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English in Thailand: development of English in a non-postcolonial context

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English is not a colonial language in Thailand and has developed more slowly than varieties of English in post-British-colonial countries, which are sometimes called non-native varieties of English. The history of colonial and postcolonial English that these other countries in the region have is absent in Thailand. This paper aims to examine the evolution of English in Thai society using Schneider’s Dynamic Model (2007) to determine whether it meets the criteria that would allow us to consider it ‘Thai English’. Analysis indicates that English in Thailand has arrived at the Phase II level, ‘Exonormative Stabilization’ with Thais prioritizing British/American English rather than what we might call Thai English.

Keywords: non-postcolonial English; Thai English; exonormative stabilization phase

1. Introduction

The socio-historical development of English in a country which is not a former British/American colony has often been neglected by scholars of World Englishes. English here has no facets and dimensions of an implanted language by a colonial power, so it does not portray language interaction between indigenous people and colonizers. Moreover, the evolution of English for nation building as a second/official language or a vernacular as well as affinity with or aversion towards it by local users in relation to colonialism does not exist. The importance of English and its multi-functions in the current global society, however, assigns English in such a community a higher prestigious status than other foreign languages. This status of English, which is also present in ex-British/American colonies, calls for more research into Thai English and its development.

Thailand has never been a European colony, therefore any study that proposes that its English development is influenced by imperial rule seems to be implausible. Several researchers have provided a description of the history of English teaching and learning in Thailand by providing background information on how English was introduced and the way it is currently used rather than analyzing socio-historical aspects of Thai–English contact. The latter emphasis has thus only been seen in a few studies.

Warie’s (1979) study can be considered the pioneer research study in sociolinguistic aspects of Thai–English contact. It highlights the historical background and the use of

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English in Thailand since the nineteenth century. It also analyzes phonological, lexical and grammatical processes reflecting the influence of Thai–English in periodicals, newspapers, government reports and textbooks in both Thai and English. These processes are evident in nativization as well as code-switching and code-mixing. The analysis leads to the proposal of the notion of Thai English. Similarly, such results have also appeared as part of Chutisilp’s (1984) research which focuses more on the spread of English in Thailand via different historical periods of development since the seventeenth century and via functional domains. Importantly, this study examines lexical, syntactic and stylistic processes affected by Thai–English contact seen in fictional and non-fictional texts in both Thai and English, resulting in an assertion of the term ‘Thai English’ as another variety. Like Chutisilp (1984), Senawong (1989) details the linguistic scenario of the Thai and English relationship over four centuries and its phonological and lexical effects on acquisition and functional uses in Thai. However, since her study stresses the phonological and morphological transference of English phraseology into Thai by Thai speakers, she does not adopt the term ‘Thai English’. Likewise, Tuaychareon (2003) presents a brief sociolinguistic background study of Thai–English contact since the seventeenth century, but Senawong (1989) describes the phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactical features of English exhibited by Thai students and users as a result of first language interference processes in order to indicate their contribution to Thai English. Overall, these four studies represent salient socio-historical phenomena of Thai–English contact as well as its effect on linguistic features which reflect the way in which Thai English has developed. Although the linguistic analysis of the English features in the Thai context is based on established approaches, such phenomena are described without using a solid theoretical framework. Thus, there is an absence of a clear depiction of how Thais and Anglophones have interacted in English as a result of contact and other factors leading to the evolution of Thai English. This paper attempts to address this gap.

This paper therefore attempts to put forward the claim that although English in Thailand is not the result of its being a British/American colony and from a history of colonization, English in Thailand has evolved to what it is today through other means of direct and indirect contact with Anglophones. It thus aims to describe stages of English development in Thailand in order to ascertain whether English in Thailand still depends on a native variety of English for what are considered norms or if it has developed its own linguistic norms similar to those in other postcolonial countries by using Schneider’s Dynamic Model of the Evolution of Postcolonial English (2007) as the theoretical framework.

2. Theoretical framework

Schneider’s Dynamic Model of the Evolution of Postcolonial English (2007) investigates cyclical processes of the development of English in former British/American colonies. Five subsequent stages or phases are proposed, namely foundation, exonormative stabilization, nativization, endonormative stabilization and differentiation. The four parameters are viewed in terms of socio-political background, identity constructions, sociolinguistic conditions and linguistic effects. The two communicative perspectives are those experienced by the major parties or agents in the processes, namely the colonizers or settlers or the ‘STL strand’ and the colonized or indigenous people or the ‘IDG strand’. Each phase is described below.
Five cyclical phases of postcolonial English

Phase 1: Foundation

a. Socio-political background. English is brought to a new territory or non-English community by an STL group for military forts and trading outposts. Relationships between the STL and IDG strands may range from friendly to hostile.

b. Identity constructions. The STL population regard themselves as full members and representatives of the source society (Britain) while the IDG population see themselves as the only rightful residents of the territory.

c. Sociolinguistic conditions. Within the STL strand, migrant speakers from different regions in Britain have direct inter-dialectal contact. There is only marginal contact between the STL and IDG strands with little communication, except for utilitarian purposes.

d. Linguistic effects. Three processes emerge: (i) koineization, which refers to a middle-of-the-road variety of language use; (ii) incipient pidginization, which concerns the development of an English-based lingua franca in trading; and (iii) toponymic borrowing, which refers to the adoption of indigenous terms for place names in the colony and the likes.

Phase 2: Exonormative stabilization

a. Socio-political background. English is now regularly spoken in a new environment, and it formally becomes the language of administration, education and the legal system in the colony. Thus, contact between the STL and IDG strands is increasing.

b. Identity constructions. The STL settlers maintain their ‘British-cum-local’ identity while the identity of the English-knowing locals undergoes development.

c. Sociolinguistic conditions. English is spread to the IDG group via education and increased contact with the STL strand. Also, written and spoken British English becomes the linguistic norm.

d. Linguistic effects. An English lexical segment in local communities containing loans and new coinages develops such as the suffix ‘-isms’ (i.e. Americanisms). The STL group classifies English spoken by the IDG group as ‘good’ or ‘broken’.

