

Identity Construction and Negotiation of Classroom CoP Members in Global Englishes Course: A Higher Education Context in Thailand

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Abstract

This ethnographic study examines identity negotiation and construction inside a Global Englishes (GE) classroom community of practice in a Thai higher education context. Drawing on the communities of practice (CoP) framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), the study theorizes the academic GE classroom as a CoP and explores how participants construct identities while engaged in the joint enterprise of becoming English as a lingua franca (ELF) users and engaging in classroom activities using a shared repertoire of humour and shared narratives. The findings revealed the emergence of multiple identities from the overlapping characteristics of the academic classroom, and raised questions regarding legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and identity trajectories as they intersect the egalitarian notion of ELF, including semi-expert identity, reverse identity, and bullying. Furthermore, the study highlighted the significant role of individual agency in the interplay between personal experiences and the broader Thai social structure in negotiating identities. The implications for researchers and practitioners focus on the potential of Global Englishes classrooms as a locus for positive identity construction and the importance of considering differing perspectives to create a more nuanced understanding of identity and participation in L2 learning. The study also suggests a bottom-up pedagogical approach with ELF-oriented materials for learners to develop more favourable identities as English as a lingua franca users and/or multicompetent speakers.

Keywords: Community of practice, Identity, Global Englishes, ELF

1. Introduction

The growing use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in global communication has challenged traditional notions of English language teaching (ELT). However, a strong adherence to the standard language ideology has hindered a paradigm shift in ELT towards a global English language teaching (GELT) approach. This has led to the construction of negative identities for non-native English speakers, who are often viewed as illegitimate (Boriboon, 2011; Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011). Despite the emergence of courses informed by ELF or Global Englishes (GE) in Thai tertiary education levels (e.g., Rajani Na Ayuthaya & Sitthitikul, 2016; Rajprasit & Marlina, 2019), Thai learners and educators continue to subscribe to the EFL ideology. Long-lasting effects of these courses on students' identities have been questioned (Rose et al., 2021), highlighting the need for further research in this area. While some ELF researchers have focused on issues of identity and language learning in contexts where English is used as a native language or among migrants (Block, 2006; Norton, 2000; Sung, 2021a; 2021b; Virkkula & Nikula, 2010), more recent work has emphasized the role of ELF as a method of expressing one's identity (Jenkins, 2007). Despite the fact that most ELF research has focused on linguistic data (Jenkins, 2000; Kalocsai, 2009) and analysis of successful communication (Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2009), the study seeks to expand the focus to include identity construction through this Global Englishes course. The concept of a community of practice (CoP) has been proposed as a framework for interpreting identity and participation in this Global Englishes (GE) classroom. This approach is grounded in social learning theory, which suggests that learning is a process of becoming and that individuals can construct new identities and renegotiate existing ones through their participation in a CoP. Given that language learning is inextricably related to identity construction, the aim of this ethnographic study is to bring in-depth information regarding identity negotiation and construction within the GE classroom CoP, situated in higher education. The study aims to (1) explore the elements of the Global Englishes classroom as a community of practice, and (2) explore how the

participants (i.e., Thai higher education students and myself as their instructor) participate in and negotiate identities in this Global Englishes classroom as a community of practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Community of Practice (CoP) and Identity Negotiation and Construction*

The model of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) places emphasis on learning as a process of identity construction in which students who have various backgrounds but common interests come together to achieve the course objectives (Kapucu, 2012). Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) can be characterized by mutual engagement where members take part in collaborative activities in which everyone can play a part. They are involved in a joint enterprise as members draw upon their shared repertoire during the classroom participation—that is, their collective knowledge and resources, such as ways of talking, ways of doing things, experiences, stories, and so forth. Members of a CoP can exploit and gradually learn from these shared repertoires, which in turn contributes to the enterprise itself.

Identity is constructed via the process called legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), which is displayed through how novice learners/newcomers (i.e., those with little prior knowledge or skill) develop competence academically through interaction with more experienced members of the community—that is, “old-timers”—and whether these novices would or would not then move toward full membership (Lave & Wenger 1991). Thus, through the lens of CoP, members can create and negotiate new identities. Wenger (1998) places greater emphasis on the presence of multiple CoPs with the defined characteristic of “knowledge brokers,” who facilitate the exchange of knowledge among different CoPs. Despite the utility built in identity and participation in CoPs, it is important to recognize that newcomers also have agency; they may choose to engage with an identity trajectory that involves either participation or nonparticipation (Morita, 2004).

Regarding the higher education context, the literature shows that the CoP model has gained purchase as a theoretical and practical framework for identity and participation. For example, Irving et al. (2020) used CoP theoretical framework to design a CoP-informed curriculum for engineering undergraduates, emphasizing the necessity of implementing the three elements of the CoP in the classroom. Moreover, in conceptualizing learning as identity transformation, the study highlighted that the class designers could foster students’ desirable identities for the subject matter through classroom participation. Another study that theorized classroom as a CoP was an ethnographic study by Taylor (2014), who studied a Thai English for specific purposes (ESP) classroom CoP. The study also emphasized the importance of LPP as an enabling process of identity negotiation and construction. Moreover, the study revealed that learners inhabited multiple CoPs and brought with them the role of knowledge brokers. Using the CoP concept as a theoretical and analytical framework, Nagao (2018) examined EFL learners’ degrees of participation in writing and reading classrooms through the lens of CoP and showcased the changes in learning. The findings underlined that the CoP concept has academic pedagogical potential, linking it to higher attention spans in EFL classrooms.

