Promoting Camaraderie or Destroying a Relationship: Addressing a Person with an Animal Name in Thai Culture

Suphachai Tawichai

Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand
Email: tawichai_s@su.ac.th

Abstract

Addressing a person with an animal name is a social practice in Thai culture. Interpreting the meaning of the animal name as an address term depends on complex processes in which each individual, either in the same culture or a different culture, might perceive and interpret the meanings of the terms differently. Despite these possible different interpretations, it is interesting to investigate why many Thais still use an animal nickname to address someone rather than using that person's name. This study examines the functions of addressing a person with an animal name and factors affecting different construals of the meanings of animal names between the speaker and the addressed person based on cognitive semantic and pragmatic approaches. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from 800 Thai informants. The results reveal the following five functions of addressing a person with an animal name: 1) conveying a vivid picture of the addressed person's characteristics, 2) lessening offensive meanings of taboo words, 3) teasing the addressed person, 4) creating a close relationship with the addressed person, and 5) bullying the addressed person. It can be concluded that this practice can either promote camaraderie when the name is used to create a close relationship, or destroy a relationship when used as a means of verbal bullying. Consequently, when addressing someone with an animal name in Thai culture, three factors must be considered: the intimacy of the speakers, the gender of the speakers, group membership, and the formality of the situation.

Keywords: address terms, cognitive semantics, pragmatics, camaraderie, verbal bullying

Introduction

Address terms or terms of address are words or phrases that speakers use to refer to their addressee; they usually serve to open an interaction to get the addressee's attention (Office of the Royal Society, 2017; Palakornkul, 1972; Tingsabadh and Prasithrathsint, 1988). An address term can be found in many languages, including Thai as in Example 1 (a)-(c).

Example 1

(a) *เข้ม, ล้างจานหรือยัง?*
'**Khem,** [a common Thai nickname] have you washed the dishes?'

(b) *แม่, แกงมัสมั่นทำยังไงจ๊ะพ่อทำไม่เป็น*
'**Mom,** can you tell me how to cook *masaman* [a Thai curry]? I don't know how.'

(c) *แม่ค้า, เสื้อตัวนี้ราคาเท่าไหร่ลดได้ไหมจ๊ะ*
'**Merchant,** how much does this shirt cost? Can you give me a discount?'

From Example 1 (a)-(c), it can be seen that many types of words can be used as address terms in Thai. In Example 1 (a), a nickname is used. Example 1 (b) shows that a kinship term can also be a term of address. It should be noted that in this example, the word "mom" here refers to the wife, not the mother, of the speaker. It is common in Thai culture for a husband and a wife to call each other "father" and "mother." Example 1 (c) demonstrates that an occupation is a common address term.

In terms of structure, both individual address terms and a combination of an address term with a premodifier or postmodifier can be found. Examples are "*Ai-Khem,*" "my dear mom," "lovely merchant." The term "*Ai-*" is a Thai derogatory prefix used for men, but it can be also used as a non-derogatory prefix showing a close relationship between the speaker and the addressed person. The findings of previous studies on address terms in various cultures reveal that terms of address

vary depending on several types of social relationship between the speakers, such as mother and child, husband and wife, and buyer and seller (Gu, 1990; Ide, 1982 and 1989; Ozcan, 2016; Parkinson, 2020; Prasithrathsint, 2002 and 2009; Surono; 2018; Tingsabadh and Prasithrathsint, 1988).

In my research for this study, I have observed that names of animals are also common types of address terms in Thai. Therefore, I conducted a preliminary study on this topic in 2013. A wide array of animal names was found, as in Example 2 (a)-(c).

Example 2
(a) *เหี้ย, ล้างจานหรือยัง*
'**Lizard,** have you washed the dishes?'
(b) *หมู, แกงมัสมั่นทำยังไงจ๊ะพ่อทำไม่เป็น*
'**Piglet,** can you tell me how to cook *masaman* curry? I don't know how.'
(c) *หนู, เสื้อตัวนี้ราคาเท่าไหร่ ลดได้ไหมจ๊ะ*
'**Mouse,** how much does this shirt cost? Can you give me a discount?'

Similar to other types of address terms, the name of the animal can be used individually or with premodifiers and postmodifiers in the Thai language, such as "*Ai*-lizard," "*fat* piggy," and "my dear mouse." The choice of animal names depends not only on the social relationship between the speakers but also on their metaphorical meanings. Miller (1993: 367) explained that the language user selects the type of animal that shares certain characteristics with the person they address. In Example 2 (a), the word lizard—an Asian water monitor—was used. This word in Thai is used to refer to a despicable person. In Example 2 (b), piglet was used to refer to a fat person. However, these two words have two implications in Thai culture. Based on Langacker's (2013) notion of construal, they could be used to address a close friend to build camaraderie and indicate group membership, or be used as an insulting term, depending on the context and the way the speaker and the addressed person perceive the meaning of the animal name.

