POLITICAL DISCOURSE: THE POLITICS OF THAI POVERTY[*]
วาทกรรมการเมือง : การเมืองเรื่องความยากจนในสังคมไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

งานศึกษาชิ้นนี้เน้นที่คำว่า ความยากจน ซึ่งได้ถูกสร้างขึ้นและผลิตซ้ำในสังคมไทย
อย่างต่อเนื่องมาเป็นเวลานาน เป้าหมายของการศึกษาอยู่ที่การเปิดเผยให้เห็นว่านิยามความหมาย
ของคำว่าความยากจนนั้นมีอิทธิพลต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงสังคมไทยทั้งในส่วนของโครงสร้างสังคม
และในส่วนของชุดความคิดที่ครอบงำคนส่วนใหญ่ในสังคมไทยอย่างไร นิยามความหมาย
ดังกล่าวมีกลไกอะไรที่ทำให้คนส่วนใหญ่เหล่านั้นยอมรับอัตตลักษณ์ของความเป็นคนจนภายใต้
ระบบความสัมพันธ์ทางสังคมที่ไม่เท่าเทียมกัน และยอมรับการถูกเอารัดเอาเปรียบในรูปแบบ
ต่าง ๆ โดยคนส่วนน้อยที่มีอำนาจในสังคม

ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการศึกษารวบรวมจากวาทกรรมความจนของอดีตนายกรัฐมนตรี พ.ต.ท. ดร. ทักษิณ ชินวัตร ในรายการนายกทักษิณพบประชาชน ตั้งแต่ปี ค.ศ. 2001-2005 โดยศึกษาจาก คำพูดที่ถูกถอดเทปและตีพิมพ์เป็นหนังสือจำนวน 9 เล่ม โดยสำนักเลขาธิการนายกรัฐมนตรี การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลดำเนินการใน 3 รูปแบบร่วมกัน คือ *หนึ่ง* การวิเคราะห์แบบจุลภาคและมหภาค *สอง* คือการวิเคราะห์ความหมายสองมิติ คือความหมายเชิงพื้นผิวและความหมายเชิงลึก และ *สาม* การวิเคราะห์ตามแนวคิดเชิงโครงสร้างและเชิงหลังโครงสร้าง เพื่อวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจระหว่าง ความรู้ และความจริง

ผลจากการวิเคราะห์ พบว่า อดีตนายกทักษิณใช้กลยุทธ์ทางภาษา 6 ขั้น เพื่อให้มีอิทธิพลต่อระบบคิด ความรู้สึก อัตลักษณ์และอุดมการณ์ของคนจน กลไกดังกล่าวประกอบด้วย การนิยามความหมายคำว่า ความยากจน เพื่อให้มองเห็นความจริงเรื่องความจนในลักษณะหนึ่ง และภายใต้ความจริงเรื่องความจนเช่นนั้น มีการใช้กลวิธีทางวาทกรรมเพื่อนำไปสู่การผลิตซ้ำระบบความสัมพันธ์แบบอุปถัมภ์ ภายใต้รูปแบบการปกครองแบบประชาธิปไตยและวัฒนธรรมการเมืองของไทย

คำสำคัญ: ความยากจน วาทกรรมการเมือง วาทกรรมความยากจน กลยุทธ์ทางวาทกรรม กลวิธีทางวาทกรรม การวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมเชิงวิพากษ์

Abstract

This study focuses on the notions of poverty, which are variously redefined. Its aim is to represent power relationships between language and society by uncovering how discourses on poverty influence both Thai society and its people, especially the poor. It is to unravel what and how discourse mechanisms are employed for distorting social inequality to become accepted realities for the poor.

This study will explore one of the tools that allow certain politicians to exploit and use the poor as a tool for victory in general elections, as a personal army to support or fight for them, and as loyal clients to benevolent patrons. This particular tool is discourse on poverty. The data were the texts collected from Thaksin Shinawatra's transcriptions of his talks in his weekly radio program, "*na yok thaksin pob pra cha chon*", since the year 2001-2005. The analyses work on two levels- macro and micro analysis, associated with two layers of analysis--superficial and deep analysis; and two approaches of structuralism and post structuralism with Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Analysis (SCA) together with Foucault's Archeology of Knowledge and Genealogy.

The findings show that Thaksin employs strategies with six steps of discourse signification and manipulation functioning at the level of people's cognitive system to constitute his reality of poverty.

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BACKGROUND

"Poverty has to be urgently evaporated from Thai society with in six years"

"ความยากจนจะต้องหมดไปจากสังคมไทยภายใน 6 ปี"

PM Thaksin Shinawatra, May 2001.

This pivotal policy of the Thaksin-led government is a beam of hope for the needy people. Why are Thai people so concern with poverty eradication?

Poverty has existed and permeated Thai society for not less than six hundred years since Ayutthaya period (Nidhi, 2000). In this regard, it could be said that nobody in Thai society have never known the meaning of poverty. The point is when the notion of poverty and the poor changed, the society changed as well. The questions then emerge that what mechanisms of discourse of poverty structure Thai society and its people, and influence people and society in various ways according to poverties' meaning. What is the power of discourses on poverty over Thai society? In this regard, poverty is not a common notion, but a political discourse.

Political discourse, in applied linguistic is different from the meaning of discourse in general in the sense that discourse is basically known as the language used in people's daily life. In this regard, nobody has never used discourse (Gee, 1999). That is discourse is used for their social interactions such as greeting and talking, or for doing social activities such as having a meeting or opening a ceremony (Schiffrin, 1994). However, political discourse acquires its meaning fatherly. Political discourse includes the language used for commonly social interactions and activities on one hand and it is used for serving the purposes of the speaker for power abuse on the other hand (Chilton, 2004). The question then emerged what mechanisms of political discourse that allows discourse to acquire power over people and society for power abuse.

