

Research of Theme-based Teaching's Effectiveness in English Language Education

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that English has long been considered as an alien tongue in Thailand. Due to the total globalization and enormous advances in communication technology, global communication has changed accordingly and English is becoming very popular. For Thai users, although English is a significant worldwide language, its actual usage has experienced status shift. In order to shed light on Bangkok's linguistic landscape, this study compiles survey responses from a wide range of English-speaking professionals in this city. In a global setting, non-native speakers may be more appealing to students and users of English than native speakers. The final findings show that English in Thailand is changing from Foreign Language (FL) status to a Lingua Franca, and both English language and ways of English teaching in Thailand should consider the dramatic environmental changes. Overall, the final goal is to serve Thai English speakers and conduct honest English international communication.

Keywords

English, Thailand, Globalization, Linguistic landscape, Lingua Franca

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English has become a widely recognized lingua franca among international communicators due to its widespread use. According to Kachru's approach, English can be classified into different tiers. In fact, English is first language within the inner circle, while it is an official or secondary language in the out tier (Antonek et al., 2005). In the twentieth century, English speakers in the regulated sphere continue to follow the guidelines established by the inner circle. People from different parts of the world may have instantaneous conversations with each other, and then the earth will become smaller than past (Shimpi et al., 2015).

Under this situation, the demand for English will increase, and it shows that the English-speaking population is quickly expanding. Scholars have focused on the use of English among non-native speakers, both in the outer circle and in the increasing process; the number of non-native users of English is higher than these native speakers.

2. Literature Review

A large number of researches have been conducted about English Language in Thailand. Thailand is adding to the expanding group of countries recognizing English as a foreign language. Back in 1824, Thai teachers introduced the language to their students. However, only diplomats, aristocrats, and courtiers could attend. Later, in 1921, English became a required subject in Thai classrooms (Trakulkasemsuk & Pingkarawat, 2017). It suggests that the Thai government has mandated that all Thai schoolchildren learn English. English-speaking countries have never invaded Thailand,

so the Thai language has remained a source of national pride, and they taught English as a foreign language in Thai schools. Since most Thais learn English as a second language, their teachers frame classroom activities and exercises from the perspective of native-born British or American speakers of English (Pingkarawat, 2020). Expressions like "EFL" imply proficiency and standards that aim to mimic those of a native speaker. Given the phenomenon of English being used in the present day, when native speakers are frequently absent, the EFL idea looks strange. Thailand uses English for more than just as a second language. They are the most common means of communication between Thais and those who do not understand Thai, both within and outside Thailand (Smalley, 2019, p. 45).

Because they frequently affected attitudes toward English teaching and testing by one's opinion of the status of English in a country, it may be time to allow individuals engaging in the sector to reconsider their positions. The educational practices in Thailand may have contributed to the country's comparatively low level of English proficiency (Bunnag, 2015). Learning cultural norms and traditions that may or may not apply to the daily interactions of contemporary native speakers is the primary focus of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons (McKay, 2019). As a result, this study aims to inform a reappraisal of ELT in Thailand by providing insight into the language habits of native Thai English speakers. This selection of Thais' current English use should illustrate the country's current English language situation.

3. Rationale

As a global language, English has led to the developing of two related concepts in linguistic studies, namely, World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca. World Englishes focuses on examining the unique features of non-native English speakers in specific speech communities or nations (Chen et al., 2022). In contrast, English as a Lingua Franca highlights the probable global characteristics of English and it studies English usage by native English speakers all over the world.

Besides, experimental research is adopted for the purpose of exploring whether the TBLT strategy can improve students' reading ability. To isolate the impact of treatment on output while keeping all other variables constant, researchers use the experimental design. Such a study is ideal for determining whether one variable causes another to change (Tsukada, 2019).

