ONLINE INTERACTION BETWEEN THAI EFL LEARNERS AND ENGLISH

SPEAKING CHAT PARTNERS: AN EXPLORATION OF

NEGOTIATION FOR MEANING AND DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

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Title: Online Interaction between Thai EFL Learners and English Speaking Chat

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Relationships

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This study examined the interaction between eleven pairs of adult Thai speakers and fluent English speakers over the course of an extended series of up to twelve online chat sessions. The study analyzed negotiation for meaning as well as the nature of the relationships that formed between the pairs and their effects on the Thai speakers' perceptions about their experience participating in the Internet chat exchange program.

The study implemented a triangulation approach for data analysis; data was drawn from chat scripts, interviews with both the Thai and English speakers, and reflective notes written by the Thai speakers after each chat session. The chat scripts were analyzed for (a) triggers that caused comprehension difficulties, (b) strategies used by the Thai speakers to solve communication problems, (c) expressions of target language expert and novice roles, (d) topic initiations, and (e) conversational strategies and linguistic devices used by the participants. The pairs were required to synchronously chat with each other for twelve chat sessions on open topics for at least twenty minutes at their own convenience.

The findings on negotiation for meaning suggested the potential benefit of reflective note writing for morphosyntactic improvement. The morphosyntactic errors

were often ignored in the original conversations because they had less effect than lexical triggers on comprehension. However, the Thai speakers reflected on their own interlanguage forms in the saved written conversations while writing their notes and tried to correct them or requested help from other sources.

The Thai speakers viewed their experience from the chat exchange as an opportunity to use the L2 in a socially meaningful context and build a friendship with a person from another culture. The friendly relationship the Thai speakers developed with their English chat partners and the positive comments from the English chat partners about their English performance, helped enhance the Thai speakers' self-confidence in using English and encouraged them to improve their L2 skills.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

English is the most widely spoken language and the most often taught as a second language (L2) in the world. In Thailand, English is perceived as one of the significant factors in the success of the nation in the current competitive world of business, science and technology. The proliferation of new technological innovations, as well as the advent of the Internet have, more than ever, fueled a demand for English language proficiency as a human resource. Thailand's National Education Plan 2002-2016, which is derived from the 1999 National Education Act (amended in 2002), states as one of its goals that Thais must cope with the rapidly changing world (Office of the Educational Council, 2004). As a result of this National Education Plan, English is now a priority compulsory foreign language (FL) subject in Thailand starting from grade 1 (6 years of age). One of the main objectives of English courses in primary and secondary education curricula cites the ablility "to use [the] English language in communication, learning and understanding the culture of native speakers" (Wiriyachitra, 2002, p. 3)

Even though Thais have studied English for several years in school, most Thais are not competent English users in natural conversations in the target language. Yimsuan's (2002) study reported that the English speaking and listening competence of Thai students who started to learn English in the first grade did not meet the expected level of the Office of Suphan Buri Provincial Primary Education. Likewise, Thai EFL universtiy students and Thai people from the survey in Teawo's (2007) study expressed their desire to improve their English communication skills. Most Thai EFL students are aware that a good command of English can play a significant role in the success of their

future career, in particular in the business sector, as it is often one of the qualifications required in high-paying jobs. Moreover, Thai college graduates who want to pursue graduate study, regardless of their field of study, are required to pass a central English proficiency test administered by that graduate school.

Statement of the Problem

One of the factors that has hindered significant progress in target language acquisition is believed to be the context of learning. Thai EFL learners depend solely on class time to learn English and have limited or no contact with English speaking communities in their local social networks, which use Thai as the medium of communication. For many, if not most, Thai EFL learners, instructional settings may be the only site for exposure to the target language. Moreover, the large class sizes in typical Thai EFL classrooms do not seem to be the most conducive conditions for communicative activities. One of the ways to enhance what Thai learners have learned in the classroom is to formulate ways for them to practice the target language in the out-of-school realm.

Extensive exposure to the target language and an opportunity to practice it are proven to be essential elements for second language learning. In her one-year ethnographic study of language learning experiences outside the classroom of immigrant women in Canada, Norton Peirce's (1995) study showed that the need of individual L2 learners to perform both domestic and public tasks in English offered opportunities for these immigrants to practice the target langue, negotiate their social identities, and develop the confidence to "claim the right to speak outside the classroom" (p. 26). Norton and Toohey (2001) emphasized that the success of good language learners from their

study of immigrant L2 learners was relevant not only to the learners' individual learning strategies and linguistic proficiency, but also to "the possibilities their various communities offered them" (p. 318). Derwing, Munro and Thomson's (2008) findings from a one-year research project suggested that immigrant English as a second language (ESL) learners who had relatively more exposure to English outside the classroom, such as through participation in English conversations lasting more than 10 minutes, and listening to television and radio usage, appeared to improve their oral comprehensibility and fluency over time more than those who reported to have less exposure to the target language.

Foreign language learners, on the other hand, do not have these kinds of access to the target language in their local communities, and they do not need to speak the language in daily life as did the the immigrant L2 learners in the studies previously mentioned. The Thai EFL university-level learners from Teawo's (2007) study on an intensive summer course of speaking and listening skills reported that two of their problems in learning and using their language skills were inadequate out-of-class practice and lack of opportunities to use English in real situations. Foreign language learners, in Brown's (2009) study of effective FL teaching in high school level conducted in the United States, expressed their opinion that the teachers should have helped them use the target languages outside the classroom. Moreover, participants from Nunan's (2003) study, who had different positions in educational sectors in China, revealed the inequity of access to the English language learning. As Nunan phrased it, "[t]he fortunate students whose parents can afford it will receive supplementary instruction in private, after-school classes" (p. 592). This situation echoes a similar inequality in opportunity for Thai

students to become competent English users. In general, Thai students whose families can afford to pay for activities outside the classroom, such as attending a private language summer camp abroad, participating in an exchange program abroad, or paying for a private native-speaking tutor, tend to show a marked improvement in English. It is also important to note that the majority of the Thai EFL learners in McDonough's (2004) study on learner-learner interaction in pairs and small group activities in Thai EFL classrooms did not perceive talking to classmates as useful for language learning. This last point addresses a perennial issue with classroom interaction which, while it has been shown to be useful, is necessarily limited, both by time constraints and by the availability of a range of speakers, including target-language speakers.

For the above reasons, there is a need to encourage more out-of-class language practice for Thai EFL learners in ways that are also economical for participants. One of the handful of relevant studies is Laohawiriyanon's (2007) study of a 12-day intensive English camp for Thai EFL first graders offered by their school with the primary purpose of establishing a solid foundation in English for students, in order to improve their studies in their regular classes the following academic year. At the camp the teacher had the students exposed to the English language from various sources, such as CD-ROM, videos and children's books. My study intends to explore another alternative form of target language practice that the learners can access at their own convenience and does not place financial burdens on the participants.

To provide such a resource, I decided to design an affordable exchange program that can help provide an alternative opportunity for Thai learners to practice their English beyond the classroom with English-speaking interlocutors. Owing to the increasing

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familiarity of Thai people with the use of the Internet (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2010) and the economical means of human interaction possible via the Internet (Warschauer, 1999), I chose to use synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) as a site for each Thai participant to engage in casual conversations with an English-speaking partner. As communication tools, synchronous private chat, or instant messaging (i.e., MSN or Skype), was chosen because it allowed users to have personal conversations, to keep spontaneous contact with each other, and stay in touch with the same chat partner throughout the course of the study (Crystal, 2006).

The number of Internet users in Thailand has increased over the past decade from 670,000 in 1998 to 16,100,000 in 2008 (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2010), which represents approximately 26.83 percent of the population in 2008. In addition, according to the 2008 Survey of the National Statistical Office (2008), the Thai people who reported using the Internet used it for several reasons, for example, searching data and news, emailing, playing online games, e-learning, synchronous chatting, and e-commerce. The available data suggests that Thai Internet users are likely to be familiar with synchronous computer-mediated communication (chat), since they use this tool to make contact with their social networks in their native language. Given this, I decided to explore the Thai speakers' perceptions about their L2 learning experience outside of the language classroom through participating in this Internet chat exchange program.

My study is based on the assumption that participation in a conversation with target-language speakers offers the L2 learner exposure to a wide range of new words,

phrases and structures they may not encounter in textbooks or regular classrooms. The opportunities to negotiate meaning and receive feedback for language development from the target-language speakers are also possible during their conversational engagements (Carter & McCarthy, 2004; Gass, 2003). By applying the lens of sociocultural perspectives that view learning as a process involving both the social and the individual levels (Vygotsky, 1978), and as a development that "comes largely from our experience of participating in daily life" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 50), I decided to explore social interaction between Thai speakers and their English-speaking chat partners in instant messaging over 12 chat sessions, ideally on a weekly basis, in a non-classroom context. I decided not to specify the topics of the chats, as Mori's (2002) study suggested that an open-ended spontaneous conversation, as opposed to a structured conversation in which the issue to be discussed was predetermined, helped create more natural and coherent exchanges.

One researcher who has focused on a similar area is Lam (2000), who examined a Chinese immigrant teenager's identity formation and L2 literacy development through his online written correspondence (email, chat and personal website). In another study, Lam (2004) examined the language socialization of two Chinese teenage immigrants in a written Chinese/English bilingual chat. My study is different from Lam's (2000, 2004) studies in that it involved Thai adult EFL learners, who, as compared to the bilingual teenagers in Lam's studies, presumably had little or no contact with the target language community. My study investigated how these Thai speakers negotiated comprehension problems that occurred over meaning and developed their relationship with their English chat partners over the course of the 12 chat sessions. More importantly, my study

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examined how the relationship that formed with the English chat partners affected the Thai speakers' perception of their own language performance, their future plans relating to the target language learning, and their opinions about their experience participating in the Internet chat exchange program. Note that in Lam's (2000, 2004) studies, the bilingual participants naturally met one another online, whereas in my study, initially, individual Thai and English speakers were paired by arrangement. The volunteer English speakers are first language speakers of English from the United States and England, and a fluent L2 English user from Germany.

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of this study was to provide Thai educators and researchers with a deeper understanding of possible interactions between Thai EFL learners and English-speaking chat partners in everyday conversational exchanges. One goal was to identify factors that had positively or negatively influenced their chat interaction and perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program.

This study also examined whether or not this chat exchange was perceived as worthwhile in providing an affordable opportunity for target language practice in an out-of-class setting for the Thai speakers, judging from their own testimony in the interviews and reflective notes, and from the features of their synchronous chat exchanges. To achieve this goal, the Thai-English dyads were required to synchronously chat on an instant messaging system they both agreed to use (i.e., MSN, Skype) on open topics, ideally on a weekly basis, for 12 times for at least 20 minutes per session, at their own convenience. After each chat, the Thai speakers were encouraged to write a brief reflective note and then share with me the chat conversations that both their chat partners

and they agreed to allow me access to. During the course of the study, I interviewed the Thai and English speakers at mid-way, or after they had completed 6 chats, and at the end of the chat exchange, or after they had completed all 12 chats. My goal was to use these interviews to examine several issues, which will be further explained in the following paragraphs.

With respect to the informational level of the interaction, this study examined types of triggers that invoked negotiations for meaning as they appeared in the chat scripts. I also explored strategies the Thai speakers used to solve communication problems in order to maintain the ongoing conversation with the English chat partners. To gain an understanding of negotiation for meaning and the conversational strategies employed by the Thai speakers, I used the chat scripts as a main source of data, as well as their reflective notes and interviews from both the Thai and English speakers, to confirm and elaborate on the themes arising from the chat scripts. The interviews were also used to elicit intentions that were invisible in the chat scripts or even in the reflective notes, but that guided the Thai speakers' usage while conversing in the chats.

With respect to the interpersonal level, this study examined the relationships that formed between the Thai speakers and their English chat partners over the course of the chat exchange, and suggested how these relationships fostered or hindered the amount of their interaction and influenced the Thai speakers' perception about their future plans in relation to the target language learning. To gain a more in-depth understanding of aspects of the relationships that formed, I triangulated the data from the chat scripts, interviews and reflective notes. The chat scripts were analyzed for three aspects of relationship, that is, turns expressing target language expert and novice roles, the number of topics

introduced by the Thai speakers versus by the English speakers, and the conversational strategies and linguistic devices used by the Thai and English speakers during the chats. In the interview sessions, I discussed with the participants issues that emerged from the analysis of the chat scripts involving the developing relationships with the chat partners. In other words, the interviews were intended to find out the terms the members of each dyad used to describe their chat partners and their relationships with the partners. The interviews were also used to explore their choices to interact beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting sessions. The participants were also asked whether or not they felt their future plans had been affected by their experience with the Internet chat exchange program and in what ways. In addition to the chat scripts and interviews, I used the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers after each chat session as a third source of data to confirm the occurring themes from the first two sources, as well as to gain further insights into the relationship that developed between the dyads.

It was a further objective of this study to explore the Thai and English speakers' perceptions about the whole Internet chat exchange program. Again, in the interview sessions, I elicited reactions from the participants about the benefits they felt they achieved through the chat exchange. These interviews were additionally intended to encourage the participants to talk about any communication events from the chat exchanges that stood out in their minds, such as particularly enjoyable exchanges or problems they encountered during the chat exchange program.

Research Questions

In this study the Thai speakers and the English speakers were paired. Each pair was asked to synchronously chat in a private instant messaging system on open topics for 12 times for at least 20 minutes per session, ideally on a weekly basis, at their own convenience. The specific research questions that guided me to explore the synchronous CMC interaction in this study are the following:

1. What is the nature of the negotiations for meaning that take place in a series of chat exchanges between pairs of adult Thai learners of English and fluent English speakers?

    1.1 What kinds of triggers seem to cause comprehension difficulties between the pairs?

    1.2 What strategies do the Thai speakers use to solve communication problems in order to maintain the ongoing conversation?

2. What is the nature of the relationships that form between the pairs of Thai speakers and their English chat partners during such an Internet chat exchange program, judging from the features of their online exchanges and their own testimony?

    2.1 How do the Thai and English speakers negotiate relationships with each other, judging from the following three features of their online chat exchanges?

        2.1.1 What types of expressions do the Thai and English speakers use when they assume target language expert and novice roles, respectively, during the chat exchanges? Are these expressions

used only for seeking and supplying linguistic help, such as lexical items, as reported in the previous studies?

2.1.2 To what extent are the Thai speakers able to take a lead in topic initiation during the chat exchanges?

2.1.3 What kinds of conversational strategies and linguistic devices do the Thai and English speakers use during the chat exchanges?

2.2 What terms do the members of each pair use to describe their chat partner and the relationship that has formed over the course of the chat exchange program? For example, do they see the relationship as one of friendship, a learning partnership, or something else?

2.3 Do the Thai-English pairs choose to interact beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting, and if so, in what ways (for instance, e-mailing, and engaging in voice chats)?

2.4 Do the Thai speakers feel their future plans have been affected by their experience with the chat exchange program, and if so, in what ways? For example, do they feel that they will keep in touch with their chat partners after the program?

3. What are the participants' perceptions about the chat exchange program?

3.1 What benefits do they feel they achieved through participating in the chat exchanges with their partners, such as in language learning and cultural awareness?

3.2 What difficulties do they encounter during the chat exchange program?

Significance of the Study

This study is important for the following eight reasons. First, to my knowledge, there have been no previous studies in the field of Thai EFL education that have attempted to connect Thai EFL learners with other English-speaking interlocutors through synchronous CMC so that they could practice the target language outside of their local classroom settings. For most of the Thai participants, this chat exchange was the first time they had an opportunity to take part in authentic target language conversations over an extended period of time. This study is significant because it provides useful information for foreign language educators who must prepare this sort of program for the new generation of learners. The findings of this study also revealed aspects of the target language teaching that are neglected in foreign language classes, but are necessary for students if they are to learn to engage in everyday conversations. The implications from this study benefit teachers in planning communicative activities in the classroom that better prepare the students for challenges they may encounter in real-life spontaneous conversational exchanges.

Second, this study is different from other previous studies because it offered insights into the learner and native speakers' chat exchanges on both the informational level, via an analysis of negotiations for meaning, and on the interpersonal level, via an analysis of the relationships that formed. The combination of both perspectives provided, as Block (2003) puts it, a comprehensive picture of "the choices learners make when interacting" (p. 5) with their chat partners. In other words, this study is different from other previous synchronous CMC studies that have treated learner-native speaker's interaction mainly on the linguistic level by analyzing negotiated sequences. The analysis

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of the interpersonal relationships that formed between the Thai-English pairs in this study helped indicate some interactional skills that were useful in real-life conversations, yet have been ignored in foreign language classrooms.

Third, unlike the majority of the previous L2 studies on synchronous CMC that were conducted in task-based instructional settings, the Thai-English pairs in this study engaged in open-ended conversations 12 times, ideally on a weekly basis, outside the classroom. For this reason, the data collected from this study provided a more broad understanding of the types of partnership that formed between L2 participants and their target-language partners in a non-classroom context.

Fourth, there is another relevant point to be made about the context of this study. While the previous L2 studies on interaction between L2 learners and target language speakers were conducted in public chat rooms, my study took place in a private space in an instant messaging system in which each of the Thai speakers were able to keep in contact with the same English speaker throughout the course of the chat exchange. Because this format allowed the formation of a fairly stable relationship, the findings of this study extended and deepened some concepts related to social interaction produced in this particular synchronous CMC environment.

Fifth, this study is different from previous studies because it explored other modes of CMC through which the Thai-English pairs chose to interact with each other besides the synchronous text chatting. In addition, this study explored the participants' view of and use of the voice tool during their chats. Many Thai people are familiar with the voice tool, or Internet-telephony calling, offered from instant messaging systems in their native

language. This study provided suggestions for future chat exchange programs to enhance the use of the voice tool during the chat exchanges.

Sixth, it is a special feature of this study that it interviewed the English-speaking chat partners about their perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program. Previous studies have not included the target-language speakers' views in the analysis. In a conversation between two interlocutors, the conversation can no longer be carried on without the involvement of both parties (Gumperz, 1982). The data from the English chat partners provided useful insights for analysis and subsequent implications.

Seventh, this study was of great value for Thai EFL learners. This study encouraged Thai EFL learners to take a more active part in their own language learning by finding their own opportunities for target language practice via the Internet or other modes that may be available to them in their daily life. For both Thai speakers and their English chat partners, participating in this study helped increase awareness of each other's countries and cultures, and thus created greater understanding between them.

Eighth and finally, this study identified the nature of interaction occurring in a non-classroom environment between Thai speakers and their English-speaking interlocutors. The findings from this study encouraged Thai EFL teachers' awareness of the crucial benefits the learners can gain from exposure to everyday interaction in the target language. This study also encouraged the teacher to design activities that foster socially meaningful engagements for their students both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, this study encouraged future studies on two areas that have been neglected in Thai foreign language education: Thai speakers' informal L2 learning experience, and attempts to promote autonomous L2 learning in out-of-school settings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter covers the essential theoretical background to my study. There are

three sections in this chapter. The first section will review related perspectives on social

interaction in face-to-face conversational exchanges. In this first section, I will discuss

the advantages of L2 conversational interaction for language development. I will then

turn to the frameworks for analyzing conversations in both the informational and

interpersonal aspects. I will review the relevant findings from the previous studies that

have examined negotiations of meaning and relationships between interlocutors in face-

to-face conversations; these studies have been instrumental to me in forming my analysis

of the online synchronous conversations between the Thai and English speakers.

In the second section, Second Language (L2) Research on Synchronous

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), I will apply what I have learned from the

previous studies conducted in face-to-face conversational interaction in the first section to

my analysis of online chat conversations. I begin this second section with a review of

second language studies on synchronous chat conversations that involve the analysis of

negotiations for meaning and interpersonal relations between the learners and target

language speakers. Based on the reviews of the previous L2 studies on both face-to-face

and online conversations, I will then point out the gaps in the literature and identify

directions my study has pursued to fill in those gaps and help expand the knowledge of

social interaction in the online synchronous L2 interaction.

In the third and last section, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), my

primary aim is to explain the reasons I chose to use an Internet-based communication

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tool, namely an instant messaging system, as the means to connect the Thai speakers and their English-speaking conversational partners. This section covers a review of the nature of computer-mediated communication, some characteristics of language in CMC, and the merits of CMC in second language pedagogy.

<div align="center">Perspectives on Social Interaction</div>

Verbal interaction offers a range of opportunities for exposure to the target language and for language practice. In addition to task-based communicative language activities that stimulate learners' L2 interaction, learners can benefit from participating in naturally occurring conversations, the kind of interaction that is the focus of my study. Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier's (2001; 2001) study, for instance, reported that open-ended conversational activity required Japanese ESL students to produce a higher quality of turns measured in length and syntactic complexity as compared with an information gap activity. The students also employed discourse strategies (e.g., inquiring about the native speaker's background knowledge to build rapport) in order to achieve reciprocal understanding of the information being conveyed as well as to maintain a friendly relationship with their native speaking partners.

What have the findings of the previous studies suggested about characteristics of conversational activity that may help foster L2 learning? First, Carter and McCarthy's (2004) study on the creative uses of spoken language (i.e., the use of figures of speech and verbal repetition) in everyday conversation between native speakers suggests a potential benefit from natural conversations for L2 learning. The findings of their study reveal that linguistic creativity is generally co-constructed in the interpersonal realm of interaction, or in social contexts in which the main purpose is mutual involvement in

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exchanging experience and viewpoints. To help generate L2 conversational exchanges

that promote symmetry of involvement between the Thai and English speakers, the

members of each dyad in the present study were assured that they were free to share with

each other their stories, experiences, or perspectives, as they do in daily life when they

get to know a new person.

Second, Mori's (2002) study suggests that an open-ended, spontaneous

conversation, as opposed to a structured conversation in which the issue to be discussed

was predetermined, may help create a more natural and coherent discussion. In her study

of interaction between L2 students and native speakers of Japanese, Mori (2002)

designed tasks whose guidelines were supposed to create symmetrical exchanges of

perspective on the part of both students and guest native speakers. However, the students'

interaction with native speakers tended to be similar to "a structured interview" (p. 323)

in which the native speakers answered the students' set of questions, rather than an

ordinary conversation, in which topics flow sequentially from spontaneous evaluative

responses and expressions of interest. Cautionary lessons can be drawn from studies of

this sort; I have deliberately avoided structuring the content of the chat exchanges

between the Thai and English speakers.

Finally, Gumperz (1982) proposes that successful conversational involvement

requires sufficient shared linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge for interlocutors to

perceive and interpret the contextualization cues sent subtly along with the semantic

content to signal the speaker's intended meanings. Awareness of contextualization

conventions is naturally acquired through engagements with individuals over a long

period of time in groups that have a common or shared relationship (Gumperz, 1982).

This view suggests that maintaining long-term personal contacts with target language speakers or experienced L2 users may help the learners to build their knowledge and communicative competence in the target language. Given the importance of this claim, my study set out to provide the individual Thai speakers with the opportunity to meet a target language speaker and start personal contacts with that speaker. Instead of collecting only a few conversations from the dyads, I chose to study their conversational interaction over a fairly extended period of time. They were encouraged to correspond with their partners at least twelve times, ideally on a weekly basis, over a three-month period.

In conclusion, the findings from the previous studies have guided the design of the exchange program my participants engaged in. The Thai-English dyads in my study participated in unstructured conversations in which they were encouraged to converse on open topics.

In the next section, I will discuss face-to-face social interaction studies as background for my analysis of the chat conversations between the Thai and English speakers. I will divide the concepts that have been used to analyze interaction between interlocutors into two aspects, namely, the informational and interpersonal aspects. The former is a study of sequences in which interlocutors negotiate comprehension difficulties that occur over the meaning of the messages in the conversations. The latter is a study of how the interlocutors negotiate aspects of their relationship with each other during the conversational exchanges.

Negotiation for Meaning

Negotiation for meaning between L2 users and target language speakers can promote L2 acquisition. An understanding of how Thai EFL learners and target language speakers negotiate their comprehension difficulties during chats can help teachers to prepare their future students to fully benefit from chat exchanges of this sort. In this section, I will discuss the benefits of negotiation for meaning in L2 learning, and describe the negotiation routines that have been identified and studied. I will then identify the areas my study has explored. In the last part of this sub-section, I discuss some findings of recent L2 studies on negotiation for meaning that can be applied to my study.

Interlocutors are occasionally required to adjust their utterances during their conversations when receiving signals indicating comprehension difficulties from one another in order to maintain their conversational involvement (Gumperz, 1982). Such interactional adjustments are typical in natural conversations and, in fact, appear more often in exchanges involving L2 users than in native speaker-native speaker conversations (Long, 1983). It has been claimed that negotiation for meaning, and in particular negotiation that elicits interactional modifications from native-speaking or more proficient L2 interlocutors, "facilitates acquisition" (Long, 1996, pp. 451-452). During negotiated interaction, correct L2 forms that are problematic for learners are meaningfully and contextually repeated via multiple types of speech from speakers of greater ability. As a result, negotiated interaction makes it possible for the learners to notice the deviation of their interlanguage forms from the target language forms. Those interactional adjustments should help the new forms become understandable to the

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learners (Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1998). Furthermore, the learners' speculative alterations to their interlanguage forms, as displayed in their modified output, are likely to stimulate useful responses for development from target language interlocutors (Long, 1996).

When one of the interlocutors makes an effort to take care of a comprehension problem, they will deviate from the main line of the conversation and engage in *negotiation routines* (Varonis & Gass, 1985). Negotiation routines, or what Varonis and Gass (1985) also refer to as non-understanding routines, are comprised of four stages in which the "mis-understanding, no understanding, or incomplete understanding" (p. 73) is collaboratively resolved. The four stages of negotiation routines are trigger, indicator, response, and reaction to response. The *trigger* is any portion of an interlocutor's speech that causes a comprehension difficulty to the listener and pushes him or her to signal an *indicator* for non-understanding, such as the use of echo with rising intonation, a poor response, or a comprehension check. The speaker then sends a *response* to the request for clarification in the form of**,** for example, a repetition, a rephrasing or a simplification of the problematic utterance. The last part, *reactions to response*, is optional as the interlocutors complete the negotiation and return to the primary point of the conversation.

My study focuses on Varonis and Gass's (1985) first three components of negotiation routines, that is trigger, indicator and response. An examination of triggers will identify the sources of comprehension problems that push the Thai and English speakers to negotiate meanings with each other. My study expands Varonis and Gass's (1985) 'indicator' and 'response' categories to cover the strategies the Thai speakers may use in synchronous chat conversations. In other words, my study aims to examine types of strategies the Thai speakers use to solve communication difficulties in comprehending

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the messages sent by their English chat partners, and in responding to the requests for clarification from their chat partners. My study also tries to identify any other strategies the Thai speakers may use to maintain their ongoing conversation with their chat partners. Synchronous computer-mediated communication offers a unique context of interaction in which the interlocutors can seek help from other available online sources while conversing with each other. Therefore, my study examines whether the Thai speakers choose to use other strategies to promote interaction in addition to those indicators that have been reported in face-to-face interaction. The following paragraphs review findings from recent studies that help shape the analysis of negotiation for meaning for my study.

Recent Second Language Studies on Negotiation for Meaning

Second language acquisition researchers have contributed additional understanding of negotiation for meaning in L2 interaction. In this part, I will discuss two issues that are related to my study, that is, the types of language tasks that have potential for rich negotiated interaction, and interlocutors' intentions in using negotiated statements. First, regarding the types of language tasks, Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier's (2001) study revealed that, although their study's information gap activity stimulated more sequences of negotiation than their conversational task did, the former activity called for attention to only discrete lexical items for task completion. In contrast, the conversational task tended to offer global triggers; that is, it required attention to the overall discourse during the interaction.

In another study of interaction between foreign language learners of German dyads, Hardy and Moore (2004) compared exchanges that occurred during "high" and

"low" structural support tasks. The former task contains a relatively high amount of linguistic information and clear steps for completing the task, while the latter task provides little linguistic content and no explicit instructions on how to proceed with the task. The researchers found that a low structural support task generated more conversational negotiations than a high structural support task. Specifically, in the low support condition, the number of "information questions, clarification requests, affirmations, and corrections" (Hardy & Moore, 2004, p. 361) produced was significantly higher than those in the high support condition.

In short, Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier's (2001) and Hardy and Moore's (2004) studies suggest that conversational tasks and low structural support tasks, respectively, promote rich negotiated sequences. The findings of their studies have confirmed my previous discussion on the merits of open-ended conversations, that they provide potential benefits for L2 learning.

Second, for interlocutors' intentions in using negotiated utterances, Foster and Ohta's (2005) study of interaction between L2 learners in interview tasks raises a caution in identifying instances of negotiation for meaning in research data. According to an analysis of the context and subsequent interviews with the participants, Foster and Ohta (2005) found that some negotiation turns (e.g. confirmation checks and clarification requests) were actually intended by the speakers to perform other functions. Apart from serving as indicators for communication problems, there was evidence that negotiated moves could be used as signals for understanding and, in turn, as expressions of enthusiasm to hear additional information. Applied to the present study, this finding suggests the importance of interview results, which may clarify the speakers' intentions,

independent of any analysis that might be offered by an outside reader of the chat logs. I have included the interview as an instrument in the present study, in order to elicit strategies that may be invisible in the chat scripts or the reflective notes, but that the Thai speakers use during the chat exchanges.

In the next section, I move to discuss studies that focus on the interpersonal aspect of the interaction between L2 learners and target language speakers.

Face-to-Face Research on Negotiation of Interpersonal Relations

Social relationships between L2 learners and their target language community outside the classroom play a crucial part in the learners' access to the L2 practice with those members of the community in the learners' everyday social networks. As Norton Peirce (1995) puts it, "relations of power in the social world affect social interaction between second language learners and target language speakers" (p. 12). Applying Norton Peirce' s (1995) view to the context of the chat exchanges in my study between the Thai EFL learners and their conversational partners, the social positions of L2 user and target language speaker, likewise, can influence their interaction and the opportunities for the Thai speakers to practice the L2. Given this, useful implications for foreign language learning can arise from a study conducted in a foreign language-learning context that explicitly addresses the effects of the relationships that form between learners and target language speakers in conversational exchanges outside of the classroom over an extended period of time.

Previous L2 studies have revealed the significant roles that interpersonal relations between teachers and learners play in the achievement or failure of learners. Blanton's (2002) revisiting of her initial ethnographic research indicated the hidden connection

between teacher-child relationships and L2 acquisition rate. The kind of teacher-child interaction that she called "synchronicity" (p. 306) fostered a remarkable rate of literacy development for pre-first-grade participants at a multilingual K-12 school in Morocco. To illustrate, the teacher and the individual students often interacted in conjunction with each other in spontaneous L2 activities, especially outside the regular class lessons, such as reading a story during recess. Blanton (2002) concluded that the teacher's verbal "tailor-made assistance" (p. 302) to each child, along with shared affectionate "inaudible exchanges" (p. 304) between both parties, promoted L2 growth, in that these positive aspects helped encourage the students' steady progress in successfully struggling against difficulties as they were acquiring the L2. Note that Blanton's (2002) study signals the importance of language practice outside the classroom for L2 development, an area of study that has not been much explored in the Thai EFL context. This is why my study examines the Thai EFL learners' language practice in a non school-based context.

For adult language learning, Block (2007) revealed that an established rapport between the teacher and his EFL focal student had a positive effect on the student. Block (2007) revisited his foreign language learning diary study in Spain that investigated the students' view on effective language teaching practice. The focal student, named Silvia, mentioned in the interview prior to the English course that she favored good relationships between the teacher and the students and among the students. In response to an interview topic on her previous experiences in foreign language learning, Silvia often brought up her relationships with her former teachers, "from the enjoyment she experienced talking to a private French teacher about literature to going out to dinner with a 'nice' teacher

and classmates" (Block, 2007, p. 126). In fact, these were teachers with whom she took language classes more than a decade ago.

During the actual course, Silvia was not satisfied with the teacher's way of responding to her compositions. She then asked the teacher to also give positive feedback instead of focusing on merely correcting mistakes. Silvia's negotiation of powers with the teacher yielded two positive results in her favor. First, the teacher changed her approach in responding to students' writing. Second, the talk gave Silvia a chance for personal contacts with the teacher, which she mentioned in the interview as being important to her. Silvia reflected on her positive view in developing a close relationship with the teacher as she wrote:

> I like talking to teachers, I don't know why, but I like it a lot … And besides, we went to the bar and had a glass of cava … But of course since we had never gone to the bar with her, you never get to know her very well. So we were asking her where she was from and how she had ended up here and everything. I don't know, you situate people more when you know a little about their past … (Block, 2007, p. 130)

In contrast to Silvia who was able to establish rapport with her former and current teachers and resolve the conflict she had with her current teacher, a Chinese EFL learner in an American university in Lantolf and Genung's (2002) study experienced a different situation. The focal student, named PG, had struggled to comply with the unfamiliar and unexpected teaching methodology, which mainly consisted of controlled grammar and drill exercises, and classroom interaction in which the native speaking teachers had absolute power. Moreover, in PG's views, the way the teachers interacted with the

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students made the classroom atmosphere undoubtedly not conducive to learning. One of the teachers, for example, humiliated PG in front of the class when the teacher thought that she had not prepared for class. PG tried to defend herself after class with the teacher, pointing out that she had, in fact, prepared for class; yet the teacher insisted on not believing her. PG also reported that another native speaking teacher intimidated her classmate in front of the classroom. The findings of Lantolf and Genung's (2002) study suggested that PG's failed attempts to negotiate with the teachers about her expectations from the class played a significant role in her shift to a negative self-perception as a language learner. In other words, she devalued herself, moving from a view of herself as a successful learner (from her history) with a motivation to be a proficient L2 user, to a more pessimistic view of herself as a surviving learner with the limited goal of just passing the course.

In conclusion, the findings of previous studies suggest that the interpersonal relations between the teacher and learner are one of the factors that affect the learner's degree of success in language development. As these studies have informed us about the learner-teacher interaction in the classroom, there is a need for more studies on interaction between learner and the other target language speakers they socialize with in real life. For this reason, my study has been designed to investigate the interaction between a group of foreign language learners and target language speakers in day-to-day conversational exchanges outside of the classroom. My study examines how a group of Thai and English speakers negotiate aspects of their developing relationships with each other, and how these developing relationships may play out in the Thai speakers'

perception about their English chat partners, their experience participating in the online

exchange program, as well as their future plans, if any, in relation to their L2 learning.

As a general additional note, Block's (2007) and Lantolf and Genung's (2003)

studies showed that diary writing was a site for students to reflect their views on their

own language learning experiences, and, at the same time, was an excellent source of

data for researchers to investigate any insight into the participants' perceptions. For this

reason, I have encouraged the Thai speakers in the present study to write a short

reflective note after each chat session. The following sections cover three aspects of

relationship that my study has focused on: expressions of target language expert and

novice roles, topic initiations, and conversational strategies and devices used by the Thai

and English speakers.

Expressions of Target Language Expert and Novice Roles

Second language research on conversational analysis among adult L2 users and

first language speakers has shown that these interlocutors perform different roles in

relation to each other while a conversation is developing. One of these roles includes the

complementary target language expert and novice categories that bring about

opportunities for target language learning. Even though target language expert and novice

exchanges in conversations between L2 and L1 speakers are crucial for language

learning, most of the previous L2 studies have predominantly examined the linguistic

aspects of these exchanges. Most of these studies reported that L2 users have generally

displayed their novice position by requesting linguistic help from their target-language

speaking interlocutors. For example, Kasper (2004) examined types of social positioning

between a foreign language student of German and her native-speaking conversational

partner in three open-topic talks assigned as part of the requirements for a course. Kasper (2004) reported that the target language expert and novice sequences that appeared in the conversations were mostly called for by the learner, who raised questions about the meaning of words or phrases. Once these linguistic issues had been taken care of, the participants shifted back to their ongoing topic and adopted a more equal relationship as conversational partners. In addition, in her analysis of casual conversations between pairs of friends or acquaintances who were learners and native speakers of Japanese, Hosoda (2006; 2006) found that the participants displayed their differences in target language expertise as a way to maintain mutual understanding when communication problems arose.

In the same vein, Park's (2007) study of nonnative speakers' identity construction in casual conversations with native-speaking acquaintances reported that the learners appeared to occasionally assume the role of a requester by seeking help from the L1 speakers on issues such as the correct pronunciation and choice of vocabulary items. Park (2007) pointed out that the learners also placed themselves as assessors of their own linguistic performance. Park's study (2007) is different from Kasper's (2004) and Hosoda's (2006) studies in that Park (2007) described the non-linguistic or affective characteristics of the exchanges involving target language expert and novice positions. For example, after requesting her American neighbor to supply a lexical item, "century," one of the learners self-assessed her failure to recall the word through saying, "Oh my god. I didn't remember this." (p. 350). Her American neighbor, however, tried to reinforce a positive outlook by telling her "Oh, its not like you say century all the time." (p. 350).

Kasper (2004), Hosoda (2006) and Park (2007) suggested that linguistic assistance, in particular with lexical items, was the most obvious feature of language expert and novice expressions during natural conversations. Park's (2007) study also revealed that the ESL learners and native-speaking interlocutors also displayed their affective stances while assuming the roles of the target language novice and expert. Building on the findings of these previous studies, it is necessary to explore non-linguistic features in the exchanges involving differential language expertise, as in Park's (2007) study. It is important for researchers to expand the understanding of these two positions (novice and expert) as social categories as well as for their effects on learning and comprehension.

My study aims to examine the types of expressions the Thai and English speakers display while assuming the roles of a language novice and expert in natural conversations. My study covers the language expert and novice exchanges from both the linguistic and non-linguistic point-of-view. My study is different from Park's (2007) study in that my study examines whether and how the degrees of target language expert and novice expressions affect the Thai speakers' perception about the relationship that has formed with their English chat partners. In the following section, I turn to research on topic introduction in L2 interaction.

Topic Initiation

Another aspect of the interpersonal relationship that is the focus of my study is the frequency of topics introduced by the Thai and English speakers during the chat conversations. Gan, Davison and Hamp-Lyons (2008) argued for the importance of L2 learners' ability to manage the topics of conversations: "the ability to stay on topic, to

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move from topic to topic and to introduce new topics appropriately is at the core of communicative competence" (p. 331). Gan et al. (2008) reported that their ESL students in group oral discussions in an assessment context were able to contribute to the topic assigned through developing and moving from one topic to the other topic while completing the task. In natural conversational engagements with a target language speaker, I was curious in approaching the analysis of the chat exchanges in the present study: would the L2 learners be able to contribute equally to the topics of conversation?

Kasper's (2004) study of conversations between an FL student of German and her native-speaking conversational partner showed that the student did not introduce as many topics as the native speakers did. This dyad met face-to-face in three open-topic conversations as part of the requirements for the student's German course. The native speaker of German in Kasper's (2004) study assumed the role of "interaction manager" (p. 557); she often introduced topics, asked relevant questions, and moved on to the next topic of conversation. My study examines whether the English speakers are the ones who take the lead in introducing the topics during the chat conversations with the Thai speakers, as Kasper's (2004) findings revealed. My study is different from Kasper's (2004) study in that my study examines the number of topics initiated by the Thai and English speakers over a longer period of time, twelve chat sessions, and these chats are independent from any school-based context, while the participants in Kasper's (2004) study met only three times as part of a language course.

Conversational Strategies and Devices

The third aspect of the interpersonal relationship my study intends to explore involves the conversational strategies and linguistic devices used by the Thai and English speakers during the chat exchanges. An examination of conversational strategies and devices used by a speaker can help suggest the kind of interpersonal relationship she or he intentionally imparts to the listener. According to Goffman's (1959) primary assumptions about social interaction in daily life, in addition to achieving a communicative aim, speakers are likely to maintain the impression the audience perceives of them. The speakers' intention to convey the impression they have chosen is associated with the verbal symbols that they use to carry out the message. To put it another way, the impression the speakers attempt to convey to the listener reflects the types of conversational strategies the speakers employ during the conversation, whereas the verbal symbols they use serve as linguistic devices to show how they want to be perceived by the listeners.

What are the types of conversational strategies interlocutors use during their interaction? Lakoff (1973) asserts that while interlocutors are exchanging information, they usually intend for the other party to have a positive attitude about the message being conveyed, a goal they try to meet by employing the Rules of Politeness to create a positive perception in the others. The first rule, "Don't impose," (distance) reminds interlocutors not to interfere with others' business. For example, one asks for permission before requesting personal information, "May I ask how much you paid for that vase, Mr. Hoving?" (p. 298). The second rule, "Give options," (deference), involves using hedged expressions; for instance, a statement such as "I guess it's time to leave. /It's time to

leave, isn't it?" (p. 300), may be used when the speaker intends not to impose on the listener by pressing the listener to make or approve a given decision. Finally, one employs the last rule, "Be friendly," (camaraderie) for instance when one addresses the interlocutors with their nicknames, to impart a warm friendly feeling to an interaction.

Previous research has investigated the effect of conversational strategies and devices used by the interlocutors during interactions. The first study looked at social interaction among native speakers of English. Tannen (2005; 2005) develops Lakoff's (1973) concept of politeness; she now uses aspects of this framework to analyze a Thanksgiving dinner conversation among friends who are from England and different regions of the United States. Tannen (2005) examined the features of talk in various dimensions, such as relative personal focus of the topic, paralinguistic features, the use of questions and repetition, topic cohesion, tolerance for noise versus silence, and laughter. Tannen (2005) concluded that when conversational strategies and subsequent linguistic devices of the participants were comparable, the listener appeared to understand the intended meaning the speaker sent by means of his choice of device; hence, the listener automatically responded to the speaker in a manner that was expected by the speaker. As a result, participants who shared more conversational strategies and devices tended to engage in more harmonious exchanges with each other more often than participants who did not share similar strategies. Tannen (2005) suggests from the findings of her study that the interlocutors that share more similar conversational strategies often "share social, ethnic, geographic, or class background" (p. 188).

For L2 research, Bongartz and Schneider (2003) studied the effect of conversational style on subsequent linguistic devices used by individual L2 learners. In their one year ethnographic study, Bongartz and Schneider (2003) examined the acquisition of German by two immigrant boys who are native speakers of English. The main finding was that the individual interactional strategies of the two brothers brought about their different linguistic choices, and consequently, different chances for L2 improvement. For instance, the younger brother (age 5) who attempted to maintain a dominant position in play, tended to use directive statements that resulted in the use of imperatives. The older brother (age 7), on the other hand, who valued shared involvement in play and favored a narrative style, appeared to use relatively more complex structures, such as complex noun phrases containing determiners, in his interaction with friends.

My study aims to investigate the types of conversational strategies that the Thai and English speakers tend to employ during the chat exchanges and the subsequent linguistic devices they use to signal their choice of strategy to each other. While Bongartz and Schneider (2003) examined the interactional strategies and subsequent linguistic choices of young L2 learners who were immersed in the target language community during the course of their study, my study is interested in social interaction between adult foreign language users and unfamiliar target language speakers in an Internet-based synchronous environment.

Second Language Research (L2) on Synchronous Computer-Mediated

Communication (CMC)

Negotiation for Meaning in Synchronous CMC Research

In this section, I will discuss the findings of previous L2 research on synchronous chat interaction on the types of triggers that caused the participants to negotiate meaning and the negotiation devices they used for negotiation. I will then identify the directions my study pursues to extend the knowledge on negotiation for meaning via the present study.