The present study, therefore, aims to further investigate this linguistic phenomenon in Thai culture to find out whether it would yield similar or different results from those in the Serbian language (Halupka-Resetar and Radic, 2003). Although there are many common address terms in Thai, such as nicknames, kinship terms, occupations, and job titles which can be interpreted directly and are easy to understand, Thais still choose to use animal names as address terms despite a possible different construal of the meaning of the animal name of each individual person.

Research Objectives

There are two objectives in this study: 1) to examine functions of addressing a person with animal names, and 2) to investigate factors affecting the use of animal names as address terms in Thai culture.

Literature Review

The Notion of Construal
Construal is one of the main ideas of the cognitive linguistic approach to language. For cognitive linguists, meaning resides in cognition, rather than in the relationship between language and the world (Divjak, Milin and Medimorec, 2020). Construal is the ability of a person to conceive and portray the same event in alternate ways (Langacker, 2013: 43 and 2017) through a variety of language choices depending on how that person conceptualizes the event (Divjak, Milin and Medimorec, 2020), as in Example 3 (a)-(c).

Example 3
(a) *A bowl is on the table.*
(b) *On the table is a bowl.*
(c) *The table has a bowl on it.*
(Langacker, 2017: 3)

Example 3 (a)-(c) demonstrates that there are three different ways of construing the same event related to two objects: a bowl and a table with a different focus. In Example 3 (a), the speaker puts more emphasis on the bowl than on the table. In Example 3 (b), the focus is now on the location, while in Example 3 (c) the point of attention is the table. These different focuses of attention result from the different construals of each person. Langacker (2013: 43) further explained that three dimensions that affect the construal of each individual are prominence, perspective, and imagination, depending on each person's background.

According to Evans (2007: 40), the way a language user selects a language choice to present a conceptual representation could have consequences on the conceptual representation that the language choice evokes in the mind of the hearer. Consequently, the notion of construal is used in the present study to discuss the different ways that the speaker and the addressed person construe the meaning of animal names as address terms.

Politeness Theory

Politeness theory was developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). In politeness theory, individuals have two types of face: positive face and negative face. A positive face is an individual's desire to be liked and appreciated by others. A negative face is an individual's desire to protect their personal rights, such as their freedom of speech and action.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), when we are rude to people or impede their personal freedoms, we commit face-threatening acts. A face-threatening act can be defined as a communication that damages a person's sense of face or affects the needs and desires of someone's positive or negative face. Face-threatening acts can be verbal (using words or language), paraverbal (tone or inflexion), or non-verbal (facial expressions or body language).

Brown and Levinson (1987) noted that speakers tend to use more polite language when addressing someone with high status than those with equal or low status, when asking for a big rather than a small favor, and when addressing strangers rather than familiar people.

However, it should be noted that politeness is not always conveyed through polite language forms; rather, politeness depends on the speaker's intention. For Example, the pronouns "*ku*" (I) and "*mueng*" (you) are considered impolite words in Thai. However, many Thais use them in informal conversation to signify a close relationship between speakers of equal or lower status, such as close friends (Panpothong, 2010).

To discuss the functions of addressing a person with animal names in Thai culture, the politeness framework in the Thai context proposed by Prasithrathsint (2009) was employed. That study suggested three ways to be polite when communicating with others in Thai culture. The first is to avoid taboo words and expressions. Taboo words are generally those related to sacredness such as God, Lord Buddha, religion, and the Thai monarch, as well as those related to sex and excretion. Many taboo words are used as swear words that signify hatred, which could destroy one's relationship with others. Regarding animal names, Prasithrathsint (2009) did not directly state that they are taboo words in Thai culture. However, some animal names are considered to be impolite and should be replaced by the polite version, such as the word "*ma*" (dog), which should be replaced by "*sunak.*" However, swear words can also be used to build camaraderie, depending on the communicative situation, the speaker's intention, and the relationship between the speakers (Fatimatuzzahroh and Setiawan, 2018; Rahmi, 2019). The second way to be polite is to protect another's face. For example, choosing an appropriate address term to show respect for the addressee. The third is using language based on norms of the culture or social manners, such as the language of greeting, thanking, and apologizing.

