Exploring the merits of team teaching in Thai classrooms: A critical reflection on practice in East Asia

Benjamin Moore
Language Institute, Thammasat University, Thailand
moorebid@hotmail.com

Abstract

In an era of ever-increasing 'internationalization' in the region, and with the demand to excel in the English language stronger than ever before, this paper seeks to revisit the notion of collaborative team teaching partnerships between local and international teachers as a useful pedagogical tool. Drawing on studies carried out in well-established team teaching programs in East Asia (e.g. JET and EPIK), team teaching is critically evaluated with reflection on its potential to be utilized in Thai classrooms. It is suggested that much more research is needed in Thailand to understand what kinds of teaching partnerships are adopted in reality, how affective they are, and what can be done to capitalize on their potential in EFL classrooms. It is argued that by maximizing teaching collaborations, the communicational abilities of Thai students could be given a much needed boost.

Introduction

The demands of a globalized world along with current trends for regional integration have forced the English language to take centre stage in meeting the need for effective regional international communication within South East Asia. This became even more apparent in 2016 with the formation of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) in which English began to function as the official working language (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Rajeevnath, 2015). In turn, this is putting increasing pressure upon governments in the region to meet the language demands of their populations, and create internationalized global citizens of the English language, whom can not only understand the structure of the language, but are also able to use it to communicate effectively (Littlewood, 2006). Given the increasingly important role of English in the region, governments are focusing educational policy and investing ever increasing sums of money into English Language Teaching (ELT). There is a universal belief that member countries' economic success within the region will be, in part, linked to the English language abilities of their citizens (Runckel, 2015).

For a number of years, one method of promoting international communicative competence across East Asia has been to introduce Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) into schools to serve as language and culture models and to initiate authentic conversations (Carless, 2006b; Littlewood, 2006; Nunan, 2003; Tanjino & Tanjino, 2000). Subsequently, a teaching pairing combining local English teachers (LETs) and NESTs has been introduced, with a certain degree of success, in classrooms in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Additionally, in a number of other South East Asian

countries, less formal collaborations have been employed utilizing Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) such as Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. A large amount of time and money has been invested and, going by the fact that very little has changed since its inception in 1987, there seems to be, in part, some merit to this method of foreign language education.

However, the world has changed dramatically since 1987. The dominance of native speaker norms and their relevance to language teaching is continuing to be challenged as the current zeitgeist shifts towards local ownership of English in a globalized world, or 'glocalization' (Tsou, 2015), and the acceptance, and indeed promotion, of local uses and "flavours" of a global English (Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Kachru, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 2006).

This article attempts to revisit collaborative language teaching with a particular focus on Thailand as it develops within the AEC. The virtues of team teaching will be explored drawing on the authors own experience of team teaching in Korea as well as relevant literature on the subject in a number of other countries in the region. It begins with an overview of team teaching and its use in East Asia, and then moves on to explore the relative qualities of the team teaching relationship. Issues in team teaching partnerships are then discussed, and recommendations for its successful adaptation and implementation into South East Asian classrooms considered.

English in Thailand

Thailand has been situated within Kachru's (1985; 1998) 'expanding circle' of English language users in which it is used as a Lingua Franca in education, tourism, and business. However, with entry into the common ASEAN market, English will increasingly be used for official purposes in which it may eventually adopt a higher status as in India and Nigeria (Kirkpatrick, 2012). There has not been any clear variant of Thai-English identified fully, as there has been in India and Singapore, with Thailand generally categorized as "norm dependent" (Baker, 2008 p. 136). These 'norms' appear to be very much centred around native speakers from Australia, America, South Africa, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, and Canada; nevertheless, a Thai variant "Thinglish" is starting to grow recognition (Baker, 2008). Thai's seem to have a reserved view regarding their ownership of English, which may reflect the fact they have never experienced colonization or had a language forced upon them in the same way as many other countries in the region. English language instruction is not new in Thailand and can be traced back as far as the reign of Rama III (1824-1851) (Foley 2005; Wongsothorn, 2000). However, it did not become part of the school curriculum until 1921. In 1996, it was made compulsory for all primary students and, combined with a movement away from traditional teacher-centred methods (Baker, 2008); it would seem that the needs of English learners in Thailand, in theory, have become rather well catered for. Emerging from the Thai Educational Act of 1999, the English curriculum is based around the 4 Cs; culture, communication, connection and community, and is focused on encouraging 'internationalization' (Mackenzie, 2003).

Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly true that a majority of Thai's are leaving school ill-equipped with the tools to enable them to effectively communicate with outsiders in the international language (Baker, 2008; Rajeevnath, 2015). It is no secret that English language education in East Asia has struggled with the goal of producing globally competent speakers of English, and this is particularly true in Thailand (Kaur et al., 2016). In a recent survey carried out on adults' English abilities, Thailand was found to be near the bottom when it came to TOEL scores (Bolton, 2008); consequently, as the AEC union grows and develops further, it would seem that this could prove a massive economic disadvantage for the country in the region (Khaopa, 2013).

