

Does Cheese Smell Like Plara?

Cognitive Stylistic Perspective on the World Englishes Portrayed in “*Farangs*” and “*At the Café Lovely*”

หรือชีสจะกลิ่นเหมือนปลาร้า?

มองนานาภาษาอังกฤษโลกผ่านมุมมองสไตล์การรับรู้
สะท้อนด้วยสองเรื่องสั้น “ฝรั่ง” และ “ณ คาเฟ่แสนรัก”

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Abstract

When one learns an international language, it is difficult to avoid cultural imperialism, the imitation of the norms of those who speak English as their first language, and struggles with identity negotiations in the global language. This paper discusses the facets of World Englishes and how the English language has affected L2 speakers. Two works of contact literatures, “*Farangs*” and “*At the Café Lovely*” selected from “*Sightseeing*”, the first short-story collection of Rattawut Lapcharoensap, a Thai writer born in Chicago but raised in Bangkok, were analyzed with the perspective of cognitive stylistics and its cognitive metaphor theory.

It was discovered that the author employed the key elements of an international language to exhibit how communicators cannot understand each other successfully, even with an international language, if they still possess their particular prejudices against members of the other culture and if local cultures are neglected. Moreover, several metaphors were adopted to challenge how readers of the English language conceptualize themselves and the English-speaking world they live in. In the end,

the two texts leave readers with the conundrum, “Does cheese (metaphor for Americanized force) smell like plara (metaphor for localness)?” The answer may not have to be precise in accordance with any particular rules, but the answer can be internationally acceptable if the one who replies has cogitated with cognitive stylistic perspective and shown proper respect to the members of any other culture.

The analysis underlines the concept that users of English as an international language should consider English as a medium, not as a means of Western thought domination. Additionally, instructors of the English language can help students become competent communicators in the globalizing era should they raise students’ awareness of the potential cultural imperialism and the necessity to respect other cultures.

Keywords: world Englishes, cognitive stylistics, cognitive metaphor theory

บทคัดย่อ

เมื่อต้องเรียนรู้และใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาสื่อสารสากล ก็ยากจะหลีกเลี่ยงการตกอยู่ภายใต้อำนาจนิยมของวัฒนธรรมทางความคิด การลอกเลียนแบบวิถีชีวิตของผู้ที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ และ ปัญหาในการปรับอัตลักษณ์ท้องถิ่นของตนให้เข้ากับลักษณะภาษาสากลนี้ บทความนี้จึงมุ่งอภิปรายถึงแง่มุมต่าง ๆ ของนานาชาติภาษาอังกฤษโลก (World Englishes) และผลกระทบของภาษาอังกฤษต่อผู้ใช้ที่ไม่ได้พูดภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ โดยศึกษาจากเรื่องสั้น 2 เรื่อง “ฝรั่ง” (Farangs) และ “ณ คาเฟ่แสนรัก” (At

the Café Lovely) ซึ่งเป็นวรรณคดีภาษาที่สอง (Contact Literatures) ที่คัดสรรจาก “ทัศนาวจร” (Sightseeing) อันเป็นผลงานรวมเรื่องสั้นชุดแรกของรัฐวุฒิ ลากเจริญทรัพย์ นักเขียนไทยที่เกิดในซิดคาโกแต่เติบโตในกรุงเทพฯ โดยใช้กรอบแนวคิดด้าน วจนลีลาศาสตร์ปริชาน (Cognitive Stylistics) และอุปลักษณ์เชิงมโนทัศน์ (Cognitive Metaphor) มาวิเคราะห์

