

อรูปร่างตามที่เป็นประธานในประโยคภาษาไทย¹

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บทคัดย่อ

ในการสื่อสารระดับโลก ความเข้าใจอย่างถ่องแท้ในภาษาย่อมจะส่งเสริมให้เกิดความเข้าใจร่วมกันระหว่างชาวต่างประเทศและเจ้าของภาษา เมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับภาษาอังกฤษ หลายภาษาในแถบเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ โดยเฉพาะภาษาไทย มีการอ้างโดยอรูปร่าง (zero anaphora) มากเป็นพิเศษจนเป็นลักษณะเฉพาะทางภาษา บทความนี้รายงานการศึกษการอ้างโดยอรูปร่างในภาษาไทย เมื่อปรากฏในตำแหน่งประธานของประโยค ข้อมูลในการวิจัยมาจากบทความ 50 เรื่อง ซึ่งสุ่มตามจำนวนที่กำหนดจากหนังสือพิมพ์และนิตยสารร่วมสมัย ตั้งแต่ปี พ.ศ. 2535 ถึง พ.ศ. 2546

จากการวิเคราะห์ เป็นที่น่าสังเกตว่าอรูปร่างตาม (zero anaphor) ที่เป็นประธานในประโยคภาษาไทย สามารถอ้างถึงรูปที่ถูกแทน (antecedent) ประเภทต่างๆ ได้มากกว่าอรูปร่างตามในประโยคภาษาอังกฤษ อรูปร่างตามที่เป็นประธานในประโยคภาษาไทยไม่ว่าจะเป็นประโยคความเดียว ประโยคความรวม หรือประโยคความซ้อน สามารถอ้างถึงรูปที่ถูกแทนซึ่งเป็นบุรุษที่หนึ่ง หรือสอง หรือสาม ทั้งเอกพจน์และพหูพจน์ หรือทุกประเภทรวมกัน ยิ่งกว่านั้นในประโยคหนึ่ง ยังอาจมีอรูปร่างตามมากกว่าหนึ่งคำ โดยที่แต่ละคำก็อ้างถึงรูปที่ถูกแทนต่างกัน

เนื่องจากการแทรกแซงของภาษาแม่อาจสร้างปัญหาในการสื่อสารได้ การศึกษาลักษณะเฉพาะดังกล่าวนี้ของภาษาไทย ก็จะช่วยประโยชน์ให้แก่ นักภาษาศาสตร์ รวมทั้งชาวต่างชาติที่ศึกษาภาษาไทย และครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษแก่นักเรียนไทย

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Zero Anaphor Subjects in Thai Sentences ¹

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Abstract

In global communication, the insight of a language will enrich the mutual understanding between foreign and native speakers. When compared with English, in several languages in Southeast Asia, especially Thai, the frequent occurrence of zero anaphora or the use of zero pronouns is dominantly typical. This article reports the study on Thai zero anaphor when it occurs at subject position. The data came from 50 articles, collected by quota sampling from contemporary newspapers and magazines from 1992 to 2003.

From the analysis, it is remarkable that zero anaphor subjects in Thai sentences can refer to more different types of antecedent than the ones in English. Thai zero anaphor subjects in simple, compound and complex sentences can refer to the antecedent which is the first/ second/ third person, singular/ plural or all persons. Moreover, there may be more than one zero anaphor subject in one sentence, and each one refers to different antecedent.

Since the inference from the mother tongue may cause some problems in communication, the study of these different characteristics will be beneficial to linguists and foreigners who study Thai, and teachers of English to Thai students.

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1. Introduction

In global communication, the insight of a language enriches the mutual understanding between foreign and native speakers. When compared with English, Southeast Asian languages possess several distinctive features that usually cause misleading, if not confusing, interpretation. The frequent occurrence of zero anaphora in Cambodian, Malay and especially Thai languages, is one dominantly typical characteristic.

Usually, when a speaker assumes that the listener shares with him the same understanding or background knowledge, the noun phrase (NP) that refers to this "given information" is omitted and appears in the sentence as a zero pronoun which is "invisible" but still meaningful.

