

World Englishes in Expanding Circle: Views from University Students in Thailand and China

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Abstract

Diverse forms of English have emerged in all domains of the society. Due to the change in status of English and the growing acceptance of World Englishes (WE) in ELT, this study aimed to explore how university students in the expanding circle perceived and positioned themselves toward WE. 255 students participated in this study, including 125 Thai university students in Thailand and 130 Chinese university students in China. Data were collected from

a questionnaire to explore their perceptions and a semi-structured interview to elicit their positions. The questionnaire data were analyzed in terms of frequency while the interview data were coded and analyzed based on Buripakdi (2008; 2012). The questionnaire revealed that there were similarities and differences in the perceptions of Thai and Chinese respondents regarding WE. Besides, five positions toward WE emerged from the interview i.e. the Standard English, the Instrumental English, the Glocal English, the World Englishes, and the Situational English. These findings reflected the hegemony of British and American English, the place of native and non-native varieties in the real context of use, the potential of Thai and China English as varieties of WE, and the coexistence of standard Englishes and WE in ELT.

Keywords: World Englishes, Thai, Chinese,
perceptions, expanding circle

For decades, English Language Teaching (ELT) has been constantly informed by theoretical and empirical studies of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In SLA research, the performance of English language learners is often compared to the language use of the native speakers (Kachru, 2006) on the assumptions that English language learners aspire to attain the native speaker competence and that they are motivated to learn the language for integrative reasons (Sridhar & Sridhar, 2006). These assumptions, however, create a monolingual bias (Kachru, 2006) which puts native speakers as well as their English varieties in a higher prestigious position. As a result, the inner circle varieties, specifically British and American English have been widely regarded in the ELT community as standard forms and unquestionably taught in most classrooms worldwide.

However, today the number of people acquiring English as an additional language is large and growing (McKay, 2003). Crystal (2000) pinpoints that the spread of the language causes changes in that language. The expansion of English around the globe has not only

resulted in its complex sociolinguistic landscape (Marlina, 2014), but also led to the birth of localized varieties of English or World Englishes (WE) which mirror the users' cultural and linguistic identities (Buripakdi, 2012). Canagarajah (2006b) states that "local Englishes are now traveling-just as American English travels through CNN, Hollywood, and MTV" (p. 590). As more and more non-native speakers use their Englishes to convey their thoughts, values, and identities in their day-to-day communication, the emergence of various forms and functions of English is an inevitable outcome (He, 2017; Low & Ao, 2018).

The paradigm shift from English to Englishes has questioned and challenged practices in ELT which display a bias in favor of the UK or the US model (Kubota, 2018). Due to the change in status of English and the increasing number of English users, Brown (2006) points out that "it is important to move beyond the traditional limits of language pedagogy and the assumption that all learners of English desire to speak one variety of English" (p. 422). Furthermore, many learners today acquire English thanks to instrumental motivation (Sridhar, 1994; Sridhar & Sridhar, 2006). They learn English to gain access to scientific and technological

knowledge as well as to participate in the wider global community (McKay, 2003). More importantly, they now use English in a way that shows their “pluralistic identities” and “hybrid discourses” (Canagarajah, 2006a, p. 213) rather than speaking like native speakers.

The growing recognition of WE in ELT has manifested in, for example, the inclusion of non-native speakers in the teaching materials (Jenkins, 2006) and the introduction of modules or units pertaining to WE in certain programs (Xu, 2018). Many scholars assert that knowledge of WE is a valuable asset to all English users. In today’s globalized world, there is no denying that most communicative exchanges in English involve speakers who not only come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but also speak different varieties of English. Therefore, the understanding and acceptance of the complex reality of English appear essential for successful communication in such exchanges (Matsuda, 2018). Furthermore, as WE recognizes the legitimacy of all Englishes (McKay, 2018), the awareness of WE can help develop English users’ respective attitude toward other Englishes and appreciative attitude toward their own English, which may enhance their

confidence in communicating particularly in multilingual, international contexts (Jenkins, 2006).

Given the value of the WE paradigm, it is crucial and interesting to explore how English language learners today perceive WE and position themselves toward WE. The present study focused particularly on university students in two expanding circle countries, namely Thailand and China. To be more specific, this study aimed to address the following questions: *1) what are perceptions of university students in Thailand and China regarding World Englishes?* and *2) what are positions of university students in Thailand and China toward World Englishes?*

Theoretical Focus

This study was conducted based on the framework of World Englishes (WE) pioneered by Braj B. Kachru and other scholars upholding the notion of WE (Bolton, 2018).

According to Kachru (1985), the spread of English can be described in terms of three concentric circles: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. *The inner circle* consists of countries in which English is used as the primary or the native language i.e. the UK,

the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. English used in this circle is believed to provide norms of usage to the other two circles. Meanwhile, *the outer circle* normally includes nations which were colonized by English-speaking countries e.g. Singapore and India. In the postcolonial outer circle communities, English is institutionalized and receives an official status in language policies. Thus, people in these countries use English locally as a second language (ESL). As regards *the expanding circle*, it encompasses countries in which English is adopted as a foreign language (EFL) such as China, Thailand, Japan, and Korea.

Aside from the three concentric circles, Kachru posits the view that English users in both the outer and the expanding circle have developed new words and rules of the language to fulfill communicative needs in their local communities (Brown, 2006). Additionally, instead of following standard norms, English users are using English in a way that mirrors the unique identity of their own region as Kachru (1985) puts it: “the non-native English-using speech fellowships are using their Englishes of the world in their divergent situations and contexts and with

various linguistic and ethnic attitudes” (p. 16). As a result, Kachru argues that English is now owned by all users of English.

