

INTRODUCTION

Every language has its own rules for the identification of participants in a discourse. This paper is an attempt to show what some of these rules are as evidenced in a selection of Thai folk stories. The scope of the analysis covers participant categories, identification of participants and how participants contribute to cohesion in the discourse structure. The following section provides some general information about the Thai language.

1.1. Language Background

The Thai language is a monosyllabic tonal language and employs SVO word order. Thai is the national language of Thailand and has 4 main dialects: Northern, Southern, Northeastern and Central (Bangkok) dialects. The Bangkok dialect is also known as Standard Thai and is understood throughout Thailand. It is considered to be the standard dialect as it is used in education, mass media and government affairs. Thai is a member of the Tai family of languages. The Tai family of languages is spoken over a fairly large area in Southeastern Asia and China. Li (1979:1) divides Tai languages into 3 subgroups: The Southern group (Siamese, Shan, Lao etc.), the Central group (Tho, Nung, Lungchow, etc.) and the Northern group (Chung-China, Chuang, etc.). The Thai language is considered to be part of the Southern subgroup.

1.1.1. Phonological Features of Thai

1.1.1.1. Phonemes

Standard Thai has 21 consonant phonemes:

/p, ph, b, t, th, d, c, ch, k, kh, ʔ, m, n, ŋ, f, s, h, w, l, r, y/

12 consonant clusters are possible:

/pl, pr, tr, kl, kr, kw, phr, thw, kh1, khr, khw/

There are 18 single vowels and 3 diphthongs:

/i, i:, e, e:, ə, ə:, a, a:, u, u:, ɔ, ɔ:, ə, ə:, o, o:, ia, ua, ua/

1.1.1.2. Supra-segmental phonemes

Standard Thai has 5 tones:

Mid Tone	no mark
Low Tone	1
Falling Tone	2
High Tone	3
Rising Tone	4

1.2. Background for Collecting Data

This study is based on 6 folk stories, all narratives, selected from a book of Thai folktales entitled **นิทานไทย (nitha:n-thay)** and written by ศาสตราจารย์ (สว⁴ p^hla:ykw:y³) The folk stories used in this study include:

1. ท้าวภูเขา (Male and Female Mountain)
2. ท้าวหมาขี้เฒ่า (King Doglike)
3. นางอรพิม (Orapim)
4. นางหอม (Miss Sweet Smelling Hair)
5. เจ้ากิ้งกัก (The Ship Owner)
6. ท้าวคูลูและนางอู๋ (King Kulu and Miss Oua)

The phonemicisation and translation (word by word and free translation) of the texts are by the author of this paper.

1.3. Participant Analysis

1.3.1. Participant Categories

Participants are important for narrative discourse since a narrative deals with a series of events in a chronological order and participants are involved in these events. Participants in Thai folk stories may be grouped into 5 main categories: introductory, main, secondary, incidental and supernatural. The distinction between these categories involves a variety of grammatical features used

- (a) at the initial identification of the participant,
- (b) in maintaining the participant's identity throughout the discourse, and
- (c) in removing the participant from the discourse.

Moreover, the participant category distinctions are also based on the degree of importance of a participant to the main eventline of the story.

1.3.2. Types of Participants

In the six stories analyzed in this paper not all contains the five categories of participants which will be discussed. The three participants essential to the story are introductory, main and secondary. The other two categories, incidental and supernatural, are often not in the story.

1.3.2.1. Introductory Participant

The introductory participant acts as an introducer of the main participant or in some way provides a connection to another participant. He may be on stage for a short time and then disappear completely from the narrative or he may appear on stage at the beginning of the story and return to the stage at the end of the story. The introductory participant in Thai folk stories is often the father or mother of the hero of the story, as in the story, 'Orapim'.

กักรพรมกักร (King Promthat) is the father of the hero **กักรพจิตตา** (King Pajitta), and has no significant role other than to introduce secondary participant. He was introduced in the first episode of the narrative and participates in only three episodes before disappearing from the narrative. He returns to the stage at the end of the narrative though only in a recipient role.

1.3.2.2. Main Participant

A characteristic of the main participant is that he generally acts throughout the story. The main participant may leave the scene for a short time and is usually the hero or conqueror. Occasionally, the main character in the first part of the story may turn out to be a victim or die in the second part. However, according to the texts analyzed, the main participant is born with special characteristics such as being very handsome, or having magical powers.

The main participant role may be filled by more than one person and in such cases may perhaps be lovers.

For example, in the story of **กักรกูลและนางอัว** (King Kulu and Miss Oua), there are two main participants. The first is **นางอัว** (Miss Oua) introduced in the first paragraph. The other, King Kulu is introduced in the following

paragraph. They have been engaged since they were young and are mentioned throughout the story. Though they may leave the scene for a short time, they soon return again. Even at the end of the story, they still remain on stage.

1.3.2.3. Secondary Participant

According to Jurgen H. Ennulat (1971),

Secondary participants play a minor part in events. Their parts may range from being on the scene for a whole story in a subsidiary role to play a role for a short passage only. A secondary participant may engage in any type of action appropriate to the character of the main participant. Sometimes a single secondary participant even grows in importance up to the stature of a second hero in the story, such as becoming conqueror of the main participant or being continually a most difficult counterfoil to main character. (Ennulat 1971:143)

For example, King Pajitta was first introduced in Episode 1. Initially, he appears to be the main participant. However, his role in the story is not as significant as that of the main participant, Miss Oraphim. Miss Oraphim fulfilled the role of the main participant throughout the story.

1.3.2.4. Incidental Participant

The incidental participant has the least important role in the story. This participant may appear on the scene for a short time and is then removed. His role is usually to make the story more vivid and interesting. Occasionally, however, he may be reintroduced in order to make the story complete. For example, Khun Lang in the story of 'King Khulu and Miss Oua' is classified as an incidental participant because he takes the least important role in the story. He appears on the stage only for a short time in the middle of the discourse and is then removed. He returns to the stage

at the end of the story. Khun Lang makes the story more interesting because he is the one who brings the two lovers together.

1.3.2.5. Supernatural Participant

The supernatural participants are participants who cannot be touched or seen by ordinary people and usually include deities and angels. However, it has been found that this category also includes hermits because they often mysteriously appear and disappear in the story.

1.3.3. Human versus Non-Human Participants

The above five categories of participants can also be subdivided according to whether they appear as humans or non-humans. A human participant differs from the non-human participant in that they have the physical form of a human being.

A non-human participant usually includes animals and things. Animals can be any animal which can act as a human being. For example, the mongoose in the story of Miss Oraphim is classified as a non-human participant.