The occurrence of repairs in Burmese telephone conversations between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers

กำรปรับเกิดกิจขึ้นในการสนทนางโทรศัพท์ระหว่างเจ้าหน้าที่ให้บริการข้อมูลชาวไทยกับลูกค้าชาวพม่า

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the types, frequency and devices of repair that occurred in Burmese telephone conversations between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers. The data consist of 80 conversations recorded from a call center. The study is based on the framework of Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977).

The research reveals that there were three types of repairs, which included 1) self-initiated and self-repair, 2) other-initiated and self-repair, and 3) other-initiated and other-repair. The most frequently used types were other-initiated and self-repair, and self-initiated and self-repair, respectively. On the other hand, it found that Burmese customers started repair initiation more frequently than Thai call center operators. The results of other-initiated repair devices show that there were six devices: 1) A short word ယောက်စာ  ‘Yes?, I beg your pardon, what did you say?’, 2) The questions: ဘာလိုလော ‘What?’, ဘာလိုလော လူလော ‘How?’, 3) Repetition as a part of the trouble–source turn plus a question: noun ဘယ်လို ဘယ်လို ဘယ်စရာ လော ‘What does ‘…’ mean?’, 4) Repetition as part of the trouble-source with rising intonation, 5) “You Mean” plus a possible understanding of prior turn: statement plus မြန်မာစာ လော ‘You Mean’

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lá ‘Is it like this’, and 6) Request: ฉันบอกเธอ ฉันจะไป ‘Please tell me’. In addition, combined devices were also found in this study.

**Keywords:** Thai call center operators, Burmese customers, repairs, Burmese language, conversation analysis

**บทคัดย่อ**

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาประเภท, ความถี่ และกลไกของการปรับแก้ในการสนทนาภาษาพม่า-ไทย โดยอ้างถึงศูนย์ดูที่ปรับ ชุดสัมพันธ์ ประมาณ 80 บทสนทนา และวิเคราะห์ขอให้บริการของข้อมูลข้ามภาษาไทยกับข้อมูลภาษาพม่าโดยใช้ข้อมูลที่นำมาจากศูนย์ดูที่ปรับ ชุดสัมพันธ์ จานวน 80 บทสนทนา และวิเคราะห์ขอให้บริการของข้อมูลข้ามภาษาไทยกับข้อมูลภาษาพม่าโดยใช้ข้อมูลที่นำมาจากศูนย์ดูที่ปรับ ชุดสัมพันธ์ (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977)

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า นิยมประเภทของการปรับแก้ 3 ประเภท ได้แก่ 1) การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-initiated) แล้วปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-repair) 2) การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-initiated) แล้วปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-repair) และ 3) การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-initiated) แล้วปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-repair) ด้วยประเภทของการปรับแก้กับบัญชีภาษาไทยมีจานวนมากกว่าการเริ่มต้นของการปรับแก้โดยเจ้าหน้าที่ให้บริการข้อมูลข้ามภาษาไทย ชุดสัมพันธ์การปรับแก้ในหน่วย 6 กลุ่มได้แก่ 1) การใช้ขอคำสั่ง เช่น ฉันขอFIN ‘ขอ’ 2) การใช้ประโยคคำกล่าว เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’, ฉันบอก ’ฉันบอก’ เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’ 3) การกล่าวขอคำสั่ง เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’, ฉันบอก ’ฉันบอก’ เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’ 4) การกล่าวขอคำสั่ง เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’ 5) การกล่าวขอคำสั่ง เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’ 6) การใช้ประโยคขอ เช่น ฉันบอก ‘ฉันบอก’'

**คำสำคัญ:** เจ้าหน้าที่ให้บริการข้อมูลข้ามภาษาไทย, บัญชีภาษาไทย, การปรับแก้, ภาษาไทย, การวิเคราะห์บทสนทนา
Introduction

According to Have (2007, pp. 4-5), Conversation Analysis (CA) uses either wider or more restricted senses. In broad terms, it means the study of people talking with one another. In a more restricted sense, it means a particular tradition of analytic work. On the other hand, CA is involved in the study of the organization of talk-in-interaction. In CA, according to Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974, p. 696), speech-exchange systems are fundamental to conversation. The basic organizational form for conversation is turn-taking. In other words, Sacks et al. (1974, pp. 700-701) explain that in the patterns of turn-taking there are 14 patterns, such as overlapping, adjacency pair, and repair.

Repairs are studied as a part of conversation analysis. “Repair refers to an organized set of practices through which participants in conversation are able to address and resolve such problems of speaking, hearing or understanding (Sidnell, 2010, p. 110).” According to Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), repair sequences consist of the repairable and the repair. The repairable is an utterance that is the trouble-source and is being repaired. The repair is the turn in which a problematic utterance is replaced by one element. Schegloff et al. (1977) make a distinction between self-repair and other-repair. They also divided repairs into self-initiation and other-initiation. Self-initiation and other-initiation are preferred when the speaker has to repair the trouble-source himself (self-repair). Other-initiation gives an opportunity to the speaker (trouble-source) to repair the problematic utterance by himself (Schegloff et al., 1977, p. 377).

The other-initiated repairs are classified into five devices: the first type is “Huh?”,” “What?””. The first type is weaker, an open class initiator, and a device that indicates that a recipient does not locate any particular repairable component within that turn; the second consists of question words such as “who?”, “where?” and “when?” The second device is more specific in that it indicates the part of the utterance that is repairable; the third type is partial repetition of the trouble-source turn, plus a question word; the fourth is partial repetition of the trouble-source; the last is “‘Y’ mean” plus a possible understanding (Schegloff et al., 1977, pp. 368-369; Sidnell, 2010, p. 117).
In the past, Drew (1977) studied repair initiation in a telephone conversation and found that repair initiation is related to an apparently abrupt shift in topics and an apparently inapposite or disaffiliate. Wong (2000) studied repair initiation between native and non-native speakers and found that other-initiated repair was not always done as early as possible or when the possible one was markedly different. Levelt (as cited in Wong, 2000, p. 259) found that some self-repair occurred immediately after the troublesome element, while other self-repairs were delayed until some point after the troublesome element.

In Thailand, mobile phone network providers have set up call centers to service customers 24 hours a day. The customers are not only Thai, but also foreigners who live in Thailand and speak languages such as English, Chinese, Korean and Burmese. There are many Burmese people who have come to Thailand for work. When they have problems, they call the call center to request information or service about promotions from mobile phone network providers. Having worked in service quality control in the service quality control section of a mobile phone network provider, I had a chance to observe conversations between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers. There were many problems regarding listening and understanding between them. It is a case to be rechecked for understanding by doing repairs. Consequently, many repairs occur in the conversations between them.

On the other hand, Kurhila (2001) said that when the participants did not have equal access to the language of exchange, they face interactional problems which are generally absent in conversations between native speakers. Therefore, when Thai call center operators and Burmese customers have inequality of language, and are in context without visual aid, they have more problems in conversation. Consequently, the repair usually happens in discourse. For my research, I collected
The occurrence of repairs in Burmese telephone conversations focusing on the types of issues, frequency of repairs, and devices of repair initiations that occurred in the unequal context and in the telephone conversational context. I wanted to find out what types of repairs are used, to compare those who make repair initiations more frequently, and to consider what devices of repairs are used to resolve trouble sources. In the next section, I will talk about the data and methodology used in my study.

1. The data and methodology

The methods of research in this study include, as follows:

1) Preparation – I prepared data collection by requesting permission to collect data from the customer relationship manager of a telecommunication service provider and explaining the research’s objectives, data collection method, and the time needed for collection.

2) Data collection – I collected conversations between six Thai call center operators and 80 Burmese customers from the information service center of a telecommunication service provider on Phaholyothin Road, Bangkok. There were altogether 80 conversations collected. The time of data collection was four months (between November 2010 and February 2011). The data were recorded by MP4 recorder, opened with the Audacity program, and transcribed into Burmese. Jefferson’s transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004) were also used, along with other details for future search, such as the file’s number, date, etc. At the third step, the transcribed Burmese scripts were transcribed into Burmese phonetic symbols using the transcription system of Watkins in Studies in Burmese Linguistics (Watkins, 2005).

3) Data analysis – The data were analyzed according to the framework of repairs by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977).

4) Result presentation – Types, frequency of repairs and devices of other-initiated repair are presented in Section (3). For example presentation, the turns in the examples are presented in four lines: the first line is the Burmese script which is spoken by Burmese customers or Thai call center operators; the second line is the
transcription in IPA; the third line is the glossary line; and the fourth line is the free translation in English. The last section consists of a conclusion and discussion.

