

## Rethinking Globalization, English and Multilingualism in Thailand: A Report on a Five-Year Ethnography

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### ABSTRACT

*The starting point of this paper is to the development of a relatively panoramic account of English and multilingualism in Thailand, illuminating the relationships among powers (trends), individuals and groups and their multilingual practices. Most previous studies draw upon arguments from the traditional monocentric model of nation-state multilingualism. Surprisingly, little is known about the polycentric forces influencing multilingual distributions. Methodologically, large-scale data sets are gathered through literature, documents, questionnaires, interviews and observing actual language behaviors. The ethnographic data gathered are analyzed through content analysis conventions. Challenging Smalley's nationalist model, the central thesis of this paper is to present an alternative path, a polycentric model, to better understand Thailand's multilingualism. There is a lack of adequate evidence within and across Thailand to show the existence of a universal and coherent hierarchy connecting different layers of language users. As such, this paper argues that Smalley's universal hierarchy/dominance model has to compete with alternative models termed a 'multiarchy' or 'multiarchies' (a portmanteau of "multiple hierarchies") where parallel language hierarchies co-exist with the orthodox one.*

*Keywords: globalization; English; language use; multilingualism; Thailand*

### INTRODUCTION

Recent research in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics has fallen short in addressing the diversity of contemporary linguistic repertoires in Thailand. There are only a handful of researchers (including Smalley 1988, 1994, Huebner 2006, Premsrirat 2007, Kosonen 2008, Lee 2015) working on multilingualism in Thailand. The majority of Thailand-based scholars (e.g., Timyam 2018, Suwanarak 2018) in English studies do not approach English from the perspective of multilingualism. Thus far the only book-length treatment to examine Thailand's linguistic diversity and multilingualism is Smalley (1994).

In Smalley's (1988, 1994) hierarchy/dominance model, there has been a strong power dynamics controlled by the ruling class in Thailand. Thais have accepted social hierarchy as the norm governing their lives. As a result, Thailand's diverse languages and dialects have become subordinate to the national official language, known as standard Thai, spoken by the higher levels of the social elite (some vernaculars have a diglossic relationship with Standard Thai).

However, a major problem for Smalley's (1988, 1994) analysis is the concept of nation-state. That is to say, he examined Thailand's multilingualism from the monocentric perspective of the national hierarchy. But shouldn't the focus go beyond nationhood? While addressing Thailand's multilingualism, a main challenge to Smalley's (1988, 1994) analysis is a form of globalization not at work in the 1980s and 1990s. First, when Smalley carried out fieldwork in the Thai Kingdom in 1985-1986 and published his book in 1994, Thailand did not attract cross-border trade and international trade, foreign direct investment, skilled and non-skilled labor migrants, and foreign holidaymakers as much as in the case of the unprecedented scale after the late 2010s. Second, in recent years (2016-present) Thais

promoted foreign/second language learning so as to increase their communication skills when dealing with foreign firms. This encouraged mobility for English-speaking Thais taking advantage of the employment opportunities in the international labor market, known as the ASEAN Economic Community. Third, the global online communication and an internet society transcending national borders did not exist in the 1980s-1990s at the time of Smalley's (1988, 1994) fieldwork.

If the concept of the monocentric national language community remains central to the discussion of multilingualism, important aspects of polycentric multilingualism will be ignored. In recent years, there has been a major shift away from the monocentric nation-state legacy towards a polycentric one in the study of multilingualism (Blommaert 2015, Pennycook 2010).

This paper attempts to provide a multi-faceted view and develops a relatively panoramic account of multilingualism from the polycentric model and a 'multiarchy' model or 'multiarchies' – alternative/parallel hierarchies. In this light, this paper seeks to make a contribution to the scholarly dialogue on polycentric sociolinguistics as viewed from the vantage point of globalization conjoined with other trends. It is responsive to recent calls to address relationships between globalization and language by "unthinking a legacy of nation-state sociolinguistics" (Blommaert 2015, p.1) as "languages are being mixed and changed [and] present new possibilities for identities that have little to do with national identifications" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 65).

The traditional study of language ecology and sociolinguistics, as closely related to multilingualism, has focused on simple and linear one-dimensional models (e.g., gender and language, globalization and language, and ideologies and language). However, recent developments have moved away from such micro-macro models toward more complex ones. By extending Kosonen's (2008) polycentric model of three trends (namely, globalization, regionalization and nationalism) against Smalley's (1994) monocentric model of nationalist sociolinguistics, this paper proposes an expanded model (figure 1), which recognizes the forces influencing language use. The present study proposes a complex theoretical model termed *magnets of trends* (figure 1). Criticizing the existing model of nation-state multilingualism (universal) hierarchy/dominance model proposed by Smalley (1988, 1994), there is strong evidence to show that there is more than one language hierarchy in existence -- a 'multiarchy' or 'multiarchies' model.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### MULTILINGUALISM STUDIES IN THAILAND

Previous studies approached Thailand's multilingualism on the basis of different models and theories (Smalley 1988, 1994, Huebner 2006, Premsrirat 1996, 2007, 2008, Kosonen 2008, Lee 2015). However, this paper argues that some of the existing models are problematic.

First, the majority of scholars ignored a wide range of polycentric forces and trends that affect Thailand. They generally adopted micro-models to capture macro-level complex phenomena. Although Kosonen (2008) proposed a polycentric model to explore language and literacy in Thailand under the joint influences of three trends (globalization, regionalization and nationalism), other trends (e.g., urbanization, separatism and integration) are largely neglected. Thus, this article addresses how ongoing trends brought about conjointly by the effects of globalization, regionalization, nationalism, urbanization, localization and separatism in Thailand.