As regards the current study, the CoP concept has theoretical and pedagogical potential that could provide a valuable framework for examining participation and identity construction in academic classroom in higher education context. However, the majority of previous studies of academic classroom communities and higher education fell into the ESL/EFL and ESP sphere. Moreover, the research seems to focus on investigating situated learning, analyzing the three features of CoP, and observing identity trajectories with limited studies examining the Global Englishes classroom environments in Thailand.

2.2 *English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) User Identity versus English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learner Identity*

According to social constructionist and poststructuralist perspectives, human identity is not fixed but rather dynamic, fluid, and socially constructed (Norton, 1995, 2000; Pavlenko, 2001). Identity is influenced by a range of factors such as past, present, and future possibilities, parental expectations, religion, social norms and values, and language. From a poststructuralist and social constructionist perspective, identity construction is influenced by power relations, social structures, and hegemonic ideologies (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Researchers who explore the links between identity and L2 learning aim to understand how learners may resist or challenge dominant discourses and power relations in order to negotiate and construct more desirable identities in relation to the language-learning process (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2001).

English as a lingua franca (ELF) refers to the language as it is used by the world’s largest English-using group—those for whom English is not their native tongue, but for whom it is often the first and only option for communication (Seidlhofer, 2004, 2011). Unlike in the English as a foreign language (EFL) model, ELF users

see English as a tool for communication, a flexible and fluid entity allowing for exchanges between the communicative needs of its users. Therefore, the emphasis is on effective communication rather than on achieving native-like proficiency or conforming to a standard norm (Seidlhofer, 2001; Jenkins, 2007, 2015). This perspective values the diversity of accents and cultural backgrounds among English language users and recognizes that language use is influenced by cultural and social factors; ELF users should not feel insecure or inferior when speaking with accents or facing culture-specific communicative styles, but count themselves as legitimate speakers of English who express their own identity through language usage. Multilingualism is also seen as a resource that contributes to mutual intelligibility among ELF speakers (Seidlhofer, 2009). The concept of ELF challenges the traditional view of English as a language associated with native-speaker norms and culture. As a consequence, the traditional notion of a standard norm and its power is no longer unchallenged, as English is now used in diverse contexts and communities.

There are studies providing evidence of how ELF affects identity construction (Costa, 2016; Jenkins, 2007; Kalocsai, 2009; Sung, 2014a, 2014b, 2021a, 2021b; Virkkula & Nikula, 2010). Studies have shown that many L2 English learners transform into ELF users and wish to integrate into the world at large (Dörnyei et al., 2006), rather than specifically into a native speaker (NS) English culture. ELF use and learning empower non-native learners to negotiate their sense of who they are and to express their identities through ELF interactions, which helps them feel like legitimate speakers of the language (Seidlhofer, 2009). ELF users consciously choose not to follow what native speakers usually do in a given situation in order to signal shared identities, even if those non-native English speakers acknowledge native-speaker norms. A vast array of studies usually revolves around the link between identity and ELF in international university contexts where ELF is seen as a means for identity expression. Sung (2014a) investigated Hong Kong university students in ELF contexts and revealed that ELF was used as a tool to maintain students' local identities. Moreover, in another Sung (2014b) study, ELF was used as a means for Hong Kong university students to express not only local identity, but also global identity. A study by Virkkula and Nikula (2010) examined how Finnish engineering students constructed their ELF user identities within the ELF contexts while studying abroad, tracking students' identity transformation between the period before and after participating in ELF contexts. The findings revealed how those learning experience in ELF contexts fostered ELF user identity.

However, in the classroom context, the literature has mainly focused on learner identities and how ELF can be used as a resource for language socialization, with an emphasis on identity construction through these ELF interactions. Costa's (2016) study showcased how learners' global identities were constructed during ELF interactions in the ELF classroom setting and revealed that ELF helps promote intercultural communicative competence, which is an integral part of the development of global citizenship. Meanwhile, research regarding identity and participation of L2 learners of English within ELF interactions that utilized the CoP concept as an analytical framework often focused on whether these experiences promote or undermine learners' construction of desirable identities. For instance, through the lens of CoP, Sung's (2021b) study showcased the role of English towards ESL university students' ability to participate and negotiate their identities in ELF classroom settings.

As can be seen, although previous identity studies have examined the role of ELF and identity construction, the majority only examined the context of ELF interactions. Moreover, while a great deal of CoP research often focused on identity construction in classroom setting in higher education context, there has been a lack of research on the context of Global Englishes as a classroom CoP in higher education. In addition, limited studies have examined the long-term impact of ELF or Global Englishes courses in Thai higher education (Rose et al., 2021). To address the existing gaps in the literature, the present study aims to analyze the elements of the Global Englishes classroom as a community of practice and explore identity negotiation and construction of the members in this classroom community through the lens of CoP.

