The Syntactic and Functional Structures of Intonation Unit in Thai*

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1. Introduction.

In natural speech, utterances are produced in chunks. This utterance chunk is often accompanied by characteristic prosodic features, such as initial pitch reset, final vowel lengthening, initial (or post) pauses, and steady declination in pitch over time. This chunk, though fuzzy at times in naturalistic data, is more often than not salient perceptually and has been identified variously as "tone unit," "breath group," "intonation group," and "intonation unit." We adopt the term, "intonation unit" (IU henceforth) here, because it has been most strongly associated with the research tradition that analyzes naturally occurring discourse rather than made up data in the literature (Chafe 1987; Chafe 1994, Du Bois 1993).

IUs have both syntactic and functional structures. Syntactically, IUs may correspond to a clause, phrase, or lexical item. Functionally, they express ideational content, textual coherence, interpersonal concerns, and other aspects of communication. One theoretical issue that has arisen in IU research is the relationship between the syntactic and functional structures of IU. For example, it has been found that Japanese speakers use phrasal IUs more often than English speakers (Iwasaki 1993). A typical phrasal Japanese IU contains both an ideational component and interpersonal component, the latter of which is expressed by an array of pragmatic particles. It is interesting from a typological point of view, then, to examine if Thai speakers resort to the phrasal IU strategy since Thai also has a mechanism to encode the interpersonal function through similar pragmatic particles. This is the first question I ask in this paper.

The second question I pose is whether both syntactic and functional structures of Thai IUs are constant across discourse genres. This question is important since such an inter-genre comparison will discriminate the influence of the cognitive pressure from social pressure in the formation of IUs. In this study, I compare three sets of oral discourse, which are different in terms of setting (experimental or casual) and purpose (informing or sharing information, or chatting), as well as content. Features that appear differently across the three data sets, are something language users control according to genre difference, while those that do not change may reflect something that a speaker does not have conscious control of, and may reflect cognitive constraint imposed on the language user.

2. The Data

The three sets of data used for this research represent three different genres of spoken discourse. The first data set, "Pear Story" narratives, were solicited in an experimental setting from speakers who have seen a short silent film "Pear Story" (Chafe 1980). In this story a young boy on a bicycle steals a basketfull of

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pears from a man who is picking pears from a pear tree. The boy falls off the bike when he sees a girl on another bike coming from the opposite direction. Three boys show up and help the little boy, who gives pears to them in return. The three boys walk past the pear picker, who looks at them suspiciously. After having seen the film, a subject is asked to retell the story in front of the interviewer, who is supposed to have not seen the film.

The second data set, "Earthquake," is a conversation between two young female students, who talk about their experiences in and after the earthquake which hit Los Angeles in January of 1994. The two participants met for the first time at the time of conversation. The setting is not formal and the goal is to share their experiences. In the segment analyzed in the present paper, they talk about the damage, first impression, and friends who suffered various sorts of damage, and give a description of Americans' reaction to the disaster. They not only report what has happened but also evaluate what they have experienced.

The third data set, "Students," is an informal conversation between two close college students. The setting is extremely casual, and as such there is no clear goal of conversation except to maintain the friendship. In the portion analyzed here, they talk about how they missed each other right before the conversation, indicating where they have been, who they have seen, and what they have done, and also what happened to them the previous night after they parted.

In order to make a reasonable comparison, I analyzed a similar number of IUs in each data set as shown below. Since one "Pear Story" narrative is short, four different narratives were combined. Also in Earthquake and Students, there are more IUs which are non-substantial (e.g., backchannels and laughter tokens), so the initial number of IUs taken from these data sets are larger than that from "Pear Story" narratives.

| Three "Pear Story" narratives (Pear) | 255 IUs |
| Earthquake (EQ)                  | 300 IUs |
| Students (ST)                    | 300 IUs |

3. Analysis of Syntactic Structure

For syntactic analysis, I used the following five categories: Simplex clause, Complex clause, Part of clause, Isolated word and phrase, and Others. The result of this analysis will follow the explanations of each syntactic type.

3.1. Definitions of different syntactic structures

Simplex clauses (SC) contain minimally an overt predicate. One or more argument(s) or adjunct(s) without clausal modification may appear. Intransitive verbs\(^1\) are likely to appear with their subject noun phrase (often with an inanimate referent) as in (1).

