

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Thesis Background

During the past twenty to twenty-five years dissatisfaction with the seeming inability of conventional sentence-based grammars to fully account for the varied properties of human language has motivated an increasing number of linguists to call for the study of text-level grammar: discourse analysis. Individuals in the vanguard of this movement have included Teun A. van Dijk, Robert E. Longacre, Joseph E. Grimes, Kathleen Callow, and M.A.K. Halliday, to name a few.

The basic premise is this: all communicative acts occur in a certain context. The individuals involved desire to "get a point across" to each other, a process which will generally be carried out in the most efficient way possible (within the bounds of intelligibility).

For example, consider conversational Thai. When two Thais meet, one will inevitably say *paj naj*⁴ -- literally 'go where?'¹ The other will probably say *paj th^hiaw*² 'travel for fun,' *paj th^hu^hra*³ 'go do business,' or the like. It is not necessary for the first person to explicitly say *k^hun ca¹ paj naj*⁴ 'you will go where?' or the second to say *chan*⁴ *ca¹ paj th^hu^hra*³ 'I will go do business,' because there is no question of whom the subject of the question/answer is.

¹All Thai examples are in phonemic transcription.

Research into text grammar has revealed that there are several distinct discourse genres in every language. These include narrative (storytelling), procedural (giving directions), expository (giving an explanation), and hortatory (giving exhortations to change people's behavior). The rules governing text formation are sometimes vastly different from one genre to another.

During the past 5-10 years a number of Thai linguists have begun to examine the discourse structures of Thai. Most of these works have concentrated on the narrative genre, a generalization which is true of discourse studies world-wide. Notable exceptions have been found among a handful of theses written by graduate students at Mahidol University.

Thai hortatory discourse in particular deserves more attention. This type of communication is all about convincing people to do (or not to do) something. It is that genre of discourse which most overtly models the structures of logic upon which entire cultures are based. Hortatory discourse can take the form of political speeches, sermons, parental advice, and even advertisements.

No figure on the contemporary Thai hortatory scene stands out more than Phra Phayom Kalayano (พระพยอม กัลยาโณ).² Possessing only a fourth-grade education, this monk has risen to become a highly popular public speaker, attracting the attention of both the "upper crust" of society and the urban/rural poor. He is unique among Thai Buddhist clergy in that he was

²Hereafter referred to as Phra Phayom, following the Thai identification convention of title + first name. First name usage in Thai carries none of the connotations of informality or intimacy present in modern English. The English spelling used here is that used in literature published by Phra Phayom.

among the first monks to preach in Thai (rather than the sacred language of Pali)--and an easily understood and yet very entertaining type of Thai at that. Phra Phayom preaches hundreds of sermons each year, many of these being recorded on cassette tapes that can be found on sale in open-air markets and sophisticated shopping malls all across the country.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to examine Phra Phayom's discourse style. How does he package his message? What sort of linguistic devices have been employed in engineering his public speaking successes? What can be learned from his sermons about his audience's logical processes? A twelve-year-old novice at a temple in Trang Province once told me, "Some monks preach well, but Phra Phayom preaches better." Why is this?

1.1 Survey of Relevant Literature

This thesis draws primary inspiration from the theoretical insight of Teun A. van Dijk and the practical application of Robert E. Longacre. Thus, in the section to follow, we will first discuss some of these two men's ideas and works as they are relevant to the study at hand. We will then turn to several works on Thai discourse. Finally, mention will be made of the relatively small corpus of papers dealing specifically with hortatory discourse.

1.1.1 Van Dijk and Longacre

Van Dijk was among the first to turn a great deal of theoretical attention to what he called "text grammar." His *Some Aspects of Text Grammars: a Study in Theoretical Linguistics and Poetics* (1972) represents perhaps the

most substantial early theoretical discussion of discourse as a distinct field within linguistic (as opposed to merely literary) science. Indeed, a large portion of the book is dedicated to simply arguing the case for text grammar.

