



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to find the distinctive characteristics of Thai English, in comparison with the British English variety as used in written magazine articles. The focus of the study is on the use of noun modifiers and types of sentence construction. Based on concepts of world Englishes and nativisation, Thai native language, communication norms, and culture should be sound explanations for the distinctive characteristics of Thai English.

1.1 Background of the study

Nowadays, English seems to be a very influential language worldwide. It is a language that most people from different language backgrounds generally use in their communication as a common lingua franca. With a large number of its users, as well as learners, there is no doubt that the English language has acquired a status as a global language.

According to the concept of the process of nativisation (Kachru, 1992), when a language is used in different places by different groups of people, the users will use that language to serve their needs in communication in their own cultural contexts. Thus, the language will be adjusted to the new environment. Then, the features of the language will be changed according to the norm or the culture of communication in the new context. Therefore, as an outcome of nativisation, there are several different varieties of English.

According to Kachru's Model of the Spread of English (1992), the users of English language can be classified into circles: *inner circle*, native speakers of English; *outer circle*, non-native speakers of English in the countries where English is used as a second language; and *expanding circle*, non-native speakers of English in the countries where English is used as a foreign language.

In discussions of nativisation or nativised varieties, the focus is generally placed on those users in the outer circle. However, with the current status and influence of English language throughout the world, it is worth examining

whether nativisation of English can occur in the expanding circle as well. As a Thai researcher observing English in a Thai context, it is very interesting to see whether the concept of nativisation is applicable to Thai English. Since Thais have their own native language, communication norms, and culture, they may transfer some Thai features to their use of the English language. Thus, it may make Thai English different from other Englishes. However, to discuss the nativisation process, Thai English used by Thai competent users must meet an acceptable standard – in other words, it should not be the interlanguage of Thai learners.

In the Thai educational system, Thai students are required to study English as a foreign language. Usually, the study of English starts from the primary school level and continues through the university level. In teaching the English language in common schools, mostly the teachers are native Thais teaching English by using the Thai language. Thus, even though Thai students have to learn English for many years, their real exposure to the language is low. As a result, some Thai students may not be able to use English proficiently. In other words, with only English learning in public schools, some Thai students may not become good users of standard English.

However, the demand for the use of good English in Thailand is relatively high since its status has shifted from a so-called foreign language to the number one language of Thailand abroad, or an international language of Thailand (Smalley, 1994). Not only do Thai people communicate with foreigners in English, but sometimes English is also used among Thai people. At present, it can be observed that the use of English in Thailand is greatly expanding. It is used in foreign companies in Thailand, Thai companies contacting with foreigners or foreign companies, in media (e.g. some TV and radio programs, newspapers, and magazines) or in the field of education (e.g. the study in international programmes, educational conferences, etc.). Furthermore, the use of English can symbolise modernity. Also, it is prestigious for Thai people to be able to use the language proficiently. Thus for most Thai people, the ability to use good English is desirable. Private English courses, English international or bilingual schools, education in English native speaking countries and so on are popular in Thailand, if one can afford it. According to this point, it is possible to expect a great number of Thai competent users of English in Thailand.

In sum, the use of English by Thai people may be described by a continuum showing language development of non-native speakers of English as proposed by Bickerton (1975, cited in Wardhaugh 1992). The development ranges from *basilect*, *mesolect*, to *acrolect*. Basilect refers to the variety that would be less comprehensible to a speaker of the standard, perhaps even incomprehensible. Mesolects are intermediate varieties. Acrolect is a variety which really has very few differences from other varieties of standard English. It is the standard variety of non-native speakers of English that is used effectively and intelligibly in international communication.

Since this study aims at discussing some distinctive characteristics of Thai English as a variety of world Englishes, only the acrolect type of English in Thailand is in focus. To ensure this, Thai English taken from articles written by Thai competent users in standard English language magazines is considered.

According to the literature, there are several studies on the Thai variety of English. Chutisilp (1984) conducted a sociolinguistic study of Thai English, aiming to describe distinctive characteristics of Thai English as transfers of Thai norms and cultures. Navarat (1989) compared and contrasted business journalism styles in Thai and American newspapers, *The Nation* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Pingkarawat (2002) did a comparative study of Thai English and native speaker English in terms of cohesive features. Vadhanasindhu (2002) studied contrastive discourse and reader perception of newspaper editorials in Thai and English. All of these studies have proven that Thai English contains various distinctive characteristics.

