

ALTERNATIVES TO REFLEXIVES IN THAI AND VIETNAMESE: BINDING THEORY AND LANGUAGE VARIATIONS¹

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I discuss coreference phenomena in Thai and Vietnamese in the framework of Principles-and-Parameters developed originally by Chomsky (1981). In particular, I argue against Lasnik's (1986) proposed theory of parameterized Binding Condition C, in which Thai and Vietnamese data play an important role.

1. CHOMSKY'S THEORY OF BINDING CONDITION C. In Chomsky's Binding Theory, R(eferring) expressions, such as names and epithets, are subject to Binding Condition C stated as in (1):

- (1) Binding Condition C (Chomsky 1981)
An R-expression must be free.

'Free' is defined as 'not bound', and 'bind' is defined as in (2):

- (2) α binds β if (i) α c-commands β , and (ii) α and β are coindexed.

I assume the following definition of 'c-command':

- (3) α c-commands β if every branching node dominating α dominates β , and neither α nor β dominates the other.

Coindexed NPs are interpreted as coreferential. Condition C was formulated to account for the unacceptability of English sentences such as those in (4):

- (4) a. *John_i visited John_i's friend.
b. *John_i thinks that Mary likes the idiot_i.

In (4-a), the first name *John* binds the second name *John*, since they are coindexed, and the former c-commands the latter. In (4-

b), the name *John* binds the epithet *the idiot*.. Both (a) and (b) violate Condition C. In addition, the unacceptability status of a sentence such as (5) is also accounted for by Condition C:

(5) *John_i likes John_i.

2. LASNIK'S THEORY OF BINDING CONDITION C. Chomsky's Condition C cannot be universal, since there are languages that allow the binding relation contained in (4-a). According to Lasnik 1986, Thai and Vietnamese are of this type, as illustrated in (6):

(6) a. (Thai data from Lasnik 1986)

ɕɔɔn_i khít wâa ɕɔɔn_i chàlaàt
'John_i thinks that John_i is smart'.

b. (Vietnamese data from Lasnik 1986)

John_i tin John_i sẽ thắng
'John_i thinks John_i will win'.

Lasnik observes further that Thai and Vietnamese versions of (4-b), in which a name binds an epithet, are acceptable as shown in (7), but an epithet is not allowed to bind a name in these languages, as shown in (8):

(7) a. ɕɔɔn_i khít wâa ?âybaa_i chàlaàt .

'John_i thinks that the nut_i is smart'.

b. John_i tin cái thằng chó đẽ_i sẽ thắng

'John_i believes the SOB_i will win'.

(8) a. *?âybaa_i khít wâa ɕɔɔn_i chàlaàt

'The nut_i thinks that John_i is smart'.

b. *cái thằng chó đẽ_i tin John_i sẽ thắng

'The SOB_i believes John_i will win'.

Lasnik points out that the notion of 'referentiality' is relevant to these binding facts: epithets are less referential than names, and the binding of a more referential expression by a less referential one results in unacceptability. He generalizes this as a universal principle in the following form:

(9) Referential Hierarchy Condition (Lasnik 1986)

A more referential expression must be free from a less referential one.

Then, the well-known universal phenomenon that an R-expression cannot be bound by a pronoun as illustrated in (10) also follows from (9):

- (10) a. *He_i visited John_i's brother.
 b. *Khắ_i nghĩ wêa cồ_n chà_là_t
 'He_i thinks that John_i is smart'.
 c. *Nó_i tin John_i sẽ thắng.
 'He_i believes that John_i will win'.

The notion of 'referentiality' is incorporated in Lasnik's proposed feature analysis for nominal categories. He adds the feature $[\pm r]$ to Chomsky's analysis with two binary features $[\pm a(naphor)]$ and $[\pm p(ronominal)]$. Both anaphor and pronominal categories bear $[-r]$, and names and epithets are categories of R-expression bearing $[+r]$ but are distinct from each other by the value of the feature $[p]$:

- (11) a. Anaphors: $[-r, -p, +a]$
 b. Pronominals: $[-r, +p, -a]$
 c. Epithets: $[+r, +p, -a]$
 d. Names: $[+r, -p, -a]$

Lasnik argues that language specific Condition Cs are needed in addition to the Referentiality Hierarchy Condition (henceforth RHC) in order to account for cross-linguistically varied Condition C effects. First, he generalizes the data in (4), that English forbids the binding of an R-expression even when RHC is met, and proposes Chomsky's Condition C as a condition specific to English, as in (12):

- (12) Condition C for English (Lasnik, 1986)
 An R-expression must be free.

