



English Loanwords and Transliterations in Thai Fan Tweets and Their Rendering in English by Automatic Translation

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Received 07/01/2026 Received in revised form 25/06/2026 Accepted 01/07/2026	ABSTRACT Fan tweets vividly reflect fan register, a distinctive variety of digital language marked by creative and culturally embedded linguistic practices. Among its most salient features in Thai is the use of English loanwords and transliterations. The present study investigates 172 instances of English loanwords and transliterations drawn from two datasets of Thai fan tweets (June 2024-May 2025 and April-May 2026), examining their forms, functions, and rendering in English by automatic translation tool of Twitter (X). Five forms are identified: direct loanwords, semantic extensions, transliterations, hybrid compounds, and clippings and abbreviations, serving five functions: lexical gap filling, in-group identity marking, expressive function, economy of expression, and prestige and modernism. The study further examines how these items are rendered in English by automatic translation, identifying four translation strategies, namely, back-translation, naturalisation, substitution, and deletion, alongside two mechanisms underlying mistranslation: orthographic ambiguity and semantic misinterpretation. The findings demonstrate that while automatic translation can facilitate interlingual and intercultural fan communication, it continues to struggle with

	the orthographic instability, fan-specific meanings, and pragmatically embedded language use that characterise English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets, posing barriers to pragmatic equivalence and highlighting the need for developers to address variant spellings, community-specific semantics, and pragmatic context. Keywords: loanwords, transliterations, fan register, machine translation, pragmatic equivalence
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Introduction

Fan communities are shaped by participatory communicative practices that foster group identity and engagement (Bennett, 2014). Language plays an important role in the construction and maintenance of fan communities, where shared terminology, insider expressions, and communicative practices bind members together and signal belonging. In multilingual and transnational fan communities, English often serves as a lingua franca, enabling communication among fans from diverse linguistic backgrounds and facilitating participation in global fandoms (Bussoletti, 2023; Duggan & Dahl, 2019). Artist names, fandom names, fan terminology, and promotional content are frequently presented in or associated with English in online fan discourse, making English vocabulary a natural and integral part of fan knowledge and communication. As a result, Thai fans routinely incorporate English words and expressions into their Thai-language fan communication, producing a distinctive hybrid linguistic style that reflects both the global reach of popular culture and the creative adaptability of Thai fan register. This incorporation takes two main categories: loanwords, which are terms that originate in one language (the donor language), and are subsequently adopted into another (the recipient language) (Mo & Xiao, 2024), such as “โชว์” ‘a performance or entertainment event and “โหวต” ‘to cast a vote in support of an artist’; and transliterations, which are English words or expressions phonologically transcribed into Thai script, such as “คลิป” ‘clip’ and “สเตจ” ‘stage’. These two categories are frequently found in Thai fan tweets and are therefore the focus of the present research.

Among Thai entertainment fandoms, Twitter, currently changed to X, serves as an important platform for fan communication, where users discuss artists, share news and media content, participate in promotional activities, and interact with others who share similar interests. As a social network site, X enables users of various linguistic backgrounds to post in their own language to share information, give opinions, or express feelings

(Chavanayarn, 2024). Importantly, X embeds an automatic translation function in non-English tweets, enabling users to access content across language boundaries and facilitating intercultural communication.

Although studies on fan language and fan register have grown in recent years, (Bennett, 2014; Na Nakorn & Thanaphansin, 2022; Noro-a et al., 2018), research specifically examining English loanwords and transliterations as a distinct linguistic phenomenon within Thai fan register remains limited. Furthermore, while automatic translation of social media texts has attracted scholarly attention (Jehl, 2010; Läubli et al., 2020), little is known about how automatic translation tools handle loanwords and transliterations, which present unique challenges due to their non-standard orthography and culture-specific pragmatic meanings. As a result, prior to the present study, the forms and functions of English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan register had not been systematically documented. Equally, the extent to which automatic translation systems are able to render such items accurately had not been empirically examined. The present research therefore aims to address these gaps directly by examining the forms and functions of English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets and investigating how they are rendered in English by the automatic translation tool of X.

Background of the Study

To provide a theoretical foundation for the present study, relevant literature on three areas is reviewed: English loanwords and transliterations in Thai; fan tweets as digital language variation, and automatic or machine translation.

English Loanwords and Transliterations in Thai

Lexical borrowing, or the adoption of words from one language into another, is a universal phenomenon driven by language contact, cultural exchange, and communicative need (Haspelmath, 2009; Haugen, 1950). The classification of loanwords can be approached from two complementary perspectives: their forms and their functions.

Haugen's (1950) core model classifies borrowings according to the degree of morphemic importation and substitution into three types: loanwords, which involve the adoption of both form and meaning from the donor language with phonological adaptation; loanblends, which combine imported and native elements to produce hybrid forms; and loanshifts, which involve the extension or shift of meaning under the influence of the donor language, without importing its form. All three types are observable in Thai,

as evidenced by studies applying Haugen's framework in Thai contexts, including loanwords in tourism discourse (Bennui, 2019), and English loanwords in the Thai language on social media (Sangsarai, 2021).

