LOCATING THE *FARANG* TEACHER WITHIN AND ACROSS WEST-THAI ENCOUNTER(S): FROM *THE KING AND I* TO CONTEMPORARY TEFL

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Abstract

Taking the contemporary idealization of NESTs as a starting point, this research draws on critical Thai studies (i.e., Harrison & Jackson, 2010; Jackson, 2008; Kitiarsa, 2010; Winichakul, 1994; 2000) to conceptualize the *farang* teacher and attempt to "locate" this figure across 150 years of Thailand's relationship with the 'West'. Guided by the assertion that "… contemporary modes of proximity reopen prior histories of encounter.” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 13), I use Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) to analyze both the 1956 film *The King and I* and the popular travel website gooverseas.com, asking how the *farang* teacher emerges both historically and today. I then consider my findings through the lens of my own experience, asking how the cultural meanings surrounding the *farang* teacher manifest within the face-to-face encounters facilitated by contemporary English language teaching. I conclude my work with a reflection on the possibility of a "pedagogy of encounter".

Dedication

To all the women in my life whose sacrifices highlight the privilege it is for me to pursue higher education. To my Nan (Pastor!) Paddock. Your trailblazing spirit and lifelong endurance have inspired me to no end. To my Nan Hawkins. Your drive to learn new things and passion for education, especially education for girls, has pushed me to achieve all that I can. To my mother Laure-Ann, the best (and perhaps most unlikely!) stay-at-home, homeschooling mom. If it was not for your personal sacrifice, devotion to your children, your full commitment to our education, and your pull-up-your-bootstraps attitude, I would never have made it here today (even if there were some shouting and tears along the way!). And finally, to my late Aunt Lynette. Aunt Nettie, you will never know how meaningful it was to watch a woman of such brilliance do it all while reminding us that we really shouldn't have to. Thank you for teaching me that I am always enough; I know you would be so proud of me.

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN .... Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CELTA .... Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (Cambridge English Level 5 Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

EFL .... English as a Foreign Language

EIL .... English as an International Language

ELF .... English as a Lingua Franca

ELT .... English Language Teaching

EPI .... English Proficiency Index

ESL .... English as a Second Language

HTML .... Hypertext Mark-Up Language

IAWE .... International Association for World Englishes

ICWE .... International Committee of the Study of World Englishes

LSRs .... Logico-Semantic Relations

MDA .... Multimodal Discourse Analysis

NES .... Native English Speaker/Speaking

NEST .... Native English-Speaking Teacher

NNES .... Non-Native English Speaker/Speaking

NNEST .... Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher

NS .... Native Speaker

SEO .... Search Engine Optimization

SF-MDA .... Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis

SFT .... Systemic-Functional Theory

TA .... Teaching Assistant

TEFL .... Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TESL .... Teaching English as a Second Language

TESOL .... Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

VPN .... Virtual Private Network

WE .... World Englishes

WWI... World War 1

WWII... World War 2

1. Introduction

In December of 2016, a few short months after my 20th birthday, I found myself standing in a primary classroom in Northern Thailand listening to a Canadian teacher excitedly pitch the benefits of an adventurous life teaching English as a foreign language abroad. From that moment I was hooked, and four short months later my spouse and I found ourselves in the same classroom, this time as an employee and volunteer respectively. This may seem like an oddly personal vignette with which to introduce a Master's thesis, but it is the origin story of this project: it is out of this personal experience that the ideas and perspectives featured in these pages have developed. Starting in the 1990s, several scholars began questioning, critiquing, and challenging the assumptions of mainstream applied linguistics and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) research and practice (i.e. Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; 1998; Phillipson, 1992). This project has been carried through to today, with research challenging the idealization of 'native' English speaker norms in TESOL (i.e. Holliday & Aboshiha, 2009; Holliday, 2006; Holliday, 2015), interrogating the relationship between language and race (i.e. Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rivers & Ross, 2013; Rosa & Flores, 2017; Shuck, 2006), and highlighting the real-world professional and pedagogical impact of these colonial attitudes (i.e. Mahboob, 2010; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020; Satienchayakorn & Grant, 2022; Savski & Comprendio, 2022; Selvi, 2010; Wright, 2022). That said, as Pennycook (2022) argues, there is still work to be done, and it is through the lens of my personal experience that I hope to contribute something new.

It is no secret that teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) has grown as a medium through which to see the world and that Thailand remains a sought-after destination for this work. While I was cognizant of this seven years ago, I was not yet equipped to consider the

cultural politics and social implications of my work. In fact, I did not initially set out to focus my Master's research on an interrogation of my experience and yet, as I began immersing myself in the theories and perspectives that support this research, I could not help but ask: What did my presence there represent? What was the impact of my body in that space? How do the contours of Thailand's specific encounter with Western powers contribute to answering these questions? It is therefore out of these personal musings that this work has emerged – a thesis that seeks to locate the *farang* teacher within and across West-Thai encounter(s). This introductory chapter, then, serves to outline what I explore in the following pages. Below, I provide a brief reflection on the history of English as a global phenomenon before discussing the development of English in Thailand specifically. I then turn to a discussion of English language teaching (ELT) within the context of postcoloniality, both broadly and in terms of Thai cultural history. Finally, I offer a summary of my research focus and methodology, concluding with a description of how this thesis is structured. Before all of this, however, I want to define the term *farang*.

1.1. Defining *Farang*

Broadly speaking, the Thai word *farang* (ฝรั่ง) "emerges from a set of pan-Asian identification markers for the West, Western peoples, and Western-derived things" (Kitiarsa, 2010, p. 60). Its origins can be traced to a "Persianization of the word 'Frank'" (once again, *farang* or فرنگ) a "very old geographical designation predating European colonialism in the Arab and Muslim world" that "could refer to the medieval Germanic people, to the French people, to the Crusaders, or to the Levantines" (Dabashi, 2020, p. 68). While "equivalences for the term are found in a large number of languages" (Kitiarsa, 2010, p. 61), Marcinkowski (2005) notes that *farang* is just one of several Persian loanwords still present in modern Thai which made their

way into the Siamese language during the Ayutthaya period[1], from the 16th century onwards (p. 5). This was owing to "the establishment of a highly influential and thriving resident colony of Persian-speaking merchants" in the city (p. 5). These Persian speakers were not the only foreign merchants present during this time, however, as it was Portuguese merchants – the "first Europeans to visit Siam in significant numbers" – who became the initial referents of the newly adopted expression (Kitiarsa, 2010, p. 61).

Today, while Thongchai Winichakul (1994) has defined *farang* as "an adjective and noun referring to Western people without any specification of nationality, culture, ethnicity, language, or whatever" (p. 5), the Royal Institute Dictionary defines it principally as a reference to Caucasian ethnicity/white race (ชนชาติผิวขาว) (ราชบัณฑิตยสภา, 2011). That said, as Kitiarsa (2010) notes, African Americans are sometimes called *farang dam* (ฝรั่งดำ), suggesting that the word is not fully confined to race. This is further supported by the second Royal Institute Dictionary definition, which speaks to the use of *farang* "as a classifying category to refer to Western-originating things" (Kitiarsa, 2010, p. 61). On the basis of this definition, Kitiarsa (2010) ultimately argues *farang* can be understood as a cultural discourse, claiming that "the connotations of the term reflect how the Thai have made sense of their encounters with Western Otherness through history" (p. 61). It is therefore the discursive nature of *farang* that is central to my conceptualization of the *farang* teacher, which I describe more fully in Sections 1.4.2. and

[1] The Ayutthaya period spanned from 1351 to 1767 when the city of Ayutthaya (the capital of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, a precursor to the Kingdom of Siam and modern Thailand) was destroyed by Burmese armies. As Baker and Phongpaichit (2017) note, "European travelers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries placed Ayutthaya or Siam among the three great powers of Asia alongside China and India" (p. ix).

1.5.1. below, and in Chapter 3. For now, however, I turn to consider the history of English as a global phenomenon.

1.2. English as a Global Phenomenon

Again, despite foundational works in applied linguistics arguing the contrary (i.e. Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; 1998; Phillipson, 1992), it seems that within the popular imagination, the global uptake of English remains an uncontroversial given. However, from its genesis, its ascension to the national language of the United Kingdom, and its spread throughout the world, to the increasing demand for English language 'skills' within our present-day globalized economy, the history of English and, consequently, ELT is far from neutral. Below, then, I offer an overview of this history as context for English teaching practice today.

1.2.1. English Origins: Nations and Empires

The history of the English language begins in the 5th century with the arrival of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to the British Isles. Bringing various Germanic dialects with them, these groups eventually settled in different regions and their languages evolved to form the four foundational dialects of Old English (Horobin, 2018, p. 28-9). Historians of English today view the development of the language as organized into four periods: Old English (650-1100), Middle English (1100-1500), Early Modern English (1500-1800), and Late Modern English (1800-present day) (Horobin, 2018, p. 30). While much can be said about the development of the English language across the British Isles, particularly in relationship to the Celtic dialects of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales (see Burchfield, 1994), such a focus falls beyond the immediate scope of my research, which begins in the late 19th century: a period of increased British colonial expansion.

> Colonialism has shaped the modern world in significant and irreversible ways, having produced young, often ethnically heterogenous nations in Africa, Asia and the Americas after decolonization. Its traces are political and economic but also cultural and, not least, linguistic... British colonial expansion has disseminated English to all continents, and has paved the way for its current status as the world's leading language... (Schneider, 2018, p. 42).

As Schneider (2018) notes, the British began their colonial endeavors much later than other European powers, and "Serious expansionist activity started no earlier than 1600" (p. 44). Beginning first with settlement colonies in North America, they started moving eastward in 1783 following American independence (Winks, 2007, pp. 43-72, as cited in Schneider, 2018). While the American revolution saw the end of British political rule, the dominant culture of the contemporary United States (and other former settlement colonies), reflect what Darwin (2009) calls Britain's powerful "demographic imperialism", that is "the human capacity to stock the settlement colonies and maintain their British complexion" (p. 9; see also Schneider, 2018, p. 45). Interestingly however, in the colonies composing what we now call Africa and Asia, wherein resource exploitation proved more desirable than settlement expansion, the emphasis on linguistic and cultural influence centered on indigenous elites in the interest of establishing indirect forms of colonial governance (Schneider, 2018, p. 43). It was arguably not until the post-WWII period of decolonization that the English language, by way of mass schooling, began to trickle down to the lower classes in these areas. This was both a function of British efforts to maintain global influence in the absence of direct political power and a matter of communication logistics for many newly independent, ethnically heterogenous nation-states (Schneider, 2018, p. 45). The post-WWII period also ushered in an era of American global dominance and with it the establishment of American English as the "globally predominant reference variety of English, spoken by more people than all the other native varieties put together." (Schneider, 2018, p. 49).

1.2.2. ELT: A Soft Power Profession?

The proliferation of ELT as a profession and field of study stems from the geopolitical conditions delineated above, with dominant traditions emanating from both England and the United States. As Howatt (1984) notes,

> The teaching of modern vernacular languages began in England towards the end of the Middle Ages when French died out as the second language of the kingdom and gradually surrendered to English. The processes of linguistic change in England from a bilingual feudal community ruled by the Anglo-French Plantagenet dynasty to a largely monolingual nation under the Tudors were slow but irreversible. (Howatt, 1984, p. 3).

Howatt (1984) argues that such a linguistic shift coincided with the development of an increasing "consciousness of nationhood" as England, particularly under Henry V, made gains in the Hundred Years' War (p. 4). Even while English was establishing itself as a national language, the classical languages and, to some extent, French, persisted as the purview of a formal education; ELT did not start rising to prominence in England (beyond the domestic education of foreigners) until the 18th century, at which time English grammar schools began to emerge (p. 32, 107). It was also around this time that efforts were made by British scholars to standardize English spelling and pronunciation (p. 109). Howatt (1984) points out the convenient timing of these efforts, stating:

> It is rather ironic that these determined attempts to fix the English language 'for ever' should have coincided with the secession of the American colonies and the establishment of an independent English-speaking nation which would inevitably seek to develop an alternative standard suited to its own purposes. (Howatt, 1984, p. 114).

The Americans did begin developing alternative standards (p. 115), and while it is true that other settler colonies saw the development of their own distinct Englishes, it is worth noting that both Standard American English and British English remain the most culturally and pedagogically influential in global ELT. Unsurprisingly, just as each nation oversaw the independent codification of language standards, so too did they birth independent ELT traditions (see Howatt & Smith, 2014). In fact, as Howatt (1984) notes, following WWI, the "centre of gravity for the development of progressive thinking on the teaching of English as a foreign language shifted from Europe to the USA..." (p. 85).

As Pennycook (1994) demonstrates, the expansion of English as an "international language" and the explosion of global demand for ELT in its contemporary form, can be traced to Britain's crisis of global influence. Spurred by two World Wars and the push toward decolonization, both Britain and the US grappled for and increased their geopolitical power through cultural diplomacy, a strategy to which the proliferation of English was central. This diplomacy was institutionalized differently in each country and further created the conditions for the professionalization of ELT. While these dynamics are explored in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6, it is important to note that major players in the development of ELT, and more specifically TESOL, include the British Council, various American government and philanthropic organizations, and the professional organization TESOL International. It is through these avenues that ELT, in the form of TESOL, has evolved into a global profession and industry.

1.2.3. TEFL and Global Capitalism

As I explore in more detail in Chapter 6, the global spread of English has both supported and been supported by the processes of neoliberal globalization. Looking to Bourdieu (1986) we see how much of human life has been absorbed into the logic of capital. Through this lens,

English language ‘skills’ can be understood as a form of cultural capital necessary for full participation in a global market economy. With English now both capital and commodity, it should be no surprise that TESOL has morphed into a lucrative industry that markets off desires for both access to prestigious varieties of English and fulfillment through the lifestyle afforded those who teach abroad. TEFL, a distinction which I cover more fully in Chapters 2, 3, and 6, is perhaps the most prominent example of the intersection between ELT and globalization. TEFL is the branch of TESOL that reflects the practice of teaching English to students for whom English is neither a first/native or colonial/lingua franca language and therefore speaks to the growth of English as an international language (see Pennycook, 1994). Given the history of Thailand’s encounter with the West, the designation of English as a foreign language within the country is complex and reflective of an ambiguity that I explore further in Chapter 3. For now, however, I want to briefly discuss the spread of English into Thailand and its contemporary relevance.

1.3. English in Thailand Past and Present

As Trakulkasemsuk (2018) explains, the history of English in Thailand starts in the 19th century during a period of increased British colonial expansion into mainland Southeast Asia. While its influence has waxed and waned over the past 150 years, and its role in educational policy is more complex, for my purposes I consider the development of English in Thailand across three distinct periods.

1.3.1. Colonial Period

It is important to note that Thai nationalist history traces the origins of contemporary Thailand back several centuries through several ethnically Tai kingdoms that consistently occupied parts of the Indochinese Peninsula. In terms of my research, however, the establishment of the Kingdom of Siam in 1782, which marked the ascent of the current Chakri dynasty, is the

most relevant starting point from which to consider the evolution of contemporary Thai cultural history. Moreover, the reign of King Mongkut, the fourth Chakri monarch, from 1851 to 1868, serves as the historical bookend to my exploration of English in Thailand today. Made popular in the West through his depiction in the critically acclaimed musical film *The King and I* (1956), Mongkut was one of the first monarchs tasked with the serious negotiation of Siamese independence from European colonial powers. As I discuss in Chapter 3 and 5, this involved overseeing a major epistemological shift which saw the Kingdom of Siam slowly adapt to Western conceptions of space and nationhood (See Winichakul, 1994; 2000). Language – never epistemologically neutral – was a facet of this shift, and Mongkut was the first king to seriously emphasize the learning of European languages, principally English, for himself and his court (see Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). It was his work with the language that put the wheels in motion for English to become the "*de facto* primary foreign language of Thailand" (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017, p. 32), a process accelerated by his successors King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh.

1.3.2. The Cold War

As I explore more fully in Chapters 5 and 6, the Cold War, specifically from the end of the Pacific War in 1945 through the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, represents an important period in the history of Thailand's relationship with Western powers, and consequently with the English language. It was during this time that Thailand strengthened its relationship with the United States, serving as a strategic regional ally in the fight against communism. While this relationship and its implications are quite complex, Trakulkasemsuk (2018) notes that the presence of 'native'-speaking American soldiers from the 1960s to 1975 served to elevate the status of English from a mere compulsory subject to a language with social and economic

significance for Thai commoners (p. 99). While this significance would decline somewhat following the Vietnam War, as evidenced by the downgrading of English from a compulsory to an elective subject in the 1978 national education curriculum (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017, p. 32), the continued "rise of American economic power" has ensured that "Thais have continued to value the ability to use English" (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018, p. 99).

1.3.3. Contemporary TEFL

The impact of the United States' global economic pre-eminence, then, has much to do with the status of English in Thailand today. Arguably this can be understood through the lens of the 1997 Asian financial crisis as a consequence of Thailand's engagement with American-led neoliberal globalization. Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017) highlight that this crisis, which presented itself not only as an economic crisis but as one with political, cultural, and social ramifications, precipitated the educational reform of 1999 (p. 33). While the core of this reform, enshrined in the National Education Act of 1999, emphasized a return to traditional Thai cultural values, it is seen to have simultaneously strengthened the position of English over and above other foreign languages (p. 34). While I discuss this further in Chapter 3, I here want to argue that the relationship between Thailand, neoliberal globalization, and English as an international language speaks to why English has continued to be designated a foreign language of prestige and importance. Moreover, I want to note that this designation, which emphasizes the pedagogical role of presumed 'native' speakers, has provided fertile ground for the expansion of the global TEFL industry into Thailand. With that in mind, I want to once again zoom out and consider the relationship between TEFL and postcoloniality broadly speaking.

1.4. TESOL and Postcoloniality

As I have established above, British colonialism represents the starting point for the global expansion of the English language. That said, as I have also argued, the most intensive period of this expansion occurred much later, spanning from the mid-20th century to today. This throughline, however, from colonialism through the Cold War and into our current globalized era can be accounted for by Sara Ahmed's (2000) approach to postcoloniality. Discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, postcoloniality involves "rethinking how colonialism operated in different times in ways that permeate all aspects of social life, in the colonised and colonising nations." (Ahmed, 2000, p. 11). Postcoloniality is therefore a useful framework through which to grapple with the implications of contemporary TESOL practice broadly speaking and within the context of TEFL in Thailand.

1.4.1. The Ideal English Language Teacher

Explored more fully in Chapter 2, the ideal English language teacher is a concept that reflects how colonialism continues to permeate the TESOL field. An outcome of discourses like native-speakerism (see Holliday & Aboshiha, 2009; Holliday, 2006; 2015; Phillipson, 1992) and raciolinguistic essentialism (see Kubota, 2022; Rosa & Flores, 2017), the ideal English language teacher is a construct with real world implications. Conceived of as White, Western, and 'native speaking', this figure is idealized as vital to the successful transmission of both linguistic norms and presumably superior cultural values. This idealization has contributed to continued disparities for both teachers and students alike (see, for example, Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Methitham, 2012; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Savski & Comprendio, 2022), and ultimately reflects the ideologies and attitudes inculcated on a global scale as a result of European colonialism. While the ideal English language teacher is a concept

present across TESOL contexts, considerable research interrogating the role of speaking status, race, and country of origin within the TESOL profession, including that cited above, focuses on Asia. This, then, brings to the forefront the importance of understanding the specificities of postcoloniality as it pertains to Asia.

1.4.2. Orientalism and Occidentalism in Context

Until now I have been referring to the relationship between Thailand and 'the West'. While the East/West distinction has long been criticized for its failure to reflect geographic and economic realities, I want to emphasis that my research is grounded in critical cultural studies. Although it has also been argued (rightly so) that the cultural distinction between West and East is a colonial construct, it remains a useful concept within the context of postcoloniality. Ahmed (2000), in offering the concept of postcoloniality, naturally builds on the foundational work of Edward Said (1978/2003) who coined Orientalism to refer to the "...corporate institution of dealing with the Orient" that emerged through the processes of and in service to European colonialism (p. 3). This institution was ultimately built upon an "ontological and epistemological distinction" (p. 2) between Orient and Occident that functioned to define the identity of the Occident through reference to an inferiorly constructed Other. Orientalism is therefore an important touchpoint for understanding the relationship between West and East, and, in this instance, between the West and Thailand.

That said, Orientalism has also proved foundational to more poststructuralist thought regarding this relationship. While, on the one hand, as will be shown throughout the following chapters, Thailand continues to be constructed in the Western imagination through the lens of Orientalism, Thai nationalist history has relied on the West as an Other against which to define itself as a nation-state. For Harrison and Jackson (2010), this has to do with "the construction of

Thainess (*khwam-pen-Thai*) in the face of its encounters with and absorption of Westernness *(khwam-pen-farang*)" (p. 2). One expression of this absorption of Westernness is the *farang* discourse identified by Kitiarsa (2010). For Kitiarsa (2010), those things labelled *farang* operate within a symbolic economy that serves to delineate domestic identities and class divisions in service to Thai nationalism. People, then, can be *farang* both in terms of their apparent Western foreignness (i.e. Whiteness, language, etc.) and the symbolic value attached to them. As I argue in Chapter 3, the *farang* discourse largely shapes how the ideal English language teacher has been contextualized within Thai society. Before I further expand on what I mean by the *farang* teacher, however, I want to turn to two theories – Ahmed's (2000) strange encounters and the tradition of social semiotics – to explain how this figure might emerge.

1.4.3. Strange Encounters and Social Semiotics

Ahmed's (2000) concept of strange encounters speaks to the way in which encounters between embodied subjects can give rise to the figure of the stranger as an Other that we already recognize. In essence, strange encounters are the points at which we make social meanings across difference. Moreover,

> … encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular – the face to face of this encounter – and the general – the framing of the encounter between broader relationships of power and antagonism. (Ahmed, 2000, p. 8).

This ultimately speaks to the way both cultural discourses (such as, for example, Orientalism and Occidentalism) and structural realities influence and shape the meanings we make. While I discuss this further in Chapter 4, the notion that meanings are made at the site of encounter supports a social semiotic theory of communication that contends both that "Signs are always newly made in social interaction" and "The forms/signifiers which are used in the making of

signs are made in social interaction and become part of the semiotic resources of a culture" (Kress, 2010, pp. 54-55). It is through a synthesis of both Ahmed's (2000) strange encounters and social semiotics, then, that I hope to articulate how the *farang* teacher comes to be.

1.5. Toward a Cultural Politics of ELT in Thailand

While the theoretical underpinnings of this research largely stem from critical cultural studies (with the addition of a social semiotic theory of communication), it is my overall intention to contribute to the field of critical applied linguistics. Set into motion in the late-1980s to early-1990s, critical applied linguistics seeks to challenge the assumption of neutrality underlying mainstream applied linguistics. While a number of authors were early contributors to this movement, I identify most with Alistair Pennycook's work, particularly his 1994 text *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. In this text Pennycook (1994) does not seek to offer a definitive account of English as an international language but rather seeks to explore and come to terms with "the difficulties in understanding its diverse implications" (p. 24). Similarly, my research seeks to address the cultural complexities and implications of teaching English in Thailand through the lens of the *farang* teacher.

1.5.1. West-Thai Encounter(s) and Locating the Farang Teacher

As previously noted, I draw on Ahmed's (2000) concept of strange encounters to explain the relationship between the West and Thailand in terms of postcoloniality. While I provide more detail in Chapter 4, the foundation of West-Thai encounter(s) is the notion that "… contemporary modes of proximity reopen prior histories of encounter." (Ahmed, 2000, p. 13). What this means then, is that the relationship between the West and Thailand is at once established and ongoing, traversing both macro, geopolitical encounters and micro, embodied encounters across time and space. In further keeping with Ahmed's (2000) contention that "Encounters involve the

production of meaning as a form of sociality." (p. 15) I argue that, within the context of English language teaching, West-Thai encounter(s) represent a site through which the *farang* teacher can emerge.

While I elaborate more fully on the concept of the *farang* teacher in Chapter 3, for now I want to reiterate that this figure represents the localization of the ideal English language teacher, whereby both the broader forces of colonial discourses and the specificities of Thai Occidentalism collide to provide the conditions necessary for its emergence. Although I maintain that the site of embodied encounter is perhaps the most insightful in terms of understanding how this figure comes to be, I rely on a combination of both textual analysis and personal reflection to untangle its complexities. Ultimately, I turn to both of these sources with the question: Where and how does the *farang* teacher emerge within and across West-Thai encounter(s)? Moreover, in Chapter 7, I turn specifically to the level of embodied encounter to ask: How might the cultural meanings surrounding the *farang* teacher manifest within the face-to-face encounters facilitated by English language teaching?

1.5.2. Text as Encounter

Following both Ahmed's (2000) and Said's (1978/2003) approach to their own respective subjects, I look to texts as sites through which to explore the emergence of the *farang* teacher. In doing so, I conceptualize certain texts as sites of West-Thai encounter(s) that demonstrate the extent to which "such encounters are mediated and partial." (p. 15). In the interest of drawing a throughline from the colonial period to now, I have chosen to build my research around two case studies. The first case is structured around a multimodal discourse analysis of 1956's *The King and I,* which serves as a textual bridge between the reign of King Mongkut and the early Cold War period. The second case reflects my interest in contemporary TEFL practice, and similarly

consists of a multimodal discourse analysis of the website gooverseas.com. In both instances I seek to tease out how these texts point to the emergence of the *farang* teacher as a mediating and influential force within the context of West-Thai encounter(s).

1.5.3. Embodied Encounter

As noted above, I understand West-Thai encounter(s) to encompass those encounters between embodied Others. Moreover, I understand contemporary TEFL practice to be a medium through which such encounters are facilitated. With that in mind, I conclude my research by reinterpreting and reimagining my textual findings through the lens of my own experience, asking how the meanings produced and upheld by these key Western-produced texts find expression in embodied encounters. I also consider the embodied encounter as a site of resistance where we can begin to make new meanings and challenge oppressive constructs. On that note, I now turn to a summary of how the following thesis is structured.

1.6. Thesis Structure

This thesis is composed of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. Combined, Chapters 2 and 3 function as a 'literature review'. In Chapter 2, I seek to situate ELT within a (post)colonial context, drawing on the field of critical applied linguistics to explain further the field's colonial underpinnings and conceptualize the ideal English language teacher. Chapter 3, then, provides more specificity, as it is here I consider more fully Thailand's encounters both with Western powers broadly speaking and the English language more specifically, particularly as they pertain to the construction of the *farang* teacher. In Chapter 4 I provide more detail regarding my overarching methodology in terms of strange encounters and social semiotics, as well as my case study approach and choice of Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) as a method of inquiry. Chapters 5 and 6 constitute my two textual case

studies, the first built around an analysis of the “March of the Siamese Children” from 1956’s *The King and I*, and the second around an analysis of several webpages from gooverseas.com, a top-ranked Google result and travel website. In Chapter 7, I move to consider the findings of my textual analyses through the lens of my own experience, interrogating the process of relocating and becoming *farang* as well as providing some brief musings about the pedagogical possibilities inspired by my work. Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude with a summary and discussion of my findings and some recommendations for further research.

1.7. Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter I have established the rationale and context of the research contained herein. Starting first with a personal vignette of my arrival in Thailand as an English teacher, I have further offered a brief summary of English as a global phenomenon, starting with the early days of the language’s genesis in the British Isles through both its colonial and mid-century expansions all the way to today, with its status as a sought-after international language and commodity under global capitalism. I then briefly considered the development and status of English in Thailand through the lens of three historical periods: the colonial period, the Cold War, and the earlier days of neoliberal globalization to now. With this established I then moved to a discussion of TESOL and postcoloniality, offering a brief summary of the ideal English language teacher as an outcome of colonial forces before reflecting on the parallel discourses of Orientalism and Occidentalism as they relate to English in Thailand. I concluded this section with a partial synthesis of Sara Ahmed’s (2000) concept of strange encounters and Gunther Kress’s (2010) social semiotics, thus introducing one aspect of the theoretical framework underlying my research. From there I turned to a discussion of methodology, communicating my intent to articulate a cultural politics of teaching English in Thailand through the location of the

farang teacher within and across West-Thai encounter(s). I further explained how I do this, describing my approach to both textual analysis and the use of embodied encounter as an interpretive lens before offering a summary of the succeeding chapters.

2. Situating English Language Teaching in a (Post)colonial World: Theorizing a Critique of Global TESOL Practice

In this chapter I offer an overview of trends in the field of applied linguistics relevant to a critical exploration of contemporary TESOL practice. I consider first a field-altering epistemological debate of the mid-1980s/early-1990s, since popularized as a conflict between 'deficit' and 'liberation' approaches to English linguistics (see Kachru, 1991; Quirk, 1990; Quirk & Widdowson, 1985). I then consider two major publications foundational to critical applied linguistics. I conclude this chapter with a synthesis of more recent critical work exploring two intertwining ideologies – native-speakerism and raciolinguistic essentialism – and how they contribute to the construction of an imagined 'ideal' English language teacher. This ideal ultimately serves as the foundation for my own conceptualization of the *farang* teacher, which I articulate fully in the next chapter. Prior to all of this, however, I provide a brief primer on the critical applied linguistics movement.

2.1. On Critical Applied Linguistics

Whereas the field of linguistics positions itself as the scientific study of language, applied linguistics is concerned with language as it functions in the real-world, focusing on questions of language policy, second language acquisition, multilingualism, and other domains of social life in which language is a central issue. ELT, and TESOL (including both TEFL and TESL), more specifically, fall under the scope of applied linguistics. Critical applied linguistics refers to a movement within applied linguistics that emerged in the late-1980s and early-1990s which sought to question the epistemological foundations of mainstream applied linguistics and problematize its central assumptions.

Despite mid-century critical turns in the humanities and social sciences, applied linguistics was somewhat slow to embrace critical perspectives, with major publications emerging nearly a decade later than critical titles in the linguistics and education fields (Mirhosseini, 2018, p. 22). This echoes the observation of foundational scholar Alistair Pennycook (1990) who noted that "… applied linguistics appears to be continuing untroubled with its firm beliefs in the basic tenets of European Enlightenment thought and its two subsequent spinoffs, positivism and structuralism." (p. 10) and ultimately urged that the field "cease to operate within modes of intellectual inquiry that are asocial, apolitical or ahistorical." (p. 25). Central to this movement were questions about the growing global nature of English. While critical conversations started among major ELT stakeholders in the mid-1980s (see Quirk & Widdowson, 1985), they were largely liberal in their orientation, focused more so on critiquing conservative beliefs about the ownership of English and language standards (i.e., Kachru, 1985) than the legitimacy of English proliferation. It wasn't until the major publications of the 1990s (i.e., Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994; 1998; Phillipson, 1992) that linguistic injustices connected to legacies of British colonialism and ongoing American imperialism fully entered the consciousness of the applied linguistics and TESOL fields.

Today, Canagarajah (2016) notes that, at least within the context of TESOL Quarterly[2], the past 50 years have seen a general shift in research focus from "knowledge or skills to identities, beliefs, and ideologies" (p. 31). That said, Mirhosseini (2018) contends that

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[2] TESOL Quarterly is the flagship professional and academic journal of TESOL International, a major professional association of TESOL practitioners.

> … although the frequency of the appearance of sociopolitical considerations of ideological issues... may arguably be on the rise, the relative quantity of such appearances is far from proportionate to the sheer volume of mainstream publications in the field. (p. 21).

What is clear, however, is that there is still critical work to be done within the field of applied linguistics, as Pennycook's (2022) recent retrospective elucidates:

> The field changes over time: The political context is never the same, matters of concern can be different, ideas and concepts get stale and become watered down, new ideas spring up. Critical work has to be responsive to a changing world, and a great deal has happened in the last twenty to thirty years. (Pennycook, 2022, p. 1).

With that in mind, the following pages provide context for my own research which I offer as a contribution to the growing body of critical thought on TESOL practice.

2.2. Confronting the Global Nature of English in the 20th Century

As discussed in my introductory chapter, while the English language started reaching far beyond the British Isles during the third wave of colonial expansion (approximately 1870 to 1914), it wasn't until the post-WWII period of decolonization that the role of English in the world demanded grappling with. By the late-20th century, both the British Council and TESOL International had positioned themselves as authorities on ELT and it was within these spaces that debate over how to address the global nature of English ensued. Central to these debates were questions about language standards, the emergence of English varieties beyond the traditional English-speaking world, and ELT practice at the frontiers of a globalizing world. Starting in the 1980s, these concerns proved divisive among TESOL-oriented linguists, and saw the establishment of world Englishes (WE) as a field of inquiry at odds with more conservative positions on English ownership and standards. While a necessary departure from the Eurocentric

underpinnings of mainstream thought in ELT, WE fell short of accusations of 'liberation linguistics' (see Quirk, 1990; Kachru, 1991) in the eyes of scholars who embraced the critical turn in the broader social sciences and humanities. While departing from one another paradigmatically, both Robert Phillipson (1992) and Alastair Pennycook (1994; 1998) laid the groundwork for further work problematizing the global spread of English within Western applied linguistics.

2.2.1. World Englishes and the Three Circles Model

According to Joshi (2013), "world Englishes" emerged as a named concept in 1978 through "loud discussions" aimed at scrutinizing "...notions of regional varieties of English across the globe." (p. 11). These discussions peaked in the late-1980s/early-1990s, with the founding of both the International Committee of the Study of World Englishes (ICWE) in 1988, and the International Association for World Englishes (IAWE) in 1992 (p. 11). According to the IAWE, these developments were instrumental in producing a "number of early publications that established world Englishes (WE) as a distinct sub-branch of linguistics." (IAWE, 2022). As a sub-branch of linguistics, WE research involves the identification, analysis, and codification of distinct, indigenized Englishes around the globe. Theoretically speaking, the work of Indian American linguist Braj Kachru has been foundational to the field. Rooted in an understanding of colonialism as the driving force behind English spread, Kachru (1985) proposed that this spread ought to be understood in terms of three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, Outer (or Extended) Circle, and Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle refers to the "traditional bases of English" (the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), while the Outer Circle refers to those regions subject to "the earlier phases of the spread of English and its institutionalization in non-native contexts." (Kachru, 1985, p. 12). Ultimately,

> These regions have gone through extended periods of colonization, essentially by the users of the Inner Circle varieties. The linguistic and cultural effects of such colonization are now a part of their histories, and these effects, both good and bad, cannot be wished away." (Kachru, 1985, p. 12).

Finally, the Expanding Circle requires "a recognition of the fact that English is an international language and that it has already won the race in this respect with linguistic rivals..." (Kachru, 1985, p.13). This circle includes regions that do not necessarily have a history of colonization by the Inner Circle but have been adopting English to varying degrees due to its pre-eminence as an international language. In general, these circles more-or-less align with the popular distinction made within TESOL between ESL and EFL. This distinction reflects an orientational difference in teaching that recognizes the role of English as a 'second' language in the Outer Circle and of English as a 'foreign' language in the Expanding Circle.

2.2.1.1. Language Standards and 'Liberation' Linguistics. It was Kachru's (1985) conviction that Outer Circle Englishes constitute "norm-developing" varieties (p. 17), which proved controversial within the pedagogical imagination of mainstream ELT. The idea that Outer Circle language norms should be considered legitimate output targets for language learners was met with particularly sharp criticism from British linguist Randolph Quirk. Contributing to the same 1984 conference as Kachru (1985) (held in celebration of the British Council's 50th anniversary), Quirk (1985) declared:

> … I hold that the stated or implied orthodoxy of regarding the term 'standard' as fit only for quotation marks is a trahison des clercs. It seems likely, indeed, that the existence of standards (in moral and sexual behaviour, in dress, in taste generally) is an endemic feature of our mortal condition and that people feel alienated and disoriented if a standard seems to be missing in any

> of these areas. Certainly, ordinary folk with their ordinary common sense have gone on knowing that there are standards in language, and they have gone on crying out to be taught them. (Quirk, 1985, p. 6).

The ideological differences between Quirk's and Kachru's ideas have been framed as a debate between 'liberation' and 'deficit' linguistics (Pennycook, 1994, p. 11), the substance of which can be found in Quirk's (1990) lament of WE's impact on ELT in English Today, and Kachru's (1991) response in the same publication. Quirk (1990) considered the in-class legitimation of students' deviations from prestigious 'standard' forms to be a consequence of the excesses of democratic idealism and a pedagogy built on "stale leftovers from the 1960s" (p. 7). He argued that:

> It is neither liberal nor liberating to permit learners to settle for lower standards than the best, and it is a travesty of liberalism to tolerate low standards which will lock the least fortunate into the least rewarding careers (p. 9).

In rebuttal, Kachru (1991) took aim at Quirk's positioning of WE as uniquely ideological, noting that

> Quirk does not use any ideological term for his concerns; that does not, however, mean that his position cannot be related to an ideological position appropriate to his concerns... It seems to me that Quirk's position is not much different from what in another context has been termed deficit linguistics. (p. 4).

He goes on to argue that Quirk's deficit linguistics is predicated on a perception of English spread "from the perspective of monolingual societies" and a negation of the "linguistic, sociolinguistic, educational, and pragmatic realities" of multilingual societies (p. 6).

Overall, the debate between liberation and deficit linguistics reflects the broader conventions of debates between conservative and liberal perspectives on a host of social issues. It is not surprising, then, that scholars more engaged with critical theory and the cultural turn of the humanities and social sciences sought to move beyond WEs acknowledgment of multiple Englishes by problematizing WEs naturalization of the linguistic consequences of colonialism.

2.2.2. Linguistic Imperialism: How English Dominates

"To put things more metaphorically, whereas once Britannia ruled the waves, now it is English which rules them." (Phillipson, 1992, p. 2).

In his 1992 work *Linguistic Imperialism*, Robert Phillipson, describes Braj Kachru as "A scholar who is generally extremely sober and generous in his views..." (p. 13). In general, this description characterizes well the differences in the scholars' orientations. While Kachru presented a potentially just path forward for English in its indigenized forms, Phillipson was more critical. Interested in "...why English has become the dominant international language and how language pedagogy has contributed to its hegemony" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 4), he puts forth the theory of "linguistic imperialism" as "... a particular theory for analysing relations between dominant and dominated cultures, and specifically the way English language learning has been promoted." (p. 15). Rather than appealing to Kachru's three circles, Phillipson (1992) instead explains the proliferation of English through the core-periphery metaphor. He sees the Inner Circle as the *core* and locates at the periphery both those countries that "require English as an international link language" and on whom "English was imposed in colonial times" and still "serves a range of intranational purposes." (p. 17). Therefore, "...inspired by the use of these terms in analyses of the relationship between the dominant rich countries and dominated poor

ones." (p. 17), the core-periphery metaphor in this context illustrates the dependency of the periphery on the core for language norms.

