Polylectal grammar and Royal Thai

Tony Diller

Bob Dixon (1983, ch. 8) engagingly relates the account of field research leading to his grammar of the North Queensland language Dyirbal. He describes how he found the everyday language Guwal to be related to Jalnguy, the so-called “mother-in-law” style required in avoidance/taboo situations. With native-speaking friends and assistants, sometimes in lively group elicitation sessions, he went on to uncover the pattern of substitutions that forms the core of the Guwal/Jalnguy contrast, leading to recognition of Dyirbal’s pervasive nuclear/non-nuclear verb classification. Dixon’s decision to devote important attention to Jalnguy in field research and in his resulting grammar was not to provide a quaint ethnographic appendix. The Guwal/Jalnguy relationship was shown to disclose deeper principles of Dyirbal’s semantic organisation and to point to wider typological and theoretical concerns.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to show again, through a further example, that grammar writing need not shy away from ethnolinguistic detail – even when this includes disparate data of special registers. An inclusive scope may well be at odds with professional pressures to build up an elegant, concise and typologically unified grammatical construct. Homogenous idealisations might be convenient for comparative theoreticians to cite, but surely more substantive advances in linguistic theory arise from just what the unified treatments are suppressing. Jalnguy is pointing the way here. My first encounter with the Guwal/Jalnguy distinction was in one of those exhilarating Dixonian departmental seminars, with a published account following (Dixon 1990). Jalnguy led me to wonder whether the complex of Thai diglossic speech styles might also disclose anything of Thai’s deeper principles of linguistic organisation. I had tended to view royal Thai, poetic language and similar registers as somehow extraneous to the real work of
grammars could be factored out or ignored until after the everyday language had been dealt with adequately. After all, were not these registers mostly a matter of automatic lexical substitutions? But the seminar suggested a closer look. What follows below is an attempt to document a post-Guwal/Jalnguy turn in my understanding of Thai grammar.

Structural and functional properties of Australian avoidance-taboo styles bear partial resemblance to “lexical other” alternation systems elsewhere, including in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, in its formal composition, Samoan respect vocabulary shows several-to-one skewing of replacement vocabulary reminiscent of Jalnguy (Duranti 1992: 80). Functionally however differences are clear. Although Samoan respect vocabulary is often characterized as the speech style prescribed for formal speech to chiefs, Duranti has indicated the further potential of using these forms with non-chiefs as a sociolinguistic resource to define situations or to adjust relationships.

Yet further removed, at least functionally, is diglossic high/(medium)/low variation, such as in Javanese with the styles Krama and Ngoko (Errington 1985) or in Balinese with Alus and Kasar. The Dyirbal, Samoan, Javanese and Balinese alternations tend to limit grammatical variation to differences in degree, with lexicosemantic contrast more basic. In another type of variation, interest focuses on psycholinguistic ability of speakers to apply variable rules of grammar. These rules may involve phonology, morphology or syntax. The term “polylectal grammar” has been used in this latter sense, especially to characterize competence along a creole continuum (Bickerton 1973; Mühlhäusler 1992).

The fact that the Haitian Creole continuum was one of Ferguson’s (1959) original defining diglossic examples is perhaps vindication for extending the term “polylectal grammar” to include other types of register switching in which lexical substitution plays an important part. The “lect” of polylectal might then be entirely a matter of lexical switching or else might include variation affecting grammatical rules as well. The latter variation is a formal characteristic of diglossic literary/colloquial variation in Sinhala (Gair 1992) and Bangla (Dil 1986). Of a slightly different type is the standard-colloquial continuum for Malay described by Benjamin (1993), where certain verbal affixes are polysemous in that they receive different interpretations across the continuum, with other affixes restricted to the continuum’s high end.
Of course, it is necessary to distinguish clearly the social functions of creole continua, avoidance/respect styles and diglossic variation of the Javanese and Sinhala subtypes. Questions of degree of structural isomorphy between varieties or along continua are important to analyse as well – questions raised earlier in dialectology research and especially in Weinreich’s (1954) discussion of “diasystem”. On the other hand, polylectal phenomena do pose broadly similar challenges both to practical projects of producing grammatical descriptions and to more theoretical programs of probing the nature of human linguistic competence.

Points of contact with all of the types mentioned above can be discerned in the royal Thai register, to which we now turn. Section 2 introduces the functional and socio-historical context of the register. For readers interested descriptive detail, sections 3–9 provide an overview of how the register is constituted and how it operates. Royal Thai is shown to be both like and unlike the common language. Its substantial enmeshment with the higher diglossic level of the common language provides one perspective, but a fuller view discloses a degree of typological disparity along with distinctive lexical patterns, morphophonemic word-building principles and semantic marking and organisation. Programmatically, section 8 proposes that the special royal register can provide a new tool to investigate grammaticalisation and related questions of phrase structure. Section 10 returns for a final look at grammar writing and other wider issues.

2. Overview: Royal Thai and Common Thai

2.1. Royal Thai as a discourse register

Royal Thai is a specific component in a diglossic register complex summarized in a general way elsewhere (Diller 1993; Smalley 1994). The Thai term ra:cha:sâp is formed from Sanskrit components ra:ja ‘king’ + çabda ‘vocabulary’. Although the Thai compound means ‘royal vocabulary’, it is used by Thai authorities in at least three different senses (Yumonthian 1993: 7–14). (i) In the most restricted or “proper” sense, it refers to several hundred items of special vocabulary, including formulaic phrases, to be used only in specified circumstances concerning royal persons. (ii) In a wider sense, ra:cha:sâp is used to include over a thousand additional words that comprise “high” speech-level vocabulary of common Thai. These words are used in polite or formal circumstances,
including – but not restricted to – royal contexts. (iii) Yet a third use of ra:cha:sâp is to characterize a passage of Thai discourse, written or spoken, in which ra:cha:sâp vocabulary, in both senses (i) and (ii), has been selected. The abbreviation RT will be used here for “royal Thai” in this discourse sense. Similarly CT will be used to characterize a passage in common Thai. Texts or passages in RT and CT share core syntax, although some syntactic patterns are specific to each variety and specific constructions show differences in frequency and detail. RT and CT also share a core lexicon of many thousand items not affected by (i) and (ii).

Neither RT nor CT is a homogeneous register. It is often useful to recognize low and high subdivisions of RT and CT, which closer scrutiny would break down into more complicated continuum relationships. For descriptive convenience RT-L and RT-H are used below to suggest this variation, paralleled by CT-L and CT-H. *An essential principle is that CT-H selections, as in (ii) above, automatically apply to RT unless RT prescribes its own special alternates, as in (i).*

A connected text in RT will thus typically include:

(i) prescribed RT selections, perhaps specified as RT-L and RT-H as appropriate;
(ii) further CT-H selections for any items sensitive to CT-L/H alternation;
(iii) core grammar and lexicon.

Running texts in CT-H, the high register of the common language, would be characterized only by (ii) and (iii) above. For CT-L, low lexical alternates would be selected, along with core grammar and vocabulary not subject to alternation.

William Gedney, one of the first to summarize ra:cha:sâp phenomena for an English-speaking audience, identified the lexical system as “certain special terms [that] are conventional substitutes in situations involving royalty for ordinary terms of the common vocabulary” ([1961]; 1989: 481). While substitution, reconciling taboo and euphemism, is certainly the basic process involved, Roengpitya (1973) and many local Thai manuals go on to show that depending on context for many lexical items a range substitutions may be prescribed. Details of royal rank may enter into particular RT selections, accounting for differences between RT-L and RT-H. As we see in the following sections, the relationship with common Thai is far from a simple one-to-one isomorphism. To see only a system of binary contrasts would be a simplified approximation.
2.2. An example: Prince William’s birthday

In a Thai text, foreign as well as the Thai royalty evoke RT substitutions. (1) is a preliminary example of how the system is used. It is an extract from a popular Thai magazine report on British royal family activities.¹

(1) Popular magazine treatment of British monarchy

\[
\text{nay} \ \text{waro:kà:t} \ \text{thí:} \ \text{câw·cha:y} \ \text{williøm} \ \text{mi:} \\
\text{in} \ \text{occasion}_R \ \text{REL} \ \text{prince}_R \ \text{William has} \\
\text{phrá·chonnáma:yú} \ \text{khróp} \ \text{si$p$p:t} \ \text{chanså:} \\
\text{age}_R \ \text{fulfill} \ \text{eighteen} \ \text{years}_R
\]

‘On the occasion of the eighteenth birthday of Prince William ...’
(Dichan April 2002: 83)

(2) Common Thai (CT) equivalent of (1)

\[
\text{nay} \ \text{o:kà:t} \ \text{thí:} \ \text{nó:ŋ côy} \ \text{mi:} \\
\text{in} \ \text{occasion} \ \text{REL} \ \text{yr.sib Joy has} \\
\text{a:yú} \ \text{khróp} \ \text{si$p$p:t} \ \text{pi:} \\
\text{age} \ \text{fulfill} \ \text{eighteen} \ \text{years}
\]

‘On the occasion of the eighteenth birthday of Little-sister Joy ...’

