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# SSJPRN

SOCIAL SCIENCE JOURNAL OF PRACHACHUEN RESEARCH NETWORK

วารสารวิชาการสังคมศาสตร์  
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## ความสัมพันธ์ของคำถามและการตอบคำถาม กรณีศึกษานายกรัฐมนตรีและผู้สื่อข่าว

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Received 17 August 2021

Revised 23 March 2022

Accepted 8 April 2022

### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์ความสอดคล้องหรือความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเนื้อหาการตอบคำถามของนายกรัฐมนตรีต่อคำถามผู้สื่อข่าว เนื่องจากภาษามีบทบาทสำคัญอย่างมากในวาทกรรมการเมืองที่สื่อให้เห็นถึงแนวความคิดหรืออุดมการณ์ของนักการเมืองได้ โดยเก็บรวบรวมถ้อยคำและถอดความถ้อยคำของนายกรัฐมนตรีที่ตอบสนองต่อคำสัมภาษณ์ของผู้สื่อข่าว ที่เกิดขึ้นในการแถลงข่าวหลังการประชุมประจำเดือนมีนาคม จำนวน 5 ครั้ง รวมถึงดำเนินการวิเคราะห์กลวิธีการตอบคำถามที่นายกรัฐมนตรีใช้ในการให้สัมภาษณ์ อิงจากทฤษฎีการเชื่อมโยงเนื้อหาของ Halliday กับ Hasan และคำนวณกลวิธีต่าง ๆ ที่พบระหว่างการให้สัมภาษณ์ในรูปแบบของคำร้อยละ

ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า ร้อยละ 25 ของคำตอบของนายกรัฐมนตรีสอดคล้องหรือสัมพันธ์กับคำถามของผู้สื่อข่าว ในด้านของกลวิธีที่ใช้ระหว่างการตอบคำถาม พบว่า นายกรัฐมนตรีตอบสนองต่อคำถามของผู้สื่อข่าวด้วยวิธีการกล่าวซ้ำข้อความมากที่สุด เพื่อเน้นย้ำอุดมการณ์ทางการเมืองและเพื่อเพิ่มความน่าเชื่อถือของประชาชนผ่านประเด็นต่าง ๆ ที่ถูกสัมภาษณ์ ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้ระบุให้เห็นอีกว่า วจนภาษาหรือการสื่อสารด้วยถ้อยคำของนักการเมือง มีน้ำหนักมากกว่าด้านอากัปกริยาหรืออวัจนภาษา ที่สามารถสะท้อนอุดมการณ์ทางการเมือง การตัดสินใจ รวมไปถึงการยอมรับและพิจารณาจากประชาชน ได้ชัดเจนที่สุด

**คำสำคัญ:** ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างคำถามและคำตอบ นายกรัฐมนตรี ผู้สื่อข่าว

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## QUESTION-RESPONSE RELATIONSHIP: PRIME MINISTER AND JOURNALISTS

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Jeerapan Phomprasert<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This current quantitative research aimed at analyzing text cohesion through the prime minister (PM) corresponding answers given to the journalists' query. In political discourse, the use of language plays a substantial role in determining the politicians' perceptions. Regarding the study objective, verbal responses or speeches given by the PM and the journalists, took place in the five latest press conferences during March, were collected and transcribed. Cohesion principle proposed by Halliday and Hasan was employed to analyze the cohesion of texts embedded in the PM responses. A number of cohesive devices found were then computed and presented into percentages.

The research findings revealed that in all press conferences, the prime minister genuinely provided relative responses to the journalists' questions, at least 25%. Analysis of speech cohesion also shows that the prime minister frequently employed reiteration, one of cohesive devices involving word repetition, in order to certify his ideologies as well as to gain trust from the public towards the different issues being questioned. The objective of this study was finally proved that verbal communication holds much weight, as for the politicians' ideology expression or decisions and as for the public judgement. The results moreover suggest to less count sorts of demeanors and non-verbal languages of the politicians.

