

**The Use of Kinship Terms in Service Encounter:
A Case Study of Northern Thai Dialect**



Sakorn Ruanklai

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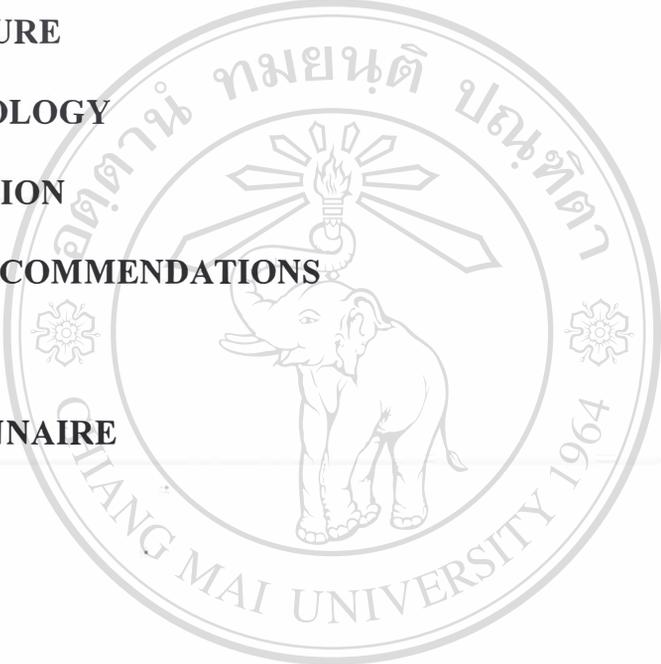
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The Use of Kinship Terms in Service Encounter: A Case Study of Northern Thai Dialect

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Abstract

This study provides a survey of Northern Thai native speakers' use of kinship terms as markers of social relationships with non-kin in everyday service encounters. Data were obtained from questionnaire responses and informal interviews among 150 respondents of three socioeconomically stratified occupations, namely, traditional open market traders, convenience store and supermarket personnel, and professional employees. Analysis and discussion of this study point to three key findings. First, Northern Thai service providers used 8 out of 13 kinship terms from both sides of the Northern Thai bilateral kinship system. The second finding indicates the correlation between different groups of occupation and the differing frequency of the use of kinship terms. The final point reveals that power, solidarity, and respect play the key factors in the use of kinship terms. These findings demonstrate that the way in which people address each other is closely linked with social and cultural values.

Keywords: Forms of address, Kinship terms, Northern Thai, Social relationships

1. Introduction

Language is essentially a means of communication among the members of a society. It serves not only to help individuals convey thoughts and feelings but also to define their social relationship to each other. According to Fasold (1990, pp. 1-2), in no area of sociolinguistics, the study of language and society, can the social function of language be more clearly understood than the forms of address, which he defines as "the words speakers use to designate the person they are talking to while talking to them." The selection of forms of address, as Fasold asserts, is all about establishing and maintaining social relationships in a particular social setting to show different kinds of feeling and attitude such as superiority, respect, friendliness, intimacy, and familiarity towards their listeners. For this reason, forms of address have been of great interest to sociolinguists and anthropologists.

Previous research carried out by linguists supports the idea that address behavior is generally determined by a multiple contextual factors. The classic and most influential study of the differences in second-pronoun usage in French, German, Italian, and Spanish is by Brown and Gilman (1960), who proposed that the use of forms of address is primarily determined by the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, and that this relationship can be explained in terms of two semantics, *power* and *solidarity*. Their study of the pronouns of address drew on a variety of methods, such as monographs, doctoral dissertations, plays and legal proceedings, conversations with native speakers, and a survey questionnaire.

The term T and V, based on Latin pronouns *tu* and *vos*, were used in Brown and Gilman study. In Latin, *tu* was originally the singular, and *vos* the plural, used as a form of address directed to the emperor in the fourth century. According to the authors, the choice of *vos* as a plural form of address may have been in response to the fact that there were actually two emperors at the time, one in Rome and one in Constantinople. An emperor can also be plural in a sense that he is the summation of his people and can speak as their representative. Since there are many bases of power including physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized roles in the church, the state, the army or within the family, the Latin plural was eventually extended from the emperor to other power figures, with the use of V in the singular developing as a form of address to a person of superior power. In this regard, the pronoun usage expressing this power relation is non-reciprocal, with the greater receiving V and the lesser T (Brown and Gilman 1960, 252-255).

It was not until the twentieth century did solidarity semantic emerge as a means of differentiating address between power equals. The shift from power to solidarity occurred because there are many personal attributes other than power that mark differences between people. This new set of relations can be reciprocal, for example, in terms of the background of the speaker. If two people are equally powerful but share no family background or amount of wealth, they would exchange V. If, on the other hand, they are solidary in terms of family background, they would exchange mutual T. The solidarity semantic is, thus, characterized by the reciprocal use of terms in

relationships among equals, which vary according to the degree of closeness and intimacy (Brown and Gilman 1960, 257-257).

Brown and Gilman further argued that there is a connection between semantics, social structure and ideology of particular societies. They maintain that while the non-reciprocal power semantic is associated with a relatively static society in which power is distributed not only by birthright but also by the Church's teaching that each man should accept his properly appointed place and not try to change it, the reciprocal solidarity semantic has grown with social mobility and an equalitarian ideology. In France, for example, the nonreciprocal power semantic was dominant until the Revolution when the Committee for the Public Safety condemned the use of V as a feudal remnant and ordered a universal reciprocal T. While the nonreciprocal address is considered proper to express a caste difference between the African and the European (the European says T and requires V from the African), young respondents in this study felt it was bad taste for them as customers to say T to a waiter (Brown and Gilman 1960, 261-271).

According to the authors, differences of power cause V to emerge in one direction of address while differences not concerned with power cause V to emerge in both direction. The corresponding norms of address are reciprocal with V becoming more probable as solidarity declines. A summary of the usage of T/V pronouns in a two-dimensional semantic model as proposed by Brown and Gilman (1960) is shown in Figure 1.1.

