

# SYNTACTIC WORD-COMPOUNDING IN TAI KHRANG<sup>1</sup>

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## บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้ผู้วิจัยนำเสนอว่าคำประสมส่วนใหญ่ในภาษาไทยไทครั้ง ก่อนข้างมีความโปร่งใส เข้าใจได้ง่าย สามารถหาความสัมพันธ์ทางไวยากรณ์และความหมายได้ไม่ยาก นอกจากนี้ยังแสดงความสัมพันธ์ทางไวยากรณ์และอรรถศาสตร์ได้อย่างซับซ้อนและแยบยล อีกทั้งคำประสมที่มีความโปร่งใสและคำประสมที่มีความหมายจำเพาะก็ได้เชื่อมต่อกัน ไม่สามารถแยกขาดจากกันได้ บทความนี้เป็นการศึกษาภาษาไทยไทครั้งในประเด็นโครงสร้าง ความสัมพันธ์ทางไวยากรณ์ และความสัมพันธ์ทางอรรถศาสตร์ของคำประสม โดยใช้ข้อมูลภาคสนามที่เก็บจากหมู่บ้านไทครั้ง 2 หมู่บ้านในเขตภาคเหนือตอนล่าง คือ บ้านหนอง

<sup>1</sup> การประสมคำเชิงวากยสัมพันธ์ในภาษาไทยไทครั้ง

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เหมือด ตำบลแสนตอ อำเภอลำดวนบุรี จังหวัดกำแพงเพชร และบ้านสระยายชี ตำบลหนองโสน อำเภอสว่างมุง จังหวัดพิจิตร และศึกษาตัวบทซึ่งเป็นเรื่องเล่า ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า คำประสมที่แสดงในภาษาไทยไทครั้งมีกลวิธีการสร้างแบ่งได้เป็น 3 หมวดหมู่ คือ คำประสมที่ประกอบด้วยประโยค คำประสมที่ประกอบด้วยกริยา-กริยา คำประสมที่ประกอบด้วยนาม-นาม คำประสมแบบประโยคแสดงวากยสัมพันธ์ประโยคสามัญ การกลายเป็นนาม และวลี คำประสมแบบกริยา-กริยาแสดงวากยสัมพันธ์ของกริยาเรียง และคำประสมแบบนาม-นาม แสดงรูปแบบความสัมพันธ์ทางอรรถศาสตร์ 3 ลักษณะ ซึ่งแตกต่างกันตามความมากน้อยของความโปร่งใส ซึ่งลักษณะที่มีความโปร่งใสมากก็จะแสดงความสัมพันธ์ทางความหมายของคำสมาชิกที่หลากหลายกว่า

## Abstract

*In this article, we claim that most word compounds in Tai Khrang are relatively transparent in the way that they can display both grammatical and semantic roles/relations in a complex and sophisticated manner, rather than arbitrary grammatical/semantic associations. Also, the term idiosyncratic or transparent is best accounted for in continuum. In this essay, we investigate the structures, grammatical relations and semantic roles/relations of word compounds in Tai Khrang with data collected from two Tai Khrang villages, Ban Nong Moet, Kamphaeng Phet, and*

*Ban Sa Yai Chi, Phichit, in the lower northern part of Thailand. Another type of corpus is one composed of naturally occurring texts such as narratives. The results show that syntactic word compounding in Tai Khrang is complex and sophisticated, performed in three categories i.e. synthetic, verb-verb and noun-noun compounds. The synthetic strategy involves the imitation of simple clauses, non-simple clauses, nominalization, and phrases. The verb-verb strategy is observed in certain serial verb constructions. The noun-noun strategy displays three semantic aspects, gradually differing from more to less transparent, which reveal various patterns of semantic relations.*

## **Introduction**

Tai Khrang is a Tai ethnic group located in Thailand that still continues to speak its own language, a member of the Tai-Kadai language family. The Khrang ethnic group in the northern part of Thailand maintain their traditional lifestyle and practices. They are referred to by Thai people (both local and government) by many names in different perspectives such as “Lao Khrang/Khi-Khrang” (people from Laos who use shellac as a red dye), “Lao Phu Khang” (people who came from the Phu Khang area of Laos), “Lao Wiang” (people who came from the Vientiane in Laos), “Tai Khao” (Tai Khao ethnic group in Laos), “Lao Ka” (people who talk like crows), “Lao Phut” (Buddhist Lao), “Lao Dan” (Lao people who came to Thailand through Dan Sai District, Loei province) and “Lao Tao Loeng” (Lao people who live in the land of yellow turtles or the

lower northern part of Thailand) (Wongwattana 2017). This ethnic group is well-known for the textile “Teen Chok Sarong”, a kind of woman’s long skirt with a red lower part, as shown in the picture below:



Figure 1 Tai Khrang women and Teen Chok Sarongs

Since the Tai Khrang are a minority group whose traditional practices and beliefs are quite different from those of the majority of people in Thailand, Tai Khrang is considered an endangered language and culture in need of protection and preservation. The best way to preserve these communities is to strengthen their minority rights. Linguistically, most of the previous studies on the group concentrated on phonology and lexical words, e.g., Wilailak Decha (1987), Wichit Kamman (1992), Wanleeya Watcharaporn (1991), Chen Nakorn. (2001), Somsongee Burusphat et al. (2011) and Unchalee Wongwattana (2017). The studies agree that the Tai Khrang dialect in the lower northern part of country displays 20 consonant phonemes: as *m, n, ɲ, ŋ, p, t, k, ʔ, pʰ, tʰ, kʰ, b, d, f, s, h, tɛ, l, w,* and *j,* and

18 vowel phonemes: *i, iː, e, eː, ɛ, ɛː, ɨ, ɨː, ə, əː, a, aː, u, uː, o, oː, ɔ* and *ɔː*; and includes the clusters such as *ia, ia/ia* and *ua*. As noted by Wongwattana (2017), language has five tones in this area: middle tone (33), high tone (44), rising tone (24/35), falling tone (42) and mid rising-falling tone (343).

However, no study has focused on word formation such as compounding in Tai Khrang although word compounding is a salient aspect of the Tai languages (Singnoi 2005). We also claim here that most word compounds in Tai Khrang are relatively transparent in the manner that they are syntactic or can display grammatical relations and semantic roles/relations in a complex and sophisticated manner, rather than arbitrary grammatical/semantic associations. In addition, the term idiosyncratic or transparent is best accounted for in continuum.

### **Methodology and Framework**

Methodologically, this research paper is descriptive. It is aimed at the study of syntactic word- compounding in the Tai Khrang language in order to understand its linguistic characteristics such as syntactic and semantic aspects. Data were collected mainly from two informants in the lower northern region, one at Ban Nong Moet (Saen To sub-district, Khanuwaralakburi district, Kamphaeng Phet province), and the other at Ban Sa Yai Chi (Nong Sano sub-district, Sam Ngam district, Phichit province). Data were also taken from naturally occurring texts such as narratives.

The analysis was conducted mainly on the basis of a functional typological linguistic perspective and cognitive linguistics such as those of Givón (2001) and Lakoff (1987). Following Givón (2001), the analysis makes use of a variety of sources of information aimed at understanding the core formal properties of syntactic constructions such as constituency, hierarchy, grammatical relations and semantic roles. At the same time, the cognitive (conceptual meaning) and communicative (propositional and information discourse coherence or pragmatics) underpinning of grammatical universals are elucidated and underscored, and the interplay between grammar, cognition and communication is outlined. Primary grammatical markers involve coding devices such as morphology and the sequential order of words or morphemes (intonation and rhythmic are also included in spoken communication). Although it is coded or located wholly in the phrase or clause, its functional scope is not primarily about the propositional information couched in the clause in which it resides. Rather, grammar is mainly about the coherence relations between the propositional (clause) and its wider discourse context. In other words, clause types – such as *Mary kissed John, Mary didn't kiss John, Kiss John!, Who kissed John?, Did Mary kiss John?, John was kissed by Mary, It was Mary who kissed John, The woman who kissed John was Mary,...*etc. – are structural variants that share, more or less, the same propositional semantic theme. The various types (structural variants) are different grammatical packaging of propositional-

semantic contents in different discourse-pragmatic functional domains.

Also, in Givón (2001), the simple or basic clause is the main, declarative, affirmative, active clause. It is the most frequent clause-type in human discourse and is thus an unmarked syntactic construction. Such a clause-type has to have a privileged cognitive position used in a particular functional domain. It serves as the reference point for grammatical description. Describing the various types of simple clauses is tantamount to describing the various types of verbs, or predications, (states, events, and actions) used in language. Simple clauses are thus defined in terms of their two matching templates or frames, one semantic frame of participant roles, the other syntactic frame of grammatical roles. Clause types other than the basic one are seen as variations. Compound words are considered as lexical constructions that have imitated a variety of clause types and phrases, either basic ones or variants.