Many studies (e.g. Buripakdi, 2008, 2012; Choi, 2007; Fang, 2016, 2017; He, 2015; He & Li, 2009; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012; Kalra & Thanavisuth, 2018; Saengboon, 2015; Wang, 2017) were conducted on the perceptions of English learners or users regarding WE in the expanding circle. Below is a review of some recent studies carried out in Thailand and China.

Saengboon (2015), for instance, investigated how Thai university students perceived and understood the concepts of WE. Results showed that the majority of them did not show a clear understanding of certain concepts and that they still regarded British and American English as better than other English varieties. Some studies focused exclusively on a certain WE variety. Buripakdi (2012), for example, interviewed Thai professional writers about the notion of Thai English. She found that most writers viewed English used in the UK and the USA as the Queen’s English, but Thai English as an invalid English variety. They were also reported to adopt multiple,

contradictory positions toward English i.e. the Queen's English, the Instrumental English, the Cosmopolitan English, the Glocal English, and the Thai English. He (2015), on the other hand, explored the attitudes of Chinese university students and teachers toward China English. Although both groups agreed on the emergence of China English as a variety of WE, China English was viewed more positively by the students than the teachers.

Attitude toward diverse English accents has also become an interesting topic. Fang (2016), for instance, investigated how Chinese university students perceived native and non-native English accents and reported that most participants showed preference for UK and USA accents. Likewise, Kalra and Thanavisuth (2018) explored Thai university students' attitudes toward accents of five Asian Englishes. Findings showed that Indian-accented English was the most preferred over other accented Englishes in terms of acceptability and comprehensibility.

The results of most of the above studies showed that English learners and users in Thailand and China still perceived British and American English, two well-recognized standard English varieties in the inner circle

(Kachru, 1985) as superior to other English varieties despite their awareness of the diversity of English. However, to obtain a better insight into WE in these two expanding circle countries from English learners' perspectives, this study not only explored their perceptions, but also elicited their positions pertaining to WE.

Methodology

Participants

255 participants took part in the study, including 125 Thai university students in Thailand and 130 Chinese university students in China. Convenience sampling was used due to the researchers' accessibility to certain groups of Thai and Chinese university students at the time of the study. All the participants were third- and fourth-year students studying different academic majors as shown in Table 1. It should be noted that while most Thai participants studied engineering, all their Chinese counterparts were majoring in soft science i.e. business administration and management and arts except one participant. The Thai group included 70 males and 55 females and their ages ranged from 20-23 years of age

when the Chinese group consisted of 66 males and 64 females and their ages ranged from 19-24 years of age.

Table 1. Number of Thai and Chinese Respondents
According to Academic Majors

Academic Majors	Thai Respondents	Chinese Respondents
1. Engineering	114	1
2. Public Health	3	-
3. Business Administration & Management	8	80
4. Arts	-	49
Total	125	130

Data Collection and Analysis

The present study is exploratory research employing a mixed-methods inquiry. In other words, quantitative data were collected from a questionnaire and qualitative data from a semi-structured interview as described below:

1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire items were written based on the concepts of WE; some were adopted and adapted from previous research studies i.e. Choi (2007), He (2015), He and Li (2009) and Saengboon (2015). The questionnaire package consists of four sections: 1) research descriptions, 2) an informed consent form, 3) a demographic information

survey, and 4) a questionnaire. The questionnaire includes 40 items and is divided into two parts: 1) perceptions of WE and 2) experiences with WE. The first part contains 34 statements related to pre-knowledge of WE (items 1-8), knowledge of WE (items 9-18), beliefs about WE (items 19-27), and factors influencing the perceptions of WE (items 28-34) and uses a 5-Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The second part comprises six yes/no statements describing experiences with WE (items 35-40).

The questionnaire was initially written in English and then translated into Thai for the Thai respondents and into Chinese for the Chinese respondents. Back translation was used to check the accuracy of the translation. To ensure the research instrument validity and reliability, the questionnaire was piloted tested in April, 2018 with 15 Thai university students in Thailand in person and with 18 Chinese university students in China online. The main study was carried out in May, 2018. The Thai questionnaire was administered to the participants in person by the researchers when the Chinese questionnaire was collected via www.wjx.cn with the help of two Chinese

university students serving as research assistants. The responses to each questionnaire item were analyzed in terms of frequency and presented in percentage.

2. Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted according to the interview guide (See Appendix A) in Thai or Chinese and/or English depending on the participants' willingness. Five Thai and five Chinese respondents from the questionnaire were randomly selected to participate in the interview. Each participant was informed about the purposes and procedures of the interview before they agreed to sign a consent form. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the Thai participants whereas QQ telephone calls were used with the Chinese participants. The interviews were transcribed and then analyzed according to a grounded theory approach to content analysis. The coding scheme, in particular, was grounded in Buripakdi (2008; 2012). New emergent themes then were added in the final findings.

Results

Research Question 1: Perceptions of WE

An analysis of the questionnaire data revealed both similarities and differences between the Thai and the Chinese participants in their perceptions of WE as reported below:

1. Pre-Knowledge of WE

As demonstrated in Table 2, most Thai and Chinese respondents acknowledged the diversity of English. That is, 60% of the Thai and 56.2% of the Chinese respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they have heard of the term World Englishes. When asked about the inner circle varieties, over 80% of the Thai and about 93% of the Chinese group were familiar with the terms British English and American English. 43.9% of the Chinese participants were also reported to have heard of Australian English. Nevertheless, up to 38.5% of them did not have opinion about it, and neither did 42.4% of their Thai counterparts.