Previous Study on Animal Names as an Address Term

To the best of my knowledge, there is no study examining this linguistic phenomenon in Thailand even though we do use animal names to address people. Since this practice does not exist in every culture, there has been very little research on this topic. However, Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003), investigating how animal names were used in addressing people

in Serbian, is a prominent study that other researchers including this present study used as their model. A questionnaire was distributed to Serbian native speakers who were third- and fourth-year linguistics majors. A list of 45 names of local animals found in Yugoslavia was given to the informants, asking five questions related to the following factors: 1) the animal names and the gender of the addressed persons, 2) positive or negative meanings of the animal names as terms of address, 3) frequency of each animal name as an addressed term, 4) the semantic and syntactic structures of each animal name, and 5) the situations when using these animal names as address terms. The main findings of this study revealed that most animal names were used to verbally abuse the addressed persons in terms of their appearance, eating habits, intelligence, and other characteristics. However, some animal names were used as terms of endearment to show love and affection for the addressed person.

The questionnaire of Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003) was adapted for use in the present study since it is by far the most holistic, comprehensive, and flexible one which could be used to collect data in any language, including Thai.

Methods

Informants

To ensure that the results of this study reflect the social practice of addressing others with animals in Thai society, three groups of the informants were selected to represent Thai native speakers who use the current Thai language.

The first group consisted of 330 undergraduate students who were purposively selected from 11 Thai universities: Chulalongkorn, Kasetsart, Thammasat, Srinakharinwirot, Ramkhamhaeng, Silpakorn, Suan Dusit, and Mahidol Universities; as well as King Mongkut's Institutes of Technology at Ladkrabang, Thonburi, and North Bangkok. This group was asked to fill out a questionnaire about their experiences in addressing a person with an animal name.

The second group consisted of 330 Thais of the general public who were randomly selected from various social factors, i.e. age, gender, education background, and region. This group was asked to complete an online questionnaire about their experiences in addressing a person with an animal name.

The last group consisted of 140 Thai people selected from conversations that I had participated in. When someone in the conversation used an animal name to address a person, I would ask for their permission to record the usage on the observation form, and then I interviewed them about their reason for addressing a person with an animal name.

The total number of informants in this study was 800.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used in this study

1. The questionnaire was distributed to the first groups of informants to draw out the data on their experiences in addressing a person with an animal name. The questionnaire was adapted from Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003) and consisted of four parts. Part 1 was general information about the informant, including age, gender, region, educational background, and occupation. Part 2 dealt with the definition of addressing a person with an animal name. This definition was given in order that all informants would understand the same definition. Part 3 was related to the informant's experience in addressing someone with an animal name. The informants were asked whether they had ever addressed someone in this way. If they had addressed someone with an animal name, they would be asked to give details on the animal name used, its meaning, the situation, the addressee, and the reason why using an animal name was used instead of other types of address terms. Part 4 was about the informant's experience of hearing someone address another with an animal name. The informants were asked whether they had ever heard someone addressing others with animal names. If yes, they would be asked to give details on the animal names used, the situation, the addressee, and whether they understood the meaning of

the animal names they heard. It should be noted that animals in this study refer to both real animals and mythical creatures, such as dragons, unicorns, and sphinxes.

2. The interview guide was designed to elicit the reason for addressing a person with an animal name from the last group of informants.

The data from these two instruments were collected in 2022.

Data Analysis

Data from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed based on cognitive semantic and pragmatic approaches. The meaning of animal names as address terms was categorized into names with positive meanings and those with negative meanings based on the findings of Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003)'s study: appearance, eating habits, intelligence, and other characteristics of the addressee. In addition, the politeness framework in the Thai language (Prasithrathsint, 2009) and the concept of covert prestige were used to examine functions of addressing a person with an animal name and factors affecting different construal of the meanings of animal names between a speaker and an addressee.

Results and Discussion

Although animal names are used as an address term in many cultures, each culture has a different construal of the meanings of such names. The results of this present study clearly revealed these differences. Overall, the results of this study shared both similarities and differences with those of Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003), who examined animal names used as terms of address in Serbian. Animal names in both cultures can be used as an address term in positive and negative ways. Nevertheless, the choice of animal names to be address terms varied across cultures. For instance, Thais and the Serbians chose a different type of animal to address a person who is fat. The following section, then, presents the results based on the two research objectives, as well as a discussion.

