CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
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1.0. Thailand and the Thai language

Thailand, (which was known as Siam before 1949) a South-East Asian country is bordered to the north by Burma and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia to the south, Andaman sea and southern extremity of Burma to the west with an area of 198,114 sq.m.\(^1\) Thailand has a population of over 63 million.\(^2\) Ethnically Thai constitutes 75% of the population. The rest includes the other communities like Chinese, Malay, Mons, Khmers, hill tribes and a number of expatriates from developed countries.

Thailand had to pass through many political changes. The first Thai or Siamese state prior to 12\(^{th}\) c is traditionally considered to be the Buddhist kingdom of Sukhothai, founded in 1238. After the decline of the Khmer empire in 13\(^{th}\) – 14\(^{th}\) c, the power of Sukhothai was overshadowed by the kingdom of Ayutthaya, a new kingdom which was established in the mid 14\(^{th}\) c on the bank of Chao Phraya river. In 1767 with the fall of Ayuthaya to the Burmese, the capital of Thailand was moved to Thonburi by king Taksin. In 1782 the current Rattanakosin era of Thai history started with the establishment of Bangkok as the capital city of Chakri dynasty. 19\(^{th}\) century witnessed the Western influences that led to the loss of territory on the eastern and southern regions. Later during 1980’s Thailand moved towards a stable democracy.
The official language of the country is Thai, a Tai-Kadai or Kadai language closely related to Lao. Thai language is principally used in the government and in education. The central Thai variety is considered as the standard variety. According to Campbell (1995: 531) "there are four main dialects, differing mainly in tonal and phonological respects." He also mentions that the central dialect is used as the literary language which is considered as the Bangkok standard. Official or Standard Thai is based on the idealized speech of the educated elite of Bangkok and large portions of the Central plain. Perhaps as many as half of the population of Thailand (total population being 60 million, approximately) speak central/standard Thai at home, school, or business houses. The other varieties of the language are southern Thai, spoken in the southern provinces, the northern Thai called 'Lannathai' spoken in the northern provinces and the Isan Thai spoken in the north-eastern provinces. In addition, there are other varieties also such as Korat Thai, Phu Thai, Song etc. The Sanskrit and Pāli words available in the Thai language owe its origin to Ayuthaya period. Over the centuries Thai has borrowed many words from Chinese, Khmer, Pāli, Sanskrit, and more recently, from the European languages such as French and English. The Thai language is tonal, and the tones serve to distinguish meanings of words otherwise pronounced alike. There are five tones: high, middle, low, rising, and falling. The Thai language has its own alphabet which was adopted in the 13th c. The Thai script is an Abugida script which is alphasyllabary, based on consonants and in which vowel notation is obligatory but secondary. Thai is written from left to right.

The genetic classification of the Thai language has yet not been very clearly established. According to Grierson (1966:59, 65) Thai
belongs to the Indo-Chinese language family forming cognates with Korean and Chinese. Benedict (1942, 1975:1) claims Thai to be a member of the Austronesian languages. Some scholars claim it to be a member of the Tai sub-group of the Sino-Tibetan language family. A number of scholars and linguists consider Kam-Tai and the Austronesian languages as branches of Austro-Tai. This observation has been controversial (Hudak, 1990:29). Hudak also goes into the historical background of Thai and points out a number of historical events and processes through which Thai has developed and got its present form. He points out that the languages of the Tai family include languages spoken in Assam (e.g., Khamti in Assam, a northeastern state in India), northern Burma (Myanmar), all of Thailand including the peninsula, Laos, Northern Vietnam and Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Guizhon (Kweichon) and Guangxi (Kwangsi). According to Crystal (1987:310), Strecker (1987:747-756), Campbell (1995:531) Ostapirat (2005:107-131) and Ratanakul (2007:189-232) the Thai language is a branch of the Tai or Tai-kadai family. The Tai family has been found in many areas of Southeast Asia including the Thai language. Strecker (1987:749) argues that “Tai is the most widespread and best known subgroup of the Kadai or Kam-Tai family.” He observes that Thai or Siamese also belongs to the group of the Tai family. According to him the total number of native speakers of the Tai languages are about 60 or 70 million approximately. The largest number of speakers live in Thailand. Thus, their opinion is the same as that of Hudak (1990: 29).
1.1. Defining Classifiers

Classifiers have been defined in different ways. Crystal (1985:48) defines classifiers as “morphemes whose function is to indicate the formal or semantic class to which items belong. ...The marking of lexical items as belonging to the same semantic class is an important feature of many languages (e.g. Chinese, Vietnamese, Hopi), and sometimes quite unexpected bases of classifications are found, in terms of shape, size, colour, movability, animacy, status and so on.”

