



**The Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context: A Case  
Study of ASEAN International Students at a Thai University**

**Sopheak Thon**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Teaching English as an International Language  
Prince of Songkla University**

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**Thesis Title**            The Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)  
Context: A Case Study of ASEAN International Students at a  
Thai University

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ชื่อวิทยานิพนธ์	การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทที่ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษากลาง: กรณีศึกษา นักศึกษาต่างชาติในกลุ่มประเทศอาเซียนที่ศึกษาอยู่น มหาวิทยาลัย ในประเทศไทย
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### บทคัดย่อ

หลักสูตรศึกษาต่อในต่างประเทศที่ภาษาอังกฤษมีบทบาทเป็นภาษากลางมีจำนวนเพิ่มมากขึ้นในกลุ่มประชาคมอาเซียน อย่างไรก็ตามการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการดำเนินชีวิตของผู้เรียนในสภาพแวดล้อมทางภาษาอังกฤษใหม่ในหลักสูตรเหล่านี้ยังมีน้อยมาก การวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาบทบาทของภาษาอังกฤษที่มีต่อการดำเนินชีวิตของนักศึกษาต่างชาติในกลุ่มประเทศสมาชิกอาเซียนที่ศึกษาอยู่น มหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ศึกษาประกอบด้วยนักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษาจำนวน 55 คนที่มาจากประเทศสมาชิกอาเซียน 6 ประเทศซึ่งศึกษาอยู่ในมหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตหาดใหญ่ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลได้แก่แบบสอบถามวัดศึกษาความถี่และวัตถุประสงค์ต่างๆในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ รวมถึงมุมมองด้านระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของตนเองและทัศนคติที่มีต่อการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย และการสนทนากับกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่เลือกมาแบบเจาะจงจำนวน 12 คน เพื่อเจาะลึกถึงมุมมองเกี่ยวกับความท้าทายในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างการศึกษาในประเทศไทย มีการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณด้วยสถิติความถี่ ค่าเฉลี่ย ร้อยละ ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และการทดสอบที (*t*-tests) ส่วนข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากการสนทนากลุ่มใช้การวิเคราะห์หาแก่นสาระ (thematic analysis) ผลการวิเคราะห์เชิงปริมาณพบว่าภาษาอังกฤษมีบทบาทสำคัญและกว้างขวางทั้งในด้านชีวิตการศึกษาและด้านสังคมของนักศึกษา ซึ่งมีผลสำคัญต่อความคิดเห็นและมุมมองของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อความสามารถและความมั่นใจในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของตนเอง ส่วนผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพพบว่าการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นสื่อกลางในการติดต่อสื่อสารมีส่วนในการจำกัดการเข้าถึงความรู้และทรัพยากรทางการเรียนรู้ของผู้เรียน กลุ่มตัวอย่างรายงานว่ามักจะประสบปัญหาด้านการสื่อสารภาษากับเพื่อนร่วมชั้นเรียนชาวไทย อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา และอาจารย์ผู้สอน อีกทั้งข้อมูลในเว็บไซต์และป้ายโฆษณา มักจะเป็นภาษาไทยทำให้ไม่สามารถเข้าถึงข้อมูลดังกล่าวได้ นอกจากนี้กลุ่มตัวอย่างยังรายงานว่าประสบปัญหาในการเขียนรายงานและวิทยานิพนธ์เนื่องจากมีความรู้ด้านการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษเชิง

วิชาการไม่เพียงพอ ผลจากการศึกษาครั้งนี้ให้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกที่เป็นประโยชน์สำหรับผู้เรียนที่กำลัง  
ตัดสินใจที่จะศึกษาต่อในหลักสูตรในต่างประเทศในกลุ่มประเทศสมาชิกอาเซียนและผู้ที่สนใจ  
ศึกษาบทบาทหน้าที่ของภาษาอังกฤษในการเรียนการสอนหลักสูตรเหล่านี้

<b>Thesis Title</b>	The Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context: A Case Study of ASEAN International Students at a Thai University
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### ABSTRACT

The number of study abroad programs is growing within the ASEAN community and English is serving as a lingua franca within these programs. However, there have been few studies examining how students are navigating these new English environments. This study aimed to do that by exploring the role of English in the lives of ASEAN international students at a Thai university. Fifty-five graduate students from six ASEAN member nations at Prince of Songkla University-Hat Yai participated in this study, which employed a lengthy questionnaire to determine how often English was used and for what purposes, as well as participants' perceptions of their English proficiency and their attitudes toward the use of English in Thailand. Then twelve of the 55 participants participated in focus groups designed to investigate participants' perspectives on the challenges of using English during their studies in Thailand. Frequency, means, percentages, standard deviation and *t*-tests were calculated in the quantitative analysis while thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data. Findings from the quantitative analysis showed that English played a critical and extensive role in both students' academic and social lives in Thailand which, in turn, had a significant impact on students' views and perceptions of their competency and confidence in using English. The qualitative data revealed that participants' reliance on English as the central means of communications played a role in limiting their access to knowledge and resources. Participants reported that they often faced language barriers with Thai classmates, advisors and lecturers. Information on websites and signage was sometimes limited to Thai, making it inaccessible to the participants. Additionally, the participants reported encountering

problems writing papers and theses as a result of not having adequate knowledge of academic English writing. These findings provide useful insights for students who are considering participating in an ASEAN-based study abroad program and those interested in how English as a lingua franca functions within one of these programs.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT (THAI)</b> .....	v
<b>ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)</b> .....	vii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	ix
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	xi
<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES</b> .....	xiii
<b>LIST OF PAPERS</b> .....	xiv
<b>LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE</b> .....	xv
<b>LETTER OF MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b> .....	xvi

### A SYNTHESIS REPORT

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1. International Students in Thailand .....	2
1.2. English in ASEAN .....	4
1.3. English in Thailand .....	4
<b>2. Literature Review</b> .....	5
2.1. Study Abroad .....	5
2.2. Study Abroad in an English as a Lingua Franca Context .....	6
2.3. Language Challenges for International Students during Study Abroad in an ELF Context .....	8
<b>3. Objectives of the Study</b> .....	10
<b>4. Research Methodology</b> .....	11
4.1. Participants .....	11
4.2. Research Instruments .....	12
a. Questionnaires .....	12
b. Focus Group Discussions .....	12
4.3. Data Collection and Analysis .....	13
<b>5. Findings</b> .....	14
5.1. Frequency and Purposes of Using English .....	14
a. The Use of English for Academic Purposes .....	14
b. The Use of English for Social Purposes .....	15
5.2. Impact of the Study Abroad Experience on the Participants .....	16

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)**

a. Participants' Anxiety about Using English .....	16
b. Participants' Perceptions of Their English Proficiency .....	16
c. Participants' Strategies for Learning English .....	17
5.3. Challenges of English Use at the University and Recommendations for Addressing the Challenges .....	18
a. The Use of both Thai and English in the Classroom .....	18
b. The Low English Proficiency Levels of Some Thai Lecturers, Advisors and Thai Classmates .....	19
c. Need for Support with English Writing .....	20
d. The Lack of Translated University Informational Materials .....	22
<b>6. Discussion and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>7. Recommendations for Future Research .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix A Questionnaire .....	29
Appendix B Paper 1 .....	52
Appendix C Paper 2 .....	68
<b>VITAE .....</b>	<b>88</b>

**LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES****TABLE****A SYNTHESIS REPORT**

1. Focus group participants .....	12
2. Academic activities in which the participants used English in Thailand .....	15
3. English used in the participants' free time activities .....	15
4. Participants' reported change in anxiety levels about using English .....	16
5. Participants' perceived English proficiency before coming to Thailand and after at least one year in Thailand .....	17
6. Methods the participants used to study English on their own .....	17

**FIGURE**

1. Number of participants with the amount of time spent using English during a typical in Thailand .....	14
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## LIST OF PAPERS

This thesis is based on the following papers:

1. Thon, S., & Nicoletti, K. (2017). The Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context: A Study of ASEAN International Students at a Thai University. *Veridian E-Journal*. (Submitted manuscript).
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Subject: Notification of Manuscript Acceptance

Dear Mr.Sopheak Thon,

We are pleased to inform you that your manuscript, **The Use of English as a Lingua Franca in a Thai University**, has been accepted for publication in *Proceedings of The 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences "Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Sustainable Development in Multicultural Societies"*. A copy of the proceedings will be made available online soon. Please visit our conference website at <http://www.iw2.libarts.psu.ac.th/registration/>.

Thank you for submitting your important work to our conference.

Sincerely,

Assistant Professor Kemtong Sinwongsuwat, Ph.D.

Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Acting for  
 Dean, Faculty of Liberal Arts Faculty of Liberal Arts  
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**Subject:** [Veridian Journal] Submission Acknowledgement
 

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Mr. Sopheak Thon:

Thank you for submitting the manuscript, "The Development and Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context: A Case Study of ASEAN International Students at a Thai University" to

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## **1. Introduction**

Among ASEAN nations, there has been an increase in the number of international students studying in neighboring countries. This increase is a result of three factors: (1) regional efforts to strengthen education systems; (2) growing student interest in studying close to but outside of the home country, and (3) affordable tuition fees ("ASEAN Poised to Usher," 2014).

In Southeast Asia there has been a concentrated effort to promote student mobility. The Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand Student Mobility Program, or MIT, for example, was developed by the governments of the three participating countries for the purpose of increasing the mobility of students within the Southeast Asian region. The aim of this project is to establish a foundation for developing sustainable and continuing student mobility programs in Southeast Asia so as to help with the development of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Other objectives of this project are to encourage the movement of students across the region, promote one-structured education systems in the whole region for the sake of student mobility, develop continuous student mobility, eliminate discrepancies between educational structures that hinder mobility of students, and create a proper system for transferring credit (Hepworth, 2010). In 2010, 117 students participated in the pilot project of this program, and by 2012, the project had 150 students undertaking studies (Seddon & Levin, 2013).

To encourage movement of students within Asia, the Great Mekong Sub-region (Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and China) has been working with the nearby countries of Korea and Japan to establish a platform for higher education. The first principle of the platform was the development of a realistic and viable system for transferring credit within the region. The hope was that this would encourage more student mobility and enhance the quantity and quality of human resources (University World News, 2012). The student mobility program started in 2013 as planned, with 220, 000 students moving to study abroad within the region, a significant increase from 2009 when only 166, 000 students participated (Hénard, Bonichon, Maulana, Iqbal, & Oratmangun, 2016).

Another program that enables student mobility among ASEAN countries is the ASEAN University Network (AUN), an association of universities in Asia established in 1995 that includes 32 universities located in ASEAN countries. The program was created to cooperatively establish academic programs for Southeast Asian studies and make those programs of study available in at least one major university in every member country, and to set up ASEAN master and doctoral degree programs with courses available at universities in two or more member countries. AUN's emphasis is also on creating research projects in the region to be conducted cooperatively by scholars from two or more member countries and developing an ASEAN Visiting Professors Program to allow lecturers from a member country to give lectures at a tertiary academy in another member country. At the same time, this program aims to boost the current cooperative network amid higher institutions in ASEAN, support joint research, study and academic programs in the fields recognized as priorities in ASEAN. The program encourages collaboration and unification among members of academies, researchers and scholars in all ASEAN member countries ("The AUN's Strategic Focus," 2016).

The mobility of students within ASEAN is also encouraged by the territory's common goals such as strengthening regional relationship and cooperation which have led to an increase in cultural and academic exchange programs, universities'/colleges' need to be more internationally recognized through the international exchange programs, and the need to improve the quality of local education systems and research and development (Cabegin, 2014).

### **1.1. International Students in Thailand**

Thailand has encouraged international students to come to study by providing a number of scholarships. Many of these scholarships has been provided through the student mobility programs mentioned in the above section. Prince of Songkla University (PSU) has taken part in these programs. According to the PSU Interactional Affairs Section (2016), PSU encourages international students to enroll in order to:

- be recognized more internationally
- promote the ranking of the university
- create a multicultural university atmosphere
- increase collaboration with academic institutions outside the country and foster relationships among ASEAN students
- become an education hub in the region.

This effort can also be seen through other scholarships provided by PSU. One of those scholarships is Thailand's Education Hub for ASEAN Countries (TEH-AC) scholarship awards for Master and PhD studies. Established in 2015, it is the main scholarship provided by PSU. In the 2017 academic year, 100 scholarships were made available. Priority is given to applicants from one of the other nine ASEAN countries. Citizens from six other countries, Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan, India, Australia, and New Zealand are eligible, but they are given second priority. Nationals from other countries may apply, but lower priority is given to them (PSU Graduate School, 2017).

Another scholarship program is the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Scholarship. This scholarship has been provided to Cambodian students since 2004. In the first year, the scholarship was provided to only 12 students, but this number has been increasing every year. In recent years, each year, there have been 100 to 200 recipients pursuing degrees at the Associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, at various institutions throughout Thailand. In the 2016 academic year, 219 scholarships under this Royal support were provided to Cambodian students to study in 28 Thai institutions. The scholarship recipients are fully funded, with allowances for living expenses, tuition fees, health insurance, books, visas and re-entry permits. Additionally students are provided with a monthly stipend (MoEYS Cambodia, 2016). PSU has been taking part in this program since 2012. Currently there are 44 Cambodian students at PSU who are under this scholarship (14 at Hat Yai Campus, 6 at Phuket Campus, 19 at Pattani Campus, and 5 at Surat Thani Campus) (PSU International Affairs Section, 2016).

