

Non-native English Varieties: Thainess in English Narratives

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Abstract

This study aims at examining Thainess as a writing strategy used in non-literary texts written by non-professional bilingual writers. These writers are advanced language learners who are pursuing their Master's degree in English. Seven English narratives of their language learning experiences were analyzed based on Kachruvian's framework of bilingual's creativity and contact literatures. The findings showed that four out of six contextualization processes - transfer, translation, code-mixing, and reduplication - were utilized when conveying the writers' experiences in acquiring their first and second languages. Unlike the findings in previous studies of Thainess in literary genre, lexical borrowing and shift process were not found in narratives. Although Thai English as a new variety in World Englishes has been debated for years and remains in an obscure status, it cannot be denied that the research findings in this study show the uniqueness of Thai English writing strategies.

Keywords: bilingual writer, Thainess, Thai English, narrative, World Englishes

1. Introduction

Taking World English in perspective, Thai English (ThaiE henceforth) is a variety of English emerging in Thailand. "Contact literatures" has already developed and emerged in Asian context. However, the existence of Thai English in writings has never been well-recognized in everyday and academic contexts of use. The term "contact literatures" refers to literature or composition writing in English written by ESL or EFL non-native English (B. B. Kachru, 1987). Previous studies on bilingual writings are mostly conducted on literary work written by professional bilingual writers. The analysis is focused on the distinct linguistic features, and rarely on non-literary genre - namely, narrative essay. According to the findings in previous studies, those professional writers create special writing styles called 'ThaiE' and 'Thainess' (Chutisilp, 1984; Watkhaolarm, 2005). Thainess in English writing refers to the result of the process of contextualization which is influenced by Thai sociocultural systems reflected in the language (Watkhaolarm, 2005). Therefore, this paper aims at exploring writing strategies, namely Thainess used in narratives and writing styles of Thai English bilinguals who do not have a mastery of English which is comparable to those aforementioned professional authors. However, these ThaiE bilinguals are advanced language learners who are pursuing their Master Degree in English. Worth-mentioning here is Indrasuta (1987)'s findings which show that English narratives created by Thai English writers at the intermediate level are more similar to Thai language than that of the target language.

1.1 *The Use of Asian Varieties in English Writings*

The notion of World Englishes suggests the rhetorical framework for a perception of the spread and functions of the English language in a global context. The term "non-native" in this paper refers to language users who do not have English British descendants. Therefore, non-native English varieties generally deal with the diversity of new Englishes (Wilang & Teo, 2012). However, the dominant new Englishes in the global spread of English occur in Asian countries where English is not mother tongue of any country. The significance of studying world Englishes in Asia is that the Asian Englishes have the largest number of English users in the world. These varieties attract the interests of linguists, literary scholars, and educators in the field to pay attention to their fast-developing functions and innovation. English does not only play an important role in the global arena but also affects many spheres of life in Southeast Asia. The citizen of ASEAN member countries adopt English for communication, but the diverse linguistic features embedded in nativized Englishes that deviate from the norms of English native speakers have been detected. The reason is because some Southeast Asian countries have been varied in terms of institutionalized Englishes (e.g. Singapore and the Philippines) while others are classified into

the Expanding Circle of English (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand) (Note 1). The characteristics of Southeast Asian Englishes are elaborated on by many scholars: Gumperz (1988), Y. Kachru and Nelson (2006), Low and Brown (2005), Nair-Venugopal (2000), and Tay (1993) regarding the structural variation i.e. phonology, lexis, syntax, and discourse. Thus, it can be assumed that the unique characteristic of Southeast Asian Englishes leads to a tradition of bilingual's creativity and contact literature as proposed by B. B. Kachru (1987).

B. B. Kachru (1987)'s theory has a key concept to characterize how bilingual writers create linguistic innovation deviates from native English's norms. To be more specific, in the countries of the Outer Circle, the bilingual writers creatively use English along with other languages in the repertory. Bilinguals' creativity or creative writing in the way, manifests itself in various genres of literatures, i.e. plays, poetry, novels. He claims that "Literature in English" by non-natives is totally distinct from general "English literature" written by natives because two or more linguistic textures are blended in the contact literatures. B. B. Kachru (1987) also coined the term 'contact' to refer to literature or composition writing between English and the new cultural features with the distinct types of discourse.