It appears, therefore, that to some extent the well placed theoretical ideas and their practical implementation are a little disconnected. Indeed, a survey carried out by Chulalongkorn University Academic Service Centre (2000 cited in Baker, 2008) identified a number of difficulties in developing education in primary and secondary schools in accordance with the 1999 Act. Among these included an overabundance on curriculum content, students not at the correct level, underprepared and overburdened teachers, larger class sizes, inadequate materials and equipment, an over-reliance on multiple choice tests, and undereducated teachers. This final obstacle often leads to an over-reliance of the mother tongue in the English classroom (Foley, 2005; Wongsothorn et al. 2002), a situation which echoes across Asia as a whole (Nunan, 2003). In addition, an abundance of vocabulary/grammar/reading based testing results in a neglect of other skills and aspects of language teaching such as the Thai Ministry of education's 4 Cs.

In South East Asia, when compared to Asia as a whole there seems to be a lack of practical team teaching methodologies incorporated within primary and secondary schools (Punthumasen, 2007). In Thailand, although there is an abundance of NESTs employed throughout the country, there appears to be a lack of formal collaboration between LETs and NESTs with perhaps the allocation of duties based on each teacher's separate strengths rather than any true collaboration. Additionally, there is a lack of studies which explore the usage of foreign teachers in schools, and how teaching partnerships actually function. With the increasing pressure for English speaking success placed upon the Kingdom as it enters the AEC, could the kind of team teaching that occurs in other parts of Asia be the answer to increases in English communicative ability across Thailand? If not, are there other teaching collaborations, or adaptations, which could work to help promote communicative competence as we enter the era of ASEAN?

Understanding Team Teaching

Team teaching can be described as a collaboration between two or more teachers in which they plan, instruct, and evaluate a group of learners in a classroom environment over a set period of time taking advantage of the unique abilities of each of the team members (Buckley, 2000; Friend & Cook, 2010; Wang, 2013). In ELT this typically means a NEST working alongside a LET, facilitating communication amongst students, and enriching lessons with their complementarity (Carless, 2006a).

For some years, thousands of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) have been employed annually in classrooms in the region to act as effective models of the English Language, promote internationalization and stimulate learning.

This focus on 'effective communication' means national policies and syllabuses have moved increasingly from a grammar-based pedagogy towards various versions of communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning (TBL). A fundamental goal of communicative language teaching is to achieve what Canale and Swain (1980) term 'communicative competence', which takes into account not only grammar rules, but "social context and social rules of use" (Leung, 2005, p. 119): Goals consistent with the Thailand 1999 National Educational Act's 4Cs.

This concept of communicative competence is based on communication with a native speaker of English: "Knowledge of what a native speaker is likely to say in a given context is to us a crucial component of second language learners' competence and to understand language communication and to express themselves in a native-like way …" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.16). Following on from this notion and the principles that are attached to it, there has long been a drive to incorporate NESTs into schools across the globe. This trend has been particularly noticeable in East Asia with programmes such as JET and EPIK. The Japan Exchange and Teaching programme (JET) has been operating since 1987 with the broad aims of enriching foreign language education and promoting "internationalization" (Jet review committee, 2001 cited in Carless, 2006a, p. 342). It was believed that bringing native English speaking teachers into Japanese classrooms could significantly promote 'internationalization' by providing examples of authentic language use in addition to helping Japanese learners to become more integrated into the international community (Sturman, 1992). In South Korea, a parallel scheme EPIK (English Program in Korea) started in 1996 with the stated aims to improve the English speaking abilities of Korean students and teachers, to develop cultural exchanges, and to reform English teaching methodologies (EPIK, 2004 cited in Carless, 2006a). Other East Asian countries are seeing similar trends in particular China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Jang, Nguyen and Yang, 2010).

Team Teaching – The Best of Both Worlds

In addressing the differences between native and non-native teachers in ELT, Medgyes (1992) argues that, "NESTs and non-NESTs can be equally effective, because in the final analysis their respective strengths and weaknesses balance each other out" (p. 347). In theory this could be a positive move towards addressing issues within ELT in public schools in Thailand; however, it does bring with it a number of challenges.

