

# *Glocalization and TESOL in Thailand*

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the roles and status of English as an international language, and the use of English as the ASEAN lingua franca. The roles of English have been changed due to globalization. When English is used as a global language, non-native speakers of English around the world, who have different cultural background and different first language increasingly use and localize English for communicating and expressing their ideas, concepts and cultures. This leads to the concept of “glocalization”. The term “glocalization” and its interpretation are addressed and clarified. Additionally, the paper reflects the challenges in teaching and learning English as lingua franca (ELF) in Thailand, before moving to the implication of “glocalization” in English teaching and learning.

## **1.Introduction**

### **Roles and Status of English as an International Language,**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, English is considered as the world’s common language used by approximately 375 English native speakers and 1.5 million people worldwide. (The statista)This statistics reveals that majority of English users are not English native speakers but the peoplewho speak different first languages and learn English as a second or third language. They use English as a mean of communication for social interaction, business transaction and competitiveness, academic sharing and discussion, technology exchange, entertainment, media, social networking, and many more.Due to the wide spread of new technology and satellite, people can access to many sources of information for learning and interacting with people in other countries which have different culture and background. English will be used as a tool for intercultural communication. Graddol (2006, p.87) points out that the use of global English for interaction among English native speakers tends to be quite low comparing to the growth of English use of the non-native speakers of English. Consequently, roles and status of English have gradually changed from being the first language of English native speakers to becomingan international language (EIL), or lingual franca (ELF).

Many scholars use different terms to identify this situation such as “English as an International language” (Widdowson,1994; Jenkins, 2000), “ English as a global language” (Crystal, 1997), “English as a glocallanguage” (Pakir, 2000), “English as a world language”(Brutt-Grifler, 2002), and “English as a lingual franca”(Jenkins, 2006).

Although these phenomena are interpreted slightly differently, they echo the prominence of sociolinguistic and socio-political realities of English used in the world (Kachru, 1992).

The roles and status of English as international language do not depend on a great number of native speakers but they come from their unique and special role that is recognized in various parts of the world (Crystal, 1997; McKay, 2002). English has been used as an official language in many countries, many professional fields, many social and political situations, and many domains of life. English has also been served as a *lingua franca* both in global and local communication and is learned as a compulsory foreign language in school (Crystal, 1997). In conclusion, English as an international language is widely used and accepted among native speakers and non-native speakers as a mean of communication in the present use of English language worldwide.

## **2. The Use of English as the ASEAN Lingua Franca**

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was officially unified in December, 2015.

English has been selected to be a regional official language based on Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter. It states that the working language of ASEAN shall be English (ASEAN, 2008, p.29). Due to the ASEAN Economic Community, there are a great wave of skilled labour mobility and a free flow of good, service, investment, and capitals. These phenomena have a great impact on members of ASEAN. They need to improve their citizens to be high competitive in global and regional markets. As a result of the above phenomena, people in each country have more chances to interact and communicate with people from other ASEAN member countries in various situations and settings. To be able to understand and be understood, the ASEAN people need to use English for communication. The main purpose of their communication is intelligibility. However, it is not sufficient for the ASEAN people to be able to master only English skills and knowledge because they need to communicate with not only English native speakers but mostly English speakers who are non-native, come from various countries and have multicultural background in the workplaces.

According to AEC, English has taken an important role as ASEAN *lingua franca*. *Lingua franca* is defined as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option,” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p.7). According to Jenkins (2009b), the difference between English as foreign language (EFL) and English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) is that errors made by second language learners are considered English language deficit by EFL paradigm whereas these errors are thought to be an ELF variant by ELF paradigm. For EFL, code switching or code mixing is due to interference errors while these errors are viewed as a bilingual resource by ELF paradigm.

He also suggests that teachers and students will benefit a great deal from ELF teaching model because it promotes intelligibility, is appropriate for regional English communicators, and easy to teach.

Thus, Teaching English as a *lingua franca* used in cross-cultural communication has become a key issue for all ASEAN countries in preparing their people for competitive context of ASEAN.

### **3.TheConcept of “Glocalization”and Its Implication**

The globalization of English and its substantial use among non-native speakers of English have led to the localization of English and establishment of many English varieties. This phenomenon is called “glocalization” (Sharifian, 2013).

The word “glocalization” comes from the blending of the terms “globalization” and “localization”. In business sense, it refers to the adaptation of international/ global products or services to suit and correspond to local particularities and cultural practice in which the products are launched and marketed. Later, this term is applied to the education and language teaching.

Swales(2004) clarifies glocalization as “a bifurcation away from the historically powerful nation state in two directions: one upward towards a world increasingly dominated by multinational corporations and international and supranational entities...and one downward(as it were) towards regional aspirations, niche marketing , local involvements” (p.11). Based on Swales (2004), Tsou (2015),“glocalization” is the combination of global ideas with local consideration. It is supported by Schneider (2011,p.229) who also states that English language has been globalized and has become a world language; meanwhile, in some cases, it has been glocalized and blended into a local language so that it can be used to express local people’s hearts and minds.

Thus the concept of glocalized English language is accepted, and errors and deficiencies made by the non- native speakers of English are viewed as unique characteristics of varieties of English. Consequently, the world standard for universal correctness and appropriateness of English language has deviated from the traditional norm which favors a native-like standard.This specific standard based on region or locality such as ASEAN English is highlighted (Svartivik& Leech, 2006). Due to the change of roles and status of English worldwide, the trends of English teaching and learning are changed as well. Boraie (2013) presents eight current trends in teaching and learning EFL/ESL. They are the changes in the goal of teaching English, age of starting in teaching English, the approach to teaching culture, a view of an English teacher, teaching content and test design, use of e-learning, strategic teaching and learning, and teachers as life-long learners. She explains that the goal of teaching EFL/ESL focuses on English as a mean for communication and as a mean to learn content such as science and mathematics (CLIL). In many countries, teaching and learning English starts at early grades at school. The change in approach deals with more emphasis on both local and international culture in English language classes and less focus on teaching the culture of native speakers of English. Linguistic, teaching, and intercultural competence are indicators of effective teachers. A range of local texts or English translations of literature should be used in the classroom. The use of L1, if appropriate, and varieties of accent are encouraged to use in English classroom.

Because of the shift of traditional form of English to English as an international language or lingua franca, and the emphasis of English varieties, many English teachers, learners, users

are worried about the standard of English that they can use as a reference for assessing students' performance to find out whether the language they use is correct and appropriate.

It is necessary to see the challenges in teaching English and the implication of globalization on teaching English to speakers of other languages (Thai students) in Thailand

#### **4. Challenges in Teaching and Learning English as Lingua Franca (ELF) in Thailand**

Since English is used as international language around the world, it is also accepted as a working language among the ASEAN economic community. Consequently, English is viewed as a lingua franca for Thai people as well. Todd (2006) supports that Thais mostly use English to interact with people who speak other languages as their first language, especially, in the Thai tourism industry.

In spite of the fact that there is a high demand of employees who are fluent in using English for professional communication, the result of English proficiency of Thai citizens presented in EF English Proficiency Index 2015 is at very low level. It means that Thai people have trouble in understanding, speaking, reading and writing English. Many studies done previously point out that Thailand's English language problems come from teaching English practice within cultural and educational context at local and national levels. Many challenges that need to be considered urgently are pedagogical approach, teachers and students, and attitude.

Concerning pedagogical approach, communicative language teaching approach (CLT) was introduced in Thailand in 1980 and has been widely accepted and adapted into schools and universities at different levels. It has been promoted in Thailand through teacher training programs, conferences, and teaching materials (Leung, 2005). This approach emphasizes a native speaker as an ideal informant of a language (Bhatt, 2002) and is based on western communicative styles and cultures (Holliday, 2005; Leung, 2005). Communicative language teaching approach (CLT) is not suitable for Thai setting and AEC which need people to use English as an International Language or as a lingua franca.

