

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

การปรับแก้ที่เกิดขึ้นในการสนทนากลางโทรศัพท์ระหว่างเจ้าหน้าที่

ให้บริการข้อมูลชาวไทยกับลูกค้าชาวพม่า

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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 ရှင် ရှင် ‘Yes?, I beg your pardon, what did you say?’, 2) The questions: ဘာလဲ bà lè ‘What?’, ဘယ်လိုလဲ bé lò lè ‘How?’, 3) Repetition as a part of the trouble-source turn plus a question: noun ဆုတေသာ ဘာလဲ shò dà bà lè ‘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 ဒီလိုလား dì lò

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lá 'Is it like this', and 6) Request: ເບື້ອະບົບ ແກ້ວ ປົງ ປີ ບ້າ ນວ '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 และกลวิธีของการปรับแก้ในการสนทนาภาษาพม่าทางโทรศัพท์ระหว่างเจ้าหน้าที่ให้บริการข้อมูลชาวไทยกับลูกค้าชาวพม่า โดยใช้ข้อมูลที่บันทึกจากศูนย์ลูกค้าสัมพันธ์แห่งหนึ่ง จำนวน 80 บทสนทนา และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยแนวคิดการปรับแก้คำพูดของเชกลอฟฟ์ เจฟเฟอร์สัน และแซคก์ (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977)

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า มีประเภทของการปรับแก้ 3 ประเภท ได้แก่ 1) การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-initiated) และวิปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-repair) 2) การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-initiated) และวิปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-repair) และ 3) การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-initiated) และวิปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-repair) ส่วนประเภทของการปรับแก้ที่พบมากที่สุดคือ การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้โดยผู้อื่น (other-initiated) และวิปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-repair) รองลงมาคือ การเริ่มต้นปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-initiated) และวิปรับแก้ด้วยตนเอง (self-repair) ตามลำดับ และยังพบอีกว่า การเริ่มต้นการปรับแก้โดยลูกค้าชาวพม่ามีจำนวนมากกว่า การเริ่มต้นการปรับแก้โดยเจ้าหน้าที่ให้บริการข้อมูลชาวไทย ส่วนกลุ่มวิธีการปรับแก้ที่นิยมพบว่ามี 6 กลุ่มวิธี ได้แก่ 1) การใช้ถ้อยคำสัน្តิ เช่น ရှင် ရှင် “คง” 2) การใช้ประโยชน์คำตาม เช่น ဘာလ bà lè “อะไร”, ဘယ်လိုလဲ bé lò lè “อ่าย่างไร” 3) การกล่าวช้าส่วนที่เป็นปัญหา กับคำตาม เช่น ဆုတေသန ဘာလ shò dà bà lè “หมายถึงอะไร” 4) การกล่าวช้าส่วนที่เป็นปัญหาด้วยทำนองเสียงสูง 5) การกล่าวถ้อยคำเพื่อตรวจสอบความเข้าใจ เช่น statement plus ဒီလိုလား dì lò lá “อ่าย่างนี้หรือ” และ 6) การใช้ประโยชน์ของร้อง เช่น ဟြေပေးပါ နော် pjó pé bà nò “ช่วยบอกหน่อยนะ” รวมทั้งยังพบว่ามีการใช้กลุ่มวิธี ผสมด้วย

คำสำคัญ: เจ้าหน้าที่ให้บริการข้อมูลชาวไทย, ลูกค้าชาวพม่า, การปรับแก้, ภาษาพม่า, การวิเคราะห์ทัศนทนา

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 disaffiliative. 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, there has been a study of conversation structure in Mon conversation, and it found that repairs occurred from missing words, unclear pronunciation, forgotten words, mishearing and inserting sequence. It has also been found that most of the repairs were self-repair. Moreover, other repairs were considered to be impolite; therefore, the participant waited for the speaker to repair the trouble source himself (Sungkaman, 2006).

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

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).

