An Examination of Thai Nominal Phrases

The Syntactic Structures and Pragmatics that Govern

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an in-depth examination of the syntactic rules and pragmatic structures that govern the construction of Thai nominal phrases. There is a current debate among linguistic researchers of the Thai language (and others within the Tai-Kadai family) contemplating whether the inherent syntactic structure of nominal phrases projects a Determiner Phrase [DP] or a Noun Phrase [NP] (Birmingham, 2020; Jenks, 2011; Piriyawiboon, 2010; and Singhapreecha, 2001). An examination of the grammatical and pragmatic features that dictate the formation of Thai nominals, as well as an investigation of the prevailing linguistic theories focused on nominal phrase construction supporting each structure, has been conducted and is presented within this thesis. This extensive research, performed to address the dilemma "Does the Thai language project a DP or an NP?", has resulted in the conclusion that the Thai language, with its free word-order and its fascinating pragmatic structures, projects an underlying NP phrase structure that allows for an optional determiner, used to indicate specificity.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Jack and our three children, Emily, Jacky (Bubba) III, and Jordyn.

Thank you all for the love, support, and encouragement you have given me throughout this long journey. Thank you for pushing me when I was stubborn, picking me up when I was down, and celebrating my victories, no matter how big or small. Your patience and understanding have given me the courage and determination to succeed. I am truly blessed and proud to be your wife, Jack, and the mother of our children.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1P	1st Person
3P	3rd Person
Adj	Adjective
AP	Adjective Phrase
BT	The Binding Theory
Class(P)	Classifier Phrase
Clf	Classifier
D(P)	Determiner (Phrase)
DA	Discourse Analysis
eClf	entity Classifier
f	female
FG	Functional Grammar
L2	second language learner
m	male
N(P)	Noun (Phrase)
NMP	Nominal Mapping Parameter
Num(P)	Number (Phrase)
O	Object
phi	person & number
Q(P)	Quantifier (Phrase)
R	Referent
S	Subject
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
Spec(P)	Specifier (Phrase)
u	uninterpretable features
UG	Universal Grammar
V	Verb

TONAL DIACRITICS

a	[unmarked]	mid tone	á	high tone
à		low tone	ǎ	rising tone
â		falling tone		

The transcription system employed for this thesis is a modified IPA format adopted from Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, (2005). I have opted to use a three-line glossing system that consists of transcribed Thai in the first line, the gloss appears on the second line, and the English translation is found on line three.

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the construction of Thai nominal phrases and the syntactic and pragmatic features that affect their formation. A current debate among linguistic researchers of the Thai language (and others within the Tai-Kadai family) focuses on whether the implicit *syntactic* – the way in which utterances are formally organized – structure of nominal phrases projects a Determiner Phrase [DP] or a Noun Phrase [NP] (Jenks, 2011; Piriyawiboon, 2010; and Singhapreecha, 2001). It is apparent, after focused study of the language, that to discover an answer to this dilemma requires investigation which goes beyond looking only at its grammatical framework; it also necessitates exploration of the pragmatic features – the features of language [while] *in* use and the context in which it is used – governing the formation of utterances as it is these features which often dictate syntactic variations that cannot be explained through the grammar alone. By investigating the linguistic features of Thai nominals, and prevailing theories that provide support for each structure, this thesis seeks to address three questions:

1. What are the different linguistic features that modern scholars believe dictate the structure of Thai nominals?
2. How do these features affect nominal phrase construction?
3. Which underlying structure do these features support, a *DP* or an *NP*?

The extensive research discussed within the following chapters provides an in-depth look at the syntactic and pragmatic features (including the sociolinguistic constructs cultivated by the culture) that dictate Thai discourse; resulting in the conclusion that nominal phrases project an inherent *NP* structure. As a language that identifies bare nouns as

arguments (through the use of classifiers [Clfs]), determiners [Ds] are completely optional and used only for *specificity*, thereby negating the necessity of a permanent DP structural layer.

Background of the Language of Thailand

The Southeast Asian country of Thailand, similar in size to France and Spain, is home to nearly seventy million people and a prodigious 71 different languages (Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Thailand, 2020). The majority of these languages belong to the Tai-Kadai language family, of which *Thai* – the official language of Thailand – is the most prominent, and is spoken natively by 20-36 million speakers and the L2 of approximately 40-45 million speakers (Birmingham, 2021; Ethnologue, 2015; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; and Thai Language, 2020). It is heavily influenced by Chinese, Malay and its sister-language, Khmer; though much of its phonemic and abogida writing system is thought to be derived from the ancient languages of Sanskrit and Pali (Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005). *Standard Thai* – also known as *Bangkok Thai* – was declared the official language of Thailand by King Ramkhamhaeng in the late 13th Century, and is used exclusively by the media, government and judicial systems, and is taught throughout the national education system, making it a necessary commodity for those seeking greater economic and social standing (Birmingham, 2020, 2021; Diller 1988; Ethnologue, 2015; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Sudmuk, 2005; and Thai Language, 2020).

Thai consists of four distinct dialects: The Northern dialect is known as Kham Muang and Lanna; the dialect known as Lao or Issan is found in the Northeastern part of

the country; while the southern region is dominated by the Pak Thai dialect. The Central dialect, wherein the Standard/ formal variation is found, is spoken within a 200 mile radius of Bangkok, the country's capital city (Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Noss, 1964; Thai Language, 2020).

The Linguistic Structure of Thai Nominal Phrases

To a new learner, the linguistic structure of Thai appears relatively straight forward. It is an analytic language that is predominantly monomorphemic and native Thai words are primarily monosyllabic (though reduplication and compounding are frequently used to convey semantic variation); however, loanwords make up the majority of the lexicon and, along with names, usually contain two or more syllables, [fun fact: the official name of Bangkok – *Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit*[1] – holds the world record for 'longest city name *ever*'] (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Noss, 1964; Robson & Changchit, 2016; and Thai Language, 2020). Phonemically, Thai is comprised of 21 consonant phonemes, as well as 9 monophthong and 3 diphthong vowels that have a short/long contrast (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Slayden, 2009). It is a tonal language that uses five distinct tones: mid (unmarked: a); low (à); falling (â); high (á); and rising (ǎ). Lexically, there are approximately 20,000 Thai words used in the Standard dialect (of which the majority are loanwords), a mere

[1]The city's official name translates to *The city of angels, the great city, the residence of the Emerald Buddha the impregnable city (of Ayutthaya) of God Indra, the grand capital of the world endowed with nine precious gems, the happy city, abounding in an enormous Royal Palace that resembles the heavenly abode where reigns the reincarnated god, a city given by Indra and built by Vishnukarn.*

4.3% of the estimated 470,000 words actively used in the English language today (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It is also an isolating language that is devoid of case, tense, inflection, agreement, and gender – except for pronouns (Birmingham, 2020; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Noss, 1964; Piriyawiboon, 2010; and Sudmuk, 2005). The language is classified as having a rigid Subject-Verb-Object [SVO] word order, determined as such to account for the possible ellipses of pronominal and bare nouns (i.e., pronouns, referentials, anaphora); but this classification has been called into question over the last two decades, as mounting evidence shows the language systematically exhibits multiple [syntactic] surface structures (Birmingham, 2020, 2021; Diller,1988; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Jenks, 2011; Noss, 1964; and Piriyawiboon, 2010).

While the features (or lack thereof) listed above suggest a rather simplistic linguistic structure, there are several features that add a considerable level of complexity to learning Thai. First, to compensate for the lack of tense and inflection, the language contains a rich aspect system consisting of 18 separate markers. Variations for mood and aspect are derived by (changeable) pre- or post-verbal positioning of these markers; and tense, though absent from the language, is expressed by combining these markers with time phrases that are positioned at the end of the clause (Birmingham, 2019; and Koenig & Muansuwan, 2005). Secondly, *formality* (i.e., *formal; informal*), in both written and spoken discourse, affects the syntactic structure of utterances[2], which often results in divergence from the SVO word order [further discussed in Chapter 3]. Additionally,

[2]For the purpose of this thesis, an utterance is refers to a single clause within any discourse, written or spoken.

Thai culture is governed by a hierarchal system that is reflected in a complex set of honorifics – this structure is arranged according to status, age, and relationship (between speakers), and is depicted via pronouns (including reflective nouns) and pragmatic particles (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005). Finally, Thai relies heavily on situational context and previous discourse; this results in rampant radical pro-drop and omission of bare nouns in subject *and* object position – it is fully possible, in this language, for a 'complete' utterance to only contain a verb when speakers rely on previous discourse and/or shared knowledge (Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Neelman & Szendroi, 2007; and Singhapreecha, 2001).

Scope and Outline of Thesis

In order to evaluate the question of whether the Thai language projects a DP or NP, this thesis will first discuss the syntactic features found in Thai nominal phrases, followed by a presentation of the pragmatic features that lead to syntactic variation. These sections will be succeeded by a presentation of current theories and research, focusing on Thai nominal phrases, that attempt to account for the multiple syntactic divergences found in Thai utterances. A discussion of the resulting personal observations and hypotheses, derived from this extensive research, will then be proposed and an overall conclusion of the thesis will be given.

The Syntax of Thai Nominals

Mentioned in chapter one, the clause structure of Thai is predominately described as having a rigid SVO word order; it is also a head-initial language, similar to English. However, in Thai, modifiers appear after the noun – as do *classifiers* [Clf]; this is shown in (1). English, on the other hand, typically exhibits a structure that has modifiers preceding its head as in (2). This is apparent even in individual and complex phrases:

1) khà-prong (tua)[3] lek sɔ̌ɔŋ tua nán
   skirt Clf small two Clf those
   "Those two small skirts"

In English NPs, the modifiers precede the noun:

2) the two fluffy cats

As such, Thai is said to 'mirror' the syntax of English determiner phrases [DPs] and NPs. with the noun snowballing as it moves up the tree structure (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Piriyawiboon, 2010; and Singhapreecha, 2001).