What have the previous second language CMC studies learned about the types of triggers that cause comprehension problems to L2 learners and that push them to signal for clarification from their L2 interlocutors or native speakers?

First of all, second language research has suggested that synchronous CMC environments can stimulate negotiation for meaning among interlocutors. Such patterns of negotiated interaction tend to share several characteristics with those that occur in offline face-to-face conversations (Kitade, 2000; Lee, 2001; Pellettieri, 2000; Sotillo, 2000; Toyota & Harrison, 2002). Lexical items have been found to be the major triggers that spur the negotiation routines, while morphosyntax triggers fewer instances of negotiation (Blake, 2000; Blake & Zyzik, 2003; Lee, 2006; Pellettieri, 2000). In comparison with lexical triggers, grammatical errors generally have less effect on comprehension (Pellettieri, 2000) and hence appear to be ignored (Blake & Zyzik, 2003).

Most of the studies mentioned above share two common characteristics. First, the researchers have examined triggers for negotiation for meaning in one-on-one synchronous interactions. Second, these learners have typically been required to

participate in tasked-based environments. For instance, the L2 learners of Spanish in Blake's (2000) study were asked to carry out jigsaw, information-gap, and decision-making language tasks, while the learners and heritage speakers of Spanish in Blake and Zyzik's (2003) study participated in a two-way jigsaw task. In Pellettieri's (2000) study, learners of Spanish engaged in five language tasks, ranging from a focused topic conversation to more controlled tasks, for example, jigsaw-type activities. In contrast to these, there is a need for investigation of negotiation for meaning between learner and native speaker dyads in synchronous chat conversations in a non-classroom based context.

In an analysis of one-to-one synchronous chat interaction between learners and native speakers, Tudini (2003) examined negotiation of meaning between 9 learners of Italian and 49 native speakers in public Italian chat rooms over two semester-long periods. The participants interacted on open topics on their own time, in connection with a course in Italian. The learners were required to submit some of their best chat scripts as part of their assessment for the course. Tudini (2003) reported that lexical difficulties were the primary triggers for negotiations. My study is different from Tudini's (2003) study, in that my study examines negotiation for meaning in a one-to-one synchronous format in which each Thai EFL learner keeps contact with the same target-language speaker throughout the course of the chat exchange for at least 12 sessions. Also, participation in my study was totally voluntary and thus was not part of any language course or assessment. However, my study tends to validate previous results on whether lexical problems seem to be the main trigger for negotiations in day-to-day conversations between the Thai EFL learners and the target-language speaking interlocutors. In addition

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to the chat script analysis as in the previous studies, my study differs from earlier ones in that it triangulates the relevant data from the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers after each chat session, and includes interviews with both the Thai and English speakers to explore insights into the participants' perceptions regarding the triggers for negotiations for meaning.

In contextualizing the present study, it is also important to look at research on the strategies L2 learners use to negotiate meaning during conversations, and to ask what previous studies have reported on these negotiation devices. Similar to research findings on negotiation devices in face-to-face interaction (e.g., Long, 1983, 1996; Gass, Mackey & Pica, 1998, Hardy & Moore, 2004), participants in synchronous CMC have employed several indicators to signal non-understanding and give responses to requests for clarification. For example, in her study of online discussions in a private chat room between learners of Spanish, Lee (2001) reported that the interactional modifications frequently used among them consisted of clarification requests, clarification checks, self-corrections, comprehension checks and confirmation checks. Learners of Spanish in Pellettieri's (2000) study also used explicit statements of non-understanding and inappropriate responses. Learners of German and English in Kötter's (2003) MOO-based collaborative project used their first language advantageously to substitute words or ideas in the target language. In addition, Tudini's (2007) analysis of one-to-one learner/native speaker interaction in public Italian chat rooms showed that many learners initiated negotiation sequences by requesting further information about the target language and culture from their Italian interlocutors through questioning strategies. My study has included the findings on whether the strategies the Thai speakers use are successful in

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solving the communication problems. My study differs from the previous studies because my study expands the study of negotiation devices, or Varonis and Gass's (1985) indicators and responses, to cover other available sources on the Internet that the Thai speakers may use to help solve communication difficulties in order to maintain the ongoing conversation. These strategies cover the devices the Thai speakers use to comprehend the chat messages from the English chat partners, and to respond to requests for clarification from the English chat partner.

L2 Learners and Native Speakers' Interpersonal Relations in Synchronous CMC

As noted earlier, second language research on face-to-face interaction has illustrated the significant role played by interpersonal relations between native-speaking teachers and L2 learners in the achievement or failure of the learners (Blanton, 2002; Block, 2007; Lantolf & Genung, 2003). With respect to the findings from the synchronous CMC environment, this section asks whether foreign language learners have been able to establish a close relationship with unacquainted target language speakers they are paired with by arrangement in an online collaborative program. More importantly, how does the relationship with the target language speaker affect the learners' perceptions and their opportunities for foreign language development?

Some of the previous L2 studies on synchronous CMC interaction have explored issues related to the relationship between learners and native speaking peers and its influence on the learners' views and sense of success in their collaborative exchange. Prior to the discussion of studies that have explored the interpersonal relations in synchronous CMC context, it is worthwhile to mention studies that have examined the relationship in asynchronous interaction. These studies have reported on issues relevant

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to interpersonal factors that correlate with successful and unsuccessful foreign language collaborative projects. O'Dowd's (2003) year-long study of the e-mail exchanges brought to light characteristics of interaction which encouraged personal-relationship building and subsequently fostered the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence. In O'Dowd's (2003) study, five pairs of Spanish and English speakers, who were learning each other's language, carried out a series of discussion tasks that were designed to generate e-mail exchanges with their native speaking partners. These tasks aimed to develop the students' knowledge of the target language culture and awareness of different perceptions people from a foreign country might have had of the students' own culture. The successful characteristics of the e-mail messages included awareness of appropriate communicative style in the target language, receptive responses to the partner's opinions, and enthusiasm for eliciting further input from their partners.

On the other hand, Ware's (2005) study of a German-American asynchronous telecollaborative project reported several factors contributing to failed collaborations. In Ware's (2005) study, twelve and nine learners of English and German, respectively, were assigned to work in groups of 3-5 members to discuss assigned texts and topics, and then post their opinions to the assigned group on a Web-based Blackboard over a three-week period during the course. The findings revealed the factors that played a part in the discontinuation of correspondence; these were mismatches between expectations, levels of experience with technology, motivation in learning the target language, and institutional factors.

In another asynchronous collaborative study, Kramsch and Thorne (2002) pointed out that the major source of problems between the American and French students in a

series of e-mail exchanges was their lack of knowledge of their partner's social genres of communication. The American and French students in Kramsch and Thorne's (2002) study were required to watch the same film, which served as a bridge for their discussions during the semester, and write e-mail messages discussing the film in the language they were learning, French or English. Both American and French students composed their own messages, but the American students sent their own e-mails, while the French teacher typed and sent the e-mails for the French students. The findings revealed that the American students, who were familiar with more personal content in asynchronous e-mail and viewed the e-mail exchange as mutually trust building, were disappointed because they felt that the French students did not share their personal view points on the topic, but instead used a writing style that resembled an academic report in the exchanges. These French students, who perceived the e-mail correspondence as an informational exchange and saw themselves as representatives of their country and educational institution, felt it necessary to be less personal and discuss the topics based on actual facts.

For my study, I have looked for any factors emerging in the chat scripts, interviews and reflective notes that may correlate with successful or failed synchronous exchanges between the Thai and English speakers. Furthermore, I have tried to be aware of any communication patterns in the synchronous chat conversations that may be used differently by the Thai and English speakers and may cause any conflict or misunderstanding between the dyads. My impression, from the viewpoint of a Thai native speaker and English user familiar with the private instant messaging system and experienced in using it for socialization in both languages, is that Thai speakers perceive

this mode of CMC in similar ways to target language speakers. In other words, the Thai speakers generally view this mode of CMC as intended for informal, day-to-day conversational engagements which feature personal discourse among close friends or acquaintances.

With respect to synchronous CMC interaction, previous L2 studies have led to some observations about the role of the relationships that form between learners and target language speakers. First of all, compared to asynchronous exchanges such as e-mail, synchronous CMC environments foster more personal and spontaneous exchanges that resemble face-to-face interaction. The foreign language learner of French in Thorne's (2003) telecollaboration project reported that the change from e-mail correspondence to instant messaging helped her develop a closer relationship with her native speaking peer since the instant messaging enabled real-time conversations in which she could send and receive immediate responses from her conversational partner.

The second relevant issue to emerge concerning the features of synchronous CMC involves the emerging target language expert and novice positions. The learner in Thorne's (2003) study revealed that the mutually high involvement in the exchange between her and her native speaking partner gave her the opportunity to learn some grammatical items whose usage she had not fully understood in previous classroom instruction.

In addition to linguistic help from the native speaker, Tudini (2003) examined the non-linguistic (affective) expressions found in exchanges involving the target language expert and novice positions. As noted earlier, Tudini (2003) examined the potential benefits of synchronous chats with native speakers in a non-instructional setting (public

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chat rooms) for learners of Italian. The chat scripts showed that the learners had a tendency to reveal their status as language learners to the native speakers, in order to foster greater understanding. The language expert and novice positions are the two common and natural social categories in conversations including L2 users and native speakers or more experienced L2 users, and as such they should be further investigated for both the linguistic and non-linguistic (affective) characteristics, as pointed out earlier.

The third relevant issue covered in previous synchronous CMC second language research involves relationships that form online in situations supporting language development. Lam's (2000) study on L2 literacy development suggested that encouragement from the other L2 users fostered greater confidence in the focal L2 learner. Lam (2000) analyzed both asynchronous (e-mail) and synchronous (chat) correspondences between a Chinese immigrant teenage boy and his bilingual international electronic pen pals. The findings illustrated that the boy developed a close relationship with his female pen pals. The boy partially adopted the female discourse style when conversing with the girls and revealed from the interview that the nurturing female role reflected in the girls' discourse helped him gain confidence in his self-expression.

My study is similar to Lam's (2000) study in that I am interested in investigating language-learning experiences through the CMC environment outside the school-based context. To the best of my knowledge, this area of study has not been explored much in Thai EFL education. My study also explores the role that developing relationships play in the Thai speakers' confidence in using English. My study, nevertheless, differs from Lam's (2000) study in that, in Lam's (2000) study, the bilingual focal boy met the other

bilinguals naturally online, whereas in my study, the individual volunteer adult Thai EFL users and the English speakers were paired by arrangement to participate in the synchronous CMC exchanges. For this reason, I wanted to examine whether the Thai-English dyads in my study would develop close relationships in the course of their chat exchange.

Finally, previous research has informed us about the factors contributing to failed relationships between L2 learners and native speakers in a CMC collaborative project. Darhower (2007) studied a synchronous collaboration between learners of Spanish in the United States and learners of English in Puerto Rico. He compared the structure of community building in two synchronous chat groups, each of which included members from both countries, over a course of ten weeks as they interacted on assigned topics. The first group had 5 members, and the second group had 7 members. While the first group achieved a level of cooperation, or camaraderie in their community, the second group solely strived to maintain their regular attendance at the membership level. The discrepancy in the outcome was explained in terms of the levels of attendance and of preparation for the assigned topics before the chat sessions. That is to say, only 3 of 7 members of the second group regularly participated in the chats, while the rest showed up only intermittently for the exchanges. The high number of absences made it impossible for all of the members of the second group to get acquainted with one another and subsequently to establish close relationships as the members in the first community did. Applied to my study of one-to-one synchronous CMC interaction, I have looked for any correlations in the findings yielded from individual Thai-English dyads that may suggest factors that may foster or hinder the development of their relationship.

In conclusion, I have so far discussed the previous L2 studies concerning online and face-to-face interaction that addressed the issues of the interpersonal level of the participants. One additional issue addressed in my study is the question of whether the Thai and English pairs choose to use the voice tool during their chat exchanges in addition to the text chatting. Previous studies have reported that the use of the voice tool is not popular due to technical problems. For example, in her exploration of the availability of error correction in instant messaging (via Yahoo! Instant Messenger), Sotillo (2005) addressed the technical problems encountered by participants who used a dial up connection; some of them relied only on the text feature due to the system's crashing while using the webcam or audio features.

In another study, Jepson (2005) compared the interaction of two separate groups of anonymous nonnative learners in text chatrooms and voice chatrooms provided by a private online English language school. Jepson's (2005) findings revealed that there were fewer chat users in the voice chat rooms at the time he collected the data, which he said might have been due to the quality of early Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology at the time his study was conducted. As an underlying problem, Jepson (2005) indicated that the delay between turns could last for as long as a minute. With the advances of today's VoIP or Internet telephony communication tools offered in instant messaging systems, and with the increased affordability of broadband Internet connections, it is worthwhile to revisit the use of the voice tool by L2 learners in synchronous interaction. Accordingly, my study investigates whether the Thai-English dyads choose to use the voice tool to interact with their chat partner in addition to the text tool.

L2 Learners' Perceptions about Synchronous CMC

Collaborative Projects

Most research has shown that learners, as a whole, have expressed positive perceptions about synchronous exchanges with native-speaking interlocutors. Learners of Spanish in Lee's (2004) study regarded text-based chat conversations with native speakers as useful in enhancing their writing skills. Students of French in Tudini's (2003) study related online chatting with native speakers as providing access to the target language and culture that helped improve their familiarity with "colloquial interactive language which is rarely found in textbooks" (p. 155). Unlike e-mail exchanges, nonnative-native dyads that were future EFL and ESL teachers in Sadler's (2007) study viewed synchronous interaction as "interesting, exciting, and productive" (p. 11). Learners of Chinese in Jin and Erben's (2007) study praised instant messaging as a convenient tool for them to stay in contact with their native-speaking partners, and did not perceive the project as an additional workload for their language class. Moreover, some American learners of Spanish in Lee's (2004) study continued to keep in touch with their native-speaking partners who resided in the United States after the exchange project. This finding has led me to inquire about my Thai-English dyads' plans after the Internet chat exchange program. In other words, it has been interesting to ask whether they feel that their future plans have been affected by their experience with the program, and if so, in what ways.

Besides the above enjoyable experiences, there have been some difficulties that learners have encountered during their participation in synchronous CMC language exchange projects. There is much to learn from Lee's (2004) findings on a collaborative

project between nonnative and native speakers of Spanish. In Lee's (2004) study, American learners of Spanish were paired with native speakers of Spanish living in the United States to synchronously chat with each other on suggested topics. The native speakers were Spanish teachers and graduate students who participated in this online exchange as a requirement for a technology course, while the nonnative speakers participated in this exchange as a requirement for a Spanish course. First, some learners reported that, at the beginning of the project, they were nervous about conversing with native speakers. Second, the learners were not able to completely voice their opinions due to their limited proficiency in Spanish. They thought their slow responses and insufficient language skills might have caused exhaustion and discouragement to their native-speaking partners. Third, the learners said they were disappointed that they did not have a lot of mutual interests to share with their native speaker partners. This frustration appeared to be at least in part a result of the age difference between the learners (ages 19-20) and the native speakers (ages 28-50). Finally, the participants' previous experience with the synchronous chat tools and technology-related issues, such as Internet speed, influenced the frequency and length of their exchanges.

Moreover, Sadler (2007) reported that the tight daily class-timetables of the learners, as well as conflicts in time zone between the two countries (the United States and Spain in his study) seemed to add another dimension to the challenge the dyads faced during their participation in the CMC collaborative project. Note that Sadler (2007) examined potential uses of CMC for language learning between two groups of students studying to become ESL and EFL teachers at a university in the United States and Spain, respectively.

I have taken into account the problems reported above by encouraging the native speakers to be understanding about the differences in their own and the learner's language proficiency, as well as trying to pair the volunteer participants with people in their own age group. I have also tried to bear in mind the potential problems with technology and the time zone conflict; I have informed the volunteer participants about these potential difficulties at the beginning of the chat exchange program.

One of my goals has been to explore the Thai speakers' positive and negative perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program. The L2 learners in Lee's (2004) study disclosed their concern about the native-speaking partners' impressions in chatting with them. It is a special addition of my study to explore the English speakers' perceptions about their relationships that have formed with the Thai speakers, and their views about their experience from participating in the Internet chat exchange program; the goal is to bring another angle of perspective to the research findings. Building on the previous studies covered in this chapter, I have inquired about the benefits the Thai and English speakers feel they have achieved through the chat exchange program. I have also explored the difficulties they have encountered while participating in the chat program.

I have so far discussed the review of related literature on social interaction conducted in face-to-face and computer-mediated environments that examines L2 conversations in its informational and interpersonal aspects. These two aspects of investigation cover negotiations that occur over meaning, and the relationships that form between L2 learners and target language speakers. In the next section, I will provide some information about computer-mediated communication (CMC) that is relevant to my study of synchronous chat interaction.

Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) comprises a range of different technologies available for communicating on the Internet that "together make it a powerful new medium of human interaction" that is "time-and place-independent" (Warschauer, 1999, p. 5). In other words, in CMC environments people can make contact with one another through several economical methods that are available worldwide and that allow them to keep a record of their correspondences for future reference. There is no doubt that such an innovative web-based channel of communication has dramatically changed the way people stay in touch with their social network (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000). It is one of the purposes of this study to provide an economical means through synchronous CMC for the Thai EFL learners to connect with their target language conversational partners for language practice outside of the classroom. In this last section of Chapter 2, I briefly discuss some important modes of CMC, language use in CMC, and the merits of this channel of interaction in second language pedagogy.

Modes of CMC

Interaction in cyberspace can take several forms depending on, for example, modes of communication (e.g., text-, audio-, or visual-based, or three combined), and number of participants (e.g., one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many) (Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004). CMC is generally characterized in terms of synchronicity of interaction. In asynchronous CMC, such as e-mails, listservs, and bulletin boards, participants are not required to be simultaneously online to make contact with another party or parties, and they can read as well as respond to a posted message at their leisure. In contrast,

synchronous forms of CMC, such as chatgroups and instant messaging, require users to log on at the communicating site in real time (Herring, 2001).

Unlike public chatgroups that allow free access to anonymous participants, Crystal (2006) notes that instant messaging enables users to have private and personal conversations with people they know in the offline world. As long as the users sign in to their accounts, this special feature of instant messaging allows them to keep instantaneous contact with friends in designated lists by showing the availability (e.g. online, offline, and away from the computer) of those people on the Internet (Crystal, 2006). Besides the text feature, most recent instant messaging systems allow users to exchange files and photographs, send messages to mobile phones, and have telephone conversations as well as visual conferences through webcams, to name just a few options.

Three examples of current instant messaging providers are Microsoft's Windows Live Messenger (MSN), Yahoo! Messenger, and Skype. Given the availability of these tools, I chose to use the instant messaging system as a meeting place for the Thai and English pairs because it allows the pairs to engage in casual conversations and keep in contact with the same chat partner over an extended period of time, as well as to make use of the various special features. The fact that the instant messaging environment is conducive to establishing a fairly stable relationship between the interlocutors has enabled me to study the relationships that have developed between the Thai and English speakers over the course of their chat exchanges. My study has also explored the modes of CMC interaction the pairs choose to interact with beyond the synchronous text chatting during the course of their chat exchanges.

Some General Characteristics of Language in CMC

The forms of discourse produced in web-based communication have unique characteristics that are distinct from other forms of discourse created in domains other than the Internet. Each form of discourse created in each channel of CMC can also be distinguished from the others. Kern (2006) observes the range of forms available for communication in CMC:

> It is clear that CMC is not a single, uniform genre of language use, but rather a constellation of genres related partly to the particular medium (e.g., instant messaging, e-mail, chat groups, blogs, MOOs) and partly to the particular social and cultural contexts of a given act of communication. (p. 193)

An example indicating the diversity of language use in different modes of CMC environments can be simply seen in the contrast between synchronous and asynchronous settings. Murray (2000) notes that interlocutors in the synchronous mode tend to use a more "simplified register" (p. 402) than in the asynchronous mode; he also observes that they use compensatory strategies to save time spent typing and imitate elements in face-to-face speech. These strategies include the use of abbreviations, simplified syntax, and tolerance for minor spelling mistakes (Murray, 2000), as well as emoticons to convey feelings (Herring, 2001). Pointing out that social context influences electronic discourse, Murray (2000) mentions that, even within the same medium of communication, for instance in asynchronous e-mail, interlocutors tend to use fewer simplified characteristics in formal e-mails (e.g., for business correspondences) as compared to personal e-mails.

Regarding synchronous CMC condition, one of the most obvious features of language produced in this mode is the overlapping among conversational turns. Each

message is chronologically posted on the interlocutors' computer screen based on the order it is delivered to the system, rather than on the order corresponding to its composition (Herring, 2001; Werry, 1996). Instant messaging, as a synchronous mode by nature, shares general linguistic characteristics with chatgroups; however, there are some distinctive elements. According to Crystal (2006), one of the most noticeable differences is that the relatively smaller number of interlocutors in an instant messaging context allows users to maintain the topic of their conversation. To put it another way, in a typical multi-user chatroom, a single utterance is generally interrupted by a substantial number of unrelated tangents which over a period of time can naturally result in confusion or interference to any given exchange, and can eventually bring about constant topic shifting (Crystal, 2006; Herring, 2001; Werry, 1996). In contrast, the environment of instant messaging, which is particularly designed for one-to-one or one-to-small group exchanges, makes it feasible for users to easily separate their message into smaller parts and post it over the sequence of turns and, thus, to continue the topic of a conversation with fewer distractions (Crystal, 2006). This is another reason I chose to use instant messaging system in my study. It was hoped that the environment in the instant messaging would offer an opportunity for Thai speakers to interact in fairly prolonged L2 conversations.

Merits of CMC in Second Language Pedagogy

CMC technologies have facilitated language learning and teaching in many ways. Three of which I will discuss here. First, Sullivan and Pratt's (1996) and Warschauer's (1996) studies suggest that CMC discussion appears to democratize participation among ESL learners, making conversations more balanced than in face-to-face discussion.

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Warschauer (1996) thus proposes that electronic discussions could be implemented, for instance, as an introduction to an oral discussion. In other words, synchronous CMC interaction encourages all the learners, especially ones who tend to be peripheral in face-to-face conversations, to comfortably generate a variety of ideas and get ready for a subsequent oral activity. Likewise, Roed (2003) points out that the higher level of participation from some learners in the synchronous CMC environment is probably a consequence of anonymity as well as the absence of disparaging non-verbal responses from interlocutors, such as rolling their eyes and sighing. For some foreign language learners, these unique features of CMC seem to diminish the degree of nervousness during their interchange.

Second, with respect to CMC as a major arena for communication in its own right, this virtual environment provides a wide range of sites for authentic target language practice. Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004) describe virtual spaces created in CMC as the "places where people hang out together and the niches where they are sociable" (p. 31). Similarly, Meskill (2005) metaphorically compares the role of the networked computer as "the community and meeting place" (p. 34) where learners of language and languages "can now communicate easily day and night in the target language with native speakers" (p. 34) and with one another via the various forms of CMC interaction. As the Internet has become a more common channel of information exchange, Warschauer (2003) underscores the necessity for CMC literacy development as one of the required electronic literacies in English language pedagogy.

Finally, CMC has made it possible for language teachers to incorporate intercultural projects that help enrich students' language development and their

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knowledge of the target culture (Kötter, 2001; O'Dowd, 2003; Schwienhorst, 2003; von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter, 2001; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Finally, CMC offers additional opportunities for language learners to explore and express their identities (Bloch, 2004; Lam, 2000, 2004; Nguyen & Kellogg, 2005; Spiliotopoulos & Carey, 2005; Warschauer, 2000).

When learners are still acquiring the standard print forms; however, they need guidance when coming across forms of language in CMC that are divergent from those of the traditional text (Lotherington, 2005). Keeping this concern in mind, in the introductory stage of this study I will make sure that the Thai speakers understand the nature of synchronous CMC exchanges. Most of the nonstandard forms produced by native speakers in this channel of interaction are not likely to be a consequence of language incompetence (Herring, 2001), but rather an outcome of technological constraints that manifest a variety of techniques among users to maintain their conversational involvement. For this reason, these learners may need some explanation of the ways in which online language may differ from the more formal usage they learn in their English classes. For the language learning benefit of the Thai speakers, I have been available during the study to answer any questions they may have about the target language.

In short, CMC has created its own forms of social interaction and discourse. CMC has become more multimodal as Internet technologies have made available more special features for users to communicate with one another. Instant messaging is a form of CMC that has increasingly become one of the most common methods for people to stay in touch with groups of peers. My study aims to validate the potential benefits of the instant

messaging environment in providing an economical means for Thai EFL learners to use

the target language in extended conversational exchanges outside of the classroom.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study, as indicated in the first two chapters, primarily aimed to seek understanding of the interaction between a group of adult Thai EFL learners and English-speaking chat partners in synchronous CMC exchanges. Again, the following research questions guided me through the process of this exploration.

1. What is the nature of the negotiations for meaning that take place in a series of chat exchanges between pairs of adult Thai learners of English and fluent English speakers?

    1.1 What kinds of triggers seem to cause comprehension difficulties between the pairs?

    1.2 What strategies do the Thai speakers use to solve communication problems in order to maintain the ongoing conversation?

2. What is the nature of the relationships that form between the pairs of Thai speakers and their English chat partners during such an Internet chat exchange program, judging from the features of their online exchanges and their own testimony?

    2.1 How do the Thai and English speakers negotiate relationships with each other, judging from the following three features of their online chat exchanges?

        2.1.1 What types of expressions do the Thai and English speakers use when they assume target language expert and novice roles, respectively, during the chat exchanges? Are these expressions

used only for seeking and supplying linguistic help, such as lexical items, as reported in the previous studies?

2.1.2 To what extent are the Thai speakers able to take a lead in topic initiation during the chat exchanges?

2.1.3 What kinds of conversational strategies and linguistic devices do the Thai and English speakers use during the chat exchanges?

2.2 What terms do the members of each pair use to describe their chat partner and the relationship that has formed over the course of the Internet chat exchange program? For example, do they see the relationship as one of friendship, a learning partnership, or something else?

2.3 Do the Thai-English pairs choose to interact beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting, and if so, in what ways (for instance, e-mailing, and engaging in voice chats)?

2.4 Do the Thai speakers feel their future plans have been affected by their experience with the Internet chat exchange program, and if so, in what ways? For example, do they feel that they will keep in touch with their chat partners after the program?

3. What are the participants' perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program?

3.1 What benefits do they feel they achieved through participating in the chat exchanges with their partners?

3.2 What difficulties do they encounter during the chat exchange program?

To gain insight into the Thai EFL learners' conversational exchanges outside of the classroom, this study was accordingly designed within the qualitative research tradition since this is a form of inquiry that, in Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) words, studies "things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). This study examined the interaction between pairs of Thai and English speakers in a series of everyday synchronous CMC exchanges during a period ranging from two to eight months. This study aimed to explore both the informational and interpersonal aspects of the Thai-English pairs' interaction through analyses of their chat scripts, reflective notes and interviews.

Participants

The eleven Thai participants and nine English participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. In a similar study involving e-mail exchanges, Ho (2005) reported that there were far more Taiwanese EFL volunteers than American ones, and she thus paired each individual American participant with a group of Taiwanese participants. I decided to avoid this possible mismatch in participant numbers. That is to say, I initially recruited as many English speakers as I could and then recruited Thai speakers according to the available number of English speakers.

At the beginning of the Internet chat exchange, there were an equal number of English speakers and Thai speakers, however, two of the English speakers decided not to participate after a few chats because they had unexpected plans and were afraid that they might have not been able to make time to chat. Two of the remaining English speakers, Alan and Kevin, thus, volunteered to chat with two Thai speakers, Mon and Noi,

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respectively. In other words, Alan chatted with Tida and Mon, while Kevin chatted with Chanon and Noi. Seven of the nine English-speaking participants are native speakers of English from the United States, and one (Alan) is a native speaker of English from England. The last English-speaking participant (James) is a native speaker of German who is a fluent L2 English user. Alan, James, and another American participant (Lucy) resided in Thailand at the time they were participating in the Internet chat exchange program.

All of the Thai speakers reside in Thailand and none have ever been in an English speaking country. Most of them have studied English since the fifth grade, or around eleven years of age. The typical English language class in Thailand tends to focus on grammar exercises and reading skills. As a result, most of the Thai learners feel more competent in and comfortable with reading in English rather than engaging in impromptu conversational exchanges. Since the Thai participants are from different educational backgrounds and college majors, their English performance, as I observed from the chat scripts, was varied. For example, as one would expect, the Thai participants who majored in English seemed to be more fluent than the participants who were from the other fields of study.

I recruited both the Thai and English speakers through personal contacts. All of the participants were introduced to me through people I know; I contacted each participant in person or over the telephone and invited them to join the Internet chat exchange program. I then paired each Thai speaker with an English speaker whose available times to chat overlapped and who is in a close age range. In addition to these two considerations (available times and age), I paired some of the pairs because of their

commonalities, such as, Nat and Emily both have a young child, and Yajai and Angie had just graduated from their universities and started their career. Note that I had to pair Kevin who is in his forties with Chanon, who is only in his early twenties, because their available times overlapped. I paired Kevin with Noi, who is also in her early twenties, because her previous chat partner decided not to continue the chat as previously mentioned. There were a total of eleven Thai-English pairs in this study.

After being assigned their chat partner, the pairs started to chat when they were ready; they were requested to engage in twelve sessions on open topics, ideally on a weekly basis. The pairs were told that the purpose of the Internet chat exchange program was to provide them with an opportunity to connect with a person from another country and culture. They were free to talk about any topics that they wished, as they would do when they met a new person in daily life. I also informed both the Thai and English speakers that this chat exchange was also an opportunity for the Thai speaker to practice the target language through participating in everyday conversational exchanges.

Table 1 shows some of the information on each Thai-English pair. The first name in each pair is a Thai speaker and the second name is an English speaker. Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation. Note that the pairs were numbered in Table 1 so that it will be easy for readers to follow the explanation after the table.

Table 1

The Thai-English Pairs: Some General Demographic and Chat Data

Names	Age	Chatting experience with foreigner	Chats scripts submitted	Period of chat exchange	Length of chat exchange	Average chat time (minutes) per session
1. Tida, F	34	No	12	10/14/08 to	6 months &	26.8
Alan, M	28	Yes		5/7/09	23 days	
2. Yajai, F	26	No	12	10/2/08 to	8 months &	75.1
Angie, F	27	No		6/4/09	2 days	
3. Ploy, F	32	No	12	9/27/08 to	8 months &	67.1
David, M	45	No		5/30/09	3 days	
4. Nat, F	33	Yes	12	10/1/08 to	3 months &	41.0
Emily, F	23	No		1/21/09	20 days	
5. Bo, F	20	Yes	12	10/16/08 to	2 months &	45.9
James, M	21	Yes		12/18/08	2 days	
6. Pairin, F	20	Yes	12	10/13/08 to	2 months &	33.1
Jason, M	23	No		12/23/08	10 days	
7. Chanon, M	21	No	12	10/4/08 to	2 months &	48.4
Kevin, M	43	No		12/21/08	17 days	
8. Noi, F	20	Yes	12	10/5/08 to	3 months &	79.3
Kevin, M	43	No		1/10/09	5 days	
9. Wit, M	19	No	9	11/23/08 to	5 months &	33.9
Lucy, F	19	No		4/27/09	4 days	
10. Mon, F	26	Yes	8	10/26/08 to	5 months &	55.3
Alan, M	28	Yes		4/1/09	6 days	
11. Chai, M	19	No	7	9/21/08 to	4 months &	50.0
Jenna, F	19	No		1/25/09	4 days	

Table 1 shows that Alan chatted with two Thai speakers, Tia and Mon; while

Kevin chatted with Chanon and Noi. Eight of the eleven pairs were mixed-gender pairs,

while three (pairs 2, 4 and 7) were same-sex pairs. The age range of the participants was

nineteen to forty-five years old. Five of the Thai speakers (Nat, Bo, Pairin, Noi and Mon)

had chatted through synchronous CMC in English with foreigners; while two English

speakers (Alan and James) had chatted with foreigners before joining the Internet chat

exchange program. Eight of the eleven pairs (pairs 1-8) sent twelve chat scripts for

analysis. Note that Wit and Lucy (pair 9), and Mon and Alan (pair 10) chatted twelve

times, but sent only nine and eight chat scripts, respectively, for analysis. The remaining

pair, which was Chai and Jenna (pair 11), stopped chatting before they reached the twelve

chat sessions as required; this pair chatted nine times and submitted seven chat scripts.

The reason that this pair did not complete twelve chats was that Jenna was overwhelmed

with her schoolwork, thus was not able to make time for the remaining chats.

I was informed by the above three pairs (pairs 9-11) three reasons that they did

not send all of their chat scripts for analysis. First, there were parts of the chat scripts they

thought were private and did not want to reveal them to others. Second, they occasionally

forgot to record the conversations during the synchronous chats. Finally, they

accidentally lost the chat script files they had saved in their computer before sending

them to me via e-mail.

The entire chat exchange period ranged approximately two to eight months. Only

five pairs, (pairs 4-8) were able to complete all the required twelve chat sessions within

two to three months. Note that Alan, James and Lucy resided in Thailand at the time they

were participating in this Internet chat exchange program, therefore, pairs 1, 5, 9 and 10

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had no time zone difference. Noi and Kevin spent the longest average time (79.3 minutes) on their chats, as opposed to Tida and Alan who spent the shortest average chat time (26.8 minutes).

<p style="text-align: center;">*General Information of Each Member of the Pairs*</p>

The following is some general information about the pairs. Recall that seven of the nine English-speaking participants are native speakers of English from the United States. These seven Americans are Kevin, Angie, David, Emily, Jason, Lucy and Jenna.

Tida and Alan

Tida is 34 years old and teaches English in a secondary school. She does not have access to the Internet at home so she used the Internet at work to chat with Alan. Alan is 28 years old and is a native speaker of English from England. He was also teaching English in a secondary school in a different region of Thailand from Tida's. Alan can speak a little Thai.

Mon and Alan

Mon is 26 years old and majored in English in a university. While participating in the Internet chat exchange program, she was preparing for the IELTS test to further her master's degree in England. Alan's information is already mentioned above.

Kevin and Chanon

Chanon is 21 years old and is majoring in digital art in a university. Kevin is 43 years old and majored in agriculture in a university. Kevin is self-employed and had experience as an L2 learner of Spanish. This pair was the only male pair in the study.

Kevin and Noi

Noi is 20 years old and is majoring in English in a university. Even though she did not have access to the Internet at home at the time she was participating in this study, she expressed her strong determination to participate in this chat exchange. She normally took a bus from home to use the Internet at an Internet café on the weekend before joining the chat program, so she scheduled to chat with Kevin when she was online at the Internet café. Kevin's information is already mentioned above.

Yajai and Angie

Both Yajai and Angie had recently graduated from a university. At the time they were participating in the chat exchange, Yajai was looking for a new job while Angie was working in an accounting firm. Angie participated in a foreign exchange program in Thailand when she was a university student; this program lasted for three months. This pair was one of the two female pairs in the study.

Ploy and David

Ploy is 32 years old and teaches English in a secondary school. David is 45 years old. David majored in business in a college and owns a family business. David speaks fluent Spanish.

Nat and Emily

Nat and Emily are single mothers who have a young child. Nat is 33 and Emily is 23 years old. Nat works from home and Emily's parents take care of her child while she goes to work.

Bo and James

Both Bo and James are in their early twenties. Bo is majoring in Business English in a university. James is a native speaker of German. He was a volunteer English teacher in a secondary school in Thailand at the time he was participating in the chat exchange.

Pairin and Jason

Both Pairin and Jason are in their early twenties. Pairin is a friend of Bo and is also studying in the same field of study as Bo. Jason is a high school graduate and was working at the mall at the time he was participating in the chat exchange.

Wit and Lucy

Wit is studying in a medical school. Lucy was a foreign exchange college student in Thailand at the time she was participating in the chat exchange.

Chai and Jenna

Chai and Jenna are both 19 years old and were freshmen in a university at the time they were participating in this chat exchange. Chai is now majoring in Science while Jenna is majoring in Art.

Protection of Human Subjects

Along with the invitation to the Thai and English speakers to join the chat exchange program, I provided thorough information about the study, so they were able to make an informed decision as to whether they were willing to participate in the Internet chat exchange program. This information covered the purpose and process of the study, the participants' obligations, confidentiality of the data and protection of their identities, their freedom to withdraw from the program, and any possible risk associated with this study. Once they decided that they wanted to participate in the study, I asked them to sign

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an informed consent form (Appendix A), in which the above information was made available, and to keep an extra unsigned copy for themselves. Recall that each participant would be addressed by a pseudonym throughout the dissertation in order to protect his or her identity. Furthermore, all of the data was kept confidential. I was the only person able to access this information.

The Internet Chat Exchange Program

A packet (Appendix B) was distributed to the individual Thai and English participants after they decided to participate in this online chat exchange program. The packet was designed to provide instructions to guide participants through the program. This packet covered information about the purpose of the study and directions on how to set up an account at an instant messaging site, to set privacy levels, and to record text and voice conversations. The packet also informed the participants about the nature of the chat exchanges, including the number of chat sessions they were expected to engage in, and examples of topics they might discuss. Recall that they were required to chat for twelve chat sessions for at least twenty minutes per session. Examples of reflective notes were also given, as well as information about the interviews at the middle and the end of the program. Moreover, I included my contact information so that the participants could ask me any questions they might have during the chat exchange program. These details had all been previously made available to the participants in summary form in their informed consent forms.

Data Collection Procedures

It took a total of eleven months to collect the data from three sources from all the eleven pairs, because the period of the chat correspondence of each pair varied from two to eight months as shown in Table 1. I started to recruit the Thai and English participants at the beginning of September 2008; the first pair (Chai and Jenna) was ready to start their first chat session at the end of September 2008; and the last interview with the members of the last pair (Yajai and Angie) was done in June 2009 after they had completed twelve chat sessions.

The data collection procedures can be described in three phases: the pre-online stage, the online stage, and the post-online stage. In this section I will explain these data-gathering stages; I will then elaborate on each data source in the separate section that follows, entitled "Data-Gathering Instruments." Since I recruited individual pairs at different times and they did not start the chat correspondence at the same time, I repeated the same procedures with each of them individually.

The Pre-Online Exchange Stage

In the pre-online exchange phase, I asked both the Thai and English speakers to answer a short background questionnaire (Appendix C) about whether they had previous experience in participating in synchronous chats with foreigners. I also asked the provider, if any, of their instant messaging accounts (e.g., MSN, Skype, Yahoo Messenger), their personal interests or hobbies, and the days and times they thought they would be available to chat. Based on the results, each of the participants was paired with a compatible partner. After that, they were given the Internet Chat Exchange Program Packet.

Recall that the participants' information about whether they had previous experience participating in online chats with foreigners is shown in Table 1. That is to say, there were five Thai speakers and two English speakers who had chatted online with foreigners before joining this Internet chat exchange program. Note that all of the Thai and English speakers were familiar with using instant messaging in their native language and did not need help to set up their account with an instant messaging system. However, three Thai speakers (Nat, Chai and Wit) requested that I help them test their voice equipment by voice chatting with them in case they and their chat partners wanted to use the voice chats. In addition, six of the eleven pairs agreed to synchronously chat with each other via Windows Live Messenger (MSN) while the remaining five pairs agreed to chat with each other via Skype.

The During-Online Exchange Stage

At the beginning of the second phase of the program, or the actual chat exchanges, I gave contact information to each member of the pair. This contact information covered their chat partner's user name on instant messaging, and their e-mail address. I then helped them to schedule the first chat session so that they could meet each other. I stayed signed in on instant messaging, listing my online status as available, while each pair was chatting at the beginning of their first chat session, in case they needed any help.

The pairs were encouraged to talk about any topics they wanted to share or discuss with each other for twelve sessions for at least twenty minutes per session. In addition, the pairs were encouraged to use other available features in the instant messaging (e.g., sharing pictures, using the voice tool) during the text chatting, or other

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modes of CMC (e.g., e-mail) they and their partners wished to contact each other apart from their required twenty-minute chats.

After each chat session, the Thai speakers were asked to write a short reflective note in Thai about any feelings they had about that particular exchange with their partner. I asked for help from the Thai speakers to record their chat conversations. I then asked them to send me, via e-mail after each chat session, the copies or parts of the copies of the conversations that both of the members agreed to grant me access to. However, some of them did not want to send them right after each chat session, but preferred to send them, for example, once every three chat sessions. Two of the Thai speakers who did not send me their chat conversations soon enough after each chat session reported losing three of their conversations. I therefore asked these two participants to try to send the chat conversation right after they were done with each chat, and then to send me their reflective notes later if they had not already written them.

To help the Thai speakers with their learning, I helped answer the questions they wrote in their notes about the target language, such as grammatical and lexical items that they said they had difficulties with; in response to these questions, I sent answers or suggestions through e-mail. A few of them also asked me questions when we happened to meet online in synchronous chats.

In the middle of the pairs' chat exchange, or after they had done the sixth conversation, I interviewed the Thai speakers in Thai about their perceptions about all the issues posted in the research questions, such as the relationships that had formed in the course of their chat exchanges so far and their experience participating in the Internet chat exchange program. I also took this opportunity to ask them any questions I had about

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the negotiation of meaning that emerged while analyzing their chat scripts. I decided not to interview the English speakers at the mid-point of the chat program because of their busy schedules, but I later asked them to compare their perceptions from the beginning to the end of the chat exchange, for instance, when asking questions such as whether they thought they had learned to know their Thai chat partner more.

The Post-Online Exchange Stage

In the third phase of the study, or after the pairs had completed the required twelve chat sessions, both the Thai and English speakers were interviewed with the same questions I used in the mid-point interview. After this end-of-chat interview, I also asked some of the participants follow-up questions on puzzling or unclear themes that emerged during analysis of their chat scripts. I contacted them according to their preference (i.e., synchronous chat, e-mail, or telephone). The data collection procedures are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Data Collection Procedures

Phase	Activity
1	Background questionnaire and pairing the participants
2	Open-topic chat sessions for twelve times
	Mid-point interview
3	End-of-chat interview
	Follow-up questions

Data-Gathering Instruments

In this section, the three main data sources previously mentioned in the data collection procedures will be described in detail. In order to seek answers to the research questions, the data from participants' chat exchanges, interviews, and reflective notes were collected for analysis. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) state the relationship between three sources, that is, observations, interviews and documents:

> Respondents are asked questions, but they are also encouraged to engage with the researcher in less structured conversations so that their hidden assumptions and constructions begin to surface. They are observed in their daily activity so that the researcher can begin to see the operational meaning of what they have said. Further insight into their constructed realities can be gained from documents that provide a historical context for interpreting their words and activity. (p. 81)

Obtaining the participants' chat conversations enabled me to observe and examine their natural online interactions, which had been recorded. These chat scripts served as documents, and thus provided what Erlandson et al. (1993) called "stable" sources for "understanding and evaluating the data obtained from dynamic human sources" (p. 101). The interviews in my study functioned as a bridge for me to understand the participants' perspectives toward their online experience "in the way that they see it" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 81). The last source of data, the participants' reflective notes, was another type of document that I used in confirming the themes emerging from the other two sources of data.

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Chat Scripts

The chat scripts between the pairs of Thai and English speakers were the primary source for analysis of their interaction in two main areas, that is, negotiations for meaning, and three aspects of the relationship that formed between the pairs. For negotiations for meaning, I examined types of triggers that cause comprehension difficulties between the Thai and English speakers, and strategies the Thai speakers used to solve the communication problems in order to maintain the ongoing conversation with their English chat partners. For the three aspects of relationship that formed, I examined the types of expressions the Thai and English speakers used when assuming the roles of a target language expert and novice, the number of new topics introduced by the Thai and English speakers, and conversational strategies and devices used by the Thai and English speakers.

I received a total of 120 chat scripts that the pairs allowed me access to. Table 3 shows the length of the chats of each pair and its average chat time per session from the highest to the lowest numbers. The three pairs that spent the longest average times (minutes) on the chats were Noi and Kevin (79.3), Yajai and Angie (75.1), and Ploy and David (67.1), respectively. The Tida-Alan pair had the lowest average chat time per session, which is 26.8 minutes, followed by Pairin-Jason pair (33.1), and Wit-Lucy pair (33.9).

Table 3

The Duration of the Chats of Each Pair and Their Average Minutes Per Session

| Name | Chat duration (minutes) | | | | | | | | | | | | Average chat time/ session |
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	
Noi & Kevin	100	94	71	93	110	76	81	71	78	58	50	70	79.3
Yajai& Angie	86	100	81	85	90	52	93	37	81	64	68	64	75.1
Ploy & David	68	61	67	79	55	82	82	77	56	64	50	64	67.1
Mon & Alan	16	81	42	71	49	106	53	24	na	na	na	na	55.3
Chai & Jenna	74	42	40	82	40	24	48	na	na	na	na	na	50.0
Chanon &Kevin	35	50	16	52	64	62	66	61	36	39	47	53	48.4
Bo & James	72	91	38	9	83	7	44	24	85	33	43	22	45.9
Nat & Emily	51	37	39	46	51	36	57	44	28	40	35	28	41.0
Wit & Lucy	32	24	41	35	41	40	33	30	29	na	na	na	33.9
Pairin& Jason	34	34	39	57	26	34	16	26	53	21	26	31	33.1
Tida & Alan	65	20	49	44	53	8	15	23	21	7	10	7	26.8

Interviews

The interviews were used as a primary source to seek insight into the participants'

views on the relationships that had formed with their chat partners over the course of

their chat exchange. To gain a picture of these relationships, I used the interviews to

examine the terms the members of each pair used to describe their chat partner and the

relationship that had formed; I also considered what choices they had made to interact

beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting, and how they spoke about their

future plans. The participants' perceptions about the chat program covered the benefits

they felt they achieved from participating in the chat exchange, as well as any difficulties

they encountered.

As a secondary source, the interviews were structured to obtain, as Lincoln and

Guba (1985) aptly put it, "verification, emendation and extension of information" (p.

268) from other sources. In other words, I used these interviews to follow up on puzzling

themes or questions that emerged while I was analyzing negotiated sequences (triggers

that caused comprehension difficulties, and strategies to solve communication problems),

and evidence of relationship in chat scripts ('language expert and novice roles'

expressions, topic initiation, and conversational strategies and subsequent devices). For

instance, I asked the Thai speakers to comment on any strategies they used to solve

communication problems that did not appear in the chat scripts.

The main purpose of the interview was to enter the participants' real world

through their eyes. Erlandson et al. (1993) emphasize that the interviewer's role is to

"focus on obtaining the fullest picture that can be communicated of the interviewee's

relevant constructions of reality" (p. 93). For this reason, my participants were considered

as legitimate conversational partners, and I made every effort not to influence them by my assumptions or views on the issue being discussed. The type of interview chosen for this study was the semi-structured interview, in which I used some basic questions prepared to cover the main issues of concern in the study. These questions served as a guideline; I did not intentionally arrange the conversation according to the sequence of those questions, but rather let them occur in the course of the conversation.

The interviews in this study consisted of main questions, follow-up questions, and probes. Following Rubin and Rubin's (2005) view, I prepared lists of main questions (Appendix D) based on the research questions, and during the actual interviews I included some follow-up questions to explore particular emerging themes introduced by the participants. I chose to follow up on concepts that seemed most important to the participants and that helped me gain insight into my research questions. I additionally used what Rubin and Rubin (2005) call 'probes,' or "techniques to keep a discussion going while providing clarification" (p. 137). Probes are often used in the form of interrogatives in response to what the interviewees have said in order to help them stay focused on the topic and to encourage them to offer more necessary examples, details, or desired level of depth (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). With permission from the participants, the face-to-face and online voice chat interviews were audio-recorded, whereas the online text chat interviews were recorded as chat logs. I took necessary notes to ensure reliable data as well.

I interviewed the Thai speakers in Thai twice: at the mid-point in the program, or after their sixth chat session; and again at the end of the chat exchange, or after their twelfth chat session, using the same set of questions. The interviews with the first seven

Thai speakers were done face-to-face, while three were interviewed through voice chat and one through text chat because she did not have equipment for the voice chat. Note that these last four Thai speakers are from the other parts of Thailand from me so they preferred to have their interview take place via online chatting instead of face-to-face. The second interviews with all the eleven Thai speakers were conducted after I returned to the United States, thus they were all done through the Internet. I interviewed seven of the Thai speakers via voice chatting, and interviewed the remaining four Thai speakers who did not have equipment for the voice chat via text chat.

For all of the nine English speakers' convenience, I interviewed them only once after their last required chat exchange, again using the same set of questions I used with the Thai speakers. I interviewed five of the English speakers face-to-face, one through voice chat and one through text chat. One of the English speakers (Angie) was not able to find time for the chat so I sent the questions to her via email. I was not able to interview one of the English speakers (Lucy) because I was not able to contact her after she returned to the United States shortly after her last required chat session with Wit.

After the interviews with the Thai and English speakers, I asked some of them follow-up questions about the themes that emerged while I was analyzing their data. I sent most of the follow-up questions via email, or synchronous chatted with some of them that I met online. Furthermore, in order to find out how many Thai-English pairs had still prolonged their relationship after the Internet chat exchange program, I sent an e-mail to ask them this question in February 2009, eight months after the last pair had completed their last required twelve chat sessions in June 2009.

The Thai Speakers' Reflective Notes

The Thai speakers were requested to write one to three sentences after each chat session about the feelings that came to their mind about the day's exchange. They had the option of writing in the language (Thai or English) that they felt most comfortable with, and all of them chose to write the notes in Thai. I also asked them to write about anything they felt about the tone of an exchange, for instance, 'My partner seemed distracted today,' 'Maybe she was upset with me, but I don't know what I might have said to upset her,' or 'I am not sure if he really understood what I said about …' The instructions and examples of the reflective notes were also made available in the Internet Chat Exchange Program Packet in Appendix B. I asked them to write briefly, so they would not feel the task was burdensome and so that it would not take away time they could spend chatting with their partner. However, they were welcome to write longer notes if they wanted to. I reminded them to write down the date they chatted above each note so I could keep it on file with their chat script from that day for subsequent analysis. I asked the Thai speakers to send the note to me via e-mail at the same time they sent me the chat script after each chat session. Table 4 shows the data sources employed, lined up with the research questions. The data is categorized into primary and secondary sources.

Table 4

Summary of Research Questions and Data Sources

Research questions	Chat scripts	Interviews	Reflective notes
1. What is the nature of the negotiations for meaning that take place in a series of chat exchanges between pairs of adult Thai EFL learners and fluent English speakers?			

Research questions	Chat scripts	Interviews	Reflective notes
1.1 What kinds of triggers seem to cause comprehension difficulties between the pairs?	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
1.2 What strategies do the Thai speakers use to solve communication problems in order to maintain the ongoing conversation?	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
2. What is the nature of the relationships that form between the pairs of Thai speakers and their English chat partners during such an Internet chat exchange program?			
2.1 How do the Thai and English speakers negotiate relationships with each other, judging from the following three features of their online chat exchanges?	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
2.1.1 What types of expressions do the Thai and English speakers use when they assume target language expert and novice roles?	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
2.1.2 To what extent are the Thai speakers able to take a lead in topic initiation?	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
2.1.3 What kinds of conversational strategies and devices do the Thai speakers use during the chat exchanges?	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
2.2 What terms do the members of each pair use to describe their chat partner and the relationship that has formed over the course of the Internet chat exchange program?	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
2.3 Do the Thai-English pairs choose to interact beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting, and if so, in what ways?	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
2.4 Do the Thai speakers feel their future plans have been affected by their experience with the chat exchange program, and if so, in what ways?	Secondary	Primary	Secondary

Research questions	Chat scripts	Interviews	Reflective notes
3. What are the participants' perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program?			
3.1 What benefits do they feel they achieved through participating in the chat exchanges with their partners?	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
3.2 What difficulties do they encounter during the chat exchange program?	Secondary	Primary	Secondary

Data Analysis

This section deals with how the data collected from the three sources in the previous section were examined. I adapted methods of data analysis developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993) to develop coding systems for my data. All the issues I analyzed in this study were basically coded according to the following steps. To examine the answer to each research question (e.g., strategies used by the Thai speakers to solve communication problems), the data (e.g. chat scripts) were separated into units of data, or single, independent ideas. These units of data were then reviewed in order to develop tentative categories. When all units of data had been placed in the categories, each category title or description was refined. Finally, I repeated this process several times until the categories and their assigned units of data worked well. During this rechecking period, some units of data were occasionally moved to more suitable categories. New categories were also added, and old categories were combined or deleted.

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Chat Scripts

The chat scripts were primary sources to examine the negotiations for meaning and three aspects of the developing relationships between the Thai-English pairs as they appeared in their chat exchanges. For the first research question on negotiation for meaning, I examined the types of triggers that caused comprehension difficulties between the pairs, and the strategies the Thai speakers used to solve communication problems in order to maintain the ongoing conversation with their English chat partners. I examined each issue separately, for the first issue or triggers; I first read all the chat scripts and marked any negotiated sequences that occurred over meaning. I then reviewed those negotiations and coded the types of triggers that spurred the negotiation routines. Note that my understanding of negotiation routines was based on Varonis and Gass's (1985) model. For the rest of the coding process, I used the same method mentioned in the beginning of this section to develop the categories. For the analysis of strategies the Thai speakers used to solve communication problems, I followed this same coding process.

For the second research question on negotiation of relationship, I examined three aspects of relationship between the Thai-English pairs as they appeared in their chat exchanges: expressions of target language expert and novice positions, topic initiation, and conversational strategies and devices. For the first area, I read all the chat scripts and marked any expressions that the English speakers used when assuming the target language expert role including both the linguistic and non-linguistic domains. I then reviewed those expressions and coded the types of expressions by, again, using the same method I previously mentioned to develop the categories. I analyzed the expressions of the novice role by following the same coding process.

For topic initiation by the Thai and English speakers, I read the chat scripts and marked all the new topics the Thai speakers introduced in the conversations. I then counted the total number of topics each Thai speaker introduced in each conversation, and the total number of topics in all of each Thai speakers' chat scripts that I was allowed to access. I followed the same steps when analyzing numbers of topics introduced by the English speakers.

For the conversational strategies and linguistic devices used by the Thai and English speakers, as I analyzed these issues I was informed by Lakoff's (1973) concepts of Three Rules of Politeness, and Tannen's (2005) concepts of speakers' conversational strategies and corresponding linguistic devices. Again, I followed the same method mentioned in the beginning of this section to develop the categories.

Interviews

The transcribed interviews were coded for themes related to the research questions that sought the participants' comments about their developing relationships, their choices to interact beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting, their future plans that might have been affected by their experience with the Internet chat exchange program, and their perceptions about the program. The participants' perceptions about the chat exchange program covered themes related to the benefits they felt they achieved through the program, and ways in which they addressed communication events, such as problems or particularly enjoyable exchanges. I also coded for any difficulties the participants encountered during the program. The findings gained from the interviews were triangulated with those obtained from the chat scripts and reflective notes.

The Thai Speakers' Reflective Notes

The purpose of encouraging the participants to write a note after each chat exchange was intended to help me gain insight into their feelings about the individual chat interaction with their English chat partner. Each note I received from the participants was analyzed in conjunction with its chat script; I looked for themes in association with negotiations for meaning, and the three aspects of relationship I aimed to explore. The Thai speakers' reflective notes also helped confirm some of the themes relevant to their perceptions about the developing relationships with the English speakers that emerged from the interviews.

Trustworthiness

Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) view on building trustworthiness in naturalistic research, I employed the strategies below to establish validity for my study. First, this study was designed to triangulate data from three different sources for analysis. In other words, the data obtained from the participants' chat exchanges were checked against the data gained from their statements in the interviews and from their reflective notes. Second, I asked for cooperation from my colleague who had enough understanding of the study to provide a peer debriefing and feedback for refining the data analysis and interpretation. Finally, the data and subsequent interpretations were verified by the participants to confirm that their constructed realities were well understood.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON

NEGOTIATION FOR MEANING IN THE CHAT EXCHANGES

In response to the first main research question on the negotiation for meaning in
the chat exchanges between the Thai and English speakers, the total of 120 chat scripts,
which were collected from all eleven pairs, were coded for types of triggers that caused
comprehension difficulties and for strategies used by the Thai speakers to solve the
communication problems during the conversations. The data relevant to the triggers and
strategies emerged in the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers after each chat
session, and the interviews from the Thai and English speakers were also triangulated in
the analysis. This chapter is divided into two sections, covering two topics: triggers that
cause communication difficulties, and strategies used by the Thai speakers. In addition to
the first two main sections, I will present relevant findings from the reflective notes
written by the Thai speakers after each chat session and the interviews from the Thai and
English speakers. This last section covers the Thai speakers' awareness of their
morphosyntactic difficulty, and the English speakers' overview on the success of
communication with the Thai speakers during the chat exchange.

Triggers That Caused Comprehension Difficulties

The triggers that appeared to cause comprehension difficulties were divided into
three classes: lexical/semantic, morphosyntactic, and global triggers. These three
categories were developed independently, but they also coincide with Pellettieri's (2000)
types of triggers. The first two categories reflect the linguistic form that seems to be at
the root of a comprehension difficulty; that is, they tag either lexical or systematic

(morphosyntactic) entities. The third category covers the comprehension difficulties that may have been triggered by a combination of both problematic lexical and morphosyntactic items, to wit, the chat messages that do not make sense to the receiver. A number of these triggers led to negotiations (e.g., confirmation checks and request for help) between the Thai-English dyads, while some were solved by non-negotiation strategies; I will present the findings on these strategies in the next section. In this section, I will present the definition of each type of trigger followed by examples. I will then present the number of times each type of trigger occurred, and the number of triggers that caused comprehension problems to the Thai speakers as compared to those that caused problems to the English speakers. Table 5 gives the definition of these three types of triggers.

Table 5

Triggers and Definitions

Trigger type	Definition
Lexical/semantic	Triggers in which the comprehension difficulty is directly attributed to some lexical item(s), such as unfamiliar words and phrases used by the English speakers, or the Thai speakers' incorrect choices of words.
Morphosyntactic	Triggers in which the comprehension difficulty is directly attributed to some morphosyntactic item(s), such as the Thai speakers' incorrect usage of the English verb tense, or the English speakers' target language forms that were unfamiliar to the Thai speakers.
Global	Triggers in which the speaker's entire message is problematic, such as the message sent by the Thai speakers that did not make sense to the English speakers. In these cases, it was the entire message sent by the English speakers that was incomprehensible to the Thai speakers, because it may have contained both unfamiliar lexical and morphosyntactic items.

Table 6 gives example(s) of each trigger type mentioned in Table 5. Note that the chat scripts are presented verbatim without any grammatical correction. Corrections are provided in square brackets and only when necessary for the readers to understand the meaning being conveyed. I have also provided some information in square brackets to help the readers understand the context of the conversation. Pseudonyms are used instead of the participants' real names. In each example, the trigger is underlined. I have also provided relevant excerpts from the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers and quotes from the interviews at the end of some of the example conversations. These contain the Thai speakers' views relevant to the comprehension difficulty they encountered during those conversations. Recall that the notes were written in Thai and the interviews with the Thai speakers were also in Thai. Thus, all texts presented here represent my translations from the original Thai.

Table 6

Examples of Triggers

Trigger Type	Example
Lexical/semantic	Excerpt 1 (Unfamiliar vocabulary item)
	Angie: oh, hehe, how long have you been dating him?
	Yajai: 3 years
	Angie: aww, that's nice! Funny <u>coincidence</u>, i have been dating my boyfriend for 3 years and 4 months! (conversation 10)
	Yajai's note: I had never heard the word 'coincidence' before, so I had to look it up in a dictionary.
	Excerpt 2 (Unfamiliar phrase)
	Alan: erawan water falls is 40 baht for thai … but 200 baht for foreigners which I like coz it helps <u>keep the place up</u> together
	Mon: keep the place up together means clean?
	Alan: yes (conversation 5)

Trigger Type	Example
	Excerpt 3 (Wrong choices of word) Chanon: Sorry.It lack. Kevin: I don't understand. lack Chanon: I mean.My internet are disconnect.Make me sign out from msn. Chanon: But I know that the way to email you. Kevin: oh I see. Its a common problem. It happens here too. (conversation 3) Chanon's interview: "I wanted to say that the electricity went off for a second while we were chatting, but I didn't know the right English words to use in that situation."
Morphosyntactic	Excerpt 4 (the Thai speaker's interlanguage form that was incomprehensible to the English speaker) Lucy: that sounds fun. maybe i'll go there [Dream World] Wit: wow... Lucy: what? Wit: i wish you had happy in over there Lucy: what? Wit: i wish you had been happy when you will go to Dream World Lucy: what do you mean? i've never been there Wit: if you go, you will be happy in Dream World Lucy: oh um yeah (conversation 5) Excerpt 5 (the English speakers' use of a target-language form that was unfamiliar to the Thai speaker) Jenna: what countries have you been to Chai: can you say easier,please Chai: haha Jenna: umm how many country have you visited Chai: umm Chai: 1 Jenna: china? Chai: Laos, is nearby Thailand Chai: no Chai: and you? (conversation 4)
Global	Excerpt 6 (Message that did not make sense to the English speaker) Noi: sometime i confuse about adjective and verb. I try to read books and I try to use it when I speak but sometime i still use it wrong. Kevin: An adjective always "describes" blue ball, red car, big house—blue, red and big are all adjectives, they describe. Noi: but something in Thai, it could not use in English, i'm missing right?

Trigger Type	Example
	Kevin: I'm not sure I understand
	Kevin: Phrase that another way, please (conversation 4)
	Excerpt 7 (Message that did not make sense to the Thai speaker)
	Alan: I realize from when I was a student they say teachers don't have favourites
	Alan: but since iv [I've] become a teacher that's not strictly true
	Mon: I am trying to read it once again to understand more
	Alan: please ask if you don't understand
	Mon: ok (conversation 2)

Table 7 shows the number and percentage of each type of trigger found in the chat scripts and mentioned by the Thai speakers in their reflective notes after each chat session. Of a total of one hundred and one triggers, lexical/semantic items (79.2%) were the primary cause of comprehension troubles between the Thai and English speakers, while global (12.9%), and morphosyntactic items (7.9%) shared a lesser amount of the distribution, respectively.

Table 7

Number and Percentage of Trigger Types

	Lexical	Morphosyntactic	Global
Number	80	8	13
($n = 101$)			
Percentage	79.2%	7.9%	12.9%

Table 8 shows that the Thai speakers encountered more comprehension problems than the English speakers during the conversations. In other words, of a total of 101 triggers reported in Table 7 above, 73 (or 72.3%) were triggers that caused

comprehension difficulties for the Thai speakers, whereas only 28 of them (or 27.7%) were triggers that caused comprehension difficulties for the English speakers.

Table 8

Number and Percentage of Triggers That Caused Comprehension Difficulties for the Thai and English Speakers According to Trigger Types

Trigger Type	Thai speakers		English speakers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lexical/semantic	65	89.1	15	53.6	80	79.2
Morphosyntactic	2	2.7	6	21.4	8	7.9
Global	6	8.2	7	25	13	12.9
Total	73		28		101	

With respect to each type of trigger, the most common source of communication difficulties for the Thai and English speakers was lexical. In other words, the Thai speakers encountered unfamiliar lexical items 65 times of a total of their 73 triggers (or 89.1%). The English speakers, likewise, encountered lexical problems, or the Thai speakers' wrong choices of words that caused non-understanding, 15 times of a total of their 28 triggers (or 53.6%). For the morphosyntactic triggers, the English speakers were more likely to negotiate these problems (6 times) than the Thai speakers did (2 times).

In addition to the findings in Table 8, an additional analysis of the lexical triggers that caused comprehension difficulties for the Thai speakers in Table 9 shows that more than half of these lexical triggers were unfamiliar everyday phrases in the target language. That is to say, of a total of 65 of the problematic lexical items for the Thai

speakers, 46 of them (70.8%) were unfamiliar phrases, while 19 (29.2%) were unfamiliar

vocabulary items.

Table 9

Number and Percentage of Words and Phrases Used by the English Speakers That Were

Unfamiliar to the Thai Speakers

Unfamiliar Lexical/semantic items	Number	Percentage
Words	19	29.2
Phrases	46	70.8
Total	65	100

Strategies Used by the Thai Speakers to Solve

Communication Problems

The analysis of the chat scripts, triangulated with the notes written by the Thai

speakers and the interviews, reveals that the Thai speakers used 6 strategies to solve the

communication problem in order to maintain the ongoing conversation with their English

chat partners: confirmation check, request for help, word substitution, rephrase,

dictionary, and avoidance. I developed these categories independently, but three of the

categories (confirmation check, request for help, and rephrase) also coincide with

codings that have been proposed in previous studies (Lee, 2001; Pellettieri, 2000). Note

that even though avoidance did not help the Thai speakers to solve the communication

problem, it appeared in their chat scripts that they used this strategy as a means of

maintaining the ongoing conversation by not having to stop to negotiate the meaning. I

thus decided to add avoidance in the categories because it was one of the choices the Thai

speakers made to let the conversation proceed. Table 10 shows the types of strategies and

their definitions.

Table 10

Strategies to Solve Communication Problems and Their Definitions

Strategy type	Definition
1. Confirmation check	The Thai speakers, in their own words, referred to all or part of the English speakers' message previously sent to ensure whether their understanding was correct or not.
2. Request for help	The Thai speakers asked the English speakers to define the meaning of the unfamiliar words or phrases, or to simplify part of the message that they could not understand.
3. Word substitution	When the Thai speakers did not know a certain word or phrase in the target language, they used another word or phrase that they thought had a meaning close to that of the form needed.
4. Rephrase	The Thai speakers expressed the message they had previously sent in different words when the English speakers signaled that that message did not make sense.
5. Dictionary	The Thai speakers looked up the unknown words used by the English speakers that they thought were necessary in understanding the message. They used the dictionary to check the spellings of words of which they were not sure. They also consulted a Thai-English dictionary when they did not know a certain target-language word to express what they wanted to say.
6. Avoidance	The Thai speakers did not understand part of the message sent by the English speakers, but decided not to negotiate the meaning. They instead continued the conversation by responding to the part of the message that they understood, or shifted to a new topic.

Table 11 gives one or more example(s) of each strategy mentioned in Table 10. In each example, the excerpt illustrating strategy used is underlined.

Table 11

Examples of Strategies to Solve Communication Problems

Strategy	Example
1. Confirmation check	Excerpt 8 Kevin: Are you taking classes at this time of year or are you still on break? Chanon: Err… On break? It mean in vacation? Kevin: Yes. (conversation 4)
2. Request for help	Excerpt 9 Ploy: How was your new year cerebration? David: I had friends come over for dinner. Low key and not intended to be loud and exciting. We didn't do any fireworks. It was nice. Ploy: What is 'low key'? David: "low key" means not highly accelerated, very calm, easy going Ploy: Thank you. David: It comes from Music, low or high key (conversation 8)
3. Word substitution	Excerpt 10 Kevin: Is this your first year of college? Noi: no, i'm second year Noi: in university Kevin: sophomore (conversation 1) Noi's note: I could not think of the word 'sophomore,' so I used 'second year' instead and he got it.
4. Rephrase	Excerpt 11 Ploy: Do you believe in supernatural event? David: I have to qualify my answer. I have many doubts about some things, but yes I do believe in supernatural events in some cases David: I need proof to believe something is real Ploy: You're right. We should proof and try to find the reason before believing. But something you can't find its reason, right?

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Strategy	Example
	David: I don't understand the last part exactly. Are you saying that if you find proof, then you believe? Ploy: Yes. <u>But there are some event happen bot [but] I can't find its reason and some events I can't proof it, Foe [For] example, when you see a ghost, yuo [you] aren't sure if it's really ghost. You yourself see it, but can't proof it because it isn't science.</u> David: I see. I have two friends that I know to be very responsible people who say they have seen ghosts. I have never seen anything like that. (conversation 3)
5. Dictionary	<u>Excerpt 12</u> Angie: what is the voting system in Thailand, at what age can you vote? Yajai: 18 years old we can vote. The system is we will vote for <u>member of parliament</u> (i'm not sure you can understand or not. <u>I open the dictionary</u>). Yajai: and the leader of <u>party</u> that got the most point from vote will be the prime minister. Angie: i understand..that makes sense. (conversation 2) <u>Yajai's note</u>: I enjoyed the conversation with Angie. I told her about the political situation in Thailand. I had to consult a dictionary very often this time because there were several political words I did not know. Anyway, it was cool; it helped enhance my knowledge of English vocabulary.
6. Avoidance	<u>Excerpt 13</u> Nat: my baby 's not accept bottle's milk so i need to breastfed her. Emily: i was lucky that mine went straight to the bottle without any problems. Nat: now she dose not get milk so much but she has a good meal Nat: yeah. i started phoenix on baby food already. he loves eating from a spoon Nat: <u>that 's cool</u> Nat: <u>dose he like noodle?</u> Nat: I haven't given him noodles yet. I want to wait until he get a few teeth (conversation 7)

Strategy	Example
	<u>Nat's interview</u>: "I didn't know what she meant by 'I started phoenix on baby food already,' but I didn't feel like pausing to ask her about it."

Table 12 shows the number and percentage of strategies used by the Thai speakers.

Table 12

Number and Percentage of Strategies to Solve Communication Problems Used by the

Thai Speakers

	Confirmation check	Request for help	Word substitution	Rephrase	Dictionary	Avoidance
Number (n=125)	14	21	34	7	40	9
Percentage	11.2	16.8	27.2	5.6	32	7.2

According to Table 12, the Thai speakers most often used the dictionary strategy (32%), followed by word substitution (27.2%), request for help (16.8%), confirmation check (11.2%), avoidance (7.2%) and rephrase (5.6%), respectively.

For the degree of success of each strategy, Table 13 shows that the Thai speakers were successful in using the rephrase strategy (100%) to explain their problematic message to the English speakers. The Thai speakers were also successful in using the dictionary strategy (100%) to look up the meaning of unfamiliar English words and search for necessary English vocabulary items to express themselves so that they could

maintain the ongoing conversation with their English chat partner. The other two

strategies that ranked reasonably high on the success rates were request for help (95.2%),

and confirmation check (85.7%). The strategy that received the lowest success rate was

word substitution (67.6%). Note that avoidance is excluded from Table 13 because this

strategy did not function as a tool to help solve comprehension problems.

Table 13

Percentage of Success of Each Strategy to Solve Communication Problems

| | Successful | | Unsuccessful | |
Strategy	$n=110$	%	$n=15$	%
Confirmation check	12	85.7	2	14.3
Request for help	20	95.2	1	4.8
Word substitution	23	67.6	11	32.4
Rephrase	7	100	-	-
Dictionary	40	100	-	-

The following are some notes from my observations while analyzing the

strategies used by the Thai speakers. The passages illustrating strategies used by the Thai

speakers, again, are underlined.

Confirmation Check

The Thai speakers who chose to use the 'confirmation check' strategy were often

able to eventually solve their comprehension problem with their English chat partners

(85.7%). In other words, even if the Thai speakers misinterpreted the meaning conveyed

in the English speakers' message, the Thai speakers' 'confirmation check' messages

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automatically signaled the English speakers that there was a misunderstanding, and consequently gave the English speakers a chance to correct it. For example, in Excerpt 14, Alan greeted Mon, the Thai speaker, with an informal English phrase in turn 2; however, being called "devil" by her chat partner surprised Mon. She immediately recalled that the day was Sunday and tried to link this term with its religious meaning, remembering that Alan, who is from a western culture, was accustomed to going to church on that day, instead of going to the gym. She was confirming this with Alan (3), and in the process alerted him to the need for him to explain the problematic phrase to her (4, 6, 8, and 10).

Excerpt 14

(1) Mon: hi! Don't u go to the gym today?

(2) Alan: Mon, how the devil are you?

(3) Mon: why? u've gotta go to the church?

(4) Alan: this is something english friends say to each other. its not bad

(5) Mon: ok. cool I'm gonna remember and use it later

(6) Alan: its friendly But only use it to friends

(7) Mon: ok

(8) Alan: not someone you meet 1st time

(9) Mon: ok   ^o^

(10) Alan: you can, but its very informal. what are you doing (conversation 2)

Mon's note: I learned a cool everyday expression today that I can use later.

According to Table 13, there were only two cases of a total of 14 cases (or 14.3%) in which the 'confirmation check' strategy was not successful. The first case, in Excerpt

15, was a conversation that dealt with the US political situation that required the knowledge of political terms (i.e., 'senators', and 'representatives'), of a slang phrase (i.e., 'screwed things up') and of the political situation in the United States at that time period. The Thai speaker, Chanon, made an effort to confirm his comprehension twice in turns 2 and 11; however he mentioned in his notes that he still could not understand this part of the chat very well.

Excerpt 15

(1) Kevin: We get a new president and lots of new senators and representatives. Jan 20 We can start over then. A little late though The one in charge now has really screwed things up!!

(2) Chanon: Umm...I can't understand for your said. But I think that a good news?

(3) Kevin: We get a new government on Jan 20, 2009

(4) Chanon: Oh, I understand. Time for Revolution!!!

(5) Kevin: The government we have now did a bad job. Easier here, we just vote them out.

(6) Chanon: No no! I mean evolution! AH! Nooo! I'm confuse!

(7) Chanon: Huh?Bad job?Why?

(8) Kevin: They wrecked the economy

(9) Chanon: Ah!Economy very important!

(10) Kevin: Yes, maybe the most important, it pays for everything else

(11) Chanon: I don't know what a policy of new government. But it bad things.right?

(12) Kevin: No, I'm looking forward to the new government. I think it will be better I hope!

(13) Chanon: Okay, I hope too. (conversation 10)

The following excerpt from Chanon's notes indicates that these two confirmation checks in turns 2 and 11 were not successful.

…The topics today were mainly about politics and economics. They were the worst headache topics ever for me. I am still confused! I don't understand whether his current and new governments are good or bad. I promise myself that I won't talk about politics again if not necessary. I felt like I knew too little about the political situation in his country to be able to discuss it with him.

The second case that the 'confirmation check' strategy was not successful came from Tida's conversation with Alan. In this case, Tida's Internet connection dropped before Alan had a chance to respond to her message.

Request for Help

According to Table 13, there was only one case out of a total of 21 cases where the use of request for help was not successful (or 4.8%). This sequence is shown in Excerpt 16.

Excerpt 16

(1) Chai: is it cold there?

(2) Jenna: its not cold. it is not hot either. it feels wonderful outside

(3) Jenna: i think i am going to make a fire tonight

(4) Chai: what does "make a fire" mean

(5) Jenna: fire like a flame

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(6) Jenna: hot bright smoky... uhm.. fire..

(7) Chai: i get it

(8) Jenna: haha

(9) Chai: haha

(10) Jenna: i dont know how to explain things well

(11) Chai: don't worry

(12) Chai: let talk [on a voice chat]

(13) Jenna: i dont have a microphone at my house

(14) Jenna: i need to buy one (conversation 2)

In this excerpt, Chai, the Thai speaker, requested an explanation in turn 4 from his
English chat partner, Jenna. Jenna then tried to elaborate on the phrase "make a fire" (5
and 6). Chai wrote in turn 7 that he understood Jenna's explanation, nevertheless, he
revealed in his notes that he, in fact, only knew the literal meaning of the phrase, but
could not picture why Jenna was making a fire. To put it another way, Chai was not
familiar with the fact that some westerners have a fireplace in their house for winter
heating. Jenna, in turn, gave a literal definition of 'fire,' and did not realize that Chai's
confusion was not over the word, but over how fire could fit in to Jenna's plans (i.e., he
did not know about the fireplace concept). Instead of starting another negotiation about
the problematic phrase, Chai suggested moving on in lines 11, 12. Chai later asked me to
explain this comprehension problem to him when we met online on instant messaging.

Word Substitution

According to Table 13, word substitution was relatively the least successful strategy among all the strategies; this strategy received only 67.6% success rate. In the unsuccessful cases, 11 of a total of 34 (or 32.4%), the wrong choice of word the Thai speakers used either caused miscommunication or did not convey the intended meaning. The following excerpt illustrates a case in which the Thai speaker's own words could not convey the entire message she wished to say to her English chat partner.

Excerpt 17

(1) Nat: how's your baby, today's my baby birthday, she's so happy

(2) Emily: how have you been?

(3) Emily: tell her happy birthday for me!

(4) Emily: my son is good; getting bigger

(5) Nat: today morning we go to the temple and buy some chocolate cake. She like cake so much

(6) Emily: how old is she now?

(7) Nat: 3 years, … (conversation 3)

Nat and Emily, her English chat partner, were talking about Nat's daughter's birthday. According to Nat's reflective notes written after the chat session, Nat mentioned that she wanted to tell Emily that her daughter and she had earned religious merit by offering food to the monks in turn 5. However, she could not recall the English phrase to express this, and thus simply said they that went to the temple, which was only part of the activity they took part in on that day. That is to say, they went to the temple in order to gain merit, but did not go to the temple to do something else, such as praying, donating

money, or attending a Buddhist ceremony. Emily may have been confused by this reference to the temple; but she did not choose to follow up and ask for further explanation.

It is important to note that of a total of 11 unsuccessful exchanges involving the use of the 'word substitution' strategy by the Thai speakers, there were 6 exchanges in which the English speakers noticed the problematic words used by the Thai speakers, consequently negotiated the meaning, and eventually solved their own communication problem. In Excerpt 18, Kevin, requested a clarification in turn 3 for the problematic word "serious" that Chanon, his Thai chat partner, had used in turn 2. Although Chanon's elaboration in turn 4 contained another wrong word choice, in the word "impact," Kevin said he was able to guess Chanon's intended meaning from the context and Chanon's explanation in turn 4 that he was concerned that his message in turn 2 might have offended Kevin.

Excerpt 18

(1) Kevin: I used to have a cat a long time ago, and they are good too.
They are good company

(2) Chanon: That right.I think some pets are good than some human. Oh.I use serious word?

(3) Kevin: I think these two [of my dogs] are better than most. What do you mean "serious"

(4) Chanon: Err..I mean I use an impact word. I'm afraid you feel bad when hear it. But forgot it!

(5) Kevin: No, not at all. I agree. I think my dogs are better than a lot of people!!

Rephrase

According to Table 13, the Thai speakers used the rephrase strategy successfully during the chat exchange (100%). In most cases, the Thai speaker's entire messages previously sent to the English speaker were incomprehensible, or contained global triggers, for the English speakers and consequently pushed the English speakers to ask for clarification.

Dictionary

All of the Thai speakers had English-Thai and Thai-English dictionary programs installed in their computers. Two of the Thai speakers mentioned in the interview the two difficulties they occasionally encountered when using the dictionaries. First, they sometimes could not find the English words they wanted in the Thai-English dictionary. Second, when they found the English words, they had a hard time choosing the appropriate meaning for the context they were talking about with their English chat partners.

Avoidance

Even though avoidance did not help the Thai speakers who decided to use it to gain comprehension of the problematic messages, these Thai speakers were able to maintain the flow of their ongoing conversation with the English speakers because they did not deviate from the main line of conversation. These Thai speakers instead chose to respond to the part of the English speakers' message that they could comprehend. Some of the Thai speakers jotted down these comprehension difficulties that they decided not to negotiate in their reflective notes. Some also asked me to explain them when we later met on instant messaging in real time, or at the interview. Note that avoidance appeared to be

based on politeness in some cases, such as in Excerpt 16 that Chai chose not to renegotiate the meaning of the phrase 'make a fire' with Jenna, but shifted to the new topic as he said in the interview: "I was confused why she had to make a fire, but I didn't want to ask her about it. I was afraid it would be annoying to her so I changed the topic."

I have so far presented the findings on triggers that caused comprehension difficulties, and strategies used by the Thai speakers during the chat exchange, based primarily on the analysis of mainly the chat scripts. In the paragraphs that follow, I will present the relevant findings from the reflective notes and interviews focusing on two topics, namely, the Thai speakers' awareness of their morphosyntactic difficulty and the English speakers' general overview of the communication with the Thai speakers.

The Thai Speakers' Awareness of Their Morphosyntactic Difficulty

Some of the Thai speakers frequently mentioned in their reflective notes their concern over their morphosyntactic errors they found while rereading the chat scripts. Some of them corrected the mistakes they had made and requested help from me when needed. The following are examples of excerpts from their notes:

I think this conversation was OK; it was better than the last one. Honestly, I still have a problem with telling time in English. I didn't know how to say it in a sentence. In general, I was sometimes not sure whether I said things correctly or not. (Chanon's note from conversation 4)

The conversation today was very smooth; we flew from one topic to the next one. There were some misspellings. I used words that have similar meaning for the words I could not think of. I was in a hurry to respond to him so that I didn't have

time to make sure if my grammar and spelling were correct. A lot of time, after I

sent the message, I saw that I used the wrong grammar. (Ploy's note from

conversation 4)

I often forgot to use the English past tense. There were also other sentences where

I didn't stay in the same tense. The other problem was I sometimes didn't know

the right tense to use in a sentence, like when I said I used to work as a secretary,

but I quit because I wanted to have time to prepare myself for graduate study.

(Yajai's note from conversation 1)

Yajai additionally mentioned in the interview that unfamiliar lexical items were

not the major concern for her because she could look them up in the dictionary.

Morphosyntactic triggers, on the other hand, seemed to be more challenging for her to

cope with:

The unknown words she used weren't a big deal for me. I could look them up on

my computer or ask her to explain them. The writing, on the other hand, was

tougher for me. I had a hard time using the correct English verb tense. It is so

different from the structure of our Thai language. (Yajai)

The English Speakers' General Overview of the Communication

with the Thai Speakers

The English speakers did not think they and their Thai chat partners had many

serious problems understanding each other over the course of the chat exchange. The

following excerpts are examples from the interviews with the English speakers.

I had to reword a few things, but for the most part, the communication was easy. I feel like he learned by looking at what I said to him. (Jenna)

It [the communication] isn't perfect but we understand each other. Sometimes it required some explanation but not much. (Kevin's response regarding his chats with Noi)

Very few problems with communication. All conversations have been very open. (Alan's response regarding his chats with Tida)

She has to think about it a little bit, but not long and she understands well. Her response time has improved towards the end. (David)

We didn't really have any real communication breakdowns. Even if something wasn't said perfectly it was still understandable and we just continued the conversation. (Kevin's response regarding his chats with Chanon)

There was a chat about politics at the time that there was [sic] the rumors in Bangkok. I think there had been some misunderstanding that we did not get the same point. I think at the same point she talked about this, and I talked about something else. I think it was because of the two reasons. It was English on the one hand, and on the other hand, it was a written chat because sometimes you did not get each other perfectly. (James)

Note that James mentioned in the last paragraph that his Thai chat partner, Bo, and he had a communication problem in one of their chats when the topic was about politics.

Discussion

Triggers That Caused Comprehension Difficulties

The finding of this study, that triggers for negotiations in synchronous CMC exchanges in a non-classroom based context between the Thai-English dyads were largely lexical in nature, are consistent with the results of previous studies conducted in the task-based instructional environments (Blake, 2000; Blake & Zyzik, 2003; Pellettieri, 2000). In comparison with lexical triggers, the grammatical-related mistakes generally have less effect on comprehension (Pellettieri, 2000) and hence appear to be ignored (Blake & Zyzik, 2003). The Thai speakers in this study, in like manner, put more emphasis on getting the meaning across to their English chat partners rather than on producing grammatically correct sentences during the real-time chats. However, the analysis of the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers after each chat session suggested that some of them noticed their own interlanguage forms and tried to correct them or requested help from me. This suggests that the chat log reading and the reflective note writing can be conducive to learning. Reading the chat logs and writing notes may help provide more opportunity after the real-time conversations for the L2 learners to notice their interlanguage forms that are deviant from those of the target language forms, and make efforts to improve their morphosyntax.

The finding that the Thai speakers encountered more triggers that pushed them to negotiate the meaning than the English speakers did suggests that the synchronous chat exchanges offered exposure to the target language, in particular unfamiliar lexical items. Moreover, the finding that more than half of the lexical triggers found were unfamiliar phrases supports the results of Carter and McCarthy's (2004) study. According to Carter

and McCarthy (2004), natural conversations occurring in informal and interpersonal realms of interaction have the potential for exposure to creative uses of spoken language for L2 learners. In other words, the Thai speakers in this study encountered everyday expressions and slang they had not learned in the classroom by participating in casual conversations with their English chat partners.

The finding that the English speakers were more likely than the Thai speakers to negotiate on morphosyntactic triggers may mean that the Thai speakers had more difficulty with producing the understandable message than with understanding target language forms in terms of the meanings carried by these triggers. This finding is consistent with the finding from the reflective notes and interviews that revealed the dissatisfaction of the Thai speakers with their grammatical performance after reading their chat scripts. The Thai speakers should be encouraged to learn and practice their English grammar during their participation in the chat program, such as by learning from their own chat scripts as previously mentioned.

Furthermore, this study suggested that negotiated sequences involving political issues appeared to be more difficult for the Thai speakers than the negotiations that were triggered basically by unknown lexical items. For example, in Excerpt 15, Chanon's lack of background knowledge of the US political situation and unfamiliarity with the English political terms contributed to his unsuccessful negotiation for meaning with his English chat partner. This finding suggests that future L2 learners may need the information about major events in the chat partner's country along with necessary technical terms so that they would feel more comfortable conversing about those topics with their chat partner. Alternatively, the English chat partners and the Thai speakers might need to explain some

concepts to their chat partners at a basic level, when they involve political and social practices that vary across culture.

Strategies Used by the Thai Speakers to Solve Communication Problems

Regarding the findings on strategies used by the Thai speakers, this study confirmed Lee's (2001), Pellettieri's (2000) and Tudini's (2003) studies that Thai speakers used request for help (16.8%), confirmation check (11.2%) and rephrase (5.6%) strategies, respectively, during the synchronous exchanges to solve communication problems. Recall that the Lee's (2001) and Pellettieri's (2000) studies examined the synchronous task-based interaction between L2 learners of Spanish, and Tudini's (2003) study examined natural conversations between L2 learners of Italian and native speakers in public chat rooms. The Thai speakers in this study, however, used other strategies that did not constitute negotiation of meaning in the classical sense, that is, dictionary consultation (32%), word substitution (27.2%) and avoidance (7.2%), respectively.