To answer these questions, this article will be divided into three parts. First part will center on the framework for investigating the power of discourse and what the power of discourse is defined. The second part focuses on the case in point which is the meaning of poverty proposed by the ex-PM Thaksin Shinawatra. The final part includes the conclusions and suggestions.

PART ONE -- The Framework for the Study

To investigate discourse mechanisms, two frameworks are employed. One is structuralistic approaches and another is post-structuralistic approaches. For structuralism language is structured and the structure functions in superstructure of the society (Sim and Loon, 2001). Superstructures refer to everything cultural, such as religion, law, traditions, mores and beliefs. Such social superstructures function unconsciously in people's brain and transform a human being into a social agent through the process of socialization. Such processes continually function since we were born through social institutions, like family, religion, and education, in order to constitute a set of thoughts or beliefs namely **ideology** which is what for people to hold on for life or die for (Sim and Loon, 2001). In this sense, ideology functions within two levels. One is at the conscious level or at the superficial level which can be recognized by our own in terms of our thought to things people and the world. The other functions at the unconscious level or deep level which is appeared in term of a self-identity or what we defined ourselves.

However Althusser argue that **ideology** is in fact a distortion of reality for blinding social inequality to be seen as natural, normal, and common. It distorts people to be never questioned on why such social phenomena of inequality between people happen and why they are exploited within such a social inequality. In this regard, an ideology is viewed as a mechanism for the one in power to exploit people unconsciously by hiding or distorting some reality. (Sim and Loon, 2001; Mill, 1997).

Consequently, post-structuralistic approach proposed that the power to govern people and exploited them is not exist in the superstructure of society but within people's brain in terms of the meaning of language or discourses. Foucault says that we are what we define ourselves or our own self-identity is governed by discourses in our brain. That is changing the meaning of discourse in term of self-identity effect changing people's way of life and then activities as well as interactions in society. And when social interactions change, type of society will be changed. This represents the power of discourse to shape people and society. Hence, the source of discourse power generates in people's brain through the practice of discourse meaning (Foucault, 1990).

Hence to investigate the power of discourse, Paul Chilton proposed two devices of discourse mechanisms influence people. One is **discourse signification** which refers to signifying the meaning to discourse the case in point here is discourse on poverty. Another is **discourse manipulation** which refers to the ways or strategies for manipulating such meaning of discourse to be accepted as reality on one hand and to serve the hidden purpose of the speaker for power abuse on the other hand (Chilton, 2004).

Within two approaches, the framework consisted of three devices employed for investigating discourse mechanisms which are influenced people by governing their thoughts, and then action, activities and interactions, and then contributing to create some social phenomena which are beneficial for transforming the speaker's discourse into social reality. The three devices are **ideology, discourse signification, and discourse manipulations**. All of these are used for analyzing the data in case.

PART TWO – The Data and analysis

To analyze the case -- discourses of poverty proposed by Thaksin − the data are collected from his speech in his weekly radio talk namely "Thaksin meet his people or *nayok thaksin pob pra sha shon*" since the year 2001-2005. The transcriptions of his speeches are

published into nine volumes by the secretarial office of the prime minister. The analyses are conducted within 3 approaches. First is a quantitative and qualitative analysis. Second is micro and macro analysis. Lastly is superficial and deep structure.

Within *a quantitative analysis*, it is found that more than 4,000 issues are proposed in his weekly radio talk. The point is that there is just only 9% out of them concerning poverty-related problems. The question emerged how such a little amount of poverty issues can acquire power. Moreover, it can be observed that the notion of poverty is such a common notion practicing among most Thai politicians, then what and how such a notion of poverty proposed by Thaksin enable to acquire power over Thai people and society?

To answer such questions, *qualitative analyses* are employed. They include macro–micro analysis. A micro analysis is to analyze the meaning of discourse individually and macro analysis is to analyze its discourse meaning wholly. Furthermore, they also cover two levels of analysis; one is the meaning at the surface level of discourse. It is the meaning from what is said explicitly. Another is the meaning at the deep level of discourse which is not given explicitly but can be understood by the audience themselves. It was the hidden meaning understood by then all sharing with the same socio-culture. Encoding this meaning of word choices and its articulation is the way to expose the hidden purpose of the speaker − Thaksin.

To analyze discourse significations, it is important to keep in mind that **discourse signification** focuses on the meaning seemingly created to be accepted as reality but in fact it is created to serve the speaker's purpose for power abuse. While **discourse manipulation** refers to the ways or strategies for manipulating such meaning of discourse to be accepted as reality on one hand and to serve the hidden purpose of the speaker for power abuse on the other hand. Such accepted reality affects the way people perceive themselves and the social world (Chilton, 2004: 44-47). The analyses work on two aspects. First focuses on discursive strategies − how the poor's newly created perceptions of themselves affected their existing identity and ideology. Second is on the definitions of the poor and poverty proposed by Thaksin.

