

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Human beings are categorized as social animals living together in groups. As a consequence, they invent various ways of communication to achieve success when communicating within their group. Various methods of communication have been created to convey messages such as language, paintings, smoke, codes, and printing. But of all of these, language plays the greatest role as a tool to express feelings, share thoughts, transfer knowledge and communicate holistically. Although language is regarded as the best form of communication, it sometimes causes misunderstandings due to errors in communication. During a conversation, a speaker is able to choose what to convey or how to react with other people in different situations, depending on the emotions of the speaker; for example, a frustrated person speaks badly to people because he cannot control his emotions. Knowing that it is not good to say bad things, (s)he still chooses to express bad feelings through words. (S)He uses those words to hurt people's feelings such as "Keep your opinion to yourself!" "Please mind your own business!", "Stop butting into my life!" These examples show that language is an effective tool for communication. From the above examples, we see another side of language used in a different way. Therefore, language can be used as a tool for people to create misunderstanding in conversation for some reasons.

People engage in conversations to accomplish their needs. Sometimes, the conversation contains more non-literal than literal meanings, which may cause ambiguity. Ambiguity in conversation is normally used to avoid an inappropriate situation or to save face on the part of an interlocutor, so that the addressee has to interpret the actual meaning. The interpretation may, however, also have variable meanings depending on the context and situation. A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics defines the term **pragmatics**, i.e. the study of ambiguous conversations, as a study of language from the users' viewpoint, the way they choose to communicate, and the usage of language for social interaction. One part of pragmatics involves speech acts. (Crystal 301) Hence, pragmatics is a study about sentences of the speaker that contain meanings distinct from the word or sentence meaning. According to Crystal, the purpose of pragmatics is to avoid abruptness, flattery, tentativeness, request or question and to diffuse responsibility because in some situations, it is not appropriate to say things in a straightforward manner.

Speech acts, i.e. the act of language, how people do things with their words, is one of the foundations of pragmatics. The founder of speech acts theory, John L. Austin, introduced the concept in 1955, in a lecture delivered at Harvard University. His lectures, published as "How to Do Things with Words" in 1962, two years after his death, were later revised and developed by one of his student, John R. Searle, to become speech act theory. (Archer, Ajimer and Wichmann 35) Searle classified speech acts into five categories which are: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations as referred to in table 1 below.

Table 1.1 Classification of speech acts

Typology of Speech Act	Examples
Representatives	Reports, Announcements
Directives	Urges, Commands
Commissives	Offers, Promises
Expressives	Thanks, Congratulations
Declarations	Sentencing, Baptisms

(Leech 211)

Searle defines Representatives as speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition, e.g. report, announce. Directives cause the listener to take a particular action, e.g. urge, command. Commissives commit a speaker to some future action, e.g. offer, a promise. Expressives express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition e.g. thank you statements, congratulations. Declarations change the reality in accord with the proposition of the declaration, e.g. sentence, baptism. As speech acts have gathered a great amount of interest from researchers who desire to extend the study of verbal behavior, these have become a major topic in the linguistic subfield of pragmatics (Archer, Ajimer and Wichmann 40).

Besides speech acts theory, linguistic implicature can also be clarified for better understanding by the so-called **the co-operative principle**. When having a conversation, people are not trying to confuse each other or withhold relevant information from each other to reach an effective communication. Therefore, both the speaker and the addressee should exchange an appropriate amount of information, tell the truth, be relevant, avoid an ambiguity and give the clearest information. According

to George Yule, implicature is an additional conveyed meaning that must be more than just what the meaning of the words is. If people wish to understand the implication, they must be speaking in the same level of cultural assumptions. In other words, both participants are expected to understand what the implication is about. Yule said that implicature is primary examples of what is being communicated rather than what is said. Hence, the co-operative principle must first be assumed to be in operation in order to understand the unsaid (35-37). Grice analyzed the co-operative principle into four maxims: those of quantity, quality, relation and manner. “Quantity” signifies that a speaker should provide enough information as needed. “Quality” signifies that the speaker must tell the truth or fact. “Relation” signifies that the speaker has to be relevant. “Manner” signifies that the speaker avoids ambiguous answers. When a speaker breaks any of these maxims, such an act is called “flouting maxims” (26-27). Interestingly, speech acts and the co-operative principle can be found in both spoken and written language. Therefore, literary text, such as novel becomes one of the most popular sources for researchers to study in pragmatics.

To elaborate on the latter, literature has two main categories, fiction and non-fiction. Novels are a genre of fiction. A novel is an invented prose narrative that is usually long and complex and deals especially with human experience through a connected sequence of events (Merriam-Webster Par. 1). Conversation appears in literature as dialogues between characters to make a whole story run smoothly and characterize the protagonist’s characters. Therefore, a novel is another option to study people’s conversations. Since the various characters handle various kinds of situations differently, their conversations deliver their emotions in the story. This helps the reader to understand the story rather than using the context only. A novel contains written

words that readers use to interpret the story using their own cognition of dialogue. With different background knowledge, readers may not fully understand some points of the story as the writer intended. Non-fiction, the writing about facts or real events rather than imaginative narration such as bibliography or history (Merriam-Webster Par. 3), is not covered by this study. For this research, a Thai novel is chosen as focal point. It will be studied to examine patterns of Thai conversation through a linguistic perspective.

