



**LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE: GRAMMATICALITY
JUDGMENTS AND SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS
IN THAI**



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Constructions in Thai
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The choice of topic for this thesis was not an easy choice to make since so many interesting ideas have presented themselves over the previous four years of coursework in this graduate program. I was advised early on to choose a thesis topic that interested me personally, that was narrow, researchable and at the same time feasible. My initial simple idea of investigating “grammaticality judgments as data” in Thai serial verb analysis led me however, toward a deep examination of unresolved foundational issues in linguistics.

My college roommate from 1968-1970 was Vanich Khanthatham from Prae, Thailand. Our friendship, based on helping each other learn each other’s language, started my interest in Thai. I became interested, not just learning to speak and understand the language as a practical matter, but fascinated also as to why learning the language presents so many particular difficulties for English speakers. It was not the tones, or the alphabet, but the great semantic and syntactical differences between the two languages that made learning each other’s language so challenging. My experiences with learning Russian, German and Spanish posed far less difficulty.

My interest in Thai led to an interest in linguistics which persisted over a lifetime spent teaching physics. The past five post-retirement years at Payap University have been an intellectual adventure rewarding beyond measure. Having professors that

respect the intelligence of their students and talk “to” and not “at” their students has made this an ideal setting to study linguistics. Being the oldest member of the class as well as being older than all of my professors seemed to bother no one. I found that age and life experience can make up somewhat for having less energy and needing more sleep than my classmates. I thank all my teachers for their patience and willingness to always respectfully listen and respond to my questions and encourage my curiosity.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is broadly concerned with the status of data used as evidence in linguistics and specifically concerned with testing grammaticality judgments which have appeared in the recent literature in Thai linguistics. A survey using questionnaire and interview techniques checked linguistic claims made by researchers regarding Thai serial verb constructions. The results show that concerns about the problematic nature of simple binary grammaticality judgments used as evidence for theoretical claims are warranted. Various approaches to linguistics are contrasted in their varying interpretations of data as evidence, grammar and the goals of linguistics. Reasons for believing that Thai offers important corrective knowledge for linguistic theorists attempting to make universal generalizations are discussed in detail.

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บทคัดย่อ

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ศึกษาสถานะของข้อมูลในฐานะข้อป่งชี้ทางภาษาศาสตร์ และทดสอบความน่าเชื่อถือของการตัดสินความถูกต้องทางไวยากรณ์ของหน่วยสร้างกริยาเรียงที่ปรากฏในงานวิจัยในอดีต โดยเครื่องมือที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ได้แก่แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ จากผลการศึกษาพบว่างานวิจัยในอดีตนำเสนอประเด็นเรื่องธรรมชาติของปัญหาในการตัดสินความถูกต้องทางไวยากรณ์เชิงทวิภาคแบบไม่ซับซ้อนโดยอาศัยการเปรียบเทียบของแนวทางการศึกษาภาษาศาสตร์ที่หลากหลายในการตีความข้อมูลที่เป็นทั้ง ข้อป่งชี้ทางภาษาศาสตร์ไวยากรณ์ และจุดมุ่งหมายของการศึกษาภาษาศาสตร์ได้อย่างถูกต้อง โดยผู้วิจัยเชื่อว่างานวิจัยภาษาไทยได้นำเสนอองค์ความรู้ที่ถูกต้องสำหรับนักทฤษฎีภาษาศาสตร์ ในความพยายามร่างข้อสรุปในเชิงแบบลักษณะภาษาด้วย

