Chapter 3
Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

The literature review in Chapter 2 on foreign language curriculum development clearly indicated the importance of combining studies on foreign language curricula with other related fields, particularly the field of curriculum studies. It is these two fields, the field of foreign language curriculum and the field of curriculum development, which provide the underlying principles of the research methodology for this thesis. These two fields have given the research both depth and breadth, while also shaping the design of this research. This chapter aims to describe the data collection methods of the research, and other related issues that were encountered during the data collection process. In this chapter, six main sections contribute to the description of the research methodology. The first three sections represent the three sources of data collection. In each of the three sections, information is given on data gathering and research procedures. The fourth section is on the limitations of the research methods applied in the field. Section five deals with the issue of ethical considerations during the data collection process. The last section is devoted to the analytical procedure of interviews and questionnaires.
3.2 Nature of the Study

This research is qualitative in nature where the curriculum document is the main focus of the research. The design of research methods is related to research questions and their problems (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Silverman & Seale, 2005). This research deals with the questions of *What? How?* and *Who?*. Questions like these represent the nature of qualitative inquiry research which aims at describing what is going on in the research. In contrast to the quantitative approach, the research question is *Why?* which explores a comparison between groups or seeks out relationships between variables for items studied (Creswell, 1998, p.17). This present research seeks to understand the participants’ experiences and its nature is that of an open-ended inquiry rather than one that seeks measurable and observable data where the research questions are specific and narrow (Creswell, 2005, p.47). Thus, the nature of this study is intended as a qualitative inquiry. The major concerns of this research are to explore the meaning underlying the curriculum planning process and curriculum. The “meaning” for Bogdan and Biklen (1992) is a concern essential to the qualitative approach. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) explain that “Researchers who use this approach are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives” or their perspectives (p.32).

3.3 The Triangulation of Data

The research design of this study comprises three research methods. Hatch and Lazaraton (1991) suggest that the multi-method approach adds great value to the research. Creswell (1998) also states that “the backbone of qualitative research is extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information.” (p.19). Three methods leading to the triangulation of the data have contributed to the analysis of the new national English language curriculum of Thailand. Hittleman and Simon (2002, p.183) explain that triangulation is a procedure for cross-validating information. It is a process of collecting information from several sources about the same event or behaviour. Silverman and Seale (2005) further explain that the form of methodological triangulation is the use of different methods and sources to corroborate each other. The triangulation in this research consists of (1) gathering of all documents related to the English language curriculum in Thailand; (2) conducting
interviews with policy makers and curriculum developers of the curriculum; and (3) conducting interviews with school teachers and seeking their completion of questionnaires. However, these three are not equally important. The most important is the English language curriculum documentation. The second most important is the interviews with policy makers. The interviews and questionnaires with school teachers were only an additional source of data for a more broadly based analysis. Figure 3.1 below shows how all the data obtained from different methods links up in the one analysis.

Figure 3.1: Triangulation of data

3.4 Gathering of Documentation

The main method is the analysis of the new official foreign language curriculum of Thailand, the “English language standards-based curriculum” (ESB curriculum). Accordingly, that documentation was the main source of information to be fed into the analysis forming the basis of this research. The documents also included the various pieces of Thai government legislation, Thai national education laws, national educational policies, teacher training materials, supporting documents, job descriptions, organizational charts and follow-up news. The following list shows the main documents for the analysis.
Official documents for the analysis

1. English Language Substance and Standards under Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D. 2001)

In order to get a more detailed picture of the situation and to expose contradictions which are often hidden, different sources were also used. The additional resources were:

Other related documents

1. The 1997 Constitution of the Thai Kingdom
2. National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (A.D. 1999), Kingdom of Thailand
5. Research relating to Thai foreign language policies and curriculum, and government leaflets, official reports, research and news related to English language teaching and learning.

3.4.1 Document Collection Procedures

In the beginning year of the research program, the researcher gathered all documents relating to the official English language curriculum. Curriculum documents are available to the public on the Thai MOE website. The documents that were gathered from the website are the legislation, education development plan, English language curriculum, and reports on educational reform. These documents provided initial information for the research methods design for further data collection in Thailand.

Original copies of the English language standards-based curriculum and other official documents were collected in Thailand during November 2003-February 2004, the data collection period.

3.4.2 Accessibility of Documents

The researcher was fortunate in being given the official English language curriculum and curriculum manuals by very generous policy makers and school teachers whom the researcher interviewed. The material that the researcher received from the
interview sessions was the material that government had provided to schools teachers to use together with the Basic Education curriculum 2001.

Other related documents as well as other support documents were also openly available to the public. While many documents were available on the website of the MOE of Thailand, other related documents can be found in book stores, especially in public university book stores, because these are the places visited by most school teachers looking for classroom materials. There are also government book stores where all government publications are available for sale.

The document update process is one of the tasks in document collection that needs to be kept in mind. Because the English language standards-based curriculum was introduced into the pilot schools in 2001 and implemented nation wide with every class level in 2005, changes in the curriculum as a result of the pilot program were to be expected. Hence, changes to the curriculum during the research time from the beginning of 2001 to July 2005 were monitored during these research years. News reports have been tracked continuously during this period, mostly via the Internet and through e-mail contact with the curriculum developers who were interviewed by the researcher.

From the initial implementation in 2004 of the ESB curriculum, discussion reviewing the curriculum was initiated by curriculum stakeholders. The discussion did not make changes to the curriculum, thus, the ESB curriculum is still valid at the present date. In 2005, the new Minister of Education called for serious strategies to develop English language education in Thailand, however the curriculum will not be changed or revised. The plan for development focuses on the development of teachers and resources management.

### 3.5 Interviews with Policy Makers and Curriculum Developers

The analysis of the curriculum planning process not only required an analysis of the curriculum itself, it also required an understanding of the principles underpinning the development of this curriculum and the planning process of the curriculum. The
analysis of the curriculum planning process involved an understanding of principles that underlie the curriculum or policy. Conclusions relating to the planning process and philosophies and ideologies underpinning the curriculum cannot be made without data and information obtained directly from the people who created and developed the foreign language curriculum. Hence, in order to elicit information necessary for a thorough and constructive analysis, this particular information was essential. An interview was chosen as the tool for information acquisition.

3.5.1 Procedure for Interviews with Curriculum Developers

Interviews with curriculum developers were carried out from November 2003 to February 2004 along with the interviewing of school teachers (which is described in the next section). The data collection procedures required that initial contact be made by telephone and e-mail while the researcher was still in Australia. The appointments were confirmed according to the availability of interviewees. The meeting locations were arranged in Thailand afterward with a request from the researcher that the place should be free from distractions, a requirement that lent itself to recording information accurately (Creswell, 1998).

Interviews were conducted in the Thai language and then translated into English by the researcher. The interviews lasted at least one hour per person. The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. The tape recording was one means of acquiring an accurate record of interview (Minichiello, 1995, p.99). Ethical issues concerning research involving human participation is discussed later in this chapter.

3.5.2 Participants

As can be seen from the name list at the back of the official curriculum document there were forty-three officials, curriculum developers and stakeholders involved in the initial development of the foreign language curriculum. These forty-three officials were from the MOE, the university sector, and school districts service areas. Eight key persons from this group of forty-three curriculum stakeholders were chosen. First, six key curriculum developers were chosen on a basis reflecting their status in the curriculum development committee. These six people were the chair of the committee, the deputy chair of committee and assistants. Because of their status, they
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held considerable power in the decision-making process for the planning of curriculum knowledge.

After the interviews with the six key persons, another two curriculum developers were recommended. The interviewees knew best who were important people and contributors in the curriculum planning. These two curriculum developers were also key persons in drafting the English language curriculum in the planning process. The recommendations from interviewees were important. This helped the researcher gather more information necessary for the analysis. To avoid the possibility of some interviewees making partisan choices in order to avoid critics, the researcher chose those curriculum developers who were recommended by most of the interviewees.

The interviews with the chosen eight curriculum developers were sufficient for the analysis. These eight curriculum developers came from two major areas. The first four curriculum developers were university lecturers whom the government had invited to participate in the process of curriculum planning. These four university lecturers were invited to work on the development of the new curriculum because they are well-known scholars in the area of English language teaching in Thailand and also they had considerable experience in the development of an official foreign language curriculum. In addition, these four curriculum developers also brought new curriculum principles into Thai curriculum development.

The other four interviewees were government officials from the MOE. Two of the government officials were positioned both as curriculum developers and teacher trainers, thus they added strong comments and information on the curriculum planning process and development. These four government officials knew a great deal about the curriculum planning process and curriculum development of an official foreign language standards-based curriculum.

The group of curriculum developers chosen for interview by the researcher was the first group that had brought new principles and concepts of curriculum development into the Thai foreign language curriculum. They were the most influential group for they presented and explained new curriculum principles to other government officials,
trainers of school teachers and teachers in Thailand. Thus, the information obtained from the chosen group is reliable enough and they well represented the target population for this research. Thus, the information obtained from the chosen group is reliable enough and provides invaluable input to this research which, in turn, holds some interest to them.

It is worth noting that in January 2005, the follow up interviews were carried out with two curriculum developers who were university lecturers (the same persons) in order to gain updated information about the movement of the ESB curriculum in Thailand. In addition, the researcher had had a chance to interview another new four teacher trainers who were recently assigned to carry out nationally a development program for school teachers. Thus, in total, 12 curriculum stakeholders were interviewed in this research.

3.5.3 Interviewing Methods

Each of the interviews was conducted by the researcher in a face-to-face, non-standardized or unstructured interview, using interview schedules. The interview questions were open-ended, including indirect questions to obtain information about the curriculum developers' attitudes and beliefs underlying the curriculum and the planning process. The following are details of the interviewing methods used with this sample group.

3.5.3.1 Unstructured or non-standardized interviews

The unstructured or non-standardized interview was the method used with the curriculum developers. An unstructured interview is a method of collecting interview data with minimum control of conversation between interviewers and interviewees (Minichiello, 1995). Different from the structured interview, where questions are fixed and are probed in fixed sequences, unstructured interviews are more flexible and open to greater interaction between interviewers and respondents (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). However, specific questions were used at times during the interview. This depended on the issue discussed in the interview sessions. The issues, which were targeted by specific questions, were the processes used in the planning and the respondents' backgrounds.
The questions dealing with respondents' attitudes and knowledge that were applied in the planning process were directed in a way that gave the floor to respondents to talk openly and tell their story. According to Hittleman and Simon (2002, p.149), directing questions in this way could encourage subjects to talk about their perceptions of what was happening, what their beliefs about the event were, and how they felt about the situation under review. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.96) state that the interviewees define the content of the interview and the direction of the study.

In order to create the best opportunity for respondents or interviewees to talk openly, the interaction between interviewer and respondents was taken into account during the interview session. Foddy (1993) explains that to create a good interaction between an interviewer and interviewee, the interviewee should be treated as an active agent. Foddy (1993) calls this interaction “sense-making activity”. The “sense-making activity” is the activity that results when interviewees take an active role, and negotiate the meaning of questions and answers with the interviewer. The interaction allows the interview discussion to move in a new direction (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Gorman & Clayton, 2005). This new direction thereby adds both depth and breath to the interviewer's understanding of the issues involved (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.45)

### 3.5.4 Interview Questions – Open-Ended

The value of open-ended items is that they are not yes-no questions. This is an extremely important development in the technique of interviewing using an unstructured interview approach (Minichiello, 1995; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Gorman and Clayton conclude that “it can be of inestimable value in understanding contexts and creating links that are such key aspects of qualitative research” (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.45). That means respondents will sometimes give unexpected answers that may indicate the existence of relations not originally anticipated.

In the unstructured interview method, the open-ended question puts a minimal restraint on the answers and their expression (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Creswell, 2005). Creswell (2005) further explains that the open-ended questions impose no restrictions on the content and manner of respondents' answers. This characteristic suited the
particular enquiry very well since the open-ended questions fitted the purpose of encouraging interviewees to express their thoughts freely and to interact openly with the interviewer without controls, despite the research nature of the enquiry. This type of technique allowed the researcher to make better estimates of respondents' beliefs, attitudes and perspectives.

3.5.5 Indirect Question Type

It is worth noting that the questions on attitudes and beliefs are known to be sensitive questions. It is information that respondents may be unwilling to give readily and directly. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.101) suggest that the interviewers should not make interviewees uncomfortable with their own thoughts. These interviews included a special questioning technique - the "indirect question type" - in the interview session with curriculum developers.

One of the well defined patterns of Thai behaviour is the symbiotic relationship between people such as teacher-pupils, elder-younger and boss-workers (Klausner, 1993). This issue was taken into account during the interviews. In this pattern of relationships, the one who is younger, or is a student or worker has to be aware of questions asked by the superior (teacher, elder and boss). Since the researcher had to ask questions about personal belief and the use of personal knowledge in planning the curriculum, this type of question could imply an intention to judge the knowledge of curriculum developers who were elders, government officers as well as university lecturers who might have been sensitive to some questions. Thus, to avoid rejection by the curriculum developers, the "indirect question" type was used to ask questions about their knowledge.

Two indirect question techniques were used following the ideas of Foddy (1993) and Kerlinger (2000). As Foddy (1993) points out on the issue of the level of social generality, respondents can answer according to their own points of view or from a broader group or community point of view. Foddy (1993) accepts the consequence of this is that distributions of responses to personalized questions can differ markedly from distributions of responses to impersonal questions. Judd, Kidder, and Smith
(1991) suggest that the questions should be asked in the form of "what other people" think about an issue because this can help elicit more information.

The second technique is recommended by Kerlinger and Lee (2000). They suggest that the interviewees could be given an ambiguous stimulus or a vague question (like a blurred picture or a blot of ink) (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). This technique was applied within the interview session and that helped produce a great deal of information from interviewees.

The researcher applied these two techniques – the social generality type of question ("What do other people think about...?") and the vague question - in the interview session because it was assumed that curriculum developers might find it more comfortable to express their own opinions on a sensitive issue by answering indirect and impersonal questions.

The interview questions were pilot tested with colleagues at the School of Languages and International Education, University of Canberra. The researcher introduced role play to test out the interview atmosphere as well as the questions. The list of interview questions with curriculum developers can be found in Appendix 5.

3.6 Interviews and Questionnaires with School Teachers

Even though this research focuses on document analysis and the planning process of the curriculum, the information obtained from curriculum implementers is needed as additional material to allow for a more thorough analysis, and to support any recommendations for the future.

The curriculum materials lent themselves to this mode of inquiry; first, because, as mentioned in the explanation of the official foreign language curriculum in Chapter 2, the curriculum is loosely specified in terms of implementation, that is, it contains teaching suggestions rather than teaching directions. The aims and objectives of the program are broadly stated and could be accomplished using a number of different teaching techniques.
Thus, the feedback from the implementers provides additional data for the analysis of the policy making process. The interviews with schools teachers and the questionnaires explored any mismatch between policy makers' and school implementers' understandings of aims, objectives and benchmarks. These data helped to clarify the attitudes of teachers to the difficulties in curriculum implementation and the value of in- and pre-service training. They also shed light on the process of teachers' interpretation of the curriculum.

### 3.6.1 Interviews with School Teachers

The interviews with school teachers focused on their attitudes, the teachers' views on the use of the English language curriculum and their understanding of the curriculum itself. The interviews also gathered information on the process of developing the school-based curriculum out of the official curriculum and the government support information received by schools.

The type of information obtained from the school teachers' interviews is different from that obtained from the interviews with curriculum developers. The differences are that the interviewing of teachers was a general inquiry about the implementation difficulties and their understanding of the official curriculum, whereas the interviewing of curriculum developers probed more deeper into the philosophy underlying the curriculum. In short, the issues explored in the interviews with teachers were less complex than those explored with curriculum developers.

#### 3.6.1.1 Procedure of the interviews with school teachers

After studying the list of schools that were participating in the curriculum pilot program, the interviewer chose schools according to school locations where transportation was convenient and available (details about the choice criteria is made available in the next section). Initial contacts with school teachers from all selected school were made by telephone. Invitation letters from the researcher, as a research student from the University of Canberra, were sent out to selected schools. The letters were issued to school principals seeking their permission to conduct interview

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10 The pilot program is the program initiated by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development to be the model of Basic Education curriculum 2001 implementation for other schools. The affiliate schools were under the responsible of other departments and also implemented the curriculum in 2001.
sessions with their school teachers. Telephone contacts were again made to seek confirmation of permission and appointments were made afterward. Each interview lasted from one to two hours per person. The interviews were recorded by the researcher with the use of a tape recorder and notes.

3.6.1.2 Site selection

The schools were selected by random sampling using five criteria. The first criterion was that the school had to be part of the pilot program or participated in the affiliated program that implemented the curriculum in 2001 (the curriculum was implemented nationally in 2003). Only schools that first participated in the pilot program implemented the curriculum in 2001. Thus, the pilot and affiliated schools were the best choice because they had been using the new curriculum for 2 years, counting from the implementing year to the year that the researcher started the interviews at the end of 2003. Two hundred schools participated in the pilot program. Six schools from the 200 were selected.

The second criterion was that schools had to be public schools not private schools. This was important in terms of the relevant variables in the same proportion as the variables - the teachers in Thailand - appearing in the target population. The public schools in Thailand number 32,310 (primary schools), 12,636 (secondary schools) and for private schools number 1,595 (primary schools), 755 (secondary schools) based on 2001 report (Office of the National Education Commission, 2002/2003). Thus, according to this large number of teachers in public schools, they are a good sample. In addition, English language teaching and learning in private schools is very different from that in private schools in terms of preparation methods, classroom materials, and teaching periods (Ratanapreedagul, 1981). Thus, public schools were chosen as the focus for a broader analysis of the national curriculum, even though the national curriculum has been adopted by both private and public schools.

The third criterion was a consideration of the cost involved in travelling, the time available for collecting and accessibility of the subjects. Hittleman and Simon (2002) comment on this consideration. They say that it is realistic for researchers to work with accessible populations, which are groups that are convenient; however, the
groups must be representative of the target population. This consideration was linked to the fourth criterion on school location.

The fourth criterion was the school’s location. Each school should be situated in different parts of Thailand for greater variability of information. Provinces in each part of Thailand were randomly sampled according to the researcher’s convenience and connection with the school. The selected schools were located as follows: in Bangkok (capital city), in the east (Rayong), in the north (Chaing-Mai) and in the capital suburban (Cha-Cheng-Sol). Thus, in total, five schools were visited and seven school teachers were interviewed in-depth.

The fifth criterion for selecting school teachers for the interviews was their availability and willingness to take part in the study. According to this criterion, age, gender and work experience could not be the main criteria for the sampling process. However, the researcher had interviewed teachers with different years of experience in one school in the east where teachers were available at that time. Hypothetically, work experience could contribute to a teacher’s perception of curriculum change. This had to be left for further study.

The school visits and interviews were discontinued in the north because the information obtained from school teachers there was unvaried, despite being in a different part of Thailand. Hence, another two parts of Thailand - the north eastern and south and west - were omitted. In conclusion, the researcher made visits to four areas for the interviews with school teachers. Seven school teachers were interviewed in-depth.

It is worth noting that in the initial plan for the school visits, the school size and class level (primary and secondary) were two of the criteria for school selection. Based on the number of students, schools that provide both primary and secondary level are likely to be larger than schools that provide only primary or secondary education. The hypothesis was that in the larger schools, the curriculum implementation might be found to be different and/or better understood because of more funding and human resources. Interestingly, after visiting two schools – one of which was large - teachers
at the larger school answered similarly to teachers at the smaller school. This appears to be because of the nature of the questions asked. The questions asked for an individual understanding of the curriculum and individual interpretation. In addition, it was found from the report on the pilot school projects from the Centre for Curriculum Development, Thailand, that small and medium schools had done better in terms of understanding of the curriculum, because of more efficient communication among peers as a consequence of a smaller number of teachers who can communicate and discuss easily, while the large schools found it difficult to communicate and to hold discussions (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002a).

Thus, the school size and class level are independent variables. With six criteria for school sites a lot of difficulties were made for the researcher. Furthermore, the interview data from school teachers were only additional, not core, data. Thus, it was decided by the researcher that the information from the seven school teachers could serve the analysis of this research.

3.6.1.3 Interview methods

Similar interview methods to those used with the curriculum developers were used in the interviews with school teachers. However, the indirect questions method was not implemented with the school teachers. Instead, interviews were in-depth with an interview schedule using open-ended questions. As mentioned in the discussion of the interviews with curriculum developers, and as outlined by other researchers (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Creswell, 2005), open-ended questions put a minimal restraint on the answers and their expression. Interviewees were able to freely comment on such issues as the realistic nature and usefulness of the curriculum. The researcher gave the research participants freedom to talk openly about their problems in curriculum implementation. At the same time, the interview schedules helped shape up the interview session.

Since the attitude in the interview session was one of open invitation to teachers to talk about the problems encountered during the curriculum implementation, interviewees gave a lot of information on their difficulties and mostly enjoyed discussing the issue on curriculum implementation with the researcher. This discussion brought out a lot of interesting issues about curriculum implementation.
3.6.1.4 Interview questions

The questions were pre-tested to ensure that respondents understood them and that answer categories reflected respondents’ thinking. Questions were pre-tested with 2 school teachers in the eastern part of Thailand.

The cultural context in which a question is presented often has an impact on the way respondents interpret and answer questions. For example, teachers in small schools interpret English language teaching and learning development as the development of materials and budget while teachers in bigger schools see English language development differently. This issue of cultural context led to a re-construction of the questions used in the interviews according to a particular school’s setting. This ensured that the interviewees and interviewer (the researcher) understood each other clearly. As Foddy (1993) shows

"...before a successful communication cycle can occur, a question must be understood by the respondent in the way the researcher intended, and the answer must be understood by the researcher in the way the respondent intended." (p.23)

3.6.2 Questionnaires

The purpose of questionnaires was first to support points made by teachers at the interview session. Despite the fact that information obtained from interviews with teachers is reliable to some extent, the questionnaires promoted additionally validity and reliability when more information from more teachers was added. Creswell (2005) states that surveys can be used to determine individual opinions about policy issues. Because of the researcher’s concern about any mismatch between the sample and the target population caused by an inadequate sample size that might contribute to sampling error, questionnaires were designed to enlarge the sample size.

The focus of questionnaires was to encounter curriculum implementation and curriculum understanding from a school teacher’s point of view which is the same point focused on in the school teacher interviews. Another focus was to gain information about curriculum understanding and curriculum implementation of school teachers from a wider sample. Similar to the interviews with the school teachers, the answers given by school teachers in the questionnaires, were in detail and descriptive.
In addition, information from questionnaires supported and confirmed various points made by teachers in the interview sessions. This helped to gain their general point of view. Fortunately, most teachers filled in their answers in detail rather than in short answers and this supported many points in the analysis. The questionnaires were in Thai language and were transcribed into English language by the researcher.

3.6.3 Description of Questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed to measure current attitudes and practices in implementing the ESB curriculum. Thus, the questionnaire is of a "cross-sectional survey design" which enabled the researcher to collect data at one point in time (Creswell, 2005, p.355). Creswell (2005) also confirms that attitudes and opinions are about respondents' thinking, and practices are what respondents do. This questionnaire was designed to collect both sets of data.

The questions developed during the interview sessions were broadly used as the questions in the questionnaires. As pointed out in Scott and Usher (1999), questionnaires are constructed in a number of different ways, one of which is open-description. Thus, the questions were of the open-ended item type which fitted the nature of this qualitative research (Silverman & Seale, 2005).

A concern about the issue of the respondent's interpretation of the interview questions and questionnaire questions was raised during the creation of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were piloted with teachers at interview sessions. The questions that interviewees did not ask to be repeated and those that interviewees answered correctly were considered to be clear questions for the questionnaires. There were 43 questions in the questionnaires.

Unlike interviews where interviewees are openly discussing the issues and where questions were posed in a different order, the questions in the questionnaire were posed in such an order as to make the whole questionnaire clear and easy to understand. The sequence of the questions was designed to make sure that respondents gave unambiguous answers. The sequence of questionnaires began with the most general questions and ended with the more specific ones.
The questions in the questionnaire were re-developed every time after the interview sessions concluded. The vocabulary used in this questionnaire was an important issue in its preparation. Because educational reform is new for many teachers, terms used in the official curriculum needed to be specified and made consistent.

### 3.6.4 Procedure of Questionnaire Distribution

The questionnaires were distributed to the participants at the Thai TESOL (Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages) conference, 2004. The questionnaires were handed out by the researcher accompanied by a conversation with the respondents. Some questionnaires were left to be freely picked up at the information desk of the conference. Hence, some of TESOL conference participants who were not school teachers also had a chance to take this questionnaire.

The target sample for the questionnaire filling was the same as the sampling selection for interviews. The preference sampling was of school teachers who had already implemented the new foreign language standards-based curriculum. The researcher had randomly asked conference participants in order to find a match with the criteria samples. From Scott and Usher (1999) we learn that a survey of this kind is based on probability sampling where the criteria for selecting respondents are known. The probability sampling was conducted in a so-called cluster samplings survey. Scott and Usher (1999) state that

"The cluster sampling comprises the selection of clusters which contain individuals who comprise the object of study. The cluster may be chosen on a random basis, with individuals within each cluster then being sampled as a whole." (p.70)

There were approximately 60 participants who had been asked to participate and approximately 28 of them matched the criteria. As a result, questionnaires were left unreturned by people who felt that it was irrelevant to them and were perhaps discouraged by the number of questions asked. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed at the conference in three days. The number of returned questionnaires was 26.

Despite the low number of returned questionnaires the numbers correlated with the researcher's prediction and expectation. Most of the returned questionnaires were
from the teachers with whom the researcher had had conversations. They answered the research questions in sufficient detail for the reliability and validity of the information. Hence, 26 sets provided an adequate amount of detail to support the analysis. The distribution of relevant variables found in the sample was not significantly different from that of the target population.

It is worth noting that feedback from the questionnaires was descriptive-qualitative in nature. All the answers were fully described and information was clearly explained by respondents. Of the 26 questionnaires, 20 were from school teachers and another 6 were from university lecturers. The questionnaire can be found at Appendix 6.

3.7 Limitation of the Methodology

The limitation of the methodology lies in the style of interview, especially the interviews with the policy makers and Thai scholars. The most important requirement in the interviews with the policy makers and Thai scholars was politeness and respect. Thai culture admires and respects seniority so that when meetings with senior groups are conducted, those of lower social status should bear in mind the need for politeness and respectful behaviour.

The difficulty in conducting an interview of this kind was not only to do with the issue of seniority and social status in Thai society, but also with the kind of information taken from interviewees. The information needed from interviews in this research was about personal knowledge and opinion. The interviewer had to seriously take into account how questions were posed to ensure that the questions did not harm interviewees nor make them uncomfortable. Furthermore, the interviewer needed to ensure as far as possible that the answers received were the intended answers.

