The Thais that Bind: Principle C and Bound Expressions in Thai

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Abstract: Principle C (Chomsky, 1981) states that referring expressions cannot be bound in any domain. Previous research has held up Thai as an example of a Principle C-less language because R-expression can receive bound readings. However, I argue that full DPs in Thai cannot be bound just as they cannot be bound in English. Apparent violations of Principle C arise when expressions with phonological forms similar to referring expressions receive bound readings. The current study reexamines Thai’s status and contends that Thai is sensitive to Principle C and that we can account for the apparent discrepancies by considering the syntactic structure of the bound expressions, not just their surface form. Thai bound R-expressions are not truly referring expressions. Rather, they are reduced syntactic structures and, thus, are not subject to Principle C.

1. Introduction

Chomsky (1981) introduced Binding Theory (BT) to account for anaphoric relations between various expressions. He argued that the indices assigned to syntactic elements and the particular configurations of these elements determine coreference. He proposed that different forms of expressions (e.g., pronouns versus reflexives) are sensitive to different binding domains. These binding domains predict when an expression will be interpreted as being coreferential to some antecedent. When an expression is “bound” it is co-indexed and coreferential with an antecedent, and an expression is free when it is not co-indexed with an antecedent and obtains its reference via some other means.

In BT, Chomsky presents three principles (A, B, and C) to account for the distribution of expression and their potential interpretations. According to Principle A, anaphors (e.g., reflexives) must be bound in their local domain. Principle B states that pronouns must be free within their local domain. And Principle C states that referring expressions such as proper names and definite descriptions (henceforth R-expressions)
must be completely free. Of particular interest to us will be Principles B and C. These
principles predict the ungrammaticality of data such as (1)-(3). In (1), both the pronoun
and R-expression are ungrammatical because neither can have an antecedent in its local
domain. However, a pronoun can be bound outside of its local domain as shown by (2)
and (3), but the R-expression is still ungrammatical with the bound/coreferential reading.

**English Principle B and C Violations –**

1. Naomi \(_1\) hit *her\(_1\)/*Naomi\(_1\)
2. Naomi\(_1\) thinks that her\(_1\)/Naomi\(_1\) will win.
3. Naomi\(_1\) likes the book you gave to her\(_1\)/Naomi\(_1\)

Although the English data appear to conform to BT’s predictions, there are exceptions
both in English and crosslinguistically, especially in regards to Principle C. In English,
apparent Principle C violations arise in some contexts when pragmatics licenses
coreference (see Bolinger (1979) and Evans (1980)). For example, the final mention of
Naomi in the sentence “No one likes Naomi. Even Naomi doesn’t like Naomi” receives a
bound interpretation, namely that Naomi doesn’t like herself. The crosslinguistic data
present even more problems for BT. Some languages, such as Thai, allow R-expressions
to receive bound readings without the special, pragmatic licensing necessary in English.

In Thai, bound R-expressions arise frequently and in many—but not all—domains.
For instance, in (4) we see that the R-expression cannot be locally bound, just like the R-
expression in (1), but it can be bound non-locally as in (5) and (6), unlike (2) and (3).

**Thai –**

4. *Sak\(_1\) dti Sak\(_1\)
   Sak hit Sak
   “Sak hit himself”

5. Noi\(_1\) kít waa Noi\(_1\) já cha- ná
   Noi think COMP Noi will win
   “Noi thinks that she will win”

6. Nid\(_1\) chòp nāng-súu tee aa hái (kub) Nid\(_1\)
   Nid like book COMP 2\(^{nd}\)S give (to) Nid
   “Nid likes the book that you gave her”

These apparent deviations from BT have led to numerous accounts in an attempt to save
it. One approach has been to stipulate that Principle C is parametric (Lasnik 1989).
Others have suggested altering the definition of binding (e.g., Huang, 1983) or narrowing
its scope to just Conditions A and B (e.g., Reinhart and Reuland, 1993). Still others argue
that BT is universal but that languages differ in aspects such as movement and
reconstruction (Lee, 2003; Mortensen 2003; Boeckx, Hornstein, & Nunes 2005) or in
what constitutes a referring expression or pronoun (Hoonchamlong, 1991). Yet another
approach is to focus more on the semantic nature of DPs and propose a semantic/pragmatic explanation (e.g., Demirdache, 1997; Fox, 1995 and 1999; Heim, 1993; Schlenker, 2005). Despite these attempts, no single account has been able to unify the phenomena and account for the crosslinguistic variation.

