

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In spite of the English integration in Thai Educational System for a long time, still, a majority of learners are still confronted with difficulties in using the English language (Wiriyachitra, 2001; Thep-Ackrapong, 2006). Some studies have showed the problems that the learners in different educational levels encounter when they learn English. For example, in the secondary education, Songsiri (1999) found out that Mathayomsuksa 6 (Grade 12) learners at Propittayapayat School had poor reading skills in vocabulary, syntax and grammar, and they lacked the ability of guessing meaning from context. Chawwang (2008) also revealed that Mathayomsuksa 6 (Grade 12) learners in educational regions 1, 2, 3, and 7 in Nakhonratchasima in the academic year 2006 had the English problems in following areas: sentence structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. In the university education, third-year Thai learners in the Bachelor's Degree program at Srinakharinwirot University had the following difficulties: vocabulary, grammatical structure, organization of a reading passage, and length of a passage (Aegpongpaow, 2008). Similarly, Eskey (1971 as cited in Inchun, 2005, p. 3) stated that Thai learners encountered 3 major problems: vocabulary, content, and structure. Gunning (2002 as cited in Chawwang, 2008, p. 2) said that limited knowledge of vocabulary and of sentence structure is regarded as the main problem. Benchakan's research (1985, p. 45 as cited in Charoonphanthitikul, 2006, p. 16) have shown that the learners could not understand what they read because they lacked knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure. Previous studies reveal that Thai learners have problems in the following areas: lack of vocabulary knowledge and inability to recognize the sentence structures. These problems affect student's comprehension. In other words, they could not comprehend what they have read because they lack the ability to understand the texts.

It is obvious that sentence structure plays a crucial role to their understanding. The reason is that sentence structure helps the readers to know what element the writer emphasizes. To be more specific, let's focus on complex sentences. In principle,

a complex sentence consists of two parts—an independent clause (main clause) and a dependent clause (subordinate clause). The more important idea or information goes into an independent clause (which can stand alone) while the less important idea goes into a dependent clause (which cannot stand alone). A few questions are raised: if the subordinate clause plays a less important role than the main clause, why do we still need it? Can we use only a simple sentence or the independent clause to convey the meanings or our thoughts? It turns out that a subordinate clause provides more and better information than a single word. To paint a clearer picture, see the two sentences below.

1. Aids is a **fatal** disease.
2. Aid is a disease **which takes millions of lives away every year**.

Obviously, (2) provides more and clearer information than (1) because of an adjective clause.

Besides information aspects, complex sentences also reflect human's complex thoughts and ideas. To express what we think, only a simple sentence and a compound sentence are not enough. Our complex ideas truly need complex sentences which help us in sequencing events temporally and causally (Haynes & Shulman, 1998), improving the cohesiveness of narratives (Badzinski, 1988), and increasing the sophistication of language (Paul, 2001). Not surprisingly, human begin to learn complex sentences when they are three years old (Lahey, 1988; Paul, 1981).

To understand the forms or structures of sentence, we have to be aware of three types of sentences: simple, compound, and complex (Alexander, 1992; Ehrlich, 2000; Emery, Kierzek and Lindblom 2000; Wannaprasert, 2004; Na Kalasin, Utawanit, and Lemchuen, 2007; Werner and Spaventa, 2007).

In all types of sentences, complex sentences are often more difficult to read and to comprehend than simple and compound sentences because of the structure. Therefore, it is necessary for learners to focus and give emphasis on the constructions of complex sentences and how or when they are used. If learners do not have such knowledge, it is difficult for them to understand what the writers want to communicate in the books.



### **The purposes of the study**

1. To investigate the frequency of the occurrence of complex sentences in three different fields of the English academic books.
2. To identify the subtype of complex sentences in three academic books on the basis of Biber, et al.'s framework (Biber, et al., 1999).

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the purposes of the study, below were the research questions:

1. What was the proportion of complex sentences in three different fields of English academic books?
2. How often did each subtype of complex sentences appear in three selected books?

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study was restricted in the following scopes:

1. The study focused on three English academic books used by Naresuan University from three different fields:

1.1 In Social Science field -“**Accounting Principles**”- published by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. (2010) and written by Weygandt, Kimmel and Kieso. This book was used in the Course of Accounting I and II for the first year learners in Department of Accounting and the second year learners in the Department of Computer Business, Faculty of Management and Information Science.

1.2 In Science and Technology field -“**System Dynamics (second edition)**”- published by John Wiley and Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd. (2010) and written by Palm. “System Dynamics” was used in Simulation of Mechanical Systems Course for the first year learners in Department of Mechanical engineering, Faculty of Engineering. This textbook was also employed in Automatic Control Engineering Course for the fourth year learners.

1.3 In Health Science field -“**TIETZ Fundamentals of Clinical Chemistry (sixth edition)**”- published by Saunders, an imprinted of Elsevier Inc. (2008) and edited by Burtis, Ashwood and Bruns. This book was taught in the course

of Clinical Chemistry I and II for the third year learners in Department of Medical Technology, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences.

2. The classification and analysis of the subtypes of complex sentences were based on Biber, et al.'s framework (Biber, et al., 1999).

3. The study analyzed only the complex sentences in the three selected books. The simple and compound sentences were excluded because they were not the focus of this study.

4. The type of dependent clause in this study was the finite dependent clause. Non-finite dependent clauses were excluded because they were not marked for tense and modality and they frequently lacked an explicit subject and subordinator.

5. Sentences which occurred in tables and illustrations were excluded from this study because the focus of this study was on complex sentences in paragraph only.

### **Significance of the study**

As mentioned above, this study focuses on the sentence structure of complex sentences in three different fields. It aimed to find out the frequency of occurrence of complex sentence and classification of their subtypes according to their functions. The results of this study help both learners and teachers of English to see a broad picture of subtypes of complex sentence forms in academic. The examples of complex sentences can also be helpful in improving learners' reading comprehension on any type of books that they are interested in, or, are related to their fields of study. Finally, instructors can prepare students to understand certain types of complex sentence by introducing or distributing some handouts about them before having students read textbooks. This will help their students gain more understanding in what they are reading.

### **Definition of terms**

To classify the terms used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

**1. Sentence:** A sentence is normally considered to be the largest unit of grammar. It consists of at least one main clause. In writing, sentence boundaries are

defined by an initial capital letter and a full stop, an exclamation mark or a question mark at the end.

**2. Complex sentence:** A complex sentence is a sentence which contains one independent clause and one (or more) dependent clause.

**3. Dependent clause:** A dependent clause begins with a subordinator such as **when, while, if, that** or **who** followed by a subject, verb, and complement. A dependent clause does not express a complete thought and cannot stand by itself as a sentence.

**4. Finite dependent clauses:** Finite dependent clauses contain a verb phrase which is marked for tense or modality. Finite dependent clauses are regularly marked by a clause link, either a subordinator or a **wh-word**.

**5. Non-finite dependent clause:** Non-finite dependent clauses are regularly dependent. They are more compact and less explicit than finite clauses; they are not mark for tense and modality, and they frequently lack an explicit subject and subordinator. It is necessary to use clues from the main clause and often also from the wider context to interpret the non-finite clauses.

**6. Academic fields:** Academic fields refer to three fields which are Health Sciences, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences.