



CHAPTER 5

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH CONVERSATION SCHOOL INDUSTRY IN THAILAND

5.1 The Scope and Purpose of the Chapter

This chapter will discuss the characteristics and structure of the industry of English conversation schools in Thailand. The focus will be on schools located or head-quartered in Bangkok, as these constitute by far the biggest part of this industry. I will classify the schools into various categories based on ownership, management and branding policy, examine the modes of operation of schools in each category and bring some examples to illustrate the points made. My purpose is to highlight the fact of the complexity of the industry in terms of the number of business models of operation that exist in it side by side. There are numerous types of ownership and management structures, but there are, on the other hand, a few common operational grounds which are shared by the majority of the schools. It is my purpose to point out this contrast between the diversity in ownership/management forms on the one hand and the commonality in pedagogical and teaching resource management on the other hand.

The variety of ownership and management structures in the English conversation school industry is almost bewildering. As we will see in the body of this chapter, they range from small private operators and teacher-owned schools to sophisticated franchise networks, professionally managed corporations and, on yet another end, even non-profit organizations. They include on the one hand internationally known language teaching institutions and multi-media and media companies, and on the other private individuals without any pedagogical experience that believe that this industry, with its relative low entrance costs, can be a golden business opportunity. This variety of forms is, in my view, the best evidence of the interest that the industry attracts from a large variety of

investors and operators. Many individuals and corporations, so it seems, coming from completely different backgrounds, believe that there is a huge unfulfilled demand for English teaching in Thailand. The fact that so many do get established and survive bears witness that this suppositions contains a grain of truth.

Interestingly, as will see in this chapter, in contrast to the large number of widely different types of operators, there are many broad similarities in what they offer in terms of content and in the way they manage teaching resources. One would have expected that with such a variety in the type of operators one would find corresponding variety in the methods of teaching, in the teaching materials, in the way teachers are organized and in the way or recruiting teachers. This, however, was hardly the case. This point is of great interest and it will be discussed in detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

5.2 Research Methodology

Research information gathered for this chapter is primary data. There are no secondary sources of information available on this subject. The information collected for this chapter has been gathered through various methods, mostly involving interviews and direct observations, while certain statistics such as the number of schools, the names of schools, etc, have come from the Ministry of Education.

The process of information collection has been very difficult and quite lengthy due to a number of reasons. First, the data collection section in the Ministry of Education has very little continuous historical data concerning private language schools which can show the development of the sector over time. Second was the fact that in interviews, the managers and owners of schools were reluctant to provide internal information, and particularly figures. Third was the general lack of historical information with all our

sources. There was very little keeping of old records such as old brochures, pamphlets, and also figures.

Through the ministry, I was able to find the number of schools from the year 2516 to 2543, a period which constitutes only about half of the time span originally intended for the thesis. Another piece of information is the list of names of these schools. Having these two pieces of information, I started going through the list of name, cross checking it and calling to find out how many schools actually exist and who are they. In other words, I checked its present validity. By doing that, I found out that there are some schools that have been closed down but still have their name in the list. An additional source of information is the website ajarn.com, an information exchange for teachers in conversation schools, that offered additional information about active conversation schools. Apart from the information of names and numbers, the ministry would not give out any information concerning the activities, the management or other aspects of the particular schools.

Detailed Information about existing schools has been collected in various ways. First, by going to visit these schools, during which visits brochures, courses, schedules, etc have been collected. Important information was also gathered through interviews with the management people of these schools. Interviews were also conducted with people such as teachers and Ministry of Education personnel to help make the information more complete. Face to face interviews were conducted with all the important schools across a few cross-sections, and, in addition. telephone interviews were conducted with personnel of other schools.

Based on the limited information that could be collected, we could examine and identify the structure of the industry as it appears through current information. The development of the industry, which will be examined in the next chapter, can be looked at only in the

broad sense. The main source of information has been the personal interviews with the 15 schools which provided examples of the different kinds of schools in the industry and some developmental information of each school as much as they could provide. The detailed interviews are in the appendix section of the thesis. The limitations of the interview has been the bias or the limitation of information from the interviewees. They may not be able to explain certain aspects because they do not have the authority to disclose certain information, they may be someone who did not stay with the school from the beginning, etc. Supplementary to the information obtain through interviews, I have collected brochures, internal publications, and I have gathered information by talking to receptionists.

I was looking at these schools from the point of view of their operations and management, by visiting the sites and examining their brochures. It is hard to find historical data/information or written documents regarding these schools because they do not have any written records kept about their school, not even old brochures. So, I relied on observations from site visits, examination of brochures and informal discussions in person and by telephone in order to find out information about these schools (except the fifteen schools that I interviewed, but even from the interview, some historical data was still not disclosed).

5.3 General Overview of the Industry

There are 57 English language conversation schools registered with the Ministry of Education that still operate in the year 2000. Of the total of 57 schools, 48 are local outfits and 9 are associated with international brands. Local and international schools are categorized by the name that is used to market the school and not by the registered name because the Ministry of Education requires that all schools have to use a Thai name in order to register (Ministry of Education, regulations of setting up private

schools). Each subcategory of schools is defined by size of the school, the identity of the owners, the management style, and the teaching resources such as the materials used, the number of classrooms, and the approximate number of teachers. (it is impossible to find out the exact number of teachers for each school, rough estimates were obtained from talking to the receptionists at each school, or the owner of each school). The schools in the survey are schools that are registered with the Ministry of Education. Freelance teachers (both Thais and foreigners that teach English from home to home, office to office or at their home) are not included in this survey.

I generally distinguished between four main types of schools:

- 1) Small local schools
- 2) Professionally managed corporations with local brands.
- 3) International brands/schools.
- 4) Non –profit organizations.

The first two categories are pure local entities, with the difference between the first and the second category lying in size, measured in number of branches, and level of management sophistication. Though foreign ownership in part or whole occurs in a few cases, these foreigners are resident in Thailand and do not represent any foreign school. I therefore treat them as one type of a local entity.

The second two types all involve foreign direction coming either through the ownership, the management or the pedagogical approach. By foreign direction I mean foreign schools or other types of organizations and not simply foreign individuals. The third category is schools that are affiliated in one way or another with existing language schools abroad. The fourth categories involves government organizations, aid programs, voluntary associations and churches. In this last case the teaching of the

language is done in the service of other goals such as promotion of a certain country or certain church, enhancement of cultural exchange, and so forth.

The subgroups of schools which we identified are therefore the following:

5.4 Small Local Schools with local brand names (in English or in Thai)

There are 48 local schools out of the total of 57 schools or 84%. As mentioned earlier, by "local" I mean local brand names and not the ownership or management structure. International brand names may operate, as purely Thai owned franchised entities, as joint ventures, or as foreign owned entities. What distinguishes international brands most clearly besides, their name is that they often have independent teaching materials and teaching concepts, at least at the initial stage of their setting up in Thailand.

Of the total of 48 local brand schools, 44 schools are small or family businesses with local names. The ownership structure can be either one or several owners, but the tendency is more towards one owner. Location-wise these schools are scattered around Bangkok and are not clustered in any specific area in particular. They tend not to be located in the prime business areas but in areas with reasonable amount of traffic. Of the total of this group, 37 schools are purely Thai owned (12 schools use Thai names, 25 schools use English names). I divided this group into three groups based on the relation between management and ownership, as follows:

5.4.1 Locally Owned Schools in which the Owner is also the Principal Teacher and the Manager

These schools are usually very small schools, having normally a maximum of 2-3 classrooms only. The location is usually in a private house or a shop house. Very often these schools are located in the residence of the owner of the school (especially in the

case of a house) and less often in a rental space. Such schools have a very small reception desk which is not always staffed, and 2-3 classrooms. In most cases there are no other facilities such as a library, a reading corner or a computer lab.

The owners of such schools usually have experience in teaching English themselves and often act as the only teacher in the school. Some do hire other teachers to help with the teaching. These teachers are often Thai or Asian English speakers such as Burmese, Indian, Filipinos, but westerners are not excluded, except for considerations of cost. As mentioned, the owners of such schools are often teachers themselves. Some have full time jobs and open their schools in the evenings or weekends only, while others manage the school on a full-time basis. Those running their school as a part time occupation often use their home as the center. This is legally possible because The Ministry of Education requires that a language school should have at least one 4*5 square meters or 20 square meter room per one curriculum. The Ministry of Education counts one curriculum to mean one language being taught. For every additional language taught, there should be one additional classroom of 20 square meters size. (Ministry of Education, regulations of setting up private schools). Teachers who run their school on a full time basis tend to rent small shophouses.

