RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE:
Analysis of Thai grammar for developing a textbook of freshman grammar classes for Thai-major students in Japan

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5. Checklist for complete report submission. These sections are to follow this submission form.
   [ ] Executive summary
   [ ] Acknowledgment
   [ ] List of collaborating Thai researchers and/or Thai institutions
   [ ] Background and rationale
   [ ] Objective of research
   [ ] Research methodology
   [ ] Research results
   [ ] Conclusions and recommendations
   [ ] References
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I do hereby certify that all of the above given checks are true.

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1. Executive summary
From October 2012 to February 2013, I conducted a short research in Thailand. The title of the research is: ‘Analysis of Thai grammar for developing a textbook of freshman grammar classes for Thai-major students in Japan’. The research was supported by the Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) and permitted by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT). The present complete report provides the results of the research.

2. Acknowledgment
I would like to thank the National Research Council of Thailand for permitting me to conduct this research in Thailand. I am indebted to Associate Professor Tasanee Methapisit at Thammasat University for her advice and assistance in conducting the research. Thanks are also due to teachers/scholars and official employees at the universities I visited for kindly giving their time to communicate with me and providing me with valuable data and information on various matters related to the teaching Thai as a foreign language.

3. List of collaborating Thai researchers and/or Thai institutions
Associate Professor Tasanee Methapisit, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University

4. Background and rationale
Currently I am a teacher of Thai at the English-Thai double-major section, the Department of Asian Languages (which was called ‘the Department of International Language and Culture’ until 2011), the Kanda University of International Studies, Japan. The university has four double-major sections, i.e., English-Indonesian, English-Thai, English-Vietnamese, and English-Brazil Portuguese sections. It provides the students with four obligatory English classes and five obligatory regional language classes per week for the first two years, and then, two advanced English classes and two or more advanced regional language classes per week for the last two years. This intensive curriculum enables the students to learn two foreign languages, English and a regional language, at the same time.

Regarding the Thai curriculum for freshman students of the English-Thai section, the students are given five elementary Thai classes in a week: Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Grammar classes. My colleagues who are Thai native speakers...
teach the first four subjects (the subjects of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing) and I teach the last subject (the subject of Grammar). In my classes I use a published textbook (Mikami 2002) which, I think, is the best among a number of commercially available elementary Thai textbooks written in Japanese. The textbook’s description is fairly precise and easy to understand. However, there is room to improve its content. Some part of the content is not in accord with the above-mentioned intensive Thai curriculum at the Kanda University of International Studies.

Since I started to study Thai linguistics some twenty years ago, I have been trying to account for the system of Thai grammar and clarify its essential characteristics (N.B., most of my previous studies on the Thai language can be obtained from my personal website [http://www.kuis.ac.jp/~kiyoko/] on the Home Page of the Kanda University of International Studies). However, I have not written a textbook for my university’s grammar classes, though I have written an elementary Thai textbook for other universities’ Open College classes for the general public (Takahashi and Masaki 2009). This is simply because my understanding of Thai grammar was insufficient and my knowledge about language teaching techniques was short.

So far many excellent Thai reference grammar books have been published. Examples are: Bandhumedha (2525/1982), Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005), Noss (1964), Smyth (2002), Vichin (2534/1991), and so on. It is interesting to note, however, that the way of describing the grammar in each book is considerably diverse. Lexical and grammatical categories taken up, for instance, vary from book to book. This variety is presumably due to the fact that the system of Thai grammar is strikingly different from that of grammars of well-known languages which have been investigated by a large number of linguists. Previously I pointed out some fundamental problems in the description of Thai grammar (Takahashi 2006), as follows:

(a) How should we classify ‘parts of speech’ in Thai? Thai lexical items do not change the form and they are largely polysemous or polyfunctional. Take one of the so-called ‘versatile’ lexical items ที่ for example. According to its differing syntactic and discursive environment, it may function as lexical noun meaning ‘place’, as class noun meaning ‘entity (including thing, person, etc.)’, or as functional morpheme (such as classifier, preposition, complementizer and

nominalizer) while not changing its form. Thus, the categorization of Thai parts of speech cannot be straightforward.

