

Ratanakosin King Referring Terms: Word Structure and Factors on Lexical Selection

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Abstract

The notions of power and distance are widely used in linguistics. They also affect the production and interpretation of language. This article focuses on the socio-cultural linguistics account of the synchronic patterns and diachronic change in referring terms to Thai kings in Ratanakosin Period. The data is divided into four periods of --1782, 1851, 1932 and 2007. This paper aimed to analyze the pattern of referring terms to Thai kings, and the factors which influence their choices. The study showed that the pattern of referring terms, social status and cultural values are closely interrelated. Because the social status of Thai kings is perceived to be the highest, it seems to override the more influential of social distance, the more complex it is. This complexity is the reason of choice of appropriateness. Hence, the socio-cultural linguistics that emerges from this study will lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon of language change and the relationship between language and society.

Keywords: referring terms, Thai kings, Ratanakosin Period

Introduction

In the recent years, linguists have widely been interested in the study of the relationship between language, society and culture, especially those about the differences in the use of language influenced by power or distance between speakers and hearers. The prominent model of this type of study was conducted by Brown and Gilman in 1960. Their research was indicated that the bipartite formal (*V* pronoun) and informal (*T* pronoun) address systems characteristic of European languages share common patterns of usage and related to the power and/or solidarity.

I investigated that in Thai society, social ranks also exist. Kingship has been the highest rank ever since the ancient time. The highest status of kings has caused Thai people use certain form of language known as “Thai Royal Language”. Even though the address terms and referring terms were not literary established in the linguistic vocabulary log, the kings’ powerfulness and the relationship between kings and the speakers are included the respects and the honors of their people toward royal institute for a long time. The kings’ names will never be directly referred to, but certain titles such as His Majesty the King or the King are frequently applied.

This paper, then, could be considered as the initiation of the study on factors affecting the use of referring terms to Thai kings in Ratanakosin Period. The findings of this research will not

only contribute the relating perspective between linguistic use in culture and society, but also give the advantages to those who study Thai language, including linguists.

Purposes

This paper aimed to analyze the patterns of the referring terms of Thai kings in Ratanakosin Period and to explain the factors affecting the use of those royal referring terms.

Hypotheses

The structures of referring terms on Thai kings in Ratanakosin Period were in various patterns depending on religions, social patterns and politics.

Data and Sample

Data

The Ratanakosin reign (1782-2007) was, in this study, chronologically divided into 4 sub-periods. This division was based on the criteria used in history study in which Thai culture and society have been changing. These changes were inevitably considered as factors causing the changes of the royal referring terms. The 1st period (1782-1851)—in 1782, Ratanakosin, the capital of Thailand (or historically as Siam), was established when King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke (King Rama I) the first king of Chakri Dynasty, started his reign; the 2nd period (1851-1932)—in 1851, the first year of King Mongkut's reign (King Rama IV), Thailand contacted with the westerners. It was considered as the beginning of the modern time of Thai society; the 3rd (1932-1946)—in 1932, the absolute monarchy was replaced by the democracy during the reign of King Phrajadhipok (King Rama VI); the 4th period (1946-2007 or the present day)—in 2007, the two important royal celebrations occurred during this period (the diamond jubilee of His Majesty King Bhumipol Adulyadej's reign and the 80th celebration of his birthday).

Sample

This study is based on the data which were taken from the Ratanakosin written documents, selected by the purposive sampling method. The contents of these documents were obtained directly about the kings—the 4 royal chronicles and royal annals were picked up as the representatives of documents in 1782 and 1851, while the 5 documents like the kings'

biographies, royal duties, royal written account, and royal esteeming texts were selected to represent the documents in 1932 and 2007.

Limitation

This study focused on the diachronic approach that covered the time of 225 years (1782-2007). However, because of the long period of time, the spoken language during the 1st and the 2nd periods can not be reached. Hence, this resulted in the perspective findings, that is, only the discussion of the written language could be concluded.

