Another Evidence of Cross-linguistic Influence: A Reflection through University Students’ Performance on Expressions of Measurement

Kunlaphak Kongsuwannakul, Mae Fah Luang University, Chiang Rai, Thailand

Abstract: This study aims to prove the influence of a mother tongue upon university students’ performance of a foreign language, in particular that of Thai on English language construction usage. The exploration combines a) a discussion about the English-Thai structural difference of certain cases of measurement expressions, b) corpus evidence and c) an empirical validation of the problematic point through a test. This measure was developed in the form of a specially designed multiple-choice test with its content validity (via the testing index of item-objective congruency) and its internal consistency (via the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient method) verified. The testing was carried out on first-and second-year English major students (two groups for each level) who were required to arrange sentence constituents containing expressions of measurement into complete sentences. Their results were then analyzed statistically (with a Levene’s test and a one-way ANOVA) and qualitatively in order to support that the English usage problem of Thai university students really exists, most plausibly owing to the cross-linguistic distinction. The analysis produced a positive result, and the stability of the measure (through a calculation of Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient) was substantiated insofar as this measure can be promisingly applied to testing a similar grammar point in other comparable languages.

Keywords: Cross-linguistic Influence, Negative Transfer, Expressions of Measurement, Test on University Students, Corpus-based Evidence, Syntactic Discussion, Thai Mother Tongue

Introduction

In THE FIELD of second language learning, it is widely agreed that if some grammatical points of learners’ first language or mother tongue is similar to those existing in their target language, a positive transfer can occur (Cortés, 2006). However, if such points are more or less different from those in the second language, a negative transfer will be likely to take place (ibid). Obvious examples of the latter case can be found all over in the field, for example in the classic discussion by Kufner (1962) about the negative transfer caused by structural differences between English and German—which of course belong to the same language family (Baugh & Cable, 1993). The problem might be even more serious when it comes to a situation in which we have to cope with different language families, for instance the negative language transfer from English prepositional phrases to wrong usage of Spanish prepositions analyzed in Cortés (2006) or, in the opposite direction, from the Spanish negation to inappropriate usage of the English negative determiner no mentioned in Hakuta (1990). Here it might therefore be claimed that the difficulty exists
partly because, when perceived from a broad point of view, Spanish is one of the Romance languages (Baugh & Cable, 1993) while English is one of the Germanic languages (ibid).

As such, when considering a case of my circumstances, it seems that Thai learners of English would bring their mother tongue's features into their second language production, as Thai does not belong to the Germanic language family, but the Tai one (Hudak, 2001). Consequently, it is appealing to empirically authenticate the existence of a speculated language learning problem arising in the English usage of Thai students insofar as a solution to it could be revealed systematically in the future.

Nonetheless, current literature related to the exploration of English language usage by Thai users seemingly focuses to a great degree on lexical use. This is, perhaps, partly due to the convenience in judgment and evaluation, as in Poonpon, Honsa and Cowan’s (2005) probe into university students’ academic word lists and their appearance in teaching materials. Otherwise, the focus is on other larger linguistic units, as in Jogthong’s (2001) dissertation on Thai academic writers’ rhetorical characteristics, reporting verbs exploited, and sentence constructions. At present, no one has studied the different word order of English-Thai various grammatical expressions present as innate qualities and explored its implied difficulty for Thai users. As such, an investigation of structural usage should be worthwhile.

In short, this paper will explore a problematic structural point occurring in Thai users’ English language usage, the different aspects of which are going to be discussed in the two following sections: its syntactic and colligational aspects. After this exploration, the influence of the Thai mother tongue upon university students’ performance of a foreign language, namely English language construction usage, will be dealt with.

