Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences 44 (2023) 1283–1292

Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

journal homepage: http://kjss.kasetsart.org

When fake news comes with translation: A study of perception toward coronavirus-related news translation into Thai

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Article Info

Article history:
Received 19 August 2022
Revised 8 January 2023
Accepted 23 January 2023
Available online 17 November 2023

Keywords:
COVID-19,
fake news,
news translation,
news reception,
truth criteria

Abstract

This paper aims to investigate how coronavirus-related fake news as a result of translation is perceived in the Thai context. Using the framework of truth criteria to guide the online questionnaire and focus group, the researchers gathered the different perspectives of three age groups: Group 1 aged 19–38, Group 2 aged 39–54, and Group 3 aged 55 or above. The findings reveal that: (1) Group 3 agrees that translated news should be compatible with their existing, verified knowledge; (2) respondents in different age groups have significantly different opinions when assessing the coherence of news translations; (3) Group 1 is the most critical when looking for the credibility of news sources; (4) Group 1 is more likely than older groups to make time to verify translated news through social consensus; and (5) Group 1 is the most active in their search for supporting evidence. The decision to verify the news translation is influenced by time constraints, family relationships, technology, and the ease of information processing. This paper sheds light on the basic understanding of fake news from translation and its impact on interactions between news services and audiences of different cultures.

Introduction

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the number of non-experts producing online news without verifying its validity, posing a severe threat to those who are the targets of news misrepresentation. The rapidly spread virus has sparked social anxiety in virtual communities, where members attempt to cast a negative light on the trend by further spreading misinformation. According to Stahl (2018), individuals are vulnerable to misleading information because of their cognitive bias-influenced method of handling and evaluating data. Most social media users, however, fail to notice the misled content, which is exacerbated by ill-intentioned news generators who tirelessly create further misunderstandings (Shu et al., 2017). Such failure and carelessness, if not outright neglect, can impair people's ability to distinguish between fact and fake news (Rubin, 2017).

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https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2023.44.4.32
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Fake news in Thailand, where this paper focuses, has impacted society as a whole, with social media playing an integral part in disseminating information, particularly about the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has accelerated Thailand's adoption of digital technology, which leads to concerns about quality content, digital literacy, online learning and even cybersecurity (e.g., Cheeppensuk, 2021; Smith & Smith, 2022; Thongsawang, 2022). According to a Ministry of Public Health survey conducted in 2020, nearly all people who have cast an opinion have encountered misinformation on social media. Still, slightly more than half can distinguish between true and false information about COVID-19 situations (Sirilak, 2020). To address these concerns, the Thai government established the Anti-Fake News Center shortly before the pandemic. Cofact.org, a network of journalists and civic society for fostering the culture of fact-checking, has also served as a gatekeeper in bringing attention to misinformation.

Despite broad consensus among scholars regarding the harm caused by fake news, there seems to be a lack of consideration for one of the possible conduits for fake news within a country — translation. Only a few studies on fake news awareness and public policy have been conducted in the Thai context (Sa-nga-ngam et al., 2019; Sombatpoonsiri, 2021). They appear to disregard the notion of translation as one of the most critical aspects leading to the distribution of misinformation from other countries. Regarding fake news from a translation studies perspective, we seldom see any attention paid to news across countries by untrained translators who can arguably alter some critical data of the source news. This is due to the ease with which the online platforms offer them, not to mention the distorted news from the established media outlets. As Luo (2021, p. 2) opined, the pandemic was a trial to translation, revealing its new approaches by which laypeople, rather than governments, could tackle the problem. These laypeople may inadvertently render the news in this pandemic-driven crisis inaccurate, and how the target readers deal with it remains a question.

This paper takes, as its point of departure, the idea that news translation can be a channel through which fake information is imported, or even real news is manipulated to become fake in the target society. The current study investigates fake news in relation to translation because there have not been enough studies directly addressing such a relationship. In addition to the translation assistance on critical information during the coronavirus crisis (Techawongstien & Phanthaphoommee, 2022) and the textual analysis of fake news translation that our colleagues have undertaken elsewhere (Phanthaphoommee, 2023), this study will further contribute to the knowledge of news translation and its attributes by exploring how Thai target audiences receive and verify fake news translation.