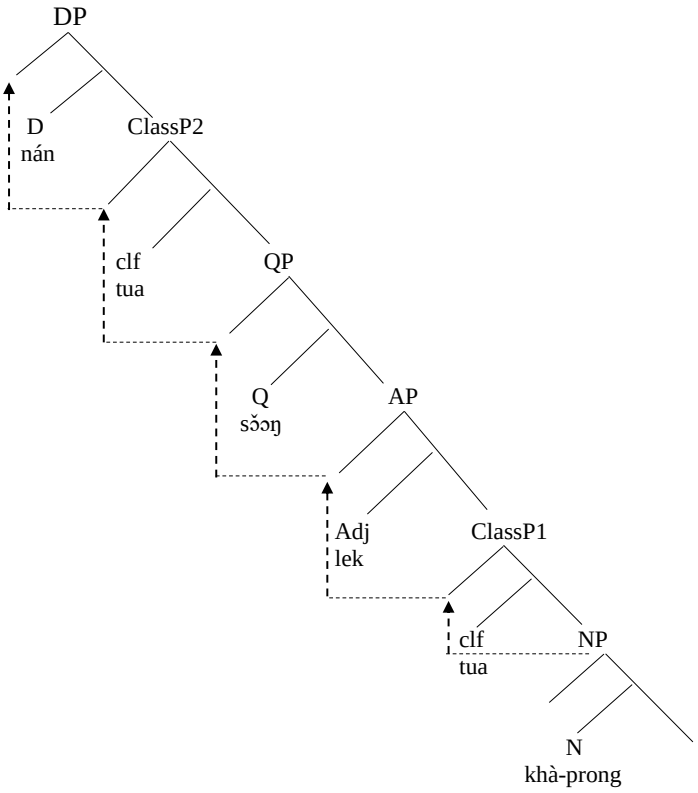
Thai	**English**
N – (CLF) – *Adj* – *Q* – CLF – *D*	*D* – *Q* – *Adj* – *N*

N=Noun Adj=Adjective Q=Quantifier/Number D=Determiner

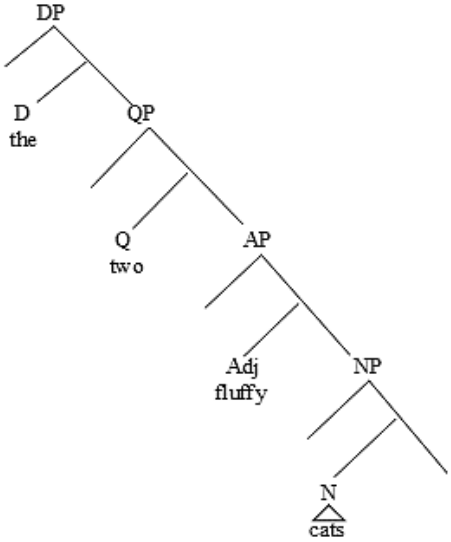
Though both languages are head-initial, movement within the nominal phrase requires that the Thai noun snowballs as it moves up the tree structure as shown in (3), while the English nominal remains in place as in (4), resulting in the mirrored syntactic structure.

[3] The first Clf is optional in informal [written/spoken] Thai but required in formal, written discourse.

3) Thai: (1) khà-prong tua lek sɔ̌ɔŋ tua nán



4) English: (2) the two fluffy cats



In Thai, complex nominals appear in several constructions (discussed later); but, as found within English utterances, Thai nominal phrases can contain *nouns, adjectives, quantifiers,* and *determiners.* In addition, *classifiers* must be used in all formal written and spoken Thai and are typically necessary in all initial discourse sequences (see section 2.5 and chapter 4 for further explanation).

Overview of Nouns

There are four types of nouns used within Thai nominal phrases. These include *pronouns*, *proper nouns, reflective nouns,* and *common nouns*. Pronouns and reflective nouns are subject to the cultural hierarchy and are thus dictated by status, age, and speaker-receiver relationship; in discourse, this is established through use of complex honorific system. Proper nouns and common nouns, in contrast, are unmarked and do not require honorific forms (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005).

Pronouns

As an isolating language, Thai does not have case; therefore, pronouns in subject and object positions are the same (e.g., /chán/ is a 1st person pronoun that means both "I" and "me"). Yet, due to the honorific system, the list of Thai pronouns is abundant. These terms are defined according to formality – formal, informal, and intimate (with friends or family); politeness – respectful, polite, derogatory/impolite; gender – male/female; age – adult/child and young(er)/old(er) relationship; and person – 1st/2nd/3rd singular and plural

(Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Noss, 1964). Tables (1-4) show the various pronouns found within typical discourse:

Table 1
1st Person Singular Pronouns (Speaker)

	Gender	**Formality**	**Politeness**
/khâaphacâw/	m, f	formal	polite
/khraphŏm/	m	formal	polite
/phŏm/	m	formal	polite
/dìchăn/	f	formal	polite
/chán/	m, f	informal/intimate	–
/raw/	m, f	intimate	–
/khaw/	f	intimate	–
/kuu/	m, f	intimate	–
	m, f	non-intimate	impolite

Table 2
2nd Person Singular Pronouns (Addressee)

	Gender	**Formality**	**Politeness**
/thân/	m, f	formal	respectful
/khun/	m, f	formal	polite
/thəə/	m, f	informal, intimate	–
/tua/	m, f	intimate between couples	–
	f	informal, intimate	–
/kɛɛ/	m, f	informal, intimate	–
	m, f	non-intimate	impolite
/naay/	m	informal, intimate	–
	m	non-intimate	derogatory
/mʉŋ/	m, f	(always)	impolite
/ii/	f	(always)	derogatory

Table 3

3rd Person Singular Pronouns (Referent)

	Gender	**Formality**	**Politeness**
/thân/	m, f	formal	respectful
/kháw/	m, f	informal	–
/thəə/	f	informal	polite
/kɛɛ/	m, f m, f	informal, intimate non-intimate	– impolite
/man/ - means “it”	neuter	informal	derogatory

Table 4

Plural Pronouns

	Person	**Formality**	**Definition**
/rao (sɔ̌ɔŋ khon)/	1st	formal	“we (two people)”
/phûak raw/	1st	–	“all of us”
/khon raw/	1st	formal	“we the people”
/thúuk thân/	2nd	–	“all of you”
/phûak kháw/	3rd	formal	“(all of) they/them”
/kháw/	3rd	informal	“they/them”

Thai also contains a single reflexive pronoun-suffix /-eeŋ/ that, in combination with various personal pronouns such as /chán/ or /phǒm/, and common nouns like /tua/ “body” or /ton/ “person”, can be used in subject and object position to refer to one’s ‘self’. It is also used as a possessor pronoun (i.e., meaning “mine”/ “yours”/ “his”) and as an oblique, appearing after as verbal and prepositional objects.

Proper Nouns

Like the majority/all languages, this category refers to names of persons, places, or things. In Thai, given names and nicknames are often used in place of personal pronouns. This substitution is indicative of an intimate relationship between the speaker

and addressee (i.e., friends, family, or couples). Of interest, in romantic relationships – which dictate the use of proper nouns among participants – the use of pronouns or reflective nouns is considered impolite and/or overly formal, unless used as a term of endearment such as /mêɛ/ “mom/mother” or /phɔ̂ɔ/ “dad/father”.

Reflective Nouns

Reflective nouns are nouns that reflect a relationship between the speaker and addressee(s). These include kinship terms (e.g., /mêɛ/ “mom”, /phɔ̂ɔ/ “dad”, /lûuk/ “son/daughter”, etc.), occupational titles (e.g., /mɔ̂ɔ/ “doctor”, /thánaai/ “lawyer”, /aacaan/ “professor”, etc.) and status titles (e.g., /naay/ “Mr.” or “master”, /nang/ “Mrs.” [also, a derogatory term used among women], /khun-yiŋ/ “Lady”, *royalty terms*, etc.). While English uses similar terms of address – given in parenthesis above, Thai reflective nouns are dictated by the hierarchal structure of Thai culture (Birmingham, 2020; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005).

Similar to Korean, this hierarchal structure dictates distinctions of age as evinced by phrases such as “older sibling” /phîi/ and “younger sibling” /nɔ́ɔŋ/; materal/paternal family members such as “aunt” (younger) – maternal /náa/, paternal /aa/; and gender – /chaay/ for males, /săaw/ for females (Cho, et.al., 2010; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Noss, 1964). Additionally, many of the kinship phrases compound with /chaay/ and /săaw/ to indicate specific gendered relationships as illustrated in (5) and (6):

5) /phîi -săaw/
older sibling -female
“older sister”

6) /lûuk -chaay/
child -male
“son”

Kinship terms also often traverse the boundary between legitimate family members and fictional familial relationships. Previously, they were used between close friends (of differing ages) and friends of the family (i.e., /phîi/ and /nɔ́ɔŋ/ used among friends of similar age; /pâa/ and /luŋ/ used for older friends of parents); however, in recent generations the use of these terms has increased in order to invoke a feeling of familiarity and comradery, used now for addressing people like waiters/waitresses, taxi drivers, vendors and more… (Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005). (For further discussion on relative nouns, see Hoonchamlong *Cultural Notes*, 2007a; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005).

Common Nouns

Common noun refers to anything that is tangible (i.e., can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted), as well as abstract concepts such as feelings and emotions (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002). As mentioned before, many common nouns contain affixes or are compounded with other words in order to indicate a distinct ‘kind’ of noun, for example, attaching the word /náam/ “water” to the beginning of a noun indicates that it is a type of liquid or fluid (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; and Slayden, 2020), as given in (7):

7) náam mámûang
water mango
“mango juice”

Some nouns, such as /náam/ “water”, can also be combined with verbs to indicate a specified type of /náam/, as shown in (8):

8) náam -kin
water -eat/drink
“drinking-water”

It is important to remember that modifiers follow the head of the phrase, so the phrase in (8) “drinking-water” should not be confused with that of (9), where /náam/ is the object of the verb:

9) kin náam
eat/drink water
“thirsty” or the act of “drinking water”

There are many affixes present in the Thai language, and like classifiers, they typically indicate a ‘type of noun’ though they function as modifiers, creating new nouns from old.

Adjectives

Adjectives, also known as ‘descriptive verbs’ in Thai, include size, shape, color, stative attributes, etc. Many adjectives can be used to modify both nouns and verbs interchangeably – referred to as *manner adverbs* (e.g., /rew/ “fast”, /sabai/ “happy” / “happily”), making them virtually indistinguishable from adverbs (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Sudmuk, 2005). Like nouns, adjectives can also be modified to establish a ‘type’ of adjective, for example: colors are compounded words derived from the noun /sĭi/ meaning “color”, and the actual color being described (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005). In Thai complex nominals, adjectives appear following the (first) Clf and appearing before the Q, with the exception of color adjectives – these immediately follow the noun that they modify, as in (10):

10) măa sĭi - dam tua yài
dog color-black Clf large
"large black dog"

Quantifiers

As described in chapter 1, Thai is an isolating language that does not contain any inflection; this means that, with the exception of 1st and 3rd person pronouns[4], nouns are not morphologically marked for plurality. In order to compensate for this missing feature, quantifiers [Q] (e.g. *some, all, many, few,* etc.) or numbers [Num][5] are used in conjunction with required noun-classifiers [Clfs] to create the concept of multiple noun units (i.e. "more than one") (Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Piriyawiboon, 2010; and Singhapreecha, 2001). When constructing QPs, the Clf must appear after the Q as in (11):

11) náam sɔ̌ɔŋ kêɛw
water two Clf
"two drinking glasses of water"

However, like many grammatical rules, there are always exceptions; in this case, one is the word /diaw/ which can *only* appear after the Clf; another is the number 'one' /nʉ̀ŋ/, which may appear before or after the Clf (see sentences 13a and 14a and their corresponding trees); and the last exception is ordinal numbers. (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005).