According to Kachru's proof, bilingual writers can produce linguistic distinctiveness and impart a writer's local national identity on their English literary texts, thus resulting in uniqueness of linguistic elements. The bilingual writers have competence in designing their language which can be categorized into four characteristics. First, B. B. Kachru (1987) clarifies the process of creativity based on the bilingual writer's multi-norms of styles and strategies. Second is the process of nativization and acculturation of text. He explains that the bilingual writers' creativity generally originates from nativizing the writer's native language into an English linguistic context. Acculturation emerges from the context of situation for the language. Third, the creativity is the result of two or more codes in combination. Fourth, he believes that the creativity shows a distinct context. In sum, the bilingual's creativity passes on a new distinctive language design that started from linguistic features in text structure with a wide range of local, national and cultural literary convention. Hence, regarding the purpose of this study, the researchers established a hypothesis that the essay composed by second language (L2) writers may involve the four processes mentioned previously and has the nativization as a vital role.

1.2 The Studies on 'Thainess' in English Writings

Chutisilp (1984) conducts a pioneer study of Thai English literature. She analyzes *Little Things* (1971) written by Prajuab Thirabutana and English novels. Other translated literary and nonliterary texts such as newspapers (*Bankok Post* and *The Nation Review*) and two leading magazines (*Satrisan* and *Skulthai*) are also analyzed with a process of 'contextualization' by the Kachru's frameworks (B. B. Kachru, 1981, 1983). Chutisilp (1984) hypothesizes that Thai English has unique writing styles and create literary discourse of stylistic innovations at the lexical and grammatical level. In addition, Watkhaolarm (2005)'s study is an essential work for examination of discourse strategies. She selects two books to seek the Thainess in English texts i.e. "*My Boyhood in Siam* (1940)", which is an autobiography of Kumut Chandruang, and the famous novel of Pongpol Adireksarn "*Until the Karma Ends: A Plot to Destroy Burma* (1996)". Watkhaolarm (2005)'s findings reveal that the two authors both create particular writing styles which can be assumed to be a characteristic of a Thai variety of English. Her study emphasizes the development of Thai English literary discourse which is based on lexical and thematic issues more than syntactic and stylistic creativity.

Although Chutisilp (1984) and Watkhaolarm (2005) employ different years of framework, it should be noted that both of them use the framework proposed by B.B. Kachru, who conceptualizes the theory. In their conclusion, they divide Thainess into broad categories with no significant differences. To illustrate, they similarly sort Thainess into six processes, namely, transfer, translation, shift, lexical borrowing, hybridization and reduplication. A slight distinction is found only in sub-categories.

Khotphuwiang (2010) examines rhetorical and ideological strategies in the novel *Monsoon Country* (1988) by Pira Sudham. In Khotphuwiang (2010)'s work, he also employs the framework of B. B. Kachru (1987) and Watkhaolarm (2005) to elaborate on lexico-semantic and stylistic strategies of novels. The study aims to analyze Thai values, identity, and attitudes. From this paper, we can see that Watkhaolarm (2005)'s approach becomes a conceptual framework for analyzing data rather than B. B. Kachru (1987)'s theory alone. This is because Watkhaolarm (2005)'s approach is adapted and clearly classifies discourse strategies that more suit the characteristics of ThaiE.

As mentioned above, previous studies are mostly conducted on English fiction writing. Pairote Bennui (2007) is one of them who studies Thainess in English creative writing by Thai authors. He decides to study the two creative writings, *Love in the Fish Market* written by Pensri Kegngsiri, and *People of Esarn* by Pira Sudham, in order to explain Thainess from the novel and autobiography which vary in terms of time of publishing, sex of the

authors, and locations. He observes that Thainess is presented by both authors: for example, both writers write the names of characters in Thai script in order to make readers feel more familiar and also provide convenience in transferring Thai cultural and social elements to the novels. In the stories, the authors translate Thai words, phrases and sentences into English, in contrast with Thai idioms and old sayings which are shifted into English instead. In the case of inability to translate, loan words and code-mixing become essential to share figurative language such as similes, metaphors, hyperbole and personification in Thai. He illustrates more the pattern of Thai discourse writing style which is also presented in both novels such as long sentences, one-sentence patterns and redundancy.

