

The Mixing of Thai and English: Communicative Strategies in Internet Chat Rooms

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ABSTRACT

The study systematically described the characteristics of mixing Thai, by Thai speakers, with English-based discourses in the Internet chat rooms. The possible functions of mixing, the factors involved, and the new textual identities built by language mixing were also explored. Data were collected from 60 textual chat extracts in international and English chat rooms on the *Sanook* and *Pantip* websites. The findings revealed that shifting to Thai was done by means of (1) Thai word insertion, (2) word translation, (3) word quotations, (4) word repetition, (5) specialized features expression, and (6) net culture switching. Shifting occurred mainly as a result of the Thai chatters' non-proficiency in English, the habitual use of Thai cultural terms, and the causal, synchronous nature of the non-visual interactions, while the individual linguistic styles as well as emotional drivers were to help build a shared understanding between Thais and at the same time express their cultural identities.

Keywords: code-mixing, language mixing and technology, language in Internet chat rooms

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยฉบับนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อบรรยายลักษณะการปนภาษาไทยในวาทกรรมภาษาอังกฤษโดยผู้พูดชาวไทยในห้องสนทนาทางอินเทอร์เน็ต รวมถึงศึกษาหน้าที่ ปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องและนำเสนออัตลักษณ์ใหม่ที่ปรากฏเป็นข้อความอันเกิดจากการปนภาษาดังกล่าว ข้อมูลในการวิจัยรวบรวมจากบทสนทนาในห้องสนทนานานาชาติและห้องสนทนาภาษาอังกฤษในเว็บไซต์สนุกและพันทิพย์ จำนวน 60 บทสนทนา ผลการวิจัยพบการสลับจากภาษาอังกฤษไปสู่ภาษาไทยโดยวิธีการต่างๆ ได้แก่ (1) การแทรกคำไทย (2) การแปลคำ (3) การอ้างอิงคำ (4) การซ้ำคำ (5) การแสดงลักษณะพิเศษและ (6) การสลับจากการใช้

ภาษาจากแบบแผนเดิมไปสู่ธรรมเนียมการปฏิบัติทางอินเทอร์เน็ต ลักษณะเหล่านี้มีสาเหตุหลักมาจากการขาดความคล่องแคล่วในการสนทนาโดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ ความคุ้นชินกับการใช้คำไทยเพื่อสื่อวัฒนธรรมและธรรมชาติของการพูดคุยในช่วงเวลาเดียวกันที่คู่สนทนาไม่สามารถมองเห็นกันได้ นอกจากนี้ ยังพบการปนภาษาอันเป็นผลมาจากลักษณะการสื่อสารเฉพาะบุคคลและแรงจูงใจทางอารมณ์ซึ่งนอกจากจะช่วยสร้างความเข้าใจสารระหว่างผู้สนทนาชาวไทยด้วยกันแล้ว ยังแสดงอัตลักษณ์ร่วมทางวัฒนธรรมด้วย

คำสำคัญ: การปนภาษา การปนภาษาและเทคโนโลยีภาษาในห้องสนทนาทางอินเทอร์เน็ต

INTRODUCTION

With linguistic globalization as a growing trend in today's communicative world, contact between speakers of the English language and a native language seems to be common, especially where English is of paramount importance. In Thailand, English was historically associated with knowledge, power, and modernization. As early as 1612, the English language came to Thailand through contact with British people. During the reigns of King Rama IV and V, it was for the exclusive use of the royal families. Under the process of westernization and modernization (1851–1960), a number of selected young men were sent to foreign countries to extend their studies for the country's development (Suraratdecha, 2003: 67). English consequently became a mark of the royals and the elite. An expansion of English and attestations of switching and borrowing between Thai and English were first witnessed during this period (Warie, 1997: 25, cited in Suraratdecha, 2003: 67). Although this foreign language is now neither an official language of the country, nor is it given any special position in terms of language policy, it is set as a compulsory course for education. The integration of English into the curriculum is evidence of its importance.

In recent years, the growth of English has been further accelerated by a startling expansion in the quantity and speed of the international communication and tourism industries. Advertisements in English are widely heard and seen everywhere promoting products ranging from canned soft drinks to T-shirts. Thai people mostly believe that knowing English is advantageous as it opens new horizons in the spheres of education and employment which lead to a better life in society and have great instrumental value in business, as if one is fluent in English, one can automatically gain a higher position. Under such circumstances, there is a great effort to be proficient in English. Prevalence of English thus generates eagerness in learning mainly for economic, social, and cognitive benefits. Mathias (2007: 72) supported

the current expansion of English, as "... In Thailand, the realization has grown that English is the lingua franca for interaction with 'foreigners', rather than just 'native speakers'...". Through this view, English is no longer restricted to upper social classes as in previous times, but is simply welcome among common people. Frequent contact between English and Thai is thus unavoidable, resulting in the 'language mixing' phenomenon – an alternation between one language and another simultaneously made by a speaker within a sentence.

There has been substantial interest in the mixing of English in Thai utterances among Thai researchers, particularly in terms of sound variables by Thai speakers with different English language experience (for example, Nimphaibule, 1996; Sertthikul, 2004), mixing of English in Thai and language attitudes as related to different social classes and occupational backgrounds (for example, Dhithiwattana, 1996; Boonkongsan, 1999), and perceptions of code-mixing in mass media (for example, Kannaovakun and Gunther, 2003). These earlier studies focused on real speech interaction in which English is used in Thai contexts. This gap will pave a challenging way for further investigation in virtual communities, in which language features are rather speech-like, but it remains largely unexplored.

