



English Code-Mixing in the Thai Series “The Believers”

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the linguistic characteristics of mixing English and Thai in the Thai series "The Believers," aired on Netflix in 2024, using frameworks proposed by Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003.) The dialogues from the nine episodes of the series were analyzed, and the results were classified into two primary forms of code-mixing, as delineated by Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003). These include nativized features, comprising truncation, hybridization, semantic shift, conversion, reduplication, and word order, as well as intrasentential code-mixing words. Within the 58 terms with nativized features, truncation was the most prevalent, appearing 24 times (41.38%), followed by hybridization with 15 occurrences (25.86%). Semantic shift was observed in 7 words (12.07%), whereas conversion occurred in 6 words (10.34%). Reduplication appeared in 4 occurrences (6.90%), whereas word order exhibited the lowest frequency, with 2 instances (3.45%). Based on the research findings, the common practice of truncating words in Thai speech, especially in Thai-English code-mixing, serves as a linguistic adaptation that facilitates pronunciation, incorporates foreign terms into Thai phonology, and suits informal communication styles. Regarding intrasentential code-mixing, an analysis of the 196 identified words revealed that nouns were the most frequently used, accounting for 113 instances (57.65%).

Keywords: Code-mixing, Thai Series, Nativized Features, The Believers

1. Introduction

Siregar (2016) described code as a specific way of using language, which can refer to a dialect, speech style, or linguistic system. It reflects social class distinctions and different approaches to structuring verbal communication. In a broader sense, a code acts as a framework that modifies language elements, such as words or phrases, into alternative forms for effective communication.

In language, code-mixing is the natural alternation between two or more languages inside one sentence, phrase, or even a single conversation. Basically, it entails including elements from one language, such as words, phrases, or more general linguistic units, into the grammatical structure of another. Usually found in bilingual or multilingual settings where speakers naturally shift languages depending on context or communicative need, this alternation can occur at many levels, including phonology, vocabulary, grammar, and orthography. Though the former is more common in daily communication, some researchers distinguish between intrasentential code-mixing, which occurs inside the boundaries of a single sentence, and intersentential code-switching, which involves shifts at the level of entire sentences. Moreover, code-mixing is not governed by strict rules; rather, it varies according to the social context, the speakers' linguistic repertoire, and the situational demands, so it is a dynamic and natural phenomenon rather than a sign of language disorder (McLaughlin, 1984; Bokamba, 1989; Richard, Platt, & Platt, 1992; Crystal, 1997; Thomason, 2001; Kannaovakun & Gunther, 2003; Wardhaugh, 2006; Ho, 2007).

Regarding the dynamic nature of code-mixing, it is essential to acknowledge that "Nativization is the process by which elements from one language are modified to align with the linguistic system of another during language contact," a mechanism that exemplifies how multilingual speakers adapt and integrate various linguistic elements into cohesive communication. In multilingual settings, such as when a Thai speaker incorporates English into Thai, code-mixing ensures that foreign words and expressions adapt to the native language's phonological, morphological, and syntactical rules. (Kachru and Nelson, 2006; Weinreich,



1953). Originally tied to language acquisition, nativization now refers to the incorporation of nonnative elements into daily language use. While borrowed words largely maintain their original form, they undergo slight modifications in the process. (Sankoff & Laberge, 1974; Bokamba, 1989; Kannaovakun & Gunther, 2003; Sik & Anping, 2004).

According to Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003), code-mixing is categorized into six types based on nativization features. These categories include truncation, where an English word is shortened by omitting syllables, such as "app" from "application." Hybridization occurs when an English word is combined with a Thai prefix or noun, as seen in "รถไฮบริด" for "hybrid car." Semantic shift happens when a word's meaning changes, like in "เด็กมันพิตเนอะ," where "fit" conveys "hard-working" instead of its typical English meaning. Conversion involves altering the part of speech, such as transforming the noun "success" into the verb "to succeed." Reduplication is the repetition of an English word for emphasis or clarity, as in "clear clear." Lastly, word order shift occurs when the syntactic structure of a foreign language is altered, as seen in "ทีมพีอาร์" (team PR) instead of the grammatically correct "PR team."

A multitude of studies has concentrated on code-mixing, especially within Thai mass media, including series, films, television shows, periodicals, social media, and music. Research conducted by Papijit (2013); Tanabut & Tipayasuparat (2018); Yuthayotin & Tipayasuparat (2018); Kuptanaroaj et al. (2020); Somsin & Suksakorn (2022); Thangjit & Srinoparut (2023) has predominantly focused on Thai series, whereas Kuptanaroaj et al. (2024) exclusively investigated Thai films. Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003) similarly examined code-mixing in Thai television broadcasts. Snodin (2014) examined English code-mixing across various Thai mass media outlets, including publications, television, radio, and popular music groups. Furthermore, research conducted by Chairat (2014); Onkhao & Tipayasuparat (2018); Likhithongsathorn & Sappapan (2014) examined the mixing of English in Thai music. The phenomenon of code-mixing in digital environments has been investigated, with Kongkerd (2015) and Pilanun (2021) examining its application on websites. Investigations into print media include analyses by Nareerat (2002); Sayamon (2010); Janhom (2011); and Thongsombat et al. (2021), which examined language patterns in Thai publications. These studies together affirm that English terminology is prominent in diverse Thai entertainment media, illustrating the extensive occurrence of code-mixing in the nation's communication environment.

The Thai series "The Believers" serves as a valuable dataset for analyzing code-mixing in modern media. Premiering on Netflix in March 2024, it weaves together crime, drama, and religious thriller elements, following three entrepreneurs who manipulate the Buddhist temple donation system to resolve their financial struggles. Beyond its compelling narrative, which critiques the intersection of capitalism and spirituality, *The Believers* effectively showcases code-mixing. Characters naturally switch between Thai and English, reflecting the linguistic reality of a bilingual society while highlighting how media both adapts to and shapes cultural identities in a globalized world. Studying code-mixing in *The Believers* offers meaningful insights into the relationship between language, culture, and contemporary Thai media.

This study uses the analytical framework developed by Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003), which categorizes nativized features of English Thai code-mixing into six types: truncation, hybridization, semantic shift, conversion, reduplication, and word order shift. This framework was chosen for its emphasis on the localized alteration of English within the Thai linguistic system, making it particularly suitable for examining code-mixing in Thai media conversation. It provides a structured approach for analyzing how English elements are incorporated into Thai speech at both lexical and syntactic levels. This classification is applied to the Thai Netflix series "The Believers", examining both the prevalence of each nativization type and the linguistic and social motivations that motivate its usage.



2. Objective

To explore the linguistic characteristics of mixing English and Thai in the Thai series “The Believers”.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Data Collection

This study utilized data from the Thai series "The Believers", released in 2024 and available on Netflix. All nine episodes of the series were selected as the unit of analysis to ensure comprehensive and diverse representation of language use throughout the full narration. With a total of nine episodes, the series served as a rich source for examining various patterns of Thai English code-mixing. The analysis focused specifically on the official Thai subtitles provided by Netflix, as these are closely aligned with spoken dialogue and serve as a practical transcription resource. To maintain analytical accuracy, proper nouns, including names of individuals, locations, brand names, application names, and company names, were excluded from the dataset. The study focused on lexical items and grammatical structures relevant to code-mixing phenomena. Additionally, duplicate entries within the same grammatical or structural category were counted only once to avoid inflating frequency data.

3.2 Data Analysis

A detailed analysis was carried out to assess the frequency of English code-mixing across the nine episodes. The entire subtitle transcript was reviewed line by line to identify instances of intrasentential code-mixing and nativized features. These were analyzed using the theoretical framework of English nativization developed by Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003), which classifies nativized code-mixing into six categories: truncation, hybridization, semantic shift, conversion, reduplication, and word order shift. Each code-mixed instance was manually categorized, counted, and its frequency calculated as a percentage to quantify its occurrence within the dataset.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The English code-mixing data from the Thai series "The Believers" were analyzed by using the framework developed by Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003). The study specifically identified six types of nativized features: truncation, hybridization, semantic shift, conversion, reduplication, and word order.