Later, P. Bennui and Hashim (2014b) bring on the developed theory of B. B. Kachru (1987, 1992a, 1995, 2003) and Strevens (1982, 1987) to indicate the features of contextual and rhetorical nativization in Thai English literary discourse. Their work differs from Pairote Bennui (2007) in that the two researchers pick up the five various collections of Thai English fiction as the main data for analyzing and identifying indicators for a Thai variety of English in a wider range of data collection. P. Bennui and Hashim (2014b) investigate the thought patterns in Thai writing styles, the uniqueness of Thai construction, and multilingual code repertoire. The findings show that much of Thai culture presented in Thai English fiction is altered via the process of transcultural creativity and localization of English forms into Thai context and Thai situations. Therefore, regarding the rationale of the study, the extent which Thainess and ThaiE have been developed must be brought into question.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study employs the term Thainess with respect to the claim of Watkaolarm, the first person who introduced this term. She explicitly explains the presence of Thainess in English writing as the result of the process of contextualization which is influenced by Thai sociocultural systems reflected in the language. In the same way, Chutisilp (1984) claims ThaiE as a non-native variety, but carries a degree of intelligibility. That is to say, this non-native variety will be comprehended when it is studied within the Thai context only since the native speakers may not be familiar with some lexis and grammar of ThaiE. In other words, ThaiE results from Thai sociocultural factors, i.e., social roles, status, stratifications in the Thai cultural system, simplification, acculturation, and creativity by the local Thais in different discourses.

Bilingual's creativity and contact literature framework was employed to study non-literary texts because the theory includes a key concept to characterize how bilingual writers create linguistic innovation which deviates from native English's norms. Since Bilinguals' creativity or creative writing in this way is manifested in various genres of writing, i.e., plays, poetry, novels, or narratives. It must be emphasized that the theory is not limited to the study of literary texts exclusively. Chutisilp (1984) employed the theory to explore both literary and non-literary texts such as newspapers and magazines as well. However, studying ThaiE in non-literary texts is not Chutisilp (1984)'s major focus. Besides, since then there is very limited research study done by Thai researchers that explore ThaiE in non-literary texts. This is also a reason which motivates the researchers to conduct the present research study.

To define ThaiE characteristics as mentioned in Watkaolarm (2005)'s studies, ThaiE characteristics can be categorized into 6 processes as follows. First is the process of cultural transfer of some words which do not exist in the English culture or way of life, such as adding kinship or social terms before the name – '*Mae*' *Hiang* '*Mae*' which means mother in Thai. Second is direct English equivalent translation such as 'cliche' (...Away from your mother's breast into your husbands' arms...), 'cursing' - (...You, a golden flower...), "transcreated style" (...words that are created from the compound nouns in Thai...), and 'translation of the character's Thai names'. Third is the 'shift' of writing style by the use of proverbs and old sayings. Fourth is the 'hybridization' which is a combination of Thai lexical items and English such as black *kawao* (bird). Fifth is lexical borrowing, which occurs when the target language do not have equivalent lexical items with the same semantic interpretation. Last is 'reduplication', which is the Thai syntactic repetition for emphasizing the meaning following Thai pragmatic discourse such as "I bought this very, very expensive shirt". In sum, sociocultural factors and Thai culture influence the characteristics of Thainess that is passed on through the process of transfer, translation, shift, hybridization, lexical borrowing, and reduplication into ThaiE.

3. Methodology

The seven participants in this research study were English-major graduate students from the Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University in Phitsanulok province. Varying in sex and age, these graduate students were enrolled in the academic year 2013. This research utilized the participants' final essay project entitled "My experience of acquiring mother tongue and learning English as a second language learner". The essay content

involves the participants' autobiography, for example, childhood, the hometown where they live and grew up, and their opinions regarding language acquisition. The essay narrates the participants' learning experiences of L1 and L2 including the factors affecting their dialect and language used. Hence, it could be said that the essay allows the participants to generate ThaiE based on personal history without limitation on the author's creativity. As they are English-major graduate students, they have more opportunities to be exposed to the English language than other major students do. In addition, given that they are pursuing a master's degree, the whole group of participants can be regarded as having advanced English proficiency (all of them have English literacy of at least B2 level on the Cambridge English Placement Test). Furthermore, this group of participants shares the mutual conditions that all of them were born in, lived and studied only within Thailand. They differ from other ESL learners in the way that this group were nurtured under a Thai environment surrounded by Thai-speaking people. They use English only inside school regarding Thai educational curriculum and do not receive a degree or graduate from English-speaking countries. In other words, they learn English in order to fulfill the degree requirements only.

