

## CHAPTER 5

### Motivations for the Use of the In-group Language

The data collected from the blind communities in Bangkok has suggested six phonological patterns deviated from normal language as stated in detail in chapter 3. I have discovered that these phonological patterns are applied alternatively in conjunction with words of Normal Thai, i.e., the language of the Thai blind are constructed from the combination of Normal Thai words and the words of their own invention. The data has suggested further that the Thai blind do not use their in-group language to communicate among themselves in normal circumstances unless they feel the secret language is useful or necessary to attract their partner's attention in a conversation. Why they need to modify Thai words with the newly - invented language patterns in their conversations is a subject of discussion in this chapter.

As discussed in chapter 1, communication by using nonverbal language requires vision which is an essential channel in sending and receiving messages. It is questionable how the blind use other means to substitute this type of communication. As discussed earlier, visually impaired people face a serious problem of such communications since they cannot use their vision which is a major channel in sending and receiving extra linguistic messages. To fulfill the basic need in communication, they have to invent their in-group language, and the simplest way to make it easy to communicate among their in-group members is to construct the language patterns by modifying syllables of Thai words using special phonological patterns (see chapter 3). This special language not only helps them communicate their secret messages among their in-group members but is also used to substitute for some words, i.e., taboos in their utterances and as a mechanism to strengthen the relationship among their peer groups.

There are three motivations for using the secret language to converse among blind members in the blind communities. The first reason which comes to the interviewee's mind during the interview is that the language is constructed primarily for concealing secrets from outsiders. In addition, the deviant patterns are sometimes used as euphemisms to substitute taboo words in a sentence. Also, the Thai blind use the language in their daily living to create solidarity among their group members, regardless of what the relationship between the speaker and addressee is. Those motivations are the core of our interest in this chapter.

## **5.1 The language for hiding secrets of the Thai blind**

Sometimes we really have a strong desire to share information with friends without being recognized by other people. We may apply various types of communications mainly nonverbal communications such as gestures, writing techniques, etc. to avoid being identified by other out-group members. Some secret communication techniques require vision in order that the secret will not be passed to the unwelcome person or party. It is questionable if the Thai blind use other techniques to substitute their communication losses, and how visual impairment influences their secret topic in the conversations. We will discuss these points in the following sections.

### **5.1.1 The language for substituting certain communicative channels of the Thai blind**

In the sighted world, we depend very much on our vision to perceive what is going on. Vision is also an essential tool in human communication. If we inspect the events in which communication takes place, it is obvious that we use much of our effort in sending and receiving messages in the form of body language. Much body movement is involuntary, but we also make use of voluntary gestures, recognized actions performed in order to express a meaning. Before communicating secret messages, we may apply our visual and/or auditory perception to inspect the event to reassure the security and use a movement or position of the hand, arm, body, head, or face to express idea, opinion or even emotion.

Conversation between individuals is often accompanied by gestures. Poyatos (1983: 248-9) emphasizes an important role of a head-nod in connection with speech. "It usually acts as a 'reinforcer', in that when a piece of A's behaviour is followed by a head-nod from B, A tends to increase the frequency of that behaviour." Besides, head-nods determine 'floor-apportionment' in a conversation, i.e., these actions can be performed by a participant to signal to a speaker to continue with his or her speech. Rapid head-nods can, however, be an indication of a speaker's wish to continue his speech.

Facial expression is also used in daily living to combine with speech. A listener reacts to what is being said by small movements of the eyebrows and mouth to show his puzzlement, surprise, disagreement, pleasure, etc. On the other hand, a speaker sends

some extra messages along with his utterance through appropriate facial expression to modify what is being said, indicating whether it is supposed to be funny, serious, important, etc. (Vine, 1971).

However, nonverbal language can take over verbal communication in case verbal communication is impossible or fail to work. Some group of people use gestures to replace verbal communication. The deaf, for example, use sign language to communicate among themselves. They are proficient of using body language to share information among themselves, due to the limitation of using auditory channel in receiving messages. Also, as Poyatos (1983) says, in some settings where speech is impossible such as in broadcasting, on racecourses, in noisy factories, and between under-water swimmers, people have developed sign languages to communicate among themselves without speaking.

We also use gestures to share information between individuals, especially when the message should be kept secret for special purposes. For example, people may use eye blinking to inform their friends not to disclose some secret messages to other participants in a conversation or eye contact to show the feeling of some kinds such as happiness, dissatisfaction, etc. to their intimates. This type of communication is very useful to satisfy the need of our communication and sometimes applied effectively in maintaining harmonious personal and social relationship.

People who have visual problems have very much difficulty in applying nonverbal language in their communication. For instance, when they feel unhappy in some social settings, they would like to share their unpleasant feelings with the other in-group members without permitting others, especially sighted people who are not acquainted to their lifestyle, to perceive these feelings for some reasons. To use some types of communication, especially those requiring visual perception seems almost impossible among them.

Vision is a key factor in communicating nonverbal language. In order for the sender to convey a message by gestures, he or she has to inspect the event to reassure that the message is comprehensible to the recipient, which is usually performed through the visual channel. Furthermore, the recipient must be alert in encountering the communicative event through the visual perception. Since visually impaired people are unable to apply their visual channel, they usually avoid communicating among themselves, and probably with other people, via nonverbal language.

It is obvious that in some social setting, using nonverbal language can create some problems. In many circumstances such as rituals or public conferences where politeness is

a major concern, applying some nonverbal actions can corrupt social customs or traditions. We can see that some gestures are considered inappropriate to be performed in public. It seems impolite in Thai culture to extend the middle finger upward to communicate in public since this action is considered an expression of contempt or indignation in an obscene way. In addition, certain actions seem unacceptable in most cultures. Of course, most cultures consider using a finger to point at an unacquainted person in public an improper manner.

In such settings, various means of conveying secret messages is utilized to maintain good interpersonal relation and proper social practices. Some people choose to convey their secret information by expressing their thought in a written form and pass the message to their recipient. This method can ensure the security of not being recognized by other people. Also, this communicative channel enable the users to express their thought as much as they find it necessary.

This means of communication, however, is not frequently brought into practice among the Thai blind, because of some limitations. The first difficulty results from the braille writing process. As Mr. Yai Pongsasanongkul, a former president of Thailand Association of the Blind, explains, "most people do not frequently carry braille writing utensils with them. Sometimes we cannot borrow those utensils from friends if we forget to bring them with us." He also adds: "Writing braille needs a lot of resources--suitable paper together with a slate (a plate used to engrave braille on) and a stylus (utensil used for punching braille dots on the paper)--, and if we lack any of these utensils, we cannot write in braille."

In addition, passing on a braille message cannot be done easily among the blind. As Mr. Witaya Sripanjaporn, a former chairman of the First Middle Regional office, Thailand Association of the Blind, explains, "It is very difficult for us as blind people to write in braille and pass on the message to our friends without being recognized by sighted people. If our friends do not give us a sound signal, we will not know where they are."

Although many people apply writing technique to conceal their secrets, the technique still has several disadvantages over the effective communication. First, writing is a one-way communication; i.e., a sender and a recipient of a message do not have a face-to-face interaction. Imagine if the sender of a message presents a secret message which is, at a certain extent, unclear to the recipient for any reason such as unclear hand-writing, missing some important words or phrases, etc., he cannot find out what the message sender really intends to communicate immediately. Besides, to send secret messages by writing can be risky if recipients do not destroy the message. The written message can be useful as a legal

or personal evidence in case of the conflict between the two sides.

People occasionally find it very necessary to convey their secret messages in the most proficient way without being recognized by others, and so often two-way communication is necessary to ensure that both the sender and the recipient have a mutual understanding.

To convey the secret message by writing may result in an unsuccessful communication. Some people, therefore, choose to take their partner or party to leave for a site which is convenient and secure for their secret conversation. By this means, they can prevent a third person or party to perceive their secret information, and it is unlikely that the other side miss the message since they have a chance to talk it over.

For blind people, it is inconvenient to leave for finding a secure place to discuss their secret affair because of the difficulty resulting from visual disability. It is intriguing to observe how they compensate by applying other means to make their secret communication work out. Of course, they use various techniques to overcome the obstacle. Above all, they create their own language by modifying syllables in their conversation with special sound patterns in words of specific syntactic roles which have been discussed in detail in the previous chapters.

