

The Emergence and Development of Abstract Nominalization in Standard Thai¹

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INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, some kinds of linguistic variation may be more sensitive to social values than others. In Thai society, it seems that grammatical variation does not receive as much interpretation as a social marker as phonological variation. In fact, whereas Thais tend to label a variant of a speech sound in Thai as *prestigious* or *stigmatized*, they rarely regard a variant of a morphological or syntactic entity in the language as more prestigious than another. However, it is grammatical variation that tends to cause a greater stir among Thai grammarians and language teachers than phonological variation, because it is concerned with the right or wrong, grammatical or ungrammatical, and appropriate or inappropriate use of language.

Passive constructions in Thai can be cited as an example of a syntactic entity that causes a stir in Thai society. Although active and passive constructions can be regarded as two variants of a kind of syntactic phenomenon, the former are more favorable than the latter. Passives are rarely used in Thai speech. Many textbooks on Thai grammar either ignore them completely or suggest that the neutral passive construction, in which the verb is neutral, be avoided. The most commonly heard reason that they give is that the typical passive in Thai has to be adversative; i.e., it must imply that the subject of the verb undergoes an unfortunate experience. In other words, only such verbs as *kill*, *punish*, *scold*, *hit*, etc. can be passivized. Otherwise, the passive will be non-Thai and should be avoided in order to “preserve Thai identity in the Thai language.”

It is interesting to note that the neutral passive emerged in Thai about a century ago but is still unacceptable among Thai teachers and language authorities. My study on change in passive constructions in Thai during the Bangkok period (Prasithrathsint, 1985, 1988) reveals that among several types of passive in Thai, the neutral passive² is the last to emerge and is found to occur much more frequently in translations from

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²The neutral passive in Thai is marked syntactically by /thùuk/, the same as the Thai adversative passive. However, the former is semantically neutral; i.e., it does not imply any unfavorable experience on the part of the patient subject; for example:

๓๓ thùuk bə̀n ɔ̀k pen sǐi sǔan

money passive marker divide out be four part

‘The money was divided into four parts.’

English than in non-translations. Could we infer from this fact that this syntactic form is not very much accepted because it has not been in the language long enough or because it is regarded as a borrowed form, which is still “foreign”—not yet integrated into the language?

The reason why this syntactic entity is considered to be a borrowing from English even though its form is not calqued from the passive in English (not marked by the verb *to be* plus a past participle) is probably that it functions the same as the English passive. It is a good equivalent of the English passive, and thus makes the English and Thai ways of talking compatible to a considerable extent. In other words, it makes translations from English into Thai easy, straightforward, and accurate in terms of informational structuring. Therefore, it usually gives an impression of being “foreign” even though it is used by Thais in their original speech or writing.

Another phenomenon that attracts the attention of language critics is *abstract nominalization*. Too much use of it is commented on as causing the Thai language to be unnecessarily elaborate and thus inappropriate. Correcting their students' compositions, Thai language teachers usually suggest that they say /tôn-ráp/ ‘welcome’ instead of /thawăay kaan-tôn-ráp/ ‘give (to a king or queen) a welcome’ or /prasôn/ ‘intend’ instead of /mii khwaam-prasôn/ ‘have intention.’ Some think that such examples of nominalization are calques from English and do not sound Thai.³

I myself have a different view. The nominalized variants of the above examples seem to be elaborate, but they are appropriate for a formal style, which is the style we often hear the forms used in.

However, that nominalization has become a target of criticism in Thai society interests me very much. This induces me to speculate that the forms may have emerged lately in the language or that their occurrence might have increased so radically that it has disturbed the traditional pattern of language use in Thai. In other words, it makes me ask this question. Is nominalization in Thai not completely accepted as typical Thai because it is too new or because it is used more frequently today than in the past? In order to answer this question I have to study the problem diachronically, starting from the time of the oldest stone inscription, which is the first record of Standard Thai, to the present decade—a time span of approximately 700 years.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to find out when each of the patterns of abstract nominalization emerged in Thai and how frequently it is used in different periods or whether its occurrence has increased over time. In my analysis, I hypothesize that abstract nominalization in Thai emerged as a consequence of the modernization of Thai society by King Rama V (1868-1910) and that its occurrences have increased through the time span of 700 years. It is hoped that the findings of this study will create more understanding of nominalization in Thai both in terms of its usage and of its development and also provide more insight into the relationship between language and society.

