The Grammatical Function of "hây" in Thai

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I. Introduction

The word hây in Thai is basically a ditransitive verb conveying the meaning 'to give'. There are, however, several homophonous hây's. In this paper, within the lexicase dependency framework, I will look into the grammatical function of hây's in constructions such as (1) and (2).

(1) púk sīI khanôm hây dEEEng
Puk buy sweets give Dang

a) 'Puk bought sweets for Dang.'

b) 'Puk bought sweets and gave (them) to Dang.

(2) dEEEng yım hây chăn
Dang smile give I

'Dang smiled at me.'

In (1) hây has two readings. One is interpreted as 'for, in place of' and the other is interpreted as 'to give'. Hây in (2), on the other hand, is interpreted as a direction toward a goal or 'to' in English. Earlier analyses of hây's are primarily concerned with (1a) in which hây carries a benefactive meaning 'for'. The meaning of hây's in (1b) and (2) have not been commonly addressed. Most analyses have considered the benefactive hây to be a preposition (Kullavanijaya 1974, Clark 1977, and Dejathamrong 1970) while Thepkarnjana (1986) has considered it to be a verb. Kullavanijaya considers hây in (1b) to be a verb and Dejathamrong consider hây in (2) to be a preposition.

1 I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Stanley Starosta, Professor Roderick Jacobs and Professor William O'Grady for their suggestions and comments of an earlier version of this paper. I am, however, responsible for any mistakes in the paper.
Dejhamrong (1970) looks into the grammatical function of the word ᵐㄚ in and found that ᵐㄚ in (1) and (2) fit in Panupong's preposition test frame:

1) N V₁ N _ N
2) N Vₜ _ N

Since ᵐㄚ appears in a position in which a preposition may appear, Dejhamrong (1970:53) concludes that ᵐㄚ in (1) and (2) belongs to a single word class, namely preposition. She does not consider, however, the semantic difference between ᵐㄚ in (1a) and (1b). Dejhamrong notes that unlike other prepositions which must be followed by a noun, the preposition ᵐㄚ may occur without a following noun.

In her study of verb serialization in the Government and Binding framework, Thepkarnjana (1986) claims that ᵐㄚ and other morphemes which occur in the constructions like (1) and (2) and have corresponding verbs are synchronically verbs, not prepositions. One argument for this claim is that only a morpheme which may appear as a full verb in isolation is a verb.

Consider (3a) and (3b).

(3) a. khāw dōn ᵐㄚ saphaṅ pay he walk cross bridge go
    'He walked across the bridgeway.'

b. khāw ᵐㄚ saphaṅ pay he cross bridge go
    'He crossed the bridgeway.'

khām 'cross' in (3a) may appear as a full verb in (3b) and should be regarded as a verb rather than a preposition. Negation is another criterion for establishing the verbal status of these words.

(4) khāw krādōt māy khām rūa he jump not cross fence
    'He jumped not go over the fence.'

Since khām in (4) may be negated, Thepkarnjana concludes that words like khām 'cross', thing 'reach' which have corresponding verbs have verbal status.

However, not all verbs may be negated. Pragmatic factors may block negation. We can only say that if an element can be negated, it is a verb. If it cannot be negated, it may or may not be a verb as in (5).
(5) a. chan sii nia maa khay
    I buy meat come sell
    'I bought meat to sell.'

b.* chan sii nia maa may khay
    I buy meat come not sell
    'I bought meat not to sell.'

(6) * nidaa tham kaanbaan may hay wiinaa
    Nida do homework not for Weenaa
    'Nida did not do homework for Weena.'

(7) * nidaa mooop dokmay hay khruu
    Nida hand flower not give teacher

Since hay cannot be negated as in (6) and (7), the negation test is not the criterion to decide whether hay is a verb.

Kullavanijaya (1974), working in the earlier version of lexicase, argues that there are two hay's: the benefactive hay which is a derived preposition, and the ditransitive verb meaning hay 'to give'. The former is derived from the latter. The preposition hay assigns a benefactive case to the following noun as in (8).

(8) mEE yep sfa hay luuk
    mother sew shirt for child
    +P +B
    +AC
    +BEN

    'Mother sewed the dress for her child.'
    (Kullavanijaya 1974:85)

(8) has another reading in which hay is a ditransitive verb. The sentence is interpreted as 'Mother sewed the dress and gave it to the child.' By treating hay as a ditransitive verb, Kullavanijaya can account for sentences like (9) in which hay is followed by the preposition hay.

(9) mEE yep sfa hay kae luuk
    mother sew shirt give to child
    +V +P +N
    +AC
    +DAT

    'Mother sewed the dress and gave it to the child.'
    (Kullavanijaya 1974:86)
Kullavani jaya explains that if ᵃy were considered to be a case marker, there would be two case markers: ᵃy as a benefactive case marker and ᵃp as a dative case marker. The question would be what case is assigned to the following noun lûuk. If ᵃy is analyzed as a verb, one does not encounter this problem and lûuk would receive, as expected, an ordinary dative case.

In this paper, I will employ the topicalization of the NP after ᵃy's, the PP topicalization, the main verb test, the lEEw insertion before the word ᵃy and the number of action test to investigate the grammatical function of ᵃy's. Like Kullavani jaya's analysis, I consider ᵃy in (1b) to be a ditransitive verb. I will, however, show that the benefactive ᵃy and the ᵃy indicating goal (cf. (2)) exhibit neither the characteristics of prepositions nor those of verbs contrary to earlier analyses. I conclude instead that they are adverbs.

II. Data

In this paper, I look into the following four sentences containing ᵃy.

(10) nídaa th'İ krap₅w ᵃy wiinaa
    Nida carry bag for Weenaa
    'Nida carried a bag for Weena.'

(11) nídaa s'Oon kaanbân ᵃy dEEEng
    Nida teach homework to Dang
    'Nida taught homework to Dang.'

(12) nídaa mÎOp dÔokmây ᵃy khruu
    Nida hand flower to teacher
    'Nida handed flowers to the teacher.'

(13) nídaa yîp nǎngs'I ᵃy khruu
    Nida pick up book give teacher
    'Nida picked up books (and) gave (them) to the teacher.'

While ᵃy in (10) is interpreted as 'substitution for', ᵃy in (11) and (12) shows direction toward the goal and it can be interpreted as 'to'. (11) and (12) differ only in that ᵃy in (11) appears after a non-physical transfer verb s'Oon 'to teach', while ᵃy in (12) occurs after a physical transfer verb mÎOp 't