THAI IMPERSONAL PRONOUNS AND LANGUAGE POWER[1]

Kitima Indrambarya[2]

บทคัดย่อ

ประธานอบุรุษหมายถึงประธานที่ไม่มีความหมายในตัวเอง งานวิจัยในอดีต (Indambarya 1996, 2011 Phimsawat 2011) ได้กล่าวถึงคำสรรพนามอบุรุษ *มัน* และ *เขา* ที่ทำหน้าที่เป็นประธานของคำกริยาไร้ประธาน อย่างไรก็ตามยังมีคำสรรพนามอบุรุษ *ท่าน* ที่ยังไม่ได้กล่าวถึง บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประธานอบุรุษทั้งสามคำที่ปรากฏในทำเนียบภาษาต่างๆ กับระยะห่างระหว่างผู้พูดและอำนาจของภาษา ผลการวิจัยพบว่าสรรพนามอบุรุษ *ท่าน* และ *เขา* ใช้ในวงจำกัด สรรพนามอบุรุษ *ท่าน* สะท้อนระยะห่างระหว่างผู้พูดและผู้ฟังมากที่สุด และยังสามารถสะท้อนอำนาจสูงสุดด้วย ในขณะที่ผู้พูดใช้ *ท่าน* และ *เขา* เพื่อสร้างช่องว่างระหว่างผู้พูดและผู้ฟังในการชักจูงให้ผู้ฟังกระทำตามความประสงค์ ผู้พูดจะใช้สรรพนามอบุรุษ *มัน* ในการลดช่องว่างและดึงผู้พูดให้ใกล้ชิดกับผู้ฟังมากขึ้น

---

[1] สรรพนามอบุรุษกับอำนาจของภาษา

[2] (กิติมา อินทรัมพรรย์) Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University

ABSTRACT

*Impersonal subjects are subjects unspecified for their reference. While previous analyses identified **man** 'it' and **kháw** as non-referential subject in Thai co-occurring with impersonal verbs (Indrambarya 1996, 2011, Phimsawat 2011), there exists the use of third person pronoun **thân** 'they' as an impersonal pronoun. This paper aims at investigating how the three impersonal subjects in Thai exhibit the distance between speakers and reflect the language power inherited in different language registers.*

*The result shows that the use of the impersonal pronouns **thân** 'they' and **kháw** 'they' are much more limited than **man** 'it'. The pronoun **thân** 'they' is the most distant and the most powerful among the three impersonal pronouns. While the impersonal pronouns **thân** 'they' and **kháw** 'they' covey the gaps between users leading addressees to follow what is to be done, the impersonal pronoun **man** 'it' brings speakers closer to addressees for more consolidation.*

Introduction

Most pronouns are personal and unmarked. Impersonal pronouns are marked and less common. Many languages have both personal and impersonal pronoun counterparts. Some make use of third person pronouns as impersonals, such as English dummy *it* and French *il* 'it'. Indrambarya (1996, 2011) identified the pronoun *man* 'it' as an impersonal subject in Thai. The term 'impersonal subjects', or non-referential subjects are identified in lexicase dependency grammar as subjects which

have no reference, as in (1) where *man* 'it' does not have any reference.

(1) *wan   níi   **man**   rɔɔn   caŋ*
    day   this   it   hot   much
    'Today it is so warm.'
                  (daily conversation)

Besides *man* 'it', two impersonal subjects *kháw* 'they' and *thân* 'they' are also found. The presence of the impersonal pronouns *kháw* 'they' and *thân* 'they' in (2) and (3) are not as common as the impersonal pronoun *man* 'it' in (1).

(2) ***kháw*** [3] *lɨ   kan   wâa*
    they   rumor together that
    bâan   níi   mii   phĭi
    house this have   ghost
    'It is rumored that this house is haunted.'

(3) *námmon **thân** wâa   khlăŋ*
    holy water they say have strong
                     magical power
    'It is said that holy water has strong magical power.'

This paper aims at investigating how these impersonal subjects appear in different language registers and differ in their ability to express distance and language power.

---

[3] *kháw* 'he, she', with the high tone mark, is a common variant of the written standard form *khăw,* with the rising tone mark. The two forms can be used interchangeably. While *kháw* is commonly found in daily speech, *khăw* is found in formal and emphatic speech. This paper captures how people use language in daily activities and hence *kháw* is used throughout the paper. Likewise, *tʃăn* 'I' can be used interchangeably with *tʃăn* 'I'.

Data Collection

In this study, data consisting of 201,911 words were collected from both spoken and written language from five registers, namely, everyday language, academic language, media language, political language and legal language. Written language includes academic journal and newspapers, magazine advertisements, and legal documents. Spoken language data were drawn from daily conversations as well as those found on TV talk shows, TV and radio, news reports, and political speeches. Even though talk shows could be viewed as media language, conversations on topics in focus discussed by guests in these programs such as "the VIP Program" are unlikely prepared and represent daily language use. Only news reports and advertisements are classified as media language in this study. Different types of data collection can be summarized in the following table.

