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**Debating Anna:
The Textual Politics of English Literature Teaching in Thailand**

Pornsawan Tripasai

Faculty of Education
Monash University

Email: pornsawan.tripasai@education.monash.edu.au

Abstract

Before the era of the no-frontiers globalised world, Thailand was made known to the Western world by the story of Anna, a dutiful English teacher, and Mongkut, a Siamese king. In the story, Thailand is portrayed as an exotic country ruled by a despotic monarch and populated by barbaric people. Anna comes to this primitive land to teach English language to the royal family and to induct them into the sophisticated English culture.

This paper offers a textual analysis of Anna Leonowens' nineteenth-century narrative about Thailand using Said's concept of Orientalist discourse to explore the cultural politics of this text. The paper goes beyond the nineteenth-century context to examine the influence of English in the contemporary globalised world where Thailand, as a member of the global community, is subjected to the dominance of English language.

This paper will cast light on the teaching of English as a form of neo-colonialism. The representational strategies employed in the story of Anna situate the people of Thailand as the marginal Others. The story becomes an allegory that reveals the hegemonic control of English over Thai people. I shall also argue, however, the possibility of resisting its textual strategies and developing other ways of reading the text.

Introduction

At the macro level of the contemporary global community, English is a necessary tool for business and communication among nations. English has also become increasingly important for countries wishing to be part of a global network of business and communication. Knowing English in the contemporary world becomes a must. People are therefore increasingly willing to learn and know English.

It seems English is beneficial to people around the world. The teaching of English might at first glance seem neutral and natural. However, the concept of English as a beneficial communicative language is problematic. Pennycook (1994 and 1998) questions the effects and neutrality of English language teaching in the Third World countries. He contends that English is not free of political values. Having originated from colonialism, English and English language teaching are involved in the colonial discourse, in which the power relations between the master and the colonial subjects are maintained.

This political implication of English language teaching is addressed clearly in 'Minute on Indian Education' written by Sir Thomas Macaulay, who influenced language policy throughout the British Empire. Macaulay states that English education would produce an elite class of persons who were 'Indian in blood, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect' (Macaulay, 1972:249). This group of educated people would help the colonial government in India govern all the native populations. The provision of English education became a cultural tool to sustain Great Britain's power among her Indian subjects. Willinsky (1998:97) argues that it was 'part of an education that could only extend and secure the empire'. The significance of English is closely related to the power of English speaking countries that were former colonisers. The teaching of English language and literature during the colonial period became a means to impose cultural domination on native students; and it helps retain the neo-colonial ideology nowadays (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Pennycook, 1998; Willinsky, 1998). In the past,

the world was connected by Great Britain's armies. In the contemporary time, the no-frontiers globalised world is linked by the use of English as the *lingua franca*.

In Thailand, English has been used as a foreign language for communication with foreigners. Similar to other countries, Thailand has responded positively to the need to promote English as language for international communication. English has been taught at all educational levels. In addition, English is used to screen students for study in higher education. It is a requirement for all university students to study fundamental English subjects in their first year. The Thai Government has recently extended the study of English to the second year of university study.

This paper considers the teaching of English language and literature in Thailand as a means to spread neo-colonial ideology and Anglocentric attitudes among Thai students. Although Thailand was never politically colonised by Britain or the United States, the teaching of English in Thailand patterned on British and American models has been influenced by the colonial provision of English education. Slightly different from colonial countries where colonised populations were forced to give consent to the study of the dominant language and literature, Thailand nonetheless shows her willingness to study the English language and literature.

History of English Language Teaching in Thailand

English language teaching in Thailand began with pressure from the imperial powers in the nineteenth century – the time when Western imperialists exercised their power and control over most of Asia. King Mongkut of Thailand, or what was then called Siam, was alarmed by the crisis of the region. Burma and Indochina were at that time occupied by Britain and France (Wyatt, 1982:181). Seeing examples from the neighbours, the King realised that isolationist policy toward Western nations was futile. He had to open his country to Western modernity and the Western mercantile system to show that Siam was willing to establish friendship with Western powers. In 1855 Siam signed the Bowring Treaty with England and similar pecuniary

contacts with other Western nations in the following few years (Darling and Darling, 1971:101-102). The exposure to the mercantile system and modernity of the Western powers meant that Siam traded her political freedom by becoming gradually dependent on imported Western culture, ideology, trading systems and perhaps political influences. Although Siam avoided imperialistic colonisation by Western powers, she was unable to escape the web of neo-colonial influences.