### Syntactic word-compounding

As already known, the term “compounding” generally refers to the method or strategy whereby two or more totally different occurring words are picked up to form a compound word which refers to a new thing or idea that is different from any of the original words or the composition of the original words. The new word meaning is *idiosyncratic* (peculiar to the individual), rather than *transparent* (straightforward) like a phrase. We would, however, claim here that most “word compounds” in Tai

languages such as Thai (Singnoi 2005) and Tai Dam (Wongwattana 2016) and Tai Khrang are relatively transparent in the manner that they are syntactic or could display both grammatical relations and semantic roles/relations, rather than arbitrary grammatical/semantic associations. As stated in Singnoi (2005), the term *idiosyncratic* or *transparent*, however, is best accounted for in *continuum*, rather than two clear-cut conceptual poles. We could still see the track, obviously in the degree of transparency, from which the new meaning is metaphorically created. The following examples display the continuum of compounds in Tai Khrang from more transparent (less idiosyncratic) as in (1a) to more idiosyncratic (less transparent) compound words as in (1c), where an intermediate is in (1b).

- (1) a. *k<sup>h</sup>iː-hǔː*<sup>3</sup>  
 excretion-ear  
 ‘earwax’  
 b. *k<sup>h</sup>iː-hēː*  
 excretion-earmpit  
 ‘underarm odor’  
 c. *k<sup>h</sup>iː-kadīan*  
 excretion-moon  
 ‘earthworm’

In (1a), the whole compound word is transparent or similar to a syntactic unit like noun phrases. In (1b), the second

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<sup>3</sup> Tonal transcriptions in this article are presented with diacritical markers: the middle tone (33) is shown by no mark, the high tone (44) by / ˈ /, the rising tone (24/35) by / ˨˨ /, the falling tone (42) by / ˨˨˨ / and the mid rising-falling tone (343) by / ˨˨˨˨ /.

member, /hē:/, still keeps the original meaning, ‘armpit’, whereas the first member, /kʰi:/ has lost the original meaning ‘excretion/feces’. In (1c), the compound word is highly idiosyncratic: it is difficult to guess its meaning from its members.

In fact, words may be compounded or combined in terms of their syntactic relations and non-syntactic, or lexical relations (such as reduplication, synonymousness, similarity, membership, and opposition) as illustrated in Wongwattana (2016). The non-syntactic or lexical combining cases, however, are not our concern here since they are not consistently considered “compounding strategies” in some other significant studies such as Thanwarachon (1991), Warotamasikhhadit (2003), Manomaiwiboon (2004) and so forth. Syntactic compounding here, refers to a word formation strategy used to create a word compound that can display both syntactic and semantic relations. We have found that syntactic compound words in Tai Khrang are basically formed in three ways: synthetic, verb-verb and noun-noun, which are different in terms of structure, syntactic relation and semantic relation.

## Synthetic compounding

Synthetic compounding is the word building strategy that imitates clauses and phrases. That is, certain compound members convey *argument structures*<sup>4</sup>, the mapping of grammatical relations and semantic roles between the main verb and arguments (nominal constituents), just like clausal constituents do. Consider the following example where a synthetic compound word in (2a) and a clause in (2b) are compared.

- (2) a. *nák-tī:-mūaj*  
person-hit-boxing  
‘boxer’  
b. *khôj tī: mūaj keŋ*  
I hit boxing ably  
‘I fight (with the fist) well.’

In example (2), the clause /*khôj tī: mūaj keŋ*/ in (2b) displays the argument structure where /*khôj*/ is an agent subject, /*tī:*/ a transitive verb, and /*mūaj*/ a patient object. Similarly, the compound word /*nák-tī:-mūaj*/ in (2a) imitates the argument structure: that is, /*nák*/ is the agent subject, /*tī:*/ the verb, and /*mūaj*/ the patient object at the word level. The different levels of the clause and compound word can be illustrated in the figure below.

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<sup>4</sup> See Givón (2001) for further details in argument structures.

