Tinglish, a variation of World Englishes: What are the unique characteristics of English spoken by Thais?

Banjob Piyamat[*1]
[*1]Lecturer, English Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Huachiew Chalermprakiet University
Ph.D. candidate in Linguistics, Department of Foreign Language, Mahachulalongkornrajavidhayalaya University
*Email : banjobp@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article aimed to examine language variation and a variation of World Englishes. The paper also attempted to examine phonological variations and problem sounds in English pronunciation among Thai EFL learners. Moreover, the study aimed to find out the unique characteristics of Tinglish or English spoken by Thai. What are the forms of English mixed with or heavily influenced by their mother tongue, the Thai language? Which of these characteristics of Tinglish are the effects of language varieties and variation of World English.

Keywords : Tinglish, variation of world Englishes, three circles of world Englishes

1. Introduction

Englishes spoken by people from different geographical areas of the world give English a new status as a language of the world, a global language, or as popularly referred to as an international language. The widely spread of English over the world over the last decades has provided new varieties of English and created changes in the sociolinguistic areas of the language. Thailand is a country in that English has been used as a foreign language; it has a specific kind of English referred to as 'Tinglish', one of the English variations. It is the way of using English by mixing 'Thai' and 'English' to refer to the English language spoken by native Thai speakers.

2. Variations of World Englishes

2.1 English as a global language

English is nowadays considered a global language (Crystal, 2003). It is widely used by people around the world as the first, the second, or the foreign language; therefore, native speakers alone cannot claim ownership over the language anymore (Bryson, 1990). Rushdie (1991), cited in Crystal (2003), also shared the same perspective by mentioning that the English language "ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago." The handover of the ownership, thus, results in the varieties of English, which are regarded as "World Englishes.".

Source: British Council, 2006

Figure 1: Languages of the World

2.2 Kachru's Three Circle Model of World Englishes

English nowadays is a lingua franca used all around the world. Moreover, English Language teaching and learning need to familiarize with the new status of English. This fact leads to a great concern of the World Englishes classification. This phenomenon can be classified and recognized by understanding Kachru's Three Circle Model of World Englishes. The term "World Englishes" has started the important step for new eras of understanding in English. Kachru (1985 cited in Bolton, 2009) classified World Englishes into three circles which are the *inner*, *outer*, and *expanding* circles, representing the widespread of English, the pattern of acquisition, and the functional domains in which English is used internationally.
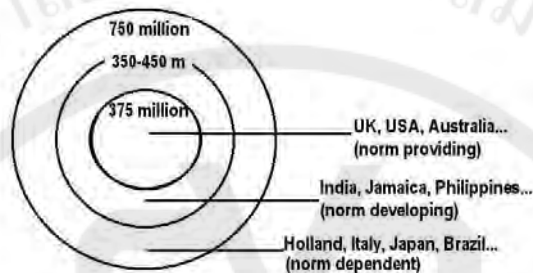

Figure 2: Kachru's Three Circle Model of World Englishes

The first circle, called 'the inner circle,' specified the countries where English is spoken as a primary language and is used in governmental institutions and daily life, such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, and Canada.

The second circle, or 'the outer circle,' indicated the countries where English is used as a second language or an official language. Most countries that belong to this circle are ex-colonies of the British Empire. English is widely used in the government sector and social life, such as India, Hong Kong, and Singapore in Asia; and Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, and other countries in East and West Africa. The English used in these countries is English as a second language (ESL).

For the outermost circle, 'the expanding circle' is the most important and the biggest circle referring to the society where English is spoken as a foreign language (EFL). Countries like China, the Emirates, and Thailand are in this circle. English here is used as a medium of communication in many domains such as education, business, diplomacy, and media, given status as a lingua franca. When English is used by a non-native speaker to communicate with other non-natives, the language is, to some extent, influenced and interfered with by the first language. The characteristics of the English language vary in different societies.

