VERBAL RELATIVE CLAUSES AS ADNOMINAL MODIFIERS IN
THAI

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the relative clause structures which appear as the modifier of a noun in Thai. Apart from having different types of modifiers such as determiners, adjectives, prepositional phrases, complement clauses, and classifier constructions, nouns in Thai also allow relative clauses to appear as modifiers. The kind of relative clause which has usually been described in the literature consists of the relative noun thii ‘that’ followed by a verbal complement, but there are in addition verbal relative clauses without thii which can also modify nouns. The objective of this paper is to examine the different types of verbal relative clause and to explain their syntactic characteristics within the constraints of the lexicase framework. It will be shown that some structures which appear to be verbal relative clauses are in fact not, but they are either constituent parts of a compound noun or are themselves pseudo-compound verbs.

2. Relative clauses as adnominial modifiers

2.1. Nominal relative clauses

In Thai, there are two types of relative clause that can appear as adjuncts to modify regent nouns. These constructions differ because of the syntactic category to which the head of the relative clause belongs (Savetamalya 1989:120). The main distinguishing characteristic of these two constructions is that the head of the first construction is a nominal headed by the relative noun thii (1-2), whereas the head of the second construction is a verb (3).

1. nānṣyỳ thii chān tāeŋ
book that I write
‘the book that I wrote’

2. nākriŋ thii sōc tōk
student that take an exam fail
‘the student who failed the exam’

3. bān jāją
house big
‘house which is big’
In (1), the noun phrase consists of the head noun nāgṣyē ‘book’ and it is modified by an adjunct thūi chān tāēŋ ‘that I wrote’, which is a nominal relative clause headed by thūi. The structure of this noun phrase is shown below:

```
   nāgṣyē
   |1ndx  
   |+N    
   [2([+N])] |
   |2ndx |
   |+N    
   [+prdc] |
   [4[+V]] |
   |3ndx |
   |+prdc |
   [4[+Nom] |
   |4ndx |
   |+trans |
   |3[+Nom] |
   |3[+AGT] |
   |2[-Nom] |
   |2[-PAT] |
```

In (2), the noun phrase consists of the head noun nakriēn ‘student’ and it is modified by an adjunct thūi sōp tōk ‘who failed the exam’, which is a nominal relative clause headed by thūi. The structure of this noun phrase is shown below:

```
nakriēn
|+1ndx |
|+N    |
[2([+N])] |
|2ndx |
|+N    |
|+prdc |
|3[+V] |
|+prdc |
|4ndx |
|+V    |
|?([Nom] |
|?([+PAT] |
|?([+actr] |
```

In (3), the noun phrase consists of the head noun bāan ‘house’ and it is modified by an adjunct jaṇ ‘big’, which is a verbal predicate clause. The structure of this noun phrase is shown below:

```
bāan
|+1ndx |
|+N    |
[2([+N])] |
|2ndx |
|+N    |
|+prdc |
|3[+V] |
|+prdc |
|4ndx |
|+V    |
|?[Nom] |
|?[+Pat] |
|?[+actr] |
```
4. khon thii wiŋ pay mâyчhây nōŋ chăn
   person that run go not brother I
   'The person who has just run away is not my brother.'

5. thii wiŋ pay mâyчhây nōŋ chăn
   someone run go not brother I
   'The one who has just run away is not my brother.'

The structures of the sentences (4-5) are shown below:

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1 Other forms of relative nouns in Thai, sêŋ, or an meaning 'that' are also
   found. In this paper, only the relative noun thii will be discussed.
When thîi appears as the head of a nominal relative clause or as a complement of a verb, it requires either an intransitive (as in 4-5) or a transitive verbal sister (as in 6-7).

6. rûup thîi chăn wâat dây raanywan picture that I paint get prize ‘The picture that I painted won the prize.’

7. thîi chăn wâat dây raanywan something I paint get prize ‘Something I painted won the prize.’
In a relative clause (either nominal or verbal), one noun phrase is always missing. In a nominal relative clause, the missing argument is the subject of the predicate *thī*, and is interpreted as coclarefential with its regent noun.

As indicated above, *thī* whether functioning as the head of a noun phrase or as the predicate head of a relative clause requires a verbal sister which can be either intransitive as in (8) or transitive as in (9). The verbal dependent sister of *thī*, is always missing one noun phrase. The fully specified feature matrix of *thī* which functions as its head of a relative clause can be stated as follows:

```
| thī |
| +N |
| +rltv |
| +prdc |
| ![+V] |
| ![+Nom] |
| ![+PAT] |
```
8. khon thīi wīŋ pay máychāy nōŋ chān
   [+N  |  +V  |
   [+rltv | -trns]
   person that run go not brother I

   'The person who has just run away is not my brother.'