Lasnik observes the acceptability contrast in Vietnamese sentences in (13):

- (13) a. John_i tin John_i sẽ thắng.
 'John_i believes John_i will win'.
 b. *John_i thương John_i.
 'John_i likes John_i'.

(13-b) is a typical case of binding within a governing category (henceforth gc). For the present paper, I leave gc undefined except to note that what is relevant to my discussion is the minimal clause containing the target NP in an object position, as in (14):

(14) [NP V NP]

When the object NP is coindexed with the subject NP in the clause in (14), the object NP is bound in its gc. In order to account for the unacceptability of (13-b), Lasnik formulates Condition C for Vietnamese as in (15):

- (15) Condition C for Vietnamese (Lasnik, 1986)
An R-expression must be free in its governing category.

Further, Lasnik observes that (16), the Thai versions of (13), are both acceptable:

- (16) a. $\text{c\ddot{o}n}_i$ khít wâa $\text{c\ddot{o}n}_i$ chàlaàt
'John_i thinks that John_i is smart'.
b. $\text{c\ddot{o}n}_i$ cháp $\text{c\ddot{o}n}_i$
'John_i likes John_i'.

Thus, Lasnik concludes that Thai R-expressions are constrained only by RHC. To summarize, Lasnik proposes parameterized Condition Cs for English, Vietnamese, and Thai as follows:

- (17) Parameterized Condition C (Lasnik, 1986)
a. English: An R-expression must be free.
b. Vietnamese: An R-expression must be free in its gc.
c. Thai: No requirement.

In Narahara 1991, I provided data which Lasnik's Condition C for English incorrectly disallows, and offered a modified version. I also discussed the fact that my consultation with native speakers of Vietnamese and Thai points to a generalization which is different from that of Lasnik's. In the present paper I follow up my argument against Lasnik's theory of parameterized Condition C for Thai and Vietnamese.

3. THAI AND VIETNAMESE REFLEXIVE CONSTRUCTIONS. In Vietnamese, one of the reflexive constructions involves a morpheme *tự*, which precedes the verb, and a pronoun. An example is shown below:

- (18) Nó_i tự đánh nó_i
 3_{per} RF² hit 3_{per}³
 'He_i hit himself_i'.

The Thai reflexive constructions involve *tua* and *eng*.⁴ These morphemes are used either by themselves or with a pronoun as illustrated below:⁵

- (19) a. Deewít_i chǎp tua ʔEENG_i
 David like RF RF
 b. Deewít_i chǎp tua KHAW ʔEENG_i
 David like RF 3-_{per} RF
 'David_i likes himself_i'.

4. GENERALIZATION OF CONDITION B. Both Thai and Vietnamese informants whom I consulted reject pronouns and R-expressions without reflexive morphemes for the intended coreference as shown in (20) and (21):

- (20) a. *cǎn_i chǎp cǎn_i
 'John_i likes John_i'.
 b. *cǎn_i chǎp khǎw_i
 'John_i likes him_i'.
 (21) a. *John_i đánh John_i.
 'John_i hit John_i'.
 b. *John_i đánh nó_i
 'John_i hit him_i'.

For Thai datum (20-a), my Thai informants' judgments differ from Lasnik's. For Lasnik, the complete grammaticality judgment on (20-a) by his informant as shown in (16-b) is crucial to his proposal of typological diversion between Thai and Vietnamese as shown in (17). Lasnik's theory that Thai R-expressions are free to occur in their gcs predicts that (20-a) has perfect acceptability as do the reflexive sentences in (19) involving reflexive morphemes. My Thai informants

unanimously reject (20-a) over (19), just as Vietnamese informants reject (21-a) over (18). But Lasnik does not discuss either Thai or Vietnamese reflexive construction, and thus he does not compare acceptabilities between the full-fledged reflexive sentences with non-reflexive alternatives. I proceed with my discussion based on the unacceptability judgments on (20-a) by my informants. Then my descriptive generalization on the occurrence of R-expression in its gc is that it is disallowed in both Thai and Vietnamese. The generalization extends to many other languages, including English and Japanese. Thus, my first hypothesis is that the Condition C that Lasnik proposed for only Vietnamese extends to Thai and English as well:

(22) An R-expression must be free in its gc.