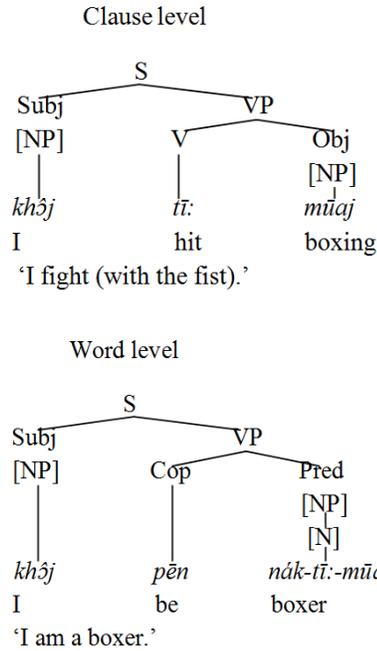


Figure 2 Different levels of clause and compound word

Synthetic compounds are found in two structures: *noun head* and *verb head* compounds. Regarding the argument structures of this compounding type, we have found that they reveal various mappings of *syntactic relations* (e.g., subject, object, adverbial) and *semantic relations* (e.g., agent, patient, dative, instrument,...) with the following verbs just like those of simple clauses. Thus, this results in a variety of synthetic compound patterns as exemplified below.

- (3) a. subject/agent-verb  
*mǎ:-bí:p*  
 master-to massage  
 ‘massager’

- b. subject/dative-verb  
*teâk-[k<sup>h</sup>ât-láj]*  
 machine-[to think-to be ably]  
 ‘calculator’
- c. subject/instrument-verb  
*t<sup>h</sup>ô:-dū:t*  
 pipe-to suck  
 ‘straw’
- d. subject/patient-verb  
*bāj-jáŋjī:n*  
 leaf-to be sustainable  
 ‘warranty’
- e. object/patient-verb  
*pā:-hēt*  
 fish-to make  
 ‘fried fish patty’
- f. adverbial/location-verb  
*póŋ-jíam*  
 hole-to visit  
 ‘window’
- g. adverbial/time-verb  
*mī:-[līaŋ-p<sup>h</sup>ĩ:]*  
 day-[to feed-spirit]  
 ‘spirit-worship day’
- h. verb-object/patient  
*ʔǝp-kā:j*  
 to exercise-body  
 ‘to exercise’
- i. verb-object/location  
*lōŋ-t<sup>h</sup>ô:ŋ*  
 to get down-stomach  
 ‘to have diarrhoea’
- j. copular verb-adjective  
 (stative verb)  
*pēn-tahák*  
 to be-to be cute  
 ‘to be cute’

Aside from the finite-clause forms, it seems that compound words are in forms similar to *nominalization*. According to Givón (2001), nominalization is a

grammatical – rather than lexical-derivational – process and thus defined as the process by which a finite clause is converted (either a complete clause or a subject-less verb phrase) <sup>5</sup> into a noun phrase. In such compounds, the head functions like a nominalizer and thus can be called a compound nominalizer (CN) – a grammaticalized unit that forms a compound from a non-nominal category such as clausal or verbal. This is a morpheme such as /ʔi:/, originated from a superordinate noun referring to ‘female human’, as exemplified below.

- (4) ʔi:-lō:j  
CN-to sprinkle  
‘watering can’

A number of compound words have been lexicalized from *verbal phrases* where the head verb is modified/preceded by an auxiliary as shown in (5a) or a negative marker as in (5b) <sup>6</sup> below.

- (5) verb phrases  
a. kʰi:-tʰi:  
always-to be frequent  
‘to be niggardly’  
b. bō:-sabā:j  
not-comfortable  
‘to be sick’

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<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is included in the synthetic compounding, rather than the noun-noun as discussed below.

<sup>6</sup> The term “verbal phrase” here, thus, is used differently from “verb phrase” which can refer to “predicate” or “clause.”

In addition, a few compound words imitate *noun phrases* where the head noun is modified/preceded by a prepositional phrase as shown in (6).