Second, although the existing literature discussed multilingualism in Thailand, most of it has not been brought up to date. The language repertoires in the Thai kingdom have been undergoing recent diversification, due to the impact of globalization and the ASEAN Economic Community, among other factors. This phenomenon is manifested in language behaviors, particularly in urban metropolitan areas. Nonetheless, previous scholars have not explored this issue in recent years (2010-2016). The classic model is Smalley's (1994). Historically, Smalley's language-ecology model--which explored the four factors of education, boundedness, hierarchy and religion--and how they influenced the interactions between languages and environments), thereby providing a panoramic overview and taxonomy of languages in Thailand. Chirasombutti (2007), too, provided a historical review of language contact in Thailand (e.g., Khmer, Pāli and Sanskrit languages were in contact with Thai during the Sukhothai period (1292-1536); Burmese, Tamil, Lao, Vietnamese, Chinese, Dutch, French, Japanese, Khmer, Malay, Javanese, Mon, Persian, Arabic and Portuguese languages were in contact with Thai during the Ayutthaya period (1350-1781); and the English, French and Russian languages were in contact with Thai during the Bangkok period (1782-present)). The recent model, proposed by Alexander and McCargo (2014), saw the use of Issan (Northeastern Thai) and standard Thai as a diglossia, thereby constituted a recent update.

Third, it has been common practice to highlight multilingualism by reference to the limited perspective of particular ethnic minority communities, thereby failing to offer an overall picture of multilingualism. For instance, Premsrirat (1996) presented the So/Thavung language in Thailand. She went on to study endangered language communities (e.g., Chung, Kasong & Sumre) of Thailand (Premsrirat, 2007). Moreover, Cohen (1992) reported on hill-tribe languages in Northern Thailand. Additionally, Draper (2010) and Draper and Prasertsrib (2016) offered a fascinating account of the Isaan language in Northeastern Thailand. Another example was Vail's investigation of the Laotian and Khmer languages in Thailand (Vail 2007a, 2007b). Also, Morita (2003, 2007) and a recent study by Lee (2014) focused on the ethnic Chinese community in Thailand.

Fourth, some studies showed a one-sided perspective on multilingualism in Thailand. For example, Huebner (2006) discussed the linguistic landscape (environmental prints) by gathering small-scale data through mono-, bi- and multi-lingual signs (from government and the private sector) in some business districts of Bangkok. The criteria for selecting a city and a number of districts to include were highly problematic, because the survey sites were prototypical urban centers where a great variety of languages were abundantly available. Nevertheless, Thailand's urban and national peripheries were ignored. In addition, signs may not reflect actual language behavior (e.g., speaking).

In summary, little attention has been paid in previous studies to the effects of globalization, among other polycentric forces, on language use across multiple domains in urban, semi-urban, rural and semi-rural areas (both centers and peripheries) across Thailand.

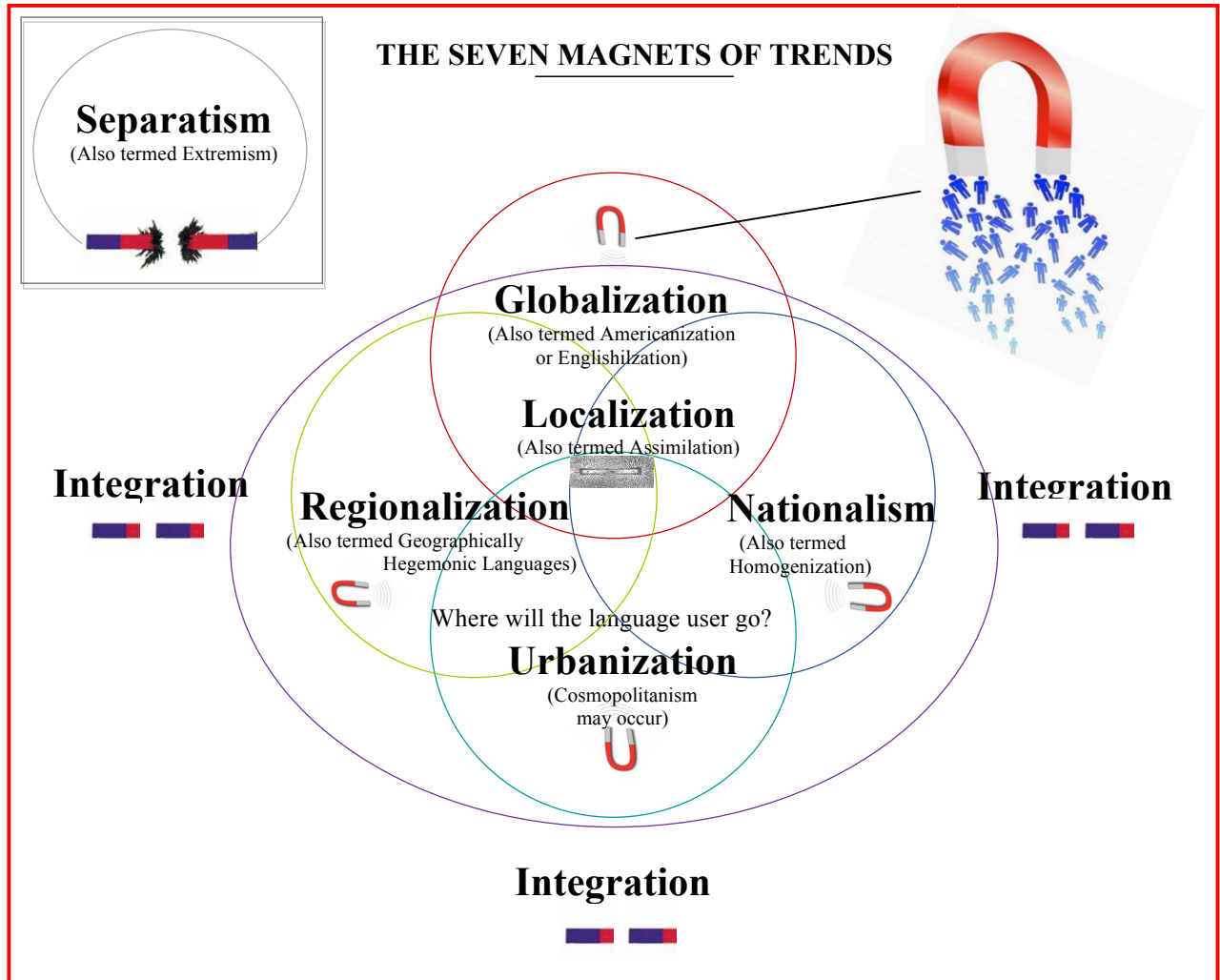
In line with this review, a major challenge for the study of multilingualism is to understand the macro-level polycentric forces that influence instances, events and episodes of multilingual language use.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Magnets, in this polycentric model, are used metaphorically as forces creating invisible magnetic fields that pull on language users from their first-language speech communities. In other words, language users are magnetized in this metaphor, because they are attracted to one or more magnets, notably globalization, regionalization, nationalism and so forth. A language user is metaphorically magnified and continues to stay magnified, meaning that s/he

