



## English Code-Mixing and Code-Switching in The Thai Reality Television Show “The Face Thailand Season 3”

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### Abstract

This research aims to identify the linguistic forms of Thai and English code-mixing in the reality television show “The Face Thailand Seasons 3.” The study also focuses on the characteristics of nativization of English and explores reasons and motivations that influence the speaker’s use of English code-mixing in the Thai modeling context. The data were collected from the dialogue between participants from the first five episodes of The Face Thailand Season 3. The investigation did not include any loan words or borrowed words. One hundred and eighty-three tokens were analyzed, based on three frameworks, to classify the linguistic forms and the nativization process of English words as well as the speakers’ reasons and motivations for using them. In terms of the linguistic forms, English code-mixing with English nouns was found to be used the most frequently. This type of language is commonly used in the Thai entertainment industry, especially on Thai modeling reality television shows. As for the nativization process, the study found that the participants preferred to create new words by mixing English words with Thai words (hybridization) for conventional reasons. Regarding the speakers’ reasons and motivations, their discourses mostly reflected the listener’s language ability. They would appear to be more professional and earn respect for demonstrating their language ability throughout the show.

**Keywords:** *English code-mixing, Thai reality television show, Thai modeling context, Linguistic form, Nativization, Reasons and motivation of the speakers*

### 1. Introduction

Benefits of the English language lead to the phenomenon of language contact worldwide, especially in non-native English-speaking countries where the English language combined with the mother tongue language is inevitable. The English language was first introduced to Thais in the reign of King Rama III. During the reigns of King Rama IV and V, the English language was almost exclusively used by the royals and elites (Prasithrathsint, 2002, as cited in Kannaovakun & Gunther, 2003). During King Rama V’s reign, a new education system for all Thais was launched that alluded to the importance of the English language. His vision included equipping his people with linguistic skills that would facilitate commerce and trade with foreigners (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Accordingly, since then, English as a subject became compulsory for Thai students. An educated person with good English skills has better job opportunities and can access higher social status in Thailand.

The occurrence of English code-mixing can be found at all levels of education in Thailand. At the university level, certain faculties (e.g. aviation, medical, entertainment, and technology) use technical terms that do not have equivalence in the Thai language. Teachers are required to adopt these English technical terms to provide the exact meaning for better understanding. Indeed, the use of English code-mixing when teaching a specific field is unavoidable. Many teachers hold that some knowledge should only be taught using the target language, not the students’ native language (Chairat, 2014). Furthermore, a highly educated person is more likely to use English code-mixing in their conversation. If both the speaker and the interlocutor have a similar English proficiency level, they will use English code-mixing smoothly in their discussion.

The use of the English language in Thailand has become more accepted, and English code-mixing has become more popular over the years. The domain of English has gradually expanded to daily interactions among people in Thailand (Kannaovakun & Gunther, 2003). Thais have become more familiar with mixing English and Thai in their daily conversation. As of 2020, people have been living in the Covid-19 era. The word “โควิด” is used frequently in Thailand. The protection regime and health control



procedures feature medical terms such as mask, face shield, alcohol gels, and state quarantine. These words are widely used among Thais, and they are generally mixed with Thai words such as หน้า mask, ใฝ่ faceshield, ฝ่องฝ่ alcohol gel, and ฝ่องฝ่ state quarantine. For this reason, people are less annoyed by the “Thai Kham Angkrit Kham” speaker.

The English language is symbolic of prestige in Thailand. Many Thai media personalities use the English language in their communicative strategy, especially on TV programs. Code-mixing is omnipresent in television programs in Thailand as film directors want to show a sense of modernization (Jaihuek, 2011, as cited in Yuthayothin, 2018). Producers are required to boost ratings and revenue from sponsors, thus they need to produce TV programs with attractive content that is appealing to viewers. Social networks enable audiences to criticize the dialogue used in the shows, resulting in language use becoming more significant. Thai celebrities prefer to use English code-mixing in their speech while being interviewed on TV programs. It can also convey power and elite social class, which are often associated with celebrityhood in general (Ruanglertsilp, 2018).

The audiences usually see models performing on TV, on catwalks, or at glamorous red-carpet events. They rarely hear them talk. The modeling-themed reality television show allows the audience to see models in other situations. Western trends of luxuriousness have influenced the overall aspect of the international franchise TV program. The use of English code-mixing allows both speakers and listeners to communicate effectively. Conversations between the models reveal the vocabulary used in this field.

“The Face Thailand” is a modeling-themed reality television show produced by the Kantana Group that airs on channel 3. The competition takes thirteen weeks to find “The Face” as the winner of the season. Three teams are coached by three mentors who are a supermodel, a famous superstar, and a popular celebrity. In the first round of casting, only fifteen contestants are selected to perform tasks like professional models in masterclasses and campaigns each week. These tasks include an opposite attraction photoshoot, a red carpet catwalk, and a smoke bomb fashion video. Each week, the mentors of the losing teams nominate one of their team members to be judged by the mentor of the winning team in the elimination room. The winning team’s mentor judges and eliminates one contestant from those two nominated by the losing teams’ mentors. In the final round, each team has only one contestant who has the chance to compete in the final catwalk with their mentors. The finalist with the highest total scores is announced as the winner of the season.

The Face Thailand Season 1 aired on October 4, 2014, while Season 5 ended in mid-2019. It has been discussed frequently in the media and is critically acclaimed. For more than five years, The Face Thailand had received many awards such as the “Entertainment Program of the Year,” “Best Variety Show of 2019” from the Line TV Awards in 2019, “Best Program of the Year 2018” from the Maya Awards in 2018, and “The Best TV Program of the Year” from Dara Daily, and it also won The Great Awards 2016. These awards have reinforced the audience’s opinion that The Face Thailand was the best reality model competition show. The fierce competition is attractive to the Thai audience. One appealing aspect of the show is the language usage, which is because there is always a memorable phrase that trends on social media the day after it is aired. For example, the word “Strong” used by one of the mentors, Lukkade, is still being used.

Research into language mixing has resulted in linguists defining, describing, and explaining the differences between “code-mixing” and “code-switching.” Generally defined, code-mixing involves intrasentential switching whereas code-switching involves intersentential switching (Kannaovakun & Gunther, 2003). Code-mixing is the blending of words from different languages within one sentence and is the change of one language to another within the same utterance or in the same oral/written text (Ho, 2007). In contrast, code-switching is the switching between multiple languages above the sentence level and is the situation in which speakers switch between two or more languages in conversation within the same context (Chaiwichian, 2007). However, in spoken language, the occurrence of code-mixing is more frequent than code-switching. Currently, there is a lot of code-mixing used in communication locally, particularly in oral communication (Janhom, 2011).



The linguistic form framework by Ho (2007) categorized seven English code-mixing elements according to the following levels of the grammatical constituency. (1) “Letters of the alphabet” (acronyms) can be classified into two types: letter names and acronyms. The first type is letter names, the letters such as Hall A, B, and C. The second type is acronyms. The use of the letter of a word to represent the whole word such as OT (Overtime) and RSU (Rangsit University). (2) “Short forms” refer to truncation of the lexical word such as present (presentation) and hi-so (high society). (3) “Proper nouns” (impersonal names) refer to a particular name of a person, place, brand, or things such as Thailand (the name of a country) and Channel (the name of a luxury brand). (4) “Lexical words” refer to English nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. (5) “Phrases” refer to a combination of words representing an idea or expression that lacks the subject-predicate connection of a clause such as laughing wildly, fan club, and discussion technique. (6) “Incomplete/minor sentences” refer to statements or questions that lack a verb or subject such as “if he signs a contract.” (7) “Single full sentences and two-sentence units” contain a subject and a predicate with an exact meaning. However, all of the English elements found in the study did not belong to the “two-sentence units” category.

