COMPLEXITIES OF THAI COPULAR CONSTRUCTIONS

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Abstract
This article presents an analysis of syntactic and pragmatic characteristics of copular constructions in Thai with both elicited data and data taken from naturally occurring texts. In this article, we claim that Thai presents copular-construction complexities. We have found that there are a number of verbs such as pen, jù, kʰič, dâːjkèː and teʰaj functioning as copulas. They not only link subject and non-verbal predicates but also verbal predicates that normally form predicates on their own. Not all of these copulas can freely carry verbal features to copular clauses. We also illustrate that Thai copular constructions can be best accounted for in terms of pragmatic interpretations. While the copulas pen and jù: are predicational, kʰič: and dâːjkèː: convey non-predicational readings. The copula dâːjkèː: is a variation of kʰič: in specification readings. In contexts other than declarative statements, the copula teʰaj is preferable to the others available in COP-NP constructions. In addition, copular omission is allowed in either some clausal structures subject to verbal features or certain pragmatic environments.

Keywords: copular constructions, syntactic characteristics, pragmatic interpretations

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1 Introduction
Traditionally, the word “copula” lexically means connection or linking. A typical definition of “copula” is a “word that links a subject and a predicate” (Narahara 2002:16). Studies in different linguistic perspectives have modified the definition that characterize the grammatical category of “copula” and the grammatical relations among “subject”, “copula”, and “predicate”.

Based on morphologically complex languages such as English and other European languages, the term “predicate” has been traditionally taken as the combination of a copula and a post-copula grammatical category such as nominal predicate and adjectival predicate. The copula functions as a linker between the subject and the predicate element and carries verbal inflectional features. Lyons (1968), for instance, claims that the principal function of the copula ‘to be’ in Russian, Greek and Latin is to serve as the locus in surface structure for the marking of tense, mood and aspect. Stassen (1977) considers the copula to be a dummy which does not contain any meaning. This work proposes the Dummy Hypothesis in which the copula is basically a “hat-rack” for categories of verbal morphology. Hengeveld (1992) proposes that the copula is meaningless or “semantically empty”, merely carrying inflectional features—marking for tense, aspect and modality—for predicate phrases. Radford (1997) defines the copula as a verb used to link a subject with a non-verbal predicate. Considering the copula as a verb, this work implies that it has the morphological property that can carry a range of inflections including past tense.

In the functional-typological perspective, Li and Thompson (1976), for instance, have generally described the subject of a clause as the phrase that has a ‘doing’ or ‘being’ relationship with the verb in that sentence. The predicate, in contrast with the subject, commonly refers to the function of a verb phrase even though a predicate is not necessarily a verb phrase. This means that in a language with verbless clauses, two juxtaposed noun phrases such as John teacher can express a characterizational meaning such as the copular clause ‘John is a teacher’. Arguably in such a construction, ‘teacher’ functions as a predication but is not a
verb phrase. Accordingly, Givón (2001) specifically proposes that a copular clause is a simple clause (main, declarative, affirmative and active clause) which semantically represents a state, either permanently or temporarily. The subject of a copular clause, thus, occupies the semantic role of either patient or dative of state. Most of the lexical-semantic load of the predicate is not carried by the copula itself, but rather by its non-verbal predicate, either a noun phrase or adjective phrase. In many languages other than European, copulas are needed only in tense-aspects other than present and habitual. This means that a non-verbal element like ‘teacher’ can function as a predicate on its own.

1.1 Previous Studies on Thai Copulas
Cross-linguistically, copular constructions have been the focus of a large number of studies. Following Higgins’ taxonomy which pragmatically distinguishes four types of copular clauses—predicational, specificational, identificational and equational (Higgins 1979)—quite a number of works have investigated copular clauses in particular languages in semantic and functional terms. Certain pieces of work (e.g., Curnow 1999, Givón 2001) point out that while certain languages have only one copular construction, others have two or sometimes three different constructions. The choice of construction in these cases depends upon discourse and grammatical factors such as tense-aspect, polarity, the status of the clause as main or subordinate, the person of the copula subject, and the semantic relation expressed.

Other studies (e.g., Pustet 2003, Niimura 2007) report that some languages obligatorily have an overt copula which heads the verb phrase of a copular construction, while in some other languages, the copular construction may consist of constituents that are just juxtaposed without any copular verb. In languages such as Russian, Arabic (Avgustinova and Uszkoreit 2003), an Ogoni language in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2004), and Qiang, a Tibatan language (LaPolla and Huang 2007), for example, copulas are absent in the present tense but must be present in the future/past tense. This is very common in languages that have verbless clauses. The default is taken as being the present moment, but if, for example, a characterizational clause is located in another temporal setting, then a copula serves as the vehicle for carrying the tense-aspect-modality marking. In a language such as Chinese (Tang 2001), however, the copula can be freely optional in a copular construction.

As for the sources of copulas, it has been observed that copulas are mainly from verbs and pronouns. The grammaticalization process which turns full verbs or the other non-copular elements into copulas has been termed “copularization” (Hengeveld 1992, Stassen 1997, though see Pustet 2003 for a slightly different terminology). It is well-attested in the literature that full verbs may develop into functional elements including copulas. This has even happened in English; the past tense forms of be come from wes meaning ‘to stay, to remain’ (Devitt 1994). Moreover, as revealed by LaPolla (2006), the copula in the Rawang language, a Tibeto-Burman language of northern Myanmar, is an intransitive verb in that it takes intransitive morphology, but is not like other intransitive verbs in not being able to take the causative prefixes and in being able to take two unmarked arguments. One of the most widely known cases where demonstratives or pronouns have become copulas is illustrated in Li and Thompson (1977), a seminal paper on the development of copula morphemes. The work shows that the Modern Mandarin shì in equational sentences has been copularized from a pronoun since there was no copula in Archaic Chinese (11th -3rd B.C.), and shì occurred as a pronoun.

In Thai, there are a number of studies focusing on certain copulas. They focus on the interpretation differentiation of the copulas pen and kʰɨː and their aspectual properties. Kuno and Wongkhomthong (1981), to start with, provide a discussion of the distinguished use of the two copulas. The article relates the copula (COP) pen to Higgins’ predicational clauses and kʰɨː to his specificational and identificational ones, as in (1)\(^1\).

\[
(1a) \quad kʰon \quad tʰiː \quad teʰːn \quad rðk \quad *pen/kʰiː \quad teʰːn \\
\text{person} \quad \text{REL}^2 \quad \text{I} \quad \text{love} \quad \text{COP} \quad \text{John}
\]

‘The person that I love is John.’

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\(^1\) Tonal transcriptions in this article are from the version of Haas (1964) where the middle tone is shown by no mark, the low tone by /ˈ/, the falling tone by /ˈ/, the high tone by /ˈ/ and the rising tone by /ˈ/.  
\(^2\) relative
Kuno and Wongkhomthong indicate that the sentence carrying $kʰɨ$: in (1a) is used in a clause that identifies the person that the speaker likes best as John. It cannot be interpreted as a clause that presents as one of the characteristics of the person that the speaker likes best the fact that he is John. Therefore, the clause is exclusively identificational. The copula pen appears in predicational clauses like (1b). Also, they claim that either copula can appear in the same clause depending on the speaker’s intention. That is, in the example (2), if the speaker intends to present one of John’s characteristics, pen is used. On the other hand, if the speaker intends to equate John and the person he (the speaker) likes best, then $kʰɨ$: is used.

(1a)  $jɨːpɨn \ pen*/kʰɨ:\ \ pràːtɤːt\  \ ʔuːsāː.hâːkam$

Japan  COP  country  industry

‘Japan is an industrial country.’

(2)  $tɛːn\ \ pen/kʰɨ:\ \ kʰon\ \ tɨː\ \ tekʰān\ \ râk$

John  COP  person  REL  I  love

‘John is the person that I love.’

