# Analysis of Language Transfers
# from Thai to English in Three Types of Discourse:
# Explanatory; Descriptive and Persuasive

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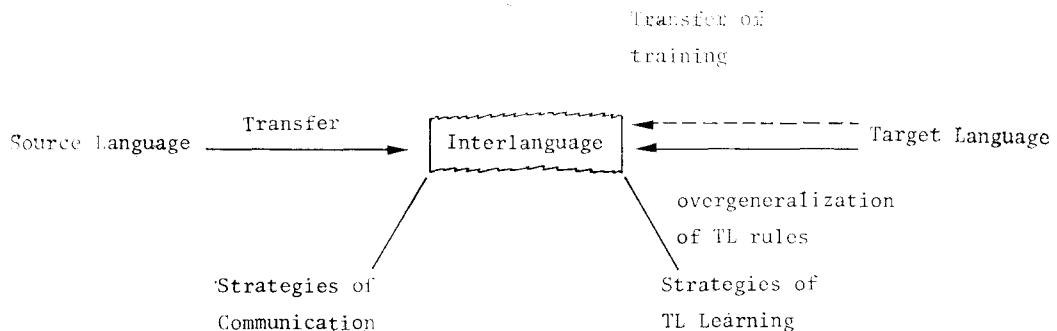Chulalongkorn University
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## INTRODUCTION

I should like to point out at the outset that the present study on language transfer phenomenon from Thai to English is text-bound rather than attempting at delineating the psycholinguistic processes of transfers. In other words, Selinker's-five processes vital in accounting for 'interlanguage,' a succession of stages of acquiring proficiency in a target language, the so-called 'language transfer,' 'transfer of training,' 'strategies of second language learning,' 'strategies of second language communication,' and 'overgeneralization of target language linguistic material' have been combined to explain the surface manifestation of language transfer, or Selinker's 'interlanguage.'

The proposed 'language transfer chart' has as backdrops Selinker's horizontal transfer scheme and Krzeszowski's vertical one, which may be presented in diagrams below:
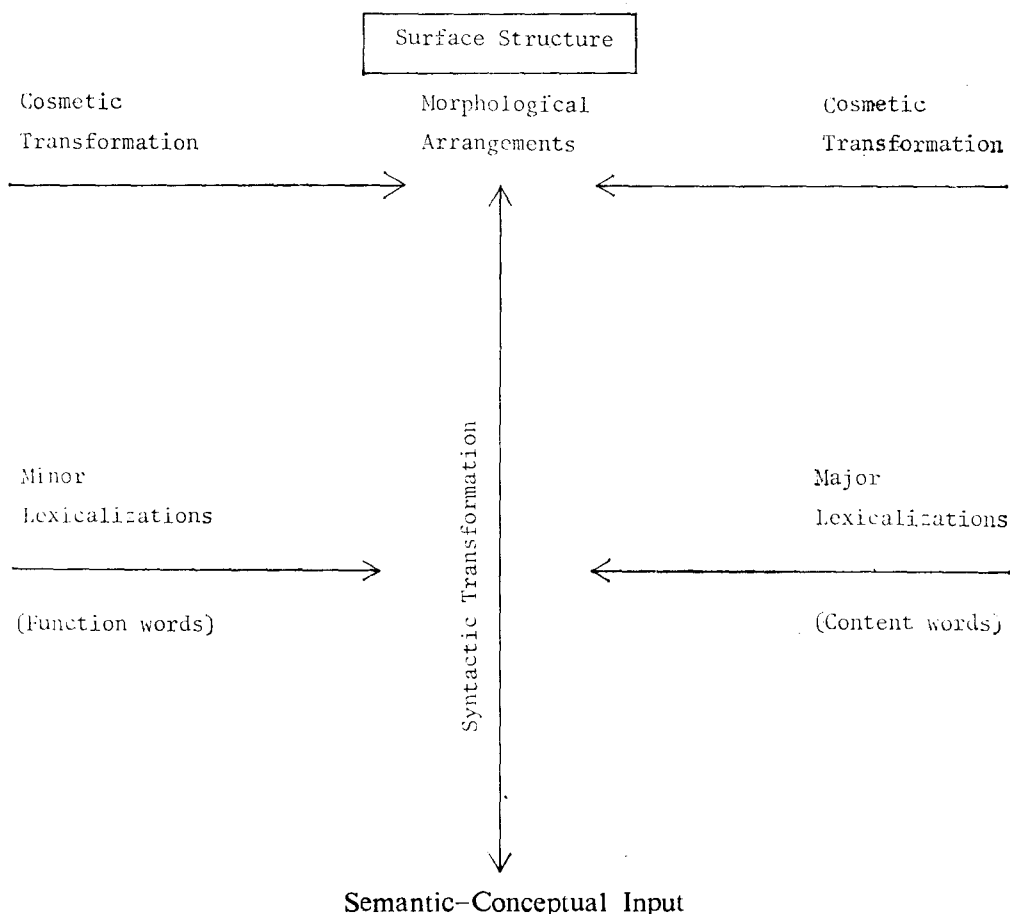
### Figure I