3. Method

The communities of practice (CoP) model has been used to highlight the importance of the social and contextual aspects of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, it is essential to provide an overview of the context and the participants in the study.

3.1 Context

In this study, the researcher was the instructor of the 45-hour course entitled "Introduction to World Englishes," run by the English major programme at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand, which lasted from 19 August to 9 December 2020. The course objective was informed by Global Englishes concepts (Galloway & Rose, 2018), and aimed to provide a critical and pluralistic perspective on English and its global variations (Pennycook, 2007, p. 18). The course objectives emphasizes (1) World Englishes and ELF exposure; (2) respecting

multilingualism; (3) awareness of Global Englishes; (4) awareness of ELF strategies; and (5) respecting diversity and different identities. All in all, the course takes a multidisciplinary studies model where a combination of subject areas—ranging from linguistics, phonetics, and phonology to history, geography, and literature—comes into play.

3.2 Participant and Ethical Consideration

The participants in this study consisted of five individuals, including four fourth-year Thai English major students and their course instructor. I included myself as a participant in the study because I, too, was a member of the classroom community; as such, my role inevitably affected the negotiation and construction of other members' identities (Creswell, 2009). The students were aged between 21 and 22 years old and were enrolled in the "Introduction to World Englishes" course. All students were at the intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of English proficiency based on the university's standardized test. To protect their identities, I have identified the students by pseudonyms: Miki, Rommie, Nancy, and Myah. The students had prior experience with content-based subjects and English language skills taught by both Thai and native English-speaking instructors. They were also regular speakers of English in ELF communications, and had experience using English with speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in a variety of contexts, including academic and social settings. Many students had participated in study abroad programs, exchange programs, or the U.S. government's Work and Travel program. In addition, the students were required to participate in internships during their summer breaks, often in the hospitality and tourism industry, where they could use English. As part of the ethical considerations, consent forms were sent to the participants to seek their approval, along with information on how the study would collect and analyze the data.

3.3 Research Design

The present study employed ethnography as a research approach. This design is appropriate to the nature of the study, in which the researcher is a participant/practitioner "living in" the community (i.e., the classroom) under study and getting hands-on experience in the research setting (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4); the researcher thus cannot be totally excluded from the setting. In this account, it seems to me that participant observation is inevitable when making meaning from the description of these events—that is, interpreting and analyzing why the observed behaviours are occurring as they are.

3.4 Research Tools

The researcher used multiple methods to collect data in order to enable the process of triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Multiple data sources can provide richer descriptions of the participants' experiences from multiple standpoints (Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2008, p. 23). Field notes were used to record participant observations and researcher reflections, while informal sequential interviews were conducted to explore specific issues and confirm data collected in the field notes. Each student kept a diary of their reflections on the themes of the GE course or anything else they wanted to share; these observations complemented the emerging themes and provided further insight into the participants' experiences. Moreover, a questionnaire was developed from the data obtained in the students' diaries and distributed two months after the course had ended to confirm data collected from participant observations, informal interviews, and reflexive essays for triangulation purposes. All conversations and interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants. Field notes were typed in Word documents to avoid readability issues.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The data analysis process in this research followed an iterative, nonlinear pattern approach, where a revised theoretical framework was developed through a revisiting of relevant literature (Dörnyei, 2003). Data interpretation began during participant observation, informal interviews, and field note-taking. The first step in interpreting the data was listening to the audio clips and transcribing the classroom dialogues, followed by identifying significant parts of the data (Bird, 2005; Ladapat & Lindsay, 1999). The field notes, audio recordings, audio transcripts, and questionnaire results were used as data sources to identify and mark meaningful units and review emerging themes. This study employed both theory-driven and data-driven analysis methods. While some of the data were coded based on the themes identified in the reviewed literature, emerging patterns in the data that went beyond the literature review were also labelled.

4. Results

The findings are presented in response to the two research questions: (1) What are the elements of the Global Englishes classroom as a community of practice? (2) How do the participants (i.e., Thai higher education students and myself as their instructor) participate and negotiate their identities in this Global Englishes classroom as a community of practice?

4.1 Global Englishes Classroom as a Community of Practice

To answer RQ 1, the GE classroom community of practice existed within a larger academic context—the community of practice of higher education. Members included newcomers and/or semi-expert newcomer students plus the instructor, an expert/“old-timer”; all participated in multiple overlapping communities of practice.

The joint enterprise of this GE classroom community of practice was to become competent users of English as a lingua franca (ELF), with less attachment to native-speakerism and negative self-image. Three students who participated in the community compromised their original goals in favor of moving towards this shared goal. One student, Myah, demonstrated less attachment to native-speakerism and no longer perceived negative self-image, but tended to be more selective as to when to draw on her EFL and ELF identities. Only one student, Nancy, did not align her goal with the joint enterprise of the community, ultimately deciding to pursue the EFL identity.