Previous Research

The notions of power and distance are widely used in linguistics. They also affect the production and interpretation of language. The theoretical framework which set out by Brown and Gilman (1960) indicated that the social factor affecting to the use of title-pronouns in the two European languages, which are the T/V (Tu and Vous), is the power and the solidarity (or the close relationship). This research method was later used to study with other languages such as Brown and Ford (1964), Cooke (1968) and Ervin-Tripp (1972).

Some Thai researchers also studied under this method, such as Palakornkul (1972), and Tingsabadh and Prasithrathsint (1986). As for Palakornkul (1972), the findings showed that the pronominal forms also illustrated correlations between the structure of language and the structure of culture. The social and cultural factors underlying and determining pronominal strategy have not been arbitrarily posted. A theoretical model for form of address terms in Thai language was presented by Tingsabadh and Prasithrathsint (1986). Their research was presented historical, cultural, and empirical evidence for the use of form of address as an indicator of both status and solidarity. The three address terms in Thai language which most frequently used are *name*, *pronominal and name*, and *pronominal*. The uses of these three forms of address are determined by the degree of respect and intimacy the speaker expresses toward the addressee. With regard to change, the address terms that used by the juniors have more equality since the “Democracy” period.

In each of the communication context, except for the address terms, the speakers and the hearers might refer to other people outside that communication context. Form of reference often involves an indirect relationship among the three communicants (speaker or writer, listener or reader, and referent). It may retain more formal rules of application than does form of address.

Tingsabadh and Prasithrathasint (1986) defined “Term of Reference” as the words which speakers use to refer to any person whom they speak to. These terms of reference have been named differently components and patterns, that is, the components in terms of reference are more than the components of naming words. This observation is very interesting because in Thai society, the kings are positioned in the highest level. Speakers have to use Royal language when they communicate with the Kings.

According to the study conducted by Chinachot (1982), it indicated that the royal reference terms are classified into 5 patterns and composed of 2 to 6 components, HN_P , HR_RN , HN_PRR , $HHN_{E1}N_{E2}$, and $HH N_{E1}N_{E2}N_PRR$ H=Honorific, R_R =Royal Rank, N= Name, N_P = Name Proclamation, N_{E1} =Name with Embellishment, N_{E2} = Name with Respectful Elaborations(. In addition, it was revealed that all the referring words have signified Thai social structures which imply the sovereignty and centrality of the kings. In the other words, the aristocratic appellations indicate the rank of nobility owing to the descent of royal blood and the relationship to the kings.

The study of Zarchi (2001) showed that in the beginning of politic change during 1930s, the words */phràbàatsǒmdètphràcâwjùuhǔa/* and */nailǔaŋ/* were on the highest used orderly. During 1980s and 1990s, the Kings visited to different places more frequently, thus the occurrence of word */phràbàatsǒmdètphràcâwjùuhǔa/* had higher frequency in formal context, whereas, the word */nailǔaŋ/* had lower frequency and usually occurred in informal situation. They also had the other words as */phràcâwjùuhǔa /*and */sǒmdètphràcâwjùuhǔa/*. He also found that the status of the kings has been changed from Devaraja (the divine king of the universe) to the constitutional kings after the regime shift.

Malakul (1984) explained that factors which affect the referring term to Thai kings were derived from characteristic of Thai people. Most of them were polite, humble and extremely concerned on social rank especially for the king who positioned in the highest status in society. Thais preferred using other words in referring to their kings instead of directly express the kings' name such as *phra-pat-samdej-phra-caw-ju-hua*, meaning ‘the great man staying over the head level’. Another is *phra-caw-paendin* which means ‘the great landlord’. These King Referring Terms showed the greatest respect and honor followed Buddhist belief. Rabibhadana (1984) explained that “in the early Ratanakosin era, the king becomes a symbol of dhamma, and he must be a great merit person. If there was a natural phenomenon, it could display the less powerful and

merit of the king". After the political change in 1932, the royal power was decreased to be under the law; however, Thai people still paid respect to the king as highest position.