Van Dijk states:

...a text grammar is required to describe the global, over-all structure of a text, which will be called its 'macro-structure.' Without such a hypothetical construct it is not possible to account for numerous properties of language and language use (1972:v).

In *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* (1977) van Dijk expands his 1972 volume, giving special attention to concepts such as connection, cohesion, topic of discourse, and the relationship between semantics and pragmatics. The concepts of text development and coherence--fundamental tenets of text linguistics--are discussed, with van Dijk stating:

...changes [in a text] must somehow be HOMOGENOUS. That is, they must be operated [*sic*] within the bounds of some higher level principle determining the POSSIBLE individuals and properties of some universe of discourse...[relative to] properties or relations which are already GIVEN (1977:94).

It is also in this work that van Dijk discusses text "macrostructures"--the abstract structures behind the surface phenomena of any text. Macrostructures are "a more GLOBAL LEVEL of semantic description; they define the meaning of parts of a discourse and of the whole discourse on the basis of the meanings of the individual sentences" (van Dijk 1977:6). The macrostructures govern text production though they themselves may not appear in the text *per se*. To actually visualize a text's macrostructure, van

Dijk proposes "macrorules" by which a text may be compressed into its most basic form.³

While the bulk of van Dijk's efforts have been in realms theoretical and Indo-European, a great deal of Robert Longacre's work has centered in practical study of the discourse features of non-Western tongues from a tagmemic perspective. One of Longacre's earliest discourse-related publications, his *Discourse, Paragraph, and Sentence Structure in Selected Philippine Languages* (1968), was an outgrowth of two field workshops conducted during the early 1960s. Subsequent minority-language projects have taken Longacre around the globe, experiences which resulted in his 1983 magnum opus *The Grammar of Discourse*.

Central to much of Longacre's thinking is the idea that any given text contains a storyline ("mainline") as well as one or more non-story line(s) ("subsidiary development"). Different languages may employ radically different devices to mark storyline, but all have some means of doing so.

It thus becomes possible to construct a hierarchy of storyline markings.

Says Longacre:

...within local spans of text an intersentential analysis can be carried out so that the sentences whose main verb(s)/clause(s) are of highest rank are structurally dominant in the local span and those of lower rank are structurally ancillary (1989a:415).

Of course, when a native speaker of any given language is in the process of creating a text--i.e., trying to communicate with someone--he or

³These are the macrorules of generalization, deletion, integration, and construction. Here van Dijk also makes a plea to consider the potential contributions of psychology to linguistics as related to the way in which speaker and listener's minds deal with macrostructure formation and decoding.

she does not actively think of verb rankings and the like. Rather, this ranking is carried out unconsciously, intuitively--the result of macrostructure/macrorule interaction in the human mind.

1.1.2 Thai Discourse Studies

During the 1970s several non-Thai linguists began, however obliquely, to approach Thai from a discourse perspective. In his article "A Thai Discourse Pattern" (1975) Howard Hatton tried to come to terms with the problem of focus within a single paragraph of Thai narrative--how a single, focused sentence can be supported by and draw meaning from surrounding non-focused sentences. The following year, Robert B. Jones and Anthony Diller's *Discourse Analysis of Thai and Japanese* attempted to analyze Thai speech in various social situations, with emphasis on the ways in which old and new information are linked in a cohesive manner.

The 1980s saw several doctoral dissertations on Thai discourse being written by Thais studying in overseas universities. Supa Chodchoey's *Strategies in Thai Oral Discourse* (1986) experimented with Thai narrative discourse, asking twenty native speakers to recount in story form the events of Chafe's *Pear Film*.⁴ Responses were recorded and analyzed in an effort to see "how oral discourse in Thai is organized into units and how these units are demarcated" (1985:iii). Attention was also focused on usage of the multifaceted particle *ko:*² as a marker of salience, as well as the Thai tendency towards ellipsis.

⁴A dialogue-less film produced by Wallace Chafe, Department of Linguistics, University of California at Berkeley, the *Pear Film* has been used to study discourse formation in a number of languages.

