

**LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES
OF MULTILINGUAL SPEAKERS: A CASE
STUDY OF PRINCE OF SONGKLA UNIVERSITY
UNDERGRADUATES**

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UNDERGRADUATES**

by

WARINTHIP KAENIN SISAMOUTH

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language / Mother Tongue
L2	Second Language
L3	Foreign Language
PM	Patani Malay
PSU	Prince of Songkla University
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

**PENGGUNAAN BAHASA DAN SIKAP TERHADAP BAHASA DALAM
KALANGAN PENUTUR MULTILINGUAL: SATU KAJIAN KES
PELAJAR SARJANA MUDA DI PRINCE OF SONGKLA UNIVERSITY**

ABSTRAK

Thailand merupakan sebuah negara multilingual yang terdiri lebih daripada 70 bahasa minoriti yang dituturkan (Smalley, 1994; Rappa & Wee, 2006). Salah satu daripadanya ialah dialek Melayu Pattani dengan sekitar 800,000 orang jumlah penuturnya yang bermastautin di wilayah-wilayah sebelah selatan sekali (Smalley, 1994). Setakat ini, belum ada pengkajian yang menumpui penggunaan bahasa dan sikap bahasa komuniti pertuturan dialek Melayu Pattani di kawasan tersebut, khususnya dalam kalangan pelajar-pelajar universiti yang mempunyai dialek Melayu Pattani sebagai bahasa ibunda. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini bermatlamat 1) untuk mengenal pasti pola bahasa yang digunakan pelajar-pelajar sarjana muda Thai di Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani, Thailand dalam pelbagai domain, iaitu rumah, kawan-kawan, pendidikan, keagamaan dan media, 2) untuk mengkaji sikap pelajar-pelajar sarjana muda Thai di PSU, Pattani, Thailand terhadap bahasa Thai, dialek Melayu Patani dan bahasa Inggeris, 3) untuk menganalisis korelasi antara sikap bahasa dan penggunaan bahasa dalam kelima-lima domain. Sampel yang digunakan terdiri daripada 337 orang pelajar sarjana muda tahun dua dari lapan fakulti, Prince of Songkla University, Kampus Pattani, Thailand. Penyelidik menggunakan kaedah menganalisis domain yang dikemukakan Fishman (1972) untuk mengkaji pola penggunaan bahasa. Di samping itu, penyelidik menggunakan konsep sikap bahasa yang dikemukakan Ryan, Giles dan Sebastian's (1982) sebagai metodologi untuk mengkaji sikap terhadap ketiga-tiga bahasa tersebut. Selain

daripada itu, penyelidik menggunakan teori tentang sikap untuk mengurai hubungan antara sikap bahasa dan penggunaan bahasa. Maka, penyelidikan ini adalah percampuran dalam pengumpulan data secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif tentang penggunaan bahasa dan sikap bahasa. Terdapat dua instrumen untuk penyelidikan ini, iaitu soal selidik tentang penggunaan bahasa dan sikap bahasa yang diubahsuai daripada Lasagabaster dan Huguet (2007) dan panduan temu bual separa berstruktur yang diubahsuai daripada Lasagabaster dan Huguet (2007) dan Salasih (1996). Ketepatan soal selidik diperiksa oleh tiga pakar Thai. Pengukur sikap mempunyai koefisien alfa Cronbach .829. Data kuantitatif dianalisis dengan menghasilkan frekuensi, peratus, mean aritmetika, sisihan piawai dan korelasi mudah (r). Teknik analisis kandungan digunakan untuk menganalisis data daripada temu bual. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar lebih menggunakan dialek Melayu Patani daripada bahasa Thai dan bahasa-bahasa lain dalam domain di rumah dan keagamaan. Keadaannya bertentangan dalam domain persahabatan, pendidikan dan media yang mereka lebih menggunakan bahasa Thai daripada bahasa-bahasa lain. Dari segi sikap pula, pelajar-pelajar mempunyai sikap yang positif terhadap bahasa Thai, dialek Melayu Patani dan bahasa Inggeris. Akhir sekali, terdapat korelasi bermakna antara sikap bahasa dan penggunaan bahasa dalam semua domain secara umum. Maka, koefisien korelasi seluruh (r) antara sikap terhadap bahasa Thai dan penggunaan bahasa Thai ialah .183, dengan tahap bermakna 0.01. Koefisien korelasi seluruh (r) antara sikap terhadap dialek Melayu Pattani dan penggunaan dialek Melayu Pattani ialah .212, dengan tahap bermakna 0.01. Akhir sekali, koefisien korelasi seluruh (r) antara sikap terhadap bahasa Inggeris dan penggunaan bahasa Inggeris ialah .334, dengan tahap bermakna 0.01. Hasil penyelidikan ini bermanfaat

kepada negara, khususnya untuk kerajaan dan pendidik Thai kerana maklumat yang didapati dapat digunakan sebagai dasar yang baik untuk perancangan.

**LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF
MULTILINGUAL SPEAKERS: A CASE STUDY OF
PRINCE OF SONGKLA UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES**

ABSTRACT

Thailand is a multilingual country with over 70 minority languages spoken in the country (Smalley, 1994; Rappa & Wee, 2006). One of which is Patani Malay with about 800,000 speakers residing in the southernmost provinces (Smalley, 1994). There are no studies focusing on language use and language attitudes of the Patani Malay speech community residing in this region, specifically of university students with Patani Malay as their mother tongue. On that account, the aims of this study were 1) to identify patterns of language use by Thai undergraduates of Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani, Thailand in domains of home, friendship, education, religion, and media, 2) to investigate attitudes of Thai undergraduates of PSU, Pattani, Thailand towards Thai, Patani Malay, and English, and 3) to analyse if there are correlations between language attitudes and language use in the five domains. The sample consisted of 337 second-year undergraduates from eight faculties, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand. The researcher adopted Fishman's (1972) domain analysis to investigate the subjects' patterns of language use and adopted Ryan, Giles, and Sebastian's (1982) concept of language attitudes as a method to infer the subjects' attitudes towards the three languages. Besides, the researcher followed the theory of attitude to explore the relationship between language attitudes and language use. So, the mixed method design was applied to obtain the quantitative data and the qualitative data on language use and language attitudes. There were two research instruments, that is, a questionnaire on

language use and language attitudes adapted from Lasagabaster and Huguet's (2007) instrument and a semi-structured interview questionnaire adapted from Lasagabaster and Huguet's (2007) and Salasiah's (1996) instruments. The validity of the questionnaires was checked by three Thai experts. The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the attitude measure was .829. The quantitative data were analysed by frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and simple correlation (r). The content analysis technique was used to analyse the data from the interview. The findings revealed that the students used more Patani Malay than Thai and the other languages in home and religious domains. On the contrary, they used more Thai than Patani Malay and the other languages in domains of friendship, education, and media. The findings also showed that the students had positive attitudes towards Thai, Patani Malay and English. Finally, there were significant correlations between language attitudes and language use in all domains as a whole. That is, the overall correlation coefficient (r) between attitudes towards Thai and the use of Thai was .183, with a significance level of 0.01. The overall correlation coefficient (r) between attitudes towards Patani Malay and the use of Patani Malay was .212, with a significance level of 0.01. Finally, the overall correlation coefficient (r) between attitudes towards English and the use of English was .334, with a significance level of 0.01. These findings were hoped to benefit the country, especially for the government and Thai educators because the information obtained would be a very good basis for policy making.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

People use languages for communication. If they are in a multilingual society, more languages will be in contact. They will have choices to choose any languages from their linguistic repertoires and use them in a variety of domains. For example, one speaks the mother tongue with his / her parents and uses another language with his / her friends. Such a phenomenon occurs in all multilingual communities around the world, including Thailand. When one chooses a language over another, he / she implicitly shows his / her attitudes towards that language and its users (Van Herk, 2012). There are a number of research interests tackling individuals' language use and / or their language attitudes towards the majority, minority, and / or foreign languages to explain the linguistic phenomena of these bilinguals / multilinguals as well as to understand the language situation in multilingual communities in many parts of the world (e.g., Caruana, 2007; Huguet, 2007; Jorda, 2007; Lasagabaster, 2007). However, such researches are scarcely conducted in Thailand. Therefore, the present study attempts to investigate language use and language attitudes towards three languages: Thai (the majority language), Patani Malay (the minority language), and English (the foreign language) of Thai undergraduates at a university in Pattani, one of the southernmost provinces of Thailand.

