Perceptions towards English as an International Language: A Study of International Students at a Thai University

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Amid the backdrop of globalization, English has become an international language that people use for various purposes in multilingual and multicultural communication. In teaching practices, British and American English are traditionally recognized as the target models. However, these models have incurred broad criticism for failing to guarantee effective communication. Thus, many studies have been done to investigate students' perceptions towards English as an international language (EIL). However, limited research has been conducted among international students. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the perceptions of international students at a Thai university towards EIL, and to uncover the reasons underlying their perceptions.

Methodology: This study employed a mixed methods research design to fulfill its research objectives, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. To capture international students' perceptions towards EIL, a questionnaire was used. A total of 98 international students were initially recruited, but only 83 questionnaires were valid. To unveil the reasons underlying their perceptions, a semi-structured interview was carried out, involving a purposive selection of six international students. The questionnaire data were analyzed using statistical software to calculate the mean, standard deviation, and frequency of each item of the questionnaire. Content analysis was employed to analyze the interviews.

Main Results: Based on the analysis of the five components of EIL perceptions (cultural realism, linguistic and cultural disposition, ownership of English, EIL posture, and localization), the findings revealed that international students held positive perceptions about EIL. Concerning cultural realism, the majority of international students were willing to learn from different cultures when learning English. In terms of linguistic and cultural disposition, international students possessed disputable views towards cultural homogenization and heterogenization. Regarding ownership of English, most international students believed that English belongs to all the users who speak the language, not only native speakers. From the aspect of EIL posture, they recognized the important roles that the English language plays in the world. As for localization, they regarded English as a means to present their own cultures and identities to others in the world. The underlying reasons are that English is a universal language and its users are all from different cultures, and that mutual intelligibility is key for international communication.

Discussions: This study underscores international students' willingness and desire to embrace different varieties of English and enhance their global cultural awareness, and it highlights the significance of incorporating cultural elements into English language education. Compared to previous studies, international students in this study demonstrate a much greater awareness of EIL due to their overseas learning experiences.

Conclusions: Some pedagogical implications are resultant from this research. English teaching materials should not only be western-culture-oriented but should include a multiplicity of cultures. Different varieties of English should be acceptable in the evaluation and assessment process in the English classroom, and content should be given priority over grammar.

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Introduction

English is presently the predominant foreign language taught in over 100 countries (Schneider, 2020), and it has traditionally been regarded as exclusive to native speakers (Wang & Jenkins, 2016). Native speaker English, typically associated with British and American English and frequently acknowledged as the target model in English teaching and learning practices (Holliday, 2005), is currently facing significant criticism. Firstly, it is commonly impossible for non-native speakers to attain native-like proficiency through macroacquisition-based English learning (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Secondly, native speaker English has failed to guarantee effective communication in the global context with the growing presence of speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins et al., 2011). As a result, EIL comes into being as an anti-normative paradigm and serves as a tool to help people ease cultural barriers for multicultural communication (Jenkins, 2009).

Based on three circles of English (Kachru, 1985), Thailand is classified within the expanding circle, where English is primarily taught as the dominant foreign language. The number of international students in Thailand increases each year, with a total enrollment of 31, 571 international students from 2016 to 2017 (Evison et al., 2019). Chemsripong (2021) conducted a survey among international students in Thailand, revealing that language and cultural difference were the primary obstacles in their multicultural communication. As suggested by Alsagoff (2012), EIL can help speakers and learners overcome these top challenges in their multilingual, multicultural communities or contexts.

Previous studies have examined students' perceptions towards EIL in diverse non-native English-speaking countries (NNES). However, most of these previous studies (Lee & Lee, 2019; Wang, 2015) have focused on EIL users residing in the same geographic area, while other studies (Lee & Chen, 2018; Tauchid et al., 2022) have focused on research across different countries or contexts. Little research, however, has been conducted with students from different countries and contexts, who have come to reside together in one geographic area. This paucity of research includes international students in Thailand. Therefore, the present research seeks to investigate the perceptions of international students at a Thai university towards EIL, and the reasons underlying their perceptions. To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, this study proposes two specific research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of international students at a Thai university towards EIL?

2. What are the reasons underlying these international students' perceptions towards EIL?

Understanding how these students perceive English as international language can offer valuable insights for teachers, policymakers, and university administrators. This can help develop more effective language education programs tailored to the needs of international students, thus contributing to improved intercultural communication in the globalized higher education setting.

