

PECULIARITIES OF INSTRUMENTAL NOUNS IN THAI¹

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This paper aims to show that a prepositional phrase signifying *Instrumental Adverb* does not exist in deep structure as has been assumed by a number of transformational grammarians.² I will argue that the instrumental prepositional phrase in Thai is transformationally derived from another source of basic structure, that is, from a sentence containing *chây* 'to use'.³ I fully realize that an instrumental noun does not play a significant role in the Thai language as it does in some Indo-European and American Indian languages, where instrumental forms are overtly signified. It is amazing how Thai speakers can sort out the instrumental nouns in surface structure from other patient nouns, as both superficially appear in the same position in a sentence, for example:

- (1) a. khăw kin tàkìap
he eat chopstick
He eats with chopsticks.
b. khăw kin kŭaytĭaw
he eat noodle
He is eating noodles.
- (2) a. khăw khĭan mĭi sáy
he write hand left
He writes with his left hand.
b. khăw khĭan còtmăay
he write letter
He is writing a letter.
- (3) a. khăw hŭŋ thaan
she cook charcoal
She cooks with charcoal.

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- b. khăw hŭŋ khâaw
she cook rice
She is cooking rice.
- (4) a. khăw yŋ p++n
he shoot gun
He is shooting (by using a gun).
- b. khăw yŋ nók
he shoot bird
He shot a bird.
- (5) a. khăw yép càk
he sew machine
He sews.
- b. khăw yép sâa
she sew blouse
She is sewing a blouse.
- (6) a. khăw thaa lípsàtìk
she paint lipstick
She puts on lipstick.
- b. khăw thaa nâa
she paint face
She paints her face.

It is evident that (1a), (2a), (3a), (4a), (5a), and (6a) contain an instrumental noun while (1b), (2b), (3b), (4b), (5b), and (6b) contain a patient noun in the surface structure.

Deep Structure of Instrumental Nouns

Neither Fillmore (1968) nor Chafe (1970) distinguishes two kinds of instrumental nouns as is proposed in this paper. Fillmore (1968) considers an instrumental case as “the case of the inanimate force or object causally involved in the action or state identified by a verb.”⁴

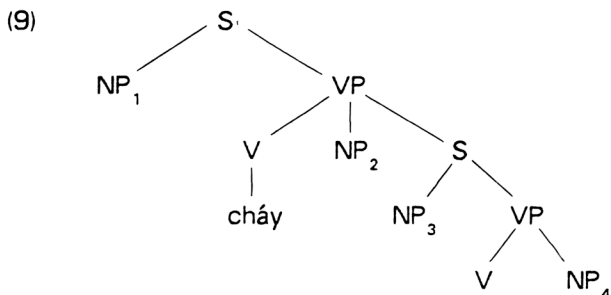
Peculiarities of Instrumental Nouns

Chafe (1970) considers “an instrument being some object which plays a role in bringing a process about, but which is not the motivating force, the cause or the instigator. It is subsidiary to the agent—something which the agent uses.”⁵

Let us consider the following sentences:

- (7) a. khǎw cháy tàkìap kin khâaw
 he use chopstick eat rice
 He uses chopsticks to eat rice.
- b. khǎw kin khâaw dūay tàkìap
 he eat rice with chopstick
 He eats rice with chopsticks.
- c. khǎw kin tàkìap
 he eat chopstick
 He eats with chopsticks.
- (8) a. khǎw cháy tháaw pèet pratuu
 he use foot open door
 He uses his foot to open the door.
- b. khǎw pèet pratuu dūay tháaw
 he open door with foot
 He opens the door with his foot.
- c. khǎw pèet tháaw⁶
 he open foot
 He uncovers his foot.

Note that (7a), (7b), and (7c) are related, but (8c) is not related to (8a) and (8b), and *tháaw* ‘foot’ is not an instrumental noun as *tàkìap* ‘chopstick’ is in (7c). There is parallelism between (7a) and (8a), (7b) and (8b), but not between (7c) and (8c). I propose that the sentence underlying (7a), (7b), and (7c) is different from the sentence underlying (8a) and (8b).



NP₁ must be animate and NP₂ must be inanimate. The noun following *cháy* 'to use' will be an instrumental noun as follows:

$$(10) \quad X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \rightarrow X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \quad [+inst1]$$

if NP₁ = NP₃

$$(11) \quad X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \rightarrow X \text{ NP}_1 \text{ cháy NP}_2 \text{ NP}_3 \text{ Y} \quad [+inst2]$$

if NP₂ = NP₃

The feature [+instrumental 1] will be incorporated in NP₂ if NP₁ is the same as NP₃, and the feature [+instrumental 2] if NP₂ is the same as NP₃.

Let us consider the deep structure of (7a).

$$(12) \quad \begin{array}{cccccc} \text{khăw} & \text{cháy} & \text{tàk}^{\text{àp}} & \text{khăw} & \text{kin} & \text{khâaw} \\ \text{he} & \text{use} & \text{chopstick} & \text{he} & \text{eat} & \text{rice} \end{array}$$

By applying rule (10), *tàk^{àp}* 'chopstick' in (12) will be assigned [+instrumental 1] because NP₁, the one who uses chopsticks, and NP₃, the one who eats rice, are the same person.

Let us also consider the deep structure of (8a).