

Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1 Aim and Scope

The author, from her experience in teaching English to Thai students, has found that the students often make mistakes concerning nominal modifiers in English. Since nominal modification is an essential part of the nominal construction, it will be useful to examine the causes of the problems which Thai students have in using nominal modifiers in English.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the problems concerning nominal modifiers in English that Chulalongkorn University students have and also to try to analyse them and to find out the causes of the problems.

The data used in the study of problems of nominal modifiers in English were collected from 500 first-semester examination papers in the academic year 2516. These papers were submitted by first-year students of the Faculty of Architecture, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Science and third-year students of the Faculty of Education. The third-year papers were included to provide a set of data from more advanced students. The analysis will deal with mistakes concerning noun modifiers found among these examination papers only. These mistakes may be due to many factors. However, only linguistic factors will be taken into account. Non-linguistic ones will not be considered.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Procedure.

According to Charles C. Fries, in learning the first language not only has a child learned to attend to (both receptively and productively) the particular contrasts that function as signals in that language but he has also learned to ignore features that do not so function. He has developed a particular set of "blind spots" that prevent him from responding to features that do not constitute the contrastive signals of his native language. When he learns a second language, the basic problems arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language itself but primarily out of the special "set" created by the first language habits¹

Therefore, the basic assumption of this study is that the cause of most problems concerning nominal modifiers in English is interference from Thai, the mother tongue of the students.

Robert Lado claims that individuals tend to transfer the forms, and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture-both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives. Lado has also proposed that a careful systematic comparison of the native

¹Robert Lado, Linguistics Across Cultures (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), foreword.

language and the foreign language to be learned be made in order to find out similarities and differences between the two languages. Through this comparison, we can predict and describe patterns that will cause difficulties in learning and those that will not cause any difficulty.²

According to Chaiyaratana, the interference in language learning may be due to different causes. If the source language lacks certain features that occur in the target language, the learner tends to neglect the occurrence of such features. Even if some features occur as optional elements in the source language, still, the learner is likely to neglect the obligatory distinctions in the target language. On the other hand, if the source language has more distinctive features governing different types of construction, they will be carried over to the target language.³

This study will present a comparison between noun modifiers in English and in Thai in order to find out similarities and differences which may cause problems in using noun modifiers in English.

At present, the grammar which seems to describe the language more explicitly than others is transformational grammar as recently

²Ibid., pp. 1-3.

³Chalao Chaiyaratana, "A Comparative Study of English and Thai Syntax" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1961), pp. 104-5.



developed by Noam Chomsky and his students. The advantages of using transformational grammar in contrastive study have been pointed out by Gerhard Nickel:

1. the differences between languages are formulated as differences between systems and domains of rules. The transformational approach often reveals divergences much finer than those detectable by other methods of description.

2. one advantage is the conception of 'deep structure' and 'surface structure' in transformational grammar. In the light of this notion, many structural differences between source and target language turn out to be merely superficial: a deep-structure feature common to both languages may be manifested differently in the surface structure of the languages and vice versa.⁴

Thai has been analysed within the transformational framework by Chalao Chaiyaratana⁵ and Udom Warotamasikkhadit.⁶ Both works were based on Syntactic Structures.⁷ Since in recent years the model has been changed greatly regarding the nature of the base and the transformational component, it is obvious that most of the rules need to

⁴Gerhard Nickel, "Contrastive linguistics and foreign-language teaching," Papers in Contrastive Linguistics, ed. by Gerhard Nickel (Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp.4-5.

⁵Chaiyaratana, op. cit.

⁶Udom Warotamasikkhadit, "Thai Syntax: An Outline" (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Texas, Bangkok: The College of Education Prasarnmitre, 1963.)

⁷Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Hague: 's Gravenhage, 1957.)

be modified. Thus, the study of noun modifiers in Thai will be based on Jacobs and Rosenbaum's analysis⁸ which, in turn, is based on Aspects of the Theory of Syntax⁹, a recent development in transformational grammar.

Noun modifiers dealt with in transformational grammar are of three main types: 1) relative clauses; 2) pre-nominal adjectivals; and 3) post-nominal modifiers. We are told that pre-nominal adjectivals and post-nominal modifiers are derived from relative clauses¹⁰ and become a modifying phrase or a modifying word through a series of transformational rules. As this is the case, the study of noun modifiers will necessarily revolve around the derivation of the relative clause.

The study will be divided into four parts. The first part will deal with relative clauses in English and in Thai and the comparison between relative clauses in both languages will be made. The second will present a comparison between relative pronouns in English and in Thai followed by relative pronoun deletion in both languages being compared. The third will provide the comparison of

⁸Roderick A. Jacobs and Peter S. Rosenbaum, English Transformational Grammar (Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1968.)

⁹Noam Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Cambridge Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1965.)

