

instance, สุดเลิฟ /sood love/ (My love), สไคไลเวอร์พูล /liverpu/ (Liverpool), and เฮด /hed/ (words and phrases were intentionally wrong) signify the status of the users as the trendy. Examples of misspelled words or phrases ว่าเป็นป้า วันเนี้ไม่ป้าละน้า ('เป็น' /pen/ should be 'เป็นน้า' /pen na/ and 'วันเนี้' /wan nae/ should be 'วันนี้' /wan ni/).

07

The use of English language and identity expression in Facebook statuses in Thailand

การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษและการแสดงอัตลักษณ์
ในสถานะเฟสบุ๊คในประเทศไทย

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A b s t r a c t

The paper examined the use of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Facebook to study the personal and linguistic identities of Thai Facebook users in relation to their language choice. The research questions in the study were 1) How is Computer-Mediated Discourse used by participants in setting Facebook statuses? and 2) How are the identities of participants expressed through language choice on their Facebook statuses? The researcher employed a textual analysis approach and the interviews of five participants to explore the research questions. It was found that new linguistic features which deviated from the standard norms in both Thai and English were frequently observed in Computer-Mediated Discourse. Also, there was a correlation between the language choices and the participants' educational and professional backgrounds. Lastly, Standard English continues to be recognized as the idealized linguistic identity which Thai participants wish to possess.

Keywords: Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD), Facebook, Linguistic Identity, English as a foreign language (EFL)

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อมุ่งเน้นศึกษาการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ ในเครือข่ายสังคมออนไลน์เฟซบุ๊ค ซึ่งประกอบไปด้วย คำถ้าในการวิจัยทั้งหมด 2 ข้อ ได้แก่ 1. การสื่อสารผ่านสื่อออนไลน์คอมพิวเตอร์ ของกลุ่มตัวอย่างโดยผ่านสถานะเฟซบุ๊คเป็นอย่างไร และ 2. กลุ่มตัวอย่างแสดงอัตลักษณ์ของตนผ่านสถานะเฟซบุ๊คอย่างไร ผู้วิจัยเลือกใช้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทางภาษาของกลุ่มตัวอย่างและการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มตัวอย่าง 5 คน เพื่อเข้าสู่การหาคำตอบในงานวิจัย จากการวิจัยพบว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างใช้ลักษณะภาษาแบบใหม่ที่ผิดแผลกไปจากการใช้ภาษาไทย และการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบมาตรฐานในการสื่อสารผ่านคอมพิวเตอร์ นอกจากนั้นการเลือกใช้ภาษาของผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยเมื่อสื่อสารผ่านคอมพิวเตอร์มีความสัมพันธ์กับพื้นฐานการศึกษาและอาชีพ ผลการวิจัยยังสรุปได้ว่าการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบมาตรฐานเป็นอัตลักษณ์ในอุดมคติที่ผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัยต้องการ

คำสำคัญ: การวิเคราะห์ภาษาบนอินเตอร์เน็ต, เฟซบุ๊ค, อัตลักษณ์ทางภาษา, ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Introduction

Globalization and the Internet extensively change the language use of people in a way that actual linguistic practices are more diverse and different from standard languages which are codified in dictionaries and grammar books (Blommaert 2008). Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD) is one of the areas where we observe the emergence of wide varieties of English. English has been spreading in the Thai context, especially in CMD, namely online social networking communities or online chat; thus, it is valuable to explore how English used by Thai online communicators changes.

Besides the language use in CMD, English as a lingua franca (ELF) and linguistic identity are taken into account to understand how non-native English users' identities are formulated in Computer-Mediated Discourse. The study of English as a lingua franca is brought into consideration in order to counter the monolithic English language attitude which believes non-native English users should speak and write English with native English standard rules. Nevertheless, Preston (2005) raises a concern

that language learners should have the right to choose their own linguistic identities; they are free to speak English with local accents and write in their own styles to show their ethnic identity. Likewise, Jenkins (2007) suggests that non-native English speakers should not be forced to use Standard English as long as they could bring about successful communications; in addition, she recommends that communicators should respect and value linguistic diversity and variation with equal rights. Last but not least, Ominiyi and White (2006) view that linguistic identity is not considered as a language deficiency, yet it is the free and rightful expression of every speaker of English. In this study, two research problems were addressed. First, the researcher investigated the non-standard English language used by Thais on Facebook, the most widely used online social networking site in Thailand, despite the conventional belief in using Standard English in communication. Second, the type of identity Thai participants wished to be associated with through their language use on Facebook status posts was investigated.

