A CASE OF A CONTEXTUALIZED VARIETY OF ENGLISH : ENGLISH IN THE THAI CONTEXT

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OBJECTIVES

The spread of English around the world and among speakers of other languages and cultures has resulted in a divergence from English native varieties. According to Strevens (1982), there are now nearly seven hundred million speakers of English, of whom only three hundred million are native speakers of one of the following varieties: British, American, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand. While a Thai native perceives that his language belongs to him, due to the spread of English worldwide, Strevens (1982 : 420) suggests that a native speaker of English can no longer claim he owns the English language. This worldwide use of English has drawn the attention of researchers in such fields as sociolinguistics, linguistic typology, psycholinguistics, ethnography of communication, and applied linguistics. In addition, it has become the special interest of applied linguists who specialize in the area of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. English, which is used by the Thai people as a foreign language, has recently gained wide acceptance as an international language in Thailand. Knowledge of English is often the means for academic achievement and upward mobility. A detailed study of the use of English in Thailand, therefore, needs no justification.

This study seeks to provide an explicit analysis of a ' performance variety ' of English as used in Thailand by the Thai people. It is an examination of the linguistic and sociolinguistic characteristics of English in the Thai context, where English serves a vital role as an **additional** language. The ways in which English is patterned and organized support the concept of ' Thainess ', i.e., Thai English with its unique characteristics. The ' deviations ' at different levels in what has been termed here ' Thai English ' are explained in terms of social and cultural transfers from the native language. It is further claimed that such **Thainess** in English can be best understood in the Thai context of situation where English is being used. The discussion, therefore, includes shared rules of speaking and interpretations of speech performance, shared attitudes regarding language forms and uses, and shared sociocultural understandings with regard to Thai norms and values in Thai settings.

It is evident that English in Thailand has been acculturated and as a result, various innovations have taken place. These innovations can be exemplified by linguistic strategies that include translation, shifts, and hybridization.

THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE IN ITS CONTEXT : CONTEXTUALIZATION

The methodology and approach for the analysis in this study is based on the Firthian framework of ' context of situation ' (See Kachru 1981). Within this framework, formal and functional characteristics of Thai English are investigated and analyzed. In this study, the following processes will be discussed and illustrated with reference to the use of English in Thailand.

1) Transfer of Context: The transfer of the ' element ' of certain contexts from C_1 and L_1 to L_2. Distinctions may be made in terms of the participants in various situations. For example, in **The Politician,** when a villager talked to the youngest son of his em-

ployer who was 6 years old, he referred to the boy as " The son of the Sky " (PL:70). It is the difference of social stratifications that governs language use.

2) Lexico - Grammatical Transfer: This includes lexical transfer as well as translation and shifts, for example, **kuti** ' monk's building ', and **chiwan** ' monk's robe '.

3) Thai English Collocations : These include typical Thai collocations of English such as **bus pier** ' bus terminal ', and **minor wife** ' a mistress '.

These transfer processes and Thai English collocations are evident throughout Thai English texts.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDIES OF VARIATION

According to Bright (1966 : 11), the aim of sociolinguistics is :

> to show a systematic co - variance of linguistic and social structure--and perhaps to show a causal relationship in one direction or the other.

Labov (1972a) seeks to account for the distribution of language differences throughout a society in terms of the age, sex, education, occupation, and ethnic membership of the speaker he studies. Such studies show the correlation of linguistic variables with demographic data. As a result, idiosyncratic uses of the individual speaker and indications of his group affiliations are revealed. Labov (1972a, 1972b) also suggests that it is meaningless to study language out of its social context; therefore, variation studies are based upon linguistic theories incorporated within a broader social base. Sociolinguistics, thus, provides the theoretical framework and methodology which expands the range of linguistics beyond the sentence toward grammars of ' speaker - hearer ' interaction, identified as priorities of linguistics by Chomsky (1965). A single chosen informant, therefore, is not capable of providing a sufficient amount of data of general description for an entire language. Hence, social and cultural information are considered extra-linguistic factors, something beyond the linguistic horizon.

Sociolinguists believe that descriptive problems can be resolved more satisfactorily by means of systematic observations of natural speech behavior rather than by intuitive judgement. Moreover, observational inadequacy can be identified more quickly and with greater precision.