Takahashi and Shinzato (2003) follow Kuno and Wongkhomthong (1981) in spirit. Specifically, their study investigates the difference between the two Thai copulas, $kʰɨ:$ and pen, and illustrates that the underlying principle to account for the difference between these two copulas is the cognitive psychological dichotomy of “fast/sensation-like vs. slow/ thought-like” processing, or “holistic vs. analytic” processing, thereby implicating the increasing degree of the speaker’s information processing time. There are many pieces of evidence to support this characterization such as the co-occurrence with epistemic modals or modal adverbials, hypothetical situations, combination with a negative marker, difference in meaning, and referentiality. In addition, the study compares these copular clauses to copularless clauses, and analyzes them using Langacker’s (1990) stage model, specifically the concept of viewing arrangements. It is argued that they parallel Langacker’s distinction between “off-stage” vs. “on-stage” viewer. That is, copular clauses tie in with the off-stage viewer (subject noun phrase is not at the scene) while copularless clauses are associated with the on-stage viewer role (subject noun phrase is at the scene). In a wider perspective, this study was an attempt to account for the two Thai copular clauses and copularless clauses with more comprehensive and broader principles rooted in cognitive psychology. In this attempt, many seemingly unrelated semantic/pragmatic concepts (identificational vs. predicational; high modality vs. low modality), and structural dichotomies (copular vs. copularless; $kʰɨ$: vs. pen) can be found to be connected.

Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005) propose that the two different copulas play the roles in different pragmatic contexts, namely, pen in attributive while $kʰɨ$: in definitive contexts. In this work, pen is treated differently as a semi-verbal which indicates that an object, a person, or a concept is in some state. The copula $kʰɨ:$, on the other hand, is a linker which introduces the name, label, or definition of an object, person, or concept.

Hedberg and Potter (2010) confirm Kuno and Wongkhomthong’s analysis by presenting relevant data to large groups of participants, to examine some gaps in the data they discussed, and to bring the Thai data to bear more concretely on the current copular clause controversy. The small differences in the survey data are explained in terms of “type shifting”; namely, different participants construed the sentences in different ways, consistent with different ways of type shifting the sentence elements.

Recently, Chiravate (2012) has also provided a study on the two copulas, pen and $kʰɨ$: based on the observation that the copula $kʰɨ$: only occurs in a positive environment, whereas the copula pen can occur in both positive and negative environments. This study attempts to explain why the two copulas differ based on the notion of polarity-sensitivity since the polarity-sensitive copula in Thai does not carry the type of meanings that English polarity-sensitive items do. Having found that aspect is a restriction over a verb phrase similar to polarity-sensitivity, this study also investigates the aspectual properties of the two copulas. It proposes that the difference in polarity-sensitivity is due to the status of pen and $kʰɨ$: as verb and non-verb, respectively. What possibly makes pen a verb and $kʰɨ$: a non-verb is their aspectual properties of [-stativity] and [+stativity], respectively. Contributing to the study of aspect and polarity sensitivity, this study demonstrates how Thai copulas differ from the copula be in English. That is, in English, the copula be is used for a variety of senses including characterization (or attribute) and identification (or designator). In Thai, however, pen deals with characterization and $kʰɨ$: with identification, respectively. Moreover, while a
copula is typically considered a verb in the same way be is in English, the copulas in Thai are not necessarily verbs. Here, in accordance with Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005), pen is considered a verbal copula while kʰɨː is considered a non-verbal copula. That the copulas in Thai differ from the copula in English in characteristics and classification suggests that the macro-category of the so-called copulas is too vague to describe cross-linguistic variation.

Up to this point, we have seen that the past studies have provided somewhat satisfying accounts for the difference between the uses of the two typical copulas, pen and kʰɨː. However, we have observed that there are some other verbs, such as jùː, dâj{kʰəː} and teːdaj functioning as copulas that should not be left undiscussed. These additional copulas operate in different syntactic structures and pragmatic/communicative contexts from the ones where the former two copulas occur. Therefore, to provide an insightful account of copular constructions in Thai, a discussion should be holistic or characterized by comprehension of the parts of the copular system as intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole. Specifically, we investigate plausible copulas, syntactic structures and pragmatic aspects and hope to illustrate that all the types of information act in such a way as to have an effect on another.

In the following sections, we start with some grammatical aspects of the Thai language that are essential to our analysis. In section 2, we discuss syntactic characteristics of Thai copular constructions and point out how Thai copulas conform to or deviate from the notion of “prototypicality”, with data both elicited and taken from naturally occurring texts. We next attempt to examine the pragmatic aspects of all copulas exhaustively in section 3. Finally, we examine constraints on copular omission in section 4.

1.2 Some Basic Information and Grammatical Aspects in Thai

The Thai language is spoken in Thailand located in Southeast Asia; it belongs to the Southwestern Tai branch of the Tai language family. There are four major Thai dialects: Northern, Northeastern, Southern and Central Thai. The dialect discussed here is the Central Thai variety mainly spoken in Bangkok and the central part of Thailand. This dialect is also the official variety in Thailand.

Grammatically, the Thai language, like some other Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean, is best characterized by having a topic-comment clausal structure (Ekniyom 1977, 1982 and Burushphat 1982) in which the noun phrase of the most salient and/or topical referent occurs first in a clause, as shown in (3).

(3) kʰāw ʔaːjúː jìːn
s/he age stand
‘S/he has a long life.’

In (3), the topic is kʰāw and the comment consists of ʔaːjúː as the subject and jìːn as the verbal predicate. This characteristic is identical to typical clauses in Chinese.

In terms of morphology, Thai is classified as an isolating language, a type of language with a low morpheme-per-word ratio. Most words are composed of a single morpheme displaying one or more syllables, and new words are mainly formed via the process of compounding. An example of a simple clause is shown in (4).

(4) maːliː kʰāːj ʔaːkʰâːw keːŋj ʔaːtəːləː sòːt]
Malee sell rice curry in market fresh
‘Malee sells rice and curry in a fresh market.’

Nouns can be modified by various modifier phrases following them such as qualitative as in (5a), demonstrative as in (5b), attributive as in (5c), possessive as in (5d), and possessive as in (5e) either with or without a classifier (CLF), as stated in Singnoi (2000). The reading with a classifier pragmatically differs from the one without a classifier involving the degree of specificity (Singnoi 2000 and Singhapreecha 2001). This is one typologically notable property of Thai.

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3 Also see Kookiattikoon (2001), Singhapreecha (2001), Jenks (2011 and 2012), and Huang and Jenks (2014).
Aside from being the head of a noun phrase, a noun itself can modify another noun without any classifier, appearing immediately after the modified noun, as shown in (6).

(6)  râj  bêːn  [pʰɔːk  nân]  
farm    sugarcane  
‘sugarcane farm’

In Thai, verbs display a distinct category which reveals various characteristics and grammatical functions. In terms of transitivity, even though they are generally classified as intransitive as in (7a) or transitive as in (7b), without making use of morphology, transitivity seems to be not that absolute: a number of Thai verbs are neither clearly transitive nor intransitive.

(7a)  kʰǎw  lɔːj  dâːj  
s/he    float    can  
‘S/he can float (in the air/water).’

(7b)  kʰǎw  lɔːj  kràːʔtoŋ  
s/he    float    flower basket  
‘S/he floated a flower basket’

Also, verbs can be semantically divided into action as in (8a) or state as in (8b), as shown below.

(8a)  kʰǎw  nɔː.n  dîk  
s/he    sleep    late  
‘S/he sleeps late.’

(8b)  kʰǎw  tɔːʔlát  
s/he    clever  
‘S/he is clever.’

4   possessive
Either state or action verbs can also function as nominal modifiers, the concepts represented by adjectives in English, as respectively shown in (9).

(9a) \( kʰ\text{áw} \quad \text{pen} \quad \text{dèk} \quad \text{di:} \)  
s/he be child good  
‘S/he is a good child.’

