



## Thai Pre-Service Science Teachers' Perceptions of Their Filipino ESL/EFL Lecturers' Intercultural Communicative Practices in Science Teacher Education

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### ABSTRACT

There has been an increasingly dominant presence of Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers in Thai higher education; yet, few studies explore the intercultural communicative practices between these Filipino lecturers and pre-service teachers in science teacher education. This study examined Thai pre-service science teachers' perceptions of their Filipino lecturers. The theoretical framework of this study consists of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), tensions between native and non-native English speakers (NES-NNES), and Thai students' perceptions of English and its varieties. Using a qualitative research paradigm, this study employed focus-group interviews with 15 pre-service teachers from biology, math, and general science majors at a Rajabhat University in Thailand. The findings suggest three key issues: 1) Filipino lecturers' teaching styles and methods, 2) classroom communication, and 3) their English accent. The implications of this study promote not only the integration of cross-cultural exchanges and translanguaging practices into classroom interactions between NES/NNES lecturers and Thai learners but also awareness of World Englishes and Global Englishes to envisage multicultural/lingual realities in social and professional contexts. This study sheds new light on the pragmatic benefits of enhancing Thai learners' intercultural communicative competence as part of ESL/EFL pedagogy in Thai higher education.

**Keywords:** intercultural communicative competence (ICC), native-English speakers (NES), non-native English speakers (NNES), Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers, science education

## Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community not only promotes regional economic integration and political cooperation but also enriches the sociocultural and linguistic diversity that creates the complex and challenging landscape of intercultural communication among community members who cross state borders for better career opportunities (Khaopanya et al., 2011; Makcharoen, 2018; Ruengdej & Nomnian, 2021; Thongprayoon et al., 2020). As a means of *lingua franca* communication, English has been chosen as a working language by ASEAN, which has led to the rise of English language teaching and learning in this fast-growing region.

The high demand for native-English-speaking (NES) lecturers in Thai universities is due to the internationalization of Thai higher education institutions (HEIs) and transnational mobility in the ASEAN Community (Mongkolhutti, 2022; Snodin et al., 2021). Non-native-English-speaking (NNES) teaching professionals, particularly Filipinos, have increasingly gained an equally significant role in English language teaching and learning in Thai university contexts (Ulla, 2019). One of the Asian Englishes that has recently become dominant is Philippine English, due to the increasing numbers of NNES teachers who have transformed the sociolinguistic landscape of English language teaching and learning in Thailand (Ulla, 2019). For instance, Thai undergraduate students in a tourism and hospitality program were well aware of the *lingua franca* status of their spoken English; thus, the NNES accents were likely to be accepted (Suebwongsuwan & Nomnian, 2020). Thai HEIs play a vital role in equipping university students with effective communication, cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies, by recognizing interactions with other ASEAN people and students' language proficiency in intercultural communication contexts (Vivatananukul, 2015).

English as a compulsory subject with foundation English and English for specific/academic purposes (ESP/EAP) courses are required for all undergraduate programs in Thai HEIs (Promnath & Tayjasanant, 2016). Apart from this, undergraduate students are expected to acquire intercultural communicative competencies in foreign languages and cultures, problem-solving skills, and cross-cultural and interpersonal understanding. Thongprayoon et al. (2020), for instance, stress the need for Thai undergraduate students to possess a combination of intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness to communicate with other people, including their NES and NNES lecturers from different cultural backgrounds. Cultural awareness and the need to incorporate intercultural communicative practices into academic programs should be factored in to enable young graduates to meet the demand for work in multilingual and multicultural professional settings (Jhaiyanuntana & Nomnian, 2020). The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) attempts to enhance the quality of Thai graduates whose skills and knowledge are applied to local communities and global competitiveness.

Originally established as a teacher's college in Thailand, thirty-eight Rajabhat universities have been promoted by MHESI to serve the surrounding local communities and provinces for human resource development. Thus, the promotion of English teaching and learning is one of the key policies to produce highly proficient graduates equipped with English communication skills to enhance their competitiveness concerning future employability (Quigley & Kanjananiyot, 2022). Although there is research regarding pre-service teachers in English language education in Rajabhat Universities (Inpeng & Nomnian, 2020; Sangpong, 2021), very few studies explore those in science education degrees.