Supanee Tiancharoen's *A Comparative Study of Spoken and Written Thai: Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspectives* endeavored to "identify the sociolinguistic variables that contribute to and influence the features differentiating spoken from written texts" (1987:iii) as seen in conversation, academic lectures, television/radio broadcasts, personal letters, academic texts, and magazine articles. In the process, she provides insight into Thai nominalization, question forms, imperatives, rhetorical questions, and repetition. A statistical approach was utilized, comparing average occurrences of certain phenomena in the various types of texts examined.

On a track more directly related to Longacre and van Dijk, Somsongee Burusphat's dissertation-turned-book *The Structure of Thai Narrative* (1991) analyzed several Thai folk tales. In so doing, she applies van Dijk's macrorules to a narrative Thai text in an effort to discover the passage's macrostructure. Participant rank, verb categories, paragraph types, and the Thai cultural context are also discussed. Now assistant professor in the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development of Bangkok's Mahidol University, Burusphat has guided several masters theses on other aspects of Thai discourse.⁵

1.1.3 Studies of Hortatory Discourse

The overwhelming focus of discourse studies to date has centered upon the narrative genre. Research on the expository, procedural, and hortatory genre has lagged somewhat behind. In fact, a recent computer-

⁵These include Nantawan Mongpin's *Cohesion in Thai Conversation* (1989), Dissaya Suppharatyothin's *A Study of Thai Hortatory Discourse* (1989), and Payung Puttapong's *A Study of Thai Procedural Discourse* (1990).

assisted bibliography search conducted at the International Linguistics Center (Dallas, Texas) of the Summer Institute of Linguistics revealed barely a dozen hortatory-related research papers. Most of these were found in two issues of a single journal: *Studies in Philippine Linguistics*.

The 1977 issue contained an article by Robert Brichoux and Austin Hale entitled "Some Characteristics of Hortatory Strategy in Subanun." Approaching the situation from a tagmemic/Longacre point of view, Brichoux and Hale assert that hortatory discourses are composed of a series of hortatory points which, in turn, are composed of a hortatory motivation, a projected conflict, and a command element as shown in figure 1:

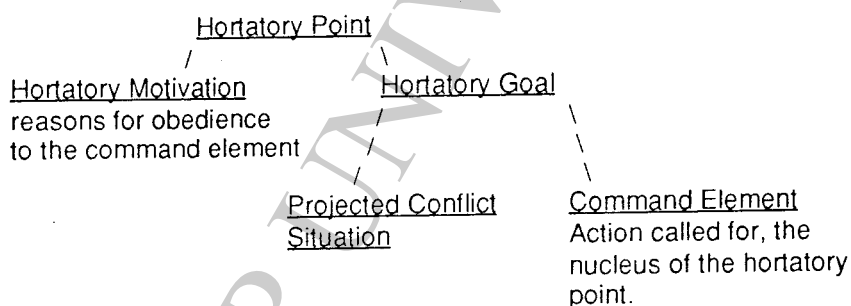


Figure 1. Composition of a Hortatory Point (Brichoux and Hale 1977:76).

Brichoux and Hale also advance the claim shared by Longacre (1989a: 415) that these command elements make up the backbone or mainline of a hortatory discourse, a line of thought given additional support in Brichoux's sequel "Hortatory Strategy in Subanun II" (1984).

Other papers in the *Studies in Philippine Linguistics* (1984) contain valuable insight into mitigation--the softening of commands by substitution of weaker hortatory forms. Among these are Hope Hurlbut's "Do as I Say: A

Study of Selected Features of Hortatory Discourse in Eastern Kadazan," Steve Doty's "Mitigation in a Tiruray Sermon," and Ross Errington's "Hortatory Mitigation: the Case of the Camouflaged Backbone."

Ivan Lowe's "Information Distribution in Hortatory Discourse" (1986) examines the way in which exhortation information (commands), motivational information (why the listener should obey the commands), and credential information (the authority from which the speaker speaks) are interwoven in hortatory texts. Following Brichoux and Hale (1977), Lowe asserts that a hortatory discourse:

...is made up of hortatory paragraphs, each such paragraph being an argument in favor of the exhorted behavior. A hortatory paragraph starts with a point of departure which may describe a real or hypothetical situation or participant. With hypothetical points of departure, the motivation information which follows consists of incentives for compliance with the exhortation or deterrents for noncompliance. With real points of departure, the motivational information consists of reasoning in terms of cultural values to show why the exhorted behavior is the right behavior (Lowe 1986:202).

The sole work on Thai hortatory discourse to date is Dissaya Supharatyothin's Mahidol University thesis *A Study of Thai Hortatory Discourse* (1989). Examining letters written by an elder sister to her younger siblings prescribing appropriate social manners, Supharatyothin writes on surface/notional structure and the mitigation of explicit command forms.

1.2 Methodology

This section will discuss the texts used in this study as well as the means by which they were analyzed.

1.2.1 Texts

This study is based on a corpus of six tape-recorded Phra Phayom sermons purchased in his temple and various markets across Thailand. Although dates are not specified for most of the sermons, references to current events indicate that all six sermons were originally presented during the past 2-3 years. The sermons are:

แก้ความงก	"Solve Greed"
มนุษย์สมบัติ ทรัพย์สมบัติ	"Wealth of Personhood, Wealth of Possessions" ⁶
กัตติค	"Stick with It" (Idiomatic)
ขวัญใจแท็กซี่	"Taxi's Favorite"
การบ้านการเมือง	"Politics"
หน้าที่ของมนุษย์	"Duties of Human Beings"

These tapes were transcribed into standard Thai by native speakers. The transcripts were then checked by other native Thai speakers and/or the author himself to insure that every sentence, phrase, word, and vocalization was accurately represented.⁷

⁶Hereafter referred to as "Wealth."

⁷Jones and Diller (1976) experienced difficulties when their language assistants conscientiously corrected grammatical and other "errors" in data taken from conversational Thai--making the spoken language conform to the same rules governing the written language. My language assistants were repeatedly urged to write exactly what Phra Phayom said--that corrections or omissions of "errors" and other phenomena appropriate only in spoken Thai would not be appreciated!

A vocalization is defined as any sound (not just sounds recognized as words) made by the speaker that communicates some sort of meaning to the hearer (Mongpin 1989:77). In idiomatic American English, vocalizations would include sounds like "uh-huh" (communicating agreement), "phew" (communicating tiredness or relief), and "oh " (communicating surprise). The importance of these vocalizations will become apparent later in this study.

1.2.2 Analysis

As the first step in this analysis, three of the sermons ("Solve Greed," "Wealth," and "Taxi's Favorite") were annotated on a personal computer using the Interlinear Text Processor (ITP) program.⁸ This provided the word-to-word Thai-English glosses and sentence-level free translations upon which the remainder of the analysis would be based.

The texts were subjected to a number of analytical processes.⁹ Charts were made of sentence length, sentence topic, paragraph type, and theme progression (see appendix E). Data obtained from the last of these proved useful in my efforts to statistically differentiate main, secondary, and tertiary themes (see chapter 3).

1.3 Overview of the Study

This study will begin in chapter two with descriptions of the surface structure of Phra Phayom's sermons. We will then move on in the next chapter to a discussion of mainline and the way it interacts with theme on the discourse level. Chapter four looks at mitigation in Thai with emphasis on the command forms utilized by Phra Phayom, while chapter five highlights some of Phra Phayom's most commonly used rhetorical devices, including jokes. Chapter six endeavors to "tie it all together" by tracing the flow of subject matter within a portion of the sermon "Solve Greed." Finally, chapter seven concludes and summarizes the thesis.

⁸Written by Gary Simons, Summer Institute of Linguistics.

⁹These devices reflect the influence of the Levinsohn-Longacre Chart, the Thurman Chart, the Grimes span chart, etc. All of these were originally created to analyze narrative discourses, and had to be significantly altered to fit the hortatory genre.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

A thesis of this type poses numerous challenges and imposes, for reasons of time and study length, certain limitations on the researcher. The purpose of this section is, then, to state some of the obstacles encountered during the course of this study and the ways in which those obstacles have been dealt with.

