

Differences in Daily Communication between Chinese and Thai people

Chen Xin^{1*}

^{1*}College of Arts, Sichuan Normal University, PR China

Wisuda Kaewyod²

²Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Thailand

Abstract

The result of the rapid growth of China's economy brings about the trend of learning Chinese around the world. At present, the increasing number of schools, undergraduate and graduate institutions both in Asia and overseas have opened Chinese classes to serve those who are interested in learning Chinese. In addition, establishment of Confucius Institutes in those countries to encourage non-native speakers to learn more Chinese becomes one of the main policies approved by the central government of China for making "World" understand China more by using Chinese as the important tool. In Thailand, schools and universities have also opened Chinese courses since 2001. It is said that the global trend of "Chinese Fever" has been in Thailand as well.

This paper summarized the comparison on the characteristics of addressing forms, greetings, compliments and acknowledgements in daily communicative expressions made by Chinese and Thai students. The questionnaires (open-ended questions) were distributed to both targeted groups. The findings revealed that there were some differences on the characteristics of communicative expressions between these two groups.

Keywords: Chinese, Thai, Daily Communicative Expressions

College of Arts, Sichuan Normal University
34 Qinghua Rd, CaoTang CanYin YuLeQuan, Qingyang Qu, Chengdu Shi, Sichuan
Sheng, 610072, China
Tel. +86-18866236112 E-mail: 373216975@qq.com

Introduction

R.A. Hudson (1980) as the sociolinguist mentioned that there is a fixed communicative mode of interaction in speech act. “Greetings - Conversation - Farewell” is the three modes in human communication, and the process of this mode is that of people’s daily communication Process, Address, Greetings, Praise, Gratitude is an indispensable communication language in daily life.

Although English has been considered to be used as one of the main languages for communication around the world, Chinese language has also been the important language for communication and negotiation in business sectors.

In addition, the researchers, as the lecturers of Chinese in Thailand, are interested in seeking the ways to teach Chinese more efficiently in Thailand context. It is found that Thai students hardly have foreign language environment. They lack opportunities to use both Chinese and English in their daily lives, and the interference of the first language (Thai), especially parts of speech might lead to failure on learning foreign languages. In terms of Thai and Chinese, although both languages originate from the Sino-Tibetan language family, these two languages have been used separately by these two ethnic groups. The following summaries were presented about the comparison on the differences between the characteristics of daily communicative expressions made by Chinese and Thai students.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the interference of L1 to L2 made by these two targeted groups
2. To point out the differences of the characteristics of daily communicative expressions made by Chinese and Thai students.

Research Methodology

1. Population: 100 Thai students majoring in Chinese (year 1 to year 4) at Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, Thailand and 100 Chinese students majoring in Thai (year 1 to year 4) at Chengdu University, PR China.
2. The questionnaires (open-ended questions) were distributed to both groups

Data Analysis

Descriptive linguistics analysis was used for data analysis.

Results

The findings revealed some confusion on using Chinese for daily communication made by Thai students while Chinese students also faced this problem. It is assumed that their mother language (L1) interfered in another language when they conveyed their messages to their dialogue partners. The following summaries were shown about some different

Comparison of Salutation

As for the name, Chinese and Thai all put “surname” in front. In Chinese, the elder calls the younger’s full name: “Surname + name” like this form. For example, “Zhang Wei”, this is used for more formal occasions; the general occasion will be directly called nicknames. For example, “Zhang Xiao Juan”, called “Xiao Juan” or “Juan Juan”. Chinese call each other’s surname; this is mostly used for colleagues and classmates. For example, “Lao Sun”, “Xiao Wang”.

In Thai, many people have long last names and first names. For more convenience, everyone has his/her own nickname. In daily communication, people are accustomed to using nicknames. For example, “Araya Chinglek”, her nickname is “paii”, elders and friends will call her “paii” in daily communication.

In Chinese and Thai social titles, there are many changes about relatives’ title. This table shows the differences about relative’s title between in Chinese and Thai.

