Grammaticalization of Nouns into Prepositions in Thai[1]

Amara Prasithrathsint

1. Introduction

In my study on parts of speech in Thai (Prasithrathsint 2010), I classified words in Thai into eight categories: ***noun, verb, adjective, numeral, adverb, preposition, conjunction***, and ***particle***. In this study I found several problems that hindered me from reaching a neat classification of words in Thai due to the lack of morphological marking, ambivalent environments, and homophony of forms.   Among the problems are the equivocality of prepositions; i.e., a number of them can be regarded as other parts of speech: verbs or nouns.

The homophony of prepositions and verbs has been investigated by Intratat (1996), who came to a conclusion that there are 23 prepositions in Thai that are grammaticalized from verbs, such as *càak* 'from' (<'place'), *taam* 'following' (<'to follow'), *thĭŋ* 'at' (<'to arrive'), *sùu* 'toward' (<'to go toward'), *pen* 'as' (<'to be'), *troŋ* 'right at' (<'to be straight'), etc. Intratat (1996) shows evidence that these forms are still used as verbs, but very rarely, compared to when they are used as prepositions. She argues that the forms are originally verbs and that they have been grammaticalized into prepositions due to syntactic reanalysis, semantic bleaching and metaphorical extension.

Prepositions and postpositions, generally named "adpositions," are divided into two kinds depending on the part of speech from which they are grammaticalized. The above-mentioned prepositions grammaticalized from verbs are ***verb-based adpositions***, or ***V-adpositions***. In contrast with these, there are prepositions in Thai which are homophonous with nouns and seem to derive from them. They belong to the ***noun-based adpositions*** or ***N-adposition group***. They are words such as *thîi* 'at' (<'place'), *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'of' (<'thing'), *nâa* 'in front of' (<'face, front'), *lăŋ* 'behind' (<'back, rear'), etc. These words have been controversially treated. Some linguists (e.g., Starosta 1988, 2000, Savetamalya 1989, Indrambarya 1994) regard all of them as **relator nouns**, arguing that they all behave as nouns in that they can occur with a determiner; i.e., *thîi nĭi* 'this place', *khɔ̌ɔŋ nĭi* 'this thing', *nâa nĭi* ' this front', *lăŋ nĭi* 'this rear', etc. Other linguists, as (Panupong 1989, Prasithrathsint 2010) classify them as prepositions because they behave like other prepositions and their occurrence is regular like other grammatical words. Indeed, the controversy is justified by the ambiguity of these words, as shown later in this article.

However, the point that should be emphasized here is that even though such words are found to function as prepositions, their homophonous forms still behave as nouns in certain contexts. Indeed, to determine whether such words belong to either the nominal or prepositional class is not as interesting as how to identify them; i.e., when to label each of these ambivalent forms as a noun and when to label it as a preposition.

This paper focuses on this point. Its purpose is to argue that there are a number of identical word pairs in Thai that belong to the nominal and prepositional classes, and that the preposition counterparts derive from nouns through the process of grammaticalization.

The data on which the analysis is based was taken from a concordance of a number of ambivalent noun/preposition words from a corpus of Thai provided by the Department of Linguistics, Chulalongkorn University.[2]

It is hoped that the result of this study will contribute not only to specific and universal study of parts of speech but also to the theory of grammaticalization.

Following the theory of grammaticalization put forward by Sweetzer (1988), Heine et al (1991), Bybee et al (1994), and Traugott (1995), I hypothesize that some words the forms of which are identical with nouns are grammaticalized prepositions if they have the following characteristics:

(1) Syntactically, they are constituents in a different syntactic construction: PP instead of NP (reanalysis).

(2) Semantically, when compared to the noun counterparts, their meanings are generalized, bleached, metaphorical or figurative (semantic generalization, semantic bleaching or reduction, and metaphorical extension).

2. Syntactic differentiation of prepositions from nouns in Thai

Generally, as stated in Prasithrathsint (2010), we can separate nouns from prepositions by using the following criteria:

1) **A noun can occur with a determiner, but a preposition cannot.** For example:

(1)　*nǎŋsǐ day*　(*nǎŋsǐ* is a noun, occurring with *day*, a determiner.)
　　book　any
　　'any book'

(2)　**phǐa day*　(*phǐa* is a preposition. It cannot occur with *day*)
　　for　any
　　'for any'

2) **A noun can be subject or object of a verb, but a preposition cannot.** For example.