(3) Comparison of lexical items in (1) and (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT</th>
<th>RT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>occasion</td>
<td>o:kà:t   \ waro:kà:t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>a:yú    \ phráchonnáma:yú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year</td>
<td>pi:     \ channáså:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\text{in} \ \text{nay} \\
\text{that (REL)} \ \text{thí:} \\
\text{have} \ \text{mi:} \\
\text{fulfill} \ \text{khróp} \\
\text{eighteen} \ \text{si$p$p:t}
\]
(2) is how a native speaker transposes (1) into a normal Thai version of a similar message, in this case not referring to a royal person but to a commoner (Little-sister Joy). (3) then compares lexical selections. The upper panel shows three pairs of common-royal alternates. The lower panel shows another five items that the two texts have in common. For this example, sentence-level syntax is shared.

2.3. Typological profile

Typologically, (1) and (2) share basic principles of phonology and rules of clause-level syntax. While there is phonological similarity between all registers of Thai, there are some characteristic differences in articulation: colloquial Thai tends to reduce clusters and to merge /r/ with /l/. khróp ‘to fulfill’ in (2) is apt to be articulated colloquially as [klōp] or [kho̞p]. Common core vocabulary includes a number of conjunctions, temporal-aspectual auxiliaries and other function words. For most RT/CT parallel texts the proportion of words in common would fall between one- and three-quarters of the lexical total, as illustrated in (3). Occasionally a sentence can be found in an otherwise RT running text in which no substitutions happen to be prescribed. For such a sentence, following the conventions used here, RT would coincide with CT. The opposite possibility, a sentence in which all words are RT substitutes, can easily be contrived but in fact is rather rare in actual texts.

Items like ‘occasion’ and ‘age’ in (3) demonstrate that lexicosemantic and morphosyntactic profiles of RT and CT are somewhat different, although neither variety exhibits inflectional morphology. Colloquial CT-L shows a high percentage of monosyllabic and a few bisyllabic forms. It is a fair representative of the isolating linguistic type. The higher register CT-H shows more Indic and Khmer vocabulary, including extensive fossilized derivational morphology. RT-L and RT-H are replete with Indic- and Khmer-inspired polysyllabic compounds – words of eight or more syllables not being unusual – some showing local agglutinative processes examined in following sections.

There is an important grammatical contrast in morphosyntax, although it is not categorical in distinguishing RT. Native compounds in Thai follow the pattern [head noun + modifier]. The opposite order [modifier + head noun] is the norm in Indic donor languages and is frequent in CT-H and RT borrowed or reconstituted compounds. This accounts for the form of the
word ra:cha:sâp itself, as noted above. Similarly, in (1) the royal form for ‘occasion’ is a sandhi compounding of Pali-Sanskrit-derived components vara ‘glorious’ + Pali okâsa ‘appearance’. The CT form is based on the latter morpheme alone. ‘Age’ shows a similar pattern. For ‘year’, the royal form is a local contraction of Sanskrit-provenance janâna ‘birth’ + vr8sha ‘rainy season’, i.e. birth-seasons, while the common form pi: is a different item inherited from Proto-Tai.

The [modifier + head noun] pattern is characteristic of many compounds in CT-H, at least as an alternative. A noun phrase with Indic components may follow indigenous order [head noun + modifier] as in: prayô:t sâ:tha:ranâ [benefit + public] ‘public benefit’, i.e. two words; or else a corresponding one-word compound may be formed using the Indic order sâ:tha:ranâ prayô:t [public-benefit]; in transcription the raised dot is used to indicate word-internal junctures of this type. This word-building process is semi-productive for Indic-provenance vocabulary.

Colloquial CT-L speech gets by with a high degree of zero nominal anaphora, leaving many bare verbs and multi-verb constructions to do much of the communicative work. RT too may leave a royal argument nominal in a clause to be interpreted from context, but often chooses instead to emphasize a long elaborate title as a token of respect. A panoply of special nominals is sometimes displayed, almost ornamentally. On the other hand, as exemplified below many RT verbs are less specific than CT counterparts would be. Passages in RT and CT may thus differ in characteristic information packaging.

2.4. Contexts of royal Thai usage; proxemic and linguistic distance

For purposes here we can summarize situations that trigger the use of RT under two headings: (i) syntactico-semantic and (ii) pragmatic.

(i) Syntactico-semantic conditions apply to message content. If an argument of a clause refers to a royal person, special marking may apply. For example, for royal-referent subject or dative-recipient, the verb must be overtly marked as royal, either through prescribed substitution or by other means to be explained. Since even a zero-anaphor subject or dative will trigger this marking process, the deeper semantic predicate role, rather than surface syntax, is the determinant. Also, if overt pronouns or classifiers refer to royal persons, regardless of semantic case, special forms are to be used. Certain royal-associated nouns must similarly be marked. These are...
usually in a genitive relationship with a royal person, whether or not the
person is referred to overtly. Included here are especially inalienable-
possession terms referring to body parts and kin. Personal clothing and
implements receive special treatment, along with more abstract notions
such as orders and communications; also nouns like ‘occasion’ and ‘age’ as
exemplified in (1).

(ii) Pragmatically, in a situation where a royal person is being
addressed, or even is merely present and listening, then certain
substitutions and other forms are prescribed. Where applicable, CT-H
alternates are prescribed. On some occasions, for example in an academic
conference attended by a prince or princess, the royal person may issue a
brief decree suspending the use of RT temporarily.

When Thai royal persons speak, they themselves normally use common
Thai verbs when referring to their own actions, unless another royal person
is jointly involved in the action (Damrong-Rajanubhab and
Narisaranuvattivongse 1963: 161). Otherwise they must follow principle
(i), resulting in complexities that have led some royal persons to prefer
communication in English in various informal circumstances (Gedney

RT is considered by most commoners to be difficult. Those who need to
use it actively report nervousness and often claim to fall short of prescribed
norms. In formal circumstances, one is aware of the register’s serious-
sounding articulation. Some have indicated that, in effect, RT serves a
distancing function. This confirms the physical separation that
characterizes typical royal encounters. In most ceremonies, Thai royal
persons of the highest ranks are situated away from and above commoners,
perhaps on a podium or dais, in a way that seems to match physically the
linguistic verticality of a high speech level. Ropes or other barriers may
cordon off royal persons from commoners as effectively as RT
distinguishes itself lexically from CT. While there has been some effort,
especially with television, to soften such images of proxemic aloofness, for
most commoners RT is the linguistic articulation of more comprehensive
semiotic imagery involving separation and elevation. Taboos relating to
heads and feet also become involved in this complex, with kinesic-
proxemic sensibilities and taboos paralleled by linguistic usage
(Juntanamalaga 1992). Examples (5), (16) and (17) illustrate these issues.
In spite of these barriers, RT would be considered by the majority of Thais
to be an important part of their cultural heritage and something to be
described in a Thai grammar.
2.5. Historical background

Historically, Thais acquired the special register from Khmers who had developed a Khmero-Indic royal language attested inscriptional sources. This marked linguistically the devaraja or ‘divine king’ cult. Wyatt (1982: 71) observes that the Thai ruling elite “buttressed the majesty of the throne with a special court vocabulary based on Khmer and Sanskrit. For them, a truly royal king should be raised far above the level of his subjects …wrapped in a cloak of mystery and sanctity …”

This explains the register’s etymology. Provenance for the majority of *raː chaː sàp* words is Old Khmer or else Sanskrit and Pali as borrowed through Old Khmer and partially assimilated to it. However, idiosyncratic compounding and other grammatical processes have developed from the borrowed Khmero-Indic base over a 500-year period. King Rama IV (r. 1850–1865) had a keen interest in language standardisation and made detailed language prescriptions, codifying RT as well as CT-H (Diller 1993; 2001). He went so far as to prescribe the semantic cases (*karaka*) for arguments of particular verbs. Ongoing refinement has occurred in recent times, at least in prescribed lists. Gedney’s report of 1961, based on an official manual of 1932, indicated substitutions for only 180 nouns and 73 verbs. This is far short of the over 2000 forms currently prescribed in some manuals.

Is the royal register RT to be regarded simply as a “diglossic parasite” dependent on the common language? (– Perhaps my misapprehension before the Jalnguy seminar.) Note that even CT, the lower stratum, is characterized by L/H speech-level phenomena. Historically, CT-H, the higher end of the speech-level system, is derived from RT and in effect merges with it. This occurred as linguistic usages of the court diffused downwards into common parlance. Indeed, even toward the lower end of CT–L, Khmer-provenance forms have found their way into colloquial speech: body-part terms like ‘nose’; common nouns ‘road’, ‘bridge’; common verbs ‘walk’, ‘drink’, and even more core grammatical items meaning ‘or’ and ‘should’. Which of these items have been borrowed vertically downwards from RT into CT and which may have been acquired more horizontally as the result of a historical stage of widespread Thai-Khmer bilingualism is a current topic of investigation (Khanittanan 2001).