Phase 3: Nativization

a. Socio-political background. This is the most important phase. Many colonies are independent, so the offspring start their own ways politically and linguistically.

b. Identity constructions. The sociolinguistic gap between the STL and IDG strands is reduced; both groups consider themselves permanent residents of the same territory. The identities like ‘us’ and ‘others’ are also gradually diminished.

c. Sociolinguistic conditions. The degree of linguistic acculturation and assimilation varies. In North America, Australia and New Zealand, assimilation is slow and reluctant due to the scale of immigration, but the STL group members become permanent residents of the country. In South and Southeast Asia, the STL strands return to Britain, but English remains important for nation building. For norms, innovation in English is rejected by the conservative STL strand.

d. Linguistic effects. Innovation widely emerges due to the nativization of English. For example, IDG speakers show a marked local accent in English and exemplify hybridization, localized collocations and varying prepositional usage.
Phase 4: Endonormative stabilization

a. Socio-political background. With political independence, a local norm in English is formally accepted such as the birth of new varieties in Australia and New Zealand.

Shifting from a self-association with Britain to the new country, the STL group carries truly independent identity.

b. Identity constructions. The STL and IDG strands share a new identity construction in the new former colony. Both groups consider ethnicity a parameter of identity negotiation to enhance nation building.

c. Sociolinguistic conditions. The gradual acceptance of localized English forms as a new norm is extended to the formal written domains and instruction. Moreover, the new term is given here: English in the context or the X English such as ‘English in the Singapore context’ or ‘Singapore English’. Also, the degree of cultural and linguistic independence leads to literary creativity in new English literatures.

d. Linguistic effects. The process of nativization has produced a new variety of English different from the STL dialect, as found in grammar books and dictionaries such as in the Macquarie Dictionary (Australia) that contains a lexicon collected from written and spoken interaction between the STL and IDG strands in English in society.

Phase 5: Differentiation

a. Socio-political background. The new nation has no external dominant source of power and orientation, so the emergence of a new variety of English is not controversial. However, some internal differences are a prominent factor of the socio-economic stability of the nation.

b. Identity constructions. For national identity, ‘group identification and social categorization’ are more vital than ‘the collective identity’ of the previous stage.

c. Sociolinguistic conditions. The patterns of dense interaction and mutual identification lead to group-internal linguistic accommodation such as the selection of certain linguistic forms as markers of group membership.

d. Linguistic effects. An acceptance of new varieties of English, in divergence from the parent varieties, leads to the birth of new English dialects and the ‘sociolinguistically meaningful internal diversification’ of the language.

The above approach is chosen for this paper for two reasons. Firstly, the Dynamic Model is suitable for describing the development of English in a post-colony but it challenges the analysis of the English evolution in a non-colonial country like Thailand. The statement ‘linguistic and cultural contact situations between English and vernaculars forced by the British/American colonial power in a certain community’ is a crucial factor in this model. In addition to colonial force and language interaction in the neighboring countries (the British Malaya and British Burma), the strategy of modernizing and avoiding the colonialism of Thailand also affect the emergence of English in Thailand. Another merit of this model lies in the focus on phases in parallel to the narration of the story of English birth, growth, usage and further evolution that leads to a new variety. Such phases are dynamic in determining whether English in a certain country can be considered progressive or regressive or can be examined in terms of its current sociolinguistic features.

3. A description of phrases of the English development in Thailand

English emerged in Thai society because of its spread during the European colonial period in Asia. Indeed, English was not a colonial language used within Thailand.
Thai is the only country in Southeast Asia which was never colonized. However, many factors and situations that mold English here are similar to those of British and American postcolonial countries. Below, the cyclical processes of the development of English in the country are examined via two of the five phases in Schneider’s (2007) model.

**Phase 1: Foundation (1612–1949)**

**(A) Socio-political background**

Early contact between Thailand and Britain can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It started in 1612 when a diplomat, Sir Thomas Essington, and the British East India Company merchant, Lucas Antheunis, were permitted by King Songtham (reign, 1611–1628) to open the trading outpost in Ayutthaya (the then capital of Thailand) (Chotirangsiyakul, 2003, pp. 323–324). The Company had not been successful in Thailand. It was overshadowed by the Dutch in 1621, so it was closed temporarily in 1623. Then, the Company was revived in 1661 but there was an intervention in its administration by the Thai monarchy’s authority and it lasted only until 1686 (Farrington & Na Pombejra, 2007; Jumsai, 2000). After the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, the Company returned to Thailand. At around this time, Colonel Francis Light, the founder of modern Penang, journeyed to Phuket Island in 1772. The trading between the two islands led to a friendship between Captain Light and Phraya Surintra, the Governor of Phuket in 1774 and then to King Taksin’s acceptance of Captain Light (Phuket Property & Home, 2009). Overall, this early intercourse between Thailand and Britain was tied to commerce, not colonization.

The crucial contact between Thailand and Anglophone countries (Britain and America) resulted in emphasizing the importance of the English language for modernizing the country and avoiding colonialism which occurred during the Bangkok Period in the early nineteenth century. America was a key country in fostering Thai–English cultural and linguistic intercourse, following the commencement of the treaty of friendship and commerce between America and Thailand in 1833 (Duke, 1982, p. 9). However, several negotiations between the two parties through interpreters failed due to misinterpretation and strong feelings of cultural identity. Then, King Nangklao (King Rama III) (reign, 1824–1851), who could not speak English, came to rule. He realized the importance of the British Empire in Asia, and required his royal children and officers to study English to communicate with the British and American people (Plainoi, 1995, p. 57; Sukamolson, 1998, p. 69). In 1851 King Mongkut (King Rama IV) (reign, 1804–1868), the first Thai king with English proficiency, proposed many foreign policies to secure Thailand as an independent country. Thus, treaties with European nations became more flexible. This era is considered a peak in cultural and linguistic contact between Thai and English. In 1857, His Majesty began to modernize the country by encouraging the nobility to study English and science, and eradicating outdated customs faced by foreigners in order to facilitate the development of understanding and friendship between Thailand and European countries. Other strategies included the employment of English and American advisers as tutors (e.g. Anna Leonowens) and government officials, and liberalizing missionary and trading residences in Bangkok (Dhiravegin, 1975, pp. 14–17). The relationship between the king, his royal family and other noblemen, and the English and Americans was strengthened due to the use of English. There was still a large gap between illiterate indigenous people and
westerners, however. Only when the westerners spoke Thai to the local people, did they become welcome or approachable to lower-class Thais.

