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THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AND AWARENESS OF GLOBAL ENGLISHES

(Research article)

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Abstract

This study investigates how Thai university students believe about English language teaching and learning and to what extent they are aware of English variation or Global Englishes (GE). The participants are 13 senior English-major students who studied at a public university in northern Thailand in the academic year 2019. As the main research tool, the semi-structured interview was employed to gain data from the participants and the data was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. The results inform that the students' beliefs about English language are the core beliefs influencing other types of beliefs in the belief system including beliefs about English teaching and learning and English teachers. Nonetheless, such beliefs are dynamic and can change over a period of their exposure to English communication outside the classroom. In terms of awareness of GE, although the interview responses show some levels of students' awareness of GE, the analysis results place such awareness only at the implicit level given that the participants could neither express explicitly about GE nor explain it in detail. These results suggest Thailand's English classrooms reconsider teaching and learning focuses to be more related to the current sociolinguistic phenomenon of English as a global language.

Keywords: students' beliefs, beliefs about English teaching and learning, awareness of Global Englishes, English as a lingua franca, World Englishes

1. Introduction

For decades, Thailand has perceived English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL). This means the ultimate goal of using English in this country has been focusing on near-native competence, as the EFL perspective generally requires learners to be able to communicate effectively with native English speakers (NESs) (Jenkins, 2006a). With this orientation, therefore, the process of teaching and learning English in this country commonly emphasizes different aspects of linguistic competence (e.g., accent, knowledge of grammar, and idioms) that are believed to facilitate Thai people's communication with NESs (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020).

Nevertheless, throughout many decades, the EFL perspective tends to be rather toxic that has been causing different English language problems for Thai users. Given that this perspective is central to NESs, the English production and reception of Thai people (that are generally different from NESs whether linguistic, pragmatic, or socio-cultural) are usually called errors or incomplete acquisition of the second language (L2) (Jenkins, 2006b). For example, as presented by Kaur, Young, and Kirkpatrick (2016), while many travelers expressed their satisfaction with the English skills performed by Thai people working in the tourism

industry, the English assessment based on the EFL perspective (e.g., Test of English as a Foreign Language or TOEFL) still regarded that Thai speakers produced poor English and suggested them to improve to be close to NESs. Besides, empirical studies reported that many features of the EFL models of English language teaching (ELT) used in classrooms are often unattainable for Thai students (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013b). They comprise the classrooms that employed the NESs' norms of using English (e.g., accent and pronunciation) to teach and test students, or the classrooms that reinforced students to engage in extra-curricular activities based on the NESs' cultures which are generally not connected with students' cultural backgrounds (e.g., Christmas and Halloween activities) (Methitham, 2009).

Since the EFL perspective will likely continue posing problems for Thai users of the English language, several ELT scholars thus attempted to point out its negative effects on Thailand's English education as well as suggested some possible solutions. Many of them approached this issue from the nation-level of language management, exemplifying how the top-down national policy which is based on the EFL perspective can affect English communication problems in Thailand (e.g., Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Kaur et al., 2016). In contrast, other scholars focused on the classroom-level of language management, perceiving that the results received from actual classroom practices can provide another insight into the English education problems caused by the EFL perspective in the country. Among these scholars, many emphases were placed on studying the impact of the EFL-based education policy on teachers and their language classroom management (e.g., Prabjandee, 2020).

For the present study, to deal with the English education problems caused by the EFL perspective, the researcher also aims to concentrate on the classroom-level of language management. Apart from the benefit in terms of empirical evidence received from the actual classroom practices, focusing on this level of language management may help to support the 'bottom-up' approach of language policy or the approach that involves other stakeholders of the educational system in deciding what should be included in the educational policy to reduce the discrepancy between the enacted policy and the classroom practice (Viennet & Pont, 2017). However, unlike the previous classroom-level studies presented above, the particular interest of this study is placed on Thai university students. The researcher conceives that the reflection on beliefs about teaching and learning English of the university students, who have been experiencing English language teaching and learning in different levels of education, may provide additional insight into this issue of English education problems in Thailand. This viewpoint is advocated by many scholars who convinced the policy designers to include students' voices in planning English language education in Thailand (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019; Jindapitak & Teo, 2013b)

Also, along with exploring the students' beliefs about teaching and learning English, the present study is interested in examining whether they have the awareness of Global Englishes (GE) or the awareness of the variation of English language around the world as well as in their local context. This kind of awareness is seen as essential for the student participants who are soon to graduate from the university and have a high possibility to encounter a diversity of English language aside from the English of NESs. This issue is promoted by many researchers who argued that, despite the increase in diversity of English around the world, classroom practices in many EFL contexts are still very much NESs' oriented. Often, this action has led to students' lack of updated knowledge of English and its current status which are important for their future English use with people from various lingua-culture backgrounds (Fang & Ren, 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2014). Therefore, investigating to what extent the students are aware of GE may be another method "to reflect on the linguistic history of a nation in order to

understand the processes that helped shape the English spoken there” (Galloway & Rose, 2018, p. 10). The present study is thus guided by the following research questions:

- What is/are belief(s) about English teaching and learning of senior English-major students?
- To what extent the senior English-major students are aware of Global Englishes?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Student’s Beliefs

Students’ beliefs, or learners’ beliefs, is one of the fields of study that has long been attracting the interests of researchers who require to challenge the educational system. In other words, it is a field of study viewed as a solution for problems and difficulties in teaching and learning any subjects. Including the field of L2 learning, Hosenfeld (1978) perceived students’ beliefs or ‘mini theories’ about learning L2 as an important factor for students’ shape of their learning tasks. This argument is supported by recent researchers who recommended that to effectively predict expectations and conflicts that may contribute to students’ frustration, anxiety, lack of motivation, and ending of foreign language (FL) study, it is necessary to approach from students’ beliefs or their preconceived notions about what is involved in studying a foreign language (W. Wang & Zhan, 2020). Nevertheless, according to Riley (2006), despite the increase in studying the role of students’ beliefs in the language learning process, there has been a lack of studies that investigate the nature of students’ beliefs and even less has been carried out into how students’ beliefs essentially affect language learning. This links with some other scholars who claimed that there are still some aspects of students’ beliefs needing to be further explored, such as the relationship between students’ beliefs and learning strategies or actions (Shibata, 2019).

In addition to hypothesizing whether the study of students’ beliefs can improve students’ learning, the questions concerning the stability and modifiability of students’ beliefs have also been passed among scholars. For instance, Kern (1995) examined changes in the beliefs of 180 students who were studying French at a university in the United States. In his study, the framework called “Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory” or BALLI of Horwitz (1988) was employed during the first and last week of the semester. The results reported that 35% to 59% of the responses changed over the 15 weeks. Wong (2010) also confirmed that students’ beliefs can change. Like Kern (1995), Wong (2010) administered Horwitz’s (1988) BALLI to collect data over a period with 25 pre-service teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (TESL) program in Malaysia. The results illustrated that the students’ beliefs on language learning difficulty and the nature of language learning changed throughout the study. However, although the BALLI was also used in his longitudinal study, Peacock (2001) reported that over three years at the University of Hong Kong, his 146 trainee teachers showed no change in their beliefs about language learning. From these pieces of evidence, it may be summarized that students’ beliefs can be both stable and changeable. As this issue is still debatable and it tends to require further evidence, the present study thus aims to respond to this issue by investigating whether Thai students’ beliefs about teaching and learning English can change after a certain period of their cooperative education outside the university. It was hypothesized that during their cooperative education when they receive new experiences related to English communication, students’ beliefs may change.

In terms of methods for investigating students' beliefs, based on Barcelos (2003), there are three approaches to investigate students' beliefs including the normative approach, metacognitive approach, and contextual approach. The normative approach identifies beliefs as 'preconceived notions, myths or misconceptions', which can be studied utilizing Likert-style questionnaires, such as the framework called 'BALLI' of Horwitz (1988). As for the metacognitive approach, it perceives students' beliefs as metacognitive knowledge about language learning like in 'theories in action' (Wenden, 1987). Perceiving in this way, students' beliefs can be examined using the content analysis of learner self-reports in semi-structured interviews. Differently, the contextual approach regards students' beliefs as varying according to context; therefore, it involves collecting a variety of data types and diverse means of data analysis. It was argued that, in comparison with the normative and metacognitive approaches, the contextual approach seems to be superior, given that it accounts for students' beliefs from their 'nature' and 'experience' rather than from their 'mental trait' viewpoint. It has to note that, in the present study, the contextual approach was applied to investigate students' beliefs about English teaching and learning. This is because this study aimed to explore whether contextual factors (e.g., new experiences in new environments of cooperative education) can affect students' beliefs. Besides, given that the present study used various research instruments to collect data (e.g., semi-structured interviews and online interviews), it serves the objective of the contextual approach about employing a variety of data types and diverse means of data analysis.

2.2. Global Englishes

Jenkins, Cogo, and Dewey (2011) defined Global Englishes (GE) as a field of English Studies that concerns the global variation of English and rejects to employ NESs as a proficiency benchmark. To put it another way, GE is interested in the worldwide impacts of the status of English as a global language and studies it with other peripheral issues such as globalization and English language education management (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Essentially, GE is not an entirely new field of English studies but the field that has developed based on the traditional model named World Englishes (WEs) or the model that mainly emphasizes English varieties based on historical and geographical aspects (Jenkins, 2015). Given this emphasis of WEs, it is thus failed to capture other phenomena of English language in particular that when English is more increasingly used as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF) among people from different lingua-culture backgrounds. This has led GE scholars to include ELF in their conceptualization and studies it along with WEs because these concepts ultimately share a mutual viewpoint about English variations affected by the worldwide spread of English language (Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Focusing more on WEs, as partially mentioned, this framework focuses on English varieties spoken in different settings. In addition, given that the notion called 'pluralism' is emphasized under this framework, it thus scrutinizes the theoretical and methodological perspectives, which are based upon the monolingual viewpoints, and attempts to substitute them with the perspectives that are more related to multilingualism and language variation (Bhatt, 2001). According to Kachru (2005), the scopes of WEs research include those who study: forms and features of English (e.g., code-switching English); intelligibility of English (e.g., Singaporean English versus Filipino English); functions of English in different contexts (e.g., classroom, institution, society, and international setting); impacts of English on local languages (i.e., Englishization) and the impacts of local languages on English (i.e., Nativization); and types of English speakers (e.g., monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual).

