Domestic Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Internationalisation at Home in Thailand: Conflicts of Recognition Surrounding International EMI Programmes

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Article information	Abstract
	In Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, higher education internationalisation agendas have increasingly shifted from studying abroad to offering 'international' English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes at home. This qualitative study explores the perceptions of seventeen domestic undergraduate students in the disciplines of Law and Business Studies regarding internationalisation at home (IaH) in Thailand. Findings from the focus group interviews revealed that domestic students positioned international EMI programmes as somewhere in the middle between studying abroad and standard domestic programmes. Moreover, these students associated international EMI programmes in Thai higher education with significant EMI, greater inbound mobility, and different teaching approaches. However, the in-between status of international EMI programmes can lead to conflicts of recognition as to whether such programmes are 'international enough'. This article offers a close-up investigation of complex meanings that circulate around IaH in the Thai context, contributing to a broader picture of the varied enactments of IaH across higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of internationalisation is a force that has profoundly reshaped global higher education (HE) over the past several decades. Internationalisation is concerned with 'policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment' (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). It takes shape via initiatives ranging from cross-border collaboration to branch campuses and the enhancement of international content in curriculae to English-medium instruction (EMI) and degrees (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In Southeast Asia, internationalisation of higher education (IHE) is becoming an increasingly growing trend as evidenced by Anglophone universities from the Global North

opening campuses in countries such as Vietnam (Welch, 2010), Malaysia and Singapore (Shams & Huisman, 2016), as well as Southeast Asian HE Institutions themselves offering international EMI programmes to attract students from home and abroad (Phan, 2018). For Thailand, IHE has only been actively pursued since 1990, with the release of the country's 15-year plan for Higher Education Development (Kanjananiyot & Chaitiamwong, 2018; Lavankura, 2013). Thai policymakers see IHE as a strategy to both meet the needs of the country and to strategically position Thailand within a competitive global HE market (Pimpa, 2011). Unlike neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia, where Anglophone universities are welcome, Thailand has implemented its IHE strategy through EMI academic programmes also known as 'international programmes' offered by both private and public Thai HE institutions alongside their standard domestic programmes, also known as 'Thai programmes'. While being called international programmes, the prime purpose is to deliver instruction in English without necessarily collaborating with international partners (Galloway & Sahan, 2021).

Broadly speaking, the internationalisation agenda in Thailand has shifted from primarily offering students opportunities to *go inter* (abroad) to offering options for internationalisation at home (IaH). These IaH offerings in the form of 'international EMI programmes' is a phenomenon which has not been yet closely examined. To date, a body of Thai research has examined historical accounts of Western influence on Thai HE (Lao & Hill, 2017; Rhein, 2016), IHE policy accounts (Lavankura & Lao, 2017), international students' experience in Thailand (Rhein & Jones, 2020; Snodin, 2019), migrant academics' experiences (Burford et al., 2020; Burford et al., 2019), lecturers' professional identities in IHE (Evison et al., 2019), and the executive leadership of international colleges (Ferguson, 2020).

Despite a growing body of research exploring meanings of IHE in the Thai context, less is known about how domestic students perceive IaH. This is especially the case in professional education (e.g., Law and Business) where programmes typically include Thailand-specific content in Thai. Our study speaks into this space, investigating the perceptions of domestic undergraduate students enrolled in international Business and Law academic programmes at Thai universities. In taking such a focus on students' perceptions, we also hope to reposition domestic students as significant stakeholders of IHE in Thailand, and within Southeast Asia more broadly.

Our article aims to answer the following research questions:

(1) How do domestic students enrolled in 'international EMI programmes' in the disciplines of Law and Business Studies in Thailand perceive the position of IaH in comparison to other kinds of educational programmes?
(2) What are the key distinguishing characteristics of 'international EMI programmes' in the view of these domestic students in Law and Business Studies programmes?

To answer these research questions, we situate our findings within the existing literature revolving around IaH as well as related bodies of postcolonial analysis of Thai HE and EMI scholarship in the Thai context. Across our article, we advance the argument that international EMI programmes are a fuzzy form of IaH provision in Thailand, with blurry boundaries and a tendency to produce conflicts of recognition. It is, we argue, these international EMI programmes'

position as *in between* domestic and overseas education that raises questions for students as to whether they are 'international enough'. We conclude the article with a wider discussion and draw out research implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationalisation at home

As Knight (2004) has argued, IHE can be categorised in two broad ways: *internationalisation abroad* and *internationalisation at home*. While *internationalisation abroad* focuses on all forms of education taking place across borders, *Internationalisation at home* describes interventions at the level of curriculum, research collaboration, and foreign language studies taking place within domestic borders. HE institutions have historically focused on *internationalisation abroad* efforts, seeking to offer students opportunities to develop intercultural competencies and global citizenship skills via mobility. However, critics have pointed out that an emphasis on crossing international borders may benefit a 'mobile minority' (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 65) and disadvantage those who are unable to travel for a multitude of reasons (de Wit & Hunter, 2015). This has led to the emergence of the idea of Internationalisation at Home or 'IaH'. According to Clifford (2011), Nilsson (1999) first coined the term 'Internationalisation at Home' and it was subsequently defined by Crowther et al. (2001) as 'any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility' (p. 8). Later, Beelen and Jones (2015) extended this definition, suggesting that IaH involves the 'purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments' (p. 8).