Because the interviews were more likely to be story-telling and discussion was employed to help encourage interviewees to be more enthusiastic about answering, the interviewer needed to keep the interview focused at all times. It is difficult to control the scope of the interview when the interview is unstructured with open-ended questions. Furthermore, each interviewee had a different style in answering. The
interviewer had to memorize the interview questions in order to keep the conversation and interaction flowing. This helped participants to elaborate better in the interview sessions and also helped the interviewer to maintain the focus of the interview.

Within the paradigm of qualitative research, one of the issues that should be taken into consideration in the qualitative method is the role of values in the study (Creswell, 1998). In this study, the presentation of data from interviews and questionnaires, as well as the analysis, represented an interpretation and presentation of the informants and the researcher so that sometimes biases as well as value-laden statements could not be avoided. The researcher was aware of this matter and tried to make the analysis as generalized as possible.

It is worth noting that this ESB curriculum was implemented nationwide in 2003. It is relatively new. In addition, the curriculum and the educational reform issues are still being debated among educators and stakeholders. Thus, changes in policy and practice are expected all the time. The researcher needed to keep up to date with any new policies related to national English language teaching and learning. English language in Thailand in 2005 became a main issue in educational development; the new Minister mentioned improvement of the English language curriculum. The issues of balancing the curriculum document analysis between the most updated and the first initiated document are challenging ones in a document gathering approach.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

#### 3.8.1 Informed consent

Participants in the interview were briefed fully on the purpose and conduct of the research. It was made very clear to them that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the project at any stage without penalty. The rationale behind this study was explained. Data collection and analysis were described clearly to them so that they knew what they were doing.

When all participants agreed that they understood everything clearly, they were asked to give their consent to participate in this study by signing a written consent form. The
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consent of the participants was recorded and notes will be kept of the dates of briefing and of the persons briefed.

As mentioned earlier, this study has dealt with information about their experience and problems in policymaking and curriculum development, therefore all effort was made to ensure that no identification of who produced what information was to be revealed to the public. As mentioned by Creswell (1998; 2005), the researcher should consciously consider the ethical issues which involve issues of maintaining confidentiality, protecting the anonymity of individuals and seeking consent, all of which the participants were informed of. The consent form can be found at Appendix 4.

3.8.2 Recruitment

Interviewees chose the meeting place at their convenience. At the beginning of the interview session, a letter from the Head of School of Language and International Education was handed to the participants in order to show appreciation of their participation in this research. Participants were briefed about the research project. Interviewees, both curriculum developers and schools teachers, were given the opportunity to ask any questions about this research project. The interviewer answered their queries honestly and happily in polite language. They were invited to be at ease during the interview.

3.8.3 Risk concern

This research is of the exploratory research type. The influence of the interviewing sessions will not seriously cause any distraction to participants’ work. Interview methods used in this study were designed to assist the participants to describe and tell the story of their experience in planning the curriculum and policy. This study, therefore, could not be thought of as modifying the knowledge, thinking, attitudes, feelings and or behaviour of the participants. In addition, although this study deals with a number of policy makers and school teachers, they worked with the researcher individually. Furthermore, the information obtained in interviews did not involve sensitive questions which could cause any distraction to the participants. Basically,
according to the methods of this study, there should be no risks involved. Thus, the possible benefits of this study apparently outweigh the risks.

3.8.4 Privacy

All personal information of the participants was treated as confidential, remained confidential throughout the study and, after the project has been completed, will be destroyed. Personal data such as recordings of the interview session and relevant personal information will not be used without first obtaining consent from the relevant individuals.

In addition, to protect the privacy of those involved, interviewees' names were replaced with pseudonyms. Four pseudonyms were used to refer to four groups of interviewees: government officers, curriculum developers (University scholars), teacher trainers and school teachers. Government officers’ names were replaced with ‘Officer A’, ‘Officer B’, ‘Officer C’ and ‘Officer D’. Curriculum developers’ names were replaced with ‘Developer A’, ‘Developer B’ and so on. Teacher trainers’ names were replaced with ‘Trainer A’, ‘Trainer B’ and so on. School teachers’ names were replaced with ‘School teacher A’, ‘School teacher B’ and so on. Questionnaires were named Questionnaires A-T.

3.9 The data analysis

The data analysis started initially during the process of data collection. Each interview session provided information about the method so that subsequent interviews could be adapted to elicit deeper and more specific information. Hittleman and Simon (2002, p.183) suggest that the interpretation of data during the data collection can assist in assembling additional information to the study. Along with data collection, research questions were revisited in ways that sharpened the research focus and contributed to interview sessions and documentation gathering.

After collecting data in the field, the documentation was sorted according to its importance. For example, the most important document was the main official foreign language curriculum in English and Thai versions and National Educational Act 1999,
both English and Thai versions were in the same category of importance. They were the main documents and they needed to be analysed first. Another category was the teacher manuals and training support documents. The next category was the news and other governmental reports both on Educational reforms and English language teaching and learning in Thailand. The data from interviews with curriculum developers and school teachers were transcribed from Thai language into English language by the researcher.

The initial full analysis of the collected data - curriculum documents, and interview responses and questionnaires - was carried out using the analytical framework proposed in Chapter 2 and which is briefly described in the next section. During the process of data analysis, the following analytical procedures were undertaken: organizing data, identifying patterns, and synthesizing key ideas. These were suggested by Hittleman and Simon (2002, p. 175). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) explain, similarly to Hittleman and Simon (2002), that sorting out descriptive data, categorizing and developing a coding system all need several steps such as searching for regularities and patterns, then writing down words and phrases representing these patterns which in turn become the coding categories. Creswell (2005) further explains that the qualitative data that consists of long descriptions by several individuals (in this study it is the interview data) may represent broad themes and categories. Thus, the researcher searched for themes emerging from the data and interpreted the meaning of the data by reflecting on how the findings relate to existing research and literature and by relating these to the research questions using the analytical procedures suggested by (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hittleman & Simon, 2002).

3.10 Summary

The intent of this chapter was to introduce the research methodology applied in the process of data collection. There are three sources of data used in this research which become a triangulation of data for data validity and reliability. The first data collection consists of relevant literature. This literature includes the official foreign language curriculum, teaching training materials, support documents, school syllabuses and lesson plans, Thai educational policy, job descriptions, organizational
chart and follow-up news. The researcher obtained these materials in several different ways. Some were publicly available; others were provided by informants.

The second set of data consisted of interviews with curriculum developers. Conclusions cannot be made without data and information obtained directly from people who created and developed the official foreign language curriculum. The information obtained from the interviews will help to understand the nature of the curriculum, any hidden agenda and the underlying beliefs and philosophies which could not be found in the curriculum documents. The researcher was able to gain access to relatively highly placed officials on curriculum committees. The method of interview with curriculum developers was the face-to-face, non-standardized or unstructured interview, using interview schedules. The interview questions were open-ended, including indirect questions to obtain information about the curriculum developers’ attitudes and beliefs underlying the curriculum.

The third source of data was the interviews with school teachers and the teachers’ questionnaires. These data are additional sources for the analysis. It is interesting to note that the information obtained from curriculum implementers is useful in that it serves as strong material in the analysis of the government’s implementation planning. The interview method used with school teachers was in-depth, face to face and unstructured. The interview questions were open-ended. Interview schedules were adopted also for the questionnaires because the interviews and questionnaires had shared the same research focuses.

The analysis of documents is based on the analytical framework described in Chapter 2. The analysis of interviews both of curriculum developers and teachers as well as questionnaires was conducted using the analysis framework described in Chapter 2. The documents, interviews and questionnaires data were categorized, and emerging themes and patterns identified.

This chapter presents the matter of ethical issues in the research related to human beings. To answer any concerns, ethical considerations were addressed during the interviews and questionnaires with the presentation of consent forms and an
awareness and sensitivity on the part of the interviewer regarding questions asked in the interviews sessions. The next chapter begins the analysis of the new English language curriculum. It focuses first on the general principles underpinning the educational goals and English language curriculum goals.
Chapter 4
The Delineation and Discussion of the ESB Curriculum Planning Process

4.1 Introduction
This chapter is primarily the opening chapter in the analysis of the Thai English language standards-based curriculum (ESB curriculum). This chapter maps out the curriculum planning process and unravels details of the origins of the new national English language curriculum. In addition, this chapter also raises issues arising from the analysis that will contribute to the discussion of other parts of the ESB curriculum in Chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8. The following questions will be proposed and answered: What are process in the ESB curriculum planning; Who and what produces, constitutes and validates knowledge in the school curriculum, and how is this legitimated; Who can be a ‘knower’ in the planning process; and What are planning approaches to the ESB curriculum development?

4.2 Setting the Scene
As stated briefly in Chapters 1 and 2, the 1997 Constitution of Thailand recommended that the quality of individual learning in Thailand schools be improved by the
development of a Basic Education Curriculum (BEC 2001). The proclamation of the BEC 2001 has brought about drastic changes in all aspects of education, especially the curriculum system. According to this proclamation, primary and secondary school curricula were amalgamated into one learning curriculum resulting in the overhaul of every curriculum in schools as well as the English language curriculum. The English language curriculum was accordingly concluded into a new principle of English language teaching to conform to a new principle of a standards-based curriculum. This brought a change in the curriculum organization, curriculum aims and learning outcomes, the syllabus, teaching methodologies and assessment.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, after the promulgation of the BEC 2001, the official name for the new English language curriculum became “English language learning strands and standards under Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D. 2001)” (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2001b). Its short name is ‘English language learning strands and standards’ or ‘English language standards-based curriculum’ (ESB curriculum).

### 4.3 Cast of Characters: List of Those Involved

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development (DCID), was assigned by the Ministry of Education (MOE) as a secretariat to develop the conceptual framework of the BEC 2001 that encompassed learning strands and standards, teaching and learning principles and details related to assessment for every school learning area, including foreign language subjects, especially English language (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002a). For the development of the ESB curriculum, the DCID sought to put together experienced groups who would undertake the development of the ESB curriculum and oversee the significant difficulties in taking the outcomes and developing them into a practical curriculum framework. Notwithstanding that problems were certainly manifested, it was their belief that it was a project where, at least, positive change was worth initiating.
4.3.1 Numbers on the Committees and Relative Controversies

It is worth noting that the number of curriculum stakeholders involved in the making of the ESB curriculum could not be ascertained. First, because there were contributions in many forms, such as consultancy and training programs, from both the private and public sector in the planning process. Second, members of curriculum development teams changed frequently during the curriculum planning process, as a result of a change of Minister of Education, altered political circumstances and changes in membership of the working committees at different times.

Some of them participated at the very beginning stage; some were invited after the basic principles of the curriculum had already been specified (Developers A, B, C, D).

"I didn't become involve at the very beginning stage." Developer B

"I did not become involved from the beginning. I was involved when the committees had already finished the first draft. I came at another step; I was responsible for the development of the curriculum wording, and presented it to the higher committee [advisory committee]. I don't know what the first committee had been doing; I only followed the format and the government’s orders" (Developer C)

"I was not involved at the beginning; I was abroad, just came back from 7 months". (Officer A)

In addition, their assignments in the curriculum development project were multiple. For example, curriculum developers produced curriculum details and, at the same time, became trainers both for the school district level, and at the school level; the Chair of the working committee controlled the basic principles of the curriculum and, after completing the task, became the only government consultant, trainer or school advisor. At the earlier stages, the contributions of the curriculum developers could be dismissed and changed without their consultation, even though, they had originally devised the curriculum. Their roles vis a vis government sometimes could not be predicted and they were prepared for instability and change in the arena of high politics that such a governmental program like this would attract.

"When I’m working for government, I gave them raw information. Government can change it and adapt it...University lecturers will firstly give the concept of the curriculum and then government section will have power to change, edit, agree or disagree with the concept. The government had the power to ask other groups of people such as teacher trainers to edit or fix the curriculum." (Developer A)
One of the curriculum developers in the working committee alleged that the government hired a new team and new eligible members of the working committee to take over the curriculum from the previous committee. A person with government 'eligibility' is someone who displays government loyalty and integrity and can contribute to something like the curriculum project in a government approved manner. Most of the eligible members were not researchers, but government officers.

A numbers of experts in the EFL field and other fields were invited by the government to work on different aspects of the curriculum project (Developer B). Their background and their beliefs were various. Thus, this produced more work for the working team such as educating new members participating on the team. Members of the working committee who were familiar with the principles, such as the standards-based curriculum and English language learning strands and standards, had to ensure that the new members were well-versed and understood the basic principles of curriculum development. Some curriculum developers complained that this situation strongly affected the overall framework of the curriculum elements (Developer B and D).

"It was just like that the curriculum was not finished and another group came in and wrote another manual which was not really working well with the curriculum." (Developer D)

"When you have a meeting, is it difficult to explain concepts or principles underlying the curriculum. Changing committees all the time made work more difficult. There were less people who worked permanently. That created more work to explain again and again." (Officer D)

"Because of different committees, it makes the basic curriculum concept a bit distorted and lost some gist." (Developer B)

"What I have to say is that "the person who knew did not finish the job; it was finished by the person who knew nothing." (Developer A)

From these interviews, it seems that different working teams and members are likely to create more problems than positive outcomes. The necessity of working with different groups of curriculum stakeholders to achieve completion of the program was a major stumbling block to the development of a new and unique national role for the ESB curriculum. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, will provide evidence of these claims.
4.3.2 Two Major Curriculum Committees

Despite a large number of participants in the ESB curriculum development, the forty-three names listed at the back of the ESB curriculum document represented key members in the curriculum planning process from the beginning stage to the implementation planning stage (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002a). Their names were listed hierarchically according to their position and their contribution toward curriculum development. The top of the list indicated members who had the most influence and who had higher work status, whereas those towards the bottom had lower status and participated more at the policy agreement, reappraisal and public hearing stages etc. According to the list, the curriculum development team was divided into two committees, the advisory committee and the working committee. The distinction between the two teams is in terms of their contribution to the curriculum.

4.3.2.1 Advisory committee

The advisory committee consisted of fourteen members. They were the Minister of Education (acting as chair of the curriculum development project), the Deputy Minister of Education and the Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Education. Other government officers were invited and assigned by the MOE to participate in the development of the ESB curriculum. Their major roles were to monitor the planning process and the products of the working committee.

After the advisory committee made its statement on the development of the new curriculum, planning of the curriculum knowledge process began with an invitation to experts in the field of ELT (English Language Teaching) to devise the curriculum, to identify and describe a body of knowledge to be covered and to represent the expectations and needs of society, teachers, and learners in the curriculum. Thus, it was the responsibility of the working committee to devise all the curriculum content and contribute their knowledge to developing the whole curriculum system. Developer C stated,

"The working committee will write all detail of curriculum, the advisory committee will not be involved in this process. They only provide directions and regulations relevant to EFL curriculum development...The advisory committee only came to open several official and formal meetings as an honour to the chair of the curriculum planning meeting " (Developer C)
Therefore, the philosophies and theories of members of the working team profoundly influenced every element of the ESB Curriculum. Hence, to answer research questions on the philosophical issues and who was “the knower” in the curriculum planning, discussion of the knowledge contribution of the working committee is indispensable. The next section details the working committee.

Because of their high status, the advisory committee had the necessary political power to decide the future and the development of the curriculum. The Thai ESB curriculum was reviewed by two major advisory committees before the final draft was finished. The first political party considered the first draft and enacted the curriculum. The second political party was in charge from 2002 to 2004 and it called for curriculum revision after the dissemination of the curriculum as well as the initiation of a teacher’s proficiency test and a teacher development program, reported by Kom Chad Leuk (May 29, 2004). In 2005, the new Minister of Education was assigned which again accelerated the development of ELT in Thailand for which the evidence is the introduction of the strategies for English language curriculum development in Thailand - the so called “Strategic plan for elevating the ability of English language usage of Thai citizens for the competitive ability of the country” (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2005). This strategy was initiated to serve the needs of English language learning and to serve the political enforcement of education change (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2005). The evidence can be found in the greater reinforcement of English language in the school curriculum reported by Siam Rath (August 11, 2005). As a result of this political movement, experts in EFL areas in Thailand had commented on weak points of the ESB curriculum. There has been in circulation a speculative statement about another serious amendment to the ESB curriculum. Even though up to the present the ESB curriculum has not yet been amended, the Secretary to the Minister of Education stated that any change to the curriculum will be held up for want of stronger evidence of the need for change (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2005). Thus, details of the ESB curriculum may be amended or re-developed in the future, but in what way will depend on political circumstances. As Marsh (2004) comments, during the last few decades, there have been many instances where Ministers or Secretaries of States, both nationally and at State level, have profoundly influenced policy clauses and curriculum change as a
result of their position and extremely strong personalities. The advisory committee clearly had a political role to monitor and control the curriculum product and outcomes, and their contribution to curriculum development should not be underestimated.

4.3.2.2 Working committee

The DCID of the MOE invited experts in the field of foreign and second language teaching and learning, government officers, teacher trainers and school teachers to take part in the working committee. Officer A stated that the government made an attempt to listen to various groups of people and educational stakeholders in order to ensure that the curriculum was as broad as possible. Members of the working committee were mostly experts in the field of foreign and second language teaching and learning. As well, there were dozens of individual professionals from all segments of the foreign language teaching and learning community, the British Council, Thai TESOL organization and American University Alumni Centre (AUA). All of whom contributed to the planning of the Thai ESB curriculum in different ways.

The working committee can be categorized into three major working groups according to their contribution to the ESB curriculum planning: (1) university lecturers, (2) government officers and (3) selected school teachers. The next section describes the task and the role of the major working groups, how they were selected to work on this ESB curriculum development project and how they performed. The task of curriculum planning relied mostly on their contribution to the development team.

4.4 The Approach to Thai EFL Curriculum Planning

From the analysis of interviews, it appears that the Thai ESB curriculum development was grounded in a goal-oriented approach, that is, a so-called ‘rationale approach or objective approach’ (Clark, 1987). The planning began with a call for a carefully selected committee of ‘experts’ identifying a body of knowledge to be covered in the curriculum. The experts carried the research and developed the curriculum based on that research. The curriculum elements - goals, aims, learning objectives, teaching methodologies and learning assessment - were devised respectively in linear fashion
where the curriculum goals and aims were the most important part that led to the
development of others. These are the major characteristics of the ‘objective approach’
to curriculum development (Skilbeck, 1976, as cited in Medley, 1985; Clark, 1987;
White, 1988; Auerbach, 1992; Crookes, 2003).

Educational reform and the need for competent English language speakers called for
the development of English language national standards as early as possible. This
allowed limited timelines for drafting, consultation, and evaluation in order to
implement the curriculum first in a pilot project program in time for the start of the
second semester 2001 (Developer A and Officer A). As Developer A states,

"We had a very limited time, though the English curriculum reform had been
discussed for quite a while (two years before); the English language
standards-based curriculum was seriously devised within approximately 4-5
months; it was such as short time." (Developer A)

Therefore, the curriculum content, in-depth details of methodologies, the teacher
development program relating to EFL teaching and learning and other relevant
matters related to the ESB curriculum were less emphasised in the initial planning
process. The main focus was on strands and standards. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss
details of curriculum elements and how the objective approach to curriculum
development affects the theoretical and philosophical underpinning of the Thai ESB
curriculum.

4.5 The Planning Process and the Working Committees’
Relative Assignments

Many meetings were held at different periods and at different stages of the ESB
planning process (Developers A, B, C, D, Officers, C and D). As Developer C
asserted "Before we finished the curriculum, there were many processes we had been
through. After the first committee finished the curriculum, there would be an editorial
team. There were a lot of meetings" (Developer C). From the interviews it can be
concluded that there were three major stages in the curriculum planning process of the
ESB curriculum: a basic principle drafting stage, an editing stage and a revision stage.
The following section summarizes the three stages in the national EFL curriculum
development project. The summary includes the roles of members of working
committees at each of the three stages of the curriculum planning. As stated, there were a large number of participants, therefore, at the end, there were more than one advisory committee and one working committee prior to the dissemination of the curriculum. This research encompasses discussion of advisory committees and working committees at different stages of planning and their relative assignments.

4.5.1 Basic Principle Drafting Stage

The conceptual bases of the curriculum, the curriculum goals, the content standards (strands and standards) were the first to be devised. Therefore, the first draft developed was that of the curriculum conceptual framework and content standards. At this stage, curriculum developers reviewed theories, models, research and school practices which were related to the common elements laid down in national education legislations (Developer A, D, Officer C, D) (the details of legislation will be discussed in Chapter 6). Thus, they had to consider particularly component of the ESB curriculum and the implication of ESB curriculum planning for Thai educational values. They also considered the extent to which an ESB curriculum was suitable for Thai society. At this crucial stage, beliefs and philosophies of the curriculum developers had a great influence on the philosophies and principles entailed in the new curriculum.

4.5.1.1 The influential group

In some countries, such as Australia, the role of academic or university scholars has decreased as a result of broader decision making in the policy process of school curriculum development (Marsh, 2004). In Thailand, universities still have a strong, legitimate and influential role in determining what knowledge students should learn in schools. The academics were mostly in the positions of chair of the working committee, vice chair and/or executive working committee consultants, the most influential positions on the working team. The university lecturers were chosen because they were believed to be experts in the field of foreign language teaching and learning (Developer A, B, C, D). Officer A agreed that the university lecturers were invited to work on the curriculum development project because of their expertise in the area of foreign language teaching and learning.
“I think that in terms of academic development area for curriculum development, we [the government] preferred experts who were from university lecturers to work for us. Because we think that they are specialists in the area.” (Officer A)

Furthermore, their affiliations were a hidden criterion for their selection on to the curriculum committees. Most of the university lecturers who were invited to work in this EFL curriculum development project were from leading public universities in Thailand, such as Chulalongkorn University, Thamasart University, Prasanmit University. These universities are traditional public universities and acknowledged for their academic excellence in English language teaching and learning. As Klausner (1997) states, the most prestigious university level of Thai education was largely limited to state universities where professors are civil servants. Also, most of them received their higher education degree, and/or training courses or certificates, from Western universities such as those in the United States of America, England and Australia. This is a very common practice in Thai society (Klausner, 1997). Thus, the trace of Western trends and knowledge in the ESB curriculum is inevitably part of the educational background of these so-called experts.

- **The Chair of the working committee**

The chair of the working committee at the Basic Principle Stage had the most prestigious assignment. That position was the pre-eminent one on the working committee. The chair of the committee vastly influenced the curriculum’s underlying principles and its effects on how the English curriculum would be interpreted (Developers D and B). Developer D stated “...what you can see is that the curriculum principles depend on who is responsible as a Chair”.

The chair of the ESB curriculum working committee had been studying the standards-based curriculum movement, especially in the United States, for eight years (Developer A). Consequently, the government assigned her to the Chair of EFL curriculum working team for the development of the ESB curriculum framework. As Developer B indicated, the Chair of the working committee previously worked in the Curriculum and Instruction area. Thus, her background knowledge had great influence on the creation of the national English language curriculum. This new English language curriculum was developed into a standards-based curriculum partly because
of her influence. A change in the theory of English language teaching and learning was the secondary focus of the English language curriculum development (Developer D).

The major role of the Chair of the EFL curriculum working committee was to steer members of the working committee and educate them in the underlying principles of a standards-based English language teaching and learning curriculum. This was to ensure that every member understood the basic principles and core knowledge in the planning process.

"The Chair of the working committee took care that all the people involved in the project especially understood the principles and core concept of development. The Chair had to make sure that they understood the concept."
(Developer A)

4.5.1.2 Government Officers

The role of government officers at this stage of planning was not as significant as the role of university lecturers. Government officers included persons working in the DCID who were designated to be in charge of the ESB curriculum development project. Government officers also included teacher trainers and government researchers. However, because the ideas of the DCID were strongly linked to previous national curriculum activities, the centre was unavoidably restricted to developing, publishing and marketing materials. On top of that, the DCID had a role to perform as a national curriculum centre - "a place where the curriculum development team could be concentrated and broad issues of principles examined and discussed, and the outcomes widely disseminated." Thus, government officers had a major responsibility in the curriculum product. They had a profound influence on curriculum principles especially at the editorial stage, which was the second essential stage of curriculum planning (to be discussed next).

4.5.1.3 School teachers

Since the previous curriculum, school teachers had had a chance to attend curriculum planning meetings and to add their voices in formulating the detail of the curriculum. Developer D said
“As with the previous curriculum, I asked for input from awarded teachers in English language teaching, 10 primary school teachers and 10 secondary school teachers. Also, trainers from primary and secondary as well as officers from government, which made a total of 40 persons attending the curriculum planning sessions. They all helped, before we started. I needed to give them a lot of information.” (Developer D)

Similar to what happened in previous curriculum planning, not all school teachers could attend; only selected ones attended, but the number of participants was greater. The selected teachers were teachers who received teaching awards in ELT, that is, they were excellent in English language teaching and learning. The degree of teacher involvement in the national curriculum planning process was stronger and more prominent than before, as claimed by Developer A -

“In the meetings, 40 to 50 people were Primary and Secondary teachers. I think it is a good thing to do in order to develop the curriculum. Government was the one who instigated this idea of having school teachers involved in the process of curriculum planning. I think it was good curriculum cooperation...it can be said that this curriculum belonged to teachers, for teachers created the curriculum” (Developer A)

At the meetings, school teachers were able to consider the relationship of the ESB curriculum to their individualized and personal processes of teaching and learning and could give feedback on any difficulties they saw. However, from the interviews with curriculum developers, it was clear that teachers mostly agreed with the curriculum concept and quietly accepted the new English language curriculum.

“No, they did not reject or object because we had a clear framework and standards that correlated with the national curriculum.” (Officer D)

Even though the participation of school teachers was not assumed to be passive in the planning process, it was unavoidable that school teachers themselves might perceive their role as passive. According to the statements of Developer A and Officer D, the powerful status of the influential group and government officers was inherent in the atmosphere at meetings. School teachers might be perceived as actively involved as alleged by Developer A, but they were clearly not co-participants or seen as having the same status as the influential group and government officers. Klausner (1997, p.55) analysed the Thai hierarchical social system as one in which “professors silently revel in the respect accorded and in their highly exalted status... there is a premium on knowing one's place in, not questioning, the system.” Further, Adamson (2003) comments on the nature of Thai behaviour -
“in the literature on the nature of Thai behaviour, Holmes and Tangtongtavy (1995) refer to krengjai, whereby reluctance is shown towards expression of direct feedback to their seniors...This is also noted by Ballard (1996), referring to the mirroring of traditional Thai values of deference to authority figures. A further concept, that of sum ruam (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1995:56), places an emphasis upon the ability to show restraint and composure in stressful situations, thereby creating the impression that the Thai learner is passive in discussions or classroom debate. ...In terms of social hierarchical influences at play, Holmes and Tangtongtavy (1995:35) and Mulder (1996) both note the top-down communication flows expected in Thai society and the consequences of apparent non-assertiveness and a lack of initiative by those in junior positions.” (Adamson, 2003p.47)

Although Klausner’s (1997) and Adamson’s (2003) statements may not totally reflect the role of the school teachers in this curriculum planning process, nevertheless their views support the observations made by those interviewed. Those interviews implied a lack of questioning by the school teachers of curriculum knowledge, or why they must follow the standards or how the new curriculum was relevant to school life and society as a whole. According to Officer D the most important part of the ESB curriculum planning process was to follow the NEA 1999, rather than to discuss its practicality or any possible hidden agenda.

