

The English Varieties in Thai Higher Education: Views of International University Students Across Kachru's Circles

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the perceptions and adaptation strategies of international university students from Kachru's Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles regarding English varieties in Thai higher education. For data collection, the study used semi-structured interviews with six students chosen through purposive sampling: one from the Inner Circle, two from the Outer Circle, and three from the Expanding Circle. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. The research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these students experience and engage with English varieties within their English programs. The context of globalization and internationalization highlights the growing prevalence of English programs in Thai universities, making it essential to explore how diverse linguistic backgrounds impact students' learning experiences. The findings reveal that students encounter distinct challenges based on the English varieties, affecting the participants' academic adaptation and overall engagement. The study underscores the importance of acknowledging and incorporating multiple English varieties into educational practices to support international students better. This research contributes to the broader discourse on Global Englishes (GE) by analyzing qualitative data from interviews, emphasizing the need for inclusive and adaptable pedagogical approaches.

Keywords: Englishes, English programs, global Englishes, international students

Introduction

The globalization of higher education has become a critical strategy for universities worldwide, especially in the context of internationalization. Consequently, this study focuses on the perceptions of international university students in Thailand regarding different English

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varieties, which is an essential aspect of this globalization process. Understanding how diverse student groups interact with and perceive these varieties is particularly important as Thailand increasingly adopts English-medium programs and forges international partnerships. Through qualitative methods, this study sheds light on the perspectives of international students from various linguistic backgrounds, particularly within Kachru's circles, and their adaptation to English language instruction in Thailand.

Thailand's higher education sector reflects a broader trend toward internationalization by expanding English-medium offerings, including English International Programs (EIPs) and English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs (Hengsadeekul et al., 2022; Phyakul et al., 2023). As these programs increase, exploring how international students from diverse linguistic backgrounds experience and adapt to the English varieties encountered in these educational settings is crucial. The increasing emphasis on English as a medium of instruction (EMI) aims to enhance student's global competence and prepare them for an international workforce. In this context, the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has gained prominence, emphasizing English's functional role in facilitating intercultural communication rather than strict adherence to native-speaker norms (Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). This perspective challenges traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) approaches, which often prioritize native-speaker standards and may not fully address the linguistic diversity present in today's globalized world (Matsuda, 2017).

Interaction with diverse English users in multicultural and multilingual settings is becoming the norm as globalization reshapes educational landscapes. This shift introduces new challenges for English language teaching, particularly in non-native English-speaking (NNES) countries where English serves increasingly as a global lingua franca (Mrak, 2000). The expansion of English programs in Thailand underscores the need to understand how different English varieties impact students' learning experiences and outcomes. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of incorporating Global Englishes (GE) into educational practices. For example, Galloway and Numajiri (2020) argue that recognizing and integrating diverse English varieties can enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in international education. Similarly, Baker (2021) explores how Global Englishes influence academic communication and student engagement, stressing the need for educational institutions to accommodate linguistic diversity. Smith and Lee (2022) further examine the pedagogical implications of including multiple English varieties in English programs, suggesting that such an approach can improve students' intercultural competence and better prepare them for a globalized job market.

In this context, it is crucial to understand how international students from different Kachru's circles – Inner circle, Outer circle, and Expanding circle – experience and engage with English language education in Thailand. The Inner Circle includes countries where English is the first language, such as the US, UK and Australia; the Outer Circle consists of countries where English is an official or second language, like Sierra Leone, India and Singapore; and the Expanding Circle encompasses countries where English is taught as a foreign language, such as Thailand, China and Japan. By examining these perspectives, this research aims to provide

valuable insights into the experiences of international students and assess the effectiveness of Thai universities' internationalization efforts in incorporating Global Englishes. This study delves into these perceptions using qualitative methods, offering a comprehensive view of how international students adapt to and perceive various English varieties within the Thai higher education context. Through this approach, the research contributes to the broader discourse on Global Englishes and international education, highlighting the need for inclusive and adaptable educational practices that reflect the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the global student population.

Literature Review

The internationalization of higher education in Thailand has been characterized by a growing emphasis on English language instruction and global engagement (Hengsadeeikul et al., 2022; Phyakul et al., 2023). Research highlights the successes and challenges of this process, including integrating diverse English varieties into the curriculum and adapting international students to different English norms (Lavankura, 2013; Nomnian, 2018). Studies by Ratana-Ubol and Henschke (2015) and Wongcha-um and Mukdawijitra (2021) discuss the efforts of Thai universities to internationalize their programs and the cultural integration challenges faced by students. The role of English varieties in shaping students' academic and social experiences is increasingly recognized as critical for effective communication and cultural competence (Cheng et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2018; Tran & Marginson, 2018). The need for comprehensive support systems and the impact of diverse English varieties on learning outcomes are key areas of focus in the literature (Leask, 2015; Ryan & Viète, 2009).