Today the number of international students at PSU-Hat Yai, Thailand continues to grow. The first academic year in which international students graduated

from PSU-Hat Yai was 1996. From 1996 to 2014, 361 international students graduated from PSU-Hat Yai. In this 2016 academic year, there are 232 international students studying at PSU- Hat Yai, 19 at Faculty of Engineering, 39 at Faculty of Science, 39 at Faculty of Medicine, 15 at Faculty of Management Sciences, 13 at Faculty of Natural Resources, 11 at Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, 46 at Faculty of Nursing, 6 at Faculty of Dentistry, 16 at Faculty of Agro-Industry, 5 at Faculty of Environmental Management, 4 at Marine and Coastal Resources Institute, 9 at Faculty of Liberal Arts, 1 at Faculty of Economics, 1 at Faculty of Medical Technology, and 8 at International College. The large majority (about 90%) are graduate students (PSU Registration Section, 2016).

### **1.2. English in ASEAN**

English has long acted as a medium of instruction in many study abroad programs and served as a shared communicative language among study abroad students (Kaypak & Ortactepe, 2014). This is especially true in study abroad programs in the member countries of ASEAN, an association in which English was declared the official language (Kirkpatrick, 2010) and, consequently, where fluency in English is widely promoted. While importance is given to English, ASEAN citizens have tended to learn English because English is necessary for them to take part in the making and spread of knowledge, modernization as well as globalization. That is why, in nine of the ten countries in the region, English is included in elementary education curriculum. In the Philippines and Singapore, it is even used as a medium of instruction (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Not only is English used in education, but it is also the most favored foreign language used in international business and research (Bigalke & Sharbawi, 2015).

### **1.3. English in Thailand**

Unlike many other nations in ASEAN, Thailand was never colonized. As a result, Thailand has had, historically, very little need for using the English language (Kirkpatrick, 2010). An exception was during the monarchy of Rama III (1824-1851), when English was viewed as necessary for coping with the rise of British influence as well as modernization. This focus on English continued during the reign of Rama IV,

King Mongkut. Nonetheless, the use of English continued to be quite limited until its integration into the school curriculum in 1921. However, rather than used as a mode of communication, English served only as a school subject. Later in 1996, English became a mandatory subject in all elementary schools. English, together with Information Technology, was positioned as one of the most important subjects for national cognitive growth, and there was a change in the focus from “teaching English as an academic subject of study, to English as a medium of communication” (Wongsothorn, 2003, as cited in Baker, 2012, p. 2). English has now become a formal working language in Thailand, and its role in this country has also increased (Baker, 2012).

As the literature review will outline, there has been a fair amount of research on the benefits and language-related issues of study abroad programs. Many of these studies looked at how the experience of studying abroad affected students' foreign language proficiency and attitudes toward the foreign language as well as challenges they face during their abroad sojourns. While many of these studies provide important insights, few have been conducted which examine the effects of a study abroad experience in an ELF ASEAN context. Given the number of students now studying in an ELF ASEAN context, this study attempted to do that. Specifically, the study examined (1) how often and for what purposes English was used; (2) what effect, if any, this use had on participants' perceptions of their English proficiency and their attitudes toward English and (3) the linguistic challenges participants faced.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Study Abroad**

The term *study abroad* is defined as short or long-term educational program conducted in a foreign country in which the students are awarded credits to fulfill a degree at their home educational institution. In some cases, the term refers to or includes the pursuance of a full degree at an overseas university. There are several forms, levels and lengths of study abroad programs (Education Abroad Glossary, 2010; Ballah, 2013). While students' studies are within a particular subject area (and this may or may not include language) traditional study abroad programs allow

students to be immersed in the native language of the host country. This integration during the students' sojourns is believed to provide a linguistically beneficial L2 learning atmosphere for the students (Freed, 1995) and is often a reason students participate in study abroad programs (Carlson, Burn, Useem, Yachimowicz & Barber, 1991).

Studies have found that students who study abroad are more advantaged than those who study in their home countries in terms of language learning, as studying abroad provides them an opportunity to be exposed to the language naturally on a daily basis (Kim, Dewey, Baker-Smemoe, Ring, Westover & Eggett, 2015). Such immersion in the language setting has been shown to be beneficial for the development of vocabulary knowledge (Dewey, 2008; Engle & Engle, 2004; Kim et al., 2015), speaking skills (Brecht, Davidson & Ginsberg, 1993; Engle & Engle, 2004; Kim et al., 2015; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), writing skills (Engle & Engle, 2004) and listening and reading skills (Brecht, Davidson & Ginsberg, 1993). The study abroad context also seems to provide advantages in terms of increasing students' pragmatic abilities (Iwasaki, 2008; Alcón-Soler, 2015). While there appear to be substantial linguistic benefits to those studying abroad in a target language setting, studies have also shown that studying abroad in an English as a lingua franca context can be advantageous to English learners.

## **2.2. Study Abroad in an English as a Lingua Franca Context**

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been defined in different ways. Firth (1996) defined ELF as a contact language communicated among non-native English speakers having different mother tongues and different cultures. To this definition, Seidlhofer (2011) has added that ELF denotes a linguistic environment in which English is the only common language. Jenkins (2009) has extended the definitions offered by Firth and Seidlhofer, arguing for the inclusion of native English speakers in the ELF community.

As the number of students who are studying abroad in ELF contexts has been growing, research on the impact of the experience on participants' English has also grown. Baker (2009) conducted a qualitative study of seven fourth-year international

undergraduates majoring in English at a university in Thailand. It was found that the skills the participants needed most were those that allowed them to be understood and to successfully negotiate meaning. Participants reported that they did not have to focus on knowledge of either American or British culture, but rather needed to use English in ways that their interlocutors could decode messages easily and clearly. This was deemed helpful for English language learners to improve their language fluency, as they reported feeling less worried and more relaxed when using the target language (Baker, 2009).

Kaypak and Ortactepe (2014), in their study of fifty-three Turkish Erasmus exchange students who studied abroad in different ELF countries in Europe, found that after the sojourn the students better understood the importance of practicing English and were more aware of the role English plays worldwide. Moreover, the students' perceptions of relationship between English and ELF culture, practice and grammar were reshaped by their social life experiences. Students discovered that they did not have to depend on cultural knowledge to communicate in English and that they could excel in learning English without having to know about the native English-speaking countries' cultures. The students also began to acknowledge the importance of practice for the betterment of their English language skills and felt more willing to take opportunities to use their existing knowledge about English so as to maintain their communication with people of the host countries. Furthermore, the students recognized the global role of English as an essential means of communication. More than this, the students' communication experiences in various ELF countries gave them a new view about the concepts of fluency and accuracy. Unlike experiences they had had before their stays, when the courses were finished, the students' English learning focus changed from form to meaning. Students started to give more value to fluency, as they surmised that fluency was what was needed to have a successful interaction.

Virkkula and Nikula (2010) carried out a case study with seven Finnish engineering students on identity construction in ELF contexts. In addition to discovering that students developed new social and linguistic resources, the researchers noted that the students were more motivated to speak, emotional obstacles

to using English were reduced, and the students developed a feeling that it would be possible for them to be successful in their language learning. The findings suggest that if there is an opportunity to use English with other people whose mother tongues are not English, it may lead to a feeling of being a more competent and self-confident speaker of English.

Findings of the aforementioned studies suggest that learning and using English in an ELF environment may provide a number of benefits to English language learners that might, perhaps, serve to better position them within a global context that is increasingly relying on English.

### **2.3. Language Challenges for International Students during Study Abroad in an ELF Context**

While studies examining study abroad in countries where English is used as the lingua franca have indicated that such contexts are beneficial for international students in terms of language learning, there are also studies, though not numerous, that have revealed that international students experience language-related problems in these contexts. Some of these problems stem from difficulties students have using academic English, an issue also found in studies of international students studying in countries where English is the L1 (e.g. Cheng, Myles & Curtis, 2004; Gebhard, 2012; Yeoh & Terry, 2013; Bitew 2015). Additionally, problems from the new varieties of English the students encounter, as well as the varying levels of English proficiency of their classmates, university staff, and lecturers, have also been reported (Talebloo & Baki, 2013).

Alghail and Mahfoodh (2016) carried out their mixed methods research about difficulties in academic reading faced by 92 Arabic graduate students at the Universiti Sains Malaysia and how they overcame those difficulties. Questionnaires, focus groups and journals were used to collect data. Findings revealed that students had difficulties in many aspects of English academic reading such as note taking, decoding difficult words and identifying supporting ideas. Participants reported having to read the same documents more than once to understand the content or find specific information. Recommendations were made that Malaysian tertiary education



institutions enhance their current postgraduate programs and establish programs to help international students deal with the challenges they encounter in English academic reading.

Mahmud, Amat, Rahman and Ishak (2010) conducted a qualitative study about the challenges faced by foreign students at three public universities in Malaysia. The study found that language was a primary issue to which the international students had to adjust. Because of their low English proficiency as well as the Malaysian-accented English they encountered, communication proved difficult. The students also struggled because of the additional linguistic challenges the use of the local language (Bahasa Melayu), both in the social and classroom contexts, presented. Additionally, the students reported encountering many Malaysians who did not speak English. The study's authors recommended that higher educational institutions in Malaysia improve their services for international students by improving the English of their international affairs administrative staff, hiring multicultural international academic staff and providing programs aimed to support the development of international students' English skills. It was also recommended that in their recruitment of future international students, closer attention be paid to the students' English language proficiency and that future students have some level of proficiency in the local language.

Alavi and Mansor (2011) investigated problems among international students at a university in Malaysia and also found students experienced language-related problems. The study was conducted with 135 international graduate students from three countries, Iran, Saudi Arabia and China, using questionnaires and interviews. It was found that the lecturers' strongly Malay-accented English caused problems for the students who reported difficulties understanding the lecturers. The researchers recommended that the university provide better academic support in order to improve lecturers' and students' English language proficiency for more effective learning and communication.

Talebloo and Baki (2013) investigated the issues challenging international students during their studies abroad. Participants were 15 postgraduate students (Yemeni, Iranian and Sudanese) from different fields of study at a university in

Malaysia. Questionnaire and interview results illustrated that most of the participants encountered comprehension problems with the accented English of the lecturers, academic staff, and students and the low levels of English proficiency. A suggestion to improve the English proficiency of staff, lecturers and students was made.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

As has been previously stated, in ASEAN countries such as Thailand, universities are encouraging students from neighboring countries to study in their countries and many students are doing just that. While research suggests that these international students may benefit linguistically from a study abroad experience in an ELF context, it has also been found that the students face some challenges regarding language use as well. However, there remains a scarcity of research on advantages and disadvantages of the use of English as a lingua franca within an ASEAN study abroad context, particularly in Thailand. According to previous studies, language, both English and the local language, is a problem normally faced by international students studying in an ELF country. Even though there have been a number of studies that investigated this language-related issues, there appears to be no such research in the Thai ELF context. Therefore, this study attempted to address this gap by closely examining how often English is used and for what purposes in the lives of non-native English speaking students participating in an ASEAN study abroad program in Thailand and the challenges regarding the language use in this context. Specifically, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. For non-native English speaking students studying in an ELF country, how often is English used and for what purposes?
2. What impact, if any, does this study abroad experience have on these students' perceptions of and attitudes toward English?
3. According to these students, what are the challenges of using English as a lingua franca at a Thai university and how might these challenges be addressed?

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Participants**

The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, 55 graduate students (26 male and 29 female) from six ASEAN countries including Cambodia (n=14), Indonesia (n=18), Laos (n=1), Myanmar (n=10), Philippines (n=3) and Vietnam (n=9) who were studying at PSU-Hat Yai, Thailand were selected using purposive sampling. Studying at 12 different faculties (in the fields of the sciences and social sciences), 39 participants were Master students, 16 were PhD. Their ages ranged from 23 to 58 with an average age of 30.04. The participants were enrolled in three different study plans, 37 in Plan A1 (research only), 17 in Plan A2 (research and coursework) and 1 in Plan B (coursework only). They all had been studying at the Thai university for at least one year. Thirty-six participants (65.45%) had been in Thailand for 12-18 months; seven (12.73%), 19-25 months; nine (16.36%), 26-32 months and three (5.45%), over 36 months.

The participants chose Thailand as their study destination for five main reasons. The top reason was reported to be the availability of scholarships. The second was an interest in experiencing life in another country, followed by the quality of the Thai educational system and the inexpensive cost of living in Thailand. The least important reason was an interest in working in Thailand after graduation.

In the second stage, twelve of the fifty-five participants were selected using both purposive and convenient sampling to participate in two separate focus group discussions.