Functions of Addressing a Person with Animal Names in Thai Culture

The results of this study revealed that Thai informants used animal names to address someone for five functions. The explanations and examples of each function are as follows:

1. Conveying a vivid picture of the addressed person's characteristics

Most informants agreed that using animal names to address a person can convey a clearer meaning than addressing that person directly with his name, since the animal names can create a clear picture of the addressee in terms of his physical appearance, personality, or habits as in Example 4.

Example 4

(a1) **หมูตอน,** เดินเร็ว ๆ เข้า เดี๋ยวไม่ทันรถ
'**Pig**, hurry up! Walk faster or we could miss the bus!'

(a2) **พี่จันทร์วาด,** เดินเร็ว ๆ เข้าเดี๋ยวไม่ทันรถ
'**Phi-Chanwad,** hurry up! Walk faster or we could miss the bus!'

(b1) **ไอ้ยีราฟ,** เย็นนี้ไปดูหนังกันมั้ย กูได้ตั๋วฟรีมา
'**Ai-giraffe**, how about going to see a movie this evening? I got free tickets.'

(b2) **ไอ้แดง,** เย็นนี้ไปดูหนังกันมั้ย กูได้ตั๋วฟรีมา
'**Ai- Daeng,** how about going to see a movie this evening? I got free tickets.'

(c1) **อิหมี,** หยุดยาวพ่อกูมาอยู่ด้วย ยกเลิกแผนเที่ยวกระบี่ได้เลย
'**Ee-bear**, my dad will come to stay with me during the long holidays. We should cancel our trip to Krabi.'

(c2) **ปอม,** หยุดยาวพ่อกูมาอยู่ด้วย ยกเลิกแผนเที่ยวกระบี่ได้เลย
'**Pom,** my dad will come to stay with me during the long holidays. We should cancel our trip to Krabi.'

In Example 4 (a1) - (c1), the speaker addressed his listener with an animal name that conveyed a more vivid picture of the listener's physical appearance rather than directly calling his name and/or a kinship term, as in Example 4 (a 2) - (c 2). In Thai culture, "pig" is used to

address a person who is fat and usually wobbles, "giraffe" for a tall person, and "bear" for a person with a massive or hairy body. Furthermore, addressing a person with his/her name and/or a kinship term or a term denoting a close relationship such as "*phi*" (a Thai kinship term meaning an elder brother or sister), "*Ai-*" (a Thai derogatory prefix used for men or a non-derogatory prefix showing a close relationship), or "*Ee-*" (a Thai derogatory prefix used for women or a non-derogatory prefix showing a close relationship) can only indicate her age, gender, and the intimacy with the speaker, not her physical appearance.

Both interlocutors need to share the same background knowledge in order to construe the same meaning of an animal name used as an address term. In addition, to address someone with an animal name, a speaker has to have a close relationship with that person. Addressing a person with an animal name for the first time is considered impolite in Thai culture.

2. Lessening offensive meanings of taboo words

The second function of using an animal name as an address term is to lessen the offensive meaning of a taboo word. According to Prasithrathsint (2009), when communicating with others in Thai culture, taboo words should be avoided, since these offensive forms of language could signify hatred and could destroy one's relationships with others. In this study, instead of addressing someone with a taboo word with an offensive meaning, the Thai informants selected an animal name whose connotation or sound is related or similar to that taboo word to lessen its meaning, as in Example 5 (a) – (c).

Example 5

(a) *หอย หายหัวไปไหนมาวะ*
    '**Clam,** where have you been?'
(b) *กระทิง, ตอนนี้ยังทำงานอยู่ร้านเดิมหรือเปล่า*
    '**Bull**, are you still working at the same place?'
(c) *อิห่าน, มึงเหยียบตีนกู*
    '***Ee*-goose**, you stepped on my foot.'

In Example 5 (a), the word "clam" was used to address a female friend. This word means a female private part that is considered a taboo word in the Thai language. In Example 5 (b), the informants addressed the listener with the word "bull" or "*krating*" in Thai instead of the word "ladyboy" or "*kratoey*" in Thai since both words sounded similar. As it is impolite to directly address someone directly as a ladyboy in Thai culture, the informants used the word "bull" which seemed less hurtful and somewhat cute. Similarly, in Example 5 (c), the word "cholera" or "*ha,*" which refers to a severe disease that killed a great number of people in Thailand in the past, is a taboo word in Thai. The informants then added the final consonant sound, "n," and the word "goose" or "*han*" in Thai was derived. In addition, a non-derogatory prefix for women, *Ee-*, was also used in front of the animal names to indicate a close relationship. Interestingly, "goose" is also sometimes used to address a person in the Serbian language. However, in Serbian it refers to a careless person (Halupka-Resetar and Radic, 2003).