Literature Review

English as an International Language (EIL)

The internationalization of English has empowered an increasing number of researchers to challenge native English models and propose alternative models to define the global status of English today, such as World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and EIL (Christou et al., 2022). The terms, WE, ELF, and EIL) are used interchangeably in some literature, but they have different foci (McKay, 2018). The focus of WE is to define the distinctive features of different varieties of English. It is thus concerned with content and not interaction. ELF is concerned both with content (though unlike WE, its focus is on the features of interaction between second language speakers of English and not on the linguistic

and cultural background of the speaker) and with interaction. EIL is concerned with both content and interaction, and its main focus is on particular principles.

Different researchers hold different interpretations of EIL. (Widdowson, 1994) stated that the status of EIL means that all English users retain freehold custody over it. Jenkins (2009) considered EIL to be a variety of English that is used as a contact language among speakers with different first languages. According to Matsuda (2017), the present use of EIL should be viewed as a function that English plays in international and multilingual settings, where individuals contribute their own distinct varieties of English influenced by their cultural backgrounds, rather than as any one specific variety of English. Inspired by Matsuda (2017), the current study uses EIL as a general term to present the use of English for multicultural contexts against the backdrop of globalization. Three assumptions that are needed to inform the teaching of EIL include the following: 1) recognize the diverse ways in which bilingual speakers make use of English to fulfill their specific purposes, 2) recognize that many bilingual users of English do not need or want to acquire nativelike competence, 3) recognize the fact that English no longer belongs to any one culture, and there is a need to be culturally sensitive to the diversity of contexts in which English is taught and used.

Previous Studies on Students' Perceptions towards EIL

Previous studies have explored students' perceptions towards EIL in diverse NNES countries. For example, in China, Wang (2015) discovered that Chinese university students were hesitant to embrace China English as the recognized form within English classroom practices, because they had a strong desire for native-like pronunciation. In Korea, Lee and Lee (2019) examined by questionnaire how Korean English majors and non-English majors perceived EIL from two perspectives, including the different varieties of English and strategies for communicating in a multilingual or multicultural context. They also examined factors that influenced their perceptions by interviewing them. It was found that English-major students held more positive perceptions towards these two perspectives compared to their counterparts who were not majoring in English. Moreover, two factors influencing the differences in their perceptions were the EIL pedagogy utilized by teachers in the classroom and students' own EIL experiences. In Iran, Marefat and Pakzadian (2017) developed and validated a five-component model to explore the perceptions of Iranian EFL learners towards EIL. These five components include cultural realism, linguistic and cultural disposition, ownership of English, EIL posture, and localization. Cultural realism refers to the willingness and ability to learn from different cultures, which may lead to cultural literacy and liberty. Linguistic and cultural disposition are concerned with issues of cultural uniformity or diversity, the political factors behind the global spread of the English language, and the impact on language teaching and learning in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. The third component, ownership of English, handles the issue of whether English belongs to English native speakers only, or all its users. The fourth component, EIL posture, aims to investigate the perceived roles that the English language plays nowadays around the world. Localisation, the last component, addresses the question of whether the English language should be employed as a medium for sharing one's culture and identity with a global audience. This model exhibited a respectable degree of reliability and validity, and its suitability was affirmed by the absolute fit indices. Moreover, some studies have also explored the perceptions of students across different contexts towards EIL. For example, Lee and Chen (2018) examined the perceptions of EFL students in Taiwan and Korea towards EIL from four dimensions through a self-report questionnaire. It was found that these EFL students in both groups demonstrated a positive acceptance of the fundamental concepts of EIL and a more positive perception of their ownership of English than their own local varieties (Taiwanese English and Korean English). However, Korean students appeared to have a

lower level of acceptance towards English listening materials that feature non-native English-speaking accents and interactions than Taiwanese students. Tauchid et al. (2022) investigated the views of university students in Japan and Indonesia towards EIL from four aspects, including varieties of English, perception of current status of English, English speakers' identity, and strategies for multilingual and multicultural communication. No significant differences were discovered between the two groups in these aspects.

In Thailand, some studies have also explored the perceptions of students towards EIL. For example, Ha (2009) conducted interviews with eight Asian international students enrolled in a Thai university to investigate their sense of ownership of English and their self-perception regarding the language. The international students used English as an international language and for their own purposes and they demonstrated a positive understanding about the ownership of English. Kalra and Thanavisuth (2018) examined Thai students' perceptions towards five Asian accents (i.e. China English, Vietnamese English, Japanese English, Burmese English, and Indian English) by having them listen to five recorded speech extracts by non-native English speakers. The results showed that Thai students have no difficulty identifying all five speakers as non-native English speakers, and most of them expressed a preference for Indian accented English over other accented English varieties. A negative attitude was held, however, towards Japanese and Burmese accented Englishes. Rajprasit and Marlina (2019) endeavored to enhance Thai students' awareness of different varieties of English. Although their attempt resulted in minor changes in the students' viewpoints, it effectively emphasized that teaching English language learners about different varieties was a challenging task.