จากการวิเคราะห์พบว่าผู้แต่งได้ใช้คุณสมบัติหลักของภาษาสากลในงานเขียน เพื่อแสดงให้เห็นว่า คนเราไม่สามารถสื่อสารกันอย่างไร้ข้อขัดแย้ง แม้จะใช้ภาษาสากลเป็นสื่อกลางก็ตาม หากยังมีอคติกับผู้ที่มาจากกลุ่มวัฒนธรรมอื่น หรือมีการละเลยวัฒนธรรมท้องถิ่น นอกจากนี้ ผู้แต่งได้ใช้อุปลักษณ์ต่าง ๆ เพื่อท้าทายผู้อ่านว่าจะมองเห็นตนเองและสังคมที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นสื่อกลางอย่างไร และ อุปลักษณ์ซีส (อุปลักษณ์แทนอำนาจอเมริกัน) กับปลาร้า (อุปลักษณ์แทนตัวตนท้องถิ่นไทย) ในสองเรื่องสั้นนี้ยังคงทิ้งท้ายคำถามให้กับผู้อ่านว่า ทั้งสองสิ่งมีกลิ่นเหมือนกันหรือไม่ และคำตอบอาจไม่จำเป็นต้องถูกต้องตามข้อกำหนดของกฎใด แต่เป็นคำตอบที่ได้รับการยอมรับในระดับสากล หากผู้ตอบได้พิจารณาเรื่องการตีความในระดับปริชานของผู้ใช้ภาษา และมีความเคารพต่อผู้ที่มาจากวัฒนธรรมอื่น

การวิเคราะห์งานเขียน 2 ชิ้นนี้ช่วยให้เห็นว่าผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาสากลควรจัดให้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นเครื่องมือในการสื่อสาร ไม่ใช่เครื่องมือครอบงำความคิดตามแบบชาวตะวันตก และผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาสากลอาจมีส่วนช่วยให้ผู้เรียนสื่อสารในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้น โดยการเน้นให้ผู้เรียนตระหนักถึงประเด็นเรื่องการตกอยู่ภายใต้อำนาจนิยมทางวัฒนธรรมและความสำคัญของการเคารพวัฒนธรรมอื่น

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาอังกฤษนานาชาติ วจนลีลาศาสตร์ปริชาน อุปลักษณ์เชิงมโนทัศน์

Introduction

“The purpose of teaching an international language is to facilitate communication of learners’ ideas and culture in an

English medium,” according to Prof. Dr. Sandra Lee McKay at a seminar given in Thailand¹. This statement most likely reminded some of those present of the one significant area of discussion within the field of World Englishes of the possibility of the English language functioning as a tool for imperialist values (Phillipson, 1992 as cited in Canagarajah, 1999). If users, teachers, or learners of English as an international language are not aware of potential thought imperialism, the main purpose of teaching English as an international language, which Prof. Dr. McKay emphasized, may fail considerably. Therefore, using English as a medium to effectively communicate the local self in international contexts should be highlighted as an attempt to eliminate the inconsiderate imitation of the norms of those who speak English as their first language.

Canagarajah (1999) is also concerned that the struggles and negotiations with the global language that occur in developing country communities are not effectively examined and that there should be sufficient representation for the subtle forms of resistance to English and for the productive processes of appropriation inspired by local needs. Accordingly, it is a challenge for contact literature² writers to reflect the two-faces of the language in contact: its own face and the face it obtains from the language with which it has contact (Kachru, 1982, as cited in Smith, 1986). In the case of Rattawut Lapcharoensap³, a Thai writer who was born in Chicago and raised in Bangkok, he chose to portray

¹ Prof. Dr. Sandra Lee McKay from San Francisco State University in the plenary session at the Thammasat University Chulalongkorn University and Kasetsart University Academic Seminar on May 21, 2012.

² Contact literatures refer to the literatures in English written by the users of English as a second language to delineate contexts which generally do not form part of what may be labeled the traditions of English literature (Smith, 1986)

³ Rattawut Lapcharoensap was educated at Triumudomsuksa Pattanakarn high school in Bangkok, Cornell University, and the University of Michigan, where he received an MFA in creative writing.

“raw and tangy stories in Thailand exploring with comic poignancy, how the small country is absorbing waves of Westernization” (Publishers Weekly Review)⁴ in his first collection of short stories, *Sightseeing*. The voices of Lapcharoensap’s narrators, which portray the duality of beauty and pain in similar circumstances such as those involving intercultural conflict or being subordinate in one’s own home, can be perceived as underlining the concept that users of English as an international language should consider English as a medium, not as a means of Western thought domination.