In the Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (1996:75) “classifiers refer to something countable in the denotation of the noun. ...In many languages (especially in East Asia), classifier constructions are very common, because a noun cannot be directly connected to a numeral.”

Matthews (1997:55) defines a classifier as “a form which marks a noun of a specific semantic class and which has to accompany e.g. a numeral.”

Classifiers have been viewed by different scholars from different points of view.

In connection with classifiers Lanyon-Orgill (1955:35) states, “As a general rule the appropriate classifier must be used with every concrete noun when limited by a numeral adverb, or a singular demonstrative.” He mentions that classifier is purely a matter of vocabulary and special usage.
Noss (1964:104) mentions, "a classifier is any substantive which occurs with weak stress directly before, and in construction with demonstratives."

Emeneau (1964:647) states "in constructions marked by these (classifiers), when a noun is numerated by means of a numeral or a similar word, the construction contains also one of a smallish class of words or morphemes which we can call by either (classifier or quantifier). The term 'classifier' indicates that there are as many classes of nouns as there are classifiers."

Burling (1970:58) states "in most of the languages of southeast Asia, a number is rarely used without being accompanied by one of the special class of morphemes generally known as numeral classifiers. The choice of classifier depends in a rough way upon what is being counted, but it is difficult to know whether to phrase the rules for choosing a classifier by reference to the noun with which it occurs (a grammatical rule) or by reference to the object to which both noun and classifier refer (a semantic rule)."

According to Bhattacharya (1976:134) "a Classifier may be defined as a word or morpheme used with numerals or with nouns designated countable or measurable objects."

According to Allan (1977:285) "...classifiers are defined on two criteria: (a) they occur as morphemes in surface structures under specifiable conditions; (b) they have meaning, in the sense that a classifier denotes some salient perceived or imputed characteristic of the entity to which an associated noun refers (or may refer)." He
distinguishes classifier languages from non-classifier languages on the basis of classifier constructions, 'although (in classifier languages) classifiers exist which function in other environments like nouns.' He mentions four types of classifier languages as mentioned below:

(a) Numeral classifier languages: where 'a classifier is obligatory in many expressions of quantity'. For example, in Thai,

(1) khru: sã:m khon
    teacher three CL: person
    'three teachers'

Allan observes that classifiers occur in anaphoric or deictic expressions and expressions of quantity in all numeral classifier languages.

(b) Concordial classifier languages: African language like Bantu and some Australian languages attest concordial classifier languages where the classifiers are usually prefixed to nouns, plus their modifiers, predicates and proforms. Allan sites the following example from Bantu.

(2) ba-sika ba-ntu ba-bile
    'ba+have+arrived ba+man ba+two'
    'Two men have arrived.'
    (Here ba- is the plural human classifier)

(c) Predicate classifier languages: Allan (1977:287) mentions Navajo verbs of motion/location consisting of a theme such as 'give' or 'lie' and a stem, which varies according to certain discernible
characteristics of the object or objects conceived as participating in an event whether as actor or goal.” For example, in Navajo:

(3) \textit{beeso si-nil}

money perfect-lie (of collection)

‘Some money (small change) is lying (there).’

(d) \textit{Intra-locative classifier languages:} Allan (1977:287) explains the intra-locative classifiers as “those in which noun classifiers are embedded in some of the locative expressions which obligatorily accompany nouns in most environments. …Toba, a South American language, has a set of locative noun-prefixes for objects ‘coming into view’, ‘going out of view’, ‘out of view’, and ‘in view’.” The first three are non-classificatory; but as Allan says, for objects in view, there are three prefixes which classify the accompanying nouns according to the arrangement and/or shape of their referents, viz. ‘vertical (extended) object in view’, ‘horizontal (extended) object in view’, and ‘saliently three-dimensional object in view’.

There is a universal principal that in numeral classifier languages the only following sequences with the approximate relative frequency as represented below are permissible for the paradigm combination of quantifier, classifier, and noun:

\textit{QCN:} Amerindian language, Bengali, Chinese, Semitic languages, Vietnamese.