To sum up, previous studies on students' perceptions towards EIL have undergone substantial development in diverse NNES countries. However, most of these studies have focused on EIL users residing in the same geographic area or across different contexts. Little research has been done on students from different contexts in one geographic area. In Thailand, to the best of our knowledge, only one study (Ha, 2009) has been done to investigate international students' perceptions towards EIL. Yet, within that study, only eight participants were recruited and the approach was solely qualitative. Furthermore, the focus was only on identity production and re-production. Therefore, the five-component model proposed by Marefat and Pakzadian (2017) was adapted in this research, aiming at eliciting a more comprehensive understanding of international students' perceptions towards EIL in the Thai context by incorporating mixed methods.

Method
Participants
The present study was carried out at a university in the northeast of Thailand. A total of 98 international students were recruited, but only 83 questionnaires would be deemed valid. The group of 83 participants was comprised of 55 males and 28 females, including 42 BA students, seven MA students, and 34 PhD students. Among these, 19 participants were from Cambodia, 17 from Myanmar, 15 from Vietnam, and 10 from China. Nine participants hailed from the Philippines, eight from Indonesia, and two from India, with one participant each from the USA, Nepal, and Laos.
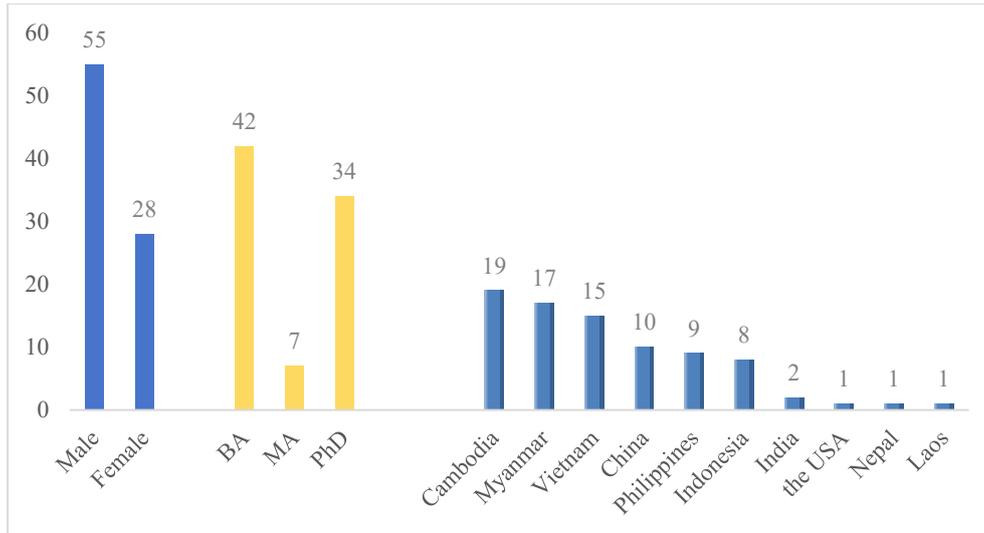
Figure 1 Demographic Information

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to elicit international students' perceptions towards EIL, which was adapted from Marefat and Pakzadian (2017), with some slight revision due to its use in different contexts. It consisted of two sections. The first section was to gather demographic information, such as name, nationality, gender, educational level, and contact information (e-mail). The second section aimed at eliciting international students' perceptions toward EIL. It contained 27 items belonging to the five components of EIL perception. It used a 6-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=slightly agree, 5=agree, and 6=strongly agree). To assess its reliability, the questionnaire was piloted with 10 international students at this Thai university who were not target participants. The reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. The questionnaire trial yielded a reliability score of 0.839 (α=0.839). Accordingly, the questionnaire employed in this study can be deemed as reliable, aligning with Deniz and Alsaffar (2013) assertion that a questionnaire is considered reliable when the alpha value exceeds or equals 0.7.

Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to explore the reasons underpinning the participants' perceptions towards EIL. Ten interview questions, comprising five fixed questions and five flexible questions, were constructed based on the participants' responses to the questionnaire. To ensure the validity of these questions, the index of item objective congruence (IOC) was used (congruent = 1, uncertain = 0, incongruent = -1). The IOC result of all the interview questions was 0.83, indicating that the interview questions were acceptable.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were gathered at a university in the northeast of Thailand. Prior to the study, a recruitment poster was distributed by email to all international students at the university to elicit participation. The poster's message detailed the research purposes and procedures of the study and outlined the incentives for participation. The participants were informed in advance that they may be interviewed after the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered on-site. All of the participants voluntarily participated and their written consent forms were collected. Then the data were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Specifically, the mean (1-1.83 = strongly disagree; 1.84-2.66 = disagree; 2.67-3.50 = slightly disagree; 3.51-4.33 = slightly agree; 4.34-5.16 = agree; 5.17-6 = strongly agree), standard deviation, and frequency of each of the 27 items in the questionnaire were calculated to understand the participants' views of EIL.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the participants through Zoom meetings after having analyzed the questionnaire data. Six international students of different nationalities were purposively selected as the interviewees based on some interesting findings from their questionnaires. Each interview lasted approximately 20-25 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English by the researchers. Prior to the interview, permission was obtained from the participants to audio-record the conversations. All audio recordings collected from the interviews were transcribed through the Temi website and then the transcriptions were manually checked by the researchers. Finally, the transcriptions were coded and analyzed based on the five components of EIL perception. The final report of the interview data was returned to the interviewees for member checking.

Findings and Discussion
Cultural Realism
The first component investigated international students' willingness to learn from different cultures. The findings showed that international students were willing to learn from different cultures when learning English (M=5.08, SD=1.05). To be more specific, 100% of respondents concurred that learning English can broaden their horizons through exposure to diverse cultures (item 1) and 95.2% held that learning about other cultures is needed for having successful international communication (item2).This indicates that the international students are keen to learn from different cultures to improve their intercultural communication by using English and promoting their cultural literacy. Moreover, 77.1% considered that English allows people from different cultures to communicate with each other, but it is not linked with any specific culture (item 3).This indicates that English is not related to any specific culture but can be utilized for the shared development of distinct cultures. Furthermore, 93.9% agreed that English teaching materials should include information about the life and culture of different countries (item 4), and 94% believed that English materials should equip students with an understanding of cultural distinctions in various contexts (item 5).This indicates that international students are willing to learn about life and culture in various contexts from English materials, and thereby develop their global cultural awareness.

Table 1. Cultural Realism

Item	Students (*N*=83)		Percentage (%)					
	M	*SD*	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. Leaning English can enrich my cultural horizons by learning from different cultures.	5.57	0.59	0	0	0	4.8	33.7	61.4
2. For having successful international communications, I need to learn about other cultures.	5.20	0.88	0	2.4	2.4	8.4	45.8	41.0
3. English allows people from different cultures to communicate with each other, but it is not linked with any specific culture (e.g., British culture).	4.51	1.43	3.6	9.6	9.6	14.5	34.9	27.7
4. English teaching materials should provide information about life and culture of different countries.	5.01	1.02	1.2	1.2	3.6	20.5	36.1	37.3
5. English materials should provide students with awareness of cultural differences in the various contexts.	5.10	0.89	0	1.2	4.8	13.3	44.6	36.1
Overall	**5.08**	**1.05**						

The interview findings supported the questionnaire results. All the interviewees believed that English allows people from different cultures to communicate with each other and five out of the six interviewees held that English is not linked with any specific culture. The reasons supporting their perceptions are threefold: English users are all from different cultures, English is a means of communication, and English is a universal language. As S6 from Myanmar articulated:

> For example, like today, I've talked to many people from many countries such as Indonesia, China, Cambodia, South Africa, and Thailand as well. They're from all from different cultures, but by using English, they can talk and communicate with each other well. And I can communicate with them and we can understand each other. So I think that English is like a way of communicating with each other, but it doesn't have to link to a specific culture because people have different cultures and they can use English to reflect their cultures as well.

By contrast, only one interviewee considered English to be related to a specific culture. For example, S3 from Indonesia claimed that:

> I think English should be linked with American or British culture because language is the carrier of culture. If we want to better use English, we should learn the cultures behind the language. Like me, I am a British English lover, I want to speak English like a native English speaker. If I know more about British culture, I can use English better.