Having observed written utterances in English and international chat rooms on particular Thai websites, the researcher witnessed the seemingly-intended alternation between Thai and English, even in simple words or phrases, leading to intriguing questions. Why do Thai bilinguals alternate between two languages? What are the crucial effects or factors involved? Are there any special features characterizing on-line code-mixing? With this linguistic curiosity, the researcher set out to systematically examine Thai and English code-mixing in the Internet chat rooms, hypothesizing that the findings could be somehow different from those in spontaneous speech situations. Some linguistic aspects in Thai styles as reflected in this cyber territory may reveal a language variety concerned with communicative functions and identity

markers. It can hopefully suggest implications for the English proficiency of Thai people and the quality of language learning in the present curriculum.

OBJECTIVES

This study aimed (1) to explore and describe the linguistic characteristics of mixing Thai and English in the English-dominant utterances at intra-sentential and inter-sentential levels in synchronous chat rooms, and (2) to investigate the possible functions of mixing, factors involved, and new textual identities built by language mixing.

SIGNIFICANCE

The study will give a finer understanding of the mixing of English and Thai, particularly shifting to Thai in English-dominant utterances, in the Internet chat rooms. The findings can be useful for foreign language learning in Thailand in terms of alternative teaching tools and activities and a curriculum design most effective to fulfill the Thai learners' communicative needs. Also, it might be of interest to those who are interested in other aspects of a language variety influenced by digitally-mediated communication to create new, virtual identities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions and concepts of language mixing

In fact, the ability to shift languages is known among bilinguals who can make irregular use of a second language or have considerable skills in a second language. While speaking with another bilingual, the bilinguals may alternate from one language to another language, leading to code '-mixing' or '-switching'. Some researchers take a further step to distinguish between them. According to Muysken (2000: 1), code-mixing is defined as all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence without

changing the topic of conversation. Referring to the 'code-switching' concept, sentences from the two distinct grammatical systems are shifted within the same speech situation. Generally defined, code-mixing involves intra-sentential switching, and code-switching inter-sentential switching (Kannaovakun and Gunther, 2003: 67). Some researchers may employ the term 'code-mixing' to cover these two alternations (Dulay *et al.*, 1982: 115). In the present study, code-mixing means the linguistic phenomenon in which the Thai chatters alternately between Thai and English, either within one English sentence or in the same speech situation.

Functions, motivations, and attitudes

Factors that bring about the mixing are numerous and various. The first is for communicative needs. In Li's (2000: 317-318) study of Cantonese and English switching in Hong Kong, he found that English is much more preferable since it is shorter and thus requires less linguistic effort as compared to the Cantonese equivalent. This study yields support to Holmes (1992). Since the students learn the vocabulary of economics, linguistics, or physics in English, they do not know particular words in Cantonese. When discussing their studies, they spontaneously switch to English (Holmes, 1992: 44). Similarly, in the study of the mixing of English and Thai in Thai television programs, English mixes often occur in high-technology fields and in the electronic world even when Thai equivalents exist (Kannaovakun and Gunther, 2003: 76). The importance of English can be attributed to the fact that it is a world language in science and technology, as well as in international trade and commerce, and so the use of English for discussing such topics will always give an impression of authority, credibility, and authenticity (Kannaovakun and Gunther, 2003: 67).

What's more, language shifting can be related to the social values of a particular root. Li (2000: 312-313) found that one of the pragmatic motivations for using English words in the Hong Kong Chinese press is for euphemisms. A specific

example is from ‘showbiz discourse’. Of interest to him is the use of the word and referent ‘bra’, which does have equivalents in both standard written Chinese and Cantonese. Previously, Luke (1998, cited in Li, 2000: 312) claimed that Chinese people use the English word ‘bra’ to appear ‘western’, but Li (2000: 312) proposed a different motivation; that is, it is most likely to be associated with a desire for a euphemism – to allude to the same referent without making explicit mention of the potentially embarrassing female body part. Chen (1996: 271) supported this idea. Since Chinese values stress modesty, Chinese people swear in English in order to avoid the negative connotations of those words or phrases in Chinese.

Through socio-cultural viewpoints, Ho (2007) suggested that the use of English affectively helps “divide those with good education, great prestige, and high social status from those without.” According to Luke (1998, cited in Li, 2000: 312), people may code-mix to express their westernized identity. This attitude is observed in the alteration of Tagalog and English in informal discourses by Bautista (2004) – switching is regarded as a linguistic feature of educated, middle – and upper – class Filipinos. In Kenya, where Swahili has been officially adopted, English continues to maintain the firm role of a second language and attitudes towards the language are positive, associated with high status jobs, and middle – and upper – class children seem to be switching gradually to English (Gramley and Pätzold, 2004: 323). The mixing also falls into the function of a prestige motive since it is used to satisfy speakers’ psychological needs for prestige marking (Kannaovakun and Gunther, 2003: 73).

Patterns reflecting a varying degree of code-switching depend on the social variables – the person being addressed, topics, and locations. It is an established norm for a particular social group to indicate membership, solidarity, and status. This sociolinguistic function was asserted by Dulay *et al.* (1982: 117); that is, any person who alternates between languages does so only in speaking with

other members of the group, or to indicate acceptance of a non-member into the group. Even in unilingual conversations, the occasional use of such terms as “OK, you know” and “and then” functions to symbolize the intra-ethnic character of the interaction. According to Suraratdecha (2003: 67), speakers switch into one language if they think it is appropriate to the topic or to their notions of self and the addressee. Conversely, some speakers appear to actively resist code-switching, depending on their perceptions of others and their evaluation of their own linguistic skills.

There are other researchers who have perceived some drawbacks of language mixing. According to Gibbons (1979), though Chinese speakers in Hong Kong use English to express values in status and westernization, and use Cantonese to present an impression of Chinese humility and solidarity, the mix is still considered ill-mannered, show-off, ignorant, and aggressive from the Cantonese point of view. Similarly, Chana (1984, cited in Luisa, 1994) supported this finding. In her study on the listeners’ evaluative reactions to code-switched speech, when the speaker, who is heard as a perfect Punjabi and as a perfect English speaker, uses the code-switched form, he is considered less fluent, less intelligent, and less expressive than when he uses only Punjabi or only English. Kannaovakun (2003) suggested a relationship between perceptions of code-mixing prevalence in the mass media and the third-person effects. The finding demonstrates the perceptual bias. The respondents considered the influence of Thai and English code-mixing more harmful to others, especially to teenagers, than to themselves though the teenagers were at the same time perceived the best to derive benefits from the positive side of code-mixing on television.

Language mixing in spontaneous speech has been widely discussed, but not in virtual situations. Thus, this study was an attempt to explore the characteristics of the mixing of Thai and English in English-dominant utterances observed from bilingual chat rooms. Possible functions of mixing and factors

involved were investigated as well.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Determining population

The international and English chat rooms on the *Sanook* and *Pantip* websites, the largest online community in Thailand, were selected as they are the places where Thais chat in English.

Collecting data

Purposive selection was employed to receive samples in the international and English chat rooms whose chat extracts contain a mixing of the Thai language and the English language. A three-month period was spent collecting data during different time durations, from 0730 to 0900 a.m. and from 1900 to 2300 p.m. as each chat participant seemed to enter the room at a fixed time. Collecting data at different times allowed the researcher to meet many chatting groups and thus find various linguistic forms. A total of 60 chat extracts, either in one-to-one exchanges or group exchanges, were studied; each was copied and posted on separate sheets of A4 paper (12-point Times New Roman font size) with an approximate length of 10 pages.

Data analysis

A qualitative approach was used for the linguistic analysis since it helps to describe and better understand characteristics and functions of the mixing of Thai and English, as found in 60 chat extracts. However, any typing mistakes, even those causing misunderstandings, were not edited. The term '[sic.]' was inserted after some words or phrases to indicate that their incorrect or unusual spellings had been reproduced verbatim from the originals and that they were not transcription errors.

LIMITATION

As any interaction in chat rooms is non-visual, chatters' identities could be easily masked.

Consequently, it could not be checked and guaranteed that all the examined chat extracts were produced by chatters who were absolutely Thai. The language used helped to determine the Thainess of the chatters. Only chatters who were supposed to be speaking in a combination of Thai and English were the subjects of the study.

FINDINGS

As the nature of chat rooms is rather exceptional, it is worth investigating the mixing phenomenon in order to better understand the new variety of language mixing, for which the findings can be different from those of others common speaking situations.

Lexical insertion

When looking into the Thai lexical features embedded in the English syntactic structures, there are certain important points that should be kept in mind. Language in the chat rooms is produced under the constraint of 'anonymous, real-time' interaction, functioning to be 'relational' or 'interactional', rather than to transmit facts or information. These factors affect the style of lexical choices to be speech-like, more personal and emotion-related, while an individual style shift might be involved. This feature is discussed in terms of content and function words.

Content word insertion

The major category was the Thai content words embedded in the English dominant utterances, with a variety of innovative representations. Slang is an obvious example normally favored among teenagers to make them feel 'fashionable,' signal their membership of a youth group or mark others as outsiders (Holmes, 1992: 183). In the chat rooms, this fashionable speaking was represented in Thai although the on-going base language was English. This might be related to the idea that talking in their native language, the teen chatters could express themselves more effectively than in English. In addition, being at a young age, they naturally enjoy

creating new things to substitute for their identity and group membership. This unique style of ‘teen-talk’ was thus widely found, as in the following examples (see the underlined words).

FruitCake~ : Win)))))))) YO YO Tantawan .. not just zeng nah.. but ZENG MAX MAX 555555 😊

yiwa : blue collar, hey!! Am I tingtong?? Look at your song555

JinGle~Bell : hOOboy ..ahaa.. poor you ..how are you feeling now la ja ? take 🍌 a' plow ?

Tantawan :(: P'bozz >> Umm i ve seen she round 2 night ago nahh but on the late night a' ka

From these utterances, the adjectives “ZENG” (bored) and ‘tingtong’ (cutie-silly or cutie-stupid), and the creative representation with the reduced form of the particle ‘a’-’ (with an apostrophe) expressed the casual style of teen speaking. They not only implied that the user was a teenager but also suggested attempts by the users to mark themselves as group members, as is commonly found in daily speech situations.

It should be noted that on some occasions, the extra-linguistic features of English were expressed by using the Thai characters. An example was found when the number ‘5’ (as in ‘5555’) represented a multi-repeated ‘hahahaha’ in English. Another example of phonological creativity was ‘max’, which is from the Romanized Thai word, ‘mak’ (very much). This formation was a device to express an individual linguistic style of Thai people even though more typing time might be required.

Shifting to Thai swear words or expressions was witnessed many times in the study. People, being able to mask their identities, might feel free to express themselves more than they normally did in real life. Using English for transliteration of Thai swearing could help avoid censorship of the website, whereas unavailability of Thai fonts could also be

another possible reason. Here is an example of the findings.

FruitCake~ : Win .. you said Nothing wrong ja.. but you said you were zeng before ngai .. now Tantawan kor KOTE ZENG .. you 2 sure be DOUBLE ZENG

The chatter ‘FruitCake~’ inserted the Thai word, ‘KOTE’, in her talk. This word generally refers to the ancestor or ethnic root. Here, as an adverb modifying ‘ZENG’ (bored), it was considered taboo or impolite because in Thai society, it is not appropriate to refer to the ancestors in a disrespectful way. The capitalization substituted for virtual loudness reinforced her dissatisfaction. Also, a new coinage of English word, ‘DOUBLE’ and Thai word, ‘ZENG’ was perceived.

In addition, switching to the Thai language occurred when the topic was about food. No matter whether the possibilities of this phenomenon were of the chatters’ lack of English proficiency or not, it was undeniable that where the English language lacked an exact term, the Thai language could be brought in to fill the talk. The followings are some examples (See the underlined words).

mana : Lena>I don't like sweet so plarah better ka

Noel : rose..I miss you like, I miss Papaya pok pok at Sripapia... 😊

Bug siew DJ : go ahead..I am hungry for hoy pad mee. lol

IdeeChobChat : MeDuSa / BadBoy...555555 tomorrow I cook Khao Niew dee kwa

From these examples, the Thai words related to food included ‘plarah’ (fermented fish), ‘Papaya pok pok’ (shredded papaya salad), ‘hoy pad mee’ (stir-fried noodles with shellfish), and ‘Khao Niew’ (sticky rice). It should be noted that though the utterances were shifted to Thai, English orthography was still

preferred. This might be due to the idea of typing economy and communication limitations – typing with Romanized fonts might save a lot of time (when entering via a keyboard) rather than typing with Thai fonts, which has many more alphabetical and vowel characters. Again, no Thai fonts on the typing keyboards could be a possibility.

Another notable factor was the influence of religious belief or social values. The shifting was highly influenced by the culture in which the chatters lived. When they were talking in the real-time virtual rooms and had to recall the Thai concepts or beliefs which had no words equivalent in English, it seemed to be much more convenient for them to think of Thai terms, instead of English counterparts. The followings were evidence. (See the underlined words.)

Tantawan : (: P'bozz >> eiei the number what ??
eiei Bai huay ror??

Pencil : Noom)))) 555 okayyou have to going to luang por bann laemm na jaa. I always dance ...gae bon there eieiei 😊 (bab pao wah nia?)

From the chats above, there were the Romanized Thai words 'Bai huay' (to give a hint for buying a lottery ticket), 'laung por' (an elder monk), and 'gae bon' (to make a votive offering), reflecting the Thai chatters' difficulty in conveying the meanings of these superstitious beliefs or social values in English. The Thai terms are used instead.

In short, when the topics were specific to Thai culture or belief, shifting to Thai would appear either to speed up the communication or to clarify the delivered messages, making the chatters feel more comfortable with an appropriate word choice and with a concept rarely found in another foreign culture. Through these speaking styles, communicative and affective functions (to create a shared understanding of the same ethnic group as well as to convey a sense of humor and playfulness) were simply fulfilled. The spontaneous communication of the chat rooms might not allow them enough time to think of the English

translation as well. Similarly, this phenomenon occurred in Tagalog-English switching in informal conversations. Bautista (2004) called the reason for this switching, 'communicative efficiency' – switching to the other language for the fastest, easiest, and most convenient way of saying with the least waste of time, effort, and resources. In this sense, code-shifting was a linguistic strategy to promote communication between people who had a mutual cultural understanding.

Function word insertion: Sentence final particles

The Thai sentence final particles were largely integrated in the English sentences, mainly following the Thai syntactic rules. Close to real speech, the use of these particles could semantically express the chatters' moods, attitudes, and emotions. In addition, sociolinguistic features, like genders, could be perceived. As they are short and easily typed, the particles, 'ka', 'krub', and 'ja' (with diverse spelling patterns) were most preferable, presented by Romanized Thai. There were some other particles inserted to serve grammatical and phonological functions as they identified the sentence type and signified the informal tone of the utterances. Some examples included 'mai' and 'lor' (pronounced with a rising tone, functioning as yes-no question particles) when tacked onto the end of the English statements.