The Thai and English contact during the reign of King Mongkut (reign, 1851–1868) spread to other provinces. Chiang Mai was the likely capital of Northern Thailand, bordered by British Burma. It thus became another English Residency because British Burma’s officials, businessmen and laborers were allowed entry by the King for temporary visits, work and inhabitation. In this regard, the British Borneo Company was given the timber concession in 1855. Many ethnic groups from British India and Burma like Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis and hill tribes provided migrant laborers and became what are now present-day residents of Thailand. In addition, Chinese from Yunnan also immigrated to Thailand. This made Chiang Mai a multicultural society. Likewise, in the South many Chinese laborers, who had been migrating to Phuket since the time of Captain Light, started governing Penang, resulting in the modernization of both islands (Karnchanawanich, 2008). The relationship between the Yunnan Chinese and the local people was stronger than with other minorities due to the similar ethnicity, but all of the groups of indigenous people managed to live together harmoniously in Chiang Mai (Suwannakat, 2011). The relationship between English officers from the British Borneo Company and their British Indian migrants was smooth due to the use of English. Similarly, Chinese migrants to Phuket got along well with their British employers and local people. However, understandably, there was still a gap between the local people of Phuket and the English traders because of language constraints.

King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) (reign, 1868–1910) successfully continued the foundation of English and the modernization of Thailand proposed by his father, King Mongkut. Their idea to use English to counter colonialism was important and this policy may have enabled them to use English to preserve Thai independence. With English competency and a thorough comprehension of the West, King Chulalongkorn’s visits to Europe twice in 1897 and 1907 made a good impression on European leaders. His international ties led to a requirement for his children to learn English and either French or German (Dhiravegin, 1975, pp. 25–27). The King then continued employing foreign advisors to modernize the country. English was the lingua franca between them and the personnel of the Court (Dhiravegin, 1975, pp. 41–44). During this time, some English and American government officials in Thailand married local people, so a number of Eurasian children were born (Mettarikanon, 2006, p. 81). Further, many additional English and American diplomats, missionaries and officers moved to Chiang Mai. As an additional factor, the British Borneo Company was allowed in with a forestry concession until 1955 and the number of ethnic workers for the company from British Burma and India gradually increased. At the same time, American missionaries were setting up Catholic schools, hospitals and churches in Thailand (Suwannakat, 2011). In the reign of King Vajiravudh (King Rama VI) (reign, 1910–1925), Thailand became more modernized as many infrastructure projects were completed. Although the king was western-oriented, he did not want Thais to follow all western cultures as they would then lose their Thai identity. Hence, he encouraged Thais to choose certain cultures from the West to suit their needs. For example, acquiring English as a language of knowledge was encouraged as it could make Thais more educated. Then, after the First World War, America started to play more political, military and educational roles in Thailand. Consequently, western influences could be increasingly observed in many aspects of Thai life (Suebwattana, 1988, p. 62). During the reign of King Prajadhipok (King Rama VII) (reign, 1925–1935), as a result of the world economic crisis, namely the Great Depression of the 1930s, foreign advisors were replaced by western-educated
Thai government officials. Further, the modernization of Thailand since King Chulalongkorn had spread to three major provinces. In addition, transportation links were of importance. Chiang Mai in the north and Songkhla in the south were both bound to Bangkok by railway. The Chiang Mai Railway Station was used by many English people and indigenous groups from British Burma working in the forestry industry. Similarly, Hat Yai (Songkhla) Station, which is connected to the Butterworth Station (Penang), started to spur Songkhla’s economy. Likewise, Phuket’s commerce grew as it was linked by sea with Penang. As a direct result of better transportation facilities, English settlers in British Burma and British Malaya had better chances to make contact with Thailand’s local populations.

With the change from an absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarch in 1932 (Kullavanijaya, 2002), Thailand had a prime minister and cabinet with important roles which affected the socio-political relationship between English and American delegations. In addition, during World War II, English–American residents in the North and South faced problems with their status as Thailand was used as a passageway for Japanese troops marching to British Burma and British Malaya. Consequently, the relationship between Thai and English/American residents deteriorated. For instance, the British companies in Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son stopped their forestry trade, so their local workers became unemployed (Taiyai Studies Centre of Maehongson Community College, n.d.). Later, the influx of workers and local peoples was discontinued and their contact with English residents in Northern Thailand was broken after Burma’s independence in 1948. In the south, tin mining companies from British Malaya in Phuket, Ranong and Pang-nga temporarily stopped production due to the Japanese invasion of the island and the companies ended their commerce with Phuket after Malaysia’s independence in 1957.

(B) Identity construction

During the early contact between Thailand and the Anglophone countries (1612–1686 and 1767–1850), English diplomats and traders considered themselves temporary privileged residents in Thailand while the local people knew little about the background of the British East India Company and the kings’ intentions. They knew that many foreign traders were giving them more chances to trade in local goods. They were afraid of approaching the westerners due to their inability to use English and other foreign languages. However, the local people had no fear that the company would colonize the country in the way that Thai kings themselves had been able to do with many neighboring countries, with the exception of Burma. Hence, both sides had their strong cultural identities. No kings were eager to learn foreign languages from traders as the negotiations were conducted through Portuguese and Malay interpreters. Moreover, Thai kings typically held very strict control over the British and American diplomats. Further, the Court of Thailand maintained a solid identity of Thainess in using local titles for foreign noblemen who worked in the country. For instance, Captain Francis Light was called ‘Phraya Ratcha Captain’ (Minister of Royalty Captain). A number of English and American delegations with Thai titles seemed to gain acceptance by the Court due to their Thainess. Nevertheless, they still used their English names when interacting with other non-Thais (Plainoi, 1995, pp. 54–65).