Contact with the West has made Thailand experience the modernity of Western countries. Involvement in Western trade exposed the country to modernising influences, especially in education. In traditional Thai education, Thai men were educated in the monasteries and learned the Buddhist ways of life or such skills as medicine or astrology (Wyatt, 1994:224-225). However, the contact with Western traders required people who had abilities to communicate in English and also those who would be suitable in the new governmental and entrepreneurial positions. This gave rise to new English education for royalty and the aristocracy, and then modern education for the common people. King Mongkut established a palace school and hired foreign teachers to teach the English language and culture to his royal family who would later help him to administer the country.

Modern education made Thai people become more and more pro-West. Accompanying the Western education system is the idea that Western culture and ideology are more 'sophisticated' and 'advanced'. Western culture is considered as the prototype that Thai people should imitate. Thailand has become the follower of the West. In other words, the picking up of Western capitalism, ideology and culture has drawn Thailand into the global community, where the former colonialists are taking command.

As a country in the global community, contemporary Thailand has been affected by the hegemonic influence of the English language, although English in Thailand has been used and taught primarily as a foreign language. At a governmental level, the Thai government sees the benefits of English as an international language. Aiming to produce people who know English, the government has included English in the curriculum at primary, secondary and tertiary

educational levels. To support that aim, the study of English in the Thai curriculum generally stresses the communicative skills of listening, speaking and writing. This governmental policy promoting English is widely accepted by Thai students and their parents, who regard English as increasingly important in Thai society and in the world. They consider that having a good command of English will provide them with opportunities to get good jobs. In other words, English seems to guarantee the privilege of people who know English. Phillipson's statement that English linguistic imperialism 'benefits those who are proficient in English' (1992:47) can explain this English language phenomenon in Thailand. It is noticeable that such a phenomenon partly results from the adoption of the Anglocentric attitude that accompanies the picking up of English and partly from the political, economical, and cultural influences of the former colonisers. In order to survive in the globalised world, the promotion of English language teaching is necessary, because English becomes a tool for seeking the advanced knowledge and high technology of the world leaders. The current situation of Thailand is not much different from her past history. Pressure of competition from global capitalism forces the country to contact and do business with other nations and forces the Thai people to know English. The more Thailand contacts the outside world, the more Western influences come into the country.

Anna Leonowens and the Textual Politics of *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*

The Western world has known Thailand through the romantic story of Anna and the King of Siam. The story was originally written by Anna Leonowens in her book *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870). In the book, Leonowens narrates her experience when she was hired to be a schoolteacher for King Mongkut's palace school. This paper considers Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* as one of the early records of English education in Thailand written from the personal experience of an 'English' teacher, despite the fact that the book is characterised by romantic sentimentalism, personal biases, and plagiarism (Smithies in Gullick, 1995; Warren, 2000).

It is an historical fact that Leonowens was among the English teachers employed by King Mongkut to teach his royal offspring and his wives (Smithies in Gullick, 1995; Warren, 2000; Jumsai, 2000). Leonowens worked at the palace school for five years. After resigning from her teaching position, Leonowens moved to the United States and published the recollections of her personal experience in the Siamese Court in her two books, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870) and *The Romance of the Harem* (1872). These two books inspired Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* (1943). Landon's version of the romantic story of Anna and King Mongkut is so popular that it has been reproduced in a Broadway production and a film version of *The King and I* and the recent Twentieth Century Fox's version of *Anna and the King*. Although Leonowens' account of Thailand is considered more a work of 'fiction' that imbues the historical fact with the author's romantic imagination, the story is so influential that it promotes among Westerners the image of Thailand as a faraway, exotic country populated by equally exotic people (albeit some what childlike or primitive).

The story of Anna can be used to make the West's neo-colonial hegemonic control accompanying the teaching of English language and literature in Thailand understandable. The original book as well as its later reproductions reveals the textual discourse that reconstructs Thailand as an imaginative colony of Britain, the country Leonowens claimed to come from. The original story of Anna was written in the nineteenth century, the time when European imperialism was expanding to Asia and when exotic stories became of interest to Western people (cf. Kabbani, 1986:6). Leonowens writes her accounts of Thailand in the tradition of what Edward Said calls 'Orientalism' or the Western discourse of representation. According to Said, Orientalism takes shape in a network of various disciplines or institutions connected to European imperialism, which define the representation of the Orient and the Oriental (Said, 1978:12). Asymmetrical power relations between the representer and the represented are involved in the Orientalist representation. In the textual discourse, Orientalist writers exercise their power by objectifying the Orient as a body of knowledge or truth about the Orient. Without consent, the

Orient is denied its autonomy and reconstructed as an entity that the writers claim power to scrutinise, define, and write about.