Literature Review

Fake News Proliferation during the Pandemic

The concept of "fake news" has been construed across different contexts. According to Klein and Wueller (2018), fake news is contrived, totally fraudulent, and without any factual foundation. Based on their degree of authenticity, fake news encompasses news satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda (Tandoc et al., 2018). Some scholars classify it as pseudojournalistic disinformation and political labelling (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). Gelfert (2018) argues that people's cognitive biases can be triggered and their resonating processes changed by fake news through the confirmation of biases, repetition, and emotional arousal, all of which can lead to information fallacies.

The COVID-19 outbreak exposes the psychological and negative health consequences resulting from an excessive intake of disinformation (Tasnim et al., 2020). Misleading news may have unforeseen effects on public behavior, making it more difficult to monitor the spread of disease and exacerbating its harmful impact on a country's health ecosystems and even security (Mheidly & Fares, 2020). Trust in health-related news may lessen the intensity of pandemic and how people consume information online (Zheng et al., 2022). In line with the above findings, Li et al. (2020) explored the influence of online media channels during the pandemic and found that most of the viewed online videos contained erroneous elements. Their sources were even generated from reputable websites. Shu et al. (2020) tested machine learning models for the detection and classification of fake messages in order to create a multi-dimensional database that considers social aspects, content, and time and space factors. In Asia, Sujoko (2022) proposed collaboration across media agencies to seek the government's information disclosure to bolster the press's role during the health crisis.

The above studies provide compelling evidence that fake news has far-reaching consequences in people's lives. However, there appear to be significant lacunae in our understanding of translation as a primary façade for fake news distribution. This is because a translator as a gatekeeper can either prevent untrustworthy information

from reaching the target readers or allow it to become "translation-*cum*-fabrication" in their society. Therefore, it is especially important for the current study to investigate how translation may play a pivotal role in (mis)communicating such news from other countries and its implications on target readers.

Truth Criteria

To link to the above argument, this study adopts Schwarz and Jalbert's (2021) truth criteria to identify how online news translation about coronavirus has been received by the Thai audience. It also looks at how they appraise the translated international news that has been proven to be false. This conceptual framework is based on a person's perception and information processing, such as whether the news corresponds to what was previously known and how much effort was made to assess the information received. Schwarz and Jalbert (2021) explain that the framework's main construct is how people evaluate relevant knowledge about fake news. When time permits, one may resort to a more laborious investigation if the first intuitive reaction indicates that something is flawed. Such a preliminary truth assessment process is a tautological form of "gatekeeper": people will either participate in the critical examination of the text or simply agree with it.

The intuitive processes of truth judgment by an individual, according to Schwarz and Jalbert (2021, pp. 75–77), are as follows: (1) when an assumption is *compatible*, rather than contradictory, with other knowledge, people tend to interpret it as correct; (2) when an assumption matches up with a bigger narrative that is *coherent* with an individual's mental models, it is more likely to be taken seriously; (3) when information is obtained from a *credible* source, people are more likely to believe it; (4) people tend to consider whether there is social *consensus* on a given assumption; and (5) people's trust grows in proportion to the amount of *evidence* obtained through an external investigation or relevant information recalled.

Despite being a typical framework for analyzing fake news, Schwarz and Jalbert's (2021) approach to truth criteria is seen as the ideal framework for researching translation-based fake news. It will serve as a foundation for questions in group discussion and online survey to explain the respondents' perceptions of fake news translation. Both results will be explained in terms of the impacts of fake news translation on Thai society and the audience's comprehension and literacy of fake news as a result of translation.

Methodology

This study was guided by a research design that combined quantitative and qualitative principles. We collected data from October to December 2021 after obtaining ethics clearance from the relevant agency. The quantitative data were collected first through an online questionnaire, and the qualitative data were gathered through three focus group to complement the first set of data. The questionnaire was developed using truth criteria (Schwarz & Jalbert, 2021). It was broken down into four sections: background information, social media usage, health-related news consumption, and truth verification.

Anyone who spends more than ten hours per week on social media platforms was eligible to respond to the survey, regardless of their gender, nationality, or religion. Snowball sampling with an online survey platform was used to recruit respondents; therefore, the exact number of populations could not be determined, only the response rate (n = 300). The respondents were informed of the study's objectives and guaranteed anonymity, with the right to withdraw at any time.

Table 1 The demographic profile of the respondents.

Demographic variables	Numberx (n = 300)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	118	39.3
Male	176	58.7
Unidentified	6	2.0
Age		
19–38	154	51.3
39–54	96	32.0
55+	50	16.7
Educational level		
No formal education	7	2.3
Primary and secondary	20	6.7
Graduate	163	54.3
Postgraduate	110	36.7

After completing the online questionnaire, the researchers contacted focus group participants to schedule each session. The primary selection criteria were similar to those for the questionnaire but emphasized their experience and exposure to international news. The participants were chosen using a convenience sampling method and were briefed that their contribution was entirely voluntary and that there would be no adverse consequences if they opted out. Participants were given a consent form prior to data collection,

and their identities were treated with confidentiality. The researcher conducted three focus groups to determine whether age has a significant impact on the reception of fake news translations. Each group contained five participants: Group 1 consisted of participants aged 19–38 (Gen Y), Group 2 consisted of participants aged 39–54 (Gen X), and Group 3 consisted of participants aged 55 and above (see Table 2). While the study acknowledges that it was impossible to recruit all likely people who met the criteria, the selection was constructive and efficient because it sought participants' perspectives on fake news translation intake rather than a precise percentage.

The discussion topics were arranged using truth criteria (Schwarz & Jalbert, 2021) as interview guidelines, emphasizing three areas: news sources, content checking, and news sharing. The procedure began with general questions to allow participants to talk about their experiences before moving to more specific questions. Some participants could not attend the meeting due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions imposed by the Thai government. One session had to be conducted online. Zoom, an online meeting platform, was chosen for this purpose. Despite the space constraint, the participants in this session were willing to be involved.

The questions used in the focus group and online survey share similar themes. They include, for example: How is the translated news presented? What are its most prominent characteristics? How do you usually share this translated news? What are the participants' cognitive processes (e.g., *the news corresponds to my beliefs, the content is complete and running smoothly*)? The discussion lasted between 40 to 50 minutes and was conducted in Thai. All three sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The participants' quotes were translated into English to convey the original message while remaining as close to the participants' original utterances as possible.

Regarding data analysis, these various data sources were realigned to discover the meanings behind the participants' process of truth verification and identification of fake news from translation. Thematic analysis was used for both the questionnaire and the focus group as it centers on experiential descriptive study and allows one to analyze nonverbal cues in collected data (Kitchen, 2013). This analysis technique can provide a detailed account of the data and multiple points of view from the participants by outlining their shared values to gain a unique perspective (Guest et al., 2011).

This paper reports both statistical and descriptive study results, and the researchers are aware of its limitations, particularly the small number of participants. However, the ultimate goal of this study is to initiate a new dialogue about translation and fake news. This case study does not seek to generalize the trend but to raise awareness of fake news translation through the insights of respondents and participants to broaden the scope of fake news, as we have long known.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings regarding perceived characteristics of fake news translation and truth verification. In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the study, we intentionally merged the discussion of the findings from the online

Table 2 Participants in the focus group

Group	Pseudonym	Education	Internet usage (hour/day)	Technological experience
Group 1 (aged 19–38)	Yuwadee	Master	12+	medium
	Lalita	Bachelor	12+	medium
	Atima	Bachelor	10	medium
	Panit	Bachelor	6–7	medium
	Roj	Bachelor	5–6	high
Group 2 (aged 39–54)	Jamik	Master	12+	medium
	Benja	Master	12+	medium
	Jitti	Bachelor	6–8	high
	Kovin	Bachelor	10	high
	Thanya	Master	7	medium
Group 3 (aged 55+)	Tanin	Bachelor	6	medium
	Montha	Master	7	medium
	Wanna	Bachelor	10	medium
	Siri	Secondary	3–4	Low
	Amnuay	Bachelor	3–4	Low

survey with those from the focus group. The quotations and insights of participants were guided by their pseudonyms, followed by a superscript to indicate which group they belong to: G1 (aged 24 to 38); G2 (aged 39 to 53); and G3 (aged 54 and above).

In terms of general information from the survey, most respondents use online social media for more than ten hours per day (45.7%; n = 137). The most popular social media platform, with a usage rate of more than ten hours per week, is LINE, a top-rated freeware app for instant communications (36.0%), followed by Facebook (32.3%). YouTube ranks third (24.7%) and Instagram fourth (14.0%). The most popular devices are smartphones for general communication (89.7%), daily news consumption (83.3%), and entertainment (72.7%), while computers are the most useful when it comes to educational research (51.3%). This clue may imply that LINE on a smartphone is the most likely channel for respondents to share online news with others.

"They All Look Fake To Me": Presentation of the Translated News

In the icebreaker section of all focus groups, there was a clear trend of participants agreeing with each other after the researchers showed them the selected vignettes of fake news from translation to identify their fake elements. However, in the online survey, most respondents indicated they had never read health-related news translated from other languages (n = 195). This suggests a lack of skills to distinguish between local and international news and awareness that translation does play a significant role in delivering news from other countries. When asked how they knew the news they were reading was a translation, the trend points to the fact that it cites international organizations (n = 133), uses foreign syntactical structure (n = 91) and contains foreign pictures (n = 85). This concurs with several participants in the focus group. For example, Atima[G1] explained, "I saw the foreign name in it […] I know right away that it's news translated from other countries."

Concerning the perceived characteristics of health news translation, the questionnaire results indicate that the most frequently perceived characteristic is the photos of foreign countries or people (52.0%), followed by the provision of news references (49.7%). Having headlines comes in third (40.7%), and displaying the news agency's name comes in fourth (32.0%), as shown in Figure 1.

During the focus group sessions, participants were asked: "Do font, text layout, illustration, and headline influence your decision to receive translated news?" Benja[G2] responded that she would generally trust the well-structured, easy-to-read font with a clear picture, but the headline is not significant. In particular, Tanin[G3] explained, "Because text arrangement can include colorful illustrations, they have a strong impact on me. It makes me want to read more."

In terms of contents, all groups seem to agree that news with a clear crediting source is likely to persuade the readers. However, Roj[G1] commented:

> *Most news on social media pages does not show the sources. I guess information was gathered from different places, so it's not referred to as a single source.*

Furthermore, Jitti[G2] voiced concern on the translation effect of the news, "The translation of news that differs from the original is the one that surprises people. I usually come across news that has duped people into sharing it for some hidden purposes."

In the online questionnaire, one section asks how "translated news" the respondents later discover as fake typically looks. One hundred and nine respondents (36%) believe that it tends to be propaganda, closely followed by fabricated news (34.7%; n = 104). These translation-related characteristics of fake news are consistent with the types of fake news (propaganda and fabrication) proposed by Tandoc et al. (2018, pp. 143, 146).

During the focus group, when asked to describe the type of international news that was revealed later to be fake, many participants agreed that those translations tend to be either fabrication or manipulation of images.

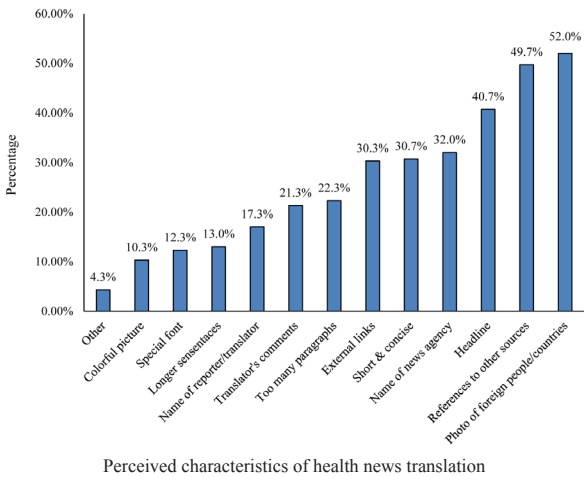

Figure 1 Percentage of perceived characteristics of health news translation (multiple answers)