**Keywords:** Question-Response Relationship, Prime Minister, Journalists

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## Introduction

"You may trust anyone except politicians," is a common phrase heard and repeated by many over the course of time, which has led to a natural distrust and scrutiny of both politicians' words and actions. Kwon (2019: 19) has remarked that roots of social distrust involve a person's judgement towards another individual, group, or institution that is seen to show disobliging behaviors or severing of a relationship. One such politician that has come under public scrutiny is the most recent prime minister of Thailand. What many Thai nationals noticed from television broadcasted press conferences are the prime minister's troubling behaviors towards reporters, displayed both verbally and non-verbally. Politically a press conference drives an interactional phase between politicians and journalists. The press conference allows the journalists to query the politicians as well as the politicians to announce their policies and decisions including to defend their speeches or actions (Eshbaugh, 2012). In the meantime, the interactional phase conceivably turns them into a poor performer if they fail to provide answers that meet audiences' satisfaction.

In a more recent political press conference, the prime minister (PM) of Thailand has fanned the flames of political distrust after being seen avoiding answering journalists' questions and leaving behind a cutout of him doing a handshake pose. In a separate incident, the PM was seen being rude to a journalist who crossed her legs in front of him. For many, the PM's contentious demeanor, displayed openly through his non-verbal actions-his gestures and facial expression-often transcend what is spoken, shifting the public's attention away from his words. This leads to arguments of whether or not the PM truly answered the questions. In order for this to be determined, discourse analysis must be applied.

An analysis of political discourse exhibits the association between politics and language that entails a socially concerned linguistic framework to explore the complexity of political thoughts and behavior (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2017: 129; Chilton, 2004: 5). To be clear, political activities exist with the use of language; it is used to share, to signify the authority, or even to communicate politicians' perception and ideologies (Mandarani & Fakhruddin, 2020: 132-132; Pathomchaiwat, 2020: 2099). Politicians are however found to frequently evade conveying genuine or proper responses to journalists' questions, despite considering as a basic moral commitment towards the public (Clayman, 2001: 404). This can be evident by cohesion in a text. Cohesion is a linguistic device used to explore the relations that exists between textual elements (Li, 2013). Cohesion is "produced by (a) the repetition of elements of the text, e.g., recurrence, textphoric, paraphrase, parallelism; (b) the compacting of text through the use of devices such as ellipsis; (c) the use of morphological and syntactic devices to express different kinds of relationships such as connection, tense, aspect, deixis, or theme-rheme relationships" (Wang & Guo, 2014).

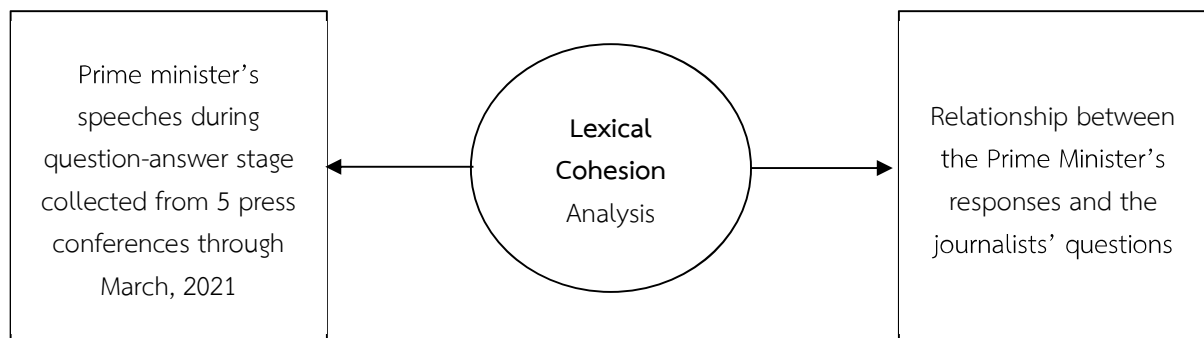
Cohesion and coherence have become the core focus of many previous studies, vastly in written texts (Ye & Liu, 2020; Briesmaster & Etchegaray, 2017; Karadeniz, 2017;

Favart et. al, 2016; Struthers, Lapadat & MacMillan, 2013; Hameed, 2008). In regards to political discourse, several studies were conducted to explore cohesion of politicians' speech and journalists' follow-up questions (Mandarani & Fakhruddin, 2020; Enyi & Chitulu, 2015; Eriksson, 2011; Voltmer & Brants, 2011A; Klebanov, Diermeier, & Beigman, 2008); though none of them examines the relationship between the journalists' questions and the politician's answer to that question.

