Conditional Constructions in Thai: A Lexicase Dependency Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating conditional constructions in Thai using Lexicase Dependency framework. The findings of the study reveal that semantically there are two main types of conditional constructions: affirmative and negative. Both constructions have different syntactic characteristics. The structures of the conditional affirmative constructions are of two subtypes. That is, the conditional affirmative constructions can appear with or without a subordinate conjunction *thaâ* "if". The *thaâ* "if" conditional affirmative construction functions as the subordinate clause of a whole construction (in the same way as **if clause** in English). In addition, the conditional affirmative construction without *thaâ* "if" also functions as the subordinate clause of a whole construction. Semantically this kind of conditional construction implies the meaning indicating conditions. The structures of conditional negative constructions are of two subtypes. That is, the conditional negative construction appears with a subordinate conjunction *thaâ* "if" and a negative adverb *mây* "not". This type of construction only functions as a subordinate clause of the whole construction.

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The other type of conditional negative construction has a double negative *mâ̂y--mâ̂y* “(if) not, (then) not”. The second negative clause functions as the first commanding verb or in a simple term the main clause, whereas the first negative clause functions as a subordinate clause of the whole construction.

Keywords: conditional construction; lexicase dependency grammar; subordinate clause; syntax

ประโยคเงื่อนไขในภาษาไทย: การวิเคราะห์ตามแนวทฤษฎีศัพทการกแบบพึ่งพา

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาประโยคเงื่อนไขในภาษาไทย โดยการใช้ทฤษฎีศัพทการกแบบพึ่งพา จากการศึกษาพบว่าประโยคเงื่อนไขในภาษาไทย สามารถแบ่งตามความหมายได้เป็นประเภทใหญ่ๆ 2 ประเภท คือ แบบบอกเล่าและแบบปฏิเสธ โครงสร้างของประโยคเงื่อนไขแบบบอกเล่าแบ่งได้เป็นประเภทย่อย 2 ประเภท คือ ประเภทที่ปรากฏร่วมกับคำเชื่อม *ถ้า* และประเภทที่ไม่ปรากฏร่วมกับคำเชื่อม *ถ้า* ทั้งสองประเภท ประโยคเงื่อนไขจะปรากฏเป็นอนุประโยค (ในทำนองเดียวกับประโยคเงื่อนไขของภาษาอังกฤษ) โดยทำหน้าที่ขยายประโยคหลัก ในทางความหมาย ประโยคเหล่านี้แสดงความหมายของการมีเงื่อนไขแฝงอยู่ ส่วนโครงสร้างของประโยคเงื่อนไขแบบปฏิเสธนั้น แบ่งออกได้เป็นประเภทย่อย 2 ประเภท คือ ประโยคเงื่อนไขที่มีคำเชื่อม *ถ้า* ปรากฏร่วมกับคำปฏิเสธ *ไม่* โครงสร้างเหล่านี้ปรากฏเป็นอนุประโยคเท่านั้น โครงสร้างย่อยอีกประเภทหนึ่ง คือ ประโยคเงื่อนไขแบบปฏิเสธที่มีคำปฏิเสธคู่ *ไม่...ไม่* ในโครงสร้างนี้ ประโยคที่มีคำปฏิเสธซ้อนทำหน้าที่เป็นประโยคกริยาหลัก ในขณะที่ประโยคที่มีคำปฏิเสธแรกทำหน้าที่เป็นอนุประโยค

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คำสำคัญ: ประโยคเงื่อนไข; ทฤษฎีศัพทการกแบบพึ่งพา; อนุประโยค;
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1. Introduction

Those who have worked on syntax applying Lexicase Dependency Grammar as a framework realize that Lexicase is a formal and explicit kind of framework that provides a simple tool to account for almost every construction in any language better than other contemporary syntactic theories. The constructions that are of interest in this paper are conditional constructions in Thai. It is the purpose of this paper to attempt to explain how a syntactic theory with considerable explanatory adequacy, namely Lexicase Dependency Grammar, can account for those constructions in Thai.

The often addressed question has arisen whether there is only a single type of conditional constructions in Thai or not. If not, how many types are there and what are the syntactic characteristics of those constructions? The result of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the diversity of languages and, at the same time, show that the universality of linguistic features can still be legitimately claimed.