1. Global Englishes (GE)

The concepts of global Englishes refer to the diverse forms and uses of English worldwide, acknowledging that English is no longer a language owned by any single nation or group of speakers (Kachru, 1992). This perspective recognizes how speakers have adapted and transformed English in different cultural and linguistic contexts, leading to the emergence of multiple English varieties such as Thai English, Chinese English, Singaporean English, and others (Jenkins, 2015). Jenkins (2014) discusses the intersection of GE and internationalization, stressing the importance of recognizing diverse English varieties in global education. The concept of GE is intrinsically linked to the internationalization of higher education, as universities globally increasingly adopt English as a medium of instruction, engaging with a global landscape where multiple Englishes coexist (Pennycook, 2007).

This linguistic diversity influences how international students and faculty communicate, learn, and teach. Understanding and embracing GE can enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of international education by acknowledging the linguistic diversity of the global student population (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Galloway and Numajiri (2020) further explore the implications of English as a medium of instruction and argue that incorporating GE perspectives can enhance the inclusivity of internationalization efforts.

In Thai higher education, adopting English as a medium of instruction has become a central strategy in its internationalization initiatives. However, to ensure these efforts are truly inclusive and effective, it is essential to integrate the principles of global Englishes. Given the diverse English-speaking backgrounds of the international student body, recognizing and incorporating different English varieties into the curriculum and pedagogy is crucial (Kirkpatrick, 2012). By doing so, Thai universities can better accommodate their students' linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby enhancing their internationalization strategies' overall impact and inclusivity.

2. English Programs in Thai Higher Education

In Thai higher education, a variety of English programs are offered, including English-medium instruction (EMI), International Programs (IP), and English International Programs (EIP). These programs are vital components of Thailand's strategy to internationalize its higher education system, with the dual goals of attracting international students and enhancing the global competitiveness of its universities. EMI programs, which involve teaching academic subjects in English, are particularly prevalent in disciplines such as engineering and business. These programs aim to improve students' English proficiency while equipping them with the skills needed for a global workforce (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Recent studies highlight the increasing prominence of EMI in Thailand's educational landscape, highlighting its significant role in the internationalization of higher education (Baker, 2021).

International Programs (IP) are specifically designed for international students, offering curricula that align with global standards and often involving partnerships with foreign institutions. These programs have attracted a diverse student body, reflecting their importance in Thailand's internationalization efforts (Lavankura, 2013; Ratana-Ubol & Henschke, 2015). Similarly, English International Programs (EIP), which combine elements of both EMI and IP, are designed to create inclusive learning environments for students from various linguistic backgrounds. The growing popularity of EIPs in Thai universities reflects the nation's commitment to fostering cross-cultural exchanges and upholding global educational standards. Together, these English programs represent Thailand's comprehensive approach to engaging with global educational trends and addressing the diverse needs of its international student population (Chen & Zhang, 2023). By integrating these programs into their higher education system, Thai universities demonstrate a proactive stance in embracing internationalization, thereby positioning themselves as competitive players in the global academic arena.

3. Recent Studies and Emerging Perspectives

Recent studies have further highlighted the importance of integrating GE into higher education. Baker (2021) explores how GE can influence academic communication and student engagement in internationalized higher education settings. This research underscores the need for institutions to recognize and embrace linguistic diversity to improve student experiences and outcomes. Smith and Lee (2022) examine the pedagogical implications of incorporating multiple English varieties into English programs. Their findings suggest that adopting a GE approach can enhance students' intercultural competence and better prepare them for a

globalized job market. Chen and Zhang (2023) investigate the impact of GE on language policy and curriculum design in higher education institutions across Asia. Their study highlights how a flexible approach to English varieties can support diverse student needs and promote a more inclusive learning environment.

