

Critical Discourse Analysis of English News Headlines on Thai Transgender Individuals from Thai and International Websites

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Abstract

This study explores the dialectical relationship between language use in English online news headlines and their possible effects to news readers in society. By deploying Critical Discourse Analysis, known as CDA (Fairclough, 1989), representational strategies (van Leeuwen, 1996), and transitivity analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), the study aims at examining the representations of Thai transgender individuals. Twenty four online news headlines, half of which from Thai websites and the others from international websites, were randomly selected by using Google and analyzed. The findings indicate that, according to the representational strategies, Thai transgender individuals are collectivized rather than being individualized. Moreover, through the transitivity analysis, they are usually depicted as doers of violence and done-tos of being victimized in the Thai websites. Rather, they are portrayed more positively in the international counterparts. Finally, it can be argued that Thai transgender people's representations are also disproportionately affected by the newsworthiness issue.

Keywords: Thai transgender individuals, Online news headlines, Critical discourse analysis, Representational strategies, Transitivity analysis

1. Introduction

News is considered a piece of information which tells its readers what happened to whom at which place and how. For those who want to follow up what is happening in local areas and the world, reading a newspaper is an answer. However, in the technological and

digital era where the news readers can access online information in no time via the internet, online news reports have gained popularity because they are not only easily accessible and free but also internationalized (Yao, 2015). In addition, as van Dijk (1988) points out, for many, the notion of news is premised on the media, which reflects the way people ask one another a question, such as ‘Have you read the news about...?’, not on the notion of news as new information. Certainly, reading news is beneficial. Nonetheless, how language is used in the news, particularly in the headline, not only conveys the most crucial information that news readers should know (Matila, 2013) but it also forms ideologies, ideas, or beliefs about states of affairs and different groups of individuals, one of whom are transgender people often mentioned in the news.

To examine how transgender people are treated in today’s world where the pursuit of equality of various facets and the elimination of inequality are taken and called for more seriously than ever before (Maneenetr & Tran, 2014; Surfus, 2013; Whittle, Turner, & Al-Alami, 2007), this study is, thus, going to show and analyze, in a critical fashion, the ways Thai transgender people are represented or depicted in online news headlines written in English from both Thai and international websites by utilizing the frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1989), representational strategies (van Leeuwen, 1996), and transitivity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

1.1 News Headlines and Discourse

Headlines are considered the most important feature of newspaper discourse (van Dijk, 1988). According to Reah (2002), a headline is the first and unique part of news which not only encapsulates a whole content of a news story with a restricted number of words but also attracts news readers’ attention. Aside from carrying information in brief summary of what happened to whom at which place and how, headlines are often written to influence news readers’ opinions about certain states of affairs. In line with Conboy (as cited in Duanprakhon 2012), headlines can reinforce what they represent by means of language. According to Taiwon (as cited in Javed, Mahmood, & Mahmood, 2011), headlines are often written with emotive words to invoke news readers of a particular matter as well as with various linguistic devices to produce ideologies implicitly.

2. Thai *Kathoey*¹, Ladyboys, and Transgender Individuals

In Thailand, where tolerance, not (yet) acceptance, is promoted and valued, transgender people or, to be more specific, male-to-female transgender people have, nevertheless, encountered various forms of prejudice, criticism, and discrimination (Winter, 2006). Trans people have also received emotional damages resulting from insults and gossip (Barea, 2012). Pejorative attitudes and comments to transgender people can, therefore, make them feel ostracized. This enables them to act openly only when they are in their circle of close people (Sinnott, 1999). For these reasons, transgender communities exist.

According to Winter (as cited in Ocha & Earth, 2012), the terms ‘ladyboy’ and ‘transgender’ are often referred to as *kathoey* in Thai, encompassing homosexual and effeminate males. They include those who occasionally cross-dress and live their lives like males, and those who always cross-dress, take female hormones, and probably undergo breast implant surgery (Saisuwan, 2011). These days the term *kathoey* is normally used to call only feminine men, as opposed to gay people² (Brummelhuis, 1999). Moreover, *kathoey* is commonly known in Thai as *sao* or *phuying praphet song* (second-type female), *phet thi sam* (third sex/gender), *nangfa jamlaeng* (a transformed angel), or *tut* (this term does not have a literal meaning) (Saisuwan, 2011).