The nativization of English framework by Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003) classified code-mixing and code-switching into six groups of nativized features as follows. (1) “Truncation” refers to an English word that is abbreviated from its complete form or the shortened form of an English word such as (tele)phone, (Inter)net, and com(puter). (2) “Hybridization” is the combination of different languages at the word level in which the meaning of English words remains unchanged such as ช่วง alone, สมุด note, and เด็ก serve. (3) “Conversion” refers to an English word that changes from one class to another class. (4) “Semantic shift” refers to a change in meaning in English words used in the Thai context such as “mouth,” which in the Thai context, refers to gossiping, not a part of the human face. (5) “Reduplication” is the repetition of an English word consecutively. Lastly, (6) “Word order” refers to the change of the word order used in the Thai context.

The reasons and motivation for code-mixing and code-switching framework by Chaiwichian (2007) consists of four motivational factors that influence the use of code-mixing and code-switching. Firstly, (1) “Topic of conversation” is divided into two purposes. The first purpose is when specific topics are somehow handled better in one language than in another while the second purpose is when the speakers use English words or phrases to inform the listener when they are changing the topic of conversation. Secondly, (2) “Interlocutors” are also divided into two purposes. First, when the speaker wants to show politeness to strangers, and second when the speaker is concerned about their audience’s perception and awareness of their listeners’ linguistic abilities to demonstrate their higher bilingual communicative skills. (3) “Target language ability” is when the speaker cannot express themselves clearly in Thai words or phrases and decides to switch to an English word or phrase because of a lack of language ability or to avoid difficulties in understanding. Finally, (4) “Familiarity of words, phrases, and sentences” is when the speaker switches to the most accustomed language.

Previous English code-mixing studies conducted in Thailand nearly all referenced only one or two frameworks. Therefore, this research applies three frameworks to discover three dimensions of English code-mixing, which are (1) the level of the grammatical constituency, (2) the features of the nativization of English, and (3) the reasons and motivation of the speaker. This research explores the direction of language change in Thailand and reveals the vocabulary used by models that have recently been popularized by Thai speakers. This research also discovers the attitudes of Thais toward the change of language phenomenon in Thailand.

## 2. Objectives

The research aims to classify the linguistic forms of Thai and English code-mixing in the reality television show “The Face Thailand Seasons 3.” The study also investigates the characteristics of nativization of English used by Thai models in the modeling-themed reality television show and determines the reasons and motivations that influenced the speaker’s use of English code-mixing.



### 3. Materials and Methods

Data were collected from the dialogues between the participants on the modeling-themed reality television show (show host, mentors, and contestants) The Face Thailand Seasons 3. The dialogues were gathered from the first five episodes (EP 1 – EP 5) of the show. Any part of the dialogues that contained English lexical items was listed as a whole sentence so the researcher can categorize the items into the correct category referring to the three frameworks. The data were put into the table of each framework separately and manually counted. All English lexical items that appear in the Royal Institute Thai dictionary (<http://www.royin.go.th/dictionary>) were not included and deemed beyond the scope of this research, which is because English words that have been borrowed and used as common words in Thai are regarded as loanwords (Thadphoothon, 2009 as cited in Onkhao, 2018). For the tokens that were classified under the frameworks developed by Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003) and Chaiwichian (2007), it was proved through the evaluation form by three of the inter-raters. Therefore, a total of 183 tokens were selected for investigation in this study. However, the data were limited to only the first five episodes from the total of thirteen episodes. Therefore, the result may not reflect the use of English code-mixing for the whole season of The Face Thailand Seasons 3.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Linguistic forms of Thai and English code-mixing in the reality television show

All 183 tokens were analyzed based on the linguistic form framework by Ho, 2007. The categories of the English code-mixing elements were based on the levels of grammatical constituency: letters of the alphabet (acronyms), short forms, proper nouns (impersonal names), lexical words, phrases, incomplete/minor sentences, and single full sentences. Table 1 shows the number of English code-mixing and code-switching items classified by the linguistic units.

**Table 1** English code-mixing and code-switching results based on the linguistic form framework

No.	Linguistic units	Number of English code-mixing items	Percentage
1	Lexical words	135	73.77
2	Phrases	21	11.48
3	Short forms	9	4.92
4	Proper nouns/Personal names/Impersonal names	7	3.82
5	Incomplete/Minor sentences	5	2.73
6	Letters of the alphabet/Letter names/Acronyms	3	1.64
7	Single full sentences	3	1.64
<b>Total</b>		<b>183</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in Table 1, lexical words were ranked the most frequently used among other linguistic units (73.77%), followed by phrases (11.48%), short forms (4.92%), proper nouns/personal names/impersonal names (3.82%), and incomplete/minor sentences (2.73%). Letters of the alphabet/letter names/acronyms and single full sentences were ranked equally (1.64%) as they were both the least found.