Although recent research contributed to the current study in terms of reference to Thai kings, a number of interesting terms have not been studied. Thus, this article aimed to investigate in the details of terms of referring to Thai kings in Ratanakosin Period. The data were obtained by using the frequency of how many patterns of these terms and which factors influence the difference of these terms.

Findings

1. Patterns of Referring Terms on the Kings of Ratanakosin Period

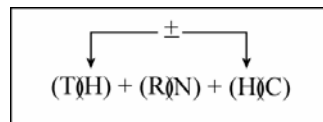
The results of the research revealed that the words used in the referring terms of the kings in Ratanakosin Period could be categorized by their powerful meanings into 5 groups: 1) words for royal ranks (R)--(phra-caw, caw-ju-hua, phra-buddha-caw-ju-hua, phra-buddha-caw-luang, phra-caw-paendin); 2) words for kings' names (N), which could further divided into 3 subgroups: a) names for the king coming to the thrones but still be used even becoming kings, for example: Bhumipol Adulyadej, b) the establishing names which were the names of the kings has been gotten while being on their kingships, for example, phra-Chom-klaw, phra-Pok-klaw, c) words for prestigious names which referred to the new names to be used side by side with other categorized names, for example, maha-Makut, maha-Praja-dhi-pok, maha-Bhumipol Adulyadej; 3) Words for titles (T), which referred to the words that would always be placed in the first position in any name patterns, for example, samdej, phra-pat-samdej; 4) words of honors (H), which signified the respects to kings, for example, phra-parama-natha-pabitra, phra-parama-naratha-pabitra, phra-paramendra, phra-paramindra, maha-rajaja; 5) words referring city names (C), for example, krung-Sri-Ayuddhaya, krung-Thai, krung Siam.

As far as the obtained data is concerned among these 5 groups of words, it was found that the words used in the king referring terms were under the **noun word class** and the **verb word class**. Based on the total data, there were 11 patterns of king referring terms during Ratanakosin Period as shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Patterns of King Referring Terms during Ratanakosin Period

Pattern	Example	1 st Period (1782-1851)		2 nd Period (1851-1932)		3 rd Period (1932-1946)		4 th Period (1946-2007)		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.R	Phra-caw- ju-hua, Phra-caw-paendin	2	0.23	2	0.23	11	1.25	61	6.94	76	8.65
2.T+R	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua , Phra-pat-samdej+phra- caw-ju-hua	164	18.66	7	0.80	10	1.14	378	43.01	559	63.61
3.R+C	Phra-caw-ju-hua+krung-Sri- Ayuddhaya	2	0.23	3	0.34	-	-	-	-	5	0.57
4.T+R+C	Samdej+phra-caw+krung- Sri-Ayuddhaya	9	1.02	7	0.80	-	-	-	-	16	1.82
5.T+H+R	Samdej+phra-parama- natha-pabitra+phra-caw- ju-hua	51	5.80	-	-	-	-	-	-	51	5.80
6.T+N+R	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- Chom-klaw+caw-ju-hua	-	-	44	5.0	45	5.11	20	2.27	109	12.38
7.T+R+N	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- caw-ju-hua+Bhumipol Adulyadej	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	3.99	35	3.99
8.T+H+N	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- paramindra+maha- Bhumipol Adulyadej	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	1.02	9	1.02
9.T+H+N+R	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- parama-naratha-pabitra+ phra-Chom-klaw+caw-ju- hua	-	-	9	1.02	-	-	-	-	9	1.02
10.T+R+ N+H	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- caw-ju-hua+Bhumipol Adulyadej +maharaja	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	0.34	3	0.34
11.T+H+N+N+R	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- paramindra+maha-Praja- dhipok+phra-Pok-klaw+ caw-ju-hua	-	-	3	0.34	2	0.22	2	0.22	7	0.8
Total		228	25.94	75	8.53	68	7.73	508	57.8	879	100

Hence, the patterns shown in this table could be synthesized as the following formula:



From the above formula, it is clearly seen that *words for royal ranks* or *words for kings' names* would always be used in each of king referring terms. *Words for titles, words of honors*

and *words referring city names* functioned as additional factors of the terms. These 3 additional groups could alone or together occur in the referring terms. The *words of honors* could be placed before or after the *words for royal ranks* and *words for kings' names*. It was important that the *words for royal ranks* could occur alone when the *words for kings' names* could always occur side by side with *words for titles*.