At least since Lasnik (1989), Thai has been characterized as a language that lacks Principle C. Although other linguists (e.g., Hoonchamlong, 1991; Natahara, 1999) have contested the strength of Lasnik’s claim, many linguists continue to use Thai data to argue about Principle C effects (e.g., Lee, 2002; Dubinsky & Hamilton, 1998). Thai does, indeed, differ from English in that R-expressions can receive bound readings, but the full extent of this generalization and the reasons for the variation are not understood. To address these issues, this study explores (i) the actual distribution of Thai bound R-expressions and (ii) the underlying factors that allow for bound readings.

Building off the observation that bound pronouns can project smaller structures than their antecedents (Hirose, 1997; Noguchi, 1997) and that pronouns may have different syntactic projections (Dechaine & Wiltshcko, 2002), I construct a syntactic account for Thai bound R-expressions. In Thai, a bound expression is actually a reduced syntactic structure, namely a $P$. This $P$ can be realized in one of two ways. The spell-out can be either of the $\Phi$-features, giving rise to a classic pronoun. Or the spell-out can be of the antecedent’s NP head and (optionally) its complements. When this occurs, the phonological form of the $\Phi P$ looks like full R-expression. However, because the syntactic form is not a full DP, the expression is not subject to Principle C. It is subject only to Principle B, like other pronouns. Thus, what differs between languages is not whether R-expressions can be bound or not, but whether a $\Phi P$ can spell out an N or not.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I present data of domains in which bound Thai R-expressions can and cannot occur. In section 3, I develop the $\Phi P$ account. In section 4, I compare my account with previous ones. And in section 5, I present the conclusions and implications of the $\Phi P$ approach, arguing that all bound expressions can be treated as reduced syntactic structures, regardless of phonological form.

2. The Generalizations and Relevant Observations

For the purposes of this section, I will continue to call bound instances of proper names and descriptions “R-expressions”. Later, I will revise this term and label these bound R-expressions $\Phi$-pronouns. Also, for the purposes of this section, I will use classic examples of common bound R-expressions, i.e., proper names, particular professions (e.g., teacher) and kinship terms. As we move away from canonical examples, speakers’ ratings shift. Some novel constructions are rated more acceptable than others, though all of the ones reported here are considered possible, grammatical Thai constructions.

2.1 Coarguments

The first generalization to make is that bound readings of pronouns and R-expressions are ungrammatical when they are coarguments with their antecedents. In transitive
constructions such as (14)-(17), both canonical pronouns and R-expressions lead to disjoint reference when they occur in direct object position (e.g., (14) and (15)) or indirect position (e.g., (16) and (17)).

**Subject-Objects** –

(14)  *Sak\textsubscript{1} dti kao\textsubscript{1}/Sak\textsubscript{1}  
Sak hit 3SM/Sak  
“Sak hit himself”

(15)  *Mae\textsubscript{1} chɔɔ̌p ter\textsubscript{1}/mae\textsubscript{1}  
Mother like 3SF/mother  
“Mother likes herself”

**Subject-Indirect Objects** –

(16)  *Nid\textsubscript{1} hâi dɔɔk-maai \textsubscript{(kub)} ter\textsubscript{1}/Nid\textsubscript{1}  
Nid give flowers \textsubscript{(to)} 3SF/Nid  
“Nid gave flowers to herself”

(17)  *Aajan\textsubscript{1} hâi näng-sù\textsubscript{(kub)} kao\textsubscript{1}/aajan\textsubscript{1}  
Teacher give book \textsubscript{(to)} 3SM/teacher  
“Teacher gave a book to himself”

In (16), the pronoun ter and the R-expression Nid are interpreted as being different women from Nid, the subject of the verb give. A bound reading cannot arise, and disjoint reference is obligatory. Furthermore, in serial verb constructions, repeated R-expressions and pronouns cannot be bound. In (18), we find the same disjoint readings for pronouns and R-expressions bound in serial verb constructions. Here, ter and Noi are the objects of the second verb, hâi, making them coarguments with their antecedent and, hence, ungrammatical on the bound reading.