(3)　*chǎn　chɔ́ɔp　nǎŋsǐ* (The noun *nǎŋsǐ* is object of the verb *chɔ́ɔp*)
　　I　like　book
　　'I like books'

(4)　**chǎn　chɔ́ɔp　phǐa* (*phǐa* is a preposition. It cannot be object of the
　　I　like　for
　　'I like for.'　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　verb *chɔ́ɔp*)

---

[2] Retrived from the website *Thai Concordance Online* at this address: http://ling.arts.chula.ac.th/ThaiConc/

Analyzing the data in the present study, I found that these two criteria are not adequate for separating prepositions from nouns when they are homophonous and occur in the same syntactic environment; i.e., **both are followed by a noun.** In other words, when the context is ambiguous, it is not easy to distinguish a noun from a preposition, as in (5) the phrase means either 'the front of the house' or 'in front of the house'. With the former meaning, the word *nâa* is a noun but with the latter, it is a preposition.

(5) *nâa   bâan*
     front   house
     'the front of the house / in front of the house'

As the phrase structure rules in Thai allow both a noun and a preposition to be followed by a noun, we face a problem of testing whether the construction is a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase. To be specific, the construction *nâa bâan* can be either an NP or a PP. **I propose that we use the marked possessive structure to test whether it is an NP or a PP in each particular context.** The marked possessive structure in Thai contains the word *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'of', which precedes the possessor, as in (6) below.

(6) *nǎŋsǐi khɔ̌ɔŋ   khruu*
     book   of   teacher
     'The teacher's book'

In (6) the word *nǎŋsǐi* 'book' is a noun and can be possessed as evidenced in the possessive structure marked by the word *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'of'. **A preposition cannot be possessed and cannot appear in such a construction.** Therefore, we can test whether the word *nâa* is a noun or a preposition in the context where it occurs. In (7) the word *nâa* is a noun meaning 'front' because we can add the possessive marker *khɔ̌ɔŋ* to form a possessive construction--*nâa khɔ̌ɔŋ wát* 'the front of the temple.'

(7) *khǎw   maa   thîi   nâa   wát* (=*nâa khɔ̌ɔŋ wát*)
     he   come   at   front temple
     'He came to the front of the temple.'

In contrast, in (8) *nâa* cannot be analyzed as a noun because we cannot form a possessive construction from it. Therefore, it is analyzed as a preposition.

(8) *khǎw   maa   nâa   wát* (**nâa khɔ̌ɔŋ wát*)
     he   come   front temple
     'He came in front of the temple.'

The same argument can also be applied to (9) and (10). In (9) the ambivalent word *nâa* 'front' is a noun because we can form a possessive construction from it; i.e., we can add the possessive marker 'of' between it and the following noun. In contrast, in (10) the

70

word *nâa* 'front' is a preposition because it would be ungrammatical to form a possessive construction from it.

(9)   *khǎw yɨɨn wɨ phǒm*   *troŋ nâa kracòk*   (=*nâa khɔ̌ɔŋ kracòk*)
     he   stand comb hair   right at front   mirror
     'He stood combing his hair right at the front of the mirror.'

(10)   *khǎw yɨɨn wɨ phǒm*   *nâa kracòk*   (**nâa khɔ̌ɔŋ kracòk*)
     he   stand comb hair   front   mirror
     'He stood combing his hair in front of the mirror.'

It should be noted that the syntactic environment of *nâa* as a noun and that of *nâa* as a preposition are different as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively. In Figure 1, *nâa* (N) and another noun (*wát* 'temple') form a noun phrase (NP) which is object of the preposition (P) *thîi* 'at.' In Figure 2, *nâa* (P)+ the noun *wát* 'temple' form a prepositional phrase (PP) modifying the main verb *maa* 'come.'
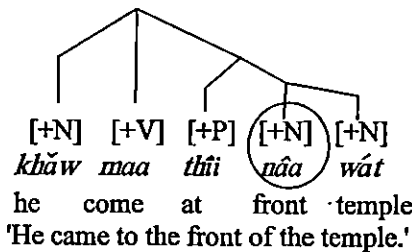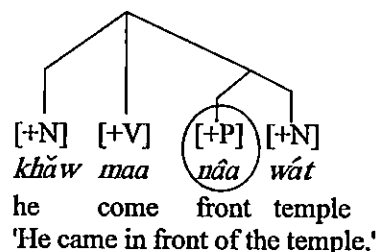

Figure 1: *nâa* as N   **Figure 2: *nâa* as P[3]**

3. Homophonous words that behave as nouns and prepositions

In addition to *nâa* shown above, there are 13 more ambivalent words that can be classified as nouns in some contexts and as prepositions in others. Based on the criteria of differentiating prepositions from nouns stated above, I will show how to distinguish them as follows. Note that if the word occurs alone without any other word as its constituent, it is clearly N. When it is followed by another N, then a test by adding the possessive marker *khɔ̌ɔŋ* will be conducted in order to decide whether the word is N or P.