The study has shown a clear evidence whether the conversational participants have the ability to perceive things around by vision is a key factor in determining the selection of communicative means in the exchange of secret messages. It comes to general agreement among the Thai blind who use the special language to communicate among themselves that the language is invented primarily for concealing secrets from outsiders. The interview conducted in the five communities as discussed earlier shows the absolute value which points toward the similar trend of the Thai blind to come to common terms in selecting the language patterns to converse among themselves. Of all the 80 subjects, everyone gives the identical explanation of the foremost motivation of using the language as a mechanism to respond to their need of communicating secret messages from outsiders although they have different views in distinguishing their out-group members.

### **5.1.2 The language for concealing secrets from outsiders**

The blind interviewees point out that the secret language is not applicable with every person they keep in touch. Certain people are included in their conversations while others are viewed as outsiders or, in other words, do not have a chance to take part in their

conversations. The study, however, suggests no clear boundary in defining the term "outsider" among the 80 blind interviewees.

The interviews of the blind sampled groups show that there are two perspectives in regarding certain people as the in-group members of the Thai blind. The first group (25%) considers only sighted people as the out-group members who have few chances to understand their deviant speech patterns. Among those people, 50% explain that they think that it is ridiculous to use the language patterns to hide the secrets from the blind since this language is widely recognized among those who have visual problems. On the contrary, the other group (75%) considers everyone who are incapable of using this special language as an outsider, regardless of whether he or she is sighted or blind.

The following table will show the differences between the two perspectives in excluding certain people as the in-group members of the Thai blind.

Table 5.1 Percentage of different perspectives in defining the word "outsider" of the sampled subjects.

Outsiders	Numbers of interviewees	Percentage
Sighted people only	20	25
People who do not know the language	60	75

The result of the study shows that there is a tremendous difference of the numbers of the subjects among the two perspectives. However, it is obvious that most subjects consider those who do not know their special language, whether they are blind or sighted, as the out-group members. It is still a question what are the criteria to measure the competence of the speaker who can speak this special language.

The subjects regarding those who do not know the secret language patterns as their out-group members explains that the idea that the special language is created to hide secrets from sighted people, as usually discussed among blind people, is not completely reliable. As some interviewees such as Kornkanoak Kanthawong, a massager at the Caulfield Foundation, point out, some blind people do not know how to converse in the blind in-group language, especially those who have just integrated into the blind society. It is likely that they be of focal interest to the blind who have just learned about their lives. In such a

case, they would be considered as strangers who are left behind in the secret conversation.

Conversely, it is remarkable that some sighted people can communicate very well via the secret language patterns, especially those who have a close connection with blind people. As Mr. Metta Ketpet, the current chairman of the First Regional Office, Thailand Association of the Blind, remarks, "some sighted people are relatives or friends of visually impaired people. Since those people have to adjust themselves to the lifestyle of people with visual disability, they automatically adopt the language and, interestingly, some of them apply the language as their social practice in some social environments." As Mr. Ketpet explains further, some sighted children of blind parents use the language to talk among themselves when they meet in some occasions.

According to Mr. Umpol Ton, a former teacher of the Bangkok School for the blind, some sighted staff members of the blind organizations also learn to use the language patterns on duty. Since they work with blind people, they have to be in harmony with their blind clients, and the means of social integration to the blind society is to learn the in-group language and use it as a key to strengthen the relationship between both sides. In addition, some staff members, especially the caretaker of the blind clients in some institutes, realize the advantage over the acquisition of the secret language. They can learn their clients' personal characters such as their behaviors and attitudes through the secret conversations taking place among their clients. By means of getting into the secret world through the special language, their blind clients can be under their close supervision. As Mr. Umpol Ton emphasizes, some staff members are so well-integrated into the blind society that blind people are willing to let them join the secret conversations. We can see, as he emphasizes, that those sighted people who know the language together with their favorable personality can be accepted as the blind in-group members.

Some subjects also suggest that they may regard the participants in the conversation as the in-group members while other people who do not participate in the conversation are just outsiders. Miss Wipana Janwatanadechakul, a junior student at Suandusit College, explains that she usually assumes in the beginning that other people staying around do not know the language, and when she feels uneasy to let the public understand her speech, she will speak out her mind with her blind friends in the in-group language. She adds: "unfortunately, sometimes I realize or doubt that some outsiders are listening to what we are talking and try to understand the secret message, so we shift the topic of the conversation

to talk about something else."

So far, we have discussed the perspectives of the blind subjects in defining the terms "outsider". We have also underlined the point in the earlier section that the blind usually use this language to converse among themselves, especially when they do not want the out-group members to understand their conversations. The interview study which I have conducted in the blind communities suggests further that the blind may use the language to talk about any in-group issue which should not be exposed to public, or they may focus their topic on any out-group issue which call to their attention. We can see that the special language plays a vital role in shaping the lives of the Thai blind. It would be interesting to learn how the language influences their lifestyle in general.

When the interviewees are asked to describe the utilities of the secret language, they give various explanations which can be analyzed to fall into two main categories. They use the language to talk about the subjects concerning (1) the speakers and/or hearers (2) the third-person, especially those who are present at the event and do not understand their conversation. Most importantly, as they explain, those messages must be kept secret from the out-group members.

### **5.1.3 The language for discussing matters between blind interlocutors**

The answers given by the blind at the interviews have clearly suggested that the in-group language is vital for them to survive in Thai society. Many interviewees point out that the language is very handy for them to discuss about personal matters with their blind conversational partners. The interviewees have suggested four main advantages of using the language to converse matters concerning speakers and hearers:

#### **5.1.3.1 The language for preventing the blind from being endangered**

Most blind people have their own business and earn their living by selling lottery tickets, while some blind people work in some business enterprises as telephone operators. The interviews show that those people usually apply the secret language patterns among themselves as a tool to prevent them from being in troubles while they are on duty.

As Mr. Plian Sukcharern says: "I am a lottery ticket vendor, and I have lots of friends who share the same profession. Sometimes when we meet each other on duty, we want to



know what is going on with our friends. We want to know how many tickets our friends can sell. It is very dangerous if we talk with our friends in normal Thai because we do not know who is listening or overhearing our conversation. Someone who knows what is going on with the money in our pocket may come and rob us. It is safe if we use our in-group language to talk about that matter."

Mr. Boonyao Yuson also clarifies this point by giving the situation when he works with his blind friends in the office. He says: "I work as a telephone operator at Asia Bank, and my blind friend is also recruited in the same position. One morning, I was told by my sighted counterpart that the manager and the head of our department were staying in our room before I came in to work. When I entered the room, I insisted on my friend to behave himself, using our in-group language." As Mr. Chulerd Ketban, a lottery ticket vendor, points out, "I think this language is very good. It can be a natural mechanism to protect blind people from being in troubles. Without the language, the blind would have more difficulties living in the society."

#### **5.1.3.2 The language for asking about the useful information perceived only by vision**

As I have mentioned, vision is one of the key instruments to provide us some useful information so that we can adjust ourselves to social settings efficiently and effectively. For people who lack vision, they have to depend on other people to provide them with the information which are perceived by vision. With adequate information, they can stay with the rest of Thai society without any difficulty. However, some blind people may feel uneasy to let some outsiders know that they want to have some information which can be perceived only through vision at hand like other sighted people. How can they get such information?

In daily living it seems nonsensical to pose some questions on anything apparently seen through our vision. In the group of sighted people, as Mr. Orachun Tonlerdsataporn, a former committee member of Thailand Association of the Blind, says, it would be ridiculous to ask whether there are a lot of people present at the meeting while we are actually sitting in the room where we stay. He also adds that we would not ask about the color of our clothes we dress to work if our vision function well.

We know that some information which can get through visual perception is very useful to adjust ourselves to social living. For example, if we dressed in a fanciful color and

were invited to the funeral arranged according to Thai tradition without being informed before-hand, we would make our decision whether we could borrow suitable clothes from someone so as to go to the funeral, or we could go back home to change our clothes.

It seems embarrassing for some blind people to ask about something that seems absurd to sighted people, especially when they are present among sighted outsiders. To refrain from the embarrassment, if they want to know anything around them which are apparently perceived by vision, they may use the language as a vehicle to lead them to those pieces of information. They may ask the people who are their in-group members and whose vision can function well enough to give them such information by using the secret language in order that they can adjust themselves to be harmonized with the other parts of Thai society. For example, if they are present among the out-group members and are invited to the funeral, they may use the in-group language to ask their friend about the color of their clothes so that they can dress properly to the ceremony. As Mr. Tonlerdsataporn reiterates the point, "the sighted people may laugh at us, blind people, if they hear us ask something ridiculous. So when we really want to know something, we will use the blind language to ask our friends."

### 5.1.3.3 The language for expressing the speaker's feeling or attitudes

The Thai blind also use the language to express their attitude or feeling toward some events in which they are taking part. In some occasions, to let the third person or party know our feeling may hurt their feeling. For example, when we are invited to dinner, we usually do not let the host know our dissatisfaction with the food that we have. However, as blind people have their in-group language, they may complain about the food they have just had with their friends in this secret pattern so as to avoid hurting the host's feeling.

The concrete example below can illustrate the event I have observed while being out with my friend to eat at a small restaurant beside a street on March 10, 1999.

(1) A: /lék khâ:wñiaw mâj hěn làʔcón læ:j wâ: ʔô:/  
 /lék khâ:wñiaw mâj hěn rón læ:j wâ: ʔô:/  
 NAME sticky rice not see hot PAR PAR INT  
 "Lek! the sticky rice is not hot at all."

B: /háj tæ: man kô: lenjun càt nô:/  
 /háj tæ: man kô: jen càt nô:/  
 INT but It However Cool PAR PAR  
 "Well! it is very cool."  
 A: /læʔchùʔ diʔ lék/  
 /chæʔ diʔ lék/  
 wet PAR name  
 "Lek! it is wet, you know."

In this dialog, A and B are blind. In the conversation, the two blind men are complaining with each other in their in-group language about the sticky rice which was not good. This kind of complaint always happens among blind people when they feel unhappy in the unpleasant environment.

#### 5.1.3.4 The language for asking for assistance about personal matters among in-group members

The blind speakers may apply the language to express their desires. They sometimes do not want the out-group members to understand their secret conversation as it may concern their personal affair, or sometimes it may threaten their face. That can be illustrated by the conversation I overheard while participating in the important ceremony held by Thailand Association of the Blind.

On November 28, 1999, I had an opportunity to take part in the white cane procession to celebrate the King's six cycle birthday. In this special event, all blind participants were arranged to walk with their cane from Ladprao Central Department Store to Lumpini Park, which was approximately 11 kilometers in distance. In order for the blind participants to walk safely to the destination, the association organized the volunteer groups of students, mostly ladies, from Suandusit College and Thammasat University to help them during the trip. While walking half way through, I heard someone complain:

(2) /pà: jâ: thò: thàʔcũŋ jaŋ wá:

/pùat	ĵiaw	caŋ	thǔŋ	jaŋ	wá:
feel like	urinate	PAR	reach	not yet	PAR

jàʔcīaw	càʔ	làʔcǎjʔ	lǎé:w	ná:/
ĵiaw	càʔ	lǎj	lǎé:w	ná:/
urine	will	come out	AUX	PAR

"I want to urinate. I can't stand it."

Apparently, the blind speaker used the language to express his desire with his partially sighted friend since he did not want the volunteers who were strangers to him to get involved in his personal affair. He knew that his friend could guide him to where he wanted to go without any assistance from those outsiders.

Another example of the situation which needs privacy is demonstrated by Mr. Boonyao Yuson. He explains that sometimes when he is broke and has to spend money, he asks his friend to lend him money. To keep it secret, he discusses the matter with his friends through the use of the in-group language. Mr. Boonyao says: "I do not want the sighted people to know my secret although they are my friends or the friends of my friend." He adds: "The reason that I do not want them to know is that I do not want to lose face among those sighted people."

#### **5.1.4 The language to discuss matters concerning the third person**

So far, we have discussed the secret messages related to the speakers and hearers. Nonetheless, the study also reveals that this language is not used for discussing the topics concerning only the first and second person in the conversation, but the speaker usually focus his attention on the third person who may or may not show up in the event.

As Miss Wipana Janwatanadechakul explains, she and her friends sometimes use the language to gossip about the third person, present or absent at the event, and they don't want other people around to know what they are gossiping. In the following sections, we will explore the utility of the language used for talking about the third-person.

##### **5.1.4.1 The language for finding information about the third-person**

In one part of the interviews of the blind people, I focus on the third person or party. As I assume that blind people may use their in-group language to talk about the third person or party with some purposes, I ask them to indicate their goals in applying the language with the third person or party. Many of them claim that the language is often used as a vehicle to lead them to the answer of the curiosity they have toward the out-group members.

Mr. Pirapat Boondankwian, a student at Suandusit College, points out that it is, to a certain extent, preferable if he could know about the personality of the people whom he will be in touch with so that he could prepare himself to deal with those people. He says: "Let say if I get interested in a sighted girl whom I have just met, I may ask my friend to tell me about her personality such as her look, dress, hairstyle, and so forth." We can see that the mentioned personality must be judged through visual perception. He continues: "I think although we cannot see, we are lucky enough have our own language that we can use for asking our friends who can see to tell us to what we want to know about the third person."

The following conversation which I overheard while participating in the conference setup by Thailand Association of the Blind in Khonkhaen province on May 20, 1999 can demonstrate the actual usage of the language for this purpose:

- (3) A: /khàʔcon mûakî:nî: sàʔcǔaj rǔ: plà:w/  
 /khon mûakî:nî: sǔaj rǔ: plà:w/  
 person a moment ago beautiful or not  
 "Is the girl whom I have just met beautiful?"
- B: /khon mûakî:nî: ʔǎ: nâ:ràʔcák dia/  
 /khon mûakî:nî: ʔǎ: nâ:rák sǐʔ/  
 person a moment ago PAR lovely PAR  
 "A girl whom we have just met is lovely."

In this dialog, A is totally blind. He wants to know the appearance of a lady volunteer with whom he has just had a conversation. He turns to B, a partially sighted lady, to ask for the information. Because of the secret language, they can discuss the matter without being perceived by the outsider who may or may not be present at the event.

#### 5.1.4.2 The language for gossiping about the outsiders

As I have mentioned earlier, the Thai blind use the language to express their feeling toward something around them. Not only do they focus their conversational topics on unusual settings or events, but they also express their feeling toward certain third persons or parties in a positive or negative way. The third person who is gossiped about may be present or absent at the event.

According to Mr. Rattikorn Kamsukpam, blind people occasionally talk about the out-group members who are present among them, either positively or negatively, or make fun of those people through the secret communication.

One of the personal qualities which attract blind people most is the voice of an individual. The collected data reveals that blind people usually chat among themselves about the voice of an outsider whom they meet. The expression /sǎ: da:/ (derived from /sǎŋ di:/ in Normal Thai) or /sǎŋ thâ:/ (from the expression /sǎŋ thê:/ in Normal Thai) is used to describe the preferable voice from the speaker's auditory perception. However, there is no data to show how the blind describe the unfavorable voice of the third person.

Nonetheless, the blind may comment on an undesirable act of an outsider. An example as such is demonstrated by Mr. Rattikorn Kamsukpam. He explains: "Suppose that there is someone not knowing the language are sitting near us. He does something improper. He breaks wind. We will use the language to comment on his bad habit among our blind friends."

The following sentence which was overheard and recorded at the School for the Blind on October 9, 1998 will exemplify this language usage:

- (4) /khraj tà: wá: hùaj thò:/  
 /khraj tòt wá: jǎe: caŋ/  
 who break wind PAR PAR  
 "Who breaks wind! That's terrible."

In this situation, two blind boys were having an idle talk with a lady guest (an

outsider). Unfortunately, one of the boys sensed an unpleasant smell and suspected that the third person would have performed an undesirable action. To avoid being perceived by the outsider, he turned to apply the secret sound patterns to comment on the undesirable action.

In many circumstances, blind people gossip about a third person or party who does not show up at the event. It is very dangerous to disclose information of the absent third person to other out-group members because those people might have a good connection with the person who is being gossiped; furthermore, this action can destroy a good reputation of the speaker. To minimize the risk of this action, blind people usually apply their in-group language with a small talk related to the third person who is out of distance. In order for that gossip to work out perfectly, they have to find some method to reassure that unwelcome people staying around do not know the language.

The conversation which I overheard at the Bangkok School for the Blind on November 15, 1999 is an example of the language used for this purpose. In this conversation, the two students in the secondary level were gossiping the third person in their in-group language.

(5) A: /ʔɔ:jɔ̃: dan khǎm na:/  
 /ʔɔ:jɔ̃: tàʔlòk caŋ/  
 somebody sound funny par  
 "Miss somebody (unrevealed to public) is very funny."