\textit{NQC:} Burmese, Japanese, Thai

\textit{CQN:} Kiriwina (Oceanic)

\textit{NCQ:} Louisiade Archipelago (Oceanic)
Lehman (1979:153-180) views noun classifiers in terms of grammatical representation and lexical realizations of referentially indexed variables.

Ahmed (1986:15-16) defines classifiers as "... morphemes which fulfil the specific function of relegating noun to specific semantic classes. Classifiers generally denote cardinality or primacy of a partitive construction, that is the realization of a specific set from an abstract whole." He categorizes classifier languages into four types: Numeral classifier languages, Concordial classifier languages, Predicate classifier languages and Intra-locative classifier languages.

Pacioni (1996:1987-1996) discusses classifiers in the Asian languages from the point of view of definiteness, specificity and related phenomena overlapping each other. The concept of specificity has been considered exhaustively to account for the function of classifiers in various contexts.

Aikhenvald (2000:81-183) studies classifiers of various types like noun classifiers, numeral classifiers, genitive classifiers, verbal classifiers, relational classifier, locative and deictic classifiers across a wide range of languages. The semantic complexity of classifiers has been dealt with much significance. The classifier system has been viewed in the study in the following way: "The term 'classifier systems' is used to denote a continuum of methods of noun categorization. Well known systems, such as the lexical numeral classifiers of Southeast Asia, on the one hand, and the highly grammaticalized gender agreement classes of Indo-European languages, on the other, are the extremes of this
continuum. They can have a similar semantic basis; and one type can develop out of the other.” (pp.3)

Grinevald (2002:259-279) addresses the continuum of grammaticalization perspective of nominal classification system on the basis of Meso American data and data from Australian languages.

Thus, taking cues from the scholars like Lanyon-Orgill (1955), Emeneau (1964), Noss (1964), Burling (1970), Bhattacharya (1976), Allan (1977), Lehman (1979), Crystal (1985), Ahmed (1986), Placzek (1992), Pacioni (1996), Matthews (1997), Aikhenvald (2000), Grinevald (2002) and from Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (1996), a classifier can be defined as a word or morpheme which is used with numerals, nouns and verbs, denoting some perceived or imputed characteristics of the entity to which it is associated. Classifiers can be both generic and specific. Generic classifiers are general in nature. One generic classifier can be used with any or almost any noun replacing other more specific classifiers. Generic classifiers refer to more than one class of individual elements, e.g., /tual/ in Thai refers to different classes of items; similarly, /til/ or /tal/ in Bengali refers to both animate and inanimate entities. On the other hand specific classifiers are restricted in use. They refer to particular objects, e.g., /law/ in Thai refers to a particular class of nouns indicating flute; similarly, /d3on/ in Bengali refers to human beings only.
1.2. Thai Classifiers: A Study in Retrospection

Amongst the various language structures classifiers have been observed to be an important phenomenon in the Thai language. Thai classifiers form a linguistic system of great richness and complexity. It has many vital functions. It exemplifies universal patterns of classifier systems. Above all, it is built on an interesting blend of extralinguistic motivation and arbitrary linguistic convention.

Thai classifiers have been studied by many scholars from different points of view.

Haas (1942:201-206) in a paper discusses the use of Thai numeral classifiers in brief.

While listing classifiers in Thai, Lanyon-Orgill (1955:35) mentions the existence of about a hundred classifiers. Though he states that particular classifiers can be used with variety of idea, no explanation has been attempted for such occurrence.

Placzek (1978:15-146) offers a study of classifiers in standard Thai from the semantic point of view only.

Hundius and Kölver (1983:165-214) study classifiers in Thai from the syntactic and semantic view points. It is claimed that Thai classifiers employ a wide range of distribution in noun phrase construction and has extremely diversified classes.

Tuaycharoen (1984) and Carpenter (1991:94) study Thai numeral classifiers from the psycholinguistic point of view. Carpenter (1991:94) further says that Thai has about 40 classifiers in everyday use, and
another 20 or so that are used relatively infrequently. Anuman Rajadhon Phraya (1971:4, 6) defines classifiers as prefixed words. He touches only the classifiers in course of his discussion on the principles of the Thai language.