Therefore, according to Developer A, the teachers’ cooperation in the curriculum planning was principally directed towards understanding the principles and concept of a standards-based curriculum, and English language learning strands and standards, after the initiation of the new concept was made by the Chair and the academics. In other words, school teachers were the knowees in the planning process, rather than cooperatively building or materially adding to the curriculum knowledge. Developer A explained the role of the academics and curriculum developers as well as the involvement of teachers in the planning process well-articulated the situation of teachers as knowees in the curriculum planning process rather than critically engaged participants.

“We [the Chair and some Universities and curriculum developers who were known to be experts] had to lecture all of the school teachers who came to do this planning of the curriculum; they did not know anything when they came to the meetings... Primary and secondary teachers had to read the entire ESB curriculum, two and three times... They were asked mostly whether they understood or not.” (Developer A)

“After we revised the curriculum draft, we would ask school teachers to read and see whether they understood or not.” (Officer A)
This type of participation stresses the traditional view of the curriculum developer where school teachers were not part of the knowledge originality, only the recipients of knowledge. The initiation of school teachers' participation in policy development had merely the appearance of opening up the policy planning process democratically. The imposition of knowledge on teachers limited the teachers' contribution of their problems and classroom realities, hence teachers again will see the curriculum as something that is not relevant to classroom practices (Clark, 1987).

4.5.2 Editorial Stage

The editorial process allowed the ESB curriculum, devised first by the Basic Principles working committee, to be scrutinized and transformed almost completely from its original form. Government officers, mainly from DCID, took the major role of editing. The working committee, who were initially involved in the basic principles drafting stage, were not significant at the editing stage. However, other academics were invited to improve the quality of the curriculum. There were two main reasons for this shift in the role of curriculum developers: DCID simply saw this as a minor change and only a matter of editing; the government preferred to have more control over the curriculum outcomes. Officer A and Developer A noted -

"University scholars devised the principles and some content and after that, the government came and took charge." (Officer A)

"The government wanted to change some principles of the curriculum that the influential groups, especially researchers, did not agree with. Then, the government asked new people in the government department such as teacher trainers to work on the curriculum after the basic principles were laid out." (Developer A)

The major task at this stage was to ensure the establishment of a set of principles, guidelines, models and other suggestions whereby schools throughout Thailand could understand, clarify and use them for their own school based-curriculum development (Developer C). The benchmarks, suggestions for teaching and learning management and assessment as well as curriculum manuals were devised at this stage. The government officers had to consider the following: the relationship between ESB curriculum planning, development and the needs of the community; school-based or school focused decision-making; pre-service and in-service teacher education; student
assessment; school accountability; school organization and administration; and the development of individual and social competencies.

This editorial stage also was when the advisory committee once again stepped in. The advisory committee examined thoroughly the curriculum document. Their focus was on the level of applicability of the curriculum at school level (Developer B). From the comments of the advisory committee the applicability of the curriculum leaned toward examining the number of standards required, and the relevance of English language to other subject areas and the national education legislation. Developer C asserted,

"They [the advisory committee] had to analyse the English language curriculum according to its suitability to other subjects as well... At the beginning stage, there were a lot of standards, but the higher committee rejected the number of standards, because they were afraid that schools would not be able to cope with a large number of standards... The advisory team asked us to adapt details of the Standards to become more scoped down, not to spell out too much. I had to follow the advisory team. Finally, it became this curriculum." (Developer C)

Thus, after revision by the advisory committee, the curriculum was edited many times. The major and obvious change was the reduction in the number of strands.

Another change in this editorial stage, as claimed by Developer B, was the wording of standards in order to improve the quality of the ESB curriculum. As mentioned previously, school teachers have to interpret the ESB curriculum and write their own school-based curriculum. The language used in the ESB curriculum, thus, was the main focus of the working committee at this stage. According to Developer C, the wording was the focus in the editorial process; most of the principles and structure of the ESB curriculum, devised in the drafting stage, remained unchanged. Developer C explained, "In the editing process, the structure was not changed at all, only wordings did I change". However, the underlying meaning of the ESB curriculum was questioned by some of the members (Developers A, B, D). Some claimed that the words used conveyed different meanings from the original (Developer B). As a result, the curriculum is difficult to interpret and implement realistically (Developer D).
4.5.2.1 The development of “Sa-ra-karn-rean-ru”

The curriculum was proclaimed as an official curriculum framework after the editorial stage was completed. After the curriculum was implemented by schools participating in the pilot program, the feedback from the pilot program indicated teachers’ difficulties in developing their school-based curriculum. As a result, apart from the Benchmarks which are the curriculum content, the government further produced the “Sa-ra-karn-rean-ru” which is referred here as “the content”. This was specific detailed content of what students have to learn in each grade level (the benchmarks is the detailed content of what students have to learn in each key stage, please see Appendix 2 for the list of benchmarks and some examples of “Sa-ra-karn-rean-ru”). It was what the government believed could suggest practical ways of making school-based curriculum amenable to classroom adaptation, monitoring, testing and evaluation. Atagi (2002) carried out an evaluation of the BEC 2001 implementation in Thai pilot schools. The evaluation, which was funded by the Asia Bank, also support the government’s proposed ‘content’ (Sa-ra-karn-riean-ru) and stated that the details of content was one of the two important issues that led to the success of the curriculum reform by ensuring that what was taught was consistent with the goals.

However, researchers, especially those who initiated the “standards-based curriculum” argued that Sa-ra-karn-rean-ru distorted the principles of a standards-based curriculum that describes a broad framework and standards of “what students should know and be able to do”, not specific details of what to learn (Developer A).

“After the proclamation of the Basic Education Curriculum nationally, the government had to train schools how to write school-based curriculum from the standards-based curriculum. The result was: from 1000 pilot schools, about 200 schools could not deal with the curriculum. Then government wrote another book called "Sa-ra-karn-rean-ru" which is “really really really” in detail. As a result, it makes me as a researcher really confused; it can be said that every district area will learn exactly the same thing. They are trying to do the “core curriculum” which is the wrong concept. Though English language curriculum is not really in detail when compared with other subject matter curriculum, it is still really bad. Some subject matter, the government provided chapters of what students have to learn. It is centralised policy, not decentralised. It is not the standards-based curriculum; the curriculum writers did not understand the concept of a standards-based curriculum at all” (Developer A)
This implies a lack of fundamental principle communication among curriculum developers which led to problems of the meaning of underlying the “standards-based curriculum” and the resulting controversy among curriculum stakeholders.

In conclusion, the compromise of opinion and ideas on the finished ESB Curriculum between researchers, government officers and the different groups of working members at different planning stages, led to the alteration of wording used in the curriculum, its number of standards and even its meaning. As a consequence, there was divergence between different groups as to the underlying meaning of the ESB curriculum. That divergence resulted from different interpretations of the ESB curriculum by members of both the advisory and working committees, hence, to confusion at the classroom practice level. This implies an urgent need of an awareness of meaning negotiation and discussion of policy clauses among the ESB curriculum developers. The lack of clarity in the curriculum principles, the underpinning philosophies and theories is a crucial matter that greatly affects change in EFL education nationally.

4.5.3 Revision Stage

An attempt to amend the number of standards was made again after the implementation of the pilot project in selected schools. The MOE called together the ESB curriculum working committees for another meeting because of complaints from school teachers about the number of standards. The Chair of the revision meetings was a university lecturer who did not have a significant role in the previous two stages, but who undertook research on teachers’ perceptions toward the ESB curriculum. The purpose of the meeting was again to revisit the number of standards in order to improve the quality of the ESB curriculum. This revision was carried out when the new Minister of Education was assigned. As Officer A saw things -

“It was the government’s decision to revise the of ESB curriculum, because there were some complaints from teachers that this curriculum contained too many standards and was difficult to implement. The complaints came from media, government school visits and from analysts and researchers.” (Officer A)
At this meeting an agreement was reached to combine standards F 1.2\textsuperscript{11} and F 1.3\textsuperscript{12} into one standard. Curriculum developers explained that the reason for combining these two, apart from the matter of reduction in the number of standards, was that the two standards repeated each other (Officer A). However, the government did not act upon the change. In an interview with the Chair of the revision meetings, she said that the revision was not significant enough to effect change (Developer B). The first curriculum to be proclaimed was the one implemented nationally at this present time.

### 4.5.4 Agreement on Numbers of Strands and Standards

As can be seen from the editorial and revision stage of planning, the number of strands and standards is one of the provocative issues in the curriculum planning process. According to the interviews, curriculum developers linked the difficulty of curriculum implementation with the number of standards. To them, the greater number of standards created difficulty and confusion at the curriculum implementation stage (Developer C). The number of standards also indicated the scope of the curriculum. The smaller the number of standards identifies a tighter curriculum scope. The curriculum developers preferred a curriculum that had a very precise meaning. The precise meaning was identified by the number of standards and the number of words used.

"I think it is good. Anything that is standards should not have a lot."

(Developer A)

"At the beginning stage, there were a lot of standards. But the higher committee (advisory committee) refused the number of standards, because they were afraid that schools could not cope with a number of standards... There were a lot of standards before; now they were cut down a lot and it became only key words. I found it is good. It will depend on teachers' ability to interpret them."

(Developer C)

The curriculum committees were careful to devise the curriculum with few standards. At the beginning stage, the Chair of the working committee advised five Cs which were adopted from the ACTFL content standards (Language for Communication, Community, Culture, Connection, and Comparison). The advisory committees

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\textsuperscript{11} Standard F 1.2 Processing skills for language communication, for data, information and ideas exchanges; capable of applying technology to express feeling and manage learning processes appropriately.

\textsuperscript{12} Standard F 1.3 Understanding speaking and writing processes; communicating data, opinions and concept of various subjects creatively, efficiently and aesthetically.
disapproved the number of strands and standards and asked the working committee to reduce the number of standards and scope it down. The other working committees, assigned by the advisory committee, changed the number to four strands by merging the Comparison strand with the Culture strand. This was carried without consulting the Chair of the working committee of the Basic principles drafting stage.

The covert reason for editing and revising the curriculum was as a result of changes in the administration. As stated previously, every time there was an administrative structure change within the MOE such as reassigning the Minister of Education or a political party was reselected, there was a call for curriculum development meetings to be held.

In the case of the standards, any attempt to develop a limited number of standards is good, according to Marsh (2004). However, because of the controversies among curriculum working committees regarding the distorted meanings of the standards after the document was edited and the reduction of standards in the revision stage that were not put into practice, it is questionable whether the process of editing and revising standards was part of the standards improvement process or just a political game. Furthermore, the nature of the curriculum as policy itself is conducive to political interference (K. Johnson, 1989b; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Tanner & Tanner, 1995). Therefore, participants in the national curriculum planning, especially school teachers, should not have been left as passive recipients of the policy. Their participation was meant to ensure that the process of curriculum planning was for the future of the younger generation, not for a particular group of people in the present. As well, their participation was meant to ensure that the new curriculum served the needs of children not only the society. In other words, development of a curriculum is about ensuring a balance between learners' needs and society's needs.

4.6 Conclusion

We have seen the three major stages of the ESB curriculum planning and what the role was of the curriculum developers in the planning process. The Thai government approached the EFL curriculum planning in a linear manner, opting for a rationale
approach where the design of goals and aims was treated as the focal point. Details of philosophies and theories underpinning the curriculum, which will be discussed later in this thesis, will clarify and add evidence to concerns about a linear approach to curriculum planning, about the distorted meaning of philosophies and theories resulting from differences among the various members of the curriculum committees, and about the type of communication among them that followed a knowledge imposition process rather than critical discussion and emancipatory talk.
Chapter 5
The Origins of the ESB Curriculum: International and Western Influences

5.1 Introduction
The previous chapter revealed the whole planning process of the ESB curriculum. This chapter deals with the origins of the ESB curriculum. It asks: Where does the ESB curriculum originate from? Why is the EFL curriculum standards-based? Who were the decision makers who selected the standards-based curriculum? First, this chapter reveals the influences of national legislation and Western and international trends toward the planning of new English language curricula; and identifies the major elements that constitute the Thai ESB curriculum. Second, is a discussion of the variety of terms stemming from the international trends and used to refer to the newly developed curriculum.

5.2 The “Standards” Movement and the Thai ESB Curriculum
The “Standards” movement and decentralisation have strongly influenced the Thai curriculum system and the curricula of other countries in the Asia-Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok, 2005). One of the critical influences on curriculum innovation in Thailand...
was the Delors Report that was released in 1996, by UNESCO, written by (Delors J. et al., 1996). The Delors Report\footnote{The Delors Report is the short name for "Learning: The treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century" carried by UNESCO in 1996, in order to formulate suggestions and recommendations in the form of a report which could serve as an agenda for renewal action for policy-makers and officials at the highest level (UNESCO Websites). The Delors report is named after Jacques Delors, Chairman of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century and the former European Commission President, who proposed the well-known "Four Pillars" of the foundations of education.}, advocated the reorientation of education systems based on the principle of “learning throughout life” and building on the “four pillars of learning” - learning to know, to do, to be and to live together - which should be promoted in curricular innovations and reforms of countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Miralao & Gregorio, 2001).

A particular statement in the Delors report, “Curriculum Innovation in Basic Education Project”, refers to a project that was initiated by UNESCO’s Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok in partnership with the International Bureau of Education (IBE-Geneva), with the support of Japanese Funds-in-Trust. This project represents an initial response to reinforcing the capacity of national curriculum developers to deal with the challenges of managing curriculum reform (Miralao & Gregorio, 2001; Ratanavipak, 2002; UNESCO Bangkok, 2005). “A Training Seminar on Capacity-Building for Curriculum Specialists from East and South-East Asia”, a collaborative activity between the International Bureau of Education (IBE) and UNESCO-PROAP (Bangkok, Thailand)\footnote{This seminar was hosted by the Ministry of Education Thailand, from 12-16 December 2000.}, was organized to reinforce capacity-building in fundamental skills for effective curriculum development and reform, with participants from eleven countries and one SEAMEO Centre (Miralao, 2001; Miralao & Gregorio, 2001). According to the seminar, the major curriculum project was to promote flexibility in the curriculum at the local level and reinforced the substance of the Delors’ report, especially the four pillars of learning and the learning throughout life learning principle. Thus, countries in the Asia-Pacific region - countries of East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Mekong sub-regions - have cooperatively followed the same educational movement path and curriculum reform in order to compete with information and technology-based global societies and globalisation (Miralao & Gregorio, 2001; Ratanavipak, 2002; UNESCO Bangkok, 2005).
Along with others in this international educational movement, Thailand proclaimed the standards-based Basic Education Curriculum 2001 (BEC 2001), that contains the conceptual framework for teaching and learning, and the strands and standards (or substances and standards) of the eight subject groups (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2001b; Miralao & Gregorio, 2001; Atagi, 2002; Office of the Education Council, 2004). These strands and standards allow the local curriculum or school-based curriculum to have flexible content to incorporate local wisdom. That is, 70% of the school-based curriculum content is based on the core curriculum and 30% is local school substance. Dr. Pirat Susansuk and Dr. Bunjeardpon Ratanapan (2003) explained why the educators' approximation was not 80:20 or 60:40. In actual fact, it was 70:30. This approximation originated from the analysis of the overall strands and standards and 'what' students nationwide should know – it was decided that all students should know approximately 70% of the overall content and 30% of the learning content was left to the local community, and for the local society to solve, as briefly discussed in Chapter 2.

The “Standards” movement and “School-Based Management” movement of America was also another influential factor in the adoption of a standards-based and school-based curriculum in the Thai educational context (Developers A, B, C, D and Dr. Boonmee Nenyod (2002)). The Chair of the EFL curriculum working committee was one of the influential educators in adopting the standards-based curriculum of the U.S. (Developer A). As indicated earlier, she is well known as an expert in the area of Curriculum and Instruction and has been studying the standards movement for at least eight years (Developers C and D). She suggested strongly that the Thai curriculum should follow the standards-based curriculum movement of the United States of America (Developers A, B, C, D; Officers C and D).

The Chair of the EFL curriculum working committee suggested to the Educational Council that what schools needed was not a detailed and all-embracing review of the total educational service in Thailand but rather an attempt to provide a "conceptual map or framework of ideas" that could serve to facilitate teachers' choices at the classroom level. In addition, Thai educational reform focuses on decentralization which aims to promote local and school autonomy. Thus, as claimed by Officer D, a standards-based curriculum was a good choice that fitted this decentralization
movement. According to these claims, the curriculum framework could be seen as a statement of what learners "should know and be able to do" (Developer A) and also promote the four pillars of learning that are - learning to live together, to be, to know and to do as claimed in the Delors report 1996 (Miralao & Gregorio, 2001; UNESCO Bangkok, 2005). This represents the view of progressive education or contemporary education, with an emphasis on the process of becoming to know, not only mastery of knowledge.

Further, according to interviews with curriculum developers, the standards-based curriculum shifted curriculum planning from an inputs focus to an outcomes focus. A focus on outcomes means being explicit about what we expect learners to know, understand and do as a result of their participation in a curriculum experience within the agreed framework (Developer A). It is not an elaborate plan that is planned in great detail (Developers A, and D). Officer A, who was partly responsible for the development of the standards-based curriculum and school based-management, elaborates on the new type of EFL curriculum:

"Thai educational contexts, before, it was really governmental centralized curriculum and even educational management; everything was set in detail from the government, even the course syllabus. Now, we use standards, which provide only very broad terms of learning outcomes and frameworks... with the new curriculum, it does not follow a book but it follows standards. It will help learners and open to local learning, they can bring any local context into the curriculum... we [DCID] have only the job to give them [the teachers] principles and what they do is another thing" (Officer A)

"The important thing is standards should be written as a broad objective. The only key for this is "to know and what to do": students have to know and can do things. Then, what we can do, I as a chair for FL, I'm controlling it. But for other subjects, the government was doing it without any basic principle or concept. You can see that standards that were proclaimed are just like a curriculum." (Developer A)

This means that the curriculum is viewed as a process whereby learners are allowed to negotiate what to learn, where and when, based on agreed standards. It is a list of what to learn as proposed traditionally in the past. Thus, with the influences of Western and international cooperative projects along with the decentralisation policy of the 1997 Constitution, the standards-based curriculum is promoted as a tool of curriculum flexibility and decentralisation. The ESB curriculum working committee was assigned the task of pursuing this path of curriculum development. It is worth noting that the
new standards-based ESB curriculum could be seen as a good model of curricula of other subjects because the Chair of the EFL curriculum working committee originated the idea of a standards-based curriculum for every subject to follow.

5.2.1 The ESB Curriculum and American Content Standards

This ESB Curriculum is exemplified by the foreign language content standards of Louisiana, USA (Developers A, B, C, D, and Officer C and D). For several reasons, Louisiana’s content standards provided predominately the working framework of the Thai EFL curriculum. As explained by Developers A and C, Louisiana was one of the States that mandated the foreign language content standards at a very early time. In 1984, Louisiana was the first state to mandate foreign language study for all academically able Louisiana students in Grades 4 through 8 (Louisiana. Dept. of Education., 1997). And in 1997, from the “State Content Standards: a 50 State Resource” book, Louisiana with Colorado and Illinois mandated foreign language content standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003). The second feature of Louisiana’s approach, as claimed by Developer A, is the composition of community learning in foreign teaching and learning. The focus on community learning has conformed to the goal of Thai national educational legislation that promotes the essence of Thai communities in education (Developer A). Thus, Louisiana’s content standards were selected to be a framework for the Thai ESB curriculum.

In spite of the fact that strands and standards of the Thai curriculum were partly translated from Louisiana content standards, their underlying meaning is slightly different. In other words, the Louisiana content standards were amended to suit the Thai context. Officer A claimed that curriculum developers were considering Thai contexts when designing the ESB Curriculum.

“We took their structure and adapted it to our curriculum. We did not take directly from them but it was similar, just slightly different.” (Officer D)

Louisiana content standards were only the guiding framework for the planning of the Thai ESB curriculum. An analysis of the Louisiana content standards found that the most common characteristic that the Louisiana content standards and Thai standards-based curriculum shared, is the structure of strands and standards. The words used and
number of strands and standards and benchmarks in the two curricula are different. For example, Louisiana's content standards, based on ACTFL National Standards in Foreign Language Education, consist of 5 strands and 12 standards (Louisiana. Dept. of Education., 1997). The Thai ESB curriculum is composed of 4 strands (Goals) which represent four major areas of learning: language for Communication, Culture, Connection, and Community. Each of the strands consists of 2-3 standards (aims). The table below compares the Louisiana and Thai foreign language content standards.
Table 5.1: A Comparison of Louisiana Content Standards and Thai Strands and Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Louisiana Content Standards</th>
<th>Thai Strands and Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strand 1: Communication Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Interpretive Mode -- Students understand and interpret spoken and written communication in the target language on a variety of topics.</td>
<td>Standard F 1.1 Comprehend listening and reading processes; capable to interpret messages derived from listening and reading all kinds of written words from various media; capable to apply those knowledge critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interpersonal Mode -- Students engage in direct oral and written communication in the target language in order to socialize, provide and obtain information, acquire goods and services, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.</td>
<td>Standard F 1.2 Have language communicative skill, capable to exchange information, news; express feeling and opinion by using technology and appropriate management for life long learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Presentational Mode -- Students present, through oral and written communications, information, concepts, and ideas on a variety of topics to an audience of listeners or readers with whom there is no immediate personal contact or in a one-to-many mode.</td>
<td>Standard F 1.3 Comprehend speaking, writing processes and communicate information, concept and opinion about various subjects creatively, efficiently and aesthetically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CULTURES</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strand 2: Culture Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Practices -- Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices (patterns of social interactions) and perspectives (meanings, attitudes, values, ideas) of the target cultures.</td>
<td>Standard F 2.1 Comprehend the relationship between languages and culture of target languages and apply it appropriately to time and place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Products -- Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products (books, tools, food, art, laws, music, games) and perspectives (meanings, attitudes, values, ideas) of the target cultures.</td>
<td>Standard F 2.2 Comprehend the similarities and differences between languages and cultures of target language and those of Thai; and apply it critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strand 3: Connection Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reinforcement -- Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the second language.</td>
<td>Standard F 3.1 Use foreign languages to connect knowledge with other subject matter strands and standards; and to be the basis of self-development and the self-broadening of world view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPARISONS</strong></td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Nature of Language -- Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.</td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Concept of Culture -- Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.</td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strand 4: Community Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Learning -- Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.</td>
<td>Standard F 4.1 Be able to use foreign languages to encounter different situations within educational institutions, community and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enrichment -- Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for enjoyment and enrichment.</td>
<td>Standard F 4.2 Be able to use foreign languages as a tool to learn, to work, to earn a living, to stimulate co-operation and to live together in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Careers -- Students explore and prepare for potential career avenues in which proficiency in the target language would be beneficial.</td>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from the table, the differences are found in the words used, and slight differences in the purposes of language learning. For example, the Louisiana Communication Strand and Thailand’s Communication Strand, are different both in terms of the written words and the presentation of standards. The working team had changed and adapted it dramatically. Interpersonal mode, Interpretative mode and Presentational mode are the basis of the Communication Strand of the Louisiana content strands. Louisiana’s content standards state explicitly which standards represent those three modes. Developer C explained in her interview, that interpersonal mode, interpretative mode and presentational mode also exist in the Thai Communication strand. Developer C explained that Standard F 1.1 requires students to be able to interpret, which is similar to the interpretative mode of the Louisiana document. Standard F.1.2 requires students to be able to exchange ideas (interpersonal mode) and Standard F.1.3 requires students to be able to communicate data, hence it is similar to the presentational mode of Louisiana. However, as is evident, they were not explicitly stated in the Thai curriculum document, and it was left to the teacher’s interpretation which standards belong to which mode out of knowledge of the existence of the three modes.

For the Culture strand, Louisiana’s cultural standards accentuate a critical awareness of the culture of the target language and the first language. The constituents of cultures are identified. On the other hand, the Thai culture strands consist of standards that emphasise a comparison of the target language and Thai culture but what constitutes ‘culture’ is left to the teacher’s interpretation. According to Developers A, B, C, and D the Culture and Comparison strands were combined (as mentioned in the previous chapter as part of the editorial process). The combination represents the developers’ views on culture learning in English language only at the level of comparison between the target language and Thai, which is different from that of Louisiana and ACTFL, which see culture learning more as an awareness raising from such terms as ‘cultural imperialism’ and the influence of the target language on the learner’s thinking and their society (this will be discussed further). The similarity that can be found is in the Community strand. The Louisiana Standard and the Thai Community Strand share some common themes in language and community such as the use of language in community and the use of language for career opportunities.
The Thai Community Strand stresses social communication and language for harmony in society. Developer A commented,

"See! "Community". It is about using language locally and in the community which is really good. Every student who studies English has to use and go out to use English in the community. Community is from home, school and that society. For example, now students have to go out and interview foreigners, go out to see signs and talk with foreigners, who do not have to be British or American, whatever nationality that uses English."(Developer A)

From the examples given, it is possible to see that the application of Western knowledge of innovation is found first in the overall structure of the curriculum. However, the underlying principles of the Louisiana curriculum did not totally guide the whole curriculum process of the Thai ESB curriculum. And the transfer of this knowledge depended on the interpretation and the understanding of curriculum developers who brought Western concepts into the Thai educational system and to the curriculum users. They had the power to insert or omit any information they thought that was suitable or unsuitable for Thai learners.