Despite existing studies exploring Filipino teachers in Thailand as well as Thai learners' attitudes and perceptions towards NNES teachers, there is a research gap in terms of investigations into pre-service subject teachers who are trained not only in the respective subjects but also in English language (Thienthong & Uthai Korn, 2023).

Concerning NNES, particularly the Filipinos teaching in this area (Ulla, 2019; Wattananukij & Crabtree, 2020), this study is crucial because the growing body of research thereon has focused

largely on those teaching in mainstream schools, either as main subject teachers or teaching assistants (TAs). Main subject teachers, for example, possess roles and a certain form of positionality that pre-service subject teachers may not necessarily hold or have access to. As there is a dearth of literature on pre-service subject teachers (Inpeng & Nomnian, 2020, 2022; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Kobayashi, 2021; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020), particularly covering their lived experience in the classroom, it is important to further explore that, if only to ascertain and understand their teaching experience in Thai classrooms.

This study thus explores Thai pre-service science teachers' insights into their Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers' intercultural communicative practices in science teacher education in one of the Rajabhat Universities in Thailand. It provides a new lens for looking at the intercultural communicative approach to English language teaching methods between Thai pre-service teachers and NNES lecturers in a science education program in Thai HEIs.

## Literature Review

### Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is the ability of individuals who have the knowledge, skills of discovery, interaction, interpretation, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness to understand their own culture and other cultures to reach effective communication (Corbett, 2022). ICC has two dimensions: 1) communicative competence and 2) intercultural competence. The former consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence, whereas the latter comprises three components (i.e. knowledge, skills, and attitudes), with five additional values, viz., intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2009).

ICC, however, has its challenges concerning language, context, communicative style, and indirectness, which should be considered when speakers from diverse cultures are involved in English as *lingua franca* (ELF) interactions (Phumpho & Nomnian, 2019). According to Wattanavorakijkul (2020), Thai undergraduate students majoring in English had high levels of English proficiency, but not high levels of intercultural sensitivity; thus, they had less confidence and motivation in communicating with people from diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds. Translanguaging for intercultural communication can potentially promote linguistic diversity and raise students' awareness of society's multilingual realities (Ou et al., 2020). Translanguaging strategies are adopted in the classroom to empower teaching and learning, promote inclusive education, and challenge the monolingual ideology and native-English-speakerism (Fang et al., 2022).

To overcome the ICC challenges, a paradigm shift in ELT pedagogy should enhance interactions that enable self-awareness, tolerance, and openness, by employing the teachers' experience in stimulating students' curiosity about their own culture and their teachers' (López-Rocha, 2016). Akkakoson (2019) finds that though Thai postgraduate students had no shared sense of English ownership, they recognized English as a useful means for their educational and socioeconomic prosperity; however, they valued Thai identity and respected ASEAN local languages and cultures. In this study, Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers should, therefore, develop ICC to build the capacity of Thai pre-service science students to communicate in a linguistically and culturally diverse society, by not only integrating communicative skills and strategies but also raising their cultural awareness.

### Perceptions of NES-NNES Distinction in Various Contexts

Previous studies on English as a foreign language (EFL) demonstrate students' preference for their NES British and American teachers. They report that students find such accents desirable, compared to those of their NNES counterparts, in terms of speaking, pronunciation,

and listening (Buckingham, 2015; Sangnok & Jaturapitakkul, 2019; Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020). Buckingham (2015), for example, shows that Omani university students generally view “standard” pronunciation as necessary and that their teachers’ American or British accent is legitimized and standardized by EFL materials and their association of accents from these “inner-circle” countries (*e.g.* the US and the UK) with high social prestige.

Wilkinson (2016), however, argues that Asian NNES lecturers not only have to prove themselves to Thai undergraduate students as proficient in teaching English or academic content in English but also need to gain the legitimacy that is normally accorded to NES lecturers brought about by people’s notions of their being “legitimate” users of the English language, due to their Whiteness. “Although race and linguistic ability are not connected, social perceptions that associate whiteness with idealized native English speakers have detrimental effects on NNES teachers and NES teachers of color” (Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020, p.112).

Asian English accents, however, have recently gained their recognized status for actual communicative contexts, where Thai EFL learners are required to be equipped for work and socialization (Sangnok & Jaturapitakkul, 2019). In Malaysia, Kobayashi (2017) suggests that the teaching and learning of ELF should consider local (un)official language policies and practices. Another study by Kobayashi (2021), however, shows that although Japanese English learners positively considered the lessons delivered by Filipino teachers as affordable and flexible, they perceived the teaching of native Anglophone teachers as authentic English.

