

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

English plays a significant role throughout the world with more than 300 million people speaking it as a first language. Moreover, it is semi-official language or official language in over 70 countries (Oxford Advance's English Learner's, 2005, p. 91). Thailand is a country in South East Asia using English as a second language. English plays important roles not only as a tool in mass communication but also in business, education, internet and tourist industries. As for mass communication, especially English in newspaper, it is used for not only presenting the news but also as a good resource for people wanting to increase their English competence: reading the news contents, increasing new vocabulary from daily news topics, and developing the idea by writing a letter to the newspaper editors.

Newspapers are a channel of mass media that have access to a large number of readers, which is a powerful, influential tool in communication. There are many local newspapers in Thailand presenting local and international news that serve their reader who both live inside and outside the kingdom. Aside from Thai local newspaper, English local newspapers in Thailand are also popular among the well-educated Thais and foreigners. Newspaper, therefore, in order to serve its readers, its previous days, it had

been limited to readers in specific places; there was a high cost to deliver printed version, and the delay of the news is hard to compare with the benefits from the online system-the Internet. Nowadays the Internet has become the center of mass media, since it has become an accessible network. Everyone can access the news just by logging in to the Internet and then they can get the fresh and up-to-date information. By saving the time, convenience, and cost for the reader, and by reaching a large number of readers in different places from all around the world, newspapers have changed their manner of presenting news from printed form to its new look in the online form.

To communicate with the readers in each section provided, some online newspapers provide space on the website for their readers. Since they can conveniently to hear their reader and the role of online newspaper has become more crucial, they provide the reader's spaces for feedback in the online comment section, for instance.

Dominick (2005, pp, 97-98) describes the online newspaper's characteristics and its advantages over traditional newspaper; it is not different from the print version, regarding the primary function, which is to gather, evaluate, and organize information. It is significantly different in the way of distributing the news to the readers. The traditional newspapers use paper and materials such as ink, presses, trucks, and delivery workers, but the online newspapers are transmitted digitally to computers and handheld wireless media. Moreover, the printed newspapers are limited by the news hole, the amount of news that can be printed in one edition.

There are three more advantages of the online newspapers. First, it does not have a limitation of time; besides, the full text of lengthy speeches, transcripts of interviews, and extensive tables and graphs can be accommodated easily. Second the online paper is able to be updated continuously. There are no edition deadlines for online papers. Third, the online papers are interactive; e-mail addresses, bulletin boards, and chat rooms allow readers to provide quick feedback to the paper. Many of them also have searchable archives and links to other site. Dominick states more on the relationship between the online and print out versions of the newspaper, which varies from paper to paper. Some large papers have made the Web version an autonomous operation, separate from the print side. Many other papers, however, have the Web staff working under the direction of the newspaper's editors.

Thailand's leading English newspapers also change their trends of presenting the news from printed version to the online version. Thailand has two major English language newspapers on general news, the Bangkok Post and The Nation. Both are large and excellent newspapers and over the years have been leading newspapers in Asia, having won many awards from international trade organization. There are not only expatriates who have rated and rated Thailand's newspapers status as among the best in Asia but also by Thais. The Bangkok Post was founded by an American editor, Alexander McDonald, in 1946 with its staff, a combination of foreigners and Thais, while The Nation was founded in 1971 by a group of journalists led by Suthichai Yoon. The Bangkok Post provides more foreign news and is relatively conservative. The Bangkok Post provides the contents on politics,

business and so on. To communicate with their readers online, the Bangkok Post also provides a link to “Share your thoughts” below the political topics every day. The readers, both English natives and non-native speakers, are able to post their online comments without showing their real name, gender, or education. (Prado, 2010)

### ***The History of Bangkok Post Online***

To understand the influential and powerful English newspapers in Thailand, it is necessary to mention their history. The Bangkok Post has a large target group, both foreigners living in Thailand and well-educated Thais. To survive in their business, the Bangkok Post has added the online version. The Post Publishing website provides the information of the Bangkok Post Online, which was launched in 2005 with its website *www.bangkokpost.com*. The Bangkok Post is the number one English-language local news and lifestyle portal of Thailand, as measured by Alexa and Truehits. The website leverages the strength of Post Publishing in the most credible English language news and information news and content into a unique position among Thai portals as the world’s window to Thailand. The readers are diverse, from well-educated and new generation local Thai people, to expatriates in Thailand, visiting foreigners and Thai people living overseas. The Bangkok Post website has a new community portal in its network *Guru Bangkok online*, which is the online society of English-speaking people in Bangkok.

The Bangkok Post's feature editorials usually consist of several sections: business, opinion, feature, travel, leisure, entertainment auto, life, tech, job forum, and classifieds. Their sections are devoted to general news, financial news sports and entertainment. Although the Bangkok Post Online and Bangkok Post daily newspaper share common features-for example, both contain international, national, and local news-their feedback has different characteristics. The printed newspaper's feedback from the readers may be delayed, while that of the online newspaper is immediate. Online readers can post their comments on the news topic immediately.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Providing a comment section is a very effective way of getting the reader to participate in the process of developing an idea; therefore, the Bangkok Post Online provides this to its readers. Since the internet is the channel of mass communication that reaches the largest numbers of readers, reporting on Thailand's political crisis is also presented on the internet from the different news sources and websites. Since Bangkok Post has changed its trend in presenting the news in English on the internet, besides their printed version, its readers follow the news both through the Bangkok Post's website and printed version. Since the political topics were heated opinion, the Bangkok Post challenges the readers reading the news besides posting their comments on the space provided. This makes communication between the Bangkok Post and its readers more effective. Therefore, for the varied readers

of the Bangkok Post coming from the different backgrounds-such as in English competences, nationality, gender, age, occupation, education, and opinion-the Bangkok Post Online has become the online community in English that consists of a wide range of English, and it is a resourceful site for English learners, besides books and magazines.