(b) How should we determine ‘sentence patterns’ in Thai? Essentially, how should we define the unit of ‘sentence’ in Thai? Thai verbs have no inflectional coding of finiteness, which means that they have no grammatical division between finite and non-finite forms (e.g. ‘walked’ vs. ‘to walk’ in English). Moreover, Thai verbs do not have obligatory arguments, let alone agreements with the arguments, and noun phrases adjacent to a Thai verb have no clear distinction between required arguments of the verb (i.e., subject and object noun phrases) and non-arguments (e.g., adjunct, complement, oblique noun phrases). These morphosyntactic properties of Thai were named ‘indeterminateness’ by Bisang (1996). The well-formedness or grammaticality of argument structures of Thai verbs, therefore, significantly differs from its counterpart in Indo-European languages, which have established the comprehensive paradigms of grammatical categories and the firm argument structures seen from agreement phenomena. Since fully entrenched argument structures of Thai verbs have not emerged, ‘sentence patterns’ in Thai are hardly determined.

(c) Even if the unit of ‘sentence’ is successfully defined, we will come across another problem. That is, how many ‘levels of linguistic units’, or in other words, how many ‘embedded structures’, should be posited in a Thai sentence? Can we regard simplex serial verb constructions such as ดี ผ่าน ‘walk + go’ and ผ่าน ที่ ‘go + reach’, for example, as comprising syntactically a head (or main) verb and a non-head (or subsidiary) verb? If we can, on what basis?

The ultimate purpose of my study of Thai grammar is to resolve these problems concerning the entire system of the grammar. However, I would like to go step by step. Initially I will make a rough, albeit reasonable, sketch of Thai grammar which is readily applicable to the teaching Thai as a foreign language. On the basis of the result of this research, I will develop a textbook for elementary Thai classes at Japanese universities. I hope that the textbook would help the students to acquire the effective way of communicating their ideas and experiences in Thai.
I study Thai grammar within the framework of ‘Functional Linguistics’ (cf. Van Valin 2001) and ‘Construction Grammar’ (cf. Croft and Cruse 2004: 257-290, Croft 2007). The approach of Functional Linguistics emphasizes the idea that language is primarily for communicating our experience. Its central objective is to explicate the role of language in communication. Functional linguists consider that the structure of language is fundamentally informed by the structure of our experience and our cultural models of experience. They also consider that linguistic forms are adapted to their functions for the sake of communication and thus can be explained only in terms of those functions (DeLancey 2001).

Construction Grammar presents a theory of syntactic representation for Cognitive Linguistics (cf. Croft and Cruse 2004, Geerearts and Cuyckens 2007) which can be regarded as a variety of Functional Linguistics. The fundamental principle of Construction Grammar is that the basic form of a syntactic structure is a ‘construction’ which is defined as ‘a pairing of complex grammatical structure with its conventional meaning’ (see Figure 1 below). Constructions are ‘fundamentally symbolic units’ representing grammatical knowledge such as syntax, morphology and lexicon.

![CONSTRUCTION](image)

Figure 1: The symbolic structure of a construction (Croft and Cruse 2004: 258)
Another fundamental principle of Construction Grammar is that constructions are organized in a network. Constructions are not merely an unstructured list in Construction Grammar. Constructions form a structured inventory or taxonomic network of a speaker’s knowledge of the conventions of their language. A taxonomic relation describes a relationship of schematicity or generality between two constructions. For example, a schematic idiom (e.g. ‘The X-er, the Y-er’) and a substantive idiom (e.g. ‘The bigger they come, the harder they fall’) have a taxonomic link, as depicted below:

[The X-er, the Y-er]

[The bigger they come, the harder they fall] (Croft and Cruse 2004: 263)