Compared with the English counterpart, zero anaphora occurs more frequently in Thai and can be classified into four types according to syntactic functions: SUBJECT, DIRECT OBJECT, INDIRECT OBJECT, and MODIFIER and four types of semantic roles: AGENTIVE, PATIENT, DATIVE/BENEFACTIVE and GENITIVE and it outnumbers the English counterparts [1]. No wonder this invisible agent with global meaning naturally causes problems to English speakers studying Thai and Thai students studying English alike.

1.1 Development of zero anaphora study

We can find different terms such as ZERO ANAPHORA, ZERO ANAPHOR, ZERO PRONOUN, NULL ELEMENT and EMPTY CATEGORY. All of them refer to the same constituent but from different viewpoints. ZERO ANAPHOR or ZERO PRONOUN refers to the pronoun that is omitted from a sentence. ZERO ANAPHORA is the general term that focuses on the relation in which that pronoun is seen as linked to an antecedent;

NULL ELEMENT is mentioned in Generative Grammar when we talk about parts of speech such as null subject; EMPTY CATEGORY is named for a gap in the structure as analyzed in Government and Binding Theory.

Zero anaphora has attracted interest from quite a few linguists for more than two decades. They started with Generative Grammar. Some Thai linguists for example Surintramont [2], Kobsiriphat [3] and Hoonchamlong [4] worked with the process of analyzing and identifying antecedents for zero anaphora, applying Government and Binding theory, but especially Control theory.

Other linguists turn away from Generative Grammar to Pragmatics Discourse framework. Fox [5] provides an account of distribution of a subset of anaphora in English conversation and expository prose. Geluykens [6] also shows evidence that the distribution of anaphora in English conversation can be determined by the interaction of two pragmatic principles: the Clarity Principle and the Economy Principle. Huang [7] observes that a single or a few syntactic parameters may never be adequate in accounting for null subjects and null objects in several languages. He states that different languages may require different licensing and identification strategies, some of which are clearly pragmatic/discourse in nature. In his cross-linguistic study of 550 languages, Huang [8] provides an account of binding theory and control theory as well as various other syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic approaches to anaphora. Gutman [9] states further that only a detailed theory of discourse anaphora can account for the distribution of third-person pro-drop in Hebrew, Finnish and Rumanian languages.

In Functional Grammar framework, Givon [10] studies about zero anaphora and compares the

occurrence of this device in different languages. He finds that the majority of sentence subjects in Ute, English, and two English-based pidgins: Spanglish and Filipinglish, have more zero anaphor or pronouns rather than the full NPs. Shokouhi [11] reports that the occurrences in full NP form are more numerous in Persian than in English due to the use of formulaic politeness expressions. Although zero anaphora has been found to be pervasive in Persian conversation, it is constrained by factors such as turn-taking, repetition, and other interactional features.

1.2 Interpretation and identification of zero anaphora

In languages other than English, Huang [12] focuses on the pragmatic aspects of interpreting several types of anaphors, including zero anaphors in Chinese. He also presents a revised neo-Gricean pragmatic theory of anaphora [8]. (That is, the interpretation of certain patterns of anaphora can be made using general pragmatic inference, depending on the language user's knowledge of the range of options available in the grammar, and of the systematic use or avoidance of particular linguistic expressions or structures on particular occasions). Matras [13] focusing on spoken Kurmanji, a northwestern Iranian language, identifies tentative restrictions on zero anaphora in conjoined clauses.

In Thai, Aroonmanakun [14] and [15] studies zero anaphora in the approach of Natural Language Processing and assumes that the resolution of zero pronouns can be done at two levels: the sentence level and the discourse level. The resolution at the sentence level can be implemented on the basis of principles in a sentence grammar, which is in accordance with the Government and Binding Theory. Zero pronouns

that cannot be resolved by the Government and Binding Theory are resolved on the basis of discourse principles.

In cognitive aspects, Long and De Ley [16] are interested in the antecedent of an anaphor in dialogues and how the antecedent becomes the most activated entity in the reader's discourse model. They suggest that readers use knowledge about the structure of dialogue to anticipate the antecedent of an upcoming anaphor.

From the syntactic-semantic viewpoint, I investigated in 1994 the recoverability of the zero anaphora in compound and complex sentences. I found that the antecedent of a zero anaphor in Thai can be recovered within three conditions as follows:

1. Syntactic condition: A zero anaphor may refer to a specific head noun in specific sentence structures.
2. Semantic and context condition: A zero anaphor may refer to a specific head noun according to the selectional restrictions between the verb of that zero anaphor and the probable head nouns. For example, a certain verb with the feature [+ human] indicates that its zero anaphor subject refers to a human antecedent.