The naming of *kathoey* and the other aforementioned names, however, seem to relegate transgender people into an inferior position (Storer, 1999). In addition to this, ‘ladyboy’ is sometimes made different from ‘transgender’; that is, the former refers to male people who live their lives as women or want to be women, whereas the latter implies an undergoing of sexual reassignment surgery. Unfortunately, there is still a gray area between the words ‘ladyboy’ and ‘transgender’, not to mention transwomen, transsexual, transvestite, cross-dresser, and gender-bender. According to Grossman and D'Augell (2007), trans people may, nevertheless, be broadly defined as those who “transgress conventional gender norms and role expectations” (p. 528). Related to transgender people is the Thai mass media such as the press in which negative stereotypes of trans people are perpetuated. They are often regarded as evil and insatiable in sexual desire (Barea, 2012).

¹ See Singhakowinta (2016) for more etymological descriptions of the term *Kathoey* and other related issues.

² Singhakowinta (2016) highlighted the polarization of the terms *Kathoey* and *gay*, suggesting that “*Kathoey* has become ‘lower’ in the hierarchical relation to *gay* identification. Since its conception, *gay* has been represented as a completely different species to that of *kathoey*” (p. 37). However, I am of the opinion that the differentiation cannot be crystal-clear. According to Saisuwan (2011), teasing apart between *Kathoey*s who cross-dress from time to time and gay men can be difficult as being *Kathoey* or gay might be contingent on different social situations or contexts (e.g. right time and places) for some *Kathoey* or gay men. In short, there exists a “fuzzy boundary between *Kathoey* and gay men” (Saisuwan, 2016, P. 224).

In this study, the word ‘transgender’ is mostly used throughout the paper, yet ‘ladyboy’ is to be used when it refers to the news in which the word appears. It should also be noted here that both terms ‘transgender’ and ‘ladyboy’ can be understood and interpreted similarly or differently depending on context. They are the umbrella terms to refer exclusively to people who do not conform to the gender identical binary of male and female, who appear to be more like female than male, and who often dress like women in this present study (Winter & Udomsak, 2002).

3. Related Study

Kasemcharoenwong (2014) conducted the corpus-based study in the use and description of the term ‘transgender’ in 25 online news articles from well-known international websites. Upon employing Critical Discourse Analysis, the study showed that, from 25 pieces of online news (126 concordances), there was the use of the transgender-oriented words toward ‘transgender woman’ rather than ‘transgender man’. Moreover, the term ‘transgender’ tended to collocate with words identifying nationality of transgender women, such as African American, and unique features, such as gender non-conforming as well as masculinity and femininity. The latter result indicated that transgender people were not much accepted as part of the society. The words such as understanding, acceptance, and identity often surfaced in the concordances demonstrating that most transgender people desired acceptance and independence.

Furthermore, the study also showed that, according to the concordances, youth transgender people were portrayed as weaklings who needed help and had to adjust themselves to fit with normative-gendered friends in school, and that transgender people were depicted as victims similar to other minorities who were physically abused and discriminated through unpleasant incidents. Based on these findings, positive news about transgender people was hardly found. However, the concordances showed the positive images of transgender people working in the fields not only of fashion and beauty but also of politics and governmental activities. Since this study is less focused on Thai transgender people, the current study seeks to further investigate the portrayal of them in English news headlines, where today’s news readers, including both local and international, can easily access, so as to shed some more light on and also criticize the way online news headlines represent this particular group of people.

4. Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks: Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (1989) said that the study of CDA aims to “see the connections between language, power and ideology” (p. 5) and also to unearth what is hidden from the readers or the listeners in discourse. In other words, CDA analyzes the relationship between concrete examples of language use (textual analysis) in relation to social structures (social analysis). Similarly, van Dijk (2001) points out that CDA is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 352). Fundamentally, CDA is an analytical approach of a dialectical relationship between language (discourse or text) and social structures or contexts. It usually addresses the results of social inequality in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity to name just a few, which is implicitly represented and reproduced in discourses. According to van Dijk (1995a), what critical discourse analysts normally do is to uncover, reveal, or disclose underlying ideologies or discursive means of social and mental influences in a critical fashion. According to van Dijk (2001), it can be said that the study of CDA centers around the ideas of power, dominance, inequality, ideology, hegemony, gender, race, reproduction, and social problems. Furthermore, the core of CDA is its multidisciplinary nature. CDA can be applied to the studies of many disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology (Bloor & Bloor, 2007), not to mention politics, economics, and the media.

To apply CDA, Paltridge (2006) points out that one can start with a textual analysis or look at how the content is represented and then move to explain or interpret underlying ideologies found in the use of language features of a text so that CDA analysts can see what is foregrounded or backgrounded in that text. The presentation of content and the connotation of word choices are also integral parts of CDA. With regard to linguistic aspects used to analyze discourse, Bloor and Bloor (2007) suggest that Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Michael Halliday, is normally deployed to explicate social phenomena because this branch of grammar prioritizes the importance of social contexts.

