

# The Use of English in Advertising Messages of Thai Traditional Products

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## Abstract

The research analysed the Thai-English grammar used in commercial and service advertising for Thai traditional products in the context of the economic and commercial promotion by the government. The sample group for the data collection came from a purposive sampling method conducted in Bangkok, Chonburi, and Prachuap Khiri Khan, totalling 525 data. Regarding the research based on the specific Thai-styled English grammar (Mallikamas, 2008), The use of English as a Lingua Franca in ASEAN community, and The use of English as a Lingua Franca, it was found that the language deviates in ten aspects of standard-English use as follows: 1) articles, 2) numbers, 3) negatives, 4) copula, 4) relative pronouns, 6) prepositions, 7) verb distribution, 8) subject-verb agreement, 9) collocations, and 10) ellipsis complements. Moreover, there were also some specific grammatical topics found other than the ones mentioned previously. These topics refer to six other deviations apart from the aforementioned standards found: serial verbs, verbless clause, adjectives, conjunctions, voice, and continual sentences. This language phenomenon may be assumed to occur as a result of interference between Thai and the target language, as both possess many differences from each other.

**Keywords:** English as a Lingua Franca, Thai-English, Interlanguage, Non-Standard English, English Language Studies

## Introduction

English for communication has been accepted and is widely used nowadays. This includes the language used for commercial business, entertainment, education and the presentation of information in many forms, resulting in the variety of language uses (Crystal, 2012: 121).

However, non-native users of English may be limited in their ability to communicate on some levels because they are more fluent in their first language. This is likely true for Thais. In this situation, it can be said that the target language may be observed to be influenced by mother-tongue interference to some extent. (Mallikamas, 2008: 142).

In the current situation where English takes on the major role in education and commerce in today's Thai society, communicating in English is unavoidable (Pitsuwan, 2012, p:150 153). Due to the fact that most people are not native English speakers, the variety of English has expanded because English as a lingua franca (ELF) is used for communication with the other local language groups (Crystal, 2012: 121). Kirkpatrick (2010: 111) explained that the use of ELF is a phenomenon that might cause some differences from standard English, for example,

disappearance of numbers, inappropriate use of tenses, or lack of correct grammar. Thus, the users can variously improvise when using the language for communication in ways that are similar to their first language. This phenomenon is called non-standard form (Trudgill, 1999:98).

The use of Thai-English can, therefore, be considered as the use of non-standard English by Thai speakers, which often contains interesting and unique grammar as well as vocabulary (Trakulkasemsuk, 2012: 102-103). Based on this notion, the topic of this research concerns an analysis in order to identify which phenomena exist in the use of Thai-English. Additionally, a benefit of this study is the ability to help understand more about Thai-English in terms of how it is used and how it appears in communication from various perspectives. Moreover, the findings of this research could be used in teaching and the learning process in order to improve students' capability and use of English.

## **Objectives**

The objective of the research is to analyse the Thai-English grammar used in the advertising messages of the commercial and service business related to Thai traditional products.

In fact, the research does not consider the target language by evaluating the errors or mistakes. The information is retrieved from a business rather than a school. In doing so, the study aims to show the common use of linguistic forms of the target language. Thus, finding mistakes is not the main purpose of this study. The research will present the language phenomena in the way they appear and describe them straightforwardly. Schneider (2011: 2) states that, in many countries, English can be entirely different in various aspects depending on how and where it is adopted. He also points out that there are 3 features likely to be different in use: pronunciation, vocabulary and sentence structure. For this research, entrepreneurs choose English as a tool for communication with their customers, many of whom have different mother tongues. Using English in this case is called "lingua franca". Sometimes, users may develop English in their own ways. Hence, it is possible to have some forms and characteristics deviated from the standard form (Schneider, 2011: 2). These specific properties are also found in Thai-English, which are discussed in the findings.

## **Research Methodology**

This is a mixed method research, combining collection of data by recording the primary data obtained from the survey with the sample group and the secondary data from the previously recorded data. In consequence, the author received the quantitative data, which was descriptively analysed and presented in the qualitative research. The research areas are Bangkok, Chonburi, and Prachuap Khiri Khan. Using purposive sampling, considered from the top three provinces in the central region that tourists access the most, the data from the National Statistics Office of Thailand, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (2016) and the Tourism Statistics of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2015).

Populations in the research were divided into two groups. Group 1 is registered entrepreneurs or members of the One Tambon, One Product (OTOP) project, consisting of 849 persons from Bangkok, 351 persons from Chonburi, and 239 persons from Prachuap Khiri Khan. Group 2 is local entrepreneurs who are not members of OTOP, the exact number of which could not be determined due to the fact that it is independent without being subject to any organisation. The samples in this research consisted of the data of products and services collected from product and service advertising found in the populations of groups 1 and 2, totalling 525 data which are distributed to 6,792 sentences.