Table 1: Focus group participants

Nº	Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Gender	Age	Faculty	Degree
<b>Focus Group 1</b>						
1	Helen	Cambodia	Female	28	Natural Resources	Master
2	Wendy	Cambodia	Female	23	Liberal Arts	Master
3	Andy	Indonesia	Male	23	Science	Master
4	Yale	Indonesia	Male	33	Natural Resources	Master
5	Tom	Vietnam	Male	26	Economics	Master
6	Lily	Vietnam	Female	28	Natural Resources	Master
<b>Focus Group 2</b>						
7	Sam	Cambodia	Male	27	Natural Resources	Master
8	Luke	Cambodia	Male	27	Environmental Management	Master
9	Vivian	Laos	Female	24	Agro-Industry	Master
10	Suzy	Myanmar	Female	24	Medical Technology	Master
11	Kate	Myanmar	Female	28	Science	PhD
12	Whitney	Myanmar	Female	31	Pharmaceutical Science	PhD

## 4.2. Research Instruments

### a. Questionnaires

In the first stage of the study, questionnaires were used as the primary means of data collection. The first section (15 items) solicited demographic information, current living and academic situations, friends in Thailand and the reasons for choosing Thailand for graduate studies. The second section (34 items) pertained to participants' use of English in their home countries and the development and use of English in Thailand. This section also solicited information about the use of English in courses, personal practices to develop their English skills, expectations about use of English in Thailand, their perceptions of their English proficiency and their attitudes toward English. Types of items in the questionnaire included five-point Likert scales, multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The third section (49 items) was concerned with participants' attitudes toward English.

### b. Focus Group Discussions

In the second stage, two focus group discussions were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the international students' experience regarding their use of English during their studies in PSU and the perceived impact of this experience.

Additionally, participants were asked to offer advice to both future international students and university officials in terms of English. The group discussions were conducted around two main questions:

1. If you were able to talk with international students who are coming to study in Thailand, what would you tell them about your experience with regards to language? What advice would you give them so that their experience was good and why?
2. If you were asked to provide advice to PSU about the international program at this university, what would you tell them about your experience with regards to language? What advice would you give them to improve the experience for students and why?

#### **4.3. Data Collection and Analysis**

To ensure reliability, the questionnaires were piloted with ten students who were selected using the same criteria as those in the final study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaires was calculated and showed that the questionnaires were highly reliable, with an overall reliability of 0.977. Based on comments and suggestions from pilot study participants, minor revisions to the questionnaire were made.

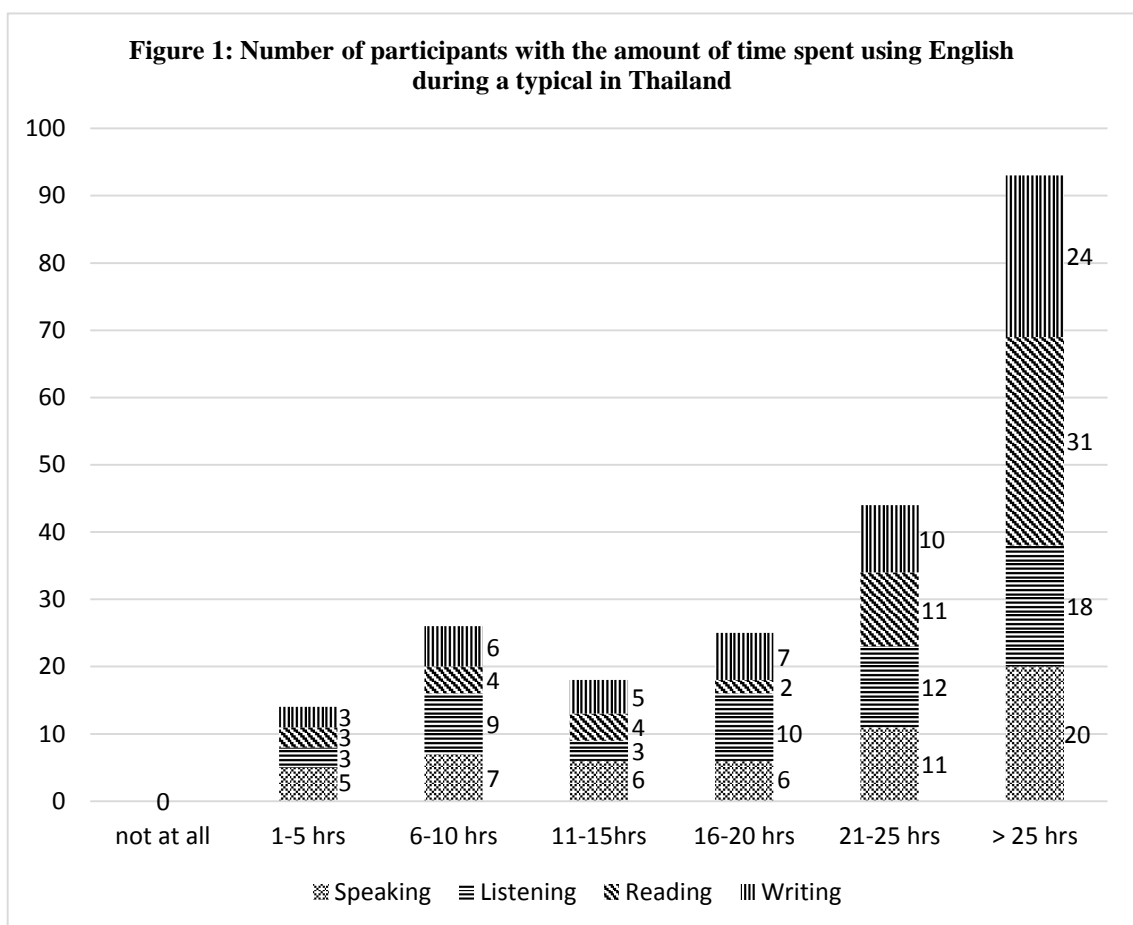
Fifty-five sets of printed questionnaires were distributed directly by the researcher to the participants in the months of September and November 2016. The return rate was 100%.

The focus group discussions were conducted four months after participants had completed the questionnaires on the PSU campus on April 2, 2017. With permission from all participants, voice recorders were used to record the discussions. Each group discussion was facilitated by the researcher and lasted about one hour. Recordings of the focal group sessions were then transcribed. Salient themes were identified and manually color-coded by both researchers.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Frequency and Purposes of Using English

Participants reported that since arriving in Thailand, they had an opportunity to use English frequently. Figure 1 indicates that during their studies abroad many participants frequently used English (in all four areas – reading, writing, listening and speaking) for more than 25 hours during a typical week.



#### a. The Use of English for Academic Purposes

Participants reported using English in all aspects of their academic lives. Within their classes, the vast majority of lectures, discussions and course materials were in English. Additionally, participants reported needing English skills for communicating with their advisors, reading journal articles/books and writing

research proposals/research papers. English was also used for other academic purposes such as communicating in class, listening to lectures, writing homework/assignments and completing exams. Theses (including proposals) and academic articles for publications would need to be written in English.

Table 2: Academic activities in which the participants used English in Thailand

<b>Activities</b>	<b>5 (<i>always</i>)</b>	<b>4 (<i>usually</i>)</b>	<b>3 (<i>sometimes</i>)</b>	<b>2 (<i>rarely</i>)</b>	<b>1 (<i>never</i>)</b>
1. communicating with advisors	46 (83.64%)	4 (7.27%)	4 (7.27%)	0	1 (1.82%)
2. reading journal articles/books	46 (83.64%)	5 (9.09%)	2 (3.64%)	1 (1.82%)	1 (1.82%)
3. writing research proposals/research papers	47 (85.45%)	3 (5.45%)	2 (3.64%)	2 (3.64%)	1 (1.82%)
4. communicating in class	33 (60.00%)	15 (27.27%)	7 (12.73%)	0	0
5. listening to lectures	34 (61.82%)	10 (18.18%)	8 (14.55%)	2 (3.64%)	1 (1.82%)
6. writing homework/assignments	42 (76.36%)	8 (14.55%)	3 (5.45%)	0	2 (3.64%)
7. completing exams	40 (72.73%)	9 (16.36%)	3 (5.45%)	1 (1.82%)	2 (3.64%)

### **b. The Use of English for Social Purposes**

English also played a critical role in the participants' social lives. As illustrated in table 3, English was frequently used in a range of activities.

Table 3: English used in the participants' free time activities

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>% of time English Used</b>
1	using social media such as Facebook, LINE, Instagram, etc.	94.55%
2	participating in activities organized by faculties or PSU student groups	94.34%
3	watching TV shows/YouTube	92.45%
4	going shopping	84.91%
5	hanging out with friends	83.33%
6	playing sports	77.78%
7	participating in religious activities	67.39%

## 5.2. Impact of the Study Abroad Experience on the Participants

### a. Participants' Anxiety about Using English

The participants were asked to reflect on their anxiety about using English before coming to Thailand and after having studied in the Thai ELF context for at least one year. They reported that there was a change in their attitudes toward their use of English in terms of anxiety. When using English in Thailand, they reported having less anxiety than previous to their arrival in Thailand. As presented in table 4, based on a five-point Likert scale – 5=very high, 4=high, 3=moderate, 2=a little and 1=none, participants' actual anxiety decreased in all areas, with a significant decrease in the areas of speaking and reading. Participants' overall actual anxiety was quite low – in between moderate and a little.

Table 4: Participants' reported change in anxiety levels about using English

Areas	Anxiety before arriving in Thailand		Anxiety after at least one year in Thailand		t	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.			
Speaking	2.91	1.09	2.58	1.08	2.100*	54	0.04
Listening	2.91	0.99	2.64	1.16	1.695	54	0.10
Reading	2.75	1.09	2.42	1.17	2.194*	54	0.03
Writing	2.84	1.08	2.56	1.17	1.817	54	0.07

\* Significant at 0.05 level

### b. Participants' Perceptions of Their English Proficiency

The Thai study abroad experience appeared to have a significant impact on participants' perceptions of their English proficiency. The participants were asked to look back to their English proficiency before participating in the current study abroad program using a five-point Likert scale (5=advanced, 4=high intermediate, 3=intermediate, 2=high beginner and 1=beginner). In that part of data, it was indicated that before arriving in Thailand, the area in which the participants' perceived English proficiency was the highest was reading ( $\bar{x}$ =3.22), and the lowest was speaking ( $\bar{x}$ =2.84). Their overall English proficiency was a bit below intermediate level ( $\bar{x}$ =2.87) (see table 5). But after at least a one-year stay in Thailand, their English proficiency was perceived to have improved significantly in all areas. This finding supports other studies. Therefore, study abroad in an ELF country,



Thailand, had a positive impact on the participants' perceptions of their English proficiency.

Table 5: Participants' perceived English proficiency before coming to Thailand and after at least one year in Thailand

Skills	Before		After at least one year in Thailand		t	t ranking	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.				
Speaking	<b>2.84</b>	0.86	<b>3.38</b>	0.73	<b>5.655**</b>	2	54	0.00
Listening	<b>2.91</b>	0.82	<b>3.49</b>	0.77	<b>5.488**</b>	3	54	0.00
Reading	<b>3.22</b>	0.96	<b>3.76</b>	0.82	<b>5.460**</b>	4	54	0.00
Writing	<b>2.93</b>	0.92	<b>3.35</b>	0.80	<b>4.524**</b>	5	54	0.00
Grammar	<b>3.15</b>	0.99	<b>3.36</b>	0.85	<b>2.360*</b>	7	54	0.02
Vocabulary	<b>2.89</b>	0.88	<b>3.22</b>	0.85	<b>3.491**</b>	6	54	0.00
Overall	<b>2.87</b>	0.82	<b>3.42</b>	0.63	<b>6.708**</b>	1	54	0.00

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level; \* Significant at 0.05 level

### c. Participants' Strategies for Learning English

As English was crucial for the participants' academic and social lives, they tried to improve their English while completing their graduate degrees. Eight participants (14.54%) reported having taken English courses while enrolled in the study abroad program and the majority (n=43, 78.18%) studied on their own to improve their English proficiency.

Table 6: Methods the participants used to study English on their own

Activities	Frequency					$\bar{x}$
	<i>5 very often</i>	<i>4 often</i>	<i>3 fairly often</i>	<i>2 not much</i>	<i>1 not at all</i>	
learning English online	29.27	29.27	19.51	21.95	0.00	3.66
reading English books	30.95	47.62	14.29	7.14	0.00	4.02
learning English through computer/mobile device programs	31.71	43.90	14.63	4.88	4.88	3.93
learning through TV/radio programs	12.50	22.50	22.50	15.00	27.50	2.78

Despite the linguistic advantages reported above, participants also reported experiencing some challenges regarding language use on campus.

### **5.3. Challenges of English Use at the University and Recommendations for Addressing the Challenges**

Participants identified four challenges with the use of English as a lingua franca at the university. These challenges were seen as the result of (1) the use of both Thai and English in the classroom; (2) the low English proficiency levels of some Thai lecturers, advisors and Thai classmates; (3) need for support with English writing and (4) the lack of translated university informational materials.

#### **a. The Use of both Thai and English in the Classroom**

*Everyone talk in Thai. Even the teachers, they explain in Thai. And then I get nothing about. At that time I cannot listen Thai language. I cannot speak Thai, so I don't get anything about my lesson. And even sometimes teachers, they explain just a short part in English. And then I cannot catch up the whole lesson. (Luke, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

Many participants in both groups shared the sentiments of Luke. They reported that while they had thought English was supposed to be the medium of instruction, lecturers often used Thai. While there were exceptions to this in a number of the classes the participants attended, the use of Thai in the classroom was still cited as a problem by almost half of the participants.

