



THAI TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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abstract

This study used a longitudinal mixed-method design to investigate how attitudes towards English as a lingua franca (ELF) changed over time as English teachers progressed through education and teaching experiences from 2019 to 2022. An online survey was conducted with 50 Thai teachers in their second year of study and after they graduated and taught at schools for one year. An interview was implemented to collect qualitative data after the two surveys were completed. The survey results indicated a congruent attitude change from 'agree' ($\bar{x} = 3.90$, S.D. = 0.43) to 'strongly agree' ($\bar{x} = 4.22$, S.D. = 0.58). The increase was statistically significant ($p = .003$). The findings revealed controversy between the teachers' attitudes and their practices. The teachers had positive attitudes towards ELF, but they preferred native speakers' models of English usage and accents. The interview findings indicated that factors influencing their attitude change were personal factors (e.g., self-perceived English proficiency and exposures to English) and contextual factors (e.g., training and teaching experiences). The findings suggest that awareness of the ELF phenomenon may not be sufficient to drive change in English language teaching (ELT), but ELF-aware teacher education is needed to teach an ELF skillset that best suits the objectives and processes of ELT.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing use of English as an international and intercultural communication tool caused by globalization has led to uncertainty among English teachers. A number of educators question how English should be taught and tested. The emergence and development of the English as a lingua franca (ELF) concept has challenged the traditional perceptions which suggest that students should conform to the norms of native English speakers. In the Thai context in which students study English as a foreign language, the notion of ELF is relatively novel. It can be said that Thai teachers' acceptance of ELF will create a great impact on their instructional practices and the instructional choices that they make. However, promoting the acceptance of ELF and the positive image of non-native English teachers seems to be a significant challenge for teacher education and training.

English as a lingua franca is "communication between people from different first languages with English most often not being the first language of anyone present in an interaction" (Leung & Jenkins, 2020, p. 27). It emerged due to the fact that, nowadays, people get more exposure, to English spoken by non-native speakers than English that native speakers speak. Even in native-speaker countries, approximately 20% of their population speak a language other than English in schools, the workplace, and at home (Leung & Jenkins, 2020). In addition, even

though English used by non-native speakers may differ from English natively spoken by people in the inner circle countries (Kachru, 2005), learning English in expanding circle countries can be beneficial in developing students' negotiating skills, resulting from diverse interlocutors (Kimura, 2017). For student teachers, learning English in an expanding country context provides rich opportunities to acquire alternative pedagogical practices and understand their beginner students when they become teachers (Stephens, 2021). However, in the context of teacher education in Thailand, Thai ELT educators seem to focus on native-speaker standards and norms. As a result, coursebooks, materials as well as syllabi are native speaker-centered. Apart from the academic aspect, the positive perception resulting from native-speaker standards and norms is also demonstrated through the favorable view towards the native-like appearances in Thai educational institutions, believing that English teachers with Caucasian looks speak English better than those who have Asian looks. Possessing this kind of belief can be considered as individual preference, nonetheless, it can also be problematic in today's changing circumstances. With that said, competent educators who do not possess a Caucasian appearance may have fewer opportunities, in regard to employment or career advancement.

Even though modern linguists believe that ELF is an appropriate means of international communication (Leung & Jenkins, 2020; Nordquist, 2020; Seidlhofer, 2020), ELF is the focus of scholarly debate for many years on the type of English it uses, its owner, and how users should react to it. Additionally, people seem to oppose ELF because of "prejudice, market forces, vested interests, cultural sensibilities, aesthetic arguments, and practical questions" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 151). Although studies (e.g., Curran & Chern, 2017) reported several characteristics of ELF of which learners feel supportive, including focusing on authentic communication, respecting English varieties, being open to intercultural communication, and focusing on language development, some critics claim that ELF lacks standards and promotes too much diversity (Jenkins, 2009). Nevertheless, in the realm of teaching, Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) argue that students are less likely to succeed in communication with foreigners who speak other Englishes if teachers' pedagogies are influenced by native speaker norms. In a similar vein, Seidlhofer (2011) opines that the English language has been prescribed based on outdated, irrelevant, and unrealistic assumptions, regarding objectives and processes of learning. Despite the fact that there are some arguable issues of ELF, it is evident that when communicating with interlocutors with different linguistic backgrounds, ELF plays a significant role.

