

# Who am I? "I am a Swifty!" Some Stories from EFL Learners

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**Abstract** This paper aims to report stories of two Thai learners who were purposively selected from a quantitative study of 233 freshmen. They study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the monolingual context. They were formally interviewed three times about their L2 motivation and learning experiences using narrative inquiry. Narrative data were supplemented by such personal and social artifacts as their memorable photos. The Ideal L2 self and the person-in-context relational view of motivation were used to analyze multifaceted aspects of both individual and contextual factors shaping their L2 self and identity. The findings suggested that they seemed to envision themselves becoming proficient English users. However, one student had stronger visions than another one. His L2 self and identity were highly influenced by the American pop culture, social media, and social networking from school to university. His desirable self-image tended to be strengthened by his sustained effort to communicate in English both inside and outside class. By applying the findings, stories of two participants can be used as exceptional cases, rather than generalizable, and as a basis for developing a series of pedagogical strategies which might be tested in the field of language teaching in the future.

**Keywords** Ideal L2 Self, L2 Learning Experiences, EFL Learner, Identity Development

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## 1. Introduction

Thailand has never been colonized by western countries. Thai students study English as a Foreign Language (EFL). They tend to have limited opportunities to speak English in their daily lives and strive to find the context to communicate in English [12]. Nonetheless, English become more important for Thai tertiary students and become widely used not only globally but also regionally. English is currently regarded as the Lingua Franca (ELF) in Thailand

[21] (Baker, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Kongkerd, 2013). An estimate of the current number of ASEAN users of English, including South Asia and East Asia, is 812 million people [10]. Thus, English is used as a medium of communication among member states in this region such as international program and business transaction. Thailand began integrating into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, where English is regarded as the official language and the Lingua Franca (ELF) among interlocutors from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Tracing back to its establishment, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was cooperatively formed by Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore on August 8, 1967. The aim was to foster the economic, social and cultural development within the ASEAN region. Its motto is "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" [14]. In particular, Asian Englishes are likely to be increasingly important for communicating among non-native speakers (NNS) of the 10 member states of ASEAN. This contrasts with their former reliance on native speakers (NS) as mediators.

The implementation of AEC integration in 2015 has created economic and social benefits and strengthened the connectivity among the citizens of the community. The increasing free flow of business transactions and skilled labour in member states has emphasised the importance of using English in educational and business contexts. As result of the AEC integration, Thai students have more opportunities to contact, travel, and even work with people in the member states. As members of a future mobile workforce, it is crucial to understand whether Thai university students are ready to participate in the global community. It is timely to capture Thai students' motivation and vision of their future selves amid the changing landscape of the social and cultural contexts in the AEC era. The social and cultural contexts mean that students have more opportunities to communicate with NS and NNS interlocutors in changing sociocultural environments.

Reflecting on my previous teaching experiences at

Southern university in Thailand, I was normally assigned to teach General English to freshmen from different majors. I found that some students feel unmotivated to learn and could not sustain their efforts in both academic and non-academic contexts. Hence, I was motivated to explore students' perceptions of their language learning motivation and experiences.

## 2. Theoretical Background

This study draws on learners' development of L2 identity through the L2 Motivational Self System [24, 25], validated in various Asian countries [15]. I applied the two components of this model in this paper. First, the Ideal L2 Self are regarded as "a desirable self-image" [27] of the L2 users. For instance, if students imagine themselves being proficient speakers of English, they feel motivated and attempt to reduce the discrepancy between the actual self and ideal self to achieve their goals. According to Higgins's [3] self-discrepancy theory, the actual self represents the attributes that learners or others believe that they actually possess and who they are at any given time. The ideal L2 self is repeatedly correlated with the variable of intended effort [15]. Still, it is not clear how the ideal L2 self and learning effort are qualitatively related and constructed for Asian students, particularly in the Thai context. Second, the L2 learning experiences refer to situation-specific motives to learn L2 such as the impact of teachers, peer groups, or previous successful learning experiences. In this study, I aim to capture the learners' actual selves and ideal L2 selves by contextualizing their in-class and out-of-class experiences.