From the year of modernization in 1856, identity construction through the use of English developed across class, race and occupation amongst Thais and foreigners. The British and American residents in Thailand maintained class distinctions; the diplomats
and government advisers would not live near the traders. They still considered themselves as privileged members of society. However, the missionaries could be either close to the royal families as teachers, or mingle with the commoners while disseminating Christianity. Likewise, the traders could be close to high-class Thais when they came to shop in their department stores, and the traders with smaller stores could also interact with commoners in Thai. English traders and American missionaries in Bangkok and Chiang Mai adapted themselves to the local people by learning Thai. Burmese and Indian ethnic laborers from British Burma used English as a lingua franca while they were acquiring Thai to converse with the local people. Likewise, the British tin mining Chinese laborers attempted to use Thai with the local people in Phuket. English–American residents and other foreigners, as well as ethnic laborers, and the Thai elite and royal families thus constructed their identities in English. The former group working with the Court used formal English while the traders used a range of formal and casual styles. Similarly, the Thai elite and royal families recognized themselves as the ruling classes, so their English tended to be very native-like; they constructed ‘a British-cum-local identity’. King Vajiravudh was the most westernized King due to his schooling in England. This led him to adopt English cultural and social values within Thailand such as with the establishment of Vajiravudh College in 1910 which was modeled after a public school in England (Wongthes, 1990, p. 140). The King constructed a ‘British-cum-local identity’. On the other hand, he transformed English titles into Thai. First of all, he coined new words in Thai but provided the original English words in brackets such as ‘bannathikarn (editor)’ and ‘chart (nation)’ (Thong-em, 2005, p. 74). In addition, he translated the names of some of Shakespeare’s plays into Thai, for example, Venit Vanit (1916) for The Merchant of Venice and Romeo Lae Juliet (1922) for Romeo and Juliet (Tungtang, 2011, p. 48). In the meantime, all migrants in Chiang Mai maintained their own ethnic identities, as they were only temporary migrant workers. Likewise, the English officers felt that they were the privileged, and their workers had to speak English to them. Local residents in Chiang Mai and Phuket, on the other hand, shared the viewpoint that they were the owners of the provinces. The English traders resided in the area for business only, temporarily, and they accommodated the local people by using Thai dialects to accomplish their commerce. In consequence, the British-cum-local identity of Thai users of English was limited to only the kings and the elite as English was generally still uncommon among the commoners. The English language and Anglophone culture did not fully penetrate into Thailand.

(C) Sociolinguistic conditions
The sociolinguistic phenomena resulting from the Thai and English contact at this stage are evident in translation, teaching, functional uses and attitudes. From 1612 to 1767, there is no evidence of Thais with English competence. The interaction through trading was done by interpreters as the kings could not speak English, so treaties were made in Thai, Malay, Portuguese and English. Interpreters in the Ayutthaya, Thonburi and early Bangkok Periods communicated with English traders in Malay and translated into Thai via Malay-speaking interpreters. Likewise, many English traders in the Malay Peninsula, including the northern part of the Gulf of Thailand, learned Malay before learning Thai (Yutthapongthada, 2007).

The first known Thai who could use English is found in the Thonburi Period (1768–1782), namely Phraya SurinThraja. He had extensive interaction with many
Europeans in his time and a decent grasp of their culture and business habits. He also had good knowledge of commerce, as well as of spoken and written English. He met Captain Francis Light, who could speak Thai, and the pair soon became well acquainted (Phuket Property & Home, 2009). Two other Thai people in the states around the Andaman Sea who could use English were Phra Kra, the then governor of Kra (now Ranong province) and Phraya Pimol (Khan), the later governor of Phuket. Phraya Pimol could read orders, invoices and receipts in English (Srinak, 2003, pp. 97–113). It is possible that their acquisition of English arose due to their teaching Thai to Captain Light and business communication with other westerners. At any rate, from the early years of contact with English traders, only three Thai governors are known to have been able to speak English, as interpreters were used extensively.

In 1822, in the negotiation for a treaty between John Crawfurd, with the English delegation, interpretation with King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (reign, 1809–1824) was very difficult due to the use of many interpreters employing the process of interpretation from English to Malay and from Malay to Thai. No treaty was signed due to language barriers but the negotiation made Thailand conscious of the importance of English as a means of communication. It should be noted that later, King Nangklao directed that his own guard be trained in the western way. In addition, he commissioned a Thai-translated version of English textbooks on cannon firing (The History of the Ministry of Education Thailand 1892–1964, 1964; The History of the Armed Forces during the Rattanakosin Period, 1967, as cited in Watananguhn, 1998, p. 87).

In terms of education, scholars have different views regarding the year in which Thais started learning English. Genaise (1989, p. 61, as cited in Tuaychareon, 2003, p. 1) believes that English must have been spoken or taught privately much earlier than commonly assumed, because of the high number of western residents in Ayutthaya. This evidence is not supported by any studies, however. Solid evidence of this matter appears in Durongphan, Aksornkul, Wannawech, and Tianchareon (1982), Sukamolson (1998) and Kullavanijaya (2002) showing that non-formal English instruction started during King Rama III’s reign (1824–1851), especially in the Court of Thailand. Prince Mongkut (King Mongkut) (reign, 1851–1868) studied English with American missionaries, namely Dr D.B. Bradley and J. Caswell, while being ordained in Rat Pradit Temple, Bangkok. Within six months, the Crown Prince had mastered the language and could later correspond with the Queen of England and the American President in English. Other key persons who learned English for diplomatic transactions were Prince Chutamani, Luang Wongsathirajisanit, M.R. Kratai Issarangkul and Mr Mode Amattayakul (Aksornkul, 1982; Tinpang-nga, 1997). At the time, King Mongkut encouraged his royal family members and noblemen to learn English and western science to ensure that Thailand would modernize itself before being modernized through imperialism (Luangthongkum, 2007, as cited in Kirkpatrick, 2012, pp. 14–15).

English education during the reign of King Mongkut operated only in the Court of Thailand with the assistance by British/American missionaries who used English as a medium of instruction. Similarly, in 1872 King Chulalongkorn established an English language school for the later generation of the elite in the Court. Their teacher, Francis Petterson, taught in English without any Thai words, so he faced some negative reactions from his students. The school was closed within three years because his method was unpopular; the Thai students preferred learning English through Thai as an instructional medium. Nonetheless, the school did produce some students with good English (e.g. Prince Damrong). In 1878, an American missionary, Samuel McFarland, was allowed to establish an English language school at the Nantha-Uttthayan Palace.
This school carried a larger number of students than the earlier palace schools. It focused on training in reading–writing for clerks, and the teaching of mathematics, arts and the sciences. The school was later moved to the Sunanthalai estate and became popular among Chinese trading families and commoners, so most of the graduates had commercial careers (Wyatt, 1969, 1984, as cited in Chotikapanich, 2001). From 1881 to 1898, three royal schools in which English was used as an instructional medium were founded in Bangkok – Suan Kulap (1881), Ratchawitthayalai (King’s College, 1897), the Anglo–Siamese School (later renamed the Sunanthalai estate, 1898). Because of English instruction in the royal schools, the Thai elite attained English proficiency. This also led to travel to Europe and America to study and to bring back western lifestyles. Consequently, during King Mongkut’s reign English became an indicator of high status in society (Eiewsriwong, 2004).