Participants relied on English to communicate and do their academic work. However, after at least a year of living and studying in Thailand, almost all the participants stated that international students should be prepared to use both Thai and English. To prepare, they suggested that international students take Thai lessons before coming. They also suggested that while the university offers a three-month course in Thai entitled *Thai for Daily Life*, it was too short, and needed to be extended. As one participant stated,

*Three months is not enough for practicing and also to learn about Thai language. And they should extend for at least one year for master's students or for PhD. [...] And for next one, more program for international students and Thai students to join together to improve the communication. Like the Thai students can improve English and international students can improve Thai language when they meet each other and they communicate with each other. (Wendy, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)*

Others reported that their lectures often delivered the lecture first in Thai and then in English. Participants expressed empathy for the lecturers who they believed had an extra burden because of the lack of international students' proficiency in Thai and the Thai students' lack of English proficiency. As Luke put it,

*While I stay in the class, I saw my teacher, I feel tired instead of them. She just come to explain in Thai and then come to explain in English. And then she just listen the student presentation in Thai, and then she translate in English. Just answer, like question and answer, she need to translate everything. So I feel tired instead of them. And why they don't, like, let the student try their best? I think all the student can speak it out if we give them or push them. Yes, their chance. I think they can. It is just about language in the class. (Luke, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

**b. The Low English Proficiency Levels of Some Thai Lecturers, Advisors and Thai Classmates**

*Some advisor, you know, they have a lot of knowledge. They're very, very, hmm, have a skill, right? In their area. But they cannot transfer the knowledge to the student much like that, especially in the class. (Vivian, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

While some participants stated that their advisors and lecturers had good English, particularly if these advisors had studied abroad, others stated dissatisfaction with the level of English of both their advisors and lecturers. Three participants from

three different faculties reported being unsatisfied with their lecturers'/advisors' current English proficiency and felt that the low level of English proficiency created obstacles to their learning. While almost all agreed that their lecturers and advisors were quite knowledgeable in their fields of study, some participants felt that their advisors and lecturers lacked sufficient proficiency in English to effectively share their knowledge and expertise with international students.

Participants also felt that their classroom experiences were often less than satisfying because their Thai classmates either lacked proficiency in English or were unwilling to use English. Participants from the science faculties were particularly frustrated by this as they often found themselves with lab partners with whom they could not communicate. One participant remarked, "[...] My lab mates, is very difficult for communicate in English" (Yale, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017). Another participant added, "Because even though they speak English language, but they do not speak it out, just only use their native language" (Kate, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017).

Participants like Kate felt that Thai students appeared to lack confidence, and she thought this was the reason they did not speak English. She said, "I thought that some people, they really wanna speak it up, but they lack the confidence" (Kate, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017). Six other participants shared the sentiment that Thai students lacked confidence to speak English. To communicate with their Thai classmates, participants reported that they did a number of things including simplifying their English and trying to learn more Thai.

*When I go to my lab, mostly I speak English just with my advisor and co-advisor. But for my lab mates, they just . . . They said they want to speak English, but when we speak English, it is difficult to communicate, so I need to adapt with them, try to speak Thai with them.* (Helen, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)

### **c. Need for Support with English Writing**

One requirement for international graduate students to receive their degree from PSU is that they need to get their research manuscript published in a journal. The manuscript is written in English, but participants reported difficulty with their

academic writing ability. Referring back to the English proficiency of their advisors, some participants stated that their advisors lacked sufficient proficiency in English academic writing to be of assistance.

Participants also expressed a need for support from the university to improve their writing,

*And other point for mention to the student who want to attend in PSU. The first, they have to know how to write research article, especially in here if PSU want to improve. They should to hire or make correlation with native English speaker to promote or to give a course for writing research article. (Sam, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

*We have like requirement to make the manuscript or publication, right? So I think they should give us like the training how to write the good manuscript. (Yale, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)*

This support, however, was not always accessible. According to one participant from the Faculty of Economics, there was a course on how to write a manuscript, but the course was conducted in Thai. Additionally, a participant from the Faculty of Medical Technology reported that if there were other resources available to assist her with her writing, she was not always aware of them. She attributed this to the lack of information provided in English. She remarked, “Every email from my department, I have to translate. It is in Thai. And sometimes they attach the PDF file in Thai, so I don’t care. I always miss the special class” (Suzy, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017).

Participants suggested that PSU hire more native English speaking lecturers to teach so that students could get the needed assistance to improve their academic writing. In employing more native speakers of English, Sam hoped to help future international students avoid what he was experiencing, “Because this one I try to write at least ten times. And then ten times and to prepare everything, fix or not, make me unhappy every day” (Sam, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017).

Also, the participants recommended that future international students improve their English proficiency before coming to study abroad. Additionally, one participant

suggested that international students take an internationally recognized English exam such as TOEFL or IELTS before their arrival in Thailand, as they will need to pass such an exam before they are permitted to graduate. The participant argued that by taking the exam before arriving in Thailand, the student would not experience the additional pressure of passing the exam after completing his/her studies. Other focal group participants agreed, citing the pressure they felt to pass the examination and the lack of university resources to assist them in doing so as problematic.

#### **d. The Lack of Translated University Informational Materials**

*Have you ever visit the website by English of PSU? I think English is not clear. [...] Because most of them write Thai is the main, but some necessary information... For example, we want to read the news of PSU by English, cannot find that if most of them are English. (Tom, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)*

A number of participants reported frustration with the lack of English translation of both print and online information on campus. Most announcements, participants reported, were written in Thai. As a result, participants expressed frustration at missing learning opportunities such as workshops or trainings because of being unable to read Thai. Participants stated that they needed access to all information and events so that they would have the same opportunities as Thai students to learn more about their fields. In addition, some participants reported that about half of the workshops/trainings were held in Thai. As Whitney shared,

*Let's say only 50% of that training can attend international student. We cannot attend 100%. You know, if there is 10 times of training, there is only five times for international students, and only five times we cannot attend because this class is only for Thai students. [...] If they would like to make 10 classes... We understand that somewhat in use their own language is better for their student. But if there is 10 course for that semester, we would like to get all 10 course. If the Thai classes they can get 10 course, we can get five course, it's not good.*

[..] *We would like to get equal chance.* (Whitney, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)

The participants expressed a hope that the university would try to cultivate a campus in which English was more widely used and encouraged. With a better English-friendly environment, participants speculated that more international students would be attracted to the university, thereby creating a more international university. Participants felt that the greater presence of English could also serve to encourage Thai students to become more proficient in English.

Finally, participants suggested that the university take steps to better integrate international students and their Thai counterparts. One area in which changes could be made was in housing. Currently, international and Thai students are housed separately. This segregated housing arrangement, the participants felt, limited their experience and access to information and opportunities to learn with and from their Thai classmates.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

This study aimed to capture how English was actually operating within an ASEAN-based study abroad context. The findings revealed that participants found themselves having to use English on a daily basis.

In their academic lives, students relied on English to talk with professors, advisors, and classmates, understand lectures and assigned readings and complete written assignments, including theses. Although some of their professors and Thai classmates used Thai in the classroom, part of academic success was firmly rooted in students' ability to navigate in English.

Participant's use of English was not restricted to their academic lives. With only one participant considering herself proficient in Thai, English was, with few exceptions, the language used in participants' social lives. While their pool of friends largely consisted of those who shared their mother tongue, many had friends who were international students and, as a result, English was used often.

The immersion into English had a significant impact on the participants' perceptions of and attitudes toward English. Participants reported being more competent in English and experiencing less anxiety about using English. This finding aligns with and supports what Baker (2009) and Kaypak and Ortactepe's (2014) found about students' feelings and perceptions about the use of language in ELF contexts and Virkkula's and Nikula's (2010) findings that using English with ELF speakers might make the study abroad students feel less anxious and more confident using the language.

In spite of these advantages, this study has also indicated studying abroad at a university in Thailand was challenging for international students in terms of language use. Language use in the program and on campus was not limited to English. Without Thai proficiency, the international students sometimes had to struggle with the use of Thai in the classroom. There were also issues created, participants felt, as a result of their professors' and classmates' limited English proficiency, which sometimes impeded their learning and communication. And with regards to the use of Thai rather than English on campus, international students were often unaware of important events and/or information. The participants, although satisfied with their study abroad experience, provided useful suggestions for the university to improve its international program as well as useful recommendations for future international students.

## **7. Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has provided a more in-depth look at how English is operating in an ASEAN ELF study abroad context. It supports previous studies' findings that studying abroad in an ELF context offers a number of benefits to participants. However, there is still much to be learned. Future research should look at the impact studying abroad in an ELF context has on students' actual proficiency levels. It is also recommended that future studies be conducted in other ELF ASEAN contexts so as to examine if the issues participants faced in this study are representative of those faced by international students in other ASEAN nations. And, if so, what the organizations that support and promote student mobility and the participating universities can do to improve these international programs.



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# **Appendix A**

## **Questionnaire**



## Questionnaire

**Research Topic:** The Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)  
**Context:** A Case Study of ASEAN International Students at a Thai University

Participants:

The purpose of this survey is to gather primary data for my research as titled above. This is a requirement for my thesis in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree in Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL). Therefore, every single piece of information from you is very important and valuable. I promise that all the information you provide in this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other purposes. Your truthful answers will be highly appreciated.

There are three sections in the questionnaire:

- Section I: Demographic Information
- Section II: Language Use and Language Development
- Section III: Learner Attitudes Toward English

Thank you so much for your cooperation.

Mr. Sopheak Thon

Candidate of Master of Arts in TEIL

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University

### Section I: Demographic Information

Please provide your personal data below:

1. Email:..... Tel:.....
2. Gender:    Male        Female
3. Age:.....years old
4. Country of origin:.....
5. Degree:    Master      PhD        Post-Doctor
6. Faculty:        Agro-Industry                            Dentistry  
 Economics                                    Engineering  
 Environmental Management            Law  
 Liberal Arts                                    Management Sciences  
 Medical Technology                    Medicine  
 Natural Resources                        Nursing  
 Pharmaceutical Sciences                Science  
 Traditional Thai Medicine            Veterinary Sciences  
 Other (please specify).....
7. In which plan are you enrolled?    Plan A1      Plan A2      Plan B
8. How long have you been living in Thailand?  
 a. 12-18 months        b. 19-24 months      c. 25-30 months  
 d. 31-36 months        e. over 36 months (please specify).....
9. Do you live in Thailand with your family or alone?  
 a. with family        b. alone (skip question #10)
10. How many family members are you living with?..... Who are they  
(e.g. wife, children, etc.)?.....
11. What kind of job do you want to do after your graduation? .....
12. Before you came to Thailand, where did you plan to work after your graduation?  
 a. in your home country            b. in Thailand  
 c. other (please specify).....

13. Now that you have been in Thailand studying, do you still plan to work in the same place after your graduation?

- a. Yes. Why? .....
- .....
- b. No. If no, where?..... And Why? .....
- .....

14. Please tick the box in front of the one statement that best describes your friends in Thailand.

- a. I have a lot of friends in Thailand.
- b. I have a fair number of friends in Thailand.
- c. I have few friends in Thailand.

15. Please tick the box in front of the one statement that best further describes your friends in Thailand.

- a. The majority of my friends in Thailand are from my home country.
- b. The majority of my friends in Thailand are international students.
- c. The majority of my friends in Thailand are Thai.
- d. About 50% of my friends in Thailand are from my home country, and the other 50% are international students.

16. Below you will find five reasons for choosing to study in Thailand. Using a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing the **most important** reason and 5, the **least important**, please number your reasons for choosing to study in Thailand.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. the availability of scholarships
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. the inexpensive cost of living in Thailand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. the quality of the Thai educational system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. an interest in living in another country.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. an interest in working in Thailand after graduation.

If there were other reasons, please specify those here .....

.....



## Section II. Language Use and Language Development

1. How many courses have you taken as part of your study program since arriving at PSU? .....
2. How many of these courses were conducted in English? .....
3. Please tick the boxes below to indicate, on average, how often English was used in those courses in question #2.

N°	Questions	0% (1)	10-30% (2)	40-60% (3)	70-90% (4)	100% (5)
1	Of those courses conducted in English, what percent of the time did your lecturers speak English in your class?					
2	Of those courses conducted in English, what percent of the materials in your course books/documents were in English?					
3	Of those courses conducted in English, what percent of your classroom activities were conducted in English?					
4	Of those courses conducted in English, what percent of the time did you speak English with your classmates?					

**A. Your use of English in your home country.**

4. When you were in your home country, approximately how many hours did you **speak** English during a normal week?

- a. not at all       b. 1-5 hours       c. 6-10 hours       d. 11-15 hours  
 e. 16-20 hours       f. 21-25 hours       g. over 25 hours

5. When you were in your home country, for what purposes did you **speak** English? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N°	Purposes	5	4	3	2	1
1	participating in classroom activities					
2	talking with teachers					
3	talking with foreign tourists/NGO staff, etc.					
4	talking with friends					
5	using school and other administration services					
6	other (please specify)..... .....					

