PATIENT SUBJECT CONSTRUCTIONS IN THAI

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explain how the grammar provides the way for the Patient to appear as a subject in Thai. To begin with, I would like to introduce the terms that are related to this topic. They include Agent and Patient case relations and the characteristics of transitivity as well.

1.1. Agent and Patient

In an accusative language, the grammatical subject occurs in a preverbal argument position. The grammar makes available the construction in which the subject is identified. Dixon (1972) states that there are two grammatical terms to identify a subject. One is an Agent, "the entity that initiates the action," the other is a Patient "the entity that undergoes the action."

Within the lexicase analysis, one of the constructions that allow an Agent to occur as a subject is a transitive clause, e.g., Mary ate some ice-cream. The example of a Patient subject is an intransitive clause, e.g., The apple rotted.

1.2. Transitivity and a subject choice hierarchy

The occurrence of an Agent is important in determining the transitivity. That is, a clause is transitive if there is an Agent; if not it is intransitive (Starosta 1982). Fillmore identifies the rank of a possible subject in relation to case relations under the notion of subject choice hierarchy. That is, when there is an Agent, it is a subject; when there is no Agent, the subject is an Experiencer, or an

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Instrument, or an Object, or a Source, or a Goal, respectively (Fillmore 1968:24).

Thai also follows this tradition. That is, when there is an Agent, it is always a subject. If there is no Agent, there is only one way for a Patient to be a subject in Thai, and that is for it to appear with an intransitive verb.

2. Subclassification of verbs

Within a lexicase analysis, verbs can be subclassified into two main subclasses: transitive and intransitive. A transitive verb requires an Agent, whereas the intransitive verb does not. Transitive and intransitive verbs can also be further subcategorized into two subclasses: locational and non-locational (Starosta 1982, Sayankena 1985, Pagotto 1988).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
[+V] \\
\downarrow \\
[-trns] \quad [+trns] \\
\mid \\
[-[+AGT]] \quad [+[+AGT]] \\
\downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
[-lctn] \quad [+lctn] \quad [-lctn] \quad [+lctn] \\
\mid \\
[?+[+LOC]] \quad [?+[+LOC]]
\end{array}
\]

Example of locational intransitive verbs:

1. dek n00n plee
   child sleep hammock
   [PAT] \ [-trns] LOC
   [actr] \ [-lctn]
   'The child slept in the hammock.'

Example of non-locational intransitive verbs:

2. phyng bin
   bee fly
   [PAT] \ [-trns]
   [actr] \ [+lctn]
   'The bees flew.'

Example of locational transitive verbs:

3. mxx say kung nay tuuyen
   mother put shrimp in refrigerator
   [AGT] \ [+trns] PAT LOC
   [actr] \ [+lctn]
'Mother put some shrimp in the refrigerator.'

Example of non-locational transitive verbs

4. puk    ?aan    kaatuun
  Puk    read    comics
  [AGT]   [-trns]  PAT
  [actr]   [+lctn]
  'Puk is reading comics.'

In addition to the two subclasses of locational and non-locational verbs, intransitive verbs in Thai can be further subcategorized into five subclasses (cf. Sayankena 1985:137):

a. Intrinsic intransitive verbs require a subject Patient case relation, and do not require other nouns to cooccur with them. They include action verbs, such as d@n 'walk', wing 'run', lom 'fall', and stative verbs, such as sabaay 'convenient', su@y 'to be beautiful', yap 'wrinkled', and kaw 'old' as in the following examples:

5. nakri@n    d@n    rew
  student walk fast
  [PAT]   [-trns]
  [actr]
  'Students walk fast.'

6. phaa    chin    nii    su@y
  cloth  classifier  this  beautiful
  [PAT]   [-trns]
  [actr]
  'This piece of cloth is beautiful.'

b. Correspondent intransitive verbs ([[-trns, +crsp]]) require complements marked with the correspondent case relation to cooccur with them, such as nak 'be heavy', myyn 'resemble', e.g.,

7. ri@n    nak    sip    kram
  coin  weigh  ten  gram
  [PAT]   [-trns]  COR
  [actr]   [+crsp]
  'The coin weighs ten grams.'

Following Savetamalya (1989:72-76), su@y is treated as a stative verb not an adjective.
8. naa th@e myyn daaraa
   face she resemble movie star
   |PAT|  |+trns|  COR
   |actr|  |+crsp|
   'Her face looks like a movie star.'

The intransitive verbs in (7-8) are different from transitive verbs. That is, a transitive verb requires an immediate following noun which is marked with a Patient case relation and the noun can be topicalized, as in 9b. On the contrary, the immediate following noun of an intransitive verb which is marked with a correspondent case relation cannot be topicalized, as in 10b:

9a. chan ?aan nangsyy nii
    I read book this
    |AGT|  |+trns| PAT
    |actr|
    'I read this book.'

9b. nangsyy na? chan ?aan lxxw
    book TOPIC I read already
    PAT |AGT|  |+trns|
    |actr|
    'The book, I already read it.'

10b. *sip kram na? ri@n nak
     ten gram TOPIC coin weigh
     COR |PAT|  |+trns|
     |actr|

3. Locational intransitive verbs [^-trns, +lctn] require complements marked with the Locus case relation to cooccur with them, such as nang 'sit', nOOn 'sleep'.

11. khruu nang kaw?ii
    teacher sit chair
    |PAT|  |+trns| LOC
    |actr|  |+lctn|
    'A teacher sat on the chair.'

12. dek nOOn plee
    child sleep hammock
    |PAT|  |+trns| LOC
    |actr|  |+crsp|
    'A child slept in a hammock.'

4. Mode [+mode] intransitive verbs require complements marked with the Means case relation to cooccur with them. The complements are marked with th