Drawing on Galtung's (1980) imperialism theory, which identifies six "mutually interlocking types of imperialism: *economic, political, military, communicative, cultural, and social"* (Galtung, 1980, p. 128, as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 52) through which the "Centre" exploits and dominates the "Periphery", he posits linguistic imperialism as a "distinct type of imperialism" that "permeates all the types of imperialism" since language is inseparable from social structures (p. 53). Ultimately, through the lens of English linguistic imperialism, "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages." (p. 47). Concerned primarily with language education, he sees the legitimation of this form of imperialism as occurring through "anglocentricity" and "professionalism". Anglocentricity "takes the forms and functions of English, and the promise of what English represents or can lead to, as the norm by which all language activity or use should be measured" (p. 48) while professionalism sees "methods, techniques, and procedures followed in ELT... as sufficient for understanding and analysing language learning." (p. 48). At its core, linguistic imperialism is an emanation of "linguicism", a form of prejudice akin to racism or sexism, in which one language is seen as superior, thus justifying inequalities according to linguistic heritage (p. 47). Overall, Phillipson moves beyond a concern for the marginalisation of non-standard/indigenized Englishes and instead focuses on how English as a dominant language is entangled with, and exists in service to, global economic and political inequalities. For him:

> The working definition of English linguistic imperialism attempts to capture the way one language dominates others, with anglocentricity and professionalism as the central ELT

mechanisms operating within a structure in which unequal power and resource allocation is effected and legitimated. (Phillipson, 1992, p. 54).

2.2.3. English as an International Language: Unravelling the Complexities of a Discourse

"Of course, there is talk of 'English as an international language' and of local varieties of English but much of this seems to have served as a smoke screen that has obscured the underlying political, cultural and ethical questions around English and English language teaching." (Pennycook, 1994, p. 5).

A central figure in critical applied linguistics, Alastair Pennycook's first major publication, *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, calls into question the assumption that the spread of English has been and continues to be "natural, neutral and beneficial" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 9). Reflecting on the mainstream of applied linguistics at the time, he concludes that "Sorely lacking from the predominate paradigm of investigation into English as an international language is a broad range of social, historical, cultural and political relationships..." (p. 12). While he acknowledges Phillipson's (1992) work on linguistic imperialism, and credits him with demonstrating "... the limitations of arguments that suggest that the current position of English in the world is an accidental or natural result of world forces." (Pennycook, 1994, p. 2), he departs from him paradigmatically. Interested less in explaining the global spread of English than with coming to terms with "the difficulties in understanding its diverse implications" (p. 24), he relies on a Foucauldian conception of discourse for his analytical framework (p. 32). Defining discourses as "ways of organizing meaning that are both reflected and produced in our uses of language and the formation of our subjectivities." (p. 32), he goes on to articulate the discursive contours of EIL.

While equally critical of colonial, imperial, and nationalistic forces, Pennycook's (1994) account of EIL resists a singular, materialist explanation for the global dominance of English and instead traces its early origins to the multifaceted functions of English in particular colonial cultural contexts (p. 103). He goes on to interrogate how EIL relies on Western linguistics and applied linguistics as language disciplining forces (p. 142) and the ways in which it has become assimilated to the forces and discourses of development and global capitalism (p. 165). Overall, he argues that "a key tenet of the discourse of EIL" is the possibility of teaching "just the language" in a way that is neutral and divorced from its cultural contexts (p. 295), something which he demonstrates to be false. Committed to avoiding a deterministic view, however, Pennycook (1994) concludes with the possibility of a critical pedagogy rooted in human agency and "an understanding of politics as infused into everyday life as we struggle to make meanings for ourselves and others." (p. 302).

2.2.4. Moving Toward Contemporary Concerns

In this section I have summarized three different streams of thought that emerged out of the need to grapple with the proliferation of English throughout the world. These ideas have since proven foundational to more contemporary theorizing about the various social, political, economic, and cultural assumptions underlying ELT. One area of inquiry central to my own research has to do with language ideologies, defined by Mirhosseini (2018) as "the most fundamental beliefs about language" that can "act to direct and shape language policies, language attitudes, language use, and, of course, language teaching and learning..." (p. 21). It is to that subject that I now turn.

2.3. Language Ideologies and Imagining the English Language Teacher

"Hegemonic ideas tend to be internalized by the dominated, even though they are not objectively in their interest." (Phillipson, 1992, p. 8)

Guided by Mirhosseini's (2018) definition quoted above, I have chosen to outline two language ideologies – native-speakerism and raciolinguistic essentialism – that contribute to the construction of an imagined 'ideal' English language teacher. It is this ideal that serves as the broad foundation for the figure that I refer to as the *farang* teacher. While I have already offered a preliminary definition of the term *farang* in section 1.2 of my introductory chapter and further expand on the concept of the *farang* teacher in Chapter 3, below I review some of the major literature on both native-speakerism and raciolinguistic essentialism and discuss how these ideologies intertwine to produce a more general idealized image of who should teach English and why.

2.3.1. Native-Speakerism

The ideology of native-speakerism starts with the assumption that there exists 'native speakers' of any given language. As Mahboob (2010) notes, the concept of the 'native speaker' comes from theoretical and descriptive linguistics, wherein "linguists are engaged in getting data from native speakers of a particular language in order to write a description (grammar) of that language" (p. 3). Liu (2021) more specifically traces this to the "Chomskyan 'ideal native speaker', who is asserted to possess complete and sound knowledge of his/her mother tongue and can therefore serve as a reliable or authoritative source of the language" (Liu, 2021, p. 99 citing Chomsky, 1965). It was the adoption, however, of the native speaker concept into applied linguistics, and more specifically TESOL, as a bastion of English language norms that led to its ideological entrenchment in English language pedagogy.

Central to this entrenchment is the not-so-straightforward notion of language ownership. Can a language be owned? And if so, what are the rights of ownership? In the context of ELT, these questions harken back to the tensions surrounding language standards discussed above, since ownership arguably suggests a right to define and control terms of use. In a well-known convention address, Widdowson (1994) raised this question of English ownership and its relationship to standards, and demonstrated how the common-sense notion that English is owned by the English (despite its global uptake) cannot hold given the dynamic nature of language in practice:

> Where are we then? When we consider the question of standard English what we find, in effect is double standards. The very idea of a standard implies stability, and this can only be fixed in reference to the past. But language is of its nature unstable. It is essentially protean in nature, adapting its shape to suit changing circumstances. It would otherwise lose its vitality and its communicative and communal value. (Widdowson, 1994, p. 384).

Given this now mainstream account of the dynamism of language in use, it might be assumed that the notion of an ideal native speaker would have been determined impracticable in terms of learning and teaching. Yet, the native speaker (NS) fallacy, as Phillipson (1992) coins it, is alarmingly persistent, as evidenced, for example, in analyses of job advertisements (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010). The NS fallacy holds that "the ideal teacher [of English] is a native speaker, somebody with native speaker proficiency in English who can serve as a model for the pupils." (Phillipson, 1992, p. 193). However, the valorization of the native English speaker (NES) in TESOL goes beyond mere linguistic concerns.

The NS fallacy has been expanded on considerably in TESOL research, particularly through the work of Adrian Holliday (i.e. 2006; 2015) who coined the phrase "native-

speakerism" as an ideology "… characterized by the belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2005, as cited in Holliday, 2006, p. 385). For Holliday and others, native-speakerism is active when reference to an individual's relationship to the English language works to obfuscate a cultural chauvinism that conflates 'native' speaking with 'Western' cultural values (such as individualism, autonomy, critical thought, etc.) viewed as superior to those of non-Western, 'collectivist' cultures (see Holliday & Aboshiha, 2009; Holliday, 2015; Liu, 2021). This essentialist belief functions to otherize (see Said, 1978/2003) non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers and learners and to justify the imposition of NES values and pedagogy across diverse ELT contexts (Holliday, 2015; Liu, 2021). Furthermore, as Holliday and Aboshiha (2009) argue, the cultural binarism – individualism vs. collectivism – underlying native-speakerism can be seen as neoracist, that is marked by a "… form of racism which is implicit in but hidden by supposedly neutral and innocent talk of cultural difference." (Holliday, 2015, p. 13). However, it can be argued that native-speakerism does not only function as a neoracist ideology but is ultimately tangled up with racism broadly speaking, operating within global discourses of White supremacy and coloniality.

2.3.2. Raciolinguistic Essentialism

In an oft-cited study within TESOL literature examining race, Rubin (1992), having conducted experimental research exploring students' perceptions of NES TAs, found that:

> … when they were faced with an ethnically Asian instructor, participants responded in the direction one would expect had they been listening to nonstandard speech. Evidence from the discriminant analysis suggests that participants stereotypically attributed accent differences –

> differences that did not exist in truth – to the instructors' speech. Yet more serious, listening comprehension appeared to be undermined simply by identifying (visually) the instructor as Asian. (Rubin, 1992, p. 519).

This foundational study has since been built on with more recent theorizing regarding the racialization of the NNES. Writing in a US context, Shuck (2006) contends that discourse on English standards and variety are "*racialized* – that is, expressed with indirect or direct reference to racial categories or using rhetorical patterns most often associated with discussions of race and ethnicity." (pp. 259-260). She substantiates this claim with participant data, demonstrating how White, NES discursively mark NNES through strategies such as "Creating iconic associations between language, nationality, or race that are so tightly linked that one category of social differentiation comes to stand in for another." (p. 263). This connection between race and language has been further theorized by Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa.

Also researching in a US context, Flores and Rosa (2015) argue that English students who do not conform to nationalist monolingual expectations are subject to raciolinguistic ideologies that stigmatize their speech regardless of their proximity to Standard English. Shifting focus from the speaking subject to "listening subjects" (borrowed from Inoue, 2006), the authors claim that "… the white listening subject often continues to hear linguistic markedness and deviancy regardless of how well language-minoritized students model themselves after the white speaking subject." (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 152). In a later article they expand on this thinking, positing a raciolinguistic perspective rooted in an analysis of "… the continued rearticulation of colonial distinctions between Europeanness and non-Europeanness – and, by extension, whiteness and non-whiteness." (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 622). In a recent introduction to a special issue of *Language, Culture and Curriculum* devoted to the racialized teaching of English

in Asian contexts, Kubota (2022) helpfully uses the phrase “raciolinguistic essentialism” to describe the above-noted phenomenon, defining it as “a fixed idea indicating which racial group is deemed legitimate speakers of a language.” (p. 2). The combination of native-speakerism, with its valorization of NESTs (native English-speaking teachers), and raciolinguistic essentialism, in its racialization of linguistic legitimacy, ultimately provides the materials by which the English language teacher becomes problematically idealized, with real world consequences.

2.3.3. The Ideal English Language Teacher

In his identification of the NS fallacy, Phillipson (1992) demonstrates how idealization functions in mainstream ELT to naturalize the centrality of Inner Circle institutions and agents in English teaching and learning. Holliday’s work (i.e. 2006; 2015) further shows how the specific idealization of NESTs encompasses not only linguistic concerns but also cultural concerns defined by assumptions of Western superiority. When coupled with a raciolinguistic perspective (Rosa & Flores, 2017; Kubota, 2022), this idealization becomes even more concerning, making visible the contours of an ideal English language teacher whose ‘nativeness’ is found at the intersection of Whiteness and Western cultural performance. It is this teacher, located within a heavily commercialized global TESOL industry, that functions as both a medium for accessing a commodified English and a commodity in itself, a dynamic that has been shown to lead to discriminatory outcomes.

Various researchers have provided support for the idea that imaginings of this mythic ideal can manifest in prejudice and discrimination within the ELT field. For example, Rivers and Ross (2013) conclude that while idealization is quite complex, with students taking into consideration academic credentials, age, race, and speaking status, when all things are equal, Whiteness continues to be a deciding factor in students’ perceptions of desirability. In fact,

Comprendio and Savski (2020), note that participants in their study pointed to "idealised features of Caucasian's, such as 'white skin'. 'blonde hair' and 'blue eyes'" (p. 678) when explaining how they identify prestigious NESTs. This suggests that raciolinguistic essentialism, when coupled with native-speakerism, can lead not only to prejudice along implicit cultural lines but also to explicit forms of ethnic and racial discrimination. Such discrimination in recruitment and hiring practices has been substantiated through analyses of job advertisements (Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010) and research with educational stakeholders (Jindapitak, 2019; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020), a reality of inequity that Wright (2022) argues has become "more prominent in the era of globalisation strongly attached to its neoliberal principles that have authorised native-speakerism as legitimate discourse." (p. 2).

As mentioned previously, the idealization of White NESTs within an industry so intimately connected to neoliberal globalization becomes further entrenched via commodification, a process that "takes place whenever they [NESTs] are presented as part of the offer of educational institutions anywhere in the world, under the heading of 'native speaker', in order to attract customers." (Holliday, 2015, p. 15; see also Jindapitak, 2019). The commodification of idealized NESTs demonstrates the extent to which the field of ELT, from its colonial origins through to its subsumption by global capitalism, is a profoundly symbolic economy. Multiple authors have drawn on the work of Bourdieu (i.e. 1986) to explain how NESTs possess symbolic capital that is unavailable to those whose race, speaking status, and/or national origin exist beyond the ideal (see Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020; Savski & Comprendio, 2022; Wright, 2022). Wright (2022) posits that the field of ELT is ultimately a "terrain for struggle and contestation in which teachers compete for their professional legitimacy" wherein "the privileged status of a native English speaker (NS)

guarantees native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) unmistakeable recognition as ideal language educators, often regardless of their academic credentials" (pp. 1-2). It is this dynamic then, that I take up more fully in the next chapter in which I offer a full articulation of the idealized *farang* teacher in context.

2.4. Chapter Summary

I conclude this chapter having briefly outlined three theories relevant to a critical exploration of TESOL and having provided a broad consideration of two language ideologies foundational to how I have conceptualized the *farang* teacher. I now turn to a consideration of the cultural and sociohistorical specifics of Thailand, how they further inform my understanding of the *farang* teacher, and the dynamics of commodification and discrimination within this context.

3. Locating ELT in Thailand: Past and Present

The purpose of the present chapter is to locate Thailand within a critical history of English spread and teaching, and to consider the role of this history in how the 'ideal' English language teacher takes shape in the Thai context. As noted in my introductory chapter, this task necessitates a postcolonial lens, one which I will expand on below and in Chapter 4. Simply speaking, applying a postcolonial lens involves conceptualizing Thailand through its relationship with European colonialism and identifying the cultural discourses that extend from this relationship. I then draw on these discourses to articulate the *farang* teacher as a situated manifestation of the ideal language teacher.

I start by outlining the geopolitical position of Thailand/Siam within 19th century Southeast Asia and considering the implications of this position as it relates to the introduction of Western education to the nation and the uptake of English as a symbolic form. From there I move toward more contemporary concerns, looking at the politics of English proficiency within the context of neoliberal globalization and the localization of such forces within Southeast Asia, ultimately questioning Thailand's continued positioning of English as a 'foreign' language. Having determined that this positioning is out-of-touch with linguistic concerns of immediate relevance, I consider how it reflects a continued preoccupation with Western foreignness as a symbol of prestige and medium of both resistance and nationalism. I close by contextualizing the ideal language teacher within these dynamics.

3.1. Locating Thailand: Colonial Threats, Nationalist Aspirations

The Kingdom of Thailand is a Southeast Asian nation located on the Indochinese peninsula where it borders Myanmar and Laos to the north, Cambodia and Laos to the east, Malaysia to the south, and both the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and the Gulf of Thailand

(South China Sea, Western Pacific Ocean) to the west and south respectively. Having welcomed over 38 million non-resident tourists in 2018 alone (World Tourism Organization, 2020, p. 866), Thailand is largely known to the rest of the world as a sought-after tourist destination, something that has been increasingly capitalized on by the Thai government (see Theparat, 2019, September 19) and which seems to be resisting pandemic pressures (Bangkok Post, 2023, April 10). As Penny Van Esterik (2000/2020) observes:

> Everyone knows something about Thailand. The country is known to many as the home of a wonderful cuisine, great package tours, child prostitution, fabulous silk, fake Rolex watches and magnificent temples. We learn about the country through tourist advertising, business and educational exchanges, films and news reports; these fragments reinforce the country's seductive appeal. For Thailand does not permit distancing, but rather sucks us into a sensual work of exotic sights, sounds, tastes, and smells. (p. 3).

As I discuss further throughout the remaining chapters, this paradoxical image of Thailand highlights a nation conceived, in the Western imagination, through Orientalism, the "...corporate institution of dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it..." (Said, 1978/2003, p. 3). And yet, the first piece of Thai history that most first-time visitors will encounter is the claim that Thailand was never colonized. This claim is largely true: Thailand, or Siam, as the kingdom was referred to prior to 1939, never fell to direct colonial rule despite the fate of its neighbours. However, this does not mean that the country was able to resist the cultural impact of European colonialism.

In his influential publication, critical Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul (1994) explores how Siam was able to resist encroaching colonial powers, eventually consolidating

itself as a modern nation-state through the assimilation of Western geographical sciences and colonial governing tactics. Starting with the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868), titled Rama IV, Winichakul charts how Siamese conceptions of borders and boundaries shifted during the latter half of the 19th century as the kingdom faced various territorial disputes with the French and English. While Jory (2001) notes that, in the Thai imagination, King Mongkut has long been understood as "the first king to have successfully engaged with the colonial powers while maintaining Siam's independence…" and "the first 'modern' King." (p. 206), the epistemological shift toward European thinking required to maintain Siam's independence has profoundly shaped the development of Thailand as a nation-state. As Peter Jackson (2008) notes, the development of Siam into contemporary Thailand is best understood from the perspective of Siam having occupied a "semicolonial" position:

> While remaining politically independent, Siam/Thailand was subjected to international legal, economic and cultural pressures that placed it in colony-like relation to the imperial West, constituting a power-knowledge nexus amenable to some forms of postcolonial analysis. (p. 148).

Interestingly, as both Winichakul's (1994) and Jackson's (2008) work highlights, by resisting European colonialism through the assimilation of the logics underlying it, Siam legitimated itself through processes of internal colonialism whereby the ethnolinguistically diverse population within its newly defined borders was subjected to Siamese (now Central Thai) cultural and political dominance. A discursive strategy of this endeavor mimicked what Europeans had done in constructing the Orient. As Winichakul (2000) notes:

> In many ways, what the Siamese elite did was similar to the colonial construction of the Others; that is, they traveled, wrote ethnography, and organized exhibitions and museums as means to

> construct otherness. Unlike the colonial otherness, however, the Others of the Siamese elite included their own subjects, hence the Others within. (p. 534).

He further notes that these Others were constructed among two groups: the various ethnic groups of the mountainous border regions of Burma and Laos (*chaopa*) and the rural villagers (*chaobannok*). The people of what is now Northeastern Thailand, however, were identified as Lao (now "Isan"), and "For the Thai elite... were somewhere between the two kinds of Others." (p. 536).

Under the reign of King Vajiravudh (1910-1925), the vision of Siam as a nation had become clearer and Siamese nationalism took root. By 1932, nationalists staged a revolution to overthrow the absolute monarchy and, while military royalists were successful in a countercoup the following year, nationalism had cemented itself. By 1939, the concept of a singular Thai national identity was institutionalized via the Twelve Cultural Mandates which renamed the country Thailand and sought to define the meaning of Thai citizenship (Draper, 2019, p. 232). The Twelve Cultural Mandates formed one of the "cornerstones of 'Thaification', a process of creating the nation-state along ideological lines adapted from the West" (p. 232). The contemporary outcome of these developments is "a widespread assumption that there is such a thing as a common Thai nature or identity: *khwampenthai* (Thainess)." (Winichakul, 1994, p. 3). As Winichakul (1994) suggests, however, Thainess is not so much about what is Thai, but rather is a negative identification concerned with what it is not: "Once un-Thainess can be identified, its opposite, Thainess, is apparent." (p. 4). When considered through Thailand's historical relationship with European colonial powers, this binary of Thainess/un-Thainess can be rearticulated as a binary between Thainess/*Farang*ness, whereby Thai identity emerges through a complex negotiation of Western foreignness. It is to this subject that I now turn.

3.2. Coming to Terms With the "Ambiguous Allure of the West"

As mentioned in my introductory chapter, the word *farang* "emerges from a set of pan-Asian identification markers for the West, Western peoples, and Western-derived things" (Kitiarsa, 2010, p. 60). Broadly speaking, in the contemporary Thai context, it can be thought of as "a usually ill-defined... reference to otherness" of the Western variety (Winichakul, 1994, p. 5). In postcolonial treatments of Thai cultural history however, *farang* is identified as a Thai Occidentalist discourse. Taking as their starting point Said's Orientalism, the editors of the 2010 book *The Ambiguous Allure of the West*, seek to critically consider the reverse processes of Occidentalism as they are situated within the Thai context, in order to

> … recognize the fractured multiplicity of cultural and racial identities, features which pervade the construction of Thainess (*khwam-pen-Thai*) in the face of its encounters with and absorption of Westerness *(khwam-pen-farang*), and the ensuing *farang*-ization... of Thai identities. (Harrison & Jackson, 2010, p. 2).

This identification of *farang*-ization harkens back to Siam's strategy of resistance during the mid-19th century and is rooted in an understanding of postcolonial theories of cultural hybridization.

Writing on the processes by which Siam transformed from an ancient kingdom into the modern nation-state of Thailand during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Winichakul (2000) identifies the quest for *siwilai*, a Thai transliteration of the English "civilized", as a "transcultural process in which ideas and practices from Europe, via colonialism, had been transferred, localized, and hybridized in the Siamese setting." (p. 529). It is this discourse that Jackson (2008) analyzes in his account of hybridity within the context of Thai semicolonialism. Drawing on theories of hybridity championed by Garcia Canclini (1995; 2001) and Homi Bhabha (1994)

respectively, Jackson reflects on the multiple manifestations of cultural borrowing in Siam/Thailand, considering *siwilai* as both a discourse of domestic hegemonic rule by Siamese elites over internal Others and as a form of subaltern resistance to Western imperialism by that same class. He notes that this strategy for dealing with the intersection of domestic and foreign power was an established pattern for Siam prior to the rise of European imperial power in the region, as evidenced by histories of hybridization in relation to both Indianization and Sinicization. He observes:

> Selective appropriation of prestigious symbols of past and present great powers and the expression of local rule through a foreign idiom worked to affirm Thai monarch's claims to rule over the country's ethnically diverse populations... by conforming performatively to the symbolic and aesthetic norms of foreign power, thus rendering their exercise of power legible in terms of dominant contemporary idioms of rule. Siam/Thailand's rulers sought recognition from the superpower of the day of their right to govern their own domain. (Jackson, 2008, p. 156).

Once European colonial powers had established themselves as the regional "superpower of the day", Siam/Thailand saw "... the emergence of a new symbolic economy in which local prestige and authority were demonstrated by the conspicuous consumption of Western rather than Chinese cultural items" (p. 160). Central to this symbolic economy, however, is that "Siamese/Thai elites have sought to manage the extent of borrowing from the West" resulting in a "class struggle for control of the process of Westernization" (p. 164).

For Kitiarsa (2010), the "*farang*-ization of Thai identities" (Harrison & Jackson, 2010, p. p. 2) is reflected in this symbolic economy, which relies on the discursive construct of *farang* as its organizing logic. He argues that "objects labelled as *farang* often indicate not only their foreign origins and character but also the allure of *farang*-ness, which signifies some superior

qualities compared to indigenous Thai counterparts" and that "*farang* is often a cultural signifier of cosmopolitanism". (p. 61). Given Jackson's (2008) observation that control over Westernization has been central to Thai class politics, it stands to reason that the *farang* discourse is "a strategy of elitist Occidentalism" that "has constituted cultural practice in the service of local projects of power." (p. 60). It is this discourse that I see as foundational to the localization of the ideal English teacher within Thailand today. To understand how the ideal English language teacher becomes the *farang* teacher however, we must first consider how English has been framed as a *farang* language.

3.3. English in Thailand: The Language of *Farang*

In accordance with the strategy of hybridity-as-resistance described above, 19th-century Siam was marked by a growing interest among ruling elites in the study of European foreign languages, principally French and English. That English came to take priority over French is explained by Trakulkasemsuk (2018) as likely owing to the presence of American missionaries during the reigns of Rama IV and V, rather than a favoring of Britain over France by King Mongkut (p. 97). A pupil of American missionaries himself, Mongkut developed a high level of competency in English and saw the language as "an important tool for acquiring advanced knowledge that could help modernise the country and protect it from being colonised by the western powers." (p. 97). It is for this reason that he introduced English to his wives and children in the court, including heir to the throne, Prince Chulalongkorn. In doing so, King Mongkut set the stage for the development of formal English language education in Thailand.

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, English-medium education remained the domain of royalty, nobility, and urban elites (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018, p. 98). Furthermore, while English was a mandatory subject under the Common Modern Educational Curriculum of 1909,

the document which governed the newly formed mass education system (Draper, 2019, p. 232), Thai became the medium of instruction. At first this was by necessity, as there were more educated Thai-speakers than English-speakers available, however, owing to the growing ethnocentric nationalism of the 1930s, which came to equate "the Tai linguistic family with a greater pan-Thai race-based 'nation.'" (Draper, 2019, p. 230), Thai in schools took on a more ideological tenor (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018, p. 98). Ultimately, it wasn't until the Vietnam War (during which time the U.S. Air Force maintained several bases in Thailand from 1961 until they were asked to leave in 1975) that the English language and American culture took on major significance for middle- and lower-class Thais via increased exposure to "native speakers". While this significance did wane briefly after the withdrawal of American forces in 1975, the continued rise of American economic power around the globe throughout the late 20th century has meant that today Thais continue to value the ability to learn and speak English (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018, p. 99).

English, therefore, is an important feature of Thailand's language education policy. As alluded to above, the proliferation of neoliberal ideals of growth and free trade that have governed the rapid globalization of national economies since the 1980s has in many ways dictated that nations around the world conform to the demands of English as an international language. That said, in line with the strategies of Thai nationalism noted above, it stands to reason that Thailand's contemporary emphasis on English acquisition reflects a complex relationship with neoliberal globalization and the role of English within it.

3.3.1. Globalization, ASEAN, and English as a Lingua Franca

Drawing on Ahmed's (2000) call to consider "how and where colonialism persists after so-called decolonisation" (p. 13), I contend that the discourse of *farang* has influenced

Thailand's negotiation of globalization and that this is well illustrated by the ambiguity with which the state has approached English language education since the 1990s. Central to understanding the place of English in the Thai education system today is the discourse of EIL (Pennycook, 1994). As Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017) point out, in Thailand "there has been a consistent increase in the emphasis on English language education in policy, based on an underlying ideology that views English as the language of development and globalisation." (p. 28). That English is viewed as such is no surprise if we are to view globalization through Ahmed's (2000) call. That said, while globalization can be understood as one strand of the "historically interweaving Western-initiated projects of colonization, modernization, and globalization" against which Thai agents have sought to locate their "cultural and national selves" (Kitiarsa, 2010, p. 60), it presents more diffusely than previous iterations. One example of this is the increasing importance of regional associations of nations beyond the Western core. In the case of Thailand, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has become an important facet of how the country positions itself within a global economy. In recent years, a central concern regarding ASEAN participation has been levels of English proficiency among Thai citizens.

3.3.1.1. ASEAN. Established via the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 as a loosely structured association of five diverse member states (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), ASEAN has since grown to include Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia (Kirkpatrick, 2010, pp. 3-5). In the face of decolonization, the initial agreement was composed of five articles rooted in shared economic, social, cultural, and political interests. As of November 2009, however, ASEAN is an international legal entity governed by a Charter (Kirkpatrick, 2010, pp. 5-6). As Kirkpatrick (2010) notes, there is no reference to language in the Bangkok

Declaration and English "immediately became the one and only de facto working language" (p. 8). Based on an investigation of ASEAN documents and interviews with ASEAN personnel, Okudaira (1999) concludes that

> the recognition of the use of English as their only common language was already established among the five member countries at the time of ASEAN's foundation. Thus the use of English in the newly built regional organization was simply considered as a matter of course." (p. 96).

Okudaira (1999), later notes that

> The position of English in ASEAN is politically neutral. Each of the ASEAN member countries has provided its own "official language" on the national level. Starting from this common ground, it has been solidly recognized in ASEAN that English is an "international language," not belonging to any particular country or culture but belonging to the "international community." (p. 98).

Today, English has been enshrined as the Association's sole working language. Making no mention of other languages, Article 34 of the Chater simply states: "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2012/2009, p. 20).

3.3.1.2. Thai English Proficiency and the ASEAN Community. Aside from the official institutionalization of English as the language of ASEAN, 2009 also saw plans to roll out the "ASEAN Community" in the interest of increasing regional integration across political-security, economic, and sociocultural domains (Our Communities, Association of Southeast Asian Nations). By the end of its first phase of implementation in 2015, the ASEAN Community had generated public concern about Thailand's supposed low English proficiency. Central to this concern were reports from agencies engaged in what Savski (2021) coins "global audit culture". One particularly relevant report is international education company EF Education First's annual

English Proficiency Index (EPI), which uses quantitative data to rank the English proficiency of countries and sort them into qualitative categories (i.e. Very High, High, Low, Very Low, etc.). As Savski (2021) highlights, Thailand has consistently ranked at the bottom of these reports. Most recently, the country was labelled “Very Low”, surpassing only Laos among its ASEAN counterparts. (EF Education First, 2022).

As Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017), point out, such reports “have a significant impact on public perceptions of English proficiency in Thailand” (p. 36). This is further supported by Savski’s (2021) observation that “the assessments generated by global audit culture are not simply communicated to government actors and used in policy decisions, but rather become part of a broader public awareness through their recontextualization in media discourse” (p. 7). They are therefore important touchpoints for understanding the cultural politics of English in Thailand today. For example, these types of reports, and accompanying public concern, seem to motivate the Thai government to address perceived English proficiency issues. Some authors (i.e., Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Trakulkasemsuk, 2018) however, have pointed to the ideologies underlying Thai language education policies as a factor in poor proficiency. Central to this critique is the difference between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) framings of the language.

3.3.1.3. English as a Lingua Franca. The study of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) runs adjacent to, but differs from, the study of World Englishes. Whereas WE research is concerned with the identification and codification of English varieties around the world, with a particular focus on how English has become localized within Outer Circle countries, ELF research focuses on the use of English as a form of communication between non-mother tongue users, particularly those from different linguacultural backgrounds. In other words, while WE researchers seek to

better understand English primarily in its intranational function and the varieties that have been created, inherited, and put into practice by people of similar national backgrounds, ELF seeks to better understand English as an international language in practice. It has therefore been criticized by WE scholars for "promoting a monocentric view of English based on American or British norms rather than a pluricentric view based on local norms." (Jenkins, 2006, p. 160). An early advocate for bridging between ELF research and TESOL, Jenkins (2006) resists this notion, arguing that while ELF researchers "believe that anyone participating in international communication needs to... have in their linguistic repertoire for use... certain forms... that are widely used and widely intelligible across groups of English speakers", this does not necessitate a monolithic variety defined by native-speaker norms (p. 161). On the contrary, she highlights how some critics "continue to describe the expanding circle Englishes indiscriminately as EFL varieties, in other words, English learned as a foreign language for use in communication with native speakers" (p. 161) and demonstrates how this contributes to the legitimization of native-speakerism.

In the 17 years since Jenkins published her call for ELF in TESOL, other scholars have taken up similar projects. Kirkpatrick's (2010) analysis of ASEAN ELF, for example, has proven foundational for scholars critiquing English language education policy and pedagogy in Thailand (i.e. Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Huttayavilaiphan, 2021; Ploywattanawong & Trakulkasemsuk, 2014; Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). As Ploywattanawong and Trakulkasemsuk (2014) note:

> The ability to be flexible and adapt oneself to the features of ASEAN English is now considered as an important value. Education departments should consider this fact and prepare Thai students with more exposure and experience with the features of ASEAN ELF. The emphasis on native

> Standard English skills should be shifted to the more essential skill of non-native Standard English adjustability. (p. 154).

However, recent moves by the government to acquire more NESTs (Mala, 2020, September 12; Post Reporters, 2021, February 25) reflect a continued framing of English as a foreign language.

3.3.1.4. English as a Farang Language. As mentioned, over the past eight years or so, Thailand's urgency to enhance its citizens English proficiency has been linked to the rolling out of the ASEAN Community (i.e. Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Jindapitak, 2019; Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). And yet, despite fostering an incongruence between the goal of ASEAN participation and the framework used to achieve it, Thailand continues to position English as a foreign language rather than a lingua franca. To make matters worse, research suggests that upholding native-speakerism via the EFL model is harming Thai students and teachers alike, whether due to unequal access to human resources (Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Jindapitak, 2019) or the deleterious effects of native-speakerism on self-confidence, self-perceptions of linguistic competence, and professional agency (Huttayavilaiphan, 2021; Methitham, 2012). While it is not uncommon for policy to fall out of step with the practical realties of education, when we consider this phenomenon through the *farang* discourse, this incongruence takes on distinctive cultural meanings.

While research suggests that Thai university students maintain positive attitudes toward emerging Thai English (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021; McKenzie, Kitikanan & Booriboon, 2016), ambivalent if not promising attitudes toward ASEAN English features (Ploywattanawong & Trakulkasemsuk, 2014), and a recognition of the importance of exposure to world Englishes (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021), it should be noted that British and American Englishes, regardless of variety, have been more highly rated than Asian Englishes in terms of competence as a metric

of status (McKenzie, Kitikanan & Booriboon, 2016). Furthermore, teachers, parents, and students alike seem persuaded by the NS fallacy and the notion of NESTs as ideal language teachers (Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Jindipatak, 2019; Methitham, 2012). This aligns with Trakulkasemsuk's (2018) observation that, in terms of social status, the variety one speaks is as important as one's proficiency, and that this symbology maps onto the history of English proliferation in Thailand. She notes "The use of British English is normally associated with the traditional elite, American English with the modern upper middle class and non-native English with reasonable fluency with the lower middle class." (p. 100). Combined, this suggests that the English language exists within a symbolic economy sustained by the *farang* discourse.

This is further supported at the government level. In their analysis of Thai education policy, Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017) trace contemporary concerns about Thai English proficiency to the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which started in Thailand and prompted the National Education Act of 1999 (p. 33). They observe that the Act reflects an ambiguous relationship between the Thai state and increasing neoliberal globalization, in that it is explicitly oriented toward a return to Thai values and local knowledge but implicitly led to a renewed focus on English proficiency and the widespread uptake of Western pedagogies and methodologies that has persisted to date (p. 34; see also Holliday, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Liu, 2021; Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011 on methods). If then, we accept that the demands of neoliberal globalization reflect the recapitulation of preceding colonial and modernizing regimes, we can view this ambiguity as a reflection of selective *farang*-ization as a strategy of Thai nationalism.

In his analysis of the recontextualization of EPI reports in Thai media (mentioned in Section 3.3.1.2. above), Savski (2021) offers a strong account of the logics underlying such a

view, arguing that, despite at times aligning with the discourse and regime of neoliberal globalization, the political economy of Thailand has long reflected a nationalist-developmentalist ideology, a key tenet of which is "...a continuous pressure for collective enhancement, progress and competitiveness, supported by a rhetoric whose features are broadly in line with those of nationalism, in particular with constant appeals to a collective sense of belonging." (p. 14). Therefore, "... acquiring English is positioned under such a nationalist-developmentalist regime as part of each individual citizen's moral responsibility to contribute to the global competitiveness of the collective." (p. 14). Through this lens, maintaining an emphasis on native speaker norms allows Thailand to project regional superiority on the world stage through the performance of *farang*ness. Furthermore, at the local level, positioning English "... as a resource all citizens must acquire to the same high standard" within a context where "the political economic reality precludes equal access to English learning" helps to "legitimate the existing status quo in society" (p. 15). Under native-speakerism, a major factor in accessing 'high quality' English learning is access to NESTs, a subject on which I conclude this chapter.

3.4. Conceptualizing the *Farang* Teacher Within Thai ELT

The dynamics explored above – neoliberal globalization, audit culture, and ELF within ASEAN – have all contributed to the explosion of the Thai ELT industry. Furthermore, given Thailand's framing of English as a foreign language and the pre-eminence of native speaker norms, much of this industry is caught in the trappings of a corporatized, transnational "TEFL" industry. This industry has been shown to be intimately tied to travel and tourism (Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Stainton, 2018a, 2018b) – a relationship I explore further in Chapter 6 – with advertising largely aimed at White, Inner-circle, native speakers (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Methitham, 2012; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010). Interestingly, while TEFL advertising

(and government rhetoric) is aimed at this particular demographic, most foreign English teaching personnel in the country are Asian, with a large contingent of Filipinos (Perez-Amurao, 2019). As Hickey (2018) demonstrates, however, it is inaccurate to assume that the flow of other Asians into Thailand via English teaching is accounted for solely by traditional understandings of economic migration. This is because such migrants are motivated "...also by aspirational desires to become more cosmopolitan subjects" and "...have more in common with their counterparts from the Global North than has previously been accounted for in migration literature." (p. 740). Despite the attitudinal shifts among Thai students toward varietal English discussed in Section 3.3.1.3 above, however, the imbalance of NNESTs (non-native English speaking teachers) to NESTs in the Thai ELT job market has contributed to supply and demand dynamics that negatively impact teachers and students alike.

As a number of authors highlight (i.e. Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020), owing to the interlocking ideologies of native-speakerism and raciolinguistic essentialism discussed in Chapter 2, those teachers who are perceived as NESTs are disadvantaged in the symbolic economy of Thai ELT (see also Bourdieu, 1986). This disadvantage is reflected in job advertisements (Methitham, 2012; Ruecker & Ives, 2015), salary disparities (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020), the accessibility of sought-after positions and locations (Hickey, 2018), job security (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016), and school branding (Jindapitak 2019; Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020). It is clear that schools and other educational institutions are valuing teachers according to their understanding of what students, parents, and other consumers want: access to native English speakers. However, if NESTs are most often identified by their race (Comprendio & Savski, 2020, p. 678),

then it logically follows that schools draw on teachers “with white skin... to enhance their reputation.” (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016, p. 9). Given low supply and the high salaries typically needed to attract White teachers from inner-circle countries however, access is significantly determined by geography, class, and colour.

This inequality in access to coveted forms of English language education reflects the logic of the *farang* discourse, with the urban upper class maintaining a monopoly over *farang*ness (Jackson, 2008; Kitiarsa, 2010). This is further supported by Perez-Amurao and Sunanta’s (2020) observation that

> … for Thai students studying English and their parents, it is not just about gaining a linguistic tool for work and communication. The desire for a proximity to and consumption of the beautiful and alluring West underlies English language education in Thailand. (p. 114).