9. rūup thīi chān wāat dāy raanjawan
   [+N  |  +V  |
   [+rltv | +trns]
   picture that I paint get prize

   'The picture that I painted won the prize.'

The structures of (8-9) are illustrated below:
The noun phrase that is missing in the verbal sister of a nominal relative clause can be a subject (as in 8) or an object (as in 9). The strategy of subject omission is the primary relativization pattern in Thai, in accordance with Keenan and Comrie’s relativization hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie 1977:8). The missing argument is coreferential with its regent noun. Thus, the missing noun phrases in (8-9) are coreferential with thiि, and thiि in turn is coreferential with its regent nouns khон ‘person’ and ruуп ‘picture’, respectively.

In the examples (1-2) repeated here as (10-11), the missing argument is coreferential with the regent noun thiि and thiि in turn is coreferential with its regent nouns nāgaṣṣy ‘book’ and nakriян ‘student’, respectively.

10. nāgaṣṣy thiि chān tāeη
    book that I write
    ‘book that I wrote’

11. nakriян thiि sāop tōk
    student that take an exam fail
    ‘student who failed the exam’

2.2. Verbal relative clauses

The second type of relative clause that can modify a regent noun is a verbal relative clause. A verbal relative clause has the same structure as the verbal dependent sister of a nominal relative clause headed by thiि ‘that’, in that both clauses are dependent on a noun and both are missing a noun phrase. The difference between the two structures is that the one headed by thiि is a verbal complement, and is therefore not itself a relative clause, whereas the other is an adjunct and therefore is a relative clause. The example of a noun phrase consisting of a noun and a verbal relative clause in (3) is repeated here as (12).
12. bāan jāj
   house big
   ‘house which is big’

   The structure is shown below:

   [bāan
     [+1ndex]
     [+N]
     [2([+V])]
     2ndex
     [+V]
     +prdc
     +rltv
     1[+Nom]
     1[+PAT]
     1[+actr]

   In (10), jāj ‘big’ is a verbal relative clause and it appears as an adjunct of
   the regent noun bāan ‘house’. There is a missing noun phrase in the verbal
   relative clause. The interpretation of the missing noun phrase is coreferential
   with its regent noun bāan ‘house’.

   There are two types of construction which appear to be verbal relative
   clauses in Thai. They differ depending on the semanticity of their head verbs:
   stative or non-stative. Stative verbs have been commonly described in the
   literature as descriptive adjectives, as in (13-15). Structures having non-stative
   verbs as their heads also follow nouns, as in (16-18), but it will be shown below
   that these structures are not relative clauses.

13. phāa sūay
    cloth beautiful
    ‘cloth which is beautiful’

14. tŷk sūŋ
    building tall
    ‘building which is tall’

15. šinkhāa dii
    goods good
    ‘goods which have good quality’

16. khon rāk rōt
    person love vehicles
    ‘person who loves cars’
17. khon khāay aahāan
    child sell food
    'person who sells food'

18. khon tham aahāan
    person make food
    'person who makes food'

The internal structure of the noun phrase with a stative verbal relative clause in (13) is as follows:

```
| phāa            |
| +1Index         |
| +N              |
| 2([+N])         |
| 2ndex           |
| +V              |
| +prdc           |
| +rltv           |
| +sttv           |
| 1[+Nom]         |
| 1[+PAT]         |
| 1[+actr]        |
```

In (13), the verbal relative clause is headed by the verb suəy 'beautiful' and functions to modify the regent noun phāa 'cloth'. The missing argument of the verbal relative clause is coreferential with its regent noun phāa 'cloth'.

Stative verbs that appear in relative clauses have been characterized as descriptive adjectives (Uppakitsilpasan 1953:87). But I have shown elsewhere (Savetamalya 1989:76) that setting up a separate adjective (Adj) word class for the group of stative verbs is unnecessary and would miss the generalization that they function in the same way as other intransitive verbs in verbal relative clauses. This kind of analysis matches the analysis which has been done by Panupong, in which she called this class of words "intransitive adjectival verbs" (Panupong 1970:125).