3. Implicit condition: A zero anaphor does not always refer to the closest noun phrase or to the noun phrases recoverable from the immediate context. In many cases, there is no suitable antecedent in the whole context. The reader has to search for it from the extra-linguistic context, from background knowledge or from pragmatic rules.

From my study in 2003 [1], which is based on functional and cognitive approaches, I observed that Thai zero anaphora performs more syntactic functions and semantic roles than their English counterparts. Its syntactic functions are SUBJECT, DIRECT OBJECT, INDIRECT OBJECT, and

MODIFIER and it performs semantic roles as AGENTIVE, PATIENT, DATIVE/BENEFACTIVE and GENITIVE. Thai zero anaphora also exists without any explicit antecedent in the immediate context. From the lyrics used as data, it was frequently found that Thai zero anaphor refers to the antecedent at a great distance later and in some lyrics, the antecedents are even omitted or implicit throughout the whole lyrics. In many cases, several zero anaphors occur continuously, each one may refer to different antecedents.

From the data in song lyrics as mentioned, I found that Thai zero anaphor can perform several semantic roles as well as pronouns or full NPs and it occurs the most frequently (57.05 %) when compared with the other two categories. It is also remarkable that the majority of zero anaphor occurs as the subject of the sentence and performs an AGENTIVE role.

This previous finding is in the same trend as in other languages studied by Givon [10] and Li [17]. Though it appears from the study that the antecedents of Thai zero anaphor subjects are varied, their recoverability has not been investigated in details since this was not the focus of the study. Therefore this present study was particularly conducted to fulfill the information gap.

1.3 Distribution of zero anaphora in English

Certain explanations by Quirk [18] and Lock [19] indicate that noun phrase ellipsis or zero anaphora performs a restricted distribution since it can occur only in some sentence structures under limited condition. It is typically final and anaphoric except in compound sentences when its antecedent is in parallel construction in the preceding clause. Hewings [20] also shows that in relative clauses, the zero anaphor can occur only when it is the

object. By all means, English zero anaphora within one sentence can refer to only one antecedent that is explicit in the preceding or immediate context.

2. Purpose of the study

This article aims to

2.1 Study the types of antecedents of Thai zero anaphor subject and compare with the English counterpart;

2.2 Supply more background knowledge to English speakers who are studying Thai and making Thai students aware of their mother tongue interference in dropping SUBJECT when writing English;

2.3 Remind English teachers in designing English supplementary and remedial material for Thai students.

3. Hypothesis

This study set a hypothesis that Thai zero anaphor subject can refer to more different types of antecedents than the English counterpart.

4. Data

The data used in this study came from 5 contemporary newspapers and magazines namely, *Matichon* [21], *Art and Culture Magazine* [22], *Sen Thang Setthee* [23], *Gourmet and Cuisine* [24], and *Tourism Authority of Thailand Magazine* [25]. Ten articles were collected by quota sampling from each source from 1992 to 2003. The articles were studied and analyzed for zero anaphora occurring as the subject of a verb in simple, compound and complex sentences. These zero anaphors are further analyzed for the recoverability of their antecedents. Then they are classified and compared with equivalent English counterparts.

5. Findings

From the data, I found that when zero anaphor subjects performed AGENTIVE role, they can refer to 4 types of antecedents. In some limited conditions, their English counterparts can refer to the same types of antecedents such as Types 1, 2, 3 but not Type 4.

The 4 types of antecedents are as follows:

- Type 1 First-person SUBJECT
- Type 2 Second-person SUBJECT
- Type 3 Third-person singular/plural SUBJECT
- Type 4 First/second/third/person/all-person SUBJECT

5.1 Type 1 Zero anaphora as first-person SUBJECT.

Examples:

1.1) *Thai*: วันนี้ขอเล่าเรื่องดีๆ ของเยาวชนสักวัน

Today \emptyset tell good story about young people once

English: 'Today let me tell a good story about young people once'

1.2) *Thai*: เชื่อว่าหลายคนไม่เคยไปชม

\emptyset believe that many people not used to visit

English: 'I believe that many people have never been there'

In Examples 1.1) and 1.2), zero anaphors occur as the SUBJECT of the verb 'tell' and 'believe' respectively. It is grammatical in Thai to omit the SUBJECT here because the AGENT of the verb in each sentence is clearly understood that it refers to the writer himself/herself and therefore its antecedent is first person singular.