2. Conditional constructions in Thai

Conditional constructions in Thai are considered to be a subtype of complex sentences in that they consist of a main clause and a subordinate clause headed by a conditional marker *thâa* "if" such as *thâa fŏn tòk rót kà tìt* "If it rained, a traffic jam would occur." What would happen if there were data without the conditional marker *thâa*? The question has arisen as to how to account for such data. For example, *kin mâak kà uân* "(If you) eat too much,

(you will) get fat." Another example is *mâ̂y lɔɔng mâ̂y rúu* "(If you) do not try (it), (you) will not know (what it is)." Both sentences are semantically interpreted as indicating a conditional, but syntactically there is no conditional marker *thâ̂a* to overtly indicate this. Even though these two examples are not overtly syntactically conditional, they are however interpreted as conditional. Accordingly, it would be of interest to investigate how Lexicase Dependency Grammar could account for this type of conditional construction in Thai.

Preceding the discussion of conditional constructions in Thai, I would like to lay out some background on how Lexicase Dependency Grammar has viewed the syntactic structures of co-ordination and subordination, something which is crucial in the proposed analysis presented in this study. A co-ordination construction is a construction where lexical heads are coordinating conjunctions, such as *and, but, or*. Such a construction is considered to be exocentric, that is, a construction which has two or more obligatory members. It must have two or more phrases and at least one coordinating conjunction (Starosta, 1988, p. 246). A subordination construction is also exocentric; it appears as the dependent sister of a matrix verb of a main clause. The construction consists of two heads, that is, it has more than one obligatory immediate constituent and takes its features from both of the heads. One of them is headed by a subordinating conjunction such as *if, though, although, however, nonetheless.* The other head is an obligatory predicate constituent (Starosta, 1988, p. 247).

The concept of co-ordination and sub-ordination is applicable to conditional constructions in Thai and is discussed below.

Conditional constructions in Thai appear as a complex sentence having the semantic meaning of stating a condition which is equivalent to an

if-clause construction in English. That is, a conditional construction consists of a main clause and a subordinate clause. It can be noticed that the adverb *kɔ̂ɔ* "then" can also appear within the main clause of a conditional clause. A subordinate clause is introduced by the conditional subordinate marker *thâa* "if" as in (1), or in some cases, there is no conditional subordinate marker as in (2).

(1) thâa ŋaan sèt chǎn kɔ̂ɔ cà pay
if work finish I then will go
'If I finished my work, then I would go.'

(2) fǒn tòk nàk náam kɔ̂ɔ cà thuâm
rain fall heavy water then will flood
'If it rained heavily, then it would get flooded.'

In (1) *chǎn kɔ̂ɔ cà pay Then I would go* is a main clause and *thâa ŋaan sèt* 'if I finished my work' is a conditional clause introduced by the conditional marker *thâa* 'if,' whereas in (3) *náam kɔ̂ɔ cà thuâm then it would get flooded* is a main clause and *fǒn tòk nàk if it rained heavily* is a conditional clause without a conditional subordinate marker.

The main criterion in establishing a conditional construction is one of the following criteria:

1. A conditional construction is headed by a conditional marker *thâa* "if" followed by a dependent sister predicate head to form a co-head construction. In some cases, the conditional marker *thâa* does not appear; nonetheless, the whole construction is interpreted as marking condition within the discourse context.

2. Within a main clause, the adverb *kɔ̂ɔ* can appear with or without the auxiliary *cà*. Or in some case, only the auxiliary *cà* occurs but without the adverb *kɔ̂ɔ*.

According to these criteria, conditional constructions in Thai are of two main types: conditional affirmative and conditional negative. A conditional affirmative construction semantically indicates affirmative meaning. Syntactically, the clause consists of a main clause and a subordinate clause. The conditional subordinate clause syntactically appears without the negative morpheme *mây* "not" as in (3-4).

(3) dèk chàlàat châat càrəən
child clever nation prosperous
'If the child is clever, the nation will become prosperous.'

(4) thâa cháy phǒngsákfɔ̂ɔk phâa kɔ̂ɔ cà sà-àat*
if use detergent clothes then will clean
'If I / you use some detergent, the clothes will then get clean.'

(*Note: In this study, *sà-àat* is treated as a verb because it occurs with the auxiliary verb *cà*. Normally, an auxiliary verb often appears with a verb, thus the occurrence of an auxiliary verb indicates that a lexical item which follows is a verb. Another reason is that *sà-àat* can be negated with the negator adverb *mây* 'not', therefore *sà-àat* is treated as a verb (Prasithrathsint, 2013, p. 94).