Dictionary consultation was the most popular method (32%) that the Thai speakers used when encountering unfamiliar lexical items or when they needed certain target-language terms to express their ideas; this strategy also yielded the highest success rate (100%). This might have been because the Thai speakers encountered several lexical triggers and the dictionary program was easily accessible from their own computer when chatting in real-time, while the L2 learners in the previous studies in task-based instructional settings either might not have been allowed to use the dictionary, or might not have had access to it. Three of the Thai speakers also said they used the Internet to check the spelling of English words and search for necessary information they wanted to exchange with their English chat partners during the conversations. This finding suggests

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that dictionary skills and website searching can be very helpful for L2 learners in synchronous exchanges. Another strategy the Thai speakers used successfully during the conversations was rephrasing, which also led to a 100% success rate. This strategy is not a skill often practiced in Thai EFL classes, yet this study reported it as one of the strategies used in everyday conversations.

The other two strategies, request for help and confirmation check, which showed success rates of 95.2% and 85.7%, respectively, also appeared to be very effective in helping the Thai speakers solve their comprehension problems because they immediately signaled the emerging communication problem to the English speakers, which in turn led to clarification provided by the English speakers.

Among the strategies used by the Thai speakers, word substitution was the second most popular strategy (27.2%) next to dictionary consultation (32%); but this strategy did not succeed as often as other strategies did, with only a 67.6% success rate. The reason that the Thai speakers failed to communicate their intended meaning was their wrong choice of word. Nevertheless, this strategy points out a potential for learning, since it gives the L2 learners opportunities to try out their knowledge of vocabulary in the target language in authentic conversations. Furthermore, the learners' choice of a word that is too far deviant from the target-language form to be understandable in that particular context may be negotiated by the interlocutor. For example, in Chanon's case, in Excerpt 18, his English chat partner requested clarification on Chanon's problematic term and finally understood the message Chanon was trying to convey in the previous turns.

What's more, the finding that the Thai speakers avoided negotiation of some of their comprehension problems with the English speakers due to politeness, suggested that

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the Thai speakers also took the interpersonal relationship into consideration when interacting with their chat partners. This finding was consistent with Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier's (2001) study. These researchers found that L2 learners in a conversational activity group, in comparison to those in an information-gap activity group, employed discourse strategies to maintain a friendly relationship with their native-speaking partners. The findings of my study from the interviews with the English speakers similarly showed that they appeared to be polite to their Thai chat partners as they ignored the minor lexical and morphosyntactic errors made by the Thai speakers when these did not interfere with comprehension. Some of the chat scripts also showed that the English speakers did not hesitate to help solve the communication problems during the chats. In the next chapters, I will discuss the relationship that formed between the dyads.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON NEGOTIATION OF RELATIONSHIPS

IN THE CHAT EXCHANGES

This chapter presents the results of the second main research question on how the Thai and English speakers negotiated three aspects of relationship with each other over the course of the chat exchange from the analysis of the online chat scripts. These three aspects of relationship will be presented in three sections, that is, expressions of target language expert and novice roles, the frequencies of topic initiation by the Thai and English speakers, as well as the conversational strategies and devices used by the Thai and English speakers during the chats. Note that the findings relevant to these aspects of relationship from the Thai speakers' own testimony in the interviews and their reflective notes will be included. In a similar vein to the chat excerpts presented in Chapter 4, the excerpts in this chapter are presented verbatim without any grammatical correction; corrections are provided in square brackets only when necessary for the readers to understand the meaning being conveyed. Recall that the reflective notes were written in Thai and the interviews were also in Thai. Thus, all texts presented here represent my translations from the original Thai.

Expressions of Target Language Expert and Novice Roles

This section aims to present the findings on the nature of the target language expert and novice expressions that appeared in the chat scripts between the English and Thai speakers, and how the reference to differential language expertise may have played out in the individual Thai speakers' perceptions about their experiences gained from the

Internet chat exchange. To answer these questions, I will discuss the types of language expert and novice expressions that appeared in the chat scripts and the frequency of sequences that the Thai and English speakers exchanged in reference to differential language expertise. I will then triangulate the findings from the interviews and reflective notes to reveal the Thai speakers' perceptions about their English chat partners who took an active language expert role during the chat conversations. The categories for the expert and novice expressions were developed independently, but some of them also coincide with what has been proposed in previous studies (Lee, 2006; Park, 2007).

Expressions of Target Language Expert Role

The conversational moves tagged as involving language expertise were categorized into four types, that is, 1) correcting grammatical errors; 2) offering to help with lexical items; 3) giving suggestions in learning English; and 4) giving supportive comments. The first and second categories reflect the areas of linguistic assistance from the English speakers concerning grammar and vocabulary, respectively. The first two categories coincide with what Lee (2006) calls explicit feedback. Note that in the second category the English speakers volunteered to help the Thai speakers with lexical items without help being requested and without any signal of a communication problem from the Thai speakers. In other words, the Thai speakers did not seek to negotiate the meaning of those words, but the English speakers were the ones who decided to display their target language expertise by offering to help with the words. The third and fourth categories reflect the non-linguistic assistance from the English speakers. Table 14 describes the definition of these four types of language expert expressions.

Table 14

Language Expert Expressions and Definitions

Type of language expert expression	Definition
1. Correcting grammatical errors	Correcting the grammatical mistakes the Thai speakers had made in a message.
2. Offering to help with lexical items	Giving the meaning of a word or phrase that they expected to be unfamiliar to the Thai speakers, or asking whether there was an unfamiliar word the Thai speakers needed help with. Providing the English vocabulary necessary for the Thai speakers on a particular topic of conversation.
3. Giving suggestions for learning English	Giving suggestions for learning or using English to the Thai speakers in response to the difficulties the Thai speakers shared with them.
4. Giving supportive comments	Giving moral support to the Thai speakers, such as giving positive feedback about their English performance or conversational ability, mitigating their negative self-perception about their linguistic deficiency, as well as building their confidence so they could improve their English as they progressed.

Table 15 gives example(s) of each type of language expert expression. More than one excerpt from the chat scripts are provided in almost all of the categories in order to give an example of the various aspects described under each language expert category in Table 14. At the end of some of the excerpts in Table 15, I have provided the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers that are relevant to their opinions of their English chat partners' display of the target language expertise. The underlined parts in the excerpts show the English speakers' expressions involving their alignment to the target language expert position.

Table 15

Examples of Language Expert Expressions

Type of language expert expression	Example
1. Correcting grammatical errors	Excerpt 1 Alan: the moral of the story [a tortoise and a hare] is dont be to [too] cocky and lazy and respect others. …. Tida: Yes! This is the good moral for everyone! Alan: im not cocky I am lazy but I do respect others Tida: So do I Alan: so AM I Alan: im sorry to correct you Tida: Thanks! I love to talk with you Alan: kop khun krap [a Thai phrase for 'Thank you'] (conversation 4)
2. Offering to help with lexical items	Excerpt 2 (Providing the meaning of a new word) Kevin: … 555 No not for me Chanon: I know, I know. 555? You know? Kevin: I just learned Chanon: Thai laugh word. And Thai number call. Ha. Chanon: That's great you know it! Kevin: Its good to learn these things. They come in handy. handy (helpful) Chanon: I understand. (conversation 11) Excerpt 3 (Providing a vocabulary item) James: I hate insects Bo: Did you see "tookkae" [a Thai word for 'gecko']? James: no Bo: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/ thumb/5/57/Tokay_Gecko.jpg/434px-Tokay_Gecko.jpg [an Internet link to a photo of a gecko] James: ahhh James: Yeah sure James: many times James: I have one of them in my house James: gecko – the English word Bo: :D (conversation 5) Bo's note: I learned the English word 'gecko' from him [James]. It means 'tookae' in Thai.

Type of language expert expression	Example
3. Giving suggestions for learning English	Excerpt 4 (Suggesting a tip in writing English for a beginner) Kevin: You can express emotion and feelings in English very well, but in all sentences and phrases you have to stay in the tense you begin in. It's probably the hardest part for students of the language. Spanish, French, Portuguese, and English have this in common. Kevin: Past, past perfect, present, present perfect, future, future perfect, conditional. In the beginning, it's best to stay with past, present, and future. Those aren't all of them, there's more!! Noi: I see Noi: so I should practise and practise and practise!! Right? Kevin: Absolutely! (conversation 4) Noi's note: I have got techniques in learning and using English from him [Kevin]. I think I will try to practice as he suggested. Excerpt 5 (Giving a tip in speaking English) Mon: I got C+ from this course. My teacher said that I spoke too little in his group discussion class Alan: well I think this is another which is important Alan: confidence, you have to be in it to win it Mon: I always have problem to catch up with the topic they are talking about Alan: kao jai mai? [a Thai phrase for 'Do you understand?'] Alan: I know its very difficult, but if were talking about English Alan: you have to be confidence to use it whenever possible especially if a c and turn into an A (conversation 2) Mon's note: He [Alan] also gave me some useful tips in using English.
4. Giving supportive comments	Excerpt 6 (Giving a positive feedback about the Thai speaker's conversational ability) Kevin: Chanon, your English is improving fast, did you know? Chanon: Huh?Idon't know,Why? Kevin: You response very quickly now, was it shyness before? Chanon: Ah,yes.

Type of language expert expression	Example
	Kevin: So your English isn't better, its just you!!
	Kevin: ;)
	Chanon: Oh, OK
	Chanon: But I must thanks Kevin too! You're good teacher for me!
	Kevin: I'm not taking credit for your hard work. I know what its like. Its not easy. (conversation 7)
	Excerpt 7 (Mitigating the Thai speaker's negative perception about her speaking ability)
	Ploy: … My listening is bad but my speaking is worse.
	David: Don't worry. We can use the chat option while we are talking so that when one of us doesn't understand the other's accent we can type it to clarify.
	David: I'm from South Carolina and we are very well known in the English speaking world for our rather different accent so if you have problems understanding me at times just remember that people from the northern U.S. spend a lot of time saying "What?" to us when we are talking!!
	Ploy: thanks to help me feel better (conversation 1)
	Excerpt 8 (Building confidence that the Thai speaker could improve her English as she progressed and giving positive feedback about her writing ability)
	Mon: I've got trouble in tense
	Alan: I understand
	Mon: my grammar is so poor
	Mon: I'm gonna try harder [to practice my grammar]
	Alan: I shouldn't worry
	Mon: It's an excellent chance to chat with u
	Mon: I hope that I can improve my English one day.
	Alan: of course I have no doubt (building confidence)
	Alan: like I said you write extremely well (giving positive feedback) (conversation 2)
	Mon's note: Alan's comment about my English helped me gain confidence in using English.

Table 16 shows the total number and percentage of the sequences in which the English speakers assumed the target language expert role as appeared in the chat scripts. The English speakers' names are alphabetically presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Number of Sequences in Which the English Speakers Displayed the Target Language Expert Role According to Types of Expert Expressions

Pair	English speaker's name	Language expert expressions					
		Correcting gramma-tical errors	Offering to help with lexical items	Giving suggestions for learning English	Giving supportive comments	Total (n=48)	%
1	Alan (with Mon)	-	2	5	5	12	25
2	Alan (with Tida)	7	-	-	1	8	16.6
3	Angie	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	David	1	-	1	3	5	10.4
5	Emily	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	James	-	1	-	-	1	2.1
7	Jason	-	-	-	2	2	4.2
8	Jenna	-	-	-	2	2	4.2
9	Kevin (with Chanon)	-	1	1	4	6	12.5
10	Kevin (with Noi)	2	2	3	4	11	22.9
11	Lucy	-	-	-	1	1	2.1

Pair	English speaker's name	Language expert expressions					
		Correcting gramma-tical errors	Offering to help with lexical items	Giving suggestions for learning English	Giving supportive comments	Total (n=48)	%
Total (*n*=48)		10	6	10	22		
%		20.8	12.5	20.8	45.8		

As shown in Table 16, there were a total of forty-eight chat sequences in which the English speakers assumed the target language expert role. Alan's conversations with Mon showed the highest frequency of language expert expressions, which is 12 or 25% of the total by all English speakers. The second and third highest rates of frequencies were from Kevin's conversations with Noi (11 or 22.9%), and Alan's conversations with Tida (8 or 16.6%). Angie and Emily's conversations contained the lowest rates of frequency. Angie, in fact, only confirmed the choice of word for her Thai chat partner (Yajai) three times when specifically asked to do so. James and Lucy's conversations showed that they both aligned to the language expert position only one time (2.1%) during the entire chat exchange program, while Jason and Jenna's conversations showed two sequences (4.2%) of language expert expressions.

With respect to the number and percentage of the four types of the language expert expressions, Table 16 illustrates that almost half of the forty-eight relevant sequences were giving supportive comments (22 or 45.8%). The two second most frequent ways the English speakers chose to display their language expertise was by

correcting grammatical errors and giving suggestions for learning English (each at 10 or 20.8%), followed by offering to help with lexical items (6 or 12.5%).

Expressions of Target Language Novice Role

The language novice role expressions were categorized into three types, that is, 1) confirming the choice of a word; 2) telling about difficulties in using English; 3) and acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise. The first category reflects the Thai speakers' taking the initiative in their own learning by questioning the language expert. Note that in this category, the Thai speakers brought the English speakers' language expertise into focus in order to confirm the correctness of their previous knowledge of a particular word, rather than to solve a communication problem as reported in the negotiation of meaning in Chapter 4. The second category, telling about difficulties in using English, overlaps with Park's (2007) category called the non-native speaker's self-deprecation of linguistic abilities. My second category, however, covers not only the L2 users' expression of their linguistic deficiency, as reported in Park's (2007) study, but also the other language learning problems they experienced as an L2 user beyond their doubts about their chat responses. The third category, acknowledging the English speaker's language expertise, reflects reactions from the Thai speakers who had received a relatively high level of assistance with their English from their English chat partners. Table 17 describes the definition of these three types of novice expressions.

Table 17

Language Novice Expressions and Definitions

Type of language novice expression	Definition
1. Confirming the choice of words	Asking the English speakers to check whether the word they had chosen was the appropriate choice in a particular context.
2. Telling about difficulties in using English	Telling the English speakers about their problematic English skills, including speaking, listening, writing and grammar. Mentioning their linguistic deficiency during the chat exchange.
3. Acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise	Stating their appreciation for the help from the English speakers.

Table 18 gives examples of the language novice expressions. More than one excerpt from the chat scripts is provided in order to illustrate the various aspects described under each language novice category in table 17. At the end of some of the excerpts in Table 18, I have provided the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers that relate to their English chat partners' target language expertise. The underlined parts in the excerpts show the Thai speakers' expressions involving their alignment to the target language novice position.

Table 18

Examples of Language Novice Expressions

Type of language novice expression	Example
1. Confirming the choice of word	Excerpt 9 Angie: … have you ever traveled long distance? Yajai: no. for me only domestic makes me crazy when the plane take off and land

Type of language novice expression	Example
	Angie: domestic is okay, long distance is very very difficult, especially when the time zones change. Angie: you don't know if it's day or night, and your body wants to sleep when it's morning! Yajai: that's we call 'jet lag' right? Oh that's so difficult … Angie: oh yes, jet lag is correct (conversation 12)
2. Telling about difficulties in using English	Excerpt 10 (Expressing a difficulty in listening comprehension) Ploy: I think American speak very fast David: I speak Spanish also and have spoken it for many years but I remember well having that same problem in the past Ploy: thanks for understand me David: A sentence in Spanish just sounds like one really long word until you get used to it, so I understand (conversation 1) Ploy's note: I was very excited because it was our first chat and we talked one day earlier than the scheduled time. He saw me online and thought it was today so we went ahead to chat. However, David is a very understanding person. He made me feel better about my English and feel less pressured. He often made me feel that I was doing fine during the conversation and mentioned that it was natural for any L2 learners to encounter difficulties one way or another. Excerpt 11 (Mentioning one's linguistic deficiency) Pairin: Would you like to talk with me by the microphone? Jason: I would prefer to just type if that's okay with you Pairin: ok Pairin: But I'm no good English Pairin: You may be annoyed me Jason: no not at all Jason: your doing fine (conversation 1)
3. Acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise	Excerpt 12 Mon: does your government nurture the unemploy [unemployed]? Mon: Do I use the right words? "nurture" Alan: not really … Alan: … nurture is a very nice word Alan: as if you look after a bird you found that was dieing, that got better Alan: English government isnt [isn't] like that Mon: actually I intend to use "feed" but I think it's weird … Alan: its difficult. nurtures [nurture is] better

Type of language novice expression	Example
	Alan: look after is more describing Mon: :D Alan: we nurture babies…but not people who lose jobs Mon: u r like a dictionary Alan: please dont say this. Im not intelligent Mon: u describe it so clear Alan: Thanks Alan: thats [that's] because I speak english … (conversation 6)

Table 19 shows the total number and percentage of the sequences in which the Thai

speakers assumed the target language novice role as appeared in the chat scripts. Note

that the Thai speakers' names in Table 19 are ranked to correspond to the order of their

English chat partners' names in Table 16.

Table 19

Number of Sequences in Which the Thai Speakers Displayed the Target Language Novice

Role According to Types of Novice Expressions

Pair	Thai speaker's name	Language novice roles			Total (n=32)	%
		Confirming the choice of words	Telling about difficulties in using English	Acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise		
1	Mon	1	6	3	10	31.2
2	Tida	-	-	3	3	9.4
3	Yajai	3	-	-	3	9.4
4	Ploy	-	3	1	4	12.5
5	Nat	-	-	-	-	-
6	Bo	-	-	-	-	-

| Pair | Thai speaker's name | Language novice roles | | | Total (n=32) | % |
		Confirming the choice of words	Telling about difficulties in using English	Acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise		
7	Pairin	-	3	-	3	9.4
8	Chai	-	1	-	1	3.1
9	Chanon	2	1	1	4	12.5
10	Noi	-	2	1	3	9.4
11	Wit	-	1	-	1	3.1
Total (n=32)		6	17	9		
%		18.8	53.1	28.1		

Table 19 shows that, of the total of thirty-two sequences involving the language novice expressions found in the chat scripts, Mon contributed the highest number to the total number, which is 10 or 31.2%. Ploy and Chanon displayed their language novice position four times or 12.5% of the total number, followed closely by Tida, Yajai, Pairin and Noi (3 or 9.4%). Chai and Wit both displayed their novice position only one time during the entire chat exchange (3.1%). The conversations from Nat and Bo did not show any sequences in which they aligned to the language novice position. Concerning the types of language novice expressions, the Thai speakers often displayed their novice position by telling the English speakers about their difficulties in using English (17 or 53.1%), followed by acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise (9 or 28.1%), and confirming the choice of words (6 or 18.8%), respectively.

Table 20 compares the findings from Tables 16 and 19 on the total number of the sequences in which the Thai speakers expressed their target language novice position with those of the English speakers' expert position.

Table 20

Comparison of the Number of Sequences Involving the Target Language Novice and Expert Expressions

Pair	Expressions of differential language expertise			
	Thai speaker		English speaker	
1	Mon	10	Alan	12
2	Tida	3	Alan	8
3	Yajai	3	Angie	-
4	Ploy	4	David	5
5	Nat	-	Emily	-
6	Bo	-	James	1
7	Pairin	3	Jason	2
8	Chai	1	Jenna	2
9	Chanon	4	Kevin	6
10	Noi	3	Kevin	11
11	Wit	1	Lucy	1
Total		32		48

Table 20 shows that Mon and her English chat partner, Alan, each contributed to the highest number, (10 and 12) of the total sequences involving the target language novice

and expert expressions, respectively. Tida, Yajai, Ploy, Pairin, Chanon and Noi displayed their novice role for either 3 or 4 times during the chat exchange, yet received different degrees of responses from their English chat partners. That is to say, Tida, Ploy, Chanon and Noi's English chat partners displayed their language expertise 8, 5, 6 and 11 times, respectively, as opposed to those of Yajai and Pairin's chat partners, which were 0 and 2, respectively.

Thai Speakers' Perceptions about Their English Chat Partners'

Expressions of the Target Language Expertise

The following are excerpts from the interviews with the Thai speakers in Thai that involved their opinions about their English chat partners frequently assuming the target language expert role during the chat conversations. Note that these excerpts are parts of responses from various interview questions that shared the common theme of the English speakers' language expert role. Tida pointed out her appreciation with the linguistic help she received from her English chat partner (Alan):

> I think it was the opportunity to practice everyday conversational English. The
>
> fact that he [Alan] volunteered to correct my messages helped me learn the
>
> appropriate [grammatical] structure English speakers would normally use in that
>
> particular situation. (Tida)

When being asked to talk about their favorite chat session, Noi and Mon mentioned their impression of their English chat partners, Kevin and Alan, respectively:

> I'm impressed with his [Kevin's] willingness to help me practice my English. He
>
> told me to write a paragraph about something and send it to him via email so that

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it would help me to think in English; he would look at it for me. I'm impressed

that he doesn't think I'm annoying. (Noi)

In our early conversation, he offered to help me with my grammar and writing. At

that time we had not known each other for a very long time at all, but he offered

to help me. (Mon)

Ploy mentioned her impression of her English chat partner's (i.e. David's) understanding

with her language learning problems while responding to the interview question: How

well do you think you know your English chat partner?

I think he is a considerate and understanding person. For example, I told him early

on in our first chat session that my English, in particular my speaking and

listening skills, was not good. He then tried to console me because he was also an

L2 learner of Spanish and he thought it was not easy, either. … He said the L1

speakers' conversations were not [grammatically] perfect, either. He tried to say

several things to make me feel relaxed while chatting with him. (Ploy)

In addition to receiving moral support from the target language expert, Mon mentioned

the language learning tips she received from her English chat partner, Alan,:

I think my speaking skill has improved. I also got some useful advice from him

[Alan] on improving my English skills by being more exposed to various English

media. It was a very valuable experience for me. I was preparing for the IELTS

while participating in the chat program; chatting with him helped me improve my

thinking process in speaking English. It really helped me with the speaking test;

I'm very satisfied with the score I got. (Mon)

Discussion

The findings of this chapter on the 'the target language expert and novice' exchanges showed that the Thai speakers appeared to define their place in the chat exchanges as novices by confirming that they were struggling language learners to seek rapport from their English chat partners, rather than appealing for linguistic help. The English speakers, likewise, did not seem to display their target language expertise only in the linguistic sense, but also by giving encouragement to their Thai chat partners to build their confidence in using English. The following are the discussions of the details of the findings in this chapter.

The finding of this study, that the majority of the Thai speakers frequently displayed their target language novice role by telling their English chat partners about their difficulties in using English, is not consistent with the findings of the previous studies (Kasper, 2004; Hosoda, 2006). That is to say, Kasper's (2004) and Hosoda's (2006) studies showed that the linguistic assistance, in particular lexical items, was the nature of the language expert and novice orientation during casual conversations between L2 learners and L1 speakers. However, my study showed that the Thai speakers also expressed their difficulties in using English, which accounted for 53.1% of the total sequences in which they assumed their target language novice role.

With respect to the sequences involving the language expert expressions, the two types of linguistic help the English speakers provided to their Thai counterparts, namely, correcting grammatical errors (20.8%) and offering help with lexical items (12.5%), were not the most popular actions taken. In fact, these English speakers appeared to frequently give supportive comments (45.8%) to mitigate the Thai speakers' negative view of their

English performance or to give positive feedback when they had performed well during the conversation.

The reasons that the shift to the target language expert and novice roles during the conversations in my study seemed to include the themes beyond seeking for and supplying the lexical and grammatical items may be as follows. First, the conversations I used for analysis in my study were conducted through the synchronous text chat mode in which the pronunciation of English words was not an issue like in other previous face-to-face conversational analysis studies, such as Park's (2007) study in which participants often requested help with the English pronunciation from the L1 speaker.

Second, the Thai and English speakers in my study had not known each other before participating in the chat exchange. Moreover, most of the Thai speakers rarely had any personal contact with English speakers outside of the institutional context. These two factors might have played a part in the Thai speakers' concerns about their English proficiency when engaging in such simultaneous conversations with an unfamiliar chat partner. The Thai speakers, thus, sought rapport with their chat partners by expressing their linguistic deficiency and difficulties in using English in other offline situations. In contrast, the L2 and L1 interlocutors in Hosoda's (2006) and Park's (2007) studies were acquaintances. The L1 speakers might have already been relatively familiar with some of the L2 learners' difficulties from their previous daily conversational exchanges.

Finally, while Kasper's (2004) and Hosoda's (2006) studies included negotiation sequences in which the L2 learners raised questions about the lexical items to their L1 interlocutors as part of their alignment to differential language expertise, my study treated the negotiation of meaning between the dyads separately as presented in Chapter 4. In

other words, the findings of my Chapter 5 are focused on the initiative of the Thai-English speaking dyads in expressing their differential language expertise beyond the negotiation of meaning to maintain mutual understanding.

Mon and Alan: The Pair That Had the Highest Frequencies of

Target Language Novice and Expert Expressions

Concerning the findings from the individual Thai speakers, Mon's highest frequency of language novice expressions (10 or 31.2%) among the total of thirty- two novice expressions from the eleven Thai speakers may have been related to her situation: while she was participating in the chat exchange, she was also preparing for an English proficiency test in order to apply to study abroad. Her determined goal in practicing her English might have driven her to frequently assume the language novice role by consulting with her chat partner, Alan, about her difficulties in using English. Alan took an active language expert role to help Mon improve her English and confidence whenever Mon aligned to the novice role. Alan was an English speaker who contributed to the highest number (25%) of the language expert expressions as well. Moreover, Mon reported from the interview that Alan offered to help her with her English during the chat conversations without being asked. Alan's frequent and voluntary orientations to the language expert position appeared to have a positive influence on Mon's view of the chat exchanges as seen in her reflective notes and interview. In other words, she reported that she had learned some useful tips in learning English and gained more confidence in her English performance from talking with Alan.

The Two Groups of Thai Speakers That Received Varying Amounts of

Response from the Language Expert

In addition to Mon's individual case, it is interesting to point out two groups of Thai speakers who shared almost the same frequencies of the language novice expressions, but nevertheless, received different amounts of responses from their English chat partners, as seen in Table 20. Note that all of these six Thai speakers (Tida, Yajai, Ploy, Pairin, Chanon, and Noi) assumed the language novice role either three or four times (9.4% or 12.5%) during the chat exchanges, among the total of thirty-two sequences involving novice expressions from the eleven Thai speakers. In the first group (Tida, Ploy, Chanon, and Noi), the English chat partners (Alan, David, Kevin and Kevin) seemed to assume the language expert role more often than the English chat partners of the second group. As shown in Table 20, Alan, David, Kevin (with Chanon), and Kevin (with Noi) assumed the language expert role ranging from 5 to 12 sequences (10.4 to 25%) of the total of forty-eight sequences involving language expert expressions.

The second group of the Thai speakers, that is Pairin and Yajai, assumed the novice role for approximately as often as the first group, but surprisingly did not receive as many responses from their English chat partners, Jason and Angie, respectively. In other words, the second group of English speakers did not seem to display their language expert role, such as giving suggestions or supportive comments, as much as the first group of English speakers did with their Thai chat partners. In fact, Jason assumed the expert role only two times (3.7%), and Angie never did. This finding extends the findings from the previous studies (Kasper; 2004; Hosoda, 2006; Park; 2007), which concluded that L2 learners were the ones who always brought differential language expertise into

focus during a conversation. The finding from my study discussed above suggests that some English speakers also played a part in creating rich sequences of differential language expertise in which the opportunities for learning arose. As seen in my study, the English speakers who decided to take an active language expert role throughout the conversations contributed to their Thai chat partners' sense of confidence.

Why Did Some English Speakers Take a More Active

Language Expert Role Than Did the Others?

The English chat partners (Alan, David and Kevin) who took a more active language expert role shared some characteristics. They all have had experiences as L2 learners. Recall that Alan is also an EFL teacher residing in Thailand. These experiences might have contributed to their understanding of the Thai speakers' difficulties in using the L2, and their willingness to help the Thai speakers improve their English. The findings from the chat scripts and interviews revealed that these English speakers volunteered to help their Thai chat partners with their English, shared L2 learning tips, and gave several supportive comments during the conversations.

In addition to the English speakers' L2 learning and teaching experiences, the Thai speakers' determined goal in improving their English might have been another motivating factor for the English speakers, as previously mentioned in Mon's case that she was preparing for the English Proficiency test. In like manner, Kevin mentioned his impression of Noi's determination in learning English while responding to the interview question on the most valuable, interesting, or enjoyable part of the chat exchange: "I think it's the dedication that Noi puts into it that I appreciate most. She rides a bus a long

way to an Internet café for each of our chats. She is very dedicated to her goal of learning English."

Mon's determination to pass the English proficiency test so that she could apply to study abroad and and Noi's determination to practice her English so that she could receive good grades in her English classes through chatting with their English chat partners reflects Norton Peirce's (1995) notion of investment. According to Norton Peirce (1995), learners invest in learning an L2 because they "expect or hope to have a good return on that investment—a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources" (p. 17). It is interesting to note that Mon and Noi both received the highest language expert's responses from their English chat partners, Alan and Kevin, respectively. This finding may suggest that the strong investment in language learning of these Thai speakers may have played a part in the English speakers' tendency to assume the language expert role to help their new Thai friends achieve their goals.

With respect to the Thai speakers' views towards their English chat partners' orientation to the target language expert role, the findings from the reflective notes and interviews suggested the positive effect of the high degree of orientation to the language expertise on the Thai speakers' attitudes. To put it another way, the Thai speakers whose English chat partners took a relatively active language expert role reported learning benefits, including better perception of their English performance, confidence in using English, knowledge of the language, and learning tips. These Thai speakers were the ones who stated their appreciation of the help they received from their English chat partners, as shown in Table 19, as well.

The finding that two English speakers, Angie and Emily, did not display any type of language expert expression did not always mean that they were unaware of the differential language expertise. The reason that these two English speakers ignored the linguistic errors the Thai speakers made during the chat exchange might have been that they did not want to topicalize their Thai chat partners' language performance as an issue, but rather made the Thai chat partner feel comfortable by continuing with the ongoing conversation. This pattern can be seen in normal social contexts in which the L1 speaker rarely directly corrects the L2 user' mistakes unless there is a need for clarification. The following chat excerpt reflects the English speaker's uncertainty in correcting the errors made by his Thai chat partner:

Excerpt 13

(1)Tida: That's why you are sleepy in the morning?

(2)Alan: correct

(3)Alan: were sleepy….past tense…….are sleepy is present tense…

(4)Alan: … I think you will dislike me if I keep correcting so please ask me to stop if you want……im not fussy at all and I can understand everything you write in fact I think you have very good english

(5)Tida: I love it really!

(6)Tida: I love to talk with you on MSN too Cause I can practise myself too

(7)Alan: cool

Alan was concerned whether Tida, his Thai chat partner, might have felt uneasy with his help to correct her grammatical errors or not (4). Tida, however, stated her appreciation for his help and insisted on him continuing to help her with her English (5 and 6).

Another possible reason why Angie and Emily did not orient to their language expert role might have been simply that their Thai chat partners (Yajai and Nat) did not often bring target language-related issues into focus. Therefore, the English speakers did not find it necessary to assume the language expert role during the conversations.

<div align="center">Topic Initiation</div>

This section aims to show the negotiation of relationships of the Thai and English speaking dyads with respect to the distribution of the topics being introduced by each party. It intends to reveal whether the Thai speakers had an equal share of topic initiation in the chat exchange or not. The following excerpt is an example of a shift of topic made by one of the members of the dyad:

Excerpt 14

(1) Jenna: did you have a winter break for school?

(2) Chai: no

(3) Jenna: really? Wow that's awful

(4) Chai: it has two semesters

(5) Jenna: I had three weeks off for winter holidays

　　Jenna: I just started back

　　Jenna: it was a nice break

(6) Chai: good

(7) Chai: I have summer break for 3 months and 3 weeks in rain

(8) Jenna: season?

(9) Chai: season

(10) Jenna: … so you have a rain season and a dry season in Thailand?

(11) Chai: Yes. How about there?

(12) Jenna: there is spring summer fall and winter

(13) Chai: aha

(14) Chai: what do you eat in each meal?

   Chai: in Thailand we have rice mainly.

(15) Jenna: haha we eat everything

(16) Chai: my friend, when she came back from USA she looked fatter

   Chai: haha

(17) Jenna: haha that happens to everyone … (conversation 6)

In excerpt 14, Jenna, an English speaker, started the topic of school vacation in turn 1. She and Chai, her Thai chat partner, continued to exchange comments about the period of time for school vacations in their respective home countries (2-9). In response to Chai's message (7) about the duration of his summer and rainy season breaks, Jenna asked a relevant question about the number of seasons in Thailand (10). Chai responded to Jenna and requested that she tell him about the seasons in the United States. (11). Chai briefly acknowledged Jenna's answer (13) and shifted to the new topic of food (14).

I decided to exclude certain kinds of turns when coding for the initiation of a new topic. First, greetings at the beginning of the conversation and requests to end the conversation were not coded as topic initiations. Second, urgent interruptions from one of the members of the dyad to pause the conversation for a short period of time were not regarded as topic initiations, such as leaving to use the restroom or to check the food on

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the stove. Finally, unsuccessful shifts of topic, such as that in Excerpt 15, were not coded as topic initiations:

Excerpt 15

(1) Angie: have you heard the news of our election results? We have a

new president! I am so excited that Obama won!

(2) Yajai: yes I heard that

Yajai: I feel that the most of American like him than mccain and I

think he have a good looking

(3) minal: well there are many americans that did vote for mccain, but

in the end Obama won the popular vote. And yes, he is very good looking!

(4) Yajai: do you like Thai food?

(5) minal: what are the opinions of him there in thailand?

(6) Yajai: I'm not sure. but I think obama is popular than mccain. …

(7) minal: …. he [McCain] is a very respectable man. both of

them were good, but i was always an obama supporter.

(8) So how are you? Any new updates in your life

(9) Yajai: Wow obama supporter. I'm fine but I have a cold about 2 weeks. I wish

I could get well soon. I stay at my farm house at Loei. (conversation 4)

In this excerpt, Yajai, a Thai speaker, tried to shift the conversation to talk about Thai food in turn 4. However, Angie, her English chat partner, did not respond to her new topic and went on with the topic on U.S. politics by asking her to share Thai opinions about the American election (5).

Table 21 shows the number of topics initiated by the Thai and English speakers over the chat conversations. The first person in each pair is a Thai speaker and the second person is an English speaker.

Table 21

Number of Topics Initiated by the Thai and English Speakers

Names	Conversations												Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Tida	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	2	2	1	0	0	16
Alan	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8
2. Nat	3	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2	2	3	30
Emily	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	15
3. Bo	9	5	3	0	5	0	1	2	5	1	2	2	35
James	2	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	1	1	11
4. Pairin	3	4	6	5	5	5	2	1	4	4	4	6	49
Jason	6	1	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	17
5. Wit	6	2	2	3	1	2	3	3	5	na	na	na	27
Lucy	0	2	3	1	1	1	0	1	0				9
6. Mon	3	4	1	3	3	1	2	0	na	na	na	na	17
Alan	1	3	2	2	0	3	4	1					16
7. Ploy	1	3	2	3	1	1	3	5	3	1	3	0	26
David	5	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	23
8. Chai	8	1	1	4	1	2	3	na	na	na	na	na	20
Jenna	8	3	3	3	2	2	1						22
9. Chanon	na	2	1	1	3	4	3	1	2	1	6	5	29
Kevin	na	2	1	2	2	3	4	3	1	4	2	1	25
10. Noi	0	1	2	1	4	3	1	5	4	1	4	3	29
Kevin	5	3	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	5	1	1	20

Names	Conversations												Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
11. Yajai	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	8
Angie	5	4	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	5	2	35

Note. na = not available; Wit and Lucy chatted 12 times and submitted 9 chat logs; Mon and Alan chatted 12 times and submitted 8 chat logs; Chai and Jenna chatted 9 times and submitted 7 chat logs.

According to the data in Table 21, there appear to be three patterns. In the first group, the Thai speakers seemed to initiate significantly more topics than their English chat partners did during the conversations. The pairs in this group are the first five pairs listed in Table 21, that is, Tida and Alan, Nat and Emily, Bo and James, Pairin and Jason, as well as Wit and Lucy. In all of these pairs the number of topic initiations by the Thai speakers was double that of their English chat partners. In the second group, both the Thai and English speakers seemed to equally introduce the topics of the conversations. The pairs in this second group are pairs 6 to 10, that is, Mon and Alan, Ploy and David, Chai and Jenna, Kevin and Chanon, as well as Noi and Kevin. The last pattern covers only one pair, which is the last pair listed in the table (Yajai and Angie), where the English speaker introduced more topics. Yajai, introduced only 8 topics, while her English chat partner, Angie, introduced most of the topics in the conversations (35 topics). Note that Tida and Alan did not introduce any topics besides greeting and ending in their conversations 7 and 12 as shown in Table 21. Bo and James did not introduce any topics in their conversation 6, either. All of these three conversations lasted less than 10 minutes because one of the members could not continue the conversations.

Some Difficulties of the Thai Speakers in Initiating Topics

Four of the Thai speakers, Mon, Tida, Ploy, and Chai, reflected in some of their notes written after the chat sessions on the difficulty of finding topics to talk about with their English chat partners. However, Mon, Ploy and Chai, except Tida, reported that they seemed to be able to lead the conversation more in their later chat sessions. The following examples reflect these four Thai speakers' perceptions on their progress in topic initiation from the beginning of the chat exchange as compared to the end of the chat exchange.

Mon mentioned her difficulty in introducing new topics of conversation with her English chat partner, Alan, in her notes after the first chat session. Her problem, nevertheless, seemed to decrease as shown in her notes after the second chat session:

> The problem I had in this first chat session was that I had no idea about what to talk about because I do not often have a chance to online chat with a foreigner. I was concerned whether my topics might have been boring to my chat partner because he only responded to what I asked about and did not ask me any relevant questions about it. I think I will try to find more interesting topics to talk with him about in our next chat. (Mon, conversation 1)

> ... I was less worried about the topics of the conversation. I have learned more about the geography of England from my chat partner; it is very useful for my decision in choosing the school for my study. … (Mon, conversation 2)

Ploy, likewise, felt that towards the end of the chat exchange she was able to introduce more topics and topics of a more challenging nature to her English chat partner, David, as she mentioned in her notes after the last chat session:

The main topic of the conversation today was business, [an area] in which I was

not familiar with the technical terms. However, I chose to explain the concepts in

my own words to my chat partner. … I feel that in the chat sessions towards the

end of the chat exchange program, I could express what I want to say with him

more than I could in my early chat sessions. I talk more in detail about our topics.

I introduce more diverse and difficult topics. Unlike in the early chat sessions

when I often left out the part I wanted to say because I did not know the

vocabulary items to explain it with. … (Ploy, conversation 12)

In addition to the business topic , Ploy said in her note after the fifth chat session that

politics was another topic that she found difficult to discuss with her chat partner, David:

The main topic of the conversation today was politics so I was tense because I

was not often familiar with the political terms. However, as the conversation

progressed, I managed to make it. (Ploy, conversation 5)

Chai's following three excerpts reflect his developing feeling of getting acquainted with

his chat partner, Jenna, which in turn seemed to help him gain the confidence to introduce

a new topic of conversation:

I was very happy to get to text chat with my chat partner. I was still nervous to

voice chat with her so we did not get to voice chat this time. Oh, I could not think

of what to talk with her about. … (Chai, conversation 1)

At the beginning I had no idea what to talk with her about. However, since I had

introduced the topic on the newly elected U.S. President, she seemed to be very

interested in this political topic. I later shared with her about the Thai political

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system, but I felt that I could not tell her everything I wanted to because I did not

know all the words needed. … (Chai, conversation 4)

I feel that we had a lot more to talk with each other about in this chat session. It

might have been because we had not chatted for several weeks and had a lot to

catch up on. If I had not had to leave to take care of my business, we would have

been able to talk more. I really enjoyed our conversation; I was not nervous like I

was in the early chat sessions anymore. … (Chai, conversation 5)

In contrast to the other Thai speakers, who appeared to feel more comfortable

introducing the topic of conversation towards the end of the chat exchange, Tida felt at a

loss to suggest a topic of conversation with her chat partner, Alan, even towards the end

of the chat exchange:

I happened to see him online today while I was preparing some documents for the

meeting. He came in and said hi, but I could not think of what to talk with him

about so our conversation was pretty short. (Tida, conversation 7)

Unlike what Chai recounted in his notes from the fifth chat session, Tida felt that

the long period of absence between chat correspondences with her chat partner

undermined her confidence in being able to introduce new topics to him, as she wrote in

her notes after the last chat session:

I had not chatted with Alan for a long time. When I met him on MSN today, I

could not think of how to start the conversation; I was afraid I would ask him

something he did not want to talk about. It was good that he left early to go to

lunch, ha ha ha. We had not chatted for a long time and I felt that I had no idea

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where to start. In the last two months we had chatted more regularly and I felt more familiar with him than I do now. … (Tida, conversation 12)

Discussion

The finding that the Thai speakers introduced either significantly more or as many new topics of conversation as their English chat partners suggests that the majority of the Thai speakers seemed to be able to actively take the lead in the conversations. These findings do not support Kasper's (2004) finding in which the native speaker of German appeared to take the role of interaction manager throughout the conversations with English speaking learners of German. Three factors could have contributed to the Thai speakers' active topic initiation during the chat exchange.

First, the learners of German in Kasper's (2004) study met individually with their conversational partner only three times in a semester, while my Thai speakers chatted online with their English partners for a longer period of time, ranging from nine to twelve sessions. This longer period of time might have allowed the Thai speakers to gradually get acquainted with their chat partners and develop their confidence in introducing topics to the ongoing conversation. The findings from Table 21 show that some of the Thai speakers, such as Ploy and Noi, did not seem to take an active role in introducing topics in their early chat sessions as much as their English chat partners did. Nevertheless, these Thai speakers appeared to have better control of topics in their later chat sessions. The findings from the Thai speakers' notes also reflected most of the Thai speakers' views on their progress in initiating new topics towards the middle and the end of the program.

Second, the English speakers might have helped prepare the Thai speakers for impromptu topic initiation. The English speakers, such as, David, Jason, and Kevin (with

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Noi), appeared to help lead the topics of the early chat sessions until Thai speakers were able to take a more active role in leading the topics of conversation. David and Kevin (with Noi) subsequently resumed a more equal role in introducing the topics, while Jason often allowed his Thai chat partner to introduce most of the topics of the conversations.

Finally, the relatively casual conversations in which the Thai-English dyads met on their private online chatroom, as opposed to the institutional context in which the conversations took place in Kasper's (2004) study, might have helped create a more relaxed atmosphere for the Thai speakers and allowed them to be more at ease to initiate topics.

