

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



1. 1 Background of the Study

Within the classified section of most daily newspapers in any urban area, recruitment advertising is one of the most important advertising categories. To the general public, it is the marketplace where businesses announce their needs for hiring new employees, and job seekers look for new employment opportunities. In the newspaper publishing business, its commercial importance can generally be observed by the fact that it tends to occupy more printing space in the newspaper than any other type of classified advertising such as housing, personals and automobiles. In some highly-circulated national and metropolitan newspapers, it is common to find separate recruitment advertising sections on particular job sectors.

As English has acquired the status of an international language in today's business community, it is not surprising that recruitment advertisements in Thai newspapers are increasingly written in English. Hence, the ability to write English recruitment advertisements is crucial for professionals in the recruiting business. On the other hand, job seekers also need to understand these advertisements in order to effectively fulfill the advertisers' requirements in their application procedures. Yet, research interests in this field have not been matched by linguists in general or discourse analysts in particular. Most previous studies on the language of advertising (e.g. Leech, 1966; Geis, 1982; Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985; Toolan, 1998; Cook, 1992; Tanaka, 1994; Hermeren, 1999) have paid attention to display advertisements in print or TV commercials. A few studies which deal with classified advertising focus on personal advertisements at either the lexical or grammatical level (Nair, 1992; Pandey, 2004). One study that particularly focuses on recruitment advertisements is that of Bruthiaux's (1996). In his study of register variation within the discourse of classified advertising, Bruthiaux (1996) investigates four advertising categories, namely, job, personal, automobile and

apartment advertisements, which recruitment advertisements form only a small part of the study. Moreover, the research places a great emphasis on syntactic elaboration of these advertisements while their discourse structures are briefly mentioned. On the other hand, Bhatia (2004) studies the organizational patterns of advertising discourse by considering advertisements as a part of the promotional genre. According to Bhatia (2004), the discourse structure of any type of advertisement is somewhat similar to those of book reviews, sales promotion letters, grant proposals and travel brochures. The grouping of all types of advertisements into the promotional genre may not be accurate. Despite their strong promotional concerns, all advertisements do not always serve the same set of communicative purposes. The main objective of corporate advertisements is to raise public awareness of the attitudes towards the organization rather than the products or services it offers, while charity advertising intends to give publicity to the needs and objectives of an association conducted for charitable purposes (Hermeren, 1999). As for recruitment advertisements, their function is to announce job openings and look for candidates to fill vacancies. With different communicative purposes across various types of advertising, recruitment advertisements should be considered as a genre in its own right rather than being grouped in the one-size-fits-all promotional genre. Indeed, the writing of recruitment advertisements deserves more attention from discourse analysts, as there have been no studies which entirely focus on recruitment advertising at the discursive level.

While this study proposes to analyze 100 recruitment advertisements in daily newspapers published in Thailand and the United Kingdom by applying the theoretical framework of Swales' (1990, 2004) and Bhatia's (1993, 2004) genre analysis, it attempts to address two issues. First, with the framework of genre analysis, this study aims to describe the organizational patterns for Thai and British recruitment advertisements. Second, it attempts to investigate the cross-cultural variation of this specific genre by considering the similarities and differences between conventional move structures of Thai and British recruitment advertisements. As it is a well-known fact that language and culture are inextricably linked, several previous move-based studies (e.g. Taylor & Chen, 1991; Bhatia, 1993; Duzsak, 1994; Ahmad, 1997; Giannoni, 2005) explore this matter across academic disciplines and professional writings. As confirmed by Bhatia

(1993), in many professional genres, the local socio-cultural constraints seem to play an important role in determining the nature and linguistic realizations of these genres. It is thus very likely that local cultural conventions will partly influence the writing of recruitment advertisements across the two countries. Therefore, this study demonstrates that genre analysis will be useful not only in studying discourse structures of recruitment advertisements but also in exploring cross-cultural variation in recruitment advertising writing in Thailand and the United Kingdom.