Both (3) and (4) are conditional affirmative constructions in that they appear without the negative morpheme *mây* "not." Sentence (3) is considered to be a conditional construction even though there is no conditional subordinate

marker *thâa* "if" because the meaning of the subordinate clause implies a condition. It should be noted that the interpretation as a condition is made within the context of discourse. In addition, the main clause can be expanded by the insertion of the adverb *kɔ̂ɔ* "then," which is an adverb that always appears in a main clause having a conditional clause functioning as its subordinate clause. The equivalent example to (3) is shown in (5):

(5) thâa dèk chàlàat châat kɔ̂ɔ càrəən
if child clever nation also prosperous
'If the child is clever, the nation will become prosperous.'

On the other hand, a conditional double negative construction semantically indicates negative meaning. Syntactically, the conditional construction consists of a main clause and a subordinate clause. Both clauses syntactically appear with the negative morpheme *mâymây* "not…not" as in (6-7).

(6) mây hĭw mây kin
not hungry not eat
(If I / you) don't feel hungry, (I / you) will not eat.

(7) (thîaw mɯaŋthay) mây pay mây dây lɛ́ɛw
travel Thailand not go not possible already
"(Travel in Thailand) if I / You don't go, it is not possible (to do that)."

(8) thâa raw mây faŋ khonùɯn khonùɯn kɔ̂ɔ mây faŋ
if we not listen others others then not listen
raw mŭ̀ankan
we in the same way
"If we don't listen to others, then others will not listen to us either."

Both (6-8) are conditional negative constructions in that the subordinate clauses *mây hǐw* “(if) I/you don’t feel hungry”, *mây pay* “(if) I/ you don’t go”, and *thâa raw mây faŋ khonùunn* “if we don’t listen to others” appear with a negative marker *mây* “not”.

In addition, the subordinate clauses of both (6) and (7) can appear with the conditional subordinate marker *thâa* “if” and the main clause can be expanded by the insertion of the adverb *kɔ̂ɔ* “then” as in (9-10). Thus, the entire sentences are conditional constructions and imply a conditional.

(9) thâa mây híɹw kv mây kin
if not hungry then not eat
“(If I / you) don’t feel hungry, then (I / you) will not eat.”

(10) (thî̂aw mɯaŋthay) thâa mây pay kɔ̂ɔ mây dây
travel Thailand if not go then not possible

lɛ́ɛw
already

“(Travel in Thailand) if I / You don’t go, it is not possible (to do that).”

3. Internal structure of conditional affirmative constructions

The internal structure of a conditional affirmative construction is not complicated. Within a Lexicase Dependency Analysis, since the conditional clause functions as the subordinate clause of a main clause, it only appears

as a dependent sister of a matrix verb. The internal structure of (3) is illustrated below:

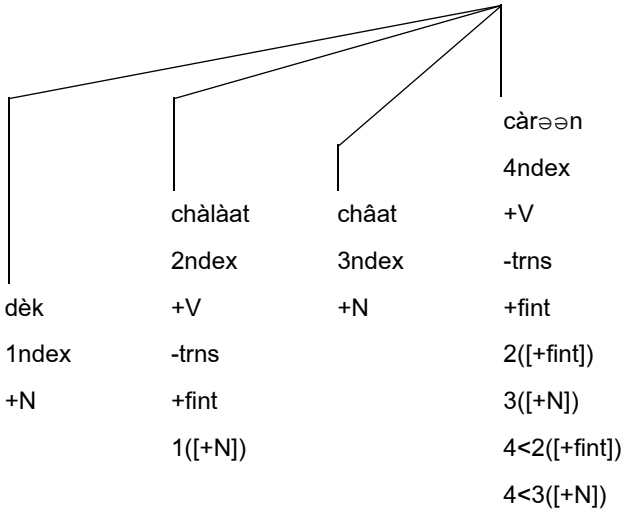

Figure 1. STEMMA I

This lexicase tree representation illustrates that *châat càrəən* “the nation will become prosperous” is a main clause. Within the main clause *càrəən* “become prosperous” is the head with *châat* “nation” and a conditional subordinate clause *dèk chàlàat* “the child is clever” appears as the left dependent sisters of a matrix verb. Within the conditional dependent sister clause *dèk chàlàat*, *chàlàat* “clever” is the head of the clause and in turn takes *dèk* “child” as its dependent sister.