It is this desire that drives the inequality experienced by NNESTs in Thailand but also that experienced by students who may feel disadvantaged when they do not have access to NESTs. Based on interviews with Thai students, Comprendio and Savski (2020) note that some saw “their own schools as disadvantaged due to their lack of economic resources and resultant inability to secure prized forms of symbolic capital (i.e. ‘NS’ teachers).” (p. 681). Having drawn participants from three geographically distinct research sites, the authors further note how accessibility to NESTs occurs along “the rural-urban divide in Thai education” (p. 681). Interestingly, as Satienchayakorn and Grant (2022) highlight, this rural-urban divide is caught up in the local logics of internal othering discussed in Section 3.1 above (see Winichakul, 2000), which today involve a synthesis of classism, regionalism, nationalism, and colourism.

In Thailand, colourism is an ideology under which darker skin is associated with poorer agricultural and working classes, many members of whom exist at the margins of Thai society and maintain borderland identities informed by the country’s history with its formerly colonized

neighbours. While in practice, under Thaification, all Thai citizens are "Thai", those belonging to some 60+ distinct ethnolinguistic groups within the country (Draper, 2019, p. 231) may experience varying levels of social inequality at the intersection of colourism, classism, nationalism, and regionalism. This has meaningful implications for English education. For one, an increased emphasis on English proficiency as a duty of the Thai collective (Savski, 2021) can serve as an educational barrier to students for whom Standard Thai, the medium of instruction in the majority of Thai schools, is itself a second language (Draper, 2012). Furthermore, this local system of othering, when hybridized with the broader discourses of coloniality and White supremacy underlying native-speakerism, serves to cement the legitimacy of idealizing NESTs and organizes access to them along socioeconomic lines. English language education, as both a symbolic economy and real instrument of social stratification, therefore represents a golden ticket for many marginalized individuals. This is best summarized by Satienchayakorn, a Thai citizen of mixed Mon and Isan/Lao heritage, in the following autoethnographic reflection: "As a result of being labeled other, and not considered 100% Thai, my parents were determined to provide me with a good education, an English education." (Satienchayakorn & Grant, 2022, p. 45).

Overall, then, the *farang* teacher represents a localized version of the ideal language teacher. While *farang* on its face may be used to reference all foreign teaching personnel, discursively it is caught between colonial aesthetics/global White supremacy (Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020) and a local "hierarchy of Others" in which "... 'white Others', while consistently treated as outsides, are placed in a position of privilege over 'Others of colour' on the basis of their value on the local symbolic market." (Savski & Comprendio, 2022, p. 7). This hierarchy of Others is further entrenched at the local student level, wherein access to prestigious education is

largely determined at the intersection of colour, class, and citizenship. Ultimately, as Hickey (2018) notes, "... indigenous class-based colorism and global white supremacy do not operate in isolation from, but rather in relation to, one another (Persaud, 2005; Thomas, 2016)." (p. 742). When viewed through the identity shaping binary of Thainess/*farang*ness, the *farang* teacher emerges as a semiotically loaded figure within the cultural politics of ELT in Thailand, embodying the tensions of colonization, modernization, and globalization as they intersect with nationalism at both the global and local levels.

3.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided a brief history of the geopolitical realities facing 19th-century Siam and the impact that these realities have had on the formation of Thailand as a contemporary nation-state. As has been demonstrated, localized forms of the Western civilizing mission contributed to the development of mass schooling based on Western models and a considerable early focus on acquiring the English language. While a turn toward nationalism in the 1930s saw a diminished focus on English among the lower classes, English (alongside other Western fashions and practices) maintained its prestigious position among the elite. The *farang* discourse identified by Kitiarsa (2010) helps explain why, despite simultaneous anti-Western sentiment, those things labelled "*farang*" have come to function as markers of high class status within the country. Today, the English language continues to be labelled "*farang*" thanks to the upholding of EFL models within language education policy. One of the primary effects of this has been the continued use of native speaker norms in English language teaching and proficiency testing. Due to limited human resources and the consequent expense of learning with NESTs, many Thai people (especially "other Others") are denied access to the prestigious spoken varieties of American and British Standard Englishes. Furthermore, teachers, both local and

migrant alike, who do not conform to the White, Western, ‘native-speaking’ ideal face meaningful disparities in pay and employment opportunities since they are not sought after to the same extent as those who do. Here we see how the *farang* teacher, as a localized expression of the ideal English language teacher, begins to take shape. It is this figure that I seek to locate within and across West-Thai encounter(s). In the next chapter, I explain in detail what I mean by West-Thai encounter(s) and outline how I have set about exploring where and how the *farang* teacher emerges within this context.

4. Methodology: Toward a Cultural Politics of ELT in Thailand

Having explored the literature relevant to a critical analysis of ELT/TESOL, located ELT within the context of historical and contemporary Thailand through a post/semicolonial lens, and having conceptualized the figure of the *farang* teacher, the following chapters seek to answer two interlocking questions:

1) Where and how does the *farang* teacher emerge within and across West-Thai encounter(s)?

2) How might the cultural meanings surrounding the *farang* teacher manifest within face-to-face encounters facilitated by English language teaching?

In this chapter I delineate the overarching theoretical and methodological approach I have taken to answer these questions. Specifically, I draw on Ahmed's (2000) understanding of postcoloniality and phenomenology (Ahmed, 2006; 2007), combining it with a multimodal, social semiotic theory of communication. Following the lead of Pennycook (1994), my objective is to explore the cultural politics of ELT in Thailand through locating the figure of the *farang* teacher within and across West-Thai encounter(s). Overall, I am concerned "… not so much with trying to describe" the practice of ELT in Thailand as it involves the *farang* teacher or "trying to present a theory that can explain it" but attempt to "come to terms with the difficulties in understanding its diverse implications." (p. 24).

I start this chapter with an exploration of postcoloniality as defined by Ahmed (2000) and, adapting her theory of strange encounters, put forth my own theory of West-Thai encounter(s). I then turn to consider how these encounter(s) and the meanings they produce can be understood through the lens of social semiotics, looking predominately at the work of Gunther

Kress (2010). Finally, I move to a conversation of method, first articulating how I understand the methodological relationship between the analysis of texts and reflections on personal experience. From there, I move into a discussion of multimodality and in particular Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) (O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014; O'Halloran & Tan, 2022) before concluding with a consideration of how I intend to apply lived experience as an interpretive lens.

4.1. Postcoloniality and Conceptualizing West-Thai Encounter(s)

As explored in the previous chapter, despite claims to the contrary, the development of the modern Thai nation-state was shaped by European colonialism. Moreover, it is important to note that colonialism cannot be conceived of as a singular colonial period ushered to its end by declarations of "postcolonialism". Challenging this notion, scholar Sara Ahmed (2000) offers "postcoloniality" as an alternative. Postcoloniality is a dynamic framework through which to study ongoing cultural realities stemming from the history of European colonialism. Contending that postcoloniality is "impossible to grasp in the present" (p. 14), Ahmed uses the term to register an interest "in the complexity of the relationship between histories of colonialism and contemporary modes of encounter..." (p. 14), and notes that it "… is about rethinking how colonialism operated in different times in ways that permeate all aspects of social life, in the colonised and colonising nations." (p. 11). It is within this context that she posits her notion of "strange encounters" as the site wherein the figure of the stranger is produced.

Arguing that the figure of the stranger becomes produced, "not as that which we fail to recognize, but as that which we have already recognized as stranger." (p. 3), Ahmed (2000) proposes that we learn to recognize the stranger through a process of stranger fetishism whereby the stranger becomes abstracted from the relations of their production. These relations are found

in what she calls “strange encounters”, those points at which embodied Others come into proximity of one another, and at which social meanings and identities emerge through interaction. She states:

> I want to consider how the particular encounter both informs and is informed by the general: encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular – the face to face of this encounter – and the general – the framing of the encounter between broader relationships of power and antagonism. (Ahmed, 2000, p. 8).

She goes on to state that “The particular encounter hence always carries traces of those broader relationships.” (p. 8). Since the broader relationships she is referring to are those informed by postcoloniality, they are the forces which perpetuate the Orientalist binary of Self/Other as the primary mode of personal meaning making. While for Ahmed (2000) the Other takes the form of the stranger, I am interested in how the *farang* teacher reflects both Self and Other within the hybrid context of West-Thai encounter(s), defined below.

The concept of “strange encounters”, in its encompassing of both particular encounters between particular bodies and broader encounters between geopolitical and cultural powers, provides the context of my inquiry. Through her rejection of the postcolonial as a tangible, modern achievement, Ahmed (2000) bridges between the processes of historical European colonization and those of contemporary globalization, permitting for an understanding of the colonial as an ongoing mode of relations rather than a determining historical force. From this position she argues that “We need to ask how contemporary modes of proximity reopen prior histories of encounter.” (p. 13). In terms of my research then, the presence of foreign teachers in Thailand can be conceptualized as one such “contemporary mode of proximity”. With that in mind, I seek to propose “West-Thai encounter(s)” as the context in and across which I seek to

explore the emergence of the *farang* teacher. West-Thai encounter(s) can be defined at three levels:

1) as an historical encounter between European colonial powers and the pre-national kingdom of Siam.

2) as an ongoing encounter between the modern nation-state of Thailand and the geopolitical beneficiaries of European colonial legacy (the "West").

3) as an ongoing series of particular encounters between embodied "Westerners" and "Thais" as facilitated by ELT.

Returning to the content of Ahmed's strange encounters, her interest in "... how the particular encounter both informs and is informed by the general" (p. 8), sits at the intersection of communication and culture. And yet, while she notes that "Encounters involve the production of meaning as a form of sociality." (p. 15), she does not appeal to any established theories of communication to further explain this production. It is my position that social semiotics, particularly as articulated by Gunther Kress (2010), offers an account of how strange encounters, as sites of contentious social interaction, give birth to new social meanings.

4.2. Encounter(s) as Social Semiotic

Defined in its broadest sense as the study of signs and meaning making, much work in contemporary semiotics has been inspired by two key thinkers, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Interested in the systematic study of language, Saussure, largely known as a father of 20th-century linguistics, structured his ideas around a proposed distinction between language in its common use (*parole*) and language as a formal system (*langue*). For him, langue thus constituted the proper object of linguistic inquiry and, having been realized through

collective assent, could therefore be understood as a social institution (Saussure, 1986). Extending this concept beyond language proper however, he further coined the term 'semiology' to refer to "a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life." (p. 16). From Saussure's perspective, signs are meaning-carrying units composed of two inseparable parts: a signifier (in the case of speech, for example, the sound pattern) and a signified (the concept which the signifier signifies), held together in arbitrary relation. For Charles Sanders Peirce, a scientist, logician, and philosopher, semiotics stretched beyond the classification and explanation of sign systems in a linguistic sense, and instead was more concerned with the intersection of signs and human experience or phenomenology. A key feature of his thinking that differs from Saussure is the role of an interpretant, that is the meaning that is interpreted through the interaction between sign, object, and one who is prepared to interpret said sign by virtue of their experience (Peirce, 1894/1998).

Social semiotics, which I draw on here, first emerged along the linguistic tradition of Saussure and Roland Barthes, taking form in the work of British linguist Michael Halliday. In his 1978 publication *Language as Social Semiotic*, Halliday, ultimately breaks with the Saussurean tradition of distinguishing between language *(langue*) and society (*parole*), setting in motion developments in both linguistics and semiotics (Kress, 2010, p. 54). On the semiotic front, this break was further taken up by Hodge and Kress (1988/2007), who sought to challenge prevailing structural approaches to the study of semiotic systems:

> 'Mainstream semiotics' emphasizes structures and codes at the expense of functions and social uses of semiotic systems, the complex interrelations of semiotic systems in social practice, all of the factors which provide their motivation, their origins and destinations, their form and substance. It stresses system and product, rather than speakers and writers or other participants in

> semiotic activity as connected and interacting in a variety of ways in concrete social contexts. It attributes power to meaning, instead of meaning to power. It dissolves boundaries within the field of semiotics, but tacitly accepts an impenetrable wall cutting off semiosis from society, and semiotics from social and political thought. (Hodge & Kress, 1988/2007, pp. 1-2).

Kress has since become a leading theorist in the study of social semiotics, more recently summarizing the fundamental assumptions of a social semiotic account of communication in four axioms:

> 1) Signs are always newly made in social interaction.
>
> 2) Signs are motivated, not arbitrary relations of meaning and form.
>
> 3) The motivated relation of a form and a meaning is based on and arises out of the interest of makers of signs.
>
> 4) The forms/signifiers which are used in the making of signs are made in social interaction and become part of the semiotic resources of a culture.
>
> (Kress, 2010, pp. 54-55).

Given that Ahmed's theory of strange encounters acknowledges, and is arguably predicated on, the sociality of meaning production, I have chosen to adopt Kress' (2010) account of social semiotics as my overarching theory of communication. For Ahmed (2000), the figure of the stranger is produced through the relations of strange encounter, wherein bodies become marked as strangers according to attributes which come to signify their strangeness (see also Ahmed, 2006; 2007). I therefore argue that the production of such a figure, and, by extension any figure identified as "other", constitutes semiosis according to Kress' (2010) axioms. Encounter(s) then, can be conceived of as both sites of particular social interactions in which the

interests of participants drive the active production of new signs, and as the contexts in which the semiotic resources of a culture come into being and are thus made available for further interactions. Cast in this way, social semiotics provides a way by which to understand the interrelation of the general and the particular, discussed in Section 4.1 above. On that note, I now turn to a discussion of my methodological approach.

4.3. Research at the Intersection of Text and Experience

In terms of method and analysis, I have chosen to approach my research questions through an interrogation of both text and experience. To do so, I have sought to combine multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) with embodied interpretation, a framework which I will explain in detail below. My interest in adding a dimension of embodiment to the analysis and interpretation of texts stems from Ahmed's (2000) position that an "... emphasis on reading (texts) as a form of strange encounter allows us to understand how such encounters are always mediated and partial." (p. 15). As I note in the below paragraphs, there are limitations to what texts can truly illuminate when such texts are largely produced by one side of a perceived cultural binary. While contextual literature can allow us to read beyond the lines, starting from the specific embodiment of the researcher ensures the maintenance of critical reflexivity on the one hand and the possibility of novel insights on the other. Before turning to the details of this interlocking methodology however, I want to provide a structural map to the remaining chapters.

In terms of texts, I have chosen two, each with a dedicated chapter, meant to function as interrelated case studies. The first case, contained in Chapter 5, will explore the life of Anna Leonowens, principally through the 1956 film *The King and I*, with a more detailed analysis of the "March of the Siamese Children" scene. The second looks to explore contemporary online discourses related to teaching English in Thailand, focusing specifically on the strong connection

between travel/tourism under neoliberal globalization and TEFL as a facilitator of global mobility. Chapter 6 is therefore built around an analysis of a popular travel website, gooverseas.com. Drawing on Ahmed's (2000) approach to postcolonial historicity, wherein "colonialism is structural rather than incidental to any understanding of the constitution of both modernity and postmodernity" (p. 10), these case studies operate as two touchpoints in the history of West-Thai encounter(s) capable of illustrating the "complexity of the relationship between past and present" (p. 11). While both texts are products of "Western" media, approaching them as instances of strange encounter through the lens of social semiotics moves beyond the strict binarism offered by Orientalism, instead positioning them as windows into the specific and ongoing relations giving rise to their semiotic content. The case studies are iterative, with the second case borrowing from and building on findings from the first. This ultimately culminates in a chapter of personal reflection, which functions to re-interpret and synthesize case study findings as well as consider paths forward and beyond.

4.3.1. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

4.3.1.1. Multimodality. While I have described the above case studies as "texts" it is important to note that these are not texts in the traditional sense. The life of Anna Leonowens has been most famously mythologized through books, musicals, and films, while online TEFL discourse reflects not only written elements, but images, videos, layouts, navigation panes, etc. The concept of multimodality, then, is necessary for adequate analysis. In their reader on the topic, Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala (2017) propose multimodality as a research orientation that "seeks to address what happens when diverse communicative forms combine in the service of 'making meanings' – however, and wherever, this is done." (p. 9). Defining multimodality itself as "a way of characterising communicative situations (considered very broadly) which rely upon

combinations of different ‘forms’ of communication to be effective...” (p. 7), the authors argue that this in fact has “always been the norm” for communication (p. 15). While Bateman and colleagues offer a compelling transdisciplinary approach to multimodal research, my methodology aligns more closely to the multimodal tradition in social semiotics, particularly in the work of Gunther Kress (2010).

For Kress (2010), the relevance of multimodality to a social semiotic theory of communication can be seen in the fact that “… humans make signs in which form and meaning stand in a ‘motivated’ relation.” and that “These signs are made with very many different means, in very many different modes.” (p. 9). Kress (2010) does not however, offer a definitive definition of “mode”, instead referring to multimodal communication as consisting of “modal ensembles” based on “designs... selections and arrangements of [semiotic] resources” (p. 28). In this context, modes function as “meaning-laden means for making the meanings that we wish or need to make material and tangible” (p. 114). Perhaps more helpfully however, he considers mode through the work of Halliday, arguing that a “full theory of communication” must represent meaning across three strands: the ideational (that is “meanings about actions, states, events in the world”), the interpersonal (or “the social relations of those engaged in communication”) and the textual (it must have the capacity to form texts”) (p. 87). It is this theory of communication, known widely as Systemic-Functional Theory (SFT), that has led to advancements in the study of multimodal texts via discourse analysis.

4.3.1.2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis. Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is a research methodology that stems from the need for traditional approaches to discourse analysis to account for multimodality. In keeping with the social semiotic tradition, the approach to MDA that I will be drawing from traces back to Halliday, specifically via Systemic-Functional Theory (SFT), an

approach to the study of language most associated with his work. As O'Halloran and Tan (2022) observe, the strands of meaning Kress (2010) draws on above, are foundational to SFT, in which they are referred to as "metafunctions" (O'Halloran & Tan, 2022, p. 233). SFT has served as the basis for developments in discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis more specifically, because, as Fairclough (2003) notes "... it is profoundly concerned with the relationship between language and other elements and aspects of social life, and its approach to the linguistic analysis of texts is always oriented to the social character of texts." (p. 5). SFT then, sees "language and other semiotic resources" as "networks of interrelated systems of meanings which are organized according to the functions that these semiotic resources serve in social contexts (e.g. Halliday, 1978; Halliday and Hasan, 1985)" (O'Halloran and Tan, 2022, p. 233). Connected to this, MDA is "concerned with the meanings arising from the integration of language and other semiotic resources" (O'Halloran and Tan, 2022, p. 232). While numerous approaches to MDA exist, O'Halloran and Lim Fei's (2014) account of Systemic-Functional MDA (SF-MDA) is well-suited to the present task. They define SF-MDA as a sum of its parts:

> 1) **Systemic**: It views "social systems and 'modes of cultural behavior' as inter-related systems of meaning which construe social interactions and practices, and indeed society itself." (Halliday, 1985, p. 4, as cited in O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014, p. 138) and sees semiotic resources as organized in such a way as to "enable the resources to be used for different purposes" including along the lines of "stratification" and "constituency" (O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014, p. 138).
>
> 2) **Functional**: As an offshoot of SFT, it is concerned with "the functional meanings of semiotic resources in society" and aims to "conceptualize, analyze, and interpret meanings in different social contexts." (O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014, p. 139).

3) **Multimodal**: It is differentiated from language-centric approaches to discourse analysis in its recognition of the multimodal nature of discourse (O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014, pp. 140-1).

4) **Discourse**: It connects discourse and Discourse by acknowledging that "instances of multimodal semiotic choices function inter-semiotically in ways which ultimately create an answer to larger patterns of social context and culture" (O'Halloran, 2011, as cited in O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014, p. 141).

5) **Analysis**: It is a "bottom-up approach where theories and ideologies are extrapolated from the intensive analysis of actual texts." (O'Halloran & Lim Fei, 2014, p. 141).

While the specific models of analysis used for each case study will be described more fully in each respective chapter, SF-MDA serves as the overarching method for both. I will now turn to what I mean by embodied interpretation and its role in the present study.

4.3.2. Embodied Experience as Interpretive Lens

Taking seriously Edward Said's (1978/2003) claim that "... texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (p. 94), I am interested not only in how the two case studies above reflect or depart from the social ideologies embedded in the various cultural discourses explored in the previous chapters, but also in how these might manifest at the experiential level of individual encounter. With that in mind, my "discussion" chapter functions to re-interpret and synthesize my case study findings through personal reflection on both my experience teaching in Thailand and my experience researching the figure of the *farang* teacher from a position of *farang* embodiment. I understand this approach as embodied interpretation, choosing to position oneself – including one's thoughts, feelings,

perspectival shifts, and personal development – at the center of a particular interpretive process. In doing so, I hope to provide insight into the interplay between the general (those signs and meanings reified in cultural texts) and the particular (the always new production of signs and meanings through social interaction). This approach is inspired somewhat by trends in self-study, positionality, and reflexive practice in the field of education (i.e., Moody Maestranzi, et al., 2022; Satienchayakorn & Grant, 2022; Tripasai, 2019), but it primarily reflects the phenomenological approach of Sara Ahmed (2006; 2007). In her article theorizing a "phenomenology of Whiteness", Ahmed (2007) starts with the concept of orientation as "how we proceed from 'here'" (p. 151). She argues that "The starting point for orientation is the point from which the world unfolds: the 'here' of the body and the 'where' of its dwelling" (p. 151). This framework then allows me to proceed from a point of lived White-turned-*farang* embodiment in a world structured by postcoloniality. By making this embodiment explicit and central to the interpretation of my findings, I can more fully explore the symbolic power of the *farang* teacher and possible entry points for resistance and intervention.

4.4. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have explored some of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my research. Starting first with Sara Ahmed's (2000) understanding of postcoloniality and strange encounters, I have put forth the notion of West-Thai encounter(s), defining them across three levels. From there I turned to a consideration of how social semiotics, particularly as articulated by Gunther Kress, offers a theory of communication that fits well with Ahmed's understanding of how the stranger (and, in my case, the *farang* teacher) emerges through encounter. Moving into a more concrete discussion of methodology, I first introduced how I understand the relationship between text and experience before discussing multimodality and SF-

MDA as a research method. Finally, I concluded this chapter with an explanation of embodied interpretation. Having, over the past three chapters, communicated the theoretical and methodological threads central to my work, I now turn to my first case study: an exploration of the life of Anna Leonowens and her relationship to the emergence of the *farang* teacher, particularly in terms of her representation in the acclaimed 1956 musical film *The King and I.*

5. The King and I: Locating the *Farang* Teacher in 150 Years of Orientalist Myth

In February of 2021 it was announced that American production company Paramount Pictures had acquired the rights to Rodgers and Hammerstein's critically acclaimed musical *The King and I* with intent to "reimagine" the story "with a contemporary perspective that explores diversity and the contrasting worldviews of the characters…" (Fleming Jr., 2021, February 12). This recent announcement speaks to Hollywood's ongoing infatuation with the 150-year-old myth of Anna Leonowens, the self-described "English governess" who served in the court of Siam as an English teacher from 1862 to 1867. Her representations of 19th-century Siam, presented first in four Atlantic Monthly articles that would become 1870's *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and again in two more articles that were expanded into 1873's *The Romance of the Harem* (Chantasingh, 2006/2020, p. 83), have long been controversial in Thailand. This has much to do with her presentation of the beloved King Mongkut "... as a capricious, sometimes cruel and often foolish tyrant" (Jory, 2001, pp. 203). As Chittiphalangsri (2015) claims, this has caused Anna Leonowens to become "one of the most hated figures in Thai history." (p. 108). The controversy surrounding her life and story however, does not seem to have impacted the American obsession with telling, retelling, and reimagining the story of the English governess.

Decades after the publication of *The Romance of the Harem*, American missionary to Siam, Margaret Landon, developed a fascination with Anna's story and went about reworking her published writings, personal correspondence, and other details gathered from descendants into a novel. Omitting the large swaths of descriptive travel writing in Leonowens' own works, she presented the novel as "seventy-five per cent fact, and twenty-five per cent based on fact" (Landon, 1944/2000, p. xii). It was this version of Anna's life, recorded in 1944's *Anna and the*

King of Siam, that would become popularized some thirty-plus years after her death. First presented to moviegoers in a 1946 film by the same name before working its way through the tunes of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1951 stage musical *The King and I*, the story of Anna and King Mongkut became immortalized in the musical's 1956 film adaptation. Released against the backdrop of the early Cold War, *The King and I* reflects the values underlying a shift in United States foreign policy toward cultural exchange and education as a means of growing American global influence.

In terms of the United States' relationship with Thailand specifically, the early Cold War period saw an influx of foreign aid in exchange for Thai allyship in the fight against communism, aid which was used not only to build up the Thai military and police forces, but also for modernization projects, including those related to English language teaching (Klein, 2003, p. 197). This is unsurprising, since, as Pennycook (1994) argues, it was during this period that demand for English and English language teaching began to grow, in large part due to the cultural diplomacy initiatives of both the United States and the United Kingdom. The connection, then, between *The King and I*, the history it represents, the context in which it was released, and the legacy it has left behind makes it an important text for unravelling West-Thai encounter(s), particularly as they relate to the cultural politics of English language teaching in Thailand today. Furthermore, that the film centres on Anna, a supposed proper, White Englishwoman called upon to advance the English proficiency of the Siamese court, indicates its value as a text through which to begin locating the *farang* teacher. In this chapter, then, I offer an in-depth analysis of a key scene from the film – the "March of the Siamese Children" – using tools from SF-MDA in order to consider how the film both reflects and constructs West-Thai encounter(s) and to identify traces of the *farang* teacher both within and beyond the film. Before

that, however, I provide some background on the life of Anna Leonowens, her evolution into a potent cultural myth, and the cultural and geopolitical context in which the film was released.

5.1. Who is Anna Leonowens?

As Chittiphalangsri (2015) notes, in Thailand, Anna Leonowens is “usually branded *torlae*, a Thai invective term for ‘pretentious liar’”, due to her account of King Mongkut and Siamese palace life (p. 109). In the American context, however, she is a beloved character, thanks to the many recontextualizations of her original writings. While Leonowens herself wrote two books detailing her experience in Siam, published in 1870 and 1873 respectively, her story has been reimagined by numerous authors and directors throughout the 20th century, perhaps the most influential of which being Margaret Landon’s 1944 novel, *Anna and the King of Siam*. It is important, therefore, to differentiate between Anna Leonowens as a historical person and the ‘Anna myth’ that audiences have come to know. It can be argued, however, that the Anna myth is not solely the result of those who reinterpreted Leonowens’ original works, but of Leonowens’ own self-mythologizing, which aided her in building a life as a writer and lecturer following her departure from Siam.

5.1.1. The Anna Myth

Using the concept of the *auteur* to explore the evolution of the Anna myth, Chantasingh (2006/2020) notes that Leonowens herself was never forthcoming about her life prior to her employment in Siam. This lack of detail spurred Margaret Landon to draw from Leonowens’ later personal writings and familial correspondence when crafting her biography:

> To complement the gaps in Leonowens’ version, Landon’s account depicts Anna as a genteel Welsh-born lady, living the usual life of an officer’s daughter in the Imperial British Army, whose father died “a soldier’s death” when she was seven. (Chantasingh, 2006/2020, p. 87).

Various biographers have since disputed this framing of Leonowens' early life (i.e. Bristowe, 1976; Habegger, 2014; Kepner, 1996; Morgan, 2008; Smith Dow, 1991). Rather than the 'proper English woman' immortalized in Hollywood films, Anna was a child of British colonialism in India, and of mixed-race heritage (Habegger, 2014, p. 20). Moreover, contrary to her claims, she was educated, not in Britain, but in an institution designated for the biracial, orphaned offspring of British servicemen (Habegger, 2014, p. 34, 42).

After marrying Thomas Louis Leon Owens in 1849 (Morgan, 2008, p. 62), Anna went on to have four children (of which only Avis and Louis survived), living with her family throughout the far reaches of the British Empire (Habegger, 2014). It was ultimately after her husband's death in 1859 that she ventured to Singapore and began reinventing herself as the educated English widow, Anna Leonowens. As Morgan (2008) notes, she "cut all ties to her true history" since "Successfully passing as white, British, and gentry required that no one ever find out about her mixed-race, lower-class origins." (p. 70). Her new identity established, Anna spent three years in Singapore teaching the children of British officers (p. 82). It was ultimately thanks to her connections in Singapore that she was able to secure employment under King Mongkut, and in 1862, with son Louis in tow, Anna arrived in Bangkok. She would remain in Siam for five years.

It is therefore a combination of Leonowens' own self-invention and Margaret Landon's reimagination of Anna in her own image (a White, American Protestant missionary) that serves as the foundation of the Anna myth. Regarding Landon's contribution, Chantasingh (2006/2020) writes:

> Exploiting the rhetoric of the American Declaration of Independence, Landon has turned Anna into an idealist with American values and democratic ideals. Landon emphasizes three characteristics: Anna the Emancipator, Anna with her Manifest Destiny, and Anna the feminist, to

> allegedly free the Court ladies from their suffering and enslavement, and the king from his purportedly innate ignorance and natural barbaric inclinations. (p. 88).

As Kepner (1996) argues then, this Anna, unshackled from the racial origins Leonowens so successfully obscured, ultimately crystalized in the American consciousness through a "mystical union" that took place when "the character of 'Mrs. Anna' strode across the movie screen… in the person of the regal, strawberry-blonde, beautiful Deborah Kerr – looking uncannily like the regal, strawberry-blonde, beautiful Margaret Landon…" (p. 8).

5.1.2. Anna the Orientalist

It was not until after Leonowens left Siam in 1867, ultimately settling in the United States, that she began her career as a writer. In this phase of her life, we see how her story, while shaped by the British Empire and cast through her self-posturing as a proper English lady, became "America's favorite narrative about Thailand" (Klein, 2003, p. 194). As Morgan (2008) highlights, while her books were not well received in British scholarly circles, they received mainly positive reviews within the American literary scene. This was due in part to the association of her second book with romance, a term that had a "specific cultural and literary meaning" in the United States (p. 177). Her acceptance in New York literary circles afforded her the scholarly authority needed to propel herself into the lecture circuit, wherein she established herself as an expert "not only on Siam but also on subjects such as Buddhism and Hinduism." (p. 178).

Chantasingh (2006/2020), drawing on Smith Dow (1991), labels Leonowens an Orientalist, given her contribution to the "...corporate institution of dealing with the Orient" (Said, 1978/2003, p. 3) during this time. However, it was only through Leonowens' own self-invention

that this was even possible. Chantasingh (2006/2020) argues that as an Orientalist, Leonowens' dark complexion was received not as a symbol of her mixed heritage but as evidence of her firsthand experience in Asia, experience necessary to establish the veracity of her claims and legitimacy of her expertise (p. 86). The perceived truthfulness of Leonowens' story has been foundational to the persistence and success of the Anna myth. That every iteration of her story can boast "based on true events" has allowed each to legitimate the "ontological and epistemological distinction" (Said, 1978/2003, p. 2) between Orient and Occident, giving new form to a colonial concept. With that in mind, I now turn to consider the relationship between *The King and I* and Orientalism within the context of the early Cold War.

5.2. *The King and I* and Cold War Orientalism

While Said (1978/2003) notes that there was "no deeply invested tradition of Orientalism" (p. 290) in the United States during the 19th century, Asian American Studies scholars have since articulated the Orientalist underpinnings of racialist discourses aimed at the Far East (i.e. Yellow Peril), which sought to delineate the Asian Other from the American Self (see Ngai, 2000, pp. 408-09). The Orient/Occident distinction, then, was mobilized in the interest of American nation building, a discursive strategy that has continued to today, taking different forms relative to shifting cultural and geopolitical concerns. As mentioned above, *The King and I* was released against the backdrop of the early Cold War, a time marked by increased American strategic interest in Asia related to the end of the Pacific War in 1945 and the successful communist takeover of China in 1949. Klein (2003) therefore argues that the period ranging from the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War until about 1961, saw both the "expansion of U.S. power into Asia… and the simultaneous proliferation of popular American representations of Asia" (p. 5). This makes sense since, as she further notes, "The exercise of political,

economic, and military power" is dependent "upon the mechanisms of 'culture'" and, likewise, that "works of culture are always embedded in concrete material and social relations." (p. 6).

Klein (2003) points to these "popular American representations of Asia" as examples of Cold War Orientalism, a discourse produced and consumed by "middlebrow" Americans that both conforms to and departs from Said's original theory. Klein (2003) observes that such texts

> … narrated the knitting of ties between the United States and noncommunist Asia, and were infused with a structure of feeling that privileged precisely the values of interdependence, sympathy, and hybridity. These narratives and structures of feeling, far from undermining the global assertion of U.S. power, often supported it. (p. 16).

She further states that this form of Orientalism works "through a logic of affiliation as well as through one of difference." (p. 16). In keeping with this observation, it is important to note that Cold War Orientalist texts, while not existing "in a cause-and-effect relationship with the Cold War foreign policies pursued by Washington" (p. 8), do reflect the post-WWII shift toward cultural diplomacy mentioned in Chapter 1. This is well-illustrated by US-Thai relations during the early Cold War period.

Beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the 1970s, American interest in Thailand had to do with the country's position as a "unique island of stability" from which the US could combat the proliferation of communism in the region (Klein, 2003, p. 197). Following Thailand's assertion of a "pro-Western and anti-communist orientation" in the 1950s, the United States designated considerable foreign aid to help the country "modernize and Westernize" (p. 197). This primarily contributed to a build-up of the Thai police and military forces, but also included funding for "cultural and scientific programs" such as those aimed at improving Thailand's "agriculture, irrigation, transportation, communications, harbor facilities, commerce,

and public health" as well as those related to education and English language studies (p. 197). As Klein (2003) further notes, such programs "established a tutelary relationship" between Thailand and the United States, within which the U.S. assumed "the position of teacher and guide to modernization, and Thailand the position of eager student" (pp. 197-8). While much of the foreign aid allocated to Thailand during this time came directly from the United States government, it is important to note the role of philanthropic organizations in this modernizing mission. Such organizations often coordinated with the U.S. government to deliver exchange programs and fund cultural activities overseas, including English language development.

A good example of this type of work is the establishment of the Siam Society Research Centre in 1959, funded in part with financial grants from the Ford Foundation (Boeles, 1962). The centre was a project of The Siam Society, a Thai Studies society was founded in 1904 by a group of Siamese and international scholars interested in "the investigation and encouragement of Art, Science, and Literature in relation to Siam and neighbouring countries" (*The Siam Society Milestones,* n.d.). This investment in Thai Studies makes sense, since Area Studies (an interdisciplinary field involving research on world regions) had become increasingly, and controversially, important to the United States' Cold War strategy, and cross-cultural academic exchanges ensured American scholars access to the field. The strategic value of academic exchanges is well illustrated by Phillips (2019) in his summary of a 1954 letter sent by William Donovan (then the United States Ambassador to Thailand) to the US State Department. Charged with securing the Thais as allies in the fight against communism, he wrote "to ask for support for Fulbright education exchanges", however,

> Most of the letter... did not focus on intelligence gathering, but the role of such exchanges in winning Thai hearts and minds. 'A Fulbright-funded academic in Thailand', he claimed 'is

> brought into direct and daily contact with people whose families represent a substantial proportion of the politically articulate population of the country'. The presence of such 'a "live" American who is also a respected teacher wins willingness and confidence to ask questions and believe'. Ultimately, he concluded, educational exchange was about promoting 'American prestige' amongst well connected Thais by facilitating a degree of 'cultural penetration that identifies Thai interests, ideals and institutions with those of the US' (Donovan, 1954, as cited in Phillips, 2019, pp. 102-3).

The King and I, then, is a text that clearly reflects an American perspective on the relationship between the U.S. and Thailand during the early Cold War. As Klein (2003) highlights, this "tutelary relationship" established under the guise of cultural exchange is palpable throughout the film. Pointing to the famous "Getting to Know You" number as an example, Klein (2003) argues that the scene "displays the process of education that the children have requested and figures it in terms of cultural exchange and transformation." (p. 203). Transformation here, however, supersedes cultural exchange since "the equality of the exchange… is deceptive" and "although Anna learns a new dance, the goal of the scene is to change the Siamese, not her". (p. 203). Unsurprisingly, the "Getting to Know You" song proved a commercial and cultural success. It was even selected as the 1958 theme of the People-to-People program, an Eisenhower-era cultural exchange program that, like others, sought to usher in a new, diplomatic U.S. presence in the world (Klein, 203, p. 219). The impact of *The King and I* on the cultural zeitgeist of the day is further observed by Phillips (2019), who makes reference to "Getting to Know You" when reflecting on the American anthropological activities conducted in Thailand during the 1950s and 1960s. He argues that while such scholarship was mobilized toward the assertion of authority over the kingdom, it was sentimental and lacking in obvious violence, since "their [academics] job was to 'get to know' a place and a people" (p. 98). Here

then, we see the extent to which the threads of cultural diplomacy and education are intertwined in ways that begin to give rise to the *farang* teacher as a mediating figure within the context of West-Thai encounter(s) and how *The King and I* is a text through which to begin unravelling these dynamics. With that in mind, I now turn to my analysis.

5.3. Analysis: The March of the Siamese Children

In this section I offer an analysis of a scene known as the "March of the Siamese Children" which runs from 14:46-22:31. I have chosen to focus on this scene specifically because it establishes the relationships between the film's main characters and serves as an entry point through which to explore several important narrative threads. At this point in the film, Anna has already arrived in Siam and met King Mongkut, stepping out of line to confront him at the end of a public audience with hopes of discussing his promise to provide her a personal residence. After some witty back-and-forth, Mongkut declares that Anna should make "very good school teaching" (14:35) and ushers her and Louis through an exit. The scene itself opens on a wide-angle shot of a large room full of elaborately dressed women sitting around, relaxing and chatting. The camera then cuts to a shot of Mongkut, Anna, and Louis entering, at which point Mongkut declares the women in the room to be "a few of my wives!" (14:58). The scene goes on to show Anna's formal introduction to some of these wives (including "head wife" Lady Thiang and Tuptim, a Burmese girl gifted to Mongkut in the previous scene), a brief disagreement between Anna and the King regarding her place of residence (during which Anna threatens to leave Siam), and the formal presentation of the royal children. The scene ends with Anna choosing to stay in Siam and teach the King's wives and children, despite her initial grievance.

5.3.1. Methodology

As mentioned in Chapter 4, I conducted this analysis according to the principles of SF-MDA. Moreover, given the salience of certain modes over others within the musical genre, I chose to focus on the interplay of gestural and speech performance, sound effects, and music. In terms of gesture, Fischer-Lichte (2014) notes that “Humans have bodies which they can manipulate and instrumentalize just like any other object, and which they can use as signs by which to communicate certain meanings” (p. 1442). In other words, the human body ultimately exists both phenomenally and semiotically. The semiotic body, however, is not only expressed in the use of motivated gestures and facial expressions but is also active in the production and interpretation of sound. As van Leeuwen (1999) argues, our understanding of how sound means is, in part, rooted in its materiality and our own bodily experience of sound production, which is to say that sound has *experiential meaning potential.* The meaning of sound derives from an experience of

> … what we *do* when we produce the sounds, either vocally or with our hands/feet, and from our ability to turn action into knowledge, to extend our practical experience metaphorically, and to grasp similar extensions made by others. (cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). (van Leeuwen, 1999, p. 140).

