

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Many studies have been conducted in order to succeed the learning of English as second language. Teaching strategies have been modified so well by the purpose of improving the students' quality in acquiring the four skill of language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nevertheless, the issues of second language learning never remain the satisfactory of learners' competency. The learners still find difficulties in expressing their ideas in English and even produce errors. When writing or speaking the second language (L2), second language learners tend to depend on their first language (L1) structures. If the structures of the L1 and L2 are the same, problems will be overcome. Yet, if the structures of the two languages are distinctly different, then one could expect a relatively high frequency of errors to occur in L2, thus indicating an interference of L1 on L2 (Dechert, 1983 and Ellis, 1997).

Ackrapong 2005, found out that the Thai students produce incorrect sentences when they are expressing their ideas in English. The Thai student writes "I closed (opened) the radio" instead of "I turned off (on) the radio". This error occurs as the students transfer the properties of their first language in the second language. The meaning of "close or open" in Thai language is equivalent to the word "turn off (on)". In addition, in Thai language, the proper noun "*hair*" and "*furniture*" are countable while in English they are not (Nattama, 2002). Thus, the students often make mistakes when they are

expressing these words in English. For instance, the Thai students tend to write “she has black hairs” instead of “she has black hair”, and to write “The room was full of furnitures” instead of “The room was full of furniture” (Nattama, 2002). Still in the context of Thai language, the influence of Thai (L1) in English (L2) is also found by Wannakarn (2001) when the students use phrase in English such as “Chicken fried” instead of the correct one “fried chicken”. The students literally transfer the structure of the L1 in L2. The students produce error as well when they are writing English sentence such as “I want to buy car” instead of “I want to buy a car”. The absence of article ‘a’ in the sentence is due to the non-existent of article (definite or indefinite article) in Thai language (wannakarn, 2001).

The transferring of L1 structure in L2, when the learners are expressing their ideas, is one of their strategies as an individual process in learning (Dulay, 1982). This strategy can be clearly seen when Chinese students in Hongkong Baptist University write in English and produce errors. The Chinese students tend to write “His father took bath” instead of the correct one “His father took a bath”. This grammatical incorrectness occurs as the absence of article (definite and indefinite) in Chinese language (Hung, 2000). Thus, in every time the students modify noun, the students tend to produce grammatical errors. Another case of the influence Chinese language in to English by Baptist University students is the use of verb and adjective. In Chinese, both verb and adjective can be used as predicator in creating sentence. The students tend to transfer this rule when they are writing in English, therefore produce grammatical errors. For example, the students tend to write “Kavin afraid to say” instead of the correct one Kavin is afraid to say” (Hung, 2000).

According to Newmark hypothesis (1966), performers who are asked to produce before they are “ready” will fall back on first language rules (L1), that is, they will use syntactic rules of their first language while speaking or writing the second language (L2). When the L1 and L2 rules are different, the resulting error is referred to “interference” (Khrashen, 1982). Ellis (1997) refers interference as ‘transfer’, which he says is ‘the influence that the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2’. He argues that transfer is governed by learner’s perception about what is transferable and by their stage of development in L2 learning. In learning a target language, learners construct their own interim rules (Selinker, 1971, Seligar, 1988 and Ellis, 1997) with the use of their L1 knowledge.

The interference of L1 in L2 is also found by the researcher in Primeone School, the place where the present research is going to take place. Primeone School has 90 percent Chinese students. The researcher is one of the English teachers in the school and found out some preliminary data about the L1 interference. This happens when Chinese students tend to write “have three book” instead of the correct one “There are three books”. The grammatical error is produced by the Chinese students as the result of the interference of their L1. In Chinese, there is no impersonal “there” Chinese, and there is no different form between singular and plural noun (Claudia, 2004). Another example is when the students write a sentence contained a grammatical error such as sentence “A best friend is someone who always **remember** you even you’re far away with **she/he**”. Ross, Sheng Ma (2006) state that in Chinese the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular does not affect the verb form. Therefore, the incorrect verb “remember” in the sentence above is affected by transfer of Chinese (L1) structure. The pronoun “she/he” is incorrect

as the students transfer the structure of Chinese language (L1). In Chinese, the form of pronoun as a subject and an object is the same (e.g He as subject *ta* and as object *ta*) (Ching and Rimmington, 2004).