Regarding Thailand's political crisis in 2010, which had its roots in September 2006 (CNN World), this attracted a large number of the Bangkok Post's readers to post their comments on the Bangkok Post website.

Thailand's political crisis, which started in the year 2006, developed into the largest protest in Bangkok during April and May 2010. The Bangkok Post online presented the hot issue about Thailand political crisis on their website every day.

Under the political news articles, readers are allowed to post their comments in the space provided under each topic. The comments from each commentator are interesting because they reflect the writer's intention, attitudes, beliefs, etc. The choice of words they use in their comments is one of the linguistic features that should be studied because it may reflect the educational background of the online readers, for instance. The researcher, therefore, is interested to study choice of words used by commentator and types of meaning regarding the words they employ.

The Bangkok Post Online is the only English-language online newspaper in Thailand which presents both international news and local news and provides comment section for the readers. The section "Share your thoughts" is provided daily below political news stories. This section is

separated from the Forum section. The “Share your thoughts” section is where English speaking foreigners and Thais participate in sharing ideas on the political news. The political issues seem to attract a lot of readers, as the researcher has found the number of the commentator on political issues is higher than those of other topics such as business, education, social news, and so on. The researcher chooses comments on political news on the Bangkok Post Online comment section because they may suggest a significant trend of word choice; moreover, the types of meaning from each comment will consist of significance for the society in a certain time.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the problem discussed above-word choices used in the comments and types of meaning from the different commentators on the Bangkok Post Online-the political news section will be analyzed in this study. The details are as follows:

1. To examine online comments on political news to discover types of words chosen by commentators.
2. To find out a trend of word choices employed in online comments on political news.
3. To interpret type of meanings conveyed through choice of words.

## **Research Question**

In order to find the answers for each purpose of the study-types of words chosen by the commentator, trend of word choice and type of meanings- the researcher's questions are formed as follows:

RQ1: What are the types of words found in online comments on political news?

RQ2: What is the trend of word choices used by the commentator?

RQ3: How does the choice of words convey the intended meaning?

RQ4: How does the choice of words, reflected by the types of meaning, express the commentators' intentions regarding political news?

## **Delimitation of the Study**

This study will focus on choice of words used by commentators from the Bangkok Post Online's comment section. The selected 2,797 comments from 50 articles during April 10<sup>th</sup> - May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 are analyzed in this study because the researcher found that a large number of commentators posted their comments with a wide ranges of word choices, higher than other news section at the same time; besides, the Bangkok Post Online is accessible around the world for the readers, which means that this study should have value by analyzing the ways the commentators express their attitudes, feelings, and opinions on the Thai political situation at that time. The study

will focus on choice of words: connotative, denotative, abstract, concrete, specific, general, slang, jargon and register. Also, types of meaning-affective meaning, referential meaning, social meaning and unseen meaning-are included.

Spelling, grammatical features, style of writing, parts of speech (article, conjunction, preposition), and common verbs which lack connotative qualities will not be analyzed in this research. However, the errors on the comments in both writing and spelling are corrected before the analysis procedure.

### **The Significance of the Study**

The expectation from this study is to reveal the commentators' points of view on the Thai political situation from the Bangkok Post Online in "Share your thoughts," focusing on semantic features of word choices. This study may also be used as a guideline for English language learners wanting to learn how to choose words to express their intention, feelings, and attitudes, for instance. In addition to answering the research questions and creating a guideline for English learners, the researcher that the findings in this research on word choice will relate to a wide range of other English newspapers.

## **Definition of Terms**

The related significant terms in this study of choice of words from the Bangkok Post Online, the comments under political news topics, are defined as follows:

Discussion board refers to a tool which allows groups to communicate online under the political news in the Bangkok Post Online.

Choice of words or diction refers to the manner in which something is expressed in words by the user to express their feeling and attitude in specific purpose and it varies according to speaking and writing situation. (Willis, 1973, pp. 209-210)

Denotation refers to the direct or literal meaning of each word appearing and defined in dictionary. (Altick, 1962, p. 4)

Connotation refers to an idea of suggestion by a word, in addition to its main meaning. (Oxford Advanced Learner's, 2005, p. 308)

Abstract refers to ideas or concepts; they have no physical referents. Its expresses a quality apart from the things that have qualities. (Willis, 1973, p. 225)

Concrete refers to the objects or events that are available to the senses, which tend to be more precise and vigorous than the abstract (Willis, 1973, p. 224).

Specific words refers to the words that more precise to individual name, term and objects (Willis, 1973, p. 222).

General words refer to the words that are less precise and more general, referring to groups of things, people in general (Willis, 1973, p. 223).

Jargon refers to the words or expressions that are used by particular professions or group of people which are difficult for others to understand (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005, p. 796).

Slang refers to a word, expression or special use of language found mainly in very informal speech, often in the usage of particular groups of people (Swan, 2005, p. 526).

Register refers the level and style of writing or speech which is usually appropriate to the situation in which it is used (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005, p. 1,226).

## **Summary**

This chapter discusses the significance of English in Thailand and its influence on the online newspapers-particularly the Bangkok Post Online, which provides a comment space under the political topics during 10<sup>th</sup> April-15<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Readers commented on Thai political situation, which is the most popular topic, interesting to a larger number of readers than other topics at that time. Furthermore, the comments on politics from the commentator are a good source of word choices for expressing their opinion on the political situation at that time.