6. When you were in your home country, approximately how many hours did you **listen** to English during a normal week?

- a. not at all       b. 1-5 hours       c. 6-10 hours       d. 11-15 hours  
 e. 16-20 hours       f. 21-25 hours       g. over 25 hours

7. For what purposes did you **listen** to English when you were in your home country? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N <sup>o</sup>	Purposes	5	4	3	2	1
1	listening to lectures					
2	communicating with teachers					
3	communicating with foreign tourists/NGO staff, etc.					
4	communicating with friends					
5	socializing					
6	listening to news/other forms of entertainment (e.g. songs, TV programs, films)					
7	using school/administration services					
8	other (please specify)..... .....					

8. When you were in your home country, approximately how many hours did you **read** in English during a normal week?

- a. not at all       b. 1-5 hours       c. 6-10 hours       d. 11-15 hours  
 e. 16-20 hours       f. 21-25 hours       g. over 25 hours

9. For what purposes did you **read** in English when you were in your home country? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

Nº	Purposes	5	4	3	2	1
1	reading books/journal articles					
2	using social media					
3	reading letters/emails					
4	reading announcements/advertisements					
5	shopping					
6	reading food menus					
7	reading newspapers/magazines					
8	other (please specify)..... .....					

10. When you were in your home country, approximately how many hours did you **write** in English during a normal week?

- a. not at all       b. 1-5 hours       c. 6-10 hours       d. 11-15 hours  
 e. 16-20 hours       f. 21-25 hours       g. over 25 hours

11. For what purposes did you **write** in English when you were in your home country? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N <sup>o</sup>	Purposes	5	4	3	2	1
1	writing homework/assignments					
2	writing in exams					
3	writing research proposals					
4	writing research papers					
5	writing letters/emails					
6	using social media					
7	writing personal notes/diary					
8	other (please specify)..... .....					

**B. Your use of English in Thailand.**

12. During a normal week, approximately how many hours do you **speak** English in Thailand?

- a. 1-5 hours                       b. 6-10 hours                       c. 11-15 hours  
 d. 16-20 hours                       e. 21-25 hours                       f. over 25 hours

13. For what purposes do you **speak** English in Thailand? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N <sup>o</sup>	Reasons	5	4	3	2	1
1	communicating in class					
2	communicating with my advisor					
3	talking with friends					
4	socializing					
5	shopping					
6	ordering food					
7	using PSU and other administration services					
8	other (please specify)..... .....					

14. During a normal week, approximately how many hours do you **listen** to English in Thailand?

- a. 1-5 hours                       b. 6-10 hours                       c. 11-15 hours  
 d. 16-20 hours                       e. 21-25 hours                       f. over 25 hours

15. For what purposes do you **listen** to English in Thailand? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N <sup>o</sup>	Reasons	5	4	3	2	1
1	listening to lectures					
2	communicating with my advisor					
3	communicating with friends					
4	socializing					
5	listening to news/other forms of entertainment (e.g. songs, TV programs, films)					
6	shopping					
7	ordering food					
8	using PSU and other administration services					
9	other (please specify)..... .....					

16. During a normal week, approximately how many hours do you **read** in English in Thailand?

- a. 1-5 hours                       b. 6-10 hours                       c. 11-15 hours  
 d. 16-20 hours                       e. 21-25 hours                       f. over 25 hours

17. For what purposes do you **read** in English in Thailand (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N <sup>o</sup>	Reasons	5	4	3	2	1
1	reading journal articles/books					
2	using social media					
3	reading letters/emails					
4	reading announcements/advertisements					
5	shopping					
6	reading food menus					
7	reading newspapers/magazines					
8	other (please specify)..... .....					



18. During a normal week, approximately how many hours do you **write** in English in Thailand?

- a. 1-5 hours                       b. 6-10 hours                       c. 11-15 hours  
 d. 16-20 hours                       e. 21-25 hours                       f. over 25 hours

19. For what purposes do you **write** in English in Thailand? (please tick the boxes in the table according to the scale below)

**5 = Always**

**4 = Usually**

**3 = Sometimes**

**2 = Rarely**

**1 = Never**

N <sup>o</sup>	Reasons	5	4	3	2	1
1	writing homework/assignments					
2	writing in exams					
3	writing research proposals/research papers					
4	writing letters/emails					
5	using social media					
6	writing personal notes/diary					
7	other (please specify).....					

20. Have you ever taken any English courses in Thailand?

- Yes                       No (skip question #21)

21. Please name the **English course(s)** you have taken and the length of the course in the table below. Tick your reason for taking the course(s).

Course Name (e.g. English Writing Skills)	Length (e.g. 3 months)	Reasons for Taking the Course(s)
1.		<input type="checkbox"/> Required by PSU <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested by my advisor <input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to improve my English <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify).....
2.		<input type="checkbox"/> Required by PSU <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested by my advisor <input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to improve my English

		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify).....
3.		<input type="checkbox"/> Required by PSU <input type="checkbox"/> Suggested by my advisor <input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to improve my English <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify).....

22. Since being in Thailand, have you studied on your own to improve your English proficiency?

- Yes       No (skip question # 23).

If yes, why? .....

.....

.....

23. If you have practiced English on your own, which methods have you used?

Please tick the boxes in front of the activities that you have done, and tick the boxes to the right to indicate how often you have done each activity.

**5 = Every day**

**4 = A few times a week**

**3 = A few times a month**

**2 = A few times a year**

**1 = Never**

✓	Activities	Frequency				
		5	4	3	2	1
	learning English online					
	reading English books					
	learning English through computer/mobile device programs					
	learning through TV/radio programs					
	other (please specify) .....					
	other (please specify) .....					

24. How would you rate your Thai language proficiency?

- a. excellent       b. very good       c. good  
 d. moderate       e. poor       f. very poor

25. **Before you came to Thailand**, how often did you expect to use English in Thailand? (please tick the boxes below)

	<b>Very often</b> <b>(5)</b>	<b>Often</b> <b>(4)</b>	<b>Fairly often</b> <b>(3)</b>	<b>Not much</b> <b>(2)</b>	<b>Not at all</b> <b>(1)</b>
<b>Speaking</b>					
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Reading</b>					
<b>Writing</b>					

26. How would you rate your anxiety about using English in Thailand **before coming to Thailand**? (please tick the boxes below)

	<b>Very high</b> <b>(5)</b>	<b>High</b> <b>(4)</b>	<b>Moderate</b> <b>(3)</b>	<b>A little</b> <b>(2)</b>	<b>None</b> <b>(1)</b>
<b>Speaking</b>					
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Reading</b>					
<b>Writing</b>					

27. How would you rate your anxiety about using English in Thailand **currently**? (please tick the boxes below)

	<b>Very high</b> <b>(5)</b>	<b>High</b> <b>(4)</b>	<b>Moderate</b> <b>(3)</b>	<b>A little</b> <b>(2)</b>	<b>None</b> <b>(1)</b>
<b>Speaking</b>					
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Reading</b>					
<b>Writing</b>					

28. Please tick the boxes in front of the activities you do in your free time, and tick the boxes to the right of them to indicate which language(s) you use when doing those activities. **You can tick more than one language for each activity.**

✓	Activities	Languages				
		Mother Tongue	English	Thai	Other (please specify)	Other (please specify)
	watching TV shows/YouTube					
	using social media such as Facebook, LINE, Instagram, etc.					
	hanging out with friends					
	playing sports					
	going shopping					
	participating in religious activities					
	participating in activities organized by faculties or PSU student groups					
	other (please specify) .....					
	.....					
	other (please specify) .....					
	.....					

**C. Your actual English proficiency**

29. What was the latest standardized English proficiency test you took?

- a. PSU TEP     
 b. CU TEP     
 c. IELTS     
 d. TOEFL  
 e. TOEIC     
 f. Other (please specify) .....

30. When did you take the above test? .....

31. What was the score you received in that test? .....

***D. Your perceived English proficiency***32. How would you rate your **current** English proficiency? (please tick the boxes)

	<b>Advanced</b> (5)	<b>High Intermediate</b> (4)	<b>Intermediate</b> (3)	<b>High Beginner</b> (2)	<b>Beginner</b> (1)
<b>Speaking</b>					
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Reading</b>					
<b>Writing</b>					
<b>Grammar</b>					
<b>Vocabulary</b>					
<b>Overall</b>					

33. How would you rate your English proficiency **before you came to Thailand?**

(please tick the boxes)

	<b>Advanced</b> (5)	<b>High Intermediate</b> (4)	<b>Intermediate</b> (3)	<b>High Beginner</b> (2)	<b>Beginner</b> (1)
<b>Speaking</b>					
<b>Listening</b>					
<b>Reading</b>					
<b>Writing</b>					
<b>Grammar</b>					
<b>Vocabulary</b>					
<b>Overall</b>					

34. How much do you think each factor in the table below has affected your English proficiency? Please tick the boxes according to the scale below.

*5 = a lot*

*4 = a fair amount*

*3 = moderately*

*2 = a little*

*1 = not affected it at all*

**a. Speaking:**

Nº	Factors	5	4	3	2	1
1	use of English on the PSU campus					
2	use of English by your lecturers					
3	use of English by your classmates					
4	use of English by your advisor					
5	use of English by your friends					
6	use of English for socializing					
7	other .....					
8	other .....					

**b. Listening:**

Nº	Factors	5	4	3	2	1
1	use of English on the PSU campus					
2	use of English by your lecturers					
3	use of English by your classmates					
4	use of English by your advisor					
5	use of English by your friends					
6	use of English for socializing					
7	other .....					
8	other .....					

**c. Reading:**

Nº	Factors	5	4	3	2	1
1	use of English on PSU campus					
2	reading journal articles/books					
3	using social media					
4	use of English to complete assignments					
5	English self-study					
6	other .....					
7	other .....					

**d. Writing:**

Nº	Factors	5	4	3	2	1
1	writing homework/assignment					
2	writing in exams					
3	writing research proposals/research papers					
4	writing letters/emails					
5	using social media					
6	writing personal notes/diary					
7	other .....					
8	other .....					

### Section III: Learner Attitudes toward English

A. This section is designed to find out your attitudes toward English **before arriving in Thailand**. Please tick the boxes that most accurately capture your feelings about the statements provided.

*5 = Strongly agree*

*4 = Agree*

*3 = Neither agree nor disagree*

*2 = Disagree*

*1 = Strongly disagree*

1.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>speak</b> English was important for my <b>studies</b> .					
2	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English was important for my <b>studies</b> .					
3	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>read</b> in English was important for my <b>studies</b> .					
4	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>write</b> in English was important for my <b>studies</b> .					
5	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> was important for my <b>studies</b> .					
6	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> was important for my <b>studies</b> .					

2.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
7	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>speak</b> English was important for my <b>career</b> .					
8	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English was important for my <b>career</b> .					
9	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>read</b> in English was important for my <b>career</b> .					
10	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>write</b> in English was important for my <b>career</b> .					
11	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> was important for my <b>career</b> .					
12	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> was important for my <b>career</b> .					



3.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
13	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>speak</b> English was important for my <b>social life</b> .					
14	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English was important for my <b>social life</b> .					
15	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>read</b> in English was important for my <b>social life</b> .					
16	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>write</b> in English was important for my <b>social life</b> .					
17	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> was important for my <b>social life</b> .					
18	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> was important for my <b>social life</b> .					

4.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
19	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>speak</b> English was important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
20	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English was important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
21	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>read</b> in English was important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
22	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that being able to <b>write</b> in English was important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
23	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> was important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
24	Before coming to Thailand, I thought that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> was important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					

**B.** This section is designed to find out your **current attitudes** toward English. Please tick the boxes that most accurately capture your feelings about the statements provided.

*5 = Strongly agree*

*4 = Agree*

*3 = Neither agree nor disagree*

*2 = Disagree*

*1 = Strongly disagree*

5.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
25	Now I think that being able to <b>speak</b> English is important for my <b>studies</b> .					
26	Now I think that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English is important for my <b>studies</b> .					
27	Now I think that being able to <b>read</b> in English is important for my <b>studies</b> .					
28	Now I think that being able to <b>write</b> in English is important for my <b>studies</b> .					
29	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> is important for my <b>studies</b> .					
30	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> is important for my <b>studies</b> .					

6.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
31	Now I think that being able to <b>speak</b> English is important for my <b>career</b> .					
32	Now I think that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English is important for my <b>career</b> .					
33	Now I think that being able to <b>read</b> in English is important for my <b>career</b> .					
34	Now I think that being able to <b>write</b> in English is important for my <b>career</b> .					
35	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> is important for my <b>career</b> .					
36	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> is important for my <b>career</b> .					

7.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
37	Now I think that being able to <b>speak</b> English is important for my <b>social life</b> .					
38	Now I think that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English is important for my <b>social life</b> .					
39	Now I think that being able to <b>read</b> in English is important for my <b>social life</b> .					
40	Now I think that being able to <b>write</b> in English is important for my <b>social life</b> .					
41	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> is important for my <b>social life</b> .					
42	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> is important for my <b>social life</b> .					

8.