Table 2. Percentage of Thai and Chinese respondents with regard to pre-knowledge of WE

Perceptions of WE Pre-knowledge	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH
1. I have heard of World Englishes.	20.8	26.2	39.2	30	24	37.7	13.6	2.3	2.4	3.8
2. I have heard of British English	40	48.5	47.2	44.6	12	6.9	0.8	0	0	0
3. I have heard of American English.	38.4	46.2	44	47.7	14.4	5.4	2.4	0.8	0.8	0
4. I have heard of Australian English.	9.6	17.7	16	26.2	42.4	38.5	28.8	10.8	3.2	6.9
5. I have heard of Singaporean English.	8.0	14.6	24	20	40.8	45.4	21.6	13.8	5.6	6.2
6. I have heard of Indian English	11.2	20	16	28.5	37.6	22.3	23.2	18.5	12	10.8
7. I have heard of Thai English.	52	17.7	35.2	15.4	5.6	35.4	4.8	20	2.4	11.5
8. I have heard of China English.	20.8	61.5	35.2	28.5	32	8.5	8.8	1.5	3.2	0

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

As regards Englishes in the outer circle, over 40% of the Thai and the Chinese respondents were not sure if they have heard of Singaporean English. Interestingly, while more than 35% of the Thai group did not have opinion about or even disagreed with the existence of Indian English, 48.5% of the Chinese participants have

heard of this English variety. When it came to the expanding circle varieties, a large majority of the Thai (87.2%) and the Chinese (90%) participants were found to have heard of their own variety i.e. Thai English or China English. Besides, up to 56% of the Thai respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they have heard of China English.

2. Knowledge of WE

It can be seen in Table 3 that up to 80.8% of the Thai and 74.6% of the Chinese respondents agreed or strongly agreed that standard English must observe the same grammar rules but may be spoken with different accents. Furthermore, over a half of Thai (56.8%) and Chinese (61.5%) participants understood that standard English refers to English spoken and written solely by native speakers. However, most of them did not consider all native speaker varieties standard; only British and American English were counted by the majority of Thai (66.4%) and Chinese (76.9%) respondents as standard English.

Table 3. Percentage of Thai and Chinese respondents with regard to knowledge of WE

Perceptions of WE Knowledge	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH
9. I understand standard English is English spoken and written by native speakers.	16.8	26.9	40	34.6	24.8	10	11.2	26.2	7.2	2.3
10. I understand standard English must have the same rules of grammar, but may differ in accents.	24	32.3	56.8	42.3	12	14.6	6.4	10	0.8	0.8
11. I understand British English and American English are standard English.	23.2	33.1	43.2	43.8	24.8	15.4	8	6.9	0.8	0.8
12. I understand Australian English, New Zealand English, and Canadian English are standard English.	0.8	10	4	16.2	55.2	47.7	32	21.5	8	4.6
13. I understand Singaporean English and Indian English are not correct English.	1.6	10.8	8	22.3	48	33.1	23.2	30	19.2	3.8
14. I understand Thai English/China English is wrong English.	4	7.7	9.6	13.1	32.8	18.5	32.8	40	20.8	20.8
15. I understand Thai English/China English has its own linguistic features.	13.6	38.5	36	47.7	35.2	12.3	13.6	1.5	1.6	0
16. I understand only British and American people are owners of English.	7.2	5.4	27.2	7.7	28	10	20.8	41.5	16.8	35.4
17. I understand English belongs to those who use it.	56	34.6	28	27.7	12.8	16.9	1.6	14.6	1.6	6.2

Perceptions of WE Knowledge	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH
18. I understand most Thais/Chinese use English to communicate mainly with non-native speakers.	15.2	16.2	31.2	42.3	32	23.8	16.8	13.1	4.8	4.6

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

As for the correctness of other Englishes, around 33% of the Chinese respondents agreed with, disagreed with, or did not have opinion about the correctness of such outer circle varieties as Singaporean English and Indian English. Likewise, 48% of the Thai respondents were not certain about the statement. When asked if their own English variety is wrong, more than a half of Thai (53.6%) and Chinese (60.8%) participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and surprisingly, the number of the Chinese respondents (86.2%) who understood that their own variety has unique linguistic features was much higher than that of their Thai counterparts (49.6%).

Regarding the notion of ownership, the Thai group appeared to hesitate whether the British and the Americans are owners of the language whereas 76.9% of the Chinese group either disagreed or strongly disagreed

that both groups own the language. What is striking is that up to 84% of the Thai and 62.3% of the Chinese group upheld the view that English now belongs to those who use it and that 46.4% of the Thai and 58.5% of the Chinese respondents were aware that they are more inclined to communicate in English with non-native speakers.

3. Beliefs about WE

According to Table 4, it was revealed that a British accent sounds charming to approximately 71% of the participants from both groups. What is more, 65.4% of the Chinese group found an American accent beautiful - 50.4% of the Thai respondents, on the other hand, could not decide. The two groups differed in their attitudes toward an accent of their own variety. Specifically, 60% of the Chinese participants agreed or strongly agreed that Chinese-accented English is embarrassing whereas up to 68.8% of the Thai group did not find Thai-accented English embarrassing. What is interesting is that a great majority of the Thai (80%) and the Chinese (86.2%) respondents believed that if they can speak English like native speakers, they will have better opportunities in

life. However, when it came to communication, most Thai (67.2%) and Chinese (55.4%) respondents did not mind if they could speak like native speakers as long as they could convey their messages.

