THE ADVERSATIVE PASSIVE IN TAI NUEA: EVIDENCE OF LANGUAGE CONTACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR A THEORY OF LANGUAGE CHANGE 1

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Introduction

The term "adversative passive" is generally used to refer to the type of passive construction in which the subject is adversely affected; for example, /khaw4 thu:k1 ma:4 kat1/2'He was bitten by a dog.' in Thai, and /boku wa Taroo ni nagurareta/ 'I was hit by Taroo.' in Japanese. This type of passive is commonly found in East and Southeast Asian languages. It is marked by /-are/ or /-rare/ in Japanese, /-hi/ in Korean, /bèi/ in Chinese, /bi/ in Vietnamese, /traw/ in Cambodian, /thŷ:k/ in Lao, and /thu:k1/ in Thai.

The most prominent characteristic of this type of passive construction is the affected subject. Shibatani (1985:837) identified "the affectedness of the subject" as a semantic property of a passive. With reference to the adversative passive, she said that in some languages "the affectedness of the Patient subject in a passive is more pronounced than the Patient object of an active sentence.... Subject position, being the highest focus position, has the effect of the affectedness inherent in the Patient." (p. 841) In brief, what Shibatani seems to say is that when speakers of these languages want to show that the Patient is highly affected, they use a construction in which that affected Patient can be highlighted, i.e. in the subject position. Such a construction, in which the Patient subject is strongly affected or affected by an unfavorable result of an action, is an adversative passive construction.

In Standard Thai, the adversative passive is marked by /thu:k1/, which does not have a specific meaning but has been interpreted by most scholars as a passive marker meaning something like 'undergo (an unpleasant experience)'. My study on change in passive constructions in this language (Prasithrathsint 1985,

Standar

1988) reveals that the /thu:k1/ adversative passive is not the oldest type of passive found in the language. It emerged after the simple "verb" passive --the passive costruction in which the verb is apparently unmarked, e.g./kam-phE:ng top1-tEng1 duaj2 do:k1-ma:j3/(wall-decorate-with-flower) 'The wall was decorated with flowers.' The study also schematizes the development of the /thu:k1/ adversative passive: it developed from the intransitive verb /thu:k1/ meaning 'be hit by; suffer from' as in (b) below, which in turn developed from the transitive verb /thu:k1/ 'hit' as in (a) below.

- (b) khaw4 thu:k1 ja:-phit3
 he suffer from poison
 [+PAT] [-trns] [+COR]⁴
 'He was poisoned.'

After (a) and (b) came Patterns (c), (d), and (e) below. In (c) /thu:k1/ occurs with an inherently intransitive verb. This type of construction is not classified as a passive by me. Pattern (d) is an adversative passive with an Agent, and (e) is one without an Agent.

- (c) khaw4 thu:k1 paj
 he undergo go
 [+PAT] [-trns] [-trns]
 'He unwillingly had to go.'
- (d) khaw4 thu:k1 khru: du1
 he undergo teacher scold
 [+PAT] [-trns] [+AGT] [+trns]
 'He was scolded by the teacher.'
- (e) khaw4 thu:k1 du1
 he undergo scold
 [+PAT] [-trns] [-trns, +ptnl]⁵
 'He was scolded.'

(Prasithrathsint 1985:87-88)

Although commonly found in all prominent languages in East and Southeast Asia, including Standard Thai, the adversative passive does not exist in Phu Thai, a major Tai language spoken in some parts

of Northeastern Thailand. Sayankena (1985) and my study on passive constructions in Phu Thai (Prasithrathsint 1984) both report the absence of such constructions in the language, and show that wherever a passive construction should occur, a topicalized construction would be used instead. Therefore, it may be interesting to find out whether passive constructions, especially the well-known adversative passive, would be found in other Tai languages. I intentionally picked Tai Nuea, a Tai language spoken in Yunnan, the People's Republic of China, to study on this issue because it is historically grouped in the same branch as Phu Thai and Standard Thai (Li 1960, Brown 1965, cited in Sayankena 1985:1,3). However, unlike Phu Thai, Tai Nuea has its own writing system and a long tradition of literacy. The language also shows a great similarity to Standard Thai in spite of having been in contact with Chinese for a long time.