To consider diachronic development in this case, symbiosis seems a better guide than parasitology.
2.6. Current scope

At present most Thais who study the system in earnest would need to consult special Thai textbooks, the ra:cha:sâp manuals. These are typically volume-length lists in two-column format. Columns are labeled sâ:man ‘common’ and ra:cha:sâp, ‘royal’. Leading authorities whose treatments we summarize below present more than 2000 pairs in this way (Yumonthian 1993; Phibanthaen 2001; Ketprathum 2001).

The two-column format of ra:cha:sâp manuals mentioned above facilitates memorization for examinations, the most common reason that ordinary Thai speakers would need to study the system methodically. School quizzes, university entrance examinations and public service promotions tests regularly include RT sections. Some manuals include sample test questions of exasperating complexity and obscurity. Occasionally manuals make attempt to separate items into broad semantic groups (e.g. kinship terms, body parts) but as we see below if a finer semantic analysis is made, more useful morphosyntactic generalisations emerge.

Apart from memorising long lists of lexical substitutes for examinations, most Thai speakers would learn part of the system at least passively through the mass media. State-controlled television gives central attention to royal news. Here RT is heard in meaningful situations along with visual semantic cues.

Fictitious royals also evoke RT. Stories featuring princes, princesses, kings and queens would expose some children to the system at an early age. RT is used in well-attended traditional dramatic performances such as shadow puppetry and the semi-humorous folk opera li:ke:. Television presents serialized dramas with fictionalized royal characters, giving viewers a chance to hear RT in more-or-less natural discourse contexts. The result is that the great majority of the 60 million native speakers of Thai would have had at least a minimal passive exposure to RT and school-aged children would have been taught some of the system in the classroom. University students and government officials would need to have learned more to pass their examinations.

Although beyond our scope here, it should be mentioned that RT has points of contact with parallel registers of literary and ecclesiastical Thai. The latter is used when speaking to or about Buddhist monks and is lexically more limited. The Buddha himself however is always accorded monarch-level RT. (In a Sapir-Whorfian theological quandary, Christian
missionaries in Thailand have disagreed as to whether or not RT should be used in their messages too.)

2.7. Royal Thai as a native variety; ranks and differentiation

Several thousand Thai speakers would have learned RT as a native variety, along with CT. These are members of Thailand’s hereditary aristocracy and, to varying degrees, children of service personnel brought up in aristocratic households. Since reigning monarchs of the 19th century had large harems and polygamy among princes was the norm, the number of households well into the mid 20th-century where RT was prescribed would have been in the hundreds. However, in the 20th-century kings have been monogamous so the number of RT-speaking households is steadily decreasing. Normally, great- and great-great-grandchildren of monarchs receive titles but do themselves not evoke RT. At the sixth generation from a monarch, descendants are considered commoners.

According to King Chulalongkorn (r. 1865–1910) in the 14th century only four royal ranks were recognized (Jones 1971: 11). The system gradually gained in complexity until, in the 19th century, 26 degrees were needed, at least to order ceremonial processions. At present, for linguistic purposes, seven ranks are distinguished by leading authorities (Posakritsana 1983: 193). The ranking applies to males and females alike. It is basically hereditary, but status is often adjusted or fine-tuned by special investing or by other circumstances as explained in more detail by Haas (1951) and Jones (1971).

The mainly hereditary context of the RT system mentioned here needs to be distinguished from a parallel hierarchy of conferred ranks and titles (Haas 1951; Jones 1971), similar to British knighthoods, etc. Special honours were formerly conferred on commoners, some carrying linguistic prescriptions, but the importance of the system has gradually lessened since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932.

A reigning monarch and spouse-consort are rank 1. The majority of royal grandchildren are rank 7 (or มณีชว Mom Chao, the most numerous category of persons for whom RT is specified). Between these ranks are a monarch’s children and those grandchildren who have been specially elevated or invested. A significant complexity of RT affecting certain lexical items is that in some cases different forms are prescribed for ranks 1-7, as in (4).
As an illustrative example, a royal granddaughter (rank 7) speaking to her children would normally use CT, even when speaking about herself. However RT would be used if she were referring to a senior relative (rank 7 or above). The children would be expected to answer their mother and refer to her actions in RT. They would speak among themselves in CT, but if they referred to other ranking 1-7 relatives, RT would be prescribed. Anecdotal evidence cited by Pramoj (1982) indicates that children brought up in such households do indeed become surprisingly fluent in controlling this complex mode of code-switching, differentiating RT sensitive to the ranks of various relatives.

(4) Comparison of lexical differentiation in Common and Royal Thai

(i) Common Thai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'to die'</th>
<th>'to eat'</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT-H (formal, polite)</td>
<td>ท่านคน kam</td>
<td>ร่ายพระทาน n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT-H (informal, polite)</td>
<td>เธอ</td>
<td>ทาน</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT-L (colloquial)</td>
<td>ต่ย</td>
<td>กิน</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT-L (vulgar, intimate)</td>
<td>นี่</td>
<td>ด่าก</td>
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(ii) Royal Thai

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT-H (rank 1-2)</td>
<td>sawานก่ย์</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-H (rank 3-4)</td>
<td>ฮิวณก่ย์</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-L (rank 5-6)</td>
<td>ซินภราชอน</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-L (rank 7)</td>
<td>ซินชิพิทักษ์ย</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The manuals mentioned above cite multiple forms for RT when they are prescribed for different ranks. In spite of the complexity of (4), for most purposes below it will be adequate to distinguish only RT-H, appropriate for monarch and immediate family (ranks 1-2) and RT-L, specified for grandchildren (rank 7, Mom Chao). Ranks 3-6 most frequently coincide with one or the other of these, but exactly how depends on individual items and also on the particular authority prescribing them.

To the extent that RT is spoken as a spontaneous code in situations such as those noted above, it is subject to further variation along a dimension that could roughly be described as casual to careful mode of articulation.
Roengpitya’s work (1973: 102) documents instances of an informal spoken subvariety of RT used in aristocratic households. In the right circumstances, reports Roengpitya, polysyllabic forms are truncated and articulated as monosyllables, following a similar tendency in casual speech characterizing CT. A prescribed RT form like sawỳ:y ‘to eat’ (4) will thus be realized colloquially as wỳ:y. Compare two pronunciations of a noun meaning ‘university’ in CT: mahā:ẃīthaya:lay (careful) mā:ẃītlay (casual). A fuller description of RT would need to take up this interesting dimension of variation but for present purposes we will have to leave it aside.

Formal-colloquial variation in idiomatic or formulaic expressions can be seen in the short formula nay·luając [in + royal], a colloquial yet still respectful way to refer to a reigning Thai monarch, contrasting with longer royal titles used in formal circumstances.

3. Nouns in Royal and Common Thai

3.1. Inalienable possession: body parts

(5) Body parts and substances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CT -L</th>
<th>CT -H</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
<td>ti:n</td>
<td>thā:w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand</td>
<td>mɯː</td>
<td>mɯː</td>
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<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>taː</td>
<td>taː</td>
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<tr>
<td>heart, mind</td>
<td>cay</td>
<td>cay</td>
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<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>lûːt</td>
<td>loːhit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prostate gland</td>
<td>tɔm·lû:k·mà:k (=)</td>
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<th>RT -L</th>
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<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>loːhit</td>
<td>phrà·loːhit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prostate gland</td>
<td>tɔm·lû:k·mà:k (=)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(5) illustrates one class of basic relationships between CT and RT nouns. A few nouns are maximally differentiated, such as forms meaning ‘head’ and ‘foot’. In CT among intimates the form тi:n is the colloquial way to refer to an animal’s foot; to use it of a human would border on vulgarity. Among educated urban speakers the form thâ:w would be heard instead and this would also be preferred, in formal writing, even for animals’ feet. Choice of L тi:n or H thâ:w thus depends not only on the semantics of whose feet are being referred to but also on the pragmatics of discourse context, genre and social identity of interlocutors. Even personality and transient mood can enter into selection. In normal RT, only semantics – the rank of the royal person whose feet are being referred to – is relevant for distinguishing L bâ:t from H phrá:ba:t. Criteria for distinguishing H from L are thus partly shared by RT and CT but differ in detail.

On the morphophonemic level, (5) illustrates that at least for most body-part terms RT derives H forms from L through prefixing the syllable phrá: originally meaning ‘most-excellent, splendid, best, noble’ but here in effect a RT-H marker (Ketprathum 2001: 111). Occasionally, as for ‘heart, mind’, other changes are also indicated. Etymologically, the base RT-L forms are derived from a tonally and segmentally assimilated version of corresponding Indic (mainly Sanskrit) nouns for body parts.

(Because of remote Indo-European etymological relationships, RT forms can sometimes be linked with cognates in English or other European languages, although sound changes may mask the relationships. Through Indo-European, RT harú:thay is cognate to English ‘heart’. Similarly: hâ:t: ‘hand’, bâ:t: ‘foot’, na:sâ: : ‘nose’, cha:nú : ‘knee’, etc.)