As for transliterations, their relationship to loanwords has been approached differently depending on the breadth of definition adopted (Mo & Xiao, 2024). The present study adopts a restricted view, treating loanwords and transliterations as distinct categories, consistent with Prasithrathsint (2005), who regards loanwords as English-derived items accepted into Thai to the degree of dictionary inclusion, such as “เบรก” ‘brake’ and “เมล” ‘mail’, as distinct from English elements that, despite frequent use, have not yet become established Thai vocabulary, such as “ไอเดีย” ‘idea’ and “พรีเซนเทชัน” ‘presentation’. Accordingly, the Royal Institute Dictionary of the Thai Language serves as the operational criterion for this categorisation in the present study.

Beyond formal classification, loanwords serve communicative and social functions. Haspelmath (2009) identifies two primary motivations for lexical borrowing: need and prestige. Need-based or cultural borrowings occur when a new concept enter the recipient culture without a native equivalent, while prestige-based or core borrowings occur when speakers choose borrowed forms over available native equivalents for the social value. Both motivations are evident in Thai, where some English loanwords fill lexical gaps, while others are borrowed despite available Thai alternatives, motivated by prestige, expressiveness, or in-group identity. This is particularly apparent in Thai social media contexts, as demonstrated by Sangsarai's (2021) study of English loanwords in the Thai language on X. For instance, “คอมเมดี้” ‘comedian’ and “คาริสม่า” ‘charisma’ reflect prestige motivation, while “ทิว” ‘tube’ and “แอคทิเวทเต็ดคาร์บอน” ‘activated carbon’, drawn from tweets discussing a medical drama, signal in-group identity among viewers familiar with the show's terminology.

Fan Tweets as Digital Language Variation

Fan communities, or fandoms, are groups of people who share common interests and communicate their experiences, opinions, and feelings through a distinctive variety of language known as fan register (Nugraha & Komsiah, 2023) or fan speak (Bennett, 2014). Fan register is closely linked to the language used in digital communication (digilect), as modern fandoms mainly exist and interact in online spaces. In the context of digilect, González-Cruz (2025) attributes the surge of linguistic creativity in digital communication, or Netspeak, to the rise of the internet. Among the most prominent features of digilect is orthographic variation, which reflects the

characteristics of spoken language in written form (Crystal, 2006; Nguyen, 2021). Similarly, in the context of digilect on X specifically, Noro-a et al. (2018) and Pavalanathan & Eisenstein (2015) collectively suggest that digilect closely mirrors spoken language across multiple linguistic dimensions, from phonology and orthography to lexis and pragmatics. This is evident in Thai digilect, where phonological variation appears in “จ๊น” chán, a colloquial variant of “จัน” chǎn ‘T’; orthographic variation in letter reduplication such as “555”, representing laughter; lexical variation in “ฮังโง”, a colloquial form of “อย่างไร” ‘how’; and pragmatic variation in the sentence-final particle “อะ”, marking casual tone or stance. Jitwiriyanont (2025) argues that such variation should be viewed not as linguistic deterioration but as a deliberate response to how people communicate online.

Contemporary fandoms gather and communicate mainly on social media platforms, particularly X. Its open following mechanism makes fan discourse publicly accessible, exposing the language used by fans, including English loanwords and transliterations, to users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, unless the account owner has restricted access through a private account setting. This is precisely what makes the automatic translation function of X particularly significant: it serves as the primary means through which non-Thai speakers may access, understand, and interpret Thai fan tweets.

Automatic or Machine Translation

Translation is fundamental to global communication, particularly in an increasing interconnected digital world where language barriers must be overcome to facilitate the exchange of information across cultures (Snell-Hornby, 1998). The growing need for rapid translation has driven the development of machine translation (MT), since human translation alone cannot meet the demand of real-time digital communication. Although earlier research identified limitations in the fluency and accuracy of MT (Gotti et al., 2013; Hernández-Guerrero, 2019; Jehl, 2010), its quality has improved considerably in recent years, to the point where MT output has been found to approach the standard of professional human translation in certain empirical evaluations (Läubli et al., 2020)

Most previous studies on MT have focused on technical aspects, such as improving translation models and language models (Chang & Lin, 2009), domain adaptation for social media texts (Jehl, 2010), and comparative evaluation of MT systems against human translation (Läubli et al., 2020). Nyuhuan (2024) takes a more communicative approach, comparing four major translation platforms (Youdao, Google, Baidu, and ChatGPT) in terms

of accuracy, fluency, fidelity, and cultural adaptability in news translation, finding that platforms relying on literal translation struggled to render culturally embedded content naturally, while ChatGPT's broader contextual processing achieved more natural and contextually appropriate outputs. However, a gap remains in research on how MT handles non-standard orthography and culturally embedded language, such as loanwords and transliterations, which differ from the longer cultural references examined in the news texts. Loanwords and transliterations present a particularly underexplored challenge in this regard, as their forms deviate from standard spelling conventions and their meanings are frequently pragmatically and culturally specific to the communities in which they are used. In such cases, automatic translation tools may preserve referential meaning while failing to capture the pragmatic dimensions of the source text. The present study therefore focuses on pragmatic equivalence as the key criterion for evaluating the automatic translation of English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets.