operates with a foreign or second language in the magnetic field which is not found in his or her first-language speech community.

In this model, globalization refers to economic, financial, geographic, political and societal drives to global circulation, flow and mobility of capital, goods, human resources and knowledge (Lee 2015). Global centers (e.g., globally leading countries and global cities) are magnets attracting capital, international trade and foreign talent from global peripheries. Globalization requires the increasing role of English as a *lingua franca*.



Sources: Lee 2016 (expanded from Kosonen 2008, informed by Kaku 2012; p. 171; Fishman 1999; modified from Lee 2015)

FIGURE 1. The Magnet of Trends®

Regionalization refers to the increasing role of hegemonic languages from developed and developing economies in Southeast Asia and/or the Asia-Pacific region, notably Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Regional centers (regionally powerful countries and cities) are magnets attracting exports and foreign talent from neighboring countries.

Nationalism refers to the increased use of the official state language, Standard Thai. National centers are magnets to attract mobile populations from national peripheries. Language users from national peripheries are required to operate with languages normative for national centers.

Urbanization refers to the increased use of urban languages. Urban centers are magnets to attract mobile populations from semi-urban and non-urban areas. For example, if

a Kamuang speaker moves from Chiang Mai (Northern) to Bangkok (Central Thailand), s/he will need to operate in Standard Thai.

## METHODOLOGY: ETHNOGRAPHY

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study pursues answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the characteristics of multilingualism in Thailand?
- 2) What are multilingual language choices and language preferences in Thailand?
- 3) How is the multiplicity of conjoined forces (such as globalization and the role of the state) shaping Thailand in relation to emerging multilingualism?

### SITES AND SAMPLE: MULTI-SITED APPROACH

The criteria for selecting sites to participate in this Multilingual Thailand Project (MTP) are that they should be representative of Thailand’s wide ranging multilingual environment. A country-wide survey is conducted.

TABLE 1. Key characteristics of the MTP database

Variables	Database			
Time Coverage (Year)	2015; 2016; & 2017- 2018			2000 - ongoing
Spatial Coverage Sample (Region)	Thailand: Bangkok; Northern Region; Eastern Region; Northeastern Region; and Southern Region			
Data Sources	Questionnaire	Interview	Observation	Literature
(Total no. of participants: 850)	(800 + surveys)	(500 + interviews)	(500 + field notes)	(Documents; 30 + journal articles and book chapters)

### PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The primary data was gathered onsite and online (e.g., emails and social media) through the three instruments of survey questionnaires, interviews and observations from 850 Thai respondents who live in the City of Bangkok and four other cities. These sites were selected, largely because the author has direct access to Thai respondents from the selected sites. The data collected was the result of help obtained from the author’s colleagues who are community members in the selected sites. Responses to the questionnaires and answers to the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and conversations were observed by the research team over a period of four years (2015-2018).

Data were triangulated by three datasets. The quantitative questionnaire data provided an overview of language-use patterns of the sample and formed the basis for analyzing the in-depth qualitative interview data. The field notes derived from the observation dataset confirm or disconfirm the questionnaire data and the interview data. Themes emerged from the triangulation were identified to construct arguments to answer the research questions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### ANSWERS TO RQ1: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MULTILINGUALISM IN THAILAND?

#### MULTILINGUAL SEGREGATION

Thailand's characteristics of multilingualism are deemed a typical example of 'multilingual segregation' -- the separation of language users into groups in daily life on the basis of their linguistic repertoires. Data (own fieldwork) show that greater intergroup contact leads to reinforcement of social divisions and separation. The multilingual segregation arises when language users of different linguistic groups favor association with interlocutors of their first language background and/or those who share the same or similar repertoires. This results in restrictions on interactions with interlocutors who do not share their first language and/or repertoires.