(11) a. *lǎŋ* 'back' (N)   *khǎw hǎn lǎŋ hây chǎn* (object of V *hǎn*)
                        he   turn   back   to   I
                        'He turned his back to me.'

     b. *lǎŋ* 'back' (N)   *khǎw waaŋ nǎŋ-sɨ̌ɨ wáy thîi lǎŋ thoora-thát*
                        he   place   book   keep   at   back television set
                        'He kept the book at the back of (behind) a television set.'
          Test: *lǎŋ thoora-thát =lǎŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ thoora-thát*

---

[3] The principles of syntactic parsing and notations used in tree diagrams representing syntactic structures used in this study are based on Lexicase Dependency Grammar put forward by Starosta (1988).

c. *lǎŋ* 'behind' (P)

    mii   baaŋ-yàaŋ sɔ̌ɔn yùu <u>lǎŋ</u> rɔɔy-yím nán
    have   something hide be back smile   that
    'There is something hidden behind that smile.'

    Test: *<u>lǎŋ</u> rɔɔy-yím;* **<u>lǎŋ</u> khɔ̌ɔŋ rɔɔy-yím*

d. *lǎŋ* 'after' (P)

    raw   duu   thiiwii <u>lǎŋ</u> aahǎan-yen
    we   watch TV   after   food-evening
    'We watch the TV after dinner.'

    Test: *<u>lǎŋ</u> aahǎan-yen;* **<u>lǎŋ</u> khɔ̌ɔŋ aahǎan-yen*

(12) a. *nɔ̂ɔk* 'the outer part' (N)

    khǎw yàak pay   <u>nɔ̂ɔk</u>[4]
    he   want go   abroad
    'He wants to go abroad.'

b. *nɔ̂ɔk* 'outside (place)' (P)

    khon thay thɔ̀ɔt rɔɔŋ-tháaw   wáy <u>nɔ̂ɔk</u> bâan
    people Thai take off shoe   keep outside house
    'Thai people take off their shoes and put them outside the house.'

    Test: *<u>nɔ̂ɔk</u> bâan;*   **<u>nɔ̂ɔk</u> khɔ̌ɔŋ bâan*

c. *nɔ̂ɔk* 'outside (time)' (P)

    <u>nɔ̂ɔk</u> weelaa-rian nák-rian phûut phaasǎa-thìn   kàp khruu
    outside time-study student speak language-local with teacher
    'Outside the study time, students speak local dialects with their teacher.'

    Test: *<u>nɔ̂ɔk</u> weelaa-rian;* * *<u>nɔ̂ɔk</u> khɔ̌ɔŋ weelaa-rian*

(13) a. *nay* 'the inner part' (N)

    rîaŋ   woŋ   <u>nay</u>[5]
    matter circle inside
    'matter of the inner circle.'

---

[4] I did not find the word *nɔ̂ɔk* used independently except in this example. The construction *pay nɔ̂ɔk* could be interpreted as a compound meaning 'to go abroad'. It seems that in present day Thai the word *nɔ̂ɔk* is no longer used as a noun. The expression *pay nɔ̂ɔk* is evidence supporting the argument that this word used to be a noun.

[5] Similar to *nɔ̂ɔk*, I did not find any instance of *nay* occurring alone as a noun. It is found to be used as a modifier of another noun. Due to lack of evidence, to conclude that *nay* was used as a noun in earlier Thai is only a speculation.

b. *nay* 'in (place)' (P)   *năŋ-sɨ̆u nay   hɔ̂ŋ-samùt*
  book   in   library
  'books in the library.'

  Test: *nay hɔ̂ŋ-samùt, *nay khɔ̌ɔŋ hɔ̂ŋ-samùt*

c. *nay* 'in (time)' (P)   *nay   chûaŋ sèetthakìt-tòk-tàm*
  in   period economy-depress
  'In the period of economic depression.'

