A SURVEY OF ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' ATTITUDES
TOWARD SPEAKING ENGLISH IN A THAI CONTEXT

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจทัศนคติในองค์ประกอบด้านความรู้สึก ด้านความคิด และด้านการกระทำของนักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อวิชาชีพ ที่มีต่อการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบไทย โดยที่ประชากรเป็นนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาโททั้งผู้ที่สำเร็จการศึกษาแล้วและยังเป็นนักศึกษาปัจจุบัน สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อวิชาชีพ คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต จำนวน 236 คน โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างมีจำนวน 100 คนได้มาโดยการใช้วิธีการสุ่มกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบง่าย การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ โดยใช้แบบสอบถามเป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ทำการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้พรรณนาสถิติ ได้แก่ ค่าเฉลี่ย ค่าร้อยละ และค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ในด้านความรู้สึกนักศึกษามีระดับทัศนคติในหัวข้อ "ข้าพเจ้าไม่กังวลว่าภาษาอังกฤษของข้าพเจ้า จะบ่งบอกว่าข้าพเจ้ามาจากประเทศไทย" สูงที่สุด ($\overline{x}$ = 3.85) ในด้านความคิดนักศึกษามีระดับทัศนคติในหัวข้อ "ข้าพเจ้าคิดว่าผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ สามารถใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในรูปแบบที่หลากหลายและแตกต่างกันได้ ขอเพียงแค่การสื่อสารบรรลุตามเป้าหมายที่ตั้งไว้" สูงที่สุด ($\overline{x}$ = 3.94) และในด้านการกระทำนักศึกษามีระดับทัศนคติในหัวข้อ "ข้าพเจ้าไม่หลีกเลี่ยงการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบไทย เพราะถือว่าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของวัฒนธรรมไทย" สูงที่สุด ($\overline{x}$ = 2.92) เมื่อพิจารณาในภาพรวมพบว่า นักศึกษามีระดับทัศนคติต่อการพูดภาษาอังกฤษแบบไทยอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง ($\overline{x}$ = 2.93) โดยแสดงทัศนคติในด้านความรู้สึกสูงที่สุด ($\overline{x}$ = 3.24) นอกจากนี้ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพแสดงให้เห็นว่านักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ (52%) แสดงความคิดเห็นว่าภาษาอังกฤษแบบไทยไม่เป็นปัญหาต่อการสื่อสารกับชาวต่างชาติ

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาอังกฤษแบบไทย, ทัศนคติ, ภาษาอังกฤษที่มีความหลากหลาย, นักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษ,
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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate English major students' attitudes toward speaking English in a Thai context (Tinglish), in terms of affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects. The population was 236 current and former students who studied the English for Professions Master Degree program at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University. The sample group was 100 students selected using a simple random method. The quantitative research instrument was a questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed by arithmetic mean, percentage, and standard deviation. Regarding the affective element, the results revealed that the item, "I am not worried about my English

signaling clearly that I am from Thailand." had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$= 3.94). Regarding the cognitive element, the item, "I think that speakers of English can use English in different forms and variants as long as the message is successfully communicated." had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 3.85). Regarding the behavioral element, the item, "I do not avoid speaking Tinglish because it is part of Thai culture." had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 2.93). Overall, it was found that the students had a moderate attitude toward Tinglish ($\overline{x}$ = 2.93), the affective attitude element had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 3.24). Moreover, the qualitative data showed that most students (52%) felt that using Tinglish in a multilingual environment did not cause any communication problems.

Keywords: Tinglish, Attitude, Varieties of English, Master degree students, English pronunciation

1. Introduction

Historically, Thailand differs from the other nations in the Asian region because Western Europeans never colonized the country. However, the Kings of Thailand recognized the importance of English, which was first introduced to the country during the reign of King Rama III (Baker, 2008; Foley, 2005). Currently, English is seen as a foreign language in Thailand. Standard Thai is the national and official language. (Trakulkasemsuk, 2012: 102). The variety of English used in Thailand has developed from the formal education realm and the tourism sector (Rogers, 2013: 37). English in a Thai context then has some features of Thai appear in spoken English and written texts, which makes English in Thailand distinct from Standard English, or other Asian Englishes. This is because Thais mix English and Standard Thai together resulting in a new variety of English in Thailand so-called "Tinglish."

Tinglish is a variety of English spoken in Thailand, which has evolved from mixing English and Thai language based on grammar and culture (Trakulkasemsuk, 2012). According to Kachru's three circles of English, Thailand is one of the countries in the 'Expanding Circle'. English in this circle plays no historical or governmental role, but it is primarily used for international communication (Kachru, 1985). This means that Tinglish has some features, which are distinct from Standard English. Recently, people at all levels of Thai society have been using Tinglish. However, Thai speakers hold different attitudes toward, which variety of English should be prioritized when speaking.