Since culture cannot be transferred from one community to others, those who try to do so can create inequality or the domination of one particular culture (Seidlhofer, 2020). Communication among non-native speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds requires intercultural communicative competence or the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who speak other languages and come from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, English language teachers should acknowledge that most intercultural communications occur in ELF contexts (Chen, 2022). Those who favor ELF believe that language is for human communication, so in ELT, the linguistic forms and features should not be the focus, but the communicative values from getting the message across.

Since misunderstanding may create obstacles to behavior change and practices or activities that teachers implement, attitudes reveal the extent to which teachers understand ELF and their acceptance of it. However, Holliday (2005) stressed that most people whose English is not their mother tongue have a positive attitude towards the native-speaker model and their perceptions of standard English were shaped by "native speakerism" unconsciously. Jenkins (2007) added that success and failure in English language learning tend to be judged based on the native-speaker standards, and ELF is seen just as "errors".

According to Seidlhofer (2011), there has long been a debate about factors that influence attitudes towards ELF which need to be considered and how they can be reconciled. While prior studies found that familiarity with varieties of English (Kaur, 2014a) and experiences abroad (Kaypak & Ortactepe, 2014; Luo, 2018) affected students' thoughts about ELF, a current study by Lim and Hwang (2019) found that studying in another country and experiences of communicating with foreigners made no difference in learners' attitudes or judgment about ELF. There are more factors found to influence ELF attitudes, including linguistic self-confidence (Dornyei, Csizer, & Nemeth, 2006), proficiency levels (Jenkins 2007), notions about communicative competence and identity as English users (Jenkins 2007; Ortactepe, 2012), images of English (e.g., belief that the English variety of native speakers is standard English (Baker, 2012), accent preference (Cheung & Sung, 2016; Kaur, 2014b), perceived future use of English (Luo, 2018), and beliefs about the process of learning a language (Mikeladze & Hariri, 2018).

Speaking of attitudes, scrutinizing attitudes at a point in time may benefit predictions of future actions. However, attitudes can change over time. Implementing a longitudinal study can reveal essential aspects of improvements in practice and changes that occur. While it is comprehended that ELF users do not use a language owned by anyone, and they must "find their own voice in their own words" (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2017), in most Thai educational institutes, English is taught as an academic subject and likely to conform to native norms, although there is weak evidence of whose norms it is reliant on (Baker, 2012). Therefore, a longitudinal investigation of the language attitude and attitude change of English language teachers may provide some insights into English language teacher education in Thailand.

At the early stage in the attempt to encourage the adoption of ELF among student teachers, understanding their current attitudes towards ELF can predict their behaviors (Kelman, 1961). More importantly, understanding the reasons behind the attitude change over time will help identify the motivation for ELF adoption within the changing environment of English teacher education. Furthermore, the positive pedagogical implications in improving English teaching and learning, as a result of ELF adoption, can inspire change and persuade student teachers to shift the English language pedagogies towards ELF.

This study investigated English language teachers' attitudes towards ELF and the factors influencing the change of their attitudes when they were in their early-career. In order to address the scholarly debates on the English language form, function, and legitimacy of ELF, the present study also examined teachers' attitudes towards ELF in three aspects as Jenkins (2007) suggested. Such aspects include models of English, communicative values, and cultural values of the English language. The research questions were first, how do Thai teachers' attitudes towards ELF change as they progress through education and teaching experiences? Secondly, what are the factors influencing their attitude change over the course of years?

It is believed that this research study would be beneficial for educators and those who are in the ELF environment, in terms of helping them prepare themselves as well as their students to communicate successfully using English in this particular context.

