Interlanguage Functional Usage of the L2 English Present Continuous Tense by Thai Learners

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Article information	
Abstract	The present continuous tense can be problematic among L1 Thai learners due to the variation in contexts in which the tense can be used (Boonjoon, 2017; Khattiya, 2018; Kongthai, 2015). The present study aimed to examine the functional use of the English present continuous tense by L1 Thai learners under the theoretical framework of the Interlanguage Hypothesis (Selinker 1972; Tarone 2006). The functions investigated in this study included instantaneous, continuous, temporary, habitual, and future based on the categorization of Eastwood (1994). A Grammaticality Judgement Test (GJT) assessing perception, a fill-in-the-blank test focused on production, and interviews were employed to elicit data from 30 L1 Thai learners of the intermediate proficiency level. The results revealed the learners' low accuracy rates in some functions, in both perception and production tasks. The accuracy rate in the production task was significantly lower than that in the perception task (p < .001). Among all the functions, the future and instantaneous functions scored at high rates in both the GJT and fill-in-the-blank tests, while continuous, habitual, and temporary functions scored at low rates. The reasons were overgeneralization of rules and a lack of emphasis on some functions. The interlanguage data from both tests, as well as data from the interviews, can be explained by L2 learners' L1

	transfer, overgeneralization of rules, and transfer of training, in accordance with the Interlanguage Hypothesis, confirming the hypotheses of this study. This research contributes to the body of knowledge on L2 learners' challenges with respect to the functions of the English present continuous tense.
Keywords	interlanguage, second language acquisition, present continuous tense, functions, L1 Thai learners
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1. Introduction

Acquiring English tenses can be challenging for second language (L2) learners, especially if the tense system is non-existent in their first language (L1). This is because L1 transfer is a critical determinant responsible for the deviant language use in adult L2 learners (Han & Tarone, 2014). The problems of acquiring L2 English generally occur in various grammatical features; one notably problematic feature is tenses. This issue has been studied across L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds. Several studies have been conducted to explore the acquisition of tense by L2 English learners, for example, the interlanguage of L1 Turkish learners of English in terms of tense and aspect (Dereli, 2014) and the interlanguage of L1 Indonesian EFL learners in terms of verb tense systems to indicate present, past, and future (Fauziati & Muamaroh, 2016). In the Thai context, previous studies have examined the interlanguage of past tense marking by L1 Thai learners (Khattiya, 2018), variability in English past tense morpheme usage by L1 Thai and L1 French learners (Prapobratanakul, 2019), and the acquisition of English tenses-aspect by L1 Thai learners (Chiravate, 2018).

The English tense is generally determined by the main verb of the sentence, as a verb phrase can be composed of tense, aspect, modality, and voice (Eastwood, 1994, p. 77). This study focuses on the tense that indicates

both the present event and the progressive aspect (the present continuous tense) since the progressive aspect is portrayed differently in Thai. The English present continuous tense, also referred to as present progressive, is one of the problematic tenses for Thai learners. L2 learners may encounter difficulties due to the complexity and multifunctionality of implementing this tense. Several studies investigating the use of the English present continuous tense or progressive aspect across different L1 backgrounds include, for instance, the acquisition of the English progressive aspect by L1 Bulgarian learners (Slabakova, 2001) and the usage of the progressive form by learners from diverse L1 backgrounds, including Swedish, Finnish, Polish, Japanese, French, and Chinese (Meriläinen, 2018). Acquisition of English tenses by L1 Thai learners has also been studied. For example, Boonjoon (2017) investigated the variable production of the English present progressive tense by L1 Thai learners in different obligatory contexts.

It has been found that L1 Thai learners encounter difficulties in using the present continuous tense, e.g., misproduction of the form and unawareness of some functions of the present progressive tense (Boonjoon, 2017; Kongthai, 2015). This study helps fill this research gap by investigating the use of the English present continuous tense by L1 Thai learners based on Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Hypothesis. The objectives of this study are to explore L1 Thai learners' interlanguage of the English present continuous tense with respect to its functions, including instantaneous, continuous, temporary, habitual, and future; and to determine the psychological factors underlying the interlanguage of English present continuous tense in terms of functions based on the Interlanguage Theory.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Interlanguage

The term interlanguage refers to the distinct linguistic system of adult second language (SL) learners, evidenced in their attempts at meaningful

performance in L2 or target language (TL) production. In other words, the utterances that learners attempt to produce during their development are not identical to those produced by native speakers of the target language, highlighting the existence of a separate linguistic system (Selinker, 1972). The identifications of interlanguage are distinctively established from both learners' native language and the target language being learned, yet linked to each other (Tarone, 2006).

Based on the Interlanguage Hypothesis, Selinker (1972) proposes five psychological processes central to second language learning. The systematic construction of interlanguage is affected by these processes and can be observed from utterances produced by L2 learners.

Firstly, the process of language transfer refers to the process in which fossilizable linguistic features are influenced by the native language. The term "fossilization" is defined by Selinker (1972) as a latent linguistic phenomenon among L2 learners, wherein linguistic features from the learners' native language continue to reemerge in their interlanguage. French learners of L2 English may misproduce the retroflex /r/ as uvular in their interlanguage.

