

Voices of ASEAN Teachers of English regarding Target Variety Issues of English as the Official Language of the ASEAN Community

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Abstract

This study investigates the uses of various Englishes throughout the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with a view to re-imagining teaching English in the ASEAN countries. The study researches the varieties of English, English language teaching models, roles, and discrepancies of English in the ASEAN countries through 374 practitioners from ten ASEAN member countries via questionnaires and six focus group interviews with 28 interviewees. Respondents expressed their attitudes toward English varieties they learned, and the reasons English was currently taught and learned in their contexts, English varieties they taught, factors influencing their teaching preferences, and English varieties for their future teaching preferences. During the focus group interviews, interviewees shared their thoughts regarding concepts of a standard variety of English, and definition of terms i.e., varieties of British (BrE) and American English (AmE), English as an International Language (EIL), and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Findings portrayed the strong beliefs in AmE and BrE varieties which conflicted with the linguistic reality in the region. Issues in terms of identity, native or non-native English teachers, and English ownership were mentioned, and the

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notions of ELF and EIL among the interviewees were unclear. Further discussions regarding an English Language Teaching (ELT) reconceptualization as the steppingstone for ELT in the current and the future globalization were provided.

Keywords: ELT in ASEAN, Teachers' Attitude, English Target Variety, EIL, and ELF

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาเรื่องรูปแบบของภาษาอังกฤษ (varieties of English) และ โมเดลที่ใช้ในการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ บทบาท และ ความขัดแย้งของภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทประชาคมอาเซียน การศึกษาครั้งนี้ใช้แบบสอบถามผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ จำนวน 374 คน และการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่ม 6 ครั้ง รวมผู้เข้าร่วมการสัมภาษณ์ 28 คน โดยให้ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามอธิบายถึงเจตคติในเรื่องรูปแบบของภาษาอังกฤษที่ตนเรียน สาเหตุที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษและเหตุที่ภาษาอังกฤษถูกนำมาสอนในบริบทของผู้ตอบ รูปแบบของภาษาอังกฤษที่ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามใช้สอน ปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการเลือกสอนภาษาอังกฤษในรูปแบบดังกล่าว และ รูปแบบของภาษาอังกฤษที่ผู้ตอบคาดว่าจะสอนในอนาคต ในการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่ม ผู้เข้าสัมภาษณ์ได้แบ่งปันแนวคิดเรื่องรูปแบบมาตรฐานภาษาอังกฤษ และให้คำนิยามของรูปแบบของภาษาอังกฤษแบบอเมริกัน ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ (EIL) และ ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลางในการสื่อสาร (ELF) จากข้อมูลพบว่า ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษแสดงความเชื่อถือในรูปแบบภาษาอังกฤษแบบอเมริกันและอเมริกันเป็นอย่างยิ่งซึ่งขัดแย้งกับสภาพความเป็นจริงด้านภาษาศาสตร์ในภูมิภาค มีการกล่าวถึงเรื่องอัตลักษณ์ เรื่องการเป็นผู้สอนแบบเจ้าของภาษาและไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา และ ความเป็นเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ ส่วนการให้คำนิยามของภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ และ ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลางในการสื่อสารนั้นยังไม่ชัดเจน การศึกษาครั้งนี้ปิดท้ายด้วยการอภิปรายผลเพิ่มเติมในการปรับแนวคิดเรื่องการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อให้สอดคล้องกับบริบทโลกาภิวัตน์ในปัจจุบันและในอนาคต

คำสำคัญ การสอนภาษาอังกฤษในอาเซียน เจตคติของผู้สอน รูปแบบภาษาเป้าหมาย ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ และ ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลางในการสื่อสาร

Introduction

Back in 2000, Professor Kirkpatrick expressed his concern in the Guardian newspaper regarding the English Language Teaching situations (ELT) in ASEAN countries. The point he made was the linkage between language and culture; how would ASEAN citizens express themselves effectively using English after English had been adopted as the official language of the ASEAN community? He also mentioned the possibility of having a particular local English variety that truly represented the culture and identity of ASEAN. Other concerns included *the curriculum*, *the textbooks*, and *the teachers* and how these factors could be properly worked to express the ASEAN identity to serve for the communication purpose of ASEAN citizens (Kirkpatrick, 2000). Kachru (1992) concluded that countries in the ASEAN community were classified into two different circles; the Outer Circle: Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei and the Expanding Circle: Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar, resulting in a pluralization of English which performed a vital component to the roles and statuses of English in the region. This study aims to investigate the reality of English, to fathom how English is perceived across ASEAN countries through non-native English speaking teachers (NNES teachers), and search for a way that ELT can make English a real working language that illustrates multicultural identities within and outside the ASEAN region as intended in the 2020 Vision Policy (Jones, 2004). Information about the situations of English in the region, the issues of English as a Lingual Franca (ELF), teachers' attitudes, language planning as well as the study findings are presented. In addition, a discussion regarding ELT reconceptualization in the region is discussed.

