

# Linguistic Devices Reflecting Violence in Border-Provinces of Southern Thailand on the Front Page of Local and National Newspapers

Chanokporn Angsuviriya

**Abstract**—The objective of the study is to analyze linguistic devices reflecting the violence in the south border provinces; namely Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkla on 1,344 front pages of three local newspapers; namely ChaoTai, Focus PhakTai and Samila Time and of two national newspapers, including ThaiRath and Matchon, between 2004 and 2005, and 2011 and 2012. The study shows that there are two important linguistic devices: 1) lexical choices consisting of the use of verbs describing violence, the use of quantitative words and the use of words naming someone who committed violent acts, and 2) metaphors consisting of “A VIOLENT PROBLEM IS HEAT”, “A VICTIM IS A LEAF”, and “A TERRORIST IS A DOG”. Comparing linguistic devices between two types of newspapers, national newspapers choose to use words more violently than local newspapers do. Moreover, they create more negative images of the south of Thailand by using stative verbs. In addition, in term of metaphors “A TERRORIST IS A FOX.” is only found in national newspapers. As regards naming terrorists “southern insurgents”, this noun phrase which is collectively called by national newspapers has strongly negative meaning. Moreover, “southern insurgents” have been perceived by the Thais in the whole country while “insurgents” that are not modified have been only used by local newspapers.

**Keyword**—Linguistic Devices, Local Newspapers, National Newspapers, Violence.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**V**IOLENT acts in the south of Thailand have been intriguing since 2004 because the number of them has soared rapidly. According to statistics between 1993 and 2003, there were 748 violent acts in three border provinces of the south of Thailand as opposed to 3,546 violent acts between 2004 and 2005. The number shows that the percentage of violent acts increased dramatically by 374 % within 11 years [3].

A Newspaper is media reflecting the social situation at that time. The report of news is selected by the editorial department so some aspects of the truth are selected to be presented or abandoned. Not only do newspapers function as a mirror to reflect societies truthfully but also produce a truthful news account [4].

Mass media has hidden ideologies because the producers have their own personal opinions which might create or affect the thought and behavior of the receivers. For example, crime

Chanokporn Angsuviriya is lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkhla University (PSU), 90110 Thailand (phone: 668-6747-0768; e-mail: chanokporn.a@psu.ac.th and poon\_chanok@hotmail.com). This research is sponsored by PSU Budget.

news pictures showing the death continue to be reproduced; therefore readers might be affected by them. This might lead to considering that murder is natural. Moreover, some receivers may solve their problem in the same way as in the news [7].

Newspapers in Thailand, according to their source, are divided into national and local newspapers. The former have been produced for people in the whole country so the number of copies and circulation are high but the latter have been particularly produced for local people. The differences of the two types are that national newspapers focus on current affairs, entertainment, advertising, and services in the center of the country whereas local newspapers concentrate on public affairs and the same topic as national ones but at local scale, with the exception of current affairs [1].

It is assumed that the same news in two types of newspapers may be different in some aspects of news account and the differences can shape the thought of receivers. As a result, the linguistic devices in the violent acts news in the border provinces are analyzed in this study. In addition, it is assumed that local newspapers report news more violently than nation newspapers do or focus on more complicated issues than national newspapers do.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective is to analyze the linguistic devices reflecting the violence in the border provinces of the south of Thailand; i.e. Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla through the front pages of local and nation newspapers.

## III. CRITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The study is on the discourse of violence in the south of Thailand and violence in society from Matchon newspapers in 2004. It is found that language use reflects the thoughts of violent problems, secession, and the images of Malaysian Thais. Moreover, because of mass media’s headquarters in Bangkok, mass media presents violence by naming terrorists as “southern insurgents” and “a gang of secession”. The reporting spreads the images that Malaysian Thais are fierce and horrible. In addition, the south of Thailand is the area in which one should not live or visit [2].