If the conditional construction contains a subordinate marker *thâa* “if” as in (4), the whole construction is exocentric. That is, there are two obligatory immediate constituents. One is the subordinate marker *thâa* “if,” the other is the head verb of a subordinate clause. The internal structure of the conditional construction in (4) is illustrated below:

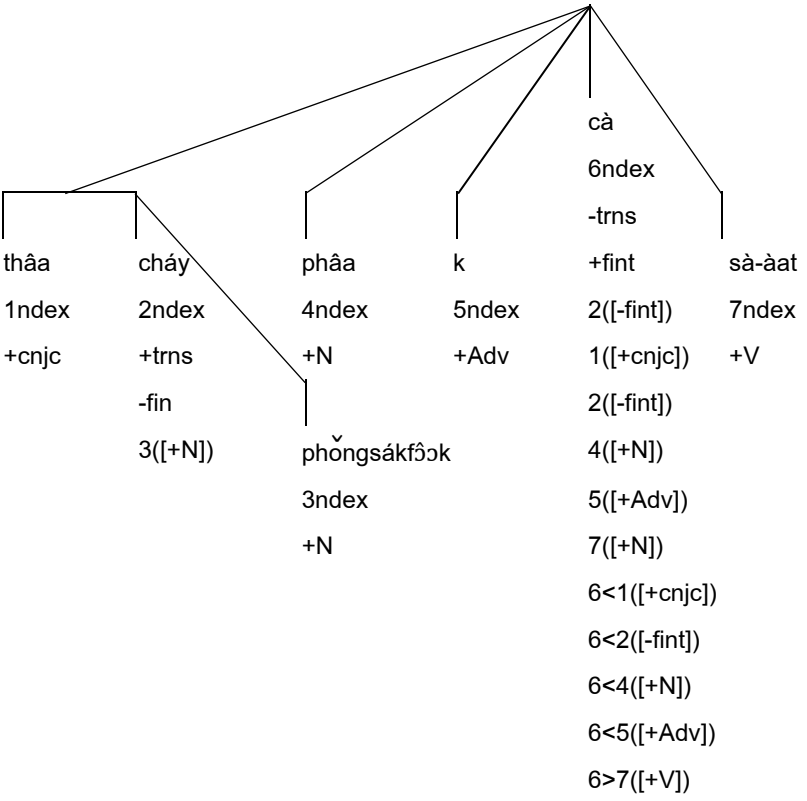

Figure 2. STEMMA II

This lexicase tree representation illustrates that *phâa kɔ̂ɔ cà sà-àat* "the clothes will get clean" is a main clause. Within the main clause *cà* is the matrix verb taking *sà-àat* "clean" as its dependent sister. The matrix verb also takes a conditional subordinate clause *thâa cháy phǒngsákfɔ̂ɔk* "if I/ you use some detergent" as its dependent sister, having two obligatory immediate constituents headed by *thâa* "if" and *cháy* "use" as the immediate predicate constituent.

It is not surprising that, within a Lexicase dependency grammar, a matrix verb can take not only an overt subject noun phrase but also other types of constituents such as a non-finite verb phrase or a subject surrogate construction as its dependent sisters (Pagotto, 1985, p. 5).

4. Internal structure of conditional negative constructions

As mentioned above, a conditional negative construction consists of a main clause and a conditional negative subordinate clause. The conditional negative constructions are of two subtypes: single conditional negative and double conditional negative. The single conditional negative construction is formed by using the negative adverb *mây* "not" to negate a verb in a conditional subordinate clause. (It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the syntactic evidence for treating *mây* "not" as an adverb. Those who are interested in this should see Indrambarya, 1994.) Moreover, a single conditional negative constructions can appear with the subordinate conjunction *thâa* "if" as in (11) and without *thâa* "if" as in (12):

(11) thâa mây khàyǎn rian cà sɔ̀ɔptòk
if not diligent study will fail
"If (you) do not study hard, (you) will fail."

(12) fǒn mây tòk khâaw cà taay
rain not fall rice will die
"(If) it does not rain, the rice crop will die."

In (11), the conditional negative clause *thâa mây khàyǎn rian* "if (you) do not study hard" is introduced by a subordinate conjunction *thâa* "if"

and it functions as the subordinate clause of a main clause *cà sɔ̀ɔp tòk* "(you) will fail". The internal structure of (11) is illustrated in Stemma III.