Research Methodology

The present study examines how English loanwords and transliterations naturally occur in Thai fan tweets and are rendered in English by automatic translation, rather than measures frequency or quantify patterns of occurrence. The data were purposively sampled from Thai fan tweets, and each instance was classified by form and function, with the corresponding translation output analysed to identify the translation outcome and strategies employed. The data and analytical frameworks are described in turn below.

Data

The data consist of Thai fan tweets collected from X, with instances of English loanwords and transliterations functioning as fan terminology as the unit of analysis. Fan tweets were operationalised as tweets posted by general (non-official) fan accounts (identified through account content indicating fan status) that referred to an artist, with no restriction on fandom or entertainment field; account names are not disclosed to protect user privacy. A total of 172 instances constitute the corpus, compiled from two datasets collected under the same criteria: tweets were chosen on the grounds that they were in Thai and mixed with English loanwords or transliterations and had a translation prompt generated by X's automatic translation function. Tweets were selected using purposive sampling and identified through manual screening rather than keyword search.

The first dataset comprises 86 instances identified across 250 Thai fan tweets collected from June 2024 to May 2025, originally gathered for a previous study on Thai fan tweets by the author, during which Google Translate served as X's automatic translation function. It was found in the course of that study that English loanwords and transliterations merited focused investigation, motivating the present research and a second, targeted round of data collection.

The second dataset, collected from April to May 2026, yielded an additional 86 instances from tweets selected specifically for containing at least one instance of an English loanword or transliteration; collection ceased once no new forms, functions, or translation strategies emerged, indicating sufficient corpus size. By this period, X had transitioned from Google Translate to Grok, its in-house AI, in June 2025, and translations in the second dataset were consequently generated by Grok. The present study examines the automatic translation function of X as a whole rather than comparing individual systems.

Analytical Frameworks

The data were recorded and analysed in an Excel worksheet. The analysis was conducted in two stages corresponding to the two research questions.

Research question 1: What are the forms and functions of English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets?

To address the first research question, a total of 172 English loanwords and transliterations were analysed in terms of their forms and functions.

For the analysis of forms, a five-category typology was developed, drawing on Haugen's (1950) core three-part model of borrowing classification and adopting a restricted view in treating transliterations as a distinct category (Mo & Xiao, 2024). Haugen's loanword informs *direct loanwords*, defined as words found in the Royal Institute Dictionary of the Thai Language (Office of the Royal Society, 2011) whose meanings in the tweets correspond to those in the English donor language. Haugen's loanshift informs *semantic extensions*, defined as borrowed forms whose meanings in the tweets extend beyond those found in the English donor language. While semantic extensions do not correspond precisely to Haugen's loanshift, which concerns native words acquiring new meanings, both share the underlying concept of meaning extension driven by language contact. Haugen's loanblend informs *hybrid compounds*, defined as forms combining an English loanword with a Thai element within a single lexical unit. Beyond Haugen's framework, *transliterations* are treated as a distinct category, referring to words

not found in the Royal Institute Dictionary of the Thai Language (Office of the Royal Society, 2011) but which may or may not appear in the Royal Institute Transliteration Database (Office of the Royal Society, n.d.) encompassing both standardised and non-standardised spelling. *Clippings and abbreviations* refer to shortened and abbreviated forms whose meanings are generally derived from, though not always identical to, those of the donor language.

For the analysis of functions, the present study draws on multiple sources in the loanword literature. The distinction between catachrestic and non-catachrestic borrowings proposed by Onysko & Winter-Froemel (2011) aligns with the theoretical basis for distinguishing need-based from prestige-based functions (Haspelmath, 2009). Drawing on these frameworks, five functions are identified in the present corpus: *lexical gap filling*, *in-group identity marking*, *expressive function*, *economy of expression*, and *prestige and modernism*. Lexical gap filling corresponds to need-based or catachrestic borrowing, while the remaining functions reflect prestige-based or non-catachrestic borrowing in the broader sense, as English-derived forms are selected over available Thai equivalents for their social value, expressive effect, or communicative identity within fan discourse. An instance may serve multiple functions simultaneously, in which case the primary function as determined by context is assigned.

Research question 2: How are English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets rendered in English by the automatic translation tool of X?

To address the second research question, the translations were analysed using two complementary frameworks: translation strategies adapted from Aixelá (1996) and pragmatic equivalence (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2007).