3. Teasing an addressed person

The Thai informants addressed their close friends with an animal name to tease them in order to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the interaction without any cruel intention, as in Example 6.

Example 6

(a) *ไอ้ม้า, หยิบหนังสือให้กูหน่อย*
    '***Ai*-horse**, pass me that book.'
(b) *ไอ้เม่น, กูละยอมใจแฟชั่นของมึงจริง ๆ*
    '***Ai*-hedgehog**, what a hairstyle!'
(c) *พี่สฟิงซ์, ช่วยวาดรูปให้หนูหน่อยดิ*
    '***Phi*-sphinx**, please draw me a picture.'

In Example 6 (a), the word "horse" was used among men to address a close male friend who has a large private part similar to that of a horse. This address term carries no rude meaning, but signifies an intimacy among close friends. This finding, however, is different from that of Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003). In Serbian, "horse" refers to a stupid man. In Example 6 (b), "hedgehog" was used to address a friend

who had a hedgehog haircut. Likewise, in Example 6 (c), "sphinx" was used to call a friend who had long and curly hair similar to that of a sphinx. The informants explained that as an addressed person, they thought it was acceptable if someone called them by these animal names since they knew that the speaker did not mean any harm and aimed to create a pleasant conversation. In all cases, the kinship term, *Phi*, or a non-derogatory prefix, *Ai-*, were also used to in front of the animal names to signify a close relationship.

4. Creating a close relationship with the addressed person

The fourth function of using an animal name as an address term was to create a close relationship with the addressed person. Although this seems similar to the previous function, most animal names in this case are normally taboo words in the Thai language and extend their meaning to be an address term that can signify a close relationship with the addressee, as in Example 7.

Example 7

(a) *เหี้ย, มึงมาไม่เห็นบอกกูว่าจะได้ขับรถไปรับ*
   '**Lizard**, why didn't you tell me that you are coming? I would have picked you up.'

(b) *อิเหี้ย, กูว่าแล้วว่ามึงต้องทำได้ดีใจด้วยนะ*
   '**Ee-lizard,** I told you that you could make it, and you did! Congratulations!'

(c) *เหี้ย, มึงเคยคิดจะทำงานอื่นบ้างไหม*
   '**Lizard**, why don't you think about changing your job?'

The word lizard—an Asian water monitor— or "*hia*" in Thai originally was used to refer to a wicked or evil person, since in the past it referred to prisoners who were punished by hitting their backs, causing them to be covered with bruises like the skin color of a lizard. Therefore, the word "lizard" could also be a swear word or a taboo word in Thai which normally would be considered offensive and can destroy a relationship with others. However, when we consider the contexts of Example 7 (a)-(c), it is clear that the speakers used this address term to signify a close relationship with the addressees who were their close

friends. The use of this word as a positive term of address in Thai culture could also be explained based on the concept of covert prestige or the speakers' intention of using nonstandard language to signify their membership in a particular social group. Despite the negative literal meaning of the word "lizard" in Thai which can be considered a non-standard form of language, the speakers intended to use it as an address term to build camaraderie and indicate group membership with the addressees.

It can be concluded that currently the word "lizard" in Thai extends its meaning to that of an address term to signify a close relationship. However, the informants noted that it was not acceptable to call someone a lizard the first time. It is only used among close friends to indicate solidarity. The informants added that the word indicated more sincerity than using the person's name or title.

5. Bullying an addressed person

Last, animal names were used as a verbal bullying term for an addressed person. The animal names were used to criticize or insult the addressed person in terms of his physical appearance, intellect, personality, habit, gender, or attitude, as in Examples 8-10. This function runs parallel with the use of animal names as an address term in the Serbian language (Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003).

Example 8

(a) *อีกา, หัดตักน้ำใส่กะโหลกชะโงกดูเงาตัวเองบ้างนะ'*
   '**Ee-crow,** look at your dark skin!

(b) *อิกุ้งแห้ง, ไม่ดูสารร่างของมึงบ้างเลยถุยสวยตายล่ะ*
   '**Ee-dried shrimp,** why are you so confident? Look at you! You are so beautiful! [ironic]'

(c) *อิปลวก, หน้าตาแลวแถมสันดานยังเลวอีก*
   '**Ee-termite,** not only is your face ugly, but your habits are also bad.'