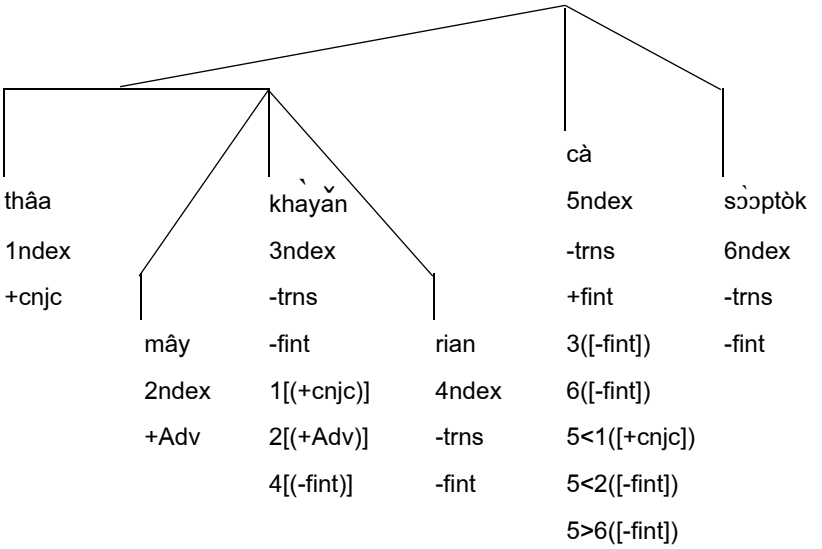

Figure 3. STEMMA III

This lexicase tree representation shows that *cà sɔ̀ɔptòk* "will fail" is a main clause. Within the main clause *cà* is a matrix verb taking *sɔ̀ɔptòk* as its dependent sister. The matrix verb also takes a conditional subordinate clause *thâa mây khaỳan rian* "if you do not study hard" as its left dependent sister. The conditional dependent sister clause *thâa mây khaỳan rian* is exocentric consisting of two obligatory immediate constituents *thâa* "if" and the immediate predicate constituent *khaỳan* "be diligent."

In (12) the conditional negative clause *fǒn mây tòk* "(if) it does not rain" appears without the subordinate conjunction *thâa* "if" and it functions as the subordinate clause of a main clause *khâaw cà taay* "the rice crop will die." The internal structure of (12) is illustrated in Stemma IV.

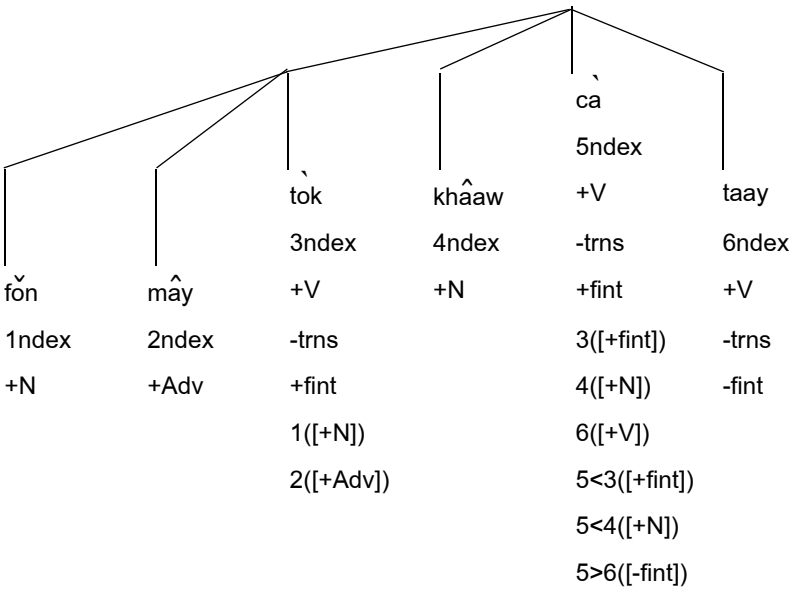

Figure 4. STEMMA IV

This lexicase tree representation illustrates that *khâaw cà taay* “the rice will die” is a main clause. Within the main clause *cà* is a matrix verb taking *khâaw* and *taay* as its dependent sisters. The matrix verb also takes a conditional subordinate clause *fǒn mây tòk* “(if) it does not rain” as its left dependent sister.

Let us now turn to the discussion of the syntactic properties of a double conditional negative *mây--mây* “(if) not, (then) not” construction in Thai. Consider the examples in (13-14):

(13) mây hǐw mây kin
not hungry not eat
“(If I / you) don’t feel hungry, (I / you) will not eat.”

(14) mây lɔɔŋ mây ruú
not try not know
"(If I / you) don't try, (I / you will) not know."

Sentences (13-14) are not imperative because the interpretation of a pronoun in both sentences can be either "I" or "you" and this depends on the speaker. If the speaker is speaking about himself or herself, the interpretation of the pronoun is "I." If the speaker is referring to the person with whom he or she is speaking, the interpretation of the pronoun is "you." Another reason why sentences (13-14) cannot be treated as imperative is that normally imperative sentences in Thai are negated by the negative word *yàa* 'do not' or *hâam* "(it is) prohibited", as in (15) and (16), respectively.

(15) yàa phûut sǐaŋ daŋ
do not speak voice loud
"Do not speak loudly."

(16) hâam kin khànǒm nay hɔ̂ɔŋrian
prohibit eat desert in classroom
"(It is) prohibited to eat some dessert in the classroom."

Sentences (13) and (14) cannot be negated by either *yàa* "do not" or *hâam* '(it is) prohibited', as (17-20) illustrate:

(17) *yàa hǐw yàa kin
do not hungry do not eat

(18) *hâam hǐw hâam kin
Prohibit hungry prohibit eat

(19)	*yàa	lɔɔŋ	yàa	rúu
	do not	try	do not	know
(20)	*hâam	lɔɔŋ	hâam	rúu
	prohibit	try	probihit	know

The question arises as to how to determine the internal structure of sentences containing conditional negative constructions. Consider sentence (14), repeated here as (21):

(21)	mây	lɔɔŋ	mây	rúu
	not	try	not	know

"(If I / you) do not try, (I / you) will not know)."

There are three possible ways to assign an internal structure to sentence (21). The first hypothesis is that *mây lɔɔŋ* and *mây rúu* are treated as a coordinated construction. Such a structure would look like the following:

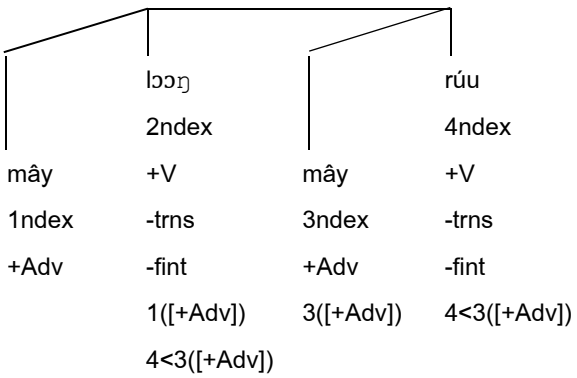

Figure 5. STEMMA V

However, this structure is not possible because if *mây lɔɔŋ* and *mây rúu* were to be coordinated, this would mean that the criteria for justifying a coordinate clause would be applicable with the *mây lɔɔŋ mây rúu* clause. We can consider these criteria step by step. The first criterion is that constituents

that are coordinated must have a coordinate conjunction, as in (22). However, there is no coordinate conjunction combining *mây lɔɔŋ* and *mây rúu*, as in (23):

(22) mǎa kàp mɛɛw pen sàttruu kan
dog and cat be enemy reciprocal
"Dogs and cats are enemies."

(23) *mây lɔɔŋ kàp mây rúu
not try and not know

The second criterion is that constituents in a coordinate construction can be reversible, as in (24). However, *mây lɔɔŋ* and *mây rúu* are not reversible in (25):

(24) nákriən lɛʔ ajaan khâw òprom mûawaannií
student and teacher participate work-shop yesterday
"Students and teachers participated in the workshop yesterday."

(25) *mây rúu mây lɔɔŋ
not know not try

The third criterion is that constituents in a coordinate construction can be multiple in number, as in (26). Again, the conditional negative *mây lɔɔŋ* and *mây rúu* cannot be multiple, as in (27):

(26) mǎa kàp mɛɛw lɛʔ kày pen sàtruu
dog and cat and chicken be enemy
kan
reciprocal

"Dogs, cats, and chickens are enemies."

(27)	*mây	lɔɔŋ	kàp	mây	rúu	lɛʔ	mây	faŋ
	not	try	and	not	know	and	not	listen

The conclusion is that the double negative construction *mây lɔɔŋ mây rúu* cannot be coordinated because its syntactic manifestation goes against the criteria for justifying claiming that it is a coordinate construction.