Thailand in Leonowens' writing becomes a textual construct on which power is imposed. The writing is based on the binary opposition between the Occident as the Self and the Orient as the Other. As a writer, Leonowens takes up an authoritative position to establish a demarcation line between Anna – the heroine – and the Siamese. The disparities between the two opponents allow Leonowens to place Anna at the centre of the story and Siamese people at the margin. The latter is judged by the former and with the Anglocentric attitude of the former. A device that Leonowens uses in *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* is her representation of Anna – who might be read as conveying Leonowens' own narrative voice – her 'I' as opposed to 'They' – the Siamese people. Grounding the narrative voice 'I' in British imperial power authorises Anna to scrutinise the Siamese and speak on their behalf. The voice of Siamese people is not entirely silenced. They are allowed some space to speak, but they speak the words and play the roles controlled by Leonowens – the writer. Anna's power of gaze and articulation reconstructs a new identity for Siamese people. Siam is transformed into a savage land and the Siamese into the barbaric Others – the antitheses of Anna, the sophisticated English teacher. Leonowens defines Siam as possessing the characteristics of typical Asiatic countries that are opposite to those of the West:

In common with most of the Asiatic races, they are apt to be indolent, improvident, greedy, intemperate, servile, cruel, vain, inquisitive, superstitious, and cowardly; but individual variations from the more repulsive types are happily not rare. In public they are scrupulously polite and decorous according to their own notions of good manners, respectful to the aged, affectionate to their kindred, and bountiful to their priests, of whom more than twenty thousand are supported by voluntary contributions in Bangkok alone. (Leonowens, 1870:25)

Leonowens' generalisation by using the phrase – '*In common with most of the Asiatic races, ...*' and her use of the pronouns, 'They' and 'Their' allows her to set a barrier between 'They' – Siamese people – and Anna's authoritative voice, and develop her Orientalist's right to make sense of Siam and its people. The reconstruction of Siamese people as being '*indolent,*

improvident, greedy, intemperate, servile, cruel, vain, inquisitive, superstitious, and cowardly' therefore reveals the 'self-presence' of Anna's Anglocentric Self. It is this Self that possesses the positive characteristics out of which the derogative labels of Siamese people are defined.

The narrative structure built around the binaries between the cultured Anna and the Siamese makes possible different timescales of civilisation. Compared to England, Siam is preserved in a primitive time. Positioning Siamese people in the time of the past provides a space for Leonowens to emphasise the importance of Anna's civilising mission. Siamese people are portrayed as primitives who need to be educated by Anna – the preacher of English culture. Educating the savages about the language and culture of the civilised land is a righteous mission. Western knowledge needs to be given to these ignorant people. English education will help develop the country. The yearning of the Siamese for Western knowledge makes them fall into the category of the noble savages – the higher level of primitive men who can be educated

The notion that Thai people are from a different time is displayed through the use of antithetical images between Anna as an adult teacher and the Siamese people as her students. Such images affirm Anna's power to step into the land and educate the fierce, yet immature people. The story depicts Anna as a dutiful English teacher who tries very hard to educate her students. However, Anna's duty is not only teaching the English language and culture, but also taming the wild Siamese students. The way to win their hearts and tame them is not to use punishment, but love, understanding and her good will to lead them to another level of development by means of education. Anna's devotion to her teaching is depicted as a symbolic act of laying a foundation for the future modern Siam. It is stated in the book that although Anna is not successful in her mission as the preacher of 'civilised' culture because it takes time to do that, she has sowed the seeds of Western civilisation in the Siamese soil. The reciprocal effect of Western education is concluded by the portrayal of her native students' admiration, loyalty, and response to their teacher and her Anglocentric ideology.