Literature Review

There is a constant change of language provisions in ASEAN countries influencing the attempts to balance the competing demands in using English as a medium of official communication and as a language of instruction in the education system at all levels. Due to this influence, new varieties of English or New Englishes located in ASEAN countries have been accommodated within English language education and instruction. In this section, the situations of

English in the ASEAN countries, the issues of ELF, teachers' attitudes, and language planning are further reviewed.

Situations of English in the ASEAN countries

Due to geopolitical settlement, ASEAN comprises 10 countries with multiracial and multicultural citizens, and where L1 is not English. The characteristic of English responding to the lingua franca conditions in the region, as Firth (1996, p. 240 cited in Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 213), is that ELF is “a ‘*contact language*’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication.” The uniqueness of the region is the combination between the countries in the outer and the expanding circles, where English governs distinct roles in the education system and has distinct functions relating to the lifestyle of people. In the Philippines and Malaysia, Philippine English and Standard Malaysian English are recognized, nativization was often found in newspapers, where new vocabularies were coined using loan words and code-switches from English in the Philippines and Malaysia (Borlongan, 2009; David & Dumanig, 2008). In Singapore, controversies between Singapore Standard English and Singlish were mentioned in Farrell and Kun (2008) and Wee (2014). Farrell and Kun (2008) investigated how the “Speak Good English Movement” (SGEM) explored the connection between the policy and teachers' practice in classrooms. The findings revealed many adverse issues between the teachers' beliefs and policy when all teachers accepted that Singlish should be used in informal situations. However, limited-English proficient students reflected that it was acceptable to use Singlish in the classroom. The “Speak Good Singlish Movement” (SGSM) was announced to counteract negative reactions to the policy, as Wee (2014) discussed, and encouraged the use of Singlish among Singaporeans. Additionally, she coined the term “linguistic chutzpah” and further stated that “chutzpah” was needed particularly in relation to the global spread of English. To become effective communicators, learners of English should monitor their performance when using English and confidently articulate their English usage between nativized and native varieties (Wee, 2014, pp. 85-86). A study relating to the SGEM's implementation was recently conducted by Rose and Galloway (2017), with the results showing a failure in implementing the

policy. In the Thai educational setting, a study from Jindapitak and Teo (2010) illustrated that 52 third-year undergraduate students preferred American English (AmE) and British English (BrE) varieties. They also expressed their positive impressions of a perceived associated prestige and believed that both varieties were the two international standard varieties. Similarly in Thailand, a study by Snodin and Young (2015) portrayed that 251 Thai learners of English had a strong belief in using AmE and AmE as the target varieties for learning. In the regional education setting, Pakir (2010) portrayed different directions in research approaches to world Englishes conducting in the outer circle and the expanding circle countries in the region which generally concurred with the situations of English as described in this paper. Whereas the research approaches in the outer-circle countries emphasized the linguistic reality, the establishment, legitimacy, and right of local varieties of English and supported the pluricentric concept of World Englishes (WE), the research approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Applied Linguistic (AL) were widely conducted in the expanding circle countries. The last study on a bigger scale was from Young and Walsh (2010) which investigated the belief of 26 non-native teachers of English from Europe, Africa, West, Southeast, and East Asia regarding the usefulness and the appropriateness of native variety models, English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) models. The results showed that 21 teachers (81%) claimed they were teaching AmE, and 22 teachers stated that in the future they would still teach AmE because of the global power of the US. Teachers expressed their beliefs about a “standard” variety which was opposite to the reality of English, also, to these teachers, EIL and ELF concepts sounded interesting, but they remained unclear as to what exactly EIL and ELF models were. The abovementioned studies portrayed the unclear direction of English in the region and the reality of English as the regional lingua franca was still unclear. For Thais, AmE was perceived to be the target variety while, for Filipinos, Philippine English was chosen when they communicated. For Singaporeans, the use of standard English is promoted, but which English should be used is contested. The actual status of Colloquial Singaporean English or Singlish remains uncertain. Therefore, these discrepancies in teaching English in the region need

to be investigated and acknowledged so that the plans regarding language for the region can be realized.

The issue of ELF, teachers' attitudes, and language planning

To successfully implement the policy regarding English as the sole working of the community, the pluralization of English in the region is a key factor that should be addressed. Many studies illustrate concerns about this issue i.e. Jindapitak and Teo (2010, p. 1) on which English variety was to be selected as a target model for the Southeast Asian countries; Sharifian (2009) and Kirkpatrick (2014) pinpointed the linguistic reality in the region and suggested ELF and EIL for learners in the ASEAN countries and discussed the possibility of implementing these two models into ELT the ASEAN countries. Additionally, the teacher was seen as the key factor in ELT as Kurland (1991, p. 81) elucidated, where teachers were likely to be key brokers between language ideology, language theory, and language policy as they were responsible for selecting the textbooks, teaching the courses, designing the tests, and evaluating students' language proficiency. Research has not yet engaged sufficiently with teacher attitudes in Southeast Asia concerning models, targets, and standards concerning English language education. There has been no comprehensive study that has a focus on local teachers' attitudes about the subject of types of Englishes. Local teachers are likely to be excellent informants about attitudes toward the different available varieties and to have well-informed perspectives on which varieties are currently, or will be, taught in their local context. Studies reflected on language teacher cognition i.e. what teachers think, know, believe, and do show the extent to which their beliefs affect both their perceptions and judgments of teaching and learning interactions in the classroom (Borg, 2003; Li & Walsh, 2011; Pajares, 1992).