## IV. METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from the front pages of three local newspapers, namely ChaoTai, Focus PhakTai, and Simila



8) *RathamontriKalahomRengTungNuayTahanPhiset Thawarn DoLaeChaiDanTai Tam Damrhi Nayok LengTungPen KongPhonMai BangPengKromLa Neung Jangwat Jungwat LaSamKongPhan (6/1/2005: Matichon)*

รมว.กลาโหมเร่งตั้งหน่วยทหารพิเศษถาวรดูแลปัญหาชายแดนใต้ตามคำรณายกฯ เล็งตั้งเป็นกองพลใหม่ แบ่งเป็นกรมละ 1 จังหวัด จังหวัดละ 3 กองพัน ... (06/01/2548 มติชน)

(The Ministry of Defense hastily set up a permanent special detachment in order to control the border problem of the southern of Thailand. According to P.M.'s opinion, there was the intention to set a new division that was divided into a department in each province, consisting of 3 battalions.)

### C. Naming Someone Committing Violent Acts

Naming someone committing violent acts is selecting words to call people who commit violent acts in the border of the southern of Thailand. This naming has hidden attitudes of journalists towards people who commit violent acts such as JonTai (Southern insurgents), DenManutJaiBap (human scums who are sinister), JonChuaYoungMaiSinRit (vicious robbers being still powerful), HuaJokTai (Southern ringleaders), KlumJon (a gang of robbers), JonNarok (vicious robbers) etc. The following are examples of this entry:

9) *JonTaiHiam! WangBuemSon (16/2/2005, ThaiRath)*

โจรใต้เหี้ยม! วางบีมซ้อน (16/02/2548 ไทยรัฐ)

(**Merciless insurgents** planted double bombing.)

10) *Wi- Huajok RKKMueKhaTatHuaTaHan*

(21/11/2011, ThaiRath)

วิชาหัวหน้าโจรเคมือนำตัดหัวทหาร (21/11/2554 ไทยรัฐ)

(The ringleader of RKK who slaughtered by cutting soldier's heads was extra-judicial killed.)

## VII. METAPHOR

Lakoff and Johnson's approach [6] has been used to analyze metaphors in the study. The findings are "A VIOLENT PROBLEM IS HEAT", "A VICTIM IS A FALLING LEAF", "A TERRORIST IS A DOG", and "A TERRORIST IS A GIANT" The following are examples of the entries:

A. "A Violent Problem Is Heat"

1) *TaiYoungDeutPutPhauWatKsalaWhitWhat*

(4/2/2004, ThaiRath)

ใต้ยังเดือดปุดเผาวัดอีกศาลาหวัดออก (04/02/2547 ไทยรัฐ)

(**Unceasing heat** in the South: Temples and shelters burnt.)

(Unceasing heat means the problem in the south of Thailand remains horrible).

2) *ChutChapraukitThahan-Tamruat*

*DuenNaShow*

*PhonnganChiapDup FireTai LakKhonKhupRotKhonPuen*

(11/1/2004, ThaiRath)

ชุดเฉพาะกิจทหาร-ตำรวจ

เดินหน้าโซ้วผลงานเขียนดับไฟใต้ลากลคนขับรถจนปืน (11/01/2547 ไทยรัฐ)

(Ad hoc unit of soldiers and policemen showed their master piece of extinguishing southern Fire, catching a driver who drove a pick-up loaded with guns)

(Extinguishing southern Fire means settle the problems of the south of Thailand)

B. "A Victim Is A Falling Leaf"

3) *ThiNarathiwatKapPattiniNaiPhanRaiBiMaiRuang*

(8/2/47 ThaiRath)

ทฤษฎีลึกลับกับปีศาจในแผนร้ายใบไม้ร่วง (08/02/2547 ไทยรัฐ)

(A Conspiracy theory: Falling leaves in Narathiwat and Pattini Provinces.)

(Falling leaves represents "being dead.")

4) *JonTaiYingDapTamruatRuang (27/7/2004, ThaiRath)*

โจรใต้ยิง ดด. ร่วง (23/07/2547 ไทยรัฐ)

(Police gunned down like **falling leaves**.)

(Fall represents "shoot someone to death".)

C. "A Terrorist Is a Fox"

5) *JonLopKatSongThayBeum-SanamdeklenPhaiNai*

*RongPhakYiNgo (10/5/2004, ThaiRath)*

โจรลอบกัดส่งท้ายบีม-สนามเด็กเล่น ภายในโรงพักย้ง (10/05/2547 ไทยรัฐ)

(Insurgents **backbit** with a new year's eve bomb on the playground of a police station in Yingo.)

(Backbiting in this point means ambushed secretly and represents the action of dogs.)

