

Thai English

*A Series of Lectures for the Video on Demand for
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Part I Preliminaries

1. Theoretical Framework

2. Scenario of the Use of English in Thailand

Theoretical Framework

The Concept of World Englishes

In the Age of Information and Communication Technology, the keyboards of the computers used in the world are mostly bilingual, i.e., English and another language, that is, the native language of the computer's owner.

The Concept of World Englishes

Knowledge and information on the network can be accessed mainly through English.

It is a must that we need a lingua franca that can be shared among the world community and English seems to be the main language taught in all the countries that are not English speaking.

English is used as a second language or a foreign language in the world community.

The Concept of Grammaticality

Linguistic Description of English is mostly based on the Standard Variety of English.

Standard Variety is the institutionalized variety accepted by educated speakers of the language. It is used in formal written style. Prescriptively speaking, it is considered the norm variety of English.

Other varieties of English, even those varieties used by L1 or native speakers of English, are usually considered as colloquial, dialectal, informal, casual, and are considered as bad (Joos 1969) or corrupted varieties.

The Concept of Grammaticality (continue)

The descriptions of English Grammar in most grammar books are based on the Standard Variety.

Variation in L1 speakers, beyond the Standard Variety, has been a topic of interest by sociolinguists who found that the linguistic patterns of these varieties are in accordance with the socio-economic patterns of the speakers.

The Concept of Grammaticality (continue)

The Sociolinguistic Theories, which started to be an issue of interest in the 70s, have given rise to the study of other varieties of English. The varieties found in the L1 speakers are called Englishes of the Inner Circle Speakers (Kachru 1985)

Other varieties spoken by non-native speakers are called Englishes of the Outer Circle Speakers, and the Expanding Circle Speakers. These varieties refer to Englishes spoken by second language speakers, and those by foreign language speakers respectively.

The Concept of Acceptability

Descriptively speaking, Englishes can be described. There are rules governing their grammars. So we can describe the grammar of “Black English” or “Ebonics”, Thai English, Singaporean English etc.

However, are these varieties acceptable and are they to be taught in schools?

Prescriptive Linguistics as introduced in Applied Linguistics is concerned about the language choice used and enforced to use in the classroom.

The Concept of Acceptability (continue)

Prescriptively speaking, the English varieties chosen to be taught in schools are the Standard Varieties, for example, Standard British English, General American English, etc.

These varieties are accepted as Standard written language. Other varieties that are non-standards can only be accepted as spoken varieties.

In formal or official written styles only the Standard Varieties are acceptable. The Non-standard can also be used to mark the social or socio-economic background of the speakers, as used in novels, plays, books, etc.

The Concept of Acceptability (continue)

The choices of what variety of English should be chosen for pedagogical purposes, are determined by different factors:

- The Economic, Social, and Political factors
- The Demographic Network
- The Attitudes and Values of the Society

The Interlanguage Perspective

We can look at Englishes as the fossilized forms of the L2 speakers trying to reach the Target, English, language, but never reach it. The concept is represented in the diagram below:



The Interlanguage Perspective (continue)

Englishes can be viewed as a developmental stage of L2 Interlanguage with interference from L1, or L1 Transfer.

These fossilized forms are condemned as the varieties of uneducated speakers, colloquial, casual, and are not accepted in the classrooms, especially when it is written.

However, Englishes are used and are acceptable in the **Oral Mode**.

Part I Preliminaries

1. Theoretical Framework

2. Scenario of the Use of English in Thailand

Scenario of the Use of English in Thailand

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that has never been colonized. So the country can be considered a monolingual country. The number of Chinese immigrants are high in big cities. The immigration can be traced back to the Sukhothai Period, more than 700 years ago, however, the number of Chinese immigrants increased a lot during the Bangkok Period, around 200 years ago.

Thailand has been in contact with many countries from Sukhothai Period through religious, trades, arts, education, etc.

The process of borrowings from many Donor Foreign Languages such as Pali-Sanskrit, Khmer, Portuguese, Persian, Chinese are very gradual. Most of the borrowings or loanwords from these language are used in the language, and common people will not know that the words are not originally Thai.

Loanwords from Pali-Sanskrit are used in the area of religion, education, proper names.

Loanwords from Khmer or Cambodian are used in the area of royalty.

A lot of words in the area of food and ordinary household things, including numbers, are borrowed from the Chinese language.

English words are also borrowed into the Thai language. The first contact with English is claimed to be during King Narai Reign, about 350 years ago.

The influx of the English language through the Information and Communication Technology during the last and the present decade creates a lot of English borrowings into the present day language.

The English language has been borrowed into the Thai language very heavily during the past decade. Especially in the area of science and technology.

In the speech of professional people where English is borrowed into the Thai language very heavily. English words are put in their Thai directly, in terms of Code Mixing.

The Thai Context

Thailand is generally **a monolingual society**. The English language was first introduced in the Bangkok period in 1828 during the reign of King Rama III.

The First Examination Act was enacted in 1890. This act was used as the guideline for education management and was regarded as the starting point for the formulation of the National Curriculum. English was one of the subjects included in the Examination Act. (Arreerad Numpeth 1986).

At present the English language is used in Thailand mainly in the international context, it is hardly used within the Thai context. However, English has been increasingly used for educational purposes, industry and business development, and international relations.

International Communication in the Thai Context

At present international communication in the Thai context, that used to be among a small group of people, has expanded into a larger group of people. Not only for international relations, but also for education, business and industry development and exchanges, entertainment etc.

This international communication in the Thai context is aided by the vast development of information technology all over Thailand. Now with internet facilities boundless information in all aspects from any corner of the world that has telephone communication can be accessed. There are electronic books, journals, websites with all interesting links which are accessible 24 hours.

Teaching English in the Present Context

← 2005 →

Looking Back and Projecting to the Future

English in the National Curriculum of Thailand

- 1890 > One of the Subjects in the Examination Act**
- 1895 > One of the Elective Subjects in Secondary Schools**
- 1909 > One of the Compulsory Subjects in Primary Schools**
- 1960 > One of the Compulsory Subjects in Primary Schools**
- 1978 > One of the Elective Subjects in Primary Schools**
- 1996 > One of the Elective Subjects Recommended to Teach in Primary School from First Grade**
- 2001 > The First foreign language to be introduced from First Grade (Standards and Benchmarks for the 12 Year General Education)**

Country Adults	Higher Education			High School		Illiterate
	<i>number/100,000 pop</i>			<i>number/total pop %</i>		<i>number/total pop %</i>
	1980	1985	1995	1985	1995	1995
HongKong	1,201	1,448	1,635	65%	71%	7.8%
Japan	2,065	1,943	3,139	95%	96%	-
Sth Korea	1,698	3,568	4,955	84%	96%	2.0%
Brunei	74	271	514	51%	68%	11.8%
Philippines	2,641	2,565	2,701	50%	60%	5.4%
Thai	1,284	2,009	2,096	-	-	6.2%
Singapore	963	1,474	2,522	-	-	8.9%
Malaysia	419	595	971	-	-	16.5%
Australia	2,222	2,366	5,401	78%	89%	-
NZ	2,462	2,950	4,603	84%	93%	-



Educational Policy and Planning for the Country Man Power

Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that generally Thailand is a monolingual country. In big cities, English is used in the area of business, tourism, and education. Outside big cities, school children can speak very limited English.

During the past decade the number of bilingual and international schools in Thailand has increased enormously. The international programs in the universities also increase in the same manner. This is to accommodate the needs of education in the English language for the Thai people and for the people from our neighbouring countries.