Inspection of (5) reveals that for ‘hand’, ‘eye’ and ‘heart, mind’ CT does not differentiate L and H forms and this is true for the majority of body-part nouns. That is, unlike the case of ‘foot’, for ‘eye’ there is difference neither as to whether reference is made to an animal’s eye or to a human’s, nor as to whether the context of mention is formal, informal, educated, etc. For ‘eye’, only RT shows differentiation based on royal rank of whose eye is being mentioned. For items like ‘blood’ however the distribution is different. Etymologically, in CT the inherited Tai form lâm:t functions as the L item meaning ‘blood’, whereas H in CT is lo:hit, derived from Sanskrit for ‘the red substance’. The latter form is also used in RT, where H prefixes phrá as above. Items like ‘blood’ are important in establishing that CT and RT are interlinked lexical systems.

Finally, (5) indicates that for ‘prostate gland’ and for other internal organs of less linguistic salience in the past, no differentiation at all is
observed between CT and RT nor is there any L/H difference. The item is everywhere a shape-based metaphorical compounding, literally [gland + [offspring (of) areca nut]]. This form is now well-known as it occurred frequently in official palace reports regarding a royal hospital stay (Matichon 2002).

3.2. Personal items

For personal items and clothing, some, but not all, of the above body-part distributional principles apply and different subsets need to be distinguished. Just as ‘foot’ is maximally proliferated in (5), so is ‘shoe’ in (6). On the other hand, in a manner parallel with ‘prostate gland’, no differentiation is prescribed for nouns like the recent English loan ‘saxophone’ – frequently used in association with King Bhumibol, noted as a performer on this instrument.

(6) Maximal and minimal differentiation in personal items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CT-L</th>
<th>CT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shoe</td>
<td>กะสีก</td>
<td>ร่อ:ง:ขาน:ว</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saxophone</td>
<td>ฮักศ:ฟ:ง</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>saxophone</td>
<td>ฮักศ:ฟ:ง</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only a few personal items in CT show L/H differentiation, such as ‘medicine’ and ‘laxative’ (cp. ยา:ย ‘expel’) in (7). As with ‘blood’ above, these items demonstrate the interlinked nature of the CT and RT lexical systems. For the RT equivalents, RT-L coincides with CT-H, while RT-H is formed through prefixation as above.
(7) Personal items, set 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CT-L</th>
<th>CT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>umbrella</td>
<td>rôm</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trousers</td>
<td>kaːŋkəŋ</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>ya:</td>
<td>oːsòt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laxative</td>
<td>yaːːthèːy</td>
<td>oːsòt'thàːy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair</td>
<td>käwʔiː</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>umbrella</td>
<td>klòt</td>
<td>phrá'klòt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trousers</td>
<td>saːnap'phlaw</td>
<td>phrá'saːnap'phlaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>oːsòt</td>
<td>phrá'oːsòt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laxative</td>
<td>oːsòt'thàːy</td>
<td>phrá'oːsòt'thàːy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair</td>
<td>käwʔiː</td>
<td>phrá'käwʔiː</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(8) Personal items, set 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CT, RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eyeglasses</td>
<td>wàm'taː</td>
<td>chalöːŋ phrá'ɲôteːt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shirt</td>
<td>sùːə</td>
<td>chalöːŋ phrá'ŋŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undershirt</td>
<td>sùːə'nay</td>
<td>chalöːŋ phrá'kɔːn'nóːy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For items shown in (8) distribution is simplified. Here authorities show a simple two-way contrast with the two morphemes chalöːŋ and phrá' used together to form RT-H items (Ratchabanditayasathan 1982: 247). These are prefixed to Indic body-part terms as in (5) to form associated nouns. chalöːŋ in ordinary CT functions as a verb meaning ‘to celebrate, glorify’ but in RT the form appears to function more as a nominal compounding head meaning approximately ‘glory’; hence a king’s eyeglasses would be conveyed by the substitute phrase ‘glory of the most-excellent eyes’.

Cutlery used by the immediate royal family is formed on pattern of (8), as in (9), with Indic-derived hàt ‘hand’, hence ‘glory of the most-excellent hand’. The common Thai word for an implement may optionally be added as a qualifier.
(9) Cutlery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>CT, RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spoon</td>
<td>chó:n</td>
<td>chalökə phrahât chó:n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fork</td>
<td>sôm</td>
<td>chalökə phrahât sôm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chopsticks</td>
<td>takiøp</td>
<td>chalökə phrahât takiøp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If personal items are sharp, then the pattern in (10) is used, with RT featuring a root word of Khmero-Indic origin, prefixed with phrahəŋ ‘weapon’. For other items of this type, the CT item itself is so prefixed.

(10) Sharp items and weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>CT, RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>razor</td>
<td>mì:t ko:n</td>
<td>phrahəŋ kanbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tweezers</td>
<td>nə:p</td>
<td>phrahəŋ katsà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sword</td>
<td>dà:p</td>
<td>phrahəŋ dà:p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>club</td>
<td>krabi:</td>
<td>phrahəŋ krabi:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gun</td>
<td>pə:n</td>
<td>phrahəŋ pə:n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. Kinship terms

In (1)-(10) lexical meanings have been held constant across varieties as suggested by shared English glosses. In other nominal sets, such as kinship terms, semantic contrasts are arranged differently and lexical relationships are not really binary. (11a) shows a kinship subset: terms for a monarch’s uncles and aunts. These do not show L/H differentiation in CT and in this particular case kin terms for royal ranks 2-7 follow CT, usually with added titles of respect (Posakritsana 1983: 195). For a monarch’s kin however semantic features of relative age, side of family and gender of relative must be realigned as shown in (11b). For RT-H, bound morphemes ma: ‘ and pi: indicating female and male descent lines are organized along with other morphemes in a tight polysyllabic paradigm, whereas CT covers the semantic area differently with monosyllables.
(11) a. Kinship terms: aunts and uncles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CT, RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H (rank 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maternal side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt Older than mo.</td>
<td>pâː</td>
<td>phráːmaː·túːt·châː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt Younger than mo.</td>
<td>náː</td>
<td>phráːmaː·túːt·châː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncle Older than mo.</td>
<td>luŋ</td>
<td>phráːmaː·tuːlaː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncle Younger than mo.</td>
<td>aː</td>
<td>phráːpiː·tuːlaː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paternal side</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt Older than fa.</td>
<td>pâː</td>
<td>phráːpiː·túːt·châː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aunt Younger than fa.</td>
<td>aː</td>
<td>phráːpiː·túːt·châː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncle Older than fa.</td>
<td>luŋ</td>
<td>phráːpiː·tuːlaː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncle Younger than fa.</td>
<td>aː</td>
<td>phráːpiː·tuːlaː</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(11) b. Semantic components distinguished in (11a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>side of family</th>
<th>gender</th>
<th>age relative to parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMON</td>
<td>if younger</td>
<td>if older always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>than parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROYAL</td>
<td>always</td>
<td>always never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4. Differential semantic organisation in other lexical sets

Sets such as (11a) erode the claim that simple lexical substitutions alone can fully elucidate CT/RT relationships. If lexicosemantic detail is considered, further evidence is not hard to find. For the sets in (8)-(10), a constant compounding head for RT-H in effect marks out semantic generic groupings not overtly marked in CT. Other sets include common foods and names of meals, where RT employs the prefixal compounding head khrùŋ as in khrùŋ·khâː·w·phát ‘fried rice’; compare the simpler CT equivalent khâː·w·phát. Similar khrùŋ expressions cover ‘rice soup’, ‘desert, sweets’, ‘snacks’, ‘breakfast’, ‘lunch’, etc. where CT equivalents omit khrùŋ (Yumonthian 1993: 42).
Contrariwise, lexical sets in CT, but not in RT, may show a constant generic compounding head. One such set of high frequency is based on the noun nāːm ‘water, liquid’. Many liquid substances are coded in CT by these formally cohesive ‘liquid’ compounds, including drinking water, milk, perfume, saliva, tears, etc. In RT however these are separate Indic-derived nouns with no explicit generic component meaning ‘liquid’ uniting them (Phibanthaen 2001: 39-40, with 15 such forms cited).

In more complex cases, the same lexical form is used as generic compounding head both in RT and in CT (or in the common RT/CT lexical core) but with different functions. Thus khrūːŋ cited above occurs in common core vocabulary as a noun meaning ‘apparatus, enhancing agent’ with over a hundred associated compounds covering motors, engines, spare parts, musical instruments and even cosmetics, costumes and spices. However, for ‘fried rice’ or names of foods and meals as noted for RT above, khrūːŋ compounds would not be appropriate in CT. In such cases then, RT is characterized by selective expansion of the semantic range associated with a generic compounding head used more restrictively in the common register. Consequently, an account of the RT/CT relationship focused only on isomorphic substitutions would miss these semantic processes.

3.5. Degrees of speech-level differentiation: the case of animal terms

Other semantically based nominal sets show CT-L/CT-H speech-level differentiation but are less directly concerned with CT/RT alternations than the preceding sets involved with inalienable possession or habitual interaction. The animals indicated in (12) are one such group. As boxes in columns H(1)-H(3) in (12) suggest, paired animal terms are actually arranged in a continuum with the point of L/H separation variable depending on the particular animal.

