The Copular Effects on the Exhaustive Interpretation of Thai *Wh*-Clefts

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This paper addresses the *wh*-cleft constructions in Thai with the focus on exhaustive interpretation. The syntactic and semantic analyses on the two varieties of *wh*-clefts, *pen33*-clefts and *khɯɯ33*-clefts, reveal that both display the raising of the subject argument of a small clause conforming to the equative approach. Moreover, partitioning into a focused cleft constituent and a background clause is overt in both types of clefts. However, these two varieties of *wh*-clefts are different in terms of semantic interpretation due to the different semantic properties of the two copulas. Such difference also impacts exhaustive interpretation. Exhaustiveness is strong in *khɯɯ33*-clefts but weak in *pen33*-clefts. The paper thus proposes that in Thai *wh*-clefts, exhaustive interpretation does not caused by the cleft structures but by the semantic properties of the copulas.

Introduction: In Thai, two copulas, *pen33* and *khɯɯ33*, are used in the *wh*-cleft constructions. According to Kuno and Wongkhomthong (1981), normally a sentence containing *pen33* like (1) is a predicational sentence which expresses the characterisation of the subject argument. On the other hand, a sentence with *khɯɯ33* such as (2) is a specificational sentence in which the two arguments at the subject and complement positions are equated.

(1)   da33nay33   **pen33**   phuu42cha45na45   kaan33khɛɛŋ22khan24   nii45
     Danai   COP   winner   contest   this
     'Danai is the winner of this contest.'

(2)   phuu42cha45na45   kaan33khɛɛŋ22khan24   nii45   **khɯɯ33**   da33nay33
     winner   contest   this   COP   Danai
     'The winner of this contest is Danai.'

Basically, as (3) and (4) shows, a *pen33*-cleft and a *khɯɯ33*-cleft are composed of a cleft constituent, a copula and a cleft clause. The cleft clause contains a nominal head, the complementiser *thii42*, which is omissible in some cases, and a VP. Semantically, a *pen33*-cleft suggests a predicational interpretation while a *khɯɯ33*-cleft gives rise to a specificational/equative interpretation. The reverse construction of *khɯɯ33*-cleft, which suggests reverse specificational interpretation, is also possible as shown in (5). The reverse *pen33*-cleft construction such as (6), however, in unacceptable.

(3)   da33nay33   **pen33**   khon33   (thii42)   thaa33sii24   pra22tuu33
     Danai   COP   person   REL   paint   door
     'Danai was the person who painted the door (predicational).'

(4)   da33nay33   **khɯɯ33**   khon33   (thii42)   thaa33sii24   pra22tuu33
     Danai   COP   person   REL   paint   door
     'Danai was the person who painted the door (specificational).'

(5)   khon33   thii42   thaa33sii24   pra22tuu33   **khɯɯ33**   da33nay33
     person   REL   paint   door   COP   Danai
     'The person who painted the door was Danai (reverse specificational).'

(6)   *khon33   thii42   thaa33sii24   pra22tuu33   **pen33**   da33nay33
     person   REL   paint   door   COP   Danai
     'The person who painted the door was Danai (reverse predicational).'

Puzzle concerning exhaustiveness: Cleft construction has been claimed to carry an exhaustive interpretation. Tawilapakul (2013) argues that this is not prominent in the case of Thai *wh*-clefts in which, as exemplified in (7), additive particles are allowed to co-occur. However, this opposing argument is not totally correct given that the presence of additive particles is unacceptable in *khɯɯ33*-clefts as exemplified in (8). This suggests a strong exhaustive interpretation in the construction.

(7) da33nay33 **pen33** khon33 (thii42) thaa33sii24 pra22tuu33 lɛɛ45 thaa33nii33
Danai   COP   NOM   REL   paint   door   and   Thani
kɔɔ42 **pen33** khon33 (thii42) thaa33sii24 pra22tuu33 duay42
also   COP   NOM   REL   paint   door   also
'Danai was the person who painted the door and Thani was also the person who did it.'