Qualities of Native Speakers

Native speakers from their very definition bring with them a fluency and accuracy in the target language which is very hard for foreign learners to master (Medgyes, 1992). The term 'native speaker' here is used to denote people who use English as a first language from the inner circle countries, and whose variations of English are norm

providing such as, North America, the UK and Australia. Their presence in the classroom can help to provide a rich input of the target language and can assist with the professional development of LETs. The presence of NESTs within the school means that the English abilities of LETs are constantly stretched. The presence of NESTs can also provide a valued cultural resource as well as a genuine need for students to communicate in the target language. NESTs can additionally facilitate the English classroom by introducing novel or alternative teaching methodologies helping to promote motivation, or at least, stimulate interest amongst students (Timmis, 2002). On the other hand, a conceivable disadvantage for the native speaker teachers is that they lack knowledge of the learner and local context (Carless, 2006b, p. 328). As a result, they may be too far removed from the reality of their students (Kirkpatrick, 2002). Moreover, they are often not sufficiently qualified as English teachers and lack command of the students' mother tongue as well as the experience of learning English as a second language.

Thai government schools frequently have English speaking teachers employed as members of staff which helps to promote an 'international feel' to the school and encourage collaboration. However, team teaching does not appear to be as frequently employed or implemented to the same extent as it is in Japan and Korea.

Qualities of Local English Teachers

Medgyes (1992) observes that many of the disadvantages for NESTs prove advantages for LETs. They know local learners and curriculums well, and the fact that they themselves have been a second or foreign language learner means that they can act as perfect learner models (Kirkpatrick, 2002). Students can admire their teachers' command of English with the knowledge that they were once at a lower level of English, and hence, are an achievable target. With this in mind, LETs can teach learning strategies much more effectively than a monolingual NEST, and they can also anticipate learning difficulties more successfully (He & Miller, 2011). Moreover, the use of the mother tongue in the classroom can facilitate the learning process as well as allowing the LET to be more, "… empathetic to the needs and problems of the learners" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 347).

Nevertheless, Ling and Braine (2007) reported several short comings based on students attitudes towards non-native speaking teachers of English at universities in Hong Kong. These included a limited use of English, over-correcting students work, and an examination-orientated teaching approach. It has also been suggested that LETs in Asia may stick to more traditional methods of teaching, which do not adhere to communicative language teaching and, therefore, fail to promote 'communicative competence' (Littlewood, 2006).

Issues in Implementing Successful Team Teaching

Having an experienced LET and a NEST in the same classroom seems like the perfect partnership with both parties complimenting each other according to the qualities that they bring to the classroom. In reality, this is quite often not the case and team teaching can bring with it a number of problems. Some of these issues will be explored below.

Cultural Differences

Asian cultures often pride themselves on a collective spirit, and strong work ethic. It is not uncommon for high school teachers to work from the early hours of the morning until late at night, proving dedication and commitment to their jobs. Many of the native teachers employed in Asian public schools may not be familiar with such a working attitude, which can result in tensions between NESTs and LETs in regard to working relations. There is also sometimes an expectation to be able to do things at the last minute, which may involve teaching an additional class with just a little forewarning, or attending an event with very little notice given. Westerners are likely to show frustration to these occurrences, and perhaps feel that they are being targeted, when in fact this is just part of the host culture. It seems clear that any teacher considering working in a foreign culture needs to be flexible and understanding. Unfortunately, these fundamental characteristics are missing from a surprising number of teachers coming to Asia to work and cause a whole host of frictions. At times differences between Confucian in the East and Socratic approaches in the west can lead to potential conflict unless the parties involved exhibit a cross-cultural awareness (Tweed and Lehman, 2002). Orientation events which encourage intercultural understanding and teach the work based culture of the host nation could help to alleviate some of these problems. In addition, clear job descriptions which outline teacher responsibilities should be produced specifically to the host schools or institutions.

Language ability and Confidence

Team teaching involves a relationship between two professional individuals in which communication is a fundamental aspect (Moote, 2003). There are often areas of difficulty which arise because of a breakdown in communication. For example, a number of LETs are reported to have reservations regarding their spoken English (Medgyes, 1992), which means that they are reluctant to speak out with their western colleagues through fear of making mistakes. The result is often that lessons simply involve a NEST teaching the class, with the LET acting as an observer having the sole responsibility of keeping discipline in the classroom. This is clearly not a useful working relationship, and may, actually, have negative impacts on the students as well as the teachers involved. If the student's LET and the new foreign teacher cannot demonstrate communicative competence, then what hope do the students have? This observation is supported by Sturman (1992) where it was found that Japanese teachers were very insecure about their ability to communicate in English, often with great variations in individual ability leading to breakdowns in working relations with

foreign co-teachers. There is also a much greater risk of the LET 'losing face' as a result of unpredicted interactions with the native teacher in front of the class. Measures have been taken, for example in South Korea, to combat these issues with higher English language expectations placed on newly recruited teachers. It follows, however, that for the successful implementation of team teaching, a key element is an understanding of the other teacher, and their culture, as well as the ability to compromise.

