English of Pattaya Ladies: Syntactic Patterns and Adaptive Strategies in ELF Communication

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Abstract

This study investigates the syntactic patterns of English utterances produced by Pattaya Ladies in Thailand, a group of speakers who regularly use English in their daily lives and workplaces where interaction with international interlocutors is constant. Rather than judging grammatical accuracy, the study focuses on understanding structural tendencies in naturally occurring spoken English within the framework of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Grounded in the World Englishes framework, this study interprets syntactic variation as a communicative strategy that reflects speakers' adaptability and local identity in intercultural encounters. The data consist of 100 utterances collected as speech-to-text transcriptions of authentic spoken interaction from 15 Thai female participants in videos uploaded on the "Queen of Pattaya" YouTube channel. The data were analyzed through a qualitative descriptive approach supported by simple quantitative counts to examine each syntactic pattern's frequency and communicative functions. The utterances were categorized into three syntactic patterns: (1) Elliptical Patterns, where certain elements are omitted but meaning is retained; (2) Extended Patterns, where sentence structures expand or vary from canonical word order through added elements, omissions, or shifted sequences while still maintaining clarity and communicative meaning in real speech; and (3) Canonical Patterns, where utterances align with conventional English syntactic structures. Extended Patterns were the most frequent, followed by Canonical and Elliptical. The findings demonstrate that Pattaya Ladies employ syntactic flexibility to ensure communicative success in intercultural contexts. This study contributes to ELF-aware pedagogy by positioning syntactic variation as a communicative resource rather than a deviation from standard grammar.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, international, communication, Pattaya ladies, syntactic patterns

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Introduction

All languages employ syntactic categories to form sentence patterns. As Dryden (2020) metaphorically observed, "who climbs the Grammar-Tree distinctly knows where Noun and Verb and Particle grow", suggesting that every language contains structural features that organize words into meaningful units. These structural tendencies are closely linked to how communication is shaped by speakers' native language. Vygotsky (1934) similarly argued that "success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language", emphasizing that the way sentences are organized in the mother tongue influences second language communication.

English today is widely used as a global communicative tool (Seidlhofer, 2010). Non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers, reinforcing the role of English as a lingua franca across the world (Wicaksono, 2020). In Thailand, English also plays an important role as a lingua franca (Baker, 2009), particularly in the tourism industry, where Thais frequently use English to interact with foreigners whose first language is not English (Todd, 2006).

As one of Thailand's most popular tourist destinations, Pattaya attracts over five million international visitors annually (Tourism Authority of Thailand News Room, 2025). Within this multilingual setting, English becomes a practical medium of communication, especially in workplaces serving foreign tourists. Among the most prominent English users in these contexts are Pattaya Ladies—Thai women working in nightlife entertainment venues such as bars and Walking Street (Yongcharoenchai, 2017). Although Thai is their mother tongue, they display distinctive uses of English in daily intercultural interaction.

Previous research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has largely emphasized phonology and pragmatics (e.g., Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2010; Jenkins, 2011), whereas syntactic adaptation has remained comparatively underexplored. Studies of Thai English have mainly addressed lexical borrowing, pronunciation, and pragmatic politeness (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018), but few have systematically examined the syntactic dimension of Thai speakers' ELF communication. Therefore, the research problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical investigation into how Thai speakers employ syntactic variation as a communicative strategy in real-world ELF contexts.