With this in mind, I transcribed the scene according to van Leeuwen's (1999) model for analyzing the semiotics of sound. This included identifying each sound event and making notes on perspective, social distance, time, melody, voice quality, and the interaction between various sounds. I then reviewed the transcript alongside the scene itself and made notes regarding any gestures that seemed to inform, alter, or extend the meanings produced by the soundtrack.

With the transcripts completed, I loosely followed the model proposed by Djonov and Knox (2014) for analyzing webpages (used more fully in Chapter 6), wherein they propose guiding questions corresponding to each of Halliday's three metafunctions. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) definitions and informed by the approach described above, I composed the following questions, reviewing the transcript and the scene side-by-side and answering each question in succession.

1) **Ideational.** Defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) as that which "represents 'the world around and inside us'" (p. 16). *How do features of the soundtrack (sound, speech, and music), as they integrate with the gestural performance of the actors, work to construct both the relationships between the characters and their relationship to the world they inhabit?*

2) **Interpersonal.** Assuming that, similar to images, film involves

> two kinds of participants, represented participants (the people, places and things they depict) and interactive participants (the people who communicate with each other through images, the producers and viewers of images) and three kinds of relations: (1) relations between represented participants, (2) relations between interactive and represented participants; and (3) relations between interactive participants (the things interactive participants do to or for each other through images). (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 113).

I chose to focus primarily on the second kind of relations, asking: *How do features of the soundtrack, as they integrate with the gestural performance of the actors, work to construct the relationship between the characters (represented participants) and the*

viewer (one kind of interactive participant)? What does this say about the relations between the presumed viewer and those who worked to produce the film (relations between interactive participants)?

3) **Textual**. Since "... any semiotic mode has to have the capacity to form texts, complexes of signs which cohere both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced." (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 17-8), I asked: *How do the signs and complexes of signs produced through the interlocking modes of the soundtrack and gestural performance carry through from one scene to the next and the film as a whole?*

Finally, given my overarching interest in locating the *farang* teacher within and across West-Thai encounter(s), I have approached my analysis with three guiding assumptions:

1) That *The King and I* is a "mediated and partial" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 15) representation of historic West-Thai encounter(s).

2) The *The King and I* is embedded within the cultural politics of Cold War-era West-Thai encounter(s).

3) Understanding the discursive construction of Anna within the context of *The King and I* is important to a partial understanding of how the *farang* teacher takes shape within and across West-Thai encounter(s).

With that in mind, I focused my analysis specifically on how Anna takes shape across the three metafunctions, concluding with a consideration of how the ideational, interpersonal, and textual

meanings identified contribute to an understanding of how the *farang* teacher emerges within and across West-Thai encounter(s).

5.3.2. Ideational Meanings: World-Ordering, World-Adapting, and World-Disrupting Roles

In terms of ideational meaning, three major themes emerged: (1) the world-ordering power of the King (2) the world-adapting and world-representing lifestyle of the women and children (3) the world-disrupting presence of Anna.

5.3.2.1. The World-Ordering Power of the King. van Leeuwen (1999) writes that "The more powerful people or institutions are, the more noise they are allowed to make." (p. 133). This claim bears out over the course of the scene, with both the King and his heir producing more noise and taking up more physical space than the other characters. This is evidenced by, for example, several features of Mongkut's speech. One of these features is elevated volume and its ability to communicate social distance. Drawing on Edward Hall's proxemics, van Leeuwen (1999) shows how motivated choices in the volume level of single sounds can communicate social space and levels of social intimacy (p. 27). Yul Brynner chose to have Mongkut speak in a manner suggestive of formal distance. While it is hard to make this judgement based on volume alone due to sound mixing and editing, the tense, mid-to-high pitch quality of Brynner's voice when announcing "A few of my wives!" (14:58) immediately calls the other characters to order and it is largely his voice that determines the flow of events for the rest of the scene.

Another interesting feature of Mongkut's speech is his tendency to disrupt interactions between the other characters. He is in fact the only character in the scene who engages in conversational overlap, interrupting Anna at 16:01:

Mongkut: She's very / grateful to me / for my /kindness // Lady Thiang / Have children / prepare for / presentation / to uh/ schoolteacher.

Anna: Uh / uh / speaking of / teaching your / majesty / in our **[overlap: *"Ah! Lady Son Klin…"*]** agreement.

Mongkut: [overlap: *"In our… agreement"]* Ah! / Lady / Son Klin / Lady / Talap / Lady / Piam / annnnd / this girl is / present to me from / uh / Burma Prince // She just / arrived.

As van Leeuwen (1999) points out, interruptions on their own do not necessarily denote dominance. To understand how interruptions function in a conversation it is necessary to account for "what was being talked about, speakers' intentions, their reactions to each other, and what effect the "interruption" had on the conversation." (Tannen, 1992, p. 189-90 as cited in van Leeuwen, 1999, p. 68). In this instance, Mongkut interrupts to continue directing the introductions at his chosen pace. This, then, indicates his dominance in relation to Anna and the others. Interestingly, while this is the only instance of true conversational overlap, Mongkut continues to disrupt interactions that do not centre him; this is largely communicated through a combination of speech and camerawork. For example, when Anna is introduced to Lady Thiang (the 'head' wife), the camera cuts to show the two women from the waist up speaking to one another as Louis looks on from the right of the shot (15:26) (Figure 5.1, L.). During their interaction, Lady Thiang shares with Anna that she also has a son (15:40), but, following a quick smile and nod from Anna in response, the camera cuts back to a wide-angle shot so that the King is once again visible (Figure 5.1, R.). The King then announces that Anna and Lady Thiang will be working together (15:45). In this instance the camera moves from a shot showcasing the developing social intimacy between the two women to a shot indicating the inclusion of the King

in their moment. The King does not participate in the conversation between the two women however, and instead uses it as a jumping off point for his own interest: how each woman will contribute to his vision of an English-speaking court.

There is one more feature of the King's speech that, while not directly related to the amount of noise he makes himself, communicates the power he holds in his world. This has to do

Figure 5.1. (L) Lady Thiang and Anna converse. (R) The camera pans out to include the King as he speaks.

with a parallel between his voice and a particularly noisy sound effect: the gong. Throughout the scene, a gong sounds three times. First, during the opening shot at 14:48, then again at 17:26 and 17:50. The gong is a noticeably loud and resonate sound that brings the characters to attention and seems to evoke predetermined responses, functioning to organize social and ritual order. When we first hear the gong, the chatter of the women quiets and they arrange themselves in the centre of the room, all taking a kneeling position. In the second instance, it is the King who reacts to the gong. Upon its sounding at 17:26, the King first looks over his left shoulder toward the entryway from which the children eventually emerge and, raising his left hand with a pointed

finger, starts walking across the shot toward the centre of the room announcing, “Now you will meet my children!” (17:28) (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2. The King announces that it is time to meet the royal children.

When the gong sounds for the third time, it is over a shot of the wives kneeling together in an audience formation. Lady Thiang is in the process of situating Louis behind the group of women and responds to the gong by rushing forward to join them, taking the same position. The camera then cuts to a close-up of the King who announces, “The royal princes and princesses!” (17:54) at which point the "March" begins. In each of these instances the gong communicates something unspoken that the audience comes to understand through the actions of the characters. The characters, however, know how to react without explicit instruction. The gong ultimately works to communicate and organize the flow of institutional rituals, which is, in this case, the presence and formal presentation of royalty.

As mentioned above, the world-ordering power of the gong seems to parallel the world-ordering power of Mongkut's speech. While, for example, Anna is often engaged dialogically – that is, when she is spoken to, she responds and when she speaks, she seeks an answer – Mongkut speaks monologically, announcing his thoughts against the flow of others' interactions in a way that seems to anticipate their conformity to his expectations. For example, when the King introduces Lady Thiang, he positions himself to observe her behaviour, taking a wide stance, with his back to the camera and his head facing her (15:14) (Figure 5.3). What he expects of her is never spoken and yet her introduction seems to please him, and he rewards her by offering her proximity to Anna and the promise of English lessons. Furthermore, when he tells Lady Thiang to prepare the children for the presentation (15:56) she immediately excuses herself.

Figure 5.3. The King observes Lady Thiang as she Introduces herself.

Overall, the quality and amount of sound Mongkut is permitted in relation to the other characters, and the way in which the sound he produces functions to order the events of the scene, helps to communicate the hierarchy governing the world of the palace. While, as I argue below, these features also contribute to the construction of Mongkut as a “tyrant” (Jory, 2001, p. 203), his right to make the most noise reflects not only his individual personality, but the power afforded him by the institution of the monarchy. This becomes even clearer during the presentation of Prince Chulalongkorn, Mongkut’s heir.

Prince Chulalongkorn is the eighth child presented to Anna, but his identity is never explicitly state. The audience is primed for his appearance, however, when Lady Thiang introduces herself as mother to the heir and refers to him by name (15:39). His identity is later confirmed by both the sonic and gestural differences between his presentation and that of the other children. The actual “March” sequence runs from 17:57 to 21:14, during which time the royal children are brought out one-by-one and presented to Anna. In general, the presentations are similar, with each child first kneeling and bowing to Mongkut and then standing and bowing to Anna before sitting down among the audience of women. The sequence contains no dialogue and is instead mostly accompanied by two distinct melodies: one a soft, major-key, woodwind-driven melody (which builds throughout the course of the sequence) and the other a low, minor-key, horn-driven melody. There is a third melody, however, that contrasts heavily with both. This melody begins at 19:26 just after the camera cuts from a shot of Mongkut dramatically folding his arms and abruptly turning his head to look over his right shoulder toward the entrance through which the children enter the room (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4. Mongkut anticipates Chulalongkorn's entrance.

The next shot focuses on the entrance and the loud, metronomic clash of symbols begins as a taller child, face serious and posture erect, enters, each of his decisive steps choreographed to the music. Once the child is positioned in front of Mongkut, Mongkut abruptly turns to face him; this too is timed with a transitionary bar of music. Once the music returns to the crashing symbols, the child flicks back his coat and jumps to his knees in a bow. Interestingly, King Mongkut simultaneously bows at the waist in a dramatic fashion (Figure 5.5). The King finishes his bow first and then turns his whole body to face Anna. The child rises and walks toward her, but rather than take her hands and bow like the other children, he stands erect looking at her. She curtsies deeply as he looks on, bowing at the waist only after she begins to rise. The new melody transitions back to the standard melody as the child takes his position next to Lady Thiang in front of the audience of women. Here we see how the power of the throne is assigned to Chulalongkorn through the use of louder music and less submissive body positioning compared to the other children. Overall, this sequence establishes the ‘throne’, rather than Mongkut, as the centre of power around which the world of the palace is structured. The women and children are therefore organized in relation to this power.

Figure 5.5. Mongkut and Chulalongkorn exchange bows.

5.3.2.2. Women and Children as World-Adapting and World-Representing. As noted above, *The King and I* departs considerably from its source material. One of the main differences between the film and both Leonowens' own account and Margaret Landon's retelling is the sanitization of 'harem' life. While both authors chose to emphasize the violence of the harem as an institution, the creators of the film chose to allude to it rather than explicitly represent it. With that said, the harem remains the backdrop of the film, since Anna lives and works with the women, teaching them and their children English and advocating on their behalf. The counterweight, then, to the power of the throne is the relative powerlessness of the women. In this scene, their powerlessness is communicated through the way the women adapt to the hierarchy of their world and how they are constructed as representatives of the Kingdom.

It is important to note that the "March" is the viewer's first introduction to the harem and that this introduction is made implicitly, through a combination of aural and visual cues. The scene opens with a shot showing a recessed living room of sorts, femininely decorated with white filigree room dividers cast against salmon pink walls (Figure 5.6). Over a dozen women,

dressed in mostly gold-accented traditional Siamese formalwear, are shown reclining, chatting, and playing games throughout. The first three sounds of the scene occur during this shot. The scene begins with the overlapping sound of unintelligible chatter and a four-note ascending scale played on a harp. The first gong replaces the anticipated fifth note of the scale and once sounded the chatter quiets. While both the chatter and the gong exist within the world of the film, the scale seems to exist outside of it, functioning as a framing device for the viewer. That said, it still contributes to the production of both interpersonal and ideational meanings.

Figure 5.6. The viewer is introduced to the harem.

From an ideational perspective, social distance once again plays a role. While not speech, the scale has a soft, breathy quality that feels like an intimate whisper. The feeling of intimacy suggested by the sound does not derive solely from this sense of personal distance, however, but also from the way the scale subverts metronomic time. According to van Leeuwen (1999), although “monorhythmic music will always have a main beat” it can at times “anticipate or delay the beat, so as to recreate the tension between objective and subjective time” (p. 58). Referencing 19th-century romantic piano music (particularly Lieder), he claims that

> ... suspension, delaying the beat, is one of the key affective devices – stretching time, so as to escape its rigidities, if only for a moment, and only within the context of leisure time and the private sphere, in the way that dinner parties need not start quite as punctually as board meetings. (p. 58).

In this scale the last note is delayed, further suggesting that we have entered the private sphere. Moreover, the ascending nature of the scale creates a feeling of revelation, as if a veil is being lifted to show what is underneath. Finally, the relatively lower and softer pitch of the scale, when supported by the obviously feminine quality of the visual, suggests the "'dangerous woman' stereotype" (van Leeuwen, 1999, p. 134). Overall, this scale works to indicate that the scene takes place within a distinctly feminine private sphere that is uniquely sensual; we have now entered the harem.

This feminine sensuality, however, is disrupted by the gong. It is this sound which announces the masculine presence of Mongkut and introduces a hierarchical dynamic into the space. That the wives exist primarily in a role of submission is reflected not so much in what they say, but in what they do, and even more so in what they do not say. At the beginning of the scene the women are engaged in their usual leisure activities. However, once Mongkut enters, they quiet and take on bodily positions of submission, kneeling with their heads bowed to the floor, lifting them only once he has passed (Figure 5.7). Moreover, beyond the realm of gesture, the women tend to speak only when invited. Of the many wives in the room only two speak at all: Lady Thiang and Tuptim. Both do so after Mongkut introduces them to Anna, thus speaking at his prompting. While Lady Thiang does speak without invitation at 17:05, she does so to deescalate the argument between him and Anna, arguing in favour of life in the palace. While I discuss how this interjection speaks to Anna's relation to power in Section 5.3.2.3. below, I

consider it here to be an example of the way Lady Thiang adapts to, rather than resists, the world in which she lives and the power that orders it.

Figure 5.7. The women bow as the King passes.

The wives' lack of power in relation to the King is related to their role in representing the throne, and, by extension, the nation. This is once again demonstrated by how they speak when prompted. As mentioned, only Lady Thiang and Tuptim speak during this scene, both in response to Mongkut's introduction. Their responses are particularly interesting, however, because of their performative nature, something I discuss in more detail in Section 5.3.4.2. below. For now, however, its worth noting that in both instances the women attempt to perform English competency with varying degrees of success. This is cemented by Mongkut's following up of Lady Thiang's introduction with an opportunity to learn "the better English" (15:46), as well as his announcement, following Tuptim's introduction, that Anna will teach what wives have "sense enough for learning" so that Siam will be a "very modern, scientific country" (16:20). Overall, Mongkut's wives adapt their lives to the world-ordering power of their husband; beyond mere domestic submission however, they exist in service to the throne and Siamese nation. Their purpose is to acquire the symbols and skills associated with modernity –

that is, Western cultural and linguistic forms – and to perform them under the Western gaze (which Anna represents). The children, furthermore, function in a similar representative role.

It is worth noting that the core activity of this scene – the formal presentation of the children – does appear to have roots in a Thai tradition called *wai khru*, a ceremony during which students pay respect to their teachers. Within the context of *The King and I,* however, the ceremony is subject to the Western gaze and serves to construct the children of the court as national representatives. Whereas the wives engage in English performance, the children are cast against the rhythmic logic of the music accompanying their presentation. van Leeuwen (1999) notes that

> Musical time... can be the time that regulates our activities, or represent the characteristics of that time and, being musical, make us rhythmically tune into and affectively identify with those characteristics. To appreciate this, we need to consider time, not as a phenomenon of nature, but as a human activity, as the result of the activity of timing. (p. 36).

The "March of the Siamese Children" conforms to the genre standards of a march, a type of music traditionally written to accompany marching soldiers. Marches, therefore, offer a strong sense of measured time. As van Leeuwen (1999) notes, measured time rose to prominence during the Industrial Revolution, so that Western music became "overwhelmingly dominated by the principle of a regular, unvarying, machine-like beat, to which all voices and instruments had to submit." (van Leeuwen, 1999, p. 38). The music in this scene, then, serves to order the children and reveal the extent to which they conform to the logic of the Western musical tradition. Moreover, given the association of marches with soldiers, the scene has nationalistic undertones. Ultimately, the children emerge as extensions of the Kingdom, adapting to both the order of the palace and the logic of modernity all the while performing under the Western gaze.

5.3.2.3. Anna as a World-Disrupting Force. Up to now I have argued that this scene establishes (1) the world-ordering power of the King and (2) the world-adapting and world-representing lifestyles of the women and children. Here, then, I want to argue that Anna represents a world-disrupting force through her construction as a foreigner. Anna's foreignness, and, by extension, the disruptive nature of her presence, become clear when her speech and behaviour is compared to the other women. While the wives submit to the power of Mongkut, both in terms of his masculine authority and the authority afforded him by his role as King, Anna resists, disrupting the gendered hierarchy within the harem. Although Anna's unwillingness to conform to institutional expectations is demonstrated in the scene prior, during which she approaches the King without an invitation (12:32), it comes to a head in this scene when she is finally able to voice her concerns about where she will live, requesting that they "can clear up this one little matter of the house" (16:44). At this point the King's otherwise positive demeanor shifts and he responds: "HOUSE?! HOUSE?! WHAT HOUSE?!" (16:51), raising his voice while maintaining a relatively low pitch on the first "HOUSE". As van Leeuwen (1999) notes, at least within an Anglo-American context, such a low but loud masculine voice reflects "the booming bass" and is "usually considered a little too overbearing" (p. 134). While he raises his pitch as he continues, the message is clear: he is not just communicating his dominance but rather is frustrated by Anna's failure to submit to the institutional order of his world. That this order is particularly gendered, however, is important for understanding how Anna functions to disrupt it.

As Glassmeyer (2012) argues in her analysis of the film, although Anna is a woman and presented through a maternal lens, gender does not define her in the way that it defines the King's wives. She notes that the Siamese are conscious of Anna's failure to conform to the

gendered expectations of their world (p. 116), and points to Anna's wide skirts as an element which obscures her body, thus de-gendering her and, by contrast, hyper-feminizing and racializing the harem women (pp. 116-18). She argues that

> Freed from her body, Anna is associated with "maternity" as a set of learned and teachable skills that form a part of her complexly empowered whole, rather than a constricting and limited identity… Anna fulfills a fantasy of masculine maternity offered in the service of conquest without bloodshed… (p. 107).

Ultimately, despite her gender, Anna gets to move through the world of the harem mostly unrestricted by the social order that keeps the other woman in submission to King Mongkut. As I explore further in Section 5.3.4. below, this points to the way her foreignness supersedes her gender. Interestingly, while Mongkut lashes out toward her for her failure to conform, there is never a sense that she is under any real threat of violence. Her foreignness is a disruptive force; she cannot be dealt with according to the status quo since she is not *quite* like the other women. That said, while she is foreign within the world of the film, it is the Siamese who are constructed as foreign in relation to the viewer.

5.3.3. Interpersonal Meanings: The King as Other, Anna as Self

My exploration of the interpersonal meanings established through this scene supports Klein's (2003) identification of the film as a Cold War Orientalist text. This has to do with how the viewer is encouraged to identify with Anna and to gaze upon the King (and the Siamese overall) as Other. Interestingly, this starts before the film even begins, since the title primes the viewer to align with Anna. Whereas Leonowens' title tells the story of a nameless English woman ("The English Governess") working in a dehumanized foreign court ("the Siamese Court"), Landon's title tells the story of an enlightened, individual woman ("Anna") and her

dealings with a foreign despot ("the King of Siam"). By the time we arrive at *The King and I,* however, there is no Anna, there is only "I". Furthermore, there is no Siam, there is only "the King". The title, therefore, cements the binary between Self and Other: by default of not being "I", the Siamese, represented by their King, are the Other. Within the scene under analysis, this binary presents itself through the contrasting performances of Yul Brynner's Mongkut and Deborah Kerr's Anna.

While transcribing, it became apparent that Brynner's performance gave the scene a voyeuristic feel, owing to its overly theatrical nature compared to the other characters. From a practical perspective, this makes sense. Brynner was new to film acting and had already developed his character for the stage. That said, the translation of this performance into film, particularly when cast against the performance of accomplished film actress Deborah Kerr, affords Mongkut a yellowface minstrel quality that invites the audience to objectify rather than identify with the character. One aspect of his performance that contributes to this effect is his body positioning; Mongkut is often shown in an exaggerated, wide stance with his body running either parallel with or in a right angle from the camera (Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8. The King's body is angled toward the camera as he describes his vision for Siam.

This stance would be conventional in theatre, wherein body positioning revolves around the presence of a live audience and the need to ensure the visibility of on-stage interactions. Interestingly, this tends to contribute a sense that stage actors are conscious of their onlookers and their own role as observed objects. Within a film context, however, this is unnecessary. Thanks to camera positioning and the ability to edit footage, film viewers can disappear into the scene, their gaze emanating from angles determined by directors, producers, and camera operators. The effect here, then, especially when compared to Kerr's choice of a more natural stance (Figure 5.9), is that Mongkut seems to be catering to an external gaze whereas Anna appears firmly grounded in the world of the film. Anna, therefore, is a character to understand and relate to while Mongkut is a spectacle to observe. This is further supported in the difference between Brynner's and Kerr's voice quality.

As noted above, Brynner has Mongkut speak in a tone suggestive of a formal social distance between himself and the other characters. This choice also suggests the existence of formal distance between himself and the viewer. When coupled with his audience-

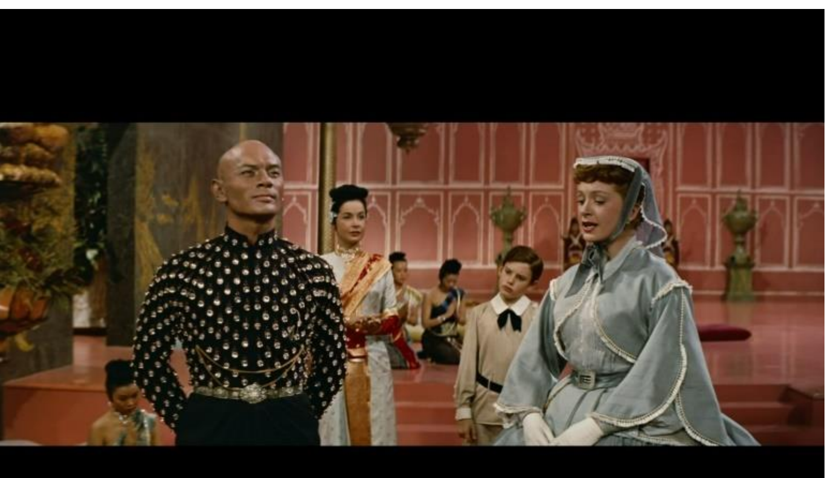

Figure 5.9. Mongkut's body is angled toward the camera while Anna's is angled more naturally toward him.

acknowledging body positioning, Mongkut's projected voice encompasses the viewer and demands their direct attention. Kerr, in contrast, maintains a volume/voice quality more indicative of an informal distance suited to her within-world interactions. This again has the effect of rendering Mongkut an object to be observed. Since, as Ahmed (2006) argues, "We are orientated… toward objects, and those objects are ''other'' than us." (p. 115), the construction of Mongkut as an object to be observed reflects an Othering process, since the viewer cannot personally identify with the object of their gaze. Anna, however, is constructed in such a way that encourages viewer identification, something further supported by the way each characters' speech reflects their emotional disposition.

Drawing on van Leeuwen's (1999) observation that "pitch range realizes the emotional extension of sound acts" (p. 111), I argue that Kerr has Anna speak with a level of emotional confinement that contrasts with Brynner's choice of emotional expansiveness. While she does allow emotion into her voice at times (i.e., during her argument with the King), in general she does not jump around her range to the extent that Mongkut does. Throughout this scene Mongkut moves from the low, steady "She is very grateful to me for my kindness" (15:53) to the high-pitched, near squealing "What is this et cetera!?" (17:17). One interaction in which the difference between Anna's and Mongkut's pitch range becomes particularly apparent is when he exclaims "WHAT HOUSE!?" (16:50) and she responds, "My house, your majesty..." (16:55). Here she maintains a loud but low and steady pitch which contrasts with Mongkut's louder and higher response: "It is a pleasure that you shall live in PALACE!" (16:58). This difference is further supported by Anna's confined gestures in compared to Mongkut's more expansive movements (Figure 11). The effect of these differences is that Mongkut appears less in control of his emotions than Anna. Of importance here is the association of emotionality with irrationality.

That Mongkut would display his emotions in a seemingly irrational and unreasonable way signals to the viewer that he is the antagonist to Anna's protagonist. There is a further gendered dynamic here as well, since it is usually women, rather than men, who are represented as emotional and, by consequence, irrational. This swap in gender roles contributes further to an Orientalist reading of the film.

Once again, as Glassmeyer (2012) notes, Anna is largely de-gendered, embodying the "masculine maternity" necessary to instruct the women and children of the harem (and, consequently, the Siamese people as a whole) in Western modernity. Anna, then, bypasses her femininity and embraces a rationality at odds with Mongkut's apparent foolishness. It is, in part, this foolishness that serves as a racial marker in a film where most Asian characters are played by Caucasian actors. Here Mongkut's performance of feminized irrationality plays into the prominent Orientalist trope of a feminine East versus a masculine West. Glassmeyer (2012) sums this up well when she states that "… the film displaces all undesirable elements of femininity onto adult Asians" and that "the King is offered as spectacle, brightly, if scantly dressed, strutting and posing for the camera's gaze…" (p. 107). Overall, then, we see how speech and gestural choices work together to encourage the viewer to identify with Anna and view Mongkut as the embodiment of a feminized, Asian Other. The social transformation of this Other therefore emerges as the core narrative around which the film is organized.

5.3.4. Textual Meanings: Transforming Siam

In keeping with Klein's (2003) analysis of the film, *The King and I,* while on the surface a tale of cross-cultural discovery and exchange, is, at its core, a story of national transformation. As mentioned, this reflects the ethos of modernization that defined both American foreign policy and Thai national development at the time. That said, rather than tell the story of King

Mongkut's successful negotiation of European colonial powers through the selective appropriation of Western culture, *The King and I* tells a story in which the primary agent of Siamese modernity is an Americanized teacher. Below, then, I use the meanings established in the "March of the Siamese Children" as a jumping off point from which to consider how Anna emerges as this agent across the film as a whole. I have chosen to do so through an exploration of three main themes: scientificness, mimicry, and replacement.

5.3.4.1. Scientific Anna. Throughout *The King and I*, the quality of being "scientific" is shown as highly prized. The viewer is first introduced to this theme when Anna confronts Mongkut in his throne room. Upon his initial assessment, the King takes issue with Anna's appearance, asking her age and observing that she does not "look like scientific person for teaching of school" (13:40). After she engages in some witty banter, however, he concludes: "You are not afraid of King. Not to be afraid is good thing in scientific mind" (14:27). Interestingly, from the outset, Anna's failure to conform to the hierarchical order of the palace is associated with her having a scientific mind. Continuing from the observation that Anna's failure to conform is highly gendered, it can be concluded that her 'scientificness' is what sets her apart from the palace women. This is evidenced by Mongkut's acceptance of her as a teacher while simultaneously declaring that his own wives are deficient, lacking a "gift for knowledge" (14:58). A later interaction with Lady Thiang reinforces this association more explicitly. As Anna is settling into her residence in the palace, she appeals to Lady Thiang for privacy from the other wives who have congregated in her room. In her response, Lady Thiang addresses Anna as "sir" twice. When Anna asks why she refers to her by masculine pronouns, Lady Thiang replies "Because you scientific! Not lowly like woman" (23:20).

Through the eyes of Lady Thiang we see that 'scientificness' is what enables Anna to step outside the gendered hierarchy governing palace life. Furthermore, as has been shown, Anna is deemed scientific by Mongkut *because* she does not conform to gendered institutional expectations; Anna is not "afraid of King" (14:27). As mentioned above, in the "March" scene, Mongkut declares his desire for Siam to become "very modern, scientific country" (16:30). He connects these ideas – modernness and scientificness – to the development of English skills and identifies Anna as the medium through which his goal will be accomplished. Very little of the film is dedicated to Anna's teaching of English, however. In fact, the only formal lessons she is shown delivering are coloured by an underlying ideological message.

In the most prominent instance of a traditional classroom scene (34:17-46:00), Anna is shown correcting Lady Thiang's geography lesson. As the children laugh in celebration of a map communicating Siam's superiority to neighbouring Burma, the camera cuts to an embarrassed Tuptim (the wife from Burma) grasping a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (35:10) (Figure 5.10)[3]. At this point Anna is shown taking over from Lady Thiang, noting that the map on the chalkboard is "25 years old" before presenting the students with a Mercator projection (35:14-35:43). Ultimately this segment reveals that Anna's role as teacher has less to do with transferring English language skills and more to do with spreading Americanized values of democracy and equality. Rather than a description of an academic disposition, scientificness, as embodied by

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[3] Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a consistent theme running throughout *The King and I*, functioning to indicate a parallel between Siamese harem life and the American institution of slavery through the lens of American abolitionism. This is particularly relevant to Tuptim's character whose own resistance to life in the harem suggests her allegiance to Anna as an emancipatory figure over and above Southeast Asian traditions (discussed further in Section 5.3.4.2 below). While considerable analysis could be dedicated to this parallel, particularly in light of the way "Uncle Tom" has become "a widely recognized epithet for a black person deemed so subservient to whites that he betrays his race" (Spingarn, 2018, *Introduction,* para. 1), this falls beyond the scope of the present research.

Anna, speaks to a cultural sensibility rooted in the democratic ideals presumed necessary for Siam to modernize.

Figure 5.10. While Lady Thiang teaches from a map representing Siam's history with neighbouring Burma, the camera cuts to show Tuptim holding a copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin.

5.3.4.2. Modern Mimicry: Performing English, Performing Scientificness. While English proficiency is not the core of scientificness, it is, however, indicative of it. Throughout the “March” scene, numerous references are made to the English language support Anna is meant to provide the court. For example, the King declares that Anna will teach Lady Thiang “the better English” (15:46), and that, by virtue of Anna teaching the more capable wives, everyone in Siam will be “speaking the English” (16:30). The extent to which the Siamese can approximate Anna’s English proficiency, then, suggests their proximity to the modern, ‘scientific’ ideal that she embodies. This ideal, however, is never fully reached, a reality suggested early on by the characters’ use of ‘non-native’ English.

The English introductions shown in the “March” scene highlight how ‘non-native’ English speech functions to racialize otherwise white-presenting actors. This can be understood in terms of van Leeuwen’s (1999) observation that provenance (the perceived origin of a sound) plays a role in how sound means:

> ...when a sound travels, its meaning is associated with the place it comes from and/or the people who originated it, or rather, with the ideas held about that place or those people in the place to which the sound has travelled. (p. 139).

He further notes that "Connotation is not restricted to music. Speech accents, too, can carry connotations deriving from ideas held about the people whose accents they are." (p. 139). Within this scene there are two broad types of speech "accents". The first is Anna's quickly identifiable 'native' English accent and the second is the broadly 'non-native' speech of the other characters, particularly that of Lady Thiang. Interestingly, the non-nativeness of her speech is not communicated through any identifiable regional accent but rather through markers of competency. Lady Thiang, for example, initially displays very limited English proficiency. She engages in the rote repetition of phrases that are not suited to the context, speaks in a pronounced accent with a broad pitch range (i.e. MEE-shon-AIR-EEE for missionary), and uses 'broken' syntax (i.e., "I have boy too" or "Will have nice apartment"). Following van Leeuwen's (1999) understanding of provenance, the non-nativeness of Lady Thiang's speech does not emerge as a result of the association of her accent with a specific non-English speaking region, but rather stems from the relationship between her own use of English and Anna's. As noted above, Anna's accent is identifiably English, and is therefore perceived as native while Lady Thiang's speech, when cast against Anna's, is shown to be lacking and therefore non-native. While this reflects the discourse of native-speakerism, which I discuss further in Section 5.4 below, it also illustrates how mimicry functions to uphold colonial differences.

In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" Homi Bhabha (1984) identifies colonial mimicry as a "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge." (p. 126). Mimicry, he notes, functions ironically in colonial

discourse as the “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*” (p. 126). Ultimately,

> the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. (p. 126).

Lady Thiang attempts to mimic Anna only for her mimicry to reveal her Otherness. This is true of Tuptim as well, however Tuptim is a little more persuasive. In contrast to Lady Thiang, Tuptim introduces herself according to English conventions, first stating her name and then informing Anna that she already speaks English (16:15). Here Tuptim’s syntax comes across as careful and calculated, something emphasized by her flat tone and slow but staccato delivery. Furthermore, she carefully enunciates each word while maintaining a confident and direct gaze toward Anna (Figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11. Tuptim looks up at Anna confidently while she introduces herself.

Tuptim's clear and careful speech is interesting in light of van Leeuwen's (1999) argument that

> Correct and clear 'diction', not expressivity and difference, were the aims of the dominant forms of 'educated' and 'professional' speech propagated by the key institutions of the nation-state, the education system and broadcasting." (p. 126-7).

According to this logic, Tuptim's speech should be interpreted as prestigious. And yet, when listened through her submissive posture and concentrated gaze, she too seems to be performing English for Anna rather than speaking it.

Looking to the storylines of both Lady Thiang and Tuptim, we can see how the differences in their English performance correlate with the extent to which each woman embraces the modern, 'scientific' values that Anna embodies (keeping in mind that her 'scientificness' stems from her failure to submit to the gendered social order of the harem). While Lady Thiang maintains respect for and submits to this order throughout the entire film, Tuptim is shown resisting it through her love story with Lun Tha, the man charged with presenting her to Mongkut. Aided by Anna, Tuptim and Lun Tha engage in a rendez-vous and the two secretly discuss Tuptim's escape (53:10). Her escape, however, is unsuccessful, as she is caught, threatened with physical punishment, and informed of Lun Tha's death (1:53:54 – 1:56:15). Tuptim's commitment to her freedom from the harem as reflected in her pursuit of monogamous love illustrates the promise of Anna's influence: the acceptance of modern values (see Glassmeyer, 2012 for more on the connection between monogamy and modernity). The sad end to her story, however, suggests that she remains confined to the gendered order of the harem and is unable to resist on her own. Anna is ultimately revealed as the only character able to step beyond this order and therefore the only one capable of moving Siam into the modern world.

5.3.4.3. Out with the Old, In with the New: Anna as a Mediator of Modernity. As Mentioned above, unlike Tuptim, Lady Thiang submits to the order of the harem. This is demonstrated by her commitment to Mongkut despite the polygamous nature of their relationship. One scene that specifically highlights this commitment occurs midway through the film, when Lady Thiang seeks Anna's help supporting Mongkut who is distressed by the increasing threat of surrounding colonial powers (1:03:10). When Anna suggests that her help is not needed given Lady Thiang's position in the palace, Lady Thiang contends that she herself is "not equal" to the King's "special needs" (1:04:40). She proceeds to sing the song "Something Wonderful", inviting Anna into a shared love and concern for her husband despite his flaws. This scene thus construes Anna as the only one who can help Mongkut since she is the only true embodiment of the scientificness needed to ensure Siamese modernization and its consequent independence. This is further cemented at the end of the film when Lady Thiang requests Anna's presence once again.

After witnessing Mongkut's rage toward Tuptim, Anna determines to leave Siam. Before she is about to leave, however, Lady Thiang comes to her room and tells her that the King is dying, requesting her presence at his deathbed (1:58:20). Lady Thiang is then joined by Prince Chulalongkorn who runs to Anna and declares "I am frightened Mrs. Anna. I am frightened because I love my father… and also because, if he dies, I shall be king… And I do not know how to be." (1:59:27). As Anna comforts him, Lady Thiang tells him that "It will be good to think back on all that Mrs. Anna has taught you" (1:59:46). Anna agrees to visit Mongkut, and the film's final scene takes place at his bedside. With everyone gathered around the King, Princess Ying Yaowalak, named for the first time, delivers an impassioned plea to Anna:

> Dear friend and teacher, my goodness, gracious! Do not go away. We are in great need of you. We are like one blind. Do not let us fall down in darkness. Continue good and sincere concern for us and lead us in right road. Your living pupil, Princess Ying Yaowalak. (2:06:44).

As a boat horn sounds in the background, the children beg for her to stay and she relents, removing her bonnet as they stand and cheer (2:08:05). After calling the children back to attention, the King calls on Chulalongkorn, instructing Anna to take notes “from next king” (2:09:00). Chulalongkorn announces that as king he would abolish the practice of prostration (2:09:48) and instructs the children to rise (2:11:02). In his final act, the King supports Chulalongkorn’s proclamation, passing away quietly as his son delivers a speech to his siblings. The film closes on a shot of Anna kneeling at his bedside as a reprise of “Something Wonderful” builds to a crescendo.

Figure 5.12. The King dies with Anna at his bedside.

This conclusion makes apparent the film's central conviction: Anna is indispensable to the future of Siam. The narrative arcs of the main characters – Tuptim, Lady Thiang, King Mongkut, and Prince Chulalongkorn – contribute to this. Tuptim, despite her mimicry of Anna's speech and values, is powerless in the face of the King's absolute power. This power, however, is shown to be antithetical to the modern future of Siam. Mongkut's inability to deliver Tuptim's punishment (1:55:40) points to his inability to fully adapt to modern values. This is directly connected to his death when Lady Thiang says to Anna "Who can say what it is that makes a man die. A sad heart that no longer wishes to go on beating?" (1: 58: 36). Far from an accurate representation of the real Mongkut's death, the film makes him a martyr of modernization. It is now Chulalongkorn, empowered by his Western 'scientific' education, who will usher Siam into the modern age. As Glassmeyer (2012) notes:

> Thus, like other films of this era, *The King and I* complexly offers to erase difference through education and succor, even as it reifies a revised notion of difference: wisdom and maturity are posited as the source of difference rather than embodied differences of race. Maturity will be reached when these Asian peoples embrace democracy. (p. 108)

While it could be argued that Chulalongkorn's abolition of prostration constitutes this embrace of democracy, his youth prevents its full realization. Anna, therefore, is not far behind.