**Syntactic Analysis**

The consequences of negative transfer, collectively called *calques* (Odlin, 1993, summarized in Cortés, 2006), seem to happen as production errors that “reflect a very closely related native language structure” (p. 5). With its proximity to the case at hand, this notion is adopted as the underlying conceptual framework for this current study. A resulting question is, hence, what is to be investigated, and a plausible answer comes from real teaching experience, which involves an expression of measurement¹. In the light of the structural framework elaborated by Radford (1998 & 2004), an English example of the structure² under discussion could plausibly be shown as follows³:

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¹ The selection of the structure under discussion originated from a conversation between Joseph Zammarelli, Ph.D., and me. I asked him whether his students had the same trouble arranging constituents in expressions of measurement as had my students or not, and his answer was yes. Therefore, I decided to study this structure in particular. Thus, I acknowledge his contribution.

² In Swan (2005, p. 10), the point of testing for this paper was called ‘expressions of measurement’—thereby explaining the original designation of the current structural manifestation and in this way adopted as the term used herein.

³ Please note that in this current publication of Radford a “traditional” so-called noun phrase is said to have been considered a determiner phrase by several minimalists of a later period. Therefore, I shall follow the practice in this paper.
By contrast, the Thai counterpart of this adverbial phrase can be diagrammed as in 4:

From (1) and (2) above, it is obvious that the DP (determiner phrase) ten minutes precedes its adverbial head late in English, which truly agrees with the English word-order rule discussed by Radford (1998 & 2004). In this case, it can follow that in English, “specifiers precede heads” (2004, p. 78). This, of course, is in stark contrast with the Thai expression, as the specifier in Thai sip nati (ten minutes) is simply preceded by its head sai (late). So, it can be asserted that Thai expressions of measurement, especially in the case of adverbial heads and their specifiers, have a completely different word order from their counterparts in English.

The same phenomenon is still true when we extend our observation to the arrangement of a prepositional phrase and its specifier. In English, the specifier of a prepositional phrase simply precedes the head, as we can observe in:

From (3), it is apparent that the English constituent order is [DP 4,000 feet] + [P’ above the sea level], whereas the Thai counterpart is simply the other way round, as in:

---

To facilitate the general audience in reading, the method for transcribing Thai words proposed by Thailand Royal Institute is adopted here.

---
Clearly, the DP \([DP \, 4,000 \, fut]\) (4,000 feet) follows the P′ \([P′ \, nuea \, radap \, namtale]\) (above the sea level) when it comes to the Thai expression of measurement.

Considering the line of argument above, it is hence intriguing whether these pairs of syntactic representations really reflect actual usage of the case under discussion or not. If the reflection is true, then a legitimate claim can be firmly constructed with language data in real use. Consequently, a further investigation of authentic data is warranted.

**Comparison of Authentic Language Data**

A crucial dimension in terms of meaningful expressions of measurement can be found in several dictionaries. As Nation (2003) stated it clearly, monolingual dictionaries can provide “a wealth of useful information” (p. 4); therefore, this type of dictionary will be used here as a source of English language production. Moreover, it should be emphasized that almost all leading monolingual dictionaries employ corpora as “a valuable resource” (Schmitt, 2002, p. 31) of authentic data—for instance Longman Exams Dictionary with Longman Corpus Network and British National Corpus (BNC) utilized (Longman Exams Dictionary, 2006) and Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary with Oxford Corpus Collection and BNC used (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000)—thereby arguably eradicating an imposition of synthesized utterances. Thus, a probe into usage patterns of the expressions illustrated in these reference books could promisingly yield a rewarding result.

In view of this fact, with a manual exploration of certain monolingual dictionaries, a few authentic instances of the expression—particularly those focusing on another adverbial/preposition to expand our scope of investigation—could be arranged in the form of a concordancer as in:

**Figure 1: A Concordancer of Expressions of Measurement with away as the Key Word**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We live 5 ( km ) away from each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The station is a few minutes’ walk away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Geneva is about 20 miles away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Christmas is now only two weeks away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 From Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2003, p. 75
2 From Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000, p. 67
3 From Longman Exams Dictionary, 2006, p. 88
From (5)-(8) in Figure 1 above, these authentic language data strongly confirm the accuracy of the syntactic projections in the previous part. That is to say, English places a specifier in front of its adverbial-prepositional head. Certainly, this description has to be contrasted with a Thai meaningful equivalent.