In terms of ELF, Galloway and Rose (2015) claimed it as a new field of English studies that is intensively developed and concentrates on investigating the global usage of the English language. By its provided definition, ELF refers to “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). To illustrate, within the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community (henceforth AEC) where ten member nations do not possess the same first language (L1), English is chosen to be their main contact language used in different communicative purposes (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Regarding the scopes of ELF research, Jenkins et al. (2011) summarized that research into the nature of ELF can include those who investigate English in different linguistic levels (e.g., phonology, lexis/lexicogrammar, pragmatics, linguistic flexibility, and fluidity) and domains (e.g., business ELF setting or BELF and academic ELF settings).

To summarize, the awareness of GE in this study comprises two sub-categories of awareness; WEs and ELF. WEs focuses on varieties of English spoken in different contexts, whereas ELF examines the use of English among people from different nations and first languages. Although having different focuses, these frameworks share some common viewpoints, such as declining the monolithic models that see NESs as superior to NNESs and identifying the L2 varieties as legitimate varieties of English language (Adityarini, 2016; McKay, 2011). Due to these descriptions of WEs and ELF, the present study perceives their practicality and possibility for capturing the use of English in Thailand which is increasingly complex because of the spread of English as well as the need to use this language for different purposes such as in ASEAN community.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Setting and Participants

In the present study, the research setting was a public university in northern Thailand, where contains over 20,000 students both from within the country and from other Asian nations (e.g., Cambodia). Besides, this university was chosen to reflect another perspective of research on beliefs and awareness of GE in Thailand, which have mostly been undertaken in the large urban areas, such as Bangkok and its perimeters (Baker, 2009; Tayjasanant & Barnard, 2010), or in other contexts that are not close to the target context of the present study (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019; Jindapitak & Teo, 2013a).

As shown in Table 1, the target research participants of the study were 13 senior English-major students (3 males and 10 females), who enrolled in the course named ‘Co-operative Education’ (Code 146482 Section 1) in the second semester of the academic year 2019 (from November 2019 to March 2020). This course is an educational system focusing on systematic practical experience in the workplace in which the period of study and the period of working in the real workplace are combined (OECD, 2018). The main requirements of the course were that the students had to have a good learning ability (i.e., GPA over 3.00) and had to pass different workshops related to professional ability such as computer and language skills. Besides, the cooperative education students had to work in their chosen workplace (e.g., entertainment services, hotel business, electronic company, and educational services) at least for four months (or a full semester) and had to complete a project which was generally beneficial to the workplace or organization, such as modification or enhancement, efficiency development or the solution to some problems in the workplace. This process can generally aid

students to learn from their work experience, and make them more qualified to meet the needs of the workplace.

Table 1. *Background information of the participants*

Student	GPA	Gender	Position in workplace	Type of workplace	Province
S1	3.38	Male	General Staff	Entertainment Service	Phuket
S2	3.63	Female	General Staff	Entertainment Service	Phuket
S3	3.05	Female	General Staff	Entertainment Service	Phuket
S4	3.03	Female	Guest Service Agent	Hotel Business	Phuket
S5	3.51	Female	Food and Beverage Staff	Hotel Business	Phuket
S6	3.68	Female	Guest Service Agent	Hotel Business	Phuket
S7	3.21	Female	General Staff	Hotel Business	Pang Nga
S8	3.25	Female	General Staff	Hotel Business	Pang Nga
S9	3.05	Female	Food and Beverage Staff	Hotel Business	Kra Bi
S10	3.76	Female	Human Resource Staff	Electronic Company	Bangkok
S11	3.50	Male	Public Relation Staff	Electronic Company	Bangkok
S12	3.25	Female	Receptionist	Hotel Business	Lamphun
S13	3.52	Male	Assistant Principal	Educational Service	Chiangmai

3.2. Research Tool and Data Collection

The main research tool used for obtaining data was a semi-structured interview. This qualitative research instrument has the ability to discover the opinions, knowledge, views, and/or motivations of people on specific matters (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Besides, it has been claimed that the qualitative research that uses interviews to collect data can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from only quantitative research instruments such as questionnaires or surveys (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The semi-structured interview employed in this study were designed based on Seidman (2013). This researcher described that effective interview data should be obtained from at least three rounds of interviews, because only one or two may not be adequate to understand in-depth data, especially the beliefs and attitudes towards particular topics. Also, each round of interviews should last no longer than 90 minutes and have a clear and different focus.

For the present study, the first interview was conducted before each participant traveled for their cooperative education working and its focus was on students' background information related to learning and using the English language in Thailand. The second interview was done when the researcher traveled to the students' workplaces to supervise them as their cooperative education advisor. At this time, the interview focus was on their received experiences of using English in their workplace. Also, as some students had other advisors who traveled to supervise them, the researcher thus conducted online interviews with them using the video conference of Facebook Messenger. Similarly, in the third interview which was scheduled to happen during the spread of novel coronavirus and students were not allowed to travel back to the university for their cooperative education's project presentation, the video conference of Facebook Messenger was used again to collect their overall opinions towards the experiences of using English outside the classrooms. Note that all the interviews were done using the central Thai language to prevent misinterpretations between the researcher and the participants and they were recorded for the benefits of data analysis. Finally, to generate the reliability, validity, sensitivity, and possibility of the interviews, the present study had checked with the Ethics

Committee, as well as tested them in pilot sessions with pilot participants. Figure 1 below shows the overall procedures for interviews.