³In English, one would say “welcome” and “intend” more frequently than “give a welcome” and “have intention.” However, that Thais usually think that these examples of nominalization are calques from English is a consequence of their over-generalization; i.e., they assume that complexities in Thai grammar are not originally Thai and that they are imported from some other language. English seems to be the language most suspected because of its obvious influence on languages around the world, including Thai.

Scope of the Study

The language that this study concentrates on is Standard Thai. It is the variety of Thai used in the court and by leading personalities of Thailand. It functions as Thailand's national language, official language, language of the mass media, and language of education. 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" or just "Thai." It also overlaps with "Bangkok Thai," which is the variety of Thai used by Bangkokians. That Standard Thai happens to be used most in Bangkok, the center of all national activities, makes it easy to assume that it is another name of Bangkok Thai. In fact, both should be regarded as the two sides of the same coin; one suggests prestige and representativeness, whereas the other, a geographical location, which contrasts with other regional dialects.

The data used in this study were selected from documents written in Standard Thai only. For the sake of simplicity, the word "Thai" will be used more often to refer to the same variety.

In this study the term "nominalization" is used to cover both *lexical nominalization* (e.g., *happiness* from *happy*) and *grammatical nominalization* (e.g., *That he refused to join the group* from *He refused to join the group*). Following Crystal (1991, pp. 233–234), I will use the term "nominalization" to mean "the process of forming a noun from some other word class (e.g., *redness*) or the derivation of a noun phrase from an underlying clause (e.g., *His answering of the letter* from *He answered the letter*)."

Most types of nominalization are abstract, although some are not, such as *meeting(s)*, *seasoning(s)*, *employer(s)*, *employee(s)*, *difference(s)*. This study will limit itself to abstract nominalization and will deal only with three prominent patterns of it. They are 1) the /khwaam/ nominalization; 2) the /kaan/ nominalization; and 3) the /thîi/ nominalization.

Description of the Linguistic Entity under Study

The process of /khwaam/ nominalization brings about a /khwaam/ nominal, which is derived from the combination of the /khwaam/ morpheme and a verb or verb phrase, e.g., /khwaam-dii/ 'goodness,' /khwaam-săamâat/ 'ability' (/dii/ 'good' and /săamâat/ 'able' are verbs in Thai). The /khwaam/ morpheme itself derives, through a grammaticalization process, from the word /khwaam/ meaning 'sense or substance of a matter; (legal) case or lawsuit.' According to Haas (1964, p.82), the nominalizer /khwaam/ is usually rendered in English by such suffixes as *-ness*, *-ity*, *-th*, *-ment*, *-ance* (*-ence*), *-(t)ion*, *-(t)ude*, *-ure*, *-y*, *-ery*, *-ship*, and *-dom*.

The /kaan/ nominalization is the process of rendering a nominal by combining the morpheme /kaan/ with a verb or verb phrase, e.g., /kaan-phûut/ 'speaking,' /kaan-kin/ 'eating,' /kaan-siksăa/ 'studying; education.' Haas (1964, p. 290) likens the nominalizer /kaan/ to such English suffixes as *-ing*, *-ion*, *-ment*, *-ance* (*-ence*), *-ery*, and *-y*.

Since /khwaam/ and /kaan/ overlap to some extent, Thais follow a general rule that the latter is limited to action verbs that usually correspond to the gerund in English, whereas the former is reserved for any verb that refers to a very intangible idea or concept. However, some verbs can be derived into both /khwaam/ and /kaan/ nominals but have different meanings, e.g., /khwaam-hěn/ 'opinion' and /kaan-hěn/ 'seeing' (/hěn / 'to see').

The other pattern of nominalization that this study focuses on is /thîi/ nominalization. The word /thîi/ generally means 'place; space.' Through the process of grammaticalization it has yielded the /thîi/ nominalizer, which is combined with a clause to form a factive nominal or complement clause or sentential complement, as can be seen in the underlined part of this sentence: /thîi khăw sòp phaan pen rîang pralâat/ 'That he passed the exam is a surprise.'

These three patterns of abstract nominalization are productive, but the factive nominal pattern does not seem to occur as frequently as the other two.

Previous Studies

There are no previous studies focusing *specifically* on nominalizations in Thai. This phenomenon is normally mentioned in certain grammar textbooks and dictionaries, which usually list the /khwaam/ and /kaan/ nominalizers with their speculated meanings, e.g., Haas (1964, pp. 29, 82), Noss (1964, p. 60), Royal Institute Dictionary (1982, pp. 89, 173).