The purpose of this study is, first, to find out whether an adversative passive construction exists in Tai Nuea, and secondly, to analyze the structure of the passive if it is found. I hypothesize that such a passive exists in Tai Nuea because unlike Phu Thai, which does not have a writing system of its own and does not have any passive, Tai Nuea has a writing system and should have a passive. Indeed, studies have shown that in general writing is related to more frequent use of passive constructions. I also hypothesize that the adversative passive in Tai Nuea is like that in Standard Thai; i.e., it contains the cognate word of /thu:k1/ and that all the uses of /thu:k1/ in Patterns (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) mentioned above exist in the language.

As will be seen below, an adversative passive was found in the data, thus confirming one of my hypotheses. However, it is not marked by a cognate of /thu:k1/ as I have hypothesized, but by a borrowed word from Chinese. I will discuss this phenomenon in terms of language contact.

It is hoped that the findings of this study may have some implications for a theory of language change, especially one concerning the development of a passive in isolating languages, such as Tai and Chinese.

Data

The data used in this study are approximately

23,000 words long. They are composed of the tape scripts of five narratives in Tai Nuea provided by my research assistant and eight narrative texts in Tai Mau from Shan Chrestomathy by Linda Wai Ling Young (1985: 39-163). "Tai Mau" is the name used to refer to a language spoken by Chinese Shans. The Tai Mau dialect in Young (1985) belongs to the Northern Shan group and is spoken in the frontiers of Northeastern Burma and Yunnan Province in the People's Republic of China (Young 1985: 1-2). As for Tai Nuea represented by the data in this study, it is usually regarded as another dialect in the Northern Shan group. According to Young (1985:4), some claim that "Tai Nuea" is the major classification for both Tai Mau and Tai Nuea. Here I will use the name "Tai Nuea" to represent both Tai Mau and Tai Nuea and regard it as a Tai language spoken in Yunnan Province.

The adversative passive in Tai Nuea

Three kinds of passive were found in the data: the simple "verb" passive, the /pen/ 'be' passive, and a type of adversative passive. Here I will deal only with the adversative passive.

Unlike what I have hypothesized, this type of passive in Tai Nuea is not found to be marked by a cognate of /thu:k1/ in Standard Thai, but by /co3/8, which seems to mean the same as /thu:k1/ in the Thai adversative passive, i.e. 'undergo (an unpleasant experience)'.

At this point, I came up with the question "Do the other words /thu:k1/, i.e. /thu:k1/ 'cheap', /thu:k1/ 'correct', and /thu:k1/ 'hit' have cognates in Tai Nuea?" I then searched for such words in the texts but did not find any. However, in the glossary provided in Young (1985: 217) are listed /thuk2/'to collect, /thuk2/ 'cheap; to hit' and /thuk2-caj/ (hitheart) 'to satisfy'. The reasons why these words were not found in the texts may be that they are content words, the occurrence of which depends on a particular context that requires them, and that they are rarely used in the language. The glossary also confirms the finding that a cognate of /thu:k1/ as a passive marker does not exist in this language.

Six instances of the Tai Nuea adversative passive were found in the data. They are as follows:

ngo1 1E4 ca:ng4 khaw5 (1) kwa:i1 tang1 and elephant plural buffalo and ox kam3-ph0ng CO3 kon1-khaw5 sEw3 ka:2 undergo man plural catch go

'Buffaloes, oxen and elephants were captured by man.'

(2) nang2-hy5 khaw5 ti5 am2 co3 kon1-khaw5
 for sake of they will not undergo man plural
 sEw2 ka:2 ...
 catch go

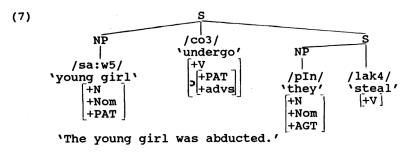
'In order to avoid being captured by man....'

