SEMANTIC TYPES OF RESULTATIVE PREDICATE IN TRANSITIVE-BASED RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN THAI

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1. Introduction

The term “resultative” is generally used to refer to linguistic forms that express a state and a previous event. The previous event may not be explicitly manifested in a sentence but implied instead. Typically, the resultative situation can be linguistically realized by (a) single verbs, such as broken in The stick is broken and washed in The floor is washed, and (b) syntactic constructions, such as The river froze solid, The butter melted to a liquid, and Mary kicked the door open. In the English examples, the matrix verbs, which represent the causative predicate, can be either intransitive or transitive. The syntactic resultative construction with an intransitive and a transitive matrix verb will be called in this paper intransitive-based and transitive-based resultative, respectively.

This paper aims to investigate the transitive-based resultative construction in Thai, which consists of a causative predicate manifested as a transitive verb with its object argument, and a resultative predicate linguistically realized as a single verb. Specifically, it will examine semantic types of resultative predicates which co-occur with transitive verbs serving as the causative predicate in the resultative construction. An investigation of the semantic types of resultative predicates is intertwined with a study of the semantic relationships between causative and resultative predicates. A number of recent studies on resultative constructions in single languages and across languages have proposed findings on such relationships, which in turn constitute well-formedness conditions of the resultative construction. By focusing on the semantic types of resultative predicates in Thai, this study will shed light on the typological study of well-formedness conditions of the resultative
construction in general. Previous works on the semantic relationships between causative and resultative predicates across languages will be reviewed in section 2. In accounting for the relationships between causative and resultative predicates, this study will draw on Talmy’s cognitive semantic account of verbal patterns (Talmy 2000), which is considered the first work to set forth a detailed framework for analyzing the semantic relationships between causative and resultative predicates.

2. Semantic relationships between causative and resultative predicates

The first type of relationship between causative and resultative predicates to be examined was the syntactic type. Simpson (1983) claims that “resultative phrases” are always predicated of the direct object argument in English. Levin & Rappaport Hovav (1995) propose a well-formedness condition of the resultative construction in English called the Direct Object Restriction (DOR), which states that the resultative phrases must be predicated of objects. It is claimed that the DOR is valid only for some languages such as English, Dutch, and Japanese. However, it has been found to be inadequate since not all direct object arguments of transitive verbs are compatible with resultative phrases (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 56-62). Thus, the well-formedness condition for the resultative construction which is purely syntactic in nature are not sufficient.

It is only in the last five years that researchers studying resultatives have begun to realize the crucial role of semantic relationships between causative and resultative predicates in postulating well-formedness conditions of the resultative construction. Goldberg (1995) analyzes these relationships in terms of causation and time span between the two predicates. That is, there must be a direct causal link between them. No intermediary time interval between the two events is permissible. Wechsler (1997), who examines the intransitive-based resultative construction, suggests that semantic relations between the two predicates are crucial. He postulates the “Canonical Result Restriction” (CRR), which states that a
resulting event must represent a "canonical" or "normal" state of the action denoted by the verb (Wechsler 1997: 310). That is, the associated canonical result is idiosyncratic to a particular verb. Verspoor (1997) also claims that the meaning of a resultative predicate must mesh with the meaning conveyed by the verb. Any resultative predicate which bears no relation to the semantics expressed independently by the verb is ruled out. Takami (1998) also recognizes the importance of semantic relations between the two predicates. According to Takami, for a resultative to be well-formed, there must be a logical cause-effect relationship between the two predicates. If no such relationship exists, the resultative sentence will be unacceptable. Such a logical cause-effect relationship is pragmatically inferred from our real-world knowledge.

The present study will continue to examine the semantic relationships between causative and resultative predicates with special reference to the transitive-based resultative construction in Thai. This study specifically draws on a cognitive semantic account of event integration set forth by Talmy (2000) as summarized below.

Event integration is defined by Talmy as the conceptualized fusion of two simpler events into an event complex expressed by a single clause. The transitive-based resultative construction is an instantiation of event integration as Talmy defines it since it is represented by a multi-verbal construction expressing a unitary event. One type of event integration postulated by Talmy which is relevant to the issue under investigation concerns the domain of "realization," which is an event of fulfillment or confirmation of the agent’s intention or goal in carrying out an action. The resultative predicate, which Talmy would call a "satellite\(^1\)" to the verb, serves to indicate the fulfillment or confirmation of the realization of the agent’s goal incorporated in the verb representing the causative predicate. Talmy postulates four verbal patterns which are largely based on English verbs. Each of these verbal patterns consists of a verb indicating a causing action and a satellite functioning as the resultative predicate indicating the fulfillment or realization of the agent’s intention in carrying out the causing action. The main verbs in the four
verbal patterns exhibit varying degrees of realization of the agent’s goal in performing an action and thus require different kinds of satellites, or resultative predicates in our terms, as described below.

a. Intrinsic-fulfillment verb + further event satellite

In this verbal pattern, the agent’s scope of intention in carrying out an action does not extend beyond the action itself. The agent’s goal is fulfilled precisely by carrying out the action referred to by the verb itself. An example of this type of verb given by Talmy is *kick*. A verb with this semantic pattern of lexicalization is termed an “intrinsic-fulfillment verb” (Talmy 2000: 263). With an intrinsic-fulfillment verb, a satellite can be added to denote a meaning that is extrinsic to the meaning referred to by the verb. A satellite with this semantic relationship to the verb is termed a “further-event satellite.” For example, in the sentence *I kicked the hubcap flat* (Talmy 2000: 262), the satellite *flat* realized by an adjective refers to a change of state which is beyond the agent’s scope of intention in performing the action of kicking.

b. Moot-fulfillment verb + fulfillment satellite

The moot fulfillment-verb refers to an agent intending and executing a particular action. Unlike the intrinsic-fulfillment verb, the agent further intends for the action to lead to a particular result. The agent’s intention is within the referential content of the verb. However, based on the referential content of the verb alone, the intended result does not come about and its eventual success or failure is left moot or questionable. A verb with this pattern of lexicalization is, therefore, termed by Talmy a moot-fulfillment verb (Talmy 2000: 264). On this basis, it can be said that without a satellite, the agent’s intended result is only potential. An example given by Talmy to illustrate this type of verbal pattern is *The police hunted the fugitive down* (Talmy 2000: 262). Without the satellite *down*, it is unknown whether the intended outcome has been actualized or not.

c. Implied-fulfillment verb + confirmation satellite