B: /khon ní: læèʔ phàʔja:ja:m tò:tâ:n ʔa:ŋ wâ:  
 /khon ní: læèʔ phàʔja:ja:m tò:tâ:n ʔa:ŋ wâ:  
 person this PAR try resist say that

phûak sǐtkàw chô:p sǎ:n hâj dèk la:má:/  
 phûak sǐtkàw chô:p sǎ:n hâj dèk la:mók/  
 group alumni like teach to children dirty-minded

"It is this person who tries to resist the alumni to enter the school by giving the reason that the alumni will teach the children to be obscene."

In this dialog, the two boys are intended to blame the third person for her unpleasant

thinking. The first child begins the talk by using the word /ʔɔːjɔː/ to refer to the third person, and expresses his feeling that he thinks the third person is funny. The second boy agrees with the idea and adds some information that he does not agree with the idea of the third person. He says that the third person does not want the alumni to come to the school just because she is afraid that the alumni will spoil innocent children.

We can see that the language is a useful tool to create the understanding among the in-group members without being recognized by the outsiders. Through the application of the secret sound patterns with certain Normal Thai words in their utterances, the Thai blind can express their feeling towards a third person or party in their own groups. Believe it or not, the language can help preserve the face of the blind from being threatened by the third person. We will focus our topic of discussion on this language utility in the following section.

#### 5.1.4.3 The language for preserving the speaker's face from being threatened by outsiders

The in-group language can be a tool to preserve the speaker's face from being threatened by an outsider. It is usual that we tend to forget something, and that can make us lose face. For instance, we might have met someone several months ago and have already forgotten his name. Unfortunately, we might run over him if we still could not recall his name, our face might be broken for he would think that we do not care about him. In case of a blind person, his friend could help him to preserve his face through the use of the secret language. This can be exemplified by the speech event I have observed on August 2, 1999, when I went to Thailand Association of the blind to collect additional data for my research. I heard the following conversation:

- (6) A: /tham wannī: lú: phàʔca: lajkhɔŋ ma: dúaj wá:/  
 /tham wannī: lú: pha: khraj ma: dúaj wá:/  
 NAME today you bring who come together PAR  
 "Thum! Who do you take with you today?"  
 B: /kô: fàʔca: ʔúa jaŋŋaj lâw ʔúa càʔ phàʔca:  
 /kô: fæ:n ʔúa jaŋŋaj lâw ʔúa càʔ pha:



that's girlfriend me how PAR me will take

khraj ma: dâ:j lâw lú: lamcɔŋ ʔàj lajɔŋ

khraj ma: dâ:j lâw lú: cam ʔàj cajmâj

who come can PAR you remember TITLE NAME

mâj dâ:j rǔ:/

mâj dâ:j rǔ:/

not can PAR

"Don't you remember my girlfriend? How can I take another girl with me?

Don't you remember jai?"

C: /sàʔwàtdi: khâʔ ʔǔ: cam raw dâ:j mǎj/

/sàʔwàtdi: khâʔ ʔǔ: cam raw dâ:j mǎj/

hello PAR NAME remember me can PAR

"Hello! Ou. Do you still remember me?"

A: /dâ:j sǐʔ sàʔwàtdi: kháp caj raw mâj dâ:j

/dâ:j sǐʔ sàʔwàtdi: kháp caj raw mâj dâ:j

yes PAR hello PAR NAME we not can

phóp kan na:n læ:j sàʔba:jdi: rǔ: kháp/

phóp kan na:n læ:j sàʔba:jdi: rǔ: kháp/

meet together long time PAR well PAR PAR

"Yes, certainly. Hello! Jai. We have not seen each other quite long. How is everything going with you?"

In this dialog, C is an outsider who does not know the blind language. We can infer

from the beginning of the dialog that A seems to forget C's name, so A asks B to tell who C is. With the assistance from B through the secret language, A can save his face from being damaged by C's action.

What we have discussed throughout this section explicitly confirm the fact the secret language is vital for the Thai blind. By means of using Normal Thai words with the phonological patterns of their own invention, they can conceal their secret from the outsiders. Not only do they apply the language to discuss what is going on within their group, but they also make the outsiders or the third person unaware of being the topic of their conversation. It is because of their language that makes them easily adjust themselves to different social settings and be in harmony with the rest of Thai society. Besides being used for concealing secret, the language is also used for other purposes. In the later sections, we will focus more on other utilities of the language.

## **5.2 Special patterns as euphemisms**

In the previous section, we have considered various aspects of the use of the in-group language as a tool to conceal secret messages among blind people. The utility of the language functions in a social setting where out-group members are present and the blind speakers need freedom of expression among their peer group without the intrusion from those unfamiliar people. The language, however, not only play a vital role as a tool to conceal secret of the blind or in isolating them from the other sectors of society, it also covers another particular function between blind speakers and hearers. So as to avoid certain Thai words which can be irritating to the hearers, the blind speakers often use their inventive phonological patterns to substitute certain Thai words which are not usually expressed freely in public.

Like people in other parts of society, blind people have a desire to talk about certain taboo objects and actions existing in the world although they cannot perceive those objects or actions through vision. Other remaining sensory perceptions such as auditory and tactile senses still allow them to experience the world in reality and convey their experiences among themselves in the form of speech sounds of different patterns which is a characteristic feature of the group. These sound patterns enable them to talk about what they have learned and how they think about the things they learn without corrupting social norms of expression in Thai society.

As I have mentioned in 5.1, the blind often use their in-group phonological patterns to make their speech unfamiliar to other out-group members in order to express ideas freely without being perceived by outsiders. Thanks to new technology which enables us to talk on the phone with one another through the conference phone service, I have discovered a new linguistic phenomenon of blind people when I was asked, one day, to participate in the conversation of four blind friends over the telephone. Even in the conversation with a security of not being recognized by outsiders like a chat over the telephone, my blind friends still apply the special phonological patterns with certain words in their utterances. As Mr. Boonyao Yuson reiterates the point, "We will use some words in the language, especially dirty words although there are no outsiders around us." It is worth noting that the application of the in-group sound patterns with certain Thai words can function as euphemisms in the conversation.

In terms of phonological forms of euphemisms, as discussed in 2.2.3, there are two types of euphemism in language: the euphemisms which are sound correspondent with the taboo words and the euphemism which have oblique referents or do not possess a similar sound property with the taboo words (see section 2.2.3). The collected data has clearly illustrated that the blind still share these two criteria of euphemism formulation in their language.

The fact that there are two types of euphemism formulations used in the blind communities can neatly conform to the criteria which have just been mentioned. The first type is derived from the modification of the syllables of Thai taboo words, which enables the invented euphemisms to share some phonological attributes with the source taboo words, and the second is derived from the deviation of those of Thai euphemisms, which makes the new euphemisms completely different from the source taboo words. Some word substitution techniques are more complicated than others.

There are various linguistic devices for avoiding the use of taboo words in Thai. Charncharoen (1989) studied euphemisms in Thai, based on eleven Thai taboo words as discussed in chapter 2. She described the characteristics of euphemistic terms in Thai, analyzed their denotative and connotative meanings, and studied Thai values and worldview reflected in these words. In her work, she pointed out that there are four linguistic devices to substitute for tabooed words: (1) distortions of a taboo word by abbreviation or phonetic corruption, (2) replacements of foreign words, (3) understatements and (4) metaphors. I will apply her framework of analysis and use her study result as a basis to describe the

euphemistic terms found in the special language of the blind.

### 5.2.1 Euphemisms by phonetic corruptions of thai taboo terms

I have collected data from conversations taking place in various situations in the blind communities. For a long period of arduous data collection in the blind communities, I have come up with a list of euphemistic terms used among blind people. After the analytical process, I have found out very intriguing results which inspire a further exploration of the language use. The study result clearly points toward the trend of blind people in applying a few simple sound patterns with the taboo terms to reduce the offensiveness of the words.

The data has suggested that the euphemistic terms which the blind use mostly in their speech have a sound correspondence with the term of the taboo objects or acts. In other words, they derive from phonological corruptions of Thai taboo terms. Instead of putting the direct taboo terms into daily usage, the blind reduce the offensiveness of those terms through the application of their in-group phonological patterns with Thai taboo terms and come up with new euphemistic terms in their own usage. In addition, the blind also apply their in-group phonological patterns with Thai euphemistic terms and use in their conversations as the in-group euphemisms. This linguistic phenomenon may be described as "double euphemisms".

