

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Summary

In this work, I have studied only the newly invented words which are derived from the modification of the syllables within the normal Thai words. The aim of this work is to explore the linguistic forms of the deviant phonological patterns used to form up the jargon in the blind society, the syntactic occurrences of words derived from the in-group sound patterns and the motivations behind the use of words of the deviant sound patterns in the speech of the Thai blind. Before we end up the discussion in this work, those points will be mentioned in short as follows:

6.1.1 Phonological forms of the secret words

As we have discussed throughout this work, the Thai blind create their in-group language by modifying normal Thai words. To create their jargons which are unfamiliar to the outsiders, the blind pick up certain words in Thai, divide the word into syllables and apply a set of rules with each syllable. These linguistic processes are proved by the similarity of some sound properties between the source word and its derived one. The collected data shows that there are six secret sound patterns applied on syllables of a blind in-group jargon. The first three sound patterns cause an individual syllable of the source word to split into two separate syllables:

- (1) The insertion of phonological segments in between the onset and rhyme of the source syllable: e.g. /khâ:w/ (= "rice") may be used as /khaʔcâ:w/.
- (2) Shuffling of syllable parts: e.g., /læ:/ (= "old") is transformed into /læ:kɔŋ/
- (3) Shuffling of syllable parts with more complex phonological rules: e.g., /hàw/ (= "bark") may be pronounced by the Thai blind as /làwhù:/.

Moreover, there are two sound patterns which are used to replace the rhyme of the source syllables of normal Thai words to generate new syllables so that the outsiders are unable to detect the actual words used among the blind members:

(4) Replacing the rhyme of the source syllables with the /a:/ sound: e.g., /mia/ (= "wife")

may be mentioned in the form of the secret sound pattern as /ma:/.

(5) Replacing the rhyme of the source syllables with the /ɔ:/ sound: e.g. /cɔ:nɔ:thɔ:/ is substituted for /câ:wnâ:thî:/ (= "staff member").

In addition, some words are derived from applying two secret sound patterns successively, especially when those words are mentioned in a very confidential situation:

(6) Mixing type: The word /mia/ (= "wife") may be spoken as /màʔca:/, which is derived from the word /ma:/, which is also derived from the secret sound pattern.

My study shows that the six phonological patterns are used alternatively in conjunction with normal Thai words to form up the in-group language. This suggests that there are some principles to govern the application of these sound patterns in the utterances of the Thai blind.

6.1.2 The occurrences of deviant words in the utterances of the Thai blind

As discussed above, not all words in the utterances of the Thai blind are transformed into the secret sound patterns. The data shows that words derived from the secret sound patterns usually appear in the slot of content words. To summarize, here are some linguistic principles governing the use of the in-group phonological patterns in the speech of the Thai blind.

In an NP construction, the head noun usually takes the form of the secret sound pattern if the word is not a pronoun and stands alone in the NP construction. In an NP which contains more than one word members, the head noun may appear in the secret sound pattern if it is taboo in Thai society or the blind communities ;otherwise , the last word in the construction usually takes the form of the secret sound pattern.

In a VP construction, the main verb is ordinarily transformed into the secret sound pattern, especially if it carries taboo content. However, if there is an adverb coming right after main verb and the verb is not a taboo word, the adverb usually appears in the form of the blind in-group sound patterns.

No evidence shows that the blind apply their in-group phonological patterns to function words, especially words showing relations such as prepositions and conjunctions. It is also remarkable that the Thai blind use different particles, one type of function words, in their utterances when conversing among their peer groups (and probably with someone who is regarded as an in-group member). This topic has already been discussed in detail in 2.1.2.

6.1.3 The motivations behind the use of the secret sound patterns

There are three motivations behind the use of the secret sound patterns. First, the blind use the secret sound patterns to disable the language perception of the outsiders. Since the Thai blind are unable or inconvenient to use certain communicative methods such as gestures, writing, etc. to convey secret messages like the sighted people, they turn to exploit normal Thai through the application of their in-group sound patterns to fulfill the same communicative goal. Through the modification of Thai words, they can discuss some matters among themselves and the third person or party.