Secondly, transfer of training is a result of educational aspects in L2 learning, such as teaching methods, textbooks, or instructors. For instance, when a textbook does not emphasize the use of "she" as much as the use of "he," learners tend to overuse "he."

Thirdly, learning strategies are practiced by the learner in a conscious attempt to learn the target language. To exemplify, Indian learners of L2 English often overgeneralize the progressive tense by adding "-ing" to stative verbs, e.g., "Don't worry, I'm hearing him."

Fourth, when L2 learners face difficulty in communication, they may resort to either written or verbal communication strategies to convey their message. For example, Russian speakers may omit English articles in their speech due to a greater focus on communication rather than form, i.e., the L2 speaker implicated a verbal communication strategy of omission.

Lastly, overgeneralization of target language rules is a process that indicates the learner has acquired some rules of the TL but has not yet realized the context in which the rules should be used. This can be seen when a L2 learner learns the English rule that subject + is can be contracted (e.g., "he is" to "he's"), they may overgeneralize the rule and produce a sentence like "Max is happier than Sam's these days."

Tarone (2006) proposes a revised version of the Interlanguage Hypothesis, expanding from the original hypothesis proposed by Selinker (1972). The revised Interlanguage Hypothesis consists of six psycholinguistic processes that affect the construction of interlanguages, including 1) the acquisition of a second language by young learners, 2) interlanguage as natural language, 3) interlanguage development in different social contexts, 4) fossilization, 5) changes in the views toward psycholinguistic processes, and 6) sociolinguistic components of communicative competence. The revised hypothesis suggests that interlanguages follow Universal Grammar and are produced through language acquisition devices (LADs), similar to native languages. The interlanguage is produced through LADs, so interlanguages are natural languages (Adjemian, 1976). Tarone (2006) observes that interlanguage development varies in different social contexts. The term variability of interlanguage systems refers to how the production of SL learners in the study of interlanguage varies in different forms of the task design for obtaining their production. For example, elicitation tasks such as the grammaticality judgment task, (GJT), (also referred to as careful style) resulted in more target-like form and native-like prestige variants than the result of the conversation elicitation

task (also referred to as casual style) (Tarone, 1983). For example, careful-style tasks, such as sentence writing exercises and GJT conducted on diverse L1 backgrounds, revealed more frequent occurrences of verb ellipsis, e.g., 'Mary is eating an apple and Sue⋯a pear.', (50%) than the free oral prediction, in which they never use ellipsis (0%) (Tarone, 1983, p. 142). The fourth revised hypothesis concerns fossilization. Tarone (1983) contradicted the original hypothesis and argued that sociolinguistic factors also caused fossilization as well, such as social influences of NL or TL upon L2 learners. The fifth revised hypothesis introduces changes in the perspective on psycholinguistic processes, particularly concerning what is transferred to the interlanguage. The revised hypothesis suggests that L1 transfer, combined with multiple influences (e.g., markedness or learning strategies), amplifies the fossilization in SLA. Lastly, Tarone (2006) expanded the study of interlanguage to the areas of sociolinguistic and communicative competence, such as learners' transferring NL politeness strategies into interlanguage communications.

2.2 Present Continuous Tense in English and Progressiveness in Thai

The concept of time is present in both the English and Thai languages. While English is an inflectional language, Thai is an isolating language. Their grammatical expressions are distinct from each other in terms of tense.

2.2.1 English Present Continuous Tense

The English language uses tenses to indicate time, whether it is past, present, or future. When considering tenses with a lexical aspect, English speakers can determine not only the time, but also whether the event is progressively changing or is relatively static (Kroeger, 2005). Such concepts underlie the implication of English tenses, particularly the present continuous tense which is the focus of this study.

According to Eastwood (1994), the English present continuous tense is a composition of the present tense and the continuous aspect. The form is verb to

be ('is,' 'am,' or 'are') + a verb in the present participle form (v + -ing) (e.g., We are moving out next month).

The present progressive tense can be used in several contexts. According to Eastwood (1994), the contexts for using the English present progressive tense include: 1) instantaneous actions, describing a current action that has begun but is not over yet complete (e.g., It is raining now), 2) continuous actions, referring to an action continuing for a period but not necessarily occurring at the moment of speaking (e.g., He is finding a new job), 3) temporary actions, describing a series of actions that are temporary (e.g., I am traveling to work by bus this week), 4) habitual actions, describing repeated behavior (e.g., She is always helping her friends), and 5) near future plans, referring to planned actions (e.g., We are going back home).

2.2.2 Progressiveness in Thai

Thai is a tenseless language. In order to describe an ongoing situation within a short period of time, which is expressed by the present progressive tense in English, the auxiliaries 'กำลัง' /kamlaŋ/ or 'อยู่' /jùː/ are added to the main verb. /kamlaŋ/ is a progressive marker indicating an ongoing situation rather than continuity. The word 'กำลัง' /kamlaŋ/ also emphasizes the idea of progressiveness and attention of the speaker, focusing on the situation at the reference time (Burapacheep, 2013). They precedes the base verb phrase (VP) with active verbs and some stative verbs (Koeing, 2005). For example:

1. khǎw   <u>kamlaŋ</u>   wîŋ

    He   PROG   run

    He   is   running.