The first and foremost of these is the nature of language itself in its various sociological, interpersonal, and pragmatic aspects. The diagram below, taken from Hatim and Mason's *Discourse and the Translator*, illustrates the complexity of a single speech act as related to communicative context:

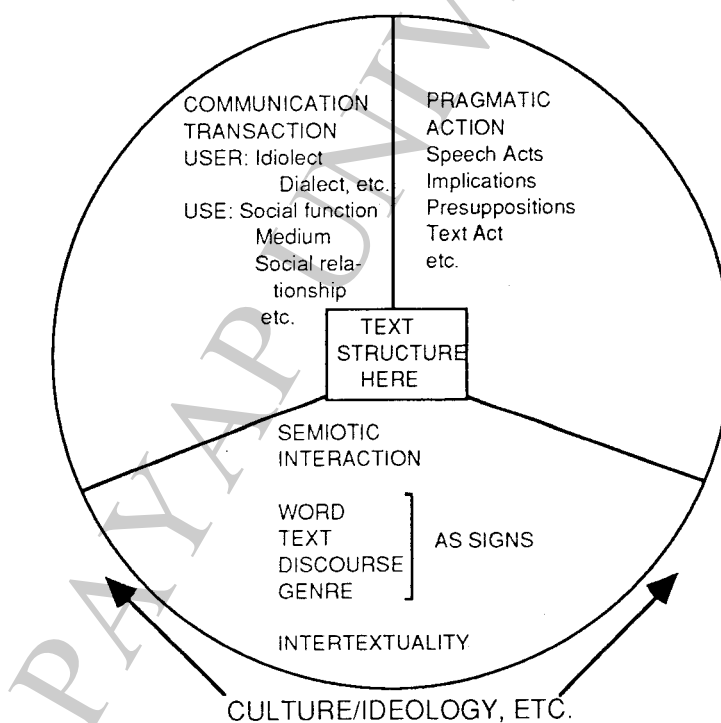


Figure 2. Speech Acts and the Communicative Context
(Reproduced from Hatim and Mason (1990:58))

One implication of this diagram is that no communicative device is wholly accidental. Certain ways of speaking (idiolect, dialect, etc.) may be adopted to better effect the pragmatic intent of the author. Similarly, the "signs" involving word, text, discourse, and genre are influenced by both the intent of the author and the signs' place in the culture in which the communicative act is taking place.

The whole field of linguistics attempts to somehow analyze such communicative exchanges in an effort to discover their underlying order. Nevertheless, the variables present in even a simple, five-minute conversation at a bus stop are so numerous and complexly arrayed that a comprehensive analysis would either have to outrightly limit its scope of investigation or take on an organizational scheme so vast that a lifetime would be required to fully sort things out. After all, a five minute bus stop conversation could be affected by anything from the weather to the conversants' appearance, health, background, occupation, or world view, to the set of all objects or events directly or peripherally present in the communicative arena.

How much more so, then, an hour-long sermon presented before a live audience by a highly-opinionated Thai Buddhist monk who, nonetheless, is much lauded for the rapport he carries with his listeners? The possibilities are mind-boggling.

We thus come to the first limitation of this thesis. As mentioned earlier (see 1.2.1), the "texts" for this study are transcriptions of tape recordings. The nature of such media prevents the analyst from having access to certain events going on during the course of a sermon which might have had some effect on the course of the oration. In this context, for example, the

movements of a noodle vendor on the outskirts of the temple grounds could cause Phra Phayom to say something dramatic or otherwise outside of the expected story line in order to draw the audience's attention away from the potential distraction. Audience response is likewise hard to judge from a cassette tape; while laughter may help one gauge a joke's effectiveness, there is no way of knowing whether or not individual members of the audience will change their behavior as a result of specific hortatory points.

