

## The Thais that Bind: Apparent Principle C Violations in Thai

Thai is often used as an example of a language lacking Principle C, at least with R-expression antecedents (Lasnik 1989). Linguists have used data such as (1), in which the repeated R-expression is bound, to illustrate this fact. However, not all R-expressions can be bound. I show that the data are better characterized by the following two previously unobserved generalizations. First, apparently bound R-expressions must contain at least the head of their antecedents, a feature hereafter called the Head Constraint. Second, functional material, e.g., determiners and classifiers, are excluded from bound R-expressions. Given these observations, I argue that the apparent Principle C violations are due to the morphological spell-out of the pronominal projection  $\phi$ P, where  $\phi$ P consists of an NP plus a functional projection containing  $\phi$ -features in the sense of Dechaine & Wiltschko (2002). What appear to be bound R-expressions are  $\phi$ Ps, which project less structure than DPs and hence are not subject to Principle C. The Head Constraint is a morphological realization of the pronominal part of  $\phi$ P, and the ban on functional material stems from the level of projected structure.

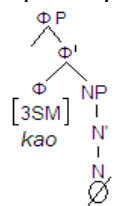
Lasnik (1989) observed that R-expressions can be bound only by other R-expressions in Thai. He claimed that this followed from the Referential Hierarchy in which nothing lower, or more pronominal, on the hierarchy can bind anything higher, or more referential (name > epithet > pronoun). However, being at the same level of the hierarchy is not sufficient to license bound R-expressions. For instance, if a person has two names, one name cannot bind the other, as in (2). This led linguists to posit that the bound expression must be an exact copy of the antecedent (Hoonchamlong, 1991; Lee, 2003; Mortenson 2004; Natahara, 1995). However, exact identity is neither necessary nor sufficient to license Thai bound R-expressions. DPs that contain demonstratives or classifiers can never be bound, even if they are exact copies of the antecedent, as shown in (3) and (4). Furthermore, nominal expressions containing adjectives or relative clauses can bind R-expressions that lack this material, provided that the head of the antecedent occurs in the bound element, as in (5) and (6). Rather than identity or referential equality, the correct generalizations consist of two parts: (i) a bound R-expression must contain the head of its antecedent, conforming to the Head Constraint; (ii) a bound R-expression cannot contain functional material such as determiners and classifiers.

The above generalizations fall out of a theory in which apparently bound R-expressions project only up to  $\phi$ P.  $\phi$ Ps in all languages contain the  $\phi$ -features of their antecedents in a  $\phi$ -head selecting a pronominal NP. This pronominal projection is spelled out via language-specific morphological rules. In Thai, as in most languages, the spell out can be of the head  $\phi$  alone, in which case a pronoun would surface. Alternatively, Thai also allows for the morphological realization of the pronominal NP contained in  $\phi$ P, in which case an “R-expression” surfaces, as in (7). Figure 1 contains the two potential morphological realizations of  $\phi$ P. Thai has both options. Using the Pro- $\phi$ P, we can account for the properties of apparently bound R-expressions. Demonstratives and classifiers are barred from these expressions because they require a structure larger than  $\phi$ P, triggering Principle C. On the other hand, Ns and any of its modifiers are allowed because they occur within the lexical projection contained in  $\phi$ P, and they do not violate the Head Constraint. The Head Constraint is a language-specific morphological rule that ensures that the head of the antecedent gets spelled out. This rule creates the impression that full DPs can be bound, but apparently bound R-expressions are in fact non-referential, reduced structures and hence are not subject to Principle C.

**Data:**

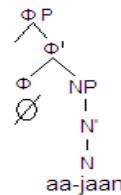
- 1) Aa-jaan chɔɔp mǎa tee nák-rian hâi aa-jaan.  
Teacher like dog that student give teacher  
“The teacher likes the dog that the students gave him”
- 2) Pat chɔɔp bpàa kɔɔng \*Pui/Pat  
Pat like father of Pui/Pat  
“Pat likes her father”
- 3) \*Aa-jaan nii kít waa aa-jaan nii jà cha-ná  
Teacher PROX think COMP teacher PROX will win  
“This teacher thinks she will win”
- 4) \*Sak bɔɔk waa aa-jaan chà-làat kon gɛɛ jùup mee-a kɔɔng  
Sak tell COMP teacher smart CL old kiss wife of  
aa-jaan chà-làa kon gɛɛ  
Teacher smart CL old  
\*“Sak said that the old smart teacher kissed his(own) wife”
- 5) Bpâa Nid bɔɔk waa bpâa / \*Nid/ bpâa Nid mǎi chɔɔp kâao  
Aunt Nid tell COMP aunt/\*Nid/aunt Nid not like rice  
“Aunt Nid said that she doesn’t like rice”
- 6) Pûu-yǐng sǔai tii súu nǎng-súu chɔɔp mɛɛo tii Sak hâi kub  
woman pretty that buy book like cat that Sak give to  
pûu-yǐng / pûu-yǐng sǔai / pûu-yǐng sǔai tii súu nǎng-súu  
woman/ woman pretty/ woman pretty that buy book  
“The pretty woman that bought the book likes the cat that Sak gave to her.”
- 7) Aa-jaan kít waa kao/ aa-jaan cha-ná  
Teacher think COMP 3SM/teacher win  
“The teacher thinks that he won”

Figure 1: Example of possible  $\Phi P$  structures in Thai



Option A

When the  $\phi$ -features are spelled out, we get a “normal” pronoun.



Option B

When the NP is spelled out, we get a “bound R-expression”

**References:**

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