The second aspect marker /jùː/, generally occurs after a verb or at the end of the sentence, indicating the continuance of a situation that extends through

time (Burapacheep, 2013). Burapacheep (2013, p. 198) gave an example as follows:

2.   tɕʰɑˇn   hǎa   jù:

I   look   for cont. I am looking for them.

/kamlaŋ/ and /jù:/ can be applied together in a sentence as well. For example:

3.   tɕʰɑˇn   kɑˉmlɑˉŋ   ʔàːn   nɑˇŋsɯˇ: jù:

I   PROG   read   a book/books   PROG

I am currently reading a book.

Boonjoon (2017) also suggests that there are equivalent progressive contexts between Thai and English; however, some Thai progressive contexts are not obligatory for the use of /kamlaŋ/ and /jù:/. The two progressive markers are limited in use compared to the English progressive structure. To illustrate, while the English present continuous tense expresses a changing event or annoyance, the progressive contexts in Thai do not necessarily comprise the progressive marker /kamlaŋ/ and /jù:/ (Boonjoon, 2017).

2.3 Previous Studies on the Acquisition of the English Present Continuous Tense

Several studies on the English progressive verb tense have been conducted with L2 learners from diverse L1 backgrounds, particularly from tenseless languages. Slabakova (2001), for example, examined the acquisition of English aspectual semantic entailments in terms of simple and progressive aspects by L2 learning. The participants of this study consisted of 112 Bulgarian learners of English, as well as 24 native English speakers as a control group. There were two elicitation tasks used in this study: 1) an elicitation writing task that required the learners to recognize present simple and progressive

morphology, and 2) a Truth Value Judgment task. The result revealed no significance in the knowledge of aspectual tense properties, thus indicating that all the learners were aware of the functional morphology signaling the present continuous tense in English, which led to a conclusion that the participants were able to acquire the progressive aspect in their interlanguage and were able to achieve target-like construction in their use of-ing in the present continuous tense since present inflectional morphology was the first grammatical feature taught in Bulgarian schools. Furthermore, semantic properties of the functional category aspect were acquired successfully by the Bulgarian learners of English.

Gabriele (2009) used the Aspect Hypothesis (AH) to investigate L1 transfer in the acquisition of aspectual semantics of the present progressive tense in L2 English and Japanese. AH suggests that L2 learners follow lexical aspectual classes (i.e., states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements) in the early stages of tense-aspect marker acquisition. It was found that the participants with low to intermediate proficiency followed the pattern predicted by L1 transfer from the Japanese language, as they tended to use present progressive with the complete contexts rather than incomplete contexts. In comparison to learners who are native English speakers studying Japanese, this group was more successful. The learners who are native English speakers were able to restructure their L1 for acquiring the progressive aspect of L2.

Khazaal (2009) examined transfers that affected the use of English present continuous tense of Iraqi L2 learners, using the theory of Error Analysis. A total of 51 ESL learners were tested using an elicitation task to assess their use of the present continuous tense. The results revealed that the participants were unable to differentiate between the present continuous tense and the present simple tense, as well as between temporal actions and habitual actions. Over half of the participants were also unable to apply the present continuous tense in the context of current repetitive habits even though the adverb of

frequency was given. The participants omitted auxiliary verbs in the present continuous form.

Gabriele and Canales (2011) examined the L2 acquisition of the semantics of the aspectual forms of the present progressive and the present simple. Their study was based on the Interface Hypothesis (IH), which suggests that L2 learners not only need grammatical knowledge to acquire their L2 but also to imperatively integrate discourse knowledge to understand and acquire the target language's verb tense. This study employed an interpretation task and a GJT to elicit the judgement of the present progressive verb tense in the context of activities, habituals, achievements, and futurates. The subjects of this study were 74 L1 Spanish speakers, 49 L1 Japanese speakers, and 76 native English speakers. The results revealed the subjects' performance on the present progressive tests with the adverb 'now' in the GJT was more accurate, while the performance on progressive tests with habituals and future adverbs were more accurate on the interpretation task. The researchers concluded that the learner's ability to grasp the contextual cues to understand how adverbs indicated the semantic function of the present progressive tense was crucial, thus yielding support to the IH.

Dereli (2014) analyzed the interlanguage of L1 Turkish learners of English with a focus on tense and aspect. The study investigated the influence of Turkish L1 on the participant's English verb patterns. Error analysis was employed to study their interlanguage. The researcher concluded that interference from Turkish contributed to errors involving missing auxiliaries. Although he was aware of English verb rules, the sequence of tenses, and the formation of direct and indirect speech, the participant was unable to apply these rules consistently in speech.

Zhiri (2017) investigated the use of the present progressive tense among 80 Moroccan EFL learners at the A2 English proficiency level, using the Lexical

Aspect Hypothesis and the principle of language transfer. The participants failed to understand the contexts of the present progressive beyond momentary occurrences. According to the researcher, the reasons underlying such difficulty were assumed to be L1 transfer, transfer of training, and learning strategies.