Teacher's Attitudes and Beliefs

According to Sturman (1992,) there are three different perceptions of the role of the foreign partner in the team-teaching context in Japan. I believe these three roles exist in Thailand and other team-teaching contexts, and add to increased tensions and difficulties within the working relationship.

1. The 'foreign expert'. Sturman alleges that this attitude has the effect of distancing the teachers in terms of an imbalance of power. The foreign teacher is always right and is the source of all knowledge, despite the fact that they frequently have no experience of EFL teaching (Canagarajah, 1999). It also has the effect of minimizing the LET's role within the class and no doubt reducing the feeling of respect that they receive from the class. The bullish foreign teacher may perceive themselves as the expert and, subsequently, take control of class activities and materials design. Sturman reminds us that it is important to take into account the fact that the LET is the "native expert" (Sturman, 1992, p. 148), which should help to balance out any power issues.

2. The 'walking tape-recorder'. It is not uncommon for some foreign teachers to realize the fact that reading out from the course text book seems to be their main role within the team-teaching partnership. As the 'native expert' the LET may feel that the best thing to do is to use the foreign teacher as a model of pronunciation, especially when established roles are unclear. This has the impact of reducing the foreign teacher's motivation and feeling of job satisfaction, but this is also a way for the LET to gain control of the class, especially if they feel that the foreign teacher is inexperienced as a teacher.

3. The 'token foreigner'. It appears that the simple fact of having a foreigner working in the school, gives off a good appearance to the local community. Although the parents may be happy that their students are interacting with NESTs every day at school, it can be disheartening for the NEST to discover that their role in the school is very much focused around a good appearance for the school and not so much on teaching outcomes. They often feature in school media, or are encouraged to greet students and parents on the school gate in the mornings: a phenomenon which can be witnessed at many Thai government schools. This can lead to tensions within the schools with the NESTs taking on a "star quality" (Sturman, 1992, p. 153) being very popular amongst students and perhaps arising feelings of jealousy or contempt from their local counterparts. As Carless (2006a) illustrates: "When unqualified or inexperienced teachers are imported, tensions become exacerbated and local teachers

may feel resentment at their well-paid and poorly prepared NEST counterparts" (p.343).

Teaching Styles and Pedagogical Practice

When teachers from different cultures come together to work as a team there is the potential for friction resulting from contrasting pedagogical principles. Moote (2003), in an interview study on NESTs views towards team teaching in Japan, found that differences in teaching style and content selection were one of the most frustrating aspects of team teaching. He also discovered that Japanese teachers disliked the extra effort involved in lesson preparation when accommodating foreign teachers. In the Korean teaching context, time is such a big limiting factor and very little is often assigned for team teachers to meet or plan together. This often means that lesson preparation becomes the job of the NEST, and the Korean teacher often enters the class with little idea about what the lesson entails and, consequently, fails to contribute much to the lesson apart from controlling student discipline. It is highly possible that insecurities, methodological differences and lack of communication skills mean that this is not the most comfortable working position for some of the LETs. Nevertheless, it is important to note that collaborative teaching is doomed to failure if teachers do not set aside time to actually get together and 'collaborate'.

The CLT approach to classes is a marked difference to the traditional classrooms of most Asian countries and may sometimes prove uncomfortable for the LET as well as lead to problems with discipline. In some classes it can be difficult to get students to take the classes seriously especially if the content is not included in any school tests. One teacher in Moote's (2003, p. 331) study explained that "…he sees his role as pointless since the main goal is to prepare the students for their grammar and reading based high school or university entrance exams." Choi (2001, cited in Carless, 2006a, p. 345) reports on an EPIK participant stating something very similar: "because there is not exam [related to the conversation lesson], there is no reason for the students to concentrate, so it's a struggle to catch their attention." Additionally, Korean English teachers have the additional challenge of teaching the core syllabus with one less class to focus on it. Sturman (1992) also found that Japanese teachers complained that the students reading and writing were suffering as a result of the team-teaching lessons.

Roles in Team Teaching

Although new NESTs often attend native teacher orientation programmes, which can be very useful, it is often still unclear how they should actually work alongside their co-teachers (Kim, 2010; Mahoney, 2004; Tajino & Tajino, 2000). Wada (1994 cited in Carless, 2006a) one of the main architects of the JET programme in Japan, suggests that the NEST should be, "…actively involved in communication and interaction with students and that the JTE [Japanese English Teacher] can explain facts about the English language and answer learners' questions" (p. 344). However, this is quite a vague description and there seems to be a lot of confusion for both NESTs and LETs about what their individual roles are exactly. For instance, Moote (2003) discovered that there were contrasting opinions amongst JTEs regarding their responsibilities in

lesson planning. Additionally, Japanese teachers felt that the lesson should be a collaborative effort, but admit that in reality this was rarely the case. It is also interesting to note that an apparent frustration for NESTs seems to arise from the restricted roles they are given such as acting solely as a walking tape recorder. It is hypothesized that similar role misconceptions exist in Thai schools with effective pedagogical outcomes being missed due to insecurities regarding teaching roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Students' Attitudes

