

# **Are there any coordinate Serial Verb constructions in Thai?**

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**1. Introduction.** The primary purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that within a lexicase analysis, a type of dependency grammar, the syntactic patterns called coordinate serial verb constructions, consisting of chains of verbs without any overt grammatical markers, when their syntactic characteristics are carefully examined, should be analyzed as either a construction with the lexically incorporated object intransitive verbs or an infinitive coordinate construction without an overt conjunction. The plan of this article is as follows. Section 2 is a brief introduction to the definitions of the term serial verb construction (SVC) and coordination and a review of previous work. Section 3 is a lexicase analysis of the so-called coordinate SVCs. In section 4 a summary of the paper is presented.

**2. Brief introduction of the definitions and a review of previous work.** What are coordinate SVCs? There have been attempts to define the term 'SVC' but there is no agreement on the definition. In order to reduce the confusion, the SVCs in this paper have the following characteristics.

a. All verbs occurring in these serial verb constructions can occur as the sole single verb in a sentence without reference to any particular context.

b. There is no conjunction<sup>1</sup> to separate the verbs in sequence.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Conjunction' here refers to a coordinate conjunction. In a lexicase analysis, coordinate conjunctions are words which form an exocentric

c. Only the first verb in a serial verb construction ('V1') can take a nominative NP as its clausemate subject.

d. The actor of the second verb of a serial verb construction ('V2') is co-indexed with the subject of the first verb.

The coordinate construction, according to lexicase grammar, is exocentric. An exocentric construction is one which has two or more obligatory members. From the strict X-bar constraints imposed on lexicase grammar, a coordinate construction must have two or more phrases and at least one conjunction (Starosta 1988:247). However, there are some languages which use a coordinate construction without an overt conjunction. To accommodate this fact, lexicase grammar provisionally also allows an exocentric construction with an implicit conjunction (cf. Sak-Humphry 1992:72 and Wilawan 1993).

There are analyses of the coordinate serial verb constructions in several languages but there is only one analysis of Thai proposed by Marybeth Clark in 1992 (cf. Sebba 1987 and Schiller 1991). Clark proposed the following definition for serial verbs, limiting her definition to languages of mainland Southeast Asia:

1. Concatenated verbs represent coordinate statements referring to related events and expressed as a single proposition, i.e. with a single finite verb and where each participant occurs overtly only once;

2. A serializing verb is not predictable in the feature matrix of the finite (main) verb or of other verbs with which it serializes;

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construction with two or more phrases of the same type (Starosta 1988:52, 107).

3. The subject of a serializing verb is coreferential with the subject of the finite verb but is never present in the construction (as stated in 1), i.e., a serializing verb is nonfinite;

4. The non-finite serial verbs are in a coordinate relationship with the finite verb and with each other if there is more than one serializing verb, but no coordinating marker is present;

5. An inner argument—Patient object, Locus (inner locative or dative), inner Correspondent—may intervene between serial verbs. When the same object is implied by more than one serial verb, it occurs only once (again, as in 1), the occurrence being not necessarily with the first transitive verb but depending on particular language preferences;

6. The time of a serial verb is either after or simultaneous with the time of the preceding verb.

Clark's analysis has two problems. First, her analysis is not explicit since she did not propose any formal syntactic structure for the SVCs. The second problem is that her examples do not accurately represent the claims she has made about the coordinate SVCs. Consider the examples in Clark's work as restated:

- (1)      kèp   khriàngmII   hòOp   krapaw  
             pack tool                  carry suitcase
- pay    h<sup>∇</sup>aakin  
             go    search-eat

'They would pack their tools and carry their suitcases to make a living.'

- (2)      náamphú?   baang   hEng   th<sup>é</sup>?thá?  
             fountain some class clumsy
- m<sup>â</sup>y                  ngaam  
             not                  pretty

t<sup>h</sup>oŋgtaat<sup>h</sup>oŋgcaŋ  
pleasant

'Some of the water fountains are clumsy and unpleasant to the eyes.'