The qualifications of teachers in some local school vary considerably. Some are graduates from local universities and some have studied abroad in an English speaking country (with degrees ranging from bachelor's, masters and even PhD). Many of them do not hold a degree in teaching English but they are competent in English and, most important, like teaching it and think of themselves as possessing talents in teaching English.

The marketing of such local schools relies mostly on words of mouth to increase their clientele. A few may put small newspaper ads and pass out flier in nearby area on

occasional basis. But generally, the marketing is not consistent and is done on an ad hoc basis, whenever the need to recruit new students arises. There is no effort to build up a brand name on a consistent basis.

In terms of manpower management, the local schools may have a few clerks to help the owners with administrative work such as answering phone calls, collecting tuition fees, explaining course schedule, etc. Some of the owners of such schools do it on their own and avoid hiring permanent staff. Students can contact them either through their office phone, pct or mobile number because these operators sometimes are not in their office or do not have a person standby to take phone calls at all times.

Some local schools do not even have written information that describes the content of the courses or class information to give to students. At the front desk, you can pick up a usually one page or half a page course-schedule. This is usually the only written document available among these types of schools. They are usually printed on white paper or colored paper with very simple graphics stating the tuition fee, class schedule, courses available, and maybe a few general lines about why you should study English.

The informality and lack of consistency which we noted concerning the marketing efforts and staffing policies of such local schools also extends to their opening hours. Office hour usually vary heavily among different schools depending on the availability of the teachers and the requirement of students. Some school open in evenings and Saturdays and close on Sunday, or certain places only do weekend courses. In general, as these schools are often oriented towards working people, and as the owners themselves are very often employed somewhere else, there is a strong tendency to focus on evening hours and weekends.

An example of a single teacher school is Sukumvitpasasart school located on Sukhumvit Road. a school which is open only in the evening. The owner of the school who is a Thai (non native English speaker) has full time work and teaches English in the evening, only on weekdays, to obtain extra income. He uses a room in his shop house as the classroom, advertises through a sign hung in front of the shop house and has a little half a page flier in his reception area. The teaching tools are a white board and radio. He practically accepts students of all adult age (15 up) with no level test. So he is the only person working for himself, without any hired staff. He puts every applicant in the same class, the class starts every month. Study time is 3 hours per day, 15 hours per week (5 days a week), and totals about 60 hours per month. Tuition fee is only 2000 per month or 33 Baht per hour. The number of students is at least 10 per class and can reach 30 in some cases. The owner creates his own work sheets for the classes (Wattana Suebphong, telephone communication, January 8, 2002).

Another example in this category of an owner who acts as a teacher and a manager is Soonpasa Ajarn Poo which is located in Chaopraya Road. The school is a rented shop house with three or four rooms of 4*5 square meters. The facilities are only a whiteboard and desk chairs. The courses are all private either in a group or one to one, and the number of hours is up to the student's preferences. There are no placement tests and teachers are either Thai or native speakers according to availability and customer preferences. Students are both children and adult.

The school is open everyday from 12.00-20.30 and Ajarn Poo is there full time. One to one classes are charged at 300 Baht per hour, 2 person 500 Baht per class, 3 person 650B Baht, 4 persons 800 Baht and 5 people 950 Baht. Ajarn Poo uses whatever books are in the market which he sees as fit for his groups, including Oxford, Cambridge, Heinnean, Longman, Mc GrawHill, Pearson. He charges for books separately. There are 3-4 people working in the office , a receptionist and a manager

(Ajarn Poo) , the rest of the teachers are part time. Teachers are paid Baht 150-200 per hour. The main marketing tools are passing out flyers and word of mouth (Surat Kanjanawat, telephone communication, February 7, 2002).

Ajarn Poo's school is typical of a small informal school run by an owner-teacher, with maximum degree of flexibility in terms of curriculum and group size. There are many similar schools and it is most probable that many of them are not even registered with the Ministry of Education.

Another interesting example of a principal teacher (act as principle teacher, owner, and manager) who still teaches at home (and also hires other teachers, all of whom are English speaking Thais) is Kru Kate or , whose pocket books have recently been very popular. In spite of the semi-super star status that she recently attained due to the popularity of her books and seminars, she still chooses to maintain her heavily booked school in a homely environment. Rongrien Son Pasa Kru Kate was established about 10 years ago, started off with Kru Kate acting as the only teacher, but now has a total of 10 teachers. The school is open only in the evenings and weekends and is located in Samsen Rd, near Rama 6 rd. The school has three classroom, each 5*6 square meters. The only teaching tool used is a white board, no other tools, no other facilities. The Curriculum is unique and it was developed by Kru Kate from her experience learning English. She stresses learning English the natural way, with emphasis on American English.(which is where she studied her own English). One class has about 30 students. What Kru Kate teaches is not English but the techniques (as shown in her book) of how to learn to speak (stress on speaking only. She does not teach writing or reading) English. The course is for 2 hours per week for 3 months, which makes a total of 24 hours, and the fee per course is 4,100 (the 100 Baht is teaching aids charge) (Rattana Phonboon, telephone communication, March 14, 2002).

Kru Kate conducts only the first session of the class, then other teachers take over. The groups are created by age rather than level of English. Children will be grouped together in the age groups of 5-6, 7-8, 9-11, 12-15, while adults above the age of 15 are classified as one group. Kru Kate recommends her students to watch soundtrack movies twice per each evening during the course, and asks them to practice pronunciation exercises that she provides. There is a mid course test and a final test, both of which emphasize pronunciation. The teachers are Thai only, mostly people who studied abroad and can speak English very well. Many are former students of Kru Kate (Kru Kate trains these teachers up). Information about Kru Kate's courses is available on the website krukate.com, where there is a map, a price schedule and a description of the course. Promotion for both the school and the books is done through talk shows and seminars. (Rattana Phonboon, telephone communication, March 14, 2002).

5.4.2 Locally Owned Schools in which the Owner is not a Teacher Himself but Acts as Manager/Administrator

This category combines the flexibility of a small enterprise with the fact that the owner is detached from English teaching as an occupation. The result is often that in addition to English, many other subjects are being offered, sometimes with no connection at all to English. The owner sees the facility as a place where all subjects can theoretically be taught. If English lessons alone sustain the facility, that is fine, but if they don't, then other subjects can be introduced. In the previous category, however, teaching English is the owner's "passion" and other subjects are very rarely introduced.

An example is Peterson Education which is located in Central Ladprao (on the same floor as EF), and was established in 1996-7. It has five classrooms with white boards and round tables for students to sit around. There is no library or similar facilities, but

does have a teacher's room. There are a total of seven levels for English conversation. Students have to go through a placement test and are then grouped. The average number of students is 10-12 people. Courses are 20 hours long. The price of one weekday off peak time is 3400, peak time 3,700, Saturday and Sunday 3990. Peterson uses only native speakers as teachers. The textbooks used are books available in the market such as Oxford books (Wanthip Rattanasuk, personal communication, January 14, 2002).

Peterson offers other languages besides English such as Mandarin, Japanese, French, German, Russian. Also taught is music: Guitar, Violin and Thai instruments.

The operation is very small: A few staff, a receptionist, and the owner acting as manager doing accounting and finance himself. All teachers are part timers. Peterson does not advertise in newspapers but is located on the "education floor" in Central so there is a good walk-in traffic. There is no brochure, just a leaflet explaining courses available and prices. (Wanthip Rattanasuk, personal communication, January 14, 2002).