3. Variation of World Englishes in Asia

Generally, there are factors in language variation range from gender, age, occupation, geography, region, and so on. Geography itself gives rise to many variations, one of which is the linguistic variations naming phonology, lexicon, and syntax. Interference from the native language plays an important role in the three aspects leading to different Englishes spoken by

people in each country. For example, in Singaporean English or 'Singlish,' reduction of final clusters is common among the speakers. For instance, 'next' /nekst/ becomes /neks/. Also, there are borrowing words mostly from Hokkien Chinese, such as 'chin chye,' which means it does not matter (Stockwell, 2002) or using 'leh' at the end of a sentence for softer command, request, claim, or complaint. Finally, the indefinite article is not often seen as in 'She is a teacher' (Stockwell, 2002).

Indian English is a keen example of linguistic variation. According to Trudgill and Hannah (1994), Indian English speakers tend to pronounce /r/ as a flap or retroflex flap and the consonant /p/, /t/, /k/ as unaspirated sounds. Moreover, the sound /t/ in English is alveolar, but the retroflex or dental sound is heard in Indian English. This is to say; all English alveolar consonants are replaced by retroflex consonants. For example, –ed endings after /k/ and /t/ are dropped as in 'walked' /wɔlkt/ which becomes /wɔlk/. Apart from phonological variations, Indian English also has a unique lexicon. Acronyms and abbreviations, for instance, create new terms and usage among Indians. ILU is an acronym for 'I love you', which is from a song and pronounced as 'ee-lu'. Another illustration of abbreviations, 'Jan', which stands for 'January' is also widely used in Indian English. Even Indian English syntax has been considerably influenced by Hindi syntax. Most importantly, reduplication affects Indian English explicitly. For example, using reduplication on action verbs such as 'come come' and 'sit sit' is common in daily life communication. Also, a literal translation is usually seen in the language. The phrasal verb 'turn on the light' translated as 'open the light' is a case in this point.

4. 'Tinglish', one of the English variations

Thailand, likewise, as a member of Kachruvian three eccentric circles, has a specific kind of English referred to as 'Tinglish', one of the English variations. It is a newly coined word by mixing 'Thai' and 'English' to refer to the English language spoken by native Thai speakers. It can vary to different regions in Thailand. However, Tinglish based on standard Thai is going to be investigated from this point on. The term 'Tinglish' refers to any form of English mixed with or heavily influenced by Thai. Therefore, Tinglish is classified as typically English is spoken by native Thai speakers. The differences from standard native English occur in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar due to the interference of the first language.

4.1 The Unique Characteristics of Tinglish

As to understand the influences and interferences of the Thai language on English, it is noted to review the unique characteristics of Thai while discussing Tinglish. First, Thai is a tonal monosyllabic language consisting of five different tones. Although all those five tones can be inflected, only some of them can convey meaning. Tones play a significant role in different levels ranging from syllables, words, phrases, and sentences to indicate the meaning. Moreover, as a monosyllabic language, it is spoken with every syllable equally emphasized.

On the other hand, English puts an emphasis on stress and intonation to elicit meanings. This leads to certain characteristics unique to English spoken by Thai.

4.2 Pronunciation English Consonant Sounds in Tinglish

In English speaking, many Thais pronounced some English sounds with high interferences of Thai native such as /z/, /r/, /v/, [θ], [ð], /tʃ/, /ʃ/, and [dʒ]. For the segmental level, Thais encountered problems in pronouncing some English sounds. The problem sounds can be divided into three main categories (Jotikasthira, 1999):

4.2.1 those that do not occur in Thai such as /v/, /z/, /θ/, /ð/, /r/, /v/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /dʒ/, /g/, and /ʒ/. Normally Thais cannot pronounce these sounds because they do not exist in the Thai language. Similar Thai sounds are usually used to substitute those English sounds, such as the /v/ sound is usually replaced by /w/ e.g. 'TV' is pronounced /tiwi/ 'tee-wee' and 'video' is pronounced /widio/ 'wee-dee-oh'. The /z/ sound is almost substituted by /s/, such as zoo /ˈzuː/ is pronounced as sue /ˈsuː/ and /g/ 'g' and /s/ 'z' sounds are usually devoiced, e.g., dog is pronounced as dock /ˈdɔk/, zero as 'see-ro' /ˈsiroː/, etc.,