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

In order to investigate theme-based teaching's effectiveness in English language education, this study adopts experimental method. A lot of efforts have been made to investigate how TBLT affects pupils' reading ability. This aims to determine whether the TBLT technique can help learners read better. In this study, action research in the classroom will be conducted. In order to improve students' educational practice and results, researchers first identified the reasons that troubled them, then tried to provide solutions, and finally evaluated the implementation effect of the solutions. The action research is divided into cycle I and cycle II. The research mainly includes the following four stages, namely, planning, implementing action, monitoring results and reflecting experience.

This research released an online survey, and respondents can accept the online survey. Investigators can see the online link of this survey on their personal Facebook page. In addition, the research also uses the unofficial "snowball" strategy. After filling out the questionnaire, researchers spread it to people they know. The main purpose of this is to increase the number of samples.

The questionnaire has three main parts. The first part mainly collects the personal and academic data of the interviewees. Before analyzing the main data in the last part of the questionnaire, researchers need to review the data. The data collected by the research should support the theory that the respondents are not real Thai - English bilinguals, but Thai speakers who have been living in Thailand. The interviewees are students with bachelor's degree or above in Bangkok. This study can also give participants enough opportunities to learn and practice language. The respondents come from different backgrounds and industries, and they represent a large group of Thai users. This survey selected 136 participants who honestly provided their language use data.

4.2 Research questions

In order to investigate how non-native English speakers see variants of English and how they add teaching English pronunciation to Thai EFL students, this research utilized a Likert-scale questionnaire which is modified from Boonsuk and Ambele (2021). Specifically, the questionnaire is divided into the following four sections.

Section 1

This section contains six questions, namely, basics Gender, age, education, citizenship, employment history, and years of teaching experience.

Section 2

In order to get a good understanding of “educators’ opinion about different forms of English language” and get a sense of “people’s opinion about the various forms of English”, I would like to ask participants to rate their degree of agreement with eight assertions. A five-point Likert scale will be used to show the degree to which people agree or disagree. Table 1 shows the type of statements and corresponding examples. “Five” means "strongly agree," “four” means "agree", “three” is the symbol of “neutrality”, “two” mean “disagree”, and “one” means "strongly disagree".

Table 1. Type of Statements and corresponding examples

Type of Statements	Statement	Example
Opinions that discourage the use of different varieties of English	1-6	1. Teaching should only be done with a British or American accent.
Opinions that are supportive or positive about English dialects	7-12	7. Students would be well to expand their English language horizons beyond the two most common varieties (American and British).
Disadvantageous methods that do not encourage or improve the use of different varieties of English	13-16	13. When lecturing and giving speeches, use, or at least attempt to employ, a British or American accent.
Activities that encourage or improve the use of a wide range of English	17-20	17. So long as they can be understood, do not care what kind of accent pupils have.

4.3 Questionnaire Structure

Section 3

In this section, we look at how teachers put their knowledge of pronunciation instruction into practice. We will use a series of eight questions to dig into how different Englishes might be used in the classroom. In order to show their relative frequency, the following criteria will be measured on a five-point Likert scale (Table 2).

Table 2. Five-point Likert scale

1	refers to	Never
2	refers to	Rarely
3	refers to	Sometimes
4	refers to	Often
5	refers to	Regularly

Section 4

This section contains free-response questions. Participants will be asked to comment and make suggestions based on their in-depth understanding of the topic. The final version questionnaire is included in Appendix A; it was reviewed expertly and piloted with a small sample of people before being distributed to the participants. It is done so that we know each question is correct. Developing one's reading ability is crucial while studying a foreign language. To interpret is to look at text or printed material and understand what each word means. Learning to read involves more than just decoding the written characters and pronouncing the printed words. It asserts inference, assessing the significance of various concepts and meanings and identifying their interconnectedness.

5. Data Analysis

Five-point scale values were evaluated by using quantitative methods. Table 3 shows mean scores and level of interpretation. Excel was used for a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire data to determine frequency distributions. The participant responses were organized according to these frequencies. Teachers' attitudes toward the variations of English and their methods for teaching pronunciation that take into account the varieties of English were reported using mean scores in the second and third sections, with the following criteria applied to interpret the mean scores of each item.