Another example is Hamilton, founded in 1994-5. Located in Amarin Plaza on Ploenchit, it has five classrooms with whiteboards and desk chairs. There are also a few computers for students to practice grammar or TOEFL. The courses they offer are general English offered in six levels, namely, beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate advanced. They use native teachers only, hire on part time basis, teach adults only (15 years old and up) and use books of Oxford, Cambridge University Press, etc. (Paiboon Suwanthaemee, personal communication, January 18, 2002)

Besides English conversation they also offer tutorials like TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, Academic English, business English, corporate training (sending teachers out), high school preparation, English for university entrance, pre-MBA, Chinese and Thai

language. They also have a program for sending students abroad to study English in England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and Switzerland. (Paiboon Suwanthaemee, personal communication, January 18, 2002)

As we saw in the two examples, in this sort of school there is generally a more organized curriculum arranged in levels than in the previous category. On the other hand, being a more "organized facility" they have a much bigger tendency to use their "facility" to teach other languages and subjects besides English conversation. In the previous category, the owners expertise in teaching English is the only real "facility", while the school itself is structured around the owner's capabilities and does not stand independently from them.

5.4.3 Locally Owned Schools in which the Owner Hires Other People to Run the School for Him

In this category, owners do not have expertise in teaching English themselves but have access or contacts with many who do. The owner may act as a manager with one or a few clerks to help with administrative tasks or may hire a manager to look after the center for them. This category of schools signifies one more level of distance between owning the school and running it. Such schools may have a few branches in a few different locations. Examples are Boston Academy and Kingswood.

Like the previous category, and perhaps even more so, these schools do not usually rely on teaching English alone, but offer other languages such as German , French , Spanish, Japanese, Chinese as well. In some cases they also offer completely different subjects such as shipping or export-import, translation service, and other clerical/administrative professions that use English. The fact that the owner is an

investor/manager rather than a teacher, allows for this flexibility. Nevertheless, English is usually the main business.

The average number of classrooms per branch (in case there are more than one branch) is usually not over 7, and the average is 5. Operating or office hours vary from location to location. Nevertheless, there seems to be more consistency in this regards when compared to schools run by a teacher. This is attributable to the fact that permanent staff are hired to run these schools on a full time basis.

For their English courses, these schools use both native and non-native teachers. For low-level classes Thai or other Asian teachers are used while westerners are used for higher-level classes. The rates per hour are usually lower if studies with a Thai or other Asian English speakers.

As an example we will look at the Boston Academy. In this case the owner does not run it herself but hired a Thai manager to run it. Boston Academy was established in 1995 and has four branches in locations of heavy traffic, namely, Silom (shop house), Ladproa (shop house), Victory monument in (Center One Mall) and Sukumvit (shop house). There are four five classrooms in each center. In each room there is a whiteboard and deskchairs, and there is no other teaching/learning tools. English conversation courses has 4 levels: basic, elementary, intermediate and advanced. Placement tests are conducted on applicants and they are organized into small groups of 6-8 people. Otherwise students can study privately or in their own group . Boston academy charges 3,200 Baht for 30 hours. For English teachers, both non-native and native the pay is very low, only 150-200 Baht per hour. (Kittichai Katekratoek, personal communication, December 9, 2001)

Besides English, Boston academy also offers Chinese, Japanese, German, Spanish and French. Also offered are TOEFL, import-export and shipping courses, typing English and Thai, secretarial course, accounting course, internet services (this was offered in one branch only). Not concentrated only English or only languages. (Kittichai Katekratoek, personal communication, December 9, 2001)

The operation is simple: a few administrators, one receptionist and one manager and teachers are all part time. Open everyday from 8am-9pm, Boston academy does advertise on newspapers but relies on the attractive locations. It has a brochure explaining the available courses and details of them, no pictures though. The simple corporate structure is what distinguishes such a school with four branches from the bigger and more complex organizations reviewed in the next section. (Kittichai Katekratoek, personal communication, December 9, 2001)

Another example is Text and Talk Consultancy-located off Phaholyothin Rd, it is owned by a Thai national who helps run it in occasional basis. It focuses on corporate training by sending native speakers as teachers into companies. It maintains one classroom in its facility in order to comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Education to have one classroom for each subject taught. Prices vary as each class is tailor made to the needs of different companies. Courses are 20-40 hours and teachers get paid on an hourly basis. (Chantana Sukaudom, telephone communication, November 4, 2001)

This school is another flexible variant of the private school type. Its exclusive focus on corporate training illustrates the fact that such school can take widely divergent shapes and modes of operation in their adaptation to the market needs.

5.4.4 Thai-foreign partnerships with foreign management

Some schools have co-owners who are foreigners such as British, Malaysian, and Filipinos who have English teaching experience and who often run the school on daily basis. Example: D Language School. These schools usually specialize in teaching English and not anything else. The only exception to that might be the offering of some tutorial courses such as TOEFL or IELTS as an add-on. The foreign owner usually does some teaching himself.

In the case of D Language, a big part of the investment came from the Thai partners, and the British owner runs the school. He used to teach in international schools in Bangkok. D Language is located on a Rama 4 office building (same as Vektor building) and was established in 1997-8. It has three classroom sized about 30 square meters. In each classroom there is a big table where students sit around., with whiteboard, but no tape player, video player. There is a separate teacher resource room for teachers to prepare lessons. (Danny Willcocks, interview, November 12, 2001)

Courses are mostly general conversation, with optional business English courses. The conversation classes are made of five levels for adults (15 years old and up), and three for kids age 7-15. The school approaches students from nearby primary and secondary schools like Saint Joseph, Bangkok Christian college (primary and secondary school) and Chulalongkorn demonstration schools. (Danny Willcocks, interview, November 12, 2001)

There are no set schedules for classes, but the school groups incoming interested persons based on the result of the placement test. It hires teachers full-time (33-50,000 Baht per month) and only one or two persons in peak time like summer may be hired

part time (pay by hour around Baht 500). The number of students per class ranges from 3 to maximum 12. Tuition is Baht 6,000 per 30 hours or 200 Baht per hour, which is quite high. Additional subjects taught are tutorials like IELTS or TOEFL, but these are not main course just supplement business. There are no other languages taught. Material used are Oxford and Cambridge University Press books. (Danny Willcocks, interview, November 12, 2001)

The school is open 9am –8pm weekday and 9:30am to 4:30pm weekends. It is a simple operation with one to two administrative staff, and/or receptionists, a manager and a head teacher, who in this case is the same person, and a few full time teachers. Marketing-wise it relies on word of mouth, no brochure only leaflets and fliers explaining the courses available, the prices and the schedules. There is a signboard of the school in front of the building. No use of newspaper ads for marketing either. (Danny Willcocks, interview, November 12, 2001)

5.4.5 Thai-Foreign Partnerships with Thai Management

In some Thai-foreign partnership schools, the Thai partner runs the school on the daily basis while the foreign partners participate in the investment and contributes some know how and, in some cases, some international recognition. The foreign partner does not, however, participate in the day to day running of the school.

5.4.6 100% Foreign Owned Private Local Schools

Such schools are owned and operated by foreigners (always native English speaker) who have English teaching experience and who have settled down in Thailand. Examples are Lesson for Life and Winsor (the owner is married to a Thai)

Winsor is owned by a British person who married to a Thai lady, used to work as English teacher in other schools and decided to start his own around the year 1992. Located in a shophouse on Suksawad rd., there are five –six classrooms equipped with a whiteboard and desk chairs. There are no other teaching/learning tools in these classrooms. The owner works as a teacher and hires other teachers, both Thai and native speakers, on an hourly basis. It offers courses for kids and adults. The general conversation program is broken down into 15 levels. The basis of the work is a placement test and then waiting for a group to form. The owner-teacher also does some corporate work. Price of course of general conversation is 65 Baht per hour, 30 hours for 10 weekly sessions of 3 hours each, Baht 1,950 for the course. A new additional course is Chinese language. This is in fact quite surprising as teacher-owner schools tend to focus only on the core competence of the owner. Materials used are Cambridge University Press book. They pay teachers about Baht 200-400 per hour and maintain the size of classes at about 6-12 per class. A separate registration fee is Baht 100 and they charge for books separately. They open Tuesday-Sunday 11am-8pm. (Pranee Sukjai, personal communication, November 8, 2001)

Lesson for Life—is another example of a foreign owner who used to be English teacher and started his own school, but now he doesn't run it on daily basis. The school has been established in early 1990's. Located in President Tower on Ploenchit Rd. there are

about four classrooms, and a computer multimedia lab as a learning tool for students. There is no library. Courses are unique, conducted through telephone, students buy 6 months time for 12,000 Baht and they get books, multimedia to study at home, then lessons are conducted over the phone, students have flexibility in terms of when they choose the time. They don't have to come to learn in the center. It is very suitable for working people. Courses are for adults. When walk in, they have a consultant to interview them in English, give suggestions on what level they are, and how they should study. There are also classes in center for special courses. The format is similar, namely, 12,000 Baht for a fixed schedule six months course, but without the flexibility of the telephone system. In the multi media lab there is a lab instructor. The school opens everyday 8am-5.30 pm. (Natruedee Phromprasit, personal communication, November 6, 2001)

For marketing, Lesson for Life advertises on UBC (they also sell multimedia, they designed their own). Their multimedia uses cartoon characters and is very easy to use. The concept was designed by the owner of the school. (Natruedee Phromprasit, personal communication, November 6, 2001)

In addition to the schools listed with the Ministry of Education there are some English native speakers who operate from home, go out to teach in houses and companies and sometimes rent space from small Thai owned English language school for teaching their own courses. Such private one-man-schools were not included in this survey.