The most influential explanation of Thai English to this study is that of Chutisilp (1984). Her findings in terms of provision of information and length of sentences lead to the hypotheses of this study. She describes that, in the use of English, Thai writers usually try to provide as much information as possible to the point that they want to address and this can be observed at any level. Furthermore, she describes that the use of long sentences and one-sentence paragraphs are common. Since a noun is a common unit in both Thai and English, and it generally takes modifiers, it is worth exploring whether Thai writers have a higher preference for noun modifiers than British writers. Furthermore, the methods of adding information to nouns used by Thai and British writers may be different. In addition, high numbers

of noun modifiers together with different ways of use and constructions of noun modifiers might be the factors causing lengthy sentences and high frequency of some particular types of sentences in Thai English.

In conclusion, the findings from this study may help provide more knowledge on distinctive features of Thai English, as an English variety in the expanding circle, in terms of the use of noun modifiers and sentence constructions. Furthermore, explanations in terms of Thai language and culture for the distinctive features are to be drawn. Therefore, the results obtained from this research may promote some strong discussions on nativisation of English in Thai contexts so that Thai English, to a certain degree, can positively claim itself as another distinctive variety of world Englishes.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Are English feature articles in magazines published in Thailand and in Britain different in terms of:
 - 1.1 the use of noun modifiers
 - 1.2 sentence constructions
2. If yes, how are they quantitatively and qualitatively different?
3. What might be the explanation for the differences?

1.3 Objectives of the study

There are three objectives of the study.

1. To exhibit distinctive characteristics of Thai English, in comparison with British English, in the magazine genre, focusing on the use of noun modifiers and sentence constructions.
2. To describe differences in the use of noun modifiers and sentence types in Thai and British English in two main levels: quantitative level - frequency of occurrence - and qualitative level – syntactic structures and use.
3. To explain that distinctive characteristics of Thai English are influenced by Thai language, culture, and communication norms; so that nativisation of English in a Thai context can be illustrated

and, to some extent, the existence of a Thai variety of world Englishes can be shown.

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

English is used in a wide range and depth in Thai contexts. Obviously, it is the most common international lingua franca of Thai people. Even though English is only named as a foreign language of Thailand so learning and use of English language by Thai people are based on some standard of native English varieties, Thai competent users of English can have their unique ways and styles to present their identities. This does not mean that Thai competent users use non-standard English. In fact, they adjust the language to serve their preference in communication and to be appropriate to their Thai contexts and culture.

With this assumption, the hypotheses in relation to the research questions of this study can be stated as follows.

1. Englishes used in feature articles in magazines published in Thailand and in Britain are different in terms of the use of noun modifiers and sentence constructions.
2. English feature articles written by Thai writers contain various forms and a higher number of modifiers to provide more information to the prominent head noun. At the sentence level, Thai writers use more coordinate, complex, and compound complex sentence constructions.
3. The Thai language system and culture have an influence on the characteristics of the English language used by Thai writers.

1.5 Scope of the study

This study compares Thai and British English in feature articles in English language magazines published in Thailand and in Britain, in 2005. The focus of the comparison is on modifiers of *the most prominent head noun* (see definition of terms) in each sentence and the types of sentence construction. As for representatives of Thai English, all Thai English articles are those written by Thai writers working and living in Thailand. And for those representatives of British English, it is assumed

that articles published in British magazines are certainly qualified for British English standard. The contents of the articles involve travel destinations and well-known people. In order to state the distinctive characteristics of Thai English, the analyses are done in two main layers: quantitative analysis (the descriptive statistics) and qualitative analysis (the syntactic description of noun modifiers and sentence constructions). Furthermore, to prove for a nativisation process in Thai English, distinctive characteristics have to be explained based on cultural frameworks and the transfers from Thai language and culture.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The study aims to compare written work of writers in the Thai community and writers in the British community in the genre of magazine expository prose. The following are points of concern in this study.

The first limitation of this study is that there are not many magazines written in English published in Thailand. Therefore, topics or types of columns of articles to be used as samples of the analysis are quite limited. Articles are initially selected based on the columns that are available in Thai English magazines. Then, articles from the same type of columns in magazines published in Britain are selected accordingly.

The selection of Thai writers is also one of the limitations of the study. It will be done carefully because even though the selected magazines are published in Thailand, the writers may not be Thai. Thus, the selection of Thai English articles is initially done by looking at the names of writers. However, some Thai writers may have a high exposure to English or experience in English speaking countries or some of them might have grown up in a bilingual (Thai-English) context. So, it may be a point to say that they may use English more like English native speakers. To make sure that the writers are good representatives of Thai users of English, a questionnaire for writers' information and language background is used (see Appendix A).