Literature review

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD)

The notion of Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD) is proposed by Herring (2001) to define communication via computers. Understanding CMD is accessible through textual analysis in various forms, namely Instant Messaging (IM), real-time chats, discussion groups and so on; what they share in common is their presentation through virtual language. CMD is divided into two types based on synchronicity and way of communication: firstly, the CMD system allows synchronous communication through real-time chat or Instant Messaging where communicators could connect at the same time via computers; in the meantime, it creates spaces for participants to have asynchronous communication. These technological features could be observed on Facebook (FB) pages as users could have real-time conversations with friends if they wished. However, what normally happens is all messages are posted as statuses or comments on FB users' sites and they can be read any time users log on. The difference between the two is while status is posted by account holders only to explain what they are doing or to express what they are thinking or feeling, comments can be posted on the pages of both account owners and their friends to share their ideas on any message or pictures. Secondly, the transmission of the messages in CMD operations is either one-way or two-way; when participants join in the synchronous communication, it is two-way content transmission

as two parties or more could have immediate feedback at the time of their interactions. However, CMD becomes a one-way message transmission when two or more communicators do not interact simultaneously. For instance, communicator A participates in asynchronous communication when he posts his comments on FB that is read later by communicator B.

Turning to the question of what computer-mediated language is, Herring (2001) proposes that online discourses contain non-standard features when they are compared with written language and they have the spoken discourse features of informality. Based on the study of the CMD of English native users, it is found that the minimal mistakes occurring in the text are not derived from the lack of knowledge of standard language, but from the limited time on delivering virtual speeches (Herring 1998). As to motivations for the new language use, the desire to save time, to express one's self in spoken language and to show linguistic creativity through language play are key reasons why people use language differently from the norm.

After briefly reviewing the nature of CMD and how it affects language use, the essential points are listed here. Formerly, the findings drawn from CMD research are from the Inner Circle countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom; hence, we could not draw generalizations on how language is used and changed in different contexts where English is not the first language (Jenkins 2007). Latterly, taking English from a lingua franca perspective, CMD research is embedded in the Inner-Circle view on considering different linguistic features,

which are excluded from the English native norms as ‘incorrect’, ‘non-standard’ or ‘impoverished’. Nonetheless, due to the fact that we are exposed to numerous kinds of English which have been affected by globalization, the Internet, the spread of media, and population mobility, new linguistic expressions or varieties should be respected with equal stances (Kachru & E. Smith 2009).

Another significant aspect of Computer-Mediated Discourse analysis is it blurs the actual identities of the language users. Starting with demographical information such as age, gender, social race, and geographical locations, CMD that are produced without face-to-face experiences lend difficulties to participants to verify the true identities of online discourse communicators. In this case, it is possible for people to veil their true identities such as social class, ethnicity or educational level and present virtual ones. Also, they could easily opt for a different gender to roleplay a cross-gender online person. One important point to note here is the identities in CMD could be dissimilar from the true identities. Given the barriers in discovering the personal identity in online communication, observation of online language use can be one means to assume actual identities of users; for example, communicators might code switch between English and ethnic lexis to provide a glimpse of their ethnicity despite their attempts to mask them.

Thai Cyber Language

Anurit et al. (2011) investigate how ‘cyber’ language has been used by Thai participants. The terms ‘Netspeak’ or cyber

language use is employed in the study to look into linguistic features of online documents and communication. The study has shown that Thai Netspeak is different from Standard Thai; for instance, it has distinctive spelling, graphology, connotations, rude words, jargons, emotional expressions and graphics to express feeling. Additionally, the findings have revealed that the use of English has become a part of cyber Thai; for example, they entail the use of loanwords, namely ‘sure’, and English abbreviations such as ‘thks’ (thanks). In terms of the identity revelation of online communication users, the majority of participants agree that the identities in online communication could be falsified when users are able to create a second identity to disguise who they actually are. To recapitulate, the findings in this research correspond with Herring’s (2001) study on CMD in two aspects: first, Computer-Mediated Discourses are observed as a deviation from linguistic standards, and second, CMD allows language users to create a new linguistic identity which does not necessarily correspond to users’ true identities.