Behavioristic Horizontal Transfer

Transfer of
training

Source Language —— Transfer ——→ Interlanguage ◄— — — — — — — Target Language

overgeneralization
of TL rules

Strategies of                          Strategies of
Communication                          TL Learning

(Krzeszowski, p. 77)

## Figure II

Vertical Transfer

(Transformation-Generativistic)

Surface Structure

Cosmetic
Transformation

Morphological
Arrangements

Cosmetic
Transformation

Minor
Lexicalizations

Major
Lexicalizations

(Function words)

Syntactic Transformation

(Content words)

Semantic—Conceptual Input

The language transfer phenomenon in this paper includes all types of mapping out from the source language, Thai, to the target language, English. In other words, the deviants and non-deviants are accounted from the study includes Krzeszowski's 3 types of errors: **type 1**-universal errors regardless of the source language such as omission of articles, inflections, tense and aspect markers and function words; **type 2**-language specific errors such as errors concerning word order, grammatical systems and rules; and **type 3**-errors of the second order or Corder's 'mistake' which are performance errors such as 'mere slips.' It should be noted that the study does not attempt to explain the distinctions between Widdowson's 'expression rules' governing communicative competence and 'reference rules' governing linguistic

competence in the mapping out of language transfer elements, nor does the study attempt at explaining psychological processes of language transfer. The study, in short, is text-bound focussing on the surface features of language transfers.

## THE STUDY

### - Rationale

In constructing the language transfer chart for the graphic mode, linguistic, socio-linguistic, stylistic and organizational factors incorporate the patterns of transfers.

### The Proposed Language Transfer Chart

| LEVEL | Types | | | Frequency of occurrences | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SYNTAX | Basic | | Complex | | | |
| LEXIS | Wrong word | Weak word | Correct word | | | |
| MEANING | FD* | PD* | ND* | | | |
| ORGANIZATION/ MECHANICS | Phrasal | Sentential | Paragraph | | | |
| STYLE/ Genre/Tone | FD | PD | ND | | | |
| FIELD Topic/Function | Full Deviation | Partial Deviation | No Deviation | | | |

FD* = Full Deviation
PD = Partial Deviation
ND = No Deviation

### - Purposes of the study

1. To analyse the transfers from Thai to English caused by four factors: linguistic (syntax, lexis, meaning), organizational (sequence of development), style (genre, tone) and field (topic, function).

2. To compare and contrast the language transfers in three types of discourse : descriptive, explanatory and persuasive.

3. To map out patterns of transfers for application purposes.

### - Procedures

#### 1. DATA COLLECTION

Fifteen English major students from Chulalongkorn University (8) and Kasetsart University (7) translated from Thai into English passages illustrating three types of discourse (Appendix I) : explanatory (Passage I-Hansawadee), descriptive (Passage II-Siam) and Persuasive (Passage III-Merle Park and Rolex). The subjects were allowed to use a dictionary if they wished to.