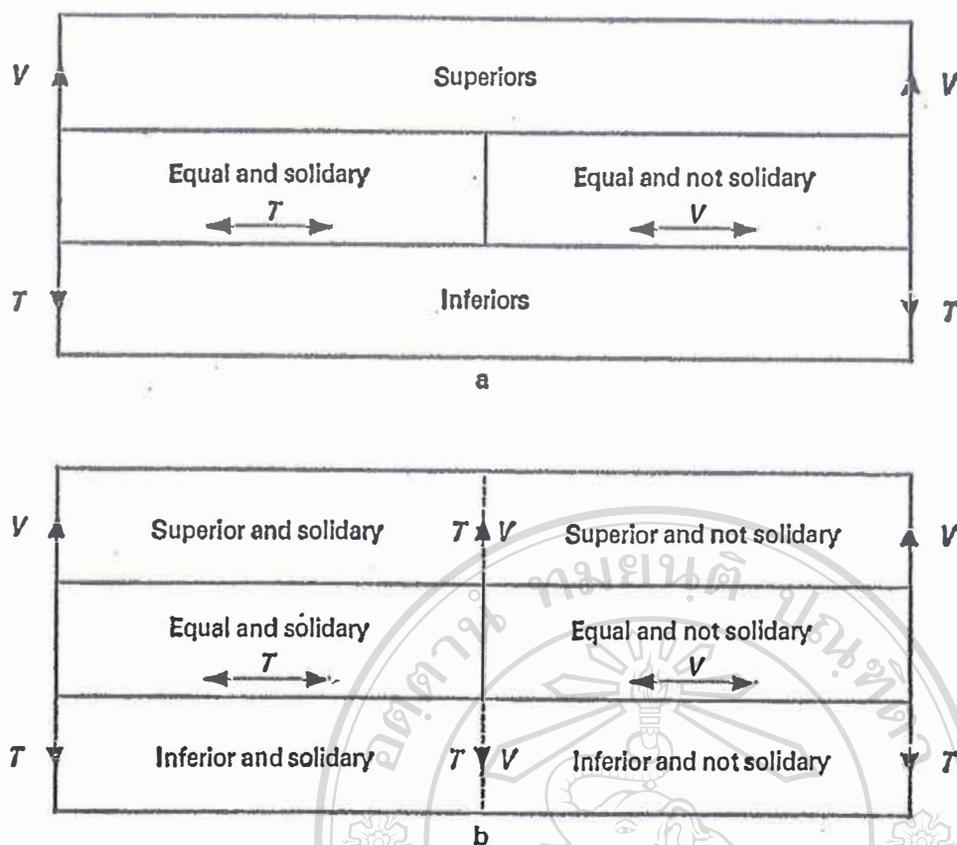


Figure 1: The two dimensional semantic (a) in equilibrium and (b) under tension (Brown and Gilman 1960: 259).

In Figure 1a, the direction of arrows upwards shows that inferiors address superiors with V form and downwards indicates that superiors address inferiors with T form. Bi-directional arrows in Figure 1b, under tension, shows that superior in power calls for V but solidarity suggests T. Depending on the importance of power and solidarity semantic, those who are equal and solidary use mutual T and those who are equal, but not solidary, use V to address each other.

The dimension of power and solidarity established by Brown and Gilman as influencing factors in choosing forms of address has been applied to studies in both English and cross-cultural contexts. Related to the use of T and V pronoun forms by speakers of European languages is the choice of the address terms by speakers of English. Brown and Ford (1961) used a variety of data including analysis of dialogue

in American plays and observations involving people in business organizations. They found that degree of intimacy governed the use of two common address forms, First Name (FN) and Title + Last name (TLN), while age and occupational status determined the choice of non-reciprocal terms. Slobin et al. (1968) carried out a follow-up study and found similar status effects in an insurance company. Ervin-Tripp (1972) developed a flowchart to show that factors such as age, status-marked setting, and sex are considered by speakers when producing a given address form. Lavin (1988) discussed the moral difficulties physicians encounter when determining the level of formality they will use when addressing their patients and argued that physicians and patients should always address each other with the same level of formality. Rendle-Short (2010) investigated the use of the address term 'mate', a popular term of address in Australian English, focusing two sequential environments, the post-positioned 'mate' (e.g. 'hello mate') and the pre-positioned 'mate' (e.g. 'mate how are ya') to explain why the term is sometimes positively interpreted as a friendly term and other times negatively interpreted as non-friendly or even with hostility.

Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced the theory of politeness involving the study of language form (i.e., how to say) and contents of utterance (i.e., what to say). Their work summarized factors influencing a speaker's politeness strategies in social interactions, assuming that all members of a society have the knowledge of the notion of politeness whereas there are cultural differences in the way it is expressed. Lambert and Tucker (1976) studied the way address systems function within many languages by conducting national and cross-cultural comparisons of address patterns in Canada, France, Puerto Rico, and Colombia. The study suggests that there is considerable variation in pronoun choice based on the background of the speaker, not only across languages but even within the same language and community, depending on the speaker's social class, sex, age and other social factors. Pauston (1976) examined the forms of address in Swedish and the patterning of their usage and found that there was a rapid shift towards general use of T address in Swedish society in the late 1960s and early 1970s where some groups reserved T for friends and family, while others extended T much more broadly. Since then the use of V address has drastically declined, due

partly to an outcome of the egalitarian and democratic ideals that gained ground in Scandinavia from the 1960s onwards.

Kroger et al. (1984) compared the usage of terms of address in Korean, Greek and Chinese and found substantial cross-cultural consistency. On the ground that Chinese is far distant from American English linguistically and culturally, Qin (2008) further investigated Chinese and English terms of address, using data from movies which are considered to better reflect social reality by portraying various interpersonal relationships in different situations. The findings clearly indicated that besides interpersonal relationships, context has a substantial effect on the choices of terms of address, both in Chinese and English. In line with previous studies on address terms in various languages, Aliabakari & Toni (2008) investigate Persian usage of addressing terminology in different contexts. Possible categories for Persian addressers' choice include personal names, general and occupation titles, kinship related terms, religious oriented expressions, and zero address terms for opening a polite conversation or to attract addressees' attention.

Based on the assumption that friendship is a universal human need and that the concept of 'friend' is a human universal, Wierzbicka (1997) explored the "friendship" patterns in English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese, and argued that while recognizing the uniqueness of each culture is vital, the culture-specific ("emic") concepts of any culture can be described and explained to outsiders in terms of universal ("etic") concepts. In her view, there is a very close link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the languages spoken by it. Categories of Australian words such as *mate*, for example, is uniquely part of the Australian way of life. As the traditional Australian way of life is changing, the term, instead of dying out, is now increasingly used by women. According to Wierzbicka, to show that a particular word is of special importance in a given culture, an in-depth study of the word needs to be undertaken in order to say something significant and revealing about that culture.