### Research Objective

This current study aims at examining a text cohesion embedded in verbal response given by the prime minister to the questions of the journalists. Regarding the investigation of the relationship between the two, this study can help provide insight into the old adage to never trust a politician.

### Research Framework



**Figure 1** Framework of the Study

### Literature Review

#### 1. Text

Text is linguistically referred to as any utterances or written elements that form a unified unit of language (Bahaziq, 2016). A text can vary in form, ranging from prose or verse, to a monologue or dialogue, or to a discussion or discourse. Discourse between two or more people would not be considered a unit of form, but rather a unit of meaning, or a semantic unit (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Moreover, political discourse, such as those used in this study, have a different purpose than other discourse that occurs - a purpose that seeks to gain, maintain, and assert power (Jalilifar & Alavi, 2011; Wang, 2010). This purpose can only be achieved through the use of language.

The meaning or truth behind discourse is often outweighed or overshadowed by the appearance and demeanor of the person involved, especially in the case of political discourse. The recent actions of the PM during the March press conferences took the forefront, obscuring

the true intent behind his words. Therefore, this study examines solely the discourse as a written text by analyzing its cohesion.

## **2. Concept of Cohesion**

According to Halliday and Hasan, cohesion is the “relations of meaning that exist within a text, and that define it as a text” (1976). In simpler terms, cohesion refers to the connection between elements of a text. It is a linguistic device that shows the connections, as well as how it gives meaning to the text as a whole. Cohesion occurs when one element presupposes the other, or when one element can only be decoded through its dependency on another element within the same discourse (Jabeen, Qasim, & Nawaz, 2014).

Cohesion can be “expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Grammatical cohesion is made through the use of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions whereas lexical cohesion expresses itself through reiteration and collocation of lexical features (words). Description of individual cohesive categories as in Halliday and Hasan’s books entitled “Cohesion in English” are given as follows:

### **2.1 Grammatical Cohesion**

Grammatical cohesion is defined by the grammatical structures that exist within a text and tie it together. It is broken down into four categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

#### **2.1.1 Reference**

Reference occurs when a piece of the text invokes another element in order for it to be interpreted. Two types of reference include endophora and exophora. To clarify, an endophora reference occurs when the referent item appears within a text, consisting of two forms: anaphora (an item referring to something stated earlier) and cataphora (an item referring to something said later). In contrast, an exophora reference is used to determine a textual element when inadequate information is given. Assumption of that element’s meaning then depends on prior knowledge, which goes beyond what is written in the text.

#### **2.1.2 Substitution**

Substitution occurs when one item replaces another. Substitution is divided into three categories: nominal, verbal, and clausal. Nominal substitution occurs when nouns are replaced by the words, “one”, “ones”, or “same”. Verbal substitution occurs when verbs are replaced with auxiliary verbs such as “do”, or “did”. Clausal substitution occurs when a clause is substituted by “so” or “not”. These types of substitutions are often used as a means of avoiding repetition.

#### **2.1.3 Ellipsis**

Halliday and Hassan (1976) describe ellipses in relation to substitution, whereas substitution replaces one item with another, ellipsis, essentially replaces said item with nothing, or rather, the item altogether has been omitted. Ellipses occurs any time the structure

of the item does not express everything that goes into it. Ellipsis is usually an anaphoric relation. However, the presupposition in an elliptical structure may be exophoric. There are three types of ellipsis: nominal, verbal, and clausal. Nominal ellipses omit the noun, verbal omits the verb, and clausal ellipsis omits the clause.

#### **2.1.4 Conjunction**

Conjunction refers to the logical order to the structure of a text or discourse- or rather, how what is to follow is connected to what has gone before. Conjunctions can be categorized into four groups: additive, adversative, casual, and temporal. An additive conjunction links one item to another with words such as “and”, “also”, “similarly”, “as well as”, etc. An adversative conjunction is demonstrated by words and phrases such as “however”, and “on the other hand,” which put two items in contrast with one another. Casual conjunctions refer to words and phrases used to connect two items through cause and effect. Lastly, temporal conjunctions connect items using time related words.

#### **2.2 Lexical Cohesion**

Lexical cohesion is realized through the vocabulary found within the discourse and is concerned with how these items relate to each other. It can be categorized into two groups: reiteration and collocation.

##### **2.2.1 Reiteration**

Reiteration involves the repetition of a lexical item, the use of a word as a reference to a previous lexical item, and the use of synonyms and hypernyms. It can occur in the form of repetition, synonyms, superordinate, and general words.

##### **2.2.2 Collocation**

Collocation is the cohesion of words built through the association of lexical items between current and preceding texts, or words that occur in the same lexical environment. Words that collocate are hard to analyze, often being dependent on the context, culture, and individual. Therefore, it should be noted that the discourse in this study comes from the Thai prime minister and is being analyzed by Thai nationals.

### **Methodology**

This study presents a text analysis of cohesion in questions and responses between the prime minister and journalists. The data was collected from five press conferences held during the month of March in the year 2021. There are thirty-five pairs of questions and responses that have each been divided into text linguistic segments. Each segment was then analyzed separately. The texts used within the study were recorded and transcribed from the press conferences by Thai nationals. The following transcriptions used within the study were then cut down to include only the main idea of each pair.

In order to determine whether or not the prime minister avoided or answered questions from the journalists, the transcribed pieces of texts were examined using

grammatical and lexical cohesion analysis. This type of analysis plays a key role because through it, we are able to see the relationship of individual units of text to the entirety of the text (Enyi & Chitulu, 2015: 79).

Speeches from the prime minister and the journalists were broken into segments and analyzed through both cohesion categories: grammatical and lexical. There are thirty-five pairs of questions and responses from the five press conferences. The discourse was analyzed by dividing the raw data into text linguistics and then identifying the main concept in the text to reiterations in sentences. The following excerpts, excerpts 1-3, are examples of such reiterations this study focused on.

**Excerpt 1:** Journalist's question and PM's response about political affairs.

|         |                                                                                                             |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| นักข่าว | มีการจดลิขสิทธิ์ Motto รวมไทย สร้างชาติ เพื่อป้องกันไม่ให้เอาไปตั้งชื่อพรรคหรือไม่                          |
| นายก    | ไม่รู้ว่ามีใครนำไปจดลิขสิทธิ์หรือนำไปตั้งชื่อพรรคหรือไม่ ผมไม่สงวนสิทธิ์ ถ้าคุณเป็นคนไทย<br>คุณก็นำไปใช้ได้ |

The above example consists of the journalist's question and the PM's responses. The journalist asked the PM whether he has copyrighted the party's motto in order to avoid duplication, and the PM replied back to the journalist about the issue being questioned. He repeated the journalist's words: "จดลิขสิทธิ์" and "ตั้งชื่อพรรค".

**Excerpt 2:** Journalist's question and PM's response about political parties.

|         |                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| นักข่าว | แล้วที่ท่านนายกบอกว่าคุยกับพรรคแล้ว ท่านหมายถึงว่าไควต่ายังเป็นอยู่เหมือนเดิมใช่ไหมคะ หลังจากที่คุยกับพรรคแล้ว ยังคงให้ไควตาเหมือนเดิมใช่ไหมหรือไม่ |
| นายก    | เอื่อยังเป็นเหมือนเดิมอยู่<br>ใช่ ยังให้ไควตาเหมือนเดิมอยู่                                                                                         |

The question raised, in the second example, is whether the PM depends on his plan to provide coalition government parties an allocation by saying "ไควต่ายังเป็นอยู่เหมือนเดิมใช่ไหม". Reiteration found in the PM's response was "เอื่อยังเป็นเหมือนเดิมอยู่".

**Excerpt 3:** Journalist's question and PM's response about refugees.

|         |                                                                                                                                        |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| นักข่าว | ถ้าหากว่ามีผู้จำนวนของผู้ลี้ภัยเข้ามาเพิ่มขึ้น เราจะประสานงานกับองค์กรระหว่างประเทศอย่างเช่น UNHCR หรือไม่                             |
| นายก    | ไม่จำเป็นต้องประสาน เพราะ UNHCR เข้ามาอยู่แล้ว คนกลุ่มนี้ตอนนี้ก็ยังอยู่ในประเทศไทย ยังไม่ได้ไปประเทศอื่น ถึงจะมีความหวังว่าได้ไปก็ตาม |

In this third excerpt, the journalist asked the PM whether or not he would coordinate with UNHCR, one of global organizations protecting refugees' right. The prime minister

repeated the key concept words such as “ไม่”, “ประสาน”, and “UNHCR”; he also used the word “คนกลุ่มนี้” to refer to the preceding word “ผู้ลี้ภัย” in the journalist statement.

Each segment unit was then rated how well the prime minister frequently responded to the journalists’ questions, emphasizing on the use of reiterations. Levels of corresponding ranges from 0 to 4 as shown in the table below:

**Table 1** Levels of corresponding and its interpretation

| Degrees of Corresponding | Interpretation                                            |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 0                        | the prime minister did not respond to the questions       |
| 1                        | the prime minister poorly responded to the questions      |
| 2                        | the prime minister fairly responded to the questions      |
| 3                        | the prime minister adequately responded to the questions  |
| 4                        | the prime minister excellently responded to the questions |

Whether or not the prime minister gave the relative answers to the journalists’ questions, the level of corresponding degree rated on each segmental unit was calculated. First, in individual press conference, the possibly full point of corresponding degree was calculated by multiplying the total number of segments with four, as the highest points of corresponding degree to be earned.

$$\text{Number of segment units} \times 4 \text{ (the highest level of corresponding degree)} \\ = \text{full points of degree}$$

After gaining the possible full point, scores of rating the corresponding degree of each segment were totally summed and multiplied by the full points of corresponding degree. In the final stage, the resulting number of reiterations was multiplied by 100 in order to achieve the percentages for each of the press conferences.

$$\frac{\sum \text{corresponding rating scores} \\ \text{(each segment)}}{\text{full points}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of answer-question relation}$$

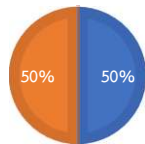
## Results

Data of this current study gathered speeches of both the PM’s answering and the journalists’ questions, taking place at 5 press conferences during the month of March. They were the latest ones that could be collected regarding the third wave of covid-19

attacked Thailand and restricted everything to develop. The following figure shows the degree to which the prime minister answered and responded to the journalists' questions.

PERCENTAGE OF  
CORRESPONDING DEGREE

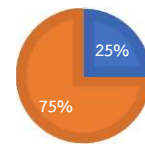
■ Answer ■ Not answer



**Figure 2** Relationship of Question-Response at 1<sup>st</sup> conference

PERCENTAGE OF  
CORRESPONDING DEGREE

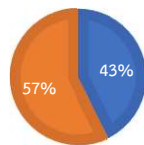
■ Answer ■ Not answer



**Figure 3** Relationship of Question-Response at 2<sup>nd</sup> conference

PERCENTAGE OF  
CORRESPONDING DEGREE

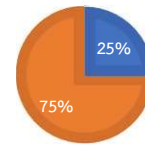
■ Answer ■ Not answer



**Figure 4** Relationship of Question-Response at 3<sup>rd</sup> conference

PERCENTAGE OF  
CORRESPONDING DEGREE

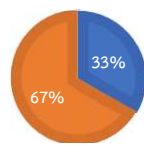
■ Answer ■ Not answer



**Figure 5** Relationship of Question-Response at 4<sup>th</sup> conference

PERCENTAGE OF  
CORRESPONDING DEGREE

■ Answer ■ Not answer



**Figure 6** Relationship of Question-Response at 5<sup>th</sup> conference

The five figures presented above illustrate the degree of the PM's responsiveness to the journalists' questions. Research findings in those charts show that the prime minister had answered at least a quarter of questions that the journalists had asked him. In the first conference, fifty percent (50%) of the PM's answers were relatively linked to the journalists' query, meaning that he answered half of the questions. In the second and third press