Additionally, the interview data showed that all of the interviewees thought English instructional materials should incorporate content related to the lifestyles and cultures of diverse nations. This is because they believed that textbooks that incorporated different cultures could boost mutual respect and understanding. For example, as S1 from China stated:

> Like me, I came to Thailand to study. My teachers are almost Thai people and my classmates are from different countries. We can only use English to communicate with each other. If we don't know each others' culture, sometimes there may be some misunderstandings. For example, a Thai student wants to take a photo with me and then he put his arms around my waist. At that time, I felt uncomfortable and embarrassed because in China, only couples can take photos like that. So I think English teaching materials should cover the life and culture of different countries to reduce misunderstandings.

Generally, the international students were willing to learn from different cultures on their English language learning journey. They recognized the significance and benefits of learning from diverse cultures when using English in a globalized context. The majority of them remained culture-neutral in this component of EIL, which is congruent with the principle of EIL coined by McKay (2018) that EIL, unlike French, Korean, or Japanese, is not intricately tied to a specific social or cultural context and should strive to be culturally neutral. Additionally, there was a consensus that English teaching materials should provide insight into the life and culture of different countries to promote intercultural understanding and minimize misunderstandings. To sum up, these findings underscored the significance of incorporating cultural elements into language education and highlighted the international students' desire to develop their global cultural awareness.

Linguistic and Cultural Disposition

The second component explored the international students' perceptions of linguistic and cultural disposition, and five items were included in this component as shown in Table 2. Regarding item 6, international students had different viewpoints. Among them, 55.4% agreed that the global spread of the English language is a result of British or American imperialism, however, 44.6% disagreed with this item. Items seven and nine were reversely worded, so their results were reversed. Of these respondents, 19.2% thought that learning English threatens their native language and culture. Furthermore, 80.8% held that the increasing enthusiasm for learning English does not pose a threat to their native language and culture, which indicates that learning English does not put people's local languages and cultures at risk to a large degree. International students believed that English language education should not be limited (91.6%, item 8) and protecting their own cultures should not

be realized by refraining from English vocabulary on television or social media platforms (95.3%, item 10), indicating that international students have preferences for learning and using English.

Table 2. Linguistic and Cultural Disposition

Item	Students (N=83)		Percentage (%)					
	M	*SD*	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
6. I think globalization of English language is the outcome of British or American imperialism.	3.67	1.52	7.2	19.3	18.1	25.3	14.5	15.7
7. I think that learning English threatens my native language and culture.	2.41	1.32	26.5	38.6	15.7	7.2	10.8	1.2
8. I think English language education should be limited because it results in western culture dominance.	2.08	1.06	32.5	39.8	19.3	4.8	2.4	1.2
9. Growing interest in learning English is not a threat for my native language and culture.	4.72	1.31	1.2	9.6	8.4	7.2	43.4	30.1
10. I think that I should protect my own culture by not using English words on TV or social networks.	1.87	0.92	38.6	43.4	13.3	3.6	0	1.2
Overall	**2.46**	**1.38**						

Note. Item 7 and 9 are reversed.

The interview results revealed the reasons underpinning the questionnaire results. Some interviewees stated that the spread of the English language is the result of British or American imperialism. They expressed the view that the UK/US attempted to expand their influence through colonization, contributing to the global use of English. As S4 from Cambodia stated:

> Since long time ago, the UK started colonization. So they try to expand the influence on every part of the world. Like the British, they conquered almost the world already. So it influenced people. For example, if you are in the country that has been colonized by British, so British people will require you to follow their rules or need to learn English. So you can work or follow their language or their knowledge.

By contrast, nearly half of the interviewees disagreed that British or American imperialism contributes to the global spread of the English language because they believed that people have become more open-minded and aspire to connect to people in different countries. As S5 from the Philippines claimed:

> But for today I believe that the increasing usage of English language is not because of US or UK wanting to gain power or influence anymore. Because I think people want to become more open and they want to bridge with other people in different countries.

In addition, some interviewees held that learning English raises concerns about its potential impact on indigenous languages and cultural preservation. However, they believed that English language education should not be limited, and they should not protect their own cultures by not using English vocabulary on television or social media platforms. The reasons they claimed were as S1 from China stated:

> I think, learning English, in a sense, threatens my native language and culture because we put much time and energy into learning English. It may reduce our time in learning Chinese and also other subjects. But I don't think we should limit English language education or even protect our own cultures by not using English words on TV. Because some advanced technology are from other countries, if we want to master some hi-tech, we must learn English and use it.