Table 1: Types of data collection

	Spoken Language	**Written Language**
Everyday language	conversation in TV talk shows daily conversation	-
Academic Language	-	academic journals
Media Language	TV news radio news	newspapers, magazine advertisement
Political Language	political speech	-
Legal Language	-	legal document

Analysis

Deictic vs. Anaphoric pronouns

Deictic and anaphoric pronouns are related terminologies which need to be clarified here. Deictic pronouns, according to Mathews (1997:9), refer to those pronouns whose references are determined by the context of speakers and addressees. Person deixis such as *I,* which refers to the speaker in *I live here,* is one of the five common types of deixis (person deixis, spatial deixis, social deixis, temporal deixis, and discourse deixis). Anaphoric pronouns, on the other hand, are those pronouns whose antecedents can be found within the text or utterance. While the first person pronoun *phǒm* 'I (male)' and *kháw₁* 'I' in (4) and the second person pronoun *thân₁* 'you' in (5) are deictic pronouns, the third person pronouns *thân₂* 'he, she' in (6) and *kháw₂* 'he, she' in (7) and *man* 'it' in (8) are anaphoric.

(4) *phǒm / kháw₁   mây   hǐw*
     I   he   not   hungry
     'I am not hungry.'

(5) ***thân₁*** *càʔ   ráp   tʃaa*
     you   will   receive   tea
     rɰ̌   kaafɛɛ dii   kháʔ
     or   coffee   good   Prt
     'Would you like tea or coffee?'

(6) *khunyǐŋ   yùu khâaŋnay //*
     Lady   stay inside
     thân₂   *rɔɔ   ø   yùu*
     he/she   wait   PROG
     'The lady is inside. She is waiting (for you).'

(7) *suthii   phɤ̂ŋ   klàp*
     Suthee   just   return
     càak   tàaŋcaŋwàt //
     from   upcountry
     kháw₂   *khâw   nɔɔn lɛ́ɛw*
     he/she   enter   sleep already
     'Suthi has just returned from upcountry. He has gone to bed.'

(8) *yàa   kɯn phǒnlamay   lǎŋ*
     Do not   eat fruit   after
     *ʔaahǎan prɔ̂ʔ   **man** phɔŋ*
     food   because   it   swollen
     nay   thɔ́ɔŋ
     in   abdomen
     'Do not eat fruit after meals because it swells in your stomach.'

The first person pronoun *kháw₁* 'I' in (4) and the third person *kháw₂* 'he, she' in (7) are used informally. The pronoun *kháw₁* 'I' in (4) refers to the speaker and hence is a deictic pronoun, while *kháw₂* 'he, she' in (7) refers to *Suthii* and so is anaphoric. In (5), the second person pronoun *thân₁* 'you' refers to the addressee and so is deictic. The pronoun *thân₂* 'he, she' in (6), on the other hand, refers to *khunyǐŋ* 'the lady' in the sentence and hence is anaphoric. Similarly, the third person pronoun *man* 'it' in (8) refers back to its antecedent *phǒnlamay* 'fruit' in the sentence and is anaphoric.

Personal vs. Impersonal Pronouns

Pronouns in Thai are mostly personal. All the pronouns mentioned in the previous section are personal. That is, they refer to persons or things and hence are referential. Within Lexicase Dependency Grammar, a personal verb is defined as having a referential subject carrying the feature

[+rfrn] (reference) while impersonal verbs carry a non-referential subject with the feature [-rfrn] (Indrambarya 1996). The term 'impersonal' is created as a counterpart of the common 'personal' one. Phimsawat (2011:57) defines impersonal pronouns as referring to one or more unspecified persons without having any antecedents. Phimsawat (2011:59) further states that the English impersonal pronoun system can be classified into two types: generic and arbitrary. The English impersonal pronoun *one* is the only pure generic impersonal pronoun while *you, we,* and *they* have both generic and arbitrary readings. The impersonal pronoun *one* is called generic inclusive. That is, it includes both the speaker and the addressee and can be used interchangeably with *you*, as in (9).

(9) ***One/You** has/have to pay more for organic products.*
(Phimsawat 2011:59)

According to Phimsawat (2011:59), the English impersonal pronoun they can have two generic readings and four arbitrary readings based on Hofherr (2003 cited in Phimsawat 2011:60). The arbitrary impersonal pronoun they can be classified into four subtypes: specific existential, vague existential, inferred existential, and corporate reading. Phimsawat (2011:59-61) offers examples of each type of impersonal they as follows.

(10) a. ***They** eat snails in France.*
(generic exclusive)
b. ***They** stole my car.*
(generic quasi existential)
c. ***They** are fixing your car now.*
(specific existential arbitrary)
d. ***They** have found my dog.*
(vague existential arbitrary)
e. ***They** have cleaned the public toilet.*
(inferred existential arbitrary)
f. ***They** delivered the parcel yesterday.*
(corporate reading)

The impersonal pronoun *they* in (10a) carries the generic exclusive reading in excluding both speakers and addressees, maintaining the plural reading and co-occurring with the locative *in France*. In (10b), the impersonal pronoun *they* is quasi existential with the singular reading of 'someone' who stole my car. In (10c), the impersonal pronoun *they* is specific existential for being specified at a point in time and yet, *they*, in (10d), is vague existential in not specifying a point of time when 'someone has found my dog'. In (10e), the impersonal pronoun *they* is inferred existential since the cleanliness of the toilet infers that someone has cleaned it. And the impersonal pronoun *they* in (10f) is a corporate reading since the only designated group of people delivering the parcel is the mail carrier.