The overlapped parentheses (Ø) in the formula indicate that one of the components in a parenthesis-unit must occur alone or together with other parenthesis-units. The symbol (±) and the arrows signify that the parenthesis-units at the top of the arrows could not simultaneously occur.

Table 1 presents that the king referring terms during Ratanakosin Period were of 11 patterns under which 1-5 components could occur. There were 3 patterns that were of high frequency, namely; T+R (63.61 %), T+N+R (12.38%) and R (8.65%). Of all patterns, it was found that the patterns R and T+R occurred in all periods, Patterns R+C, T+R+C, T+H+R and T+H+N+R were not being used during the 1st, 3rd, and 4th periods. Besides, there were 2 patterns of king referring terms (T+N+R and T+H+N+N+R), which were used not later than the year 1851 and have existed up to the present day, while the other 3 (T+R+N, T+H+N, T+R+N+H) didn't occur until the year 2007.

The findings in this research revealed that there were various patterns of king referring terms. Every pattern followed *the Thai noun phrase (NP) structure*, which is [(NP)+NP+(NP)]. That is king referring terms have one main NP-component (the NP without parentheses) and the modifying NP(s). The modifying NP-components could either come before or after the main NP-component, or both simultaneously. The main NP-component could sometimes occur alone. The main NP-component of the *king's names* (N), however, this phenomenon always co-occurred with *words for titles* (T), which was the T+N pattern. This last pattern, the (T+N), indicates the relationship between the speakers and the persons referred in terms of the non-reciprocal one, in other words, the speakers is socially inferior to the persons referred, and that is why the *words for king's name* never occurred alone.

2. Factors in the Use of Terms Referring to Thai Kings in Ratanakosin Period

The king referring terms in Ratanakosin Period showed the relationship between the inferiority of speakers and the highest superiority of the referees, the kings. The 11 patterns of

the king referring terms implied the highest status of the Thai kings. The data obtained showed that the lexical selection of the king referring terms depended on the 3 main factors: religion, society, and politics.

2.1. Religion Factor

Buddhism beliefs through the ancient India and Cambodia states into Thailand have been influencing the Thai people. These beliefs could be illustrated in table 2.

Table 2: King Referring Terms Comprising Buddhism Influence

1 st Period (1782-1851)	2 nd Period (1851-1932)	3 rd Period (1932-1946)	4 th Period (1946-2007)
Samdej+phra- <u>buddha</u> -caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua
Samdej+ <u>phra-parama-natha-pabitra</u> +phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+ <u>phra-parama-natha-pabitra</u> +phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua

Table 2 shows that during the 1st period, the lexical choices for the king referring terms were strongly influenced by Buddhism. Hence, the words from Buddhism were widely used in king referring terms, for example in the referring term “Samdej+phra-budha-caw-ju-hua”. The word “buddha” refers to Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. In the term “Samdej-phra-parama-natha-pabitra-phra-caw-ju-hua”, the word “parama-natha” refers to the one who was *the great supporter of all creatures*, which was Lord Buddha. Whereas the word “pabitra” refers to ‘the purer or the purest’, this is the term for Lord Buddha.

It was, however, found that the words referring to Lord Buddha were not used during the 2nd period (1851-1932) up to the present time. It was during the beginning of the 4th Ratanakosin king’s reign when the western civilization spread into Thai. The 4th Ratanakosin king was the scholar of the era who led Thai society through the western influences.

2.2. Society Factor

Thai tradition, custom and self-conducts were considered the factors which have influence on king referring terms in 2 main issues: the *respectfulness* and the *praise for the good-doers*.