In terms of the phonological structures, some invented euphemisms are more phonologically complicated than others, depending on the familiarity of the language users with the taboo objects or acts. The data has proved that the more the language users familiarize with the taboo objects or acts, the less complicated the phonological patterns seem to be.

#### 5.2.1.1 Frequently used euphemisms among the Thai blind

Before we explore this type of euphemisms, let us look at the actual speech of the example that has been stated in the previous section. As stated earlier, on July 18, 1999, I received a phone call from a group of three blind friends who gathered together on the party line. Here is a part of the dialog I heard on the phone during the chat.

(7) A: /tòkloŋ lú: cà: khon thǐ: chû: na: tít máj ʔâw/

/tòkloŋ lú: cǐ:p khon thī: chû: na: tít máj ʔâw/  
 so you lure person who name NAME can PAR PAR  
 "Well! Are you successful in making Na be your girlfriend?"

B: /bà: suaj thò: kháw mi: fæ:n læé:w na:/  
 /bà: suaj thò: kháw mi: fæ:n læé:w là?/  
 well! bad luck PAR she have boyfriend AUX PAR  
 "That's so bad. She has got her boyfriend already."

C: /pen ʔàʔraj lâw pen khæ: fa: mâj dâ:j pen phǎ nǐ:wà:/  
 /pen ʔàʔraj lâw pen khæ: fæ:n mâj dâ:j pen phǔa nǐ:wà:  
 be what PAR be only boyfriend not AUX be husband PAR  
 "Why? He is just a boyfriend, not a husband."

B: /jà: wâ: læ:j pen phǎ: ma: kan kô: jà: dâ:j/  
 /jà: wâ: læ:j pen phǔa mia kan kô: jà: dâ:j/  
 don't say PAR be husband wife together but divorce can  
 "Don't say so. Even though they are married, they can get divorced."

I first suspected that the four words in the conversation might have derived from certain Thai taboo words. To test my hypothesis, I read the conversation to the interviewees, and asked them to state the derivation of those words. Table 5.2 will illustrate the translation results of the words highlighted in the dialog above.

Table 5.2 The translation of four euphemistic terms in the conversation in (7).

Forms in Special Language	Actual Thai Words	Meanings
fa:	fæ:n	boyfriend/girlfriend
cà:	cǐ:p	to lure or entice
ma:	mia	wife
phǎ:	phǔa	husband

Table 5.2 illustrates that this sound pattern is applied with the Thai taboo words and is used as euphemism in the conversation. In stead of saying such words as /pǔa/ (husband) or /mia/ (wife), which are generally considered improper words among well-educated people, the blind apply their in-group phonological pattern with those words to make it more proper to use in the conversation. In daily usage, the blind always substitute the special words /phǎ:/ and /ma:/ for the words /phǔa/ "husband" and /mia/ "wife" sequentially.

We can also see that the data in table 5.1 are good examples of the regular sound pattern which usually occur with the taboo words in the speech of the Thai blind. Let us take the word /mia/ as an example of our analysis. The word consisting of one syllable is concatenation of the sound /m/ as onset and /ia/ as rhyme of the word. The replacement of a rhyme of the word with the sound /a:/ will generate the new word /ma:/ used to refer to "wife" in the blind in-group language. (Look at 3.5 for further explanation of the sound pattern.) The collected data suggests further that this linguistic phenomenon occurs not only with the illustrated word but also with the taboo words frequently used in the blind communities.

The data of the actual speech obviously represents the cognition of blind people in categorizing certain tabooed objects or acts. The categories of tabooed objects or acts may or may not conform to the Thai thinking in general, but the difference of the categorization partly result from their loss of vision. We will discuss each category of tabooed objects or acts in the cognition of blind people and explain the reasons behind the categorization of those objects or acts.

### **A. Money-related lexical Items**

One of the most distinctive categories of words avoided among the blind concerns any lexical items pertaining to money. The collected data confirms the fact that money is a topic which is usually avoided in the conversations of blind people. How wealthy each individual becomes is a personal concern and, hence, is not usually revealed to other people. However, in some situations, it is hard to avoid mentioning those money-related lexemes since the avoidance of the matter can cause problems especially when ones do not have enough money to respond to their necessities or demands. Even on the phone where the

message is safeguarded by natural protection, those lexemes are mentioned in the forms of the in-group language patterns to make the speech more gentle to talk with the addressee. The following phone conversation will illustrates the point:

- (8) /c̥iap khru: paj kòt ɲa: ma: jaŋ mâj hěn dâ:j  
 /c̥iap khru: paj kòt ɲən ma: jaŋ mâj hěn dâ:j  
 NAME Teacher Go Press Money come Yet not see receive  
 læ:j wâ: ʔo:n ɲa: hâj khru: ru̯: jaŋ hǎ:/  
 læ:j nâʔ ʔo:n ɲən hâj khru: ru̯: jaŋ câʔ/  
 PAR PAR transfer Money To Teacher Or Not yet PAR

"Jiap! I (teacher) came to withdraw the money from the ATM but I couldn't withdraw it. Have you transferred the money into my account yet?"

The word /ɲa:/ derived from /ɲən/ (= money), is used in the dialog as a euphemism since the speaker does not want to mention the direct term as suggested earlier.

As stated in chapter 1, the interviewees are asked in one part of the conversation to answer some questionnaires. In order to test my hypothesis concerning whether money is taboo among blind speakers, I have constructed a situation in which the interviewees stay with their friends without the intrusion from the outsiders, and ask them to select only one of the following utterances to converse with their friends.

(9) Which one of the following sentences will you speak with your blind friend when you want to borrow his or her money?

A. /lú: mi: ɲa: jâ:sà: máj hǎ: jw:m nòj dǐʔ/

You have money twenty PAR PAR borrow some PAR

B. /lú: mi: ɲən jī:sǐp máj hǎ: jw:m nòj dǐʔ/

You have money twenty PAR PAR borrow some PAR

"Do you have twenty baht, don't you? Could I borrow it?"

The following figure will show the result of the questionnaire.

Table 5.3 Numbers of subjects who choose to use the language in each item in (9).

Items	Numbers of subjects	Percentage
9A	72	90
9B	4	5
Either 9A or 9B	4	5

Out of 80 interviewees, 72 people (90%) answers that they will use the utterance (9)A with their friends while four people (5%) will use (9)B and four people (5%) will use either (9)A or (9)B. It can be inferred from these figures that most blind people avoid using some money-related terms in natural conversation among themselves. The data in various conversations also indicates that the blind usually apply the sound pattern to other money-related lexemes as euphemisms. Here are the money-related lexemes collected from various conversations of blind speakers.

Table 5.4 Money-related Lexemes as Euphemisms

Euphemisms	Taboo Words	meanings
ŋa:	ŋən	money
bæŋsà:	bæŋsìp	ten baht bill
bæŋjâ:sà:	bæŋjî:sìp	twenty baht bbill
bæŋhâ:sà:	bæŋhâ:sìp	fifty baht bill
bæŋrá:	bæŋró:j	one hundred baht bill
bæŋhâ:lá:	bæŋhâ:ró:j	five hundred baht bill
ŋa:da:	ŋəndwan	salary

## B. Eye-sight Terms



It is surprising that talking about eyesight is taboo in the blind communities. In uttering some terms relating to blindness or sightedness among blind interlocutors, blind people usually use some indirect terms to describe the state of their eye functions, as illustrated in table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Eyesight Euphemisms

Euphemisms	Tabooed Words	Meanings
ta: da:	ta: di:	sighted
ta: bà:	ta: b`ò:t	blind

For blind people, they usually refer to the state of their visual impairment, including partial sightedness, as /ta:bà:/ while referring to the state of the eyesight of others whose eyes can function well as /ta:da:/. There is a reason behind the application of the two euphemistic terms.

Many blind people have a negative attitude about their visual impairment and try not to mention it. They think that blindness is the source of difficulties in their lives. During the period of data collection, I have heard many blind people say that they are prejudiced by Thai society just because their eyes cannot function as well as others. Some people say they would not be in such dilemmas if they were sighted. To avoid talking about blindness is, therefore, an alternative which can help them relieve their depression. If they cannot avoid talking about their visual impairment, some indirect terms must be used instead of uttering the direct term /ta:b`ò:t/.