In Thai, Phimsawat (2011:67) found generic inclusive use of impersonal *raw* 'we', as in (11) and the use of impersonal *kháw* 'they' in both generic and arbitrary readings. She considers *kháw* 'they' to be a shortened form of *phûakkháw* 'they'. (12) exemplifies the generic exclusive reading while (13) and (14) show vague existential arbitrary and a corporate reading, respectively.

(11) ***raw*** *kɨn* *cee* *nay* *dɨan*
we eat vegetarian in month
tulaakhom
October
'We have vegetarian food in October.'
(Phimsawat 2011:66)

Like the English quasi-inclusive generic *we*, *raw* 'we' in (11) must be present to maintain its non-referential reading. In (12), *kháw* 'they' is an exclusive generic impersonal pronoun with the plural reading with an obligatory locative. Without the locative *thîi mùubâan níi* 'in this village', *kháw* in (12) can only have a referential reading.

(12) *thîi   mùubâan   níi   **kháw***
       at   village   this   they
     mây   km   nɨa   kan   ləəy
     not   eat   meat   each other   at all
     'In this village, they don't eat meat at all.'

(Phimsawat 2011:66)

Example (13) shows *kháw* 'they' as a vague existential since no specific time is given. Example (14) exemplifies the corporate reading in that the action of selling eggs is carried out by merchants and not other professionals.

(13) ***kháw*** *bɔ̀ɔk   wâa   kruŋthêep*
       they   say   that   Bangkok
     náam   càʔ   thûam
     water   will   flood
     'They said that Bangkok would be hit by floods.'

(Phimsawat 2011:67)

(14) *kháw   khɨ̂n   raakha   khày   ʔìikléɛw*
     they   raise price   egg   again
     'They have raised egg prices again.'

(Phimsawat 2011:67)

The present study defines impersonal pronouns as pronouns [+prnn] (pronoun) which could be human or non-human [±humn] (human), having no antecedent [-ntcd] (antecedent), and having either no

reference [-rfrn] (reference) or an unspecified reference [-spcf] (specified).

Thai impersonal Pronoun
$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{+prnn} \\ \pm\,\text{humn} \\ \text{-ntcd} \\ \text{[-rfrn] or [-spcf]} \end{bmatrix}$$

Three third person pronouns are found to have homophonous impersonal counterparts: *man₂* 'it', *kháw₃* 'they' and *thân₃* 'they'. Unlike Phimsawat (2011) who considers *kháw* 'they' to be a shortened form of *phuakkháw* 'they', this study considers *phuakkháw* 'they' and *kháw* 'they' to be different words and only the latter form has an impersonal counterpart in Thai. Let us take a closer look at each of the three impersonal pronouns in Thai.

***man₂* 'it'**	***khâw₃* 'they'**	***thân₃* 'they'**
$\begin{bmatrix} \text{+prnn} \\ \pm\,\text{humn} \\ \text{-ntcd} \\ \text{-rfrn} \\ \text{-plrl} \\ \text{-high} \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} \text{+prnn} \\ \text{+humn} \\ \text{-ntcd} \\ \text{-spcf} \\ \text{+plrl} \\ \text{-high} \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} \text{+prnn} \\ \text{+humn} \\ \text{-ntcd} \\ \text{-spcf} \\ \text{+plrl} \\ \text{+high} \end{bmatrix}$

While the impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' could be human or non-human and non-referential without any antecedents, the impersonal pronoun *khâw₃* 'they' and *thân₃* 'they' are unspecified human with plurality and no antecedents. The difference between *khâw₃* 'they' and *thân₃* 'they' lies in the feature [±high] (high rank). The impersonal pronoun *khâw₃* 'they' is of equal status and thus carries the feature [-high] while the impersonal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' is higher in rank and thus [+high].

The impersonal pronoun *man* 'it' in (15) and (16) does not refer to anything, and hence is non-referential. Similar to the French impersonal pronoun *on* which appears in an informal usage, Thai pronoun *man₂* 'it' may occur with true-impersonal verbs in colloquial usage, as shown in (15). The pronoun *man₂* 'it' co-occurs with the true-impersonal verb *mii* 'to exist' denoting existence. Thai true-impersonal verbs carrying the feature [+mprs (impersonal), -psdo (pseudo)] refer to verbs which do not require the presence of a non-referential subject. Thus, the true-impersonal existential verb *mii* in (15) can occur with or without the surrogate subject *man₂* 'it', but not *kháw₃* nor *thân₃.*

(15) *ø / man₂/ *kháw₃ /*thân₃ mây mii*
     it   / they / they not exist
     Nom   +mprs
     -rfrn   -psdo
panhǎa rɔ̀ɔk
problem Prt

'There is no problem.'
                  (daily conversation)

In (16), the true-impersonal verb *dɨ̀k* 'to be late at night' denoting temporality may appear with or without a subject. The only possible subject to co-occur with *dɨ̀k* 'to be late at night' is the impersonal *man₂* 'it'. As illustrated in (16), the presence of the first person pronoun *tʃán* 'I' as well as that of the impersonal pronouns *kháw₃* and *thân₃* would not be acceptable.