The present study is framed within the World Englishes paradigm, viewing ELF syntactic variation as a communicative strategy that enables speakers to negotiate meaning, maintain rapport, and express local identity. From this perspective, syntax is not treated as a fixed rule system but as a flexible communicative resource that adapts to intercultural contexts. Pattaya Ladies represent a particularly valuable case because their speech reflects a grassroots variety of Thai English—an organically developed form shaped by workplace interaction rather than formal instruction. Investigating their English thus offers insight into how non-institutional users develop intelligible and adaptive structures that sustain communication with global interlocutors.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding ELF communication at the syntactic level, demonstrating that structural variation serves pragmatic and interpersonal purposes rather than marking deficiency. The findings not only enrich the theoretical understanding of ELF syntax but also provide pedagogical implications for ELF-aware English teaching, highlighting the value of communicative flexibility over prescriptive correctness.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the syntactic patterns of English utterances spoken by Pattaya Ladies based on actual speech transcriptions from authentic spoken interactions in online videos. Rather than evaluating grammatical correctness, the research identifies three major syntactic tendencies observed in their speech: Elliptical Patterns, where certain elements are omitted but meaning is preserved; Extended Patterns, where sentence structures expand or vary from canonical word order while maintaining communicative clarity; and Canonical Patterns, where utterances align with conventional English structures. By examining these patterns, the study seeks to reveal how Thai speakers use English syntactically to achieve effective communication in intercultural encounters, reflecting the adaptive and systematic nature of English as a lingua franca in Thailand.

Literature Review

1. English as a Lingua Franca

English functions as a contact language among speakers of diverse first languages and continues to expand as a global medium of communication (Jenkins, 2009). Varieties of English often serve as markers of identity, shaped by speakers' mother tongues, which challenges conventional views of the relationship between language, culture, and identity (Kachru & Nelson, 2006). Within Kachru's (1985) model, Thailand belongs to the Expanding Circle, where English is primarily used as an additional language for international communication (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018).

Research on ELF has highlighted phonology, lexis, syntax, and pragmatics as central to mutual intelligibility, and it rejects rigid boundaries between native and non-native users by focusing instead on successful communication across cultures (Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2010). However, much ELF research has focused on phonology and pragmatics, while syntactic adaptation remains comparatively underexplored. Understanding how speakers strategically vary syntactic forms can reveal how meaning, politeness, and clarity are negotiated in intercultural contexts. Examining syntactic tendencies such as ellipsis, extension, and canonical structuring thus provides an important window into how meaning is co-constructed in multilingual communication (Odlin, 1989; Fromkin, Hyams & Rodman, 2018).

2. English Use in Pattaya

Pattaya's tourism industry attracts millions of international visitors each year, making the city one of Thailand's most multilingual settings. In this context, English serves as a practical lingua franca enabling communication between Thai service workers and foreign visitors. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the city operates as a microcosm of global English use, where communicative practices are continuously negotiated across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Among these users, *Pattaya Ladies* refers to Thai women working in the nightlife and hospitality sectors. The term represents a particularly dynamic speech community. Their English emerges outside formal education, shaped instead by workplace experience and intercultural negotiation. This group exemplifies what can be considered a "grassroots variety" of Thai English, which is an organically developed ELF repertoire grounded in practice rather than pedagogy. Their communicative style reflects both Thai politeness norms and ELF principles of clarity, efficiency, and mutual understanding (Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2010).

By analyzing their spoken English, this study explores how such grassroots users develop syntactic strategies that balance intelligibility and identity expression. English in Pattaya thus provides an empirical foundation for examining ELF in real-life multilingual tourism contexts, where English operates as both an economic resource and a symbol of cultural negotiation.

2.1 Syntax and Sentence Patterns

The study of syntax traditionally concerns the rules governing how words combine to form sentences. Theoretical linguists such as Fromkin and Rodman (1998) and Chomsky (1965) conceptualize syntax as part of an innate rule system or "mental grammar", emphasizing structural completeness. In contrast, Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) propose a functional view, interpreting syntax as a communicative system in which clause structures are expanded or reduced to serve specific interactional purposes. These theoretical frameworks form the foundation of the present study, establishing the link between grammatical form and communicative function.

Building upon this theoretical base, the study employs an analytical framework distinguishing three syntactic patterns, which are Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical. The framework is adapted from both ELF and systemic-functional perspectives. This approach aligns with ELF principles that prioritize meaning negotiation and communicative success over prescriptive correctness.

2.1.1 Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical Patterns

To analyze the syntactic patterns of Pattaya Ladies' English, this study employed a three-category analytical framework—Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical Patterns—adapted from existing linguistic theories of syntax and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). These categories were developed to capture the balance between structural form and communicative function in naturally occurring spoken data.