According to CLT, it is necessary that teachers must be very competent in using English like a native speaker of English. Moreover, what deviates from the English native speaker's norm is considered errors and mistakes. These frustrate both teachers and students who have to struggle to achieve CLT goal. Based on the lingua franca context in AEC, English language teaching in Thailand should not depend on English native speaker norm. In order to achieve the effective communication outcomes, it is necessary for teachers to expose students to a variety of English, particularly, accent and to master intercultural communicative competence. Baker (2011) explains that knowing only linguistic knowledge such as lexis, grammar, or the cultural norms of English native speakers is not sufficient for communication with people who are multilingual and have multicultural background. In addition, the speakers need to understand a variety of contexts and cultures for success in intercultural communication in English as a lingua franca. Intercultural communicative competence is "the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities" and "ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple

identities and their own individuality” (Byram, Gribkova&Starkey, 2002, p.11). It is teachers’ responsibility to prepare students to be competent in intercultural communication.

Regarding teacher and students factor, due to the National Education Act issued in 1999 (Wiriyachitra, 2002), Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) which has been introduced into schools and universities emphasizes speaking and listening for communication. Teachers are required to be competent in using English for communication in order to handle communicative activities in the class. Majority of teachers in school at different levels have difficulties in implementing this approach because their listening and speaking proficiency are quite low, some can’t even speak English or understand what they listen to. They also have little English cultural knowledge because they have never had an opportunity to expose to English native speakers or have never immersed themselves in English speaking context.

Besides teachers’ problem, students who earn bachelor’s degree can’t use English for communication although they have learned English for more than 12 years. When looking into the causes of their incapability, it can be assumed that the number of hours of English subject is quite low. Students study English for only one hour a week in grade 1-3, two hours a week in grade 4-6 students, and 3 hours a week for grade 7-12. For university level, they take only four English courses, two courses in academic or specific areas, the other two for basic English (Foley, 2005). The other factors that hinder Thai students from speaking English are fear of making mistakes, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence and lack of motivation.

Dealing with attitude toward English and English teaching, many old generation teachers and administrators like old school principals or heads of English section view English language teaching (ELT) based on their old perception. The effective methodology in teaching English for them means teaching grammar and structures, rote memorizing, reciting, writing grammatical rules, and translating reading text into Thai. They don’t appreciate new methodology of English which highlights the use of language instead of the usage.

Additionally, many teachers have heavy teaching loads and have 45-60 students in each class (Wiriyachitra, 2002), undoubtedly they prefer teacher- centered approach because it saves their time, effort and money in preparing new materials, arranging learning activities and creating conducive learning environment. They think English for communication is time consuming. In short, they don’t believe in student- centered. Though the National Education Act issued in 1999, as stated in the objectives, emphasizes learner-centered practice, learner autonomy, life-long learning policy (Wiriyachitra, 2002), many English teachers still ignore these objects. Likewise, Thai students are familiar with teacher- centered approach, teachers are knowledge providers, students receive the knowledge by listening, following the teachers’ instruction and obeying what is told. This is the effect of Thai learners’ cultures of unquestioning and obeying the senior people (Wiriyachitra, 2002). This situation corresponds to Mackenzie (2002) study, he identifies that Thai students are too shy to speak English, have

no motivation to communicate in English, are worrying too much about accuracy, and rely on rote memorization.

Although government has employed different strategies and launched different language policies such as allowing many schools to open English program (EP), providing more opportunities to open many international schools, employing more native English teachers, offering various training courses to English teachers, English language teaching in Thailand is still unsuccessful to enhance students' English communication.

The problems mentioned above are very critical and become big challenges for Thai government. Urgently, Thai government needs to build students' awareness of the importance and benefits of English in learning and absorbing knowledge; therefore, they will be able competewith other people in regional and global labour markets.