The tables below provide a classification of English usage, organized into English word and phrase units, English word classes, and code-mixing words exhibiting nativized characteristics. Additionally, they present examples illustrating each nativized feature, including truncation, hybridization, semantic shift, conversion, word order, and reduplication.

Table 1 English word and phrase units

Types of English units	Frequency	Percentage
Word	172	87.76
Phrase	24	12.24
Total	196	100

Table 1 presents the English word and phrase units, comprising a total of 196 items. Words account for the majority, appearing 172 times, which represents 87.76% of the total, while phrases are found 24 times, making up 12.24%.

**Table 2** English word classes

English word classes	Frequency	Percentage
Noun	113	57.65
Verb	46	23.47
Noun phrase	23	11.73
Adjective	8	4.08
Interjection	4	2.04
Adverb	1	0.51
Verb phrase	1	0.51
Total	196	100

Table 2 displays the distribution of English word classes. Nouns were the most frequently occurring, appearing 113 times (57.65%), followed by verbs with 46 instances (23.47%). Noun phrases accounted for 23 occurrences (11.73%), while adjectives appeared 8 times (4.08%). Interjections were found 4 times (2.04%), and both adverbs and verb phrases had the lowest frequency, with only 1 instance each (0.51%).

Table 3 Code-mixing words with nativized features

Nativized features	Frequency	Percentage
Truncation	24	41.38
Hybridization	15	25.86
Semantic Shift	7	12.07
Conversion	6	10.34
Reduplication	4	6.90
Word order	2	3.45
Total	58	100

Table 3 illustrates a total of 58 words classified into six types of nativized features. Truncation was the most common, occurring 24 times (41.38%), followed by hybridization with 15 instances (25.86%). Semantic shift appeared in 7 words (12.07%), while conversion was observed in 6 words (10.34%). Reduplication accounted for 4 occurrences (6.90%), and word order had the lowest frequency, with 2 words (3.45%).

Table 4 Examples of truncation

Truncation	Full word	Code-mixing within a conversation
1) Retaining the first syllable of the word		
Back	Backup	อาดตามิเบ็คคี่
Lo	Location	มิ่งส่งโลมาเลขนะ
Foot	Footage	เคี้ยวเคี้ยวไปซึกฟุคอีกที
2) Retaining the last syllable of the word		
Net	Internet	เน็ตที่นี้ซ้า
Kay	Okay	เก
3) Cutting off the last syllable of the word		
Motorcy	Motorcycle	ซันมีมอเตอรี่ไซค์กับรดเก็ง
Consult	Consultant	เราอยากจ้างนำมาเป็นคอนซัลต์
4) Retaining the initial two syllables of the word		
Brand am	Brand ambassador	เหมือนเราหาแบรนด์แอมหรือไอคอนนิคให้วัดอย่างนี้



5) Cutting off the second and last syllable of the word

Mocy	Motorcycle	ปกคิมันก็ชอบเข้ามาข้ามมอไซค์เล่น
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Table 4 illustrates various forms of truncation frequently used in conversational Thai-English code-mixing, classified into five types. The most frequently used type involves retaining only the first syllable of the original English word. For instance, the term “บ่ก” (back) shortened from “backup,” as demonstrated in the sentence “อาดต้ามบ่ก” (I have strong backup). Another example is “โล” (lo), shortened from “location,” used in the sentence “มึงส่งโลมาเลขนะ” (Just send me your location).

The second most common truncation type retains only the last syllable, such as “เน็ต” (net) shortened from “internet,” illustrated by “เน็ตที่นี่ช้า” (The internet here is slow.) and “เค” (kay) from “okay.”

The third form involves cutting off the last syllable of the word, exemplified by “มอโตร์ไซค์” (motorcy) from “motorcycle,” as seen in “ฉันมีมอโตร์ไซค์กับรถเก๋ง” (I have a motorcycle and a car.), and “คอนซัลต์” (consult) shortened from “consultant,” as shown in “เราอยากจ้างน้ามาเป็นคอนซัลต์” (We'd like to hire you as a consultant.).