2. Results

From the researcher’s thesis, many components of conversation structures are studied. These components include opening and closing, overlapping, backchannels, and repairs. However, the researcher has found that repair is an outstanding point in telephone conversation between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers. When Burmese customers wanted to register for promotional or additional services and they did not state their purposes clearly, or when the Burmese customers spoke their mother tongue with local accents, such as Dawei, Karen, and Shan, or spoke English with a Burmese accent, a repair usually occurred during their utterance. Likewise, when Thai call center operators did not explain the detail clearly or correctly, or spoke Burmese with a Thai accent, the Burmese customers tended to correct their speech. Those repairs reflect not only the problem of conversation between them but also the method to deal with problems from conversation. Therefore, in the next section, the results of studies of types, frequency and devices of repair initiation to understand this situation are presented.

3.1 Types of repairs

This study revealed that there were only three types of repairs, which include 1) self-initiated and self-repair, 2) other-initiated and self-repair, and 3) other-initiated and other-repair as the following. (Note: CM: Burmese customer, OP: Thai call center operator)

3.1.1 Self-initiated and self-repair

This type of repair occurred when the first speaker realized the trouble, and the repair was pointed out by the speaker himself, as in excerpt (1).
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T19. OP: =tʃəmaŋ ³j ³tʰ ³n dê ʔakò ³pʰɔ̃ ⁴kʰ jìn (network 1) =ŋF know want NFUT elder brother phone call COND (network 1)

T20. (0.1)

T21. CM: (network 1) aŋ (network 1) pŋ (network 1) REINF “(network 1)”

T22. OP: ³mjà ⁸mjá kʰɔ̀ ³θwá lá ³dàməməhóu? (network 2) (network 3) much much call go q or (network 2) (network 3)

T23. CM: ³ŋəbɛɁ ⁷mjá kʰɔ̀ ³θwá lá night time (network 2) much much call go q (network 2) (network 3)

I would like to know if you (elder brother) often make a call through network 1 or through network 2 and 3.

T22. OP: ³mjá ⁸mjá kʰɔ̀ ³θwá lá yes one-cl (network 2) (network 3) day time much call go q (network 2) (network 3)

Yes one time (network 2) (network 3) day time much call go q (network 2) (network 3)

“I would like to know if you (elder brother) often make a call through network 1 or through network 2 and 3.

T23. CM: ³ŋəbɛɁ ⁷mjá dê night time much "I often make a call at night time”

F6/10.12.53
In excerpt (1), the Thai operator knew what she wanted to say in turn 22, which was 'day time', but she said 'one time' instead. Therefore, she initiated the Thai word ‘one time’ and repaired the trouble source from ‘one time’ to the utterance in turn 22, “Do you often make a call at day time or at night time?”

3.1.2 Other-initiated and self-repair

This type of repair occurred when the recipient acknowledged a trouble source from the speaker and made the repair initiation, leading the speaker to repair the trouble source. From the data, this type of repair was frequently found. In this case, the Thai call center operator did not speak clearly and spoke ungrammatically. So the Burmese customer would initiate with a polite tag such as ‘yes?’ to stimulate the repair initiation. In the same case, when Burmese customers called the call center to ask for information or to make some requests about various services, they sometimes did not speak clearly, spoke Burmese with an accent, or suddenly changed topics. So the Thai call center operators would use a polite tag with rising intonation such as ‘yes?’, or questions such as ‘what’ to be a repair initiation. The word ‘yes?’ is a polite term of address used by female speakers. It is used to address people or call their attention. Sometimes, if we use this short word with rising intonation, it acts as a polite response, meaning “I beg your pardon, what did you say?” (Okell & Allott, 2001, pp. 197-198), as in excerpt (2).

(2)

T12. OP: =Second date until arrive.Cond this mess this message

=Second date until arrive.Cond this mess this message

‘On the 2nd, this short message wasn’t be sent and [it will automatically disappear].’
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In excerpt (2), when the Thai call center operator explained about canceling a short message in turn 12, the Burmese customer responded by saying ‘yes’ and suddenly changed the topic to song downloading. The sudden change of topics was an event that the Thai call center operator could not follow, so she used a polite tag with rising intonation ‘Yes?’ in turn 14 to stimulate the repair initiation. After that, the Burmese customer repaired the utterance in turn 13 from “I would like to download one more song, can I download it?” to the utterance in turn 15 “a song, (I) want to download a song onto this telephone.”

3.1.3 Other-initiated and other-repair

This type of repair occurred when the recipient realized the speaker’s trouble source and made the repair initiation to stimulate the speaker to repair the trouble source. However, if the speaker did not repair a trouble source, the recipient had to repair the trouble source himself, as in excerpt (3).
“Balance was charged if you didn’t make a call?”