It should be noted that the questionnaire could not be distributed to all of the Thai writers because some of them were part-time writers. However, there were about 70% of the writers answering it and the information was enough. Therefore, it could be certain that the data of Thai English would not be much deviated.

Furthermore, even though the Thai writers' proficiency of English is near-native (most of them have been in English native speaking countries for at least 3 years), since the magazines are published in Thailand (Thai context) and the writers are Thais working in Thailand, they should have a higher exposure to the Thai language and culture than to the native English language and culture, so it is assumed that there should be influences from the Thai language on their use of English language to a certain degree and that is the main point that this study is aiming to prove.

Another limitation is the limited number of Thai writers. Unlike those British English articles that each of them was written by different writers, for Thai English articles in average, two of them were written by the same writer (there are a total of 16 writers and 28 articles). However, this number should be enough to ensure that the distinctive features to be found from Thai English articles would not be influenced by individual style of a particular writer.

The next limitation concerns the editorial process of Thai English articles. It is common that most editors of English magazines published in Thailand are English native speakers. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration whether or not the language used in the articles is a real representative of Thai English. However, since articles in Thai English magazines are written by Thais and published in Thailand, it should be reasonable enough for this study to expect some differences in the use of English. As an editor of Macquarie Dictionary, Butler (2000) mentions that the important role of editors is not to control people to use the language with accordance to some certain standard but it is to do their best on describing the way things are in that community. However, to deal with some doubts for influences of editorial process on Thai English articles, a questionnaire was sent to editors asking for their roles and opinions (see Appendix B).

All editors, both Thai and native speakers, mentioned that, in editing, they mainly focus on comprehension and the language in terms of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. None of them mentioned the style of writing. Unfortunately, in this study, the access to the original version (the pre-editing) is not available so it cannot be known for how much of the language has been edited. However, if the result turns out that there are some distinctive characteristics of Thai English, it will be strong evidence to prove that nativisation really occurs in Thai English, no matter what roles

the editors have or how much the language used as the corpus for this study has been changed through the editorial process.

Next, another limitation of this study involves the generalization of the findings. Since the study only compares Thai English with one variety of native Englishes (British), the result cannot be generalized for the whole population of English native speakers.

Last, the explanation for Thai distinctive characteristics in this study is based only on differences in language systems and culture of Thai and British writers. Other factors, such as writers' age, gender, social status, and others, are not points of concern.

1.7 Definition of terms

English as an International Language

Theoretically, English as an international language can be discussed within two main perspectives. According to Davie (1989), first, it can be the 'treated English' of which features concerning individual culture and communicative styles are taken off. As a result, this type of international English should insist on the same basic standard for all users. Second, it is the 'natural English'. This is a type of international English welcoming all varieties of English that occur in successful communication in international contexts. It allows users to use the language naturally with their own methods of communication that do not ruin international intelligibility.

In this study, English as an international language refers to only the natural one. Its meaning covers all varieties that global people use successfully as a tool in a wide range of international communication.

Nativisation

In this research, the term 'nativisation' is based on the concept suggested by Kachru (1985). Nativisation can be described as a process of changes in English language according to the cultural context where it is used. Nativisation occurs when the language is used in different communities by different groups of people. Those people normally have their own native language and they use English as a tool for communication to serve some purposes in their community. Therefore, they will use

English with the norm of communication in their native language and culture. As a result, English used in different communities will have their own characteristics. According to the concept of nativisation, different features in English are not errors or mistakes. In fact, they are representatives of different English varieties. In the field of world Englishes, there are many varieties of English and all of them have equal status.

English Native speakers

Richards et al. (1992) define a native speaker (of a language) as “a person considered as a native speaker of his or her NATIVE LANGUAGE. The intuition of a native speaker about the structure of his or her language is one basis for establishing or confirming the rules of the grammar. A native speaker is said to speak his or her language ‘natively’”. Jenkins (2003) describes that native speakers of English are those who are born and raised in one of the countries where English is historically the first language to be spoken. However, according to Kachru (1998), two types of English nativeness are suggested: ‘genetic nativeness’ and ‘functional nativeness’. Genetic native speakers of English refer to those who are in inner circle countries, while functional native speakers of English are those who are in outer circle countries.

In this study, English native speakers mean only those with genetic nativeness.

