

The Wider Social Context of School and Thai EFL University Learners

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are to investigate a group of 14 Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' views on their learning context outside the classroom and the extent to which it has an influence on their English learning in their tertiary education. From the language classroom comes further the wider social context of university in which EFL students learn outside the formal learning environment in relation to the opportunities to use and to be exposed to the target language. Two data collection methods are employed: questionnaires and interviews. It is revealed that the students perceive that the wider social context indeed influences their learning experiences outside as well as in the language classroom in two major aspects: self-development in English use and drawing on English as a common means of communication or a lingua franca (ELF) whereby there is an implicit search for similarities through English. Many further report that the specific university culture and its environment play a great role in their English learning, motivating or demotivating them to use English for communication. Implications from the study can be made to Thai EFL universities to focus on the stance on English and their efforts to make the school environment more conducive to English use and learning.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL) English as a lingua franca (ELF), school Culture, social context, university learners

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