*Farangs*⁵ and *At the Café Lovely*⁶, two texts from Rattawut Lapcharoensap’s short story collection, have been selected as the materials for exploration. From the perspective of cognitive stylistics, this paper analyzes the facets of World Englishes portrayed in the two short stories to highlight Lapcharoensap’s attempt to challenge L1 norms. The concepts of ‘interpretability,’ ‘situation model,’ and ‘cognitive metaphor theory’ have been adopted to explore how Lapcharoensap’s two stories emphasize significant identity and power issues in the realm of World Englishes.

Cognitive Stylistic Perspective and World Englishes

Since the term World Englishes implies the use of the same language (English) with different styles associated with the various mindsets of language users from all over the world, cognitive stylistics dealing with the study of language style and

⁴ Publishers Weekly Review on the back cover of Rattawut Lapcharoensap’s debut short story collection, *Sightseeing*.

⁵ *Farangs* is a story that deals with a teenage boy living on an island with his Thai mother, with an absent American father. The narrator keeps falling in love with American tourists and having his heart broken.

⁶ The narrator of *at the Café Lovely* tells readers the time of when he was an eleven-year-old boy. He lives with only his mother and 17-year-old brother since his father has just died in an accident. The café lovely is a brothel where his brother takes him along one night.

analysis of cognition (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Norgaard, Montoro, & Busse, 2010) is a closely related discipline to be adopted for the exploration of the impact World Englishes may have on the locals. Cognitive stylisticians are interested in what happens or what people do during the reading process and how this impacts readers' interpretations of the text they are reading. Whereas traditional literary stylisticians focus on how linguistic forms and functions affect readers' interpretations, cognitive stylisticians highlight the mental component of the meaning creation process (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Norgaard, Montoro, & Busse, 2010).

Farangs and *At the Café Lovely* are contact literatures designed to create certain effects on the reader's psychology. As a way of challenging admiration of inner-circle standards and their imperialist values, Lapcharoensap has developed unconventional linguistic forms which can make the reader stop to ponder the values of L1 norms.

How can Lapcharoensap's linguistic features create mental components of the meaning creation process for international readers when they are reading about the lives of the fictional characters?

With the international-language characteristics Lapcharoensap adopts in his writing, international readers can absorb the ideas questioning the identity of English users. With no authoritative or didactic voice in the texts, the author has his readers experience the struggles of the characters in their own homes, and the non-conforming linguistic features also draw readers' attention to the necessity to question the power of the inner circle⁷. The following section considers how Lapcharoensap incorporates international-

⁷ According to Kachru's model "Three Circles of English," the inner circle refers to societies where English is the primary language. The inner circle consists of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, and USA.

language characteristics into his written works for specific dramatic effects.

International-Language Characteristics Portrayed in *Farangs* and *At the Café Lovely*

According to McKay (2012), an international language (1) becomes denationalized (i.e. English is no longer British, American, or etc.), (2) tends to establish itself alongside other local languages, (3) unlike an elite lingua franca, is not confined to the economic elite, and (4) shows no necessity for L2 speakers to internalize the cultural norms of L1 speakers of that language. Lapcharoensap employs all these elements of the English language mentioned above in his work.

First, the terminology used in the stories exhibits some unique elements of the local language. This furthers the notion that the English language no longer belongs to any country in the inner circle and that the international language is used alongside Thai. The terms *ma*⁸ and *luk*, for instance, are adopted instead of ‘mother/mom’ and ‘son,’ respectively, in order to maintain the sense of the particular kind of relationship between a mother and her offspring in Thai families, such as the offspring’s obedience or avoidance of confrontation with their mothers. This can be seen in the following examples from *Farang* and *At the café Lovely* respectively.

“No cry, *luk*. No cry” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 6)

⁸ This usually call their mother *Mae* whereas Chinese Thais usually call their mother *Mama*. Some Chinese Thais sometimes shorten the word *Mama* to be just *Ma*. In addition, some westerners like Americans may also call their mother *Ma*, but what the writer emphasizes here is the terminology used by the locals as seen through the pairing of *Ma* and *Luk*, not *Ma* and another foreign word.

“Ma’s cooking was also getting worse, but we couldn’t bring ourselves to say anything about it” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 29).

