VERB COMPLEXES IN THAI

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is a comprehensive study of Thai verb complexes which are not semantic arguments of the main predicate of a clause. These non-argument verb complexes are classified into three groups: 1) Directional Serial Verb Constructions, 2) Aspectual Constructions, and 3) Adjoining Constructions. Verb complexes in Directional Serial Verb Constructions encode motion-related situations. Since Thai lacks morphology Thai marks aspect by using distinct aspectual words in either pre-verbal or post-verbal positions. I call the constructions which contain aspect-marking elements, Aspectual Constructions. Adjoining Constructions are composed of verb complexes linked by causal chains and are similar to Resultative Constructions found in English and other languages. However, the result of the causal event in a Thai Adjoining Construction is unique in the sense that it is merely an expectation.

Using Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar and Minimal Recursion Semantics as theoretical frameworks, I present analyses of the three types of verb complexes. I illustrate how these three types of verb complexes are syntactically manifested and how their semantic compositions proceed. Traditionally, these three groups of non-argument verb complexes in Thai have been considered instances of serialization. However, I argue that there is no uniformly defined notion of so-called serialization, from either a syntactic or semantic point of view, that can apply to all of the three types of Thai verb complexes. To illustrate this, I show that Directional Serial Verb Constructions include both a recursive VP-over-VP structure, with fixed positions of certain verb classes, or a
complementation structure. Aspectual Constructions include both a head-complement and a head-adjunct structure. Adjoining Constructions are formulated via a type of complementation. This non-uniformity between the syntactic structures and the semantic sub-groupings of the Thai verb complexes indicates that if we want to apply the notion of serialization to these Thai verb complexes, we cannot define it on the basis of either the positions of verb complexes in the construct, the syntactic structures involved, or the semantic domains it expresses.