

Stylistic Differentiation of /kaan/ and /khwaam/ Nominalization in Standard Thai¹

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1. Introduction

Nominalization is the process which derives a nominal from some other word class or part of a sentence which is not already a noun phrase; e.g., the nominalization of *happy* into *happiness* in English.

In Thai, two best known patterns of nominalization are: /kaan/ + *action VERB*, such as /kaan-kin/ 'eating' (/kin/ meaning 'eat'), and /kwaam/ + *stative VERB*², such as /khwaam-dii/ 'goodness' (/dii/ meaning 'good').

The /kaan/ morpheme, which functions as a nominalizer, has developed, through a process called *grammaticalization*, from the lexical word /kaan/ meaning 'work, affair(s), matter(s)'. According to Haas (1964:29), the /kaan/ nominalizer is usually rendered in English by such suffixes as *-ing*, *-(t)ion*, *-ment*, *-ance(-ence)*, *-ery* and *-y*.

Similarly, the /khwaam/ nominalizing morpheme has developed from the word /khwaam/ meaning 'sense or substance of a matter; (legal) case or lawsuit'. Haas (1964:82) relates the /khwaam/ nominalizer to such English suffixes as *-ness*, *-ity*, *-th*, *-ment*, *-ance(-ence)*, *-(t)ion*, *-(t)ude*, *-ure*, *-y*, *-ery*, *-ship*, and *-dom*.

The /kaan/ and /khwaam/ patterns of nominalization are the most frequently used among all the nominalizing patterns in Thai³. My study on borrowing and nominalization of technical terms in Standard Thai (Prasithrathsint 1994a) shows that among all the nominalizing strategies used in coining Thai technical terms to replace English borrowed terms⁴, /kaan/ and /kwaam/ occur most frequently. My research on the emergence and development of nominalization in Thai (Prasithrathsint 1994b,

¹ This study is part of the research project on "the emergence and development of nominalization in Thai: evidence of Thai language modernization," which was supported by the Institute of Thai Studies at Chulalongkorn University, and completed in December 1994.

² It is widely accepted that /khwaam/ connotes abstractness. Some grammarians state that /khwaam/ is usually attached to words denoting 'state of being' or 'quality' and that it precedes "adjectives" to form nominals in Thai. Here, I intentionally try to avoid the word "adjective" because such words that denote 'state of being' or 'quality', as /dii/ 'good', /suaj4/ 'beautiful' behave structurally as verbs in Thai. Also, recently some linguists have argued that there are no adjectives in Thai (e.g. Statosta--p.c.). Even though this has not totally convinced me, I think that the "adjective" category in Thai has become an unstable and controversial. More studies and arguments are needed to determine its status in Thai syntax.

³ Other productive nominalizing patterns in Thai are, for example, /phu2/ 'person' + VERB, e.g. /phu2-syy3/ 'buyer', /phu2-khaaj4/ 'seller'; /thi2/ nominalization, which is comparable to that complement clause in English, e.g. /chan4 dii-caj thi2 khun maa/ 'I am glad that you came.'

⁴ Other strategies of nominalizing words to create technical terms in Thai are: using the prefix /phaawa3/ 'state of being', e.g. /phaawa3-car@@@nphan/ 'fertility', /phaawa3-cuk1c@@@n4/ 'emergency'; using the suffix /ni3jom/ '-ism', e.g. /sang4khom-ni3jom/ 'socialism', /chaat2-ni3jom/ 'nationalism'.

1995) reveals that /khwaam/ nominalization is the oldest, which emerged in the Sukhothai Period around the late 13th century, and that /kaan/ nominalization is the second oldest, which was found to be used for the first time in the Ayutthaya Period during the reign of King Narai--around the latter half of the 17th century.

Even though /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations have been used for centuries, frequent use of them is often criticized by Thai language authorities. They are regarded as unnecessarily elaborate and causing the Thai language to degenerate. Thai language teachers teaching students to write compositions in Thai usually make them write /tOOn2-rap3/ 'welcome' instead of /haj2-kaan-tOOn2-rap3/ 'to give a welcome' and /tang2-caj/ 'intend' instead of /mii-khwaam-tang2-caj/ 'have intention'. They argue that nominalizations make the language sound complicated and thus unlike Thai because genuine Thai, according to them, has to be brief, simple and concise.

In my opinion, that /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations are considered to cause the Thai language to become overly complex may have something to do with speech styles. I have observed that they normally marked formal or written style in Thai and used less in casual or spoken style. In brief, I see nominalization as a linguistic device that differentiates styles in Thai. In order to prove this, I have to conduct a study based on data from different functional varieties of Thai and find out how frequently /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations occur in each variety.

Therefore, this study aims at analyzing the frequencies of the occurrences of /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations in three varieties of Standard Thai⁵ representing three distinctive styles; i.e., newspaper editorials representing formal style, narrations in fiction representing semi-formal style, and conversations in fiction standing for informal style. I will also analyze change in the occurrences of the two nominalizing patterns in the three varieties from 1972 to 1992 in order to see whether their frequencies have increased over time and when they started to differentiate styles in Thai.