Historically, geographical barriers have fragmented Thailand. There are geographical boundaries between dominant-majority *Thaiklang* (Central Thai) language users in the central plains and dominant-minority *Kammuang* (Northern Thai), *Lao* (Northeastern Thai) and *Paktay* (Southern Thai) language users. However, this has not lasted. Since the turn of the century, commerce, logistics, media, digital technology, among other factors, make Thailand more interconnected sociolinguistically. Century-old immigrant ethnic minorities, notably ethnic Chinese, ethnic Malaysians and ethnic Indians, speak Thai as their first language and are forming ties with *Thaiklang* and *Kammuang*, *Lao* and *Paktay* language users. However, the geographic barrier has repeatedly erected barriers between local/indigenous (or regional) minorities (*hill-tribes/Karen*) language users and their Thai-speaking counterparts.

In addition to the geographical barriers, the cultural and language barriers between the Thai-speaking dominant-majority, dominant-minority, century-old ethnic language users and the recent immigrant minority language users (e.g., Africans, Burmese, Russians and expatriates from America, Western Europe and Eastern Asia who arrived in Thailand after the 1990s and 2000s) result in 'multilingual segregation.' Many recent immigrant minority language users receive very little language support in learning Thai. Some of them are not keen in developing relationships with mainstream Thais, not least because of the language barrier but mainly because Thais are unwilling to develop relationships with them. As a result, some recent immigrants isolate themselves in their immigrant community and only take employment in their own ethnic social group. They have no incentive to integrate into mainstream Thai society. They speak their ethnic languages and live in a separate sector than the Thais as a form of reluctant segregation or self-segregation.

However, not all of the 200,000 foreigners have the same reasons for segregating themselves. With a significant number of Filipino office workers and Filipino English teachers, most of them only stay in Thailand temporarily and will eventually land another job in a developed economy. As a result, many Filipinos do not see an urgent need to speak Thai.

The more nuanced answer to the first question is that polycentricity -- polycentric forces and trends where international trade, the internet and e-commerce, global integration, regionalist interaction, internal geopolitics, language barriers for minority groups—occurs simultaneously with socio-cultural barriers and together become major factors in a new transformation. These factors lend themselves to a new transformation which in itself fragments and re-configures the conventional order of indexicality. Many Thais and expatriates hardly recognize the old 'linguistic unity' that Smalley described in "Linguistic Diversity and National Unity" (1994). Contrary to his assertion that the different languages are in harmony, many multilingual language users in Thailand are experiencing a struggle for the order of indexicality (order transition), with respect to the hegemony of some global and

regional powerful languages and the hierarchy and transition of some domestic and external languages. In other words, a new organizational form is on the rise in complicating and replacing the conventional hierarchy of languages, while restructuring into a new hierarchy where Thai is not always the apex language. For instance, Thai, the official language of a nation-state and a central language in de Swaan's (2001) language pyramid, is valuable for national bureaucracies and state-run media. However, in Thailand's multinationals and conferences, institutional communication is not always conducted in Thai. Rather, globally and regionally hegemonic languages such as English, Chinese and Japanese challenge the status of Thai for wider communication. In Thailand's tourism sector, for example, the multilingual tourist map of Bangkok is printed in English, Chinese and Japanese. There is no Thai version of this map. In fact, the tourist map is printed in global/super central languages and regional/central languages as defined by de Swaan 2001, because it is not designed for Thai domestic travellers.

#### A 'MULTIARCHY' OR 'MULTIARCHIES'

Present-day multilingualism in Thailand can be described as a 'multiarchy' or 'multiarchies' or alternative/parallel hierarchies, a viewpoint in opposition to Smalley's (1988, 1994) universal hierarchy/dominance model. Some researchers argue against parallel hierarchies for a state's multilingualism. The normative structure of a traditional large language hierarchy is deeply ingrained in mainstream Thais and is contrasted with the notion of alternative structures composed of smaller hierarchies. It remains true that Thailand's language users who operate in severely limited language-use quadrants and particularly with respect to those who are under the heavy influence of nation-state policies and "old statist language ideologies" (Otsuji & Pennycook 2009, p. 243) are markedly less multilingual, thereby indicating their relatively fuller participation in the universal hierarchy/dominance model of multilingualism (Smalley 1988, 1994).

Some researchers argue for a 'multiarchy' or 'multiarchies'. I argue for a broadened scope of multilingualism, which highlights 'diversity'. (This view is largely influenced by Dell 1970.) A hierarchy/dominance model is overrated since it proceeds in ignorance of diversity, some individuals, groups and organizations argue, particularly among those who are involved in international entrepreneurship and trade cooperation. Despite the fact that the nation-state plays a central role in almost all daily affairs, the scale of engagement of non-state actors (sub-nationals, multinationals and international activists) is rapidly growing and becoming powerhouses for conducting domestic and foreign affairs, and have gone far in the transformation of multilingualism at national and international levels. Although they do not forget the nation-state, they, to a greater extent, move beyond the common frameworks of the state and alternative/parallel hierarchies. Smalley's (1988,1994) universal hierarchy/dominance model perhaps only tells half of the story, thereby taking little notice of most recent developments and bears little relation to globalist's views (English-dominant users) and regionalist's view (Chinese-, Japanese- and Korean-dominant users). Taken together, the confluence of a multitude of trends (figure 1) and forces overcome the constraints of national political boundaries, as well as the national linguistic hierarchy.