Linguistic Identity

Based on Kachruvian’s three circles of English systems, the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle, Thailand is categorized as an expanding circle country where the status of English is ‘English as a Foreign Language’ (EFL). In the Thai context, English has limited roles in people’s lives and Thais are not expected to be able to speak English fluently. (Kachru & Nelson 2006). Also, English is regarded as a contact language of

communication among people who do not share a first language; in this sense, English in Thailand is theoretically termed ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF).

ELF is crucially relevant to the study of linguistic identity as it involves English users’ language attitudes towards native and non-native English varieties. The ELF theory emphasizes the right of non-native English users to adopt their own identity in expressing themselves in new English varieties which could best describe their personal and ethnic identity. In other words, ELF takes a socio-cultural perspective on understanding different identity expressions of English users around the globe (Jenkins 2004). Despite ELF’s celebration of linguistic differences, both native English speakers and non-native English speakers reveal in Jenkins (2007)’s language attitude research that native English is still the most preferable type of English to acquire in both writing and speech; the findings here have demonstrated the participants’ perceptual preference of English as a native language (ENL) to English as a lingua franca (ELF). On stressing the argument, Bourdieu (1977) lends a strong point that second language (L2) speakers could experience negative results by being negatively evaluated on their non-native English accent and their social identity.

In a relevant issue, according to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), the selection of language use could be a strong and sensitive issue in the multilingual community because it influentially involves power negotiation and interlocutors’ views of their own and others’ identities; nonetheless, English plays

a less important role in monolingual countries than it does in bilingual and multilingual societies (Kachru & Nelson 2006).

Limitations

There are some limitations in this research. First, the participants group may not be able to represent the whole group of Facebook users in Thailand as all of the participants are the researcher's Facebook friends. It is possible that they are participants with no significant difference in their educational and occupational backgrounds. As this study functions as a starting point for CMD research in Thai social networking communities, the more diverse backgrounds of the participants should be taken into account in order to better generalize the findings. Second, findings on linguistic identity need a larger number of interviewees to substantiate the generalizations on the linguistic identity issue.

Methodology

Research questions

The research questions in the study were 1) How is Computer-Mediated Discourse used by participants in setting Facebook statuses? and 2) How are identities of participants expressed through the language choice on Facebook statuses?

Research tools

Two major research tools in this study were the collection of Facebook statuses and interviews. The researcher continually collected Facebook statuses that appeared in the researcher's

personal new feeds for one month before the data was further investigated via textual analysis approach. Subsequently, five interviews were conducted to study participants' language attitude towards English native speaker (NS) values and Non-native speaker values (NNS) to explore their linguistic identities. The questions of the interviews concerned their choice of language use in Facebook status posts, their perspectives towards Standard English, and their identity they wished projected when posting Facebook statuses.

Participants

Participants whose Facebook statuses were collected are Thai Facebook users who constantly update their Facebook statuses. The sample size was 900 Facebook users who are friends with the researcher. Regarding participants' demographic information, they are mixed-gender with the age range of 18-35 years and have various occupations, including university students, master and doctoral degree students studying in Thailand and overseas, teachers in Thai universities, and employees of national and multinational companies in Thailand. For the examination of the linguistic identity, two female and three male Facebook account holders were interviewed. The selection criteria of participants were their active participation in Facebook, active updates of their online statuses and the variety of participants' background of those who have been educated abroad in English-speaking countries and who have never experienced education overseas.

Data collection

The researcher collected the data for this study in two phases. In phase one, Facebook status, the virtual space to notify others what Facebook account users are thinking, doing, feeling or wishing to express, was collected as it contained the actual language use of Facebook users and was available for the examination of linguistic identity. Facebook statuses posted by the participants were collected for a month in February 2013 and the researcher continually gathered the data that appeared on the researchers' news feed without filtering out any status to avoid subjectivity. After the data gathering period, 340 Facebook statuses were finally collected for further investigation.