5.2.1.1 Other differences between the Thai curriculum and the American standards-based curriculum

As Officer A claimed, and the document analysis confirmed the principles of a standards-based curriculum itself when it was implemented in Thai contexts had slightly different educational purposes from the American content standards. Officer A claimed that the overarching goal of the standards implemented in the United States, was designed mainly to control the quality of education. This claim correlated with the U.S. Goals 2000 policy, that articulates that there should be an establishment of a framework in which to identify world-class academic standards and to measure student progress to ensure the quality of education of Americans (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1996; LeLoup & Ponterio, 1997). Hence the issue of accountability is the inherent meaning of the standards movement. Thailand prioritizes the application of a standards-based curriculum (the BEC 2001) for the promotion of curriculum flexibility and local input according to the policy of decentralization. Officers C and D added that
“The Standards-based curriculum will increase autonomy of schools. This is good in terms of its consistency with the National Education Act of B.E. 2542; the policy stipulated that localization is one of the educational reform missions. That is to decentralize the educational management to a locally managed system. The centralized system was implemented for a long time. The locality needs more attention” (Officer C)

“It is the time that government really gives freedom and schools need to understand that what government gives are only guidelines; schools need to do it by themselves. The centralized system was implemented for a long time. If you see different school curriculums, you can see that they are very different which depends on local context.” (Officer D)

Even though the application of a standards-based curriculum in Thailand initially was to promote locality and school autonomy, the issue of accountability and educational control could not be avoided in this context. Though, unlike the Foreign Language Learning Standards by ACTFL that followed proficiency guidelines to assess a learner’s performance, Thailand proposed a national test for accountability purposes and educational quality control organized by the Office of National Education Standards (ONES) (now named the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)). Thus, even though initiation of the standards-based curricula in Thailand and the United States might be different, in the end, they pursue the same path of accountability and control that relate to the test of technical skills and mastery of knowledge rather than the process of knowing (to know) and to be able to do and be part of the society or meet the four pillars of education. In other words, it is a challenging task for curriculum developers to propose details of a curriculum that can achieve a balance between accountability and the process of becoming to know. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 discuss how the curriculum working committees dealt with the balance between these issues.

5.3 Variety of Designation and its Possibility of Misinterpretation

As stated earlier, the official name of the new EFL curriculum is “English language learning strands and standards under Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D. 2001)” (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002a). However, according to the interviews and a document analysis, there is more than one term for the new curriculum when it comes to curriculum implementation. Different terms are
used by teachers, trainers and even by curriculum developers in their curriculum documents to refer to the new English language curriculum as well as the standards-based curriculum. Because the Thai standards-movement is adopted from Western education, it was found when it was implemented in Thailand, various terms used to refer to a standards-based curriculum such as ‘Standards-based curriculum’, ‘Core curriculum’, ‘Curriculum standards’, ‘Standard curriculum’ etc. varied in use among Thai educators. This came about because of the interpretation and translation of English words such as “the Standards”, “Curriculum framework”, and “Standards-based curriculum”, “Content-Standards”, and “Strands and Standards” into the Thai language.

The question of meaning rested on whether these various terms could mislead people and whether the real meanings underlying the original terms could be grasped when it came to curriculum implementation, and whether this was an example of the unawareness of curriculum developers in developing the ‘Official curriculum’. In Thailand, the ‘Standards-based education’ is newly developed and informed. Its underlying principles are new to teachers and, worse, words used to represent this new curriculum are different in meaning from one document to another, even from one person to another, which may give rise to confusion over apparent ambiguity in the underlying meaning of the terms. For example, ‘Core curricula’ is used to refer to the new curriculum system in the 1997 constitution of Thailand. In the NEA 1999, section 27, the Thai educational law, articulated

“The Basic Education Commission shall prescribe core curricula for purposes of preserving Thai identity; good citizenship; desirable way of life; livelihood; as well as for further education.” (National Education Act, 1999)

The term ‘Core curriculum for foreign language learning’, is found in the English language version of the BEC 2001 document that refers to the new English language curriculum. The term ‘core curriculum’ is the official term used to refer to the national standards-based curriculum in most of the official documents. Unsurprisingly, according to interviews conducted and questionnaires answered by school teachers, the term ‘core curriculum’ is the term that is most frequently used to refer to this new curriculum system (standard-based). However, several official documents such as “Education in Thailand 2004” refer to the Basic Education Curriculum as “the standards-based curriculum”. Some documents state that it is the “curriculum
framework”. These terms mean the same thing in that they refer to the Basic Education Curriculum that is standards-based and contains “strands”, (which in some official documents are called “substances”) standards and benchmarks.

However, Developer A, (one of the key persons on the ESB curriculum development committee who initially recommended ‘Standards-based education’), argued that the term ‘core curriculum’ should not be used in the official document at all, and further added that ‘standards-based curriculum’ was what she suggested. She explained that the term ‘core curriculum’ in Thai language, represents something that is more authoritarian, and implied a sense of centralization rather than decentralization. She distinguished ‘core curriculum’ as having a slightly different meaning when compared to ‘standards-based curriculum’. In Thai language ‘Core curriculum’ (luk-sud-kan-klang) is the curriculum that curriculum users must use as the main curriculum to follow, whereas a standards-based curriculum means the curriculum that provides only a list of standards for further interpretation into a school-based curriculum (Developer A). For Developer A, in other words, the curriculum is not a prescribed body of knowledge, but rather a framework for further development of knowledge in school.

Developer A in her interview advised the committees at an early stage of curriculum planning, that she was looking beyond a simple core of compulsory subjects based on the traditional pattern. She echoed the risks in using the term ‘core’ because it was already used in a different way and had the effect of opening up the idea that some aspects of the curriculum might be compulsory for all students. Despite her awareness of the risk, it seems likely in hindsight that deeply established relationships of core thinking to traditional models of the curriculum made ‘core’ an unfortunate choice of terminology amongst educational stakeholders and school teachers.

“So what I have suggested is ‘the standards of the curriculum’, ‘Standards-based curriculum’. But it becomes ‘Core curriculum’ and even worse ‘Standard curriculum’ written in the National Education Act which is a really big mistake.” (Developer A)
Furthermore, another term was found in the Thai language version of the BEC 2001 document: the term is ‘English language learning strands and standards’. The term is also used widely in the Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D. 1999) (Thai language version) (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2001b) and in the new English language curriculum document as well as its manuals. A variety of terms used are also found in discussion forums, conference papers, news and other educational sources. For example, in the paper presented at the Thai TESOL conference 2003 on the implementation of the new EFL curriculum, the presenter used the term “English language curriculum standards” to refer to the new English language curriculum. Developer A explained that ‘curriculum standards’ is different from ‘English language standards-based curriculum’. The former, when is translated into Thai language, “Luck-suud-mad-tra-tarn”, generates a meaning similar to ‘core curriculum’. On the other hand, Developer A complained, the latter when it is translated into Thai language, “Mart-tra-tarn-luck-suud”, means the curriculum that contains a list of standards for further interpretation, which is the more appropriate term. Other scholars also explain similarly to Developer A.

5.3.1 Conflicts between the Document and Curriculum Developers

Developer A’s argument is worth noting since there is a possibility of misinterpreting the “core curriculum” with standards-based principles, and the “core curriculum” with traditional concepts that represent authoritarian concepts of imposed knowledge. The risk is that what was written in the “core curriculum” is prescribed knowledge content that can be seen as traditional curriculum content rather than as a description of what students should know and be able to do.

According to Developers A and D, the ESB curriculum describes what students should know and be able to do, which is quite similar to the Standards (U.S.) and Curriculum Framework (Australia). The document analysis found that some statements imply the authoritarian conception that prescribes what students have to learn, rather than what they should know and be able to do. The BEC 2001 states (the researcher highlighted the key issue),
"Basic Education Curriculum 2001 is the core curriculum of the country and consists of Standards, that is, the specification of learner's quality of knowledge, skills/process, morality and values; and consists of Substances, that is, the specification of knowledge content that encompasses basic education over 12 years, in order for educational institutions, teachers and stakeholders to organize the curriculum appropriately according to learners and according to curriculum goals. The Ministry of Education developed Substances and Standards for each key stage as well as specifying clearly details necessary related to learning substances for schools to develop their school-based curriculum" (Translated from the Basic Education Curriculum, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, (2001b))

In general, the standards-based curriculum is perceived as the curriculum that describes "what students should know and be able to do", as indicated previously; and benchmarks that describe the levels of achievement in the subject matter set out in content standards and state how well students demonstrate their competency in a subject that was written in the interlocking progress of learners in each learning stage in order for a standards assessment to be made (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1996). According to the Thai statement, the use of the word 'specification', implies imposed knowledge, rather than the process of allowing a learner's construction of knowledge. The American content standards and benchmarks, for example, as stated in the Louisiana curriculum document indicate that a "Benchmark is a broad statement of process and/or content that is used as a reference to develop curriculum and assess student progress." (Louisiana. Dept. of Education., 1997). It also different from the Australian use too. According to Vale et al. (1991,p.10) - the authors of the Australian All Guidelines for languages other than English and English as a Second Language (ESL) - the curriculum framework contains flexible guidelines for teachers to develop further their own school-based curriculum as well as a series of progressive, interlocking, age-related stages (1991, p.15). These are different from the Thai Standards, stated in BEC 2001, which specify the content of what to learn.

The differences are three-fold. First, the statement in the BEC 2001 document did not articulate well the concepts underlying the standards-based curriculum that the Thai curriculum developers and researchers tried to propose to the government. In other words, the person who wrote the statement might not be the one who proposed the standards-based curriculum concept. This is similar to the problem of the designation...
of the new EFL curriculum. Second, it is possible that, in fact, the Thai standards-based curriculum is really different from the general Standards movement. The Thai government could possibly prefer to have more control over school practices. However, if this is the case, then it conflicts with the 1997 Constitution of Thailand that promotes school autonomy, school-based curriculum and management, and conflicts with the Delors report and its philosophies. Third, this represents the view of curriculum developers toward ‘knowledge’ itself as static and imposed. Then, in this case, the interpretation of 70:30 will be that 70% is imposed and defined from the centre and another 30% imposed knowledge from the local scene by teacher selection which there is no learner’s selection at all.

Therefore, in this regard, curriculum flexibility occurs in terms of the teacher’s decision making, but may not occur in terms of the student’s decision making and hence the appearance of imposed knowledge in the classroom that is characteristic of the traditional classroom where learners learn what is not relevant to their lives because they did not have any choice of their own. Whether teachers are viewed as sole decision makers or as purveyors of traditional knowledge-imposed education or whether the learners have flexibility through their right to negotiate their curriculum experience should be in question. This research then argues that a discussion of the controversy between the government statement and the claims made in the interviews, as well as the general Standards movement relating to the meaning underlying the “standards-based curriculum” as well as the designation used are all crucial. This is because the underlying meaning and the designation itself define the role of the curriculum which then affects how it is perceived among educators and curriculum users, as well as those interested in the larger purpose of education.

5.3.2 The Conventional Term ‘English Language Standards-Based Curriculum’ (ESB Curriculum)

In this thesis, the term “English language standards-based curriculum” (ESB curriculum) is the term that will be used to refer to the new English language curriculum under BEC 2001. Although the official name of the Thai new English language curriculum is “English language learning strands and standards under Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D. 2001)”, this term represents ‘the content standards’ which is not a curriculum in itself. It was ‘strands and standards’ when it
was part of the BEC 2001 book. However, within its own curriculum book, there is more than "strands and standards". The Thai ESB curriculum is similar to a U.S. State's curriculum framework that encompasses not only 'strands and standards' or content standards but also conceptual frameworks, proficiency levels, benchmarks (curriculum content), teaching and learning management (methodology), suggested assessment methods and suggested learning resources which represent the whole curriculum system, despite being limited in detail. Thus 'English language standards-based curriculum' is the most appropriate term to use. It is also a term known internationally in the field of education as well as in foreign language education associations (ACTEL, TESOL). Furthermore, the term can be easily understood by people who are not familiar with the term 'strands and standards' alone. 'English language standards-based curriculum' is also used interchangeably with 'the new English language curriculum' in this research, when appropriate, to represent the Thai new national English language curriculum.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the origins of the ESB curriculum which were the international cooperative project and the American Content Standards movement. The framework adopted from the West was scrutinized and changed into the detail of Thai educational belief. In the process, a variety of terminologies denoting the new ESB Curriculum was discussed. This research raises concerns and awareness relating to the designation used which could lead to traditional thinking about and traditional interpretation of the decentralisation process and thus obscure practices in many ways. The next chapter explores in more detail the underlying meaning of the ESB curriculum focusing on its goals, strands and standards, the views of curriculum developers toward the meaning changes, their own interpretation of the meaning and how their meaning affected the underlying meaning of the curriculum strands and standards.
Chapter 6
An Analysis of the Philosophies Underpinning the ESB Curriculum Overarching Goals and Content Standards

6.1 Introduction

The literature review in Chapter 2 clearly states that if a full scale analysis of EFL curriculum policy is to be undertaken, then it must be directed at clarifying the philosophical concepts underlying the formulation of policy statements and provisions as well as the processes through which the conditions of English as a foreign language learning are maintained and improved in society. This chapter aims to unravel the philosophical and ideological concepts underlying the Thai English language standards-based curriculum (ESB curriculum). The following questions will be proposed and answered: What counts as curriculum knowledge? Who decides what and on what basis? How is access to such knowledge determined? Whose interests are being served by the selection, legitimation and production of curriculum knowledge? How is that knowledge expressed and made visible/invisible? Where does the knowledge come from? What is the value system of Thai education and how does it affect the English language curriculum? and What concepts and conceptions are
hidden in the ESB curriculum? The delineation of philosophies and theories of the ESB curriculum in this chapter acts as a basis for a discussion of the curriculum content, teaching and learning management and assessment.

6.2 Setting the Scene

Throughout the development of the ESB curriculum, curriculum working committees were asked to acknowledge, promote and integrate the identified values of the National Educational Legislation into the ESB curriculum and consider whether an ELT situation in Thailand could possibly theoretically conform to National Education Legislation as well as movements in foreign language teaching and learning trends and practices. This chapter is devoted to the consideration of the underlying philosophies and ideologies of the ESB curriculum, and its overarching goals, strands and standards. Below is an extract of the ESB overarching curriculum goals that will be referred in this discussion.

Extract of ESB Curriculum overarching goals

A: In the social world, foreign language learning is vital. Its advantages are for communication, education, searching for additional information, and for occupation;
B: As well as for bringing the nation into the economic competition, understanding the differences of in politics and cultures under the condition that we are the citizens of the globalization era.
C: Foreign language learning helps expand a learner’s vision, so that he or she is be able to communicate with foreigners, correctly, appropriately and confidently, and have positive attitudes toward language usage and foreign cultures.
D: Furthermore, learners have an understanding of and pride in the Thai language and culture and are able to promote Thai culture to the global society.

(Translated from the ESB curriculum, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development (2002a))

6.3 The Substance of Thai Education Legislation Relating to the ESB Curriculum

From the evidence of the interviews, the Thai ESB curriculum conformed generally to three major pieces of legislation which are the 1997 Constitution of Thailand, the National Education Act 1999 (NEA 1999) and the Basic Education Curriculum 2001 (BEC 2001). Every curriculum framework as well as school practices, legislative
bodies, curriculum stakeholders and communities are required to observe and pursue these law and practices. It is worth noting that this research took into account the legislation during the drafting and until the dissemination process. Therefore, other legislation after the dissemination in 2001 (such as the National Education Plan (2002-2016)) is not involved here because it influences only the curriculum implementation not the planning process.

Philosophically, the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand is the basis of the principles of the NEA 1999 and BEC 2001. Section 81 of the 1997 Constitution of Thailand, contains a statement relating to the provision of Thai public and private education to the effect that education should be provided in developing the core share values which are -

1. To create knowledge along with morality
2. To improve education to be in harmony with economic and social change
3. To create and strengthen knowledge
4. To instil correct awareness with regard to politics and a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State
5. To support research in various sciences
6. To accelerate the development of science and technology for national development
7. To develop the teaching profession, and promote local wisdom and national arts and culture (Office of the National Education Commission, 1997, )

Within the spirit of this statement, the NEA 1999 as a new educational law, pursued the enactment into details for practice which has had as its aim the promotion of three major principles of educational provision: (1) “Lifelong education for all”, (2) “All segments participating in the provision of education” and (3) “Continuous development of the bodies of knowledge and learning processes” (National Education Act of 1999, section 8). In addition, NEA 1999 stresses the essential goal of being an ‘all round person’ which means to be one who is capable of undertaking self-learning, who is filled with morality, knowledge, and integrity; who understands Thai democracy, and is prepared for the social world and the economic competitiveness era in the 21st century. Thus, Fry’s (2002, p.61) analysis of this Thai concept of learning as a holistic approach follows.
6.3.1 Thai Education and the Holistic Approach

Fry (2002, p.61) assesses the whole learner approach, whole school, whole teachers or holistic approach as the most important approach in Thai learning reform. Regarding the area of curriculum reform, the report on “Education in Thailand 2004” states that the NEA 1999, s 8, emphasises that “the substance of the curricula, both academic and vocational, will aim at human development with a desirable balance regarding knowledge, critical thinking, capability, virtue and social responsibility” (Office of the Education Council, 2004, p.69). Further, the NEA 1999 stipulates that:

“Education shall aim at the full development of the Thai people in all aspects: physical and mental health; intellect; knowledge; morality; and desirable way of life so as to be able to live in harmony with other people.” (National Education Act, 1999, s 6)

Thus, education is not only for promoting the intellectual growth of the individual, but for the education of the whole person whose growth is to be physical, moral and intellectual. Dewey (1963) asserts that ‘holistic’ education aims to provide a learning process that emphasises growing that is not only physical but intellectual and moral. This concept of learning represents Thai fundamental thinking of education as a progressive perspective rather than embedded with academic rationales and social and economic efficiency perspectives that focus solely on knowledge and not the learners. The BEC 2001 preceded the NEA 1999’s core shared values into school practices and proclaimed that

“The ultimate aims of education are to transform Thai citizens into perfect human beings, having good health, wholesome minds, intelligences, knowledge, morality, good behaviour and cultural life” (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2001a, p.2)

In order to achieve a holistic approach to educational development, the BEC 2001 divided subject matter into two major groups where each group accommodates a different educational mission and values, despite attaining the same national overarching goals. The first subject matter group’s mission is to develop basic knowledge needed for life experiences. Foreign languages are categorized into the second group of subject matter which has as its mission to develop the all-round person, and enhance the abilities of “critical thinking and creative working”.
Chapter 6: An Analysis of the Philosophies Underpinning the ESB Curriculum

Overarching Goals and Content Standards

"....EFL strand is the strand for developing fully as a person and the ability of critical thinking and creative working in order to develop learners to become as purposed curriculum objectives."

(Translated from the Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, (2001b))

Even though the statement "in order to develop learners to become as purposed curriculum objectives" sounds authoritarian and oppressive in terms of learning to achieve the educational objectives, it is hoped that the statement "developing fully as a person and the ability of critical thinking and creative working" could help curriculum stakeholders understand the core of the EFL curriculum. It is worth noting that, as stated, the ESB curriculum needs a great deal of interpretation from those involved, so how the curriculum was written is crucial at the practice level. This statement is one of the examples that could result in different interpretation, especially if teachers apply traditional thinking toward education.

6.3.1.1 The holistic approach to EFL education

In their planning the working committees encompassed the statement of NEA 1999 and stated explicitly in the curriculum appropriate overarching goals as can be seen from the extracts (a), (b) (c) and (d). The stipulation of English language as a subject or learning strands for developing the 'all-round person', has given new meaning to ELT, and EFL curriculum development and classroom practices. The ESB Curriculum strands and standards were aimed at promoting communicative competence in a holistic setting, focusing on development of learning skills and of learning attributes (confidence, motivation and independence) which would facilitate students' future learning endeavours. The strands and standards led on to views of language learning as integrated learning including an integrated skill both in terms of integrated macro skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and micro skills (understanding, applying, using, managing, expressing and, critical thinking).

This means that ELT is not involved only in the issue of acquiring four basic language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - but also it accommodates the essentials of being a fully developed Thai citizen, as well as the application of knowledge critically and creatively to the development of skills needed to function within and outside the community, the international society and the democratic society. In other words, ELT in Thailand has taken a holistic approach that aims to
expand foreign language learning as a vehicle for becoming a more enlightened and
effective citizen and expands and enhances perceptions toward shaping the societal,
economic and political issues of our technological and democratic society.

6.4 The Core Principles: Knowledge, the Learning Process and Affectivity

According to the interviews, in order to meet the requirement of core shared values of
Thai education that are based on a holistic view, the foremost underlying principle of
the ESB curriculum as well as other curriculum frameworks, had to stress the
development of “Knowledge, Learning Process and Affectivity” (or KPA) into the
organization of learning (Developers A, B, C, D, and Officers C and D).

“This curriculum is under the principle that we call, “knowledge, learning
process, and affective (morality) domain”. From this, no matter how many
standards, it has to represent those three. They are main principles of every
subject in schools. It means every subject needs to have these three domains.
It comes from national reform policy.” (Developer C)

The claim is corresponded with the statement in the NEA 1999, section 23 that
“Education shall give emphases to knowledge, morality, the learning process,
and integration of the following [knowledge], depending on the
appropriateness of each level of education” (National Education Act of 1999)

In the planning process, working committees, especially at the basic principle drafting
stage, had to interpret these three principles into EFL learning contexts. Some of
those interviewed claimed that the three principles were similar to Bloom’s
Taxonomy of Objectives (Bloom, 1946) which classified the objectives into three
domains: Knowledge, Affective and Psychomotor (Developer B, C and Officer D).
However, the statement of Bloom’s Taxonomy of objectives could not be found in the
curriculum book; it came only from the interviewees’ information.

“...each standard will have three Taxonomy domains: cognitive, attitudes,
and learning process domain. This is a big principle in devising the
curriculum. You cannot escape them. They are the objective of education that
every country took for the main.” (Officer D)

It is worth noting that whether what they claimed represented Bloom’s whole system
of classification of objectives or not, Bloom’s concept itself is worth questioning. The
"Final report of the Training Seminar on Capacity-Building for Curriculum
Specialists in East and South-East Asia, Bangkok, 2000" by UNESCO and IBE, Miralao (2001, p.37) argues that the linear form of skill development like cognitive, affective and psychomotor is not suitable for the development of education that promotes 'life skills' as a goal of educational reform. The Delors Report 1996, Delors J. et al. (1996) also argue that learners require 'life-skills' that allow them to be able to cope with change as individuals and also as social persons with sensitivity for their environment. This matter of ‘life-skills’ for Delors J. et al. (1996) did not conform neatly with the usual categorisation of learning skills and competencies like cognitive, affective and psychomotor, but required new ways of conceptualizing learning behaviours, processes and outcomes (Miralao, 2001). As discussed in Chapter 2, Bloom's Taxonomy of objectives has its bases on social and economic efficiency perspectives that value the delineation of what to learn into details which left no negotiation and freedom to the learner's decision making. This view contradicts Thai educational philosophies that take further steps toward a contemporary approach to curriculum design that rejects the delineation of learning objectives.

Further, if Bloom's Taxonomy of objectives were perceived as a good support of ELT in Thailand, as claimed by the curriculum developers, it would have been written in the curriculum document. The curriculum did not explicitly state, for example, that the organisation of teaching and learning should be seen as a hierarchical development as stated in Bloom's Taxonomy of Education.

The next section explores the meaning of “Knowledge, Learning Process and Affectivity” (KPA) that is stated in the Thai Educational Legislation and the interpretation of the three principles by the ESB curriculum working committees will also be revealed. In addition, it discusses in detail the claims of curriculum developers of the use of Bloom's Taxonomy of objectives and its relationship to the KPA.

6.4.1 Knowledge

The NEA 1999 stipulated that educational institutions should provide content knowledge and morality along with the learning process as follows:

1. Knowledge about oneself and the relationship between oneself and society (family, community, nation, and world community) as well as knowledge about the historical development of Thai society and
matters relating to politics and democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy;
2. Scientific and technological knowledge and skills, as well as knowledge, understanding and experience in management, conservation, and utilisation for natural resources and the environment in a balanced and sustainable manner;
3. Knowledge about religion, art, culture, sports, Thai wisdom, and the application of wisdom;
4. Knowledge and skills in mathematics and languages, with emphasis on proper use of the Thai language,
5. Knowledge and skills in pursuing one’s career and capability of leading a happy life. (National Education Act, 1999, s 23)

The meaning of “education” defined in the NEA 1999 stresses the importance of the mastery of knowledge as part of teaching and learning, and expected learning outcomes.

“education” means the learning process for personal and social development through imparting of knowledge, practice, training, transmission of culture, enhancement of academic progress, building a body of knowledge by creating a learning environment and society with factors available conducive to continuous lifelong learning” (National Education Act 1999, s 4)

As stated in the standards, apart from knowledge of English language itself, which is the most important, three types of knowledge are stressed in the ESB curriculum: knowledge of technology, knowledge of culture and local wisdom, and knowledge of community (Developers A, B, D) as well as knowledge for self-development and career opportunities and life happiness. Evidence of the different types of “knowledge” is to be found in the following explicit statements – (the numbers represents the knowledge stressed in the NEA 1999, listed above)

**Standard F 1.2** “...capable of exchanging information, news; expressing feeling and opinion by using technology and appropriate management for life long learning” (2) Knowledge of Technology

**Standard F 2.1** “Comprehend the relationship between languages and culture of target languages and apply it appropriately to time and place” (3) Knowledge of Culture and (4) Knowledge of Language

**Standard F 2.2** “Comprehend the similarities and differences between languages and cultures of target language and those of Thai; and apply it critically” (4) Proper use of Thai language

**Standard F 4.1** “Be able to use foreign languages to encounter different situations within educational institutions, community and society” (1) Knowledge of languages related to community
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Standard F.4.2 “Be able to use foreign languages as a tool to learn, to work, to earn a living, to stimulate co-operation and to live together in the society”
(1) Knowledge of living in the society and (6) Knowledge of languages for career
(Translated from the ESB curriculum, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development (2002a))

Three types of knowledge that were evidently seen as the most emphasised are: technology, culture and local wisdom, and community. They are discussed below.

6.4.1.1 Technology in Language teaching and learning
The educational reforms stressed ICTs development in schools and this has stirred the movement of technology in language learning in Thailand. Official documents such as national reports on education view the utilisation of technologies in education, in particular the information and communication technologies, as a tool for enhancing lifelong learning opportunities by making learning accessible anywhere and at anytime (Office of the Education Council, 2004). However, in the ESB curriculum, there was no articulation of this statement and no explanation in any great detail of the kind of technologies needed to pursue this goal. Even though technology-enhanced language learning has been discussed among Thai foreign language scholars and teachers, the ESB curriculum only emphasizes the technology aspect in the Communication strand. The ESB curriculum did not articulate well the roles of technology in ELT.