In her definition of SVCs, Clark stated that a serializing verb is an adjunct, not a complement. An adjunct may occur freely with any head, subject to pragmatic considerations, while head words may differ in their ability to co-occur with a particular complement. However, the example given above seems to indicate that the second verb is a complement rather than an adjunct of V1. If we can replace V1 with verbs which have a similar meaning, then V2 is an adjunct. However, when the verb ruapruam 'to gather, to collect' is substituted for the verb kəp 'pack', the sentence (3) becomes unacceptable.

- (3) kəp/?ruapruam khrīangmII  
pack/gather tool
- hōop krapaw  
carry suitcase

'(They would) pack/gather their tools and carry their suitcases (to make a living).'

This indicates that hōop is a lexically licensed complement of kəp, so that V2 is a complement of V1 kəp. We can see that there are some problems in the coordinate serial verb analysis proposed by Clark.

3. Lexicase analysis. Contrary to the serial verb analysis proposed by Clark, I argue that verbs in the construction covered in Clark's studies should be analyzed as either lexically incorporated object intransitive verbs or a head of an infinitival coordinate construction.

3.1. Lexically incorporated object intransitive verbs. The syntactic characteristics of the verbs will be used as evidence to support the lexibase analysis.

3.1.1. V2 as subordinate, not coordinate. Contrary to Clark's claim that SVC is a coordinate construction, I argue that the second verb in the series is subordinate.

Consider the following example:

(4) kháw yíng nók tòk  
he shoot bird take

plaa thúkwan  
fish everyday

'He shoots birds and fishes everyday.'

At first glance, this sentence appears to consist of two transitive verbs, two noun dependents and two intransitive verbs. We cannot reverse the order of these verbs and their dependents.

(5)? kháw tòk plaa yíng  
he take fish shoot

nók thúkwan  
bird everyday

'He fishes and shoots birds everyday'.

This indicates that it is not a coordinate construction and that V2 and its dependent is a subordinate dependent of V1 since we can reverse the order of the verbs in the coordinate construction.

3.1.2. V2 as complement not adjunct. Unlike Clark's claim about the so-called coordinate SVCs, I argue that V2 in this construction is a complement of the head verb. Lexibase theory makes the standard dependency grammar distinction between complements and adjuncts (Starosta 1988).

Adjuncts are optional while complements are obligatory. However this criteria is not easy to apply to languages like Thai, where subjects and objects are freely omissible in context for all verbs. A head variation test then is needed. Head words may differ in their ability to co-occur with a particular complement, while an adjunct may occur freely with any head (subject to pragmatic consideration). In the following examples, the head variation indicates that V2 is a complement of a head verb since we cannot replace V1 with any verbs.

- (6)      kháw      dák/?háa/\*lôo      nók  
             he      trap/seek/lure      bird
- tòk      plaa                      thúkwan  
             take      fish                      everyday

'He traps/seeks/lures birds and fishes everyday.'

3.1.3.      Vs as lexically incorporated object intransitive verbs. Since it is established that this construction is not a coordination but subordination, we would expect that we should be able to topicalize a noun phrase (NP) after V2. In Thai the NP after the nonfinite complement verb can be topicalized (cf. Wilawan 1993:64). However, this is not the case.

- (7)\*      plaa      ná?      nuan      ying  
             fish      Top      Nuan      shoot
- nók      tòk  
             bird      take

\*'The fish, Nuan shot the bird and caught.'

Then does this construction really contain two transitive verbs and their dependents? The syntactic properties of

verbs and NPs indicate rather that the two verbs are not transitive but rather must be analyzed as two intransitive verbs with lexically incorporated objects, derived into compound intransitive verbs forming single lexical units. This conclusion is based on the fact that neither the nouns nor the verbs in this construction can take any additional dependents. With a number and classifier modifying the nouns, the sentence is unacceptable.