Word translation

Switching by means of translation has been found in previous studies of speech situations and also in these chat rooms. The chatters shifted to Thai when trying to explain an idea of what was said before. However, as people simultaneously joining the chat rooms came from diverse settings worldwide, it is surprising that their chat partners' linguistic backgrounds could affect the shifting by translation, either from Thai to English or from English to Thai, primarily for a clarification or shared understanding of the idea. No matter what factors were involved,

the flow of the sentences in the other language was not distorted. The equals symbol (=), parentheses, or dots (...) were also employed in order to conjoin the original ideas in one language with the translated version in the other. Some examples are as follows:

w a t e r : K.Samee... get in my heart is difficult noi' na... it's dark (jai dum) and narrow (jai kab) haha water's samee : water i chop sao jai duma nd jai kab na

Ed : Yeehaa.what is .. fagot << ?
YEEEEHAAAAA!!! : I meant faggot...(kra-toye)

In the first extract, the English adjectives 'dark' and 'narrow' modifying the pronoun 'it' (referring back to 'my heart') were clarified by the translated words in Thai -- 'dark heart' is for 'jai dum', and 'narrow heart' for 'jai kab'. Similarly, in the second extract, the Thai word equal in meaning to the English 'faggot' was intentionally put in the parenthesis (kra-toye) in order to make sure of the same reference.

From the observation, switching to Thai-translated words serving an emphasis function could be presented in alternative ways – either with the Thai alphabet or in Thai Romanization. Sometimes, the Thai translation version was written far from the English original words, as in these examples.

เผื่ออก : WeedMuff !! - I miss คิคคิง 😊

csiro : sandy.....i am very good at chinese [sic.] language ภาษาจีนกลาง

M & N : sorry about that i just busy na ka narak kor tot

The speakers inserted the translated Thai 'คิคคิง' (miss) and 'ภาษาจีนกลาง' (Chinese language) after their English words in order to emphasize the feeling and the particular language previously referred to. In the last chat, shifting to Thai 'kor tot' for the word 'sorry' occurred at the end of the utterance for emphasis.

Translation shifting might be influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the chat partners. When the Thai chatters were talking to foreigners, they might first start with the Thai word normally used in their social habits, and then translate it to English in order to make this cultural word clearer to the non-Thai native speakers. The extracts below are examples.

FruitCake~ : Bruce.. Kanomchun = thai desseart ja.. makes ..looks just like jello but harder and got coconut milk added na

FruitCake~ : Bruce .. I'm allergic of 🍌 ja.. hen leaw yakkkk.. = need it badly when I see one 😊
.. 55555.

The chatter 'FruitCake~' shifted, by translating, from Thai to English, to give a clear idea of a typical Thai dessert 'Kanomchun' and the Thai phrase "hen leaw yakkkk". This shifting showed a linguistic advantage from being bilingual and at the same time implied her root ethnicity.

Sometimes, switching to Thai which was written in Romanization might be hard to literally decode or could cause confusion in pronunciation. In such a case, translation to English might be a solution to make such Romanized Thai words more understandable to both parties. Examples are shown below.

yiwa : ka, I look,and kam (have fun) you work ok??

L e n a : Mana, ahh~ I love Narm Pla Waan dipping sauce [sic.] with Mango. I often dip my Granny Smith green apple into that sauce

DeeJaiPT : Alex.....I know you...

a l e x : DeeJaiPT, roo leaw yhieb wai loey...no need to make an announment [sic.] :P 😊

Here, the English translation would be typed right

next to the Thai words. In the first extract, translation to English was given in parentheses to explain the word 'kam' (pronounced differently if there was no specific meaning put together). Similarly, in the last two chats, the compound noun 'Narm Pla Waan' (dipping sauce) and the phrase 'yhib wai loey' (no need to make an announcement), were clarified by the English translation, showing a linguistic advantage of the bilingual speakers to give an alternative word choice for better understanding.

Besides elaboration and emphasis functions, switching with translation could be used to create a sense of humor or playfulness, as found below.

Nadia : 555+++... funny name . 😊 hooboy = boy's ears ? ...555+++

111 : greeny ...555...tub keang = strong lever [sic.]?
greeny : 111 yes luktung should stop drinking if not strong lever will come soon

111 : greeny..er! strong lever [sic.] better than weak lever [sic.]?

The chatter 'Nadia' translated her partner's name, which is a compound of the Romanized Thai noun 'hoo' (ears) and the English noun, 'boy'; thus, it means 'boy's ears'. As for the second extract, instead of using 'cirrhosis', the chatter '111' preferred the Thai word 'tub keang' which was translated word-by-word (in English lexical order) to 'strong lever' ('tub' is for 'liver' and 'keang' for 'strong'). Sarcastically, the chatter made fun of this translation, as found in, "...strong lever better than weak lever?"

It was accepted by the chatters that one reason for translation was their deficiency in English. When the chatters did not know how to convey the idea in English, a request for translation into Thai was made. This revelation was as follows:

aurnitear O-> : จะอ้วกภาษาอังกิดว่าไงครับ

aurnitear O-> : 5555

Mik : ja-oukkkaurnitear

Kugran : 555

kiddo : aurnitear, อ้วก = vomit

Idee : 007 5555555555 I was trying to read those words..Phayaban jom Khaen

007 : Ummmmmm.. very hard to explain in English ..

Idee : 007, kind of naughty nurse?

007 : That's correct Idee, you know well na..

These two chatters could not spontaneously type 'อ้วก' (to vomit) and 'Phayaban jom Khaen' (a naughty nurse) in English. They then directly asked for help. This showed the English learning cooperation among bilingual chatters, whose native language was Thai.