As for the /thîi/ nominalization, it is even more rarely dealt with than the other two. What is more, it is labelled with different names or classified into different categories by different syntacticians. Phraya Upakit Silapasarn (1948) called it /naamaanúprayòok/ 'nominal subordinate clause,' e.g., /...thîi thəə tham chên nîi/ '...that you did like this.' Bandhumedha (1982, p. 189) calls the /thîi/ nominal /prayòok khayăay/ 'modifying clause.' She also regards /thîi/ as a word to be added after the /kaan/ nominal in certain contexts; for instance, from the sentence /raw hăa sîi sîn-kháa làw nîi dâay năay/ 'We can find and buy these goods easily,' Bandhumedha derives the following sentence with the /kaan/ nominal followed by /thîi/: /man pen kaan năay thîi raw cà hăa sîi sîn-kháa làw nîi/ 'It is easy that we find and buy these goods.' Savetamalya (1989, pp. 139–141) states that there are four words /thîi/ in Thai, and the one that corresponds to what I call the /thîi/ nominalizer here is considered by her to be a complementizer which functions as the regent of a complement clause. According to her, "noun complement clauses in Thai are headed by the complementizer noun /thîi/ which is obligatorily followed by its immediately following verbal sister. They can be either the head of a free noun phrase (e.g., *thîi fôn tók nàk* tham hây náam thûam/ 'That it rained very hard caused a flood.') or an

attribute modifying a regent noun (e.g., /kaan *thii khǎw maa cháa* tham hây thúk-khon kròot/ 'That he came late made everybody angry.')."

In this study I will regard /khwaam/, /kaan/, and /thii/ as nominalizers, which belong to the NOUN word class and syntactically head a noun phrase in a sentence. With special reference to /thii/, I agree with Savetamalya that it is a complementizer noun. However, I will treat it here as the head of a noun phrase labelled here as a *factive nominal* or *sentential complement*.

Data

The data used in this study were taken from documents inscribed or written in the periods from 1283 (the date of King Ramkhamhaeng's stone inscription) to 1992. This time span of approximately 700 years covers three important periods of Thai history: (1) the Sukhothai Period, during which the capital of Thailand was Sukhothai, lasting about 100 years; (2) the Ayutthaya Period, during which Ayutthaya was the capital, lasting about 400 years; (3) the Bangkok Period starting when King Rama I established Bangkok as the capital of Thailand in 1782 and lasting until today.

For the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya Periods, I randomly selected a sample of passages that were each approximately 15,000 words long from all the inscriptions and writings available. All of these documents were in the form of modern publications, but all the original ways of talking and spelling were maintained.

For the Bangkok Period, in which documents are too plentiful, especially in the latter half of the period, I divided the time span into two sub-periods: the earlier Bangkok period, which covered the time from the reign of Rama I to that of Rama IV (about 80 years), and the late Bangkok period (Rama V to the present time) from the latter half of the nineteenth century till now.

The sample of the language that represents the earlier Bangkok period was selected from various kinds of prose writings available, mostly in the form of travelogues, memoirs, and short articles in newspapers. It was approximately 15,000 words long.

For the late Bangkok period, I divided the time span into 13 intervals of a decade each, and the sample of not more than 15,000 words representing each interval was selected from the years representing the beginning of the decades: 1872, 1882, 1892, 1902, 1912, 1922, 1932, 1942, 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, and 1992.

Since in this period too many kinds of publications were available, I chose to sample my passages from only three varieties of Thai: newspaper editorials, descriptions in novels, and conversations in novels. The reason for this is that they were accessible in every decade of the late Bangkok period and that they represent the formal, semi-formal, and informal styles of Thai.

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

As for novels, in some periods they appear in magazines or weekly newspapers, but in others they are in the form of books. The procedure of selecting those from newspapers and magazines was done by choosing 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. For novels 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.

FINDINGS

The Three Patterns of Abstract Nominalization as Found in the Data

The three patterns of abstract nominalization dealt with here are marked by the nominalizers /khwaam/, /kaan/, and /thîi/. They are all derived from nouns that can occur in isolation, as mentioned earlier. The following are examples of the three patterns found in the data.