Construction Grammarians consider that a substantive idiom (substantive construction) is an instance of a schematic idiom (schematic construction); that is, these two constructions are independent but related in terms of schematicity. The following is another example. Several levels of schematicity can be represented between the substantive idiomatic phrase (e.g. ‘kick the bucket’) and the most schematic representation of the verb phrase (i.e. ‘[VERBPHRASE]’), as the following:

[VERBPHRASE]

[VERB OBJ]

[kick OBJ]

[kick [the bucket]] (Croft and Cruse 2004: 263)

In line with these basic tenets of Functional Linguistics and Construction Grammar, I would like to explain a variety of Thai syntactic patterns or grammatical constructions in terms of their functions. I believe that it is desirable for foreign learners of Thai to be able to use those various syntactic patterns or grammatical constructions according to their distinct functions.
5. Objective of research

This research aims to increase my knowledge about the current state of affairs with respect to the study of Thai grammar and the teaching Thai as a foreign language in Thailand. The knowledge will be utilized for writing a textbook for freshman Thai classes at the Kanda University of International Studies, Japan.

Specific purposes are as follows:
(1) To review academic papers on Thai grammar, Thai reference grammar books, and textbooks of Thai for foreign learners that are recently published in Thailand.
(2) To observe teaching Thai as a foreign language at educational institutions in Thailand.
(3) To exchange ideas and experiences concerning the curriculum and textbooks for teaching Thai as a foreign language with teachers and experts in Thailand.
(4) To analyze the data obtained from the research activities stated above and identify useful basic syntactic patterns or significant grammatical constructions that should be included in my forthcoming textbook.

As mentioned before, textbooks that can be used in intensive grammar classes for Japanese Thai-major students are lacking. In order for the students to have a good command of Thai, it is necessary to develop an excellent elementary Thai textbook written in Japanese, which properly explains Thai basic syntactic patterns or grammatical constructions and their functions in use and also contains appropriate sample expressions and exercises. Making use of this research, I will try to develop such a textbook which enhances the students’ understanding of Thai grammar and their communicative ability.

6. Research methodology

I have conducted the research with the following empirical methods.
(1) To collect the above-mentioned literature and materials from libraries, book stores and Internet sites, and to analyze their accounts of the system of Thai grammar.
(2) To observe elementary Thai classes for foreigners, and analyze the way of treating grammar-related matters in the classes.
(3) To exchange ideas and experiences related to the teaching Thai as a foreign language with Thai teachers and scholars, and summarize main points.
(4) To identify useful basic syntactic patterns or significant grammatical constructions in Thai by examining the data obtained.
7. Research results

This section comprises the following subsections:

7.1. Collected literature and teaching materials

7.1.1. List of collected elementary Thai textbooks for foreigners

7.1.2. List of collected Thai reference grammar books

7.1.3. List of collected research reports and guidebooks/textbooks of the teaching Thai as a foreign language

7.1.4. List of collected academic papers on the teaching Thai as a foreign language

7.1.5. List of collected research reports on Thai grammar

7.1.6. List of collected academic papers on Thai grammar

7.1.7. Notes

7.2. Observation of elementary Thai classes for foreigners

5.2.1. List of observed elementary Thai classes for foreigners

5.2.2. Notes

7.3. Exchange of ideas and experiences with Thai teachers and scholars

5.3.1. List of interviewed Thai teachers and scholars

5.3.2. Notes

7.4. Identification of useful basic grammatical constructions in Thai

7.1. Collected literature and teaching materials

I have gathered recent books and documents that deal with basic Thai grammar or basic Thai syntactic patterns, which are listed in 7.1.1 to 7.1.6 below. Note that they were all published in Thailand after 2001. (See บุญเรือง ชื่นสุวิมล ๒๕๔๔ [Chunsuvimol 2001] or บุญเรือง ชื่นสุวิมล ๒๕๕๓ [Chunsuvimol 2010] for a list of Thai textbooks and grammar books for foreigners that were published before 2001.)