(12) Animals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animals</th>
<th>COMMON L</th>
<th>LITERARY/ROYAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>māː</td>
<td>sunāːk sunāːk sunāːk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buffalo</td>
<td>khwaːy</td>
<td>kрабː kрабː kрабː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cow</td>
<td>wuː</td>
<td>khoː khoː khoː</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For ‘dog’, there is especially low tolerance for the CT-L form mā:. The higher form sunāk is known by all Thai speakers and is regularly used in polite speech and writing. (Unlike the ‘cur’/‘hound’ pair in English, the Thai distinction is stylistic and interactional, not implying specifically canine denotive or connotative nuances.) This is similar to the distribution of ‘foot’ tī:n and thā:w in (4). For ‘cat’ however the situation is reversed (Ketprathum 2001: 88). The lower form mē:w occurs almost universally. In fact, the “super” high substitute wīla:n is unfamiliar to many native speakers and is effectively confined to archaic poetry and advanced examinations. Except for these cases, one would conclude that ‘cat’ in Thai is handled by the core vocabulary item mē:w, suitable for all registers. Similarly: ‘rabbit’, ‘turtle’, ‘fish’ and ‘leech’.

With items for which two nominal terms are available, RT manuals prescribe that the higher term is to be used in the presence of or when associated with a royal person. In actual usage however there is great flexibility. The higher form for ‘dog’ is far more likely to be heard in a royal context than the higher form for ‘cat’. When royal persons ride horses, even official news sources are more apt to use the lower form mā: than the specified higher âtsawá; see (15).

3.6. Sequenced affixation and sandhi

Examples above have illustrated one way to form RT alternates: through prefixation or infixal treatment of special bound morphemes, including phrá, chalōŋ and sā:m. (These processes would not constitute infixation in the strict sense of application within a single morpheme.) Bound morphemes may occur together in predictable configurations such as in (13), featuring derivatives from Sanskrit rā:ja ‘king’ and para ma ‘first, foremost’. In sets like (13), there is a sequenced series of morphemes
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A-D forming ranked compounds of form D, AD, ACD, ABCD. In general, the longer the compound, the higher the rank of indicated royal person. For ‘son’, the formal and literary term for ‘crown prince’ is thus phra\'borom\'rā:tcha\'o:rōt while other aristocratic sons are referred to with shorter terms as appropriate. The infix ‘borom’ is correctly applied only to nouns associated with a reigning monarch.

(13) Differentiation through sequenced affixation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Son</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) o:rōt</td>
<td>archaic CT; RT, of rank 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) phra'o:rōt</td>
<td>RT, of rank 3-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) phra'rā:tcha'o:rōt</td>
<td>RT, of rank 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) phra'borom'rā:tcha'o:rōt</td>
<td>RT, of rank 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decree</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) o:ŋka:n</td>
<td>CT and RT, of rank 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) phra'o:ŋka:n</td>
<td>RT, of rank 3-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) phra'rā:tcha'o:ŋka:n</td>
<td>RT, of rank 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) phra'borom'rā:tcha'o:ŋka:n</td>
<td>RT, of rank 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The paradigm illustrated in (13) includes most nouns referring to orders, decrees, decisions, etc., as well as to a monarch’s direct-line immediate kin. However the full paradigm is not prescribed for, nor acceptable with, all semantic sets. If phra\'borom\'rā:tcha\'bā:t for ‘king’s foot’ or chalō:ŋ phra\'borom\'rā:tcha\'nē:t for ‘king’s eyeglasses’ were derived instead of forms shown in (5) and (8), the effect would be ludicrous. Thus semantic taxonomy is an important constraint on morphophonemic rule application.

Outside of the semantic areas illustrated in (13) there are sporadic items of similar form, but showing variations on the general pattern: phra\'borom\'de:cha\':nuphā:p ‘royal power’ omits syllable ‘rā:tcha’; similarly for ‘royal remains’, etc. A few items add extra morphemes: phra\'borom\'mahā:\'rā:tcha\'waŋ ‘grand palace’ (with infixal ‘mahā:\ ‘great’).

Conversely, for what one authority (Yumonthian 1993: 20) describes as “neutral or ordinary usage”, compounds are acceptable which simply prefix rā:tcha ‘royal’ to Indic-provenance nouns: rā:tcha\'tha:ni ‘royal location’; rā:tcha\'sōmbāt ‘royal property’, rā:tcha\'thū:t
'ambassador', etc. The process is apparently semi-productive, with 45 such compounds listed in the official Thai Royal Institute dictionary (Ratchabanditsathan 1982: 693; in fact, ratchabanditsathan ‘royal institute’ itself is an example of this construction type).

Occasionally sandhi operations apply, as in (14). Compare also o:kà: t, waro:kà: t ‘occasion’ and a:yú, phrá·chonnáma:yú ‘age’ (3), illustrating further prefixal possibilities.

(14) Differentiation and sandhi elision for item meaning ‘policy’

CT-H, RT-L   nayo:ba:y
RT-H(rank 2)  phrárá:tcho:ba:y
RT-H(rank 1)  phráboromrá:tcho:ba:y

3.7. Genitive marking

Possession is indicated in CT through a pattern of normal noun phrase modification: possessed (head) noun followed by possessor, optionally with intervening marker khç& N, or hàŋ for abstract entities. For RT, most commonly royal possession is indirectly suggested through use of an RT-marked noun, such as in the constructions introduced above. However if possession by a particular royal person is to be emphasized, more explicit formulae are available. When a monarch is possessor, for a set of entities including decrees, writings, etc., the preferred strategy is to use the construction type [possessed noun + nay + royal possessor].

(The form nay occurs also in CT but not as a genitive marker. Rather, it has locative functions: ‘in, inside’. In a limited push-chain operation, locative functions in RT may then be covered by another Khmer-derived preposition: ná ‘in, inside, at, on’. This RT genitive thus employs the CT syntactic form for genitive constructions but with a reinterpreted form as marker.)

To indicate physical objects used or possessed by a monarch, another possibility is to employ suffixal formulae in tön, lûŋ, or phrá·thî:·nāŋ. The first two occur as unbound lexemes in CT, tön meaning ‘base, stalk’ and lûŋ ‘great, public’. These genitives are unusual in current practice. More frequent is the suffixal phrase phrá·thî:·nāŋ [glorious + place + sit] ‘royal seat’ added to vehicles carrying a royal passenger. In other contexts this phrase can mean ‘royal seat’ in the sense
of ‘buttocks’ (Kankuson 1985: 104). To mark possession or similar genitive associations for other royal persons,  CoreData, a royalising verb form treated in 7.3, can be used as a nominal modifier. For conveyances such as boats or cars,  CoreData, a shortened version of the monarch's form, can be appended (Yumonthian 1993: 19). (15) illustrates a range of suffixal possibilities, each with a different nuance.

(15) Suffixal genitive markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT</th>
<th>RT-L</th>
<th>RT-H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gun</td>
<td>ภูขน</td>
<td>พระ ภูขน</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boat</td>
<td>รูเร</td>
<td>พระรูเร</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td>รูป</td>
<td>พระรูป</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horse</td>
<td>มะา</td>
<td>พระมะา</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. RT first- and second-person pronominal terms

(16) Sequenced morpheme compounding for second-person royal pronominal reference

\[
\text{tây fà: láʔɔŋ thúli: phrá: bâ:t} \\
\begin{align*}
& + + + + + & \text{to rank 1} \\
& + + + + & \text{to rank 2} \\
& + + + & \text{to ranks-3-6} \\
& + + & \text{to rank 7}
\end{align*}
\]

The CT pronominal and personal reference system is known for its sociolinguistic complexity, described in detail elsewhere (Chirasombutti and Diller, 2000). RT first- and second-person personal reference, while complex, is also systematic in that selection is based on rank of addressee. A complication is substantial variation in usage over several centuries. As a result, while authorities agree on most forms comprising the system, they may disagree as to how forms are to be applied. Ketprathum’s (2001: 60–62) usage descriptions are summarized in (16) and (17); for somewhat different prescriptions, see Yumonthian (1993: 57–60).

(16) is intended to indicate schematically how second-person forms are built up from five morphemes in a sequenced set. Selections yield the form [fà: phrá:bâ:t] for rank 7 and increase in syllables on up to octosyllabic [tâyfà: láʔɔŋthúli: phrá:bâ:t]. This additive scheme recalls the
sequentially constructed nouns in (13) but the formula sequence for the pronominals is slightly different: BE, ABE, ABCE, ABCDE. Components ABCDE literally mean [under][sole][dust(1)][dust(2)][foot], as though one were addressing the dust under the royal foot rather than the foot’s owner directly (Chantornvong 1992).

Most first-person forms are built up in a similar way. Thus [môm chan] to [klâw krâ môm chan] as indicated in (17) shows staged components CD, BCD, BC, ABC and ABCD (Posakritsana 1983: 212–114). The basic reference in these cases is to the top of the head, considered the most sacral part of the body (Juntanamalaga 1992). A separate form khâphráphútthacâw ‘servant of the Lord Buddha’ is the specified first-person form when speaking to a king or other royal person of rank 1-3, indicated as (a); (b)-(f) show the sequence other first-person forms sensitive to descending rank of addressee.