Mutual engagement was crucial for the success of the joint enterprise of the Global Englishes classroom community of practice. This mutual engagement reflected the participative social nature of learning and working together, where all members responded to each other’s perspectives and ideas and the teacher, as the knowledgeable old-timer, organized all shared activities to ensure that the learning objective of this course was achieved and that the students mutually engaged to sustain the enterprise of this CoP. The forms of mutual engagement as interactive learning were the focus of the delivery system of this GE classroom CoP, which included knowledge sharing sessions, group and classroom discussions, group presentations, group works, and a term paper. The elicitation sequence—a tripartite routine documented in classrooms (Mehan, 1985; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975)—was used to encourage participation and comprehension during discussions. All participants were encouraged to express their views, ask questions, and share their ideas and thoughts in the form of narratives and experiences. The classroom mechanism of this GE classroom CoP and the shared activities created synergy and knowledge sharing that led to mutual engagement. Shared practices (e.g., back-channel responses such as “yes” and “right”, affirmative head-nodding, smiling, using humour and jokes, and laughter) built around the main form of mutual engagement allowed members to accomplish routine activities and fulfill the shared goal together.

The shared repertoire of the Global Englishes classroom community of practice was built through both nonlinguistic and linguistic resources, and it served the purpose of enabling students to become competent ELF users. The nonlinguistic resources used by the members of the GE classroom CoP included the use of narratives to explore and reflect on experiences with learning and using English. Common themes that emerged in the shared repertoire were the topics of negative experiences as non-native speakers of English and ELF exposure experiences. By sharing personal stories related to the classroom content, the students and the teacher were able to foster a deeper knowledge and understanding of the challenges and benefits of ELF, as well as strategies for effective communication in ELF interactions. It was an effective way to build a strong sense of community and shared expertise within this GE classroom CoP, as it allowed the members to connect on a personal level and to feel more invested in the learning process.

The participants also used humour as a linguistic resource to create a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding within the group. In this GE classroom CoP, jokes and teasing—including mockery, imitation, ridicule, disparagement, and sarcasm—were the two main shared repertoires that created humorous effects. These teasing practices often centered around cultural differences in terms of vocabulary and sociolinguistic or pragmatic mechanisms, and how they compared to mainstream native-speaker cultural norms as well as the student’s own culture. For example, all students mocked Australian English when she heard an Australian pronounce the sentence “Good day, mate” as “goo die, mite.” The students then imitated the pronunciation and mocked that it sounded like a “Southern Thai accent.” Myah imitated an Indian accent saying “Hello” in an Indian English style, and the class pretended to be furious, saying “Hey, that’s bullying,” while still laughing along with Myah’s teasing. When the students learned about the Canadian English usage of “eh” at the end of a sentence, they found it funny and began to mockingly imitate it: “eh, eh, eh.”

It should be noted that the use of these shared practices would not be likely be amusing to outsiders; indeed, they

might be interpreted as discriminatory or even bullying if used outside this particular classroom CoP. This is because humour requires shared understanding among interlocutors, which means that outsiders who did not engage in the mutual engagement and shared practices would not find the jokes or teasing funny. In other words, the use of humour and teasing in this GE classroom CoP was a means of belonging that the students used to express their membership in the CoP.

4.2 Identity Negotiation and Construction of Global Englishes Classroom Community of Practice Members

In response to RQ 2, five distinct identity types were identified as a result of the GE classroom CoP participation.

4.2.1 Teacher as an Old-Timer and a Peer

Having a formal social role as a teacher assigned by the social institution, I automatically appeared as an authority figure who provided academic Global Englishes knowledge and ELF skills, so I became an expert/old-timer with legitimacy in this GE classroom CoP. However, to foster viable classroom participation among the students, I decided that I must negotiate my identity beyond the role of the authority figure to become one of the members of the CoP and have students perceive me as a friendly teacher giving them legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) that enabled them to move away from the boundaries. As Wenger (1998) posited, being able to participate in order to move towards fuller participation in the community requires authentic access to as well as the willingness of old-timers to assist newcomers, support learning, and share their knowledge, expertise, and resources. Accordingly, I used informal everyday language similar to that of my students—laughing at their jokes and using taboo words, slang, and impolite language. Over time, I noticed changes in students' use of informal everyday language style, particularly the use of Thai impolite title *ai* (Leetrakul, 1978) before name-calling in my presence, which would be considered inappropriate in most contexts in Thai society. Using slang, taboo, and/or impolite language signals in-group identity (Niraula et al., 2022), which means students considered me as one of the peers whom they included in their discussions. As a result, this data confirmed that I successfully negotiated my teacher identity to be one of them.