In general, people have an attitude about their own language and the language of others. For example, they may feel that speaking a second language is difficult to achieve or that their own language is the best language. Attitudes toward language influence second language or foreign language learning. The measurement of language attitudes, therefore, provides information, which is beneficial to language teaching and language planning (Richards et al., 1992 cited in Coronel-Molina, 2009; 6). It has been claimed by psychologists that attitude consists of three elements, which are stated to be affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Garrett, Coupland, and Williams (2003) defined language attitude using these three elements. They defined the affective element as a statement of a person's feelings about a situation. For example, when an American encounter someone speaking an unrecognizable variety of English, such as Thai-English, they may consider it pleasant or unpleasant. The cognitive element concerns beliefs and

thoughts about the world. For example, a Thai may believe that they would get a better job if they had an American or British accent. The behavioral element concerns the predisposition of a person to act in certain ways. For example, people speaking local English with their friends.

Previous studies on the attitudes of English major students toward Tinglish have been rare. However, the unique role of the English language in Thailand means that many scholars have conducted research on how Thais use English in different situations. Chutisilp (1984) referred to the emerging characteristics of Thai-English, and Watkhaolarm (2005) reported on the Thainess found in Thai novels. Interestingly, both studies investigated characteristics of Thai-English such as language transfer, cultural and social elements, hybridization (the mix of Thai and English lexical items), and reduplication (Thai syntactic repetition from the Thai pragmatic discourse). Buripakdi (2008) interviewed 20 professional writers from different fields about their perception of Thai-English. The results of her study revealed that that only one writer supported and agreed with the emerging Thai variety of English. Rogers (2010) interviewed 12 highly educated Thai-English speakers to get their opinions on ThaiE (Tinglish). The results of her study showed that six out of twelve participants did not believe that there was a ThaiE variety of English. However, five participants thought that ThaiE existed, and one participant did not provide an exact answer to this question.

These earlier studies seemed surprising enough to encourage further questions and call for more research; they acted as a springboard for this study, which explores attitudes toward Tinglish. This study explores the attitudes of English major students, enrolled in the English for Professions program (MA), toward speaking English in a Thai context. The reason that these students' attitudes were investigated was that they were considered as English users who are confronted with English language in their daily lives. In addition, they had a good command of English and could distinguish between local and standard varieties of English. It is hoped that this study will benefit teachers and students, who are interested in the status of English pronunciation instruction, by exposing them to different varieties of English used in Thailand.

2. Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate English major students' attitudes toward speaking English in a Thai context. The focus was on Master Degree students who studied the English for Professions program at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University, Thailand.

3. Materials and methods

3.1 Materials and respondents

The main instrument used to collect the data was an online questionnaire, which was distributed in both Thai and English to minimize misinterpretation. To validate the questionnaire, three experts were asked to use a specific IOC (Item-Objective Congruence) evaluation form, and then a pilot study was conducted. The respondents,

100 current and former Master Degree students who studied the English for Professions program at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University, were selected using a simple random sampling method.

3.2 Data collection and data analysis

The data were collected during the second semester of the academic year 2016. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires, which were sent to their e-mail addresses. Microsoft Excel 2016 was used to calculate the arithmetic mean, percentage and standard deviation.

4. Results

4.1 Background of the respondents

Regarding the distribution of the respondents by gender, age and education: 79 of them were female, most of the sample group (49%) were aged between 26 and 30, and 57 percent of them were current English major students. Regarding their English experience, 45% of them had studied English for 15 to 20 years. For the frequency of English use in their current job, most respondents (38%) used English for their current job. Regarding studying with native speakers, 53 percent of them had some experience of learning English with native speakers.

4.2 The respondents' English skills in comparison to most English native speakers

Regarding the respondents' English skills in comparison to most native speakers, the results showed that "Isolated word pronunciation" had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 3.53), followed by "Connected speech pronunciation" ($\overline{x}$ = 3.34), and "The use of vocabulary" was third ($\overline{x}$ = 3.20). "The use of sentences" and "The use of slang and colloquial language" had the lowest mean values ($\overline{x}$ = 3.14 and $\overline{x}$ = 2.88.), respectively. Overall, the results revealed that students were at a moderate level compared to most native speakers ($\overline{x}$ = 3.22).

4.3 The respondents' attitudes toward speaking English in a Thai context

This part presents the results concerning the respondents' attitude, in terms of affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements toward speaking English in a Thai context. All the arithmetic means were interpreted according

to the following scale:

3.68-5.00	High level of attitude
2.34-3.67	Moderate level of attitude
1.00-2.33	Low level of attitude.