Placzek (1992:154) studies classifiers in Thai depending upon two major criteria — perceptual and generic. Ambivalent classifiers have also been discussed by Placzek. He (1992:154) states, "perceptual criteria are primarily visual; in particular, they are based upon shape in the vast majority of cases. Generic criteria, in contrast, are a mixed grouping of factors, some perceptual, some functional or material, which depend upon a notion of 'kind' or 'essence'." The classifiers that apply to generic in some cases and perceptual in some cases have been considered under ambivalent classifiers.

Beckwith (1995:11-26) discusses the Thai classifiers briefly in a paper from the point of view of class noun categorization and its relationship to both classifier categorization and folk taxonomy.

Deepadung (1997:49-55) studies Thai classifiers as "one of the most important areal features characteristic of the South East Asian region, i.e., numeral classifier system." The increasingly widespread usage of the Thai classifier /tual/ has been studied with much emphasis. /tual/ is used with other nouns which share some features with animals such as chairs and trousers because they have legs, but generally the classifier /tual/ is used only with animals.

Other important works on Thai classifiers are Uppakitsillapasarn Phraya (1968:72-76), Cambell (1969:58-67), Sindhvananda (1970:67-93),

Thus, it is evident from the above account that an exhaustive description of classifiers as realised in the Thai language from the view points of morphology, syntax, and semantics together is yet to be attempted and the study is expected to have some practical utility.

1.3. Scope and Objectives of the Research

The present work aims at describing the Thai classifiers exhaustively. Therefore, the present work attempts to deal with the Thai classifier from the point of view of its nature as a morphological structure, semantic structure and its position in the syntactic structure. The usage of the Thai classifiers will also be studied in different contexts.
This may contribute to the acquisition of the classifiers of the Thai language in a better way. The first and the second chapters of the thesis are structurally essential as they prepare a ground for dealing with the study of Thai classifiers in the present work.

Thus, the objective of the present treatise is a detailed description of the classifiers in the Thai language. An efficient use of the classifiers being essential for effective communication, the phenomenon will be dealt with from the point of view of its nature and use. Therefore the present work aims at studying the particular grammatical phenomenon from the following points of view.

i. To study the nature and use of the classifiers in the Thai language.

ii. To explain the structure of the classifiers in the Thai language.

iii. To explain the semantic mechanism employed in the classifiers.

iv. To develop an insight into the nature of the classifiers as a part of communication in general.

1.4. Methodology of the Research

This research work involves the study of classifiers in the Thai language. The study is based on the data collected from the speech of the native speakers of Thai. The study has been carried out in the descriptive model.

In a broad sense, the present study of classifiers includes three important areas of grammar, i.e., Morphology, Syntax and Semantics.
The research proposes a method which can process contextual information in a text by applying some classifier relationships between sentences. We will find the classifier relationships analyzed as contextual constraints which bind sentences together. There are many other semantic phenomena involved in contextual processing of a text utterance which will be analyzed and elaborated during the course of the study.

This work is a qualitative research. The research methodology can be divided into four stages as follows:

i. Data collection.
ii. Constructing the overall outline of the work.
iii. Analyzing the raw data as well as systematizing the collected data.
iv. Formulating conclusion, identifying significant results, and areas for further research.

1.5. Plan of Work

The present work is divided into six chapters.

CHAPTER I consists of a brief introduction to Thailand and the Thai language. It also deals with the definition of classifier, a study in retrospection of Thai classifiers, objectives, methodology and plan of work.

CHAPTER II deals with the nature of classifiers in general. It discusses the types of classifiers and types of classifier languages as well.
CHAPTER III consists of the description of the Thai classifiers with reference to their types.

CHAPTER IV is dedicated to the syntactic and semantic aspects of the Thai classifiers.

CHAPTER V describes the usage of the Thai classifiers.

CHAPTER VI draws the conclusion.

Notes

1. The information has been taken from http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/thailand.htm


3. According to Anuman Rajchadhon Phraya (1968:122) the Thai script is derived from the Khmer script which is again modelled after the Brahmi script. In 1283 A.D. Ramkhamhaeng, the great King of the Thai of Sukhothai dynasty introduced the present Thai alphabet. The oldest known inscriptions in the Thai writing began to appear around 1292 A.D.

4. Benedict proposed that the languages of Southeast Asia should be reclassified. He removes Thai from its traditional association with Chinese and Tibeto-Burman and groups it with Indonesian, Kadai, Mon-Khmer etc. and thus places it within the Austro-Thai group.
References


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