Teaching English to the public, including a decent number of commoners in the middle class, started in Bangkok in 1836 when an American missionary named Mrs Davenport was allowed to establish a school named ‘Rong School’. Also, in 1840, a boarding school was founded by the missionary named Miss M.E. Piece. However, neither of the schools was popular among Thai students (Yutthapongthada, 2007, p. 20). Missionaries did not succeed in converting the Thais to Christianity but their presence did turn their students’ attention to education, medicine and modern technology (Methitham, 2009, p. 32). Indeed, missionaries did reach out to lower-class people in terms of teaching English. Among these, Dr Smith founded the first private academy called ‘University Siam’ offering the study of English language and western science. Many graduates from here later became high-ranking government officers (Chotikapanich, 2001, p. 12). Additionally, public education was supported by King Mongkut who employed Europeans to prepare texts to help the Thai people learn English (Chutisilp, 1984, p. 88). The first English course book in Thailand, produced by Dr Bradley in 1842, was Elementary Lesson Designed to Assist Siamese in the Acquisition of English Language (Sukamolson, 1998, p. 70).

During King Chulalongkorn’s reign, public English education was more fully recognized. The first public school, Wat Mahannapharam (1884), and another 14 schools in the main provinces, where English was taught as a subject, were established in this period (Wyatt, 1969, pp. 315–317, as cited in Chotikapanich, 2001, p. 17; Pisalbutra, n.d., p. 43, as cited in Yutthapongthada, 2007, p. 34). Eventually, English was included in the general curriculum from 1890 in a primary and secondary education structure which was modeled after that of England (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 1; Buls, 1994, p. 70, both as cited in Tuaychareon, 2003, p. 48). Further, in higher education institutions, English was used as a language for training specialized officials for government service (Chutisilp, 1984, p. 94). English as an instructional medium for all subjects (except the Thai language) was used in private schools by the American Presbyterians in Bangkok and Chiang Mai during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868–1910). The first boys’ school in Thailand was the Bangkok Christian College (1852) but the first in the North (Chiang Mai) was the Prince Royal’s College (1887). Then, the first girls’ school in Chiang Mai was Darawittayalai, founded in 1878 (Dara Wittayalai School, 2011; Pinyakorn, Virasilp, & Somboon, 2007; The Prince Royal’s College, 2005). The students of these schools and other Christian schools in Thailand were taught with American English. In the reign of King Vajiravudh (1910–1925), English was used as an instructional medium at the first university, Chulalongkorn University, founded in 1917. Most of the instructors during its early establishment were British.
and American missionaries, so they found it easier to use English. Thus, many Thai technical words influenced by English were created here (Chutisilp, 1984, p. 91).

Few lower-class Thais had a chance to study English as a formal universal education policy had not been developed. While government officials and the rich people of Thailand were learning English, English–American residents in Thailand regularly acquired the Thai language beginning with the Ayutthaya Period due to the need to communicate with the indigenous people. In the early Bangkok Period, those English speakers who had department stores and publishers in Bangkok were fluent in Thai as they needed to transact with local customers.

Speaking English with British or American accents was a must for the royal families and ministers. Among commoners, those who attempted to learn and use English with native speakers during the early Bangkok Period were teased as fools; other people would laugh at their English expressions because English was a new, strange and difficult language that one spent many years acquiring (Wongsurawat, 2003, pp. 40–41). This did not mean that those with English proficiency would be insulted, but British or American English became the language for the more privileged Thais.

Apart from education, English became a tool of social skills among the high-class local residents and foreigners. The Oriental Hotel in Bangkok was the meeting place of high-class locals and foreigners who used English as a lingua franca. For instance, two famous English authors, Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham, visited the hotel. Conrad first arrived in Bangkok in January 1888, so his literature employed the scents and flavors of life in Bangkok. Maugham came to Bangkok in 1923, and his books Siamese Fairy Tale (a children’s story) and The Gentleman in the Parlor (a travelogue) have themes influenced by his tour of Thailand and its neighboring areas (Tour Bangkok Legacies, 2005). Also, English as an intra-national language was used in the Royal Bangkok Sports Club, the most prestigious club of the elite society supported by the royal family beginning in the reign of King Vajiravudh (1910–1925). Members of the club were required to use English for social activities. The Thai elite were widely known to converse with each other and with privileged foreign members in English (Chutisilp, 1984, p. 96).

Unlike in Bangkok, in Chiang Mai, English was used as a lingua franca between native English officers, Burmese traders and laborers, and between Thai students and American missionaries. Likewise, the British tin mining traders in Phuket conversed in English with their local officers and their Chinese laborers from Penang.

English in Thailand has also functioned as a medium of newspapers. Dr Bradley’s invention of the first printing press led to the introduction of English language newspapers in Thailand. The first newspaper, named The Bangkok Recorder, was published in Thai and English and the only English newspaper was The Bangkok Calendar. Both papers were intended for local and English–American residents in Bangkok but the initial readership was very low. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the greatest number of English newspapers was published, including The Bangkok Daily Advertiser (1868–1871), The Bangkok Times (1887–1942), Siam Free Press (1891–1908) and The Bangkok Daily Mails (1907–1939). In comparison, The Star of Siam was the only English newspaper during the reign of King Rama VI due to the rising popularity of Thai newspapers (Wibulsri & Worapan, 1987, pp. 7, 11–15). Articles in those newspapers were written and edited by native English journalists with the use of a British English norm for spelling, vocabulary and grammar.