(1)

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T19. OP: =ကျွန်မ သိ ချင် တယ် အစ်ကို ဖုန်း ခေါ် ရင် (network 1)
=teəmə θi ̥ te̥h̥in d̥e ̥ ʔəkò p̥h̥ón k̥h̥ò j̥in (network 1)
=1SG.F know want NFUT elder brother phone call COND(network 1)

များ များ ခေါ် သွား လား ဒါမှမဟုတ် (network 2)(network 3)
mjá mjá k̥h̥ò ̥θwá lá dàm̥ám̥əhou? (network 2)(network 3)
much much call go Q or (network 2)(network 3)

များ များ ခေါ် သွား လား
mjá mjá k̥h̥ò ̥θwá lá
much much call go Q

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

T20. (0.1)

T21. CM: (network 1) ခေါ်
(network 1) p̥
(network 1) REINF
“(network 1)”

→T22. OP: ဟုတ်ကဲ တစ်ခါ ၃။။ (Th.) နေ့ဘက် များ ခေါ် သွား လား
hou?k̥ ̥t̥ek̥h̥à 3။။ (Th.) n̥eb̥e? mjá k̥h̥ò ̥θwá lá
Yes one=CL 3။။ (Th.) day.time much call go Q
ညဘက် များ ခေါ် သွား လား
n̥ab̥e? mjá k̥h̥ò ̥θwá lá
night.time much call go Q
“Yes, one time. ၃။။ (Th.), do you often make a call at day time or at night time?”

T23. CM: ညဘက် များ တယ်
n̥ab̥e? mjá d̥e
night.time much NFUT
“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 နေ့တစ်နေ့ *ngēbē?* ‘day time’, but she said တစ်ခါး *təkʰà* ‘one time’ instead. Therefore, she initiated the Thai word ဒေါ်? and repaired the trouble source from တစ်ခါး *təkʰà* ‘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 ရှင် *jín* ‘yes?’, မှုပ် *bjà* ‘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 ရှင် *jín* ‘yes?’, or questions such as ဘာဝဲ *bàle* ‘what’ to be a repair initiation. The word ရှင် *jín* 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:	=နှစ်	ရက်နေ့	အထိ	ရောက်	ရှင်	ဒီ	mes
		=nə	jɛ?nɛ	?ətʰj	jau?	jín	dì	mess
		=Second	date	until	arrive	COND	this	mess
								message
		မောင်	တော့	ပါ	ဘူး	ရှင်	အလိုလို	[ပျောက်
		məwɪn	dɔ	pà	bú	jín	?ələlò	ဘူး မယ်]
		NEG=enter	EMPH	POL	NEG	PTAG	automatic	[disappear go FUT]

“On the 2nd, this short message wasn’t be sent and [it will automatically disappear].”

T13 CM: [ဟုတ်ကဲ့]
 [hou?kə]
 [Yes]

သိချင်း နောက် တစ်ပုဒ် ထည့် ချင် လို့ ရ မလား
 ဓာတ္ထိုံး nau? təpou? tʰɛ̥ teʰin lq ja məlā
 Song more one=CL put.in want SUB get FUT-Q
 “[Yes]. Then I would like to download one more song, can I
 download it?”

→T14. OP: ဂျင့်
 ſín?
 PTAG
 “Yes?(women)”

→T15. CM: သိချင်း အဲဒီ ဒီ ဖုန်း ထဲ ကို နောက် တစ်ပုဒ် ထည့် ချင် လို့
 ဓာတ္ထိုံး ?édi dì pʰón tʰe kò nau? təpou? tʰɛ̥ teʰin lq
 song ANA-this this Phone in OBJ back one=CL put.in want SUB
 “A song, (I) would like to download a song onto this telephone.”

:

F27/10.12.53

In excerpt (2), when the Thai call center operator explained about canceling a short message in turn 12, the Burmese customer responded by saying ဟုတ်ကဲ့ hou?kə ‘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 ဂျင့် ſín ‘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).

(3)

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→T39. OP: ဖုန်း မခေါ် ရင် ပိုက်ဆုံး စား သွား လား
p^hón mək^hò jìn pəi?s^hàn sá θwá lá
Phone NEG= call COND money eat go Q
“Balance was charged if you didn’t make a call?”

T40. CM: ဗျာ

bjá?

PTAG

“Yes?(men)”

→T41. OP: ဖုန်း မခေါ် ပိုက်ဆုံး စား အဲလို လား
p^hón mək^hò pəi?s^hàn sá ?élo lá
Phone NEG= call money eat ANA-like Q
“Balance was charged if you didn’t make a call, wasn’t it?”