Sometimes, the text itself triggers the participants' suspension to find more evidence if they have time. For example, Montha[G3] explained:

> "*They all look fake to me. They are all muddled writing. I read them but don't understand them. I guess they were translated by Google Translate.*"

Despite being in different sessions, Kovin[G2] and Lalita[G1] agree that this type of news is most often mistranslated from foreign sources to discredit others or benefit themselves. This tactic can be explained by Egelhofer and Lecheler's (2019, p. 105) argument that influential political blocs can use the term "fake news" to defame media outlets for political purposes. Likewise, participants in our study believe that fabricated content can be used to directly discredit their opponents. Furthermore, Thanya[G2] reiterated its interconnected characteristics:

> "*I think fake news from translation consists of fabricated news, distorted images, and propaganda. Some even lost money because of such news.*"

This quote is consistent with the findings of Li et al. (2020, pp. 5–6), who reported that during the COVID-19 crisis, online media platforms could stream videos fraught with fabricated images, even from popular sites. Fake news from translation, in this sense, seems to share many of its characteristics and hidden motivation with fake news generated locally.

"We all make mistakes, after all": Truth Verification of Health News Translation

According to the online survey, more than half of the respondents (53.0%) have never checked to see if the translated news is accurate before sharing it. This seems to be slightly different from some participants' views in the focus group. Benja[G2], who sometimes checks the news origin explained, "If the subject interests me and I have the time, I'll follow and read [the source text]. Twitter has a thread where I can easily return to the first tweet."

In the questionnaire, when asked about the best method for determining the accuracy of translated news, respondents reckon that the ideal technique is to examine the soundness of the contents, followed by a comparison to the original, as illustrated in Table 3.

As the technique ranked first among others, relying on "soundness" signifies the respondents' intuition or past experiences, which also implies that this group of Thai respondents uses their cognitive process rather than pursuing additional research to verify the news. The participants in group discussion were also asked to justify their interpretations of how they usually appraise the translated news. Panit[G1] was quite vocal about this topic:

> "*According to one news agency, the [anonymized] vaccine is very effective in preventing diseases, but after I checked the original news, [it] said such a brand [of vaccine] is the least efficient as compared to others.*"

Less than half of the participants in the three focus groups were willing to accept the translated news without further thought, while the remainder were entirely uninterested. For example, Amnuay[G3] in the group aged 55 and above said, "I don't have much time to consider it, so I'm not sure. I only skimmed it. Then I just let go if it doesn't make sense."

In terms of news sharing, while some agree that news translation should be checked and others disagree, respondents in survey indicate that some (n = 69) have shared content without verifying it for the reasons shown in Figure 2.

Concerning the intended audience for news sharing, friends are the most likely group to whom online respondents would send the translation (18.7%), while family members come in second (13.0%). This figure is unsurprising given how they disseminate information online. 26.0% share the original post of translated news on their social media

Table 3 The ideal topics for news verification

Topics for verification	Sampling (n = 300)	
	Number	%
Soundness of news content	85	28.3
Comparison to the original	72	24.0
Individuals/organizations that appear in the news	53	17.7
Wording (positive or negative)	29	9.7
Photo or graphic (relevant to the translated news)	26	8.7

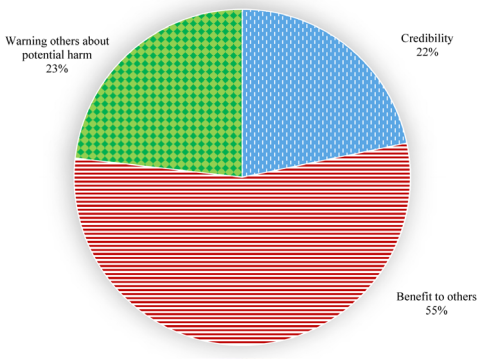

Figure 2 Reasons for sharing news without verification (n = 69)

feed, where friends in that account are most likely to see it. 17.7 precent copy and paste the translated news link into a specific online group, such as the LINE group.

After combining and triangulating data from an online survey and focus group with Schwarz and Jalbert's (2021) truth criteria, we discovered several factors influencing respondents' and participants' perceptions, as summarized in Table 4.