\(^1\) Though it is not our major concern in the present paper, it should be noted that SCs may be classified according to the type of predicate. No a priori classification of a predicate is given, but its categorization is determined by the context in which a predicate appears. This sensitivity is necessary for Thai, in which many verbs take the same form for both transitive and intransitive senses. For example, háw 'bark' is an intransitive verb in man háw 'It barked,' but structurally is a transitive verb in man háw khon 'It barked (at) people.' Actual situations are more complex than this since non-overt arguments abound in Thai. Thus, háw in man háw in some cases should be considered as a transitive verb if the situation clearly demands that the direct object be associated with the verb.
(1) không lỡ maa lêèw (EQ 13)
thing down come ASP "Things fell off already."

Transitive verbs, on the other hand, are usually accompanied by the overt direct object noun phrase but not the subject noun phrase (Du Bois). Thus (2) is a typical transitive clause, while (3) is unusual. However, both are SCs.

(2) kamlang kęp pònlamáay (PS #14:3)
ASP collect fruits "(He) is collecting fruits."

(3) phàan kawli k5 sùu stèro maa (EQ 173)
friend Korean HP buy stereo ASP "(My) Korean friend had bought a stereo."

Complex clauses (CC) are of four types. Classification into subtypes requires a theory which is based on a careful analysis of clause structure. The following classification should be regarded as tentative.

**CC1: Paratactic construction:** This construction combines two (or more) simple clauses paratactically. The two (or more) events depicted in this construction are relatively independent of each other, as evidenced by different subjects, aspectual markings, polarities associated with different clauses, and/or an intervening conjunction. The following two serve as examples.

(4) yang nêoc mây lûu lêà̄ŋ (EQ:4)
still sleep NEG know thing "(I) was still sleeping (and) didn't know (about the earthquake)."

(5) mây chây nêoc tôleêk tê Individual pay khâu hâu nàm pay (ST:25)
NEG right sit desk first but I go enter bathroom PP "No, I was sitting on the first desk, but I went into the restroom."

**CC2: Serial construction:** The serial construction is similar to paratactic construction, but what is expressed in this construction is conceived as one event. From a structural point of view, this means that the two serialized verbs are not independently marked with aspectual and other verbal information. Causative, passive and purpose constructions are considered as serial constructions. However, other highly grammaticalized serialization which indicates, for example, directional, aspectual and other information is not considered as serial construction.

(6) dààm kìn maa kàñ (Pear #16:60)
wake eat come together "(They) were walking towards (him) together eating (pears)."

(7) ̀dààm klàp pay phít mòt lêèw (ST:263)
oh walk return go turn-off all ASP "Oh, (they) returned and turned off everything."

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2 Glosses used for Thai examples are as follows: ASP (aspect marker), C (complementizer), EMPH (emphasis particle), HP (highlighting particle), NEG (negative), PP (pragmatic particle)
(CC3) Hypotactic construction: This construction consists of a dependent (adverbal) clause and the main clause. In some cases a dependent clause is marked with an overt subordinator such as welaa 'when' or thàa 'if.' In others, the main clause is introduced by the particle kò.

(8) thàa ?alay kàat khùn nìi khàw lâpphit chàop tìa ?eeng nìi bèp (EQ 130)
   "If something happens PP they be responsible self PP like
   "If something happens, they would be responsible themselves."

(9) khàw kò maa tìat kò máy mìi ?alay (EQ 94)
   they HP come investigate HP NEG have something
   "Though they came to check, there was nothing."

(CC4) Complement and relative constructions: Complement construction is a construction with a verb which takes the complement, often marked by a complementizer wàa or thìi.

(10) khàw sàŋkèe tìe wàa màn hāay pay (Pear #16:67)
   he notice see C it disappear go
   "He notices that it has disappeared."

(11) kò bòøk wàa hìw nám (ST 112)
   HP tell C thirsty
   "So (I) told (her) that I was thirsty."

Sometimes a complementizer does not appear as in (12) below.3

(12) khàw bòøk ëm yìu roosg ?ahān nè (ST 106)
   he say Um stay dining hall PP
   "He said Um was at the dining hall."

A relative clause is marked with thìi. This construction appears often as part of a simplex or complex clause. The next example shows a case where the subject noun phrase is relativized in a simplex clause.

(13) khon thìi kamlaŋ kèp phonlamáay yàŋ yìu bon tònmáay (Pear #14:17)
   person C ASP collect fruits still stay up tree
   "The man who is collecting fruits is still up in the tree."

Part of a clause: An IU is recognized as part of a clause when it combines with the next IU to create a complete clause. If the second IU in this case can be considered independent, then it is coded as SC or CC.

(14) (EQ)
57 mày hèn
   NEG see

58 mìi ?alay .. nàa ca; tôkçay ?alay laay
   have something induce ASP surprise something EMPH

   "I don't see"

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3 There is a rather frequent appearance of IUs which end with wàa. Such IUs are classified as a simplex clause.