[4]Though 1st and 3rd person pronouns are listed in section 2.1, the basic form of the pronoun is actually a referent of the 1P and 3P singular pronouns. The formal variants of these plurals require a quantifier or number to convey the meaning of plurality. It is possible that the 1P and 3P plurals /rao/ and /kháw/ are abbreviated forms of the more complex formal phrase, or a semantic extension of the singular pronouns developed into plurals for the sake of simplicity.

[5]For the purpose of this thesis, both quantifiers and numbers will be identified as [Q].

Diaw

The word /diaw/ is frequently used in complex nominal constructions. Its translations include ‘single’, ‘only one’, and “alone”, and it always appears at the end of the nominal phrase, following the Clf, as in (12).

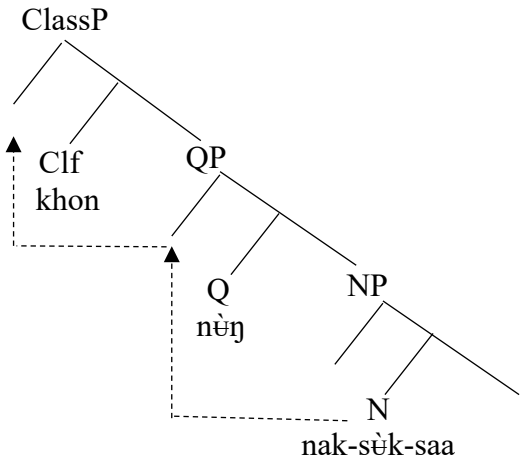
12) rótmee khan diaw
bus Clf single
“only one bus”

The Number nɤ̀ŋ

The number /nɤ̀ŋ/ “one” is a unique quantifier that plays a dual role within the syntax of Thai nominals dependent upon its placement within an utterance. If /nɤ̀ŋ/ appears before the Clf, the focus of the QP is placed on the number ‘one’, identifying the noun as a countable item, as shown in (13a-b):

13) a) nak-sɤ̀k-saa nɤ̀ŋ khon
student one Clf
“one student”

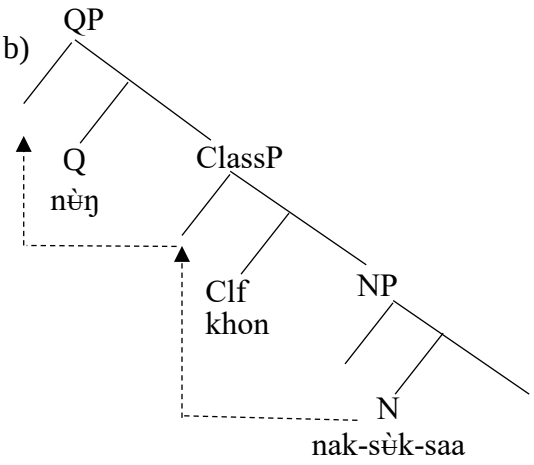
13) b)



However, when /nɤ̀ŋ/ emerges after the Clf, it acts as an indefinite marker, such as the particle ‘a/an’ in English, as shown in (14a-b):

14) a) nak-sɤ̀k-saa khon nɤ̀ŋ
student Clf one
“a student”

14) b)



Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers are structurally similar to adjective phrases [APs], modifying the nominal on a gradable, rank/sequential scale (e.g., *first, second, third,* etc.) instead of providing the quantity of a noun within the phrase, as cardinal numbers do. As such, not only do they follow the Clf (as do most adjectives), but because both cardinal and ordinal numbers use the same numeric system, the entity classifier [eClf] /thîi/ needs to *precede* the Q to ensure the proper (definite) meaning is derived from the number (Birmingham, 2020; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005), as shown in (15):

15) lûuk-sǎaw khon thîi-sǎam
child-female Clf eClf-three
“the third daughter”

Determiners

The Thai language contains several types of determiners [D] that act as focus markers pointing to a particular noun. As in English, demonstratives, a singular interrogative, possessives, quantifiers, and a prolific personal pronoun system function to fill this grammatical role [Ds]. The latter three have been previously discussed and project their own position within complex nominal structures. Interrogatives act similarly to 'wh' questions in the English language and are given in table 5:

Table 5
Thai Interrogatives

	Meaning		**Meaning**
/khray/	"who"	yàaŋray/	"how"
/aray/	"what"	/yaŋŋay/	"how"
/nǎy/	"which"	/thâwrày/	"how much"
/thammay/	"why"	/kìi/	"how many"
/mɯ̂aràay/	"when"		

In contrast, the demonstratives found in Thai more closely resemble those found in Korean (not English), whereby spatial reference is a key component to the demonstrative used. There are three separate distinctions described as "proximate ["this"], medial ["that"], and distal ["that over there"]" by Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom (83), and subject to a tonal difference that indicates whether it is functioning as a pronoun or a modifier (2005). This distinction can be seen in Table 6:

Table 6

Thai Demonstratives

Spatial Reference	Pronoun	Modifier
"this"	/nîi/	/níi/
"that"	/nân/	/nán/
"that over there"	/nôon/	/nóon/

Classifiers

In linguistics, there is a distinction made between languages that identify nouns as 'countable' through morphological markings (e.g., singular, dual, plural) – known as *number-marking languages*, and those that require the use of an additional device (i.e., *classifiers* [Clfs]) to identify the quantified nouns – known as *classifier languages* (Piriyawiboon, 2010; 2). Thai falls into the category of *classifier languages*, making the inclusion of Clfs obligatory in all nominals that include a QP.

Similar to counters in Korean and English (e.g., 'cup', 'pair', 'bowl') Clfs indicate the 'kind' of noun being modified based on a specific attribute assigned to the noun (Chierchia, 1998; Cho, et.al., 2010; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Piriyawiboon, 2010). These Clfs can be extremely specific (e.g., /khon/ is the Clf indicating *person*), or very general, covering multiple noun categories regardless of animacy (e.g., /tua/ indicates *anything with legs/arms* - including clothing, animals, and people) (Hoonchamlong, 2007a; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Slayden, 2020). There are 339 noun-Clfs in the language, but with the general Clfs like /tua/ and /bay/ (used with *container utensils, furniture, round objects,* and *flat objects*) some researchers

suggest L2 learners can get by with only 20-30 of these Clfs in their repertoire (Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Slayden, 2020).

While it is understandable that an isolating, analytic language like Thai uses classifiers when forming complex noun structures, there is one dilemma that has prompted further research by a number of linguists and has led to the current controversy over the configuration of these arrangements – it is possible to have the *same* Clf appear twice within a single phrase. According to Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005), Clfs are used in combination with QPs to signify a correlation between the quantifier and the noun; so, what is taking place, structurally, that prompts the use of the Clf more than once in the phrase? [An attempt to ascertain an explanation for the reduplication of a Clf within a nominal phrase will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.]

The Pragmatic Structures affecting Thai Nominals

As previously described, much linguistic research has described the Thai language as exhibiting a strict SVO word order; the reasoning for this belief lies in the institutional doctrine established by King Rama IV during his reign (1851-1868). Rama IV was extremely concerned with elevating the status of Siam (later known as Thailand) in the eyes of the world and sought to do so through technological and cultural advancement (Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988). Part of his doctrine established a nationalized educational curricula that favored westernized grammatical norms, creating a standardized, 'formal' writing system throughout Thailand which exhibits the strict SVO word order maintained by the western world (Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Jenks, 2011).

However, though considered an SVO language, the majority of linguists acknowledge that Thai is an exceedingly pragmatic language that relies heavily on situational context and sociolinguistic factors, resulting in a multitude of syntactic variations (Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; and Neelman & Szendroi, 2007). As a matter of fact, in his article, *Thai syntax & "National Grammar,"* Diller (1988) provides ample evidence for the existence of multiple word-order constructions found in informal, natural discourse (i.e., SVO, SOV, OSV, VS, SV, VOS, VSO, and simply V), prompting the suggestion that it is these pragmatic and sociolinguistic features, favored by the Thai people, that dictate and shape the grammatical structures and semantic functions of the language (e.g., *tense,*

inflection, topic, focus, etc.) (Birmingham, 2020, 2021; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005; Jenks, 2011; and Piriyawiboon, 2010). And while Rama IV believed formalization of the Thai language would lead to increased global status, his successor King Rama VI (1910-1925) felt otherwise, stating that enforcing westernized grammatical standards veritably "destroys" the beauty of the language and the identity of the Thai population(s); in effect, it leads to the destruction of Thailand's culture (Diller, 1988; 295). These conflicting viewpoints have led many modern scholars, politicians, and native speakers to debate the ethicality of using grammatical classifications (a westernized notion) for a language that relies copiously on pragmatics and the sociolinguistic structure of the culture (Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; and Simpson, 1997).

The following sections will discuss the major pragmatic features that affect the surface structure of utterances in Thai discourse.

Formal versus Informal Discourse

It is important to make a unique distinction regarding the *formality* of the discourse during the construction of utterances in Thai: there is an unmistakable divide between formal discourse – governed by the prescribed set of grammatical rules instituted by King Rama IV's education curricula, and informal discourse that appears in *naturally* occurring utterances (i.e., colloquial speech) – crafted by paying careful attention to a complicated set of culturally 'authentic' structures (i.e., sociolinguistic factors and situational context). Often distinguished as a split between written and spoken discourse, examples from various research – including Diller (1988) and Jenks (2011) – show that,

while written discourse is frequently governed by the nationalized grammar, discourse such as intimate letters, instant messages, and advertisements often portray informal surface structures. Likewise, verbal discourse is not always informal; though colloquial speech is more predominant than formalized speech, it is often the case that business meetings, religious sermons, legal proceedings, and news broadcasting are conducted using formulaic grammar (Diller, 1988; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; and Jenks, 2011). [It should be noted that formal situations tend to invoke utterances that employ both formal grammatical rules *and* pragmatic patterns.]

Situational Context

While *formality* plays a role in which linguistic notions predominantly govern a discourse, variant syntactic construction often results from the pragmatics surrounding the discourse. Often referred to as *situational context*, discourse in Thai is markedly influenced by several key factors.

Personal Knowledge and Beliefs of Speaker

It is commonly known, in Linguistics, that every speaker[6] creates utterances manufactured with an inherent bias towards their own beliefs and personal knowledge. In doing so, unless explicitly communicated, the speaker assumes that the addressee(s) knows the speaker's stance or beliefs, and/or is privy to the same knowledge (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014). However, due to the assumption that the knowledge or beliefs are shared

[6]Throughout this thesis, s*peaker* refers to the participant delivering an utterance to a listener, in either written or verbal discourse.

between the participants, and/or are universally known, the speaker risks the possibility of miscommunication.

Speaker-Listener Relationship

In order for successful discourse to occur, a requisite relationship between the *speaker* and the *listener* must be established that dictates the role of the participants. For example, in a university lecture hall, the discourse between the professor (i.e., *speaker*) and their audience (i.e., *listener(s)*) is based on the relationship roles of *teacher* and *student.* This relationship is governed by its own set of pragmatic rules that assume the professor's job is to convey [new] knowledge to the audience, while the students' job is to receive/listen to the knowledge being conveyed (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014; and Paltridge, 2012). The relationship between the *speaker* and *listener* is, therefore, essential in determining the type of discourse that is to be conducted.