Yajai and Angie: The Pair That the Thai Speaker Did Not Share

an Equal Role in Topic Initiation

The finding that one Thai speaker, Yajai, did not seem to share an equal role in topic initiation with her English chat partner, Angie, can be explained as follows. Yajai occasionally tried to introduce new topics of conversation, but her chat partner, Angie, did not often respond to her new topics and went on asking relevant questions about the topic being discussed; when this happened, Yajai did not repeat her attempt to start a new topic. For example, recall excerpt 15, in which Angie did not respond to Yajai's new topic of food, but asked Yajai about her opinion on the U.S. politics. Even though Yajai did not seem to introduce as many topics as her English chat partner, and tended to adopt the topics introduced by the chat partner, their average chat time per session as shown in Table 3 in Chapter 3 was ranked relatively high (75.1 minutes) out of all the eleven dyads. In other words, while Yajai's chat partner introduced more new topics to their conversations, Yajai contributed to the conversation through her involvement in those

topics. Yajai, for instance, often carefully responded to a question being asked and showed interest in the topic introduced by her chat partner by asking questions about it. For example:

Excerpt 16

(1) Angie: so what's going on in Thailand?

Angie: any new developments?

(2) Yajai: there is no more movement of red shirt and yellow shirt [two opposing protest groups]

(3) Yajai: that's a good news may be it's rainning [raining] all day here so they cannot gather together

(4) Yajai: and how about your country i heard the news of the new influenza

(5) Angie: that's very good news, nice to have calm and peace

(6) Angie: Have you heard of American Idol? It's very popular in the States, I am watching the final show, it's a singing competition.

What are some popular shows over there?

(7) Yajai: yes i've heard that.

(8) Yajai: we can see only by cable not free TV so it's not popular here

(9) Yajai: this program shows on free TV there?

(10) Angie: no, you have to pay for cable, you have to pay per month …

(conversation 11)

According to excerpt 16, Yajai responded to her chat partner's (Angie) question about the political situation in Thailand in turn 2 and added her personal opinion about the developing situation in turn 3. Yajai tried to introduce a new topic about current events in

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Angie's home country (4), but instead adopted Angie's topic of an American television show (7). Yajai then shared with Angie about how this show was viewed in Thailand (8) and ask a relevant question about how Angie subscribed to this show (9). At the end of the chat exchange, Yajai seemed to eventually take a more active role in topic initiation as reported by her chat partner:

> Yajai's confidence in using English has greatly improved over the course of our chats. In the beginning, I felt like I had to lead our conversations, often introducing topics and asking questions. Towards the end of our chats Yajai showed more enthusiasm and took more initiative by leading new discussions and bringing up previously discussed topics. I think she has certainly gained more confidence in her comprehension and use of English. If I were to meet Yajai in person, I have no doubt that we would pick up where we left off and jump into a lively conversation! (Angie)

Tida: The Thai Speaker Who Continued to Have Difficulty in Introducing

New Topics Towards the End of the Chat Exchange Program

Tida's continued difficulty in introducing new topics of conversation towards the end of the chat exchanges while other Thai speakers seemed to suggest more topics as time went on can be explained as follows. First, the place Tida chose to chat from might have affected her concentration with the conversations, which resulted in her being unable to introduce new topics of conversation with her chat partner, Alan. That is to say, Tida had to chat with her chat partner during the day at work because she did not have Internet access at home. Thus, she might have had more outside distractions, and felt more constrained, during the conversations than the other Thai speakers who chatted with

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their partners at their own place. Table 3 in Chapter 3 shows that Tida's average chat

time per session is ranked the lowest (26.8 minutes) of the eleven dyads. Table 3 in

Chapter 3 also shows that conversations 7 and 12 lasted only 8 and 7 minutes,

respectively. These were two short conversations in which no new topics were

introduced, as shown in Table 21 in this section. The relatively short average chat time

per session might not have been sufficient to allow Tida and her chat partner, Alan, to get

acquainted with each other, and in turn to allow Tida to gradually develop confidence in

introducing the topics of conversation.

Second, the finding that Tida felt at a loss to suggest a topic of conversation with

her chat partner may have been related to cultural factors. She may have felt hesitant to

introduce new topics because she was not sure what kinds of topics would be appropriate

to initiate with an unfamiliar interlocutor, such as her chat partner, who is from another

culture.

A third factor contributing to Tida's, or even Yajai's, relatively few topic

introductions could have simply been their different personalities. In other words, in

natural conversations, some interlocutors may be more extroverted and thus have a

tendency to come up with various topics to carry on the conversation while others may be

more reserved and thus tend to follow topics being introduced by the more talkative ones.

Angie's response to the question concerning the differences between her self and her

Thai chat partner (Yajai) reflected their different personalities: "… generally speaking, I

think that I am more talkative."

It is important to note that Tida's chat partner (Alan) also chatted with another

Thai speaker (Mon). Mon had a much longer average chat time per session with Alan

(55.3 minutes), than did Tida's conversations with Alan (26.8 minutes). The finding that Mon's conversations with Alan seemed to be relatively longer than Tida's conversations with him may have been due to the topics of the conversations. Several of the topics Mon introduced to the conversations were about her preparation to study in England and to take the English proficiency test, as mentioned in the previous section on Language Expert and Novice Roles. Alan might have felt that he was an expert in the topic about his home country and wanted to help Mon with her language test; he mentioned during the interview that: "she [Mon] wants to go to [the] UK to study. I could help with location advice and editing some work she wanted to send to [the] UK." Alan, therefore, might have had more to share with Mon about these two areas of his expertise, as shown in Table 21 from the fact that he introduced as many topics as Mon did, (17 and 16 respectively) in the eight chat scripts they sent for analysis. In contrast, Alan introduced only 8 topics in his twelve chat conversations with Tida, which was only half as many as those that were introduced by Tida (16 topics). Mon's notes after the sixth chat session reflect a large amount of information Alan shared with her about his home country as well:

> I have received very helpful information from Alan in detail to help me make a decision about the university [I want to go to study], including the location of all the universities I have had as my choices, their local climate and crime rates. He really helped me save my time in finding all of this information. He is very kind to give me all the information in every detail. (Mon, conversation 6)

Apart from the language and studying topics, Mon, who is a more fluent English user than Tida, seemed to be able to introduce various and interesting topics of conversations

which helped generate long responses from Alan and prolong the conversation. Alan's excerpt from the interview mirrors Mon's introductions of various topics during the conversations with him: "… those chats were really cool because it wasn't [a] predictable conversation. We could talk about anything. Not that I have ever met her but [I feel] more like friends than strangers."

The last point to be made in this section on topic initiation is the one topic that appeared to be difficult for the Thai speakers. The notes from Chai and Ploy in this section support the finding on Chapter 4 on Negotiation of Meaning that the Thai speakers regarded politics to be a hard topic to discuss with their chat partner, since they were unfamiliar with the terms and the political situation in their chat partner's country. The other topic Ploy mentioned to be challenging for her, for similar reasons, was business.

<div align="center">Conversational Strategies and Devices for Rapport</div>

This last section of chapter 5 aims to present the findings from the analysis of the chat scripts on how the Thai and English speakers negotiated their relationships with each other, judging from the conversational strategies and linguistic devices they used during the chat exchange. From the analysis of the chat scripts the Thai speakers and their English chat partners had a tendency to use strategies to enhance camaraderie while chatting to build rapport with each other. Tannen (2005) refers to speakers who operate on the basis of camaraderie, or whose behavior falls under Lakoff's third Rule of Politeness (Be friendly). She notes that these speakers assume a shared emotional involvement with each other or with the subject matter, and thus establish rapport by eliciting everything associated with the topic of their conversations. The Thai and English

speakers in this study used several conversational devices that showed their intention to develop positive interpersonal connections with each other. These conversational devices were categorized into eight types: 1) evaluative responses; 2) agreement; 3) mutual revelation; 4) minimizing difference; 5) using a nickname; 6) showing interest in the topic; 7) making a summary or conclusion; and 8) asking personal-experience questions. Since the last type of device is in the form of a question and thus represents a speakers' indirect way to show rapport, I chose to present the findings of this last type of device in a separate part from the first seven devices. I will refer to the first seven devices as primary devices involving rapport building and the last device as a secondary device.

In the first part of this section, I will first present the definition of each type of conversational device used to build rapport in the conversations, followed by examples from the chat scripts. I will subsequently show the findings in bar graphs, including the total number and percentage of each type of conversational device found in the chat scripts, the total number of conversational devices used by the Thai and by the English speakers, as well as a comparison of each type of conversational device used by the Thai and by the English speakers. I will also provide detailed bar graphs on each type of conversational device, showing the distribution of usage by the individual Thai-English pairs in order to discuss any particular findings from any given pair that may provide insight into the relationship that has formed in that pair. In the second part of this section, I will present the findings on the secondary conversational device for rapport, asking personal-experience questions, following the same patterns as for the primary conversational devices.

Primary Conversational Devices

Again, the primary conversational devices used by the Thai and English speakers tagged as involving rapport building were categorized into seven types: 1) evaluative responses; 2) agreement; 3) mutual revelation; 4) minimizing difference; 5) using a nickname; 6) showing interest about the other's topic; and 7) making a summary or conclusion. The categories for the conversational devices were developed independently, except "mutual revelation" which I adopted from Tannen's (2005) concept from her analysis of talk among friends. The following paragraphs give the definition and example(s) for each primary rapport-building conversational device, ranked from the most common device used to the least common one. The relevant portions of the exchanges cited are underlined.

1. Evaluative Responses

The participants sometimes expressed judgments about their chat partners' stories, experiences, or opinions. Note that the tone of the evaluative responses cited always paralleled their chat partner's emotional tone towards the topic she or he was talking about, for example in Excerpts 17 and 18:

Excerpt 17

Noi: how are you today?

Kevin: I'm good. I got a lot done today and I'm going on vacation to the beach tomorrow

Noi: wow!! So nice (conversation 11)

Excerpt 18

Angie: why did you stop working?

Yajai: as I said I used to be a secretary. I think there is no progress. just do as my

boss said.

Yajai: I cannot get the promotion to be assistant department manager or

department manager

Angie: oh i see

Angie: oh, do you think there is an issue of gender when it comes to being a

manager..what i am trying to ask is..are there mostly men in the higher-level jobs?

it is like that in the US..

Yajai: Thailand is the same. The most maneger [manager] are men.

Angie: yes, it's terrible how there is still a difference (conversation 5)

2. Agreement

This device was identified when participants showed that they shared a similar

feeling, opinion, belief or experience with the chat partner, for example:

Excerpt 19

Nat: I think baby need to play more than study.

Nat: 3 years time to go to school in Thailand, How's US?

Emily: 5 years starts kindergarten. they can start preschool at 3

Nat: in Thailand past we start at 7 years old, I think that's good

Emily: I think so too. 5 is so young, 3 is very young

Nat: yes too young (conversation 5)

3. Using a Nickname

The participants called their chat partners by their nicknames, or first names for those who did not have a nickname. Note that the Thai people always have a nickname; therefore, the English speakers in this study referred to their Thai chat partners by their nicknames.

Excerpt 20

Chanon: Hello! Kevin!

Kevin: hello

Chanon: How are you today?

Kevin: ok Good timing Non [Chanon's nickname]. I'm good and you

Chanon: I'm good too. (conversation 2)

4. Showing Interest in the Topic

The participants displayed their excitement or enthusiasm about the topic their chat partner was talking about by expressing their interest in that subject matter, such as saying that they would like to experience that particular event, to do or to learn that particular thing that their chat partner was mentioning. For example:

Excerpt 21

Chanon: Oh, You want to tell me that [it is] very very cold [where you live]?

Chanon: Ha ha. I see

Kevin: In some parts of the country it's much worse than here. It is very rare that we get snow, … Up north it is much colder

Chanon: Snow? Wow! That's great !! I want to play a snow! That look fun! But at Thailand. That impossible to have snow.

Kevin: Yes, I understand. … (conversation 3)

5. Mutual Revelation

The participants expressed comparable statements of personal experience to their

chat partners' statements, for example:

Excerpt 22

Nat: my husband gave money for my daughter, so I allowed her to buy some toy

that she wanted.

Nat: she was so happy

Emily: that's nice!

Nat: yes, she has mickey mouse shoes and elephant trains.

Nat: it's nice to see her very happy

Emily: I understand that feeling. Even though my baby can't talk yet, I can tell

when he's happy (conversation 6)

6. Minimizing Differences

When the participants differed on some opinion or preference, they courteously

expressed their disagreement while acknowledging or showing respect for their chat

partner's opinion. For example, in Excerpt 23, Angie softens her dislike of dogs by

admitting that young ones are attractive, and further by explaining her dislike as having a

cause in her fear of dogs, rather than being a deliberate choice:

Excerpt 23

Angie: what did you do today?

Yajai: There is no plan today. I just stay home to take care of my puppies.

Angie: oh you have puppies, how many?

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Yajai: 2 puppies. They are cute. They are 2 months. ……

Angie: …. Wow. I actually don't like dogs.. and I've never had pets, but puppies
are nice. I'm just scared of dogs. (conversation 2)

7. Making a Summary or Conclusion

The participants made a summary or conclusion after listening to their chat
partners' story, experience or opinion, seemingly in order to show that they had been
listening to what their chat partners had to say. For example:

Excerpt 24

Kevin: What is your nickname or do you have one?

Noi: my nickname is Noi

Kevin: Is that what everyone calls you?

Noi: my family and my friends call me Noi

Noi: my thai teacher call me Nontida [her first name], but some Thai teacher call
me Noi too

Noi: and chinese teacher call me Nong Ping

Noi: and foreign teacher call me Nancy

Kevin: Lots of names! (making a summary) My name is …., I go by my middle
name, which is … . (conversation 2)

Excerpt 25

David: Are you less busy now?

Ploy: Yes, I have a school break for two weeks.

David: Oh that's nice. Good for you. Are you going to go anywhere during your
vacation?

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Ploy: No, only stay home. I like staying home because besides a school break, I

go to work by taking a bus every day from Kanchanaburi (my house) to Nakhon

Pathom (my work). It's seem to be my big trip every day too.

David: How many kilometers is that?

Ploy: I'm not sure how many kilometers it is, but my father's just told me that it's

about 70 kms. (I take an hour on the bus)

David: about 40 miles.. a long way to commute everyday

David: A very long way. So for you a vacation is being able to NOT go

anywhere! (making a conclusion) I fully understand. (conversation 10)

Figure 1 shows the total number and percentage of each type of primary

conversational device for rapport found in the chat conversations. Of a total of 1014

conversational devices found in the chat scripts, the first three most common ones were

evaluative responses (499 or 49.2%), agreement (247 or 24.4%) and using a nickname

(139 or 13.7%). Figure 2 compares the total number of primary conversational devices

for rapport used by the Thai speakers and by the English speakers. Of a total of these

1014 devices found in the chat scripts, the Thai speakers used these devices 436 times (or

43%) and the English speakers used them 578 times (or 57%).
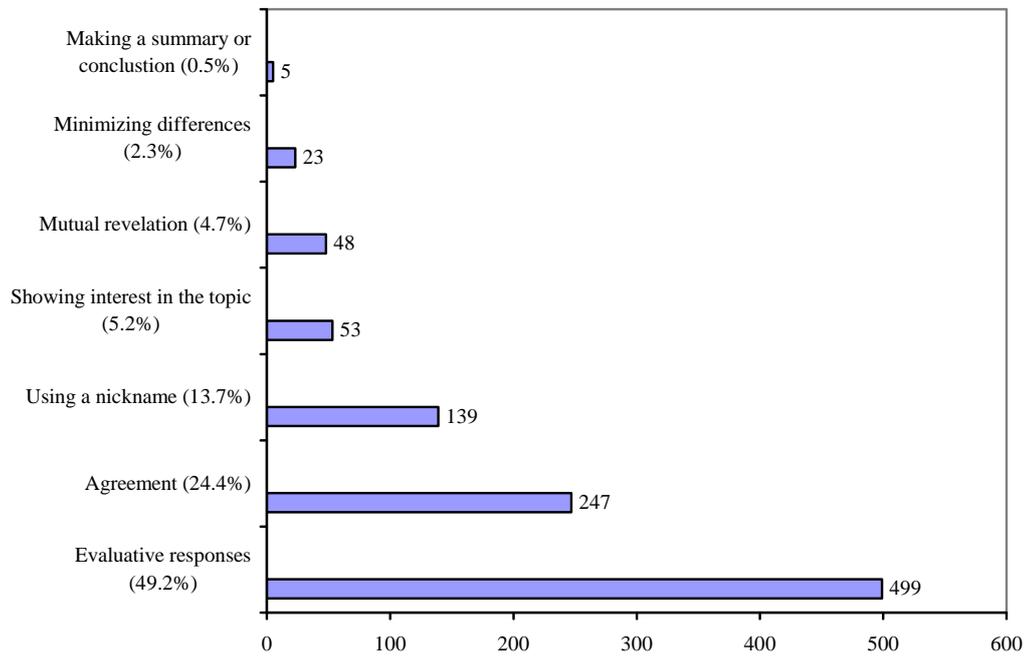
Figure 1. Total number and percentage of each type of primary conversational device.
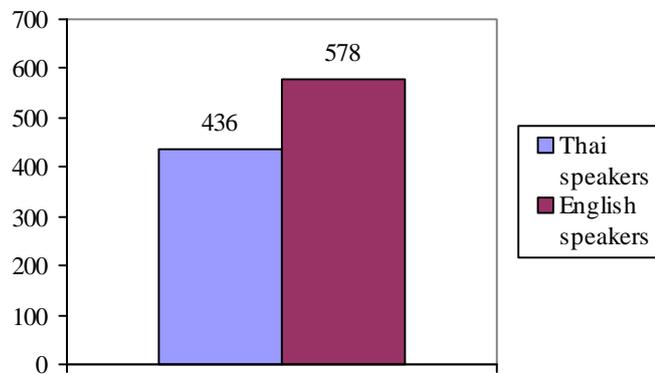
Figure 2. Total number of primary conversational devices used by the Thai and English

speakers.

Figure 3 compares the number of each conversational device used by the Thai speakers and by the English speakers. According to Figure 3, the Thai and English speakers seemed to use an equal number of agreement (123:124), minimizing differences (10:13), and making a summary or conclusion (2:3). The conversational devices for rapport that the Thai speakers seemed to use substantially less than the English speakers were evaluative responses (186), showing interest about the topic (20), and mutual revelation (15), as opposed to those devices used by the English speakers, which were used 313, 33 and 33 times, respectively. The largest gap occurred with evaluative responses, which English speakers used strikingly more often than their Thai partners.
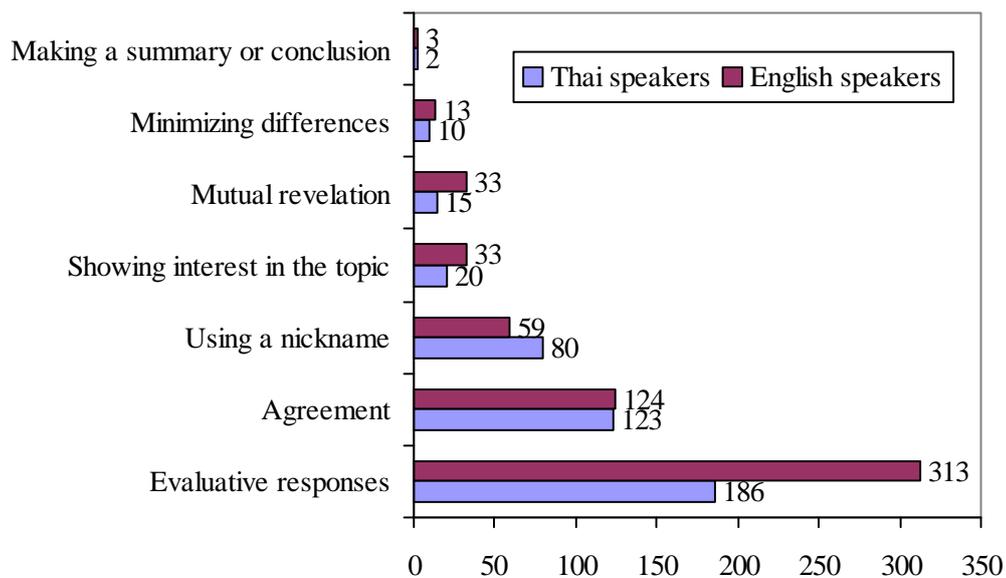
Figure 3. Comparison of each type of primary conversational device used by the Thai and English speakers.

Figures 4 to 10 compare the distribution of usage of each conversational device by the members of each Thai-English pair. The first name in each pair is a Thai speaker and the second name is an English speaker.

Figure 4 (evaluative response) and Figure 5 (agreement) both show that Chanon (M) and Kevin used the highest number of evaluative responses and agreement during their conversations. Chanon (M) used evaluative responses and agreement 54 and 30 times, respectively, while Kevin used these two devices 45 and 25 times, respectively. Note that most of the English chat partners used more evaluative responses than their Thai chat partners did, except Chanon and Nat. Chanon used more evaluative responses than his chat partner, while Nat used as many evaluative responses as her chat partner.
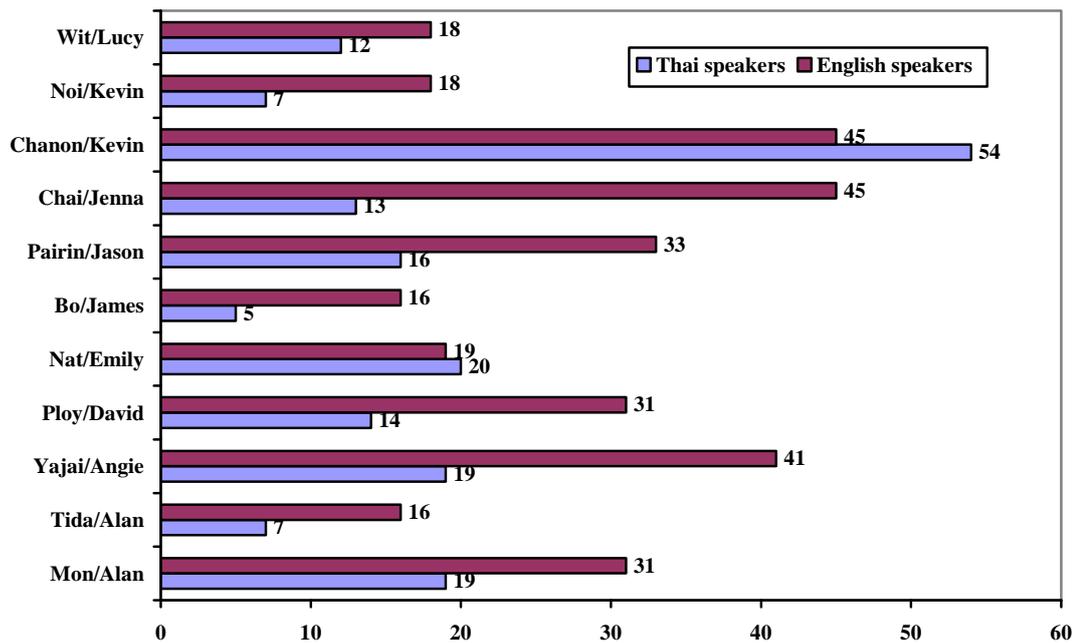
Figure 4. Comparison of evaluative responses used by the Thai and English speakers.
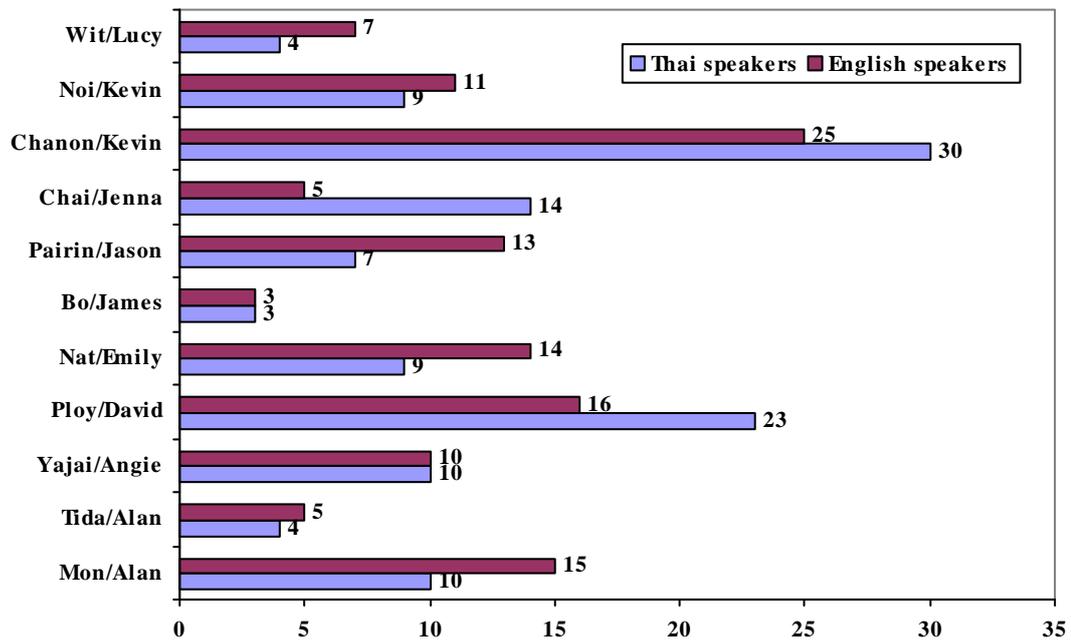
Figure 5. Comparison of agreement used by the Thai and English speakers.

Figure 6 (using a nickname) shows that Nat (F) and Emily both most often called each other by a nickname; Nat (F) used this device 18 times and Emily used it 17 times. Chanon (M) and Kevin was the pair that ranked second in the use of nicknames. Chanon (M) called Kevin by his first name 15 times, and Kevin called Chanon by his nickname 14 times. Note that neither Emily nor Kevin have a nickname, so their Thai chat partners called them by their first names.
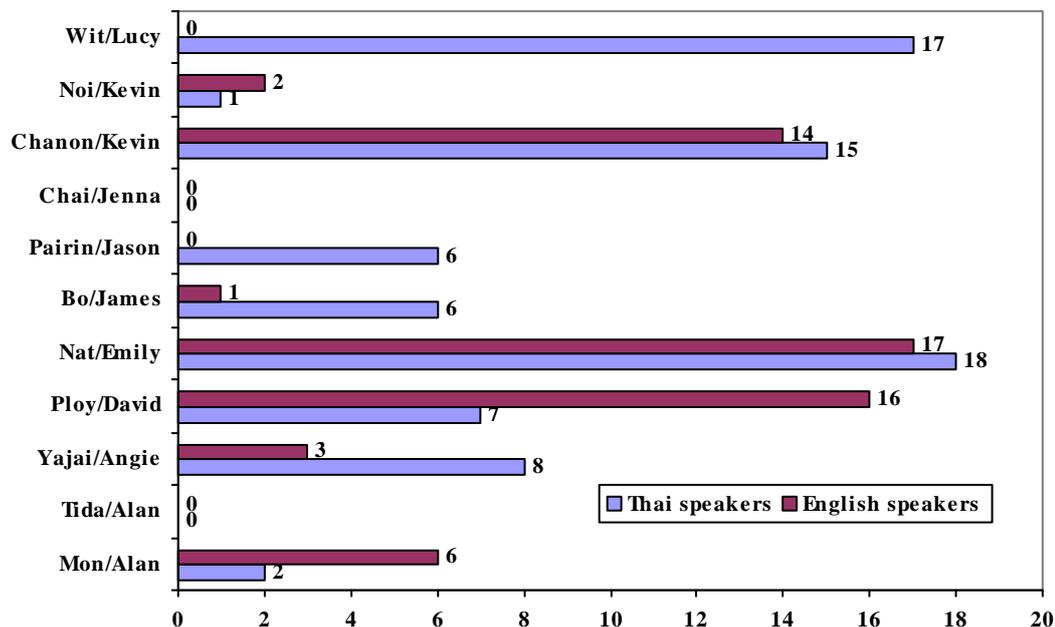
Figure 6. Comparison of using a nickname used by the Thai and English speakers.

Figure 7 (showing interest in the topic) shows that several Thai-English pairs seemed to use an equal number of 'showing interest about the other's topic' device, for example, Mon (F) and Alan (7 times in total), Nat (F) and Emily (8 times in total), and Wit (M) and Lucy (7 times in total). It is worth repeating here that the absolute numbers are very small for this device; hence what appear to be large differences on the chart are actually very small in terms of absolute numbers.
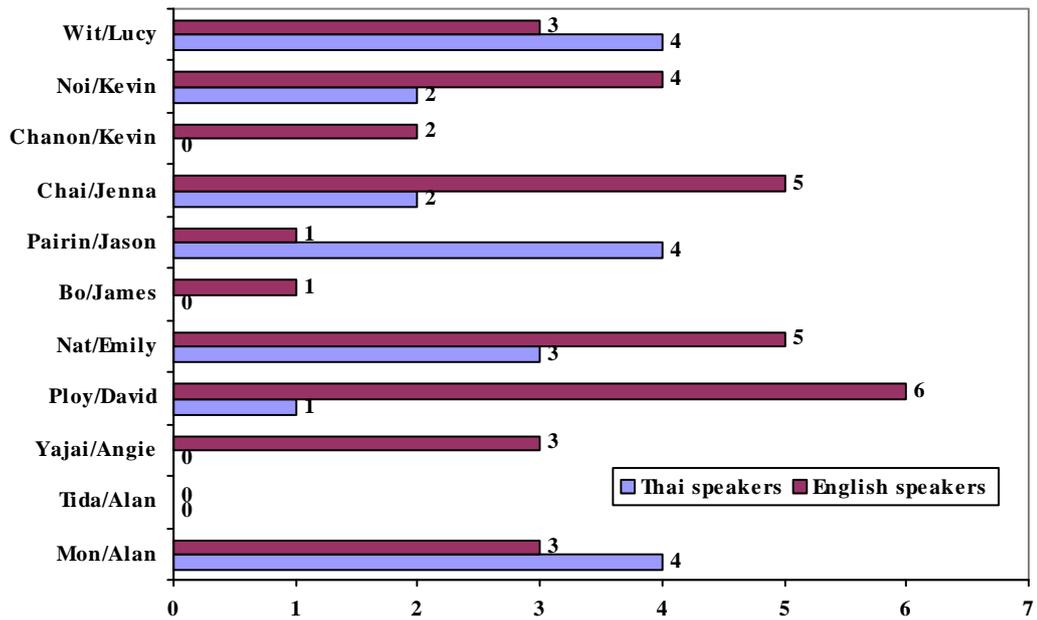
Figure 7. Comparison of showing interest in the topic used by the Thai and English speakers.

According to Figure 8 (mutual revelation), Nat (F) and Emily most often used mutual revelation to show rapport; Nat (F) used this strategy 6 times and Emily used it 5 times. The other two pairs that appeared to use mutual revelation more frequently than the rests of the pairs were Yajai (F) and Angie, and Noi (F) and Kevin. In these two pairs, there was an imbalance, though it was slight in actual numbers: the Thai speakers both used this device 2 times while the English speakers both used it 7 times.
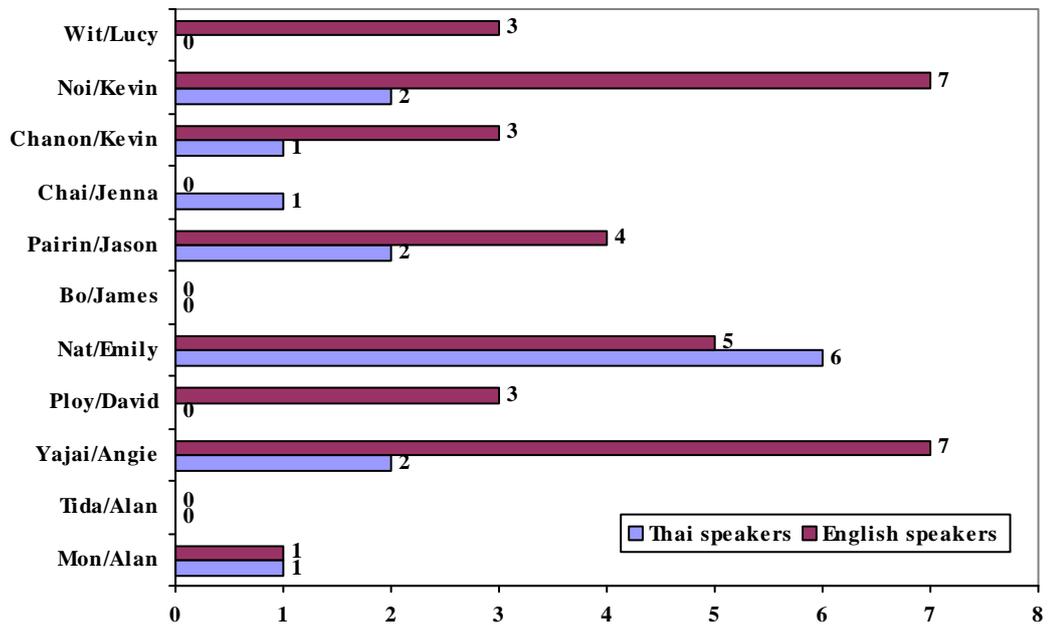
Figure 8. Comparison of mutual revelation used by the Thai and English speakers.

According to Figure 9 (minimizing differences), Chanon (M) and Kevin appeared to use the 'minimizing differences' device more often than the other pairs; however, again, the numbers are small. They each used this device 3 times.
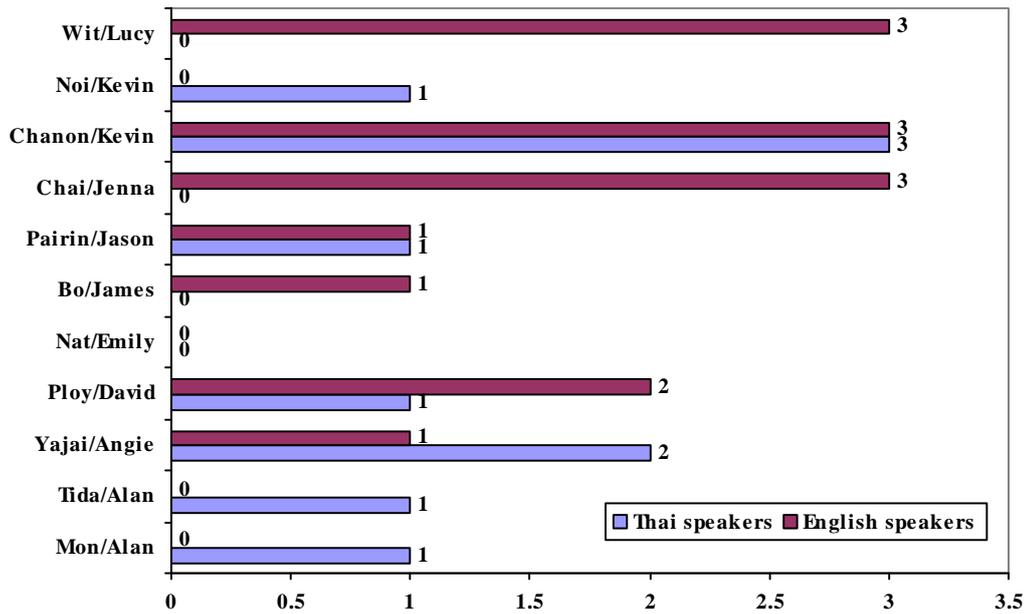
Figure 9. Comparison of minimizing differences used by the Thai and English speakers.

Finally, Figure 10 (making a summary or conclusion) shows that Ploy (F) and David, and Noi (F) and Kevin, were the only two pairs where each member of the pair used this device once.
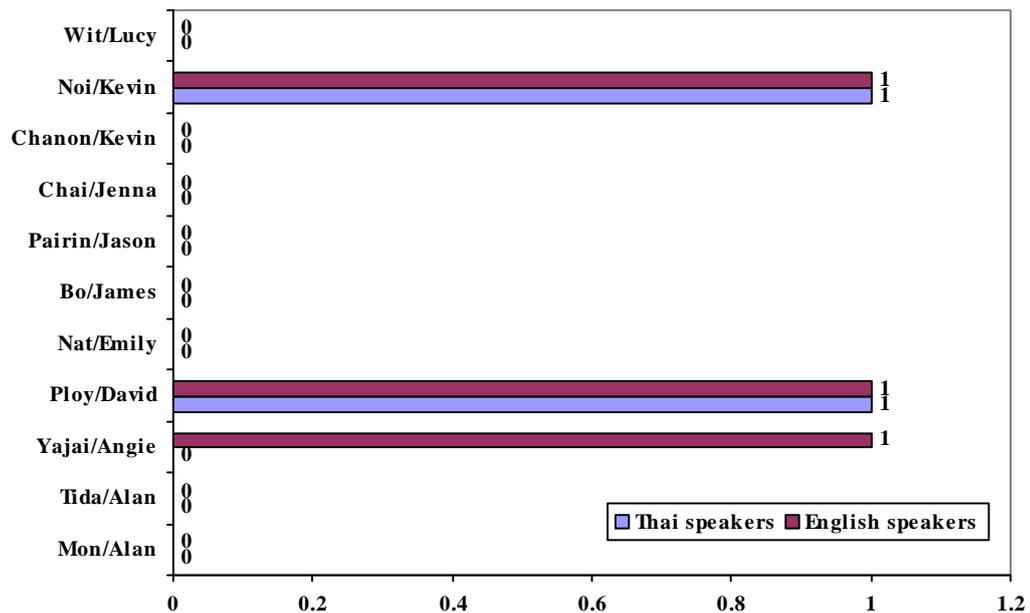
Figure 10. Comparison of making a summary or conclusion used by the Thai and English speakers.

Secondary Conversational Device

The Thai-English pairs in this study also used what I call 'personal-experience questions' to show rapport with each other. The questions tagged as personal-experience questions were those that elicited the listener's personal information, experience or perspective in reference to the topic being discussed. The participants seemed to use these personal-experience questions for developing the topic of conversation and eliciting their chat partner to share their stories, experiences and viewpoints relating to the topic at hand. The use of such questions can indirectly signal to the listener that the speaker is interested in learning more about her or him and thus showing the speaker's intention for rapport building. Excerpt 26 provides examples of personal-experience questions. The personal-experience questions used by the participants are underlined.

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Excerpt 26

(1)Yajai: do you live at atlanta ? because i saw your e-mail

(2) Angie: yes, I live in atlanta

(3) Angie: Have you heard of Atlanta, not many outside of the US know it.

(4) Yajai: yes olympic [The Olympics] used to hold there ,right?

(5) Angie: yes, the olympics were held in Atlanta in 1996.

(6) Angie: There is a big park near my work that is dedicated to the Olympics

(7) Yajai: about 12 years ago. but i can remember that

(8) Yajai: are there any tourist attractions in atlanta?

(9) Angie: Wow, you have a very good memory! Do you like watching the

Olympics?

(10) Angie: My favorite event is the gymnastics competition.

(11) Yajai: yes i do. ….

(12) Yajai: … wow me too i like gymnastics especially rhythmic gymnastics

(13) Angie: Do you play sports?

(14) Yajai: no i rarely play sport, so i'm not healthy

(16) Angie: That's okay, I don't really play sports, but I do like to hike..

(17) Yajai: so where do you go to hike? at the sports center?

(18) Angie: no, hiking on mountains, there are a few close to us, maybe a 30

minute drive from my house. here is a link: http://stonemountainpark.com/

(19) Angie: it's fun to visit! i remember that thailand had a lot of mountains, are

there any near you? or is that area flat? (conversation 12)

Yajai, a female Thai speaker, introduced the topic of her English chat partner's (Angie) hometown, Atlanta, Georgia, in (1). Angie checked Yajai's knowledge of her hometown in (3). They went on to talk about the Olympic Games held in Atlanta in (4-7). Angie asked Yajai another two personal questions; whether Yajai liked watching the game (9) and whether she played any sport or not (13). To show her interest in Angie's favorite outdoor activity, Yajai asked about the place she went hiking (17). Angie, in a similar vein, asked Yajai to talk about a location for hiking in her hometown in Thailand (19).

Figure 11 shows that the total number of personal-experience questions used by the Thai speakers and by the English speakers was comparable; it is also notable that this device is very frequent for both groups. Of a total of 934 personal-experience questions found in the chat scripts, the Thai speakers asked these questions 494 times (or 52.9%) and the English speakers asked them 440 times (or 47.1%).
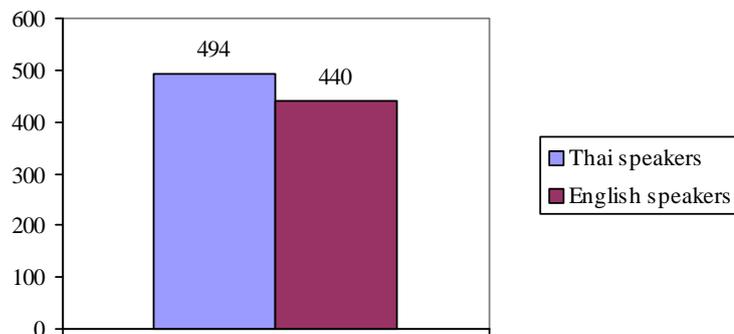
Figure 11. Total number of personal-experience questions used by the Thai and English speakers.

Figure 12 compares the number of personal-experience questions used by each member of the Thai-English pairs. Bo (F) and James, and Pairin (F) and Jason, were the two pairs that ranked highest in use of personal-experience questions. Bo and James asked this kind of question 81 and 56 times, respectively, and Pairin and Jason asked them 76 and 55 times, respectively.
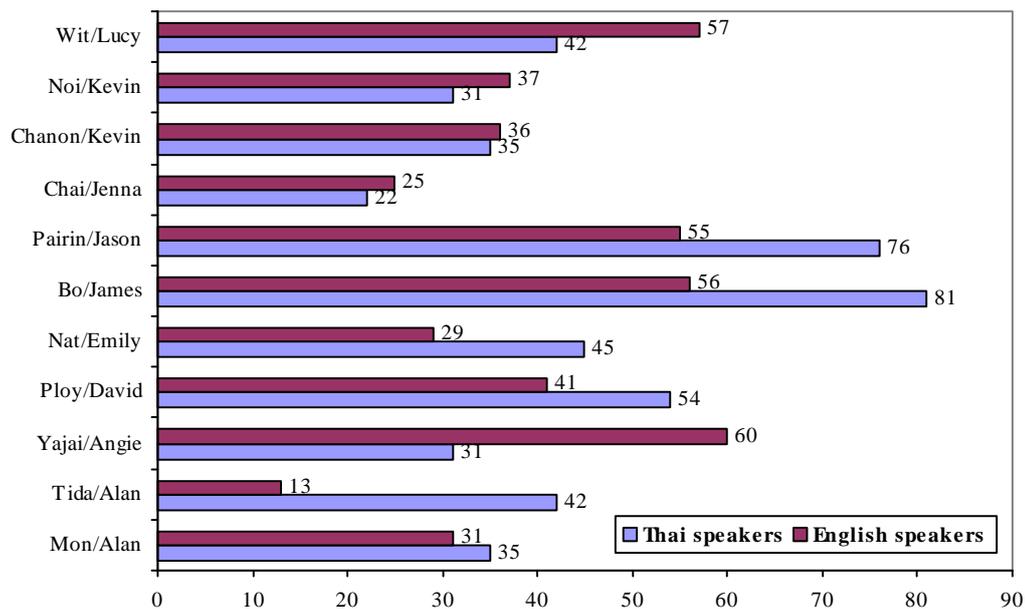
Figure 12. Comparison of personal-experience questions used by each Thai-English pair.