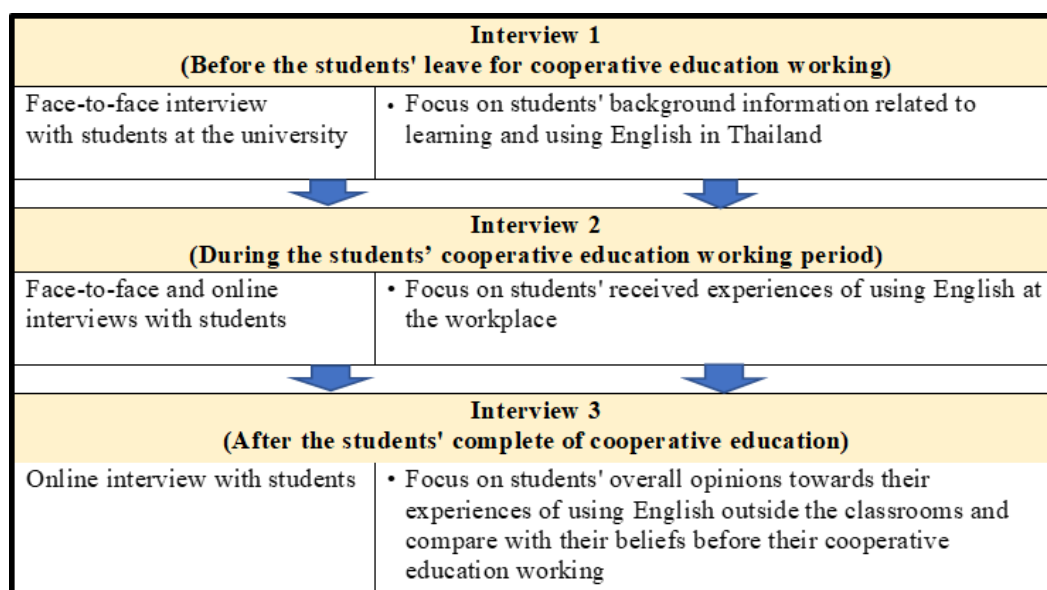


Figure 1. Overall procedures for semi-structured interviews

3.3. Data Analysis

Regarding the data analysis process, the researcher employed the analytical framework called Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) of Schreier (2012). Using this framework, the researcher was able to manage textual data received from different qualitative research instruments (Schreier, 2012; Silverman, 2015), such as transcriptions from the face-to-face interviews and online interviews. The initial stage for the interview analysis was transcribing the recorded data verbatim. Note that the verbal tics such as the speakers' tone, pacing, timing, and pauses were not analyzed given that the main focus of this study was placed on what the participants said, not on how words were said (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In fact, the researcher started transcribing and analyzing processes immediately after each of the interview sessions because he attempted to link and elucidate the participants' thoughts in their later interview meetings. By doing so, he was also able to ensure trustworthiness for the data, as the participants had a chance to clarify their ideas and to summarize their expressed opinions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Moreover, this action allowed the researcher to define emerging themes that could be used as 'deductive codes' for later data collection and analysis processes. Meanwhile, the 'inductive codes' which were later derived from the data were also counted to ensure that the research was not overwhelmed by the researcher's preconceptions (Thomas, 2006). Finally, all the emerging themes were revised, restructured, and clustered together for consistency, while those unrelated themes were eliminated.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Beliefs about English Teaching and Learning in Thailand

4.1.1 Beliefs about English language, language ownership, and language modification

In this study, one of the most common types of beliefs explored in the students' interview responses is the belief about English language. This belief is considered important because it

systematically links with other beliefs associated with English language of the students including the beliefs about English language ownership and language modification. The followings are the excerpts gathered from the interviews with students 2, 7, and 8 who defined English language in distinctive ways. For example, as seen in excerpts 1 and 2, students 2 and 7 perceived English as an ‘international’ and ‘universal’ language, explaining that this language is currently used and spread globally and is no longer the language of specific groups of people. Consequently, this belief tended to lead them to argue that any users of English language can adjust or modify the language for their own purposes. On the other hand, in excerpt 3, student 8 viewed English as only a ‘second’ language or even the language of ‘others’. For her, the target groups of English speakers whom she aimed to use English with seem to mainly from native English-speaking countries. Therefore, when it comes to language modification, this participant thought that those who are non-native English speakers (NNEs) have no right to modify the language. Note that the interview excerpts presented below consist of some abbreviations (e.g., S2 = Student 2, R = Researcher).

Excerpt 1 (Interview 1 with S2)

S2: I think that English has already become an international language being spoken around the world by people from many different backgrounds ... I am not sure what other people think but I believe that every user who can speak English can own it or even modify it for their own usages without asking for permission from those native speakers ...

Excerpt 2 (Interview 1 with S7)

S7: For me, English is a universal language that everyone can use. ... As it is used globally, I don't think it should belong to specific groups of people like American or British people. For example, we are Thai but we can adjust English to suit our communication with other foreigners like Chinese and Indians who come to our country. We don't have to wait for native speakers' permission when we use or modify this language ...

Excerpt 3 (Interview 1 with S8)

S8: ... just because we can use English doesn't mean that we are its owner. For us, this language is still a second language that we learn to communicate with its native speakers ...

R: How about if we learn it until we can use it properly as a native speaker? Do you still think that we cannot own it or at least modify it for our personal uses?

S8: Well, but for me, I still think that English is the language others who have historical backgrounds and were born with it ... I don't think we are allowed to modify it or use it in the way that we want without receiving permission from its original native speakers ...

4.1.2 Beliefs about teachers of English language and their teaching practices

Another prominent type of belief explored in the students' interview responses is the belief about teachers of English language and their teaching practices. When the students described their learning experiences with teachers of English language, they generally compared two groups of teachers involving Thai teachers and foreign (including native speaker) teachers of

English language. Considerably, the data analysis showed that most of the students thought that learning English with Thai teachers is often more stressful than learning with foreign teachers. This is because, while Thai teachers place more teaching and learning focuses on grammatical rules, foreign teachers often encourage them to practice communication skills. The followings are the excerpts received from different interview sessions.

Excerpt 4 (Interview 1 with S1)

S1: *I feel that Thai teachers are stricter about grammar than foreign teachers. I know that grammar is important in English language but I can't remember all the rules when I have to speak English.*

R: *You mean your foreign teachers don't stress on grammar at all?*

S1: *They do but not much like Thai teachers. I think they might want us not to be scared when we have to speak with them ...*

R: *Oh I see. Are there any more reasons for you to prefer studying English more with foreign teachers? Is that also because of their accents?*

S1: *Not really. I do like their accents, but the more important thing is that they didn't scare or punish me when I made mistakes in classrooms ...*

Excerpt 5 (Interview 1 with S6)

R: *Between Thai and foreign teachers, whom do you like to study English with more? And why?*

S6: *I prefer foreign teachers because they tend to encourage us to speak and communicate in English although we make a lot of mistakes. Some Thai teachers do this as well actually but most of them are quite strict about grammar and rules of the language.*

R: *I see. Are there any other reasons for you to choose foreign teachers? Accents?*

S6: *Well, I like their accents but it is not the main reason ...*

Despite having negative opinions towards Thai teachers' grammar strictness, a few students pointed out some qualities of Thai teachers that facilitated their English learning. This included S7 and S4 who claimed Thai teachers' Thai accent of English as well as their use of Thai language to explain English lessons as beneficial for their English learning.

Excerpt 6 (Interview 1 with S7)

R: *What do you think about teaching English in Thai accent of Thai teachers?*

S7: *There is nothing wrong with their Thai accent because I have a Thai accent as well. I think it is actually useful for me because I can understand them easily when they communicate with me in classrooms.*

Excerpt 7 (Interview 1 with S4)

S4: *... I like it when Thai teachers explain the English lessons in the Thai language. It helps me a lot especially when the lessons are very difficult to follow ... Differently, when I study with foreign teachers who teach me in English without checking my understanding, I often get confused and discouraged...*

4.1.3 Beliefs about teaching English to Thai students

In addition to the two types of beliefs presented above, the data analysis revealed that the students frequently suggested what should be emphasized in teaching and learning English in Thailand. Particularly in the second and the third interviews, many of them connected their working experiences received from the cooperative education with their interview responses. What is interesting here is that the researcher could observe some changes in their beliefs about teaching and learning English in Thailand affected by their realistic English confrontations outside the classroom.

For instance, S8, who expressed obviously in the first interview that we, as NNEs, have no right to modify the language or use the language without considering the rules (see excerpt 3), claimed in her second interview that language changes are normal in the place where is diverse in terms of language uses. Therefore, in English classrooms, she suggested teachers of English emphasize language flexibility rather than the fixed rules of the language. Additionally, S3, who has ever thought that grammatical rules have to come first in English language teaching and learning, changed to see that communicative competencies and strategies as more important in reality. This is because these aspects seem to be useful for her communication with speakers of different English varieties.

Excerpt 8 (Interview 2 with S8)

R: *What have you learned from your working experiences?*

S8: *I have learned a lot. I met many people from different countries and many of them rarely speak English, such as Chinese and Russian. So, when we had to fix their room problems in the hotel, my colleagues and I had to do everything to communicate with them, such as mixing up English words and tenses or even using code-switching because my colleagues and I know some fundamental Chinese language and Russian vocabularies.*

R: *I see. But you have ever told me that we are not allowed to change or modify the language in the way that we want in our previous interview session?*

S8: *I know, but that was before I came here to Kra Bi where is quite diverse in terms of language usages. We cannot control or fix anything about language use ... So, I think that, when English teachers teach Thai students, they may have to emphasize more on flexible language uses than on strict rules of the language. For example, they may stress communicative competencies or strategies which will help their students succeed in their encounter with foreigners ...*

Excerpt 9 (Interview 3 with S3)

R: *OK. To confirm your answer given in our first interview, what should we focus on in teaching and learning English in Thailand?*

S3: *What did I answer you at that time?*

R: *Well, you thought that grammatical rules should come first in English classrooms.*

S3: *No, I think I have changed my mind because, you know, when I was working at the XXX cabaret show, I met many tourists who came from different countries and spoke English in different ways. I often didn't understand what they said or what they wanted. I mean I couldn't catch their language. Especially Indian people, their English was so difficult to understand so I had to use different strategies like asking them to repeat, telling them to slow down, or even requesting them to reform their sentences ...*

R: *So now you think that speaking or communicative strategies are more important in English classrooms than grammatical rules?*

S3: *Yes. I mean grammar is still important but when you have to really speak out the language, you will think that strategies to deal with communication problems are more important ...*

4.2. Students' Awareness of Global Englishes

Apart from investigating the students' beliefs about English language teaching and learning, this study also examined their awareness of Global Englishes (GE). In fact, some information concerning the awareness of GE of the students has been partially shown in the previous parts. For instance, in excerpts 1 and 2, S2 and S7 considered English as currently an 'international' and 'universal' language and argued that any speakers of English can claim ownership or can adjust the language to suit their personal purposes. Besides, in excerpts 4 and 5, S1 and S6 believed that grammar is less important than communication ability or confidence. More importantly, in excerpts 8 and 9, S8 and S3 reflected on their working experiences that language flexibility and communicative competencies and strategies are more important than the fixed rules of language.

