THĪI FOR TWO
THE TWO FLAVORS OF THAI THĪI

Marcel den Dikken and Pornsiri Singhapreecha
CUNY Graduate Center and Thammasat University

1 Introduction

The Thai word thīi, qua functional element, serves as a complementizer (Comp) in relative clauses, where it is not omissible (cf. Kobsiriphat 1988; Hoonchamlong 1991). An example of thīi qua complementizer is given in (1).

(1) khon thīi chán phóp
    person THĪI I met
    ‘the/a person that I met’

But thīi also shows up in noun phrases with attributive postnominal adjectives, where it is optional in the general case:

(2) khon (thīi) kèng
    person THĪI smart
    ‘the/a smart person’

In this paper, while taking thīi’s incarnation as a complementizer for granted, we focus on its other flavor: that of a linker of nouns and postnominal attributive adjectives.

The use of thīi as a linker is both syntactically and semantically different from that of thīi as a complementizer. That thīi in (2) (khon thīi kèng) is not a complementizer is not immediately obvious — after all, we might be dealing here with a reduced relative clause ‘who is smart’; the fact that the Thai counterparts of English adjectives exhibit some verbal properties makes such an analysis conceivable in principle. However, two properties of Thai noun phrases with postnominal attributive adjectives conspire to suggest a different approach:
• (i) in existential and possessive ‘have’ constructions, thii is impossible with certain classes of adjectives despite the fact that these adjectives are perfectly well usable as predicates of clauses (color adjectives being a case in point: cf. (3a), where, as throughout, ‘CLF’ stands for ‘classifier’), and the presence or absence of thii in constructions in which it is optional on the surface has semantic consequences: in particular, when thii is present, the noun phrase tends to take on a contrastive interpretation, as the minimal pair in (3b,c) shows

(3a) chán mii rôm (*thii) sī̂ khô aw lâaj khan
I have umbrellas THII green many CLF
‘I have many green umbrellas’

(3b) chán mii rôm jâj lâaj khan
I have umbrellas big many CLF
‘I have many big umbrellas’

(3c) chán mii rôm thii jâj lâaj khan
I have umbrellas THII big many CLF
‘I have many big (as opposed to small and medium-size) umbrellas’

As the prose translation tries to make clear, in (3c) thii jâj signals contrast by adding the ‘big as opposed to small and medium-size’ reading.

Both syntactically and semantically, Thai thii patterns with French de,3 which likewise occurs as a complementizer (cf. (4)) and as a linker (cf. (5)), being obligatory in its former incarnation and generally optional in the latter, just like Thai thii.

(4) il est impossible de faire cela
it is impossible DEComp do that
‘it is impossible to do that’

(5a) il y a une pizza chaude
it there has a pizza hot-AGR
‘there is a hot pizza’

(5b) il y a une pizza de chaude
it there has a pizza DELinker hot-AGR
‘there is a hot pizza (as opposed to pizzas that are not hot)’
The parallel between *thii* and *de* qua linkers goes further: as Milner (1978) points out, the use of (5b) (*une pizza de chaude*), with the linker *de*, signals a contrast between hot pizzas and pizzas which are not hot; in this respect (5b) is perfectly on a par with Thai (3b) as well.

For French *de* in (5b), an analysis which likens it to the use of *de* as a linker in other complex noun phrases (such as *cet imbécile de garçon* ‘that fool of boy’) leads to the postulation of a syntactic derivation in terms of inversion of a predicate around its subject, with the linker facilitating the inversion and surfacing as a reflex thereof. This paper develops an account of the syntax and semantics of Thai *thii* and French *de* qua linker from the perspective of the predicate inversion analysis, and incorporating massive remnant movement inside the complex DP.

2  
Quantificational and interpretive restrictions

We will start our discussion of ‘NP – linker – AP’ constructions with a review of the quantificational and interpretive restrictions imposed on the construction. We take our cue here from the extant studies of the French construction (see Milner 1978, Huot 1981, Azoulay-Vicente 1985, Hulk & Verheugd 1994, Kupferman 1981, 1994a,b, Lagae 1994, 1995, Hulk 1996, *i.a*.), and subsequently check the parallels with Thai, which turn out to be near perfect.

2.1  
French

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Quantification

A key property of the NP part of the French construction in (5b) is that it is typically *quantificational* in one of three ways, as illustrated in (6):

\[(6a) \quad NP \text{ is a wh-pronoun} \]
\[
\text{qui} \quad *(\text{de}) \quad \text{sérieux as-tu} \quad \text{rencontré?} \\
\text{who} \quad \text{of} \quad \text{serious have-you} \quad \text{met} 
\]
(6b) *NP is an indefinite pronoun*
rien *(d’)* extraordinaire n’est arrivé
nothing of extraordinary not-is happened

(6c) *NP is a focused noun phrase*
je n’ai mangé que deux pizzas
I not-have eaten but two pizzas
(de) chaudes
of hot-AGR

*Wh*-pronouns and indefinite pronouns force the presence of *de*; cases in which the NP part of a complex noun phrase is focused (in the *ne ... que* ‘only’ construction illustrated in (6c)) are perhaps more natural with *de* than without it, but are certainly grammatical either way. What all three examples share in common is that the NP part of the complex noun phrase is quantificational. And indeed, it typically will be quantificational in one of these three ways in the ‘NP – *de* – AP’ construction.

There is one systematic exception to this generalization, as we already mentioned in parentheses above: in existential sentences (including possessive ‘have’ constructions), it is enough for the NP to meet the constraints generally imposed on NPs in existential clauses; so *any* indefinite noun phrase will do as the first member of the ‘NP *de* AP’ construction in those contexts — (7a,b) contrast minimally with (6c’) as regards the nature of the predicate.

(7a) il y a deux pizzas *(de)* chaudes
it there has two pizzas of hot
(7b) j’ai deux pizzas *(de)* chaudes
I-have two pizzas of hot

2.1.2 *Interpretation*

The examples in (7) do not just deviate from the ones in (6a,b) when it comes to the quantificational properties of the NP part, but also when it comes to the need to use *de*: the linker is optional in (7), at least on the surface. But it turns out that whether or not *de* is inserted in examples of this type is not at all semantically