¹⁰Robert Lees, The Grammar of English Nominalizations (Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology Folklore, and Linguistics, 1963), pp. 85-98.

the modifying phrase and word which are results of relative clause reduction in both languages. The fourth part will put the findings together and recommendation will be made.

1.3 Related Literature.

Noun modifiers in English have been studied quite thoroughly by traditional, structural and transformational grammarians. Noun modifiers in Thai have been classified and analysed within traditional, structural, and early transformational frameworks. However, no study to date concerns the analysis and comparison between noun modifiers in English and Thai based on transformational grammar in its recent development. Those related studies may be divided into three main groups. The first two groups deal with the analysis of noun modifiers in English and in Thai respectively. The third presents the studies concerning the comparison between noun modifiers in English and in Thai.

1.3.1 Related literature concerning the analysis of noun modifiers in English.

Suwilai Premsrirat has investigated different aspects of nominal modification as treated in traditional, structural and transformational-generative grammar. The study shows that traditional grammar treats only adjectives and adverbs as noun modifiers. Structural grammar gives the structures of nominal modification and classifies noun modifiers into two main types; prenominal and post-nominal modifiers. Transformational grammar tries to explain noun modifiers as having been derived from an embedded sentence in the

deep structure by a series of T-rules and appearing in the surface structure as a modifying word, phrase or clause. Premsrirat believes that the transformational grammar treatment seems to be the most adequate.¹¹

Noun modifiers have also been analysed within the transformational framework by Robert Lees in The Grammar of English Nominalizations¹² and by Jacobs and Rosenbaum in English Transformational Grammar.¹³ Both works differ in that the former classifies noun modifiers into relative clauses, pre-nominal adjectivals and post-nominal modifiers and claims that the noun modifier is introduced into the matrix sentence through generalized transformations. The latter, on the other hand, believes that noun modifiers in English are derived from sentences embedded in the noun phrase. The difference between the two analyses is that in Lees' the noun modifier is not introduced by a phrase-structure rule whereas in Jacobs and Rosenbaum's it is.

1.3.2 Related literature concerning the analysis of noun modifiers in Thai.

Phya Upakit, whose analysis of Thai is based on traditional grammar, claims that noun modifiers in Thai can be a word,

¹¹ Suwilai Premsrirat, "English Nominal Modification and Theories of Syntax" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1971 (B.E. 2514)), pp. 107-8.

¹² Lees, op. cit., pp. 85-98.

¹³ Jacobs and Rosenbaum, op. cit., pp. 200-212.

a phrase, or a clause. The class of words which can function as modifiers of nouns is khamwísèed, for example the word jàj 'big' in the noun phrase tó? jàj 'a big table.' Phrases which can be noun modifiers are:

1. krijaa-wálii 'verbal phrases,' for example thamnaan nàg 'work hard' in the noun phrase khon thamnaan nàg 'the person who works hard'

2. wísèed-wálii 'adjectival phrases,' for example nôo bàdsób 'terribly stupid' in the noun phrase khon nôo bàdsób 'a terribly stupid person'

3. bùphabòd-wálii 'prepositional phrases,' for example naj súan 'in the garden' in the noun phrase dògmaaaj naj súan 'flowers in the garden'.

Phya Upakit tells us that the clause which functions as a noun modifier in Thai is khúnaanúprayòog. This kind of clause is linked to the main sentence by linkers, i.e. thîi, sýn and ?an., for example thîi kîadkhraán 'that is lazy' in the sentence khon thîi kîadkhraán jôm lambaag 'a person who is lazy is always in trouble'.¹⁴

Noun phrase constituents have been classified and analysed within structural framework by Vichin Panupong into five groups:

¹⁴Phya Upakit-Silpasarn, lâgphasáathaj (Bangkok: Thaiwatana-panich, 1971), pp. 87-266.

1. the Head which may consist of a noun, a pronoun, or a sequence of nouns and pronouns, for example the word mîid 'knife.'

2. the Intransitive Modifier which consists of any intransitive adjectival verb alone or with a preceding classifier, for example lêm jàj 'big' in the noun phrase mîid lêm jàj 'a big knife'

3. the Adjunctive Modifier which consists of a mode-word or any of the three types of downgraded phrase, namely a downgraded modal, locational or temporal phrase, for example naj tûu-jen 'in the refrigerator' in the noun phrase khàj naj tûu-jen 'eggs in the refrigerator.'

4. the Quantifier which consists of certain arrangements of the cardinal numerals, ordinal numerals, classifiers, prenumerals and post-numerals, for example sǒn lêm 'two' in the noun phrase mîid sǒn lêm 'two knives'

5. the Determinative which consists of a determinative with a preceding classifier or a downgraded sentence preceded by a relative linker. For example thîi jan tuum jùu 'which is still in bud' is a downgraded sentence preceded by a relative linker in the noun phrase kulàab thîi jan tuum jùu 'the rose which is still in bud.'¹⁵

Dusdeeporn Chamnirokasarn who based her analysis of clauses in Thai on structural grammar tells us about adjective clauses in

¹⁵Vichin Panupong, Inter-Sentence Relations in Modern Conversational Thai (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1970), pp. 46-69.