1) Discursive strategies for the poor's newly created perceptions

From data analyses, the results show that Thaksin employed **six steps of strategies** of discourse signification and manipulations to constitute the power to his discourse on poverty. Six steps involved 1) reshaping existing perceptions of the poor ideology, 2) creating the perception of problems, 3) proposing social issues, 4) creating needs for changes, 5) praising the poor, and 6) creating a new audience's and speaker's identity and ideology.
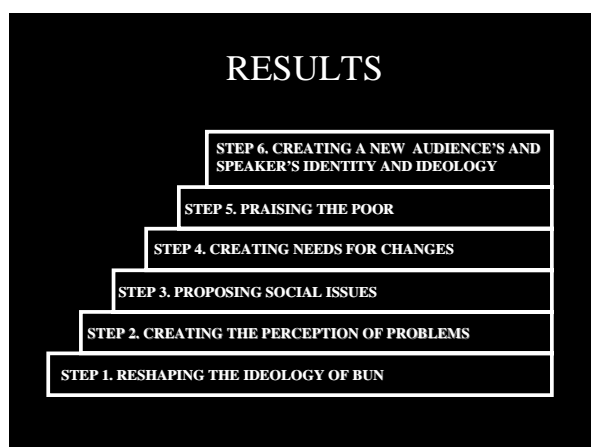
Figure 1 Six steps of Strategies of Discourse Signification and Manipulations

Step one -- Reshaping existing perceptions of the poor ideology

Excerpt 1

"We are an open country. In the near future, the boundaries between countries will soon disappear. We have to prepare ourselves and our systems so that our younger generations will live in a good society, a good system. I do not want you all, the people in my generation, to stay still waiting for bun or merit from our ancestors to shape your life, to just waste your lives, that will not benefit the country. The country will be lost." (4/28/2001)

Excerpt 2

"After returning from a trip to Laos, I had an opportunity to chair a 'ngarn-bun งานบุญ (the ritual for creating more merit – author)' for moving out of harm's way. Many eighty-to-ninety year old senior priests together with 1,100 monks were present at the ceremony. People in the North-East believe this to be a very important ceremony especially for solving all kinds of the country's problem." (6/16/2001)

Referring to above excerpts, the notions of **bun** are mentioned in both excerpts. However the ways he signified the perception of **bun** are different.

Excerpt 1 presented on the first day of his radio program shows that Thaksin first attempted to shift the poor's ideology on **bun** in order to reduce the value of bun. This can be seen quite explicitly as he argued that the way people relied on **bun** would not be beneficial for their descendants, "younger generations" and the country.

However, in Excerpt 2 he talked of the power of **bun** to protect the country from harm and solve the problems in the country. In this regard **superficially** it could be considered that from the excerpt 1, Thaksin attempted to create a better way of thinking suited for the contemporary world. **Bun** cannot be explicitly proven it sounds unscientific thus people should not place their hope on it and wait for it to reshape their lives. But **at the deeper level** it should be questioned why he attempted to shift only some part of the **bun** perception. He attempted to shift the perception on **bun** at the **micro level** − the individual perception − as shown in Excerpt 1, while still maintaining it at the **macro level** − the whole society − as in Excerpt 2.

Hence, this kind of meaning mingling raised the question of what was hidden as the purpose behind such manner of speech.

Step two -- Creating the perception of problems

It should be noted that though the issues of poverty and the poor mentioned on his radio talks, when compared to the other issues he proposed, accounted for less than 9%, the issues of poverty were very dense in the first year as circled in Figure 2 below.

Grey = other issues

Black = poverty issues
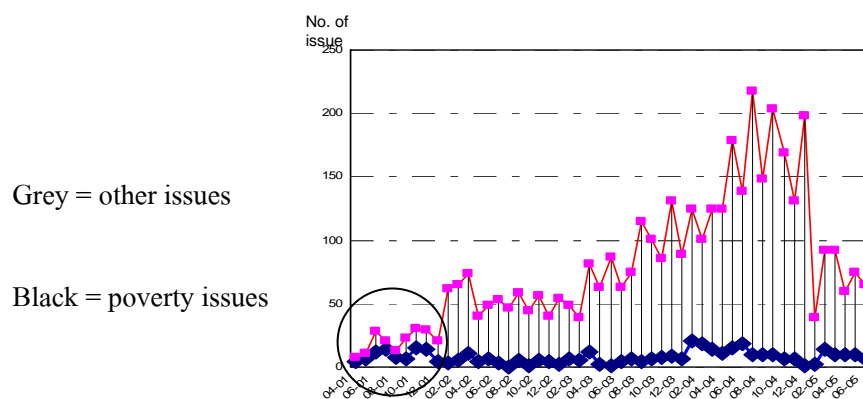
Figure 2 Ratio of Talk on Poverty and Other Issues

However within the 9% of his talks concerning issues on poverty and the poor more than 50% were mentioned within his first radio talk. So his first radio talk was considered the most significant. On his first radio talk, the salient notion proposed by Thaksin was "*problems*" which accounted for 36 times. The problems that he mentioned seem to be related to the previous government and their lack of vision, good management and their professional decision as seen in the examples below.

(1) "เพราะผมถือว่า **ปัญหา**ของชาติวันนี้หนักหนาอยู่พอสมควร" or "I consider that **the nation's problem today is quite serious**".

(2) "ยังมี**ปัญหา**ที่ต้องแก้เยอะ" or "there are still **a lot of problems waiting to be solved."**

(3) "**ปัญหาตกค้าง**ที่รัฐบาลได้ทำคือ   การ**แก้ปัญหา**ของสมัชชาคนจน **ปัญหา**ของเกษตรกรภาคต่าง ๆ … เพื่อเรียกร้องให้รัฐบาลแก้**ปัญหา**ให้เขาอยู่ที่บริเวณรอบทำเนียบรัฐบาลเป็นเวลานานมาก" or **"the existing problems** are the problems **left from the previous governments.** Those are the problems of the poor assembly, the problems of the various agricultural sectors ... All of these urge government to recover because they have gathered around the government house building requesting solutions **for a long time**.

(4) "**ปัญหาที่สำคัญ**ในการจะสร้างรากฐานสำคัญของประเทศ   ถ้าตราบใดคนที่เป็นเกษตรกรของประเทศยังยากจนอยู่   ประเทศจะมั่นคงได้ยากเราต้องทำพร้อม ๆ กันครับ **ปัญหา**ความยากจน **ปัญหา**เกษตรกร **ปัญหา**เศรษฐกิจ   **ปัญหา**ภาคธุรกิจภาคการเงิน   และ**ปัญหา**การบริหารการจัดการ ทิศทางในการดำเนินการของประเทศของการค้ากับต่างประเทศต้องปรับใหม่หมด" or "the crucial problems for stabilizing the nation's strength is that as long as the poor are still poor, the country will be not stable. We need to improve every thing at the same time, such as the poverty problems, agricultural problems, business and financial problems, and management problems. We have to restructure all of the country's management systems, especially in the international trade sectors."