As to which variety of English should serve as an instructional model, 54.6% of the Chinese group supported British and/or American English. Meanwhile, 40% of the Thai group showed no preference, and 36.8% of them disagreed with the adoption of these two varieties. When asked whether to select their own English variety as the teaching model, 72.8% of the Thai participants and 68.5% of their Chinese counterparts either disagree or strongly disagreed. Instead, more than 60% of both groups thought that teachers should expose other English varieties in the classroom alongside the teaching of British or American English. With regard to native and non-native teachers of English, 45.4% of the Chinese group believed that native speaker teachers have more knowledge of English and are more effective in teaching than local teachers. When 40.8% of the Thai group could not decide, 32.8% of them either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 4. Percentage of Thai and Chinese respondents with regard to beliefs about WE

Perceptions of WE Beliefs	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH
19. I think a British accent is charming.	28	42.3	43.2	29.2	24	20	3.2	6.2	1.6	2.3
20. I think an American accent is beautiful.	14.4	29.2	30.4	36.2	50.4	24.6	3.2	7.7	1.6	2.3
21. I think it is embarrassing to speak English with a Thai/Chinese accent.	3.2	20.8	12.8	39.2	15.2	15.4	36.8	20	32	4.6
22. I believe if I can speak English like native speakers, I will have better opportunities in life.	60.8	48.5	19.2	37.7	15.2	9.2	4.0	3.8	0.8	0.8
23. I don't mind if I can speak English like native speakers or not as long as I can communicate my messages.	28.8	18.5	38.4	36.9	18.4	16.9	12	22.3	2.4	5.4
24. I think teachers should teach only British English and/or American English in classroom.	8.8	23.8	14.4	30.8	40	20	24.8	21.5	12	3.8
25. I think teachers should teach Thai English/China English, not British English or American English in classroom.	1.6	7.7	5.6	10.8	20	13.1	42.4	43.1	30.4	25.4
26. I think teachers should expose students to other varieties of English alongside the teaching of British English or American English in	17.6	23.1	43.2	43.8	24.8	16.9	12	15.4	2.4	0.8
27. I believe native speaker teachers have more knowledge of English and are more effective in teaching than Thai/Chinese teachers.	11.2	16.2	15.2	29.2	40.8	37.7	27.2	13.8	5.6	3.1

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

4. Factors Influencing the Perceptions of WE

Table 5 reveals factors influencing the perceptions of Thai and Chinese respondents concerning WE. As regards textbooks, it was found that when 50.4% of the Thai participants did not know whether English language textbooks used in their classrooms are from the publishers in native English-speaking countries, 46.9% of the Chinese group either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 50.4% of the Thai and up to 71.5% of the Chinese group observed several conversations in English between non-native speakers in their English language textbooks.

When asked about their teachers of English, a large majority of Thai and Chinese respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their teachers are British or American. When it came to local teachers, 44% of the Thai group was not sure whether their teachers speak Thai English when 43% of the Chinese group thought that most of their Chinese teachers speak China English. Apart from textbooks and teachers, most Thai (84%) and Chinese (74.6%) respondents observed different varieties of English in addition to native speaker varieties in the media or on the

Internet. In addition, up to 88% of the Thai and 77.7% of the Chinese group were found to study English so as to pass national and international English proficiency tests, for example, TOEIC, IELTS, TOEFL, or CET.

Table 5. Percentage of Thai and Chinese respondents with regard to factors influencing perceptions of WE

Perceptions of WE Factors	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH
28. I study English based on textbooks which belong to the publishers in native countries.	12	11.5	28.8	13.1	50.4	28.5	7.2	29.2	1.6	17.7
29. I observe several conversations in English between non-native speakers in English language textbooks.	16	22.3	34.4	49.2	41.6	20.8	6.4	5.4	1.6	2.3
30. My English teachers are British.	4.0	5.4	8.8	8.5	24.8	8.5	32.8	38.5	29.6	39.2
31. My English teachers are American.	2.4	8.5	11.2	13.1	28	9.2	32	33.1	26.4	36.2
32. Most of my Thai/Chinese teachers of English use Thai English/China English.	2.4	13.8	28.8	29.2	44	28.5	18.4	26.2	6.4	2.3
33. I observe different varieties of English in addition to native speaker varieties used in the media or on the Internet.	36	20.8	48	53.8	14.4	22.3	1.6	1.5	0	1.5

Perceptions of WE Factors	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH	TH	CH
34. I have to study English in order to pass such English proficiency tests as TOEIC, IELTS, TOEFL or CET.	55.2	29.2	32.8	48.5	4.8	8.5	5.6	11.5	1.6	2.3

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

5. Experiences with WE

Table 6 indicated that most Thai and Chinese respondents experienced WE through reading, listening, speaking, and writing as described in each statement. However, the Thai respondents tended to read and listen to content in diverse Englishes especially through the media and on the Internet. Specifically, up to 84.8% of them were found to read comments written in English by other non-native speakers on Facebook, and 76.8% listened to interviews in English between non-native speakers who speak accented English.

Consistent with the Thai group, 77.7% of the Chinese participants were reported to listen to interviews between non-native speakers, and 72.3% read comments written in English by non-native speakers on Weibo. Unlike the Thai group, 79.2% of them observed signs and notices in

hotels and tourist attractions written in different Englishes, but still found them intelligible. What is surprising is that a huge majority of the Chinese respondents experienced WE through the direct use of their own English. In other words, up to 71.5 % of them chatted in English with their foreign friends who are also non-native speakers on the Internet. They were aware that they wrote incorrectly, but that did not impede success in their communication.