The following sections will introduce the sociolinguistic profile of Thailand and Thai language in brief, including varieties of the Thai language and the minority languages, specifically Thai or Standard Thai. Nationalism in Thailand is then presented together with language policy and language planning in summary. After that, the notion of English in Thailand and its place in the country are taken into

account. The chapter continues to present the overview of the Thai educational system, and how English is placed as the main foreign language in the Thai national curriculum. Then, the Malay Muslims and their ethnic language, Patani Malay, are discussed. Next, the overview of the setting of the present study is introduced consisting of the Pattani province and Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand. After that, the chapter identifies the problem statement, the research objectives, and the research questions. The significance of the study and the definition of the terms of the study are presented next, followed by the organization of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with limitations of the present study.

1.1 Thailand in Brief: A Sociolinguistic Profile

Thailand, officially known as the Kingdom of Thailand (previously called Siam) and situated in Southeast Asia, has linguistic and ethnic diversity (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Phillips, 2007).

The country is composed of five regions, sharing borders with four countries: the north borders Myanmar and Laos, the northeast borders Laos and Cambodia, the south borders Northern Malaysia, and the west borders Myanmar (Phillips, 2007; London, 2008) (see Figure 1.1). It is a constitutional monarchy with a democratic parliamentary system of government (Phillips, 2007). The primary religion is Buddhism, but Thai citizens have religious freedom (about 95 per cent claim they are Buddhist) (Severson, 2013, May 24; Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.).



Figure 1.1 Map of Thailand (adapted from “Map of Thailand and neighbour,” 2013)

The current population is approximately 65 million, including various ethnic minorities: indigenous Thai (75%), Thai Chinese (14%), Malay (3%), and the rest are the Vietnamese, Khmers, Indians, Mons, and hill tribes, such as the Karens, Lahus, and Lissus (Smalley, 1994; Rappa & Wee, 2006; Peleggi, 2007; Phillips, 2007; London, 2008).

1.1.1 Thai Language in Brief

The Thai alphabet was based on the Khmer script and invented in 1283 by King Ramkhamhaeng with today 44 consonants and 18 vowels. It also has diphthongs and vowel-consonant combinations (London, 2008). The alphabet remains intact until today.

The Thai language, a part of the Tai language family (London, 2008) or a part of the Sino-Tibetan language family (Phillips, 2007), is melodic and tonal-word meanings differentiated by various tones. For example, the word *maa* (level tone) means to come. It can refer to a horse with high tone and a dog with ring tone (London, 2008).

The Thai language is artistic with graceful curves in the written language (Phillips, 2007). Its orthography is “from left to right with undivided blocks of letters” (London, 2008, p. 84).

1.1.1(a) Varieties of Thai and Minority Languages in Thailand

The main varieties of the Thai language can be divided into four based on regional features, that is, Kammuang (Northern Thai), Isan or Lao (Northeastern Thai), Klang or Thaiklang (Central Thai), and Tay or Paktay (Southern Thai) (Smalley, 1994, p. 67; Warotamasikkkhadit & Person, 2011, p. 34) with a large number of speakers. Some scholars use the term, regional dialects (Warotamasikkkhadit & Person, 2011, p. 34), regional languages (Smalley, 1994, p. 67; Lee Hugo, 2013, p. 413), or variants of the Thai language (Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 106) referring to these four varieties. However, Standard Thai, which came from Thaiklang, has been declared as the national and official language with prestige in the society. In addition, the majority of people widely uses the language in various

domains, for instance, education, government offices, private sectors, media, and so on.

Apart from these major varieties, over 70 minority languages are used in the country, for example, Patani Malay and Thai Khmer have more than 1 million speakers (for more information on minority languages, see Smalley, 1994; London, 2008; Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). There are also varieties of the Chinese language spoken among the Chinese communities (Smalley, 1994). However, the exact statistic data on the number of minority language speakers in Thailand is still vague.

As a result of history, people use vernacular languages, adjacent to regional designation. People who live in the north region speak Kammuang, a Thai variety. Those who live in the northeast speak Isan, a variety of Lao. Southern people speak Pak Tay, and those who live in the far south use Patani Malay, a variety of Malaysian language. Besides, Khmer is used among those who live along the border of Cambodia, including the Mon and the Khmer who migrated to Thailand. Karen people and hill tribes speak in the Sino-Tibetan languages. The Chinese people speak Teochew, Mandarin, and the varieties of the Chinese language (London, 2008; Rappa & Wee, 2006). But, it should be noted that Standard Thai is used throughout the country.