With the help of an online concordancer of Thai, namely the concordancing program provided by the Department of Linguistics, Chulalongkorn University (Aroonmanakun, 1999), a comparable key-word-in-context (KWIC) could be arranged as:

Figure 2: A Concordancer of Expressions of Measurement with 

\textit{hang} (away) as the Key Word

| (9) | sueng yu \textit{hang} pai khae siroi kilomet \textsuperscript{1} | PRN V ADV [particle] ADV NP |
|     | (in word-by-word translation, “which is \textit{away} [particle] \textit{only} 400 kilometre(s)”)| |
| (10) | thoe yu \textit{hang} chak khao phiang sip la thaonan \textsuperscript{2} | PRN V ADV P PRN ADV NP ADV |
|      | (in word-by-word translation, “she is \textit{away} from him \textit{only} 10 yard(s) [only]”) | |
| (11) | taela chut thotlong \textit{hang} kan yangnoi 48 chuamong \textsuperscript{3} | D N V ADV PRN ADV NP |
|      | (in word-by-word translation, “each set \textit{was} experimented \textit{away} [from] one another \textit{at least} 48 hours”) | |

\textsuperscript{1} From a subcorpus of magazines and documentaries provided by the online Thai concordancer
\textsuperscript{2} From a subcorpus of general articles provided by the same concordancer
\textsuperscript{3} From a subcorpus of academic journals provided by the same concordancer

From (9)-(11), it is apparent that these Thai examples of usage from a corpus of authentic language data truly depict the way in which the Thai language places an adverbial/adjectival or prepositional head \textit{before} its specifier in expressions of measurement. As such, it can be claimed with confidence that, in addition to the constructed syntactic projections of the expressions above (Figures (1)-(4)), even data from corpora of authentic language can reflect the linguistic difference of the structure under discussion.

**Empirical Evidence of Cross-linguistic Influence**

After having observed the difference in order of the expressions of measurement existing between English and Thai, a doubt might plausibly arise in that the sharp distinction would impose a hardship on Thai students using the structure. Moreover, another pertinent question is whether the difference only exists theoretically and from the conjecture of language corpora; Thai students might not have any learning difficulties concerning the English expression in reality. That is to say, they might not have the negative disparity transferred into their English production of this structure. It is disappointing, however, that according to the literature review for this paper, no one has mentioned the pattern under discussion. However, with some previous research in the field conducted with learners of different mother tongues, it is widely known and accepted that such a structural dissimilarity between L1 and L2 can cause difficulty...
to the learners, e.g. Hakuta’s discussion on Spanish learners’ hardship about English negation (1990, section “Second Language Learning”), Schachter’s (1983) discussion of Arabic, Hebrew, and Japanese learners having trouble with the English relative clause construction (mentioned in Kachru, 2008) and Kufner’s book on English learners’ difficulty faced when studying German (1962).

To support the existence of this structural problem, nonetheless, it is quite different a matter, as a well-constructed test is needed. Consequently, the following section will provide a brief description of the test construction. Afterwards, the outcome of the data elicited from university students will be analyzed and discussed.

Test Development

In King’s classic publication *Statistics in Education*, it was emphatically asserted that “a measuring instrument must be reliable and […] valid” (1969, p. 137). The importance of the two key terms has also been repeated many times in literature (e.g. Nunan, 1999; Kanjanawasee, 2005). As a result, a valid and reliable test was developed in order to meet this requirement.