In phase two, five participants whose statuses were previously collected were semi-structured interviewed in Thai to examine their linguistic identities based on the theory of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD). The interviews were conducted for 15 minutes to ask participants about their language attitude towards native and non-native English and their language preference in CMD. The interview questions involved: 1) Do you normally set the FB status in Thai or English?; 2) When do you use Thai or English FB status?; 3) Why do you use Thai or English status?; 4) Do you care about language and grammar correctness when posting your status in English?; 5) What do you want to express when posting Thai/English status?; and 6) Do you wish to be like a native English writer? Why?

Findings and Discussions

The section reported findings from the collection of participants' Facebook statuses in two aspects. In the first part, the data was examined in terms of the language use of Thai participants. Next, personal and linguistic identities of participants in CMD context were analyzed in the second part.

Language use

In terms of the language use, it was found that there were three types of language usage on Facebook statuses by Thai participants: English status, code-mixed status and Thai status. Out of 340 statuses, Thai was the most frequently opted language for Facebook statuses (187 times, 55%) and English was the language with the second highest occurrence (103 times, 30%). Lastly, participants rarely chose to form code-mixed statuses as only 50, or 15%, were found.

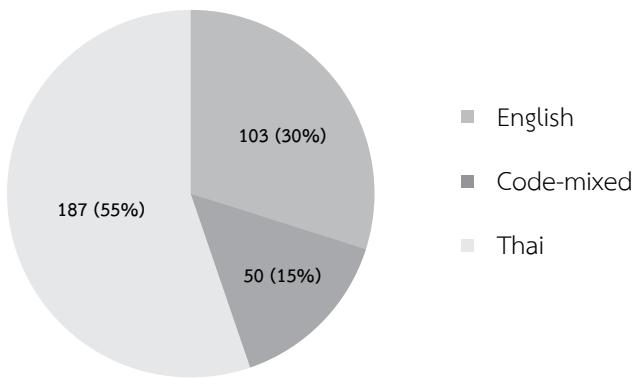


Figure 1: Language use in Facebook status

For the use of Thai, it was found that the Thai used in creating online statuses by participants were deviations from Thai language norms. Initially, it was found that the majority of data were not complete sentences; they normally started with verbs and lacked subjects. The incomplete sentence construction was understandable in the CMD context when users produced their statuses on behalf of themselves; hence, the subject is omitted. For example, รักเหมือนเดิมแต่ต้องจำใจจร /rak meun deum tae tong jam jai jorn/ (love you always), and นอนดีกว่าครับ /horn dee khwa klub/ (Better go to bed). Next, participants used English loanwords translated into Thai; for instance, สุดเลิฟ /sood love/ (My love), สcone /sa kone/ (scone), ลิเวอร์พูล /liverpu/ (Liverpool), and เขด /hed/ (Head). Thirdly, Thai words and phrases were intentionally wrongly spelled; they signify the status of the users as the trendy young generation. Examples of misspelled words or phrases were เมื่อวานโดนหากว่าเป็นป้า วันเนี้ไม่ป้าล่ะน้า ('เป็น' /pen/ should be 'เป็น' /pen/ and 'วันเนี้' /wan nae/ should be 'วันนี้' /wan nee/). Fourthly, there was extensive use of colloquial language in the forms of discourse particles, ellipses, slang and repetitions. As Facebook is an informal online forum for friends to communicate, a large number of vernacular words and phrases that were produced by the young and working generations were observed in written statuses. These words were frequently used in both offline and online casual interactions. Some illustrations are provided here.