“Balance was charged if you didn’t make a call, wasn’t it?”

“yes, although (I) didn’t make a call, although (I) have never talked on the phone, my balance changed. Then an SMS was sent to me in Thai, but I can’t read it. Can you please send an SMS to me in English? I can read English.”
In excerpt (3), the Thai call center operator asked the Burmese customer in turn 39 whether a “balance was charged if you didn’t make a call?”. After that, the Burmese customer didn’t answer, but instead used a polite tag with rising intonation in turn 40 ၭို ။ ။ ဗု ‘yes?’ to initiate the repair because the Thai call center operator used the wrong conjunction ၐင် jîn ‘If’ in turn 39. However, the Thai call center operator didn’t repair and kept using the incorrect utterance in turn 41. So the Burmese customer repaired the conjunction word from ၐင် jîn ‘If’ to ၯိုတို ။ ။ ဗု ‘although’ in turn 42 and spoke more clearly that the short message was sent and his balance was charged by the system. Consequently, he requested the Thai call center operator to send him the short message in English instead of Thai.

In addition, this research considers the frequency of types of repair. The frequency of repair helps identify what types of repair occurred most often, as well as who still has a problem and makes the repair initiation more frequently in conversation. The study revealed that the types of repair used most often included the following, detailed in section (3.2).

### 3.2 Frequency of repair

The data reveal that the most frequently used types of repair were other-initiated and self-repair, self-initiated and self-repair, and other-initiated and other-repair, respectively, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of repair initiation</th>
<th>Types of repair</th>
<th>Number of occurrence</th>
<th>Percent of occurrence</th>
<th>Number of occurrence divided by actor</th>
<th>Percent of occurrence divided by actor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self-initiation</td>
<td>self repair</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>16 2 7.8 1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other-initiation</td>
<td></td>
<td>181</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>80 101 39.2 49.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-initiation</td>
<td>other repair</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0 0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other-initiation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2 3 1.0 1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1** Frequency of repairs

The occurrence of repairs in Burmese telephone conversations
From Table 1, the types of repairs that occurred the most often in this data is other-initiation and self-repair (88.7%). The second most frequent one is self-initiation and self-repair (8.8%). Other-initiation and other-repair occurred (2.5%) less frequently in all of the data.

From a comparison of repair initiation between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers, the study found that Burmese customers started repair initiation more frequently (49.5%) than Thai call center operators (39.2%). The process of repair initiation began with Burmese customers used polite tags for men or women, such as bjá ‘Yes? (men),’ and fin “Yes? (women),’ with rising intonation, leading the Thai call center operators to make a self-repair of their speech. Moreover, the study found that self-initiated and self-repair of Thai call center operators occurred more frequently (7.8%) than self-initiated and self-repair (1.0%) of Burmese customers.

The frequency of repair data show that Thai call center operators may still have a problem with communicating unclear descriptions and using ungrammatical words. In this case, the Burmese customers did the repair initiation to stimulate Thai call center operators to repair. The next section (3.3) considers the study of repair initiation devices that try to deal with conversation problems. The goal is to learn what kinds of repair initiated devices are used and what devices point to the trouble source of the miscommunication.

### 3.3 Devices of other-initiation

Other-initiated repairs (OI) occurred when the recipient of the trouble-source produces the utterance to signal that the first speaker should repair the problematic utterance by his/herself (Wong, 2000). From the comparison of repair initiation between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers, it is found that Burmese customers started repair initiation more frequently than Thai call center operators. From my data, the six devices of other-initiated repairs found in this study are as follows: 1) A short word: fin ‘Yes?’. I beg your pardon, what did you say’. 2) The questions: bá lè ‘what?’, lè lè ‘how’?. 3) Repetition as a part of the trouble–source turn plus a question word: Noun plus lá yes or no question, Noun sá‘ what does “Noun” mean?’. 4) Repetition as a part of
the trouble-source (to produce a noun with rising intonation). 5) “You mean” plus a possible understanding of prior turn: statement plus ပိုလောင်စွာ “Is it like this?”.

6) Request: ပိုလောင်စွာပြချင်ပါသည် “tell me please.”

The sixth device was not mentioned in Schegloff et al. (1977)’s framework. In addition, combinations of devices were also found in this study. I will present each OI device and give examples of their occurrence below.