Studies of address terms have been conducted in different languages, from different angles, and with varying focus. They confirm that native speakers' selection of pronouns of address is determined by multiple contextual factors: the identity of the

speaker and the addressee, their social relationship such as age, gender, nationality, and the context of the communication. Address terms in different speech communities are worth studying because different languages have different linguistic resources that reveal not only the nature of interpersonal relationship but also the socio-cultural aspects of a particular speech community. In this regard, the present study aimed to explore address term usage in Thailand, focusing on the use of kinship terms to address non-kin.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Kinship Terms as Address Forms

Kin relationships are traditionally defined as ties based on blood and marriage. Those who are related to each other by blood are consanguineal kins while those related to each other through marital relationship are affinal kins. Consanguineal kins include *lineal generational* bonds (children, parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents), *collateral* bonds (siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles), and ties with *in-laws*, thus the terms “immediate family” for the former and “extended family” for the latter. The term “fictive” kin, on the other hand, is often used to denote relationships where the traditional rules of kin membership do not apply (Dykstra, 2009). According to Dykstra, kinship relationships do not exist in isolation but they form a system that is crucial to the organization of society. Research on kin relationships is not only informative about mechanisms underlying social cohesion but also provides insight into processes of modernity in terms of changes in economic conditions, labor market arrangements, and cultural climate. In fact, a leading question posed by Dykstra is whether given economic and social circumstances facilitate or require particular kinship patterns (Dykstra, 2009, p. 7).

In many languages, kinship terms are only used to address family members and relatives. The use of kinship terms to address or refer to non-kin called *vocative* kinship, however, is a widespread phenomenon. It occurs in different languages and cultures, Indo-European and non-Indo-European, each with their own systems of kinship terms and the functions they serve in society (Wardhaugh, 1986). Vocative usages of kinship

terms have been addressed, studied and analyzed in various linguistic contexts due to their essential function and role in any society.

According to Huang & Jia (2000), in contrast to English kinship terms, the Chinese kinship system is very complicated. Both share common features of kinship terms including the semantic meanings of generation, sex and certain kinds of relations. However, Chinese kinship system has its roots deep in Chinese culture, a product of an agricultural society, a family-centered economy, and a hierarchical family system. While the English language pays little attention to the differences between consanguineal and affinal relations in its kinship terms, the Chinese language considers these relations seriously.

Two studies on Chinese kinship terms provide some understanding about the Chinese power structure, its intricate family and kinship system, and some practical uses in interpersonal communication. According to Wu (2008), using kinship terms to address non-kin can be considered one of the typical characteristics of Chinese. In Chinese, although not all kinship terms can be used, usages of kinship terms among non-kin apply to both seniors and juniors, and even strangers. In fact, choosing correct kinship terms to address others in the light of different social contexts demonstrates a person's communicative ability to establish or extend "family solidarity" (Wu, 2008, p. 86).

According to Hentschel (2004), in Chinese almost every kinship term may be used in order to refer to non-kin and a very regular use of kinship terms in everyday life is shown in modern Chinese. Her study reveals that the use of kinship terms in addressing or referring to non-kin connotes a sign of respect in Mandarin Chinese, disrespect in German, and both in Serbian. Two factors, gender and age, influence the connotations of a kinship term. In German-speaking countries, for example, terms for female relatives are pejorative. Male terms can carry negative connotations but only when they refer to much older persons. Kinship terms are neutral only if used when speaking to a child. This shift from politeness to impoliteness can be explained through

the development collectivism to individualism, that is, when societies move from collectivism to individualism, kinship terms move from respectfulness to disrespect.

Other kinship studies have been conducted from contemporary perspectives. Ngo (2017) explored the kinship terms used by the first and second generation of Hokkien Chinese Indonesians in Surabaya Indonesia and examined the changes in the kinship terms used between the two generations. Based on the data collected through a questionnaire, the study identified 38 kinship terms used in Hokkien Chinese Indonesian family including relatives. The study also showed that as social conditions change, the kinship terms of the first and second generation have slightly changed.

Mashiri's Zimbabwe study (2004) used field notes from participant observations taken of naturally occurring interactions in public and private spheres and transcriptions of semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with individuals of varying ages, gender, educational status, occupation and religious affiliation to provide an interpretive analysis of Shona native speakers' use of kinship terms of address as forms of communicative resources to invoke social meanings in non-kin relations. The author remarked that the address system models under study are found to be inadequate in their meaning representation of both the complexity and distinctiveness of social meanings, thus requiring more interpretive, ethnographic approaches for the discovery of social meaning of kinship as address forms in Zhona speech communities.

Al-Haj (1995) explored the impact of modernization on kinship structure in developing societies. The data were based on a synthesis of secondary sources and a field study conducted among the Arab population Israel. The analysis showed that the kinship structure has survived and, in some aspects, has been reinforced in the wake of modernization. However, the processes connected with individual modernization have changed the nature of kinship organization and the dynamic of the interaction between individuals and their kinship group. The author argued that they have led to the emergence of "instrumentalized kinship", based on pragmatics needs rather than traditional ideological commitments.

Thus, further studies focusing on the relations between a culture's kinship system, the influence of a certain kinship system on communicative behavior of different generations, and using kinship terms to address non-kin in speech communication are warranted.

2.2 Kinship Studies in Thai

Thai kinship is a bilateral system based on sex, age, and generation. According to Hentschel (2004), Thai may not be the best known language for usage of kinship terms but it is among the numerous non-Indo-European in which vocative uses of kinship occurs. Previous studies on Thai kinship terms have been carried out by Thais as well as non-Thais.

According to Benedict (1943), Tai (of which Thai is a family member) is unique among the world's languages for the variety of its kin expressions. For example, Thai has four distinct terms for ego's four grandparents (vs. two in English), four terms for parents' sibling (vs. two in English), two terms for in-laws, two terms for parents, two terms for spouses, two terms for siblings, and one for siblings' children. Tingsabadh and Prasithratsint (1986) explored the historical and cultural backgrounds and existent forms of Thai kinship system from the beginning of the Rattanakosin era (ca. 1782). The study revealed that Thais use kinship terms such as aunt, grandmother, uncle, among others to address people who are not their relatives to show intimacy. Prasithratsint (2001) presented a componential analysis of the Thai kinship terms. The data covered only standard Bangkok Thai in two categories, basic kinship terms (those that designate relationships by blood) and non-basic kinship terms (those that designate relationships by marriage). The analysis revealed that the basic kinship terms contrast with one another in five dimensions: generation, lineality, age, sex and parental side, while those in the non-basic kinship terms contrast in 3 additional dimensions: sex of the speaker, euphemism, and new marriage.