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| Acknowledgements..... | ii |
| List of Tables | viii |
| List of Figures | ix |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Thesis overview | 2 |
| 1.3 Introduction to the problem | 3 |
| 1.4 Basic introduction to Thai..... | 4 |
| 1.5 Summary of Methodology | 6 |
| 1.6 Contribution of the thesis..... | 6 |
| 1.7 Limitations and scope | 7 |
| 1.8 Similar research | 7 |
| Chapter 2 Theoretical background behind this research..... | 9 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 9 |
| 2.1.1 Landscape of Contemporary Linguistics | 9 |
| 2.2 Data in the Externalist approach..... | 11 |
| 2.3 Data in the Essentialists approach..... | 14 |
| 2.4 Summary | 17 |
| Chapter 3 Data Collection, Methodology and Results..... | 19 |
| 3.1 Overview..... | 19 |
| 3.2 Methodology | 19 |
| 3.3 Sentences Surveyed | 20 |
| 3.4 Summary Chart of Results..... | 23 |
| 3.5 Discussion of individual sentences | 24 |
| 3.5.1 Sentence #1: Thepkanjana | 25 |
| 3.5.2 Muansuwan and serial verbs..... | 26 |
| 3.5.3 Sentences #2-#5: Muansuwan..... | 28 |
| 3.5.4 Sentences #6-#7: Muansuwan..... | 33 |
| 3.5.5 Sentences #8-#9: Muansuwan..... | 35 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 3.5.6 Sentences #10-#13 Takahashi – allative and arrivals (th̃ŋ, yaŋ and s̃u) | 37 |
| 3.5.7 Sentence #14: Takahashi | 40 |
| 3.5.8 Sentences #15-#16 Takahashi – copulas khi and pen | 41 |
| 3.5.9 Sentences 17-18 Takahashi – negation before and after verbs | 42 |
| 3.5.10 Sentence #19: Smythe Reference Grammar | 44 |
| 3.5.11 Sentence #20: Enfield (adaption) | 45 |
| 3.6 Discussion of Summary Table of Results | 45 |
| Chapter 4 Relationship of this survey of grammaticality judgments to the field of linguistics | 51 |
| 4.1 Overview of Chapter | 51 |
| 4.2 English and Grammaticality | 52 |
| 4.3 Ungrammaticality and intuition | 53 |
| 4.4 Ungrammaticality and unacceptability | 56 |
| 4.5 The linguists judgments as data | 57 |
| 4.6 The inseparability of normative judgments from grammaticality judgments | 59 |
| 4.7 Itkonen’s resolution to the major dilemma of empirical data in language | 61 |
| 4.8 Emergentist approach to data and syntax | 62 |
| 4.9 Data from computer natural language processing | 64 |
| 4.10 Summary discussion | 66 |
| Chapter 5 Implications for the linguistic analysis of Thai | 67 |
| 5.1 Overview of the chapter | 67 |
| 5.2 Eurocentric linguistics | 67 |
| 5.3 Implicit syntactic assumptions challenged | 69 |
| 5.4 Main verbs are assumed | 72 |
| 5.5 Contrasting numbers of function words | 73 |
| 5.6 Pre-essentialist description of Ahom | 74 |
| 5.7 Semantic analysis of verbs used in the Malee bridge sentences | 75 |
| 5.8 Grammaticality as a normative judgment | 80 |
| Chapter 6 Conclusion | 82 |
| 6.1 Conclusion | 82 |
| Bibliography | 87 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Three Approaches to the Study of Language | 10 |
| Table 2: Informant and Survey Summary | 20 |
| Table 3: Summary of Survey Results | 24 |
| Table 4: Expanded Summary of Results | 47 |
| Table 5: English Grammaticality Judgments | 52 |
| Table 6: Thai verbs scrambled word order | 70 |
| Table 7: Common collocations of <i>jɔ̌n</i> | 76 |
| Table 8: Common collocations of <i>klap</i> : (of 28 listed) | 76 |
| Table 9: Common collocations of <i>tronj</i> : (of 29 listed) | 77 |
| Table 10: Common collocations of <i>khám</i> (of 16 listed) | 77 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Tai Language Family..... | 5 |
| Figure 2: Schematic of the Essentialist view of language | 15 |
| Figure 3: Muansuwan part of speech diagram..... | 26 |
| Figure 4: Thepkanjana SVC Flat SVC Structure..... | 27 |
| Figure 5: Muansuwan Suggested SVC Structure..... | 28 |

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