The sample essay was collected from the final project assignments in a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course. The essay was required to be at least 10 pages in length using Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced. Seventy pages of essay in total may seem lacking in terms of analysis and drawing conclusions, but it should be noted that this paper is part of a larger research project that investigates ThaiE characteristics in three aspects: 1) word and sentence levels, 2) discourse level, and 3) how the sociocultural and linguistic diversity have an influence on the participants' writing. However, this paper will focus only on Thainess and ThaiE at the word and sentence levels. Subsequently, the researchers carefully read all papers and analyzed Thainess, writing strategies, and ThaiE writing style as being the focal points in the research questions. The passages of literary discourse that deviated from the stylistic, conventional, and contextual patterns of native or Standard English writing were selected for discussion. The researchers utilized *Structural Features of New Englishes* by Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008a, 2008b) as the criteria to identify which ones were distinct from the Standard English (American and British). Thainess or ThaiE presented in the samples were quoted and analyzed following the framework by Watkhaolarm (2005) which was retrieved from the original Kachru (1987)'s framework on bilingual's creativity and contact literatures.

3.1 Ethical Issues

The participants were asked for their consent to participate in the present study via their email addresses. They were informed about the description of the research and the researchers emphasized that they would take part in the study only after giving their consent. This consent form also stipulated that the participants gave the researchers permission to analyze their narratives. Email (electronic mail) was chosen as the tool to contact all participants because it could provide time for them to carefully think over and well-comprehend the main focus of this present study. The researchers gave the participants enough time (about two weeks) to make a decision whether to participate or not participate in this study. In each email, the attached file of consent form was provided to the participants with an explanation of the study and a request for a copy of the participants' narrative writing. Therefore, the participants could be assured that all the data were kept with confidentiality and treated anonymously, but were analyzed and presented as an overall view in preference. In case of quoting part of their works, the names of participants were not disclosed, but were presented as code names instead. Code name 'P' stands for 'participant' followed by the number of each participant, starting from 1 to 7. Furthermore, the researchers returned the manuscripts to the participants and asked them to review their statements for accuracy. The participants were assured that the researchers accurately report their narratives. It was made clear to all the participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

4. Findings and Discussions

In this section, Thainess presence in English narratives is quoted without editing the respondents' statements, either the spelling or grammatical structure. The results show that the bilingual writers use four processes of contextualization out of six to convey their experiences in acquiring their first and second languages (excluded were lexical borrowing and shift process). Lexical borrowing did not occur in the narratives because the writers tend to utilize "trancreated style" strategy rather than using loan words from Thai. Although shift was found in novels, it did not appear in narrative essays. This is probably because writing in non-literary genre does not require imaginary language such as old sayings, idioms, similes, and metaphors as much as writing in literary genre does. All four processes are described and discussed with examples as well as compared to examples in previous studies of literature in Thai English.

4.1 Transfer

When the writers reveal their experiences in acquiring their mother tongue, it seems impossible to not mention the social, cultural, and religious elements. These following excerpts demonstrate the first person pronoun used in the text.

4.1.1 Transfer of Cultural Elements: Thai Has Different Ending Particles and First Person Pronouns Regarding Gender

The problem was we're different genders; also the speaking pattern among men and women in Thai language is very different. I speak the word “คะ (ka)” at every ending of the sentences and also use the word “ดิฉัน (di chan, “I” for a woman)” to represent the word “I” or “me.” (P3)

In this excerpt, the participant is a male who is talking about his childhood while living alone with his mother. Since his father had to work in another city, he spent most of his time with his mother and imitated her sayings without noticing the distinction between the norms of male and female expressions. Indeed, he would rather say *krub* instead of *ka* when ending each sentence and use *phom* (I for a man) referring to himself instead of *dichan* (I for a woman) in formal situations. While another female participant whose background is being a person from the north, she used the term *nong* (sister) when referring to herself. In contrast to standard Thai, a girl usually calls herself *noo* (meaning I). This following excerpt shows the conversation between the participant and her mother.

One of the example as I can be imaginable is the situation which happened during my childhood. When I wanted to do something by myself, though my mother did not want me to do for any reasons. I would say “น้องจะยะตนเอง” (I will do it by myself.). For example, I would like to eat by myself, but it might be messy if I did it. My mother would help me to hold a spoon then I told her “น้องจะกินตนเอง” (I will eat by myself). Indeed, the correct utterance in this case should be “น้องจะกินเอง”. (P5)

4.1.2 Transfer of Religious Elements

The majority of Thai people are Buddhists, and many of them believe in supernatural power. For example, Thais believe that ivory signifies purity and it has the power to overcome an enemy and increase the power of those who possess it. Therefore, they also believe that charms and amulets can enhance luck in different aspects. It is very common to see a group of male seniors discussing amulets in coffee shops as their hobby.

My grandfather always went to the coffeehouse forum, and of course, I always went with him. In coffeehouse forum, there had my grandfather's friends who were all teachers and schoolmasters. I remembered that in everyday, they would talk in the same topic that is they would ask about other's health and talked about charm and amulet. (P1)

4.1.3 Transfer of Social Elements

As Thai society is hierarchical, birth rank and social status determine the language used and social practice, for example, the language used with royalty is not similar to that used with ordinary people.

I also learnt about the Thai royal words which was the last thing that I learnt in Thai and very hard. (P1).

The language used does not only depend on social status but it also depends on the region where the speaker lives. In terms of Thai food, the ingredients are called differently based on each region. To illustrate, the standard Thai word for noodles made of mung bean is *วุ้นเส้น (woonsen)* while in some regions it is called *เส้นแกงร้อน (sengangron)*, which directly means noodles in hot soup.

My grandmother taught me to speak the word “vermicelli” which in Thai called “วุ้นเส้น”, but my grandmother attempted to train me to speak “เส้นแกงร้อน”. (P1)

The writer should put Thai characters in the name of food, for example, *woonsen* vermicelli or *sengangron* vermicelli to prevent confusion for non-Thai readers. Similarly to Japanese noodles, we would say *soba* noodles or *udon* noodles in order to explain to readers who do not understand Japanese (Note 2).

As we can see, writers use many Thai words written in Thai characters combined with English instead of using the romanization system. The reason is because the expected reader of the narrative is a professor who is a Thai English bilingual. Unlike in writing Thai literature, the writer must write in romanized letters followed with an explanation in parentheses to make it understandable to non-Thai readers. Although this combination seems to be code-mixing, the researchers determine that it can be classified in the transfer process as well if the writer's purpose is given consideration. To illustrate, the researchers would rather be confident that the writers prefer to write with Thai characters because they know that the reader is already specified. From this point, the writers are comfortable with writing in Thai and adding Thai characters into English text. This is because they are assured

that the reader - in this case a professor - is able to understand both Thai and English. However, if the writers were asked to write, for example, a work which would be published internationally, they might not employ this technique.

Another dominant theme which emerges in narratives is the high status accorded teachers in Thai society. Teachers are treated as a “second parent” to whom students have to pay respect. These following excerpts show the relationship between the participants and their teachers in both positive and negative attitude.

When I studied with a foreign teacher, they seldom gave me a negative feedback when I wrote or spoke something wrong such as during I present about something I said that he is a black skin, Mr. Richard, he immediately correct that he is a dark skin. Meanwhile some Thai teacher gave a negative feedback and blames over which made learner down hearted. Once I used to meet teacher was hitting her student because that student cannot answer her question or pronoun a wrong word. (P6).

In the past, teachers had full rights to punish students even to the point of hitting them, since Thai society is confident in teachers’ judgment under the concept of “A good person is made from a wooden stick”. This concept has been debated for a long time, however, punishing a student by hitting with a wooden stick is illegal nowadays. Foreign readers may feel that ‘hitting’ is physical abuse, but hitting in Thai and non-Thai society has different levels of severity. In the Thai’s view, a teacher hitting a student with a wooden stick is a way to ensure good discipline while non-Thai readers may think differently.

On the other hand, a teacher’s career is a symbol of commitment and dedication. The following example shows the kindness of a teacher who dedicates her time after work to giving extra tuition to a student who cannot learn equally at a pace with his classmates.

In the first semester studying her subject, I got the minimum score of English in my class. The same as in fourth and fifth years, she gave me unimpressive commends about my score, but this teacher is different. She asked me to come to her every day after finish school and gave me many kinds of English exercises. After two weeks, she found that I had made good scores in most of the exercise except for the part of speech grammar exercises. Then she tried to teach me individually by focusing on the part of speech in our free time. The result is I’ve got the maximum English score in my class. (P3).

Since the professor assigns the narrative topic involving learning experiences, the content is certainly related to an academic environment. Besides, the presence of Thainess pertains to the learning norm of Thai people. Many characteristics of learning patterns in Thai ways were noted. For instance, the writers elaborated their learning experiences of the first language. As illustrated in the excerpt below, the writers mention the Thai teaching standard consisting of recitations rhyming words together.

He always taught me to write Thai alphabet and read it in children’s books by using Thai teaching standard (ถ ่ย่ย กอ ไก่ – ข ไซ่ ในเล้า – ค เข้านา etc.). (P1).

She always taught me to write and read Thai alphabets like my grandfather did. She also tried to teach me to read short sentences like “มานี้มีตา”, “ในนามีปู” and asked me to write it. Every night, she told me about *Aesop* and children’s book and asked me *to read and repeat it*. (P1; italic added).