CHOMSKIAN LINGUISTICS AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS

For the past two decades, Chomsky's **Syntactic Structures** (1957) has made a great impact on the language sciences. Sociolinguistics helps us to understand man and society not only vis-a-vis the functions of language varieties but their unique characteristics as well.

Sociolinguists such as Labov (1972b) and Bailey (1973) have demonstrated that what earlier linguists had considered ' irregularity ' or ' free variation ' in linguistic behavior or as acting in an internally very inconsistent and unpredictable manner, can be found to show regular and predictable statistical patterns in language use. For example, a New Yorker will sometimes say ' guard ' with /r/ and sometimes without. Or he might say ' beard ' the same way as ' bad '. It was found that this variation was neither free nor random, but determined by extra - linguistic factors, in a quite predictable way, depending on the speaker's social class, age, and sex. Sociolinguists are, therefore, able to accurately correlate linguistic features with social class.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS

According to Hymes (1962), we should accept language as a socially situated cultural form, while at the same time recognize the necessity to analyze the code and the cognitive process of its speakers and hearers. Therefore, a language and its variations are best understood when the habits, customs, and subject matters of thought embodied in the language are well known. In all cases, patterned variations can be related to aspects of the social structures or value and belief systems within the respective cultures. The recognition of non - native varieties of English has resulted from the careful observation of language use which implies that language must be considered a part of the ' meaning system ' in which it functions, and related to the contexts in which it is used.

Under the Firthian concept of ' context of situation ', human participants, their behavior, the objects involved, the words used--all of which can be identified as environmental features--are relevant to the interpretation of a particular communicative act. Context of situation, then, " establishes the rules of appropriateness for the behavior of participants in a lan-

guage event on the basis of who they are, where they are, and why they have come together, and gives meaning to that behavior " (Savignon 1983 : 303). For Firth, meaning is deeply embedded in the living process of people maintaining themselves in society. Hence, it is this process which results in the ' newness' or the ' non-nativeness ' in non-native Englishes; and therefore, language as a communicative system cannot be divorced from its social functioning, which requires heterogeneity for a range of situation types and functions.

STUDIES OF VARIATION

Before describing the varieties of English, I shall discuss current approaches to description of variation, a phenomenon of linguistic change which results in numerous varieties.

Bell (1976 : 32 - 34) offers the following definitions :

> Variables may be distinguished from variants. A variable is an ' consistency of disagreement that a particular from the language may exhibit from an abstract standard ', while a variant is a ' specific value of a variable '.

He continues :

> in addition to having formal values, variables can have different values associated with them.

According to Labov (1972b), there are three types of linguistic variables: **indicators, markers,** and **stereotypes.** Indicators are indexical values correlated with the socio-economic class membership or other demographic characteristics of the users. Markers, like indicators, have indexical values, and are subject to stylistic variation; that is, subject to use or non - use by the same speaker in his ' casual ' or ' careful ' styles. Stereotypes do not relate to social factors but are subject to stylistic shifting. They based on views and demonstrate the norms of speech which may be quite at variance with the actual facts based on recollections of speech habits. These three linguistic variables can be clarified in the table below (Bell 1976 : 33) :

Sociolinguistic Variables

Type	Social Stratification	Style Shifting
Indicator	+	-
Marker	+	+
Stereotype	–	+

These variables are motivated internally as well as externally, and are realized as ' allophonic variations '. They are termed: dialect, register, and style. Nineteenth - century linguists (e.g., Baugh 1951; de Saussure 1962) were concerned with the internal sources of variation. Sound change resulted from the influence of one single sound or a group of sounds. That is, X becomes Y in the environment of Z, (X $\rightarrow$ Y/Z). As Martinet says (quoted in Bell 1976 : 34) " items which resisted inclusion in their systems were termed ' irregularities ' or ' loans ' and the whole system would be dubbed a ' mixed dialect '. " There are, however, other kinds of variation, even in phonology, which linguists have found difficult to include in phonological models, and, thus, have been viewed as external to the code in which they occur. External sources of variation are considered to be ' inter - personal ', ' intra - personal ' and ' inherent variation ', all of which will be discussed as follows (Bell 1976).

a) Inter - personal variations have some correlations with the age, sex, geographical or social prominence of the user. Ideally, a precise specification of the characteristics of a user would correlate perfectly with the choices he makes. In practice, a sociolinguist is more concerned with generalizations about the common use of a group as a collection of individuals showing similar norms than with individual member use.

b) Intra - personal variations, on the other hand, depend on conditioning factors such as the ' formality ' or ' informality ' of the situation. Such variations are stylistic rather than dialectal.

c) Inherent variation plays another role in linguistic change. Labov (1963), however, argues that ' inherent variation ' is unpredictable; and therefore, should be discounted. Nonetheless, the inherent variability of language must be considered as true variation to allow for individual freedom of choice.

VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

I shall now outline how ' varieties ' of English have been described in previous sociolinguistic studies. The existence of variation and heterogeneous linguistic structure is not to be denied. Investigation on the actual speech used in specific speech communities shows that heterogeneity is the normal situation and is the natural rule; it is the fundamental condition of linguistic change (Weinreich et al., 1968). Sociolinguistic studies have shown that variation in speech is a systematic rule - governed behavior.

AN OVERVIEW

' English ', as Quirk & Greenbaum (1973:1) argue, is " a common core or nucleus which is realized only in the different forms of the language that we actually hear or read. " The common core, as explained by Quirk & Greenbaum, excludes variation due to region, education, special standing, medium, attitude and interference. Regional variation for Quirk is something comparable to dialect which marks varieties according to region. Quirk (1981) elaborates variation in terms of ' educated speech ', which tends to be given the additional prestige of the learned professions, political parties, the press, law courts and governmental agencies and uneducated speech as well.

Varieties are also due to interference and transfer. ' Interference ' (Albert & Obler 1978), as used in psychology, is a phenomenon that occurs when acquired behavior is applied to a situation which requires a completely new style or pattern of behavior. In the pedagogical sense and in language learning, it has also been referred to as ' negative transfer ' (Corder 1971). In linguistic literature, ' interference ' is characterized as a trace left by someone's native language upon the additional language he has acquired, or vice versa. For example, a Thai might say, " I am here since Friday, " thus imposing Thai grammatical usage on English.

THE USE OF ENGLISH

The use of English for international communication has increased dramatically during the past four decades. Moreover, English continues to be used for intranational communication in many countries of the world. Thus, the possibilities for variations in the English language tend to expand in proportion to the increases in its new users and new uses. Noss (1983 : 1) feels that " no other international language, past or present, has exhibited more variation, in linguistic and sociolinguistic terms, than English now does, while at the same time maintaining its status as a vehicle for effective worldwide communication in many different domains. "

The spread of English has created new varieties which can be termed " non-native varieties " (Kachru 1982a, 1982b, 1983a) in the sense that they are used for intranational and international communication by non-native speakers of English as a second language. For example, English in South Asia has been institutionalized and shows distinct characteristics of " South Asianess " (Kachru 1982a, 1982b, 1983a) as a result of the acculturation of a Western language in the linguistically and culturally pluralistic context of the subcontinent.

Non-native varieties of English, however, have been viewed essentially in terms of ' deviations ' by some researchers (Trudgill & Hannah 1982). Detailed analyses of non - native English varieties such as Malaysian English, African English, Singaporean English, Philippine English, and Indian English have all supported the idea that these ' non-native Englishes ' deviate from the norms of the English native speakers and can be considered ' deviations ', and not ' mistakes '. " Deviations " refer to (Kachru 1982a:25) :

> the linguistic and cultural nativization of a variety of English. Nativization is the result of the new ' unEnglish ' linguistic and cultural setting in which English is used as a tool of communication.....and this new setting determines the deviation in the language use. Therefore, each variety differs from the native varieties spoken in Britain, the United States, Canada or Australia.

A ' mistake ' is different from a deviation. The term is normally used in the literature on language acquisition. Corder (1974) defines a ' mistake ' as a performance failure that is likely to occur when the speaker is tired, nervous, or in some sort of situation of stress or uncertainty or when the speaker is absorbed in a non - linguistic activity. A mistake, then, is unacceptable and can occur in both native and additional languages.

Deviation in language use is one of the context - determined linguistic innovations which are productive and pragmatically essential, and, therefore, a part of a specific variety. Deviations also have a role according to Firth's context of situation; that is, they are context - bound, and culturally governed.

The fact that there are many varieties of English implies that it is considered the language of ' cross-cultural ' and ' cross-national ' understanding (Kachru & Quirk 1981 : xiv). English is used by over 700 million people around the world and, thus, comes close to being a universal language. The spread of English has resulted in the fact that non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers of English. This fact then implies that bilingualism in English is continually growing.