However, some interviewees claimed that learning English does not pose a threat for their indigenous language and culture, and it is even a blessing for spreading their own cultures. As stated by S4 from Cambodia:

> English plays an important role in spreading culture and also tradition to the world. So they know, for example, if you study English, you can talk with foreigners. So you can tell them,

show them, spread your culture to the world instead of thinking that it's threatened because learning another language doesn't affect your own language or your own culture if you gained more knowledge. And you can use it as an advantage to share to the world your culture.

The findings from the questionnaire and interview suggested that international students possessed disputable views towards cultural homogenization and heterogenization. Almost half of the participants perceived that the global spread of the English language has historical roots in British and American imperialism. English globalization is therefore considered an instrument of linguistic and cultural imperialism or homogenization. Crystal (2003) also claimed that the connection between language dominance and economic, technological, and cultural power is extremely strong. This relationship will become more evident as we delve into the history of the English language. By contrast, the other half of the international students considered that the internationalization of the English language does not attribute to British or American imperialism. Some students (e.g., S1, S5, S6) believed that the globalization of English is due to the globalization of economics and the closer relationships among countries. Most of the international students did not consider English as a threat to their native languages and cultures, emphasizing the importance of embracing cultural diversity and utilizing English as a means of cultural exchange. The majority of international students claimed that English language education should not be limited because of the important roles that the English language plays in international communication.

Ownership of English

The third component investigated international students' attitudes towards ownership of English, and six items were included in this category (see Table 3). It was found that 96.4% agreed that English belongs to anyone who speaks the language not only the UK and US. It was also found that the authority to determine English language usage was not solely vested in native speakers (94%), and that the acceptable norms go beyond only British and American ones (91%). This indicates that international students are open-minded about the ownership of English. Moreover, 88.1% acknowledged the possibilities of different English varieties (item 16, M=4.73), which indicates that international students tended to embrace the different varieties of English.

Table 3. Ownership of English

Item	Students (*N*=83)		Percentage (%)					
	M	**SD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
11. English belongs to anyone who speaks the language.	5.06	0.75	0	0	3.6	14.5	54.2	27.7
12. English belongs only to the UK/US.	1.72	0.89	47.0	39.8	9.6	2.4	0	1.2
13. It is only native speakers' right to decide how English should be used.	2.01	1.16	46.3	31.3	16.4	4.5	0	1.5
14. If English is used differently from British or American English, it must be wrong.	1.94	0.93	40.3	31.3	23.9	1.5	3.0	0
15. I think only British and American norms are acceptable in using English.	2.20	1.13	35.8	32.8	22.4	6.0	3.0	0
16. It is possible to have different kinds of Englishes like China English, Singapore English, etc.	4.73	1.06	0	4.5	7.5	20.9	47.8	19.4
Overall	**2.42**	**1.43**						

Note. Item 11 and 12 are reversed.

The interview findings were in consistent with those of questionnaire. All the interviewees considered that the ownership of English goes to anyone who speaks the language and that it is possible to have different English varieties. They believed that every user of English is entitled to utilize those variations according to their preferences, and

mutual intelligibility is the key in international communication. For example, S5 from the Philippines asserted that:

> English becomes more and more universal today. English today does not belong to any specific group of people as it already became an international language where everyone can speak it anytime, anywhere or whenever they want to. So this leads to my opinion that anyone who speaks a language makes the language as their own. Like anyone who speaks English makes English their own already.

By contrast, only one interviewee held that only British and American English norms are acceptable in using English, particularly in English teaching practices. This is because English is originally used by native speakers and native English should be considered to be authentic and standardized English. As stated by S2 from Vietnam:

> I think different kinds of English can be acceptable in daily communication. But in teaching process, I think we'd better follow the British and American English, or teachers don't have criteria to assess our work. Like, in writing class, how will the teachers revise our sentences? Or all of our grammatical mistakes or pronunciation problems are allowed?

The questionnaire and interview findings showed that international students were open-minded about the ownership of English and believed that English belongs to all the users who speak the language, not only native speakers. This result is in consistent with that of Ha (2009) who found that international students regarded English as everyone's language. It revealed that the international students had awareness of EIL. Certain international students observed shifts in sociolinguistic reality, such as the worldwide population of non-native English speakers having exceeded that of native English speakers (Kachru, 1985). This implies that English is no longer exclusively utilized among native speakers or in interactions between natives and non-natives. This change is evident (Widdowson, 1994), particularly in international contexts where conversations frequently occur solely among non-native English speakers. Consequently, these international students argued that English belongs to all users, and it is not limited to native speakers alone.