**Co-arguments in Serial Verb Constructions** –

(18)  *Noi\textsubscript{1} ser chut hâi ter\textsubscript{1}/Noi\textsubscript{1}  
Noi buy dress give 3SF/Noi  
“Noi bought a dress for herself”

Thus, it would appear than whenever a pronoun or R-expression is a coargument with its antecedent, it is necessarily disjoint.

### 2.2 Non-coarguments

The next generalization to make is that the second R-expression or pronoun can receive a bound reading when it is not a coargument with its antecedent. Because we are primarily interested in the distribution of R-expressions and the following domains should all allow
for bound pronouns, I present only the R-expression in this section. In (19) and (20), we see that prepositional phrases can act as minimal governing categories and thereby allow for co-reference. In (19), the preposition *kɔɔng* creates a possessive construction, and within it, the R-expression, *Noi*, can receive bound readings. Likewise, in the *kiew-kub* ("about") construction, the R-expression, *Sompob*, can be bound.

**Clausemates but not Coarguments: Inside Prepositions –**

(19) Noi₁ hen cham kɔɔng Noi₁
Noi see bowl of Noi
“Noi saw her bowl”

(20) Sompob₁ arn ruang kiew-kub Sompob₁
Sompob read story about Sompob
“Sompob read a story about him(self)”

In examples (21)-(23), we see that CP/IPs also are boundaries that allow for bound R-expressions. In (21) the bound R-expression, *Sid*, is embedded in a relative clause, is not an argument of the main verb *chɔɔp*, and can receive a bound reading.

**Non-clausemates: Relative Clauses –**

(21) Sid₁ chɔɔp māa tee Noi ser hāi Sid₁
Sid like dog that Noi buy give Sid
“Sid likes the dog that Noi bought for him”

**Non-clausemates: Complement Clauses –**

(22) Bpāa₁ kít waa bpāa₁ jā cha- nā
Aunt think COMP aunt will win
“Auntie thinks she will win”

(23) Sak₁ yak hāi Sak₁ cha- nā
Sak want give Sak win
“Sak wants himself to win”

In (22) the R-expression *bpāa* ("auntie") is embedded in a complement headed by *waa* and can be bound by the first *bpāa*. The same holds true for the *Sak*-expression in (23), where the proposition “Sak win” is an argument of the verb *hai* “give”.

2.3 Further Observations and Data to Consider

The data above seem to paint a clear picture: when R-expressions are coarguments with their antecedents, they cannot be bound but, when they are non-coarguments, they can. However, the facts are not quite so clear-cut. There is more to the grammaticality of a bound R-expression than its coargument status. The surface form of the R-expression
seems to influence the effect its grammaticality. One common feature of the grammatical examples above is that the antecedent and the bound R-expression have the same surface form. This may lead one to believe that the R-expression must be a full or exact copy of its antecedent, and indeed other linguists working with Thai data and languages with similar phenomena have stipulated an exact-copy condition to account for the data (e.g., Boeckx, Hornstein, and Nunes, 2005; Hoonchamlong, 1991; Lee, 2003; Mortensen, 2004). However, in Thai, this condition is not exactly true. Exact copies are neither necessary nor sufficient for binding.

First off, an exact copy is not sufficient for binding, even in domains where binding is usually possible. Expressions that contain classifiers or demonstratives cannot be bound regardless of what domain they are in. In (24), we have an example of bound R-expression that is an exact copy of its antecedent. Both the antecedent and the bound R-expression contain the classified kon. The second R-expression occurs in a prepositional phrase, which should allow for bound readings, but here it is necessarily disjoint.

(24) *Sak bɔɔk waa aajan chaalat kon uuay1 jop mee-a kɔɔng
    Sak tell COMP teacher smart CL fat kiss wife of
    aajan chaalat kon uuay1
    teacher smart CL fat
    “Sak said that the fat smart teacher kissed his wife”

The two expressions receive indefinite readings, such that Sak said that some teacher kissed the wife of some other teacher. The bound reading is not possible. This same observation holds for demonstratives and for all the construction types mentioned in section 2.2.

Secondly, the exact-copy component is not necessary to explain the binding conditions for R-expressions. There are instances in which reduced copies of the antecedent can give rise to bound readings. Previous accounts of the Thai data have noticed particular cases of “incomplete” copies and have postulated that they are a result of the use of titles (see Hoonchamlong, 1991). Data such as (25) and (26) demonstrate instances of canonical, incomplete-copy, bound R-expressions. In both (25) and (26), the antecedent aajan Nid “teacher Sid” attempts to bind an R-expression. In (25), the title expression, aajan, receives a bound reading, but in (26) the proper name, Sid, cannot even though, Sid, aajan, and aajan Sid refer to the same person.