Also relevant to the present study are CDA and the World Wide Web. According to Paltridge (2006), CDA can be extended to the use of texts available online. (Critical) discourse analysts can collect several relevant data at their fingertips in order to see how a term, for example, is typically used. As for this study, online news headlines regarding Thai transgender people will be analyzed through CDA as, according to Duanprakhon (2012), news, particularly its headlines, is so powerful that it can control readers’ minds which insidiously affects the way

they perceive and communicate certain states of affairs. Hence, it is possible that readers construct ideological views presented through news headlines (Klausingto & Aroonmanakun, 2010).

4.1 Representational Strategies in Language

In CDA, individuals and groups of people are often referred to as ‘social actors’ or ‘participants’ (Machin & Mayr, 2012). There are many referential choices to represent or refer to them in discourses. Van Leeuwen (1996) proposes numerous ways of how to represent or classify people and what kind of ideological effects that might ensue. Some classifications will be briefly explained below.

(1) Personalization and impersonalization refer to the extent to which a social actor is personalized or impersonalized as in:

1.1 Professor John Smith requires academic staff to give notification of strike action.

1.2 The university requires academic staff to give notification of strike action.

(Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 79)

In 1.1, Professor John Smith is the only person who has responsibility for the giving of notification, whereas, in 1.2, impersonalization is employed to indicate that it is the whole institution which requires the academic staff to do something. This is to conceal who will hold responsibility for the matter.

(2) Individualization and collectivization demonstrate the way a participant is individualized or collectivized as in:

2.1 Two soldiers, privates John Smith and Jim Jones, were killed today by a car bomb.

2.2 Militants were killed today by a car bomb.

(Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 80)

In 2.1, the soldiers are individualized by being named, while they are referred to as a collective group of military officers in 2.2.

(3) Specification and genericization look at how a participant is represented as specific or generic as in:

3.1 A man, Mazar Hussein, challenged police today.

3.2 A Muslim man challenged police today.

(Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 81)

In 3.1, the man with his name provided is treated as a specific person; by contrast, in 3.2, the man is classified as being a Muslim in general.

(4) Nominalization or functionalization show how a participant is depicted as who they are or what they do as in:

4.1 George Bush said that democracy would win.

4.2 The American president said that democracy would win.

(Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 81)

In 4.1, the use of nomination, George Bush, sounds more personal, while the use of functionalization, his title as president, sounds more official.

According to Machin & Mayr (2012), the four representational strategies above enable the news writers to stress social actors' identities which in turn influence people's ideas and opinions.

4.2 Representing Action: Transitivity

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), besides carrying the ideational function of language in the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), transitivity is referred to as "a system of the clause, affecting not only the verb serving as process but also participants and circumstances" (p. 181). In simpler language, transitivity refers to the idea that "the who (or what) does what to whom (or what)" (Richardson, 2007, p. 54). Focusing on a clause level, the transitivity analysis popular in a critical linguistic analysis (Simpson, 1993) illustrates how the actors and their actions are represented among different choices of verbs in order to understand hidden meanings embedded in a text. Such a representation will reveal how agents (subject and object) and their actions are characterized and represented (Juan, 2010). This, in turn, affects a proposition whose ideological implications inevitably arise. Transitivity is, therefore, a basis of representation (Fowler, 1991).

As seen above, transitivity comprises three components: participants, processes, and circumstances. According to Machin & Mayr (2012), participants which include the doers and the done-tos (affected agents) can be people, things, or abstract ideas. The participants can be realized by nouns or noun phrases in a clause. Processes which are the most important part of transitivity refer to verbs or verb phrases. The processes consist of four main or typical types (see also Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Here, they are to be briefly touched upon below.

- (1) Material processes are processes of *doing*: such verbs as shoot and fly.
- (2) Mental processes are processes of *sensing*: such verbs as see, like, and consider.
- (3) Verbal processes are processes of *saying*: such verbs as say, sing, and explain.
- (4) Relational processes are processes of *being*: such verbs as have/has, see, and be (is, am, are).

Circumstances refer to where, when, and how something happens by means of prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses.

5. Research Questions

1. How are Thai transgender individuals represented in the selected online news headlines within the framework of representational strategies and transitivity?

2. What are plausible interpretations and ideologies hidden in the representation of Thai transgender people in the online news headlines used in this study?

6. Methodology

The online news headlines in this study were retrieved from different Thai local news websites and international websites which were based outside Thailand. The researcher used the Google search to obtain data due to the fact that up-to-date news sites can be found easily, and online news is preferably consumed by a number of today's news readers. Additionally, Google could assist in gathering a number of data for interpretation, hence convenience for data collection.