Next, the /ʃ/ 'sh' and /tʃ/ 'ch' sounds can be indistinguishable as the Thai language does not have the 'sh' sound, e.g., sheep/cheap, ship/chip are pronounced almost the same by Thais. The /θ/, /ð/ 'th' sounds are often substituted by /t/ 't' or /d/ 'd' sound. Particularly, the voiceless 'th' /θ/ is replaced by [t] or [tʰ], while the voiced /ð/ 'th' is replaced by [d], e.g., thin is pronounced as tin [ˈtin] or /ˈtʰin/, then is pronounced as den /ˈden/. through is pronounced as true /ˈtʰɹuː/, thank you is pronounced as tang kyou /tɛŋ kiw/ or /tʰɛŋ kiw/.

4.2.2 those that are different from their Thai equivalents as to their distribution, such as /l/,/f/,/s/. Although those English sounds exist in Thai, they are also considered problem sounds. This is because they do not occur at the final position in Thai, and most Thai people fail to pronounce them when they appear finally in English words. The /l/ sound is substituted by /n/ as in the word 'football' /fʊtbɔn/. The unreleased /b/ is heard instead of /f/ as in 'golf' and 'safe'. The sound /s/ in 'gas' /gæs/ is usually replaced by the unreleased /d/ as /gæd/.

4.2.3 those that are phonetically different from their Thai equivalents. The differences in both places and manners of articulation of those sounds in the Thai language make it difficult for Thais to pronounce them the same way as the native speakers do. The English sounds /r/, for example, can be formed in various ways depending upon different speakers and dialects. This retroflex /r/ is made by moving the sides of the tongue against the back teeth. The front of the tongue is lowered, but the tip is turned upward and withdrawn towards the back of the mouth, whereas the Thai /r/ sound is just a trilled /r /.

4.3 Pronunciation English Vowel sound in Tinglish

The differences in pronunciation between English and Thai vowel sounds are classified into four main categories: (1) the height of tongue, (2) the position of the tongue, (3) the muscular tension of tongue, and (4) the shape of mouth respectively. English vowel sounds spoken by Thais are mostly interfered with by single vowels in Thai.

In pronunciation vowel sound in Tinglish, there are equivalents and near-equivalents in shaded phonemes to English. Hence, there are some difficulties in perceiving and articulating them. This raises some confusion in the pronunciation of English vowel sounds among Thai speakers as some example of uniqueness below:

Most short vowels are pronounced as long vowels. A case example is /eɪ/. There are some ambiguities between the short 'e' /ɛ/, as in 'bled', and a long 'a' /eɪ/, as in 'blade' because both are pronounced as [e(:)] by most Thai speakers.

Gliding characteristic of the English vowel sounds are also substituted by single vowel sounds such as /oʊ/ in the word 'go' /goʊ/ becoming /go/, /ɔɪ/ in the word 'boy' /bɔɪ/ is pronounced as /bɔj/ in Tinglish are cases in point.

It is common for Thai speakers to stress the final syllable and consequently lengthen the final vowel such as 'sugar' /ʃuˈgə(r)/ is pronounced as /ʃukaˈ:/ or /sukaˈ:/ easy /iˈsɪ/ is presented as /isiˈ:/.

4.4 Pronunciation Consonant Clusters in Tinglish

Consonant clusters in the initial position are another concern in Tinglish. When English allows as many as three consonant sounds in the initial position, Thai contains at most two sounds. There is a wide range of consonant clusters in the English language compared to Thai. A simplified formula for the syllable structure of English is (C) (C) (C) V (C) (C) (C) (C). While in Thai, the formula for a syllable construction is (C)CV, (C) (Ariyapitipun,2015). Thai permits only two consonant clusters at syllables' initial position and permits no consonant clusters at a final position. In addition, since the final sounds of Thai words are classified into only eight groups, namely /k/, /p/, /t/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /y/, and /w/, English spoken by Thais has only one final sound no matter how many sounds the final consonant clusters represent. The initial segment clusters that are not present in Thai include the following: /dr/. /fr/, /fl/, /fj/, /tw/, /sl/, /sw/, /sm/, /sp/, /sk/, and /st/. Therefore, most Thai speakers usually face difficulties in pronunciation those consonant clusters. As an illustration, the word 'twelfth' is pronounced /twew/ instead of /twelfθ/, 'speak' is presented as sah-peek /səˈpiːk/. .