What if the classic largest hierarchy theory is mistaken, describing only a mirage? There is growing evidence to show that sociolinguistically Thailand's borders bear little resemblance to the global supply chains of manufacturing companies (located in Thailand's industrial estates) and to medium-large multinational corporations with back office work in Bangkok. For many manufacturing companies, English is not the apex language among external and international languages in their hierarchies, but it is rather Chinese. For multinationals, Standard Thai is not always the apex language for internal language use in

their hierarchies, but English is in some companies (e.g., Royal Dutch Shell in Thailand). Although Japanese is in the top layer of the hierarchy for Toyota Motor in Thailand, the use of English is encouraged instead of Thai. Multinationals, who live in the universe of alternative/parallel hierarchies, conduct research and make innovations in, for instance, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, while manufacturing in China and Vietnam, and assembling work and conducting logistics in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos.

Data from the current study are in disagreement with Smalley (1988, 1994) as to which languages should be regarded as higher layered in the hierarchy of multilingualism. There could be other language hierarchies in exogamous and international marriages (at the family level) and ethnic minorities (at the community level) besides the one created as a result of the state's centralization policy that favors exclusively standard Thai. Smalley's (1988, 1994) universal hierarchy/dominance model is doomed, since it cannot, e.g., account for a daughter of a Japanese-Thai couple, for instance, choosing to learn Japanese as a heritage language, instead of English as a global and international language. Smalley's (1988, 1994) model is inadequate to explain why a second-generation Bangkok-born Bengali youth focuses primarily on learning Bengali instead of focusing on going up the hierarchy by learning Standard Thai.

It is an illusion that state control can account for e-multilingualism as digital technologies, ICT and social media make it easier for millennials from Thailand to create their online language hierarchies. The disparity between online language hierarchies and on-site ones have become increasingly common, particularly with respect to the Thai millennials of K-pop fandom and Thai cosplayers in Japan cosplay online platforms, just to name a few.

#### ANSWERS TO RQ2: WHAT ARE THE MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE CHOICES AND LANGUAGE PREFERENCES IN THAILAND?

Two top models have emerged and have come to be recognized on the basis of generalized principles governing the communicative conduct of Thais.

##### MONOLINGUALISM (1): THAI (HABITUAL) MONOLINGUALISM

As many observers note, the first model is the monolingual language choice of mainstream Thais characterized as the Thai-only choice for communication. 'Thais' (estimated 95-99 percent of the mainstream Thai population) communicate with other Thais in general, and with expatriates, or foreign interlocutors (with a range from minimal to intermediate or advanced-level Thai language proficiency) in particular in Thai-only communication. It is generally agreed that the language choices of Thais have become less dependent on available language choices in the speaker's and interlocutor's repertoires, but more towards the habitual preference for the exclusive use of the Thai language. It is evident that Thais easily, readily and routinely choose the Thai language for daily interactional communications with other Thais. They also knowingly or unknowingly prefer to use Thai and avoid the use of English as a *lingua franca* of English when speaking with interlocutors who are of foreign origin but with some minimal proficiency in the Thai language. Seen from another angle, Thais have developed an exclusionary attitude against the use of languages other than Standard Thai. Standard Thai is the interethnic *lingua franca* in Thailand and it is also the medium of communication between Thais and (minimal to intermediate-advanced level) Thai-speaking (short-term or long-term) expatriates in the capital city (Bangkok) and nearly everywhere else across Thailand.

There is no alternative model to common-ground language except the use of English, which emerged as a 'reluctant realism' on the basis of the operating principles of



communicative conduct. Accordingly, Thais hesitate to embrace an English-only *lingua franca*. It is generally held that an alternative medium of communication native to Thais and in communicating with non-Thai-speaking interlocutors has yet to emerge. Thus, Thais use English in adopting an alternative and reluctant realism since limited to Thai speaker and foreign interlocutors' repertoires. While there is not a coherent strategy to communication with foreign (non-Thai-speaking) interlocutors, this is an emerging strategic communication. As a US-born Thai college lecturer comments on my data:

“Thais will actively fallback to their L1 when dealing with other Thais and when dealing with foreigners who have some understanding of the Thai language. This could come from Thais attempting to avoid 'losing face' by making mistakes in their use of the English language and this may result from their underlying lack of confidence in using English so that in avoiding to speak it they don't become more proficient and their 'willingness to communicate' remains minimal in many contexts especially when using Thai as a viable yet inefficient option.”

By reference to the first and the second models, Thais generally prioritize the use of the Thai language over other mediums of communication, except for low or zero Thai-speaking interlocutors. When Thais are reluctant to use English as an alternative medium of communication, Thais may yet display a 'can-do' attitude in using English as a *lingua franca* between them and non-Thai interlocutors. Far from being a preference for using English, Thais develop an exclusionary attitude against the use of languages other than Standard Thai. At the same time, it is truism as explained in Smalley's model that many Standard Thai speakers would like to know and learn English so as to be able to climb up the language hierarchy.

#### MONOLINGUALISM (2): ENGLISH (HABITUAL) MONOLINGUALISM

The arguments in favor of learning a host-country language among expatriates are strong. The most obvious advantage and the commonsense idea is that expatriates need to learn Thai for wider communication while living in Thailand (as retirees and/or frequent holidaymakers) and/or entering Thailand's workforce. In a linguistically homogeneous country such as Thailand where the mainstream population (95-99 percent) is monolingual, there is powerful evidence to support the learning of Standard Thai. Given all these benefits, why a huge number of expatriates insist on the use of English only and do not learn Standard Thai? English is their preferential language choice in Thailand. One reason for this is that fresh holidaymakers and recent immigrants from English-speaking countries and non-English countries (e.g., Bangladesh) use English for communication with Thais before they acquire Standard Thai. Over the years, however, many expatriates who are long-term residents in Thailand complain that they have not received much return from their investment in learning and using the Thai language, because they are evaluated by criteria in workplaces where their proficiency in Standard Thai is not appreciated. Despite Thais normally evaluating expatriates in terms of their willingness to learn and use Standard Thai, there is still discrimination against foreigners regardless of their Thai speaking ability.