Meriläinen (2018) explored the variable of exposure to rich learning environments and also intra-corpus variation from learner corpus data that affected learners' usage of the progressive form. The frameworks included the English progressive tense and the ESL-EFL continuum. In this study, the data obtained from the Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI) was compared with the data collected from English native speakers from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation (LOCNEC). The progressive samples were classified according to the semantic taxonomy and the results supported the ESL-EFL continuum proposal. The Finnish showed the most frequent use of the progressive, while the Chinese showed the least frequent use of the progressive. Contrary to the theory of language transfer, the Finnish learners produced native-like frequencies of the progressive despite not being in the language group with progressive marking (i.e., Japanese, French). Meriläinen concluded that there was a connection between a rich exposure learning environment and the use of the progressive form by EFL learners. The ESL-EFL continuum was also connected to the use of the progressive form, as the learners in ESL environments (i.e., Finnish and Swedish) acquired an additional amount of the present progressive functions (i.e., future and subjective functions).

In addition to the aforementioned studies undertaken overseas, in Thailand, the acquisition of English present progressive tense by L1 Thai learners has also been explored. For instance, Kongthai (2015) analyzed the acquisition of English morphosyntactic features of the present simple tense and the present progressive tense by L1 Thai and L1 Spanish students learning English as an L2. The researcher examined language transfer from different L1s based on the

Contrastive Analysis (CA). The participants were required to translate sentences from their native languages into English. The results of the study showed that L1 Spanish learners' performance was significantly greater than that of learners whose L1 was Thai, thus leading to a conclusion that the L1 Spanish learners acquired English present progressive tense better than the L1 Thai learners, thus confirming the influence of L1 transfer.

In another study, Boonjoon (2017) investigated the variable production of the English present progressive tense in different obligatory contexts, examining whether learners were able to use the tense and identify it in those contexts. Two controversial theories were applied: the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (MSIH) and the Failed Functional Features Hypothesis (FFFH). Boonjoon's (2017) participants were eight L1 Thai learners at the upper-intermediate level. Two tasks were employed for data collection: a gap-filling test and a GJT. It was found that the participants' perception of the future expressed using the present progressive tense was better than their production. Such a finding supported the FFFH, as the variable production could be accounted for by learners' L1 and textbooks they had used.

In conclusion, previous studies on the acquisition of the English present continuous tense have used different theories such as error analysis, contrastive analysis, AH, MSIH, and FFFH. However, there has been no study concerning L1 Thai learners' interlanguage of the present continuous tense. This study aimed to fill this gap by using the Interlanguage Theory to identifying the psychological factors underlying L1 Thai learners' interlanguage of the English present continuous tense.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 30 leaners of English whose L1 was Thai. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years old. They had been learning English

in school for approximately 12 years, and their English proficiency was intermediate, determined by CU-TEP scores (60-90), IELTS scores (4-6.5), or TOEFL scores (41-95).

3.2 Research Instrument

Two tasks were used in this study: the grammaticality judgment task (GJT) and the fill-in-the-blank test. Interviews were also used to elicit data. All the functions of the present continuous tense, i.e., instantaneous, continuous, temporary, habitual, and future (Eastwood, 1994) were included in the GJT and fill-in-the-blank test. Two items were designed for each context; 30 items were designed for each task in total. The objective of the GJT was to determine the participants' perception of the present continuous tense, while the objective of the fill-in-the-blank test was to assess the production of the present continuous tense. In addition, interviews were conducted with eight randomly selected participants. The interviews consisted of five open-ended questions designed to gain insights from the participants into their use of the English present continuous tense so as to shed light on the psychological factors underlying their interlanguage.

3.3 Validation of the Instruments

Regarding the validity of the tasks, all three tasks were verified with the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), developed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). Three raters, who were native English speakers with backgrounds in English linguistics or English Instruction, examined and judged the validity of the instruments All the instruments employed in this study received the required IOC scores of .67 to 1. In this research, a pilot study was conducted to examine the feasibility and test the data collection procedure before applying it to the main study. The pilot study included eight independent L1 Thai learners and showed that there were no issues with the instruments or the data collection procedure.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

An online recruitment poster was used during the initial recruitment process. The participants were asked for their CU-TEP score, IELTS score, or TOEFL score to indicate their level of English proficiency. After 30 intermediate learners were recruited, they were provided with a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. To ensure internal validity and prevent order effect from the sequence of the task, Counterbalancing Hypothesis (Lyster & Mori, 2006) was applied. According to Lyster and Mori (2006), there are prompts or factors that can affect learners' output on a task, such as the sequence of the task. After the tests, interviews were conducted to gain more insights into the participants' experiences and attitudes regarding the use of the English present continuous tense.

3.5 Data Analysis

After the data were collected, a dependent t-test was applied to calculate the mean difference between the two sets of tests. The calculation process was aimed to indicate the significance between two variations of the elicitation tests, perception test and production test, in the use of English present continuous tense. Furthermore, the results from the tasks were analyzed by implementing Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory to determine the psychological factors influencing L1 Thai learners' interlanguage of the English present continuous tense. The scores for each function of the English present continuous tense were analyzed, and the functional problems were identified based on the five psychological factors. In addition, data from the interviews were qualitatively analyzed for further investigation of the psychological factors.