In Thailand, the *speaker-listener relationship* is subject to a myriad of sociolinguistic factors rooted in the nation's culture. These sociolinguistic factors that include a stringent *social hierarchy*, *age* (among participants), *gender*, and *professional* and/or *personal relationships* (between the speaker and listener(s)) – all dictated by a prolific honorific system (Baron, 2001; Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; and Simpson, 1997).

Shared Knowledge & Continuing Discourse

Discourse, in any language, is facilitated by the *shared* knowledge of the participants involved, establishing a rapport that can include and/or exclude additional

contributions from new participants. Informal Thai discourse relies heavily upon this sharing of knowledge, evinced through the development of several unique anaphoric patterns used frequently within the language [to be discussed in section 3.3].

Similarly, discourse is aided by its continuance; as it progresses, shared knowledge about a topic and/or its surrounding context is developed, making it easier for participants to communicate with one another. However, in the Thai language, as a discourse progresses it can often become ambiguous or obscure to non-participants due to ellipses of grammatical structures taken for granted in many other languages (e.g., anaphora, bare nouns, referential terms).

Anaphoric Correspondence

The linguistic phenomena known as *anaphora* results from a pragmatic need for simplicity by increasing continuity and reducing redundancy among a series of utterances. It functions at the syntactic and semantic levels by linking a pronominal phrase to an antecedent referent through synonymous meaning and/or role (Birmingham, 2021; Chomsky, 1981; Deen & Timyam, 2018; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; Hoonchamlong, 1991; Jenks, 2011; Larson, 2005; and Schlenker, 2005); in which an anaphor (aka., *pronouns*) is directly aligned with a *referent* – commonly identified as a *proper noun* (i.e., people, places or things), a *reflectional term* (e.g., “uncle” or “mom”), or a *bare noun* (e.g., “dog” or “tree”). It is a predominant feature in most languages; yet, in Thai, the patterns of correspondence between a referent and its anaphora deviate from the norm in exceptional ways [soon to be discussed], allowing for the variant surface structures proffered in Diller (1988) to emerge without creating ambiguity or confusion

among the participants. As the syntactic structure of informal [Thai] utterances can take on any of these forms (i.e., SVO, SOV, OSV, VS, SV, VOS, VSO, and V), it is greatly important to understand how this pragmatic feature functions within the language and shapes ongoing discourse [discussed forthwith].

Anaphora

Linguistically, *anaphora* is a phenomenon governed by internal and external factors including grammatical structures, pragmatic functions, and sociolinguistic features. *Pronouns*, *pronominals*, and noun *referentials* (i.e., quantifiers and reflective nouns) – known as *anaphora* – are commonly utilized in most languages throughout the world. As previously described, it is a way to link utterances by using [nominal] terms indicating a specific referent that carries the same semantic meaning and/or syntactic role and is typically perceived as a way to simplify discourse by reducing redundancy and [possibly] ambiguity (Birmingham, 2021; Chomsky, 1981; Deen & Timyam, 2018; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; Hoonchamlong, 1991; and Schlenker, 2005). And though anaphora in Thai may fulfill these tasks, research examining the distribution patterns, found [specifically] in this language, suggests that the prolific use of these patterns throughout Thai informal discourse serves a far more pragmatic function, indicating sociolinguistic structures (dictated by the culture) or a marking nominal movement within a discourse (Baron, 2001; Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; and Simpson, 1997). As such, the question of whether applying westernized notions of grammar and semantics (i.e., syntactic roles and semantic meaning/roles) to phenomena that is clearly governed by the pragmatics of the language, is a topic of debate and interest among

modern linguists interested in the Thai language (Aroonmanakun, 1999; Baron, 1999; Birmingham, 2021; Deen & Timyam, 2018; Dolphen, 2017; Hoonchamlong, 1991; Larson, 2005; Meepoe, 2000; Neeleman & Szendroi, 2017; and Schlenker, 2005; among others). More importantly, as a language that frequently exploits the ellipses of pronouns [pro-drop] and/or zero-anaphora (aka., null) and often exhibits structural ambiguity through a series of unique anaphoric distribution patterns – as does Thai, it is necessary to look beyond the *prescribed* syntax of formal discourse to the *inherent* [pragmatic] patterns found in informal discourse; patterns which lead to the many syntactic surface forms and which may play a role in determining whether the Thai language projects a DP or an NP.

In the following sections, existing anaphoric patterns – frequently occurring in Thai colloquial speech – and factors affecting its use will be examined. Though many other languages – such as Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and even Spanish – are known to adhere to one or two of these characteristics, the existence of all four within one language – as in Thai – is exceedingly rare; especially as each one can lead to syntactic variation that deviates from the [supposedly] strict SVO word order dictated by the grammatical rules governing formal discourse.

Radical Ellipses of Anaphora and Bare Nouns

As previously stated, the Thai language has been described as having a rigid SVO word order; in part, this distinction has been made to account for the radical ellipses, of pronominal (aka., zero/null-anaphora and pro-drop) and bare noun terms, that frequently occurs in informal discourse (Birmingham, 2021; Higbie & Thinsan, 2002; Iwasaki &

Ingkaphirom, 2005; Jenks, 2011; Noss, 1964; and Piriyawiboon, 2010). Pro-drop and zero-anaphora are commonly employed to reduce the redundancy of pronominal terms, resulting in omission of the subject, and sometimes object, reference. Thai, on the other hand, regularly utilizes pro-drop and zero-anaphora in both positions [often within a single utterance], producing surface structures comprised only of a verb or a set of serialized verbs (Birmingham, 2021; Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017; Hoonchamlong, 1991; Larson, 2005; and Simpson, 1997).

Long-Distance Anaphoric Distribution

According to Chomsky's Binding Theory [BT] of Universal Grammar [UG] (1981), one of the defining characteristics of anaphoric use is the necessity for an anaphor (including zero-anaphora) to be bound to an antecedent that appears in the utterance directly preceding it. However, Thai anaphora is not restricted by this rule, as seen in evidence produced by Diller (1988) showing examples of anaphora appearing as distant as 100-words away from its referent. Several researchers have speculated that this may be because anaphoric distribution in Thai is highly governed by situational context (e.g., sociolinguistic factors) and the shared knowledge between participants, along with discourse context (e.g., continuance of topic/subject matter) (Birmingham, 2021; Deen & Timyam, 2018; Iwasaki & Ingaphirom, 2005; Diller, 1988; and Simpson, 1997).

Cataphora

Once again, the principles and rules set forth by Chomsky (1981) governing anaphoric distribution prescribe that pronouns, pronominals, and noun referentials must

be bound to referents that *precede* the anaphor. Therefore, the notion that pronouns, pronominals, and referentials can be bound to referents that *succeed* the anaphor – known as *cataphora* – seems counterproductive to the purpose of an anaphor (i.e., simplicity), especially to those who have little or no experience with this distribution pattern. Nevertheless, according to Diller (1988) and Dolphen (2017), this pattern of distribution is common in Thai discourse. In practice, this pattern resembles the English construction given in (16):

16) it is delicious that flavor [of ice cream]

Whereas this sounds odd and stilted in English (though this construction can be used when emphasizing a particular characteristic of a noun), it occurs naturally and effectively throughout informal Thai discourse.

Age of Speaker

While *age* [of speaker] does not reflect a particular anaphoric distribution pattern, a recent study conducted by Deen & Timyam (2018) suggests that *age* actually plays a key role in the distribution patterns utilized by speakers. Their research examines the use of anaphora by both children and adults, looking for corresponding or contrasting patterns of anaphor dispersion in Thai discourse. The findings presented infer that young children actually exhibit anaphoric patterns that abide by the principles set forth in BT – including Condition C, previously suspected to be absent from the Thai language. However, by the time native speakers of Thai reach adulthood, Condition C virtually disappears from all naturally occurring discourse. From the evidence obtained, the

researchers draw two plausible conclusions that make *age* an important factor as far as anaphoric distribution goes:

1. If Thai children in the early stages of development exhibit distribution patterns that adhere to the BT principles set forth by Chomsky as part of UG, as the research suggests, then this proves that anaphoric patterns are an internal and inherent part of all human language.
2. While it may be the case that these patterns are inherent to language starting from birth, it is through learned pragmatic behaviors that the grammar is altered, allowing for Condition C to be prohibited and/or violated.

These conclusions support the aforementioned notion that the Thai language is governed more so by the pragmatic structures tied to the situational context and sociolinguistic factors instilled by the native culture, and less so by the grammatical structures prescribed by formulated curricula taught in the education system or inherent to UG.

Proposed Theories for Structural Variance in Thai

Discourse within the Thai language often reflects multiple surface word-orders. Researchers attempting to understand how movement and fluctuation occur in Thai syntax have developed and/or adopted several theories which attribute [syntactic] structural variance to syntactic and pragmatic features that directly affect the construction of nominal phrases. Much of the analysis conducted has, therefore, focused primarily on two specific features of the nominal phrase: *classifiers* and *anaphora* (including *zero-anaphora*).

In the following sections, several linguistic methodologies used in analysis of Thai nominals are introduced. In addition to a thorough explanation of the theories, each is accompanied by a recent study that illustrates the/a significance of the approach. However, it is important to note that though only one study is given for each, the theories presented are prevailing theories utilized in the analysis of the Thai language (as well as other languages that exhibit some of the syntactic anomalies seen in Thai, such as Vietnamese, Chinese, and Cambodian), each providing valuable insight that may aide in the determination of whether Thai projects a DP or an NP.

Syntactic Approaches

In this section, two different theoretical methods are introduced, each one proposing a different solution to account for the inconsistent nature of Thai syntax. Both of these syntactic approaches focus on the function of the *classifier* within nominals, proposing new and/or additional layers to the phrase structure.

"The Classifier Phrase"

Identified in chapter two as a classifier-language, Thai relies extensively on classifiers to denote or modify nominals that include a QP. Thailand's classifier system, however, is distinctly unique, maintaining one of the only systems that exhibits *identical* classifier cooccurrence, and the only one where it is a common and predictive phenomenon (Singhapreecha, 2001; 261). Researchers such as Longobardi (1994), Piriyawiboon (2010), and Singhapreecha (2001) draw on previous linguistic theory to help explain the purpose of classifiers within the language as they work to unearth the underlying syntactic structure for Thai complex nominals. In particular, several proponents of Stephen Abney's *DP-Analysis* hypothesis[7] specializing in the Thai language (such as Kookiattikoon, 2001; Simpson, 1994; and Singhapreecha, 2001 – to name a few), aim to develop a working model(s) of the underlying syntax by looking at the correlations between classifiers and determiners, the obligatory nature of [Clf] inclusion when a quantifier is present (*quantifiers* are commonly considered a type of determiner), and the use of [Clf] cooccurrence when specificity (typically achieved through use of particles in many other languages – such as "a/an" or "the" in English) is coupled with a QP.