Thai users of English

Regarding the concept of English as an international language (EIL), McKay (2002 p. 12) describes users of English as “...users of EIL whether in a global or local sense do not need to internalize the cultural norms of Inner Circle countries in order to use language effectively as a medium of wider communication. Furthermore, when EIL is used by speakers from both Outer and Expanding Circle countries to communicate across borders, one of its main uses is to allow speakers to tell others about their ideas and culture.”

According to the above definitions of a native speaker of a language and users of EIL, Thai users of English are people who are native speakers of Thai, speak Thai as a mother tongue and are living in Thailand. Thai users of English, in this

study, use English effectively as a medium of communication in both global and local contexts and they do not need to internalize the cultural norms of Inner Circle countries. In other words, they are users of the Thai acrolect variety of English: a variety that is acceptable as a standard that is used by non-native speakers of English.

Prominent head noun

Prominent head nouns refer to nouns in sentences that take a role as the most important topic of discussion. For this, the concept of theme and rheme suggested by Prague school of linguistics (cited in Connor 1996) is applied. According to the concept, theme is a topic that the sentence is telling. It is the departure point of a sentence and rheme is a part giving further information to theme. Thus, the prominent head nouns, in this study, are generally referred to as those in the theme of a sentence. Nouns in rhemes are not taken as prominent head nouns since they are just some parts of information describing theme.

However, in cases that theme does not contribute any point to the study of noun modifiers (it cannot have any modifiers according to grammar rules, e.g. personal pronoun, subject of cleft sentence) or theme can be omitted as in passive sentences; noun in rheme is selected instead. (For more information of identification of prominent head nouns, see Chapter III, Research Methodology.)

Modifiers

According to Finch (2000), modifiers can be any kinds of grammatical units added to other units to give more information. The units to be modified can also be any kind: a noun, a verb, an adjective, or a larger unit like a phrase, a clause, or a sentence. Since the focus of this study is on the modifiers of the prominent head noun, therefore, the term 'modifier' in this study referred to the modifier of prominent head nouns only.

Greenbaum (1991) mentions that modifiers of a noun phrase can be pre-modifiers, post-modifiers, or discontinuous-modifiers. A noun phrase can take all of them within the same time. Modifiers of a noun can be in forms of words, phrases, or clauses. Thus, a modifier of a prominent head noun can be any grammatical unit that describes or provides information to the head noun.

Types of sentence construction

Types of sentence construction refer to different structures of sentences as defined by English grammar. In this study, types of sentences can be classified into four different categories: simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, and compound complex sentence.

1.8 Significance of the study

Results of this research can be beneficial in several ways as follows.

1) This study provides more information on distinctive characteristics of the variety of English used in Thailand.

2) With an explanation of Thai language, norms, and culture as factors influencing Thainess in Thai English, reliable reasons for occurrence of nativisation in Thai contexts, even if Thais are users of English in the expanding circle, can be illustrated. Furthermore, it proves that, to some certain degree, existence of Thai English as a variety of world Englishes can be claimed.

3) Since there has been only a small amount of empirical research in the field of world Englishes focusing on English in the expanding circle, the findings of this study can provide some contributions, adding more knowledge to world Englishes.

4) The study may demonstrate some research methods on Thai English and nativisation. Also, it may help open more areas for research in the field of world Englishes.

5) The study may also make some contributions to pedagogical aspects. Once Thai English is accepted, teachers can consider the use of source materials to accommodate Thai students for their background knowledge and culture with the new language. In addition, it may raise awareness of teachers and learners for the existence of other varieties of international Englishes, apart from native speakers' English. Thus, instead of only focusing on English native varieties, Thai English as well as other varieties of international English should be presented to students so as to prepare them to be successful users of international English.

1.9 Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In Chapter I, general information on the background of the study based on the concept of world Englishes is described. Chapter II introduces theories that are essential to this study. The discussion includes concepts of world Englishes, noun modifiers, sentence constructions, cultural frameworks and Thai culture, and other related studies. In Chapter III, data collection, research procedures and methods of analysis are elaborately presented. Chapter IV provides the findings and discussions in terms of the use of noun modifiers. It states the results from statistical perspective along with those from detailed analysis on the use and structure. Thus, distinctive features in the use of noun modifiers of Thai English can be concluded. Chapter V presents the findings and discussions in terms of sentence constructions. The presentation starts with information obtained from statistical test. Then, findings on how sentences are constructed differently in Thai and British English are displayed. Last, in Chapter VI, distinctive features of Thai English presented in Chapter IV and V are explained in terms of transfers from Thai language and culture. Also, implications in relation to the field of world Englishes, English language instruction, and future research are suggested.