METHOD

This longitudinal study used an explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design to collect and analyze data. The data were collected using two research instruments; an online questionnaire and a semi-structured individual interview. The questionnaire consisted of five demographic questions and 12 Likert scale questions. The 5-point scale ranked from 1 to 5, the value of 1 was strongly disagree and the value of 5 was strongly agree. The rating-scale questions comprise three aspects: models of English, English for communication, and English language

and culture. The questions in the questionnaire were adopted from Curran and Chern (2017). The interview included two questions asking about the participants' perceptions of ELF before and after graduation and factors influencing their attitude change. Both the questionnaire and the interview questions were validated by three experts in ELF and ELT filed before using for data collection.

The survey was undertaken twice. The first survey was carried out with the second-year English Education majors in 2019, and the second one was done in 2022 after the student teachers had graduated and taught at schools for one year. To conduct the first survey, the researchers sent the questionnaire link to the advisor and then she sent it to the student teachers who were under her supervision. Selected from convenience sampling method, 50 English-major student teachers studying at a university in Thailand consented to participate in the study. The demographic data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics (n = 50)

Items	n	%
<i>1. Gender</i>		
Male	10	20
Female	40	80
<i>2. The number of languages spoken</i>		
1 language	7	14
2 languages	37	74
3 languages	5	10
4 languages	1	2
<i>3. Experience in other countries</i>		
Yes	2	4
No	48	96
<i>4. Goals of studying English</i>		
To speak like a native speaker	6	12
To speak sufficiently for communication	5	10
To have satisfactory proficiency in English language	7	14
To teach English	12	24
To teach in English	3	6
To seek further knowledge from various sources in English for personal and professional development	12	24
To communicate while travelling	4	8
Others	1	2

The majority of the participants (80.00%) were female. Most of them spoke two languages (74.00%). Nearly all participants had never been to other countries (96.00%). Their primary goals of studying English were to teach English (24.00%) and to use English as a tool for individual and career development (24.00%). The study goals of the participants who could speak more languages (three to four languages) were not different from those of the participants who spoke fewer languages (one to two languages).

The second survey was carried out after the student teachers graduated and worked as school teachers for one year. The questions were identical to the ones used in the first survey. In addition, this research did not involve sensitive topics, so the researchers collected data non-anonymously. Anyhow, apart from their emails, the participants were not asked to provide other identifying data for ethical reasons. In the second survey, the percentage of participants having been abroad (e.g., participating in an exchange program, internship, language school, and

conference) increased from 4.00 % to 14.63%. All participants who had been abroad would like to speak like native speakers and use English as a medium of instruction. Additionally, the participants addressed more goals of study. For example, Participant 3 specified in the first survey that her goal of studying English was to speak like a native speaker. Surprisingly, in the second survey, she added several goals including, to speak like a native speaker, teach English, teach in English, have satisfactory English proficiency, communicate while travelling, and seek further knowledge. Regardless of the lower percentage, the participants' top two goals of study remained the same: to teach English (17.94%) and to seek further knowledge (16.24%).

As for the analysis of the quantitative data, the interval scores were interpreted as follows: 1.00-1.79 = strongly disagree, 1.80-2.59 = disagree, 2.60-3.39 = neutral, 3.40-4.19 = agree, and 4.20-5.00 = strongly agree. That is to say, the interval scores between 1.00 - 2.59 mean that the participants have negative attitudes towards ELF, 2.60 - 3.39 means neutral attitudes, and 3.40 - 5.00 mean positive attitudes.

The results from the survey revealed top five students who had the largest difference between their original attitudes and their current attitudes. Subsequently, these participants were selected to participate in the interview. The interview was conducted online in Thai and recorded with the participants' permission. After that it was transcribed and translated into English. Then, the translated version was approved by an expert in Thai-English translation. The qualitative data from the interview were analyzed using open coding and axial coding. Interview transcripts were sent back to the five interviewees so that they could approve or correct them for clarity and conciseness.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the research questions, the results of this study are divided into two sections. First, the quantitative analysis of the participants' attitudes in the first and the second survey. Second, the qualitative analysis of factors influencing participants' attitude change during the transition from student teachers to early-career school teachers.