The situation of Filipino teachers working in Vietnam revealed that they were held in lower esteem and viewed by students and parents as less commendable, although more affordable. According to Bright and Phan (2011), “they’re second class citizens ... important second-class citizens, not unimportant... but second-class citizens...” all the same (p. 129).

As Thai university students, with exposure to Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers and familiarity with Filipino English, have a more positive attitude regarding social attractiveness and linguistic quality, scholars argue that the Philippine English variant should be accepted as a medium of instruction in academic contexts in Thailand (Wattananukij & Crabtree, 2020). Thai undergraduate students found the Indian accent clear and comprehensible, whereas the Filipino and Singaporean accents were more familiar (Sangnok & Jaturapitakkul, 2019). Choomthong and Manowong (2020) also confirm that Thai students have become more aware of the varieties of English, especially those spoken by NNES teachers; yet, the English variant spoken by speakers from Braj Kachru’s (1985) expanding circles is perceived as the most intelligible.

Despite much debate regarding what accents should be taught as models for learning and use, few studies explore this in the context of non-English language content classes and interactions, let alone in the area of science teacher education. This study then looks into emerging communicative practices that play a role in the insights and perceptions Thai pre-service teachers have towards their Filipino lecturers concerning the teaching and learning of English linked to the educational and professional milieu as equally legitimate speakers of the English language. The rise of English as a global *lingua franca* has called for a paradigm shift in the field of ELT to match the new sociolinguistic landscape of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This involves focusing on classroom-based research and language teacher education (LTE) research that have emerged to investigate these proposals in practice (Rose et al., 2021).

### **Thai Students’ Perception of English and its Varieties**

In Thailand, where English is spoken as either a second language or a foreign language, the variant of the language where it is used is viewed to occupy a certain position in the hierarchical ladder.

Perez-Amurao and Sunanta (2020) reveal similar findings. “As the data in this study indicate, this is almost always the case of current recruitment, hiring and employment practices in the Thai labor market...majority of the employers nevertheless cited a preference for specific nationalities and native English speakers” (p. 123).

Although Thai EFL undergraduate learners preferred NES accents as models for learning and use, they considered NNES worth understanding and learning, which challenges the “standard” paradigm of English language teaching based on linguistic Americanization or Britishization by examining the extent to which English functions as an international *lingua franca* in a linguistically diverse society (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013).

Thai EFL students, for example, seemed to have more positive attitudes towards “standard” inner-circle Englishes (American and British English) than NNES, as the former were perceived to have high-quality attributes (e.g., status, competence, and personality) than the latter (Jindapitak & Teo, 2014). These learners, however, were linguistically biased in terms of accent because they did not have sufficient awareness of the varieties of English (Jindapitak & Teo, 2014).

Thai undergraduate students, for instance, had negative attitudes towards ELF, including their Thai English pronunciation, but valued American and British English pronunciation models due to their limited exposure to other English varieties, the fixated native ideology, and the lack of awareness of other English varieties (Phusit & Suksiripakonchai, 2018). Sangnok and Jaturapitakkul (2019) explored Thai undergraduate students’ perceptions toward three Asian English accents on listening comprehension, namely Filipino, Singaporean, and Indian, and found that the students preferred the Indian accent for its clarity and comprehension over the other two accents that were, however, more familiar. Thai pre-service English teachers preferred Standard English (i.e., British, or American) and had neutral perceptions towards World Englishes, NES, and NNES teachers, due to their limited exposure to other varieties of English (Namphandung et al., 2021). The aforementioned studies suggest that perceptions of English accents significantly contribute to the use of the English language in communication and classroom behaviors (Sangnok & Jaturapitakkul, 2019). Because Thai EFL students’ positive attitudes toward their English accent can influence their social behaviors and language learning, a native-like English pronunciation is not as important as speaking with intelligibility, due to the *lingua franca* status of English in diverse linguistic and sociocultural contexts (Tananuraksakul, 2017).

Concerning Filipino English, Thienthong and Uthai Korn (2023) claim that although Filipino English was negatively perceived for its intelligibility by English and non-English undergraduate students, equipping them with meta- and socio-linguistic and cultural knowledge through media exposure (e.g., TED Talks) can not only enhance their intelligibility toward English varieties but also alleviate their sociocultural stereotypes and prejudices. Wattananukij and Crabtree (2020), however, found that Thai undergraduate students exposed to Filipino teachers were likely to have a more positive attitude toward Filipino English than those who were not; thus, Filipino English was considered acceptable for being used as a medium of instruction and communication in academic contexts in Thailand.