This section provides more evidence of students' awareness of GE. It should be noted that, in this study, the data analysis seemed to show that the students had limited knowledge of (or even were unfamiliar with) the conceptual framework of GE. To illustrate, in the third interview when the researcher summarized overall emerged points in their interview responses and asked whether they have ever come across with the concepts called World Englishes (WEs), English as a lingua franca (ELF), or English as an international language (EIL) which is a superordinate term that encompasses ELF (Sifakis, 2017), almost all of them presented their unfamiliarity with such concepts and requested for more explanations. Once they were given a brief overview of GE (e.g. the different focuses of EFL and ELF perspectives), they showed more interest and expressed that their teachers should have emphasized this concept while they were studying in classrooms because it may be useful for their English learning and use (see excerpts 10 and 12). However, the data reported that, despite having not been properly taught about the framework of GE in classrooms, many students still expressed the opinions that were associated with GE issues. This can be seen in excerpt 11 when S1 unconsciously showed his awareness of GE which was affected by the cooperative education experience. That is to say, in his final interview when the researcher elaborated on some key concepts of GE, similarly to the interview response of S3 presented in Excerpt 10, S1 thought that his English teachers should have lectured him the knowledge of GE given its potential benefits for his professional encounters (see excerpt 12).

Excerpt 10 (Interview 3 with S3)

S3: *... Well, I would say that these concepts (WEs and ELF) seem useful for English learning. But why didn't any of my English teachers talk about it in classrooms? You know, I have always been taught to use English based on native speakers and, whenever I misused it or used it differently from native speakers such as different pronunciations, they will ask me to correct it until it is similar to what they called standard. This has ever made me scared and bored with learning English ... I think if they have raised these (GE) issues in classrooms, it may be much beneficial for our English learning competence or, at least, we may be more confident to use it than in the present ...*

Excerpt 11 (Interview 2 with S1)

- S1: *You know, in the first moment I worked here in the XXX cabaret show, I had to communicate with many people who came from different countries and their accents were totally different. I was stunned at that time and was unable to do anything. Luckily, my supervisor helped and taught me how to deal with that situation ...*
- R: *... so, based on your working experience, what skills should the university provide to students before leaving for their cooperative education or professional training?*
- S: *Of course, I think the future trainees should be equipped with communication skills, in particular to the knowledge or strategy that can be useful for their communication with people who speak different English accents ...*

Excerpt 12 (Interview 3 with S1)

- S1: *... Personally, I think that these concepts (WEs and ELF) are interesting and relevant to our context. As I have ever told you about the XXX cabaret show that many of my customers were not from the USA or the UK, it seems that we, Thai people, have to use English more with non-native speakers than with native speakers in the present day. I am wondering why haven't my English teachers imparted us this concept because I can see that it is beneficial for our future working ...*

5. Discussion

5.1. Beliefs about Language as the Core Beliefs in the Students' Belief System

According to Pajares (1992), in almost every belief system, there should be two types of beliefs; one is called 'core' belief and another is 'peripheral' belief. In general, core beliefs play a central and powerful role in influencing other peripheral beliefs. The result of the present study serves with this perspective as the researcher discovered that the students' beliefs about English language have a crucial impact on other beliefs associated with English including beliefs about language ownership and language modification (see excerpts 1, 2, and 3). In practice, this function of beliefs about language (in terms of influencing other beliefs in the belief system) seems to have an intersection with the concept known as 'language ideologies', which many researchers concerned as an important factor influencing people's beliefs and practices of English language (e.g., Kroskrity, 2010; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2017). For example, Sifakis and Bayyurt (2017) illustrated that the beliefs established from language ideologies (e.g. standard language ideology) will develop values that control how teaching, learning, and communication is perceived, and what is accurate, suitable, and relevant is designated in the way that the English language is viewed.

Given the impact of the beliefs about English language on other related beliefs about English language, the researcher thus perceives that, in ELT classrooms, the pedagogical emphasis should be primarily devoted to defining the nature of this language (e.g., definitions and functions) before focusing on its other aspects (e.g., rules and features) while teaching and learning. This perception is advocated by many scholars who argued that how English is conceived has important implications for the theory and practice of language learning and teaching (e.g., Hall, Wicaksono, Liu, Qian, & Xu, 2017; Seidlhofer, 2011). Particularly to this period when English serves as a global lingua franca and it is used differently by people from

different lingua-culture backgrounds, there should be a re-examination of the traditional belief that appeals to English as the sole language of a specific group of users based on their birth origins or historical backgrounds. In other words, to properly capture the changing phenomenon of the use of English around the world, local ELT educators and teachers may have to make English as a ‘subject matter’ more interrelated with English as a ‘sociolinguistic phenomenon’ (Widdowson, 2003). As for Thailand, the researcher supports Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017) who suggested the English language education policy more enhance Thai students’ awareness of ELF as well as other related aspects of the English language (e.g. intercultural communication awareness) for the benefits of their intercultural encounters both within the country and international contexts.