(16) *kwàa cà? thɨ̌ŋ bâan*
     more   will arrive house

*ø / man₂/ *tʃán /*kháw₃ /*thân₃ cà?*
   it   I   they   they will
   Nom
  -rfrn
dɨ̀k   mâak
late at night   much
+ V
+mprs
-psdo
 'By the time (we) get home, it will be very late.'
                (daily conversation)

Example (17b) shows the presence of the impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' with the pseudo-impersonal verb *khîikìat₂* 'to be lazy'. Here, as proposed in Indrambarya (2011), *man* 'it' functions as an impersonal marker and is used to convert the personal verb *khîikìat₁* in (17a) to an impersonal counterpart in (17b). The personal verb *khîikìat₁* in (17a) co-occurs with personal subjects such as *tʃán* 'I' *kháw₁* 'I', *and kháw₂* 'he or she' as permitted by the context. When a null subject is present, it refers back to *tʃán* 'I', *kháw₁* 'I' and *kháw₂* 'he or she' within the context. The pseudo-impersonal verb *khîikìat₂* requires the presence of the impersonal *man₂* 'it', and not any other impersonal subjects, as shown in (17b). The impersonal subject *man₂* 'it' alienates the speaker from his/her own self and makes him/her talk more freely as if he/she is someone else.

(17) a. *thammay wan ńii ø /tʃán /*
     why   day this   I
                          Nom
                          +rfrn
   kháw₁ / kháw₂   khîikìat₁ caŋ
    I   he/she   lazy   much
                        -mprs

'Why am I so lazy today?'
'Why is he/she so lazy today?'

b. *thammay* *wan* *n̄ii* **man₂**/
why day this *it*
Nom
-rfrn

*kháw₃ /*thân₃/ *khîikìat₁* *caŋ*
they they lazy much
+mprs
+psdo
'Why am I so lazy today?'

Unlike the impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it', the two impersonal pronouns *kháw₃* 'they' and *thân₃* 'they' are more limited in usage. They refer to an unspecified group of people and carry the features [-spcf] (specified). In (18), the verb *wâa* 'to say' is an impersonal verb which requires the presence of an unspecified human impersonal subject. The only two possible impersonal subjects co-occurring with verbs denoting speech are *kháw₃* 'they' and *thân₃* 'they'. And yet, only the impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' *sounds* natural in the context of (18). It is not known to whom the pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' refers. This type of impersonal verb corresponds to Phimsawat's (2011) vague existential arbitrary *kháw* 'they' for the obscure point of time of the shop's reputation.

(18) **kháw₃ / *man₂/?thân₃** *wâa*
they / it / they say
Nom
+humn
-spcf

kuăytĭaw *ráan* *níI* *ʔarɔ̀y*
noodle shop this delicious
'It is said that the noodles at this shop are delicious.'
(daily conversation)

Like the impersonal *kháw₃* 'they' in (18), the impersonal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' in (19) is unspecified for gender. It implies a certain number of elder persons, particularly those who are wise or respected. The presence of the impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' is not acceptable in (19). The impersonal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' is found to co-occur only with the impersonal verbs *wâa* 'to say' and *hây* 'to make, to cause'. The use of the impersonal pronoun *thân* 'they' in Thai, as in (19), would belong to the corporate reading arbitrary type of impersonal subject as classified in Phimsawat (2011:59-61) since the interpretation of *thân₃* 'they' refers to wise people of the older times. Example (19) is also acceptable with the presence of the impersonal subject *kháw₃* 'they'. In this case, *kháw₃* 'they' refers to an unspecified group of people in general and falls into Phimsawat's (2011:59-61) category of vague existential arbitrary.

(19) *námmon* *khiin* *canpen*
holy water night full moon
thân₃ / kháw₃ / *man₂ *wâa*
they they it say
Nom
-spfc
khlăŋ
strong magical power
'It is said that holy water on a full moon night has strong magical power.'
(daily conversation)

This section has exemplified three pairs of homophonous personal and impersonal counterparts of Thai pronouns. The next section will discuss how these impersonal pronouns behave in different language registers.

Impersonal pronouns in language registers

This section discusses the occurrence of each impersonal pronoun in the five language registers, namely, everyday language, academic language, media language, political language and legal language. The following figure illustrates the occurrence of each impersonal pronoun in the five language registers.

occurrence of 0.53 and 0.18, respectively, within a text of 1,000 words. The impersonal pronoun *man* 'it' is not found in academic, legal or media language. Moreover, the other two impersonal pronouns are much less commonly used. The impersonal pronouns *kháw₃* 'they' and *thân₃* 'they' are found only in everyday language with 0.01 occurrence out of a text of 1,000 words. They are scarcely found in other language registers. The following subsection discusses how each impersonal pronoun behaves in each language register.