I hypothesize that /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations occur more frequently in editorial writing than the other two varieties because its purpose is more serious and its content more abstract. I also believe that conversations contain less incidences of nominalization than narrations because the former are more spontaneous than the latter.

⁵ Standard Thai is the variety of Thai used in the court and by leading personalities of Thailand. It functions as Thailand's national language, official language of the mass media, and educational language. It is the most prestigious variety, which is taught to non-Thais as a second or foreign language and used as the lingua franca among people from different regions of Thailand. Some scholars call it "Central Thai". It also overlaps with "Bangkok Thai", which is the variety of Thai used by Bangkokians. Since Standard Thai happens to be used most in Bangkok, it is easy to assume that it is the same as Bangkok Thai although it is not despite a great deal of overlapping. In fact, the name "Standard Thai" suggests representativeness and prestige, whereas the name "Bangkok Thai" implies a geographical location, which makes it in contrast with other geographical dialects in Thailand. The source of the data used in this study is Standard Thai, but the word "Thai" will be used more often to refer to the same linguistic variety.

I hope that the findings of this study will confirm that there is stylistic variation in Thai and that syntactic features can be used to differentiate registers in a language.

2. Previous studies

Nominalization in Thai is a phenomenon that is normally taken for granted. There has been no study that focuses particularly on it. Grammar books mostly include the /kaan/ and /khwam/ nominalizations under a topic that deals with something else. Dictionaries normally treat them as part of the entries /kaan/ and /khwam/--primarily interpreted as lexical words.

With regard to the relationship between nominalization and stylistic variation, a number of studies show that nominalization is a distinguishing marker of register. Chafe (1982, 1985) and Danielewicz (1984) maintain that nominalizations are used for expanding ideas and integrating information into fewer words. Biber (1986) finds that they tend to co-occur with passive constructions and prepositions and thus interprets their function as conveying highly *abstract* (as opposed to *situated*) information. Janda (1985, cited in Biber 1988:227) shows that nominalizations are used during note-taking to reduce full sentences to more *compact* and efficient series of noun phrases. Biber (1988) uses computational techniques to analyze linguistic characteristics of 23 spoken and written genres in English and finds that nominalization is an important feature which distinguishes spoken and written registers of English.

In Thai, Supanee Tiancharoen (1987) finds that nominalization differentiates written texts from spoken ones. The former contain more nominalizations than the latter and is therefore marked by *detachment*, whereas the latter by *involvement*.

Tiancharoen deals with six text types: conversation, personal letters, lectures, broadcasts, magazine articles, and academic texts and does not separate /kaan/ and /kwaam/ nominalizations. Questions still remain about two other varieties, which are very common in Thai: *newspaper editorials* and *fiction*. I would like to find out whether they are different as far as nominalizations are concerned and also whether /kaan/ and /khwam/ occur with equal amount of frequency in each register.

3. Data

The data used in this study were taken from written documents in the Bangkok period from 1872 to the present decade. The time span of approximately 120 years was divided into 13 intervals of a decade each. Each decade is represented by the beginning year starting with 1872 and ending with 1992. A sample of approximately 15,000 words representing each interval was systematically selected from documents published in or a little after each representative year: 1872, 1882, 1892, 1902, 1912, 1922, 1932, 1942, 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, and 1992.

The reason why I started with the year 1872 is that it marks the beginning of the turning-point decade in the Bangkok Period⁶. Many changes took place during this decade (1872-1881); for example, the opening of the first school in Thailand,

⁶ The Bangkok Period started in 1782. It is about 9 decades after the beginning of the period that Thailand shifted into a modernized society.

the establishment of the Royal Printing Office, the occurrence of the first Thai magazine and the first Thai newspaper, etc.

Publications from 1872 to 1992 were of many genres. However, I chose to sample my texts from only three of them, which were accessible in every decade and reasonably represent three distinctive styles of Thai. They are newspaper editorials, which represent formal style, narrative parts in fiction, which represent semi-formal style, and conversations in fiction, informal style.

Newspaper editorials in each decade were random-sampled by selecting titles of newspapers first and then selecting months. Finally, the whole text of the editorials in the newspapers of days 1-10 were collected from each selected month.

As for fiction, I sampled texts from novels, which for some periods occurred in magazines or weekly newspapers but for others appeared in the form of books. The procedure of selecting those from newspapers and magazines was done by selecting five names or titles of the magazines or newspapers first. Then I random-selected an issue, from which an equal number of pages were taken for each decade. In case novels were in the form of books, I randomly selected five names of novelists in each decade. Then I selected one work for each writer. Finally, an equal number of pages were taken from each work.

4. Findings

4.1. Occurrences of /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations in the three varieties

The analysis of frequencies of /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalization is based on the data of the last decade represented by the year 1992. The results show that /kaan/ nominalization occurs most frequently (2.66 per 100 words) in editorials and virtually equally in the other two varieties (0.17 and 0.12 per 100 words). (See Table 1 and Figure 1.) This suggests that /kaan/ nominalization is a factor distinguishing the style in editorials from that in narrative and conversational parts of fiction.

Table 1: /kaan/ and /khwaam/ nominalizations in the three varieties of Thai

	/kaan/	/kwaam/
Editorials	2.66	1.28
Narrations	0.17	0.55
Conversations	0.12	0.12