The sentences used in the test were gathered from Swan’s English usage guide (2005) and a corpus-based reference book, namely Longman Exams Dictionary (2006), owing to the language authenticity and its suitability of language level for university students. The collection of sentences and/or phrases being focused upon and the adjustment of these instances to a certain degree—due mostly to their presentation only in the form of somewhat short phrases in the dictionary—gave the results as appeared in Appendix A. Then, these sentences were brought into the measurement of content validity, which is the technique for the testing index of item objective congruency (IOC) by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977, as mentioned in Secolsky, 1983, pp. 115-117):

\[
IOC = \frac{\Sigma R}{N}
\]

When

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IOC</th>
<th>Congruency index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Score from each expert’s judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\Sigma R</td>
<td>Total score from the experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Number of experts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the technique discussed in Kanjanawasee (2005), three native speakers of English\textsuperscript{12} were requested to consider and judge the validity or the “content-relatedness” of the sentences in Appendix A. Quite surprisingly, the objective congruency index for every sentence is 1, showing that all of the sentences can be truly used in a test on expressions of measurement.

\textsuperscript{12} All of these native speakers of English are between 41 and 60 of age. Two of them are American, holding a Ph.D. The other one is British with a B.A. in English language and literature. The criterion for purposively selecting these language experts is the attribute of being a native speaker of English with experience of using English as a medium of instruction for more than ten years.
To formulate a test, the major constituents of each of the twenty-seven sentences in Appendix A were organized into test items. On the grounds of categorization of tests described by Kanjanawasee (ibid), the test newly created can be regarded as belonging to the selection type with ‘modified’ multiple-choice format. In other words, a test taker has more than merely four alternatives to arrange the given words/phrases in each item into a complete and meaningful sentence. For this reason, the execution of this new testing format reduces the chance of getting an answer solely on a random or ‘guess’ basis to a certain degree, thereby contributing another way of eliciting data from subjects/informants based on unconventional testing format, as a traditional multiple-choice test can be more or less affected by the high probability that some answers, whether correct or incorrect ones, may be guesses only. Moreover, the underlying reason behind this test is to control the measured trait and content domain so as to produce a measuring result with test homogeneity (ibid).

The following are a few examples of the developed test items (See all of the items in Appendix B):

![Figure 3: Examples of Test Items for Expressions of Measurement](image)

It should also be noted that out of the twenty-seven sentences derived with complete content validity, only twenty-four were selected into the test formation for the sake of brevity.

With the well-known Cronbach’s alpha coefficient method elaborated in Vanichbuncha (2007) and Kanjanawasee (2005), the reliability of the test was obtained through the formula:
The reliability coefficient of the twenty-four test items calculated by SPSS version 17.0 (trial version) is 0.94, which strongly implies a high reliability of the test. This might be due to the fact that the test is intended to measure only one trait of the same content domain—which is the arrangement of sentence constituents with expressions of measurement—just as Kanjanawasee observed that \( \alpha \) (= alpha) is a good approximate reliability value of a particular test if that test is purposefully designed to measure one trait (ibid). This statistical value was derived from the trial of the measure on thirty-two university students whose attributes were equivalent to those of the sampled research subjects: they were first- and second-year English major students who were enrolled in the same course, Academic English 1, in the first semester, Academic Year 2008, at Mae Fah Luang University.

Apart from the aforementioned reliability value, another aspect of the test development worth explaining is the justification for the number of the implemented test items. The persistence of the number of the test items ‘24’ is justified in that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of these items are densely scaled and, thus, there is no need to cut some of them out. To endorse this claim, the inverse matrix of the reliability coefficient for each test item was carefully considered and it was revealed that the statistical values of the twenty-four test items ranged individually in a narrow scale from 0.9357 to 0.9445 (See their enumeration in Appendix B), implying that should the ‘worst’ test item be taken away, the overall alpha coefficient will still be increased to 0.9445 at most. Therefore, it is a better choice to adhere to the logic that the more test items there are, the more precisely the test could measure a trait.