3.3.1 Short words

The first other-initiation device that Schegloff et al. (1977) mentioned is the use of words such as “huh?” or “what?”. This is the device of repair initiation which indicates that there is a problem with the prior turn but cannot identify the item which is the trouble source (Sidnell, 2010, p. 119). Devices such as “huh?” or “what?” are called “open class,” a term that was first proposed by Drew (1997). When those words are used, the speaker, who is an initiator, wants the original speaker to repair the trouble utterance by him/herself.

When the Burmese customers called the call center to ask for information or to make requests about various services, they sometimes did not speak clearly. Similarly, Thai call center operators did not always speak clearly or using proper grammar. I also found that Thai call center operators and Burmese customers would use a polite tag such as ၂င in as repair initiation. The word ၂င is a polite tag. In addition, the word ၂င is a polite term of address used by female speakers. It is used to address people or compel their attention. Sometimes, if we use this short word with rising intonation as ၂င, it acts as a polite response meaning “I beg your pardon, what did you say?” (Okell & Allott, 2001, pp. 197-198) as in excerpt (4). (Note: TS: Trouble Source, RI: Repair Initiation)

(4)

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T18. TS ➔ CM: ၂င  ၆ပြောင်း၊ ၆ပြောင်း ဝိုင်ပ ဝိုင်များ ဝိုင်များ ၂င ၂င
        ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င
        လပ  ၆မှာလေ
        ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င
        လပ  ၆မှာလေ
        ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င
        လပ  ၆မှာလေ
That’s right, song more one=cl. put.in want ၆မှာလေ
            ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င
            လပ  ၆မှာလေ
            ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င
            လပ  ၆မှာလေ
            ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င  ၂င
            လပ  ၆မှာလေ
            “That’s right, I would like to download another song, Can I?”
```
T19. RI → OP: ʃí

PTAG

“Yes? I beg your pardon, what did you say?”

T20. CM: θəʨí ʔé-dí di plón tʰé kò nau? tə=pou?

song ANA-this this phone in OBJ more one=CL

That’s right, song more one=CL put.in want SUB get FUT-Q

tʰɛ’tʰɛ̰ʨʰìɲ lo̰

put.in want SUB

“Song, I would like to download another song onto this

phone:”

In excerpt (4), a customer called the call center to ask how to download a

song. After the call center operator downloaded the first song for him, the customer

wanted more songs and asked θəʨí ʔé-dí di plón tʰé kò nau? tə=pou?”

song ANA-this this phone in OBJ more one=CL

That’s right, song more one=CL put.in want SUB get FUT-Q

tʰɛ’tʰɛ̰ʨʰìɲ lo̰

put.in want SUB

“Song, I would like to download another song onto this

phone:”

3.3.2 Questions

The second device proposed by Schegloff, Jefferison and Sacks (1977) is the

use of words such as “who”, “where” and “when”. This device is called “class-
specific question words.” They identify the kinds of items in the prior turn as needed

to be repaired (Sidnell, 2010, p. 124). In my data, I found that call center operators

or Burmese customers would use questions such as, ʃí ʔé-dí ‘for this’ after the word

θəʨí ‘music’ and dropping a question θəʨí jà malá ‘Can I?’. It is a question about the ability to do the requested

act of the hearer, and it is considered a conventional request in Burmese

(Rattanapitak, 2012).
lò lè ‘how?’ These questions are classified as open-class repair initiators in the same way as “huh?” and “Sorry”. “These repair initiators indicate that there is a problem with the prior turn, but they cannot identify the particular item, which is the trouble source.” (Sidnell, 2010, p. 119)

(5)

T3. TS ➔ CM: ချင်းစာလွယ်ကူစေရန် ကန်သွယ်မှု ရှိကြောင်း သေချာ ပေါ်နှီးခြောက် ပါခြင်း သေချာ မှိချေသည်
Hello  ႏွင့် ၏လူဦးရော် အပေါ် စာမျက်နှာ လှုပ်ရှား မှ လမ်းညွှန်ချင်
မှ ပေါ်နှီး တလူသို့ လည်း ၏ဝန် နဲချင် လမ်းညွှန်ချင်
LOC phone one=CL signal open stay want NFUT

= ပေါ်နှီး ၏လူသို့ အလွန် နေဆိုချင် နှစ်ခိုင်ငံသား =
open SUB able FUT=Q=
“(I) would like to open the telephone signal in my phone. Can you connect it for me?”

In excerpt (5), a customer called the call center because he wanted to set up a call screening service. The customer started his request with a declarative sentence indicating his desire to open the telephone signal on his phone that ချင်းစာလွယ်ကူစေရန် ကန်သွယ်မှု ရှိကြောင်း သေချာ ပေါ်နှီးခြောက် ပါခြင်း သေချာ မှိချေသည်
Elder sister, I would like to open the telephone signal in my phone' (T3).

Then he was not sure whether he could do it by producing the utterance ‘Can I do it?’ (T4) as a repair initiation. After that, the customer repeated the trouble utterance clearer than the one in turn 3 by adding an demonstrative phrase as ‘for that’ to indicate what exactly wanted to do.

3.3.3 Repetition as a part of the trouble-source turn plus questions

The third device is repetition as part of the trouble-source together with a question word. “It is a way as to locate a word which they had difficulty hearing or understanding, that word being replaced/indicated by ‘what’” (Drew, 1997, p. 71). It is used when the call center operators were not sure or did not understand what the recipient asked. In addition, in my data, I also found this device occurred due to customers using service terms which differed from those of the call center operators. Such service terms are English words which are pronounced with a different accent in Burmese. She would repeat a part of the trouble utterance together with a question such as ‘what?’ as a repair initiation, as in excerpt (6).