The lexical words were the most commonly found accounting for almost three-quarters of the total tokens in the study (73.77%). This finding corresponded with Ho (2007) who reported that the lexical words were the most commonly found items. *This category makes up the most considerable portion of code-mixed linguistic items and includes IT-related terms (Ho, 2007).* This research revealed that the most found examples were lexical words, and letters of the alphabet were the least found. These findings indicated that the advantage of using English words is that they can convey the exact meaning to the listener. Moreover, they are easy to use in daily conversation as lexical words are generally understood in normal communication (Wae, 2012).

Of the lexical words, English nouns had the highest occurrence in the study. The majority of English-Thai code-mixing and code-switching research has been similarly reported that English nouns were found to be the most frequently used items in code-mixing, followed by verbs and adjectives (Likhithongsathorn & Sappapan, 2013). Seventy-seven tokens representing nouns were found and



categorized into the following three types: 1) people (13 tokens), namely mentor, celebrity, and fan club, 2) objects (22 tokens) such as red carpet, make-up, and clubhouse, and 3) ideas (42 tokens) such as acting, comment, and drama.

All English nouns above are commonly used in the Thai entertainment industry, especially in modeling reality television shows. It is usual for Thai celebrities to mix these English words with Thai utterances in their conversation. An idea, quality, or state were the types of nouns that were found the most. The use of English code-mixing with English nouns allows the speaker to express their main idea directly to the listener, and the listener understands it at once. Most of these English words are “content words,” rather than “function words” (Gibbons, 1987 as cited in Ho, 2007).

**Example 1** “ตัวเองไม่เคย acting มาก่อนเลย” (acting)

/tə ɛŋ ma kæktɯ ma k:n l/

I have never done acting before.

**Example 2** “เวลาที่พี่ตี๋ขอ comment อะหรือ ไม่น่ากลัวนะ เพราะจริงๆแล้ว มาชินอะ” (comment)

/we: la: ti: pi: (T:) k'haw 'kment ə l: ma na: kləɔ na prɔ: dʒiŋ dʒiŋ læw (Maya) n ə/

When Mr. Tue was commenting, it didn't seem scary because I got used to it.

**Example 3** “จะกัดก็สี ก็ไม่มี drama” (drama)

/j kɑ:d ki: si: k: ma mi: 'dra:mə/

You can dye your hair in as many colors as you like, and your hair will not be damaged (drama).

#### 4.2 The characteristics of nativization of English used in the modeling-themed reality television show

The investigation of the data was applied to the framework by Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003) to explore the special characteristic of the nativization of English used in the Thai modeling context. A total of 44 tokens was classified into six of the following nativized features: truncation, hybridization, conversion, semantic shift, reduplication, and word order. The number of English code-mixing items of each nativized feature is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2** English code-mixing and code-switching results based on the nativization of English framework

No.	Nativized features	Number of English code-mixing items	Percentage
1	Hybridization	17	38.63
2	Truncation	9	20.45
3	Reduplication	7	15.90
4	Semantic shift	6	13.63
5	Conversion	4	9.10
6	Word order	1	2.29
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

As demonstrated in Table 2, the most frequently found were hybridization (38.63%), followed by truncation (20.45%), reduplication (15.90%), semantic shift (13.63%), and conversion (9.10%). Lastly, word order was the least found (2.29%).