An example of the initial consonant cluster is in the word 'strong', consisting of three consonant sounds /s/, /t/, /r/. Since in Thai, up to only two sounds are found in the initial position, /s/,/t/. In Thai, certain consonants cannot occur as a consonant cluster. Such illicit clusters include those with sibilant sounds followed by obstruent sounds. So as to avoid such illicit forms, a short 'a' (ah; [ə]) sound is added between these consonants:

album - alabum /ələˈbam/,   school - sahkoon /səˈkʰuːn/

snore - sahnore /səˈnɔː/   sleep - sahleep /səˈliːp/,

start - sahtat /səˈtaːt/   speak - sahpeak /səˈpiːk/,

4.5 Omission of the consonant

Tinglish's uniqueness is the consonant omission at the end of words ending in a diphthong and a consonant. For example, 'mouse' /maʊs/ is pronounced as /maʊ/ 'mao'/, and 'dogs' /dɔgz/ is pronounced as "dog" /dɔg/. Another example, /r/ 'r' or /l/ 'l' after another

consonant may be completely omitted. Final consonants are usually omitted or converted according to the rules of Thai pronunciation: example, /l/ and /r/ is replaced by /n/ at the end of the word, for instance "school" /skul/ is pronounced as 'sah-koon'. If there is more than one consonant at the end of a syllable, only the first consonant is pronounced, the others are omitted. For example, 'cats' /kæts/ is pronounced as cat [kæt], six /sɪks/ is normally pronounced as /sɪk/.

Pronunciation of s-ending and ed-ending sounds is one the uniqueness in of Tinglish. The omission of consonant clusters as in 'mixed' is pronounced 'mik' instead of /mɪkt/. The omission of plurality is usually found such as 'dogs' is pronounced /dɔk/ instead of /dɔgz/. Thai speakers often move 's' on singular verbs to the subject, for instance 'She's speak too much' instead of 'She speaks too much'.

4.6 Pronunciation Suprasegmental Phonemes in Tinglish

There is some more uniqueness about the pronunciation of suprasegmental phonemes such as 'stress' spoken by Thai. For example, to illustrate, the word 'apple' is stressed on the first syllable as /'æpl/, but Thais stress on every single syllable as /æ'pp'n/. This is because of the interferences of the mother tongue, Thai.

Intonation patterns in Thai are completely unique from English as Thai is primarily a monosyllabic language; its pitch contour fluctuates sharply. In Thai, the 'question words' are used to denote questions such as "Who is your English teacher?" (ใครคือครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ของคุณ). That pattern has an inherent increasing tone. Polite requires intonation should be the main focus. There is also the disappearance of polite requests when translation is being done from Thai to the English language. If the speaker opts to be too literal, a brusque imperative is left after the translation.

5. The Uniqueness of Using Grammar in 'Tinglish'

Good examples of the differences are the unmarked use of verb tenses and plurals of nouns. Moreover, structural words are added to indicate tense as well as singular and plural forms of words. (Clewley, Jai-Ua & Golding, 2013). Verbs in Thai can also be denoted by using adverbs and adjectives. Moreover, the pronominal system of the Thai language is rather complicated. Various degrees of intimacy are reflected by clear sets of pronouns. When it comes to the word order in sentence structures, it follows a similar pattern of the English language that is subject-verb-object. Nevertheless, there are several examples when the Thai language neglects the subject part of a sentence. The latter occurs when there is a vivid understanding of what is being addressed in a given sentence.

5.1 Auxiliaries, questions, and negatives in 'Tinglish'

The Thai language does not have auxiliary verbs. Question words are used to transform sentences into questions. When a literal translation is used, rising intonation is

substituted, be noted that there are no equivalents in English when it comes to questioning words. There is also confusion when it turns to questions and answers that are negative.

Negative markers in Thai and English are different. In English, negative markers must be placed after auxiliary verbs, whereas they usually appear before (for some, after) an auxiliary verb in Thai. Therefore, Thais tend to use the word 'no' before words to make a negative sentence. In English, the auxiliary verb 'does' is needed in creating a negative sentence, 'He does not come to class.' To refer to the same sentence in Thai, Thais usually drop the auxiliary verb in such a sentence. Simply put, 'he not come to class' (เขาไม่มาเรียน) is understandable among Thais.