Table 3. Mean scores and level of interpretation

Mean scores	Level of Interpretation
4.51-5.00	Very high
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Very low

In order to delve further into the participants' perspectives on incorporating the English variations in pronouncing instruction approaches, the written replies to the open-ended questions were evaluated as qualitative data. In this section, we describe the study's participants, research methods, and research tools.

6. Results

Knowing how often Thais use English is the first step in evaluating the language's present status in the country. Table 4 is the summary of the prevalence of English use among Thai internet users. Most respondents claimed to use English daily, which may show that English is highly valued in Thailand, at least among the educated professionals who make their homes in Bangkok.

Table 4. Summary of the prevalence of English use among Thai internet users

Consistently	24	17.65%
Regularly	40	29.41%
At times	57	40.18%
Hardly	18	12.76%
Not at all	0	0.00%

While the country's native language remains its most vital asset, the nation recognizes English as a second official language. Table 5 shows the percent of different people in speaking English. When Thais go outside of Thailand, not only do they speak English, but they are also not expected to or able to speak Thai.

Table 5. Percent of different people in speaking English

Thai speakers	54	36.3%
Countries where English is spoken	59	44.1%
Foreigners	108	82.5%

The implication is that fluency in English is required for most employment in Thailand, at least in the capital of Bangkok. Fluent in English is not a unique quality that may help people get jobs. Language use is a common talent required for most employment. Thai English speakers also often use the language in the academic realm. Respondents in this survey all had at least a bachelor's degree, and a firm command of the English language is a prerequisite for further study at the master's or doctorate level.

7. Discussion

The findings of this poll provide insight into the state of English proficiency among Bangkok's educated Thai population. The findings suggest that English's function in Thailand may extend beyond that of a foreign language (Jenkin, 2014). Mostly, Thais do not rely on English when interacting with fluent English speakers. Therefore, everyday English may differ from the standardized variety (Schneider, 2011). It may be premature to affirm the existence of the Thai English variation when considering the breadth and depth of usage and the standing of English in the nation. The find-

ings of this study have shown the first phases of the Thai English variety.

Given that English is a lingua franca among Thai English speakers, it is important and necessary to think over English education in Thailand. Thailand's Basic Education Core Curriculum may apply to other languages since Thai students may continue to use other foreign languages to communicate with native speakers (Graddol, 2019). Simply classifying English as a foreign language ignores the language's unique status in the United States. If effective communication is at the core of language use, then intelligibility may take precedence over accuracy when measured against the expectations of native speakers (Darasawang & Watson Todd, 2018). There is a possibility that Thai students' mandated level of English competence in the EFL program needs help to make sufficient progress in their studies. It may be challenging for Thai students to reach the EFL aim in English instruction since they have little exposure to native English speakers (Darasawang, 2019). As a result, the method by which pupils study the language might lead to a lack of interest or lead them to learn the language just for examination rather than for actual conversation. Therefore, it may be time to reevaluate the trend toward abandoning EFL in favour of ELF, as the latter may provide students with a more realistic result (Crystal, 2020). Teachers need to help them develop techniques for effective communication, and this will help their peers understand what they want to express.

8. Limitation

There are two limitations in this research. The first issue is that the participants may have exaggerated or overestimated their reading abilities while answering the questions about their reading skills. Besides, this research does not provide a precise picture of the participants' test-taking tactics, and this can be solved by administering a reading exam and asking participants complete the questionnaires simultaneously.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research shows that Thai English speakers used English extensively in their life and speaking English with people who are not native English speakers is very common while travelling internationally. There are better ways to improve students' command of the language than concentrating on native-speaker norms and putting too much emphasis on teaching English grammar in speaking or pronunciation. However, it does not mean what the English instruction mentioned in the article is proper. Many disagreements have arisen about the usage of English as a lingua franca, and the model is built on English. Some helps are needed to improve their English pronunciation. Finally, it is suggested that educating pupils to accomplish the aim of intelligibility is preferable to correctness, especially in Thailand. It is worthy noted that pupils are hesitant to use English in class largely because they often make grammatical errors.

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