Many studies illustrate a strong relationship between language attitude and policy planning; for example, Baker (1992, p. 9) stated that a survey of attitude played an important role in policy implementation by providing an indicator of current community thoughts and beliefs. Evans and Imai (2011, p. 1) concurred, suggesting that "capturing the attitudes of non-native speakers to varieties of English provides an understanding of the influences on the shape of English as a global language, as attitudes are known to be a powerful influence on the usage and perceptions of language varieties". However, a lack of awareness

of the role of attitudes may lead to the failure of policy implementation and may create conflict between national language policy and actual practice (Darasawang & Watson Todd, 2012, p. 219; Thongsri, Charumanee, & Chatupote, 2006). Studies that focus on attitudes toward educational policies are essential, and long-term policy implementation are unlikely to be successful without conducting research into attitudes (Watson Todd, 2001 cited in Snodin & Young, 2015, p. 10).

In this study, participants who were L2 teachers of English in 10 Southeast Asian countries, as teachers and learners of English, were asked to state which varieties of English they had learned; which were taught in the contexts they worked in; which they would like to teach; what they understand about the nature of available varieties and models; and which they think will serve as targets in their future contexts. With their experiences and beliefs related to varieties, models, standards, and targets, teachers will play a key role in any possible changes in the ASEAN region. Accordingly, four research questions, findings toward their learned varieties, reasons why people learn English in their countries, their taught varieties and reasons behind their preferences, their ideas regarding native and non-native English teachers, teaching native speakers' cultures in class, varieties of future instruction, and factors that influence them were presented. Lastly, the findings and discussion on the reconceptualization of ELT policy in the regional context were also included. This study aimed to address the following four interrelated research questions:

1. Which variety or varieties of English did the teachers in the ASEAN countries learn?
2. Which variety or varieties of English do the teachers in the ASEAN countries currently teach?
3. What do the teachers in the ASEAN countries understand about the nature(s) of available varieties?
4. Which variety or varieties of English do the teachers in the ASEAN countries expect to dominate in the context in which they operate in the future?

Methodology

Population and Sample Group

The population of this study was non-native ASEAN English teachers who taught in all levels of education in ten ASEAN countries. Samples of this study consisted of 374 non-native teachers from ten ASEAN member countries, classified into four categories: 1) field of English language teaching and learning and their names appearing on the educational institute websites, in journals regarding English language and ELT; 2) pursuing their study in Thailand and abroad, and planning to pursue their careers as an English teacher in their homelands after graduation; 3) teaching in universities and schools in ASEAN countries where the researcher visited; and 4) being introduced to the study by other teachers of English. The participants were from various age levels (20-65+) and taught English in all levels of education. The samples comprised 13 Bruneians (3.48%), 31 Burmese (8.29%), 61 Cambodians (16.31%), 60 Filipinos (16.04%), 30 Indonesians (8.02%), 36 Laotians (9.63%), 26 Malaysians (6.95%), 11 Singaporeans (2.94%), 55 Thais (14.71%) and 51 Vietnamese (13.64%). The six focus group interviews were conducted with 28 interviewees, obtained through a voluntary response sampling method, consisting of four Burmese, four Filipinos, two Indonesians, three Malaysians, one Singaporeans, eleven Thais, and three Vietnamese.

The Cochran's sample size formula by Cochran (1977) was used to calculate the sample size in this study with the population as infinite.

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 (pq)}{e^2}$$

Where

n_0 is the sample size

z is the selected critical value of the desired confidence level

p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population

$q = 1-p$ and

e is the desired level of precision

A calculation was required for the sample size from a large population where the degree of variability was not known. The maximum variability was 50%

(p =0.5) taking a 95% confidence level with ± 5% precision. z was 1.96. According to the school visits in Thailand, around one-fourth of the teachers were teachers of English. Thus, by changing this maximum amount of 40 to percent by assuming that in 100 teachers, 40 of them were English teachers; therefore, q was 0.4. The desired level of precision or e was 0.05. Thus, the required sample size was calculated as follows.

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.6 \times 0.4)}{(0.05)^2} = 368.69$$

According to this calculation, the required sample size of the questionnaire for this study was 369. However, it was considered, as well as possible to collect more data than the required sample size, therefore the total amount of questionnaire respondents was increased to 374.