In Example 8 (a), the word "crow" was used to address a person with dark skin like the feathers of a crow. As a result, the addressed person felt annoyed, irritated, ashamed, and inferior. According to the

informants, this type of verbal bullying seemed less serious than directly calling someone by such terms as "you, the dark" or "*Ee-dam*" in Thai. Interestingly, however, this case is different from calling someone "buffalo" or "*kwai*" in Thai, which sounds more severe than the word "dull" or "*ngo*" in Thai. In Example 8 (b), "shrimp" was used to call someone who was very skinny like a dried shrimp. The addressed person would feel insulted. In Example 8 (c), "termite" was used to call someone whose facial skin was rough. In this case, it is the termite's nest, not the physical appearance of a termite itself, that is used to compare the rough facial skin of a person. In all cases, the prefix, *Ee-*, was used in front of the animal names to bully the addressed person.

In Example 9 (a) – (c), animal names were used to bully the gender of the LGBTQ+.

Example 9
(a) *ลูกเก้ง, แต่งตัวขนาดนี้สวยตายล่ะ*
    '**Barking deer**, look at the way you dress! How beautiful! [ironic]'
(b) *กวางสาว, แต่งหน้าโทนเทาหลีเหรอจ๊ะ*
    '**Doe (female deer)**, do you use *Torean* makeup?'
    [ironic: the speaker adjusts the initial consonant sound of the word "Korean" in the Thai original version to be the same sound as the word "gray" in Thai, and the gray color is used to describe a person who wears the wrong shade of facial foundation.]
(c) *ไอ้ไส้เดือน, ได้หน้าลืมหลังนะมึง*
    '**Ai-earthworm**, you have feelings for both boys and girls.'

In Example 9 (a), "barking deer" was used to address a gay man in an insulting way. Many gay informants are not pleased if someone calls them by this term, similar to being called "mom" or "*mae*" in Thai. In Example 9 (b), "female deer" was used to address a gay man who looked more feminine than the gay man in Example 9 (a). In Example 9 (c), the derogatory prefix, *Ai-*, was used in front of the word "earthworm" to address a person who was sexually attracted to both men and women

like an earthworm that has both sexes in itself. The informants stated that the word "earthworm" was used not only to bully someone about gender but also about the inferior status of the addressed person since the earthworm is classified as a low-class animal.

In Example 10 (a) – (c), animal names were used to bully the addressed persons in terms of their intellect and attitude.

Example 10
(a) *ควาย, บอกกี่ครั้งกี่หนแล้วทำไมไม่รู้จักจำสักที*
    '**Buffalo,** I have told you many times. Why can't you remember?'
(b) *เจ้าไดโนเสาร์, ยุคนี้มันยุคไหนแล้ว ยังจะมาเชื่อผีสางอยู่อีกเหรอ*
    '**Dinosaur**, we are now in the digital era. Why do you still believe in superstitions?'
(c) *ไอ้ลา, เขาไม่ได้รักมึง เขารักตัวเอง*
    '**Ai-donkey,** he doesn't love you! He loves himself!'

In traditional Thai culture, a farmer passes a rope through a buffalo's nose so that he can lead it in any direction. The word "buffalo" then connotes stupidity. Thus, this word is used to address someone who as dull, as in Example 10 (a). In Example 10 (b), "dinosaur" was used to bully someone with old-fashioned ideas since the dinosaur has become extinct. In Example 10 (c), the derogatory prefix, Ai-, was used in front of the word "donkey" to insult someone whom the speaker considers stupid, which is similar to the Serbian address term and to an English saying, "as dumb as a donkey." However, in Serbian the term "turkey" can also signify stupidity of an addressed person as well (Halupka-Resetar and Radic, 2003).

Factors Affecting the Use of Animal Names as Address Terms
According to the notion of construal, individuals conceive and portray the same event in alternate ways (Langacker, 2013: 43; 2017). Consequently, the meaning of the same animal names can be conceived differently by individuals, even those who are in the same culture. For instance, the word "dog" in the Thai language could be conceived

positively as in "*Ai-ma noi*" (a little puppy), or negatively as in "*Ai-ma khii ruan*" (a mangy dog). Before addressing someone with animal names, the speaker needs to consider many factors. The Thai informants in this study mentioned three factors needed to be considered for effective interactions: intimacy of the interlocutors, gender of the interlocutors, and degree of formality of the situation.

1. Intimacy of the interlocutors

Since a term of address depends on the social relationship between the interlocutors (Ozcan, 2016; Parkinson, 2020; Prasithrathsint, 2002; Surono; 2018; Tingsabadh and Prasithrathsint, 1988), before addressing someone with animal names in Thai culture, the speaker needs to consider how close the relationship between him and the addressed person is. Normally, it is inappropriate to address someone with an animal name when meeting for the first time.