In the last two decades, IaH has arisen to greater prominence in HE scholarship (Jones & Reiffenrath, 2018). The momentum that IaH has achieved is visible via a growth of articles (Trahar & Hyland, 2011) encyclopaedia entries (e.g., Beelen & Jones, 2018), edited collections (e.g., Manning & Colaiacomo, 2021) and special issues (Clifford, 2011), all of which are focused on this domain of educational activity. Arguably, this increasing interest has arisen given growing recognition that not all learners have access to transnational mobility because of its significant cost and other impediments on travel (e.g., caring responsibilities, visa restrictions, fear of racism and marginalisation). Policymakers have recognised that a wider pool of students could benefit from 'international' experiences and knowledge, even those who do not leave home (Robson et al., 2018).

Across the literature, there is significant conceptual variation surrounding how the term 'IaH' is put to use, much of which appears to be marked by contextual difference. For example, many Anglophone IaH studies tend to frame IaH as connected to student and staff mobility, focusing on how inbound international mobility can help develop the intercultural competence of domestic students (Jon, 2013; The Higher Education Policy Institute, 2015; Schreiber, 2011; Soria & Troisi 2014; Trahar & Hyland 2011). However, in non-Anglophone contexts, IaH often tends to be connected to domestic students' English skill development (Jon, 2013) and English-medium courses (Ishikura, 2015) rather than via inbound internationally mobile students. This

framing of IaH in non-Anglophone country contexts is one we explore in our own investigations of IaH in Thailand.

Given that 'domestic' students are important stakeholders of IaH, increasingly researchers have sought to ask what IaH means to them. There are studies which explore the benefits that domestic students gain from IaH in both Anglophone countries such as the US (Schreiber, 2011; Soria & Troisi, 2014) and the UK (The Higher Education Policy Institute, 2015) and non-Anglophone countries such as Korea (Jon, 2013). Currently, these studies tend to emphasise the development of domestic students' intercultural competence, however only the Korean study also associated IaH with English skill development (Jon, 2103), illustrating the salience of language in varied understandings of IaH.

IaH in Thai HE

When compared with its Southeast Asian counterparts, the ways in which IaH is conceptualised in Thailand remain highly ambiguous. For example, IaH was implemented in Vietnam in the form of 'advanced programmes' with leading experts offering favourable learning-conditions, innovative pedagogies, and assessment practices in a research culture (Nghia et al., 2019). In Malaysia, there was evidence of IaH in the form of students' intercultural exchange programmes where domestic students developed intercultural awareness and intercultural competence by working closely with inbound international students (Samat et al., 2019). Unlike neighbouring countries, IaH in Thailand has its strongest trace in the form of policy documents.

An example is found in the Thai Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation's policy text titled 'Internationalisation at Home'. It is in fact rather light on detail about the concept of IaH, only describing IaH as 'enabling students to gain international experience without necessarily going abroad' (Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2020) by having inbound international students and/or creating events focused around international cultural experiences (such as international culture days, buddies, and pen-pals). Another policy document is Prince of Songkla University (PSU)'s Action Plan for Internationalisation at Home 2020-2021 which includes goals to internationalise curriculae, increase inward academic mobility and create IaH activities to facilitate students' development as global citizens (Ek-Uru & Pavel, 2019). It is our view that IaH is an emerging concept in the Thai HE context. While the term may not yet be popularly used in Thailand, there are relevant bodies of Thai literature that may provide a better understanding of IHE and possibly IaH in Thailand, including (1) Thai postcolonial literature and (2) a body of scholarship on EMI.

Thainess vs international-ness

To understand how domestic Thai students in this study conceptualise IaH, it is valuable to explore Thai conceptualisations of being 'international' or 'international-ness', which are often constructed in opposition to 'Thainess'. Winichakul (2010) has written about the identity of 'Thainess' (*khwam-pen-thai*), describing this as an outcome of a bifurcated relationship with the West entailing 'a paradoxical set of desires [of] ... how to be like the West yet also to remain

different; how not to love the West despite its attractions; and how not to hate it despite its obnoxious dominance' (Winichakul, 2010, p. 135). This bifurcated relationship has become a strategy in terms of how Thais have dealt with the West since the mid-nineteenth century. This 'bifurcation strategy' is an 'intellectual strategy specific to a colonial and postcolonial experience in trying to negotiate between the power of the modern West and the persistent strength of local culture and identity'. It 'constructs ideas of the Thai Self in relation to ideas of the West' (Winichakul, 2010, p. 139). However, it should be noted that in this construct the West need not be the actual West and many elements that historically shaped the West as an existing culture, society, and polity may be ignored.