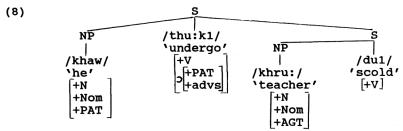
- (3) khIng khOng5 lE4 to sat5 tay3 lum Clsf. thing and Clsf. animal under beneath fa:4 je la:3 je co3 kon1 pe4-kin sky more after more undergo man defeat eat
 - 'Things and animals in the world are more and more oppressed by man.'
- (4) k0j5 la:3 k0j5 co3 kon1 cay4-kin gradual after gradual undergo man use eat
 - '(They) are gradually exploited by man.'
- (5) sa:w5 co3 pIn lak4 ka:2 aw4 young girl undergo they steal go already

'The young girl has already been abducted.'

- (6) phOng1 wa sa:w5 co3 pIn hot2 lam4
 if that young girl undergo they throw water
 co3 sa:w5 com1 caw com1
 hit young girl pleased heart pleased
 - 'If somebody throws water at the young girl, she will be pleased.'

Although these passive constructions are marked by /co3/\undergo', a word that has no cognate in any other Tai language, they have the same structure as the /thu:k1/ adversative passive in Standard Thai. Diagrams (7) and (8) below represent the structures of the adversative passive in Tai Nuea and Standard Thai, respectively. 10





'He was scolded by the teacher.'

It should be noted that although Structures (7) and (8) are identical, the Agent in the /co3/adversative passive in Tai Nuea (7) is not like that in the /thu:k1/ adversative passive in Standard Thai (8); the latter is specific, but the former is not. Such words as /pIn/'they', /kon1-khaw5/ 'men, people' are minimally specified--their meanings are almost zero. Indeed, the /co3/ passive in Tai Nuea functions almost the same as Pattern (e), the one without an Agent in Standard Thai, which is not found in Tai Nuea.

Language contact

As for the word $/\cos^3/$, it is most likely to be from Chinese. However, to determine definitely what word in Chinese it is derived from is not easy. One possiblility is the adoption of /tsaó/ from the Yunnan dialect of Mandarin Chinese. According to my Tai Nuea informant, who also speaks Yunnan Chinese fluently, the word /tsaó/ is represented by the The Dictionary of Spoken Chinese character compiled by the Institute of Far Eastern Languages, Yale University (1966:116-117) listed four words that correspond to the character 🕍 . They are /jau/ meaning 'receive; suffer from; be troubled with'; /jau/ meaning `be ignited or lit; fall asleep;

touch'; /je/, which is added to the main verb to indicate that the action or condition is going on or continuing; and /jwó/ used to indicate success in getting at something or indicate touching something.

It is not easy to determine definitely which of the four words in Mandarin corresponds to /tsao/ in Yunnan Chinese. My Tai Nuea informant said it should be /je/, the meaning of which does not seem to have any relation to the passive. However, my Chinese informant insisted that it should be /jau/ meaning 'touch'. Actually, all the three words /jau/, /jau/ and /jwo/ seem to be somewhat related to the adversative passive. The meanings 'be troubled with' in /jau/, 'touch'in /jau/ and 'succeed in getting at or touching' in /jwo/ are all similar to the meaning of /co3/ in the adversative passive in Tai Nuea. Therefore, any of the three words could be the one corresponding to /tsao/ in Yunnan Chinese, from which /co3/ in Tai Nuea is derived. More evidence is needed to make it possible to conclude definitely about this.

Another possibility is that /co3/ in Tai Nuea is derived from /jyàu/ represented by 表 , meaning 'let; cause or make' and is used as a passive marker as in the sentence 他 我人打了 'He was beaten up by someone.' Also, it could be derived from another /jyàu/, the homophonous form represented by another character: 中, which means 'call; whistle or blow; shout; order; tell someone to do something; make or cause; and also used as a passive marker in such a sentence as 科科教授教育 'The tree was blown over by the wind.' and 他科人打了 'He got beaten up by somebody.'11

It may be interesting to note that the use of /jyau/ (水 or 中) in Mandarin as a passive marker is exactly the same as the use of /co3/ in Tai Nuea and /thu:k1/ in Standard Thai. However, although this parallelism is striking, my informants seem to be certain that /tsaó/ in Yunnan Chinese, which is used as the passive marker, corresponds to 本 rather than 女 or 中 . This makes me unable to draw a final conclusion here about the original word deriving /co3/ in Tai Nuea. More study is needed to obtain the answer.