The point is that for what functions such a numerous account of the notion of "problem" serves. Relying on the assumption that every word we employ is purposeful. The function of the notion "problem" have could be two folds.

The first function is assumed to create the perception of numerous social problems in the current society. Following Deleuze, language reality generates the thought event and then creates the perception of social reality in the audience's cognition. Hence, various accounts of the notion "problem" employed here can be said to signify the current social reality with numerous problems occurring in Thailand. Some examples are in Example (1) of "**ปัญหาของชาติวันนี้หนักหนา**" or "the nation's problem today is quite serious" and in Example (2) "**ยังมีปัญหาของชาติที่ต้องแก้อีกเยอะ**" or "there are still a lot of problems waiting to be solved".

The second function is to represent the perception of problems within two regards. *The first one* is to call to the audience's attention to the problems from the previous governments. For doing this, the speaker links the meaning of "**ปัญหาตกค้าง**" or "existing problems" with "**เป็นเวลานาน**" or "for a long time" at the end of the message as shown in Example (3). *The second one* is to imply as in Example (4) that there are lots of problems left for him to resolve. In this regard, various kinds of problems such as poverty-related problems, agricultural problems, economic problems, financial problems, or management problems are mentioned in order for the speaker to attach them with the phrase "to be restructured" at the end of his message.

Hence the two functions are *first* to blame the previous governments for having created the problems, and *second* to shape the audience's perception so that they believe he is the one who can solve these problems. In this regard, the purpose of his proposing of problems seems to be one on one hand to **superficially** alert the poor to be aware of the problems against them and their country. But on the other hand his talk **deeply** serves the function of pinpointing the failures of the previous governments and the senior officers and the administrations involved.

Consequently, the blame for the failure of their performances led the audience to believe in the needs to "execute" the previous PMs with a "political death" in leading the country. The evidence for this regard manifested itself in the result of the general election votes

in the year 2005 in which Thaksin and his party gained overwhelming supporting votes. That is it can be assumed that the more blame on the previous governments that were mentioned and perceived as real the higher the chance for Thaksin to be viewed as the best PM.

In this light, this step is employed to damage the others especially the previous government and the previous PMs while at the same time to escalate his government and himself as a sought-after leader at the time. However his discourse would not have been effective if it had been mentioned only once. But with his consistency in proposing the notion of problems, the words came to hold more power. In this regard Wiroj Aroonmanakul (2003) posits that his radio talk served various functions, one of which was to attract and criticize other politicians.

Step three- Proposing social issues

In order to link the already stated problems in step two, the need for change is emphasized as seen in the following Excerpts.

"เราเป็น**ประเทศเปิดโลกก็เปิด**   อีกหน่อยเป็น**โลกที่ไร้พรหมแดน**มากขึ้น ทุกวัน ๆ ฉะนั้นเรา**ต้องเตรียมตัวประเทศเรา เตรียมระบบเรา**ให้ลูกหลาน ของเรานั้นเติบโตมาในสภาพที่ดี**ระบบที่ดี**" or "we are now an open country. In the near future, the boundaries between countries will soon disappear. We have to prepare ourselves and our systems so that our younger generations will live in a good society, good system." (4/28/2001).

"ประเทศเราถึงเวลาที่จะ**ต้องเปลี่ยนแปลงในหลายมิติ**   ไม่ว่าจะเป็นมิติ ทางด้านการบริหาร   มิติในเรื่องของความคิด   ในการที่จะมอง**การพัฒนา ประเทศใหม่** ไม่ว่าจะเป็นเรื่องของการค้าการลงทุน เป็นสิ่งที่จะต้องมีการ **เปลี่ยนแปลง**มากหลายจุด ผมกำลังดูความรอบคอบ เพราะการ**เปลี่ยนแปลง** แต่ละครั้งถ้าไม่รอบคอบจะมีผลเสียหายต่อประเทศ" or "our country now needs change in various dimensions, such as management dimension, the

thought process needs to be renewed for further development. Trade and investment need to be changed in many ways. I am going to carefully reconsider because if changes are made with careless decisions, the nation will be damaged" (4/28/2001).

"เพราะ**ถ้า**โลกหมุนเร็ว **เราหมุนช้า** ผลสุดท้าย ก็คือคนไทยเรายากจนลง" or "since the world moves at a faster pace, the result is that Thais become poorer" (8/25/2001).

From the data above it was found that there are three types of social issues proposed by Thaksin:

First is **external social issues** which are external social phenomena such as the notion of "**globalization** ไร้พรหมแดน" "**open society** เปิดโลก" "**modernization** ทันสมัย" "**society with no boundary** โลกที่ไร้พรหมแดน" "**development direction** การพัฒนาประเทศใหม่" and "**fast pace** โลกหมุนเร็ว"

Second is **internal social issues** which are the problems mentioned above such as "...มิติทางด้านการบริหาร **national administration**" "การว่างงาน **unemployment** " "การค้าการลงทุน **financial problems**" "เราต้องเตรียมตัว **the need to prepare**" "เปลี่ยนแปลง **be changed**" etc.