Occurrence of Impersonal Pronouns in Various Language Registers

1:1000

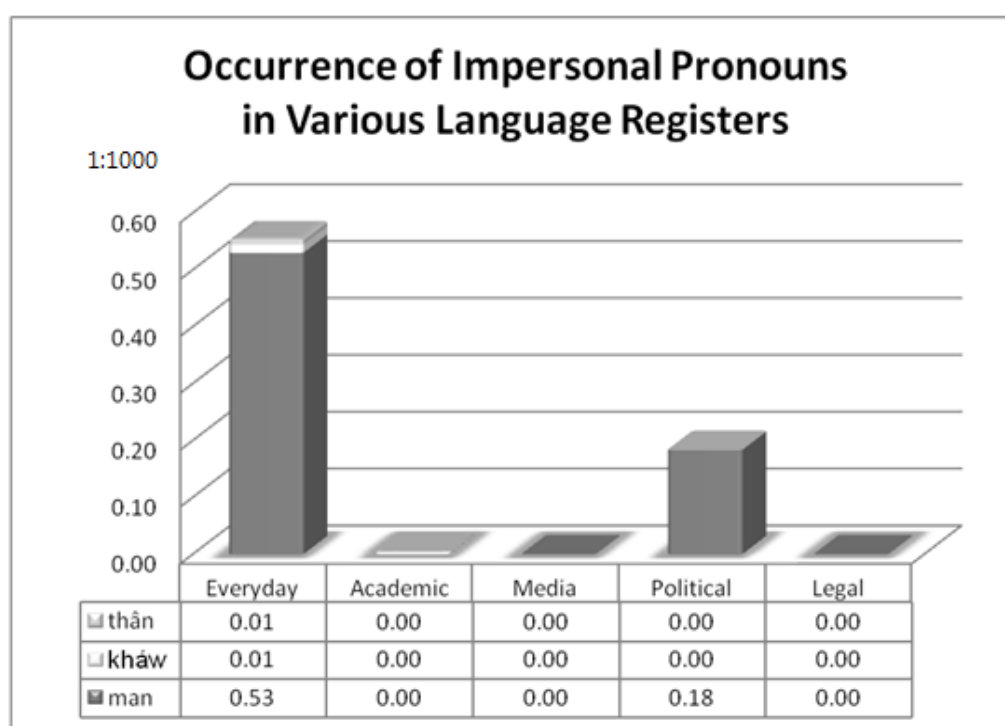|	Everyday	Academic	Media	Political	Legal
thân	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
kháw	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
man	0.53	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.00

Figure 1: Occurrence of Impersonal Pronouns in Various Language Registers

Based on the data of 201,911 words, this study found 150 occurrences of impersonal pronouns (0.74 times out of 1,000 words). Obviously, the impersonal pronoun man_2 'it' is the most frequently used. It is found most in everyday language, followed by political language. That is, this pronoun is found at the

Everyday Language

Everyday language is informal spoken language used in everyday life. Impersonal subjects are found most in everyday language, especially the impersonal subject *man* 'it'. This section explores the

occurrence of the three impersonal subjects in the language of everyday use.
*The Impersonal Pronoun **man₂** 'it'*

The impersonal subject *man₂* 'it' may optionally co-occur with true-impersonal verbs or those without an overt non-referential subject, such as *kə̀ət* 'to happen' as in (20), and with pseudo-impersonal verbs, those which require the presence of the dummy subject *man* 'it', such as *dɨk* 'late' as in (21a).

(20) *nîi   man₂   kə̀ət   ʔaray   khɨ́n*
　　 this   it   happen   what   up
　　 Nom   + V
　　 -spcf   +mprs
　　 -psdo
　　 'What has happened?'
　　　　　　　　　　　 (daily conversation)

In (20), the impersonal subject pronoun *man* 'it' co-occurs with the verb denoting existence *kə̀ət* 'to happen' in informal or colloquial speech. As proposed by Indrambarya (2011), the impersonal pronoun *man* 'it', when co-occurring with the pseudo-impersonal verb *láa₂* 'to be exhausted', in (21a), is a marker for converting the personal verb *láa₁* 'to be exhausted' in (21b) into an impersonal one.

(21) a. *man₂   láa₂   sùtsùt*
　　 it   exhaust extremely
　　 Nom   +mprs
　　 -rfrn   +psdo
　　 'I feel absolutely exhausted.'

　　 b. *ʨán   láa₁   sùtsùt*
　　 I   exhaust extremely
　　 Nom   -mprs
　　 +rfrn
　　 'I feel absolutely exhausted.'
　　　　　　　　　　 (daily conversation)

*The Impersonal Pronoun **kháw₃** 'they'*

The use of the impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' is found sparingly in daily language usage, as shown in (22). The impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' does not refer to any specific person and its reference cannot be retrieved from the text. It is unknown who *kháw₃* 'they' actually is. The impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' is often found to co-occur with the impersonal verb *wâa* 'to say'.

(22) ***kháw**   wâa   kan   wâa*
　　 they   say   together say
　　 Nom
　　 -rfrn
　　 phûyĭŋ   ʨɔ̂p   phûtʃaay   səəsəə
　　 woman   like   man   surrealistic
　　 'It is said that women like 'surrealistic' men.'
　　　　　　　　　　 (daily conversation)

*The Impersonal Pronoun **thân₃** 'they'*

The impersonal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' is used sparingly and in quite limited contexts. It can be found in legends, as well as in traditional herbal medicine, mostly in everyday language. Here in example (23), the word *thân₃* 'they' originally referred to wise elders or the wise. Like the impersonal *kháw₃* 'they', this impersonal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' is unspecified both for gender and number. It is generally acceptable to interpret *thân₃* 'they' as the elderly and the wise of an earlier time.