Discussion

The Thai and English speakers in this study appeared to interact based on an involvement style using a range of devices to establish rapport with each other. This conversational strategy fits Lakoff's (1973) third Rule of Politeness, or camaraderie (Be friendly). This main finding supports Tannen's (2005) assumption about interlocutors who utilize camaraderie-building strategies, in that the Thai-English pairs seemed to

share emotional involvement by expressing interest in each other's stories, feelings, experiences or opinions. The analysis of the chat scripts showed that the Thai-English pairs employed eight rapport-building devices during their chat conversations; that is, evaluative responses, agreement, using a nickname, showing interest in the topic, mutual revelation, minimizing differences, making a summary or conclusion, and asking personal-experience questions.

The English Speakers' Tendency for Primary Conversational Devices Versus

the Thai Speakers' Tendency for Secondary Conversational Device for Rapport

The English speakers had a slightly higher tendency to use the primary conversational devices for rapport, or the first seven strategies, (578 times or 57%) than the Thai speakers, who used them 436 times or 43%. In contrast, the Thai speakers had a slightly higher tendency to use the secondary conversational device for rapport, or personal-experience questions, (494 times or 52.9%) than the English speakers, who used these questions 440 times or 47.1%. These findings cannot be taken as evidence for a general pattern, even with these participants. However, a possible explanation does come to mind.

The reason that the English speakers used more primary devices for rapport may have been that the medium of the chat exchange was in their L1 (or in an L2 of expertise for the L1 German speaker, who is an experienced English user). Thus, given their relative strength in fluency, they may have been more able to aptly express themselves and employ various conversational devices to show a friendly interpersonal relationship with their Thai chat partners in a variety of subtle ways. The Thai speakers, on the other hand, may have wanted to show more rapport during the conversations but were not able

to do so as much as they wished to in their target language. In particular, the Thai speakers seemed to use relatively fewer evaluative responses (186 or 37.3% as opposed to 313 or 62.7% used by the English speakers), mutual revelations (15 or 31.25% as opposed to 33 or 68.75% used by the English speakers), and 'showing interest in the topic' devices (20 or 37.7% as opposed to 33 or 62.3% used by the English speakers). The finding that the Thai speakers appeared to use these three conversational devices less often than their English chat partners may indicate that these linguistic devices were relatively more difficult for the Thai speakers to utilize than the others. The use of mutual revelation, which received the lowest usage rate by the Thai speakers (31.2%), in particular, may require some fluency with the target language repertoire to operate, especially in an instant-messaging context in which there is a time-constraint in producing the text. In this last case, it might also be noted that the Thai speakers may have felt hesitant to offer evaluation due to cultural factors, if they felt that evaluative responses might be intrusive to their partners.

In support of my conjecture about fluency, two of the Thai speakers, Yajai (F) and Chai (M), mentioned in their chat logs that they wanted to use more evaluative responses to their chat partners' stories, ideas, or experiences, but were not sure how to express them appropriately in the target language. For example, Yajai wrote a note in Thai about part (2) in the following excerpt reflecting her wish to respond to her English chat partner's (Angie) past experience in Thailand.

Excerpt 26

(1) Yajai: If you will visit Thailand please tell me. I am please to welcome you and take you to travel everywhere you like

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(2) Angie: of course, I hope I get to come back to Thailand! I have a really good

friend there in Bangkok, her name is Suree.

(3) What are you [your] favorite places to visit in Thailand?

(4) Angie: and likewise, you can stay with me if you ever get to come to the

States

(5) Yajai: thanks Angie. My favorite place …. (conversation 4)

Yajai's note:

" I wished I could say something to her like 'That's very cool!' [after what she

said in (2)] that she had made friend with a Thai person while she was in Thailand

last time, but I could not think of how to say it in English so I just didn't say

anything and went on with the conversation!"

Yajai also recalled her frustration in using evaluative responses during the

interview in Thai:

"I sometimes wanted to react to what she [Angie] told me, but I didn't know how

to say it! She may have thought that I was not excited to hear about what she had

to say! In fact, I really wanted to say something, such as 'That sounds like fun!,'

'I'm jealous that you are having a vacation!' or 'I wish I could go to New York

with you!' "

The finding that the Thai speakers had a tendency to use more personal-

experience questions may imply that the Thai speakers felt more at ease in formulating

various questions to request the information than employing other primary linguistic

devices that the target language speakers in this study seemed to use quite naturally. This

finding may also mean that these Thai EFL participants are able to use questioning

strategies to show their contributions to the topic of conversation and rapport in natural conversations, while they may need to strengthen their skills in using other primary conversation devices to foster their interactional ability.

The Pairs That Used High Rates of Primary Conversational Devices for Rapport

For this part of the discussion and the part that follows, I will compare only the findings from the eight Thai-English pairs that sent twelve chat scripts to me, and exclude the three pairs that sent fewer than twelve chat scripts, so that I have an equal number of chat scripts from each pair to compare. The three pairs that will not be included in the discussion are Mon (F) and Alan, Chai (M) and Jenna, and Wit (M) and Lucy. As mentioned in Chapter 3, among the eleven pairs that participated in this study, there were three same-sex pairs; one male pair (Chanon and Kevin) and two female pairs (Nat and Emily, and Yajai and Angie). These three same-sex pairs all sent twelve chat scripts for analysis.

With respect to the eight pairs that sent twelve chat scripts (3 same-sex pairs and 5 mixed-sex pairs), it is interesting to point out that the three same-sex pairs seemed to use relatively higher number of some types of primary devices for rapport to express their solidarity with the same-sex chat friend. That is to say, Chanon (M) and Kevin were the male pair that ranked highest in three types of the primary devices, that is, evaluative responses (99 times), agreement (55 times), and minimizing differences (6 times). Nat (F) and Emily were the pair that ranked highest in two types of primary devices, including using a nickname (35 times), and mutual revelation (11 times). Note that the two men in the Chanon-Kevin pair also ranked second highest in using a nickname (29 times). In addition, the other same-gender pair, Yajai (F) and Angie, ranked second in the use of

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two primary devices for rapport. In other words, the Yajai-Angie pair used evaluative

responses 60 times, which was the second highest rate, after the Chanon-Kevin pair (99

times). These two women also used mutual revelation 7 times, which was the second

highest rate, only outpaced by the other female pair, that is, Nat and Emily (11 times).

These findings that the same-sex pairs often used conversational devices for

rapport may be explained as follows. First, the same-sex pairs may have had some

commonalities that they could have shared with a same-sex interlocutor better than with

an opposite sex partner; they perhaps felt more comfortable showing solidarity with a

same-sex chat partner by expressing their emotional involvement with each other and the

topics of conversation. For instance, they tended to mutually agree to often call each

other by a nickname during the conversations. In one case, Nat (F) and Emily, both are

single mothers with a young child. Their chat scripts showed that they seemed to

mutually exchange ideas about their ambitions to provide their child with the best future.

They also shared notes about childcare as well as stories about their child's activities and

schooling. In another case, Yajai and Angie were both young female college graduates of

about the same age with similar family background and interests. Like the other same-sex

pairs, Yajai and Angie talked about subjects ranging from their opinions about politics in

their own and each other's countries, current world events, their jobs and hobbies, and

some of their personal stories, such as about their boyfriends.

It is not surprising that these two same-sex pairs appeared to use slightly more

'mutual revelation' devices than the other mixed-sex pairs or even the male pair (Chanon

and Kevin). This finding echoes what is normally perceived for gender communication,

that women seemed to tell each other about their stories more than men (Tannen, 1990).

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Even though the findings mentioned above suggested that gender played a part in the high usage of primary conversational devices for rapport, this was not the only possible factor. The findings also showed that two mixed-sex pairs (Noi and Kevin, and Ploy and David) used a fairly large number of primary devices for rapport. Noi (F) and Kevin, for example, used as many 'mutual revelation' devices as Yajai (F) and Angie, the female pair, did, which was 7 times. As I discussed in the 'Language Expert and Novice Roles' section, Noi (F) and Kevin seemed to spend a considerable amount of their conversations sharing their experiences as L2 learners. Noi (F) and Kevin's chat scripts showed that they also exchanged personal stories, as did the same-sex pairs. Ploy (F) and David were another mixed-sex pair that used several devices for rapport, that is, agreement (39 times or the second highest rate), and using a nickname (23 times or the third highest rate). Ploy (F) and David discussed various topics, ranging from general topics, such as cultural and economic situations in their respective countries, to private information, such as their family members and their occupations, and family matters.

The Pairs That Used High Rates of Secondary Conversational Device

for Rapport (Personal-Experience Questions)

The findings revealed that two of the mixed-sex pairs used reasonably more personal-experience questions than did the other pairs; however these two pairs were not the same pairs that tended to use high rates of primary devices for rapport. These two pairs were Bo (F) and James, and Pairin (F) and Jason; the pairs asked personal-experience questions 137 and 131 times, respectively. It is interesting to note that in the Pairin-Jason pair, their chat scripts showed that Pairin appeared to use personal-experience questions to elicit brief exchanges from Jason and shift from topic to topic,

rather than staying on topics and developing them as the other pairs did. As shown in Table 21 in the section on topic initiation, the Parin-Jason pair ranked highest in number of topics (66 topics), and Pairin introduced more than half of the topics during the chat conversations. This finding suggests the need for further investigation of the ability to manage topic of L2 conversation on the part of the Thai speakers.

The Two Examples of Other Conversational Strategies

In spite of the main finding that the Thai-English pairs often employed camaraderie-building strategies to build a friendly relationship with each other, there were a few situations from the chat scripts that showed the use of other conversational strategies to avoid discussing some personal matters for fear of negatively affecting their relationship with the chat partner. In other words, the analysis of these sequences, along with the relevant data from the other two sources (interviews and reflective notes), revealed that Pairin (F) and Tida (F) chose to employ the distance (Don't impose) and deference (Give option) strategies a few times, in addition to the other strategies discussed earlier, to ensure a smooth relationship with their English chat partners, Jason and Alan, respectively.

These two strategies seemed to fit Lakoff's (1973) first and second Rules of Politeness in a conversational exchange. According to Tannen's (2005) notion of conversational styles of speakers, the number of conversational strategies a speaker uses can shift "in response to the situation, the people participating, the subject at hand, and so on. Each person's notion of what strategy is appropriate to apply is influenced by a combination of family background and other interactive experience" (p. 20). The

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following are two examples from Pairin (F) and Jason's conversations that show Pairin's use of a conversational strategy that fits Lakoff's (1973) distance strategy.

Pairin explained in her note about the following excerpt that she chose to not ask her chat partner (Jason) any further questions about the religion-related issues that she thought might have not been appropriate to discuss with him.

<u>Excerpt 27</u>

(1) Pairin: Do you have a plan for Christmas

(2) Jason: no not really

(3) Jason: you?

(4) Pairin: I don't go where [anywhere] Because I am Budishsm [Buddhist]

(5) Jason: really?

(6) Pairin: yessssssssssssss

(7) Jason: nice

(8) Pairin: I know Christmas is very important for you.

(9) Jason: ah. take it or leave it

(10) Jason: I like the money and presents, all that stuff

(11) Jason: the food is good to [too]

(12) Pairin: ha ha

(13) Jason: but its not that important to me

(14) Pairin: Some American have to celebrate a Christmas tree

(15) Jason: hah yes I am not one though

(16) Pairin: In your home will have a Christmas tree?

(17) Jason: yes

(18) Pairin: Nice!

(19) Jason: my parents love Christmas time

(20) Pairin: Wow! Wonderful! (conversation 6)

Pairin's note:

I enjoyed this chat. I wanted to ask him why he did not have any plans for Christmas, and why he was an atheist [in the previous conversation] but I chose not to. I was afraid it might have offended him. Oh, and I felt he was friendly to me.

In (1) Pairin started the topic of conversation on Christmas, which was being celebrated at the time they were chatting. She continued the conversation about her understanding of Christmas, which she said in the interview she had learned from the English classes, in (8, 14 and 16). Nevertheless, Jason's responses (2, 9, 13 and 15) that he had not embraced the tradition surprised her. Pairin's note revealed that she chose to keep some distance from the religious topic, in spite of her curiosity about religion-related issues, which she believed could be sensitive to discuss with people she did not know well, like Jason, her new chat friend.

Pairin explained in the interview her feelings about the following excerpt, where she again avoided talking about an intimate topic with her chat partner (Jason).

Excerpt 28

(1) Pairin: … and how about the US?

(2) Jason: well, the stock market is doing better

(3) Pairin: good

(4) Jason: yeah..

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(5) Jason: me and Amy broke up though

(6) Pairin: and the US economic is being better?

(7) Jason: yes, it is

(8) Pairin: Do you like Twilight movie? and 007

(9) Jason: yes, ..ha…, and you?

(10) Pairin: I like them very much.

(11) Pairin: Do you like to buy goods by internet?

(12) Jason: sometimes… depends

(13) Jason: a lot of the time it costs less by internet

(14) Pairin: No your free time what do youdo?

(15) Pairin: on your free time what do you do?

(16) Jason: well i used to spend it with Amy and just sit around but i don't really know anymore

(17) Pairin: ha

(18) Pairin: Jason! sorry I have to go outside and then I will come back to read a Japanese book cause on Sunday I have Japanese test it is very important for me.

(19) Pairin: See you next week, and you ok?

(20) Jason: yeah, same time next monday?

My first impression, seeing that Pairin did not respond to Jason's personal revelation about the end of his relationship with his girlfriend (Amy) was that Pairin might have not fully understood the messages Jason was trying to convey twice in turns 5 and 16. However, in her interview, Pairin revealed that she understood Jason's messages, yet avoided responding to the issue:

"He [Jason] talked about his break up with his girl friend twice (5 and 16), but I wasn't sure how to respond to it. I was afraid I would say something that might have made him feel worse so I asked him about something else (8, 11, 14 and 15) and then said that I had to go (18 and 19) [after he mentioned it the second time]."

In other words, Pairin chose to keep distance between herself and her chat partner's topic of intimacy by avoiding discussing it.

From these two examples, Pairin's choices showed that she was a very considerate speaker who avoided initiating any sensitive topics that might have created an awkward situation with her chat partner. This finding also indicated that Pairin, like other participants in this study, valued a polite and smooth relationship with the chat partner. However, in spite of her good intentions toward her partner, these instances do represent lost chances for learning and relationship building. For instance, in excerpt 27, if Pairin had decided to find out whether or not Jason felt comfortable talking about his choice of religion or his views about Christmas tradition, she might have had an opportunity to learn about the diversity of American culture in those particular aspects from a perspective of an American whom she had a real personal contact with. This learning experience might have been a supplement to the traditional cultural aspect of the target language often taught in typical English language classes in Thailand.

In a similar vein, in excerpt 28, if Pairin had sensed Jason's personal revelation as a show of rapport or a desire to have her respond to his situation, she might have showed an interest in his story and shared her personal statements. In other words, Jason's remark about his breakup with his girlfriend might have meant that he was operating on a high involvement style through revelation of this intimate detail, and may have expected

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Pairin to offer comparable personal statements, or to show an interest in his personal story. Had Pairin been aware of Jason's invitation for her to share her own personal revelations or comment on his, they might have discussed more intimate matters, like some of the pairs seemed to do, and perhaps strengthened the friendship bond between them.

In fact, Pairin's interview at the end of the chat exchange reflected that she did not feel that her relationship with her chat partner had significantly improved because they did not often share their private stories. There seems to be a note of disappointment in her comment on this:

> "I think it [our relationship] has not much improved [from the beginning of the chat exchange]. He didn't often ask me about my personal stuff, like what my family was like; I didn't ask him about his, either. I usually talked with him about things in general, such as his culture, his country, something like that."

Moreover, the finding that Pairin chose not to discuss religion-related issues or respond to Jason's personal revelations may have been due to cultural factors. For example, in Excerpt 28, she may have wanted to console Jason about the sad news of the end of his relationship with his girlfriend, however, she may have felt hesitant to do so because she was uncertain how to respond appropriately in such a situation in the L2, as she reflected in her interview: "… I wasn't sure how to respond to it [his break up with his girlfriend]. I was afraid I would say something that might have made him feel worse so I asked him about something else ….".

In short, the findings on conversational strategies and devices reflected that the participants seemed to value the chat exchange as a social place in which they established a friendly relationship with their new friend. During the online chat interaction, the participants predominantly tried to promote camaraderie, as well as using a few other strategies appropriate to the topic of conversation to ensure harmony in their interpersonal relationship. To put it simply, no matter what conversational strategies they used, their ultimate intention in the chat exchange seemed to be about developing a good friendship with their chat partner.

The findings from the analysis of the conversational strategies and devices used in the chat scripts also yielded some hints about the relationships that formed between the Thai and English speakers. Nevertheless, some of these did not appear in any particular form in their chat conversations. The following chapter will report on the findings from the interviews on the participants' perceptions about the relationships that developed in the course of the chat exchange.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON THE THAI SPEAKERS' PERCEPTIONS

ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ENGLISH CHAT PARTNERS

AND THE INTERNET CHAT EXCHANGE

This chapter is divided into two main sections each discussing one of two topics, to wit, the Thai speakers' perceptions about their relationship with the English chat partners and the Thai speakers' perceptions about the whole online chat exchange program. The first section aims to reveal the relationship that formed between the Thai-English pairs from their own testimony in the interviews. Some of the findings of this section correlated with the findings from the analysis of the chat scripts presented in Chapter 5, whereas some did not appear in any particular form in the dyads' conversations. Recall that Chapter 5 reported on some features of the chat conversations that indicated the interpersonal relations between the Thai-English pairs, judging from data that emerged in looking at a range of themes: expressions of language expert and novice positions, number of topics initiated by each member of the pairs, and conversational strategies and devices for rapport used by the Thai speakers.

The first goal of the first section of this chapter is to reveal whether the Thai-English pairs perceived that they had established a relationship with each other over the course of their synchronous CMC exchanges via a private instant messaging system. Second, this section also examines the nature of the relationship that formed, through the participants' own words. Finally, this section examines whether and how the interpersonal relationship with the chat partner influences the Thai speakers' future plans relating to their L2 learning.

The second section seeks to answer whether the Thai speakers perceive this online chat exchange as a worthwhile experience for their target language practice. This second section also reports on the benefits the Thai speakers believe they gained from participating in the chat exchange program, as well as any difficulties they encountered during the program.

Recall that the interviews with the Thai speakers were in Thai and were translated into English. Thus, all passages presented here represent my translations from the original Thai. The individual Thai speakers participated in two interviews during the course of their chat exchange, that is, in the middle (or after the sixth chat session) and at the end of their chat exchange program (or after the twelfth session). The same set of interview questions were used in both interview sessions. Due to the busy schedules of the English speakers, I interviewed them only once after their last required chat session, using the same set of questions I used with the Thai speakers. I interviewed only ten of the eleven English speakers because I was not able to contact Lucy after the chat exchange program. Note that the focus of this chapter is to report on the Thai speakers' perceptions about their relationship with the English speakers and the online chat exchange; thus I will mainly present the findings from the words of the Thai speakers. I will, however, at times include the English speakers' perceptions when they help to shed light on the nature of the developing relationship. After each excerpt cited in this chapter, I have provided the following information: first, the pseudonym of the interviewee; second, the order of the interview (first or second interview for the Thai speakers); third, the type of interview (face-to-face, text or voice chat, e-mail); and finally, the date the interview was conducted. Most of the Thai speakers gave the same or similar responses to the questions

repeated in the second interview. I have therefore chosen to quote only the first interview whenever the responses from the second interview were the same as those from the first interview.

<div align="center">The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about Their Relationship

with the English Chat Partners</div>

This section consists of three sub-sections. First, this section presents the findings on how the members of each pair described their chat partner and the relationship that formed in the course of the online chat exchange. Second, this section reveals the participants' types of interaction beyond the boundaries of the text chatting; and finally, it discusses their possible future plans involving language learning, particularly as they perceive these as having been affected by their experience with the chat exchange program.

<div align="center">*Terms Used to Describe the Relationship That Formed*</div>

This sub-section reveals whether the Thai-English pairs had developed a personal relationship with each other towards the end of the chat exchange and how they perceived their relationship with their chat partner. In fact, the analysis of the interviews shows that the participants had established friendships, and there were two patterns to this relationship. The first group of participants (nine of the eleven pairs) believed that they had developed a closer relationship with their chat partner towards the end of the chat exchange. In contrast, the second group, or the remaining two pairs, did not believe that their relationship had greatly deepened or grown towards the end of the chat exchange.

I will present the findings of this sub-section in three parts according to the interview questions the pairs were asked, that is, their view of the development of the

relationship towards the end of the chat exchange, their view of their commonalities with and differences from their partners, as well as their imagined views about the character of their partners. In each part I will provide the interview question or a group of interview questions that the participants were asked. I will then give passages from the interviews that exemplify how each of the two groups of participants responded to these questions.

The Development of the Relationship Towards the End of the Chat Exchange

In response to the question: How well do you think you know your chat partner?, the answers from the first group of Thai-English pairs showed that they believed their relationship with their chat partner had grown towards the end of the chat exchange program. For example, Bo's response in the first interview reflected that her relationship with James was that of an acquaintance, while her response in the second interview indicated a closer level of friendship:

Passage 1

I don't think I know him well. I think he is kind of shy, ha ha, so I am kind of afraid to talk to him. Most of my foreign chat friends are not good at English, but this chat friend can teach English to me, too, ha ha. (Bo, first face-to-face interview, 11/20/2008)

Passage 2

I know him more now. We seem to be closer to each other. We talk more now. We talk more in depth about stuff. We have become friends! (Bo, second interview on voice chat, 12/29/2008)

In a similar vein, James, Bo's English chat partner, agreed that their relationship had improved towards the end of the chat exchange. When asked to compare his

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familiarity with Bo between the beginning and the end of the program, he responded, "Of course [I know her more now.]! I could even think that um if I was in Bangkok and she was in Bangkok and we [could] like see some stuff together (Skype voice chat, 02/03/2009)." Recall that James resided in Thailand during the time of the chat exchange, but in a different part of Thailand from Bo's residence. James indicated the growth in their relationship and the possibility of meeting Bo in person so that they could visit some of the tourist attractions in the capital city of Thailand.

Two Thai-English pairs did not feel their relationship with each other had significantly improved towards the end of their chat exchange; these two pairs were Tida and Alan, and Pairin and Jason. Both Tida and Pairin, the two Thai females, said they had not learned more about their chat partners towards the end of their chat exchange because their chat partners and they had not often shared personal stories with each other. For example, Pairin's comparison of the relationship with her chat partner, Jason, between the beginning and the end of the chat exchange, suggested no progress in their relationship:

Passage 3

He doesn't reveal much about himself to me. For me, I try to talk with him, like what I am like, but I try not to ask him about anything that is too personal. We have just gotten to know each other so we talk about things in general. (Pairin, first face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)

Passage 4

I think it [our relationship] is still the same because we have not gotten to talk about ourselves much; we've been talking about things in general. I don't ask

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about his private stuff because I am afraid it may be too personal. (Pairin, second interview on Skype voice chat, 1/30/2009)

Jason's response, likewise, was consistent with Pairin's position that their relationship had not significantly progressed: "[u]m, I mean, I guess I know her about as well as you could know someone from chatting with them, you know." (Jason, face-to-face interview, 01/18/2009)

The Pairs' Perceptions of Their Commonalities and Differences

The Thai-English pairs that believed their relationship had improved gave responses in relatively long detail on the questions that elicited their views about their chat partner's interests, commonalities with and differences from their own views and interests. In contrast, the pairs that did not believe that their relationship had significantly grown towards the end of the chat exchange, appeared to have less to say about their chat partners. The following are examples of responses from the group that believed their relationship had grown. Chanon elaborated at length about his commonalities with his English chat partner, Kevin, and recalled some parts of their conversations as examples:

Passage 5

Neither of us are experts in every topic, but we can talk about whatever the other introduces. For example, he doesn't know much about art and design, but he can talk with me about it. …. He is interested in technology; he told me about Skype. When I talked about computers and notebooks, he was able to pick up and continue the conversation. He said if I wanted to buy one there [in the US] he could help me with it, ha ha. … We both have a sense of humor, like while we were chatting, his dogs barked so he had to go check on them. When he came

back [online] I asked if there was a ghost there; he said he was about to mention about ghosts to me, too, ha ha. (Chanon, first face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)

Kevin's response, likewise, seemed in line with Chanon's response about their tendency to be talkative: "I think we are both very social people. We are both honorable, intelligent, honest people that look for the best side of people." (face-to-face interview, 01/25/09).

In addition, Chanon listed several reasons why he believed he was different from Kevin:

Passage 6

He likes sports, but I don't care much for them. He watches every football match that his team plays, but I have never done this. He likes outdoor activities, but I prefer indoor ones, like chess and reading. He doesn't like sweets and desserts, but I do. I like to play computer games, but he doesn't often play them …

(Chanon, second interview on MSN text chat, 03/03/09)

Kevin talked about a similar set of differences between Chanon and himself that he had learned from the chats, as well.

For the two pairs of participants (Tida and Alan, and Pairin and Jason) that believed their relationship had not improved towards the end of the chat exchange, Pairin and her English chat partner, Jason, for example, both indicated that they had not learned much about each other. Pairin named only two of Jason's interests in the first interview: "[h]e wants to have some Thai friends, and he likes to go to concerts (face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)." Her response to a question on Jason's and her commonalities was none, while Jason briefly named two of their commonalities: "[w]ell, we both like to

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go to music. We like music a lot and I like the snow, too (face-to-face interview, 01/18/2009)."

With respect to their differences, Pairin mentioned one item of favorite music styles in the first interview: "[w]e like different styles of music; I like Hip-hop, but he likes rock (face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)." In the second interview she added another item: "[h]e doesn't often go online, while I like to spend my free time on the Internet (interview on Skype voice chat, 1/30/2009)." Jason's response at the end of the chat exchange, similarly, did not reflect that he had learned much about Pairin, either: "[w]ell, I like to get out and have fun with my friends. I don't really know what she does, like, you know, like what she is interested in Thailand. I don't really know, I mean (face-to-face interview, 01/18/2009)."

The Thai Speakers' Imagined View of Their Chat Partner's and Their Own Characters

I asked one question that asked the participants to imagine their chat partners and themselves as characters in a play. Their responses to this question confirmed their views about how they had perceived their relationship with their chat partner in the previous two sections. In other words, the pairs that believed their relationship had grown towards the end of the chat exchange mentioned two characters that had a closer connection with each other than the characters cited by the pairs that did not think their relationship had grown. The exact question they were asked was, "Imagine that your chat partner and you were characters in a play, movie, TV show, or cartoon, what roles do you think the two of you would be playing? The following are examples of responses from the first group that perceived their relationship had progressed towards the end of the chat exchange.

Passage 7

I think of the Japanese cartoon "Doraemon[1]." I would be Noble and he [Alan] would be Doraemon. He would be a friend who can help me all the time. He gives me suggestions on studying [the English language and abroad]. He gives me advice and moral support in doing things. He would be like Doraemon who helps Noble to solve his day-to-day problems and helps him with his study. (Mon, second interview on MSN text chat, 04/09/2009)

Passage 8

I would say the movie, "Jerry McGuire," that Tom Cruise and Renee Zellweger played the leading roles. … Dorothy [Renee] is his [Tom's] staff accountant who is a single mother and secretly in love with him. Emily and I would be like Dorothy who loves her child very much and works hard in order to provide all the good things for her child. … In the movie, there is a group of single mothers getting together every week to chat about their kids, ex-husband, something like that. … This is not exactly the same relationship I have with Emily, but it is similar. We meet [on Skype] and sort of share some of our stories like these women in the movie do. (Nat, first face-to-face interview, 11/20/08)

Passage 9

We [Angie and I] would be close girlfriends like Rachael and Monica in "Friends". We would hang out and go to places together. (Yajai, first face-to-face interview, 11/17/2009)

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[1] Doraemon is a Japanese popular cartoon. Doraemon is a robotic cat that came back from the future to help take care of the boy named "Noble." Doraemon has a magic pocket on his belly. He can take all kinds of future inventions right out of his pocket to help Noble solve his problems.

I would say maybe she [Bo] would be Lisa Simpson, while I be more like Bart

Simpson [in the Simpsons]. … Lisa is like the good girl, with the good marks in

school, very delighted. … Bart Simpson is more like, the funnier guy, not

concentrating all the time on his study, more on his free time activities. … They

have like the typical brother and sister differences like making fun of each other

and stuff, but also like helping each other in a lot of episodes, they were working

like a team together. (James, interview on Skype voice chat, 2/3/2009)

The following are examples of responses from the group that did not think

their relationship had significantly improved towards the end of the chat

exchange. Recall that this group included Tida and Alan, and Pairin and Jason.

Passage 11

I can't think of a particular movie, but he [Jason] would be like a good friend of

the male leading role, that is, he would be my friend, too. He would be the one I

[the female leading role] go to when I want to know more about the guy I am

dating [the male leading role], like what kind of person he is. (Pairin, first face-to-

face interview, 11/21/2008)

Here Pairin does seem to envision some degree of closeness for the two characters she

cites, in spite of her earlier claim, repeated here, that she did not think her relationship

with Jason had grown towards the end of the chat exchange:

Passage 12

I think it [the answer] is the same. He didn't often ask me about my

personal stuff, like what was going on in my family; I didn't ask him

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about his, either. I usually asked him about things in general, such as his

culture, his country, something like that. (Pairin, second interview on

Skype voice chat, 1/30/2009)

However, she does not elaborate on the characters she names, as did some of the

other Thai participants.

Participants' Interaction Beyond the Boundaries of

the Synchronous Text Chatting

The Thai-English pairs in this study interacted with each other through other

modes of communication available on the Internet in addition to the required

synchronous text chatting. According to the interviews, six types of interaction were

reported by the Thai and English speakers: exchanging of artifacts, leaving asynchronous

text messages, chatting besides the scheduled times, e-mailing, posting asynchronous

comments on the chat partner's personal profile in a social networking website, and using

the voice tool. I have developed these categories independently. Table 22 shows the types

of interaction each pair chose to contact each other in addition to the synchronous text

chatting (a slash for any given item and pair indicates that this tool was used by the pair).

Table 22

Types of Interaction Between the Thai-English Pairs Beyond the Synchronous Text Chatting

Names	Exchanging artifacts	Leaving asynchronous messages	Chatting besides the scheduled chat times	E-mailing	Posting comments on the partner's personal profile in a social networking website	Using the voice tool
Mon/Alan	/	none	/	none	/	none
Tida/Alan	none	none	/	none	none	none
Yajai/Angie	/	none	none	/	none	none
Ploy/David	none	none	none	/	none	none
Nat /Emily	/	/	none	/	none	none
Bo/James	/	/	/	none	/	/
Pairin/Jason	/	none	none	none	/	none
Chai/Jenna	/	/	none	none	/	/
Chanon/Kevin	/	/	/	/	none	none
Noi/Kevin	/	/	/	/	none	none
Wit (M)/Lucy	/	/	/	/	none	none
Total (n=33)	9	6	6	6	4	2
Percentage of outside tools (%)	27.3	18.2	18.2	18.2	12.1	6.0

According to Table 22, most of the Thai-English pairs (or 9 of the 11 pairs) exchanged artifacts with each other, which represents 27.3% of the additional communication channels used. The three modes of interaction that received the second highest usage rate (6 pairs, or 18.2% of the total for extra communication) were leaving asynchronous text messages on each other's instant messaging, chatting besides the scheduled chat times, and e-mailing. The two activities that received the lowest usage rates were using the voice tool (2 or 6%) followed by posting comments on the chat partner's personal profile in a social networking website (4 or 12.1%). The following paragraphs give an explanation of each type of interaction.

Exchanging Artifacts

During the text chat conversations, nine of the total of eleven pairs occasionally exchanged artifacts with each other directly through the features available in the instant messaging system. These artifacts included pictures, music files, video clips, and web links. Some of the participants showed each other their photographs taken with family members and friends. Some of them exchanged some of their favorite music files or video clips. Some also sent web links to each other; these web links often contained text information and pictures about the topic of conversation, such as tourist attractions in their respective countries.

Leaving Asynchronous Text Messages

Six of the eleven pairs said they used asynchronous text messaging to contact their chat partners on emergency occasions, such as when they needed to reschedule the chat session, or inform the chat partner that they would have been late for a particular chat session. In addition, one of the Thai speakers, Bo, said that she occasionally left an

offline text message via instant messaging to her English chat partner, James, who resided in Thailand during the time of this study, in order to briefly inform him about a current event in Thailand that she thought might have been helpful to him.

Chatting Besides the Scheduled Chat Times

Six of the eleven pairs said that they occasionally logged in on the instant messaging system at the same time and so they talked with each other outside of the scheduled chat times. On these occasions, they either greeted each other and had a short chat, or had a long conversation with each other if they were both available. Note that four of these six pairs were the four pairs whose English chat partners resided in Thailand during the course of the chat exchange program. These pairs were Mon and Alan, Tida and Alan, Bo and James, and Wit and Lucy. In addition, the first three pairs said that they did not often schedule the chat times, but naturally chatted with each other when they saw each other online.

E-mailing

Six of the eleven pairs contacted each other through e-mail to schedule chat times. Two of the Thai speakers (Mon and Noi) said that they also sent a few of their writings to their English chat partners, Alan and Kevin, respectively, for proofreading.

Posting Comments on the Chat Partner's Personal Profile in a Social Networking Website

Four of the eleven pairs, who had their personal profiles on the Internet, added their chat partners to their contact lists. These social networking websites that the participants are members of include Facebook, MySpace, and Hi5. They said that they occasionally checked on new updates of their chat partners' profiles and posted their

asynchronous comments on them. For example, Mon mentioned going to Alan's Facebook to look at his vacation pictures he had posted and write a question she wanted to ask about his trip.

Using the Voice Tool

Only two of the eleven pairs (Bo and James, and Chai and Jenna) used the voice tool to talk with each other in addition to the text chatting. Bo and James switched to voice chatting three times; two times during their first chat session and one time during the second chat session. They then resumed text chatting only in the rest of the chat sessions. Their voice chats lasted 10, 15 and 5 minutes, respectively. Chai and Jenna talked on the voice chat only one time at the beginning of the chat program for a short period of time and then went back to text chatting only.

The reason that most of the pairs did not use the voice tool can be categorized into four groups, though three of these involved lack of equipment. First, in two of the eleven pairs, neither partner had the equipment, that is, a microphone and headset. Second, there were two pairs where the Thai speakers did not have the equipment. Third, in three pairs, the English speakers did not have equipment. For the fourth group, or the remaining four pairs, both of the members of the pairs had the equipment, but it turned out that one of the members of each pair preferred the text tool to the voice tool. More specifically, three English speakers and one Thai speaker in these pairs did not want to talk with their partners through audio chatting.

It is interesting that, among the four pairs where both members had the equipment, there were more Thai speakers than English speakers who wanted to use the voice tool, but could not because their English chat partners did not want to. For example,

Bo, the Thai speaker, shared with me that she preferred voice chats, but she felt that her English chat partner, James, was too shy to voice or turn on the web cam during their conversation:

Passage 13

I like to voice because I can practice my listening and speaking. … but I think that James doesn't like to use either the voice tool or web cam. I tried to voice chat with him again, but he asked me if it was necessary to use the voice chat. He asked if we could just do the text chat. I think he is shy, ha ha. … (Bo, second interview on Skype voice chat, 12/29/2008)

With respect to the four members of the pairs that did not want to use the voice tool, their reasons were varied. For instance, for James and Jason, the text chatting was more suitable when conversing with a new person they had just gotten to know; as James put it:

Passage 14

I've used text messaging like this for many years already. Back in Germany we use a lot of ICU. So, um, I feel comfortable doing it, especially in the beginning when you don't know each other, it is more comfortable, I would say, than starting with the voice or video chat. So at the beginning, the text chat is the best solution; the best way to learn to get to know each other. (James, interview on Skype voice chat, 02/03/2009)

For Ploy, the Thai speaker, her hesitation to do the voice chatting was related to language anxiety: "I am afraid to speak English. The place where we have the computer at home isn't private; my brother and my parents could hear me speak English. I would feel shy if

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they hear me (first face-to-face interview, 11/21/08)." For Jenna, another of the English speakers, the difficulty in comprehending her Thai chat partner, Chai, made her go back to using only text chatting with him: "[t]he voice too is easy to use but understanding his voice over the phone was extremely difficult (face-to-face interview, 02/04/2009)."

The Thai Speakers' Possible Future Plans That Have Been Affected
By Their Experience with the Internet Chat Exchange Program

This sub-section aims to present the findings on the Thai speakers' view about their possible future plans that have been affected by the chat exchange with their English chat partners. This sub-section will first present whether the Thai and English speakers feel that they will keep in touch with each other after the chat exchange program. I will also include the findings from e-mail contacts with the Thai speakers eight months after the chat exchange program to reveal whether they have kept in touch with their English chat partners. Second, this sub-section reveals whether the Thai speakers perceive that their experience with this chat exchange program has affected their future, and if so, in what ways?

The Thai Speakers' Feelings about Keeping in Touch with Their English Chat Partners

All of the eleven Thai-English pairs said that they wanted to keep in touch with their chat partners after the required twelve chat sessions to prolong their friendship. Some said that they would greet and chat with each other whenever they found their chat partners online in the instant messaging system. Some said that they would send greetings or holiday greetings via e-mail to each other, such as the New Year Holiday, or on each other's special occasions. Some said they would occasionally check each other's personal profile in the social networking website and post some comments to each other. For

example, Bo said in the second interview that she wanted to extend her friendship with James: "I will keep in touch with him via Skype chats. We have become friends; we will still talk to each other (interview on Skype voice chat, 12/29/2008)."

However, eight months after I collected the last chat script from one of the pairs, there were only five of the eleven pairs that had kept in touch with each other, while five pairs had not, and one Thai speaker (Tida) did not respond. The five pairs that have kept in touch with each other were Mon and Alan, Bo and James, Chanon and Kevin, Noi and Kevin, and Nat and Emily. Mon went to England to further her degree shortly after her last required chat session with Alan. While Mon is studying in Alan's home country, Alan is still working in Thailand. Mon said they have occasionally kept in touch through MSN text chatting, and Alan has given her some advice on adapting herself to her new country, which is his native homeland. Mon commented, "[e]ven if the chat program ended, we still occasionally keep in touch. He always asks when we see each other online about how I am getting along with my life in England. He is such a good friend (e-mail, 4/4/2010)."

For another pair that has kept in touch after the chat exchange program, Bo said James had left Thailand and moved to work in another foreign country. They contact each other once or twice a month through Skype, chatting whenever they find that the other is online and available to talk. Chanon and Noi said they used both e-mail and MSN chatting to keep in touch with their English chat partner, Kevin. In other words, they occasionally e-mail their English chat partner a greeting e-mail and chat with him when they find he is online and available to talk. For the last pair, Nat said she used only e-mail

to keep in touch with Emily on special occasions because they had both been busy with their work and children.

There is a note regarding one of the five pairs that have not kept in touch. That is, one of the Thai speakers, Wit, from these five pairs said that he tried several times to contact his English chat partner, Lucy, after she left Thailand for her home country, however, he did not hear from her.

The Thai Speakers' Future Plans That Might Have Been Affected by Their
Experience with the Internet Chat Exchange Program

The Thai speakers were asked the question "Do you think this chat exchange program has affected your future? If so, in what ways?" They all mentioned that the experience with the exchange program had affected their future, and most of their comments on this involved their target language learning. Some of the responses from all eleven Thai speakers overlapped one another, and showed two patterns. The first group of Thai speakers, consisting of seven participants, mentioned that their experience from the chat exchange motivated them to improve their target language skills so that they could be able to more effectively communicate with their English chat partners and other foreigners they might meet. The following excerpts illustrate this position:

Passage 15

In the past I didn't really like English, but now I want to be able to communicate in English. Even though I'm not that fluent, I feel that I can communicate and respond to him. The fact that he understands what I want to say motivates me to improve my English so that I can talk with him more fluently. I feel proud when

talking to him because I feel that I can understand him! (Noi, first face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)

Passage 16

I'd like to save some money so that I could visit her in the US; she invited me to stay with her and she would show me around. … I'd like to take an English writing course. I'd like to improve my writing; I feel that I have a hard time thinking and producing the messages in English when chatting with her. (Yajai, second interview on MSN voice chat, 6/8/2009)

The second group of Thai speakers, five participants, mentioned that their experience with the chat exchange motivated them to want to further their education abroad. For example, Noi said in her second interview, "I'd like to further my study abroad. If I can study in a country where English is spoken, I think I will be more fluent. This chat program makes me feel more motivated to further my study abroad (second interview on MSN voice chat, 2/28/2009)." Three of these five Thai speakers, who already had a plan to further their study abroad, felt that this chat exchange program was a good opportunity for them to practice their English, for example:

Passage 17

This chat program has affected my future. It's my intention to further my education abroad. … This program was a great start for me to practice my English. I feel that it really helped me to practice my English! (Wit, second interview on Skype voice chat, 5/7/2009)

For another Thai speaker, Tida, this chat exchange program helped her to gain more confidence in her English and encouraged her to pursue an advance degree abroad:

<u>Passage 18</u>

I used to think that studying abroad was very very scary, but I don't think it will

be that bad now because I feel that I can at least communicate with him. In the

past, I thought about taking a short course abroad, but now I'd like to further my

PhD study abroad. I think I may be able to adjust to using the English language.

(Tida, first face-to-face conversation, 11/22/2008)

The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about the Internet Chat Exchange

In this second section, I will present the Thai speakers' perceptions about their

experience in participating in the chat exchange with their English chat partners. This

section is divided into three sub-sections, that is, the benefits that the Thai speakers

believed they had gained from the chat exchange, the English Speakers' views regarding

the Thai speakers' progress in English conversations towards the end of the chat

exchange, and the difficulties the participants encountered during their participation in

the chat exchange program.

Benefits of the Internet Chat Exchange

I explored the Thai speakers' perceptions about the benefits they had gained from

their participation in the chat exchange program by using the following questions to elicit

their responses. First, how would you describe your experience with the Internet chat

exchange with your chat partner? Second, please share with me the most valuable,

interesting, or enjoyable part of this online exchange. Third, please tell me about your

favorite chat session. Finally, do you feel you have been through any kinds of changes

from participating in this online chat exchange?

The analysis of the responses from the Thai speakers showed that they had gained four types of benefits from the chat exchange. First, the Thai speakers believed that this chat exchange helped them gain more confidence in using the target language. Second, this chat exchange offered the opportunity for target language practice in real-life conversations, and for learning unfamiliar words and every day expressions. Third, the Thai speakers (and their English chat partners) perceived this chat exchange as an opportunity for them to exchange ideas and cultures with a person from a different culture. Last but not least, the Thai speakers (and their English chat partners) said they had made a new friend from another culture. The paragraphs that follow present examples of excerpts from the interviews indicating these benefits the Thai speakers had gained.

The following passage showed the benefit of the exchange program in helping the Thai speakers gain more self-confidence in using the target language.

