PATIENT SUBJECT CONSTRUCTIONS IN THAI[1]

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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
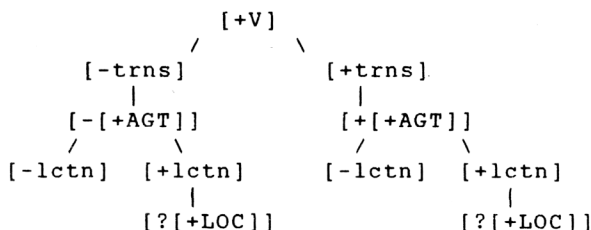

Instrument, or an Object, or a Source, or a Goal,
respectively (Fillmore 1968:24).

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).

```
                    [+V]
                 /        \
         [-trns]              [+trns]
            |                    |
        [-[+AGT]]            [+[+AGT]]
        /       \            /       \
   [-lctn]   [+lctn]    [-lctn]    [+lctn]
               |                     |
           [?[+LOC]]             [?[+LOC]]
```

Example of locational intransitive verbs:

```
1.  dek      nOOn     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 transititive verbs

4. puk   ?àan   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 *dɛɛn* 'walk', *wing* 'run', *lom* 'fall', and stative verbs, such as *sabaay* 'convenient', *suɛy*[1] 'to be beautiful', *yap* 'wrinkled', and *kaw* 'old' as in the following examples:

5. nakriɛn   dɛɛn   rew
    student   walk   fast
    |PAT | [-trns]
    |actr|
    'Students walk fast.'

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

2. 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. riɛn   nak   sip   kram
    coin   weigh   ten   gram
    |PAT | |-trns| COR
    |actr| |+crsp|
    'The coin weighs ten grams.'

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[1] Following Savetamalya (1989:72-76), *suɛy* is treated as a stative verb not an adjective.

```
8.  naa    th@@   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 fro
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. chán   ?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 relatio
to cooccur with them, such as *nang* 'sit', *nOOn* 'sleep'

```
11. khruu    náng    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