### **5. Implication of “glocalization” in English Teaching and Learning in Thailand**

It is very essential that Thai students who want to succeed in their future career and have high competitiveness in the labour market in AEC need to be very competent in using English for effective communication with people from different multilingual and multicultural background. To prepare efficient citizens for the country, the cooperation and collaboration are required from many sectors, namely, Ministry of education, educational institutions at different levels, curriculum developers, teachers, students and parents.

This article will reflect the implication of glocaization in teaching and learning in Thailand. Firstly, the emphasis on listening and speaking with different English varieties should be introduced in class room practice. Teachers takes a very crucial roles in applying the appropriate pedagogical approach, activities, contents, materials and assessment in the classroom for students to fulfill communication needs. The teachers need to put emphasis on improving students' listening and speaking skills, especially, pronunciation. Since entering AEC period, Thais have had to interact more with a number of people from ASEAN countries, particularly in tourism industry and business investment. Thai teachers should consider not to depend only on the native English speakers' model but choose to expose students with variety of English spoken by non-native speakers of English because in reality, the students mainly confront and interact with the interlocutors who are not native speakers of English. Baker (2012) supports that Thai ELT should not put the emphasis primarily on an English variety used by native speakers because Thai English speakers do not mainly interact with people from inner circle countries; therefore, equipping students with ability to understand many different varieties of Englishes is indispensable.

Penny Ur (2009 cited in Boraie, 2013) notes the goal of teaching EFL/ESL is “to produce fully competent English –knowing bilinguals rather than imitation native speakers” Moreover Boraie (2013) states the change in the goal of teaching EFL/ESL and the change in the approach of teaching culture. She explains that the goal of teaching EFL/ESL focuses on English as a mean for communication and as a mean to learn content such as science and mathematics. The change in approach deals with the emphasis on both local or native and

international culture in English language classes and less focus on teaching the culture native speakers of English.

Since most students expect to speak English with correct accent like native speakers, they may feel very shy and are afraid of making English pronunciation mistakes. Based on the concept of English as a lingua franca and globalization, teachers should not rely strictly on native English model and do not give students direct corrective feedbacks. Furthermore, teachers should ignore some small mistakes, and consider students' deviation from standard American or British English as a variety of Thai English. Teachers should provide activities and opportunities that students can experience as many varieties of English spoken by non-native speakers in ASEAN countries as possible because the students are likely to deal with these people in the future. Teachers apply different sources of teaching materials, media, and technology such as website, blogs, Facebook, YouTube, Line and clips to familiarize students with ASEAN Englishes and world Englishes. These teaching aids are suitable for young generation because they use online media and applications in modern gadgets in their daily life. Sharifian (2011) also agrees with the use of Facebook as a tool to expose learners to various English forms and accents.

With these teaching strategies, students are encouraged to speak more and to have more confidence to produce effective communication. Jenkin (2009a) also confirms that non-native accents are perceived by non-native speakers of English to be more understandable than RP and GA accents. Thus, teachers should make students understand and realize the importance of intelligibility in communication. In short, the focus of teaching English will be fluency rather than accuracy.

Another proposed pedagogical method is service learning or experiential learning. Service-learning is a form of experiential learning that employs service as a means of learning, it deals with the application of classroom knowledge and skills and forming lifelong connections between students, their community and the world (Wattanakul, 2009).