Despite the difficulty in drawing a dividing line between 'Thai' and 'West', this bifurcation strategy is commonly used within IHE in the Thai context. According to Ferguson (2021), when seeking to distinguish what international education is, many might resort to describing what it *is not*, i.e., *not Thai*. As the antithesis of Thai education, international education is often presented as 'an in-country alternative, predominantly for middle and upper-class families, for escaping Thai-style education whilst staying at home' (Ferguson, 2021, p. 2). Many distinguish international EMI programmes from Thai programmes based on language of instruction, modernised pedagogy, and liberal values instilled in the curriculum. Yet as Ferguson (2021) comments, this conceptualisation of IHE is commonly framed as a symbol of sophistication 'in order to distinguish one with status to the deficit of another less cultivated Thai' (p. 5).

EMI and IaH in Thai HE

While some scholars perceive EMI as a strategic tool for both internationalisation and Westernisation (Sperduti, 2019), in Thailand EMI is a key tool to internationalise HE (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). As an increasingly expanding global phenomenon, EMI is not a single entity. EMI environments are rooted historically and politically which consequently resulted in different EMI policies and practices, and thus different implementation challenges (Coleman et al., 2018). For Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, one of the main driving forces behind EMI is the use of English to internationalise HE as well as improve students' English proficiency (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). Since the 1997 economic crisis, EMI programmes have become an alternative space for domestic students to study a university degree in English at a lower cost, as evidenced in the rising number of EMI programmes at the HE level over the past several decades (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). The availability of EMI programmes in Thai HE is often seen as a solution to the limited number of seats to enter university in Thailand, yet international EMI programmes have been critiqued in terms of access, which is limited only to the wealthy and upper-middle classes due to high tuition costs when compared with other standard domestic programmes (Surichai, 2002).

In the Thai context, EMI and IaH are closely linked, and EMI often emerges as a common institutional strategy for enacting IaH. Thus far, we can see that there is limited research on IaH in the Thai context, particularly studies which engage with Thai students who study in international EMI programmes themselves. Empirical studies have been conducted to investigate students' attitudes on EMI in Thai HE (e.g., Galloway & Sahan, 2021; Tang, 2021), but few studies have explored the meanings that circulate within students talk about what being in an

'international EMI programme' might mean. Our study addresses this absence in the literature, by asking domestic students (i.e., Thai students) about their own experiences and understandings of IaH. As a result, we extend previous studies on 'internationalisation at home' (Clifford, 2011; Trahar & Hyland, 2011) with a focus on the specificities of the Thai context.

Research context

In selecting our research context, we wished to include both private and public universities well known for offering 'international' learning opportunities for domestic students. Ultimately, we elected to conduct research at two institutions in Bangkok[1]: 1) a large research-intensive public university offering Thai and international academic programmes for various disciplines, and 2) a large private university, which markets itself as offering all academic programmes in English.

Research participants

Following institutional human ethics committee approval, we approached two existing academic contacts within these institutions to request formal permission for research. Both contacts allowed us to attend their classes to invite students to participate in the study. In selecting target research participants, we chose to include only domestic undergraduate students, i.e., Thai students, in our study. The inclusion criteria was aligned with our study purpose of understanding domestic Thai undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences of IaH. With students' consent, we shared the information sheet and collected signed consent forms. Seventeen domestic undergraduate students (i.e., Thai nationals) were recruited for the study. (See details in table 1.)

Table 1
Demographics of research participants

Research setting	Number of participants	Programmes of study	K-12 Education background
Public university	4 (3 women, 1 men)	Business Administration	Thai public or private schools
Private university	7 (4 women, 3 men)	Law 1	Thai public or private schools & international school in India
Private university	6 (2 women 4 men)	Law 2[1]	Thai public or private schools

Initially, we expected to recruit students from a greater number of disciplinary areas than the two (i.e., Business Administration and Law) presently included in our study. Due to time constraints and the limited availability of institutional contacts, we decided to recruit students

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[1] The setting of the study in the Bangkok metropolitan area is important. As Ferguson (2020) notes, there may be important distinctions surrounding the 'geography of class in which power and importance are situated at the literal centre of Thailand' (p. 229) when compared to other regions of the country.

[2] Law 1 and Law 2 students studied in the same programme of study at the same university. Codes, however, were assigned to different focus groups for data analysis purposes.

from these two disciplinary areas only. While the narrower focus of this sample may present a demographic limitation, the disciplines of business and law also offer a helpful category for analysis, given their similarities regarding the context for employability for Thai graduates. In Thailand, the law and accounting professions are highly restricted, meaning that they are either solely or mostly reserved for Thai nationals (Ministry of Labour, 2020). The skills and knowledge required to perform such locally reserved professions (e.g., local language and practices) may raise questions about the 'international' and 'local' aspects of international programmes (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). However, it is important not to reduce international and local into a binary: simply because some professions are reserved for Thai citizens does not mean that international perspectives and intercultural communicative competence (which may be learned via international programmes) are not valued. Given the specific disciplinary context of our study, we accept that there are limits on how generalisable our findings may be to other disciplinary areas.

Research method and data collection

This paper is part of a wider international study which collected focus group interview data in Malaysia and Thailand in order to explore a series of questions about IHE, one of which was domestic students' perceptions. In this paper, we focus on the Thai data, in which focus group interviews were employed as the primary method of research. Two investigators in this project were involved across all interviews, allowing consistency of process across the data collection

At the outset of the focus group interview participants were given a demographic questionnaire to complete in order for us to understand more about each individual's socio-cultural as well as educational background in relation to the use of English and their international experience (e.g., whether they have lived or studied abroad).

All focus groups were undertaken in the Thai language, and they lasted on average two hours. The focus group interviews were designed to include individual writing (20 minutes) and group discussion (100 minutes). We began the focus group with individual writing to break the ice and free participants' thoughts (Colucci, 2007; Yuen, 2004). Participants wrote down the characteristics that they attributed to studying in an 'international university' and an 'international programme'. Then, we moved onto group discussion to consider ideas arising from the writing. Using these methods of data collection allowed us to obtain greater richness and complexity of information, as well as adding rigor, breadth, complexity, and richness to our inquiry (Flick, 2007). Moreover, it also allowed data triangulation (i.e., to enhance the reliability of the data), offering a more comprehensive understanding and offering corroborating evidence.

Data analysis

We undertook thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the data. Our purpose in having multiple investigators work with the data was to engage in investigator triangulation, whereby the researchers interpreted data individually to find concurrent themes in each other's data interpretations or analysis. Our approach was both theory-driven and data-driven. Whereas part of the data was coded based on the themes in the reviewed literature, emerging data

patterns beyond the literature review were also labelled. This resulted in an iterative process in data analysis where literature was further reviewed for a revised theoretical framework. Thus, the process of data analysis was hermeneutic and circular (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

FINDINGS

Domestic undergraduate students' perceptions of IaH in Thailand

In this article we have arranged our findings to answer the two research questions that have framed this study.

1. Internationalisation 'at home': Somewhere in the middle

This section presents findings which respond to the first research question regarding domestic students' perception of IaH when compared with other types of educational programmes.

Participants[3] described overseas study as 'better' than HE provision in Thailand (W1, Law 1), having higher quality and prestige and enabling students to 'get to know people from other countries' (W1, Law 1). As W1 from Law 1 noted, 'now everybody should graduate from abroad. It's one of the social values most people believe in', so therefore graduating from abroad would make 'you look good, look competent; you look like you work hard' (W1, Law 1). While this student describes a sense that 'everybody' should graduate from abroad as being a prevailing social value, it is important to recognise that in Thailand studying abroad remains a privilege reserved for the wealthy few. Overseas educational experience often connotes a sense of privilege, capability, and resourcefulness on the part of the mobile student.

However, in a context where some families do not allow their children to study overseas or may not have the means to do so, international EMI programmes have emerged as an alternative. For example, Student M1 from Law 1 noted 'For me, my grandmother is worried. She doesn't want me to go abroad'. Many other students were influenced by their family members in their decision to study in an international programme: 'He [uncle] said studying here [in an international EMI programme] is good because they have English here. Now judges have to take an English language exam. Studying here should help at a certain level' (M1, Law 1). Moreover, students emphasised that another advantage to studying in Thailand compared to overseas was that it enabled them to build important domestic connections. In Thailand, the practice of building a network is valuable across all professions, and commonly Thai people understand that 'who you know' matters for building a career. Other students (e.g., W4, Law 1) undergraduate international EMI programmes as a stepping stone to a postgraduate qualification overseas.

When compared with Thai (or standard domestic) programmes, students described international EMI programmes as being better quality, and having higher status and prestige. For example, students reported that international EMI programmes have a better reputation (M1, Law 1),

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[3] In this study participants have been assigned codes based on their discipline and gender identity.

'international standards...equal to other countries' (W3, Business 1), and 'more variety' in terms of the topics they teach (M2, Law 2). Student W1 from Business 1 also described having greater access to foreign academics as in the following quotation:

> It's not that *aa-jaan tai* (Thai academics) don't teach well, but I feel that if we learn with *aa-jaan fà-ràng* (foreign academics, often assumed to be White) we will get another perspective. Because for *aa-jaan tai* they grew up in Thailand[4]. Their mindset will be similar to ours. If we sometimes get to talk to foreign *aa-jaan* they can suggest something we have probably never thought of.

However, there was often doubt expressed by students as to whether their academic programme was 'international enough', suggesting that there is wider debate about what constitutes a programme as legitimately 'international'. For example, one student described their programme as 'not fully international' noting that 'most students, around 90%, are Thai' (W3, Business 1). Another student noted 'the degree is international, but the environment is full of Thai people' (W1, Law 1).