Table 4.2 Mean value of the affective element

Items	High $\overline{x}$	Moderate $\overline{x}$	Low $\overline{x}$
1. I enjoy speaking Tinglish with foreign people.		3.35	
2. I am not worried about my English signaling clearly that I am from Thailand.	**3.85**		
3. I am upset when I hear someone say that the only correct English variation is standard American or British English.		3.47	
4. I do not feel bad speaking English, which is not standardized and contains many Thai sounds.		3.59	
5. I enjoy using Thai particles like "ná" and "si" in my English utterances.		2.45	
6. I do not feel annoyed when hearing someone speaking English using Thai structure.		3.19	
7. I enjoy using mixed words or phrases in English and Thai.		2.77	
Total		3.24	

Regarding the affective element, items 2 and 4 had the highest mean values ($\overline{x}$ = 3.85 and 3.59), respectively. Item 5 had the lowest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 2.45). Among the three attitude elements the affective element had the highest overall mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 3.24), which was interpreted as a moderate attitude level.

Table 4.3 Mean value of the cognitive element

Items	High $\overline{x}$	Moderate $\overline{x}$	Low $\overline{x}$
1. Tinglish is now widely acceptable as another variety of World English.		3.19	
2. I think that it is proper to use the expression "where are you going?" as one way of greeting a foreign visitor.		2.49	
3. I think that speakers of English can use English in different forms and variants as long as the message is successfully communicated.	**3.94**		
4. The use of Thai final particles such as "khâ" (female) and "khráp" (male) contributes to successful communication.		2.49	
5. I believe that the use of word "khun" before the first name of acquaintances (e.g. Khun Thomas) is preferable and polite.		3.43	
6. I realize it is difficult for Thai speakers to distinguish the sound "ship" and "chip", but the mispronunciation of the two sounds does not cause a problem.		3.33	
7. I think that the use of incorrect verb tenses does not cause a serious communication problem.		3.12	
Total		3.14	

The cognitive element that had the highest mean value was item 3 ($\overline{x}$ = 3.94.), item 5 had the second highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ =3.43). Items 2 and 4 had the lowest mean value ($\overline{x}$ =2.49). The overall mean value of the cognitive element was 3.14, which was interpreted as a moderate attitude level.

Table 4.4 Mean value of the behavioral element

Items	High $\overline{x}$	Moderate $\overline{x}$	Low $\overline{x}$
1. I use Tinglish with foreign friends and colleagues.			2.30
2. I do not avoid speaking Tinglish because it is part of Thai culture.		2.92	
3. I try not to imitate the English native speaker's accent.		2.34	
4. I use the particle such as "chây máy?" or "rěu?" in English questions.			2.04
5. I combine Thai words and English words with foreign conversational partners.			2.23
6. I replace the "th" sound in the word "then" with the "d" sound although I do not have problems pronouncing the [ð] sound.		2.56	
7. I use Thai language structure to arrange words in my English sentences.		2.42	
Total		2.40	

Finally, for the behavioral element, items 2 and 6 had the highest mean values ($\overline{x}$ = 2.92 and 2.56), respectively. Item 4 had the lowest mean value ($\overline{x}$= 2.04). The overall mean value of the behavioral element was 2.40, which was interpreted as a moderate attitude level.

Among the three attitude elements, the affective element had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 3.24), followed by the cognitive element ($\overline{x}$ = 3.14), and the behavioral element had the lowest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 2.40). When considering all three attitude components, the overall mean value was 2.93, which was interpreted as a moderate attitude level.

4.4 The respondents' opinions on using Tinglish for international communication

For the open-ended questions, the respondents were asked if they thought using Tinglish in a multilingual environment caused communication problems. Their answers are given in this section.

Fifty-two percent of respondents stated that using Tinglish in a multilingual environment did not create communication problems. Most respondents in this group said that Tinglish was understandable because people were aware of different varieties of English. For example, one respondent believed that Tinglish was just one variety of the English language. He perceived communication as being successful when listeners and speakers understood each other. Many respondents noted that context and gestures could also lead to successful communication.

Forty-eight percent of respondents stated that using Tinglish created communication problems. The majority in this group believed that those who did not know or were unfamiliar with Thai would hardly be able to access the pragmatic meanings of Tinglish. One respondent indicated that people who did not understand Thai language would find words that were unfamiliar and difficult to understand. Many respondents thought that English and Thai grammar were different, therefore, those unfamiliar with Thai might get confused about the meaning of an expression when hearing Tinglish.