4.2.2 Student as Novice Newcomer

Within the GE classroom CoP was an example of the identity of novice newcomer who participated in legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and moved towards full membership by accumulating knowledge and skills that the CoP values (Wenger, 1998). During the first few weeks, Miki perceived herself as an EFL learner who had rather poor skills in English; she also assessed her language proficiency as “not good enough,” and regarded her skills as inadequate in many aspects, such as grammar and pronunciation:

English language was my problem because I did not understand the grammar and pronunciation. So, it was the reason why I am not confident to communicate and develop my skills. I heard that one of my classmates insulted me to my friends while I was [a] sophomore, saying “Miki is so stupid.” Because of that, I thought I should stop trying to learn and develop myself. I lost my confidence and was discouraged. I always felt pressured when I had to present in front of the class in English. (from Miki's diary)

Miki also made a reference to the gap between the language she used and what was deemed to be proper and correct by native speakers:

It is not appropriate when it happens in academic writing works. Grammar is like my enemy while I have been learning in this major because I always stressed about it while I did my writing and speaking. (from Miki's diary)

Despite an identity constructed as a less-competent EFL learner based on Miki's sense of how others might perceive her and the difficulties experienced in the past, Miki decided to negotiate her identity of a less-competent EFL learner who had lower linguistic competence through her full engagement with the classroom activities. During teaching, I usually asked questions as I went along the lessons (rather than me doing the talking alone); Miki was always participative and collaborative, so I would always hear answers from her. It could be said that Miki had a strong desire to participate as a competent member. As a result of Miki's legitimate peripheral participation in this CoP, she gained ELF knowledge and skills, gaining the courage to use English, which was a choice that did not have before she entered this CoP. Thus, there was a new resource for identity-building as an ELF user available for Miki. This emergence of new identity options can be an empowering experience which gives a sense of growing proficiency and confidence relating to self-identity change:

For my old views, I thought people who can communicate efficiently with foreigner must talk with grammatical sentences and perfect accent. In contrast, now I think they are not necessary for

communication. Why do we desperately want to have a native accent as American or British? I realize it is the ideal of our society that who has a good accent and perfect grammar is well-educated and cool. On the other hand, we can use many strategies for making ourselves understood, such as meaning-negotiation and response strategies. So, [the] World Englishes class changed my views and attitudes. I am not stupid and really want to improve myself again. (from Miki's diary)

It appears that her LPP contributed to her Improved skills and knowledge, which is consistent with Wenger's point (1998) that being able to participate enables participants to move toward fuller participation in the community.

4.2.3 Student as Semi-Expert Newcomer

The multidisciplinary element of this GE classroom CoP affected students' forms of participation in the sense that because the Global Englishes subject is interdisciplinary in nature, partaking of history, geography, literature, linguistics, phonetic, and phonology as well as other English-related language skills, students—even if they are newcomers to the CoP—potentially can be a source of knowledge, depending on their background. The newcomer can act as an informal teacher who shares knowledge with other classroom members, decentralizing knowledge (from the teacher role as a transmitter of knowledge), which is a useful role for today's interdisciplinary subjects. This ability of the semi-expert newcomer leads to the pedagogical role of knowledge broker, who brings knowledge into the classroom community (Wenger, 1998; Taylor, 2014; 2015).

In the present study, a number of students appeared to have relatively more ELF user experience and Global Englishes-related knowledge than the others. One such example, Rommie, entered this CoP as a semi-expert newcomer (Taylor, 2015):

I enrolled in the class as someone who is interested in the ideas of varieties of English, from accents to cultural differences among English speaking countries. I wanted to know whether they need to change the way they speak when they are faced with different situations. (from Rommie's diary).

It seemed that Rommie was accepted by his peers as a highly skilled and knowledgeable member of the CoP. This is likely due to his ability to provide correct answers when called upon by the teacher, as well as his peers' reinforcement and nomination of him as a knowledge broker; this led to his informal identity as a teacher or semi-expert newcomer. We see this in Extract 1, below, where Rommie performed the knowledge broker role in turn 2 and received acceptance from his teacher and peers as such in turns 3 and 4.

Extract 1 (from transcript of class)

- 1) Teacher: What are the characteristics of the outer circle English, such as Indian or Malaysian, that you can think of?
- 2) Rommie: (was the first and the only one who replied) They were colonized by the British. They were all the former British colonies.
- 3) Teacher: (impressed voice) Exactly! Very good.
- 4) Myah: (suddenly turned to Rommie to applaud and give praise for his answer) Rommie, why, you are so clever! (playful voice) Such a clever student!

Here, the analysis of the findings highlights the importance of peer acceptance and knowledge in a particular area that represent a good fit with the expectations of the community which contributed to the development of a fuller form of membership as a competent ELF user. Nonetheless, it is clearly evident that the identity trajectories of semi-expert newcomer imply a not-so-direct path in the linear journey of novices becoming experts via LPP (Harris & Simmins, 2008; Irving et al., 2020; Taylor, 2014, 2015).

4.2.4 Student's Reverse Identity

When a member of the CoP struggled to construct an identity that was valued by the CoP despite the member's LPP and mastery of the knowledge and skills required by the community, they enacted what can be called a "reverse identity." In one such case, Nancy entered the classroom as a semi-expert newcomer; however, she exited the classroom not as an expert with a fuller ELF user identity, but with a more EFL learner identity—that is, subscribing to a more pronounced EFL paradigm. The evidence shows that she facilitated learning and knowledge sharing among group members by bringing in her own expertise and insights, including knowledge of the varieties of English across the British Isles and the General American (GA) accent, as well as the dispersion of English history related to them. For instance, Nancy highlighted some of the differences between General American and British English.