5.2 Thai Teachers and Foreign Teachers of English Language

The results of the present study also revealed Thai students’ beliefs towards teachers of the English language and their teaching practices. As seen in excerpts 4, 5, 6 and 7, in contrast to previous studies that compared English teachers based on the native/ non-native perspective (e.g., Cheung & Braine, 2007; Kemaloglu-Er, 2017), the student participants in this study used the terms ‘Thai teachers’ for those who share the same lingua-culture background with them and the term ‘foreign teachers’ for both non-native English teachers (NNETs) who come from other non-native English speaking countries (e.g. Germany and Finland) and native English teachers (NETs) from native speaking countries (e.g. USA and UK). Despite using different terms, the analysis result was still associated with previous studies particularly when the students pointed out the pedagogical weaknesses and strengths between their Thai and foreign teachers.

To illustrate, many students expressed that learning English with foreign teachers is more enjoyable than learning with Thai teachers. The main reason for this opinion is not related to accents or speaking abilities of foreign teachers (or NETs) as presented in other studies (e.g., Chun, 2014; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014), but it is the classroom focus of the teachers. That is to say, while foreign teachers encourage them to speak English, the students reported that Thai teachers are too strict with grammatical rules in classrooms and this action often makes them unconfident to produce the language. This result supports previous researchers who pointed out that the NNETs’ strictness of grammatical rules can lead to students’ language learning anxiety or even negative attitudes towards English and learning English with NNETs (Boriboon, 2011; Kemaloglu-Er, 2017). On the other hand, the present study disagrees with previous studies that claimed the ability to teach grammar makes NNETs stronger than NETs (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2002), as none of the students in this study viewed this ability as a strength but rather a weakness of NNETs.

Regardless of the above weakness, there are some strengths of Thai teachers pointed out by the students. This involves their ability to use the Thai language to explain English lessons to students. Essentially, this quality is often claimed to be a pride of NNETs by many scholars. For example, Árva and Medgyes (2000) argued that, if teachers share the same mother tongue with their students, they will not only be able to clarify the lesson in-depth but also be able to forecast language structures that may appear to be problematic for the students. Additionally, some students considered the Thai accent of English of Thai teachers as another positive resource helping them both in classroom lecturing and classroom communication. This result corresponds with previous studies that also perceived accents of NNETs as not a hindrance but rather a benefit for non-native English students in classrooms (Ballard & Winke, 2017). Given these results, the present study thus confirms previous studies that regarded the NETs’ accent

and incapability to use the students' mother tongue language as one of the main factors influencing students to view them as difficult to approach or even unsympathetic in English classrooms (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Chun, 2014).

5.3 From Fixed to Flexible Beliefs about English Teaching and Learning

Another interesting point to be discussed is related to the change of the students' beliefs. As illustrated in excerpts 8 and 9, the beliefs about teaching and learning English of S8 and S3 were influenced by their working experiences. That is, after exposing to English variation during their cooperative education, they changed their fixed beliefs about language modification and teaching grammar to be more flexible. This result challenges previous studies that claimed students' beliefs as stable and unchangeable through periods (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Tanaka, 2004).

More importantly, based on their changed beliefs, the students suggested Thai ELT classrooms change to focus on language flexibility and communicative competence to suit the current use of the English language within the country. This result corroborates previous studies that claimed learners' real experiences of using English with other NNEs as a tool to prompt their reflection on ELT beliefs which are frequently refined by the traditional ELT model and often do not reflect the current reality of global usage of English language (e.g., Ke & Cahyani, 2014). Additionally, the present study perceives this result connected with the theoretical framework called 'Transformative learning' of Mezirow (1991) which is frequently employed in the field of GE (e.g. ELF-aware teacher education) to raise the awareness of English variation among students and teachers of English language (Sifakis, 2014; Sifakis & Kordia, 2019). This is because the transformative learning theory systematically describes how the experiences of individuals change their frame of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds.

5.4 From Implicit to Explicit Awareness of Global Englishes

In the present study, the analysis results inclined to show that the students' awareness of GE resides only at the implicit or subconscious level. That is to say, although a number of them pointed out some issues related to GE in their interview responses (e.g., English is a universal/international language in excerpts 1 and 2; grammar is less important than communication ability and confidence in excerpts 4 and 5), none of them expressed explicit knowledge or could explain thoroughly about GE issues (e.g., WEs, ELF, and EIL). The researcher hypothesizes that this implicit awareness of GE of students may cause by a lack of proper GE-informed instruction of their teachers. This is because, in the last interview when the researcher provided a brief overview of GE, the students expressed that their teachers never instructed them the knowledge of GE in classrooms but kept focusing on teaching and learning English based on the NESs' standard which is indeed a cause of the English using difficulty during their cooperative education working (see S3 in excerpt 10 and S1 in excerpt 12).

Nevertheless, the present study agrees with previous researchers who maintained that the implicit level of awareness of GE is still important and it is a crucial stage for growing a full awareness of GE through proper GE-informed education (Kemaloğlu-Er & Bayyurt, 2018, 2019) (Novotná & Dunková, 2015; Sifakis, 2017). In other words, it is believed that, if the students are equipped with proper knowledge of GE, they can become more explicitly aware of this concept and may even apply it in their future practices of English language in classrooms. Taking the cases of S8 and S3 to be an example, the researcher observed that, after

the exposure to English variation during their cooperative education working, these students expressed some issues that are related to GE such as when S3 thought that communicative strategies are more important than grammar and when S8 viewed the concept of language flexibility more practical than the strictness of language structure (see excerpts 8 and 10). However, in the last interview when they received a proper overview of GE, their awareness of GE became more explicit as they began to use the key terms of GE (e.g., WEs, ELF, and EIL) and critically linked them with their experiences of learning and use of English.