(9b) \( kʰ\text{áw} \quad \text{pen} \quad \text{dèk} \quad \text{rian} \)  
s/he be child study  
‘S/he is a studious child.’

In addition, state verbs can function as adverbs following the main verbs in the clauses. As exemplified in (10), the verb \( \text{di:} \) functions as an adverb modifying the verb \( \text{rian} \).

(10) \( kʰ\text{áw} \quad \text{rian} \quad \text{di:} \)  
s/he study good  
‘S/he studies well.’

It is common in Thai that a verb, as a predicate, can occur in adjacent to another, without any morphological connection, to show a particular semantic relation. This syntactic aspect is known as serial-verb construction, a well-known characteristic of the Thai language (Thepkanjana 2006 and Wongwattana 2012). An example is shown in (11).

(11) \( kʰ\text{áw} \quad \text{do:n} \quad \text{kin} \quad \text{ʔajtim} \)  
s/he walk eat ice-cream  
‘Walking, s/he ate ice-cream.’

Consequently, a number of second verbs, especially directional verbs, have been grammaticalized to act as prepositions, as shown in (12).

(12) \( kʰ\text{áw} \quad \text{do:n} \quad \text{paj} \quad \text{ro:ŋrian} \)  
s/he walk go school  
‘S/he walked to school.’

However, not all second verbs as such have completely changed to be in the new category. A large number of them still maintain the former function—main verbs—in the present. The verb \( \text{paj} \) is among those that still acts as the main verb, as illustrated in (13).

(13) \( kʰ\text{áw} \quad \text{paj} \quad \text{bā:n} \quad \text{tʰúk} \quad \text{ʔa:tʰit} \)  
s/he go house every week  
‘S/he goes home every week.’

2 Syntactic Characteristics of Copulas  
According to the definitions of copulas in morphologically complex languages above, we can summarize the prototypical characteristic of copular clauses by means of the syntactic functions of copular verbs as shown below.

1) A predicate marker that is added to grammatical categories that do not form predicates on their own
2) A linker between either patient or dative subject and non-verbal predicate
3) A syntactic carrier to carry tense and other verbal inflectional features to a clause that contains a non-verbal predicate
The definition repeats or emphasizes the predicate as non-verbal and suggests that a copular verb functions as a predicate marker added to the grammatical categories that normally do not form predicates on their own. This is true for languages such as English and other European languages. Example (14) presents the occurrences of the Standard English copula be with its post-predicates such as a noun phrase (NP), adjective phrase (AP) and prepositional phrase (PP) since they cannot function as predicates on their own. In contrast, a verb phrase (VP) which can function as a predicate on its own prohibits the occurring of the copula (Zhan and Sun 2013).

(14a) *This a cup. (COP-NP)
(14b) *The cups full. (COP-AP)
(14c) *The cup on the desk. (COP-PP)
(14d) *He was break the cup. (COP-VP)

In Thai, we argue that copular clauses deviate from these copula characteristics in that there are many copulas, that copular clauses can convey verbal predicates, and that some copulas do not carry verbal features. Therefore, to provide the syntactic discussion of Thai copular clauses, we would divide it into three sections: copulas, syntactic and semantic properties and verbal features, as below.

### 2.1 Copulas

There appear five copulas in Thai; that is, pen, jù:, kʰɨː, dâːjk èː and teʰâj , as exemplified below.

(15a) kʰǎw pen pʰonlâːmian diː.
s/he COP citizen good
‘S/he is a good citizen.’

(15b) mɔːtəːsaj jùː naj bâːn
motorcycle COP in house
‘The motorcycle is in the house.’

(15c) nân kʰiː kʰamtɔː p
that COP answer
‘That is the answer.’

(15d) pʰuː teʰâˈnâː dâːjkèː buakʰâːw poː prâˈmûk
person win COP Buakaw Por Pramuk
‘The winner is Buakaw Por Pramuk.’

(15e) man teʰâj panhâː máj
it COP problem Q
‘Is it a problem?’

All the copulas have been copularized from lexical verbs, for example, pen ‘to be able, to be alive’\(^6\), jùː ‘to live, to be available’, kʰiː ‘to resemble’\(^7\). dâːjkèː ‘to go to’ and teʰâj ‘affirmative, to be right’ (Royal

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\(^6\) Also see Jaratjarungkiat (2012) working on the development of pen in Thai.
Academy of Thailand, 2011). Not only did these copulas come from verbs, but they can still be used as main verbs in modern Thai, as shown below.

(16a) plaː tua níː pen riː taːj
fish CLF this be alive or die
‘Is the fish alive or dead.’

(16b) kʰáw jùː diː kin diː:
s/he live good eat good
‘S/he lives happily.’

(16c) man kʰìː kān
they resemble REF
‘They are similar.’

(16d) raŋwan teːáːnáː lásː tâːjkêː tʰiːm síː deːŋ
award win best go to team color red
‘The first winner award goes to the red team.’

(16e) teːkâj, teːkān tʰam ʰiːŋ
right, I do REC
‘Yes, I did it myself.’

The first three copulas—pen, jùː and kʰìː—are used in different copular syntactic structures as discussed in section 2.2 below while, unlike English and some other languages, the last two copulas—dâːjkêː and teːkâj—are variations used in different pragmatic/communicative contexts as discussed later on in section 3.

2.2 Syntactic and Semantic Properties

Formally, it seems that any kind of complement is possible in copular clauses in Thai. Post-copula elements can be not only non-verbal elements such as noun phrase, prepositional phrase and clause (S) but also verbal elements such as verb phrase and adjective phrase regardless of the high restriction of some types, as discussed below. This results in five copular clause forms—COP-NP, COP-PP, COP-AP, COP-VP and COP-S. This is not incompatible with the first prototypical syntactic principle of copulas stating that a copula is added to grammatical categories that do not form predicates on their own. Examples are in (17).

(17a) kʰáw kʰìː kʰâːtâːkâːn
s/he COP murderer
‘S/he is the murderer.’

(17b) kʰá:kàː jùː bon tôː
ting COP on table
‘The belongings are on the table.’

(17c) kʰáw pen bâː
s/he COP insane
‘S/he is insane.’

^7 However, this lexical verb is not generally communicated in the present: it is still found in certain Thai dialects other than the central Thai, especially in the north and northeastern areas.

^8 reflexive

^9 reciprocal

^10 As illustrated earlier, all state verbs also function as adjectives without any morphological marker.
Each copular form allows a different number of copulas and carries particular mappings of syntactic and pragmatic properties or argument structures, as illustrated in the following discussions.

2.2.1 COP-NP

COP-NP copular clauses allow most of the four copulas, namely, pen, kʰiː, dâːjɛː and teʰjɛː to lead patient (PAT) noun phrases, resulting in the argument structure COP-NP/PAT, as respectively shown in (18) below.

(18a)  
\[ kʰǎw \; \textit{pen} \; pʰáˀ \; nákŋaːn \; bɔː\.rǐː\;sàt \; ?èː\;kkàˀ\;tɕʰon \]  
\(\text{they COP personnel company private}\)  
\[\text{‘They are private company personnel.’}\]

(18b)  
\[ \textit{man} \; kʰiː \; wɛ̌ːn \; nɛːnɛːː \; \text{it COP ring sure} \]  
\[\text{‘It is a ring for sure.’}\]

(18c)  
\[ pʰâː\textit{teʰ}náʔ \; dâːjɛː \; māːjɛːk \; sip \]  
\[\text{winner COP number ten}\]  
\[\text{‘The winner is number ten.’}\]

(18d)  
\[ kʰǎw \; kɔ̂ː \; māj-ɛːjɛː \; kʰon \; leːw \; māːk \]  
\(\text{s/he then NEG-COP person bad very}\)  
\[\text{‘Then s/he is not a very bad person.’}\]

However, in a highly restricted context such as actual or current situations like introducing someone or something, it seems that a noun phrase can form a predicate on its own, as shown in (19).\(^{12}\)

(19)  
\[ nǐː \; maː\textit{rǐ}ˀ\;təː \; \text{this Mario}\]  
\[\text{‘This is Mario.’}\]

2.2.2 COP-PP

COP-PP copular clauses involve two copulas; namely, jùː and pen in different semantic contexts. The copula jùː leads either locative (LOC) or temporal (TEM) prepositional phrases, while pen leads possessive phrases, resulting in three different argument structures—COP-PP/LOC, COP-PP/TEM and COP-PP/POS—as respectively shown in (20).

(20a)  
\[ pàːkkaː \; jùː \; bon \; tôʔ \]  
\[\text{pen COP LOC table}\]  
\[\text{‘The pen is on the table.’}\]

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11 negative  
12 This case is discussed as copula omission constraints in section 4.
(20b) ʔaːrom jùː naj pâtcùːban
   temper COP LOC present
   ‘The temper is in the present.’

(20c) bâːn níː pen kʰ̄ːj sâmteːəj
   house this COP POS Somchay
   ‘This house is Somchay’s.’

There is something concealed in the structure COP-PP/POS where the semantic role POS is marked with the preposition kʰ̄ːj indicating that the patient subject is possessed by the post-copula part. As indicated in Huang and Jenks (to appear), since the phrase kʰ̄ːj-NP can occur with the predicative copula pen, kʰ̄ːj is still a noun denoting ‘possession, belonging’, a fact which finds support from its inability to be negated. We, however, have evidence that the lexical noun kʰ̄ːj has been grammaticalized to function as a preposition used to indicate not only possession but also separation as in (21a), connection as in (21b), association as in (21c) or particular item within a category as in (21d), just like the English preposition of does.

(21a) pʰâːk nta kʰ̄ːj tʰaj
   part north POS Thai
   ‘the northern part of Thailand’

(21b) wâttʰáːnáːram kʰ̄ːj tʰaj
   culture POS Thai
   ‘the culture of Thailand/the Thai culture’

(21c) kʰriagmiː kʰ̄ːj kaːn-pʰâttʰáːnaː:
   device POS NOM-13-develop
   ‘the device of development’

(21d) kʰwaːm-mâj kʰ̄ːj wâttʰáːnáːram
   NOM-mean POS culture
   ‘the meaning of culture’

Also, there is an argument that kʰ̄ːj is a preposition in pen kʰ̄ːj; namely, the copula pen can occur before these uses of kʰ̄ːj in appropriate contexts, as exemplified in (22).

(22) pʰâːk nta pen kʰ̄ːj tʰaj, mâj-teːâj kʰ̄ːj mianmaː
   part north COP POS Thai, NEG-COP POS Myanmar
   ‘The northern part is Thailand’s, not Myanmar’s.’

Therefore, we can conclude that kʰ̄ːj in a copular construction does function as a preposition which has been grammaticalized from the lexical noun kʰ̄ːj and still denotes possession when indicating the possessor of the subject. It has been generalized so far to indicate other features than possession. Since it used to be a noun phrase, it can be led by the copula pen just like a noun phrase can. This is a piece of evidence showing that it is the semantic complexity of the prepositional phrase, rather than the form itself, that makes the combination pen-PP possible.

2.2.3 COP-AP
COP-AP copular clauses involve the copula pen and non-inherent and non-evaluative adjectives (NON-INH), resulting in the argument structure COP-AP/[NON-INH]. In our analysis, it is found that state verbs that denote non-inherent and non-evaluative qualities—for example, bâː ‘insane’, jâj ‘important’, sâk 13 nominalization.
‘happy’, pòkkà’tì’ ‘normal’, ʔîtsà?râ’ ‘free’, sò:t ‘single’, teiŋ ‘true’, tʰét ‘false’, and the like—should be distinguished from state verbs denoting inherent and evaluative qualities since only those verbs are allowed in the post-copula position in this copular form. This characteristic is different from the competitive form COP-VP with the copula tɕʰâj where the post-copula element is not restricted to any type of verbs, either state or action. Regarding this limited syntactic characteristic (even though it seems that there is not any other syntactic evidence that they are different from other adjectives), it is possible to say that the Thai language encodes non-inherent states as “true adjectives”.

Consider the COP-AP/[NON-INH] clauses in (23) in which the post-copula elements in (23a-c) denoting non-inherent qualities are acceptable, while the one in (23d) denoting inherent and evaluative qualities are not.

(23a) kʰǎw pen bâ: 
s/he COP insane
‘S/he is insane.’

(23b) mè: kʰɔ̂ːnkʰâːŋ pen jàj
mother somewhat COP big
‘The mother is somewhat big/important.’

(23c) tɕitteaj raw pen súk
mind we COP happy
‘We are happy.’

(23d) *kʰàw pen diː/stantsːŋ/kʰâːw
s/he COP good/pretttty/tall/white
‘S/he is good/pretttty/tall/white.’

2.2.4 COP-VP
A COP-VP copular clause licenses the copula tɕʰâj to lead a verb phrase displaying an event (EVE) in a negative environment, resulting in the argument structure [NEG-COP]-VP/EVE. The subjects of the verb phrase and main clause are coreferential, and thus the subject of verb phrase is obligatorily equi-deleted. Even though this copular form does exist in Thai, it is restricted to informal contexts such as daily conversation, web boards and the like, as shown in (24).

(24a) raw ʔːp tɕʰɔ̂ːp kʰâw kɔː:n, máj-tɕʰâj râk loːj
I secretly like him first, NEG-COP love then
‘Firstly, I secretly like him, but didn’t fall in love with him.’

(24b) klàp tʰỳŋ bâːn kɔːː; tɔːŋ-ʔːpːnâː;m kɔːːn, máj-tɕʰâj nɔːn loːj
return to home then must-take a bath first, NEG-COP sleep then
‘When I got back home, I had to take a bath first, but didn’t go to bed immediately.’

Conveying the negative sense, the copula may appear without the negative marker in certain contextual environments (as discussed in details in section 3), as exemplified below.

(25) tɕòp kʰɔmpʰiwtǝ̂ kɔːː (mâj-)tɕʰâj tɕàː-ːsɔm kʰriːŋ pen
graduate computer then (NEG-)COP IRR 14 fix engine able
‘Graduating in computer science does not mean that s/he can fix a computer.’

14 irrealis
2.2.5 COP-S
A COP-S involves the copula $kʰɨ$: and a propositional complement (PRO), resulting in the argument structure COP-S/PRO. The COP-S/PRO copular structure should be syntactically separated from COP-VP/EVE clauses in a couple of reasons. Certainly, one reason is that they license different copulas; that is, while COP-VP/EVE clauses allow the copula $tɕʰâj$, COP-S/PRO ones allow the copula $kʰɨ$: Also, the imbedded clause in COP-S/PRO is more finite; that is, the subjects of the imbedded and main clauses are not coreferential and thus the former is not equi-deleted and may be present. Examples of COP-S/PRO clauses are provided in (26).

(26a) $pʰôn$ $kʰɨ$: $tɕʰân$ $tɕː-ɲ-tɕâːj$ $pʰ:\mbox{m}$
result COP I must-pay add
‘The result is that I must pay more (money).’

(26b) $kʰwa:\mbox{m-}\mbox{fân}$ $kʰː$ $\mbox{raw}$ $kʰɨ$ $jâːk$ $\mbox{mi}$ $\mbox{lâːk}$
NOM-dream POS we COP want have child
‘Our dream is that we want to have a child.’

2.3 Verbal Features
The last prototypical function of copulas stated above is that a copula is a syntactic carrier to carry verbal features to a clause. It is not, however, applicable to all copulas in Thai. In Thai, only the copulas $\mbox{pen}$ and $\mbox{jù}$: can be marked to denote negation and modality (M) in the same fashion as typical verbs can, as respectively shown in (27).