Passage 19

Although I didn't get to do the voice chat with Alan, I feel more confident in speaking English because the chatting has helped me to think faster in English and type it quickly. I was normally nervous when meeting foreigners, but chatting with Alan has helped me feel braver to talk with them. (Mon, second interview on MSN text chat, 7/30/2009)

In addition to increasing their self-confidence, some of the Thai speakers mentioned that the chat conversations helped them learn how the grammatical structures they had learned from the classroom were used naturally by the English speakers in a meaningful context:

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Passage 20

I have learned the way my chat partner uses some English structures in his
sentences. It's not like I have never seen those grammatical patterns before; I have
learned almost all of them, but had already forgotten. Seeing those patterns again
while we were chatting enhanced my understanding of how they should be used
correctly. I have actually picked up some of them and used them in my classroom.
(Noi, first face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)

The following are examples of the Thai speakers' responses regarding benefits they had
gained from the chat exchange more generally, including their comments on the
exchange of viewpoints and cultures, and the forming of friendships:

Passage 21

I feel that this chat exchange was a great opportunity for me to make a new friend
from another culture and exchange viewpoints. In general, we don't have a lot of
chances to talk and exchange opinions with foreigners so it was nice to be able to
see what a foreigner would think about particular topics … It was a good
opportunity for me to test my English; we have learned a lot about the English
language, but we don't really have a chance to use it. … Even though I just typed
in the text form, I knew that this was what I would say if I had to say it out loud. I
could talk about various topics in daily life with my chat partner in English
otherwise I would have nobody to talk with me in English about this stuff! (Ploy,
first face-to-face interview, 11/21/2008)

Passage 22

This chat exchange helps me to think and respond quicker in English conversations with a foreigner. I have learned to use some new words and slang. However, I think I have gained much more than just learning the language. I have made a new friend; I have gained some new experiences; I have learned about his country and different viewpoints; I have enjoyed our chats. I think this chat exchange is one of my good and memorable experiences. There should be more of this kind of program in the future. (Chanon, second interview on MSN text chat, 3/3/2009)

Furthermore, two of the Thai speakers' responses reflected the advantage of the synchronous computer-mediated communication that made it possible and affordable for them to connect with the target language speakers from their own computers at their residence:

Passage 23

I think this chat exchange is a very good program. I have made a new friend and learned about her day-to-day life and American culture; she has also learned about ours, too. Her culture is interesting and different! … I don't have to actually go to the US, but I've gotten to learn [about some of her culture] from talking with her. It was very good! … (Wit, second conversation on Skype voice chat, 5/7/2009)

Passage 24

… Another point is that this chat exchange was very convenient. With the Internet technology, we did all kinds of things during the chats, such as sending offline messages, music, and pictures. It was cool! It was like we really knew each other;

we saw what each other looked like and heard each other's voice. (Chai, second interview on Skype voice chat, 1/27/2009)

For the English speakers, they also viewed the online chat exchange as a positive experience in exchanging ideas and cultures, and making a new friend:

Passage 25

[The experience with the online chat exchange was] very rewarding. It's nice to know there are people like Chanon in the world. I enjoyed the conversations. … It was a significant step forward in understanding people in other countries and cultures that are very different from our own. … I have added a new friend that will help me to stay connected to another country. … (Kevin, face-to-face interview regarding his chat exchange with Chanon, 1/25/2009)

Passage 26

The most enjoyable part of this online exchange was reconnecting with someone from Thailand. I participated in a study abroad program in Thailand two years ago, a program which has been one of the best experiences of my life. Speaking with Yajai reminded me of the time I spent in Thailand, especially when we talked about the political developments. A particular chat I remember is when Yajai invited me to visit her; I immediately recalled the friendly and welcoming culture of the Thai people. (Angie, e-mail, 6/21/2009)

Passage 27

It [this chat exchange] kind of helps me in a small way, not to be shy in meeting new people. I feel more confident in meeting new people from far far away, while

normally I wouldn't have done anything like that. I'm very shy. I'm a very shy

person! (Emily, face-to-face interview, 4/6/2009)

Last but not least, during the interviews with the English speakers, some

of them mentioned their view of their Thai chat partners' improvement in the

English conversations. They believed that their Thai chat partners had gained

more confidence in using English towards the end of the chat exchange and were

able to respond to them in English faster than they were in the early chat sessions.

For example:

Passage 28

Ploy's response time improved. At first she often took a while to reply, but that

improved, as she has to think about it less. (David, interview on Skype voice chat,

6/12/2009)

Passage 29

Yajai's confidence in using English has greatly improved over the course of our

chats. In the beginning, I felt like I had to lead our conversations, often

introducing topics and asking questions. Towards the end of our chats Yajai

showed more enthusiasm and took more initiative by leading new discussions and

bring up previously discussed topics. I think she has certainly gained more

confidence in her comprehension and use of English. If I were to meet Yajai in

person, I have no doubt that we would pick up where we left off and jump into a

lively conversation! (Angie, e-mail, 6/21/2009)

Difficulties During the Internet Chat Exchange

The Thai and English speakers reported two kinds of difficulties they encountered during their participation in the chat exchange: the occasionally dropped Internet connections, and the difficulty to schedule a common time to chat synchronously on the Internet. For the Internet connections, three of the pairs said that they occasionally had a connection problem; four of them said they hardly had any connection problem; and four of them said they had no problem at all with the connection. All of the pairs that encountered the Internet connection problems during the chat said that they were expected and these problems did not have any negative effects on their perceptions about the chat exchange. For example:

Passage 30

We do have some bad connections; he connects to the Internet from his mobile phone, which sometimes doesn't have a good signal, and mine is a dial up. We are both used to the dropped connections when we go online, but it is OK most of the time, so we don't really think it is a big problem. … When the connection is not good, we just talk later (Tida, first face-to-face interview, 11/22/2008)

For the time factor, the pairs that chose not to schedule their chat times in advance mentioned the conflict of their available time to be online, for example, Mon said, "We aren't always online at the same time, so we don't get to chat with each other on a weekly basis as often as the chat program requires" (second interview on MSN text chat, 7/30/2009). For the pairs that chose to schedule the chat times in advance because of their time zone difference, some of them mentioned that it was sometimes difficult for them to schedule the time to do the chats because of their busy work or study schedules:

We sometimes couldn't schedule a time that we could both be available, but I

understand because he had to work. When it happened, we both tried to work our

chat time out so both of us could make it. … I wish we could have talked longer

in some of our chat sessions, but either he or I didn't have time (Pairin, second

interview on Skype voice chat, 1/18/2009)

Some of the participants, such as Emily, mentioned their difficulties in finding the time to

chat; however they committed to the chats because the rewards were worthwhile. As

Emily put it,

Passage 32

It [the experience from the chat exchange] was fun! It was very interesting. I got

to learn about a new person. It was at times very demanding on my part because

of either lack of sleep or the baby, but I enjoyed it very much. I think it was a

learning experience for me. (Emily, interview in person, 4/6/2009)

In addition, some of the participants, such as Yajai, did not perceive this chat exchange as

an additional workload, but rather a beneficial experience:

Passage 33

Thank you for inviting me to join this chat exchange program! Some people may

think that they would rather spend their time doing something else. In fact, I don't

think it required a lot of time, [though] I can manage only one hour a week to do

it. I have made a new friend and had opportunities to practice my English. (Yajai,

second interview on MSN voice chat, 6/8/2009)

Discussion

The findings in this chapter from the participants' interviews suggested that they perceived the chat exchange not only as a site for target language practice in a real-life context for the Thai speakers, but also as an opportunity for building a friendship and exchanging viewpoints with a friend from another culture. The findings of this study also indicated that the friendly interpersonal relationship the Thai speakers developed with their English chat partners and the positive experience they gained from the chat exchange enhanced the Thai speakers self-confidence in using the target language and encouraged them to improve their language skills. The experience from the chat exchange also inspired some of the Thai speakers to want to further their education in an English speaking country. In addition, the findings in this chapter revealed that the solid friendships that had grown over the course of the chat exchange encouraged five of the eleven pairs to continue to keep in touch with each other after the required twelve chat sessions to prolong their friendship. From the language-learning point of view, long-term social contacts with the individual target-language speaking friend may promote more opportunities for target language use in authentic and meaningful personal correspondences. To put it simply, this study suggests that a chat exchange like this can foster continuous language learning for individual L2 learners in an out-of-school context. I will discuss further details relevant to this issue in the sections that follow.

Discussion: The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about Their

Relationship with the English Chat Partners

This section of the discussion is presented in three sub-sections, that is, the terms the participants used to describe the relationship that had formed, the Thai-English pairs' interaction beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting, and the Thai speakers' possible future plans that have been affected by their experience with the chat exchange program.

Terms Used to Describe the Relationship That Formed

As noted earlier, all of the eleven Thai-English pairs felt that they were able to establish a friendship with each other over the course of the chat exchange, and most of them, or nine out of the eleven pairs, believed that their relationship had grown towards the end of the chat exchange. These findings reveal the potential of the instant messaging system for L2 practice in an informal social setting. The findings of this study showed that the instant messaging system enabled the Thai speakers to participate in extended personal conversations, keep in touch with the same target-language conversational partners, and gradually develop a friendship with them. This finding also supported Jin and Erben's (2007) study that the learners of Chinese as a foreign language praised instant messaging as a convenient tool for them to stay in contact with their native-speaking partners.

As for the two pairs who did not believe they had developed a closer relationship, this result supported the finding in Chapter 5 on conversational strategies and devices for rapport used by the Thai speakers. In other words, one of the reasons that Tida and Pairin did not feel that their relationship with the English chat partners had grown may have

been the result of their preferred conversational style, that is, their use of distance (Don't impose) and deference (Give option) strategies, which led them not to share with their English chat partners their own personal stories during the conversations. Recall that Tida and Pairin were the only two Thai speakers who, at times, used distance and deference strategies in Chapter 5, and also the only two in the findings of this chapter who did not think their relationship with the chat partner had improved. In contrast, the rest of the pairs, those that believed their relationship had progressed towards the end of the chat exchange, reported that they had learned quite a bit about each other, as seen in Chanon's responses in Passages 5 and 6, regarding his commonalities with and differences from his English chat partner.

A related contributing factor to the reticence of the the two Thai girls, Tida and Pairin, may have simply been their personality, as previously discussed in Chapter 5 in the section about topic initiation. The finding of this chapter from the interview confirmed the possible effect of personality on the amount of chat conversation, as Tida recalled her introverted nature while talking about the change she had been through from participating in this online chat exchange:

> I'm normally shy about talking with unacquainted westerners besides my former
>
> English teachers. It's probably my nature, too, that I'm not a talkative person; I
>
> don't often talk much with people I don't know well. However, I felt comfortable
>
> talking with Alan because he is friendly. … (Tida, first face-to-face interview,
>
> 11/22/2008)

With respect to the finding on the participants' imagined characters for their chat partners' and themselves in a movie or a television show, their responses to this interview

question confirmed the relationships that had formed judging from the findings on the features of the pairs' conversations. For example, the finding in Chapter 5 that Mon and Alan's chat conversations contained the highest number of exchanges involving the target language expert and novice positions corroborated with Mon's report in this chapter that her relationship with Alan resembled Doraemon and Noble from a Japanese popular cartoon called "Doraemon," as shown in Passage 7 above. In particular, the fact that Alan had given Mon suggestions on improving her English language skills and furthering her education abroad reminded her of Doraemon, a robotic cat who came back from the future to take care of and help his friend, Noble, solve his problems.

The other two examples are from the two same-sex female pairs, Nat and Emily and Yajai and Angie, as shown earlier in Passages 8 and 9. The finding in Chapter 5 showed that these two pairs were among the pairs that used high rates of conversational devices to build rapport in their chat conversations. Their responses regarding their imagined characters, reported earlier in this chapter, were congruent with the finding in Chapter 5 that they had developed solidarity with each other as close female friends. For example, Nat saw Emily as a friend who shared a commonality with her as being a single working mother; while Yajai saw her relationship with Angie as one of close single female friends who enjoyed each other's company. Note that the responses from the English chat partners also paralleled the responses from all of the Thai speakers.

For some of the pairs, the development of their relationship did not obviously appear in any particular form in their chat scripts in chapter 5, but their words from the interviews indicated the establishment and growth of their friendship. These pairs are Bo and James and Wit and Lucy. Bo and James' s relationship, for example, reflected in

James' words in Passage 10, where he characterized their pair as a sister and a brother who were close to each other, shared stories with each other and sometimes teased each other in conversations, as siblings normally do.

The Participants' Interaction Beyond the Boundaries of the Synchronous Text Chatting

The findings of this study showed that the pairs used other types of communication beyond synchronous text chatting on the Internet to contact each other, such as exchanging artifacts, e-mailing to schedule the chat time, or posting asynchronous comments on each other's personal profile. These various types of contact via computer-mediated communication might have helped the pairs to learn more about each other, as reflected in Chai's words:

> With the Internet technology, we could do all kinds of things during the chats, such as sending offline messages, music, and photos. It was cool! It was like we've really gotten to know each other; we saw what each other looked like and heard each other's voice. (Chai, second interview on Skype voice chat, 1/27/2009)

In addition, the findings in this section showed that the use of other modes of electronic communication, such as e-mail and asynchronous text messaging, allowed the pairs to reschedule their chat times and advise each other when there was an expected change in the schedule. Moreover, for the language-learning point of view, contacting the English chat partners via other modes of communication, such as email, asynchronous messages and comments on each other's personal profile in the social network website, might have allowed the Thai speakers more chances to communicate in the target language in a socially meaningful context.

It is interesting that all four of the pairs whose English speakers resided in Thailand during the course of the chat exchange reported that they chatted with each other besides the scheduled chat times. This suggests that their being in the same time zone might have helped them to stay in touch more often. Accordingly, three of these four pairs said that they did not often schedule the chat times, but chatted with each other whenever they found that the other was online and available to talk. However, some of the members of these four pairs, even though they had no time zone differences, still mentioned that they did not often see their chat partner online because they tended to log in at different times, as shown in Mon's response in the findings. I will further discuss the time factor in relation to difficulties during the chat exchange, in a later section of this chapter.

The last point to be discussed about the modes of interaction beyond the synchronous text chatting was the use of the voice tool. Surprisingly the finding of this study showed that, among the four pairs where both members had voice equipment, three of the English speakers did not prefer the voice mode, whereas only one Thai speaker did not want to use it. This finding was different from Sotillo's (2005) and Jepson's (2005) findings that their L2 learners relied only on text chatting rather than the voice chatting or web cam during their exchange because of the Internet speed problem. The reasons for some of my participants' rejecting the voice tool seem to have been personal, and not due to technical difficulties. Two English speakers, James and Jason, in this study preferred text chatting to voice chatting because they felt comfortable using text chatting to learn to get to know a new person, such as their Thai chat partners, Bo and Pairin, respectively.

They believed that voice chatting was more personal, more convenient and time-saving than the text tool, but was only suitable for talking with a familiar person.

Another English speaker, Jenna, who did not want to use the voice tool, cited comprehension difficulties. It may have been her intention to avoid the awkward situation of having to keep asking her Thai chat partner, Chai, to repeat himself due to difficulty in understanding his English pronunciation. Finally, for Ploy, the only Thai speaker who rejected the chance to use voice chat with her English chat partner, her avoidance of the voice tool was because of her shyness in speaking the target language. In short, these findings suggest that the exchange through text chatting may be suitable for the pairs to get acquainted with each other at the beginning of their chat contact, while the voice tool may be better used later, when they have gained sufficient familiarity with each other.

The Thai Speakers' Possible Future Plans That Have Been Affected by Their Experience with the Chat Exchange Program

With respect to the effect of the chat exchange on the Thai speakers' future plans, the findings of this study indicated that the experience with the chat exchange motivated the Thai speakers to want to keep in touch with their English chat partners, to improve their target language skills, or to further their education in a target-language speaking country. The sense of success in being able to carry out spontaneous conversations with the target language speakers might have inspired the Thai speakers to believe that developing the target language skills was not a goal beyond their ability, as shown in Tida's response in Passage 18.

Another factor that might have encouraged the Thai speakers to improve their target language skills involved the comprehension difficulties they encountered, as reported in Chapter 4. These communication troubles might have made them realize that it was necessary to improve their language skills so that they would be able to communicate more effectively with their English chat partners or other foreigners they might meet; this idea was shown in Noi and Yajai's responses in Passages 15 and 16, respectively.

The finding that five of the eleven pairs did not continue to keep in touch with each other after that chat exchange program may have been due to their busy work or study schedules. Note that all of the pairs that have continued to keep contact are pairs where both members regularly use instant messaging to stay in touch with people they know, or those who have a habit of checking their e-mail regularly. The Pairin-Jason pair was one of the pairs that did not keep in touch after the chat exchange program; Pairin acknowledged at the second interview that her chat partner was different from her because he did not often go online.

Moreover, the finding that one of the Thai speakers, Wit, tried to contact his English chat partner, Lucy, via e-mail after the chat exchange program, but did not hear from her again, was unexpected for him. Wit and Lucy's chat scripts showed no clues of conflict. In fact, their chat scripts showed that they had shared several of their personal stories with each other like most of the pairs did, and they seemed to enjoy the conversations, as Wit put it:

> … A lot of times, I didn't realize that we had chatted for almost an hour; I didn't
> feel that it was that long at all. I sometimes had to end the conversations, though, I

didn't really want to because I had to go do something else (Wit, second interview on Skype voice chat, 5/7/2009)

Furthermore, Wit's perception about the chat exchange from the interview was positive, as reflected in Passage 17, where he claimed that he valued the exchange program as an opportunity for him to practice his English for studying abroad. He also spoke of its being an economical way, through the Internet, for him and Lucy to exchange and learn each other's cultures in Passage 23. Wit expressed his disappointment with not being able to contact his chat partner: "I tried several, several times to e-mail her, but didn't hear from her at all. I was stunned!" The only reason I could think of was that Lucy might have been busy after she left Thailand for her home country, the United States, or might have changed her e-mail address and consequently lost contact with Wit. Future chat exchanges may ask participants to have more than one way to contact each other, such as a second e-mail address and telephone number.

Discussion: The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about

the Internet Chat Exchange

As noted, the Thai speakers believed the experience from the chat exchange helped them to gain more self-confidence in using English, to practice the target language in natural conversations, to exchange viewpoints and cultures, and to make a new friend from another culture. This group of responses suggests that this chat exchange program was a worthwhile resource for the Thai speakers. In other words, this study suggests that the online chat exchange offered the Thai speakers an informal language learning experience outside the classroom, as well as an intercultural learning experience in understanding people from a culture different from their own for both the Thai and

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English speakers. These findings corroborated Tudini's (2003) finding that the students of Italian related to the online chatting with native speakers in a public chat room as providing access to the target language and culture that helped improve their familiarity with "colloquial interactive language" (p. 155) forms that were seldom taught in the classrooms. Furthermore, the finding from the responses from the English speakers regarding their views about the Thai speakers' progress in the English conversations supported the Thai speakers' belief that they had gained greater self-confidence in using the target language, as the English speakers noted the improvement in their response time in English.

Difficulties During the Internet Chat Exchange

The last topic for discussion concerns the difficulties the pairs had encountered during their participation in the chat exchange. The findings of this study were similar to Sedler's (2007) finding that his two groups of students from the United States and Spain encountered Internet connection problems. However, the participants in my study said that this technology-related problem did not influence the number of their chat conversations, as it did for the participants in Sedler's study. This might have been because the Thai-English pairs in my study were able to be more flexible and reschedule their chat times; in contrast, the groups of participants in Sedler's (2007) study had more than two members in the group, and had a limited period of time to complete the collaborative project within a semester.

For the time factor, the finding of this study also echoed Sedler's (2007) finding, as some of the Thai and English speakers reported having difficulties in finding a common time that they could chat synchronously on the Internet. This was true even for

the pairs that did not have different time zones. That is to say, three of the total of four pairs where the English speakers resided in Thailand during the course of the chat exchange mentioned that they could not chat with each other as often as the chat program required, which was once on a weekly basis, because they were not always available online at the same time. As a result, most of the pairs took a longer time to complete their required twelve chat sessions. This finding suggests that future chat exchanges should be flexible with the chat schedules.

In spite of the finding that the participants occasionally encountered difficulty in finding a common time to chat synchronously on the Internet, they were well informed about the possibility of this difficulty before agreeing to participate in this chat exchange program. For this reason, all of them appeared to cooperate with each other to schedule their chats so that both of them could be synchronously online, as shown in Pairin's response in Passage 31. Even though some of the participants encountered difficulties in finding a common time to chat with each other, they felt that the benefits and experience they had gained from the online chat exchange were worth the trouble, for example, Chanon reflected on his commitment to the chats:

> I had to wake up early on Saturdays to chat with him to be able to work it in our schedules, and miss a few of my favorite cartoon shows. … It is a chance for me to learn English, like having an English tutor at home. … I'm not complaining about it; I really enjoy chatting with him. It was worth it to miss my shows!
> (Chanon, second interview on MSN text chat, 3/3/2009)

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CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the findings of this study based on the data collected from the Thai-English pairs' chat scripts, and interviews, as well as the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers. I will then provide the implications for future chat exchange programs and foreign language teaching. The last three sections of this chapter are limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and final thoughts.

The central goal of this study was to examine whether and in what ways the Thai EFL speakers perceived the online chat exchange through the private instant messaging system as worthwhile in providing an economical way to practice the target language in everyday conversations outside of the classroom setting. More importantly, this study examined whether the Thai speakers were able to establish a relationship with an English chat partner over the course of the chat exchange program, and how the relationships that formed influenced the Thai speakers' perceptions about their future plans involving the target language learning.

Since to the best of my knowledge, there was no study of this kind conducted with Thai EFL users at the time I started this study, I decided to add the analysis of the chat logs of the interactions between the Thai and English speakers, looking at features such as the negotiation for meaning between the pairs over communication problems. In examining these negotiation moves, I felt I would be able to compare this study's data with the findings of previous studies, which were mostly conducted in task-based instructional settings. I wondered whether the same types of triggers caused

comprehension problems for the Thai and English pairs in this study as were reported in these other studies, and whether the Thai speakers used the same types of strategies to solve comprehension difficulties during synchronous chat exchanges in a non-classroom based context. Last but not least, this study explored the Thai and English speakers' perceptions about their experience with the chat exchange and the difficulties they encountered during the program; one goal here was to suggest implications for future Internet chat exchange programs.

The Thai and English volunteers were paired to form 11 dyads, and asked to synchronously chat with each other via instant messaging (e.g., MSN or Skype) on a weekly basis for twelve sessions for at least 20 minutes on open topics. After each chat session, the Thai speakers were asked to write a reflective note in Thai. I interviewed the Thai speakers in Thai twice during the course of their chat exchange, that is, at the middle and the end of the chat exchange, and interviewed the English speakers once at the end of the chat exchange with the same set of questions. The pairs sent me a total of 120 chat scripts for analysis, along with 120 reflective notes written by the Thai speakers. The average chat time of each pair ranged from 26.8 to 79.3 minutes per session. The main findings of the analysis from the three sources of data are as follows.

<div align="center">Summary of the Findings</div>

The findings of this study will be reviewed according to each main research question, that is, the findings from the analysis of negotiations for meaning, aspects of relationship found in the chat exchanges, as well as the Thai speakers' perceptions about the relationship with the English speakers and the Internet chat exchange program.

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Negotiation for Meaning

The findings of this study showed that triggers for negotiations in natural synchronous conversations between the Thai and English speakers were largely lexical in nature, as was also found in previous studies. The Thai speakers in this study, likewise, put more emphasis on getting the meaning across to their English chat partners rather than on producing grammatically correct sentences during the synchronous chats. However, their notes written after each chat session indicated that some of them reflected on their own interlanguage forms in the saved written conversations and tried to correct them or requested help from other sources, such as the Internet, friends, or myself. In addition, the Thai speakers used strategies to solve comprehension problems that did not constitute negotiations of meaning in the classical sense, that is, dictionary consultation, word substitution and avoidance. The other three strategies the Thai speakers used were request for help, confirmation check and rephrase strategies.

Aspects of Developing Online Relationships

The findings from the analysis of the 'target language expert and novice' patterns in the exchanges revealed that the Thai speakers frequently took on a target language novice role by telling their English chat partners about their difficulties in using English (53.1% of the 'novice' expressions), followed by acknowledging the English speakers' language expertise (28.1%). In contrast, the Thai speakers requested linguistic help from their English chat partners to confirm their choice of words for only 18.8% of the total of sequences involving the novice expressions. The English speakers, likewise, did not offer linguistic help as often as they gave supportive comments to mitigate the Thai speakers' negative view of their English performance, or to give positive feedback when they had

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performed well during the conversations. Some of the English speakers also shared suggestions for learning an L2 with their Thai chat partners in response to the difficulties the Thai speakers shared with them.

The findings from the analysis of the number of topics introduced by the Thai and English speakers showed that the majority of Thai speakers appeared to be able to actively take the lead in the conversations. To illustrate, ten out of a total of eleven Thai speakers introduced either significantly more or as many new topics of conversation as their English chat partners. In addition to the findings from the chat scripts, the reflective notes and interviews indicated that some Thai speakers had difficulties in finding topics to talk about with their English chat partners at the beginning of the chat program; however, they believed they were able to suggest more topics as time went on. The Thai speakers felt that their progress in topic initiation was due to their growing familiarity with the English chat partners and with using the target language in spontaneous conversational exchanges.

The findings from the analysis of conversational strategies used by the Thai and English speakers revealed that they interacted based on an involvement style using a range of devices to establish rapport with each other. The Thai-English pairs appeared to share emotional involvement by expressing enthusiasm in each other's stories, feelings, experiences, or opinions. The analysis of the chat scripts showed that the pairs employed eight rapport building devices, that is, evaluative responses, agreement, using a nickname, showing interest in the chat partner's topics, mutual revelation, minimizing differences, making a summary or conclusion, and asking personal-experience questions. The comparison of each device used by the Thai and English speakers indicated that the

Thai speakers had a tendency to use relatively fewer evaluative responses, mutual revelation, and 'showing interest in the topic' devices than did the English speakers. The Thai speakers, on the other hand, used more personal-experience questions during the chat conversations to elicit the chat partner's personal information, experience or perspective in reference to the topic being discussed.

The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about Their Relationship with

the English Chat Partners

All eleven of the Thai-English pairs felt that they were able to establish a friendship with each other over the course of the chat exchange, and most of them, or nine out of the eleven pairs, believed that their relationship had grown towards the end of the chat exchange. The two Thai speakers, Tida and Pairin, who did not believe that they had developed a closer relationship, revealed that they did not often share with their English chat partners their own personal stories during the conversations, but talked about general topics. Therefore, these two girls had not learned more about their English chat partners, such as their personal interests, as well as their commonalities and differences, in the course of the chat exchange program.

For the effect of the chat exchange on the Thai speakers' future plans, the findings of this study indicated that their experience with the chat exchange motivated the Thai speakers to want to keep in touch with their English chat partners, to improve their target language skills, or to further their education in a target-language speaking country. In addition, five of the pairs reported that they have still kept in touch after the chat exchange program through synchronous chat and email.

The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about the Internet Chat Exchange

The Thai speakers believed the experience from the chat exchange helped them to gain more self-confidence in using English, to practice the target language in everyday conversations, to exchange viewpoints and cultural information, and to make a new friend from another country.

As for difficulties during the chat exchange program, the Thai-English pairs who did not schedule the chat time in advance reported they were not able to chat with each other as often as the program required, which was once on a weekly basis, because they tended to log in to their instant-messaging account at different times. For the pairs that chose to schedule the chat times in advance because of their time zone differences, some of them mentioned that it was sometimes difficult for them to find the time to chat because of their busy work or study schedules.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggested that a synchronous chat exchange program like this could provide an affordable meeting place for the Thai EFL users to connect with the target-language speaking peers. The Thai speakers viewed their experience from the chat exchange as an opportunity to use the target language they had learned from the classroom in a socially meaningful context and build a friendship with a person from another culture. The findings of this study also indicated that the friendly relationship the Thai speakers developed with their English chat partners, and the positive comments from their chat partner about their English performance, helped enhance the Thai speakers self-confidence in using English and encouraged them to improve their language skills so that they could be able to communicate more fluently with other foreigners they

may meet in the future. In addition, the friendship bonds that had grown over the course of the chat exchange encouraged five of the eleven pairs to prolong their friendship beyond the required twelve chat sessions.

The findings of this study suggested three main elements that contributed to the success of the individual pairs' chat exchanges and the positive perceptions of the Thai speakers about the chat exchange program. First, the length of the conversations played a part in the growing familiarity of the pairs. To illustrate, the pairs that made a commitment to find time to chat with each other for a reasonably long period of time, regardless of their busy schedules, appeared to have sufficient time to learn more about each other than the pairs that did not often spend enough time conversing. Second, the findings on conversational strategies and devices suggested that the choice of conversational strategies the Thai speakers used during the conversations may have promoted or hindered the opportunities for learning and relationship building. Finally, the help and moral support from the English speakers played a crucial part in the Thai speakers' sense of confidence and of progress in conversational ability towards the end of the chat exchange program. For example, some of the Thai speakers said that the English speakers' positive feedback about their improved conversational ability helped mitigate their negative view about their English performance. Another example, from the findings on topic initiation, showed that some of the English speakers helped lead the conversation in the early chats and gradually developed into an equal conversational partner when their Thai chat partner felt ready to introduce new topics.

The surprising finding of this study was that the age difference between the members of the pairs did not seem to affect the amount of topic initiations and friendship

building. This finding did not support Lee's (2004) study that learners of Spanish expressed their feeling of being at a loss to introduce topics to their native speaking chat partners whom they did not have a lot of mutual interests to share with. These learners of Spanish claimed that this frustration appeared to be at least in part a result of the age difference between themselves (ages 19-20) and the native speakers (ages 28-50). However, the Thai-English pairs in my study, such as Chanon and Kevin, who have a twenty-year age gap, appeared to chat together well and did not express any difficulties in finding topics to talk about. Chanon and Kevin, in fact, named several of their differences, yet they said they enjoyed learning about each other and felt that their friendship had grown towards the end of the chat exchange. Another interesting finding was that the English speakers in this study did not tend to use abbreviations in their messages, even the ones that are commonly used in synchronous chats, such as LOL (Laughing out loud) and OMG (Oh, my God!). The English speakers may have been aware that their Thai chat partners are EFL learners and may not be familiar with those abbreviations.

Implications

In this section, I present implications for future Internet chat exchange programs and for foreign language teaching based on the results of the present study.

Implications for Future Internet Chat Exchange Programs

The results of the study are most relevant for educators considering future synchronous chat exchange programs of this kind. A chat exchange of this kind can be designed as an optional activity for foreign language learners to practice their target language outside of the classroom in a more relaxed atmosphere. This chat exchange can

also be part of a pen-pal project in which synchronous chatting is one of the ways L2 learners and English speakers can stay in touch with each other. The suggestions for future chat exchange programs fall into three classes, involving the negotiation of meaning, aspects of the developing online relationships, and the Thai speakers' perceptions about the their relationship with the English speakers.

Negotiation for Meaning

There are three suggestions for future practice that arise from the findings on the analysis of triggers that caused comprehension difficulties, and the strategies used by the Thai speakers to solve comprehension problems. First, it would be helpful to ensure that future L2 participants have good dictionary skills to help them comprehend unknown lexical items and express their thoughts when needed. The teacher can also suggest some websites that offer free and high quality online dictionaries for English language learners before a chat program such as the one in this study begins.

Second, the writing of reflective notes at the end of each chat session should definitely be encouraged for learning purposes**.** It would also be worthwhile to use the chat script reading and note writing as activities for the L2 learners to improve their morphosyntactic skills, as these allow for reflection on the natural conversations. The learners can reread their chat scripts in order to learn about the unfamiliar target-language forms used by their English chat partners, correct their grammatical errors, and rewrite or reconsider their sentences that do not make sense.

Finally, With respect to the avoidance strategy, for the purpose of learning, the L2 participants should be encouraged to seek out the answers to the comprehension problems they decide not to negotiate with their English chat partners; for instance, they can

consult other available sources (e.g., teachers, classmates, and online sources) to gain an understanding of these parts of their conversations. Here again, the chat logs are an invaluable aid for the learners; and it should help learners gain confidence if they are able to follow up on issues they felt unable or unwilling to negotiate during their online conversations.

Aspects of Developing Online Relationships

Several suggestions arise from the results of this study regarding the developing online relationships in the participant pairs.

Expressions of target language expert and novice positions. The findings on the target language expert and novice exchanges suggest that, first, a future chat exchange program may want to include target-language speakers who have had an experience in learning an L2 because this group of people may be able to share their language learning experiences and learning techniques with the L2 participants. Target-language speakers who have had experience as L2 learners may also give the kind of moral support the L2 participants need to boost their self-confidence in using English or in improving their L2 as they progress.

Second, the L2 participants should be informed that during the chat exchange, they could create opportunities for language learning with help from their target-language partners. In other words, their chat partner, such as those who have never had an experience relating to L2 learning or teaching, may not always know how to help the L2 participants with their L2; in fact, they may not mind serving as a language expert to help their new chat friend, though they may need to be prompted or encouraged.

Topic initiation. The findings on numbers of topics introduced by the Thai and English speakers suggests that, first, the L2 participants might be given examples of possible topics they can start with their new chat partner. Note that they should not be obligated to follow the examples of topics, but encouraged to use them as ideas to begin with if they choose to do so. If they encounter difficulty in introducing topics of conversation, as some of the Thai speakers in this study did, they should be given encouragement that once they have become more acquainted with their chat partner, they may feel more at ease to play an equal role in the conversation, as did the Thai speakers in this study.

Second, it should be suggested to the L2 participants that they chat with their chat partners at a place where they think they can concentrate on the ongoing conversation and carry out a fairly long conversation without having to end the exchange too soon. The place should ideally be informal and comfortable, and not be a public place such as a workplace. The findings of this study suggested that longer periods of conversation and more familiarization with the English chat partners might have allowed some of the Thai speakers to develop greater confidence in taking the initiative in introducing topics of conversation.

Third, the L2 participants should be prepared for their chat partners to introduce the topics of politics and economics, which were reported to be challenging for some of the Thai speakers in this study. The L2 participants can prepare some helpful terms on these topics in accordance with the current major situations in their own and their chat partner's home country at the time they are participating in the chat exchange. Teachers may provide some little 'fact sheet' to the L2 learners, such as information about politics,

some recent news events, or sports terms if they want to talk about sports with their chat partners.

Finally, throughout the course of the chat exchange program, teachers may encourage the L2 participants who often seem to shift topics during the first part of the chat exchange to try to develop some of the topics of their conversations with their chat partners in the remaining chats. This may be a great authentic exercise for those L2 participants to practice their conversational skills in discussing particular issues in depth in the target-language conversations.

Conversational strategies and devices. Several suggestions for future chat exchanges can be made based on the results of the present study. First, this study suggests that it may be helpful to pair the L2 and L1 participants who have some commonalities with each other because these interlocutors may find it easier to relate to each other and to establish mutual rapport. Pairs that can get acquainted and build a friendly relationship with each other may also in turn participate in longer chat interactions, as they may enjoy learning more about each other through the mutual exchange of personal stories and opinions in relation to the topic of conversation. This social development may help create more language-learning opportunities for the L2 learners.

Second, it may be helpful to alert L2 participants to a variety of conversational strategies and correlated linguistic devices before they start the chat exchange. This awareness may help some of the future L2 participants to confidently respond to the conversational style of their chat partners, which again may help foster an engaging mutual exchange and relationship bond between them.

The Thai Speakers' Perceptions about Their Relationship with the English Speakers

Based on the Thai participants' expressed viewpoints about their relationship with their partners, again, several suggestions can be made. First, participants in future chat exchanges should be encouraged to use other modes of communication available via instant messaging and the Internet to stay in touch with each other in ways other than synchronous text chatting. The findings of this study suggests that the interaction beyond the required text chatting may help the pairs to learn more about each other, such as viewing each other's pictures, listening to each other's favorite music or videos, and reading about each other's local tourist attractions from a website recommended by the chat partner. Engaging in interaction beyond text chatting may also enhance the opportunities for L2 participants to practice the target language in various modes of communication, such as writing offline messages, e-mail, or asynchronic comments on each other's personal profile in a social network.

Second, future chat exchanges may try to pair participants who have the equipment for the audio function in instant messaging, and who would also like to do voice chatting together. If the participants are hesitant to use the voice tool at the beginning of the chat exchange, they may be encouraged to try to use it towards the end of the chat exchange, or whenever both members feel familiar with each other and are ready to hear each other's voice. The participants should be informed that they are not obligated to use only the voice or only the text chatting in any chat session. In other words, they may choose to interact with each other by using a combination of both tools. For instance, they can start the conversation with the greeting through the voice tool, then switch to the typing; or they can switch from voicing to texting when there is a need for

written clarification caused by a pronunciation problem. For the pairs whose members have a difficult time understanding each other, they may try to use the voice tool only in the greeting or the ending of the conversation, and use the text tool for most of the conversation. The use of the voice tool in the greeting and ending, which are normally short and routine in nature, may be easier for the members to understand than the long discourse during the actual conversation, and thus may help the members to gradually become familiar with each other's accent.

Third, the finding that the one of the Thai speakers lost contact with his English chat partner and thus caused disappointment for him suggests that the future participants should be encouraged to have more than one way to keep in touch with each other.

Finally, it will always be necessary to make the participants in future chat exchange programs aware of the potential difficulty in finding a common time to chat synchronously on the Internet, a problem that is often unavoidable for chat exchange programs. In particular, participants that have large time zone differences should be encouraged to schedule their chats in advance as the Thai speakers in this study did. It is helpful to request that the participants, even where pairs live in the same time zone, fill out a table regarding the times and days they think they would be available online, as shown in the Appendix C, so that the teacher can pair them with a compatible chat partner. Nevertheless, participants must realize that these times and days are tentative and can change over time; the future participants should always be encouraged to contact their chat partners via other modes of communication (i.e., e-mail and offline messages) to inform each other when they need to reschedule a chat, as the participants in this study did.

Implications for Foreign Language Teaching

In the larger domain of foreign language teaching generally, the present study also leads to suggestions that educators might consider as they design their instruction. The first, second and third of these are based on this study's findings on negotiations of meaning, while the fourth and fifth rely on the findings on aspects of relationship.

First, learners should be encouraged to take part in conversations in the target language, in order to have exposure to everyday phrases and expressions they may not learn from the regular classroom. Teachers can also include more lessons on everyday conversational English in the classroom using cassettes, videos or multimedia along with language exercises, such as role-plays that are designed to create a meaningful communication between students.

Second, the teaching of culture in the classroom should include concepts along with technical terms that may feature in common topics of casual conversations between L2 users and their foreign friends, for instance, terms related to political and economic situations.

Third, when teaching vocabulary items, it is worthwhile to include at least a couple of synonyms and example sentences in meaningful contexts, rather than teaching those vocabulary items by themselves or in a single context. This may encourage students to be aware of the importance of the choice of words when communicating in the target language.

Fourth, the assistance the learners seek during conversational interaction is not always focused on linguistic issues, such as lexical and grammatical items. Teachers, L1 interlocutors or other L2 users can also provide moral support for the individual learners

when necessary to help them develop greater self-confidence in their English performance and potential for improvement. In addition, foreign language learners should have opportunities to participate in natural conversations with teachers or other target language speakers as much as possible because these exchanges are language-learning opportunities.

Finally, the findings on conversational strategies and devices suggest that it may be worthwhile to supplement language-learning classes with exercises that help strengthen the learners' interactional skills in using the conversational devices that target language speakers normally use to establish and maintain rapport in real-life conversations. For example, teachers may include in their conversational lessons the devices that the Thai speakers in this study seemed to use less than their English chat partners did, such as evaluative responses, mutual revelation, and showing interest in the topic.

<div align="center">Limitations of the Study</div>

The limitations that may affect the findings of this study are as follows. First, the findings of this study were not based on an equal number of chat scripts received from each of the eleven pairs. Therefore, the findings from the pairs that did not send me all of their 12 chat scripts may not be comparable with the findings from the pairs that did send all of their 12 chat scripts for analysis. Eight of the eleven pairs sent 12 chat scripts for analysis, while three of them sent 7, 8 and 9 chat scripts, respectively, for analysis. Note that the participants were not required to send all of the 12 chat scripts, but only the ones they wanted to allow me access to. Another limitation about the amount of data was that one of the eleven pairs did not complete the required 12 chat sessions; this pair chatted

for 9 times. So again, the findings from this pair's chat scripts, and perceptions about the relationship that formed, as well as about the Internet chat exchange program, may not be comparable to those of the pairs who engaged in more chats.

Second, difficulties in coding any particular exchange arise in any study of this sort, particularly since a given conversational turn may involve more than one intention on the speaker/writer's part. For instance, while the Thai speakers were negotiating a problematic part of a conversation with their English chat partner, it was possible that they were also assuming the role of a language novice by pushing the English speaker to display their target language expertise. In other words, the two categories in Chapter 4, confirmation check and request for help, overlapped with the category involving requesting linguistic help, which was reported in Chapter 5 in the section on expressions of the novice role.

Third, the findings on conversational strategies and devices used by the Thai and English speakers presented in Chapter 5 were based on the analysis of only three basic types of strategies (Lakoff, 1973; Tannen, 2005): camaraderie (Be friendly), distance (Don't impose), and deference (Give options). In fact, there is a wide range of conversational strategies, which can be applied according to each individual's personal style and vary from situation to situation (Tannen, 2005). Thus, the findings on the conversational strategies the participants used in this study are not intended to claim that they operated their interaction on only these three basic types. In other words, the purpose of this study in analyzing the conversational strategies that appeared in the chat scripts was to suggest a general picture of the relationship that formed between the group of Thai

and English speakers participating in this study, rather than to give a detailed and exhaustive description of the set of strategies or the style employed by each individual.

The last limitation involves the reliability of the data and my own bias. It was possible that some of the participants may not have wanted to reveal their real feelings about the developing relationships with their English chat partner, for example, if they had a negative perception about the relationship that formed. Another limitation comes from my own bias as a person who believes in the potential role of computer-mediated communication for the target language practice in natural settings for foreign language learners who do not have access to the L2 in their local community outside the classroom. For these reasons, I implemented a triangulation approach for data analysis, obtaining the data from three sources, that is, the chat scripts, the interviews with both the Thai and English speakers, and the reflective notes written by the Thai speakers to analyze the findings.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

While answering the questions that guided it, the present study also raises new issues, which lead to suggestions for future research. In the paragraphs that follow, I will concentrate on suggestions aimed at further research with Thai speakers; however, of course, this and other studies might also be repeated productively with other populations.

First, future researchers might analyze the ability of Thai speakers' or other learners to manage the topics of conversations with their English chat partners over the course of a chat exchange program such as the one studied in this dissertation. This suggestion emerged while I was analyzing the Thai-English pairs' chat scripts to determine the number of topics introduced by the Thai and English speakers. Some pairs

seemed to stay on topics and develop them by discussing them in depth or in detail, whereas others seemed to elicit only brief responses from each other before shifting to a new topic. As a consequence, some Thai-English pairs introduced fewer topics, but had longer conversations, than some of the pairs who introduced more topics, but their chats did not last as long as the conversations of those who introduced fewer new topics. For example, among the eleven pairs, the Pairin-Jason pair introduced the most new topics (66 topics) as shown in Table 21 in Chapter 5, but ranked the second lowest in average chat time per session (33.1 minutes) as shown in Table 3 in Chapter 3. In contrast, the Ploy-David pair introduced only 49 topics, but their chat conversations lasted twice as long as those of Pairin-Jason pair, which was 67.1 minutes per session. The ability to introduce new topics, elaborate on the topic at hand, and shift topics appropriately is crucial in L2 conversational participation. An inquiry that examines foreign language learners' topic management in L2 natural conversations over time may point out the areas of linguistics or skill that need attention in the classroom.

