“MAI PEN RAI” ON COMMUNICATIVE PHENOMENA IN THAI CULTURE

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Abstract

This paper discusses patterns of use and various functions of the frequent Thai expression *mai pen rai*, which can be roughly glossed as ‘never mind’. The study is based on conversational data: face-to-face and by phone. *Mai pen rai* is a linguistic pattern requiring appropriate knowledge for its practical use in the culture of everyday human communication. The expression *mai pen rai* implies a pragmatic response to culture, and acts as a psychological mechanism reflecting the influence of Buddhism (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 1956; Phra Khantipalo, 1993; Phra Rajakittimoli, 1997) in a relaxed Thai lifestyle. *Mai pen rai* demonstrates a unique communication pattern for different situations in life. It further reveals speech strategies resulting from the application of natural phonological processes, as discussed by Stampe (1979), Dressler (1989) and Foltin and Dressler (1997). *Mai pen rai* can be considered as a back-channel expression (Iwasaki and Horie, 1998; Chaimanee, 1999), which is sent out as a mental response formula: a reply of thankfulness or pardon or a sign of social care, or as a politeness formula (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Since *mai pen rai* has multiple and effective uses,

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the expression highlights a practical phase of human language in communication. Communicating with the universally underlying semantic structure – ‘*never mind*’ – would help all of us to live in harmony with a peaceful mind in this Global World.

Introduction

“*Mai pen rai*”, which can be translated as “*never mind*” or ‘*It is nothing*’ is a very common expression in Thai, the language of Thailand. This conventional speech pattern has been widely discussed but needs further exploration as regards linguistic structure and socio-cultural trends. In this paper, I propose a viewpoint on the expression “*mai pen rai*” as a linguistic pattern, the practical use of which in everyday communication requires appropriate knowledge of a socio-psychological and cultural nature. The study is supported by actual conversations in everyday life: face-to-face, phone calls and e-mails. The pragmatic “*mai pen rai*” used to feed back the channels of communication is regarded as a back-channel expression in spontaneous interactions (Iwasaki and Horie, 1998; Chaimanee, 1999), and shows the result of natural speech strategies with its simple linguistic construction (Foltin and Dressler, 1997). This specifically linguistic and cultural phenomenon unifies not only typical characteristics of the Thai language, but also certain Thai cultural concepts. It characterizes the Thai community, generally influenced by Buddhism (Buddhadasa Bhikhu, 1956; Phra Khantipalo, 1993; Phra Rajakittimoli, 1997) where people live a so-called relaxed Thai lifestyle. “*Mai pen rai*” is a linguistic form with multiple applications in various life situations and draws out cognitive, socio-psychological

and cultural affects in the culture of human communication.

Language structure and speech strategy in the expression “mai pen rai”

The expression “mai pen rai” demonstrates certain characteristics of the Thai language. It exhibits linguistic developments or changes, which indicate strategies in the use of language in general. The linguistic evidence drawn from the expression is discussed below.

Linguistic elements in “mai pen rai”

The expression “mai pen rai” appears as a negative sentence. “Mai” functions as the negation element of the sentence and always occurs before the verb/predicate. This sentence also shows a characteristic of Thai syntactic structure. It has a simple structure: SVO i. e. subject + verb + object. Subjects in Thai are optional and support the criteria for Thai as a topic-prominent language (Burusphat, 1991: 9), where the topic is usually in the initial position. The element in this position is made prominent and plays a prominent role. The sentence “mai pen rai” has no subject, and at the same time, exemplifies common sentence use in spontaneous speech situations in Thai. It shows a characteristic that the element “mai”, being present in the initial position is the topic, and not the subject, and also plays a significant role in sentence construction. The three linguistic elements of the expression can be analysed according to position as follows:

mai [mâi]	= negation	‘not’
pen [pen]	= copula verb	‘be’
rai [rai]	= connecting complement	‘something’