## Research Methodology

### Research Setting and Participants

A qualitative research inquiry was employed in this study, as it examined people’s social circumstances, life experiences, and behaviors by understanding the meanings and interpretations that individuals attach to particular behaviors (Liamputtong, 2019). Lincoln and Denzin (2003) argue that the use of qualitative research started because of the criticism against models of research that were mainly experimental, that the latter failed to report on the value of narratives as tools deemed crucial in research.

In this study, qualitative research was used mainly because of the rich description accompanying it, providing access to thicker data that was much needed and more “comprehensive or fine-grained information than quantitative research” (Elliott, 2005, p. 3).

This study was conducted in one of the Rajabhat Universities located in Western Thailand during the academic year 2022. Originally established as a teacher’s college, this University produces high-quality graduates, enhances advanced knowledge and professionalism, conducts

research for local communities, and provides academic services to society. It promotes technology and innovation, conserves arts and culture, enhances the academic standard of teachers, and contributes to the development of the local areas. The University's mission is to promote academic excellence based on local wisdom, reinforcing the knowledge, and understanding of lifelong learning, value, and pride in local and national culture, and strengthening teacher professions and educational personnel.

This study was approved by the Internal Review Board of Mahidol University, Thailand (COA. No. 2021/08-163). Studying English Usage for Communication as a compulsory subject delivered by Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers, the participants were recruited based on the recommendation of their Filipino lecturers who communicated with the pre-service science teachers about the research project. They were referred to one of this study's authors. In return, they contacted them through a LINE group. This group comprised undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education in various fields, including biology, general science, and mathematics (See Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Demographic data of the participants*

Degree Pursued/ Discipline	Age	Number of Participants	Year Level
B.Ed. (Biology)	20	5	2 <sup>nd</sup>
B.Ed. (General Science)	20	6	2 <sup>nd</sup>
B.Ed. (Mathematics)	21	4	3 <sup>rd</sup>

## Data Collection and Analysis

Online focus-group interview was employed as the main research tool in this study. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Please introduce yourself and mention your educational level.
2. How long have you known your Filipino lecturer?
3. How do you find him/her as a person?
4. What do you think about their use of English as a medium of instruction?
5. What do you think about their accent?
6. What do you think about their teaching?
7. If you can choose, would you prefer to study with Thai or Filipino lecturers? Why?
8. What suggestions can you give to your Filipino lecturer?
9. What suggestions can you give to your program and university concerning Filipino lecturers?

The participants were interviewed through the first author's online Webex meeting platform. The focus-group interview sessions were arranged on a mutually agreed date and time. The interviews were conducted in Thai and lasted 45–60 minutes. It was recorded via Webex recording, transcribed, and translated into English by the first author.

The transcripts were then analyzed, considering the themes and patterns that emerged. Using the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis, the procedure included the following: being familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. Once the patterns and themes were identified, the interviewees' responses were subjected to content analysis through categorical data analysis (CDA). This enabled the authors to sift the data accordingly.

This study undertook an online research approach due to Covid-19 disruptions that prevented the researcher and the participants from meeting face-to-face. Consequently, online

focus-group interviews proved to be practical and efficient. Salmons (2016) details how qualitative researchers can conduct studies with participants through an online platform to collect deep, rich data and generate new understandings of contemporary research phenomena. It is important to note, however, that the researchers should be equipped with digital research literacy essential for designing and conducting online data collection, such as online interviews.

## Findings

This study arrived at three key findings reflecting the principal patterns in Thai pre-service science teachers' responses concerning their Filipino lecturers' intercultural communicative practices, namely, the Filipino lecturers' teaching styles and methods, classroom communication, and English accent.

### Filipino Lecturers' Teaching Styles and Methods

Filipino lecturers were positively perceived by the pre-service science teachers who enjoyed learning English with a communicative language teaching method. The pre-service teachers stated found their Filipino lecturers paying attention to oral communication, which encouraged students to speak up, whereas Thai lecturers focused on grammar.