Table 1 A comparison of relative’s title between China and Thailand

Object	Thai appellation	Chinese appellation
Father	พ่อ	爸爸
Mother	แม่	妈妈
A man older than his father	ลุง	伯伯
A man younger than his father	อา	叔叔
A woman older than his father	อา	姑姑
A woman younger than his father	อา	姑姑
A man older than his mother	ลุง	舅舅
A man younger than his mother	น้า	舅舅
A woman older than his mother	น้า	阿姨
A woman younger than his mother	น้า	阿姨
A man older than himself	พี่ชาย	哥哥

Object	Thai appellation	Chinese appellation
A man younger than himself	น้องชาย	弟弟
A woman older than himself	พี่สาว	姐姐
A woman younger than himself	น้องสาว	妹妹

From Table 1, we can see that a women older than their father or younger use the title “姑姑” in Chinese language. Men who are older or younger than their mothers are called “舅舅”. These titles are all differentiated by gender. This is due to an ideology in traditional Chinese culture that men and women are different. In Thai, “อา” the same title is used to call men and women younger than their fathers. “น้อง” the same title is used to call men and women younger than their mother. Calling men and women younger than their own age use the same title.

From here you can see that older relatives have their own titles, and young relatives use a title. This shows that the Thai people pay more attention to “Different age” not the difference between men and women.

About social titles, Thai people call each other’s specific job title. For example, one can call the police “น้อง”. This is the same as in China, but some job titles differ

according to their working level. A university teacher is called “อาจารย์”. A high school teacher is called “คุณครู” when you know each other’s name. Chinese and Thai differ in the title occupation. Thai will use this form “occupation + name”, such as “คุณครู” (It’s mean “teachepaii), but in Chinese it is “ name + occupation “ , such as “Wang police” “Li teacher”.

Conclusion and Discussion

Different comparisons of greetings

Every ethnic group has its own culture. Due to historical reasons, many Chinese do not have enough to eat. Therefore, Chinese people pay attention to food culture. If they meet, they will ask you “Have you eaten?”. So this greeting is Chinese-specific. Chinese and Thai people generally do not talk about the air. The Thai weather is very hot all year round. The relatively stable weather conditions between China and Thailand make the two peoples less interested in the topic of weather conditions.

Intersection produces the reason for the difference

Differences in ways of thinking

China and Thailand are two neighboring countries and the Thai people come from many different places. There are many Chinese among them, so Chinese and Thai people have the same way of thinking. However, there are also some differences. Thai people have long formed a characteristic of mutual acceptance and national integration. Thai people believe in Buddhism, so most people are calm and secure. Chinese are industrious since ancient times. Therefore, China is exclusive and Thailand has compatibility. This difference is also reflected in the umbrella of communication. There are few foreign words in everyday communication in China.

Differences in values

The cultures of different countries and nations are different. Every country and nation has its own value system, and people's communication is constrained by the values. The common ground between the Han people and the Thai nation is that both attach great importance to "affection" and attach importance to interpersonal relations and etiquette. This is because of the influence of Confucianism in China. Thailand is also known as "the country of Buddhism." Thailand is dominated by the Buddhist system. At present, more than 90% people believe in Buddhism. Therefore, Thailand is a country that values ceremonies.

References

- Chotivachira, B., & Hwang, K. (2010). The case studies of daily-life discourses between Thai and Korean cultures. *Journal of Korean Association of Thai Studies*, 16(2), 111-151.
- Duangmanee, K. (2016). Thai-Chinese translation errors made by students at Thaksin University (Thailand) and Solutions. *Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities*, 2(10).
- Hudson, R. A. (1980). *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wongkhomthong, P. (1990). A preliminary investigation of Thai and Japanese formulaic expressions. *Journal of Japanese Linguistics*, 12(1).
- Xu, P. (2015). Teaching business Chinese translation to Thai undergraduates: Problems, difficulties and implications. *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics*, 1(2), 74-79.