5.5 Professional Business Corporations with Local Brands

In contrast to the schools surveyed so far, which are mostly small private outfits run by an owner/manager, there are important players in the English teaching market which are run in the form of a corporation. I refer to such companies that has more than a few employees, that have a main office and many branches, and that usually have more than one owner. They are all English and computer schools. Interestingly, the additional service of teaching computers is common to all the four main players in this market. In that sense they are similar to private schools in which the owner is an investor/manager rather than a teacher. But whereas such private schools tend to branch into administrative professions such as shipping, import export, secretary, etc, the bigger corporate entities focus mainly on computers, in addition to English.

The operation of such outfits is much more complex compared to the private schools and includes a much bigger administrative center. Such schools have departments such as a school-curriculum or academic development department—to improve or adapt curriculum, make it up to date with the demand, or come up with new materials—who consist of a few people who are hired on the full time basis to develop curriculum and do teaching (other teachers/most teachers are hired part time on an hourly basis).

Other important administrative departments are 1) Legal (usually one person, to take care of foreign teachers work permit), 2) Personnel department- involved in administrative process of hiring, 3) Maintenance department-for maintaining computer system for office use and for student use, 4) Marketing and Public Relations who train the staff and inform front desk staff about what courses are available and how to explain courses, lay out marketing and promotional plan and strategy, and are also responsible

for brochure and fliers. 5) Finance and accounting, 6) Franchise-sell franchise and conduct training for franchisees, do administrative work relating to the franchising business.

There are four schools in this category, namely, British-American, ECC, BCC and Siam Computer. Two of them (BCC, Siam Computer) started out with teaching computing first. All four schools started their business in the 1980s. Computers and English conversation has been their parallel business with certain period in which computers generated more business and other periods in which English generated more business. But for the past five years the market for computer teaching stopped to expand much, while the market for English has been steadily growing. These 4 schools started out with branches opened up in shop-houses, but later tried to upgrade their image by moving to department stores and shopping malls. At present all British American branches are in shopping malls. Other three schools are chained which have more than twenty branches each because of their franchising system. All branches are located in high traffic areas.

Of the four schools, three are partially run as franchise networks. This covers ECC, Siam Computer and BCC. Of the three, ECC has the highest no of branches. There are 28 in Bangkok and 19 in the provinces or the total of 47 branches. Siam Computer has 17 branches in Bangkok and 7 in the provinces or the total of 24 branches. BCC has 13 branches in Bangkok and 12 in the provinces or the total of 25 branches. All three schools rely on franchising for their expansion strategies. All three schools started expanding with their own resources and later came up with the franchising system. So the result is that at present there are some branches which are owned own by the school itself and others by franchisee. All three expanded into the countryside but their strategy to expand to the provinces is based on franchising only. They do not want to

open on their own in the provinces because it is far and they don't understand the nature of the market or demand as well as the local people do.

In contrast to these three schools, there is one school, namely, British American, which expands solely with its own resources. There is no resort to the franchise system in order to finance the process of branch expansion.

The four schools in this category operate in different hours in different locations depending on characteristics of the demand in each area and the level of traffic. The variation in opening hours is not extreme, however, some consistency is maintained. The prices of tuition are low because the target is the mass market. For the 30-hour general conversation course for adults, prices range from Baht 1,700 or Baht 57 per hour at British American to Baht 2,750 or Baht 92 per hour at ECC. The tuition in Bangkok is the same in all branches, while in the provinces rates are cheaper and may vary from province to province. The main topics offered are computer and English conversation, but peripheral courses such as other languages, tutorial such as TOEFL, TOEIC, entrance preparation in all kinds of subjects (usually in summer time) are also offered. Interestingly, there is no attempt to venture into the field of administrative professions such as shipping, import-export, etc. as was the case with private schools in which the owner is not a teacher himself.

The main method used by the four schools to attract new students is through the selection of convenient locations and by cheap tuition fee. These schools usually have big and very noticeable signs and big banners in front of the school—this help then to establish brand recognition because they are located all around Bangkok. The signs are usually located where the schools are located, except in the provinces where they

use highway or main road billboard to establish brand recognition. Signs help them attract students to call or walk into the center. The schools are very often located in busy market areas with very heavy foot traffic. Observations on a number of locations of ECC found them to be mostly to be located in market areas. The schools also pass out fliers in areas with a lot of traffic and potential students. These schools tend to engage in much more intensive marketing activities, such as passing out of fliers, when the schools were starting and are in need of brand recognition. As time goes by, these marketing activities fizzle out and they hardly pass out fliers anymore. In that time information sheets and brochures are being handed out or picked up by people who come in to their center.

The main marketing expense of the 4 main school chains is on newspaper advertisements, both in Thai newspapers–Matichon , Krungthaeap Thurakit and in English newspapers –Bangkok Post, Nation. Also popular is the recently started magazine on educational affairs called Karnsuksa (การ์ตูนศึกษา) of the Wattachak group, where the four schools advertise intensively. Newspaper ads are run a couple of times per year. The important periods are the summer season (March, April, May), and the school break period of September-October. In these periods students in educational institutions enroll en masse in auxiliary educational programs such as English conversation schools. Obviously, these peak seasons for the enrollment of students are not concerned with the enrollment patterns of working people.

In addition to newspaper advertisements, such schools also resort to occasional radio ads. None of the schools engage in television advertising though. That is due to its very high cost. An additional method of self promotion is educational and job fair such as study abroad fairs. English language program on television are usually not run by these schools, and are not related to them. Separate entities run these programs for television.

The only exception is the cooperation of British-American with channel 5. British American runs a 15 minute series once a week as a part of the television program "Sueyngam Tham Pasa" –for teaching English. During the program British American gives out free computers. (Dr. Amnuay Phungchai, interview, January 25, 2001)

The four schools usually run a discount campaign of some kind, such as enroll into two conversation course, and get a grammar course free, enroll into a computer (or language course) and get 50% off from a language course (or a computer course), pay Baht 12,000 and study as many courses as you like within one year, enroll for three courses get discount of Bt 1500, etc. The purpose of these promotions is to cross-market the various courses on offer and to tie the students into the school.

Almost all teachers in the four schools are hired on part time hourly basis, the pay rate range is Bt 200-400. There may be a few full time teachers being paid on salary basis in big centers or branches like ECC at Siam Square. The schools use both native and non-native (Thai, Filipino, Burmese, Indian). Usually non-native speakers are used for beginner classes, while more advanced courses use Westerners. In some cases the students can choose who to study with, with rates being considerably lower with Asians teachers. (around 30% lower). This approach stands in contrast to the approach taken by schools such as Kru Kate's, who consider Thai teachers who are fluent in English as the most suitable to convince students to overcome their psychological barriers and dare to speak English without fear of embarrassment when making mistakes.

The courses offered by the four schools are usually in evening weekday , or day time weekends, and also run daytime weekday in summer and October school break. In that sense the big four chains appeal to the same clientele as the numerous private schools



which we surveyed. Missing here are the corporate customers which arrange English enhancement to their employees in working hours, during lunch or at the very end of the workday. As I will show later, the four schools recognize this as a separate market and approach it in a different way

All four schools have their own web-sites but these are relatively simple site that function as on-line bulletin boards. Obviously the clientele of these schools is not very computer and internet literate. This strengthens the impression I have that the four big chain schools are not materially different in approach and customer base than the majority of private schools.