In terms of the samples for the focus group interview, they were selected using a voluntary response sampling method based mainly on the availability of each interviewee. The interviewees were ASEAN citizen L2 teachers of English who lived and worked in one of the ten ASEAN nations. To create a useful discussion, it was aimed to mix the interviewees from the outer circle and the expanding circle countries in each focus group interview.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire and focus group interview questions were adapted from the study “Which English? Whose English?-An investigation of ‘non-native’ teachers’ beliefs about target varieties” by Young and Walsh (2010). The original questionnaire comprised 30 questions dividing into four parts: personal information (numbers 1-8), learning experience (numbers 9-14), teaching experience (numbers 15-25), and open-ended questions to provide some additional information regarding the varieties of English that respondents had learned, taught and were likely to teach in the future (numbers 26-30).

The adapted version of the questionnaire was made to match the different target informants who were L2 teachers of English from the ASEAN nations, whereas- the original version was designed to match L2 teachers of English worldwide. Some choices regarding local varieties of English e.g., South

African English, Nigerian English, and South American English were removed due to a lack of relationship between the varieties and ASEAN citizens. To shorten and make it more friendly to the respondents, five open-ended questions from the original version were also moved and placed at the additional comment section under the questions. Respondents rated their attitudes in five Likert-scale choices regarding the varieties of English they learned and the frequency that they used commercial texts produced by native English-speaking countries. Additionally, they rated their attitudes in four Likert-scale choices toward their competence in teaching different varieties of English, their reasons for teaching a variety of English, and their reasons for selecting a particular variety of English to teach in the future. If they had any comments, respondents could express their thoughts in the additional comment sections.

The adapted questionnaire contained 21 questions dividing into three parts. The first part was regarding personal information (numbers 1-6). The second part regarded the learning experience (numbers 7-12). The third part regarded the teaching experience (numbers 13-21). The adapted questionnaire was later validated by two professors. The original and the adapted versions were compared, and the differences between the researcher and the two professors during their visits to Thailand were examined, and then was piloted in Thailand and the UK. After the pilot study, an item, *to travel overseas*, was added in question number 11 on reasons for learning English.

Six questions were asked during the focus group interviews. These six questioned were also validated by the two professors. Question 1, 2, and 3 asked the interviewees to discuss the varieties of English they learned, taught, the varieties that they wanted to teach, and the reasons behind their preferences. Question 4 asked them to define AmE, BrE, EIL, and ELF and local varieties of English in ASEAN countries. EIL and ELF were intentionally included in the question, even though they were not varieties of English, to collect the respondents' opinions regarding the two terms. Question 5 asked the interviewees' opinions about the varieties of English that they are likely to teach in the future in their contexts and reasons. For question 6, the interviewees were asked to express their opinions regarding the term "standard English" and the importance of using standard English when teaching. Regarding the research,

ethics, both research tools and the data collection methods were presented to the research committee members at the Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand, and were approved before the study took place.

Data collection

The questionnaire was equipped with a dedicated email address for the respondents' replies, and detailed explanation of the study, and asked for the respondents' consent to participate in the study, and was administered online from 2015 to 2017. The printed questionnaires were administered by the researcher during his visits to different educational institutions. . A snowball sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire. The respondents were required to provide comments in English. 374 teachers of English from ten ASEAN nations taking part in the study were from various age levels (20-65+) and taught English in all levels of education. Focus group interviewees consisted of 28 teachers of English, including four Burmese, four Filipinos, two Indonesians, three Malaysians, one Singaporeans, eleven Thais, and three Vietnamese. There were six interviews; three interviews took place in June 2015 in the United Kingdom and the other three took place in November 2017 in Thailand. The researcher informed all interviewees about the study and asked them to sign the consent form before the interview started.

Data Analysis

Findings from the printed questionnaires were imported into the online questionnaire system. Both data from the online and the printed version were automatically computerized by the questionnaire service provider. Excerpts from the questionnaires were identified by the questionnaire respondent's number (R), followed by the respondent's nationality (e.g., R001-Thai). Excerpts from the focus group interviews were identified by the number of the interview (FGI), followed by the participant's country. A number was assigned after the country name to indicate the participant if there were more than one participant from the same country participated in the same focus group interview (e.g., FGI-1-Malaysian 1). Qualitative findings from both questionnaires and focus group interviews were thematically grouped, coded, and analyzed according to each research question. Both findings were triangulated as illustrated in Table 1.

Research questions	Research instruments	
	The questionnaire	The focus group interview
1. Which variety or varieties of English did the teachers in the ASEAN countries learn?	Questions 1-6 and 7-12	Question 1
2. Which variety or varieties of English do the teachers in the ASEAN countries currently teach?	Questions 1-6 and 13-18	Question 2
3. Which variety or varieties of English do the teachers in the ASEAN countries expect to dominate in the context in which they operate in the future?	Questions 19-21	Question 3 and 5
4. What do the teachers in the ASEAN countries understand about the nature(s) of available varieties?	Question 15	Question 4 and 6

Table 1: The triangulation between data from the questionnaire and the focus group interview

Findings

Findings were presented based on the research instruments. Findings from the questionnaires are presented following the findings from the focus group interviews.

Which variety or varieties of English did the teachers in the ASEAN countries learn?