In English version, the first person singular subject of the verb 'tell' in 1.1) and the verb 'believe'

in 1.2) can not be omitted. The sentence 1.1) is acceptable only if it is changed into imperative form. As for the sentence 1.2), the zero anaphor subject is not acceptable. In other case, if the structure is a compound sentence, the subject of the verb 'believe' can be omitted but not in a complex sentence, as in:

1.2 a) I/We discover this place and \emptyset believe that many people have never been there.

Thai: ข้าพเจ้า/เรา ค้นพบสถานที่นี้ และเชื่อว่าหลายคนไม่เคยไปชม

1.2 b) *I/We discover this place where \emptyset believe that many people have never been there.

Thai: ข้าพเจ้า/เรา ค้นพบสถานที่นี้ ซึ่งเชื่อว่าหลายคนไม่เคยไปชม

This shows that Zero anaphora as first-person (singular/plural) SUBJECT in English occurs only in the coordinated clause of the compound sentence structure whereas it occurs deliberately in all types of sentences in Thai.

5.2 Type 2 Zero anaphora as second-person (singular/plural) SUBJECT.

Examples:

2.1) *Thai*: ถ้าจะเถียงว่าไปทางเครื่องบินก็ได้... if \emptyset argue that \emptyset go by plane can

English: 'If you argue that you can go by plane...'

2.2) *Thai*: ...บินตรงจาก ก.ท.ม ไม่เห็นยาก

\emptyset fly directly from Bangkok \emptyset see no difficulty

English: 'You can fly directly from Bangkok. You'll have no difficulty'.

In these above examples, zero anaphors occur as SUBJECT of the verb 'argue', 'go' 'fly' and 'see'. It is grammatical in Thai because these zero anaphors subjects refer to the reader who is, in the writer's particular aspect, the person to whom he is telling the story. Therefore these zero anaphors

can be interpreted as second-person (singular/plural) SUBJECTS.

In English, the only sentence structure that permits second-person zero anaphor subject is imperative. However, it is not grammatical to omit subjects in complex sentences such as the if-clause structure as in Example 2.1) or a simple sentence as in 2.2).

5.3 Type 3 Zero anaphora as third-person (singular/plural) SUBJECT.

Examples:

3.1) *Thai*: เด็กชาย...เล่าให้ฟังว่าเห็นสภาพคนติดยาในชุมชนแล้วรู้สึกสงสาร เพราะเป็นที่รังเกียจของสังคม

The boy...tell \emptyset_1 listen that \emptyset_2 see condition addicts in community then \emptyset_3 feel pity because \emptyset_4 are disgusted by society.

English: 'The boy told me that he felt pity when he saw addicts' condition in the community because they were disgusted by society'.

3.2) *Thai*: ลองคิดภาพคนยืนเข้าแถวยาว...เมื่อถึงคิวได้ก้าวเข้าไปยืนในร้านที่มีไฟสว่างไสว ปูพื้นพรมนุ่มจนแทบลงนอนได้นั้น จะมีความสุขขนาดไหน

\emptyset_1 try imagine people in long queue... when \emptyset_2 reach the turn \emptyset_3 able to step in to the well-lit shop laid with carpet so soft that \emptyset_4 can almost lie down, \emptyset_5 will have what happiness

English: 'You may try to imagine that people in long queue...when they reach their turn and step into the well-lit shop laid with carpet so soft that they can almost lie down, how would they feel happy?

In Examples 3.1) and 3.2), it is noticeable that zero anaphors occur several times in one sentence and they refer to different persons. This particular characteristic is different from English

zero anaphor which refers to one antecedent in one sentence.

In Example 3.1), the first zero anaphor occurs as the OBJECT of the verb 'tell' and performs the PATIENT role but we will not discuss about it because this is not the focus of this present study. Those who are interested in details about the semantic roles of zero anaphora in Thai may read about them in my previous investigation [1].

The second and third zero anaphors in 3.1) refer to the boy, so they are third-person (singular) SUBJECTS of the verbs 'see' and 'feel'. The fourth zero anaphor refers to the addicts who were disgusted, so this is the third-person (plural) SUBJECT of the verb 'disgust' and performs the PATIENT role.

