

## HOW GENERATIVE GRAMMAR HELPS BUILD SENTENCE SKILLS FOR THAI STUDENTS: A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING WRITING

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### Abstract

Although the teaching of EFL writing in Thailand has mostly focused on the grammar and structure of the language, it may not have sufficiently demonstrated to students how the knowledge about sentence parts and sentence patterns explained by generative grammar (GG) may be useful in coping with the differences between Thai and English sentences. Generative grammar is a structuralist and cognitivist approach to make students visualize not only how sentence parts are arranged together to form complete and grammatical sentences but also how modifying phrases or clauses are tied to core sentence parts to get rid of redundancies as well as to achieve clarity. Cognitive theory supports generative grammar in that it helps students to imagine the locations of sentence parts and imprint them in their memory. Through comparison of sentence parts in Thai and English, the present article illustrates that for the most part sentences of the two languages are syntactically similar, and as a result students, using cognitive or mental ability, should be able to keep the same or similar sentence structures in their minds and to restore them for use when encountering differences between the two languages. Specifically, the paper shows how knowledge created by generative grammar can help get rid of the redundancies prevalent in the Thai language.

**Keywords:** Generative Grammar, Basic Sentence Patterns, Cognitive Theory

### Introduction

Generative grammar (GG) involves studying the syntax of a language; in other words, it explains the rules governing the combinations of words, phrases, and clauses into sentences of that language (Generative grammar; Eppler & Ozon, 2013). Generative grammar mainly relies on Chomsky's syntactic principles (Conde, 2005), and Chomsky refers to the principles as a person's tacit knowledge of the grammar of his or her native language (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, & Harnish, 2001). With this knowledge, the person has the intuitions to judge the grammaticality of sentences