(8)? nuan ying nók láay  
Nuan shoot bird many

tua tòk plaa háa tua  
class take fish five class

'Nuan shot many birds and caught five fishes.'

With a relative clause modifying each noun, the sentence is also unacceptable.

(9)\* nuan ying nók thîi tŏng  
Nuan shoot bird that Tong

kliat tòk plaa thîi yùu  
hate take fish that be

nay lamthaan  
in creek

'Nuan shot the birds that Tong hated and caught the fish that were in the creek.'

We can see that these nouns have syntactic properties that are different from those of an ordinary noun. They do not allow any noun modifier such as a classifier, a number, or a relative clause, to follow. These nouns are incorporated into verbs as a unit forming an intransitive verb rather than a transitive verb with a noun dependent. The lexicalization analysis then explains

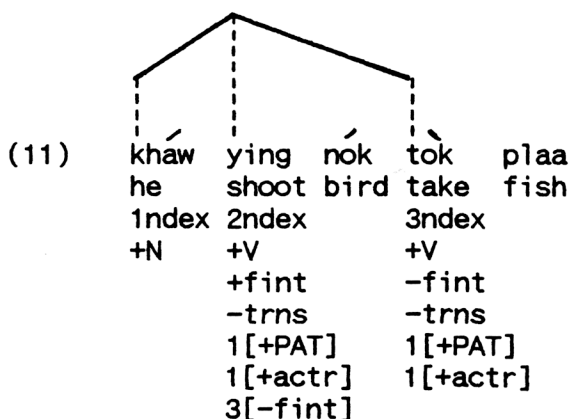
the fact that we cannot topicalize a noun after the verb. Because an intransitive verb behaves as a compound unit, breaking it by topicalizing a noun is impossible.

3.1.4. V2 as a non-finite verb. The second verb in this construction is analyzed as a non-finite verb since the nominative NP is not allowed. In lexibase grammar, nonfinite verbs are defined as verbs with which overt grammatical subjects may not occur (cf. Starosta 1988).

- (10)\*    nuan    ying    nók    kháw    tòk  
           Nuan   shoot   bird   he     take  
  
           plaa   thúkwan  
           fish    everyday

'Nuan shoots birds and he fishes everyday.'

I propose the following structure for this type of construction :



'He shoots birds and fishes.'

The standard complement control rule applies to get the interpretation of this sentence. A Patient, he, of a matrix verb is also interpreted as an implied actor of a nonfinite verb in the lower clause.



There are quite a number of phrases that have the same syntactic characteristics as the example given by Clark (1992). For example:

- (12)      khoncháay      [sák      phaa  
             maid            wash      clothes  
  
             láang            chaam]      thúkwán  
             clean           dish        everyday

'A maid washes clothes and washes dishes every day.'

- (13)      naythun      khon      nán      cáang  
             investor      clss      that      hire  
  
             chaawbâan      [tát      tónmaáy  
             villager      cut      tree  
  
             thamlaay      paa]  
             destroy      forest

'That investor hires villagers to destroy the forest.'

3.2. Non-finite coordinate transitive verb. Now consider the following example:

- (14)      khonráay      khâa      cáwkh<sup>✓</sup>Ongbâan  
             robber      kill      owner of house  
  
             khómkh<sup>✓</sup>IIn      lúukcâang      k<sup>✓</sup>Oon  
             rape            maid            before

'The robber killed the owner of the house and raped the maid before...'

At first glance, this sentence does not look different from example (4). Again it seems to consist of two transitive verbs and two noun dependents. However, the syntactic characteristics of the verbs in this sentence are not similar to the ones in example (4). Because of its syntactic characteristics, I propose that the second

verb in example (14) should be analyzed as a head of a non-finite coordinate clause. There is evidence for this conclusion.