4. Results and Discussion

The GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test were employed in this study with an aim to explain L1 Thai learners' perception and production with respect to the functions of the present continuous tense. The results from both tests are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Results from the GJT and the Fill-in-the-blank Test

		GJT	Fill-in-the-blank Test
Proportion		193/300	159/300
Percentage		64.33%	53.00%
Mean		6.43	5.30
S.D.		1.81	1.29
df	29		
t	3.659		
Sig.	.001		

The results revealed that the scores from the GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test were relatively low, at 64.33% and 53.00%, respectively.

On average, the intermediate L1 Thai learners perceived the English present continuous tense (M = 6.43) at a higher rate than they produced it (M = 5.30). A dependent t-test was conducted to compare the data between the GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test. The difference was significant (t (29) = 3.659, p < .01). The findings showed that even though the participants scored higher in GJT than the fill-in-the-blank test, the overall results were quite low.

Based on the Interlanguage Hypothesis (Selinker, 1972), the problems could be traced back to the factor of L1 transfer. While English has tense, Thai is a tenseless language (see 2.2). The absence of tense in Thai possibly resulted in difficulties of the Thai learners' perception and production of the English present continuous tense in connection with functions. The results were confirmed by interview data, as every single interviewed participant said the absence of tense in the Thai language posed challenges for them in how to use and understand the tense. The participants agreed that they were able to use

the form of the tense, i.e., 'is'/'am'/'are' + V. + -ing, without difficulty but they were unable to identify the different functions of the tense. The results from both tests revealed a low rate of incorrect present continuous tense usage. There were only four errors from the GJT (1.33%) and eight errors on the fill-in-the-blank test(2.67%). Examples of the errors included missing verb to be ('is'/'am'/'are'), e.g., *'It is rain (rain) right now,' missing -ing, e.g., *'He pretending (pretend) with his teacher tomorrow,' and adding -s to verb in future simple, 'will + verb,' e.g., *'He will speaks with his teacher tomorrow morning.'

Table 2

Breakdown of Accuracy Rates for the Different Functions of the Present Continuous Tense by L1 Thai Learners in the GJT and Fill-in-the-blank Test

Rank	GJT		Fill-in-the-blank-Test	
	%	**Function**	**%**	**Function**
1	90	Future	95	Instantaneous
2	78.33	Habitual	93.33	Future
3	746.67	Instantaneous	51.67	Continuous
4	53.33	Temporary	16.67	Habitual
5	46.67	Continuous	15	Temporary

Figure 1

The Use of Present Continuous Tense in Terms of Functions by L1 Thai Learners from the GJT and Fill-in-the-blank Test
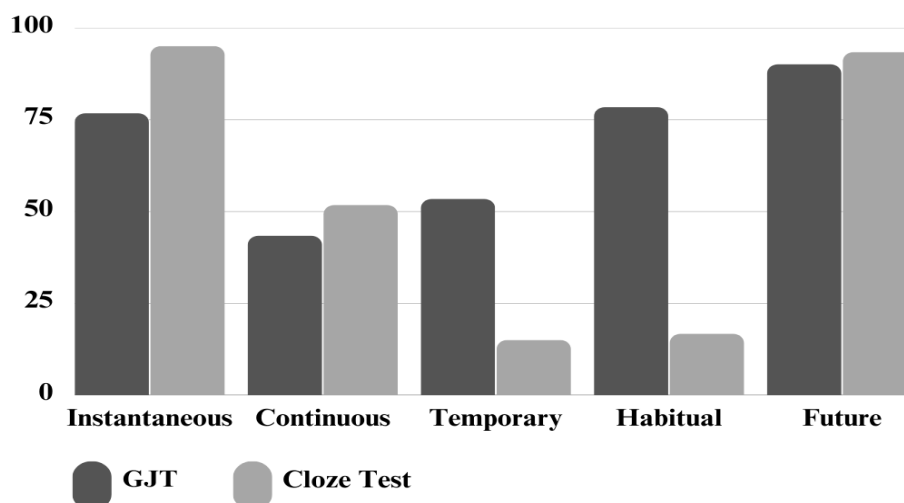
Table 2 and Figure 1 show the accuracy rates for the different functions of the present continuous tense by L1 Thai learners in the GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test. It can be seen that the correct results of the GJT tended to be much higher than those of the fill-in-the-blank test- except for the instantaneous and the future functions. Regarding the GJT, the future function received the highest score (90%), followed by the habitual function (78.33%), and the instantaneous function (76.67%). The temporary function accuracy was around half (53.33%), followed by the continuous function (43.33%). As far as the fill-in-the-blank test is concerned, the instantaneous function received the highest accuracy rate (95%), followed by the future function (93.33%), and the continuous function (51.67%). The accuracy of the habitual function dropped to 16.67%, followed by the function with the lowest score, which was the temporary function (15%).

To summarize, the future function received the highest score in the GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test (90% and 93.33% accordingly). The overall accuracy rate of the instantaneous function was also high in the GJT and in the fill-in-the-blank test (76.67% and 95% accordingly). The overall accuracy rate of the habitual function was higher in the GJT (78.33%), but lower in the fill-in-the-blank test (16.67%). The L1 Thai learners' scores in the temporary and the habitual functions were much lower in the fill-in-the-blank test than the GJT.