The Change of Attitudes Towards ELF

Before participating in the first survey, the student teachers had some knowledge in English teaching and learning because they just finished their second-year of study in English Education program. In the second survey, they gained more experiences because they had finished their fourth-year study and taught in schools for one year. Table 2 and Figure 1 illustrate the participants' attitudes (N = 50) and the attitude changes during the past three years.

The results from the first and second surveys show that the participants' average scores for models of English were 3.44 and 4.69, meaning that the participants had positive attitudes towards ELF. However, in both surveys, their attitudes towards the importance of having native speakers' accents remained neutral ($\bar{x} = 2.82$ and 3.12), as same as introducing students to many different English accents ($\bar{x} = 2.74$ and 2.72) and providing only American or British classroom materials ($\bar{x} = 3.32$ and 3.08). The participants strongly agreed on the significance of various selections of both native and non-native class materials ($\bar{x} = 4.00$ and 4.12), and various experiences of being exposed to several English varieties ($\bar{x} = 3.94$ and 4.50), as well as native-like role model conformity ($\bar{x} = 3.90$ and 3.88). In communicative aspect, the results regarding English for communication illustrated the participants' high level of agreement in the aspect of real-life English communication teaching focus ($\bar{x} = 4.34$ and 4.98). Additionally, the research participants also displayed their agreement on preparing their students for non-native English communication ($\bar{x} = 3.58$ and 3.82). In the aspect of English language and culture, it was evident that the majority of participants strongly agreed with almost every statement, and the level of

agreement on being familiar with native speakers' culture and traditions increased the most, followed by the aspect of teaching students to be aware of intercultural differences.

Table 2. Thai Teachers' Attitudes Towards ELF

Items	1 st Survey		2 nd Survey	
	\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.
Models of English				
1. To sound like native speakers is important.	2.82	1.02	3.12	1.06
2. Being exposed to English spoken by a range of native speakers is important.	3.94	1.13	4.50	0.58
3. Introducing students to many different English accents in class is confusing.	2.74	1.07	2.72	1.26
4. Providing only American or British classroom materials is important.	3.22	1.13	3.08	1.16
5. Providing classroom materials with a range of models of English used by native and non-native speakers is important.	4.00	1.03	4.12	0.82
6. Native speakers of English should be role model for Thai students.	3.90	1.02	3.88	0.92
Overall	3.44	0.58	3.57	0.70
English for communication				
7. English program should teach students to use the language in real-life communication.	4.34	0.87	4.98	0.14
8. English program should focus on preparing students for communication with people who are not English native speakers.	3.58	1.05	3.82	0.87
Overall	3.96	0.54	4.40	0.82
English language and culture				
9. Students have to be able to use English to share information about their own culture and traditions.	4.36	0.83	4.60	0.49
10. English teachers have to help students understand people from other countries better.	4.24	0.82	4.64	0.53
11. Students should be familiar with the culture and traditions of native speakers of English.	4.22	0.89	4.72	0.45
12. Students should be taught to be aware of intercultural differences.	4.32	0.87	4.80	0.40
Overall	4.29	0.07	4.69	0.09

Although the overall attitudes of the research participants towards EFL appear positive, the results on the models of English aspect illustrate contradicting attitudes. That is, even though the participants seemed to have favorable attitudes towards various models of English, they were still inclined toward the teaching of English that conformed to that of the native English speakers. This is also in line with the assumption that when the trained teachers are not native English speakers, they desire to speak like the native in attempts to project themselves as capable English teachers. However, the participants seemed not to let such desire influence their decisions when choosing class materials. The outcome of this study contradicts the previous finding that although student teachers realized that there were many forms of English, they still insist on using only the native English norms in their teaching. Similarly, when it comes to evaluating students' performance, the student teachers may unconsciously allow their

preferences towards native speakers' norms to influence the assessment, albeit being aware of the importance of ELF.