In Example 3.2), the first zero anaphor refers to the reader so it is the second-person SUBJECT of the verb 'try'. The second up to the fifth zero anaphors that follow in the sentence refer to the people who have been waiting in a long queue. They are the third-person (plural) SUBJECTS of the verbs 'reach', 'step', 'lie' and 'have happiness' in Thai version or 'feel happy' in English version. The recoverability of these zero anaphors in Thai is interpreted from the implicit immediate context which is not always applicable in English.

Moreover, English zero anaphor subjects are permissible in coordinate clause of compound sentences but this condition is not applicable to the original readings of Examples 3.1) and 3.2). In particular, when the different subject of the verb firstly occurs in the sentence, a full NP or a pronoun is required so the occurrence of zero anaphors which refer to different antecedents as in these examples are not grammatical.

5.4 Type 4 Zero anaphora as first/second/ third-person or all-person SUBJECTS.

Examples:

4.1) *Thai*: สมัยนี้ของกินอะไรก็ตาม กินแล้วไม่
ทำให้อ้วน ไม่มีไขมัน จะได้รับความนิยม

nowadays any food \emptyset_1 eat \emptyset_2 not make
 \emptyset_3 fat \emptyset_4 not contains any fat \emptyset_5 will receive
popularity

English: 'Nowadays, any food I/you/
they/whoever eats, that doesn't make me/you/ them/
whomever fat and doesn't contain fat, will be
popular.'

4.2) *Thai*: หันซ้ายแลขวาไปตามท้องถนน...เป็น
ต้องได้เห็นและได้ยินเสียงรถจักรยานยนต์ ดังกระหึ่มไป
ทั่วบริเวณ

\emptyset_1 turn left, \emptyset_2 look right... \emptyset_3 must see
and \emptyset_4 hear motorcycles roaring go all the area.

English: 'When I/you/they/whoever
turns to the left or looks to the right, I/you/they/
whoever must see and hear motorcycles roaring all
over the area.'

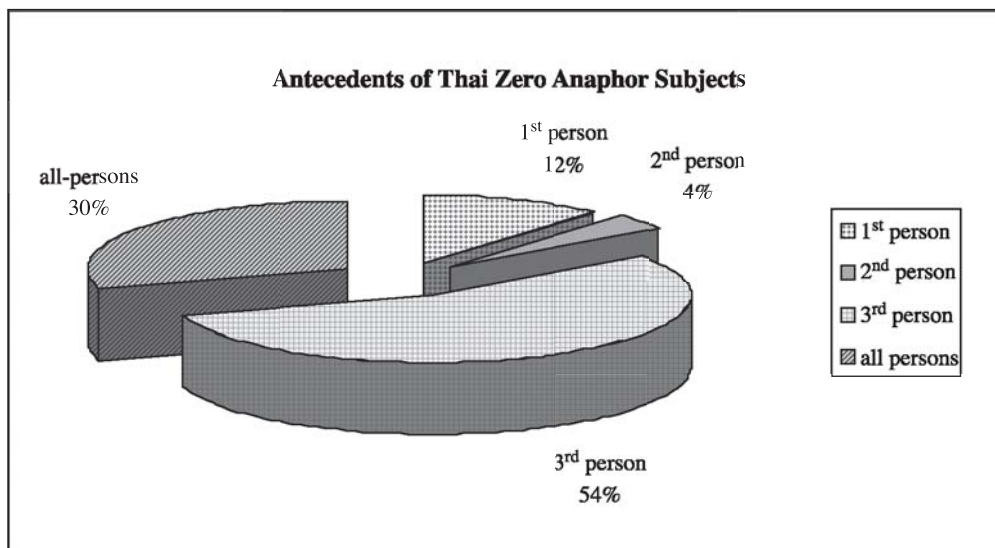
In the above examples, zero anaphors occur as SUBJECTS and OBJECT of several verbs. In 4.1) the first zero anaphor is the subject of the verb 'eat' and it is possible to interpret that it refers to all-person, that is, the writer himself, the reader or someone in general, the consumer whoever it is, or all of them as the AGENT of the verb. Another possible interpretation is that this zero anaphor may refer to any food as the PATIENT of the verb. The

second and the fourth zero anaphors are the subjects of the verb 'make' and 'contain' which refer to the food. The third zero anaphor is the object of the verb 'make' which refers to the all-person as mentioned previously.