Aixelá's (1996) framework is adopted as the key mechanistic criterion for two reasons. First, English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets function as culture-specific items in the sense that their meanings are embedded in fan community practices. Second, the framework accounts for both form-based and culture-based dimensions of translation, making it suitable for analysing items with non-standard orthography and culturally specific meanings. Aixelá (1996) proposes 11 strategies in two groups: the conservation group, comprising repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic (non-cultural) translation, extratextual gloss, and intratextual gloss; and the substitution group, comprising synonymy, limited universalization, absolute universalization, naturalization, deletion, and autonomous creation. Of these, naturalisation and deletion are observed in the present corpus following Aixelá's original concepts. Two further strategies are renamed to better reflect the present context: orthographic adaptation, which in Aixelá's framework refers to adapting a foreign item's spelling into the target script, is renamed *back-translation* here, as the phenomenon observed runs in the

reverse direction, with the translation tool recovering the English source form from its Thai phonological adaptation. Absolute universalization, which in Aixelá's framework involves replacing a culture-specific item with a culturally neutral reference, is renamed *substitution*, as what occurs in the present data is the rendering of loanwords or transliterations with general English meanings at the cost of fan-specific pragmatic meaning, a process more transparently captured by this term. Finally, *mistranslation*, in which the tool misidentifies a loanword or transliteration due to orthographic or semantic confusion, is identified as an additional category outside Aixelá's strategy-based framework, as it represents a translation error rather than a deliberate translation strategy.

Pragmatic equivalence (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2007) was applied as the key evaluative criterion, on the basis that the translation of fan tweets should convey not only the referential meaning but also the intention, emotion, and feeling of the source text. Translation outcomes were categorised as *equivalent translation*, in which both referential meaning and pragmatic function are preserved; *partial translation*, in which referential meaning is preserved but pragmatic function is lost or reduced; and *mistranslation*, in which referential meaning is incorrectly rendered.

To enhance the consistency of classification, explicit criteria for each category of form and function, as detailed above, were applied systematically across the corpus by a single researcher; as no second coder was involved, inter-rater agreement could not be established. As forms and functions are not mutually exclusive, each instance was classified according to its most evident function in context.

Throughout this study, examples of English loanwords and transliterations are presented in quotation marks, accompanied by their meanings in single quotation marks. Romanisation, with tone diacritics where needed, is added only where pronunciation is directly relevant. In translation examples, word-by-word glosses of the STs are provided, where necessary, in square brackets on a separate line beneath the source text.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion in two parts, corresponding to the two research questions

Forms and Functions of English Loanwords and Transliterations in Thai Fan Tweets

The formal properties and functional roles of English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets are examined.

Forms of English Loanwords and Transliterations in Thai Fan Tweets

A total of 172 English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets are categorised into five forms as follows.

Direct Loanwords. Direct loanwords are English words that have been adopted into Thai with phonological adaptation and whose meanings in the tweets correspond to those in the English donor language. These words are established in the Thai lexicon and appear in the Royal Institute Dictionary of the Thai language. Direct loanwords reflect the influence of English on Thai vocabulary in the domain of entertainment and popular culture. For example, “การ์ด” ‘card’, “คอนเสิร์ต” ‘concert’, and “เปียโน” ‘piano’. This finding reflects the pervasive influence of English-dominant global entertainment industries on Thai fan vocabulary, as English terms for artist-related concepts have become naturalised into everyday fan communication.

Semantic Extensions. Semantic extensions are English loanwords that are established in Thai use but whose meanings in the tweets extend beyond those found in the English donor language. These words have acquired fan-specific meanings that are not attested in the donor language, reflecting the creative linguistic practices of Thai fan communities. For example, “เมน” ‘the most favorite artist in the group’ (its original English meaning is ‘main’, the most important part of something), and “ไคคอส” ‘an artist recognised for the strength of singing ability’ (its original English meaning is ‘vocal’, relating to the voice). Many semantic extensions in the corpus involve English words whose meanings are associated with film, photography, and performance, such as “ช็อต” ‘the moment something amazing happens’ (its original English meaning is ‘shot’, a filmed sequence), “เฟรม” ‘a still image or photo of an artist’ (its original English meaning is ‘frame’, a single image in a film), and “ไลน์เต้น” ‘details of dance movements’ (its original English meaning is ‘line’, a formation or arrangement), all of which have been reanalysed to express fan-specific meanings.

This creative reappropriation of borrowed vocabulary exemplifies what Onysko & Winter-Froemel (2011) describe as luxury borrowing, whereby speakers extend the meaning of existing loanwords for expressive rather than referential purposes. The fan-specific meanings of these words would not be interpretable by English speakers unfamiliar with Thai fan culture, underscoring the in-group nature of this semantic creativity.