As my reading skill started since I have studied English in early childhood. I began *read aloud* the simple vocabulary and sentences. (P4; italic added).

In these excerpts, we also found another Thai way of acquiring literacy competence. Thai parents normally read *Aesop’s fable* to their children before bed time because they want to teach a moral of the fables to their kids (Note 3). Although Aesop’s fables did not originate in Thailand, they have long been kindergarten’s reading practice and bedtime stories for Thai children simultaneously when this group of bilingual writers was young kids. Besides, the norm of learning and teaching in Thailand still focuses on repetition. Teachers often speak and expect students to repeat after them out loud. This phenomenon may be questioned because it can lead to the problem of Thai students lacking creativity since they are more familiar with imitation than generating new ideas. This is similar to Thammanit and Bussracumpakorn (2011)’s research finding which shows that Thai adolescents cannot interpret information, generate ideas and develop creative abilities in an effective way. These following statements also demonstrate Thai’s tendency to learn English by memorizing the language instead of using the language in the real context of use. In general, parents would provide their children with posters or pictures with simple English vocabulary. Then, the children are taught easy English words and simple sentences. Even in conversation, children were also taught to speak according to patterns.

As I can remember, I started to learn English alphabets from my mother’s books and from the English alphabet posters she posted them on the wall and my writing table. (P3).

I began studied English as a second language when I was in Kindergarten I only wrote and recited alphabets. For example a - ant, b - bird c - cat, and etc. (P4).

In primary, there is no doubt that all of children had to learn English alphabets and pick up some easy word or sentence ‘cat’, ‘bird’, ‘hen’, ‘this is a pen’ ‘this is a car’, greeting with an easy conversation ‘Hello’ ‘Hi’ ‘How are you’, etc. (P6).

Therefore, it is not surprising for a foreign teacher to say “Hi, how are you?” in the classroom and Thai students to reply “I’m fine, thank you, and you?” like programmed robots. You will not hear other replies such as “I’m pretty good, I’m wonderful”. Even when they are sick, they still reply with the same “I’m fine, thank you, and you?”. Since most of Thai students learn English according to this method, another important problem about learning English narrated by the participants is double-thinking process. A learner has to translate any word/sentence into Thai before writing/ speaking in English. In the same way, when listening to English, the learner must translate it into Thai before replying in English.

I always thought about a Thai sentence first before writing an English sentence, such as, when I wrote the sentence “I am hungry”, I would think about its meaning in Thai that was “ฉันหิว”. (P1)

As well as the way I acquire English Language, the pattern of my English language learning was “English to Thai” that means every English that came to my mind had to be translated to Thai before I can understand it, but Thai grammar and English grammar are very different. (P3).

4.2 Translation

It is a process of translating Thai to English word for word, or “transcreated style”, which may result in a distinct collocation from native English writing. In case of the term ‘open’, Thai people can use the term ‘เปิด’ (open) for all electronic devices, music, dictionaries, or even in the sense of starting action or process as well.

In every class after finishing, the teacher will *open* the modern songs and let students find the meaning and translate from English to Thai. (P7; italic added).

In the first period of my study in sound lab class, the teacher who is Thai would *open* some short sentences from tape recorder and video player and students must listen and read it from the book. (P1; italic added).

Instead of using the verb ‘play’, both participants directly translate the word ‘open’ from Thai into English without being aware of the distinctiveness. Similarly, opening a dictionary book may give a sense of turning it page by page. The participant chose to write as the following example instead of “look up the word in dictionary”.

I can *open* dictionary to find the vocabulary if I don’t know the meaning of the words. (P7; italic added).

Thai people normally understand if someone says “the school/university *opens* (start) or *closes*” (school break).

When the university *opened*, absolutely, I studied in NUIC [Naresuan University International College]. At there, there had a lot of foreign teachers, both native speakers and non-native speakers. (P1; italic added).

Some examples of word for word translation from Thai to English are provided here. Other examples presented below also represent the translation strategy commonly used by this group of bilingual writers.

First, when we heard the song there was vocabulary or sentence patterns that you heard it made easy to understand. These mean you have been *storing in the mind*. (P4; italic added).

“Storing in the mind” was translated word-for-word from “keep in mind”. While the next expression “face them with brave” was translated from common saying in Thai which means “face up to”.

... I have to say that I met them only four hours a week which is not enough for motivation and input to learn new language. Moreover, it isn’t enough for me to *face them with brave*. (P2; italic added).

Like my one friend, he told me that he wanted to travel America and Japan. (P6; italic added).