2.2.1. *Respectfulness*

Respectfulness was the main factor affecting the lexical choices in the king referring terms as shown in table 3.

Table 3: King Referring Terms Comprising Words of Respectfulness

1 st Period (1782-1851)	2 nd Period (1851-1932)	3 rd Period (1932-1946)	4 th Period (1946-2007)
Phra-bat-samdej+ phra-caw-ju-hua	Phra-bat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Phra-bat-samdej+ phra-caw-ju-hua	Phra-bat-samdej+ phra-caw-ju-hua
Samdej+phra-buddha-caw-luang	Samdej+phra-buddha-caw-luang	Samdej+phra-buddha-caw-luang	Samdej+phra-buddha-caw-luang

Table 3 shows that in the king referring terms of Ratanakosin Period, the speakers paid the highest respects to the kings. This was exemplified by the term “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua”, which referred to ‘the great king who is the top executive being on all of our heads’ (caw = the authority, ju-hua = being on heads). It can be clearly seen that the term “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua” had no changes during all periods. Even though, there was the political change from the absolute monarchy into the democracy during the 3rd period. It means that Thai people were still giving respect to their kings.

I investigated that the term “Samdej+phra-buddha-caw+luang”, meaning ‘the king who was the great superb Lord Buddha’ (luang = great, sublime), had no changes in word form, but changes in meaning. During the 1st and 2nd period, this term referred only to the kings who were reigning, but during the 3rd period this term only referred to the kings who had passed away. During the 4th period, however, the term had the narrower meaning, which referred only to the 5th Ratanakosin King.

2.2.2. *Praise for the Good-doers*

Thai society has been the society of Buddhists who believed their goal of life is good doing. The kings were the supporters of Buddhism. They lead their natural life under the 10 rules of Buddhist principle, in the other word, king was “Dhammaraja” meaning the king who governed with Dhamma, who possessed the highest Dhamma (Changkhwanyuen, 1999), and followed the royal principle (rajaniti, cakaravartavatra, and catusamgahavatthu) while ruling the country. These good doings laid the kings not to perform wrongly. The ancient people believed

that the country's well-being depended on the kings' self-conducts. These principles then refrained the kings to perform bad doings.

The characteristics of praising the good-doers brought to the prestigious name of the Thailand present day king, “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua+Bhumipol Adulyadej+maha-raja”. Jitprapart (2009) explained that the adding up of the final morphemes “maha-raja” (= the great king) clearly showed the sublime praise for the king because of the great benefits he donated to Thailand.

2.3. Politics Factor

Members of Thai society were ranked by their social status. This led to power relationship which was important in using the king referring terms. The 2 factors under politics that influenced the king referring terms are the *king's highest social rank* and the *importance of Royal Coronation*.

2.3.1. King's Highest Social Rank

Thai society has had the kingship as the political patriarch for a long time (through the Sukhothai, Ayudhaya, Dhanapuri and Ratanakosin Periods). The highest social rank as the king of the empire was believed to be the result of accumulating merit of the previous lives up to the present life. The status of being the most powerfulness of the kings became the factor affecting in the lexical selection of the king referring terms as shown in table 4.

Table 4: King Referring Terms Comprising Words of King's Highest Social Rank

1 st Period (1782-1851)	2 nd Period (1851-1932)	3 rd Period (1932-1946)	4 th Period (1946-2007)
Phra-caw-paendin	Phra-caw-paendin	Phra-caw-paendin	Phra-caw-paendin
Phra-caw-paendin+krung-Sri-Ayudhaya	Phra-caw-paendin+krung-Siam	-	-
-	Phra-pat-samdej+phra- <u>Chom-klaw</u> +caw-ju-hua	Phra-pat-samdej+ phra- <u>Pok-klaw</u> +caw-ju-hua	Phra-pat-samdej+ phra-caw-ju-hua+ <u>Bhumipol Adulyadej</u>