- (6) nām-[tá:j-sí:k]  
water-[under-humus]  
‘waste water’

### Verb-verb compounding

Verb-verb compounding should be separated from the verb-phrase and verbal-phrase compounding strategies discussed above since it conveys a different grammatical relation; namely, *serial verb* constructions such as activity-objective as in (6a), direction-activity as in (6b) and manner-activity as in (6c) on the one hand, and less-prototypical ones such as head-complement as in (6d) and head-preposition as in (6e) on the other. <sup>7</sup>

- (7) a. kʰúa-kīn  
to fry without oil-to eat  
‘to fry’  
b. pāj-bāw  
to go-to be light  
‘to go pee’  
c. wīŋ-mūn  
to run-to rotate  
‘turbine’  
d. hīw-lāp  
be hungry for-to sleep  
‘to want to sleep/ to be sleepy’

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<sup>7</sup> see Kingkarn Thepkarnjana (2006) and Wongwattana (2012) for further details in serial-verb constructions

- e. *kʰit-hɔ̃:t*  
 to think-to arrive  
 ‘to miss’

### Noun-noun compounding

Nominal or noun-noun compounding is a salient word-creation strategy where two nouns or nominal units are semantically associated. Since the semantic relation in this compounding type is relatively more complex, to be better construed, it would be accounted for in terms of formulas which can be classified into three forms according to transparency degree levels, graduating from more transparent to less transparent, as shown in the figure below.

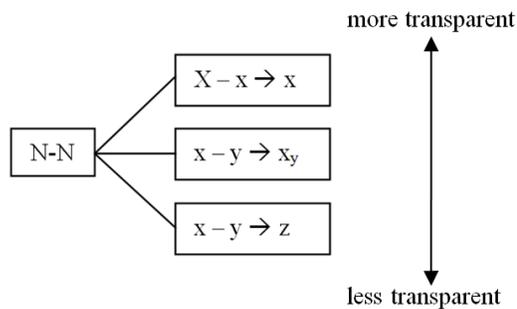


Figure 3 Three semantic formulas of noun-noun compounds

### Formula I: $X-x \rightarrow x$

A number of noun-noun compounds in Tai Khrang display the semantic formula  $X-x \rightarrow x$ , where the first/head member is the class/higher term<sup>8</sup> of the second member which stands for the whole compound itself. The pattern can be separated into five different manners according to the semantic feature of the head parts: namely, *generic*, *shape*, *gender*, *whole* and *excretion* heads.

### Generic head

Lakoff states that “Every time we see something as a kind of thing, for example, a tree, we are categorizing. Whenever we reason about kinds of things – chairs, nations, illnesses, any kind of thing at all – we are employing categories” (Lakoff 1987: 5). With evidence in the analysis of ‘eating’ terms in Thai, Singnoi (2006) concludes that, in order to understand individual things in the world, we have to understand them not only in terms of themselves but also as categories. This implies that the words of a language can be understood via the concept of categorization rather than only in terms of individual words.

<sup>8</sup> According to DeLancey (1986, 440), class terms are different from classifiers. The difference would obviously be predicted on the grounds that class terms occur with their classified nouns in lexicalized compounds, while classifiers occur with their classified terms in nonce syntactic constructions, so that it is perhaps unnecessary to connect this with any significant difference in semantic function.

Typically, people categorize *spatial/concrete entities* into *animate* and *inanimate* and further categorize *animate* into *human* and *animal* (Givón, 2001), as shown in a simple taxonomic diagram below.

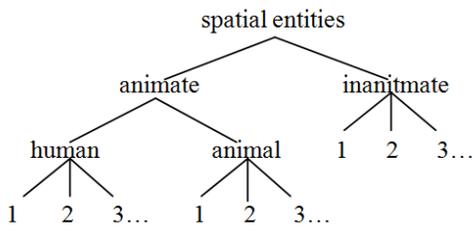


Figure 4 General taxonomic categorization of spatial entities

A large number of noun-noun compounds Tai Khrang, similarly to other Tai languages such as Thai, Tai Dam and the like (Wonwattana 2011, 2014 and 2016), display a portion of taxonomy as such in the way that the compound head is a superordinate term, or class term, followed by a subordinate term as the other member. It is the subordinate member that displays the meaning of the compound since the head is too basic or broad to present a communicative meaning, as illustrated in the following example.

- (8) a. *təŋ:n-p<sup>h</sup>ɔ̃n*  
squirrel-mongoose  
'mongoose'  
b. *mǎ:k-mō:*  
fruit-water melon  
'water melon'  
c. *nā:m-mô:k*  
vapor-fog  
'fog'

## Shape head

Rather than a subordinate term, the class-term head is the shape class term of the other member, as shown below.

