

**CHINESE ADULTS' LEARNING THAI
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INFORMAL CONTEXTS**

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Abstract

The objectives of this thesis are 1) to illustrate the influence of cross-linguistic similarities in multilingual acquisition and 2) to investigate the problems and limitations with informal third language (L3) acquisition, focusing on young adult Mandarin speakers whose L1 is Mandarin and L2 is English and who acquire oral Thai as their L3 through informal learning in social interactions. The participants were Mandarin teachers who have acquired certain levels of Thai language while working in Thailand. In my study, I suggest that as both Thai and Mandarin are tonal languages that have similar sentence patterns, it is relatively easy for Mandarin speakers to acquire Thai. Using a survey and language proficiency tests, it is found that language distance affects the cross-linguistic influence in multi-linguals' language acquisition. More specifically, when learners have knowledge of related languages that belong to the same language family (in this case, Sino-Tibetan), the background language (BL: Mandarin) that is closest to the target language (TL: Thai) will be a positive source for TL learning. In other words, cross-linguistic similarities can help learners to achieve the TL.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Third Language, Cross-linguistic Similarity, Informal Language Acquisition, Thai

Abstrak

Objektif huraian ini adalah untuk menerangkan tentang pengaruh persamaan cross linguistik dalam penerimaan pelbagai bahasa. Kajian ini mengupas masalah-masalah tentang pembelajaran bahasa ketiga (L3) yang tidak rasmi, tertumpu kepada penuntut-penuntut muda dan dewasa Mandarin yang bahasa utamanya (L1) Mandarin dan bahasa kedua (L2) bahasa Inggeris, dan belajar bahasa Thai sebagai bahasa ketiga (L3) melalui pembelajaran biasa secara interaksi sosial. Para peserta di sini merupakan guru-guru bahasa Mandarin yang telah menguasai Bahasa Thai semasa mereka bekerja di Thailand. Dalam kajian ini, saya mencadangkan bahasa Thai kerana ianya lebih mudah untuk pentutur bahasa Mandarin menguasainya, kerana ia mempunyai persamaan pola ayat dan juga tona. Dari tinjauan dan ujian kefasihan bahasa, didapati bahawa jarak bahasa member mempengaruhi cross-linguistik terhadap penerimaan pelbagai bahasa. Khususnya, apabila pelajar mempunyai pengetahuan bahasa milik keluarga yang sama (Sino-Tibet), bahasa latar belakang (BL: Mandarin), lebih dekat dengan bahasa sasaran (TL: Thai), ia akan menjadi sumber yang positif untuk pembelajaran TL. Dalam erti kata lain, persamaan cross linguistik bahasa boleh membantu pelajar untuk mencapai TL.

Kata Kunci: Multilingualisme, Bahasa Ketiga, Persamaan Cross-linguistik, Pembelajaran Bahasa Tidak Rasmi, Bahasa Thai

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List of Abbreviations

B

BL Background Language

C

CLI Cross-linguistic Influence

L

L1 First Language

L2 Second Language

L3 Third Language

T

TL Target Language

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

“Humans are potentially multilingual by nature and that multilingualism is the normal state of linguistic competence” (Hammarberg, 2009: 2). According to Hammarberg, this statement serves as the fundamental theoretical aspect of the study of third language (L3) competence, use and acquisition (Hammarberg, 2009: 2). In this era of globalisation and cultural openness, people frequently come into contact with others from foreign countries and often communicate using several kinds of languages. Thus, as knowing more languages is an asset, multilingualism has become a common achievement for many people around the world. In addition, the Internet promotes and facilitates easier ways to obtain information making the process of language acquisition among multilinguals a significant field of study.

This study investigates problems with informal third language (L3) acquisition and focuses on young adult Mandarin speakers, who, based on Erik Erikson’s theory, are in the sixth stage called early adulthood. That is, the individuals are people between the ages of 20 and 40 years (Weiten, Lloyd, Dunn & Hammer, 2009: 341-345). The L1 of the individuals in the study is Mandarin and their L2 is English. They are learning oral Thai as their L3 through informal social interactions.

Beginning in 2008, Hanban (Confucius Institute Headquarters), under the Chinese government, has sent more than 1000 Mandarin teachers per year to Thailand to teach. During the time these teachers lived in Thailand — mostly one to three years as

required by Hanban — they could achieve naturally at least an elementary level of Thai through informal learning, which means that they could communicate with the locals fluently in most of their daily communications. Compared with their L2, English, which they studied at schools in China for over 10 years, to gain such a level of Thai as their L3, seems to be easier and faster. However, the participants in this study only achieved certain levels of oral Thai, not the traditional writing system.

This is probably because the Thai language has its own alphabet system, which is quite different from both the widely used Roman alphabets and the Mandarin characters of their native language. Accordingly, the Thai writing system was unfamiliar to the learners. However, using the Roman alphabet as part of the Thai language is now becoming more popular in Thailand, especially among the Thai youth. People see English as well as the Thai language written in the Roman alphabet throughout Thailand. For example, guideposts, signage, menus, maps, names of goods, and currency units commonly use the Roman alphabet in Thailand, thus making the acquisition of Thai through informal learning possible.

The sample in this study consisted of twenty-seven young Chinese adults who were government-sponsored Mandarin teachers from mainland China. With Mandarin as their L1 and English as their L2, they were considered bilingual before arriving in Thailand. The question was posed regarding how the participants would gain knowledge of the Thai language without enrolling in an L3 course. The plausible explanation was that they would most likely acquire Thai through informal learning.

1.1.1 Multilingualism

Multilingualism is the adopting of polyglotism, or the making use of multiple languages, and is usually either employed by an independent speaker or by a group of multiple speakers. The subject of how to define multilingualism remains as disputable as the defining of language fluency. On the one hand, multilingualism may be defined as the absolute fluency and proficiency in another language with regards to the linguistic-continuum. Accordingly, the speaker would possess the overall knowledge and competence of the language to become fluent and to speak the language as well as native speakers. On the other hand, people such as tourists want only to grasp some useful expressions and short sentences of an alternate language to facilitate their visits to foreign countries (Eades, 2005).

Because there is no true definition of multilingualism, there is no clear specification of how much knowledge a person should possess to be classified as multilingual; thus, it is highly difficult to distinguish an individual as a multilingual speaker. Many language teaching institutions and universities find it difficult to explain language fluency to their students as there are no agreed upon standards of the definition of bilingualism. That is, there is no verdict or level of knowledge a person must acquire to be recognised as bilingual. Consequently, many language learners do not receive an adequate level of knowledge because the majority of speakers do not achieve the full level of their native languages. As a result, language teaching may be far from what is expected (Cook, 1992).

Broadly speaking, a multilingual person is able to speak more than two languages and master them actively, through writing, signing or speaking, or passively, through listening, understanding or reading. To be more specific, the terms bilingual and trilingual are adopted to explain comparable conditions that involve several different languages (Eades, 2005).

Multilingual speakers have learned at least one more language in addition to their mother tongue or first language (L1) during their early childhood. In accordance with Matthews's statement, L1 is "the language someone acquires first. Often, therefore, in a sense equivalent to native language; also of the language mainly used by an individual or a community" (Matthews, 2007: 140). Further, a second language (L2) is "the second language that a person acquires, or a language which is not native to a community but has an established role, for certain purposes or at a certain social level, within it" (Matthews, 2007: 358). It is disputable to say that the L1, usually referred to as one's mother tongue, is not learned through formal education. Children who master two languages in this way are referred to as simultaneous bilinguals. In most instances, one language generally assumes a dominant position over the other for simultaneous bilinguals (De Houwer, 1996, sec. 3).

1.1.2 L1 and L2 Acquisition

L1 acquisition is closely related to the notion of native speaker in the linguistic field. According to an opinion supported by linguists, in some respects, a native speaker who uses a given language is able to reach a level that an L2 learner has difficulty achieving.

As a result, depictive empirical studies of language are often performed by only allowing a native speaker to act as an information provider. However, this view is somehow indefinite to some degree, especially when many non-native speakers who successfully engage in their working fields as non-L1 speakers. In fact, many of them have become crucial contributors in cultural undertakings as well as in linguistic fields, such as performing artists, politicians and writers, using their non-native languages. For decades, the majority of the studies on language acquisition have focused on L1 and L2 acquisition. However, studies on languages beyond L2 are quite rare. Recently, however, linguistic researchers have begun to focus on the use of lingua franca, also called the international language, such as English, or on a shared common language in a professional field or commercial community. In this situation, most speakers who adopt common languages are usually multilingual (Himmelman & Mosel, 2006).

1.1.3 L3 Acquisition

In this study, the additional language (De Angelis, 2007) beyond L2, is referred to as the third language — L3. This is in accordance with a statement by Hammarberg (2009): “... L2 is secondary to L1, and an L3 is tertiary in relation to L1 and L2” (Hammarberg 2009: 7). The L3 specifically became a research topic compared to the L2 because the L3 is not the first non-native language encountered by the learner. In other words, “The distinction between L2 and L3 acquisition means that language learners are being differentiated according to the complexity of their language background” (Hammarberg, 2009: 1). In studies on non-native language acquisition, learners might have knowledge

of three or more languages. Thus, more variables might come into play that may influence L3 acquisition when compared to a pure L2 acquisition scenario. For example, the typology of languages, the recency of use, the proficiency of background languages (BLs), and the L2 factor should be considered.

1.2 Informal Learning

Formal, informal and non-formal learning are three learning models defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Informal learning usually occurs in various circumstances including work and family environments. This learning model occurs through daily contacts and shared relations with other people in society, and as such, it consists of cultural manners, language acquisition, cultural norms and discriminations. Younger learners can master this type of learning as it is a continuous process that can occur outside of school in student communities and in media labs (Croft, William & Cruse, 2004).

Mocker and Spear (1982) identified formal, non-formal, informal and self-directed learning models by differentiating learning objectives and learning methods. However it is the informal learning issue that has captured the interest of researchers. As early as 1977, Penland had proposed 10 key reasons that people might learn informally, while Tough (2002) discussed the causation of informal learning from the perspective of adult motivation, placing less emphasis on the direction of the learner. Other studies have examined the advantages of informal learning and highlighted that it occurs without following any certain programme or structure (Eraut, 2000; Tough 2002). According to

Eraut, informal learning “takes place in day-to-day life activities, related to work, family or leisure and may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional or incidental and random” (Eraut, 2000: 115). Thus, it is not simply the case that informal environments provide the necessary input for language acquisition, but rather, the requirement of the informal environment is that it must be “intensive and involve the learner directly” (Krashen, 1981: 47) to be effective. Additionally, informal learning is more self-directed such that the individual assumes the primary responsibility for the learning experience (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991: 24).

Marsik and Watkins (1990) explained the informal learning model more specifically by differentiating incidental learning and self-directed learning from the informal learning model. Informal and incidental learning happen when learners have needs and are motivated to learn regardless of whether they intentionally or unintentionally engage in learning activities (Marsick & Watkin, 2001: 28) (refer to 2.2 Learning Models, p.20). The difference between self-directed learning and incidental learning is whether the learner is aware of the learning objective and the approach.

In this study, participants primarily received their informal learning by engaging and practicing in the community that allowed the individuals to thoroughly investigate and participate in continuous community activities. Thus their learning model could be described as either self-directed or incidental or a combination of the two. Based on a review of previous studies, their learning is understood and classified as informal learning.

1.3 Cross-linguistic Influence

Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) is a generic term used to describe the different ways that various language systems interact with each other in one's mind. Furthermore, it explains the impact on either the linguistic behaviour or on the cognitive and linguistic development — both of which are likely to be included — of the involved individual (Smith, 1983).

1.3.1 Language Transfer

One of the subcategories of CLI is language transfer. Transfer is a borrowed term that originated with behaviourist psychology and is incorporated into the study of L2 acquisition. This term was first used to explain how the effects of an old language may positively or negatively influence the effects of new languages. With respect to the positive aspects of transfer, similarities between languages were considered to improve and facilitate learning. Regarding negative aspects of transfer, one set of ingrained language habits may be transferred to the developing language and result in non-native or incorrectly used forms of the new language (Seuren, 1998).

More specifically, when two languages have the same relevant structure or component, linguistic interference can result in correct language production, which is known as positive transfer. A common example is the use of cognate words. However, language interference is more often expounded as a source of language errors and is thus referred as negative transfer. Speakers and writers who transfer vocabulary phrases and sentence structures that are not the same in both languages cause negative transfer to occur. According to the theory of relative analysis, which uses statistical methods to

analyse a pair of different languages to identify and understand the structural disparities and similarities, the more diverse the two languages and the greater the differences and divergence found, the more negative the transfer. Thus, the actual results and the expected results will vary significantly (Trudgill, 1994).

Generally speaking, the more similarities the two languages have, the easier it is for the learner to be aware of the link between them and thus be able to draw the connections between the two languages, causing positive transfer to occur.

1.3.2 Cross-linguistic Similarity vs. Typological Similarity

Recent L3 research focuses on four main factors: proficiency, typological similarity, recency of use, and closely related recency of acquisition or foreign language effect. Many of the researchers claimed that the ability of the student to learn an L3, or any additional language, is highly dependent on the student's L2 learning experience and results (De Angelis, 2007).

In other words, the knowledge of prior languages and the experiences gained in acquiring such knowledge are important for TL acquisition (Ringbom, 1986). Furthermore, when the TL is relatively strong to very strong, the knowledge of typologically related BLs will positively affect TL acquisition (Hammarberg, 2009: 2). Hammarberg calls this typological similarity (Hammarberg, 2009: 128), though it may also be referred to as language distance or linguistic distance (Cenoz, 2001: 8). That is when languages are closely related to each other, for example, languages are from the same branch of the language family, they are considered typologically related.

Furthermore, Hammarberg contends: “If a particular BL shows greater similarity than another to the current L3, this may cause a dominant cross-linguistic influence from the former language” (Hammarberg 2009: 128).

Cross-linguistic similarity and typological similarity are connected with each other, but they are not identical. According to Ringbom (2007), cross-linguistic similarity is discussed with respect to typologically related languages. However, cross-linguistic similarity may also exist between unrelated languages. In the present research, as the BL (Mandarin) and TL (Thai) are typologically related languages, the cross-linguistic similarities between these two languages will be examined, and the concept of cross-linguistic similarity will be used.

In this study, as the L2 (English) is not as typologically close to the L3 (Thai) as is the L1 (Mandarin), the influence converts. In other words, because Mandarin (L1) and Thai (L3) are more typologically related, the influence of Mandarin rather than the influence of English should be favoured in the acquisition of the Thai.

1.3.3 Introduction of Mandarin and Thai

The L1 in this study is Mandarin Chinese, which is a subfamily of the Sino-Tibetan language family — a “family of languages of which Chinese and Tibeto-Burman are two genetically and typologically distinct branches” (Matthews, 2007). The L3 is also the TL whereas Thai and Mandarin belong to different subfamilies of the Sino-Tibetan language stock — Tai-Kadai and Chinese (Ji, 1988). Furthermore, Kuhn (1889) divided the Indo-Chinese languages into northern and southern groups and sub-divided the

former into two primary branches — Chinese-Siamese and Tibeto-Burman (cited in Van Driem, 2001: 264). Accordingly, Mandarin, in certain circumstances, is also grouped with Thai.

Mandarin, the official language of China, is the most widespread form of Chinese and is regarded as the modern standard for Chinese as it is spoken by approximately 70% of the population of China. While standard Thai, the national and official language of Thailand, is another typical tonal and analytic Asian language. It is also known as Siamese and is spoken by over 20 million people (2000), most of whom comprise Thailand's primary ethnic group — the Thai people (Lewis, 2009).

As Mandarin and Thai are both Sino-Tibetan languages, they share many similarities. For example, both are isolating languages, which means they are defined by a low morpheme-per-word ratio (Matthews, 2007), and they both have quantifiers. Furthermore, the main way of delivering grammatical meaning is through the use of empty words and by changing the word order. Additionally, both Thai and Mandarin are tonal languages, which refer to the pitch and the pitch changes in words, and as such, the contrastive tonemes differentiate various lexical meanings (Erickson, 1976). More specifically, Mandarin has four tones while Thai has five (see Figures 1.1 & 1.2) (Shu, Chen & Xia, 1980: 887).

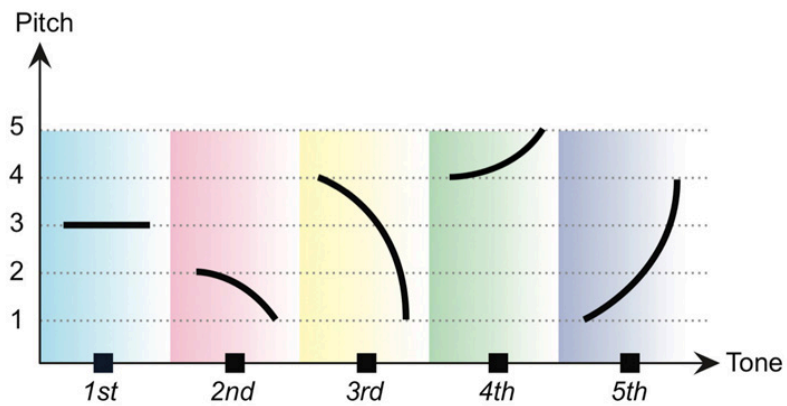


Figure 1.1: Thai Tones

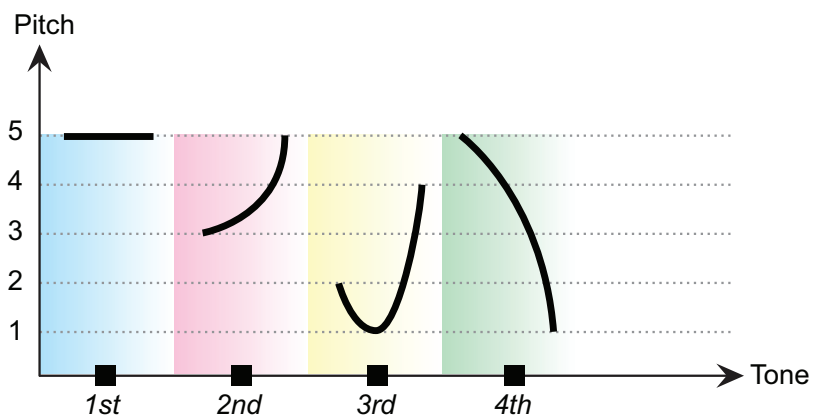


Figure 1.2: Mandarin Tones

The number of tones varies among the Chinese dialects, Mandarin, for example, has four tones — “a high tone, a rising tone, a tone that combines a falling and a rising inflection, and a falling tone” (Jin, 2007). The five phonemic Thai tones, which are more complicated, include mid, low, falling, high and rising tones (Henderson, 1949; Haas, 1958; Abramson, 1962).

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study identifies the cross-linguistic similarity influences among adult Mandarin L1 speakers of English as a L2 and Thai as a L3.

This study tests the hypothesis that states that language distance affects cross-linguistic influence in language acquisition of multi-linguals. More specifically, when learners have knowledge of related languages that belong to the same language family (Sino-Tibetan), but not the same subgroup within the family, the BL (Mandarin), which is closest to the TL (Thai), will be a positive source for TL learning. In other words, do cross-linguistic similarities help learners learn the TL. The study focuses on similarities related to tone and to syntactic structures.

The research objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai.
2. To investigate the ways cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai influence the L3 acquisition of Chinese adults.
3. To identify the problems or limitations of informal L3 acquisition of Thai by Chinese adult learners.

1.5 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the cross-linguistics similarities between Mandarin and Thai?

2. How do cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai influence Chinese adult learners' acquisition of Thai as a L3?
 - 2.1 Do Chinese adult learners rely on their L1 (Mandarin) knowledge more than on their L2 (English) in their informal acquisition of Thai as a L3?
 - 2.2 What roles do sentence patterns and tone play in Chinese adult learners' acquisition of Thai as a L3?
3. What are the problems or limitations of the informal L3 acquisition of Thai by Chinese adult learners?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is a significant endeavour in exploring the correlation between the existence of cross-linguistic similarities and the acceleration of language acquisition, which means that when the languages are relatively strong, the knowledge of typologically related languages has a positive or negative effect on TL acquisition. By extension, when a learner has more than one BL that is related to the TL, there will be more similarities from which the learner can draw. Thus, it might be beneficial to the language learners who have already mastered more than two languages to explore more languages, and it may also provide language teachers with some new thoughts with respect to the teaching of an L3.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Based on the limitations of the present study, this research focuses only on the factor most frequently mentioned in the survey feedback — typological similarity, specifically phonetics and syntax. Thud, the researcher suggests there remains a lack of focus on other factors of cross-linguistic similarity, such as recency, proficiency, L2 effect, etc., with respect to facilitating L3 acquisition among Asian languages.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Third Language Acquisition

While it is known that individuals can learn some foreign languages with ease, we have little knowledge regarding the number of languages that can be learned and maintained over short or long periods of time. Recently, a young girl named Wendy Vo was the topic of a BBC documentary, “Inside the Human Body”, because of her ability to speak 11 languages fluently (Bradshaw, 2011). According to a report from Baker and Jones (1998), Harold Williams learned 58 languages throughout his life. Such accounts cause us to consider the human being’s potential to learn and maintain languages over time. Thus, a noticeable increase in interest and in research on the topic of multilingualism has emerged. “Multilingualism and multilingual acquisition are widespread and not only in officially recognised bilingual and multilingual communities but all over the world”. Furthermore, “learning an additional language after the mother tongue is easier for those who already know a second language than it is for monolinguals” (Bağtürk & Gulmez, 2011: 17). Moreover, Cenoz and Genesee (1998) noted that multilingualism and multilingual acquisition can occur simultaneously or successively, formally or naturally, during childhood, adolescence or adulthood.

For several decades, the majority of the studies on language acquisition focused on the learning of the L1 and the L2, while studies on the acquisition of languages beyond L2 were quite rare. While according to De Angelis (2007), studies on multilingualism

were primarily based on a third or additional language. Thus, in this study, the concept of a third language (L3) is used.

Although it is more likely to define the L1 and L2 using a linear model from previous research, there is a consideration that “the languages of multilinguals are very often not easily numbered on a linear time scale. Both purely chronological problems and uncertainty whether to count or exclude a language contribute to this difficulty” (Hammarberg, 2009: 5). For example, the simultaneous acquisition (how to order languages acquired in parallel), the limited knowledge (by what criteria to count or exclude languages the person knows ‘a little’), the intermittent or alternating acquisition (how to establish an order of priority for languages acquired in different periods), the type of knowledge (how to evaluate a person who has a particular type of language knowledge), the closely related languages (how to determine if a language is closely related to a language the person knows), etc., will affect this linear model. Thus, the question of how to define language acquisition beyond the L2 has been raised.

This issue is more clearly elaborated upon by Grosjean who argued that a “... bilingual is not the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and a specific linguistic configuration” (Grosjean, 1985: 467). By extension, we can say that a multilingual is neither the sum of three or more monolinguals, nor a bilingual with an additional language. Rather, it is a speaker of three or more languages with unique linguistic configurations, and as such, the study of third or additional language acquisition cannot be regarded as an extension of second language acquisition or bilingualism. According to Hammarberg, the L3 is defined as

the language that is tertiary in relation to the L1 and L2, while an L2 is secondary to the L1 (Hammarberg, 2009: 7).

There are several reasons for the interest in L3 acquisition. First, as previously discussed, while humans are potentially multilingual by nature, multilingualism is becoming socially common due to economic globalisation and open cultures, the study on language proficiency, use and acquisition of three or more languages should be considered a special case. That is, similar to the way in which bi- and mono-lingualism have been regarded in the past, the language acquisition process of multilingual speakers should be a significant field of study.

Second, we know that there are people around the world who are required to learn more than two languages, whether the purpose is for work, travel, education or immigration. Especially in the era of globalisation, where international contacts have increased enormously, the increase in the number of the multilingual individuals has been unavoidable. Consequently, the need to approach language teaching/acquisition from perspectives other than the traditional model of teaching/learning is becoming more and more apparent (Hammarberg, 2009).