Third is **Thaksin's personal issues** perceived as social issues. The type of social issues that deserved to be focused on here is **the third type**. It is interesting to see how the speaker can transform his personal issues into social issues. This was done when the speaker **implied that certain projects** which would help eradicate poverty as shown above **may not be successfully carried out without him**. For example by mentioning the word "**แรงเสียดทาน**" stress or forces "แรงเสียดทาน stress and forces" in the followings:

"ผมจะตั้งหน้าตั้งตาทำงานด้วยปัญญา และสมาธิทุ่มเทแก้ไขปัญหาความ
เดือดร้อนของประชาชนอย่างต่อเนื่อง   **โดยไม่สนใจแรงเสียดทานใด ๆ
ทั้งสิ้น**" or "I will dedicate myself to work with all my wisdom and
concentration to solve the people's problems, continually without regard
for any stress or forces against me."(4/28/2001)

"**ผมเข้ามาด้วยคะแนนเสียงท่วมท้น ผมถือว่าเป็นทั้งกำลังใจและเป็นทั้งการ
มอบหมายภารกิจอันยิ่งใหญ่**ที่ผมจะต้องใช้ทั้งสติปัญญา   สมาธิในการ
แก้ปัญหา**ถึงแม้จะมีแรงเสียดทานใด ๆ เกิดขึ้น**" or "I was elected by an
overwhelming number of votes. I consider this as both my encouragement
and your faith and responsibility in me. I will work for you with all my
wisdom and dedication to resolve the problems, though there is a lot of
stress and many forces against me." (4/28/2001)

"พี่น้องครับผมมั่นคงครับ   **ผมดำรงความมุ่งหมายในการแก้ไขปัญหาของ
ชาติ ผมจะไม่ค่อยสนใจต่อเรื่องเหล่านี้** ผมจะทำหน้าที่ของผมไป" or "my
brotherhood, I still confirm to you that I will dedicate myself to you to
resolve the national problems. I will disregard any of my personal issues;
I will go ahead with my duties." (4/28/2001)

His personal problems and relating them to the solutions of the poverty-related problems
associated with strong assertion that he was extremely dedicated to work for the people and the
country, the speaker was able not only to **make his personal issues the social issues** which
would affect the well-being of the poor but **to strengthen the closer relationship** between the
speaker and the audience as well. The fact that the speaker was able to make his personal issues
social is significant. This can be done unconsciously via the presentation of discourse
signification on poverty and the poor time after time continually.

Thus as illustrated in step 1, Thaksin proposed that the people should not wait for **bun** to improve their lives while at the same time presenting step two proposing a lot of problems the country and the people were facing. In step three, he declared the problems as social issues to highlight the importance of such problems. When such social issues -- both external and internal, are raised in the public sphere raising his personal issues at the same time transformed theses personal issues into the social issues as well. Moreover when these personal issues were mentioned with such phrases as they become **"ผมจะตั้งหน้าตั้งตาทำงาน I will dedicate myself" "ผมมั่นคง I still confirm to you" "ผมดำรงความมุ่งหมายในการแก้ไขปัญหาของชาติ I will dedicate myself to you to resolve the national problems"** and **"ผมจะทำหน้าที่ของผมไป I will go ahead with my duties"** they become even more powerful.

Following Plato, the mind is the source of human force and energy. The mind generates powerful and strong feelings such as desire, bravery, anger, love, and sympathy. Hence, pursuing the inner space/mind by first revealing the speaker's mind can be considered superficially insignificant and common when showing sincerity in communication. Moreover by seemingly revealing his true self the speaker manages to create trust in the audience as well. **This trust allows the speaker's words to be more powerful in the audience's mind**.

In this regard, the step three shows that Thaksin proposed various social issues. It seemed superficial for the audience to recognize such various social issues. However, the way he **"co-presented" his personal issues and the social issues** deserves serious scrutiny. That is, it should not be taken for granted because the possible result of his personal issues would be significant due to the fact that he would have to leave the political sphere for five years to comply with the court judgment.

In this regard employing discourse signification to create a certain perception showing him as "the only one" who was fit for the current situation seems to be his way out. Thus, linking the social issues and the personal issues let the audience to believing that he must survive his current personal storm in order to fight the national storm.

As a result his personal issue was perceived as social. Hence this step was assumed to create the establishment of **"social force" for him**. And with such social force, he can be assumed to leap "the political block" from legal accusation of hidden assets from the court and was thrown on "the throne" of his political power in Thailand to be the Prime minister of Thailand.

Step Four – Creating needs for changes

Step four is created to escalate him to power by way of forming the audience's desires as his own needs. That is Thaksin employed his talk to create a new type of people who are reinforced to believe in the need for change for better lives. The example of this is shown below.

> "ประเทศเราถึงเวลาที่จะต้อง**เปลี่ยนแปลงในหลายมิติ**" or "our country now needs changes in various dimensions" **"ต้องมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงมากหลาย จุด"** or "it needs to be changed in many ways…" **"การเปลี่ยนแปลงแต่ละ ครั้งถ้าไม่รอบคอบ** จะมีผล**เสียหาย**ต่อประเทศ" or "if changes are made with careless decisions, the nation will be damaged."   (4/28/2001).

By paving his way from step one to reduce the power of **bun** Thaksin proposed the new solution for the poor by changing the poor's idea from not waiting for bun to shape their lives but waiting for the outcome of his schemes to shift their lives. Moreover, with the previous steps allowing Thaksin to be perceived by the people as **"a sought-after leader"** who cares for the poor and the pressing needs for change, which for the poor tend to refer to "being released from suffering and gaining better social status or condition," Thaksin becomes the solution to the problems.

Furthermore change in the Thai society has been viewed as something positive in nature. Notions such as development growth and modernization all carry a positive connotation of change. On the contrary the concept of "no change" has been viewed as unprogressive undeveloped or primitive.