The second hypothesis is that *mây lɔɔŋ* “do not try” is treated as the first commanding verb of the construction, and the internal structure would look like the following:

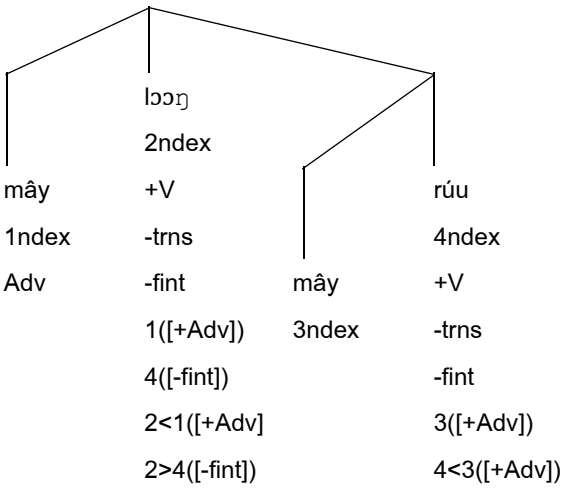

Figure 6. STEMMA VI

The internal structure illustrated in stemma VI will be discussed along with the third hypothesis.

The third hypothesis is that *mây rúu* “do not know” is treated as the first commanding verb of the construction, and the internal structure would be as in the following:

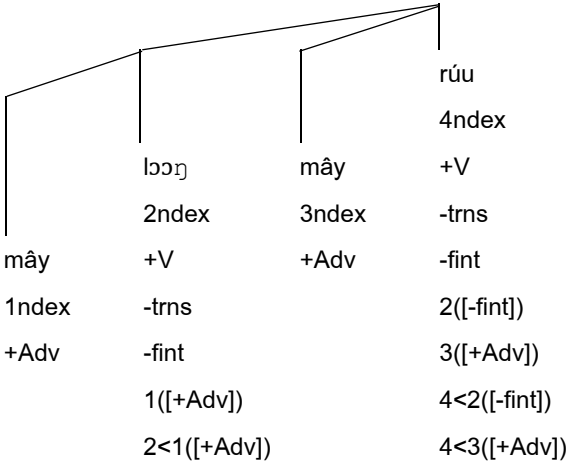

Figure 7. STEMMA VII

Ordinarily, in Thai, the criterion used to find the commanding verb in a clause is that the highest verb can be negated by the negative adverb *mâay* "not," e.g.

(28) khǎw wîŋ pay khûn rótmee
he run go board bus
"He ran to board the bus."

(29) khǎw mâay wîŋ pay khûn rótmee
he not run go board bus
"He did not run to board the bus."

(30) *khǎw wîŋ mây pay khûn rótmee
he run not go board bus

(31) *khǎw wîŋ pay mây khûn rótmee
he run go not board bus

Sentence (31) is grammatical if it is treated as having two separate predicate clauses instead of one predicate clause. The two clauses would be *khaw̌ wîŋ pay* “he ran” in which *wîŋ* is the first commanding verb and the clause *mây khûn rót̀mee* ‘(he does not) board a bus’ has *khûn* as the first commanding verb.)

The adverb *mây* “not” can negate only the verb *wîŋ* “run” in (29), but not the verbs *pay* “go” or *khûn* “board” in (30-31). This means that *wîŋ* is the commanding verb in the clause. Neither *pay* nor *khûn* can serve this function. Thus, the verb *wîŋ* is the verb that commands the other two verbs but not vice versa.

However, the negation test *mây* “not” cannot be used to determine the commanding verb for sentence (21) because in sentence (21) both clauses are negated by the conditional negative *mây-mây*. The verbs *lɔɔŋ* “try” and *ruu*́ “know” in both clauses can be treated as commanding verbs, and they can appear as formulaic structures.

However, there is another way to justify the internal structure of sentence (21), that is by the insertion of *kɔ̂ɔ* “then.” In Thai, there are two different lexical entries of *kɔ̂ɔ* functioning as an adverb: $kɔ̂ɔ_1$ meaning “also” and $kɔ̂ɔ_2$ meaning “then.” These two meanings differ in their syntactic distribution. Accordingly, $kɔ̂ɔ_1$ can appear without a preceding predicate dependent sister, whereas $kɔ̂ɔ_2$ always appears with a preceding predicate dependent sister (Savetamalya, 1996). Based on the syntactic characteristics of $kɔ̂ɔ_2$, the internal structure of sentence (21) would favor stemma VII over stemma VI. That is, if $kɔ̂ɔ_2$ is inserted, it must be inserted after *mây l kɔ̂ɔŋ* which would bring about sentence (32):

(32) mây lɔɔŋ kɔ̂ɔ$_2$ mây rúu

not try then not know

"(If you) don't try, then (you) would not know."