The images of taming the savages in Leonowens' story is similar to the story of Crusoe teaching Friday the language of the master (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Pennycook, 1998; Willinsky, 1998) and Prospero teaching Caliban (Ashcroft, 2001). The three stories demonstrate the imperial power of language teaching. Teaching the masters' languages to native students results in the students' consent to the command and 'high' culture of the teacher. Pratt's idea of 'contact zone' (1992) helps explain how the masters can gain the natives' consent. Pratt discusses asymmetrical power relations and the coercion of power in connection with the copresence of people in the position of power and those who are brought under control. When the spatial and temporal copresence occurs, the interaction between people of power and their subordinates has been developed in a way that allows the former to designate the signifying practice that represents the former and their culture as 'the centre'. And this signifying practice of the 'dominant' culture is transmitted to the subordinated or marginalized people. The subjugated people are in a position that cannot control what emanates from the dominant culture. As a result, they absorb the culture of the domineering group into their own. In *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*, Leonowens places Anna in the central position from which British culture is generated for the benefit of her native students. The 'high' culture works well in replacing their animalistic behaviours. Anna's introduction of British culture accompanying the teaching of the English language to the Siamese makes them become more humane and value Anna and her British culture as a model for their development.

Although the story of Anna is more an imaginative story, it influences the way her readers perceive Thailand. This fact shows the relationship between Leonowens' textuality and its worldliness (cf. Said, 1978). Leonowens uses her own experience as material for her writing. She writes her story with her Western audience in mind and appeals to shared preconceptions about what the Orientals are like. This relationship between the writer and her audience is made understandable by using Said's notion of *textual attitude*. Said (1978:94) argues that a textual attitude results from the complex interchange between the experiences of readers in reality, which

are determined by what they have read, and the influence of the readers, which in turn makes authors write about subjects defined in advance by readers' experiences. In her representation of Thailand, Leonowens establishes herself as the one who thoroughly knows the country. She redefines Thailand and Thai people as a body of knowledge or truth, which she has acquired to present to her audience. This redefinition of Thai people as a body of knowledge deriving from the timeless repository of Western knowledge about the Orient matches what her audience's believe and so they believe her narrative.

The Story of Anna in Applied Pedagogy

Leonowens' story about Thailand has become a controversial issue in Thailand (Smithies in Gullick, 1995; Warren, 2000; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/entertainment/newsid_573000/573461.stm; <http://thaistudents.com/kingandi>). It is argued in Thailand and among critics of Leonowens' story that Thailand is misrepresented in the story and there is little truth in it. For example, Warren (2000) refutes Anna Leonowens' claim that she was originally came from a good British background. According to Warren, Anna was born in India, the daughter of an enlisted Englishman and an India or Eurasian mother (21). However, it is not the purpose of this paper to focus on how credible the story is for Thai people. Instead, it uses the story of Anna, the English teacher, to show how English teaching colonises Thai people with Western representations of their culture. The story is also helpful in examining critical approaches to reading English literature. Literary texts can be open to many interpretations, and Thai students can read English texts in productive ways.

In the matter of the influence of the English language, there is a parallel line between the current situation of Thailand in the globalised world and the nineteenth-century story of Anna and Thailand. As a Third World country, contemporary Thailand has to use First World countries as a model for development. The English language is one of the main tools that Thailand uses to contact and receive knowledge from the advanced First World countries. The use of the dominant

language conveys the political influences of its mother countries – the United States and Britain – on Thailand. The analysis of the representational power of English on Thai people can become more concrete and easy to understand when looking at the current situation of Thailand together with Leonowens' story.

In the text, the story of Thailand is recounted from Leonowens' British perspective and in the English language itself. According to Stuart Hall (1997:1), language 'operates as a *representational system*'. That is how meaning is produced. When looking from the Anglocentric position, the English language is considered a signifying practice that brings British culture (or in other words, Anglocentric attitudes) to the place where it is taught. In Leonowens' textual discourse, Thailand and Thai people are brought into the narrative where the representation of stereotypical characteristics of 'otherness' is emphasized. The emphasis on the 'stereotyping difference' is in fact a process of the signifying practice resulting from the Anglocentric bias that aims to exclude everything that does not belong. In Leonowens' narrative, a symbolic boundary is set to exclude everything Siamese from Anna, the preacher of metropolitan culture. This boundary is employed to screen and then devalue Siamese people and their culture as inferior. Here symbolic power prevails between the people who are represented and the culture and institution doing the representing. Speaking from the position of power, Anna can command her students' representation of themselves by exerting the Anglocentric attitude upon them through her English teaching. According to Pennycook (1994:77), the Western colonizer's provision of English education implies 'the moral imperative to imperialize'. Learning and speaking the given English language, the language of the superior, does not just mean learning a foreign language, but the unconscious implantation of the Anglocentric attitudes or the perspective of the dominant race in the native's mind. Thus, Leonowens' story becomes a microcosm that helps explicate contemporary Thailand's adoption of the perspective of the former masters in looking at herself as a developing country.

