

On the Non-Referential Subject /man/ 'it' in Thai

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- (1) *thāā sīi kloŋ yài man kōō nàk*
if buy camera big it also heavy
'If you buy a big camera, it could be heavy.'
- (2) *man yāāk caŋ lèek khōō níi*
it difficult much math CL this
'It's so difficult.'
- (3) *nalika man sǎá léew*
clock it out of order already
'The clock is broken already.'

- (4) *wan nīi thammai man plia caŋ*
day this why it exhaust much
'Why am I so exhausted today?'
- (5) *th ĩ bāan man kōō sawàaŋ*
arrive house it also light
'When (I) get home, it's dawn.'

Objectives

- Identify the non-referential /man/ as distinct from referential ones.
- Identify its co-occurrence with Thai verbs

DATA

- Data collected between 2009-2010
- Source of data
 - Local Thai newspapers
 - TV news,
 - talk shows
 - CU concordance

Identifying non-referential Subject

A non-personal subject /*man*/ 'it' cannot be replaced by other words. Semantically, it has no reference in context

(6) *man* *mây plòtphay sǎmràp khon paythiaw*

It NEG safe for person go out

tàng caŋwàt

different province

No reference

'It's not safe for anyone going upcountry.'

(7) A: *pâa mây klua nuu rǎǎ*

Aunty NEG fear snake Q

'Doesn't Aunty fear snake?'

Reference

mây klua man cǎŋ kàt rǎǎ

NEG fear it will bite Q

'Aren't you afraid that it will bite you?'

B: *mây khít rǎk phró? man tòkcay*

NEG think Prt because it startle

'I didn't think of it because I was startled.'

No reference

Identifying non-referential Subject

It can be left out within context.

(8) a. *wan nǐi thammay man rǎǎn caŋ*

Day this why it hot so

Why is it so warm today?

b. *wan nǐi thammay rǎǎn caŋ*

Day this why hot so

'Why is it so warm today?'

Characteristics of the non-referential subject /man/

- Non-referential subjects co-occur with impersonal verbs
 - Impersonal verbs : verbs which do not take a referential subject (Indrambarya 1996)
 - True-impersonal verbs : Verbs which do not require an overt subject.
 - Pseudo-impersonal verbs : Verbs which require an overt non-referential subject e.g. expletive 'it' in English

Impersonal Verbs in Thai

Indrambarya (1996) identified *kàət* 'happen', *mii* 'exist', *prakòt* 'appear' as true-impersonal verbs in Thai.

Cooccurrence of the non-referential subject /man/

- It can co-occur with true impersonal verbs in Thai in informal and colloquial usage.
 - Verbs indicating existence
 - Verbs indicating degrees of possibilities, accessibilities, ease, time, temperature

Verbs denoting existence

- (9) a. *kàət phàndinwǎy thîi yîipùn*
happen earthquake at Japan
'There was an earthquake in Japan.'
- b. **man kàət phàndinwǎy thîi yîipùn*
it happen earthquake at Japan
'There was an earthquake in Japan.'

/man/ is not acceptable in formal usage.

Verbs denoting existence

- (10) a. *mii* fǒntòk fǎakhanon lǎe? lomkanchòok
exist rain thunderstorm and wind strong
sàpdaa níi
week this
'There is some rain, thunderstorm and strong
wind this week.'
- b. **man mii* fǒntòk fǎakhanon lǎe? lomkanchòok
it exist rain thunderstorm and wind strong
sàpdaa níi
week this /man/ is not acceptable in formal usage.
'There is some rain, thunderstorm and strong
wind this week.'

Verbs denoting existence

- (11) *toon rǎæk man kǎet thii ayúttaya*
part first it happen at Ayutthaya
'At first it happened in Ayuthaya.'

/man/ is widely acceptable in informal and
colloquial speech.

Verbs denoting degrees of possibility

Verbs denoting degree of possibility

- (12) (*man*) *l'ichi'a* wǎa sàt léklék cà?
it unbelievable that animal small will
mii phít ráayræŋ
have poison severe
'It is unbelievable that small animal can be
poisonous.'

Verbs denoting degree of possibilities

verbs denoting degree of possibility

- (13) (*man*) *penpaydây* wǎa kháw plâat rǒtfay
it possible that he miss train
thiaw nán
CL that
It is possible that he missed that train

Verbs denoting degree of accessibility

Verbs denoting degree of accessibility

- (14) (man) mây ηây thii cà lhm kray
It NEG easy that will forget who
sak khon
Quantifier person
'It's not easy to forget someone.'

- (15) (man) pen khwaamphît chán rĕ thii
it be fault I Q that
thoə pay mây than rôt fay
you go NEG catch train
'Is it my fault that you missed the train?'

Verbs denoting degree of accessibility

- (16) man pokatĭ rĕ man sitthiphĭsèet

- It normal or it privilege
- 'It's normal or it's a privilege'

verbs denoting time

- (17) kwàa cà? thĭj bán (man) ca? đĭk mâak
more will arrive house it will late much
'By the time (we) get home, it will be very late.'

verbs denoting time

(18) kwàa cà? thǎn bân (man) kôw sawàaŋ
more will arrive house it then light
'By the time (we) get home, it's dawn.'

Verbs of temperature

(19) wan nii thammay (man) ron caŋ
day this why it hot much
'Today why is it so warm?'

Pseudo-impersonal Verbs

- Verbs requiring a non-referential subject /man/ 'it'.
- The non-referential subject /man/ cooccurs with pseudo-impersonal verbs denoting feeling or psychological state, rather than action verbs.

Use of /man/ to indicate alienation from certain unpleasant action or activity.

Verbs of feeling

(20) man / tǎn pùat nɔn nǎay mâydây
it I pain lie on back NEG
nɔn khwâm kôw mâydây
lie on one's chest also NEG
'It's painful. (I) cannot lie on my back. (I) cannot lie on my chest.'

Cooccurrence with verbs of psychological state

- (21) thuk wan nii man kôo mii ñon kan
every day this it also have upset together
'Nowadays, there might be some upsetting.'

Verbs of psychological state

- (22) chán hǎw vs. man hǎw
I hungry it hungry
'I'm hungry'
(23) chán lɛm vs. man lɛm
I forget it forget
'I forgot'
(24) Sababay man lóoŋ
comfortable it relieve
'I'm happy. I'm relief.'

Other verbs

- (25) thǎŋ baan man ca lóŋ
Arrive home it will empty space
'When we get home, it's an empty area.'
(26) man kà? mây thùuk nà?
it estimate NEG touch prt
'I couldn't figure where it is.'

/Man/ as impersonal marker

- personal verbs [-mprs]
- ↓ /man/ 'it'
- impersonal verbs [+mprs]

Conclusion

- The non-referential subject /man/ may cooccur with true-impersonal verbs in informal speech.
- The non-referential subject /man/ may cooccur with pseudo-impersonal verbs. It is the marker for changing any personal verbs into impersonal verbs to alienate oneself from certain actions or activities.