Moreover, the findings also showed that the international students embraced different English varieties, aligning with previous research on WE, which highlights that this diversity is a result of the global expansion of English and the development of various English varieties (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). According to their perspectives, as long as individuals can understand one another, employing any form of English is deemed acceptable in international exchanges. However, the results are different from those of Wang (2015) and Lu and Buripakdi (2020) who found Chinese students were reluctant to accept or remained neutral towards diverse varieties of English. Their staying abroad may contribute to their perceptions of EIL (Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014). International students in the present study have overseas learning experiences and tend to have greater awareness about EIL than those who have no such experiences.

EIL Posture

The fourth component examined international students' perceptions regarding the roles that the English language plays in the world. The results showed that international students recognized the importance of the English language around the world now (M=5.28, *SD*=.86). As depicted in Table 4, 98.8% agreed that English plays an important role in achieving success in international affairs (item 17) and 96.4% held that English is a useful tool among non-native English speakers (item 20), indicating that international students recognize the importance of English and regard it as an international language in intercultural communication. Of those surveyed, 91.6% considered that English being commonly used in daily life is a result of increasing internationalization (item 19). Moreover, 100% agreed English serves as the conduit for connecting with the global community (item 18) and 97.6% considered learning English can make themselves be a part of the global world (item 21),

which indicates that international students tend to associate themselves with the broader international community as a whole.

Table 4. EIL Posture

Item	Students (N=83)		Percentage (%)					
	M	*SD*	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. English plays an important role for successful international affairs.	5.55	0.65	60.2	37.3	1.2	0	1.2	0
2. English makes it possible to connect to the rest of the world.	5.55	0.57	59.0	37.3	3.6	0	0	0
3. English being commonly used in daily life is a result of increasing internationalization.	4.94	1.16	2.4	4.8	1.2	13.3	44.6	33.7
4. English is a useful tool among non-native English speakers.	5.14	0.81	0	2.4	1.2	8.4	55.4	32.5
5. I can be a part of the global world by learning English.	5.22	0.83	0	2.4	0	10.8	47.0	39.8
Overall	**5.28**	**0.86**						

The interview results showed that all the interviewees reaffirmed that they can be a part of the global world by learning English. From their points of view, English is used as an international language, and they can utilize it as a means to establish connection with the rest of the world and fully integrate into the international community. As S4 from Cambodia stated:

> Because English is widely spread and it's an international language. So many people already knew about it. So you can travel the world. You can go anywhere you want by using English. So it plays an important role in your daily life as well, to know the language.

From the questionnaire and interview, it was found that the international students recognized the important roles that the English language plays in the world. This finding echoes with that of Lu and Buripakdi (2020) who found that English holds significant importance in the globalized context. One reason is that English serves as an international language, commonly employed in international affairs including business, sports, education, and conferences. As Matsuda (2012) pointed out, English plays a crucial role in international contexts, facilitating communication and information exchange among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Another reason is that international students have a high demand for English. They not only need to pass the English exams, but also use it as a means to communicate with their teachers, classmates and friends when living in Thailand.

In addition, it was also found that the international students were inclined to identify themselves with the broader international community as a whole. This is congruent with Yashima (2009), who pointed out that the notion of international posture attempts to reflect an inclination towards engaging with the global community as a whole, rather than centering on any particular L2 group in EFL contexts.

Localisation
The findings from the last component revealed that international students regard English as a means to present their own cultures and identities to others in the world (M=4.98, SD=0.99). To be more specific, 92.8% agreed that English textbooks should include some aspects of their own countries' cultures and lifestyles (item 22) and around 88% held that English teaching materials should reflect their own countries' cultures and beliefs (item 23), and not only depend on western oriented English textbooks (item 24). The results indicate that international students have the need for and the hope of presenting their local cultures in English language teaching materials. What's more, in their viewpoints, learning English should enable their respective countries' voices to resonate across the globe (92.8%), help to

promote their own countries' cultures and identities (98.8%), and introduce the cultures of their own countries to other countries (100%).This indicates that international students value their home cultures and hope to attempt to spread their own cultures and concerns to others around the world by learning English.