(27a) $kʰâw$ $kʰoŋ\mbox{-}\mbox{mâj} -$ $kʰru$:
s/he M-NEG-COP teacher
‘S/he might not be a teacher.’

(27b) $kʰâw$ $kʰoŋ\mbox{-}\mbox{mâj-jâː}$ $\mbox{naj-bâːn}$
s/he M-NEG-COP in-house
‘S/he might not be in the house.’

The copula $tɕʰâj$, which is restricted to the negative marker sometimes, can also carry a modal, as shown in (28).

(28) $kʰâw$ $kʰoŋ\mbox{-}\mbox{mâj-tɕʰâj}$ $kʰon$ $\mbox{tʰaj}$ $\mbox{mâŋ}$
s/he M-NEG-COP person Thai Q
‘S/he might not be a Thai, might s/he?’

Unlikely, the copulas $kʰɨ$: and $\mbox{dâːjːkê}$: cannot be marked with any of those verbal features, as shown in (29).

(29a) $pʰ:\mbox{u}\mbox{-}\mbox{tɕʰâːnāːʔ}$ $*kʰoŋ\mbox{-}\mbox{mâj-kʰɨ}$: $\mbox{sɛː}\mbox{sâk}$
winner M/NEG-COP Sansak
‘The winner might be/is not Sansak.’

(29b) $pʰ:\mbox{u}\mbox{-}\mbox{tɕʰâːnāːʔ}$ $*kʰoŋ\mbox{-}\mbox{mâj-\mbox{dâːjːkê}}$: $\mbox{sɛː}\mbox{sâk}$
winner M/NEG-COP Sansak
‘The winner might be/is not Sansak.’

This is in accordance with Chiravate (2012) proposing that the copula $kʰɨ$: can only occur in a positive environment and cannot take any aspectual properties.
The syntactic characteristics of the Thai copula \( k'\hat{i} \): are similar to the Chinese copula \( shi \), which has come from a pronoun as illustrated in Zhan and Sun (2013). The Chinese copula \( shi \) is not subject to any of tense, aspect or modality marker, be it perfective (P) -le, experiential (EXP) -guò, or imperfective (IMP) -zhe, as exemplified in (30).

(30a) \( t\ddot{a} \ s\overline{he}\ COP-P/EXP/IMP\ COP-P\ COP-P\ shi\ */le*/guô*/zhe\ la\ddot{o}s\ddot{h}\ddot{i} \) (Chinese)  
\hspace{1cm} ‘S/he was/used to be/ is a teacher.’

(30b) \( k'\ddot{w}\ s\overline{he}\ EXP/IMP-COP\ COP-P\ ru\ k'\hat{i} \) (Thai)  
\hspace{1cm} ‘S/he used to be/ is still a teacher.’

This suggests that the verbal function of \( k'\hat{i} \): shown in (16c) above might not be the origin of this word. Since such a diachronic study is beyond our concern, we will not examine further than the present use.

To conclude, we claim that, syntactically, the Thai language exhibits particular and complex characteristics, deviating from those in morphologically complex languages. The syntax of copular clauses is best discussed in terms of argument structures or the mappings of syntactic and semantic properties. Structurally, copular clauses display five different predicates—noun phrase, prepositional phrase, adjective phrase, verb phrase and clause. The five predicates display seven semantic properties—patient, locative, temporal, possessive, non-inherent, eventive and propositional. It is the prepositional phrase that displays three semantic roles (possessive, locative and temporal). The argument structure with the patient noun phrase accepts four copulas. We then have come up with ten mappings between argument structures and copulas as shown figure 1. Moreover, not all the copulas can freely carry verbal features to copular clauses: \( pen, j\ddot{u} \): and \( t\ddot{c}^\ddot{a}\ddot{j} \), but not \( k'\hat{i} \): and \( d\ddot{a}\ jk\ddot{e} \), can be marked to denote negation and modality.

Figure 1: Seven syntactic varieties of copular argument structures in Thai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>syntactic forms</th>
<th>semantic relations</th>
<th>copulas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COP-NP</td>
<td>COP-PAT</td>
<td>( pen, k'\ddot{i}, d\ddot{a}\ jk\ddot{e}, t\ddot{c}^\ddot{a}\ddot{j} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP-PP</td>
<td>COP-LOC</td>
<td>( j\ddot{u} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP-PP</td>
<td>COP-TEM</td>
<td>( j\ddot{u} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP-PP</td>
<td>COP-POS</td>
<td>( pen )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP-AP</td>
<td>COP-[NON-INH]</td>
<td>( pen )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP-VP</td>
<td>COP-EVE</td>
<td>( t\ddot{c}^\ddot{a}\ddot{j} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP-S</td>
<td>COP-PRO</td>
<td>( k'\hat{i} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Pragmatic/Communicative Aspects

The discussion above has demonstrated five copulas in Thai—\( pen, j\ddot{u}, k'\ddot{i}, d\ddot{a}\ jk\ddot{e}, t\ddot{c}^\ddot{a}\ddot{j} \)—that operate in different argument structures. It is from COP-NP which can allow most copulas, four of them: \( pen, k'\ddot{i}, d\ddot{a}\ jk\ddot{e}, t\ddot{c}^\ddot{a}\ddot{j} \). For the copula \( j\ddot{u} \), its occurrence is restricted to the form COP-PP. To differentiate the occurrences of all the copulas exhaustively, we further examine the properties such as pragmatic/communicative interpretations.

As proposed by Higgins (1979) analyzing English copular clauses, copulas are classified into four types: predicational (PRE), specificalional (SPE), identificational (IDE) and equational (EQU), as exemplified by Mikkelsen (2005) in (31). \(^{16}\)

(31a) \( Susan\ is\ a\ doctor \) (PRE)
(31b) \( The\ winner\ is\ Susan \) (SPE)
(31c) \( That\ woman\ is\ Susan \) (IDE)
(31d) \( She\ is\ Susan \) (EQU)

\(^{16}\) see also Niimura (2007) and Von Heusinger et al. (2011)
While the copula *be* typically displays all the interpretations in English, such copular interpretations involve different copulas in Thai declarative clauses. Predicational copular clauses carry the copulas *jù* and *pen* whereas non-predicational ones associate with the copulas *kʰì* and *dâjkè*. Also, it has been further found that not all the copulas can be used in some other pragmatic contexts. In other contexts, the copula *tekâj* is found obligatorily replacing some of those copulas. In this section, we then discuss, on the one hand, the two different interpretations and, on the other hand, other pragmatic contexts that are constraints on sets of copulas.

3.1 Predicational Copulas

Since the copulas *pen* preceding noun phrases and *jù* preceding prepositional phrases can be marked for any verbal feature in the same fashion as typical verbs can (as illustrated in section 2.4 above), both of them are clearly considered predicational. We only consider the copula *pen* here, however, as only it is in competition with the other copulas which are allowed in the structure COP-NP.

Cross-linguistically, predicational copular clauses occurring with the predicate COP-NP have subjects referring to some individuals and predicates characterizing individuals or stating individuals’ properties. The subject noun phrases refer to something and hence are referential. In contrast, predicate noun phrases do not have references and function like adjectives. Therefore, they are not referential. In Thai, the copula *pen* marks for predicational copular clauses to exhibit this notion, as shown in (32).

(32)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{kʰǎw} \\
\text{pen} \\
\text{dèk}
\end{array}
\]  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
s/he \\
\text{COP} \\
\text{child}
\end{array}
\]  
‘S/he is a child.’

In (32), the noun phrase predicate *dèk* does not refer to any child: it attributes the subject as being a child just like an adjective does. In an obvious predicational or attributive context, any non-predicational copula that competes with *pen* is not even accepted to be structurally interchangeable, as in (33).

(33)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
kʰǎw \\
\text{pen/*kʰì:} \\
\text{dèk} \\
\text{mâ} \text{kmâ:k}
\end{array}
\]  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
s/he \\
\text{COP} \\
\text{child} \\
\text{very}
\end{array}
\]  
‘S/he is really a child/S/he is very childish.’