According to Mr. Chalong Sujarittum, the blind usually avoid uttering the word /ta:b`ò:t/ since the blind, as he explains, do not want to depress themselves by their impairment. As he goes on, the blind cannot avoid talking about blindness, but in order to reduce the offensiveness of saying the direct term, they turn to use their in-group euphemistic term /ta:bà:/ to describe their visual impairment and /ta:da:/ to convey the state of eyesight in the other direction.

### C. Words showing special relations

Some words showing special relation are tabooed in Thai society. We rarely hear the word /mia/ in a daily conversation of well-educated people, but some words such as /phanràʔja:/, /fæ:n/ are mentioned, instead, to refer to the relationship one have towards the other. Interestingly enough, those taboo words are modified through the application of the in-group sound patterns to create the in-group euphemisms widely used among the blind interlocutors.

Let us come back to the data shown in (7). We can see that the euphemism /ma:/ is used to replaced the taboo word /mia/ in the dialog. There are still some euphemistic terms possess the same attributes as we have discussed. Here is a list of euphemisms showing special relations collected from various conversations of the Thai blind:

Table 5.6 Euphemisms showing special relation.

Euphemisms	Taboo Words	Meanings
fæ:n	fa:	girl friend/boy friend
ma:	mia	wife
phă:	phuʔa	husband

It is remarkable that the word /fa:/, equivalent to / fæ:n/ in Normal Thai, has more specific meanings than the normal Thai word itself. The word / fæ:n/ in Normal Thai may refer to "boyfriend or girlfriend" or it can be used in reference to "husband or wife". However, the word /fa:/, as pointed out by many blind interviewees, is used to refer solely to ""boyfriend or girlfriend" in the language of the Thai blind.

### D. Words related to immorality

Immorality can influence the language use as shown in the language use of the Thai blind. As Hertzler (1965: 275) states, "... certain words are made untouchable and are

banished from the vocabulary of well-brought-up persons, because they relate to persons or acts which are deemed "immoral" ..." My study has clearly shown that the fear of being blamed of immoral misconduct has greatly influenced on the language use of blind people.

Thai society regards the principles of Buddhism as a social practice, and usually considers people who do not obey the principles to be ill-behaved persons. The trend of the thinking as such may, however, changes bit by bit among Thai people. It is common that nowadays drinking and smoking can be done freely, and the topics as such are always mentioned in the conversations of Thai people. The study has suggested that those terms regarding immorality are still taboo in the blind communities.

The law of karma is a common belief in Buddhism, and it can be used as a reason to explain inequality of people in Thai society. This principle or belief can dramatically explain the state of individuals who are blind, and Thai people are firm in their belief of karma that causes distinctions between individuals. According to Buddhism, the defects of individual persons in some ways such as physical impairments results from the wrong doing in the past or their previous lives. Those people have to accept their karma, do something good and omit bad things so that they could have better next lives. If those people did not conform to the standard of morality defined in Thai society, they would be blamed more severely.

Blind people, who are believed to destine by their karma of wrong doing in the past, are highly expected by Thai society to be morally well-behaved. Doing or talking about something immoral is prohibited since that can result in negative attitudes of general public toward blind people. Therefore, certain Thai words concerning immorality have been diversified through the application of the special sound patterns, and are persistent in use among blind people, no matter whether or not they are observed by outsiders. In other words, those words are intrinsic parts of the language. The following table is a list of words related to this area of taboo.

Table 5.7 Euphemisms related to immorality.

Euphemisms	Taboo Words	Meanings
ka:ba:	kinbia	to drink beer
ka:lâ:	kinlâw	to drink alcohol

sa:ba:la:	sù:pbùʔrĩ:	to smoke a cigarette
thâ:ka:là:	thĩawkàʔrĩ:	to go to brothel

### E. Words related to excretory functions

There have been various research publications written on euphemisms for excretion in many languages. For example, Penalosa (1981: 57) illustrate the euphemisms in English related to this area. He says: '... today a woman may go to the "powder room," even when her face needs no powdering. Likewise, a person may go to the "bathroom" who doesn't need a bath or to the "restroom" when he isn't the least bit tired.' Obviously, people usually avoid talking about any terms pertaining to this area.

There are also various research papers discussing about Thai euphemisms concerning excretion (see Charncharoen 1989; chapter 2). Charncharoen (1989) has successfully collected a variety of euphemistic expressions and analyze their denotative and connotative meanings. Her euphemistic expressions also include some terms related to excretion such as feces and niacin. Charncharoen has discovered that certain euphemistic terms in this area originate from loan words (e.g. /ʔùtca:râʔ/ and /pàtsă:wáʔ/) or the use of understatements (e.g. /pha:jlom/ literally translated as "break wind").

The data I have collected from the blind communities has shown that the blind do not use Thai euphemistic terms to talk about excretion in their conversations. However in reference to concepts in this area, they usually modify the taboo terms with their in-group sound pattern and use the secret forms to converse among themselves. Here is a list of the euphemistic terms pertaining to excretion in the special language:

Table 5.8 Euphemisms related to excretion.

Categories	Euphemisms	Tabooed Words	Meanings
1. objects	jâ:	jĩ:aw	urine
	khâ:	khĩ:	feces
	tâ:	tòt	niacin

2. desires	pà: jâ:	pù:at jĩ:aw	to have a desire to urinate
	pà: khâ:	pùat khĩ:	to have a desire to expel feces
	pà: tà:	pùat tòt	to have a desire to expel niacin

## F. Swearwords

It comes to the general agreement that swear words are usually not mentioned in public. However, the data shows that the blind interlocutors still use those words to express feelings among their in-group members through the application of the in-group sound patterns. The following table will list all the swear words found in the collected data.

Table 5.9 Euphemisms for swear words.

Euphemisms	Taboo words	Meaning
já:mâ:	jétmæ:	to have sexual intercourse with ones mother
ka:ta:	kuanti:n	to invite kicking (annoying)

## G. Words having sexual connotation

Words related to sex are deemed to be tabooed in most cultures but this area is still of focal interest especially among teenagers. In the discussion in the area of sex, certain parts of body or certain acts are usually mentioned through the use of indirect expressions.

In the area of Thai euphemisms, both Leetrakul (1987) and Chancharoen (1989) discover that metaphorical expressions are mostly used with euphemistic terms in the area of sex. However, it appears in the opposite direction in the special language. The data clearly illustrate that the blind apply direct taboo expressions through the phonological transformational process which are newly-invented euphemisms to converse among

themselves.

The collected data has proved that sex is one of the most taboo areas in the blind communities. Comparing the data of euphemisms in the other categories, it is obvious that euphemistic terms related to this area are the most abundant of euphemisms of all categories. The following table is a list of euphemistic terms found in the special language:

Table 5.10 Euphemisms in the area of sex.

Categories	Euphemisms	Taboo Words	Meanings
1. objects	hǎ:	hǐ:	female sex organ
	kha:	khuaj	male sex organ
	mǎ:	mǒj	pubic hair
	na:	nom	breast
	thǎ:ja:	thǔŋja:ŋ	condom
2. creatures	phâ:cha:ʼ	phû:cha:j	man
	pha:jǎ:	phû:jǐŋ	woman
	tá:	tút	gay (male)
3. acts	ʔa:	ʔaw	to have a sexual intercourse
	já:	jét	to have a sexual intercourse
	lá:	lúaŋ	to touch some parts of body inside the clothes by fingers (used in the conversation of the male speakers).

	ŋâ:	ŋian	crave for sexual desire
4. states	pá:	pó:	indecently dressed
	lá:	lúk	erected (penis)
	la:má:	la:mók	dirty-minded

It should be noted that some taboo words in the area of sex have identical sounds with some Normal Thai words. For example, the word / hǎ:/ can be interpreted to refer to female sex organ in the secret language or "to look for" in Normal Thai. Believe or not, such ambiguities can lead to joke creations among the Thai blind. We will discuss this language use in detail in section 5.3.2.

#### 5.2.1.2 Occasionally used euphemisms among the Thai blind

As we have discussed in the previous section, there is a clear distinction of phonological patterns between commonly and rarely used euphemisms in the special language. Obviously, the phonological pattern applied with taboo words illustrated in the previous section is very simple. However, the collected data has proved that some euphemistic terms of certain areas which are rarely discussed among blind people are more phonologically complicated.

#### A. Death euphemisms

The data shows that **death** is not a common topic theme in the conversations of blind people. However, some collected data suggests that when the blind talk about death, they use the other complicated sound patterns to refer to it.