According to Table 4, no group has a significant difference at the level of .05 views on *compatibility* and *coherence*, implying that both criteria are applied when participants in all three groups attempt to verify the translation of health-related news. However, in terms of credibility, consensus, and evidence, a significant difference was found at a level of .05. Group 1 is more likely to apply *credibility* than Group 3, while Group 1 and Group 2 are more likely to apply *consensus* and *evidence* than Group 3.

Regarding *compatibility*, respondents aged 55 and above in the online questionnaire agree that translated news should be *compatible* with their existing, verified knowledge ($\overline{\chi}$ = 3.92), which is slightly higher than other younger groups. Participants in the focus group were also specifically asked, "Do you tend to verify the news translation to ensure that it is consistent with your existing knowledge?" Every participant in focus group 1 would look at the news with the information they already knew. For example, Roj[G1] explained, "Quite true. Especially the news about vaccines. I often compare it with older sources to see if it is reasonable." Focus group 2 members have a similar tendency to agree that having a prior perception of certain health news available to them in Thai can help them decide whether to trust the new information. However, focus group 3 members are prone to believing news translations sent from their younger relatives, particularly from the LINE platform. For example, Amnuay[G3] clarified, "If it's the same with what I knew […] I just believed the messages my grandchild sent me. He sent them through LINE, which is easy to use. So, you have to pick the person you trust the most, right?"

As for *coherence*, when asked to rate the statement, "One should check to see if the news content is reasonable," respondents in different age groups had significantly different opinions (Group 1, $\overline{x}$ = 3.97; Group 2, $\overline{x}$ = 3.73; Group 3, $\overline{x}$ = 3.74). Participants in focus groups were also asked to describe how they assess the *coherence* of online news translations. Members of focus group 1 seldom check whether the news fits logically. Almost everyone in focus group 2 agrees that the new details should be double-checked to see if they are coherent enough to trust in the end. Thanya[G2], on the other hand, explained, "I seldom go into detail because there isn't time to double-check it. Most news I received online was uninteresting."

Several participants in the focus group highlighted the overall readability of the text. For example, Wanna[G3] opined that "I skim the news and don't read it thoroughly. If the text looks okay with a good opening and ending line, I believe it's true." This statement appears to corroborate Johnson-Laird's (2012) observation that people process coherent stories more easily than contradictory ones, which can occasionally result in the verification process being fallible.

Interestingly, concerning *credibility* of news translations, the respondents' views from the online survey significantly varied according to age group (Group 1, $\overline{x}$ = 4.12; Group 2, $\overline{x}$ = 3.77; Group 3, $\overline{x}$ = 3.68). This tendency also shows in focus group sessions. Most focus group 1 members believe

Table 4 Opinions toward news verification from questionnaire and group discussion

Truth criteria	Overall	Age group				Sample quotes from focus group
		(1) 19–38	(2) 39–54	(3) 55+	Comparison between groups (*p Value*)	
	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD*)	Mean (*SD*)		
Compatibility	3.54 (.78)	3.56 (.77)	3.52 (.88)	3.56 (.59)	.900	If I have time, I will compare the news to other news agencies that I usually subscribe to. (Montha[G3])
Coherence	3.81 (.92)	3.90 (.96)	3.73 (.91)	3.65 (.80)	.171	We've to make sure the translation is consistent […] it shows how the translator can make news stories understandable. (Yuwadee[G1])
Credibility	3.71 (.84)	3.84 (.77)	3.67 (.84)	3.38 (.91)	.003* 1 > 3	If it's about me, I need to go into more detail to see if the news is credible enough. (Thanya[G2])
Consensus	3.46 (.95)	3.66 (.92)	3.39 (.83)	2.97 (1.08)	.000* 1,2 > 3	I like looking at polls […] but sometimes they are not related to the translation I'm reading. (Lalita[G1])
Evidence	3.58 (1.05)	3.72 (1.04)	3.60 (.99)	3.11 (1.08)	.002* 1,2 > 3	Of course, we need to compare the news […] There're always different details in each new report. (Benja[G2])