  Test: *nay chûaŋ; *nay khɔ̌ɔŋ chûaŋ...*

(14) a. *bon* 'the upper part' (N)

  khăw khîn pay yùu dâan bon[6]
  he   rise go   be   side upper
  'He went up to the upper part.'

b. *bon* 'on (concrete)' (P)

  khăw nâŋ   loŋ   bon   kâw-îi
  he   sit   down on   chair
  'He sat down on the chair.'

  Test: *bon kâw-îi; *bon khɔ̌ɔŋ kâw-îi*

c. *bon* 'on (abstract)' (P)

  kaan-miaŋ tɔ̂ŋ waaŋ yùu bon khunnatham
  politics   must lay be on moral principle
  'Politics must be based on moral principles.'

  Test: *bon khunnatham; *bon khɔ̌ɔŋ khunnatham*

(15) a. *nǔa* 'north' (N)   *khăw cá khîn nǔa mâychây loŋ   tâay*
  he   will go up north not   go down south
  'He will go up to the north, not go down to the south.'

b. *nǔa* 'above' (P)   *cintanaakaan mii   bòtbàat nǔa wítthayaasàat*
  imagination   have role   above science
  'Imagination has a role above science.'

  Test: *nǔa wítthayaasàat; *nǔa khɔ̌ɔŋ wítthayaasàat*

(16) a. *tâay* 'south' (N)   *khăw dəən-thaaŋ   càak nǔa   cròt   tâay*
  he   travel   from north reach south
  'He travels from north to south.'

---

[6] The word *bon* is not found to be used alone as a noun even though it was in Sukhothai Thai. (e.g., *liaw mɔɔŋ bon* 'turn to look at the space above') Similar to *nay*, it is mostly found to occur with a noun and functions as a modifier.

b. *tâay* 'under' (P)

chiiwítkhǎw yùu tâay itthíphon
life   he   be   under influence
khɔ̌ɔŋ phanrayaa
of   wife   .

'His life is under the influence of his wife.'

Test: *tâay itthíphon*; ** tâay khɔ̌ɔŋ itthíphon*

(17) a. *klaaŋ* 'middle' (N)

lǎŋ-càak klaaŋ dian sǐŋhǎakhom
after-from   middle month August
'after the middle of August'

Test: *klaaŋ dian* = *klaaŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ dian*

b. *klaaŋ* 'in the middle of' (P)

khǎw thaló kan klaaŋ ŋaan tὲŋ-ŋaan
they   quarrel each other middle party wedding
'They quarreled with each other in the middle of the wedding party.'

Test: *klaaŋ ŋaan;* ** klaaŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ ŋaan*

(18) a. *rim* 'edge' (N)

yàa waaŋ kɛ̂ɛw boriween rim tó
do not place glass area   edge table
'Don't put the glass on the edge of the table.'

Test: *rim tó* = *rim khɔ̌ɔŋ tó*

b. *rim* 'by' (P)

raw cà càtŋaan rim mɛ̂ɛ-naám
we   will arrange   party   by   river
'We will arragne a party by the river.'

Test: *rim mɛ̂ɛ-naám*; ** rim khɔ̌ɔŋ mɛ̂ɛ-naám*

(19) a. *thîi* 'place' (N)

nîi pen thîi khɔ̌ɔŋ chǎn
this be   place of   I
'This is my place.'

b. *thîi* 'at' (P)

chǎn cà pay phóp khun thîi ráan-aahǎan
I   will go   meet you   at   shop-food
'I will meet you at the restaurant.'

Test: *thîi ráan-aahǎan;* ** thîi khɔ̌ɔŋ ráan-aahǎan*

(20) a. *khâaŋ* 'side' (N)

rɔɔŋ-tháaw sɔ̌ɔŋ khâaŋ mây thâw kan
shoe   two   side   not   equal each other
'The two shoes (of the pair) are not equal.'

74

b. *khâaŋ* 'beside' (P) *chǎn dɔɔn maa nâŋ khâaŋ phɔ̂ɔ*

I   . walk come sit beside father

'I walked hither to sit beside my father.'

Test: *khâaŋ phɔ̂ɔ, *khâaŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ phɔ̂ɔ*

(21) a. *dâan* 'side' (N) *dâan níi khɔ̌ɔŋ tík mây khôy sǔay*

side this of building not quite pretty

'This side of the building is not quite pretty.'

b. *dâan* 'concerning' (P) *khǎw sǎmrèt kaan-sìksǎa dâan bɔrihǎan-thúrakìt*

he finish education side business administration

'He graduated in business administration.'