While entering an international EMI programme may be considered a 'good' move due to its perceived quality and international standards, some of this decision making depended on whether students wished to seek employment in Thai or global labour markets. One research participant reported that certain professions, such as accountants, require more local knowledge and thus arguably Thai programmes are better:

> Yes, even for accounting. Studying BBA for most people if they intend to work in Thailand, they [faculty members] will advise us to study accounting in a Thai programme. (W2, Business 1)

Students may view domestic Thai programmes in some disciplines as more elite, and more easily opening onto employment opportunities than international EMI programmes, as W3 from Business 1 mentioned:

> I think Thai programmes have more solid [i.e., deep] content than *inter* [international] programmes, for example, medicine, engineering, architecture, and the important thing with these fields is that they can work in Thailand. Looks like it's more convenient for them to work in Thailand. It's a *pro* [benefit] for them.

It is worth noting that all of the high-status professions mentioned by this student are 'reserved professions' in Thailand, requiring a national professional certification. This gives a certain logic to being credentialised in a Thai programme. As we have shown across this theme, international EMI programmes are positioned by domestic undergraduate students as 'in between' overseas education and domestic Thai programmes on the whole. However, there

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[4] While interviews were conducted in Thai there was significant language mixing in students' talk. In translating excerpts from interviews, we have tried to capture some of the mixed nature of this talk by underlining text which was English in the original.

is also significant complexity here, as some domestic Thai programmes may be positioned as higher status than some international EMI programmes, and some international EMI programmes may be seen as offering opportunities that overseas study cannot.

2. The characteristics of international EMI programmes in Thailand: Conflicts of recognition

The first theme we have discussed identifies that IaH is broadly positioned 'in the middle' between overseas education and domestic Thai programmes, albeit in a complex and shifting kind of way. In this section we aim to identify the characteristics that students perceive as marking IaH as 'international'. We argue that there is considerable doubt in the minds of students as to whether IaH achieves recognition as a form of education that is sufficiently 'inter'.

2.1 English as a medium of instruction

Across our study the most significant finding was that students closely associated recognition of a course as 'international' with English as a medium of instruction or EMI. However, domestic students' expectations regarding EMI offering were sometimes far from reality. Language switching was a crucial but conflicting element related to international EMI programmes in Thailand.

During focus group interviews students often made comments which implied *international learning* 'should' or 'must' be in English: '*ideally* it should be English' (M1, Business 1); 'at least the subjects we learn, all teaching and learning must be in English...materials we learn from, or *aa-jaans* speak English. When we speak in the classroom it should be English'. (W2, Business 1)

However, some students noted the differences between the ideal of using English as a medium of instruction and what may, in fact, occur in practice. Some students noted that the curriculum itself had fewer courses taught in English than they anticipated:

> But when in the real classroom there aren't many [laughter]. They said Law in English but in reality only 2-3 subjects are in English. The rest is all Thai ... It's not that *inter* [laughter] because most Law subjects are in Thai (M2, Law 2)

When students were asked in the Law 2 focus group if using the Thai language in an international EMI program was acceptable, the following dialogue occurred:

> M2: In class, I think no...Some subjects only [laughter]
> W1: If it's me it's okay. But if it's for other foreigners, they probably say no. They won't understand

This dialogue demonstrates differing views among students about whether using the Thai language in a programme affects its recognition as 'international' education. While English might be idealised as a signifier of 'international-ness' in practice some students found that

using Thai could help to facilitate their learning. At times this appears in the form of language switching designed by instructors: 'most activities will be in Thai and then present in English. Something like that' (Student W2, Business 1). In other occasions language switching may occur because students' English academic skills were in development, as is described by this student in the Law 1 focus group:

> M1: … *aa-jaans* speak English, but if they know we don't understand they will speak Thai.
> Interviewer: Like translating the content taught?
> M1: Yes. Yes.
> Interviewer: But when chatting informally?
> M1: I have met *aa-jaans* outside class, they speak all Thai, not English.
> Interviewer: And you're okay with that?
> M1: Yes.

Another student also noted that being able to switch to the Thai language can help him to understand the classroom content:

> When I entered the programme, my English was poor. In the first year my grade wasn't good because I didn't really understand the content because of <u>English use</u>. The lectures were in English, and I couldn't understand. I couldn't really follow. At least it's better that we can still use Thai that we can ask our friends [in Thai]. (M1, Business 1)

Other students also noted significant language switching within classroom interactions:

> <u>Ideally</u>, it should be <u>English only</u>. But it's understandable that because it is Thai <u>culture</u>, Thai friends, Thai *aa-jaans*, Thai <u>office, why we should have to use English</u>? (Student M1, Business 1)

> I think this is probably the reason why we should also use our mother tongue because sometimes you have to work in Thailand, but you don't know any marketing words in Thai at all. So, I think in class there should be some translation to tell us that this term should be used in Thai in this situation. (W3, Business 1)

While mostly students reported language switching to be positive for their learning, some students felt anxious that a habit of moving between languages may turn out to be a disadvantage when seeking employment in Thai workplaces, where they may be perceived as *grà dàe* (pretentious) or culturally incompetent, as discussed in the Business 1 focus group:

> W2: We will speak one word in Thai one word in English without knowing it.
> W1: This is a con [disadvantage] ... if we apply for a job and if the organisation has a Thai style, I feel that it doesn't look good.