Each component of the expression, in addition, is evidence of the typical characteristic of Thai as an isolating language of a monosyllabic type. The native or original words are predominantly monosyllabic in nature although polysyllabic words, including borrowed ones, also occur in the language (Diller, 1992). Single words in Thai are originally constructed from isolative syllables which are termed “khammuun” (Upakit Silpasan, Phraya, 1992: 60). In the expression “mai pen rai”, according to its connected word order of an underlying unit of idea and especially the copula verb “pen” requiring the complement, “rai” can be considered as a monosyllabic reduced form of “arai” [ʔâʔrai], which is classed as an impersonal pronoun (Upakit Silpasan, Phraya, 1992: 82; Thonglor, 1982: 335) and functions as complement, a related feature of the object.

Speech strategy

The expression “mai pen rai” involves speech strategy through linguistic change or development, which occurs as the final component of the expression. The speech strategy operates, according to Natural Phonology, as a weakening process due to natural phonological processes resulting from mental operations (Foltin and Dressler, 1997). The speech operation imposed on the last unit of the expression, “rai”, requires an adaptation related to cognitive and phonological processes in order to conform to the moderate capacity of the speech tract. Accordingly, the adaptable

operation which results in the unit “rai” shows up in the following process, which also reflects certain specific characteristics of the language.

Consonant alternation

Consonant alternation applies in the last unit of the expression “mai pen rai” as a phonological process which facilitates the speech tract. The alternation of consonants is between [r] and [l] in the word “rai”, realised as “rai” [rai] or “lai” [lai]. This consonant alternation process occurs in the use of “mai pen rai” and also in other situations as a normal phenomenon in everyday communication, in fast-casual speech. This speech strategy signals a sound change and affirms the lack of a stable contrast between two phonemes /r/ and /l/ in the Thai language (Chaimanee, 1999: 55). It may also be relevant evidence for a universal difficulty of speech production across human languages.

The consonant alternation process is a phenomenon in linguistic development. The phonetic alternation between the alveolar [r] and the lateral [l] is later evidence for segmental change. This alternation process shows not only a process of sound change in Thai, but also a ‘preference for simplicity’ as the use of filled pauses in spontaneous interactions in all languages (Chaimanee, 1999: 240). The simple phenomenon is natural, and this simplification process conforms to the moderate capacity of the articulatory mechanism (Dressler, 1989). Foltin and Dressler (1997: 10) claimed that the articulatory process of the trill [r] is much more complex for the speech tract than the lateral [l] and this process includes, in terms of Natural Phonology,

a weakening process which eases speech production. Accordingly, the lateral [l] is preferable in the syllabic word “lai” realised as “mai pen lai” as well as in other spontaneous speech situations in everyday interactions for speakers of Thai.

The consonant alternation between [r] and [l] in the expression “mai pen rai ~ lai” is common in all spontaneous interactions among speakers of Thai. The meaning of the expression with the pronunciation of rai ~ lai, as well as that of words with a similar alternation, is still understandable through the context or situation of communication.

The use of the expression “mai pen rai”

The expression “mai pen rai” is a speech pattern which is commonly used in various Thai-speaking contexts. Thai-speaking people, both native and non-native, use this expression in everyday communication, face-to-face and by phone; this expression is now used in e-mails. They use and re-use of “mai pen rai” as a speech habit is mainly a verbal behaviour but is a mental behaviour as well. The expression is required as one standard pattern for different purposes and meaning as follows.

Back-channel expression

“Mai pen rai” is commonly used as a back-channel expression or back-feed channel cue (Iwasaki and Horie, 1998: 513; Chaimanee, 1999: 238) in several kinds of interactions. The expression is especially distributed, as are filled pauses, at turn-takings in spontaneous conversations in Thai, both in Thailand and in foreign countries. This speech

pattern occurs in various speech situations as a reply to thankfulness or as a pardon, a sign of social care and as a politeness formula, all of which indicate a mental response formula. Various usages of “mai pen rai” include the following.