(25) Aajan Sid1 bɔɔk waa aajan1 mài waang phrungnii
    Teacher Sid tell COMP teacher not free tomorrow
    “Teacher Sid said that he isn’t free tomorrow”

(26) *Aajan Sid1 bɔɔk waa Sid1 mài waang phrungnii
    Teacher Sid tell COMP Sid not free tomorrow
    “Teacher Sid said that se isn’t free tomorrow
Rather than just assume that (25) is grammatical because of a special use of titles in Thai, let us assume that there is a structural explanation for the data. Thai is a head initial language; thus, we can assume that the head of phrases such as aajan Sid is aajan with Sid acting as a complement. So, instead of bound R-expressions needing to be full copies of their antecedents, they may need to be only a copy of their antecedent’s head. If the requirement is more about the head of the antecedent then about the whole antecedent, then (26) may be ungrammatical because only the complement is repeated, and we may be able to do away with a stipulation about special uses of titles.

By approaching this phenomenon through a syntactic account rather than a strictly pragmatic one, we are able to explain more of the Thai data, namely instances where a reduced copy surfaces, receives a bound reading, and lacks a title. In (27), we see that the antecedent phrase contains a head poo-ying “woman” followed by an adjectival complement suay “pretty” and a relative clause. The subsequent bound expression can surface as either a pronoun, ter, or as the full antecedent NP, including its modificational material. More important is that the bound expression can also be just the head or just the head and the adjectival phrase, so full copies and reduced copies are grammatical.

(27) Pûu-yîng sûái tî sîn nang-sûi1 ch-loop má o tî Sak hâi
woman pretty COMP buy book like cat that Sak give

kub pûu-yîng1 / pûu-yîng sê1ai / pûu-yîng sêai tî sîn neng-sûi1
to woman/ woman pretty/ woman pretty that buy book

“The pretty woman that bought the book likes the cat that Sak gave to her.”

When novel expressions such as the one in (27) arise, speakers tend to prefer pronouns but are willing to allow the head of the antecedent and potentially more modification material to be repeated. As the noun phrase becomes increasingly more complex, judgments vary, but the expressions are still assumed to corefer. Any of these combinations is grammatical, as long as the “copied” R-expression is not more complex than its antecedent. For example, if just poo-ying “woman” were the antecedent, poo-ying suay “pretty woman” could not be bound. Thus, explaining incomplete copies cannot be just a matter of treating an expression as a title. Rather, the phenomenon must have something to do with the construction being sensitive to—or constrained by—the content of the antecedent’s head. We will call this sensitivity the Head Constraint:

(28) **Head Constraint:** The antecedent’s head must be spelled out in bound R-expressions.

Using this constraint, we can now explain the grammaticality of (25) and the ungrammaticality of (26). In (25), the head of the antecedent surfaces, whereas in (26) the modifying material (i.e., Sid) surfaces without the head, leading to disjoint reference. The Head Constraint states that only the head is necessary, leaving the possibility of complete copies to surface, but this constraint may interact with a general constraint to be parsimonious, leading to a preference for shorter, bound constructions.
2.4 Summary of Observations and Generalizations

From the above we know that bound R-expressions are sensitive to the following domains and constraints:

**Table 1: Domains and Constraints for Bound R-expressions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Grammatical?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coargument</td>
<td>All forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-coargument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifier</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-copy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head-copy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complement(s)-only</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bound R-expressions are ungrammatical in coargument position, regardless of their phonological form. This suggests that bound R-expressions are sensitive to Principle B, not Principle C and are akin to pronouns. The data also demonstrate that the R-expressions are grammatical in non-coargument position as long as (i) they contain at least the head of the antecedent, and (ii) the do not contain classifiers or demonstratives. So indeed Thai allows for the binding of R-expressions, but the phenomenon is not as unconstrained as was previously assumed (e.g., Lasnik, 1989). The phenomenon is systematic but leaves us with three things to explain: (a) the restriction on coarguments, (b) the restriction on demonstrative and classifiers, and (c) the Head Constraint. A unified account for these as well as the phenomenon as a whole is possible. However, it entails reanalyzing the underlying structure of these “R-expressions” as being reduced syntactic structures, not full DPs.