This descriptive research on the use of English in advertising messages of Thai traditional products was conducted in order to explain the phenomena of Thai-English grammar found in

products and service advertisements by using the criteria of Thai-styled English grammar (Mallikamas, 2008), The use of English as a Lingua Franca in ASEAN community (Kirkpatrick, 2010) and The use of English as a Lingua Franca (Cogo and Dewey, 2006; Jenkins, 2006), for the analyze.

The 4 criteria used in this research are mainly used to determine the characteristics of English that exist among non-native English users, particularly those that frequently appear in various forms and features. First is the criterion on varieties of English. In terms of non-standard English, Jenkins (2006) claims that they can be classified into 4 topics under the criteria of ELF, which include a part of World Englishes, non-system language, transferring concept to target language without certain aspects, and code switching / code mixing by bilingual resources. Second is English as a Lingua Franca in ASEAN community by Kirkpatrick (2010) identifies 10 specific phenomena of English characteristics that occur in the use of English as a mediator language, which are usually found in the features of determiners, plurals, negatives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, contraction of negation, and copula. The third criterion is from the framework of Cogo and Dewey (2006), who stated that English used by non-native users regularly happens in 10 natures when they choose English to communicate in each situation. The specific features include non-inflection of the third person, the use of articles, the use of tag questions, relative pronouns, conjunctions, verb forms, collocations, additional words, compliments and numbers. The forth criteria is from Mallikamas (2008), who pointed out 2 different points between Thai and English that always seems to be a problem when Thais communicate in English as a target language. One is the concept of using English. For example, the two languages have different ways of classifying nouns and differences concerning article use. The other is the difference in grammatical categories between the languages, such as the use of affix with verbs or the use of inflection to identify tenses. All criteria mentioned above are considered the phenomena that have some particular points quite similar to each other. In order to create the criteria for this research, the author merges thoughts and theory together. Ultimately, the solutions are grouped into 11 features for use in analysing the data. These features consist of 1) the use of articles, 2) the use of numbers, 3) the use of negatives, 4) the use of copula, 5) the use of phrases as questions at the end of a sentence, 6) the use of relative pronouns, 7) the use of prepositions, 8) the use of verb distribution, 9) the use of subject-verb agreement, 10) the use of collocations, and 11) ellipsis complements.

**Table 1** Criteria on ELF

<b>English as a Lingua Franca criteria by Cogo and Dewey (2006)</b>	<b>English as a Lingua Franca criteria by Kirkpatrick (2010)</b>	<b>Criteria on ELF used in this research</b>
1. verb inflection	1. verb distribution	1. articles
2. articles	2. subject-verb agreement	2. numbers
3. tag question	3. negation	3. negatives
4. relative pronoun	4. copula	4. copula
5. conjunction	5. articles	5. tag question
6. verb distribution	6. numbers	6. relative pronoun
7. collocation	7. affix	7. preposition
8. word adding	8. tense	8. verb distribution
9. ellipsis complement	9. preposition	9. subject-verb agreement
10. numbers		10. collocation
		11. ellipsis complement

Table 1 shows the classification of the criteria which are English as a Lingua Franca and non-

standard English and English as a Lingua Franca in ASEAN community as well. All criteria mentioned above by previous researchers are considered the phenomena. Then, in order to create the criteria for this research, the author merges the thoughts and theories. Finally, the solutions are grouped into 11 features to use for analyzing the data. They consist of 1) the use of articles, 2) the use of numbers, 3) the use of negatives, 4) the use of copulas, 5) the use of tag question, 6) the use of relative pronouns, 7) the use of prepositions, 8) the use of verb distribution, 9) the use of subject-verb agreement, 10) the use of collocations, and 11) ellipsis complements.

## Results

According to the criteria specified in literature review and works relating to English as a Lingua Franca and the use of Thai-English that are different from standard English, the results consist of 10 grammatical categories, which are: 1) articles, 2) numbers, 3) negatives, 4) copula, 5) relative pronouns, 6) prepositions, 7) verb distribution, 8) subject-verb agreement, 9) collocations, and 10) ellipsis complements. However, one of the significant grammatical topics, tag question, does not occur in this result as the data are collected from written messages. There are not the spoken messages functions. Moreover, from the results, six other deviations apart from the aforementioned standards were also found: serial verbs, verbless clause, adjectives, conjunction, voice, and continual sentences out of the given criteria.