However, several previous studies in Asian contexts on the L2 Motivational Self System model were conducted employing quantitative methods. I applied a *person-in-context* relational view of motivation [5] to complement the model and capture L2 students' English learning processes and experiences in the Thai context. Drawing on the sociocultural theory, she argues that motivation needs to be regarded as an organic process which emerges through the multifaceted system of social interrelationship. Ushioda argues for an emphasis on "real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual persons as thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background" (p. 220).

In EFL contexts, acquiring English in out-of-class contexts is necessary, particularly for university students in the current digital age [9, 11]. Ushioda [5] applies the notion of transportable identities to extend the scope of autonomy and motivation into the digital world. Ushioda [6, 7] argues that students' transportable identities are not grounded only in physical boundaries and social relations with new people, but also increasingly expand in the virtual

world of cyberspace, mobile communication, and entertainment technologies. According to Stockwell [9], EFL learners are motivated to use technology for language learning in two ways. First, they take ownership of a form of language learning controlled or assigned by teachers in class and out-of-class settings. Second, they may extend their intended effort and act on their own volition. Still, it is questionable how they sustain their motivation to regulate themselves in their contexts.

The research questions reflect this contextualized understanding of motivation:

1. How do the students report their past and present learning motivation from school to university?
2. How do they report their in-class and out-of-class experiences in learning English?

## 3. Material and Methods

### 3.1. In-depth Interview

After receiving ethical approval from the Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee, I administered an online questionnaire to 233 freshmen at a private university in Bangkok. Items from the English Learner Questionnaire [26] were used to select an eligible participant who perceived themselves as motivated students. Two participants, Nott and Ake, were formally invited to conduct three in-depth interviews. They were male, aged 19, majoring in English. They learned English for more than 12 years and had moved from their hometown in southern Thailand to Bangkok. They were also asked to bring personal and social artifacts related to their experiences. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and translated from Thai into English.

### 3.2. Questionnaire Items and Interview Questions

Here are a few samples from the quantitative questionnaire.

#### 3.2.1. Criterion Measures (Learner's Intended Effort and Motivation towards Learning English)

- If an English course was offered at university or somewhere else in the future, I would like to take it.
- I am working hard at learning English.
- I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English.
- I think that I am doing my best to learn English.

#### 3.2.2. Ideal L2 Self

- I can imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English.
- I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.

- I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English.
- Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English.

### 3.2.3. Interviewing questions

- Could you share with me your favorite/memorable classroom experiences at your university?
- Why do you like the subject, activity, and teacher?
- How do you feel while doing the activity?
- What have you learned from the activity?
- Could you tell me about your out-of-class learning experiences?
- What activities do you enjoy doing during your free times?
- When did you start doing the activity?
- Why do you feel motivated to do so?
- What have you learned from doing non-academic activities?

### 3.3. Narrative Analysis

After collecting data, I analyzed the data through a process of broadening (generalizing), burrowing (deepening), and restorying [8]. These analytical models deepened my understanding of the participants' emerging stories. Broadening allowed me to portray the individual participant's characteristics and perceptions and to set up the social and contextual backdrop for their stories. I attempted to elicit and broaden stories that shaped their language learning motivation, experiences, and their self-identities. Burrowing was used to capture their perceptions and emotions at that particular time and place. Using these techniques enabled me to develop probing questions to dig deeply and focus on their perceptions and emotions. Finally, by collating and triangulating a wide range of data, I could restory specific critical incidents and transitional experiences in the narratives. This allowed me to understand how they developed and reconstructed their L2 learning process and self-identity.

I present results as a story that came of two participants' L2 motivation and learning experiences. I have put their stories in boxes to indicate their vignettes. Then, the analysis of the vignettes is provided.