In this final scene, all the children deem Anna's continued presence necessary, ultimately illuminating the parallel between Anna and Lady Thiang. From their first meeting, the women bond over their shared maternity. However, as a vestige of the old order, Lady Thiang acknowledges Anna's superiority as both wife and mother and freely hands her the reigns. It is Anna's counsel that inspires King Mongkut's best impulses, and it is Anna's teaching that will ensure King Chulalongkorn's success, not Lady Thiang's. The future of Siam necessitates the

passing away of the old order and the introduction of a new one. Anna, in her role as an educator and the embodiment of modern values ultimately emerges as the mediator of Siamese modernity.

5.4. Locating Teacher Anna: *The King and I* and the *Farang* Teacher

Before I conclude this chapter, I want to refocus on my overarching objective: locating the *farang* teacher within and across West-Thai encounter(s). As already established, *The King and I* is a valuable text through which to explore how the *farang* teacher begins to emerge as a product of such encounters. Returning to Ahmed's (2000) understanding of postcoloniality as being concerned with how "contemporary modes of proximity reopen prior histories of encounter." (p. 13), *The King and I* demonstrates how colonial conceptions of Self and Other can be adapted to new contexts in the interest of maintaining Western power over the East. By reimagining the 19th-century story of Anna Leonowens through the lens of contemporary geopolitical concerns, the creators of the film constructed Siam/Thailand as a nation in perpetual need of Western interference. Contemporary Thailand is ultimately represented as a product of historical Western tutelage. Moreover, the choice to have Anna present at Mongkut's deathbed signals the continued legitimacy of this relationship. Therefore, as Klein (2003) argues, under the veneer of popular discourses about cultural diplomacy and exchange, *The King and I* continues a long tradition of Orientalism. What is interesting, however, is the extent to which the critical perspectives introduced in Chapter 3 can be read back into the film in a way that complicates a single reading. While Klein (2003) is critical of the way the "March of the Siamese Children" suggests that "Anna does not impose modernization on the Siamese against their will, but rather that they request it." (p. 202), it is important to note the degree to which Siam/Thailand has engaged in the selective appropriation of, to quote the film's Mongkut, "what is good in Western culture" (13:15).

With that said, I do not want to argue that the film is accurate in its representation of the real Mongkut's interest in acquiring 'Western' knowledge. Rather, taking the film as "mediated and partial" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 15), I contend that while it casts this history through a particular ideological lens, the other side still slips through. It is correct to argue that the film legitimates Anna's continued presence in Siam by emphasizing her invitation to be there in order to soften the cultural chauvinism of its core premise. That said, this invitation can also be seen as a reflection of Siamese agency. For example, Mongkut uses Anna's knowledge of European culture to demonstrate Siam's 'civility' to the British ambassador. This agency, however, even extends beyond the King to encompass more marginalized characters. For example, both Lady Thiang and Tuptim appeal to Anna for help. While this can be read as a kind of White saviourism, it can also be read as an expression of agency on behalf of the women. A good example of this is when Lady Thiang first approaches Anna to help Mongkut. As mentioned above, the viewer is first introduced to Lady Thiang during the "March", at which time she is shown lacking English proficiency. Her lack of proficiency, however, is complicated by the film being written in English, so that this initial framing is challenged every time Lady Thiang speaks. Her fluid delivery of the song "Something Wonderful", during which she pleads her husband's case, therefore stands in stark contrast to her botched introduction. Although this initially points to her acceptance of harem life and her concession to Anna, it also works to subvert her supposed inadequacy. Here Lady Thiang draws on what resources she does have – including her proximity to Anna – to advocate for Mongkut, and, by extension, her nation. Anna, in her role, then, reflects the *farang* discourse.

As argued above, Anna functions as a disruptive force within the palace by virtue of her foreignness and therefore has a power inaccessible to the other women. Her foreignness is

largely connected to her ‘scientificness’, as it is her embodiment of modern (Western) values which allows her to step outside the gendered order of the harem. Returning to Kitiarsa (2010), Anna emerges as *farang* across two planes. The first has to do with her invitation to the palace and her mobilization by Mongkut in service to Siamese modernization. The second has to do with how proximity to her enables more marginalized characters to access power that they otherwise would not have. With Anna established as *farang*, then, it is important to further emphasize that she is a teacher. As is true of the real Anna Leonowens, the film’s Anna is in Siam to teach English. It has already been established that the real Mongkut employed Leonowens, among others, to teach his wives and children English since he believed it would help in securing Siamese independence (see Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). It has also been noted throughout the proceeding chapters that the period during which *The King and I* was released coincides with the explosion of English as an international language, something both facilitated and taken advantage of by discourses of cultural exchange. Anna’s *farangness* then, has much to do with the interlocking discourses of native-speakerism and raciolinguisitic essentialism. Ultimately, Anna is invited to Siam based on her ability to teach “the better English” (15:46). This ability stems from her ‘nativeness’ which, compared to the non-native speech of the other characters, also serves as a marker of her racial and cultural difference. As demonstrated above, however, Anna engages in very little formal instruction and instead her pedagogical function is revealed to be about the inculcation of cultural values rather than linguistic norms. This upholds native-speakerism as discussed in Chapter 2, since Anna is cast as an ideal English language teacher, not because of her superior linguistic capacity, but because of her presumably superior cultural capacity.

Overall, then, we see the importance of *The King and I* for understanding the cultural politics of ELT in contemporary Thailand. Not only does the film represent two important periods in the historical relationship between Thailand and the West, but it also offers Anna Leonowens, a White English teacher, as a mediator between two worlds. As a Western produced film, it is unsurprising that Anna conforms to the discourses of Orientalism, native-speakerism, and raciolinguistic essentialism. It is interesting, however, that a deconstructive lens allows for a reading of Anna as *farang,* illustrating how the ideal English teacher is recontextualized within Siam/Thailand through the process of encounter. With that in mind, I want to jump forward to my second case study, wherein I offer an analysis of a popular travel website to illustrate how the *farang* teacher presents today. In doing so, I return to my findings here to consider more deeply how the *farang* teacher emerges within and across West-Thai encounter(s).

5.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have sought to position *The King and I* as an iteration of the Anna myth defined by a particular set of Cold War-era US-Thai relations and therefore a text through which to read West-Thai encounter(s). Using SF-MDA and various tools for the analysis of sound and gesture, I have explored how Anna is constructed in relation to the film's other characters across the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. At the ideational level, Anna emerges as a foreigner within a hierarchical world governed by the institutional power of the King to which submission is assumed and in service to which successful national representation is required. This world is highly gendered, and it is Anna's failure to conform to gendered expectations that reveals the disruptive nature her foreignness presents to the current world order. Anna's de-gendering further contributes to her construction as the just and rational protagonist with which the viewer is encouraged to identify. That is to say, at the interpersonal level, Anna emerges in

opposition to the King who is made into feminized spectacle. The Self/Other binary that is upheld by this distinction ultimately supports the film's central discourse. Textually, Anna functions as the sole agent of modernity, serving as a template of Siamese mimicry and outliving a passing world order.

The above findings considered, I have argued that Anna emerges as a character that upholds the discourses of native-speakerism and raciolinguistic essentialism. Anna's 'nativeness' serves as her credentials; she is presumed to be a capable English teacher because she is a 'native' speaker. Furthermore, the differences between her English and that of the other characters serve as markers of racial difference, so that otherwise Caucasian actors are read as non-native speakers and consequently non-White. The cultural motivation underlying native-speakerism, however, is made clear through the film's overarching narrative, which, in keeping with Klein's (2003) analysis, positions an Americanized English teacher as the embodiment of the cultural values needed for Siam to resist colonial oppression and enter the modern world. While the film is produced from an American perspective, however, the work of critical Thai Studies makes it possible to read beyond the lines so that Anna's invitation to Siam can be seen as an example of Siamese agency. Overall, then, we see how the Anna myth helps to illustrate how West-Thai encounter(s) have given rise to the figure of the *farang* teacher.

6. Teach in Thailand: Situated TEFL Discourses in the Shadow of Anna Leonowens

As already established, the emphasis on English language education set into motion by King Mongkut in the mid-19th century has carried through to today, so that, as recently as 2021 (see Post Reporters, 2021, February 25) the Thai government has been seeking to acquire more NESTs in the interest of increasing Thai English proficiency. These actions ultimately play into a growing international TEFL industry that has sought to respond to the demand for English education created by the emergence of English as an international language. Interestingly, this industry has grown alongside a proliferating Thai tourism industry that was set in motion by the pressures of economic globalization and built upon the remnants of Vietnam war-era entertainment infrastructure. The neoliberal underpinnings of globalization have moreover created a discursive environment in which global mobility has become one mode through which individuals might increase their cultural capital. This mobility, however, is largely determined by one's access to certain privileges, whether that be Whiteness, financial affluence, a 'strong' passport, and/or English proficiency.

These privileges map onto the traits of the ideal English language teacher so that TEFL presents itself as a natural medium through which to engage in global mobility. Both Thailand's emphasis on English language education, with its prioritization of NESTs, and its development as an idyllic paradise in the Western tourism imaginary have created the conditions necessary for TEFL and tourism to collide. It is within this context – the intersection of Western desire for Thailand as place and the proliferation of TEFL as a global industry – that the *farang* teacher can emerge through embodied West-Thai encounter(s). One of the most popular modes through which these encounters are facilitated is the Internet, since, as Ruecker and Ives (2015) argue, "… one of the first places someone interested in seeking an ELT job abroad goes is the Internet."

(p. 734). With this in mind, the following chapter is built around an analysis of three webpages belonging to the website gooverseas.com, which was selected due to its frequency and high ranking in Google search results for phrases related to teaching English in Thailand. Following a similar approach to that used in the previous chapter, I employ the tools and principles of SF-MDA to explore the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings produced through these pages. I then reflect on my findings through the lens of their social context, drawing on Ahmed's (2000) understanding of postcoloniality to explore how these pages serve to "reopen prior histories of encounter." (p. 13), such as those represented in the life of Anna Leonowens and her portrayal in *The King and I*. Finally, I conclude with a consideration of how sites like gooversea.com, and the cultural discourses that they uphold, produce the conditions necessary for the *farang* teacher to emerge.

6.1. From Diplomacy to Profession to Industry: The Evolution of ELT Under Global Capitalism

It has hereto been established that the English language underwent a global expansion in the aftermath of WWII and that some of the earliest and most influential mechanisms of this expansion were organizations with ties to the geopolitical agendas of both Britain and the United States. It was The British Council, however, that contributed most to the formal development of ELT as a practice and profession. As Smith (2015) notes: "... in a very literal sense, The British Council can be said to have 'invented' ELT". While ELT practice existed in both Britain and the United States prior to the establishment of The British Council (see Howatt, 1984), a growing emphasis on teaching English to non-English speakers sparked moves toward more intensive professionalization. On the American front, this is evidenced by the establishment of TESOL (today, TESOL International) in 1966. TESOL was ultimately the result of "professional concern

over the lack of a single, all-inclusive professional organization that might bring together teachers and administrators at all educational levels with an interest in teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL).". (TESOL International Association., n.d.). Today, TESOL International is a professional association encompassing both TESL and TEFL practitioners, reflecting members who work with speakers of other languages in both traditionally English-speaking and non-English speaking countries. The professionalization of ELT during the mid-20th century speaks to how the global spread of English led to increased interest in training for teachers and evidence-based practice. That said, as globalization intensified throughout the late-20th century, propelled by neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, and free trade, ELT, and TESOL more specifically, exploded into a largely decentralized industry.

Today's regime of neoliberal globalization, with its emphasis on the free flow of capital, people, and ideas, has contributed to the commodification of English language skills. This has resulted in English becoming a form of cultural capital necessary for participation in a global market economy (see Bourdieu, 1986; Gray, 2010). The demand that this commodification produced has led to the popular transformation of TESOL into a lucrative industry. For example, alongside a continued commitment to the promotion of British culture, The British Council boasts its contribution to the UK's "prosperity". In its most recent corporate plan, the Council claims it generates over £400 million annually for the UK economy (British Council, 2022, p. 4) and describes its strategy to reach "more customers in more places" through digital services (p. 9). The report estimates that English teaching and assessment is a $38 billion dollar industry (p. 24), from which the Council continues to generate revenue through IELTS testing, English learning centres, consultation, and professional development (p. 30). They are far from alone in benefiting from the commodification of English language skills, however. A quick Google

search for “TESOL” reveals the extent to which the industry has expanded to encompass prestigious universities, private businesses, humanitarian organizations, and travel agencies, with a wide variety of offerings for both teachers and students alike.

One of the outcomes of this expansion are the many avenues through which individuals can seek certification as teachers. Unlike national education systems, in which teachers are generally expected to attend recognized training programs and acquire appropriate licensing, standards for TESOL practitioners vary extensively both within and between nations. This is particularly relevant to TEFL, since the appeal of world travel seems to attract individuals more interested in global mobility than career advancement (Stainton, 2018b). Perhaps the most common product offered by TEFL-oriented education providers is the 120-hour TEFL certification, often delivered fully online. Despite a wide range of entry and licensing requirements from country to country, popular providers like The TEFL Org continue to claim that “the vast majority of employers” require 120-hour TEFL qualification (*TEFL certification*, 2020, July 17). Furthermore, while claims of accreditation abound, even they concede that “There is no over-arching accrediting body for TEFL courses” and that “providers can hold accreditation from a wide range of bodies” thus requiring would-be teachers to do their own “research” (*TEFL certification*, 2020, July 17). This suggests a crisis of professionalism within TEFL. The ease by which individuals can access ‘credentials' creates an educational landscape rife with potential for ulterior motives, such as, for example, the realization of personal aspirations for global mobility that are influenced by neoliberal discourse.

6.2. TEFL and Global Mobility

When I refer to neoliberal discourse, I am referring to how the structural legitimacy of neoliberal policies are upheld through the absorption of every facet of human life into the logic of the free market. Which is to say, neoliberalism discursively constructs society as one in which all individuals are imagined to be self-maximizing decision makers within a global marketplace, strategically accumulating an ever-expanding array of social, cultural, and material capital to be competitive. As Mancinelli (2020) demonstrates in her research on digital nomads, neoliberalism is intimately connected to aspirations of global mobility. Drawing on theories of lifestyle mobilities and individualization, she argues that digital nomadism represents a mode by which those with means – often White, usually affluent holders of 'strong passports' - exercise their privilege to choose mobile lifestyles in the pursuit of self-realization. She notes how participants in her study maintained their lifestyles by adapting to “the logic of the dominant neoliberal order” (p. 434), drawing on the material and cultural capital afforded them by virtue of their countries of origin. The connection between lifestyle mobilities and ELT work has been further explored by Codó (2018), who claims

> ELT is one of the most emblematic fields in which English-speaking ‘working tourists’ have inserted themselves globally over the past 30 or 40 years, in parallel with the rising of English as a global commodity. (p. 439).

In ELT specifically, the ubiquity of the ideal English language teacher ensures that the same privileges capitalized on by Mancinelli’s (2020) nomads are equally available to potential teachers since, as Codó (2018) continues, “This form of employment is grounded on and at the same time reinforces ideologies of native-speakerism, purism and authenticity still associated to standard English.” (p. 439).

The relationship between tourism and the TEFL industry has been addressed by Stainton (2018a; 2018b), who coins the term "TEFL tourist" to refer to "a person who travels outside of their usual environment to teach English as a foreign language, whose role shifts between tourist, educator and educate at various points in their trip" (Stainton, 2018b, p. 128). The extent to which TEFL teachers identify with the tourist image, however, likely varies, and Stainton (2018b) further demonstrates how teachers tend to move fluidly back and forth along a spectrum of teaching typologies that include leisure-minded, philanthropy-minded, career-minded, and expatriate-minded orientations (p. 137). With that said, research continues to point to travel as a primary motivator for those engaging in TEFL (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016) and the predominance of travel themes in online TEFL recruitment discourse (Durdle, 2022b; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). The existence of TEFL tourism, and the spectrum of typologies under the TEFL tourism banner, suggest that TEFL is being used to facilitate individual aspirations for global mobility. This is true not only of NESTs from Western countries but extends to individuals from countries traditionally associated with economic migration (Hickey, 2018). That said, it remains that the inequalities underlying the image of the ideal English language teacher continue to impact who has access to the most prestigious forms of TEFL-facilitated global mobility. As noted in Chapter 3, this is particularly true in Thailand, a country that has a long history in the tourist imaginary of the West.

6.2.1. Thailand in the Tourist Imaginary

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Orientalist representations of Thailand/Siam have existed in Western popular culture for some time, first in the form of travel writing and then later in audiovisual mediums like theatre and film. As one of the most popular representations of Thailand, *The King and I* presents an image of the nation as rich and ancient, enveloping viewers

in a world of bright colours, exotic rituals, ornate dress, and gracefully submissive women. Today, travel blogging and vlogging continue this tradition of representation, as Oh and Oh (2017) note: "like past colonial travel writing, white expat vlogs are global texts about the exotic other" (p. 698). The online proliferation of these "global texts" demonstrates how the advent of social media platforms in tandem with the expansion of cheaper, more accessible modes of international transportation have created the conditions for an increasing number of people to produce and distribute representations of "the exotic other". While it would be disingenuous to say that these representations are unidirectional, reflecting the perspectives of Western travellers alone, research suggests that this phenomenon does tend to recapitulate colonial impulses in the form of "performative travel to and in the Global South" by those in the Global North (Putcha, 2020, p. 451; see also Ogden, 2021). Owing to its tropical climate, relative political stability, Buddhist heritage (see Choe & O'Regan, 2020), low cost of living and manageable entry requirements, Thailand is a very popular destination for the "Global North forms of engagement" (p. 451) that Putcha (2020) describes. Contemporary images of Thailand as a tropical, spiritual, and exotic paradise, however, have their origins in older representations of the nation and the geopolitical context of those representations.

As Morgan (2008) notes, the Special Logistics Agreement Thailand (SLAT) of 1963, which governed the United States military's use of Thailand as a base from which to fight the Vietnam war, ensured that U.S. servicemen could take rest and recreation in the country. She further highlights that such a move "made sense to Americans, who had grown up on Hollywood images of Siam as a land of lovely and docile women, polygamy, and harems" (p. 221). Today, alongside promises of hot weather, beautiful beaches, ancient temples, and delicious food, the allure of sexuality continues to lurk not-so-far-under the surface. Beyond short term tourism,

Thailand's history with American servicemen has heavily influenced expat demographics. While it is hard to determine just how many Western expats/migrants live in Thailand, research has shown evidence of a "strongly gendered migration" with some Western men seeking out, among other things, the promise of "attractive sexual partners" (Howard, 2009, p. 217). This is further supported by Maher and Lafferty's (2014) research exploring the lives of White, Western men in relationships with women in Thailand's Northeast, a region particularly impacted by U.S. military imperialism. While a recent surge in Chinese tourism has had an impact on the gender ratio of incoming visitors, Thailand has long appealed to male tourists (Tanakasempipat, 2017, October 20). This is not only the result of exoticized Western representations, however, and is reflected in how the Thai state itself has built and advertised its tourism industry.

Similar to other 'developing' nations, the Thai economy is largely dependent on tourism. In 2019, tourism contributed an estimated 11.5% of the country's GDP, and while the COVID-19 pandemic caused a big hit to the industry, trends suggest the nation will see a return to pre-pandemic levels (Biswas, 2023, March 28). Van Esterik (2000/2020) traces the build up of this contemporary industry to 1980, when the World Bank "advised Thailand to develop tourism as a means of accumulating foreign exchange" (p. 179). This industry, then, has become intwined with the Thai state's efforts to craft its national image in an increasingly globalized world through the codification and packaging of Thai 'culture'. She argues that

> The marketing of Thai culture domestically and to foreign visitors subsidizes or underwrites the cost of efforts to preserve Thai culture seen to be under threat by Western ways. Like many developing countries with rich heritages, Thailand sells itself abroad by commodifying its culture and traditions (Van Esterik, 2000/2020, p. 124 citing Reynolds, 1991, p. 15).

It is important to note, however, that this is in part a domestic project since "Thailand appeals to tourists but the public culture that appeals is constructed for and by Thai… that public culture exoticizes and reifies Thailand's image to enhance the country's international reputation and tourist appeal." (p. 36).

Central to Van Esterik's (2000/2020) overarching thesis, is how representations of Thai women have been mobilized in the construction of Thai material culture. Within the context of West-Thai encounter(s), this naturally has implications for how tourist advertising is conceptualized and received. While the Thai government continues to resist the nation's status as a popular sex destination both rhetorically (Reuters Staff, 2018, February 28) and in terms of enforcement (Amendral, 2021, February 3), it is difficult shed. Since the 1990s the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has even crafted campaigns targeting woman tourists in an effort to clean up the country's image (see Tanakasempipat, 2017, October 20; Van Esterik, 2000/2020, p. 124). The domestic sex industry, however, is a multibillion-dollar industry that, despite legislation making much of it effectively illegal, continues as a lucrative underground economy (Wadekar, 2023, February 15). It is arguably inevitable that the tourism and sex industries will remain enmeshed, especially since the industry's flashiest manifestations have deep roots in the history of West-Thai encounter(s). Ultimately, "The American military presence in Thailand changed the public display of prostitution" (Van Esterik, 2000/2020, p. 175), and the industry buildup encouraged by the World Bank in 1980 was done on the back of an already established infrastructure:

> Building on the supply of both prostitutes and 'entertainment places' in Bangkok, and the demand of male tourists, sex tourism expanded in the 1970s in a form more blatant and diverse than anywhere else in the world. (p. 179-80).

Today, travel vloggers continue to present Thailand not only as a rich cultural paradise, but as a world full of young, beautiful, submissive, and available Thai women akin to the harem image perpetuated by *The King and I* so many years ago (Durdle, 2022a). While this is not the only image of Thailand, and perhaps not even the most popular, it continues to lurk just below the surface.

When considering how Thailand takes shape in a Western tourist imaginary, particularly in relation to those interested in TEFL, we have to consider both the surface and underlying appeal of the country. In her research with TEFL tourists, Staiton (2018b) found that 85% of those seeking out Thailand as a TEFL destination were interested in Thai culture (p. 136). That said, 6% admitted to an interest is sex-oriented nightlife and 16% to an interest in seeking out romantic relationships with locals (p. 136). In his research, Howard (2009) found that a number of his male participants had taken up TEFL teaching as a way to support themselves in Thailand and Perez-Amurao and Sunanta (2020) found that while teaching is a traditionally feminized field, NESTs in Thailand tend to be male and are often absolved of the gendered expectations placed on NNESTs (p. 117). Ultimately, TEFL in Thailand is embedded within a long history of West-Thai encounter(s) that have given rise to a particular tourist imaginary on the part of the West. Moreover, the extent to which TEFL is influenced by this imaginary has been demonstrated by research into online TEFL recruitment discourses (see Ruecker & Ives, 2015). With this in mind, I too look to the Internet for this case study.

6.3. Methodology

As Ruecker and Ives (2015) argue, "… one of the first places someone interested in seeking an ELT job abroad goes is the Internet." (p. 734). I have therefore turned to the Internet, and more specifically Google search, to identify texts through which to explore TEFL as a

contemporary mode of encounter that gives rise to the *farang* teacher. In this section, then, I provide a brief description of how I selected the text under analysis as well as a more detailed description of Djonov and Knox's (2014) model for analyzing webpages referenced in Chapter 5.

6.3.1. Data Collection and Background Information

I have chosen to build this case study around an analysis of the travel program advertiser gooverseas.com. While this website does not focus exclusively on TEFL or Thailand, it was selected from a small dataset collected for a 2022 pilot study exploring how the topic of teaching in Thailand gets constructed through Google search results (see Durdle, 2022b). Data were collected from June 5th to June 8th, 2022, and the process involved manually cataloguing the top ten search results for each of the search phrases "teaching in Thailand", "teaching English in Thailand", "TEFL Thailand" and "teaching requirements in Thailand". Search phrases were selected to reflect what an average English-speaking person might search if they were interested in more information about teaching in Thailand. Moreover, while the original study included search results drawn from three search "locations"[4], due to the present study's focus on West-Thai encounter(s), only the United States results were considered here.

The United States dataset consisted of 27 unique sources, 14 (52%) of which were determined to be primarily travel focused. The website selected for the present study was therefore chosen in part due to its topical conformity to the majority of results. However, both frequency and ranking were considered as well. While gooverseas.com was not the most frequently occurring source, it was the second most, appearing four times across the dataset and accounting for three distinct webpages. Furthermore, it was highly ranked, appearing as either

[4] Search locations were operationalized using a VPN service and manually setting the location on Google. They included South Africa, the United States, and the Philippines.

the first or second non-ad result for each search term. Finally, while the initial result links were gathered in June of 2022, the following analysis was conducted using a combination of screenshots taken on September 11, 2023, and navigating through the site from September 11 through September 30, 2023.

6.3.2. Reading Webpages

The following analysis was conducted using Djonov and Knox's (2014) model for analyzing webpages. The authors approach webpages within the context of websites, defining a website as "a group of hypertext mark-up language (HTML) documents, or webpages, housed within the same WWW domain" (p. 173). In their sample analysis, Djonov and Knox (2014) focus on a website homepage, "considering its relationship to other webpages within the same website" where necessary (p. 174). Rather than analyze homepages however, I have chosen to analyze the three gooversea.com pages that surfaced through Google search, as discussed above. That said, I have positioned them within the context of the website as a whole, and therefore similarly consider their relationship to other webpages where necessary. Moreover, in keeping with Safiya Noble's (2018) observation that "Search does not merely present pages but structures knowledge…" (p. 148), I have also remained cognizant of how these pages fit within the results pages from which they were linked.

Analytically, Djonov and Knox's (2014) approach webpages as "visual units" since "In complex multimodal documents of this kind, visual design is key to organising meanings on and beyond the page" (p. 171). With this in mind, they draw on the field of web design as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design (for most recent edition see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). Their overarching method conforms to the principles of SF-MDA, and relies on

the adaptation of Halliday's metafunctions into a series of guiding questions, presented as follows:

1) **Page and Purpose**: *What is the purpose of the website and webpage under analysis?*

2) **Ideational Meanings**: *What content is included on or excluded from the page? How is the content on the page classified? What logico-semantic relations reveal the organisation of content of the website as a whole?*

3) **Interpersonal Meanings***: How is the content presented to the reader (e.g. as rational, factual, or sensational)? What kind of relationship is construed visually between the reader, the content, and the author? How does the webpage align users attitudinally towards the website and its content?*

4) **Textual Meanings***: How is the page composed to make each screen, and the entire page a meaningful 'whole'? To what extent does the homepage reveal the organisation of the website as a whole? What navigation choices does it offer and privilege? Does it support user orientation?*

5) **Social Context and Interpretation***: In what ways are the multimodal and hypermodal structures of the webpage and their meanings related to social context? How can you explain these relations?*

(Djonov and Knox, 2014, p. 175).

The below analysis largely follows these same categories and questions, with the "textual meanings" section changed to reflect my chosen webpages and their context:

Textual Meanings*: How is the page composed to make each screen, and the entire page a meaningful 'whole'? How is the page related to the website as a whole? How is the page related to the Google results page from which it was linked?*

Furthermore, in light of my overarching objective, I have approached the question of social context through Ahmed's (2000) postcoloniality and the reopening of "prior histories of encounter" (p. 13). It is in Section 6.4.5, then, that I consider these webpages through the lens of the previous chapter, contextualizing them within a history of West-Thai encounter(s) and reflecting on how the *farang* teacher emerges through the text.

6.4. Analysis: gooverseas.com

gooverseas.com is the domain name for Go Overseas, a US-based company and website whose business revolves around advertising for third-party travel program providers. The company refers to itself as a "community reviews site" where users can "explore & discover international, culturally immersive programs, trips, and jobs" to their "heart's delight" (*how go overseas works,* 2019, April 24). Overall, Go Overseas offers travel program providers both paid and free advertising space on their site and offers travel-seekers a search database through which to easily identify, compare, and save programs of interest according to type, location, and duration. In addition, Go Overseas boasts thousands of travel-related articles and even offers scholarships based on the notion that "travel should be accessible, not a luxury" (*About go*, 2019, March 8).

6.4.1. Page and Purpose

Starting with the website's homepage, it is clear that the primary purpose of Go Overseas is to connect users with various travel-abroad programs. When a visitor first navigates to gooverseas.com they are met with a large image of a man in hiking gear looking over a mountain

range (Figure 6.1). This image spans the full width of the screen and serves as the background for the heading "Discover meaningful programs abroad". Beneath the heading is a description which reads

> Go Overseas is your guide to 15,000+ programs that will change how you see the world. Read 50,000+ community reviews to help you choose your next adventure.

Below these words there is a blue rectangle that reads "Explore Programs". This functions as a dropdown menu of program categories including "TEFL Courses", "Teaching Abroad", "Internships Abroad", "Study Abroad", "Language Schools", "Volunteer Abroad", "Gap Year", and "High School Abroad". The primacy of this combination of elements clearly communicates to the user that this website is intended to connect them with travel programs that go beyond the typical tourist experience. It goes deeper than this, however, as this banner points to an

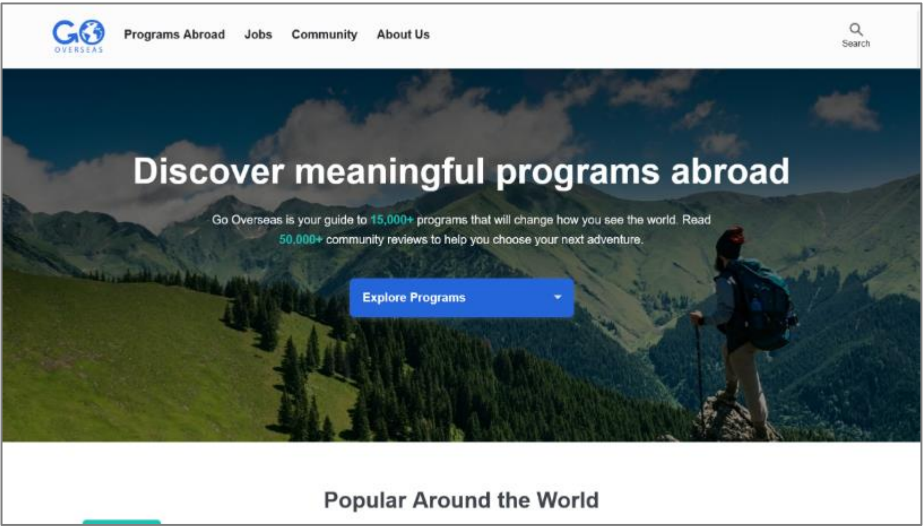


Figure 6.1. gooverseas.com homepage banner.

underlying ideological position. Phrases like "*meaningful* programs" [emphasis added] suggest that the company sees travel as holding some sort of existential value. Furthermore, the use of direct language (i.e. "programs that will change how *you* see the world" [emphasis added]) and

the image of a man standing alone in a landscape suggest an individualist orientation. It can be concluded that the programs Go Overseas advertises are “meaningful” because of their ability to facilitate personal transformation.

6.4.1.1. Teach English in Thailand. This page was the first non-ad result for the phrases “Teaching in Thailand” and "Teaching English in Thailand”. The first screen of the page features a prominent search bar located beneath a heading that reads “Teach English in Thailand”, which is set over an image of a beach lined with traditional longtail boats (Figure 6.4). Scrolling down the page reveals various content sections dedicated to program advertisements, a teaching in Thailand “guide”, recent program reviews, job board postings, featured articles, and links to other country pages, all arranged in a vertical order. The page serves three main purposes:

1) To help users locate programs meant to facilitate their interest in teaching in Thailand.

2) To ensure users find programs suited to their specific preferences with regard to location, duration, pay, and work setting.

3) To present Go Overseas as both knowledgeable about the regions their providers work in and a source of authoritative information on teaching English in Thailand.

6.4.1.2. TEFL Courses in Thailand. The second page under analysis was the second non-ad result for the phrase “TEFL Thailand” and is almost identical to the “Teach English in Thailand” page. It features a banner with the heading “TEFL Courses in Thailand” atop an image of a mountain-top rice field (Figure 6.4). Immediately below the heading is another search bar, followed by similar content sections arranged in a vertical formation. Like the above page, this page has the following aims:

1) To help users locate programs meant to facilitate their interest in completing a TEFL course in Thailand.

2) To ensure users find programs suited to their specific preferences with regard to location, program type, and certification.

3) To present Go Overseas as both knowledgeable about the regions their providers work in and a source of authoritative information on TEFL courses in Thailand.

6.4.1.3. How to Get an ESL Teaching Job in Thailand. The final page under analysis was the first non-ad result for the search phrase "Teaching Requirements in Thailand". It is markedly different from the other two pages, serving as host to an informational article formatted as a step-by-step guide to getting an English teaching job in Thailand. It should be noted that the publishing date listed on the article is May 15th, 2023, but the link used to navigate to it was collected in June 2022. It appears then, to be an updated version of a previous guide. The article itself covers the types of schools offering employment, Thai government requirements for entry and licensing, steps for how to prepare and conduct a job search, salary estimates for each type of school, and concludes with a section of job postings. The purpose of this page, then, is:

1) To provide users with information about teaching in Thailand.

2) To position Go Overseas as a source of authoritative information on teaching in Thailand.

6.4.2. Ideational Meanings

In this section, I explore how webpage content is organized and classified as well as the relations between webpages and what these relations say about the organization of gooverseas.com as a whole. I start first with the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL

Courses in Thailand" pages, asking what content is included on/excluded from the webpages and how that content is classified. In doing so, I rely on Djonov and Knox's (2014) approach to zones and content taxonomies, which is, in part, rooted in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) notion of conceptual representations. I then turn to the article "How to Get an ESL Job in Thailand", using the webpage as a jumping off point from which to consider the role of logico-semantic relations in understanding how the website is organized. Here I look to Djonov (2005), drawing on her approach to analysing logico-semantic relations in hypermedia.

What content is included on or excluded from the page? How is the content on the page classified?

As Djonov and Knox (2014) note,

> The spatial organisation of the webpage is an important resource for 'packaging' meaning. Different content may be placed in different 'zones' on the page, and a range of visual devices can be used to distribute content on the page, and to classify information. (p. 176).

Therefore, when attempting to identify ideational meanings, it is important to "consider the broad structure of the page" (p. 176). As noted, both the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand" share the same structure, while the article page differs considerably. All pages, however, share two of the same "navigation zones", zones which serve the "dual purpose of providing navigation links and classifying the content on the website." (p. 178).

The first navigation zone is a white bar that runs across the very top of each webpage (Figure 6.2). In the top-left corner there is a blue Go Overseas logo which serves as a link to the website's homepage. Four navigation options are also located in the left half of the zone, all written in black. Running from left to right these include: "Programs Abroad", "Jobs",

"Community", and "About Us". Hovering over each of these activates a drop-down menu containing links to related sub-sections. Finally, there is a magnifying glass labeled "search" located in the far-right corner. This icon serves as a link to a page that allows for keyword searches for guides/articles as well as navigation to programs by type.

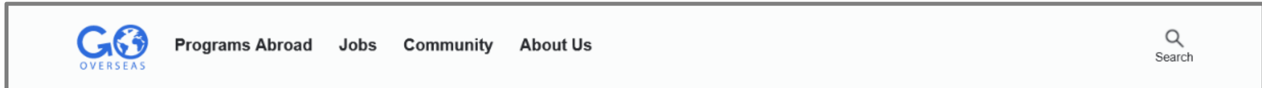


Figure 6.2. gooverseas.com top navigation zone/bar.

The second navigation zone is located at the bottom of each webpage and is demarcated by a transition from the off-white background of the main page to a royal blue background (Figure 6.3). The website's "signature", composed of a white Go Overseas logo and the site's vision statement, can be found in the upper left portion of this zone. Below this is a subscription box for the site's newsletter followed by the site's trademark. Located in the right half of the zone are three columns with the bold headings "Company", "Providers" and "Community", each containing a list of hyperlinked subheadings relevant to their respective column heading. Finally, located immediately beneath these columns are four social media icons linking to external pages.

Figure 6.3. Bottom gooverseas.com navigation zone/bar.

Turning now to the “Teach English in Thailand” and “TEFL Courses in Thailand” pages, both contain a banner (featuring an image of a Thai landscape and the webpage heading) and a content zone. Both also feature a search bar that overlaps with the banner and content zone, lending a sense of connectedness to each page’s first screen (Figure 6.4). Finally, the content zones of each page share the same broad structure of vertically stacked content sections demarcated by section headings. Users, then, must scroll down to see everything on the page.

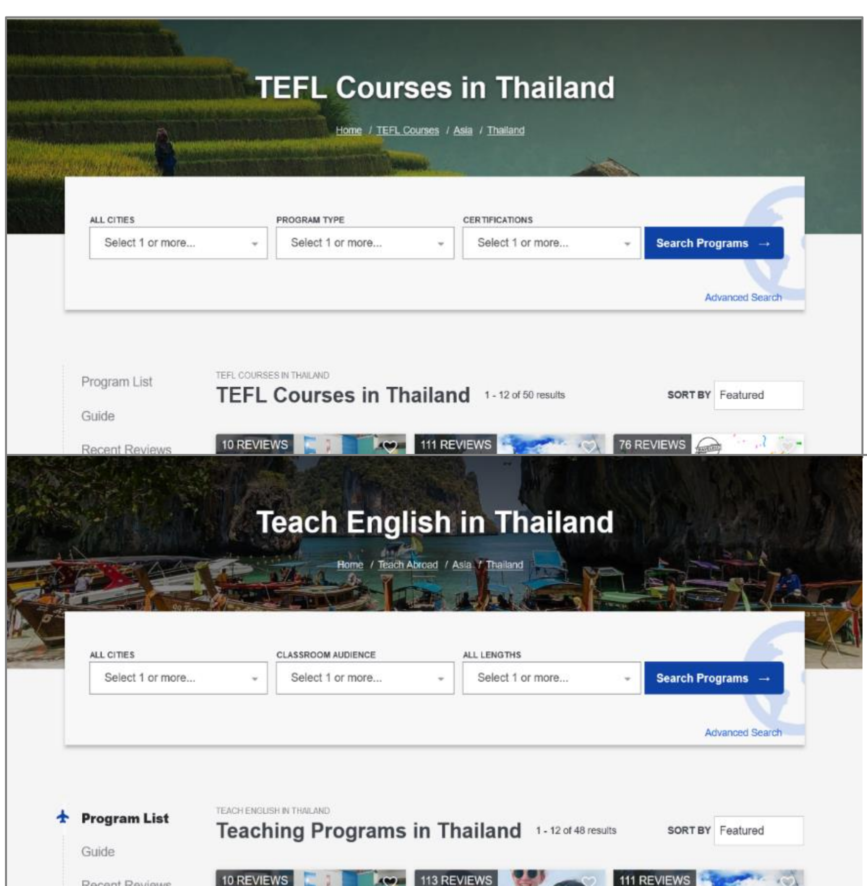


Figure 6.4. (T) "TEFL Courses in Thailand" first screen. (B) "Teach English in Thailand" first screen.