The question arises as to whether structures such as those illustrated in (13-18) are sequences of a noun plus a verbal relative clause, or whether they form a nominal compound. If they are compounds, they form a single syntactic unit with their regent nouns; whereas if they are verbal predicates, they are considered as separate syntactic units from their regent nouns. In the previous discussion, I have shown some examples of noun phrases having a noun and a verbal relative clause as a separate syntactic unit, not a compound. The following section will discuss the possibility that some nouns with a following stative verb are compound nouns, not nouns followed by a relative clause.
3. Nouns with stative verbal relative clauses versus compound nouns

Consider the following examples:

19. phéa sūaj
cloth beautiful
‘cloth which is beautiful’

20. bāan sa?āat
house clean
‘the house which is cleaned’

21. aahāan dii
food good
‘food which is good’

22. phéa kāw
cloth old
‘cloth which is old’

The noun phrases in (19-22) have the same structure, that is, each of the noun phrases consists of a head noun followed by a stative verbal relative clause. However, examples (21-22) are ambiguous. Example (21) has the second meaning of ‘luxurious food’, while example (22) has the second meaning of ‘a rag’ as in (23-24).

23. aahāan-dii
‘luxurious food’

24. phéa-kāw
‘a rag’

I will, therefore, claim that the expressions in (23-24) are structurally different from their respectively homophonous expressions in (21-22). Examples (23-24) are not noun phrases but compound nouns. I shall now present a set of syntactic and semantic criteria to distinguish nouns with a stative verbal relative clause from compound nouns. Some of these criteria were first proposed by Kuno and Wongkhomthong (1981:196).

The characteristics which distinguish nouns followed by a verbal relative clause from compound nouns are directly the result of the fact that the latter are lexically nouns, they have none of the syntactic characteristics of verbs. The “verbal component” of the compound noun is inseparable from the “nominal component”. It cannot itself occur as the predicate of a free clause, e.g.,

25. phéa kāw
cloth old
‘cloth which is old’
26. phāa chīn nāy kāw
   cloth clsf which old
   [+V  |  [+prdc  |  'Which piece of cloth is old?

27. phāa-kāw
   'a rag'

28. *phāa- chīn nāy -kāw

   Similarly, a modifier, such as an adverb, can occur following the verb in a relative clause as in (29), but the "verbal component" in a compound noun cannot be modified in this way (30).

29. phāa kāw thīsūt chīn nāy
   cloth old most clsf which
   [+V  |  [+ADV]  |  'Which is the oldest piece of cloth?'  
   [+prdc]  

30. *phāa-kāw thīsūt chīn nāy
    [ +ADV ]
    rag most clsf which
In (29), kāw ‘old’ as the head of a verbal relative clause can be modified by thīsūt ‘most’, whereas in (30) phāā-kāw cannot be modified by an adverb.

In noun phrases, a verbal relative clause can be conjoined, as in (31), but the “verbal component” in a compound noun cannot be conjoined, as in (32).

31. phāā kāw lāē thūuk  
cloth old and be cheap  
‘cloth which is old and cheap’

32. *phāā-kāw lāē thūuk  
rag and be cheap

In (31), the noun phāā ‘cloth’ can be modified by two verbal relative clauses kāw lāē thūuk, ‘old and cheap’, whereas in (32) the compound noun phāā-kāw ‘rag’ cannot conjoin with thūuk ‘cheap’.

Typically, noun compounding is not a productive process. One of the word formation strategies in languages in general is compounding. For example, a set of compound nouns in Thai can be formed by combining a free morpheme māē ‘mother’ with other nouns, such as,

33. māē-khrua  
mother-kitchen  
‘a cook’

34. māē-bāān  
mother-house  
‘a housewife’

35. māē-phim  
mother-mold  
‘a teacher’
However, combinations of this sort are not productive. It is not possible to freely combine mæē 'mother' with any noun to form a compound. Similarly, although phāa-kāw is an acceptable compound, *phāa-dii 'luxurious cloth' is not acceptable. The latter can only mean 'cloth which is good'.

The property of compositionality can be used to support the compound analysis here. The semantic structure of a noun phrase having a noun followed by a verbal relative clause is compositional; whereas that of a compound noun is not compositional. That is, the meaning of a compound is sometimes not predictable from the original meaning. For example, phāa-kāw is formed from two free morphemes phāa 'cloth' and kāw 'old'. By looking at the original meaning of these two morphemes, there is no way to predict whether phāa kāw is a kind of old cloth that people do not want to use, or a kind of used cloth that people use as a rag.