Table 6. Percentage of Thai and Chinese respondents with regard to experiences with WE

Experiences with WE	Yes		No	
	TH	CH	TH	CH
35. I spoke accented English to give directions to foreigners, and they seemed to perfectly understand what I said.	66.4	52.3	33.6	47.7
36. I read comments written in English by non-native speakers on Facebook/Weibo. I knew many of those comments were ungrammatical, but I clearly understood the messages they wanted to convey.	84.8	72.3	15.2	27.7
37. I heard some Asian actors/actresses speak accented English in Hollywood movies. I think it sounded charming and understandable.	69.6	65.4	30.4	34.6
38. I chatted in English with my foreign friends who are also non-native English speakers on the Internet. I knew I wrote incorrectly, but that did not cause any communication breakdown.	58.4	71.5	41.6	28.5

Experiences with WE	Yes		No	
	TH	CH	TH	CH
39. When I traveled, I observed signs and notices in hotels and tourist attractions written incorrectly in English, but I found them not difficult to understand.	65.6	79.2	34.4	20.8
40. I listened to interviews in English between non-native speakers. Both the interviewer and the interviewee spoke accented English and seemed to understand each other clearly.	76.8	77.7	23.2	22.3

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

Research Question 2: Positions toward WE

An analysis of the interview data revealed five positions toward WE as shown below:

1. Standard English

The participants who took this position believed that native speakers are owners of English. They, thus, regarded the inner circle varieties, especially British and American English as standard English. In their opinion, standard English can be defined in terms of the accuracy of the linguistic structure based on the inner circle norms. Accordingly, the inner circle varieties should be used as instructional varieties in the classroom.

แบบมาตรฐานก็คือเป็นพวกโครงสร้างประโยคที่ถูกต้อง

“Standard English is a correct sentence structure”.

那我觉得可能就是British English 或者American English。就我们所说的标准的英音或者美音。

“Then I think it (standard English) might be either British English or American English, that is what we call standard British or American accent”.

2. Instrumental English

The participants whose responses were classified into this position viewed English as a communicative device and intelligibility, rather than mastery of a native speaker variety as a significant factor contributing to successful communication. The ability to convey their messages was the ultimate goal of those who held this position.

จริงๆ ผมก็คิดว่าได้ครับ ก็ในเมื่อเรามีสำเนียงแบบนี้ พอเราพูด แต่เราสื่อสารกับเขารู้เรื่อง มันก็ complete

“Actually, I think it is ok. Although I speak accented English, it is okay as long as I can communicate with others”.

因为语言它不就是为了交流的吗，只要能对方能听得懂，意思能传递，就可以达到目的了。

“Because a language is used for communication. As long as the other person can understand, and meaning can be conveyed, it (a language) achieves its purpose”.

3. Glocal English

Similar to the Instrumental English position, the Glocal English position recognizes the function of English as a global lingua franca. The participants whose responses were in line with this position, however, found it important to express Thainess or Chineseness in English in order to present the uniqueness of their culture to parts of the world.

จำเป็นค่ะ เพราะว่าจำเป็นมากๆ เราใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในแบบของเขา แต่ว่าสื่อสารในแบบที่เป็นของเรา แล้วก็เป็นเสน่ห์ให้กับเรา ประเทศเราคือ...เนื้อหาความเป็นไทยแต่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษสื่อสาร

“It’s necessary (to express Thainess) because it’s really necessary. We use English like native speakers, but communicate in our own ways. It makes us and our country charming...Content about Thainess but use English to communicate”.

从中国人角度来说，学英语是必须的，因为是为了传播我们本国文化，传统的重要方式，尤其当前英语比较流行的情况下。

“From the perspective of Chinese people, learning English is a must because it is an important way to spread the

culture and tradition of our country, especially in the current situation where English is relatively popular”.

4. World Englishes

The participants who held this position were aware of the diversity of English as well as the unique characteristics of English used by the people in their country. They also saw the potential of their own English to develop as a legitimate variety thanks to the widespread use of English in a number of domains in their country.

ไม่เคยค่ะ แต่รู้สึกว่ามันเป็นสำเนียงจีนหรือว่าสำเนียงอินเดียหรือเปล่า แต่รู้สึกว่า
อย่างนั้น

“I have never heard of (Singaporean English, Indian English, and Chinese English.), but I feel it sounds like a Chinese accent or an Indian accent. That’s how I feel”.

感觉我们使用英语总是特别简短，比如定语从句，主语从句都没有
“I feel that English we use (China English) is always very brief, sometimes there is no such elements like the attributive clauses or the subject clauses”.

5. Situational English

The participants who took this position acknowledged the roles of both native and non-native varieties; however, their functions vary according to situation. In other words, native varieties should be adopted in a written discourse,

formal contexts, and intercultural communication. Meanwhile, non-native varieties are acceptable in casual situations and intelligible only to speakers who share the first language and culture.

การเขียนก็ควรจะเป็นแบบมาตรฐานตามแบบพื้นฐาน

“Writing must follow standard English”.

和外国人交流时, 应该用标准英语,

“When communicating with foreigners, we should use standard English”.

Tables 7 and 8 show the number of Thai and Chinese interviewees regarding positions toward WE. It was found that all Thai and Chinese respondents took multiple positions toward WE. In other words, one Thai interviewee held five positions whereas the rest took four positions i.e. the Standard English position, the Instrumental English position, the World Englishes position, and the Situational English position. Similar to the Thai group, one Chinese interviewee held five positions. Meanwhile, two adopted four positions: one taking the Standard English position, the Glocal English position, the World Englishes position, and the Situational English position and another holding the Standard English position, the Instrumental English

position, the Glocal English position, and the World Englishes position. The other two held three positions: one taking the Standard English position, the World Englishes position, and the Situational English position and another adopting the Standard English position, the Instrumental English position, and the World Englishes position. *Second*, there was an apparent contradiction in how the two groups self-positioned toward WE. To be specific, all Thai and Chinese interviewees held the Standard English position while at the same time adopting the World Englishes position. *Third*, when the responses by all Thai interviewees could be categorized into the Instrumental English position and the Situation English position, three Chinese interviewees took these positions. Conversely, when three Chinese interviewees took the Glocal English position, only one Thai participant adopted this position.