Another interesting finding related to EMI is its fuzzy logic. Although many students perceived that English would be beneficial for their future employment, they also questioned the application of English use in their potential domestic workplaces as in this example from the Business focus group discussion:

M1: I then ask why would you need to study Law in English? Who are you going to use it with?

W1: Yes, true. Marketing is a bit better because they also use the same technical terms as us. Apart from Law I think Accounting is also in a difficult situation…

Cross talk: Cost...depreciation...what the heck does it mean in Thai?

W1: I have to read reports of Thai companies and when I read I have to try to compare with what we learn in class.

Interviewer: So international programmes must fit in the local context as well...but if the lecturers aren't Thai?

W1: Then it can be problematic.

The above extract may offer implications for EMI and international EMI academic programmes in non-English speaking countries. The global-local tension in the use of English means that we may wish to reconsider the purpose of EMI, including its implications for students' future employment.

2.2 Inbound mobility

Across the data set students described inbound mobility as a key feature of IaH in Thailand. Both instructors and students from abroad were important for international EMI programmes, yet a lack of international students and teaching staff led to questions about the distinguishing characteristics of these programmes.

When asked what makes their study programmes 'international' some students replied that it 'must have foreigners' (M1, Law 2), noting that the presence of foreigners gave IaH an 'international feel'. As students in Law 1 noted:

W1: When looking around, we can see red hair, blonde hair, something like that.
M2: That feel. When you walk around, there's blue eyes.

It is noticeable in this extract that the students connote 'international-ness' with whiteness rather than other kinds of international bodies. However, across the dataset students also noted that their international classmates and instructors came from countries including Nepal, Korea, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

In terms of mobile academics, students identified that those who had experiences abroad, may not 'adhere to traditional Thai stuff. They will offer different ideas that we can implement' (M1, Law 1). However, there appeared to be a hierarchy where the inbound mobility of foreigners was more highly valued than the return mobility of Thai scholars who had studied abroad, as discussed in the Law 2 focus group:

M1: I think they [the university] should hire from abroad because we will know the kind of language they really use...

M4: ...[in agreement] they have to be imported from abroad because we will learn from their curriculum and they graduate from that curriculum. They use it right at the start so they should know better than people from abroad who travel to study with them.

A lack of inbound mobility was also viewed as something that marked a programme as insufficiently 'inter'. As one student noted 'it's not fully international because it lacks *aa-jaan fà-ràng* and *inter* (international, non-Thai) students' (W1, Business 1). Indeed, some students noted that most of the inbound international students were exchange students 'there's no one who moves here specifically because they're interested in coming here' (W2, Business, 1).

As the findings presented above suggest, students described inbound mobility as a key characteristic which distinguishes the uniqueness of international EMI programmes in Thai HE institutions. However, despite this ideal, there is often a lack of inbound mobility both in terms of instructors and students. This leads to conflicts of recognition, where students express doubts as to whether their IaH experiences are sufficiently 'inter'.

2.3 Different approaches to teaching and learning

Participants in our study stated that domestic and international EMI programmes at Thai HE institutions may have different approaches to teaching and learning. Students appeared to have a positive view of 'international' knowledge and pedagogies, but also had doubts about how to make use of international knowledge in the Thai labour market. Firstly, students argued that being in international EMI programmes and having access to teachers who studied abroad enabled them to access 'international knowledge':

> *Aa-jaans* who graduate from abroad, we can be sure that their knowledge that they give in the lecture is international. (M1, Business 1)

> I think it is more diverse [international]. Especially for subjects like international law, they [teachers who graduated from abroad] teach very clearly. (M2, Law 2)

Students also argued that compared to Thai programmes, students studying in international EMI programs may have to work harder to enable success because the standards were 'world-class':

> They [Students in domestic Thai programmes] might chill out more, learn more easily, and they might not be as stressed as us. We're quite serious when we study and when we work because the lecturers have a high standard. They have their experience, like international, like world-class. (W2, Business 1)

Students also observed that international EMI programmes differed in their encouragement of active learning, critical thinking, and lower power distance between lecturers and students:

> 'Internationalisation' is like they [lecturers] would encourage open discussion. They want us to "express ideas". Most of us in the international [EMI] programme are comfortable with public speech and able to express our opinions. The lecturers really care about students' participation in class discussion, in answering questions because the [local] nature is we're quite shy and not confident with speaking in class. But

because of the international [EMI] programme, then they would say you must share ideas in class, forget about right or wrong answers. (W2, Business 1)

Normally for Thais you come to class, listen to lectures, they give you homework and you go home. For international [EMI] programmes there'll be discussion, you have access to *aa-jaans*. If you want to know something, you can just go to them and ask without this fear of them telling you off. (M1, Business 1)

In addition, the participants noted that international education links theories to real workplace needs, whereas Thai programmes are felt to be more restricted to textbooks and what is learned in class. As M1 from the Business 1 focus group mentioned:

We're like this. Like I often say that it feels like we often get to practise a real job. What we study we get to practise in real life. W1 and I studied research before and *aa-jaans* would ask us to do the real research. It's not like using theories to answer questions. Then I feel that it is this which is one thing called international.