Table 5. Localisation

Item	Students (*N*=83)		Percentage (%)					
	M	*SD*	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. English textbooks should include some aspects of my own country's culture and lifestyle.	4.81	0.98	0	3.6	3.6	26.5	41.0	25.3
2. English teaching materials should reflect my own country's culture and belief.	4.63	1.03	0	3.6	8.4	31.3	34.9	21.7
3. I should not depend only on western oriented English textbooks.	4.75	1.18	2.4	4.8	4.8	16.9	45.8	25.3
4. Learning English should let the voice of my own country be heard in other parts of the world.	5.06	1.09	1.2	3.6	2.4	15.7	34.9	42.2
5. Learning English should help to promote my own country's culture and identity.	5.28	0.70	0	0	1.2	10.8	47.0	41.0
6. Learning English should help to introduce the culture of my own country to other countries.	5.35	0.61	0	0	0	7.2	50.6	42.2
Overall	**4.98**	**0.99**						

The interview data supported the findings of questionnaire. All the interviewees held that they should not exclusively rely on western oriented English textbooks. They felt that their own countries' cultures need to be included, because they perceive English as an international language which belongs to every user, and it should reflect the global culture. S3 from Indonesia clarified:

> As a non-native speaker, in most of the time I speak English with non-native speakers, not native speakers. To better understand their behaviors and what they say, I think I need to learn about their cultures and beliefs. I hope in future our English textbooks can add more different cultures, not only British or American cultures. And then, I can introduce my own country's culture to others, too.

In addition, all the interviewees reaffirmed that learning English should help to introduce their country and culture to others. The reason underlying is to strengthen their identities. This is shown in the excerpt by S4 from Cambodia:

> Once you study English, you can bring your culture and introduce it to the world. And as I can see, like one of the artists in Cambodia, as she works abroad, she brings her culture and represents her culture to the world to see. So it really helps spread the culture and also let people know who you are as a person and who you represent as well by using English.

The findings from the questionnaire and interview revealed that international students have the need and hope of presenting their own countries' cultures in English language teaching materials and spreading them to others around the world by learning English. This matches with what has been stated by McKay (2018), that the use of English should function as a medium for individuals to convey their own cultures and concerns to a global audience. What's more, Block (2004) pointed out that globalization reaches its culmination in the process of localisation. It is proposed that alongside our enthusiasm for promoting English, we should make simultaneous endeavours to appreciate native languages and cultures.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of international students at a Thai university towards EIL. It was found that they held positive beliefs about EIL. Compared to

the prior research, international students in this study had much greater awareness about EIL due to their overseas learning experiences. Another interesting finding is that they had an intense argument about whether the internationalization of the English language is the result of British or American imperialism. The supporters held that the United Kingdom and the United States aspired to expand their influence around the globe through colonization and in this way the English language has been internationalized. On the other hand, their counterparts believed that the internationalization of English has been the result of the globalization of economics and the closer relationships among countries. However, both the supporters and their counterparts considered that English language education should not be limited, and English teaching materials should try to incorporate a variety of cultures, not only western-centered materials.

This research provides some implications for EIL teaching practices. Firstly, more training programs can be organized to reshape the conception of EIL. Secondly, English teaching materials such as textbooks do not have to be western-culture-oriented, but rather, include distinctive cultures. Thirdly, different varieties of English should be acceptable in the evaluation and assessment process in English classrooms and more importance should be attached to content than to grammar. Lastly, foreign teachers should not exclusively come from native English-speaking countries, but from diverse cultural backgrounds. This aims to expose students sufficiently to a real EIL context, which will ultimately promote multilingual and multicultural communication.

However, this study was carried out at alone university in Thailand. Thus, it is not advised that broad generalizations be made. Subsequent studies should be conducted to explore the perceptions of international students from various universities in Thailand towards EIL.

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Appendix

Interview questions

1. Do you think that English allows people from different cultures to communicate with each other, but it is not linked with any specific culture (e.g. British culture). Why do you think so?
2. In terms of English teaching materials, do you think they should provide information about life and culture of different countries? What are the reasons?
3. You disagree/agree that globalization of English language is the outcome of British or American imperialism. Why do you think so?
4. In the questionnaire, you think that learning English (does not) threaten(s) your native language and culture. Why do you think so? Why do you think English language education should (not) be limited? And you (dis)agree that we should protect our own cultures by not using English words on TV or social networks, why?
5. In the questionnaire, you think that growing interest in learning English is (not) a threat for your native language and culture, why do you think so?

6. Do you think English belongs to anyone who speaks the language? Do you think that only British and American norms are acceptable in using English, why?

7. Do you think that it is possible to have different kinds of Englishes like China English, Singapore English, etc?

8. Do you think that you can be a part of the global world by learning English? Why?

9. You (dis)agree that you should depend only on western oriented English textbooks, why?

10. Do you think that learning English should help to introduce the culture of your own country to other countries. If yes, why and how?