(6)

T34. TS ➔ CM |
| hou?kg hou?kg nau? ta=pa? sʰò jìn dei?= (Eng) |
| yes yes more one=cl say cond “da-date (Eng)” |
| kòn ñà pə expire nfut.nom reinf |

“That’s right. That’s right, the valid date will expire next week?”

T35. (0.2)

T36. RI ➔ OP: |
| date date (Eng) sʰò=dà bà=lè |
| date date (Eng) say=nfut.nom What=Q |

“dei?(Eng)”, What does “dei?” mean?”

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Excerpt (6) occurs in the context of topping up one’s internet balance. The caller asked for the validation period of his internet access, and the call center operator informed him it was valid until next week. The customer said a trouble turn with an English word in a Burmese accent da date nau? 'the valid date will expire next week?' (T34). In this case, the call center operator did not understand the word date which is the English word “date” in a Burmese accent. This resulted in pausing for about 0.2 millisecond (T35). Then, she repeated the word date date together with a question word ‘What is it?’ to the customer to let him do a self-repair in turn 36. Then, the customer performed repairs by changing it into an easier utterance and without the problematic word (T37).

3.3.4 Repetition as a part of the trouble-source

This device is similar to the third device, but there is a slight difference. That is, the repetition of the trouble-source in the third device is used together with a question word, while in the fourth device, the repetition of the trouble-source is used with a rising intonation. The following example illustrates such a case.

(7)
In excerpt (7), the customer asks for details about a 1 baht-free promotion. However, there is no such promotion. Thus, a call center operator did not understand which promotion the caller was talking about. Then she repeated a part of the prior utterance 逞 the free? tabat fri: ‘one baht-free?’ with rising intonation (T27) as repair initiation. Thus, the customer extended an answer (T28) by adding an utterance ‘one baht-free promotion which can be used all day and night’.

3.3.5 “You mean” plus a possible understanding of prior turn

Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) said about this device: “You mean ’X’, that it is used in checks of understanding, or that as a guess or a ‘try’ in what is called a correction invitation format.” In my data, this device was uttered when the customer described his calling purpose in very long and unclear terms. Thus, the call center operator uttered a service term together with an utterance ‘Is it like this?’ as in excerpt (8).
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When I don’t have time to pick up the phone or the phone is turned off, the call will be forwarded to a voice message center. I want to ask if it is set up by you, elder sister?"

“Ok, this phone doesn’t have any time. The call is forwarded to another number. Is it like this?”
In excerpt (8), the customer has described the process of call forwarding (T12) and wondered whether her call forwarding was set up by the company. The description given by the caller was very long and fast. It was a problematic turn which had to be repaired, so there was a long pause of about 3 milliseconds before the call center operator responded to the prior turn. The call center operator responded by uttering an utterance which showed her understanding ‘Ok’. Then she uttered a service term to show her understanding checks (T14) and added ‘Is it like this?’ to act as a guide question and correction check. In this case, when the customer was encouraged to perform self-repair again, so she repeated the same utterance more clearly than the first time in turn 15.

3.3.6 Request

A request is used to initiate a repair when the call center operator did not understand the entire utterance of the caller.

(9) T1.TS→CM.:

just.now phone number one=CL say FUT AGR

0 8 2 ANA-this number money borrow SFUT
The occurrence of repairs in Burmese telephone conversations

1. OP: call NEG=able NEG moment say say fall fall

2. OP: tʰó mə=ja̰ bú kʰəna żyə ká pjɔ́ ʨa̰ ʨa̰ call NEG=able NEG moment say say fall fall

3. CM: 082 xxx and then?

4. RI OP: more one=cl. again say pol 0 8 2 xxxxxxx more one=cl. again say pol 0 8 2 xxxxxxx

5. CM: xxxxxxx xxxxxx 082 xxxxxxx

---

“I will tell you a phone number, ok? 082xxxxxxx. The money was borrowed from the company to the balance of that number, but I can’t call out. I called several times, but it failed.”
In excerpt (9), the customer borrowed money from the company to refill her balance, but she cannot call out. The call center wanted to know the phone number first and did not perform the repair initiation of the trouble source (T2). However, she repeated the phone number and searched for more details on the database. When no details were found, she did the repair-initiation by uttering a request (T4) that "tell me again please" to the customer to say the problematic utterance again. The utterance was reformulated (T5) more clearly than the first time she asked the question (T1).

3.3.7 Combination of devices