While students noted that international academics may bring international knowledge and practices into the classroom, some students were also concerned that international academics may not be sufficiently grounded in Thai knowledge and practices that would be valuable to students seeking to enter the Thai labour market, as mentioned by students from the Business 1 focus group:

W1: So it has to do with subjects too. If it's HR we can probably use *fà-ràng* teacher. International marketing we can use *fà-ràng* teacher...
W2: But if it's Thai teachers it'll be core subjects.
W1: Accounting [laughter]
W2: Core subjects like finance... and what else? Law definitely. Tax as well, [definitely] Thai teachers.

The importance of local knowledge for Thai labour market was also confirmed by law students:

They need to have foundation subjects because when we graduate we will work in the field of Thai law anyway. (M2, Law 2)

They must look at what Thailand is using and teach that. (F1, Law 1)

As the findings suggest, students understand that approaches to teaching and learning in international EMI programmes, including the knowledge they have access to, are distinct from domestic Thai programmes. However, students also raised questions about the value of these approaches, especially when they may be entering into the domestic labour market.

DISCUSSION

The intention of our study was to investigate how domestic undergraduate students enrolled in international EMI programs in Thailand characterise the position of such programmes in comparison to other types of HE provision (e.g., overseas education or domestic Thai programmes). Students described a continuum of prestige normatively configured as *abroad- international-domestic*, where international EMI programmes were broadly identified as more prestigious than domestic programmes taking place in the Thai language but were often perceived as being less prestigious than studying abroad. However, upon a close analysis of students accounts it became clear that this continuum of prestige was complex rather than straightforward. While studying abroad may be associated with privilege, capability and resourcefulness, some students emphasised the valuable domestic networks that could be gained by studying within an international EMI programme in Thailand. Students showed some concern that domestic students enrolled in domestic Thai programmes may have the benefit of being more exposed to local knowledges and materials, local contexts, and specialist Thai language. Equally, they also expressed doubt about whether their international EMI programme was *international enough*, and also raised questions about whether an international EMI programme would necessarily prepare them well for employment within domestic labour markets, especially when compared with some prestigious domestic Thai programmes (e.g., medicine or engineering) which train students for 'reserved professions' in Thailand. Students in this study felt that studying in these highly sought-after domestic programmes may be similarly, if not more, high status than studying in 'international' programmes in another field. The vague definition of IaH in Thai HE and domestic students' conflicting views surrounding international EMI programmes has implications for numerous stakeholders. Rather than simplified understandings of what these programmes are for, there is a greater need for researchers, policymakers and institutional stakeholders alike to understand the complexity of these programmes. The current vagueness that surrounds these programmes can make it difficult to design appropriate curricula with clear learning objectives and effective learning outcomes.

Despite the ambiguity of IaH in Thailand, international EMI programmes in Thai IHE were identified by students with a series of characteristics which distinguished 'international EMI programmes from domestic Thai programmes. For students, the most important factor was the use of English as a medium of instruction. Indeed, reading across our data it was almost as if an equation was being repeated by students: '*Inter* = English'. This is perhaps unsurprising given that English skill development is commonly identified as a key benefit of international education (Jon, 2013) given the prevailing ideology of English as an international language as well as an ASEAN lingua franca (Kirkpatrick, 2012). Similarly, students identified inbound mobility (of both instructors and other students) as a key characteristic, and a key distinguishing feature from domestic Thai programmes. Students articulated a view that is commonly seen across the literature that inbound mobility of both academic migrants and international students allowed them to be exposed to international knowledge and pedagogy (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Robson et al., 2018). In particular, they noted differences in terms of learning and teaching, arguing they were held to 'world-class' standards, and were engaged in active learning pedagogies which prioritised lower power distance and the development of critical thinking. However, it is important to remember that participants in our study compare their own study

experiences in international EMI programmes to *ideas* of domestic university courses which they may not have first-hand experience with. These students' idealised expectations of international education could be a result of international education ideology which promotes the West as heterogenous, liberal, and democratic, thus being better than the rest (Sperduti, 2019). However, we argue that these ideological assumptions need to be carefully re-considered, as do discourses which result in positioning Thai educational provision as perpetually in deficit.