The /khwaam/ Nominalization

The /khwaam/ nominals found in this study are mostly derived from non-action verbs dealing with emotive or mental processes. These nominals refer to very intangible objects or concepts. Therefore, I will call the /khwaam/ nominalization "the intangible" nominalization. The following are examples from the data:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| khwaam-sùk | 'happiness' | (Sukhothai) |
| khwaam-yindii | 'pleasure' | (Ayutthaya) |
| khwaam-rák | 'love' | (Bangkok, Rama I-IV) |
| khwaam-sabaay | 'comfort' | (Bangkok, Rama I-IV) |
| khwaam-wêetthanaa | 'pity' | (Bangkok, 1872) |
| khwaam-kròot | 'anger' | (Bangkok, 1882) |
| khwaam-katanyuu | 'gratitude' | (Bangkok, 1892) |
| khwaam-sõṅsǎan | 'sympathy' | (Bangkok, 1902) |
| khwaam-ciṅ | 'reality' | (Bangkok, 1912) |
| khwaam-rúu | 'knowledge' | (Bangkok, 1922) |
| khwaam-prasõṅ | 'intention' | (Bangkok, 1932) |

The /kaan/ Nominalization

Unlike /khwaam/, the /kaan/ nominalizer marks abstractness of a more tangible kind. Nominals resulting from /kaan/ nominalization potentially carry the meaning of certain "actions." Since most of them correspond to the gerund in English, I will label this pattern of nominalization the "gerundive" nominalization. The following are examples of /kaan/ nominals taken from the data:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| kaan-róp sǐk kampàn | 'fighting in a battle ship' (the single instance found in the Ayutthaya Period, late 17th century) |
| kaan-aayát | 'confiscating' (Bangkok, Rama I-IV) |
| kaan-daw | 'guessing' (Bangkok, 1872) |
| kaan-lâw-rian | 'studying, learning' (Bangkok, 1882) |
| kaan-líang cháang | 'raising elephants' (Bangkok, 1892) |
| kaan-tham-bun | 'making merit' (Bangkok, 1902) |
| kaan-dǎon-thalee | 'sailing' (Bangkok, 1912) |
| kaan-tòklong | 'setting an agreement' (Bangkok, 1922) |
| kaan-pràap yun | 'eradicating mosquitoes' (Bangkok, 1932) |

The /thîi/ Nominalization

This pattern of nominalization is different from the other two. It creates what might be called a factive nominal or sentential complement, not just an abstract noun or noun phrase that results from the /khwam/ and /kaan/ nominalization. The following underlined strings are examples of /thîi/ factive nominals from the data.

- ...pen thîi sǎnkèet (Bangkok, Rama I-IV)
 be notice '(It) is what is noticed' (= 'It is noticeable.')
- ...pen thîi chǎwpay (Bangkok, 1872)
 be pleased with '(It) is what (I) am pleased with' (= 'It's (my) pleasure.')
- ...pen thîi wáywaanay (Bangkok, 1882)
 be trust '(He) is what is trusted' (= 'He is trustworthy.')
- ...pen thîi wàatwàn (Bangkok, 1892)
 be frightened of '(It) is what is frightening.'
- ...yindii thîi dāay hěn nāa (Bangkok, 1902)
 glad get see face '(I) am glad to see your face.'
- ...cà phūt hāy pen thîi khāwcaay kan (Bangkok, 1912)
 will speak for be understand each other
 '(I) will speak so that we understand each other.'
- ...mii amnāat thîi cà hāy naay thōng-in òk càak rāatchakaan dāay
 have power will force Mr. Thong-in exit from government job able
 '(He) has enough power to have Mr. Thong-in dismissed from his
 government job.' (Bangkok, 1922)
- thə mǎay thîi cà phǐn khǎw yàan tem-pǎam (Bangkok, 1932)
 she aim will depend on he like fully
 'She aims to depend fully on him.'

As can be seen from the cited examples above, in earlier periods of its existence, the /thîi/ nominalization seems to be limited in its occurrence. That is, it tends to follow

only the verb *to be*. However, in later periods, it develops to be more diverse in its occurrence.

The Emergence of Each Pattern of Abstract Nominalization in Standard Thai

The result of the analysis shows that the three patterns of abstract nominalization were found to emerge at different times. The intangible pattern—/khwaam/ nominalization—was the oldest. Second is the gerundive-type /kaan/ nominalization, and the last to emerge is the sentential complement or factive /thîi/ nominalization. As shown in Table 1, the /khwaam/ pattern was found first in Sukhothai documents in the late 13th century and the second in the late Ayutthaya Period during the reign of King Narai, around the latter half of the 17th century, four centuries apart from each other. The last one was found first in the earlier Bangkok Period, around the first half of the 19th century, about a century and a half later than the second.