**Data Collection**

Data were gathered from four sections of first- and second-year English major students who had all registered for the course of Academic English 1, in the first semester 2008 at Mae Fah Luang University.

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

The elicited answers from the students were marked with the basic criteria that one mark would be given to an item if the arrangement of the expressions of measurement was correct—i.e. in a real English order—but an item would be marked zero if the answer was not in the correct order. With the aid of SPSS, version 17.0, the testing scores of the students were analyzed, yielding the following mean scores:

\[
\alpha = \left[ \frac{k}{k-1} \right] \left[ 1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_x^2} \right]
\]

When \( \alpha \) = Reliability coefficient of the test

\( \sigma_i^2 \) = Variance of the score in part i (or test item i)

\( \sigma_x^2 \) = Variance of the total score x

k = Number of components combined to be x (or the number of test items) (translation, Kanjanawasee, 2005, p. 71)
Table 1: Mean Scores of the Four Groups of Sampled Research Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year 1 (FY1)</td>
<td>10.3462</td>
<td>7.5534</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year 2 (FY2)</td>
<td>7.3421</td>
<td>6.3301</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Year 1 (SY1)</td>
<td>10.4706</td>
<td>7.7820</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Year 2 (SY2)</td>
<td>7.8125</td>
<td>6.2395</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1, the performance of these students on the structure obviously indicates that the structural difference is a problematic grammar point for Thai students, as none of the four sections’ mean scores reached half of the full score 24. Another interesting aspect of the information in Table 1 is the relationship of the mean scores and the standard deviations. When observed closely, the higher the mean score is, the higher the standard deviation is in the same direction and manner. To be specific, the groups FY1 and SY1 seemed to outscore their counterparts if one looks at the former pairs’ mean scores only; nevertheless, the standard deviations of their scores were higher than their counterparts as well. This occurrence might be explained on the basis that as the trait being measured is unitary or belongs to “a ‘pure’ test of a single ability” (King, 1969, p. 137), the case might be that, while working on the test, particular students would be able to take notice of the similarity in content and pattern shared by all the test items and, hence, repeat the patterning of their answers. If they could manipulate the structure correctly, the high probability of getting a very high total score could emerge. But if the situation was the other way round, they simply followed the Thai patterning and consequently transferred it into their English expression consistently.

It is still necessary to investigate further whether the discovery is merely by chance or not. The next aspect of the elicited data that will be explored is the variance. To verify whether the four groups’ answers bore homogeneity of variances or not, a Levene’s test for equality of variances was used. The following are the results:

Table 2: Levene’s Test Statistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.104</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p≤.01$

From Table 2, it is clear that the scores are not statistically different; instead, the scores of the four groups are homogeneous with equal variances assumed. In other words, as one can observe, the statistic of this Levene’s test is not statistically significant (with the significance value at 0.152) while the $p$-value is $≤.01$, indicating that each group or section had the same variance. Thus, with the equal variances proved, a one-way analysis of variance, i.e. a one-way ANOVA, should be performed to recheck whether the resultant scores were genuinely pointing to the same direction—which is the cross-linguistic influence from L1 (Thai) to L2 (English)—or they were just affected by the varied categorical independent variables (sections of students). The following are the results of an ANOVA:
Table 3: The Result of a One-way ANOVA Comparing the Four Sample Groups’ Mean Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>315.018</td>
<td>105.006</td>
<td>2.101</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>7597.667</td>
<td>49.985</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>7912.686</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 3 shows, the F-test of the difference of these four groups’ means indicates that their scores were not influenced significantly by the variables of the sections/groups, whether at $p \leq .01$ or at $p \leq .05$, signifying that the null hypothesis that the group means on the scores did not differ can still be accepted, thereby implying that the distinction in the group means were “only random variations” (Garson, 2008, section “Significance tests,” para. 2). Thus, one can infer that the negative cross-linguistic influence really existed and imposed a difficulty upon the Thai university students in terms of the usage of expressions of measurement indeed.