Content is further organized by a sort of navigation zone within the content zone. This zone is located to the left of each page and includes the same six options (“Guide”, “Recent Reviews”, “Read Articles”, “FAQs”, and “Popular Cities”) in order of their appearance. As a user scrolls, this list remains in the top left corner of the page, transitioning from one heading to the next as the corresponding section appears on the screen, denoted by a combination of bold text and a small, blue airplane icon (Figure 6.5). Users can also choose to navigate to a particular section of content by clicking on the appropriate heading.

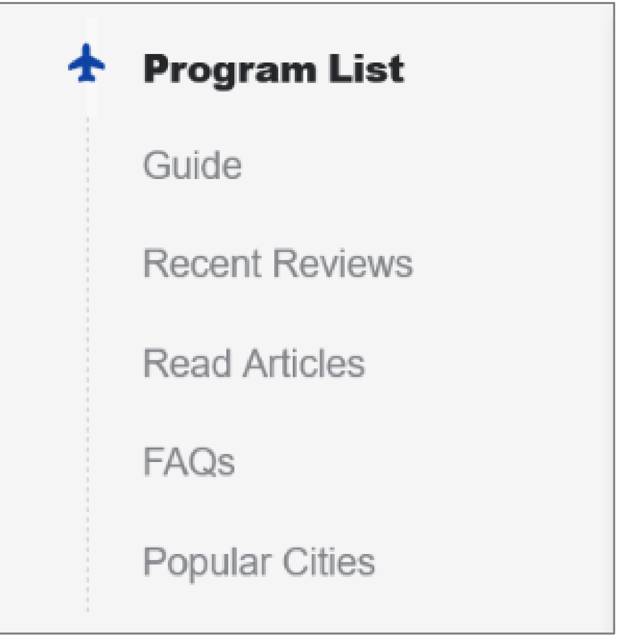


Figure 6.5. Content zone navigation menu for both "TEFL Course in Thailand" and "Teach English in Thailand" webpages.

The content zones of these two pages can be understood to construe “a taxonomy of information” (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 178), which is to say that the layout of each page serves to classify the information therein. These taxonomies are predominately “overt”, in that they are composed of sections of information demarcated by descriptive headings (see Kress and van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 82). Following Djonov and Knox (2014), I have mapped these taxonomies to better communicate the classification of information on each page (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). In both

instances, italic text indicates covert categories (categories unnamed on the webpage) while categories that contain an asterisk are not listed in the navigation menu shown in Figure 6.5 but are equal in level to other content sections as indicated by their heading style.

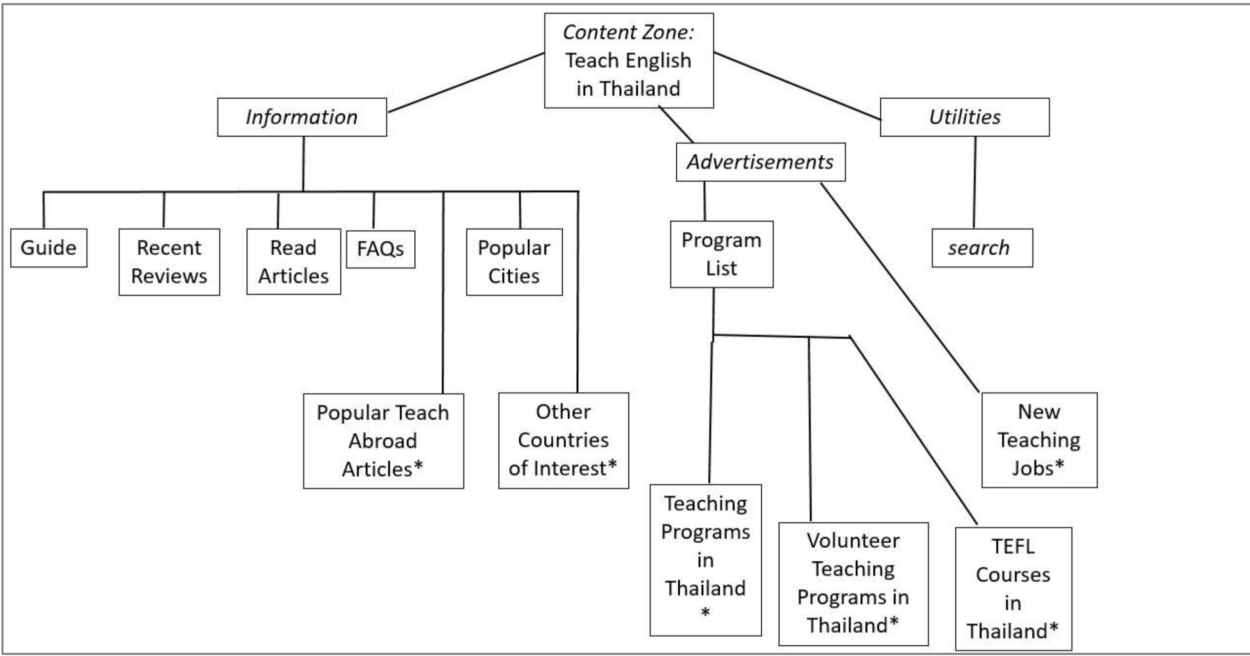


Table 6.1. "Teach English in Thailand" content taxonomy.

As demonstrated by the taxonomy maps, the layout of these two pages initially suggests a bias toward information over advertising and utility, as there is, generally speaking, more space dedicated to informational content. The number of informational sections located beneath the topical headings “Teach English in Thailand” and “TEFL Courses in Thailand” suggest that both pages function as “all you need to know” primers on their respective topics. That said, the overall composition of these pages does not support such a simplistic interpretation. In fact, it can be argued that these pages revolve around advertising, with utility working to support this central function. While this is discussed in more detail in the section on textual meanings, the salience of the search bars and “Program List” sections indicates the centrality of user-directed discovery of advertised programs over the delivery of information. With that said, that these pages present as

containing "all you need to know" highlights the way information is used to keep users on gooverseas.com, increasing the likelihood that they will consider registering for an advertised program. This phenomenon is further demonstrated by the hypertextual logico-semantic relations discussed below. Before switching gears, however, I want to quickly consider what is included and excluded from the content zones of these pages and what this says about how the topic of teaching in Thailand is constructed on gooverseas.com.

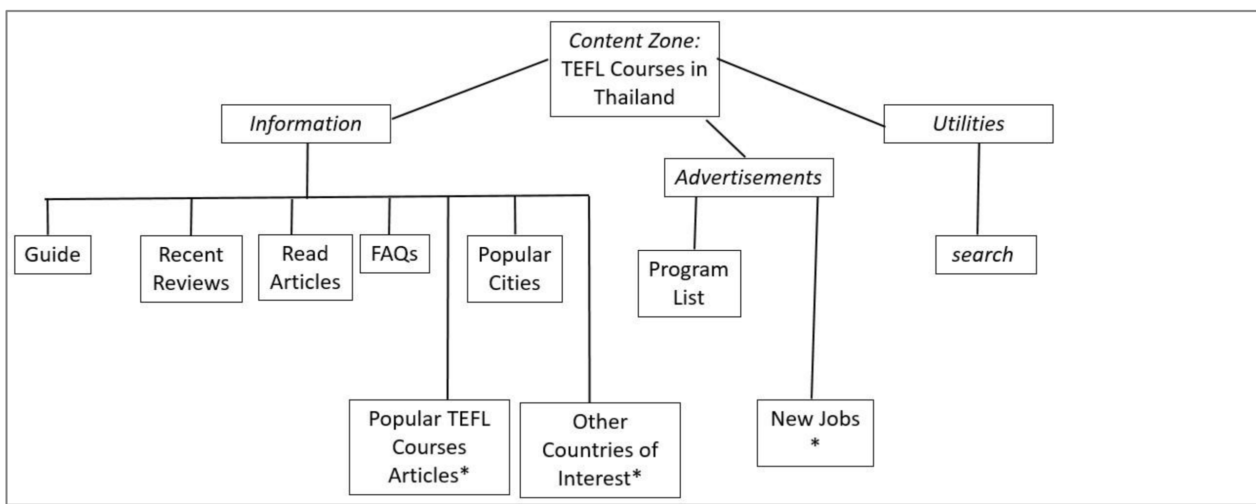


Table 6.2. "TEFL Courses in Thailand" content taxonomy.

While the information on these pages is important for understanding how the topic of teaching in Thailand is represented, perhaps what is more revealing is what is excluded. For example, the "Popular Cities" section of both pages only include links to Bangkok (Teach English in Thailand) and Bangkok and Ko Samui (TEFL Courses in Thailand). Furthermore, the "Cities" dropdown menu in the search bar of both pages reflect a prioritization of known tourist areas like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Krabi, Phuket, and Hua Hin. Although the "FAQ" and "Guide" sections of both pages provide information on other cities and regions, and the search bar for "Teach English in Thailand" does show several programs in the rural Isan region, the presentation of both the capital city and a sunny tourist destination as the most "popular"

locations reveals two things. First, it suggests a lack of connection to local priorities in education and second, it reiterates Go Overseas' primary purpose: to advertise programs intended to facilitate international travel. What is relevant to the present study, then, is not so much a list of what content is included/excluded, but rather a consideration of how included/excluded content might reflect included/excluded voices. I consider this in more detail in Section 6.4.5. below. For now, I turn to the question of logico-semantic relations.

What logico-semantic relations reveal the organisation of content of the website as a whole?

Djonov (2005) defines logico-semantic, or conjunctive, relations as relations which "connect experiential meanings at both the lexico-grammatical and the discourse stratum of language" (pp. 89-90). Seeking to adapt "social semiotic principles for analysing conjunctive relationships in verbal discourse" (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 181) to the analysis of webpages, Djonov and Knox look to Djonov (2005), drawing on three of the parameters she identifies for "describing the logico-semantic relations (LSRs) that can be used to organise information in websites" (p. 181). These parameters include scope, type, and explicitness. Scope "concerns the size of the related units" (p. 181), while type "refers to the meaning of LSRs" (p. 182), and explicitness refers to the "extent to which a LSR is clearly signalled" (p. 182).

In terms of LSR type, Djonov (2005), borrowing Halliday's (1994, p. 220) definitions, advocates an initial distinction between *expansion* (when a clause expands on another) and *projection* (when a clause is projected through another). This distinction is further broken down into the following subcategories:

Expansion: Elaboration: “one clause expands another by elaborating it (or some portion of it): restating in other words, specifying in greater detail, commenting, or exemplifying”.

Expansion: Extension: “one clause expands another by extending beyond it: adding some new element, giving an exception to it, or offering an alternative.”

Expansion: Enhancement: “one clause expands another by embellishing around it: qualifying it with some circumstantial feature of time, place, cause or condition.”

Projection: Locution: “one clause is projected through another, which presents it as a locution, a construction of wording”.

Projection: Idea: “one clause is projected through another, which presents it as an idea, a construction of meaning.”

(Halliday, 1994, p. 220, as cited in Djonov, 2005, p. 104).

These subcategories are broken down further still, with elaboration manifesting through either reinforcement, clarification, or generality, extension being communicated across a spectrum of similarity and contrast, and enhancement reflecting either location (place or time) or cause (reason, purpose, or means) (Djonov, 2005, p. 176). Below, I consider some of the LSRs present on the article page “How to Get an ESL Teaching Job in Thailand” as a launching off point from which to explore how the various pages of Go Overseas relate to one another. I do, however, first briefly consider the general structure of the page.

As mentioned, the article page is quite different from the other two pages in terms of content. That said, it does consist of the two navigation zones mentioned above, and a banner

featuring an image of a rice field. The title, in contrast to the other pages, is not part of this banner but is part of the content zone located underneath it. The white background of the content zone obscures the right portion of the image, and it is here that the title, article description, and publishing information is located (Figure 6.6). Three social media icons are also located here for the purpose of article sharing. The location of the title ultimately speaks to a key difference between the article and the other pages. While the headings on the other pages serve to title the webpage itself, classify what information is available through the page, and to indicate the function of the page within the overall website, the heading here serves only as a title for the article.

Figure 6.6. "How to Get an ESL Teaching Job in Thailand" banner and title.

Like the layout of the other pages, the Table of Contents, located to the left of the page, serves as a navigation menu for the content of the article (Figure 6.7). Located at the bottom of this list is a blue rectangle with “Explore Jobs” written in white.

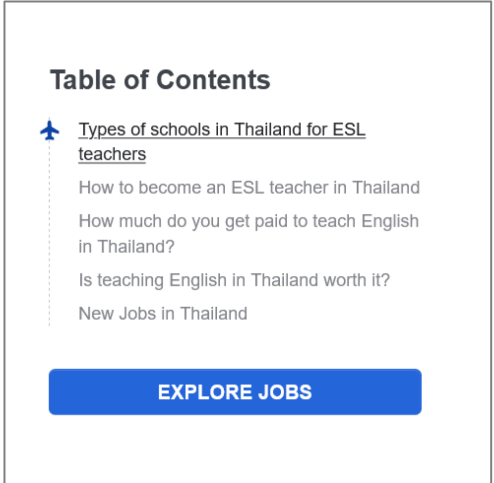


Figure 6.7. "How to Get an ESL Teaching Job..." article Table of Contents.

The article itself is formatted as a guide to getting an English teaching job in Thailand, introducing readers to the types of schools they can work in, the steps involved in finding a job and securing proper immigration documents, and salary estimates. The "New Jobs in Thailand" section at the end of the article includes a selection of job postings with the option to "View More Jobs" (Figure 6.8). Directly below this is a sign-up form for Go Overseas' newsletter. Finally, the last section in the content zone is titled "Keep on Reading" and contains hyperlinks to other articles (Figure 6.9).

While LSRs can be both intra-webpage and inter-webpage, I am most interested in the latter, which is to say I am most interested in the nature of the relations between separate webpages. I have chosen to focus on the article because it features several hyperlinks that speak to how the content on gooverseas.com is organized. As Djonov (2005) writes "the presence of a hyperlink always signifies the existence of a semantic relation between its place of origin and destination." (p. 177). There are 24 inter-webpage links included in the content zone, whether within the article itself or in other content sections. Of these, one links to the author's profile,

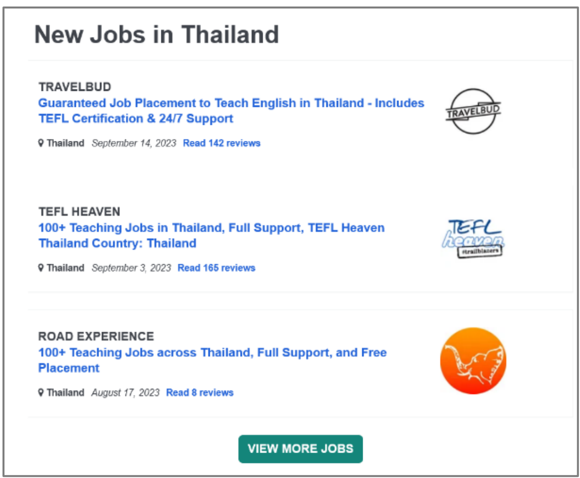


Figure 6.8. "New Jobs in Thailand" section of the "How to..." article page.

three link to the "Teach English in Thailand" page, two link to similarly formatted pages for searching CELTA courses and online TEFL courses respectively, ten link to other articles (one is placed within the article, three in a list at the end of the article, and six in the "Keep on Reading" section), six are located in the "New Jobs in Thailand" section, including three to individual job postings and three to review pages for the providers of those job postings (these links are grouped with their respective posting links through the use of various semiotic resources), and finally, two link to the "Teach Abroad" section of the Go Overseas job board. As with all LSRs, those communicated by these hyperlinks can be assessed according to explicitness, scope, and type.

As Djonov (2005) highlights, the mere presence of a hyperlink by itself "cannot signal the type of the relationship… or its orientation" (p. 177). That said, they can do so "in collaboration with the semiotic resources on the departure and/or arrival node" (p. 177). It is through the combination of semiotic resources, then, that we can distinguish "between degrees of explicitness" (p. 177). All the hyperlinks noted above are "overt" but not all are maximally explicit. While several hyperlinks can be found within the article, indicated by blue text, the

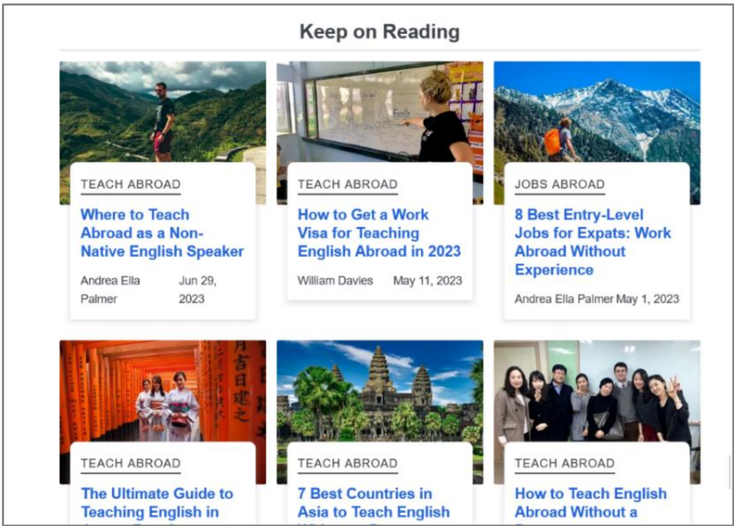


Figure 6.9. "Keep on Reading" section of the "How to..." article page.

semiotic resources involved in their construction signal only the presence of a link and not the type. For example, in both the second and last paragraphs of the article, there are links to the "Teach English in Thailand" page (Figure 6.10). In both instances the anchor is part of the paragraph text, but the text does not indicate the purpose of the link; one cannot logically deduce where the link directs or in what way its destination is related to its origin.

> If you're interested in **teaching English in Thailand**, this article can provide you with some tips for securing a teaching job there and beginning your adventure in the undeniably alluring "Land of Smiles."

> Yes! **Teaching English in Thailand** is popular for a variety of reasons. English teachers in Thailand can earn a good salary in a beautiful country which has a very low cost of living. Additionally, teaching English in Thailand will grant you a healthy work life balance, all while gaining valuable work experience and expanding your comfort zone.

Figure 6.10. (T) Hyperlinked text to the "Teach English in Thailand" page in the first paragraph of the "How to..." article. (B) Hyperlinked text in the last paragraph.

In contrast, there is a link to another article located in the "How to Become an ESL Teacher in Thailand" section under step three, "Craft a Winning Teaching Resume". The anchor, once again denoted by blue text, is clearly an article title: "How to Create an ESL Teacher Resume that Will Get You the Job". This title is proceeded by the phrase "Read more" in bold,

followed by a colon (Figure 6.11). Here it is clear that the link represents a relationship of *expansion* through *elaboration*, something discussed in more detail below. For now, we can see this as an example of maximal explicitness. Other examples of maximal explicitness include a link at the bottom of the "New Jobs in Thailand" section, which is made overt through the use of a coloured, bevelled icon and reads: "VIEW MORE JOBS" (Figure 6.8), as well as the article links located under the "Keep on Reading" section, where the section heading, the use of titles as anchors, and the inclusion of author names reveal the type of relation present (Figure 6.9)**.**

3. CRAFT A WINNING TEACHING RESUME

If you want to teach English in Thailand, you should tailor your resume to the specific job. Be sure to place an emphasis on your TEFL certificate, bachelor's degree, and teaching experience (paid or voluntary).
If you don't yet have any teaching experience, highlight any jobs that required you to demonstrate communication, leadership, and management skills.

Read more: **How to Create an ESL Teacher Resume that Will Get You the Job**

Figure 6.11. Hyperlinked article title located within the "How to..." article text.

I have already noted that my interest is in how hyperlinks realize inter-webpage relations. With regards to scope then, these relations can be described as hypertextual "anchor-to-webpage" relations when the meaning of the LSR is "revealed by the anchor from which it is actualised" or as "webpage-to-webpage" relations, a more common phenomenon that occurs when the LSR is "a product of the anchor's interaction with other elements occupying the same webpage and the meaning of relationships between elements on the destination webpage" (Djonov, 2005, p. 180). Generally speaking, the links on this page reflect webpage-to-webpage relations. For example, the links to the articles located just below the "Is teaching English in Thailand worth it?" section, gain their meaning through the interplay of their anchors (hyperlinked article titles), their location at the end of the article, and the heading which introduces them, as well as the content of the articles to which they link (Figure 6.12). These

things combined communicate the relationship between the origin page and destination page as one of *expansion* through *extension* by *similarity*, which, once again, will be explored in more detail below.

Prepare to teach and live abroad:

- Beginners Guide to Teaching English Abroad: Tips for New TEFL Teachers
- 10 Essential ESL Teaching Tools
- Guide to Moving Abroad: Live Overseas as an Expat

Figure 6.12. Hyperlinked article titles located at the end of the "How to..." article.

Webpage-to-webpage relations are not all equal in scope, however, and

> may represent LSRs between whole website sections (e.g. when the main page of a section is connected to the main page of another one) or between the website as a whole and any of its parts (e.g. when the homepage, representing the website as a whole, is hyperlinked with the main page of one of the website's sections)" (Djonov, 2005, p. 180).

While the hierarchical structure of the website as a whole is considered in more detail in Section 6.4.4. below, the notion of website "sections" is relevant to the analysis of scope. On gooverseas.com the top navigation zone communicates the main sections and subsections of the website, and it is through reference to it that we can understand the scope of a given webpage-to-webpage LSR. For example, the ten hyperlinks to other articles represent relations between equal webpages belonging to the "Travel Articles" subsection of the website. In contrast, the links to the job board as well as those to the "Teach English in Thailand" page and other search-based pages represent relations that traverse sections, connecting a webpage in the "Travel Articles" subsection with webpages in subsections belonging to the "Jobs" and "Programs Abroad" sections, respectively. Similarly, the links to job postings and provider reviews represent

relations between pages belonging to different website sections, however these are more difficult to identify since there is content crossover between program advertisements in the "Jobs" and "Programs Abroad" sections.

Finally, with regard to type, the majority of hypertextual webpage-to-webpage LSRs represented on this page fall under *expansion,* which is to say that the destination page "elaborates, extends or provides circumstantial detail" about what is construed by the origin page or some section of it (Djonov, 2005, p. 103). Below, then I consider each example of *expansion* according to subtype. I then turn to consider three examples of *projection: locution*, LSRs.

The first example of *expansion* that a user encounters on the article page is the "Explore Jobs" icon (Figure 6.7). What is interesting about this is that the anchor is somewhat misleading as to its destination page. The text, "explore jobs" suggests that this icon would link to a job board, much like the icon located at the bottom of the job postings section further down the page, but this links to the "Teach English in Thailand" page. When other elements are taken into consideration, however, the relationship is made clear. This icon is located at the bottom of the Table of Contents for an article about how to get a teaching job in Thailand and links to a page that provides *additional* resources for next steps in that process (i.e. program/job advertisements, other relevant articles, reviews, and links to information on other countries). This points to a relationship of *extension*. Furthermore, the relationship is an example of *extension* through *contrast*. Here the origin and destination pages contrast in terms of layout and function; they are different pages belonging to different website sections. Overall, then, we see how the "Teach English in Thailand" page can be seen to extend the content on the article page through the provision of new elements.

Another example of *expansion* through *extension* are the three article links located at the end of the article under the heading "prepare to teach and live abroad" (Figure 6.12). As mentioned above, the location of these links at the end of the article, coupled with the heading, indicate that the destination pages provide new, additional information than that in the original article. Whereas the article proposes to instruct users on how to get an ESL teaching job, the additional articles provide information on the steps that follow securing a job, be that the actual practice of teaching or the move abroad. Here, however, *extension* is made manifest through *similarity*, as the destinations pages share the same layout as the origin page, indicating their belonging to the same website section.

Interestingly, the other two links to the "Teach English in Thailand" page are not examples of *extension* but of *elaboration*. In both instances the anchors for these links are in the main text of the article (Figure 6.10)**.** In both examples, the whole article page is less important than the text of the anchors themselves. Here the topic of teaching English in Thailand is elaborated upon by the resources located on the destination page. Moreover, this relationship of *elaboration* is established through *clarification* by *specifying.* As Djonov (2005) notes, "*Specifying* relations involve the addition of more general information and context to a previously introduced point." (p. 231). In these instances, then, the origin page introduces the topic of teaching English in Thailand, and the destination page contributes "more general information and context".

Of the *expansion* relationships, *elaboration* is the most common on this page. Apart from those noted above, these include the two in-article links to search-based pages for CELTA courses and online TEFL courses, the link to the resume article described above (Figure 6.11), the link to the Go Overseas job board, and the "VIEW MORE JOBS" icon at the bottom of the

job postings section (Figure 6.8). In each instance, the destination page represents an addition of information. In the first three examples, the destination page elaborates on the content contained in the section of the article to which the link belongs. For example, the link to the job board is located under step five of the “How to become an ESL teacher in Thailand” section, which is titled “Start Your Job Search” (Figure 6.13). The “VIEW MORE JOBS” icon functions similarly, connecting the section containing a preview of job postings to a page containing all job postings. Here, the three links to individual job postings (Figure 6.8) also represent an *elaboration* relationship, however these are examples of *exemplifying* relations, as the links connect the “more encompassing point” of the job posting preview to a “concrete example” of a job posting (Djonov, 2005, p. 231).

5. START YOUR JOB SEARCH

The Thai school year begins in May and concludes in February, with a month-long break between semesters starting around the end of September. Most schools look to hire teachers during the months of February and March, but some private schools will hire teachers between semesters in October and November. If you want to work at a university in Thailand, their hiring season is usually in early August.

English teachers in Thailand are in high demand, so you'll have a plethora of options when it comes to searching for the perfect job.

- **Use a recruiter.** Recruiters can simplify things by gathering your resume and preferences in order to pair you with a suitable employer in Thailand. Since Thailand is such a popular teaching English abroad destination, there are a wide range of recruiters and programs available for those intrigued. They often provide TEFL courses and help guide you through the entire process.
- **Search jobs boards.** You can look no further than **Go Overseas' Teaching Job Board**! You'll find a diverse array of job postings and more helpful information about the different job qualifications and benefits.

Figure 6.13. Hyperlinked text to the Go Overseas 'Teaching Job Board" located in the "How to..." article text.

While the links analyzed above represent *expansion* relationships, the six article links (Figure 6.9) located at the bottom of the content zone seem to reflect *projection*: *locution* via *Concrete Projectors,* meaning that the “projecting element is a visually or verbally represented participant endowed with consciousness” (Djonov, 2005, p. 213). In this instance, hyperlinked

article titles are each grouped with a relevant image, the author's name, and the publishing date to form discrete visual units that are distributed in a grid format below a heading which reads "Keep on Reading". The *projection: locution* relationship, then, has to do with the way that clicking on each anchor "presents the *words* of the *Concrete Projector*" (p. 218), that is, the words of the author listed. In contrast to the above article links, which represent various types of *expansion*, these links can be read as *projection* due to a combination of semiotic resources. Perhaps most significantly, these links are sectioned off from the main article so that their relationship to their respective destination pages is not primarily defined by the article's content.

Another example of *projection: locution* via a *Concrete Projector* is the hyperlinked name of the author located just under the main article title (Figure 6.6). In this instance, however, the nature and directionality of the relationship is complex. To start, the inter-webpage LSR is dependent on an intra-webpage LSR whereby the inclusion of the authors name, according to the conventions of web-based article formatting, presents the article content as a *locution* of the author, a *Concrete Projector*. Understanding this intra-webpage LSR helps to make sense of the inter-webpage LSR represented by the hyperlinked name. Unlike the examples above, the relationship here is reversed in terms of directionality, so that the origin page is a *projection* of the destination page. This link launches a webpage containing the author's profile which includes links to all of his articles, including the one on the origin page (Figure 6.14). These links are located under a heading which reads "My Articles", so that the webpages to which they lead are

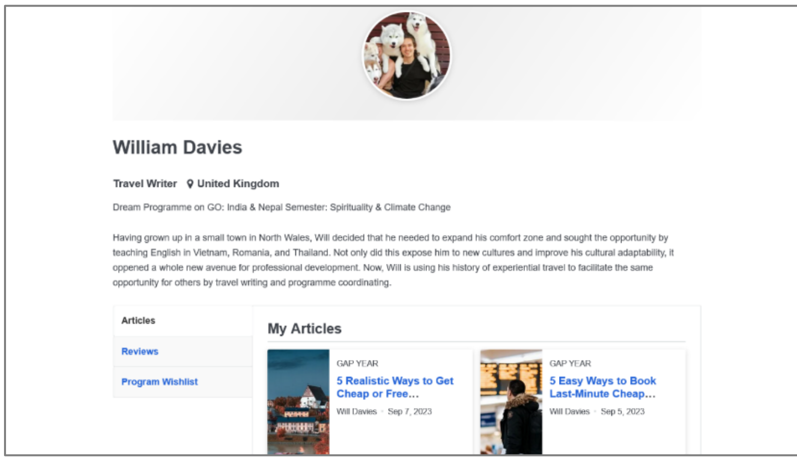


Figure 6.14. Article author's profile page

clearly presented as the words of the author. Finally, the projector type in the last example of inter-webpage *projection: locution* is somewhat ambiguous. This example includes the three links located within the job postings described above, for which the anchors read "Read _ reviews" (Figure 6.8). In each instance, the destination page is a provider profile displaying community photos and reviews. Due to the absence of a "represented participant endowed with consciousness" on the origin page, the projector initially appears to be *Abstract*. However, the destination page reveals the photos and reviews to be the projections of "community" members who are named in each individual posting.

Before I conclude this section, I want to make note of another tool that Djonov (2005) introduces for the analysis of LSRs in hypermedia: *orientation.* Under orientation, relations can be either *internal* or *external*. *Internal* relations

> can function either (i) structurally, to connect parts of the text to each other or (ii) metatextually, to relate to a part of the website or the website as a whole to information about it, depending on the LSR type with which it combines. (p. 196).

A relationship is *external* "if the parts of the website it connects construe entities as related in the text-external world" (p. 196). That said, as Djonov (2005) further notes, "the orientation of a

relationship may be ambiguous" (p. 196). Therefore, rather than identify the orientation of each individual LSR described above I want to consider, in general terms, what *external* meanings these relationships communicate.

Returning to the layout of both the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand" pages, it is clear that Go Overseas wants to communicate that its site is, among other things, a source of information and resources on the topic of teaching English in Thailand. This is made further evident by the inter-webpage *expansion* relations described above. For example, the article contains three links to the "Teach English in Thailand" page. The effect here is the persistent referral of the user to new and more content on the topic of interest. Go Overseas goes beyond the mere provision of theoretical information, however, and serves as a liaison between users and providers that can facilitate real world travel and teaching jobs. The inclusion of a job postings section at the end of the article makes this clear, and the *exemplifying* relationship between the posting previews and the actual posts themselves further illustrate how Go Overseas is organized around advertising for its providers. Something that is important to note, however, is that, despite how the website presents the expertise of the company, Go Overseas is not necessarily a specialist in the area of teaching in Thailand. This is further demonstrated by, for example, the *extension* relationship between the article on the origin page and the destination pages linked under "Prepare to teach and live abroad". Here, Go Overseas is shown to have a broad scope in relation to both teaching and travel.

Another *external* meaning communicated by the LSRs described above is the way in which Go Overseas is organized around the concept of community. This is apparent, of course, in the inclusion of "Community" as a main navigation option in the top navigation zone but is also revealed by the *projection* relations represented by the links to the author profile, provider

reviews, and the related articles. Starting first with the reviews, "community" members are made *Concrete Projectors* whose words are positioned as related to a given job posting and employer. These are not the only community members voices present, however. It should be noted that the "Travel Articles" subsection to which this page belongs is grouped under the "Community" section of the top navigation zone. This suggests that the authors of the articles, many of whom are paid employees, are also part of the Go Overseas community. Overall, then, both the provision of information and resources (including concrete resources like jobs, courses, and programs via advertising partnerships) and the value of community emerge as themes around which gooverseas.com is organized.

6.4.3. Interpersonal Meanings

How is the content presented to the reader (e.g. as rational, factual, or sensational)? What kind of relationship is construed visually between the reader, the content, and the author?

Following Djonov and Knox (2014, p. 183), I have approached these questions through Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) work on modality (or truth value) and validity. The authors note that

> … modality is 'interpersonal' rather than ideational'. It does not express absolute truths or falsehoods: it produces *shared* truths, aligning readers or listeners with some statements and distancing them from others. It serves to create an imaginary 'we'. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 151).

In terms of tools for assessing modality, Djonov and Knox (2014) look to Knox (2009) who identifies stasis, shape and space, and colour. They further state that "these three factors are 'read' in combination" when assigning a degree of modality (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 183). I therefore consider each factor in turn before assessing their collective impact.

Stasis refers to “degrees of movement on a page” where “Less movement helps present a page as less ‘playful’ and visually adds to its credibility as a source of information” (Knox, 2009, p. 256 and Kok, 2004, as cited in Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 183.) Movement can include animations, flashing element, and rollovers. In general, all three webpages feature very limited movement, apart from the rollovers that trigger the four drop-down menus in the top navigation zone and the transitioning menus located in the left of each content zone. As mentioned, on all three pages, as a user scrolls from section to section, these side menus jump from one heading to the next, indicated by a small, blue plane icon and the bolding of the heading itself. In terms of movement, then, these pages lean more serious, with a touch of playfulness that I discuss in more detail below.

Moving on, shape and space refer to the way the spatial design of the page and the layout of page elements impact modality. Djonov and Knox (2014) note that “generally a squared, ordered page with clearly defined and consistently designed spaces for content visually presents information as rational, ordered, and logical” (p. 183). In general, Go Overseas has a mostly consistent layout across pages, and the pages under analysis are noticeably “squared” and “ordered”. For example, on the “Teach English in Thailand” and “TEFL Courses in Thailand” pages, content sections conform to a grid format and are mostly composed of squared visual units of information equally distributed under section headings (Figure 6.15). In the case of the

article, the clear organization of content in a linear fashion demarcated by headings and sub-headings has a similar impact, suggesting a certain rationality to the information provided.

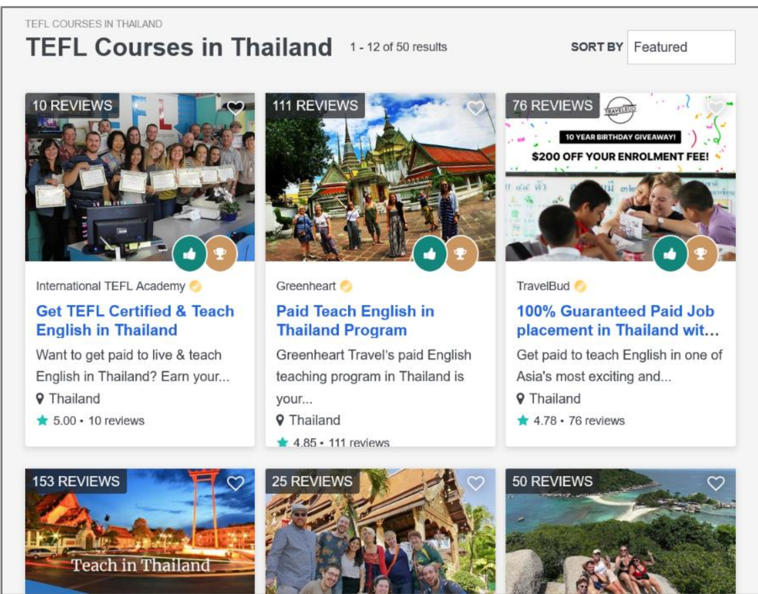


Figure 6.15. Arrangement of advertisements on the 'TEFL Courses in Thailand" page.

Regarding the impact of colour on modality, Djonov and Knox (2014) state that "black (or near-black) text on a white (or-near white) background draws on the tradition of print. The further webpages move away from this, the more they bring attention to their 'impermanency' as web texts". (p. 183). Overall, the colour palette of gooverseas.com is largely muted. Each page consists of an off-white background and all written text, excluding hyperlinks, is grey black. That said, most pages feature photos throughout and these lend a considerable amount of colour to each page as a whole. When it comes to modality in images, Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) argue that

> the standard by which we judge the validity of the new kinds of visual communication… is, we believe, to a large degree still based on the standards set by the old technology of 35mm photography. We judge an image as 'real' when, for instance, its colours are approximately as saturated as they are in standard average 35mm photography. When colour becomes more

> saturated, we judge it exaggerated, 'more than real', excessive. When it is less saturated, we judge it 'less than real'. (pp. 155-156).

They therefore assess the "role of colour as a marker of naturalistic validity" along three scales: colour saturation, colour differentiation, and colour modulation (p. 156). Due to the number of images on the pages under analysis it is hard to argue that they collectively suggest more or less validity. That said, the use of landscape photos in prominent positions, when read through the genre of travel photography, does lend a 'more than real' element to each page.

As Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) note, today, "software such as Instagram and Photoshop" allow photographs to exceed the standards of 35mm film. Instagram travel photography (see Ogden, 2021), is a byproduct of these advancements, resulting from free access to editing tools and a mode of distribution that allows everyday people to participate in a long tradition of travel photography steeped in the 'tourist gaze' (see Ogden, 2021, p. 89, citing Urry, 1990). Looking to the Caribbean, Ogden (2021) cites Thompson (2006) who observes that from the 19th to 20th centuries "not only did tourism promoters use photography to reconstitute an image of [Caribbean] islands, but they marketed their landscapes and inhabitants as picturesque, more specifically as photographs" (Thompson, 2006, p. 8, as cited in Ogden, 2021, p. 89). Today, most people would be familiar with overly saturated photos of tropical landscapes and their association with the concept of 'paradise'. In fact, images of Thailand may be some of the most prolific. For example, the "How to Get an ESL Teaching Job in Thailand" page features a near-ubiquitous image of famous Phang Nga Bay just below the article title (Figure 6.16). Although perhaps not as saturated as others of its type, the bright blues and greens of the sky and sea encourage desire for an imagined sense of place. The banner images used on all three pages (Figures 6.4 and 6.6) have a similar effect. Once again, this is not so much due to actual

saturation (these banners even have reduced brightness, which counteracts the saturation), but the effect produced when they are read through the expectations of the travel photography genre. While all pages feature less sensationalized photos (i.e. of classrooms, students, etc.) these images are more prominent and serve to frame the rest of the information on the page.

There are seemingly endless options when it comes to teaching English abroad. Thailand is at the top of many expats' lists (ours included!) and it is easy to see why. The magnificent beauty and culture of Thailand attracts many English teachers each year.

Figure 6.16. Photo of Phang Nga Bay from the "How to..." article page.

Combined, the factors of movement, shape and space, and colour have an interesting effect. Although, generally speaking, gooverseas.com has high modality by virtue of its static elements, squared and ordered layout, and minimal use of colour, there remains a slight playfulness. For example, the small airplane graphic that is triggered by scrolling contributes a sense of adventure. This is further supported by the use of conventional travel photography. The combination of seemingly high modality with a sense of adventure ultimately indicates Go Overseas' relationship to TEFL, which has less to do with professionalization and more to do with its ability to facilitate world travel. The relationship then, between the user, the content, and the author is one whereby the author has constructed content meant to appeal to users who are seeking out the adventure of travel. TEFL becomes a medium through which this can be

accomplished, rather than a career rooted in a history of professionalization and scholarly inquiry.

How does the webpage align users attitudinally towards the website and its content?

In approaching this question, Djonov and Knox (2014) offer two tools originally developed by Stenglin (2004) for analyzing 3D space and adapted by Stenglin and Djonov (2010) to hypermedia. These are "Binding" which concerns "the way a space closes in on a person or opens up around them" (Stenglin, 2004, p. 115, as cited in Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 184) and "Bonding" which "interacts with Binding to create communities around shared values and involves aligning a particular field to positive or negative attitudes about it" (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 185). Bonding is facilitated through "Bonding Icons" which are "attitudinal alignments that have achieved stability and become social emblems [e.g. buildings, famous people, flags and symbols, iconic works of art and buildings] that people rally around in acceptance or rejection of shared values" (Stenglin & Djonov, 2010, p. 196, as cited in Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 185).

In terms of Binding, Djonov and Knox (2014) state that "spaces invoke security by providing protection and comfort (if Bound) or freedom of movement (if Unbound)" (p. 184). Following Stenglin and Djonov (2010, p. 195), they note that spaces that are "Too Bound" or "Too Unbound" lead to frustration, either due to the existence of a "strongly predetermined navigation path" or "too many navigation choices and poor user orientation", respectively (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 185). Arguably, gooverseas.com avoids these extremes, offering a comfortably unbound space, that encourages freedom of navigation while still ensuring navigation paths are clear and logical. The top navigation zone functions to anchor each webpage, providing quick access to the homepage through a hyperlinked icon in the top-left

corner. While the link is not overt, its form and location follow well-established conventions in web design. Furthermore, the categories included in this zone and the use of rollover drop-down menus work to communicate a broad overview of all available content on the website and permit easy navigation to that content from any webpage on the website.

Looking to the webpages under analysis, the content navigation menus have a similar function, simultaneously communicating what content is on the webpage and providing ease of navigation to topics of interest. Furthermore, both the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand" pages feature a prominent search engine with limited options, something featured on most of the pages grouped under the "Programs Abroad" section. This points to the balance of the page in terms of Binding, since users have the freedom to explore according to their interests but with the guidance of preset, relevant categories. When navigating to, for example, the "Teach Abroad" page through the "Programs Abroad" menu, users are met with a search bar that allows them to specify location, classroom audience, and program type. Beneath this, they also have the option to "Explore Regions", with a selection of links that navigate to similar search-focused pages catered to teaching abroad in a given region (Figure 6.17). Country-specific pages can be accessed through the "Top Country" section of region-specific pages and as already noted, are structured around a similarly formatted search bar. Combined, it is clear

that Go Overseas prioritizes allowing users to chart their own journey through what content is available while ensuring that such content is easy to find, access, and understand.

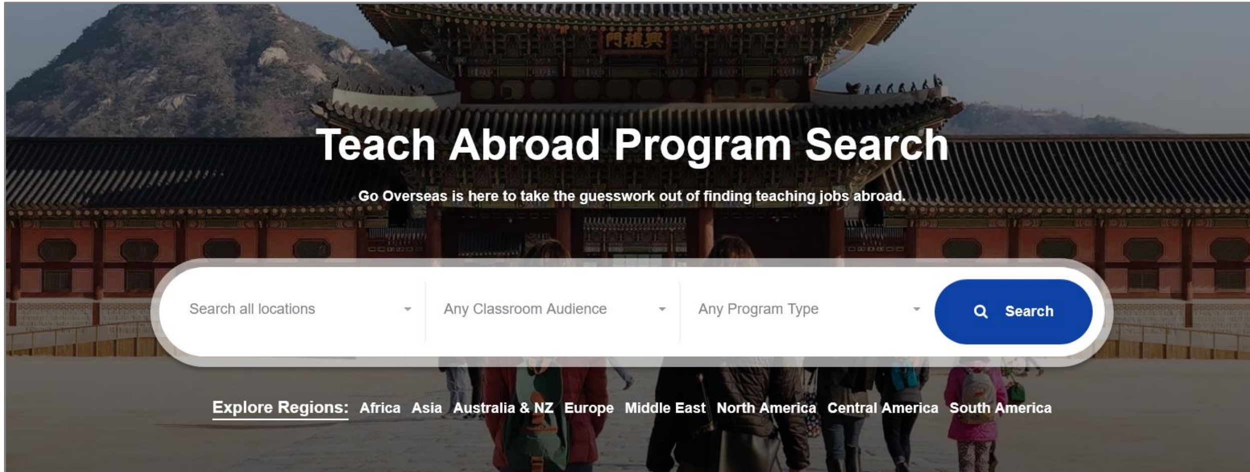


Figure 6.17. the "Teach Abroad" search page which features links to similar regional pages.

In general, gooverseas.com is designed with individualism in mind. That does not mean, however, that Bonding is not relevant to the interpersonal meanings it creates. Bonding Icons are therefore limited but not entirely absent. As mentioned above, features like the small plane icon in the content menus as well as the use of travel photography work together to create a sense of adventure and fantasy. Arguably these can also function as Bonding Icons, albeit in a more covert fashion. While both elements uphold individualism (i.e. by signalling an individual user's navigation pathway or encouraging users to imagine themselves in an empty, exotic landscape), they also signal belonging to a community of like-minded travellers. Regarding Thailand, images of rice fields and longtail boats serve as a metonymy for the country itself, speaking to a long-established Western desire toward the nation and to its construction as an idyllic paradise. The use of these images signal to users that they are in the right place: As a company, Go Overseas does not only facilitate their travel fantasies but also understands and participates in them.

When Binding and Bonding are considered in tandem, gooverseas.com can be seen to foster a sense of individualized adventure that remains grounded in a community of shared values. Users can chart their own path through the website content according to their program or regional interests, desire to purchase a program, or need for relevant information on a travel topic. That said, they do so in an environment designed to facilitate the efficient navigation of these paths, thus signalling to the user how Go Overseas can support them in their travel journey. Furthermore, through the prominent use of travel photography, the user is encouraged to imagine themselves adventuring through an idyllic paradise. While this is individualist on the surface, such conventionalized tourist imagery functions as a Bonding Icon around which individuals drawn to travel, and, in this case, to Thailand specifically, can coalesce.

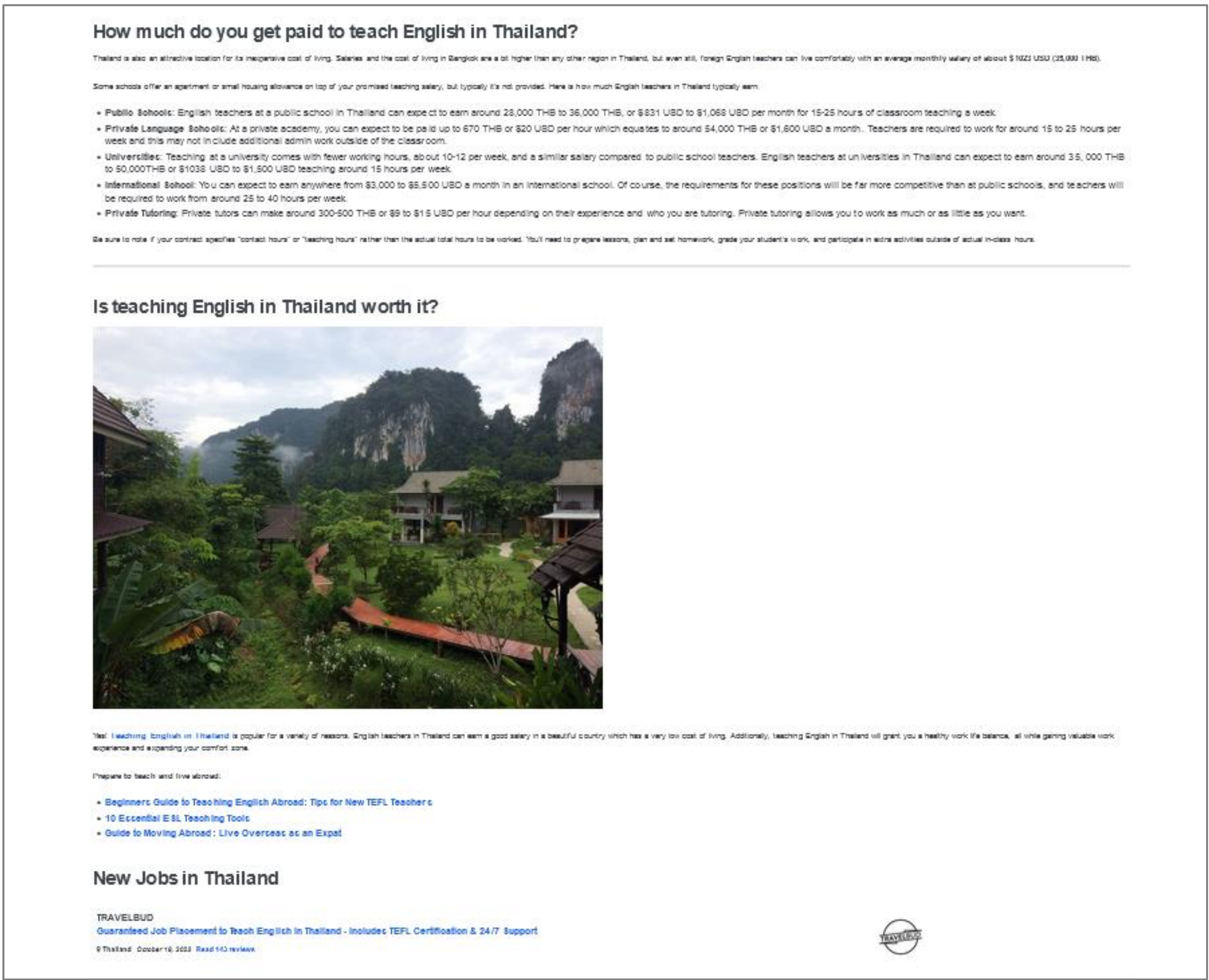
6.4.4. Textual Meanings

How is the page composed to make each screen, and the entire page a meaningful 'whole'?

In identifying tools for the analysis of textual meanings, Djonov and Knox (2014) once again turn to Kress and van Leeuwen's *Reading Images*. In the interest of remaining current, I reference the most recent edition of their work for definitions of these tools which include Framing, Information Value, and Salience. I consider each in turn below, defining them and considering their role in the webpages under analysis.

To start, Framing has to do with the degree to which the elements of a visual composition are connected or disconnected. Ultimately, "The stronger the framing of an element, the more it is disconnected from its immediate environment and presented as a separate unit" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 205). Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) further note that disconnect can "be realized in different ways" such as "by framelines or white space between elements" (p. 205). Within the context of webpages, framelines "create distinct spaces for different functional

elements" while white space presents elements "as in one way belonging together, yet at the same time keeping distance" (p. 205). Both tools are used across all three pages. In the case of the article, white space is used considerably, mostly to indicate breaks between paragraphs and article sections. Framelines, however, are used throughout the page to separate the navigation zones from the content zone, indicate clickable icons, and separate content sections. Perhaps most interesting is the single frameline separating the section titled "Is Teaching English in Thailand Worth It?" from the rest of the article (Figure 6.18).



How much do you get paid to teach English in Thailand?

Thailand is also an attractive location for its inexpensive cost of living. Salaries and the cost of living in Bangkok are a bit higher than any other region in Thailand, but even still, foreign English teachers can live comfortably with an average monthly salary of about $1023 USD (35,000 THB).

Some schools offer an apartment or small housing allowance on top of your promised teaching salary, but typically it's not provided. Here is how much English teachers in Thailand typically earn.

- **Public Schools:** English teachers at a public school in Thailand can expect to earn around 28,000 THB to 36,000 THB, or $831 USD to $1,068 USD per month for 15-25 hours of classroom teaching a week.
- **Private Language Schools:** At a private academy, you can expect to be paid up to 670 THB or $20 USD per hour which equates to around 54,000 THB or $1,600 USD a month. Teachers are required to work for around 15 to 25 hours per week and this may not include additional admin work outside of the classroom.
- **Universities:** Teaching at a university comes with fewer working hours, about 10-12 per week, and a similar salary compared to public school teachers. English teachers at universities in Thailand can expect to earn around 35, 000 THB to 50,000THB or $1038 USD to $1,500 USD teaching around 15 hours per week.
- **International School:** You can expect to earn anywhere from $3,000 to $5,500 USD a month in an international school. Of course, the requirements for these positions will be far more competitive than at public schools, and teachers will be required to work from around 25 to 40 hours per week.
- **Private Tutoring:** Private tutors can make around 300-500 THB or $9 to $15 USD per hour depending on their experience and who you are tutoring. Private tutoring allows you to work as much or as little as you want.

Be sure to note if your contract specifies "contact hours" or "teaching hours" rather than the actual total hours to be worked. You'll need to prepare lessons, plan and set homework, grade your student's work, and participate in extra activities outside of actual in-class hours.

Is teaching English in Thailand worth it?

Yes! Teaching English in Thailand is popular for a variety of reasons. English teachers in Thailand can earn a good salary in a beautiful country which has a very low cost of living. Additionally, teaching English in Thailand will grant you a healthy work life balance, all while gaining valuable work experience and expanding your comfort zone.

Prepare to teach and live abroad:

- Beginners Guide to Teaching English Abroad: Tips for New TEFL Teachers
- 10 Essential ESL Teaching Tools
- Guide to Moving Abroad: Live Overseas as an Expat

New Jobs in Thailand

TRAVELBUD
Guaranteed Job Placement to Teach English in Thailand - Includes TEFL Certification & 24/7 Support

Figure 6.18. *Frameline separating the "Is teaching English in Thailand worth it?" section from the rest of the "How to..." article.*

Overall, based on the content of the rest of the article, this frameline suggests that the content beneath it is an “outro” of sorts, meant to direct users through the next steps in getting a teaching job. While the article provides detailed information on the types of schools in Thailand, the steps associated with securing a teaching job, and estimated compensation, this section asks a rather subjective question: "Is teaching in Thailand worth it?”. The author answers this question firmly in the positive in a small paragraph located below a landscape photo. This paragraph is then separated vertically by white space from the “Prepare to teach and live abroad” links. Finally, underneath a somewhat bigger white space is the larger heading for the “New Jobs in Thailand” section. This layout suggests that the article is meant to encourage users to pursue more information and potential employment through Go Overseas. Having been presented with the steps needed to get a job in Thailand, users are instructed how to feel – yes! It is worth it! – before being encouraged to take the next steps to make their travel ideas a reality.

Framing is particularly important to the composition of the “Teach English in Thailand” and “TEFL Courses in Thailand” pages. In fact, here framelines are much more prevalent, with the content composing the various content sections heavily framed into discrete visual units. For example, program advertisements consist of a square image at the top, underneath which various fonts and colours of text are set on a white background, including a hyperlinked title. Together, the image and the white background form a rectangle that is set off from the background of the content zone by a combination of colour contrast (the white of the advertisement is much brighter than the off-white of the content zone) and the use of a shadow border (Figure 6.15). While other visual units on the page differ somewhat in composition, this combination of contrast and shadow to denote framelines is used consistently. This design choice contributes to

the squared and orderly nature of the layout, and the consequent high modality, mentioned above.

Moving on, Information Value refers to how "the placement of elements… endows them with specific informational values attached to the various zones of the image" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 181). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2020), the information value of left and right is culturally specific, but in English-speaking cultures which read and write in a left-to-right fashion, those elements located to the left are presented as "Given", which is to say they are "presented as something the viewer already knows", whereas those elements located to the right of a composition are presented as "New", or "something which is not yet known or perhaps not yet agreed upon by the viewer." (p. 187). Additionally, the information value of centre and margin have to do with the vertical axis, and the meanings associated with top and bottom. For Kress and van Leeuwen (2020), this difference can be summarized as such:

> If there is a sense of opposition between top and bottom, that is, if in a visual composition some of the constituent elements are placed in the upper part, and other *different* or *contrasting* elements are placed in the lower part of the image, page or screen, then what has been placed on top is presented as the Ideal, and what has been placed at the bottom is put forward as the Real. (p. 191).

The Ideal refers to the "idealized or generalized essence of the information" whereas the Real refers to the "more specific information (e.g. details), more 'down to earth' information (e.g. photographs, maps or charts as documentary evidence), or more practical information (e.g. practical consequences, directions for action)." (p. 191).

As a whole, gooverseas.com is overwhelming oriented around the vertical axis. Since, as Djonov and Knox (2014) note, "webpages are viewed onscreen, and the most important

information typically appears on the first screen of a page", websites like gooverseas.com, which feature long, scrolling content zones that "extend beyond a single screen", typically have "a top-bottom distinction between the first screen and the remainder of the page" (p. 187). As noted above, each of the pages analyzed feature an image banner running the full width of the page with content zones proceeding immediately beneath them. These banners take up the majority of the first screen. In the case of the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand" pages, the first screen includes an image of a Thai landscape, the title of the page, and a search bar that connects the content zone to the page banner. These pages, then, ultimately conform to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) Ideal-Real distinction. This first screen communicates the essence of the page, with the combination of the title and image grounding the page in both its topic and the world region on which that topic is focused. Furthermore, the search bar indicates that this page is a place to seek information on the title topic. As a user scrolls, however, they encounter more concrete information. This holds true for the article page as well, where the first screen consists of an image indicative of the region of focus, while the title and publishing information signals to the user that what proceeds is a topical article. In all three instances, scrolling to the next page reveals more concrete and specific information about the topic at hand. This Ideal-Real distinction also stands when considering the composition of the program advertisements on the search-based pages. As mentioned above, each program advertisement features an image at the top with a hyperlinked title located in the lower half, just beneath the provider's name and above a preview description, location note, and star rating (Figure 6.15). Although Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) reference images in their description of the Real, here we see how the image indicates the essence of the posting, the Ideal, whether that be a given program's ability to facilitate the tourist experience, classroom experience, or the achievement of

a certification. The lower section, then, contains a preview of and link to the "Real" information about the program and what it offers.

The top-bottom or Head-Tail distinction described above, can also be considered through the lens of Salience. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) observe, Salience "can create a hierarchy of importance among elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others." (p. 210). For example, elements "become 'heavier' as they are moved towards the top" and "appear 'heavier' the further they are moved to the left" (p. 211). With this in mind, the differences between the top and bottom navigation zones are quite interesting. To start, the top navigation zone, by virtue of being located at the top of the first screen of every page, is considerably more salient than the bottom. Furthermore, the order of categories from left-to-right indicates the location of website sections within a hierarchy of importance. To start, the Go Overseas logo (which functions as the homepage link) in the far-left corner follows the "increasingly standardized format of webpages" which relies on "clearly framed and predictably placed functional elements" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 210). In general, Internet users have become accustomed to homepage links being in this particularly salient location. Beyond this, however, the location of the "Programs Abroad" tab as the furthest-left navigation option speaks to the primary purpose of the Go Overseas website as a platform through which users can identify and register for programs abroad. Moving to the right, "Jobs" is the next category, once again indicating Go Overseas' purpose in connecting users with opportunities in other countries. To the immediate right of this tab is the "Community" tab which is followed by the "About Us" tab. This order is interesting, as it indicates the company's desire to be perceived as a community of travellers rather than a for-profit advertiser. What is even more interesting is that the "Travel Articles" subsection is located at the top of the "Community" dropdown menu, since a quick

exploration of the articles available reveal that many of them are written by career travel writers and even Go Overseas staff. The relative salience of this section in relation to the “About Us” section further demonstrates Go Overseas’ efforts to present its staff as equal to its users, all of whom belong to a community of world travellers.

The content of the bottom navigation zone illustrates this point even further, in that it speaks to how Go Overseas’ corporate interests are obscured by its focus on “community”. Whereas the top navigation zone reflects this posturing, the bottom navigation zone paints a more realistic picture. While there is a community menu in this zone, there is also a menu labelled “Company” which contains many of the same links as the “About Us” section of the top navigation zone, as well as links to “Careers” and “Press”. Directly next to this vertical menu is another menu labelled “Providers”, which contains links titled “Advertise” and “Post a Job”. Both of these menus are located in the right half of the zone, while the left, and more salient zone, contains the company logo and vision statement. In this navigation zone, then, both the corporate nature of Go Overseas, and its revenue source – the providers who advertise on their website – is made clear. Ultimately, the salience of the top navigation zone in comparison to the bottom zone highlights how the website is designed with the consumer in mind, prioritizing their navigation of website’s content while abstracting the financial interests of both Go Overseas and its providers.

Visual Salience, however, is “not limited to proximity to the top of the page” (Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 187), but ultimately “results from a complex interaction, a complex trading-off relationship between a number of factors” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 211). These factors can include size, sharpness of focus, tonal contrast, colour contrasts, placement in the visual field, and perspective. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 211). Moving to the content zones, we

can see how perspective plays a role in Salience. For example, on both the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand" pages, the search bars overlap with the banner image and the content zone, demarcated by the same colour contrast and shadow border combination used in the visual units discussed above. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) note concerning perspective, "elements that overlap other elements are more salient than the elements they overlap" (p. 211). Similarly to the top navigation zone, then, and in line with the information value afforded by the top-bottom distinction noted above, the salience of these search bars suggests their importance over the remainder of the information on the page. This once again reiterates that Go Overseas is primarily interested in connecting its users with the programs it advertises, and that its provision of topical information has to do with presenting itself as a trustworthy source on world travel.

Perspective is also at play on the article page, where the section containing the article's title and publishing information overlaps the image banner. This has more of an isolated effect, in that it functions to signal the importance of the article over and above the banner image. This is interesting, since Djonov and Knox (2014) note that

> Commonsense predicts that images will be more salient than written text, but findings from eye tracking research are ambivalent about this, and some suggest that readers' gaze is typically attracted to writing first. (Leckner, 2012, as cited in Djonov & Knox, 2014, p. 187).

Here we see how other factors (i.e. perspective), might influence the priority that a viewer assigns to text over image and vice versa. For example, perspective and colour contrast play a role in communicating the salience of the hyperlinks in the "Other Countries of Interest" section in relation to the images with which they are framed. While in each instance the images are located above the links, the links, which are indicated by blue text, are contained within a white

box that is demarcated from the off-white background of the content zone with a shadow border (Figure 6.19). These boxes overlap with the image above it, affording them more salience than the images themselves and therefore placing priority on the links to related content.

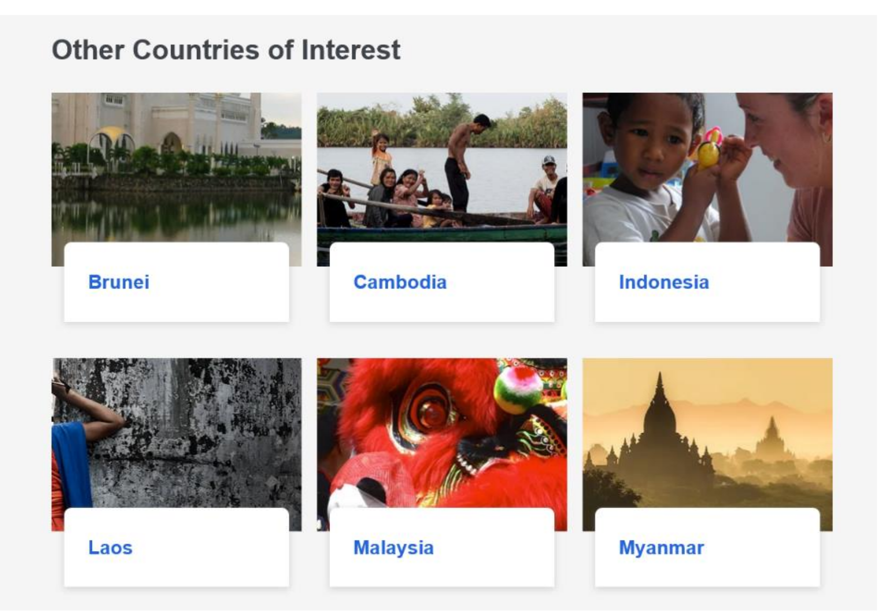


Figure 6.19. "Other Countries of Interest" links located on the "Teach English in Thailand" search page.

Another example of how hyperlinks are made salient can be seen on the “How to Get an ESL Teaching Job in Thailand” article. Here I am interested in the “Explore Jobs” icon at the bottom of the Table of Contents (Figure 6.7). Once again, the placement of the icon in the visual field is somewhat ambiguous in terms of salience. While it is located to the left of the screen, it is also at the bottom of the list. That said, the size of the icon in relation to other text contributes more visual weight. Furthermore, the “Explore Jobs” text is white and framed by a blue box. This use of colour provides even more weight, setting it apart from even the Table of Contents heading so that it is the most salient element in the list. Finally, as mentioned above, the Table of Contents remains on the screen as the user scrolls, ensuring that this link is prominent regardless of what screen the user is on. The salience of this particular hyperlink once again speaks to how

the design of gooverseas.com supports its main goal of connecting users with programs and jobs posted by its providers. Moreover, the salience of certain hyperlinks in general (i.e. the ones discussed above) speak to the importance placed on user-led navigation. This is further supported by the "hierarchy of Themes" concept explored below.

How does the page reveal the organization of the website as a whole?

Djonov and Knox (2014) argue that "A webpage is expected to provide navigation options and reveal its place in the website to which it belongs" (p. 188). Following Djonov (2007) they further propose a "hierarchy of Themes" whereby the homepage of a website is defined as the highest level, and "the main page of a website section as a Theme below the level of the homepage, and so on" (p. 188). According to this model there are multiple hierarchies of Themes, as "each section, subsection, etc. branches into a separate hierarchy of Themes" (p. 188). According to this model, both the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand" share the same level within separate hierarchies of Themes, with each located three levels below the homepage via different subsections. Their location within the website is made quite clear to the user through the inclusion of a workback navigation path positioned within the banner zone directly under the page title. Here, running from left to right in chronological order, is a list of pages that a user would go through to arrive at the present page from the homepage. Each page name in this list is hyperlinked, denoted by underlining, and separated from the previous page name with a forward slash. These hyperlinks are what Djonov and Knox (2014) refer to as "vertical hyperlinks", website-internal links that connect a page to "different levels within the same hierarchy of Themes" (p. 188). (Figure 6.4).

While navigating to both pages starts with the "Programs Abroad" tab in the top navigation zone, "Teach English in Thailand" belongs to the hierarchy of the "Teach Abroad"

subsection, which is further broken down into regional and then country-specific subsections. Similarly, the "TEFL Courses in Thailand" page belongs to the "TEFL Courses" hierarchy. These pages contain further vertical hyperlinks, such as in the "Popular Cities" section, where users can navigate to one more level below the homepage. Interestingly, both pages also contain horizontal hyperlinks, that is links to different hierarchies. For example, each section contains links to featured articles that belong to the "Travel Articles" hierarchy accessed through the "Community" tab. Interestingly, these articles are also three levels removed from the homepage, since one must navigate to the "Travel Articles" subsection, select a topical subsection (i.e. "Teach", "TEFL", etc.), and then finally select an article. Djonov and Knox (2014) contend that while such horizontal links may potentially increase "disorientation", since they allow users to bypass higher level Themes, they ultimately "enable freedom of navigation and are indispensable for a website's attractiveness" (p. 188). Overall, then, while gooverseas.com allows for a considerable amount of such bypassing, the presence of a well laid-out navigation zone provides balance, helping combat potential user disorientation while maintaining the sense of freedom discussed above.

How is the page related to the Google results page from which it was linked?

As described in Section 6.3.1. above, the relevance of gooverseas.com to the topic of teaching in Thailand has to do with its prominence in Google search results. Today, Google is synonymous with search and the discovery of information. As Safiya Noble (2018) has shown us, search is part of a long history of how we have catalogued, classified, and legitimated knowledge overtime in ways that not only serve to mirror social reality but also to construct it. gooverseas.com was selected for this case study because it was the second most frequently occurring and overall highest ranked non-ad result across four search phrases. This points to how

the website's content is designed with SEO (search engine optimization) in mind. Which is to say that effort has been made by the company to craft content that ensures their website is the top result users see when seeking information on teaching in Thailand. This has two notable implications. First, it establishes the website and company as a legitimate source of information on teaching in Thailand. This is particularly true when considering the article "How to Get a Teaching Job in Thailand" was the first result for the search phrase "Teaching Requirements in Thailand". Here we see how an American travel company is prioritized over Thai government sources on what is needed to qualify as a teacher in a variety of Thai educational institutions, including the public school system. Second, it contributes to the prioritization of travel over professionalization. As noted in Section 6.3.1., most top ten results across the four search phrases were travel focused, with gooverseas.com a prominent example. Although education-focused International TEFL Academy ranked above Go Overseas for the phrase "TEFL Thailand", the "TEFL Courses in Thailand" page still ranked number two, positioned above several sources focused exclusively on TEFL and English language education.

It is important to remember that these results were compiled using a VPN with the Google search location set to the United States and that result rankings are based in part on a result's relevance to a user's location. It is unsurprising, then, that an American company like Go Overseas is considered more relevant than a Thai source, however, as noted, this positions such American sources as authoritative voices on issues of crucial importance to Thai social development. I explore this in more detail below, but for now I want to argue that, while the sampling method used for this study is limited by virtue of the sample size and number of phrases used, the relationship between gooverseas.com and the result pages on which it appeared suggests that the topic of teaching English in Thailand is embedded in certain Western discourses

of individualism and global mobility. Although this connection is impermanent, since Google search results are inherently dynamic, such discursive possibilities, resulting from SEO and the semiotic value of hypermedia, emerge when individuals seek information on teaching in Thailand.

6.4.5. Social Context: Reopening Histories of Encounter

In keeping with the social semiotic foundations of SF-MDA, the last step in Djonov and Knox's (2014) model is social context and interpretation. Here, then, I ask:

In what ways are the multimodal and hypermodal structures of the webpage and their meanings related to social context? How can you explain these relations?

In line with my overarching research question and theoretical framework, I seek to explain these relations through the lens of reopening past encounters. As texts which serve to both represent and facilitate West-Thai encounter(s), I am interested in how the pages of gooverseas.com reopen the encounters represented in both the life of Anna Leonowens and the advent of *The King and I* musical. In doing so, I want to reiterate that the company, Go Overseas, not only facilitates encounter(s) in its function as a liaison between travellers and program providers, but also in its representative capacity. Which is to say that users encounter Thailand through encountering representations of it on the Go Overseas website. It is within this encounter that I believe the *farang* teacher begins to emerge, a subject on which I conclude. For now, I want to consider how Go Overseas recapitulates prior histories of encounter through the lens of contemporary discourses of global mobility.

As noted, the visual organization of content on both search-based pages, and the hypertextual LSRs represented on the article page, when combined, reflect a website organized

around the user-directed discovery of advertised travel programs. The provision of relevant travel information ultimately works to support this function by keeping users on the website, navigating from page to page to explore content related to their travel interests. Community has a further role in this dynamic, with information (i.e. blog posts, reviews) presented as the product of community members, whether they be paid employees or program alumni. This brings about the question of voice and representation. Go Overseas is an American for-profit company and a quick visit to the "Meet the Team" subsection reveals that the majority of Go Overseas staff is American, with the exclusion of one writer (the author of the article page) from North Wales. Moreover, while nothing on the analyzed pages explicitly suggests the nationality or ethnicity of those who might become "members" of this "community", the absence of a translation option presumes at the very least an English-speaking clientele. A review of the top three most-reviewed programs advertised on both the "Teach English in Thailand" and "TEFL Courses in Thailand", more or less supports the argument that this "community" is largely centred on the United States and United Kingdom.

When writing a review, users have the choice to include a country of origin. The top three most-advertised programs on the "Teach English in Thailand" page under the "Teaching Programs in Thailand" heading, have a combined 300 reviews. Of those 300, 89 have a reported country of origin with 11% (10) of those coming from the UK and 75% (67) from the US. The rest of the reviews came from South Africa (6), Canada (4), Spain (1), and France (1). The most-reviewed programs under "TEFL Courses in Thailand" are admittedly more diverse, however of the 435 reviews with a reported country of origin (out of a total 759), 17% (75) are from the US, 56% (243) from the UK, and 6% (24) from other NES countries (New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Ireland, South Africa, and Isle of Man). The remaining reviews come from several other

African, European, and Asian countries. What becomes clear here is the extent to which the website is organized around a concept of community that is rooted in a Western, and particularly American, perspective.

This notion of community is further supported on the interpersonal level, with the use of conventional tourist imagery as Bonding Icons encouraging the orientation of users toward Thailand as an idealized destination. What is interesting, here, however, is that while Bonding Icons might normally reflect those things that a community orientates itself *around*, in this instance, the community emerges as a result of what they are orientated *toward.* As Ahmed (2006) notes "We are orientated… toward objects, and those objects are ''other'' than us." (p. 115). That said, what we are orientated around may be reflected in what we are orientated toward. For example, Ahmed (2006) further notes that if she is "orientated *around* writing" she will be orientated towards those objects that facilitate writing (p. 115). In this instance, then, a community orientated toward an idealized destination might be orientated around, not travel in a strictly practical sense, but travel in relation to the allure of the Other. In the case of Thailand specifically, this ties back to Orientalism, since "… the Occident coheres as that which we are organized around through the very direction of our gaze toward the Orient" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 116). The representation of Thailand on gooverseas.com is ultimately Orientalist, then, not as the sole result of the real "community" creating content and their ethnic backgrounds, but also a result of the semiotic resources used to usher users into a sense of belonging on the website; users become part of the community by virtue of their desire for an exotic Thailand. That this desire is caught up in the production of "knowledge" about Thailand, further implicates Go Overseas in Orientalism.

As noted above, the information on gooverseas.com is presented in a way that suggests its factuality, while maintaining a sense of adventure framed by a desire for Thailand as an idealized destination. This combination of seemingly authoritative knowledge with the promise of adventure in an exoticized locale builds upon a long tradition of colonial travel writing. This is unsurprising, since, as Oh and Oh (2017) demonstrate, the Internet presents a new mode through which to construct and distribute texts about the Oriental Other. Placing the webpages analyzed within the context of how they were found – that is, through Google search results for phrases related to teaching in Thailand – we can see how Go Overseas is presented as an authoritative source on the topic and, by extension, the culture surrounding it. Regardless of the reason an individual might search for the topic, they are presented with information that is framed by a touristic, even consumptive, desire toward Thailand. This is interestingly in-part prefigured by Anna Leonowens writing, wherein she combines dramatic tales of personal encounters with detailed descriptions of Siamese history and culture. Central to both the legitimation of knowledge and the sense of adventure expressed in travel writing, moreover, is the individual behind it. It is the first-hand encounter that lends a sense of, on-the-one hand, expertise by virtue of experience, and, on the other, the possibility that one might embody a similar role. The presentation of information on teaching in Thailand as extending from a community of experienced travellers does something similar, legitimating the knowledge produced by those travellers (whether customers or paid employees) while also centering who a user could become if they purchase a program.

Looking to the life of Anna Leonowens, we see how world travel can enable an individual to construct themselves anew, appealing to the desire for adventure of those around them. This remains true today, since, as described in Section 6.2, global mobility has become

intwined with projects of self-realization, projects which are regularly shared online (see Mancinelli, 2020; Ogden, 2021; Putcha, 2020). This consumption of the Other in the interest of personal development makes sense when considered through the words of Ahmed (2006):

> The otherness of things is what allows me to do things ‘‘with’’ them. What is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body. Rather than othering being simply a form of negation, it can also be described as a form of extension. The body extends its reach by taking in that which is ‘‘not’’ it, where the ‘‘not’’ involves the acquisition of new capacities and directions—becoming, in other words, ‘‘not’’ simply what I am ‘‘not’’ but what I can ‘‘have’’ and ‘‘do.’’ The ‘‘not me’’ is incorporated into the body, extending its reach. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 115).

Within the context of gooverseas.com, the centring of users' individual interests in navigation works to facilitate this desire of extension through the Other, whether that Other is encountered solely online or in-person through the purchase of a travel program. It is important to note, however, that this extension is not only related to abstract self-realization but reflects both an individual's present social status and the promise of the status that they seek.

Returning once again to Anna Leonowens, the ability to consume the Other and produce knowledge about them is shown to be related to both the privileges which one already possesses and those which one can acquire through incorporating the Other into themselves. Today, while travel is increasingly accessible, inequality in access still tends to reflect colonial-era inequalities. Travel ultimately represents both a mode through which one can gain cultural capital and an activity from which one may be barred by virtue of a lack of capital, whether cultural, economic, or otherwise. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to draw conclusions regarding the social status of those purchasing the programs advertised by Go Overseas, the

company's claim to being a purveyor of "perspective-changing" travel suggests that Go Overseas markets to those socially positioned to pursue mobility for the abstract purpose of self-realization and personal development rather than for economic necessity.

With these dynamics in mind, it should suffice to say that Go Overseas exists firmly within the realm of tourism rather than education. That said, what is interesting are the ways in which Go Overseas obscures its relationship to "tourism" through appeals to "perspective-changing" travel or the placement of navigation tools for "providers" in the bottom navigation zone. This suggests that Go Overseas conceives of its target demographic as resistant to traditional tourism, something shown to be true of self-described expats (Norum, 2013) and digital nomads (Green, 2020). This is further reflected in the programs advertised being focused on certain activities like teaching, studying, interning, and volunteering rather than leisure. With regard to TEFL, the relationship between world travel and English teaching is naturalized, with implications ranging from the deprofessionalization of TEFL to the use of Thai students as a medium through which to access Thailand as an object of desire. Once again, this reopens prior West-Thai encounter(s).