The use of /co3/ as the passive marker in Tai Nuea is an evidence of Tai Nuea in contact with Chinese. According to Weinrich (1953:1), "two or more languages are said to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same persons." Persons who use two languages alternately or are able to speak two languages are called **bilinguals**. Thus, language contact is related to bilingualism. Tai Nuea in contact with the Chinese dialect of Yunnan is a result of the bilingualism in Tai Nuea speakers. Indeed, virtually all Tai Nuea speakers are bilingual. They can speak both Tai Nuea and Chinese.

Bilingualism brings about interference. This term is used by Weinrich (1953:1) to refer to "the rearrangement of patterns that result from introduction of foreign elements into the more highly structured domains of language, such as the bulk of the phonemic system, a large part of the morphology and and some areas of the vocabulary." Interference, as Haugen (1956:12) put it, takes many forms, such as "foreign accent," "language mixture," "unidiomatic expressions," "loanwords," etc, and can be either unconscious or deliberate. In the case of Tai Nuea, its speakers, who also speak Chinese must have adopted some features in Chinese into their language, including the word from which /co3/ is derived. Interference of Chinese into Tai Nuea has caused the development of a new pattern in Tai Nuea--the adversative passive.

Actually, the emergence of a grammatical pattern as a result of language contact is usually called grammatical borrowing or grammatical interference. According to Weinrich (1953:39), if the bilingual identifies a morpheme or grammatical category of Language A with one in Language B, he may apply the B form in grammatical functions which he derives from the system of A. Weinrich classified this type grammatical interference as "replica functions of equivalent morphemes." This causes a language to develop a full new paradigm of obligatory categories on the model of another language. Some examples provided by Weinrich (1953:41) to illustrate this are: the partial aspective system in Irish based on English, the disappearance of the infinitive and the differentiation between two conjunctions in the Balkan languages under Middle Greek influence, and the passive voice in Estonia, Sorbian, and Slovene based on German.

Importation of a type of construction from one language into another is not simply copying the structure of the construction. My study on change in passive constructions in Standard Thai (Prasithrathsint 1985) shows that the /thu:k1/ non-adversative passive

in the language emerged as a result of Thai in contact with English and that the influence did not result in just a straightforward borrowing of the English passive into Thai, but the modification of the language in such a way that Thai ways of talking have become more like English. One way to lessen the gap between the Thai and English ways of talking is to allow more grammatical use of constructions with the Patient subject in Thai, especially those with an inanimate subject. The non-adversative passive is a construction which allows an inanimate Patient subject in Thai. Thus, the development of Tai Nuea adversative passive should not be interpreted as a simple process of importation of the passive from Chinese, but a re-analysis of the syntactic and semantic properties of certain elements in Tai Nuea itself.

In fact, when specifically speaking of the pattern of adversative passive itself, I find it difficult to state exactly that Tai Nuea has borrowed the passive from Chinese. Actually, the reversal is also possible. Evidence shows that both Tai Nuea and Yunnan Chinese have highly compatible ways of talking. The grammars of both languages are very similar. Morpheme-to-morpheme translation between both languages can be done easily. This phenomenon is parallel to linguistic convergence in India reported in Emeneau (1956) and in Kupwar village, a small convergence area, in which three languages, Marathi, Kannada and Urdu, appear to have become identical in the grammar through convergence development (Gumperz and Wilson 1971 cited in Grace 1981:25-26). As for Tai Nuea and Yunnan Chinese, the following examples show how compatible the two languages are as far as the passive is concerned.

Tai Nuea: man1 co3 pIn mang

he/she undergo they beat

Yunnan Chinese: tha **tsao**´ ren-jiā dǎ he/she undergo people beat

'He/she got beaten (by somebody).'