To help illustrate the links between classifiers and determiners, researcher Pornsiri Singhapreecha (2001) calls for the inclusion of an additional phrase structure known as the *Classifier Phrase* [ClassP]. Additionally, Singhapreecha makes several important claims that lend support to her proposed structure of Thai:

[7] In 1987, Stephen Abney proposed that all complex nominal arguments are generated in a DP structure, even if a determiner is not present (i.e., *null* determiners); thus, all languages must contain DPs – this popular hypothesis is known as the *DP-Analysis*.

1. When appearing without a quantifier or number, Clfs indicate *specificity* as illustrated in (17) and (18) below:

   17) náŋsŭ̆ŭ̆ níi
   book this
   "this book"

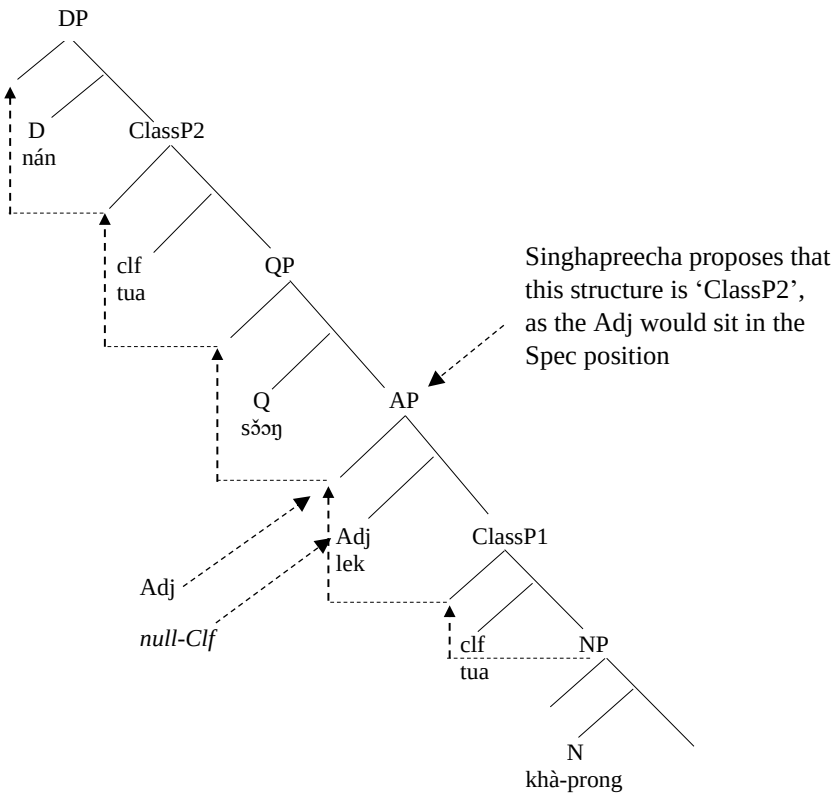
   18) náŋsŭ̆ŭ̆ lêm níi
   book Clf this
   "this very book"

2. Clfs are distinct from nouns and belong to the functional category (264) – essentially, since they cannot be modified by adjectives and can occur multiple times in a single DP, their function is not lexical; therefore…
3. Clfs function as agreement markers, since nouns 'choose' their corresponding Clf (though it is said Thai lacks agreement) (264)
4. Clf u-phi features are 'strong' in Thai, and these features trigger the movement of the N up the structure (266).

Based on the above claims, Singhapreecha makes a case that the syntactic structure of Thai DPs must contain a classifier-phrase [ClassP], and in cases of multiple modifiers (e.g., adjectives *and* demonstratives) multiple ClassPs. Using the complex nominal phrase presented in (1) and restated in (19a), Singhapreecha proposes a tree similar to the one given in (3) and reproduced in (19b):

19) a) khà-prong (tua) lek sɔ̆ɔŋ tua nán
skirt Clf small two Clf those
"those two small skirts"

19) b)



This tree is constructed using the proposed framework Singhapreecha (2001) suggests, however, it is important to note that Singhapreecha adopts Cinque's proposal that APs start in the spec of functional phrases due to their "restricted hierarchal structure" (265); as such, she includes an additional ClassP, directly following the ClassP1, that contains a *null* Clf in order to provide a location for the Adj phrase.

"Nominal Mapping Parameter" and the "Specifier Phrase"

Introduced by Gennaro Chierchia in 1998, the *Nominal Mapping Parameter* [NMP] theory suggests that Ns are mapped to one of two possibilities: arguments or predicates. Developed with the purpose of supporting the notion that not all languages project a DP – directly contrasting Abney's *DP-Analysis* hypothesis, Chierchia proposes

that most languages are divided into two categories based on these mappings[8], *determiner languages* and *determiner-less languages*.

In determiner-languages, Ns must be accompanied by a D (e.g., *demonstrative, quantifier, pronominal*) in order to be recognized as an argument, therefore the N is mapped to the predicate and generates a DP structure (Longobardi, 1994). Conversely, in determiner-less languages, the syntax of the language allows bare Ns to appear as arguments without an obligatory D; therefore, these Ns map to the argument of an utterance (Birmingham, 2020; and Chierchia, 1998, 2009) and provoke an NP structure. It is argued by Chierchia (1998, 2009) and followers of the NMP theory [such as Bošković (2005, 2008), Lyons (1999), and Piriyawiboon (2010)] that the syntactic properties of these determiner-less languages never produce a DP structure since the bare N itself acts as the argument; without an overt need for a D (Birmingham, 2020; Chierchia, 1998, 2009; and Piriyawiboon, 2010). Since Thai is a language that does not require the use of Ds and bare Ns [often] function as arguments, it falls into the latter category as a determiner-less language, thereby compelling a mandatory NP structure. It is with this theory (NMP) as the framework that Nattaya Piriyawiboon (2010), investigates Thai complex nominals and proposes a possible NP tree structure headed not by a DP, but by an optional *specifier phrase* [SpecP] when a D is present.

Piriyawiboon (2010) makes several observations about NMP and the Thai language that are important factors to the presented analysis:

[8] A third category exists in which languages utilize both *determiner* and *determiner-less* strategies to mark number; English is one of these languages, whereby plurals and mass nouns do not require determiners, but all other nominals must be introduced by a determiner.

1. As discussed in chapter 2 [section 2.5], in order to individuate Ns, all languages employ *at least* one of two morphological devices:
    - number marking – whereby Ns are marked through inflection to depict an inherent quantity (e.g., plurals and mass nouns in English)
    - the use of Clfs – in the presence of Qs, an N must be accompanied by a Clf to indicate quantity

Thai, as previously indicated, is categorized as a classifier-language. This distinction is important to Piriyawiboon's proposal because it is argued that classifiers are used to represent a *kind*[9] of noun, and when combined with a quantifier, they denote a portion of a *kind*[9] (Chierchia, 1998; and Piriyawiboon, 2010).

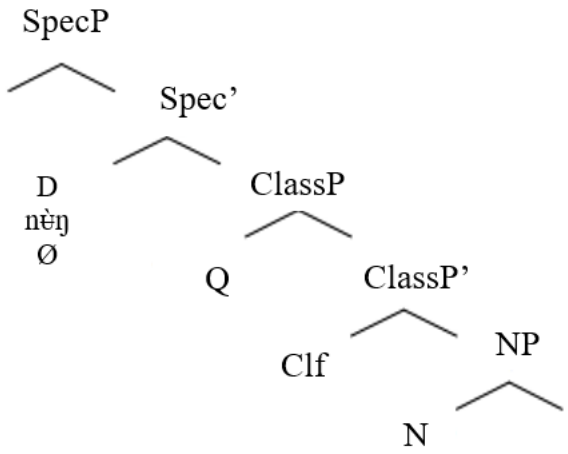
Additional principles important to Piriyawiboon's analysis are as follows:

2. CLFs that appear in constructions *without* Qs function as a marker of specificity – they denote a single unit of a *kind* of N
3. Ns appear head-initial to check with the u-phi features in the spec-head – this is what triggers movement of the N up the tree, in order to derive surface word-order
4. Spec NPs include those that appear with a demonstrative, the number 1, or a modifier

[9] *Kind* refers to a "species or class of some sort" that contains a particular set of characteristics. CLFs function by linking *kinds* to quantifiers and numerals based on one or more of these characteristics. In languages the map [bare] nouns to arguments, such as Thai, it is argued that these nouns actually denote a *kind*, similar to mass count nouns in English. (Chierchia, 1998; and Piriyawiboon, 2010; 3).

With the NMP and these additional parameters set, a tree structure similar to (20) is proposed by Piriyawiboon (2010) to be the underlying syntactic structure of complex nominals in the Thai language:

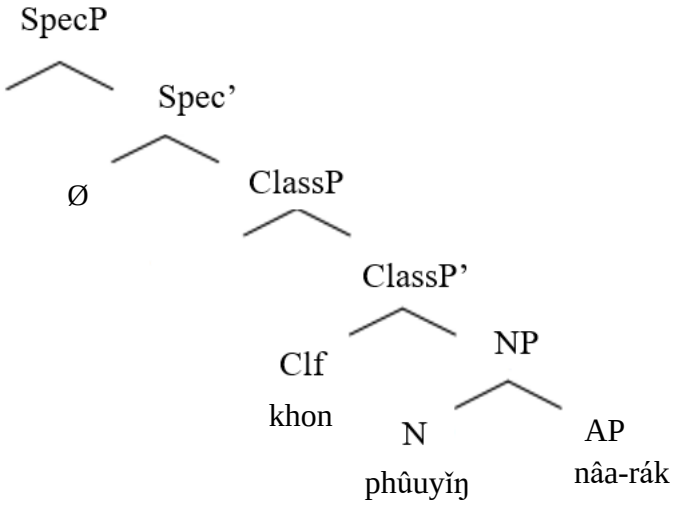
20)



In practicum, by adopting the proposed tree structure in (20), a complex Thai nominal phrase and its corresponding tree structure, are given in (21a-b).

21) a) phûuyĭŋ khon nâa-rák
female Clf face-cute
"the/a (specific) cute girl"

21) b)



Pragmatic Approaches

In contrast to the approaches introduced in the previous section – which look at syntactic features to explain the variance found in Thai syntax, the theories presented in this section hypothesize that it is the pragmatic features found within nominal phrases that lead to different syntactic structures. The two theories discussed in this section directly attribute syntactic variance to the pragmatic structure and features of *anaphora* used in the Thai language.