Test: *dâan bɔrihǎan-thúrakìt, *dâan khɔ̌ɔŋ bɔrihǎan-thúrakìt*

(22) a. *thaaŋ* 'way' (N) *raw tɔ̂ŋ phóp kan khrɯ̂ŋ thaaŋ*

we must meet each other half way

'We must meet half way.'

b. *thaaŋ* 'concerning' (P)

khaan-khèŋkhǎn thaaŋ thúrakìt mii mâak

competition concerning business have much

'There is much competition in business.'

Test: *thaaŋ thúrakìt; *thaaŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ thúrakìt*

(23) a. *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'thing' (N) *mɛ̂ɛ sɯ́ɯ khɔ̌ɔŋ maa mâak-maay*

mother buy thing come many

'Mother bought many things.'

b. *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'of (P) *mɛɛw khɔ̌ɔŋ chǎn hǎay pay sǎam wan lɛ́ɛw*

cat of I lose go a three daya already

'My cat had been missing for three days.'

Test: *mɛɛw khɔ̌ɔŋ chǎn; *mɛɛw khɔ̌ɔŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ chǎn*

c. *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'of (P) *khǎw yím khɔ̌ɔŋ khǎw khon diaw*

he smile of he person alone

'He smiles on his own.'

Test: *yím khɔ̌ɔŋ khǎw; *yím khɔ̌ɔŋ khɔ̌ɔŋ khǎw*

As can be seen in the above examples, an N/P ambivalent word tends to be ambiguous when it is followed by a noun forming an NP (N+N) or a PP (P+N) construction. I proposed to test such a construction by adding the possessive marker *khɔ̌ɔŋ* between the ambivalent word and the noun that follows it. When *khɔ̌ɔŋ* is

added, we consider whether the construction becomes grammatical or not. If the construction becomes grammatical, then it must be NP, and thus the ambivalent word is N. If the construction is ungrammatical after *khɔ̌ɔŋ* is added, then the construction is PP, and thus the ambivalent word is P. This kind of test should be a useful device for identifying whether an N/P homophonous word in a sentence is a noun or a preposition.

The fact that there are a number of such N/P homophonous words in Thai is due to a universal process of language evolution known as "grammaticalization," which will be accounted for in the next section.

4. Grammaticalization of nouns into prepositions

According to Bybee et al (1994:4), grammaticalization is a process whereby grammatical morphemes develop gradually out of lexical morphemes or combinations of lexical morphemes with lexical or grammatical morphemes. The mechanisms of grammaticalization are both syntactic and semantic. In this study I will concentrate only on these mechanisms: reanalysis, semantic bleaching, semantic generalization, and metaphorical extension, which serve as explanations as to how nouns are grammaticalized into prepositions in Thai.

4.1 Reanalysis of NP as PP

According to Hopper and Traugott (1993: 40-49) and Bisang (1998), in a process of reanalysis, one syntactic position is reanalyzed; i.e., the condition of its co-occurrence with some other constituent has changed. In the present paper we will see that the position of N is reanalyzed as that of P; therefore, its relationship with the following head N has changed--the construction has changed from an endocentric construction (NP) to an exocentric construction (PP), as shown in Figure 3 and and Figure 4. Reanalysis of nouns into prepositions has brought about structural ambiguity, as shown in (24), in which the word *nâa* may be interpreted as a noun meaning 'front' or a preposition meaning 'in front of.'

(24) *khǎw   yùu   nâa   bâan*
      he   be   front house
      'He is at the front of the house.' (N)
OR   'He is in front of the house.' (P)

Syntactically, there are two reasons why the construction *nâa bâan* in (24) can be interpreted as a noun followed by another noun. First, the N + N pattern[7] is a very common type of NP in Thai; for example, *mɛ̂ɛ phɯ̂an* (mother+friend) 'friend's mother,' *lǎŋ-khaa bâan* (roof-house) 'the roof of the house.' In this type of NP, the first N is the head and the second N[8] is a modifier. Secondly, the pattern of the verb *yùu* 'be/stay/live' followed by NP is also common. The NP after *yùu* 'be' signifies location; for example, *yùu*

---

[7] N+N pattern here means an NP composed of a head noun and a modifying NP.
[8] Head of another NP