A. Discourse particles: ค่ะ /ka/ (showing Thai politeness) / ละ /la/ – เลย /leoy/ – อ่ะ /ah/ (discourse particles to end the

sentence) / ເຕອະ /ter/ (an invitation). B. Ellipses: ປະປ້າ /papa/ (ປ່າປ້າ) (a father), ດີກ່າ /dee ga/ (ດີກ່ວ່າ) (better), ເຟັບ /face/ (ເຟັບຸ້ນຸ້ນ) (Facebook), ບ່ອງຕົງ /bong tong/ (ບອກຕຽງໆ) (saying directly). C. Vowel repetitions: ຄ້າກາກາກາກາ /kaaaaaaaa/ (a discourse particle showing politeness)/ ເຈິ້ນຕາກາກາ /Jeb taaaaaaa/ (eyes hurt). D. Slang: ໜ້ຳຍື່ອໂສກ /neuy hok/ (very tired)/ ຈ່ວງຈຸນເບຍຍຍຍຍ /huang jung beoi/ (ຈ່ວງຈັງເລີຍ) (very sleepy).

In terms of English statuses, there were different types of English sentences occurring in Facebook statuses: grammatically correct sentence structures and English quotes were observed. The lexis used was sophisticated and elaborate; moreover, English quotes were frequently noticed. Interestingly, some users tended to avoid using subjects while the rest of the sentence was grammatically correct and full stops were frequently ignored. For example:

*It's always rad when low, popular culture and
darn stupid shits are academically philosophized and
deconstructed. I love that stuffs.*

*“Language is the armoury of the human mind, and
at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons
of its future conquests.” (Samuel Taylor)*

*Puzzled by the fact that the Song of Ice and Fire
serious just keep getting better and better. What a page-
turner! Strictly insomnia-inflicting.*

Next, participants set English statuses which were different from Standard English norms. On the one hand, new features observed in English use could be considered a fragmentation of the language when English users did not follow the Standard English norm (Kachru & Nelson 2006). On the other hand, there were linguistic innovations evolving with local dialects and contexts. The use of English which deviated from native English norms was evidenced. Firstly, there were vocabulary misspellings such as ‘Congragtuation’ ‘problemless’ (without problem), ‘sooo’, ‘good niteeee’ and ‘musiccccc’. There were five causes of spelling mistakes. Firstly, there was an inadequate language competency of participants as well as a desire to express their emotions through alphabetically repeated lexicons. Secondly, sentences with grammatical errors were frequently observed in English statuses by Thai users; for instance, ‘Anyone understand the words below’ (Subject and verb agreement), ‘In financial world always expect the unexpected and be prepared’ (a lack of subject). Thirdly, sentences created from the direct translation from Thai to English were observed such as ‘There is no place to eat’ (ไม่มีที่กินข้าว). Lastly, the use of colloquial language through the lack of subjects and contractions was noticed, namely ‘going to be sick’, ‘Wanna’ (Want to), ‘Otw’ (On the way) and ‘xoxo’ (Hugs and Kisses).

Besides the use of Thai and English statuses as their choice of Computer-Mediated Discourse, code-mixing, the dynamic discourse where two languages hybridize, was also practiced by Thai participants. It was noticed that a small proportion of Thai

participants used both Thai and English loanwords in setting their statuses. Samples of English loanwords occurring in Thai statuses were ‘present’, ‘taxi’, ‘report’, ‘training’, ‘QA’ (Question and answer), ‘Auto-warehouse’, ‘Hi-tech’, and ‘Check-in’. The major reason supporting the use of loanwords was that it was more convenient and easier for users to type these words in English rather than in Thai (Anurit et al. 2011); as these words are frequently seen in public media and advertising, people are familiar with English forms. Furthermore, participants practiced code-switching especially with well-known brand names such as ‘AIS/True’ (communication networks), ‘Honda’, ‘Toyota’, ‘iStudio’, ‘wifi’ and ‘furby’ which were delivered in English while the rest of the messages were in Thai such as ‘มันมาแล้ว...รถในฝัน Honda Dream’ /mun ma leaw...rod nai fun Honda dream/ (Here my dream car comes Honda Dream). It was observed that code-switching was frequently used for brand names in English as it was the most straightforward means of communication that was shared by Thai message receivers. Also, names of famous figures in pop culture were normally written in English such as Sweet Mullet (Thai band) and Shinee and Cr. SNSD_FamilyRP (Korean pop band). Next, Thai discourse particles were transliterated into English to retain Thai cuteness and politeness, namely ‘naja’, ‘jajaa’ and ‘ka’. Lastly, transliteration language or ‘pasakaraoke’ in which participants used the English alphabet to form Thai statuses was observed. Seargeant and Tagg (2011) used the terms ‘pasakaraoke’ or ‘karaoke language’ to describe the phonetic rendering of Thai words through the English alphabet.