There is another set of words that can also be analyzed as stative relative clauses and which function to modify their regent nouns in Thai. This set of words has traditionally been called color adjectives, e.g.,

36. dinsōo dam
   pencil black
   'pencil which is black'

37. māa dam
    dog black
    'dog which is black'

38. lāŋkhaa dææŋ
    roof red
    'roof which is red'

These structures are clearly identical to those described above, and are nouns modified by dependent verbal relative clauses. However, each of these structures also has a homophonous form, the meaning of which is non-compositional, and which cannot take any internal modifiers. They are also compound nouns, e.g.,

39. dinsōo-dam
    'black-lead-pencil'

40. māa-dam
    'dirty-dog'

41. lāŋkhaa-dææŋ
    'mental-hospital'
4. Nouns with pseudo-compound verbs

In some cases, a noun may appear to be followed by a sequence of two different stative verbs. Such a sequence in Thai does not constitute a single noun phrase as in (42).

42. naalikaa  thɔŋ  sūɔj
    watch  gold  beautiful
    'A gold watch is beautiful.'

It can only be analyzed as a free clause in which the second verb is the predicate of the clause, not an adjunct of a regent noun. Sūɔj ‘beautiful’ is a main verb which governs the subject noun naalikaa ‘watch’. The structure can only mean 'A gold watch which is beautiful'. The structure assigned to this analysis is illustrated below:

```
   sūɔj
    |
naalikaa    3n=ex
   |   
   +1n=ex  |
+Nom      
   |  
+PAT      
   |  
+actr
```

Although a noun may not be modified by a sequence of two verbal relative clauses, a number of noun phrases appear to contain just such a sequence, as in (43-46). This group of words has been treated as "expressive elaboration" by Nacaskul (1970:873-89).

43. nāataa  saʔaat  mōtchōt
    face  clean  clean
    'a very clean face'

44. mūu  ?uʔn  phiỉ
    pig  fat  fat
    'a very fat pig'

45. ?aayū  kæε  thāw
    age  old  old
    'very old age'
46. ɲάαapkhian wichít banconŋ
painting neat neat
'a very neat painting'

The second form must be semantically identical to the first, and it must result in an intensive meaning. In this case, the verbal sequences look like they are compounds, because not all stative verbal clauses can occur freely in this position and some of their characteristics are like those of compounds. They are not permutable, as in (47-50), nor do they allow an intervening coordinating conjunction (51-52). Most of them cannot appear as the predicates of free clauses, and neither can they take inner modifiers (53-56):

47. *nâataa mótchót saʔəat
face clean clean

48. *mũu phiī ?uən
pig fat fat

49. *ʔaayū thâw kææ
age old old

50. *ɲάαapkhian banconŋ wichít
painting neat neat

51. *nâataa mótchót laʔ saʔəat
face clean and clean

52. *mũu phiī laʔ ?uən
pig fat and fat

53. *nâataa saʔəat mótchót caŋ
[+V | [+ADV]
face clean clean indeed

54. *mũu ?uən phiī caŋ
[+V | [+ADV]
pig fat fat indeed

55. *ʔaayū kææ thâw caŋ
[+V | [+ADV]
age old old indeed

56. *ɲάαapkhian wichít banconŋ caŋ
[+V | [+ADV]
painting neat neat indeed
A further characteristic of these expressions is that the final “verbal component” can only occur in these expressions, they never occur as the modifier of a noun nor as the predicate of a free clause (57-60). They are restricted to appearing as the “intensifier” of the stative verbs that they follow.

57. *náataa mótchót
   face clean

58. *mūu phiī
   pig fat

59. *?aayú thāw
   age old

60. *phāapkhion bancoŋ
   painting neat

As a result, sequences of this sort which modify nouns are considered to be single syntactic units. They are treated in this study as pseudo-compound verbs (Starosta 1988:205-206), not iterated relative clauses, and function like intensive reduplicative forms in other languages. They are pseudo-compound in that although they carry some of the characteristics of a compound, their semantic interpretation is compositional.

In summary, an apparent sequence of a noun and a single stative verb may be either a noun followed a relative clause, or they may constitute a compound noun. An apparent sequence of a noun and two stative verbs is either a full sentence whose subject noun is modified by a relative clause, or it is a noun phrase containing a pseudo-compound verb as a relative clause. In the following section, I will discuss structure which contains a noun and an apparent non-stative relative clause, to see whether this set of noun phrases behaves in the same way as the set of noun phrases consisting of a noun and a stative verbal relative clauses or not.