Note: The interpretation of the mean range is as follows: 1.00–1.80 (not at all likely), 1.81–2.60 (a little likely), 2.61–3.40 (moderately likely), 3.41–4.20 (very likely), and 4.21–5.00 (the most likely). The differences between the means were analyzed by *F*-Test (One-Way ANOVA) at the 95% confidence interval, and each group was tested using Scheffé's method with a significant difference of .05.

it is important to rely on well-established news sources. Panit[G1] added that she does not believe the previously mistaken sources. This view is similar to those of focus group 2 and group 3 members. For example, Jamik[G2] explained, "Every news source is bound to make mistakes, which is normal. If it is revised, the reader will regain trust. We all make mistakes, after all." This statement seems to corroborate Hartley and Vu's (2020, p. 751) assertion that news agencies who spread fake news are monitored through "social sanctioning" mechanisms such as public rejection or shame. Besides, Waszak et al. (2018, p. 115) state that external links in the news can be used to gain credit, and Del Vicario et al. (2019, p. 16) believe that logical-appearing statements can bolster readers' perceptions of the news. These views are supported by some of the participants, particularly in focus group 1 (Yuwadee[G1] and Lalita[G1]) and group 2 (Jamik[G2] and Benja[G2]). However, focus group 3 do not particularly pay attention to these aspects.

Regarding how one seeks social *consensus*, the online questionnaire results revealed that respondents aged 19–38 are more likely to make time to verify translated news through additional research ($\bar{x} = 3.72$) and polls or friends ($\bar{x} = 3.64$). Similarly, almost all members of focus group 1 (the same age range) concurred with this assessment and Schwarz and Jalbert's (2021, p. 76) statement that people can use opinion polls or consult their peers to determine the level of social consensus. They can base their decision on how familiar a belief is with other widely-held beliefs. Only Atima[G1] provided a slightly different rationale, "Research is important for me to help consider whether to believe a piece of news. But as for polls, sometimes it's just one personal opinion. So, I don't always trust polls." Focus group 3 generally agreed with Atima[G1] that, while seeking a third party's opinion is the best course of action, polling is quite difficult to obtain.

Most participants in focus group 2 agreed that if the recently acquired news from translation is about something crucial to their health, such as vaccine inoculation, they look for different studies to ensure that the translation is accurate and the content is feasible.

Furthermore, as Rzymski and Nowicki (2020) warn that too much disinformation can have psychological consequences, Thanya[G2] seems to show a tendency toward this:

> "*When I have questions about foreign news related to my health, I will ask my friend, who is a doctor, for help. She warned me, though, not to read the unverified news so much that I became obsessed with it.*"

An interesting trend emerged from the online survey concerning supporting evidence for translated news. Respondents aged 19-38 are the most active in their search for additional evidence from other sources ($\bar{x} = 3.87$) and self-evident support, such as clear images accompanying the texts ($\bar{x} = 3.80$). Many participants in the focus group agreed, particularly Yuwadee[G1] who said, "I'll be careful at first. But many times, I don't always look for more clues because we can think about it from our experiences." Many participants in focus group 2 used a combination of methods. They occasionally asked a close friend or family members to help them verify the translation and used their judgment about the picture and sound, which must be adequately clear. The latter idea of audio-visual self-evidence supports Newman and Zhang's (2021) claim that a picture without proof can increase people's approval of a news quote by helping them visualize the news. Moreover, Thanya[G2] added, "When I use LINE, it's only for work. No time to check on it." This is especially true for most participants in focus group 3, who made no effort to contact anyone who might have extra details. Siri[G3] admitted that she tends to believe the image or content of the news translation because she does not have the time to review it, particularly "I don't know how to do the research."

Arguably, many participants' opinions in all three groups seem to support Schwarz and Jalbert's (2021, p. 77) claim. People can incorrectly deduce that a piece of information is true if a supporting clue comes to mind *easily* due to its endless repetition in one's memory. It is the ease with which novel information (from translation, in our case) can be digested, regardless of the truth criteria employed.