A reply to thankfulness

“Mai pen rai” has its primary purpose and meaning as a reply to thankfulness in spontaneous speech situations. Possible translations for “mai pen rai” can be: ‘you are welcome’, ‘not at all’, ‘that’s alright’. In everyday communication, the expression is used to reply to the thankfulness expression: “khopkhun” [kʰɔːpkʰun] which means ‘thank you’. Thai speakers, both native and non-native, naturally acquire and use the pattern “mai pen rai” to reply to the expression “khop khun”. They keep it in long term memory and automatically use it in Thai-speaking contexts, not only in Thailand, but also in foreign countries.

Situation 1: A Polish doctor who had lived in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, for five years replied to thankfulness after giving acupuncture to a Thai in Denmark.

A Thai:

[kʰɔːp kʰun mâ:k kʰâ?]
 thank you much F. pol. Part.
 ‘Thank you very much’

Polish doctor:

[mâi pen rai kʰâ?]
 not be sth. F. pol. Part.
 ‘You are welcome’

Situation 2: As a student opened the car door for her, the instructor thanked him and the student spontaneously gave the reply.

Instructor:

[kʰɔːp kʰun kʰâ?]
 thank you F. pol. Part.
 ‘Thank you’

Student:

[mâi pen rai kʰráp]
 not be sth. M. pol. Part.
 ‘You are welcome’

A reply of pardon

The expression “mai pen rai” is also used in spontaneous speech situations as a pardon. Speakers use it after the pardon formula: “khotot” [kʰɔːtʰɔːt] which means “I am sorry”, “excuse-me”, “I beg your pardon”. It can be used after some other utterances of apologizing which have a similar meaning to “khotot”. Possible translations for “mai pen rai” in this situation are: “it doesn’t matter”, “never mind”, “not at all”, “it’s nothing”. In saying “mai pen rai”, speakers express sympathy, understanding or acceptance of an event. The first situation also shows a relaxed Thai lifestyle; people can see each other without a previous appointment.

Situation 1: A colleague apologizes to two colleagues as she simply comes to see them at home in a town in Thailand and interrupts their dinner.

Colleague 1:

[ma: rópkuən we:la:
 come disturb time
 ʔa:hă:n rúí? plàw kʰá?]
 meal quest. Part. F. pol. Part
 ‘Did I interrupt your meal?’

Colleague 2:

[mâi pen rai kʰâ?]
 not be sth. F. pol. Part.
 ‘Not at all’

Situation 2: By phone call in Germany, a Thai apologizes to a neighbour that her phone call may have disturbed her.

Thai 1:

[kʰǎ: tʰô:t kʰâ? rópkuən
ask punishment F.pol.Part. disturb
ʔi:k læ:w jaŋ nɔ:n jù: ruí? plâw]
again still sleep be quest.Part. Neg.
'Sorry to disturb you again. Were you sleeping?'

Thai 2:

[mái pen rai kʰâ? tu:n
not be sth. F.pol.Part. wake up
læ:w lâ? kʰâ?]
postV. Part. F.pol. Part.
'Never mind. I'm awake.'

A sign of social care

"Mai pen rai" is specifically used to show care in Thai society. In all situations of everyday life, Thai-speaking people spontaneously use "mai pen rai" to express their feeling of care for each other and oneself as well. People show their compassion/friendliness and sympathy, and encourage each other with "mai pen rai". They use it to sympathize, and encourage others and even themselves in some cases, for example when someone needs help, has some worries, gets depressed, is inconvenienced, or is an unhappy situation, or when one does not succeed. Using "mai pen rai" in the sense of care converse several meanings, as replies to thankfulness and pardon and also 'it's okay'. Situation 1. in Sec. 3.1.2. also supports the criteria for "mai pen rai" as a sign of social care. Colleague 2 considers that her colleague may need important help from her. That's why she came without an appointment. The following two situations show the feelings of care among intimates. The

third situation, which was taken from an e-mail, especially shows the use of "mai pen rai" to encourage oneself. In addition, everyone may also take care of oneself by saying in one's own mind "mai pen rai" as a direct mental response to every matter in life.