(17) Sequenced morphemes compounded for first-person pronominal reference

(a) khâ·phrá·phúttha·câw

klâw kra môm chan

(b) + + + +
(c) + + +
(d) + +
(e) + + +
(f) + +

5. Classifiers and third-person reference

Thai has a well-developed system of classifiers (Aikhenvald 2000). Many are sensitive to CT speech-level (Juntanamalaga 1988). The basic CT-L classifier constructions along with some 20 high-frequency classifiers are learned naturally by young children but CT-H lexical elaboration of less frequent classifiers continues throughout formal schooling. Presentation of the total prescriptive system requires a book of 128 pages, with about 3000 entries (Ratchabandithayasathan 1995). RT in the first instance specifies these CT-H classifier selections but with a few idiosyncratic shifts. For example, in (1) we saw that ‘year’, an item which functions as a measure in classifier position, requires a special form in RT.
If royal persons are referred to in classifier constructions, then special classifiers are used: rank 1-3: phráʔọŋ; rank 4-7: ọŋ. The latter classifier also serves for royal body parts, as in (18), and for additional sacral items such as thrones. phráʔọŋ also serves as the most common third-personal reference form for royalty; see (24).

A few frequent CT classifiers undergo effective tabooing: bay (containers, roundish items), tuə (animals, animal-like items) and an (a general classifier for small implements) are not to be used in RT at all, with accommodation through use of a repeater construction as in (19). Note the difference between CT-H, where high lexical substitution has occurred but the common classifier tuə is retained, and RT where the latter suffers taboo and the repeater construction is used instead. Tabooing is said by some consultants to be due to avoiding figurative sexual connotations of the three offending classifiers.

(18) Variation in classifier constructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT-L/H</th>
<th>RT-L/H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mi: fan sōːŋ</td>
<td>sī mi: phráʔon sōːŋ ọŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have tooth two</td>
<td>CLF have tooth two CLF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘There are two teeth.’ ‘There are two teeth (of a royal person).’

(19)

CT-L
| mi: wuə sōːŋ tuə |
| have cow one two CLF |

‘There are two cows.’

CT-H
| mi: khoː sōːŋ |
| have cow two CLF |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RT-L/H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tuə mi: khoː sōːŋ khoː</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have cow two cow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘There are two cows.’ ‘There are two cows.’
6. ABAC constructions

A morphosyntactic process common in Southeast Asian languages is the formation of so-called 4-syllable expansions or “elaborate expressions” (Haas 1964: xvii). In one frequent CT pattern, sequences AB and AC are conjoined to form ABAC, where B and C are synonyms, antonyms or in another close semantic relationship (recalling English easy come, easy go or monkey see, monkey do). Various CT subtypes can be formulated depending on morphological class of components and function of the resulting expression. For example, if A is a quantifier, constructions are generally productive and semantically predictable: \[ yi^N ya$y yi^N \\
\] ‘more large, more expensive’; \[ ta$n khon ta$n pha:s$\] ‘various person(s), various language(s)’. Other collocations are less transparent \[ thi: khray thi: ma$n \] ‘time who time 3P’ = ‘when it’s someone’s turn, then their time’s up (they must perform)’.

A particular version of the ABAC pattern is heavily utilized in RT. Recall that pronominal expressions in (17) feature the morphemes kla$w and kram$m, both referring to the head – more precisely, to the scalp and crown/fontanel of the head. These items also occur as B and C respectively in the ABAC pattern above, yielding \[ A kla^w A kram$m \].

This pattern in turn becomes a component in RT formulaic opening and closing sequences, used especially when addressing the monarch on ceremonial occasions or in formal correspondence. For this purpose, the repeated component A is one of perhaps a dozen verbs with meanings like ‘announce’, ‘cover’, ‘exceed’, ‘know’; along with a few closed-class forms. Selection of a particular lexical repeater as A in the formula is normatively regulated and specifies the exact nature of the associated speech act: whether the message is intended as a report, petition, expression of gratitude, admission of guilt, etc. (Kankuson 1985: 99). In similar manner, with A = sa$y ‘to put on/in, place on’, the above construction is used in utterance-closing formulae: as though ‘(may I receive your command and) place (it on my) scalp (and) place (it on the) crown/fontanel (of my head)’ (Yumonthian 1993: 62–63). When A = pr$tt ‘to be pleased’, then the resulting ABAC expression takes a high-ranking royal person as subject and, either alone or as part of a larger formula, means approximately ‘(the royal person) is/was pleased to …’, as in (25).
7. Verbs and verb phrases

The treatment of verbs and verb phrases in RT shares general features encountered above but requires extra considerations. A basic principle of RT is that if a clausal subject refers to a royal person, then the predicate needs to be marked as “royal”. This specifically applies to the main verb of the clause but also to selected secondary verbs, as discussed below. Sections 7.1-3 discuss how subject marking is accomplished. Then 7.4-5 consider cases where royal referent serves as direct object or dative/recipient. The royal referent triggering the following processes may be either overtly expressed as a noun or pronoun in superficial syntax or be interpreted (i.e. as the understood referent of a zero anaphor).

In terms of lexical variation by level and rank, a few verbal concepts are maximally differentiated both in RT and in CT: mainly life transitions such as ‘to die’ (4). Other verbs such as ‘to eat’ (4) have a single form prescribed for all levels of RT. What follows is simplified as regards this dimension.

7.1. Substitute verbs with royal referent functioning as transitive or intransitive subject

For royal referent as subject, if a RT substitute word is prescribed, then marking is of the four subtypes below. Otherwise “elsewhere” principles apply as in 7.3. It must be emphasized that semantic subject is the relevant trigger. This need not be overt in syntax. Thus zero-anaphor royal referents often account for verb marking in 7.1.1-4, in which case the marking can be seen also as having a reference tracking discourse function.

7.1.1.

A lexical verb substitute – a “proper” ra:cha:sâp item – is selected if available, as with sawâñkhôt ‘to die’ or sawây ‘to eat’ in (4). The majority of verbs in this category focus on some manner of direct involvement or operation of the body, such as reclining, bathing, kissing, listening, watching, etc.
If focus is on the royal subject moving, then the semantically generalized main verb form sadēt ‘to proceed’ is selected, optionally followed in a serial verb construction by another more specific verb, either common or royal (e.g. praphā:t ‘to tour’); thus sadēt praphā:t ‘to go on a tour.’ A nominal complement is also possible after sadēt, as in sadēt phrä·rā:tcha·damy:n ‘to proceed in a royal progress’.

If focus is on the royal subject staying in a location or position, then the main verb form prathāp ‘to stay’ is selected, often followed by another more specific RT or CT verb (e.g. prathāp râm ‘to spend the night [somewhere away from the normal residence]’.

For the CT verbs mǐ: ‘to have; to be [existential]’ and pen ‘to be [equivalent to; characterized by]’ and a few other low-agentive verbs, if the postverbal noun is a proper RT substitute, then the predicate is deemed to be adequately marked without further process. Thus mǐ: phrä·phāk cām·sāy ‘to have a happy expression’; pen phrä·rā:tcha·orōt ‘to be a royal son’. Nominals of the type illustrated in (13) are common in this construction.

A large and frequently-used subtype of these constructions consists of predicates of expression and communication. These use postverbal nominals such as in (20). To understand the CT/RT relationship, first we need to note that in CT the straightforward way of expressing the agentive notion ‘speaking’ is simply to use a transitive verb like phū:t ‘to speak’, followed optionally by a quotative complement. However for a less agentive and more existential alternative, mǐ: ‘to have; to be [existential]’ can be followed by the compound kham·phū:t [word + speak] ‘spoken word’; hence mǐ: kham·phū:t ‘something was said’. This expression can optionally take a “reduced-agency” preverbal subject, as though distancing the speaker somewhat from involvement or responsibility in the act of speaking. A quotative complement specifying what was said can be added.
Now in RT this less agentive mode of expression is a favourite construction type. It is a standard way of reporting that a royal person said something, wrote something, communicated something by letter or the like, with noun phrases as in (20). Similarly: ‘(write a) letter’, ‘(send a) telegram’, etc. See also (25).

(20) Noun phrases common in predicates after verb mî: ‘to have; to be [existential]’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saying</th>
<th>CT</th>
<th>kham·phû:t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RT-L</td>
<td>phrâ·damrât</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RT-H</td>
<td>phrâ·râ:tcha·damrât</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>khwa:m·khít</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RT-L</td>
<td>phrâ·damri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RT-H</td>
<td>phrâ·râ:tcha·damri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2. Homonymous verbs

A source of practical confusion is that the same superficial form may occur both in CT and in RT but with different semantics. Whether to consider these to be cases of homonymy (two separate verbs that happen to coincide phonologically) or partial synonymy would depend on the analyst’s viewpoint. Examples are shown in (21).