All in all, the results from the online survey and those from the focus group came with the similar conclusion when the three groups were compared. Despite their generational difference, most participants in the focus group sessions had similar methods of truth verification, with only a minor disagreement on the characteristics of the news. Interestingly, decision to verify the news translation often depends on social factors (e.g., Thai culture that focuses on family). This also confirms Levin-Zamir and Bertschi's (2018, p. 7) assertion that contextual factors (e.g., age, allocated time, and exposure to technology) influence both the development and application of skills required to control news intake.

When comparing participants' opinions on fake news translation to Schwarz and Jalbert's (2021, pp. 73–74) truth criteria, we discovered that most of them accept information rather than dismiss it as fake unless there are apparent signs of suspicion at the time of receiving it (e.g., Thanya[G2]). Our case also illustrates Greifeneder and Schwarz's (2014) previous claim that people who can find time to verify news are more likely to process information carefully before deciding (e.g., Benja[G2] and Tanin[G3]).

However, our findings differ from Meyrer and Kersch's (2022) study on students' evaluations of COVID-19 news. Their participants would justify opinions on fake news only when motivated, but ours depends on the above factors.

According to Schwarz and Jalbert (2021, p. 75), a more in-depth examination is required when information is difficult to process (e.g., Atima[G1]). However, according to Gelfert (2018, p. 111), *easily comprehended* information is more likely to be accepted or confirm the bias. Although most survey respondents have education levels above the average, this element is found to have a positive impact on the reliability of the translated news (Table 3), suggesting that it influences how this group of people processes the information with which they are presented. It is also possible because people tend to compare new information with their past knowledge and trusted sources, such as close friends or relatives. To this end, the concept of trust, which is based on sociocultural context (e.g., Mishra et al., 2014; Pedersen, 2015), may help explain in part why family relationships are essential and psychologically affect any person receiving the translated news. In our case, this can be seen in the second-highest percentage of those who are the targets of news sharing (family members), and Amnuay[G3], who always trusts his family when they send him messages. This implies that a certain degree of trust in the family can preclude participants from double-checking the news, resulting in either the spread of false information or their own victimization. Our findings appear to be in line with those of Doungphummes et al.'s (2022, p. 29) study on the media literacy of Thai elders. They found that the family element tends to influence whether people believe specific information without questioning. It can also be explained in light of Pink et al.'s (2018) thesis that trust entails optimism based on past experiences, which may not lead to a practical judgement but an emotional reaction to what feels "right" (e.g., Thanya[G2]).

Apart from trust, some participants, particularly those in Group 2 with an overall higher level of education, believe that frequent exposure to technology and online health information significantly affects one's ability to recognize fake news. This viewpoint partially supports Levin-Zamir and Bertschi's (2018, p. 5) observations that the public will interact better with digital resources if they have simple health information instead of complicated ones, which will help them improve their health literacy in the end.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the reception of fake news translation on a target society that imports health-related news. It used a hybrid of the online questionnaire and focus group methodology to investigate respondents' and participants' perceptions, awareness, and truth verification of fake news from translation among three age groups in the Thai context. This research is important not only for understanding the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on health information dissemination but also for translations that may cause harm to local society, provided that "translators" lack language competence and are unaware of the consequences of their translated news. During a health crisis, translation activities are driven by the urgent need to find a treatment option. The pandemic has demonstrated the value of freely disseminating health-related news while highlighting the possibility that "anyone" who considered themselves an "able" translator, as this study contends, could take the liberty of translating critical health news without proper translation training, which can lead to fake news in the target culture. This would undeniably affect the work of professionals in the localization business who try hard and translate against the clock to produce practical and correct translations (e.g., Anichini & Nemeth, 2020; Richards, 2021). Concerning target readers, our results suggest that age, time constraints, the priority of family, technology literacy, and cognitive effort all play a part in the decision to double-check translated news.

The COVID-19 crisis raises immediate research questions about translation and fake news that need to be further addressed. How can authorities regulate shared fake news translations in addition to those generated locally? What mechanism should be put in place to equip people of all ages with media health literacy? Why can someone easily fall prey to translated news despite its prominent deceptive characteristics? We hope that the knowledge gained from the group discussion and the trend revealed by the online survey will help broaden scholars' interest in the characteristics of health-related fake news translation and its impact on interactions between news services and audiences in different cultures.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Fundings

This research project is supported by Mahidol University.

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