1.1.1(b) Thai or Standard Thai

Though Thailand is home to various minority languages, the only language with privilege is Standard Thai or Thai, the sole national and official language of the country defining the Thai national identity and strengthening national unity (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Lee Hugo, 2013). The language is standardized by the Royal Institute guidance (Bradley, 2006). Due to its status, Thai is, therefore, widely used throughout the country in all domains, including in government and in education (Lee Hugo, 2013). If one desires to assimilate into the Thai society or to be accepted by the Thai majority citizens, he or she must learn and speak Thai (Rappa & Wee, 2006). Furthermore, it is the main medium of instructions in the Thai educational system (Bradley, 2006; Rappa & Wee, 2006), albeit education sometimes shifts to the local varieties in rural schools (Rappa & Wee, 2006).

1.1.2 Nationalism

Though Thailand is ethnically and linguistically diverse, it is commonly seen as a linguistic homogenous country where every Thai speaks the Thai language. The notion of homogeneity is highlighted by the previous king of Thailand, King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910):

you must remember that if you are speaking with a westerner on the one hand and Lao on the other, you must maintain that the westerner is 'them' and the Lao is Thai. If, however, you are speaking with a Lao on the one hand and a Thai on the other, you must maintain that the Lao is 'them' and the Thai is 'us'. (Streckfuss as cited in Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 106)

This dictum reveals the notion of nationalism and language. On the one hand, people speak Thai to feel part of the nation; thus, the Thai language represents national identity. On the other hand, languages, such as Patani Malay, Chinese, and Khmer used in Thailand are perceived as foreign languages.

Thai or Standard Thai, as mentioned earlier on its privilege in Section 1.1.1 (b), is historically related to the King, “the soul of Thainess” (Connors as cited in Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 107), who is as “the embodiment of the ideal Thai” (Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 107). Hence, the ideal Thai is the one who speaks Standard Thai like the king (Rappa & Wee, 2006).

The status of Thai as the national language or implicitly national unity is emphasized. The subcommittee on Thai for Thai students and Thai nationals points out that all Thai nationals should learn Thai well. This is true for those who live in rural areas and receive inadequate education. Moreover, the committee notes the concerns over the maintenance and development of the Thai language as well as the anxiety for inadequate foundation in the Thai language among many middle and upper-class Thai youth, receiving international and bilingual educations (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011).

The notion on the maintenance of Thai language is reiteratively stressed in various aspects, for example, to prevent the influence of the English language on the Thai lexemes and the Thai grammar (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). Foreign companies’ signs should not only be in English, but also in Thai (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). These implicitly show nationalism.

Thus, again Standard Thai is used to unite the nation as Noss (1984)

highlights:

...neither the nature nor the role of the national language has ever been seriously questioned. Whether this has something to do with the country's non-colonial history, or whether it merely reflects some kind of ethnic accident, there has been no serious challenge to the national language of Thailand. It is the standard version of the Central Plains variety of Thai that is officially used in all domains and which is also the most important lingua franca of the country...No concessions are going to be made to the other Thai varieties, any more than they are going to be made to speakers of Malay in the South, to speakers of Khmer in the East, to speakers of Chinese varieties in the cities, or to speakers of minority languages in the mountains. The only real issue, then, is how best to convert other speakers into speakers of Standard Thai, and how best to spread literacy in the written form of the national language. (as cited in Rappa & Wee, 2006, p. 110)

1.1.3 Language Policy and Language Planning in Thailand

For centuries, Thailand never has its written / formal language policy. According to Warotamasikkhadit (as cited in Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011, p. 30), "Although Thai was declared the national language of Thailand in State Convention number 9, promulgated 24 June 1940 during the regime of Field Marshal Plaek Pibunsongkhram, most language decisions in modern Thailand are based on unwritten assumptions".

The language policy of Thailand has been initially and seriously developed in 2006. The Committee to Draft the National Language Policy (hereafter CDNLP) is assigned by the Royal Institute in order to investigate the current language situation in the country. Moreover, the committee has to study future language-related needs vis-à-vis the language policy of Thailand. These tasks are beneficial to the Kingdom and all Thai people (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). For gathering these data, conferences and forums involving these two main issues are required. The CDNLP with the objective to gain data from several participants from diverse societies/ domains, therefore, held a forum and a conference: *Forum on Bilingual and*

Multilingual Education in the National Language Policy in 2007; the International Conference on National Language Policy: Language Diversity for National Unity in 2008 (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011).