Team teaching in communicative classrooms can help to motivate students by showing them a new, exciting approach to language learning, but it can also bring additional pressures that were absent from traditional classes. There is a strong goal to converse in English, and students that are lacking in ability have more risk of standing out in class and feeling ridiculed. These students may not be so comfortable with the NESTs since they cannot understand what they are saying and are unable to express themselves in English (Carless, 2006a). In addition, the new classroom culture may be uncomfortable for some students in which they are expected to work together with peers often at a time of their lives where they are particularly sensitive (i.e. puberty).

Despite these pressures, students do still appear to show positive reactions towards team teaching (Carless, 2006b; He & Miller, 2011; Sturman, 1992). This is a strong indication of the benefits which teaching collaborations can bring to EFL in terms of student motivation and involvement, especially within large, mixed ability classrooms. The presence of a foreigner can create interest and a desire for communication from the students' even if their abilities are low. Successful negotiations within the classroom have the potential to be exciting and rewarding for the students and stimulate a desire for further learning. In the next section, the ingredients for an effective co-teaching relationship will be explored.

Aspects of Successful Team teaching

The process of team teaching is not without its problems, but in many instances this cross-cultural pedagogical combination can lead to fantastic outcomes. In the view of Carless (2006a), team teaching presents a challenging situation because it requires the juggling of a number of enabling features which he divides into three factors: pedagogical, logistical and interpersonal. In this next section, the aspects of successful team teaching will be explored in relation to these three factors.

Pedagogical

In reference to the pedagogical aspects of team teaching we are concerned with training, relevant approaches to team teaching, and teachers' roles. Clearly, "There should be some evidence of positive student responses being facilitated by the teamwork of the two teachers" (Carless, 2006a, p. 343). It is important that teachers' roles should be defined before entering the classroom and that it is the responsibility of both partners to devise roles in relation to the qualities that they can bring to the

class. In an interview with NESTs in Slovenia, a preferred method of team teaching involved interactions with both teachers in the class, and with the teachers alternating the teaching. This friendly approach to team teaching was in the opinion of the NEST: "less stressful," "creates a warm atmosphere," and "really conducive to the learning process" (Pizorn & Pedea, 2002, p. 22). This approach to the teaching partnership provides really useful examples of successful interactions in the target language, and gives them a range of different inputs and styles. Moote (2003) suggests that the best way to promote successful communication with team teaching partners would be to, " …provide opportunities for both groups to attend teacher education and training courses together" (p. 13). In reality, I think in most teaching contexts it is a real challenge to find the time for the LET to leave the classroom and attend training with their foreign colleagues, but potentially, the rewards would be great. It would enable the partners a chance to develop sound working relationships as well as to promote team teaching approaches and a sense of solidarity. Reflecting on Thailand, it seems that due to the nature of foreign teacher turnover, it is the responsibility of individual schools to provide orientation and to promote working partnerships with local teachers.

In a successful account of EPIK team teaching Carless (2006a) reports that the two teachers; "… met once a week to plan the next week's lesson, taking it in turns to bring suitable material and trying to integrate the materials with the students' regular English lessons, taught solely by Kim [the Korean English teacher]" (p.347). I think this highlights two key factors apparent in successful team teaching; firstly, that working together and organization are key to the successful partnership; and secondly, the importance of keeping classes relevant to the students real worlds by incorporating the lessons with the students' regular classes, thereby keeping a sense of purpose and relevance.

Logistical

Currently, it seems evident that many aspects of team teaching have been overlooked, especially from government administrators. In many cases, it seems that the idea to incorporate NESTs into public schools has been promoted with insufficient consideration to the difficulties that it entails and perhaps insufficient time and support provided for its successful implementation. A core concern is that, "CLT and TBLT do not prepare students sufficiently well for the more traditional, form orientated examinations which will determine their educational future" (Littlewood, 2006, p. 245). Governments need to support the implementation of these communication techniques into the national syllabuses, and allow for some recognition and value within examinations. Effort needs to be made to retain successful teachers, and in particular successful team-teaching partnerships, as it has been shown that these do improve over time (Carless, 2006a). It is a certainty that investment from local schools in forming positive relationships between teachers will help to promote longer lasting team partnerships, which can serve as role models to newer ones. It appears that many team teaching programmes are somewhat split over the roles they desire in the classroom from the NESTs. It is perhaps unrealistic to try to have the 'best of both worlds' from the people they recruit. It is, therefore, important to decide whether they require young, inexperienced teachers who are