Our study has tracked a discrepancy between students' idealised expectations of international education and their descriptions of its realities. As our findings demonstrate there were frequent conflicts of recognition as to whether international EMI programmes were sufficiently '*inter*'. For example, while students identified that international EMI programmes learning 'should' or 'must be' in English, in practice students wondered if their programme was '*inter*' enough if there were fewer courses taught in English than expected, or there was significant language switching in the classroom. While students noted that language switching and the use of mother tongue could be valuable for their learning (Galloway et al., 2017), there were also doubts expressed about how becoming accustomed to 'mixing' languages may be perceived in workplace settings, and whether it may evoke a sense of cultural incompetence or pretentiousness. Given these conflicts of recognition that students noted, EMI educators can have a role to play in discussing the benefits of language mixing with students. Teachers could explain the benefits of pedagogical translanguaging, where two or more languages are integrated into instructional strategies, for instance, to help students achieve both language and content learning outcomes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Another key conflict of recognition revolved around inbound mobility, where a lack of inbound mobility was also seen to be something that could mark domestic students' learning experience as insufficiently 'inter'. Students expressed concern that they had limited interactions with non-Thai students, and that many of their teachers were Thai academics who had returned from sojourns abroad rather than being *aa-jaan fà-ràng*. As some studies have shown, inbound international students appear to help domestic students to develop intercultural competence (e.g., Jon, 2013; Samat et al., 2019) and this finding raises questions regarding difficulties in enabling intercultural interaction as also noted in previous studies (e.g., Trahar & Hyland, 2011). However, understanding intercultural competence based on the structuralist correlation between culture and nation offers a rather restricted view of the intercultural in today's fluid, hybrid world of HE where instructors and students carry with them a lingua culture. Despite being Thai, these mobile instructors or students can be multilingual, have different intercultural experiences, or use different kinds of English based on their experiences (Taylor, 2021). Rather than viewing a lack of inbound mobility as a weakness, international EMI programmes could better highlight the existing strengths and experiences of their returnee staff and students, which can be significant assets for developing students' intercultural competence.

Being taught by academics who were not necessarily grounded in the local Thai context was also seen as a potential weakness. This study had a particular disciplinary inflection, with our focus on students from faculties of Law and Business. Our study raised concern over the local knowledge required for the legal and business professions, knowledge (including of specialist language) which often non-Thai speaking international academics may not be well placed to

offer. The implications here are that daily practices in certain jobs in Thailand may rely as much on local knowledge as global ones, and the language used will be more often Thai than in English. Students who study in international EMI programmes may find it difficult to transfer skills and knowledge into their domestic workplace and may be disadvantaged because there are specific contextual features that are important (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). This has implications for the designers of curriculae who might need to ensure an appropriate balance of the subjects to serve employment demands, such as technical terms and technical subjects can be taught in Thai so that the students can apply them to their future careers. The notion of 'glocalness', in which students think globally and act locally, is thus a significant consideration for IHE in Thailand.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand students' perceptions of IaH in Thailand through their conceptualisation of international EMI programmes, which is often linked with prestige, yet situated as 'somewhere in the middle' between domestic programmes and study abroad programmes. This positioning leads to conflicts of recognition of what is 'international' enough. EMI, inbound academic mobility, and international teaching and learning were perceived by domestic students as key characteristics of being 'international', but they remain fuzzy and contested. Because international EMI programmes take place 'at home' tensions surrounding *international-ness* and *Thainess* in IaH will remain a site of unease and creativity.

Nonetheless, there are questions which may be fruitfully pursued by researchers, policymakers, and international programme administrators. From our perspective, there is fuzziness not only in practice, but also in national and institutional policy where the definition of IaH, and how it may be enacted, is left open. Policy makers as well as researchers in the field may revisit the criteria for 'international' programmes such as the English language, intercultural competence, taught content, and more importantly the beneficiaries of IaH. While IaH discourse usually emphasises its democratic nature in opening up international learning to a wider array of possible students, in the Thai context IaH is often enacted via EMI programmes which are inaccessible to the majority of Thais. We suggest that our analysis reveals that deep questions remain about what IaH means in the Thai context and how it may be imagined otherwise in the future.

Our study has contributed to the body of research on IaH, demonstrating IaH in Thai context through the perceptions of domestic students. By extending Winichakul's (2010) pathbreaking articulation of the 'bifurcation' intellectual strategy of resisting Western imperialism and meanwhile adopting aspects of Western culture, we have introduced in-between-ness and conflicts of recognition as key conceptual tools to explore IaH in Thailand. However, since there are national and regional inflections to the enactment of IaH, the field requires more studies which look at IaH closely, tracing how it is enacted at the local and regional level in order to better understand the place of IaH across the region. While undergraduate domestic students are key informants in our study, it would be valuable for further studies to engage the perspectives of other stakeholders, including domestic Thai programme students and postgraduate students.

It would also be beneficial if a similar study was to be conducted amongst other disciplines, to explore this as a potential factor.

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