Hence, when the ideology governing poverty was changed into something more materialized and scientific as accumulating money instead of merit, the change seemed to the poor to be more practical and not as "far-fetched". Money is perceived as something that creates a better opportunity to shift their life. Thus they then place more of their hope on the new ideology of accumulating money. Such a new hope can be a powerful tool in the short term for PM Thaksin**.**

At this time**,** Thaksin now is not only seen as **a sought-after leader** but also seen as **"a modern benevolent patron"** – the one who is qualified as the traditional benevolent patron who is decisive and has vision in the speedy world of globalization, Thaksin used his talk to portray himself as "**the one**" in whom the poor could place their trust for a better life, instead of **bun**.

Step Five -- Praising the poor

Praising the poor was also employed to strengthen relationships between him and the poor by invoking certain emotions with praise and encouragement with a statement such as

"ผมอยู่กับคนจน ผม**ลงไป**แก้ปัญหาให้เขา ผมมีความสุขจริง ๆ.... เวลาผม ไปอยู่ต่างจังหวัด ไปอยู่กับคนจน **หาทางช่วยเหลือเขา** ผมมีความสุขครับ" or "I am very happy surrounded by the poor working to solve their problems." (11/24/2001).

"ผมจะใช้**หลักเมตตาธรรม**ในการแก้ปัญหา" or "I will employ **the mercy principle** to solve the problems." (11/10/2001) and

"ไม่มีอะไรเหนือบ่ากว่าแรงฝีมือคนไทยแน่นอน" or "There's nothing too difficult for the Thai people nationwide" (4/28//2001).

Praise and encouragement are employed to affect people's feelings and emotions. As praise creates emotional effects in the human mind and the human mind is the space of force and energy in a human being, this kind of force will then unconsciously generate power in order to govern one's behavior and practices as they would act according to such emotions. Moreover it will also affect their decision making. Hence, praise and encouragement for the poor is one essential device used to create a new perception of the speaker identity − Thaksin, by his audience − the poor.

As having known in Thai society that the poor are generally perceived as dirt or margin the effect of these kinds of words used praising the poor were not only to fasten the emotional bond between them, the relationship representing **"entourage" but also to emphasis their social relationship of "patron-client"** and **"phuyai-phunoi"** in the Thai culture.

Step Six -- Creating a new audience's and speaker's identity and ideology.

Step six is the result of all of the previous steps which shows that Thaksin tended to "attack" the traditional ideology of **bun** in order to put himself into that space as an element that generated the poor's life. The purpose was to acquire the power in the people cognition.

"ผมอยู่กับคนจน ผม**ลงไป**แก้ปัญหาให้เขา ผมมีความสุขจริงๆ …
เวลาผมไปอยู่ต่างจังหวัด ไปอยู่กับคนจน หาทาง**ช่วยเหลือ**เขา ผมมี
ความสุข"

"ผมจะใช้**หลักเมตตาธรรม**ในการแก้ปัญหา"

"ต่อไปนี้ **คำสาป**ที่ว่า ใครเป็นลูกคนจน จะต้องจนเหมือนพ่อแม่ต้องไม่มี"
(22 /3/ 2003)

The statements above when considering each word individually within Thai concept represent the hidden perception of hierarchical relationships functioning unconsciously when he viewed the poor. The notion of "ลงไป" which means "to go down" reflects the perception of himself a higher position towards the audience a lower position. Another is "หลักเมตตาธรรม" or "merciful principle" representing the reproduction of perceiving himself as a benevolent patron within the tradition Thai socio-culture working in the modern world. The notion like "The curse" which would be abolished" emphasis his power to let the poor escape from the chain of poverty − a curse.
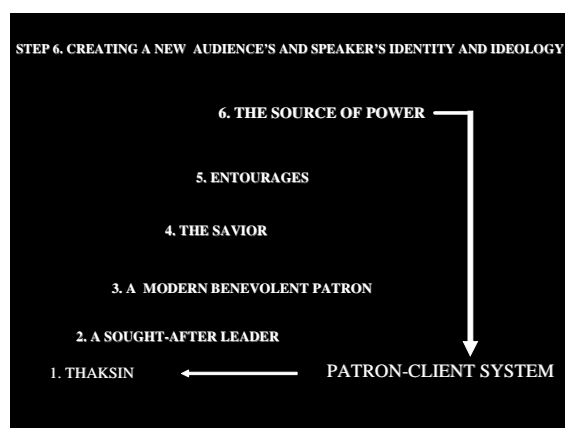
Figure 3 The Result of Six Steps of Discursive Strategies

Given the fact that people, especially the poor hold on to **bun** and **money** for their life if Thaksin was perceived as **the source of power** to better their lives instead of **bun** and **a source of money allocation**, Thaksin could be perceived by the poor as the ultimate one essential for them to eradicate poverty.

2)   The definitions of the poor and poverty proposed by Thaksin

From the data the second part on discourse signification – the definition of poverty proposed by the Ex-PM Thaksin – it was found that the definitions of the poor and poverty proposed by Thaksin could be divided into two categories; one is implicitly defined and another the other is explicitly defined.

The first category of definition of the poor is implicitly defined**.** It was observed that various definitions of poverty were mentioned along the process of proposing issues in the six steps previously discussed above. In this regard, the definitions of poverty created a new perception of reality for the audiences. That is poverty seems to serve as scaffolding making building blocks to make his points clearer as they affect the logical reasoning, the social reasoning or and even the emotional reasoning in certain ways. The definition of the poor can be perceived in five respects as shown in the examples below.

(1)   Concerning the area. The poor are defined on the basis of location in which they live such as "คนจน คือ คนที่อยู่ในชนบท" (5/26/2001; 6/9/11)

(2)   Concerning the occupation. The poor are referred to the as peasant or those in the agricultural sector such as "คนจนคือ คนที่เป็นเกษตรกร" (4/28/2001; 5/26/2001; 6/9/11)

(3)   Concerning the social status and structure. The poor are viewed as the lower part or the base of the social structure. Examples to show this point are mentioning of class, amount or structure, such as "The poor are the lower class" (2/12/2005; 3/5/2005) "The poor as the mass or majority of society" (1/8/2003; 3/12/2005) and "The poor is seen as the base of the pyramid (14,8-7/28/2001) or the base of the house/society/country" (2/26/2005; 3/12/2005; 2/12/2005).