The samples of pasakaraoke found on Facebook statuses were ‘ma tae ruengg!’ (so much trouble), ‘Ruk teesudd’ (so in love). It was found in Seargeant’s study that Thai people tend to use a high frequency of pasakaraoke in Instant Messaging (IM) discourse. However, the use of this language type was minimally found in the Facebook setting. One explanation here is that the communication in IM prioritizes the intention to get messages across in an urgent manner; using transliterate language was thus faster and more comfortable than typing with the Thai alphabet given the fewer number of English letters. On the contrary, Facebook statuses were the online venues for users to express themselves. Consequently, Thai Facebook users opted for Thai language rather than karaoke language as the former better assisted account users on expressing themselves and their emotion.

Personal and Linguistic identity

The findings in this part involved two aspects of identity expressions on Facebook which were personal identity and linguistic identity. The theory of Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD) was taken into consideration to point out the personal identity of Thai Facebook participants. Later, the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) theory was put forward for the analysis of participants’ online linguistic identity.

Regarding the personal identity, the data showed the close relevance between participants’ personal backgrounds such as their educational levels and professions and their language choice of Facebook statuses. Beginning with the educational

level aspect, it was found that the higher the educational degree the participants obtained, the higher the tendency they would use English and code-mixed statuses; students who graduated with a lower-level degree, namely college and vocational school degrees, inclined to set statuses in Thai rather than English; on the contrary, participants who had a higher educational background (master degree, PhD), had graduated from international universities, and had experienced studying overseas were inclined to use code-mixed and English statuses.

In occupational terms, employees who worked at Thai-owned companies tended to select Thai statuses while those whose works were related to English such as English teachers, translators, employees in multicultural companies or students who were studying abroad tend to have their statuses in English. However, it must be noted that we could not draw a clear-cut classification of the relevance between participants' careers and language choice because online users could hide or modify their true identities in online communication. It was reflected in the findings that a small of number of participants who are competent English users only had their statuses in Thai; accordingly, it must not be presumed that people who used Thai to represent themselves are not English competent users. The results on the issue of personal identity in CMD reinforced Herring's (2001) theory that the CMD user was a powerful authority in setting his/her virtual identity that did not need to match with the true identity; additionally, the online personal identity was fluid and able to be shifted based on the users'

intention.

Regarding the linguistic identity of the Facebook participants collected from five interviewees, the analysis was based on the ELF theory to examine language attitudes of participants towards native and non-native English. It revealed that the majority of interviewees attached themselves to the Inner Circle norms or Standard English. They generally perceived Standard English as ‘correct’ while sentences which were grammatically different were presumed ‘wrong’. When asked whether they were concerned about grammatically correct sentences when posting statuses, four out of five interviewees admitted that they had to make certain that English sentences were correct before posting them; otherwise, they would choose Thai as the language choice as posting grammatically wrong sentences would make them look unprofessional and unsophisticated. In terms of their views on linguistic identities, one interviewee accepted that she wished to communicate like a native English speaker because speaking like a native is a plus. Nonetheless, she still saw her personal self as a Thai while the other interviewee who is a British-born Thai personally perceived himself as both Thai and English as he could use both languages in different occasions, yet he always had his statuses grammatically precise when he posted them in English. Most of the interviewees who posted their statuses in English confessed that they tended to follow the norm of Standard English because only grammatically correct English statuses were acceptable on FB. This group of participants viewed themselves as fair English users and they would use English

statuses if what they wished to communicate was short whereas they would use Thai when what they wished to express was long and more emotionally expressive. In this case, the decision to create Thai statuses was rooted in the lack of confidence in their English communication skills. Besides the confidence issue of using English on FB status, one interviewee always created his statuses in Thai because he strongly considered himself as a Thai despite his 15 years of education background in the USA. In this scenario, he rejected the use of English as it could not successfully fulfill the expression of his identity.