The CDNLP consists of six subcommittees with different objective responsibilities. According to Warotamasikkhadit and Person (2011, p. 32), these subcommittees are 1) *Thai for Thai students and Thai Nationals*, 2) *Regional Languages* (including ethnic minority languages), 3) *Languages of Commerce, Neighbouring Languages, and Working Languages*, 4) *Teaching Thai to Migrants Seeking Employment in Thailand*, 5) *Language Needs of the Visually and Hearing Impaired*, and 6) *Translation, Interpretation, and Localization Standards*.

The National Language Policy of Thailand (hereafter NLP) is still undone and under developed. It requires more work to be done. However, it is hoped that the NLP is beneficial to the country as a whole (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011).

Those regional speakers, for instance, of Kammuang and of Lao (Isan), share a sense of being Thai and thus accept their languages to be variants of the Thai language. In contrast, those immigrants, such as the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Cambodian, the Laotian, and the Burmese absorb the Thai culture and share a sense of Thai unity. They are willing to assimilate to Thai community by shifting to Thai language (Rappa & Wee, 2006). The Chinese, for example, shift to Thai language for running a business in Thailand; in this manner, it is important to know Thai.

1.1.4 English in Thailand

Historically, in 1826 during the reign of King Rama III (ruling 1824-51), the English language came to Thailand via British diplomats from the British East India Company for international trading between Thailand (at that time “Siam”) and Britain (Phillips, 2007; London, 2008). King Rama IV (ruling 1851-68) realized the usefulness of English in preserving the independence of the country and preventing it from the European powers, and thus demanded a good knowledge of English as a tool to modernize the country (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Phillips, 2007; London, 2008; Kachru & Nelson, 2006). In this way, American missionaries were assigned to teach English to the royal families. Initially, the language was exclusively used between the royal members and the Siamese elite during the reign of King Rama IV and V onwards (London, 2008; Rappa & Wee, 2006; Yiamkhamnuan, 2011). Later, not only the royal family, but also the Thai government felt the importance of English for the global economy and for establishing Thai modernity; therefore, the need for more Thais to know English increased with more contacts with western countries (Rappa & Wee, 2006). Consequently, in 1913, English became a part of the Thai educational curriculum (Kachru & Nelson, 2006); as a result, it became the first foreign language subject in the Thai educational system.

It is clear that English has been of value to the country as key to widening knowledge and for international communication (Kachru & Nelson, 2006). The English Language was initially used for international trade and diplomacy (Rappa & Wee, 2006), but it is also widespread among other classes because of the requirement to learn English. In addition, those who know English can gain social mobility, including positions in government (Rappa & Wee, 2006).

Today, English has become the most popular and the main foreign language in Thailand (Rappa & Wee, 2006). It has remained a part of the national curriculum for Basic Education and Higher Education (Ministry of Education, n.d.). In this way, the majority of Thai students learn English at school.

Although English is in Thailand for almost 200 years and is a part of the Thai educational system, it is still placed in the expanding circle (see Figure 1.2) where English is seen as a foreign language, as noted by Kachru (2005).

