The Code-Mixing of Japanese, English and Thai in Line Chat

Premvadee Na Nakornpanom

Abstract—Code-mixing in spontaneous speech has been widely discussed, but not in virtual situations; especially in context of the third language learning students. Thus, this study is an attempt to explore the linguistic characteristics of the mixing of Japanese, English and Thai in a mobile Line chat room by students with their background of English as L2, Japanese as L3 and Thai as mother tongue. The result found that insertion of Thai content words is a very common linguistic phenomenon embedded with the other two languages in the sentences. As chatting is to be 'relational' or 'interactional', it affected the style of lexical choices to be speech-like, more personal and emotionally-related. A personal pronoun in Japanese is often mixed into the sentences. The Japanese sentence-final question particle か was added to the end of the sentence based on Thai grammar rules. Some unique characteristics were created while chatting.

Keywords—Code-mixing, Japanese, English, Thai, Line chat.

I. INTRODUCTION

The internet has developed into a social environment for people to 'meet and talk' every day and has become a part of one’s lifestyle [1]. In Thailand, more than 25 million of the country’s 66 million people are using the internet and more than 18 million are social media users. In the social-networking scene today, the mobile messaging chat app LINE dominates Thailand with more than 15 million users from the country [2].

Line is a proprietary application for instant communications on electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablet computers and personal computers. Line was designed and launched in Japan in 2011 and has rapidly attracted social media users in Japan and worldwide. A direct pop-out message box for Japan and worldwide. A direct pop-out message box for Japan in 2011 and has rapidly attracted social media users in Japan and worldwide. A direct pop-out message box for

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are to investigate the linguistic characteristics of sentences mixed with Japanese, English and Thai during texting in a Line chat room by Thai students as well as the occurrences of code-mixing under the headings of insertion and translation.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data extracted from smart phone’s Line chat room of Japanese class students feel sleepy during study

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time?), and *qua think นี่หู picture ดี. (What do you think about this picture?). The research intends to focus on the two topics in Line chat for this study since the majority of the student’s chats were related to their study and general topic were individual privacy was not violated. Moreover, the language features in their Line chat met the objectives of the study. The total number of replies were 66 but only 28 with trilingual mixing were extracted. The length of each data varies from a few words to a sentence. However, there was a limitation in collecting data due to the topics of the chats were often changed and the trilingual mixing in Line chat was rarely found when topics were changed.

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A. The Distinction between Code Switching and Code Mixing

Code switching and code mixing refer to the same phenomena in “which the speaker stops using language ‘A’ and employs language ‘B’” [7]. Code switching is viewed as a phenomenon that occurs in a continuum where both Code switching and code mixing are distinct based on the place where the alternation occurs. If code alternation occurs at or above clause level, it is considered code switching, but if it occurs below clause level then it is considered code mixing [8]. Some scholars considered code-switching as the shift of two languages within a discourse, sentence or constituent. By this means, an inter-sentential switching occurs when alteration is made beyond a single sentence [9].

In linguistics, code-switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. Speakers practice code-switching when they are each fluent in both languages. Thus, code-switching is the use of more than one linguistic variety in a manner consistent with the syntax and phonology of each variety.

Code-mixing is defined as the embedding of various linguistic units (affixes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses and sentences) from the two distinct grammatical systems within the same sentence and speech event [10]. This is viewed in terms of the appropriate use of more than one language in a single sentence to convey the speaker’s intent. In short, code-mixing involves various levels of language without changing the topic of conversation. It is thus intra-sentential switching.

The usage of the terms code-switching and code-mixing varies. Some scholars use either term to denote the same practice, while others apply code-mixing to denote the formal linguistic properties of language-contact phenomena, and code-switching to denote the actual, spoken usages by multilingual persons. Some researchers may employ the term “code-mixing” to cover these two alternations [11]. In the stage of mixing, the function word; especially nouns are the largest proportion of the usage [12], [13].

B. Characteristic of Code-Mixing in Line Chat

Most of the words being mixing during line chats are single items, particularly nouns. This finding is consistent with the previous studies of [14] and [15] stating that nouns are the largest proportion of the switches. However, pronouns in Japanese are also most of the words being mixed. Content words like verbs, adjectives/adverbs, especially in Thai are often inserted as an integral part of a sentence.

The Japanese personal pronoun *watashi “I” is preferred to mix with Thai and English while chatting. In contrast, they rarely used English or Thai personal pronouns in their chats.

It is interesting to find that the Japanese sentence-final question particle like *ka is used with a WH question words in English to form a question.

However, a large proportion of the words being mixed are Thai words as shown in Table I. This can be considered that it was an easy way for the chatters to express their intent in real-time communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Thai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>33.75</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>31.48</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>49.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs/Adjectives</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>33.34</td>
<td>44.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question words/question particles</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Linguistic Function

Lexical Insertion

Since the language in the Line chat is produced under the constraint of real-time interaction, functioning to be ‘relational’ or ‘interactional’, rather than to transmit facts or information, these factors affect the style of lexical choices [16]. It is to be speech-like, more personal and emotion-related, while an individual style shift might be involved. Content and function words are the largest proportion of the mixing, follows by question particles (Japanese).