Additionally, the research outcomes regarding English for communication reveal that the teachers understood that ELF rather than standard English was more practical in general conversations. Such manifestation demonstrates contradictory thoughts between pragmatic English communication afforded by the ELF concept and traditional academic beliefs conformed to standard norms. It is evident in the research outcome elaborated earlier that as much as teachers aimed to adhere to standard English teaching customs, they are willing to bend those norms in general communications. These contradictory ideas may have been as a result of the wrestling between two different schools of thought. The first school of thought was the belief since they were pre-service teachers believing that a good English teacher must use English correctly. However, their post-graduation experiences and the additional uses of English might help them realize the second school of thought in which the communicative function of the language was just as important. Therefore, the teachers favored the traditional English teaching in classroom instructions. However, when using English for general communication, they adopt ELF. It indicates that these Thai teachers perceive that ELF is more practical than standard English for daily conversations among non-native English speakers

Concerning the cultural aspect of languages, it appears the teachers participated in this research acknowledged that there are intercultural differences from country to country. They also believed that ELF could be the means for their students to help them learn about their own culture, while also enabling them to learn about the culture of others. Notwithstanding, they still put a great emphasis on integrating cultures and traditions of native speakers into their teaching. Similar to the models of English aspect, the research outcome related to the English language cultural aspect may have been as a result of their preferences towards standard English norms. The desire to sound like native speakers unconsciously influenced the teachers in conforming to traditional English traditions in their classroom teaching. Therefore, although they are aware of diverse cultural backgrounds in general communication, they still prefer to integrate cultures and traditions of native English-speaking countries into their teaching.

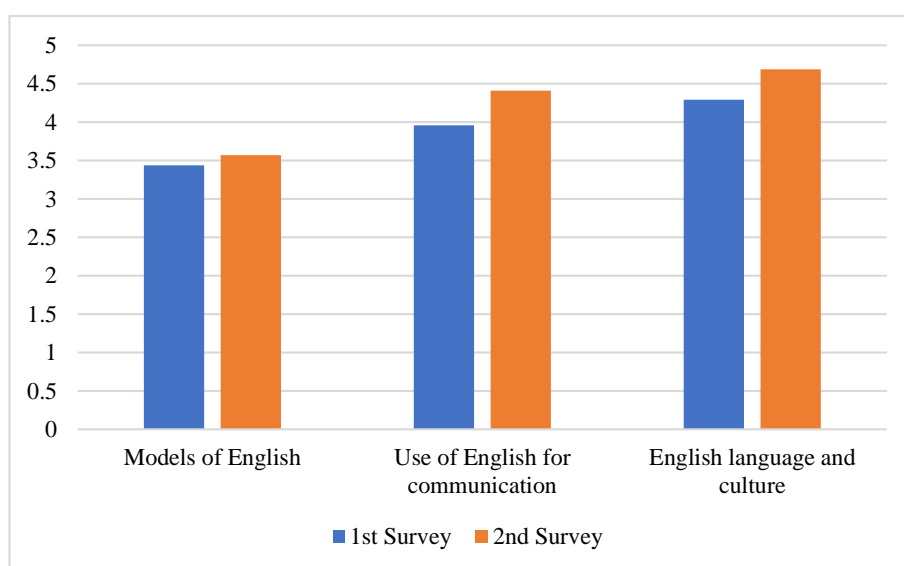


Figure 1. Comparison of Participants' Attitudes Towards ELF

Figure 1 indicates that the participants' attitudes moved to the higher level in the last three years. However, among the three aspects, their attitudes towards models of English changed

very little. Even though the attitudes towards the use of English for communication showed the biggest difference between the first and the second survey, the English language and culture aspect remained at a high degree of attitude. The direction of attitude change is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired Samples T-test Results of Thai Teachers' Attitudes Change

	Teachers	\bar{x}	S.D.	Meaning	Sig. (2-Tailed)
First survey	50	3.90	0.43	Agree	.003
Second survey	50	4.22	0.58	Strongly agree	

Table 3 shows that the participants' attitudes changed in the same direction as the original attitude. The congruent attitude change was from 'agree' ($\bar{x} = 3.90$, S.D. = 0.43) to 'strongly agree' ($\bar{x} = 4.22$, S.D. = 0.58). The increase was statistically significant ($p = .003 < .05$).