The biggest challenge to the learning of Thai among expatriates has to do with English as a limited *lingua franca* in Bangkok's metropolitan area and cosmopolitan urban environments elsewhere (e.g., Pattaya, Phuket and so on). Foreigners need only to speak English to live their lives along the Sky Train lines (Sukhumvit and Silom).

*Case Study #1: Let's meet Joe (pseudonym), a male American expatriate.* Joe, a recent immigrant and a participant in the current study, is an administrative officer in an intergovernmental organization. There has been an incredible growth of globalized industries and international institutions in Thailand. As the fact that the outside world is more inter-

connected with Thailand's international institutions through English as the medium of communication, Joe's duties as a head of his department in a Thailand-based international institution can be performed with his English-only repertoire. He argues that he operates in a predominantly Thai-speaking workplace and city, although he cannot carry out simple conversations in Thai. He contends that international institutions such as his workplace enables him to use English only for administration and his residence in the downtown area (Sukhumvit) of Bangkok (where some Thais in commerce and tourism sectors speak English reasonably well) enable him to speak English only for access to life essentials. It is no exaggeration to claim that Joe represents about 200,000 expatriates who live in such an alternative/parallel language hierarchy where the apex language and the only spoken language is English. The exclusive use of English by these expatriates has little to do with the fact that they live in Thailand.

ANSWERS TO RQ3: HOW IS THE MULTIPLICITY OF CONJOINED FORCES SHAPING THAILAND  
IN RELATION TO WHAT FORMS OF MULTILINGUALISM EMERGE?

The present paper argues that a new metaphor (figure 1), 'magnets of trends', is replacing the conventional hierarchy proposed by Smalley (1988, 1994). The orthodox way of organizing different layers of languages under a universal hierarchy (Smalley 1988, 1994) is too rigid. Without restoring to a universal hierarchy model, our metaphor of magnets suggests that numerous forces (e.g., globalization, regionalization and nationalism) metaphorically create different magnetic fields at different scales (namely, global, regional, national and local scales) that in turn create alternative/parallel hierarchies of Thailand's multilingualism hierarchies.

THE FIRST MAGNET - GLOBALIZATION OF ENGLISH: GLOBALIZATION PERIOD (1990S UNTIL TODAY)

It is no overstatement to claim that many hundreds of thousands upper-class Thais (estimated 1-5 percent of Thai population) are deliberately involved in great efforts to learn English. Part of the reason is that they tend to participate in globalized activities aiming to become beneficiaries as being privileged speakers of English. Their explicit and imperative goal of becoming speakers of English indicates that English is the apex language of their hierarchy, despite the fact that they live in Thailand. Their language hierarchy is co-existing and parallel to where Thai is the apex language.

*Globalization* creates a global hierarchy (operational at a global scale and parallel to the one established by the nation-state) with an influence challenging sovereign states. The form of multilingualism addressed in the present sub-section is associated with the force of globalization and the globalization of English. Multilingualism is traditionally understood as taking place in a nation-state. However, the form of multilingualism, as a result of globalization, may play a larger role in multilingual language use at individual and group levels than nationhood.

Global businesses and multinational corporations have been in partnership with local Thai firms (of large and small-medium size) in the present-day global economy and the global supply chain. As Thailand is increasingly becoming a market-oriented nation, the distinction between foreign and domestic markets is becoming less pronounced (e.g., Thailand's MaxValu convenient store chains and Honda and Toyota Motor are Japan's foreign direct investment). In this study, the central puzzle of Thailand's multilingualism has been why the mainstream of Thais (95.9 percent as of 2010) have continued to play a passive role in foreign or second language learning despite the fact the country is pursuing export- and tourism-oriented markets and cooperates closely with international bodies and trade partners. Thus, English in Thailand plays a role as a 'limited *lingua franca*.'

The fact that the prestige of English is high in an English-dominant global economy (English is the language for international trade, diplomat, science, entertainment and so forth) of the 21st century has many important consequences for contemporary Thai society. However, this paper argues that, most importantly, there is a lack of evidence provided that shows English is the apex language in the hierarchy of Thailand. Mainstream middle-class Thais, on the one hand, view the use of English as a means by which they gain income in the forms of tourism, commerce and trade. English-speaking tourists and foreign business partners are sources of income. On the other hand, the royalist elites and Bangkok-based upper classes view the use of English as a symbol to decorate their born-to-rule mindsets. English is a mere tool for the ruling class and the middle classes. All in all, however, English does not go up higher in the hierarchy than Standard Thai. The illusion of English as the apex language in Smalley's (1988, 1994) universal hierarchy/dominance model is sustained partly because of the fact that Thais also partly live under the American empire, but there is still inadequate evidence provided by Smalley's (1988, 1994). Smalley's American worldview should be questioned, given that Thai society, to a greater extent, is authoritarian, and thereby it is considered wrong to place anything (including languages) higher than what Thailand already has within Thailand.