It should be noted, however, that besides intimacy, the speaker also has to consider the meaning of the animal names since some names have positive meanings while others have negative meanings.

Animal names with positive meanings were mostly used among family members, close friends, and couples to signify love and close relationship. The informants noted that it seemed like they are the owner of a cute animal. Thai parents might call their children with animal names as a term of endearment. Some examples of these terms are "piglet," "puppy," "my dear little elephant," "little rabbit," "lamb," and "little bear." According to the informants, the parents started to call their children with animal names since the time they were very young and continued calling them this way even when they became adults. For example, the term "mouse" or "*nu*" in Thai would be combined with the word "*ta*" (a Thai pronoun) meaning "*ta-nu*" (my dear little boy). Sometimes a nickname was also added such "*ta-nu* Benz" (a Thai nickname). Among close friends, terms such as "piggy," "little bear," and "kitten" are sometimes used to signify tenderness. Some Thai married couples also use animal names as terms of endearment. Additionally, they might call a slim spouse "babe" to show their affection, not to indicate the physical appearance of the spouse. These

findings run parallel with those of Halupka-Resetar and Radic (2003). In Serbian, such terms as "little mouse," "you babe," and "my kitten" are used to show affection.

Animal terms of address with negative meanings were also found, such as "elephant" which connotes being overweight, and "buffalo," which, as mentioned, connotes stupidity. Among negative terms, the term "lizard" or "*hia*" in Thai was the most frequently found. According to Puapattanakun (2018), there were 12 different meanings and functions of the term "*hia*" in Thai. For instance, the term could be used as an insulting word, as an address term, or as a modifier. Interestingly, the informants in this current study noted that even though this term originally connotes a very impolite insulting term when used among close friends, it could build solidarity and group membership. The addressed persons even felt honored rather than irritated when their close friends addressed them with this term. As a result, this finding indicates that addressing a person with an animal name, even one with a negative meaning, could create a good friendship rather than destroy it since it signifies intimacy and sincerity among close friends.

However, the word "mouse" or "*nu*" in Thai can be used to address someone for the first time in Thai culture since its meaning is neutral. In Thai, it can be used not only as an address term but also as the second personal pronoun, "you," for a person who is younger than the speaker. This study employed the grammatical function of words in an utterance of Wachirapansakul (2002) to identify the word "*nu*" (you) as a term of address if it appears as the first word in an utterance and is used to attract the addressee's attention as in "หนูกินข้าวยัง" (<u>You</u>, eat yet?). However, in "กินข้าวยัง<u>หนู</u>" (Eat yet, <u>you</u>?), the word "*nu*" (you) is a second personal pronoun used to replace a noun which usually is placed at the end of an utterance.

2. Gender of the interlocutors

The gender of the interlocutors was another factor affecting the use of animal names as an address term. The results showed that Thai men tended to use animal names as an address term more often than women did. In addition, most of the addressed persons were men. Since

most animal names were used as a negative address term in Thai to insult or were used as a swear word, addressing someone with the animal names was more popular among men than women.

Furthermore, the gender of the addressed person also affects the selection of the animal name. For example, the term "*Ai*-horse" (which refers to a man who has a large private part like that of a horse) was used among men to call their close male friends, whereas the term "clam" (which connotes a female private part) was used among women to address their close female friends in order to tease them. Nevertheless, it was found that men called their male close friends "*Ai*-horse" more often than women called their female close friends "clam," reflecting patriarchy and gender role in Thai culture. Thai women are expected to be gentle and polite both in action and speech, so they should not use the word "clam" to address others. By contrast, Thai men are less expected to be polite, especially in speaking. They, therefore, used "*Ai-horse*" more often.

3. Formality of a situation

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2017: 178, 208), formal language is used mainly in formal situations that require fixed regulations, involve people who are unfamiliar with each other or relate to a serious topic. Formal language is associated with the flawless choice of grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, informal language is mostly used in relaxed situations among people who have a close relationship, and regarding a topic that is not serious. For the choices of grammar and vocabulary, simple structures, normal words, and even slang are used. Consequently, it is not surprising that addressing a person with an animal name was mostly found mainly in informal situations.

However, the term "mouse" or "*nu*" in Thai was the only animal name used in a formal situation since it signifies no inferiority of the addressed person, compared to addressing someone with the term "*khun*" (you) or a job position, which signifies more distance in the relationship.