In yet a further complication, a homonym of sadêt ‘to go’ functions as a title or epithet for intermediate-rank royal persons (typically included in the royal entourage), so that the sentence sadêt N. sadêt could mean ‘Princess N. went’ – such homonymy being the source of much royal-milieu joking and wordplay (Pramoj 1981).
(21) Verb forms with differing interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT meanings</th>
<th>RT meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>damnγ:n conduct, continue</td>
<td>go, proceed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pratháp stamp, impress</td>
<td>stay, remain, sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soŋ  maintain, keep, be shaped</td>
<td>be engaged with, act on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chy:n  invite; please (proceed to do s.t.)</td>
<td>take, conduct, carry, lift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prò:t  be the favourite (one); please (formal)</td>
<td>be pleased to (act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fàw  watch, guard</td>
<td>to attend, wait upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chalö:ŋ celebrate</td>
<td>see (8)-(9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3. “Elsewhere” predicate constructions in soŋ

If 7.1 does not apply, then a special “royalising” verb form soŋ is used instead. This has rather generalized semantics: ‘to be engaged in/with; operate on/with; demonstrate; act’ and can be used with all royal ranks. In RT this light verb is used in one of the following three construction subtypes.

7.3.1.

For transitive clauses, when verbal semantics relates to a conventional process, then soŋ alone, treated in effect as main verb, followed by nominal is usually preferred. The exact action is then interpreted from context.

Thus: soŋ rwa·bay ‘to be engaged with a sail boat’ = ‘to go sailing’; soŋ ròt ‘to drive/ride in a car’ – emphasis on the vehicle, rather than the trip, for which sadêt would be normal; soŋ má: ‘to ride a horse’; soŋ kò:f ‘to play golf’; soŋ sákso:fo:n ‘to play the saxophone’; soŋ phrá·aksö:n ‘to be engaged with script₉’ = ‘to read, to study, to write’ (exact meaning determined by context; Ketprathum 2001: 98). Formally similar to the preceding example, over a hundred RT transitive and semi-transitive predicate items are covered in this way through expressions in soŋ [phrá·[+N]₉] ‘to be engaged with [the royal N]₉’ including such varied notions as deciding, recalling, being named, presenting alms, and smoking cigarettes.
In addition, semantically less transitive notions can be coded with the soN construction above, now recast as formal transitives. Such notions include being kind [=demonstrate kindness], being friendly, being angry, being pregnant, exerting effort, dancing, laughing, crying, dreaming, vomiting, urinating, and lamenting. The construction can be used for predicates of expression using forms in (20). Thus ‘thinking’ could be handled though soN phra\textsuperscript{R}at\textsuperscript{A}cha\textsuperscript{T}\textsuperscript{Dam}\textsuperscript{R}i ‘engage in thought, plan something’; compare this with the less agentive and more existential alternative in (iv) above ‘to have a thought occur to one’.

The normal expression for a monarch commanding something is soN phra\textsuperscript{R}a\textsuperscript{Karuna} pr\textsuperscript{T} kl\textsuperscript{A}w pr\textsuperscript{T} kram\textsuperscript{M}, [exercise + glorious + kindness + be-pleased + head\textsuperscript{1} + be-pleased + head\textsuperscript{2}] incorporating an instance of the A\textsuperscript{K}kl\textsuperscript{A}w A\textsuperscript{K}kram\textsuperscript{M} formation discussed above. See also (25).

7.3.2.

When the above conditions do not apply, then soN directly precedes the CT main verb of a matrix clause. Thus CT phaya\textsuperscript{M} ya\textsuperscript{M} ‘to try’ does not have a prescribed RT lexical substitute, hence soN phaya\textsuperscript{M} is specified for royal-subject RT (Posakritosana 1983: 204). Similarly cha\textsuperscript{Y} ‘to use’ (CT), soN cha\textsuperscript{Y} ‘to use’ (RT).

7.3.3.

Prescriptive texts categorically forbid the use of soN in the constructions summarized in 7.1 as though to prevent double marking of royal forms. Thus a sequence like soN saw\textsuperscript{Y} ‘to eat’ is considered incorrect. In actual practice, even very respected academic authorities use double RT-coded expressions like soN sad\textsuperscript{T} pay ‘to go’ or soN mi\textsuperscript{R} phra\textsuperscript{A}ra\textsuperscript{T}\textsuperscript{Dam\textsuperscript{R}at ‘to say’ (Charoenwongsak 2001: 8-9; Damrong-Rajanubhab and Narisaranuvattivongse 1963, vol. 20: 124). Moreover, a subset of royal-subject verbs is officially exceptional in employing soN along with prefixal phra\textsuperscript{A} to adjust RT level upwards (Ketprathum 2001: 79; for a slightly different prescription, see Yumonthian 1993: 65).
(22) Predicates with complex royal morphosyntactic coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT</th>
<th>‘to be ill’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT-L (rank 7)</td>
<td>pu$ýy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-L (ranks 2-6)</td>
<td>soŋ prachuén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-H (rank 1)</td>
<td>soŋ phrá-phachuén</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT</th>
<th>‘to be ordained’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT-L (rank 7)</td>
<td>bʊøt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-L (ranks 2-6)</td>
<td>soŋ phanʊøt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT-H (rank 1)</td>
<td>soŋ phrá-phanʊøt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4. Royal referent functioning as direct object

One of the most common RT transitive verbs used with a royal referent in semantic direct object function is fa^w, having a rather generalized meaning of ‘to attend, wait on’. This occurs either singly or in multiple-verb switch-reference constructions, e.g. [fa^w ra@p sade$t] [receive proceed] ‘to receive or wait on (a royal person who) comes (for a visit)’, sometimes shortened to [fa^w sade$t]. Switch reference subject can be deduced from verbal semantics, even when all overt nominals are unexpressed, as is frequently the case. Especially in the Thai cultural context, other transitive verbs with royal direct-object referents are used rather sparingly, with a fa^w construction preferred if possible. Thus rather than reporting that “I saw the princess when she came”, many speakers would prefer to rephrase this message as “I attended [fa^w] as the princess arrived”.

7.5. Royal referent functioning as indirect object

For verbal notions such as ‘to give’, semantic case roles associated with a verb in a given sentence are critical in selecting among RT alternates, as in (23). For a royal recipient, ranks 1-2, the lexical compound specified employs once again the formula A klāw A kramôm (section 6). Also,
selection requires further discrimination regarding features of direct object. If one royal person gives something to another one, the verb associated with the semantic case role of the higher ranking royal person is selected. In CT, other than in religious contexts, a single form ʰʰʸʸ is used, sensitive neither to semantic particulars of direct or indirect object nor to pragmatic features of speech level.

(23) Verbs ‘to give’

(i) royal person is semantic subject/agent of ‘to give’
   rank 1-2  phrá·râ·tcha·thaːn
   rank 3-7  phrá·thaːn

(ii) royal person is semantic dative/indirect object of ‘to give’
   rank 1-2, dir. object carried by hand
       thuːn·klâw· thuːn·kramom· thawāːy
   rank 1-2, dir. object larger item
       nōːm·klâw·nōːm·kramom· thawāːy
   rank 3-7  thawāːy

(iii) commoners subject/agent and dative/recipient of ‘to give’
   (all levels) ʰʰʸʸ

8. Grammaticalisation as a constraint in rule application

A major class of failures to undergo normatively prescribed substitution for RT involves several high-frequency verb forms. Suspension of substitution is likely to happen when a verb form takes on meanings or functions removed from its core semantic and syntactic properties. Although I am not aware of prescriptive interest in this issue, in nearly any RT passage of more than a few clauses, some RT marking of common verb forms will not occur, even in texts by respected authorities.
The CT verb *hāy* has core meaning ‘to give’ but it has developed a number of grammaticalized functions (Indrambarya 1992; Diller 2001). (24) illustrates a causative construction in which the extended meaning of *hāy* is ‘to cause, have someone do something’. Interestingly, in this situation *hāy* resists substitution with the royal-agent ‘give’ verb *phráːrāːːtchaːːtn* noted above. Instead, we find the *suːn* construction. Recall that this is normally appropriate only under “elsewhere” conditions as described in 7.3.

In yet a further degree of grammaticalisation, (25) illustrates a complementizer function of *hāy* to mark switch-reference complements after verbs of ordering, allowing, forcing, and the like. In this passage from a palace press release, *hāy* no longer functions as a main verb and perhaps for that reason it resists both lexical substitution and also the *suːn* “elsewhere” construction. Note also that in the embedded complement clause of (25) introduced by *hāy* the ‘royal matter’ nominal *phráːrāːːtchaːːkraːsːː* is sufficient to trigger lexical substitution of governing verb ‘take’ from CT *aw* to RT *chːːn*. In other secondary-verb functions where a dative-benefactive meaning of *hāy* is stronger and the recipient referent is a royal person, lexical substitution to *thwāːːy*, as in (23), does in fact occur. Rather fine specifics of grammaticalisation are thus relevant to the question of when to make RT changes.
(25) Usages of ₄ር to mark complement in controlled-action predicates

(i) RT controlled-action clause with king as zero-anaphor matrix-clause subject (Matichon, 11 February 2002)

nay ₃ₔ ₄ₕ ₉₂₈ ₉₂₈
in affair this
phhra₄₆ kurna:₄₆ prō:₄₆ klāw:₄₆ prō:₄₆ kramōm ₄₆
order₉₆ give/cause
chr₄₆ phra₄₆ rā:₄₆ tcha₄₆ kras₄₆:₄₆ ma: c₄₆.
take₉₆ matter₉₆...