(4) Concerning the emotion or feelings. Some examples are: "The poor are compassionate" (11/1/2003; 5/4/2002; 10/18/2003) "The poor are those with heavy burden." (9/29/2001; 4/28/2001; 7/21/2001), "The poor are hurt and abused both physically and emotionally" (2/26/2005; 7/19/2003),. "The poor are to be taken care of" (7/14/2001, 6/30/2001; 7/21/2001), "The poor lack of opportunities." (6/21/2003; 12/1/2001), and "The poor are the ones in debt." (24/1/2004; 6/30/2001).

(5) Others. Some examples of this respect are shown by the use of employing metaphors to create the sense of a family member as cousin (/28/2001; 5/19/2001); a patient (2/12/2005); or a part of body; the spinal cord. (2/26/2005):

For the notion of poverty it is found that Thaksin also variously defined such notions in the negative sense for example "Poverty is like a disease" (7/4/2001), "Poverty is the weakness." (4/17/2001), or "Poverty is the source of problems." (6/30/2001), all definitions serve the functions of strengthening the negative aspect of the poor as seen in the 13 layers of poverty as given in figure 1 above.

However, it should be noted that those examples mentioned above are produced at different times to create a perception of reality and acceptance for the audience. This differs from the following category which was produced in one occasion to **explicitly define** poverty as well as to provide resolutions.

It could be observed that the notion of poverty, which it was explicitly defined, can be seen in 7 categories at that time. Its production can be assumed to serve the function of claiming his success during his administration. He stated that

Excerpt 3

"Within 6 years, we will make sure that poverty is gone for good in Thailand… Seven groups of people should be considered the hearts of this problem namely 1) those who need to own pieces of land in order to make a living (referring to cultivators); 2) the homeless who will need assistance in medical care and also in vocational training so that they will be able to fit in with the society; 3) those who own illegal businesses such as copycats, drug-traffickers, or illegal lottery brokers will be guided so that they can have legal jobs and we will supply these jobs for them; 4) those Thai citizens who have been abused, be it about labor or home purchasing; 5) those who need part-time jobs such as students; 6) for those who are directly affected by the poverty-related problems and are carrying debts on their shoulders, we will restructure people's debts; 7) for those who are in need of accommodation, how much can you spend monthly on housing, whereabouts do you want to live, we will build a low cost housing to accommodate your every need." (11/22/2003)

Excerpt 4

"Within the next 6 years poverty-related problems will be eradicated from Thailand. In the next 6 years we must solve all poverty-related problems. Every Thai citizen will have a house. Cultivators will own pieces of land. They will have official documents to assure their ownership of the land. And they must be able to turn these documents into capitals in order for them to have the potential to create a better way of living and a brighter future for themselves. From now on, **the curse** that states that if one's parents are poor then one cannot escape poverty will be gone. We have to

make them (the poor) see that it all depends on their diligence and perseverance. And that their opportunity has come. If they persevere and carry with them wisdom, they will be able to improve themselves. We will stress the point that there will always be opportunities. All merchandise prices will be up. Drugs-related problems will be vanished. In terms of politics, the people will be put in the center. Politicians and political bodies must not play any political games. Political bodies and political parties will put the people in the center. This means everybody volunteers to work for the people." (3/22 /2003)

Excerpt 3 represents the most explicit definitions of poverty and the poor which are categorized the poor into seven groups including 1) The cultivators; 2) The homeless; 3) The illegal business one; 4) The deceived people; 5) The one who need a part-time job; 6) The people in much debt; and 7) The one who need low cost housing. Hence, Excerpt 4 shows him mentioning about the poverty eradication and identifying measurements toward poverty recovery including 1) cultivators will own pieces of land; 2) they have the potential to create a better way of living and a brighter future for themselves; 3) the curse that states that if one's parents are poor then one cannot escape poverty will be gone; 4) their opportunity has come; 5) they will be able to improve themselves; 6) all merchandise prices will be up; 7) drugs-related problems will be vanished. Moreover, he also noted that in terms of politics, "the people will be put in the center" (3/22/2003).

It could be assumed that the way he defined poverty in categories tends to purposefully serve his goal in order to create the acceptance to with the audience for his future plans. Such acceptance will become "the fort" or social approve approval for him to claim defend against the criticizing criticizism or controversy surrounding him, such as Ammar Siamwalaya – the economist (1993 quoted in Kusol Suthornthasa, 1995: 70-71). Prawese Wasi – the social intellectualist (2003). Anek Loathammathat – the academic (2006).

Part THREE – Conclusions and Suggestions

To answer the research question on what and how discourse on poverty shape and change Thai society and its people and what and how discourse mechanismsacquire power in people cognitive system.

For the first question by adopting Fairclough's CDA and SCA's van Dijk frameworks together with Foucault's Archeology of knowledge and Genealogy, this study has attempted to uncover the relationship between language, power, and society. The study has looked at the various definitions of poverty in Thailand and has presented a brief of how poverty has acquired the definitions under the two prominent ideologies of poverty, one is accumulation of merit and the other is accumulation of money, as shown in table below.