As can be seen from the Communication strand, Standard F.1.2 “Capable of applying technology to express feeling and manage learning process appropriately”, from this statement, it is unclear how technology can help students express feeling and manage the learning process. Thus, the use of technology depends on the teacher’s interpretation of technology as well as the teacher’s knowledge background. If one treats technology as anything related to computers, the only place that technology is being mentioned is in the curriculum manual. CD-Rom and the internet were used as examples of learning resources that are related to technology. While mostly technology is understood as an information resource among Thais, the difficulty lies at the heart of the linkage between what technology is chosen and the requirements of the standards F.1.2. In addition, the discussion related to how technology influences the lives of the new generation and how learners deal with the mass information in
such areas as the high technological period is not part of the curriculum standards. Thus, from this lack of core thinking about technology in the ESB curriculum there is a risk that technology, such as CD-Rom and the Internet as proposed only replace tape recorders or traditional materials; they are not included as the new approach to language learning that views technology as a way or means, such as enhancing learners' repertoire of knowledge, self-learning, self-realisation and awareness raising toward the advantages and disadvantages of technologies such as the internet and its vast information.

6.4.1.2 The promotion of “Culture” in the ESB curriculum

From the interviews and document analysis, three major influences on the teaching of ‘culture’ knowledge in the ESB curriculum are: National Education Legislation, American content standards and the sociolinguistic view of language learning.

- National Education Legislation

Miralao and Gregorio (2001, p.42) stress that curricula in all four countries of the Mekong sub-region (Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) emphasize the propagation of a national identity. As stated in the NEA 1999, local knowledge and wisdom should be added into the school-based curriculum. As stated by NEA 1999 section 24:

“The learning process should encourage the availing of local knowledge and wisdom for strengthening the community and maintaining Thai cultures”
(National Education Act of 1999)

The ESB curriculum accentuates the need to promote Thai culture and local wisdom. This can be seen clearly in the statement of the Constitution, section 289, NEC1999, BEC 2001 and the ESB curriculum.

“Local administrative organizations have the duty to conserve local arts, customs, local wisdom or the goodness of local culture...In providing education and training at the local level under paragraph two, local administrative organizations shall also direct attention to the conservation of local arts, customs, wisdom and the goodness of culture.” (Office of the National Education Commission, 1997, p.5)

This direction can also be seen in a section of the publication of thirty Thai Wisdom teachers by ONEC on being an honour expert of Thai wisdom such as traditional medical science, Thai medical herbs, handicrafts, folk arts etc (Kaewdang, 2001).
These 30 teachers are responsible for helping to promote Thai wisdom among communities and their network members (Kaewdang, 2001).

Developer D stated that the previous EFL curriculum did not emphasise both Thai wisdom and national identity. Therefore, the ESB curriculum needs to take this issue into account. Developer D stated that “They [teachers] complained that the old one come from the centre, does not care what local knowledge is”. Thus, the ESB curriculum committee interpret the need to promote Thai wisdom by emphasising the knowledge of culture in English language learning. As can be seen from the extract from goals (d) “Furthermore...have an understanding of and pride in Thai language and culture, and be able to demonstrate Thai culture and Thai identity to the social world.” From the standards, three major components of culture in English language teaching were stressed explicitly: (1) learning the culture of the target language as well as the culture of Thailand, (2) distinguishing and comparing the target language culture and Thai culture and (3) promoting Thai culture to other world communities. In other words, it focuses on the macro level of teaching and learning about the culture of the target language. However, the details of what constitutes ‘cultures’, both Thai and the target language, are left entirely to teachers’ own definition of ‘culture’.

- American Content Standards

It is worth noting that the major driving forces behind the devising of the Culture Strand did not come only from the requirements of the NEA 1999, but also from Western influences. The inserting of the Culture strand in the Thai ESB curriculum is inherent in the American content standards. The American content standards emphasise that the “United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad” (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1996). Clearly, Thais received this as a new trend in language teaching and learning. Cultural learning in American content standards clearly accentuated critical awareness of the influence of different cultures, and views culture as an essential part of language. Thus, as stated in Chapter 2, culture in language learning is not seen only as the comparison between the target language and the ‘home’ language, but an awareness of the influences of different cultures, and discussion of each cultural value. In other words, as Lo Bianco (2004) argues it is not about learning about culture and comparing cultures but it is
about intercultural exploration that foreign language learners of the 21st century must experience.

- **Sociolinguistics view**

However, according to the interviews, the curriculum working committees mostly viewed the teaching of culture only at the level of knowing and comparing the target language and Thai, the use of language on different occasions, in foreign festivals, or understanding the target language’s gestures – all related to a sociolinguistic view of language learning. Further, the merging of the comparison strand and the culture strand into one strand greatly confirmed the view of Thai EFL curriculum developers of comparison as the main purpose of learning culture. The evidence is from the interviews, such as Officer A explaining that students can learn cultures and make comparisons in the same lesson and to compare the target language and Thai language as a linguistics component.

For example, language and culture, I'm the one who lectures other committees, like in the comparison why we need to know culture. Like “passive voices”, Thai does not have passive voice. Talk about pragmatic, semantic. I don't know that teachers will understand or not. They should have an example. (Developer D)

“Culture is in the language, this model can work, and language is not alone…there is a communication element. There is based that communication can express culture. The teacher asked me that how can we do compare in culture. In Thai curriculum, we add that students have to use language to represent Thai culture.” (Developer B)

For example, we teach “hi hello”, they can teach culture and teach them to know the differences and compare between culture. They have to raise how these two cultures are different, formal and informal and which can be a kind of discussion which curriculum can serve. (Developer C)

The interpretation of learning about ‘culture’ by the Thai ESB curriculum working committee in this regard is different from the interpretation of learning about ‘culture’ in the ACTEL national foreign language content standards and Louisiana content standards. While the Thai ESB curriculum emphasises culture at the macro level, which is related to knowledge of language and Four Fs approach: Food, Fashion, Festivals, and Folklore (Diaz-Greenberg & Nevin, 2004), American content standards include further the micro level which is about critical awareness of culture of the target language and the multicultural perspective in a global context.
In addition, the limitation of teaching and learning culture only at the macro level is not conducive to the development of Thai citizens who are capable of drawing on their own views and attitudes toward Thai culture, as well as other cultures, that is part of the NEA 1999. In order that learners are capable of making critical judgements regarding Thai culture and/or others, they need learning environments that encourage learners to participate and construct their own meaning of culture rather than impose knowledge of cultures on them. In other words, if learners are expected to be able to realize the values of Thai cultures and be aware of the influences of the dominant culture, such learning deals with critical awareness of cultures rather than with issues of memorization and comparison of the differences of food and festival or language structure.

Therefore, the question is - If language learning is limited only to comparison, how do Thai learners of English learn intrinsically the value of Thai culture and develop a sense of ownership toward local wisdom as required in the National Education Law? In other words, culture learning at the macro level would not be able to promote learners taking a critical perspective toward a multicultural society in the globalisation movement where learners are exposed to more than one culture.

There is another problem with the concept of culture: the culture of English language speaking countries is itself difficult to define because there are many countries that claim English as the sole or a mother tongue. Thus, the question is just what culture of what country should learners compare Thai with. Such a range of cultures exists amongst the English speaking countries of Singapore, America or Britain, between the cultures where Glaswegian English or Geordie are spoken and the culture of the British Home Counties. The comparison that is inherent in the macro level approach to the learning of culture assumes that learners have an adequate understanding of and language facility in both Thai culture and the culture of the target language. Moreover, when it comes to the classroom level and curriculum implementation, all the questions relating to the teaching and learning of cultural issues are left to the teacher's interpretation of what constitutes Thai and target cultures and how to teach - by implicit or explicit teaching, by negotiation of meaning or imposition of knowledge. This discussion implies that policy implementation is proved to be a
complex task when the policy does not delineate and accentuate its philosophical and theoretical ground clearly. The design of language curricula with objectives that lack coherent underlying principles created confusion rather than positive change.

6.4.1.3 Locality and community

Curriculum Developer A explained that the new ESB Curriculum focuses on the use of English language in and outside the community. The community in this sense expresses the need of schools to link that reality of living to the school experience. An article written by Thai educators as well as the government’s published articles reveals that the community and schools have now become closer and there is a need to form links between schools and students’ lives. Dr. Prawase Wasi (2000, p.II), a leading Thai educator and influential in educational reform in Thailand, also states that “according to Buddhist philosophy …life and education are identical”. Professor Sumon Amornvivat (n.d., as cited in Kaewdang, 2001) supports the Buddhist perception of a human being both as an individual and as a member of society living with others. In addition, Atagi (2002) states that Thai educational reform focuses on ‘community’, which plays an increasingly important role. Therefore, with the strong movement of community as part of school life in the educational reform statement, ‘locality and community’ becomes one strand in the ESB curriculum. Locality and community is a concept that is clearly explained in the curriculum, as can be seen in the standards F 4.1\textsuperscript{15} and F 4.2\textsuperscript{16}.

The view of life and society in Thai education represents the social-reconstructionists’ perspective that schools and society are not seen as a separate entity. It is the view that cultivates learners who are fit for social interaction (Hooks, 1994). Language learning here then has both individual and social aspects (Vygotsky, 1986; Lantolf, 2000). Learners take part in social issues and engage in emancipatory talk as part of being citizens in a democratic society (Freire, 1998, 2004). Thus, a Thai English language classroom is not only seen as a place for practising conversations such as going to the supermarket, asking for direction and buying movie tickets, but is about open discussion and communication related to everyday life issues, community, society

\textsuperscript{15} Standard F 4.1 BE able to use foreign languages to encounter different situations within educational institutions, community and society

\textsuperscript{16} Standard F 4.2 Be able to use foreign languages as a toll to learn, to work, to earn a living, to stimulate co-operation and to live together in the society
within and outside, nationally and internationally. In other words, it is English language literacy and a critical literacy approach to ELT that Thai language educators at present need to be aware of, because these deal with the issue of English language as part of a social movement encompassing and responding to the Information Age in the 21st century.

6.4.1.4 The knowledge of grammar and communicative skills

The emphasis on the excellence of knowledge created a strong criticism of the previous EFL curriculum that was seen as not focusing enough on learners’ grammar knowledge. In the new ESB curriculum both communicative competence and grammar knowledge will be mutually enhanced (Developers A and D). Developer C explained that English language learning had to strengthen the importance of both language form and communicative skill or both linguistic and communicative competence.

“Now, I will explain the idea underlying this new curriculum standard. Look at the objectives, they said “use language for communication in various situation”, this is communicative approach. The problem is that only communicative approach is not enough for Thailand, because students don’t have the chance to communicate outside school because English is TEFL. Then I put “use correctly in term of linguistics and culture”. These two parts are a linguistics competent and communicative competence. Because you can not have only communicative competence...Language with good grammar is very important. It is uneducated if it is without grammar. For example, the language on the website is broken English, without grammatical correctness. Or when you want to further your education abroad, it is hard because your English is not standard.” (Developer D)

However, how communicative skill and grammar knowledge are introduced in the classroom and in what way, depend a great deal on teachers’ knowledge and interpretation. This is not a discussion about concepts related to grammar and communicative language teaching. As discussed in Chapter 2, the teaching of grammar has been a major debate topic since the introduction of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching); it is not an easy concept to work with. The teaching of the two requires clear fundamental thinking about ELT.
6.4.1.5 The comparison of “Knowledge” and Bloom’s Cognitive Domain

Some curriculum developers claimed in their interviews that Bloom’s cognitive domain is similar to the “knowledge” principles of the Thai ESB curriculum. In general, Bloom’s Taxonomy demonstrates the hierarchical development of how learners gain knowledge at different stages of their development (Bloom, 1956, p.80). According to Bloom (1956) the cognitive continuum begins with

> "the student’s recall and recognition of knowledge; it extends through his comprehension of the knowledge, his skill in application of the knowledge that he comprehends, his skill in analysis of situations involving this knowledge, his skill in synthesis of this knowledge into new organizations, his skill in evaluation in that area of knowledge or judging the value of material and methods for given purposes" (p.49)

Some characteristics of Bloom’s taxonomy can be found in the ESB standards but they did not apply throughout the list of standards. In general, the mastery of knowledge was stressed, which may refer to the first stage of Bloom: that in order to perform further, knowledge must be recognized. Furthermore, comprehension and application that are stated in the standards F.1.1, F.1.3, F.2.1, and F.2.2\(^{17}\) are similar to Bloom’s cognitive domain components (the lower order skills). However, at the level of analysis, synthesis and evaluation (or higher order skills), it can only be assumed that these three levels have a close link with the word ‘critically’ in standard F.1.1 that may require analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The link between higher order skills of Bloom’s cognitive domain and the meaning of the word “critically” of the ESB curriculum will be discussed further in Chapter 7 in the organisation of curriculum content where the standards are expanded in detail and, as claimed by the interviewees, the essence of Bloom’s ‘Cognitive’ domain can be further found.

- Critical thinking

While the term “critically” is expanded in the curriculum content (Chapter 7), the word “critically”, as it is used in the standards, is worth discussing in terms of the clarity of its definition for curriculum interpretation at the practice level. Although the phrase ‘apply knowledge critically’ is inserted as part of standard F.1.1, there is no definition of the term ‘critically’ stated in the curriculum, nor is there any consensus

\(^{17}\) Please see Appendix 2 for full description of strands and standards
about its use. The definition of ‘critical thinking’ appears to depend on the interpretation of curriculum users.

From the NEA 1999 and other relevant documents we can see that Thai Learning reform promotes the development of thinking skills - analytical thinking and critical thinking skills (Atagi, 2002, p.24). Official documents and statements by Thai leading educators who influenced the learning reform, such as the report on Thai education 2000, imply that critical thinking is important in language learning - (researcher’s highlight)

“Learners of the globalize age must be competent in the use of more than one language. In other words, they must be fluent in Thai and also have a good command of a foreign language(s) to facilitate communication with the international community. They must be able to competently use new technologies, e.g. a computer, the internet etc., which are gateways for access to the world outside. They must be able to analyse the information thus received for the benefit for themselves, their families, societies, and , ultimately, the nation” (Office of the National Education Commission, 2000, p.6)

From this statement, however, it is not clear whether an ability to analyse information refers to or counts as part of critical thinking or not. At this stage, the researcher can only infer that it does because of the lack of agreed meaning. The implication is that the ESB curriculum has responsibility to profess goals that are not only to produce English language basic macro skills, but to develop critical literate English language learners that critical thinking is central to the ability to criticize real issues and information. In addition, the focus on critical thinking imbues the curriculum with values that uphold the democratic system and a particular socio-economic society. In addition, the introduction of critical thinking, which promotes critical literacy in ELT, has shown the influence of the social reconstructionists’ view on education for freedom and for the empowerment of learners in the Information Age. Instead of offering training in language in everyday use, this curriculum aims to create critical thinkers, who are capable of using language to gain knowledge and to think critically about all knowledge (whether knowledge really exists or not is another matter). The ESB curriculum’s preface also indicates that the primary goal of the curriculum is to develop a student’s mental processes for critical thinking.
Not only is there a lack of clear statements indicating a consensus about critical thinking, but also about how to teach critical thinking. Again this matter rests on individual teachers' background knowledge. Whether implicit or explicit teaching is appropriate or whether it can even be taught or transferred or not, is not explained. In other words, there is only the statement of the requirement of 'critical thinking and analytical thinking'. Further information from the interviews did not clarify matters at all. The working committees stated that “thinking skill should be promoted in each lesson, in every expected outcome, and should not be treated as separate from subject matter”. However, while this was the opinion of the working committees, this opinion was not stated in the document.

“Actually, it is based on the previous one. For example, “thinking process”… this did not come out as a small standard; it will be inserted in every standard, for example: ‘students should be able to use knowledge critically’.”

(Developer C)

Thus, ‘critical thinking’, so much promoted in Thai ESB curriculum, has not been defined and this leads to confusion and difficulty for teachers and learners at the practice level.

6.4.2 The Learning Process: Progressive education

The emphasis on ‘the learning process and the learners’ in the national education legislation and the ESB curriculum presents a view of progressive education that sees learning as a dynamic process that is not limited to the sphere of imposed knowledge outside the learner’s repertoire of experience (Dewey, 1963; Kilpatrick, 1993). Rather, it aims to expand the learner’s view of the world and of reality by allowing learners to engage in real and authentic learning according to their interests (Dewey, 1963; Kilpatrick, 1993). Progressive education also influenced views about subject matter in the development of the Thai curriculum, hence the application of knowledge to human problems and affairs, to interdisciplinary subject matter, activities and project work. The NEA 1999 stated that the learning process should

1. Be organized into learning activities in which learners may draw from authentic experience, drilling in practical work for complete mastery and enabling learners to think critically and acquire the reading habit and continuous thirst for knowledge.
2. All subjects should achieve a balanced integration of subject matter, integrity, values and desirable attributes.
3. Encourage life long learning
4. The learning process should emphasise learners’ interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences.
5. Education should provide training in thinking processes, management, how to face various situations and application of knowledge for obviating and solving problems. (National Education Act, 1999, s 24)

The ESB curriculum explicitly emphasises the learning process by using the word “process” in the standards, as for example,

**Standard F 1.1** Comprehend *listening and reading processes*...
**Standard F 1.3** Comprehend *speaking, writing processes*...
(Translated from the ESB curriculum, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development (2002a))

Below is the English language version of the foreign language learning strands and standards in the Basic Education Curriculum book.

**Substance F 1.2** *Processing skills* for language communication ...capable to ... manage *learning process* appropriately
**Substance F 4.1** *Possessing skills* in the use of foreign languages to encounter different situations ...
**Substance F 4.2** *Processing skills* in the use of foreign languages to acquire knowledge...
(Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2001a)

The intent of the NEA 1999 is straightforward, but explanations of the listening and reading processes, or the speaking and writing processes are lacking. Again it is up to the teacher’s own interpretation of what is meant by those references. For example, if teachers’ interpretation of the ‘learning process’ is a way of promoting the democratising of society, then teachers may interpret the reading process as a way of questioning texts and discussing how relevant they are to the democratic society. On the other hand, if teachers’ understanding of ‘learning process’ is habit formation, then teachers may interpret ‘understanding listening and reading processes’ as a process of mastering what to listen to and a process of reading aloud that stems from a traditional view of language learning that treats learners as passive recipients of knowledge. This implies that the standard did not express its intention clearly. Thus, there is potential for both teacher and learner confusion in interpreting this standard.

Two progressive views of education are found in the Thai education overarching goals: the learner-centeredness conception and the social progressive or social-reconstruction conception.
6.4.2.1 Learner-centeredness conception

The ‘learner-centred approach’ in learning reform places learners at the heart of education as opposed to the ‘teacher-centred approach’ that sees learners as passive recipients. In addition, education development in Thailand reflects the constructivists’ belief in teaching and learning that should at best emphasise how learners learn rather than what the outcomes are. In “Learning Reform: A learner-centred approach”, it is proposed that if learners are given opportunities to think for themselves, do and create, with teachers providing an ambiance conducive to learning, these opportunities will best facilitate the learner’s learning on their own (Office of the National Education Commission, 2000, p.27). Ratanavipak (2002) stressed that the Thai ‘learning process’ means learning how to learn rather than learning the content of various subjects.

6.4.2.2 Social-reconstruction conception

While learners learn at their own pace and are capable of self-development (Office of the Education Council, 2004), the learning process should also encourage learners to be active and involved members of the new socialist society, rather than just passive factory fodder. This represents the views of social progressive education (Langford, 2005, p.131) or social-reconstruction. These principles are contained in the statement of the NEA 1999,

“The learning process shall aim at inculcating sound awareness of politics and a democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy; ability to protect and promote their rights, responsibilities, freedom, respect of the rule of law, equality, and human dignity; pride in Thai identity; ability to protect public and national interests; promotion of religion, art, national culture, sports, local wisdom, Thai wisdom and universal knowledge; inculcating the ability to preserve natural resources and the environment; the ability to earn a living; self-reliance; creativity; and acquiring a thirst for knowledge and capability of self-learning on a continuous basis” (National Education Act, 1999, s7)

Professor of Medicine, Dr. Prawase Wasi states that it is essentially a shift from focussing on subject matter to human beings or learners involved in social issues. In other words, a social progressive education should be imperative. He further states that

“Society at present is interconnected, highly complex and undergoing rapid change. Human inability to face such complexity and fast movement and change has led to an inevitable crisis. In other words, people are unable to cope with difficulties arising from poverty, unemployment, stress, violence,
drug addiction, HIV-AIDS, accident, conflict, crime, environmental
degradation etc.; as a result, stability and harmony in their way of life and
society cannot be attained.
Education through rote learning or focussing on subject matter will not
enable us to face and cope with these problems. The academic world in fact
differs entirely from the real world. Focussing on subject matters divorces
learning from the realities of life and complexities of society with its rapid
movement and changes” (Wasi, 2000, p.1).

As can be seen from Extracts (a) and (c) of the ESB curriculum goals, the ESB
curriculum represents this perspective and encourages language learners to be skilful
problem-solvers, problem poser, active citizens and responsible members of society in
their future lives.

6.4.2.3 Learning by doing
Developer A explained in her interview that the learning process was interpreted as
“learning by doing”. It is not surprising that “learning by doing” is promoted in Thai
education because it is an essential learning principle that focuses on the process of
becoming to know as such in progressive education (Nunan, 2004). The meanings and
definitions of “learning by doing” of the ESB curriculum developers are to be
discussed further. In the interviews, most curriculum developers asserted that learning
occurs when learners have practised what they learned (Developer B, and Officer D).
Developer A explained that the learning process means 'what students should know
and be able to do'. However, an analysis of the curriculum document shows that the
concepts of 'learning by doing' and 'students should know and be able to do' are not
stated clearly in the ESB curriculum; the only matter stressed is that there should be
practice of the target language as much as possible. The following statement about the
learning process is included in the ESB curriculum:

"Teaching and learning language principles under the communicative
approach emphasises the "learning process" that includes practising and using
language in the real situation according to language communicative
functions. The main purpose is to use language to communicate in real life,
especially to use language with social appropriateness. Thus, the learning
process should aim to give the most opportunities to students to practice the
language as much as possible..." (Translated from the ESB curriculum,
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development (2002a))

18 (a): In the social world, foreign language learning is vital. Its advantages are for communication, education,
searching for additional information, and for occupation

19 (c): Foreign language learning helps expand a learner’s vision, so that he is able to communicate with foreigners,
correctly, appropriately and confidently, have positive attitudes toward language usage and foreign cultures.
Again, when “learning by doing” is interpreted in a limited way into the practice of language skills, there is a risk that what students should know and be able to do is graded in behavioural objective terms that may promote habit formation, rather than a process of coming to know. Furthermore, the interpretation could be, for example, an emphasis on *should know* and what the learner *should be able to memorize*. In other words, the policy statement emphasises the progressive approach, but in practice the learner may experience a social and economic efficiency approach that values skills development rather than the learning process. This will be discussed further in Chapter 8 which is related to the organisation of teaching and learning.

### 6.4.2.4 Integrated curriculum

The concept of integration is found to be dominant in Thai ESB Curriculum (Developers C and D). The concept of an integrated curriculum is implied in the Connection Strand (Strand 3)²⁰ (Developers B and C). Developer D in her interview explained further that every subject in school needs to be integrated. English language is a tool for communication and for the discussion of other subject areas. Clearly the integrated curriculum is part of the progressive view of education that a subject matter is not designed in isolation, but integrated with other subject matters across the curriculum (Sowell, 2005). However, from the interviews, some EFL curriculum developers viewed the integration only in terms of the use of English language to read texts of other subjects, such as texts in sciences and social science. Their interpretations were obviously presented in the Benchmarks and the content which will be discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.7.3.

Developer C explained further that the main purpose behind the implementation of integration was communication between teachers in other subject areas. However, these aspects of integration were not written into the curriculum. Basically, the concept of integration across the curriculum was left to teacher trainers to explain to school teachers and to the teachers’ own knowledge.

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²⁰ Strand 3: Language and other subject groups’ relationship (Connection strand)

Standards F 3.1: Use foreign languages to connect knowledge with other subject matters strands and standards; and to be the basic of self-development and the self broadening of world view
6.4.2.5 A comparison of “Learning Process” and Bloom’s Psychomotor domain

Developer B claimed that the psychomotor domain of Bloom’s Taxonomy is similar to the “learning process” of Thai learning principles, especially ‘learning by doing’. However, the learning process proposed in the NEA 1999, stated above, is based on Piaget, a constructivist, who saw learning as self constructed knowledge in which cognitive development is much more involved in learning development and the meaning-making process, not only the practice of physical activities. Bloom’s taxonomy, on the other hand, includes an inherent social and economic efficiency conception which was developed at the time when the behavioural objectives movement was very strong. There is thus a great difference between Bloom’s psychomotor taxonomy and Thai philosophies of learning. Furthermore, Bloom’s (1956) psychomotor domain stresses physical involvement in learning; this does not mean that physical involvement enhances the learner’s construction of knowledge. Bloom’s psychomotor domain does not mention whether this physical involvement is originated by learners or not. On the other hand, ‘learning by doing’ or ‘experiential learning’, according to constructivists, is learning in which learners take responsibility for their own in learning and learning occurs when they are active in learning rather than passively participating (Allen, 1984; Skilbeck, 1984; A-P Lian et al., 1993; A-P. Lian, 2000, 2001; Richards, 2002a; Nunan, 2004). Thus, it could be assumed that those on the working committee who claimed the equivalent of Bloom’s knowledge about the ‘learning process’ stated in the NEA 1999, interpreted ‘learning by doing’ in terms of a set of behavioural practices and saw the development of learners of language in a linear fashion. On the other hand, it could also imply that some working committee members did not have a good understanding of either the learning process stated in the NEA 1999 or the psychomotor domain of Bloom.

From the foregoing discussion of the learning process and the interpretation of the ESB curriculum working committees, we can see there is incoherence between the underlying theoretical basis of the Thai education legislation and the ESB curriculum. Therefore, instead of moving EFL education development forward, the curriculum committees moved EFL education backward to a more traditional approach to EFL education.
6.4.3 Affectivity

The word 'affectivity' in this context, revolves around morality restraints and the development of Thai learners who are physically, intellectually and morally capable of happily contributing to a democratic society that embraces Buddhism (Amornvivat, 2000; Kaewdang, 2000; Wasi, 2000). Kaewdang (2001) stresses that the Buddhist concept of life should be preserved and transmitted along with modern knowledge. Sumon (2002a, as cited in Fry, 2002, p.61) stated that His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's emphasis on the promotion of moral education as part of the whole student learning approach is critically important.

6.4.3.1 The Thai ESB curriculum and Affectivity

According to the ESB curriculum working committees' interpretation of affectivity, affectivity can be promoted most in group working activities, through communication among peers and by developing a feeling toward learning. This is also about positive attitudes toward English language learning.