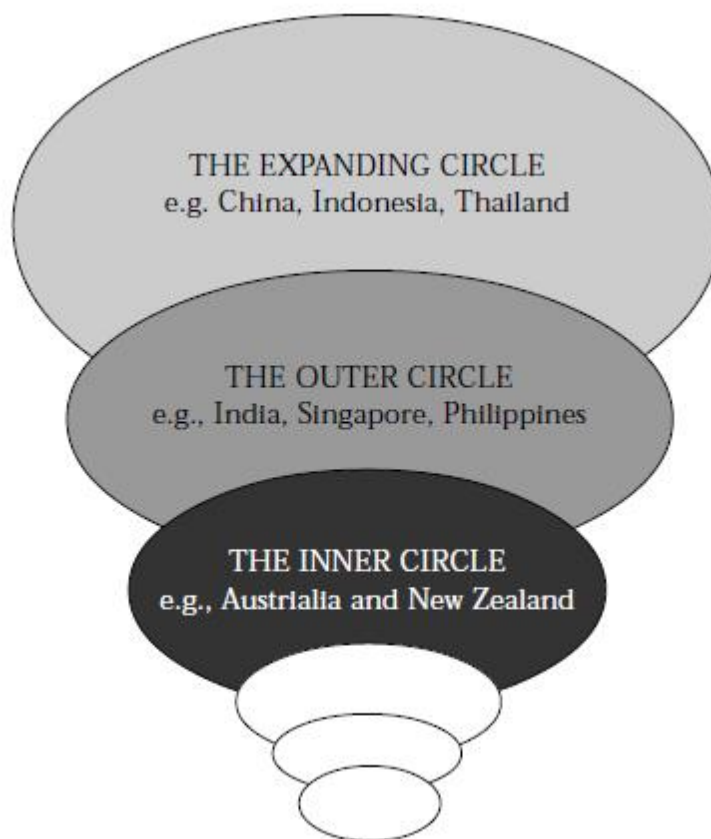


Figure 1.2 Three Concentric Circles of Asian Englishes (Kachru, 2005, p. 14)

Figure 1.2 clearly illustrates the use of English in Asian countries. According to Kachru (1985, 2005), there are three circles of English representing a group of countries and how English functions in each circle. The first circle is the inner circle

where English serves as the major language in the country. Everyone speaks the language as their native tongue and uses it for communication within the country. Countries, such as Australia and New Zealand are in this circle. The second circle is the outer circle where English serves as one of the official languages because the countries are formerly colonized by the United Kingdom or America. Therefore, the language used to be essential in government and in education. Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines are grouped in this circle. The final circle is the expanding circle where English is perceived as just a foreign language. People do not normally communicate in English in general. To be more specific, Thailand is in this circle. Thus, the English language has no communicative function within the country because Standard Thai is the only marker of the Thai national identity (Rappa & Wee, 2006).

Furthermore, the authorities feel a need of maintaining the Thai purity without the mixture of foreign cultures (Rappa & Wee, 2006). However, English serves instrumental purposes: upward social mobility, careers, economic development, diplomacy, and academic (Rappa & Wee, 2006). Most Thai policy makers agree that Thai and English are important for the country (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011) as English represents modernity.

Smalley (1994) points out that English in Thailand has integrated with Thai phonology and Thai tones as well as grammatical constructions. In fact, most Thai people speak English with the Thai accent. Bradley (2010, p. 101) exemplifies this as follows: the English 'sh' /ʃ/ is consistently replaced by Thai /tɕ^h/ (similar to the English 'ch' /tʃ/) as there is no /ʃ/ in Thai; final /l/ is normally replaced by /n/; and so on.

Apparently, the researches done on Thai English features are still limited. One quantified study was done by Bradley and Bradley in 1984 on “Thai English phonology and morphosyntax” (as cited in Bradley, 2010, p. 101).

1.1.4(a) The Role of English in Thailand

English plays a part in the Thai educational context (see section 1.1.6) because authorities feel the importance of English in this dynamic world, so Thai people must learn English at a young age.

Besides classroom domain, English can be found in the media, for example, in newspaper - *The Bangkok Post* and *The Nation*. Both newspaper report on news in English language and are issued daily. They cover all issues relevant to Thailand, including regional and world news. They also have the online websites and provide the English language learning sections. *Business Day* is another Thai newspaper that offers business information in English. However, there are not many people who are able to read news in English.

English is also found in TV programmes, for instance, in the Thai PBS Channel, there are English programmes, such as *Good Morning*, a variety and quiz show for children or adolescents, broadcasted every Saturday from 7.30 a.m. to 7.55 a.m. in 2014. It aims to increase English language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. *English Mission* is another program offered in the channel and broadcasted every Saturday from 9.05 to 9.30 a.m. in 2014. Home audiences could learn authentic English via watching and listening to the dialogues of trainees. *English Breakfast*, broadcasting every Sunday from 9.05 to 9.30 a.m. in 2014, is also in this channel teaching useful phrases and expression in English via

Thai English experts with fun. All the three programmes are in the kid section (<http://program.thaipbs.or.th/kidsprogram/>).

In Channel 3, another Thai TV, there is only one English programme, *English on Tour*, which aims to teach useful phrases and expressions in English to the young. It broadcasted from Monday to Friday at 5.40 p.m. in 2014 (www.thaitv3.com).

Thai TV 5 Channel also offers the English language learning programme, that is, *Chris Delivery*, which is suitable for all ages and teaches English in a fun way. The programme broadcasted every Friday at 9.10 p.m. in 2014 (<http://www.tv5.co.th>).