5.2 Time, tense, aspect, and articles in 'Tinglish'

There are no inflected forms in Thai verb. Most Thai learners also confront serious problems when handling complex verb phrases and verb inflections. There are remarkable differences in the grammatical structure of Thai and English languages. For instance, unmarking of verb tenses and plurals of nouns takes place. Moreover, structural words are added to denote tense as well as singular and plural forms of words.

Thai verbs are not conjugated to indicate tense. That's why Tinglish has no verb inflection, too. It is understandable to say, 'I go to school yesterday.' instead of saying 'I went to school yesterday.' As the same indication, Thais usually use of present tense + already (แล้ว), in contrast to the past tense of Standard English. For example, 'He go to school already'. (เขาไปโรงเรียนแล้ว) instead of 'He went to school.'

Omission of articles, declension, prepositions, and conjugation happens in Tinglish as there are no articles at all in Thai. When Thai people communicate, the articles are left out as in 'I have baby.' Cardinal numbers are also used instead of ordinal numbers, and they follow nouns. 'She lives in floor two' is a good example. Thais delete the article in the sentence. Also, the ordinal number 'second' becomes the cardinal number 'two', and it comes after a noun. Omission of prepositions, for instance, 'I wait you' instead of 'I'll wait for you'.

The way Thai people treat negative questions is reflected as Tinglish uniqueness. Completely different from English, responding to a negative question is regarded as a confirmation of the fact asked. A Thai being asked, "Haven't you had your lunch yet?" the answer is 'Yes' if he or she hasn't had lunch. Also, the polite request 'Do you mind driving me home?' which the answer as 'No, I do not mind' is required, but commonly replied by 'Yes' to offer a friend a ride home.

5.3 Word choice, Gender, Direct Translation in 'Tinglish'

Thais tend to use a final particle at the end of a sentence such as 'How are you ka/krup/na/ja/la?". Using such a final particle presents ethnicity because each ethnic group "uses a distinctive language associated with their ethnic identity" (Holmes, 2008). Moreover, 'any' and 'every' is used interchangeably, as 'She beautiful very much'.

Since Thai is not an inflectional language, it is difficult for Thai speakers to use proper forms of words in English. Pronouns, as an illustration, remain the same no matter

where they are or whether they are subjects or objects. This is because pronouns remain uninflected in Thai. When a pronoun is used in different cases, many Thais use the same forms of English pronoun as in the following example; Instead of saying 'I love you.' and 'You love me.', Thais say 'I love you.' (ผมรักคุณ) and 'You love I.' (คุณรักผม) with the same pronouns.

Gender is also a Tinglish uniqueness. In English, suffix change is used to indicate whether the noun is masculine or feminine such as waiter – waitress, actor- actress, etc., but Thais do not add or change any suffixes and use the same words to indicate both masculine and feminine.

Direct Translation is another uniqueness of Tinglish. This is because the source language interferes with the target language, such as:

Phrase (Tinglish)	Meaning (English)
Are you boring?	Do you feel bored?
Check bill	Can I have the bill, please?
He same you.	He is/looks like you.
No have …	There is no ..., I do not have a …
Please open/close the light.	Please turn on/off the light.

5.4 Syntactic and Semantic Features of 'Tinglish'

Lastly, punctuation is also a unique characteristic of the dialect. In English, there are a lot of punctuations such as periods (known as 'full stops'), comma, semicolons, etc., whereas they are not commonly seen in Thai. Put it this way, a sentence in English supposed to complete itself becomes a run-on sentence in English written by Thais.

The semantic aspect is worth consideration. Firstly, some borrowed words from English are generally used in different meanings. For example, 'to fit', which means to be suitable for someone/something, is used to say that something is too tight. Therefore, when Thai people speak English, they say such words in a different meaning.