Moreover, the use of the predicational *pen* in Thai is comparatively wider than the copula *be* in English and some other European languages. It includes the description of the subject’s health problems such as diseases and symptoms whereas English offers different verbs, as exemplified in (34).

(34)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
kʰǎw \\
\text{pen} \\
\text{má:rey} \text{/kʰâj} \text{/wàt} \text{/lom} \text{/}
\end{array}
\]  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
s/he \\
\text{COP} \\
\text{cancer,/fever,/cold,/wind}
\end{array}
\]  
‘S/he got cancer.’

‘S/he had a fever.’

‘S/he caught a cold.’

‘S/he fainted.’

3.2 Non-predicational Copulas

Non-predicational clauses in the form COP-NP involve the two copulas *kʰì* and *dâjkè* with different constraints. The copula *kʰì* can denote up to four distinctive non-predicative senses; namely, specificational, indentificational, equational and definitional, which can also be characterized by means of referentiality. The copula *dâjkè*: is a variation in certain specificational contexts.

3.2.1 Specificational Interpretation

In general, specificational copular clauses are used to specify who (or what) someone (or something) is, rather than to say anything about that person (or entity). In other words, they are the type in which the
referent of the noun phrase predicate is the entity that meets a condition denoted by the subject noun phrase which is non-referential. In Thai, it is the specificational clauses that associate with both the copulas kʰɨː and dâːjkêː; but not pen, as in (35).

(35)  pʰːtɕʰáːná?  kʰɨː/dâːjkêː/*pen  sːnsâk
     winner  COP  Sansak
     ‘The winner is Sansak.’

In the specificational interpretation, the two copulas kʰɨː and dâːjkêː are used differently in two binary contexts: indirect versus direct declaration and individual versus list.

3.2.1.1. Indirect vs. direct Declaration
The use of kʰɨː is preferable in indirect declaration. A clear indirect declaration clause that allows dâːjkêː to occur as a copula is somewhat odd, as exemplified in (36).

(36)  kʰǎw  kʰít  wâː  pʰːtɕʰáːná?  kʰɨː/?dâːjkêː  buakʰǎːw  pː prâmûk
     s/he  think  that  winner  COP  Buakaw Por Pramuk
     ‘S/he thinks that the winner is Buakaw Por Pramuk.’

As for the copula dâːjkêː, it is preferable in the direct declaration sense such as lot-drawing or game winner announcement, as respectively exemplified in (37).

(37a)  “lêː kʰːiː  ?ːk  dâːjkêː/?kʰːiː  506260 !”
     number  REL  come out  COP  506260
     ‘The coming number is 506260.’

(37b)  “pʰːtɕʰáːná?  dâːjkêː/?kʰːiː  buakʰǎːw  pː prâmûk!”
     winner  COP  Buakaw Por Pramuk
     ‘The winner is Buakaw Por Pramuk!’

3.2.1.2. Individual vs. List
In contexts other than declaration, the copula kʰːiː is preferable in leading an individual item, while the copula dâːjkêː is preferable in leading a list: the subject of a specificational clause acts as the head of the list and the post-copula elements serve as items on that list, as exemplified in (38).

(38)  ‘aːhâːn  tʰːiː  mːiː  kʰːaːboːhajdrēːt  sːn  dâːjkêː  kʰːw  klûaj  man
     food  that  have  carbohydrate  high  COP  rice  banana  yam
     ‘Foods that are high in carbohydrate are rice, banana and yam’

3.2.2. Identificational Interpretation
Identificational copular clauses are cross-linguistically defined as the type in which a clause is to identify the references of the two noun phrases, the subject and predicate, both of which are referential. It is also stated by Higgins (1979) that identificational clauses are characterized by having a demonstrative pronoun or demonstrative phrase in the subject position. The demonstrative must be understood as having deictic, not anaphoric, reference. The subject of identificational clauses is referential, while the predicate is ‘identificational’ and thus referential. As regards their actual function, Higgins has posited that these sentences are typically used for teaching the names of people or of things. In Thai, identificational copular clauses are also displayed by the copula kʰːiː. Likewise, the type is also used for teaching or introducing the names of people or of things. Examples are provided in (39).
3.2.3. Equational Interpretation
Equational copular clauses are generally defined as the type in which a clause is to equate the references of the subject and predicate noun phrases, both of which are fully referential. Since equational clauses differ from identificational ones in the degree of reference, they should be considered separate interpretations. In Thai, equational clauses are also displayed by the copula kʰɨː,
as exemplified in (40).

(40a) sàːjáːm kʰɨː/pen pràːtʰêː tʰaj
Siam COP country Thai
‘Siam is Thailand.’

(40b) wan níː kʰɨː/?pen wan tʰîː tɕèt miːna kʰom
day this COP day Monday at seven March
‘Today is Monday, March 7.’

3.2.4. Definitional Interpretation
In Thai, an additional interpretation that should be separately addressed since it denotes a distinct communicative sense is definitional copular clauses. In a definitional clause, the subject noun phrase is a concept which is unknown or unclear, and the post-copula noun phrase defines it rather than characterizing it. Both the subject and post-copula noun phrases are generally stated and thus are non-referential. In this interpretation, the copula kʰɨː is preferable to pen, as shown in (41).

(41a) sàːtiː kʰɨː/?pen kʰɔ̌ːŋ kʰon náj sǎŋkʰom nán nán
consciousness COP of people in society
‘Consciousness is the fundamental knowledge of people in a society.’

(41b) pʰumpanjaː kʰɨː/?pen pʰɨ́ n kʰwa:m-rúː
wisdom COP ground NOM-know
kʰɔ̌ːŋ kʰon náj sǎŋkʰom nám nám
of people in society that
‘Wisdom is the fundamental knowledge of people in a society.’

All five distinct communicative interpretations indicating distinct referentiality patterns—the mappings of subject-predicate—with specific copulas could be conclusively shown in the following figure.

**Figure 2:** Referentiality patterns of declarative copular clauses in Thai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative interpretations</th>
<th>NP subject</th>
<th>Copula</th>
<th>NP predicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE</td>
<td>referential</td>
<td>pen</td>
<td>non-referential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE</td>
<td>direct declaration, individual</td>
<td>non-referential</td>
<td>kʰɨː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE</td>
<td>indirect declaration, list</td>
<td>non-referential</td>
<td>dâːjɨː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDE</td>
<td>referential</td>
<td>kʰɨː</td>
<td>referential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQU</td>
<td>fully referential</td>
<td>kʰɨː</td>
<td>fully referential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF17</td>
<td>non-referential</td>
<td>kʰɨː</td>
<td>non-referential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 definitional
3.3. Constraints on Sets of Copulas
We have also found that there are some other pragmatic contexts that are constraints on the uses of copulas. They are non-declarative speech acts such as negation and yes/no-interrogatives on the one hand and stronger affirmative uses on the other. In such contexts, the copula teʰâj is obligatorily used as a variation of some declarative copulas: that is, it replaces the non-predicational copula kʰɨ in the former context type and the predicational pen in the latter. The predicational copula jù is still possible in the two types. As for the declaration copula dâ:jkː; it is not possible in any type here.

3.3.1. Non-declarative Speech Acts
In non-declarative speech acts, such as negative and yes/no-interrogative, the copulas jù and pen still perform their functions while the copula kʰɨ must be replaced by the copula teʰâj. In general, negative clauses are typically marked with the negative marker mâj. When the copulas are in negative environments, the copulas jù and pen are also marked with mâj. The two copulas can be accompanied with the grammaticalized modal dâ:j, marked for realis (R). The copula kʰɨ must be replaced by the copula teʰâj in all communicative interpretations, as exemplified in (42).

(42a) pə:kka: mâj-(dâ:j)-jù: bon tô’
pen NEG-(R)-COP on table
‘The pen is not on the table.’