Apart from the media domain, English is used in engineering industries for international communication and training as well as learning new technology (see Hart-Rawung & Li, 2008). The language is also used on signs and in international conferences.

English is also used in informal contexts, such as chatting on the internet via *Facebook*, and sending messages via mobile phones by those who know English. The Thai merchants and vendors speak in English with foreign tourists for their businesses. In addition, it is used by bargirls and those who work in the “love industry” (Lee Hugo, 2013, p.411).

It is clear that English is used in a variety of domains. However, there are not many researches on how English is used in different contexts in Thailand, so the exact data on these cannot be identified here.

1.1.5 The Thai Education System

Though English plays a crucial role in the Thai society, specifically for commerce with the outside, the language does not impact on the national language of the Thai citizens because Standard Thai is the only main medium of instruction in the Thai educational system. Albeit teachers sometimes switch to the local vernaculars in schools in rural areas, Standard Thai is still needed and required for those who want to fully participate in the Thai society (Rappa & Wee, 2006).

In Thailand, the educational system comprises of four levels and is supervised by the Ministry of Education. These four educational levels are as follows (Office of the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education, 2013b):

- Early year education is aimed at children aged 3 to 5.
- Basic education is for children aged 6 onward. The pattern for the basic education is 6-6, that is, six years of *Prathom* (primary education) and six years of *Matthayom* (three years of lower secondary level and another three years of upper secondary level).

The national curriculum consists of eight core subjects: Thai language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Religion and Culture, Health and Physical Education, Arts, Careers and Technology, and Foreign Languages.

- Vocational and technical education is divided into three levels: upper secondary, post-secondary, and university level. There are eight majors for the vocational study: Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Home Economics, Fisheries, Business and Tourism, Arts and Crafts, Textiles, and Commerce.
- Higher education is for those who complete Matthayom 6 or Grade 12. It consists of two levels: universities and colleges. Their difference is based

on the certificate one receiving after graduation if it is a diploma or a graduate degree.