Since a good novel cannot be judged by itself, it has to be read and awarded by a reliable organization, numerous literary awards around the world are extended to honor selected writers and those awards can be divided by genre, language, country and region. A famous literary award for ASEAN writers, in South East Asia, is the S.E.A. Write Award (Southeast Asian Write Awards). In 1982, this award went to a Thai novel *The Judgment*, by Chart Korbjitti which is the main focus for this research,

The Judgment actually received two awards, i.e. the Thai National Book Award in 1981 and the S.E.A Writers Award in 1982. The content deals with the tragic story of a man accused and misjudged by the local villagers who claim that Fak, the main character in this story, has had a special relationship with his stepmother since the death of his father. Fak tries his best to explain the situation, but no one takes him seriously nor listens to him. This novel portrays the damage caused by unfair and baseless accusations in the character's life by local Thai society. The novel became a bestseller because of the two awards, but also due to continuous reprints, more than 48 times between 1981 to 2013. Moreover, it has been translated into many languages, including, English, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, German, and French. *The Judgment* is one of the S.E.A. literature award bestsellers of all times. Additionally, it was made into a television series for Channel 3 in 1985 by Sodsai Pantumkomol, and two movie

versions were produced, one in 1989, by Permpol Cheiarun and another in 2004, by Pantum Thongsung. In February 2013, it was made into a musical show for the “World Symposium on Global Encounters in Southeast Asian Performing Arts,” by Bangkok University. As referred to earlier, the theme of *The Judgment* is the unfair judgment of a person who becomes a victim of a critical society. This novel is a good story in which to study conversations or (mis)judgments by villagers which impact on the protagonist, a fact that becomes clear as the reader becomes familiar with the story through its conversations. Since this novel has been reprinted many times, it can be stated that *The Judgment* has been able to attract a sizeable reader population. Conversations in it include mostly accusations of local villagers targeting the protagonist. The author conveys a message of how conflicts in Thai society can emerge through conversation. Some of the utterances are naturally ambiguous and could be analyzed by Searle’s taxonomy and Grice’s co-operative principle. Therefore, it is interesting and worthwhile to study this Thai novel from the perspective of linguistics, focusing on speech act theory. Even though some research work has been conducted on Thai novels employing speech acts theory, none of them contain conversations of local Thai people as in *The Judgment*.

As previously mentioned, speech acts can be interpreted in positive or negative ways. Hence, this study aims to examine various types of utterances in *The Judgment* in conversations in the original Thai version, using Searle’s theory, and to arrive at implications of the conversations in order to reach an improved understanding of the novel. Utterances were chosen from dialogues between the people and the protagonist, who decides to escape into alcohol in an effort to forget what people say and do to him, eventually dying from alcohol abuse. The selected utterances from the Thai version of

The Judgment are categorized by speech act typology by form, function and frequency. In addition, the utterances that cause misunderstandings are analyzed using Grice's co-operative principle to assess their implications. The results are meant to show in a more in-depth way the clarification of speech act typology and the implications of misunderstanding that so often appears in Thai conversations.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purposes of this study can be described as follows:

1. To identify and examine types of utterances in *The Judgment* using Searle's speech act theory to arrive at the usage frequency following Searle's taxonomy.
2. To analyze the selected misunderstanding utterances based on the co-operative principle of Grice to identify flouting maxims for the underlying meanings of *The Judgment's* conversations.

1.3 Research Questions: How do conversations in *The Judgment* portray a dramatic life of Fak through the use of speech act and the co-operative principle?

1. How are the conversations in the novel analyzed in terms of speech act theory?
2. What are the speech act typologies that can be found in *The Judgment*?
3. What are the flouted maxims in the misunderstood conversations in *The Judgment*?

1.4 Research Design, Scope and Methods

This research is conducted as a qualitative analysis focusing on conversation in a Thai novel, *The Judgment*, written by Chart Korbjitti. A Thai version of *The Judgment* is analyzed pragmatically based on the speech act theory of Searle that is thereafter applied to examine utterances that create misunderstandings within conversations in the novel. Only sentences of people talking to or talking about the protagonist were selected from each chapter and categorized into five types of Speech Act to determine the frequency of pragmatic use in this novel. The result is meant to rank types of Speech Acts used in this novel. The same sets of selected utterances are also studied based on the co-operative principle of Grice to clarify the misunderstandings of conversations. The outcome should help readers to better understand actions resulting from vague conversations that eventually impact on the protagonist.

1.5 Educational Advantages

This research is meant to help clarify and offer a wider and better interpretation of Chart Korbjitti's *The Judgment* through Searle's taxonomy and Grice's co-operative principle by identifying the types of utterances used in this novel, while Grice's maxims will show the results of conversations that break the co-operative principle's maxims leading to the protagonist's dramatic life. This research is meant to showcase the importance of communication through the lens of Searle's taxonomy and Grice's maxims. It is hoped that this research becomes a guideline for future research on Thai novels, *The Judgment* included, and other literary works through the lens of Searle's speech acts theory and Grice's co-operative principle.