

THERE ARE NO PREPOSITIONS IN THAI

Udom Warotamasikkhadit

0. Introduction

It is not necessary that all languages have prepositions. Whitney (1889 : 403) states that " The indeclinable words are less distinctly divided into separate parts of speech in Sanskrit than is usual elsewhere in Indo - European language--owing to the fact that the class of prepositions hardly has a real existence, but is represented by certain adverbial words which are to a greater or less extent used prepositionally. " The term " preposition " did not appear in Thai grammatical terminology until Uppakitsinlapan (1953 : 58 - 70) wrote his *Siamese Grammar : Morphology* in 1953. He defines a preposition as a kind of word that precedes a noun, a pronoun, or a certain kind of verb in order to indicate the function of the noun, the pronoun, and the verb it precedes.¹ A Thai preposition is somewhat different from an English preposition because the English preposition connects words. The Thai preposition is the word used in front of a noun which Thai grammarians add in front of a noun to signify the different cases in the translation of the noun declension in Pali.² Kullavanijaya's analysis of coverbs and noun auxiliaries (Kullavanija 1974 : 72 - 93), Clark's analysis of coverbs and relator nouns (Clark 1975 : 222 - 247), Clark and Prasithratsint's analysis of relator nouns (Clark and Prasithratsint 1985 : 53 - 65), and Sayankena's analysis of relator head nouns (Sayankena 1985 : 82 - 83) are heading in the same direction as mine. It is evident that the words which are called prepositions in the traditional Thai grammar do not constitute a single form class like English as defined by Curme (1947 : 27 - 29) or by Fries (1952 : 95 - 96).³

1. VERBS MISTAKENLY CALLED PREPOSITIONS

Action verbs like taam 'to follow', càak 'to leave, to depart', thǎŋ 'to reach', sùu 'to reach', kràthǎn

'to touch on', con 'to end', tɔɔ 'to connect, to build, to continue', and etc. are all verbs in their occurrence, but their translation into English are often prepositions, for example: taam 'along', càak 'from', thǎŋ 'to', sùu 'to', kràthǎn 'until', con 'until', tɔɔ 'to'. I consider them verbs because they can be negated when occurring as a main verb signifying propositional semantic interpretation or when occurring as the last member of a verb string signifying the same semantic interpretation as the main verb.

1.1 taam 'to follow'

- (1) khǎw taam hǎa lûuk
he follow search child
He was searching for his child.
- (2) khǎw dɛen taam hǎa lûuk
he walk follow search child
He was walking in search of his child.
- (3) khǎw dɛen taam lûuk
he walk follow child
He walked, following his child.
- (4) khǎw dɛen taam thǎnǒn
he walk follow street
He walks along the street.
- (5) dèk dèk nǎn taam raaw sǎphaan
child sit follow rail bridge
Children sit on the bridge rail.

No one will deny that taam 'to follow' in (1) is a verb because it occurs after a pronoun khǎw 'he' which is the subject of the sentence and can be negated. taam 'to follow' in (2) is also a verb but it occurs as a second member of the verb string signifying functional meaning (Filbeck 1975 : 112 - 129). taam 'to follow' in (3) is also a verb where khǎw 'he' follows and lûuk 'child' precedes. taam 'to follow' in (4) is considered a preposition by traditional Thai grammarians because they do not see the semantic equivalence between taam 'to follow' in (3) and (4) and the translation of taam 'to follow' in

(4) is rather closer to 'along' than to 'to follow'. Our argument is that (3) and (4) are structurally the same and the meaning of *taam* 'to follow' remains the same in both sentences. The only difference is that the nominal actant *lôuk* 'child' in (3) is an animate noun and the nominal actant *thànôn* 'street' in (4) is an inanimate noun. Thus *taam* 'to follow' in (3), (4), and (5) are all verbs, not prepositions.

1.2 *càak* 'to leave, to depart'

(6) *khăw càak bâan maa*
he leave home come
He left home (to come here).

(7) *khăw maa càak bâan*
he come leave home
He came from home.

It is evident that *càak* 'to leave, to depart', in (6) is a verb where *bâan* 'home' is the object. *càak* 'to leave, to depart' in (7) is not semantically different from the one in (6). I see no point in calling *càak* 'to leave, to depart' in (6) a verb and *càak* 'to leave, to depart' in (7) a preposition. Kulavanijaya (1974 : 82 - 83) considers *càak* 'to leave, to depart' a coverb or a derived preposition.

(8) *khăw rîiprôon dœn càak raw pay*
he hurry walk leave we go
He hurriedly walked away from us.

(9) *khăw rîiprôon dœn càak pay*
he hurry walk leave go
He hurriedly walked away.

càak 'to leave, to depart' in (9) functions as a member of a verb string *rîiprôon dœn càak pay* 'hurriedly walked away' and its meaning is the same as *càak* 'to leave, to depart' in (8) where *raw* 'we' is not deleted as it is in (9). I find no reason to classify the two *càak* 'to leave, to depart' differently.