Table 7. Number of Thai interviewees with regard to positions toward WE

Positions toward WE	Interviewees					Total
	TH1	TH2	TH3	TH4	TH5	
Standard English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Instrumental English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Glocal English		✓				1
World Englishes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Situational English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Total	4	5	4	4	4	

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

Table 8. Number of Chinese interviewees with regard to positions toward WE

Positions toward WE	Interviewees					Total
	CH1	CH2	CH3	CH4	CH5	
Standard English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Instrumental English			✓	✓	✓	3
Glocal English		✓	✓	✓		3
World Englishes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Situational English	✓	✓		✓		3
Total	3	4	4	5	3	

*TH: Thai, CH: Chinese

Discussion

This study explored the perceptions as well as the positions of Thai and Chinese university students regarding WE. The results of the data analysis are discussed in this section.

The Hegemony of British and American English

The questionnaire revealed that most Thai and Chinese respondents acknowledged the diversity of English. In other words, a great majority of them were reported to have heard of different English varieties, particularly British English, American English, and their own English. Their recognition of diverse Englishes were also reflected in the interview results which found that all Thai and Chinese participants adopted the World Englishes position. However, it was observed that these English varieties were not regarded equal by the two groups in relation to the notion of standard English. According to the questionnaire, most participants from both groups defined standard English in terms of a structural linguistic system based on the inner circle varieties, specifically British and American English. These findings not only imply that other native and non-native varieties are less-than-standard or even non-standard, but also echo the

hegemony of English associated with the UK and the USA. Accordingly, in a hierarchy of the English language, British and American English were placed by both groups in a higher position than other English varieties.

The Place of Native and Non-Native Varieties in the Real Context of Use

Being put at different levels within the hierarchy, native and non-native varieties were perceived by the majority of the Thai and Chinese respondents to be appropriate for use in different situations. This finding was shown in the responses of those adopting the Situational English position. It is crucial to note that while the other four patterns of self-positioning toward WE were in line with Buripakdi (2008; 2012), the Situational English position was newly emerged in the present study.

According to the Situational English position, native varieties, specifically standard varieties are to be employed when it comes to a written discourse or formal contexts whereas non-native varieties are only appropriate in casual situations. In addition, those adopting this position claimed that native varieties must be employed in communicative exchanges with foreigners when non-native varieties are

understandable merely to speakers who share the first language and culture. They, for instance, said:

ถ้าสำหรับของเราเองเราจะเข้าใจค่ะ เพราะว่าเราก็เหมือนว่าเขาพูดมาที่มันเป็นภาษาไทย
เหมือนกัน เราก็จะเข้าใจในแบบของเราด้วยกัน

“For Thai English, we will understand because we speak (English) in a way that is similar to when we speak Thai so we (Thai English speakers) understand each other”.

显然不太合适，因为文化差异和用法的不同，与外国人交流很容易
出现理解上的问题，误解。

“It (writing or speaking China English) is obviously not suitable because of cultural differences and language usage. There will be problems and misunderstandings coming easily in communication with foreigners”.

These responses suggest that the role of English spoken in the outer and the expanding circle are restricted to intra-ethnic communication.

On the other hand, in intercultural encounters, native varieties function as a lingua franca. It should be noted that intercultural encounters can occur either between a native and a non-native speaker or between non-native speakers. This means that whether such encounters involve a native speaker or not, a non-native speaker is expected to use English based on the inner circle norms. This finding,

however, reflects the deep-seated beliefs that a native variety is standard and, therefore, supposed to be intelligible to speakers of all English varieties and that over the course of conversation, a non-native speaker is the one to accommodate the language so as to make themselves understood by a native speaker. These beliefs, again, echo inequality in power not only between native and non-native Englishes, but also between native and non-native speakers in intercultural communication. Recognizing the nature of communication as a two-way process, Matsuda and Matsuda (2018) posits that “making one’s own message clear and trying to understand others is not the sole responsibility of non-native speakers or speakers of less privileged English varieties. Everyone is responsible for and should contribute to successful communication” (p. 67-68).

The Potential of Thai and China English as Varieties of WE

It was found that all Thai and Chinese interviewees held the World Englishes position, which showed that they were positive about the development and emergence of other Englishes, including their own variety as illustrated in the responses below:

ผมว่าในอนาคตมีแน่ เนื่องด้วยเพราะอะไร เพราะว่าคนไทยก็ถือได้ว่าเรามีการตื่นตัวมากขึ้นในเรื่องของการใช้ภาษา ดังนั้นผมคิดว่ามันก็น่าจะมี มีแน่นอนในอนาคตน่าจะรับเนื่องด้วยเราสนใจภาษามากขึ้น ดังนั้น การที่เราจะสร้างความเป็นตัวเป็นตนของตัวเอง มันก็มีแน่

“I think in the future, there will be Thai English. Why? Because Thai people are now more active in using the language so I think there will be Thai English in the future. Because we are increasingly interested in English so it is certain that we create our own identity”.