2.1.1.1 Elliptical Patterns

Elliptical Patterns are utterances where one or more syntactic elements, such as subjects, auxiliaries, or verbs, are omitted, but the sentence remains interpretable in context. Ellipsis has been extensively studied in linguistics as a phenomenon that bridges incomplete syntax with complete semantic interpretation (Jong-Bok & Nykiel, 2020). Their research outlines types of

ellipsis such as verbal phrase ellipsis (VPE), sluicing, stripping, fragment answers, and gapping, all of which show that omission does not prevent meaning from being conveyed. In ELF contexts, ellipsis reflects a broader pragmatic strategy of economy, where speakers prioritize efficiency and shared understanding over grammatical completeness (Seidlhofer, 2010; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In the case of Pattaya Ladies, their utterances can demonstrate how elliptical structures allow for intelligibility even when English grammar is reduced, mirroring strategies of omission also common in Thai discourse.

2.1.1.2 Extended Patterns

Extended Patterns refer to utterances that move beyond canonical sentence structures by incorporating additional elements such as modifiers, connectors, or reordered clauses. These forms often appear longer or more elaborate than necessary but serve to add emphasis, detail, or cultural nuance. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe this phenomenon as *clause expansion*, where clauses are extended through elaboration, addition, or enhancement to enrich meaning. Similarly, Odlin (1989) notes that cross-linguistic influence can lead speakers to reproduce discourse strategies from their first language, producing expansions and reordering in second-language use. From another perspective, Tomasello and Brandt (2009) argue that syntactic systems must allow flexibility for optional and extended structures, since natural discourse rarely conforms neatly to canonical forms. Studies of non-canonical syntax also affirm that such extended utterances, though divergent from prescriptive grammar, are legitimate and interpretable in real interaction (Jong-Bok & Nykiel, 2020).

2.1.1.3 Canonical Patterns

Canonical Patterns in this study refer to utterances that conform most closely to the syntactic rules of English, demonstrating full sentence structures with clear subjects, verbs, and objects. Such patterns align with what Chomsky (1957) identified as phrase structure grammar, in which sentences are generated from hierarchical rules ensuring grammatical completeness. Unlike elliptical or extended forms, canonical structures follow expected configurations, providing a baseline against which deviations can be measured in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication. In linguistic theory, the notion of "canonical" syntax has been discussed in relation to morphology and clitics. Zwicky and Pullum's (1983) work emphasized the rules governing affixation and clitic distribution, distinguishing canonical word structures from borderline cases. Spencer and Luís (2012) further expanded on the idea by demonstrating how canonical syntax serves as a reference point for analyzing cross-linguistic variation. They argue that canonical forms are not merely prescriptive but offer a comparative baseline, making visible the extent to which real-world utterances deviate from or approximate idealized structures.

3. *Pattaya Ladies*

"Pattaya Ladies" refers to a group of females geographically working or living in Pattaya, one of the cities of Thailand. Pattaya is a city in Thailand. It is on the east coast of the Gulf of Thailand, about 100 kilometers southeast of Bangkok, Thailand's capital city. Pattaya has a

reputation for its pulsating nightlife as a result of one of the best tourist attractions in Thailand (Tourism Authority of Thailand News Room, 2025). As a result, English is used as a medium of communication in order to communicate with each other. Especially in the workplaces, a dominant working group is "Pattaya Ladies".

Pattaya Ladies are a majority group of people in the workplace who are required to be able to speak English. The term "Pattaya Ladies" refers to "ladies of the night": Bar girls and sex workers have a visible presence in Pattaya along the walking street (Yongcharoenchai, 2017). However, nowadays the categories tend to be more varied. Sociological and ethnographic research highlights that women working in Pattaya's service and entertainment sectors participate in a complex tourism economy where English operates as a key medium of interaction. Rather than viewing them through stigmatizing labels, scholars emphasize their communicative agency and the broader social systems in which they work. As Enteen (2024) notes in her review of Weitzer's *Sex Tourism in Thailand*, the Thai sex-work industry, particularly in cities like Bangkok and Pattaya, is a dense and networked social system that reflects both local economic realities and international mobility. From this perspective, Pattaya Ladies can be understood as multilingual service workers navigating intercultural encounters through adaptive communicative practices. In this study, the term *Pattaya Ladies* is used descriptively to refer to Thai female service workers who regularly employ English in tourism-based interactions, without reinforcing moral or social stigma. Their mother tongue is Thai; however, this particular group of ladies occupies a distinct language use.

4. Relevant Studies

Previous research on English syntax and intercultural communication has examined how sentence structures are acquired, transferred, and adapted in multilingual contexts. For example, Braidi (2020) investigated second-language syntactic acquisition and showed how L1 grammatical rules influence L2 structures, providing insights into the role of transfer and acquisition in shaping utterances. Haider (2010) further illustrated how syntactic interactions between English and German reveal universal constraints on interpretation, suggesting that cross-linguistic influence is a persistent phenomenon in sentence formation. Similarly, William (1974) emphasized the pedagogical role of syntactic and pragmatic awareness, underscoring how structural choices directly affect communicative success.

In contrast, theoretical frameworks such as Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) systemic-functional grammar and Chomsky's (1965) generative grammar provide conceptual insights into how syntax functions as both a formal and communicative system. This distinction between theoretical and empirical research underpins the present study, which applies theoretical models of syntax to empirical ELF data from naturally occurring speech.

While prior studies have illuminated syntactic transfer and learning in controlled or classroom-based contexts, few have examined spontaneous ELF communication among service workers in multilingual tourism environments. The speech of Pattaya Ladies remains underexplored despite its sociolinguistic significance. This study addresses that gap by integrating theoretical

perspectives on syntax with empirical ELF data to demonstrate how real-world users employ structural variation as a communicative strategy.

Research Objectives

1. To categorize the English utterances of Pattaya Ladies into three syntactic patterns, including Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical, based on naturally occurring spoken data
2. To analyze how these syntactic patterns function as communicative strategies in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) interactions

Research Questions

1. What types of syntactic patterns—Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical—can be identified in the English utterances of Pattaya Ladies based on naturally occurring spoken data?
2. How do these syntactic patterns function as communicative strategies in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) interaction?

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis supported by descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to examine syntactic variation in English utterances produced by Pattaya Ladies. The qualitative approach enabled close examination of linguistic and communicative patterns, while descriptive statistics illustrated the overall distribution of syntactic forms. The analysis was framed within the World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) perspective, interpreting syntactic variation as a communicative strategy in intercultural encounters.

2. Participants and selection criteria

The participants were 15 Thai female service workers, commonly known as Pattaya Ladies, who appeared in publicly available videos on the "Queen of Pattaya" YouTube channel between January 2022 and March 2024. These women regularly interacted in English with foreign visitors in authentic workplace and social settings such as bars, massage shops, and tourist areas. The videos were selected because they depict naturally occurring, unscripted interactions that exemplify ELF communication in Pattaya's tourism context, guided by the following criteria: English was the primary medium of communication between Thai speakers and foreigners; speech was spontaneous and audible for accurate transcription; the interaction context reflected common service or conversational exchanges (e.g., customer service, introductions, casual talk); and participants displayed diversity in age, occupation, and communicative situations. Although demographic information such as age and education was not officially disclosed, observable cues suggest that participants were adult women aged approximately 25-45, with varied occupational backgrounds in hospitality, entertainment, and tourism services. Using online video data provided an ethical and practical means to access authentic ELF communication that could not easily be replicated in controlled fieldwork. All selected videos were publicly accessible, and no private or identifiable information beyond

what was already public was used. The study complied with institutional ethical standards regarding the use of publicly available media.