The adversative passive and language change

The coexistence of several words /co3/ in Tai Nuea implies that the word /co3/'undergo (an unpleasant experience)' in the adversative passive in this language is most likely to develop from the word /co3/'be hit by or suffer from', which may derive from the

transitive verb /co3/ 'hit'. Actually, these three words /co3/ in Tai Nuea are parallel to the three words /thu:k1/ found in Standard Thai, as in Patterns (a), (b) and (d) shown earlier. Examples of the use of the three words /co3/ taken from the data are as follows. Note that (f), (g), (h) below are parallel to (a), (b), (d) in Thai.

- (f) mit lEn5 sep2 my1 man1 aw1 co3 my1 man1 knife sharp pierce hand she then hit hand she 'The sharp knife pierced her hand and hurt it.'
- (h) sa:w5 co3 pIn lak4 ka2 young girl undergo they steal go 'The young girl was abducted.'

Besides these three words /co3/, the data also shows another word /co3/ in Tai Nuea, meaning something like 'get' as in the following sentence.

(9) sa:m5-lo1 kep2 co3 pha3 cet an1
Samlow pick get cloth clean that
'Samlow got that handkerchief (by picking it up)."

As far as evidence shows, I regard the three words /co3/ in (f), (g), (h) as derived from one word in Chinese, but /co3/ 'get' as derived from another word in Chinese--very likely from /jwó/, which indicates success in getting at something.

Based on the findings about the uses of the words /thu:k1/ in different periods of time (Prasithrathsint 1985), I propose that /co3/ in the Tai Nuea passive, as in (h) develops from /co3/ in (g), which develops from /co3/ in (f).

This process of change has been called grammaticalization or grammaticization (Bybee 1990, Burridge 1990, Perez 1990). According to Perez 1990:49), grammaticalization is traditionally defined as "an evolutive process that shifts either a phrase, word or morpheme from a predominantly lexical function into a more grammatical function in a language." In the case of Tai Nuea, the word /co3/ has been grammaticalized as a passive marker. Givón (1979:187, cited in Shibatani 1985:845) dealing with language change pertinent to passives refers to a re-analysis of

some features as passive markers. This could serve as an explanation of the re-analysis of /co3/ and /thu:k1/ 'be hit by' as a passive marker in Tai Nuea, and Standard Thai, respectively.

It should be remarked that most scholars dealing with grammaticalization of a syntactic feature have mostly provided evidence from inflectional or agglutinating languages in which morphology plays an important part. When they talk about a re-analysis of a feature, usually they refer to that of a morpheme. Thus, when dealing with isolating languages like Tai and Chinese, an explanation of language change in terms of grammaticalization including re-analysis would need more clarification.

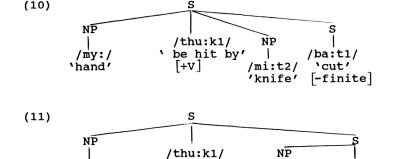
Therefore, I propose here that the grammaticalization of /co3/ and /thu:k1/ as a passive marker in Tai Nuea and Thai, respectively is caused by the fact that speakers in both languages re-analyzed the syntactic and semantic properties of the lexical verbs /co3/ and /thu:k1/. The following is a scheme of stages of grammaticalization of the passive in Tai Nuea and Standard Thai. It started with the transitive verb meaning 'hit; touch' and ends with the neutral /thu:k1/ passive, which is used in Standard Thai but is not found yet in Tai Nuea.

Stages of development

The above diagram means that at the final stage (6) we have a passive marker with a neutral meaning, which is an auxiliary verb (+xlry) that has lost its adversative connotation. Stage 5 is an adversative passive without an Agent, corresponding to Pattern (e) mentioned earlier, which is not found in Tai Nuea data, but which my informant seems to agree to its existence in Tai Nuea. Stage 4 is the adversative passive in Tai Nuea, and in Standard Thai with an Agent. The feature [+pptn] means that /co3/ and /thu:k1/ has to occur with

a proposition represented by a sentence (NP+V). This corresponds to Pattern (d) shown earlier. Stage 3 develops from a re-analysis of the feature transitive [+trns] as intransitive [-trns]. The semantic implication of the adverse effect on the Patient is maintained. Stage 2 is likely to result from a reanalysis of the semantic property of /co3/ and /thu:k1/ in Stage 1: from a neutral meaning of `something hits or touches something' to `hit with a bad effect.'

