

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Rationale of the Study**

“Everything that is written in a newspaper has to be transmitted through the medium of language. The transmission of a message through language almost of necessity encodes values into the message. Language has its own emotional and cultural ‘loading’. What is loaded will depend on the nature of the culture or sub-culture in which the language exists”

Reah (2002: 55)

Newspapers play an important role in people’s daily life. They provide information about recent events, things or persons. Having been reading newspapers for many years, the researcher has noticed that wars, strikes, natural disasters, criminal, scientific discoveries, elections, the deaths of world leaders are topics considered newsworthy. A study on how a particular group of people is portrayed in news is very interesting.

### **Newspapers and Representation**

Newspapers can be viewed as a tool for communication, and its role and power in spreading information in a modern society is significant. When reading a newspaper, people often think of it as having a relatively straightforward relationship to reality. Although they may be well aware that the news media or newspaper omits certain stories, people nevertheless tend to assume that events are recorded as they happen, and that the real world is somehow being reflected. In fact, news is just the re-presentation of the real events. However, “once information - right or wrong is reported or presented to the public, it has an impact on the perception of audiences” (Susskind, 2002). He also states that the media are a significant social agent, with the

potential to influence community perceptions. Its influence can have a serious impact on a particular group said to be a minority group by subjecting them to exclusionary pressures by implying that they hold ‘alien’ characteristics, which do not correspond with the values and ethos of the mainstream country.

According to Fairclough (1995: 79), news, as a discourse, sometimes speak for itself. For example, the news may be filmed or interviewed on television. In contrast, to become news in a newspaper, their news or stories are represented or reported by journalists, and are not always presented the way the discourse really is. As Fairclough (1995: 81) suggests, “reports are rarely even - handed with all the various voices represented. Some are given as very important, and some are treated as less important. Some are used to frame others. Some are presented by being taken up in the reporters’ voice”.

### **Muslims in Thailand and the Present Situations**

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the subsequent ‘war on terror,’ the refugee crisis and the Bali bombings has put the Muslim community worldwide under the spotlight. The term ‘Islamophobia’ has been used by some commentators and news writers in recent years to describe the increasing isolation and victimization of Muslims living in the West ([www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia)).

In Thailand, media have also focused on the situation in the deep South. The daily bombing and killing news can be found in every day newspapers. According to Aurel (2005), Muslims comprise 5.5 percent of Thailand’s population. While The images of Thai Muslims can also be found in news articles. Thus, having realized the importance of this issue, the researcher therefore is interested in the language used in newspapers and would like to conduct research focusing on how Muslims in Thailand are being portrayed and represented. In addition, a study of the representation in the media is a challenge for people who are interested in this field.

### **Objective and Research Question of the Study**

The objective of the study is to conduct an analysis of language used in news articles about Thai Muslims in Thailand. This study intends to answer the main research question: ‘How is language used to portray Thai Muslims in Thailand?’ through a study of their representation in printed media.

### **Significance of the Study**

Once this research has been undertaken, the findings that are concerned with language and representation would be useful for journalists. It would help in raising their awareness that they have to be careful with the style of news writing and presenting.

Moreover, the knowledge gained from this research can be used to be applied in the process of news writing for news writers, especially for those who are non-native speakers of English. This will enable the news writers or journalists to present and report the news effectively and correctively.

In addition, the results would benefit newsreaders to be aware that the representation of a particular group in news might always not what the group really is. Thus, as a reader they have to be careful of what they read. The result gained from this study could be at least a suggestion which will help news readers read and react to the news critically. Moreover, the knowledge, particularly about transitivity and the language of newspapers obtained from this study can be used to be applied in the teaching and learning of English for journalism. For example, the news articles can be use as authentic materials for studying language in newspaper.

Lastly, this study would benefit other researchers who are interested in this field to further study the topic of language in newspapers and the language of representation in other kinds of media.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study is focused on only the news related to Thai Muslim teachers, Thai Muslim students, and ponoh schools. The data is limited to the news related to those groups published in the Bangkok Post from the years 2004 and 2005. The study is text-based, therefore, pictures, the size of the font, and other semiotic features are not taken into account.

### **Definition of Terms**

‘Muslims news’ refers to news articles related to Thai Muslim and Islam published in the Bangkok Post between the years 2004 and 2005.

‘Muslims’ refers to Thai people whose religion is Islam. Muslims exist all over the county but who mostly live in the four southernmost provinces of Satun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

‘Texts’ refers to the twenty news articles being studied.

‘Transitivity analysis’ refers to an analysis of clause focus on process types or verbs used in clauses.