It can be seen that the use of the present continuous tense was not well achieved in many functions. The participants could not achieve 80-90% accuracy rates across all the functions. The overall mean scores were 6.43 for the GJT and 5.40 for the fill-in-the-blank test. There were functions that the participants were able to achieve considering the high percentages of the results. However, as previously mentioned, even though the future function received the highest accuracy rates, the participants employed the future simple tense (55.44%) and the form 'be going to' for expressing future plan (7.27%), while using the present continuous tenses at only 10%. These results are in accordance with Boonjoon

(2017). They are evidence that L1 Thai learners have less familiarity with the future function of the present continuous tense than the future simple tense. To explain, L1 Thai participants can understand the future contexts but are unable to produce the present continuous tense for such contexts. The interviews also provided some insight. According to the interview data, L1 Thai learners had studied the English present continuous tense in school. Most of them recognized the future and the instantaneous function of the tense, but few knew that the tense could be used for other functions. The answers to the third interview question, "Do you find it difficult to use this tense? Why or why not?" revealed that the participants did not have any difficulty in using the present continuous form, i.e., 'is,' 'am,' and 'are' + V.+ -ing. However, when it came to different functions, they failed to recognize the contexts of the tense usage. For example, when the participants were asked why they used the future simple tense instead of the present continuous tense, they explained that they were unfamiliar or felt wrong using the present continuous tense. In addition, many participants did not know that the present continuous tense could be used in the future context. In the Thai language, instantaneous and continuous functions can be applied with /kamlaŋ/ and /jùː/. However, these two lexical words cannot be used in temporary, habitual, and future functions. For future contexts in Thai, the language relies on time adverbials, e.g., tomorrow or next month.

As regards psychological factors which influenced the interlanguage of the English present continuous tense by L1 Thai learners in terms of functions: 1) transfer of NL, 2) overgeneralization of L2 rules, and 3) transfer of training, the data from both the GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test reflected the asymmetric patterns in functional usage of the English present continuous tense. L1 Thai learners' interlanguage of functions in the present continuous tense in this study seemed to result from the aforementioned psychological factors.

Firstly, L1 transfer likely influenced the L1 Thai learners' interlanguage of the English present continuous tense. While English has tenses, Thai is a

tenseless language (see 2.2.2). From the interviews, the participants acknowledged the distinct characteristics between Thai and English regarding the existence of tense in English and non-existence of tense in Thai. They, however, did not recognize it as a problem since they were able to form the English present continuous tense, i.e., verb to be ('is,' 'am,' or 'are') + present participle + -ing, which is why the answers were in correct grammatical form but incorrectly used in the context given. As mentioned earlier, the participants made very few errors in form, i.e., GJT (1.33%) and the fill-in-the-blank test (2.67%). The majority of errors occurred in the functions (see 4.2). In the Thai language, instantaneous and continuous functions can be applied with /kamlaŋ/ and /jù:/ (see 2.2.2). However, these two lexical words cannot be used in temporary, habitual, and future functions. This was likely the reason why the participants were able to score much higher in instantaneous and continuous functions but quite low in temporary and habitual functions in both perception and production (see Table 5). According to Yang and Huang (2004), L2 learners tend to rely on their L1 for pragmatic and lexical devices when they produce tense and aspect. The lexical devices /kamlaŋ/ and /jù:/ enabled L1 Thai learners to use the instantaneous and continuous functions following their L1 knowledge. However, they failed to interpret the contexts for the other functions of the present continuous tense beyond their L1, i.e. habitual, temporary, and future. As for the future function, L1 Thai learners were able to understand lexical devices such as 'tomorrow' or 'next month,' which also exist in the Thai language. However, the participants were unable to produce answers in the present continuous form due to more familiarity with the future simple tense, not because they were unable to understand the future function of the present continuous tense. The participants applied other tenses in the contexts of the present continuous tense, which were the results of their incompetence in identifying the functions of the English present continuous tense. These results are in line with Boonjoon (2017), Dereli (2014), Gabriele (2009), Kongthai (2015), and Zhiri (2017), in which the failure to acquire the present continuous tense was due to L1 transfer.

Another psychological factor according to the Interlanguage Hypothesis is overgeneralization of L2 rules. By replacing the present continuous tense with other tenses—the present simple tense and the future simple tense, the participants overgeneralized the L2 rules to contexts where the rules were inapplicable. The reason is assumed to be that the participants employed other tenses they had learned and considered appropriate when they encountered unfamiliar contexts of the present continuous tense, i.e., temporary and habitual contexts, leading to low accuracy in its use. The participants frequently overgeneralized the present simple tense since the contexts were mostly in the present time. Using the present simple tense because of its simplicity and relation to the present time was thereby a common error. From the interviews, the participants were able to identify only one or two functions of the present continuous tense when asked, "Do you know when the English present continuous tense is used?" Some answers from the interviews included: "Not quite sure. It is used for present action that is continuing to the future, is it?" and "Not sure, But I understand that it is used for an event in the present that is continuing. If compared to a graph, it's going to be something that continues to some point and continues until now." Such overgeneralization cases indicate that the low-scored functions and future function were not yet acquired by the participants, and they overused tenses during this developmental stage. These results are in line with Boonjoon (2017) and Khazaal (2009), where the participants displayed overgeneralization of the present simple tense in the present continuous context.