3. A New Proposal: DPs, Φ-Ps, and NPs

We know that Thai bound R-expressions demonstrate pronoun-like properties, in that they are sensitive to coargument positions, but that they differ from canonical pronouns, in that they are more than just a spell-out of agreement features (e.g., person, gender, and number). They appear to be full, referring expressions. However, I argue that this last assumption, that the bound expressions are “full, referring expressions” is false. The bound Thai R-expressions are not really referring expressions. Rather, they are reduced, non-referential structures. They project less structure than their binders and, therefore, are not full DPs and not subject to Principle C.

3.1 Background on Pronoun Types

The structure of bound variables and pronouns in general has been debated. Hirose (1997) argues that pronouns bound by a quantified expression can be N-bar proforms.
Noguchi (1999) contends that only D-pronouns can be bound, and that N-pronouns cannot. And Dechaine and Wiltschko (2002) (hence D&W) propose that “pronouns” themselves are not syntactic primitives. D&W propose that there are different syntactic forms that have different surface realizations and that each of these forms demonstrates different sensitivities. The overarching element of all these arguments is that pronouns, specifically bound pronouns, do not necessarily have the same structure as their antecedent and, furthermore, that not all pronouns have the same syntactic form.

Of most use to us is D&W’s analysis, which is a comprehensive overview of crosslinguistic pronoun variants. They find that some languages allow pronouns to have different syntactic structures with different projection levels. Each of the different syntactic pronominal forms corresponds with different surface structures, binding sensitivities, and semantic values. They propose three types of pronouns: pro-DPs, pro-ΦPs, and pro-NPs. Each pronoun type projects to a different level of structure, and each has different available heads. In the pro-DP, the D must be filled, and either the Φ or the N must also be filled. In pro-ΦPs, only the Φ can be filled, and the D is not projected. In the pro-NP construction, only the N is present, so only it can be filled.

We will be adopting a modified pro-ΦP to account for the bound Thai R-expressions. Figure 2 contains a brief summary of the semantic implications for D&W’s proposed structures. Notice that each of the variants has a different binding domain. Pro-DPs, though they may technically pronouns, are sensitive to Principle C, whereas pro-ΦPs are not. Of particular interest to us are these pro-ΦP forms, because they demonstrate the relevant binding features: (i) they can occur in predicate and argument positions, (ii) are sensitive to Principle B, and (iii) can be non-locally bound. Bound Thai R-expressions share all these features.

![Figure 2: Nominal Proform Typology (Dechaine and Wiltschko)](image)

Building off of these crosslinguistic observations, I will readdress the bound “R-expressions” in Thai, though I will have to make a slight modification to D&W’s proposal, namely the fact that in Thai the N can be pronounced in pro-ΦPs.

### 3.2 The pro-ΦPs analysis of Thai R-expressions

I propose that bound Thai R-expressions are actually D&W style pro-ΦPs. These expressions do not have independent reference because they are not full, referential expressions. Rather, they are reduced structures, projecting to a syntactic level that can be bound. Because they are not full DPs, they are not subject to Principle C, but because they are pro-ΦPs, they are subject to Principle B. I concede that bound Thai R-
expressions do not conform exactly to D&W’s definition of pro-ΦPs because the N can be pronounced. Previously, Wiltsko (1998) argued that pro-ΦPs lacked NPs to account for German data, but this stipulation may not be necessary for other languages. Likewise the stipulation in D&W is meant to describe the data they had at hand and doesn’t propose why this restriction should be necessary for all languages. Because we can safely assume that languages may differ in the morphological realization of particular forms, the N-less stipulation may be unnecessary.

Assuming my proposal is correct, how does the bound reading of apparent R-expressions arise? First, we can assume that the initial expression, which will serve as the antecedent, is generated as a full DP. This DP can then be an antecedent for a ΦP. This ΦP picks up its features from its antecedent and is sensitive to certain constraints, some language-specific, some inherent to its form, e.g., the lack of D. At this point, we can pause to re-address one of our main observations: the fact that bound Thai R-expressions cannot arise in coargument position. Two explanations lend themselves to answering this question. The first reason why R-expressions cannot occur in coargument position is theory-internal, in that I am assuming that the expressions are pro-ΦPs and by definition are sensitive to Principle B and, therefore, must be free within their minimal domains.

