

The Code-Mixing of English Loanwords

by Mathayom Suksa 1 and Mathayom Suksa 2 Thai Learners

David D. Perrodin

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Eastern Asia University

Abstract

The study describes the characteristics of mixing English, by Thai speakers, with Thai-based discourses in the general daily conversations of young Thai learners. The possible functions of code-mixing English loanwords, the factors of such loanwords, and the new language identities built by mixing languages were also explored. The research sample consisted of eighty learners classified into sixty learners from Mathayom Suksa 1 and twenty learners from Mathayom Suksa 2, obtained by purposive sampling. The research instrument used for gathering data was the spreadsheet. The statistics used for data analysis were frequency and percentage. The findings revealed that code mixing of English loanwords occurred mainly during the informal, casual discussion of hobbies or interests among the young Thai samples.

Keywords: code-mixing, English loanwords, young Thai learners



Introduction

English is the universal language or the lingua franca of the world. It has become increasingly important in most aspects of the global society. An analysis of daily conversation and speech, as well as the content of communication with Mathayom Suksa 1 and Mathayom Suksa 2 Thai learners, reflect that the Thai language is greatly influenced by the English language. It is commonly accepted that English plays a significant role in Thai society in general, especially among adolescent Thai learners.

According to Preechaamornkul (2005), the presence of English has gradually expanded to become an aspect of the daily activities of Thais, such as in communicating with foreigners, listening to foreign music, watching foreign movies, and pursuing higher

education in western English speaking countries. As a result, the English language's influence in the daily life of young Thai people is every expanding. Adolescent Thais often code-mix, or mix and use written and spoken English in Thai contexts. Code-mixing reflects the tremendous impact the English loanwords are having in the Thai language.

Rationale

Woon Yee Ho (2007), defined code mixing as the “act of combining one language with another in the same utterance or sentence. It is a common phenomenon in societies in which there are bilingual or multilingual elements.” Code mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units, such as morphemes, words, phrases, and

clauses to better understand each other (Ayeomoni, 2006). This mixing of English loanwords and Thai frequently occurs in both the spoken and written Thai language among adolescent Thai learners.

A loanword is a borrowed word from a donor language that is incorporated into a recipient language. The terms borrow and loanword conflict with the ordinary meaning of those words because nothing is returned to the donor languages.

It is observed that young Thais often code mix English loanwords with Thai when they talk about fashion, entertainment, or new technology. Code mixing also occurs when young Thais are talking with friends who have the same level of English skills. It was anticipated that this study would give a better understanding of the mixing of English and Thai, particularly shifting to English in Thai dominant utterances, in the general conversation of Thai learners. In relation to a study conducted by Yiamkhamnuan (2011), the findings from that study were used for foreign language learning in Thailand in regard to substitute teaching tools and activities, and effective curriculum design to fulfill the communicative needs of the Thai learners. Also, the findings of that study might be of notice to those who are interested in other aspects of a language code mixing and possible socio-economic, cultural influence in the Thai language.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to (1) explore the frequency and recognition of mixing English loanwords in Thai dominant utterances in general conversational settings, and (2) investigate the possible functions of code mixing English loanwords. Also, this study might generate interest in other aspects of a language code mixing and possible socio-economic, cultural influence in the Thai language. The characteristics of code mixing are varied according to age, gender, social status, and education

level just to name a few. Code mixing can encompass many types of linguistic units such as words, phrases, and clauses.

Different parts of speech are also affected. Whereas, nouns, the part of speech describing something which is physical and tangible, such as a person, place, or object, were the most affected part of speech according to this research.

Research Methodology

The data for this study was collected from a collection survey completed by sixty Mathayom Suksa 1 and twenty Mathayom Suksa 2 Thai learners, ages twelve years old and thirteen years old respectively with English language proficiency levels ranging from Intermediate to Advanced. This study only focused on commonly used or recognized English language loanwords mixed in a Thai context. Therefore, in this study, proper names such as people's names, business names, names of places, or brand names were not considered.

Data Collection Procedure

The first step, the learners were encouraged to brainstorm in small group settings with two to three learners in each group. This process of brainstorming in a small group setting was used to assist all learners participating in this study to generate a list of at least twenty English loanwords within a forty-five minute class period. Learners were asked to individually and anonymously write common English words that they use in daily conversation. The learners were also asked to write the Thai spelling of each word.

The samples were instructed that this study only focused on commonly used or recognized English language loanwords mixed in a Thai context. It was clarified that proper names such as people's names,

business names, names of places, or brand names would not be considered as viable loanwords in this study. The samples were further instructed to hand in the survey sheets upon completion, and avoid assisting their fellow samples in the completion of their surveys.

The second step, the samples consisted of eighty learners classified into sixty Mathayom Suksa 1 learners and twenty Mathayom Suksa 2 learners, divided through purposive sampling. The samples were selected to partake in this small-scale research in conjunction with previously scheduled educational standardized test preparation groups. The samples were first chosen upon prior standardized testing scores. The two groups equally consisted of learners whom either received mean scores above the median (50% or greater) and mean scores below the median standardized testing scores (49% or less). The two groups were further regulated by gender, which was equally distributed within the populations. It was believed that the nearness in age and grade level within the two groups, would lead to lessening the uncertainty margins in the data. It was believed that minimizing the

diversity of the groups would offer reliable research data within the groups and would give a correct image of each particular group.

Research Tools

The spreadsheet was carried out as a research tool and through which data was collected for the study. The data from the eighty surveys was then inserted into a spreadsheet format. Once the one thousand and six hundred words (twenty words per survey form x a total of eighty learners) were entered into the spreadsheet, the words were then alphabetically sorted. This process caused the individual words to group together with like words. It was discovered that there were three hundred and twenty separate groups of words in the collected data. The words were then separated into groups, and the frequency of each word was then calculated.

Due to a large amount of data collected in this research, only the top ten most frequently used words within the data are shown in the following table.

Table 1

English Loanwords from Mathayom Suksa 1 and Mathayom Suksa 2

Mathayom Suksa 1			Mathayom Suksa 2		
Loanwards	Frequency	Percentage	Loanwards	Frequency	Percentage
1. Computer	36	60.00	1. Guitar	18	90.00
2. Football	30	50.00	2. Hamburger	17	85.00
3. Apple	25	41.67	3. Chocolate	15	75.00
4. Strawberry	25	41.67	4. Computer	12	60.00
5. Hamburger	23	38.33	5. Mouse	11	55.00
6. Chocolate	21	35.00	6. Sandwich	11	55.00
7. Game	21	35.00	7. Football	10	50.00
8. Basketball	20	33.33	8. Keyboard	10	50.00
9. Ice-cream	19	31.67	9. Cheese	8	40.00
10. Pizza	19	31.67	10. French fries	8	40.00

Data Analysis

The statistics employed for analyzing the data for frequency and percentage. The results of survey data from the Mathayom Suksa 1 and Mathayom Suksa 2 samples are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1 showed that code-mixing of English loanwords occurred more within the scope of interests or hobbies of the speaker seeing as “computer” was the most familiar English loanword for Mathayom Suksa 1 and “guitar” was the most common English loanword for Mathayom Suksa 2.

Results and Discussion

This study showed that code-mixing English loanwords occurred mostly functioning as a noun rather than as a verb, adjective, adverb, noun phrase, and verb phrase seeing as thirty-six (60.00%) respondents in the Mathayom Suksa 1 group chose computer as the most recognized English loanword, and “guitar” is the most recognized English loanword for Mathayom Suksa 2 with eighteen respondents (90.00%). Thais choose and use English words of all grammatical functions, mostly as nouns, then as verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

In agreement with a study conducted by Radcharak (2011), Thai learners choose and use English words of all grammatical functions, mostly as nouns, then as verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. This study showed

that code-mixing English loanwords occurred mostly functioning as a noun rather than as a verb, adjective, adverb, noun phrase, and verb phrase. This study further showed that code-mixing English loanwords were mostly used when the samples were familiar with the English vocabulary related to each purpose or meaning.

Nouns, words that name a thing, or that denote a thing as a member of a class of similar things, were more often used in reference to interests or hobbies. English nouns may be substantive (having a physical and tangible referent, such as a person, place, or object), or they may be abstract (having a non-physical or intangible referent, such as an idea or abstraction). A proper noun is a special class of noun that names a particular where in its primary application refers to a unique entity, such as Chicago, Saturn, Jonathon, or Apple, as differentiated from a common noun.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The use of code switching English loanwords has been playing a more significant role in communication among adolescent Thai learners. Adolescent Thais communicate on a variety of topics by speaking, and typing or writing utterances. Hence, it is worth further investigating the phenomenon of code-mixing in order to provide a better understanding of a new variety of language code-mixing influenced by digitally mediated communication.



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