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The Importance of English at Primary

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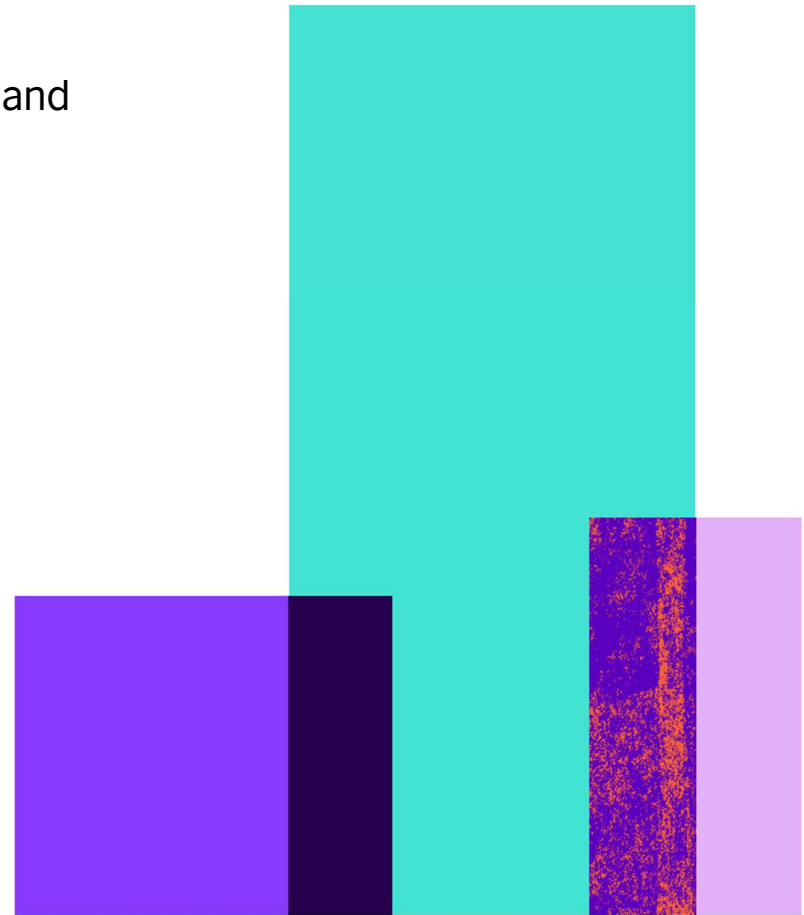

1. The state of pre-service English teacher education for the primary phase in Thailand

Who teaches English at primary: PTE (generalist) graduates and ELT (specialist) graduates.

a. PTE programmes offer 0–3 credits of ELT methodology.
b. 32% of PTE student teachers had a primary English practicum, compared with 63% of ELT student teachers.
c. The language paradox: 97.8% of novice teachers agree with English-only, 84.6% agree L1 should be used, and 39% use L1 for more than 70% of the lesson.

Sumonwiriya, S. (2026). *State of the pre-service English language teacher education provision for the primary phase in Thailand*. British Council. https://doi.org/10.57884/6EF4-4R73

2. PreBoot: emerging observations from a hybrid programme for generalist pre-service teachers

What is PreBoot?

- Partners: British Council, the Teachers' Council of Thailand (TCT), and 10 primary teacher education programmes
- Trainers: British Council trainers and teacher coaches (primary teachers trained in teaching English at primary)
- Length: 12 months
- Languages: English and Thai
- Hybrid format: online (InClass, British Council's online learning platform and live sessions) and face to face (orientation with half-day workshop and a 2-day workshop)

Evaluation ongoing: early observations, not findings

What I've observed so far

- Pre-service teachers reported that they could apply the songs and activities from the face-to-face sessions during their practicum.
- Live sessions led by teacher coaches gave practical models of classroom management with young learners.

What we're still examining

- Interviews with more pre-service teachers and school mentors.
- Examine whether confidence carries into the practicum and the first year of teaching.

3. Listen, play, then read: suggested activities for primary English classrooms

- Songs: "Hello!" song: use it to open lessons; children answer with their feelings.
- Chants: Teacher says, "1, 2, 3, eyes on me" / students say, "1, 2, 3, eyes on you": a call-and-response chant to get attention.
- Story book: Do you see Ros? (Let's Read Asia).
- Games: Fly Swatter known as Hit the Board, Stop the Bus, Go Fish, using flashcards.
- Useful classroom language: greetings, praise, and instructions (e.g. sit down, open your book)

4. Questions to take home

- Is "English-only" an official policy where you work, or an unwritten belief?
- Who teaches English in small schools in your country, and what preparation do they get?
- How could generalist and specialist teachers in your context learn from each other?

5. Takeaways

- Generalist teachers need young-learner English pedagogy, not just English proficiency.
- Strategic L1 use is legitimate.
- Practice with real children matters more than extra theory.

6. References

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