The tokens with characteristics of nativization of English were identified using Kannaovakun and Gunther's (2003) framework, which was found to be the smallest portion (25.14%) of the results. The most frequently found type was hybridization (17 tokens). All of these tokens had Thai prefixes with English suffixes where most English suffixes were nouns, followed by an adjective, and a verb. The examples of the English noun suffixes included ตอน finale, พี่ stylist, บั๊ต dinner, อ่าง Jacuzzi, เนื้อ lotion, จุด full stop, คน talent, การ planning, สาว Korea, and การเดิน red carpet. Only two proper nouns were found, indicating that the speakers did not need to use English words for technical terms or to describe a specific place. For example, “วิธี walk” means to move along on foot. The word “walk” is “เดิน” in Thai, both words have only one





syllable. In this case, it can be concluded that the speaker preferred to use an English word for a conventional reason.

Today, adding the Thai word “ความ” in front of adjective has become popular to express the real condition of something. In this example, the speaker added the Thai word “ความ” before English adjectives such as “ความ sexy” and “ความ confident.” The Thais tend to mix English and Thai words, which is a form of hybridization as it is a fashionable style of communication (Janhom 2011). The speaker added the Thai word “โคตร” even though it may sound impolite. For instance, it was used in front of the word “cool” as “โคตร cool” to intensify the word. In this example, the listener understands that it must be the coolest. The original meaning of the English word was not lost in this hybridization.

The second most frequently found type was truncation (9 tokens). Almost every item in this type omitted the ending syllable such as fin (finale), stu (studio), and hi-so (high society). Only one token omitted the first syllable, “noid,” which came from paranoid. Both the speaker and listener understood the meanings of the original words before they were truncated. The Thais tend to truncate words into a shorter form to make them easier to understand and for the convenience of pronunciation (Papijit, 2013). All nine truncation tokens are widely used within the context of modeling. Lastly, word order was the least found, which is similar to the findings of Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003) and Likhitphongsathorn and Sappapan (2013). Surprisingly, this research found only one token of the word order type: “party foam.”

#### Example 4 Word order (party foam)

Mentor Bee Namtip: “เล่น เล่น party foam อิม อิมให้เต็มๆ”

/len len pɑː.tɪ fəʊm jɪm jɪm hai tem tem/

Let's enjoy this foam party and give a big smile

In Example 4, mentor Marsha was building up the models' confidence during the program. She instructed the contestants to imagine that they were having a fun time at the foam party together. Instead of saying the English noun phrase “foam party” correctly, mentor Marsha and many Thai speakers rearrange the phrase as “party foam” as it sounds more familiar in Thai conversation.

#### 4.3 The reasons and motivations that influenced the speaker's use of English code-mixing

The reasons and motivation for code-mixing and code-switching framework by Chaiwichian, 2007 was used to explore the reasons and motivations that influenced the speaker's use of English code-mixing. A total of 155 tokens were analyzed by the motivational factors that influenced the use of code-mixing and code-switching: the topic of conversation, interlocutors, target language ability, and familiarity of words, phrases, and sentences.

**Table 3** English code-mixing classified by motivational factors

No.	Motivational factors	Number of English code-mixing examples	Percentage
1	Interlocutors	80	51.61
2	Target language ability	38	24.52
3	Familiarity of words, phrases, and sentences	35	22.58
4	Topic of conversation	2	1.29
<b>Total</b>		<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows English code-mixing and code-switching classified by motivational factors. The most frequently found were the interlocutors (51.61%) followed by the target language ability (24.52%), the familiarity of words, phrases, and sentences (22.58%). Lastly, the topic of conversation was the least found (1.29%).

The results revealed that the interlocutors were the most frequently used. This finding appears to contradict the study by Wae (2012), which found that the familiarity occurred the most, followed by interlocutors. This could be because the data were collected from a different genre of the TV show. The



Face Thailand Season 3 also featured more participants (it had nineteen participants one show host, three mentors, and fifteen contestants), which gave more opportunity for communication between different contributors throughout the show. Most of the participants were bilingual and worked within the fashion industry. They would appear to be more professional and earn respect for demonstrating their language ability. One way to show their expertise is using English lexemes in their speech since using the English language in Thailand signifies prestige (Nordquist, 2017 as cited in Ruanglertsilp, 2018).

**Example 5** Interlocutor (backstage)

Mentor Lukkade: "ไปเป็น backstage แล้วก็จุดสโมกบอมบ์"

/pai pen bækste læw k: j u:d smøk bm/

To be a backstage and make a smoke bomb.