To recapitulate on the issue of linguistic identity, the majority of Thai interviewees preferred Standard English to Non-Standard English in delivering online discourses in English; those who were not confident in their English language competence would opt for Thai FB status rather than English; and the use of Thai FB status post was observed in the research for the user who believed Thai was the better language choice to express his identity as a Thai citizen.

Recommendations and implications

This section offers an overview of research possibilities involving Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD). Also, implications of the research are stated to address how the research can create an impact on CMD research and society.

This study involved the investigation of language on Facebook, yet other computer-mediated discourse analyses are worthwhile to be used to study other online social networking

networks, namely Line, Instagram and Twitter in which language is the major means of communications. It is hoped that the researcher could gain better insight on language use when different sources were compared and contrasted. Another important topic of research is intercultural CMD or the study of online discourse across cultures in which people do not share similar attitudes, beliefs and values. A better understanding on this topic could bring about successful communication in the online context. For research implications, the findings can be used by language and cultural studies researchers, and sociolinguistics and language instructors to observe language change in CMD over time. The capability to observe the language trend would enable them to be more open to CMD which is new and refreshing, be adaptive in communicating and teaching via CMD, and understand the cultural impacts that have created linguistic change in the Thai context.

Conclusions

The paper investigated the language use on Facebook statuses which is a type of Computer-Mediated Discourse, and the personal identity and the linguistic identity of Thai Facebook members who are actively joining this virtual community and contributing online discourse in the form of Facebook statuses. The key discussions were concluded in the following section.

Regarding the status of English in Thailand, the language functioned as English as a foreign language (EFL) and also English as a lingua franca (ELF) and the role of English was judged by

audiences in the online communication and language users' communicative intentions. Supposedly, both communicating parties were Thais, the English language acted as English as a foreign language (EFL) when it was not the prioritized language choice, and people could achieve successful communications by using Thai. It was shown that English played a less significant role than Thai because the findings revealed that the majority of Facebook users overwhelmingly used Thai in their virtual interactions rather than English. On supporting Paolillo (1996), who preceded that English is not as influential as local languages in certain parts of the world such as South Asia because computer technology can fully support CMD in the local native language, Thai was more prevalently used than English as technology facilitated the Thai language system through the availability of Thai computer fonts. In another aspect, the status of English in Thai CMD could also be English as a lingua franca (ELF) when two communicating parties did not share the same native language but had the intention to get messages across; English functioned as a contact language between Thai Facebook users and their foreign friends in this case.

In terms of the language use of Thai Facebook users, the findings supported Herring (2001) and Sargeant and Tagg (2011) that linguistic differentiation out of the standard norms, namely misspellings, grammatically incorrect sentences, transliterate lexis, karaoke language and code-mixed language, was observed. Considering these Thai linguistic variations, it was still debatable in the academic area whether language users should follow the

norms or exercise linguistic innovations in their own right. Also, the language differentiation did not exist only in English, the emergent Thai variations were also noticed in the CMD context via Thai misspelled words, the lack of subject in the sentence construction, English loanwords transliterated into Thai and the use of spoken discourse particles. Interestingly, the language was changed to be more vernacular, flexible, informal and colloquial in the CMD context.

Last but not least, regarding the identity issue in Computer-Mediated Discourse, it was found that CMD could help the online communicator assume the personal identities of his/her interlocutors. In fact, their identities could be falsified in CMD as people did not face-to-face interact in online communication. Furthermore, there was the relatedness between CMD users and their educational and occupational backgrounds; those with a higher educational degree or work in leading or multicultural companies tended to choose English and code-mixing in contributing Facebook statuses whereas those with a college or vocational degree and work in Thai owned companies were inclined to opt for Thai as the main language option. In terms of linguistic identity, given the fact that there were new English linguistic variations occurring in CMD by Thai users, participants aligned with the native English linguistic attitude and tried to create correct written forms following the native norms, yet for those who were not sure about the language correctness, they played safe by choosing Thai over English language statuses. It was summarized that English as a native language (ENL) was

considered by the majority of the participants as the idealized linguistic identity that Thais should have.



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