Third, “The distinction between L2 and L3 acquisition means that language learners are being differentiated according to the complexity of their language background” (Hammarberg, 2009: 1). That is, the L2 is the first non-native language encountered by the learner, while the L3 is not. As long as multilingual learners have knowledge of three or more languages, including the TL, which is being acquired at the moment, more variables might become factors that affect the result of L3 acquisition than when investigating pure L2 acquisition. In other words, as long as the multilingual

individual's BLs and TLs interact in a more complex way, there will be more questions that need to be answered.

According to Wood (2011), recent L3 research has focused on four main factors: proficiency, typological similarity, recency of use, and the closely related recency of acquisition or foreign language effect. Additionally, although there are some studies of L3 acquisition among European languages (Pál, 2000; Tremblay, 2006; De Angelis, 2007; Letica & Mardešić, 2007; Hammarberg, 2009; Wood, 2011; Bağtürk & Gulmez, 2011;), it is difficult to find sufficient literature regarding the L3 issue in Asian language contexts. "Most of the current research in the field of L3 acquisition is conducted in Europe, where many people are bilingual, if not trilingual", and "all of the research done on L2 and L3 acquisition refers to spoken languages" (Wood, 2011: 89). Many previous studies have examined the L2 proficiency factor, which influences L3 acquisition.

The present research does not specifically or directly compare the L2 with languages beyond L2 acquisition. This study explores the influence of cross-linguistic similarities between L1 (Mandarin) and L3 (spoken Thai) on the acceleration of L3 acquisition based on the literature and research of European languages and on the results of surveys and language proficiency tests due to the lack of sufficient literature regarding L3 acquisition in Asian language contexts.

2.2 Learning Models

By reviewing previous relevant studies, various types of learning models have been identified for the learning project undertaken in this study. Some of these models focus on teaching and instructional aspects, such as teaching programmes and instructional materials design, classroom teaching methodology, etc., while other models focus on learner perspectives, such as learner objectives, learner motivation, etc.

2.2.1 Krashen's Monitor Model: The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis and Input Hypothesis

The monitor model is a group of five hypotheses regarding L2 acquisition that have been developed by Stephen Krashen, a linguist of the 1970s. Though they have received criticism from some academics, these hypotheses have been influential in language education. The hypotheses include the input hypothesis, the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis.

Because they are the two main hypotheses that can define the process of L3 acquisition in this study, the acquisition-learning hypothesis and input hypothesis are discussed in greater detail in this section.

2.2.1.1 Acquisition-learning Hypothesis

Acquisition and learning are different ways to developing ability in languages other than the mother tongue. The distinction is whether the non-native language is being learned in a natural or a tutored setting. “The term ‘acquisition’ is used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure, whereas the term ‘learning’ is used to refer to the conscious study of a second language” (Ellis, 1999: 6).

Krashen claimed that in the acquisition-learning hypothesis there are two ways of gaining language knowledge. The first is by systematic learning, which is typified by classroom learning wherein the learner learns the rules of grammar, lists of vocabulary, etc. This is what is referred to as learning, and as such, it is a conscious process that demands effort and focused attention on the learning tasks. On the other hand, learners rarely exhibit any conscious effort in their increasing mastery of language through the subconscious process of acquisition (Krashen, 1981: 2) because, for the most part, the process of learning occurs naturally while doing irrelevant things.

“Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language — natural communication — in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterance but with the messages they are conveying and understanding” (Krashen 1981: 1). In other words, “we ‘acquire’ as we are exposed to samples of a second language we understand in much the same way that children pick up their first language” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006: 36). Moreover, compared with conscious learning, “subconscious acquisition appears to be far more important” (Krashen, 1981: 1). As reported by

Krashen (1981), Corder (1967) built upon Lambert's work and discussed the distinction of acquisition and learning as well as the possibility that acquisition is also available to the adult learner of a non-native language (Krashen, 1981: 2).

Error correction and explicit teaching of rules are considered a great help to the process of learning a non-native language. However, these two factors are actually not relevant to acquisition. Thus, the acquisition process mainly depends on the native speaker's modifications and on the acquirer's self-corrections that are based on an understanding of the grammar of the TL. Krashen (1981) again referenced the monitor hypothesis model for adult L2 performance, which is, in general, utterances. That is, the learner's fluency is based on acquisition through active communication. The learner's formal knowledge of the language gained by conscious learning may be used to alter the acquired output and thus improve accuracy. This process may occur either before or after the utterance is produced (Krashen, 1981: 2).

2.2.1.2 Input Hypothesis

By discussing situations wherein people understand a certain language perfectly well but never speak it, as well as people who only know words and phrases in a certain language but may speak a new language by applying that which they knew from an appropriate situation, Krashen (1981) suggests that "theoretically speaking and writing are not essential to acquisition. One can acquire 'competence' in a second language, or a first language, without ever producing it" (Krashen, 1981: 107). Therefore, Krashen (1981) proposed the concept of input hypothesis under the acquisition node. To

understand input that is only slightly more advanced than the current level of the learner's competence (Krashen, 1981: 103), it must be understood and meaningful to the acquirers. This input is mostly acquired through informal learning from caretakers whose utterances are syntactically simple but become more complex with linguistic progress. Based on input theory, the caretakers "talk about what is going on in the immediate environment..." as they do not consciously intend to teach language; their concern is communication". The learners therefore are "given extra linguistic support to aid in their comprehension", while the caretakers' language "is effective in encouraging language acquisition" (Krashen, 1981: 102). With regard to non-native language acquisition, input may facilitate linguistic progress by providing ready-made utterances to the learners, by helping them to build vertical constructions, by modelling high-frequency grammatical forms, by guarantee that the input is slightly beyond the learner's current language competence, and by ensuring that input becomes intake (Ellis, 1985: 162). In other words, we acquire non-native languages by understanding the input of the TL that is only slightly beyond the knowledge we have gained. Furthermore, the intake should be natural as well, which means that it should be the language used for communication. Nonetheless, it does not mean that speaking and writing are not of practical importance as it might be the case that they indirectly promote language acquisition.

Because language can be acquired through interaction, the role of interaction in the learning of a non-native language according to Micheal Long's hypothesis is that "it is not what the learner hears but how they are interacted with that matters" because non-native language acquisition "depends on profiting from conversation which makes

concessions to the learner through processes of topic clarification and repair” (Long, 1981/1996, cited in Cook, 2008: 225). After reviewing a number of studies, Ellis (1985) claimed “...comprehensible input is provided by means of interactional adjustments” (Ellis, 1985: 162).

The participants in this study are Mandarin speakers who never formally learned Thai while living in Thailand. Thus, their only way of acquiring the Thai language was by listening and imitating, mostly unconsciously, during their interactions because of their being unavoidably involved in daily communications. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006), “students may reach a point from which they fail to make further progress on some features of the non-native language” unless they enrol in courses with formal guided instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2006: 38). Therefore, it is considered an impossible task to acquire the complete unfamiliar writing system of Thai.

2.2.2 Mocker and Spear’s Learning Models

Mocker and Spear (1982) present four types of learning models based on the extent to which learners control the learning objectives and the learning methods or means. The first type is formal learning whereby learners have little control over what they learn or what learning method is imposed. In the second model, which is that of non-formal learning, learners control what they learn but not the learning method by which they learn. “Informal learning, which is the third model, allows learners to control the study method used but not the learning objectives. The last type of learning is the self-directed

learning model wherein learners control both the learning methods and the learning objectives.

Lifelong Learning Model			
		What (Objectives)	
		Institution	Learner
How (Means)	Institution	Formal	Non-formal
	Learner	Informal	Self-directed Learning

Table 2.1. Lifelong learning model, Mocker and Spear, 1982

Formal learning is associated primarily with elementary and secondary education as well as college and university programmes. The key to formal learning is that the learner assumes little responsibility for the learning outcomes. Therefore, formal learning is understood as a structured learning programme by which the learners adhere to organised guidelines that systematically direct their studies. For example, as elementary learners typically do not know what they are expected to learn or what goals they must achieve, they are guided by teachers and tested based on criteria established by educators.

Different from formal learning, Mocker and Spear's second learning model, non-formal learning, allows learners to assume some responsibility for their learning. Specifically, this type of learning requires learner to decide what is to be learned and then to seek a method or means to achieve the learning goal (Mocker & Spear, 1982: 6). In other words, as the learners know what to learn but they do not know how to learn,

the learning method must be provided by some individuals or institutions. For example, learners want to acquire some knowledge outside of the typical classroom, so they attend a relevant workshop.

Mocker and Spear's informal learning model has some similarities to the non-formal learning model as the learner must assume partial responsibility in the decision-making process. However, different from non-formal learning, informal learning means that an organisation or institution controls the goals of the learning while the learners take responsibility for the learning approach (Mocker & Spear, 1982: 8). In other words, learners do not know the learning goals or the objectives of the learning, but they know how to access the learning. For example, a learner needs to gain more experience in a particular area, so the learner decides to learn from someone who possesses more experience. While many argue that instructor preferences is the most persuasive reason for implementing an informal learning model, the more philosophical understanding of informal learning considers that "the individual develops beneficial competencies through the exercise of autonomy and freedom" (Mocker & Spear, 1982: 9).

Mocker and Spear's last learning model is that of self-directed learning. This model requires learners to assume full responsibility for the learning goals and the learning methods (Mocker & Spear, 1982: 11). In other words, self-directed learners must decide what to learn and how to learn it. Tough (1971) and Cross (1981) noted that most adult learning projects fall under this category (cited in Mocker & Spear, 1982). For example, the learner decides what to learn and what objectives to achieve. In the typical self-directed learning model, the learner also decides what instructional

materials or approaches to use to achieve the identified goals. Merriam concludes from previous studies that “learners become increasingly self-directed as they mature” (Merriam, 2001: 8) and that such self-directed learning has three goals, “the development of the learner’s capacity to be self-directed”, “the fostering of transformational learning” and “the promotion of emancipatory learning and social action” (Merriam, 2001: 9).

Inspired by Mocker and Spear (1982), the learning models mentioned herein are concretised in the four expressions cited by individuals as their reason to learn (see Figure 2.1):

Learner I: *“My teacher said I had to take a Thai language course to assist my work.”*

Learner II: *“I need to learn the Thai language, so I think I will attend the course.”*

Learner III: *“My colleague said that I need to know some Thai in order to better communicate with the local students. My friends and students can teach me how to use the language.”*

Learner IV: *“I have always wanted to learn how to speak Thai. I bet I can learn it from books related to it.”*

Figure 2.1: Individual’s Decision to Learn Thai

2.2.3 Marsick and Watkin’s Learning Models

Marsick and Watkins (1990) distinguished informal learning from formal learning based on learning structure and learner intentions. They also identified another learning

model within the construct of informal learning - incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990: 12). They stated,

“Formal learning is typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured. Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Incidental learning is defined as a by-product of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organisational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning. Informal learning can be deliberately encouraged by an organisation or it can take place despite an environment not highly conducive to learning. Incidental learning, on the other hand, almost always takes place although people are not always conscious of it” (Marsick & Watkins, 1990: 12).

Marsick and Watkins further believe that self-directed learning is a subcategory of the informal learning model and that the difference between self-directed learning and incidental learning is that in the former the learner is fully aware of what is to be learned and what approach will be used to achieve the learning objectives, while in the latter, learning is often unconscious.

As previously indicated, many studies have focused on formal and informal learning models. However, studies about incidental learning are also abundant as they contribute to building a clear structure of the complex informal learning systems. Callahan (1999) reviewed close to 150 studies on incidental learning. The results of his review indicated that informal and incidental learning models are relevant and are practiced in many cultures and in various contexts (Callahan, 1999, cited in Marsick & Watkins, 2001: 26). It was concluded that informal and incidental learning “generally take place without much external facilitation or structure... can be enhanced with

facilitation or increased awareness by the learner” (Marsick & Watkns, 2001: 25-32), sometimes occur unconsciously, and often occur outside of classroom-based contexts, such as public sectors, social activities, academic practices, religious activities, professional associations, family events, etc.. As Marsick and Watkins (2001) stated, “...by providing opportunities for interaction and sharing, adult educators built on the natural enthusiasm for learning...” (Marsick & Watkin, 2001: 27).

Another significant finding of Marsick and Watkins’s informal and incidental learning is that informal and incidental learning occur when the learner has specific needs and is motivated to learn. Thus, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the learner engages in learning activities (Marsick & Watkin, 2001: 28).

Marsick and Volpe (1999) concluded that informal learning can be characterised by six characteristics. That is, informal learning “is integrated with daily routines, is triggered by an internal or external jolt, is not highly conscious, is haphazard and influenced by chance, is an inductive process of reflection and action, is linked to learning of others” (Marsick and Volpe, 1999: 5).

2.2.4 Other Studies on Informal Learning

Rogers (2004) defined informal learning as unstructured learning that happens incidentally and unpurposefully, and most importantly, it is learning that people engage in everyday of their lives (Rogers, 2004).

Informal learning occurs during daily life activities and “is often treated as a residual category to describe any kind of learning which does not take place within, or follow from, a formally organised learning programme or event” (Eraut, 2000: 114).

Tough (2002) believed that the primary motivation of adult informal learning is to gain and retain certain knowledge and skills with respect to a certain task or concept.

A survey conducted by Penland (1977) to understand why learners engage in informal learning resulted in a list of ten reasons (see Figure 2.2):

1. Desire to self-pace.
2. Desire to personalise learning.
3. Demand for flexible learning strategy.
4. Demand for self-controlled learning projects.
5. Have no idea where to go to learn.
6. Desire to learn “just-in-time”.
7. Demand for flexibility regarding time of learning.
8. Have no interest in formal learning.
9. Have no money to spend on learning.
10. Have no convenient transportation to attend formal learning.

Figure 2.2: Reasons for Choosing Informal Learning, Penland, 1977

2.2.5 Conclusions

Based on the review of previous studies, it is clear that even though there are several types of learning models, a differentiation exists between formal learning and other types of learning because formal learning is not learner-centred, as it does not require

the learner to assume any responsibility for his or her learning. Learning models are divided into formal and informal models for the reason that formal learning is highly structured and class-based, thus meaning that the learner makes no decisions regarding learning objectives or learning approaches. Informal learning, on the other hand, is often not systematically organised or structured. Informal learning approaches might be applied by adult learners based on their own needs, motivations, and directions, or it may take place unconsciously and incidentally during unexpected activities or social interactions.

In the present study, none of the participants had been enrolled in any formal Thai language course, and according to their feedback on the questionnaire, which will be detailed in Chapter 4, none of the participants had considered learning a new language simply because they were starting a career in Thailand before they actually began to acquire their L3. Moreover, none of them had shown any desire or plan to learn the TL. To conclude, the present study does not focus on adult formal learning of an L3. On the contrary, it constitutes an informal learning, a non-formal learning, or even an incidental learning case study instead.

After referring to the answers provided by the participants in this study, it is clear that the participants did not show any awareness of the language environment and cultural barriers they were about to confront before living in Thailand. Nor did they demonstrate any awareness of what to learn before realising that they were, in fact, acquiring a whole new language. Thus, the present study is not a case study for the formal or the non-formal learning of an L3.

The participants in this study were asked to provide their ideas about future plans to learn the Thai language as an L3. Almost all of the participants indicated that they had no plans to further study the Thai language. This may be a rational decision in accordance with the difficulties faced in learning Thai as an L3 due to the unfamiliar Thai writing system and perhaps some other individual considerations, such as future career plans (working in Thailand or another country), no need for formal learning (current L3 level or current unstructured acquisition progress is sufficient for daily communications), lack of interest in gaining knowledge of the TL, etc. To summarise, the participants noticed that they faced an unplanned new language environment and cultural barriers shortly after arriving in Thailand, and thus, they began to informally and incidentally learn the Thai language. Those who indicated an interest in L3 acquisition may be more motivated and self-directed than the others. However, because they all needed to communicate with the locals, they knew what they need to learn and they know how to gain that knowledge, such as depending on students and local friends or by passive acceptance of information. In this sense, as the participants were responsible for their learning goals and methods, they were engaging in, to some degree, a form of self-directed learning.

2.3 Environmental Influences

Environmental influence as a crucial factor in non-native language acquisition and learning has been the focused of several studies.. Specifically, two types of environmental influences that affect non-native language acquisition have been

identified. One is that of formal and informal linguistic environments (Krashen, 1981: 40), and the other is the non-native language environment (Vildomec, 1963, cited in De Angelis, 2007: 37).

Many researchers have indicated that while there is no evidence that a formal linguistic environment benefits adult learners' non-native language proficiency, an informal linguistic environment does, to some extent, effectively contribute to language learning. Upshur (1968) studied three groups of adult law students who participated in a special summer session at the University of Michigan. In that study, the ESL students were divided into groups by their entrance test scores. Group 1 consisted of students who had the highest test scores and attended law classes conducted in English with no additional English class required. Group 2 students had mid-range/ lower test scores and attended a one-hour daily English class in addition to the law classes that were conducted in English. Group 3 students had the lowest scores and were thus required to attend 2 hours of English class in addition to their law classes. The results showed that the three groups all improved accordingly. However, the foreign language classes, which represented a formal linguistic environment, had no significant effect on language learning. Rather, the use of language in other circumstances was perhaps more effective.

Similar results regarding the significance of informal environments are found in other studies as well. Carroll (1967) administered MLA foreign language proficiency tests to 2,782 college seniors from 203 institutions who majored in foreign languages such as French, German, Russian, or Spanish. The findings showed that foreign majors did not perform well, as their average scores on the MLA corresponded to a level

between limited working proficiency and minimum professional proficiency. Additionally, Carroll's study further suggested a strong relationship between time spent abroad where the target language was used and test performance. That is, the more time the participants stayed abroad where the target language was spoken, the better the test performance.

Mason (1971) conducted a study regarding the influences of formal and informal linguistic environments on non-native language learning. In the study, Mason focused on foreign students enrolled at the University of Hawaii. Some students were allowed to begin regular academic programmes and skip ESL classes, even though it was suggested that they attend English classes based on their actual English level. The results indicated that by the end of the semester, there was no significant difference between students who took ESL classes and students who skipped ESL classes with respect to their English proficiency improvement.

As previously mentioned, formal and informal linguistic environments influence language learning, though they do so in different ways. It is difficult to conclude whether a formal or informal environment is more effective. It is not simply the case that informal environments provide the necessary input for language acquisition, the very requirement for an informal environment is that it "must be intensive and involve the learner directly in order to be effective" (Krashen, 1981: 47). As Krashen notes, "Formal and informal environments contribute to second language competence in different ways, or rather, to different aspects of second language competence..." (Krashen, 1981:47). Krashen (1981) also notes that the adult language learner can take advantage of an informal environment. For people who acquire languages in informal

environments, motivation plays an important role in the learning process and the learning outcome. Krashen and Seliger (1975) suggest that the motivated language learners provide themselves with the basic materials and instruments of formal instruction without attending a formal class (cited in Krashen, 1981: 41). Upshur (1968), Mason (1971) and Carroll (1967) arrived at similar results that indicated living in foreign country may present more opportunities for self-study and for increased formal language learning motivation (cited in Krashen, 1976: 158-159).

On the other hand, a non-native language environment has also been found to play an important role in non-native language acquisition in many studies. Stedje (1977) examined the German learning production of Finish L1 learners who had resided in Sweden for a substantial period of time. The sample was divided into two groups, one was comprised of Finish L1 learners who had spent a considerable period of time in Sweden, while their counterparts had resided in Sweden for a short period of time. Comprehensive Swedish influence was found in the learning production of those who had lived in Sweden for a long period of time, thus suggesting that the non-native language learner can be effectively influenced by exposure to the non-native language environment (Cited in De Angelis, 2007).

A similar study was conducted by examining the production of other languages. Fouser (2001) chose two English L1 learners who took Korean as a third or fifth language. Both learners had remained in Japan for quite a long time before beginning their Korean studies. In addition, both had acquired Japanese as a non-native language and were much more fluent in Japanese than in Korean. An interesting phenomenon was that the participants frequently thought in Japanese while using Korean or switched

to Korean while speaking Japanese (Cited in De Angelis, 2007). The result of Fouser's study suggests that a non-native language environment plays a key role in foreign language acquisition.

Yager (1998) investigated forty-one students with seven different background languages who studied Spanish as an L2 in Mexico for five weeks during the summer of 1992. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between their linguistic progress and their informal contacts with the Spanish language outside the structured classroom environment. The students provided two oral samples as well as other information (background, language and culture attitudes and language contact profile) during a pretest and a posttest before and after the summer session. The sample, which was graded by native speakers, provided a measure of linguistic gain. Yager (1998)'s study concluded that "greater informal interactive contact is related to greater gains in nativeness in Spanish for all students" and is beneficial to gains in the beginning stages of grammatical knowledge (Yager, 1998: 908). This is consistent with the notion that "both teachers and students of foreign languages have long assumed that study or living abroad is extremely beneficial in achieving a high level of proficiency in a foreign language, and perhaps even obligatory for most learners" because living abroad provides "opportunities for informal contact with the language", such as conversing with native speakers, watching television, reading books, listening to music, etc., which contribute to linguistic proficiency in the TL (Yager, 1998: 898). Vildomec (1963) contends that the length of residence and exposure to a non-native language environment can influence a third or additional language acquisition. Carroll (1967), Freed (1990) and Milleret (1991) note that living abroad even for short periods is

helpful as it provides an opportunity for informal contact with the TL (Cited in Yager, 1998: 899). With the exception of formal instructional studies, learners exposed to non-native language environments are objectively involved in informal environments where they have more opportunities to access foreign language in a real interactive context (Cited in De Angelis, 2007). Evelyn Hatch, 1978; Michael Long, 1983, 1996; Teresa Pica, 1994 & Susan, 1997 (Cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2006) reached consensus that conversational interaction is an essential condition for non-native language acquisition. Similarly, Rod Ellis stated, “social conditions influence the opportunities that learners have to hear and speak the language and the attitudes that they develop towards it” (Ellis 2009: 5). These studies indicate that a non-native language environment is an important factor as it influences non-native language acquisition, and therefore, it cannot be neglected.

Length of residence and exposure to a non-native language environment increase the individual’s reliance on a particular source for language in production, and they also help to build a connection between language and the individual’s personal experiences. This connection may be difficult to recall once the learner leaves the non-native language environment, and thus, the fluency of the non-native language will also decrease (De Angelis, 2007).

Apart from the effect of the social milieu in which learning takes place in this research, it is evident that the learners’ years of living in Thailand provide a natural, native and intensive language environment. Thus, it is necessary to consider the influences of the cross-linguistic similarities as a main factor affecting L3 acquisition.

2.4 Typological Similarity, Cross-linguistic Similarity and Language Distance

Learning, including language learning, is based on prior knowledge. A major theme in the present studies of multilingualism is the influence that the knowledge of background languages has on the learner's current L3 production process.

During the language acquisition process, the knowledge of prior languages and the experiences gained in acquiring such knowledge are considered to be important factors in TL acquisition (Ringbom, 1986). Moreover, prior knowledge is consistently useful for learning a language that is closely related to the learner's L1, and vice versa.

“Presence or absence of cross-linguistic similarities accounts for the differences in effort and time existing between learning a language close to the L1 and learning a totally unrelated language... At early stages of learning, when the target language knowledge is insignificant, L1 is the main source for perceiving linguistic similarities” (Ringbom 2007:1).

“Cognate languages are learned easily notably when the similarities and positive transfers from one language to another are considered to be influential and contributive factors in the acquisition of a new foreign language” (Bağtürk & Gulmez, 2011: 17).

When the TL is relatively strong to very strong, the knowledge of typologically related BLs positively affects TL acquisition (Hammarberg, 2009: 2).

According to Ringbom (1986) and Hammarberg (1998), cross-linguistic influences are more likely to occur during the early stages of language acquisition. That is, when the learners' knowledge of TL is still weak, they need more existing language knowledge to fill the gaps in the TL. This does not mean, however, that cross-linguistic

influence does not occur during later stages of acquisition. Singleton (1987) and Möhle (1989) confirm that there is proof of cross-linguistic transfer occurring in multilingual acquisition when languages share similar vocabulary, phonetic structure, and syntax.

