

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 conjunction¹ to separate the verbs in sequence.

¹ '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;

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 hOOp krapaw
 pack tool carry suitcase
 pay haakin
 go search-eat

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

- (2) naamphú? baang hEng thə?thá?
 fountain some class clumsy
 mây ngaam
 not pretty

t^ho^hngtaat^ho^hngcay
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 kep 'pack', the sentence (3) becomes unacceptable.

- (3) k^hep/?r^huapruam khr^hiangmII
pack/gather tool
- h^ho^hop krap^vaw
carry suitcase

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

This indicates that h^ho^hop is a lexically licensed complement of kep, so that V2 is a complement of V1 kep. 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.