→T42. CM: အေး ဖုန်း မခေါ် စေနဲ့ စကား မပေါ် စေနဲ့ ပိုက်ဆုံး
?é p^hón mək^hò pém̥z zéká məpjó pém̥z pəi?s^hàn
RP Phone NEG= call although word NEG=say although money

စား စား သွား လေ စာအိတ် ပို့ လာ တယ်
sá sá θwá lè sà?ei? pq là dè
eat eat go EMPH SMS sent come NFUT

ဘူး စာအိတ် လာ ော် ထိုင်း စာအိတ် ထိုင်းစာ
θú sà?ei? là dà t^haín sà?ei? t^haínsà
3SG.DIM SMS come NFUT.NOM Thai SMS Thai language

မဖတ် တတ် ဘူး အက်လိုင်စာ ပို့ ပေး ဝါ
məp^ha? ta? bú ?íngəlei?sa pq pé bà
NEG=read able NEG English send Give POL

အက်လိုင်စာ ဖတ် တတ် တယ်
?íngəlei?sa p^ha? ta? dè
English read able NFUT

“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.”

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F2/20.01.53

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 ချေးပျေး ‘yes?’ to initiate the repair because the Thai call center operator used the wrong conjunction ငါး ရှင် ‘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 ငါး ရှင် ‘If’ to ငါးပေါ် ပေမဲ့ ‘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 1 Frequency of repairs

Types of repair initiation	Types of repair	Number of occurrence	Percent of occurrence	Number of occurrence divided by actor		Percent of occurrence divided by actor	
				OP	CM	OP	CM
self-initiation	self repair	18	8.8	16	2	7.8	1.0
other-initiation		181	88.7	80	101	39.2	49.5
self-initiation	other repair	-	-	-	-	0.0	0.0
other-initiation		5	2.5	2	3	1.0	1.5
summary		204	100	204		100	

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 မှ ပျော် ‘Yes? (men),’ and မှ ရှင် ‘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: မှ ရှင် ‘Yes?. I beg your pardon, what did you say’. 2) The questions: ဘာလဲ ပါ လောက် ‘what?’, ဘယ်လိုလဲ ပေါ် လောက် ‘how?’. 3) Repetition as a part of the trouble-source turn plus a question word: Noun plus အသာ လောက် ‘yes or no question, Noun ဆိုတော် ဘာလဲ ပေါ် လောက် ‘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 ဒီလိုလား dì lò lá ‘Is it like this?’. 6) Request: ပြောပေးပါ နော် pjó pé bà nò ‘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 ရှင်း ရှင် as repair initiation. The word ရှင်း ရှင် is a polite tag. In addition, the word ရှင်း ရှင် 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 ရှင်း ရှင်, 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)

T18. TS → CM:	ဟုတ်ကဲ့၊	သိချင်း	နောက်	တစ်ပုဒ်	ထည့်	ချင်
	hou?kɛ,	θətɛín	nau?	tə=pou?	t ^h ɛ	te ^h ɪN
	That's right, song		more	one=CL	put.in	want
	လို့	ရဲ	မလေား			
	lq	ja	mə=lá			
	SUB	get	FLT-Q			

"That's right. I would like to download another song. Can I?"

T19. RI → OP: ရှင်
JÍN
PTAG

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

T20. CM: သိချင်း၊ အဲဒီ ဒီ ပုန်း ဆဲ ကို နောက် တစ်ပုဒ်
θəteíN ʔé-dì dì pʰón tʰé kó 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
ထည့် ချင် ထွေး
tʰɛ təʰin lq
put.in want SUB
“Song, I would like to download another song onto this
phone.”

:

F27/10.11.53

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 သိချင်းနောက်တစ်ပုဒ် ထည့်ချင်လို့ ရမလား θəteíN nau? tə=pou? tʰɛ təʰin lq ja mə lá ‘I would like to download another song, can I?’ (T18). However, the caller spoke very fast. Thus, the call center operator could not comprehend the utterance. After that, she uttered a polite tag with rising intonation ရှင် JÍN ‘Yes?, I beg your pardon, what did you say?’ (T19) This signals to the first speaker to repair the utterance by himself (T20). Consequently, the customer modified the utterance to make it clearer than the first utterance (T18) by adding a phrase အဲဒီ ʔé-dì ‘for this’ after the word သိချင်း θəteíN ‘music’ and dropping a question ရမလား ja mə lá ‘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).

3.3.2 Questions

The second device proposed by Schegloff, Jefferson 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, ဘာလ bà lé ‘what?’, ဘယ်လိုလ bà

lò lé ‘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: မင်္ဂလာပါ ခင်ဗျာ အစ်မ ရေ ကျွန်တော် ဖုန်း ဘဲ
mínkələbà kʰəmjà ?əmə jè təənɔ pʰón tʰé
Hello PTAG elder sister APPEL ISG.M.DEP phone in

မှာ ဖုန်း တစ်လုံး လိုင်း ရွှေ့ နေ ချင် တယ်
mà pʰón tə=lón láin pʰwɪn nè təhɪn dè
LOC phone one=CL signal open stay want NFUT

ရွှေ့ လို့ ရ မလေား=
pʰwɪn lq ja mə=lá=

open SUB able FUT=Q=
“Hello, elder sister. I would like to open the telephone
signal in my phone. Can I do it? =”

T4. RI → OP:=ဘာဝ

= bálé

= What?