- (9) a. *tə<sup>h</sup>ĩn-wūa*  
lump-beef  
'beef'  
b. *kǐ:p-lép*  
hoof-nail  
'nail (for animals like horse, cow, and so on)'  
c. *hūa-kat<sup>h</sup>ĩam*  
head shape-garlic  
'garlic'

## Gender head

A number of class-term heads are the gender of the other member which display various kind of identities including, even though inconsistently, *kin*, *animal*, *fruit*, *important object* and *normal object*, as respectively shown below.

- (10) a. *ɕĩ:-p<sup>h</sup>ɔ̃:*  
female-father  
'father'  
b. *ɕĩ:-kĩ:*  
female-millipede  
'millipede'  
c. *fruit*  
*bâk-t<sup>h</sup>ápt<sup>h</sup>ĩm*  
male-pomegranate  
'pomegranate'

- d. important object  
*mé:-[k<sup>h</sup>ua-fāj]*  
 mother-[kitchen-fire]  
 mother-kitchen  
 ‘cooking area’
- e. normal object  
*ʔi:-dā:p*  
 female-sword  
 ‘sword’

### Whole head

A number of class-term heads display the whole of a part presented by the other member, as exemplified in (10), where the part member conveys a communicative meaning.

- (11) a. *k<sup>h</sup>ě:n-sǎ:k*  
 arm-elbow  
 ‘elbow’
- b. *tōn-tō:*  
 oneself-body  
 ‘body’

### Excretion head

Last but not least, there are many compounds whose head member is the excretion /*k<sup>h</sup>i:/* to present negative interpretation of the other member, as shown below.

- (12) a. *k<sup>h</sup>i:-kabī:*  
 excretion-navel  
 ‘navel’
- b. *k<sup>h</sup>i:-fīaŋ*  
 excretion-straw  
 ‘straw’
- c. *k<sup>h</sup>i:-jǎ:kjāj*  
 excretion-cobweb  
 ‘cobweb’

### Formula II: $x-y \rightarrow x_y$

There are a number of compounds of the noun-noun type displaying the semantic formula  $x-y \rightarrow x_y$ , where the two members are not related in the same manner as compounds in Formula I. Rather, the second member modifies the head with more specific information including *portion, whole, compared item, shape, color, amount, material, purpose, possessor, possessed item, body part, location, temporal, profession, expertise, nationality* and *gender*.

### Portion

A number of compounds in this formula reveal the metonymic model, a basic characteristic of cognition. Metonymy in the sense of cognitive linguistic theory like that of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is the case that salient part or aspect is commonly used to stand for the thing as a whole or for some other aspect or part of it. They display that an object name or concept is employed as a compound member for that of the other member to which it is related, or of which it is a part. Examples are shown below.

- (13) a. *lót-təâk*  
 vehicle-machine  
 ‘motorcycle’
- b. *[p<sup>h</sup>âk-k<sup>h</sup>ǎ:m]-nǎ:m*  
 [vegetable-bitter]-thorn  
 spinach-thorn  
 ‘thorny amaranth’
- c. *[bâk-t<sup>h</sup>úa]-[fâk-jǎ:w]*  
 [male-bean]-[pod-long]  
 bean-long pod  
 ‘long bean’

## Whole

Conversely, the modifying member displays the whole of the partial head, as shown below.

- (14) a. *bía-māj*  
sprout-tree  
'tree sprout'  
b. *kōŋ-kīan*  
wheel-cart  
'cart wheel'

## Compared

A large number of compounds in this formula reveal the metaphorical model, another basic characteristic of cognition. Metaphor, as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), helps us to understand some things in terms of others that we already understand. It is conceptual, not merely a use of language, and involves people's world view and thought in a social system. This compound type makes use of metaphor in the way that the second member applies to an object that implies a resemblance with the head/first member. Examples are shown below.

- (15) a. *sabu:-fūn*  
soap-dust  
'powdered detergent'  
b. *pā:-fǎ:*  
fish-jar lit  
'soft-shelled turtle'  
c. *k<sup>h</sup>anǒm-[nōm-sǎ:w]*  
dessert-[breast-girl]  
dessert-girl breast  
'stuffed dough'

## Shape

The modifying member is also found to display the shape of the head when the compound does not refer to a normal-shaped object, as shown below.

- (16) a. *k<sup>h</sup>anǒm-sên*  
snack-line  
'vermicelli/rice noodles'  
b. *jā:-sên*  
medicine-line  
'cigarette'

## Color

The modifying member displays the color of the head, as shown below.