1.3 *th̃ŋ* 'to reach'

(10) *khăw cà th̃ŋ bâan kh++n nîi*
he will reach home night this
He will arrive home tonight.

(11) *khăw cà pay th̃ŋ Chiangmày*
he will go reach Chiangmai
kh++n nîi
night this
He will arrive in Chiangmai tonight.

(12) *khăw cà pay mây th̃ŋ Chiangmày*
he will go not reach Chiangmai
kh++n nîi
night this
He will not reach Chiangmai tonight.

He will not arrive in Chiangmai tonight.

th̃ŋ 'to reach' in (10) is definitely a verb because it follows a preverb *cà* 'will' and can be negated. In traditional Thai grammar *th̃ŋ* 'to reach' in (11) is considered a preposition even though it can also be negated as in (12). To me there is no possibility of classifying *th̃ŋ* 'to reach' in either case as a preposition.

1.4 *sùu* 'to come to'

(13) *raw cà mây sùu khǎo lûuksăaw*
we will not come to ask for daughter
khăw kòon r++
he before question

Should we not ask for his daughter's hand before doing something else?

(14) *khăw hăn nâa pay th̃it ña*
he turn face go direction north
He turned to face north.

(15) *khăw hăn nâa sùu th̃it ña*
he turn face come to direction north
He turned toward the North.

sùu 'to come to' in (13) is definitely a verb because it occurs after a preverb *cà* 'will' and can be negated. In traditional Thai grammar *pay* 'to go' in (14) is considered a secondary verb (Uppakitsinlapasan 1953 : 68, Haas and Subhank 1948 : 376 - 378, and Warotamasikkhadit 1972 : 18, 34) and *sùu* 'to come to' a preposition (Uppakitsinlapasan 1953 : 139). Because the two sentences reveal the same structure, both *pay* 'to go' and *sùu* 'to come to' should be the same part of speech, namely verbs.

1.5 *kràthân* 'to touch on'

(16) *khî++n kràthân fân*
wave touch on shore
Waves dash against the shore.

(17) *săamii phanrayaa yom*
husband wife should
kràthópkràthân kan sàmœ
strike against each other always
Husband and wife usually clash with each other.

(18) *khăw rōo khun kràthân th̃an*
he wait you touch on noon.
He waited for you until noon.

kràthân 'to touch on' in (16) is definitely a verb because it occurs after the subject *khî++n* 'wave' and before the object *fân* 'shore'. *kràthân* 'touch on' rarely occurs independently to signify pro-

positional meaning but rather occurs as a compound verb *kràthópkràthân* 'to strike against, to touch on' as in (17). *kràthân* 'to touch on' in (18) is considered a member of a verb string *รอต* *khun* *kràthân* 'wait for you until' to signify a functional meaning 'touching on'.

1.6 *con* 'to end'

- (19) *khăw con mum*
he end corner
He is cornered.

- (20) *khăw khooy khun con sàwàan*
he wait you end dawn
He waited for you until dawn.

con 'to end' in (19) is definitely a verb because it occurs after the subject *khăw* 'he' and before the object *mum* 'corner' and it can be negated. It seems to me that both *con* 'to end' in (19) and (20) signify the same meaning with (19) showing a propositional meaning and (20) showing a functional meaning.

1.7 *tòc* 'to connect, to build, to continue'

- (21) *phôm tòc pleen càak khruu*
I build song leave teacher
I practiced the song with my teacher.

- (22) *thanaay yā+n khamròc tòc*
lawyer file complaint connect
sǎan
court

The lawyer filed the complaint to the court.

tòc 'to connect, to build, to continue' in (21) is definitely a verb because it occurs after the subject *phôm* 'I' and can be negated. *tòc* 'to connect, to build, to continue' in (22) is a member of a verb string *yā+n khamròc tòc* 'to file the complaint with' shows a functional meaning.

2. STATIVE VERBS MISTAKENLY CALLED PREPOSITIONS

Some words which are called prepositions in traditional Thai grammar are stative verbs or descriptive verbs, such as *klay* 'far' and *klây* 'near'.

2.1 *klay* 'far'

- (23) *bāan khăw yùu klay*
home he be far
His house is far (away).

- (24) *bāan khăw yùu mây klay*
home he be not far
His house is not far (away).

- (25) *bāan khăw yùu klay càak bāan chǎn*
home he be far leave home I
house is far from my house.

- (26) *bāan khăw yùu klay bāan chǎn*
home he be far home I
His house is far from my house.

klay 'far' in (23) and (24) is definitely a verb because it can be negated as in (24). *klay* 'far' in (25) is a member of a verb string *yùu klay càak* 'to be far away from' showing that it is a verb and *klay* 'far' in (26) is structurally and semantically the same as in (25) except *càak* 'to leave, to depart' is deleted in (26).