"The Binding Theory"

Much of the research investigating anaphoric distribution in Thai has been conducted using the *Binding Theory* [BT], a fundamental component of Chomsky's *Universal Grammar* [UG] model (Birmingham, 2021; and Chomsky, 1981). The theory applies syntactic constraints upon the pragmatic functions of anaphora, binding them to one another in a conditional syntax-pragmatic relationship (Birmingham, 2021; 7). Through the application of three *binding* principles – Conditions *A, B,* and *C* – BT analysis utilizes the connection between syntactic roles (i.e., subject, object) and their pragmatic function [within a discourse] to *bind* anaphora (including zero-anaphora/ pronouns) to antecedent referents maintaining the same syntactic roles (Chomsky, 1981). These conditions are:

> *Condition A:* An anaphor must be bound within its binding domain.
> *Condition B:* A pronoun must be free within its binding domain.
> *Condition C:* An R-expression (i.e., proper names, proper nouns, referent nouns, bare nouns) must be free everywhere.

Thai anaphoric distribution patterns have long confounded many scholars interested in the language. In the mid-19th century, English missionaries in Thailand, first described Thai as having a "rigid" SVO word-order attempting to account for the radical pro-drop and ellipses of anaphora that appeared prolifically throughout Thai discourse (Diller, 1988). To fit in with their preconceived grammatical notions, the missionaries postulated that even utterances consisting only of a verb still inherently projected the syntactic roles of subject and object [respectively] through what is known as *zero-anaphora*, therefore adhering to the principles of BT even though it would be another century before Chomsky developed the theory (Birmingham, 2021; and Diller, 1988).

Since it was first instituted by Chomsky in 1981, linguists interested in the Thai language – including Deen & Timyam (2018), Hoonchamlong (1991), Jenks (2011), Larson (2005), Lee (2003) [to name a few] – have principally applied BT to formal and informal discourse in order to understand anaphoric dispersion patterns native to the language. Nevertheless, certain patterns, discussed in chapter 3 [section 3.3] (i.e., radical ellipses of anaphora and bare Ns, long-distance distribution, and cataphora), promote discourse constructions that seem to prohibit or violate Condition C of the theory (Deen & Timyam, 2018; Hoonchamlong, 1991; Jenks, 2011; Larson, 2005; and Lee, 2003). To account for evidence suggesting that various [syntactic] surface structures exist within the language – which make it difficult to attribute syntactic roles to anaphora when referents do not always maintain the same role within a discourse – researchers such as Lasnik (1989), Hoonchomlong (1991), and Larson (2005) have proposed modifying Condition C or adding supplemental Conditions to account for some of the variance exhibited by the

language. Then there are scholars such Larson (2005), Jenks (2011), Piriyawiboon (2010) and Simpson (1997), who frequently draw on and/or modify the proposed *supplemental* Conditions to explain anaphoric patterns found in Thai nominal phrases (Birmingham, 2021).

On the other hand, Deen & Timyam's (2018) study of anaphoric distribution in child and adult spoken discourse provides credible evidence that the Thai language *is* governed by the binding principles of BT (as prescribed by Chomsky), including Condition C, as child discourse patterns adhere to all three of the binding principles from an early age. The data, from the study, reveals that pro-drop and zero-anaphora appear rarely in utterances constructed during the early stages of language development, supporting the UG model developed by Chomsky in 1981 (Birmingham, 2021; and Deen & Timyam, 2018). Yet, the study also reveals that by adolescence, ellipsis of anaphoric expressions and pro-drop become more common in discourse; and by the time speakers reach adulthood, these features are used rampantly throughout verbal exchange. The evidence gives credence to the hypothesis that the radical pro-drop and zero-anaphora frequenting discourse in adult Thai are actually *learned* linguistic behaviors, not inherent features of the language.

It is important to note that while the ellipses of anaphora and pronominals, as well as the existence of various surface structures, found throughout Thai discourse can be explained by applying BT – in part, whole, or through a modified version of the theory – many of the proponents of BT fail to account for the existence of long-distance anaphora (Birmingham, 2021). The conditions of BT state that anaphora must be bound by a

referent in the utterance “immediately preceding” its appearance in order “to adhere to the rules of c-command and indexicality” (Birmingham, 2021; Chomsky, 1989; Deen & Timyam, 2018; Hoonchamlong, 1991; and Larson, 2005). However, as Diller (1988) effectively illustrates, multiple accounts of natural discourse link anaphora in Thai referents located distantly within the discourse; some examples show antecedent R-expressions located as far as 100-words prior to an anaphoric expression (Diller, 1988).

Also prescribed by the conditions of BT, it is obligatory for an anaphor to *succeed* its referent, thereby discounting the notion of cataphora. The low index level of anaphors requires that an R-expression c-command their position within an utterance; when anaphora appear before the R-expression, the anaphor is in position to c-command the referent, and regardless of its index level, this is a direct violation of BT (Birmingham, 2021; Chomsky, 1981; and Dolphen, 2017). But once again, there is an abundant amount of evidence supporting the existence of cataphora in the Thai language, creating a paradox that cannot be explained by BT (Birmingham, 2021; and Diller, 1988). As a result, proponents of BT often ignore this anaphoric pattern since a resolution cannot be offered within the theory (Birmingham, 2021; Dolphen, 2017).

Theory of Theme & Rheme: “SFG” & “DA”

As mentioned in the previous section, most of the research focusing on anaphoric distribution in Thai has done so by linking the pragmatic functions of anaphora to grammatical structures (e.g., syntactic roles). Yet, many linguists acknowledge that Thai is a highly pragmatic language which relies prodigiously on pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors – not grammatical structures – when constructing [informal] discourse. This is a

cause of concern for linguists who believe that analyzing pragmatic phenomena through a grammatical lens does not promote accurate understanding of the Thai language or the processes used in the formation of discourse (Birmingham, 2021; 11). This has prompted some researchers of the language – such as Aroonmanakun (1999), Baron (1999; 2001) [see also Meepoe (2000)], Dolphen (2017) and Simpson (1997) – to search for [pragmatic] strategies that will aid in the analyzation of the Thai language without relying on the 'westernized' structures dictated by formulaic grammar. By investigating using pragmatic techniques, the hope is that a more accurate understanding of the linguistic structures [governing discourse patterns] will emerge. Theoretical frameworks such as Centering Theory (Grosz, Joshi & Weinstein, 1995), Functional Grammar [FG] (Halliday, 2004), and Systemic Functional Grammar [SFG] (Halliday, 2004), aided by Conversation and/or Discourse Analysis [DA], have been used by modern researchers like Aroonmanakun (1999), Baron [Meepoe] (1999; 2000; 2001), and Dolphen (2017) to investigate the pragmatic structures found within the language (e.g., anaphoric dispersion) that affect discourse formation. A recent study by Dolphen (2017) utilizes Halliday's SFG model (2004), in conjunction with DA, to analyze Thai's anaphoric distribution patterns; attempting to provide solutions to previously unanswered questions and explanations about the rarely seen anaphoric patterns that research using BT is incapable of addressing.

SFG is an extended FG model that focuses on the way *meaning* is acquired, processed, and applied during the development of communicative discourse

(Birmingham, 2021; 11). SFG designates three levels of *meaning* used to create utterances – known as 'metafunctions' (as cited by Dolphen, 2017: Halliday, 2004):

1. Ideational metafunction – this function assigns [internal] meaning to logical and experiential knowledge obtained by the speaker as it is stored within the mind.

2. Interpersonal metafunction – this level of meaning refers to the way in which speakers use grammatical processes (e.g., clausal formation, modality, mood, polarity) [externally] to communicate '*about* something, *to* someone'.

3. Textual metafunction – this function combines the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions by assigning the meaning behind a speaker's thoughts to a communicative form containing grammatical structure. Essentially, this is the function in which discourse, itself, is created.

Each metafunction is essential to understanding how discourse manifests between speakers, but recently, the third metafunction has been a key component of the strategies developed to analyze the use of anaphora in Thai. Essentially, during the development of a discourse, this third metafunction allows a speaker [and listeners] to assign the *meaning* of a referent to its corresponding anaphor through the pragmatic functions of *theme* and *rheme* (Birmingham, 2021; 12).

In a recent study by Itsarate Dolphen (2017), the researcher used the textual metafunction to assign the pragmatic roles of theme and rheme to each nominal – including anaphora and zero-anaphora – found within the narratives of five Thai folktales. After designating these roles throughout, Dolphen performed a thorough DA searching for correlations [between anaphora and their referents] and identifying patterns found within the five discourses. Dolphen found that the assignation of pragmatic roles (i.e., theme/rheme), instead of syntactic (i.e., subject/object) or semantic (i.e., topic/focus)

roles, to each of the various syntactic constructions identified by Diller (1988), allowed for (previously discussed) anaphoric distribution patterns to manifest. By using this mixed method of analysis (i.e., SFG and DA), Dolphen was able to identify *all four* anaphoric distribution patterns used generously throughout the Thai language – including those previously found to be enigmatic (i.e., cataphora and long-distance anaphora). Therefore, for the first time ever, Dolphen's analytic strategy provides evidence of a *systematic* relationship between the pragmatic structures and the varying syntactic constructions found within Thai discourse. Also significant is the fact that Dolphen did not need to modify or add to the theory of SFG in order to account for all possible anaphoric distribution patterns or every syntactic variation recognized by the language.

While studies such as Dolphen's, utilizing pragmatic strategies coupled with DA to analyze languages heavily influenced by pragmatic structures, offer promising insight about the construction of the Thai language, it is important to acknowledge that these strategies are new and have a limited range thus far. In the case of Dolphen's study, the scope of his research is very narrowly focused and does not look at the most common forms of natural discourse. It is, therefore, prudent to verify that the pragmatic patterns, and the correlations made between these patterns and the amorphous syntax, apply to 'all' informal discourse, and that the results are repeatable.

"DP or NP?" – What the Theories Suggest

In this chapter four prevailing theories that are used in the study of Thai grammatical structures, are presented. These theories, chosen for the insight they offer about nominal phrase structure and syntactic variation found in the Thai language,

provide important information necessary to the consideration of whether Thai projects a DP or an NP; each supporting one side of the debate. Interestingly, while the theories discussed are based in two different linguistic disciplines (i.e., syntax and pragmatics), one theory from each [discipline] provides support for a DP construction and the other theory supports an NP construction.

Support for a DP Structure

Since Abney developed the DP-Analysis in 1987, it has been a widely accepted linguistic theory that all languages project DP structures for nominal phrases, even in languages that exhibit multiple syntax variations (such as Thai). In order to prove this hypothesis correct, researchers like Singhapreecha (2001), Kookiattikoon (2001), and Simpson (1994), have assigned new phrase structures (e.g., ClassP) and rules that attribute syntactic variation to the function and use of *classifiers* within Thai utterances. In these theories, the additional structures/rules dictate that Clfs are decisively linked to a D, even if it takes the form of a *null-determiner* (one which is absent from surface forms but is underlying to the structure). Evidence supporting this connection looks at the *specificity* of a nominal within an utterance – which, when a Clf is present, suggests that the nominal refers to a specific [very particular] one (similar to the English article "the"), while the absence of a Clf means the nominal is referring to a certain type but without specificity (like the article "a/an" in English). These strategies also look at the *necessary* inclusion of a secondary Clf when Qs are present, which call for the nominal to be readdressed in both specificity and quantity.