Imagine if we apply the sound pattern used with commonly found euphemism discussed earlier with the word /ta:j/ (meaning "death"), the word will become /ta:/ which is

unaccepted by the blind speakers. According to the interviewees, when they mention about death, they usually apply the other phonological patterns mentioned in chapter 3 with the word /ta:j/. Hence, the word forms /la:jtɯ:j/, /la:jtɔŋ/, /təʔca:j/, are all accepted by the blind speakers to refer to death.

## B. Fatal Disease Euphemisms

Another area which is rarely mentioned relates to some diseases which are also taboo in Thai society. According to Charncharoen (1989), Thai people usually avoid some words concerning fatal diseases, especially the word /máʔreŋ/ (cancer). Hence, Thai people usually substitute some euphemistic terms such as /núa:rá:j/ etc. for the word /máʔreŋ/. Nowadays the list of the taboo words in this area may extend to include the word /ʔè:t/ (AIDS) which has just come into existence in the body of mankind.

The collected data also suggests a similar trend that words concerning fatal diseases are also prohibited among blind speakers. However, instead of using some oblique reference terms in place of the taboo words, the Thai blind apply their in-group phonological patterns with the original tabooed words and use them as euphemisms. There are only two words found in the data: /máʔreŋ/ and /ʔè:t/. These two words have various forms as shown below:

Table 5.11 Euphemisms for fatal diseases.

Taboo Words	Euphemistic Terms	Meaning
1. máʔreŋ	məʔcáʔləʔceŋ	
	məʔləʔceŋ	
	ləʔmɔŋləʔceŋ	cancer
2. ʔè:t	lè:tʔɔŋ	
	lè:tʔù:t	



	ʔàʔcè:t	AIDS disease
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### 5.2.2 Euphemisms by phonetic corruptions of Thai euphemisms

We can see that phonetic corruptions play a crucial role in converting Thai taboo terms into euphemistic ones in the blind language, as discussed in the previous section. The study suggests further that the blind not only apply this linguistic device with Thai taboo words, but they also apply the device with Thai euphemisms and use them euphemistically in the special language. The data shows that the Thai blind modify syllables of certain Thai euphemistic terms, including loan words, understatements, and metaphors, and use in their natural conversations among themselves. However, the euphemisms of this category are not as profuse as the one of previous category but this linguistic phenomenon is still worth studying.

#### A. Euphemisms from loan words

Another linguistic phenomenon which occurs with the in-group language is that Thai blind modify the syllables of certain loan words and use them as euphemisms in their conversations. By this mean, they can express their thoughts regardless of whether or not it would be annoying to their interlocutors.

In the area of sex, the word "sex" itself is a loan word widely used among Thai speakers. To make it less irritating, the blind use the phonological rules in 3.5 to change the rhyme of the word. Instead of saying /sék/ (the Thai phonological form for the word "sex", they would say /śa:/; hence, we hardly hear the blind talking about /sék/ but about /śa:/ instead.

#### B. Euphemisms from understatements

There is only one word found in the collected data that could exemplify this type of euphemisms. This word appears at the conversation I have overheard from a blind man when he touched the bag of a blind lady lying on the table. Here is his speech:

- (9) Male: /kràʔpǎw khraj wá: tuŋ thò:/  
 /kràʔpǎw khraj wá: tuŋ caŋ/  
 Bag Who PARTICLE Fat PAR  
 "Whose bag is it? It is very fat."
- Female: /kràʔpǎw raw ʔe:ŋ/  
 /kràʔpǎw raw ʔe:ŋ/  
 Bag We Own  
 "It's mine."
- Male: /khlá:j mi: ka:tá: jù: thò:/  
 /sǒŋsǎj mi: ko:ték jù: máŋ/  
 seem have sanitary napkin be PAR  
 "I guess it may have a sanitary napkins inside."
- Female: /bâ: thò: thaʔluŋ càt/  
 /bâ: caŋ thaʔluŋ caŋ/  
 mad PAR rude PAR  
 "That's bad. You are rude."

It might be construed from the conversation above that both speakers may be intimates so the male speaker made fun of her. It is worth noting from the example that the blind sometimes modify Thai understatement words by applying their in-group phonological patterns and use among themselves as euphemisms. The word /ka:tá:/, interpreted by blind interviewees to mean /ko:ték/ (sanitary napkin), is used as a euphemistic term in the dialog to make it less irritating to the female interlocutor. We can see that the word /ko:ték/, one of the famous brand names of sanitary napkins, is quite often used in casual conversations to represent the whole category of sanitary napkins in Normal Thai. The blind also borrow this word and apply their in-group sound pattern with the word to use to represent the object in general. Hence, instead of using other terms such as /phâ:ʔàʔna:maj/ to refer to this object, they usually use the word /ka:tá:/ to talk about it.

### C. Euphemisms from Thai metaphors

In most languages, there are certain words extending their meanings in comparison to refer to something in other domains. This phenomenon is identified as "metaphor." As Morgan (1983) defines, a metaphor is "basic structural form of experience, through which human beings engage, organize, and understand their world." Metaphors make communication colorful, vivid and comprehensible.

In the area of Thai euphemisms as discussed in the previous section, both Leetrakul (1987) and Chancharoen (1989) discover that metaphorical expressions are mostly used with euphemistic terms in the area of sex. The study suggests that this phenomenon also occurs with the language of the Thai blind but the forms of euphemisms are more complicated. The euphemistic terms found in the in-group language derive from Thai metaphorical expression which have been diversified through the application of the special sound pattern. Here are the three euphemistic terms found in the special language.

Table 5.12 Metaphorical euphemisms in the area of sex in the in-group language.

Categories	Euphemisms of blind	Thai euphemisms	Meanings
Objects	mâ:	mô:	female sex organ
Acts	chá: wâ:	chák wâw	to masturbate (male)
	ta: mâ:	tí: mô:	to have a sexual intercourse

However, there is no evidence in the collected data suggesting that there should be other in-group phonological patterns used with Thai euphemistic terms, other than the phonological pattern /a:/ described earlier. I may draw the conclusion from this stage of research that the blind tend not to use the other sound patterns with Thai euphemistic terms to create their in-group euphemisms.

In this section, I have given evidences to show that the blind use their in-group phonological patterns to modify certain Thai tabooed and euphemistic terms to create the so-called in-group euphemisms. I have also claimed that the complication of sound patterns used with in-group euphemisms is determined by the familiarity of the language users with

the tabooed objects or acts. In the next section, I will discuss another highlighted motivation of the language use in the blind communities.

### **5.3 The language for in-group solidarity**

As discussed in the previous sections, the in-group language performs important functions in the blind communities. The blind can conceal their secrets from outsiders through the use of their special language. Also, in pronouncing some words irritating to the blind hearers, the blind speakers usually apply some phonological patterns with Thai tabooed or even euphemistic terms to reduce the offensiveness of the Thai tabooed expressions. Another function of the language which should be covered here is that the language can create in-group solidarity among blind people.

There are various things which can show the in-group identity. Of course, the language used in the blind communities is an example of the blind in-group identity. As suggested in 5.1.2, the Thai blind use their in-group language only among their group members. Those who are regarded as outsiders will be excluded in the secret conversations.

It is apparent that the special language plays a vital role to create in-group solidarity among blind people. The result of the study suggests that the blind usually use the language to talk with one another, regardless of some social factors such as age or sex. Through the use of the secret language, people at the conversational site are separated into two groups: those who know the language and those who do not have a command of the language – the ones they consider outsiders. By the natural mechanisms of the language protection, the blind can declare their own territory and share their experience among their group members without an intrusion from other out-group members.

When the 80 blind interviewees have been asked if they usually use the secret language with every blind person they meet, 72 (90%) answer "Yes" while 8 (10%) say "No". These figures have clearly illustrated that most blind people use the language to converse with people who have visual problems like them. The special language can be used as a medium to tie relationship among themselves. It helps reduce the social gap among blind interlocutors.

#### **5.3.1 The language of intimacy**

Intimacy has a great influence on the language use between speakers and addressees in the conversation. The language use among friends is certainly different from the language use among people who are unacquainted or different in aging or power. We would use a lot of slang or colloquial language to talk with friends but we would use more formal language to converse with people of different ages, power, etc. or unacquainted people.

However, it is not true in the language of blind people. The in-group language is a means to show intimacy among blind people. The language can narrow the gap between the speakers and hearers. Many interviewees state that when they see each other, they often use the secret language to greet each other. Some tabooed topics may be brought up in the conversation of closed friends through the use of the secret language.