"The affective domain is best promoted in activity and group work. The affective domain can be promoted by asking learners to evaluate other projects, and encouraging learners to make notice of who are their best friends and who is child of the month in their classroom" (Developer C)

"Affectivity is about teaching and learning activities that are working together." (Developer A)

"The affective domain is about making students like their classroom" (Developer B)

The Hidden curriculum

Morality and affective objectives are both explicit and implicit in the ESB curriculum. They are explicitly stated in the extract goal (C) where affectivity is about having positive attitudes toward language use, if they are interpreted as promoting positive feelings about learning as claimed by Developer B. However, affectivity is implicitly stated in the Community Strand - "students should be able to use English language to acquire knowledge to stimulate co-operation and to live together in society" (Translated from the ESB curriculum, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002). That is what Developers C and A claimed that the affectivity was about - cooperatively working together. In other words, the working committees explained that activity-based learning was a tool for promoting the affective domain. The meaning of affectivity and morality are not to be found in the curriculum, which
mean that again these basic curriculum concepts - morality and affectivity - depend on the teacher’s interpretation. This implies that the working committees viewed affectivity in foreign language education as a hidden curriculum element and were not aware of the influence of teachers’ interpretations of morality and affectivity on learners. Affectivity and morality, according to the national educational law, relate to bigger issues of good citizenship and the ability to distinguish good and evil, and are immediately relevant to the Buddhist concept of life. The presence or absence of any discussion of these issues in learning is critical to development of the whole person that foreign language learning can contribute to. Further, the issue of how language learning supports moral restraints is not made explicit elsewhere in the curriculum. This hidden element of the curriculum is an influential force in the curriculum; so far none of the research on the EFL curriculum in Thailand has mentioned it or pointed out its crucial effect on Thai society.

6.4.3.2 Comparison with Bloom’s Affective Domain

As can be appreciated from the discussion above, the extent and intent of Thai affectivity goes beyond what is found in Bloom’s affective domain. Despite sharing some similar characteristics in terms of values, Thai affectivity is not differentiated into this linear process that refers to the ability of receiving, responding, valuing, conceptualisation and then origination of those values as stated by Bloom (1965). It is assumed that everyone has the same core share values. Thais are Buddhists and the basic tenets and values of Buddhism are very powerful community values that bind the Thai society together. Indeed, the school should reinforce what is taught at home, what is generally observed in the whole community, and what the King stands for and is respected for standing for. Thus, the ESB curriculum should clearly define affectivity and its place in EFL teaching and learning and point out its crucial effect on Thai society.

6.4.4 Controversial Issues in the Development of the Core Principles in the ESB Curriculum

6.4.4.1 Mutually developed concept of KPA

The development of these three areas of the curriculum (Knowledge, Learning Process and Affectivity) was a controversial issue between the advisory committees and the working committees in the planning process. It represents mainly the lack of
mutual understanding of philosophies and theories of learning among stakeholders. The curriculum working committee had to discuss whether these three should be promoted separately or should be mutually developed within one standard. The advisory committee initially advised that the development of these three principles should be made clear at one principle per standard. This means that the English language curriculum should have three main strands (goals) which are “the knowledge strand”, “the learning process strand” and “the affectivity strand”. The advisory committees’ request for separation of knowledge, learning process and affectivity into different strands implies a view of knowledge that is not constructed out of the learning process, but is static and absolute, something that can be transmitted. Separation of the learning process from knowledge implies a process of undertaking activities that may reinforce the mastery of skills, rather than a process of knowledge construction.

On the other hand, the working committee at the Basic Principles drafting stage could not agree with the idea of independently developed principles. Thus, they had explained clearly that Knowledge, Learning Process and Affectivity or Morality principles should be mutually developed into strands and standards of English language learning. These three principles could not be developed independently.

“When government said that strands needed to be spelled out in terms of knowledge, learning process and affective domain, they [advisory committees] wanted us [researchers] to insert them into the standards and separate each standard into a knowledge standard, a learning process standard, and affective standards. We [the working committee] could not do it...Government really tried to do it in their own way, identifying this strand as Knowledge, another one as Learning Process and another one as Affective. I did not agree with them...I tried to fight it, and the outcome was that they understood and did not separate them...English language teaching and learning have knowledge, process (skills) together. Affectivity is about teaching and learning activities. It is not standards.” (Developer A)

It is not surprising that the controversy occurred. The advisory committee’s argument represents the traditional view of teaching and learning that has been a long held view in Thai education. On the one hand, most researchers represent more modern thinking about education which values the holistic view and sees knowledge and learning as a joint cultivating process. Nevertheless, how the three are integrated at the practice level will be a more challenging task. The integration of KPA is a new concept at the policy making level. A great deal of education relating to this concept is required if
these three are to be integrated well, not only at the rhetoric level but in practice also. Furthermore, the meaning of KPA itself in the ESB curriculum lies somewhere in the paradoxical argument about static and dynamic knowledge, the promotion of learning process and product. Thus, in order that school teachers develop a better understanding of the ESB curriculum's philosophies and theories, including the integration of KPA, a great deal of development and improvement of theoretical coherence is necessary.

6.5 Summary: The Hybridity of Thai ESB Curriculum Conception

It can be seen from the foregoing discussion that the ESB curriculum working committees had brought together a range of international trends and Thai philosophies in their development of the EFL curriculum. The report from the MOE also claims that the ESB curriculum has a global competence outlook (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2005). The range of theoretical bases of the ESB curriculum thus indicates an eclectic approach to curriculum development. The literature review explained that an eclectic curriculum represents a mixture of theories drawn together, depending on the historical and cultural contexts of that curriculum (Schwab, 2004, p.110). The Thai ESB curriculum encompasses four curriculum perspectives from traditional to contemporary: academic rationale, social-economic efficiency, learner-centeredness and social reconstructionism. The use of a traditional and modern dualism in many Thai curricula and education overviews is noteworthy. The dichotomy between traditional and modern knowledge is more than an abstract concept; it is a lived reality. Even though Western influence is one of the most powerful drives in Thailand toward educational change in many aspects - for example, Western concepts of learning, teaching and curriculum and have penetrated our philosophies to life - traditional concepts of preservation of culture, transmission of morality, and a strong belief in social values are absolute and standards relating to these matters appear in underlying educational philosophies. The need to cultivate Thai wisdom and identity has converted a Western-driven EFL curriculum into a Thai culture-oriented framework.
While educators promoted the learning process, at the centre of Thai educational development is academic excellence which focuses on strong development of knowledge as well as the preservation of the Thai culture. This demonstrates divergent emphases: the promotion of learning that focuses on the process of the learner's development is developed alongside the expectation of excellence in the learning product. The values of a learner-centred approach and self-construction of knowledge represents the views of individual-progressive education. Learners are placed at the heart of teaching and learning and it is believed that the meaning making process is the essential part of learning as well as learning by doing. Thus, learners should be encouraged to take action in their own learning. Further, the subject matter cannot be taught alone, but must be integrated with subject matter across the curriculum.

The social reconstructionists' view of education also can be seen in the requirement of learners as active participants being able to critically involve themselves in the social problems of their country and, at the same time, serve their own needs (Glatthorn & Jailall, 2000). English language learning is not seen as learning the language of itself, but as a tool for whole person development - to acquire information, to allow the learner to become a text user, to be able to learn language across disciplines and to communicate internationally. Thus, language learning is not limited to the repertoire of a foreign language paradigm that aims to communicate within specific countries, such as learning the Japanese language to speak with Japanese. Rather, English language learning is seen as the language of an international communication paradigm in which learners are not only be able to communicate, but are able to think critically, to exchange main ideas, to discuss issues related to social and global communities, to distinguish facts from opinion, to be citizens of an Information Technology world and who are cultural and moral learners. It is not only about English language competent learner but it is about promoting critical literate English language learners. These represent the trends of the social reconstructionists who view language learners as socially constructed persons, and education as a state where freedom may be exercised with the condition that they recognise that they are part of society. Language learning is a tool that helps learners avoid oppressive education and restrictive society (Pennycook, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999; Wallace, 2002, 2003;
Canagarajah, 2006). It assists learning and expanding a world view that does not promote their culture and other cultures as superior. It allows them to critically engage in all forms of communication that foster more understanding of and more information related to different cultures and their own (K. Johnson, 2001; Diaz-Greenberg & Nevin, 2004; Phipps & Guilherme, 2004).

6.5.1 Concerns about the Terms and Their Interpretation

It is worth noting that an eclectic curriculum is problematic if theories are not adopted in a coherent way. In the case of the ESB curriculum, the interpretation of the curriculum developers influenced how the dualism between the traditional and modern views of education or eclectic curriculum would be implemented. From the analysis of curriculum documents it appears that the ESB curriculum developers had interpreted the three key learning areas “Knowledge”, “Learning Process”, and “Affectivity” slightly differently from the national education legislators. To complicate matters further, even if they had interpreted similarly, their interpretation of these philosophies is not explicitly stated in the curriculum document. Many of the terms and concepts used in the curriculum are left to the teachers’ own interpretations, and to the responsibility of the teacher trainers conducting the training program. Many issues remained implicit in the curriculum. Furthermore, according to Developer C, not only did the Thai EFL curriculum not clearly state clearly the philosophies underlying the curriculum in the curriculum document, but the training program did not explicitly educate teachers on the principles underpinning the standards-based curriculum. Even where education took place, what was explained should have been questioned. If the curriculum principles and philosophies or concepts are only transferred to teachers in the training program provided by the government, it cannot be ascertained whether every school teacher receives the same message because so much depends on who the teacher trainers are. As explained by Officer C, who was one of the chief teacher trainers in the ESB curriculum training program,

“Some teacher trainers were not aware of their training details; when I attended their workshops, I found that they misinterpreted the curriculum principles. Some of them did not prepare well for the training workshop, then they could not thoroughly explain, describe the main theme of this curriculum to school teachers” (Officer C)
Marsh (2004) argues that curriculum developers have to be very disciplined in writing “Standards” because the standards can be too vague for practice, too many for implementation or too few to produce any further practice. Here in the case of the Thai ESB curriculum, the curriculum committees’ intense awareness of numbers of standards produced confusion rather than a clear-cut policy for practice. The question here is how much detail should be stated in the curriculum as well as what type of information is necessary for teachers to be capable of learning for themselves, of forming their own understanding of the curriculum statement and of relating curriculum knowledge into practice.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter reveals the knowledge claimed by the new ESB curriculum. Three key learning areas: “Knowledge, Learning Process and Affectivity” are philosophical bases of every subject including English language. There has been growing interest in updating theoretical assumptions about language teaching and learning. Efforts have been stepped up to introduce new educational philosophies, approaches and methods into the classroom. The curriculum working committee stressed what is required by law.

However, the underlying theories and philosophies present a dichotomy of traditional and contemporary views of education. The dichotomy has produced an incoherent curriculum rather than a coherent eclectic one. This chapter raised questions about the variety of new terminologies and speculative words applied throughout the new curriculum with a lack of care as to their precise meaning. The next chapters expand further on the theories and philosophies underlying the ESB curriculum as well as give evidence of the incoherent theoretical basis of the ESB curriculum, especially as a result of the curriculum developers’ interpretations of theory and terms.
Chapter 7
Analysis of the Organisation of Curriculum Content

7.1 Introduction
In order to achieve the Thai ESB curriculum’s overarching goals, the working committees planned a curriculum content that entails a Proficiency-based grade level, Learner’s quality description, and Benchmarks. Furthermore, DCID (the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development) developed the content or “Sa-ra-karn-reain-ru” that specifies what type of language and other details students have to learn as a guideline for teachers to develop their school-based curricula. In this research, the term ‘the content’ refers to the further specified content knowledge, while ‘the benchmarks’ refers to the generic curriculum content or syllabus.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the proficiency level description provided in the curriculum. Two sections are devoted to the planning of benchmarks and the analysis of its characteristics, the scope and sequence of benchmarks or the organization of benchmarks. The discussion focuses on the benchmark’s underlying principles both from an analysis of the document and the interviews. The discussion centres on coherence and incoherence in the underlying principles between the ESB curriculum overarching goals and what is delineated in the benchmarks.
Chapter 6 revealed the philosophical and theoretical bases of the ESB curriculum’s overarching goals and its content standards. This chapter has taken the revealed philosophies into consideration and questions whether the provided benchmarks or the curriculum content have philosophically informed practices in a coherent way as the stated goals claim. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the assumptions underlying the curriculum content. The questions that are related to the curriculum content are: What are the skills that support the effective practice of Thai citizenship? What are the skills that lead to creating English language competence in the learners? How can appreciation of the English language be developed? Of the many English language skills students might acquire, which one(s) ought to be taught and why?

### 7.2 Setting the Scene

As discussed in previous chapters, despite various interpretations that led to a dichotomy of traditional and contemporary concepts of EFL education, in general, ELT is justified in relation to the rapid development of IT, the globalization of economic activities, and a basic competence that citizens in the 21st century must possess. Thus, there are a number of extra-linguistic goals of ELT. The most important goal is to promote quality education and cultivate creativity as well as practical competence in students through implementing the policy of all-round or fully developed person development and education for modernization, the world, and the future. Another goal is to instil in students a respect for meritorious cultural traditions of other nations and an understanding of, as well as love for, Thai culture. A third goal is to develop students’ ability to think independently and actively, expand their cultural and scientific knowledge, enrich their cultural experience, refine their ideology and morality, and prepare them for the needs of Thailand’s social, economic and scientific development. As far as linguistic goals are concerned, teachers must help students master both basic linguistic knowledge and basic language skills so as to acquire an initial ability to use English to obtain information and lay a foundation for genuine communication, as well as being capable of coping critically with vast amounts of information in the Information Age of the 21st century.
Thailand has taken a progressive approach toward the development of education both in terms of its choice of a learner-centeredness conception and a social reconstruction conception. Learners and learning are central to the education provided. The process of becoming competent learners is emphasised as well as excellence in the knowledge of subject matter. The curriculum is seen as a process whereby teachers and learners can negotiate and the place where learners are allowed to construct knowledge based on their interests and history, as well as the place for social issues to be discussed. Therefore, the teaching and learning process should also centre on present social issues that do not separate learners from reality, society and community both within Thailand and within the world community.

### 7.3 Analysis of the Proficiency Level Description (PLD)

#### 7.3.1 Proficiency level: Description of Entry and Exit Levels

As stated previously in the review of Thai EFL education in Chapter 2, the ESB curriculum organizes the learner’s competency according to proficiency grade levels, where the preparatory level determines the students of grades 1-3 and expanding level determines students of grades 10-12. Each proficiency level contains descriptions of the learner’s qualities that are required when students finish at certain key stages. According to the ESB curriculum book, the description of a learner’s quality contains the specification of K P A (Knowledge, Learning Process and Affectivity) that all learners of English language should possess (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002a). These three principles were incorporated into the list of linguistic and communicative competences as well as ‘life skills’ at each key stage with the minimum vocabulary requirement that students need (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002a). Table 7.1 is an example of a learner’s quality description. See also Appendix 3 for the full translation of the learner’s quality description in the Thai ESB curriculum.
Table 7.1: An example of a learner’s quality description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginner Level</th>
<th>Expanding Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Upper primary level) (Grades 4-6)</td>
<td>(Upper secondary level) (Grades10-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Understand and use foreign language for exchanging and presenting information that is related to self daily life, and surrounding communities</td>
<td>1. Understand and use foreign language for exchanging news and information, be able to create interpersonal relationship, express thoughts and ideas that are related to education, career, community and social world issues appropriate for times, places and people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Possess language usage skills, emphasis on listening, speaking and reading. Students can listen and speak according to topics which are related to themselves, family, schools, surrounding environment, foods, drinks, interpersonal relationship, hobbies, activities, weather, health and facilities buying and selling. The vocabulary limitation is 1,050-1,200 words (concrete and abstract vocabulary).</td>
<td>2. Have language usage skills, emphasis on listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students can do all skills with topics which are related to themselves, family, schools, surrounding environment, foods, drinks, interpersonal relationship, hobbies, activities, weather, health and facilities, buying and selling, education and career, traveling, services, places, language, science and technology. The vocabulary limitation is 3,600-3,750 words (vocabulary that have different levels of usage).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use one word sentences, simple sentences and compound sentences to communicate in different contexts.</td>
<td>3. Use compound sentences and complex sentences to represent meaning in various contexts, both in formal and informal conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Understand formal and informal conversations in various contexts</td>
<td>4. Understand formal and informal conversations in various contexts with Discourse Makers (Linkers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Possess knowledge and understand language, culture and lifestyle of foreigners according to the texts found at each level</td>
<td>5. Possess knowledge and understand language, culture and lifestyle of foreigners according to the texts found at each level, and be able to apply to appropriate times and places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Be able to use the language for information presentation. The information can be about other subjects according to students’ interests and levels.</td>
<td>6. Have knowledge and understand the usage of language, and be able to search for information that is related to other subjects according to students’ interests and levels from different and various sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Be able to use the language in classrooms, schools for searching for more information and fun</td>
<td>7. Be able to use the language inside and outside schools for searching for more information continually and fun, and for the foundation of further education and career</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the interviews we learn that the description of a learner's quality is the so-called "Proficiency level description" (PLD) because it is 'proficiency-based' (Developer D). Developer D, who mainly developed the PLD for the Thai ESB curriculum, gave reasons for the development of the PLD. She said that it is a description of the entry and exit levels that are to provide a solution to the articulation problems between schools. Second, it provides details of standards and scope in providing English language to all schools in Thailand (Developer D). She explained:

"If you asked about the sequence of the curriculum, it is still similar to the previous curriculum. It is proficiency based grade level...The proficiency level description is very important. If we did not specify proficiency level for schools, schools would themselves specify learner’s proficiency without any standard, and even not proficiency-based specification. If we did not provide this proficiency level, school teachers will not know how many vocabularies students should learn. Compared with the previous curriculum, the requirements of learner were written in really broad terms. For example, "students should have four skills both at primary and secondary level." It was a really loose term. According to this statement, school teachers interpreted too many things without any scope and standards. On the other hand, for PLD, you cannot do it. PLD specifies detail of the requirements of each level, what students need what, how many vocabulary teachers have to teach and students need to learn. If we want to compete internationally, we need to have this PLD...This PLD was from what I have been studying and from what other countries have been doing as well. For example, Singapore also used this. Before, if they asked how many words in the vocabulary Thai learners have, we could not tell them. If we did not have PLD or proficiency level guidelines, then students would suffer because each school was different at the proficiency level. There was not a system. When students moved from one school to another, they experienced repeated lessons or more advanced levels of English. Then, proficiency-based was brought in, to describe the requirement of English language from grade 1-12 on a continuum basis. " (Developer D)

From the interviews we also understand that PLD is second in importance to the content standards. Teachers need to ensure that learners meet the requirements stated in PLD (Developer D and Officer D). The next section discusses first the characteristics of the PLD and the premise it is based on which is to solve the stated problems. The Thai PLD is compared with international proficiency guidelines, especially the well-known ACTFL proficiency guidelines and ISLPR (International Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale) that are based on the same premises. The PLD is also discussed against the ESB curriculum overarching goals and content standards in terms of theoretical coherence.
7.3.2 The Thai PLD and International Proficiency-Based Guidelines (ACTFL and ISLPR): Characteristics and their Premises

The proficiency guideline is a criterion for grouping learners; it assumes that learners at a similar level would have similar needs as stated by Bottomley et al. (1994) and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (1986/1999). The Thai PLD and ACTFL and ISLPR are also designed to have each proficiency level subsume all previous levels and the sequence moves from simple to complex (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1986/1999; Bottomley et al., 1994).

The ACTFL proficiency guidelines are based on the same premise of solving the problem of articulation of learning progress and proficiency of foreign language learners. The implementation of the proficiency guidelines proposes that when learners move across schools that apply the same proficiency guidelines, learners may not experience different course levels and learning goals from their previous school or institutions. As Omaggio and Levy (1985) explained.

"Guidelines facilitate the goal-setting process, as well as promote articulation from course to course, level to level, teacher to teacher, and institution to institution. This is an important benefit of a proficiency orientation, since articulation has been a perennial problem in the past. It helps solve articulation problems. Students moving from course to course, either vertically or horizontally, often encounter completely different expectations, goals, and instructional formats, all of which leads to a feeling of frustration and potential failure. In some cases, students experience a great deal of overlap from course to course; in others, tremendous gaps have to be bridged to assure success in the new course of study. If courses can be compared against a backdrop of commonly understood guidelines, articulation can be greatly improved in the year ahead (p.10)

Even though PLD shares a similar premise and some basic characteristics with international proficiency guidelines such as ACTFL, their characteristics are in many ways different. First, the international proficiency guidelines have in them an inherent purpose for testing; they need to be devised as clearly as possible for the purpose of the assessment (Stern, 1989; Wylie & Ingram, 1999). Thai PLD does not provide and delineate a learner’s proficiency in any detail. PLD is rather a description and a scope of what is to be learned or it can be seen as a summary of benchmarks or a summary of curriculum content. PLD then is not equivalent to a guideline as in ACTFL, or scales as in ISLPR, or bands as in the IELTS (the International English Language
Testing System). In other words, the PLD is not a construct of reliable and valid assessment tools; rather, it is the summary of what learners of each key stage have to learn and become, or it is the summary of the benchmarks.

Second, as can be seen from Table 7.1, PLD does not describe the four skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - in a separate manner in order for schools or institutions to monitor a learner’s proficiency. Teachers need to further the interpretation, such as how well students at grade 3 are able to possess knowledge and understand language, culture and lifestyle of foreigners according to the texts found at each level, and are able to apply this knowledge at appropriate times and places. This interpretation results in different testing regimes and criteria between schools to measure the learner’s proficiency. Here is another example, drawn from the developing level - “Understand formal and informal conversations in various contexts with discourse markers”. According to this statement, schools need to interpret further how well learners demonstrate their understanding and in what ways. On the other hand, the international proficiency guidelines provide the learner’s proficiency level in each language skill in detail that does not need further interpretation. ACTFL proficiency guidelines and ISPLR explain the tasks that people at particular levels can perform as well as the contexts in which they can perform them, as well as the language form (Wylie & Ingram, 1999). For example, ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines C Writing for Intermediate-High level,

“Writers at the Intermediate-High level are able to meet all practical writing needs such as taking notes on familiar topics, writing uncomplicated letters, simple summaries, and compositions related to work, school experiences, and topics of current and general interest. Intermediate-High writers connect sentences into paragraphs using a limited number of cohesive devices that tend to be repeated, and with some breakdown in one or more features of the Advanced level.” (Breiner-Sanders, Swender, & Terry, 2001)

Therefore, the PLD alone may not solve the problem of articulation. PLD should be developed as a more explicitly stated proficiency requirement, if accountability and articulation between schools are perceived to be important for the Thai school system. In other words, the benchmarks become essential information that provides more deliberate details for schools across Thailand to pursue at the same pace of language proficiency development. Also, if PLD is implemented as the basis for a national test, then the details of this proficiency level should be extended for practical purposes.
Nevertheless, the general characteristic of the proficiency guidelines accentuates the language as an end in itself, and limits the view of language proficiency in the four macro skills. The PLD alone may result in the risk of teaching towards a test of vocabulary knowledge rather than testing an application of language to other areas of learning or life skills. From the PLD, we see that more than half of the description contains the requirements of mastery of language knowledge and a list of vocabulary. The interview with Developer D confirms that the PLD contains mainly structural syllabus characteristics that consist of two components: a list of linguistic structures (the 'grammar' to be taught) and a list of words (the lexicon to be taught).

"Again, there are two parts, grammar and lexicon. What vocabulary students should have, i.e.: intermediate should have 3,000 words, advanced level is 4,500 words. You need to look at our neighbours, Singapore is the example, they have done the same thing" (Developer D)

Therefore, the development of proficiency guidelines should be mindful of the stated goals that view English language as a means of developing creative and critical thinking and learners who are part of a democratic society.

7.3.3 PLD and Its Theoretical Coherence with the ESB Curriculum Overarching Goals

In general, as discussed in the review of traditional to contemporary views of education and EFL curriculum development, the theoretical basis of a proficiency-based guideline and syllabus stem from a social and economic efficiency perspective that values accountability and pre-specification of learning content. It has close links also with the functional-notional approach to ELT. From the analysis of the Thai PLD we can see that it represents the stress of this functional-notional approach to language learning that emphasises the appropriateness of the use of language as well as language form with the attachment of a progressive view of education.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the knowledge required for a fully developed person, requires knowledge and understanding far beyond the PLD's scope. In other words, issues such as culture and technology, critical thinking, creativity and critical cultural awareness are not well represented in the PLD. The document analysis found that there is a tension between, on the one hand, the encouragement of language use, or functional proficiency and a renewed emphasis on discrete points of sentence-level
grammar, or accuracy and, on the other hand, the promotion of critical thinking, creativity, and democratic and moral citizen. This tension evidently reveals differences in the ESB curriculum developers’ theoretical backgrounds, between those who have a commitment to functional and structural definitions of language and those who view language learning as process of cultivating a critically literate English language learner for the Information Age and globalisation.

It is clear that those who designed language learning as a part of critical thinking and the democratizing process did not influence the planning of PLD, because there is a lack of these critical elements in the description. In other words, the description limits ELT to the conception of social-economic efficiency, with learner-centred progressive education, but omits the social-reconstructionists’ perspective that stresses critical perspectives in language learning. As stated previously, although PLD is second in importance to content standards, its role is crucial in many ways. The presentation of PLD with its dominance of structural and functional notional approach leads to the risk of misinterpretation of language learning confined to subject matter, rather than as a means of developing creative and critical learners as required by the NEA 1999.

In conclusion, PLD has as its purpose the articulation of the learner’s English language competence at each key stage in order that the learner attains the same pace of language development. PLD, despite asserting the same premises as ACTFL and ISLPR, has different characteristics. ACTFL and ISLPR proficiency guidelines describe in detail and as clearly as possible each of the four language skills as functional skills for assessment purposes. PLD is rather the summary of what Thai learners of English language should master and be able to do, but does not delineate the four proficiency skills in detail. Thus, PLD cannot be seen as a proficiency guideline; it is a statement of the requirement of learners at certain proficiency levels - what has to be mastered and what has to be done.

Underlying PLD is the functional-notional approach which focuses on the appropriateness of language use and views language as an end although PLD does emphasise learners’ intrinsic values in the use of language in searching for information, for learning and for their own pleasure. The description does not contain a critical perspective of language, where language is seen as part of the social
development and development as individuals and how English language becomes part of the democratic society. The lack of these elements makes the PLD incoherent with the stated ESB curriculum overarching goals that have as their purpose the education of learners of English who are possessed of creativity and sound morality, and who are critical thinkers.