Nº	Statements	5	4	3	2	1
43	Now I think that being able to <b>speak</b> English is important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
44	Now I think that being able to <b>understand</b> spoken English is important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
45	Now I think that being able to <b>read</b> in English is important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
46	Now I think that being able to <b>write</b> in English is important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
47	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>vocabulary</b> is important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					
48	Now I think that knowledge of English <b>grammar</b> is important for me to <b>use technology</b> .					

C. Do you have any additional comments to add about any changes in your attitude toward English since living in Thailand? .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Appendix B**  
**Paper 1**

**The Use of English in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context: A Study of ASEAN  
International Students at a Thai University\***

Sopheak Thon\*\*

Kathleen Nicoletti\*\*\*

**Abstract**

The number of study abroad programs is growing in the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Within these programs English is serving as a lingua franca. However, there have been few studies that have examined this emerging linguistic terrain. In particular, while many ASEAN study abroad programs state that English is used as the lingua franca, little, if anything, is known about what that usage entails.

The study reported on in this article attempted to begin to address this by investigating how often and for what purposes English was used in the lives of 55 ASEAN international students participating in a study abroad program at a Thai university. The study examined the role of English in the students' lives, both inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, the study attempted to determine what effect, if any, this usage had on students' anxiety about using English. Findings showed that the participants used English frequently and extensively for both academic and social purposes during their time in Thailand. Students also reported having lower levels of anxiety about using English after a year or more of studying in Thailand. These findings have significance for students who are considering participating in a study abroad program in which English serves as the lingua franca and those interested in having a better understanding of how English as a lingua franca functions within such programs.

**Keywords:** Study abroad; English as a lingua franca (ELF); ASEAN

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## Introduction

The term *study abroad* is used to refer to a short or long-term educational program conducted in a foreign country in which the students are awarded credits to fulfill degree requirements in their home educational institution. In some cases, the term refers to or includes the pursuance of a full degree at an overseas university. There are several forms, levels and lengths of study abroad programs (Education Abroad Glossary, 2010; Ballah, 2013).

Study abroad programs have played an increasingly larger role in the lives of students around the world (Dwyer, 2009). This is also true in Asia where there has been a concentrated effort to encourage student mobility within the region. This effort can be seen through the establishment of regional student mobility programs such as the student mobility program established by the Great Mekong Sub-region (Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and China) together with Korea and Japan, the Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand Student Mobility Program (MIT) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN) (Hepworth, 2010; Hénard, Bonichon, Maulana, Iqbal, & Oratmangun, 2016; "The AUN's Strategic Focus," 2016).

An emphasis on studying abroad can also be seen in the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) where, in the last five years, the number of international students studying in neighboring ASEAN countries has increased ("ASEAN Poised to Usher," 2014; Hénard, et al., 2016). The ASEAN member country of Thailand has played an active role in encouraging student mobility and study abroad in an effort to foster regional development. To this end, steps have been taken to (1) promote one-structured education systems in the region; (2) create a common credit transfer system; (3) conduct joint research projects; (4) reinforce the current cooperative network amid higher institutions in ASEAN; (5) enhance the quantity and quality of human resources and (6) encourage collaboration among academics, researchers and scholars in all member countries of ASEAN (Hepworth, 2010; Hénard, et al., 2016; "The AUN's Strategic Focus," 2016).

English has long acted as a medium of instruction in many study abroad programs and served as a shared communicative language among study abroad students (Kaypak & Ortactepe, 2014). This is especially true in study abroad programs in the member countries of ASEAN, an association in which English was declared the official

language (Kirkpatrick, 2010) and, consequently, where fluency in English is widely promoted. So it is believed that a study abroad experience in an English as a lingua franca country might serve to better position international students within a global context, particularly when returning to work in their ASEAN home countries, which is increasingly relying on English.

### **Study Abroad in an ELF Context**

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is defined as a contact language used to communicate among non-native English speakers having different native languages and different cultures (Firth, 1996). Seidlhofer (2011) asserts that the term ELF denotes a linguistic environment in which English is used for communication by speakers of different mother tongues and usually in environments in which English is the only shared language. Jenkins (2009) argues that native speakers of English are often also part of an ELF community.

The number of students who are studying abroad in ASEAN ELF contexts has been growing, yet there has been little research on these contexts. The research that does exist suggests that such an experience can help students develop a better attitude toward their English use. For instance, Baker (2009) and Kaypak and Ortactepe (2014) reported that a study abroad experience in an ELF context enabled international students to develop a better attitude toward English use with regards to their cross-cultural communications in English. Specifically, after having studied abroad, students had a better understanding of the importance of fluency and reported feeling less worried and more relaxed when using English. Additionally, as a result of their experience abroad, the students reported they were now more willing to use the language so as to communicate more effectively. Virkkula and Nikula (2010) reported a similar impact. These authors found that after studying abroad in an ELF context, students were more motivated to speak. The participants also reported that emotional obstacles, i.e. worries about grammatical correctness and the ability to maintain good communication, were reduced, resulting in a more optimistic view about their ability to be successful in language learning. In summary, the findings from each of the aforementioned studies suggest that these changes in students' attitudes led to their becoming more competent and self-confident speakers of English, and that these changes could be attributed to the fact that their interlocutors

were also non-native speakers of English. Because of the latter, students felt less self-conscious and more willing to use the language.

### **Rationale and Research Questions**

As has been previously stated, in ASEAN countries such as Thailand, universities are encouraging students from neighboring countries to study in their countries and many students are doing just that. These programs inform students that English will be used as a lingua franca during their studies. What is not at all clear, however, is the extent to which English is actually used within these study abroad contexts. In the Thai context, this is especially important to know given the abundance of literature documenting Thai's struggle with using English (Baker, 2008, 2012; Foley, 2005; Bruner, Sinwongsuwat, & Shimray, 2014; Khamkhien, 2010; Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2003). Determining how much English is used and for what purposes will provide some much needed specifics in terms of actually defining and understanding what is meant when universities use the term ELF in their study abroad programs.

In addition to trying to determine how often English was used and for what purposes, this study looked at the effects of this usage on students' perceptions of and attitudes toward English. Findings on various aspects will be discussed in future articles, but in this article the authors share findings about one aspect of students' attitudes and that is students' anxiety around using English. While a review of the literature suggests that a study abroad experience can have a positive impact on students' attitudes, the researchers were especially interested in the effects on anxiety, as a substantial amount of research on second language learning (Krashen, 2009; MacIntyre, 2007; Khaldieh, 2000; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) points to the critical role anxiety can play. In particular, the researchers wanted to assess whether the ELF study abroad experience could lower students' anxiety levels around using English. Consequently, the research questions reported on in this article were:

1. For non-native English speaking students studying in an ELF country, how often is English used and for what purposes?
2. What impact, if any, does this study abroad experience have on students' anxiety about using English?



## Research Methodology

### 1. Participants

Fifty-five graduate students (26 male and 29 female) from six ASEAN countries including Cambodia (n=14), Indonesia (n=18), Laos (n=1), Myanmar (n=10), Philippines (n=3) and Vietnam (n=9) who were studying at Prince of Songkla University (PSU) Hat Yai Campus, Thailand, were selected using purposive sampling. These students were selected from an overall population of 217 graduate students at PSU. All participants were from ASEAN member nations and all had been in Thailand for more than one year. The latter criterion was established so that the participants would have enough overseas experience to answer the questions asked.

Studying at 12 different faculties (in the fields of the sciences and social sciences), 39 participants were Master students, and 16 were Ph.D. students. Their ages ranged from 23 to 58 with an average age of 30. The participants were enrolled in three different study plans, 37 in Plan A1 (research only), 17 in Plan A2 (research and coursework) and 1 in Plan B (coursework only). Thirty-six participants (65.45%) had been in Thailand for 12-18 months; seven (12.73%), 19-25 months; nine (16.36%), 26-32 months and three (5.45%), over 36 months.

The participants chose Thailand as their study destination for five main reasons. The first reason was reported to be the availability of scholarships. The second was an interest in experiencing life in another country, followed by the quality of the Thai educational system and the inexpensive cost of living in Thailand. The least important reason cited was an interest in working in Thailand after graduation.

## 2. Instrument and Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaires were used as the means of data collection. The first section (15 items) solicited participants' demographic information and general information about their lives in Thailand as it related to English use. The second section (34 items) pertained to participants' frequency of and purposes for using English in Thailand. This section also solicited information about the use of English in students' courses and their perceptions of their English proficiency and anxiety levels about using English before coming to Thailand and after at least one year in Thailand.

Types of items in the questionnaire included five-point Likert scales, multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was drafted by the researcher and then evaluated by a panel of three experts from the Faculty of Liberal Arts at PSU. Recommendations for revisions of some questionnaire items were made. The questionnaire was revised accordingly and checked by the panel a second time and additional revisions were then made. Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) was calculated on the final revised questionnaire to check validity. The questionnaire was found to have a high level of validity (IOC = 0.904).

To ensure reliability, the questionnaires were piloted with ten students who were selected using the same criteria as those in the final study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaires was calculated and showed that the questionnaires were highly reliable, with an overall reliability of 0.977. Based on comments and suggestions from pilot study participants, minor revisions to the questionnaire were made.

Fifty-five sets of printed questionnaires were distributed directly by the researcher to the participants in the months of September and November 2016. The return rate was 100%.

## 3. Data Analysis

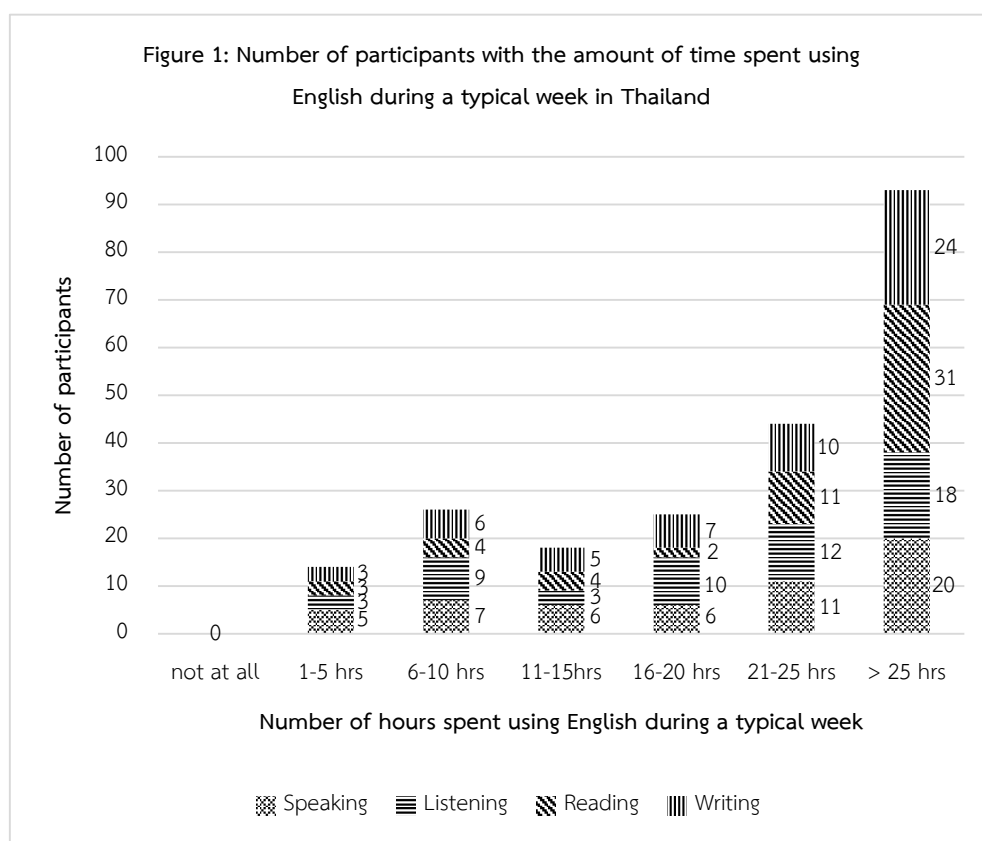
Questionnaire data were first coded using Microsoft Excel and then imported to SPSS 17 and analyzed quantitatively. A descriptive statistical analysis was performed to identify answers to the research questions. A quantitative method was applied to analyze frequency, means, percentages and standard deviation of students' demographic information, amount of time they spent using English and activities in which they did so, their anxiety about using English and their perceived English proficiency. To see if there

was a significant difference between their past and current anxiety as well as perceived English proficiency levels, t-tests were also performed.

## Findings

### 1. Frequency and Purposes of Using English

Answers to both research questions were acquired from the quantitative data analysis. Regarding research question 1, participants reported that during their time in Thailand, they had the opportunity to use English frequently for a number of academic and social purposes. Figure 1 indicates that during their studies abroad many participants used English (in all four areas – reading, writing, listening and speaking) for more than 25 hours during a typical week.



As illustrated in Figure 1, among the 55 participants there was a small number who used just a little English, five hours or less per week. Five participants reportedly spoke English in Thailand for 1-5 hours. And only three listened to, read and wrote in English for 1-5 hours during a typical week. In contrast, a large number of participants used

English in Thailand very frequently during a typical week. Twenty reported speaking English for over 25 hours while 18 listened to English for over 25 hours. For those who read in English for over 25 hours, there were up to 31 participants. Twenty-four participants reported spending more than 25 hours per week writing in English.