The following conversation is an example of the language use for greeting between the two blind intimate friends when they meet each other in the playground at the Bangkok School for the blind.

- (10) /ʔûan ʔûa:n sàʔnǎ:nâ: mâ:k paj læ:w lú: rɔ: phǎ: lǎ:/  
 /ʔûan ʔûa:n sàʔnǎ:nâ: mâ:k paj læ:w lú: rɔ: phǔa rǔ:/  
 NAME NAME overact much too AUX you wait for husband PAR  
 "Uan Uan! You are overacting. Are you waiting for your husband?"

In the extracted part of the conversation between the two blind speakers, a boy is greeting his female friend. We can infer from the speaker's saying that the two blind speakers have a good relationship, so the speaker does not hesitate to tease his friend by asking her in the in-group language if she is waiting for her husband. It would be very impolite if the male speaker conveyed the same message with the female addressee in Normal Thai since such saying is against Thai social values, and that could weaken a good relationship between the two intimates. It is because of the in-group language that allows the male speaker to greet his friend in such a creative way without corrupting Thai social values, and that is also a means of showing intimacy between the two interlocutors.

That does not mean that blind people use the language only with the blind intimates. Many blind interviewees point out that blind people use the language with other visually impaired people who they do not know well, but the language use are limited. As Mr. Chalong

Sujarittum says: "It is quite common that we usually do not tell an unacquainted person what kind of secret we have in mind, and we usually do not converse with strangers about some areas such as sex or violence although those people may have visual problems like us." However, as he says, Blind people usually apply some words derived from the special sound patterns to converse with other blind people who may or may not be their intimates to show that they are sharing the same destiny of being visually disabled.

The special language can also be a tool to create intimacy between sighted and blind people. It is not surprising that someone who works in the blind organizations has a good command of the special language. As discuss in 5.1.2, some sighted staff members of the blind organizations try to be in harmony with their blind clients. One way of integrating into the blind society is to learn the language and use with their blind clients. Mr. Pitaya Srigotapet, a student in the Philosophy Department at Mahitdul University, comments that the sighted people use the special language, making blind people happy since that can prove that sighted people accept the culture of the blind and want to be in harmony with them.

### **5.3.2 The language showing relationship between generations**

Thai society--including some Asian society-- regards aging as a crucial social factor in behaving toward one another. This social value is reflected in the form of language use between people of different ages.

Generally, the special language is usually applied by blind people of the same age. The collected data suggests that the Thai blind tends to use more in-group jargon with their friends than people of the same age. As Mr. Kitipong Sutthi gives a comment, "I think a person who invent this language is very smart. He can find suitable phonological patterns to fit in the Thai language very well." He also suggests that this language is a property of the group which has been inherited from generation to generation with little change in the sound patterns. This language is, as he suggests, used widely in various groups of blind people of identical age since it is a mechanism to show intimacy among the blind in-group members.

Besides, most blind people still use the language to converse with other blind of different age although age can be a factor in determining the language use of blind interactants. Mr. Chalong Sujarittum says that in conversing with friends of the same age, he usually converses by applying a lot of words in the special patterns, but for people who are older than him, he will use the language only if necessary. For example, he will apply special

patterns only with some words which are not suitable to talk in public, or use the language to express some important messages which should not be exposed to outsiders. Nonetheless, he admits that if blind people who are older than him show the intimacy by conversing with him in the special language, he would not hesitate to use the language with those persons.

As we have discussed in 5.1, the Thai blind usually use their in-group language to convey secret messages among themselves in certain circumstances. According to the interviewees, age is not a crucial factor to obstruct their usage of the in-group language among themselves. When they feel that some important messages must be conveyed to create better understanding among the in-group members without being recognized by the out-group members, the language will be used as a tool to strengthen their relationship. A blind man can express their feeling with an older blind person whenever he is among the out-group members and feel uneasy. A blind student can consult his blind teacher in the in-group language about an urgent issue which needs an immediate interaction when he is present among strangers. It is because of the in-group language which plays a vital role in maintaining the solidarity among the Thai blind.

In this section, we have discussed a function of the in-group language in creating solidarity among the blind members. We can see that the Thai blind use the language to show intimacy with their blind associates, regardless of some social factors which influence the language use such as sex, age, and power. sometimes they can also create jokes by using the special language, and tell those jokes among themselves. In the next section, we will explore the language used for this purpose.

### **5.3.3 The language of joke: the declaration of the blind in-group membership**

In section 3.5, I have discussed the in-group phonological pattern widely used between blind interlocutors, and I have also claimed in section 5.2 that the blind apply the phonological pattern /a:/ with certain Thai tabooed and euphemistic terms and use them as the familiar in-group euphemisms. If we take the phonological form of /a:/ into account, we can notice the ambiguity of word forms resulting from the correspondence between the words in normal Thai and those created from the use of special patterns. Those ambiguous forms can be a tool to create humors among blind people. This type of jokes is usually circulated

among the blind, regardless of age, power, sex, intimacy, etc. Creating jokes is one way of declaring the in-group membership. That means those who can get a sense of humor must know the language well, and should be, therefore, accepted as the in-group members.

On June 18, 1999, as I was interviewing a blind lady at Thailand Association of the Blind, I heard one of the staff saying the following sentence which make some blind members sitting there laughing:

(12) /hǎ: khraj cá? khun chaj/

After the staff member saying the sentence, I heard someone repeating the sentence and a lot of people laughed by the reputation. The staff member, as an outsider, was surprised by the laughter, asking what was wrong with her words.

This situation is a tantalizing example that can illustrate the language as a tool to create jokes. Because of the ambiguity lying between words in Normal Thai and words originated from the special pattern, the blind can create a joke and share the funny story to other peer members. Those who can get a sense from the joke and react to the story telling may be accepted as the in-group members.

It is unquestionable why the utterance is funny to the blind. Let us take the word /hǎ:/ into consideration. We can see that this word is very ambiguous. If we look at the sentence above, we can notice that the word can be interpreted as a verb in normal Thai or as a noun in the special language. Here are the possible interpretations:

(13) Normal Thai: Who would you like to **meet**, Khun Chai?

Blind in-group language: Whose female sex organ is it, Khun Chai found?

People who do not know the language will not imagine how the ambiguity in the utterance stated above work out as a joke in the blind communities. The joke as such can be circulated among people with visual impairment, but outsiders who do not understand the language may find it ridiculous of blind people to laugh at things that are not funny.

Another example of a joke resulting from the ambiguity of the blind language is told by Miss Tanapharn Kaosin, a teacher who teaches the Thai language at the Bangkok School



for the Blind and the president of Blind Women Club of Thailand. This story took place when she went with her student's mother to visit her student who was studying in Nakorn Rachasima.

Before she went to see her student, as she described, she had telephoned her student to wait for her at the small pavilion locating on the playground of the school. When she arrived at the school, her escort took her to walk on the grassy playground to go to the appointment place. Since she was blind, she did not know that the grassy playground had a concrete way passing through. Walking on the thick grass could be dangerous.

At that time, she really had an urgent need to go to bathroom, so she murmured, "/pà:jâ: thò:/", meaning "I really have a desire to urinate!" Then, she heard the escort say: "I am sorry. It would take more time to walk on the concrete way, so I am taking you by this way."

The story told by Miss Tanapharn Kaosin shows the ambiguity lying in the word /pà:jâ:/ which can be interpreted to have two meanings. On one hand, the phrase has a referential meaning in Normal Thai as "the wood that is grassy"; on the other hand, the phrase can refer to "the desire to urinate" in the special language. The joke results from the misinterpretation of the sighted escort towards her blind conversational partner.

The collected data suggests that the Thai blind usually used metathesis words in certain areas, mainly sexual concern. Since this feature of language is beyond the scope of my study, I will not go in detail.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have discussed the motivations behind the in-group language. The first foremost motivation of using the in-group language is to hide secrets from outsiders. It seems to be in general agreement among Thai blind to use the language for this purpose. This does not mean that Thai blind do not use the language when they stay alone with their peers. The research has revealed that another motivation behind the application of the in-group sound patterns is to avoid Thai taboo words. They avoid the corruption of Thai social customs by the application of their in-group sound patterns with the source taboo words or euphemisms, as illustrated in section 5.2. Interestingly, the blind also use the in-group language to create in-group solidarity among themselves. The application of the language

among the blind of different social ranking is the means to show intimacy among themselves. The language can be a tool to create jokes, which is a mechanism to tie relationships among the Thai blind.