COORDINATE CONJUNCTIONS IN THAI

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Formal Thai provides an interesting case of surface form being conditioned by hierarchical ranks (levels).[1] Grammatical coordination appears at all ranks in language,[2] thus is a good place for ranks to show their contrast. Among the conjunctions in Thai (cf. Vichin 1970: 163-168, Udom 1972: 43-47) are kàp 'and, with, together', lɛ́ʔ 'and, also', dûay 'and, at the same time', sùan 'and, as for'. These are all coordinate conjunctions (or additives (Thomas 1975: 117) but are distinguished in formal Thai by the grammatical rank on which they function. Colloquial Thai does not make this distinction, using kàp at all ranks and rarely using lɛ́ʔ.[3]

Let us briefly define the noun phrase rank as the rank containing descriptions of participants or items, the verb phrase rank as containing descriptions of motions, the clause rank as containing a motion and its participants, and a sentence as containing an illocutionary force and its locution (one or more clauses). These definitions are of semantic ranks; the corresponding grammatical ranks may be defined as those sets of forms which are the common manifestations of the semantic ranks (Thomas 1975: 114-116).

The contrast between kàp and lɛ́ʔ in formal Thai is basically a contrast between the phrase and clause ranks: kàp joins two nouns in a single noun phrase (1,2) and lɛ́ʔ joins two clauses (3) or two sentences.

    (1) phɔ̂ɔ   kàp   mɛ̂ɛ   pay   duu   nǎŋ.
          father and mother go   see movie
          Father and mother went together to the movie.

    (2) lûuk   duu   phɔ̂ɔ   kàp   mɛ̂ɛ.
          child see father and mother
          The child is looking at his parents.

    (3) khǎw rɔ́ɔŋ lɛ́ʔ phǒm ram.
          he   sing and   I   dance
          He sang and I danced.

Examples (1) and (2) are simple actions with complex actors (i.e., additive compounding of the noun phrase), (3) is a complex action (i.e., additive compounding of the clause).

Compounding of the verb phrase may be handled with dûay...dûay (4) or with kàp (5). Since this is still the phrase rank, the interchangeability with kàp is not surprising. And they can even be combined as dûay kàp...dûay (6). Dûay is not used to link clearly distinct clauses (*7).

(4) khǎw rɔ́ɔŋ dûay ram dûay
    he   sing and dance and
    He sang and danced.

(5) khǎw rɔ́ɔŋ kàp ram
    he   sing and dance
    He sang and danced (closeknit action).

(6) khǎw rɔ́ɔŋ dûay kàp ram dûay
    he   sing and and dance and
    He sang and danced.

(7) *khǎw rɔ́ɔŋ dûay phǒm ram dûay
     he   sing   and- I   dance and

A different use of kàp is to link one participant to another at the clause rank as distinct yet associated participants, one of them being the subject of the clause and the other a companion (8). Here the kàp is not a marker of additive compounding but is a case marker marking the Associate (Comitative).

(8) phɔ̂ɔ   pay duu nǎŋ kàp mɛ̂ɛ
    father go   see movie with mother
    Father went to the movie with mother.

Where a situation is clearly clausal conjunction with different subjects and verbs, lɛ́ʔ or sùan are used in formal Thai (3,9) and dûay is prohibited (*7). Where it is clearly phrasal conjunction kàp or dûay are used (1-2,4-6) and sùan is prohibited (*10).

(9) phɔ̂ɔ pay thîi tham ŋaan sùan mɛ̂ɛ klàp bâan
    father go place do   work and mother return house
    Father went to his office and mother went home.

(10) *phɔ̂ɔ sùan mɛ̂ɛ pay duu nǎŋ
      father and   mother go   see movie

But where a situation could be interpreted as either phrasal or clausal conjunction kàp tends to indicate two participants functioning as one NP (1), or two actions functioning as a single complex VP (5), while lɛ́ʔ tends to indicate independent individuals or independent actions (clauses) (11-13).

(11) phôɔ lɛ́ʔ mɛ̂ɛ pay duu nǎŋ
father and mother go see movie
Father and mother both went to the movie (as individuals).

(12) kháw rɔ́ɔŋ lɛ́ʔ ram
he   sing and dance
He sang and danced (separate actions).

(13) pay caŋwàt dây thaaŋ rót lɛ́ʔ thaaŋ rʉa
go province can way car and way boat
You can go to the province by car or boat.

There is some blurring of borders and overlapping of meanings, but in general these distinctions hold in formal Thai. Thus we see additive (coordinate) compounding of the noun phrase, the verb phrase, and the clause (or higher ranks) each manifested by a different conjunction or set of conjunctions.

The grammatical rank at which the compounding is being done determines the form of the conjunction.

NOTES

[1] This paper is based on the usage of a Nakhon Pathom schoolteacher and his schoolteacher friends. I am indebted to Wilaiwan Kanittanan and Suriya Ratanakul for comments on an early draft; mistakes that remain are mine. Dr. Wilaiwan called to my attention the similarity between my analysis and the traditional Thai grammar formulations which distinguish between word-joining conjunctions and sentence-joining conjunctions (cf. Seni 1972: 85).

[2] Cf. Pike 1974.

[3] It is difficult to keep different levels of usage apart in an analysis like this. I have tried to seek the middle ground between the colloquial style which seldom uses lɛ́ʔ and the hyper-correct style which over-uses lɛ́ʔ.

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