“= What?”

T5. (.)

T6. CM: ဖုန်း တစ်လုံး လိုင်း ရွှေ့ နေ ချင် တယ်
pʰón tə=lón láin pʰwɪn nè təhɪn dè
phone one=CL signal open stay want NFUT

အဲဒါ ရွှေ့ ပေး လို့ ရ မလေား
?é-dà pʰwɪn pé lq ja mə=lá
ANA-that open give SUB able FUT=Q

“(I) would like to open the telephone signal in my phone. Can
you connect it for me?”

⋮

F13/10.11.53

In excerpt (5), a customer called the call center because he wanted to set up a call screening service². The customer started his request with a declarative sentence indicating his desire to open the telephone signal on his phone that အစ်မရေ ကျွန်တော်

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 ဘာလဲ bà lé ‘what?’ as a repair initiation, as in excerpt (6).

(6)

T34. TS → CM: ဟုတ်ကဲ ဟုတ်ကဲ နောက တစ်ပတ် ဆို ရင် da date (Eng)
 hou?kɛ hou?kɛ nau? tə=pa? shò jìn de dei? (Eng)
 yes yes more one=CL say COND “da-date (Eng)”
 ကုန် ဝါ ပေါ့
 kòn dà 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) ဆိတ် ဘာလ
 date det (Eng) s^hò=dà bà=lé
 date date (Eng) say=NFUT.NOM What=Q
 “dei??(Eng)”, What does “dei?” mean ??

T37. CM: အေ အင် အင်တာနက် နောက် တစ်ပတ် သုံး လို ရ ပြ ၆၅
 ?à ?ín ?ítane? nau? tə=pa? θón lq ja pjì pø
 RP in- internet more one=CL use SUB able NSIT REINF
 “Yes, I will be able to use the internet next week. Ok?”
 :

26/10.11.53

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 နောက်တစ်ပတ်လိုရင် da date ကုန်တာပေါ့ nau? təpa? s^hò jɪN de dei? (Eng) kòN dà pø ‘the valid date will expire next week?’ (T34). In this case, the call center operator did not understand the word date /dei?/ 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 အိုဘာ dei? dei? s^hò dà ‘dei??’ together with a question word ဘာလဲ bà lè ‘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)

⋮
 T25. TS → CM:ကျေနိတော့ ဖုန်း လေ တစ်ဘတ် **free** သိ ချင် တယ်။
 təənɔ̄ p^hón lè tə=ba? p^hri:³ θì tèɪN dè
 1SG.M.DEP phone EMPH one=CL free know want NFUT
 ဘယ်လို လုပ် ရ မလဲ မသိ ဘူး
 bèlò lou? ja mə=lè mə=θì bú
 How do able FUT=Q NEG=know NEG
 “I would like to know about **1 baht-free promotion** for my
 phone number. I don’t know how I can do it”

T26. (.)

T27. RI → OP: ຕາດ້ວຕົດ free?
 tə=ba? fri:⁴
 one=baht free?=
 “one baht-free=”

T28. CM: = ແລ ຕາດ້ວຕົດ ແດ. ໂ ດີ ດີ ດີ free
 = ?à tə=ba? nè ja p^hri:
 = RP one=baht day night free
 “=Yes, 1 baht-free promotion which can be used all day and
 night.”

:

7/17.08.53

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 ຕາດ້ວຕົດ free? təbat fri: ‘one baht-free?’ with rising intonation (T27) as repair initiation. Thus, the customer extended an answer (T28) by adding an utterance ຕາດ້ວຕົດ ແດ. ໂ ດີ ດີ ດີ free təba? nè ja p^hri: ‘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 ແກ້ໄຂລິ້ລາ: ?é dì lòlā ‘Is it like this?’ as in excerpt (8).