7.1.1 List of the collected elementary Thai textbooks for foreigners

(1) Thai Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University (Archatewan, Pongpen, Rungroj Archatewan, Rattana Phumipitak. (eds.)). 1st ed. 2011. Intensive Listening-Speaking Thai for Foreigners [สนทนาภาษาไทย (ฉบับเร่งรัด)]. Bangkok: Skybook. (124 pages, with CD)

(2) Fujisaki, Phongphan and Laurisa Deacon. 1st ed. 2011. Master Thai in 1 Night: The
Simplest in the World! [เรียนคืนเดียวก็เก่งได้ภาษาไทย สําหรับคนพูดภาษาอังกฤษ]. Bangkok: TLS Group. (152 pages, with CD)


(14) Withayasakphan, Somphong et al. 1st ed. 2002. แบบเรียนภาษาไทยเบื้องต้นในบริบทของภาษาไทยคดีศึกษา [แบบเรียนภาษาไทยเบื้องต้นในบริบทของภาษาไทยคดีศึกษา]. โครงการพัฒนาความรู้เกี่ยวกับการเรียนรู้ภาษาไทยในบริบทของไทยคดีศึกษา

7.1.2 List of the collected Thai reference grammar books

(1) ประสารานุวงศ์ ภนาวณิช [Nimanhemin, Prakhong et al.]. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๑, ๒๕๕๒ [1st ed. 2009]. บรรทัดฐานภาษาไทย เล่ม ๔: ชั้นเรียนกับการสอนสื่อสารการศึกษาสําหรับนักเรียนที่พูดภาษาอื่น [Training Package Design for Thai Language Teacher to Teach Non-Thai Speakers]. สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ. (172 pages)


7.1.3 List of the collected research reports and guidebooks/textbooks of the teaching Thai as a foreign language

(1) ศรีวิไล พลเมีย [Ponmanee, Sriwilai]. ๒๕๕๒ [2009]. การออกแบบแพคเกจอบรมครูสอนภาษาไทยสำหรับผู้เรียนที่พูดภาษาอื่น [Training Package for Thai Language Teacher to Teach Non-Thai Speakers]. คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล. (168 pages)

7.1.4. List of the collected academic papers on the teaching Thai as a foreign language


(3) บุญเรือง ชื่นสุวิมล [Chunsuvimol, Boonruang]. ๒๕๕๘ [2011]. วรรณยุกต์มีการแทนเสียงอย่างไรในหนังสือสอนภาษาไทยสำหรับชาวต่างประเทศ [How are tones represented in Thai language teaching books for foreigners?]. วารสารภาษาและภาษาศาสตร์ [Language and Linguistics] 29(2), 46-60.

(5) บุญเรือง ชื่นสุวิมล [Chunsuvimol, Boonruang]. ๒๕๕๓ [2010]. หนังสือสอนภาษาไทยสำหรับชาวต่างประเทศเขียนขึ้นด้วยข้อความไทยโดยไม่ใช้ภาษาไทย [What are the purposes of Thai language teaching books for non-Thai speakers?]. วารสารมนุษยศาสตร์ [Humanities & Social Sciences] 21(1), 1-17.


(9) บุญเรือง ชื่นสุวิมล [Chunsuvimol, Boonruang]. ๒๕๕๓ [2010]. หนังสือสอนภาษาไทยสำหรับชาวต่างประเทศเขียนขึ้นด้วยข้อความไทยโดยไม่ใช้ภาษาไทย [What are the purposes of Thai language teaching books for non-Thai speakers?]. วารสารมนุษยศาสตร์ [Humanities & Social Sciences] 21(1), 1-17.


(22) Gafur, Zahrah Abd. ๒๕๔๔ [2001]. Foreign language learning for linguistics students in the school of Humanities at University of Science Malaysia. ใน องค์การวิจัยและพัฒนาภาษาไทย [Kanuong, Aporn and Ekaphong Lauhathiansind (ed.)]. ๒๕๔๔ [2001]. การสัมมนาระดับภูมิภาคว่าด้วยการเรียนการสอนภาษาไทยในบริบทไทยศึกษา [Regional Seminar on Teaching and Learning Thai Language in the Context of Thai Studies], 198-201. ถาวรศิลป์พันธ์ สานักงานปลัดทบวงมหาวิทยาลัย.