Situation 1: Two friends talk about the new job that one of them got in Germany.

Friend 1:

[hm̩ mái rú: tɕa jâ:k mái
not know will difficult

Quest.Part.

ná?]

Part.

'Hm I don't know if it will be difficult.'

Friend 2:

[(laugh) kô: lɔ:ŋ du: ná? pʰi: kô: tɕa
Conj. try look Part. I Conj.
will

pʰaja:ja:m tʰam hai di: tʰi: sùt]
try do give good Qual.D.-most
'I will try, I will try my best'

Friend 1:

[tæ: kô: mái pen rai pʰi: pen
but Conj. not be sth. you be
kʰun kʰru: tʰi: muangʰai
pol. title teacher at town Thai
læ:w kô: tʰi: ní: kô: pen
postV. Conj. at here Conj. be
kʰun kʰru: tʰi: kè:ŋ
pol. title teacher Conj. smart
dái muən kan]
postV. same Reflex.

'Anyway, that's alright. You were a teacher in Thailand, You can be a good teacher here as well.'

Situation 2: Female relative complains with a male relative in Germany by

phone whether she did right to write an e-mail to someone she knows.

Female relative:

[p^hi: mâi rú: wâ: p^hi: t^ham p^hit plâ:tI not
know that I do mistake

ruí? plâ:w ná?]

Quest. Part. not Part.

'I don't know whether I made a mistake'

Male relative:

[mâi pen rai k^hrâp]

not be sth. M.pol.Part. 'It doesn't
matter (Don't worry about it)'

Situation 3: An e-mail message. A
German friend in Thailand let a Thai
friend know that she had a lot to do
though she was not feeling well, and she
wrote:

[Mai pen rai!]

'It's okay'

Politeness formula

The expression "mai pen rai" also shows a degree of politeness. "Mai pen rai" as is used in situation 2, in Sec. 3.1.2. implies at the same time negative politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987: 29). Accordingly, "mai pen rai" has conventionally been used in the Thai community as a linguistic strategy of avoidance and a behaviour of respect by the user. Speaker who says "mai pen rai" in that situation simply expresses optimistic politeness, adjusting to and cooperating with her unexpected participant. Actually, she may not be pleased to get the phone-call while she was still laying in bed. Politeness expressed in conversations by "mai pen rai" relates to the personality of the user and the relationship between participant speakers and hearers in the community as well.

"Mai pen rai" used as a politeness formula is not only a speech utterance, but also a specific socio-cultural phenomenon which correlates with the expression "kreng chai" [kre:ŋtɕai]. "Kreng chai", which can be translated as "have consideration for", also implies politeness and the respect that a person has towards the other and the feeling of awareness for oneself. The behaviours which arise from these two specific expressions have conventionally been construed and recognized by the Thai community.

"Mai pen rai" and its correlate "kreng chai" reflect hierarchy in Thai society. It may be that Thai people use "mai pen rai" because they habitually and conventionally care about "kreng chai", consideration for differences in certain socio-cultural factors like age and position at work. These two connected expressions show not only negative politeness, but also unequal relationships. Thai people are aware of age and sex, and also social status, which results from one's position at work. Younger people, in general, pay respect to or are aware of older people. Male and female interactants consciously use different linguistic elements, for example pronouns, of which female speakers have many more to choose from, and particles. Position at work also plays a noticeable role in personal contact among people in everyday life, making people "kreng chai" among themselves. In interactions, younger people and people with lower positions at work are in general aware of themselves and have consideration for older people and people with higher positions. Expressing "mai pen rai" as a result of "kreng chai" can however be regarded as a kind of avoidance of conflict (in living together) in the community.