(8)

⋮
 T12. TS → CM: ແດ້ວ ມາວ: ຕູ້ອາວີ ອຸ່ນ ອຸ່ນ
 ?əlou? mə=?á də=?əkhà təq jìn
 work NEG=free NFUT.ATTR=time fall COND
 ມກົດ ດ້ ບວ ຕາດ້ວຕົດ: ດີນ ຕູ້ອາວີ
 mə=kàin də hà tətə^há pei? də=?əkhà
 NEG=hold NFUT.ATTR TOP other close FUT.ATTR=time

လိုင်းကူး စကားပြာ ပြာ တယ် လေ
 láin.kú zəgápjó pjó dè lè
 call.forwarding say say NFUT EMPH

အဲဒီ တကယ် တော့ အစ်မ လွန် ပါ သလား လို့
 ?é-di təkξ də ?əma lou? bà tə=là lo
 ANA-this really EMPH elder.sister do POL NFUT=Q QUOT

မေး ကြည့် တယ်
 mé təj dè
 ask try NFUT

“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?”

T13. (0.3)

T14. RI → OP: ေသာ် ဒီ ဖုန်း နံပါတ် ဖုန်း မအေး ဘူး
 ?à dì pʰón nànba? pʰón mə=?á bú
 RP this phone number phone NEG=free NEG

ဖုန်း မအေး ရင် ဘူများ ဖုန်း ဝင် တယ်
 pʰón mə=?á jìn θù.mjá pʰón wìn dè
 phone NEG=free COND other.person phone enter NFUT

အစ်မ အခြား ဖုန်း နံပါတ် ဝင် ပါ တယ်
 ?əmä:: ?ətəhá pʰón nànba? wìn bà dé
 elder.sister::other phone number enter POL NFUT

အဲဒီ လို ဘာ:
 ?é-di lò lá
 ANA-this like Q

“Ok, this phone doesn’t have any time. The call is forwarded to another number. **Is it like this?**”

T15. CM:ဟုတ် တယ် အစ်မ၊ သမီး မအေး၊ ဖုန်း မကိုင်
 hou?.dè ?əmä θəmí mə=?á, pʰón mə=kàin
 That’s right elder.sister daughter NEG=free phone NEG=hold

တဲ့အခါ မှာ တစ်ခြား ဖုန်း လိုင်း ဝင် ဘာ
 dè ?əkʰà m̥à tə=təhá pʰón láin wìn dà

NFUT.ATTR=time TIME other phone signal enter NFUT.NOM

እዕስ ቅዱ ዘዴወ የኩና ቅዱ በኩና አዕስ
?éda kò ?éma p^hón m^é=kàin dà lou?
ANA- that OBJ elder.sister phone NEG=hold NFUT.NOM do

ወዕስ ለዕስ

t ^há lá

put Q

“That’s right, sister. When I don’t have any time or I don’t pickup the phone, the call will be forwarded to another number. Isthath set up by sister?”

:

1/1.11.53

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 ይሸኑ የኩ ‘Ok’. Then she uttered a service term to show her understanding checks (T14) and added እወቃለሁ፡ ?é dì lò lá ‘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.: ይኩ የኩና ቅዱ በኩና ይሸኑ ወሆኑ
k^hunq^a p^hón nànb^a? t^o=t^{ch}é? pjópj^a m^é nò
just.now phone number one=CL say FUT AGR
○ ፧ J እወቃለሁ፡ የኩና ይሸኑ ወሆኑ
θùnq^a sⁱ? nⁱ? ?é-dì nànb^a? pai?shàn t^{ch}í dè
0 8 2 ANA-this number money borrow NFUT

ထိုး	မရ	ဘူး	ခဏ	စကားပြော	ပြော	ကျ	ကျ
t ^h ó	mə=jə	bú	k ^h ənqá	zéká	pjó	teq	teq
call	NEG=able	NEG	moment	say	say	fall	fall

သွား	တယ်	ပိုက်ဆံ	ချေး	တယ်	လေ
θwá	dε	pai?shàn	tehí	dè	lé
go	NFUT	money	borrow	NFUT	EMI

"I will tell you a phone number, ok? 082xxxxxxxxThe 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. "

T2.	OP:	○	◎	Ј	xxx ⁵	ပြီးခေါ်။
		θùnŋa	ʃi?	ní?	xxx	pjí.də
		0	8	2	xxx	then
		“082 xxx and then?”				