会, 中国是人口第一大国, 伴随着经济的发展, 我们肯定会逐渐使用英语对外交流, 有句话是这样说的: “走的人多了, 也便成了路。” 逐渐使用英语变多, 别的国家会有他们的英语, 那我们国家也会有自己的英语。

“Yes, China is the country with the largest population. There will be China English. With the development of economy, we will surely gradually use English for communication with foreigners. As the old saying goes: “Path is shown up only when thousands of people walk through.” Just like other countries, the growing use of English resulted in their own varieties, so we will have our own variety”.

In fact, the use of English in Thailand and China has always been categorized into norm-dependent (Kachru, 1985), which infers that the development of Thai and China

English as well-established varieties is difficult to occur. Given the fact that a growing number of Thai and Chinese people adopt English to communicate with others in their professional lives, they inevitably appropriate and shape English to meet their practical needs, which results in the development of the unique characteristics of English used by the Thai and the Chinese people (Watkhaolarm, 2005; He, 2017).

The increasing use of their developing English in their country may also lead Thai and Chinese people to become more aware of themselves as legitimate speakers of their own variety as well as make them feel a growing sense of ownership of the language. These were reflected in the questionnaire results which indicated that most Thai (84%) and Chinese (62.3%) respondents believed that English now belongs to those who use it and that up to 76.9% of the Chinese participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that British and the Americans are owners of English. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the findings run counter to those of previous research (e.g. Fang, 2017; Matsuda, 2003; Saengboon, 2015; Watkhaolarm, 2005) which revealed that non-native speakers in their studies did

not take the ownership of English and considered English a foreign language.

Interestingly, the majority of both groups were reported to believe that their own English variety has unique linguistic features. However, the Chinese respondents (86.7%) who agreed with the statement were far greater than their Thai counterparts (49.6%). The difference between the two groups in this aspect may result from the deficiency of knowledge regarding the linguistic features of Thai English since research in this area remains largely unexplored. Meanwhile, a greater and growing number of studies have been conducted on the phonology, lexis, syntax, and discourse pragmatics of China English (He & Li, 2009; He, 2017).

However, the two groups differed in their views on the distinctive linguistic feature of their own English variety. The Chinese interviewees held that the unique feature of China English was its linguistic structure which they believed to be transferred from the Chinese language as demonstrated in these responses:

中国人按照自己的逻辑顺序肯定是可以理解的。这是第一点。

“The first point is that the Chinese will certainly understand English based on the logical order of the Chinese language”.

就是用我们自己能够理解的翻译翻译出来，而且这种翻译都是我们大家能够接受的那种翻译，这个我感觉是独特的，就是中文的语序排列英语。

“(China English) is a kind of translation that we can understand. And this kind of translation is what we all can accept. So I think the unique feature of China English is in the arrangement of the language based on the order of the Chinese language”.

The finding was supported by the responses of those adopting the Glocal English position which argues that it is necessary and crucial to express their voices and identities in the use of English as one Chinese interviewee stressed:

我觉得，还是比较重要的，毕竟现在是一个全球化的大环境，而且这个全球化范围越来越广也越来越深入，如果一个国家想要在世界之林上，屹立不倒，或者更好的融入全球化趋势，还是需要通用语言来传达自己的文化身份

“I think it is still relatively important, after all, we are now under an environment of globalization, and the degree of this globalization is getting wider and deeper. If a country wants to stand as one of top countries in the world or to

integrate better into the trend of globalization, (in this situation) she needs the language to convey her own cultural identity”.

Desire to convey Chineseness in English may lead many Chinese people to adopt some features of the Chinese language which have developed into the characteristics that distinguish China English from other varieties (He & Li 2009).

Conversely, an accent was claimed to be the salient linguistic feature of Thai English. The Thai interviewees, for example, asserted:

มันเป็นสำเนียง สำเนียงที่แบบว่าที่เราสามารถฟังออกว่า นี่สำเนียงไทยนะ

“It’s an accent that we can tell this is a Thai accent”.

*อย่างเช่น เราจะพูดเป็นสำเนียงของเราเอง ไม่รู้ grammar ถูกไหม หนูไม่รู้ แต่ว่าน่าจะ
เป็นสำเนียงของเราเอง จะไม่ค่อยเป็นสำเนียงของเขาจริงๆ*

For example, we will speak with an accent. I don’t know if the grammar is correct, but it seems to be our own accent, unlike native accents.

These responses suggest that an accent serves as an index for the Thai respondents to differentiate their own English from those of others.

The difference between the two groups also lied in their attitudes toward an accent of their own variety. To be specific, the questionnaire revealed that 68.8% of the Thai respondents thought that Thai-accented English is not embarrassing. This finding was supported not only by 67.2% of the Thai respondents who argued that they do not mind whether they can speak English like native speakers as long as they can convey their communicative intentions, but also by the responses of those adopting the Instrumental English position which regards English as a communicative tool and intelligibility as a crucial factor for successful communication. In this sense, the Thai group placed a greater emphasis on getting their messages across than producing sounds closer to native accents as shown in this response:

สำเนียงของตนเองหรือครับ จริงๆ ผมก็ไม่ไ้ซีเรียส ก็ดีครับ เพราะว่าก็เป็นสำเนียงเรา แต่ว่าต้องเป็นเป็นสำเนียงเราที่คนอื่นฟังเข้าใจด้วยนะ

“My own accent? Actually, I don’t mind. It’s okay. Because it’s my own accent, but it must be an accent that is understandable to others”.