In addition, the analysis of textual politics of the story of Anna, the preacher of English culture, can be applied to investigate English literature teaching in Thai universities. Similar to the English literature curriculum in such former British colonies as India or Bangladesh, the English literature curriculum in the English Departments of Thai universities mainly emphasises canonical English texts. Thai students' reading of canonical texts from a traditional point of view has similar effects to the Western audience's reading of Anna's story in that in their reading students adopt the perspective of the main character. It is argued here that traditional practices of interpreting the English canon in Thai classrooms positions the canonical texts as the centre and marginalises Thai readers and Thai contexts. According to Guillory (1990), the use of the canon as a standard text means the inclusion of a 'dominant' ideology and the exclusion of an 'inferior' one. An important factor that promotes the Anglocentric 'dominant' ideology is the objective of English literature study set by the departments. The main objectives of English literary study focus on the universalism of English canonical texts, their aesthetic value, and an authorial intention.

The aims of studying English literature are to recognise the universality of human nature conveyed by canonical texts and to appreciate the aesthetic values of the texts. These two aims reveal the claim that literature, especially 'great' literature, is universal and therefore is worthy of appreciation. However, the concept of universalism itself is problematic. What underlies such a transcendental idea of using canonical texts as representatives of universal truth is an attempt to communicate the value judgments or ideology of certain groups. The universal wisdom of canonical texts in fact demonstrates the subjective beliefs and value judgments of the society that produces them. Therefore, the notion of what is considered great literature is debatable. According to Eagleton (1996:10), a literary canon is a '*construct*, fashioned by particular people for particular reasons at a certain time'. Although here Eagleton talks about value judgment in conjunction with space and temporality of the great literary tradition, his emphasis on literature as a 'construct' pinpoints the fact that canonical texts are not valuable in themselves. Instead, the

value is related to social or institutional entities, and dependent on the decision making of certain groups. This means the reading of canonical texts reflects a discursive power structure. The acceptance of certain value judgments brought about by the texts is the acknowledgment of such a prevailing power structure.

The emphasis on authorial intention is the other aim of English literary study in Thailand. With this aim, an interpretation of the text tends to focus on the canonical authors and their social background. Authors and their societies become an established orthodoxy or the 'single voice' that commands conformity in the interpretive activity. However, the legitimation of the single voice of the author is argued against in Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, which stresses the numerous social contexts within which the language is used. Bakhtin sees language as a social phenomenon. Language for him is not neutral or objective but is always involved in social ideology (Allen, 2003:80). Bakhtin's argument makes the emphasis on the author's intention questionable. An approach which focuses on authorial intention reveals the one-way communication only from the author to the reader. The passive reader just decodes encoded messages from the author. This traditional approach then has the effect in silencing the voice of literature students and removing them to the margin of the centre-texts from which they are forced to accept the social ideology of the authors.

Close examination shows that the above aims make possible the textual politics that allow the neo-colonial influence to take place in Thai classrooms. In the colonial era, the colonial administration used this emphasis on the textuality of the canonical texts as a tool to impose an Anglocentric ideology on the colonial subjects. Thus, the use of the canon in English classrooms is not free of political values. My contention is that the English literature classroom in Thai universities becomes a site where Anglocentricism is empowered. Using the English canon with the aims of stressing aestheticism, universalism and authors' intentions means it is possible for Thai students to adopt the Anglocentric sets of beliefs and accept the authority of the canonical texts as well as the society in which the texts were produced. Studying literature with these

traditional approaches does not encourage Thai students to think critically. Instead, their perspectives are narrowed down to the pervasive presence of the British as well as the American exemplars. Studying literature from this perspective has a great effect on Thai students who have been marginalised in the study process. They are excluded from the Thai contexts of which they live in their everyday lives. This is an echo of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) argued against, that is, colonial alienation and the system of cultural domination which accompany English literary study.