Of the four schools, the smallest, in terms of number of branches, is British American which has only six center. Its smaller size is mainly due to its avoiding the franchise system. The branches are quite large, though. In each branch, there is a manager who is of Thai nationality, a head teacher who is a Westerner, front desk staffs and one book keeping or accounting. For other schools, they may or may not employ a head teachers, depending on the size of the branch (defined by the number of students), big centers have head teachers. Head teachers have responsibility to recruit other teachers, and are required to do certain number of hours of teaching per month, act as substitute teacher in case of emergency in which teachers can not come to teach, coordinate with the manager in arranging class scheduling. The manager is responsible for class scheduling, supervising staff, and run daily operations.

The conversation courses offered by the four schools are separated into a large number of levels (12-15 levels), each level is made up of 30 hours of frontal teaching. Students are encouraged to take the next level if they want to improve their English further. Before

enrolling, students are required to take a placement test, in order to determine what level they are at. After the placement test they will be grouped with students that belong to the same level. Once enough students have been gathered, the course can open, so there is no fixed schedule of when each course will be open, and it depends on the grouping. This means in fact that students have no choice of when to start, the school arrange it for them. The students give their preference of when to study, such as, for example, weekends (sat or sun), or weekday (evening), then the school will note it down and try to organize a group according to their preferences. Sometimes students have to compromise to study on the day that they do not prefer, otherwise they might have to wait longer (two to six weeks on average). No fees are charged for placement test and the school sometimes requests the walk-ins to do the placement test in order to have some idea about this prospective students and if there is a group suitable for him. Later on, the school will inform the prospective student by phone, and if he is interested and can make it, he could come and join the group.

The average size of a group or a class for big centers is 12-18 students and 8-15 in small centers. The main target is adults of working age, mainly in their twenties and thirties, a group often referred to as the "false beginner" level. The term "false beginners" is an interesting one and it captures well the nature of the industry as a whole. The clientele are all people who have passed through the formal educational system. Some are young working people who graduated just recently; others are still in high schools or in university. All of them share the feeling that their studies of English were insufficient and that they are unprepared to use English in real life situations. They are called "false beginners" because they are not real beginners, but at the same time it is very difficult to determine how deep did their studies in the formal sector really "sink in". Because of this fact, the numerous levels offered by the schools are often simply a marketing ploy aimed at prolonging the time the students will spend with the school.

With 12-15 levels this can be a long period indeed. In reality, however, the students could easily be classified in 3-4 major groups, depending on the depth and duration of their English studies in the formal sector.

In the last five years, these schools try to offer English teaching for children market, but the only successful one is ECC, and that only in a few branches of ECC. The children are aged 4-11. Appealing to the children market takes these schools away from their traditional “false beginner” market and they face here challenges which is doubtful whether they are well prepared for. The methodology, the approach, all have to be completely different than their established ways of running their schools

The main courses offered by the four schools are computer and English conversation, but they also offer tutorial, other languages, course for teenager, for children, grammar courses, pronunciation courses, teacher certificate courses, private course, business English –they take whatever business come their way. These add on courses make their income more steady.

As regards corporate work-British American and ECC have separate departments for this market segment, that is, a corporate training division with an academic head of its own. The job is separate between academic head of the branch and the head of corporate training. Characteristic for the corporate training division is mainly sending teachers out to teach in English in companies. (There may be a few cases that the trainees of companies come to study at the center --this can happen when the center is very close to their offices). These business English courses are tailored made to suit customer's needs and practical usage of English, be it for low-level staff or high level staff. So these schools will propose a study package with price quotation. In this

market, prices vary, and there is no standard price set as in the center courses. The structure of the course is similar to those offered in the branches, which is 30-40 hours long, but there is an attempt to incorporate some specific vocabulary or other needs of the customers. Classes are usually conducted once to three times a week in the evening (after office hour) for about two hours each day, and sometimes at lunchtime. (Dr. Amnuay Phungchai, interview, January 25, 2001, Mr. Geoffrey Blyth, interview, 26 February 26, 2001).

The facilities offered by the four schools are a big reception area (not just front desk like the first category), classrooms (sized around 20-25 square meters)-deckchairs, white boards. No teacher's resource room. Materials used are mainly textbooks of either Oxford or Cambridge University Press with many different titles. In conversation class, the main issue is to have the student practice speaking, so there is no need for other resources besides the native-speaking teacher, and textbooks. No other study tools like videos, radio or computer are needed as teaching or learning tools. There is no library for the students. There is only a sitting area near the reception.

5.6 International Names

5.6.1 International Names: Franchise Networks: EF, Direct English

Of all the English language schools in Thailand there are only 2 who are international franchise networks. Both have just recently entered the market: both opened in 1998/9.

The first is EF, an American firm head-quartered in Boston. EF's initial business in Thailand was that of sending students abroad. EF has offices all over the world, specializing in sending students to English speaking countries for summer courses or as

exchange students. EF has just recently (1998) set up their own language business teaching in non English speaking countries, so in 1999 a division was set up to sell franchises in Thailand. (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001)

Direct English is a language center that belongs to a big British publisher (Pearson Education-which is the result of the merger of Addison Wesley, Longman, Penguin books, the Financial Times, and Pearson television. The Nation Multimedia Group Public Co acts as the master franchise in Thailand and Indochina of Direct English. (Pornpan Jeerapreda, personal communication, January 12, 2002)

EF is looking to establish branches around Bangkok. Its first branch is located in Central Ladprao and the second on Silom Rd. Direct English is located in the Nation building, in Bangna. The target markets are different between these two entities: EF is aimed at teenagers, children, young adults, Direct English targets mainly working people. The two schools in this category are different in many aspects. Tuition fees are very different. EF charges Baht 6,540 for its 36-hour general conversation course while Direct English charges Baht 18,900 for its 30-hour general conversation course, an unparalleled price in this industry.

EF Has set up a franchise section in their student exchange bureau located in Liberty Building, Silom, in 1999. First, the idea was to sell a master franchise for around 10 million Baht, but no candidates were found, due to the bad economic situation. According to the interview with Khun Nitinuch, they were able to sell franchise to one operator, who now has two branches, one in Ladpraow, and another one on Silom. Initial franchise fees were very high and had to be discounted a few times before a taker could be found. The total investment in one branch including franchise fee stands now at around Baht 3-4 million. However, EF has expanded further and now as of April 2002, has four branches around Bangkok. Information was not disclosed whether all four

branches belong to the same or different people. (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001).

EF has clear guidelines on the size of classroom, color theme, furniture. There are stylistic requirements as to color and design. This is due to the fact that they want to create international standard and recognition. Franchisees of EF have to pay monthly royalty fee of around 10%, and send a report of their revenue and number of students for each month to the mother company. The franchiser acts as a business consultant and coordinator for the franchisee. The franchiser also helps with marketing and promotion, and both sides sometimes do joint marketing and promotion for all the franchisees, but the expense incur is on the franchisees. In any case, this is a good way to save money, as for example when an ad is placed in a newspaper. Also, franchisees can share the cost of a big PR event, which they would not be able to put through on their own. (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001).

The first two branches of EF in Bangkok are owned by the same operator. The same owners had plan to open another branch in Pinklao. They told me in the interview that they foresee high growth. Direct English has plans to open its second branch on Silom road (the nation group will run it themselves, they do not want to sell to smaller franchisee). (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001, Pornpan Jeerapreda, personal communication, January 12, 2002).

An EF Center has four to five classrooms of around 20 square meters with white board, no other tools in classrooms such as radio or video players. There is a small computer lab, but no library or reading corner only waiting area. The EF center is colorful as it attracts young adults (early twenties probably not more than 25 years old) and children. For Direct English, the number of classrooms and size are similar to EF, but they have a big computer lab with about 20 computers for students to be studying from their

company-developed multimedia materials. In classroom, other learning tools such as VDO or tape players are not available. (personal observation, January 25, 2001, personal observation, January 12, 2002).

EF offers conversation courses for children, teens, and adults. For children and for teen EF have their own materials including books and multimedia materials, for adult they just choose what is available in the market. They now use the Oxford University Press books. EF started out with general conversation courses, but later expanded to do business courses and started corporate work (sending teachers to offices). They also opened TOEFL. Their main office in Boston has research and development house to create more curriculum. They also designed their own multimedia programs for children. and computerized TOEFL practices. So in their center there are computer labs, but lab materials are not designed as part of the course only add one for those who want to come and use it. (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001).