These findings can be clarified in terms of Thai-English use as follows:

1. Articles are divided into three types, which are indefinite articles, definite articles and no articles. Indefinite article is the unit standing before the noun to indicate things or quantity. These articles are “a”, and “an” which can appear in four types with unspecified countable nouns, unspecified uncountable noun, first mentioned singular or plural noun, and second mention of the specified countable noun. Definite article is “the”, which stands before specified, purposive, or indefinite nouns. It can be used in 4 ways with plural and countable nouns, plural and uncountable nouns, plural and singular nouns, and a singular noun in a plural context. Also, it can be appeared before the first or the second mentioned nouns or disappear as well. For example,
2. Numbers, they indicate the quantity of nouns. They show a quantity of one or more than one. Regarding the scope of Thai-English, there are three types found, which are plural, non-plural, and double plural or duplication. For example, the clause “For excellent mouth, gum, teeth, and root.” does not show the plural suffix “-s” after the plural noun “gum” Another example of using numbers is duplication, as in “The childrens are not allowed to use.” There are more plural in the noun.
3. Negatives are to add denial words such as “no”, “not”, “non” or “never” that always appear with a verb or nouns. Regarding the scope of Thai-English, there are two types found, those used for denial and those used for commands. For example, “Not pet” means “Pets are not allowed”. Or it is occur in the clause “not never toxic inside”. There are double negatives with “not” and “never” in the same clause.
4. Copula will connect the sentence that expresses the condition, feeling or qualification of the subject without using an object, for example, “be”, “feel”, “like”, or “have”. For example, “I am really good today,” or “She feels so ill.” However, in the concept of Thai-English, there are two types found, the existence of a verb that does not relate to the context and the inexistence of a copula as well. For instance, “Pineapple very fresh.”, doesn’t have a copula “is” in the sentence. Another example is in “Pattaya about 80 kilometers.” Copula, “is”, does not found in the sentence.
5. Relative pronouns are the pronouns that are used to replace the noun mentioned previously or used as the connection between the sentence and the subordinate clause. For the

subordinate clause, it will expatriate the main subject. Regarding the scope of Thai-English, there are two types found, relative pronouns used to connect sentences, and the non-existence of relative pronouns. For example, the sentence “We have to promote the mission of women are unemployed.” does not show a relative pronoun “who” between main clause “We have to promote the mission of women” and subordinate clause “are unemployed”. Another example is in “Pattern is more traditional rope takes an hour each time.” Relative pronoun “which” is not found in the clause.

6. Prepositions are used to indicate a place, location, level, direction, symptom, or action in order to present the relationship between the object and the other words in the sentence. There are two types of prepositions in Thai-English, which are simple prepositions, and compound prepositions. For example, the sentence “We provide you lunch box in the boat.” uses preposition “in” instead of “on” as it is similar to Thai.

7. Verb distribution is the conjugation of the verb in order to indicate the time duration in compliance with the standard English grammar rules. Tense is the form used to indicate the time of the mentioned situation. The use of Thai-English contains 2 main verb types, which are non-related tense, and non-tense distribution or base form. for example, “This lotion used for dry skin.” uses past tense “used” to describe the fact or general situation. Another example is in the sentence “Night cream been develop for many times.” where present perfect form is incomplete.

8. Subject-verb agreement means that the main verb of the sentence must be changed in order to represent the grammar characteristics that refer to the relation between the subject and the verb. The use of Thai-English contains the verbs that remain unchanged. For example, “Essence of turmeric leave skin balanced, soft, smooth and refreched.” singular subject “Essence of turmeric” goes with infinitive “leave” in base form. Or in the sentence “Two kinds of fresh herb mixes in the natural moisturiser.” that plural subject occur with an inflected form of singular verb.

9. Collocations are the use of words that always appear together, in which the structure must definitely refer to a specific meaning. The native speakers of the language have a strong potential to use this type of word pairing because it includes finished phases that contain specific meanings rather than direct meanings. For example, when the native speaker uses the adjective “strong” with the noun “language”, it means the use of intense words, but “strong language” does not have the same meaning as “rude language” or other similar phrases. In Thai-English, there are some misuse of collocations as the users may not realize certain meaning of them. For example, “strong rain” uses adjective “strong” instead of “heavy.”

10. Ellipsis complements are when the sentence is deprived of a complement, and thus it cannot communicate a complete meaning and may be dependent on the other elements within the context. For example, “The fisherman sails to get fish. They still want.” does not have an object follow transitive verb “want”. Or in the phrase “The idea how to make Batik.”, the word “Batik” is used with verb “make” instead of “do”.

