

Projective Meanings of Thai Passive-type Constructions,
and Implications for East Asian (Chinese *Bei*) Passive Constructions
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This paper investigates *thuuk/door* constructions in Thai, which have often been referred to as a Chinese-type *bei* passive construction (e.g., Wongbaisaj, 1979). *Thuuk* and *door*, roughly meaning ‘suffer’, are divided into two forms: (1a) the long form with an external argument (an overt agent) and (1b) the short form without it.

Contra the classical view, we argue that (a) *thuuk* and *door* are syntactic heads associated with multidimensional semantics; they have two tiers of meaning, the at-issue meaning and the not-at-issue meaning (presupposition or implicature) in the spirit of Karttunen (1973), among others, as illustrated in (2); and we argue that (b) the short form is a true passive and the long form is an inverse construction which involves object promotion without deletion or demotion of an external argument. Under this analysis, the two forms are distinguished by the complement that the heads *thuuk* and *door* select; the heads select an InverseP in the long form (3a) and a PassiveP in the short form (3b).

Typically, the subject of *thuuk* and *door* is understood as suffering an unpleasant experience. However, when the subject is inanimate, the sentence has the interpretation that a salient individual may suffer. Note also that *thuuk* can be distinguished from *door* in that, while *door* conveys a strong sense of negativity, *thuuk* often simply predicates the subject as it can occur in a neutral context without the notion of ‘suffering’. Based on these facts, we show from the *family-of-sentence* tests that the notion of ‘suffering’ is projected as a not-at-issue meaning, but it needs not be if *thuuk* is associated with a neutral context. For example, in (4a) ‘suffering’ cannot be questioned, and the meaning projects above a yes/no question; the utterer and the listener accept the not-at-issue meaning of ‘suffering’ irrespective of the answer to the question. Next, in (4b) negation can only be used to negate a truth-conditional meaning that Nit was punched by the teacher, and cannot be used to mean that Nit was punched by the teacher but no one suffered from the punching event. It thus follows that *thuuk* and *door* involve two tiers of meaning to which meaning can contribute, the at-issue dimension and not-at-issue dimension.

In addition, we argue that only the short form is a true passive and the long form is an inverse construction that involves object promotion. In Thai, an external argument has an argument status as a subject. For example, in (5) the *thuuk/door*-NP sequence cannot move, unlike a putative PP. By contrast, an external argument in the short form is understood as an existential like a *be*-passive in English as shown in (6). Despite this distinction, the two forms display similar syntactic properties like A’-dependencies (e.g., long-distance movement) and null operator movement. Arguments for null operator movement include the lack of reconstruction effects: the absence of idiomatic interpretation in (7), the binding variable interpretation in (8), and the sensitivity to island effects in (9).

We thus conclude that it is a null operator that undergoes movement and that the subject is base-generated in its surface position (an A-position) and related to the null operator through predication; in the event semantics we use, a null operator adjoins to a PassiveP in the short form and an InverseP in the long form, and with this adjoining PassiveP and InverseP turn into a property. We also provide evidence illustrating the surface subject position being non-thematic.

This study reveals an interesting parallelism with Chinese *bei* passives in distinguishing the long form from the short form and displaying null operator A’-movement (Huang 1999, Ting 1998, Bruening and Tran Ms.). By illustrating the similarities between Thai *thuuk/door* and Chinese *bei* constructions, we will show based on Bruening and Tran’s (Ms.) observation that the current multidimensional semantic analysis can straightforwardly account for the meanings of Chinese *bei* constructions. Finally, we hope that this study will allow us to resolve some of the long-standing

issues regarding the adversity passive constructions in East Asian languages such as Korean and Khmer.

- (1) a. Nit thuuk/door Tim toj. b. Nit thuuk/door toj.
 Nit thuuk/door Tim punch Nit thuuk/door punch
 ‘Nit suffered Tim punching her.’ ‘Nit suffered (someone) punching her.’
- (2) $\llbracket \text{thuuk/door} \rrbracket = \lambda P. \lambda x. \lambda e. P(x)(e)$
 Not-at-issue meaning: any world there exists an e(vent) such that $P(x)(e)=1$ is a world where a contextually salient individual suffers.
- (3) a. Long form $[_{\text{ThuukP}} \text{Nit}_i [_{\text{Thuuk}} [_{\text{InverseP}} \text{OP}_i [_{\text{InverseP}} \text{Tim} [_{\text{Inverse}} [_{\text{VP}} \text{punch } t_i]]]]]]]$
 b. Short form $[_{\text{ThuukP}} \text{Nit}_i [_{\text{Thuuk}} [_{\text{PassP}} \text{OP}_i [_{\text{PassP}} [\text{Pass} [_{\text{VP}} \text{punch } t_i]]]]]]]$
- (4) a. Nit thuuk/door khruu thamtod ræ? b. Nit maj thuuk/door khruu thamtod.
 Nit thuuk/door teacher punish Q? Nit Neg thuuk/door teacher punish
 ‘Did Nit suffer the teacher punishing her?’ ‘Nit did not suffer the teacher punishing her.’
- (5) a. *thuuk/door Tim Nit toj. b. bon to? nii Nit kin thurian.
 thuuk/door Tim Nit punch on table this Nit eat durian
 ‘Nit suffered Tim punching her.’ ‘On this table, Nit ate the durian.’
- (6) thuk khon waan waa Achara ca? thuuk/door toj.
 every person hope Comp Achara Fut thuuk/door punch
 ‘Everyone hopes that Achara will be punched (by someone).’
 *‘Everyone_i hopes that Achara will be punched by them_i.’
- (7) bia thuuk Achara kep taihun ran.
 sand thuuk Achara pick under platform
 Literal meaning ‘The sand was picked by Achara under platform.’
 *Idiomatic meaning: ‘Achara started saving from small money.’
- (8) a. tæla khon thuuk mææ khœŋ khaw tii. b. *luuk khœŋ khaw thuuk tæla mææ tii.
 each person thuuk mother Poss 3Sg hit kid Poss 3Sg thuuk each mother hit
 ‘Each person was hit by his mother.’ ‘His kid was hit by each mother.’
- (9) *nakrian thuuk/door Achara ploj khaaw waa khruu toj e.
 student thuuk/door Achara spread rumor Comp teacher punch e
 ‘The student suffered Achara spreading the rumor that the teacher punched e.’

References. Bruening, B. and Tran, T. *Manuscript*. Chinese-Type “Passives”: A Vietnamese Perspective. University of Delaware. Karttunen, L. 1973. Presuppositions of Compound Sentences. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4: 167-193. Kim, L. to appear. On the Khmer Passive-like Construction: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective. *Proceedings of the 48th Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*.