Besides, responses to questions starting with an auxiliary verb also show a distinctive characteristic of Tinglish. In English, a contracted form of an auxiliary verb is used to replace the main verb when answering a 'yes/no question'. However, Thais answers such a question with the main verb instead of an auxiliary contraction as below:

English	Thai responses
Do you like to study English?	Yes, I like.
Will you study tomorrow?	Yes, I study (tomorrow).

6. Discussions and applications

The English and Thai languages are different in the areas of phonological systems. For example, there are 21 vowel phonemes and 21 consonant phonemes in the Thai language. The aspirated voiceless stops such as /ph/, /th/, and /kh/ in the Thai language are not mere

allophones of /p/, /t/, and /k/. Instead, they are distinct phonemes (Enfield, 2008). There are more fricatives in the English language. This is a crucial difference when English is compared to Thai. When it comes to the Thai language, it is quite cumbersome to generate /v/, /z/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/. (Swan & Smith, 2001). Besides, the length of the vowel is important. Hence, long and short vowels are clearly differentiated.

Moreover, most Thai speakers are unable to produce interdental sounds /θ/ and /ð/ since they do not exist in the sound system of the Thai language. As there are no such sounds in Thai, and they need to be careful when they speak English. There are also many other problematic English consonant sounds for Thai learners such as /z/, /r/, /v/, /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /dʒ/. The differences in both places and manners of articulation from those in the Thai language make it difficult to pronounce them the same as native does.

According to the Kachruvian approach, there is a variety of Englishes spoken in different parts of the world. There is no standard English as English varies to geographical factors; people in different places have their own way of speaking English.

Knowledge of English variations is beneficial to teachers of English as a foreign language. For instance, phonetics is one of the most difficult issues among students. Teaching to pronounce English sounds, teachers need to explain places and manners of articulation and explain the variations, so they are aware of the possibility of encountering different sounds in daily life. Apichatabutra (2011) has suggested that it is necessary to provide students with some background in articulatory phonetics, which will provide the basic guidelines in articulation, so they can differentiate English problem sounds and improve their English pronunciation. Ellis (1997) stated that if the sounds, words, or sentences are not pronounced those structures correctly, this may lead to communication failure in the end.

As the number of native speakers of English is limited, the researcher recommends that 'computer-assisted language learning' (CALL) can be applied to pedagogical practices. For example, in teaching pronunciation, teachers can use CALL in both speaking and listening classes. This will be beneficial to students as they are exposed to native speakers and a variety of world Englishes at the same time.

In terms of syntax, Thai learners are influenced by their native language, as explicitly seen in writing classes. For example, word orders are inverted. Noun + adjective is more commonly seen than adjective + noun. Mainly, passive voice is rarely seen in students' papers as passive voice is restricted to negative meanings in Thai.

Besides, in translation classes, the researcher noticed that Thai students often use 'literal translation' as the source language interferes with the target language all the time. In addition, as Thai and English structures are different, students perceive the world differently. This helps develop students' communicative skills as well since they must find a way to convey meaning and make themselves clear enough to be understood. Wongranu (2017) has mentioned that translating is a complicated skill. A translator has to interpret a source text and put it in another language, keeping the meaning, style, and purpose of the source text, and this requires proficiency in both foreign languages and the mother tongue.

Most importantly, during the time of writing this research article, there were some arguments whether a particular characteristic of English spoken by Thais is common enough to be considered a feature of Tinglish or it is just a mistake made by a non-native speaker. This gives rise to the question, 'Does Tinglish really exist?' Are characteristics of English spoken by Thais distinctive enough to be a dialect?

7. Conclusion

Seeing this with a pedagogical perspective, the researcher, on behalf of English teachers, views the differences as deviations from the norm. Or frankly say, the researcher tends to correct the students if they produced a structure of the language different from that of native speakers. However, from a sociolinguistic point of view, differences are colorful. They add varieties to the language. Englishes spoken by people from different geographical areas of the world give English a new status as a language of the world, a global language, or as popularly referred to as an international language. 'World Englishes', that is to say, start a new era of universal communication in our modern world.

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Author

Banjob Piyamat is a full-time lecturer in the Department of English, Liberal Arts Faculty at Huachiew Chalermprakiet University and holds M.A. in Linguistics. His research interests include Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, and English Language Teaching.