(42b) krâˀtʰuː ní: mâj-(dâ:j)-pen ka:n-ri:wiw
post this NEG-(R)-COP NOM-review
‘This post is not a review.’

(42c) pʰû.teʰâ’ná’ mâj-teʰâj/*kʰiː sɛ̌ː nsàk
winner NEG-COP Sansak
‘The winner is not Sansak.’

(42d) ní: mâj-teʰâj/*kʰiː ma:riː’ô:
this NEG-COP Mario
‘This is not Mario.’

(42e) sîamrîap mâj-teʰâj/*kʰiː prâ’tʰe:t tʰaj
Siemriep NEG-COP country Thai
‘Siemrie is not Thailand.’

(42f) bû:p mâj-teʰâj/*kʰiː sîŋ di:
sin NEG-COP thing good
‘Sin is not a good thing.’

Our finding of the negation of the copula pen, in which the negative marker is accompanied with dâ:j, is in accordance with Chiravate (2012), who claims that the copula pen can occur in negative environments marked with the negative form mâj-dâ:j. However, we posit that the copula pen is normally negated by the sole negative marker mâj in the irrealis reading. The combination mâj-dâ:j does not work well in such reading, as in (43).

---

18 Here, negation is considered a speech act type in contrast with affirmative assertion according to Givón (2001: 372) proposing that negative assertion is “a distinct speech act, used with different communicative goals in mind than affirmative assertions. In using a negative assertion, the speaker is not in the business of communicating new information to the hearer. Rather, s/he is in the business of correcting the hearer’s misguided belief.”
Moreover, in a more specific negative context like contrastive-focus (CON-FOC) typically marked with the expression such as ติ่:–น้ำจ—ฆан…ต้:–ษ:ห—:ก (‘elsewhere…instead’), the combination of ณำจ–ทรง can somehow has gone through the process of meaning transmission where the negative sense has been transmitted from the negative marker ณำจ to the copula ทรง. The result is that the sole presence of ทรง can be used to denote the negative sense of the non-predicative interpretations, as exemplified in (44).

(44a) ภู:ทรงจำน้ำจิ: พระจิ:ทรงจำนำเสนอ ติ่:–น้ำจ—ฆан, สัจ:นัก ต้:–ษ:ห—:ก (SPE)
winner COP Suchart CON-FOC Sansak CON-FOC
‘The winner is not Suchart, but Sansak.’

(44b) นี่: ทรงจำ ม้า:ก ติ่:–น้ำจ—ฆัน, ม้า:ริ่:อ:ก: ต้:–ษ:ห—:ก (IDE)
this COP Mark CON-FOC Mario CON-FOC
‘This is not Mark, but Mario.’

(44c) ชัยมาป ทรงจำ พระจิ:ทรงจำ ติ่:–น้ำจ—ฆัน, ก:มะเม:น ต้:–ษ:ห—:ก (EQU)
Siemrieb COP Thai CON-FOC Khmer CON-FOC
‘Siemrieb is not Thailand, but Cambodia.’

(44d) บ้า:พ ทรงจำ สิ่ง ดิ: ติ่:–น้ำจ—ฆัน, สิ่ง เล:ริ่:จ ต้:–ษ:ห—:ก (DEF)
sin COP thing good CON-FOC thing bad CON-FOC
‘Sin is not a good thing, but a bad thing.’

Similarly, in yes/no-interrogatives—either open or alternative yes/no-interrogatives which are typically marked with the question markers ณำจ or ริ่:–ปล:ว (or-not) respectively—the copulas จู: and ผอน are also allowed, while the copula กิ: must be replaced by the copula ทรง in all communicative interpretations, as shown in (45).

(45a) ปาก:ก้า: จู: บอน ต็:ก: ณำจ/ริ่:–ปล:ว (จู:–PRE)
pen COP on table Q
‘Is the pen on the table?’

(45b) กก:ว ผอน ค:ก:น ดิ: ณำจ/ริ่:–ปล:ว (pen-PRE)
s/he COP person good Q
‘Is s/he a good person?’

(45c) ภู:ทรงจำน้ำจิ: ทรงจำ/กิ:สัจ:นัก ณำจ/ริ่:–ปล:ว (SPE)
winner COP Sansak Q
‘Is the winner Sansak?’

this COP Mario Q
‘Is this Mario?’

Siam COP Thai present Q
‘Is Siam Thailand at the present?’
In contrast, in constructing other interrogatives such as wh-interrogative and alternative interrogative where two alternative answers are provided, the use of a declarative copula, no matter what it is, remains acceptable, but not the copula tɕʰâj, as shown in (46).

(46a) pʰûː tɕʰá ná kʰɨ/*tɕʰâj kʰraj (wh-Q)
winner COP who
‘Who is the winner?’

(46b) pʰûː tɕʰá ná kʰɨ/*tɕʰâj sɛ̌ː nsàk rɨː tɕʰâː tɕʰaːj (or-Q)
winner COP Sansak or Chatchay.
‘Is the winner Sansak or Chatchay?’

3.3.2. Stronger Affirmative Use
The stronger affirmative use involves a systematic preference toward either the affirmative or negative (Bolinger 1978b, Givón 2001). The preference is graded from the strongest preference toward the affirmative (or the strongest bias to the negative) to the strongest preference toward the negative (or the strongest bias to the affirmative). In this scale, the affirmative declarative speech act is considered the strongest preference toward the affirmative, next comes the interrogative speech act, and the negative speech act is the strongest preference toward the negative. In this continuum, it is evidential in Thai that copular clauses in the affirmative declarative one could be further graded as normal and stronger affirmatives, resulting in a more elaborate continuum, as shown below.

Figure 3: A systematic preference toward either the affirmative or negative speech act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strongest preference toward the affirmative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stronger affirmative declarative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal affirmative declarative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By normal affirmative, we mean declarative assertions. We consider the stronger affirmative as a type of speech acts that is different from declarative assertions. It should be recognized that stronger affirmatives are not in the same categories as copular clauses in which predicates are focused. Typically, any clause type in Thai including the copular type can be focused on its predicate by adding deontic morphology or words such as modals and adverbs, as exemplified in (47).

(47) man tɔ̂ ŋ-pen fajfáː lát wounded nɛːnɛː:
it M-COP electricity sure
‘It must be a short circuit for sure.’

The modal and adverbial devices are not used to mark a stronger affirmative. Rather, carrying the predicative focus as such, a copular clause can obtain a stronger favour toward the affirmative by making use of the copula teʰaj. Consider the example (48) in which the focused copular clause in (47) above is occupied by a corresponding copular clause carrying a stronger affirmative (STR-AFF), either before or after it.

(48) man tɔ̂ ŋ-teʰaj nɛːnɛː, tɔ̂ ŋ-pen fajfáː lát wounded nɛːnɛː:
it M-[STR-AFF] certainly M-COP electricity sure
‘It surely is. It must be a short circuit for sure.’
Another situation that is also found obtaining the stronger affirmative is an affirmative response to a yes/no-interrogative. Here, the response that obtains the stronger affirmative makes use of the copula teʰaj in a short form as in (49b) while the one that does not obtain the stronger affirmative—and thus called normal affirmative (NOR-AFF) — makes use of a corresponding declarative copula in a full copular clause as in (49c). Both responses can occur together in one answer as in (49d).

(49a) nî: teʰaj ma:riːʔoː: máj/rìː:-plà:w (yes/no-Q)
this COP Mario Q
‘Is this Mario?’

(49b) teʰaj/*kʰːi:
STR-AFF
‘Right.’

(49c) nî: kʰːi:*teʰajma:riːʔoː:
this COP Mario (NOR-AFF)
‘This is Mario.’

(49d) teʰaj, nî: kʰːi: ma:riːʔoː:
STR-AFF this COP Mario (STR-AFF and NOR-AFF)
‘Yes, this is Mario.’

