Synchronic derivation—derivation by productive lexical derivation rule—is common in all languages. Some particular lexical derivations in Southeast Asian languages include such areal characteristics as 1) locus prepositions derived from a class of locus verbs, 2) locus adverbs derived from the same class of locus verbs, 3) transitive verbs derived from a class of intransitive motion verbs, 4) intransitive "passive" verbs derived from agentive transitive verbs, and 5) intransitive incorporated-object verbs derived from a class of transitive verbs, and a small class of secondarily derived transitive verbs from these same intransitive incorporated-object verbs. At least two languages—Vietnamese and Hmong—derive deictic nouns from locative relator head nouns. The derivation of restrictive possessive nouns from animate nouns in Hmong appears to be peculiar to that language.¹
1.1 Historical derivation

The term 'derivation' has traditionally been used to describe a process by which one lexical item is derived from another lexical item and the semantic/syntactic/phonological changes are such that the derived item has become lexicalized; that is, it is no longer--or never has been--predictable by rule and occurs separately in the basic lexicon (Starosta 1971:85).

An example in English of lexicalized derivation is that of a noun having been derived from an intransitive verb which has in turn been derived from another intransitive verb:

(1.1) Vi spring (IE* spergh-, Gmc*sprengh-, OE springan)² 'leap up, emerge suddenly (from coiled position)' → Vi spring 'come into being (by growth)' → N spring 'season of year characterized by budding and growth'

1.2 Idiosyncratic synchronic derivational relationship

Sometimes two words are so close phonologically and semantically that native speakers think of them as one word and it is clear that they have a synchronic derivational relationship. In this case, the close relationship of the two words is revealed by the similarity of some of their semantic and grammatical features. However, they exist in the lexicon as separate lexical items because they are called upon to fill different grammatical roles. Therefore, there is not a general derivational rule such that one item is predictable from the other.
Such a phenomenon can be seen in the verbs used to express existential and possessive constructions in most Southeast Asian languages and in Chinese. The two verbs—the possessive verb and the existential verb—are kept apart in the lexicon by the difference in their grammatical requirements; the main difference being that the possessive verb is transitive whereas the existential verb is subjectless. (See Clark 1982 for more detailed discussion of existential and possessive constructions in Southeast Asia.) Sentences from Thai, Khmer, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Mandarin Chinese illustrate the similarities and differences between the two verbs.  

(1.2) 'have, possess'  
\[+[NM, +COR]_+[PAT]([+LOC])\]  
'She has three bowls/dishes.'  

Thai  
Khǎw mì caan sām bay.  
3P have dish 3 Clsf. have dish 3 Clsf. top table  
Mì caan sām bay bon tò?.

Khmer  
Kōt miən caan bòy.  
3P have dish 3 have dish 3 Clsf. top table  
Mīn caan bòy lea tok.

Vietnamese  
Ngàng có ba cái chén.  
she have 3 thing bowl have 3 thing bowl top table  
Có ba cái chén trên bàn.

Hmong  
Nw múa pé lú ntí?  
3P have 3 thing bowl at top table have 3 thing bowl  
Nyó pé? rông múa pé lú ntí?

Mand.  
Ta yòu sān ge wǎn. Yòu sān ge wǎn zài zhuōzi-shang.  
3P have 3 Clsf. bowl have 3 Clsf. bowl at table-top
([+NM]=Nominative case form, [+COR]=Correspondent case relation,  
[+PAT]=Patient case relation, and [+LOC]=Locus case relation.)

There are many of these idiosyncratic derivations in the lexicons of these languages, but it is not such unproductive--albeit common--derivations that are the focus of this paper. Rather, we will discuss productive synchronic derivations, those which are predictable by general rule.

1.3 Class synchronic derivation

A productive synchronic derivation is one in which two sets of words are related in such a way that one set is predictable from the other; that is, there exists a general lexical derivation rule which states that, given certain features in a set of words, a new set of words can be produced. A general derivation rule states the condition for potential new words and describes the relationship between the old set and the new set.

To return to the English verb *spring* and one of its derivatives, the noun *spring*, we can see that two productive derivation rules in English derive two new words. One is the rule which allows causative transitive verbs to be derived from intransitive verbs:

(1.3) Vi *spring* 'emerge suddenly (from coiled position)'

* Vt *spring* 'cause to spring, actuate, as in *spring* the trap' 

and another is the rule which allows adjectives to be derived from nouns: