CASES IN ENGLISH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAGES,
AND TRANSLATION

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0. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at advocating some grammatical principles of transla-
tion from Southeast Asian languages (Cantonese, Khmer, Lao, Thai, and
Vietnamese) into English and vice versa. These principles are based
upon a case grammar model where both case relations and case forms are
taken into account (Starosta 1973a and 1973b), and upon the system of
translating set forth by Nida and Taber in these terms:

> "Basically there are two systems for translating...
>
> The second system of translation consists of a more
> elaborate procedure comprising three stages: (1) analysis,
> in which the surface structure (i.e., the message as given
> in language A) is analyzed in terms of (a) the grammatical
> relationships and (b) the meanings of the words and
> combinations of words, (2) transfer, in which the analyzed
> material is transferred in the mind of the translator from
> language A to language B, and (3) restructuring, in which
> the transferred material is restructured in order to make
> the final message fully acceptable in the receptor language.
> This approach may be diagrammed as in Figure 6.

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       A  (Source)                        B  (Receptor)
       |                                  ↑
 (Analysis)                         (Restructuring)
       |                                  |
       ↓                                  |
       X——————— (Transfer) ———————→ Y
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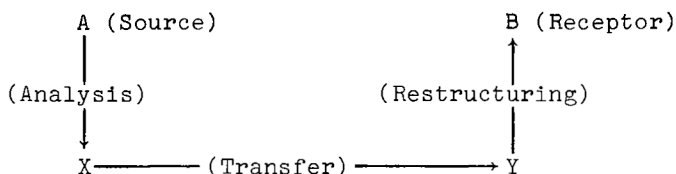<p align="center">Figure 6.</p>

<p align="right">(Nida and Taber 1969:33).</p>

1. CASE RELATIONS IN ENGLISH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAGES

The analysis of English and Southeast Asian languages presented here
assumes to be correct Fillmore's claim that there is a finite and uni-
versal set of relationships holding between a predicate and its hosted
nominals such that every nominal constituent of a proposition is related
in a specific way to the predicative verb;

> "...for the predicates provided in natural languages, the
> roles that their arguments play are taken from an inventory
> of role types fixed by grammatical theory"   (Fillmore 1971:376).

Case relationships, hereafter referred to as case relations, may be
realised overtly in a variety of ways. These ways include (1) affixa-
tion of the noun or pronoun, (2) presence of prepositions or postposi-
tions, (3) word ordering, or (4) marking on verbs (Fillmore 1968:32).
Thus, a single case relation can quite normally be realised in different
ways, or case forms. Likewise, a single case form can host more than
one case relation.

The following twelve universal case relations can[1] be posited. And
as they are universals, they should be adequate and sufficient for an
analysis of English and the Southeast Asian languages studied:

The AGENTIVE (**AGT**) case:

The **AGT** actant is the "instigator of the action identified by the
verb" (Fillmore 1968:24). It is assumed here that the agent is not
necessarily equated with "intent", for recent research on Tagalog (Ramos
1973) has indicated that certain generalities cannot be formulated unless
we allow for non-intentional agents as well as intentional non-agents.

The OBJECTIVE (**OBJ**) case:

The **OBJ** actant is the "semantically most neutral case, the case any-
thing representable by a noun whose role in the action or state identi-
fied by the verb is identified by the semantic interpretation of the
verb itself" (Fillmore 1968:25). In general, it will be the element
which is acted upon, or whose state or existence is predicated. This

relation subsumes several that have been treated as distinct in other case grammars including Experience, and Result/Factitive. These two types are treated as the interpretations given to the neutral Objective case when it appears with psychological and creative verbs respectively.

The DATIVE (**DAT**) case:

The case of the "animated being affected by the state of, or experiencing the action of the verb" (Fillmore 1968:24).

The BENEFACTIVE (**BEN**) case:

The **BEN** actant receives the benefit of the action identified by the verb.

The COMITATIVE (**COM**) case:

The **COM** actant accompanies another actant in the verbal activity or state described.

The INSTRUMENT (**INS**) case:

The **INS** actant is "the case of the inanimate force or object causally involved in the action or state identified by the verb" (Fillmore 1968: 24).

The LOCATIVE (**LOC**) case:

The **LOC** actant indicates "the location or spatial orientation of the state or action identified by the verb" (Fillmore 1968:25).

The DIRECTION (**DIR**) case:

The **DIR** actant indicates the orientation of the state or action identified by the verb.

The SOURCE (**SRC**) case:

The **SRC** actant indicates the location or time from which action has begun.

The GOAL (**GOL**) case:

The **GOL** actant indicates the space or time toward which the action or state identified by the verb has occurred.

The EXTENT (**EXT**) case:

The **EXT** actant indicates the space or time through which the action or state identified by the verb has occurred.

The TIME (**TIM**) case:

The **TIM** actant identifies the time-setting of the state or action identified by the verb.

Out of the twelve cases, only the AGENTIVE and OBJECTIVE are nuclear in the clause, the DATIVE, BENEFACTIVE, and INSTRUMENTAL cases are seminuclear in that they can be hosted only by certain verb classes, and the

rest of the cases, namely, COMITATIVE, LOCATIVE, DIRECTIONAL, SOURCE, GOAL, EXTENT, and TIME are satellites in that they occur with most verbs except those otherwise marked.

The twelve universal case relations are pigeon-holed in language-specific case forms that differ from one language to another. The covert case relations and overt case forms could be set up in bidimensional charts yielding pigeon-holes for possible correspondences of possible, i.e. case relations and case forms of a language.

2.   CASE RELATIONS AND CASE FORMS IN ENGLISH

In English, the twelve universal case relations are pigeon-holed in twelve overt case forms of which some are marked by their positions *vis-à-vis* the predicative verb, and some are marked by prepositions. The twelve case forms are:

NM   the Nominative position immediately precedes the verb, and there are no prepositions.

O   the Objective position immediately follows the verb, and there are no prepositions.

A   the Agentive position follows the verb, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *by*.

B   the Benefactive position follows the verb, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *for*.

C   the Comitative position follows the verb, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *with*.

I   the Instrumental position follows the verb, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *of*.

L   the Locative position follows the verb, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *at*.

Di   the Directional position follows the verb, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *to*.

Sr   the Source position follows the verbs, and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *from*.

Gl   the Goal position follows the verb and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *until*.

Ex   the Extent position follows the verb and its objects if any, and it is marked by the preposition *in*.

T   the Time position is variant. It can be at the beginning or at the end of the clause, and it is not marked by a preposition.