Word quotations

Word quotations happened when the chatters repeated the word in previous turns spoken by other people. In the study, this phenomenon was interesting, particularly when the sentences began with English and automatically reverted to Thai words which were found in their chat partners' former utterances. Like translation, switching by means of quotations helped build shared understandings between Thai people while the original meaning and the emotional state such words conveyed were still kept through the native language. In short, this functioned to consolidate their ethnic identity. Below are some examples.

mind : lukmoo kon suay

@__@ V2 : mind, mind, nooo...not suay....soo ugly ka

@__@ V2 : mind, lolzzz...shy..

Here, the chatter "mind" addressed '@__@ V2' as 'kon suay', in which the word 'suay' means, 'beautiful'. The word 'suay' again appeared in @__@ V2's response to serve the shared meaning in her English utterance.

คำม่วน : when people say I am baaaa ..I alway [sic.] don't know what to say ..

This is an example of indirect quotation. The chatter ‘คำม้วน’ inserted the Thai word ‘baaaa’ (crazy), without distorting the flow of the English structural utterance. The repetition of the letter ‘a’ was to show the expressive, drawn-out pronunciation of the word.

One more interesting aspect was found in greetings. If a person began with a Thai greeting, the chat partner tended to give a response in the same language. This response style could create familiarity and an ethnic bond among the Thai chatters, as shown below:

urDoc^^ : Ann, sabaidee,greetin [sic.] wiv [sic.]
smile n hard 2 say gd 🤝kaaa
Hanna : Hi..Ann,Have we talked?
Ann : sabaidee, cool ja
Ann : Hanna, hi... long time no talk naka

In the extract, ‘Ann’ uttered, “sabaidee” in response to “sabaidee” by ‘urDoc^^’. She reversed to “Hi” in the next turn when replying to ‘Hanna’ whose greeting was “Hi”.

Word repetition

Repetition was used to emphasize the written messages, indicating causality of the topics and situations as well as showing the playfulness of the chat speaker’s tone, as found in “...i want to speak eng mak mak ...” and “... i am hungry sood sood...”, for instance. It should be noted that repetition was found only in the simple Thai words with one syllable. They were transliterated into the English alphabet, whereas the syntactic structure of Thai was predominant. Interestingly, the Thai repetition punctuation ‘ๆ’ was creatively combined with English words for extreme emphasis, as in “...free free free freeๆๆๆๆๆๆ” and “my eng class veryๆๆๆๆๆ hard.” By such repeating, the intensification of the words was visually multiplied, but the meaning was redundant.

Specialized features

In the chat rooms, chat was conveyed through

typing, whereas the flow of messages was expected to be fluid, almost as rapid as speaking. Also, access to any non-verbal cues was not directly possible. This nature put an effect on language choices and representations, producing some special features rarely seen in other types of either written or spoken communication.

Orthographic representations

The orthographic representations include two phenomena: (1) Thai orthography for English words and (2) English orthography for Thai words. These linguistic representations were widely accepted in these bilingual chat rooms. (See the translated version in parentheses.)

- Thai orthography for English words (See the underlined words or phrases.)

TJMaxx_In_The_Box : อยู่ที่ไหนก็ได้ไม่แปลก (*It doesn't matter where we live.*)

MAY : อยู่ที่ไหนก็ได้ไม่แปลก หนุ่ (*It doesn't matter where we live, too*)

แฟน-แอน : เฟรนช กิสส แอนนน? (*French kisses Ann?*)

just the way you are : BMX-Gal, 555555...ก๊ึดไอดีแย้ นะ ..ว่าแต่จะจ้างใครดีละ (Good idea! ... but who should we hire?)

- English orthography for Thai words (See the underlined words or phrases.)

forever n ever :be right back ka

Ann : 555555>>> why laka ?

Hanna : So lazy

zitoon : IDEE))))))))))) PLS tell me >>you tee nai???? (Where are you?)

IdeePap1 : Tada / Honey..I'm surprised that he dares to reveal himself to us na si...lol..kor he pak jad mak ([He] is so sharp-tongued.)

samantha : dsm4>>>ug is kinda old man ka...mong mai hen ([I] Can't see.)

brunt : so nice na ann 1 nee (weather) no so cold

The first phenomenon suggested the use of Thai orthography for English. An influence of the addressing chat person in constructing an ethnic bond was implied, while causality and enjoyment of the atmosphere were explicitly perceived. As for the second one, in which the Thai language was represented by the English alphabet, the personal convenience and typing difficulties in Thai were probably their main excuses.

Sometimes, using the Romanized Thai clearly caused trouble in understanding or affected a flow of communication. The followings are examples. (The translated version is shown in parentheses.)

a l e x : Cheng_/^_ sa bai dee? (How are you?)
 Cheng : gor ruey ruey la ja (just so so).....alex.....its a bit cool this morning in bkk
 a l e x : Cheng, ruey ruey = so so or = rich rich a ja? :P
 Cheng : haha rich rich gor dee na si.....alexandra
 😊

<O>_<O> : emmie, busy lor
 emmie : pow ja payayarm read karaoke eu eiei..chai we la nid nung ja < O > _ (no, [I] just try to karaoke [laugh] It takes time a bit.)
 <O>_<O> : do you want me type thai pao laa

By using the Romanized Thai 'ruey ruey', the written message by 'Cheng' seemed to be ambiguous, meaning either 'so-so' or 'rich'. The chatter 'emmie' then revealed that her slow response was because she was trying to decode Thai messages typed by the English alphabet.