(23) ***thân₃**   hây   ʔaw   tônmayarâap*
　　 they   make   take   mimosa plant
　　 Nom
　　 -spcf
　　 tônkrɔ̂pcakrawan   maa   láaŋ
　　 all purpose plant   come   wash

náam   saʔàat hàn   pen fɔ̌y
water   clean chop be   shred
tàak   hây hêŋ   khûa   fay
sun-dry till dry roast   fire
hây   sùk   rɪn   námyaa
make   fully cooked pour medicine
ráprathan   thɛɛn   náamʧaa
eat   instead of tea
'It is said that after rinsing mimosa and the all-purpose plants with clean water, and then shredding, sun-drying and roasting them, one can drink the juice as a tea.'

(Traditional recipe for making herbal medicine for curing diabetes)

Political Language

Only the impersonal subject *man* 'it' is found in political language. The impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' can co-occur with both true-impersonal verbs, as in (24), and pseudo-impersonal verbs, as in (25).

(24) ***man***   *mây pen rɨ̂aŋ dii*
      it   not be   story good
      Nom   +mprs
      -rfrn   -psdo
      sǎmràp   prathêtʧâat lɛ́ʔ
      for   nation   and
      praʧaʧon ləəy
      people   at all
      'It is neither good for the nation nor for the people.'
                    (political speech)

In political language, politicians tend to reach out to their audience and so the use of *man* 'it' with the true-impersonal verb *pen* 'to be' in (24) makes the sentence informal and easier for politicians to talk to supporters. Example (25) is an instance of the impersonal subject *man* 'it' co-occurring with a pseudo-impersonal verb

ʧaná? 'to win' to strengthen the unity of speaker and audience as members of the same group sharing a similar experience so that moving toward the same goal is simpler.

(25) *phrɔ́ʔ*   ***man***   *yaŋ*   *ʧaná?*
      because   it   yet   win
                   Nom   +mprs
                   -rfrn   +psdo
      mây   sùt nà? sì?   phîinɔ́ɔŋ
      not   end Prt Prt   sibling
      tháŋlǎay
      altogether
      'Because it is not the ultimate victory, folks.'
                    (political speech)

Media Language

No impersonal subject was found in news reports: newspapers, TV and radio news broadcasts, nor in any magazine advertisements. Note that the impersonal subject *man* 'it' can be found in the interview part of a news item but it is not counted as part of media language.

Academic Language

Academic language is the register which is formal and concise. Indrambarya (2014) found that academic language tends to use true-impersonal verbs, rather than pseudo-impersonal verbs. Impersonal subjects which co-occur with true-impersonal verbs illustrate informality and hence not expected in this language register. As expected, the impersonal subject *man* 'it' then was not found. However, this study found one instance of the impersonal subject *kháw* co-occurring with the true-impersonal verb *rîak* 'to call' in a medical journal for the general public, as in (26). Here, it is an instance where the writer

may be trying to express closeness with readers.

(26) *tamnèŋ   kaankhûapkhum kaanbèŋ*
    position control   dividing
    *sɛl **kháw** rîak proto ʔɔŋkhociin*
    cell they   call   proto Oncogene
        -rfrn
    'The position of cell division control is called Proto Oncogene.'

(medical journal for the general public 2)

Legal Language

Even though legal language makes most frequent use of true-impersonal verbs such as *hây* 'to make, to cause', none of the impersonal subjects were found in legal language. This is because legal language is a formal language register. The presence of the impersonal *man* 'it' with true-impersonal verbs denotes informality (Indrambarya 2011). Instances of the archaic use of the 3rd person pronoun *thân₁* 'he, she' in a legal document dated between 1874 and 1933 were found. Yet, this *thân₁* 'he, she' is referential. Such usage is found exclusively in Military Law, Civil Law and Commerce, and regulation for civilians. The word *thân* in legal language originally referred to the King who promulgated laws and regulations to signify his supreme power. Once the country became a constitutional monarchy, the word was no longer used in legal language. Therefore, *thân* in (27) is a third personal pronoun found exclusively in an old legal text.

(27) Act 19. *phûday   pen thahǎan   lɛʔ*
            anyone be soldier   and
        man baŋʔàat klîaklɔ̀m
        it   dare   persuade
        khon   hây   pen phûak
        person cause be   group
        *ráchasàttru **thân** wâa*
        enemy   they   say
                     Nom
                     +rfrn
        thôot   manthǐŋ   tɔ̂ŋ
        pardon   it   reach   touch
        prahǎantiiwît ...
        death penalty
    'Any soldiers who led others to become disloyal to the country, deserve the death penalty...'

(Military Law 1934)

As illustrated in this section, the impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' is the most prevalent. The occurrence of impersonal pronouns is limited to everyday language and political language, with the highest frequency in everyday usage. Impersonal pronouns are not found to be associated with legal, academic and media language registers, which are mostly formal language. The next section discusses how each impersonal pronoun reflects social distance.

Impersonal Pronouns and Social Distance

This section discusses how the three impersonal pronouns exhibit different degrees of social distance. The three personal pronouns in Thai convey different characteristics when co-occurring with animate subjects. While *man₁* 'it' conveys a derogative meaning, intimacy and colloquial speed, *kháw₂* 'he, she' is used to refer to people of equal or lower status. The personal pronoun *thân₂* 'he,

she' is used to refer to a respected person and/or an acquaintance of high rank. Each of these intrinsic hierarchical values is carried over to their homophonous impersonal counterparts.