With respect to mainstream Thais, English is only added to the Thai royalist elites' and business leaders' language repertoires. English is associated with a caste-like class system that prevails across Thailand. Compared to the English literates of the upper classes, middle- and lower-income Thais have limited access and exposure to English lessons and lack opportunities to practice English. Wealthy families enroll their children in English-medium international schools. English has become not only the medium of instruction in private international schools, but also the language of home and media for the rich (wealthy Thai families speak English at home). For the poor, English is nothing more than a public school subject. As a result, English-educated Thais have better employment opportunities than their middle- and lower-income counterparts. This conduces to wide class and income gaps between English-medium and Thai-medium graduates, and plays a large role in rising economic inequality in Thailand.

With regard to the use of the English language (if viewed from both Thais and non-Thais with migrant backgrounds), there are two Thailands: 1) Thai-excluded (English-only) expatriates and 2) English-excluded (Thai-only) Thais 2), suggesting two norms – two hierarchies if viewed on the basis of the habitual use of English in contrast to Standard Thai – two types of language users operating out of two discrepant language quadrants. One is the urban metropolitan area and the other is the rest of Thailand where ThaiKlang or Standard Thai is the most widely spoken national language for interlocutors with varied major-marginal regional language backgrounds. Suffice it to say that Thailand's upper classes have changed the status of English from what Smalley (1988/1994) described decades ago as an external language to becoming an internal language used as a *lingua franca* between interlocutors in commerce and tourism sectors. This observation is confirmed by Trakulkasemsuk (2016). As for the communicative value (de Swaan 2001) among Thailand's language users with migrant backgrounds, English is seen as a 'limited *lingua franca*.' The most visible use of English for many foreigners is in the downtown business districts, even though English is used minimally for bureaucratic communications in government offices between migrants and mostly-monolingual Thai government officers. The communicative reach of English is restricted to examples such as when Anglophone Africans communicate with Francophone Africans, or when West Nigerians communicate with East Nigerians in Christian churches (due to the mutual unintelligibility of their first languages). English is only heard on streets with tourist sites where shops, restaurants, hotels and hospitals cater to foreign tourists and in neighborhoods that host multinational corporations (e.g., Sathon

district, Bangkok). Conversely, Standard Thai is the official institutional communication between residents with migrant backgrounds and Thai government officers (with and/or without some minimal English assistance).

THE SECOND MAGNET - REGIONALIZATION OF CHINESE, JAPANESE AND KOREAN: REGIONALIZATION PERIOD  
(1970S AND 1980S UNTIL TODAY)

Regional hegemony exerts influences, creating a multitude of regional hierarchies and challenging sovereign states. The geopolitics of strong regions in Asia-Pacific is in flux, thereby militating against the supposition of a sovereign state and its national language ecology. Powerful East-Asian states (China, Japan and South Korea) and their geographical proximity to Southeast Asia ensure that the three strong economies in the East translate their hegemonic power into political influences, as well as linguistic effects in countries such as Thailand. It is evident that Thais are making increasingly effective use of the Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages – geographically hegemonic languages for international entrepreneurs, trade cooperation and commerce (despite English still being mostly used). The rise of strong regions promotes East-Asian languages and yet provides an opportunity to incorporate English. Regional forces to a large extent impede but at the same time reinforce the global flow of English media in international popular culture (e.g., comedy, comic, cosplay, fashion, folklore, magazines music, TV, the Internet and video). In an example, a 20+ year-old Thai cosplay celebrity (interviewed by the author) argues that the use of Japanese and English is needed in the context of the tasks she performs online and onsite for receiving and distributing information.

However, as global power is shifting to the East (with the rise of China, in particular), Thais not only live in the era of the American empire, but they are also facing strong regions – the hegemonies of China and Japan. Shifting power to regional hegemony that combine their joint influences to challenge sovereign states create alternative/parallel hierarchies (where East-Asian languages are predominantly used) while a universal national hierarchy of multilingualism (Smalley 1988, 1994) might wither away. New Asia-Pacific regional institutes and government-backed projects, such as ‘*One Belt One Road*’, are gradually fragmenting what was once English-medium global trade.

Regionally hegemonic languages, Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese dialects are languages stemming from abroad – the east coastal areas of Mainland China. The outcomes of this multilingual use survey demonstrate the high status of Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese dialects in some ethnic China Towns. These findings clearly show that the traditional Chinese concept of the transgenerational maintenance of Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese dialects is still honored today, although this is not a mainstream practice. Among ethnic Chinese families, a number of conservative ethnic Chinese families (with relatively strong Chinese identity) encourage in-group marriage for their children and grandchildren. In these families, a good command of Chinese (Mandarin) and Chinese dialects helps a younger generation of ethnic Chinese achieve higher status in the family. In addition, there is a strong connection between the individual ability to speak Chinese and/or Chinese dialects and the ability to operate businesses in Thailand and/or mainland China. The results of the language surveys show that young generations of ethnic Chinese (in families with strong Chinese identity) expressed a desire to learn Chinese (Mandarin) and/or Chinese dialects. The reason for relatively strong maintenance of Chinese (Mandarin) and/or Chinese dialects across generations is to operate businesses in Thailand’s ethnic Chinese sector and mainland China. In these families, the ability to speak Chinese (Mandarin) and/or Chinese dialects is of great importance. The above-mentioned case study of ethnic Chinese communities suggests that it is incorrect to believe that Standard Thai is the unchallenged apex language in their national language hierarchy.