A second challenge lay in the size of the texts studied. The shortest of these is approximately one-half hour long, the longest a full hour. The Thai transcriptions of these tapes often run ten to fifteen single-spaced typewritten pages, with the English translations often topping twenty pages.¹⁰

The size of the text involved and the constraints of time and space mandated that the primary discourse unit analyzed be the paragraph. Some aspects of sentence-level activity prompted by discourse features (e.g., the way in which the initial sentence of a paragraph might be affected by that which precedes it, as in head-tail reduplication) will occasionally be referred to, but no attempt to apply specific sentence forms to specific parts of the discourse will be made at this time.

Third is the fact that all Phra Phayom sermons are not created equal. Like everyone, he has "off days." Indeed, in "Stick with It" Phra Phayom makes indirect complaints about his busy schedule--getting up at 5:00 A.M., preaching 3-5 times, overseeing the various projects of his foundation and the

¹⁰Still, virtually all of the taped sermons which I have listened to seem to have been slightly edited at points. That is, a sound editor may have deleted a story or two from the master copy in an effort to fit the discourse onto a standard 60 minute cassette. Nevertheless, the "main line" of the sermon can easily be followed across such breaks. Choice of cuts may be indicative of sermon portions which the editor thought to be of less hortatory or entertainment value.

approximately 100 monks living at Wat Suan Kaew (temple), and not getting back to bed until 2:00 A.M. Similarly, at one point in "Wealth" he recounts what a great effort it often takes for him to get up on stage after stage, always smiling and active. When I interviewed him in February, 1992, Phra Phayom complained about not being as "hot and spicy" now as he was in years past (Kalayano 1992).

"Stick with It" seems to be an example of a sermon given on such an off day.¹¹ Phra Phayom's voice seems a little tepid as he simply recounts various events of his life that show the benefits of being decisive. Audience response is minimal; there is a queer silence in the crowd that is atypical for a Phra Phayom assembly. Towards the middle of the sermon, Phra Phayom puts himself in his listeners' shoes and says, "Some of you are thinking, 'When is he going to stop preaching?' and are wondering whether you should risk embarrassment by getting up and walking out like others have already done." Not incidentally, some of the discourse features found in "better" sermons--an abundance of rhetorical questions and vivid vocalizations all bound together by a clearly defined mainline--are absent in "Stick with It." Indeed, a Thai colleague reading the transcription found it so atypical of Phra

¹¹This might also be reflected in the fact that this tape was packaged by itself in a cassette case with a standard, pre-printed cover insert with the title and date of the sermon roughly printed, as with a hand-stamp, on the cover. "Politics," another more subdued sermon, likewise appears in this format. It seems that such tapes are simply recorded and reproduced, with little editing, to serve as souvenirs for those who were present for the original sermon. I have never seen any of these types of recordings for sale outside of Wat Suan Kaew. Other titles, presumably of a more entertaining nature, are often packaged in boxes of 2 or 3 cassettes with covers that bear sermon-relevant posed pictures of Phra Phayom engaged in various activities. These cassettes are more discretely edited (usually with a pious introduction from a recording company manager explaining how he is not making any money from these cassettes, and inviting the listeners to go out and buy other Phra Phayom cassettes to give to their friends as gifts, etc.) and distributed to tape stores in open-air markets and sophisticated shopping malls all over Thailand.

Phayom's preaching style that she suggested the student transcriber had been less than careful--a hypothesis that was discarded when the author re-checked the transcription with the cassette tape.

Of the texts examined here, "Solve Greed" and "Wealth" seem to represent "good" or at least "typical" Phra Phayom sermons. For the purposes of this study, then, these two sermons have been adopted as the standard against which others are measured.

Finally, the very nature of the spoken, as opposed to the written, word brings a whole different light on questions of grammar, reference, cohesion, theme, etc. Nevertheless no attempt is made here to extract from or connect to Phra Phayom's sermons a comprehensive grammatical description of Thai spoken language. Similarly, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to thoroughly investigate vocal inflection, rate of delivery, and the use of silence (dramatic pauses, etc.); such information would be very helpful in grasping "the big picture," but must be left for future investigations.