This device was not mentioned in Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977)'s paper. Combined devices refer to the use of more than one repair initiation device together, such as using a question word device together with a request. This device is used to indicate that there is a problem with the prior turn but cannot identify the particular item, as the trouble source and the whole utterance do not make sense. This is illustrated in the excerpt below.

(10)

T1. Ring

T2. OP: ((call center’s name)) Hello (((call center’s name))

HelloPol order have Pol PTAG

Hello, “call center’s name”, may I help you?”

T3.TS→CM: hello 1SG.M.DEP phone ANA-this phone signal hold

“Hello, I can’t activate call holding in my phone”

T4.RI→OP: What more one=cl say Pol

“What? Tell me again, please”
In excerpt (10), the customer started the conversation with a problem about a call holding system that was not active. The call center operator did not understand the whole utterance because that utterance included some Burmese words, and only “call holding” was comprehended and familiar to the call center operator. Thus, the call center operator initiated the repair (T4) by combining two devices: a short word and a request for the customer to repeat the same utterance. Using a combined device is an attempt to get more details to verify and resolve a troubled source turn. After that, the customer repaired his utterance to restatement by describing the process of call holding again (T5).

All of the findings above are types, frequency and devices of repair that occurred in conversations between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers. In the next section, I will conclude and discuss the results of this paper.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The study found that there are three types of repair, which include 1) self-initiated and self-repair, 2) other-initiated and self-repair, and 3) other-initiated and other-repair. Analysis has revealed that initiation by Burmese customers and self-repairs by Thai call center operators, as well as initiation by Thai call center operators and self-repair by Burmese customers, were mostly found in the study. This finding is in accordance with the study of Sungkaman (2006) which suggested that the most frequently used type of repair is self-repair. According to Schegloff et al., (1977), other-initiated repair devices are the most frequent repair devices in
native-speaker-to-native-speaker conversation. Likewise, McHoul (as cited in Kurhila, 2001, p. 1087) has studied classroom interaction and has observed that self-correction is also used in pedagogic context between teachers and pupils. He said that the correction sequence between teachers and pupils are most frequently realized as other-initiated self-repair.

Moreover, after considering the results in detail, the most frequently used types were other-initiated and self-repair, and self-initiated and self-repair, respectively. On the other hand, it has been found that Burmese customers started repair initiation more frequently than Thai call center operators.

There are two possible factors for these initiations and repairs: language competency and politeness. For the language competency factor, it is because the operators did not explain clearly, used incorrect grammar, or pronounced English words with a Thai accent. This resulted in misunderstanding or unclear information for the Burmese customers, and the Burmese customers tended to start the initiation and have the operators do a self-repair. Those language competency factors are the same with Mon conversation, which has found that repair initiation occurred by unclear pronunciation, mishearing, and missing words (Sungkaman, 2006). For repair initiation in telephone conversations, however, Drew (1977) found that there were two environments in which there is an apparently abrupt shift in topic and inapposite. Likewise, in telephone conversation between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers, those environments also occurred in which Burmese customers suddenly changed topics.

In terms of politeness, one possible reason why Burmese customers initiate to Thai call center operators repair utterance may be that Burmese customers may not want others to feel they have flaws in their speech. For this reason, they tend to start the initiation and let the other do the self-repair. This behavior also shows politeness in terms of saving each other’s face. It corresponds with repair occurrence in Mon conversations, which found that other repairs are considered impolite and therefore participants wait for the speaker to repair the trouble source by themselves (Sungkaman, 2006). Rattanaphitak (2012) has suggested the choices of politeness in Burmese. Burmese people choose a level of politeness according to power, social
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relation, and with respect to the others’ feeling. Both Thai call centers and Burmese customers have unfamiliar levels in social relation and normally, the customer is in the position of the one who is requesting the call center operator to do something. It is possible that Burmese customers choose to initiate and not repair to be polite to Thai call center operators.