Two searched key phrases, namely 'Thai ladyboys in news' and 'Thai transgender in news' were used to find related English news headlines. Around 29 pieces of news out of 30 search pages, which were relevant to Thai ladyboys and transgender people, were found, five of which published before 2005 were excluded due to the increasing use of the term 'transgender' after the year mentioned, according to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

In total, the number of the English headlines utilized was 24, divided equally into 12 from Thai local websites and 12 from international websites. They were afterwards analyzed and discussed with respect to representational strategies and transitivity. All the headlines, their dates, and the sources are provided in Appendix 1. Some of the headline samples and their sites as well as their dates are shown below.

(1) Transgender bemoans club ban.

<http://www.bangkokpost.com> (Thai website: February 9, 2015).

(2) Pattaya Transgender Faces Jail Term for 'Kicking a Cat'.

<http://www.khaosodenglish.com> (Thai website: January 13, 2015)

(3) Thai transgender politician vows to fight for rights of all.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com> (International website: May 30, 2012).

(4) Thailand plans to legally recognise a third gender.

<http://www.dazeddigital.com> (International website: January 15, 2015).

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Representational Strategy Analysis

According to the representational strategies, the way transgender people are classified in both Thai and international websites is certainly based on their gender. As written in English, male-to-female transgender people are depicted as either ‘ladyboy(s)’, ‘transgender(s)’, or sometimes ‘trans’ and ‘transvestites’, together with Thai nationality in the international websites. These representations fall into ‘collectivization’ or ‘genericization’ categories.

It can be said that there are no other ways to call or represent transgender people. However, it can be argued that this means transgender individuals cannot escape the fate of being treated as a whole by those who read the news, or, to be specific, the online news headlines. In the Thai local websites, there are four ways the news writers choose to represent transgender people. First of all, when a transgender person is represented in the online news headlines, the word ‘ladyboy’ or ‘transgender’ is used without articles like ‘a’ and ‘the’, which is common in the writing of news headlines. Some of the headline samples are shown below.

(1) *Transgender* bemoans the club

(2) Army investigates soldiers’ alleged attack on *ladyboy* outside Bangkok pub

Secondly, when more than one transgender person are in the news, specific numbers are employed.

(3) Israeli drugged and robbed by 2 *Ladyboys* in South Pattaya

(4) 3 *Ladyboys* arrested after iPhone snatch from Russian on Pattaya Beach

Thirdly, the words ‘ladyboy’ and ‘transgender’ without the plural marker –s are used as adjectives to modify certain nouns.

(5) *Transgender prostitutes* singled out by Pattaya law enforcement

(6) Indian Tourists Lied That Their Jewellery Was Stolen By ‘*Lady-Boy*’ Thieves

Fourthly, the words ‘ladyboys’ and ‘transgender’ people are generalized in plural forms.

(7) *Ladyboys* get greedy and pickpocket tourists in Phuket

(8) Gamblers, *Ladyboys*, Drug Users & Former Police Volunteer Arrested in Jomtien

As for the international websites, this particular group of people is mostly referred to by the word ‘Thai’ accompanied by the terms transgender(s), ladyboy(s), and transvestites, or these words are used as adjectives as shown below.

(9) *Thai transgenders* looking for dignity and respect

(10) *Thai trans* group complain to IKEA about ad

Similar to the Thai local websites, transgender individuals in the international websites can be seen as collectivized groups of Thai trans people getting involved in certain situations. As exemplified above, even though they are indicated by either singular or plural (1) - (4), it is difficult for them to be seen as being specific individuals or to be individualized. Upon employing the terms 'ladyboys' and 'transgender' people, it seems like all of them, when reported in the news, are categorized according to their gender identity rather than their individuality. Being male-to-female transgender people and being referred to as 'ladyboys' and 'transgender' are inseparable. According to Machin & Mayr (2012), when people are depicted as a group, they are not humanized but are homogenized as a whole. That is, they tend to look like or act like one another to different degrees. This means that they are collectivized or, as Machin and Mayr put it, "they are all the same" and "you can't tell them apart" (p. 101). In addition, transgender people in the online news headlines can be considered generalized or categorized. They are never portrayed as individuals such as being named. This may be even more compounded when one or a few transgender individuals commit any wrongdoing but are pluralized as general as in (7) and (8) above. These interpretations, perhaps, accord with the way the Black, the Jewish, and Muslims have been depicted (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

It should be noted that the researcher acknowledges the fact that it can be a common practice for news writers to use collectivized terms and to avoid unknown names in headlines so that they can sell the news, attract news readers' attention, and constitute public interest. However, when the repetitive use of collectivized terms becomes commonplace or widespread in headline writing, people who define themselves or are defined within those terms may be seen as part of them. Referring to people who are not male or female only by their gender, such as 'ladyboy' and 'transgender', news writers establish dominance of gender in news discourse, homogenizing transgender people, and creating common pictures among them. Therefore, people who read news or at least its headlines and often come across the terms 'ladyboy' and 'transgender' may not see a specific trans person as an individual but rather as a whole bunch of transgender people. Their idea of gender biased slant is probably formed, and, in the long run, the idea might become deep-seated due to the frequent use of gender-specific terms in headlines.

