

CASES AND CLAUSES IN LAO

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The purpose of this paper is to present a syntactic analysis of Lao at the clause level. The format and approach employed will be that used by Nguyen Dang Liem in the study *Cases, Clauses and Sentences in Vietnamese* (Liem 1975). This approach utilises the principles and methods of both tagmemics and the lexicase model of case grammar. This eclectic approach has been developed in this work and in earlier studies (Cook 1971, Liem 1971a, 1971b, 1974 and 1976, Heidi Platt 1970, and John T. Platt 1971) to provide a suitable framework for studies in contrastive analysis. Although the theoretical orientations of tagmemics and those of case grammar recognise and attempt to describe models of linguistic structure fundamentally different in many respects, the combination of their basic principles employed in this framework can provide a systematic and pedagogically useful analysis of some of the basic syntactic and semantic properties of a language for contrastive purposes. The findings of this study will be presented in two sections, the first dealing with case relations and case forms and the second with clause types and verb classes.

The tagmemic model of grammar is based on the concept that syntax is organised in hierarchical levels, and that the basic unit of analysis at each level is the tagmeme, a unit consisting of a slot and filler class. This study concentrates on the tagmemes that constitute the clause level of Lao. Current tagmemic theory, drawing upon the concepts of case grammar, recognises that the grammatical slots of this level have overt syntactic relationships (case forms) and covert semantic relationships (case relations) with the predicative verb, which is considered to be the central slot of the clause (Pike 1970 and Liem 1975). This study will attempt to define these properties for the clause tagmeme of Lao. The occurrence of Fillmore's (1968) set of case relations and case forms

along with additional case forms posited by Liem (1975 and 1976) will be assigned to clause level tagmemes in the form of syntactic features in accordance with the lexicase model of grammar (Starosta 1971a, 1971b and 1973). At the case level of analysis, the possible co-occurrences in a clause tagmeme of members of the set of case relations and the set of case forms established for Lao will first be determined. Then, clause types will be classified in terms of the case features marking their constituent tagmemes.

The data for this study was obtained through fieldwork with five native speakers of Lao. Two informants used are bilingual in English and Lao, one bilingual in Lao and Thai, and the other two basically monolingual with a limited knowledge of English. The elicitation procedure used with the bilingual speakers was to present each informant with an English sentence and request a translation of it into Lao. The procedure used with the other informants involved using an interpreter to present a situation or event to them and requesting a Lao sentence describing the situation or event from the informants. The system of transcription used in this study is that employed in the text, *Lao Basic Course*, published by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI 1970).

1. CASE FORMS AND CASE RELATIONS

1.1. LAO CASE RELATIONS AND CASE FORMS

Lao has the following twelve universal case relations, as defined by Fillmore (1968) and Liem (1975 and 1976).

- (1) AGENTIVE (AGT) case: the actant that instigates the action.
- (2) OBJECTIVE (OBJ) case: the actant whose role in the clause is identified by the verb itself.
- (3) DATIVE (DAT) case: the animate actant receiving the action or effect of the verb.
- (4) BENEFACTIVE (BEN) case: the actant receiving the benefit of the verbal action.
- (5) COMITATIVE (COM) case: the actant accompanying another actant in the verbal activity or state.
- (6) INSTRUMENT (INS) case: the inanimate object or force causally involved in the verbal action or state.
- (7) LOCATIVE (LOC) case: the actant indicating the spatial location or area of the verbal action or state.
- (8) DIRECTION (DIR) case: the actant indicating the directional orientation of the verbal action or state.
- (9) TIME (TIM) case: the actant indicating the temporal setting of the verbal action or state.
- (10) SOURCE (SRC) case: the actant indicating the spatial or temporal point from which the verbal action began.

- (11) GOAL (GOL) case: the actant indicating the spatial or temporal end point toward which the verbal action is oriented.
- (12) EXTENT (EXT) case: the actant indicating the spatial or temporal extent through which the verbal action has occurred.