Some other words portraying certain cultural concepts include, for example, *farangs*, *Apae*, *sawasdee*, and *wai*. In *Farangs*, the narrator says that his Ma is “tired of **farangs** running all over the island, tired of finding used condoms in the motel’s rooms, tired of guests complaining to her in five languages” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 2). The term *farangs* here appears to emphasize the sense of alienation or of the other. However, without prior sociocultural knowledge, readers may not acquire the sense that the term *farangs* can convey greater alienation or the state of an outgroup to some people than the term *foreigners*. This is how Lapcharoensap highlights the importance of the local culture.

In order to fully understand the international language, local elements cannot be ignored. Readers who comprehend the possible notions accompanying the term *farangs*, therefore, can relate the term to the appearance of those who look completely different running all over the locals’ land, as *farangs* instantly suggests the appearance of westerners unlike the term *foreigners*, which can be associated with any other race including those that look more similar to Thais.

Furthermore, in *At the Café Lovely*, “Apae’s convenience store” is mentioned (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 27). If the term *Apae* was eliminated and merely convenience store was used, then this would convey a different image since a convenience store in the West does not usually look like a local one in Thailand, the owner of which is commonly an old Chinese man normally known as *Apae*. The way the author maintains the local term in the local

context emphasizes how global communication cannot overlook local cultures. Additionally, consider the following item from *Farangs*.

“ ‘Sawasdee, Uncle,’ I said, greeting him with a wai, bending my head extra low for the effect; but he slapped me on the head with a forehand when I came up” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 10).

In *Farangs*, when the narrator wishes to get sympathy from Uncle Mongkhon, he mentions the particular culture of Thai greetings. This is another area where the significance of the local culture is underlined. With no specific knowledge of Thai culture, readers may not understand the common effect generated by *sawasdee* and a *wai*. Moreover, besides local words, Lapcharoensap also puts some English words together to portray a local meaning. One example is ‘your mom.’

In *At the Café Lovely* when the narrator’s brother would like to highlight his younger brother’s special skill of smelling, he says, “my little brother can smell your ma taking a crap on the other side of town,” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 24) and when the narrator’s brother teases the narrator about getting AIDS at the Café Lovely—“*The AIDS might eat your dick*,” the narrator immediately says, “not before it eats your mom’s though” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 35)

How the use of ‘your ma’ or ‘your mother/mom’ originated is somewhat a mystery even to Thai native speakers. A great number of Thais tend to become irritated or even furious if anyone mentions their mom without an appropriate reason. It could be assumed, with the respect Thais pay to ancestors, that Thais may not wish for anyone to tease them about their ancestors, especially mothers, who may appear more fragile and in

need of greater protection than fathers. This concept about mothers may also be fairly normal in the West, but in Thailand, the issue can be even more sensitive. In short, as evidenced by the given examples, the English language used in the two short stories is not American, British, or that of any other but it appears to establish itself alongside with the local language and culture.

Second, the characters in the international language context are not members of the economic elite, and both of Lapcharoensap's stories show no necessity for L2 speakers to internalize the cultural norms of L1 speakers. For instance, at one point, the narrator in *Farangs* says, "because of our plans to move to California. Ma was learning English at the time. She hasn't spoken a word of English to me since" (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 6). The excerpt reveals that what matters is not the English language itself but the situations that are attached to it. When her love with an American seems to be promising, the Thai mother is willing to learn English, but when the love turns sour, it can be seen that the English language or culture were never elements that she actually internalized.

Additionally, instead of internalizing the L1 cultural norms, the characters do not seem to willingly accept the cultural norms of the L1 speakers. The two stories even emphasize particular attitudes revealing potential obstacles to communication. According to Stening (1979), researchers have attempted to cope with the issue of cultural distance from the basis that most problems in intercultural interconnectedness arise from the different interpretations placed on certain conduct or the environment by the parties concerned (i.e. from their different conceptions of reality). In *Farangs*, Lapcharoensap portrays the problematic issues of communication via cultural prejudices. In the

story, each group has hostile outlooks towards those whom they consider to be members of the out-group. Consider the following example.

*“You irritate me. Tell that girl to put on some clothes. You know damn well I don’t let bikinis ride. This is a **respectable** establishment. We have rules”* (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 9).