Similarly, the phrase “like my one friend” was directly translated from “as one of my friend” to mention a friend of the writer. Additionally, the structure *go + verb* is commonly used by Thai English bilinguals because ‘go’ in Thai could refer to both ‘let’ and “actually go”.

If I did the wrong thing, some teachers provided the negative comment, and keep saying that why you cannot do this, it’s easy. *Go learn something else*. (P2; italic added).

Furthermore, participant (P2) revealed in the essay that he had difficulty in translating Thai sentences into English. English structure is very complex, he added. Hence, when he did not yet have enough mastery of English as he probably does now, he translated these sentences in the following Thai structure:

รองเท้าคู่นี้ ฉันใส่ไม่ได้ when transfers to English: *This shoe, I can't wear* (I can't wear this shoe.) (P2; italic added).

Using verb as a subject in Thai language: ไปกินข้าวด้วยกันไหม when transfers to English: *Go eat rice with me?* (Let's have lunch/dinner.) (P2; italic added)

4.3 Code-mixing

It occurs when the writers put Thai lexical items or write with mix codes of Thai and English in narratives. For example, Thais normally refer to a movie with Thai subtitles as “sub Thai” for short.

My friends like to watch Korean series so much. Also, she has known about Korea cultures. She tried to learn Korean language by herself via Korean series channel that it shows *sub Thai*. Now, she can speak Korean language as well. (P6; italic added).

The writer also related his problem with pronunciation of Thai consonant clusters and how he learned to read Thai words.

When I started in primary school, I tried to distinguish between Thai alphabet “ร” and “ล” separately. I could pronounce these two alphabets correctly when I faced the word that had these as a component, such as, “รูปร่าง”, “ละเลง”, and “เรือลม”. Additionally, I started to learn about Thai clusters, such as, “ความ”, “ปลา”, and “กล้า”. (P1).

When I was about 6 years old, as a primary school student, I started to learn how to read and write Thai. I was able to read non-complex words, for example, พ่อ, แม่, โท่, กา, บ้าน etc., but still can't read some complex and irregular words, for example: คฤหาสน์, ปรรารถนา, etc. (P3).

I always imitated those words that my grandfather talked to his friends and speak with my family member when I came back home, for example, the word “อาจารย์”, “พระเครื่อง” or the sentence “เป็นไงบ้างครับ”, “รับอะไรดีครับ” (P1).

Learning from these excerpts above, code-mixing of Thai words written in Thai characters is very evident among Thai bilingual writers. It is noteworthy that all writers mixed Thai words without providing translation because they realized that their readers were bilinguals and competent, at least, in Thai and English.

4.4 Reduplication

It is a process that is most important in English narratives. All the following statements are from the same participant. She always emphasized her grade level by adding the elementary school and secondary school. This is probably because Thais and English natives are different in how they divide, classify, and name education levels. Thai educational levels are divided into two: *Pratomsuksa* 1-6 (elementary school) and *Mathayomsuksa* 1-6 (secondary school) in contrast to the western educational systems, for example, in the U.S., whose education system is divided into 12 levels (K-12) (Note 4). Therefore, the writer emphasized it to avoid confusion and ensure intelligibility.

Since *the fourth grade in an elementary school*, the English instruction I received was very boring, as the instruction focused on grammatical rules and vocabulary.

My formal English instruction began when I was in *the fifth grade in an elementary School* till I finished the university.

As I had seen the Australia's tourist attraction is The Great Ocean Road on TV from music video of Thai singer since I was *grade 8 of secondary school*, I would like to travel in this wonderful place, so I tried to find out the information of the tourist attraction via an internet.

In *the tenth to twelfth grade of secondary school* I had studied in English-French Programme. (P4; italic added).

Another sample of writing from a different participant shares the same writing strategy in repeating words to emphasize his or her meaning. This style of communication is rather typical in Thai writing. However, when these Thai authors write in English, they add emphasis to the sentences as if they were written in Thai. In the following sentence, the term “unimpressive” appears twice to express emphasis.

This issue causes a lot of mistakes of my English study, I also got *unimpressive* scores and *unimpressive* commends from my English teachers in both *fourth year and fifth year of my primary school*. (P3; italic added).

Additionally, the reduplication process in writing becomes noticeable when these two writers narrate their learning experiences in different school levels. They state the grade level first and then add the term “elementary, primary, or secondary school” to emphasize the meaning. Similarly to the examples on Watkhaolarm (2005)'s

study, the author utilizes the process of syntactic repetition to ensure clarity of the text as follows:

Ike Cadell stepped from the landing on the eastern bank of the Chao Praya River onto a *long-tail boat*, a popular *river taxi* in Bangkok.