'In this affair (the king) ordered that the matter... be reported on.'

(ii) For comparison: CT analogue of (i)

nay ₃ₔ ₄ₕ ₉₂₈ ₉₂₈
in affair this
phhra₄₆ rā:₄₆ tcha₄₆ kram₄₆:₄₆ ma: c₄₆.
take₉₆ matter₉₆...

'In this affair (a commoner) ordered the matter... to be reported on.'

Similarly, for basic verbs of directed motion such as pay ‘to go’ and ma: ‘to come’ a grammaticalized directional-marking function appears to reduce the subject properties which trigger RT. Thus the serial construction sadēt praph₄₆:₄₆ pay NP would be used when a royal person was going somewhere (goal NP) on a tour. Note that CT directionals pay and ma: are admissible as grammaticalized secondary verbs in this sadēt construction and similar ones but they are not acceptable alone as main verbs with royal subjects. It is also clear from this example that we cannot simply formulate a superficial rule that only the first verb form in a serial construction is RT-marked. In this case the second verb praph₄₆:₄₆ ‘to tour’ is a specified RT substitute for CT thi₄₆w.

We can surmise then that competent users of RT have internal a taxonomy of predicate argument semantics and differential grammaticalisation patterns. These are relied on implicitly by speakers to decide whether or not to make prescribed substitutions. For one analysing grammar, this ability then becomes a new tool for probing linguistic processes – in particular, to determine how degrees of grammaticalisation might relate semantics to syntactic configuration. It is too early to see just where this line of inquiry might lead, but it is surely a lead worth following.
9. Taboo and circumlocution

Stronger tabooing of certain lexical items and phrases can perhaps be distinguished from the more general types of lexical substitution treated above – also arguably taboo processes in a general sense. The avoidance of certain common classifiers with functional replacement through repeater constructions is mentioned in section 5.

Predictably, “rude” bodily-function actions would not be mentioned in the royal presence, but a few surprisingly “innocent” verbs are similarly proscribed, or at least restricted. The high-frequency CT verb satire ‘to put in/on; place; wear’ is considered taboo when its subject refers to a royal person and goal/locative argument is a physical place, whether overt or covert. One authority (Yumonthian 1993: 73-74) lists 25 circumlocutions used to avoid this verb, depending on specific target locations. ‘To put in a boat’ becomes ‘to load a boat’; ‘to put in chains’ becomes ‘to confine in chains; ‘to put in a box’ becomes ‘to have enter a box’, ‘to put in a pot’ becomes ‘to fill a pot (with)’, etc. For reasons unclear, King Rama IV (r. 1850-1865) wished this verb to be used only with abstract goal/locatives, e.g. ‘to put into the account’ (Diller 2001: 234-236). His sentiments appear to have been incorporated into ongoing norms of usage. (Section 6 includes a RT expression where this verb is acceptable.)

Further taboos follow from Thai word games. In one traditional pastime called khłam phuän ‘reversed words’, syllable-initial components of compounds are interchanged. For RT, avoidance is prescribed for a compound or phrasal expression which, if initials were switched, would produce an “off-colour” expression. Thus the compound [phàk·bùːŋ] [vegetable + sp. aquatic plant] is the name of a favourite Thai food, the common edible leaf Ipomoea aquatica. This compound must be avoided in RT because of interchanged result [bàk·phùːŋ] [penis + thrust]. The prescribed circumlocution is [phàk·thòːt·yòːt] [vegetable + cast + top], ‘greens that spread at the top’. Similarly, the phrasal expression [sǐ·hàːŋ] [four + place] ‘four locations’, interchanged, is uncomfortably close to [hìː·sàːŋ] [vagina + overtake], so one should use a synonym instead, hence: [sǐ·tambon] ‘four locales’. Manuals include lists of proscribed compounds and phrases with suggested circumlocutions (Ketprathum 2001: 94-95). However, these lists could hardly be exhaustive. Those fluent in spoken RT would need to develop the skill of monitoring potentially dangerous phonological patterns, of blocking their articulation and of substituting appropriate circumlocutions, all in real time.
10. Conclusion

In brief, a grammar of the Thai language would need to characterize royal Thai as the upper region of an interlocking diglossic register complex formed mainly through lexical variation, but with at least quantitative differences in construction types. Lexical relations between common speech and the higher registers cannot always be accounted for through one-to-one substitutions. In particular, semantics cannot be assumed as isomorphic between registers.

Semantically, a guiding generalisation for royal Thai is that the more a noun or verb refers to an item or action associated with a royal person’s body, the more likely that a special lexical substitute will be needed. Body part nouns, kinship terms and personal reference forms are highly affected. This differs from avoidance styles such as Jalnguy, for example, where grandparent terms and pronouns are not among special alternates (Dixon 1982: 66). On the other hand, royal Thai verbs often show the many-to-one pattern of generalized meaning one finds in Australian avoidance styles. For example, Haviland (1979:218) reports a Guugu Yimidhirr avoidance verb baılı which has a generalized semantics of going or travelling, closely paralleling royal Thai meaning of sadet described above. The importance of semantics in organising morphosyntactic subtypes of royal Thai has also been shown above. Thus specialized morphological subprocesses are indicated for sets like body parts, cutlery, weapons, uncles and aunts and other semantic groups.

Most constructions in clausal syntax vary in frequency of usage rather than categorically, but morphophonemic compounding principles make the higher and lower registers look somewhat different typologically. Common Thai is mainly monosyllabic and isolating, forming compounds on a head-first principle. Quantitatively at least, royal Thai is highly polysyllabic and derivationally agglutinating, often forming head-final compounds. Rather complex morphophonemic derivations are also a feature of royal Thai with patterns such as BC expanded to ABAC or to ABCD, depending on subtype. Of particular interest is verb coding in this register, where substitutions are constrained by construction type and, apparently, by degrees of grammaticalisation. Further analysis of this distribution is likely to deliver new insights about Thai more generally. Such findings would resonate with the Guwal/Jalnguy semantic relationships in Dyirbal.

Method is another issue raised by polylectal variation. The preceding sketch has relied partly on normative textbooks, partly on individual
interviews with speakers of varying degrees of competence in the special register, partly on natural recordings and texts and partly on study of possible etymological source materials in other languages. An eclectic combination methods seems to be what is needed to probe polylectal grammars effectively. Since typically not all speakers in a community are equally proficient in the special register, the status of generalisations may be problematic and cross-checking becomes especially important. Dixon (1984: 177) relates how one Yidinj speaker, with fading memories of Yidinj avoidance forms, “fudged” by coming up with words actually from the normal style of a neighbouring language, Mamu. For some Yidinj avoidance vocabulary, Mamu was indeed the source. What this speaker did was to over-extend etymological reliance on a “lexical other” to create special-register forms at will. This ruse was found out five years afterwards in the course of cross-checking.

Etymological over-reliance on the “lexical other” can also be a trap for Western-oriented investigators encountering high registers or polylectal phenomena in languages like Thai, Burmese, Bangla or Sinhala. These display what seems to be classical Indic vocabulary that is acknowledged as a difficult sort of traditional lore. Erudite speakers typically gain the community’s esteem by creating appropriate neologisms or through rhetorical manipulating of classical words and roots. Uncritical reliance on the academic apparatus standard for studying classical source languages may lead to “fudging” on the part of the researcher. This is through assuming that adequate explanation of special register phenomena is merely a matter of tracing forms back to their etymological sources. What a Sanskrit-English dictionary or a Western grammatical exegesis may say about forms and meanings is not necessarily the local system that a Burmese, Bangla or Sinhala diglossic expert has internalized. As we have seen above for Thai, Indic bits and pieces may be reinterpreted and reassembled in myriad novel ways. These follow local semantic constraints, sensibilities and morphosyntactic operations. Relevant rule prototypes may or may not be found in Sanskrit grammars.

Polylectal situations of this sort present special descriptive challenges. The grammar writer might be inclined to emphasize easy-to-explain unified processes, such as strictly one-to-one lexical substitutions. In league with our Yidinj consultant above, one might be tempted to rely on an isomorphic “lexical other” as a practical expedient or as an explanatory mechanism. Grammar writing of this bent could impose too tidy an algorithm on what is really a more challenging set of questions. Admittedly, it takes extra pages
of a grammar to depict a polylectal continuum or to explicate an intricate diglossic series.

All grammars run the risk of perusal in the armchairs of imprudent theoreticians, but comfortably neat accounts should be seen as especially perilous when polylectal variation has been under-described. The unward theoretician could be lulled into confirmation of favourite parameters or be charmed into other visions of oversimplified typology. On the other hand, as with Jalnguy, special-style phenomena when adequately researched and described have the potential to reveal general insights that move linguistic theory ahead.

Notes

1. Transcription note: a straightforward adaptation of the Haas system for Thai is used, with tones marked â low, â falling, â high, â rising, unmarked, mid-neutral. Predictable glottal stops are not indicated.

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