(22) shares the anti-locality condition with Chomsky's Binding Condition B stated as follows:

(23) Binding Condition B (Chomsky, 1981)
A pronominal must be free in its gc.

I proposed in Narahara 1991 to generalize (22) and (23) as a binding condition for non-anaphors:

(24) Generalized Condition B
A non-anaphor must be free in its gc.

Versions of Generalized Condition B have been proposed by Jackendoff 1972 and Kuno 1987. The Thai and Vietnamese data give independent evidence for it. Furthermore, by formulating the condition referring to a non-anaphor category, rather than to pronominal and R-expression categories, it renders the feature $[\pm p]$ superfluous, since no binding condition refers to it. The pronominal category can be instantiated by the default value of $[-a, -r]$. One of the consequences of eliminating the $[\pm p]$ feature is that names and epithet categories are no longer specified as distinct categories. One of the arguments that Lasnik presents for specifying the epithet category with $[+r, +p]$, distinguishing from names $[+r, -p]$, is the following contrast in acceptability status that he observed:

(25) a. $\text{cɔn} \text{ } \text{chɔp} \text{ } \text{cɔn}$;
John like John

- b. * $\text{c}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{n}_i$ $\text{ch}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{p}$?aybaa_i
 John like the idiot
- c. * $\text{c}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{n}_i$ $\text{ch}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{p}$ $\text{kh}\check{\text{a}}\text{w}_i$
 John like 3-per

Lasnik argues that unacceptability of both (25-a) and (25-b) can be accounted for by Chomsky's Condition B by assuming the epithet category to be bearing the feature [+p]. Lasnik's theory that Thai names are free but epithets are subject to Chomsky's Condition B predicts a sharp acceptability contrast between (25-a) and (26):

- (26) $\text{?}\hat{\text{a}}\text{yb}\hat{\text{a}}\text{a}_i$ $\text{ch}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{p}$ $\text{?}\hat{\text{a}}\text{yb}\hat{\text{a}}\text{a}_i$
 the idiot like the idiot

Unfortunately, this datum is not examined in his article. My informants find (25-a) to be as unacceptable as (26)⁶. This shows that the categories of names and epithets need not be distinct, thus supporting the claim that the feature [\pm p] is superfluous in Binding Theory. Another of Lasnik's arguments for distinguishing names and epithets as distinct categories is that the former is more referential than the latter. However, this would result in proposing numerous nominal categories among R-expressions, since there exist inter-categorical referentiality hierarchy between names or between epithets. For instance, *John Smith* is more referential than *Mr. Smith* since the former can bind the latter, but not vice versa, as the following acceptability contrast shows:

- (27) a. John Smith_i will talk to those who are
 interested in the health care plan which Mr.
 Smith_i is advocating.
- b. *Mr. Smith_i will talk to those who are interested
 in the health care plan which John Smith_i is
 advocating.

Clearly, the feature [\pm p] is irrelevant to the referentiality hierarchy between the names. It is also useless in indicating the referentiality hierarchy between epithets. A wide range of data in Narahara 1991 shows that referentiality is not discrete, but a continuum. Thus, beyond [\pm r], referentiality of nominals must be indicated by non-categorical features.

5. ALTERNATIVES TO REFLEXIVES. The Vietnamese and one of the Thai reflexive constructions involve pronouns. My consultation with native speakers revealed contexts in which they accept an R-expression in place of a pronoun in the reflexive constructions. One of the contexts allows the use of R-expressions for a non-third party reference. Unlike English, and like many other Asian languages, Thai and Vietnamese allow proper names and common nouns such as kinship terms and titles for self-reference and addressee reference instead of using one of the first-person and second-person pronouns.^{7,8} The referent of *Val* in (28) can be the speaker herself, the addressee, or a third party, depending whose name it is:

- (28) *Val wing rew*
Val run fast
 'Val runs fast'.