During the initial stages, the function of English in Thailand grew as a medium of new literature. The first work of literature in English by a Thai writer, Kumut Chandruang (1912–1970), who was sent to study in America, is an auto-biography,
My Boyhood in Siam, which was published by the Los Angeles Times in 1935. After World War II, Prem Chaya (1915–1981), a British-groomed Thai, published his first poetry in English, Siamese Idyll, in 1946 in Bangkok. These two works presented new English expressions and cultural content relating to old Siam and Thailand, for example, the use of Thai idiomatic expressions and metaphor translated into English as well as Thai characters and local themes of Buddhist beliefs. Nevertheless, they found little recognition in the country at that time. Many Thai users and learners of English considered only the use of native-English and reference to non-native culture as appropriate.

It is noted that in the early phase, English did not spread to all groups and classes of Thai users. Interpreters and learners of English were limited to only high-ranking people. Likewise, the readers of English newspapers and Thai English literatures were confined to overseas-educated Thais. In fact, the diffusion of English to the lower-class people via education faced difficulty as there were few Thai teachers of English. Thai students of Grade 5 were first given a chance to study English as a required subject through the first compulsory Education Act in 1921 (Durongphan et al., 1982, as cited in Darasawang & Watson Todd, 2012). This requirement shifted to the secondary level in 1936, although the study of English was later banned by the Japanese during the Second World War (1941–1945) (Sukamolson, 1998). Overall, in the formative stages, British and American English played an equal role as the best norms for English in Thailand. The significance of a choice between these varieties as an educational language was rarely conveyed to lower-class Thais because the English education policy then was not yet fully established.

(D) Linguistic effects

The first Thai English word found during King Narai’s reign (1656–1666) is farang which is either based on the Persian feringhi, meaning ‘Franks, and more generally Westerners’ (Cruysse, 2002, pp. 58–59) or in reference to the first Europeans in Thailand in 1511, the Portuguese, who were called farang, based on the English word foreigner (Chutisilp, 1984, p. 87). Since then, the word farang has been used to refer to ‘any light-skinned westerners’. Another early example is the word menam, ‘Menam River’, which was found in French and Dutch maps of early Bangkok. Westerners misunderstood the Chao Phraya River, Menam Chao Phraya, to be named Menam, which in Thai only means ‘river’ (Sittithanyakij, 2008, pp. 33–35).

In the early Bangkok Period, several English borrowings in Thai came about. In the reign of King Nangklao, some Thais repeated certain English words after hearing them spoken by interpreters such as, for example, ‘A-Min-Ra-Bad’ (Edmund Robert) and ‘En-Cha-Neer’ (Engineer). In the reign of King Mongkut, only a few Thais could use English, so English loanwords were pronounced in Thai – ‘kap-tan’ (Captain), ‘poli-tman’ (policeman) and ‘ob-fit-ser’ (officer) (Thong-em, 2005, p. 72). At the same time, many foreign residents in Bangkok refrained from using Thai names, for example, calling King Mongkut ‘The First King’ and His Majesty’s cousin ‘Phra Pinklao’ ‘The Second King’. Moreover, they used the words ‘new road’ to refer to the first road of the country (Blog Gang, 2004). On the other side, seven English words with Thai origin are found in early English dictionaries or Western documents – ‘Siamese twins’ in The Times (1829), ‘Wat’ (Thai Buddhist temple) in The Chinese Repository XIII (1844), ‘farang’ in The Narrative Repository Capital of Kingdom of Siam (1852), ‘Siamese cat’ in The London News (1871), ‘Siamese coupling’ in Scriber’s Magazine (1891), ‘klong’ (canal) in Kingdom: Yellow Robe (1898) and ‘Siamese fighter’ (fighting fish) in Goldfish Varieties (1929) (Simpson & Weiner, 1989).
Other English expressions in the reign of King Mongkut are also noted. Thai soldiers being trained with the local English (Indian) military of Sepoy by Captain Impey, who was employed from British India, understood commands in English, for example, ‘Spread Both Columns from Center to Center’ (Sornparin, 2007, p. 42; Wongsurawat, 2003, p. 39). In addition, the ‘Second King’ (Phra Pinklao) was quite Westernized due to his good diplomatic relationships with the United States. His son’s nickname was ‘George’ which was derived from an American President’s name ‘George Washington’ but it was pronounced ‘M.C. Yord’ since ‘George’ was pronounced as ‘Yord’ in Thai (Sabploy, 2004, pp. 9–11).

Beginning with the reign of King Chulalongkorn, various English loanwords were widely used – hotel, emperor, motorcar, queen, dinner, park, villa, general, lift, restaurant, museum and exhibition (Prasithrathasint, 2004, pp. 59–61). Some items were not used until the reign of King Vajiravudh – captain, bank, policeman, agent and officer. In this reign, many English loanwords were coined in Thai – officer, president, committee, opposition, commonsense, editor and nation (Thong-em, 2005, p. 74). Several English words which were difficult for Thais to pronounce were translated into Thai. However, some translated words – football or mark-kaeng (shin and leg game) or mark-teh (kicking game) and lift or hongleun (lifting room) – did not gain popularity among Thais, so they were left as loanwords.

Overall, the contact between Thai and English in the first phase resulted in the following foremost linguistic phenomena. A number of indigenous words were imported and translated in western documents and English dictionaries from 1829. These words are not toponyms but cultural items. Moreover, there are a number of English loans with Thai pronunciation which, though awkward, reflect an attempt to use English. There was a movement to translate English loans into Thai that started at this stage. Such expressions included, for example, expressions used in military training.

**Phase 2: Exonormative stabilization (1950–)**

It took about three centuries for the majority of Thais to become familiar with the English language and Anglophone culture. Indeed, the early acquaintance of high-class Thais with English and competence in English through educational, transactional, literary and journalistic functions from the early nineteenth century does not support the conclusion that English had taken hold in Thailand. The crucial factor in the spread of English to Thailand was in the second phase, the period of time when the majority of Thais, Thai commoners, had more opportunities to acquire and use English. This appears in the post-World War II period when Thais were influenced by American culture. The late arrival of English in Thailand in this phase is supported by Kirkpatrick (2012, p. 17) – a Thai variety of English is still developing and a native variety (either British English or American English) is regarded as the model, so English here remains at the stage of exonormative stabilization. Further discussion of this observation follows below.

