ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA ELICITED IN ASEAN ACCENTS

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Abstract- This study explores attitudes towards ASEAN plus ONE (namely ASEAN plus China) accents of English as a Lingua Franca. The study draws attention to features of ASEAN’s diversity of English and specifically examines the extent of which the English accent in ASEAN countries of three of the ten members plus one were perceived in terms of correctness, acceptability, pleasantness, and familiarity. Three accents were used for this study; Chinese, Philippine and Thai. The participants were ninety-eight Thai students enrolled in a foundation course of Suan Dusit Rajabhat University, Bangkok Thailand. The students were asked in questionnaires to rank how they perceived each specifically ASEAN plus One English accent after listening to audio recordings of three stories spoken by the three different ASEAN plus ONE English speakers. SPSS was used to analyze the data. The findings of attitudes towards varieties of English accent from the 98 respondents regarding correctness, acceptability, pleasantness, and familiarity of Thai English accents found that Thai accent was overall at level 3 (X = 2.757, SD= 0.33), Then Philippine accents was at level 2 (X = 2.326, SD = 16.12), and Chinese accents was at level 3 (X = 3.198, SD = 0.18). Finally, the present study proposes pedagogical implications for teaching regarding awareness of ‘Englishes’ of ASEAN and their respective accents and their Linguacultural background of instructors.

Keywords- English as a lingua franca, English accents, English as an International language: ASEAN plus ONE, ASEAN English varieties

I. INTRODUCTION

Several studies have shown that English is used throughout the world as a lingua franca, using English as a medium of instruction and communication. English teachers who, in the case of countries such as Thailand, are not in the context of native speakers as the first language. However, there is a dramatically widespread and common function of English. Analysis and descriptions of lingua franca Engishes are rare, although there is increasing interest in English as a lingua franca (ELF). The role of Englishes of South-East-Asian Nations (ASEAN) is as a prominent factor in terms of lingua franca (Kirkpatrick, 2011) [1]. In addition, this privileges those member states who can be considered outer circle countries, largely due to their earlier status as colonies of Britain including Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore or in respect to the Philippines, which was strongly linked with the USA. Using English among the ASEAN countries as an official language provides English language usage contexts that are of great potential interest. First, the four outer circle countries have developed local Englishes, namely Brunei English, Malaysian English, Philippine English and Singaporean English. Additionally, there are five of the remaining 6 nations are Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. They are described as being in the ‘expanding circle’. This leaves Myanmar, which would have classified as an outer circle country (Kirkpatrick, 2011) [1]. Thailand is in the expanding circle, seen as using English as a foreign language. Therefore, using English as an inter-regional ability lingua franca raises the question of mutual intelligibility. If ASEAN is characterized by different varieties of English accents that include both a number of new varieties and a range of expanding circle Engishes, to what extent do the ASEAN community, who use English language as a lingua franca within ASEAN, understand each other?

A. Research objectives

1) To investigate the students’ attitudes towards varieties of English accent in ASEAN countries plus China on four dimension (correctness, acceptability for international communication, pleasantness, and own familiarity with the accent).

2) To investigate what ASEAN English varieties accents varieties were the most and least comprehensible to the participants.

Research framework

In the case of English in the ASEAN region, there seems little doubt that it will continue to increase its position as the dominant lingua franca especially in Thailand, which is in the outer circle, with English as a foreign language. Whether this will result in varieties of ASEAN Englishes, being used as a lingua franca can be determined in the present research.

Research benefits

The present research will provide attitude the implication for international communication and English language teaching and its requirement for ELF teachers who wish to teach in the outer and expanding circle countries included within the ASEAN community. The present research pointed out that;

- Multilingual and multicultural and identity knows the language of their students and understand the
schemata such as educational, social, and cultural contexts of linguacultures.

- There is the ability to provide an appropriate and attainable model for their students or, if they speak another variety, understand that the local variety of English is an appropriate and well-formed variety that is not inferior to their mother language.

II. RELATED LITERATURE

English as a Lingua Franca

The term lingua franca is usually taken to mean “any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language” (Samarin, 1987, p. 371) [2]. In this definition, then, a lingua franca has no native speakers, and this notion is carried over into definitions of English as a lingua franca as in the following two examples:

[ELF is] a “contact language” between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth, 1996, p. 240) [3].

ELF interactions are defined as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue (House, 1999, p. 74) [4].