*Filipino teachers focus on communication rather than correct grammar. Thai lecturers focus on content and examination rather than communication (Pre-service biology teachers).*

*Foreign and ASEAN lecturers should focus on communicative purposes rather than grammar (Pre-service math teachers).*

*My lecturer is well-prepared in his teaching. He gives us opportunities to speak up in class even though we don't use correct grammar. Thai lecturers often scold us (Pre-service general science teachers).*

The difference in teaching focus between Thai and Filipino lecturers was observed by the students, who found communication more important than grammar. In addition, Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers employed a variety of active learning tools such as games and interactive teaching materials to motivate learners. Thai lecturers, on the other hand, were textbook-dependent and not keen on using technology. Thai pre-service teachers preferred the use of technology and game-based classroom activities.

*Thai lecturers are not up to date with technology and lack attention to Thai students. Our Filipino lecturer is very energetic. He introduces a lot of games and activities that draw our attention (Pre-service general science teachers).*

*Thai lecturers only use textbooks in class, but Filipino lecturers promote the daily use of English. I want Filipino lecturers [as they teach us] to develop interactive and updated teaching materials and speak at a moderate pace that I can follow and understand (Pre-service biology teachers).*

Being active and energetic, lecturers not only promoted learner autonomy in Thai pre-service teachers through an inductive approach but offered opportunities for every student to participate in class discussions. The pre-service teachers observed their lecturers' learning-by-doing teaching style.

*He doesn't tell us what to learn. He shows us by providing examples and then informs us what grammar topic we have learned. He calls all students without paying particular attention to any student. Everyone will have a chance to take part in the class (Pre-service general science teachers).*

Student-centeredness was also prevalent among Filipino lecturers, whose positive attitude to teaching was highly appreciated by the students. Thai pre-service teachers not only viewed Filipino lecturers' personality as highly energetic and supportive but also looked up to them. Despite being strict, attentive, and punctual, one of the lecturers not only set up a good role model for the pre-service teachers in terms of self-improvement but was also interested in learning the Thai language and culture.

*My Filipino lecturer is very strict, attentive, and punctual. But he is a good role model who always improves himself. He learns to speak Thai to communicate with Thai students (Pre-service general science teachers).*

Besides learning and using the Thai language in the class, one of the Filipino lecturers was so interested in learning Thai culture that he paid respects to the students' Buddhist religion in class.

*He learns Thai culture. He shows us his interest in learning the Thai language and culture. I should improve myself as he does. Consequently, I have become more confident in speaking English (Pre-service general science teacher).*

*My Filipino lecturer likes to learn Thai culture. For example, he wants to know why Thai men have to be ordained as monks. He is very religious and respects Thai students' belief in Buddhism. He asks male students to pray. He doesn't know that female students can do it too. He always prays before class and lets us do it too. I think this is really good as we feel relaxed and are ready to concentrate before the class starts (Pre-service math teachers).*

To sum up, it is evident that Filipino lecturers were highly appreciated by the Thai pre-service science teachers, who enjoyed their active and communicative teaching styles and methods that encouraged students to engage with the lessons and cultivate a positive attitude toward learning English. The reciprocal exchange of the Thai language and culture proved to be useful and inspiring, as the pre-service teachers found one of their Filipino lecturers open and respectful to Thai ways of life. These intercultural communicative practices not only enhanced the rapport between them but also opened the linguistic and cultural space in the class.

### **Classroom Communication**

Most of the time, the pre-service teachers were struggling to communicate with their Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers. Thus, they employed various strategies, including the use of Google translate and a student assistant, to overcome intercultural communication challenges with their lecturers.

*I use Google Translate for communicating with Filipino lecturers. (Pre-service biology teachers).*

*When the students don't understand, the Filipino lecturer will ask the student assistant to interpret what he says to the class (Pre-service general science teacher).*

The Filipino lecturers, on the other hand, had their assistant, a highly competent pre-service teacher who could communicate in English, to interpret and clarify his/her colleagues' requests and questions. Thai pre-service science teachers knew that their English proficiency was not good and wanted their Filipino lecturers to speak Thai with them, to avoid misunderstanding.

*Filipino lecturers always encourage us to speak in English, even though they could speak Thai. They tried to avoid speaking Thai with the students as they wanted them to put effort into communicating in English with them (Pre-service biology teachers).*

*Filipino lecturers should have basic Thai speaking skills to help students who don't understand (Pre-service math teachers).*

*My Filipino lecturer uses Thai only when he cuts jokes (Pre-service general science teachers).*

Translanguaging seemed preferable to Thai pre-service teachers. The Thai language was, however, solely used when the lecturers would like to make fun with the pre-service teachers to feel more relaxed.