Next, only when the analysis above is incorporated with the transitivity analysis will the representation of Thai transgender individuals become clear that they are represented in the online news headlines as a biased group of people in society.

7.2 Transitivity Analysis

Working in tandem with the representational strategies, the transitivity analysis can be incorporated to address the representation of transgender individuals in online news headlines.

As for the online news headlines written in English from the Thai local websites, they will be shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The process type of each headline from the Thai websites

No.	Participant	Process	Circumstance
1	<i>Transgender</i>	<i>bemoans (verbal)</i>	club ban
2	Army investigates soldiers' alleged	<i>attack (material)</i>	on <i>ladyboy</i> outside Bangkok pub
3	<i>Transgender prostitutes</i>	<i>singled out (material)</i>	by Pattaya law enforcement
4	Israeli	<i>Drugged and Robbed (material)</i>	by 2 <i>Ladyboys</i> in South Pattaya
5	Indian Necklace Snatch	-	by <i>Ladyboy</i> on Pattaya Beach
6	3 <i>Ladyboys</i>	<i>arrested (material)</i>	after iPhone snatch from Russian on Pattaya Beach
7	Indian Tourists Lied That Their Jewellery	<i>Was Stolen (material)</i>	By ' <i>Lady-Boy</i> ' Thieves
8	Gamblers, <i>Ladyboys</i> , Drug Users & Former Police Volunteer	<i>Arrested (material)</i>	in Jomtien
9	Life on the streets	<i>Gets (being)</i>	tougher for <i>ladyboys</i>
10	<i>Ladyboys</i>	<i>get greedy and pickpocket (being & material)</i>	tourists in Phuket
11		<i>Meet</i>	the <i>transgender</i> lecturer working in one of Bangkok's oldest education institutions
12	<i>Pattaya Transgender</i>	<i>Faces (material)</i>	Jail Term for 'Kicking a Cat'

From the 12 headlines in Table 1, it is clearly seen that Thai transgender people are mostly represented in the material processes, i.e. as doers of actions in either the active form (1 token: No. 10) or the passive form (2 tokens: No. 4, 7) and as done-tos affected by other people's actions (4 tokens: No. 2, 3, 6, and 8).

On one hand, as doers of actions, transgender people are represented as active agents of doing something terrible; for example, they pickpocket, rob, steal, or drug others who become their victims. On the other hand, when they belong to the passive role, they are depicted as being victims of others who are explicitly or implicitly mentioned. This, as Machin & Mayr (2012) point out, is similar to the way ethnic minorities have been represented. That is, they are shown as the agents of actions when doing something wrong and as the patients or themes when someone or something is done for or against them.

As regards the international websites, Thai transgender people are also represented most of the time in the material processes as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The process type of each headline from the international websites

No.	Participant	Process	Circumstance
1	Thailand	<i>plans (material)</i>	to legally recognise a third gender
2	<i>Thai trans</i> group	<i>complain (verbal)</i>	to IKEA about ad
3	Monks	<i>teach (material)</i>	maleness to <i>Thai 'ladyboys'</i>
4	<i>Ladyboys</i>	<i>attract (material)</i>	the crowds at Thai festival in Hook Road, Epsom
5	Thai school	<i>offers (material)</i>	<i>transsexual</i> toilet
6	Thailand	<i>launches (material)</i>	world's first <i>transgender</i> modeling agency
7	<i>Thai transgenders</i>	<i>looking for (material)</i>	dignity and respect
8	<i>Thai transgender</i> conscripts	-	no longer "insane"
9	<i>Thai "ladyboy"</i> pictures	<i>confuse (mental)</i>	election officials
10	<i>Thai transgender</i> politician	<i>vows (verbal)</i>	to fight for rights of all
11	<i>Thai transgender</i>	-	at risk from HIV
12	<i>Thai transvestites</i>	<i>employ (material)</i>	criminal kiss

Besides being referred to as Thai citizens, Thai transgender people in the online news headlines from the international websites are represented as doers of actions like attracting, looking for dignity and respect, and employing criminal kiss. Moreover, the phrases ‘Thai ladyboy’ and ‘Thai transgender’ are used as adjectives to modify the nouns such as modeling agency, conscripts, pictures, and politician. However, the transitivity analysis seems to be less applicable to the headlines in Table 2 compared to those in Table 1.