Second, an additional corpus study on the types of topics chosen in casual conversations such as those in the present study would be helpful for communicative activities in foreign language classes. An additional corpus study can also be done with each conversational device the English speakers in this study used for rapport. Careful attention to the target language patterns or phrases often used to perform each device would provide L2 learners with a resource they may need for participation in real-life L2 conversations.

Third, future research could study Thai-English pairs that have kept in touch with each other after a chat exchange program to examine whether and how such extended

informal social contacts over time help improve the foreign language learners' language skills.

Finally, it would be interesting for future research to study whether synchronous text chat exchanges over time have a positive effect on L2 fluency. Some Thai speakers in this study, such as Mon, believed that the text chatting helped them improve their response time in English and thus improve their speaking skill. For example, recall Mon's excerpt from the interview from Chapter 5:

> I think my speaking skill has improved. … It [the chat exchange program] was a very valuable experience for me. I was preparing for the IELTS while participating in the chat program; chatting with him helped me improve my thinking process in speaking English. It really helped me with the speaking test; I am very satisfied with the score I got. (Mon)

In addition, Ploy had a similar opinion that the chat conversations helped improve her fluency, as shown in Passage 21 in Chapter 6. A study of this kind would expand an understanding of the connection between the synchronous text chatting and L2 fluency, and hence provide another aspect of the potential of synchronous text chatting for L2 learning.

<div align="center">Final Thoughts</div>

The most rewarding part of this research was to learn how much the Thai and English speakers appreciated the opportunities the Internet chat exchange program enabled them to connect to and make a new friend from another culture. I hope that, whatever future research brings, learners in Thailand and other countries continue to find ways to learn about each other's lives and form friendships in the decades to come.

During the course of this study I have also developed friendships with the participants. Being part of this Internet chat exchange has made me aware that personal relationship building between teacher and students may contribute to the students' learning progress. Besides the conversations with the Thai participants about the chat exchange program, I had opportunities to get to know each of them through chatting when we synchronously signed in on our instant messaging system. I had never met some of them in person, yet felt that I knew them quite well and considered them friends. They shared some of their personal stories with me, including their future plans related to English language learning, their struggling in using the target language, and their individual needs for help in language learning. These Thai participants regarded me as their friend with whom they could socialize and as someone they felt comfortable seeking suggestions from about language learning. Applied to my classroom teaching, even in large classes, I will make sure to spend at least a little time in each class or outside of the class getting to know individual students. A close relationship with students may help teachers learn more about their individual language learning goals and needs, making it possible for the teachers to provide specific instruction tailored to the needs of the students.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Letters (for English Speaking Chat Partners)

Project Title:
Online Interaction between Thai EFL Learners and English Speaking Chat Partners: An Exploration of Negotiation for Meaning and Developing Relationships

You are invited to participate in this research project. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of partnerships that are formed between Thai learners of English and native speakers. The study also explores participants' perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program and the technology they will use.

I hope that you will find this chat exchange program an enjoyable learning experience. In the world of globalization, this low-cost Internet-based communication could shorten the distance between people around the world and provide opportunities for us to learn about one another. You may take this opportunity to have cross-cultural exchanges of ideas and make a new friend from another culture. It is hoped that this exchange program will encourage an intercultural understanding which would make this world an even better place. This research will provide us with insights that should be very valuable in preparing a program of this kind for future generations of students.

This research will be conducted during late August 2008 to January 2009. Participation in this study will require you to synchronously chat with a Thai partner through an instant messaging system on a weekly basis for at least twenty minutes at the times that are convenient for you and your partner for 12 weeks. You will be encouraged to converse and share ideas with each other on topics of mutual interests, such as current news and events, celebrations and festivals, hobbies and cultures.

Your Thai partner will take responsibility in recording the chat conversations. Your partner and you will be asked to share those chat conversations with me on a voluntary basis. You will keep any exchange confidential if either your partner or you wish not to share it.

Prior to the start of the chats, you will be asked to complete a background questionnaire about your prior experience with instant messaging systems, personal interests and available times to go online. This information will be helpful in pairing you with a compatible conversational partner.

Twice during the chat exchange program, I will interview you about your perceptions about the program. These interviews will be scheduled at your convenience and will be conducted face-to-face or online (chat or e-mail). Over the course of the program I will keep in touch with you via e-mail and/or telephone.

Your identities and the identities of others as well as all the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. You will be given pseudonyms in the report. Any chat logs and recordings, or interview responses you do not want to include will be left out of the study. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

Your participation in this study is <u>voluntary</u>. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me or people concerned. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying me. Upon your request to withdraw, all the information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you participate in this program, all information will be held in strict confidence and will be retained for at least three years in compliance with federal regulation and then will be destroyed.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and return the form to me. Please keep the extra unsigned copy for your records. Your time is greatly appreciated.

Researcher:	Dissertation Chair:
Kandanai Worajittipol	Dr. Jeannine Marie Fontaine
Doctoral Candidate	
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
English Department	English Department
421 North Walk	Sutton Hall 347
Indiana, PA 15705	Indiana, PA 15705

<u>This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724-357-7730).</u>

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at anytime. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

……………………………………………….

Signature

………………………………………………….

Date

………………………………………………….

Telephone number or location where you can be reached

…………………………………………………

Best days and times to reach you

…………………………………………………

E-mail address

…………………………………………………

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study. I have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

…………………   …………………………………………..
Date   Investigator's Signature

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724-357-7730).

Informed Consent Letter (for Thai Speakers)

แบบสมัครเข้าร่วมโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat)

<u>หัวข้อการวิจัย</u>

Online Interaction between Thai EFL Learners and English Speaking Chat Partners: An Exploration of Negotiation for Meaning and Developing Relationships

    ดิฉันขอเชิญคุณที่มีความสนใจเข้าร่วมเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัย ขอความกรุณาอ่านรายละเอียดของการวิจัยข้างล่างนี้เพื่อประกอบในการตัดสินใจเข้าร่วมโครงการ หากคุณมีข้อสงสัย โปรดซักถามดิฉันได้ตลอดเวลา

    จุดประสงค์ของการวิจัยนี้คือ เพื่อศึกษาลักษณะปฏิสัมพันธ์ของนักเรียนไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษและคู่สนทนาที่พูดภาษาอังกฤษ ในระหว่างที่เข้าร่วมโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทาง chat ตลอดจนความคิดเห็นของคุณต่อโครงการดังกล่าว และต่อเทคโนโลยีที่ใช้ในการติดต่อกับคู่สนทนา

    ดิฉันหวังว่าโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนนี้จะเป็นประสบการณ์การเรียนรู้ที่เพลิดเพลินแก่คุณในโลกยุคข้อมูลข่าวสาร อินเตอร์เน็ตเป็นวิธีการสื่อสารที่ประหยัด ซึ่งทำให้เราสามารถติดต่อสื่อสารกับคนที่อยู่ห่างไกลในอีกซีกโลกได้ และทำให้เราได้เรียนรู้ซึ่งกันและกัน โครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ตนี้อาจจะเป็นโอกาสให้คุณได้แลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นกับชาวต่างชาติ สร้างมิตรภาพกับเพื่อนจากต่างวัฒนธรรมตลอดจนได้เรียนรู้คำศัพท์และสำนวนภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในชีวิตประจำวัน สุดท้ายนี้ดิฉันหวังว่าโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนนี้จะส่งเสริมความเข้าใจอันดีระหว่างประเทศ ซึ่งอาจส่งเสริมให้โลกใบนี้น่าอยู่ยิ่งๆขึ้นไป สุดท้ายนี้งานวิจัยนี้จะให้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกที่มีคุณค่าในการจัดโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนในลักษณะนี้แก่นักเรียนในรุ่นถัดไป

    ดิฉันวางแผนจะเก็บข้อมูลในการวิจัยระหว่างปลายเดือนสิงหาคม 2551 ถึงมกราคม 2552 ดิฉันจะขอความร่วมมือให้คุณคุยกับคู่สนทนาที่จัดหาให้ ทาง chat สัปดาห์ละหนึ่ง ครั้ง ๆ ละอย่างน้อย 20 นาทีเป็นเวลา 12 สัปดาห์ โดยใช้ instant messaging คุณและคู่สนทนามีอิสระในการเลือกหัวข้อที่ทั้งสองมีความสนใจร่วมกัน เช่น ข่าวสารและเหตุการณ์ปัจจุบัน เทศกาล และประเพณีในทั้งสองประเทศ งานอดิเรก และวัฒนธรรมเป็นต้น หลังจากที่แชดกับคู่สนทนา ขอให้คุณเขียนความรู้สึกของคุณต่อการสนทนานั้นๆ จำนวนหนึ่งถึงสามประโยคเป็นภาษาไทยหรืออังกฤษ ดิฉันจะขอความร่วมมือให้คุณส่งบันทึกนี้แก่ดิฉันตามความสมัครใจ

    ดิฉันจะขอให้คุณบันทึกบทสนทนาของคุณกับคู่สนทนา ดิฉันจะขอความร่วมมือให้คุณส่งบทสนทนาที่คุณบันทึกไว้ ให้ดิฉันใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ โดยที่คุณสามารถเก็บบทสนทนาที่คุณและคู่สนทนาไม่ต้องการส่งให้แก่ดิฉันไว้เป็นความลับ

    ดิฉันจะขอให้คุณตอบแบบสอบถามเกี่ยวกับข้อมูลทั่วไป ซึ่งประกอบไปด้วย ประสบการณ์ในการใช้ instant messaging system ความสนใจ และเวลาที่มักใช้อินเตอร์เน็ต ข้อมูลเหล่านี้จะช่วยให้ดิฉันจับคู่คุณกับคู่สนทนาที่เหมาะสม

ดิฉันจะสัมภาษณ์คุณสองครั้ง ในช่วงระหว่าง และหลังการเข้าร่วมโครงการ เกี่ยวกับความคิดเห็นของคุณ
ต่อประสบการณ์ในการ chat กับคู่สนทนา   ดิฉันจะนัดเวลาที่คุณสะดวกในการคุยกันด้วยตนเอง
หรือทางอินเตอร์เน็ต ได้แก่ อีเมล หรือแชต   ในระหว่างที่คุณเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย ดิฉันจะติดต่อคุณโดยทางอีเมล
chat หรือ โทรศัพท์

ดิฉันรับรองว่าจะเก็บข้อมูลส่วนตัวของคุณ   และคนที่เกี่ยวข้องเป็นความลับอย่างเคร่งครัด
ดิฉันจะใช้นามสมมุติแทนชื่อจริงของคุณและของคนที่เกี่ยวข้อง   บันทึกบทสนทนา บันทึกที่คุณเขียนหลังจาก chat
ในแต่ละครั้ง หรือบทสัมภาษณ์ ที่คุณไม่ประสงค์ให้อ้างถึง จะไม่ปรากฏในรายงานการวิจัย ดิฉันรับรองว่าคุณจะ
ไม่มีความเสี่ยงต่ออันตรายใดๆ ในการเข้าร่วมการวิจัยนี้

คุณมีสิทธิ์ที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการตามความสมัครใจ คุณสามารถตัดสินใจไม่เข้าร่วมโครงการ หรือ ถอนตัว
จากโครงการได้ทุกเวลาที่ต้องการ โดยไม่มีผลกระทบต่อสัมพันธภาพกับดิฉัน หรือบุคคลที่เกี่ยวข้อง
ถ้าคุณตัดสินใจเข้าร่วมโครงการ คุณอาจถอนตัวได้ทุกเวลาโดยแจ้งความจำนงค์แก่ดิฉัน เมื่อใดก็ตามที่คุณถอนตัว
ข้อมูลที่คุณให้แก่ดิฉันจะถูกทำลาย ถ้าคุณเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ ข้อมูลของคุณจะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับอย่างเคร่งครัด
เป็นเวลาอย่างน้อยสามปี ตามข้อกำหนดของรัฐบาลสหรัฐฯ และหลังจากนั้นจะถูกทำลาย

หากคุณตัดสินใจเข้าร่วมโครงการ โปรดลงลายมือชื่อในแบบยินยอมเข้าร่วมโครงการ ข้างล่างนี้
โปรดเก็บสำเนาไว้ และส่งเอกสารที่คุณลงนามคืนแก่ดิฉัน ขอบคุณมากที่คุณสละเวลาอันมีค่าในการ
พิจารณาเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้

ผู้วิจัย	ประธานกรรมการวิทยานิพนธ์
Kandanai Worajittipol (กันต์ดนัย วรจิตติพล)	Dr. Jeannine Marie Fontaine
Doctoral Candidate	
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
English Department	English Department
421 North Walk	Sutton Hall 347
Indiana, PA 15705	Indiana, PA 15705

โครงการวิจัยนี้ได้รับการเห็นชอบจากคณะกรรมการคุ้มครองสิทธิของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง ของมหาวิทยาลัย Indiana
University of Pennsylvania (โทรศัพท์: 724-357-7730)

แบบยินยอมเข้าร่วมโครงการ (VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM)

ข้าพเจ้าได้อ่านและเข้าใจข้อมูลข้างต้น และมีความสมัครใจเข้าร่วมเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัยนี้ ข้าพเจ้า
ทราบว่า ข้อมูลที่ข้าพเจ้าให้แก่ผู้วิจัยจะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับอย่างเคร่งครัด และข้าพเจ้ามีสิทธิ์ที่จะถอนตัวจาก
โครงการได้ตลอดเวลา ข้าพเจ้าได้รับสำเนาฉบับที่ไม่มีลายมือชื่อของข้าพเจ้าไว้ในครอบครอง
ชื่อ (โปรดเขียนตัวบรรจง)

....

ลงนาม

....

วันที่

....

หมายเลขโทรศัพท์ หรือที่อยู่ที่สามารถติดต่อได้

....

....

วัน และเวลาที่คุณสะดวกให้ติดต่อ

....

อีเมล

....

ดิฉันรับรองว่า ได้อธิบายแก่บุคคลข้างต้นนี้ ถึงธรรมชาติและจุดประสงค์ของการวิจัย ประโยชน์ที่อาจได้รับ
และภัยที่อาจเกิดจากการเข้าร่วมการวิจัยนี้ ดิฉันได้ตอบข้อสงสัยที่ถูกถาม และได้เป็นพยานแก่ลายมือชื่อ
ข้างบนนี้

....

วันที่   ลงนามผู้วิจัย

<u>โครงการวิจัยนี้ได้รับการเห็นชอบจากคณะกรรมการคุ้มครองสิทธิของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง ของมหาวิทยาลัย Indiana
University of Pennsylvania (โทรศัพท์: 724-357-7730)</u>

English Translation of the Informed Consent Letter for the Thai Speakers

Project Title:

Online Interaction between Thai EFL Learners and English Speaking Chat Partners: An Exploration of Negotiation for Meaning and Developing Relationships

You are invited to participate in this research project. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of partnerships that are formed between Thai learners of English and native speakers. The study also explores participants' perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program and the technology they will use.

I hope that you will find this chat exchange program an enjoyable learning experience. In the world of globalization, this low-cost Internet-based communication could shorten the distance between people around the world and provide opportunities for us to learn about one another. You may take this opportunity to have cross-cultural exchanges of ideas, make a new friend from another culture and learn English slang and idioms through direct correspondence with an English-speaking peer. It is hoped that this exchange program will encourage an intercultural understanding, which would make this world an even better place. This research will provide us with insights that should be very valuable in preparing a program of this kind for future generations of students.

This research will be conducted during late August 2008 to January 2009. Participation in this study will require you to synchronously chat with an English speaking chat partner through an instant messaging system on a weekly basis for at least twenty minutes at the times that are convenient for you and your partner for 12 weeks. You will be encouraged to converse and share ideas with each other on topics of mutual interests, such as current news and events, celebrations and festivals, hobbies and cultures. After each chat, you are encouraged to write a brief reflective note about one to three sentences in either Thai or English regarding your feelings about that chat session; you will be asked to share the notes with me on a voluntary basis.

I will ask you to record your conversations with your partner. Your partner and you will be asked to share those chat conversations with me on a voluntary basis. You will keep any exchange confidential if either your partner or you wish not to share it.

Prior to the start of the chat exchanges, you will be asked to complete a background questionnaire about your prior experience with instant messaging systems, personal interests and available times to go online. This information will be helpful in paring you with a compatible conversational partner.

Twice during the exchange program, I will interview you about your perceptions about the chat exchange program. These interviews will be scheduled at your convenience and will be conducted face-to-face or online (chat or e-mail). Over the course of the program I will keep in touch with you via e-mail and/or telephone.

Your identities and the identities of others as well as all the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. You will be given pseudonyms in the report. Any chat logs and recordings, reflective notes or interview responses you do not want to include will be left out of the study. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

Your participation in this study is <u>voluntary</u>. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me or people concerned. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying me. Upon your request to withdraw, all the information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you participate in this program, all information will be held in strict confidence and will be retained for at least three years in compliance with federal regulation and then will be destroyed.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and return the form to me. Please keep the extra unsigned copy for your records. Your time is greatly appreciated.

Researcher:	Dissertation Chair:
Kandanai Worajittipol	Dr. Jeannine Marie Fontaine
Doctoral Candidate	
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
English Department	English Department
421 North Walk	Sutton Hall 347
Indiana, PA 15705	Indiana, PA 15705

<u>This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724-357-7730).</u>

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at anytime. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

……………………………………………………….

Signature

…………………………………………………….

Date

…………………………………………………….

Telephone number or location where you can be reached

………………………………………………………

Best days and times to reach you

………………………………………………………

E-mail address

………………………………………………………

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study. I have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

…………………   …………………………………………..
Date   Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX B

The Internet Chat Exchange Program Packet

Dear participants,

Thank you for your decision to participate in this research project. I hope you enjoy these online exchanges with your chat partner. The following instructions are to guide you through the program.

Purpose:

This research study aims to gain insights into the nature of partnerships that are formed between Thai learners of English and target language speaking conversational partners. The study also aims to explore the participants' perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program. For you as a participant, you may take this opportunity as a way to exchange ideas and make a new friend from another culture.

The Survey Questionnaire:

At the beginning of the program, you will be asked to complete a background questionnaire about your experience in using instant messaging systems, personal interests, and times you are available to synchronously chat with your partner. This information will be useful in pairing you with a compatible chat partner and preparing any necessary introductory session.

Setting up an Instant Messaging Account:

The following is an example of how you can set up an account with Skype. To set up a Skype account, please go online to the website www.skype.com, select the *download* option, and follow the instructions provided to download the Skype program. After downloading the software, you will be guided to set up a new account by filling in your information and choosing your user name and password.

When you sign in to your account, you can add your partner into your contact lists by opening *Tools* from the task bar and selecting *Add a contact* option. Then you can type your partner's skype name, full name, or e-mail address. After your partner is added to your lists, you will be ready to chat with her/him by pointing a mouse at her/his name and selecting *Call* or *Send message* options. You will need to have a head set and a microphone in hand since you will be guided to test if your equipment is working properly before making a real call.

Like other instant messaging systems, you can also personalize your Skype, exchange files and photos, have a video chat, and record your conversations. You are recommended to protect yourself from unwanted calls and chats. From the main page, open *Tools*, select *Options*, select *Privacy setting*, and check on *Only allow people in my Contact List to contact me* category.

Recording Text and Voice Conversations:

I will ask the Thai speakers to take responsibility for recording the chat conversations. This information is the main source of data that will help me gain understandings of interaction between the English language learner and target language speaker.

Most free instant messaging systems archive your chats for you and store them locally on your computer, if you have enabled this option. To enable this option, for example in Skype, go to *Tools*, *Options*, and *Privacy Setting*. In *Keep chat history for* category, select one of the options for how long you want to keep the chat history.

To record a voice conversation, please download a free-of-charge program from Skype. Go to *Tools*, *Do More*, and select *Record Skype Calls*. Click download "Pamela Call Recorder." Like text conversations, your voice conversations are stored locally on your computer in a form of MP3 files.

The records that you and your partner agree to send to me will be used for study purposes <u>only</u>. Pseudonyms will be used in the final report.

The Chat Exchanges:

You are required to chat with your partner once a week for at least 20 minutes per session over a course of 12 weeks. I will send you your chat partner's contact information and help you schedule the first chat session with her/him. Both of you are free to talk about topics of mutual interests and to share ideas with each other. The topics that you may talk about are, for example, family, friends, news, celebrations, music and movies.

Reflective Notes

I strongly encourage you to write down one to three sentences about your feelings that come to your mind right after each chat session with your partner. You may also write about how you feel about the tone of an exchange. To give you an idea; the examples I can think of are:

- "It seems to me that she/he was really interested in the part that we talked about …"
- "Maybe she was upset with me, but I don't know what I might have said to upset her."
- "I was not quite sure what she meant when she was talking about ………. I might have to ask her to clarify it next time."
- "I am not sure whether she/he really understand when I talked about … ."
- "I will ……… next time I talk with him."
- "I learn from talking with her/him that in her/his culture …"
- "I feel …… after talking with her/him because ……"

I will ask you to share these reflections with me on a voluntary basis. For any reflective note that you do share with me, please put the date on each note so I can compare it with anything that you also share with me from that particular chat session. The Thai speakers can choose to write from the language (Thai or English) they feel comfortable with.

Interviews

During and after the Internet chat exchange program, I will schedule interviews with you at your convenience. I want these two interviews to be casual conversations where you feel free to share with me your experiences participating in the program. I will be looking forward to talking with you about them. The interviews can be done face-to-face or online (chat or e-mail). Any interview responses that you do not wish to include will be left out of the study.

Collection of Data

I will ask your cooperation in sending me copies (or parts of copies) of your text-chat logs and voice-chat recordings that you and your partner mutually agree to allow me access, along with your notes that you want to share with me. I will be in Thailand during most of the program; therefore, I will collect the chat logs and recordings from the Thai speakers, on a weekly basis. Please send your notes to me via e-mail.

I hope the instructions above are helpful in guiding you through the program. If you have any questions, please contact me at anytime via e-mail or by leaving a message to me in Skype or MSN. I will be very happy to hear from you and I will respond to you immediately. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you very much.

Kandanai Worajittipol

Thai Translation of the Internet Chat Exchange Program Packet

คู่มือโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat)

สวัสดีผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat)

ดิฉันขอขอบคุณที่คุณตัดสินใจเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยนี้ ดิฉันหวังว่าคุณจะได้รับความเพลิดเพลินจากการ
คุยกับคู่สนทนาทางอินเตอร์เน็ต ข้อมูลข้างล่างนี้คือรายละเอียดของโครงการ

จุดประสงค์

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาลักษณะปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างนักเรียนไทยและคู่สนทนาที่พูดภาษา
อังกฤษ   และศึกษาความคิดเห็นของกลุ่มตัวอย่างต่อโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat)
การเข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ อาจเป็นโอกาสให้คุณได้แลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นกับชาวต่างชาติ และสร้างมิตรภาพกับ
เพื่อนต่างวัฒนธรรม

แบบสอบถาม

ดิฉันจะขอให้คุณตอบแบบสอบถามเกี่ยวกับข้อมูลส่วนตัว ในตอนต้นของโครงการ คำถามในแบบสอบถาม
ประกอบด้วย ประสบการณ์ของคุณในการใช้ instant messaging system ความสนใจ และเวลาที่คุณคาดว่า
จะสะดวกในการ chat กับคู่สนทนาทางอินเตอร์เน็ต   ข้อมูลที่ได้จากแบบสอบถามนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ในการ
จัดคู่สนทนาที่เหมาะสมให้แก่คุณ   และในการเตรียมความพร้อมของคุณก่อนเริ่มการ chat กับคู่สนทนา

การสมัครเป็นสมาชิก instant messaging

ในที่นี้จะยกตัวอย่างการสมัคร account ของ Skype ดังนี้   เข้าไปที่ www.skype.com
คลิกดาวโหลดและทำตามขั้นตอนที่ถูกแนะนำ หลังจากที่ดาวโหลดโปรแกรมแล้ว คุณจะถูกแนะนำให้สมัครสมาชิก
โดยการกรอกข้อมูลของคุณ และเลือก user name และ password

เมื่อคุณ sign in ใน Skype คุณสามารถเพิ่มชื่อคู่สนทนาของคุณ ใน contact lists โดยเลือก ‘Tools’ จาก
task bar และเลือก ‘Add a contact’ จากนั้นจึงพิมพ์ชื่อ Skype ของคู่สนทนา หรือชื่อจริง หรืออีเมล   เมื่อคุณ
ต้องการ chat กับคู่สนทนา ให้ชี้เม้าส์ ที่ชื่อของเขา และเลือก ‘call’ หรือ ‘send message’ จากนั้นโปรแกรม Skype
จะแนะนำวิธีให้คุณทดสอบไมโครโฟนและหูฟังของคุณ ก่อนที่จะโทรหาคู่สนทนา

เช่นเดียวกับ instant messaging system อื่นๆ ใน Skype คุณสามารถเลือกการนำเสนอตัวคุณ
(personalize) แลกเปลี่ยนภาพถ่ายและไฟล์ ใช้วีดีโอในการ chat และบันทึกบทสนทนา   ดิฉันแนะนำ
ให้คุณตั้ง account ของคุณให้ป้องกันการติดต่อจากคนจากผู้ใช้ chat คนอื่นที่คุณไม่รู้จัก โดยโทรศัพท์ หรือ
ข้อความ   วิธีการตั้งคือ จากหน้าจอหลัก เลือก ‘Tools’ เลือก ‘Options’ เลือก ‘Privacy setting’ และเลือก
‘Only allow people in my Contact List to contact me’

การบันทึกบทสนทนาที่เป็น text และ voice

ดิฉันจะขอความร่วมมือให้คุณบันทึกบทสนทนาระหว่างคุณกับคู่สนทนา บันทึกบทสนทนานี้
เป็นข้อมูลหลักที่จะช่วยให้ดิฉันเข้าใจปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษและคู่สนทนา

บทสนทนาที่คุณต้องการบันทึกจะถูกเก็บไว้ในเครื่องคอมพิวเตอร์ของคุณ   การบันทึกบทสนทนาที่เป็น text ทำได้โดยจาก 'Tools' เลือก 'Options' เลือก 'Privacy Setting' เลือก 'Keep chat history for' และเลือกระยะเวลาที่คุณต้องการเก็บบันทึกบทสนทนา

คุณสามารถบันทึกบทสนทนาที่เป็น voice โดยการดาวโหลดโปรแกรมที่ใช้บันทึกเสียงใน Skype ได้ฟรี โดยไปที่ 'Tools' เลือก 'Do More' เลือก 'Record Skype Calls' และเลือกดาวโหลด 'Pamela Call Recorder' บทสนทนาที่เป็นเสียงของคุณจะถูกเก็บบันทึกไว้ในคอมพิวเตอร์ของคุณในไฟล์ MP3

บันทึกบทสนทนาที่คุณและคู่สนทนาเห็นชอบส่งให้ดิฉัน จะถูกใช้เพื่อประโยชน์ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเท่านั้น   ดิฉันจะใช้นามสมมุติแทนทุกคนที่เกี่ยวข้อง

<u>การ chat กับคู่สนทนา</u>

ดิฉันจะขอให้คุณคุยกับคู่สนทนา สัปดาห์ละหนึ่งครั้ง ๆ ละประมาณ 20 นาที เป็นเวลา 12 สัปดาห์ นับจากสัปดาห์ที่คุณเริ่มต้น   ดิฉันจะส่งที่อยู่ซึ่งคุณสามารถติดต่อกับคู่สนทนา (อีเมล และชื่อที่เขาใช้ใน instant messaging) และดิฉันจะช่วยคุณนัดเวลาในการ chat ครั้งแรกกับคู่สนทนา   คุณและคู่สนทนามีอิสระที่จะเลือกคุยแลกเปลี่ยนในหัวข้อใดๆ ที่มีความสนใจร่วมกัน หัวข้อที่คุณอาจคุยกัน เช่น ครอบครัว เพื่อน ข่าวสารบ้านเมือง เทศกาล ดนตรี ภาพยนตร์ เป็นต้น

<u>การจดบันทึกหลังจาก chat กับคู่สนทนา</u>

ดิฉันขอความร่วมมือให้คุณเขียนบันทึกสั้น ๆ ประมาณ 1-3 ประโยค เกี่ยวกับความรู้สึกของคุณที่เกิดขึ้นหลังจากที่ได้คุยกับคู่สนทนาในแต่ละครั้ง   คุณอาจเขียนความรู้สึกเกี่ยวกับท่วงทำนอง (tone) ของการสนทนา คุณสามารถเลือก จดบันทึกเป็นภาษาไทย หรืออังกฤษก็ได้ ตัวอย่างบันทึกที่ดิฉันนึกได้ เช่น

"ฉันรู้สึกว่าเขาสนใจมากๆ ตอนที่เราคุยเกี่ยวกับ ...."

"ฉันรู้สึกว่าเขาอาจจะไม่พอใจฉันอยู่ แต่ฉันไม่รู้ว่าฉันเผลอพูดอะไรไปที่ทำให้เขาไม่พอใจ"

"ฉันไม่แน่ใจว่าเขาหมายความว่าอะไร ตอนที่เขาพูดว่า .... เวลาที่คุยกันคราวหน้า ฉันคงต้องขอให้เขาอธิบายตรงนี้ให้เข้าใจ"

"ฉันไม่แน่ใจว่าเขาเข้าใจ ตรงที่ฉันพูดเกี่ยวกับ .... หรือไม่"

"ฉันจะ .... เวลาที่คุยกันคราวหน้า"

"ฉันได้เรียนรู้จากการคุยกับเขาครั้งนี้ว่า ในวัฒนธรรมของเขานั้น ...."

ฉันรู้สึก .... หลังจากที่คุยกับเขา เพราะว่า ...."

ดิฉันจะขอให้คุณส่งบันทึกเหล่านี้แก่ดิฉันตามความสมัครใจ สำหรับบันทึกที่คุณมีความประสงค์จะส่งให้แก่ดิฉันเพื่อประโยชน์ในการวิเคราะห์ กรุณาเขียนวันที่ในบันทึกเพื่อที่ดิฉันจะได้นำบันทึกของคุณไปเปรียบเทียบกับบทสนทนานั้นๆ หรือบทสัมภาษณ์ของคุณ ซึ่งคุณอ้างถึงบทสนทนาในวันนั้นๆ คุณสามารถเลือกเขียนบันทึกเป็นภาษาไทย หรืออังกฤษ ก็ได้

<u>การสัมภาษณ์</u>

ดิฉันจะขอสัมภาษณ์คุณสองครั้ง ในช่วงระหว่าง และหลังการสิ้นสุดโครงการ ดิฉันจะนัดพบคุณด้วยตนเอง หรือทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat หรือ อีเมล) เพื่อคุยกันในวันเวลาที่คุณสะดวก   การสัมภาษณ์นี้เป็นแบบ

เป็นกันเอง ดิฉันหวังว่าคุณจะรู้สึกสบายใจและอิสระที่จะเล่าสู่ประสบการณ์ที่ได้จากการร่วมโครงการ แก่ดิฉัน ดิฉันจะตั้งตารอที่จะได้คุยกับคุณ ดิฉันรับรองว่าจะไม่เผยแพร่คำตอบใดๆ ของคุณ ที่คุณไม่ต้องการให้เปิดเผยในรายงานการวิจัย

<u>การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล</u>

    เนื่องด้วยดิฉันจะกลับไปพักอยู่ที่ประเทศไทยเกือบตลอดช่วงเวลาที่คุณ chat กับคู่สนทนา ดิฉันจึงจะขอความร่วมมือให้คุณเป็นคนส่งบันทึกบทสนทนา หรือส่วนของบันทึก ที่เป็นข้อความ (text-chat logs) และเสียง (voice-chat recordings) ที่คุณและคู่สนทนาเห็นชอบ แก่ดิฉันทุกสัปดาห์ทางอีเมล

    สุดท้ายนี้ดิฉันหวังว่าคู่มือนี้ช่วยแนะนำแนวปฏิบัติในการร่วมโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat) ดิฉันยินดีจะตอบข้อสงสัยทุกประการ กรุณาติดต่อดิฉันที่อีเมล หรือฝากข้อความที่ instant messaging system ดิฉันจะตอบกลับคุณทันทีที่ได้รับข้อความ   ขอขอบคุณอีกครั้งที่คุณสละเวลาอันมีค่า มาร่วมโครงการนี้

             กันต์ดนัย วรจิตติพล

Background Questionnaire (for Thai and English Speakers)

Dear Participants,

The main aim of this survey is for me to gain knowledge of your previous experience in using online chat and your personal interests so I can do my best to pair you with a compatible conversational partner. Please complete the following questions and feel free to give me as much information as you wish.

1. Have you ever synchronously chatted with your friends? If yes, how often do you chat with them (e.g., every other day, twice a week, once a week, etc.)?

   ……………………………………………………………………………………..

2. What kind(s) of synchronous computer-mediated communication tools are you familiar with? Please put a check(s) below.

   ____ Text chat
   ____ Voice chat
   ____ Video chat
   ____ Other(s) …………………………………………………………………...

3. Have you ever participated in synchronous chats with people from other countries? If yes, how often do you chat with them?

   ……………………………………………………………………………………..

4. What chat rooms or instant messaging systems do you use? Please provide the names, e.g., Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, Skype, etc.

   …………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Please tell me five of your personal interests or favorite hobbies.

   1. …………………………………………………………………………………
   2. …………………………………………………………………………………
   3. …………………………………………………………………………………
   4. …………………………………………………………………………………
   5. …………………………………………………………………………………

6. Please list five topics you can think of now that you would like to talk or share with your expectant partner.

    1. ………………………………………………………………………………
    2. ………………………………………………………………………………
    3. ………………………………………………………………………………
    4. ………………………………………………………………………………
    5. ………………………………………………………………………………

7. Please put the checks on the times you think you would be available to synchronously chat with your expectant partner.

    _____ Friday evening
    _____ Saturday morning
    _____ Saturday evening
    _____ Sunday morning
    _____ Sunday evening
    _____ Others……………………………………………………………………….

    Note that the local time zone in Thailand is twelve hours ahead of that of the United States. Please feel free to provide as many available periods of time as you think you could. This information would help me match you with someone whose schedules are compatible with yours.

    Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Thank you very much for your time.

Thai Translation of the Background Questionnaire

<div align="center">แบบสอบถาม</div>

สวัสดีผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการ

      จุดประสงค์หลักของแบบสอบถามนี้คือ เพื่อทราบถึงประสบการณ์ในการใช้อินเตอร์เน็ตในการ chat และความสนใจของคุณ กรุณาให้ข้อมูลของคุณให้มากที่สุดเท่าที่จะทำได้ ข้อมูลของคุณจะช่วยให้ดิฉันสามารถจับคู่คุณกับคู่สนทนาที่เหมาะสมได้

1. คุณเคย chat กับเพื่อนของคุณ ทางอินเตอร์เน็ตบ้างหรือไม่ ถ้าใช่ คุณ chat กับเขาบ่อยเพียงใด (เช่น วันเว้นวัน สัปดาห์ละสองครั้ง สัปดาห์ละครั้ง เป็นต้น)

……

2. คุณมีความคุ้นเคยกับเครื่องมือสื่อสารทาง chat แบบใดบ้าง เลือกใส่เครื่องหมายถูกได้มากกว่าหนึ่งข้อ

        …….. Text chat

        …….. Voice chat

        …….. Video chat

        ……. Other(s)……………………………………………………………………………………..

3 คุณเคย chat กับชาวต่างชาติหรือไม่ ถ้าใช่ คุณ chat กับเขาบ่อยแค่ไหน

……

4. คุณใช้ห้อง chat (chat rooms) หรือ instant messaging systems ใดบ้าง โปรดระบุชื่อ เช่น

    Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo Messenger และ Skype

……

5. กรุณาระบุความสนใจ หรืองานอดิเรกของคุณมาห้าอย่าง

      1………

      2………

      3………

      4………

      5………

6. กรุณานึกถึงหัวข้อห้าประการที่คุณพอนึกได้ตอนนี้ ที่คุณปรารถนาจะคุยแลกเปลี่ยนกับคู่สนทนา

      1………

      2………

      3………

      4………

      5………

7. กรุณาใส่เครื่องหมายถูกหน้าช่วงเวลาที่คุณคาดว่าจะสะดวกในการ chat กับคู่สนทนา กรุณาตอบมากกว่า
หนึ่งคำตอบ

         .... วันศุกร์ค่ำ

         .... วันเสาร์เช้า

         .... วันเสาร์ค่ำ

         .... วันอาทิตย์เช้า

         .... วันอาทิตย์ค่ำ

         .... อื่นๆ โปรดระบุ ....

         เนื่องด้วยเวลาท้องถิ่นในประเทศไทยเร็วกว่าเวลาท้องถิ่นของสหรัฐอเมริกาสิบสองชั่วโมง
กรุณาระบุช่วงเวลาหลายๆช่วงที่คุณคิดว่าอาจจะสะดวกในการ chat เพื่อช่วยให้ดิฉัน สามรถจับคู่คุณกับ
คู่สนทนาที่มีช่วงเวลาว่างตรงกันได้

         ขอบคุณที่คุณสละเวลาอันมีค่าในการตอบแบบสอบถามนี้

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions (for Thai and English Speakers)

Questions related to negotiations for meaning and developing relationships:
1. Do you think your chat partner understands you well?
2. Please tell me about the chat session that you felt you and your chat partner had trouble understanding each other? Why do you think it happened?
3. How well do you think you know your chat partner?
4. What do you think she/he is interested in?
5. What do you think you and your chat partner have in common?
6. In what ways do you think you and your chat partner are different?
7. Imagine that you and your partner are characters in a play, movie, or television show, what roles do you think you and she/he are playing?

Questions related to the participants' interaction beyond the boundaries of the synchronous text chatting:
1. Did you and your partner use other features available in the instant messaging while chatting besides the synchronous text chatting (e.g. sending pictures or files, or using the voice tool)?
2. Did you make contact with your partner through other modes of communication outside of the standard program, for example, via e-mail or asynchronous text messaging? Please give examples.
3. Did you chat with your chat partner beyond a required weekly chat session? Please give examples.
4. Did you find any difficulties in using the communication tools in the instant messaging system?

Questions related to future plans:
1. Do you feel that you will keep in touch with your partner after the chat exchange program ends?
2. Do you think this program has affected your future? If so, in what ways?

Questions related to perceptions about the Internet chat exchange program:
1. How would you describe your experience chatting with your partner?
2. Please share with me the most valuable, interesting, or enjoyable part of this Internet chat exchange.
3. Please tell me about your favorite chat session.
4. Do you feel you have been through any kinds of changes from participating in this Internet chat exchange? If any, what are they?
5. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to share with me?

Thai Translation of the Interview Questions

คำถามที่ใช้ในการสัมภาษณ์

คำถามเกี่ยวกับการต่อรองทางความหมาย และการพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์กับคู่สนทนา:

1. คุณคิดว่าเขาเข้าใจเวลาที่คุณคุยกับเขามากน้อยแค่ไหน

2. กรุณาเล่าถึงบทสนทนาที่คุณรู้สึกว่าคุณและคู่สนทนาประสบปัญหาในการสื่อความหมาย   คุณคิดว่าปัญหานั้น
มาจากสาเหตุใด

3. คุณคิดว่าคุณรู้จักคู่สนทนาของคุณดีแค่ไหน

4. คุณคิดว่าคู่สนทนาของคุณมีความสนใจในด้านใดบ้าง

5. คุณคิดว่าคุณและคู่สนทนามีลักษณะนิสัย หรือความสนใจ อะไรบ้างที่คล้ายๆ กัน

6. คุณคิดว่าคุณและคู่สนทนามีอะไรบ้างที่ไม่เหมือนกัน

7. สมมติว่าคุณและคู่สนทนาเล่นบทเป็นตัวละครในละครเวที ภาพยนต์ หรือรายการทางโทรทัศน์
คุณคิดว่าตัวละครสองตัวนั้น   คือตัวละครใด

คำถามเกี่ยวกับการที่คุณติดต่อกับคู่สนทนา ที่นอกเหนือจากการ chat โดยใช้การพิมพ์ข้อความ (text):

1. ในขณะที่คุณ chat กับคู่สนทนานั้น พวกคุณได้ใช้เครื่องมือสื่อสารอื่นๆ ใน instant messaging นอกเหนือจาก
การพิมพ์ (text) หรือไม่   ตัวอย่างเช่น ส่งรูปภาพ หรือ ไฟล์ หรือคุยกันโดยใช้หูฟังและไมรโครโฟน (voice)

2. คุณและคู่สนทนาได้ติดต่อกันนอกเหนือจากที่โครงการกำหนด โดยใช้รูปแบบการสื่อสารอื่นทางอินเตอร์เน็ตหรือไม่
เช่น ส่งอีเมล ทิ้งข้อความ (asynchronous text messaging) กรุณายกตัวอย่าง

3. คุณและเขาได้ติดต่อกันนอกเหนือจากการ chat สัปดาห์ละหนึ่งครั้งหรือไม่ กรุณายกตัวอย่าง

4. คุณปัญหาบ้างหรือไม่ในการใช้เครื่องมือสื่อสารต่างๆ ใน instant messaging

คำถามเกี่ยวกับแผนการในอนาคต:

1. คุณคิดว่าจะยังติดต่อกับคู่สนทนาหลังจากสิ้นสุดโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat) นี้หรือไม่

2. คุณคิดว่าการเข้าร่วมโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนนี้มีผลต่อการวางแผนอนาคตของคุณหรือไม่ ถ้ามี โปรดอธิบาย

คำถามเกี่ยวกับทัศนคติต่อโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนทางอินเตอร์เน็ต (chat):

1. กรุณาเล่าถึงประสบการณ์ของคุณที่ได้จากการ chat กับคู่สนทนา

2. กรุณาเล่าถึงส่วนที่คุณคิดว่ามีคุณค่า ที่น่าสนใจ หรือที่เพลิดเพลินใจ ในการร่วมโครงการนี้

3. กรุณาเล่าถึงบทสนทนาที่คุณประทับใจ

4. คุณรู้สึกว่าการได้เข้าร่วมโครงการนี้ ทำให้เกิดการเปลี่ยนแปลงใดๆ ขึ้นแก่ตัวคุณบ้างหรือไม่ ถ้ามี โปรดอธิบาย

5. คุณคิดว่ามีประเด็นใดๆ อีกบ้าง ที่ดิฉันไม่ได้ถามคุณ   แต่คุณต้องการจะแลกเปลี่ยนประสบการณ์ที่ได้รับ
หรือความคิดเห็นเกี่ยวกับโครงการนี้ กับดิฉัน   ถ้ามี โปรดอธิบาย