Findings from the questionnaires portrayed the hegemony of AmE and BrE as most teachers felt they had mainly learned these two varieties, however, one-third of the teachers also stated that apart from BrE and AmE, they had also learned EIL. Respondents were asked to express reasons people in their countries needed to learn English. The first four reasons mentioned were: to get a good job (63.17%, n =235/372), to pass the compulsory subject in school, college/

university (57.26%, n = 213/372), to study overseas (48.79%, n = 182/373), and to have access to more information on the web (36.10%, n= 135/374). The reason for using English to communicate with people from English-speaking countries was ranked fifth (32.17%, n =120/373), whereas only 22.43% (n = 83/ 370) stated that they learned English to communicate with non-native English speakers.

Findings from the focus group interviews also showed that their awareness of varieties was likely to occur during their schooling due to many factors, such as accents and nationalities of teachers and interlocutors, their experiences during their study abroad, through media, the school they attended, and by exposure to various varieties in classes. Singaporean and Filipino interviewees also emphasized the importance of English as their first and/or the language for general communication and in the education system and it was seen as particularly important to use English as a communication medium among different races within a country like Singapore.

Following, findings regarding the varieties that ASEAN teachers currently teach are presented.

Which variety or varieties of English do the teachers in the ASEAN countries currently teach?

Findings from the questionnaires illustrated that they were competent in teaching AmE (very competent 31.34%, n = 110/351) and BrE (very competent 22.51%, n = 79/351). A few of the respondents strongly expressed they were also competent in teaching EIL (very competent 29.14%, n = 88/302). Their competencies in teaching their local English, ELF, and AusE were ranked fourth, fifth and sixth, respectively.

Findings from the questionnaires also revealed that the teaching contexts and the teachers' individuality were two key factors when selecting to teach a particular variety of English. The teaching contexts were the school and university policy (very important 42.31%, n =154/364) and the availability of textbooks (very important 38.72%, n = 139/ 359), whereas the teachers' individuality included their familiarities with the taught variety, and the way that they interpreted the curriculum were also essential (very important 40.90%, n = 146/357). A respondents expressed that:

“I try to expose my students to different varieties of English, but I think due to available materials and my familiarity with the variety, I teach more of American and British English which I think have become the English used as an international language.” (R021-Indonesian)

When investigating the use of NES commercial textbooks in class, the textbooks were mainly used for reading skills (46.03%, n = 168/365), for listening skills (44.44%, n = 160/ 360), and teaching grammar (43.80%, n = 159/363), whereas pronunciation and speaking skills were almost at the similar degree (40.39%, n = 145/359) and (40.00%, n = 144/360). Additionally, only 21.75% (n = 77/354) of the questionnaire respondents used NES textbooks for teaching cultures. Respondents' points of view regarding NES as teachers of English, the use of a standard variety when teaching, and their ideas of teaching the culture of English-speaking countries to students were also investigated. Findings portrayed that almost one-third of questionnaire respondents were NES followers, however, most respondents positioned themselves as "neutral".

Topic	Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
1. I think NESs are the best people to teach English (n = 371)	23	77	157	82	32
(8.63%)		(6.20%)	(20.75%)	(42.32%)	(22.10%)
2. It is important to use a standard variety to when teaching (n = 369)	86	165	81	29	8
(2.17%)		(23.31%)	(44.72%)	(21.95%)	(7.86%)
3. Teachers should also teach the culture of English speaking countries (n = 370)	114	168	75	10	3
	(30.81%)	(45.41%)	(20.27%)	(2.70%)	(0.81%)

Table 2: the ASEAN NNES teachers' perceptions toward NES teachers, standard variety, and teaching culture of NES countries

In terms of flexibility of language usage, NES teachers had a perceived advantage over NNES teachers; the respondents who opposed the ideas of NES teachers shared different points of view about the issues in terms of equality in teaching ability and the teachers' abilities regardless of their nationalities. An advantage NNES teachers had was their understanding of students' learning

difficulties compared with the NES teachers, due to their familiarity with the context and their L1 proficiency. To approach students' learning problems, however, NNES teachers had to use their first language in class. On the other hand, those who agreed with the topic believed that NES teachers must have at least an English teaching qualification.

In terms of using a standard variety to teach, the respondents agreed that a standard variety was needed (44.72%, n = 165/369) as a teaching reference. BrE and AmE were the two varieties that were mentioned the most. The respondents still did not believe in the legitimacy of local varieties and thought they should not be introduced into the education system. A respondent stated:

"Although I ticked Singapore and Malaysian English, in Brunei we do not necessarily see a clear distinction between the two, and both of them (as well as Brunei English) are seen as colloquial varieties rather than standard. I believe even in Malaysia or Singapore; the local variety of English is unlikely to be taught as a model of English in the schools." (R037-Bruneian)

Moreover, findings from the questionnaires on the teaching of the culture of English-speaking countries in class, supported the idea that NES cultures should be introduced to the learners to broaden their knowledge about western cultures (44.35%, n = 157/354).

Even though the teaching of NES cultures was selected to be taught in class, it contradicted with the reality that the chance of NNES learners who would be collaborating with native English speakers.