## 2. DATA ANALYSIS

Fifteen pieces of Thai——→English translation were analysed to discover the patterns of deviant and non-deviant of successful transfers. Classifications were made in accordance with transfer levels and types presented in the chart. Transfer elements were tallied and entered as frequency of occurrences in the chart.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF TRANFER LABELS WITH EXAMPLES

### 3.1 Syntax

Deviants resulting from the influence of Thai language were counted and classified into "basic" and "complex".

Basic syntactic deviant-: e.g. subject-verb agreement.

Example : Hongsawadee give me..............................

Complex syntactic deviant-: e.g. strings of relative clauses.

Example : Mons in Hongsawadee had already lost since the time of

Alongphaya which they killed...................

### 3.2 Lexis

Deviants are classified into three types: wrong word, weak word, and correct word.

*Wrong word* – the transfer is completely wrong in both Thai and English meaning of the word

Example : good at imitating foreign civilization

Thai = "ถ่ายแบบ"     = English-follows, copies

*Weak word* – the lexical transfer still carries some meaning of Thai which does not correspond to the English one

Example : She said rather funny that

Thai = "ติดตลก"     = English humorously

Example : Siam is the nation by the real name of the word.

"สยามเป็นประชาชาติโดย *นัยอันแท้จริงแห่งศัพท์*"

English = ...........by the true meaning of the word

*Correct word* – In most cases the Thai words are ambiguous and can carry the meaning chosen by the subjects which turns out to be wrong in English.

Examples :

Siam is a nation according to the true meaning of the vocabulary.
Thai = ศัพท์   English = word (not-vocabulary)
...............settled into Thai border
Thai = เข้าเขตไทย English = Thai territory
The above two cases are classified as "correct words"
"ND" having "ND-no deviation" meaning since in Thai
"ศัพท์" and "เขต" can also mean "vocabulary" and "border."

**3.3 Meaning** : Syntactic and lexical transfers have influence on the transfer of meaning from Thai to English.

FD = Full Deviation : the meaning transferred is completely wrong.

Example : Mons in Hongsawadee had already lost.

Thai = ละลายหายไปหมด

English = annihilate

PD = Partial deviation : the meaning transferred is partially correct

Example : westerners wrote "peku."

Thai = ฝรั่งเขียนเปกู

English = use

therefore "wrote" was classified as correct word; meaning-PD

ND = No deviation : the meaning in English is wrong but the words or syntactic patterns used are ambiguous and could be correct in Thai.

Example : She acted for the first time in 1954.

Thai = แสดง

English = performed

**3.4 Organization/Mechanics**

Another factor affecting the transfers from Thai to English is organization/mechanics. Organization here means the structuring of words, sentences and the total paragraph. Mechanics refers to pauses, gaps and punctuation.

*Phrasal*

The errors occur are at the phrasal level such as word order.

Example : Because people have Thai being.

Thai = ด้วยประชาชนมีความเป็นไทย = English–with the spirit of being = Thais, the people....

*Sentential*

The deviants are at the sentence level such as relative clauses.

Example : Merle Park's colleague created excellent works always.

Thai = เพื่อนร่วมงาน คู่ใจ เมอร์ล พาร์ค สร้างผลงานเยี่ยมยอดอยู่เสมอ

= English – Merle Park and her closest companion always create masterpieces.

*Paragraph*

Deviants occur at paragraph or discourse level. For example, in Thai the message is rendered in 2 paragraphs, whereas the English one can correctly be put in only a paragraph.

### 3.5 Style/Genre

The types of discourse studied here are : explanatory, descriptive and persuasive. In most cases the style-genre of the discourse was transferred correctly. In very few cases that the discourse deviates, e.g. deviation from descriptive to explanatory or from persuasive to explanatory. For example, in translating the Rolex advertisement, some subjects put more emphasis on "Merle Park" instead of her companion "Rolex"; therefore, part of the discourse is explanatory focussing on Merle Park more than on the fact that she wears a "Rolex."

