

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Background of the study

Serial Verb Construction (SVC) is a prominent syntactic feature occurring in Thai and other languages such as some African languages, Chinese, Burmese, etc. (Thepkanjana, 1986). According to Thepkanjana, linguists have studied SVCs primarily focusing on the syntactic source of SVCs and come up with several questions, for example, whether SVCs involve a mono-clausal underlying structure or a multi-clausal underlying structure or whether SVCs are synchronically verbs or prepositions. Some other linguists have different views opposite to those statements. They study SVCs by emphasizing on their semantic aspect (Filbeck, 1975; Thepkanjana, 1986; Yangklang, 2003) and claim that SVC refers to a single event (Filbeck, 1975), and serves a variety of functions (Matisoff, 1969: 71 cited in Aikhenvald, 2006; Masica, 1976; Thepkanjana, 1986; Aikhenvald, 2006)

With different aspects viewed on SVC, its definition varies. However, the wide use of its definition by most linguists working on SVCs (Matisoff, 1973; Boadi, 1968; Westerman, 1907; Thepkanjana, 1986; Chuwicha, 1993; Muansuwan, 2002; Yangklang, 2003) is usually based on consideration of its surface form as a concatenation of at least two verb phrases immediately adjacent to each other. This definition can be illustrated with the following examples (from the Thai story named 'Looking Back'):

(1) Directional: tiia1 naaj0 jak1song3 k@@@2 klap1 paj0 mvvang0 ciin0
 เต็ม นาย ยักซัง ก็ กลับ ไป เมือง จีน
 father master Yaksong then return go city China
 "...his father returned to China."

(2) Purposive: thaa2 paj0 tham0ngaan0
 ถ้า ไป ทำงาน
 if go work
 "When I went to work, ..."

(3) Aspectual: mvva2 ngvvan2khaj4 hxng1 khwaam0pen0juu1

pliiian1plxxng0 paj0

เมื่อ เงื่อนไข แห่ง ความเป็นอยู่

เปลี่ยนแปลง ไป

when condition of living

change go

“As conditions of live have changed,...”

(4) Sequential: than2 pen0 caw2mvvang0 khon0 rxk2 thii2 daj2 paj0 hen4

khaw4phra3wi3haan4

ท่าน เป็น เจ้าเมือง คน แรก ที่ ได้ ไป เห็น

เขาพระวิหาร

he be governor person first that get go see

Khao Phra Viharn

“He was the first governor to have seen Khao Phra Viharn.”

From the above sentences, the underlined SVCs consist of two serialized verbs in which /paj0/ ‘go’ co-occurs with another verb in each construction. It is seen that /paj0/, which is considered as a Directional Verb (DV), can occur before or after the other verb but denoting different concepts – Directional, Purposive, Aspectual, and Sequential. On the other side, the English expressions tend to retain the same concepts as those in the original by using different linguistic structures. This is because both languages are considered to have a different language system.

If sentence (1) is taken into consideration, it can be seen that two serialized directional verbs /klap1+paj0/ ‘return+go’ are conveyed in English with a preposition following the main verb /klap1/, resulting in ‘returned to (China)’, in which the suffix of past tense ‘-ed’ is attached to the verb. In the second sentence, the verb /paj0/ occurs before the verb /tham0ngaan0/ ‘work’ and the serial verb construction of /paj0+tham0ngaan0/ is translated into English as ‘went to work’. This is different from the former example in which /paj0/ is translated into a preposition ‘to’ whereas in the latter the same DV is translated into a lexical verb ‘go’ in the past form followed by a to-infinitive verb. The prepositional phrase and the to-infinitive pattern, which usually follow most verbs, are some instances considered as verb complements in English.