In the context of globalization, the internationalization of higher education has become a pivotal strategy for universities worldwide, with Thailand exemplifying this trend through its growing adoption of English programs and international partnerships (Hengsadeekul et al., 2022; Phyakul et al., 2023). Recent studies emphasize the importance of understanding how international students from different Kachru's circles Inner, Outer, and Expanding, perceive and interact with various English varieties within these programs (Sahan et al., 2022; Ngang, 2020). Research by Baker (2021) and Smith and Lee (2022) highlights the critical need for institutions to recognize and integrate diverse English varieties to enhance inclusivity and support international students effectively. This study aims to address this gap by using qualitative methods to provide insights into how these students experience and adapt to English language education in Thailand, reflecting broader calls for more nuanced research into GE in higher education (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Boonsuk et al., 2023).

Research Objectives

1. To explore how international students from Kachru's Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles perceive various English varieties within Thai higher education contexts
2. To examine the strategies employed by international students to adapt to different English varieties within their study programs

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study used qualitative research to explore international students' perceptions of English varieties within Thai higher education. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for exploring complex, context-dependent phenomena such as language adaptation and perception, which were central to this investigation. The decision to use a qualitative approach was driven by the need to obtain rich, detailed insights into students' nuanced experiences and attitudes towards the diverse English varieties they encounter in academic settings. Recent research underscored the effectiveness of qualitative methods in capturing the intricate dynamics of language use and adaptation. For instance, a study by Smith and Lee (2022) highlighted how qualitative approaches, including semi-structured interviews, allow for a deep exploration of students' personal experiences with English in international educational contexts. This method facilitated an understanding of how students from different Kachru's circles, Inner, Outer and Expanding, navigated and perceived various English varieties in their studies.

2. Participants

The study focused on international students enrolled in English programs at Thai universities, selecting a diverse range of participants from Kachru's Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles through purposive sampling. This approach ensured representation from different linguistic

backgrounds, aligning with the study's emphasis on exploring perceptions of English varieties in Thai higher education. Participants were drawn from institutions offering English programs, allowing for a broad perspective of English usage in diverse academic contexts. This varied participant pool provided insights into how international students perceived and adapted to different English varieties in the Thai higher education setting, offering valuable perspectives on the intersection of English varieties and their adaptation. To ensure that participants' privacy was protected, the study used pseudonymization, assigning pseudonyms that combined the first letter of the student's name with a numerical code based on the interview order (e.g., Pim as P-1 for the first participant, Jane as J-2 for the second). This method maintained confidentiality while allowing clear identification within the research.

3. Instrument

The study utilized a semi-structured interview format to explore international students' perceptions and adaptation strategies regarding English varieties in Thai higher education. This format was chosen based on recent research highlighting its effectiveness in capturing nuanced and detailed responses. According to Smith and Jones (2022), semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in questioning while ensuring that core topics are covered, providing a rich understanding of participants' experiences. Liu and Zhang (2023) emphasize that this approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena such as language adaptation. The interview questions were crafted to probe themes related to English varieties, drawing on established frameworks from Patel et al. (2024) and aligning with the study's objectives of understanding students' perceptions and adaptations. The study drew on these recent studies to guide the creation of a semi-structured interview framework. This framework featured open-ended questions and probing follow-ups aimed at examining English varieties in Thai higher education. Semi-structured interviews allowed the study to obtain rich, detailed information, providing a thorough understanding of international students' experiences and perspectives. This approach was selected to enable a comprehensive investigation into how students perceive diverse English varieties in Thai university programs.

4. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews with international students enrolled in English programs at Thai universities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select six participants, ensuring representation from Kachru's Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles. This method, as described by Flick (2022), enables the collection of detailed and contextually rich data. The interviews were conducted in person or via video conferencing, depending on participants' availability and preferences. Each interview followed a pre-determined schedule, with questions designed to explore participants' perceptions of English varieties and adaptation strategies. To ensure transparency and maintain ethical standards, participants were informed in advance that the interviews would be recorded. They were assured of the confidentiality and security of their data and were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. During the interviews, if any responses were unclear or required further elaboration, follow-up questions were posed to obtain more precise information. This approach aimed to enhance the clarity and depth of the

responses, thereby improving the overall quality of the data collected. Bolderston (2012) underscores that this systematic approach to data collection ensures reliability and validity in capturing participants' detailed experiences and perspectives.

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this study was meticulously designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of international students' perceptions of English varieties in Thai higher education. The initial step involved verbatim transcription of the semi-structured interview recordings to accurately capture participants' responses. Following transcription, the data were analyzed using a coding approach to identify recurring themes and significant statements related to English varieties and academic adaptation.

The coding process began with open coding, which allowed for identifying broad categories from the data, followed by axial coding to refine and interrelate these categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This iterative coding process was essential for adapting the initial codes as new patterns emerged. Thematic analysis was then employed to group these codes into broader themes that reflected participants' experiences and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This method enabled the identification of key patterns and variations in how students from different Kachru's circles perceive and adapt to various English varieties.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, member checking was conducted, where participants reviewed the interview transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, peer debriefing sessions were held to challenge and refine the analysis, enhancing the validity of the thematic conclusions (Yin, 2018).

The final stage involved synthesizing the identified themes into a coherent narrative that directly addressed the research questions. This synthesis provided a detailed view of how international students from different Kachru's circles experience and adapt to English varieties within Thai higher education, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact of English language education on academic adaptation and internationalization.

Results

The responses to the interviews provided rich insights into the first research objective, which focused on international students' views on English varieties within Thai higher education English programs. The responses from students across Kachru's three circles were categorized into diverse English varieties encountered, perceptions of English proficiency, and impact on academic experience.

The findings reveal that students from all three circles, Inner, Outer, and Expanding, reported encountering a wide range of English varieties in their academic and social interactions. These variations included differences in accent, dialect, and language use, reflecting the diverse regional and cultural contexts of the students. The variety of English experiences posed

challenges to comprehension but also enriched their communication skills. The term highlights the range of students' English experiences in their interactions and academic settings.

I have friends from numerous different nationalities, but in general conversation, I would say some accents are the most challenging. (D-1) Inner

This is my first time to having meeting people from different countries and speaking English in their own different ways. I grew up all my life in Nigeria, and there was not much difference, but it is good to have met people from different places and use different Englishes together. (A-2) Outer

In my opinion, the diversity of Englishes in Thailand has shown me that spoken English is meant to be understood regardless of its specific form. (O-3) Outer

I think the diversity of Englishes in Thailand is mainly about the pronunciation features, words used, and ways of thinking by my teachers and peers from Thailand, China, Vietnam, and so on. At times, I struggle to understand their accents or specific pronunciations of certain words, and I ask them to repeat themselves for clarity. We often find humor in the situation. (C-4) Expanding

I placed great importance on accents in communication, particularly valuing native English accents. I didn't pay much attention to my own accent, but in Thailand, I've come to realize that everyone has an accent. (R-5) Expanding

When we understand English, we can speak with people from different countries, it develops our thinking or ideas, we will be more globalised, understand people from different countries, so we can behave with varieties of people peacefully and also very well. (W-6) Expanding

The analysis of the findings also revealed that students' views on English proficiency, both their own and that of others, varied widely. These perceptions were shaped by their experiences with different English varieties and their interactions with peers and instructors. The following excerpts reinforce the perspectives shared by the students:

oh sure, international students seem to be a little more open with their language, they are of course respectful, it's really not much, language varieties are not as big of an issue, some students tend to use language that's not common and some tends to be a little free with the language even simpler (D-1) Inner

It is just for some Thai students, because there are those that can speak English and others that cannot speak at all. (A-2) Outer

Some students in Thailand are still getting better at speaking English. However, some of them find it difficult to understand English when the conversation becomes complex. (O-3) Outer

I learn a lot from my friends, because my English capability will not improve if I don't practice it, so every day when I meet friends from another country, I have to force myself to speak in English. (R-5) Expanding

The diversity of English varieties also had a profound impact on students' academic experiences. Inner Circle students generally felt more aligned with the English used in their programs, while Outer and Expanding Circle students often faced difficulties due to unfamiliarity with certain English varieties. These assertions can be supported by the following excerpts:

Yes, a lot, I think it has really influenced my perspectives and my whole view about learning in English. You are coming to learn in a university where English is spoken in different accents and forms. (A-2) Outer

Most of my experiences in Thailand with varieties Englishes have taught me that spoken English is simply supposed to be understood, regardless of the English language form. In communication, the grammatical form of the English language is not followed. (C-4) Outer

When I came, I was grammar-focused, but later understood that the most important thing is to understand each other (R-5). Expanding

These reflections emphasize the need for universities to consider the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their students and how these backgrounds influence their academic experiences.

To address the second research objective, which focused on how students adapt to different English varieties in their study programs, several key findings emerged. Students employed various strategies to adapt to the diverse English varieties encountered in their academic programs. These strategies included seeking clarification from instructors, using supplementary materials, and participating in language support services. The examples of students' views are as follows:

For me, coming to learn entirely in English is different from someone from a country where all levels of education are in English. It is quite different for people from non-English speaking countries to adapt easily and understand. (A-2) Outer

Yes, in some ways, there's what you might call a Thai accent. When I first arrived, it took me some time to get used to it. But over time, I've been able to understand what people are saying more easily. (C-4) Expanding

What stood out to me is that the relationship with the lecturers is easier compared to my country. It is easier to interact with them; they are more open and freer to interact with, which helps one adapt to the system. (W-6) Expanding

Despite these strategies, students from the Outer and Expanding Circles faced significant challenges in understanding different English varieties. These challenges often led to misunderstandings and a reduced ability to fully engage in academic activities. The following examples highlight these challenges:

The international students tend to find some difficulty in navigating the university systems without someone there helping them along the way all the time. It's quite challenging to get some things done and not because of the language barrier, but because internationalization requires a different mindset, a more of a service mindset that is systematically developed, and in some cases, Thailand lacks those resources. (D-1) Inner

When I came here, it was difficult because most of the people here cannot speak English, I don't know, because some of them also don't understand English, they also cannot speak, that's the challenging part. How I solve this problem, now technology has developed, then I used like maps, pictures from google, now we can use google translator, but sometimes it still become difficult because of tones and the pronunciation (O-3) Outer

As a newcomer in Thailand, Yeah, we face challenges, because of the Thai accent, I think for me accent is not a bad thing and because every country has its own accent. When I just arrived in Thailand, I couldn't understand when a Thai person speaks in English, I had to process it to adapt to it right (C-4) Expanding

Some students reported having access to support systems in their institutions, while others expressed a need for targeted support mechanisms to help them adapt to diverse English varieties. This included requests for clearer explanations, additional practice opportunities, and resources tailored to different English accents and dialects. Their perspectives are captured in the following excerpts:

The English versions of the websites are just either sporadically translated or the translations are not contextually accurate, so that is not internationalization. The programs, let's say a Master's degree, is the Thai curriculum taught in the English. Sometimes of the Thai administrators are not aware of what is needed in the global sector, what is needed to prepare students to be global citizens (D-1) Inner

Yeah, for us in this institute, we have an American citizen who is a foreign expert in the institute and his primary role is to teach students to communicate in English, that is his

major role and then also to help in terms of writing in English, to support the students and as well as the staffs (A-2) Outer

I think that I get all the English support service from the international office. For example, if I want to extend my visa, they always give English support services and always have someone to help me out during the process before going to the immigration. so for me it is not a full support, let me say it is half half. (W-6) Expanding

Discussion

The findings provide a nuanced understanding of how English varieties influence students from Kachru's Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles within Thai higher education. The interplay between these groups reveals both shared experiences and distinct challenges, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the globalized linguistic landscape in academic settings.

Students from all three circles reported encountering a wide range of English accents and dialects. Inner Circle students, such as D-1, found some accents challenging but generally felt more accustomed to navigating diverse English varieties. This comfort likely stems from their exposure to a wider range of English accents in their home countries. Outer Circle students, represented by A-2 and O-3, initially faced difficulties but appreciated the opportunity to engage with multiple English forms, recognizing it as an enriching experience that broadened their understanding of the language. Expanding Circle students, including C-4, R-5, and W-6, emphasized the importance of mutual understanding despite accent differences, valuing the diversity of English as it enhanced their global communication skills. These observations are consistent with previous studies suggesting that exposure to diverse English varieties can both enrich communication skills and pose challenges (Jenkins, 2015; McKay, 2018).

Perceptions of proficiency varied among the students. Inner Circle students, like D-1, were generally more at ease with diverse Englishes, reflecting a higher baseline comfort level. In contrast, Outer Circle students, such as A-2 and O-3, noted disparities in English proficiency among Thai students, which sometimes hindered academic interactions. Expanding Circle students, exemplified by R-5, observed that their proficiency improved through active practice and interaction, underscoring the importance of engagement in language development. This variation in perceptions aligns with research suggesting that students from different linguistic backgrounds may have varying expectations and require different levels of adjustment when exposed to diverse English varieties (Canagarajah, 2013; Kachru, 1992).

The influence of English varieties on academic experiences was significant across all groups. Inner Circle students felt relatively aligned with the language used in their academic programs, which eased their academic journey. However, Outer and Expanding Circle students often felt less supported due to unfamiliarity with specific English varieties. For instance, Outer Circle students, such as A-2 and C-4, reported adapting to various accents over time, while Expanding Circle students like R-5 initially struggled but eventually prioritized communicative clarity over strict grammatical correctness. These findings corroborate existing studies on how varying

proficiency levels and accents can influence academic adaptation and experiences (Houghton & Rivers, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Students from different circles employed a range of strategies to adapt to the diverse English varieties, including seeking clarification from peers and instructors and using supplementary resources. Outer Circle, such as A-2 and Expanding Circle students, including C-4 and W-6, reported overcoming initial challenges through these adaptive strategies. Despite these efforts, students across all circles faced difficulties related to accent and language variety, particularly in navigating university systems. These challenges are consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of effective support mechanisms in multilingual educational settings (Tsui, 2007; Yang, 2021).

Regarding support mechanisms, the availability and effectiveness of support mechanisms varied widely among students. Inner Circle students, like D-1, reported experiencing inadequate institutional support, highlighting a gap in the resources provided for facilitating linguistic diversity. Conversely, Outer Circle students, such as A-2, noted the presence of specialized resources, particularly foreign language experts. Expanding Circle students, like W-6, pointed out that while there was some support from international offices, it was often incomplete. These findings suggest a need for more tailored and comprehensive support systems to address the specific needs of students from different linguistic backgrounds, echoing recent research that advocates for context-sensitive support strategies in global education (Holliday, 2011; Pérez-Paredes, 2015).

Conclusion

This study explores the influence of diverse English dialects on students from Kachru's Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles within Thai higher education. The findings reveal distinct challenges and adaptations each group faces in response to the varied Englishes present in academic settings.

Inner Circle students demonstrated a greater comfort with different English accents and dialects, using the higher baseline proficiency and familiarity with GE to guide academic interactions effectively. Their ability to adapt was largely attributed to their extensive exposure to a range of English varieties, allowing them to engage more confidently in the academic environment. In contrast, Outer Circle students initially encountered challenges due to the diversity of English forms but gradually adapted over time. They began to appreciate the exposure to these varied forms of English, recognizing that it enhanced their language proficiency and broadened their understanding of global communication. Such adaptability highlights participants' resilience and willingness to engage with linguistic diversity in their educational context. Similarly, Expanding Circle students faced the most significant difficulties in understanding and adapting to different English varieties. However, despite these challenges, the students eventually recognized the value of this linguistic diversity in improving global communication skills. This journey underscores the importance of persistent practice and engagement in overcoming the barriers posed by unfamiliar English dialects.

The study underscores the need for tailored support mechanisms in higher education to address the diverse needs of students from different English circles. Providing targeted language support and fostering inclusive academic environments are crucial for enhancing all students' academic experiences and outcomes. By implementing these measures, educational institutions can better support the international student population, creating a more inclusive and practical educational experience for everyone involved.

Recommendations

1. Implications

The research presented here has several limitations. Firstly, it focuses exclusively on international university students from countries within Kachru's circles enrolled in English programs in Thailand. Due to the relatively small sample size and the limited diversity among participants in terms of nationality, academic background, and English proficiency, the findings may not fully represent the broader spectrum of international students in Thailand. This limitation suggests that the results may not be easily generalizable to other contexts, such as different educational levels or geographic locations. To provide a more comprehensive understanding, future research should explore a wider range of international programs across various regions and educational systems, accounting for diverse cultural contexts.

Institutions should consider incorporating a broader range of English varieties into their curricula to better equip students for global communication and interactions, addressing the challenges faced by students from Outer and Expanding Circles (Jenkins, 2015; Matsuda & Silva, 2019). Additionally, universities need to enhance their language support services by providing targeted assistance to help students navigate different English varieties, which includes clearer explanations, additional practice opportunities, and resources tailored to various accents and dialects (Holliday, 2011; Sifakis & Sougari, 2021). Furthermore, fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding towards diverse English varieties can significantly improve both communication and academic experiences. Institutions should promote awareness of the value of different Englishes and facilitate intercultural dialogues to enhance students' overall engagement and integration (Canagarajah, 2013; Macaro & Pinner, 2018).

2. Further Studies

For future studies, it is recommended that institutions integrate a broader spectrum of English varieties into their curricula to better prepare students for global communication and interactions, addressing the specific challenges faced by students from Outer and Expanding Circles (Jenkins, 2015; Lee, 2020). Additionally, universities should enhance their language support services by offering targeted assistance designed to help students navigate different English varieties. This support could include clearer explanations, more practice opportunities, and resources tailored to various accents and dialects (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Holliday, 2011). Promoting a culture of mutual respect and understanding towards diverse English varieties is also crucial. Institutions should foster awareness of the value of different Englishes

and facilitate intercultural dialogues to improve students' overall communication and academic experiences (Meierkord & Ranta, 2022).

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