(A) Socio-political background

With the end of British Burma and British Malaya, the English influence over Thai ways of life lessened and was replaced by Americanization. From 1950 to 1964, American aid to Thailand covered military, economic, technical and educational areas. The American community in the country expanded considerably (Indorf, 1982; Wyatt, 1984, both as cited in Masavisut, Sukwiwat, & Wongmontha, 1986). During the
Vietnam War (1964–1973), 50,000 American military personnel were stationed in Central, South-eastern and North-eastern Thailand, so exposure to the American lifestyle was brought to the local people. Many Thai businesses began tailoring soldier (GI) uniforms and nightclubs were profitable. Also, Eurasian and Black American-Thais were born as various Thai women became partners with or married American soldiers. After the war, some of these women and children migrated to the United States with their GI husbands, while others remained. The interaction between the American soldier-delegations and the Thai people was both positive and negative. Abundant financial aid from the American Army during the Cold War helped Thailand become more developed economically. Moreover, many Thais in the provinces (where there were army bases) found employment or could operate businesses, so the economy in those provinces was boosted. Further, many well-known entertainment venues in Bangkok (Silom) and Chonburi (Pattaya) prospered and became Westernized communities since the army used those places to rest and recuperate. On the one hand, many conservative Thais felt that the American soldiers left many problems behind, such as half-caste children, drugs, prostitution and the promotion of the image of Thailand as a paradise for sexual tourism. Hence, some organizations offered resistance to Americanization in Thailand. Notwithstanding this negative reaction, however, most Thais inevitably accepted various aspects of American influence. From the 1970s onwards, the Thai government has taken the position that if Thais become proficient in English and become aware of Western cultures, these skills and knowledge will enhance the country’s tourism and commerce in the global market (Masavisut et al., 1986, p. 201).

(B) Identity construction

As the use of English became more widespread, Thai users of English constructed their own linguistic and cultural identities, ranging from achieving near native-speaker likeness to assuming a more local variety of English. First of all, Thai residents in provinces where there were American bases considered themselves rightful citizens, so at first, they viewed the American soldiers as strangers. After having worked with them, however, they came to recognize the Americans to be a good source of income. English became an important tool for a better quality of life. They found it difficult to speak with native American accents, so they settled for broken forms, although an understandable level of English was a must. Since 1987, the influx of foreign tourists to Thailand has helped shape the way Thai speakers use English. An American accent came to be considered the best English model, followed by British and other native-English accents or at least some farang accent (spoken by any westerners). Other Asian and Thai accents were ignored due to their divergence from standard native-English varieties. During this time, many American-educated Thais constructed their ‘American-cum-local identities’ to be good models for other Thai speakers of English.

American English has played a large role in Thailand as it is linked to modern technology, mass media and popular culture, but British English is still a significant alternative since this variety draws on political similarities between Thailand and Britain. A number of Thai users prefer this variety due to Britain’s constitutional monarchy system (Kirkpatrick, 2012, p. 17) which is quite similar to the local political system. Thus, Thai users have developed their way of speaking English by modeling these two varieties while other native varieties, namely Canadian, Australian and New Zealand varieties of English, have not been popular. Also, a local or Thai way of using English has not been fully accepted among the Thais themselves.
After the Second World War, many of the Thai elite became journalists and editors for the existing two English newspapers *The Bangkok Post* (1946–) and *The Nation* (1981–). The former uses the American standard while the latter, with Thai owners, uses the British standard. This mirrors the balancing status of the parent varieties in the Thai English media. At the same time, a majority of Thai English readers still patronize Thai newspapers. Similarly, the number of works of Thai literature in English has been rising since 1950. Since most of the authors are overseas-educated Thais, they tend to rely more on Standard English forms than local forms of English. However, this non-native English literature has been marginalized in Thai society. Meanwhile, British/American literature has become well noted as it represents a valuable resource of the Anglophone culture and heritage as well as a window into western civilization and modernization. Hence, Thai newspapers and writings in English still serve as a communicative tool for an exclusive group of users.

On the other hand, English did become more approachable for various classes of Thais during the presence of the American army bases in the country. Thai diplomats and army commanders in contact with the American supreme commanders used ‘good’ English while the use of ‘broken’ English by Thai officers, lower rank soldiers and rent wives was controversial. The local people around the army bases seemed to approach the American variety of English in usage, though they were not aware of the influence of either British or American English. Most Thais during this time viewed this variety as ‘farang’ English. Moreover, American styles, such as in foods, fashion and music, were flowing into the Thai way of life. Coombs (1982, pp. 113–114) states that 30 or 40 English volunteer teachers were sent by the American government each year during this time to secondary schools around the country. This clearly allowed the Thai students to become even more familiar with American English accents.

During this time, several of the Thai elite, who had graduated from schools in Britain and America, became ministers and government officials, consequently setting the British and American English norms and models for usage and pedagogy. Thus, pidginized forms with Thai accents came to be considered totally unacceptable. This tendency remained pronounced in English education in Thailand until around 1995, though the number of native-English teachers in the country had been declining since the revolution in 1932. Until this time, English textbooks and guidebooks by native writers were considered standard while those by the Thai people were ignored or, if not, taken for granted and sidelined. The 1950s was also a turning point in the history of English education in Thailand. British and American experts introduced the aural–oral method of English to replace the grammar-translation method in order to enhance the Thai students’ English proficiency, and to bring them closer to sounding like native-speakers (Durongphan et al., 1982, p. 30).

The status of English in Thai education was uncertain after World War II. In 1955, English became an elective subject in primary education but a compulsory course at the tertiary level. Those who wanted effective English skills needed to study at a private school. This approach remained steady until 1978 when English was reinstated as an elective course for all levels. This lasted until 1995.

The 1996 English curriculum for primary and secondary education presented a novel phenomenon. Previously the curriculum had aimed at helping students attain English proficiency similar to that of a native speaker. This new curriculum, however,
promoted English as a means of access to globalization, boundary-free mass communication and modern technology. Moreover, one stated goal of this curriculum was that:

students will primarily gain knowledge and understanding of ways of life and cultures of those who use English as the mother tongue and of the world community in general, as well as be able to creatively communicate Thai cultures to others (Sukamolson, 1998, pp. 83–85).

Indeed, this displays the importance of international English as a lingua franca in the global society, but a native variety of English was still used as the norm.