The results gained from this longitudinal study reveal congruent attitude change among the research participants, in an upward direction. This is an indication that the participants' attitudes towards ELF become more positive after they had gained new experiences and acquired new information, post-graduation. It can be explained that cumulative experiences of the participants shape their attitude towards the language. Furthermore, when the language is used repeatedly over time, it can gradually alter the perception of the language users. Hence, there is a possibility that attitudes towards the language can change, as a result.i

Factors Influencing Attitude Change

This section presented the results from the interview with the five teachers whose scores showed the largest difference between the first and the second survey. Table 4 shows the information of the five teachers.

Table 4. Information of the Five Interviewees

Participants	Gender	First survey	Second survey	Difference
1	Female	2.00	3.75	1.75
2	Female	3.00	4.50	1.50
3	Female	2.42	3.75	1.33
4	Female	2.67	3.83	1.17
5	Male	3.25	4.33	1.08

The first interview question focused on how the participants perceived English language learning when they were student teachers and how they thought about it after they had been English teachers. Their responses confirmed the quantitative results that they found communicative English more significant than standard English. Even though, they admired native speakers' accents and preferred what they perceived to be correct or proper English based on native speaker norms, they did not feel inferior that they could not speak exactly like native speakers, as Participant 2 described in the interview.

"I always want to perfect my accent and improve my English competence, but I don't think that I can meet the ultimate goal. Anyway, I just let it go. I don't blame myself for that. Speaking with an accent does not make me a bad English teacher." (Participant 2)

All participants said that their attitudes toward ELF had changed. They agreed more to the ELF concept and tried to teach communicative English but they felt that it was difficult to do so, as was mentioned by Participant 3 in terms of the challenges in their practices.

“My students are not proficient. I used to teach my students everyday English focusing on communicative skills but it did not work. The study plan allowed me to meet students twice a week, 50 minutes each time. It was not enough to teach language skills and prepare them for the National Test. It was very stressful.” (Participant 3)

The reflection of Participant 3 discloses a mismatch between the new theories of English language teaching and the requirements of Thailand’s national tests. While communicative skills are widely accepted to benefit students’ real lives, Thai teachers are tempted to employ a grammar-translation approach rather than communicative language teaching so that their students will be prepared for the national test.

The second interview question asked about factors influencing their attitude change. The coding methods revealed two major themes: personal factors and contextual factors.

Personal factors

1. English language learning goals

All participants mentioned their original goals for learning English, and more goals were determined after they were English teachers. Their additional goals were found to influence their preferences of ELF.

“When I was a student, I used to think that being able to communicate in English with foreigners was sufficient, but when I become a teacher, I need English not only for communication but also searching for resources for teaching, improving my career, contacting foreigners and others. I think English is more than just a subject of study, but it is an essential means for global communication and international relations.” (Participant 1)

Not only had their goals impacted their beliefs about ELF, but their awareness of ELF also influenced their instructional aims such as developing students’ communicative competence (Participant 3) and using English as a medium of instruction (Participant 4). They accepted that teaching should not aim at producing formal or grammatically correct English, but meaningful communication.

2. Self-perceived English proficiency

The participants’ self-perceived English proficiency has occurred from the understanding of the English language norms. Their opinions on the norms that they have accepted created their perceptions of their proficiency. For example, Participant 5 echoed that:

“When I was a student, I thought that knowing a lot of vocabulary and grammar would help me to use English fluently. I was afraid that my classmates would have laughed at me if I had spoken ungrammatically. I feared of being judged by friends and teachers. It is different now because I have learned that meaning is more important than accuracy. I am willing to communicate and teach in English, and I always remind my students that mistakes are welcome in my English class.” (Participant 5)

The significant shift in their viewpoints of English norms changed their perceptions of their English proficiency. The perception that their proficiency is high enough to use English made them feel more confident and positive to their own variety of English and of others, beyond those which are native speaker owned.