GA is r-ful and the pronunciation of the vowel *a* as /æ/’ noting that over time, the language has changed and deviated from its British roots. (from transcripts of Nancy’s class)

However, despite her initial identity as a semi-expert newcomer, Nancy’s language ideologies regarding the superiority of standard English constrained her negotiation of a positive identity as a competent ELF user. The analysis also highlighted the role of agency in constructing and negotiating identity. By exercising her agency, Nancy was able to reconstruct her EFL identity, creating new possible selves in the imagined community and imagined identities (Umrani, 2015, p. 69):

After I finished any assignment, I was required to check the grammar first. For example, I should not write *ain’t* in my essays because it is not standard English. This is to notice the problem, not to make it clearer; the reasons to have to write or speak standard English are to get a good score for the paper essays, to pass the exam, to get a job, to qualify as a professional person, and so on. (from Nancy’s diary)

From the analysis provided, it is clear that Nancy’s identity negotiation and construction in the GE classroom CoP was complex and influenced by various factors, including language ideologies and individual agency.

4.2.5 The Bully

One student, Myah, exhibited observable elements such as teasing humour and dominant power that contributed to the emergence of the bully identity in this classroom CoP. Myah excelled academically, as she demonstrated high proficiency in English and had been assigned a leading role in presentations. It was also noteworthy that Myah would actively participate in classroom activities and take charge of group discussions while also being respectful and inclusive of her peers. This signified her power and legitimized Myah’s LPP in this GE classroom CoP. While it was important to recognize that teasing could sometimes be a normal part of social interaction among peers, it also highlighted the issue of unbalanced power among different speakers of English that continues to pervade the ELF community (Sung, 2014a). Myah was observed to make disrespectful comments and hold stereotypical prejudices toward other non-native English speakers—particularly toward Indian English. For instance, Myah was easily able to cite specific pronunciation features of Indian English that she believed to be bad, problematizing the accent and focusing on stigmatized features and difficulties:

It was like an alien language. He talks gibberish. It’s truly unintelligible. It was a bit like “tara, tara, tara, ta, ta.” What is it? Go clear your throat first! (from transcript of Myah’s class)

In addition, Myah also believed in an accent hierarchy (Jenkins, 2007), wherein certain accents are considered superior or inferior to others:

When you’re mistakenly stereotyped based on your appearance for being Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, you don’t feel offended. You don’t accuse that person of stereotyping other people and you don’t show resistance to being stereotyped or don’t even try to project your Thai identity. But if you’re mistaken for Laos, you really are offended and feel discriminated against. (from transcript of Myah’s class)

The notion of an accent hierarchy is a social construct that is often influenced by factors such as historical power dynamics of dominant countries and cultural stereotypes of Thais towards other native and non-native English speakers. However, as a teacher, it is important to address any instances of discrimination that may arise in the classroom. It was observed that Myah had to negotiate her bully identity with the classroom teacher, who had more power in this relationship and deserved to be respected and listened to. Nonetheless, it appeared that Myah completely changed her views and attitudes regarding the traditional paradigm and the Global Englishes paradigm:

As I have learned this subject for a semester, I found several problems about English. World English, indeed, changed my views and attitudes regarding the matter. (from Myah’s diary)

This was evidence that the formal social role of the teacher as an authoritative figure in the classroom, as well as the broader social structures of Thailand, could have a positive impact on students’ learning and attitudes towards language diversity. It could be said that Myah participated in a process of learning through interacting with other students and with the teacher, who had more experience and knowledge of the topic in the GE classroom CoP. Through these interactions, she was able to acquire knowledge and skills critical for this particular CoP. The concept of a community of practice, as described by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), emphasizes the social nature of learning and the importance of participation in a community; however, it seemed that Myah constructed a dual identity in ELF, which incorporates both her EFL identity and her membership in an international ELF community. Myah’s desire to pursue a nativelike competence in English was driven by her belief that it would enhance her career success in order to be intra-nationally acceptable. This belief was influenced by the prevalent ideology towards English in Thailand, which places a high value on

standard English and often equates it with success. However, Myah's conflicted feelings suggest that she was also taking the notion of ELF seriously, and saw herself as part of a wider global community of English users. This led her to project a "global identity" (Sung, 2014b) associated with open-mindedness, resistance to "non-native speaker" status, and confidence in using English internationally. This is consistent with the findings of Jenkins (2007) and Sung (2014b) that non-native English users often experience mixed feelings about their identity in relation to English, and may desire an EFL identity in certain contexts while also relating themselves to a global culture and maintaining their national and/or local identities. The desire for a natively-like English identity in these contexts is often rooted in the perception of needing to be taken seriously and gaining credibility in order to fit in and be accepted in certain social or professional circles where using English is directly tied to career advancement or success. This highlights the complexity of identity construction in language learning and use, and the need to recognize that identity is multivalent and constantly negotiated.

5. Discussion

Theorizing the GE classroom as a CoP, the findings in this study suggest that the traditional conceptualization of Lave and Wenger's (1991) CoP model may not be fully applicable to today's multidisciplinary knowledge and multiple overlapping classroom communities, especially in higher education. The emergence of the notion of semi-expert newcomer (Taylor, 2015) has challenged the simplistic view of newcomers/novices and old-timers/experts in LPP and highlighted the complexity of participation in this GE classroom CoP. Furthermore, the distinct characteristic of this GE classroom CoP, which existed as part of multiple overlapping academic classroom CoPs, directly affected characteristics of this GE classroom's community members. The notions of "reverse identity" and "the bully" raise questions regarding the linear journey via LPP and the limitations of Wenger's (1998) identity trajectory framework in explaining identity development. Therefore, it is important to consider a more nuanced and complex understanding of participation and identity development in contemporary classroom CoPs.

Regarding identity negotiation and construction in GE classroom participation, the data show that the students' participation had a reciprocal relationship with their perceived competence, which consequently led to the formation of an identity as a more competent member. Moreover, the degree of alignment between students' skills and knowledge and the demands and expectations associated with the particular community context seems to contribute to their level of success in negotiating fuller forms of participation and constructing more desirable identities. Rommie is an exemplar of the valuable community member whose personal experiences and knowledge of ELF and multilingual competences align with the demands of this Global Englishes course objectives; he subsequently could convert his valued skills and knowledge into affordances for his identity transformation to become ELF user. From the perspective of the LPP framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991), this supports Wenger's (1998) idea of learning through participation, where being recognized as belonging to and contributing to a community can be a source of identity change for newcomers.

This idea is supported by Sung (2021a) and Morita (2004), who suggest that the process of identity construction is ongoing and dynamic, shaped by interactions with others and the context in which they occur. According to Morita (2004), learners' participation in a given classroom cannot be separated from the local classroom context. The way students construct their identities and become members of a particular community of practice (CoP) is closely linked to their degree of participation in that community and how well they align with its values.

The analysis of the findings in this study also indicated the identities of students as knowledge brokers who performed informal pedagogical role brought in knowledge from other CoPs and shared it with the GE classroom CoP. Although the broker role was mentioned in Wenger (1998), and Taylor (2014, 2015), Fuller and Unwin (2005) have pointed out that this emerging informal pedagogical role is not fully explored in either Wenger's (1998) or Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of situated learning and communities of practice. From the analysis, there arises an issue regarding the idea of knowledge being decentralized such that students themselves can perform a knowledge-sharing role as a teacher does. Thus, the findings in this studied classroom support Lave and Wenger's (1991) conclusions about decentralized knowledge in that mastery is not limited to the teacher, but also shared among students who assume a knowledge-broker identity. The idea knowledge decentralization is particularly useful for today's interdisciplinary subjects, where knowledge has become highly complex because it allows for the use of multiple experts in the component areas of the subject.

Although students can perform informal knowledge-sharing as knowledge brokers, a traditional pedagogical role is still crucial for the viability of a community; the formal teacher social role drives the GE classroom community to meet the needs of the students, as well as to ensure the course objectives are achieved. In a university setting, there are inherently unequal power relationships not only between professors and students but

also among more and less powerful peers; a teacher's institutionalized power is vital to encouraging students to participate actively in class and to direct the lessons to the purpose of the constructive pedagogical aim. For instance, I handled a more powerful student like Myah when she exercised her power over her less powerful peers by drawing on a teacher's institutionalized power, which is inherently greater than the students' and based on factors such as greater knowledge, academic status, age, and responsibility for grading.

Regarding the ways identity negotiation and construction in a CoP can vary depending on the context and the individual (Morita, 2004), the emerging reverse identity and bully identity raise some critical points. The interplay of individual past experiences, classroom CoP, and the broader language ideologies in the EFL community, educational institution, and Thai society all played roles in shaping the negotiation and reconstruction of identity. In line with Morita's (2004) concept of personal agency, this explains how participants' identities were shaped by their agency and how their agentive positions helped them negotiate their identities within these social structures.

The study also highlights that learners' investment in the target language (along with their willingness to practice it) is heavily influenced by its perceived value in the social world, such as academic achievement and career advancement (Norton, 2013). For instance, Nancy's language ideologies of proficiency in mainstream English and her beliefs about the limited instrumental value of ELF—despite her awareness of its reality—may have hindered her investment and her efforts to integrate into the ELF community and negotiate a competent ELF user identity. It appears that Nancy's imagined community of symbolic and material resources (Bourdieu, 1977) may not be reflected in the actual practices of the ELF community; thus Nancy exercised her agency in order to seek out opportunities to connect with others who share her imagined community and identity (Anderson, 1983; Umrani, 2015). This could lend support to Sung's (2021a) ideas on the role of language ideology regarding the limited value of certain linguistic capital for the future, which places a constraint upon agentive attempts to construct a competent English language user identity.