Also supporting the determination that Thai projects a DP (and all languages, for that matter), is the BT hypothesis introduced by Chomsky as part of his UG model in 1981. Proponents of this theory, including Hoonchamlong (1991), Jenks (2011), Larson (2005), Lasnik (1989), and Lee (2003), look at how anaphora ties directly to the syntax of the Thai nominal phrase through the assignation of syntactic roles (i.e., subject/object). The majority of these researchers see the radical use of *pro-drop* and the *ellipses of bare nouns* as key components to the inconsistent nature of Thai syntax, and attribute many of the variations to the inclusion of *zero-anaphora* in the syntactic positions of 'subject' and 'object' – which results in the absence of nominal terms in surface structures. However, these studies do not account for all anaphoric patterns identified in the language; *long-distance anaphora* and *cataphora* are often left unaddressed or disregarded, as Condition C designates these constructions impossible. On the other hand, Deen & Timyam (2018) suggest that the Thai language follows *all* Conditions set forth by Chomsky, evinced by the fact that children [in the early stages of development] elicit utterances that abide by these principles – including *Condition C*. Their study attributes syntactic variation to the *learned* pragmatic features of the language, qualifying that the inherent structure of the language is exhibited by early learners who are not familiar with the sociolinguistics dictating the culture. As such, with *Condition C* present in the language, as determined by Deen & Timyam (2017), the syntactic structure exhibited must project a DP for anaphora to correctly correspond to an antecedent through the syntactic roles imposed by BT[10].

[10] This hypothesis is derived from the notion that, in any language (including Thai), anaphora [syntactically] corresponds to a referent that is a specified nominal (e.g., a proper noun, an N accompanied by a D or Q, a modified noun that indicates a *type*, etc.).

Support for theNP Structure

In recent years, research of languages exhibiting linguistic processes (or structures) that allow for the omittance of syntactic and pragmatic features (e.g., determiners, bare nouns, anaphora, etc.) – such as Thai – has suggested that contrary to Abney's widely accepted [DP-Analysis] hypothesis, not all languages project an obligatory DP structure. According to scholars such as Bošković (2005, 2008), Chierchia (1998, 2009), Lyons (1999), and Piriyawiboon (2010), languages that utilize Clfs to mark number in nominal phrases, process the N as an argument (i.e., the subject or object), eliminating the need for a D (Birmingham, 2020; and Piriyawiboon, 2010). By its very nature, a DP insinuates that a D must be present in [most] nominal constructions in order for the N to be introduced as an argument; however, if the presence of a Clf removes the mandatory need for a D within its phrase structure – as it does in Thai, there is little need for a DP structure exist unless the constructed utterance uses a D to indicate *specificity* (Chierchia, 1998, 2009; and Piriyawiboon, 2010). Therefore, without the need for a DP, only the NP structure is mandatory in nominal phrases. Piriyawiboon (2010) addresses this issue by suggesting that an optional *SpecP* is added to nominal structure when a D is present [within an utterance] since the D functions as a *specifier*, not a number-marking instrument.

Just as BT attributes syntactic variance to anaphoric patterns within the Thai language, so too does the pragmatic strategy employed by Dolphen (2017) [discussed in the section 4.3.2]. Yet, in contrast to BT, Dolphen's study proposes that the anaphoric patterns identified throughout informal [Thai] speech actually indicate that the underlying

structure of nominal phrases is that of an NP. Dolphen hypothesizes that the relationship between nominals and referents is governed by pragmatic roles (i.e., theme and rheme), not syntactic ones, which cause [syntactic] surface structures to vary considerably when the pragmatics allow for *radical pro-drop and ellipses of bare Ns* (aka., *zero-anaphora*), *long-distance anaphoric distribution*, and *cataphora* to manifest. The rationalization is that, through the assignation of pragmatic roles – to anaphors and their referents (including zero-anaphors) – [native speaking] discourse participants communicating in Thai can easily redistribute and omit anaphora that is otherwise systematically dictated and required in languages that project DPs, because the pragmatic and sociolinguistic features which dictate the language also govern the roles (i.e., theme and rheme) maintained by referents[11]. This suggests, like Chierchia's NMP hypothesis (1998, 2009), that determiners are not mandatory to the syntax of nominal phrases, rendering the DP structure unnecessary.

[11]Understanding the pragmatic structures of the language does not mean that understanding Thai discourse is easy for any non-participant, native or non-native communicants, since the syntactic constructions permitted in the language vary considerably, rely heavily on shared knowledge between speaker and listener, and are a direct result of learned linguistic behavior.

The Dilemma: "DP or NP?"

Though clause-structure syntax is not what this thesis seeks to address, it has been illustrated that Thai syntactic and pragmatic features affect surface structures exhibited in utterances, revealing that the previously prescribed SVO word-order does not accurately characterize the language. Nonetheless, examining the pragmatic features that affect clause structure provide important insight about the function of nominal phrases within Thai discourse. By knowing the syntax and pragmatics affecting the nominal phrase, and understanding its function within an utterance, the question at hand – "Do Thai nominal phrases project a DP or an NP?" – can be adequately addressed.

Summary of Thesis

Syntactically, Thai nominal phrases exhibit a structure that mirrors English – they are head initial and [may be] comprised of a noun, adjective(s), a quantifier, classifier(s), and a determiner, in this order[12]. Nominals are subject to a complex honorific system – used to demonstrate the sociolinguistic dimensions of formality, politeness, age, gender, and speaker point-of-view – that conveys a rigid social hierarchy, whereby status, age, and [speaker-receiver] relationship moderate discourse construction. However, pragmatic features largely dictate language formation – namely, formal versus informal discourse, social context, and anaphoric distribution – permitting each of the grammatical categories (listed above) to be rearranged in, or omitted from, syntactic structures. This results in a variety of surface forms that refute the previously prescribed SVO word-order.

[12]Classifiers may also appear following the noun, but researchers suggest that this position is becoming optional (Piriyawiboon, 2010; and Singhapreecha, 2001).

In attempt to explain the distinct processes that affect the way Thai nominal phrases can be arranged, both internally (i.e., within the phrase) and externally (i.e., within an utterance), several theories were presented [in chapter four] examining linguistic features that affect the utterance construction, especially in informal speech. Early research seeking to resolve the question of whether Thai projects a DP or an NP, looks directly at the syntax of nominals to provide answers; primarily focusing on the function of number-marking Clfs within the language. Proponents supporting the DP projection look to Abney's 1987 DP-Analysis hypothesis – which theorizes that the DP is the underlying structure of nominal phrases in *all* languages – as justification for the proposal of the *Classifier Phrase* structure (Singhapreecha, 2001). This proposal links Clfs directly to Ds (including *null-determiners*), establishing that as a marker of quantity, a D of some type (i.e., quantifier, demonstrative, determiner), is inherent to the nominal structure. In contrast, the *Specifier Phrase* is proposed by supporters of an underlying NP structure (Piriyawiboon, 2010). Based on the NMP model established by Chierchia in 1997, the SpecP identifies Clfs as markers of *specificity* (not strictly numbers), noting that the presence of a Clf indicates the nominal as being either a highly specific type or as a countable entity; but as the Clf is not required in all constructions, and bare nouns [devoid of Ds] can act as the argument of an utterance, the DP structure is not always required – hence the optional SpecP.

Recently, modern research has attempted to resolve the DP/NP dilemma by examining the Thai nominal phrase through a more pragmatic scope, looking specifically at the role of anaphora in nominal structures, though results of this research still provide

contrasting conclusions. In support of an implicit DP structure, many researchers follow the binding principles (BT) established in 1981 as a part of Chomsky's UG model. Looking at Conditions A, B, and C as foundations for anaphoric distribution patterns, scholars seek to explain the radical pro-drop and ellipses of bare nouns used prolifically throughout Thai discourse by linking the syntactic roles of subject/object between anaphors and their referents. In constructions which [seem to] violate Condition C (e.g., *dropping of bare nouns, long-distance anaphora*), BT proponents often propose modifying the parameters of Condition C or including additional conditions – although some distribution patterns cannot be explained even through modification of the theory (i.e., *cataphora*). However, resent research studying anaphoric distribution in early child discourse suggests that the patterns which defy Condition C are a direct result of learned pragmatic behaviors and are not reflective of the underlying *DP* syntax (Deen & Timyam, 2018).

On the other hand, scholars supporting an NP projection look to Halliday's (2004) SFG model to better define the function of anaphora in Thai. Basic definition establishes that an anaphor is a pronominal term linked to a referent through syntactic (i.e., subject/object) or semantic (i.e., topic/focus) roles; instead, by analyzing the anaphor-referent link based on the pragmatic roles of *theme* and *rheme*, as Halliday's [SFG] 'textual metafunction' implies, recent research has successfully identified *every* distribution pattern present in the Thai language (Diller, 1988; Dolphen, 2017). This indicates that the assignation of these roles allows for the redistribution and omittance of anaphora that would otherwise be required if the DP was the underlying syntactic

structure; thereby rendering the DP structure unnecessary and providing support for an inherent NP structure.

As anaphors are used to represent full nominal phrases but inclusion or omittance is dependent on the sociolinguistics and pragmatics of the language, it is important to consider the affects anaphora has on nominal phrase structure. Whether Thai projects an underlying DP or NP construction, the syntactic function of anaphora (i.e., the fact that it appears in place of proper, reflectional, or bare nouns) is important to the DP/NP dilemma because it relies on the pragmatic structures established by the culture to construct successful discourse. This results in anaphoric patterns that produce the free word-order exhibited in the language (Diller, 1988).

Significant Observations

From the onset, the purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the intrinsic structure of Thai nominal phrases and to carefully examine the syntactic and pragmatic features that govern their construction. Central to this research is the fundamental question regarding which phrase structure Thai nominals project, *DP* or *NP* – a question that has been at the forefront of much linguistic inquiry [of the Thai language] since the 1990's. Following the extensive research conducted for this thesis, several personal observations deserve thoughtful consideration as this dilemma is contemplated.

Prevalence of Various Syntactic Structures in Informal Speech

As previously discussed, there is a great deal of research that provides evidence supporting the presence of various surface structures within Thai discourse (Diller, 1988;

Jenks, 2011; and Piriyawiboon, 2010; to name a few). In addition, personal exposure to the language through news media, reality and scripted television programs, and music, has increased my own awareness of the free word-order found in Thai discourse. These structures, while not [necessarily] a reflection of nominal phrase syntax, are derived from the application of pragmatic and sociolinguistic features directly to the nominal phrase. Anaphoric distribution patterns, pragmatic features (i.e., formality and situational context), and sociolinguistic factors – conveyed through a strict honorifics system – influence the way nominal phrases are manufactured (i.e., including/omitting anaphora, pronouns, Clfs, and Ds) and where they appear within (or are absent from) clausal structures. Therefore, in order to address the question of whether the Thai language projects a DP or an NP, it is important to understand: (a) how the various surface structures appear within the language (e.g., SVO, SOV, SV, V, etc.); (b) which [linguistic] processes produce structural variance by affecting nominal construction; and (c) what the outside influences are that prompt speakers to opt for one variation over the other.