5. Discussion

At the start of this study, it was presumed that most English major students would be accepting of speaking Thai-English. This perspective was based on scholars consistently reporting that English belongs to the world and one variety of it should not be a normal for others to follow. It was expected that Thais educated in English would be aware of the different varieties of English. This study was conducted to substantiate this hypothesis. However, some results were surprising.

Regarding the affective element, the English major students indicated that they were not worried about their English signaling that they were from Thailand. This result is in line with Widdowson (2003, cited in Jindapitak. 2010, 39) who stated that English had become a language, which is spoken by so many people in diverse contexts, the inner-circle communities are not the only party, which can claim and tie up the ownership of the language. When English is used in an outer or expanding circle, it is particularly adapted to the cultural mindsets of the people who have chosen to use it and it serves speakers' communicative needs whether locally or internationally (Crystal, 2003). Furthermore, all English speakers may contribute to the development of English through new conventions, thoughts, customs, and codes of practice or even standards (Widdowson, 1994). From this perspective, English, particularly pronunciation is not kept under the inner-circle speakers' control and does not need to conform to native speakers' rules.

Regarding the cognitive element, the vast majority believed that all English speakers were free to use different varieties of English. The respondents felt that communication would be successful if the message was mutually comprehensible. This attitude can be explained using Kachru's World Englishes model. The World Englishes model represents types of spread, the pattern of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in a diverse cultural context (Kachru, 1985, 1992). Moreover, Kachru's model implies that English is not owned by anyone, it belongs to everyone who uses it. English speakers who use different varieties of English deserve to have equal status. Additionally, it is not significant to discuss the stained or deficient English found in lingua franca interactions when most English speakers are non-native and they routinely use English forms, which are different from Standard English to communicate intelligibly with each other (Jenkins, 2004). All English speakers can freely create forms of the language. The devolvement of English form does not request the judgment of native speakers to direct or control the linguistic rules or principles (Kirkpatrick, 2006, 2007c, Windowson, 2003 cited in Jindapitak. 2010; 44). English functions itself as a tool for international communication, it does not matter which forms or variants are used, if the message is mutually comprehensible, it can lead to successful communication.

The respondents use of Tinglish was less than anticipated. When their responses were analyzed for the behavioral element, the statements that had the lowest mean values were "I use particles such as "chây máy?" or "rě̌u?" in English questions." and "I combine Thai words and English words with foreign conversational partners". This result is interesting because the behavioral element had a lower mean value than the other two attitude elements. This might be because English education in Thailand has been primarily promoted to the inner circle (Cook, 2007

cited in cited in Jindapitak. 2010; 44). Consequently, some well-educated Thais try to act in accordance with native speaker forms even though they have positive feelings and beliefs about Thai-English. This result concurs with Jindapitak (2010) who found that Thai students believed that the inner-circle was representative of "standard," "international," or "intelligible" English.

Concerning using Tinglish as a medium for international communication, most respondents felt that the use of Tinglish in a multilingual environment was not problematical. They perceived Tinglish as being understood by people who could not speak Thai, and they accepted English in different variants and forms. This result agrees with Glass (2009) and Watkhaolarm (2005) who noted that Tinglish had the capability to be recognized as another English variant because Thais were incorporating more of the language into their daily communication. Currently, more Thais than ever before are using English to communicate and some Thai words are becoming more recognizable to people who do not speak Thai. This use of English and Thai language based on grammar and culture may have contributed to the acceptance of Tinglish as a medium for international communication. To convey the same meaning of something speakers of English may combine it with distinct language forms using different language variants. As long as the message is mutually intelligible, the communication is successful (Rogers, 2013).

6. Conclusion

Regarding the affective element, the results show that item 2, "I am not worried about my English signaling clearly that I am from Thailand." had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$= 3.94). Regarding cognitive element, item 3, "I think that speakers of English can use English in different forms and variants as long as the message is successfully communicated." had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$= 3.85). Regarding the behavioral element, item 2, "I do not avoid speaking Tinglish because it is part of Thai culture." had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$ = 2.92). Overall, it was found that the students had a moderate attitude toward Tinglish ($\overline{x}$ = 2.93). The affective attitude element had the highest mean value ($\overline{x}$= 3.24). In addition, the qualitative data revealed that most students (52%) thought that communicating using Tinglish in a multilingual environment was not a problem.

Several possible directions for future research are given in this section.

The instrument, which was used in this study could be adapted for use with different sample groups. For example, similar studies could be conducted on students who work in the hospitality or tourism field.

Researchers could use this framework to compare native speakers' attitudes toward Tinglish. They could explore whether native or non-native English speakers are more tolerant of this variety of non-standard English.

This study did not consider demographic profiles; it is recommended that further studies consider whether demographic variables have any relationship to the respondents' attitudes toward varieties of spoken English.

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