2.2 *klây* 'near'

- (27) *bāan raw yùu klây kan*
home we be near each other
Our houses are near each other.

- (28) *bāan raw yùu mây klây kan*
home we be not near each other
Our houses are not near each other.

klây 'near' in (27) and (28) is definitely a verb because it can be negated as in (28).

3. NOUNS MISTAKENLY CALLED PREPOSITIONS

I believe that any word which can be modified by one of the determiners. *níi* 'this', *nán* 'that', or *nóon* 'that yonder' is called a noun. Thus, a classifier is a noun under the above definition as also in Uppakitsinlapasan (1953: 21-28). I consider *khǒc* 'thing', *hǎn* 'place', *thîi* 'place', *nay* 'inside', *nòok* 'outside', *bon* 'top', *nāa* 'face', *lǎn* 'back', *klaan* 'middle', *khāan* 'side', *nāa* 'north', *tāay* 'south', *rim* 'edge, rim', *māa* 'time', *tān* 'time starting', *tān* 'starting from' are nouns according to the above definition. Starosta (1967) and Kullavanijaya (1974: 88-91) call this type of noun "noun auxiliary"; Clark (1975: 239-243), Clark and Prasithrathsint (1985: 53-62), and Sayankena (1985: 82-83) call it "relator noun".

3.1 *khǒc* 'thing'

- (29) *sāa khǒc khun sǎay*
shirt thing you pretty
Your shirt is pretty.

I consider s⁴a kh³oŋ khun 'your shirt' in (29) a noun phrase with a string of three nouns, where kh³oŋ 'thing' is a noun according to the above definition. We ignore the translation of kh³oŋ 'thing' as 'of' in English. Prasithrathsint (1985: 94 - 95) also considers kh³oŋ 'thing (of)' as a noun.

3.2 h³əŋ 'place'

(30) th³uk khon t³oŋkaan l³ook h³əŋ
each person want world place
s³ant³i ph³āap
peace

Everyone wants a peaceful world.

h³əŋ 'place' in (30) is a noun in the noun string l³ook h³əŋ s³ant³i ph³āap 'world of peace'.

3.3 th³i 'place'

(31) kh³aw kamlan c³a pay h³āa
he progressive will go visit
khun th³i b³aan
you place home
He is going to visit you at home.

3.4 nay 'inside'

(32) ph³om k³ep p³in w³ay nay
I keep gun keep inside
l³inch³ak n³i
drawer this

I kept my gun in this drawer.

nay 'inside' in (32) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase nay l³inch³ak n³i 'in this drawer'.

3.5 n³ook 'outside'

(33) kh³aw y³in r³oo y³uu n³ook b³aan
he stand wait be outside home
He stood waiting outside the house.

n³ook 'outside' in (33) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase n³ook b³aan 'outside the house'.

3.6 bon 'top'

(34) n³ang s³ kh³ray waan y³uu bon
book who place be top
t³o n³an
table that

Whose book is placed on that table?

bon 'top' in (34) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase bon t³o n³an 'on the table'.

3.7 n³aa 'face'

(35) ph³an ph³om r³oo y³uu n³aa r³aan
friend I wait be face store
My friend is waiting for me in front of the store.

n³aa 'face' in (35) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase y³uu n³aa r³aan 'in front of the store'.

3.8 l³əŋ 'back'

(36) d³ek d³ek l³en kan y³uu
child child play each other be
l³əŋ w³at
back temple

Some children are playing behind the temple.

l³əŋ 'back' in (36) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase l³əŋ w³at 'back of the temple'.

3.9 klaan 'middle'

(37) kh³aw n³an klaan th³an³on
he sit middle street

He sits in the middle of the street.

klaan 'middle' in (37) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase klaan th³an³on 'in the middle of the street'.

3.10 kh³aan 'side'

(38) th³ee y³in kh³ian kh³aan kh³aw
she stand close side he
s³am³ee
always

She always stands side - by - side with him.

kh³aan 'side' in (38) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase kh³aan kh³aw 'on his side'.

3.11 rim 'edge, rim'

(39) kh³aw y³in r³im s³a
he stand edge pond

He stood on the edge of the pond.

rim 'edge, rim' in (39) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase rim s³a 'on the edge of the pond'.

3.12 n³ya 'north'

(40) kh³aw th³een kh³oŋ w³ay n³ya h³ua
he place thing keep north head
He places something on top of his head.

n³ya 'north' is a relator head noun in the noun phrase n³ya h³ua 'on the top of his head'.

3.13 t³ay 'south'

(41) m³aw n³oon t³ay t³o
cat sleep south table

The cat is sleeping under the table.

t³ay 'south' in (41) is a relator head noun in the noun phrase t³ay t³o 'under the table'.

3.14 m³a 'time'

(42) kh³aw m³a m³a ch³aw
he come time morning

He came this morning.