(NESs) was minimum and the chance of the learners to use English as the medium in the workplaces with other native English speakers (NNESs) was higher. A respondent stated:

"Graduates entering the workplace often work with someone who is not NES, but some Indians, Japanese, Malaysians...who use English" (R048-Vietnamese)

Moreover, in some countries like Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos PDR, textbooks were provided by the government, and the local contexts and cultures

within the country were used for teaching English, especially at the primary and secondary school levels. A respondent also concurred:

"In Brunei, the textbooks are designed to teach the English language with local/Bruneian context." (R182-Bruneian)

Data from the focus group interviews (FGIs) regarding the taught variety also reaffirmed the findings from questionnaires that their familiarity with a particular variety was a major factor when teachers selected a variety to teach. The FGIs suggested that the teachers' views and interpretation of school curriculum and their predictions of what students' needs in the future also governed their decision about the taught varieties. These views explained the reason that some teachers might adapt or might not fully follow the requirement of their school curriculum. The national curriculum and the varieties that teachers learned, learners' demands, and teachers' beliefs, were also discussed to a lesser degree. The national curriculum was rarely mentioned during the discussion of the factors that influenced their taught varieties.

Regarding the NES teacher issues, data from the FGIs illustrated that NNEs teachers believed that their students preferred NES teachers over NNEs teachers when teaching pronunciation, speaking, and listening which concealed the belief in standards and language ownership.

Another major discussion point during the FGIs was regarding the standard variety. Participants were asked to posit their definitions and opinions about "a standard variety" to investigate their perceptions about a standard variety and the standards they used as a reference when teaching. The provided definitions of "a standard variety" were various and tangled. American English and British English were mentioned as the two main standard varieties. The issues discussed the most were spelling and pronunciation between BrE and AmE. FGIs findings also highlighted that the use of mixed American and British English varieties when speaking was acceptable as long as it was intelligible, however, a rule based on either BrE or AmE standards was considered needed when writing. Additionally, in writing, a Filipino teacher argued, instead of using mixed varieties, the learners should show their consistency by using only one variety, either AmE or BrE.

When talking about the issue of a standard variety, FGI interviewees commented that the British Broadcasting Channel (BBC) and Received Pronunciation (RP) were once believed as their two reference sources of standard BrE, whereas CNN was mentioned as a reference for AmE. However, as they were interviewed, both news channels were no longer used as their references of a standard variety. They expressed that standards could be changed due to time and trends. They also mentioned the change from RP to Estuary English (EE), which might become a new standard form of British English in the future. A standard variety could also be influenced by pop culture, mainly from the US, through music and the movie industry that shaped the manner of English daily usage around the world. FGIs participants from the Philippines and Myanmar admitted that for teaching purposes, they also had to adapt themselves to their students' language learning abilities by avoiding the use of the variety they were familiar with, and simultaneously explained the differences between varieties to be more intelligible to their international students.

The idea of having a standard variety when teaching was extensively discussed and raised issues during the interviews in terms of the choice of a standard variety and which particular standard should be used for what skill(s), what constituted valid usage if different varieties were used as benchmarks, conflicts between the reality of English used in an ASEAN context, the idealism of English in the education system, and the influence and interference of local languages toward the development of English in the region. Following are some comments from the questionnaire regarding the standard variety issues:

"If a standard variety of English means "correct", native speaker-like, then I disagree" (FGI-1-Filipino 1)

"Currently, English no longer belongs to the native speakers" (FGI-2-Malaysian 2)

"Rather than "standard", I believe that a "standardized" variety is necessary. There should be some particular patterns to call on."(FGI-2-Thai 2)

"...I believe that there is no "better or "best" English as these Englishes have their complexities and at the same time undergo a change in time, culture,

and location. Something that is considered "non-standard" as of this moment may become "standard" soon." (FGI-3-Filipino1)

Other issues related to textbooks under the influence of two authorities: from the government language policy through national and school curriculum and from western language aid institutions, i.e., British Council, American University Alumni (AUA), Education Testing Service (ETS) which provide learning material and proficiency tests. Other collaborated aid projects from the UK and the US among the ASEAN countries may have repeated and emphasized the belief in NS linguistic legitimacy over local English varieties.

In terms of teaching NES cultures in the class, most FGI interviewees agreed that NES culture should be taught in class, but NNES cultures should be introduced as well, and by teaching both NES and NNES cultures, learners could be able to develop their intercultural sensitivity and to communicate successfully in the intercultural world.

Following, findings regarding the teachers' understanding of each variety of English, English as an International Language (EIL), and English as a Lingual Franca (ELF) are illustrated.

What do teachers in the ASEAN countries understand about the nature(s) of available varieties?

The objective of this question is to investigate the teachers' perceptions and understanding of different varieties of English, for instance, BrE and AmE, different modes of teaching, such as EIL and ELF, and a local variety of English. What matters is that a "definition" gives us the mutual understanding of something and it locates us to be on the same page and enables us to discuss the same issue (Whitfield, 2012).