7.1.5. List of the collected research reports on Thai grammar


(2) ปรัณี กุลวัฒน์ชัย [Kullavanijaya, Pranee]. ๒๕๔๖ [2006]. ชนิดอนุประโยคในภาษาไทย: การวิเคราะห์ทางยุทธศาสตร์ [Adnominal clause constructions: Relative clause constructions and noun

7.1.6. List of the collected academic papers on Thai grammar


7.1.7 Notes

From a close examination of the literature and teaching materials listed above, I see the following.

(a) There are no elementary Thai textbooks for foreigners that are designed primarily for promoting a better understanding on basic Thai grammar. Although most of the textbooks give accounts of relevant grammatical matters, the way of explaining is not systematic. They are seemingly sporadic notes on the usage of a certain grammatical item or construction. Only one exception is the textbook developed for foreign students at the Mahidol University International College (Mahidol University International College, 2008) which includes the sketch of basic Thai grammar. At any rate, all of the textbooks listed above take a communicative approach, and they consist of a number of lessons (6 to 54 lessons) with short dialogues or conversations in daily life. They focus on practices of speaking and listening concise everyday expressions (and additional writing and reading practices) rather than the learning of basic grammatical matters.

(b) Most of the textbooks are expected to be used by teachers of Thai native speakers who are responsible to provide their own explanation for grammatical matters in each lesson according to the learners’ proficiency level and other properties.

(c) Many of the textbooks try to account for Thai grammatical matters by means of technical terms in English/Japanese grammar. This is presumably because native Thai teachers and foreign learners of Thai are expected to commonly have
knowledge of English/Japanese grammar. In those textbooks, mere translation from Thai words/constructions into English/Japanese ones is often taken to be enough to make the foreign learners understand basic Thai grammar.

(d) Generally, the written variety of a language tends to be less taught in the elementary level of the foreign language teaching, since it is more complex and less useful in daily life than the spoken variety. What is more, nowadays communicative approaches are the mainstream of the foreign language teaching. It is not strange, therefore, that all the textbooks principally aim at developing foreign learners’ communicative skill of Thai by practicing spoken communication. Exemplified discourses in the textbooks are all from the spoken language, and there is little explanation as to how different or similar lexical items and expressions in the spoken language (such as dialogues and conversations) and those in the written language (such as letters and literary works) are. It follows that currently the elementary level of the teaching Thai as a foreign language does not offer a systematic explanation about quite elusive syntactic patterns involving grammatical words such as prepositions and conjunctions, which may or may not be used especially when speaking.

(e) Like the textbooks, the reference grammar books rely on technical terms of the grammar of English and other Indo-European languages in explaining Thai grammar. Interestingly, however, the exact terminology employed differs among the books.

(f) On the basis of examination of the literature on the teaching Thai as a foreign language, one may conclude that researchers in this field regard the ‘grammar-translation’ teaching method as out of date. Specifically, they consider the traditional ‘grammar-translation’ method (or ‘teacher-centered’ method) to be less effective in teaching foreign languages than the modern ‘communication’ method (or ‘learner-oriented’ method).

(g) The research reports and academic papers on Thai grammar (to be precise, original studies on grammatical words and constructions in Thai) clearly indicate that the authors view the grammatical systems of Thai (such as the system of word classes, of aspect, of modality, of compounds, of classifier constructions, of adnominal constructions, of serial verb constructions, of passive constructions, and so forth) from quite a novel perspective. They each uniquely and reasonably analyze those systems of Thai grammar within various theoretical frameworks that they adapted from original Western theories. It is likely that the excellent outcome of these recent studies on Thai grammar has not yet been reflected in textbooks and reference materials.
grammars in the teaching Thai as a foreign language. This is probably because teachers of Thai as a foreign language and the authors of the textbooks and reference grammar books have scarcely familiarized themselves with contemporary linguistic researches.