perhaps easier to accommodate and less likely to interfere with local practice, or do they desire experienced teachers who may bring with them a stronger teaching philosophy and novel approaches to teaching, which may create tensions in the schools that they are employed to work? Ultimately, ministries of education across the region need to consider what is really trying to be achieved by employing communicative language teaching techniques and foreign teachers into their classrooms. It has to be much more that an image requirement, and first and foremost, this has to be demonstrated by the teachers who are acting as role models for the language learning model they promote. It would seem that, in Thailand, much more research regarding how foreign teachers are actually utilized in EFL classrooms is needed in order to generate a picture of current pedagogical practice. Additionally, it would be useful to establish what teaching relationships actually work, how these are could be promoted, and what could be done to retain successful partnerships.

Interpersonal

Carless (2006a) makes the observation that successful team teaching is best achieved when participants show sensitivity and goodwill, promote the development of relationships inside and outside the classroom, have a willingness to compromise or make sacrifices, and exhibit respect for culturally well-established classroom practices even when holding different views. An essential part of team-teaching is for both partners to demonstrate "intercultural competence" (Hyde, 1998, p. 8), and in so doing they will provide good models for their students. Carless (2006a) found that by following the social norms of the host culture the NEST can become accepted into the local community, and this in turn, carries with it the great potential to facilitate positive attitudes towards the English language and other cultures. In the view of Byram, Nichols, and Stevens (2001), the foundation to intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the speaker and mediator. It is important to "relativize" one's own beliefs and values, and to be able to see things from the perspective of an outsider, something they call the ability to "decentre" (p. 5). Team teaching requires open-minded people who are flexible, curious and sensitive about other cultures. In addition, foreign language learning can have a big impact in enabling NESTs to become part of the local culture. In the words of Kramsch (1998): "Language is the most sensitive indicator of the relationship between an individual and a given social group" (p. 77). Consequently, it would seem that a grasp of the local tongue would help to bring the foreign teacher closer to the local community. Medgyes exhibits a strong opinion along similar lines (1992), "The ideal NEST is one who has achieved a high degree of proficiency in the learners' mother tongue" (p. 348). This will help them to gain further insights in regard to their students as current learners of foreign language, and also bring them closer to their partner teachers. With this is mind, it would be advisable that foreign teachers in Thai schools were offered Thai language training as part of their teaching schedules, ideally administered by their co-teachers.

Conclusions

In this paper, collaborative team teaching has been discussed with particular reference to its effective utilization in Thai schools. Current practice, in particular, in Japan and Korea has been critically evaluated, and the qualities of successful collaborative partnerships explored. It has been suggested that team teaching allows schools to exploit the beneficial qualities of NESTs and LETs in a way that demonstrates the key aims of educational policies in the region, namely that of communicative competence and internationalization.

It is clear that team teaching brings with it many advantages, including catering for the diverse needs of students, providing a variety of input and styles, improving student motivation, and promoting the professional development of teachers. Consequently, to combat the problem of poor language performance in Thai learners, one possible solution is promoting the practice of not only hiring foreign nationals to teach in Thai schools, but incorporating them into successfully integrated team teaching relationships with Thai LETs in which intercultural collaboration, communication and confidence can be demonstrated at face value in the classroom.

Though it is clear that these partnerships are difficult to foster, there is empirical evidence that team teachers can complement each other (Park, 2014). Successful team teaching is reliant on a number of factors, and at the forefront of these live interpersonal and intercultural aspects. The key ingredients appear to be empathy and cultural sensitivity for all parties involved. Additionally, Nunan (1992) recommends that: "For collaborative teaching to be effective, teachers need appropriate training and support. It is insufficient to simply throw teachers together without giving them opportunities for developing the skills they need for success" (p.6). This support needs to come in terms of appropriate time for planning and successfully implementing team teaching as well as from the wider curriculum and assessment procedures. If anything the failure of team teaching has resulted from a top-down process of dictating what goes on in classrooms from the outside, without considering the practical realities of each teaching situation in its local context. Future research regarding effective team teaching collaborations in Thailand, the realities of the relationships, and the provision which is needed would be extremely valuable in exploring its feasibility.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) urges teachers to be critical of the concept of prescriptive methods, and instead suggests a postmethod pedagogy. The foundation of his postmethod pedagogy is visualized as being formed around three pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 34).

• *Particularity* requires that the teaching situation is seen as relevant to a particular group of learners in a particular setting. In terms of team-teaching what works in one school or between one teaching partnership may not necessarily work with another. We must be context sensitive to our individual teaching situation and be aware that a number of variations of the team teaching relationship exist (Tanjino & Tajino, 2000),

which can be implemented in various ways dependent on the particular teaching context.