The elephant owner, Uncle Mongkon, gets irritated with the narrator since the narrator’s farang friend is wearing a bikini for an elephant ride, which is not deemed polite in accordance with Thai traditional rules. In this excerpt, the reader experiences the difficulties of communication across cultures. According to Stening (1979), the accomplishment of an adequate level of understanding between those who come from different cultural backgrounds can be significantly linked to their overall attitudes with respect to members of the other culture. Nevertheless, without adequate prior knowledge about a specific culture, the foreign girlfriend seems to disrespect a particular aspect of the other culture. At the same time, Uncle Mongkon, in the story, does not seem to show much respect to the narrator’s American girlfriend, either. Obviously, Lapcharoensap portrays the issues of cultural respect through the use of the English medium in his work of literature.

In addition, consider the particular prejudices from the attitudes of the older locals.

*“Sometimes I think **your stubborn farang half** keeps you from understanding this. You should be ashamed of yourself. I would tell your ma if it wouldn’t break her heart”* (Lapcharoensap, 2005, pp. 10-11).

The narrator is half-Thai half-American, and when he does something the local adult does not consider appropriate, the American half of the narrator from his father is held to blame and

not his Thai blood.

Moreover, there is the consideration of how each group can view those from another culture as acting ‘inappropriately.’ For instance, in *Farangs*, the narrator’s mother says, “I saw you, luk. I saw you on your motorcycle with that farang slut in her bikini” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 13). According to Graburn (1983, p. 438), Asian societies have “the deeply rooted patriarchal attitude toward sexuality which casts in the role of either “madonna/virgin” or “whore”. When the narrator’s mother sees the American girl wear a bikini—not usually worn by a girl that fits the concept of madonna/virgin—the difference in the culture of appropriate attire means the American girl is instantly perceived as a *slut* from the perspective of the Thai mother.

In short, the main characters in the two stories are not members of the elite group, and the examples discussed above emphasize the problems of communication rather than the willingness to accept the cultural standards of the L1 speakers. Even with an international language, communicators cannot understand each other successfully if they still possess their particular prejudices against members of the other culture.

Conspicuously, with the characteristics of the international language portrayed in *Farangs* and *At the Café Lovely*, international readers can experience the issues of identity and power through the ways the locals look at the world. The unconventional linguistic features and the implementation of the local terminology invite the reader into these characters’ worlds, ones that clearly differ from that created by the inner circle.

Metaphorically Speaking: Issues and Possible Solutions

Cognitive stylisticians do not view a metaphor as a

linguistic tool simply enhancing the beauty of the language but as a matter of thought, which is central to how we conceptualize or make sense of ourselves and the world we live in (Semino, 2002; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Norgaard, Montoro, & Busse, 2010). In Lapcharoensap's short stories, several metaphors are adopted to portray certain messages challenging how readers of the English language conceptualize themselves and the English-speaking world they live in.

The metaphors portrayed in the two stories reveal specific world-views concerning the particular roles and consequences of globalization—one aspect of communication in the field of World Englishes. In accordance with how readers may interpret the texts, Lapcharoensap's metaphors can be divided into two categories: (1) the problematic images of power/subordinates and (2) the glimpse of solutions.

Where Power Stays

In *Farangs* and *At the Café Lovely*, it is possible to interpret the author as employing specific metaphors to suggest the images of those in power and the subordinate locals, and the images of the gap between different cultures. Consider the following excerpt from *Farangs*.

The narrator's mother considers that Thais can give farangs “*history, temples, pagodas, traditional dance, floating markets, seafood curry, tapioca desserts, silk-weaving cooperatives, but all they really want is to ride some hulking gray beast like a bunch of wildmen and to pant over girls and to lie there half-dead getting skin cancer on the beach during the time in between*” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 2).

The metaphor of farangs riding elephants can convey the concept of westerners lording their power over the local Thais. The

action of riding here does not capture the sense of real civilization since the author chose the word *wildmen*. Also, the attitudes of some farangs seeing themselves as superior through their fluent use of the English language are portrayed when the American girl's boyfriend, Hunter, condescendingly asks the narrator, "Speak English? Talk American?" (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 16). Obviously, Hunter suggests that he considers English to be 'American,' which is the same as his nationality. However, in the story, Hunter's bullying behavior does not portray accepted civilized behavior at all.