3. Research Instruments

Three research instruments were employed as follows:

1. Secondary Data Source – Publicly available videos from the YouTube channel "Queen of Pattaya" were selected as the primary source of naturally occurring spoken English. These videos captured authentic interactions in intercultural contexts, providing a reliable basis for syntactic analysis. From over 40 videos posted on the channel, a purposive sampling strategy was applied to ensure thematic and situational diversity. The final dataset comprised 100 English utterances selected according to the following criteria: (1) time span, covering videos recorded between January 2022 and March 2024; (2) contextual variety, including interactions in workplaces such as customer greetings and negotiations, as well as informal conversations involving personal stories and small talk; and (3) randomization, where after identifying eligible videos, a random number generator was used to select representative clips until the total of 100 utterances was reached. This procedure ensured the inclusion of a broad range of real communicative events, representing both transactional and relational discourse typical of ELF interaction in Pattaya.

2. Manual transcription of actual speech – The spoken utterances were transcribed into written form to ensure accuracy and consistency of analysis. Transcription served as the foundation for identifying and categorizing the syntactic patterns in the data.

3. Coding and Classification Scheme – A categorization framework was developed to group utterances into three syntactic patterns: (a) Elliptical Patterns, (b) Extended Patterns, and (c) Canonical Patterns. This served as the main analytic instrument for describing and interpreting the data within a qualitative design. For the purpose of this study, the syntactic patterns were categorized into three groups adapted from existing syntactic and ELF literature: (1) Elliptical Patterns (Radford, 2008; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), (2) Extended Patterns (Selinker, 1972; Odlin, 1989; Kachru, 1985), and (3) Canonical Patterns (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973; Fromkin et al., 2018). These categories were not intended to evaluate grammatical correctness but to describe structural tendencies in spoken English.

4. Data Collection

The data were collected from publicly available videos uploaded on the YouTube channel "Queen of Pattaya". These videos feature authentic spoken interactions in which Thai women communicate in English with foreigners in everyday and workplace settings. The data were analyzed qualitatively according to the following steps:

1. The researcher manually transcribed the actual speech into written form to capture the linguistic features as they naturally occurred. This process preserved the characteristics of spoken discourse, including incomplete forms, pauses, and variations typical of real-life communication.

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2. From the transcriptions, 100 utterances were purposively selected for analysis. The selection criteria required that each utterance (1) conveyed complete communicative meaning, (2) was sufficiently clear for accurate transcription, and (3) reflected varied themes such as daily life, workplace encounters, and personal perspectives. By focusing on utterances that met these criteria, the study ensured that the data represented a diverse range of naturally occurring spoken English in intercultural contexts.

5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed as follows:

1. All spoken utterances were manually transcribed by the researcher from the selected YouTube videos. Each transcription was reviewed for accuracy to ensure that the language reflected naturally occurring spoken English. Furthermore, each transcript was checked twice for accuracy and compared with the original audio to confirm the wording and rhythm of naturally occurring speech. A pilot case of two short video clips was first transcribed and coded to test the clarity of the procedure and refine the category definitions before the main analysis began. Credibility was achieved through repeated listening and transcription review, as well as a brief pilot coding exercise that helped refine the analytical framework.

2. The 100 utterances were examined for their structural characteristics and categorized into three groups: (a) Elliptical Patterns, where certain elements were omitted but meaning was retained; (b) Extended Patterns, where sentence structures expanded or varied from canonical word order while maintaining communicative clarity; and (c) Canonical Patterns, where utterances followed conventional English structures. Confirmability was strengthened through a second reader's cross-checking of a subset of the data to verify coding consistency, while transferability was supported by providing contextual descriptions of the video settings and authentic examples of utterances. A brief sample of the manual coding process is shown below to illustrate how utterances were analyzed and classified:

Table 1

Sample Coding for Manual Qualitative Analysis

Example utterance	Coded pattern	Communicative function	Reason for classification
"For 30$ USD for 6 people is ok."	Elliptical	Prepositional phrase fronted; missing subject and auxiliary verb	The speaker omits the subject *it*, but meaning remains clear in context.
"Here is shower room and toilet it inside."	Extended	Elaboration / emphasis	The structure extends beyond canonical order through repetition and tense simplification.

Table 1 (Continued)

Example utterance	Coded pattern	Communicative function	Reason for classification
"Before I massage, I show you what I do."	Canonical	Clause linkage with sequencing marker (*before*)	The utterance follows a full clause structure (SVO + subordinate clause) and demonstrates clear logical sequencing; it reflects organized, standard syntax for instruction.