The transitivity analysis above shows that whereas the Thai local websites written in English often foreground the negative pictures of Thai transgender people who are placed as inferior objects in the headlines and who are initiators of violence themselves ranging from kicking cats to stealing other people’s possessions and valuables, the international websites do not present Thai transgender people in the same manner. Rather, they portray them in a more positive light. Therefore, it can be concluded that, according to the patterns of transitivity, Thai transgender people represented in the online news headlines retrieved from the Thai local websites are mostly confined to criminal activities, being either attackers or victims (Table 1: No. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 12). Unlike the Thai local websites, the international counterparts often headline Thai transgender individuals in more varied issues (Table 2: No. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11).

In addition, the issue of newsworthiness emerges out of what or who is commonly in the news. As exemplified above, the Thai local websites largely present the dark sides of Thai transgender folks. They tend to select the negative pictures of them as newsworthy, while instances of positive actions from other groups of transgender people seem to go unreported. Quantitatively speaking, out of 12 news headlines related to Thai transgender people in the Thai websites, 11 headline samples consist of negative lexical items which can be calculated as 91.6% compared to 41.6% of those negative words in the international websites (see Appendix 2 for the negative word list).

This probably means that Thai transgender prostitutes who might do something horrible for others are in the spotlight or attract news writers more than Thai transgender individuals who do something benevolent or have different professions (Table 1: No. 11). Therefore, it is likely that the Thai local websites are subjected to quarantine Thai transgender people in the areas of beauty and sexual entertainment (being prostitutes) and crimes (being attackers and victims). On the other hand, in the international websites, Thai transgender people are newsworthy in many aspects related to, for example, religion (Table 2: No. 3), beauty (No. 4, 6), rights (No. 5, 7), politics (No. 10), and health (No. 11). This seems to show that the international websites portray Thai ladyboys and transgender people in various topics other

than prostitution and violence. In relation to the way Thai transgender people are represented in the representational strategy analysis, it might be possible to say that the high proportion of negative pictures of Thai transgender people portrayed through the headlines reduces their profiles or overshadows their positive actions, not only of those Thai transgender individuals who are involved in violence and robbery-related crimes but also of those who are well-behaved and successful Thai transgender people. In association with the representational strategies discussed, there seems to be no other practical way to call or represent male-to-female oriented people, so they are likely to be treated as a collective group of Thai transgender people with shared negative attributes. This is to say, it is possible that people who read the news will not consider certain groups of transgender people's undesirable actions as a case-by-case basis. In line with Renström (2012), who pointed out that protesters' negative and aggressive actions were more emphasized in the *New York Post* and the *New York Times*, perhaps sometimes Thai transgender people are represented and thus headlined as such.

Somewhat in line with Kasemcharoenwong (2014), transgender people in general were constructed as victims, but they were also shown as admirable in various facets. However, it can be argued from this study that Thai transgender people in particular are likely to be represented, especially in the Thai websites, as both victim and attacker or depicted more frequently in the negative pictures. Additionally, this is compatible with Lemmouh (2008), who studied articles about Muslims represented in the *New York Times*. Through lexical analysis, the findings indicated that the representation of Muslims was non-neutral. Many events relating to them were regarding violence, and they were often portrayed as collective groups, not as individuals. One, however, might argue that the way Muslims were presented in the media was the truth of what had happened. Despite that, as van Dijk (1991) puts forward, topic selection to be presented is not neutral. Minorities, such as Muslims, and perhaps, Thai transgender people in this current study are represented with limited and stereotyped sets of contexts and topics.

There seem to be a few points worth mentioning which are relevant to the representation of Thai transgender people, that is, the use of single and double quotation marks and the position of the word 'ladyboys' in one headline from a Thai website. That is, the single and double quotation marks are employed to highlight or emphasize certain words in headlines (Fogarty, 2011; Hill, 2011). Considering the Thai local websites, certain words in No. 7 and No. 12 are put in single quotation marks-- that is, 'ladyboy' thieves and 'kicking a cat'. This can be interpreted that a ladyboy and an unacceptable action are stressed in such a way that transgender people are stigmatized by gender and action right at the beginning of the news, that

is, in the headline. From the international websites, some words in No. 3, 8, and 9 are likewise placed in the single and double quotations, that is, ‘ladyboys’, “insane”, and ‘ladyboy’ pictures respectively. Again, being transgender people is branded negatively. As for the position in a sentence, the word ‘ladyboys’ in ‘Gamblers, Ladyboys, Drug Users & Former Police Volunteer Arrested in Jomtien’ (Table 1: No. 8) is put between the two negative but gender-neutral words ‘gamblers’ and ‘drug users’. This might, therefore, be interpreted that being a transgender is no different from those complicit in illegal activities.