Use of Determiners

Regardless of whether scholars have supported the projection of a DP or NP in Thai nominal construction, most research on nominal phrase structure has identified the D as a marker of *specificity* (encompassing *definiteness*, *number marking*, '*kind',* etc.). However, in a language that allows bare nouns to be used as arguments, the D becomes an optional grammatical feature that is often absent from surface structures. Additionally, Thai anaphoric distribution patterns suggest that use of nominals [in general] is not

necessary to establish a successful discourse; thus, if the N is not required, nor is a D. In short, without the requirement of a D in every nominal construction (even as a *null-determiner*), an underlying DP structure seems arbitrary and overly complex. It is easily explained by mimicking the structure of phonological rules: the presence of a D in Thai nominal constructions is used to indicate a level of *specificity*; however, other nominal constructions (devoid of Ds) appear elsewhere, thus indicating that DP constructions are only present as an exception to the rule.

The Nature of Classifiers

Linguistic research of the Thai language asserts that Clfs indicate a *type* of noun, illustrating (like Ds) a level of *specificity.* There are several facts that are important for consideration:

1. In nominal constructions without Ds, Clfs are not a required element of the phrase structure unless the speaker is indicating a specific *kind*[9] of noun or a particular noun known only through the context of the discourse.

2. In constructions where a D is present, a Clf is always required, pin-pointing a specific noun as *quantifiable*.

3. The Thai language commonly exhibits a unique pattern of Clf *reduplication* in nominal constructions, whereby the *same* Clf appears twice – once directly following the N, and once directly succeeding the Q. This reduplication of the Clf (like the inclusion of a D) indicates an increased level of *specificity* of the noun, as in (22a-c):

22) a) *no classifier*

mangkút mii-náam
mangosteen have-liquid
“juicy mangosteen”

b) *1-classifier*
mangkút lûuk mii-náam
mangosteen Clf have-liquid
“the juicy mangosteen”

c) *2-classifiers (aka., reduplication)*

mangkút lûuk mii-náam lûuk nóon
mangosteen Clf have-liquid Clf that over there
“that (specific) juicy mangosteen [over there]”

However, linguistic evidence shows that as the language evolves, the first Clf (following the N) is slowly being omitted from Thai utterances, calling to question whether speakers are attempting to reduce the redundant use of the Clf, similar to the use of radical pro-drop and zero-anaphora as a means for reducing redundancy; or is it reflecting an overall simplification of the language, eliminating an unnecessary element that is clearly indicated by the mandatory D necessary in double-Clf constructions?

The inclusion and omittance of Clfs in nominal phrase structure are important to the DP/NP dilemma because it provides support for the notion that the D is not a necessary feature of the language. Elimination of the first Clf (that succeeds the N) – shown to be slowly phasing out of nominal constructions – solidifies the link between the remaining Clf and the D (including Qs); and since this second Clf appears optionally only when

increased *specificity* is required, it indicates that the Clf (as well as the D) are not necessary to all nominal constructions.

Pragmatics Dictate Syntactic Structures

As discussed throughout chapters three and four, the Thai language is heavily governed by the pragmatics features and structures dictated by the sociolinguistics of the culture. First and foremost, the fact that formal and informal speech vary significantly – with formal speech governed predominately by 'westernized' grammatical standards and informal speech highly susceptible to pragmatic structures (e.g., anaphora, situational context, etc.) – compromises the question of what the underlying syntactic form is when two very different processes are readily accepted by speakers of the language. Second, the sociolinguistic features of the culture (i.e., a social hierarchy that distinguishes between class, age, gender, and relationship) heavily influence the pragmatic structures instilled within the language (e.g., a strict honorific system, anaphoric distribution patterns, reliance on shared knowledge/situational context between participants, etc.). This leads to the various surface structures present in Thai discourse, but also prompts discourse patterns to comply with the strictures set forth by the culture. As such, it is very complicated to analyze the underlying structure of the language without experiencing the language, and its complex processes, through personal use or considerable exposure to natural discourse. Last, some researchers have deduced that the radical pro-drop and zero-anaphora present in the language are a result of a shift in cultural perspectives (Baron, 1999, 2001; and Simpson, 1997). This hypothesis looks at patterned use of pronominal terms (and/or lack thereof) within formal and informal discourse, finding that

pro-drop and zero-anaphora are used as a leveling strategy whereby speakers purposely omit terms that reflect a social divide between participants (i.e., status, age, gender, relationship). As such, this complicates the linguistic structure by reinterpreting the pragmatic functions of the language and ignoring the sociolinguistic features that are so important to the internal and external structures of Thai nominals.

Neutralization of Terms

Over the past two decades, a noticeable shift has taken place within the structure of some gendered pronominal terms (Baron, 2001; Dolphen, 2017; Hoonchamlong, 2007a,b; and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom, 2005). First person pronouns, such as /chán/ "I", "me" [previously used singularly by females as a shorted, less formal version of /dichán/] and /kuu/ "I", "me" [used as an informal, often impolite term by males as a self-reference] have shifted from being dictated by the gendered patterns governed by the sociolinguistic structures of the culture, and have become neutral terms that are used by both genders. Additionally, age and relational-defined terms such as /phîi/ "older sibling" and /nɔ́ɔŋ/ "younger sibling" are now being used more generally to facilitate bonds and comradery among participants in occupational relationships, service relationships, and among participants who occupy a common space (e.g., attend the same school, frequent the same restaurant, attend the same religious event, etc.). All languages change and evolve, but the neutralization of elements within a system so heavily influenced by the pragmatics and sociolinguistics of the culture can lead to additional complications for early learners and non-native speakers of the language. This may ultimately lead to

different interpretations of the sociolinguistic features which influence the pragmatic functions governing the language, including the nominal phrase.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are many scholars that have offered their own analyses and opinions to the DP/NP query, and the issue is still a great source of debate among Linguists interested in the [beautiful] Thai language. Previous research methods have predominantly relied on syntactic theory to evaluate the internal structure of nominal phrases; however, with its free word-order, ellipses of bare nouns, zero-anaphora, and radical pro-drop, the language is arguably a "highly pragmatic language". It is, therefore, prudent to conduct further research that dons a more pragmatic lens. In this vein, Dolphen's (2017) study employed a combined method of analysis that utilized DA to analyze the application of pragmatic roles – prescribed by the *textual metafunction* of SFG (Halliday, 2004) (i.e., *theme* and *rheme*) – when applied to the syntactic functions of anaphora and their referents. This research offers important insight about the connection between pragmatic roles and syntax and provides the first systematic evidence for the different [anaphoric] distribution patterns found in the language. However, the scope of the study was very limited, focusing on five prerecorded narratives of Thai folklore, found in a 1980's archive. There are several factors that may influence Dolphen's findings, including speaker (are all narratives recorded by the same storyteller, who may exhibit certain linguistic features not used by all speakers), age of recordings (has the language changed in the past 4 decades, possibly skewing the results), content (folktales may have a predetermined mode of delivery that may affect the findings), and amount (only 5

narratives were analyzed). It would be beneficial to look at other types of natural discourse between multiple speakers, and within different registers, to verify that the anaphoric patterns attributed to the language (and identified by Dolphen) are present in all forms of discourse.

There are also many implications for research like Deen & Timyam's (2018) study, which evaluated the anaphoric distribution patterns exhibited by speakers from three age groups – early learners (3-5 years), early adolescents (10-12 years), and adults (20+ years). They established that young children abide by all three conditions of the BT (Chomsky, 1981), rarely displaying the anaphoric patterns that appear rampantly in adult discourse; but, by early adolescence, speakers have begun to acquire these patterns, suggesting that it is a learned pragmatic behavior. Further studies should investigate where and how these learned pragmatic behaviors are acquired, narrowing the focus to young learners who enter the national education system. Studies concentrating on questions such as: "Are pragmatic structures learned from parents or older speakers from within their community? If so, when?"; "Are these behaviors learned from teachers through conscious or unconscious instruction?"; "Are pragmatics actually a part of the curriculum, advertently or inadvertently?" Answers to these inquiries may provide valuable insight into language acquisition and the nature of learned pragmatic behavior, especially in languages that are deemed 'highly pragmatic'.

As language is ever-changing, it will be interesting to see what future research reveals about Thai and its underlying structures. Undoubtably, scholars will continue to

analyze and develop theories that focus on the unique syntactic and pragmatic features that govern the Thai language.

Conclusion of Thesis

In the first two chapters of this thesis, I have provided a thorough description of the syntax found in Thai nominal phrases. I have discussed the syntactic categories that may be present in nominal constructions – including nouns, adjectives, quantifiers, determiners, and classifiers – and the syntactic processes that dictate whether they are obligatory or optional within nominal phrases. I then looked to the predominant pragmatic structures and sociolinguistic features that affect nominal-phrase construction, establishing that though these structures alter the overall syntax of an utterance, they do so by directly influencing or modifying the nominal phrase. I followed this by investigating several prevailing theories that discuss the unique syntactic and pragmatic features of Thai nominal phrases, looking specifically at the use of classifiers and anaphora within the language. These theories provide valuable insight to the way Thai nominals (and discourse, in general) are developed and the amorphous surface structures that result from the syntactic and pragmatic processes dictated by the culture. Finally, I have discussed several important features that deserve careful consideration when addressing the question, "Do Thai nominal phrases project a DP or an NP?"

The extensive research I have conducted – aided by the many hours I have purposefully (and with great enjoyment) exposed myself to the language – and my analysis of the Thai nominal phrase, leads me to support the hypothesis that Thai projects an underlying NP structure. Following scholars such as such as Bošković, Chierchia,

Lyons, and Piriyawiboon, it is rational to conclude that the facultative use of Ds, along with Clfs, indicates that the DP is an optional structure. As such, to include Ds within a nominal phrase, an additional/optional structure may be utilized, such as Piriyawiboon's (2010) SpecP, without altering the foundational NP. This is further supported by the fact that when bare nouns can act as arguments, as is the case with *determiner-less languages* that use Clfs to mark *number* and/or *specificity*, there is no need for a D to introduce the N as an argument; as Thai fits this classification, it need not rely on the D to indicate the *type* of N present in an utterance. Also, as suggested by researchers such as Aroonmanakun and Dolphen – who see anaphoric distribution patterns as indicators that DPs are not required in the Thai language – the fact that successful [informal] discourse relies heavily on pragmatic-based features like *zero-anaphora*, *radical pro-drop*, and *ellipses of bare nouns* means that even full nominal phrases may be rendered unnecessary in many surface constructions; therefore, when no NP is overtly required, a DP certainly is not necessary (even covertly).

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