EF general conversation courses last 36 hours, price is Baht 6,540 or Baht 182 per hour, which is relatively not expensive compared to other international brands such as Inlingua and Berlitz. Another thing that EF does is helping students who want to go study English abroad (such as summer or university English program). This is done in cooperation with the mother company EF and through their branches abroad.

Direct English general conversation courses are divided into eight levels. In each course there are separate grammar, and conversation parts (they separated the course in order to use Thai teachers to teach the grammar part. This is the only school that does it this way. Other schools teach grammar as it appears under a conversation context).

Placement test is a 15-minute computerized test. Computerized tests are being used only by a few international named schools such as Vektor and Direct English. It is considered to be the most hi-tech way to test students. Direct English curriculum is

designed to suit working people who don't have much time to come to class on a fixed schedule, so there are a lot of learning tools, given to the student, including books, nine tapes and one video. The courses emphasize self study and self test—through books, video, tapes, CD-ROMs, and internet (of Direct English). For the grammar classes, students are required to make appointments to come in at his own convenience to see the teacher. For the conversation classes with native English speakers (locally recruited), students have to choose and attend one the schedules set by the school. However, the reservation is made week by week-not fixed schedule throughout the course leaving a lot of flexibility on the part of students. This approach is in fact a portfolio of teaching aids which is offered to the student to choose from. The student can build his own portfolio based on his time constraints and his personal disposition. It is, in a sense, one step before completely personalized teaching. (Pornpan Jeerapreda, personal communication, January 12, 2002).

Teachers at EF are native-speakers only and they are being recruited locally in Thailand. Teachers get paid by the hour, getting around 300-400 Baht per hour. Some teachers may have English teaching certificates and some don't, some have experience and some don't, the selling point though is being a native speaker. Interestingly, the company makes no use of its international teaching resources which it uses for the study-abroad programs. Direct English use native speakers for conversation classes but Thai teachers to teach the grammar parts. Part time native speaking English teachers are recruited in Thailand as well. (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001, Pornpan Jeerapreda, personal communication, January 12, 2002).

It is interesting to note that apparently the pool of available native speakers residing in Thailand is big enough to allow local recruitment to take place, even for the most selective schools. This community of locally available teachers contains both long-term

residents as well as travelers who come and go. This community would be interesting for a separate study in its own rights as it continues to exist at the edge of society.

EF's positioning is not at the high end like other international brand name such as Inlingua or Berlitz. Its positioning is somewhere in the middle between the local names such as ECC, BCC, Siam Computer, and the international brands including Berlitz and Inlingua. The operation of EF is simple. There are a few administrative people or receptionists, a manager, (sometimes the owner acts as a manager), a head teacher who is a native speaker of English. The rest are part time teachers.). (Nitinuch Banchongsilpa, interview, February 26, 2001).

The brochure is a four-color print with pictures of students from different age and race including Thai students and Western teachers. The brochure tells the history of EF in the English language business, how many branches all over the world, and details of their standardized curriculum (used everywhere in the world). It also mentions that their teachers are native (big selling point) and qualified. It talks about courses in the broad sense or their method of teaching. The brochure has Thai and English language on the same brochure.

Apart from the brochure that presents the international image of the school, there are leaflets of course schedule describing which courses are opened such as conversation, business English, English for children courses, and summer course schedules. Both EF and Direct English have a sophisticated website.

5.6.2 International Names: Joint venture Thai and foreigners

ELC is a joint venture of Thai and British that expanded aggressively after setting up in Thailand in 1999. The main branch is around the victory monument and the expansion

was so far to 9 branches, as follows: in Bangkok: Ramkhamheng, Kaset, Chang Wattana, Pinklao, Bang Khae upcountry: Chiangmai, Lampang, Nan, Saraburi, Ratchburi, Chachengseo, Maha Sarakham, Nakhon Sri Thammarat. After a period of very aggressive expansion in the beginning the company went into some difficulties and had to rationalize its branch organization and some had to be closed down now. Besides teaching English, ELC also engages in sending students abroad as related business. (Chanthana Yingsook, personal communication, January 14, 2002).

ELC branches are big with a big reception area. The receptionists wear uniform. The main center at the Victory Monument has teacher working rooms and offices for administrative use on the first floor, classrooms are located upstairs. Most classrooms are sized 20 square meter. There is a place for students to sit and relax on the first floor in the back like a little garden. They can bring their own food in. Classrooms have whiteboard. There are no other tools except for some radio, and video players in the resource room. (personal observation, January 14, 2002).

Courses offered by ELC are mainly English conversation. The courses are separated into many levels. ELC offers many programs including intensive English program (nine levels)- a general conversation program in which students study intensively (6 hrs a day), dynamic conversation program (four levels), business conversation program (eight levels), active communication program (12 levels) which combines conversation and writing. Number of hours per level is around 20-22 except the intensive program which is 96 hours long.

All students in ELC have to take a placement test. The placement test is set only on Saturdays. Classroom group size is quite large, 15-20 people. The prices are very cheap and average only Baht 73 per hour. Materials used are textbooks of Oxford and Cambridge University Press. There is not much of other learning tools being used apart

from text books because mostly teachers let students practice speaking in class. The listening skill comes from hearing actual voice of the teachers. The target of ELC is adults only, there is no attempt to expand into the children market. ELC uses Thai teachers for low levels such as beginning levels, and use native speakers for higher level such as intermediate and advanced. Teachers are hired on an hourly basis. When the school was at its opening stage there was an attempt to hire full time teachers, but this was dropped later. (Chanthana Yingsook, personal communication, January 14, 2002).

There are evening classes Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday for 2.5 hours from 6:30 to 9:00 pm. On Saturday or Sunday, there are morning and afternoon classes from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. The starting dates are set fixed for the main branch, but are more flexible in the small branches. The modus operandi here is similar to AUA, namely very low prices, large classes and fixed dates for courses to start. This stands in contrast to most other schools where the system is once enough students have enrolled, a class is then opened. Therefore, students sometimes have to wait until a group can be organized. ELC are closed on Friday because it is the least busy day of the week for them.

The school's marketing strategy is frequent advertisements on newspaper such as the Bangkok Post, the Nation, and Thai newspapers including Mathichon, Krungthaeap Thurakit. The locations selected are very attractive. All are high traffic sites for the low-end market. ELC brochure is a glossy four-color print with pictures, which give the international appeals. However, there was no picture of Thai students or the ELC center in Thailand. Most of the brochure's text is in Thai except for a few lines in English such as "Excellent Program," and "Experienced teachers." The brochure explains the teaching approach as being communicative and activity based. There is a slogan –"AT ELC We Make Learning Easy. The brochure explains about the courses and the

programs being offered. Apart from the brochure which is used to present the international image of the school, there are leaflets of course schedule, informing of time of study, which courses are open, description of the courses being offered, etc. ELC has a website: www.elcinter.com. (personal observation, January 14, 2002).

Another example of a school with an international name that is structured as a joint venture is King's College: Thai and British owned. King's College three branches are located in Emporium (established in 1999), in Sukhmvit, at SCB Park Plaza (established in 1996), Ratchada, and Central City building ,Bangna. The first branch was opened in Central City Bangna in 1994.

King College was established in England in 1957 and now has teaching centers in Thailand, Brazil, Spain and Indonesia. (King's College information sheet, 2001).

Each center has 5-6 classes and there is no computer or multimedia lab. There are videos for children courses, but for adults there are no extra tools. They have classes both for kids and adults. Adults have to take the placement test. There are general communications and business English modules. Each module is made of 4 levels with 30 hours of study in each .The price per level is Baht 5,550, and at the end of each level the students would be tested again so as to check the effectiveness of the course. Normal classes have 8-10 students and not more than 12. King's College offers corporate training tailored made for client needs.

Materials used are Oxford and/or Cambridge University Press books. Teachers are hired locally, some are hired full time, but most are hired on an hourly basis. The organization structure of the school is simple. There are a few receptionists with uniforms (usually people who graduated with vocational education, unlike Inligua whose receptionists are bachelor's degree graduates from good universities), an accountant, a head teacher or

an academic coordinator, a manager, and teachers both full time and part time. (Laksamon Chaiyakul, telephone conversation, January 22, 2001).