Creative combination of English and Thai

This phenomenon was a specialized means of code-mixing in the study, but it was rarely found. It

was conveyed through the creative combination of English morphemes and Thai words. The obvious example was 'maoing' in "!!!เมรีสุดสวยค่ะ!!! is maoing 555", in which the Thai verb 'mao' (to get drunk) was combined with an English tense inflection '-ing' in order to express the progressive action with playfulness. It resembled the grammatical structure of the present continuous tense in English.

Another example was in "Did I hear a bird jippering". In Thai, the bird's crying is heard 'jip' ('cheep' or 'chirp' in English). As added by '-er', this word acts as a verb form, 'jipper', and by '-ing', as an ending participial phrase functioning as an adjective modifying 'a bird'. In addition, the chatter's teasing and playing with words could be expressed, as in "Prim)))))) joooob morning ja 🍷", in which the Thai word 'joooob' (kiss) was employed, instead of 'good' (in the typical greeting, Good morning).

Non-verbal representations

To compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues, chatters might convert them into written forms. This written translation expressed a language shift and indicated social practice possibly understood among Thai chatters. A variety of laughter, either by the repeated number '5555' (which represents a multi-repeated 'hahahaha', the sound of laughter in English, as earlier mentioned) or by the stereotypical Thai laughter representations, 'eiei' and 'kak kak', could best explain this. By this textual translation, the auditory features which were normally missing in the chat rooms were possibly perceived.

Switching to the Net culture

As we know that the Internet chat room is a virtual interaction through writing, there are some features (related to typing speed, non-visual and non-audio accessibility, and chat room purposes) uniquely produced as a part of the so-called 'Netspeak' culture. In these bilingual chat rooms, these features were found mixed up with either Thai or English for the main purpose of communicative efficiency.

Prosodic features

In the chat room where sounds cannot be heard directly, the study of language mixing in terms of pronunciation could be possible, but through word insertion, together with influential features of the Net culture. They are discussed briefly in terms of the three main features of pitch, duration, and loudness.

Even though different kinds of pitch were not directly transmitted, they could be perceived through the insertion of Thai question words. An example was found when chatters switched into Thai using a typical question particle, like ‘chai mai’ (the final particle for yes-no questions) in “... still don't remember [sic.] me chai mai”, the rising pitch could be indirectly conveyed. There were some other question particles, like ‘ja’ in “Bruce.... what's up ja? :)”, or ‘ka’ in “kummaun, I still haave [sic.] some hot wwwingss left >> do u want some ka?”, inserted at the end of the utterances to signify the communicative functions and tones of the chat speakers.

The sound quality of duration (timing in speech production) was conveyed by Thai words embedded in English utterances. The more the Thai letter was reduplicated, the more time in pronunciation was visually consumed. Also, this use of letter elongation could signal intensification. Examples were found in “...Thaxxxxxxx kaaaa 🚗 *100 back jaaaaa” and “toooooooo cold loeiiaiiiiiii”. The Thai particles ‘ka’, ‘ja’, and ‘loei’ were peculiarly typed. The letters ‘x’, ‘a’, ‘o’, and ‘i’ were typed more times than usual. This switching indicated a long duration of the word pronounced and sometimes intensified the idea said before.

Loudness (the intensity of sound or sequences of sounds) could be conventionally detected through the use of capitalization which not only expressed yelling or shouting, but also added emphasis, especially if a whole word was capitalized. It was thus obvious that the standard rules of capitalization were largely ignored. For example:

SUPANIKA : SEMAKUTE....are you okay?

SMAKUTE : MAI UNDERSTAND

The Thai negative particle ‘mai’ (not) was typed in capitalization in the English dominant-utterance to represent loudness, and thus called for attention more dramatically.

Shortening: Vowel dropping

Vowel dropping is a specialized word formation in the chat room communication involving typing. By dropping vowels, less typing time is consumed. This typing technique was applied to Thai words embedded in English utterances. Only the dropping of ‘a’ in the Thai male polite particle ‘krp’ in “...ok nongnai make sure you are a real girl na.krp” and “tada...hello krp” was found in the study. Indeed, there was no fixed rule for this dropping, but rather it depended on an individual style or creativity.



Noticeably, there was an attempt to shorten other Thai phrases and mix them in the English-based utterances. Only the first letters of a series of words were combined to coin the word. Nevertheless, because of its unpopularity (not well-known or widely used), the full form of a word had to be revealed, together with its English version. The following is the only example found in the study.

@___@V1 : KKK = Khob Khun Kha..... Why you know na kha...?.....Wonder but thankyou [sic.] so much kha...😊

The shortened word ‘KKK’ was a new use. Its meaning, ‘thank you’, required clarification. In this case, the idea of minimizing the number of keystrokes was not achieved. Linguistic creativeness and playfulness were displayed, instead.