Kemp (1983) conducted an ethnographic study at Hua Kok hamlet, Phitsanulok province, Central Thai region. According to Kemp, Thai society is based upon the premise of inequality. The fact that there are no relations between equals in Thai culture

can be understood through the various forms of the *phuyai* (*big man*) and *phunoi* (*little man*) relationship. This inequality is reinforced by Buddhism, with its emphasis on the individual whose private collection of merit results in social rank. In addition to such social hierarchy and distance, the ethnography record reveals that Thai kinship is based on the “axiom of amity”. To uphold the values of love and trust means that “irrespective of personal feelings one should behave well towards, help, and not exploit those who are kin.” (Kemp, 1983, p. 84). Another important observation made is that people start to use kin terms fictionally with those not genealogically related because they are attempting to utilize the benefits of kinship, that is, they are seeking to “establish closer, more comfortable and trusting relations than would otherwise exist” (Kemp, 1983, p. 90).

Dube’s study on kinship (1997) was based on the conviction that kinship can provide an appropriate context for understanding gender in a society. Dube’s basic argument is that differences in kinship systems and family structures account for some critical differences among societies in the ways in which gender operates. Thailand is among several South and South-East Asian countries whose aspects of family and kinship in the rural areas are compared with. According to Dube, although there are significant differences among the kinship systems of north-eastern, northern, and central Thailand, Thai kinship is bilateral and matrilocality is the predominant type of post-nuptial residence among most of the rural population. Northern Thai kinship, in particular, is characterized by effective matrilineality and the structural centrality of women. Her study reveals that in northern Thailand the social system is female centered but not matrifocal, that is, women do not have more authority, influence, and responsibility than their husbands (Dube, 1997, p. 32).

These scholarly studies have provided insights and understandings into the historical and cultural backgrounds of the Thai kinship terms and usages. They are, however, based exclusively on standard Bangkok Thai. Research on kinship terms and kinship system on KamMuang, a Northern Thai dialect, is very much under-researched. This study contributes to the study of Northern Thai dialect by offering an understanding to the relations between its kinship system and other aspects of its social structure in contemporary context.

2.3 The Service Encounter

The term “service encounter” has been defined differently in business journals. For example, Shostack (1987, p. 243) defined the service encounter as “a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a service”. This definition encompasses elements beyond the interpersonal element of a service encounter, including physical surroundings and self-service technology. Lewis and Mitchell (1990, p. 11) define a service encounter as "the interaction between a service organization and its customers/clients, and may take varying forms: face to face, over the telephone, by letter, or by automated means (e.g. ATM)". This study, with its focus on face to face verbal communication between a service provider and a customer in certain service areas, adopted a narrow definition of the service encounter as the "dyadic interaction between a customer and service provider" (Surprenant & Solomon (1987, p. 87), which means a moment in time when a customer interacts directly with a service provider.

Service quality is an important area for all types of service. Researchers generally agree that service quality largely determines consumer satisfaction, especially now that consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable, discriminating, and demanding of service. In the business and marketing literature, the role relationship between provider and consumer interaction is considered a critical determinant of customer’s satisfaction with the service (Czepiel et al., 1985) and the source of differentiation and competitive advantage for companies (Pfeffer, 1994). Parasuraman et al., (1985), developed a model of service quality called SERVQUAL, consisting of 5 dimensions: *Tangibles* (physical facilities, equipment, and staff appearance) and 4 human aspects of service delivery: *Reliability* (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately); *Responsiveness* (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service); *Assurance* (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence); *Empathy* (caring, individual attention the firm provides its customers). Other than functional qualities, the study of Goodwin and Frame (1989) indicates that friendship behaviors of addressing a customer by his/her first name can influence perceptions of quality. Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu’s study (2001) also reveals

a complex communication in which distance, status, and gender play key factors in the use of pronouns and terms of address in service interaction.

In the Thai-speaking service encounter setting, Banthuchai (2006) examined the relationship between customer's social factors (age, gender, clothing, and intimacy level) and service provider's linguistic factors (opening, building rapport, and making an offer). He analyzed patterns of address terms, first personal pronouns, and second personal pronouns used by department store service providers in 3 different economic levels in Bangkok. Observation results indicated that 49.4% of the service providers did not use address terms and 30.6 % used kinship terms. The questionnaire results, on the other hand, revealed that 37.7% of the service providers used kinship terms, 28.6 % no address terms, 44.1% first personal pronouns, and 47.1% second personal pronouns. In addition, observation results indicated that only department store type had a statistically significant effect on service providers' linguistic choices to approach their customers while questionnaire results revealed that both customer identity and store type did.

To contribute further to the service encounter literature in the Thai context, this study was not concerned with the role relationship aspect of the service encounter as a basis for creating perceptions of service quality per se.

Most immediate evidence of service quality occurs in the service encounter. However, this study was not concerned with the role relationship aspect of the service encounter as a basis for creating perceptions of service quality per se. Essentially, the study aimed to investigate factors influencing service providers' choice of address terms in everyday service encounters. The city of Chiang Mai was chosen as an ideal setting for this study of kinship terms for several reasons. The city of Chiang Mai is the largest and most culturally significant city in northern Thailand. Once a former capital of the kingdom of Lan Na (1296-1768), Chiang Mai has been expanding rapidly and undergoing changes in cultural, social, and economic aspects. Its metropolitan area has a population of nearly one million people, more than half the total of Chiang Mai Province. It is home to the native Lan Na populations as well as different communities of diverse ethnic groups and cultures. Regarding language situation, Standard Thai

(Central Thai) is used almost exclusively in government, education, and media, while Northern Thai (KamMuang) is still spoken as vernacular by the local people.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Objective

In line with the above-mentioned theoretical perspectives and research based findings, this paper investigated Northern Thai service providers' use of kinship terms as markers of social relationship with non-kin customers in face-to-face interactions called "service encounter".

3.2 Research questions

The study aimed at answering the following research questions:

- 3.2.1 What kinship terms are used by service providers to address non-kin customers?
- 3.2.2 What are the influencing factors for service providers' choice of kinship terms?

3.3 Research Design

The data for this study was based mainly on the survey through questionnaire and additional informal interview. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire asked demographic questions (e.g. age, sex, educational background). The second part of the questionnaire asked 10 questions related to the respondent's use of kinship terms to address customers (e.g. Do you use kinship terms to address your customer? What kinship terms do you use?). Among the choices of address terms were 2 generic polite address terms which are normally used in Central Thai and borrowed into Northern Thai and 13 Northern Thai kinship terms based on the dimensions of generation, blood relationship, age, gender, and parental side (Prapantasiri, 1992). The questionnaire used a multiple-choice as well as open-ended answers so that respondents were able to provide their own answer if necessary. The questionnaire was piloted among representative of the study groups and revised subsequently.