The pre-service general science teachers viewed English as an important tool for their teaching professions upon graduation. They would like to learn scientific terms in English as much as possible so they could use them when teaching their future students. English was, thus, viewed as a future asset, rather than a subject to get a pass mark.

*English should not just be a subject, but an opportunity for us to use and develop our communication skills for future work. Science teachers have to learn English because there are a lot of English scientific terms. Some of these can't be replaced by Thai equivalents. In the future, we may need to use English when teaching science students (Pre-service general science teachers).*

Besides the use of English in future teaching careers, the pre-service teachers also recognized the emerging status of English as a *lingua franca* essential for global communication.

*English is a lingua franca. I can use it with anyone in the world. If I am not a teacher, I can use English for other professional purposes (Pre-service general science teachers).*

*English is essential as it opens up new opportunities (Pre-service math teachers).*

*English has been integrated into our lives. We can read labels in English without having to translate them into Thai (Pre-service biology teachers).*

The pre-service teachers preferred to learn English from Filipino lecturers who were considered their “neighbors” due to geographical and sociolinguistic connectedness that enabled them to feel closer than to NES lecturers.

*We like to learn from Filipino lecturers, as they are our neighbors. They can also speak Thai. They can explain in Thai when we don't understand (Pre-service math teachers).*

*I would like to learn English from ASEAN lecturers, like the Filipinos. Native speakers find it difficult to understand me and other Thai learners because we only know basic English. But if you want to learn idioms, native speakers will be suitable. Thai lecturers are good at grammar (Pre-service biology teachers).*

*Thai lecturers always speak Thai in class. I like ASEAN lecturers because they try to make us understand [the lessons]. Native speakers speak so fast that I couldn't catch them (Pre-service general science teachers).*

In sum, the pre-service teachers viewed classroom communication as a platform for personal and professional development. They foresaw English becoming a visa to gain new opportunities in life and teaching careers. It is important to note that despite the Thai linguistic

capabilities these Filipino lecturers had, they tried to avoid using Thai with the pre-service teachers because they would like to challenge the latter to excel in English communication.

### **Filipino Lecturers' English Accent**

Having an English accent is one of the key elements that the Thai pre-service lecturers found vital for learning English. They had different attitudes towards the varieties of English accents relevant to their communication needs.

Most pre-service teachers preferred Filipino lecturers' English accents. They were accustomed to these lecturers who spoke slower than their native-speaking counterparts. The pre-service teachers feel they do not "get lost" when listening to them. The notion of "getting lost" is interesting, as it suggests that communication is like a journey between the Thai pre-service teachers and their lecturers, depending on how well both of them can hold and comprehend conversations.

*I find Filipino lecturers' English accents familiar and easy to understand. We always get lost when listening to native English-speaking accents like British or American (Pre-service math teachers).*

Pre-service teachers felt they would "get lost" if they were talking with British or American lecturers, who talked too fast. Contrastingly, Filipino teachers were familiar to them and easy to comprehend, as the students had been exposed to their accents since the latter's high school days.

*We are more familiar with the Filipino accent as we have been exposed to this accent since high school (Pre-service biology teachers).*

Nevertheless, the pre-service teachers suggested that NES lecturers were suitable for the senior-year pre-service teachers, who should be exposed to the NES accents, as they were supposed to have high English proficiency. On the other hand, Thai and Filipino lecturers were appropriate for the freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, who presumably had a lower proficiency than their seniors.

*The fourth-year pre-service teachers should learn with native English speakers because they can improve their speaking and listening skills with native accents. The first-, second- and third-year pre-service teachers can learn with Thai and Filipino lecturers because they can easily understand the accents (Pre-service general science teachers).*

In summary, although there were mixed views regarding accents between NES and NNES lecturers, the students perceived the NES lecturers' accents as more suitable for final-year pre-service science teachers. The NNES counterparts, including Thai, however, were suited for the lower-year pre-service teachers who required time and effort to develop and improve their English proficiency to be ready for studying English with NES lecturers.

### **Discussion**

Based on the findings, there are two key issues of science teacher education in terms of intercultural communication and perceptions of NES-NNES distinction in Thai higher education contexts, which are discussed below.