Unlike the first sentence which denotes the directional concept, sentence (3), in which its serial verbs have a similar construction as the first one, i.e., a verb followed by /paj0/, is expressed in English with a different form. With the combination of the verb of change /pliian1plxxng0/ 'change' and /paj0/ as in /pliian1plxxng0+paj0/ 'change+go', such SVC in the third sentence is conveyed in English as 'have changed' denoting the aspectual concept with the form of an auxiliary verb 'have' in the present tense followed by the main verb in the past participle form, i.e., 'changed'. In the fourth sentence, the SVC is syntactically similar to the second one, i.e., /paj0/ followed by a verb, but with the dissimilar semantic concept of translations if both are compared. The series of verbs /paj0+hen4/ 'go+see' which consists of /paj0/ preceding the perception verb /hen4/ 'see' in sentence (4) are expressed in English through the to-infinitive verb in the present perfect form as 'to have seen' in order to denote the sequential concept. This translated form is rather similar to the translations of sentence (2) that also uses 'to-infinitive' form but to represent the purposive concept of the SVC instead.

Evidently, the co-occurrence of SVC with DV /paj0/ 'go' can denote several concepts through certain syntactic forms. Moreover, this co-occurrence is translated into English, a non-serial verb construction, with the English syntactic constructions or multiple devices to express utmost consistent concepts. In other words, each Thai lexical verb in SVCs cannot be individually translated into a series of English lexical verbs but they will be translated into a main verb with different grammatical devices e.g. preposition, to-infinitive, auxiliary or adverb to express the concepts of directional, purposive, aspectual, or sequential instead. These appearances of Thai SVCs compared to their translations in English correspond to perception of linguists like Matisoff (1969: 71 cited in Aikhenvald, 2006) and Masica (1976: 150-153). These linguists agree that SVCs serves to provide some sorts of information and functions that are handled by different devices e.g. adverb, preposition, inflection, modal auxiliary and conjunction in non-serial verb languages like English.

Having seen the comparison between Thai SVCs and English translations above, it is notable to recognize certain English grammatical devices employed to reserve the original concepts of SVCs. With this reason, I found that it is interesting to search for answers to the questions: what are the forms in English translations

selected to represent the concepts of SVCs with DVs in Thai? Are there any potential corresponding forms between the two languages?

Besides, in consideration of translation perspective, the focus and the most exclusive concern in translation process is the equivalent meaning between an original text in a source language (SL) and a translated text in a target language (TL). That means the meaning has priority over the form in translation. Neubert (1984 cited in Bell, 1991) says that it is 'meaning' which is the kingpin of translation studies. Catford (1965) also agrees that 'meaning' is important in translation. In his point of view, 'meaning' is the total network of relations entered into by any linguistic form – text, item-in-text, structure, element of structure, class, term in system – or whatever it may be. Nida (1964 and 2001) extends the 'meaning' in translation with the involvement of communication within the context of interpersonal relations. Larson (1998) puts an emphasis on the meaning-based translation. The 'meaning' in his viewpoint arises from the study of the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text.

In short, translation is the transfer of the meaning in one language into another language. Thus, it is the meaning, which is carried over from the SL to the TL, not the linguistic form. With this reason, to translate Thai sentences in which SVCs with DVs occur into English, their meanings have to be thoroughly examined to perceive what they convey in order to later compare with their English translations whether there is the semantic equivalence as in the Thai original texts.

From all of the above, it is advantageous for English, as an international language in the current world, to be further investigated on how it will express Thai SVCs with those DVs in both semantic and syntactic aspects through translation, and whether the translations will have the equivalence in those two dimensions. Although a considerable number of studies have been made on Thai SVCs, such as Sereechareonsatit (1984), Thepkanjana (1986), Chuwicha (1993), Muansuwan (2002), and Yangklang (2003), it is found that there is no study that is dedicated directly to the translation of Thai SVCs with DVs into English. Therefore, the translation of Thai SVCs into English is considered to be an attractive area to be deeply investigated in this research in order to contribute another fruitful idea for translation studies in relation to Thai SVCs, and to provide possible direction of translation of SVCs with DVs from Thai into English.