The Impersonal Pronoun *man₂* 'it'

The impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' which co-occurs with pseudo-impersonal verbs reflects social distance quite clearly. The pronoun *man₂* 'it' reflects alienation from the speaker and at the same time brings the speaker closer to listeners. In example (28), instead of calling herself *phîi* 'sister', the speaker prefers to lose her own self and uses *man₂* 'it' instead. In this way the speaker is able to share her own experience freely with others, no matter how bad it sounds, as if she is talking about someone else, not herself.

(28) **man** *plia // phîi mây yàak yím //*
     it   tired older not want smile
     ø   mây yàak   pay nǎy
           not want   go where
     man *plia // **man** mòt   rɛɛŋ*
     it   tired it   use up energy
     'I feel tired. I don't want to smile.
     I don't feel like it. I don't want to go
     anywhere. I am exhausted. I have
     used up all my energy.'
                    (daily conversation)

The Impersonal Pronoun *kháw₃* 'they'

The impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' refers to other people of equal status just like its personal counterpart. The impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' can be used to secure and support a speaker's voice and opinions. That is, listeners are urged to feel there are many other people who perform a similar action. The impersonal pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' is used in

example (29) to show that the idea of passing under an (artificial) elephant would be widely acceptable. Many people have done this. Therefore, it is not odd to do something similar. This pronoun *kháw₃* 'they' can refer to anyone out there who supports such an idea, and hence it is impersonal.

(29) **kháw₃** *wâa ø lɔ̂ɔt thɔ́ɔŋ*
     they   say   pass abdomen
     ʧáaŋ   lɛ́ɛw càʔ klɔ̂ɔt   ŋâay
     elephant then will give birth easy
     'It is said that if (a pregnant woman)
     passes underneath an elephant, she
     will have a smooth delivery.'
                    (daily conversation)

The Impersonal Pronoun *thân₃* 'they'

Since the personal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' normally refers to someone older or in a higher position, the word *thân₃* 'they' maintains this intrinsic semantic feature of being of high rank and reflects a certain distance from the addressee. A speaker could then manipulate the impersonal *thân₃* 'they' to gain more creditability with regard to the topic in focus, as in (23) repeated here as (30).

(30) **thân₃** *hây   ʔaw tônmayarâap*
     they   make take mimosa plant
     tônkrɔ̂pcakrawan maa   laáŋ
     all purpose plant   come   wash
     náam saʔàat hàn pen   fɔ̌y
     water clean chop be   shred
     tàak   hây hɛ̂ŋ khûa fay
     sun-dry till dry roast fire
     hây sùk   rɪn námyaa
     make fully cooked pour medicine
     ráprathan thɛɛn   náamʧaa
     eat   instead of tea
     'It is said that after rinsing mimosa
     and the all-purpose plants clean water,
     and then shredding, sun-drying and

roasting till them cooked, one can drink the juice as a tea.'

(traditional recipe for making herbal medicine for curing diabetes)

Example (30) is a traditional recipe for curing diabetes. Since this recipe has earned its reputation by a word-of-mouth from generation to generation, it is not known exactly who initiated it. The writer then intentionally uses *thân₃* 'they' to convince readers that the far-fetched and less known recipe has been highly regarded as efficacious and that this herbal medicine might be worth a try.

As shown in this section, the three impersonal pronouns exhibit different degrees of social distance. Figure 2 captures how the three impersonal subjects reflect different degrees of social distance from listeners. While the impersonal pronoun *man₂* 'it' brings a speaker closest to a listener, the impersonal pronoun *thân₃* 'they' pushes a listener furthest away.
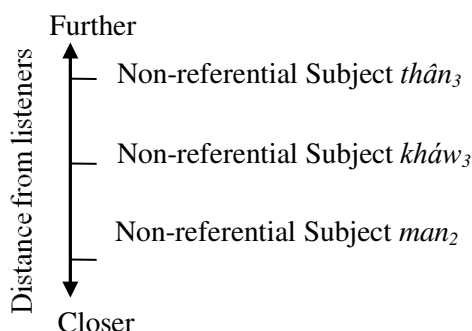
Further

— Non-referential Subject *thân₃*

— Non-referential Subject *kháw₃*

— Non-referential Subject *man₂*

Closer

Distance from listeners

Figure 2: Relations between Impersonal Subjects and Social Distance

Impersonal Pronouns and Language Power

Social distance correlates closely with power over interlocutors. Hence, each impersonal subject reflects different degrees of power over listeners. By using *thân₃* 'they', a speaker is able to motivate others to do as he/ she wishes by claiming the authority of wise elders while creating a certain gap of respect and high regard from listeners, as shown earlier in (30).

With the pronoun *kháw* 'they' in (29), a speaker could consolidate his/her power by informing listeners of what other people have said and indirectly motivating listeners to believe him/ her and to follow his/ her lead.