Oracion (2007) also defines that service learning means serving other people by applying the knowledge and skills the students learned from school while at the same time learning more from their community engagement. This demonstrates that community service reinforces academic learning and vice versa. Additionally, service-learning experience of young learners contributes to the acquisition of an appreciation of cultural diversity, a commitment to peace, greater awareness of global and local issues and a broader view of the world. (McCarthy, 2009)

Therefore, service-learning is reciprocally beneficial for both the students and the community. Students can choose to serve in different real workplaces in communities such as hotels, guest houses, travel agencies, police station, hospitals, airports or bus terminas. Students will have chances to deal with foreigners who are from ASEAN countries and English speaking countries. It is a good opportunity for students to expose themselves to English used by native speakers and non-native speakers who use English as a mean for career communication. With different English accent, localized vocabulary and structures,

and different cultural practice, students will learn how to get the message and make their sent message understandable. Students will be able to develop their own communication strategies, appreciate their own culture and understand cultural diversity and practice. Since real interaction in the real workplace emphasizes intelligibility (fluency) rather than correctness of grammatical usage (accuracy), this service learning turns out to be the right direction for students to practice English in use in particular settings and situations, to perceive the authentic English language, to learn how to solve problems of English at work and to deal with unexpected communication problems. This can lead them towards lifelong learning. For the community, the service project fulfils the community's actual needs, solves its problems and promotes collaboration between the school and the community.

Another advantage of service learning in relation to glocalization is that service learning promotes students intercultural communicative competence. Baker (2012) identifies that besides English linguistic knowledge, pragmatic competence, and intercultural competence are equally important for successful intercultural communication. Not having intercultural competence, misinterpretation, prejudice and misunderstanding may occur in any communication setting and cause unexpected serious problems because people tend to interpret verbal or non-verbal communication based on their cultures and norms (Damnet, 2008).

Looking into the features of service learning that can reflect and support intercultural competence, students who serve in the workplace usually confront cultural difference and practice such as facial expression, gestures, eye contact, tone, social manners, expressions, idioms, vocabulary and grammatical structures that they don't really understand. As a result, communication break-down or ineffective communication occur. Normally, students need to find out what the problems are, why they happen, how they can be solved, and whether they are right. With this analysis, peer sharing, and collaboration, students develop problem solving skills, critical thinking, perspective of other cultures, and finally have profound understanding of cultural practice of native and non-native interlocutors. Through the process of trial and error, students are aware of intercultural communication and gradually master intercultural communicative competence. Equipped with intercultural competence, students are very successful in communication. Not surprisingly, service learning can be used as one teaching strategy which serves and reflects characteristics of glocalization.

Regarding curriculum development, the implication of glocalization can be traced from the courses offered. Formerly, in the university level, the English degree program or English teaching programs was designed based on the concept from the western world. The program structure consisted of core courses, major courses, and elective courses. For major courses, there were many literature courses which focused on western literature. British and American poetry, novel and fiction courses were the main part of the program.

In 1980, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was promoted in English language teaching in Thailand. The CLT approach ignored intercultural competence because it depended solely on the culture of English speaking countries, namely American and British



English. Alptekin (2002) notes that CLT approach depends on English native speakers' norm; therefore, the English users need to understand the target cultures for communicating with native speakers. This methodology influenced students to prioritize English nativeness as the only standard for accuracy, and to devalue local non-nativeness as the deficiency in language acquisition (Methitham&Chamcharatsri, 2011). As a consequence of CLT, literature courses still appeared in the English and ELT program but a number of literature courses were decreased, comparing to the past. The emphasis was changed to skill courses, for instance, listening, speaking, reading and writing courses. CLT highlighted the English native speakers' norm and use native speaker model as a standard.

At present, the idea of glocalization and English as International language or as a lingua franca has been accredited by many scholars and educators. It has also been promoted by government sectors and many educational institutions. This can be seen that many literature courses are discarded from the revised curriculum of English, ELT, or TESOL program, and more courses on English for specific purposes or functional English including ASEAN literature, world literature which have been translated into English are added to the program. These additional courses help students to cope up with the needs, and demand of multilingual context.

To sum up, the language must be diverse and dynamic. This is true for English language. When English is in contact with other languages and cultures, it will be adjusted and adapted by the non-native speakers of English so as to be suitable to convey the concepts, culture, and values used in their society. New forms and patterns of English will be used for communication aiming at intelligibility. That is why glocalized English are widely accepted among the users.

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