Transliterations. Transliterations are English words or expressions phonologically transcribed into Thai script that are not found in the Royal Institute Dictionary of the Thai Language. Some can and some cannot be found in the Royal Institute Transliteration Database. In the cases where they can be found, they include both ones with standardised forms in the Royal

Institute Transliteration Database and those transcribed on an ad hoc basis without standardised spelling. Some transliterations are found in the database with standard spelling, such as “เมนเทอร์” ‘mentor’, and “ซีน” ‘scene’; others are found but with variant spelling, such as “ซัพพอร์ต” ‘support’ (the standardised form is “ซัปพอร์ต”), and “ออรา” ‘aura’ (the standardised form is “ออร่า”); and some are not found in the database, such as “วินเทจ” ‘vintage’, and “รีเลท” ‘relate’. Transliterations are characterised by orthographic instability, as the same English donor item may be transcribed in multiple Thai spellings across different tweets.

Transliterations in the present corpus include not only single words but also multi-word expressions transliterated as a single unit, such as “พราวพรีเซนต์” ‘proud to present’, “ออลเดนิม” ‘all denim’. This reflects what Prasithrathsint (2005) describes as language or code mixing, in which elements of one language at any level—including words, phrases, and longer expressions—are incorporated into discourse in another language. The transliteration of such expressions as single orthographic units further suggests that multi-word transliterations are perceived and processed holistically as chunks associated with specific fan contexts rather than as sequences of individual words.

As noted in the corpus, transliterations in Thai fan tweets exhibit the characteristic of orthographic variation identified by Jehl (2010) as expressive variation, whereby non-standard spelling is employed not carelessly but intentionally to achieve pragmatic effects. Orthographic variation in social media language frequently mirrors phonological patterns in spoken language (Pavalanathan & Eisenstein, 2015). Crucially, the orthographic instability of transliterations carries significant implications for automatic translation, as discussed later.

Hybrid compounds. Hybrid compounds are lexical items formed by combining an English loanword or transliteration with a Thai element within a single unit, producing a form that draws simultaneously on both languages. Following Haugen’s (1950) classification, these items correspond to what he terms loanblends, in which morphemic importation and substitution occur together. In the present corpus, hybrid compounds typically combine an English loanword or transliteration with a Thai word of equivalent or related meaning, resulting in a reinforced or semantically intensified form. For example, “เสิร์หา” ‘search’, “ชมพูพื้งค์” ‘pink’, and “ไลฟ์สด” ‘live’.

The hybrid compounds found in the corpus reveal an interesting pattern of semantic reinforcement, whereby the English and Thai components are not merely juxtaposed but work together to create a unified expressive effect. In “ไลฟ์สด” ‘live’, for instance, both ไลฟ์ ‘live’ and สด ‘fresh or live’ carry overlapping meanings, suggesting that the hybrid form expresses

not as redundancy but as emphasis, amplifying the immediacy and authenticity of the event being described. Klinkajorn (2021) confirms that the combination of English and Thai elements within a single lexical unit is recurrently found in Thai across different text types and historical time periods.

Clippings and Abbreviations. Clippings are shortened forms produced by truncating one or more syllables of an English donor word, while abbreviations are initialisms or acronyms derived from English expressions. In both cases, the meanings of the shortened forms remain consistent with those of the donor language items. These forms reflect the general tendency of digital communication towards brevity and economy, as confirmed by Jitwiriyanont (2025) and Mukhtar et al. (2024). For example, “ด้อม” dom ‘fandom’, “แฟ” fae ‘fashion’ for clippings; and “ทล” tho-lo ‘timeline’, “ออฟช” o-fo-cho ‘official’ for abbreviations.

Functions of English Loanwords and Transliterations in Thai Fan Tweets

The five functions found in the data are presented and discussed as follows.

Lexical Gap Filling. Lexical gap filling occurs when an English loanword or transliteration is employed because no established Thai equivalent exists for the concept being expressed. Following Onysko and Winter-Froemel (2011), these are classified as necessary loans or catachrestic borrowings. In the present corpus, this function is exemplified by “สตรีม” ‘stream’, to transmit or access audio or video content over the internet in real time without downloading; “บลูทูธ” ‘Bluetooth’, a wireless technology enabling the exchange of data between electronic devices; and “มินิฮาร์ท” ‘mini-heart’, a hand gesture forming a small heart shape to express love, all of which refer to concepts with no direct Thai equivalent and are conventionally used in fan discourse.

In-group Identity Marking. English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets function as markers of in-group membership, signalling shared cultural knowledge and community affiliation. The use of loanwords is not merely a lexical act but also a socially meaning one, functioning as a contextual expression of identity and social belonging. In the fan context, this function operates on two levels simultaneously: the use of English vocabulary indexes familiarity with the English-dominant cultural spaces of entertainment industries, while the use of fan-specific semantic extensions indexes membership in particular fandom community. For example, “เมน” ‘main’, the

most favorite artist in the group; “ไรท์” ‘write’, a fan fiction writer’; and “เดม” ‘DM’, to send a DM or direct message’.