King's College runs advertisements on newspapers such as the Bangkok Post and the Nation a couple of times a year. Sometimes they would run a promotional campaign, for example, sign up for one level, get 10% off, sign up for two levels, get 20% off, sign up for three levels get 30% off, etc. No brochures are used and leaflets are locally made- there is no use of King's College overseas promotional materials. It relies on words of mouth and is known to have high quality and reasonable price. It is opened seven days a week, regular classes run Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday in the evening, and Saturday or Sunday classes are from 9 am to 12 am. Other class schedule can be arranged. Summer courses run throughout the week, usually kids in the morning and adults in the afternoon.

5.6.3 International Names: Inlingua

Inlingua is a well-known international language school. The owners are Thai, and are the same owners as those of ECC (a few Thai owners). With Inlingua international reputation they could expand their market segment to the high end. The owners are not involved in running the operation, but hire professional to run it. The manager is a Westerner with teaching experience and management skill. And the case is they usually hire someone who started teaching for them from the beginning to run it.

Inlingua is unique because it is not a franchised company, but is operating under a licensing agreement with the head quarters in Switzerland. For the Thai branch to have a vested interest in Inlingua, they have to buy shares (two shares) in the holding company in Switzerland. The head quarter is not a profit center but an R&D center responsible for

producing materials for Inlingua schools around the world. The headquarter's income is a flat small licensing quarterly fee plus invoicing for books that each center buys. The first branch of Inlingua in Thailand was established in Bangkok in 1988, but the total is now seven branches. Many branches are located in Central Department stores around town, or located in office buildings in Silom and Bangna. The emphasis is on convenient parking to give it a high-end image.

(John Tylor, interview, March 8, 2001).

The centers are around 300 square meters each with small classrooms of 15-18 square meters. Classrooms are equipped with whiteboard, but no other tools such as radio, video players. Centers have teacher resource room where books are available and where teachers can prepare their lessons. There is also a coffee corner for teachers and students to sit and rest. There is a big reception area with sofa as sitting area. There is no library or reading corner for students. (personal observation, March 8, 2001).

Inlingua offers courses for all age groups: children 4-11 years old, teenagers 12-16 years old, and adults (16 and up). Inlingua offers other languages besides English including European and Thai language. Inlingua uses materials developed in Switzerland for teaching European languages. But the Thai language curriculum was developed locally, not from their head quarter. They run conversation course for all ages, business English both in and outside the center (corporate), and private courses. Classes are small groups of 5-8 people for adults (adult generally prefer to have fewer people in class compared to children), 12-15 for kids (kids like bigger classes). Inlingua also offers tutorial courses such as TOEFL, IELTS, GMAT but only as supplement, not as the main business. The tutorial courses open only when there is demand so it is like private groups or one to one course. (John Tylor, interview, March 8, 2001).

General conversation is divided into five levels-beginners, lower intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced courses. Classes take place on Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday for 1 hour and 40 minutes for each session or Saturday or Sunday for three hours. During weekday class there are peak and off peak schedule –with tuition fees different by Baht 500. Peak time schedule 5:30-7:10 pm and 7:20-9:00 pm, off peak 10:00-11:40 am or 1:00-2:40 pm. Duration of classes is seven weeks, ten week, twelve and eighteen weeks depending on each schedule. Inlingua's schedule is not by hours but by period, each period is 50 minutes.

Students in Inlingua have to take a placement test first and then wait for a group to open a class. There are no fixed schedule classes as in ELC.

The materials used in Inlingua in Thailand are mostly textbooks available in the market rather than Inlingua books from head quarters (unless students prefer to use books of Inlingua, but these are more for advanced level and rarely suitable for Thai students. Books of different publishing companies are used. At present the books used are the Heinemann conversation books. They conduct a review of textbooks once every 3-4 years. Inlingua charges separately for registration fee and study books and materials. (John Tylor, interview, March 8, 2001).

Teacher employed by Inlingua are only native speakers from a variety of nationalities. There are two types of native teachers hired by Inlingua. One is teachers that can not teach anywhere else. These teachers will receive a minimum guaranteed salary (in case their number of teaching hours is not high) but if they teach and their hourly pay rate adds up to be more than the minimum, then they get that extra amount. Then there are teachers who are hired on a part time basis and get paid by the hour. In this case the rate per hour is lower as well. Pay rate at Inlingua ranges from Bt 200-650 per hour depending on what classes and class size. Highest pay is for business English taught

outside. If the class is only 2-3 people, the pay is lower than for bigger classes. (Mr. Davic Knight, interview, 12 March, 2002).

Operation wise, each of Inlingua center employs only several full time staff on salary base. And that includes a Thai center manager, a native English head teacher, and a few receptionists. The rest is teachers who are either hired on a contract or a part time basis. The manager is responsible for the management of the operation, the marketing, and the finance of each center. The receptionists at Inlingua are different from other language schools in that most of them graduated with a university degree from respectable university such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasart, or ABAC. The manager and receptionists are required to wear Inlingua uniform. (John Tylor, interview, March 8, 2001).

Marketing includes no aggressive methods such as passing out flyers, but relies mostly on advertisements in leading newspapers like the Bangkok Post and the Nation a few times a year. Inlingua brochure is four color print with pictures, with different brochures for different segment: one for kids, one for adults. The pictures in the brochure are mostly taken in Thailand and show teachers and students as well as the buildings where Inlingua branches are located. The brochure also gives background information on Inlingua mother company, the number of branches all over the world, how long they have been in business, who do they teach, their international standard curriculum (used everywhere in the world). It is also mentioned that their teachers are experienced and qualified native English speakers. The brochure also talks about courses in the broad sense and Inlingua's method of teaching. The brochure has Thai and English explanation on the same brochure.

Apart from brochure which used to present the international image of the school, there are leaflets of course schedule, telling days and time of study, which courses open such

as conversation, business English, children courses, and summer courses. A website is also available: www.Inlingua.com.

5.6.4 International Names: Foreign Owned (with Thai nominee) e.g. Vektor, Berlitz

Berlitz has been established in Thailand around 10 years ago and now has 3 branches. It is located in office buildings. Berlitz stresses small personalized classes, so the classroom size is small with round table for 4-6 people. Classes are equipped with a white board, and no other tools. In the receptionist area there are shelves of Berlitz in-house developed books, cds, tapes, of different languages. But there is no separate library or reading corners for students. There are, however, teacher resource rooms.

Course offered are corporate (tailor made), general and business conversation, business writing, etc. Conversation Courses for Thai and English languages are 40 lessons (each lesson is 45 minute). Prices for 2-6 people are Baht 1,100 per lesson (a group rate which has to be split up among students). Students can also take more than 40 lessons. In that case price per group will drop slightly. Prices are slightly higher for other languages such as European and Japanese language. Enrolling students take placement test and then wait for a group to form if they do not come with their own group. Learning materials and registration are charged separately.

Vektor has developed from a multimedia company making multimedia products for teaching different languages for children up to adults. In Thailand, Vektor puts the stress on the corporate market, and there is no teaching in center. It was established in Thailand in 1999. Vektor is registered with the Ministry of Education as a private language school, and also has a corporate entity of a limited company to sell or lease multimedia programs. It is located in office building Olympia on Rama 4. (Heather Knox, interview, September 11, 2001).

Vektor offers only business English. They go into companies, and each contract may last 30-40 hours. The number of students depend on the contract and each company preference. The teacher is responsible to tailoring the course to the customer's needs, by combining different Vektor materials. Usually multimedia is used as learning and teaching tool. There are no textbooks, but they would combine and tailor work sheets into a book for clients. Price depends on courses and number of students.

Both places Berlitz and Vektor have placement test. In Berlitz, the test is done on paper, while in Vektor the test is computerized. Vektor's computerized placement test is a product, which they sell to other interested parties as well.

Berlitz engages in some other services besides English conversation classes. They send students abroad for total immersion program, and also provide translation and interpretation services.