76

bâan 'to stay home', *yùu rooŋ-rian* 'to be at school', *yùu khɔndoo* 'to live in a condominium', *yùu mɯaŋ-nɔɔk* 'to be abroad/ live in a foreign country', etc. Therefore, to analyze *yùu nâa bâan* as V + NP meaning 'to be at the front of the house' is justified. The structure is represented by Figure 3 below.
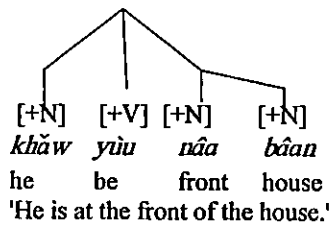


```
      [+N]    [+V]   [+N]    [+N]
      khǎw    yùu    nâa     bâan
      he      be     front   house
      'He is at the front of the house.'
```

Figure 3: Structure of the sentence in which *nâa* is N [9]

Another interpretation of (24) is that *yùu nâa bâan* means 'to be in front of the house.' The syntactic pattern of this construction would be V+PP, where *nâa* is a preposition meaning 'in front of' followed by the N *bâan* 'house'. The pattern of *yùu* 'be' followed by a PP is also a common structure in Thai. Therefore, to analyze *nâa bâan* in (24) as a PP is also justified as shown in Figure 4.


```
      [+N]    [+V]     [+P]    [+N]
      khǎw    yùu      nâa     bâan
      he      be       front   house
      'He is in front of the house'
```
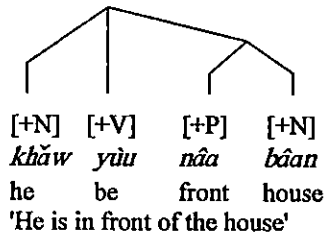
Figure 4: Structure of the sentence in which *nâa* is P

In present day Thai, it is more likely for *nâa* to be analyzed as a preposition than a noun because it cannot be possessed (**nâa khɔ̌ɔŋ*) in most contexts. However, since structurally it can be either a noun (see Figure 3) or a preposition (see Figure 4) , it is possible that a reanalysis has occurred, which has caused the structure in Figure 3 to become that in Figure 4. However, the older structure (Figure 3), which, according to the theory of grammaticaliztion, is the one that is used less at present, still exists in the language. The following diagram (Figure 5) represents the mechanism of reanalysis of NP as PP in Thai.[10]

---

[9] Note that this structural representation based on Starosta (1988) shows V as head of the sentence.

[10] Note that NP is an endocentric construction, the head N of which is represented by a straight branch line longer than that of the modifier, whereas PP is an exocentric construction represented by two equal lines representing two heads (P+N).
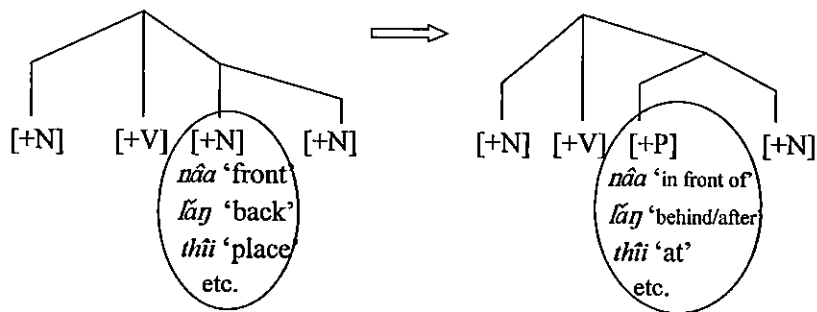
Figure 5: Reanalysis N as P

4.2 Semantic bleaching

Different linguists provide different definitions of "semantic bleaching." According to Sweetser (1988), semantic bleaching means "fleshing out" of meaning. Heine (1984) says that it means "desemanticization." Bybee and Pagliuca (1985: 59-63, cited in Heine et al 1991:40) explain that bleaching is "generalization or weakening of semantic content." Heine et al (1991: 40) add that "grammaticalization is viewed from the perspective of the source concept, which carries the 'full meaning,' whereas the output of the process is interpreted as an impoverished form, one that is emptied of, or has bleached out, the semantic specificities of its source. Examples of semantic bleaching that they provide are spatial terms that are derived from body part terms, e.g., 'behind,'< 'back,' 'in front' < 'breast,' 'toward' < 'eye,' and 'from' < 'hand.' This phenomenon is commonly found in many languages.