Figure 1 shows the selected 13 Northern Thai kinship terms for the study. These terms reflect the relationships among kin differentiated by 5 main features: sex

(mother/father), parental side (aunt and uncle), generation (child/grandchild), relative age (younger/older sibling), and lineality (father/uncle).

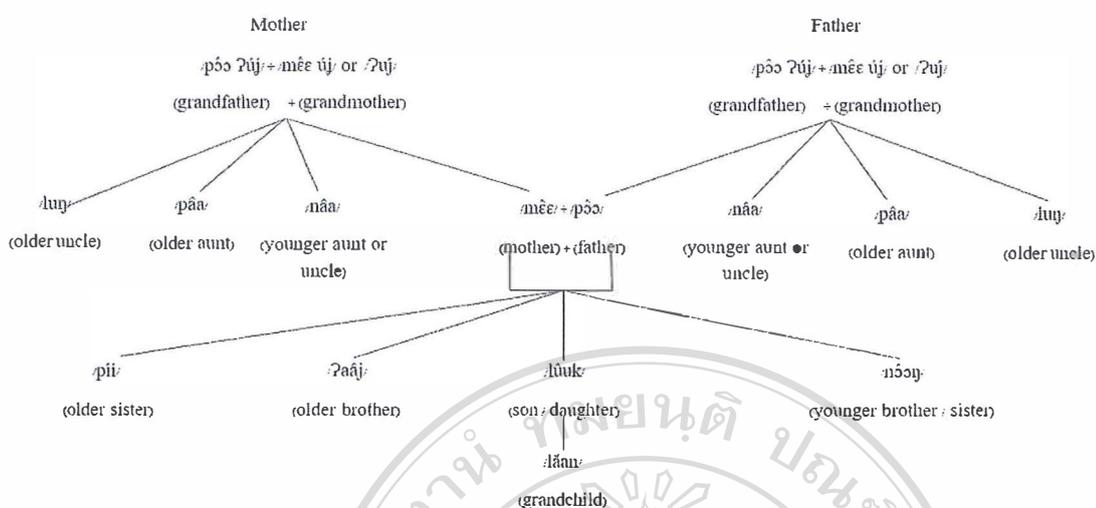


Figure 2: The Selected Northern Thai Kinship Terms

3.4 Participants

Service encounters in this study were selected to represent high, medium and low status based on Duncan's Socioeconomic Index (SEI), a widely used indicator of occupational ranking based on education and income data from the 1950 census. According to Stevens & Featherman (1981), measures of the income and educational criteria in Duncan's scheme were based specifically on the American labor force. A great deal has changed since the construction of the original SEI resting on the characteristics of the male labor force, rather than the total contemporary labor force. The original Duncan index of occupational ranking has been altered in subsequent studies due to its limitations.

Chiang Mai is divided into 25 districts (amphoe). The location for this study is the central district (mueang), which is divided into 16 sub-districts, 5 of which are the target areas in this study. In light of the present income and educational level of the Northern Thai labor force, 3 categories of service providers were assigned ranking. Service providers of high status category were represented by outpatient clinic nurses

at 3 hospitals: Maharaj Nakorn Chiang Mai Hospital and Sriphat Medical Center at Chiang Mai University Faculty of Medicine, and Chiang Mai Neurological Hospital, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Public Health. Service providers of middle status category were represented by cashiers (and station-based personnel) at chain stores: 15 7-Eleven stores and 2 Tesco Lotus stores (Hang Dong and KamTiang). Service providers of low status category were represented by traditional open market traders at 5 locations: Mae Hia Market in the southernmost area, Phayom Market in the southern area, Siriwatana Market in the northern area, Muang Mai Market in the northeastern area, and San Paa Khoy Market in the eastern area. Of the total number of 150 questionnaire respondents (50 from each category), 89 were female and 61 males, between the ages of 20-60, with educational background varying from primary to university education.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

As mentioned in 2.3, the focus of this study was not concerned with the interaction quality in service encounter, which is generally believed to be related to customer satisfaction and service quality perception. The aim of the study, to survey usage of kinship terms in service encounters, was clearly stated in the questionnaire. There was no item in the questionnaire that implied or stated the underlying sociolinguistic concept of the study regarding use of kinship terms among non-kin as “markers of social relationship”. Respondents were also assured full confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, the study took into account the 3 different types of service encounters, the context of situation, and the nature of interaction in considering how best to approach the respondents in order to obtain reliable data.

Approaches to the target respondents of high and middle status categories were based on convenience grounds. Through personal contact among university colleagues, friends, and acquaintances, questionnaires were distributed among representative individuals who were willing to provide the information needed. Necessary time was given to ensure accurate responses and returns. Data collection among the low status group, however, was the most difficult and time consuming task. The marketplace

respondents did not fill out the questionnaires themselves. I felt that obtaining accurate information from trader respondents would be easier if they were comfortable not having to deal with writing down information. Instead of asking the market traders to fill out questionnaire forms, I decided to carry out a semi-structured interview, engaging in casual conversation, using the questionnaire as a guide to ask relevant questions. The questions and topics covered were not in an exact order.

I visited the 5 selected markets many times for making general observation on trader-customer interaction and verbal behavior and for establishing myself as a regular and familiar customer. On an interview day, I visited the market accompanied with a different female friend who was a regular customer at each market. We were at the market on the pretext of doing routine buying trips. We either started out the conversation after hearing address terms being used or initiated a conversation about people being addressed by different address terms by different traders. The accompanying person, then, introduced me as a researcher interested in getting first-hand information from the traders about their general patterns of addressing their customers. The conversation typically went well so that I managed to register responses in the appropriate box in the questionnaire. I tried focusing the conversation on address terms and avoiding intrusion on our trader-customer boundaries. Most of the time, it was a one-on-one interview, but sometimes neighboring traders joined the conversation and it became a group conversation. After that, I asked for their demographic data as much as I could. For the sake of building a connection with the market traders, at each market visit I ended up buying more fresh produce and ready-to-eat meals than I ever needed.

For the high and middle status category, I arranged to have informal interview among those who were willing to elaborate on the answers given in the questionnaires. On the pretext of looking for help and tips on certain goods available at both Tesco Lotus locations, I had opportunities to strike up casual conversations with cashiers who were comfortable answering my questions about their usage of address terms among customers. For the low status category, I visited all five markets alone and randomly

engaged in casual conversation with traders who were not previously included in the survey for the purpose of gaining more information than those already given.