7.2. Observation of elementary Thai classes for foreigners
During the period from November to December 2012, I visited six universities with the program of Thai for foreigners and observed several elementary Thai classes, as listed in 7.2.1 below.

7.2.1 List of the observed elementary Thai classes for foreigners
(1) Two classes of the subject “Everyday Thai 1” by Associate Professor Hataiwan Chaiyakul at the Thai as a Foreign Language Program, Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University on Thursday, November 22, 2012
(2) One class of the Special Program for Chinese students from a tie-up university in China, by Lecturer Jirat Hiranras at the Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University on Thursday, November 22, 2012
(3) One class of the “Basic 1” course, by Lecturer Suriya Sriphrom at the Intensive Thai Program, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University on Monday, November 26, 2012
(4) One class of the Special Program for Chinese Students from a tie-up university in China, by former Associate Professor Pongpan Chantrawaratit at the Thai Language Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University on Tuesday, December 18, 2012

7.2.2 Notes
I have found some similarities and differences among these elementary Thai classes for foreigners, as summarized below.
(a) The observed elementary Thai classes are of two types: intensive and normal semester types.
(b) Foreign students taking elementary Thai classes in these universities are mostly from China or Myanmar. Therefore, the classes are apt to be homogeneous in terms of the students’ cultural background. However, the nationality of students in the class of Chulalongkorn University’s Intensive Thai program is relatively diverse; in

addition to seven Chinese students, two American, two Japanese, one Korean, one Swedish, one Belgian and one English students attend the class together.

c) Some teachers use only Thai as the language for instruction in their classes, and some teachers use English, too. If Chinese students are dominant in the class, the teacher may sometimes show Chinese translations of Thai lexical items or expressions to the students.

d) The way of dealing with grammatical matters in elementary Thai classes for foreigners is variable, for there are no detailed explanations about grammatical matters in the textbook. Some teachers occasionally give an account of grammatical matters according to questions raised by students. Some teachers offer carefully prepared explanations of grammar with some concrete examples. Yet, some teachers consider that any explicit grammatical explanation is not necessary because the inductive process on the part of students is more important than the deductive instruction on the part of teachers. In their view, the task of teachers of elementary Thai classes for foreigners is to give the foreign students many samples of Thai phrases or expressions, thereby the students by themselves will find out the covert underlying syntactic patterns.

7.3. Exchange of ideas and experiences with Thai teachers and scholars
I have discussed with a number of Thai experts on various matters concerning the teaching Thai as a foreign language and Thai grammar. Their names and affiliations are in 7.3.1 below.

7.3.1. List of the interviewed Thai teachers and scholars
(1) Lecturer Dr. Rujira Sengnet
   Lecturer Dr. Methawee Yuttapongtada
   at the Thai as a Second Language (Communicative Thai Language for Foreigners) Program, Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University on Monday, November 12, 2012

(2) Associate Professor Nuantip Permkesorn
   at the Basic Thai for Foreigners Program, Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University on Thursday, November 15, 2012

(3) Lecturer Jirat Hiranras
   Lecturer Amphika Ratanapitak
   Lecturer Pancheewa Butraj
   Lecturer Dr. Charoen Phetrat
Associate Professor Dr. Nanthariya Sah-iam
Associate Professor Hataiwan Chaiyakul
at the Thai as a Foreign Language Program, Department of Thai Language, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University on Wednesday and Thursday, November 21-22, 2012

(4) Lecturer Suriya Sriphrom
at the Intensive Thai Program, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University on Monday, November 26, 2012

(5) Lecturer Dr. Sumittra Suraratdecha
at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University on Monday, December 17, 2012

(6) Lecturer Wasamone Peansamer
Lecturer Siwaphorn Kosiyakul
Former Associate Professor Pongpan Chantrawaratit
at the Thai Language Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University on Tuesday, December 18, 2012

7.3.2. Notes
Having interviewed these experts, I learn many things regarding the curriculum and the learning contents of each program. I also learn their opinions on basic Thai grammar. Main points are summarized below.