Findings from FGIs participants illustrated that American English was characterized as a standard variety that had its legitimacy in spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation. It has been used and accepted around the world with the look of an easy, modern, dynamic, and flexible variety. In terms of accent and pronunciation, it was easier to understand compared to other varieties of English. Even though AmE consisted of various dialects, some FGIs participants found it easier to understand compared to counter-norm of BrE provider. The main means

that carried AmE to the world were Hollywood movies and songs. On the other hand, AmE was seen as a sub-variety of BrE due to its origin and its leniency in following a set linguistic format.

FGIs participants characterized British English as a traditional standard English variety belonging to British people and was used among BrE native speakers in the UK. BrE has a culture of strictness, prestigiousness and encapsulates the elite's culture. As a result, it was modified with some adjectives such as "posh", "prestige", "cool", and "high status". As three of the FGIs had been conducting in the UK, the FGI participants who studied there also mentioned the differences between local dialects and regions, where each dialect originated, its intelligibility, and with real exposure to some BrE accents such as Jordie and Cockney; they accepted that local accents were sometimes rather difficult to comprehend.

When asking them to define English as a Lingual Franca (ELF) and English as an International Language (EIL), FGIs participants illustrated different understandings and gave many interpretations of the two terms. According to their understanding, ELF was seen as the official language in use among different NNEs within a country. For example, in a multiracial country like the Philippines, English was used as a lingua franca for communication among locals who have different L1s. Some pictured ELF as English that NNEs use according to their own preferences and mutually understand within that speech community. However, for EIL, it gives the impression it is a formal style or standard; it sounds like a global language with a better status, but ELF is seen as just for mutual understanding among groups of the minority.

Some of participants had no idea about the terms, so they could not differentiate between the two. ELF is the English language that is used as a medium in communication between non-native speakers only. Some stated that ELF was like a standard in the international setting for communication. There were also various definitions for EIL. Some pictured EIL as English for economics and trade; some stated that it was a type of English language used for communication between native and non-native English speakers. Others suggested EIL was an unofficial English language used for communication between people from different countries, diverse backgrounds, and who had

different first languages. Some believed that EIL was the English used for communication globally and it was another standard form of English.

Following, the findings regarding English that the teachers would like to teach in the future are presented.

Which variety or varieties of English do the teachers in the ASEAN countries expect to dominate in the context in which they operate in the future?

Findings from the questionnaire still portrayed the popularity of American English (AmE) (70.54%, n= 261/370) and British English (BrE) (60.81%, n= 225/ 370) as the two most selected varieties that respondents would like to teach in the future. English as an International Language (EIL) was chosen as the most common mode of teaching (42.16%, n= 156/370) that respondents would like to teach in the future. Findings from Table 3 illustrated that the numbers of respondents who selected EIL were higher in number than the local varieties and Australian English. To address the needs of students, respondents were asked to select the varieties that their students would like to learn in the future; the findings are illustrated in table 4. The qualitative data from the questionnaires regarding Tables 3 and 4 revealed that the popularity, legitimacy, and the respondents' positive perception toward BrE and AmE as two standard varieties were reasons for selecting BrE and AmE as their language teaching goals.

Regarding the learners and their preferences, some respondents illustrated that their prime concerns were regarding the curriculum and their familiarity. Additionally, the varieties or coursework that respondents wished to teach should be specifically researched and designed to fit the learner's needs:

“In my opinion, if you are conducting a specially customized course for a group of people, their needs and wants, as learners, are of prime importance” (R177-Malaysian)

“Depends on the needs – if they are sitting for British examination then British variety” (R-089-Malaysian)

Varieties	Total respondents (n=370)	Percentage
BrE	225	60.81%
AmE	261	70.54%
AusE	65	17.57%
Singaporean E	23	6.22%
Malaysian E	20	5.41%
Philippine E	31	8.38%
Indian E	3	0.81%
Your local E	50	13.51%
EIL	156	42.16%
ELF	68	18.38%

Table 3: Varieties that respondents expect to teach in the future

In terms of findings from the FGIs, interviewees discussed various aspects that the taught varieties in the future should be influenced by; these aspects could be summarized under two umbrellas: their teaching context and familiarity. The teaching context included the curriculum at the schools where teachers would be working, and the variety that the majority of people in that area were using. In terms of familiarity, the teachers interpreted the curriculum based on their attitudes and expectations and taught lessons based on their experiences. They were likely to avoid the pronunciation and accent challenges of some varieties that might later cause them troubles in teaching and might lead to students' misunderstanding.

A FGI Filipino participant also asserted that both teaching context and familiarity had to follow the economic and cultural powers of norm-providing countries in the world arena. Moreover, they posited that different varieties of English should be introduced into the classroom, and more materials related to English in the ASEAN countries should be developed and introduced into the classroom to prepare students to collaborate with multilingual professionals. Many FGI participants stated that students' needs, and the availability of materials were two main factors that would influence their teaching in the future.