Whatever the setting, ELF interactions often occur in influential networks, (i.e., global business, tourism, politics, science, technology and media discourse), “it seems vital to pay more attention to the nature of ELF interactions, and ask whether and how they are different from both interactions between native speakers, and interactions between native speakers and nonnative speakers. An answer to this question would bring us closer to finding out whether and in what ways ELF interactions are actually sui generis” (House, 1999, p. 74) [4]. What House identified here is crucial for appreciating the current unprecedented linguistic situation. For the first time in history, a language has reached truly global dimensions, and as a consequence, is being shaped, in its international uses, at least as much by its nonnative speakers as its native speakers. This process has been accelerated by the dramatic expansion of electronic communication through the Internet, which has so far enhanced the social prestige attributed to typical global users of English global players, indeed although there are already signs that English may not always enjoy the status of the primary Internet language. For the moment, however, the situation seems to be as Brumfit (2002) [5] describe it:

“The members of the expanding circle who do use English are an increasingly significant group who operate in an increasingly global economy which has an impact on the economy in all countries . . . [and] the Internet, mobile phones and other technology increasingly establish the potential for use of English which is quite independent of the controls offered by traditional educational systems, publishing outlets and radio/television (Brumfit, 2002, p. 5)[5].”

One main reason for this study is the global spread of English, which has long been a focus of crucial discussion. However, ELF is not insufficient simply to recognize the need for reconceptualization and changing attitudes toward English language uses. Another lesson to be learned from work on Outer Circle varieties of English, including Thailand, is that a conceptualization of ELF as discussed in the preceding section, even if its desirability is acknowledged in principle, is unlikely to happen as long as no comprehensive and reliable description of salient features of ELF are available. A description is also important because establishing a linguistic reality, named and captured in reference works alongside ENL and Outer Circle Englishes, is a precondition for acceptance. At present, the idea that sometime in the future there may be a descriptive basis for an eventual codification of ELF may sound controversial and utopian, but in fact empirical work on various levels of linguistic description has been under way of several years now. The objective of such research varies from study to study, but taken together, this gradually accumulating body of work will lead to a better understanding of the nature of ELF as such, a fact that is likely to have a positive effect on how it is regarded and to lead to support of its recognition.

For two main reasons, this research is being undertaken predominantly on spoken data: first, the language is at one remove from the stabilizing and standardizing influence of writing, and second, spoken interactions are overly reciprocal, allowing studies of utterances. This facilitates observations regarding mutual intelligibility among interlocutors.

To make their scope manageable, scholars tend to limit their research primarily in terms of (a) level of language, (b) linguacultural background of interlocutors or (c) domain. These studies, as I have indicated, relate to spoken data, but ELF also manifests itself in the written mode, and this I discuss in the section on Modes of Use?

III. DESCRIPTION AT SPECIFIC LEVELS OF LANGUAGE

In recent years, ELF descriptions have focused on two levels of language: phonology and pragmatics. In what follows, an overview will be given of the most important findings in these areas. An account will also be given of work on ELF lexicon grammar, which is only at its beginnings.

Phonology is a comparatively closed system and virtually all ELF users speak the language with some trace (more or less pronounced, so to speak) of
their L1 accent. It is therefore not surprising that the first comprehensive study of characteristics of ELF interaction should be available in this area, namely, Jenkins’s “The Phonology of English as an International Language (2002)” [6]. Here Jenkins gives an additional reason for focusing attention on phonological features: it is that, in her data, pronunciation was by far the most frequent cause of intelligibility problems in ELF interaction. Jenkins’s work (see also Jenkins, 1998; 2002[6]; in press; this volume), culminating in what she has termed the phonological “Lingua Franca Core,” (LFC) thus takes as its starting point the need for empirical data drawn from interaction between L2 speaker of English to assess which phonological features and which are not-essential for intelligible pronunciation when English is spoken in lingua franca contexts including:

- Vowel quality
- Weak forms
- Other features of connected speech as assimilation
- Pitch direction to signal attitude or grammatical meaning
- Word stress placement
- Stress-timing

Jenkins (2006)[6] has repeatedly pointed out that LFC may need to be modified in the light of more data, maybe from additional L1s, but to date no studies that investigated her findings from the perspective of such additional language have classified? Whether or not modifications are necessary with more research, Jenkins’s work is groundbreaking in that in the genuine difference (rather than deficit) perspective she takes, divergence from native speaker realizations in the non-core area are regarded as perfectly acceptable instances of L2 sociolinguistic variation.

While the primary aim of VOICE is to provide a basis for whatever type of research scholars wish to conduct, it is envisaged that a useful first research focus might be to complement the work already done on ELF phonology and the initial findings on ELF pragmatics summarized above by concentrating on lexical grammar, an aspect that tends to be regarded as particularly central to language pedagogy. It is hoped that this general corpus will make it possible to take stock of how the speakers providing the data actually communicate through ELF, and to attempt a characterization of how they use, or rather co-construct, English to do so. The overall objective will be to find out what salient common features of ELF use (if any, notwithstanding all the diversity) emerge, irrespective of speakers’ first languages and levels of L2 proficiency.