The reason why the representation of Thai transgender people as well as the notion of newsworthiness matters is that a number of readers living in the world run by the internet, in order to save time, are inclined to resort to online news and sometimes choose to read only news headlines, so at first glance their perceptions or opinions can probably be formed based solely on the headlines alone (Aitchison, 2006; Klaisingto & Aroonmanakun 2010; Tiono, 2003). In other words, headlines, whether they are online or not, manipulate news readers’ minds, thereby leading to the formation of ideologies constructed and maintained through them. Additionally, van Dijk (1995b) states that it is a repeated reproduction in the media which has a huge impact on people’s minds and thus indirectly influences and controls their actions.

For these reasons, English teachers teaching a variety of courses ranging from fundamental English courses to print and mass media, especially at a university level, may select news articles pertaining to transgender people and analyze how they have been written differently from the news written for other groups of people with normative gender identities. They can also encourage their students to have a debate on being different or being who they are in Thai society, employing English as a medium of discussion. This will hopefully help students be more open-minded and be well aware of the fact that transgender individuals co-exist with them so that they can develop more understanding and live with transgender individuals happily in their future workplaces.

In addition, it may be possible for some to say that the researcher attempts to defend Thai transgender people even if they have done something wrong or even committed a crime. However, this study does not mean to be read that way. Thai transgender individuals as well as their online news headline samples were interpreted as they were presented. It can also be said that the researcher shares the same idea as Hillary Clinton, as she put it in her speech relevant to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people), “I’m not saying that gay people (including all LGBT-- my addition) can’t or don’t commit crimes. They can and they do just like straight people and when they do they should be held accountable but it should never be a crime to be gay” (Xtraonline, 2012).

As seen from the discussions, the representation of Thai transgender people in disproportionately high numbers of bad news headlines, particularly those retrieved from the Thai local websites written in English, seems to imply that Thai transgender people are still stereotyped, for example, as being prostitutes who may be labeled on the bottom of the societal rung (Head, 2008; Kaiman, 2015).

8. Conclusion

The representations of Thai transgender individuals found in the online news headlines suggest that whereas, in the Thai local websites, Thai transgender people are mostly portrayed in the headlines as being involved in violence and also confined to sexual entertainment, they are represented in the international websites in a less negative attitude and with varied issues. Moreover, it seems that being homogenized as transgender people is unavoidable. That is, when they are in the news, others who define themselves as transgender are inevitably included. Thai transgender people are also often depicted in the material processes being both victims and initiators of negative actions. What is newsworthy for them seems to be related to violence, wrongdoing, and something negative. Other Thai transgender people who attempt to break down the barrier of sexual prejudice appear to be less attractive when it comes to the process of news production. The one-sided picture of Thai transgender people presented creates ideologies that may also become ‘realities’ perceived or even worse automatically activated in people’s minds. Therefore, when some people talk about Thai transgender folks in general, they are likely to stereotype them as represented through news and headlines.

For future researchers who wish to explore the representation of transgender people, especially in the media, they can choose other forms of media to investigate in the same vein or collect more data, such as news headlines, to make their research thorough and more detailed. They can also compare and contrast the same news reports about transgender people in two different sources, which are traditionally performed by the application of transitivity analysis. Lastly, it is hoped that this research will raise news readers’ and news writers’ awareness of the representation and the newsworthiness of Thai transgender individuals in pieces of news and their headlines, and that it will become a small step that helps challenge this dominant, yet unjust, ideology and brings about changes to the way Thai transgender people are portrayed in the news (headlines) where traces of ideological agenda can be found, given that we, including them (Thai transgender individuals), are born free and equal, and that the reality to create a better, safer, and more equal world for all genders is not a pipe dream.