## 4. Results and Topics for Discussion

### 4.1. Contextualising the Language Education in Thailand

#### 4.1.1. "Vignette 1: Nott's Perspectives and his Goals for Learning English"

*"The major problem was that we stayed in a learning environment where most people did not speak English. We should study in the International Program or pursue our study in foreign countries. We studied only in classroom contexts. When classes finished, we switched into Thai. Actually it should not be like that. Let me give you one example. While I was studying in the vocational school in Hat Yai, there was one initiative project called "English Speaking Day 2012". We were encouraged to speak English every Friday. It appeared that most students did not talk to one another". Most people complained: "We have been learning English from the kindergarten to present". How come we could still Speaking Njoo..Njoo..Pla..Pla<sup>1</sup>. Without doubt, that was why we could not.*

*Before the AEC, I thought I had to learn English to work overseas. However, currently I thought we learned English to accept the AEC as part of our community, since we would have more opportunities to use English as a medium of communication. I had noticed an advertisement with a message: "If you spoke three languages, you would earn a competitive salary and would be desirably considered". So, in my view, if you were a bilingual or trilingual person, you would gain more special opportunities."*

*(Nott, interview on June 3 and 17, 2014)*

#### Analysis:

Looking more closely at the intrapersonal aspect, the findings indicated that he prioritised speaking skills and envisioned himself as a competent speaker of English. He strongly agreed that there was a mismatch between the implementation of the English Speaking Year 2012 policy and their personal motives and aspirations. His school teachers, like those in other studies of EFL students, continued to use traditional pedagogical practices and assessments [22]. In reality, he rarely had opportunities to practise speaking English at his school or in their daily lives. Nonetheless, he felt more motivated to study and to engage in a variety of communicative English activities at their universities.

<sup>1</sup> Speaking Njoo..Njoo.. Pla..Pla means that they can speak English just a little bit despite studying English since childhood.

He strongly agreed that currently English is widely used as an international language. He was aware that non-native speaker (NNS) people in expanding-circle contexts use ELF, especially in Asian region due to the integration of AEC in 2015. Sharing similar beliefs to the EFL learners in Ryan's [18] study the participants had a sense of membership of an imagined global community and perceive himself as an English-language user rather than expressing any desire to integrate with a target language community. His ideal L2 self was activated and he perceived himself as a fluent English-user at a time when learning English is not solely restricted to classroom settings. He felt highly motivated to attain functional English for his future career. His ideal L2 self continuously changed over contexts and time.

This is consistent with Magid's [17] study which indicated that the university students' ideal L2 selves were likely to be more vivid and concrete than those of school participants. The participant expected that, to become successful language students, he would successfully reduce the gap between their actual selves and future possible selves. Also, he appeared to envision himself having more frequent opportunities to improve his English proficiency and speaking skills at university in comparison with his time at school.

#### 4.1.2. "Vignette 2: Ake's Perspectives and his Goals for Learning English"

*"If you asked me about the AEC integration in 2015, I was quite not sure if I could improve my quality of life in the future. I thought it might be good but not sure in what way. Basically we had to communicate in English since it was the second or international language besides our mother language."*

*Reflecting the project called "English Speaking Day 2012", as I remembered, at our flag ceremony, the principal encouraged us to use more English in our daily lives in compliance with the policy of Ministry of Education. Sometimes a Thai teacher spoke in English and translated it into Thai."*

*I was interested in majoring in English. I would like to feel confident in speaking and to express myself in English well. My problem was that I still spoke English haltingly, making grammatical mistakes. But I did not mind about accents, just focusing on understanding. To me, I preferred to speak in my own way. It was English similarly.*

*(Ake, interview on June 3 and 17, 2014)*

#### Analysis:

Similar to Nott, Ake prioritised speaking skills and appeared to envision himself as competent speakers of English. Both participants strongly agreed that there was a mismatch between the implementation of the English Speaking Year 2012 policy, his personal motive, and

aspiration. In reality, the participants rarely had opportunities to practise speaking English at their school or in their daily lives. Majoring in English had a major impact on the strength of their intended effort in studying and using L2.

Nonetheless, it seemed that Ake was rather different from Nott. He felt unsure of his academic and professional goals even if he was well aware of the importance of English as an international language. He seemed to value Thai-English accents so long as his English was intelligible and prioritised this form of English as the medium of his communication. He claimed his right to speak English within his national identity and maintained his "Thainess". Because of the AEC integration, English has been the "working language of ASEAN" with a slogan "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008, p. 29). Despite having diversity among the member states of the community in ethnicity, races and religion, English has been widely used as a lingua franca to bridge the differences among us. Ake empowered himself majoring in English and perceived to speak in the Thai accent, rather than solely focusing on Standard English or American and British accents/pronunciation. Consistent with Ushioda (2009), learners have their own right to speak as who they are as long as they can be understood. It may be time to take the Asian Englishes or Thai English into an account.