IV. ELF AND MODES OF USE

Whatever the focus of the descriptive work on ELF now being undertaken, it will be able to build on scholarship in the areas of native language variation and change (Trudgill 1990) [8], indigenized varieties (Schneider, 2003) [9], and language contact as well as studies of simplification in language use and language pedagogy (Timmis, 2002) [10], plus older conceptual and empirical work on English as an international language (e.g., Basic English; see Seidhofer, 2002c) [11]. Two research projects that may prove to be of particular relevance for formulating research questions and hypotheses concerning the description of ELF are the International Corpus of English (ICE) and the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) already mentioned. ICE, which captures 1 million words of spoken and written texts each in over a dozen varieties, is described as "the first large-scale effort to study the development of English as a world language. ICE (International Corpus of English) components available at present are those of East Africa, Great Britain, India, New Zealand, Philippines (written only) and Singapore. But it needs to be pointed out that this world language is defined in terms of speakers for whom English is either a majority first language or an official additional language” Although the corpus is indeed international and captures Englishes across the globe, it is important to realize that it actually excludes the use of English by the worldwide majority of English speakers, namely those for whom it mainly functions as an international lingua franca, most of whom are nonnative speakers of English. However, discussions such as those found in the contributions, can serve as excellent sensitizing devices for processes of language variation and change that are likely to be at work in ELF as well. There is also one large-scale project focusing on the English of learners from a great variety of first language backgrounds: the International Corpus of Learner English at the Centre for English Corpus Linguistics in Thailand and more extensive studies based on this corpus, e.g., Lorenz, 1999[15]. However, the main thrust of this research enterprise is not a description of ELF use as conceived of in the present section. Rather, ICE intends, as indeed its name indicates, to identify characteristics of written learner English from different L1 backgrounds, with the objective to facilitate comparisons between these foreign language productions and those of native speakers, and so to highlight the difficulties specific L1 groups have with native English in order to make it easier for learners to conform to ENL if they so wish. In this respect, investigations of ICLE data could serve as empirical tests of the points made in Smith (1996) [12].

V. TEACHING ELF IN ASEAN

It seems, then, that the growing awareness of the unique global role of English and its cultural, ecological, sociopolitical and psychological implications is gradually leading to the realization
that these momentous developments also have linguistic consequences that are waiting to be noticed and described. Although this descriptive work is only in its early stages, the fact that it is being undertaken does raise the question as to what implications the eventual availability of ELF descriptions may have for the teaching of English. Obviously, if a language is perceived to be changing in its forms and its uses, it is reasonable to expect that something in the teaching of it will also change. However, this is not to say that descriptive facts can, or should, determine what is taught. This caveat is an important theme in Widdowson (2003) [13], a book that combines considerations of the global role of English with a critical evaluation of the pedagogic relevance of linguistic description. As Widdowson (1997) [14] puts it, “linguistic descriptions cannot automatically meet pedagogic requirement,” and it would therefore be wrong to assume that “findings should directly and uniquely inform what is included in language courses” (Widdowson, 2003, p. 106) [13]. Language pedagogy should thus refer to, but not defer to, linguistic descriptions. In conclusion, it may be worth emphasizing some important social and psychological advantages that a proper conceptualization of ELF is bound to have for the actual speakers involved. For ENL, and ENL speakers, the option of distinguishing ELF from ENL is likely to be beneficial in that it leaves varieties of native English intact for all the functions that only a first language can perform and as a target for learning in circumstances where ENL is deemed appropriate, as well as providing the option of code-switching between ENL and ELF. This takes pressure off a monolithic concept of English pulled in different directions by divergent demands and unrealistic expectations, a state of affairs frustrating for speakers of both ENL and ELF.

Finally, Seidlhofer (2002c) [11] stated that if ELF is conceptualized and accepted as a distinct manifestation of English not tied to its native speakers, this perspective opens up entirely new options for the way the world’s majority of English teachers can perceive and define them: instead of being nonnative speakers and perennial, error-prone learners of ENL, they can be competent and authoritative users of ELF. The language teaching profession has too long been obsessed with the native speaker–nonnative speaker teacher dichotomy.

1. The work on ELF described here offers the prospect of abolishing this counterproductive and divisive terminology which hinges on a negative particle, and which has had correspondingly negative effects on English language pedagogy.

2. Distinguishing ELF in relation to domain and linguacultural background of speakers would seem to correspond to the distinction between register and dialect varieties, i.e., what Halliday (1964) [14] refer to as variety according to user (dialect) and variety according to use (register). It is important to stress, therefore, that although domain and linguacultural background will clearly influence the forms ELF takes since it is after all a naturally occurring and therefore adaptive means of communication, since it has no native speakers, ELF functions as a register—albeit an unusual one—and not as a dialect as this is usually defined (cf. also James, 2000; Widdowson (2003) [13].

3. For a broader contextualization and discussion of this work, see Jenkins, this volume; for full details of both core and non-core features, see Jenkins, 2000, Ch. 6[7].