Discussion

The very common use of the expression “mai pen rai” in Thai indicates pragmatic phases of mental action taken by individual users in communication, which are closely related to socio-cultural phenomena grounded by the community. The expression “mai pen rai” was determined by the community and denotes the mental state of the users as well. It also reflects socio-cultural concepts of people in the community. It has a “unique” linguistic characteristic denoting a pragmatic response to socio-psychological and cultural contexts.

A pragmatic response to culture

“Mai pen rai” is conventionally used as a speech pattern which implies a pragmatic response to Thai culture. This utterance specifically mirrors Thai cultural concepts.

The expression “mai pen rai” indicates a pragmatic phase of cultural significance. It is used as a common linguistic cue to convey different semantic messages. Its varied use for different meanings shows clearly the relaxed nature of Thai community. In that community, people generally consider that not everything can be definitely fixed and hence they can accept any kind of unexpected event or change. Thai people are relaxed, and don't mind receiving someone spontaneously as seen in situation 1 under 3.1.2. The expression implies the flexible way that Thai people live. The following situations show the relaxed characteristic of the Thai people as well. In situation 1, though they had made an appointment, Thai people can accept postponement. Foreign people who have

lived in Thailand and have had contact with Thai people spontaneously learn and use the expression as well. The interactants use the expression “mai pen rai” in a Thai environment naturally, even while they are in a foreign country.

Situation 1: An older Thai expressed her relaxed style of living and sympathy when a younger Thai student apologized to her for postponing the appointment the younger Thai had made.

Younger Thai student:

[tôn k^hǎ: t^hô:t dúay ná? k^hráp
must sorry also Part. M.pol.Part.
t^hi: nát káp ná
Conj. appointment with Kin.-Pron.
wái tæ: pho:di: mi: we:la:
postV. but fortunately have time
k^hæ: nán]
only that
'I have to beg your pardon, that I made
an appointment with you, but I only have
that time'

Older Thai:

[mái pen rai k^hǎ? pen tɕ^huamôn
not be sth. F.pol.Part. be hour
t^hi: k^hǎu haí p^hóp dái
Conj.3rd sing.Pro. give meet able
tɕ^hái mái tɕ^huān ní: mi: ʔarai tōŋ
Quest.Part. period this have sth. must
t^ham jǎ? ní: ná?]
do a lot Part. Part.
'It's okay. That's the time he/she
allows for the meeting, isn't it? At the
moment, (you) have a lot to do'

Situation 2: A foreign student who has learned Thai showed his relaxation by spontaneously replying to his instructor who apologized for never remembering the way to a temple she had gone to several times.

Instructor:

[kʰɔːtʰɔːt kʰáʔ tɕam tʰaːŋ

sorry F.pol.Part. remember way

mái kʰəːj dái]

not ever able

'Sorry. I have never remembered the way'

Foreign student:

[mái pen rai]

not be sth.

'It doesn't matter'

As a Thai cultural concept, "mai pen rai" is valued as a common heritage which can be applied to various life situations. "Mai pen rai" has conventionally been used as a speech habit and routine in everyday communication among speakers of Thai. Its habitual and routine use shows cultural concepts of value and attitude which, according to Flavell (1963: 16), develop later in life and are a part of the intelligence of the user.

The expression "mai pen rai", used as a speaking-turn of complete utterances in isolation in spontaneous conversation as well as the use of filled pauses, is a cultural mode of recycling and signifies cultural learning (Chaimanee, 1999: 264). It is imprinted from the community and conceptualised as a product of culture. Speakers of Thai, including non-native speakers, recognize and recycle this very common expression in the Thai-speaking environment. They learn naturally, with help from socio-cultural knowledge, appropriate use of the expression in Thai contexts. This cultural learning shows the universal ability of language acquisition across languages. Similar semantic structures regardless of ethnic background probably enhance the formulation of the similar meaning:

'it's nothing' in the Thai surface structure.