conferences, the PM's responses only correlated to a fourth of the journalists' questions, with the response rate being at 25% for both conferences. The degree to which the PM responded to the journalists during the fourth and fifth press conference were 43% and 33% respectively.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The recent prime minister of Thailand has been under public scrutiny for his troubling actions and speeches. As stated earlier, politicians' authority, ideologies and perceptions towards their people can be recognized through their speech. However, their words can often be overshadowed by their non-verbal actions, as such is the case with most recent PM of Thailand. The PM has been under fire for his contentious manner and demeanor that has been displayed so openly through non-verbal cues, which has seemingly transcended his words in matter of importance, leaving many to wonder whether or not the PM has provided a sufficient answer to their questions. Thus, the primary goal of this study was to examine the discourse as textual speeches using cohesive analysis in order to determine if the PM provided satisfactory verbal answers. In this way, the study disregards any non-verbal cues that may mask the textual evidence.

The analysis through cohesive devices shows that, despite the number of broken textual segments, the PM's responses do correspond with the journalists' questions. This correspondence is clearly seen through the use of reiteration, shown in the excerpts above. For example, in the first excerpt, the PM repeated the journalist's words: “จตลธิสธิธิ” and “ตั้งชื่อพรรค” indicating a correlation between question and answer. Excerpt 2 the reiteration of “ยังเป็นเหมือนเดิมอยู่” shows that the PM perceived correctly what was being asked and strongly confirmed that he would stick to his plan. Lastly, in the example of Excerpt 3, we can see that the reporter and PM are on the same page, as the PM repeated key concepts from the journalist. The calculations then from these reiterations show that in the first press conference, the PM's responses sufficiently answered the journalists' questions half of the time, at 50%. In the fourth conference, he answered 43% of questions sufficiently and 33% in the fifth conference. During the second and third conferences, the PM only answered in a sufficient manner a fourth of the time, with both conferences being at 25%. From this, we can conclude that the PM genuinely delivered sufficient and instructive answers to some of the questions in each of the March press conferences. These findings are somewhat controversial towards Clayman (2001)'s and Bull and Mayer (1993)'s studies, or perhaps even the publics, that almost all politicians barely provide direct answers. As noted in the first press conference, the PM gave satisfactory answers to half of the queries, though this amount decreases in the proceeding conferences, it still remains at or above 25%. These findings show that, overall, a decent number of questions were given satisfactory verbal responses, more so than what the public may have thought. This sort of results agrees to Voltmer and Brants (2011B)'s study. Their research findings illustrated the high percentages of politicians' corresponding to the

journalists' queries: 52.4% of British politicians and 92.8% of Dutch groups delivered the required statements towards the questions asked through the interviews, particularly for closed and limited choice questions.

Regarding the current research, we can see that not all of the questions were however answered in this same manner. This fact, coupled with PM's demeanor and non-verbal cues may cause the public to believe that the PM did not provide an acceptable response to the majority, or even any of the questions. Though this research proves that, by examining the discourse only, this is not the case. In fact, rather the opposite seems to occur when we ignore the non-verbal cues and analyze only the discourse.

In conclusion, this study ascertains the semantic relations established within the interaction of the journalists and prime minister. It shows that, overall, the PM gave a sufficient response to many of the questions, though not all of them. While this is only one study, the findings here point in the direction of less political distrust, or perhaps less scrutiny of non-verbal cues and more scrutiny in the verbal responses. It stresses the importance of speech within political discourse, asking the public to look closer at the verbal responses. This in no way means that the public should discount the demeanor and non-verbal cues of their politicians. However, it merely suggests that more weight should be given to verbal responses than what is currently given. It is true that action holds weight, but the same is true for spoken words. A politician's word should not be discounted based solely on their unpleasant manners, but rather should be properly scrutinized.

## Recommendations

1. Further studies are recommended to shift the sample group, from Thai politicians and journalists to the international groups, in gaining evidence of verbal responses that either build or diminish the public's trust.
2. News programs, as another stage of politicians and journalists' interaction, should be encouraged to be the focus of future studies.

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