• *Practicality* involves obtaining a pedagogical theory based on classroom practice. Rather than relying on prescriptive methods, a successful team teaching practice must be worked on based on tried and tested methods on our learners, and on the individual qualities that each teacher brings. Therefore, the roles of each team teaching situation need to be worked out collaboratively in a context-sensitive manner. Good team teaching practice will mature over time as will professional relationships; nevertheless, it's important to be aware of the potential limitations of these which are often dependent on the makeup of individual personalities.

• *Possibility* involves sensitivity to the sociopolitical situation that exists in all classrooms and the impact that teacher's values may bring to the class. Native speaking teachers within Thai schools will generally bring with them the values of the western white middleclass with certain prejudices attached to these (Braine, 1999). We need to be aware of the impact this may have on our students, and be sensitive to their own cultures. A policy of inclusion as well as promoting criticality in our learners can help empower them as English learners. In addition, the inequality of power that exists between partners in collaborative teaching needs addressing and rebalancing (Wang & Lin, 2013). Perhaps it is high time that rather than being viewed as linguistically deviant, local varieties of English usage are also accepted and celebrated (Moore, 2009). The first step towards this could well be a wider recognition of Thai English, or 'Thinglish' (Baker, 2008).

A critical pedagogy involves teachers themselves making decisions themselves within their local context. With this in mind, it may be that certain teaching partnerships are just not compatible, and if this is the case, the necessary adjustments which prove most beneficial to the learners must be made. It is only in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect that teaching partnerships can achieve their full potential (Bailey, Dale & Squire, 1992). Another question to ask is whether all the money spent is really worth it (Ling & Braine, 2007; Nunan, 2003). Could the students be better served if governments made more effort to enhance both the language proficiency and teaching skills of local teachers (Kirkpatrick, 2002)? In an age of ASEAN should Thai schools be looking to other members of the economic community to act as successful bilinguals rather than an outdated reliance on NESTs for team teaching partners? Furthermore, is it not time that ELT recognizes that "… experience and professionalism (qualifications) are more important than native language backgrounds" (Wang & Lin, 2013 p. 14). It is paramount that educators are critical of prescriptive methodologies which may not function in their local contexts and remain open-minded in their approach to team teaching.

About the Author

Benjamin Moore was awarded his MEd TESOL from Exeter University in the United Kingdom in 2009 and since then has been working at the Language Institute, Thammasat University involved in ESP course development and teaching. His primary research interests include ESP course design, effective needs analysis, and understanding and improving the ESP situations at Thai universities. He has recently been working on a foundation level integrated skills text book and English for Economics course.

References

Bailey, K.M., Dale, T. & Squire, B. (1992). Some reflections on collaborative language teaching. In Nunan, D. (ed) (1992). *Collaborative language learning and teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baker, W. (2008). A critical examination of ELT in Thailand. The role of cultural awareness. *RELC Journal*, *39*(1), 131-146.

Bolton, K. (2008). English in Asia, Asian Englishes, and the issue of proficiency. *English Today*, *24*(2), 3-12.

Braine, G. (1999). *Non-native educators in English language teaching*. Routledge.

Buckley, F.J. (2000). *Team teaching: What, why, and how*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Byram, M, Nicols, A. & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing intercultural competence in practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters ltd.

Canagarajah, A. S. (1999). Interrogating the "native speaker fallacy": Non-linguistic roots, non-pedagogical results. In G. Braine (Ed.), *Non-native educators in English language teaching*, pp. 77-92.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of com-municative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied linguistics, 1*(1), 1-47.

Carless, D. (2006a). Good practices in team teaching in Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong. *System, 34*, 341-351.

Carless, D. (2006b). Colloborative EFL teaching in primary schools. *ELT Journal*, *60*(4), 328-335.

Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(2), 185-209.

Foley, J. A. (2005). English inThailand. *RELC journal*, *36*(2), 223-234.

Friend, M. & Cook, L. (2010). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals.* Columbus, OH: Merrill.

He, D. & Miller, L. (2011). English teacher preference: The case of China's non-English major students. *World Englishes*, *30*(3), 428-443.

Hyde, M. (1998). Intercultural competence in English language education. *Modern English Teacher, 7*(2), 7-11.

Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk & HG Widdowson (eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures*, (pp.11–30).

Kachru, B. B. (1998). English as an Asian language. *Links & letters, 5*, 089-108.

Kaur, A., Young, D., & Kirkpatrick, R. (2016). English education policy in Thailand: Why the poor results? In R. Kirkpatrick (ed.), *English Language Education Policy in Asia* (pp. 345-361). Springer International Publishing.