Use of graphic representations

Since graphic representations were available in the chat rooms, they were often typed after chatters’ responses to substitute for a word or phrases. Thus, it not only helped minimize the number of keystrokes and increase the speed of responses, but also made the virtual chat more

specialized, attractive, and colorful. Sometimes, it was also compounded with Thai and English words (with Thai translation), as in “... nong  Onion 5555555,” the addressing Thai title ‘nong’ was for the younger sister, the graphic for Thai pronunciation, ‘kluay’ and the English word, ‘onion’ for Thai translation and pronunciation, ‘hom’. This coining showed an individual linguistic mixing style and innovative, playful word coinage. Another example was “... this is my e ” – the letter ‘e’ (substituted for ‘electronic’) and the graphic were coined to express playful and manipulative behavior.

In terms of language use, it was clear that the chatters would code-mix primarily to facilitate communication and to construct their ethnic identities in this virtual speech-like world. Chatting in the English or international chat rooms, they also had to struggle to overcome the gap of linguistic competence between the two languages. Code-mixing or -shifting thus was regarded as a communicative strategy to make communication as effective as possible. On the other hand, the findings revealed that chat room-mediated communication had a clear impact on language change as expressed through linguistic creativity and specialized features.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The Internet-mediated chat rooms have been playing a more and more significant role in communication. People chat on a variety of topics by typing or writing utterances, which will appear on the computer screen. In Thailand, there are websites providing Thai chatters with opportunities to chat in English. Unavoidably, contact between the English language and the Thai language can be perceived. There have been works involving the mixing of English and Thai in real speech, but this kind of mixing is still unexplored in communicative contexts, particularly in the virtual chat rooms where Thai people talk in English-based interactions. So, it is worth investigating this phenomenon in order to

provide a better understanding of a new variety of language mixing influenced by digitally-mediated communication. As the nature of chat rooms is rather unique, some specialized linguistic features are reflected.

In the study, there was evidence of Thai people using English above the clause level, implying the bilingual qualities of the chat participants (in a very broad sense). Though chatting consists of numerous features of oral communication, which could be applied to the study of code-switching, there were some other differences caused by the nature of synchronous communicative limitations. The findings of this study presented some aspects different from those of previous studies in Thai and English code-switching in several ways.

A. Linguistic features of language mixing and possible functions

The insertion of Thai content words was a very common linguistic phenomenon embedded in English-based utterances. As chatting is ‘relational’ or ‘interactional’, it affected the style of lexical choices to be speech-like, more personal, and emotion-related with a variety of function words often added to the end of a sentence. The outstanding ones were final-sentence particles for politeness; for instance, ‘ka’, ‘krap’, and ‘ja’, whose use was explained by Thais as any sentences without these particles were ‘not beautiful’.

Similar to some of the previous studies, language shifting occurred via a variety of linguistic means including translation, quotations, and repetition. It was interesting to find that in translation, English punctuation was employed to conjoin the original ideas in one language with the translated version in the other, while in some utterances the creative mixing of the Thai repetition punctuation “๗” with English words was also found. Moreover, the shifting feature in this study was very special because there was a combination of English and Thai in a very playful way, as the English morpheme, ‘-ing’ was combined with the Thai word in ‘maoing’

(getting drunk), and the phonological feature of English was innovatively integrated to the Thai word in ‘max’ (very much). What was more interesting was the repetition of the number ‘5’ substituting for laughter in Thai pronunciation to sound like ‘ha’ (haha) in English, which was obviously unknown to the English native speakers. This indicated transference of elements of one language to another (Berthold, Mangubhai, and Batorowicz, 1997, cited in Skiba, 1997) at phonological, lexical, grammatical, and orthographic levels. In short, these language phenomena were mainly to serve communicative and affective functions, and to compensate for a lack of English proficiency in some situations.

B. Impact of computer-mediated communication on language mixing

Since the chat room is a synchronous communication happening through typing, rapid responses are technically required; otherwise, the chat partners, waiting for the written or typed responses, might become bored and finally leave the room. Aware of this fear, when a reply in English could not be immediate, the native language would be the preferred choice. Switching to Thai thus not only provided linguistic advantages but also served social functions to achieve interactions in this virtual community.

In addition, according to the etiquettes of *Sanook* and *Pantip* chat rooms, like those of other chat rooms, a person was required to reply to any messages in a courteous manner. In other words, rude or profane language was officially prohibited. However, swear words were obviously found in the study because the chatters, being able to distort their identities, felt free to express themselves, and switching to their native language helped express their emotion more precisely. By using English for transliteration of Thai swearing, censorship of the website can be avoided. This shifting was opposite to the findings in Chen’s study of code-switching between English and Mandarin Chinese on postings (Chen, 1996: 217). In his study, Chinese people

preferred to switch from Chinese into English to express emotions or to avoid negative connotations – speaking in the second language sounded less severe or brutal.

Moreover, as communication took place by typing, some unique characteristics were created. The non-verbal cues were represented in personal, Thai styles by inserting textual representations of images or feelings available on the websites into streams of conversations. There was also a variety of orthographic representations of Thai and English, expressing individual creativity in the chat community and at the same time bonding bilingual people of the same ethnic group identities.

RECOMMENDATION

This study investigated the linguistic features and functions of code-mixing in chat rooms. A correlation of psycho-social variables – chatters’ personal backgrounds, language mixing behaviors, and attitudes towards language mixing – is worth further exploration to see how much and in what way they are related to their linguistic performances. Also, the study should be extended to other written contexts or areas in which English is highly involved.

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