Less common is truncation that retains the initial two syllables, demonstrated by “แบรนด์แอม” (brand am) shortened from “brand ambassador,” found in the sentence “เหมือนเราหาแบรนด์แอมหรือไอคอนนิคให้วัดอย่างนี้” (It's like we're finding a brand ambassador or an iconic figure for the temple.). Lastly, the least common truncation type involves cutting off the second and last syllables, as seen in “มอไซค์” (mocy), derived from “motorcycle.”

Table 5 Examples of hybridization

Hybridization	English word/phrase	Code-mixing within a conversation
1) Retaining the first syllable of a Thai word.		
รุ่นlimited	Limited edition	พระเครื่องรุ่นลิมิเต็ดที่พวกน้องทำออกมามันสุดยอดมาก
หลักmarketing	Marketing principles	ผมใช้หลักมาร์เก็ตติ้ง
2) Retaining the last syllable of a Thai word.		
Themeสี	Color theme	ธีมสีที่ส่งไปปุยโอเคปะ
Qualityเสียง	Sound quality	เหมือนควอลิตี้เสียงมันจะไม่ได้อะปะ
3) Retaining the initial two syllables of a Thai word.		
ศาลาามินิมอล	Minimalist pavilion	ดูว่าเหมาะกับศาลาามินิมอล
4) Retaining the final three syllables of a Thai word.		
Caseโทรศัพท์	Phone cases	ทำเคสโทรศัพท์กันไหม

Table 5 presents examples of hybridization in Thai-English code-mixing, categorized into four distinct types based on syllable retention. The first type involves retaining the first syllable of a Thai word combined with an English term. Examples include “รุ่นlimited” (limited edition) in the sentence, “พระเครื่องรุ่นลิมิเต็ดที่พวกน้องทำออกมามันสุดยอดมาก” (The limited-edition amulets you guys made are amazing.), and “หลักmarketing” (marketing principles), used in “ผมใช้หลักมาร์เก็ตติ้ง” (I am using marketing principles.).

The second type retains only the last syllable of a Thai word and adds it after an English term. For instance, “Themeสี” (color theme), as in “ธีมสีที่ส่งไปปุยโอเคปะ” (Is Pui okay with the color theme we sent?), and “Qualityเสียง” (sound quality), used in “เหมือนควอลิตี้เสียงมันจะไม่ได้อะปะ” (It seems like the sound quality isn't quite up to standard.). The third category retains the initial two syllables of a Thai word combined with an English concept, exemplified by “ศาลาามินิมอล” (minimalist pavilion) in the sentence “ดูว่าเหมาะกับศาลาามินิมอล” (I think it suits the minimalist pavilion well.). The fourth type of hybridization is retaining the final three syllables of a Thai word combined with an English word. For example, “Caseโทรศัพท์” (phone cases) as in the conversational question “ทำเคสโทรศัพท์กันไหม” (Should we make phone cases?).

**Table 6** Examples of semantic shift

Semantic shift	English word/phrase	Code-mixing within a conversation
Interior	Interior designer	กำลังหาอินทีเรียท์คณิกอยู่
Short	Financially broke	คนอย่างมึงเหรือช้อด
Bomb	Causing trouble	กูไปบอมบ์วัดเขามา

Table 6 illustrates examples of semantic shift in Thai-English code-mixing, showing how three English words have acquired different meanings within Thai conversational contexts. The word “interior,” which originally refers to the inside part of something, is shifted in Thai to specifically denote an “interior designer.” Similarly, “short,” generally meaning brief or insufficient in English, shifts semantically in Thai to mean “financially broke.” Finally, “bomb,” originally meaning an explosive device or an act of destruction, undergoes a shift in Thai conversations, signifying “causing trouble or creating chaos.”