Of course, it should be emphasized that the underlying reasons why there were two groups for each level brought into this current study are a) to prevent the research findings from taking into account the error of random distinction: it is possible that the low mean scores between any two groups might be simply due to random chance; and b) to recheck whether the low mean scores existing in the statistical analysis of the different university years were merely owing to probability chance or they were truly affected by the factor of education at university: the case might also be that the problem in constituent arrangement can be alleviated simply when students get to a higher university year.

The low mean scores, one may assert, were reflecting the negative transfer or the cross-linguistic influence dominating the Thai university students’ English usage and they were still prevailing even though the students might have passed to their second year—as there was no statistically significant distinction between any pairs of the four groups of subjects. In other words, the logic of this current exploration is that the claim for the misuse of the Thai structural knowledge can still apply even if the students had more than one year of education at university level. The problem did not seem to decrease, chiefly due to the transferred arrangement from their mother tongue to the target language and to the plausible lack of emphasis on measurement expressions to the students.

Returning to the syntactic projections of the structure under discussion, it is obvious that they correctly reflected the structural difference of the two languages, and so did the corpus evidence. In this way, the earlier speculation that such a variation would have a negative effect upon the English pattern mastery of the Thai students is hereby affirmed through several analytical aspects of the patterns: syntactic, authentic data-based, and statistical aspects. A qualitative search for occurrences of a few sampled students’ arrangement of the explored constituents can be employed to corroborate the finding even more firmly as follows:
From (12)-(15) in Figure 4, it is perfectly obvious that the Thai university students who were the sample of this research truly used their mother tongue’s structure with their English language production. The patterning of these four instances can well fit into that of Thai expressions of measurement (cf. (9)-(11) in Figure 2), thereby endorsing the claim that once such a structural distinction exists, Thai learners of the English language are highly likely to negatively transfer the arrangement of their indigenous language to their target language production. The following are approximate equivalents to the produced sentences in Thai:

From Figure 5 compared with Figure 4, it is obvious that Thai university students ‘transferred’ the Thai way of arranging measure constituents into their English expressions. Certainly, even though the elicited data came from a quasi-multiple choice test, it is arguable that with this invented form of the test, a student could guess a correct answer much harder, at least insofar as he/she needed to create a meaningful and conceivably grammatical string of words, thereby unknowingly being required to arrange expressions of measurement. In this way, the results can to a great degree be claimed as reflecting the cross-linguistic influence of Thai L1 on English L2.

Conclusion and Implications

The data obtained from four sample groups of university students were analyzed in the previous part in terms of their mean scores, homogeneity of variances, and mean score differences. Though their mean scores were slightly different from each other, Levene’s test for homogeneity of their variances was positive, suggesting that their variances were statistically...
equal at the confidence level of 99 percent. Moreover, a one-way ANOVA of the mean scores indicated that there was not any significant difference among them. In this way, it can be strongly argued that the developed test has really exhibited the existence of the cross-linguistic influence of Thai on the Thai students’ usage of English expressions of measurement—whether they were in their first year at university or possibly moved higher to the second year—since their mean scores could not reach even half of the full score of the validity-and reliability-verified test.

To consolidate the reliability of the test, moreover, data from two of the four sections were re-elicited two weeks later to bring into an analysis of Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient, just as Kanjanawasee (2005) stated clearly that the measure of stability can be carried out on the grounds that the trait intended to measure is consistent (here is the arrangement of expressions of measurement) and the period of time between the first testing and the second one is not too close to each other so as to bring about a carry-over effect (pp. 60 & 62). The test of stability was conducted for two primary reasons: the first was to make sure that the test was of sufficient quality and the second, as a consequence of the first reason, was that the test could be performed on university students with other sociolinguistic factors in the future, as well as on English-studying informants with other native languages (in this way broadening the implications of these research findings).