The next section analyses the interpretation by the ESB curriculum developers of the core philosophies entailed in the national education legislation into the details of the ESB curriculum content or benchmarks and the planning process. This section discusses two major issues related to the benchmarks. First is the characteristic of benchmarks themselves. Second is the analysis of coherence and incoherence in the underlying principles, between the benchmarks, the overarching goals of the ESB curriculum and its content standards.

### 7.4 The Planning of Benchmarks

Compared with the development of strands and standards, the involvement of the advisory committee was not so significant in developing the rest of the curriculum and the curriculum working committee had more freedom to devise the detail of the curriculum. In other words, the development of strands and standards had been more influenced by the politics. Developer A explained that the content standards define the overall goals and how the English language curriculum would be attained and perceived among schools; on the other hand, the benchmarks were more flexible at the school level and related to the specific area of ELT (Officer D) because they focused on the specific issues of English language teaching and learning. In addition, Developer A and Officer D explained that the benchmarks were devised within the scope of the content standards. Therefore, the advisory committee allowed this content detail to be developed within the approved framework by the curriculum working committee who were believed to be experts in the area.
7.5 Analysis of Underlying Principles of Benchmarks against the ESB Curriculum Overarching goals

7.5.1 The Characteristics of the Benchmarks

Benchmarks have the same characteristic as a syllabus which contains details of learning objectives or expected learning outcomes or learning processes and principles depending on the principles underlying it. Chapters 5 and 6, explained that Thai EFL education promotes flexibility at the local level, emphasises the process of learning and promotes 'learning how to learn' to the learners of English. The syllabus design that represents this view is Syllabus Type C. It allows the negotiation of what to learn and how to learn among teachers and learners in order to allow learners to construct knowledge that is based on their interests and own history. Thus, the syllabus or the benchmarks here should not be a list of what to learn but rather provide principles of language teaching and learning, and or the statement of what students should know and be able to do that guides the process of learning in the language classroom. In other words, the core of curriculum content is to avoid any statement that specifies what students have to learn because it limits the capacity of learners to build upon their own interests, and hence takes learners away from their life experience.

As stated earlier, the PLD did not provide details of how well students should achieve and meet the standards, nor how well students should be able to understand or act after experiencing the learning process. Therefore, benchmarks come to play a major role in detailing what students should know and be able to do. In the ESB curriculum book the benchmarks are fixed points of reference in graduated levels of achievement on a continuum basis. The following statement is taken from the manual of the ESB curriculum, “Benchmarks are the expected learning outcomes of learners after they have experienced the process of English language teaching and learning at each key stage” (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2002b). The benchmarks then describe broad spans of learning that enable educators to monitor progress from grade 1 to grade 12 (Developer C). A learner’s achievements will be collected by the national office that is responsible for the national test, at grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 or the four key stages. These four key stages are designed to correspond to the students’
expected levels of progress as they study the language on the continuum basis from first grade to grade 12 (Developer D).

The arrangement is similar to the American content standards, ACTFL devised ‘performance standards’ that can be implemented in conjunction with the content standards. These performance standards are similar to the benchmarks that provide “information to teachers and administrators about how well students can be expected to do the 'what' from the content standards” (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1996). At the State level, each state can either provide the benchmarks based on the performance standards or devised their own benchmarks. Louisiana developed its own benchmarks and stated further that a benchmark is “a broad statement of process and/or content that is used as a reference to develop curriculum and assess student progress.” (Louisiana. Dept. of Education., 1997). However, some parts of Thai benchmarks are different from the Louisiana benchmarks and these will be discussed in section 7.5.3.3. Table 7.2 shows an example of Thai benchmarks. Refer to Appendix 2 for a full translation of the Thai benchmarks at every key stage.
Table 7.2: An example of Thai benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand 1: Language for Communication</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard F 1.3</strong></td>
<td>Comprehend speaking, writing processes and communicate information, concept and opinion about various subjects creatively, efficiently and aesthetically</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P^11.1-P.3</th>
<th>P.4-P.6</th>
<th>M^22.1-M.3</th>
<th>M.4-M.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Give information about self and surrounding things in general with gestures, pictures, words and short messages</td>
<td>1. Give simple information about self, surrounding and society that are close to self with short messages</td>
<td>1. Present information and short stories or daily routines, experiences and general stories</td>
<td>1. Present information and stories about experiences and general stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Present concepts about various daily routines information</td>
<td>2. Present concepts about stories that are closed to self</td>
<td>2. Present concepts about self-experience or various affairs</td>
<td>2. Present concepts about various affairs, activities, goods, or services in local community using different methods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Present opinions toward information and facts correctly</td>
<td>3. Present opinions toward stories that are closed to self critically</td>
<td>3. Present opinions toward various affairs in local community and social world creatively</td>
<td>3. Present opinions toward various affairs, activities, goods or services in local community with different and various methods creatively and effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Present language activities that are suitable for ages, interests with fun</td>
<td>4. Present songs or well-known poems or information from different sources according to interests with fun</td>
<td>4. Present songs, skit, affairs, poems or information from different sources according to interests with fun</td>
<td>4. Present poems or skits, by using foreign poems and skit structures or compose them freely with fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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^11 P = Prathom (Primary Education) (P.1-P.6 = Grades 1-6)

^22 M = Mattayom (Secondary Education) (M.1-M.6 = Grades 7-12)
7.5.2 The Previous Curriculum and ESB Curriculum Content

Compared with the previous curriculum, the ESB curriculum content is different according to the claims of most curriculum developers. The previous curriculum is objective focused, but the ESB curriculum is outcomes focused (Developer B). The outcome focus again concentrates on the learners’ achievements and how they come to know and learn, rather than the specification of what they have to learn. The benchmarks mainly increase flexibility in ELT as well as flexible learning content (Officers C and D). Further, curriculum developers claimed that the organization of the benchmarks increased teachers’ awareness of the continuity of learning between each level and each key stage, while the old curriculum created confusion and separation (Developer A, Officers C and D).

“It is clear in terms of that it has clear objectives and framework compared with the past, there was only little explanation. Teachers had to interpret them, which they had never done. They waited for anyone who came along and did it for them or waited for government manual which was ready-made curriculum.” (Officer D)

Table 7.3 presents the old curriculum content and Table 7.4 presents the ESB curriculum content (Benchmarks).
Table 7.3: The Curriculum of 1996 (the old curriculum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparatory English (P.1-P.2)</th>
<th>(Beginner Level (P.4-6))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To be able to use English language that is suitable in the communicative context</td>
<td>1. To be able to communicative using listening, speaking, reading, and writing correctly and appropriate with learners' levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To be able to listen and follow simple orders</td>
<td>2. To be able to use fundamental English and understand the principle of English language usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To be able to communicate meaning in simple situations according to English language level</td>
<td>3. To be able to speak, listen and talk in English and read aloud and read for meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammatical structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Short and Simple sentences about greeting, farewell, introducing self, saying thank you, sorry; politely interrupt, request.</td>
<td>1. Short and simple sentences about greeting, farewell, introducing self, thank you, sorry, politely interrupt, request, make an order; use statement sentence, question and answer within the specified vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching and learning management</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Emphasis on communication using listening and speaking</td>
<td>1. Emphasis on communication using listening and speaking, reading and writing. This has to be mutually taught in each teaching and activity period and should use English as the language medium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students are at the center; students should have an opportunity to present and express; teachers are facilitators and guide the lesson through the specified plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Emphasis on the activities that serve happiness and fun, which help learners to have positive attitudes toward English language learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.4: Benchmarks (the ESB curriculum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vertical Development</th>
<th>Horizontal Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.1-P.3</td>
<td>P.4-P.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Understand orders, requests, gestures and simple sentences in surrounding situation</td>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Understand orders, requests, gestures and recommendations in surrounding community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Read aloud and spell words, phrases, and simple sentences correctly and grammatically</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Read aloud and spell words, sentences, and simple texts correctly and grammatically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Understand words and phrases by transferring to pictures or symbols</td>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Understand short sentences by transferring to pictures or symbols and vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Understand short conversations or easy tales with pictures</td>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Understand short conversations, easy tales and story telling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strand 1: Language for Communication**

**Standard F 1.1** Comprehend listening and reading processes; capable of interpreting messages derived from listening and reading all kinds of written words from various media; capable of applying knowledge critically
From a comparison of Table 7.3 and 7.4, we can see that the great difference between the two is the presentation of the curriculum content. The ESB curriculum delineates the learning outcomes in more detail and clearly demonstrates the vertical progression of learners within the key stages and horizontal development across the key stages, whereas the previous curriculum only summarised the requirement of each proficiency level. It is worth noting that the old curriculum content (especially at the objectives level) was organised in a similar fashion to the organisation of PLD of the ESB curriculum. Table 7.5 is a comparison of the previous curriculum content and the PLD organisation.

Table 7.5: A comparison of the previous curriculum content and the PLD organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Curriculum of 1996 (the old curriculum)</th>
<th>The PLD (the ESB curriculum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginner Level (P.4-6)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Beginner Level (P.4-6)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. To be able to communicate with listening,</td>
<td>1. Understand and use foreign language for exchanging and presenting information that is related to self daily life, and surrounding communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking, reading, and writing correctly and appropriate to learners’ levels.</td>
<td>2. Possess language usage skills, emphasis on listening, speaking and reading. Students can listen and speak according to topics which are related to themselves, family, schools, surrounding environment, foods, drinks, interpersonal relationship, hobbies, activities, weather, health and facilities buying and selling. The vocabulary limitation is 1,050-1,200 words (concrete and abstract vocabulary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To be able to use fundamental English to students at the higher level and understand the principle of English language usage</td>
<td>3. Use one word sentences, simple sentences and compound sentences to communicate in different contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Be able to speak, listen and talk in English and read aloud as well as read for meanings</td>
<td>4. Understand formal and informal conversations in various contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Be able to communicate and write in English by writing messages and various talk by using capital letters and small letters, by using correct punctuation.</td>
<td>5. Possess knowledge and understand language, culture and lifestyle of foreigners according to the texts found at each level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Be able to use English language as a tool for more knowledge search, by using different sources, including newspapers, dictionary and other sources as a tool.</td>
<td>6. Be able to use the language for presenting information. The information can be about other subjects according to students’ interests and levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Have knowledge and understand culture under the communicative contexts</td>
<td>7. Be able to use the language in classrooms, schools for searching for more information and fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have a positive attitude toward English and reading-lover characteristics.</td>
<td>(Translated from the ESB curriculum, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction Development (2002a))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Analysis of the Organisation of Curriculum Content

However, in terms of content knowledge, as can be seen from Table 7.3 and 7.4, it is clear that the ESB curriculum content is similar to that of the previous curriculum. Even though some curriculum developers denied the relationship between the previous curriculum and the ESB curriculum, Developers B, C and D stated that basically the ESB curriculum content is similar to that stated in the previous curriculum. The difference that can be found is in the omission of explicitly stated grammatical structures and teaching and learning management. The omission may stem from attempts by the ESB curriculum working committees to give freedom of choice of methodology entirely to the teachers to meet part of the principles underlying the standards-based education (Developers A, B, C, D, Officers A, B, C, D, Trainers A, and D). In addition, as stated in Chapter 4 that the Chair of the ESB curriculum working committee guided the ESB curriculum with her background in the field of Curriculum and Instruction, rather than in terms of ELT. Therefore, the curriculum content or syllabus design, which requires knowledge related to ELT or more theoretical support in foreign language teaching and learning (Richards, 2001; Nunan, 2004), was not much developed or changed in the ESB curriculum.

7.5.3 The Contradiction of Principles Underlying Benchmarks

7.5.3.1 Syllabus Types A, B and C

It is important to note that despite the methodology generally not being written and specified in the benchmarks, in reality some parts of the benchmarks contain a specification of grammar structures and methodology. In Table 7.4, the expected learning outcomes are for example, “Read aloud and spell words, phrases, and simple sentences correctly and grammatically”, “Understand short conversations, easy tales and story telling” (Standard F.1.1). From these examples (more examples can be found in the Appendix 2), what was left to teachers and students may be only the choice of words and stories, but not the negotiation between teachers and learners as to what counts as the process of becoming competent language learners. Such statements implicitly limit what teachers can do in the classroom, rather than giving to teacher’s freedom of methodology.

Furthermore, these examples did not represent Syllabus Type C that allowed the process of learning; rather they represent Syllabus Types A and B that are
characterised by the delineating of learning content into pieces of information, and specification of language functions in the checklist of items. Some may argue that the Thai benchmarks may be proved to be mixed syllabus types such as Finney (2002) proposed in "the mixed focus method" that combines three syllabus types A, B, and C and introduces these three at different proficiency levels (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Unfortunately, the Thai benchmarks proposed the three types differently from Finney. Finney (2002) introduces three syllabus types at different proficiency levels where beginners are exposed to Syllabus Type A and intermediate and advance are exposed to Types B and C respectively. Thai benchmarks were proposed in an arbitrary and not systematic way. In other words, the mixture of Syllabus Types A, B, and C that can be seen in the benchmarks is not the eclectic concept (where a possible mix of theories is made up to the best guiding practices), but rather is an incoherent theoretical syllabus design.

In addition, the benchmarks are prior knowledge that is imposed on learners, rather than a description of what students should know and be able to do, thus allowing the knowledge to be constructed by learners' meaning making processes and negotiations among peers. It is, in fact, a specification of what students have to learn and must do. Worse, the specification of content knowledge in this way links the argument of Developer A (as discussed in Chapter 5) about the risk of the use of the term "core curriculum" and its inherent traditional meaning to issues of imposed knowledge, pre-specification of knowledge and oppressed education. This inherent meaning is clearly seen here in the benchmarks and is evidenced of problems in meaning of underlying terminology in the ESB curriculum.

7.5.3.2 Reinforcement of the contradictory characteristics of benchmarks

The contradiction between the 'description' of learning outcomes that focuses on the process or 'to know and be able to do' and the 'specification' of content knowledge can also be seen in the interviews. Officer D in her interview elaborated on the view that "benchmarks" provide the content knowledge:
Chapter 7: Analysis of the Organisation of Curriculum Content

"The benchmarks are not specifically defined into details comparing with the previous curriculum. Teachers can find their own content but we [the curriculum working committee] specified the framework and gave roughly the content. For example, if we look at each benchmark, content is not specific into topic but it tells that it is a text or information about something. Then, it is not fixed, it is flexible...English language teaching and learning as standards and flexible benchmark, it is good for teacher to choose when it is possible to teach in three years time. Example, if teachers think that these standards or benchmarks are not suited to grade 2, they might change and teach it at the higher level or lower grade. Teachers have freedom in choosing. This is the reason that we cannot specify what content should be taught at each level as government asked. We cannot do it, we need it to be flexible in order that teachers especially in remote area where students do not know anything, they might take time to study A B C D for a year, then they study something else later. If we specify which vocab, they should teach, they may not be able to find any resources. It’s difficult...The reason why Thai children cannot speak English is that the curriculum was too fixed, not flexible and with blurred objectives. These make students and teachers lose their way in teaching and learning. Then, when we set up this standard, it helps teaching and learning be more flexible which helps language skills”
(Officer D)

“A learning content depends on teachers, what they want to put into classroom, what styles, as well as depending on local need.” (Developer B)

In fact, the benchmarks are another form of specification of what to learn, rather than a description of expected learning outcomes. Developer B’s statement also represents an imposition of knowledge rather than teachers’ and learners’ negotiation. In other words, it focuses on the product rather than the process itself and that is contradictory to the stated curriculum goals. These statements also imply the meaning of flexibility of learning and the notion of flexible classroom management more in terms of a teacher’s choices and decision making of learning content and environment than the flexibility related to a learner’s choices of what to learn, similar to what has been discussed in Chapter 5.

7.5.3.3 Comparison with the Louisiana benchmarks

Further contradictions can clearly be seen by comparing the Thai benchmarks with the Louisiana benchmarks. It must be stressed here that by comparing the Thai with the Louisiana benchmarks does not value the Louisiana benchmarks more highly as a better design. The comparison is made because the Thai curriculum developers claimed to have used the Louisiana, as well as the American standards as a framework, thus, they share some basic principles. An analysis of the two reveals that despite having Louisiana as a framework for planning the benchmarks, Louisiana’s
benchmarks are quite different from the Thai. The difference is in terms of the language use in the benchmarks. The Thai benchmarks contain language that demonstrates more the requirement of learners to master knowledge than the promotion of the process of becoming English language competent. In other words, the terminology is different. Further, the Thai benchmarks indicate the fact that any given text may be based on any one of several competing theories of grammar, but the basic approach or strategy is identical. Some examples may serve to demonstrate the point.

Table 7.6 and 7.7 demonstrate the differences between Louisiana's content standards and the use of traditional terminology to present the learning outcomes of the Thai benchmarks. Table 7.6 presents the Communication strand for developing and extending levels and developing and expanding levels respectively, and Table 7.7 presents the Cultural strand for grades 4-5 of Louisiana and 1-3 and 4-6 of Thai Benchmarks (the underlined words illustrated the issues discussed).
### Table 7.6: A comparison of Louisiana and Thai benchmarks (Communication Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOUISIANA</th>
<th>THAI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing (Grades 6-8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expanding and Extending (Grades 9-12)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| CM-1-D1
demonstrating comprehension of oral and written instructions connected to daily activities through appropriate responses,(1) | CM-1-E1 demonstrating through appropriate responses an understanding of written and spoken language, as expressed by speakers of the target language in both formal and informal settings.(1) | 1. Understand gestures, accents, speakers' feeling as well as understand orders, requests, recommendations and real life or authentic description and media | 1. Understand accents, (tone or intonation) speakers' feelings as well as understand explanations, lectures (speech), recommendations, information and various manuals |
| CM-1-D2
demonstrating comprehension of the main ideas and identifying the principal characters in reading selections in age-appropriate literature from the target cultures.(1, 4) | CM-1-E2 demonstrating comprehension of the main ideas and themes in selections from various literary genres and the arts.(1,4) | 2. Read aloud texts correctly, following pronunciation principles and fitting with contexts | 2. Read aloud texts correctly, following pronunciation principles and fitting with contexts |

### Table 7.7: A comparison of Louisiana and Thai benchmarks (Culture Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOUISIANA</th>
<th>THAILAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning (Grades 4-5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Preparatory Level (P.1-P.3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL-1-B1 identifying and reacting to cultural perspectives and practices in the culture studied, such as greetings, leave takings, and common social interactions. (1, 5)</td>
<td>1. Understand styles, characteristics and phases, simple expressions for contacting and interacting according to the cultures of foreign language study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL-1-B2 identifying commonly held positive and negative generalizations about the culture studied. (1, 2, 4, 5)</td>
<td>2. Know customs, traditions, festivals and feasts in cultures of foreign language study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

28 Benchmark code: The first two letters indicate the strand (CM=Communication, CL=Cultures, CN=Connections, CP=Comparisons, CT=Communities). The following number indicates the standard. The following letter indicates the level (B=Beginning, D=Developing, E=Expanding/Extending). The last number indicates the benchmark. For example: CM-1-D1 refers to the Communication Strand, Standard One, and Developing-Level Benchmark One. (Louisiana. Dept. of Education, 1997)
From the tables, words such as "understand and know" convey a sense of passive reception of knowledge especially when compared with the words "demonstrate and identify" that allow learners to accommodate and assimilate, reorganise and produce what they have learned in a different way. Also "read aloud" is not necessary a demonstration of a learners' understanding what they are reading, but perhaps drilling for correctness that is not the expected learning outcome of competent language learners (K. Johnson, 2001). The overwhelming emphasis here is on knowledge of language. Language written in this way leads to be the testing of knowledge itself, rather than the testing of a learner's achievement in becoming a culturally aware person or in becoming a competent communicator.

It is worth mentioning that, according to the standards-based curriculum, each school is allowed to develop its own assessment based on its knowledge background and interpretation of the content standards and benchmarks. The benchmarks do not make clear what the outcomes of this process of examination are to be, nor what would be regarded as a satisfactory demonstration of the process of knowing and understanding. With benchmarks with these characteristics, the risk that assessment will be based on how well learners memorise the content knowledge becomes very high. This analysis is correlated with the report from the MOE that the ESB curriculum lacks a clear learning indicator (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2005). The benchmarks as expressed indicate that the process is a relatively narrow and descriptive one. In other words, the benchmarks separate knowledge from the learning process per se.

7.5.3.4 The content: Sa-Ra-Karn-Reain-Ru

As discussed in Chapter 4, the DCID developed for school teachers further details related to learning content. This is a controversial issue between the government and some Thai scholars because the latter believe that the detailed content has distorted the concept of a standards-based curriculum. An analysis has been undertaken by the researcher of the specification of detail of content that is known as "Sa-Ra-Karn-Reain-Ru" or 'the content'. The analysis reveals that 'the content' represents the traditional view toward learning that values pre-specified knowledge of details. The document specifies the content of what students have to learn in order to achieve the benchmarks and standards. 'The content' also represents controlled knowledge and hence teacher-centredness (rather than learner-centred learning) that does not allow
much flexibility in teaching and learning, because it has already been specified what students are to learn. Furthermore, specification of the content in this way accentuates the knowledge of English language as an end that focuses, for example, on issues of vocabulary-building in different contexts. Table 7.8 and 7.9 show the delineation of benchmarks into each grade level or so-called “Sa-Ra-Karn-Rein-Ru” - the content. The examples are the learning outcomes and the content of the Communication Strand, Standard F.1.1 of grade 4, 5 and 6 and of the Culture strand, standard F 2.2 of grade 1, 2 and 3.
Table 7.8: An example of benchmarks with its content (Communication Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Upper Primary Level 4 (Grade 4)** | - Gestures  
- Requests  
- Orders  
- Suggestions | - Gestures | - Requests  
- Orders  
- Suggestions |  |  |
| **Upper Primary Level 5 (Grade 5)** | - Vocabularies  
- Phrases  
- Simple sentences  
- Pronunciation rules and principles | - Vocabularies | - Phrases  
- Simple sentences  
- Pronunciation rules and principles | - Sentences  
- Short messages | - Sentences  
- Short messages |
| **Upper Primary Level 6 (Grade 6)** | - Vocabularies | - Sentences  
- Short messages | - Sentences  
- Short messages | - Sentences  
- Short messages | - Sentences  
- Short messages |

**Standard F 1.1** Comprehend listening and reading processes; capable of interpreting messages derived from listening and reading all kinds of written words from various media; capable of applying knowledge critically
Table 7.9: An example of benchmarks with its content (Culture Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Primary Level 1 (Grade 1)</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between English and Thai language about pronunciation, vowels, consonants and words</td>
<td>- Pronunciation</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between English and Thai language about pronunciation, vowels, consonants and words, phrases, and simple sentences</td>
<td>- Pronunciation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between culture of native speakers and Thai culture</td>
<td>- Culture of native speakers</td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between culture of native speakers and Thai culture</td>
<td>- Culture of native speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Realise the benefits of using English to seek for knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>- Language for seeking knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>3. Realise the benefits of using English to seek for knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>- Language for seeking knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Participate in language and cultural activities</td>
<td>- Language and cultural activities</td>
<td>4. Participate in language and cultural activities</td>
<td>- Language and cultural activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Primary Level 2 (Grade 2)</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between English and Thai language about pronunciation, vowels, consonants and words, phrases, and simple sentences</td>
<td>- Pronunciation</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between English and Thai language about pronunciation, vowels, consonants and words, phrases, and simple sentences</td>
<td>- Pronunciation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between culture of native speakers and Thai culture</td>
<td>- Culture of native speakers</td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between culture of native speakers and Thai culture</td>
<td>- Culture of native speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Realise the benefits of using English to seek for knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>- Language for seeking knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>3. Realise the benefits of using English to seek for knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>- Language for seeking knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Participate in language and cultural activities</td>
<td>- Language and cultural activities</td>
<td>4. Participate in language and cultural activities</td>
<td>- Language and cultural activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Primary Level 3 (Grade 3)</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between English and Thai language about pronunciation, vowels, consonants and words, phrases, and simple sentences and messages</td>
<td>- Pronunciation</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between English and Thai language about pronunciation, vowels, consonants and words, phrases, and simple sentences and messages</td>
<td>- Pronunciation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between culture of native speakers and Thai culture</td>
<td>- Culture of native speakers</td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between culture of native speakers and Thai culture</td>
<td>- Culture of native speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Realise the benefits of using English to seek for knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>- Language for seeking knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>3. Realise the benefits of using English to seek for knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td>- Language for seeking knowledge and entertainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Participate in language and cultural activities</td>
<td>- Language and cultural activities</td>
<td>4. Participate in language and cultural activities</td>
<td>- Language and cultural activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though Dr. Pirat Susansuk and Dr. Bunjeardpon Ratanapan (2003) state that school-based curriculum developers may not be interested in looking at the content that the MOE provided and that they can freely develop their own content, the statement and its underlying principles imply a traditional view of the curriculum that contains a pre-specification of learning content. This may lead to the inclusion of the content as in a traditional Syllabus Type A that has dominated language teaching over a long time (Yalden, 1983) and it is not a type that is conducive to foreign language education in the 21st century. Syllabus type A consisted of two components: a list of linguistic structures (the 'grammar' to be taught) and a list of words (the lexicon to be taught), as shown in the example given above. Nevertheless, whether the content presents the form, function or skills, the basis for such a syllabus remains essentially the same, that it focuses on objectives to be achieved, and content to be learned.

### 7.5.3.5 Threshold level

More contradictions between the specification of what students have to learn and the principles of a standards-based curriculum that allows the negotiation of what to learn among learners can also be found in the recommendations of the Threshold Level of the Council of Europe on lesson planning (see van Ek & Alexander (1980)). Curriculum working committees chose this Threshold Level for the reason that it is the content that is widely used internationally, and they believed that it was world standard.

"We use Threshold level Council of Europe. They have done English for communication. It is world standard." (Developer A)

"Teachers also need to start writing curriculum by starting at the theme provided in the curriculum. When the theme is selected, teachers have to choose which language skill and structure. Under theme, sentence structures or maybe culture need to be inserted." (Developer C)

The application of Threshold levels accentuates the 'theme-based learning' of the Thai ELT. Developer C stated that the teaching and learning should be created by themes according to the Threshold Level or what developers called “theme-based

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24 The Threshold Level lists the notions and language functions that learners might want to use in situations rather than dividing language activities into the four skills - speaking, listening, writing, reading - and argues that activities that focus on the four separate skills are not ‘fully adequate’. The Threshold Level is also seen as a proficiency level that rates scales of linguistic and communicative competence, or the way that language is used, into levels that are defined as clearly as possible in relation to the expected performance levels of the students for whom the curriculum is intended.
learning”. Theme-based learning is a positive way of organising learning if the theme is organised in such a way that English language learners can experience integrated experience across different subject matters and social life issues together or integrated curriculum with the learner’s negotiation of choices. However, the theme of Threshold Level was principally designed to use within a subject matter and pre-specified content. Furthermore, more detail of what to be learnt is further delineated when the theme is specified, especially vocabulary that is used according to the theme. The selection of the Threshold Level model reconfirms that Thai benchmarks represent traditional Syllabus Type B (the notional-functional syllabus) that centres on the issues of pre-specification of learning content. As White (1988) states, the prototype notional-functional syllabuses are Threshold Level. K. Johnson (1989b) argues that Threshold Level is ‘ends’ specified so that it appears to be what a syllabus ‘ought’ to look like, but the style may be inappropriate for a policy whose aim, for example, is to promote life skills.