### 1.1. The Use of English for Academic Purposes

Participants reported using English in all aspects of their academic lives. The vast majority of class lectures were given in English as were classroom discussions. Course materials were written in English. Additionally, participants reported needing their English skills to communicate with their advisors, read journal articles/books and write research papers. English was also needed to complete written assignments and exams. Theses (including proposals) and academic articles for publications also needed to be written in English.

Table 1: Academic activities in which the participants used English in Thailand

Activities	5 (always)	4 (usually)	3 (sometimes)	2 (rarely)	1 (never)
1. communicating with advisors	46 (83.64%)	4 (7.27%)	4 (7.27%)	0	1 (1.82%)
2. reading journal articles/books	46 (83.64%)	5 (9.09%)	2 (3.64%)	1 (1.82%)	1 (1.82%)
3. writing research proposals/research papers	47 (85.45%)	3 (5.45%)	2 (3.64%)	2 (3.64%)	1 (1.82%)
4. communicating in class	33 (60.00%)	15 (27.27%)	7 (12.73%)	0	0
5. listening to lectures	34 (61.82%)	10 (18.18%)	8 (14.55%)	2 (3.64%)	1 (1.82%)
6. writing homework/assignments	42 (76.36%)	8 (14.55%)	3 (5.45%)	0	2 (3.64%)
7. completing exams	40 (72.73%)	9 (16.36%)	3 (5.45%)	1 (1.82%)	2 (3.64%)

As table 1 shows, up to 47 participants (85.45%) reported always using English to write proposals/research papers. And 46 participants (83.64%) reported always using English to communicate with their advisors. The same number of participants reported relying entirely on English to read journal articles/books. In the same way, there was a large number of participants who always used English for the rest of the academic purposes while very few (from 1 to 8) reported not using English frequently (sometimes, rarely and never). Therefore, even though sometimes Thai was used in these students' academic situations, English was still used more widely.

### 1.2. The Use of English for Social Purposes

While participants reported using English frequently for academic purposes, they also reported using it extensively in their social lives. As shown in table 2, English was frequently used in a range of activities.

Table 2: English used in the participants' free time activities

	Activities	% of time English Used
1	using social media such as Facebook, LINE, Instagram, etc.	94.55%
2	participating in activities organized by faculties or PSU student groups	94.34%
3	watching TV shows/YouTube	92.45%
4	going shopping	84.91%
5	hanging out with friends	83.33%
6	playing sports	77.78%
7	participating in religious activities	67.39%

Participants depended on English to participate in social activities. Among those activities, the participants most frequently used English when using social media and participating in activities organized by faculties or university student groups. Although used least frequently than in other activities, English was still needed 67.39% of the time when participating in religious activities. Additionally, while participants reported that their pool of friends largely consisted of those who shared their mother tongue, many had friends who were international students and, therefore, English was needed to establish and maintain these relationships.

## 2. Participants' Anxiety about Using English

As previously noted, some studies have found that using English in an ELF context positively affected international students' attitudes toward their English use. With an aim to explore whether the Thai ELF context is helpful in the same way for ASEAN international students, the present study also looked at the impact of study abroad experience on students' anxiety. Therefore, participants were asked to reflect on their anxiety about using English before coming to Thailand and after having studied in the Thai ELF context for at least one year.

When using English in Thailand, they reported having less anxiety than they had previous to their arrival in Thailand. As presented in table 3, based on a five-point Likert scale – 5=very high, 4=high, 3=moderate, 2=a little and 1=none, participants' actual anxiety decreased in all areas, with a significant decrease in the areas of speaking and reading. Participants' overall actual anxiety was quite low – in between moderate and a little.

Table 3: Participants' reported change in anxiety levels about using English

Areas	Anxiety before arriving in Thailand		Anxiety after at least one year in Thailand		t	d.f.	Sig. (2-tailed)
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.			
Speaking	2.91	1.09	2.58	1.08	2.100*	54	0.04
Listening	2.91	0.99	2.64	1.16	1.695	54	0.10
Reading	2.75	1.09	2.42	1.17	2.194*	54	0.03
Writing	2.84	1.08	2.56	1.17	1.817	54	0.07

\* Significant at 0.05 level

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to capture how English was actually operating within an ASEAN-based study abroad context, particularly how often and for what purposes it was used by the ASEAN international students. The findings revealed that participants found themselves having to use English on a daily basis for both academic and social purposes.

In their academic lives, students relied on English to talk with professors, advisors, and classmates, understand lectures and assigned readings and complete written assignments, including theses. Although some of their professors and Thai classmates occasionally used Thai in the classroom, academic success was firmly rooted in students' ability to navigate in English.

Participants' use of English was not restricted to their academic lives. With only one participant considering himself proficient in Thai, English was, with few exceptions, the language used in participants' social lives.

This English immersion appeared to have less anxiety when using English. Participants reported being more competent in English and experiencing less anxiety about using it. This finding aligns with what Baker (2009) and Kaypak and Ortactepe (2014) found about students' feelings and perceptions about the use of language in ELF contexts, and Virkkula's and Nikula's (2010) findings that using English with ELF speakers might make the study abroad students feel less anxious and more confident using the language.

Findings from this study provide a glimpse into how English is operating within this Thai ELF university context. They suggest that even though English is not the native language of the country, students will have ample opportunities to use English and that this use may result in students feeling less anxious about using English and therefore more willing and able to do so. Future studies that investigate other benefits of studying in an ELF context are recommended.

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**Appendix C**  
**Paper 2**

## The Use of English as a Lingua Franca in a Thai University

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### Abstract

This article reports on part of study aimed to explore a group of international students' experiences using English as a lingua franca (ELF) at a university in Thailand. Fifty-five graduate students from six ASEAN member nations studying at Prince of Songkla University-Hat Yai participated in the first part of this study, in which data were collected through the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires were employed to ascertain how often English was used and for what purposes, as well as participants' attitudes toward their use of English. Findings from the questionnaires revealed that English played an extensive role in the participants' academic and social lives and that participants felt that their extensive use of English bolstered their English proficiency levels and lowered their anxiety about using English (Thon and Nicoletti, 2017). In the second part of the study, which is the focus of this article, two focus groups consisting of 12 of the 55 participants were conducted to investigate participants' perspectives on the challenges of using English during their studies in Thailand. Focus group data revealed that participants' reliance on English as the central means of communications played a role in limiting their access to knowledge and resources. Participants reported that they often faced language barriers with Thai classmates, advisors and lecturers and information on websites and signage was sometimes limited to Thai, thereby rendering it inaccessible to participants. Additionally, participants encountered problems as

a result of not having an adequate knowledge of academic English. This proved problematic in terms of producing papers and theses. The findings from this study suggest that using English as a lingua franca in study abroad contexts is not without its challenges for both the international students studying abroad and the universities that host these students. These challenges are explored in this article and recommendations given for addressing them.

**Keywords:** Study abroad, student mobility, English as a lingua franca (ELF), ASEAN

## Background

In 2013, there were almost 4.3 million students who pursued their tertiary education outside of their home country. Among the international students enrolled globally, 53% were from Asia, with the majority from China, India and Korea. Geographically, the leading study destination at the university level for foreign students is Europe. It hosts almost half of all international students (48%). The second destination is North America, hosting 21%. Oceania receives less than 10% of foreign students; however that percentage has been increasing. As more and more countries in Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America are making their higher education institutions more international, the number of foreign students in those regions is also increasing (OECD, 2013).

Although intra-ASEAN mobility of students for higher education remains low compared to the outward mobility of students (see Figure 1), there has been a steady increase in the last five years (Hénard, Bonichon, Maulana, Iqbal, & Oratmangun, 2016). This is particularly true in Thailand where, for the past decade, the Thai government has attempted to attract international students to its universities.

Country	Total Outbound Students	Intra-ASEAN Mobility	Percentage
Malaysia	56,260	2,766	4.92%
Vietnam	53,546	2,003	3.74%
Indonesia	39,098	6,579	16.83%
Thailand	25,517	1,036	4.06%
Singapore	22,578	855	3.79%
Philippines	11,454	507	4.43%
Myanmar	6,388	1,833	28.69%
Lao PDR	4,985	3,184	63.87%
Cambodia	4,221	1,468	34.78%
Brunei	3,361	309	9.19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>227,408</b>	<b>20,540</b>	<b>9.03%</b>

**Figure 1: Intra- and inter-regional mobility of ASEAN students for higher education in 2013**

Source: Hénard et al. (2016): *Mapping student mobility and Credit Transfer Systems in ASEAN region* (p. 10)

As a member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Thailand has made an effort to establish greater academic cooperation and promote international student mobility in the region. Such an effort can be seen through its participation in the establishment of regional student mobility programs such as the student mobility program established by the Great Mekong Sub-region (Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and China) together with the nearby countries of Korea and Japan, ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) and the ASEAN University Network (Hepworth, 2010; Clark, 2014; Hénard, et al., 2016; "The AUN's Strategic Focus," 2016).

With this push for increased student mobility with the ASEAN community has come an increasingly greater demand for English, which serves as the lingua franca in these student mobility programs.

### **English as a Lingua Franca in Thailand**

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been defined in different ways. Firth (1996) defined ELF as a contact language communicated among non-native English speakers having different mother tongues and different cultures. To this definition, Seidlhofer (2011) has added that ELF denotes a linguistic environment in which English is the only common language. Jenkins (2009) has extended the definitions offered by Firth and Seidlhofer, arguing for the inclusion of native English speakers in the ELF community.

In Thailand, despite the presence of other minority languages and dialects, standard Thai is spoken by almost all of the Thai population (Baker, 2012). Thailand has no official second language, but the second linguistic position is given to English, which widely serves as a lingua franca in many important domains in the country. In the Thai education system, English is a compulsory subject from primary to higher education. Additionally, because of the global economic importance of English, English is recognized by Thais in all sectors (i.e. commerce, technology, medicine, etc.) as essential (Foley, 2005; Wongsothorn, Sukamolsun, Chinthammit, Ratanothayanonth & Noparumpa, 1996). It is considered the crucial communicative language connecting Thailand



with other nations, both regionally and globally (Baker, 2009). Moreover, the national role of English in Thailand is emerging in cultural communication through writing, both electronically and non-electronically, among the Thais themselves (Glass, 2009).

### **Language Challenges for International Students during Study Abroad in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context**

Although the number of studies examining study abroad in countries where English is used as the lingua franca are not numerous, those that have been conducted have revealed that international students experience language-related problems in these contexts. Some of these problems stem from difficulties students have using academic English, an issue also found in studies of international students studying in countries where English is the L1 (e.g. Cheng, Myles & Curtis, 2004; Gebhard, 2012; Yeoh & Terry, 2013; Bitew 2015). Additionally, problems have been reported as arising from the new varieties of English the students encounter, as well as the varying levels of English proficiency of their classmates, university staff, and lecturers (Talebloo & Baki, 2013).

Alghail and Mahfoodh (2016) carried out their mixed methods research about difficulties in academic reading faced by 92 Arabic graduate students at the Universiti Sains Malaysia and how they overcame those difficulties. Questionnaires, focus groups and journals were used to collect data. Findings revealed that students had difficulties in many aspects of English academic reading such as note taking, decoding difficult words and identifying supporting ideas. Participants reported having to read the same documents more than once to understand the content or find specific information. Recommendations made in the study were that Malaysian tertiary education institutions enhance their current postgraduate programs and establish programs to help international students deal with the challenges they encounter in English academic reading.

Mahmud, Amat, Rahman and Ishak (2010) conducted a qualitative study about the challenges faced by foreign students at three public universities in

Malaysia. The study found that language was a primary issue which the international students had to adjust to. Because of their low English proficiency as well as the Malaysian-accented English they encountered, communication proved difficult. The students also struggled because of the additional linguistic challenges the use of the local language (Bahasa Melayu), both in the social and classroom contexts, presented. Additionally, the students reported encountering many Malaysians who did not speak English. The study's authors recommended that higher educational institutions in Malaysia improve their services for international students by improving the English of their international affairs administrative staff, hiring multicultural international academic staff and providing programs aimed to support the development of international students' English skills. It was also recommended that in their recruitment of future international students, closer attention be paid to the students' English language proficiency and that future students have some level of proficiency in the local language.

Alavi and Mansor (2011) investigated problems among international students at a university in Malaysia and also found students experienced language-related problems. The study was conducted with 135 international graduate students from three countries, Iran, Saudi Arabia and China, using questionnaires and interviews. It was found that the lecturers' strongly Malay-accented English caused problems for the students who reported difficulties understanding the lecturers. The researchers recommended that the university provide better academic support in order to improve lecturers' and students' English language proficiency for more effective learning and communication.

Talebloo and Baki (2013) investigated the issues challenging international students during their studies abroad. Participants were 15 postgraduate students (Yemeni, Iranian and Sudanese) from different fields of study at a university in Malaysia. Questionnaire and interview results illustrated that most of the participants encountered comprehension problems with the accented English of the lecturers, academic staff, and students and the low levels

of English proficiency. A suggestion to improve the English proficiency of staff, lecturers and students was made.