Cross-linguistic similarity and typological similarity are connected with each other, though they are not exactly the same. According to Ringbom, “It is natural that cross-linguistic similarities have mostly been discussed in the context of typologically related languages. However, even total unrelated languages with little or no structural cross-linguistic similarity may exhibit surprising similarities, especially in lexis” (Ringbom, 2007: 77).

“Language distance refers to the distance that a linguist can objectively and formally define and identify between languages and language families. Sometimes the term formal similarity is also used to refer to a relationship of similarity between the features or components of two or more languages without necessarily implying a genetic relationship between them” (De Angelis 2007: 22). Language distance is one of the factors that determine which background language becomes the learner’s main source of information with respect to learning a new non-native language. More than one background language can be the learner’s preferred source. As long as more languages are being added to the learner’s mind, there will be more languages upon which the learner can draw while learning a new foreign language (Angelis, 2007).

De Angelis (1999), Möhle (1989), Ringbom (1987) and Vildomec (1963) concurred that transfer is most likely to occur between languages that are closely related to one another than between languages that are distantly related. In other words, if a clear difference in cross-linguistics is easily discovered, learners are likely to be

sensitive to it and rely on the useful information that the closer language can provide, rather than on that of the more distant language. Chandrasekhar (1978) also indicated that learners are primarily affected by the language that most resembles the TL.

Lightbown and Spada contend that: "... behaviourism was often linked to the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH)... According to CAH, where the first language and the target language are similar, learners should acquire target language structures with ease, where there are differences, learners should have difficulty" (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 34).

As evidenced, cognate languages can be learned easily as long as the cross-linguistic similarities are considered effective and beneficial factors in the acquisition of the target language — not as an unfailing rule, but a definite tendency. This indicates "the learner must be somewhat familiar with the target form in order to transfer" (Angelis, 2007: 31). In this study, the tonal and syntactic similarities between Thai and Mandarin are examined to test whether cross-linguistic similarities between typologically close languages can accelerate L3 acquisition.

2.5 Related Study

2.5.1 Related Research Methodology

According to some past studies, the use of a questionnaire as a research instrument has been quite common in the field of cross-linguistic influence on L3 production. Specifically, the aim of using a questionnaire is to assess the learners' language learning

history, which consists of language learning order, time before starting to learn, number of years, type of instruction they received, etc.. Moreover, a language proficiency test that includes an oral and a written component, is another method commonly used.

Letica and Mardešić (2007)'s research focused on cross-linguistic transfer in L2 and L3 production¹ and aimed to identify “cross-linguistic influences in oral production of Croatian L1 speakers of English as L2 and Italian as L3 and to investigate the influence in terms of exposure to L2 or L3, proficiency in L2 and L3 and both formal and perceived typological distance between L1, L2, and L3” (Letica & Mardešić, 2007: 309). The research design was a combination of a questionnaire that incorporated oral description and a proficiency test that included an oral translation. The objective was to determine whether language learners who found English (L2) and Italian (L3) more closely related and similar had more occurrences of L2 transfer in L3 production. The participants in the study included twenty university students aged between 21 and 26 years who were majoring in English and Italian languages. Letica and Mardešić (2007)'s study is a good example of a research that investigates the relationship between language distance and TL production. In this study, twenty subjects were tested for their proficiency and a questionnaire was used as the instrument.

Tremblay (2006)'s study² focused on a group of L1 English and L2 French learners whose TL and L3 is German. The aim of the study was to determine whether differences could be observed among learners who achieved different levels of L2 proficiency and had different degrees of exposure to the L2. Although it emphasised

¹ Letica, S. & Mardešić, S. (2007). Cross-linguistic Transfer in L2 and L3 Production. In J. Horváth & M. Nikolov (Eds.), *UPRT 2007: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics* (pp. 307-318). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

² Tremblay, M.C. (2006). Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: The Role of L2 Proficiency and L2 Exposure. *CLO/OPL Janvier/January 2006*, Vol. 34:109-119.

more the influence of L2 proficiency and exposure on L3 learning, cross-linguistic influence in the research field of multilingualism was still the main scope of the study. Thirteen native-speakers of English aged between 19 and 25 years constituted the sample of Tremblay's study. Both the participants' L2 French and L3 German were acquired through formal learning at a university. As the main aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between L2 proficiency and L3 production, the participants were divided into groups according to their L2 levels. The primary instruments applied in this research were a questionnaire that provided information regarding the learners language learning backgrounds and a language proficiency test for both their L2 and L3.

Pál (2000) conducted a sophisticated experiment that consisted of five components and aimed to investigate the role of cross-linguistic similarity in Hungarian-German bilingual learners' learning English as an L3. The purpose of Pál's study was to determine whether bilinguals relied on their L2 lexical knowledge more than on their L1 if they perceived greater similarities between the L2 and the L3 than between the L1 and the L3. The sample consisted 69 Hungarians and 16 Germans aged between 13.5 and 15.5 years, who had studied English for 2.5 years and achieved a pre-intermediate level of proficiency. They were divided into four groups according to their language backgrounds (see Table 2.1). The instruments used in this study included a pilot study to examine the following tests, a self-evaluated questionnaire to provide information of the subjects' historical language acquisition experiences, and a language proficiency test in lexicon, spoken language and reading.

Information regarding Subjects in Pál (2000)'s Study				
Group	Number of Subjects	Bilingual Status	Language Condition	Knowledge of German
MonoHu	23	Mono	Hungarian	-
BiHu	23	Bi	Hungarian	+
Mon-Ge	16	Mono	German	+
BiGe	23	Bi	German	+

Table 2.2: Information regarding Subjects in Pál (2000)'s Study

In the current research, the questionnaire is comprised of all of the questions, and the perspectives mentioned herein are applied. Due to the concerns regarding location, the language proficiency test is a written rather than an oral test.

2.5.2 Related Empirical Findings

Some studies mentioned in 2.2.1 reported similar results, thus supporting the hypotheses and expected findings of the current research.

Letica and Mardešić (2007) found that learners' L1 Croatian was not always dominant in L3 Italian learning, while English L2 provided more information in the learning process of L3 because of the cross-linguistic similarity, which "is thought to be a significant factor in L2/L3 transfer" (Letica and Mardešić, 2007: 316). Furthermore, the authors indicated that the degree of linguistic constraint and communicative pressure,

as well as the exposure to the L3 and the proficiency with respect to the L2, are important factors that affect L3 learning.

The result of Pál (2000)'s study suggests that only perceived similarities result in facilitation. This means that if the learners had a low frequency of exposure to the TL, it was not yet retrievable through language association.

The result of Bağtürk & Gulmez (2011)'s study implies the positive influence of cross-linguistic similarities between closely related languages. Accordingly, their study greatly supports the premise that “similarities and positive transfers help create a multilingual learning environment” and that the “languages of the same family are easily learned because these languages have common words and syntactical structures” (Bağtürk & Gulmez, 2011: 20). They also suggested that the source language, which has many commonalities with the TL, can be comparatively used in the process of TL acquisition to possibly achieve better learning outcomes.

Wood (2011) claimed that most of the current L3 acquisition studies have been conducted in Europe, where many people are bilingual or even trilingual. Furthermore, all of the accomplished research in the field of L3 acquisition refers to spoken languages. The conclusion of Wood (2011)'s research was that while language similarities contribute to the successful learning of the TL, only tight similarities guide learners in the right direction.

According to Letica and Mardešić (2007), Pál (2000), Bağtürk & Gulmez (2011) and Wood (2011)'s research, the empirical findings show that language distance affects language acquisition. Generally speaking, the closer the distance between languages, the faster or easier it is for the learners to master the TL. In other words, the reason why

languages belonging to the same family are more easily learned is that these languages share similar vocabulary, phonetics and/or grammar structures.

The specific condition in this research is that Mandarin and Thai are in the same language family - Sino-Tibetan family - although they do not belong to the same sub-family. Thus, while they differ from the European languages, they share many similarities, though the writing systems are dissimilar. Because of the lack of research in this area, the researcher will discover if similar findings are true for Asian languages.

2.5.3 Conclusions

According to the research design of related studies mentioned in this study, questionnaires and language proficiency tests are the mostly common used instruments in the L3 acquisition research field. Thus, the methodology used in the current study is the same as that used in previous studies. However, to gain insight and greater depth as well as to strengthen the reliability of the results, interviews with professionals in the area of language teaching and learning are also conducted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the methodology and relevant research approaches adopted in this study. In this chapter, the researcher explains the research philosophy, approaches and strategies, and why the methodology has been adopted. This study seeks to identify cross-linguistic similarity influences among adult Mandarin (L1) speakers of English (L2) and Thai (L3). Obtaining effective data and information is of vital importance to build an accurate picture of the issue being studied. Therefore, it is crucial to choose appropriate research methods and conduct them effectively in order to answer the research question and meet the research objectives.

3.1 Research Design

The principle method of the study is a case study with a questionnaire, an L3 proficiency test and interviews, which involved first, a qualitative approach using interviews and a questionnaire to develop an understanding of the main issues involved; second, a quantitative approach based on the data generated and collected by L3 proficiency test; and third, an analysis of results.

The current study would be conducted based on the questionnaire, L3 proficiency test and structured-based interviews to allow first-hand feedback and minimize ambiguity, resulting in a high quality response. The author conducted a pilot check with

the assistance of some previous linguistics colleagues, which allowed improvements to be made and implemented.

The overall goal in designing this research is to obtain the most useful information. The questionnaire should be chosen to quickly collect a great deal of information; the L3 proficiency test should contribute to understanding the L3 level, as well as the strengths and weaknesses in the participants' L3 acquisition; and then the follow-up interviews should provide more in-depth data and relevant information

3.2 Sampling Methods

Convenience sampling is a statistical method of drawing representative data by selecting people because of the ease of their volunteering or selecting units because of their availability or ease of access. The advantages of this type of sampling are the availability and speed with which data can be gathered, while the disadvantages are the risk that the sample might not represent the overall population and that volunteers might be biased.

Due to time and location limitations, 27 participants, who used to be the researcher's colleagues and were conveniently chosen from schools or universities in central Thailand, were asked to finish a questionnaire and a written language proficiency test. Their answers were written with the Roman alphabet, which can be used to spell Thai, instead of using the unfamiliar Thai alphabet system, which is too difficult to master under the circumstance of informal learning. These answers were then sent back to the researcher via e-mail.

All of these young adults, aged 23 to 31 (Figure 3.1), were government-sponsored Mandarin teachers who taught in schools and universities in Thailand from 2008 to 2012. Additionally, all of them are from mainland China, with Mandarin as their L1, and had graduated from universities in China, majoring in Teaching Mandarin as Foreign Language. Most of them had been formally learning English (L2) for over eight years before they graduated from university. All had received professional Mandarin education throughout their student lives and had received a certificate for the National Putonghua Proficiency (Level II Class B or above³), while none of them was able to speak or understand Thai before going to Thailand. Participant anonymity is maintained in this study.

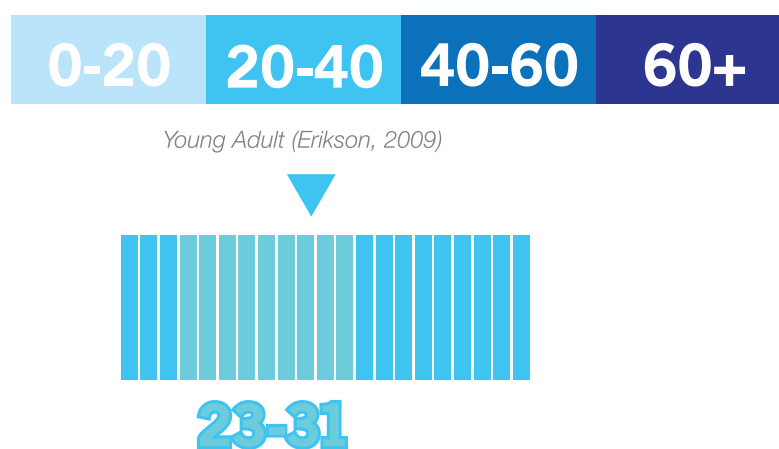


Figure 3.1: Participants Age Range

There were some limitations during sampling. One limitation stems from the location issue and participants' current situations — as international Mandarin teachers, they were living and working in different countries, so it was hard to gather more

³ The National Putonghua Proficiency Test is the only recognized Mandarin proficiency examination in China, which has three levels, with two classes (A and B) in each level. To achieve the Putonghua level of Level II Class B is one of the requirements for all international Mandarin teachers. Further more, Level II Class B means that the examinee will at least achieve the accuracy of 87% or above in the test (《普通话水平测试标准》, 1999).

participants to increase the sample size. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, according to some related studies in this area, small samples of 13 (Tremblay, 2006) or 20 participants (Letica and Mardešić, 2007) are also acceptable.

The other limitation involves gender. More than 70% of the participants in this study were female (see Figure 3.2). Because female teachers generally outnumbered the male teachers, the imbalance of sexes could not be avoided. It has often been claimed that women are better at languages, but because the gender factor's influence on L3 acquisition is not going to be examined in this paper, it will not be considered in this study.

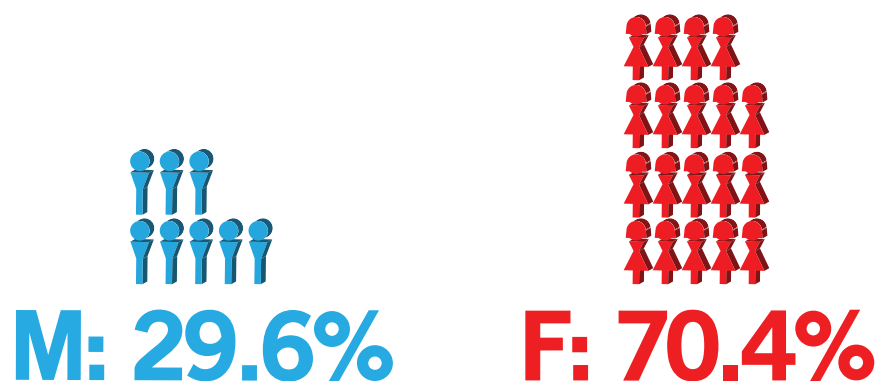


Figure 3.2: Gender Comparison

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Questionnaire

“The use of a questionnaire is an instrument specifically designed to elicit information that will be useful for analysis” (Earl Babbie, 2010). As mentioned previously, in the

studies of Tremblay (2006), Pál (2000) and Letica and Mardešić (2007), the questionnaire had been commonly used as a research instrument in the field of cross-linguistic influence on L3 production. The specific aim of conducting the questionnaire is to assess the learners' language learning history, which consists of language learning order, time to start learning, number of years and type of instruction they have received, and so on. The questionnaire contains all of the questions and perspectives above and was applied in the current study.

The questionnaire in this study is a document containing questions and statements designed to demand appropriate information for analysis, including closed-ended questions, open-ended questions and statements.

The participants were required to fill out several questions in this questionnaire about their language learning history to ensure that all of them had only learned Mandarin, English and Thai (and in that order). Participants were also asked to provide background information about how long they had studied and how they had actually learned English and Thai. Almost all participants had received over 8 years of formal English instruction. In addition, participants were also asked to identify two languages, among their L1, L2 and L3, that were, in their view, typologically closer. In addition, the questionnaire provides information about their personal information (e.g., age, gender and education background), learning method, motivation, current Thai and English levels (self-evaluation), attitude towards Thai language learning, and so on. The results revealed their attitudes, problems, advantages, and their understanding of the influence of cross-linguistic similarity.

Because it is a self-evaluated questionnaire, its structure is shown in Figure 3.3.

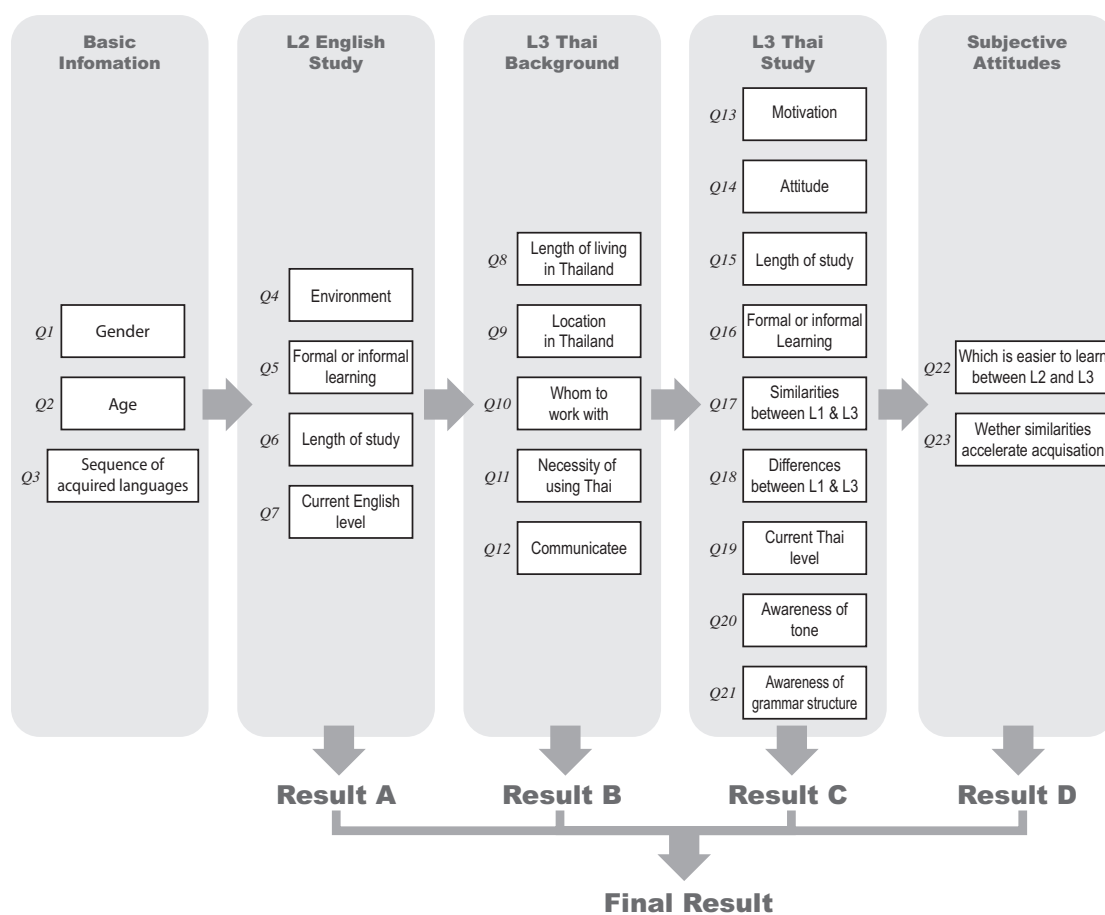


Figure 3.3: Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire has five basic parts:

Part I: Basic information. This part provides information about participants' gender, age and language learning sequence to get a basic idea about this sample and to examine whether the sample is properly chosen, i.e., all participants were adult Mandarin speakers and had acquired Mandarin, English and Thai in that chronological sequence.

Part II: L2 (English) learning. This part collects information about the participants' English (L2) learning, including the learning environment (L2 environment or non-L2 environment), learning method (formal or informal learning), length of learning and current self-evaluated L2 proficiency. This part is designed to understand every aspect

of the participants' L2 learning situations to compare them with their subsequent L3 learning situations.

Part III: Background of L3 (Thai) acquisition. This part includes information about the location and duration of their stay in Thailand, the categories of students they taught and target communication groups of L3, the frequency of using Thai, and the learning environment. The answers provided in Part III is definitely a great help in understanding how and in what circumstance the participants' L3 acquisition occurred. Similar ways and conditions of encountering L3s among the candidates are accordingly expected.

Part IV: L3 (Thai) acquisition. This part collects the participants' motivation, attitude, learning/acquiring duration, learning form (formal or informal), views on similarities and differences between L1 and L3, current proficiency in Thai, and awareness of Thai tones and syntax. As the most important part of this questionnaire, it provides information about the main factors of L3 acquisition that need to be considered in this study, which shows the participants' situations and understanding of their acquisition of Thai as an L3.

Part V: Attitudes towards the cross-linguistic influence of Mandarin and Thai. As Part V of this questionnaire, two statements from Questions 22 and 23 collect the participants' ideas and understanding of the cross-linguistic influence of Mandarin and Thai — ideas that they would like to share but that are not included in the previous 21 questions. This part provides some significant information beyond the researcher's pre-considerations, which contributes to this study's results.

Despite the basic information collected in Part I, the other parts lead to results in different aspects: "Result A", "Result B", "Result C" and "Result D" in sequence (see

Figure 3.3). Result A represents the participants' L2 (English) learning, compared with Result C, which is scoped down by Results B and represents their L3 (Thai) acquisition. We can then probably get an idea of which language, between L2 and L3, has a better learning result. Result D subjectively shows their views on this study's research questions. The purpose of this study thus could be addressed through this framework.

A copy of questionnaire can be found in Appendix I.

3.3.2 L3 Proficiency Test (in writing)

Language proficiency is language learners' ability to speak or perform an acquired language. There are several recognized proficiency tests around the world, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, and Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì (HSK). However, there is no such an authorized proficiency test for Thai.

Because the questionnaire was an entirely self-evaluated survey, the language proficiency test thus became a new add-on part to promote objective results. The researcher and two native Thai speakers from Bangkok designed and graded this study's written Thai language proficiency test, which focused on two main aspects of tones and syntax (see Appendix II). This test required the participants to use the Roman alphabet to read and write instead of using Thai alphabet. As previously discussed in this study, Roman alphabet use is acceptable because the Thai alphabet system is quite different from the widely used Roman alphabet and the Mandarin characters of the learners'

native language; in addition, using the Roman alphabet to spell Thai is becoming increasingly popular in Thailand, especially among Thai youth.

A well-designed answer sheet makes the tonal test much clearer and easier to understand; with a series of syntactic questions of increasing difficulty, the participants' real understanding on Thai tones and syntax were tested.

3.3.2.1 Tonal Test

For the tonal test, 20 words were given in Thai (written with the Roman alphabet) and English (this word's meaning). With five different Thai tones for each, all the Thai words were set up as choices. The tone numbers from one to five, which were given next to the words in the options, represents different pitches of the Thai tones (refer to Figure 1.1, p.12). The participants were asked to choose the correct one with the right tone from the five given answers. An example is shown below (see Figure 3.4):

10. maa (dog)

A. maa[33] B. maa[21] C. maa[41] D. maa[45] E. maa[14]

Figure 3.4: Example of Thai Tonal Test

As mentioned in Chapter 1, tonal languages are those in which contrastive tonemes differentiate lexical meanings (Erickson, 1976). Thus, the participants would be able to get the right answer only if they knew exactly which the tone is right for each Thai word. According to the example above (see Figure 3.4), the Thai word “maa”, meaning “dog”

in English, is a word with a rising tone (refer to Figure 1.1, p.12), and the answer for the question above will thus be “E. maa[14]”. If the examinee chose other answers, for instance, answer “D. maa [45]”, representing the sound of “maa” with a high tone, this word’s meaning will accordingly change to “horse”. If the examinee chose answer “A. maa[33]”, this word’s meaning will then become “to come”.

3.3.2.2 Sentence Construction Test

Unlike English, Thai and Mandarin do not have auxiliary verbs. Therefore, with a negative sentence, people put a negation adverb directly in front of the verb. In Mandarin, it is “不” (pronounced “bù”); in Thai, it is pronounced “mai[41]”. Two examples are given below in Tables 3.1 and 3.2:

Example of Negation Adverb Use in Mandarin and Thai - I					
Affirmative Sentence	Mandarin	我	想		吃饭。
	Thai	Chan	yaak		ginkaaao.
Negative Sentence	Mandarin	我	不	想	吃饭。
	Thai	Chan	mai[41]	yaak	ginkaaao.