Moreover, consider the following excerpt from *Farangs*.

*"When we were kids, Surachai and I used to run around the beach advertising ourselves as the Island's Miraculous **Monkey Boys**...For a small fee, we'd climb up trees and fetch coconuts for farangs, who would both ooh and aah at how nimble we were...For added effect, we'd make monkey noises when we climbed, which always made them laugh. They would often be impressed too, by my facility with the English language. In one version of the speech I gave before every performance, I played the part of an American boy shipwrecked on the Island as an infant. With both parents dead, I was raised in the jungle by a family of gibbons"* (Lapcharoensap, 2005, pp. 18-19).

The narrator's description shows how the locals are viewed as being more barbaric through the metaphor of Monkey Boys. Westerners are surprised when one of the Monkey Boys (the narrator) can fluently speak the English language.

However, it is interesting to see that the author does not portray the negative side of the rural life. Specific consequences of turning nature into business are depicted in *Farangs* while nature

itself is portrayed as something beautiful. For example, the narrator in *Farangs* says, “I’m reminded of how pleasurable this used to be—hoisting myself up by my bare feet and fingertips—and I’m surprised by how easy it still is” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 19). The pleasant feeling of going back to nature somehow compensates for the narrator’s previous pain of being left by an American girl. Interestingly, returning to nature here can heal the pain of one’s loss caused by others whose culture one does not understand.

Moreover, economic power is vividly depicted in both short stories. Apparently, economic status seems to be an essential element that cannot be overlooked in the contexts of international communication. Consider the following examples. First, in *Farangs*, Monkhon’s Jungle Safari is put out of the elephant riding business because of a monopoly underpricing the competition. Foreign controlled companies with their greater financial power have come to put the locals out of business and take over. The appearance of Uncle Mongkhon’s elephants, Yai and Noi, accordingly, can be metaphors perceived as subordinate locals. The two elephants are described as “aging bulls with ulcered bellies and flaccid trunks that hung limply between their crusty forelegs” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 8). This serves to emphasize how local business does not have the adequate power to compete against more powerful foreign ones.

Other illustrations can be found in the story *At the Café Lovely*. First, the Café Lovely is a brothel, which is not portrayed as an appropriate place for the young generation. However, the brothel can also highlight the status of subordinate locals the great number of whom are not financially secured. Graburn (1983) asserts that prostitution is associated with the capitalist system and Cohen (1982) also argues that commercial sex has dramatically

increased since foreign demand for it soared in the mid 1960s. The Café Lovely, therefore, can be perceived as a metaphor of locals who are always financially dependent on those with greater power. Even though there are no farangs portrayed in this brothel, the place can still be seen as a metaphor of local poverty of finances and thoughts.

Next, the metaphors of the mall, hamburgers, cheese, and plara portrayed in the story *At the Café Lovely* are significant examples emphasizing the concepts of economic power and subordinate locals. Consider the following excerpt.

“A month before my birthday, Anek had taken me to the new American fast-food place at Sogo Mall. I was happy that day. I had dreamed all week of hamburgers and French fries and a nice cold soda and the air-conditioning of the place...The place was packed, full of students and families clamoring for a taste of American fast food. All around us, people hungrily devoured their meals...We had our best clothes on that day...but even then I knew our clothes couldn't compare with the other kids' clothes. Their clothes had been bought in the mall; ours had been bought at the weekend bazaar and were cheap imitations of what they wore” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, pp. 25-26).

The products of Americanization, such as the mall and hamburgers, are metaphors of the arrival of western economic power combined with cultural globalization and the English L1 speakers' ways of life. The air-conditioner also implies a comfortable life associated with superior technology. The narrator and his brother are the representative of the less powerful locals who tend to think they need and want to follow the American or capitalist path—they view the clothes in the mall and the new fast food superior than what they usually have. However, the author's

choices of words like ‘hungrily devoured’ (consuming without careful consideration) and ‘cheap imitation’ (copying without careful thought) do not suggest any healthy sets of actions. Apparently, Lapcharoensap uses the voice of his narrator to portray the issues of imitating the L1 speakers’ cultural norms.