“Yesterday a male Westerner, a *farang*, came to see Sansak.” (Watkhaolarm, 2005, p. 154)

According to the aforementioned excerpts, the author endeavors to provide the meaning of Thai words used in the novel with equivalent English words. The finding in this present study is accordance with Chutisilp (1984)’s claim that the reduplication process is influenced by the nature of Thai language indicating emphasis. The following excerpts demonstrate how the author repeats a constituent of the sentence to underline the meaning.

And to his surprise, *he ate and ate and ate* but he could not eat all the rice in that tiny basket and although *he ate* till the rice came up to his throat still there was some rice left in the basket, when his stomach was full his temper cooled down.

I started to dream about walking in the street with *many, many* buildings on both sides, seeing myself in a *big, big* school. (Chutisilp, 1984, p. 144; italic added)

Lastly, regarding all excerpts, the researchers agree with Watkhaolarm (2005)’s claim that Thai English, as a variety, is still at an early stage of development, but has a potential to become more developed. Compared to the research studies on literary texts previously mentioned, Thainess in narratives seems to be less evident since it depends on what topic the author writes about and since the content in the essays is based on academic experience, for instance, how the writers acquired their first and second language, as well as the relationship between student and teacher. Thus, the topic of narrative in the present study may not facilitate the writer to generate creativity to the same extent as a composed literature. Even though the writer uses Thainess at lexis and sentence levels to illustrate the story, not many new words are created. As a result, students may consider the essay as an academic assignment which has to be submitted for a final project. Therefore, they prefer to not use too many styles in the work. In spite of using Thainess in casual conversation, Thais get used to utilizing ThaiE words naturally, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

Example 1:

A: “Hey, how can you go shopping here? Won’t you have a big examination tomorrow? Why don’t you read a book at home?”

B: “It’s not a big deal. *Chill chill*”

Example 2:

“Let’s have a walk *chill chill*”

Chill chill may have originated from the term “chill out” in English, but Thais understand *chill chill* as “not serious, and relaxed”. The same thing goes with terms for clothing size. When a customer asks what size this shirt is, a Thai seller always says “free size” which means “one-size-fits-all”. If a Thai customer can’t wear a shirt because it is too tight, (s)he would say “It fits me!”. To illustrate, Thais say ‘fit’ to mean ‘tight’, not ‘suit’. These situations are obviously confusing for foreigners because they do not understand these nativized English terms. Similar to nativized English in speaking, Thainess and ThaiE in writing need to be understood. The notion of bilingual’s creativity and contact literatures are not new, but the majority of English major students are not familiar with them. Hence, it will be beneficial if the instructor introduces this notion to raise awareness that “writing differently does not mean an error”. It is a kind of writing which is full of the writer’s customs and culture.

5. Conclusion

Thainess presented in English narratives is the outcome of the four out of six contextualization processes based on the Kachruvian framework. Thainess is found in the narratives because it seems impossible to narrate the story without including Thai ways of life such as cultural and social elements into the work. Although Thai English as a new variety has been debated for years and remains in an obscure status, it cannot be denied that the research findings in this study show uniqueness of Thai English writing strategies.

The research findings can aid Thai teachers and English native teachers who do not have a background knowledge of Thai English in teaching a writing course. With insights on nativized English, localized text, and students’ learning attitudes, teachers can be more understanding when it comes to giving feedback. Having insights on Thainess and ThaiE would enhance creativity as well in Thai English bilingual writers since the number of Thai English bilinguals who publish works in the international market is limited. Hence, it would be

nice to know that the next generation of Thai English bilingual writers will not be framed with overly restricted Standard English when writing English in multicultural settings. The researchers will be satisfied if the findings of this study can decrease the number of non-recognized writers and help them become accepted when they create a writing style which deviates from restricted Standard English, but is still intelligible to bi/multilingual readers. However, the researchers realize that this claim may be contrary to the norms and goal of the English language learning in the country.

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Notes

- Note 1. The expanding circle is the third circle following the well-known three concentric circles of Kachru which consists of inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle respectively.
- Note 2. Soba noodle are a type of thin noodle made from buckwheat flour while Udon noodle are thick wheat noodles.
- Note 3. Aesop's fable is a collection of fables credited to Aesop, a slave and storyteller believed to have lived in ancient Greece.
- Note 4. K-12 is primary and secondary education in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

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