Is Hây Really a Benefactive-Causative in Thai?

Udom Warotamasikkhadit
Ramkhamhaeng University

0. Introduction.

One of the most troublesome verbs in Thai is hây 'to give' which has several semantic interpretations when occurring with another verb. A similar verb in Cambodian (Schiller 1992: 777–790) and Vietnamese also has the same problem. It is rather difficult for a foreigner to know when hây 'to give' should appear in a sentence or not. This paper attempts to define the occurrence of hây 'to give' in different sentence types.

1. Benefactive hây ' to give'.

A benefactive hây meaning 'to give' occurs in:
NP_1 V_1 (NP_2) hây NP_3 V_2 t_2
(1) phôɔ hǎa ŋən hây lûuk cháy (ŋən)
    father seek money give child spend money
    A father earns the money for his child to spend.
(2) khǎw sɨ́ɨ sɨ̂a hây mɛ̂ɛ sày (sɨ̂a)
    he buy blouse give mother wear blouse
    He bought a blouse for his mother to wear.
t_2 is a trace of NP_2 where the same NP_2 in the sentence has been deleted. V_2 in (1) and (2) can be further deleted as in:
(3) phôɔ hǎa ŋən hây lûuk
    father seek money give child
    A father earns money for his child.
(4) khǎw sɨ́ɨ sɨ̂a hây mɛ̂ɛ
    he buy blouse give mother
    He bought a blouse for his mother.
If the preceding sentence of (1) contains ŋən 'money', and of (2) contains sɨ̂a 'blouse', NP_2 can be deleted:
(5) phôɔ hǎa hây lûuk

father seek give child
A father earns (it) for his child.

(6) khǎw sɨ́ɨ hây mɛ̂ɛ
he buy give mother
He bought (it) for his mother.

In this case NP$_2$ becomes t$_2$. It should be noted that NP$_3$ must be an animate noun and hây 'to give' cannot precede an inanimate noun.

(7) * phɔ̂ɔ hǎa ŋən hây bâan
father seek money give house
* A father earns the money for a house.

(8) * khǎw hǎa khɔ̌ɔŋ tòktɛ̀ŋ hây bâan
he seek thing decorate give house
* He has been looking for something to decorate his house.

Both (7) and (8) are ungrammatical. (8) should be without hây 'to give' because bâan 'house' is an inanimate noun.

(9) khǎw hǎa khɔ̌ɔŋ tòktɛ̀ŋ bâan
he seek thing decorate house
He has been looking for something to decorate his house.

Some may find that hây 'to give' in (10) precedes an animate noun which contradicts the statement above.

(10) phɔ̂ɔ hây ŋən lûuk
father give money child
A father gives a son money.

It must be noted that word arrangement in Thai is different from English. Thai ŋən 'money' precedes lûuk 'child' but in English 'son' precedes 'money'. The deep structure of (10) is (11):

(11) phɔ̂ɔ sɔ̀ŋ ŋən hây lûuk
father hand out money give child
A father gives a son money.

2.   **Causative hây in different environments.**

2.1   hây preceding a descriptive verb.

When hây precedes a descriptive verb, hây no longer conveys the meaning of benefactive. It is a causative.

NP_1 X   hây t_1 V_{dcs}

(12)   mɛ̂ɛ kin yaa hây (mɛ̂ɛ) ʔûan
mother eat medicine caus. mother fat
Mother takes medicine to get fat.

(13)   phǒm mây yɔɔm càay ŋen hây (phǒm) ŋôo
I not agree pay money caus. I stupid
I would not make myself look stupid by paying the money.

The ungrammatical sentence (8) can contain hây and become grammatical as in:

(14)   khǎw hǎa khɔ̌ɔŋ tòktɛ̀ŋ bâan hây (bâan) sǔay
he seek thing decorate house caus. house beautiful
He has been looking for something to decorate his house to make it beautiful.

(14) is grammatical and hây conveys the meaning of causative when it precedes a descriptive verb..

2.2   hây following tham 'to make'.

When the verb tham 'to make' precedes hây with an empty category between tham 'to make' and hây, hây will convey the meaning of causative in the following sentence type:

NP_1 tham   PRO   hây NP_2 VP

(15)   nâataa khun tham hây dèk rɔ́ɔŋhâay
face eye you make caus. child cry
Your features make the children cry.

(16)   khun tham hây phǒm mii khwaamsùk
you make caus. I have happiness
You make me happy.

It must be noted here that no element can occur between tham 'to make' and hây 'causative'.

A sentence like (17) is grammatical and one may think that it violates the postulation of 2.2.

(17) mɛ̂ɛ tham khànǒm hây lûuk kin (khànǒm)
mother make dessert caus. child eat dessert
A mother makes dessert for her children.

It can be seen here that (17) follows the pattern of 1., not 2.2 because khànǒm 'dessert' is an inanimate noun and it occurs between tham 'to make' and hây 'to give.' If it were to become a causative, the element between tham ' to make' and hây 'causative' must be an empty category.

2.3   hây preceded by another verb of a certain sentence type.

If hây is preceded by a verb of command like baŋkháp 'to force', bɔ̀ɔk 'to tell', cháy 'to use', sàŋ 'to order', or other verbs like sɔ̌ɔn 'to teach', wâa 'to scold mildly', or others in the following sentence type:

NP_1 V NP_2 t_1 hây t_2 VP

NP_2 must be an animate noun and NP_2 can be placed after hây, for example:

(18)   khǎw baŋkháp phǒm hây tham ŋaan
he force I caus. do work
He forced me to work.

(19)   mɛ̂ɛ sàŋ phǒm hây pay
mother order I caus. go
Mother ordered me to go.

(18) can also appear as (20), and (19) as (21):

(20)   khǎw baŋkháp hây phǒm tham ŋaan
he force caus. I do work
He forced me to work.

(21)   mɛ̂ɛ sàŋ hây phǒm pay
mother order caus. I go
Mother ordered me to go.

(22)   khruu sɔ̌ɔn phǒm hây wâay náam
teacher teach I caus. swim water
The teacher teaches me to swim.