Next, look what happens when the narrator eventually gets a burger.

“The place smelled strange—a scent I’d never encountered before—a bit rancid, like palaa⁹ fish left too long in the sun. Later, I would find out it was cheese...I chewed and I chewed and I chewed and I finally swallowed, the thick mass inching slowly down my throat. Then I felt my stomach shoot up to my throat...I threw up all over that shiny American linoleum floor”
(Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 27).

Even though the narrator previously thought he desperately needed a burger, when he gets a chance to get one, the situation does not turn out to be desirable at all. He compares the smell of cheese representing the Americanization to that of *plara* referring to a well-known unpleasant smell among the locals. This can suggest the undesirable elements or outcome of merely looking up to Americanized ways with intention to just imitate. Ironically, the narrator destroys the beautiful view of the shiny American floor with what he previously considered to be the great American food. With the consideration of cognitive metaphor theory, readers can interpret this piece of contact literature as a way to warn people against imitation or blind reception of the norms of economically powerful English communicators.

⁹ According to the transliteration rules of the Royal Institute of Thailand, the word is written as ‘*plara*’ whereas ‘*palaa*’ is how the author based the spelling on certain pronunciation.

Besides the power and subordinate aspects, the gap between different cultures is also depicted through certain metaphors. For instance, in *Farangs*, Uncle Mongkhon yells to his sister following the scene of the uncle's argument with the narrator over the bikini: "It's nothing Maew...Though I wouldn't come out here unless you like nudie shows. The mongrel's here with another member of his international harem" (Lapcharoensap, 2005, P. 9). Uncle Mongkhon, the representative voice of the local older generation does not view the farang girl or the narrator positively. He chooses the terms 'nudie shows' and 'mongrel' to describe the two of them. Also, he uses the term 'international harem' to emphasize how it is impossible for him to consider the conduct of the members of the other culture to be good or morally acceptable according to his standards.

Also, when Uncle Mongkhon insists with the narrator that the American girl must put on some more clothes, he mentions that the elephant is the national symbol of Thailand and says, "what if I went to her country and rode a bald eagle in my underwear, huh? How would she like it?" (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 11). Without the specific knowledge concerning Thailand's past, one may not know that elephants were used in sacred battles between kings. To this day, a great number of Thai people, therefore, still respect elephants. The metaphors of elephant and eagle can represent Thailand and the United States, the powerful inner circle. The use of such metaphors can imply that the locals and the L1 speakers can communicate effectively as long as they have some respect for each other and some knowledge concerning each other's culture or effective ways of interpretation.

2 A Glimpse of Solutions

Going back to nature or adapting to the acceleration of

change offers glimpses of the solutions portrayed in Lapcharoensap's works. According to all the metaphorical examples elaborated above, it can be seen that Lapcharoensap emphasizes the issues of how local people cope with globalization, or particularly Americanization through the use of English as an international communicative medium. In the stories, the author chose to portray industrial or commercial elements negatively whereas nature or particular aspects of traditional art are described positively. For example, in *Farangs*, the feeling of contentment associated with the mango tree and the sea is repeatedly highlighted. In the end the narrator's pet silently escapes the force of the bullying American boys by swimming back into the sea.

Also, the narrator in *At the Café Lovely* highlights the nostalgia for the union of father and mother through the scent of natural elements, namely sea and jasmine. Although at that moment the concepts of hamburgers and the new mall seem to occupy the narrator's thoughts, the narrator in *At the Café Lovely* recalls the time when his family were still all together and says that he remembers his father smelled like the sea and his mother like jasmine. Nostalgia for the past here is portrayed through his yearning for natural elements associated with the concept of his beloved ancestors.

The illustrations depicted above can lead to this question: Did Lapcharoensap intentionally portray globalization in a negative tone and localization or the natural ways in a positive tone? One possible answer is 'Probably not.' Even though Lapcharoensap seems to be negative about the imitation of Americanized ways and positive about natural elements, the stories do not simply end so.

