

Does TEFL or TESL work in Teaching English in Thailand?

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Introduction

It has been well-known that Teaching English as a Foreign Language, TEFL, and Teaching English as a Second Language, TESL play a major role in influencing pedagogy of English in many countries. The TEFL refers to teaching English to students living in countries where English is not the native language such as Thailand. The other one refers to teaching English to students whose first language is not English, for example Singapore. Why is English language proficiency in Thailand very lower than Singapore? If TESL is used in Thailand, would the proficiency be in the same level as Singapore?

Approach, Method, and Technique

There are three key words that should be discussed: approach, method, and technique.

Approach is a set of assumption or belief dealing with the nature of language, learning, teaching, and learning theory. Upon the approach, the main language learning theories are Behaviorism, Cognitive, and Social-Cognitive. The approach of all methods, Grammar-translation, Direct, Audio-lingual, Cognitive Code Learning, Silent Way, or Communicative Language Teaching, aims at developing learners' language proficiency.

Method refers to description as an overall plan or systematic of language based upon a selected approach. The methods mentioned in paragraph 2 are used when teaching and learning is consistent with the selected approach.

Technique defines the specific activities manifested in the classroom that is consistent with a method and therefore is in harmony with an approach.

It can be said that the three words above are the main elements of language pedagogy. Techniques used when teaching English should carry a method and the method should be consistent with an approach.

English Proficiency in Asia

The latest English Proficiency Index (EPI) includes 18 countries from Asia. The nations found to have the highest levels of English language proficiency were Singapore, Malaysia and India, which were all rated as having 'very high proficiency'. At the bottom

of the index were Thailand, Mongolia and Cambodia, with ‘very low proficiency’. Across Asia, the countries that made the most significant progress since last year were Kazakhstan and Vietnam.

According to the EPI above, Singapore had the highest level of English language proficiency because Singapore was the trading colony of the British the same as Malaysia and India, one of four official languages of Singapore is English, and ESL teachers, native English speakers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the USA. earn one of the highest wages in Asia.

However, in Thailand had very low proficiency because Thailand was not the colony of any other countries, The official language of Thailand is Thai not English, and most EFL teachers, Thai and not native English speakers from Philippines, Africa, and Europe, earn the lower wages than Singapore.

Why not changing TEFL to TESL in Thailand?

Most teachers who teach English as a foreign language in Thailand are Thais and Thai students have just learned English subject in classroom. Majority of the English teachers do not often use English in classroom but Thai so students are not confidential to use English when meeting foreigners. Additionally, English is not Thailand’s second or official language, Thai students have seldom chances to communicate in English. Though Thailand changes TEFL to TESL in English classroom, it cannot improve English language proficiency to a high level as Singapore, Malaysia and India.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many factors to develop to succeed in a high level of English language proficiency in Thailand; teachers who teach English in schools and universities had to be developed as the standards of teaching as Singapore, Malaysia, and India, TEFL and TESL can be applied to use in English classroom, and students should have more and more opportunities to communicate in English not only in classroom but also in their daily life.

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