The second reason for the coargument restriction stems from competition with the reflexive system (as in Kiparsky, 2002). Thai has a productive reflexive system with many surface forms, some taking the standard base form tua-eng (body-INTENSIFIER), others taking more complicated forms such as tau-Nid-eng (body-Nid-INTENSIFIER) “Nid’s self”. Depending on various factors, such as the perspective shifts, some of these forms may be long-distance bound. However, the basic form (tua-eng) must be locally bound by its antecedent (Hoonchamlong, 1991). In (29) and (30) we find that the anaphors are the only possible coreferring expressions in coargument position.

(29) Mae1 chɔp tua-eng/*ter1/*mae1
Mother like body-INTS/*her/*mother
“Mother likes herself”

(30) Noi1 ser rod hâi tua-eng/*ter1/*Noi1
Noi buy car give body-INTS/*her/*Noi
“Noi bought a car for herself”

We saw previously (examples (14) – (17)), that pronouns and R-expressions could not occur as coarguments with their antecedents, but here we see that the reflexive form can be, and in fact must be locally bound, akin to English-style reflexives. With these two reasons and an account for a restriction on coargument binding, we can move on to address the remaining questions: (i) why classifier and demonstrative expressions are ungrammatical and (ii) why the Head Constraint exists.

To answer these, let’s return to our example. We now have a full DP antecedent licensing a bound ΦP in non-coargument positions, so we proceed to the morphological spell out of this projection. Pro-ΦPs in all languages contain the relevant features of their
antecedent (e.g., gender, number, person), and these features are spelled out in a language-specific manner. In Thai, the spell out can be either of just the agreement features of the antecedent’s Φ, in which case a pronoun would surface. Or the spell-out can be of antecedent which determined the agreement features. So everything up to the antecedent Φ could be spelled out, in which case an apparent R-expression may arise. Consider the following example:

(31) Aajan1 kid waa kao1/aajan1 ja cha-na  
Teacher think say 3SM/teacher will win
“The teacher thinks that he will win”

In (31), the DP aajan can serve as the antecedent for the subsequent ΦP. This ΦP surfaces as either the pronoun, kao, or the R-expression, aajan, both being equally as grammatical. Thus, Thai has two options for pro-ΦPs, either to spell out the Φ or the N. Figure 2 contains the different possible structures.

**Figure 2: Example of Possible ΦP Structures in Thai**

Option A: When the ΦP features are spelled out, we get a “normal” pronoun.

Option B: When the NP features are spelled out, we get a “bound R-expression”

The assumption is that when the agreement features are spelled out, a pronoun, e.g., kao, surfaces and the N will be unpronounced. In the alternate form, the agreement features are not spelled out, rather the N features of the antecedent are. This model predicts that forms such as kao aajan (“he teacher” to mean “him”) should be ungrammatical, and indeed they are.

Now let us return to our remaining questions. Previously, we found that expressions with demonstratives could not be bound. The reason for this is that demonstratives are in D, so when they occur, a full DP is projected, triggering Principle C. The restriction on quantified expressions arises for the same reason. It too has a syntactic structure larger than ΦP and will, then, trigger Principle C. Finally, we can account for the Head Constraint. We found that the head of the antecedent must be spelled out in the bound R-expression and that some or all of its modifiers could be realized but that if the head was not spelled out, the R-expression could not receive a bound reading. I proposed that the ΦP-alternative requires, minimally, that the features of the N be spelled out, this leaves open the possibility for N’ complements to be spelled out as well. As long as no structure larger than NP is pronounced, the ΦP can be bound.
4. Previous Accounts and Problems with Them

There are three major previous accounts for this type of phenomena, and while each offers insights into BT and may explain their particular data set, they cannot explain the Thai data. The first account for Thai, in specific, was Lasnik’s (1989) parametric and Referential Hierarchy approach. In this theory, any expression at the same level of referentiality should be able to bind another at its level. However, as we saw in (26), just making reference to the same entity (i.e., Sid is the teacher and could be referred to by either DP, Sid or aajan), and using equally-weighted expressions (i.e., two R-expressions) is not enough to ensure bound readings. The bound expression must have a phonological form similar to the antecedent.