1.4 Statement of hypotheses

According to the examples provided earlier, the hypotheses of this research can be stated as follows:

- 1.4.1 Thai SVCs with DVs denote the semantic concepts of directional, purposive, aspectual, and sequential. The syntactic forms of these concepts consist of DVs occurring either in the preceding or following position of other certain lexical verbs in the series.
- 1.4.2 The English forms representing those SVCs concepts are varied in accordance with the positions of the DVs co-occurring with other lexical verbs in the series and with other grammatical markers in the constructions.
- 1.4.3 There are syntactic gaps between those Thai SVCs and their English translations. Some forms of Thai SVCs can be mapped with the forms in English whereas the others cannot be mapped.
- 1.4.4 There are semantic gaps between those Thai SVCs with DVs and their English translations. A certain original concept of SVCs is sometimes lost, sometimes is replaced by another concept, and sometimes gains another concept into the English translations.
- 1.4.5 There is no one-to-one correspondence between Thai SVCs and their English translations but there are potential forms given as the guidance in translating SVCs with DVs into English. That is, 'adverb' and 'preposition' are the potential forms for the directional concept, 'auxiliary' is the potential form for the aspectual concept, and 'to-infinitive' is the potential form for the purposive concept, and the sequential concept.

1.5 Scope of the study

- 1.5.1 This research mainly involves the investigation of the semantic and syntactic aspects of Thai SVCs with six directional verbs, i.e., /paj0/ 'go', /maa0/ 'come', /khaw2/ 'enter', /?@@k1/ 'exit', /khvn2/

'ascend', and /long0/ 'descend' in the Thai story named /fvvn3khwaam0lang4/ 'Looking Back' and their English translations.

- 1.5.2 Verb /mii0/ 'have' is not included as a part of SVC (the definition is to be given below) due to its distinctive syntactic characteristics which permit itself to occur in a subjectless construction.
- 1.5.3 The semantic framework employed in this study is based on Thepkanjana (1986) and Yangklang (2003). The criteria used to classify the concepts of SVCs are the other lexical verbs that co-occur with the DVs and their positions in the constructions. Also, the English translations, on the other hand, can be of assistance to the concept classification.

1.6 Definition of terms

There are four key terms that need to be defined for common understanding in this research. They are as follows:

Serial Verb Construction (SVC)

The definition of SVCs is presently still a subject to controversy due to the different linguistic criteria used by the linguists. However, in this research, it is referred to as "the construction in which two or more verbs are strung together without any words occurring in between except a single noun which has no modification and functions as an object to its preceding verb. Such combination of serial verbs includes any one or more than one DVs of /paj0/, /maa0/, /khaw2/, /?@@k1/, /khvn2/, and /long0/ functioning as the pre-verb or post-verb and adjoining other lexical verb(s) or main verbs. These verbs, however, are individually capable to occur as a main verb outside the string."

Directional Verb (DV)

DV refers to "a verb in which its core concept associates with path and direction of motion. This verb can co-occur with other lexical verbs to denote additional information to the main verb in a construction. It can also co-occur with

other DV(s) to convey a single action relating to direction.” Six DVs in Thai to be focused in this research are /paj0/ ‘go’, /maa0/ ‘come’, /khaw2/ ‘enter’, /ʔ@@k1/ ‘exit’, /khvn2/ ‘ascend’, and /long0/ ‘descend’.

Semantic Equivalence

It refers to “the meaning gain and the meaning loss of any part of meaning in the TL texts (English) in comparison with those SVCs with DVs in the SL texts (Thai).”

Syntactic Equivalence

It refers to “any part of text or form in the TL (English) that always corresponds to any part of text or form of SVCs with DVs in the SL (Thai) regardless of an adjustment of item category or class or structure in the TL.”

1.7 Significance of the study

Results of this research will be beneficial in several ways as follows:

- 1.7.1 To contribute knowledge of Thai SVCs with DVs.
- 1.7.2 To contribute knowledge of translation particularly on Thai SVCs which can be applied to further study on other translation researches.
- 1.7.3 To present practical principles of Thai SVCs with DVs translation by a comparison at both semantic and syntactic levels of Thai SVCs and English translations.
- 1.7.4 To exhibit the potential English patterns of SVCs concepts. This will be valuable for teachers and ESL/EFL students in teaching and learning translation, and for inexperienced translators to perceive the direction in translating SVCs with DVs into English.
- 1.7.5 To provide the useful implication and application in developing existing translation courses.