*Case Study #2: A similar point can be made by Gong (pseudonym).* Gong is a father of a three-year-old boy and a Bangkok-based entrepreneur. In this interview, the researcher (R) asks Gong (G) about his language attitudes. We take Gong's description of his plans for his son's foreign language education as a suggestion, perhaps an invitation, to more carefully investigate Thailand's language hierarchy.

G: I want my boy to learn and speak English and Chinese.

R: But, how about Thai?

G: Thai is not that important. I want him to speak some Thai, but do not want him waste time in learning Thai. Because in the business world, people speak English and now they speak Chinese.

THE THIRD MAGNET – NATIONALISM/NATIONALIZATION OF THAI: CENTRALIZATION PERIOD  
(1940S AND 1950S UNTIL TODAY)

Thailand has a long-lasting form of centralization policy (as reckoned by Alexander and McCargo 2014, p. 62). The Thai government wields authority so as to make Standard Thai the *de facto* language at the expense of ethnic minority languages (Kosonen 2008). Thai authoritarian elites encouraged the use of Standard Thai, along with a faith in Thai Buddhism and other ritualized beliefs as a means of solidifying the legitimacy of the ruling class and the promotion of Thainess. Almost all foreign and second languages (including English) are all subordinate to the dominance of standard Thai.

To oversimplify, the research team has examined language users and noted that speaking Standard Thai is linked to job opportunities for lower-skilled workers, but to a lesser extent for higher-skilled English-speaking expatriates (suggesting that lower-skilled migrant workers and higher-skilled expatriates operate in two different language quadrants with minimal opportunities to cross each other's' quadrants, thereby creating two distinctive spaces with minimal interactions and live under two parallel language hierarchies. It is never a good day when you find yourself being ridiculed for speaking a language of wider communication (e.g., Standard Thai) in the lowland community (in contrast to your highland community) with a 'funny' accent. But that is the reality for Shawn (pseudonym), belonging to a local minority. A hill tribe group in Northern Thailand, who has migrated to Bangkok to form part of Thailand's lower-skilled workforce. Moreover, it is not surprising that nearly all migrant workers (Burmese, Khmer, Laotian, Shan and Karen) from the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Myanmar, Laos PDR and Cambodia) manage to speak good Standard Thai, suggesting that they will thus become more employable in Thailand's farming and fishing industry, manufacturing workforce and domestic care areas if they speak fluent Thai. The most relevant sources for this assertion in agreement with our data are Srichampa (2015) as follows:

"Thai also functions as the working language of some foreign transnational workers and labourers. (p. 94)

Most Thai businessmen have the mentality that since they have more power than the migrants, it is not necessary for them to learn the languages of their workers. Migrant labours are poor and need the work therefore they have to adapt to speaking Thai".

(p. 101)

The present study, in agreement with Srichampa's (2015) assertion, argues that Standard Thai is not only a national language as in Smalley's (1994) classification, but also a working language for migrant labours.

City-state interactions create urban hierarchies and choice of language use which move away from national government policy towards urban residents and urban migrants. As such, I argue for the possibility of alternative/parallel language hierarchies that co-exist within the nationalist hierarchy. Although Thailand has merely 45.7 percent of its population living in cities (as of 2010, as based on NESDB), the number of city dwellers is growing. Thais move to the cities, seeking better education, job opportunities and more life style choices. Urbanization has major implications for Thailand's multilingualism. Rural and semi-rural Thais do not merely migrate to the country's capital where Standard Thai is the city-wide common language as an internally interethnic *lingua franca*. They also migrate to other rapidly growing cities, including Kammuang-speaking (Northern Thai) Chiang Mai, Lao/Isaan-speaking (Northeastern Thai) Khon Kaen, Paktay-speaking (Southern Thai) Hat Yai, and English-speaking Pattaya and English-speaking (and Russian-speaking) Phuket.

## CONCLUSION

It is the goal of this paper to provide an up-to-date introduction to English and multilingualism in Thailand. My argument builds on trends taken as forces whereby global and regional forces are set up that fragment what was once a national commons. A multiarchy model, unlike a universal hierarchy/dominant model, looks at 'diversity' in multilingualism rather than favoring the old 'universal.' In short, I conclude that the shift from a universal hierarchy/dominance model of multilingualism to globally, regionally and urbane forces provide an opportunity to advance our understanding of modern-day multilingualism.

The orthodox universal language hierarchy might be defunct, but multiple alternatives persist. The world will continue to see multiple hierarchies. We see increasing globalization and the use of English in Thailand. We see increasing regionalization and the use of hegemonic languages--Chinese, Japanese and Korean--in Thailand. At the same time, we see increasing nationalization and the use of Standard Thai in Thailand. The alternative/parallel hierarchies of multilingualism have come not a moment too soon. The old model of universal hierarchy (Smalley 1988, 1994) tends to require little more than nationhood and ranks discrete languages as solely a function of the nation-state.

This study, of course, is not the first to suggest that the social construct of a universal hierarchy/dominant model proposed by Smalley (1988, 1994) and supported by his followers (including Premsrirat, 2007) might be too narrow. Such a model narrowly robs us of reaching their potentials to understand the key notion of polycentricity— a multiarchy model (see figure 1) — proposed by the present study. Knowing that conjoined trends and forces have confluence and challenge nation-states, will enable future researchers to have a promising start in working out how to understand multilingualism. For all non-state trends have made much progress in penetrating the nation-state's old power structure (e.g., globalization inter-connects people beyond borders, producing a considerable number of English users in Thailand), whereas others (e.g., urbanization) to a lesser extent have not yet made much of a dent to the nation-state.

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