Table 3.1: Example of Negation Adverb Use in Mandarin and Thai - I

Example of Negation Adverb Use in Mandarin and Thai - II					
Affirmative Sentence	Mandarin	他	在		家。
	Thai	Kao	yoo tee		baan.
Negative Sentence	Mandarin	他	不	在	家。
	Thai	Kao	mai[41]	yoo tee	baan.

Table 3.2: Example of Negation Adverb Use in Mandarin and Thai – II

When it is a yes/no question, both in Thai and Mandarin, people put a question particle at the end of the declarative sentence, without making any change to the word order of the original sentence. In Mandarin, the question particle is “吗” (pronounced “ma”), and it is “mai[14]” in Thai. Examples appear below in Tables 3.3 and 3.4:

Example of Question Particle Use in Mandarin and Thai - I				
Declarative Sentence	Mandarin	你	回家。	
	Thai	Kun	glap baan.	
Yes/No Question	Mandarin	你	回家	吗?
	Thai	Kun	glap baan	mai[14]?

Table 3.3: Example of Question Particle Use in Mandarin and Thai – I

Example of Question Particle Use in Mandarin and Thai - II					
Declarative Sentence	Mandarin	他	是	好人。	
	Thai	Kao	bpen	kon dee.	
Yes/No Question	Mandarin	他	是	好人,	对吗?
	Thai	Kao	bepn	kon dee	chai mai[14]?

Table 3.4: Example of Question Particle Use in Mandarin and Thai – II

For interrogative sentences, an interrogative word is used after the verb, and the word order in the sentence is not changed. We take the word “who” as an example, which is “谁” (pronounced “shuí”) in Mandarin and is pronounced “krai[33]” in Thai.

An example appears below in Table 3.5:

Example of Interrogative Word Use in Mandarin amd Thai				
Declarative Sentence	Mandarin	你	爱	他。
	Thai	Kun	rak	kao.
Interrogative Sentence	Mandarin	你	爱	谁?
	Thai	Kun	rak	krai[33]?

Table 3.5: Example of Interrogative Word Use in Mandarin amd Thai

Sentence word order is the primary factor of cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai, and it should be the easiest L3 syntactic part for the Mandarin L1 speakers to understand and achieve.

For the sentence construction test, a series of increasingly difficult syntactic questions were assigned to examine the participants’ actual understanding of Thai syntax. The participants were asked to rewrite ten Thai sentences (written in the Roman alphabet). For example, they were asked to rewrite an affirmative sentence into a negative sentence (see Figure 3.5):

Original: Wan nee kao yaak gin aa-haan tai. (He wants to try Thai dishes today.)

Rewrite: Wan nee kao mai yaak gin aa-haan tai. (He doesn't want to try Thai dishes today.)

Figure 3.5: Example of Rewriting an Affirmative Sentence into Negative Sentence

Another example is rewriting a declarative sentence into a yes/no question (see Figure 3.6):

Original: Wan nee kao yaak gin aa haan tai. (He wants to try Thai dishes today.)

Rewrite: Wan nee kao yaak gin aa haan tai mai? (Does he want to try Thai dishes today?)

Figure 3.6: Example of Rewriting an Affirmative Sentence into a Yes/No Question

In addition, participants were required to rewrite a declarative sentence into an interrogative sentence, as follows (see Figure 3.7):

Original: Wan nee kao yaak gin aa haan tai. (He wants to try Thai dishes today.)

Rewrite: Wan nee kao yaak gin a-rai? (What does he want to eat today?)

Figure 3.7: Example of Rewriting an Affirmative Sentence into an Interrogative Sentence

The language proficiency test paper can be found in Appendix II.

3.3.3 Interview

The interview provides insight into people's experiences, beliefs, perceptions and motivations at a depth that is not possible with questionnaire. It is a conversation with a purpose, a way of exploring people's experiences and views (Lester, 1999: 1).

In this study, the interview was an in-depth and structured online interview, which allowed the interviewer and interviewees to talk through Skype voice calls due to the geographical limitations. The interview aimed to explore as deeply as possible the respondents' experiences, views, and feelings on the topic of cross-linguistic similarities that promote L3 acquisition. The interview transcriptions are summarized into several perspectives and used to strengthen, explain or contradict the results from the questionnaire and language proficiency test.

The interviewees are a long-term informal learner of Thai (L3), who is a Mandarin speaker with a very high level of L3 proficiency, and an English speaker who also informally acquired some Thai during his two years of living in Bangkok. Both of them were multilingual, certificated language teachers, and professionals in the area of language acquisition and teaching. Their abilities in professionally analysing language acquisition are thus trustworthy, while their experiences of acquiring three or even more than three languages will certainly provide us with more practical views on L3 acquisition and valuable ideas for analysing the influence of cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai. The interview plans an in-depth exploration of the respondents' past experiences, opinions and feelings, focusing on the theme of cross-linguistic similarities in facilitating their L3 acquisition. The interview

transcription notes will be summed up into several perspectives and used to enhance, support or contradict the questionnaire results and Thai language proficiency test outcomes.

Structured Interview
Part A: Interviewee Background
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly describe your role (e.g., nationality, language background, career background, etc.) as it relates to your experience of L3 acquisition (if appropriate). 2. How long have you been living in Thailand?
Part B: Thai Language Acquisition
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please self-evaluate your Thai language proficiency. 2. What are your thoughts on reading and writing in Thai? 3. Please describe your experience of Thai language acquisition (e.g., formal/informal learning, duration, learning method, etc.). 4. How does the language distance between your mother tongue and Thai affect your Thai language acquisition?
Part C: Cross-linguistic Similarity and Language Learning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please provide your opinion on whether and how cross-linguistic similarity accelerates non-native language learning.

Table 3.6 Structured Interview

Due to the two interviewees' different language backgrounds, the interviews were conducted in Mandarin and English.

The interview protocol and transcriptions can be found in Appendix III.

3.3.4 Pilot Study

The pilot study is also referred to as a pilot experiment. It is a small range of experiments and a preliminary study—or a set of observations undertaken to evaluate

feasibility analysis, time, cost, bad results, and average effect size (or statistical variability) in an attempt to forecast a suitable sample size and to make improvements on the basis of the study design before launching a full-scale research project (Vasu, 1996).

To pre-test the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted in which ten people who had previously worked in Thailand were selected to participate in this study to protect against errors. These participants had worked in Thailand for one to two years and had acquired some level of proficiency in spoken Thai as their L3. The participants completed a questionnaire and language proficiency test. The language proficiency test and questionnaire were modified based on the feedback.

For the questionnaire part, a few unnecessary options that were not necessarily related to the participants' experiences had been removed, while some new questions that could provide useful information were added; some questions' orders were changed, and a few of unclear instructions were amended to make the questionnaire more logical, understandable and easy to follow up. Because the questionnaire is an entirely self-evaluated survey, the language proficiency test thus became a new add-on part to promote objective results. A well-designed answer sheet made the tonal test much clearer and easier to understand; through a series of increasingly difficult syntactic questions, the participants' real understanding of Thai tones and syntax were tested.

3.3.5 Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity, two Thai language-teaching professionals carefully tested the questionnaire and L3 proficiency test to avoid errors from misinterpretation or misunderstanding and to ensure that responses are valid.

The questionnaire and L3 proficiency test were sent out during a one-week period, and all questions are related to the research objectives to ensure that the result is stable over time.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

The data collected from L3 proficiency test, which is quantitative data, is numerical and standardized data, which can be analysed with statistics. The researcher applies descriptive statistics, which enables the description and comparison of numerical variables, to summarize and present the collected data.

The collected data from the questionnaire are primarily nominal and ordinal data. Therefore, bar charts are most suitable for displaying the data. Except for the open questions, the researcher will summarize and present the data in tables. It is easier to understand the results and tendencies with the analysis.

In addition, according to the nature of qualitative data, which refers to data collected from the interviews in this study, it is important to develop data categories from the research questions, research themes and initial proposition and to classify them into appropriate categories before analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

The data in this study were collected from three sources: questionnaire data were mainly based on the tendencies of each question; L3 proficiency test data were calculated through the accuracy that examinees exhibited; interview data—from the interviewees' ideas, attitudes, and experiences—will supplement the main findings from the previous two data sources.

4.1 Analysis of Questionnaire Survey

The 23 questions were divided into five parts (refer to Figure 3.3, p.51) in this questionnaire: participants' basic information, L2 (English) learning, L3 (Thai) learning background, L3 (Thai) acquisition, and attitudes towards the cross-linguistic influence of L1 (Mandarin) and L3. The collected data were analysed in these five aspects.

4.1.1 Part I: Basic information

All participants are Chinese young adults, aged 23 to 31, and have acquired languages in the following order: Mandarin (L1), English (L2), and Thai (L3). Above 70% of the participants in this study are female, while only 29.6% are male (refer to Figure 3.1, p.48, and Figure 3.2, p.49).

4.1.2 Part II: L2 (English) learning

None of the participants had been to any English-speaking country, except for one participant who had spent more than three years in an English-speaking country after staying in Thailand, and two participants who had travelled in English-speaking countries for less than two months while working in Thailand. In other words, none of the participant's L2 (English) learning was performed in an English-speaking environment.

88.9% of the participants indicated that they had primarily learned English through formal learning, as well as some informal learning (e.g., by watching movies or listening to music); 7.4% claimed that they only learned their L2 at school, while only one participant chose the "all by informal learning" option. 81.5% of the participants had been learning English as their L2 for over eight years, while 18.5% had learned their L2 for about six to eight years. No one claimed to have learned English for fewer than six years. 37% of the participants believed that they had achieved an advanced level of L2 proficiency; 33.3% believed that they had gained an intermediate level; 22.2% of them are beginners in English; only 7.4% believed that they have achieved advanced levels in reading and writing.

Figure 4.1 shows a summary of ways the participants in this study learned English as their L2. In terms of L2 learning information, almost all (up to 96.3%) of the participants claimed their L2 learning method was formal learning at school, while 88.9% mentioned a slightly informal learning experience in addition to formal L2 learning at school.

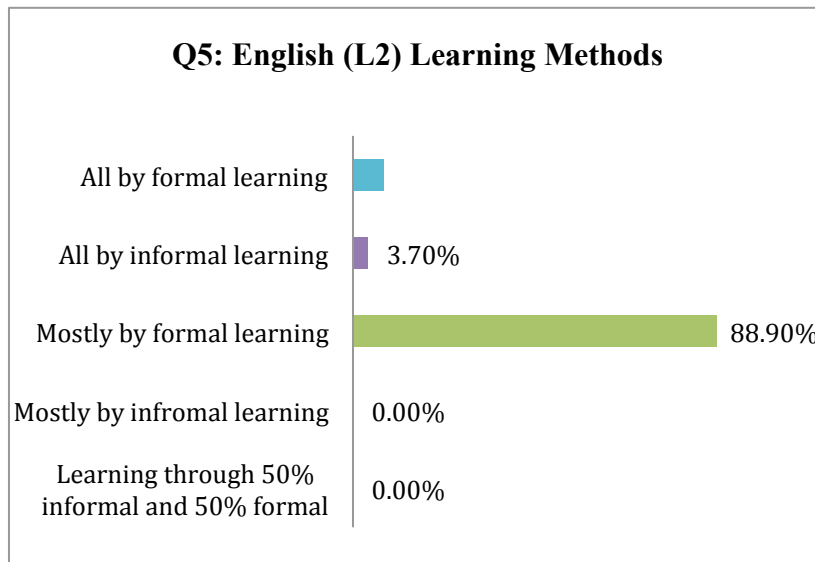


Figure 4.1: English (L2) Learning Methods

Additionally, Figure 4.2 clearly shows that more than 80% of the sample had learned English for over eight years, and the rest had spent at least six years learning their L2 at school.

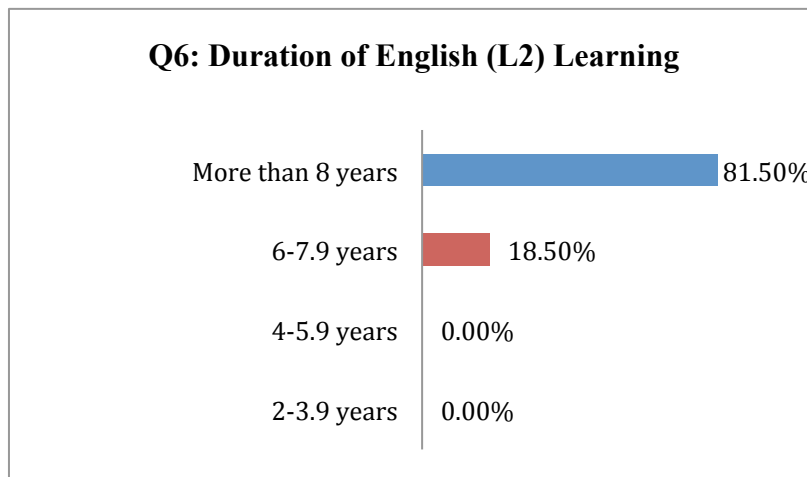


Figure 4.2: Duration of English (L2) Learning

In this study, according to the questionnaire feedback, a few participants had travelled to English-speaking countries for a few months, but only one had lived in an

English-speaking country for years. However, these experiences did not occur during their period of formal learning of L2 at school. In other words, the participants' formal L2 learning experience primarily took place at school in China, and there was not an intensive English language environment that contributed to their English learning.

In terms of L2 proficiency, the learning did not seem as efficient as expected after almost a decade of formal L2 learning. Figure 4.3 below clearly shows that more than half of the participants believed their L2 competence was less or equal to intermediate level. Nevertheless, only 7.4% of the whole sample evaluated their L2 levels as advanced.

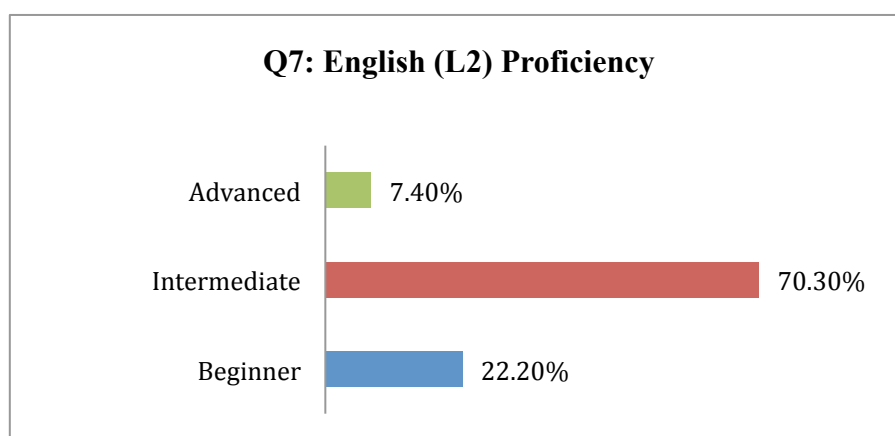


Figure 4.3: English (L2) Proficiency

As mentioned before in Chapter 2, formal learning provides structured learning programme and has organized guidelines to conduct the learners' study systematically. Formal learning, which is considered a main learning methods used in gaining almost all kinds of knowledge and skills, has been definitely proved as an efficient approach of learning. However, as long as this method is subject to conditions sometimes, such as the lack of an intensive language environment, or the lack of cross-linguistic similarity

for the learners to draw on, or even the lack of motivation and hardworking, it becomes difficult to maximize formal learning's advantage and effect, and may ultimately affect L2 learning efficiency. The conclusion thus is that it is not the formal learning that cannot lead to success in L2 learning, there are lots of factors that can affect formal learning's result. In other words, the learning result may vary under certain conditions.

4.1.3 Part III: Background of L3 (Thai) Acquisition

As seen in Figure 4.4, more than 80% of the participants had been working in Thailand for two years, while the rest (18.5%) had spent only one year there.

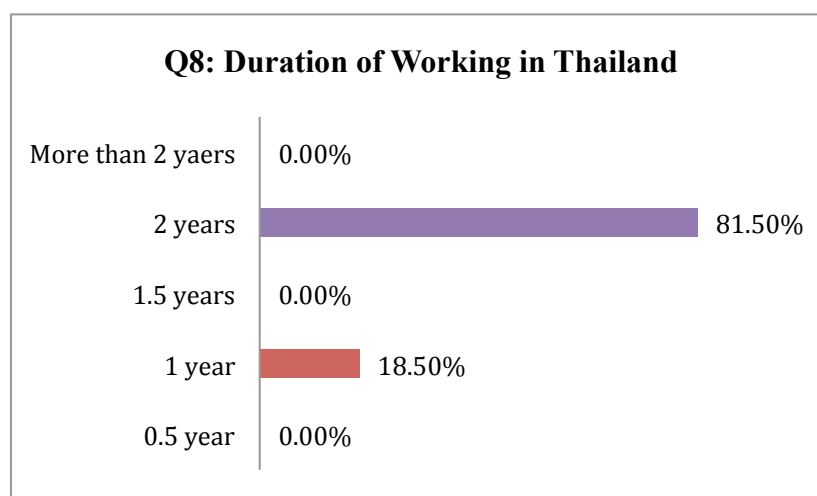


Figure 4.4 Duration of Working in Thailand

In terms of the residence location in Thailand, there were equal numbers of participants who lived in Bangkok and Nakhon Pathom (25.9% for both); for the remainder, 14.8% were from Samut Sakhorn; 11.1% were from Pattaya; and 7.4% were from Chonburi; and 3.7% were from each other four provinces (Nonthaburi, Samut

Prakan, Chanthaburi and Buriram). In other words, 96.3% of the sample were living in Thailand's central and eastern provinces, where standard Thai is spoken. Only one person (3.7%) was living in a north-eastern province called Buriram, which is quite near central Thailand but far from the north-eastern Laos-Thailand border area where dialects are spoken. Thus, all participants in this study were acquiring standard Thai while living in Thailand (see Figure 4.5).

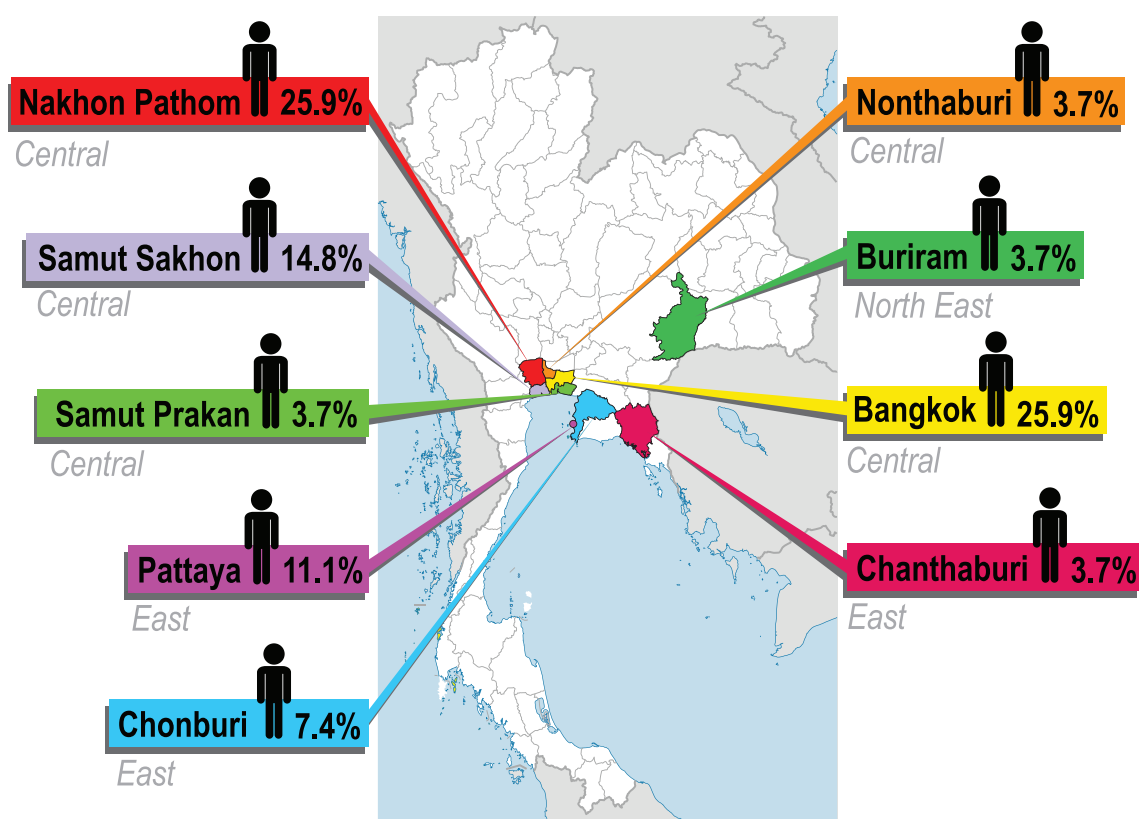


Figure 4.5: Locations of Participants' Residences

The participants were not assigned teaching jobs for only a certain level of students. For example, a Mandarin teacher's job in Thailand may not be only teaching high school students; the teacher most likely had to also teach middle school students, even elementary pupils, at the same time. In this study, as Figure 4.6 shows, over 70% of the

participants were teaching middle school students, while almost 60% were teaching elementary pupils; approximately 45% of them were teaching high school students; 37% were teaching adults; and 18.5% of them also taught kindergarten kids.

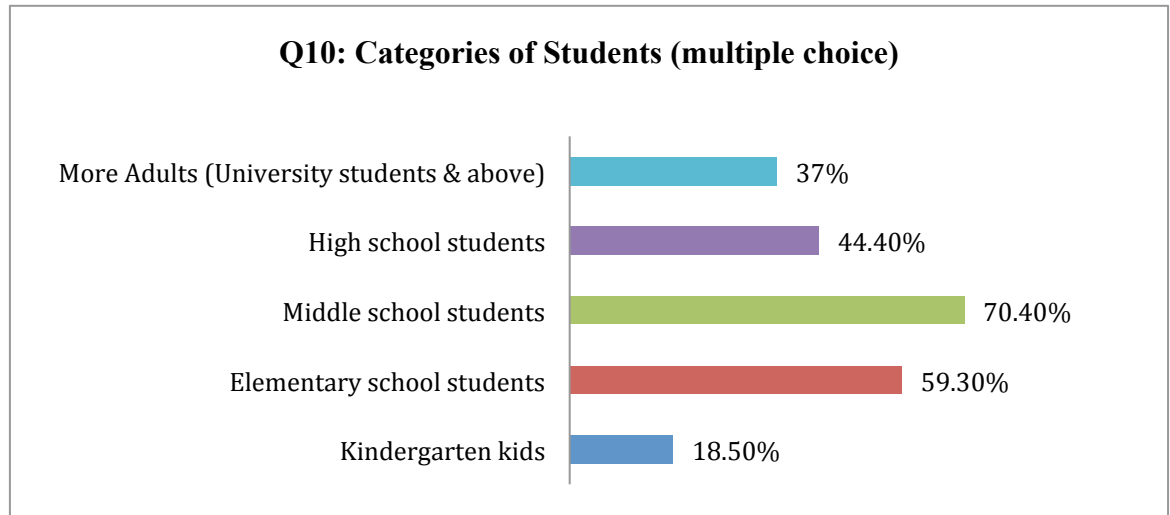


Figure 4.6: Categories of Students

Figure 4.7 shows how necessary it was for the participants to communicate in Thai. Because only older students were able to speak relatively fluent English, communicating with kids in elementary school and kindergarten was definitely a problem. The participants also had to talk to the local people in their everyday lives (e.g., when taking a taxi or ordering food). Therefore, up to 62.9% of the participants claimed that they “always” had to use Thai to communicate, while 25.9% “often” spoke Thai; no one in this sample considered Thai as unnecessary (see Figure 4.7).

