

VERBAL RELATIVE CLAUSES AS ADNOMINAL MODIFIERS IN THAI

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the relative clause structures which appear as the modifier of a noun in Thai. Apart from having different types of modifiers such as determiners, adjectives, prepositional phrases, complement clauses, and classifier constructions, nouns in Thai also allow relative clauses to appear as modifiers. The kind of relative clause which has usually been described in the literature consists of the relative noun *thîi* 'that' followed by a verbal complement, but there are in addition verbal relative clauses without *thîi* which can also modify nouns. The objective of this paper is to examine the different types of verbal relative clause and to explain their syntactic characteristics within the constraints of the lexibase framework. It will be shown that some structures which appear to be verbal relative clauses are in fact not, but they are either constituent parts of a compound noun or are themselves pseudo-compound verbs.

2. Relative clauses as adnominal modifiers

2.1. Nominal relative clauses

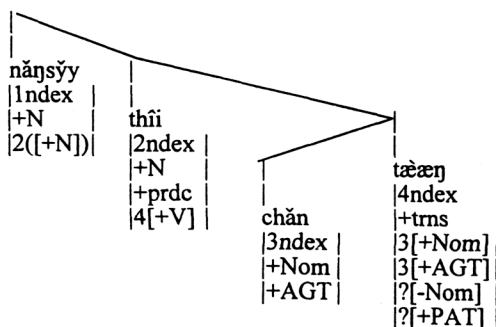
In Thai, there are two types of relative clause that can appear as adjuncts to modify regent nouns. These constructions differ because of the syntactic category to which the head of the relative clause belongs (Savetamalya 1989:120). The main distinguishing characteristic of these two constructions is that the head of the first construction is a nominal headed by the relative noun *thîi* (1-2), whereas the head of the second construction is a verb (3).

1. nǎŋsǎy thîi chǎn tǎæŋ
 book that I write
 'the book that I wrote'

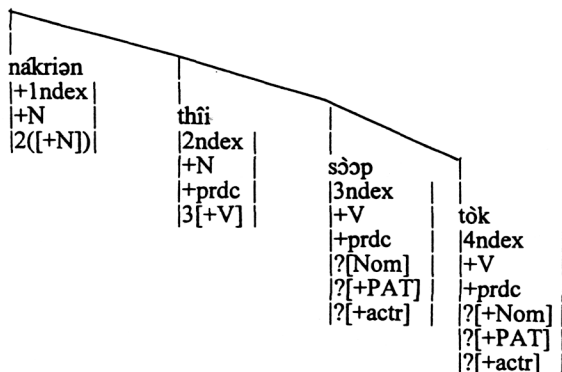
2. nákriən thîi sǎɔp tòk
 student that take an exam fail
 'the student who failed the exam'

3. bāan jǎj
 house big
 'house which is big'

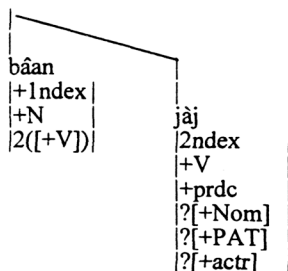
In (1), the noun phrase consists of the head noun *năṅsŷy* 'book' and it is modified by an adjunct *thīi chăṅ tææŋ* 'that I wrote', which is a nominal relative clause headed by *thīi*. The structure of this noun phrase is shown below:



In (2), the noun phrase consists of the head noun *nākriən* 'student' and it is modified by an adjunct *thīi sɔɔp tòk* 'who failed the exam', which is a nominal relative clause headed by *thīi*. The structure of this noun phrase is shown below:



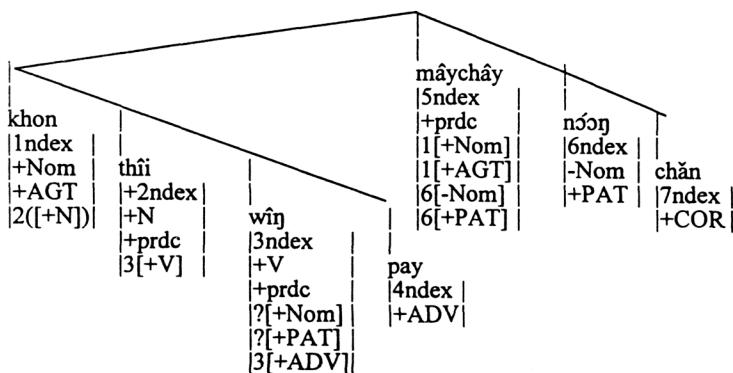
In (3), the noun phrase consists of the head noun *bān* 'house' and it is modified by an adjunct *jāj* 'big', which is a verbal predicate clause. The structure of this noun phrase is shown below:



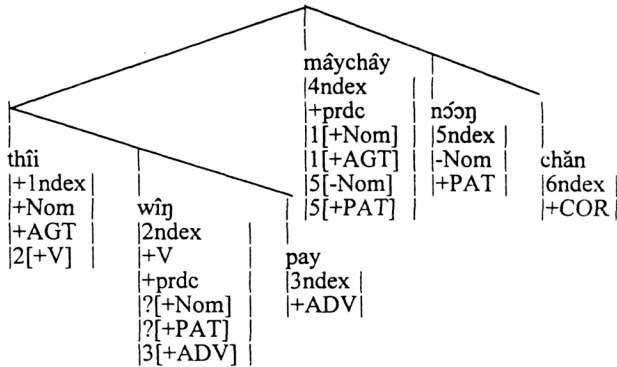
The nominal relative construction illustrated in (1-2) is the type of construction which in traditional descriptions of Thai grammar has been called a relative clause. A structure headed by *thîi* 'something (that)' however may be either a relative clause, that is, an adjunct of a head noun, or it may be a complement of a verb. As a relative clause, *thîi* is a nominal predicate as in (4), but when *thîi* is the head of a nominal complement in a sentence, it is assigned case by the verb that is the head of that sentence as in (5).

4. khon thîi wîŋ pay mâychây nŏŋ chăŋ
 person that run go not brother I
 'The person who has just run away is not my brother.'
5. thîi wîŋ pay mâychây nŏŋ chăŋ
 someone run go not brother I
 'The one who has just run away is not my brother.'

The structures of the sentences (4-5) are shown below:



¹ Other forms of relative nouns in Thai, *sŏŋ*, or *an* meaning 'that' are also found. In this paper, only the relative noun *thîi* will be discussed.



When *thi* appears as the head of a nominal relative clause or as a complement of a verb, it requires either an intransitive (as in 4-5) or a transitive verbal sister (as in 6-7).

6. rûp thi chăn wât dây raajwan
 picture that I paint get prize
 'The picture that I painted won the prize.'
7. thi chăn wât dây raajwan
 something I paint get prize
 'Something I painted won the prize.'