From the structural point of view, the process could be interpreted as a result of "mis-assignment of constituent structure" as Parker (1976) put it. This might explain the development of Stage 5 from 4 above. Such a sentence as (11) could be a result of mis-assignment of constituent structure in (10) as shown below:



'be hit by'

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/mi:t2/

`knife'

/ba:t1/

'cut'

+finite

Conclusion

/my:/ hand'

In the preceding pages I have shown that passive constructions exist in Tai Nuea and what the adversative passive in this language is like. It is marked by /co3/, a borrowed word from Yunnan Chinese and always occurs with an Agent. Its structure is the same as that of the adversative passive with an Agent in Standard Thai. I have explained the development of the adversative passive in Tai Nuea in terms of language contact and also proposed that grammaticalization of the adversative passive in Tai Nuea and Standard Thai is caused by a re-analysis of the syntactic and semantic properties of a verb with a predominantly lexical function as one with a more grammatical function.

NOTES

- 1. This paper was completed with the help of several people. I am grateful to Thananan Trongdee, my research assistant, who is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Linguistics at Chulalongkorn University, for collecting Tai Nuea narratives for me while conducting his field research in Yunnan in 1990, and to Wu Jinming, a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese, Fang Hiang Hong and Fang Zhi Liang, native speakers of Tai Nuea, for serving as my informants. I am also grateful to William S. Whorton for suggesting some changes in the paper and Pranee Kullavanijaya for inducing me to study Tai languages in China and providing me the information I need about Tai Nuea.
- 2. Standard Thai has 5 distinctive tones. The mid tone is usually unmarked. The rest will be marked by 1, 2, 3, 4, respectively. Also, in this paper the mid central, low front and low back vowels in Thai will be represented by II/, II/ and II/0/, respectively.
- 3. The verb /top1-tEng1/ in this sentence is regarded here as an intransitive verb derived from a transitive verb of the same form.
- 4. COR stands for Correspondent case relation. Correspondent corresponds with the Patient. It normally signifies the Patient's characteristics, physical quality or describes the extent of the action undertaken by the Patient (Sayankena 1985:100).
- 5. The feature [+ptnl] stands for "potential" signifying that the verb is not inherently intransitive but derived from a transitive one.
- 6. The topics of the five narratives are: a Tale of the Magic Hammer; Samlow (a tragedy); Farming; My Favorite Food; Courtship.
- 7. The topics of the eight Tai Mau narratives are: Revenge; The Proud Person; Top-Look Arrive (Proper Name); Lady Tip-Sky; Sour-Cooked Snails with Bamboo Shoots; The Spirit of the Rice; The Creature That Makes Use of a Log; Elephants.
- 8. Tai Nuea has 6 distinctive tones traditionally ordered like this: mid, high level, low, mid-falling, high-falling and rising. The mid tone is usually unmarked. The rest will be marked by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,

respectively.

- 9. The meaning 'to collect' of /thuk2/ is doubtful. As far as I have known, no other Tai language has a form meaning 'to collect' that is similar to this. If the meaning of this /thuk2/ were 'correct', then the word would correspond to /thu:k1/ 'correct' in Thai and cognates in many other Tai languages.
- 10. The structures shown here are based on the Lexicase grammatical theory founded by Stanley Starosta (See Starosta 1988). The straight line from a higher node signifies the head of a construction. The feature o(+PAT, +advs) means that f(+av) implies that the Patient subject is adversely affected.
- 11. The examples are from **Dictionary of Spoken Chinese**, compiled by the Institute of Far Eastern Languages, Yale University. 1966. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

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