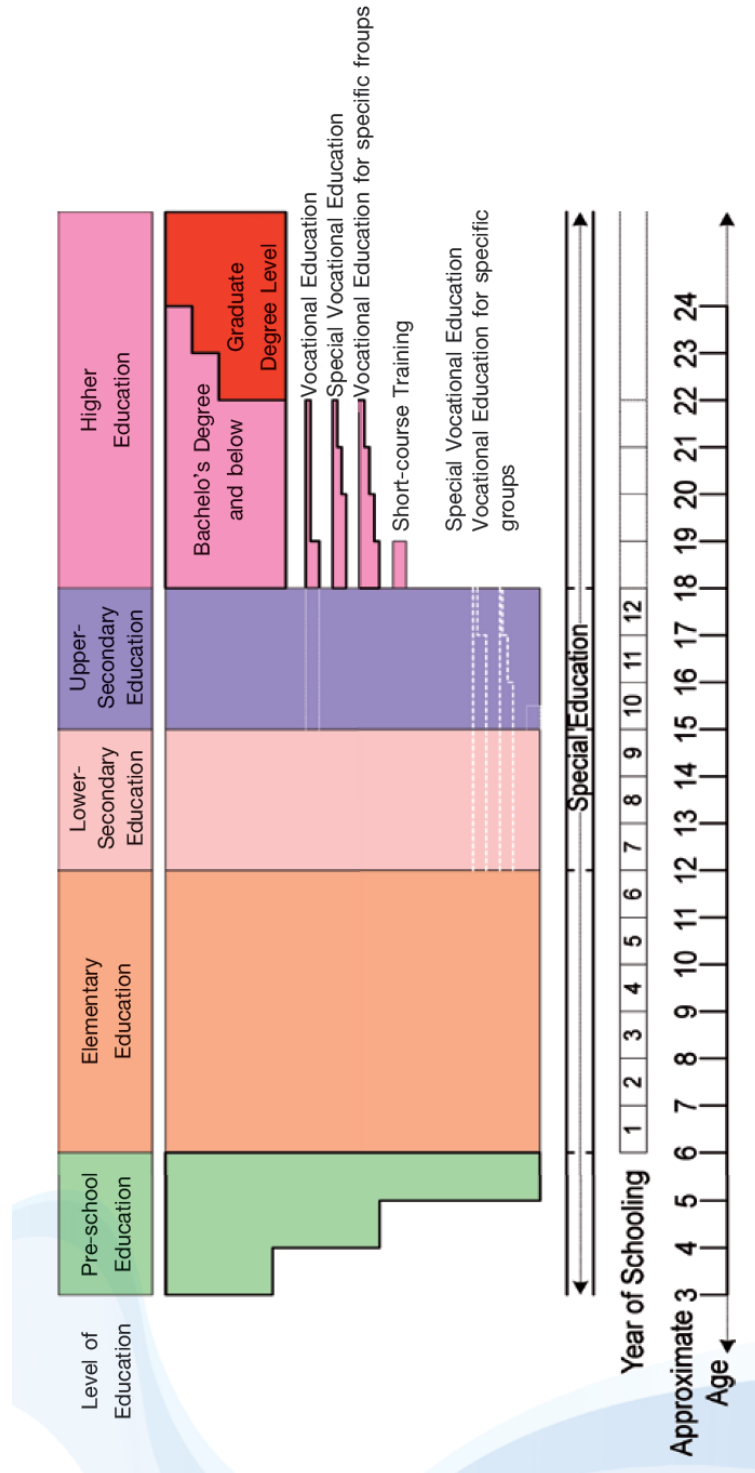


Figure 1.3 Thai Education System (Office of the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education, 2013a, p. 17)

Figure 1.3 illustrates the Thai educational system which is divided into five levels: Pre-school Education, Elementary Education, Lower-Secondary Education, Upper-Secondary Education, and Higher Education (4 or 5 levels depend on how the levels are classified). The age and the year of schooling corresponding to each level are also shown in the figure. The younger children start the early education at the age of three. They have three years to complete the early education. At the age of six, the young students start the elementary education (Grade 1 to Grade 6) with six years of schooling. The students attend the lower-secondary education (Grade 7 to Grade 9) at the age of 12 with three years of schooling and start the upper-secondary education (Grade 10 to Grade 12) at the age of 15 with another three years of schooling. At the age of 18, they start higher education (vocational or bachelor degree levels) with four years of schooling in general. The students might further the postgraduate education after receiving the undergraduate degrees.

1.1.6 English as Part of the Thai National Curriculum

As Thailand is preparing for ASEAN Union in 2015, the tendency of learning English might increase and its status might change. Students have an opportunity to learn English since kindergarten or early year education if they go to the private schools or receive bilingual education. But, for government schools, they will learn English in Prathom 1 or Grade 1 onwards until they complete the basic education. If they continue their higher education, they will study English as a general and compulsory subject during their first year.

Pongtongchareon (as cited in Kachru & Nelson, 2006) points out that English was a part of the core curriculum of the Thai basic education since 1913 until 1977. The students started studying English from Prathom 5 or Grade 5 onwards. But, the latest curriculum (B.E. 2551) indicates that the students will study English from Prathom 1 or Grade 1 onwards until they finish the basic education (see Figure 1.3 and Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Hours of Studying Foreign Language (s)

Hours per year											
Elementary Education						Lower-Secondary Education			Upper-Secondary Education		
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	40	40	80	80	80	120	120	120	240		

Note. (adapted from Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2012)

Table 1.1 shows the number of hours for Thai students to study English as the main foreign language during Basic Education (12 years). From Elementary 1 to 3, students will study English at least 40 hours per year (one hour per week) and 80 hours per year from Elementary 4 to 6. In Lower-Secondary Education, students will spend at least 120 hours per year to study English and at least 240 hours when they are in Upper-Secondary Education. The total hours of studying English are at least 960 for Basic Education.

As mentioned earlier that English will be more vital in Thailand due to the upcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the Thai government realizes the importance of English for Thai people to be competitive in the free market; thus, the current curriculum should be reformed. At the seminar about how to reform the learning and teaching English in Thailand, the previous Minister of Education, Mr. Chaturon Chaisaeng, stated that:

English as a foreign language is important for communication, education, and knowledge; thus, the curriculum should be focused on communication-based practice. Because the current curriculum is still grammar-based, it makes difficult for learners to study and therefore they cannot speak English. (Rohitsatian, 2013)

It is clear that in the near future English will play a crucial role in Thailand because the new generation will learn English, not just for passing the course, but for being competitive against other job seekers from neighbouring countries. Additionally, the status of English might change to a second language, not just a foreign one. In this way, understanding the English use and English attitudes of Thai students are really necessary for policy development and for the improvement of English teaching and learning in Thailand.