It is worth mentioning that even though the future function received a high rate of accuracy, the scores were marked from the participants' overgeneralization of the future simple tense. This phenomenon demonstrates that the participants recognized the future context in the target language and attempted to apply the target language's rule, revealing their process of interlanguage development. The overgeneralization of the future simple tense in the GJT and the fill-in-the-blank test was considered appropriate for using the

future function. Therefore, the scores were given even though the participants did not utilize the present continuous tense according to the aim of elicitation tests. The fill-in-the-blank items consisted of time phrases indicating the future, i.e. 'next month' and 'tomorrow,' As these future time phrases specified planned events; thus the present continuous tense could also be used. The results revealed that there was a high rate of using the future simple tense for the future function, which signified that the participants were aware of it. However, the much higher rate of future simple tense usage compared to the present continuous tense reflects overgeneralization in the participants' interlanguage of the present continuous tense for the future function.

Such results can be traced back to another psychological factor, transfer of training. Based on the Interlanguage Hypothesis (Selinker, 1972), transfer of training is a result of teaching methods and textbooks. Most of the participants acknowledged the instantaneous function but did not seem to be aware of the habitual function and the temporary function. L1 Thai learners' instructions and materials are focused on the instantaneous function, but not the other functions. The results from both tests showed that the future function was scored at the highest accuracy rate. The reason for the frequent usage of the future simple tense possibly derived from the lack of emphasis on the future function of the present continuous tense. However, the other contexts (i.e., habitual function, future function, continuous function, and temporary function), which were not emphasized in the teaching materials, scored very low in the production task as well. The lack of emphasis on the functions of the present continuous tense also led to adverse consequences, including low accuracy rates for the continuous, habitual, and temporary functions. The reason why Thai learners did very well in the instantaneous function was possibly that this function was the first and main function that L1 Thai students were taught. From the first interview question, "Did you study the present continuous tense before? If so, how did you study it?," the participants' answered, "I studied the tense from the classroom and textbook." Considering the second interview question, "Do you know when the

English present continuous tense is used?," the participants' answered, "To describe the event that is happening right now." These answers reflected the students' competence of the English present continuous tense due to transfer of training. In the fill-in-the-blank test, the targeted sentences contained adverbial phrases denoting the instantaneous function, such as "right now" and "at this moment," which made the participants more certain in using the present continuous tense. These results are in line with Fauziati and Muamaroh (2016) that the interlanguage of verb tense systems to indicate present, past, and future by Indonesian EFL learners was affected by L1 transfer and transfer of training. Gabriele and Canales (2011) also discovered that L1 Spanish and Japanese learners performed better on present progressive tests with the adverbs "now" and "this week."

5. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study collected data from a group of 30 intermediate Thai learners of English. Future research could investigate L2 participant groups of different proficiency levels for comparisons and contrasts. Secondly, the focus of this study was on the interlanguage of the English present continuous tense and its functional usage. Exploring the interlanguage of other tenses, such as the simple present, past simple, and future tenses, would offer a more comprehensive picture of L2 learners' interlanguages of English tenses.

6. Conclusion

The results from the GJT, the fill-in-the-blank test, and interviews revealed that the participants' interlanguage of the present continuous tense occurred in the functions. Moreover, the interview data confirmed that the psychological factors underlying L1 Thai learners' interlanguage were transfer of L1, overgeneralization, and transfer of training. The present study yields theoretical and pedagogical implications as follows.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of the present study provide empirical evidence of the psychological factors underlying the interlanguage of the present continuous tense by Thai learners of English, i.e., transfer of NL, overgeneralization of L2 rules, and transfer of training. The present study, therefore, contributes to SLA research by supporting the Interlanguage Hypothesis (Selinker, 1972).

6.2 Pedagogical Implications

The findings from this study inform pedagogical practices for teaching the English present continuous tense to Thai learners of English by examining the three psychological factors: transfer of NL, overgeneralization of L2 rules, and transfer of training. First of all, transfer of L1 plays a crucial part in L2 learners' interlanguage in interpreting the contexts of the tense and in determining the functions in which the present continuous tense can be used. Secondly, the tendency towards overgeneralization suggests a need for more comprehensive explanations and input regarding the functional use of the present continuous tense. Teachers can provide authentic examples and contrasting scenarios to illustrate the nuanced use of the tense across different functions. Thirdly, transfer of training suggests a potential lack of emphasis on some functions during instruction. To avoid negative transfers from transfer of training, instructors should ensure all functions of the present continuous tense receive equal attention in the curriculum.

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10. Appendices

Appendix A

Grammaticality Judgment Test

30 items

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Instructions: Read the following sentences and judge whether the underlined phrases are grammatical or ungrammatical by putting ✓ in the box. If the phrases are ungrammatical, write down the grammatical phrase in the blank.

Name-Lastname: _____   Grade: _____   Proficiency: _____

Part 1 Grammaticality Judgment Test (30 items)

Instructions: Read the following sentences and identify whether the underlined phrases are correct or incorrect by putting ✓ in the box. If the phrase is incorrect, write down the correct phrase in the blank.

1. A: What do you think that old lady does in the evening?

    B: She <u>is feeding</u> the stray dog every evening.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

2. <u>Earth is the only planet</u> in our solar system that has living creatures.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

3. Drunk driving is <u>against the law</u>.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

4. He <u>is constantly complaining</u> about his work.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

5. She likes the bag <u>but</u> she thinks it is too expensive.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

6. You can either get a discount <u>and</u> receive a gift card for your next purchase.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

7. He is a man with great vision and <u>leadership</u>

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

8. Nutritious food and enough sleeping are parts of <u>healthy</u> living

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

9. She <u>is still working</u> in her office.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

10. <u>The tabby cat</u> generally refers to any cat with a stripe pattern.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

11. There are many beach shacks <u>in the beach</u>, offering various kinds of tropical experiences.

    ☐ Correct　☐ Incorrect　_____

12. He <u>speaks</u> with his teacher tomorrow morning.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

13.   She is an electrical <u>engine</u> who works in a technology company.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

14.   I think sitting in the garden must be <u>relaxed</u>.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

15.   A: Lucas seems busy lately.

       B: He <u>is working</u> on his final project. He will finish it soon.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

16.   <u>A plastic bottle </u>can cause more harm to the environment than you think.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

17.   My dog sits down in the middle <u>between me and my cat</u>.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

18.   He always has time for his family <u>despite</u> working multiple jobs and staying overtime.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

19.   She <u>is going</u> to her friend's house tonight.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

20.   The important skills that students need to learn are <u>management</u> and self-care.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

21.   She watched a really <u>thrilling</u> movie last week.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

22.   There is <u>an university</u> in Bangkok that offers an economic course for the public.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

23.   The present came, <u>along by a card and a bouquet</u>.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

24.   She <u>watches</u> an interesting TV series recently.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect   _____

25.   Task management skills not only allow students to have control over their time <u>as well as</u> the quality of their work.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect _____

26.   He <u>is living</u> with his parents until he can find a new apartment.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect _____

27.   She <u>looks</u> for a part-time job as a cashier.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect _____

28.   Some say <u>happy</u> is more important than money.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect _____

29.   I can't believe it is <u>really</u>.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect _____

30.   She <u>is visiting</u> her beach house every summer.

☐ Correct   ☐ Incorrect _____

End of the test

Appendix B

Fill-in-the-blank Test

30 items

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Name-Lastname: _____   Grade: _____   Proficiency: _____

Part 2 Fill in the blank (30 items)

<u>Instructions</u>: Complete the sentences by using the verb in the brackets in a correct grammatical form.

1.   A plane is flying _____ (on/above) our head.

2.   She passed the English exam _____ (although/even though) she does not understand any grammatical rules.

3.   It _____ (rain) right now, did you bring an umbrella?

4.   There is _____ (a/an/the) movie about some strange things with a lot of kids, I cannot remember the name.

5.   A: Is Mary busy right now?

      B: She _____ (check) her E-mail.

6.   Our summer vacation was such a _____ (delight) moment.

7.   One quality of unadmirable people is _____ (arrogant).

8.   My neighbor lives _____ (aside/across) the street, opposite of my house.

9.   A: Has Mason brought us our coffee yet?

        B: Not yet, he _____ (wait) for our order at the coffee shop.

10.   You must contact the police if there is _____ (a/an/the) emergency.

11.   Nowadays, people have listened to podcasts for _____ (entertain).

12.   She is twenty but still has_____ (child) personality.

13.   A great environment supports the well-being of citizens _____ (whereas/while) toxic environments infect people with physical and mental issues.

14.   He _____ (walk) around nonstop. He is really energetic, isn't he?

15.   He _____ (act) unlike himself today. I wonder what is wrong with him.

16.   Some companies tend to hire people with high _____ (educate).

17.   You have to wait _____ (before/until) the bus arrives and then we will call a taxi.

18.   I feel like this is winter, _____ (a/an/the) weather is chilling.

19.   She _____ (take) her medicine until the end of the week, according to doctor's advice.

20.   You can find this architecture _____ (along/around) this area of London.

21.   My boyfriend _____ (pretend) like he can not hear me again.

22.   This exercise might be considered as too _____ (difficulty).

23.   We do not know how to behave when _____ (a/an/the) boss suddenly walks in. He is a serious and strict man.

24.   She is interested in subjects like science and _____ (chemical).

25.   She _____ (behave) oddly nice and obedient these days.

26.   My cat had jumped _____ (on to/above) a shelf and knocked everything down.

27.   You can listen to the advice and adjust your work _____ (and/or)

repeat your mistake again.

28. She _____ (leave) our city to Oregon, USA next month.

29. It has such a friendly and _____ (cheer) personality.

30. It _____ (arrive) tomorrow. Can you pick it up for me?

End of the test

Appendix C

Interviews

5 items

Estimated time: 10 minutes. Interview questions.

1. Did you study the present continuous tense before? If so, how did you study it?

2. Do you know when the English present continuous tense is used?

3. Have you used this tense before, and in which context have you used it?

4. Do you find it difficult to use this tense? Why or why not?

5. What are your attitudes toward the English present continuous tense compared with the Thai language, in terms of grammar or other aspects?