Expressive Function. The expressive function encompasses the use of loanwords and transliterations to adjust the intensity of meaning, either by intensifying or mitigating it relative to available Thai alternatives. Loanwords serving this function exemplify what Onysko & Winter-Froemel (2011) term luxury loans, in that they are chosen over available Thai equivalents for expressive rather than referential purposes. In the present corpus, the expressive function is realised in two directions, both often carrying a playful, self-mocking tone. First, intensification is found when loanwords are employed to express meanings more forcefully than Thai equivalents would convey. For example, “นัมเบอร์วัน” ‘number one’ appears in exclamatory contexts (e.g. “ยูโรนัมเบอร์วัน!!”) that intensify admiration hyperbolically, unlike the flatter “อันดับหนึ่ง” ‘first’. Similarly, “เซอร์วิส” ‘service’ has narrowed from general English “service” to denote an idol’s responsiveness to fans (e.g. “นี่คือคนที่เซอร์วิสแฟนคลับมากที่สุด” ‘This is the guy who serves fans the most’), carrying a stronger affective charge than the more transactional “บริการ” ‘service’. Second, mitigation is found when loanwords soften the forcefulness of a meaning that would otherwise sound overly strong or formal in Thai. For example, “เสื้อเขียวที่ว้าดามจแล้ว เสื้อดำทำลายล้างยิ่งกว่า” ‘If the green shirt was considered damaging the tank top is even more devastating’, “ดามจ” ‘damaged’ expresses being emotionally affected, used here at a lighter degree than “ทำลายล้าง” ‘destroyed’; similarly, in “อยากจะทำอะไรก็เหวี่ยง” ‘I want to go crazy over this flirtatious charm’, “เหวี่ยง” ‘crazy’ conveys a playful sense of being overwhelmed, softer than “บ้า” ‘mad’ which carries connotations of mental illness. “เซอร์วิส” ‘service’ and “ดามจ” ‘damage’ presuppose fandom familiarity but are classified as expressive here, as their primary role is adjusting emotional intensity rather than signalling community membership.

Economy of Expression. Economy of expression refers to the use of loanwords or transliterations to convey meaning more concisely than Thai equivalents would allow, where the Thai equivalent requires a notably longer expression to capture the same meaning. This function is consistent with the general tendency of diglect towards brevity driven by the constraints of digital communication (Jitwiriyant, 2025; Mukhtar et al., 2024). For example, “เรฟ” ‘reference’ (e.g. “ยื่นเรฟ 1:1 ให้” ‘Hand him a reference for the 1:1 photo’) is more concise than its Thai equivalent “ตัวอย่างอ้างอิง” ‘reference example’; similarly, “แมส” ‘masses’ (e.g. “แมสเกิน” ‘Too widely known’) is more concise than “เป็นที่รู้จักของคนหมู่มาก” ‘widely known among the masses’. Likewise,

“คอนเซปต์” ‘concept’ (e.g. “ไม่ได้เห็นคอนเซปต์ซัมเมอร์แบบนี้มานานละ” ‘I haven’t seen this kind of summer concept in a long time’) denotes an overall presentation or theme, a meaning that would require a considerably longer Thai phrase to convey in full i.e. “รูปแบบการนำเสนอหรือแนวคิดโดยรวม” ‘presentation style or overall concept’.

Prestige and Modernism. Loanwords serving the prestige and modernism function are chosen to convey associations of sophistication, modernity, or cosmopolitan identity that Thai equivalents do not carry, regardless of relative length. This function similarly represents luxury loans in the sense of Onysko & Winter-Froemel (2011), chosen for their social and stylistic associations rather than economy or lexical necessity. This function is particularly evident in vocabulary associated with appearance, lifestyle, and celebrity culture, domains in which English terminology carries social prestige in the Thai context. For example, “วินเทจ” ‘vintage’, “เมคอัพ” ‘makeup’, and “ชิค” ‘chic’, carry a stronger sense of modernity and sophistication than “ย้อนยุค” ‘vintage’, “เครื่องสำอาง” ‘makeup’, and “เก๋” ‘chic’, which are their Thai equivalents but lack the same cosmopolitan association, respectively.

These findings extend and refine earlier accounts of Thai-English code-mixing. Whereas Chalaemwaree & Rodrigo (2020) found Thai-English code-mixing on X to centre on everyday vocabulary motivated primarily by emphasis and convenience, the present findings show that within fan discourse specifically, English loanwords and transliterations additionally serve in-group identity and prestige functions tied to fandom membership, extending the scope of code-mixing motivations beyond general usage to a genre-specific register. Similarly, while Kannaovakun and Gunther (2003) identified nativisation processes such as truncation and reduplication in English elements mixed into Thai television discourse, comparable processes are observed here under *naturalisation*, suggesting that such nativisation patterns persist across media and time, from broadcast television to contemporary social media. Attention now turns to how such items are rendered under automatic translation.

Rendering in English of English Loanwords and Transliterations in Thai Fan Tweets by X’s Automatic Translation Tool

Four translation strategies adapted from Aixelá (1996) are identified and presented according to three translation outcomes, evaluated against the criterion of pragmatic equivalence (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2007).

