COORDINATE CONJUNCTIONS IN THAI

David Thomas
Mahidol University and Summer Institute of Linguistics

Formal Thai provides an interesting case of surface form being conditioned by hierarchical ranks (levels). Grammatical coordination appears at all ranks in language, thus is a good place for ranks to show their contrast. Among the conjunctions in Thai (cf. Vichin 1970: 163-168, Udom 1972: 45-47) are แกบ 'and, with, together', แล้ว 'and, also', ดูแล 'and, at the same time', สำหรับ 'and, as for'. These are all coordinate conjunctions (or additives (Thomas 1975: 117) but are distinguished in formal Thai by the grammatical rank on which they function. Colloquial Thai does not make this distinction, using แกบ at all ranks and rarely using แล้ว. 

Let us briefly define the noun phrase rank as the rank containing descriptions of participants or items, the verb phrase rank as containing descriptions of motions, the clause rank as containing a motion and its participants, and a sentence as containing an illocutionary force and its locution (one or more clauses). These definitions are of semantic ranks; the corresponding grammatical ranks may be defined as those sets of forms which are the common manifestations of the semantic ranks (Thomas 1975: 114-116).

The contrast between แกบ and แล้ว in formal Thai is basically a contrast between the phrase and clause ranks: แกบ joins two nouns in a single noun phrase (1,2) and แล้ว joins two clauses (3) or two sentences.

(1) ผู้ค่อน แกบ เมื่อ ไปดูหนัง.
father and mother go see movie
Father and mother went together to the movie.

(2) ลูก ดูผู้ค่อน แกบ เมื่อ.
child see father and mother
The child is looking at his parents.

(3) ข้าว ร้อน แล้ว ผอม ร้อง.
he sing and I dance
He sang and I danced.

Examples (1) and (2) are simple actions with complex actors (i.e., additive compounding of the noun phrase), (3) is a complex action (i.e., additive compounding of the clause).
Compounding of the verb phrase may be handled with ดูย...ดูย (4) or with กระ (5). Since this is still the phrase rank, the inter-changeability with กระ is not surprising. And they can even be combined as ดูย กระ...ดูย (6). ดูย is not used to link clearly distinct clauses (*7).

(4) ท่าน ดูย ราม ดูย
    he sing and dance and
    He sang and danced.

(5) ท่าน กระ ราม
    he sing and dance
    He sang and danced (closeknit action).

(6) ท่าน ดูย กระ ราม ดูย
    he sing and and dance and
    He sang and danced.

(7) *ท่าน กระ ดูย ผ่อง ราม ดูย
    he sing and- I dance and

A different use of กระ is to link one participant to another at the clause rank as distinct yet associated participants, one of them being the subject of the clause and the other a companion (8). Here the กระ is not a marker of additive compounding but is a case marker marking the Associate (Comitative).

(8) พระ ภาย ดูย น้ํา กระ แม่
    father go see movie with mother
    Father went to the movie with mother.

Where a situation is clearly clausal conjunction with different subjects and verbs, แต่ or แอน are used in formal Thai (3,9) and ดูย is prohibited (*7). Where it is clearly phrasal conjunction กระ or ดูย are used (1-2,4-6) and สอน is prohibited (*10).

(9) พระ ภาย ทิ่ห ตำม นา แอน แม่ กระ บ้าน
    father go place do work and mother return house
    Father went to his office and mother went home.

(10) *พระ สอน แม่ ภาย ดูย น้ํา
    father and mother go see movie

But where a situation could be interpreted as either phrasal or clausal conjunction กระ tends to indicate two participants functioning as one NP (1), or two actions functioning as a single complex VP (5), while แต่ tends to indicate independent individuals or independent actions (clauses) (11-13).
(11) ผ่ำะ ลี? หม่ำง ปาย ดิว น้ำง
father and mother go see movie
Father and mother both went to the movie (as individuals).

(12) ข้าว รั่ง ลี? ราม
he sing and dance
He sang and danced (separate actions).

(13) ปาย แคนวะต์ ด้าย ท่าง ร่อต ลี? ท่าง ร่าว
go province can way car and way boat
You can go to the province by car or boat.

There is some blurring of borders and overlapping of meanings,
but in general these distinctions hold in formal Thai. Thus we see
additive (coordinate) compounding of the noun phrase, the verb phrase,
and the clause (or higher ranks) each manifested by a different conjunc-
tion or set of conjunctions.

The grammatical rank at which the compounding is being done
determines the form of the conjunction.

NOTES

1 This paper is based on the usage of a Nakhon Pathom schoolteacher
and his schoolteacher friends. I am indebted to Wilaiwan Kanittanan
and Suriya Ratanakul for comments on an early draft; mistakes that
remain are mine. Dr. Wilaiwan called to my attention the similarity
between my analysis and the traditional Thai grammar formulations
which distinguish between word-joining conjunctions and sentence-
joining conjunctions (cf. Seni 1972: 85).


3 It is difficult to keep different levels of usage apart in an analysis
like this. I have tried to seek the middle ground between the collo-
quial style which seldom uses ลี? and the hyper-correct style which
over-uses ลี?.

REFERENCES

Panupong, V. 1970. Inter-sentence Relations in Modern Conversational