However, it should be noted that when the /kaan/ pattern was found to be used for the first time in the Ayutthaya Period, there was only one instance of it (shown above). It is in the following period—the Bangkok Period—that /kaan/ nominalization regularly occurred.

Table 1. *The period during which each nominalizing pattern emerged*

| Period | /khwaam/ | /kaan/ | /thîi/ |
|--------------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| Sukhothai (13th century) | x | 0 | 0 |
| Ayutthaya (14th century) | x | 0 | 0 |
| Ayutthaya (15th century) | x | 0 | 0 |
| Ayutthaya (16th century) | x | 0 | 0 |
| Ayutthaya (17th century) | x | x | 0 |
| Bangkok (18th century) | x | x | 0 |
| Bangkok (19th century) | x | x | x |
| Bangkok (20th century) | x | x | x |

As can be seen in Table 1, the periods specified are one century apart from one another. Although the exact time when each pattern emerged cannot be specified with one hundred percent certainty, what is found in this study provides a considerably reliable picture of how approximately far apart in time each pattern is from the others as far as its emergence is concerned. It also tells us how old each pattern is.

It should be remarked that the finding shown above does not support my hypothesis that all the abstract nominalizing patterns emerged as a consequence of the modernization of Thai society, that is, during or after the reign of King Rama V (1868–1910), the period during which the country underwent its greatest Westernization, which makes modern Thailand what it is today. On the contrary, all three patterns are found to be used for the first time before this modernization period. Even the /thîi/

nominalization was found to emerge during the early 19th century. However, that abstract nominalization did not emerge as a consequence of the modernization period does not mean that there is no relation between this linguistic phenomenon and the modernization of Thai society. The result of a quantitative analysis presented below will provide some evidence to support the claim that the great social change did have some influence on the language.

Frequencies of Occurrence of Each Pattern of Abstract Nominalization from the Past to the Present Time

In order to determine the change in the use of abstract nominalization through time, I counted the tokens of each pattern of nominalization in the sample of each period. Then the relation between the number of the tokens of the nominalization and that of all the words in the sample was calculated as a percentage. This quantitative result for each period of time was compared to that of the other periods for an inference as to the frequency of occurrence of abstract nominalization throughout the whole period.

Table 2. *Frequencies of occurrence of each of the three nominalization patterns from the Sukhothai period to the present time*

| Period | Nominalizing Pattern | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------|--------|
| | /khwaam/ | /kaan/ | /thîi/ |
| Sukhothai | 0.02 | ----- | ----- |
| Ayutthaya | 0.11 | 0.02 | ----- |
| Rama I-IV(1782-1868) | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.03 |
| 1872 | 0.50 | 0.08 | 0.14 |
| 1882 | 1.86 | 0.45 | 0.17 |
| 1892 | 1.94 | 0.52 | 0.25 |
| 1902 | 0.46 | 0.29 | 0.38 |
| 1912 | 0.67 | 0.34 | 0.68 |
| 1922 | 0.87 | 0.35 | 0.38 |
| 1932 | 0.95 | 0.42 | 0.49 |
| 1942 | 0.83 | 0.46 | 0.36 |
| 1952 | 0.76 | 0.51 | 0.17 |
| 1962 | 0.55 | 0.25 | 0.34 |
| 1972 | 0.58 | 0.59 | 0.21 |
| 1982 | 0.85 | 0.75 | 0.39 |
| 1992 | 0.56 | 0.58 | 0.25 |

Columns 2, 3, and 4 in Table 2 show the difference in the frequency of occurrence of each pattern in different periods. Also, looking horizontally, we can compare the occurrence of /khwaam/, /kaan/, and /thîi/ in each period. Column 1 gives the periods and sub-periods divided by the criteria stated earlier.

As can be seen from Table 2 and Figure 1, when each of the patterns was first used, it had the lowest frequency of occurrence: 0.02 of /khwaam/ in the Sukhothai Period, 0.02 of /kaan/ in the Ayutthaya Period, and 0.03 of /thûi/ in the early Bangkok Period.