The second major approach is a R-pronoun account (e.g., Hoonchamlong, 1991). This approach argues that Thai R-expressions are actually R-pronouns, a class of kinship terms, titles, and professions that can substitute for normal pronouns when social context demands. This approach makes two general predictions, neither of which holds. First, it predicts that R-expressions outside of the canonical set should not be treated as potential pronouns. Secondly, it suggests that anything that isn’t an exact copy of the antecedent will necessarily lead to disjoint reference. As demonstrated by the use of novel expressions (e.g., (27)) and by the ungrammaticality of the full-copies with classifiers and demonstratives (e.g., (24)), neither of these predictions hold.

The final approach assumes that movement and reconstruction account for bound R-expressions (e.g., Lee, 2003; Mortenson, 2005; and Boeckx, Hornstein, and Nunes, 2005). This approach contends that the bound R-expression is a trace of movement with an exact spell-out function or that the second expression a variable. However, like the descriptive R-pronoun approach before it, the movement account fails to explain certain restrictions on particular surface forms and the Head Constraint. Movement should not be sensitive to the “definiteness” of an expression (i.e., the use of demonstratives and classifiers), but Thai bound expressions are. And furthermore, movement and reconstruction should disallow reduced copies from being bound, but they are grammatical in Thai (as in (25) and (27)). So all the previous accounts as they currently stand are inadequate.

5. Conclusions

The previous approaches for the lack of Principle C effects are insufficient for the full expanse of Thai data. Unlike the ΦP approach, they cannot account for various potential forms and configurations. However, one question none of these approaches has answered satisfyingly is why a language may allow for two forms of ΦP and why a speaker may alternate between them.

While there is no restriction on the number of alternatives a language may have to express a particular meaning, it would be satisfying to have some way of predicting the choice between the variants. The answer to this riddle may come, not from the syntax alone, but from some aspect of pragmatics as well. It has been noted that Thai speakers
often chose the form of their referring expression to comment on the current state of the discourse. The choice of pronoun may reflect everything from the referent’s gender, social status and age to the speaker’s evaluation of the speech situation itself (Vongvipanond). For example, if the person being addressed is much younger or older than the speaker or if the speaker wishes to distance herself from the proposition or avoid ambiguity, she may choose a more formal or precise expression, making the “R-expression” more likely. This sensitivity to formality and status explains why canonical professions (e.g., teacher and monk) and kinship terms are some of the most common examples of bound R-expressions. Furthermore, it explains the sensitivity in grammaticality judgments. Often times, the judgments depended on the context in which the sentence was presented. When social factors were considered, such as who was speaking to whom about whom, odd constructions may become grammatical and grammatical constructions may become odd.

While pragmatics may account for the choice between variants, it is important to remember that both forms project to the same level of structure. In Thai, like other languages, when a full DP is projected, it is subject to all of the constraints for its type just as ΦPs and NPs are subject to their own syntactic and semantic constraints. Full DPs are sensitive to Principle C. ΦPs are sensitive to Principle B. Previously, linguists have attended to the surface form of an expression, such as the bound R-expressions in Thai, and wondered why certain violations do not arise. Rather than trying to adjust our definitions of binding to account for what we assume the syntactic structure of an expression is, we should allow for the possibility that just because something looks like a R-expression doesn’t mean it is an R-expression.

All languages allow for the same syntactic structure, i.e., ΦP, to be bound. However, the way a given language realizes this structure phonologically varies. In English, only the agreement features on Φ can be realized. No element of the NP can. In Thai, the situation differs; either the Φ features or the NP features can be spelled out. Because of this variation, previous researchers have mis-analyzed the data, mistaking NP-realized pro-ΦPs as R-expressions. By attending to the syntax of an expression rather than its phonological form, per se, we can account for the data and leave Principle C as it is. This stated, we can conclude that (i) bound Thai R-expressions are actually reduced syntactic structures that can escape Principle C but are subject to Principle B, (ii) the Head Constraint is a morphological process that ensures that the head of the phrase is spelled out when features on the Φ are not, and (iii) bound R-expressions/ΦPs are prohibited in coargument position due to competition with the reflexive system and because of the inherent binding domains of ΦPs. Finally, we can lay to rest the question about Thai’s Principle C status. It, like English, has a fully functional Principle C: referring expressions must be free.

References


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