Now, consider the following Thai reflexive sentences:

- (29) a. *Val_i thii tua ʔeengi.*
Val hit RF RF
 b. *Val_i thii tua khǎw ʔeengi.*
 'Val hit RF 3-per RF'
 'Val_i hit herself_i'.

Val in (29-a) can have a self-reference or addressee-reference reading in addition to the readily available third-party reading, while *Val* in (29-b) can have only a third-party reading. These facts are accounted for if we assume that a self-referring or addressee-referring R-expression does not agree with the third-person. The object NP in (29-a) does not contain a pronoun, but the object NP in (29-b) contains the third-person pronoun *khaw*. Thus, it can corefer with *Val* only if its referent is a third-party. It is reasonable to assume further that a self-referring R-expression agrees only with the first-person, and an addressee-referring R-expression, with the second-person. Then, one expects (30) to be acceptable:

- (30) **Val_i thii tua chan ʔeengi*
Val hit RF 1-per RF
 'Val_i (=the speaker) hit myself_i'.

Contrary to the expectation, (30) is unacceptable. The cause of the unacceptability, however, is not that the self-referring R-expression disagrees with the first-person pronoun in the object NP, but rather a stylistic mismatch between the R-expression and the pronoun. Use of an R-expression for self-reference or addressee-reference is a stylistic choice that reflects the interpersonal relationship among the discourse participants, and it is mutually exclusive with a first-person pronoun or a second-person pronoun respectively.⁹ For a self-referring R-expression, then, there is no appropriate pronoun that can appear between *tua* and *?eeng* in the reflexive constructions. Thus, for the intended meaning of 'I hit myself' with *Val* for self-reference, (29-a) appears to be the only choice. But there are native speakers who accept as *Val*'s utterance the R-expression itself appearing between *tua* and *?eeng* as in (31):

- (31) *Val_i thii tua Val ?eengi*
Val hit RF Val RF
 'Val_i (=the speaker) hit Val-self_i'.

A similar phenomenon is also observed in Vietnamese. Consider again a reflexive construction in Vietnamese:

- (32) *Hoang_i tự đánh nó_i*
Hoang RF hit 3-per
 'Hoang_i hit himself_i'.

If Hoang is talking to his mother, he would refer to himself as *con*, 'child'. It can corefer with neither *nó*, a third-person pronoun, due to the person disagreement, nor *tôi*, a first-person pronoun, due to the stylistic mismatch, but it can corefer with another *con* :

- (33) a. **Con_i tự đánh nó_i*
 child RF hit 3-per
 'Child_i (=I_i) hit himself_i'.
 b. **Con_i tự đánh tôi_i*
 child RF hit 1-per
 'Child_i (=I_i) hit myself_i'.
 c. *Con_i tự đánh con_j*
 child RF hit child
 'Child_i (=I_i) hit child_j'.

In Vietnamese, the use of third-person pronouns in the reflexive construction faces additional constraint. Like those of many other Asian languages, Vietnamese pronouns define the relative social status among the discourse participants.¹⁰ The use of the Vietnamese third-person pronoun *nó* presupposes the referent to be in a status inferior to the speaker.¹¹ Thus, my informants say that they prefer using (34-b) to (34-a) when talking about their peer *Hoang*:

- (34) a. Hoang_i tự đánh nó_j.
 Hoang RF hit 3-per
 ‘Hoang_i hit himself_j’.
- b. Hoang_i tự đánh Hoang_j.
 Hoang RF hit Hoang
 ‘Hoang_i hit Hoang-self_j’.

The occurrence of R-expressions in Thai and Vietnamese reflexive sentences reveals a complementary function of R-expressions to the pronouns since they are free to assume any of the first, second, or third-person roles. This contrasts with English R-expressions, which are inherently in the third-person. In English, an R-expression for a non-third party is observed in conversations involving younger children. But the R-expression can corefer only with a third-person pronoun, as the following examples illustrate:

- (35) (Mother talking to Johnny)
- a. Mommy_i ate her_j vegetables.
 - b. *Mommy_i ate my_i vegetables.
 - c. Is Johnny_i going to eat his_j vegetables?
 - d. *Is Johnny_i going to eat your_j vegetables?

Also, the Vietnamese examples in (34) represent the nature of pronouns in Thai and Vietnamese which are specified for more than person, number and gender features.