### 3.6 Field/Function/Topic

The domain of messages may deviate completely (FD) or partially (PD). Deviation can arise from omission or distortion of the message, either syntactically or lexically. The deviation may occur at the phrasal, sentential and paragraph level. Deviation in "field" is more inclusive than deviation in "meaning." However, at times the two coincide.

## 4. RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

### Table 1

|  | Explanatory Discourse | | Total No. of Transfers = 225 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Syntax* | *Frequency* | *Percent* | *Rank Order* |
| Basic Syntax | 45 | 20.0 | 1 |
| Complex Syntax | 20 | 8.889 | 5 |
| *Lexis* | | | |
| Wrong Word | 22 | 9.778 | 4 |
| Weak Word | 6 | 2.667 | 11 |
| Correct Word | 9 | 4.0 | 10 |
| *Meaning* | | | |
| FD | 10 | 4.444 | 9 |
| PD | 26 | 11.556 | 3 |
| ND | 39 | 17.333 | 2 |
| *Organization/Mechanics* | | | |
| Phrasal | 6 | 2.667 | 11 |
| Sentential | 12 | 5.333 | 8 |
| Paragraph | – | | |
| *Style* | | | |
| FD | – | | |
| PD | – | | |
| ND | 15 | 6.667 | 6 |
| *Field* | | | |
| FD | – | | |
| PD | – | | |
| ND | 15 | 6.667 | 6 |

From Table I we can see that transfers at the basic syntax level is most frequent in explanatory discourse. Deviations in meaning "ND" and, "PD" rank second and third respectively. Uses of "weak word" and deviation of phrasal organization are the least frequent.

## Table 2

| Syntax | Descriptive Discourse Frequency | Percent | Total No. of Transfers = 139 Rank Order |
|---|---|---|---|
| Basic Syntax | 15 | 10.791 | 3 |
| Complex | 7 | 5.036 | 9 |
| *Lexis* | | | |
| Wrong Word | 9 | 6.475 | 6 |
| Weak Word | 1 | .719 | 15 |
| Correct Word | 22 | 15.827 | 1 |
| *Meaning* | | | |
| FD | 15 | 10.791 | 3 |
| PD | 9 | 6.475 | 6 |
| ND | 19 | 13.669 | 2 |
| *Organization/Mechanic* | | | |
| Phrasal | 6 | 4.317 | 10 |
| Sentential | 6 | 4.317 | 10 |
| Paragraph | — | | |
| *Style* | | | |
| FD | 2 | 1.439 | 13 |
| PD | 4 | 2.878 | 12 |
| ND | 9 | 6.475 | 0 |
| *Field* | | | |
| FD | 1 | .719 | 15 |
| PD | 12 | 8.633 | 5 |
| ND | 2 | 1.439 | 13 |

Table 2 indicates that the most common transfer in descriptive discourse is "lexis-correct word." Transfers of meaning with no deviation from Thai (ND) and with full deviation (FD) rank second and third. Deviation in basic syntax also ranks third. The least frequent type of transfer is "lexis-weak word" and "field-full deviation."

## Table 3

| Syntax | Persuasive Discourse Frequency | Total No. of Transfers = 236 Percent | Rank Order |
|---|---|---|---|
| Basic Syntax | 30 | 12.712 | 3 |
| Complex Syntax | 24 | 10.169 | 4 |
| *Lexis* | | | |
| Wrong Word | 14 | 5.932 | 7 |
| Weak Word | 10 | 4.237 | 10 |
| Correct Word | 12 | 5.085 | 8 |
| *Meaning* | | | |
| FD | 11 | 4.661 | 9 |
| PD | 29 | 12.288 | 2 |
| ND | 36 | 15.254 | 1 |
| *Organization/Mechanics* | | | |
| Phrasal | 16 | 6.780 | 6 |
| Sentential | 19 | 8.051 | 5 |
| Paragraph | 3 | 1.271 | 16 |
| *Style* | | | |
| FD | 2 | 0.847 | 17 |
| PD | 4 | 1.695 | 14 |
| ND | 9 | 3.814 | 11 |
| *Field* | | | |
| FD | 4 | 1.695 | 14 |
| PD | 6 | 2.542 | 13 |
| ND | 7 | 2.966 | 12 |