As far as teaching materials are concerned, Berlitz and Vektor use their own in-house developed materials, including textbooks, tapes, videos or multimedia. In class, however, both emphasize on books or worksheets, other tools are just supplementary. Vektor would use their multimedia as a presentation tool in class for about 15 minutes in the beginning of class and then the teacher would explain and discussion would follow. Vektor also rents or leases multimedia for companies who are interested in using the multimedia for self-study. The terms of the lease can be one month to one year. Vektor would lease to companies and universities. (Heather Knox, interview, September 11, 2001).

Berlitz hires teachers on a part time basis, and the pay rate is around Baht 300-650 per hour depending on the nature of the courses, the number of students and the number of hours they study. Vektor hires teacher on fulltime basis with salary. So teachers are

required to come in and work on their lesson plans and make student reports in the office when they are not teaching. This is quite unique. (David Knight, interview, 12 March, 2002; Heather Knox, interview September 11, 2001).

Operation wise, Berlitz operates like most other schools surveyed, while Vektor is a bit different. The difference of Vektor lies in its being a unit in a global operation and not an independent entity. In Vektor, the managing director reports to Vektor in the United Kingdom, while the Thai office serves as the headquarters of the Asian expansion. The managing Director of Thailand therefore overlooks Asia. The Vektor organization includes a head teacher and other teachers; there are technical support team which is responsible for installation and maintenance of Vektor computer and internet's programs. There is a marketing person who makes direct approach to companies either by telephone or in person. Newspaper advertisements are not used. Berlitz, on the other hand, advertises in English newspapers. Berlitz is also utilizing brochures with many versions, Thai, English, Japanese (not English and Thai language in the same brochure like Inlingua). The brochures look very professional and projects the global image. Neither Vektor nor Berlitz pass out flyers. (Heather Knox, interview, September 11, 2001; Pojanee Lakanawilai, interview, October 20, 2001).

Berlitz's brochure is a four-color print with pictures, and there are different brochures for different market segments: one for kids, one for adults. The English language brochure is separate from the Thai language one, but both have the same pictures and style. In the brochure, information such as the number of branches (all over the world), their philosophy of management and teaching, the business history, their curriculum, are mentioned. The fact that they use native English teachers is stressed as a selling point. Apart from the brochure which is used to present the international image of the school, there are leaflets of course schedule, telling days to study time to study, which courses

are open such as conversation, business English, children courses, and summer courses for both adults and children.

5.7 Non-Profit Organizations e.g. AUA, British Council, CCLC, IDP

Two of the non-profit schools are local names, namely AUA and CCLC, the other two are international names, namely British Council and IDP.

AUA and the British Council were established in the 1950's in order to promote the use of English in Thailand, to help the Thai population and to promote their culture and education in their countries. IDP set up in 1987 in order to promote education in Australia. Teaching English was an activity that was added later. AUA was set up by AUAA (American University Alumni Association) with the help of USIS (US Information Service) who sponsored it to be English school that prepared Thai students to go abroad, and for those who need to use it. To promote cultural exchange, they also offer Thai language program. They also arrange events relating to Thai and American culture. In the case of the British Council, the similar objectives are pursued, namely, to promote mutual understanding, and British culture. There are no Thai classes with the British Council and the emphasis is on promoting British culture and further education in Britain rather than cultural exchange. The British Council also has activities such as arranging art and science exhibitions from Britain. The British Council was set up with the help of British Council (UK), a government entity. (Paul Humphries, interview, March 16, 2001; Wass Saosila, personal communication, March 27, 2001).

Both AUA and the British Council are involved in social charity such as training Thai English teachers for government schools, involvement in assisting different Universities in Thailand, conducting research on effective English teaching, helping train teachers,

assisting in establishing English language program for different universities. For example, the British Council helped Chulalongkorn University when they started up their language institute. IDP is also involved in such activities and it used to help the Thai Chamber of Commerce University to run their English program for many years. (Paul Humphries, interview, March 16, 2001; Wass Saosila, personal communication, March 27, 2001; Chunpit Phalavadhana, interview, March 7, 2001).

CCLC is a different type of entity than the above mentioned three. It was established in the year 1998 inside a church on Sathorn Rd, and the objective is to teach people in the near community as well as to perform charity work such as training Bangkok Metropolitan elementary school English teachers. Obviously, the aim is to promote the church, in the same sense that the above three organizations aim to promote their respective countries. English is used as an inherent asset of these organizations in attracting interest to themselves.

CCLC has no plans to open another branch since it is attached to the church. IDP has one branch on Silom Road in CP tower, and there is a possibility for opening a new branch. The British Council and AUA have many branches. The British Council has four branches, three in Bangkok, and one in Chiang Mai. AUA has 15 branches, 4 in Bangkok, and 11 in the provinces. Their central branches are very centrally located: Siam Square and Rajadamri road respectively.

In terms of facilities, AUA, the British Council, and IDP all have libraries for students to use. In all three places students can get access to the internet and computer lab. At AUA the audio and video lab that has been set up since the beginning of the school operation still exist and widely used by students. All have teacher resource room for teachers to prepare for their classes. The classrooms are of quite big size, normally bigger than 20 square meters and sometimes reaching 30 square meters. The classes

have desk chairs, whiteboard, but no other tools present in these classes. In the British Council and IDP, there is information section about universities in Britain and Australia. CCLC have teacher resource room, and the size of the classrooms is similar to those of AUA and IDP. In classrooms, there are whiteboards, and big table where students could sit around. There are radio and video players in the resource room. (personal observation, March, 2001).

In terms of courses available, AUA, and IDP provide courses for adults only (or age 15 up), but the British Council and CCLC also provide courses for children from age four to teen years. General Conversation is divided into many levels as followed: AUA 15 levels, British Council 15 levels, IDP 5 level, and CCLC 12 levels. Students have to take placement test in all these institutions and for CCLC you have to interview test too. Each level consists of 30 hours, and is mostly based on fixed schedules, which students do not have to wait for a group to be formed before a schedule can be set. There are many students in one class, reaching 15-20 students or sometimes even more. Price per hour are Baht 73 at AUA, Baht 203 at the British Council, Baht 163 for IDP, and Baht 127 for CCLC. All institutions have registration and material fees.

The main and most important activity is teaching general English conversation. Other supplementary subjects are business writing, business conversation, general writing, and tutorial courses such as TOEFL (AUA and CCLC), IELTS (the British Council and IDP). AUA offers Thai language courses as well. IDP conduct English language training for companies, but others do not.

In terms of materials, the four institutions use books of Oxford, Cambridge University Press, or Heinemann. The decision with series to use depends on the consensus of their teachers. These schools upgrade their textbooks about every 3-4years to keep up with

new edition. CCLC also uses a lot of in house materials (they create worksheets on their own).

All four schools hire teachers on part time basis, paying by the hour with settlement at the end of each month. However, they all employ a head teacher on a full time basis. These head teachers may be called academic director. His responsibility include training other teachers, designing new materials for students, and choosing what textbooks and other learning tools to be used. IDP also hires a few teachers full time to teach and help in doing the copyright for their advertisements and leaflets. For regular conversation courses, AUA pays the lowest rates, of Baht 250-350 per hour, CCLC and IDP pay around Baht 400-500 per hour and the British Council pays the highest at around Baht 700-800 per hour. (Justin Moseley, interview, July 4, 2001; Todd Babcock, interview, June 25, 2001).

Management wise AUA and British Council have complex organizations with all kinds of departments, like human resources, accounting and finance, academic department, activity department (relating to cultural or science activity for AUA and the British Council, and for IDP relating to giving advise to students who want to study in Australia). CCLC has a much simpler operation, which consists of a few clerks and one head teacher, while other teachers are part time employees. The manager and head teacher are the same person in CCLC. (Ramon Sanchez Sui, interview, December 10, 2001)

All four operate everyday except AUA, which closes on Sunday. AUA opens however early mornings with classes from 7:00–8:00am. The others open 9:00am –8:00pm on weekdays and 9:00 am to a 4:30 pm on weekends. Except CCLC all have complex webs tes.

As far as marketing is concerned, they do not have fancy four-colored brochures (just one colored or two colored brochure for IDP, AUA and the British Council (CCLC no brochure), and all have just a lot of leaflets. CCLC and AUA rely on words of mouth and do not pass out fliers or advertise. IDP and the British Council do newspaper advertisement on the Bangkok Post and the Nation. All four rarely run discounts and if they do, then it is very small (in case of IDP and CCLC perhaps 5%), AUA and British Council do not discount at all.

