

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This research presents a linguistic analysis of the Thai short story “Mom,” written by M.R. Kukrit Pramote (hereafter referred to as Kukrit). Kukrit’s work was chosen because he is a well-known contemporary Thai author whose style of writing is interesting and touching to Thai readers. As far as is known, however, no discourse analysis has been done on his narrative discourse style, such as in this research. Therefore, this research can be regarded as pioneer work that illustrates a linguistic approach to the study of Kukrit’s writing style. This research, as a result, can give insights that can not be obtained by studying only the parts of the units on the lower levels of grammar or by a purely literary approach.

1.1 Scope of this study

This research is conducted from the perspective of discourse analysis. However, as “discourse analysis” is quite wide in scope, the focus of this thesis was narrowed. The primary focus of the research is restricted to an analysis of the surface and the notional structures of the text. This research is not exhaustive of all aspects of narrative discourse; relative importance of information, participant reference, salience analysis of storyline, etc., is not included. Other linguistic areas of study, such as the phonetic features and the phonological structure, are excluded as well. In addition to the analysis of the surface structure and the notional structure in isolation, the way the slots contained in these two structures correspond to each other in the text is examined.

1.2 Classification of Thai and its distribution

This research is based on the Thai spoken in the central part of Thailand, where Bangkok, the capital of the country, is situated. This is due to the fact that it is the language Kukrit used to compose his work, including the text analyzed in this study. According to *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (1995), Thai is spoken by approximately 65 million people in Thailand. It is used in the classroom and in conducting national affairs as it has been officially considered 'Standard Thai' or the national language of Thailand. Besides Standard Thai, the other main regional languages are Northern Thai, which is spoken in and around Chiang Mai Province, Northeastern Thai (Isan), which is spoken in the North-East of Thailand, and Southern Thai, which is spoken south of Chumpon Province and into neighboring communities of Northern Malaysia. Related Tai languages are also spoken in a wide area of Southeast Asia covering Laos, Viet Nam, eastern India, and southern China.

Thai belongs to the Tai-Kadai family. As displayed in www.Ethnologue.com, the classification of Thai is demonstrated in Figure 1 on the following page.

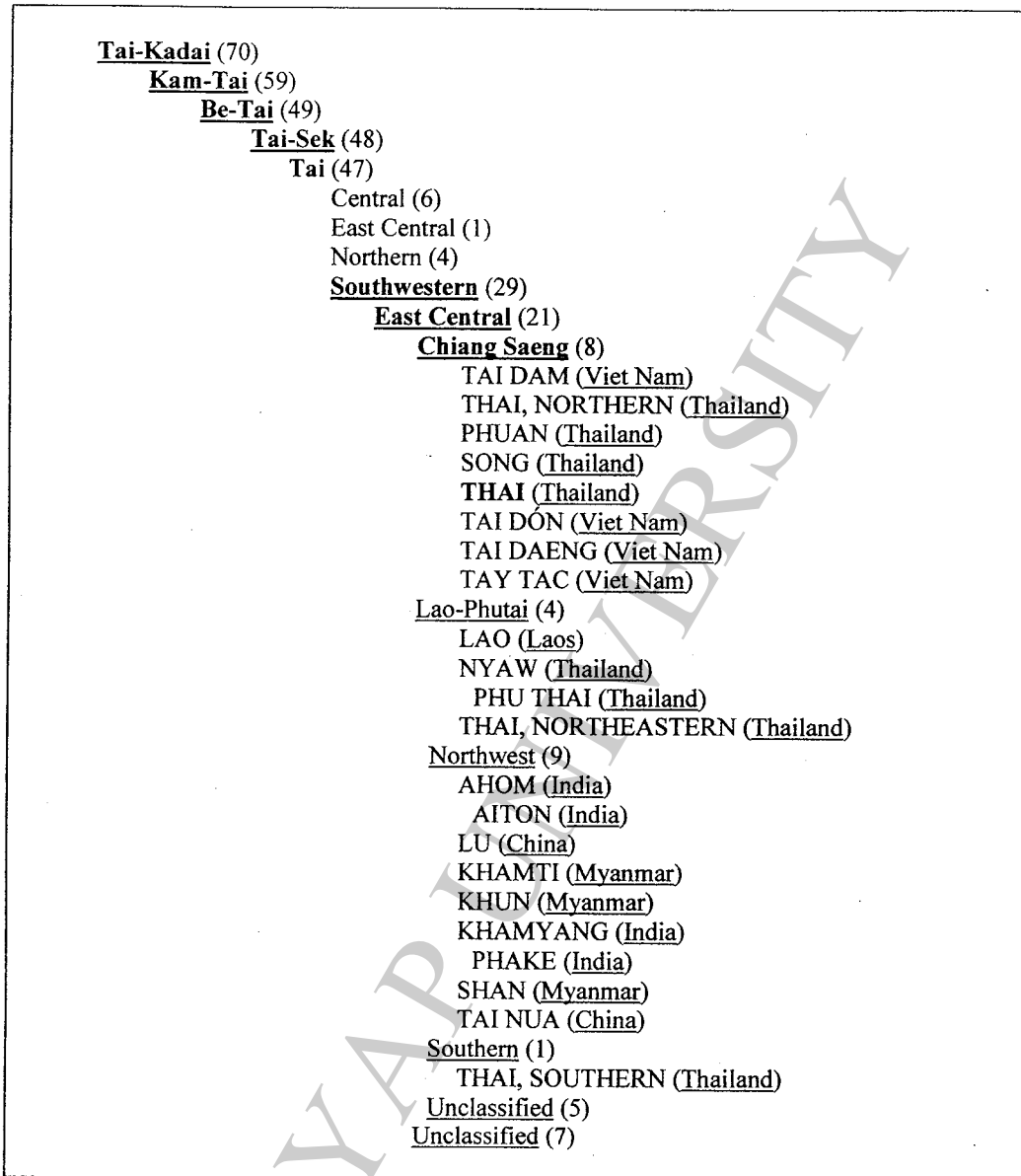


Figure 1: The Classification of Thai

1.3 Notable features of Thai

The purpose of this section is to introduce the general properties of Thai to prospective readers so that they are able to understand both the interlinearized text given in the Appendix and the interlinearized examples demonstrated in the thesis text.

According to Somsong (1991:5), the Thai language is considered an isolating language because most typical Thai words contain one morpheme which can not be divided into component parts. In other words, Thai is monosyllabic in its formation of words where each word has a complete meaning within itself. Although most of the words are monosyllabic, nowadays, a number of them are polysyllabic. Additional notable characteristics of Thai are listed below.

1.3.1 Subject-verb-object (SVO) word order

The Thai language utilizes a subject-verb-object (SVO) word order. It can be said that Thai sentences are similar to English sentences in the sense that they begin with a subject, which is followed by a verb and an object, as shown in example (1), below. In this example, *dɛŋ* 'Dang' functions as the subject, *kin* 'eat' as the action verb, and *k^hâ:w* 'rice' as the object of this sentence.

(1)	dɛŋ	kin	k ^h â:w
	n	v	n
	Dang	eat	rice

Dang eats rice.

1.3.2 No inflection

In terms of morphology, there is no inflection in Thai. There are no changes in the word form or word inflection as expressions of tense, case, gender, aspect or number. According to Cholthicha (2003:406), the lack of inflection is the most important property of Thai words. Neither prefixes nor suffixes are required. In addition, there is no system of tenses to mark temporal relationships in Thai. However, this does not mean that the Thai language has no way to express time. To make explicit temporal references in Thai, it is necessary to use either a time adverbial, such as *wan wan* 'yesterday,' *duan kəm* 'last month,' etc., or an auxiliary verb.

Baker (2002:7) stresses that:

Although temporal references can be made in Thai through time adverbials and auxiliary verbs, these are usually only used when the context is not sufficient. The context is by far the most important component of temporal reference in Thai.

Somsong (1991:6) states that "Thai expresses time through other linguistic units other than verb forms, namely, time phrases, time markers, aspect markers, and special verbs." The most frequently used unit, however, is the time phrase.

Preserial verbs, auxiliaries, postserial verbs, and particles can function as time markers and aspect markers. Preserial verbs, such as *mák* 'usually' and *jaŋ* 'still/yet,' and auxiliaries, such as *tɕuan* 'almost' and *k^hoŋ* 'probably,' always precede a verb. However, they are differentiated from each other by the fact that the former is always attached to a verb while the latter can be separated from a verb. Unlike preserial verbs and auxiliaries, postserial verbs and particles always follow a verb. The difference between them is that the

postserial verbs, such as *sət* ‘finish’ and *jù:* ‘stay,’ may be negated while the particles, such as *lɛ:w* ‘already’ and *ʔaw* ‘get’ cannot.

1.3.3 The significance of word order

Due to the lack of inflection, word order plays an important part in both determining the syntactic role of a word and showing grammatical relationships in Thai. Rattasit and Smith (n.d.:5) emphasize that “the same form of words in different positions contains different syntactic properties and therefore conveys different meanings.” Examples (2) and (3) demonstrate the difference in terms of the syntactic and semantic roles of the word *jù:*, which appears in different positions in different sentences. In example (2), *jù:* in final position functions as an aspect marker expressing the continuation of Dang’s eating from an unspecified past time to the present moment of speaking and can thus be glossed as ‘still.’ On the other hand, when following the subject *dɛ:ŋ* ‘Dang’ in example (3), *jù:* functions as the main verb expressing Dang’s state of being and can thus be glossed as ‘exist/stay.’

- (2) dɛ:ŋ kin k^hâ:w jù:
 n v n **still**
 Dang eat rice **mod**

Dang is eating rice.

- (3) dɛ:ŋ jù: bân
 n v n
 Dang **exist/stay** house

Dang stays home.

1.3.4 The composition of Thai sentences

Thai words are able to be introduced and added into a sentence without any limitations as long as the logical meaning is clear. Thai sentences are often composed of a series of words, such as compound nouns and verbs. Rattasit and Smith (n.d.:5) state that “Often, words with the same syntactic category are joined together as serial words.” Example (4), below, contains a series of five verbs, so-called serial verbs, which are included in a single concatenation.

(4)	nam	paj	tɕ^háj	háj	kət'	pràʔjò:t'
	v	v	v	v	v	n
	bring	go	use	give	occur	usefulness

To make use of (it)

1.3.5 Word and sentence boundaries

Written Thai does not generally contain word or sentence boundaries. In sentence formation, Thai words are combined together without separation while English employs a space between words. In Thai, however, a space may be used either as a separation between contents or to indicate the end of a clause or a sentence. Therefore, the identification of words and sentence breaks on the basis of written Thai texts is unreliable and complicated in terms of syntactic analysis.

1.3.6 A “pro-drop” language

Thai is considered a “pro-drop” language (Hartmann and Hudak, n.d.:3) because it is not necessary for a Thai sentence to have an overt subject or object. Even though the subject or object pronouns are omitted from a sentence, the sentence is still considered valid. The omitted pronouns are called “zero pronouns.” The capability to identify the zero pronouns is essential for the readers’ comprehension of a written Thai text. Rattasit and Smith (n.d.:5) also mention that the referent

resolution for the zero pronouns can be achieved at two levels: the sentence level and the discourse level. Example (5) contains overt subject and object nouns. By contrast, examples (6) and (7) contain null pronouns in the subject and the object positions, respectively. The sentences in examples (6) and (7) can be considered valid in Thai if the referents are semantically and logically clear from the discourse context.

(5)	dɛŋ	jà:k⁷	kin	k^hâ:w
	n	v	v	n
	Dang	want	eat	rice

Dang wants to eat rice.

(6)	Ø	jà:k⁷	kin	k^hâ:w
	n	v	v	n
	Dang	want	eat	rice

(Dang) wants to eat rice.

(7)	dɛŋ	jà:k⁷	kin	Ø
	n	v	v	n
	Dang	want	eat	rice

Dang wants to eat (rice).

1.4 Thai phonetic transcription used in the study

1.4.1 Consonant phonemes

Thai contains twenty-one consonant phonemes, all of which can appear in syllable-initial position. On the contrary, not all Thai consonants can appear in syllable-final position. There are only nine consonant phonemes which can occur in syllable-final position, namely /*p, t, k, ʔ, m, n, ŋ, w, j*/. However, there is no audible release on

final consonant phonemes /p, t, k, ʔ/. Table 1, below, is a summary of the transcription of Thai consonant phonemes used in this study.

	Bilabial			Labiodental	Alveolar			Postalveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal
Plosive	p	p ^h	b		t	t ^h	d					k	k ^h	ʔ
Nasal			m				n							ŋ
Trill							r							
Fricative				f	s									h
Affricate								tʃ	tʃ ^h					
Approximate											j			w
Lateral approximate							l							

Table 1: Thai Consonant Phonemes

1.4.2 Vowel phonemes

There are twenty-three vowel phonemes in Thai. These vowel phonemes are comprised of nine monophthongs with length distinction, three diphthongs containing one of the three high vowels both followed by a centering off-glide /a/, namely /ia/, /ua/, and /ua/, and two diphthongs containing the centering off-glide followed by one of the approximate consonant phonemes, namely /aj/ and /aw/. Table 2 demonstrates the phonetic symbols of Thai monophthongs used in this study.

		Front	Central	Back
Monophthongs	High	i	ɯ	u
		i:	ɯ:	u:
	Mid	e	ə	o
		e:	ə:	o:
	Low	ɛ	a	ɔ
		ɛ:	a:	ɔ:

Table 2: Thai Vowel Phonemes

1.4.3 Tonemes

Thai is a tonal language. There are five phonemic tones in Thai as described below. In this thesis, tonal diacritics are used to indicate the tones, with mid tone being unmarked.

- Mid tone [ma]
- Low tone [mà]
- Falling tone [mâ]
- High tone [má]
- Rising tone [mǎ]

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical background of discourse analysis applied to this research is primarily based on the model of Robert E. Longacre (1983, 1996), whose studies have been done on many languages worldwide. His framework is adopted as the main criterion in analyzing the text. Due to the fact that this research is done on a Thai short story,

it is also worth applying the study done on Thai discourse analysis conducted by Somsonge Burusphat (1991), who has analyzed ten Thai short folktales according to Longacre's framework.

1.5.2 Data collection and the text in brief

The text "Mom" was chosen to be analyzed in this research because of its being well-known among many Thai readers. It has been compulsory literature for all high school students in Thailand for decades.

Mom was a male mutt that had been born without his parents' intention. In other words, Mom had been born by accident. However, he was raised with great love and care by his master. Mom was extremely loyal, smart, and obedient to his master. He had been living with the master happily and peacefully for years until World War II occurred. The master was conscripted to serve in the army; therefore, Mom was left to live with the master's wife and daughter. The master ordered Mom to take care of them while he was away.

The master's departure caused a terrible change in the family. Without the master, the family's living situation was harder than before. The mistress, her daughter, and Mom had to struggle against poverty and starvation. However, they were determined to survive in order to wait for their beloved man's return. The war was approaching and threatening the family. And, as a result of the war, the mistress and the master's daughter were killed and buried by a powerful bomb. Mom was very depressed because he could not help them at all.

Mom still waited for the master's return although there was no one left beside him. In order to survive, Mom had to wander around hunting for leftovers, even in rubbish bins. Mom wandered from place to place hopelessly and aimlessly until, one day, he woke up and found himself lying in front of a very big building. A girl living in

the building felt pity on Mom, so she then raised him as her pet dog. Mom was given good food and love by the girl, but he still missed and waited for his former master. What motivated Mom to go on living was the hope of seeing the master and living with him again.

One night, when left to guard the house during the girl's vacation, Mom heard a thief breaking into the building. Mom then found that his hope was fulfilled, since the thief turned out to be his former master, whom Mom had been looking forward to seeing again for ages. Mom was so delighted that he willingly choose to leave the wealthy girl to live with his master, who had become ragged and poor, without being afraid of the suffering he might experience on the road ahead.

1.5.3 Analysis of the text

The first step in the analysis of the text was to interlinearize it by using the Toolbox computer program (version 1.0, September 2003). This method glosses each Thai word with its phonetic transcription, English gloss, and grammar tag, followed by an English free translation of each individual sentence. Next, the overall notional structure of the text was analyzed by using the features suggested by Longacre (1983, 1996). After that, an analysis of the syntactic structure of the text on the surface structure level was taken into account. The text had to be charted and divided into various categories of stages and episodes, namely prepeak, peak, and postpeak, on the surface structure level. Each chunk in the text, then, was looked at closely in order to find the surface structure features. Then, the notional structure was analyzed and divided into various slots, such as exposition, inciting moment, climax, etc. The way in which the surface structure slots and the notional structure slots correspond to each other was then analyzed. This analysis displayed how the surface structure slots corresponded to the plot structure slots. Somsonge's principles (1991) of marking the surface structure slots and characterizing the notional structure slots were adopted as another criterion to help analyze the text.

1.6 Introduction to Kukrit

1.6.1 Kukrit's biography

Kukrit is the author of more than one hundred and twenty books. One of them, *The Four Reigns*, has already been made into a screenplay broadcast on TV. He also has many short stories to his credit. According to Barang (1994:260), Kukrit was “an exceptional man” who came to the world in “exceptional circumstances.” He was born on a boat while his family was traveling on the Chao Phraya River in the province of Singburi on April 20, 1911. He was educated by women in an old aristocratic environment. In 1926, during his last year of secondary education, he was sent to England where he studied philosophy, politics and economics. He returned to Thailand in 1933. He was a talented man who worked in many careers. He was a journalist, politician, historian, businessman, banker, and, eventually, prime minister of Thailand. What made him well-known throughout the country were his jobs as a politician and, certainly, a writer.

1.6.2 Kukrit's style of writing

Kukrit was regarded as a gifted writer. His style of writing entices the readers to continue their reading. Many people feel that his writing is never boring. His writing is unique; therefore, a lot of Thai readers find Kukrit fun to read whatever the topic is. He could write an informative article, for example, by using playful language. His readers could become very sensitive when reading his work even though they might be known to be very tough in their daily lives. Kukrit is very keen on using conflict as a main theme of his writing, as found in *Lai Chiwit* ‘Many Lives’ which is a collection of his short stories whose main characters all end with the same fate: drowning. This makes his writing an interesting source of data for analysis of narrative discourse in Thai.

Kukrit's literary work can be divided into five major categories: 1) fiction, novels and short stories, 2) historical works, 3) religious works, 4) political articles, and 5) documentaries. His works have made him one of the most popular authors of Thailand. His literature is treasured by Thai readers.

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