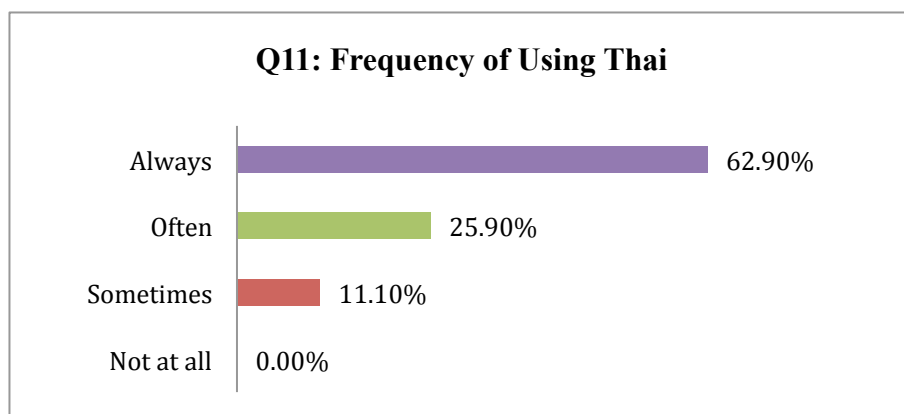


Figure 4.7: Frequency of Using Thai

Figure 4.8 shows that more than 85% of the participants indicated that they mostly had to talk to local taxi drivers, salesmen, waiters and peddlers, not their students. In other words, most of the participants' target communication group are the people who they met in their daily lives. Hence, although they may use their L2 (English) to communicate in the beginning, all of the participants claimed that they had to use Thai while living in Thailand, meaning none felt that using Thai was unnecessary.

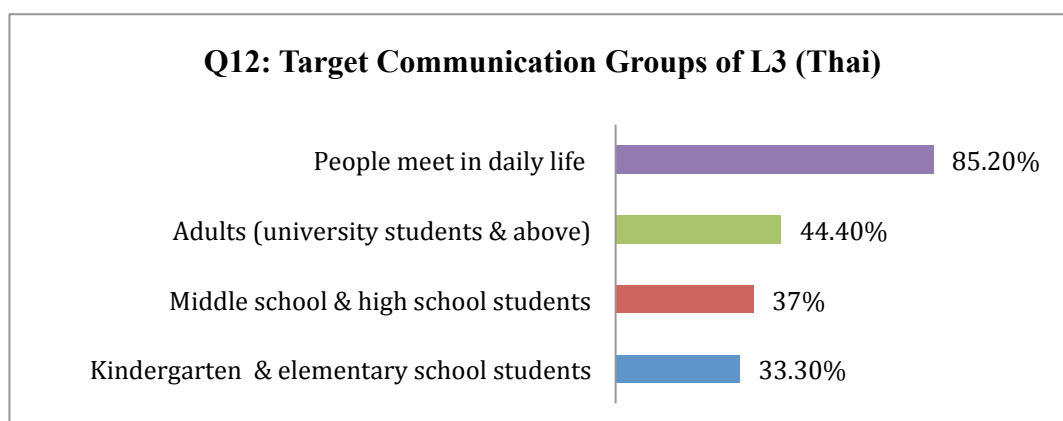


Figure 4.8: Target Communication Groups of L3 (Thai)

According to the present study's questionnaire feedback, participants' main reasons for learning their L3 were the indispensable communication with local people

and their interests and desires to know Thai. Communication is the primary method of naturally acquiring L3 knowledge. Some participants also indicated that they have no plan for formal Thai learning in the future, even they had gone this far in the L3 learning process. As mentioned previously, various reasons (e.g., laziness, difficulties in learning a language, satisfaction with the current situation, or future plans) may explain this decision. The learning model of this study's sample can thus be identified as general informal learning, in accordance with the discussion above.

To conclude, unavoidable use of the Thai language and the long duration of exposure in an intensive informal L3 environment promoted the participants' L3 acquisition.

4.1.4 Part IV: L3 (Thai) Acquisition

As mentioned previously, motivation and attitude are two factors that affect adult learners' non-native language acquisition. Self-directed learning is likely to happen with a very motivated adult learner; likewise, incidental learning may also motivate learners who have positive attitudes.

Figure 4.9 summarizes the reasons for the subjects' acquisition of Thai, and more than 85% of the participants claimed that they were passively involved in their L3 acquisition of Thai, due to the unavoidable communication with the local people. More than half of them believed that their L3 acquisition occurred naturally.

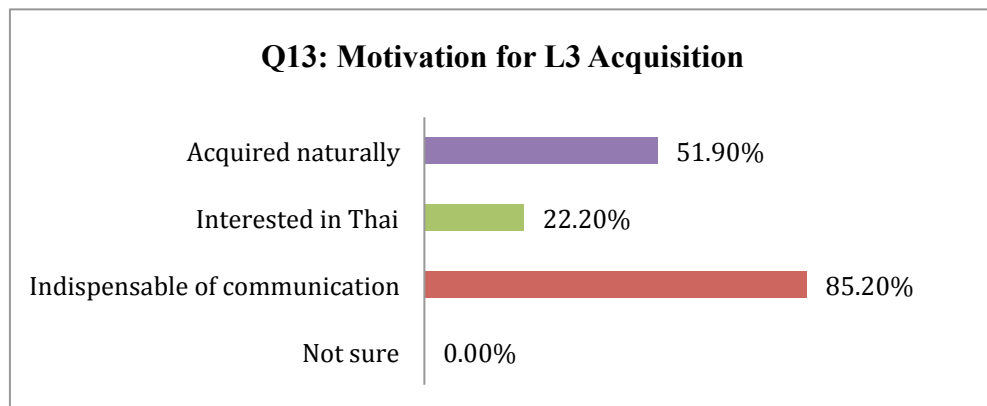


Figure 4.9: Motivation for L3 Acquisition

Furthermore, a summary of participants' attitudes towards the Thai language can be seen in Figure 4.10. It shows that more than 40% of the sample claimed that they liked Thai, while 44.4% felt they did not really like or dislike Thai. In addition, approximately 15% of the participants indicated that they liked Thai very much.

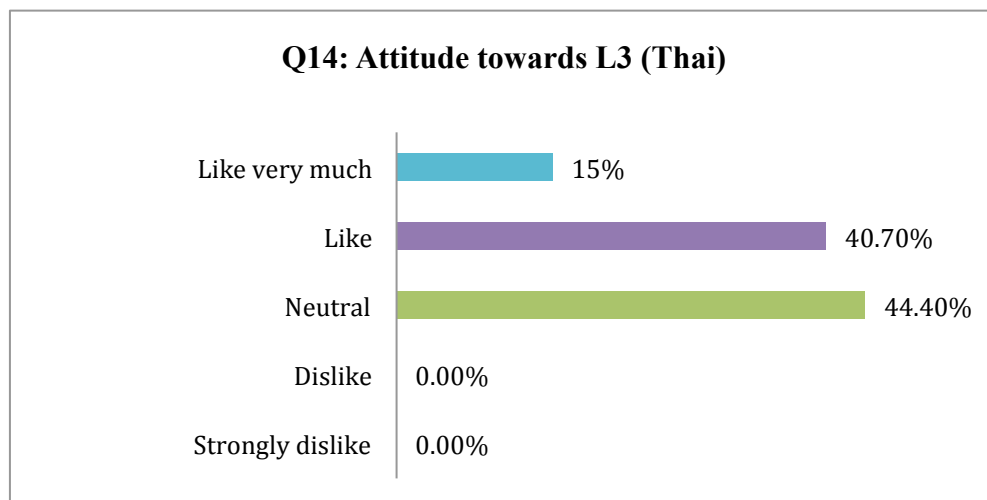


Figure 4.10: Attitude towards L3 (Thai)

As mentioned in 4.1.3, given how long they had resided in Thailand, almost 70% of the participants had been acquiring and using Thai as their L3 for two years. An

equal number of learners had spent half a year or 1.5 years acquiring and using their L3 (3.7% for both), while the remainder had spent a year (see Figure 4.11).

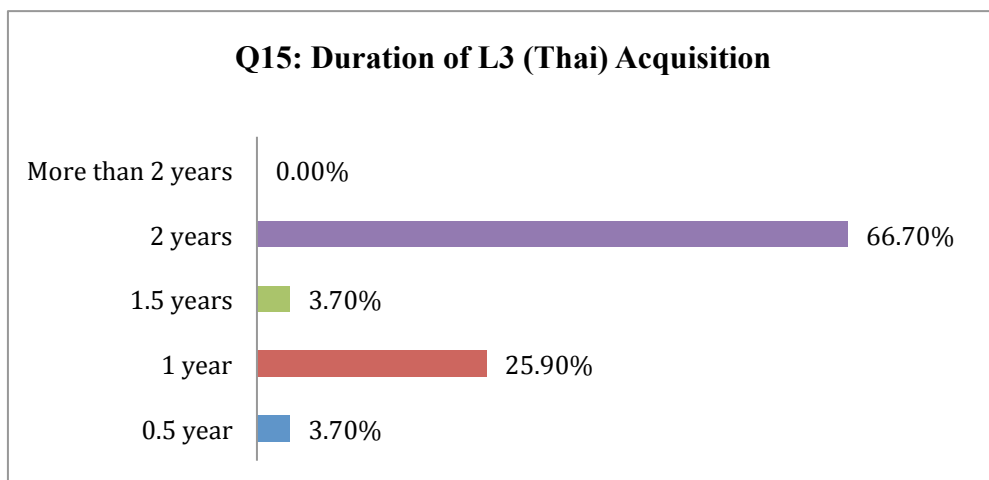


Figure 4.11: Duration of L3 (Thai) Acquisition

According to Figure 4.12, almost half of the participants had once tried to formally learn Thai, but soon gave up, during L3 acquisition. Except for one self-directed learner who had always been learning Thai, the rest of them (48.1%) acquired their L3 even though they never attended any formal Thai classes.

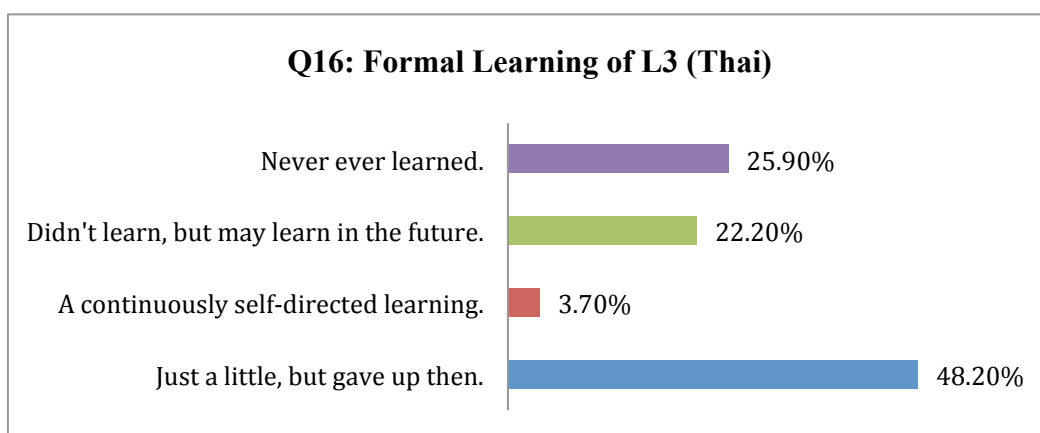


Figure 4.12: Formal Learning of L3 (Thai)

In general, the major motivating factor in L3 acquisition was the need for communication, and more than half of the participants showed a positive attitude towards Thai, which might have led to their natural L3 acquisition or even inspired systematic learning of Thai. There might have been some problems, which could result from the time limitations, lack of professional training, or some unachievable difficulties of the TL, that made nobody stay to the last. Therefore, it is probable that none of the participants had “learned” their L3; they primarily “acquired” this language.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Mandarin and Thai are typologically related languages; they share similarities such as tones and syntax. Meanwhile, these two languages are quite different from each other in terms of their writing systems. According to the participants’ observations and experiences, more than 80% of them considered “syntax” as a factor of cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai; 63% of the sample chose “phonetics”; half of the sample chose “pragmatics”; no one chose “orthography” as an L1-L3 similarity. In addition, 3.7% chose other, but they did not write in an answer. In short, “syntax” was the most obvious L1-L3 similarity; “phonetics” comes in second, receiving votes from more than half of the participants (see Figure 4.13).

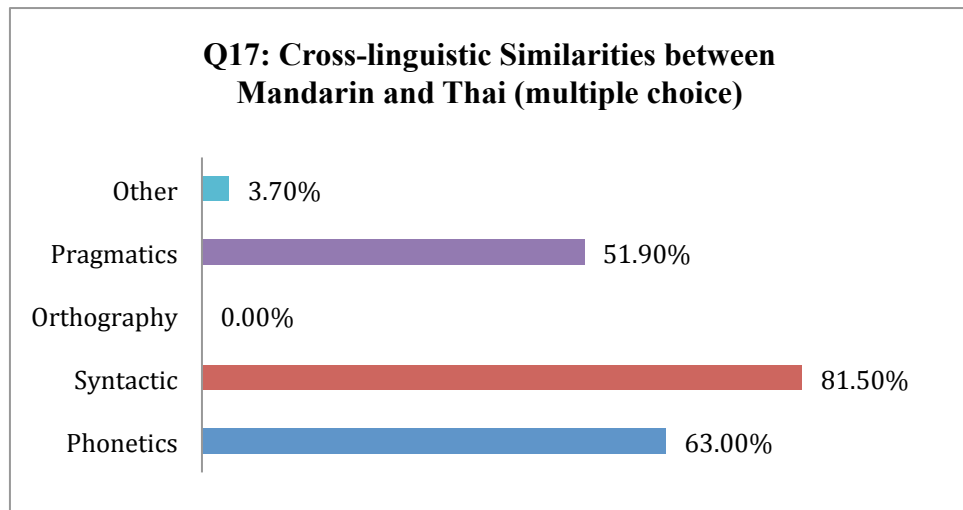


Figure 4.13: Cross-linguistic Similarities between Mandarin and Thai

For answers about the differences between Mandarin and Thai, “orthography” was an option that 100% of the participants chose as an L1-L3 difference; nearly a quarter of the sample chose “phonetics”, while approximately 15% chose “pragmatics”. Only one participant thought that the syntaxes for L1 and L3 were not very similar (see Figure 4.14).

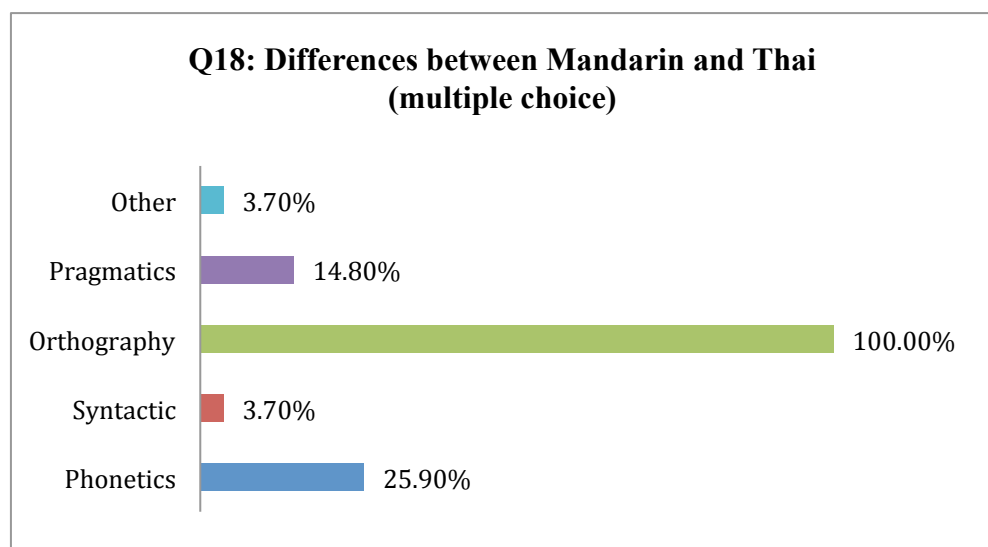


Figure 4.14: Differences between Mandarin and Thai

In conclusion, “syntax” is chosen as the factor with the most similarities between L1 and L3; all participants believed that the factor that most differentiates Mandarin from Thai was the writing system, which explains why almost no participants could read or write in Thai after their long-term stays in Thailand. In the terms of “phonetics” and “pragmatics” factors, there are people who considered both factors similar, as well as different, but more than half of the participants generally saw both as similar factors between Mandarin and Thai. In the present study, tonal similarities (refer to 3.3.2.1 Tonal Test, p.54) and sentence patterns (refer to 3.3.2.2 Sentence Construction Test, p.55) will be examined to determine whether these two cross-linguistic similarity factors promote Chinese adult learners’ L3 acquisition.

The participants were also asked to evaluate their Thai proficiency level. The evaluation results can be seen in Figure 4.15. Over two-thirds of the sample considered themselves Thai-speaking beginners, who can use their L3 to accomplish daily communications; nearly one-third believed that they had reached the intermediate level, meaning that they could handle daily communications as well as some complex or professional topics. Furthermore, one participant, who was following a self-directed learning model, claimed that he had achieved an advanced level, which means that he could handle most of the required communication and also read and write in Thai. No one considered him/herself a Thai language beginner who could only understand and say certain simple words.

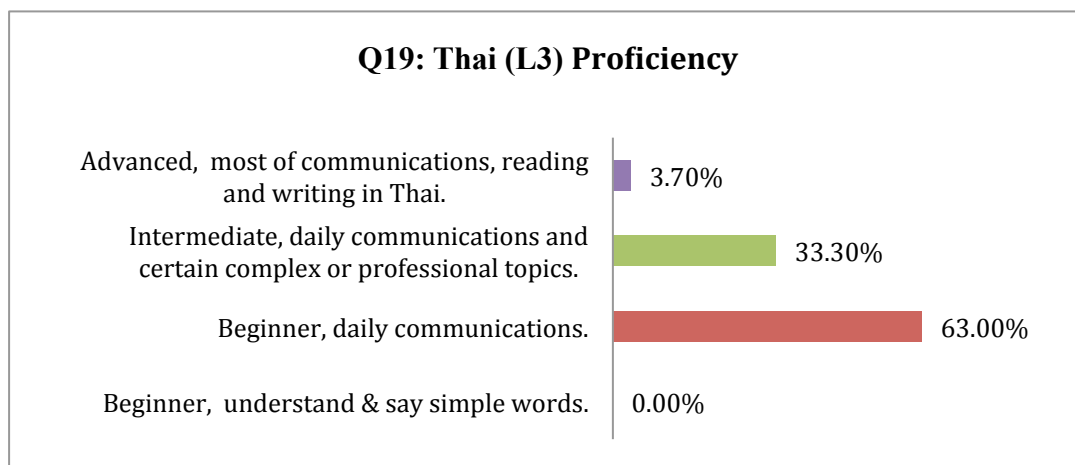


Figure 4.15: Thai (L3) Proficiency

To compare with their self-evaluated L2 (English) proficiency (see Figure 4.3), nearly one-third of the participants believed that they had reached the intermediate levels with their L2 and L3. However, more of them were at an advanced L2 level and a beginning L3 level. In other words, most participants had formally learned English for over eight years and had only acquired Thai for less than two years through informal learning. The L2 and L3 learning results are somehow counterintuitive. Without a proper English-speaking environment, it was difficult for the learners to achieve efficient L2 learning outcomes in a language that was linguistically distant from their L1. Moreover, Chinese adult learners may not be able to make any further progress in learning Thai as their L3, as informal learning cannot provide enough learning material and opportunities to gain knowledge about an unfamiliar writing system. Structured tutoring, i.e., formal learning, is needed when learners demand more linguistic knowledge and in-depth competence.

Because this study focuses on two factors of cross-linguistic similarity between L1 and L3 (i.e., sentence pattern and tones), we narrowed the questions to address the specific awareness of Thai tones and syntactic similarity.

Figure 4.16 provides a summary of the participants' awareness of Thai tones. Almost half of the sample indicated that they do not really know about all Thai language tones, but they knew how to distinguish different words by tones. Nearly a quarter of the sample admitted their awareness of Thai tones and their ability to distinguish words by different tones, but they also mentioned that they probably did not know this tonal system perfectly (i.e., they knew that they might have some blind spots in this area). The number of participants who knew exactly how Thai tones worked and those who knew nothing about Thai tones were equal (7.4% for both).

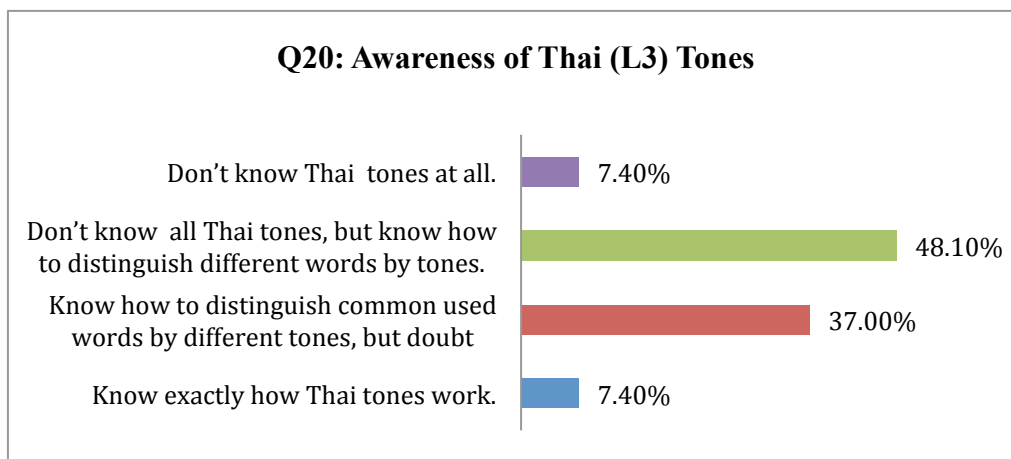


Figure 4.16: Awareness of Thai (L3) Tones

On the other hand, a summary of the participants' awareness of syntactic similarities between Thai and Mandarin is provided in Figure 4.17. All participants indicated that syntactic similarities exist or might exist between Thai and Mandarin. Of

this total, 44.4% of the participants believed that these two languages are syntactically similar to a great extent, while over 40% believed that there were L1-L3 similarities, although they claimed that the similarities were not overwhelmingly significant. The remainder, who made up almost 15% of the whole sample, did not deny the existence of cross-linguistic similarities between Thai and Mandarin syntaxes. However, they claimed that they were unsure about these similarities.

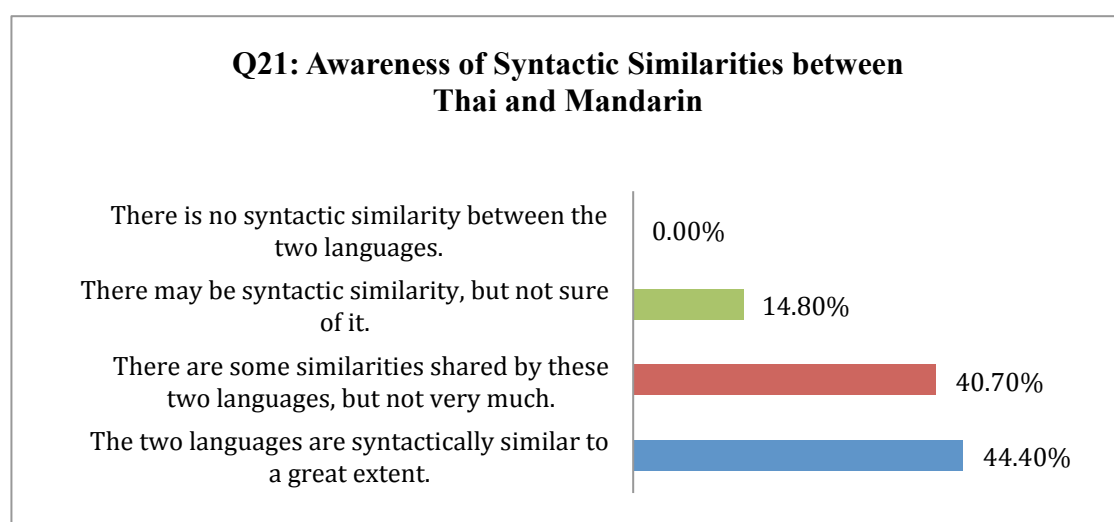


Figure 4.17: Awareness of Syntactic Similarities between Thai and Mandarin

To conclude, the participants in this study noted some cross-linguistic similarities between L1 and L3 through their Thai acquisition, especially the syntactic factor, which could have led the sample of one-to-two-year informal learners to at least gain the ability to handle daily communications, which also made their residence in Thailand more convenient.

4.1.5 Part V: Attitude towards Cross-linguistic Influence Promoting L3 Acquisition

As to whether cross-linguistic similarities make learners more easily acquire certain languages that are closer to the learners' L1 (i.e., whether Chinese adult learners are more likely to rely on knowledge of their L1, which is closely related to their L3, in their informal acquisition of Thai), the participants' response tendency in this study is obvious. In general, Thai (L3) is easier for Chinese adult learners to acquire when compared with English (L2).

Figure 4.18 shows that over 60% of the participants felt that Thai could be easily acquired, even though they did not formally learn their L3 when compared with their L2 (English) learning experience. Only 25.9% believed that learning English was easier than learning Thai.

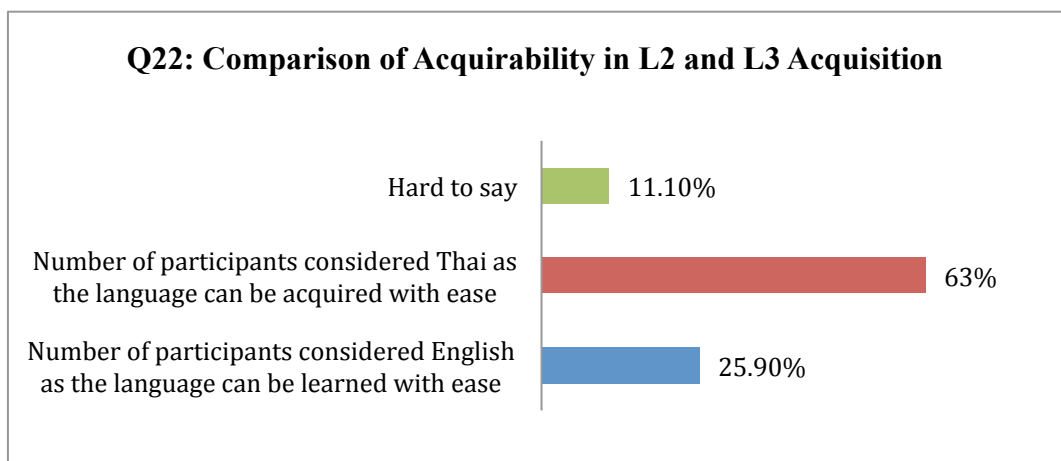


Figure 4.18: Comparison of Acquirability in L2 and L3 Acquisition

Table 4.1 displays the reasons that participants provided to explain why they believed one non-native language was easier for them to learn than the other.

Comparison of Acquirability in L2 and L3 Acquisition			
Participants' Opinions		Reasons of Learning Ease	Reasons of Learning Difficulties
English is easier to learn.	7 (25.9%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easier pronunciation 2. Formal learning 3. Widely used 4. Easy access to materials 5. Familiar alphabet system 6. Started learning at young age 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complex syntax, especially the tense 2. Cultural differences 3. Large vocabulary
Thai is easier to learn.	17 (63%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Similarity in syntax, especially no tense (11/17) 2. Similar pronunciation of certain words and similarity in morphology (5/17) 3. Language environment (4/17) 4. Similarity in pragmatics (4/17) 5. Similarity in tones (3/7) 6. Similarity in culture (1/17) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unfamiliar alphabet system 2. Informal learning 3. Difficulty in pronunciation of certain words 4. Narrowly used and less materials found 5. Being adult learners
Other	3 (11.1%)	Both have advantages and disadvantages	

Table 4.1: Comparison of Acquirability in L2 and L3 Acquisition

First of all, up to 63% of the participants considered Thai as the easier language to learn. They indicated that the primary reason was that both Mandarin and Thai were syntactically similar. Some mentioned the “no tense” issue, either in Mandarin or in Thai. The secondary reason was that there were many similar pronunciations for words that had the same meanings in their L1 and L3. Moreover, these two languages are also

morphologically similar, to a large extent because Chinese immigrants have been historically and culturally integrating into Thai society for centuries. Participants had been living in an intensive Thai language environment where English was not so widely used, and they were thus forced to incorporate unavoidable Thai language use into their daily lives. In addition, similarities in pragmatics were also considered very important in making Thai a more easily acquired language. Furthermore, as Mandarin and Thai are both tonal languages, Mandarin speakers' understanding of how tones function in tonal languages was simplified, and they had more ease in understanding and producing tonal utterances than those whose L1 was not tonal. One participant noted that Thai and Chinese cultures were close to each other in many aspects, and this cultural closeness contributed positively to language acquisition. Participants also mentioned some difficulties with Thai language acquisition. A common difficulty in learning Thai was the unfamiliar Thai alphabet, which is distinct from Chinese characters and the Roman alphabet. Additionally, insufficient formal learning and lacking study materials also led to incomplete L3 learning outcomes (see Table 4.1).

In addition, 26% of the sample believed that English was easier to learn compared with Thai. The reasons behind this belief are logically rational. First, most participants had been formally learning English since they were young (most started learning at the age of 13) and for more than 8 years. This long learning history gave those participants solid basis to confidently use English, with some even enrolling in advanced level studies. Second, English has long been considered the most widely used language in the world, with easier pronunciation methods, a familiar alphabet system, and sufficient

study materials for learners to access, which thus supports their view on this issue (see Table 4.1).

Furthermore, neither English nor Thai was considered easier to learn by three participants (11.1% of the sample). All three suggested that there was no obvious factor facilitating or blocking their L2 or L3 acquisition. Because there had been clear attitude about whether cross-linguistic similarity made a particular language more easily accessible, these three participants' deeper reasons for not leaning towards either language were not explored.

To sum up, compared with English, Thai can generally be acquired with ease by the Chinese adult learners, as it is more closely related to Mandarin. However, compared with L2 (English) acquisition, a shorter duration of informal L3 acquisition lasts less than two years, and the specificity of the Thai writing system may lead to incomplete linguistic competence in future L3 learning processes, e.g., undeveloped linguistic competence in reading and writing. As long as the learners were still at early stage of informal L3 learning, cross-linguistic similarity played a very important role in promoting their utterance-producing abilities. On the other hand, in terms of L2 (English) learning, most participants acquired their L2 through long-term formal learning at school, and they consequently gained a relatively well-developed English knowledge system. In addition, participants also mentioned that the Roman alphabet was widely used and familiar to them when compared with Thai alphabet. Hence, the adult learners may not be able to reach a professional L2 level, but the integrity of their linguistic competence is higher than that of their L3.

As this research intends to determine whether cross-linguistic similarity accelerates language acquisition, the last question in questionnaire has been purposely designed to discover participants' subjective opinions and attitudes about the effect of language similarity on Mandarin speakers' acquisition of Thai as their L3.

Figure 4.19 shows that the majority of participants had a similar view about whether cross-linguistic similarity accelerates language acquisition.

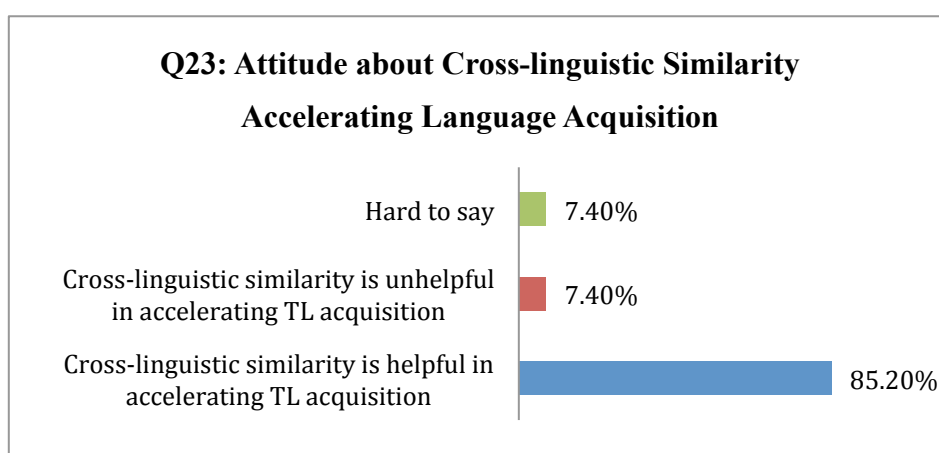


Figure 4.19: Attitude about Cross-linguistic Similarity Accelerating Language Acquisition

As seen in Figure 4.19, as much as 85% of the total believed that the cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai did accelerate their L3 acquisition. Participants explained how language similarity helped their Thai language acquisition in 9 ways (see Table 4.2).

Attitudes about Cross-linguistic Similarity Accelerating Language Acquisition			
Number of participants considering cross-linguistic similarity		Reasons that cross-linguistic similarity is helpful	Reasons that cross-linguistic similarity is unhelpful
Helpful in accelerating TL acquisition	23 (85.2%)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It helped in general (8/23) 2. Tonal languages (7/23) 3. From the same language family (5/23) 4. Syntactic similarity (9/23) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Morphology (2/23) b) Quantifier (1/23) c) Expression of function word (1/23) d) Word order (1/23) 5. Similar logic (1/23) 	
Unhelpful in accelerating TL acquisition	2 (7.4%)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language similarities led to confusion 2. Mandarin and Thai are still so different, and the similarities were not of obvious help
Hard to say	2 (7.4%)	There are some influences in cross-linguistic transfer, but it is hard to say whether it is helpful or unhelpful	

Table 4.2: Attitudes about Cross-linguistic Similarity Accelerating Language Acquisition

First, the most important reason that participants mentioned was that language similarity generally helped them in learning Thai compared with learning English. They strongly expressed this attitude and explained that they had been gradually realized that language similarity affected their learning during L3 acquisition process.

Second, unlike English, both Mandarin and Thai are tonal languages, which participants considered the next important factor, as Mandarin speakers felt that they

could realize different tones in oral Thai and easily understand how tones change the word meanings.

Third, participants noted another crucial reason: Mandarin and Thai are both from the Sino-Tibetan language family, which is different from the Indo-European language family to which English belongs. This explanation is reasonable because both Mandarin and Thai have historically developed into different branches from the same root; they must, more or less, have verbal or syntactic similarities. During their Thai acquisition period, some participants found that Thai and Mandarin have some syntactic similarities. For instance, both languages have similar morphology, which helped the learners to comprehend and use vocabularies. In addition, both languages have quantifiers and function word usage. Furthermore, both languages present simple sentences with the exactly same word order. Moreover, one participant mentioned these two languages' similar language logic. This point is quite interesting because Mandarin speakers not only linguistically felt Thai was easy to learn, but they also believed that Thai and Chinese speakers have very similar language logic, as reflected in their linguistic performance.

On the contrary, 7.5% of participants felt that language similarity did not help their L3 acquisition for the following reasons (see Table 4.2). First, cross-linguistic similarity did contribute to Thai learning; however, this similarity might lead learners to rely too heavily on the similar language information supplier, i.e., their L1 (Mandarin), and they could possibly miss some unique features or irregular cases in their L3. Second, some participants believed that the cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai was minor and the connection too ambiguous to reference purposes, which made Mandarin

and Thai still largely distinct from one another. In addition, another 7.5% of participants showed a neutral opinion because it was hard to say whether cross-linguistic similarity helped or did not help, as diverse influences could occur to different degrees in any cross-linguistic transfer.

In conclusion, up to 85% of the participants believed that cross-linguistic similarity had a positive effect on their L3 acquisition. Meanwhile, more than 65% of the sample believed that Thai was easier to learn than English. The answers also clearly showed that two languages that are closely related and have cross-linguistic similarities were the main reasons that 65% of the sample believed that Thai could be acquired with ease. Somehow, language distance and cross-linguistic similarity influence seemed not to be the only two reasons that made Thai acquisition easier and English learning harder.

It is because first, in addition to the similarities between Thai and Mandarin, some major differences may also exist. For example, the totally different writing systems and some unfamiliar pronunciations are hard for Mandarin speakers to master. Furthermore, minimal formal learning opportunities, along with overreliance on cross-linguistic similarities that led to some negative transfers, would also make any further L3 acquisition even harder.

Second, as the participants mentioned in their answers, English is widely used around the world. Therefore, it is easy to access learning materials. In addition, learners can start long-term formal learning at school at a very young age. These reasons summarize their views against Thai being easier to learn than English.

From a language acquisition perspective, based on the factors we mentioned in the previous paragraph, there had been several advantages in the participants' English

learning. However, the majority of this sample (65%) still considered Thai as the language that was easier to learn (not English), primarily because up to 85.2% of the participants' benefited from cross-linguistic similarities that could provide valuable and reliable information and lead to positive transfers that could accelerate non-native language acquisition.

4.1.6 Important Findings

According to the previous discussion (see also Table 4.3), it is clear that the cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai primarily involve two factors: syntax and phonetics. While acquiring Thai, Chinese adult learners mostly relied on their L1 (Mandarin) knowledge, especially the two factors mentioned above. Therefore, cross-linguistic similarity does facilitate non-native language acquisition.

On the other hand, almost all participants confronted difficulties in achieving TL reading and writing abilities. The length of residence in Thailand is not the only significant factor, as two-year learners show only slight improvement in linguistic competence (e.g., vocabulary and fluency) when compared with one-year learners.

To conclude, informal learning and intensive non-native language environments do not provide enough assistance and promotion in Chinese adult learners' Thai acquisition. It is hard to progress in acquiring Thai language skills without structured formal learning.

In addition, a limitation of this study is that there was no question about how English (L2) helped the learners' learning of their L3. The researcher thus do not know

the participants' experiences and ideas towards whether their L2 helped the learning process of L3. Therefore, it is not appropriate to say that the participants were not able to find any cross-linguistic similarity between English and Thai, or they found English not helpful at all during their learning of Thai as L3. While learning a new language, links can be made not only with cross-linguistic similarities, but also with previous learning experiences in another language. Thus, the over decades of L2 (English) learning experiences might have been a possible facilitation and helped the participants' L3 (Thai) learning to some extent.

Comparison of Chinese Adult Learners' L2 and L3				
		English	Thai	
Learning Style		Formal (92.6%)	Informal (96.3%)	
Duration of Learning/Acquisition		8+ years (81.5%)	1-2 years (96.3%)	
Proficiency	Advanced	7.4%	3.7%	
	Pre-advanced⁴	37%		
	Intermediate	33.3%	33.3%	
	Beginner	22.2%	63%	
	Pre-beginner⁵	-	-	
Easy to Learn/Acquire		25.9%	63%	
Cross-linguistic Similarity		-	Syntax	81.5%
			Phonetics	63%

Table 4.3: Comparison of Chinese Adult Learners' L2 and L3

⁴ The "pre-advanced" level in this questionnaire design is the learner with the ability to handle daily conversation and complex topic communication, and with the ability to read relatively professional articles.

⁵ The "pre-beginner" level in this questionnaire design denotes proficiency in using simple and basic words, phrases, or short sentences to communicate.

4.2 Analysis of L3 Proficiency Test

The L3 proficiency test consists of two parts, which include Thai tonal and sentence construction tests. Table 4.4, which is the collection of L3 proficiency test results, shows that the average score of the tonal test is 64.6, while the average sentence construction test score was a very high 94.6. The two parts of L3 proficiency test made a huge difference in examining the participants' language competence in terms of tones and syntax.

4.2.1 Analysis of Tonal Test

For tonal test, participants answered 20 questions based on their experience in understanding tones; however, the results included a wide range of scores—from 35 to 100 (see Table 4.4).

L3 Proficiency Test Results		
Participant	Tonal Test	Sentence Construction Test
Participant 1	55	90
Participant 2	35	90
Participant 3	60	100
Participant 4	35	90
Participant 5	55	100
Participant 6	95	100
Participant 7	80	90
Participant 8	40	100
Participant 9	52.5	100
Participant 10	77.5	90
Participant 11	90	100
Participant 12	95	70
Participant 13	60	100
Participant 14	57.5	100
Participant 15	90	100
Participant 16	72.5	100
Participant 17	100	100
Participant 18	85	90
Participant 19	40	100
Participant 20	60	100
Participant 21	65	100
Participant 22	35	90
Participant 23	70	100
Participant 24	77.5	100
Participant 25	85	100
Participant 26	47.5	95
Participant 27	30	60
<i>Average score</i>	<i>64.6</i>	<i>94.6</i>

Table 4.4: L3 Proficiency Test Results

As shown in Table 4.5 below, four participants scored within each of the following score ranges and equally account for 14.8% of the total: 30 to 39, 50 to 59, 60 to 69 and 70 to 79. The three participants who scored between 40 and 49 represent 11.1% of all participants, while another three had higher scores within the 80 to 89 range, representing the same proportion. In addition, five participants fell within the highest score range of above 90, some even receiving scores of 100, representing the largest proportion of the total at 18.5%. Due to the diverse results in the tonal test, the final average score is 64.6, which is considered middle level.

Tonal Test		
Score Range	Participants	Percentage
0 – 9	-	-
10 – 19	-	-
20 – 29	-	-
30 – 39	4	14.8%
40 – 49	3	11.1%
50 – 59	4	14.8%
60 – 69	4	14.8%
70 – 79	4	14.8%
80 – 89	3	11.1%
90 – 100	5	18.5%
<i>Average Score: 64.6</i>		

Table 4.5: Data of Tonal Test

The score range in the tonal test is huge, and the participant distribution in every 10-point range is interestingly quite close.

According to the previous discussion (refer to Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2, p.12), we know that Mandarin has four tones, while Thai has five. The participants who did transfer actually based their acquisition on the four tones of their L1. Thus, it was very easy for them to understand how different tones distinguish word meanings, but the L1 tones did not help with the accuracy of achieving the five tones in Thai. Furthermore, as Table 4.6 shows below, the low tone in Thai with the pitch trend of [21], which slightly falls down, and the falling tone of [41] are very similar to the falling tone of [51] in Mandarin. These very similar Thai tones might present difficulties for Mandarin speakers, in whose language only one falling tone exists. Similarly, while the TL has a rising tone of [14] that is quite alike the rising tone in Mandarin (pitch [35]), Thai has another slightly rising tone, which is the so-called “high tone” of [45], which would definitely confuse Mandarin L1 learners (see Table 4.6).

Similar Tones in L1 and L3						
Thai Tones	Low	Falling	High	Rising	Mid	-
	[21]	[41]	[45]	[14]	[33]	-
Mandarin Tones	Falling		Rising		High	Inflection
	[51]		[35]		[55]	[214]

Table 4.6: Similar Tones in L1 and L3

4.2.2 Analysis of Sentence Construction Test

The results (see Table 4.7) of the sentence construction test are dramatically different from the tonal test results (see Table 4.5). Up to 25 of the participants, representing 92.6%

of the sample, obtained very high scores—from 90 to 100. With scores of 70 and 60, only two participants (a mere 3.7% each) obtained scores lower than 90. The average score on the sentence construction test was 94.6. Interestingly, as high as 92.6% of participants in this test could achieve this level, indicating a very strong tendency towards understanding Thai syntax.

Sentence Construction Test Data		
Sentence Construction Test Score	Participants	Percentage
Range		
0 – 9	-	-
10 – 19	-	-
20 – 29	-	-
30 – 39	-	-
40 – 49	-	-
50 – 59	-	-
60 – 69	1	3.7%
70 – 79	1	3.7%
80 – 89	-	-
90 – 100	25	92.6%
<i>Average Score: 94.6</i>		

Table 4.7: Data of Sentence Construction Test Data

On the sentence construction test (see Table 4.7), the average score was dramatically higher than that of the tonal test. 92.6% of the whole sample got very high scores (above 90), among whom 17 participants obtained full marks of 100, which was an excellent performance. Only two participants in this sample scored lower than 70,

and their lesser scores came from spelling mistakes or misunderstanding the rewriting requirements. The L3 proficiency test result is strong evidence of the participants' awareness of syntactic similarities between the L1 and TL and successful cross-linguistic transfer in the L3 acquisition process.

4.2.3 Important Findings

The result of L3 proficiency test shows significant support of the hypothesis that tones and syntactic similarity are the two evident factors of cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai. In addition, cross-linguistic similarity benefited Chinese adult learners' L3 acquisition. However, overreliance on the similarities will lead to incomplete learning outcomes.

4.3 Analysis of Interview

Two multilingual individuals accepted the request to be interviewed by the researcher of this study, and the interviews were conducted through Skype voice calls. One of the interviewees is a Mandarin speaker who has been living in Thailand for eight years and has achieved a very high level of proficiency. The other is an English speaker who had been living in Thailand for two years and had acquired some Thai language skills. These two people were chosen for the following reasons: First, both of them are multilingual certified language teachers and professionals in language acquisition and teaching. Their ability to professionally analyse language acquisition can thus be

considered more trustworthy. Moreover, their experiences of acquiring three or more languages will certainly provide us more practical perspectives on L3 acquisition.

The interview transcript can be found in Appendix III.

4.3.1 Result of Interview with Interviewee-A

The first interviewee (Interviewee-A) was working as a Mandarin lecturer in a university in Thailand and was also a young adult from mainland China. Interviewee-A is a multilingual person who is fluent in three languages: Mandarin (L1), English (L2), and Thai (L3). Until 2012, Interviewee-A had been living in Thailand for seven years and could handle most of the daily communication in Thai. However, Interviewee-A's weakness in Thai is professional vocabulary, e.g., lacking economic and political vocabulary, which limited language competence in such topics. In addition, Interviewee-A is able to read up to 70% of Thai but is still incapable of writing. Interviewee-A's way of achieving L3 was through natural acquisition; although she attended a few classes after work, she did not pay much attention and did not benefit much from the course.

Interviewee-A's perspective can be summarized as follows: First, it is difficult for Mandarin speakers to learn the Thai writing system without experienced and professional tutoring. Second, Interviewee-A believed that being a language teacher provided her with some practical methods in language learning, as language teachers are supposed to be good at analysing and summarizing the characteristics of languages. Third, one of the cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin and Thai is their

tonality. It should have been a great help in conceptually understanding the ways that tones work and mastering different tones. In addition, in the early stages of Thai learning, Mandarin speakers do not have to consider the word order issue, as most of the simple and common sentences in both two languages use the exact same word order. Fourth, Interviewee-A considered whether to put the adjective before or after the noun to be the main difference between Mandarin and Thai. Moreover, Interviewee-A also mentioned that Mandarin had more mental adjectives and Thai had more nouns.

To summarize Interviewee-A's point of view, typological or cross-linguistic similarity generally accelerates non-native language acquisition. On the other hand, she also indicated that overreliance on cross-linguistic similarity would result in deficient attention on the details and characteristics that distinguished the TL from the supplier language. Interviewee-A also believed that language use frequency definitely leads to better learning outcomes, while exposure to a non-native language environment becomes a very important factor affecting learner's language acquisition.

In conclusion, as long as it is not very difficult for Chinese adult learners to find cross-linguistic similarity factors between their mother tongue and Thai (e.g., both are tonal languages and have similar sentence patterns), the positive transfer of syntactic and phonetic aspects can thus occur during L3 acquisition. However, going too far is as bad as not going far enough, and over-reliance on the resource language is not advocated.

4.3.2 Result of Interview with Interviewee-B

The second interviewee (Interviewee-B) was a retired language teacher and principal from Canada. In his 50s, he is now working as an English lecturer in Korea. Interviewee-B is multilingual; his mother tongue is a dialect of German called “Low German”, while he considers English, French and “High German”, which is the official language of Germany, to be his L2, L3 and L4, respectively. In addition, Interviewee-B also knows some Thai and Mandarin, and he is currently learning Korean. Interviewee-B spent two years living in Thailand, working as an administration principal and English teacher in a school in Bangkok. While Interviewee-B was in Thailand, a Thai native became his Thai language tutor and taught him spoken Thai by structuring different topics (e.g., work, school, days of the week, and time). The tutoring was conducted without any formal learning materials and focused more on basic spoken Thai; little syntactic knowledge was involved. According to Interviewee-B’s statement, he could meet and greet people and talk about basic things with them (e.g., communicate with a taxi driver or order food in a restaurant). He explained, “I could use basic simple everyday phrases to talk about common things. While it went to some more specialized topics, I didn’t have the vocabulary to do that”. In addition, Interviewee-B explained that his Thai proficiency was only at the level of using basic words and phrases and some simple short sentences. He could put together a few long sentences but was very limited. In terms of reading and writing in Thai, Interviewee-B claimed that he had never learned the Thai writing system, and he is unable to read or write in Thai.

Interviewee-B's opinions are summarized as follows: First, the Thai alphabet system "is not something that you could pick up by just looking at it", and it has many more letters than English does. Thus, acquiring the Thai writing system is a rather difficult task for learners. Second, using examples of his own experience in language acquisition, he proved that cross-linguistic similarity accelerates language acquisition, which shows practical significance in supporting the hypothesis of the current research. For instance, Interviewee-B found that learning his L3 (French), even in his 40s, was not very difficult because he could find many connections among English, German and French, and these connections helped him in his L3 acquisition. He also gave examples of his Thai and Chinese acquaintances acquiring each other's languages with ease. However, with respect to Thai learning, he found nothing from his previous gained languages that could be relied on. Hence, it became almost an impossible task for him to master his L5. As a supplement to the example of Interviewee-A, a Mandarin speaker who speaks very good Thai, Interviewee-B provided another example: a Thai high school girl learned Mandarin and was quite good at it, proving that because Thai and Mandarin are closely related, acquiring other's languages should be easy for Thai or Chinese learners.

According to the discussion above, it is clear that two interviewees have reached a similar conclusion: cross-linguistic similarity, or typological similarity, can accelerate non-native language acquisition. In particular, because of the unfamiliar Thai alphabet, which is totally different from Mandarin characters and English letters and has many more letters than the Roman alphabet, it is quite difficult for both interviewees to gain the knowledge of the Thai writing system.

Second, cross-linguistic similarity, or typological similarity, generally promotes adult learners' non-native language acquisition. Languages that are closely related will definitely have more connections and similarities. Among the learner's previous languages, the one being closer to the TL can thus provide more information for the learners to draw on. In addition, the more occurrences of BL transfer in TL production, the faster the TL can be acquired.

4.3.3 Important Findings

To sum up, both interviewees strongly supported the idea that cross-linguistic similarity plays a very important role in learners' non-native language acquisition; meanwhile, the Chinese and Canadian interviewees indicated that the Thai writing system was a significant hurdle in their Thai language acquisition. This perspective thus supports the participants' feedback on the questionnaires. Unlike Interviewee-B's situation, Interviewee-A was able to rely on the cross-linguistic similarity of her L1 (Mandarin), which is typologically related to her L3, for her Thai language acquisition. In other words, Chinese adult learners relied on their L1 (Mandarin) knowledge more than their L2 (English) in their informal acquisition of their L3 (Thai). The Chinese interviewee, who has the same language background as the surveyed participants, also noted tones and similar sentence pattern as the most reliable factors during the Chinese adult learners' L3 (Thai) acquisition. However, in accordance with the previous analysis of tonal test results (see Table 4.5), she also emphasized that overreliance on cross-linguistic similarity might lead to insufficient TL learning. Therefore, interviews

again provide evidence that informal learning of Thai will not lead to a complete learning outcome, especially in gaining knowledge of the Thai writing system. Structured formal learning is needed when the learner needs to improve linguistic competence through further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

In this chapter, the answers to and discussion of research questions will be listed in three sections, and the findings will be compared or contrasted with the literature review (theoretical framework & related studies) from Chapter 2. In the conclusion, the researcher will highlight important findings to show the significance of this study and discuss possible avenues for future research.

5.1 Cross-linguistic similarities between Mandarin & Thai

Because Mandarin and Thai are both Sino-Tibetan languages, they share many similarities, for example, both are isolating and tonal languages and both have quantifiers. In addition, grammatical meaning is generally by changing the word order in a sentence. In this study, two main factors of cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai have been examined, namely, syntactic and tonal similarities.

First, the syntactic similarity, which refers to similar sentence patterns, received the highest number of votes for cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai. The questionnaire survey, sentence construction test and interview results all confirmed that syntactic similarity is the greatest help during the early stage of Chinese adult learners' L3 (Thai) acquisition. With exactly the same word orders in simple sentences, the learners can get started in informal L3 acquisition with ease. The application of syntactic similarity is limited, however, the results show that the length of residence in Thailand only improves the vocabulary and fluency of the learners' L3. For further Thai

learning, such as gaining knowledge of the writing system, structured formal tutoring and sufficient materials are badly needed.

The second-ranked factor of cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai is that both are tonal languages. Learners with a tonal BL can easily gain access to Thai tones because they fully understanding how tones work to differentiate words. However, the tonal test result shows that participants who did transfer were actually based on the four tones of their L1 (Mandarin). Thus, the tonal BL only assists in understanding, not in performing, for no strong ability is displayed in the accurate performance of different pitches of the TL's tones. In other words, speaking Mandarin did not help the participants to accurately master the five tones in Thai.

5.2 Cross-linguistic Influence on L3 Acquisition

Cross-linguistic influence is a common term used to describe the different ways in which various languages interact in an individual's mind. According to the discussion in the previous chapters, the present research is in keeping with the theoretical framework proposed by Vildomec (1963), Singleton (1987), Ringbom (1987), Möhle (1989), De Angelis (1999), Bağtürk and Gulmez (2011) and Hammarberg (2009), that cross-linguistic transfer occurs in multilingual acquisition when the TL is relatively strong: in this case, the knowledge of typologically related BLs will positively affect the acquisition of TL. In other words, cognate languages can be learned with ease, because positive transfer is more likely to occur between languages that are closely related than

between distantly related languages (see 2.4 Typological Similarity, Cross-linguistic Similarity and Language Distance, p.38-40).

The reasons that a larger number of Chinese adult learners confirm that Thai is an easier TL compared with English, are generally concerned with the influence of cross-linguistic similarity. These results show that the research subjects do rely on their L1 (Mandarin) knowledge because they perceive greater cross-linguistic similarity between their native language and the TL/L3 (Thai). Although some participants felt that other than Thai, English was easier for them to achieve, this was mostly due to their long-term formal learning and abundant supporting resources and not because of cross-linguistic influence between L1 and L2. However, because the participants were not asked about their ideas on whether English had helped their Thai language learning, it is not appropriate to say that English has no cross-linguistic similarity to share with Thai, or the learning experience of L2 did not help the learners' L3 acquisition at all.

Cross-linguistic similarity influences Chinese adult learners' early stage acquisition of Thai as L3 to a great extent, especially in achieving sentence patterns; the sentence construction test results show strong evidence of the benefit of the application of the same word order applied in L1 transfer and L3 production. Additionally, the multilinguals in this study have a clear understanding of tonal languages. Mandarin-speaking learners may over-rely on their source language tones, however, which may lead to a lack of knowledge and attention to the slightly different pitches between the tonal systems of Mandarin and Thai. Thus, in this case, the fact that both Thai and Mandarin are tonal languages is only of limited help in learners' L3 acquisition.

Through the results discussed above, the researcher in this study reached a similar conclusion to those found in studies by Pál (2000), Letica and Mardešić (2007), as well as Bağtürk and Gulmez (2011), namely, that cross-linguistic similarity is a significant factor in TL transfer and that similarities and positive transfers are helpful in promoting multilingual learning. In addition, the “languages of the same family are easily learned just because these languages have common words and syntactical structures” (Bağtürk & Gulmez, 2011: 20). Moreover, the degree of linguistic constraint and communicative pressure, as well as the amount of exposure to L3, are important factors that affect L3 learning. Unlike the studies mentioned above, however, the present research is a case study based on informal rather than formal learning, which is a source of some problems and limitations.

5.3 Problems & Limitations of Informal L3 Acquisition of Thai

As discussed previously (see 1.2 Informal Learning, p.6-7), informal learning occurs under various circumstances during daily life activities, especially when people have a need and motivations for learning. Informal learning can either be self-directed or incidental. The majority of informal learning cases, however, occur unintentionally or incidentally because learners can receive informal lessons through community practices allowing individuals to make a thorough investigation and take part in continuous community activities. Most importantly, this type of learning can happen with little external facilitation or structure during everyday life. Informal learning is considered to be a great help, especially for adult learners who are no longer in school

and have limited opportunities to participate in formal learning. The collected data clearly show that the study participants acquired some knowledge of Thai, which provides a major source of their language production, without much effort. Thus, it is rational to believe that informal learning does facilitate adult learning production to some extent, regardless of its context.

Informal learning may lead to incomplete knowledge of the TL, however, as well as over-reliance on cross-linguistic similarities that can cause negative transfer and the obstruction of higher levels of learning.

Chinese adult learners' limited linguistic competence and inaccurate performance in this study are most likely caused by informal L3 acquisition of Thai. As discussed in Chapter 2, informal learning may result in gaining incomplete knowledge. In this study, the lack of ability to read and write is the greatest difficulty confronted by both the participants (one to two years of residence in Thailand) and Interviewee-A (eight years of residence in Thailand). In addition, the participants who took part in the questionnaire survey showed an incomplete knowledge of Thai tones. Although positive transfer took place, because the learners are aware of how tones work and similar tones are shared by Mandarin and Thai, their over-reliance on their knowledge of BL leads to a tendency to ignore the slight differences in the two languages' tones, which can result in negative transfer and incorrect speech. This indicates that informal L3 (Thai) learning will not lead Chinese adult learners to a higher level or to complete linguistic competence in TL.

Compared with the learners' formal L2 learning (see Figure 4.3, p.66), because Mandarin and English are not typologically related, the influence of cross-linguistic

similarity between L1 (Mandarin) and L2 (English) can be ignored. Although less than a quarter of the participants achieved only beginner levels of English, nearly half considered themselves to be advanced learners. Chinese learners may find the English language difficult at the outset, due to the lack of similarity between the two languages; ultimately, advanced proficiency is best achieved through long term formal learning. It is the combination of the complete knowledge system with the organised guidelines formal learning provides that regulate learners' continuous study in a systematic way.

Therefore, when learners are in need of further study and improvement of L3 (Thai), formal learning is highly recommended.

In addition, another limitation of this study is that the participants were not asked whether they think that English facilitates their Thai language learning, no matter from a linguistic aspect or a way of using for reference experience. The over decades of L2 (English) learning experiences might have possibly helped the participants' L3 (Thai) learning to some extent. Thus, it is not appropriate to conclude that Chinese adult learners rely on their L1 (Mandarin) knowledge more than on their L2 (English) in their informal acquisition of Thai as a L3, further study in this area is needed.

5.4 Conclusion

This study investigates problems with informal L3 acquisition, focusing on Chinese adult learners whose L1 is Mandarin and L2 is English who acquire oral Thai as their L3 through informal learning via social interactions. Through experiments, the author

verifies existing theory, answers the research questions posed at the beginning of the study and meets all research objectives.

In summation, first, the sentence patterns and tones are the evident factors of cross-linguistic similarity between Mandarin and Thai. Second, multilingual Chinese adult learners rely on their L1 (Mandarin) knowledge in the processing of informal L3 (Thai) acquisition, in which the similarity in sentence patterns is of great help to the learners, while the assistance of knowledge of the BL tones is limited. In addition, it is neither appropriate to conclude that English did not facilitate the learners' L3 learning, nor to say that the learners' rely on Mandarin knowledge more than English knowledge. As the author did not exam how English helped Thai language learning, it is a limitation of this study, which needs an improvement in the future. Finally, informal L3 acquisition of Thai leads to incomplete linguistic knowledge and competence in the TL. In order for Chinese adult learners to continue to progress in their Thai language learning, structured formal learning and abundant supporting materials are required.

As discussed in Chapter 1 (refer to 1.6, Significance of Study, p.14), this study is a significant endeavour that explores the correlation between the existence of cross-linguistic similarity and the acceleration of foreign language acquisition. More specifically, this paper investigates whether the cross-linguistic similarity of the BL (Mandarin) will have a positive or negative influence on TL (Thai) acquisition. By extension, when a learner has more than one BL, there will be increased cross-linguistic similarities for the learner to draw on, if the BLs are highly related to the TL.

By analysing the data, the researcher have reached the conclusion that first because Mandarin and Thai are closely related languages classified under the Sino-Tibetan

language family, the assistance of the knowledge of the BL (Mandarin) tones is limited. Nonetheless, the great similarities in sentence patterns is a great help in individuals' acquisition of L3 (Thai), which is also the main reason that the majority of the language learners in this study consider Thai as the easier foreign language to learn compared with their L2, English. In addition, average test scores as high as of 94.6 clearly show a strong tendency of positive transfer and learners' comprehension of Thai syntax.

Second, in accordance with Interviewee-B's statement, as a multilingual speaker of five languages (Low German, English, French, High German & Thai), although he was in his 40s when he began to learn his L3, French, the process of acquisition was not overly difficult because he found many connections among English, German and French that aided him in his acquisition of L3. On the contrary, although he had spent two years in Thailand and acquired Thai language through informal learning, his Thai proficiency remained at the beginning level of using basic words and phrases, as well as some simple sentences. This provides evidence that cross-linguistic similarities accelerate language acquisition, as well as showing that exploring additional TLs is beneficial to those language learners who have already mastered more than two languages.

The finding that cross-linguistic similarity, specifically positive transfer, can accelerate language acquisition may also provide language teachers with new ideas concerning L3 teaching. Teachers should not assume that transfer will automatically occur after a sufficient base of information is acquired. "Significant and efficient transfer occurs only if we teach to achieve it" (Sousa, 2012). Therefore, language teachers can plan lessons using the impact of positive transfer to help language students

learn better and faster, solve problems encountered in learning process, and generate creative language products when they understand the factors that influence transfer.

Two major factors should be considered in teaching for positive transfer, namely:

1. The time sequence, meaning that teachers should plan to use closely relevant past knowledge or learning experience to present new concepts. For example, when learning Chinese question particles, the knowledge that the question particle “吗” (ma) does not have a tone and is always placed at the end of a sentence can be duplicated in learning “呢” (ne) and “吧” (ba).
2. Cross-linguistic similarity, which is already known to be a great help in learning foreign languages. Native Mandarin speakers, for instance, will find Thai syntax or Japanese writing less challenging than native English speakers. Teachers should give full play to cross-linguistic impacts to promote positive transfer. Meanwhile, the differences between similar languages must also be carefully explained to avoid errors caused by over-reliance on previous knowledge.

As mentioned previously (refer to 5.3, Problems & Limitations of Informal L3 Acquisition of Thai, p.105-107), informal learning can be of great assistance to the ability of Chinese adult learners to learn an L3 (Thai) because of the inevitability of encountering learning materials, the intensive language environment, the mostly unconscious and less stressful learning process and the cross-linguistic influence between Mandarin and Thai. Informal learning has helped Chinese adults to gain many linguistic materials that help them cope with their daily communications with Thai locals. Their questionnaire feedback and sentence construction test results show strong

evidence of the benefit provided by identical sentence construction applied in L1 transfer and L3 production, which can easily be gained through informal learning due to positive transfer. Although these Chinese adults have shown a full understanding of tonal language and how tones work to differentiate meaning, however, the tonal test results show that participants over-relied on the four tones of L1 (Mandarin), the source language. In other words, informal learning cannot assist in the accurate performance of TL tones. Instead, negative transfer due to over-reliance on the source language, which leads to errors, is generally caused by incomplete knowledge induced by unstructured and guideless informal learning.

Compared with the learners' L2 (English) acquisition, it is clear that although they may suffer at the outset of learning English due to the lack of similar elements between their mother tongue and L2, the majority ultimately achieved a relatively high level of L2 proficiency. Formal learning that provides proper and plentiful of materials, as well as systematic and intensive interventions, does assist in completing the learners' L2 knowledge system and the progression of their linguistic proficiency. Therefore, formal learning in Thai is highly recommended for as long as the learners are in need of improvement and the achievement of a higher level of linguistic ability in L3 (Thai).

Although these results shed some light on the role of cross-linguistic similarity in L3 acquisition, it is important to note that this study only provides an indication of how similar factors influence Thai utterance production through informal learning. It would therefore be interesting to see how formal L3 (Thai) learners with the same language background as the participants in this study would behave in a similar task. Moreover, it is very unlikely that these results apply to all language acquisition contexts especially

that most of the current L3 acquisition studies is conducted in Europe, where many people are bilingual or even trilingual. As a result, it would be interesting to investigate different combinations of Asian languages.

Appendix I: Questionnaire

----- Chinese Version -----

1. 你是_____。
A. 男性 B. 女性

2. 你的年龄是_____岁。

3. 请写出你的语言习得顺序。
 - (1) 第一语言: _____
 - (2) 第二语言: _____
 - (3) 第三语言: _____
 - (4) 其他: _____

4. 你曾经在英语为母语的国家生活过吗?
A. 生活过_____月/年 B. 没有生活过

5. 你是怎么学习英语的?
 - A. 主要在学校里进行正规学习, 也有一些非正规学习, 如听音乐, 看电影, 看电视, 等等。
 - B. 主要通过非正规学习, 有少量正规学习。
 - C. 全部是通过学校里的正规学习。
 - D. 全都是通过非正规学习。

6. 你学了多久的英语?
 - A. 两到四年, 不包括四年。
 - B. 四到六年, 不包括六年。
 - C. 六到八年, 不包括八年。

D. 八年及以上。

7. 你现在的英语水平是_____。

- A. 初级水平，只能理解和说少量的简单词汇和句子。
- B. 中级水平，可以进行一些相对复杂的英语交流，及阅读英语文献。
- C. 中高级水平，可以进行较复杂的英语交流，以及阅读较长的文献。
- D. 高级水平，可以进行复杂的英语交流，阅读以及写作较长、较专业的英语文献。

8. 到目前为止，你在泰国工作了多久？

- A. 半年
- B. 一年
- C. 一年半
- D. 两年
- E. 两年以上

9. 你在泰国_____ (府/城市) 工作生活。

10. 你在泰国教授课程的对象是_____。（多项选择）

- A. 幼儿园的孩子
- B. 小学生
- C. 中学生
- D. 高中生
- E. 成年人（大学生及以上）

11. 在平时生活中，和当地泰国人的交流是必须的吗？

- A. 完全没有必要
- B. 偶尔需要交流
- C. 有时候需要交流
- D. 总是需要交流

12. 在日常生活中，你用泰语的主要交流对象是_____。（多项选择）

- A. 幼儿园的孩子以及小学生
- B. 中学生以及高中生
- C. 成年人（大学生及以上）
- D. 平时生活中遇见的人，如出租车司机，售货员，服务员等等

13. 你学习和使用泰语的动机或者动力是什么？（多项选择）
- A. 没有动机和动力，自然习得。
 - B. 对泰语有兴趣。
 - C. 日常交流的必须。
 - D. 不确定。
14. 你喜欢泰语吗？
- A. 非常喜欢
 - B. 喜欢
 - C. 一般
 - D. 不喜欢
 - E. 非常不喜欢
15. 你学习和使用泰语多长时间了？
- A. 半年
 - B. 一年
 - C. 一年半
 - D. 两年
 - E. 两年以上
16. 你系统正规地学习过泰语吗？
- A. 学习过一点儿，但后来放弃了。
 - B. 一直在系统正规地学习。
 - C. 从来没有，但是有计划在将来进行系统正规的学习。
 - D. 从来没有，将来也没有这方面的打算。
17. 你认为泰语和汉语有什么相似性？（多选）
- A. 语音
 - B. 语法
 - C. 字形
 - D. 语用
 - E. 其他
18. 你认为泰语和汉语有什么不同？（多选）
- A. 语音
 - B. 语法
 - C. 字形
 - D. 语用
 - E. 其他
19. 你现在的泰语水平是_____。
- A. 初级水平，只能理解和说少量的简单词汇和句子。
 - B. 初级水平，可以进行一些相对复杂的泰语交流，应付日常生活。
 - C. 中级水平，可以进行较复杂的泰语交流，并且能够应对某些特定领域或专业话题内容的谈话交流。
 - D. 高级水平，可以进行复杂的，有关各类内容的交流；以及读写泰语。

20. 你对泰语声调的了解有多少？

- A. 我了解泰语的声调，并且能够准确运用。
- B. 我了解泰语的声调，但是在运用过程中有对正确与否的不确定性。
- C. 我对泰语的声调了解得不全面，但是我能够通过声调区分一些读音相同、意义不同的词。
- D. 我对泰语的声调毫无了解。

21. 你对泰语和汉语之间的语法相似性了解多少？

- A. 我认为泰语和汉语在很大程度上有语法相似性。
- B. 我认为泰语和汉语有一定程度上的语法相似性，但不是很多。
- C. 我不确定泰语和汉语是否有语法相似性。
- D. 我不认为泰语和汉语有语法相似性。

22. 对你来说，泰语和英语哪个更容易习得？为什么？

23. 你对“同语族语言的语言之间存在相似性，而这些相似性在一定程度上可以加速语言学习”怎么看？就泰语和汉语来说，你认为两种同族语言的相似性是否有助于泰语学习？

----- English Version -----

1. You are				
A. Male		B. Female		
2. Your age is _____.				
3. What is your sequence of language learning or acquisition? Please write down all the languages you have learned through a linear model.				
L1:	L2:	L3:	Other:	
4. Have you ever lived in any English-speaking country?				
A. Yes. For _____ months/years.		B. No.		
5. How did you learn English?				
A. Mostly in the classroom by formal learning, as well as some informal learning ((e.g. TV, music, movie, etc.).		B. Mostly by informal learning in daily life, with a little systematic formal learning.		
C. All by formal learning at school.		D. All by informal learning during daily life.		
E. Learning through 50% informal and 50% formal.				
6. How long have or had you been learning English?				
A. 2-3.9 years	B. 4-5.9 years	C. 6-7.9 years	D. More than 8 years	
7. What is your English language level now?				
A. Beginner, only can understand & use some simple words.		B. Intermediate, can perform some longer, complex communications in English in certain length, and read English.		
C. Advanced, can perform complex communications in English and read & write English.				
8. How long have you been working in Thailand?				
A. 0.5 years	B. 1 year	C. 1.5 years	D. 2 years	E. More than 2 years

9. You are working/used to work in _____ province.				
10. Your students are/were _____. (You can select more than one answer.)				
A. Kindergarteners	B. Elementary school students	C. Middle school students		
D. High school students	E. Adults (University students & above)			
11. How frequently do you communicate with others in Thai?				
A. Not at all	B. Sometimes	C. Often	D. Always	
12. With whom do you usually talk in Thai? (You can select more than one answer.)				
A. Kindergarteners & elementary school students		B. Middle school students & high school students		
C. Adults (university students & above)		D. People meet in daily life (e.g. taxi drivers/salesmen/waiters, etc.)		
13. What is your motivation in learning/using Thai? (You can select more than one answer.)				
A. Acquired naturally	B. Interested in Thai	C. Indispensable to communication	D. Not sure	
14. Do you like the Thai language?				
A. Strongly like	B. Like	C. Neutral	D. Dislike	E. Strongly dislike
15. How long have you been learning/using Thai?				
A. 0.5 years	B. 1 year	C. 1.5 years	D. 2 years	E. More than 2 years
16. Have you ever learned the Thai language formally?				
A. Just a little, but then gave up.		B. Have always been learning.		
C. Never, but plan to learn in the future.		D. Never, and have no plan to learn in the future.		
17. What factor(s) do you consider as the similarities shared by Mandarin and Thai? (You can select more than one answer.)				
A. Phonetics	B. Syntax	C. Orthography	D. Pragmatics	E. Other
18. What factor(s) do you consider as the difference between Mandarin and Thai? (You can tick more than one answer.)				
A. Phonetics	B. Syntax	C. Orthography	D. Pragmatics	E. Other

19. What is your Thai language level now?	
A. Beginner, only can understand & say some simple words.	B. Beginner, can handle daily communications.
C. Intermediate, can handle daily communications and certain complex or professional topics.	D. Advanced, handle most of the communications, as well as reading and writing in Thai.
20. How much do you know about Thai language's tones?	
A. Yes, I know exactly how Thai language tones work.	B. Yes, I know Thai language tones, and I know how to distinguish different common used words by different tones, but I won't say that I know everything about its tones.
C. No, I don't really know about all the Thai language tones, but I know how to distinguish some different words by tones.	D. No, I don't know Thai language's tones at all.
21. Are you aware of any syntactics similarity between Thai and Mandarin?	
A. Yes, I think Thai and Mandarin are syntactically similar to a great extent.	B. Yes, I think there are some similarities shared by these two languages, but not that much.
C. No, I don't really think that these two languages are syntactically similar, maybe some, I'm not sure.	D. No, I don't think so.
22. Comparing Thai & English, which one do you consider easier to achieve proficiency in? Why?	
23. What is your opinion on how cross-linguistic similarity (language) facilitates language acquisition? Specifically, do you feel that Mandarin being tonal and syntactically similar to Thai can accelerate Thai language acquisition?	