Intertextuality: Reading against the Grain

From the above discussion, English canonical texts can be politically used to promote 'dominant' ideology among students of English literature. The political use of literary texts by the colonial enterprise stresses only one single interpretation of the texts that centre around Anglocentrism. It is only a one-way communication from the centre to the margin. However, the notion of intertextuality of literary texts discussed in Barthes' essay, 'the Death of the Author', challenges this traditional literary practice. Barthes' essay reveals the meaning making power of recognising the intertextuality of texts. For Barthes, there is no single origin of literary texts generated from their intertextual nature. In writing a text, its textuality is linked to intertextual relations with other pre-existing literary texts and their cultural texts. Meanings cannot be confined to authorial control. Instead, intertextuality involves the reader in textual interpretation. The reader is recovered from the position of the one who just decodes the text encoded by the author. Barthes' concept of intertextuality can be used to acknowledge the voice of Thai students and retrieve Thai contexts, which have been removed from the interpretive classroom activities of English canonical texts.

The recognition of intertextuality can be achieved by employing the metaphor of 'framing'. Framing is useful in removing the sole importance and hierarchy of the canonical text and repositions the 'active' reader as the central agent of the act of interpretation. In other words,

‘framing’ allows a critical reader to break through the controlling power of the ‘given’ interpretation of English texts. Employing framing, the reader is no longer a passive reader who is under the control of the canonical text and its author.

Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid in *Framing and Interpretation* (1994) emphasise the dynamic interaction between text and reader as well as text and context. They argue that a text does not have a single meaning determined by a single context. Meanings are multiple depending on the interplay of different framings, which are involved in the reader’s interpretation of the text. Also, texts can frame themselves and contribute to further framings. In addition, MacLachlan and Reid mention the orphaned status of the written texts, which creates the conditions where interpretation can occur. This means that the author of the text is excluded from the interpretive activity, and the interaction between the text and the reader is emphasized instead. The idea of variable and changeable framing as an ongoing activity therefore helps defer the power and control of the author’s authorisation to the reader of the reading text. By this means, interpretation is considered as an active process which involves the reader as the centre of activity. MacLachlan and Reid mention four kinds of framings: extratextual, intertextual, circumtextual, and intertextual framings. These four framings act as the mediator between the text and the reader. The mediating status of interpretive framing allows various ways of interpretation depending on what type or types of frames are involved in the interpretive activity. There cannot be one fixed authoritative reading of the text because the text can be interpreted through other framing(s) and can also be further reframed.

An application of the metaphor of framing in a Thai classroom can possibly blur the boundary between the binary opposites: active centre/passive margin. Framing can be used to dismantle the system of domination of canonical texts as the speaking persona, which requires that the passive reader ‘listen’ to its command. It will provide a space for Thai students to be engaged in active interpretive activities and give them an opportunity to express their ‘voice’, which in the traditional literary study is silenced. Students will be encouraged to be critical

readers by using the four framings to analyse the canonical texts. Framings will allow them to use Thai contexts as material for interpretation. Thus Thai students will have an opportunity to speak back to the 'centre' (cf. Ashcroft et al., 1989).

Conclusion

In the globalised world, Thailand's economics and international politics have been controlled by the United States and Britain. An explicit factor that leads to such a direction of Thailand is the Western powers' economical and political influences. The other implicit factor is Thailand's English education patterned on British and American models. Although such education brings to Thailand modernity and technology, an Anglocentric ideology accompanying English education works to discriminate the Thai cultural contexts from the 'dominant' British and American culture. The exclusion of the Thai contexts induces Thai students to regard Britain and the United States as the centre. Anglocentricism in English education results in students' tendency to perceive themselves as being secondary to the more advanced English and American people. They tend to acknowledge Western powers as models that they should follow and attempt to imitate. English classrooms where Anglocentricism is emphasised become sites on which neo-colonial influences of Britain and the United States operate. Thai students' views are moved towards convergence and hence their consent gained.

There is a necessity to retrieve Thai students' voice and Thai contexts from their marginal position. One possibility is to introduce the notion of intertextuality to Thai classrooms, English literature classrooms in particular. Intertextuality brings in cultural diversity denied by Anglocentricism. The Thai contexts will be stressed and acknowledged as an interpretive 'framing' students use to interpret reading texts. Students as critical readers will be encouraged to speak from their marginalized position. Their voice – the Thai voice – is thus enabled.

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