Thai which can function as modifiers of the Head, for example thîi kamlaj lèn naj sanăam 'who is playing in the field' in the noun phrase dèg thîi kamlaj lèn naj sanăam 'the child who is playing in the field.'¹⁶

Phattanee Chotikasthira has classified noun phrase constituents into two main groups:

1. the Head

2. the noun phrase constituents which function as modifiers of the Head:

2.1 the Quantifier

2.2 the Determinative

2.3 the downgraded sentence

2.4 the Intransitive Modifier



Chotikasthira has also classified the structure of noun phrases in Thai into 83 structures.¹⁷

The relative clauses and adjectives in Thai have been analysed based on transformational grammar in its early development by Chalao Chaiyaratana in A Comparative Study of English and Thai Syntax¹⁸ and

¹⁶Dusdeeporn Chamnirokasarn, "Clauses in the Thai Language" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1969 (B.E. 2512)), p. 24.

¹⁷Phattanee Chotikasthira, "The Structures of Noun Phrases in the Thai Language," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1972 (B.E. 2515)), pp. 188-9.

¹⁸Chaiyaratana, op. cit., pp. 10-18.

by Udom Warotamasikkhadit in Thai Syntax: An Outline.¹⁹ In both works, the noun modifier in Thai is introduced into the matrix sentence through generalized transformations.

1.3.3 Related literature concerning the comparison between noun modifiers in English and in Thai.

Chalao Chaiyaratana has presented a comparison between relative clauses and adjectives in English and in Thai within the transformational framework and attempts to predict the types of errors which Thai students learning English and native speakers of English learning Thai may have owing to syntactic differences between these noun modifiers in both languages.²⁰

A comparison between noun modifiers in English and in Thai has also been made by Pongsri Lekawatana and Others. The noun modifiers in English and in Thai being compared are the relative clause, the appositive, and the adjective. Prediction of errors and suggestion for teaching these modifying elements have also been proposed.²¹

1.4 Value of the Study

The author hopes this work will be helpful in the following ways:

¹⁹ Warotamasikkhadit, op. cit., pp. 42-5.

²⁰ Chaiyaratana, op. cit., p. 161, pp. 207-9.

²¹ Pongsri Lekawatana, and Others. A Contrastive Study of English and Thai (University of Michigan, 1968-69, Mimeographed, the English Language Center, Bangkok), pp. 100-108.

1. it will help to improve the methods of teaching English to Thai students.

2. a systematic comparison of the structures of noun modifiers in English and in Thai dealt with in this study will permit a finer grading of difficulties. The instructor of English will find it easier to select and grade teaching materials and determine the staging of instruction as well as the sequencing of the materials used.

3. it will enable instructors of English to understand, diagnose and predict the students' problems concerning noun modifiers in English more efficiently.

4. it will help in the preparation of valid tests.

1.5 Transcription and Abbreviated Forms

The transcription used in this study is based on Thai-English Student's Dictionary by Mary R. Haas, with intonation and stress unmarked.

The following are charts of symbols used:

Consonants:		Bilabial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops:	Vd. Unasp.	b	d		-g	
	Vl. Unasp.	p-	t-	c-	k-	?
	Vl. Asp.	ph-	th-	ch-	kh-	
Spirants:	Vl. Unasp.	f-	s-			h-
Sonorants:	Vd. Semivowels	w		j		
	Vd. Nasals	m	n		ŋ	
	Vd. Lateral		l-			
	Vd. Trill or Retroflex		r-			

Vowels:	Front	Central	Back
	Unrounded		Rounded
High	i, ii, ia	y, yy, ya	u, uu, ua
Mid	e, ee	ə, əə	o, oo
Low	ɛ, ɛɛ	a, aa	ɔ, ɔɔ

Tones

Mid	unmarked
Low	∖
Falling	^
High	/
Rising	∨

Words that are morphologically complex are hyphenated.²²

The Abbreviated Forms and Symbols Used in This Study

* (placed in front of the construction) shows that construction is ungrammatical

{ } (placed around two constituents) show that either of the constituents can appear.

Asp. stands for aspirated

R. Pron. stands for relative pronoun

T-obl. stands for transformational rule which is obligatory

²² Mary R. Haas, Thai-English Student's Dictionary (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. XI-XII.

T-opt.	stands for	transformational rule which is optional
T-rule	stands for	transformational rule
Unasp.	stands for	unaspirated
Vd.	stands for	voiced
VP.	stands for	verb phrase
Vl.	stands for	voiceless



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