

Is Hây Really a Benefactive-Causative in Thai?

Udom Warotamasikkkhadit
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) *phôw hăa ɲən hây lûuk cháy (ɲən)*

father seek money give child spend money

A father earns the money for his child to spend.

(2) *khăw sɨ sɰa hây mæ̌ sɰa*

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) *phôw hăa ɲən hây lûuk*

father seek money give child

A father earns money for his child.

(4) *khăw sɨ sɰa hây mæ̌*

he buy blouse give mother

He bought a blouse for his mother.

If the preceding sentence of (1) contains *ɲən* 'money', and of (2) contains *sɰa* 'blouse', NP_2 can be deleted:

(5) *phôw hăa hây lûuk*

father seek give child

A father earns (it) for his child.

(6) *khăw sɿi hây mææ*

he buy give mother

He bought (it) for his mother.

In this case NP₂ becomes t₂. It should be noted that NP₃ must be an animate noun and *hây* 'to give' cannot precede an inanimate noun.

(7) * *phôw hăa ɲən hây bân*

father seek money give house

* A father earns the money for a house.

(8) * *khăw hăa khɔɔŋ tòktæŋ hây bân*

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 *bân* 'house' is an inanimate noun.

(9) *khăw hăa khɔɔŋ tòktæŋ bân*

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) *phôw hây ɲən 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 *ɲən* 'money' precedes *lûuk* 'child' but in English 'son' precedes 'money'. The deep structure of (10) is (11):

(11) *phôw sòŋ ɲən 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.

NP₁ X *hây* t₁ V_{des}

(12) *mâæ kin yaa hây (mâæ) ʔuən*

mother eat medicine caus. mother fat

Mother takes medicine to get fat.

(13) *phôm mây yoom càay ɲen hây (phôm) ɲôo*

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) *khăw hăa khǝŋ tǝktæŋ bâan hây (bâan) sǝy*

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:

NP₁ *tham* PRO *hây* NP₂ VP

(15) *nâataa khun tham hây dèk rǝŋhây*

face eye you make caus. child cry

Your features make the children cry.

(16) *khun tham hây phôm 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) mææ tham khànôm hây lûuk kin (khànôm)
 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 khànôm '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 bapkháp 'to force', bôok 'to tell', chây 'to use', sàŋ 'to order', or other verbs like sôn 'to teach', wâa 'to scold mildly', or others in the following sentence type:

NP₁ V NP₂ t₁ hây t₂ VP

NP₂ must be an animate noun and NP₂ can be placed after hây, for example:

- (18) khăw bapkháp phôm hây tham ɲaan
 he force I caus. do work
 He forced me to work.
 (19) mææ sàŋ phôm hây pay
 mother order I caus. go
 Mother ordered me to go.

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

- (20) khăw bapkháp hây phôm tham ɲaan
 he force caus. I do work
 He forced me to work.
 (21) mææ sàŋ hây phôm pay
 mother order caus. I go
 Mother ordered me to go.
 (22) khruu sôn phôm hây wâay náam
 teacher teach I caus. swim water
 The teacher teaches me to swim.

- (23) luj wâa hây phôm cèp cay
uncle scold caus. I pain heart
Uncle scolded me and hurt my feelings.

3. Permissive hây.

When hây is preceded by a verb like tòklon 'to agree', yindii 'to be glad', yoom 'to agree', and ʔanúyâat 'to permit' in the following sentence type:

NP₁ V PRO hây NP₂ VP

there must be an empty element between V and hây. NP₂ must be an animate noun.

- (24) phôw yoom hây khăw khâw maa dâay
father agree let he enter come can
Father allowed him to come in.

If NP₂ is a second person pronoun, it can be deleted, for example:

- (25) raw yindii hây (khun) thăam khamt hăam dâay
we glad let you ask question can
We are glad to let you ask questions.

4. Preferential hây.

When hây is preceded by a verb of intention or desire like chôp 'to like', mii khwaampràatthànăa 'to have a wish', mii khwaampràsôn 'to have an intention, to have a goal', pràatthànăa 'to desire, to wish', pràsôn 'to wish', tâncay 'to intend', tónkaan 'to want', yàak 'to want, to prefer' in the following sentence type:

NP₁ V PRO (cà) hây NP₂ VP

cà 'will' is optional unless it is preceded by pràsôn 'to wish' or mii khwaampràsôn 'to have an intention or to have a goal'. Then cà 'will' is obligatory.

- (26) phôm yàak hây thiim raw cháná
I want prefer team we win
I want our team to win.
(27) phii chôp hây khăw maa
sister like prefer he come
My sister prefers for him to come.

- (28) mǽæ pràsǝŋ cà hây khǎw pen phrá
 mother wish will prefer he be monk
 His mother wishes for him to be a monk.

5. Conclusion.

The meaning of hây is dictated by the verb preceding it. It can be a benefactive, a causative, a permissive, or a preferential depending on its sentence type and the verb preceding it.

References and Other Resources

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