Content Word Insertion

The Thai content words embedded with the Japanese and English are commonly occurred with a variety of innovation. The code-mixing is occurred with Thai grammar rules as in the examples.

Because ตื่น (Because I enjoy watching TV series too much.)

Because ตื่น (Because I am beautiful)

Because it is midnight and I am reading a novel.

ตื่น very much
(I also feel so sleepy.)

私はちとだら in cookie run おじ（I have been sending my heart in a cookie run game to my chat’s friends.)

Celebr するを とした (Whatever the Celebrity does, it is acceptable.)

I'm so cute!!!
(Pretty. So cute)

It's a scary picture.

Go-ahead if you think it is good.

Beautiful in 世界の (It is beautiful in your private world.)

Function Word Insertion

Function words as pronouns are often used. Japanese pronoun usage dominated English and Thai words. The Japanese pronoun  watashi (I) is widely used as the subject of a sentence. In Japanese, it is possible to form a complete sentence with a single verb because subjects and objects can be omitted if the context makes them clear.  watashi can be omitted, and it will sound more natural to a Japanese person. In a conversation,  watashi is rarely used. This is the same as in Thai words that would be considered essential in an English sentence are frequently dropped in Thai. Both the subject and/or the object of a sentence are likely to be dropped if they can be worked out from the context. This has the effect of making many Japanese and Thai sentences somewhat ambiguous in their meaning, and so it's commonly necessary to rely on the context to understand the intended meaning.  watashi very much, (I also feel so sleepy.)

Because it is midnight and I am reading a novel.

Because とと思う (Because I enjoy watching TV series too much.)

Question Particle Insertion

The Japanese sentence-final question particle は も does not always have a question meaning, it is often integrated in the sentences, mainly following the Japanese syntax rules. The word order of a sentence does not change by adding the particle は も to the end of the sentence. We also found WH question words integrated into sentences which ended with the Japanese particle は も. The sentences are based on English grammar rules.

OMG!!! ですか。（Oh my God!!! What kind of animal is it?）

 Uh...what is it? (Who is this aunt?)

The Thai sentence-final question particle ระยะ a conversational word was also added in the sentences, following the Thai syntactic rules. It’s functioning is as yes-no question particles.

Bell さん powder ร่อน า (Miss Bell, did you fall into the bucket of powder?)

Slang and Dialect Insertion

Slang is normally favored among teenagers that signal their membership to a youth group or mark others as outsiders [17]. In the Line chat, this fashionable speaking was represented in Thai mixed with Japanese and English.

OMG!!! ですか。（Oh my God! What kind of animal is it?)

Oh! Awesome.

Word Translation

Word mixing by means of translation has been found in this Line chat. The chatters translated the word おいしい which means “delicious” in Japanese to Thai ร่อ า; a Thai Southern dialect meaning “very delicious, great, awesome and often used for expressing bad impressions depending on context”. The chatter tried to explain an idea of what was said before by putting the translated words in the brackets.

Oh! Awesome.

Use of Graphic Sticker Representations

Since graphic sticker representations are available for Line chat, they were often used to substitute 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.
linguistic competence between the languages. Code-mixing thus was regarded as a communicative strategy to make communication as effective as possible.

V. CONCLUSION

The Line chat now has been playing a more significant role in our communication world and spontaneously has come to emergence as a new text language in our society. The messages are short, instant, colorful, real speech and representing identity of the chat group. The chatters introduced some specialized linguistic features which reflected the nature of the chat room as mentioned by [18].

By means of code mixing, content words as nouns are used in the largest proportion as [19], and [20] mentioned. It is interesting to find that the function words as a subject pronoun; especially in Japanese, is a large integral part of the mixed sentences; which was not mentioned in the previous study. Furthermore, some special characteristics of linguistics were created; the chatters can choose appropriate words from three languages: Japanese, English and Thai, which are different in grammar rules to mix in a single sentence to convey the speaker’s feelings and intent. In the term of code-mixing, it involves various levels of language that the chatters have to consider before integrating the words into a sentence. This is the new language phenomenon created by bilingual or multilingual people.

VI. DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of language use in Line chat is worth investigating for a better understanding of a new variety of language mixing influenced by social networking. People can chat on a variety of topics at any moment with real-time text-based communication. Thus speed in response time is preferred to transmitting facts or information. This brought some new features of linguistics: embedding various linguistic units in terms of appropriate use of more than one language in a single sentence to convey the speaker’s intent as [21] mentioned. As more popularity of real-time text-based communications arises, the more phenomenon of language use is created. It helps us to notice that language changes rapidly.

It is interesting to find that the chatters preferred inserting the Japanese personal pronoun Watashi to omitting in embedded Japanese, English and Thai in a sentence. It makes the sentence clear not ambiguous. This can explain why Thai or foreign speakers of Japanese often say Watashi after every sentence. That is because of what they learn in their elementary textbooks. It is correct grammatical Japanese, but the Japanese themselves do not speak that way because saying Watashi too much makes the speaker sound self-important. This should be pointed out for the learners of the Japanese language.

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