Second, they modify taboo words through the use of the in-group sound patterns and employ those deviant words as euphemisms in their conversations. The finding reveal that the objects or actions which are usually mentioned among the Thai blind possess a simple pattern; for example, /mia/ (= wife) is mentioned in the in-group language as /ma:/. On the other hand, taboo objects, states, or actions which are rarely mentioned usually take more complex forms, such as /ta:j/ may be referred as /la:jtɔŋ/,

/la:jtu:j/, /təʔca:j/, etc. The results of my study suggest further that the Thai blind also transform Thai euphemisms into their in-group sound patterns and use those newly invented terms to reduce offensiveness to the hearers. For example, the euphemism / sék/, borrowed from the English word "sex", is mentioned by the Thai blind as / sá:/. The metaphor / chák wâw/, meaning male masturbation in Thai, will be mentioned as / chá: wâ:/ in the in-group language.

Last, the in-group sound patterns are used to create in-group solidarity. The Thai blind can use the in-group language with other blind associates, regardless of sex, age, or social status. Also, the application of the language is a way to show intimacy among their peer members. Some words which are overlapped in meaning between normal Thai and the blind in-group language may be used to create joke or funny stories among the Thai blind. For example, the word / hă:/ can be interpreted as "to look for" in normal Thai or "female sex organ" in the secret language if it appears in some contexts. This ambiguity can be employed as a linguistic device to create joke circulated among the Thai blind.

6.2 Discussion on some observations

6.2.1 Braille characters used as secret codes

My pilot study and collected data give an evidence that aside from the six secret sound patterns discussed throughout this work, the blind use their writing system, known as "Braille", as an aural medium to convey secret messages among themselves. They create the secret codes by spelling out the secret words in Thai and mapping each Thai Braille alphabet with the English Braille character. (One character may be interpreted as an English character, morpheme, or word.)

According to Randomhouse Webster's Electronic Dictionary, Braille is "a system of writing, devised by L. Braille for use by the blind, in which combinations of raised dots represent letters, numbers, punctuation marks, etc., that are read by touch.", most Braille textual systems is based on the combination of usually six dots (or probably eight dots in

some systems) at maximum to represent a single character or linguistic form such as vowel or consonant cluster, morpheme, word, etc. A combination of raised dots is known among blind users as "cell".

Every language based on the Braille system inevitably shares the same tactile forms, and each raised dot cell is interpreted differently in various languages. English is an example of complex Braille writing systems which one cell may represent a single character, sound cluster, morpheme, or word. For example, the tactile cell which has a shape like the alphabet g (represented by dot 1,2,4,5 in Braille) is interpreted as g only if it is a part or parts of a syllable, i.e., it occurs as an initial consonant, final consonant or a part of a sound cluster like (ng). However, the alphabet can be interpreted as the word "go" if the graphic representation appears in between the two spaces or has a space in front and a punctuation at the end of it. This representation is known as the English Braille contraction of the word "go". On the other hand, in Thai writing system, the Shape-like g in Braille represents the alphabet n.

The interviews of the Thai blind and some data collected from the blind communities show that the Thai blind sometimes map the Thai Braille system with the English one to create their secret codes. When I conducted a pilot study, I asked a group of blind people to give all possible forms of word /paj/ used in their secret conversations. They gave a form of the word suggesting that the overlapping of Braille graphic representation of the Thai and English systems discussed earlier is applied in the secret language. Instead of saying the word /paj/, they use the word form "which and" to conceal their secrets. The word "which and" derived from the spelling of the word /paj/, consisting of two Thai alphabets: "๓" and "๑". The former Braille graphic symbol also represents the English word "which", and the latter represent the word "and"; hence, the Thai blind use the word "which and" to substitute for the word /paj/.

6.2.2 Personal pronouns used among the Thai blind

I have found that the use of first and second personal pronouns among blind intimates is another distinctive feature in the blind language. The data shows that the first personal pronoun /ʔúá/ and the second personal pronoun /luú:/, which are rarely used in today conversations, are widely used among the Thai blind. From my observations, the blind teenagers usually use the first personal pronoun /ʔúá/ and the second personal pronoun /luú:/ with other blind people of similar age, regardless of sex, to express their feeling of intimacy, and the same pronominal system also seems to be applied among blind adult males of similar age to show good relationship.

6.2.3 Some jargons of the Thai blind

The collected data shows that there are some jargons which are usually used for describing voice quality of a person among the Thai blind. An attractive voice of a person, especially of different sex, may be described as /sǎŋ thê:/ (= /sǎ: thâ:/ in the secret language) or (= /sǎŋ di:/ (= /sǎ: da:/ in the secret language), but an unpleasant voice may be described as /sǎŋ bâ:/ or /sǎŋ hùaj/.

The word /daŋ/ (= to produce a sound) has a variety of meaning. Syntactically, this word can be used as a complementizer, as in the sentence:

- (7) /man bò:k ʔúá daŋ man caʔ ma: na:/
 /man bò:k ʔúá wâ: man caʔ ma: na:/
 he tell me that he will come PAR
 "He told me that he would come."

In addition, when some blind intimates meet each other, they use the expression /daŋ jaŋŋaj læé:w/ (literally translated as "How does it produce a sound?") to greet each other, just like the English expression "How are you?".

6.2.4 Some observations regarding the language use of the Thai blind and other kinds of verbal play

As we have discussed in chapter 2, we may observe some similarities between the secret language of the Thai blind and other kinds of verbal play such as reversed speech, pig latin, etc. Those kinds of verbal play may be analyzed to take some linguistic similarities, e.g., the /lu:/ language may be recognized to apply the same transformational rules as the shuffling of syllable parts in section 3.3. However, it should be noted that the secret language of the Thai blind possess some salient features which are easily distinguished from other kinds of verbal play.

As discussed in chapter 3, there are six secret sound patterns used to form up the secret language. The data presented throughout this thesis clearly shows that these secret sound patterns are alternatively used with content words in the utterances of the Thai blind (see chapter 4). On the other hand, my literature review gives some evidences that sighted people may use some similar techniques to form up their in-group language but they would use one technique at a time with every syllable in the utterances to form up their in-group language (see the example in section 2.2.2).

In terms of the motivations behind the use of verbal play to create unfamiliar language, the secret language is very vital for the Thai blind to survive in society since the Thai blind have fewer communitative channels to communicate their private or secret messages among themselves (see chapter 5). However, sighted people use verbal play techniques mainly for entaining their peer members such as telling joke or funny stories but if they have to communicate secret messages among themselves, they may select other communicative technique to fsatisfy their need (see section 5.1).

6.3 Concluding remarks

It is of my enjoyment and pleasure to make an investigation on the secret language of the Thai blind. With the investment of time and efforts of many helpful people, I feel that I have learned a lot from the study.

In my study, I have discovered some universal principles from the language use of the Thai blind as follows:

First, the most important technique for hiding secret of the blind often appears in a form of deviated language sound patterns. In the sighted world, people usually communicate secret messages through nonverbal communication and other techniques such as writing. Those communicative techniques seem difficult or impossible to be applied among the blind, due to the limitation of their eyesight. The interviews of the blind subjects show that the most convenient method to communicate secret messages among their in-group members is to create secret codes through the modification of regular language sound patterns. The study shows that aside from the deviation of Bangkok Thai, the Thai blind in other regions, such as blind people in the north, also deviate their dialectal sound patterns for the same purpose.

Next, verbal plays can provide many utilities. One of the main advantages of verbal play is to use them as a language tool to communicate secret messages among the in-group members. Through verbal plays, the Thai blind can hide their secret from the outsiders. Besides, verbal plays can be a way of indirect ways of uttering certain taboo objects, states or actions. When there is no outsider around, the Thai blind also use verbal plays with taboo words or euphemisms to make the words less irritating to other blind hearers. Verbal plays can be a source for joke creation. The ambiguity lying between normal Thai words and words derived from some secret sound patterns is a technique of joke creation of the Thai blind. The word /hǎ:/, for example, can be interpreted as "to look for" in normal Thai or "vagina" in the secret language when this word appears in some contexts, such as /hǎ: khraj/ (= "Whom are you looking for?" or "Whose vagina is it?").

The study of the secret language of the Thai blind inspires me to investigate more in the field of language use of the blind and verbal plays. With the limitation of time and resources, I have to end up my work at this point. Before we conclude our discussion, I would like to make some suggestions for further research.

In terms of the language use of the Thai blind, I notice that the Thai blind of different sexes, aging, etc. have different frequencies of applying each secret sound pattern. From my observations, the speech of blind teenagers contains a lot of words of

the pattern "syllable shuffling with more complex phonological rules" while those of blind adults have high frequencies of applying the pattern "syllable shuffling". Therefore, there should be further studies on the differences of the application of the secret phonological patterns of the Thai blind in the dimension of social factors such as aging, sex, region, etc. In addition, as discussed in 6.2.1, the Thai blind also exploit their braille writing system and use it as their secret codes. It would be interesting to investigate the other means of secret communication of the blind in Thai and other languages.

From having conversation with people of different social groups, I was informed that there are some social groups using verbal plays to deviate the language use to communicate among the in-group members. Hence, there should be a study of the verbal plays of other social groups such as women, gays, etc. in Thai and other languages.