1.8 List of symbols and abbreviations

1.8.1 Symbols

Thai phonemes

In this research, two transcription systems of the IPA and the LRU¹ Transcriptions (Luksaneeyanawin, 1993) are used to illustrate the examples from other studies on Thai SVCs. However, in transcribing the data from the selected sample in this research, the LRU system is used since this research does not deal with the phonological issue. The following are the tables of the Thai consonants, vowels, and tones used in the transcription of the data in this study.

Table 1.1: The transliteration system for Thai consonants

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop, +voice –asp.	b	d			ʔ
Stop, –voice –asp.	p	t	c	k	
Stop, –voice +asp.	ph	th	ch	kh	
Fricative	f	s			h
Semivowel	w		j		
Nasal	m	n		ng	
Lateral		l			
Trill		r			

Table 1.2: The transliteration system for Thai vowels

	Front		Central		Back	
	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short	Long
Close	i	ii	v	vv	u	uu
Mid	e	ee	q	qq	o	oo
Open	x	xx	a	aa	@	@@

Diphthongs: /ia/, /iia/, /va/, /vva/, /ua/, /uua/

Tones

Mid	=	0
Low	=	1
Falling	=	2
High	=	3
Rising	=	4

¹ The LRU system is the transcription system developed at the Linguistics Research Unit of Chulalongkorn University (cf. Schoknecht, 2000) to be easily processed by computers.

1.8.2 Abbreviations

SVCs	=	Serial Verb Constructions
DVs	=	Directional Verbs
SL	=	Source Language
TL	=	Target Language

Concepts

ASP	=	Aspectual
pf	=	perfect
pfv	=	perfective
imp	=	imperfective
att	=	attitudinal
DIR	=	Directional
PUR	=	Purposive
SEQ	=	Sequential
RES	=	Resultative
SUC	=	Successful
TME	=	Time

Forms

V	=	Verb
bas	=	base form
pre	=	present tense
pst	=	past tense
fut	=	future
Aux	=	Auxiliary
Pas	=	Passive
Pf	=	Perfect
Mod	=	Modal Auxiliary
Tf	=	To Infinitive
N	=	Noun
NP	=	Noun Phrase
PP	=	Prepositional Phrase
Art	=	Article
Prep	=	Preposition
Adj	=	Adjective
Adv	=	Adverb
Conj	=	Conjunction
Part	=	Participle
Subj	=	Subject
Obj	=	Object
Suf	=	Suffix
Neg	=	Negative
∅	=	no form

Types of Verbs

In this research, verbs found co-occurring with DVs are classified into three main groups (based on Chafe, 1970): 1) action verbs which can be divided into motion verbs and non-motion verbs; 2) process verbs; and 3) stative verbs. Each group also consists of sub-types of verbs (see Table 3.3 for classification of verbs and their definition in Chapter III). The abbreviations of these verbs with their definitions are listed below:

Mot	=	Motion Verbs
Traf	=	Transfer Verbs
Disp	=	Displacement Verbs
Dir	=	Directional Verbs
Tra	=	Travel Verbs
Tak	=	Take Verb
Bod	=	Bodily Movement Verbs
Post	=	Postural Verbs
Com	=	Communication Verbs
Dec	=	Decrease Verbs
Pos	=	Possession Verbs
Per	=	Perception Verbs
Act	=	Action Verbs
Pro	=	Process Verbs
Des	=	Destruction Verbs
Disa	=	Disappearance Verbs
Cre	=	Creation Verbs
Pas	=	Passive Verbs
Men	=	Mental Verbs
Cog	=	Cognition Verbs
Emo	=	Emotion Verbs
Cau	=	Causative Verbs
Cha	=	Verbs of Change
Ach	=	Achievement Verbs
Asp	=	Aspectual Verbs
Sta	=	State Verbs
Qan	=	Quantitative Verbs
Equ	=	Equative Verb
Man	=	Manner Verbs
Comp	=	Comparative Verbs