4. See www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/VOICE. This project is being supported by Oxford University Press, hence the Oxford element in its name.

5. This also raises the question as to whether it is justified to refer to ELF as an emerging variety in its own right. Some people think it can ultimately be so described predicts “a supranational standard” for Global English in less than a century from now. Others are more skeptical (Gorlach, 2002) [15]. Everything, of course, hinges on the definition of the term variety and, importantly, on what emerges from the empirical work described in this chapter.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explains the research questions, research setting and participants, and data collection and analysis.

Research setting and Participants

A total of the 98 first year students of English at Suan Dusit Rajabhat University who are non-native speakers will complete the questionnaire. The respondents are between 19 and 21 years of age (with an average of 20.5). All of them were enrolled in English Arts. They were predominantly born and raised in Thailand. The respondents were asked to rate each of three specified accents on 4 dimensions on a scale 1 to 6, where 1 represented 1 as ‘very correct’, 2 as ‘very acceptable’, etc. and 6 as the exact opposite.

Data collection and analysis

Methodological triangulation was employed in this quantitative and qualitative study, mainly to achieve validity of the research findings so that they reflect the research context accurately and to provide ample support as evidence. The three data collection methods that were employed include 1) a questionnaire 2) an interview and finally 3) a listening comprehension test. Directly after the participants completed the questionnaires, they were...
interviewed by the researcher in their mother tongue (Thai). The interview data were noted and recorded for analysis. After that the participants were asked to do the listening comprehension test.

Collecting data

For the questionnaire, the researcher carried out two roughly equal sessions, during the time of the English for Academic Purposes course, which is one of the general education courses at Suan Dusit Rajabhat University. Then each student received an assignment and a questionnaire, and a brief introduction was provided explaining the task as well as introducing the 3 listening texts to be heard with the different accents of ASEAN. Then, the audio samples were played in turn, with one accent per week, with short pauses in-between to allow for rating completion. The lineup of the audio samples were switched between the two class for ordering effects (though order was not completely randomized – female and male samples remained grouped together throughout, but the sequencing was reversed between and within these groups). Subsequent to the experiment, a debriefing was carried out in the form of a critical discussion of issues in language attitude studies towards ASEAN accents, in order to provide some benefit to the students in return for their contribution to the present study.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from questionnaire review

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<tr>
<th>TABLE I</th>
<th>THAI ACCENT IDENTIFICATION (N=98)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>correctness</td>
<td>acceptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X=2.918</td>
<td>X=2.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=15.74</td>
<td>SD=16.13</td>
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Thai accent means for the pleasantness was rated top at 2.224, obviously correctness as the less rating accent among 4 domains.

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<tr>
<th>TABLE II</th>
<th>PHILIPPINE ACCENT IDENTIFICATION (N=98)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>correctness</td>
<td>acceptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X=2.918</td>
<td>X=2.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=15.74</td>
<td>SD=19.49</td>
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</tbody>
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Philippine accent rated best of the remaining three accents at the level 2. The rating of Philippine means rated top for acceptability and familiarity reaming the two accents.

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<tr>
<th>TABLE III</th>
<th>CHINESE ACCENT IDENTIFICATION (N=98)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>correctness</td>
<td>acceptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X=2.989</td>
<td>X=3.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=15.74</td>
<td>SD=15.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rating scales yielded some interesting response from the informants regarding the three accents. The findings of the 98 respondents means for the correctness, acceptability pleasantness, and familiarity regarding Thai English accents, were rated top with 2.918 (SD=15.74), 2.908 (SD=16.13), 2.224 (SD=15.63), and 2.757 (SD = 0.33), whereas the Philippines accents were 2.102 (SD = 19.69), 2.244 (SD = 18.64), 2.469 (SD = 16.75), 2.326 (SD = 16.12), with the overall at 2.326 (SD = 0.15). The Chinese accents to be the worst on some dimensions were 2.989 (SD = 16.35), 3.183 (SD = 15.41), 3.142 (SD = 12.06), and 3.418 (SD = 9.46) with the overall at 3.198 (SD = 0.18). Finally, the present study proposed a pedagogical implication for teaching and being aware of ASEAN Englishes’s accents.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the participants’ attitudes towards and amount of exposure to a certain English language accents (namely, Thai, Philippine, and Chinese) was studied. They are devoted to teach varieties of English accents in the classroom as compared to linguaculture awareness and the different phonology in Thailand, Philippines, and China. Therefore, using native speaking country accents as the standard varieties to formal situation as the concept of English as an International language and using ASEAN Englishes in informal situations. The overall findings of the present study would create of ASEAN Englishes, as well as how they are emphasized in teaching for effective intercultural and lingualcultural communication in English for the upcoming establishment of the AEC in 2015.

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