As discussed up to this point, the analysis of the findings in this study highlights a power imbalance and accent hierarchy (Jenkins, 2007) that exists within the ELF community and Thai society, where certain non-native varieties of English are perceived as more desirable than others. This power imbalance is linked to issues of stereotypical language-based judgments (Birney et al., 2019) and inequitable power relations among different social groups in Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines and Thailand's neighbouring countries, that pervade linguistic ideology in Thai society. This suggests a superiority-inflected understanding by Thais, which runs contrary to the global harmony that the ELF paradigm ostensibly seeks to engender. The analysis highlights the role of Thai cultural values—specifically the top-down view of “Thai exceptionalism” (Noom-ura, 2013)—in possibly influencing the othering of foreign countries and citizens of certain countries by Thais, reinforcing a sense of superiority and accent hierarchy. The findings seem to lend credence to Jenkins' (2007) observations of the accent hierarchy in that non-native speaker accents are disfavored in a hierarchical fashion. The findings of this study align with previous research (e.g., Apiruangrit, 2018; Huttayavilaiphan, 2021; Jindapitak & Teo, 2012; Kalra & Thanavisuth 2018; Phusit & Suksiripakonchai, 2018), indicating that linguistic ideology and prior experience with a particular variety of English affect the credibility of the speaker of that variety, perpetuating social hierarchies and reinforcing the status of Standard English as a sign of superior intelligence associated with higher social classes. The implied message is that we live in a hegemonic system which often assigns language-based stigma (Birney et al., 2019) to non-native varieties of English through stereotypical language-based judgments of social class status, race, and ethnicity. Furthermore, the study suggests that English language is seen as a tool for symbolic power, and English L2 learners in Thailand tend to aspire towards the prestige and status associated with the powerful group in the power hierarchy. As a result, speakers of stigmatized varieties of English are subject to discrimination by the dominant ideology, and they remain marginalized and undeserving of the prestige and resources enjoyed by other powerful members of society (Lippi-Green, 1997; Milroy & Milroy, 1985). The finding highlights that issues of identity and social power are intertwined with linguistic ideology in Thai society, indicating that the construction of identity among L2 learners of English may go beyond the traditional dichotomy of “native” versus “target” language, and may involve the incorporation of both as part of a changeable globalizing world. The study shows that some L2 learners may wish to project a global identity while still maintaining their aspiration to be identified as EFL members in their local context. This is particularly relevant in expanding circle regions, where local linguistic ideologies are responsible for sustaining the local hegemony of English, rather than native speakers of English imposing their language and norms on non-native speakers (Luk & Lin, 2006, p. 12; as cited in Jenkins, 2007). Such L2 speakers may thus face the negative consequences if they speak the language with an “illegitimate” accent, which may negatively impact their social identity and adherence to the norms of educated non-native

speakers.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge demonstrating that the ELF community is grounded in conditions more complex than a simplistic, essentialist EFL versus ELF dichotomy. Instead, the ELF community is made up of speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds who use English as a common language. Further, the study notes that power imbalances still exist within this community, which challenges the notion of the ELF community as purely egalitarian (Jenkins, 2000, 2007). Instead, it suggests that the ELF community should be viewed as a “multilithic” community (Sung, 2014a), with members who identify themselves to varying degrees with others in the community.

As for its practical implications, the current study provides a useful starting point for English language teachers in understanding the role of classroom identities and participation, especially in the context of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. Classrooms are places where multiple identities are negotiated and constructed; this process can lead to positive identity transformations. By recognizing the diversity of identities in the classroom and the role of knowledge and skills in identity negotiation and construction, teachers can create a more positive and effective learning environment for their students.

Moreover, teachers should be aware of the role of nonverbal communication in academic settings, particularly in ELF contexts where different lingua cultures exist. Teachers should not react to nonverbal communication based on cultural stereotypes, but instead take an ethnographic perspective and carefully attend to students’ nonverbal behaviors to foster mutual understanding in the classroom. By reconceptualizing conflicting attitudes or opinions as learning opportunities and providing space for student agency, teachers can create a more constructive pedagogical environment.

The current study also provides a foundation for classroom teachers (as well as for researchers) in regards to the value of taking learners’ voices and agency into account in classroom pedagogy. It also highlights the importance of understanding learners’ past life histories and their envisioned futures in developing an understanding of their current identity negotiation and construction. The roles of language ideology and cultural values in broader social structures, as well as alignment with imagined communities that might impose on students’ identity negotiation and construction, should also be taken into consideration in both research and classroom teaching.

Furthermore, the study has implications for administrators and policymakers regarding the need for innovative pedagogical practices to be adopted in a bottom-up fashion—a more inclusive and diverse approach to English language education that takes into account the global Englishes paradigm, and equips students with skills and knowledge that are relevant to real-world usage. This could involve using ELF-oriented materials that emphasize strategic identity-making, and that recognize and value the diversity of English language users and promote the development of multilingual and intercultural competence, empowering learners in their language learning journey.

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