In the life of Anna Leonowens we see how a growing demand for English within Siam facilitated her exit from a previous life and her creation of a new one. Underlying this personal project, however, was a colonial enterprise with a vested interest in growing its cultural influence within the Kingdom. Education would ultimately go on to be foundational to the diplomatic strategies of both the UK and U.S. during a tumultuous 20th century, at which time cultural exchange was positioned as a moral imperative and often facilitated by the state. This process also saw the collision of individual motivations and desires with the objectives of those in power. The world that resulted from the social, political, and economic conditions of this time, one of

increased connectivity across all domains, is one in which travel has become fully commodified in the form of tourism and English has become an international language. As mentioned previously, the driving force behind both phenomena, as it relates to Thailand and many other so-called 'developing' nations, is the demand to participate in a global economy that has, until recently, been largely determined by Western powers. Here then, individuals, motivated by any number of reasons to travel and teach, begin to collide with larger-scale structures and discourses that shape how they conceive of and communicate their experiences of encounter. I want to therefore conclude by refocusing on the *farang* teacher.

6.5. Moving Toward the *Farang* Teacher

As with *The King and I,* it is important to note that the *farang* teacher does not explicitly emerge out of the pages of gooverseas.com. What does begin to emerge, however, is the ideal English language teacher. Go Overseas is primarily a travel company that casts travel as a medium through which one can experience personal transformation. In this way it participates in neoliberal discourses of global mobility for the purpose of self-realization. As previously noted, however, access to this type of global mobility is largely determined by things like race, class, citizenship, and proficiency in English as an international language. These inequalities map well onto the traits of the ideal English language teacher, as Whiteness, relative affluence, a strong passport, and 'native' proficiency in English privilege certain travellers and teachers over others. It follows therefore, that within the context of a rapidly growing international TEFL industry, English language teaching presents itself as a natural facilitator of world travel for those who conform closely to this ideal. This on its own is enough to ensure the maintenance of the professional inequalities plaguing the TEFL field, however, the extent to which Go Overseas upholds the ideal English language teacher goes beyond these structural concerns.

The ideological positioning of Go Overseas as a facilitator of "meaningful" travel serves to recapitulate the mid-century discourses of modernization that gave rise to *The King and I*'s Anna as an agent of change. Returning, for a moment, to the ideational question of what content is included/excluded from the webpages under analysis, I want to draw attention to the inclusion of the "Volunteer Teaching Programs in Thailand" section on the "Teach English in Thailand" page. As Bernstein and Woosnam (2019) observe, within the context of Thailand, the practice of "volunteer tourism" intersects with TEFL, given the high demand for English language education. The effect here is the positioning of Go Overseas users as potential agents of change in Thailand through English education. This once again provides the conditions necessary for the emergence of the ideal English language teacher since, in line with the discourse of native-speakerism, a cultural chauvinism lurks under the surface. Here teaching English in Thailand is put forth as an altruistic action, a form of "meaningful" travel that allows participants the opportunity to grow as individuals while helping the people of Thailand acquire presumably necessary English language skills. Like *The King and I*, Go Overseas constructs Thailand as, to a certain degree, deficient and in need of intervention. This has further implications for how potential teacher-travellers conceive of themselves and their work.

Through a social semiotic lens, the cultural discourses embedded in texts like *The King and I* and gooverseas.com can be seen as belonging to the cultural resources individuals draw on when they communicate and make meaning. This is important when we consider the third level of West-Thai encounter(s), the embodied encounter. As demonstrated, gooverseas.com not only serves to represent Thailand and construct the relationship between Thailand and Go Overseas users, but as a company also helps to facilitate embodied encounters between the two. Program registrants may therefore bring with them the discourses that Go Overseas participates in as

resources through which to make sense of their experiences. However, these modes of meaning-making likely fall short on the ground where the *farang* discourse modulates the Self/Other binary underlying them. It is here, then, that these teacher-travellers, some of whom conform more closely to the traits of the ideal English teacher than others, are cast through the *farang* discourse symbolically and politically. On that note I turn to my next chapter, where I seek to consider this dynamic through the lens of my own experience of "becoming" a *farang* teacher.

6.6. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have reflected on the history of TEFL in terms of its development into a decentralized, global industry, and worked to place it within the context of a growing emphasis on global mobility as a value of neoliberal globalization. I have also considered how, in the context of Thailand, this intersects with the country's tourism industry and the perception of it in a Western tourist imaginary. To help unravel these themes, I have presented an in-depth case study of the website gooverseas.com, based on a multimodal discourse analysis of three webpages that surfaced in the top results for Google searches related to teaching English in Thailand. Overall, this analysis revealed how Go Overseas has built a business on advertising for travel program providers and sustained this business through posturing itself as an authoritative source of information on the types of programs it advertises. Moreover, Go Overseas legitimates itself through an appeal to community, positioning the information it provides as the output of a community of experienced and like-minded travellers. Drawing on Ahmed (2000), I have shown how gooverseas.com serves to reopen the prior histories of encounter exemplified by *The King and I* and contribute to the emergence of the *farang* teacher by facilitating embodied encounters.

7. Teaching in Anna's Shadow: Phenomenological Reflections on Becoming the *Farang* Teacher

Through the literature and case studies explored up to now, I have demonstrated how English language education features prominently in West-Thai encounter(s). Starting with *The King and I*, I have shown how a White, Americanized teacher has served to mediate Thailand to the West through the lens of Cold War-era discourses of modernization and cultural exchange. I have moreover drawn a throughline from Anna Leonowens to contemporary TEFL, particularly insofar as TEFL intersects with an increased focus on global mobility as a value of neoliberal globalization. Through an analysis of the website gooverseas.com, I have shown how the Orientalism upheld by *The King and I* continues to today, with Thailand simultaneously constructed as the object of a desirous Western gaze and in need of Western intervention. Here TEFL is revealed to be a medium through which individuals can access Thailand. When cast through the lens of the ideal English language teacher, however, we see how TEFL as a facilitator of global mobility lends itself to inequalities along the lines of race, class, citizenship, and speaking status. It is within this context, then, that the conditions for the emergence of the *farang* teacher are established.

In this final chapter I explore how embodied West-Thai encounter(s) can give rise to the *farang* teacher. Through phenomenological reflections on my own experience as an English language teacher in Thailand from April 2017 to March 2020, I consider the process of becoming *farang* within the context of TEFL today. I do so in two stages, looking at my experiences through the lens of each of the case studies presented. After that, I conclude by proposing a pedagogy of encounter, turning once again to Ahmed (2000) and Kress (2010) to articulate a pedagogical approach that seeks to identify, maneuver, and subvert the discourses that frame the

cross-cultural encounters facilitated by English language teaching. Here I return to the structural inequalities between teachers and between teachers and students discussed in Chapter 2, reflecting on the possibilities for resistance at the site of embodied encounter.

7.1. Background

My first experience with Thailand was in November 2016. At this time my husband had recently left a pastoral ministry position and we were in transition, living at home with our family and trying to decide where to go next. Prior to his resignation, however, I had registered for an overseas trip hosted by our denomination meant to connect ministry leaders with our ministries overseas. Over the course of ten days, several others and I travelled throughout Southeast Asia. While in Northern Thailand, we visited a local public school and, through conversations with a couple of foreign teachers, I determined that this would be mine and my husband's next move. Upon returning home we reconnected with the teacher who had facilitated my school visit and in short order my husband was offered a teaching contract. Having not yet graduated university, I did not get a full-time position but was offered a volunteer role with a local organization. So, in April 2017 with my 120-hour TEFL certificate in hand, I flew to Northern Thailand, remaining there until March 2020. During my time there I engaged with several different teaching contexts, from after-school classes to kindergarten programming, second-grade immersion settings to communication programming for adults in rural settings and everything in between. It was through these experiences that I became interested in the cultural politics of English language teaching in Thailand, particularly in relation to my own embodiment as a White, 'native'-speaking Canadian woman, the assumptions that I brought with me and the meanings assigned to me.

7.2. Thailand Through Anna's Eyes: Zealous Benevolence and the Construction of Deficit

As mentioned, my first embodied encounter with Thailand was in 2017. That said, it was not the first time I had encountered the concept of working abroad. As a young girl growing up in a Pentecostal church, I was exposed to missionary discourses, by which I mean both discourses promoting interculturally-oriented religious proselytization and broader discourses of outsider-led social transformation projects, like modernization and international development. It was therefore the type of benevolent Orientalism embedded in *The King and I* that served as the primary lens through which I approached Thailand. Within my circles no one would ever explicitly vocalize a belief in our own cultural 'superiority'. In fact, like the Cold War Orientalism identified by Klein (2003), cultural exchange and intercultural learning were upheld as values. However, the naturalization of our presence in countries deemed 'developing' or 'unreached' reflects an underlying deficit lens, regardless of the sentimentality attached to our actions.

One conversation that took place during my trip to Thailand in 2016 stands out as emblematic of this dynamic. Near the end of our trip, after I had determined that I wanted to be involved in TEFL in Thailand, I enthusiastically shared my plans with a colleague. Thrilled by the opportunity to do something 'good' for the people of Thailand, I – not yet 20 years old and with a very limited understanding of Thai culture, economics, or politics – espoused the benefits of an English language education for Thai students. It was my assumption that English was a golden ticket to such high-profile jobs as a McDonald's cashier in a popular tourist city. This of course plays into the rise of English as an international language and the very real economic disparities that it both reflects and produces, but it also demonstrates cultural ignorance and the ubiquity of colonial thinking in contemporary religious and social development spaces. I had

been trained to think of countries beyond the traditional "West" or Global North in terms of deficit. The confidence I had in my own ability to bridge this deficit, despite having no meaningful teaching experience, ultimately speaks to how the discourse of native-speakerism intersects with this cultural chauvinism. I, by virtue of being a native speaker of English, considered myself the best answer to the problem of English proficiency in a country I knew nothing about. Just like Anna Leonowens before me, and those who continued to reconstruct and reimagine her life story, I was participating in a form of sentimental Orientalism (see Glassmeyer, 2012).

Interestingly, I had never heard of *The King and I* until I moved to Thailand, where I learned of its controversial status only in passing. It was not until I began conceptualizing this project in the Spring of 2022 that it came to mind again, and I watched it for the first time. Armed with a basis in critical theory garnered from my freshly completed Social Development Studies degree, and confident that I had done the work of deconstructing systems of oppression, I was prepared to render a scathing critique of an infamously racist film. Imagine my surprise when I immediately found myself enthralled by Deborah Kerr's performance of "I Whistle a Happy Tune":

> Whenever I feel afraid
> I hold my head erect
> And whistle a happy tune
> So no one will suspect, I'm afraid
> (Lang, 1956, 4:28-4:40).

With these words, I was back in Chiang Mai Airport, dirty and exhausted from nearly 30 hours of travel and all at once faced with the personal, professional, and cultural uncertainties of my

own actions. By the time I arrived at the "March of the Siamese Children" – a scene reminiscent of the many *wai khru* ceremonies I participated in – I had come to identify with Anna. This identification is in part due to the actual similarities between her experience with Thailand as represented in the film and my own. Another aspect of this identification, however, has to do with the affective power of *The King and I* and the way in which the musical genre was mobilized as an ideological form.

As the film continued, I was also transported to my grandmother's basement where I sat in forest-green shag carpet watching Julie Andrews spin around her bedroom, her young charges dancing along to her melodic recitation of the "favourite things" she recalls as a remedy for negative emotions. For many years Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* was my favorite film and both the sonic and narrative similarities it shares with *The King and I* explain why it was so easy to identify with a character I was apt to criticize. I have since watched *The King and I* countless times. I have also read *The English Governess at the Siamese Court, Anna and the King of Siam,* and watched both 1999's *Anna and the King* and 1946's *Anna and the King of Siam.* None, however, had the same impact on me as the live-action musical film. Klein (2003) looking to the work of film scholar Thomas Schatz (1981), notes that musicals are an ideological genre of integration, and

> … tend to feature a collective hero, usually a couple or a community, in which feminine and familial values dominate. They express their dramatic conflicts as emotion and resolve them by integrating antagonistic characters into a harmonious community, usually through the mechanism of romance. (Klein, 2003, p. 192).

I believe that it was this emphasis on "feminine and familial values" that drew me so deeply into the film. I further believe that these values are largely communicated through the sonic power of

the musical. Looking to Broadway lyricist E. Y. (Yip) Harburg, Klein (2003) notes that “In his view, the musical’s ideological force arises from two sources: its ability to translate controversial ideas into easily absorbed emotions and the inescapability of song in the age of mass culture.” (p. 193). The familiarity of any specific Rodgers and Hammerstein number, regardless of if one has heard it before, speaks to the sonic, affective, and ideological continuity maintained across their productions. While *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music* are different in content, they both function to articulate the emotional contours of strong-willed, independent female characters who are placed in roles of feminine domestic leadership and assigned agendas of reform and transformation. My relationship to the Anna character, then, speaks to the relationship between texts like *The King and I* and the cultural environments that evolved out of the mid-century emphasis on sentimentality in international relations and development.

Being forced to confront my own affective identification with Anna has laid bare some of the hegemonic discourses and popular constructs that I brought with me to Thailand, and the structural realities that allowed for their expression. Captivated by the allure of certain feminine and maternal subjectivities and their function within projects of meaningful social transformation, I failed to pre-emptively question the legitimacy of my presence and purpose in Thailand, particularly in relation to the actual practice of English language teaching. With that in mind, I now turn to consider my experience through the lens of the contemporary TEFL industry.

7.3. TEFL and the Promises of Global Mobility

As the above sections suggest, my path to Thailand was not initiated nor facilitated by my encounter with the TEFL industry as represented by companies like Go Overseas. Once I made my decision to relocate, however, I did have to quickly become familiar with certain aspects of ELT as a profession which, given the Thai government's framing of English as a foreign

language, required a level of engagement with TEFL as a concept and industry. That said, I did have some early experiences with TEFL that speak to the extent to which teaching English overseas is presented as an opportunity for global mobility. Perhaps the result of being surrounded by missionary discourses that valorized the act of moving abroad, I toyed with the idea of teaching English in my early teens. It would be wrong to say that during this time (around the early-2010s) I was motivated by a desire to pursue teaching as a profession; rather, I was intrigued by the opportunity TEFL presented to live and work outside of Canada with limited qualifications. Naturally, when my interest was piqued, I turned to Google, and through that was exposed to how search results can cement the relationship between TEFL and tourism, and, more specifically between TEFL and tourism as a form of personal development. One thing that stands out about my thinking at this time was the allure of a form of income requiring minimal qualifications. I remember the phrase "teach English without a degree" was particularly popular at the time, with online sources claiming that one only needed a 120-TEFL certificate (most likely one that they offered), Inner Circle passport, and native speaking status to secure a position in many countries.

This foray into the online world of TEFL was really the first time I had encountered the concept of the 'native' speaker. While I intuitively understood that everyone starts learning some language at birth and inevitably would have to study others, the idea that being a native speaker was afforded certain cultural and pedagogical value over and above that afforded someone with learned proficiency had never really occurred to me. However, by the time I found myself sitting in a school in Northern Thailand listening to someone relay the excitement and meaningfulness of teaching English, the native speaker concept had been naturalized. The idea that Thailand would prioritize NESTs over NNESTs felt logical: of course you would want to be taught a

language by someone who had been speaking it since birth. I now realize that this felt logical because I was benefitting from it and had no lived experience with the inequality and discrimination that this type of thinking produces. As a 20-year-old woman with limited educational, professional, and general life experience, native-speakerism allowed me to travel to a foreign country, secure a visa, and lay claim to the type of cross-cultural experience that I have since transformed into cultural capital. Today, I reference my time abroad in university applications and resumes, even in this very research, as a way to signal my supposed intercultural competencies and right to speak on matters related to teaching in Thailand. This is all despite having only ever engaged with TESOL and applied linguistics research through this project. Returning to the analysis in the previous chapter, then, I have seen firsthand how claiming a travel experience lends a certain authority to the knowledge one communicates about a place and a people. To backtrack even further, I have lived the refrain of "Getting to Know You" and benefitted from the status it affords, whether or not it is warranted.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I selected Go Overseas for my case study based on its frequency and high ranking in a sample I collected for another project (see Durdle, 2022b). This, however, was only part of my rationale. After conducting the pilot study in question I was not particularly surprised by the connection between TEFL and travel as this seemed emblematic of my own experience with NESTs the ground. While my teaching context was dominated by NNESTs, I do remember three instances, in particular, that speak to this dynamic. The first occurred outside of the classroom when I happened to run into a group of '*farang*s' while walking in my village. I was used to being one of a handful of White people in my neighbourhood, so I initially assumed they were tourists who had trekked "off the beaten path" from the major centre some 25 kilometers North of us. Once I began speaking to them, however,

I learned that they were teachers at the local high school on contract through a placement agency. I also learned that most of them were on semester-long contracts and looking to prioritize their travel experience. At the time I sought to distance myself from them; I was a long-term resident and serious about Thai social development, not a tourist looking for an easy income. I now, however, understand the extent to which the allure of global mobility was foundational to my own choices and to which I was engaged in a common practice of expat identity formation: distancing myself from 'lesser' tourists (see Norum, 2013). This type of psychological distancing is very potent, however, and was also very much a feature of the second instance I want to discuss.

Living just outside of a popular tourist destination, I quickly became familiar with the relative 'underbelly' of tourism in Thailand. As mentioned in the previous chapter, alongside its reputation for being a tropical paradise and exotic, spiritual oasis, thanks to the cultural impact of the Vietnam War, Thailand is a well-known destination for nightlife and sex tourism. This became particularly real to me when I met up with someone who was in the country on a multi-week tour. From them I learned that it was not uncommon for travellers to combine periods of volunteer teaching with other, party-oriented tours during which some program participants would take part in the country's drinking culture, engage in illicit drug use, and explore the country's more Americanized sex-districts. In relaying this it is not my intention to pass judgement on these types of activities, but rather to highlight how the "perspective-changing" travel purveyed by companies like Go Overseas can come to crossover with more explicitly exploitative forms of travel, both of which can, depending on the route an individual chooses to take, implicate TEFL and its function as a medium through which to experience and consume the Other. This is not dependent on travel companies and placement agencies, however, with

research pointing to how TEFL features in long-established forms of migration for the purpose of sex and intimacy (see Howard, 2009; Maher & Lafferty, 2014). As the only White woman in my circle of peers and colleagues, I regularly observed this phenomenon.

Moving on, the final instance occurred when I visited a public school several provinces away. It is common for teachers to visit other schools on "study tours" to learn about how they run their English programs, build their curriculum, and deliver their lessons. Since, at the time, I was volunteering at the same school my husband was working at, I attended this study tour. One of the activities planned for us when we arrived was a classroom observation during which we observed lessons delivered by two newly graduated White American women who had been placed there by an agency on temporary contracts. Their presence at this rural school inspired a lot of discussion among the handful of NESTs on our team (myself included), who began discussing the need to secure more 'native' speakers. My husband's school was one of the few that never relied on agencies, choosing instead to recruit through traditional job postings and word-of-mouth. More often than not, however, if a school had acquired a sizeable number of White NESTs, it was through some sort of recruitment agency. The presence of these NESTs was moreover undeniable since, as Jindapitak (2019) observes, such teachers are valuable for English program marketing. It is on that note, then, that I turn to the *farang* discourse and the ways in which my experience "becoming" *farang* elucidates the impact of the meanings attached to the *farang* teacher.

7.4. Becoming *Farang*

To now, my discussion of the *farang* teacher has been largely theoretical. In Chapter 3, I articulated how the *farang* teacher presents as a culturally contextualized version of the ideal English language teacher, a figure formed by, on the one hand, hegemonic forces and discourses

stemming from a legacy of British colonialism and, on the other, Thai resistance to them. In Chapter 5, I reflected on the origins of the *farang* teacher, looking to Anna Leonowens as a Western cultural myth in order to explore the intersection of colonialism, American imperialism, and English language teaching represented by this infamous instantiation of West-Thai encounter(s). On the surface, *The King and I* is an example of Cold War Orientalism that casts the relationship between Thailand and the West as one of cultural exchange between a noble but deficient Other and a benevolent teacher-Self. However, when reading 'beyond the lines' it also points to Siamese agency, both in terms of elite resistance to colonialism and marginalized negotiation of domestic power. Here we see whispers of the *farang* teacher. Chapter 6 further revealed not so much the whispers of the *farang* teacher but the consolidation of TEFL with discourses of "meaningful" travel, and thus pointed to the structural and discursive contours of TEFL-facilitated contemporary West-Thai encounter(s). We have now arrived at the embodied encounter, the site best positioned for an exploration of how the *farang* teacher comes into being in a more real sense.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, an important feature of how the *farang* teacher comes to mean has to do with how teachers relate to the cultural and professional discourses that help to uphold the ideal English language teacher. Of course, as explored in Chapter 3, these include native-speakerism and raciolinguistic essentialism, which work together to cast the ideal teacher as White, Western, and 'native' speaking. In my case, I conformed quite easily to these ideals as a White, native-speaking Canadian passport holder. These are not the only discourses to consider, however. As noted above, the core message of *The King and I*, that a White, Americanized woman was naturally positioned as the embodiment of the skills and values needed for Siam to modernize, was made manifest in the culture I grew up in in the form of

missionary and social development discourses. Interestingly, without having ever seen the film I was primed to engage Thailand in ways similar to those represented within it. Moreover, while my path to Thailand did not primarily grow out of an explicit familiarity with and consumption of the travel-focused framing of TEFL online, this framing is indicative of the broader forces of neoliberal globalization that have positioned global mobility as a mode through which to experience personal transformation and garner cultural capital. Privileged, then, by the structural realities of a postcolonial world, I stepped foot in Thailand as an embodiment of an ideal I was not conscious of and armed with several chauvinistic frameworks through which to make meaning out of my experiences. Ultimately, my envelopment into the *farang* discourse did not immediately challenge these frameworks and, in many ways, upheld them.

As mentioned above, in my teaching context I was one of only a few White people and even fewer 'native' English speakers. That said, apart from the discomfort one might expect when adapting to a new culture, the *farang* discourse ensured that I was never on the receiving end of any meaningful forms of discrimination and, in fact, was privileged in ways I could not immediately recognize. In her work on the phenomenology of Whiteness, Sara Ahmed (2007) considers Whiteness "as a category of experience that disappears as a category through experience, and how this disappearance makes whiteness 'worldly'." (p. 150). She continues, stating

> To put this simply, what I offer here is a vocabulary for redescribing how whiteness becomes 'worldly'. Whiteness describes the very 'what' that coheres as a world… We can consider how whiteness becomes worldly as an effect of reification. Reification is not then something we do to whiteness, but something whiteness does, or more precise, what allows whiteness to be done. (p. 150).

The *farang* discourse can be seen through the lens of the worldliness of Whiteness, which is to say that for the White body, aspects of the reality of Whiteness disappear under it. This is because the *farang* discourse serves to uphold many of the privileges that the White body is familiar with, such as the right to exist in a 'foreign' space with minimal resistance. Within the context of teaching, Whiteness is of course not the only trait that works to uphold these privileges, however, as argued in Chapter 3, it is one of the few external signifiers that one is a NEST. When I first arrived in Thailand, I was not familiar with the inequalities experienced by NNESTs in relation to NESTs and did not really become aware of them until I was forced to view them through the lens of race. As mentioned, I had internalized native-speakerism to the point that I was willing to justify things like pay disparity based on speaking status. Sure, the vast majority of NNESTs I encountered were more qualified than the average NEST, but I felt this was warranted since we were assessing students against a native-speaker standard. It was not until I came to discover, through conversations with NNEST peers and colleagues that, in many instances, the 'non-native' White European teachers that I knew were being compensated as if they were NESTs. In contrast, many qualified and licensed Filipino teachers were being paid significantly less. As noted in Chapter 3, this personal experience is supported by the research of Perez-Amurao and Sunanta (2020) who uncovered the same type of practices in the Thai context.

Having learned this, I was confronted with the reality of my own Whiteness and the privileges that I was afforded by virtue of being perceived as *farang*. As established in Chapter 3, one of the byproducts of the *farang* discourse is a symbolic economy wherein those things deemed *farang* are afford more cultural and economic value in relation to others. Within the context of English language teaching, this has to do with the framing of English as a *farang* language and the approximation of native forms as a symbol of elite proximity. It is this dynamic

that contributes to the higher valuation of White NESTs in relation to others, since they are perceived to both embody and transmit these forms. This became very real to me after I was informed by a peer of the financial situation of one of his students. While public schools are predominately free in Thailand, individual schools are allowed to charge extra for special programming. In the case of my husband's school, this meant students could pay to be in an immersion setting where most of their subjects were taught in English. Theoretically their fees would help to pay for a NEST and ensure students learned in an air-conditioned classroom with more advanced technology. While considerably cheaper than a private school, these fees were ฿25,000 THB or approximately $1000 CAD per year. To put this in perspective, at the time a minimum wage worker would have only made ฿9000 THB or approximately $340 CAD per month. Moreover, in our smaller village, wherein the economy largely revolved around the selling of goods and services through small and family-run businesses, many families would have made less in proportion to their family size. This was the case for the student in question, a reality that triggered a conversation amongst some of us about the emphasis placed on English education, and particularly English taught by NESTs, as a "golden ticket" out of poverty.

There was something about the willingness of parents to pay for an education from a *farang* whose competency is assumed because they are *farang* that made me uneasy. Even more so when I came to realize how often this "golden ticket" fails to materialize. This ultimately speaks to the class dynamics discussed in Chapter 3. Through my experience I learned firsthand how my presence was used to attract Thai parents and students, whether that be to religious institutions, for-profit programming, and even community and government programming. In retrospect, I now see how, as Comprendio and Savski (2020) observe, I and others like me are "… instrumentalized by being treated primarily as resources necessary to achieve a higher goal,

while having little prospect of overcoming the Occidentalist discourse of cultural difference." (p. 682). At first the *farang* discourse, and the extent to which it reflects the worldliness of Whiteness, abstracted the privileges I was afforded by failing to challenge the discourses I arrived with. However, it eventually made itself apparent. Like Comprendio and Savski (2020), I do not intend to argue that this sort of objectification is equivalent to the types of discrimination faced by NNESTs on a personal level, rather, I want to note that first, it is the reality of instrumentalization that reveals the emergence of the *farang* teacher in its full scope of meaning and second, that an awareness of this instrumentalization in necessary for those who closely approximate an embodiment of the *farang* teacher if they intend to engage in critical practice both within and beyond the classroom. It is on this subject, then, that I conclude.

7.5. Toward A Pedagogy of Encounter

What I have learned through the process of becoming a *farang* teacher, and my attempt to untangle the many threads of this process, is the complexity of the cultural politics underlying contemporary TEFL practice today. It is in light of this complexity that I have come to realize the difficulties in addressing the structural inequalities plaguing both English teaching and learning in Thailand. Perhaps the most glaring difficulty has to do with who holds the power to enact structural change. Despite the assertion of *The King and I*, that one White woman might be afforded the power and opportunity to transform a presumably unjust system, this is merely an Orientalist fantasy. Not only is it an Orientalist fantasy, but it is also an undesirable solution. With that said, as noted in Chapter 5 and following Jackson's (2008) exploration of Thai semicolonialism, the *farang* discourse has the potential to allow for the expression of agency on behalf of more marginalized individuals, who can use proximity to challenge the power and status assigned to them. When the proximity in question is to a *person* who conforms to the

farang discourse, however, it goes beyond mere allyship. For this proximity to be weaponized against structures of oppression it is important that the *farang* individual do three things:

1) Be aware of their capacity to be instrumentalized.

2) Resist their instrumentalization by forces that seek to re-entrench the status quo.

3) Consent to being instrumentalized by those looking to resist their own oppression.

Within the context of ELT, these three things serve as a foundation for a kind of pedagogical intervention. While it goes without saying that quality language instruction is indispensable to ELT practice, it is important to apply a critical lens so that schools and classrooms stop being sites that reify social and cultural inequalities. While structural change may seem out of reach, however, embodied encounters, when cast through the lens of social semiotics, emerge as sites through which to explore resistance.

Having established how the figure of the stranger emerges through embodied encounters, Ahmed (2000) concludes her work with personal reflections on international feminism and its possibilities. Using the 1995 UN conference for women as a launching off point, she reflects on the way spaces relate to the encounters that occur within and beyond them. She notes that:

> Institutions cannot and do not fully 'colonise' spaces. The 'beyond' is always 'within' – the inside and outside don't fit together to form 'discrete' spaces. The 'face-to-face' encounters beyond the formalised spaces of the conference rooms or workshops are thus not within *or* outside institutions; they neither fully escape nor fully inhabit their limits (p. 163).

Within the context of my research, cultural discourses, whether they be Orientalism, Occidentalism, native-speakerism, globalization, etc., can be viewed similarly to the institutions that Ahmed (2000) reflects on. As demonstrated above, while these discourses certainly shape

encounters, they do not have to dictate them and, in fact, can be negotiated, manipulated, and resisted. With this in mind, I want to return to Kress (2010) and the principles of multimodal social semiotics:

1) Signs are always newly made in social interaction.

2) Signs are motivated, not arbitrary relations of meaning and form.

3) The motivated relation of a form and a meaning is based on and arises out of the interest of makers of signs.

4) The forms/signifiers which are used in the making of signs are made in social interaction and become part of the semiotic resources of a culture.

(Kress, 2010, pp. 54-55).

A social semiotic theory of communication affords the personal agency necessary for each encounter to become a site of resistance, something that can be consciously facilitated on a pedagogical level when teachers have engaged in the research and self-reflection needed to identify what hegemonic and potentially harmful discourses, forms, or signifiers belong to the "semiotic resources" of their cultural and professional context. In the context of TEFL, this might involve resisting discourses of Orientalism, native-speakerism, or individualist conceptions of travel when attempting to articulate one's professional identity. This might also involve engaging in ways that allow marginalized students and colleagues to take advantage of one's *farang* status on their own terms. Moreover, while I do believe that conscious engagement with this approach on behalf of teachers might represent an articulatable pedagogical intervention, I also want to note that resistance at the site of encounter regularly occurs both consciously and unconsciously as a subaltern act (see Kumaravadivelu, 2016 for more on

subaltern voices in ELT). Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis does not allow for a full exploration of a pedagogy of encounter, however, I do want to share an example from my own experience that I feel exemplifies the type of possibilities that I envision.

At some point during my time in Thailand I was invited on a trip into the mountains. On this trip I had the opportunity to visit a Hmong family and while others in our group chatted with the parents and other children, I found myself engaging with one young girl. Something that immediately became apparent, however, was the language barrier between us. While I was used to working across a language barrier, the majority of kids that I had worked with had some level of English proficiency; this girl's, however, was quite limited. And yet, that did not stop us. Between the two of us (her more than me) we found a solution: translation dictionaries. Using these dictionaries we began exploring different words, each choosing a word and saying it in Thai. I would then say the word in English, asking her to follow up with a Hmong translation. We kept this up until it was time for me to leave. Interestingly, I would go on to tell this story to a colleague, who jokingly said that I should focus on learning Thai before branching out to less 'useful' minority languages. This didn't sit right with me at the time and, through the research I have conducted, I now understand why.

Caught between an internationally dominant language and a domestic one, it would have been easy to see this young, ethnic-minority girl for her linguistic deficits. Instead, I, albeit with little conscious awareness and predominately through her prompting, chose to engage with her in a way that worked to subvert the power of these dominant modes of communication, placing Hmong at the same level as both English and Thai. In doing so, I resisted the desire to choose forms and signs emanating from the discourses I was familiar with, while she drew on all of her linguistic resources. Together in that mountain village we both decided, whether consciously or

intuitively, to resist and create something new. Although this may not be a pedagogical approach that lends itself to concrete methods or plans, it is one that can be engaged anywhere, anytime both inside and outside the classroom. Ultimately, in the process of becoming the *farang* teacher, then, one can choose to uphold the discourses that maintain one's privilege, or choose to step outside of them, leaving the door open for expressions of agency and resistance.

7.6. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I consider my case studies through the lens of my own experience teaching English in Thailand. In doing so I discovered that both prior to and following my arrival in Thailand I had come to accept certain cultural discourses as viable frameworks for making meaning out of my experiences. In some instances, these beliefs were reinforced since the *farang* discourse, through its partial congruence with the worldliness of Whiteness (Ahmed, 2007), made invisible many of the privileges I was afforded. It was not until I had to confront the inequalities in front of me through the lens of race that I began to realize what it meant to be *farang*. This was further made clear when I began to encounter the sacrifices individuals were willing to make to achieve proximity to my *farang*ness. It was this that ultimately inspired my desire to question the meanings assigned to and articulated in the figure of the *farang* teacher, largely in the interest of working toward a critical pedagogical approach that takes into consideration the difficulties of resisting structural inequalities within a context like Thailand. While the scope of my research did not allow for a full exploration of this concept in practice, I concluded with a call to move toward a pedagogy of encounter, wherein teachers can begin to consider their teaching choices through the lens of semiotic possibility and semiotic resistance. And on that note, I now turn to conclude.

8. Conclusion

Given the iterative nature of the research contained in this thesis, the previous chapter has served to summarize much of the work I have accomplished. I do however want to offer some brief concluding thoughts in terms of what I believe this work has contributed to the field of critical applied linguistics and beyond. I am hesitant to speak of "findings", since I have maintained throughout that the goal of this research was to interrogate and problematize more so than explain and solve. With that said, I do want to present several key take-aways and suggest some potential avenues for future research. With that in mind, in this concluding chapter I first offer a discussion of what I understand my work to have accomplished before providing a brief consideration of what further research may be undertaken from here.

8.1. Contributions

Having both conceptualized West-Thai encounter(s) as the context of my exploration and structured my research around a loose timeline of three distinct historical periods, this thesis, while far from comprehensive, constitutes a sociohistorical critique of the role of English in Thailand and the cultural politics surrounding its teaching. While several of the works I have cited throughout (i.e. Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Trakulkasemsuk, 2018) offer similar critiques through the lens of educational policy and the development of Thai English, I have chosen to ground my work in cultural studies, following Pennycook (1994) in applying a poststructuralist lens to identify and challenge the binary assumptions underlying this history.

The overall effect of this has been the problematization and destabilization of the assumed neutrality of teaching English in Thailand and, more specifically, TEFL in Thailand. While the neutrality of English as an international language has long been called into question (i.e. Pennycook, 1994; 1998; Phillipson, 1992) and the impact of certain colonial concepts on the

culture of teaching of English in Thailand recently explored (i.e. Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020; Savski & Comprendio, 2022), my research has, on the one hand, offered a contextualized exploration of the former and, on the other, extended the perspectives of the latter. I have done this through the use of two case studies, the first of which illustrates the ideological underpinnings of the English language and English teaching stemming from the reign of King Mongkut through the early Cold War and into the Vietnam War. The second emphasizes a contemporary trend in English language teaching in Thailand – its absorption into regimes of TEFL-facilitated global mobility – in order to illustrate how "… contemporary modes of proximity reopen prior histories of encounter." (Ahmed, 2000, p. 13).

This destabilization, however, takes place across both domestic and international domains. While both texts drawn on are Western-produced and reflective of an Orientalist construction of Thailand in the Western imagination, the added lens of Thai Occidentalism has allowed me to conceptualize the figure of the *farang* teacher. What I have uncovered is how the potentiality of the *farang* teacher consistently lurks under the surface of West-Thai encounter(s) so that even before an approximate embodiment of such a figure enters Thailand, its realization is possible through meaning-making processes inherently shaped by postcoloniality. This ultimately highlights how the *farang* body is privileged both prior to and following its becoming. As other research has demonstrated (i.e. Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Jindapitak, 2019; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Savski & Comprendio, 2022), the privileging of the *farang* teacher over and above other educators has real-world implications in terms of educational equity, playing into both global and situated class regimes that have been initiated and sustained by colonial histories. These inequalities therefore demand a response or point of entry for resistance.

I have offered one such point of entry in Chapter 7. Reinterpreting my findings through reflections on my own experience both on the ground in Thailand and throughout the research process, I have proposed the possibility of a pedagogy of encounter. While the scope of the present study limited the extent to which I explored this possibility, it does present opportunities for future research. In general, a pedagogy of encounter depends on a social semiotic theory of communication, whereby the possibility of resistance is found in the power of the face-to-face encounter. Here we are presented with the opportunity to resist hegemonic signs and meanings through the construction of new ones by choosing to negotiate the cultural and semiotic resources that we are presented with from one context to the next. It is on that note that I turn to briefly consider the possibilities for future research opened by my work.

8.2. Looking Forward

In general terms, this thesis represents a situated critique of power within educational contexts. It has therefore highlighted the value of engaging in critical work to address not only the broad power structures of colonialism, racism, classism, etc. but also the importance of considering how these structures and discourses manifest in specific times and spaces. In terms of educational studies, then, I have laid the groundwork for similar practitioner-led interrogations of distinct educational and cultural contexts. In a similar vein, my proposal of a pedagogy of encounter points to the need for further practical exploration of the topic. Future research could therefore be conducted looking at if and how this approach can be mobilized alongside more traditional forms of instruction. The primary questions that might guide this research would be related to the practicality of ensuring adequate instruction while simultaneously challenging imbalances that arise from the unequal distribution of power in a given educational context.

Apart from these more universal concerns, this research also provides the foundation for further inquiry into teaching English in Thailand. While some research has already sought to introduce the concept of *farangness* to more general concerns about the impact of native-speakerism (Comprendio & Savski, 2020; Savski & Comprendio, 2022), this thesis has demonstrated the richness of this line of inquiry. For example, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which both foreign and local teachers in Thailand understand and internalize the concept of *farangness* as a facet of their professional identities. This would likely have implications for further resistance within the TESOL field, particularly in terms of the NNEST movement and the possibility of critical engagement and allyship across race, class, and speaking status.

8.3. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided some brief concluding thoughts, including both a summary of the major contributions my research has made to critical applied linguistics and a consideration of how this research might be built on in the future. In terms of contributions, I have shown how sociohistorical critique can assist in destabilizing the assumed neutrality of teaching English in Thailand. I have further noted that rather than a unidirectional critique, my appeal to both Orientalism and Occidentalism has allowed for this destabilization to occur at both the international and domestic Thai levels. Moreover, the lens of the *farang* discourse has allowed me to conceptualize the specific figure of the *farang* teacher as one that is ever present in ELT-related West-Thai encounter(s), regardless of whether an approximate embodiment of this figure is present. Drawing, then, on my own lived experience as one such approximation through which to consider the process of becoming *farang,* I have put forth the possibility of a pedagogy of encounter as a form of resistance that emphasizes encounters, and in particular

embodied encounters, as sites where new meanings can be forged. In terms of future research, I have proposed several possibilities, including the application of my overarching methodology to critical research into other teaching contexts, more in-depth explorations of a pedagogy of encounter, and further research into the role of *farang*ness in ELT in Thailand.

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