Given this result indicating the absence of GE-informed instruction as a cause of the students' implicit (or lack of) awareness of GE in classrooms, the present study thus recognizes the importance of raising their explicit awareness of GE through the input of explicit knowledge of GE in classrooms. This viewpoint supports many GE scholars who suggested ELT teachers include GE-related issues in their classroom practices for the benefit of their students who will graduate to encounter English variation outside the classroom (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Kemaloğlu-Er & Bayyurt, 2018; Lopriore & Vettorel, 2015; Sifakis, 2014; Sifakis & Kordia, 2019; Y. Wang, 2015). For example, Y. Wang (2015) described that the input of explicit knowledge of GE is an important factor that helps to enhance the students' awareness of GE (e.g., awareness of ELF). This is because the explicit knowledge of GE is likely to have immediate impacts on L2 students' consciousness of the global spread of English as well as its impacts on both international and intranational contexts in the current period. Without this knowledge, it seems difficult to see the explicit awareness of GE in their usages and practices of English language either inside or outside the classroom.

6. Implications of the Study

In terms of implications for further studies interested in the topic of students' beliefs about teaching and learning English, the present study recommends them to examine this kind of beliefs over a period because the result of the present study showed that the students' beliefs toward this topic are quite flexible and changeable. In particular to when the students have the opportunity to expose to different forms of language use outside the classrooms, their stated beliefs can be influenced by their experiences. Besides, as the present study focused only on the beliefs of students, further studies may include studying the beliefs of other ELT stakeholders such as teachers, students' parents, institution administrators, and the prospective employers of the students. This is because each stakeholder may have different perspectives on this aspect of ELT and may significantly affect the teaching and learning of the institution (Chan, 2017; Liu & Fang, 2020). For example, as the researcher had the opportunity to supervise the cooperative education students and to interview their employers, he received some interesting information concerning differences between the use of English in the workplace and the use of English classrooms. That is, while the employers focused on communicative competence, the teachers stressed on language accuracy. This is one of the issues that may be worth exploring in further studies. Moreover, further studies may study whether or not the beliefs of each stakeholder go in the same direction (e.g., the beliefs of the teachers and employers) as doing so may ensure the consistency between the classroom lessons and the expected goals of their future profession. And if the beliefs of each stakeholder are different, it seems crucial for the people related to ELT to take further action.

The above information has also led to the implication for Thailand's ELT educators and teachers. Given that the main role of ELT educators and teachers is to facilitate students to achieve the goals and to be successful in using English outside the classrooms, these people may need to take the results of this study into their consideration of ELT preparations and

practices. This is particular to when the results presented that the teachers' lack of proper GE-informed instruction is the main cause of the students' lack of (or implicit) awareness of GE, which has contributed to their difficulty in communicating in English with other speakers of English in their workplaces. What the researcher wants to suggest is further ELT educators and teachers need to find some practical methods to integrate the explicit of GE into their ELT practices for the benefit of their students.

In fact, many GE scholars noted that the promotion of GE-informed instruction does not mean a rejection of standard English. This includes Sifakis (2007) who described that the main goal of raising awareness of GE (e.g., awareness of ELF) among ELT scholars is to ensure that they can strike a balance between the EFL and GE by combining standard norms with an awareness of the inherently dynamic and fluid multi-semantic structures that result from the various intranational and international interactions involving non-native users. Moreover, some scholars have even applied the GE-informed instruction to raise the awareness of GE among students and have received successful results. For instance, Galloway and Rose (2018), who observed a lack of GE-related teaching and learning materials as a barrier to promoting explicit knowledge of GE in EFL classrooms, designed an ELT model called Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) for promoting Japanese EFL students' awareness of GE. In their study, the students are requested to choose a regional variety of English and/ or the use of English in a chosen context (e.g., an ELF context) in which they were interested and to research their topics before performing a short presentation and evaluating their topics. Their results proved their GELT model has raised the students' awareness of variation in English as well as challenged attitudes towards Englishes that differed from the NESs' models employed in typical ELT materials in Japan.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to examine Thai university students' beliefs about English teaching and learning and their awareness of Global Englishes. As students are an essential group of ELT stakeholders, the data received from them can also be useful for dealing with English education problems caused by the EFL-based policy of the country. In other words, the present study perceives their responses as important evidence to support the bottom-up policy or the policy that allows voices of other stakeholders apart from the government sectors to decide what to teach and learn in classrooms. The results received from a qualitative analysis proved that the beliefs about English teaching and learning of the students are flexible and changeable. This means their beliefs can be significantly influenced by their experiences of using English outside the classroom. More importantly, the results showed that the working experiences of the students can help equip them with the awareness of GE which, in fact, should be taught in classrooms before their cooperative education. However, it should be noted that this study was conducted in only one university in Thailand; thus, generalizations should be avoided. Further research may be conducted to examine students' beliefs about teaching and learning English and awareness of GE in other universities. They may also consider emphasizing other types of beliefs related to ELT or including other groups of ELT stakeholders to measure whether or not their beliefs are consistent for the benefit of their students.

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