Khaopa, W. (2013). 'Thais score lowest in TOEFL' The Nation, 28 February. Retrieved from http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/national/aec/30200874

Kim, M. (2010). How do native English-speaking teachers perceive co-teaching? *Korea Journal of Applied Linguistics, 26*(4), 213-249.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2002). ASEAN and Asian cultures and models: Implications for the ELT curriculum and for teacher selection. In. A. Kirkpatrick (ed.), *Englishes in Asia: Communication, Identity, Power and Education,* (pp. 213–224).

Kirkpatrick, A. (2006). Which model of English: Native-speaker, nativized or lingua franca. In R. R. and M. Saraceni (Eds.), *English in the world: Global rules, global roles* (pp. 71-82).

Kirkpatrick, A. (2012). English in ASEAN: Implications for regional multilingualism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 33*(4), 331-344.

Kramsh, C. (1998). *Language and culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kumaradivelu, B. (2003). *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jang, S.H., Nguyen, B.H, & Yang. Y (2010). Enhancing Pedagogical Roles of ESL/EFL Native and Non-Native Teachers through Team Teaching: How to make this 'International Partnership' Successful. *The International Journal of Learning, 17*, 249-257.

Leung, C. (2005). Convivial communication: recontextualizing communicative competence. *International Journal of Applied Linguisitics* 15 (2), 119-144.

Ling, C. Y., & Braine, G. (2007). The attitudes of university students towards non-native speakers (NNS) English teachers in Hong Kong. *RELC journal, 38*(3), 257-277.

Littlewood, W. (2006). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. *Language Teaching, 40*, 243-249.

Mackenzie, A. S. (2003). Curriculum development in Thailand. In A. S. Mackenzie & Tim Newfields (Eds.), *Curriculum innovation, testing and evaluation* (pp. 59-67). Tokyo: The College and University Educator (CUE) Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT).

Mahoney, S. (2004). Role controversy among team teachers in the JET Programme. *JALT Journal, 26*(2), 223-244.

Medgyes, P. (1992). Native or non-native: Who's worth more? *ELT Journal, 46*(4), 340-349.

Moore, B. (2009). Perceptions of identity and foreign language use in Thai hotel workers: Insight into sociocultural understandings of foreign language learning. *Language Institute Journal, 4*, 19-41.

Moote, S. (2003). Insights into team teaching. *The English Teacher: An International Journal, 6*(3), 328-334.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Collaborative language learning and teaching.* Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly, 37*(4), 589-613.

Park, J. E. (2014). English co-teaching and teacher collaboration: A micro-interactional perspective. *System*, *44*, 34-44.

Pizorn, K. & Bedea, C. (2000). Collaboration between native-speaking and non-native speaking teachers in Slovenia. *The Teacher Trainer, 14*(3), 22-24.

Punthumasen, P. (2007). International program for teacher education: An approach to tackling problems of English education in Thailand. In *The 11th UNESCOAPEID International Conference Reinventing Higher Education: Toward Participatory and Sustainable Development* (pp. 12-14).

Rajeevnath, R. (2015). English language education in Thailand and AEC 2015. *RJES, 2*, 28-36.

Runckel, C.W. (2015). *Asia opportunities: ASEAN economic community (AEC) in 2015.* Retrived from http://www.business-in-asia.com/asia/asean_economic_community.html

Sturman, P. (1992). Team teaching: A case study from Japan. In Nunan, D. (Ed.) (1992). *Collaborative language learning and teaching.* Cambridge University Press.

Tajino, A., & Tajino, Y. (2000). Native and non-native: what can they offer? Lessons from team-teaching in Japan. *ELT journal*, *54*(1), 3-11.

Timmis, I. (2002). Native- speaker norms and International English: A classroom view. *ELT journal*, *56*(3), 240-249.

Tsou, W. (2015). From Globalization to Glocalization: Rethinking English Language Teaching in Response to the ELF Phenomenon. *English as a Global Language Education (EaGLE) Journal*, *1*(1), 47-63.

Tweed, R.G. & Lehman, D.R. (2002). Learning considered within a cultural context: Confucian and Socratic approaches. *American Psychologist, 57*(2), 89-99.

Wang, L. Y. (2013). Non-native EFL teacher trainees' attitude towards the recruitment of NESTs and teacher collaboration in language classrooms. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *4*(1), 12-20.

Wang, L. Y., & Lin, T. B. (2013). The representation of professionalism in native English-speaking teachers recruitment policies: A comparative study of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. *English Teaching*, *12*(3), 5.

Wongsothorn, A. (2000). Thailand's globalisation and language policy: Effects on language classroom practice'. In H.W. Kam, and C. Ward (Eds.), *Language in the Global Context: Implications for the Language Classroom*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, pp 326-39.

Wongsothorn, A., Hiranburana, K., & Chinnawongs, S. (2002). English language teaching in Thailand today. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 22*(2), 107-116.