5. The status of non-stative verbal relative clauses

A sequence which appears to be non-stative verbal relative clause appears in Thai following the free morpheme khon ‘person’ (as in 61-63):

61. khon khāay nāŋsŷy
    person sell book
    ‘a person who sells books’

62. khon thriam aahāan
    person prepare food
    ‘a person who prepares food’
63. khon khàp rót
   person drive car
   'a person who drives a car'

Structures of this sort are clearly compositional, and behave like stative verbal relative clauses in that they can also occur as the predicates of free clauses as in (64-66):

64. khon nǐ khāay nāŋsēy môt lāëw
   AGT |+V | PAT
   |+prdc|
   person this sell book finish already
   'This person has already sold the books.'

65. khon nǐ thriam aahān wāy lāëw
   AGT |+V | PAT
   |+prdc|
   person this prepare food get already
   'This person has already prepared some food.'

66. khon nǐ khàp rot kēŋ māak
   AGT |+V | PAT
   |+prdc|
   person this drive car very good much
   'This person drives well.'

The structure of example (64) having a non-stative verb as the predicate of a free clause is shown below:

```
  khāay
   |+V
  |+trns
  3ndex
   nāŋsēy
   |+Nom
   4ndex
   1[+Nom]
   |+Nom
   5ndex
   |+ADV
  lāëw
  6ndex
  4[+ADV]
  5[+ADV]
```

However, it is not possible to freely combine non-stative verbs with khon as its relative clause. Thus khon khāay nāŋsēy 'person who sells books' is possible, but *khon khāay bāep 'person who designs clothes' is not.
The fact that the possible head noun of such sequences is highly restricted (it can only be khon), and that the sequences do not appear to be productive suggests that they are not noun phrases at all but compound nouns. This is further supported by applying some of the other tests used above to check the status of noun plus stative verb sequences that are actually compounds. Non-stative verbs following khon cannot carry an adverbial modifier as in (67-69), neither can such verbs be conjoined, as in (70-72).

67. *khon kháay næṣṣýy thukwan môy sabaay lææw
   [+V ] [+ADV]
   |+prdc|
   person sell books everyday not be good already
   'The person who sells books everyday already got sick.'

68. *khon thriam aahāan thukwan môy sabaay lææw
   [+V ] [+ADV]
   |+prdc|
   person prepare food everyday not be good already
   'The person who prepares food everyday already got sick.'

69. *khon kháp rôt thukwan môy sabaay lææw
   [+V ] [+ADV]
   |+prdc|
   person drive car everyday not be good already
   'The person who drives a car everyday already got sick.'

70. *khon kháay næṣṣýy læ khuy káp lǜukkháa
    [+cnjc]
    person sell book and talk to customer

71. *khon thriam aahāan læ tham khanôm
    [+cnjc]
    person prepare food and make dessert

72. *khon kháp rôt læ faŋ phen
    [+cnjc]
    person drive car and listen song

These characteristics suggest that sequences of khon plus non-stative verbal clause are not noun plus relative clauses but occupational compound nouns, e.g.,

73. khon- kháay- næṣṣýy
    person sell book
    'book-selling-person'
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74. khon- thriam- aahān
    person prepare food
    'food-preparing-person'

75. khon- kháp- rót
    person drive car
    'car-driving-person'

6. Conclusion

This paper illustrates the advantage of using lexicase theory as a highly
constrained theory in explaining the syntactic phenomena of verbal relative
clauses as adnominal modifiers in Thai. The final result is a clearer picture of
how such structures behave. We have seen that the typical relative clause in
Thai is a nominal predication, consisting of the relative noun thīī ‘that’ followed
by a verbal complement. Nouns may also be followed directly by a verbal
relative clause when the verb is a descriptive, or a color term of the type usually
characterized as adjectives. Some sequences of noun plus stative relative clause
I have shown to be compound nouns because of their syntactic characteristics.

Typically, a noun can be modified by only one verbal relative clause.
This can be either a simple stative verb, or a pseudo-compound, intensified
verb. Finally, an examination of apparent non-stative relative clauses following
the noun khon ‘person’ suggests that although they carry some of the syntactic
and semantic characteristics of relative clauses, the sequences probably also
constitute a set of compound nouns.

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