Apart from the uniqueness of Thai-English in accordance with the 10 principles of English used as a lingua franca that are different from standard English as mentioned, there are some additional important unique phenomena that should be exemplified in this study. These other six principles are serial verbs, verbless clause, adjectives, conjunctions, voice, and continual sentences, with details as follows:

a) Serial verbs in Thai-English refer to the appearance of two or more verbs without any connecting words that demonstrate their relationship to the context. An object might also be used or unused. For example, “Use apply lotion over your body.” uses serial verb “use apply” as main verb in the sentence. Another example is in “Parties will make use bamboo or natural stone.” Three verbs display in the same sentence.

b) Verbless refer to a sentence that is composed of a subject and predicate but no main verb is

found. For example, “Lunch for you on the trip to the island” does not appear main verb “will be prepared” in the sentence. Or another example in “The special ingredients to your health.” shows that there is no verb in the sentence.

c) Adjectives are string of two or more words used in Thai-English. They can be found from one to six words as the highest, without the ordering by the type of adjectives or without connection. For example, “They will make you happy, blessed, white lovely room.” does not use adjective in correct order. Another example is in the sentence “Private apartment with wifi, big, wide, and comfortable rooms provide for you.” that shows the freely use of adjective not to be in order.

d) Conjunctions of the sentence structure will function as the connector or subordinate clause. They may or may not appear in the sentence. Nevertheless, sometimes the context can be understood by inferring from the whole sentence. For example, “Chonburi is about 100 km. to Bangkok Pattaya about 120 km.” does not have a conjunction between 2 clauses.

e) Voice, in Thai-English, is found in two forms. They can be formed of auxiliary followed by past participle of the main verb to state the role of subject as an object of the sentence. Another is formed of main verb in the structure that demonstrates the role of the subject to perform the verb itself. For example, “This lotion mix with many kinds of herbs.” uses infinitive “mix” instead of passive voice form “be + mixed”. In this case subject does not a human. It cannot manage things by itself but can be communicate in Thai-styled English. Another example is found in the sentence “The bungalow locate in the central of Pattaya.” The subject is not being, however, it can project itself to do things as human do.

f) Continual sentences are the sentences that are found in Thai-English. These are two or more sentences put continuingly in order. One sentence may have the main idea, or it can be transformed into a subordinate clause without any punctuation marks or conjunction indicating a connection or an ending. For example, “Baan Yang Ngam Moo 3 Tambon Sattahip home beauty is one of the nine villages of Tambon Sattahip a beautiful village named Yang Ngam said the village has a number of trees that are about 200 years old with long big trunk stood in the middle of the village.” is too long sentence. It can be separated into sentences.

## Discussion and Conclusion

It can be stated that Thai-English used in this research deviates from standard English in significant ways. It displays different uses with various features and situations; for example, sometimes found verbless constructions in sentence structure. Otherwise, it may have some double plurals after nouns and so on. As mentioned earlier, the deviations of these findings do not explain the incorrect application of grammar. However, it clarifies how it commonly appears in sentences. From the literature review, there are 11 criteria of non-standard English in ELF use frequently found, which have been merged from the framework conducted by Kirkpatrick (2010), Cogo and Dewey (2006), Jenkins (2006), and Mallikamas (2008), in which it was found 10 aspects off 11 of all non-standard English uses which occur in the area of articles, numbers, negatives, copula, relative pronouns, prepositions, verb distribution, subject-verb agreement, collocation and ellipsis complements. Only the question tag topic does not found in the data. This is because, the data was collected on only written text and not spoken language. Besides, out of the criteria, there are six other specific points of Thai-English uses that particularly standout in the data, namely: serial verbs, verbless clause, adjectives order, conjunctions, voice and continual sentences. These remarkable six items are very similar to some of the characteristics of Thai grammar. For instance, Thai sentence structure allows more than one verb to be placed in order in the predicate part to clearly communicate how the subject performs. Certainly, the same thing is found using serial verbs in the target language like “You can use apply this lotion on your body. Or in verbless

situations in which there is no main verb in the predicate; “The beach beautiful in sunset.” The word “beautiful” in this example performs as a verb in Thai language. So, the user does not need to put another verb in the sentence. From the mentioned example, it is clear that almost all of them have some interference from their mother tongue. The use of target language reveals significant characteristics close the characteristics of their native language also. As Jenkins (2006) mentioned, English as a lingua franca is used to communicate in various situations. The users use it freely and create the language by mixing some Thai language rules in their outcomes. This can be stated that there are some significant interferences occurring between Thai and English in written Thai-English language.

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