3.6 Method of Analysis

The obtained information from the questionnaires was distributed across the tables and figures that displayed a summary of the respondents' answers: use versus non-use for research question 1 and reasons for use/non-use for research question 2. Results from the interviews provided additional answer to the analysis. Discussions and conclusions were based on theoretical concepts and study findings discussed in the literature review.

4. Results and Discussion

Analysis of this study points to three key findings.

4.1 Social Distance

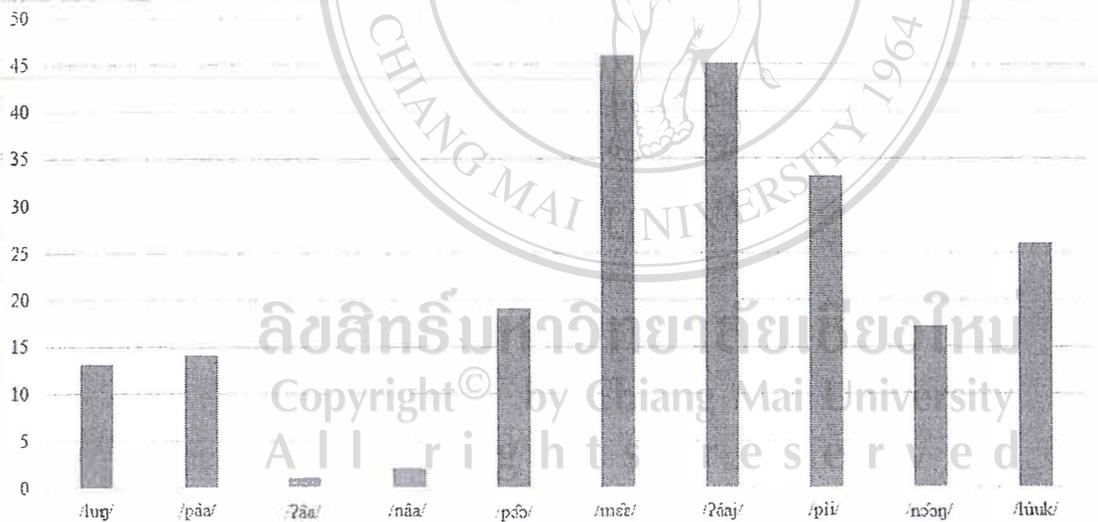


Figure 3: Use and Frequency of Kinship Terms among Three Groups of Northern Thai Service Providers by Features of Kin Relationship

Figure 3 shows the use and frequency of kinship terms among three groups of Northern Thai service providers by 5 key features of kin relationship: sex, parental side, generation, age, and lineality. Of the 13 basic kinship terms from both sides of the Northern Thai bilateral kinship system, 10 kinship terms were used. The findings indicated that the choices of kinship terms by the respondents did not include those of /ʔuj/ grandparents and /lǎan/ grandchildren. This discrepancy could be explained in terms of the rarity of the face-to-face interactions of these two family members. For the former, the equivalent of Central Thai term /taa/ (maternal grandfather) and /jaaj/ (maternal grandmother) were used to replace /ʔuj/, the original Northern Thai terms. Interview results indicated that the borrowed terms for people of advanced age were thought to be more euphemistic than the traditional ones in terms of physical activity and functional independence. As for the latter, the term /lûuk/ (child) was widely used as a term of affection for all young children.

From Table 1, it can be seen that Northern Thai service providers in all three categories used all kinship terms to address non-kin customers, with the exception of the Central Thai kinship terms for grandparents and grandchildren. As stated by Fasold (1990), forms of address are fundamental for the speakers in establishing and maintaining social relationship with their listeners in a particular social setting. In this regard, it can be interpreted that service providers used kinship terms to express common ground of belonging to the same cultural community. In his Central Thai kinship study, Kemp (1983) noted that people use kin terms with those not genealogically related as a means to establish closer, more comfortable and trusting relations. Parallel to this notion, it can also be interpreted that service providers used kinship terms to position themselves closer to the customers. Their expression of kin ties among non-kin at a group level suggests the social distance norms in Northern Thai culture.

4.2 Power and Solidarity

The second finding indicates a correlation between different groups of occupation and the differing frequency of the use of kinship terms. Table 2 shows the use and frequency of the choices among three groups of Northern Thai service providers.

Occupation	kinship terms	non-kinship terms
High level	20	80
Middle level	8	92
Low level	82	18

Table 1: Use and Frequency of Address Terms among Three Groups of Northern Thai Service Providers in Percentage

From Table 1, it can be seen that Northern Thai service providers in all three categories used kinship terms to address non-kin customers, though in a varying degree depending on the speakers' occupational statuses.

For the designated lowest occupation level represented by traditional open market traders, a large majority of the open market traders used kinship terms to address their customers. Interview results revealed that addressing customers by kinship terms was a normal addressing practice among market traders. However, some respondents revealed that their addressing patterns shifted when communicating with customers with certain physical and social characteristics. While they scarcely ever used /khun/ (a polite Central Thai address term) or /lûuk khaá/ (customer), they admitted using the Chinese kinship terms /sɛ:/ (older sister) or /hiə/ (older brother) increasingly as a respectful term to address well-dressed and rich-looking customers.

For the middle level represented by chain and convenience store cashiers, /khun/ (a polite Central Thai address term) and /lûuk khaá/ (customer) were predominantly used while the use of Northern Thai kinship terms was minimal. Results of the interview revealed that this is mainly due to the company's customer service policy. The interview results revealed that in providing services, they typically remain passive and impersonal and use no address forms. Nevertheless, some respondents said that

they used kinship terms to address well-acquainted customers when providing help locating certain items or telling them about forgetting things after making purchases.

For the highest level represented by hospital outpatient care nurses, the polite Central Thai address terms /khun+first name/ or /khun+firstname+last name/ were mainly used as they are the standard forms for formal encounters. These terms are generally used when delivering health care and patient care management such as calling out patient names in the waiting room, collecting patient information, conducting patient assessment, and administering treatment and medications. However, in assisting and guiding patients through hospital visit procedures, kinship terms were sometimes used. The interview results among respondents of this particular group revealed that in situations where patients require further assistance or extra care and attention such as giving directions for medical and non-medical services around the hospital, arranging patient follow-up, and explaining care instructions, a shift from polite Central Thai address terms to kinship terms was a preferred choice.