(8) *da33nay33 **khʉʉ33** khon33 (thii42) thaa33sii24 pra22tuu33 lɛɛ45
Danai   COP   NOM   REL   paint   door   and
thaa33nii33 kɔɔ42 **khʉʉ33** khon33 (thii42) thaa33sii24 pra22tuu33 duay42
Thani   also   COP   NOM   REL   paint   door   also
'Danai was the person who painted the door and Thani was also the person who did it.'

Proposal: In order to detect the cause(s) of the presence and absence of exhaustiveness, both the syntactic and semantic properties of the two cleft constructions are examined. Following the equative approach (Heycock & Kroch 1999; Hedberg & Potter; Han & Hedberg 2008), this paper proposes that the *khʉʉ33*-cleft construction is derived through the raising of the subject in the small clause, which is the argument of type $<<e,t>, t>$, to the topic position of the sentence while the e type argument takes the complement position as shown in (9). In a reverse *khʉʉ33*-cleft, the e type argument is in the subject position and the $<<e,t>, t>$ type argument is the the complement position. As for the *pen33*-cleft construction, (10) shows that the type e argument, which is the subject of the small clause, raises to the topic position of the sentence. In all three constructions, partitioning into a focused cleft constituent and a background clause induced by the nominal + the complementiser *thii42* is overt.
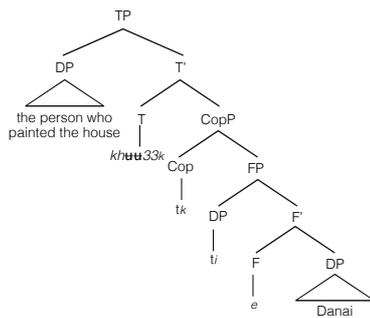
(9)   (10)
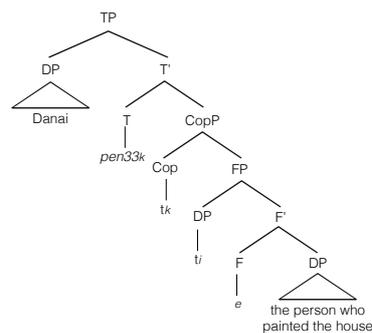
Semantically, following Han and Hedberg (2008), the $<<e,t>, t>$ type argument in a *khʉʉ33*-cleft acts as a generalised quantifier which provides a uniqueness interpretation in the sense of Halvorson (1978) as shown in (11) and gives rise to an exhaustive interpretation. Conversely, a *pen33*-cleft does not denote equation and uniqueness. Rather, it denotes the characteristics of the subject argument suggesting the subset relation of the subject argument to the complement argument. Consequently, exhaustiveness is weak and the reverse version is unacceptable.

(11) $\exists x[\forall y[\text{have a Siamesse cat } (y) \rightarrow y = x]]$

Conclusion: The above analyses indicate that syntactically both *pen33*-cleft and *khʉʉ33*-cleft constructions involve the raising of the subject argument in the small clause to the topic position and present overt syntactic partitioning. They differ in terms of semantics which is caused by the dissimilar semantic properties of the two copulas. This explains why exhaustiveness is strong in *khʉʉ33*-clefts but weak in *pen33*-clefts. It is not in line with Hole & Zimmermann (2013) who propose that an exhaustive interpretation is prominent in cleft structures and that exhaustiveness is attributed to syntactic partitioning.

Selected references: Heycock, C., & Kroch, A. (1999). Pseudocleft connectedness: Implications for the LF interface level. *Linguistic inquiry*, 30(3), 365-397. Kuno & Wongkhomthong. (1981). Characterizational and identificational sentences in Thai. *Studies in Language Groningen* 5(1), 65-109. Han, C. H., & Hedberg, N. (2008). Syntax and semantics of it-clefts: a Tree Adjoining Grammar analysis. *Journal of Semantics*, 25(4), 345-38.