In Example 5, two models from team Bee Namtip, Tubtim, and Blossom were assigned as “backstages” to create the smoke bomb for their team. In the elimination room, mentor Lukkade asked Tubtim, the contestant from team Bee Namtip, why mentor Bee Namtip assigned her as a “backstage” yesterday. In Thailand, the word “backstage” is used as a noun in the entertainment industry to define a person who works behind the scenes and supports the main show rather than the area behind the stage.

Most of the participants had good English skills. The results showed that the target language ability was the second most frequently used (38 tokens). The campaigns and activities that the participants needed to undertake were all concerned with fashion that was influenced by luxurious western trends. Some of the words used are unique to the fashion world and have no equivalent words in the Thai language that could express the same meaning. To express the same meaning in Thai, the speakers would have to use several Thai words that give a similar meaning to one English word, which could cause production delays and time being wasted on the set. Therefore, the speaker had to use the English word to convey the exact meaning (Wae, 2012).

**Example 6** Target language ability (masculine)

Mentor Bee Namtip: “เป็นผู้หญิงที่แต่งตัวเป็นผู้ชายแล้วเป็น masculine”

/pu: yij ti: ju: nai raŋ pu: a læw pen mæs.kjə.ln/

A lady dresses like a man with a masculine appearance.

In example 6, mentor Bee Namtip asked the judge about the theme of the photoshoot. The judges insisted that they required all female models to dress and pose with a masculine appearance. Mentor Bee Namtip relayed the information to her models using the statement shown.

## 5. Conclusion

This research investigated the linguistic characteristics and the factors that influenced the use of English code-mixing in a Thai modeling reality television show. All contestants had to collaborate to ensure their team won. Their communication skills played an important role in determining their chances of winning the campaign. In this TV production, good communication skills and the use of appropriate language were essential for the contestants. On the show, more than half of the models were bilingual, which was advantageous for their careers. The show also helped the audience to learn English and improve their speaking skills. They could learn new vocabulary and look up the meaning to understand the conversation between the participants. Some of the viewers may not have been proficient in English, however, they could understand some words from the context. For example, currently, a trending English word in Thailand is “strong,” which has a specific connotation as expressed by mentor Lukkade. It has become one of the most frequently used words on TV programs and in the daily conversation since The Face Thailand Season 2 aired.



Language can help create the social identity of the speaker. It declares their belonging as a member of a particular social group. Social status in Thai culture is important. Generally, it is common for celebrities to differentiate themselves in the entertainment industry, seek the limelight, and pursue more fame. This research demonstrated that some Thais use the English language as a tool to represent their social status and gain prestige. The participants in the show could influence the audience's behavior and increase their reputation by using the English language.

This research has reviewed the use of English code-mixing and code-switching in the reality television show "The Face Thailand Season 3." Further research could expand the analysis using alternative data and explore the scope of English code-mixing as follows.

(1) The researchers could apply the current data to other related frameworks such as functions for English code-mixing, factors that influence the use of English code-mixing, or the nativization process of English words. This type of analysis could reveal other aspects or new styles of English code-mixing with the Thai language. Additionally, it could inform on the trend and development of English code-mixing.

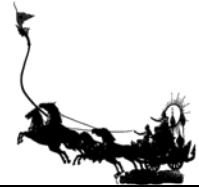
(2) An analysis of other productions created by the Thai mass media could enhance the knowledge of English code-mixing. The researchers could apply the frameworks used in this research to alternative data such as dialogues from other genres of TV programs, popular quotes from celebrity Instagram accounts, dialogues of make-up tutorials by beauty bloggers, or motivational stories created by the influencers on their Facebook accounts. This type of analysis could identify the differences and similarities of the characteristics of nativization of English. It could also investigate the reasons why the speakers use English code-mixing to deliver key messages to their audiences.

(3) Further research could include a discussion of English code-mixing frequency. The analysis could focus on the frequency of English code-mixing used by TV program participants such as the contestants, mentors, and show hosts. The research could reveal other aspects of the topic such as whether the participants' status could affect the use of English code-mixing.

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