3. Learning experiences

The participants used to be less tolerant of different accents and varieties because they previously dominantly experienced Anglo-American accents, stylistic features, idiomatic expressions and cultures, as Participant 1 said.

“When I was a student teacher, I used course books from British or American publishers. In the classrooms, I listened and watched Anglo-American media, so I did not quite understand other accents. The program also offered a course called Sociological and Cultural Backgrounds of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. However, I think the two Englishes are the fundamentals for English learning that make me understand other accents and stylistic features better now.” (Participant 1)

After graduation, the participants’ learning was not limited to classrooms. They interacted in various experiences through academic and recreational activities. Their attitudes towards ELF were gradually changed, as Participant 5 described.

“To be honest, when I was a student, I thought English belonged to the US or the UK. British English was privilege and rigorous and American English was practical and widely used around the world. I had to choose one model and I chose American English. Even though I encountered mixed use of Englishes, I had to identify which ones were American styles and learned those patterns. I also studied grammar intensively. After I have used social networking sites, watched many videos and movies, and read research articles, I think meaning is more important than accurateness.” (Participant 5)

4. Exposures to English

Previously, the participants were limited to Anglo-American varieties of English in their course books due to the study plan offered by the program, as Participant 1 explained.

“I feel that studying in the English Education program limited the opportunities to use English because I had to spare time for taking many courses relating to general education, teaching profession, and the practicum. Additionally, I studied each English course once a week, and I think it was not sufficient to develop English skills.” (Participant 1)

However, when they are English teachers, they use English to seek knowledge from different sources for personal and professional development every day. They get more exposures to English than the time they were students from using social networking sites and consuming online contents produced by English users from all over the world. Participants 4 and 5 said as follows:

“When I was a student teacher, I thought of English as a communication tool, but I was too shy to speak English. I was afraid that foreigners would misunderstand me because of my

accent and misuse of words and grammar. Now, I am a lot more confident to speak with a foreigner. I was very happy to have a French missionary visiting my school and helped me teach English for three months. I learned from her that nobody would judge my English competence as long as the interlocutors can come across the message.” (Participant 4)

“After I have used social networking sites, watched many videos and movies, and read research articles, I think meaning is more important than accurateness.” (Participant 5)

Contextual factors

1. English language learning situations

The participants reflected that when they were students, they studied English through traditional face-to-face courses, but when they are teachers, they use technology more often. Searching for online resources for their online instruction allowed them to see different Englishes, and they did not hesitate to use various supplementary teaching materials from the internet, as Participants 1 and 2 stated.

“The classrooms I teach are quite different from the ones I studied. In my teaching space, I was not limited to only British or American English because the instructional materials from the internet used a variety of English. My students learned well from those digital media, so native-speaker-based grammar and norms are not the foci in my classrooms.” (Participant 1)

“The world has been changed. Everybody uses English. I have learned that I cannot expect my students to speak perfect English. So, I have to try to understand them and they should acknowledge the existence of this phenomenon.” (Participant 2)

Participant 3 also prioritized intelligibility over accuracy and forms and revealed some challenges of implementing the ELF approach in Thai classrooms.

“I know that communicative competence is the most important thing my students should develop, but it is a strange paradox that the Ministry of Education who requires English teachers teach communicative skills uses grammar-oriented tests to evaluate students’ English proficiency concerning the native speakers’ standard.” (Participant 3)

2. Educational practices

Modifications of ideas of language and communication were partly created from prior educational practices. There is a connection between the participants’ thoughts and educational practices, as Participant 4 claimed.

“During my study, I learned some instructional principles and theories, and I had practiced them through some courses such as Teaching Practice 1 and 2 and Teaching Practicum 1 and 2. Every time I was in front of the whiteboard, I was very nervous, but I improved little by little both my skills and attitude towards using English as a medium of instruction.” (Participant 4)

3. Training

The participants encountered a disparity between the native English that they were familiar and the ELF uses that they have to deal with. Attending professional development training regularly in order to complete their annual portfolio performance reports allowed them to learn from many ELT experts and slowly changed their perceptions of ELF, as Participant 4 said.