Since 1996, the Thai Ministry of Education has been supporting the establishment of international and English-programmed schools. Nowadays, many primary and secondary public and private schools throughout the country offer bilingual, mini English and English Plus programs (OBEC, Thai Ministry of Education, 2010). Likewise, several state and private universities offer international programs. The number of foreign students in the country is thus growing; the use of English as a lingua franca will play a greater role in Thailand in the future. This also includes many English language houses offering private courses and camps in Bangkok and other major cities encouraging Thais to learn English for jobs and pleasure. With various English programs, native and non-native English teachers have appeared in dramatic, rising numbers. Nevertheless, although native and non-native varieties of English are competing, Thai students and teachers still prefer the former variety (Buripakdi, 2010).

Beyond the education domain, the Thai government has also cast light on the economic domain of English. In 1987, Thailand began promoting tourism, advertising and improved English in the country. The so-called farang or native English accents have also been recognized since then. In addition, some provincial cities such as Chiang Mai, Phuket and Pattaya have become filled with foreign tourists, causing an influx of Thais from different regions who are successfully employed because of their English competence.

Currently, there appears to be only 10% of the approximately 6.5 million people who use English (Bolton, 2008). This represents only a limited use of English in Thailand beginning with the introduction of English more than 300 years ago. Nonetheless, Trakulkasemsuk (2012) argues that the number of English users is actually larger if the standard and non-standard use of English is considered. In this respect, the latter notion has not been recognized by Thais themselves; any broken form of English, namely Tinglish, is considered abhorrent and not counted. In fact, in the present phase, a basilectal variety of English by Thais has emerged. Evidently, several local employees in shopping centers in Bangkok and other major provinces have attempted to use broken English for business survival (Komon, 1998, as cited in Foley, 2005). Likewise, in a typical apartment in Bangkok the switchboard operators speak passable English to residents from both English and non-English speaking countries (Smalley, 1994, as cited in Pupipat, 1998). Similarly, broken English is also used in remote areas in the Northeast, the former American army base provinces. A 2003 report by the Social and Economic Development Institute of North-eastern Thailand showed 14,063 Thai women married to European and American retired men (Dornsom, 2010). These men live and work in the communities as teachers, farmers and gardeners. The Thai wives and children can speak simple English while they also have to converse in Thai (Supanpaysaj, 2010). These instances are evidence that the number of Thai users of English has been increasing although they are using non-standard English.
The recognition by Thai and international cultures of the importance of English acquisition and usage since 1996 and evidence of Tinglish users seem to be a step into the early phase of nativization for Thai identity in English. However, this level has not been apparent, and this will remain so for as long as Thais still laud the native variety of English as the best norm.

(D) Linguistic effects

During the presence of the American bases in Thailand, non-translated English signs and posters were found around the provinces such as ‘Welcome to Korat 388 Tactical Fighter Wing Best in Sea’ and ‘Home of the Hunters’ (CRMA42, 2008; Tee-Noi View, 2009, p. 8). Moreover, code-switching and the mixing of Thai and English had been used by rent wives – ‘One car come One car go Two car krom’ (two cars crashed) (Charungkitanant, 1997, p. 63). Interestingly, some new English words created by Thais have come into use since then – ‘American fried rice’, ‘rent wife’, ‘second hand wife’ and ‘sea, sand & sex policy’ (Supanpaysaj, 2010).

Currently code-switching and code-mixing are popular in the Thai media. Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003, p. 71) found that sports programs on Thai television tend to use Thai English code-mixing more often than other genres. This is followed by talk shows, game shows and Thai dramas. The subsequent number of the code-mixed items found are of single nouns (e.g. ‘course’ and ‘dinner’), verbs (e.g. ‘support’ and ‘promote’) and compound nouns (e.g. ‘matching fund’ and ‘mini series’). Similarly, Arakwanich (1996, p. 35) states that English words are mixed in many registers of the Thai language such as sports, computers and technology, and medicine. Thais inevitably mix English words; sometimes they do not know exactly which of the words are Thai or English. This is widely found in story titles which are mostly blends of Thai and English – ‘Rungruang Ceramic and Wassadu’ and ‘Waen Top Chareon’. In addition, Thai English code-switching commonly emerges in popular Thai songs, television games and talk shows, radio programs, and academic lectures, etc. This phenomenon shows the linguistic strategies Thais attempt to use for accommodating their English use; there is a common perception that Thai English code-mixing and switching makes them more modern.

The above instances can also yield some symptoms of the nativization of English; code-mixing, code-switching and Tinglish forms are exponents for constructing the notion of Thai English. However, these spoken features alone are insufficient since only a few Thais speak with mesolect and acrolect varieties. Moreover, the development of written English by Thais via creative literature, newspapers, magazines and textbooks is quite gradual. To make Thai English more nativized, both spoken and written characteristics of Thai English must display a wider range of use at the acrolectal or standard level. The evidence is that the use of Thai English is still following far behind the use of either British or American English. Once Thai English is as significant as native English, Thai English will move on beyond this early developmental stage.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined the development of English in a non-colonial country. It has applied Schneider’s model to show the processes in Thai English development with respect to ‘contact between English and indigenous languages in Thailand’. The term ‘settler strand’ (the colonizer) is replaced by ‘trading representatives of the British East Asian Englishes'.
India Company and of the British Borneo Company’ and ‘British/American residents’. The latter strand includes various persons such as traders, royal tutors, officers, supervisors, soldiers and missionaries, etc. Meanwhile, the term ‘the indigenous people strand’ (the colonized) appears as ‘the local people’, ‘the migrants’ and ‘the staff members and laborers of the British East India Company and of the British Borneo Company’. All four criteria for describing the phases – socio-political factors, identity construction, sociolinguistic conditions and linguistic effects – are emphasized in this study. Although the two phases of English in Thailand are not a full reflection of an implanted English of a colony, they mirror a range of British/American English influences in sociolinguistic dimensions which occur because of the relationship between Thailand and Britain–America and their neighbors (British Malaya and British Burma). This indicates that Schneider’s model can be adopted for a non-colonial society like Thailand.

It appears that English in Thailand has attained the second phase ‘exonormative stabilization’ although this has been evolving for more than 300 years. The Thais did not directly encounter the English language and Anglophone culture through the colonial ways of life, thus they still appear to favor native varieties of English as the norm and rarely realize the potential of developing or recognizing a truly Thai variety of English.

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