From Table 3 we can see that the most frequent transfer is "lixis-no deviation." Lexis "Partial deviation" is second and deviations of basic syntax rank third. The least frequent type of transfer is in "Style" with "full deviation."

## 5. DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESULTS

In explanatory discourse the focus is on the subject, the city called Hongsawadee. The most common deviant is basic syntax indicating that Thai students still commit "Type I" errors such as subject-verb agreement and inflections since these features do not occur in That at all.

In descriptive discourse, the language is elaborate containing difficult words. The two most frequent types of transfer is "Lexis-correct word" and "Meaning no deviation", indicating that the subjects interpreted the message erroneously and used the wrong interpretation in rendering the message in English. This fact coupled with lack of adequate English vocabulary lead to "Meaning-ND" deviants.

In persuasive discourse the deviants labelled "Meaning–ND" are again most frequent. Ranked second and third are "Meaning–PD" and "Basic syntax." This leads us to conclude that in translating Thai into English, the subjects were hampered by their Thai habits. The surface features were distorted by co-ordinate translation scheme.

**Table 4**

**Comparative Analysis**

| Rank Order of Frequencies | Explanatory | | Descriptive | | Persuasive | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | Type | % | Type | % | Type |
| 1 | 20 | Basic syntax | 16 | –Lexis–Correct word | 15 | Meaning–ND |
| 2 | 17 | Meaning–ND | 14 | –Meaning–ND | 12 | Meaning–PD |
| 3 | 12 | Meaning–PD | 11 | –Basic syntax<br>–Meaning–FD | 13 | Basic syntax |
| 4 | 10 | Lexis–Wrong Word | 9 | Field–PD | 10 | Complex syntax |
| 5 | 9 | Complex syntax | 6 | –Meaning–PD<br>–Style–ND<br>–Lexis–Wrong word | 8 | Organization–sentential |
| 6 | 7 | Style ND<br>Field–ND | 5 | Complex syntax | 7 | Organization–phrasal |
| 7 | 5 | Orga.–Sentential | 4 | –Orga. Sentential<br>–Orga. paragraph | 6 | Lexis–wroug word |
| 8 | 4 | Meaning–FD | 3 | Style–PD | 5.1 | Lexis–correct word |
| 9 | 4 | Lexis–Correct word | 1 | –Style–FD<br>–Field–ND | 4.7 | Meaning–FD |
| 10 | 3 | Lexis–Weak word<br>Orga.–Phrasal | 7 | Lexis–Weak word<br>Field–FD | 4.2 | Lexis–weak word |
| 11 | – | – | – | – | 3.8 | Style–ND |
| 12 | – | – | – | – | 3 | Field–ND |
| 13 | – | – | – | – | 2.5 | Field–PD |
| 14 | – | – | – | – | 1.7 | Field–FD<br>Style–PD |
| 15 | – | – | – | – | 1.3 | Orga.–paragraph |
| 16 | – | – | – | – | 0.9 | Style–FD |

Table 4 reveals that the transfers of the following types are common and very frequent in the three types of discourse : basic syntax, meaning–no–deviation and meaning–partial deviation. The transfers of "Lexis–weak word" rank tenth in all types of discourse under analysis. For explanatory discourse "field" and "style" are correctly transferred, while deviations in both style and field occur in descriptive

and persuasive discourse. In descriptive discourse the deviation to explanatory discourse occurs because the subjects used factual and straightforward lexis and syntax of explanatory discourse in their description of "Siam". In persuasive discourse unconventional uses of lexis and syntax lead to deviants caused by distortion of meaning and misplaced emphasis on Merle Park instead of the watch she wears.