What is striking is that even though 55.4% of the Chinese participants did not mind about their accent in communicating in English, 60% of them viewed

Chinese-accented English as embarrassing. This finding may be explained by their preference for native English accents as up to 71.5% of the Chinese respondents found a British accent charming and 65.4% found an American accent beautiful. The researchers assumed that their academic major could be a significant factor causing the difference between the two groups. Since most Chinese participants were majoring in soft science, possessing the native-like fluency would yield them a big advantage over others in their career opportunities. Meanwhile, the majority of the Thai participants studied engineering in which particular technical skills seemed to be more important in their future professions. As a result, attaining the native speaker accent may not be their ultimate goal.

The Coexistence of Standard Englishes and WE in ELT

The questionnaire showed that more than 60% of the participants in both groups upheld the use of British or American English as an instructional model while at the same time finding it necessary and beneficial to incorporate diverse Englishes into the lessons. Due to the prestigious status of these standard English varieties, up

to 80% of the Thai and 86.2% of the Chinese respondents believed that attaining the native-like competence will yield them better opportunities in life. To use Bourdieuan term, English is considered a form of capital which can be used to advance career opportunities and acquire social prestige (Pan & Block, 2011). Another possible reason for advocating standard varieties as instructional varieties is their need to pass English proficiency tests. As reported earlier, up to 88% of the Thai and 77.7% of the Chinese group agreed that they are required to take such standardized tests as TOEIC, IELTS, TOEFL, or CET which are generally constructed based on norms of the native speaker varieties (Mahboob, 2018).

While acknowledging the advantages brought by the achievement of the native-like competence, both groups showed awareness of the diversity of English and argued for the integration of other Englishes into their lessons. This awareness could be raised by rich exposure to and experiences with different English varieties in their everyday life. In other words, the questionnaire found that most Thai and Chinese respondents read and listened to content in diverse Englishes via the media and on the

Internet. The Chinese group also observed different Englishes used in hotels and tourist attractions. Apart from reading and listening, most Chinese respondents experienced WE through the use of their own English on the Internet.

The participants may also upheld the integration of Englishes other than British and American English into the lessons thanks to the awareness of their future interlocutors. Specifically, the questionnaire showed that about a half of the Thai and the Chinese participants acknowledged that they are more likely to communicate in English with non-native speakers, which could be influenced by their observation of conversations between non-native speakers in their English language textbooks. Marlina (2014) states that “the forces of globalisation such as the explosion of advanced information technologies and human mobility across the globe have further led to uncertainty of the lingua-cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors with whom people communicate in English” (p. 3). Consequently, ELT professionals are encouraged to take into consideration this diverse and complicated reality of English as well as English users in their teaching

practices in order to prepare their students for the real-world communication (Matsuda, 2018).

Interestingly enough, although the majority of Thai and Chinese participants revealed their receptive attitude toward WE, both groups reflected their preference for British and American English varieties. This may be explained by standard language ideology which has been deeply ingrained in their minds via teaching and learning materials and standard examinations. In other words, as a result of the adoption of standard English varieties, specifically British and American English as the target varieties in most English language classrooms in Thailand and China, it is likely that British and American English is dominantly viewed by the majority of Thai and Chinese students as the most desirable, thus resulting in their preference for these two standard varieties.

Conclusion

The present study explored how university students in Thailand and China perceived and positioned themselves toward WE using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The two groups showed both similarities and differences in their perceptions of WE. Furthermore,

they adopted five positions toward WE i.e. the Standard English position, the Instrumental English position, the Glocal English position, the World Englishes position, and the Situational English position.

These findings indicated that both groups recognized the existence of different varieties of English. However, these varieties were perceived differently regarding the notion of standard English with native varieties, specifically British and American English being viewed as standard. As a result, native and non-native varieties were believed by both groups to be appropriate for use in different situations. Furthermore, both groups saw the potential of Thai and China English to develop as varieties of WE. Nevertheless, the two groups differed in their views on the salient linguistic feature of their own variety as well as their attitudes toward an accent of their own variety.

Finally, thanks to the superiority of standard varieties and the need to pass standardized English proficiency tests, most Thai and Chinese participants supported the use of British or American English as an instructional variety. In the meantime, the two groups argued for the integration of diverse Englishes into the lessons as a result of rich

exposure to and experiences with diverse Englishes in their daily life as well as awareness of growing communicative exchanges in English with other non-native speakers.

Despite all the efforts of the researchers, the present study is not without limitations. To gain better insights into the perceptions and positions of university students in Thailand and China concerning WE, future studies may enlarge the sample size by including more Thai and Chinese university students in other Thai and Chinese universities in the questionnaire and the interview. Besides, the perceptions and positions of university students in other expanding circle countries e.g. Japan, Korea, and Vietnam can be explored to obtain a more comprehensive picture of WE in this particular circle. Lastly, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the influence of such factors as levels of education, fields of study, and professions on the perceptions and positions regarding WE.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Can you share with me your English learning experience?
2. What are your goals of learning English?
3. What is your understanding of standard English?
4. Who do you think are owners of English? Why?
5. Do you think there are unique characteristics of English used by the Thai/Chinese people?
6. Do you think it is appropriate for the Thai/Chinese people to use their own English in speaking and writing? Why?
7. Do you think it is important to use English in a way that expresses one's own cultural identity? Why?
8. There are different varieties of English such as British English, American English, Indian English and Singaporean English. Do you think there is/there will be a Thai/Chinese variety of English called Thai English/China English?
9. What variety of English would you like to study in the classroom? Why?

10. What do you think of native and non-native teachers of English in terms of knowledge of English and effectiveness of teaching?
11. How do you feel about speaking accented English in communication?
12. When using English, how do you feel if someone identifies you as a native speaker of English?
13. Do you think one must require the native-like English to communicate in English? Why?
14. What do you think are the most important factors contributing to successful communication between English language users? Why?
15. Are there any more things you would like to share before we end the interview?