The word “Phra-caw-paendin” signified that the king was the owner of his kingdom. The term “Phra-caw-paendin+krung-Sri-Ayudhaya” and “Phra-caw-paendin+krung-Siam” referred to the kings of Thailand (krung-Sri-Ayudhaya and krung-Siam were the capitals of Thailand). The kings had the highest absolute power in ruling the country. There is a crucial code in the

constitution of Thailand saying “The king must be on the respectful position in which could not be infringed”. That is, king is beyond the politic and “anyone” means either public or private sector which cannot accuse or make a prosecution against him in three ways: constitution, penalty, and civil (Kluaymai Na Ayudhya, 1996)

The terms “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-Chom-klaw+caw-ju-hua” and “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-Pok-klaw+caw-ju-hua” referred to the great kings who ruled all of their people (Chom-klaw = the top of the head, Pok-klaw = the protectors of the heads). The term “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua+Bhumipol Adulyadej (Bhumipol= powerful ground, Adulyadej = strength)” means the king who is the strength of the ground. This term implies the sublime praise for the highest status of the king.

2.3.2. Importance of Royal Coronation

The coronation was held when the new king was established after the former king had died. The coronation was then the approval of the right kingship. The words involving the coronation were used in king referring terms to show the lawful or righteous rulers. These terms are illustrated in table 5.

Table 5: King Referring Terms Comprising Words Indicating Royal Coronation

1 st Period (1782-1851)	2 nd Period (1851-1932)	3 rd Period (1932-1946)	4 th Period (1946-2007)
Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua, Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua
-	Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua	Phra-pat-samdej+ phra-caw-ju-hua	Phra-pat-samdej+ phra-caw-ju-hua

From table 5, the king referring terms comprising words indicating Royal Coronation have changed since the 2nd period, that is, in the 1st period the terms “Samdej-phra-caw-ju-hua” and “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua” could be alternatively used without political implication. However, these 2 terms were used differently in the 2nd period: the term “Samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua” was used to refer to the king who did not pass the coronation, when the term “Phra-pat-samdej+phra-caw-ju-hua” was used for the coronated one. However, after the political change in 1932, when the king became the ruler under the constitution, the king’s power was decreased. Burintramart (1994) claimed that in the traditional coronation, the brahmans offered *the blessing*,

the sacred water from the conch, and *the kingdom* to the new king, but only *the blessing* was offered to the new king in the present time.

Conclusion

As far as the data is concerned, we can summarize that the king referring terms were found to be used under the 11 patterns. They were formed by using the **nouns** and **verbs**. The terms started with the main NP-component accompanying with the modifying NP-component (either in the front or at the back of the main NP-component). It was clearly seen that *words for royal ranks* could occur alone when the *words for kings' names* could always occur side by side with *words for titles*. The king referring terms in Ratanakosin Period indicated that the speakers paid the highest respects to the kings. This finding supported by Tingsabadh and Prasithratsint (1986) mentioned that the more use of the pattern "title+name" shows the more respects, but simultaneously indicates the non-intimate relationship between the speakers and the referees.

Moreover, it was found that there were 3 factors on lexical selection: religion, society, and politics. They, in terms of ways of life, are strongly and mutually inter-related—especially the basic religious belief that was expressed in forms of king referring. In the ancient time, people believed in god-kings or Buddha-kings. The referring terms showed the great respects equally to what people gave to Gods. However, the social factor showed that the changes in the Thai society caused the king referring terms to change. This can be illustrated by the referring terms in the 2nd period, in the reign of the 4th king of Ratanakosin when the Thai society was influenced by the western civilization. The Thai people's concepts about the status of the kings had changed from the god-kings to the human-being-kings. Since there was a political shifts into democracy, the king's power was regally decreased, the Thai people also still regarded the kingship rank at the highest level, especially the present king of Thailand who becomes the spiritual center of the nation. His people honored him *the King of the world* or *King of the king*.

The findings of this research accepted the hypotheses in that the structures of referring terms to Thai kings in Ratanakosin Period were in various patterns. The influential factors are religion, social patterns and politics.

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