Equivalent Translation

Equivalent translation refers to cases in which the automatic translation tool successfully renders both the referential meaning and the pragmatic function of the source loanword or transliteration. Two translation strategies are identified as producing this outcome.

Back-translation. Back-translation occurs when the translation tool successfully recovers the English source form of a loanword or transliteration and renders it directly in the target text. This strategy is most consistently applied to direct loanwords whose phonological and orthographic forms retain close ties to their English origins, making them recoverable by the translation system. For example,

ST (source text): มีบางซีนที่โดนคัทบ่อย

[have some scene that get cut often]

TT (target text): There were some scenes that were often cut ...

Naturalisation. Naturalisation occurs when the translation tool renders the loanword in a standardised English form, adapting it to conform to English grammatical norms in the TT. The present corpus reveals that naturalisation operates at two levels: inflectional and derivational.

At the inflectional level, the translation tool applies English grammatical morphology to loanwords in the ST, producing TT forms that are grammatically well-formed in English. Two types of inflection are attested in the corpus. First, tense marking is found when English loanwords or transliterations functioning as verbs in the ST. For example,

ST: ทุกคน ผมนั่งชิวอยู่ชั้นหกพาราгон แล้วเจอพี่ตรี

[Everyone I sit chill be floor six Paragon then meet Brother Tree]

TT: Everyone, I'm chilling on the 6th floor of Paragon, then I ran into Phi Tree.

Second, number marking is found when English loanwords or transliterations functioning as nouns in the ST. For example,

ST: แฟนแคมเดี่ยวของทั้งสองเมม

[fancam single of both two mem]

TT: solo fancams for both of them ...

At the derivational level, the translation tool produces TT forms that involve a change in part of speech from the loanword as used in the ST. This occurs when a loanword is used in a grammatical category in Thai that differs from its typical category in English, and the translation tool derives a new form to fit the syntactic context of the TT. For example,

ST: รูปนี้คือโคตรอิมแพก

[picture this damn impact]

TT: This picture is insanely impactful.

These findings demonstrate that when the translation tool successfully identifies a loanword as English-derived, it does not merely reproduce the base form but applies English morphological rules to produce a grammatically integrated TT. This level of morphological processing represents a notably successful aspect of the tool's handling of loanwords, suggesting that direct loanwords with high formal transparency to their English source forms are processed with grammatical accuracy. However, this morphological competence is contingent on the tool's prior recognition of the item as a loanword, a condition that is not consistently met across all loanword types in the corpus, as discussed in the following translation outcome.

Partial Translation

Partial translation refers to cases in which the referential meaning of the loanword or transliteration is preserved in the TT but pragmatic meaning is lost or reduced. Substitution and deletion are found as producing this outcome.

Substitution. Substitution occurs when the translation tool replaces the source loanword or transliteration with a semantically related English equivalent, preserving referential meaning but losing platform-specific pragmatic meaning. For example,

ST: ไม่อยากให้คลิปนี้ของน้องคอมหายไ้จากทล.

[not want give clip this of brother Kyom disappear go from tho-lo]

TT: I don't want this clip of Nong Kyom to disappear from the public.

From the example, “ทล” ‘timeline’ is substituted with “public” in the TT, a rendering that partially communicates the sense of a shared digital space but loses both the platform-specific meaning of X's feed and the brevity and informality of the abbreviated form.

It can be observed that the automatic translation tool tends to translate source tweets accurately at the surface level while missing deeper pragmatic and emotive meanings.

Deletion. Deletion occurs when the translation tool omits the source loanword or transliteration entirely from the TT. The overall referential meaning of the tweet remains interpretable, but the pragmatic meaning carried by the deleted item is lost. For example,

ST: แก้มใสๆ ผิวขาวๆ ปากขู้ๆ ริมฝีปากสีชมพู เสื้อชมพูๆ

[cheek clear clear skin white white mouth pouty pouty hair brown shirt pink pink]

TT: Clear cheeks, white skin, pouty lips, brown hair, pink shirt.

From the example, this deletion does not affect the referential accuracy of the TT, as the colour pink is already conveyed by the preceding word “ชมพู” ‘pink’. However, the emphasis and playfulness of the hybrid compound, which reinforces the pink colour description through the addition of its English transliteration counterpart, disappear entirely from the TT.

Mistranslation

Mistranslation refers to cases in which the referential meaning of loanword or transliteration is incorrectly rendered in the TT. Two mechanisms underlie this outcome in the present corpus. The first mechanism is orthographic ambiguity, in which the non-standard, abbreviated spelling of the ST corresponds to more than one possible English-derived word, and the translation tool selects the incorrect one. For example,

ST: ดากต้องมือทองทดสอบดี

[photographer hand golden taste good]

TT: The golden photographer tests very well ...

From the example, “ทดสอบ” ‘taste’ is ambiguous between ‘taste’ and ‘test’, as both may be transliterated identically in this abbreviated form; the translation tool renders it as ‘test’ rather than the intended ‘taste’, producing a TT that is referentially incoherent in this context.