This common expression exists as a socio-cultural phenomenon in the Thai community. It reflects a simple but dependent lifestyle based traditionally on agriculture and Buddhism. Since times past, agriculture and Buddhism have played an essential role in Thai society and culture (Mekharat, 1993: 25 - 26). In such a community, relations among relatives are very important, firm, and widespread. People are very co-operative: that is, they help each other in many situations of life. They also need to be aware of respect for people. Accordingly, age, appropriateness related to the situation, relations between speakers and hearers, relations among relatives, sex, and later social status play an important role. These factors determine the rich Thai usage of pronouns, according to Khanittanan (1993: 31 - 32) as well. They certainly affect the use of the expression "mai pen rai" in various situations for different purposes. This linguistic phenomenon in the Thai language, as well as some other phenomena, reflects not only socio-cultural factors but also hierarchy in the Thai society. In that society, through "mai pen rai", users intuitively and habitually reveal certain social factors of hierarchy including inequality or difference in age, sex, kinship relations and social status determined by position at work. Users express their awareness of and respect for each other due to those factors. The pattern of social hierarchy connoted in "mai pen rai" has ritually and conventionally been used in the Thai community and Thai contexts, out of Thailand as well.

"Mai pen rai", a phrase in common usage, functions as social interaction,

according to Schiffrin (1994). This common expression frequently accompanies everyday interactions among speakers of Thai, for example, face-to-face and phone-calls as discussed in Sec. 3. Speakers are both intuitively and consciously required to have a high level of speech capacity as well as cultural knowledge. Then, they are able to spontaneously and appropriately use “mai pen rai” in various social contexts. The pragmatic “mai pen rai” is recognized not only as a cultural but also psychological response of the interactants to their social environment.

A psychological mechanism

“Mai pen rai” functions as a mental motor, which is sent out of and reflects mind and feeling. The expression indicates cognitive concepts which remarkably reflect the influence of Buddhism in Thai life. Buddhist teaching affects general principles of Thai community life in accordance with which good people should conduct themselves.

The use of the expression “mai pen rai” seems to mirror certain important teachings in Buddhism, which include above all the three universal characteristics of all things (Buddhasa Bhikkhu, 1956: 41-56) and of the four principles of sublime attitude which are important spiritual principles (Khantipalo, 1993: 129 - 131; Phra Rajakittimoli, 1997: 95). The three universal characteristics are: impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-selfhood (*anatta*); the four principles of sublime attitude are: loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity or impartiality (*upekkha*). These basic principles have probably

formed the attitudes towards life and general way of living of the Thai people and are revealed through the use of “mai pen rai”. According to these basic principles in Buddhism, good people are taught to be conscious and wise to consider the true nature of all things as ‘*it is so*’. Accordingly, all things or events which happen in life should be considered as unavoidable and to be accepted. One should keep to the middle path, and avoid making any definite judgements. Members of the Thai community are thus influenced to spend life relaxedly and to be kind or friendly to each other; whatever happens can commonly be considered and expressed as “mai pen rai”, *never mind or it's nothing*.

The expression “mai pen rai” reflects, both mental and active actions, referred to channels classified in Buddhist explanation on “kamma” which literally means actions (Phra Rajakittimoli, 1997: 62) in everyday communication. Through this simple and transparent linguistic construction, beginning with the negation “mai” ‘*not*’ of “mai pen rai”, users reactivate intellectual concepts and respond to various life situations. Everything should be seen, understood and accepted in mind and words as ‘*not - to be - something*’. Users are required to recognize and practise mental and active skills in appropriate and effective uses of “mai pen rai” for different events. “Mai pen rai” is a tool of the mind providing various strategies in everyday communication, as shown in the examples in Sec. 3.

