

LIA International Conference 2010

Sanur Beach Hotel & Resort, Bali, Indonesia

April 28 – 30, 2010



Abstract for Plenary Session

English as a Lingua Franca in Thailand

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In this paper, a view of English used as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Thailand essentially means it should be seen as a vehicle for communication between 'non-native' users and 'non-native users' as well as with 'native users' but not among Thai themselves. ELF in this context has to be seen as part of the multicultural discourses that reflect the cultural footprint of the Thai language and traditions. ELF is seen as a continuum of functional Englishes which is acceptable for international communication although often within a limited register. This sees EFL as a mobile commodity mainly used in economic, educational and certain sociocultural settings.

The majority of Thais are Buddhist and Thai is the national language used throughout the Kingdom. There are certain domains where English is used widely such as international organizations, banking, tourism and education. However, there are a number of key concepts in Thai culture which play an important role in daily life and influence the teaching of English. The notion of 'Karma' (accepting one's position in life); 'Krengjai' (deference); the hierarchical forms of the Thai language and 'Bunkhun' or the reverence accorded to people in authority, in particular the teacher, involve cross-cultural pragmatics in which English is playing an increasing role in the Thailand.