The measurement of the test’s stability was carried out with an appropriate time lag, i.e. two weeks, between the pretest and its posttest, which is the time lag asserted by King (1969) and Kanjanawasee (2005) (cf. the section “Test Development”). A calculation of Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient of two sample groups randomly selected for each level provides values of 0.807 and 0.832 for the sample groups FY2 and SY2 respectively. These sizes of correlation indicate a rather high correlation (just as similarly interpreted in Vanichbuncha, 2003), denoting that the test is of sufficient quality for larger-scale research or application to research contrasting other L1-L2 pairs.

Of course, the phenomenon simply implies that the developed test itself as well as its design can be applied to other structural areas of English-Thai difference along with being applied to cases between other languages and English. That is to say, the test can be further used in the validation of the influence of other first languages upon the usage of English expressions of measurement. Otherwise, the design of this modified multiple-choice test (cf. Appendix B) can be adapted to the assessment of structural cross-linguistic influence between other languages and English, as it should be suitable for testing the arrangement of sentence constituents so as to support or reject the existence of a mother tongue’s influence in terms of any particular structural patterns. Were similar distinctions to be found theoretically, this format of testing can be utilized to unveil whether negative transfer truly exists in that particular situation or not. Certainly, because the findings, though of quite small a scale, are from rigorously studying various aspects of the test, they, as a result, suffice for encouraging other EFL researchers to explore further (and certainly understand better) whether such a structural distinction exists between a pair of languages so as to bring about a) an even better body of knowledge concerning linguistic transfer—especially with respect to the structural influence of a mother tongue towards second/foreign language learning—as well as b) a simple but functional design of a test to verify a particular claim and learning material for solving such a learning hardship as well. This encouragement for structural exploration can be supported by the fact that we also need to “ensure that learners also focus on form” (Ellis,
2005, p. 4); to know what is a problem can certainly lead to a realistic and possibly viable solution.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks also go to Emerita Professor Judith Davenport, Ph.D., for her fastidious proofreading and constructive comments, Phanintra Teeranon, Ph.D., for her careful consideration of this paper and a generous smile as ever, and, of course, Joseph, for a helping hand and suggestions for further improving my paper.

References


24. I was a few minutes early for my appointment.
25. The log was two meters long.
26. The conference will be three days long.
27. The Grand Canyon is 4000 feet deep.

### Appendix B. Inverse Matrices of the Reliability Coefficient of the Test Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. around 12 inches</th>
<th>please dig deep a hole</th>
<th>.9374</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. below sea level</td>
<td>the Dead Sea is 420 meters</td>
<td>.9400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. long three days</td>
<td>will be the conference</td>
<td>.9369</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. 4000 feet is deep the Grand Canyon</td>
<td>.9369</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. the bus ten minutes was early</td>
<td>.9401</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. wide 10 to 20 mm are the plant's leaves</td>
<td>.9388</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Christmas away only one month is</td>
<td>.9405</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. was the speech twenty minutes long</td>
<td>.9363</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. is Geneva away about 20 miles</td>
<td>.9397</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. high up to 40 meters were the waves</td>
<td>.9377</td>
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<td>11. was sitting she away from the microphone ten feet</td>
<td>.9409</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. that house above sea level 50 meters is</td>
<td>.9401</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. three miles is the stream long</td>
<td>.9361</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. my watch I 15 minutes always keep fast</td>
<td>.9389</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About the Author

Kunlaphak Kongsuwannakul

I graduated from Chulalongkorn University, majoring in Secondary Education (English and German) for my B.Ed. and in English for my M.A. My thesis is “Characteristic Features in English Acknowledgements Written by Thai Graduates: Indicators for Thai English,” which is a study under the theory of World Englishes. Therefore, my interests lie in characteristics of New Englishes, English language and teaching, and applied corpus linguistics. At present, I am working for Mae Fah Luang University as a lecturer.