## 6. APPLICATIONS

It is apparent from the analysis that the subjects could tackle explanatory discourse better than the other two types of discourse. Register seems to affect their translation skills to a great extent. Their weakness in interpreting the mother-tongue, especially in the descriptive discourse containing eleborate vocabulary and complex syntactic patterns, lead them to deviants labelled "Lexis-correct word" "meaning-no deviation. It is clear that the majority of the subjects were co-ordinate belinguals. They tended to translate word by word rather than attempting at the essence of the message. Language teachers should encourage meaningfulness of transfers rather than exact word-by-word translation. Enhancing interpretive skills of deciphering the message in the mother-tongue will no doubt leads to better rendering of the message into English.

The study leads to the conclusion that the two criteria for successful translation are:

(1) compound bilingualism and
(2) knowledge and interpretive skills of all language registers in the mother-longue.

## REFERENCES

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**ให้แปลเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ**

1. "ที่หงสาวดี ข้าพเจ้าติดใจมากกว่าที่อื่น หรือถ้าพูดอย่างสำนวนฝรั่งก็พูดได้ว่า มี
รอยพิมพ์ใจแก่ข้าพเจ้ามาก เพราะเป็นเมืองที่ข้าพเจ้าได้ยินชื่อมาแต่เล็กแต่น้อย เป็นเมืองที่ต้อง
เล่าเรียนประวัติศาสตร์ทั้งในทางดีและทางชื่นชม เราเคยเข้าใจว่า หงสาวดีเป็นเมืองมอญ แต่
เดี๋ยวนี้หามอญไม่ได้ มอญในหงสาวดีได้ละลายหายไปเสียหมดแล้ว หมดไปตั้งแต่สมัยอลองพญา
ซึ่งเขาประหารพ่นฆ่าตลอดจนพระเจ้า พระสงฆ์ ชาวมอญได้พากันอพยพไปทางใต้บ้าง เข้าเขต
ไทยบ้าง แม้แต่ชื่อหงสาวดีก็เกือบจะไม่มีใครรู้จักเขาเรียกกันว่า พะโค และฝรั่งเขียน เปกู"

(หลวงวิจิตรวาทการ)

2. "สยามเป็นประชาชาติโดยนัยอันแท้จริงแห่งศัพท์ ด้วยประชาชนมีความเป็นไทย
และเสรีภาพเป็นที่รัก มีความสงบสุข และไม่ถือโทษเป็นอุดมทัศนีย์ มีการถ่ายแบบอารยธรรม
ของต่างประเทศเป็นอัจฉริยวุฒิ มีอาณาเขตแน่นแฟ้น มีขุมทรัพย์มโหฬาร มีความมั่นคงแน่
ตระหนัก เปิดประตูรับพลโลกทั้งมวลโดยยื่นมือจับฉันมิตร เธอสถิตในท่ามกลางประชาชาติอย่าง
หนักแน่น เธอเสถียรในหมู่รัฐอย่างแน่นอน ปานฉะนี้"

(กรมหมื่นนราธิปพงศ์ประพันธ์)

3. เพื่อนร่วมงานคู่ใจ เมอร์ล พาร์ค สร้างผลงานเยี่ยมยอดอยู่เสมอ

เมอร์ล พาร์ค ดาราเอกแห่งคณะรอยัล บัลเล่ต์ ซึ่งมีชื่อเสียงที่สุดในโลก เธอ
เข้าร่วมแสดงเป็นครั้งแรกในปี 1954 และจากนั้นเพียงปีเดียว ก็ได้ออกแสดงเดี่ยว ด้วยความ
สามารถและลีลาอันสง่างามเธอกล่าวติดตลกว่า "ดิฉันคงแก่พอจะเป็นดาราบัลเล่ต์ รุ่นอาวุโสได้
แล้วซินะ" อาจเป็นเช่นนั้น แต่ผลงานการแสดงของเธอทั่วโลก ยังคงได้รับคำยกย่องสูงสุด คำ
ยกย่องซึ่งมีแต่จะเพิ่มพูนขึ้นทุกปี "ดิฉันต้องพึ่งคู่ฝ่ายชายอยู่มากทีเดียว เราต่างต้องมีร่างกายที่