Varieties	Total respondents (n=344)	Percentage
BrE	260	75.58%
AmE	304	88.37%
AusE	85	24.71%
Singapore E	16	4.65%
Malaysian E	7	2.03%
Philippine E	13	3.78%
Indian E	3	0.87%
Your local E	32	9.30%
EIL	121	25.17%
ELF	47	13.66%

Table 4: Varieties that learners want to learn in the future

Discussion

This study addressed varieties of English and various roles of English in the ASEAN region. The first discussion point is the influence of native-speakerism and the “standard variety” issues. AmE and BrE still maintain their status as the current two preferred varieties and are likely to maintain their popularity in the future. Although colonialization in these regions was some time ago, the region is still linguistically colonized. This is due to the shift from the influence of military forces to the economic power of the US and the UK in the world. Consequently, English has become the extrinsic value for ASEAN people as a language that helps them achieve their studying and professional goals. The belief of the utility of native speakers’ varieties was portrayed among teachers when they wanted their learners to benefit from using native-like English and to be able to communicate with NESs effectively. This might also explain the reason that NES textbooks were widely used among NNES teachers and the belief that NES teachers had authority over NNES teachers when teaching pronunciation, speaking, and listening. NES textbooks were legitimated simply because they were as “standard English” as one could get and that left nobody to be blamed when using these textbooks; NES teachers were the people who represented the “standard”.

Furthermore, there was no such "standard" because it was a changeable term (Rosewarne, 1996 cited in Jenkins, 2009). When a teacher selected to teach

AmE or BrE, it should be explained that he/she believed in AmE or BrE that could help support their learners when they had to use English in the future and that did not mean that AmE or BrE was a standard variety. The teachers also needed to adapt themselves when instructing multinational students by avoiding the use of their local varieties and spending more time to explain the differences between varieties to the learners so they could communicate effectively with other international colleagues.

Another point worth mentioning regards native-speakerism and the class arrangement method. Having a NES teacher teaching English using a NES textbook may be an ideal class; however, it may be problematic for both teacher and learners, especially at the beginner level when the learners cannot speak English and understand almost nothing about the content. Having NNES teachers teach at the beginner level may save more time and solve this problem. NNES teachers also have the advantage over NES teachers due to their L1 proficiency and their understanding of the local context. In terms of the learning process, NNES teachers can explain English using local languages, and learners can explain to the teachers directly when having troubles in their language learning---. These findings concurred with Kieu (2010) that the use of Vietnamese was likely to assist the learning process and allowed learners to interact with teachers effectively (Atkinson, 1987 cited in Kieu, 2010).

The next discussion point was the reason that English as an International Language was also chosen. As Breen (1991, p.215 cited in Peacock, 2001, p. 180) explained, “teaching behavior is the result of how teachers conceptualize the teaching and learning process”, EIL might be chosen based on many assumptions. Also, Graddol (2003) and Martin (2016) posited that with the present spread of English through the use of uncountable NNE speakers, globalization, political and business collaborations, norms, status, the legitimacy of NESs are being challenged in a multilingual society. The reason that EIL was selected was probably because of the teachers’ views of the rapid change of globalization which influenced their interpretation of school curriculum and their predictions of students’ needs. They might pay more attention to the fruitfulness of communication rather than the taught variety. EIL had no branding to designate

it as “international”, English should not be limited under only two varieties. EIL might challenge the status of AmE and BrE in the future.

Conclusion

In sum, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in teaching AmE or BrE, but in this era of globalization, English has become a tool of communication for everyone regardless of their nationality. Apart from AmE and BrE, it is encouraged that the teachers should take this opportunity to pay attention to English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). These two alternative paradigms have no country label that they are associated with, and they highlight the use of English *in situ*, which is the reality of how English is used among ASEAN people. As Kachru (2005, p.220 cited in Jenkins, 2006, p. 159) stated, “there is considerable overlap between ELF users and EFL learners, partly because many of those who start out thinking they are learning English as a foreign language end up using it as a lingua franca”, therefore the teachers must construct the language teaching with the current linguistic reality to make English the most fruitful and truly reflect its users’ paradigms.

On the national level, the reality of English, the idea of EIL and ELF and English in the ASEAN countries and World Englishes should be conceptualized in the pre-service teacher curriculum and training and for in-service teachers’ education.

At the regional policy level, policymakers should be informed and acknowledged how EIL and ELF are to achieve two benefits i.e., as a tool for international communication among and outside the ASEAN countries, and as a tool to create unity and identity among ASEAN citizens. There should be a program that encourages a better collaboration among ASEAN teachers of English to share their teaching experience to find a way to improve English language teaching in the region. Also, at the policy level, quality English language teachers from the ASEAN countries, apart from the other eight professions: engineering, nursing, architecture, medicine, dentistry, tourism, surveying, and accountancy, should be acknowledged as another profession in the ASEAN skilled labor mobility agreement. This is in response to the need for quality English teachers, especially in the Expanding Circle countries.

Lastly, this study investigated and illustrated the attitudes of L2 teachers of English in ASEAN countries toward their target varieties and the current situation of English from the view of practitioners. A further study may be needed to be undertaken to include the role of English and the formation of the ASEAN identity to contribute and sustain the ideas of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

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