Table 7 Examples of conversion

Conversion	Form (Original from to code-mixing)	Code-mixing within a conversation
Iconic	Adjective to noun	เหมือนเราหาแบรนด์แอมหรือไอคอนนิกให้วัดอย่างนี้
Active	Adjective to verb	แอดมินแอ็กทีฟตลอด
In-trend (Trendy)	Adjective to verb	กำลังอินเทรนเลขนะเว้ย

Table 7 demonstrates examples of changes in the part of speech of English code-mixing words when integrated into Thai conversational contexts. For instance, in the sentence “เหมือนเราหาแบรนด์แอมหรือไอคอนนิกให้วัดอย่างนี้” (It’s like we’re finding a brand ambassador or an iconic figure for the temple.), the English adjective “iconic,” originally describing something symbolic or representative, is converted into a noun, indicating a person or thing that represents symbolic value. Similarly, the word “active,” originally an adjective describing someone’s energetic state, becomes a verb in the sentence “แอดมินแอ็กทีฟตลอด” (The admin is always active.), emphasizing continuous action or state. Lastly, “in-trend” (trendy), typically an adjective indicating a fashionable or popular status, is converted to a verb in “กำลังอินเทรนเลขนะเว้ย” (It’s really trendy right now!), highlighting the action of following or embodying current trends.

Table 8 Examples of reduplication

Reduplication	English word	Code-mixing within a conversation
Chill chill	Chill	เลิกทำตัวชิลล์ๆ สบายๆ ได้แล้ว
Minimal minimal	Minimal	หรือไม่ว่าพวกกำโรมินิมอลๆก็ได้
Free free	Free	รู้ใช่ไหมว่ามันไม่มีอะไรได้มาฟรีๆ

Table 8 shows examples of reduplication in Thai-English code-mixing. In these examples, English words are reduplicated to emphasize or reinforce their meaning within a conversational context. For instance, “Chill chill” conveys a relaxed or carefree attitude, as used in “เลิกทำตัวชิลล์ๆ สบายๆ ได้แล้ว” (Stop acting so chill and carefree.). Similarly, “Minimal minimal” implies doing something casually or minimally, as illustrated by “หรือไม่ว่าพวกกำโรมินิมอลๆก็ได้” (Or maybe at least try making minimal profit.). Lastly, “Free free” emphasizes the meaning of completely free, appearing in “รู้ใช่ไหมว่ามันไม่มีอะไรได้มาฟรีๆ” (You do realize nothing comes for free, right?).

**Table 9** Examples of word order

Word order	English word	Code-mixing within a conversation
กลุ่ม VIP	VIP group	ก็เข้ากลุ่มไว้อีพีวีดีได้แล้วไง
แผน PR	PR plan	นี่แผนพีอาร์มีงไม่ใช่อะไรหรือ

Table 9 illustrates word order shifts occurring when mixing Thai and English codes. Specifically, it demonstrates how the standard English modifier-noun structure adjusts to align with Thai grammar, where the head noun precedes its modifier. For example, the English phrase “VIP group” becomes “กลุ่ม VIP” in the Thai context, as shown in the conversational sentence “ก็เข้ากลุ่มไว้อีพีวีดีได้แล้วไง” (I've already managed to get into the temple's VIP group.). Similarly, the phrase “PR plan” shifts to “แผน PR,” as exemplified by “นี่แผนพีอาร์มีงไม่ใช่อะไรหรือ” (Isn't this your PR plan?). These examples clearly highlight how English word order adapts when mixed with Thai grammar.

4.2 Discussion

The analysis of scripts from the nine episodes of the Thai series "The Believers" revealed a significant occurrence of English-Thai code-mixing, with a total of 196 instances identified. Within these instances, the study employed the framework developed by Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003) to examine code-mixing involving nativized features. Findings displayed that such instances appeared 58 times across the nine episodes, with truncation emerging as the most frequent type, followed by hybridization, semantic shift, conversion, reduplication, and finally, word order. The analysis also indicated that nouns represented most English code-mixing occurrences, followed by verbs, noun phrases, and adjectives, whereas interjections, adverbs, and verb phrases appeared less frequently. These results align with earlier studies, such as those by Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003); Papijit (2013); Tanabut & Tipayasuparat (2018); Yuthayotin & Tipayasuparat (2018); Kuptanaroj et al. (2020); Thangjit and Srinoparut (2023); Kuptanaroj et al. (2024), which similarly identified truncation as the leading form of code-mixing, particularly involving nouns. Conversely, these findings contrast with those reported by Somsin & Suksakhon (2022) in their analysis of the series "The Gifted," where hybridization was noted as the most prevalent type of code-mixing.

