1. INTRODUCTION

Examinations of Standard Thai

Advantages and Possibilities of Computer-Assisted

Schindhelm, Martin

Phonetics of the foreign language with those of this and the learner’s native language. Standard Thai not the need of the Thai teacher of foreign languages to concern themselves with the need of Thai as a foreign language to understand certain phonemes of Thai. Similarly, the multilingual teaching of English students on singular phonemes of the Thai

Standard Thai, as a foreign language, is not necessarily for both learners of Thai as a foreign language as well as for learners in teaching Thai. The role of the teacher and as a student of the Thai language. The text from my experiences as a foreign language teacher in Thailand.
One of the advantages of a computer-assisted examination of Thai texts is that it allows to look at linguistic phenomena on a large scale, may verify or falsify hypotheses or intuitions and thus may lead to new insights, ideas and hypotheses. Computer technology helps making available large amounts of texts, either spoken or written and presents the tools to quickly browse through them. Unfortunately, the computer regards a language as a systematically structured object of examination and doesn’t account for irregularities and fluctuations in the field of semantics. The subtle semantic tints that are saturated with culturally specific meanings and attitudes probably only fully grasped by a native speaker elude the computer’s software as well as the analytical Western eye and the scope of Western academic terminology. This is especially the case with a language as context-dependable and semantically ambiguous as Thai.

2. SUBJECT MATTER AND PREPARATORY WORK

My specific interest is the representation of tense and aspect in contemporary Standard Thai. The chronological narrative order is the natural time axis of a language with such a strong tradition of literature, historiography and religious teaching by word of mouth as Thai (Chetana 1998). Temporal relations are usually self evident and thus do not necessarily need explicit marking. What has happened first will be narrated first. It is sufficient to situate events by time adverbials such as วันนี้ or ปีนี้, usually in topical position.

Chronological narrative order and time adverbials, however, say nothing about the completion, the beginning or the state of progression of an activity and their subsequent relation to other activities. Sometimes, these aspects are a semantically inherent characteristic of the main verb¹. Often, they need to be marked explicitly. I have looked at such markers of aspctual relation and, in order to get a broader picture, at conjunctions that mark interclausal chronology.

For the purpose of this paper, I have looked at the presentation of preverbal ไวด in standard reference and teaching material and compared it with its actual use in two different kinds of texts. I have generated two concordances, one from the soap opera รักไม่รู้สนัด published between September 22 and November 10, 1999 in the Thai Rath-newspaper’s online version, and the second one from a compilation of articles of three issues of the online version of the magazine ทีม รัก ซับ ซ้อน from September, October and November 1999. I have selected the soap-opera from Thai Rath as an example for a text whose language is close to every-day spoken language. It consists mainly of dialogues that are supposed to be realistic and comprehensible to the average reader. I am aware of the fact that especially the language of soap operas varies greatly according to the social status of the characters involved. I think, however that this more a matter of the lexicon than of the function and syntactic

¹ In German linguistics, the term “Aktionsart” – manner of action (Bussmann 1990:59pp) is used to refer to the different states of progression an activity verb may imply, as for instance in “verbrennen – to burn to the point of complete destruction” as opposed to “brennen – to burn” or in “einschlafen – to pass from the state of being awake into the state of sleep” as opposed to “schlafen – to sleep”.

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Teaching Material

3. Preverbal Prepositional Phrases

In standard reference and

seems to appear more frequently in the negation than in the affirmative.

generally a concordance of the negation.

Thus, it is necessary to build sub-concordances. In the case of Prepositional

primary verb, every compound verb will have its own

every appearance of a chain of symbols regardless of its context. Thus, a non-

one of the problems in deriving evidence from these concordances is that they

mention the preverbal prepositional phrase, but only

The absence of an explanation for the

regarded as not capable of change. (p. 139) The presence of an explanation for the

The statement that in classic classes of modals, He explains that it

There seems to be no disagreement that one of the semantic properties of preverbal

that a prepositional phrase could be characterized as the beginning of a verb concordance of a verb.

Thus we see that for any kind of concordance between preverbal and the main verb, the

meaning properties depending very much of the English to get. There is no

concordance of the main verb. In the position in front of the main verb, it leaves an

direct object, as a secondary verb, it can be positioned either before or before a

form plus associated meaning, but a form plus meaning plus distribution. (Stefan

form is a frequently used word whose semantic properties change with its syntactic

1969:8) As a main verb in means to receive or to obtain and can be followed by a

is a frequently used word whose semantic properties change with its syntactic

Preverbal Prepositional Phrases
primary verb to get, to receive. Oscar Frankfurter (1900) explains “The past is indicated by the words ได้, and ได้. The former precedes the modified word and has the meaning of the imperfect; [...]” (p.84) Frankfurter’s confinement within the patterns of a Latin proto-grammar becomes obvious when he further writes “In combination we have ได้ and ได้ when a pluperfect meaning is to be given [...]” (p.85) Campbell (1968) gives a rather confusing explanation of the issue. After saying that “the past tense may be indicated by putting the wordDY in front of the verb.” He continues: “This form of the past tense is not very often used except with a few words such as ‘to receive’, ‘to hear’ etc. which almost invariably take DY in front of them in the past tense.” (p.73), leading to the wrong assumption that ได้รับ and ได้ยิน are the past tense versions of the verbs รับ and ยิน. Bisang (1992) considers, contrary to Noss, the preverbal affirmative ได้ but not the negating preverbal ไม่ได้. He categorizes ได้ as a Tense-/Aspect-/Modality-marker and comes to the conclusion that as a TAM-marker it has retained its meaning of to obtain but has in many contexts developed from here the function of a marker of past time. He maintains, however, that this function is secondary to the meaning “to get to.” (p.349) ภักษา ทองพล (1977) in his standard หนังสือไทย simply states that preverbal ได้ marks past tense as does เคย. (p.245) ภักษา apparently tries to force Latin based grammatical patterns on to Thai. He explains for instance that the sentence เพราะฉะนั้นท่านนี้ is an expression of the ‘future perfect’ เป็นอดีตกาลในอนาคต (p.248).

Like Noss, Anthony (1968) gives prominence to the negative preverbal ไม่ได้. He introduces ไม่ preceding the main verb in the second part of Foundations of Thai and explains “When day precedes the main verb, it no longer means ‘can’ but signals past time. It most frequently appears in the negative—may day—but the use of day alone as a signal for past time has become increasingly frequent.” (p.341) Equally, the A.U.A. Thai Language course introduces preverbal ได้ in its negating version: “มาย ได้ ... This denies the occurrence of an action and hence almost always refers to the past (I didn’t ...).” (Brown 1991:137) In Book 3 of the language course, the aspectual character of preverbal ได้ is mentioned expressively. “Preceding a verb, this [ได้] shows the accomplishment or completion of the verb.” (Brown 1969:218)

Among the non-English language Thai courses, Gilles Delouche gives in his Méthode de Thaï an explanation similar to that of Campbell. He explains that ได้ is used with verbs of activity which in itself carry the meaning of reception. As examples he gives two sentences, one with ได้รับ and one with ได้ยิน (p.96). As with Campbell, this statement gives room to the misleading assumption that ได้ will not be used in front of

2 "Als TAM-Zeichen schließlich behält ได้ seine Bedeutung von "erlangen" bei, entwickelt aber daraus in vielen Kontexten die Funktion als Vergangenheitszeichen. Diese Funktion ist aber – wie Scovel (1970:88f.) bemerkt – eher sekundär zur Bedeutung ‘to get to’.

3 “สมิงค์ธารกุล […] ถึงก็ตีศึกษำ ได้เกี่ยวกับ ได้, เคย”