Appendix II: Language Proficiency Test (by writing)

----- Chinese Version -----

第一部分：声调测试

泰语有五个声调：中调[33]，低调[21]，降调[41]，高调[45]，和升调[14]。
请根据给出的泰语词语以及意思，从五个升调选项中选择正确答案。

	词语	声调				
		[33]	[21]	[41]	[45]	[14]
1	faa (蓝)	A	B	C	D	E
2	meu (手)	A	B	C	D	E
3	bpai (走, 去)	A	B	C	D	E
4	chan (我)	A	B	C	D	E
5	daeng (红)	A	B	C	D	E
6	gaew (杯子)	A	B	C	D	E
7	rak (爱)	A	B	C	D	E
8	mae (妈妈)	A	B	C	D	E
9	nang seu (书)	A	B	C	D	E
		A	B	C	D	E
10	maa (狗)	A	B	C	D	E
11	maa (马)	A	B	C	D	E

12	maa (来)	A	B	C	D	E
13	mai (不)	A	B	C	D	E
14	mai (吗)	A	B	C	D	E
15	bpaa (森林)	A	B	C	D	E
16	bpaa (扔)	A	B	C	D	E
17	wan (天, 日)	A	B	C	D	E
18	waan (甜)	A	B	C	D	E
19	song (送)	A	B	C	D	E
20	song (二)	A	B	C	D	E

第二部分：语法测试

请根据要求改写以下句子。

➤ 请把下列肯定句改写成否定句

1. Meua waan kao yaak gin aa haan tai. (他昨天想吃泰国菜。)

2. Kon Thai chop gin aa-haan jeen. (泰国人喜欢吃中国菜。)

➤ 请把下列肯定句改写成一般疑问句（……吗？）

3. Wan nee puak rao bpai doo nang gan. (今天我们一起去看电影。)

4. Dton-nee tee bpra-tayt tai, mee farang poot paa-saa tai dai yae. (现在在泰国有很多外国人会说泰语。)

5. Kun Mod rian paa-saa jeen tee bpra-tayt jeen. (Mod 小姐在中国学汉语。)

➤ 请把下列句子改成特殊疑问句

6. Chan mai chop doo nang pee. (我不喜欢看恐怖片。)

(用“什么”提问)_____

7. Kun Fonhip Watchararakul bpen Miss Thailand Universe 2010. (Fonhip

Watchararakul 小姐是 2010 年环球泰国小姐。)

(用“谁”提问)_____

8. Ta-naa-kaan Ayutthaya yoo tee Central World. (Ayutthaya 银行在 Central

World 商场里。)

(用“哪里”提问)_____

9. Man bpen bpaet mohng krueng. (现在八点半。)

(用“什么时间”提问)_____

10. Dtrong bpai, laew gor lieow saai, laew gor lieow kwaa. (直走，然后左拐，然后

右拐。)

(用“怎样”提问)_____

----- English Version -----

Part 1: Tonal Test

Thai language has five tones that distinguish meanings. Please circle the right answers, which match the meanings of the given words.

Words		Tones				
		[33]	[21]	[41]	[45]	[14]
1	faa (blue)	A	B	C	D	E
2	meu (hand)	A	B	C	D	E
3	bpai (go)	A	B	C	D	E
4	chan (I)	A	B	C	D	E
5	daeng (red)	A	B	C	D	E
6	gaew (cup)	A	B	C	D	E
7	rak (love)	A	B	C	D	E
8	mae (mother)	A	B	C	D	E
9	nang seu (book)	A	B	C	D	E
		A	B	C	D	E
10	maa (dog)	A	B	C	D	E
11	maa (horse)	A	B	C	D	E
12	maa (come)	A	B	C	D	E
13	mai (no)	A	B	C	D	E
14	mai (question particle)	A	B	C	D	E
15	bpaa (forest)	A	B	C	D	E
16	bpaa (throw)	A	B	C	D	E

17	wan (day)	A	B	C	D	E
18	waan (sweet)	A	B	C	D	E
19	send (song)	A	B	C	D	E
20	two (song)	A	B	C	D	E

Part 2: Sentence Construction Test

Please rewrite ten sentences given below according to the requirements.

➤ **Rewrite affirmative sentences into negative sentences.**

1. Wan nee kao yaak gin aa haan tai. (*He wants to try Thai dishes today.*)

2. Kon Thai chop gin aa-haan jeen. (*Thai people love Chinese food.*)

➤ **Rewrite affirmative sentences into yes/no questions.**

3. Meua waan puak rao bpai doo nang gan. (*We went to watch movie together yesterday.*)

4. Dton-nee tee bpra-tayt tai, mee farang poot paa-saa tai dai yae. (*There're lots of foreigners in Thailand nowadays can speak Thai.*)

5. Kun Mod rian paa-saa jeen tee bpra-tayt jeen. (*Miss Mod studies Mandarin in China.*)
-

➤ **Rewrite sentences into interrogative sentences.**

6. Chan mai chop doo nang pee. (*I don't like to watch horror movie.*)
(What...?) _____ ?
7. Kun Fonthip Watchararakul bpen Miss Thailand Universe 2010. (*Miss Fonthip Watchararakul is Miss Thailand Universe 2010.*)
(Who...?) _____ ?
8. Ta-naa-kaan Ayutthaya yoo tee Central World. (*Bank Ayutthaya is in Central World mall.*)
(Where...?) _____ ?
9. Man bpen bpaet mohng krueng. (*It's 8:30.*)
(When/What time...?) _____ ?
10. Dtrong bpai, laew gor lieow saai, laew gor lieow kwaa. (*Go straight, then turn left, and then turn right.*)
(How...?) _____ ?

Appendix III: Interview Protocol and Transcript

Interview Protocol

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate the note-taking, the researcher of this study would like to audio tape our conversations today. For your information, only the researcher and examiners on the project will be privy to the tapes. Besides, please noted that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

The researcher of the current study has planned this interview to last no longer than half an hour. During this time, there will be several questions that the researcher would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction of the Study

You have been selected to speak with the researcher today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about teaching and learning languages in linguistic field.

The research project as a whole focuses on investigating problems with informal third language acquisition, with particular interest in understanding whether and how

cross-linguistic similarity affect the acquisition of a non-native language, which is Thai in this study. The current study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, the researcher is trying to learn more about non-native language acquisition, and hopefully learn about multilingualism that helps improve adult learners' experience in their L3 learning.

Survey Section

A. Interviewee Background

1. Briefly describe your role (nationality, language background, career background, etc.) as it relates to your experience in L3 acquisition (if appropriate).
2. How long have you been living in Thailand?

B. Thai Language Acquisition

1. Please self-evaluate your Thai language proficiency.
2. Your thoughts on reading and writing in Thai.
3. Your experience of Thai language acquisition (by formal/informal learning, for how long, learning method, etc.).
4. How does the language distance between your mother language and Thai affect your language acquisition?

C. Cross-linguistic Similarity and Language Learning

1. Your opinion on cross-linguistic similarity accelerates non-native language learning.

----- **Interview I Transcript** -----

Interviewer	Wang Dong Hui Zi (researcher of this study)
Interviewee-A	Interviewee-A
Interview Setting	Interview conducted on Skype by voice call at 5:35pm June 28 2012.
Affiliation with Interviewee-A	Interviewee-A is a lecture teaching Mandarin in a university in Bangkok. She used to be the Director of the Chinese Language Department of an international school in Thailand.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: 邵老师您好。麻烦您先介绍一下自己。

Interviewee-A: 邵丽敏，中国人，大学汉语教师。

Interviewer: 您的第一语言，第二语言，第三语言分别是？

Interviewee-A: 嗯.....应该就是汉语，英语和泰语吧。

Interviewer: 到 2012 年为止，您在泰国生活了多久？

Interviewee-A: 七年。

Interviewer: 那您的泰语现在是什么水平？

Interviewee-A: 嗯.....一般的聊天儿，应该问题不大。跟.....怎么说呢，工作上问题也不大。但是专业术语知道的可能还是比较少。包括经济，政治类的。

Interviewer: 嗯。那您可以读写泰语吗？

Interviewee-A: 嗯.....读应该比写好一些吧。因为接触，看得多了，可能就是，相对来说，半猜半拼读，能读一个百分之七十左右。写.....会抄，不会写。

Interviewer: 那您觉得，对于中国人来说，泰语的读写是不是一个难点？

Interviewee-A: 对中国人来说.....如果没有，没有一个有经验的人来指导的话，应该还是比较难。毕竟不一样的文字嘛。

Interviewer: 嗯。所以，嗯.....您正规、系统地学过泰语吗？

Interviewee-A: 嗯.....应该说没有吧。只是说，有，有.....应该是说，那种凑热闹的似的。然后请老师，请那个教小学的老师，然后教过那么几堂课。然后几个人扎堆儿那么学。但是觉得，跟我自己，就是说，在我原来已有的基础上，进步不太大。

Interviewer: 嗯，那所以这种相对正规、系统的学习进行了多长时间呢？

Interviewee-A: 课后这种.....算正规吗？因为，基本上，老师给你的要求，比如说，要做作业，要抄，我们基本都不做。就是，听完就完。因为当时，怎么说呢，是想让，鼓励那些，嗯.....新来的老师学泰语。所以，所以找了这么一个老师。那基本上因为我听说都没有问题，所以上课就是.....就是“打酱油”的。

Interviewer: 嗯。那您基本上等于是说，比较自然地习得泰语的？是这样吗？

Interviewee-A: 嗯。对。

Interviewer: 那您.....嗯.....

Interviewee-A: 但是因为可能是语言教师，所以就是，可能在语言的这个.....叫什么，习得方面，可能有自己，就是，自己的一套东西，有自己归纳总结语言规律的一种.....可能，思维方式。

Interviewer: 那您的这个习得用时，大约有多长时间呢？

Interviewee-A: 嗯.....应该说.....

Interviewer: 或者说从您接触泰语，一直到现在.....

Interviewee-A: 或者说什么？

Interviewer: 或者说从您一开始就已经接触泰语，然后一直到现在的话，这个，已经持续跟您在泰国生活时间一样长的时间了，对吗？

Interviewee-A: 嗯？这个问题没有听明白，你再说一遍。

Interviewer: 就是，从您接触泰语，一直到现在，是已经跟您生活在泰国七年一样长这样的时间了吗？或者说比七年短一些？或者说怎样？

Interviewee-A: 应该是.....怎么说呀，我来在泰国可能，一两个月的时候，基本上交流就不是太大问题。

Interviewer: 嗯。但是之前您是没有学习过？

Interviewee-A: 因为每天都要用嘛。

Interviewer: 那您在来泰国之前，之前是没有学习过泰语的，对吗？

Interviewee-A: 喂？啊？再说？

Interviewer: 在您到泰国之前，是没有学习过泰语的，对吗？

Interviewee-A: 对，但是接触过泰国留学生。

Interviewer: 嗯。然后到泰国之后一两个月.....

Interviewee-A: 所以就像那种类似的，一般的那种，就是比如说问候啊，或者就是很简单的口语词，比如说“你很漂亮”，“你很可爱”呀，这些词，是早就听过的。

Interviewer: 嗯。嗯。那之后您到泰国以后，一两个月以后交流就基本上没有问题了，对吗？听说交流。

Interviewee-A: 对。

Interviewer: 好，那下一个问题是，中文和泰语，同属于汉藏语系，所以这两种语言之间应该有一些相似性，比如说语序啊，语法啊，构词法啊等等。嗯.....那您怎么看这两个语言之间的相似性？

Interviewee-A: 这个东西按照一般的说法就是，所谓泰语和汉语都有声调，所以呢，可能就是泰国人来说也好，对中国人来说也好，学习彼此的语言，在声调方面都不是太大问题。

Interviewer: 嗯。

Interviewee-A: 至于说这个，语法上面.....构词法属于语法的一种啊。

Interviewer: 对。

Interviewee-A: 应该就是我们比较强调所谓的那个修饰词的顺序问题，认为这就是说，就是两种语言之间最大的差别。

Interviewer: 嗯。嗯。

Interviewee-A: 从其他的一般说，好像简单的句子里面，都差不多。但是，可能这个，这个，我感觉就是可能泰语，就是说，嗯.....基于它那个各种原因吧，可能名词类的词更多，然后，这个.....心理类的词可能会要比汉语要少一些。

Interviewer: 嗯。那您觉得语序方面，泰语和汉语的相似性大吗？

Interviewee-A: 如果从简单句来说，是挺大的。

Interviewer: 比较大的。嗯。

Interviewee-A: 像比如我们说这个“我们去哪儿”，或者“我吃什么”，像这种的结构，我想从语序上是基本上都一样的。

Interviewer: 那所以说，等于说，在比较早期的泰语学习阶段的，对于这些中国人来说，比较早期的情况下，语序方面的相似性对他们帮助应该是蛮大的。

Interviewee-A: 嗯.....起码不用考虑这方面吧。

Interviewer: 对。

Interviewee-A: 不用去担心说“什么词应该放在什么词的前面”这样。

Interviewer: 嗯。那您认为两个语言系统，如果比较接近的话，它们之间的这种相似性是否有助于其中那个非母语语言的习得呢？

Interviewee-A: 两个语言系统.....你现在是在谈泰语和汉语，对吗？

Interviewer: 对。

Interviewee-A: 如果光泰语和汉语来说，原则上是应该有助于这种习得的。但是同时呢，反正我们也知道事情都有利有弊嘛，所以我想，其中可能在习得的过程中，出现一些.....就是，可能泰国人不会犯的这种偏误，也可能是因为这种相似性造成的。

Interviewer: 嗯。那您也系统地学过英语。所以在您看来，学习英语和学习泰语，哪一种对您来说更容易呢？

Interviewee-A: 我觉得要是从这个生活环境来看，当然就是说你用得越多的越容易吧。而且在泰国像我们有的工作中需要你用英语的时候，那如果非严格划分的话，别人不会去计较你的语法的，但是我们正规学习的时候，是很强调这些语法的规范和用词的规范。那在泰语这个环境里面，如果你是用泰语，反过来说呢，如果你用词用错了，或者用得不恰当，然后作为泰国人来说，他可能就会很敏感地，直接就告诉你，不可以这样说，或者说从语用上来说不适合这样说。所以我想这个东西，可能，就是人的因素也比较重要。

Interviewer: 所以您认为，就英语和泰语而言，这个语言环境可能有助于这两种语言某一种语言习得的因素更大一些。

Interviewee-A: 嗯，对。语言环境。对。就是……对，你说的对，就是生活环境，生活里面这种语言的使用环境。

Interviewer: 好，那我的问题就是这些。谢谢您，邵老师。

Interviewee-A: 不客气。

Interviewer: OK，下次再聊。Bye bye.

Interviewee-A: Bye bye.

----- **English Version** -----

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: Hello Ms. Shao, please introduce yourself first.

Interviewee-A: *OK. My name is Shao Li Ming, I'm Chinese, and I'm currently working as Mandarin lecturer at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand.*

Interviewer: What are your L1, L2 and L3?

Interviewee-A: *Mandarin, English and Thai.*

Interviewer: How long have you been living in Thailand?

Interviewee-A: *Seven years.*

Interviewer: What is your current Thai proficiency?

Interviewee-A: *Handle most of the daily communication, topic chatting and job demand language using, but still weak in some professional terms, for example, the professional terms in economic category and political field.*

Interviewer: Can you read or write in Thai?

Interviewee-A: *Better reading than writing, because of more experience in reading. Can read up to 70%, but cannot write.*

Interviewer: Do you consider Thai writing system a hard task for the Mandarin speaking learners?

Interviewee-A: *If without an experienced and professional tutor, it would definitely be difficult for the Mandarin speakers to achieve Thai writing system, for Mandarin and Thai have totally different writing systems.*

Interviewer: Have you ever learned Thai in a formal and systematical way?

Interviewee-A: *I would say no. I only attended few after-school classes, and I was not really pay attention to that. Besides, I didn't feel much improve after the classes.*

Interviewer: How long had this learning experience lasted?

Interviewee-A: *Just very few classes.*

Interviewer: Meaning that you actually acquired Thai naturally.

Interviewee-A: *Yes. I think it was because as a language teacher, I have my own language learning method, and I'm good at summarizing language characteristics as well.*

Interviewer: How long did you spend your time to acquire Thai?

Interviewee-A: *Before arriving in Thailand, I learned some very basic phrases and words from the Thai overseas students who studied in China universities. Somehow, since I arrived in Thailand, after one to two months, I could handle common daily communication in Thai, because I had to use Thai everyday.*

Interviewer: Next question is that since both Thai and Mandarin belong to Sino-Tibetan language family, they should have some cross-linguistic similarities to share. For example, grammar, word order in sentences, morphology, and so on. What do you say?

Interviewee-A: *Generally speaking, both Thai and Mandarin are tonal languages, thus both Mandarin and Thai speakers can easily understanding how tones work in each other's language, as well as to achieve different tones. Besides, Mandarin speakers don't have to consider word order issue because at least in early stages of Thai acquisition, word order in basic Thai sentences is exactly the same what it is in Mandarin. These two languages also have some differences, for example, in Mandarin*

we put adjective before none, but it is exactly the opposite in Thai. Besides, there are more nouns in Thai, but more mental adjectives in Mandarin.

Interviewer: If two languages were closely related, do you think that the cross-linguistic similarity can accelerate language acquisition?

Interviewee-A: *Specifically in the two languages of Thai and Mandarin, in principle cross-linguistic similarity can accelerate language acquisition. However, over rely on these similarities two languages share, might also make the learners miss some characteristics and details of the TL.*

Interviewer: OK. Since you had learned English as your L2 systematically, what do you consider as the easier-achievable language between your L2 and L3?

Interviewee-A: *The higher frequency of use of course will lead to better learning result, besides, language environment is another important factor that influence language acquisition. For example, while you are living in Thailand, when you speak English, the Thais will not or are not able to point out your mistakes, but when you speak Thai, they will definitely know what you did wrong, and may let you know. Thus this is another factor that can accelerate language acquisition.*

Interviewer: Meaning that language environment is quite an important factor that affect language acquisition.

Interviewee-A: *Yes, you are right.*

Interviewer: OK, I'm done with all my questions, thank you for your time, Ms. Shao.

Interviewee-A: *You are welcome.*

----- **Interview II Transcript** -----

Interviewer	Wang Dong Hui Zi (researcher of this study)
Interviewee-B	Interviewee-B
Interview Setting	Interview conducted on Skype by voice chatting at 12:08pm June 28 2012.
Affiliation with Interviewee-B	Interviewee-B is a retired principle and language teacher in Canada. He used teach English in a school in Thailand from 2007 to 2009.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: Hi Dave, please introduce yourself.

Interviewee-B: *OK. My name is David Goertzen. I'm a retired teacher and principal from Canada. My current job is teaching spoken English in Korea, and also helping an university with a program in Korea for English teachers.*

Interviewer: OK. So Dave you are from Canada, and English is your L1, right?

Interviewee-B: *No it's actually my L2.*

Interviewer: Oh, really? So what is your L1?

Interviewee-B: *My L1 is Low German.*

Interviewer: What is that?

Interviewee-B: *It's a dialect that is similar to German that I spoke in the first five or six years in my life. And I learned English when I went to school, and I grew up in Canada, speaking English, so I'm fluent in English. But actually my mother tongue was Low German, which I spoke at home. I also speak French fluently, and also High*

German, which is actually the official language of Germany. And I'm learning Korean right now, and I still know a bit Thai.

Interviewer: OK, I see. As I know, you were teaching English in Thailand in 2008, right?

Interviewee-B: *Yes.*

Interviewer: How long had you stayed there?

Interviewee-B: *I had stayed there from April 2007 to end of April 2009. I taught and did administration principal work there for two years.*

Interviewer: OK, so you'd stayed there for two years, right?

Interviewee-B: *Yes.*

Interviewer: That was much longer than mine. I had stayed there only for ten months.

Interviewee-B: *Yes, I stayed a little longer.*

Interviewer: OK, so can you speak Thai?

Interviewee-B: *Well, I can meet and greet people, and talk basic things with them. I could, for example, communicate with taxi drivers, I could order food in restaurants, I could use basic simple everyday phrases to talk about common things. While it went to some more specialized topics, I didn't have the vocabulary to do that.*

Interviewer: OK. What about long sentences? Like, you can do words or phrases, or even long sentences?

Interviewee-B: *I could put together a few long sentences maybe, but not many. I mostly use short phrases and short sentences, just for basic communication.*

Interviewer: OK, I see. Can you read and write in Thai?

Interviewee-B: *No, I never learned the written language of Thai.*

Interviewer: Do you think it was because Thai alphabet system was hard to achieve, at least for us?

Interviewee-B: *I don't know if it was hard to achieve, but it's not something that you could pick up by looking at it. I think Thai has 77 characters or so, a lot more than English, and even though it is systematic, I never learn the structure of it. All I concerned when I was in Thailand was about acquiring a basic and survival level of Thai.*

Interviewer: So whatever you had learned was by naturally happened acquisition? Did you ever joined in any formal learning program of Thai?

Interviewee-B: *By formal learning, you mean going to a school and studying from a book?*

Interviewer: I mean to study from a book or have someone teaches you.

Interviewee-B: *Well, I did have a Thai tutor, who was a business lady in my neighborhood. She taught me basic spoken Thai. And since she would like to upgrade her spoken English, as an exchange, I was teaching her English. We didn't have books to refer to. Thus I did study with someone who trying to teach me basic Thai.*

Interviewer: Was it a systematical learning?

Interviewee-B: *How do you define systematical learning?*

Interviewer: I mean from very basic letters, words, then phrases, sentences, like from easy stuff to difficult things.

Interviewee-B: *Not really. What we did was topics about school, about days and week and time, and so on. It was more focusing on basic spoken language, not much about grammar.*

Interviewer: As we know, English and Thai belong to different language families. Thus, they are not closely related to each other, and they may not have many similarities to share. What do you say?

Interviewee-B: *Yes, there is very little carry-over. I learned Low German, which as I said was my mother tongue, and I learned English at school when I was very young — when you are young, you pick up everything very quickly. I started to learn English when I was six, and that is the ideal time for language learning. I learned French when I was about 40, and it was much difficult. But because of the typological similarity or cross-linguistic similarity — that was a huge factor that accelerates my French learning, as well as German, because both share many similarities with English. The more similarities I saw, the more points I can connect, and the fast I can learn. So cross-linguistic similarity definitely accelerates non-native language acquisition. But for Thai, there was almost no carry-over between English and Thai.*

Interviewer: Meaning that you do believe that typological similarity or we say cross-linguistic similarity can accelerate non-native language acquisition, right?

Interviewee-B: *Absolutely yes.*

Interviewer: We both know that Amy can speak really good Thai, and she's Chinese. Do you have any other Chinese friend who can speak good Thai?

Interviewee-B: *I actually knew a Thai girl who learned Chinese, and she was very good at it.*

Interviewer: OK. I've done all my questions. Thank you so much for your time, Dave.

Interviewee-B: *You are welcome, my pleasure.*

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