3. After coding, the frequency and percentage of each syntactic pattern were calculated to indicate the general tendency of structural choices. Representative examples from each category were selected to illustrate the typical forms and their communicative roles in context. Collectively, these procedures ensured that the analysis remained systematic, transparent, and faithful to the naturally occurring language of the participants while remaining appropriate to the qualitative scope of the study.

Results

The analysis of one hundred transcribed utterances produced by Pattaya Ladies revealed three observable syntactic patterns: Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical. Among these, Extended Patterns were found to occur most frequently, followed by Canonical Patterns, while Elliptical Patterns appeared least often. The overall distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of Syntactic Patterns

Pattern	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Example utterances
Elliptical	18	18%	*"Go now?"* / *"Not same today"*
Extended	55	55%	*"Thailand now soon come for big festival, Songkran."*
Canonical	27	27%	*"I will show you how we do massage."*

Note. N = 100

From table 2, Extended Patterns made up the largest portion of the data, with 55 percent of the utterances falling into this category. These patterns were characterized by expansions, variations in word order, or the addition of extra elements influenced by Thai, the speakers' first language. While such utterances diverged from conventional syntax, they preserved clarity and communicative effectiveness. This finding reflects theories of interlanguage and transfer (Selinker, 1972; Odlin, 1989) as well as Kachru's (1985) notion of structural variation within World Englishes. In ELF contexts, Extended Patterns served as strategies for elaboration and

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accommodation, allowing speakers to clarify or expand their meaning during interactions with international interlocutors. For instance, the utterance *"Thailand now soon come for big festival, Songkran."* illustrates a non-canonical sequence that nevertheless communicates the intended message effectively.

Elliptical Patterns accounted for 18 percent of the data. These utterances typically omitted certain constituents, such as subjects or auxiliaries, while still conveying complete meaning in context. This characteristic aligns with the concept of ellipsis as a natural feature of spoken discourse (Radford, 2008; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), elliptical structures functioned as strategies for efficiency, enabling speakers to communicate quickly and directly, particularly in routine exchanges such as confirming schedules or giving short responses. Examples include *"Go now?"* instead of *"Do you want to go now?"* and *"Not same today"* rather than *"It is not the same today."*.

Canonical Patterns represented 27 percent of the dataset. These utterances followed conventional English syntactic structures, particularly subject–verb–object (SVO) order, consistent with descriptions in syntactic studies (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973; Fromkin et al., 2018). Canonical forms were generally employed in moments where explicitness and precision were required, such as giving instructions or describing work-related tasks. Examples include *"I will show you how we do massage."*, *"She works in Pattaya for a long time."*, and *"I don't like the same food every day."*. These utterances demonstrate that Pattaya Ladies are capable of producing English structures when necessary for clarity and precision, especially in work-related contexts.

Table 3
Syntactic Patterns, Communicative Functions, and Examples

Pattern	Structural features	Communicative function in ELF	Example utterances
Elliptical	Omission of verbs or subjects; fragments with implied meaning	Efficiency and quick responses in interaction	*"Everything good, good time, a lot."* / *"If small one but good work, I accept for that."*
Extended	Reordered sequences, added phrases, or provided a direct Thai translation	Elaboration, accommodation, emphasis	*"If I do not forget about it, 18 years old."* / *"The time we have that is different."*
Canonical	Conventional SVO order, with minor deviations	Explicitness in explanation or service-related talk	*"I will give you no-loop massage."* / *"Before I massage, I show you what I do."*

Table 3 illustrates how each syntactic pattern not only represents a structural form but also functions as a communicative strategy in English as a Lingua Franca. Elliptical Patterns, such as *"Everything good, good time, a lot."* or *"If small one but good work, I accept for that."*, omit verbs or subjects but convey meaning efficiently, enabling speakers to provide quick responses or evaluations without constructing full clauses. Extended Patterns, on the other hand, reveal reordering and Thai-influenced sequencing, as seen in *"If I not forget about it, 18 years old"* and *"The time we have that is different.".* Although these forms diverge from canonical English word order, they serve as effective tools for elaboration and accommodation, giving interlocutors enough information to interpret meaning. Finally, Canonical Patterns maintain conventional SVO order, often surfacing in work-related contexts where clarity is important; for instance, *"I will give you no-loop massage."* and *"Before I massage, I show you what I do.".* These examples demonstrate that, rather than signaling deficiency, syntactic variation across all three categories supports different communicative needs, reinforcing ELF's emphasis on intelligibility and adaptability.