First of all, according to Waterworth (2016), effective English language teaching is essential for promoting a culturally diverse, economically sound, and socially united ASEAN community. Educational institutions and English teachers are the key change agents to bring forth students who understand, accept, and respect cultural differences for intercultural communication. This study illuminates how Filipino lecturers and Thai pre-service science teachers engaged, learned,

and shared their sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds; thus, all parties co-created a sense of ownership and belonging in this multicultural and multilingual space. The emerging status of English as a global *lingua franca* has addressed alternative views on language, culture, and identity, which impact the participants, purposes, contexts, and histories underpinning dynamic ELF communication in a certain community (Baker, 2018; Prabjandee, 2020).

The intercultural communicative approach to English language teaching can enhance language learners' ICC in a globally interconnected society. Language learners not only acquire a deeper understanding of the target language and skills but should also reflect on their own language and culture; thus, they become mediators between various sociocultural and linguistic groups where different languages and linguistic varieties exist (Corbett, 2022). The translanguaging practices of Thai and cultural exchange employed by the Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers not only created convivial intercultural communication with the Thai pre-service teachers but also envisaged a multilingual reality for these teachers. The findings in this study demonstrate the positive impact of Filipino lecturers' intercultural communicative practices on fostering lecturer-student rapport and cultivating a linguistically and culturally inclusive classroom environment. Fang et al. (2022) suggest that translanguaging for inclusive education requires the enhancement of language teachers' awareness and their role in recognizing the benefits of translanguaging, and promoting dialogues with students to contest native speakerism during instruction and communication in the class.

Secondly, the Thai pre-service science teachers' perceptions of NES-NNES were highly valuable for the pedagogical implications of English in science teacher education. Due to the increasing number of NNEs who have changed the sociolinguistic landscape of English, with pedagogical implications in English language teaching (ELT), calls for the ELT paradigm shift from native-norm English to the diversity of Global Englishes (GE) have acquired legitimacy and urgency (Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020; Prabjandee, 2020). Thai undergraduate students' awareness and positive attitude toward the varieties of English must be enhanced to achieve mutual intelligibility for effective ELF communication (Suebwongsuwan & Nomnian, 2020). In line with Wattananukij and Crabtree (2020), the Thai pre-service science teachers in this study were culturally familiar with their Filipino EFL/ESL lecturers, whose English was considered suitable for a medium of communication and instruction in class.

Although previous studies on the varieties of English have shown that Filipino English was not highly regarded by Thai learners due to its unintelligibility (Thienthong & Uthakorn, 2023), the findings of this study show that the Filipino lecturers were a useful resource in terms of English language teaching and learning. They were not only determined to promote Thai pre-service science teachers' English proficiency and communicative competence but were also role models for the pre-service teachers, with an NNE accent that raised awareness of the varieties of English. Being NNE speakers from the outer-circle countries, the Filipino lecturers were the mediators who linked the inner-circle and expanding-circle varieties of spoken English; thus, they opened up and raised awareness of authentic English learning space for the pre-service teachers who would be exposed to various English accents in their professions and lived experiences in the ASEAN community.

## Conclusion

This study examines Thai pre-service science teachers' perspectives of their Filipino ESL/EFL lecturers' intercultural communicative practices in an English Usage for Communication class, which was a compulsory subject for a Bachelor of Science Education, at a Rajabhat University located in Western Thailand.

The focus-group discussions in this study suggest that the pre-service teachers have developed their confidence, understanding, and competence in intercultural communication by interacting with their lecturers, sharing cross-cultural practices, and raising awareness of the varieties of English accents, especially NNEs. In addition, the pre-service teachers can potentially

foresee their future teaching professional identities in multilingual and multicultural societal contexts, with the support of their Filipino lecturers who underscored the importance of the diversity of cultures, experience, and knowledge that can be learned within and beyond the classroom setting. Raising awareness of World Englishes and Global Englishes can enable Thai pre-service science teachers to recognize the dynamic use of English in these linguistically and culturally diverse professional and social contexts.

Importantly, there were several limitations in this study. The participants were pre-service science teachers recommended by their Filipino lecturers. Although the participants were informed that they were free to share their honest thoughts without fear of reprisal, there could have been potential bias in their responses due to the power structures that implicitly existed in classroom contexts and peer groups.

This study can be a steppingstone for further studies by exploring other disciplines and views of NNES lecturers to achieve a deeper understanding of ICC and teacher education in the context of the internationalization of Thai HEIs.

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