In Example 4.2), the first, second, third and fourth zero anaphors are subjects of the verb 'turn', 'look', 'see' and 'hear' respectively. They may also refer to all-person, that is, the writer himself, the reader or pedestrians. All the antecedents in these two examples are recovered through implicit context which is not always applicable in English. Though the continuous occurrence of zero anaphora is frequent in Thai, the recoverability is sometimes ambiguous and the type of all-person antecedent can be interpreted differently and subjectively. Nevertheless, it is acceptable in Thai though not in English.

5.5 Statistics of the findings

From the total occurrence of entire zero anaphora in the data, Type 3 with third-person singular and plural antecedents occurs the most frequently, which constitutes 55.07%. The second in frequency is Type 4, the all-person antecedent, at 29.88%, the third is Type 1, the first-person antecedent, at 11.52%. The least frequent group is Type 2, second-person antecedent type, which constitutes only 3.6%. The pie chart of this statistics is shown below:

Fig. 1 Antecedents of Thai Zero Anaphor Subjects

5.6 Interpretation of the findings

From the statistics, most Thai zero anaphor subjects in the data refer to third-person (singular/plural) antecedents. It can be interpreted that this phenomenon is natural since the data came from narrative types of writing. Because it is the one-way communication from a writer to the readers, the "given information" then mostly concerns the third party. Consequently, the zero anaphors referring to third-person antecedents frequently occurs. Different phenomenon may occur in face-to-face conversations, dialogues, letters and songs when the speaker corresponds directly with the listener or seems to do as such. In this situation, the first-person and the second person are not necessarily mentioned and tend to be omitted as zero anaphors referring to first and second-person antecedents more than other types.

As for the all-person antecedent, the second highest percentage type in this study, it can be interpreted that in some informal writing, the writer may want to construct a friendly atmosphere or to

convince the readers to accept his ideas. He would appear to be less detached from the readers when he uses zero anaphora referring to all-person antecedents because he seems to integrate into the same group as the readers or whoever in general. It is also possible that, according to Thai social etiquette, the proper address terms to individual persons cause difficulties for the writer because he doesn't know who his readers will be, so zero anaphora is a convenient alternative.

6. Conclusion

From the investigation, Thai zero anaphor which occurs as the SUBJECT and performs an AGENTIVE role can refer to first, second, or third person, singular or plural. Moreover, it can refer to all persons according to individual interpretation. In one sentence, there may be more than one zero anaphor and each one may refer to different persons, as in examples 3.1 and 3.2 above.

I can compare the characteristics of Thai and English zero anaphor SUBJECTS as follows:

Table 1 Types of antecedent of Thai and English Zero Anaphor Subjects

Zero Anaphor Subject	1 st /2 nd /3 rd person in simple sentence	1 st /2 nd /3 rd person in compound sentence	1 st /2 nd /3 rd person in complex sentence	1 st /2 nd /3 rd or all persons	same antecedent	different antecedent
Thai	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
English	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗

The result of the analysis shows that whereas English zero anaphor subject is permissible in limited conditions, Thai zero anaphor subject can occur abundantly and deliberately. In particular, it can refer to more different types of antecedents than the English counterpart and this evidently supports the hypothesis of the study.

7. Discussion

It is clearly seen that zero anaphor SUBJECTS occur abundantly and freely in Thai. They can perform more functions in the sentence and express more meanings than in English. These different characteristics may cause problems to Thai students. When they speak or write English, the interference from Thai may cause them confusion then they inclined to drop their SUBJECTS and thus commit grammatical errors. In order to raise the students' awareness, and to help them eliminate these errors, English teachers may prepare supplementary and remedial exercises based on these different characteristics between Thai and English mentioned in this study.

Foreigners who study Thai may apply the results of this study when they are confronted with ambiguous interpretations of zero anaphora. Considering the frequent occurrence of third-person and all-person antecedents- both types constitute about 84% of the entire occurrence of zero anaphor subjects- they tend to be a refuge for

non-Thai natives who are not acquainted with this typical characteristics of the Thai language.

I would also like to suggest for further studies about interpretation of zero anaphora in other South-east Asian languages that would enrich the global knowledge of linguists and language students.

8. References

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