In this study, the result of the comparison of the meaning of the nouns and the meaning of their preposition counterparts shows that the lexical meanings of the words have been reduced to grammatical meaning. Particularly speaking, when nouns become prepositions in Thai, they lose the sense of **entity** and **concreteness**. Indeed, the lexical meanings of the nouns under study are fairly concrete; i.e., specific, definite and vivid. Two of them refer to tangible entities, e.g., *khɔ̌ɔŋ* 'thing,' *thîi* 'land/ place,' Others denote location or direction, e.g., *nɔ̂ɔk* 'the outer part,' *nay* 'the inner part,' *bon* 'the upper part,' *klaaŋ* 'the middle part,' *rim* 'edge.' *khâaŋ* 'side.' In contrast, the meanings of the grammaticalized forms (prepositions) are fairly abstract; i.e., vague and intangible. All of them signify location and direction, not in themselves but in relation to the nouns that follow them. Table 1 below is a conclusion of semantic bleaching of the nouns that are grammaticalized into prepositions. Note that the semantic features of the set of nouns are opposite to that of prepositions.

Table 1: Semantic bleaching

FORM	MEANING	
	N [+concrete, +entity]	P [+abstract, +relation]
khɔ̌ɔŋ	thing	of
thîi	land, place	at
nâa	front	In front of
lǎŋ	back	behind, after
nɔ̂ɔk	the outer part	outside
nay	the inner part	in, inside
bon	the upper part	on
nɯ̌a	north	above
tâay	south	under
klaaŋ	the middle part	amidst, in the middle of
rim	edge	by, beside
khâaŋ	side	beside
dâan	side	concerning
thaaŋ	way	concerning

4.3 Semantic generalization

By "semantic generalization" is meant here the widening of the scope of meanings. Bybee and Pagliuca (1985) explain that it is so called because it correlates with a generalization of the contexts in which the gram[11] can be used. It is found here that the grammaticalized prepositions signify more related things than the original nouns, as can be seen in Examples 11-23 and Table 2 below.

---

[11] A gram means a grammaticalized form, which is a grammatical word or morpheme.

Table 2: Semantic generalization

FORM	MEANING			
	N [+specific]	Related concept	P [+general]	Related concepts
khɔ̌ɔŋ	thing	non-human	of	human, non-human
thîi	land, place	space	at	thing, place, human
nâa	front	location	In front of	thing, place, human, period, season
lǎŋ	back	location	behind, after	thing, place, human, time
nɔ̂ɔk	the outer part	location	outside	thing, place, period
nay	the inner part	location	in	thing, place, human, time
bon	the upper part	location	on	thing, place
nɯ̌a	north	direction	above	thing, place, idea
tâay	south	direction	under	thing, place, idea
klaaŋ	the middle part	location	amidst, in the middle of	thing, place, time
rim	edge	location	by, beside	thing, place
khâaŋ	side	location	beside	thing, place, time
dâan	side	space, location	toward, concerning	direction, idea
thaaŋ	way	space	toward, concerning	direction, idea

4.4 Metaphorical extension

Some of the grammaticalized prepositions mentioned above can be cited as evidence of the process of metaphorical extension. According to Heine et al. (1991:55), The direction of semantic change in grammaticalization has to be from something that has to do with a **person** changing into something concerning an **object**, then a **process, space, time** and finally **quality** (PERSON>OBJECT>PROCESS>SPACE>TIME>QUALITY). They label this process "metaphorical extension." Table 3 below shows how this process plays a role in the grammaticalization of nouns into prepositions in Thai.

Table 3: Metaphorical extension

form	PERSON	OBJECT	PROCESS	SPACE	TIME	QUALITY
nâa	N 'face'	N 'front, season'		P 'in front of'	P 'during'	
lăŋ	N 'back' (human)	N 'back' (non-human)		P 'behind'	P 'after'	
khɔ̌ɔŋ		N 'thing'	P 'belonging to'			
thîi		N 'land'		N 'place' P 'at'		
nɔ̂ɔk		N 'outer part'		P 'outside'	P 'out of (period/season)'	
nay		N 'inner part'		P 'in'	P 'in/on (day/month/year)' 'during (period)'	
bon		N 'upper part'		P 'on'		
nǔa		N 'north'		P 'above'		P 'beyond'
tâay		N 'south'		P 'beneath'		P 'under (idea, influence)
klaaŋ		N 'middle part'		P 'amidst'	P 'in the middle of (day, month...)	
rim		N 'edge'		P 'by, beside'		
khâaŋ		N 'side'		P 'beside'		
dâan		N 'side, part'		P 'beside' 'toward'		P 'concerning, in the line of'
thaaŋ		N 'way'		P 'toward'		P 'concerning'

Examples of the use of grammaticalized prepositions with reference to PROCESS, TIME and QUALITIY