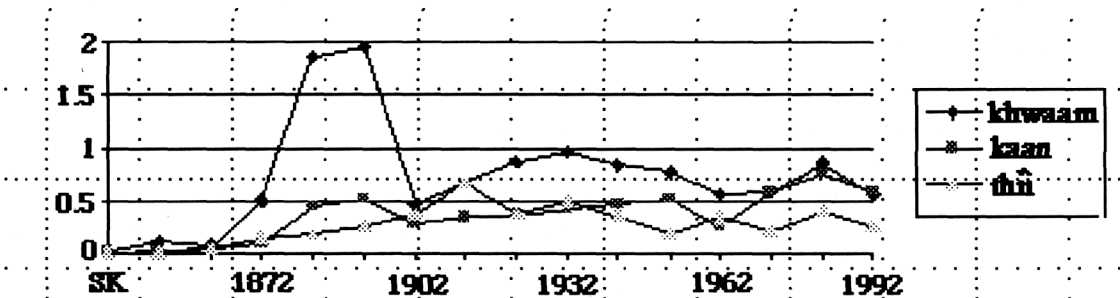


Figure 1. The occurrences of three abstract nominalizing patterns from the Sukhothai Period to 1992.

It is also interesting to note that the extremely radical increase of the frequency of occurrence of each pattern came quite a while after it emerged. The /khwaam/ nominalization increases from 0.50 in 1872 to 1.86 in 1882—almost four times. The /kaan/ nominalization increases from 0.08 in 1872 to 0.45 in 1882—about six times. Also, the /thûi/ nominalization increases 0.38 to 0.68 from 1902 to 1912—almost twofold.

These radical increases in the frequency of occurrence of each of the three nominalization patterns are found either during or right after the period of modernization of Thai society under King Rama V, i.e., 1882–1912. (See also Figure 1.) This seems to suggest the great impact of the social change on the language, and nominalization is an index of that. Therefore, even though the three patterns did not emerge in this modernization period as I first hypothesized, they all became extensively used for the first time in this period.

The reign of King Rama V covers the latter half of the 19th century. This period is usually considered to be the most important turning point in modern Thai history. Most historians and sociologists call it “the modernization of Thailand.” It is during these decades that Thailand changed from traditional to modern society. Among the social reforms inaugurated by the King, some significant ones were the abolition of slavery, central and provincial administration reform, reforms of the army and the navy, judicial reform, improvement of the means of communication, and, most important of all, reform in education. These reforms were deliberate moves toward the Westernization of the country, resulting from contact with the West.

It is very likely that the great social and cultural changes described above had an impact on the Thai language. Indeed, this is the period during which the first Thai newspaper, first Thai magazine, first scientific paper in Thai, and first novel translated from English appeared. The language had to be adapted to be used in domains in which it had never been used before. In addition, the number of bilinguals who spoke both Thai and English probably increased considerably in this period. Many English-speaking people were hired as advisors and teachers in the court. A number of young people started to go abroad and returned home competent bilinguals. These situations

brought about contact between Thai and English. The Thai language used by Thai-English bilinguals must have been influenced by English ways of talking, and the radical increase in the use of nominalization in this particular period is very likely to have been a consequence of that language contact.

Considering the total picture of change throughout the period, we seem to be safe in concluding that the frequencies of occurrence of all the nominalization patterns have increased over time, as I have hypothesized. Despite fluctuations in frequency throughout the period, each pattern is found to be used more now than at first. However, the increase was never steady, and it seems that after the modernization period, the use of each pattern decreases to some extent. This is probably because since becoming integrated into Thai, the nominalization patterns have become less frequent in their occurrence. Also, the fluctuations may be due to external social factors; for instance, during the decade of 1932, which is marked by a political revolution that turned Thailand into a democracy, the frequencies of the three patterns increase remarkably again although not as radically as in the modernization period. The political change may have induced the Thai language to talk about abstract ideas concerning political ideologies and philosophies. That is why the use of abstract nominalization increases noticeably in 1932.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have attempted to show when each of the three prominent patterns of abstract nominalization in Standard Thai emerged and how its occurrence has changed over time. I have also tried to relate what I found to change in Thai society in order to provide insight into the problem of language change.

Of all the three patterns of abstract nominalization, the intangible /khwaam/ nominalization is the oldest. It emerged in the Sukhothai Period. The second is the gerundive /kaan/ pattern, which was found to be used for the first time in the late Ayutthaya Period about four centuries after the first. The last to emerge is the factive /thîi/ nominalization. It came into being in the early Bangkok Period about a century and a half after the second.

With regard to their frequencies of occurrence, generally speaking, the use of all of the three patterns of abstract nominalization today is more frequent than during the times of their first use; however, quantitative analysis shows that there are fluctuations throughout the period. The most important peaks are those extreme increases in the period of modernization of Thai society. Many socio-cultural changes in this period were likely to bring about change in the Thai language as well. Nominalization furnishes good evidence to support that hypothesis.

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