1.2 Research Questions

This research addresses the following questions:

- 1) What are the moves and steps in English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers?
- 2) What are the similarities and differences between the move structures of English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers?
- 3) What are possible factors which determine the variation of the move structures of English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- 1) To identify moves and steps in English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers
- 2) To compare and contrast the move structures of English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers
- 3) To offer possible factors which determine the variation of the move structures of English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

Given the fact that this research is one of the first to apply Swales' genre analysis in the study of recruitment advertisement writing across two contexts, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the feasibility of this study. Based upon the analysis of 30 recruitment advertisements from the banking/finance/accounting sector drawn from the *Bangkok Post* and the *Times* during a three-week period from late May to mid June 2006, the following hypotheses are proposed.

1. The recruitment advertisements in Thai and British national daily newspapers are realized by the same set of moves and steps.
2. The move structures for Thai and British recruitment advertisements are different in terms of the specificity/generality, sequence, frequency, and cyclicity of moves.
3. Factors determining the move structures of Thai and British recruitment advertisements are the degree of power distance, and individualism/collectivism of each country.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is determined by two factors; the source of the advertisements and the type of recruitment advertisements. First, the data in the study was drawn from only one daily newspaper from each country. Since the market of the English language daily newspapers in Thailand targets the educated and upper socio-economic class readers, the choice of representative newspapers is quite limited. To ensure that the data from Thailand and Britain are comparable, the representative newspaper from Britain must be one of the daily newspapers targeting similar readership. In this study, the *Bangkok Post* represents the Thai corpus, whereas the *Times* is the representative of the British corpus. The websites of the two newspapers are the main source for data collection in this study. Evidently, the content of the advertisements in the website is identical to that in the newspapers. Therefore, the advertisements were downloaded from the websites of both newspapers, which are www.bangkokpost.com and www.timesonline.co.uk, respectively.

Second, this study investigates the advertisements from only one job sector, which is the banking, finance and accounting sector. As shown in previous genre-based studies (Swales, 1990; Samraj, 2002; Kanoksilapatham, 2003, 2005; Ozturk, 2007), the identification of moves and their structures may vary across disciplines. Thus, it would be most appropriate for a cross-cultural comparative study to focus on one job sector. Jobs in the banking, finance and accounting sector are selected since they tend to be of similar nature, for example, financial controller, internal auditor and accounting manager. On the contrary, in other job sectors such as hotel and tourism or sales and marketing, positions advertised may cover a wide variety of job types, ranging from management to clerical positions. The defining characteristics of these jobs may influence the organizational structure of the advertisements. To control the diversity of jobs and eliminate possible variables, recruitment advertisements in the banking, finance and accounting sector from the *Bangkok Post* and the *Times* are the focus of this study.

It should also be noted that the findings of this study are descriptive because the focus of genre analysis is pattern seeking rather than pattern imposing (Hart, 1986 as cited in Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). To elaborate, the main focus of genre analysis is not to prescribe but describe prototypical characteristics and conventions of a text according to its communicative function. Therefore, this study aims at identifying communicative preferences in recruitment advertisement writing across two contexts rather than focusing on cultural stereotyping.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Due to the characteristics of the selected data, this study has the following limitations.

1) This study focuses on the recruitment advertisements in the finance, banking and accounting sector. The findings will not be generalized to other types of classified advertisements and other job sectors in the recruitment advertising category.

2) As the data are selected from daily newspapers, the findings will not cover recruitment advertisements in other types of publications such as local or regional newspapers and magazines.

3) This study examines the cross-cultural variation in recruitment advertisement writing between Thailand and Britain. The results may not be applicable to other cultural settings.

4) This study does not take into account the nationality and educational background of the advertisement writers. It is assumed that the advertisements represent the recruitment advertisement writing conventions of the country from which they were drawn.

5) The data selection in this study does not take into account the nature of the companies placing the advertisements, i.e. country of origin (local vs. multinational), industry (manufacturing vs. service), size (large vs. small depending on the number of employees and turnover), and number of years in business (established vs. new). It is assumed that the advertisements represent the recruitment advertisement writing conventions of the country from which they were drawn.

6) By applying the concept of genre analysis (Swales, 1990, 2004; Bhatia, 1993, 2004) which categorizes various discourse units within the text according to their communicative purposes, this study only examines the semantic and functional units of text in recruitment advertisements. Therefore, the analysis of this study is not concerned with size, color, typeface, pictures, design and layout of the advertisements.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

- A **recruitment advertisement** refers to a type of classified advertising where advertisers announce their needs for hiring new employees. On the other hand, it serves as a major source for job seekers to look for employment opportunities.
- **Genre analysis**, in this study, is limited to Swales' (1990, 2004) and Bhatia's (1993, 2004) framework of genre and move analysis.
- A **move** refers to a segment of a text that performs a communicative function.
- A **step**, also known as **strategy** by Bhatia (1990), refers to an element with which a move is realized. The steps of a move function to achieve the purpose of the move to which it belongs (see e.g. Swales, 1984, 1990; Crookes, 1986; Dudley-Evans, 1994).

- A **specificity/generality of a move** refers to the volume of details provided within a move.
- A **sequence of moves** refers to an order of moves within an advertisement.
- A **cyclicity of a move** refers to the repetition of a move within an advertisement.
- A **frequency of a move** is based upon its presence in an advertisement in the corpus, regardless of the number of times it appears in an advertisement
- A **conventional move** refers to a move whose frequency of occurrence is at least 60% of the entire corpus.
- An **optional move** refers to a move whose frequency of occurrence is less than 60% of the entire corpus.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study was conducted with the following expected contributions to the field of linguistics and English language instruction.

First, this study provides valuable descriptions of the organizational structure of English recruitment advertisements in Thai and British daily newspapers. Based on the identification of all moves and steps in Thai and British recruitment advertisements, suggestions for writing recruitment advertisements for each country will be proposed. Moreover, these suggestions will shed light on the cross-cultural advertising variation in the writing of recruitment advertisements.

Second, the description of organizational structure in recruitment advertisements can be pedagogically useful in the development of writing and reading materials of an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course in advertisement writing. The knowledge gained from this study will enable non-English speaking learners and novice professionals in recruitment business to be aware of the local cultural conventions and meet the demands of different discourse communities, especially how information should be organized and presented.

Finally, given the fact that this study is one of the first to apply genre analysis to study recruitment advertisements in two different cultural contexts, it can serve as a basis for further studies on other types of advertising or other cultural settings.

1.9 Outline of the Dissertation

The structure of the remainder of this dissertation is as follows: Chapter II reviews previous literature in three major areas pertaining to this study, namely advertising language, genre analysis and the concept of culture. The definition and functions of advertising provides a basic understanding of the advertising genre. The importance of recruitment advertising is also mentioned as to stress why recruitment advertisements have become the focus of this study. The chapter then proceeds to discuss the concept of genre analysis (Swales, 1993, 2004) which is the underlying principle of the study. Previous genre-based studies in professional discipline are reviewed to give insights on how genre analysis has been applied in various types of professional writing. The chapter then introduces the role of culture in business as well as the influence of culture on language as seen in past genre-based studies. The chapter concludes with major reasons why this study is called for.

Chapter III presents a detailed description of the methodology of the current study including the corpus construction and data analysis. To come up with two comparable and representative corpora, two major issues are addressed: selection of the newspapers and advertisements. In the data analysis, an inter-coder reliability procedure to assess the reliability of move and step demarcation is described. Finally, it explains how the move structures of Thai and British advertisements are compared.

Chapter IV and V are devoted to the findings of the genre analysis of the Thai and British recruitment advertisements in the corpus. Chapter IV presents the moves and steps identified in these advertisements. In Chapter V, the comparison of their move structures is discussed in four aspects which are the specificity/generality, frequency, sequence and cyclicity of moves.

Chapter VI discusses the findings and offer possible factors which determine the variation in move structures of Thai and British advertisements. The discussion focuses on the national culture of each country which is likely to play a major role in the advertisement writing conventions. Finally, the chapter provides valuable implications of the study in relation to both pedagogical and theoretical aspects. The dissertation concludes with suggestions for future research.