Considering the findings that truncation was the most frequent type among the 58 observed instances of nativized code-mixing, it can be inferred that Thai speakers frequently prefer truncation when incorporating English into their conversations to simplify pronunciation and improve communicative efficiency. Shortening English terms helps align them with Thai phonological and morphological patterns, making these words easier and more natural to integrate into daily interactions. Examples from the series scripts clearly illustrate this phenomenon, such as “มีงส่งโลมาเลขนะ” (Just send me your location.) and “ปกติมันก็ชอบเข้ามาขับมอเตอร์ไซด์เล่น” (Normally, he likes to come here just to ride his motorcycle around.). These truncated forms have become deeply embedded within everyday Thai communication, effectively operating as standard lexical items within the language. Additionally, using truncated English vocabulary conveys an image of modernity, education, and social prestige, particularly among Thai adolescents. The contrast between these findings and those of Somsin & Suksakhon (2022) could be attributed to the different characteristics of the speakers observed; particularly, "The Gifted" primarily features high school students who frequently mix English words into their Thai speech. Due to their limited ability to express complete ideas solely in English, hybridization, combining Thai and English words, was employed more commonly to communicate clearer and more precise meanings.

The analysis of English code-mixing, particularly intrasentential usage involving English words or phrases embedded within utterances, indicated distinct findings from the Thai series "The Believers". Specifically, the data revealed seven grammatical categories of English words integrated into Thai speech, namely noun, verb, noun phrase, adjective, interjection, adverb, and verb phrase. An analysis of the 196 identified words in intrasentential code-mixing showed that nouns were the most frequently occurring,



appearing 113 times (57.65%). Beyond 196 examples observed, English words appeared 172 times, accounting for 87.76% of the occurrences. These results align with earlier research examining code-mixing in Thai television programs, including studies by Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003); Tanabut & Tipayasuparat (2018); Yuthayotin & Tipayasuparat (2018); Kuptanaroaj et al. (2020); Thangjit & Srinoparut; Kuptanaroaj et al. (2024), all of which reported single nouns as the major form. Furthermore, the analysis highlighted that most intrasentential code-mixing preserved the original lexical and grammatical properties of English, indicating minimal adaptation or alteration of English words or phrases.

The motivations for English Thai code-mixing in “The Believers” appear to be both linguistic and cultural. Code-mixing enables speakers to express concepts that might not have a direct or similarly clear alternative in Thai, especially in professional, technological, or lifestyle contexts. The utilization of English culturally indicates cosmopolitanism and economic status. People that merge English into their Thai conversation frequently convey an image of modernity, urbanity, education, or global connectivity, which attributes that appeal to the younger demographic in Thai culture.

These results may imply that English Thai code-mixing, especially truncation and English nouns, has become a firmly embedded characteristic of modern Thai media. The pattern links more general language changes brought about by globalization, in which English functions as a marker of social membership and identity as well as a useful tool of communication. Therefore, code-mixing approaches might still influence the language use among Thai teenagers as well as in the media, thus impacting future trends in language contact and hybridization in Thailand.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the patterns and characteristics of English-Thai code-mixing found in the Thai series “The Believers”. The analysis was based on data collected from nine episodes of the series, which premiered in 2024 and is accessible through Netflix. The study primarily explored instances of the use of nativized linguistic elements and intrasentential code-mixing. Moreover, the theoretical approach proposed by Kannaovakun & Gunther (2003) served as the analytical framework to evaluate the patterns and characteristics of English code-mixing within the selected episodes.

All things considered, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the patterns and functions of English-Thai code-mixing, particularly in media contexts such as series. The prevalence of truncation highlights its role in simplifying pronunciation, enhancing linguistic efficiency, and conveying social prestige among Thai speakers. However, variations observed across different speaker groups and contexts, as indicated by comparisons with the series “The Gifted,” suggest that code-mixing practices are influenced by speakers' linguistic proficiency, social environments, and communicative purposes.

Future research in Thai series could further examine these sociolinguistic factors, linguistic proficiency, social environments, and communicative purposes, to better understand how they influence language use across various media genres and demographic groups, thereby deepening our knowledge of English-Thai code-mixing phenomena.

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