แข็งแรง....แม้ดิฉันจะไม่ต้องอุ้มเขาก็ตาม” “ดิฉันชอบที่จะเปลี่ยนคู่เต้นหลาย ๆ แบบ เพราะจะ
ต้องเข้าถึงบทด้วยความรู้สึกใหม่สดเสมอ แม้แต่บทที่เคยเล่นมาแล้ว” “วิธีนี้จะช่วยให้ผลงาน
ของคุณ รวมทั้งลีลาและการตีบทมีชีวิตชีวายิ่งขึ้น ดิฉันจึงไม่เคยเลือกใครเป็นคู่ประจำตัวเลย”
อย่างไรก็ตาม เมอร์ล พาร์ค ยังมีคู่ใจประจำตัวอีกรูปแบบหนึ่ง นาฬิกาข้อมือของเธอนั่นเอง
โรเล็กซ์ เลดี้–เดทจัสต์ ออยส์เตอร์ เพอร์เพ็ทชวล “ที่จริงจะเรียกว่ารูปแบบเดียวกันก็ว่าได้นะคะ
เพราะโรเล็กซ์งามสง่า สะดุดตา และแข็งแรงมากทีเดียว” “ดิฉันซ้อมหนักทุกวันค่ะ นาฬิกาเรือน
นี้ก็พลอยรับบทหนักไปด้วย แต่มันยังเดินเยี่ยมยอดเสมอ เรื่องความสวยงามก็เช่นกัน ดิฉัน
ชื่นชมเพื่อนคู่ใจเรือนนี้มากค่ะ”

ความงามสง่าอันหาที่ติมิได้ ผสานกับพลังอันแข็งแกร่งจากภายใน เมอร์ล พาร์ค และ
โรเล็กซ์

# Appendix II
## Sample Text

**I Explanatory Discourse**

I like Hongsawadee much better than any other places, in *other*[1] words
using an English expression, Hongsawadee *give*[2] me a *good*[3] impression 17 because
it is the city that I've heard *its*[4] *name* since I was young and that I was made to
study about her history is both good and *bitter*[5] *aspect.*[6] /We *use*[7] to have an
understanding that Hongsawadee is a city of Mon but nowadays, we can no longer
see Mon for they *have been*[8] *disappeared* since the reign of Alongphaya when
*there*[9] *were* a hollocross. Besides the *remains*[10] *who*[11] were *monk*[12] moved to the
south *while*[13] some to Thailand./Therefore, *born*[14] the name Hongsawadee is hardly
known to the world. Instead, we use the word Paco and the foreigner *spells*[15] it
*pegu*[16]

1 = Meaning PD
2 = Syntax Basic
3 = Lexis Weak Word, Meaning PD
4 = Syntax Complex
5 = Lexis Wrong Word, Meaning PD
6 = Syntax Basic
7 = Lexis Weak Word

```
 8 = Syntax  Complex
 9 = Syntax  Complex
10 = Lexis  Wrong  Word,  Meaning  FD
11 = Syntax  Complex
12 = Syntax  Basic
13 = Syntax  Complex
14 = Syntax  Complex
15 = Lexis  Wrong  Word,  Meaning  PD
16 = Mechanics-Phrasal
17 = Organization-Phrasal,  Sentential
18 = Organization-Phrasal,  Sentential
19 = Organization-Phrasal,  Sentential
Style = ND
Field = ND
```