In addition, topics and themes provided by Threshold Level can shape a student’s perceptions of a language learning area. From the ESB curriculum manual, we see that language learning focuses on learning of expanding English vocabulary according to topics and themes chosen by teachers. Therefore, what learners may perceive as the learning of English language is equivalent to the learning of more vocabulary. The curriculum assumes that the students will be able to collate the pieces of language for themselves, integrate concepts across a theme and that they will develop as a whole person later.

Furthermore, not only is the problem of integration across themes a concern at this stage, but also integration across the curriculum becomes a greater concern. How teachers integrate other subject matter into English language learning and how they can implement a Threshold Level that contains lists of what to learn while incorporating other subject matter is indeed a challenging problem and an even more challenging task. It is even more so especially in this case when scope and sequence of the curriculum content stresses learning within subject matter with less integration across subject matter. This is clearly a contradiction between the traditional and
contemporary views of learning that confuses both teachers’ and learners’ perceptions of ELT.

Therefore, basing learning on the Threshold Level or Syllabus Type B does not provide learners with life skill contexts; rather it limits learners to a practice of language as a technical skill function with a vocabulary building focus. Hence, the biggest weakness of this curriculum content is that students could finish the class never understanding that English language learning has functions other than knowing some vocabulary.

Positively, the introduction of Threshold Level and ‘the content’ may be interpreted in terms of a weak interpretation of learner-centred progressive where teachers identified what to learn; the negotiation between teachers and learners remains only to ensure an understanding of predetermine objectives as explained by Clark (Clark, 1987). However, this weak interpretation is still contradicted by the stated goals that emphasise the learners’ construction of knowledge from their interest and history, rather than the imposition of knowledge from outside. In other words, while Thai education as a whole stresses contemporary education, accentuated learner’s initiation and induction of knowledge, the ESB curriculum developers guided the curriculum towards training and transmission of knowledge. Further, instead of devising a process curriculum where the process of meaning-making and negotiation among learners and teachers can occur, the curriculum developers designed a curriculum as a product that values static, imposed and pre-specified knowledge.

7.6 **Characteristics of the Scope and Sequence of Benchmarks**

In the interviews with curriculum developers, they claimed that details of benchmarks were structured from easy to difficult, simple to complex and from behavioural toward cognitive development.

7.6.1 **The Meaning of “Simple to Complex”**

Officer D stated that scope and sequence are based on the acceptance of simple to complex where more proficient learners engage in more complex activities. Further,
the scope and sequences were developed in both horizontal and vertical arrangement on a continuum basis (Developers A, D and Officer D). Developer A explained that 'simple' means learning about self that is expanded to the learning about society and the world community when learners learn at higher level.

"It is from easy to difficult. From simple to complex and it is sequence and continuity. Horizontally, from Level to 4 is the same. Then, in this curriculum, there will be both sequence and continuity vertically and horizontally. The structure like this will help teachers when they have to plan. They will have to plan continually lesson plans vertically and horizontally." (Officer D)

"We use curriculum development principles in doing this structure which are easy to difficult. You can see that benchmark Level 1 is easy and then more difficult. It is more complex, from close to oneself to more far a way. Such as start from myself, my dad and then outside home to school. Secondary students will look at professional environment." (Developer A)

"At primary one, students should understand order and request in classroom. At primary two, they should understand about school life, primary level three engage in community." (Officer C)

The benchmarks represent the perception of learning at a younger age as needing to be exposed to simplicity, whereas the higher level needs to be engaged more with complexity as well as authenticities and real life activities. The sequence appears to be based on common sense and yet the arbitrary sequence is based on curriculum developers' interpretations as well as on their experience of life relating to persons as individuals and as part of society and the world community. Thus, it is their interpretation of the meaning of simplicity and complexity (for example, the italic and underlined words illustrated the issue discussed.)
Table 7.10: An example of the meaning of simplicity and complexity (Communication Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard P.1.1</th>
<th>Comprehend listening and reading processes; capable of interpreting messages derived from listening and reading all kinds of written words from various media; capable of applying knowledge critically</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.1-P.3</td>
<td>1. Understand orders, requests, gestures and simple sentences in surrounding situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4-P.6</td>
<td>1. Understand orders, requests, gestures and recommendations in surrounding community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.1-M.3</td>
<td>1. Understand gestures, accents, speakers' feeling as well as understand orders, requests, recommendations and real life or authentic description and media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.4-M.6</td>
<td>1. Understand accents, (tone or intonation) speakers' feelings as well as understand explanations, lectures (speech), recommendations, information and various manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Read aloud and spell words, phrases, and simple sentences correctly and grammatically</td>
<td>2. Read aloud texts correctly, following pronunciation principles and fitting with contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understand words and phrases by transferring to pictures or symbols</td>
<td>3. Understand short sentences by transferring to pictures or symbols and vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Understand short conversations or easy tales with pictures</td>
<td>4. Understand and interpret non-text information into different form by transferring into self-word or transfer to non-text information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard P.1.2</th>
<th>Have language communicative skill, capable of exchanging information, news, expressing feeling and opinion by using technology and appropriate management for lifelong learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.1-P.3</td>
<td>1. Use simple and short language to create interpersonal relationship by using easy innovative materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4-P.6</td>
<td>1. Use simple and short language to create interpersonal relationship by using easy innovative materials and technological materials available at schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.1-M.3</td>
<td>1. Use language according to social customs to create interpersonal relationship and be able to continually communicate by using technological materials available inside and outside of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.4-M.6</td>
<td>1. Use language according to social custom to create interpersonal relationship and be able to continually and appropriately communicate by using technological materials available inside and outside of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use simple and short language to express self-need by using technological materials</td>
<td>2. Use language to express self-need, offer help and services to other people and plan learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use simple and short language to express self-need, offer help to other people and exchange ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use language to express self-need, offer help and services to other people and plan learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use language to express self-need, offer services to other people, negotiate and plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 7.10, complexity is defined by the use of language itself where short sentences are perceived to be easy and more language functions are added at the higher level in an accumulative process (as can be seen from the italic words). From the benchmarks, it can be seen clearly that learners are only able to engage in more complex environments at the higher key stages or almost at the end of the course (as can be seen from the underlined words). This linear form of learning development is contradicted by educational philosophies that view learning as a complex process in which learners from quite a young age should be exposed to real and authentic environments that are not graded and which do not take them away from reality (Auerbach, 1992; A-P. Lian, 2000, 2001; A. B. Lian, 2006). The organisation of learning in this way deprives students of opportunities for improvement so that they become incapable of coping with reality. Language learners are given opportunities, not building from the simple to the complex, but by creating their own internal system on the basis of analysis of real language and action, even at the beginner's level (Auerbach, 1992; A-P. Lian, 2000, 2001; A. B. Lian, 2006). Another example is shown in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11: An example of the meaning of simplicity and complexity (Community Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard F 4.1</th>
<th>Be able to use foreign languages to encounter different situations within educational institutions, community and society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.1-P.3</td>
<td>1. Use foreign language according to different situations at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4-P.6</td>
<td>1. Use foreign language according to different situations at school with simple methods and forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.1-M.3</td>
<td>1. Use foreign language according to different situations at school and community with various methods and forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.4-M.6</td>
<td>1. Use foreign language according to different situations at school and community with various complex methods and forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use foreign language to communicate with internal school personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use foreign language to communicate with internal school personnel and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use foreign language to communicate with internal school personnel, community and society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the example (Table 7.11), we can see that complexity is defined by engagement in social activities. The delineation of the learning process in this way implies that the curriculum developer understands the learning processes of young learners as individuals, and that only at the higher proficiency levels can learners engage in social issues. Thus, learners will not be exposed as social persons until approximately aged ten. The benchmarks also limit the learning environment so that younger learners should only experience school environments whereas higher level learners can be exposed to larger community contexts. This implies that curriculum developers view schools and society as separate entities, rather than viewing schools as part of the society. Thus, what learners will mainly be exposed to, is past knowledge that is based on books rather than on present social issues.

From examples in Table 7.10 and 7.11, the delineation of benchmarks into pieces of information and fragmented knowledge in this way may be good in terms of clarity and accountability; however, would there be enough for learners at every age to develop them as fully developed persons? The example also implies that language learners will not meet the standards until they graduate or in other words, they will not be fully developed persons until they have experienced 12 years in school. Nunan (2004) argues that language learning that is broken down into its constituent parts and each part introduced separately, step by step, from the easy to the difficult, from the simple to the complex, is based on the belief that the instructional role is to simplify the challenge for learners and assumes second language acquisition as a linear and cumulative process (Rojas, 2001), which is not the case. This is another example of the influence of the educational background of the Chair of working committee. With a great emphasis on principles of standards (in which the Chair is an expert), there is evidence of a lack of clear EFL theoretical bases underpinning the curriculum content. Therefore, the detail constituting curriculum content is not coherent with the curriculum theory nor the curriculum overarching goals, strands and standards.
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7.6.2 The Influence of Bloom’s Cognitive Domain

Developer C indicated the notions of easy and difficulty matter were based on the development of behavioural skills and cognitive skills, where the younger learners should engage in the practice of behavioural skills while the higher level learners experience more cognitive development. Developer B stated that this scope and sequence was based on Bloom’s Taxonomy that views learning as a linear form where learners first acquire and comprehend knowledge which later they can apply, interpret and synthesise. In other words, the scope and sequence of the curriculum are determined by a set of behavioural skills at the lower level and develop into more cognitive engagement at the higher proficiency level in a linear form.

“Look at difficulties and easy. We have to look at skill, listen and reading first. From the standard, the committee breaks them down to learning indicators, by looking at what students should understand. Ex: at P.1 and P.3, what students should understand, might understand orders, requests and language. P.4, P.5 and P6 involves more about feeling.” (Developer C)

Other one is Bloom Taxonomy’s theory of learning which is started with knowledge, understanding, comprehension, inferring and application, and synthesis and evaluation. This is classic theory. These are the origins of sequence that means you have to understand and understand and more and more. (Developer B)

An analysis of the benchmarks correlates with the claims by interviewees: the benchmarks present the concept of scope and sequences in a similar fashion to Bloom’s Taxonomy in that learning must start with simpler and more overt behaviours and gradually move to more complex and more internalized behaviours (Bloom, 1956, p.80). Thus, knowledge excellence is seen in the light of a socio and economic efficiency model (rather than learner-centeredness and social construction conceptions) in which learners develop knowledge that includes the comprehension and application of knowledge in a linear fashion as is shown by evidence from the Communication, Culture and Connection strands in Table 7.12, 7.13 and 7.14 respectively below.
### Table 7.12: Evidence of the influence of Bloom's cognitive domain (Communication Strand)

**Standard F 1.1** Comprehend listening and reading processes; capable of interpreting messages derived from listening and reading all kinds of written words from various media; capable of applying knowledge critically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P.1-P.3</th>
<th>P.4-P.6</th>
<th>M.1-M.3</th>
<th>M.4-M.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Understand</strong> orders, requests, gestures and simple sentences in surrounding situation</td>
<td>1. <strong>Understand</strong> orders, requests, gestures and recommendations in surrounding community</td>
<td>1. <strong>Understand</strong> gestures, accents, speakers' feeling as well as understand orders, requests, recommendations and real life or authentic description and media</td>
<td>1. <strong>Understand</strong> accents, (tone or intonation) speakers' feelings as well as understand explanations, lectures (speech), recommendations, information and various manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Read aloud and spell words, phrases, and simple sentences correctly and grammatically</td>
<td>2. Read aloud and spell words, sentences, and simple texts correctly and grammatically</td>
<td>2. Read aloud texts correctly, following pronunciation principles and fitting with contexts</td>
<td>2. Read aloud texts correctly, following pronunciation principles and fitting with contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Understand</strong> words and phrases <strong>by transferring</strong> to pictures or symbols</td>
<td>3. <strong>Understand</strong> short sentences <strong>by transferring</strong> to pictures or symbols and vice versa</td>
<td>3. <strong>Understand and interpret</strong> non-text information into different form by transferring into self-word or transfer to non-text information</td>
<td>3. <strong>Understand, interpret and/or express</strong> more complex ideas about various information that is (essays, articles) texts and non-texts and transferring into self-word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Understand</strong> short conversations or easy tales with pictures</td>
<td>4. <strong>Understand</strong> short conversations, easy tales and story telling</td>
<td>4. <strong>Understand, interpret and express</strong> idea about texts, information and news from information, printed texts or electronic sources that are related to students' daily life interest</td>
<td>4. <strong>Understand, interpret and analyse and express</strong> idea about more complex texts, information, news, articles, documentary, and fiction from printed texts or electronic sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7.13: Evidence of the influence of Bloom's cognitive domain (Culture Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard F 2.2</th>
<th>P.1-P.3</th>
<th>P.4-P.6</th>
<th>M.1-M.3</th>
<th>M.4-M.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehend the similarities and differences between languages and cultures of target language and those of Thai; and apply critically</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between foreign languages and Thai language about tones, vowels, alphabets, words, phrases, sentences and simple messages</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between foreign languages and Thai language about tones, vowels, alphabets, words, phrases, sentences and simple messages, and apply correctly</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between foreign languages and Thai language about words, phrases, expressions, sentences, complex texts, apply correctly and appropriately</td>
<td>1. Understand differences between foreign languages and Thai language about words, phrases, expressions, sentences, complex texts, and apply critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Understand similarities and differences between foreign cultures and Thai cultures</strong></td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between foreign cultures and Thai cultures that have influences on language usages and apply correctly</td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between foreign cultures and Thai cultures that have influences on language usages and apply appropriately</td>
<td>2. Understand similarities and differences between foreign cultures and Thai cultures that have influences on language usages and apply critically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7.14: Evidence of the influence of Bloom’s cognitive domain (Connection Strand)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard F 3.1</th>
<th>P.1-P.3</th>
<th>P.4-P.6</th>
<th>M.1-M.3</th>
<th>M.4-M.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use foreign languages to connect knowledge with other subject matters strands and standards; and to be the basic of self-development and the self-broadening of world view</td>
<td>1. Understand words and phrases of foreign languages that are related to other subjects strands</td>
<td>1. Understand and transfer simple contexts and contents of foreign language that are related to other subjects strands from various sources</td>
<td>1. Analyse and synthesise contexts and contents of foreign languages that are related to other subjects strands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Transfer words meaning and phrases that are related to other strands in foreign language</strong></td>
<td>2. Understand and transfer contents and contexts that are related to other strands in foreign language</td>
<td>2. Apply foreign language to search for knowledge that are related to other strands with various methods</td>
<td>2. Apply foreign language to search for knowledge that are related to other strands in order to expand global vision from various and different sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Discuss experiences about foreign language usages when applying foreign language for searching for information about other subject areas and strands</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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7.6.2.1 Issues of “critical thinking”

The examples given in this section (Tables 7.12, 7.13, and 7.14) represent the definition of ‘critical thinking’ of the ESB curriculum developers who strongly adhered to Bloom’s cognitive domain. For example, the Communication strand (Table. 7.12) stresses learning to communicate critically. Critical thinking is interpreted as the ability to analyse, transfer, interpret, synthesise (as can be seen from the underlined words). If this is what they mean by ‘critical’, critical thinking may lead to comprehension, but not engagement in critical discussion related to social issues. Tables 7.12, 7.13 and 7.14 also tell us that Thai students will only experience critical environments when they are about 10 or 13 years old. In addition, by adding the word “critically” in the benchmarks (as can be seen from Table 7.13), without consensus on the term ‘critical thinking’, teachers may find it even difficult to encourage learners to take a critical perspective in language learning or critical literacy approach to ELT.

Chapter 6 discussed the inappropriateness of applying Bloom’s thinking in the learning reform period of curriculum development. The reappearance of Bloom’s cognitive domain in the benchmarks reinforces this inappropriateness and underlines the incoherence of the philosophies of the curriculum working committees. This interpretation of curriculum developers implies the lack of critical discussion toward the development of a critical literacy approach to ELT that is conducive to the development of critical literate English language learners as required by National Educational Law or NEA 1999. Therefore, not only is there incoherence in learning theories underlying the overarching goals and benchmarks, but also between the beliefs of the working committees and the national education goals. That is the big concern about the future of Thai EFL education.
7.7 Evidence Supporting the Claims Made in Relation to Culture in ELT, Technology in ELT and Integrated Learning

7.7.1 Cultures and ELT

The benchmarks details also confirmed the views of the curriculum working committees on issues of culture in ELT. The Culture strand benchmarks accentuate that the teaching and learning of cultures is limited to the macro level, that it is about comparing linguistic differences between the target language and Thai language; and the use of appropriate language in the target culture’s contexts. The micro level of culture is only introduced at the expanding level. As can be seen from the example below in Table 7.15, only grade 10-12 (M.4-M.6) are expected to have more critical cultural awareness while the lower grade students are not required to have any. This can be seen from statements such as “give an opinion about the target language culture, realise the values of target cultures, understand the influences of target language cultures on Thai culture.” (Standard F.2.1). Please see Appendix 2 for more examples of the cultural strand.

Table 7.15: An example of Culture Strand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard F 2.1 Comprehend the relationship between languages and culture of target languages and apply it appropriately to time and place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.1-P.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Understand styles, characteristics and phases, simple expressions for contacting and interacting according to the cultures of foreign language study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Know customs, traditions, festivals and feasts in cultures of foreign language study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.7.2 Technology in ELT

As discussed in a previous chapter there is a risk of interpretation of technology as another form of traditional teaching material. The delineation of learning content supports this claim. In standard F.1.2, technology can be seen only as another form of learning material equivalent to other more customary electronic equipment such as tape recorders or microphones. Critical discussion about how IT affects learners’ lives and the influence of the Internet on learners’ perceptions was not emphasised here (this concern was raised in the previous chapter and this is the evidence). These benchmarks imply that when learners are capable of using technology, they are then able to cope with its influences and are part of the Information Age in the 21st century. Thus, the outcomes of this benchmark stress the learner’s ability to use English in different functions such as to describe, request, ask, but how this function relates to the development of a learner’s life is left to the learner’s own interpretation. Table 7.16 is the content of Communication Strand and illustrates how technology is perceived among curriculum developers (the underlined words illustrate the issue discussed).

Table 7.16: Evidence of the lack of clear meaning of Technology in ELT of Thai ESB curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand 1: Language for Communication</th>
<th>Standard F 1.2 Have language communicative skill, capable of exchanging information, news; expressing feeling and opinion by using technology and appropriate management for life long learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.1-P.3</td>
<td>M.1-M.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Use simple and short language to create interpersonal relationship by using easy innovative materials</td>
<td>1. Use language according to social customs to create interpersonal relationship and be able to continually communicate by using technological materials available inside and outside of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use simple and short language to express self-need by using technological materials</td>
<td>2. Use language to express self-need, offer help and services to other people and plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.4-P.6</td>
<td>M.4-M.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Use simple and short language to create interpersonal relationship by using easy innovative materials and technological materials available at schools</td>
<td>1. Use language according to social custom to create interpersonal relationship and be able to continually and appropriately communicate by using technological material available inside and outside of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use simple and short language to express self-need, offer help to other people and exchange</td>
<td>2. Use language to express self-need, offer services to other people, negotiate and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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From Table 7.16, it illustrates that while the modern foreign language education stresses the need for developing critical literate English language learners, who are capable of coping with vast information and its influences through IT, Thai EFL curriculum developers were not aware of this issue. They only interpreted the IT into a simple teaching material for ELT, rather than a part of English language learners’ development in the Information Age and Globalisation.

7.7.3 Integrated Curriculum

As discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.4.2.4 that the interpretation of ‘integration’ and ‘integrated curriculum’ of some ESB curriculum developers demonstrates what the curriculum developers had in mind: integration occurs when students apply language to studying other subjects, but not in terms of a progressive education. As Wilson and Jan (2003) state that the structured organisation of teaching and learning experiences of an integrated curriculum (according to the view of progressive educators) revolved within and across learning areas that extend the learner’s understanding of the world. In addition, as stipulated in the NEA 1999, the learning process shall emphasise the integration of subject matter. The organisation of learning is not limited only to the subject matter but across the curriculum. The subject matter is not seen as compartmentalized according to distinct fields, disciplines, or study areas, but rather as integrated subject matter including more than one related subject.
However, as can be seen from the underlined words, the Connection Strand, Standard F.3.1 in Table 7.17, it is likely that integration occurs only at the level of using English language to study other subjects and knowing the vocabularies of other subjects, but not in terms of integration of knowledge and learning across the curriculum as well as the understanding of the world. Although, there is some connection with the expansion of the world view in the process of language learning, it only occurred at grades 10-12, as can be seen from the sentence that has been italicised in Table 7.17.

Table 7.17: An example of the concept of an integrated curriculum (from Benchmarks)

| Standard F 3.1 Use foreign languages to connect knowledge with other subject matters strands and standards; and to be the basic of self-development and the self-broadening of world view |
|---|---|---|---|
| **P.1-P.3** | **P.4-P.6** | **M.1-M.3** | **M.4-M.6** |
| 1. Understand words and phrases of foreign languages that are related to other subjects strands | 1. Understand and transfer simple contexts and contents of foreign language that are related to other subjects strands | 1. Understand and transfer contexts and contents of foreign language that are related to other subjects strands from various sources | 1. Analyse and synthesise contexts and contents of foreign languages that are related to other subjects strands |
| 2. Transfer words meaning and phrases that are related to other strands in foreign language | 2. Understand and transfer contents and contexts that are related to other strands in foreign language | 2. Apply foreign language to search for knowledge that are related to other strands with various methods | 2. Apply foreign language to search for knowledge that are related to other strands in order to expand global vision from various and different sources |
|  |  |  | 3. Discuss experiences about foreign language usages when applying foreign language for searching for information about other subject areas and strands |
7.8 The Contradiction between an Atomistic and Holistic Approach to ELT

As discussed above, the adoption of a linear approach to learning shares the same principles and theories with Syllabus Types A and B as well as Bloom’s cognitive domain, and represents an atomistic approach to learning. Within this approach students are fed bits of information by teachers and then they must memorize and store these as a “banking system” (Freire, 1998). What is to be learned is all predicted from an analyst’s view of language - not a learner’s view - and is not centred on the language user’s intrinsic values (K. Johnson, 1979; Widdowson, 1979). This contradicts the stated goals that value a holistic approach to learning.

7.8.1 Whole Child Approach and the Benchmarks

The holistic approach is also seen as placing emphasis on the development of the whole child intellectuality (with the ability of learning how to learn) as well as morally, and preservation in Thai wisdom. This means ELT is not limited to the study and practice of macro skills or only to the development of speakers of English language, but open to the development of fully developed persons with critical, analytical and creative thinking. The developers of the curriculum worked hard to serve this philosophy as can be seen from Standard F 4.2 in Table 7.18 (the underlined sentences illustrated issues discussed).

Table 7.18: Evidence of whole child approach in the benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand 4: Language, community and world relationship (Community Strand)</th>
<th>Standard F 4.2</th>
<th>P.1-P.3</th>
<th>P.4-P.6</th>
<th>M.1-M.3</th>
<th>M.4-M.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be able to use of foreign languages as a tool to learn, to work, to earn living, to stimulate co-operation and to live together in society</td>
<td>1. Use simple language to primarily communicate about various careers in local community</td>
<td>1. Use language to communicate at work or apply for jobs in roles-play or real situations</td>
<td>1. Use language to communicate at work or apply for jobs and careers, as well as giving and asking information about careers in roles-play or real situations</td>
<td>2. Use foreign language</td>
<td>2. Use foreign language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the standard F.4.2 is not enough for whole child approach. As discussed above, the issue such as the embeddedness of language in culture and society and in the individual’s life is not sufficiently reflected in the language programs. Overall, the benchmarks tend to be too narrowly focused on second language proficiency in isolation, especially at the lower proficiency level. There is also the aspect of a hidden curriculum because school teachers have to take into account in their teaching and learning organization matters which are not clearly or explicitly stated in the course rationale, such as issues of morality and the democratic society. How the content specified in the benchmarks serves the needs of a democratic society, as well as a socioeconomic movement still remain as questions. Sometimes the emphasis of the curriculum placed on developing good, responsible citizens seems to border on propaganda. This serves primarily to fragment the material and confuse teachers because there is no attempt to uncover relationships and organization of the larger purposes of education in a holistic way.
7.9 Conclusion

The benchmarks present a great range of issues related to English language education as stated in the overarching goals and the content standards. In addition, the language used in the benchmarks and how the benchmarks are presented, leads to a distortion of the meaning underlying the benchmarks. It is clear that the benchmarks are not coherent with the stated goals and content standards. Worse, with a lack of consensus about terms and principles of practice, the benchmarks present incoherent principles. Thus, rather than the benchmarks promoting English language as a means; they become an ends specification, one that views language as an end in itself. The benchmarks are formed from a mix of Syllabus Types A and B. This implies that the Thai perception of curriculum is a product, not a process whereby the curriculum can be negotiated between learners and as praxis in which the social issues and learner's life can be negotiated in the classroom. Most of all, the idea of the teacher's specification of content that derives from an externally defined body of knowledge is not coherent with the educational philosophies. As a result, the syllabus becomes a kind of blueprint or road map for instruction, rather than a place where learners are empowered to learn about their own interests and at their own pace.

Even though some parts of the benchmarks accentuate the process of learning and allow freedom of teaching methodologies, most parts of the benchmarks are problematic. Whether the focus of language is on form, functions or skills, the basis for the benchmark remains essentially the same, that is, there are objectives to be achieved and content to be learned. This separates knowledge from the learning process; it does not allow for learning to be a mutually developed process. The organisation of the benchmarks in this way presents the traditional view that is centred on past knowledge and the transmission of knowledge from knowers to recipients rather than organising learning in terms of understanding relationships of life and society, centred on present to future and co-construction of meaning. The greatest weakness is that learners are not promoted into complex and holistic learning until almost the last stage of learning.