In this study, it can be seen that the higher the level of socioeconomic status the occupation is, the more clearly defined relationship of the service providers and the customers, and thus, the more predictable forms of address. The three groups of service providers followed the norms of address at the setting. However, their evaluation and perception of the customers prompted them to shift their address terms, depending on whether power or solidarity is more prominent. This relatively stable address practice provided evidence for Brown and Gilman's notation (1960) that there is a link between the two-dimensional space of power and solidarity in address terms to signify the difference in social status between the speakers and the addressees. Furthermore, the use of address terms among Northern Thai service providers in these three stratified groups of occupation clearly reflected the long established diglossic situation in the Northern Thai linguistic community, in which Central Thai serves as the High variety and Northern Thai (KamMuang) the Low variety (Smalley, 1994). As noted by Howard (2010), the differential power of Central Thai and Northern Thai has been an influencing factor in common linguistic practices among Northern Thai speakers to mark public distance and social status, with the former being the language of "prestige" and the latter being the vernacular of "accommodation". In this study, service providers

shifted their address terms to fit not only the particular situations in which services take place but also to accommodate to the social characteristics of the customers. While non-kin terms were used for a proper practical goal called for by the social context, kinship terms were used to send meaningful signals of solidarity.

4.3 Respect

Another interesting finding in this study is the use of address term /mêɛ/ (mother) to address female elderly customers. Figure 2 shows the frequency distribution of the kinship term by open market traders.

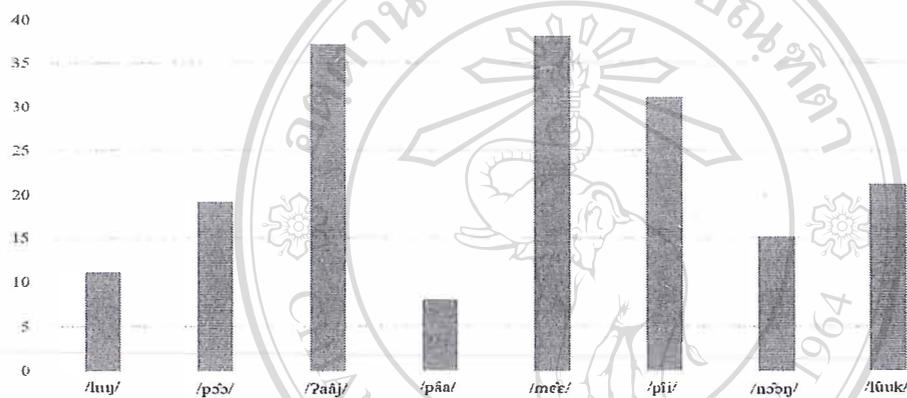


Figure 4. Distribution of Frequency by Use of the Kinship Terms among Market Traders

As shown, the respondents in the designated low occupational status group used kinship terms to address female and male customers very differently. The most frequently used term to address male customers was /ʔaâj/ (older brother) while /mêɛ/ (mother) was used most frequently among female customers. Of course, there are many possible factors to account for a lack of compatibility (e.g., the age and gender of the service providers and the customers). Through interview, one account for this difference in address terms shared by market traders at all 5 markets was that they seldom saw elderly male customers doing food shopping. Women customers of middle and old age, on the other hand, were commonly seen at the market and they were

customarily addressed as /mêɛ/ (mother). The main reason given was the appropriateness of the term for showing respect as one does for one's own mother. In this regard, the address term /mêɛ/ (mother) not only indicates the positive attitude but also connotes a close relationship. Considering a low frequency usage of /pôɔ/ (father) for male customers and a comparatively high frequency usage of /mêɛ/ (mother), this finding appears to support the structural significance of women in Northern Thai community (Potter, 1977; Dube, 1997; Prasithrathsint, 2001).

While this is in line with previous descriptions of gender relations in Thai bilateral kinship system, the data further suggest that the use of kinship term /mêɛ/ (mother) to address non-related female customers provides insight into the Northern Thai matrilineal kinship system. In this study, the term /mêɛ/ (mother) not only functions as an address but it also carries the social meaning of both solidarity and intimacy. When asked about female customers' reaction to being addressed in this way, some of the respondents reported having had neither positive nor negative reaction, while others said they have experienced some sort of displeasing reaction. Two respondents reported having been asked by female customers about the reason for choosing /mêɛ/ (mother) over /paa/ (aunt). As noted by Mashiri (2009) in his socio-linguistic interpretation of the social meanings of kinship terms, the indication of solidarity does not necessarily include intimacy. In this respect, it can be interpreted that the value of solidarity relationship in the form of respect is intended by market traders but the customers may or may not perceive its value along their scale of social distance. To achieve a successful communication of the intimate kin term in a random encounter such as one revealed in this study, the shared understanding of the speaker and the addressee regarding its literal meaning or the transparency of the context in which the interaction takes place is needed. Thus, it would be warranted for future studies to investigate the nature of underlying cultural and linguistic concepts shared by Northern Thai community to ascertain the mutual perception of the intended social meaning of the kinship term /mêɛ/ (mother) at the Northern Thai open market.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study provides a survey study of kinship terms of Northern Thai in a service encounter context in Chiang Mai municipality. The results confirmed that Northern Thai kinship terms provide not only a taxonomy of familial relations but also serve as address forms among non-kin. The extension of such kinship terms are determined by many key factors such as age, gender, and setting. To extend the literature of Northern Thai kinship terms among non-kin, it will be interesting to expand the targets in other Northern provinces with century-old historical background but less populated and less impacted by modernization.



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การสำรวจการใช้คำเรียกญาติในบริบทการให้บริการ

คำชี้แจงสำหรับผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

การสำรวจครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อรวบรวมข้อมูลการใช้คำเรียกญาติในบริบทการให้บริการ เพื่อการศึกษาวิจัย เรื่อง

คำเรียกญาติในบริบทการให้บริการ : กรณีศึกษาภาษาไทยในถิ่นเหนือ

(The Use of Kinship Terms in Service Encounter : A Case Study of Northern Thai Dialect)

จึงใคร่ขอความร่วมมือจากท่านกรุณารอกข้อมูลตอบแบบสอบถาม จำนวน 1 ชุด ในแบบสอบถามชุดนี้ โดยทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ในช่องที่ตรงกับความเป็นจริง ข้อมูลทั้งหมดที่ท่านตอบ จะมีประโยชน์อย่างยิ่งสำหรับงานวิจัย โดยข้อมูลของท่านจะถูกใช้เฉพาะการวิจัยครั้งนี้เท่านั้น แบบสอบถามมีทั้งหมด หน้า แบ่งออกเป็น 2 ส่วน คือ

ส่วนที่ 1 ข้อมูลพื้นฐาน/ทั่วไป เกี่ยวกับผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

ส่วนที่ 2 พฤติกรรมการใช้คำเรียกญาติของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

ลักษณะของคำถามเป็นแบบเลือกตอบ และ/หรือเติมคำลงในช่องว่างที่กำหนด

ขอขอบพระคุณท่านเป็นอย่างสูงที่ท่านกรุณาให้ความร่วมมือในการตอบแบบสอบถามนี้

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เลขหมู่.....