The summary of the pragmatic classification of copulas in Thai discussed above is best provided by proposing a diagrammatic taxonomy. In doing this, the five copulas are primarily classified into three overlapping groups: declarative pen, jùː, kʰː and dâ:jkèː; non-declarative pen, jùː and teʰaj; and stronger affirmative teʰaj. The declarative group is made different: predicational pen and jùː vs non-predicational kʰː and dâ:jkèː. The non-predicational copulas display specificational, identificational, equational and definitional interpretations. Only the specificational interpretation is made different in terms of copulas, namely, kʰː in indirect and individual contexts and dâ:jkèː in direct and list ones. The non-declarative type includes negative and yes/no interrogative speech acts.

Figure 4: A taxonomy of pragmatic classification of copulas in Thai

4. Constraints on Copular Omission
Regarding the ideas put forward by Hale and Keyser (1993, 2002) among others, the presence or absence of copular verbs may project a structural relation and verbal features. This is partially true in the Thai language. In Thai, the copular omission is allowed in some clausal structures, subject to verbal features. In fact, it has
been found that the omission of copulas is also subject to some pragmatic aspects, as illustrated in the following discussion.

A copular clause displaying either the form COP-AP or COP-VP certainly allows the absence of the corresponding copula since both adjective phrases and verb phrases can function as predicates on their own, as in (50a) and (50b).

(50a)  
\( kʰāw \) \((pen)\)  \( bâ:\)  \( s/he \ COP \)  \( \text{insane} \)  
‘S/he is insane.’

(50b)  
\( rā:kʰâ:\) \((mâj-cʰâj)\)  \( pʰ:\text{COPE}\)  \( mâ:k \)  \( \text{price} \ COP \)  \( \text{expensive} \)  \( \text{much} \)  
‘The price is not very expensive.’

Also, a copular clause displaying the form COP-NP that carries either the copula \( \text{pen} \) or \( kʰɨ:\) allows the absence of the corresponding copula in some interpretative environments, leaving the noun phrase to be adjacent to the subject, as exemplified in (51).

(51a)  
\( \text{wan} \ \text{nǐ:} \) \((pen)\)  \( \text{wan} \ \text{tɕan} \)  \( \text{day} \ COP \)  \( \text{day} \)  \( \text{Monday} \)  
‘Today is Monday.’

(51b)  
\( \text{nǐ:} \) \((kʰɨ:)\)  \( \text{maːrɨ̂ːō:} \)  \( \text{this} \ COP \)  \( \text{Mario} \)  
‘This is Mario.’

Among non-predicational copular clauses with the form \( kʰɨ:\)-NP, only the identificational interpretation, introducing someone or something, licenses the optional presence of the copula, as exemplified in (52).

(52a)  
\( \text{nǐ:} \) \((kʰɨ:)\)  \( \text{maːrɨ̂ːō:} \)  \( \text{this} \ COP \)  \( \text{Mario} \)  
‘This is Mario.’

(52c)  
\( *pʰː\)  \( \text{tɕʰâj} \)  \( \text{person} \ COP \)  \( \text{Sansak} \)  
‘The winner is Sansak.’

(52d)  
\( *sàːjá\)  \( \text{pàtɕù} \)  \( \text{Siam} \ COP \)  \( \text{Thai} \)  \( \text{present} \)  
‘Siam is Thailand in the present.’

(52e)  
\( *sàːtʰi\)  \( \text{ka.n-rúː sik-tua} \)  \( \text{consciousness} \ COP \)  \( \text{NOM-feel-body} \)  
‘Consciousness is being awakened.’

The optional presence of the identificational copula \( kʰɨ:\) also extends to its variant, \( tɕʰâj \), in an alternative \text{yes/no}-interrogative, as shown below.

(53)  
\( kʰon \ \text{nǐ:} \) \((tɕʰâj)\)  \( \text{maːrɨ̂ːō:} \)  \( \text{riːːplà:w} \)  \( \text{person} \ COP \)  \( \text{Mario} \)  \( \text{Q} \)  
‘Is this person Mario?’
Moreover, a copular clause displaying the argument structure COP-PP/POS allows the absence of the corresponding copula pen. This is not that surprising since, as discussed earlier, the preposition kʰɔ̌ːŋ has been grammaticalized from the lexical noun which still performs its original function as a lexical noun. The absence of the copula is even preferable in certain informal spoken-contexts, as exemplified in (54).

(54) bâːn níː (pen) kʰɔ̌ːŋ teʰân
house this COP POS me
‘This house is mine.’

In copular clauses displaying the form either COP-AP or COP-VP, the omission of the corresponding copulas is still possible when a verbal feature is added, as shown in (55).

(55a) tɔːː: teʰâː-bâː: rτː
you IRR-insane Q
‘Are you insane?’

(55b) raːkʰːaː teʰâː-pʰː:ŋmâːk
price IRR-expensive much
‘It will be very expensive.’

In contrast, in copular clauses displaying the form COP-NP and COP-PP/POS carrying the copula pen, this copula must be present when a verbal feature is added as a prefix, as exemplified in (56).

(56a) wan nán kʰɔ̌ːŋ-pen/*ʔ wan tean
day that M-COP day Monday
‘That day might be Monday.’

(56b) bâːn níː teʰâː-pen/*ʔ kʰɔ̌ːŋ teʰân
house this IRR-COP POS me
‘This house will be mine.’

As for the copula kʰiː in an identificational COP-NP clause, its omission has nothing to do with the addition of verbal features since the copula cannot take any verbal one. Rather, its presence or absence seems to be accounted for in terms of formality; namely, its presence is more formal while its absence is less formal.

5. Conclusion
Copular constructions in Thai display complexities and particular characteristics deviating from those of morphologically complex languages. In Thai, there appear a number of copulas such as pen, jùː, kʰiː, dâːjkʰː and teʰajː. They precede not only non-verbal predicates such as noun phrases, prepositional phrases and clauses but also verbal predicates such as verb phrases and adjective phrases that normally form predicates on their own in Thai. Copular clauses also display distinct mappings of syntactic and semantic properties (or argument structures) on the one hand and copulas on the other hand. That is, beside five different forms of complements such as patient, possessive, locative, temporal, non-inherent, eventive and propositional. It is the prepositional complement that expresses more than one semantic property (possessive, locative and temporal). Such different mappings or argument structures allow particular copulas, resulting in up to ten different patterns of copular constructions; that is, pen-NP/PAT, kʰiː-NP/PAT, dâːjkʰː-NP/PAT, teʰajː-NP/PAT, jùː-PP/LOC, jùː-PP/TEM, pen-PP/POS, pen-AP[NON-INH], teʰajː-VP/EVE, and kʰiː-S/PRO. Not all the copulas can freely carry verbal features to copular clauses; namely, the three copulas pen, jùː and teʰajː can be marked to denote negation and modality while the other two, kʰiː and dâːjkʰː, cannot.

Even though four copulas—pen, kʰiː, dâːjkʰː and teʰajː—can operate in the argument structure COP-NP/PAT, they can be exhaustively differentiated with respect to certain pragmatic/communicative aspects.
The copulas จุ: and pen appear in predicational clauses, whereas the other copulas appear in non-predicational clauses such as specificational, identificational, equational, and definitional. Here, the difference of all communicative interpretations is accounted for in terms of referentiality patterns. Both ฤ: and ด่ำ: are used in specificational clauses, but they can be differentiated by the pragmatic binary environments such as indirect versus direct declaration and individuals versus lists. In other environments, the copula ฤ: is obligatorily used as a variation of some declarative copulas; that is, it replaces ฤ: in non-declarative contexts and pen in stronger affirmative contexts. The copula จุ: still works well outside the declarative one. As for the copula ด่ำ:, it is not possible in any use other than declarative.

In addition, most copular clause structures license the optional occurrence of copulas. Among these structures, some allow copula omission with respect to syntactic factors such as structures and verbal features, while the others allow copula omission with respect to certain pragmatic aspects.

References
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