Beardsmore (1982) states that many the difficulties of the second language learner in phonology, vocabulary and grammar of L2 are due to the interference of habits from L1. The formal elements of L1 are used in the context of L2 and result error especially when the structures of the languages are different.

The present study focuses on investigating the interference of Chinese language (L1) in written English (L2). The researcher focuses on the written English (L2) that the students produced. On the other hand, the interference may affect the speaking or pronunciation, reading and so on. Yet, the researcher, in this occasion, merely focuses on the interference which occurs in written English (L2). The main reason is that the interference must be more obvious seen in written English rather than spoken one. In addition, in written English (L2) the learners must have more time to think the structures and words before they began to write. The question is why the interference still exists? Another reason is also due to the authenticity and easiness in analyzing the data compared to the transcription of the pronunciation. Nevertheless, other researchers are suggested to accomplish the investigation on how the Chinese language (L1) influences the speaking or reading the English (L2). In conclusion, the present study particularly investigates the Chinese language (L1) interference in written English (L2) by the Primeone Schooll students. The researcher specifies to investigate the syntactic interference. Lexical interference will not be investigated here. The syntactic interference means the interference of Chinese language rules, structure or grammar in written

English. Obviously, the syntactic interference occurs when the learners use the L1 structures or rules in L2. The syntactic interference may occur in the use of noun, adjective, correlative conjunction, impersonal there, preposition, auxiliary, verb-tense, pronoun and so forth. The researcher has chosen to conduct the study in the Primeone School since 90 % of the students are Chinese and the school uses English as language delivery in teaching and communication among students or teachers. In addition, the researcher is teaching there which could be beneficial to the collection of the data, determination of the subjects and the application of the findings later on.

### **1.2 The statement of problem**

Coherently to the background of the study above, the statement of the problem can be formulated as follows:

1. What syntactic interference of Chinese language (L1) occurs in written English (L2) of Primeone School students?
2. How does syntactic interference of Chinese language (L1) occur in written English (L2) of Primeone School students?

### **1.3 The Objective of the Study**

This study is mainly expected to reveal the native Language (L1) interference in learning foreign language or second language. Therefore, the objectives can be written as follows:

1. To find out what syntactic interference of Chinese language (L1) occurs in written English (L2) of Primeone School students.

2. To describe how syntactic interference of Chinese language (L1) occurs in written English (L2) of Primeone School students.

#### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The present study only focuses on the investigation of syntactic interference of Chinese language (L1) in written English (L2). The researcher did not investigate the lexical interference or interference in the other two skills, speaking and listening. The syntactic interference of Chinese language is the main focus of the present study.

#### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

Theoretically, the results of the present study are expected to enrich the discussion and contribute knowledge to other researchers who concern to the language interference investigation of L1 in L2.

Practically, the findings of the present study are useful for the following person:

- Teachers

The findings are expected to be useful for English teachers as the reference in their teaching. With this knowledge, they could zoom out the students' difficulties in writing English text especially the ones related to syntax. In addition, the results of this investigation, syntactic interference of Chinese language in written English, will be very helpful for teachers in improving the teaching strategies to enhance students' English skill.

- Students

The Chinese students will be more aware of the errors produced by the interference of their native Language (L1) in English. This awareness will give more possibilities for the students to do self-correction.

- Other researchers

The findings of the present study are expected to give more reference to other researchers in investigating the interference of Chinese language and also other languages in English proficiency such as speaking and writing.

- Schools or institutions

Schools or institutions play the important role in improving the students' English proficiency. Therefore, the findings could be used as the reference deciding the further policy of more effective teaching and learning process.