6) *BenPaoKatDaLaiThaLomKru Si 7*

(24/9/2004, ThaiRath)

เบนเป้ากัดตะไลถล่มครู "ซี7" (24/09/2547 ไทยรัฐ)

(A target has been distracted, **biting** without choosing and chasing to bombard a teacher who is seventh in rank.)

(Biting without choosing means to kill thoroughly and represents dog's behaviors)

The important linguistic devices in the study are lexical choice and metaphor that are selected by the journalists in order to be headlines, sub-headlines and short news on the front page. Three words were randomly selected in each type of lexicon in order to count the number of stative verbs, of action verbs, verbs describing behaviors, of quantitative words, and of word naming someone who committed violent acts. The examples are DupSayong (die horribly), Toom (blown up with a bang), Laek (torn in to many pieces), SupKho (chop one's throat), Puan (Sabotage), Phaowhot (burn down by fire), Yeuy (commit acts of terrorism defiantly), Heumkreum (commit acts of terrorism wantonly). In respect of metaphors, it is used to show violent problems that occur in the south of Thailand. Metaphors found are "A VIOLENT PROBLEM IS HEAT", "A VICTIM IS A FALLING LEAF" "A TERRORIST IS A Fox". The numbers of linguistic devices that occur on the front pages of newspapers

are presented in percentages. The statistic results are shown in the table:

TABLE I  
LINGUISTIC DEVICES ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE TWO TYPES OF  
NEWSPAPERS

Linguistic Devices	Local Newspapers	National Newspapers
1. Lexical Choice		
1.1 The Use Of Verb		
1) Stative Verb	11.53	88.46
2) Action Verb	14.62	85.37
3) Verb Describing Behaviors	25.92	74.07
1.2 The Use Of Quantitative Words	31.03	68.96
1.3 The Use Of Naming Terrorists	21.61	78.38
2. Metaphor		
2.1A Violent Problem Is Heat	19.70	80.29
2.2A Victim Is A Falling Leaf	33.34	66.67
2.3A Terrorist Is A Fox	0	100

### VIII. CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that there are two linguistic devices which are lexicon choice and metaphor. Compared data as shown in the table, the findings are that local newspapers use less lexicons than national newspapers do because they are not a daily newspapers. However, one interesting finding is that national newspapers choose more violent words than local newspaper do. For example, the former used twenty three words as opposed to three words in the latter. With regard to metaphors, "A TERRORIST IS A FOX" is only found in national newspapers. This might create violent images of what happens in the south of Thailand in order to provoke readers to share their feelings and emotions.

Not only does lexical choices reflect in the attitudes of the journalists but also they might provoke readers' perceptions without stopping to pose any questions. For example, national newspapers selected "Southern insurgents" 452 times while only were used by contrast with 13 times in local newspapers. Conversely, the latter used "insurgents" 117 times as opposed to two times in the former. The findings show that local newspapers use a modifier "southern" less than national newspapers do. This is because "southern" means the whole region of the south of Thailand that covers 14 provinces but violent acts happen in only four border provinces of the south of Thailand. Collectively using the label "southern robbers" might create horrifying and negative images of the whole region. This can lead to outsiders' ideas that the south of Thailand is not suitable for living or that southern people are cruel.

### REFERENCES

- [1] C. Phisit, *Reformation of local mass media: Participation and Pushing local government organization to be free according to the constitution strategy*. Bangkok: Double Nine Printing Company Ltd, 1999. (trans.)
- [2] K. and S. Hongladarom, *Southern Discourse and violence in Thai society: viewing through discourse*: Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2006, pp. 111-112. (trans.)
- [3] S. Jittraphiromsri, *Violent characteristics in the south of Thailand*. Rpt. In *Knowledge and Ignorance in three border provinces in the south of Thailand*, K. Withunthian, et al. Bangkok: Plan of coeducation of Health Promotion in the case of three southern provinces of Thailand, 2006. (trans.)

- [4] W. Phipitkun, *The Introduction of Communication: mass media, culture, and society*. Media for peace Project. The faculty of communication arts, 2002. (trans.)
- [5] A. E. Baker, & K. Hengeveld, *Linguistics*. India: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- [6] G. Lakoff, and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago ; London : The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- [7] Fairclough, *Language and power*. London: Longman, 1989.