PROCESS
(25) *khɔ̌ɔŋ*   'of / belonging to'   *khɔ̌ɔŋ khruu* 'of the teacher'
                                            khɔ̌ɔŋ rooŋ-rian 'of the school'
                                            khɔ̌ɔŋ rabòp 'of the system'

TIME
(26) nâa   'during'   *nâa kèp-kìaw* 'during harvest'
                              nâa thɔ̂ŋ-thîaw 'during tourism'

81

(27) lǎŋ   'after'   lǎŋ *hâa-mooŋ-yen* 'after five in the evening'
                               lǎŋ_*wan-prakàat-phŏn* 'after the day of the result announcement'

(28) nɔ̂ɔk   'out of'   nɔ̂ɔk weelaa prachum 'out of the meeting time'
                               nɔ̂ɔk rɨ́duu *kèp-kìaw* 'out of the harvest season'
                               nɔ̂ɔk chûang lót-raakhaa 'out of the sale time'

(29) nay   'in'   nay wanníi   'today'
                               nay dɨan sǐŋhǎakhom 'in August'
                               nay chûa-mooŋ níi 'in this hour'
                               nay pii nâa 'next year'
                               nay sàpdaa kɔɔn 'in the previous week'

(30) klaaŋ   'in the middle of' klaaŋ sǒŋkhraam 'in the middle of the war'
                               klaaŋ ŋaan-thalɛ̌ɛŋ-khàaw 'in the middle of the press conference'

QUALITY

(31) dâan   'part, side'   khɔɔŋ-kaan dâan kasèet 'projects concerning agriculture'
                               khwaam-rúu dâan kaan-mɨaŋ 'knowledge of politics'

(32) thaaŋ   'way'   kaan-thót-lɔɔŋ thaaŋ wítthayaasàat 'scientific experiments'
                               ŋaan-wícay thaaŋ phaasǎa-sàat 'linguistic research'

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study may help solve the problem of conflict in word classification in Thai. Words that are ambiguous as to whether they are nouns or prepositions are shown here as two sets of homophonous words functioning either as nouns or prepositions. This paper provides evidence of their usage and proposes criteria to differentiating them. The most effective criterion seems to be possessive marking: *prepositions cannot occur in the possessive construction but nouns can.* Finally, this paper shows how prepositions are grammaticalized from nouns through the process of structural reanalysis and semantic change.

References

Bisang. Walter. 1998. Grammaticalization and language contact, constructions and positions. *The Limits of Grammaticalization,* edited by Anna Giacalone Ramat and Paul J. Hopper. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 13-58.

Bybee, Joan L. and William Pagliuca .1985. Cross linguistic comparison and the development of grammatical meaning. In *Historical Semantics, Historical Word Formation. Trends in Linguistics, Studies and Monographs 29,* edited by Jacek Frisiak. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bybee, Joan L., Revere Perkins, and William Pagliuca. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Heine, Bernd, Ulrike Claudi, and Friederike Hünnemeyer. 1991. *Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Heine, Bernd. 1984. *Grammaticalization and Reanalysis in African Languages.* Hamburg: Helmut Buske.

Hopper, Paul J. and Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 1993. *Grammaticalization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Indrambarya. Kitama. 1994. Subcategorization of verbs in Thai. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii.

Intratat, Charatdao. 1996. Grammaticalization of verbs into prepositions in Thai. Ph.D. dissertation, Chulalongkorn University.

Panupong, Vichin. 1989. *The Structure of Thai: Grammatical System.* Bangkok: Ramkhamhaeng University.

Prasithrathsint, Amara. 2010. *Parts of speech in Thai: A Syntactic Approach.* Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press. (ชนิดของคำในภาษาไทย การวิเคราะห์ทาง วากยสัมพันธ์)

Starosta, Stanley. 1988. *The Case for Lexicase.* London: Pinter Publishers Ltd.

Starosta, Stanley. 2000. The identification of word classes in Thai. *Essays in Tai Linguistics,* edited by M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh and Arthur Abramson. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Publishers.

Savetamalya, Saranya. 1989. Thai nouns and noun phrases: a lexicase analysis. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii.

Sweetzer, Eve E. 1988. Grammaticalization and semantic bleaching. *Berkeley Linguistic Society* 14: 389-405.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 1995. Subjectification and grammaticalization. *Subjectivity and Subjectivisation,* edited by Susan Wright and Dicter Stern. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 1988. Pragmatic strengthening and grammaticalization. *Berkeley Linguistics Society* 14: 406-16.