While the impersonal pronouns *thân₃* 'they' and *kháw₃* 'they' claim an authority of others directly, the impersonal pronoun *man* 'it' brings a speaker closer to a listener so that a speaker could familiarize him/ herself with and befriend a listener. Once the listener's trust has been gained, the speaker could further motivate him/ her. It is a more indirect way of expressing power. It is not surprising to find the use of impersonal *man₂* 'it' in political language, in addition to everyday language. In (31), the impersonal *man* 'it' co-occurs with the true-impersonal verb *mii* 'to exist' and makes the sentence informal. It is common for a politician to use the impersonal *man* 'it' with true-impersonal verbs in his/ her speech because it brings politicians closer to their supporters.

(31) **man** *mii khon sùan nìŋ thîi*
    it   exist person part   one   that
    kháw pay plùkradom wáy
    they go   provoke   lying

'There are a group of people who have been provoked.'

(political speech)

Moreover, it is natural for politicians to familiarize themselves with their advocates. The presence of *man* 'it' in their speech with pseudo-impersonal verbs enables politicians to express and share their feelings and opinions with their supporters, as in (32).

(32) **man** *cèppùat tĥii raw tôŋ*
it pain that we must
tʃótʃáy paasĭi tʃaawbâan
pay for tax villager
hây kàp khon klùm nɨ̀ŋ
for with person group one
'It is painful that our taxes need to be spent to pay off debts made by for a group of people.'

(political speech)

Here, a politician brings him/herself closer to his advocates by sharing how painful it is for both citizens to pay debts made by a group of selfish people. Once the politician gains trust and amity, it is not difficult for a politician to induce further motivation and movement.

Figure 3 illustrates how Thai impersonal subjects reflect degrees of power over listeners with *thân₃* 'they' being the most influential pronoun and *man₂* 'it' being the least influential.
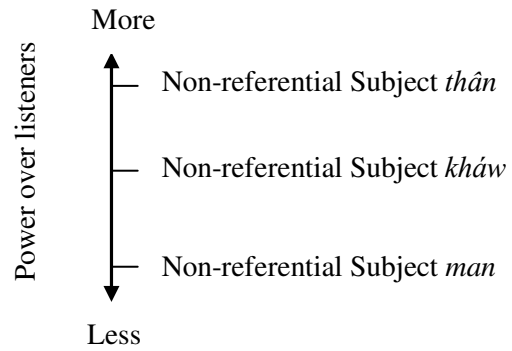
More

Power over listeners

↑
— Non-referential Subject *thân*

— Non-referential Subject *kháw*

— Non-referential Subject *man*
↓

Less

Figure 3: Relations between Impersonal Subjects and Language Power

Conclusion

The three Thai impersonal pronouns are found mainly in everyday language and political language. They are rarely found in legal language, academic language or language of news reports as well as magazine advertisements.

These impersonal pronouns exhibit different degrees of social distance and language power over listeners. It is claimed in this paper that by using the impersonal pronoun *thân*, a speaker creates the largest gap from a listener by appealing to the authority of past wisdom to induce listeners to do as he/ she wishes. By using the impersonal pronoun *kháw,* a speaker makes a certain gap away from a listener and searches for power of precedence or a claim on what other people have said or done, while then allows the listener to ponder whether to believe him/ her. Both *thân* and *kháw* are not commonly used and are exclusively found in everyday language.

The impersonal pronoun *man* 'it', on the other hand, not only makes sentences informal but also separates a speaker from his or her own self and brings closer

connection with the listener. Use of this pronoun is offer a strategy for gaining the listener's trust, friendship and cooperation, a common tactic found in political language.

References

Angkhapanichkit, Janthima. 2010. The Grammatical Function of the Word *man* in Thai and speakers of Different Ages (in Thai). *Paper Presented at the New Dimensions in Thai Grammatical Analysis.* Kasetsart University, July 12– 13, 2010.

Creissel, Denis. No date. Impersonal Pronouns and Coreference : the case of French on. To appear in Manninen, S., K. Hietaam, E. Keiser & V. Vihman (eds.). *Passives and Impersonals in European Languages.* Retrieved from http://www.deniscreissels.fr/public/ Creissels-ON.pdf

_____. 2011. Impersonal pronouns and coreference: two case studies. *Journée sur les pronoms impersonnels. Workshop on impersonal pronouns.* Paris, 20 Sept. 2011.

Hofherr, Cabredo. 2003. Arbitrary reading of 3pl pronominals. In M.Weisgerber (Ed.) Proceedings of the Conference" Sub7-Sinn und Bedeutung, 7th Annual Meeting of the Gesellschaft fur Semantik.' Arbeitspapier Nr. 114, FB Sprachwissenschaft, Konstanz University.

Indrambarya, Kitima. 1996. On Impersonal Verbs in Thai. *Pan-Asiatic Linguistics: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on Language and Linguistics.* 505-521.

_____. 2011. On the Non-Referential Thai *man* 'it'. *Paper presented at the 21st Southeast Asian Linguistics Society,* 11-13 May, 2011, Kasetsart University, Bangkok.

_____. 2012. On Impersonal Subjects in Thai." *Paper presented at Paper presented at the 22nd Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, 29 May -1 June, 2012, Agay, France.

Mathew, Peter. 1997. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phimsawat, On-Usa. 2011. *The Syntax of Pro-drop in Thai.* Doctoral Dissertation. New Castle University.

Sugiharto, Setiono. 2004. Reference, Anaphora, and Deixis: An overview. *Junal Bahasa & Sastra*. Vol.4 No.2, September 2004: 134-145.