These case relations represent universal semantic relations holding between a predicate and its arguments within a clause in accordance with Fillmore's standard case grammar approach (Fillmore 1968 and 1971). Fillmore's principle of limiting the possible occurrences of each case to one instance per clause will be adhered to in this study for the most part. However, as Starosta (1973) has noted, this constraint seems too strong, in that more than one instance of a single case per clause can be allowed providing that the NP's marked for this case are coreferential. Therefore, in this study, coreferential NP's having the same semantic relation to the verb of the clause, will be marked with the same case relation despite their co-occurrence in the same clause.

There are ten case forms, or case realisations, into which the universal case relations are pigeon-holed. These forms are defined either in terms of position of the noun phrase relative to the verb or in terms of its occurrence with certain prepositions. Since the level of analysis is the clause level, these prepositions will not be assigned case frames as in the standard lexicase model. Only the main verb of each clause will host a case frame, which will specify both the required case relations it takes as well as the case forms with which they may co-occur. Accordingly, the entire prepositional phrase tagmeme rather than the case marking preposition will be marked for case form as well as case relation. This restriction of the level of case analysis to the clause level tagmemes has been made only to facilitate the classification and comparison of Lao clause types for pedagogical purposes. Overt case forms for tagmemes of the clause level, then, are marked by the following characteristics in Lao:

- (1) NM (nominative): marked by the position immediately preceding the verb.
- (2) O (objective): marked by the position immediately following the verb.
- (3) D (dative): marked by the preposition *hâj*.
- (4) B (benefactive): marked by the preposition *săm|āp*.
- (5) C (comitative): marked by the preposition *nám*.
- (6) L (locative): marked by the preposition *jūū*.
- (7) I (instrumental): marked by the preposition *dùaj*.

- (8) Di (directional): marked by the prepositions máa, paj, khým, lón, wàj, ôok, khâam, khâw, taam, hãa, sãj and mýa.
 (9) Sr (source): marked by the prepositions câak and tēē.
 (10) G (goal): marked by the prepositions thǎn and hǎot.

The set of prepositions functioning as case markers in Lao consists of both non-derived (intrinsic) prepositions and derived prepositions (coverbs) as defined in Kullavanijaya 1974 and Clark 1975. The derived prepositions or 'coverbs' are the dative marker hãj, the comitative marker nám, the locative marker jūū, the source marker câak, as well as the entire set of direction and goal marking prepositions. Each of these derived prepositions is derivationally related to a homophonous and synonymous verb in the language hosting the same case frame. The direction and goal marking prepositions are related to a set of adverbial particles usually occurring after an object NP as part of a transitive compound verb (FSI 1970). However, neither the verbal nor adverbial occurrence of these forms functions as a case marker. Since in the lexicase model, the syntactic category of a lexical item is determined solely by its structural position in a phrase marker, a separate lexical item must be listed in the lexicon for its occurrence in each kind of construction, unless a totally productive derivational rule can be written as a redundancy rule. Homophonous forms of different grammatical categories, but with identical syntactic-semantic features are related by lexical derivation rules. The markers listed above function as case form markers at the clause level only when marked as prepositions, or coverbs, in the lexicon enabling them to occur in construction with a noun phrase in a prepositional phrase. Therefore, the lexical items listed above must co-occur with another verb (the main verb) and immediately precede a noun phrase in a prepositional phrase tagmeme, in order to mark that tagmeme with the appropriate case form. For example, considering the sentences 1-5 below, only in the second and fifth sentences does paj function as a coverb marking a case form.

- (1) lǎaw lēēn paj.
 [+NM]
 [+OBJ]
 'He ran away.'
- (2) lǎaw lēēn paj w'ãŋcan.
 [+NM] [+Di]
 [+OBJ] [+DIR]
 'He ran to Vientiane.'
- (3) lǎaw paj sýy pým.
 [+NM] [+O]
 [+OBJ] [PURPOSE]
 'He went to buy books.'