#### 4.1.3. "Vignette 3: Nott's Perspectives and his Goals for Learning English"

*"At the beginning, I did not like English. But my sister had a foreign boyfriend working in Singapore. They stayed together at our house. Sometimes I felt like an outsider. While my sister could converse with him in English, I could not. I felt stressed when we sat together, had a meal, and her boyfriend turned his face to speak to me in English. But I dared not to chat with him because I could not do so. That was why I started learning English. I believed one day I could speak English like foreigners. Also, I wanted to work overseas. Even if I did not reach my goal, I intended to work hard towards it."*

*(Nott, interview on June 17, 2014)*

#### Analysis:

His stories reflected forming his L2 motivation at the early stage as a result of the negative experience with a native-speaker (NS) in his family. He envisioned himself speaking fluently like native speakers and aspired to Received Pronunciation. He held up native speakers of English as a model. His perception of idealized pronunciation had shaped his L2 identity in learning and using English. This perception is consistent with Jindapitak & Teo's findings [18] which indicate that the majority of the Thai participants preferred inner-circle accents as a model to upgrade their social status and did not favor

localized forms of English. It seemed that Nott’s ideal L2 self was adapting to the changing sociocultural linguistic landscape of the country. Thus, his ideal L2 self appeared to be strengthened by exercising his agency and pushing himself to fully extend his intended effort to approach and engage in various new learning environments.

**4.2. In-class Learning Experiences**

4.2.1. “Vignette 4: Ake’s in-class L2 Learning Experiences”

The participants, Ake and Nott, had some similarities and differences in their L2 learning experiences. Ake enjoyed taking the Basic Speaking course at his university.

*“I was impressed with a female Filipina teacher. The way she taught us was very enjoyable, like our friend. She did not stick to contents much. In that class, the teacher asked us to describe each photo of five to six photos on the Power Point slides. We did not have to prepare beforehand. We were very attentive and engaged. If anyone made errors, she would say them in the other way round. We then realized that we were putting the words in the wrong order or making grammatical errors.*

*I learned a lot from this activity. First, it made me witty. I could think and speak rapidly. Second, I could say without caring much about grammar. I could say what I thought right away. Ajarn (teacher) was not serious. Although my vocabulary was limited, I could use basic ones. To me, she was the best teacher who taught from the heart, not from the book.”*

*(Interviews on June 3 and 17, 2014)*

**Analysis:**

Ake was impressed with the group work activity in class. He perceived that his ideal teacher engaged with students as real people, social beings, rather than simply language students (Ushioda, 2009). The most valuable aspect of his learning experience is the matter of heart. He did not want his teacher to employ grammar-translation approach, orient towards using textbooks, lecture and talk at him as if his brain was empty. This teacher had successfully created a friendly and approachable atmosphere. His teacher’s motivational strategies could engage their involvement since they were voluntarily competing to speak, which made the learning process enjoyable and challenging. Particularly, his teacher also cared about his language learning motives, faces, and encouraged him to speak out. Despite using broken English, he could speak as who he is. This also allowed him to enhance his Ideal L2 self and reduce the limitations of his actual self during performing the meaningful activity. This state occurred because he was given the opportunity to practice speaking English freely. The students thus could naturally learn from their grammatical mistakes without losing face among their peers

because their teacher indirectly corrected mistakes.

4.2.2. “Vignette 5: Nott’s in-class L2 Learning Experiences”

*“I felt happy with an American lecturer. Ajarn did not teach like other lecturers who kept explaining about complicated passages on the Power Point, loads of contents and slides. His objective was to encourage us to speak as much as we could and we had the conversation tests frequently.*

*For instance:*

*Teacher: What country would you like to travel?*

*Nott: Myanmar.*

*Teacher: Why would you like to travel there?*

*Nott gave him the reasons and asked: Would you like to travel with us?*

*I did not perceive him as a lecturer while speaking. I really enjoyed keeping answering and questioning continuously. I had a fun and smooth conversation. Particularly, when he asked me many questions, I could automatically answer him without any pauses.”*

*(Nott, interview on June 17, 2014)*

**Analysis:**

While having a speaking test with his favorite native speaker, Nott could relate to a trip he was planning over the summer break. By using following-up questions, his teacher successfully invoked and stimulated Nott’s transportable identities during the interaction. Transportable identities refers to the implicit, powerful components of learners’ identities that allow a student to imagine himself out of class and lead to a higher level of personal involvement and effort and a further sense of investment of self [5]. In this scenario, his teacher tried to foster and scaffold his autonomy and motivation. It appeared that Nott and his American teacher’ identities were connected. He highly valued the activity and learning experience because he could envision and connect with his real life outside the academic settings.

Based on these two vignettes, both of the participants prioritised speaking skills and felt engaged in communicative tasks or tests. Their perceptions of their speaking experiences reflected the interplay between their ideal L2 selves and actual selves. Ideally they would like to speak and express themselves in English fluently. Thus, they valued the impromptu activities and fluency-oriented, rather than accuracy-oriented tasks. These findings indicated that they could develop their ideal L2 selves while performing these tasks and extended their actual selves. Dörnyei (2009) addresses how some learners may experience “the absence of sufficient motivation” (p.19). He illustrated that despite being able to visualise their self-image as English users, they could not take effective action in reality. When I asked them about their future job,

they visualised themselves working in the service business such as being a tour guide or flight attendant. Yet, Ake did not tell learning stories that showed his efforts and autonomous learning outside of class related to his goal. Importantly, Ake and Nott's self-regulation of learning is different. In class, Ake felt engaged with solely communicative tasks he personally enjoyed. He could not regulate himself to perform linguistic and cultural activities out of class like Nott. His sense of agency seemed to be remote and pull apart his Ideal L2 self from his current self. He thus could not drive himself to act upon his learning goals. Like other students, he simply preferred listening to western music and sometimes downloaded MP3 on his smartphone for his own pleasure.

Nott was rather different from Ake. Sometimes, while doing some in-class activities, he still tried to reconnect and remotivate himself to gain various self-directed learning experiences in out-of-class context. He could drive himself to socialise with foreign friends and expose to linguistic and cultural activities without perceiving them as obligations.

### 4.3. Out-of-class Learning Experiences

#### 4.3.1. "Vignette 6: Nott's Stories about the Pop Culture and Social Networking"

*"Sometime I downloaded western movies and programs from the Internet. I was addicted to a foreign series named "Walking Dead". I watched it frequently. Supposing I knew it was launched on the internet at 8 pm., I would rush home and watch it. Even though there were Thai subtitles provided in some websites, I thought the way it was translated was not fun, like listening to it by myself. The word choices in translation were not "O" (Okay). I would rather listen to it by myself. Sometime I used "Scotch Tape" (Sell tape) or my hand covered the subtitle on the TV/computer screens. I would rather listen to it by myself. If I could not catch words, difficult vocabulary and slang while watching movies, I would rewind them until I understood, four to five time maximum. If I did not know vocabulary, I would guess them from context clues."*

(Nott, interview on August 22, 2014)

#### Analysis:

According to this finding, he tended to be motivated to learn English both in classroom and out-of-class settings. Accessing these alternative learning spaces may boost his confidence in using English as a medium of communication. The findings revealed how he accessed learning opportunities in his local context. To compensate for communicative constraints in his monolingual physical context, he accessed pop culture, English-language media and resources. His L2 identities seemed to be interwoven with local and global culture or a "bicultural identity" due to the impact of globalization [16]. Accessing technological

devices enhanced their English proficiency and provided a positive link between activating and sustaining his ideal L2 self and intended effort in his virtual communication.

#### 4.3.2. "Vignette 7: Out-of-class Learning Experiences: Who am I? I am a Swifty."

*"During studying at vocational school, I listened to Taylor Swift's music almost every day. From my view, she was a talented song writer, guitarist, and singer. I printed her song lyrics, translated, and sang along. I followed, read her messages, and tried to tweet her in English—"I'm your biggest fan, I will follow you, until you love me". Initially my dream came true once she organized her tour concert "Taylor Swift Red Show 2014" in Bangkok. I tweeted her: "I am your Thai fan". And she sent me a smiley emoticon. I was so happy. However, I felt so disappointed when I knew that her concert was cancelled due to the announcement of martial law."*

(Nott, interview, June 17 and August 22, 2014)

#### Analysis:

Nott was likely to envision himself as a high-sociable or cosmopolitan participant from school to university. He proudly showed me his favourite photo loaded on his iPhone, "I am a Swifty!" He applied technological devices and smartphones as sociocultural tools to develop his L2 identity beyond the classroom setting since studying at a high school (see Figure 1). His ideal L2 self and his motivated behaviours arising from using technology tended to be sustained continuously. Technological advances have given him more access to social networks and the Internet to chat and interact with his idol or NS interlocutors virtually in meaningful contexts. Yashima [21] suggests that, instead of integrating into the NS community, the EFL participants are likely to use English to gain linguistic and intercultural experiences simultaneously.



Figure 1. Taylor Swift's photo on his cell phone

## 5. Conclusions

My study reveals that the EFL Thai university students, despite studying in the monolingual context, seemingly exerted varied degrees of intended effort in learning English and gained exposure to face-to-face and virtual communication. Nott felt motivated to reduce the discrepancy between their actual self and their other two selves [3, 4]. He regulated himself to gain more exposure to a variety of learning experiences through face-to-face and virtual communication. Additionally, he capitalised on the access to English resources and attempted to participate in English-speaking communities.

This study has some limitations. The qualitative data is based on a small number of participants' stories about their self-reported perceptions and self-beliefs of their learning which shaped their L2 self and identities. Thus, it is not generalizable to all English-major students in Thailand as a whole. Nevertheless, stories of two participants can be used as a pilot study of exceptional students and as a basis for developing a series of pedagogical strategies which might be tested in the field of language teaching in the future. Further studies may integrate digital technology with both in-class and out-of-class settings within the virtual milieu familiar to many students. But that does not necessarily make it a sustainable language environment in which all students can sustain positive learning.

Action research and classroom observation may be one potential way to explore the interaction and dialogue between teachers and students to capture their identities while performing communicative activities. This brings answers to such questions as "Why do students feel motivated or keep silent?" In what scenario or activities do they invest their efforts and time during their free time? How could they forge their L2 identities in face-to-face and virtual communication? The students' learning motivation and identity gradually changed and developed from their L2 lived and learning experiences.

Pedagogically, the real challenges for teachers are how to create motivating activities that simulate real communication. How can teachers boost students' confidence and sense of autonomy to continue to enhance their skills by themselves? Teachers play a crucial role in engaging students in idealised activities which encourage students to improve their communicative competency. In some cases, teachers and students may frequently work together as co-teachers and co-learners in individualised dialogues, group-based activities, and classroom interaction. Such support may enable them to perform tasks independently in out-of-class contexts. Thus, teachers should help them form their ideal L2 selves [2] and reinforce the idea that linguistic mistakes in communication often occur. Also, they can help learners boost their ideal L2 self in supported communicative situations. If the students feel unmotivated in class, they can try to reconnect with enjoyable and fulfilling activities outside class as "a

strategy for remotivating themselves" [13].

One pedagogical possibility would be the application of sociocultural participatory activities in teaching practices to promote the learner's agency, autonomy, and motivation. My findings contribute to the implications from Yashima [21] who suggests that teachers connect local classroom communities to their L2 communities which encouraged students to use their own imagination and creativity. Engaging in language projects such as role play, drama production and improvisation not only enabled them to integrate with language learning, art, and pop culture in authentic communication but also enhanced fulfilling learning experiences in classroom settings. In the digital age, teachers may incorporate participating in students' imagined global community by using smartphones and social media.

Despite having diversity among the member states of the community in ethnicity, races and religion in AEC, English has been widely used as a lingua franca to bridge the differences among us. To achieve their goal, the educators and teachers could design courses and curriculums which open up possibilities for learners to gain more exposure to a variety of English accents, particularly Asian Englishes in ELF. It may be time to take the Asian Englishes or Thai English into an account. It would be necessary to recognize Thai English as a legitimate variety of international English in the ELF era. Learners have their own right to speak as who they are as long as they can be understood by other English users [6].

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