สำนักหอสมุด มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

ส่วนที่ 1 ข้อมูลทั่วไปเกี่ยวกับผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

คำชี้แจง

กรุณาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงในช่อง หน้าข้อความที่ตรงกับคำตอบของท่านมากที่สุด หรือเติมข้อความลงในช่องว่างที่กำหนด

1. เพศ ชาย หญิง

2. อายุ ต่ำกว่า 20 ปี 20 – 30 ปี

31 – 40 ปี 41 – 50 ปี

50 ปีขึ้นไป

3. ระดับการศึกษา ประถมศึกษา มัธยมศึกษา
 มัธยมศึกษาปลาย/ปวช. อนุปริญญา/ปวส.
 ปริญญาตรี สูงกว่าปริญญาตรี

4. ภูมิลำเนาเดิม จังหวัด _____

5. ภาษาหลักที่ใช้ในชีวิตประจำวัน ภาษาไทยกลาง ภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ

ภาษาหลักที่ใช้ในการทำงาน/ประกอบอาชีพ ภาษาไทยกลาง ภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ

6. สถานที่ทำงาน/ประกอบอาชีพ

ตลาดสด/ตลาดนัด โรงพยาบาล

ร้านสะดวกซื้อ/ซูเปอร์มาร์เก็ต

7. ตำแหน่ง

พนักงานเก็บเงิน

พนักงานประจำจุดขาย

พยาบาล

ผู้ช่วยพยาบาล

พ่อค้า/แม่ค้า

8. ระยะเวลาในการทำงานในตำแหน่งงานในข้อ 7.

ต่ำกว่า 1 เดือน

1 - 6 เดือน

7 - 12 เดือน

มากกว่า 1 ปี

ส่วนที่ 2 พฤติกรรมในการใช้คำเรียกขานของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

1. ในการทำงานของท่านมีโอกาสในการใช้คำเรียกขานผู้มาใช้บริการหรือไม่

มี

ไม่มี

2. ความถี่ที่ท่านใช้คำเรียกขานผู้มาใช้บริการ

ทุกครั้งที่ให้บริการ

ส่วนใหญ่ที่ให้บริการ

บ่อยครั้งที่ให้บริการ

น้อยครั้งที่ให้บริการ

3. ในการทำงานของท่านใช้คำเรียกขานผู้มาใช้บริการ เพื่อ..... (ตอบได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)

ทักทาย

ขอขอบคุณ

ล้อลา

ถามคำถาม

ตอบคำถาม

ให้คำแนะนำ

อื่นๆ (ระบุ) _____

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4. คำเรียกขานที่ท่านใช้เรียกผู้มาใช้บริการ

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> คุณ | <input type="checkbox"/> ลูกค้า |
| <input type="checkbox"/> น้อง | <input type="checkbox"/> ลูก |
| <input type="checkbox"/> หลาน | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> อ้าย (พี่ชาย) | <input type="checkbox"/> ปี่ (พี่สาว) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ป้อ (พ่อ) | <input type="checkbox"/> แม่ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ลุง | <input type="checkbox"/> ป้า |
| <input type="checkbox"/> อา | <input type="checkbox"/> น้า |
| <input type="checkbox"/> อู๋ย/ป้ออู๋ย (ปู่/ตา) | <input type="checkbox"/> อู๋ย/แม่อู๋ย (ย่า/ยาย) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> อื่นๆ (ระบุ) _____ | |

5. สาเหตุที่ท่านเลือกใช้คำเรียกขานสำหรับผู้มาใช้บริการแต่ละคน

- เรียกตามวัย
- เรียกตามรูปร่าง/หน้าตา
- เรียกตามลักษณะการแต่งกาย
- เรียกตามความสนิทชิดเชื้อ/คุ้นเคย
- เรียกตามความน่านับถือ
- เรียกตามนโยบายของที่ทำงาน
- อื่นๆ (ระบุ) _____

6. ภาษาที่ท่านใช้พูดคุยกับผู้มาใช้บริการ

- ภาษาไทยกลาง (ตอบข้อ 7)
- ภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ(คำเมือง) (ตอบข้อ 8)

7. สาเหตุที่ท่านใช้ภาษาไทยกลางพูดคุยกับผู้มาใช้บริการ

- ผู้ใช้บริการใช้ภาษาไทยกลางทักทายก่อน
- เป็นนโยบายของที่ทำงานให้ใช้ภาษาไทยกลาง
- คุณลักษณะผู้มาใช้บริการน่าจะเป็นผู้พูดภาษาไทยกลาง
- ผู้ใช้บริการส่วนใหญ่เป็นผู้พูดภาษาไทยกลาง
- อื่นๆ (ระบุ) _____

8. สาเหตุที่ท่านใช้ภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ(คำเมือง)พูดคุยกับผู้มาใช้บริการ

- ผู้ใช้บริการใช้ภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ(คำเมือง)ทักทายก่อน
- เป็นนโยบายของที่ทำงานให้ใช้ภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ (คำเมือง)
- คุณลักษณะผู้มาใช้บริการน่าจะเป็นผู้พูดภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ (คำเมือง)
- ผู้ใช้บริการส่วนใหญ่เป็นผู้พูดภาษาไทยถิ่นเหนือ (คำเมือง)
- อื่นๆ (ระบุ) _____

9. ท่านเคยต้องเปลี่ยนคำเรียกขานผู้มาใช้บริการในขณะกำลังสนทนาหรือไม่

- เคย (ตอบข้อ 10)
- ไม่เคย

10. สาเหตุที่ท่านต้องเปลี่ยนคำเรียกขานผู้มาใช้บริการในขณะกำลังสนทนา (ตอบได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)

- เปลี่ยนภาษา
- เปลี่ยนหัวข้อการสนทนา
- มีผู้อื่นมาร่วมการสนทนา
- ผู้รับบริการไม่พอใจคำเรียกขาน
- อื่นๆ (ระบุ) _____