- (17) a. *mót-sôm*  
ant-orange color  
'red ant'  
b. *lú:k-dē:ŋ*  
daughter/son-red color  
'infant'

## Amount

The modifying member displays the collective amount of the item head, as shown below.

- (18) a. *māj-t<sup>h</sup>ú:*  
stick-pair  
'chopsticks'  
b. *p<sup>h</sup>âk-kum*  
vegetable-group  
'sacred barnar'

### Material

The modifying member displays the material of the head, as shown below.

- (19) *t<sup>h</sup>ũŋ-jā:ŋ*  
 bag-rubber  
 ‘plastic bag’

### Purpose

The modifying member displays the purpose of the head, as shown below.

- (20) a. *dén-dǎ:k*  
 outdoor-flower (shuttle cock)  
 ‘badminton court’  
 b. *hóŋ-kā:n*  
 room-work  
 ‘office’

### Possessor

The modifying member displays the possessor of the head, as shown below.

- (21) a. *lép-k<sup>h</sup>út*  
 nail-garuda  
 ‘Rangoon Creeper’  
 b. *pā:-tǎék*  
 fish-Chinese  
 ‘a kind of silver barb’

### Possessed

The modifying member displays the possessed item of the head, as shown below.

- (22) *tǎáw-tǎ<sup>h</sup>ĩ:wít*  
 owner-life  
 ‘king’

### Body Part

The modifying member displays the body part which involves the head, as shown below.

- (23) a. *fīa-mĩ:*  
 loom-hand  
 ‘loom’  
 b. *tǎáw-húa*  
 god-head  
 ‘monk’

### Location

The modifying member displays the location of the head, as shown below.

- (24) a. *t<sup>h</sup>úa-dĩn*  
 pea-earth  
 ‘peanut’  
 b. *láv-pa:*  
 whisky-forest  
 ‘illegal whisky’

### Temporal

The modifying member displays the time of the head, as shown below.

- (25) *k<sup>h</sup>âw-lē:ŋ*  
 rice-evening  
 ‘dinner/supper’

### Profession

The modifying member displays the profession of the human head, as shown below.

- (26) a. *nā:j-k<sup>h</sup>ū:*  
 mister-teacher  
 ‘male teacher’  
 b. *sǎ:w-k<sup>h</sup>ū:*  
 miss-teacher  
 ‘female teacher’

### Expertise

The modifying member displays the expertise of the human head, as shown below.

- (27) a. *mǎ:-māj*  
 human-wood  
 ‘fortune teller’  
 b. *nā:j-p<sup>h</sup>ā:sǎ:*  
 mister-language  
 ‘interpreter’

### Nationality

The modifying member displays the nationality of the head, as shown below.

- (28) a. *tāj-t<sup>h</sup>āj*

- people-Thai  
 ‘Thai people’  
 b. *k<sup>h</sup>ām-lā:w*  
 word-Lao  
 ‘Laotian language/dialect’

### Gender

The modifying member displays the gender of the animate head, as shown below.

- (29) a. *tō:-mÉ:*  
 animal-mother  
 ‘female animal’  
 b. *tō:-p<sup>h</sup>ɔ:*  
 animal-father  
 ‘male animal’

### Formula III: x-y → z

There are a relatively small number of compounds displaying the semantic formula **x-y → z**, where the two members are not related in the same manners as compounds in formulas I and II, and the compound meaning is not from the modified head in the same manner as that in Formula II. Rather, compound meaning does not seem to relate to any compound member. In other words, the compound meaning is highly idiosyncratic or unpredictable from any compound member. Examples are shown below.

- (30) a. *k<sup>h</sup>ām-tawēn*  
 gold-sun  
 ‘sunflower’  
 b. *k<sup>h</sup>î:-nó:*  
 excretion-shoot  
 ‘ankle’

**Conclusion**

The study of syntactic word compounding in the Tai Khrang language reveals that people intuitively create new words by employing a variety of syntactic aspects

constituting the language. Also, word formation is performed in a variety of complex and sophisticated manners. The complex taxonomy of syntactic compounds in Tai Khrang is illustrated below.