From the perspective of the addressed persons who were the informants of this study, being called "mouse" also indicates a close relationship. When someone who usually calls them "mouse" addresses

them by a job position, they would think that there might be something wrong in the relationship. For example, in a meeting, if a senior teacher addresses a young teacher who used to be his student as "*Ajan*" (a title for Thai teacher) instead of "*nu*" as when the addressee was a student, the addressee might feel distance in the relationship. Although this is only one case, it can indicate the complicated way of addressing a person with animal names in Thai culture.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to investigate the reasons why many Thais address another person with an animal name despite the complexity of the construal processes of the meanings of such names which can cause different interpretations of the speakers and their addressee. According to Thai informants, animal names are used this way in order to convey a vivid picture of the addressed person's characteristics, lessen offensive meanings of taboo words, as well as to tease, create a close relationship with, or bully the addressed person.

The construal processes of the meanings of animal names can vary among individuals and across cultures. Therefore, to address someone with an animal name, the speaker has to consider such factors as the intimacy of the interlocutors, their gender, and the degree of formality of the situation. If an animal name is used properly to address another person in an appropriate situation, it can help promote camaraderie. If not, it can destroy the relationship.

Acknowledgments

References

Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). **Politeness: Some universals in language uses**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Divjak, D., Milin, P., and Medimorec, S. (2020). Construal in language: A visual-world approach to the effects of linguistic alternations on event perception and conception. **Cognitive Linguistics**, **31**(1), 37-72. https://doi.org/10.1515/cog-2018-0103

Evans, V. (2007). **A glossary of cognitive linguistics**. Edinburgh University Press.

Fatimatuzzahroh, S. S. and Setiawan, S. (2018). Swear words among males: The social functions and pragmatic meanings. **Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 222**, 330-335. DOI 10.2991/soshec-18.2018.71

Gu, Y. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. **Journal of Pragmatics, 14**(2), 237- 257.

Halupka-Res, S. and Radic, B. (2003). Animal names used in addressing people in Serbian. **Journal of Pragmatics, 35**(March), 1891-1920.

Ide, S. (1982). Japanese sociolinguistics: Politeness and women's language. **Lingua, 57,** 357-385.

Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness. **Multilingua, 8**, 223-248.

Langacker, R. W. (2013). **Essentials of cognitive grammar.** New York: Oxford University Press.

Langacker, R. W. (2017). **Lecture 1–Ten lectures on the elaboration of cognitive grammar.** DOI:10.1163/9789004347465

Miller, G. (1993). Images and models, similes and metaphors. In A. Ortony (Ed.). **Metaphor and thought** (2ⁿᵈ ed.). (pp. 357-400). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Office of the Royal Society. (2017). **Dictionary of Thai linguistic terms (General Linguistics)**. Bangkok: Office of the Royal Society.

Ozcan, F. H. (2016). Choice of address terms in conversational setting. **International Journal of Human Sciences, 13**(1), 982-1002. DOI 10.14687/ijhs.v13i1.3489

Palakornkul, A. (1972). **A Socio-linguistic study of pronominal strategy in spoken Bangkok Thai.** Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Linguistics. University of Texas, Austin.

Panpothong, N. (2010). **2201 783 Pragmatic analysis of Thai**. Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

Parkinson, J. (2020). On the use of the address terms *guys* and *mate* in an educational context. **Journal of Pragmatics, 161**, 81-94.

Prasithrathsint, A. (2002). **Language in Thai society: Diversity, change and development**. 3ʳᵈ ed. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Prasithrathsint, A. (2009). **A reference book of Thai language. Norms of Thai language (Book 4): Culture of Thai usage.** Bangkok: Thai Language Institute, Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards. Ministry of Education.

Rahmi, B. A. (2019). Swear words and solidarity in Ampenan communities. **Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 338**, 71-75. DOI 10.2991/prasasti-19.2019.10

Surono. S. (2018). Address terms across cultures: A sociopragmatic analysis. **Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research**, **166**, 316-324. DOI 10.2991/prasasti-18.2018.59

Tingsabadh, K. and Prasithrathsint, A. (1988). **The use of address terms in Thai during the Bangkok period**. Research Monograph (in Thai). Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Research Division.

Wachirapansakul, N. (2002). **Chit Phumisak's translation of address terms and pronouns in the translated version of** *He Who Rides a Tiger.* (Master's thesis). Bangkok, Thailand: Language and Culture for Communication and Development, Mahidol University.

Website

Puapattanakun, C. (2018). 12 Meanings of *Hia*. **The Cloud**. Retrieved June 8, 2022 from https://readthecloud.co/scoop-12meaningsofhia/