Table 1   Discourse Mechanism on Poverty in Thai Politics

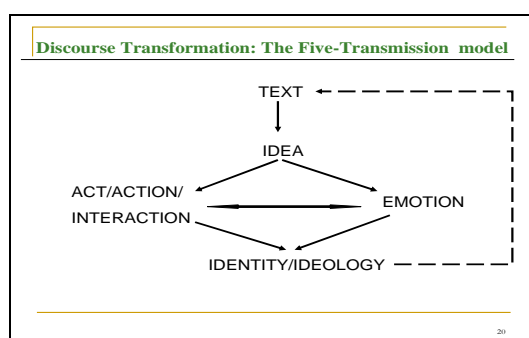| Discourse mechanism within the traditional ideology of merit	Discourse mechanism within the contemporary ideology of money

1. **A moral rule as a natural rule**
  - Karma-bun-bap
  "ปลูกพืชเช่นไร   ย่อมได้ผลเช่นนั้น"
  ทำกรรมเช่นไร ย่อมได้รับผลเช่นนั้น
  or What goes around, comes around"
	1. **Deconstruction**
	  1.1 Discovery of natural rule decline the power of moral rule

2. **The space of power**
  - The sacred world (superstructure)
  is over the secular world.
	2. **The space of power convert**
	  - The secular world (within scientific methodology) is over the sacred world

3. **Shifting and switching** between	3. **Replacing the new rule bounded discourse**

spaces

- Moral rules (sacred world) generate social rules and social structure (secular world) within absolute Monarch.

- Social inequality is natural within a patron-client of *nai* and *phrai* and *sakdina* system

"แข่งเรือ แข่งพาย แข่งได้ แข่งบุญ วาสนา แข่งไม่ได้"

or one can compete in a race boat, but compete with those with vasana one cannot."

based on the secular world: modernization-development-democracy

3.1 The social rule base on the western model:

- *Military-led politics (Sarit)*
"งานคือเงิน เงินคืองาน บันดาลสุข or Work is money, money is work, bring thou happiness".

- *Economic-led politics (Chartchai)*
"เปลี่ยนสนามรบเป็นสนามการค้า or change a battle field into a marketing place" and
"เสือตัวที่ห้าแห่งเอเชีย or the fifth tiger of Asia"

- *Market-led politics (Thaksin)*
"ความยากจนจะหมดไปจากแผ่นดินไทย ภายใน 6 ปี or poverty will be eradicated in six years"

3.2 Democracy focus on social equality and human right

4. **Social stratification and mobility**:

- A reward of merit or **bun**
- Spiritual oriented
" คนงาม งามที่ใจ ใช่ใบหน้า"
" คนจะรวย รวยศีลทาน ใช่บ้านโต"
or beauty is at the heart, not face, richness is because of merit making, not elegant house".

4. **Social stratification and mobility**:

- A reward of more amount of money.
- Material oriented
"ไก่งาม เพราะขน คนงาม เพราะแต่ง or
A rooster is beautiful because of feature. People are beautiful because they know how to dress".

Sources: Akin Rabibhadana, 1996; Chairat Chareonsinolarn, 1999 and Nidhi Aeusriwongse, 2000.

For the second questions, the analyses mentioned above emphasize on the analysis at the level of language: texts and the lexicon choices as well as the functional systems and their organizations.

It is found from the case that the power of discourse generates from discourse mechanisms functioning at the audience's cognitive level by employing three devices as tools. First is ideology ‑ a set of beliefs which people hold on for life or die for and forming their self identity ‑ the way to look their own self. Second is discourse significations ‑ the meaning of discourse seemingly created to be accepted as reality but in fact it is created to serve the speaker's purpose for power abuse. Lastly is discourse manipulations ‑ strategies for manipulating such meaning of discourse to be accepted as reality and to serve the hidden purpose of the speaker for power abuse at the same time.

The results from examples of discourse significations and discourse manipulations by Thaksin on the poor have shown that Thaksin attempted to shift the poor's identity and ideology and to create new knowledge and social realities in their cognitive system. It should be noted here that all the strategies are used together and also work together rather than in isolation. So this study is proposing the **five–transmission model** as a way to explain how the power of discourse, in this case used by Thaksin, functions in our cognitive system.

Discourse Transformation: The Five-Transmission model

TEXT

IDEA

ACT/ACTION/
INTERACTION

EMOTION

IDENTITY/IDEOLOGY

20

Figure 4 Five‑Transmission Model.

In this model the text can represent Thaksin speech as it enters the cognitive system of given members of the audience. It articulates with the other already existing perceptions or ideas to create a new one. The newly created perception will have an effect either on the action/relation or the emotion or sometimes both. This action and emotion may create identity shifts and consequently ideology shifts. Because we usually produce our texts based on our ideologies, so the ideology shift can become a very powerful tool in reproducing Thaksin's ideas and perceptions. So the more people perceive the reality the way he does, the longer he can stay in power and that is the power of his discourse.

The analysis is not only to emphasize what he talked about poverty and the poor; in terms of what poverty and the poor are and what his poverty recoveries are; but also to investigate discursive strategies to manipulate the language to provoke the audience with a beam of hope and capture them as his loyal army for supporting him. Six strategies are employed to make it possible by working with the crucial meaning of bun at step one for partially deconstructing the ideology of bun governing the poor, of problems at step two for damaging others, of social issues at step three for leaping their political block of praising the poor at step five for strengthening their closer relationships and step six as the result of all steps to reconstruct him and the audience's identity and ideology. The strategies he employed can be assumed that it is not to abolish patron-client system from Thai society but instead to strengthen such relationships by turning to fasten people with him as the sources of power under both the ideologies of bun and money for poverty eradication

In this regard, political discourse on poverty should not be taken for granted. Instead it should be problematized to create some awareness deconstructed to see whether power abuse is distorted or hidden, and reconstructed to expose whether power abuse works against the poor or not. It should be recognized that discourses on poverty have shaped and changed Thai society variously for a long time. Along the ways of its change, the poor were made more sufferings. Awareness on political discourse on poverty will shed light on a way out of poverty eradication.

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