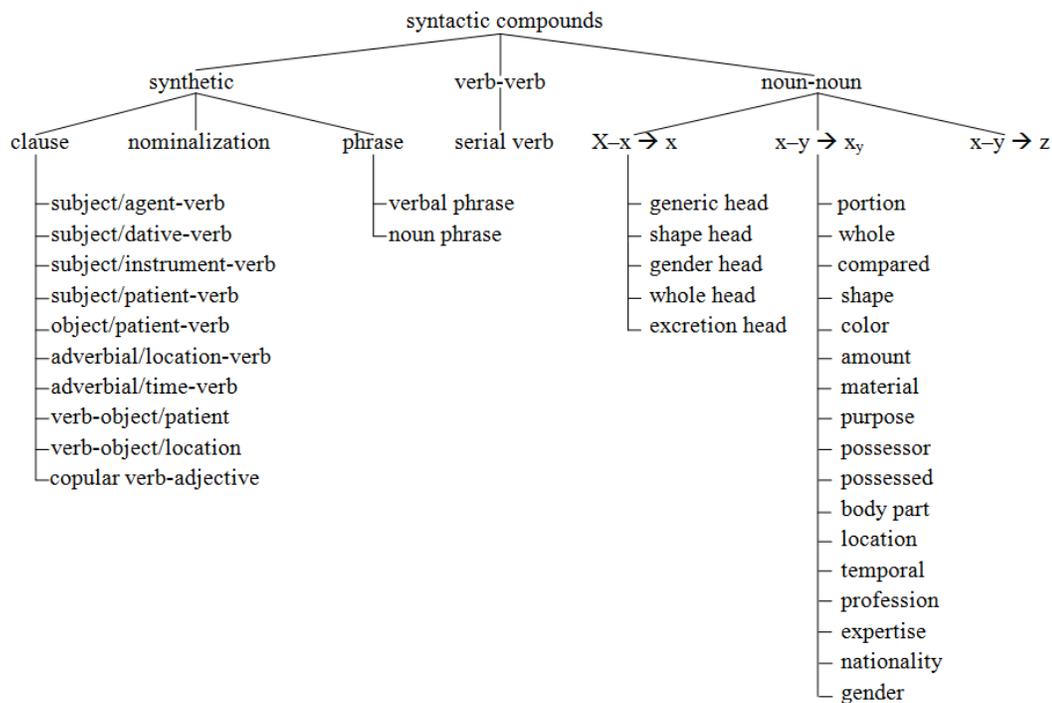


Figure 5 Taxonomic categorization of syntactic compounds in Tai Khrang

The figure above shows that syntactic compounds in Tai Khrang can be discussed in three basic, structural ways: synthetic, verb-verb and noun-noun compounding. The synthetic strategy is a compound formation that imitates clausal/phrasal constructions such as simple clauses, nominalization, and phrases. Compound words imitating clausal structures convey various patterns of argument structure such as subject/agent-verb, subject/dative-verb, subject/instrument-verb, subject/patient of state-verb, object/patient of change-verb, adverbial/locative-verb, adverbial/temporal-verb, verb-object/patient of change, verb-object/locative, and copular verb-adjective. The verb-verb strategy displays a different synthetic relation such as serial verb construction. The noun-noun strategy displays three semantic aspects that can be formulated as  $X-x \rightarrow x$ ,  $x-y \rightarrow x_y$  and  $x-y \rightarrow z$ , graduating from more transparent to less transparent. The first formula contributes to a number of head-difference semantic relations such as generic-noun, shape-noun, gender-noun, whole-noun and excretion-noun. The second formula provides various noun-noun patterns that display different semantic domains inherited in the second member such as portion, whole, compared, shape, color, amount, material, purpose, possessor, possessed, body part, location, temporal, profession, expertise, nationality and gender. The last formula reveals a relatively small number of less-transparent noun-noun compounds.

The findings of this study regarding syntactic word compounding in Tai Khrang are specific to Tai Khrang. The complex taxonomy of compounding categorization in Tai Khrang contributes to a greater

understanding of either language and cognition on the one hand and minority language preservation and revitalization on the other, a topic that goes beyond earlier work on other Tai languages. The complicated methods seen in Tai Khrang word compounding imply that the Tai Khrang language and culture, like every other, are prestigious in their value, as stated by Wasi (2012):

*Regarding culture as the concept, every community or country is equally prestigious. No one is more prestigious than others since cultures vary and local cultures are not centralized and are accepted in their own values. This is the best way to carry on multi-culture communities and make them stronger and durable.*

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