3.2.1. V2 as a non-finite verb. The second verb in this construction is analyzed as an infinitival verb since the presence of nominative NP creates an unacceptable sentence:

- (15)\* khonráay khâa cáawkh<sup>V</sup>Ongbâan  
 robber kill owner of house
- khâw khomkh<sup>V</sup>IIn lúukcâang  
 he rape maid

'The robber killed the owner of the house and he raped the maid.'

3.2.2. Coordinate not subordinate construction. In a finite and nonfinite coordinate construction in Thai, we can reverse the order of verbs and their dependents (subject to pragmatic constraints) (cf. Wilawan 1993:63). Reversing the order of verbs in example (14) also creates an acceptable sentence:

- (17) khonráay khomkh<sup>V</sup>IIn lúukcâang  
 robber rape maid
- khâa cáawkh<sup>V</sup>Ongbâan k<sup>V</sup>Oon  
 kill owner of house before

'The robber raped the maid and killed the owner of the house before...'

Thus, this seems to indicate that it is a coordinate, not a subordinate, construction. In addition, in Thai, there is a constraint on topicalized coordinate structures which corresponds to the Coordination Structure Constraint proposed by John Ross (Ross 1967). That is, no element can be moved out of a coordinate structure. We cannot topicalize or cleft the NP in the finite or nonfinite coordinate construction (cf.

Wilawan 1993). Topicalizing an NP after V2 in example (14) creates an unacceptable sentence as in:

- (17)\*    lúukcâang    ná?    khonráay    khâa  
              maid            Top robber            kill  
  
              câawkh<sup>✓</sup>Ongbân                    khòmkh<sup>✓</sup>IIn  
              owner of house                    rape

\*'The maid, the robber killed the owner of the house and raped.'

It could be argued that example (14) may consist of two lexically incorporated object intransitive verbs. However, this is not the case since the NPs can take the modifiers and the relative clauses as illustrated in the following examples.

- (18)    khonráay    khâa    câawkh<sup>✓</sup>Ongbân  
              robber    kill    owner of house  
  
              nìng khon    khòmkh<sup>✓</sup>IIn    lúukcâang  
              one clss    rape            maid  
  
              s<sup>✓</sup>Ong            khon  
              two            clss

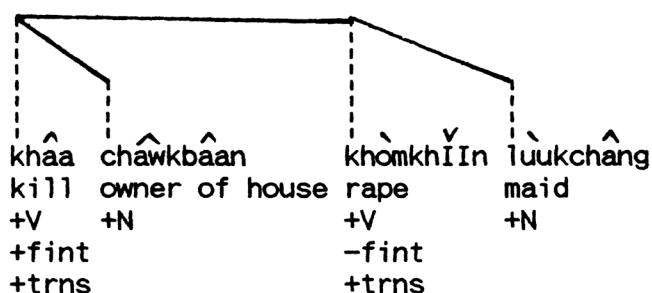
'The robber killed one owner of the house and raped two maids.'

- (19)    khonráay    khâa    câawkh<sup>✓</sup>Ongbân  
              robber    kill    owner of house  
  
              thii    nuan    rúucák    khòmkh<sup>✓</sup>II  
              who    Nuan    know    rape  
  
              lúukcâang    thii    ph<sup>✓</sup>eng maa  
              maid            who    just    come

'The robber killed the owner of the house that Nuan knew and raped the maid who just came.'

Thus, these sentences are considered as coordinate constructions because they have

syntactic characteristics of coordination. We can reverse the order of the verbs and an NP after V2 cannot be topicalized. The second verb in this exocentric structure is analyzed as a nonfinite verb. The presence of an NP subject is not acceptable. Similar syntactic structures can be found in Mandarin Chinese (cf. Wilawan 1993:175). I propose the following dependency syntactic structure. The horizontal line indicates an exocentric construction.



4. **Summary.** In this paper, I have presented the lexicase analysis of the so-called coordinate SVCs. Because of the syntactic characteristics of the verbs in this construction, I argue that the second verb in the series should be analyzed as either a lexically incorporated object intransitive verb or a head of a coordinate nonfinite construction.

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