“Mai pen rai” indicates mental action and the mental state of speakers in the form of thinking, intention, attitude and feeling, like other linguistic phenomena (filled and unfilled pauses), as suggested

by Goldman-Eisler (1961: 25) and Chaimanee (1999: 246 - 249). The speakers, both sender and receiver of the expression, require an effort to know and understand well when, how and why to appropriately and effectively apply "mai pen rai" in real interactions. The expression "mai pen rai" exists, as a socio-psychological linguistic unit, in the mind of the users. Its pattern, with respect to the negation "mai", determines cognitive concepts and communicative efficiency. To use or interpret this pattern, users need a level of cognitive activity, namely intention or thinking into comprehending and interpreting several corresponding means of communicating with "mai pen rai". Hence, using "mai pen rai" deals with intention, which is a basis of communication (Schiffrin, 1994: 403). Users are required to have a high degree of intention in order to apply the expression in numerous situations. They also show their attitude and feeling while expressing "mai pen rai" in various situations with different purposes in everyday life. The negation "mai", which functions as topic prominence, in correlation with the two following elements: "pen" and "rai" denotes some kind of feeling and attitude like understanding, sympathy, acceptance, pleasure, etc. towards 'not - to be - something'. That is, "mai pen rai" expresses what users are supposed to realise about every event or action in a neutral state: 'it's nothing' and/or 'that's alright'.

A unique communication pattern

The expression "mai pen rai" is considered as a unique speech pattern/model in communication. This speech pattern, which is constructed in one standard sentence, suits various speech

situations with different meanings in everyday communication.

The syntactic construction of the expression "mai pen rai" shows its unique characteristic: simplicity which is natural, according to Natural Phonology (Stampe, 1979; Dressler, 1984). The expression is built from three monosyllabic words in a simple negative sentence with direct and transparent meaning: mai 'not', pen 'to be', rai 'something', as discussed in Sec. 2.1. This simple syntactic pattern, which also includes the alternation process, as discussed in 2.2.1, between the lateral /l/ becoming "lai" and /r/ on the last unit "rai", explains a preference for simplicity. The alternation process which operates on that unit and results in the preference for the lateral /l/ ease of speech production. To ease speech processing, there may be other processes like the reduction process on this position of the expression which co-operates in order to cope with a single underlying unit of idea, "mai-pen-rai". The combination of sentence expression of "mai pen rai" in a simple manner eases the processes of articulation and perception. Participants do not require much awareness in pronouncing and perceiving this unified syntactic expression.

"Mai pen rai" is used as a unique tool of communication by the community. One standard mode of language is applicable to different goals in life situations. The expression, due to its meaning, characterizes the general lifestyle of a hierarchical society. It unites and balances unequal relations in the Thai community as having a state of 'it doesn't make any difference'. In this community, all members are equally capable of recognizing and

understanding how and when they should use this speech convention. Regardless of age, relation among people, sex and social status, everyone equally values and uses the same expression. The use of “mai pen rai” can be evidence of common speech capacity in cross-cultural communication.

This one speech formula “mai pen rai” provides remarkable contributions, as discussed in Sec. 3. It ties, within a single syntactic unit, not only variant linguistic skills, but also cultural concepts and social characteristics. This specific utterance contributes various cognitive attitudes (knowledge, consciousness, imagination, etc.) and communicative efficiencies. Users can recognize and acquire the use of “mai pen rai” with little energy but much profit. Therefore, the expression “mai pen rai” fits as a universal of language application for communication (Ferguson, 1978). It is fixed only once, and is applicable for multiple goals in different life situations.

Conclusion

“Mai pen rai”, which means ‘*never mind*’, is a heritage of culture which is highlighted as a practical phase of human language in communication. The expression indicates an active performance of the mind or mental action to cope with the art of living. This cognitive and cultural product has a unique characteristic due to its simple linguistic form with multiple and effective uses. The various strategies of “mai pen rai” reflect pragmatic traits and responses in the language and mentality of its users. Using the common meaning ‘*never mind*’ in both active and mental communication would harmonize living, with peaceful mind, in this Global World.

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