Possible answers may lie somewhere among the metaphors

of the swimming pig in *Farangs* and the motorcycle in *At the Café Lovely*. In *Farangs* the pig escapes the bullying by the American boys by swimming into the sea. One solution of creating some distance from the negative force is to return to the impenetrable nature. This is in accordance with one point of the story when the narrator says, “the sea rippled before us like a giant blue bedspread... I pointed to Ma’s motel below, the twelve bungalows like tiny insects on a golden shoreline” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, p. 12). With that statement, the author emphasizes the real power of nature. The industrialized business of selling nature cannot be compatible with the real nature.

However, the author might not suggest simply leaving all the new westernized aspects behind and completely going back to the same old ways since the author chose to portray the action of swimming with a pig in the sea, which is not a common image. The peculiarity of the case can leave some elements for further interpretation that the locals may need to ponder on some creative or innovative ways to subtly dwell within nature and the globalizing force while at the same time they should not just blindly accept the bullying or fight aimlessly against the globalizing force. Without adapting appropriately, the pig may not be able to swim very long in the sea.

Additionally, the end of *At the Café Lovely* suggests a certain kind of adjustment but also shows a glimpse of questionable adaptation. In the story, at first the narrator’s brother did not allow the narrator to ride on his motorcycle, the only tangible object he has inherited from his dead father. However, in the final scene, the older brother has to rely on his younger brother to take them both back home. He allows the narrator to control the motorcycle and even tells the little brother to go faster

and move up gears.

“I didn’t argue this time. I just twisted the accelerator some more, popped the bike into fourth, sliding smoothly off the seat then quickly back on. This time, to my surprise, our course didn’t even waver. It was an easy transition. We were cruising comfortably now at sixty, sixty-five, seventy, seventy-five, faster and faster and faster still, the engine singing a high note beneath us as we flew along that straight and empty speedway. We didn’t say a word to each other the rest of the way. And nothing seemed lovelier to me than that hot wind howling in my ears, the night blurring around us, the smell of the engine furiously burning gasoline” (Lapcharoensap, 2005, pp. 50-51).

Eventually, the narrator portrayed as a local boy seemingly unable to handle social globalization very well gets to be the one who controls the technology—usually representative of the modern world. The older brother who owns the motorcycle has to trust the narrator. Even though on the surface when the narrator believes they have an easy transition, the engine *beneath them* does not seem to completely blend well with the scene. It is singing “a high note,” and “furiously burning gasoline.” Moreover, a young boy riding a motorcycle, with his barely conscious brother at the back, on an “empty” speedway very late at night can experience seriously dangerous circumstances at any moment. There is no one in sight to rescue them, either.

Interestingly, at that moment, the narrator only has the motorcycle to rely on. He has no other choice but to do what he does not know well. In short, it can be interpreted that the local has to adjust in some way to go with the flow, but simultaneously, there is no easy serene juxtaposition to just pop up in no time. The

metaphor of the motorcycle may suggest that one possible safe way to commute on the globalizing path is to go with the flow but with great diligence and caution.

Conclusion

In order to effectively understand the phenomena of World Englishes, English users cannot neglect certain significant issues concerning the communication between L1 speakers who may possess greater economic power, etc., and the locals who have to inevitably experience certain new ways of life. Through cognitive stylistic perspective and cognitive metaphor theory, it can be seen that the contact literature writer adopts the characteristics of the international language and particular analogies in his short stories to enhance certain mental components for the meaning creation process.

Eventually, how Lapcharoensap uses English as a medium to portray the significance of local cultures and resistance against the blind imitation of L1 speakers' cultural norms may lead the reader of World Englishes to a conundrum for further consideration: *Does cheese smell like plara?* Of course, cheese can be a metaphor for the force of Americanization whereas the plara can stand as a metaphor for the local Thai self. Can these two be perceived in the same way?

The individual's answer may not need to be absolute in its correctness in accordance with any one's exact standards, but the answer can be internationally acceptable if one carefully considers how international communicators may interpret the answer and show the appropriate respect to the members of any other culture. As for further implication for the field of English teaching, instructors of the international language can raise students' awareness of the potential cultural imperialism and the necessity

to respect others' cultures through the use of the sampled analysis or other works of contact literatures and help them become competent communicators in the globalizing era.”

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