The second mechanism is semantic misinterpretation, including cases of idiomatic meaning in which a loanword with a fan-specific extension is translated according to its general Thai or English meaning rather than its fan register meaning, producing a translation that is referentially incorrect and pragmatically infelicitous in context. For example,

ST: ทำไมพี่ที่ต้องน่ารักขนาดนี้!!! ช็อตไมค์

[why brother must cute size this!!! Short mic]

TT: Why does big bro have to be this cute!!! That shot of Mike

From the example, “ช็อต” ‘short circuit’ (used metaphorically in Thai fan register to mean ‘to malfunction’ or ‘to fail’, as in “ช็อตไมค์” [shot mic] meaning ‘to stumble or perform poorly when speaking or giving an interview’ because ‘mic’ is a microphone) is rendered as “shot of Mike”, misidentifying “ช็อต” [shot] as the photography term “shot” and “ไมค์” [mic] as a person’s name “Mike”. The resulting translation is not only referentially incoherent but loses the humorous and affectionate tone of the original, in which the fan finds the artist endearing precisely because of his poor speaking performance.

The mistranslation through orthographic ambiguity is particularly significant, as it demonstrates that the orthographic instability has direct and

systematic consequences for translation quality. As Yang (2020) confirms, when unfamiliarity with the source culture persists, intercultural communication readily fails. The translation tool's inability to recognise English loanwords and transliterations as English-derived forms, rather than deviant Thai spellings, represents a fundamental limitation in its handling of the creative orthographic practices that characterise Thai fan register. Similarly, the mistranslation of semantic extensions through semantic misinterpretation reveals that the tool processes loanwords according to their general lexical meanings rather than their contextualised fan-specific meanings, a limitation that reflects the broader challenge of pragmatic and cultural competence in automatic translation systems noted by Bekmurodova et al. (2024), Margareth et al. (2025), Nyuhuan (2024), and Kim et al. (2024).

Conclusion

This study investigates English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets and their rendering in English by the automatic translation tool of X. Five forms were identified: direct loanwords, semantic extensions, transliterations, hybrid compounds, and clippings and abbreviations, serving five functions: lexical gap filling, in-group identity marking, expressive function, economy of expression, and prestige and modernism. In terms of translation, three outcomes were identified: equivalent translation via back-translation and naturalisation; partial translation via substitution, and deletion; and mistranslation, arising from orthographic ambiguity and semantic misinterpretation.

The present study contributes to loanword studies extending inquiry to fan register, a domain previously underexplored. English loanwords and transliterations in Thai fan tweets are distinguished from those in other text types by their fan-specific meanings, their orthographic instability driven by expressive and identity-marking purposes, and their predominantly affective and social functions. Mo & Xiao (2024) demonstrate that the emergence of loanwords is closely tied to specific social and cultural contexts. While early borrowing was driven primarily by lexical necessity, Klinkajorn (2021) notes that contemporary loanwords in Thai increasingly serve broader functions. As empirically demonstrated in the present study, English vocabulary enters Thai fan register through active fan engagement with global pop culture, acquiring new forms and meanings that are distinctly fan-specific.

In translation studies, the study demonstrates that loanwords and transliterations constitute a systematically challenging category for automatic translation, with orthographic instability and fan-specific meanings emerging as the two primary sources of translation failure. These sources of failure correspond conceptually to the forms and functions identified earlier: forms

whose primary challenge lies in non-standard spelling, such as transliterations and clippings, are vulnerable to misidentification regardless of context, whereas functions whose primary challenge lies in culturally specific meaning, such as in-group identity marking or expressive functions, depend on community-specific semantic knowledge that standard dictionaries and training data are unlikely to capture. This finding is consistent with broader evidence that machine translation (e.g. Google Translate) continues to produce systematic errors in Thai-English translation, particularly in semantically and pragmatically complex cases (Kitbamrung & Chinokul, 2026).

As the present study focuses on a single platform and a specific tweet genre, future research extending the analysis to other platforms and fan tweet types would provide a more comprehensive account of loanword use in Thai fan discourse. The typology of forms and functions proposed in this study may also serve as a replicable framework for examining English loanwords and transliterations in other varieties of Thai digital language, such as gaming discourse, beauty communities, or sport fandoms, where English is equally prominent but potentially distinct in its semantic and pragmatic characteristics. For practical application, the findings point to a cultural rather than purely technical gap: standard lexicographic resources, on which automatic translation tools partly rely, cannot keep pace with the creative, community-driven evolution of fan language. Developers of translation tools embedded in social media platforms could address this by training systems on the non-standard orthographic forms characteristic of fan-generated content and incorporating dynamic, community-sourced fan lexicons, updated through user feedback, alongside standard dictionaries, recognising that pragmatic and emotive equivalence is as crucial as referential accuracy in facilitating effective intercultural fan communication.

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