(a) Roughly speaking, the objective of the curriculum of the Thai program for foreigners at the universities I visited is identical, that is, to teach Thai to foreigners so that they will acquire effective communicative skills of Thai and will be able to perform academic or professional activities in Thai society.

(b) The academic background of teachers of Thai as a foreign language is varied. Some teachers major in linguistics; some in Thai literature; and, many also study foreign language(s).

(c) Pure grammar classes of the elementary level are not included in the curriculum. By and large, grammatical matters are introduced in speaking and listening classes. According to the contents of sample conversation discourses taken up in the textbook or either prepared or spontaneous spoken discourses produced by students in the class, the teachers account for relevant grammatical matters (such as basic speech-act types of sentence, basic word orders, the structure of noun phrase, the system of pronouns and address terms, the system of demonstratives, the system of
directional verbs, expressions of space, expressions of time, classifiers, aspectual/modal markers, final particles, and so on).

(d) Some experts fear that foreign students will not understand the teacher’s explanation about Thai grammar unless they get used to actual Thai expressions involving particular grammatical matters. In other words, they speculate that it is difficult for elementary Thai learners to fully understand explanations about the system of Thai grammar, because they do not yet have sufficient knowledge of how the system works. Therefore, they think that grammar classes for beginners who are little exposed to actual Thai expressions (like Thai-major freshman students in my university) are not meaningful very much.

(e) In some experts’ opinion, the knowledge of grammar will not help the beginners improve their language fluency. For this reason, generally there are not grammar classes at the elementary level. For advanced learners, however, the knowledge of grammar is necessary to appropriately express the exact meaning they want to convey to others and make themselves clearly understandable to others. So, grammar classes at the intermediate or advanced level are more preferable.

(f) Some experts point out that it is not necessary for students in an elementary class to perfectly understand what the teacher speaks in Thai. The important point is that students must firstly get used to Thai discourses in terms of sounds and the information structure; after they become familiar with the general characteristics of Thai discourses, their comprehension ability will naturally progress in due time.

(g) Additionally, some experts emphasize that teachers teaching Thai to foreigners should make contrastive studies between Thai and foreign languages. Being aware of both commonalities and differences existing between Thai and foreign languages, the teachers can effectively teach Thai to foreigners.

(h) The following are regarded, by most of the experts I met, as the indispensable qualification of the teacher of Thai as a foreign language: good personality with curiosity, patience and kindness, good knowledge of the Thai language, adequate knowledge of foreign languages, and the skillful technique of making students understand.

(i) Opinions on so-called ‘basic Thai grammar’ differ from one expert to another, though most of them take the following as the basic grammatical matters: the phonological system, word formation (compounding), the linear order of constituents of noun phrase, the linear order of constituents of sentence/clause, the formation of complex sentential forms, and aspectual/modal expressions. Some add the following: reduplication forms, verbless sentences (Topic-Comment structure),
non-appearance of arguments/complements of verb, serial verbs, expressions of politeness (expressions in different registers), pragmatic particles (final particles and discourse markers), and idioms.

7.4. Identification of useful basic grammatical constructions in Thai

I will continue analyzing the research results to identify useful Thai basic syntactic patterns or significant grammatical constructions. I believe that primary grammatical constructions in any language is verbal constructions, which are constructions including verb(s) as the core constituent. We humans use verbal constructions to structure our ideas and communicate our experiences with others in the society. In each speech community, humans have developed the system of verbal constructions for communication.

In my view, the most significant nature of verbal constructions is that there is a certain relationship between a verbal construction and the semantic classes of verbs possibly included in the construction. The relationship of verbal construction types and verb classes is characteristically conventionalized in each language. When identifying the types of verbal constructions in a language, one also has to identify meaningful verb classes for each type of verbal constructions at the same time. Unfortunately, grammatical descriptions seen in the recent elementary Thai textbooks and Thai reference grammar books still fail to reveal the picture of how basic verbal constructions and basic verb classes for the constructions are related to each other. Therefore, I would like to tackle this challenging issue. In doing so, it is crucial to describe basic verbal constructions at the adequate (necessary and sufficient) level of schematicity. If the schematicity level of description is too low (concrete), the number of constructions with concrete verbs will be too large to derive generalizations from them. Exposure to a non-organized, mere random list of constructions should prevent foreign learners from their smooth acquisition of basic grammar. In contrast, if the schematicity level of description is too high (abstract), constructions will be roughly described by using rather abstract linguistic categories such as NP and VP, or in other words, they will not be described in a usage-based way. As a result, learners will not be able to learn essential constructions that Thai speakers frequently utilize in actual communication.

In line with this view, I am going to write a draft of the elementary grammar textbook of my grammar classes for freshman Thai-major students at Kanda University of International Studies (2014 edition), which will contain the following basic Thai constructions that are frequently used by Thai speakers.
Constructions with a demonstrative
Constructions with a classifier
Constructions consisting of a noun predicate
Constructions consisting of a simple verb predicate, including the one-argument type (such as expressions for existence and appearance/disappearance), the two-argument type (such as expressions for state and activity/process in general), and the three-argument type (such as expressions for transferring a theme to a goal and giving a theme to a recipient).
Constructions consisting of a complex verb predicate composed of two verb phrases (namely, what is called ‘basic serial verb constructions’)
Constructions consisting of a complex verb predicate composed of more than two verb phrases (such as self-motion and caused-motion expressions)
Constructions with a preposition
Constructions with an adnominal clause, including a relative clause and an infinitive clause
Constructions with a noun complement clause
Constructions with a verb complement clause
Constructions with a linkage marker for non-integrated clauses (such as a coordinate conjunction and an adverbial conjunction)
Constructions related to voice phenomena (such as passive, analytic causative, and benefactive/malefactive expressions)
Constructions related to subjectivity (aspect/modality), inter-subjectivity and speech acts.

The next step is to gather actual tokens of constituents of these constructions from large corpus data. I will identify both high- and low-frequency tokens so that I can see possible types of each construction. In addition, I will further investigate into relationships among various constructions.

8. Conclusions and recommendations
From this research I learn that the field of the teaching Thai as a foreign language in Thailand has been remarkably progressing and that studies on Thai grammar by native Thai scholars have been seamlessly providing in-depth analyses of a wide range of grammatical matters. Making use of the knowledge I have obtained, I will develop a new textbook of grammar classes for Thai-major freshman students at my university in
Japan. I hope that my forthcoming book will benefit not only students taking my grammar classes but also Japanese teachers of Thai in general who may apply my generalizations of basic Thai grammar shown in the book to their teaching activities.

As some teachers mentioned, elementary Thai learners who have little experience of using Thai may be confused when listening to the teacher’s explanation about Thai grammar. However, I claim that it is the case only when the teacher’s explanation is unreasonable or too complicated. In fact, providing the learners with adequate (viz., plain, systematic and reasonable) accounts of Thai grammar from the beginning enables them to make a long-term steady progress in learning Thai, and it is only the systematic knowledge of grammar that will help them develop accuracy in their language production. I maintain that basic Thai grammar can be taught to foreign students in a practical and effective manner by using the old teaching method (i.e., explicit instruction and extensive practice) if the teachers are capable of analyzing the grammatical systems of Thai and of the students’ mother tongue and making the students recognize significant differences as well as commonalities between the two systems. My basic idea is that it is desirable that Thai textbooks explaining grammatical matters are written in the respective mother tongues of foreign students.

9. References


Using part of the knowledge about the Thai language that I had obtained in this research, I wrote the following:

(a) Academic articles:
- Takahashi (2013a) <Appendix 1>
- Takahashi (to appear a) [Takahashi (to appear a)] <Appendix 2>
- Takahashi (to appear b) <Appendix 3>

(b) Research report:
- Takahashi (2014) [Takahashi (2014)] <Appendix 4>

(c) Résumé for oral presentation at the 147th General Meeting of the Linguistic Society of Japan:
- Takahashi (2013b) [Takahashi (2013b)] <Appendix 5>