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Appendix 1

1. The 12 online news headlines retrieved from Thai websites written in English

1.1 Transgender bemoans club ban

(February 9, 2015: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/470338/transgender-moans-over-club-ban>)

1.2 Army investigates soldiers alleged attack on ladyboy outside Bangkok pub

(December 2, 2014: <http://bangkok.coconuts.co/2014/12/02/army-investigates-soldiers-alleged-attack-ladyboy-outside-bangkok-pub>)

1.3 Transgender prostitutes singled out by Pattaya law enforcement

(September 1, 2014: <http://bangkok.coconuts.co/2014/09/01/transgender-prostitutes-singled-out-pattaya-law-enforcement-0>)

1.4 Israeli Drugged and Robbed by 2 Ladyboys in South Pattaya

(October 27, 2014: <http://news.asiainterlaw.com/israeli-drugged-robbed-2-ladyboys-south-pattaya>)

1.5 Indian Necklace Snatch by Ladyboy on Pattaya Beach

(October 22, 2014: <http://news.asiainterlaw.com/indian-necklace-snatch-ladyboy-pattaya-beach>)

1.6 3 Ladyboy's arrested after iPhone snatch from Russian on Pattaya Beach

(March 28, 2014: <http://news.asiainterlaw.com/3-ladyboys-arrested-iphone-snatch-russian-pattaya-beach>)

1.7 Indian Tourists Lied That Their Jewellery Was Stolen By 'Lady-Boy' Thieves

(October 28, 2013: <http://news.asiainterlaw.com/indian-tourists-lied-jewellery-stolen-lady>)

boy-thieves)

1.8 Gamblers, Ladyboys, Drug Users & Former Police Volunteer arrested in Jomtien (January 22, 2014: <http://news.asiainterlaw.com/gamblers-ladyboys-drug-users-former-police-volunteer-arrested-jomtien>)

1.9 Life on the streets gets tougher for ladyboys

(August 31, 2014: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/429649/life-on-the-streets-gets-tougher-for-ladyboys>. View our policies at <http://goo.gl/9HgTd> and <http://goo.gl/ou6Ip>)

1.10 Ladyboys get greedy and pickpocket tourists in Phuket

(October 2, 2014: <http://www.thaivisa.com/forum/topic/765221-ladyboys-get-greedy-and-pickpocket-tourists-in-phuket>)

1.11 Meet the transgender lecturer working in one of Bangkok's oldest education institutions

(March 9, 2015: <http://bk.asia-city.com/city-living/news/transgender-lecturer-thammasat>)

1.12 Pattaya Transgender Faces Jail Term for 'Kicking a Cat'

(January 13, 2015: <http://www.khaosodenglish.com/detail.php?newsid=1421142555>)

2. The 12 online news headlines retrieved from international websites written in English

2.1 Thailand plans to legally recognise a third gender

(January 15, 2015: <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/23224/1/thailand-plans-to-legally-recognise-a-third-gender>)

2.2 Thai trans group complain to IKEA about ad

(January 22, 2013: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/thai-trans-group-complain-ikea-about-ad220113#sthash.WfXFQqH4.dpuf>)

2.3 Monks teach maleness to Thai 'ladyboys'

(July 16, 2011: <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/monks-teach-maleness-thai-ladyboys-061315457.html>)

2.4 Ladyboys attract the crowds at Thai festival in Hook Road, Epsom

(June 30, 2014: http://www.newsshopper.co.uk/news/11309407.PICTURES__Ladyboys_attract_the_crowds_at_Thai_festival)

2.5 Thai school offers transsexual toilet

(July 29, 2008: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7529227.stm>)

2.6 Thailand launches world's first transgender modeling agency

(November 14, 2014: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/thailand-launches-worlds-first-transgender-modeling-agency141114>)

2.7 Thai transgenders looking for dignity and respect

(July 24, 2014: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/asia-pacific/thai->

transgenders-looking-for-dignity-and-respect/1347607)

2.8 Thai transgender conscripts no longer "insane"

(September 2, 2011: <http://www.fridae.asia/gay-news/2011/09/02/11157.thai-transgender-conscripts-no-longer-insane?n=sec>)

2.9 Thai "ladyboy" pictures confuse election officials

(June 29, 2011: <http://pittsburghseniornews.com/news/2011/jun/29/thai-ladyboy-pictures-confuse-election-officials>)

2.10 Thai transgender politician vows to fight for rights of all

(May 30, 2012: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/05/30/thai-transgender-politician-vows-fight-rights-all.html>)

2.11 Thai transgender at risk from HIV

(July 25, 2012: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/world/thai-transgender-at-risk-from-hiv-1.1349043#.VQgfEk0cSM8>)

2.12 Thai transvestites employ criminal kiss

(November 14, 2005: <http://mg.co.za/article/2005-11-14-thai-transvestites-employ-criminal-kiss>)

Appendix 2

Below are negative words found in the news headlines retrieved from the Thai and international news sites.

Thai websites	International websites
Bemoan	Complain
Attack	Insane
Singled out by law enforcement	Confuse
Drugged and Robbed	Risk
Necklace snatch	Criminal kiss
Arrested	
Stolen	
Arrested	
Tougher	
Get greedy and pickpocket	
Faces jail	