“Attending various professional development projects allowed me to meet and learn from many experts in English teaching. They open my world about English for multilingual communication.” (Participant 4)

4. Teaching experiences

Developing students’ intercultural communicative competence during their teaching profession drove changes in participants’ attitudes. Engaging students with the native English speakers were not enough to prepare students for realistic international communication, as Participant 2 and 4 addressed.

“In all existing media, English is often spoken by non-native speakers, so the international use of English tends to serve the needs of current students.” (Participant 2)

“Most of my students learn English as the third or fourth language. They use a local language at home. They learn Thai and English at school. They use Thai every day but they don’t have the opportunity to use English. It’s quite hard to engage them in class because they don’t realize the significance of English, so they should learn English for survival not for being tested. For these students, communication is more important than correctness.” (Participant 4)

The results analyzed based on the individual interview with the research participants indicate that the teachers’ direct experiences, both in their personal context and professional aspects have influenced their change of attitudes towards ELF. The interview results suggest that factors contributing to their change of perceptions can be grouped into personal factors and career related factors. The personal factors include their English language learning goals, self-perceived English proficiency, post-university graduation learning experiences, and exposures to English varieties. In addition to the personal factors, the career related factors that influence their positive perceptions towards ELF include English language learning situations, educational practices, training, and teaching experiences. It is quite evident that these teachers’ direct experiences in applying English skills in various situations both for personal gains and for career success have helped them come to the realization that there are more than just American English and British English being used throughout the world. In the era where people can be connected through social media platforms, English contents available in the online world appear in much more varieties than just American English and British English. Nonetheless, people throughout the world who use neither American English nor British English can communicate just as effective. This higher degree of realization of the practicality of ELF among the research participants probably contributes greatly to their changes of attitudes

towards ELF. Moreover, people get more exposures to Englishes spoken by non-native speakers in many different circumstances. The emergence of this phenomenon may have caused the research participants to witness the importance of ELF and change their attitudes as time goes by.

Again, another invaluable section full of lively extracts, student voices which capture their lived experiences of the phenomenon under study. An original contribution to the field of ELF.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to the adoption of ELF in the realm of pragmatic language use, attitude is an essential factor influencing users' acceptance. In this study, the researchers aim to explore attitudes of Thai teachers towards ELF concept and to investigate factors affecting the change of their attitudes over time. Although the research participants' preference in acquiring native-like accents in their own speaking and in putting a great emphasis on teaching cultures and traditions of native speakers, the research results gained from both quantitative and qualitative instruments revealed interesting answers to the two research questions that seemed contradicting to such preference. In regards to the overall attitude, the teachers seemed to perceive ELF positively one year after their graduation. Taking for example, during class instructions, it was evident that the participants' main instructional goal was preparing their students for authentic intercultural communication. With such goal in mind, it resulted in their preference in adopting various instructional materials made by both native and non-native speakers, with the aim of exposing their students to various Englishes. As for factors impacting the change of attitudes, it was evident that personal factors and career related factors affected their change of attitudes over time.

The aforementioned results yield some implications for professionals in educational sectors. At the national level, the ELF paradigm should be introduced and promoted to educators in order to aid their preparation for the curriculum development, improvement and implementation. English courses that seem to place bias against models of English, emphasizing or focusing on only the two major models should be revised. On the contrary, courses that promote students' awareness and intelligibility of various English forms should be added in the curriculum. At teaching levels, instructors should understand ELF concept and be able to teach and guide learners to become effective English language users in these diverse circumstances. In classroom instructional contexts, instructors can still touch upon the area of standard English. However, English instructors should also interject varieties of English into their teaching, course materials, as well as tests and assessments. It is also suggested that educators provide learners with appropriate degree of diverse English exposures and focus more on intercultural communicative competence. Lastly, it is important to note that this study is not without limitations. As this study is context-specific, the finding cannot be generalized to other study contexts. Additionally, the sample size for this research is rather small. Therefore, it is recommended that future ELF research be conducted with a larger sample size and involve other levels of education, in order to capture other aspects of the phenomenon.

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