The aforementioned studies provided an overview of some of the linguistic issues that may exist in the growing ASEAN student mobility programs. As Thailand expands its student mobility programs, this study tried to add to this body of literature by attempting to answer the following research questions:

1. According to international students, what are the challenges of using English as a lingua franca at a Thai university?
2. How do these challenges affect students' experiences as international students in Thailand?

## **Research Methodology**

### **Participants**

The study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, fifty-five international graduate students, Master (n=39) and PhD (n=16) from six ASEAN countries – Cambodia (n=14), Indonesia (n=18), Laos (n=1), Myanmar (n=10), Philippines (n=3) and Vietnam (n=9) were selected through the implementation of purposive sampling. The participants were current students at Prince of Songkla University (PSU)-Hat Yai who had been in Thailand for at least one year. In this first stage, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire aimed at exploring the role of English in their lives in Thailand and their attitudes about their English use.

In the second stage, twelve of the fifty-five participants were selected using both purposive and convenient sampling to participate in two separate focus group discussions.

Nº	Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Gender	Age	Faculty	Degree
<b>Focus Group 1</b>						
1	Helen	Cambodia	Female	28	Natural Resources	Master
2	Wendy	Cambodia	Female	23	Liberal Arts	Master
3	Andy	Indonesia	Male	23	Science	Master
4	Yale	Indonesia	Male	33	Natural Resources	Master
5	Tom	Vietnam	Male	26	Economics	Master
6	Lily	Vietnam	Female	28	Natural Resources	Master
<b>Focus Group 2</b>						
7	Sam	Cambodia	Male	27	Natural Resources	Master
8	Luke	Cambodia	Male	27	Environmental Management	Master
9	Vivian	Laos	Female	24	Agro-Industry	Master
10	Suzy	Myanmar	Female	24	Medical Technology	Master
11	Kate	Myanmar	Female	28	Science	PhD
12	Whitney	Myanmar	Female	31	Pharmaceutical Science	PhD

**Table 1: Focus Group Participants**

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Two focus group discussions were conducted in English to gain a deeper understanding of the international students' experience regarding their use of English during their studies in PSU and the perceived impact of this experience. Additionally, participants were asked to offer advice to both future international students and university officials in terms of English. The group discussions were conducted around two main questions:

3. If you were able to talk with international students who are coming to study in Thailand, what would you tell them about your experience with regards to language? What advice would you give them and why?
4. If you were asked to provide advice to PSU about international programs at this university, what would you tell them about your experience with regards to language? What advice would you give them to improve the experience for students and why?

Both focus group discussions were conducted four months after participants had completed the questionnaires on the PSU campus on April 2,

2017. With permission from all participants, voice recorders were used to record the discussions. Each group discussion was facilitated by the researcher and lasted about one hour. Recordings of the focal group sessions were then transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed inductively and reflectively to determine major aspects of issues, so as to identify answers to the research questions. Salient themes were identified and manually color-coded by both researchers. The identified issues were then categorized based on the themes. Frequency of occurrence of each theme was also counted.

## **Findings**

The findings revealed that participants encountered three challenges with the use of English as a lingua franca at the university. These challenges were identified as (1) the use of both Thai and English in the classroom; (2) the low English proficiency levels of some Thai lecturers, advisors and Thai classmates; (3) Need for support with English writing and (4) the lack of translated university informational materials.

### **The Use of both Thai and English in the Classroom**

*Everyone talk in Thai. Even the teachers, they explain in Thai. And then I get nothing about. At that time I cannot listen Thai language. I cannot speak Thai, so I don't get anything about my lesson. And even sometimes teachers, they explain just a short part in English. And then I cannot catch up the whole lesson. (Luke, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

Many participants in both groups shared the sentiments of Luke. They reported that while they had thought English was supposed to be the medium of instruction, lecturers often used Thai. While there were exceptions to this in a number of the classes the participants attended, the use of Thai in the classroom was still cited as a problem by almost half of the participants. Others reported that their lectures often delivered the lecture first in Thai and then in English.

Participants expressed empathy for the lecturers who they believed had an extra burden because of the lack of international students' proficiency in Thai and the Thai students' lack of English proficiency. As Luke put it,

*While I stay in the class, I saw my teacher, I feel tired instead of them. She just come to explain in Thai and then come to explain in English. And then she just listen the student presentation in Thai, and then she translate in English. Just answer, like question and answer, she need to translate everything. So I feel tired instead of them. And why they don't, like, let the student try their best? I think all the student can speak it out if we give them or push them. Yes, their chance. I think they can. It is just about language in the class. (Luke, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

### **The Low English Proficiency Levels of Some Thai Lecturers, Advisors and Thai Classmates**

*Some advisor, you know, they have a lot of knowledge. They're very, very, hmm, have a skill, right? In their area. But they cannot transfer the knowledge to the student much like that, especially in the class. (Vivian, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

While some participants stated that their advisors and lecturers had good English, particularly if these advisors had studied abroad, others stated dissatisfaction with the level of English of both their advisors and lecturers. Three participants from three different faculties reported being unsatisfied with their lecturers'/advisors' current English proficiency and felt that the low level of English proficiency had been an obstacle to their learning. While almost all agreed that their lecturers and advisors were quite knowledgeable in their fields of study, some participants felt that their advisors and lecturers lacked sufficient proficiency in English to effectively share their knowledge and expertise with international students.

Participants also felt that their classroom experiences were often less than satisfying because their Thai classmates either lacked proficiency in English or were unwilling to use English. Participants from the science faculties were particularly frustrated by this as they often found themselves with lab partners with whom they could not communicate. One participant remarked, “[...] My lab mates, is very difficult for communicate in English” (Yale, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017). Another participant added, “Because even though they speak English language, but they do not speak it out, just only use their native language” (Kate, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017).

Participants like Kate felt that Thai students appeared to lack confidence, and she thought this was the reason they did not speak English. She said, “I thought that some people, they really wanna speak it up, but they lack the confidence” (Kate, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017). Six other participants shared the sentiment that Thai students lacked confidence to speak English. To communicate with their Thai classmates, participants reported that they did a number of things including simplifying their English and trying to learn more Thai.

*When I go to my lab, mostly I speak English just with my advisor and co-advisor. But for my lab mates, they just . . . They said they want to speak English, but when we speak English, it is difficult to communicate, so I need to adapt with them, try to speak Thai with them. (Helen, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)*

### **Need for Support with English Writing**

One requirement for international graduate students to receive their degree from PSU is that they need to get their research manuscript published in a journal. The manuscript is written in English, but participants reported difficulty with their academic writing ability. Referring back to the English proficiency of their advisors, some participants stated that their advisors lacked sufficient proficiency in English academic writing to be of assistance.

Participants also expressed a need for support from the university to improve their writing,

*And other point for mention to the student who want to attend in PSU. The first, they have to know how to write research article, especially in here if PSU want to improve. They should to hire or make correlation with native English speaker to promote or to give a course for writing research article. (Sam, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

*We have like requirement to make the manuscript or publication, right? So I think they should give us like the training how to write the good manuscript. (Yale, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)*

This support, however, was not always accessible. According to one participant from the Faculty of Economics, there was a course on how to write a manuscript, but the course was conducted in Thai. Additionally, a participant from the Faculty of Medical Technology reported that if there were other resources available to assist her with her writing, she was not always aware of them. She attributed this to the lack of information provided in English. She remarked, “Every email from my department, I have to translate. It is in Thai. And sometimes they attach the PDF file in Thai, so I don’t care. I always miss the special class” (Suzy, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017).

### **The Lack of Translated University Informational Materials**

*Have you ever visit the website by English of PSU? I think English is not clear. [...] Because most of them write Thai is the main, but some necessary information... For example, we want to read the news of PSU by English, cannot find that if most of them are English. (Tom, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)*

A number of participants reported frustration with the lack of English translation of both print and online information on campus. Most announcements, participants reported, were written in Thai. As a result,



participants expressed frustration at missing learning opportunities such as workshops or trainings because of being unable to read Thai. Participants stated that they needed access to all information and events so that they would have the same opportunities as Thai students to learn more about their fields. Additionally, some participants reported that about half of the workshops/trainings were held in Thai. As Whitney shared,

*Let's say only 50% of that training can attend international student. We cannot attend 100%. You know, if there is 10 times of training, there is only five times for international students, and only five times we cannot attend because this class is only for Thai students. [...] If they would like to make 10 classes... We understand that somewhat in use their own language is better for their student. But if there is 10 course for that semester, we would like to get all 10 course. If the Thai classes they can get 10 course, we can get five course, it's not good. [...] We would like to get equal chance. (Whitney, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)*

## **Discussion**

The findings reported in this article were part of a larger study that took an in-depth look into how a study abroad experience in an ASEAN ELF context impacted ASEAN international students' use of English during their sojourns. Findings in the first stage of the study indicated that the experience allowed participants to use English on a daily basis for various academic and social purposes. Participants relied on English to understand lectures, communicate in class and with their advisors, read books/journal articles and complete written assignments and theses. As a result of their extensive use of English, the participants expressed having much less anxiety toward using English than they had when they first arrived in Thailand. Additionally, the participants felt their English proficiency had greatly improved.

However, as this article has shown, the participants faced several challenges around this English use. In the classroom, participants encountered the use of Thai by both lecturers and classmates and this caused difficulties for the international students, often, they felt, impeding their learning. And at the same time, participants felt it was hard for them to communicate with their Thai classmates whose English the participants considered quite poor. As a result, participants reported that in addition to the challenges of keeping up with their academic workloads, they needed to spend time to improve their English writing and learn some Thai, so as to be able to communicate with classmates.

Participants also felt they lacked access to academic resources because these resources were not made available in English and the participants lacked proficiency in Thai. These resources included print and online information (e.g. announcements, university guidelines) and special lectures, workshops or trainings conducted exclusively in Thai. Participants expressed disappointment at having missed what they viewed as valuable opportunities to increase their knowledge and their skills in their fields of study and in English.

### **Recommendations**

*After I expose with this environment, in my opinion, the new students should pay attention or spend a little time to understand Thai before come here.*  
(Sam, Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017)

Participants relied on English to communicate and do their academic work. However, after at least a year of living and studying in Thailand, almost all the participants stated that international students should be prepared to use both Thai and English. To prepare, they suggested that international students take Thai lessons before coming. They also suggested that while the university offers a three-month course in Thai entitled *Thai for Daily Life*, it was too short, and needed to be extended. As one participant stated:

*Three months is not enough for practicing and also to learn about Thai language. And they should extend for at least one year for*

*master's students or for PhD. [...] And for next one, more program for international students and Thai students to join together to improve the communication. Like the Thai students can improve English and international students can improve Thai language when they meet each other and they communicate with each other.*  
(Wendy, Focus Group 1, April 2, 2017)

The participants expressed a hope that the university would try to cultivate a campus in which English was more widely used and encouraged. With a better English-friendly environment, participants speculated that more international students would be attracted to the university, thereby creating a more international university. Participants felt that the greater presence of English could also serve to encourage Thai students to become more proficient in English.

Participants suggested that PSU hire more native English speaking lecturers to teach so that students could get the needed assistance to improve their academic writing. In employing more native speakers of English, Sam hoped to help future international students avoid what he was experiencing, "Because this one I try to write at least ten times. And then ten times and to prepare everything, fix or not, make me unhappy every day" (Focus Group 2, April 2, 2017).

The participants recommended that future international students improve their English proficiency before coming to study abroad. One participant suggested that international students take an internationally recognized English exam such as TOEFL or IELTS before their arrival in Thailand, as they will need to pass such an exam before they are permitted to graduate. The participant argued that by taking the exam before arriving in Thailand, the student would not experience the additional pressure of passing the exam after completing his/her studies. Other focal group participants agreed, citing the pressure they felt to pass the examination and the lack of university resources to assist them in doing so as problematic.

Finally, participants suggested that the university take steps to better integrate international students and their Thai counterparts. One area in which changes could be made was in housing. Currently, international and Thai students are housed separately. This segregated housing arrangement, the participants felt, limited their experience and access to information and opportunities to learn with and from their Thai classmates.

### **Conclusion**

This study has indicated studying abroad at a university in Thailand, though beneficial in terms of English language learning (Thon and Nicoletti, 2017), was challenging for international students in terms of language use. Language use in the program and on campus was not limited to English only. Without Thai proficiency, the international students sometimes had to struggle with the use of Thai in the classroom. There were also issues created, participants felt, as a result of their professors' and classmates' limited English proficiency which impeded their learning and communication. And with regards to the use of Thai rather than English on campus, international students were often unaware of important events and/or information. The participants, although satisfied with their study abroad experience, provided useful suggestions for the university to improve its international program as well as useful recommendations for future international students.

Future studies in other ELF ASEAN contexts are recommended so as to examine if the issues participants faced in this study are representative of those faced by international students in other ASEAN nations. And, if so, what the organizations that support and promote student mobility and the participating universities can do to improve these international programs.

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Thon, S., & Nicoletti, K. (2017). The Use of English as a Lingua Franca in a Thai University. *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences on "Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Sustainable Development in Multicultural Societies"*, The International Convention Center, Prince of Songkla University-Hat Yai, Songkhla, Thailand.