6. NOMINAL CATEGORIES. If the acceptability of (31), (33-c) and (34-b) is an indication that they satisfy binding conditions, particularly Generalized Condition B, how do we account for it? One unworkable account is that Thai and Vietnamese R-

expressions are unconstrained in the presence of the acceptability contrast, as shown below:

- (35) a. *Val_i thiit Val_i
 Val hit Val
 b. Val_i thiit tua Val ?eeng_i
 Val hit RF Val RF
 'Val_i (=the speaker) hit herself_i'.

I suggest that the reflexive morphemes in Thai and Vietnamese turn non-anaphor categories into anaphor categories by affecting only the feature [-a] of the given nominal. For instance, the reflexive morpheme *tɯ* turns *Hoang* in (34-b) from non-anaphor R-expression category [-a, +r] into a distinct category of anaphor R-expression [+a, -r]. However, the fact that acceptability of (34-b) and other reflexive sentences involving the R-expression category is limited to special contexts, as discussed above, suggests that anaphorization of the [-a, +r] category is not unqualified. I leave the articulation of anaphorization for future research.

7. CONCLUSION. I have presented data to argue against Lasnik's proposed parametric theory of Condition C which separates Thai from Vietnamese. The data I collected show that the R-expressions in these languages share basic distributional properties. The data led me to generalize Chomsky's Condition B and Lasnik's Condition C proposed for Vietnamese as Generalized Condition B, to which both Vietnamese and Thai are subject. As a result, Binding Theory is simplified, as Condition C consists only of Referentiality Hierarchy. My investigation of Thai and Vietnamese R-expressions occurring in reflexive sentences reveals how the systems of person-reference in Thai and Vietnamese interact with binding properties of nominal categories. I leave for future research a more detailed analysis of agreement phenomena of R-expressions in Thai and Vietnamese.

Notes

- ¹ The earlier version of this paper was written while I was a post-doctoral fellow at the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University. I thank the Institute for making it possible for me to write the earlier version of the paper and attend the SEALS III conference. I gratefully acknowledge John

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² RF is an abbreviation for 'reflexive morpheme'.

³ 3-per is an abbreviation for 'third-person pronoun'.

⁴ *Tua* literally means 'body', and *?eeng* 'alone'.

⁵ See Wilawan 1991 and Osatananda 1993 for syntactic analyses of *tua ?eeng* and *tua pronoun ?eeng*.

⁶ There may be Thai native speakers who find (25-a) and (26) a little better than (25-b) and (25-c). According to my investigation of Japanese R-expression and pronoun alternatives to *zibun* 'self', Condition B effects somewhat weaken when the nominals involved in the binding relation within a gc are morphologically identical as illustrated in the following:

a. ??? Hanako_i-ga Hanako_i-o semeta
Hanako-NOM Hanako-ACC blamed
'Hanako_i blames Hanako_i'.

b. * Hanako_i-ga kanozyo_i-o semeta
Hanako-NOM her-ACC blamed
'Hanako_i blames her_i'.

c. ??? kanozyo_i-ga kanozyo_i-o semeta
she-NOM her-ACC blamed
'She_i blamed her_i'.

⁷ While the use of names for self-reference is limited to a particular population, the use of kinship terms for self-reference and address is very common in these languages.

⁸ There are more pronouns for first, second, and third-person in Thai and Vietnamese.

⁹ It is unclear how strict this constraint is in Thai and Vietnamese. In Japanese, I have heard the following utterance in which a proper name for addressee-reference and a second person pronoun are mixed:

Nobuyuki_i-no sitai koto-wa nandemo
Nobuyuki-GEN want to do thing-TOP anything
anta_i-no sitai yooni site ii-no-yo
2-per-GEN want to do like do fine

'As for the things Nobuyuki_i (=the addressee) wants to do, you_i can do as (you) like'.

The relative acceptability of this sentence may be due to the fact that addressing someone with his/her first name and addressing

someone with a second person pronoun *anta* both presuppose the addressee to be equal or inferior to the speaker.

¹⁰ See Cooke 1968 for a detailed discussion.

¹¹ According to Cooke 1968, there are two Vietnamese pronouns for the third-person singular, *no'* and *nguoi*.. The latter is used for gods, kings, and highly respected persons.

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