In other-initiated device, native English speakers in Schegloff et al.’s (1977) study used device, such as the word “what” or “huh,” which cannot identify the trouble source (Sidnell, 2010); the use of a single question words, such as “who” or “when” with rising intonation; and the use of “Y mean plus possible understanding of prior turn”. However, the results of other-initiated repair devices in conversations between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers show that there are six devices: 1) A short word: ʃ`fin ‘yes?, I beg your pardon, what did you say?’, 2) The questions: ɔɔɔɔɔɔ bɔ lɛ ‘What?’, ɔɔɔɔɔɔ bɛ lɔ lɛ ‘How?’, 3) Repetition as a part of the trouble-source turn plus question: noun ɔɔɔɔɔɔ sò dà bɔ lɛ ‘What does it mean?’, 4) Repetition as a part of the trouble-source (to pronounce a noun with rising intonation), 5) “You Mean” plus a possible understanding of prior turn: statement plus ɔɔɔɔɔɔ dì lò lá ‘Is it like this’, and 6) Request: ʃ`fin ‘yes?’ with rising intonation, request, and combined devices.

The request is used when the call center operator does not understand the whole utterance. She will use the request utterance in order to ask the caller to say the problematic utterance again. The combination device was not mentioned in Schegloff et al. (1977)’s paper. The combinations of a short word and a request, or a request together with a partial repetition, are also used in other-initiated repairs. Using combined devices is an attempt by the call center operators to get as many details as possible, because the duty of the call center operator is to get information from the callers in order to find the best way to solve the problem they are facing.
Interestingly, the first device is a polite tag pronounced with rising intonation, and there are differences in the use of repair initiation between Thai call center operators and Burmese customers. From my observation, the Burmese customers preferred to use polite tags with rising intonation, such as .Foundation/boxshadowup/ampersandit pjá ‘Yes?, I beg your pardon, what did you say?’ as repair initiation. If a polite tag is used with an unfamiliar person, it is more polite than a question word. Although there are polite tags in both Thai language and Burmese language, the Thai call center operators seem to prefer to use a question word such as “what?” or a partial repetition of the first time.

Therefore, when Thai call center operators are trained, it is seems that repair initiated devices for native speaker of target language should be applied. To achieve native-like interaction in foreign language service encounters, other-initiated devices, such as the polite tag pjá ‘Yes?’, should be trained. In other words, the call center operators should be helped to achieve native-like proficiency.

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Endnotes

1. This topic is a part of my MA thesis which was financially supported by the Thailand Research fund through TRF Master Research Grants: TRF-MRG
2. Call Screening is a service which the customer can choose ten phone numbers which they preferred.
3. Word ‘free’ is pronounced by Burmese customer.
4. Word ‘free’ is pronounced by Thai call center operators.
5. Phone number
6. Phone number
REFERENCES


**APPENDIX**


- ? rising intonation
- - cut off utterance
- [ ] Utterance produced in overlap with another
- : Sound stretch (more than one set of colons indicates a longer sound stretch)
- = indicates that there is no beat of silence separating the utterance.
- (0.2) pauses in tenths of a second
- (. ) a very slight pause
- (()) transcriber’s note relevant to an understanding of the talk
- | Previous turn or Next turn
- ➤ Point of discussion

**Abbreviations**

1.SG.F First person singular female
1.SG.M First person singular male
3.SG Third person singular
AGR agreement
ANA anaphora
APPEL appellative
CL classifier
CM Customer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COND</td>
<td>conditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIM</td>
<td>diminutive</td>
</tr>
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<td>Eng</td>
<td>English word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPH</td>
<td>emphatic</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUT</td>
<td>future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFUT</td>
<td>non-future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFUT.ATTR</td>
<td>non-future, attributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFUT.NOM</td>
<td>non-future nominaliser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJ</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>Thai call center operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTAG</td>
<td>polite tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL</td>
<td>politeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREP</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOUT</td>
<td>quotation marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REINF</td>
<td>reinforcement of proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUB</td>
<td>sub-ordinate</td>
</tr>
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<td>SUBJ</td>
<td>subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Thai word</td>
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<td>TIME</td>
<td>time marker</td>
</tr>
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<td>topic</td>
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