Sentence (32) indicates that *kɔ̂ɔ$_2$* as an adverb requires a preceding predicate dependent sister which will appear on the left side of the stemma. The structure would look like the following:

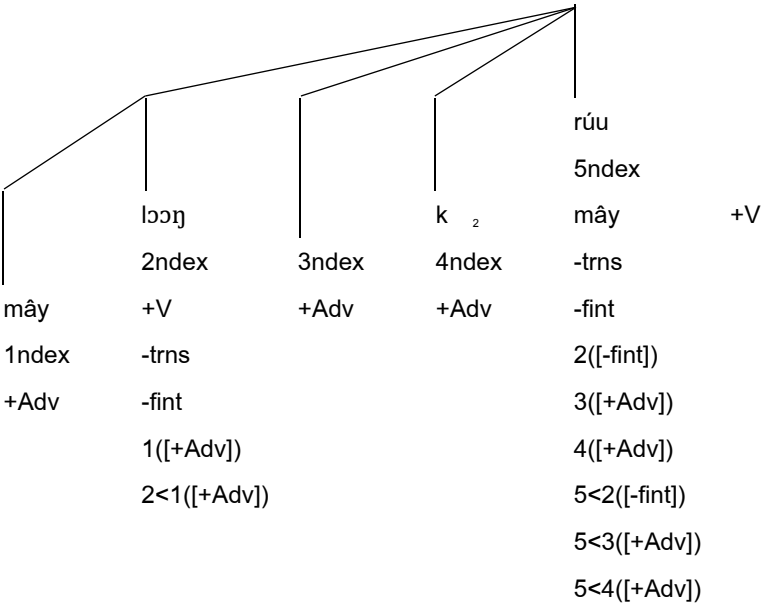

Figure 8. STEMMA VIII

The structure illustrated in stemma VIII helps to verify that the internal structure of the conditional negative construction *mây lɔɔŋ mây rúu* must be the same as that illustrated in stemma VII.

It also confirms that *mây lɔɔŋ mây rúu* is a negative conditional construction whose meaning is interpreted within the discourse context. *Mây rúu* is a matrix clause, whereas *mây lɔɔŋ* is a conditional clause.

The conclusion here is that by using Lexicase Dependency Grammar in analyzing the conditional negative *mâ̂y-mâ̂y* "(if) not, (then) not" construction in Thai, there is a strong syntactic argument which can justify selecting one structure over other structures and, importantly, would conform to native speakers' interpretation of this type of construction.

6. Conclusion

The result of the research indicates that the syntactic characteristics of conditional constructions in Thai are in some ways similar to so-called conditional clauses in English. In both languages, there is a main clause and a subordinate clause. A subordinate clause can be introduced by a subordinate conjunction *thâ̂a* 'if' in Thai or *if* in English. In some cases, both languages allow that the conditional constructions can appear without a subordinate conjunction. Even though the structures of conditional constructions of both languages are similar in this respect, the conditional constructions in Thai do differ, however, from those in English. Conditional constructions in Thai are of two main types: conditional affirmative and conditional negative, whereas the conditional constructions in English do not make any distinction between the affirmative type and the negative one.

The difference between the conditional affirmative constructions in Thai and the conditional negative counterpart is in terms of semantics. Conditional affirmative constructions convey positive meanings, whereas conditional negative constructions indicate negative meaning. The conditional affirmative constructions can appear with or without the subordinate conjunction *thâ̂a* "if." A conditional construction with *thâ̂a* "if," functions as the dependent

sister of a matrix verb. The conditional construction with *thâa* "if" requires an obligatory immediate predicate constituent to co-occur with it. Conditional constructions without *thâa* "if" semantically imply meanings indicating conditions which must be interpreted within the discourse context.

Conditional negative constructions in Thai allow the appearance of the negative adverb *mây* "not," or the double negative *mây--mây* "(if) not, (then) not." The first type of conditional negative construction appears with the subordinate conjunction *thâa* "if" and the negative adverb *mây* "not," only functions as a dependent sister of a matrix verb. The second type of conditional negative constructions contains a double negative, *mây-mây* "(if) not, (then) not." The second *mây* functions as the first commanding verb, or in simpler terms, as the main clause, while the first *mây* functions as the dependent sister of the first commanding verb.

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