Although the sample size of 100 utterances may appear limited, the study was not intended to produce statistically generalizable findings but rather to offer a qualitative snapshot of naturally occurring ELF communication within a specific sociolinguistic environment. This smaller, context-specific dataset allows for close examination of authentic spoken English as used by Thai service workers in tourism-based encounters a setting that has received little empirical attention. The findings are significant because they illustrate how non-institutional users of English creatively employ syntactic flexibility as a communicative strategy, supporting the view that intelligibility and interactional success in ELF communication do not depend on adherence to native grammatical norms. This context-specific evidence contributes to ongoing ELF and World Englishes discussions by highlighting how localized English use reflects communicative adaptability, identity expression, and functional competence in real-world intercultural communication. Thus, while the study's scope is necessarily limited, its value lies in demonstrating that even small-scale qualitative analysis can uncover systematic syntactic tendencies that reveal how English functions as a resource for meaning-making among grassroots speakers in Thailand's tourism context.

Taken together, the results indicate that Pattaya Ladies rely on all three syntactic patterns as communicative resources in their spoken English. Extended Patterns dominated, highlighting the flexibility of their sentence structuring and the influence of L1 transfer, while Canonical and Elliptical Patterns played complementary roles in ensuring clarity and efficiency. These findings suggest that effective communication among Pattaya Ladies in intercultural contexts is achieved not through strict adherence to prescriptive grammar but through the adaptive use of syntactic variation. This reflects the ELF perspective, which emphasizes intelligibility, negotiation of meaning, and mutual understanding over grammatical conformity. Syntax here is understood as a resource that speakers adapt, reshape, and simplify in order to meet the demands of intercultural interaction. For Pattaya Ladies, syntactic choices such as ellipsis, extension, or adherence to canonical forms were not markers of correctness or incorrectness, but strategies that served efficiency, clarity, and accommodation. This perspective demonstrates that syntactic analysis, while often associated with grammar, also offers insight

into the broader dynamics of language as a social practice: how speakers draw on structural resources to achieve intelligibility and mutual understanding across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that Pattaya Ladies employ three major syntactic patterns in their spoken English: Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical. Among these, Extended Patterns were most common, suggesting that the speakers rely heavily on adaptive and flexible structures when communicating with foreigners. Elliptical Patterns, though less frequent, demonstrated efficiency by omitting predictable elements, while Canonical Patterns, appearing in fewer instances, showed that conventional SVO word order is still available to the speakers when explicitness is required. These results align with the view of syntax as a communicative resource rather than a prescriptive rule system, echoing Purves's (1985) observation that all languages share syntactic categories even if speakers are not always aware of their technical labels.

A notable feature of the data is the influence of Thai language transfer. Several utterances showed direct translation from Thai structures into English, such as *"Thailand now soon come for big festival, Songkran."*. These patterns reflect Thai topic–comment organization and flexible verb placement, which, although unconventional in English, remain comprehensible to interlocutors. This supports Odlin's (1989) concept of language transfer and Selinker's (1972) notion of interlanguage, where speakers create systematic yet different forms that function effectively in communication.

Another interesting dimension of the data is the presence of unsystematic or incomplete sentence patterns that nevertheless conveyed meaning. Utterances such as *"You no have time for me."* or *"Make you fat more"* are not well-formed according to English syntactic rules, yet they remain interpretable in context. This confirms ELF research (Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2010) that communicative success is not dependent on grammatical conformity but on intelligibility, negotiation of meaning, and shared understanding between speakers.