T3. CM: xxxx⁶
xxxx
“xxxx”

T5.	CM:	xxxxxx အဲဒီ	နံပါတ်	ဂိုဏ်ဆံ	ရှိ	တယ်
		xxxxxx ၃é-dì	nànbà?	paiʔs ^h àN	jí	dè
		xxxxxx ANA-this	number	money	have	NFUT

ပုန်း	စကားပြော	မရ	ဘူး	ခုနဲ	ဆက်	လာ	တယ်
pʰón	zəká pjó	mə=jə	bú	kʰynq	sʰε?	là	dè
phone	say	NEG	get	NEG	just, now	connect	come NFUT

ပုန်း ပြန် ကျ တယ် လေ ပုန်း ဘာဖြစ်လို့ လဲ မသိ
 p^hón pjàn tɕà dè lè p^hón bàpjí?lqo lé mə=θi
 phone again fall NFUT EMPH phone why Q NEG=know
 “This number has a balance, but I can’t call out. I just try to
 call out, but it fails. I wonder why that is?”

3

F2/1

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 နောက်တစ်ခေါင် ပြန်ပြောပါ nau? tək^hau? pjàN pjó bà ‘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: မင်္ဂလာပါ ((call center's name)) ၅ အမိန် ၇၅ ၅ ၇၅
 mínkələbà ((call center's name)) bà ?əməein jí bà jíN
 Hello ((call center's name)) POL order have POL PTAG
 “Hello, “call center’s name”, may I help you?”

T3.TS→CM: ဟဲလို ကျွန်တော် ဖုန်း အဲဒီ ဖုန်း လိုင်း ဆုံး လို့
 héló təənq pʰón ʔédi pʰón láin sh̥ín lq
 hello ISG.M.DEP phone ANA-this phone signal hold SUB

မရ ဘူး ပျော်
 mə=jə bú pjà
 NEG= able NEG PTAG

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

T4.RI→OP:ဘာလဲ နောက် တစ်ခေါင် ပြောပြု ၅။
 bà.lé nou? tə=k^hau? pjó pjà bà
 What more one=CL say POL
 “What? Tell me again, please”

T5. CM: ကျွန်တော် ဖုန်း က လိုင်း ဆင့် လို့ မရ ဘူး
 teənɔ ɔpʰón kə láiN sʰiN lq mə=jə bú
 1SG.M.DEP phone SUBJ call hold SUB NEG=able NEG

တစ်လုံး တစ်လိုင်း ဆင့် နောက် တစ်လိုင်း ဆင့် လို့ မရ²
 tə=lón tə=láin sʰiN mau? tə=láin sʰiN lq mə=jə
 one =CL one =CL hold more one=CL hold SUB NEG=able

“I can't activate call holding. A number is not overlapping with other phone numbers”

:

F2/3

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 ဘူး bà lè “What?” 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

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 some thing. 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: ဂျေး ရှိန် 'yes?', I beg your pardon, what did you say?', 2) The questions: ဘာလဲ ပဲ လော် 'What?', ဘယ်လိုလဲ ပဲ လော် လော် 'How?', 3) Repetition as a part of the trouble-source turn plus question: noun ဆိုတာ ဘာလဲ ဆွဲ့တဲ့ ပဲ လော် လော် '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 ဒီလိုလား ပါ လော် လော် 'Is it like this', and 6) Request: ပြောပေးပါ နော် ပျော် ပေါ် ပဲ လော် လော် 'Please tell me'. In addition, combined devices were also found in this study, such as the second device together with the sixth device. In addition, Thai call center operators and Burmese customers not only use repair initiated devices which are the same with Schegloff et al.'s (1977) study, but also use different devices, such as the polite tag ဂျေး ရှိန် '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 ဂျေး ရှိန် , မျှေး ပုံ၊ ‘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 ဂျေး ရှိန် ‘Yes?’, should be trained. In other words, the call center operators should be helped to achieve native-like proficiency.

Acknowledgments

The study was financially supported by the Thailand Research Fund through TRF Master Research Grants: TRF-MRG to Wijit Krisathian and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sujaritlak Deepadung. I would like to express my gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sujaritlak Deepadung for her comments and suggestions during the writing of this paper and my thesis.

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

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APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions by Jefferson (2004)

- ? 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

COND	conditional
DIM	diminutive
Eng	English word
EMPH	emphatic
FUT	future
LOC	location
NEG	negative
NFUT	non-future
NFUT.ATTR	non-future, attributive
NFUT.NOM	non-future nominaliser
OBJ	object
OP	Thai call center operator
PTAG	polite tag
POL	politeness
PREP	Preposition
Q	question word
QOUT	quotation marker
REINF	reinforcement of proposition
RP	response
SUB	sub-ordinate
SUBJ	subject
T	Turn
Th	Thai word
TIME	time marker
TOP	topic