In addition to syntactic variation, the study revealed examples where Pattaya Ladies' utterances performed semantic roles in creative ways. For instance, the phrase *"Money can negotiate."* metaphorically assigns "money" the role of agent, showing how meaning can be constructed beyond formal grammar. Similarly, utterances such as *"I will give you no-loop massage."* or *"Here I give you jacuzzi and shower."* highlight how new terms and collocations are created to serve specific communicative purposes in their work domain. These findings illustrate that Pattaya Ladies actively shape English to suit their communicative environment, reflecting Kachru's (1985) perspective on localized innovations in World Englishes.

Therefore, the discussion demonstrates that Pattaya Ladies' English reflects not a deficiency but a strategic adaptation. Elliptical forms allow economy, Extended forms show elaboration and accommodation influenced by L1, and Canonical forms provide clarity when needed. The

interplay of these strategies underlines the flexible and functional nature of ELF communication in Pattaya's tourism context. By analyzing syntactic structures, this study has shown that what may appear as "errors" under a prescriptive lens are, in practice, effective resources for sustaining intelligibility, establishing rapport, and achieving successful intercultural communication.

Conclusion

The results of the study can be summarized as follows: the analysis of Pattaya Ladies' spoken English revealed three recurring syntactic patterns, including Elliptical, Extended, and Canonical. Among these, Extended Patterns appeared most frequently, while Elliptical Patterns were the least observed. Each pattern served a distinct communicative function in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Elliptical forms promoted efficiency in interaction, Extended forms allowed elaboration and accommodation, often influenced by Thai structures, and Canonical forms ensured clarity when precision was required. Overall, these syntactic patterns are not deficiencies but adaptive strategies that enable effective communication in intercultural contexts. By treating syntax as a communicative resource rather than a measure of grammatical correctness, the research highlights how non-native speakers flexibly employ structural variation to achieve intelligibility and maintain mutual understanding.

Beyond its descriptive value, this study contributes to current knowledge of ELF in Southeast Asia by providing authentic evidence from Thai speakers in a naturally occurring tourism setting. The findings illustrate how grassroots English users construct meaning through syntactic flexibility, enriching regional discussions of World Englishes and local ELF practices. Such data highlight that syntactic variation reflects both cultural adaptation and communicative creativity, offering a realistic picture of how English functions in multilingual workplaces.

While the study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a specific group of speakers, its findings provide a foundation for further research on syntactic adaptation in regional ELF contexts. Future studies could expand the dataset, include participants from other Southeast Asian tourism hubs, or explore how syntactic choices interact with discourse and pragmatic strategies.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the English used by Pattaya Ladies represents a meaningful instance of ELF syntactic adaptation or a form of language use shaped by purpose, context, and identity. It contributes to a broader understanding of how English evolves through use in Southeast Asia and underscores that global English thrives not on uniformity, but on diversity, adaptability, and communicative success.

Recommendations

1. Implications

The present findings have implications not only for traditional classroom teaching but also for the broader development of ELF-aware pedagogy and communication training in multilingual tourism and service industries. This study offers a new perspective on syntax-based communicative awareness, showing how speakers flexibly manage grammatical resources to achieve intelligibility and rapport. For professional English programs in tourism and hospitality, training should focus on functional grammar in use by recognizing how syntax adapts to context and purpose. This approach goes beyond teaching correctness; it prepares learners to handle diverse communicative styles in multicultural workplaces.

2. Further Studies

Future research could strengthen and expand these findings through mixed-methods approaches that integrate both structural and experiential dimensions of ELF use. For instance, future studies could employ a mixed-methods design combining syntactic analysis with semi-structured interviews or stimulated recall to gain insight into speakers' metalinguistic awareness of their communicative strategies. Comparative investigations across different ELF contexts such as tourism, business, or online communication could reveal whether syntactic adaptation patterns are locally distinctive or regionally shared. In addition, corpus-based or longitudinal analyses could track how syntactic variation evolves over time in authentic interaction, providing a broader understanding of ELF syntax as a dynamic and adaptive system.

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