# Translation of Directional Serial Verb Constructions in Thai into English: A Case Study of Students of Faculty of Communication Arts

การแปลกริยาเรียงที่บอกทิศทางในภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาอังกฤษ:
กรณีศึกษาของนิสิตคณะนิเทศศาสตร์

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate how Thai students interpret the meaning of directional serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Thai, and to examine whether they encounter any problems in translating the SVCs into English. The 20 participants in the study were fourth year students of the Faculty of Communication Arts enrolled in a translation course at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute. The translation task employed as the research tool included ten sentences consisting of two to four serialized verbs. It was found that the students' interpretations of SVC meaning can be categorized into four groups based on the position of verbs in a series - the first verb, the second verb, the third verb, and the first and second verbs together, which are viewed as a main verb in English. It also reveals that students have two main problems in translating SVCs into English. The first problem is related to the grammatical aspect including: tense, aspect, voice, lack of main verb, double finite verbs, verb conjugation, subject-verb agreement, adverbs, prepositions, articles, and misspelling. The second one is the semantic problem consisting of:

mistranslation, under-translation, over-translation, and no translation. Problems with tense were found to occur most frequently, followed by under-translation and mistranslation respectively. It was discovered that, to a significant degree, the more verbs an SVC contains, the more problems that will occur with the translations.

**Keywords:** Thai serial verb constructions, Thai students' translation, interpretation, translation problems

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการตีความหมายกริยาเรียงที่บอกทิศทางในภาษาไทยเพื่อแปลเป็นภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตชาวไทยและปัญหาในการแปลกริยาดังกล่าว กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนิสิตชั้นปี 4 คณะนิเทศศาสตร์ จำนวน 20 คน ที่เรียนวิชาการแปลของสถาบันภาษา จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แปลประโยคทั้งหมด 10 ประโยค โดยในแต่ละประโยคประกอบด้วยกริยาเรียงตั้งแต่ 2-4 คำ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างตีความหมายของกริยาเรียงในภาษาไทยและแปลเป็นกริยาหลักในภาษาอังกฤษโดยพิจารณาจากตำแหน่งของกริยาเรียงในหน่วยสร้างกริยานั้น ซึ่งแบ่งได้เป็น 4 กลุ่มคือ ตำแหน่งกริยาคำแรก กริยาคำที่สอง กริยาคำที่สาม และกริยาคำแรกและคำที่สองประกอบกัน และกลุ่มตัวอย่างมีปัญหาหลัก 2 ประการในการแปลประโยคที่มีกริยาเรียง ปัญหาแรกคือปัญหาทางด้านไวยากรณ์ประกอบด้วย กาล การณ์ลักษณะ วาจก การขาดกริยาหลัก การใช้กริยาหลักซ้อน การผันกริยา การใช้กริยาให้สัมพันธ์กับประธาน คำวิเศษณ์ คำบุพบท คำนำหน้านามและการสะกดผิด ปัญหาที่สองคือ ปัญหาทางด้านอรรถศาสตร์ประกอบด้วย การแปลผิดความหมาย การแปลขาด การแปลเกิน และการไม่แปล โดยปัญหาเรื่องกาลเป็นปัญหาที่เกิดมากที่สุด รองลงมาคือการแปลขาดและการแปลผิดความหมาย ตามลำดับ นอกจากนี้ ยังพบอีกว่า จำนวนกริยาที่มากขึ้นในกริยาเรียงมีผลทำให้กลุ่มตัวอย่างแปลไม่ถูกต้องมากขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ

**คำสำคัญ:** โครงสร้างกริยาเรียงภาษาไทย การแปลของนิสิตชาวไทย การตีความ ปัญหาการแปล

**Introduction**

With the arrival of the ASEAN Community in 2015, the demand for greater English proficiency will increase significantly as it will become the predominant language or the lingua franca employed across the region. However, people in many countries in this part of Asia still have limited ability to communicate in English effectively or even no ability at all. This necessitates the translation of English into numerous other languages to enable wider access to information and guarantee effective message delivery. Like other non-native speakers of English who wish to disseminate information within the global arena, Thais too often must translate from their mother tongue into English to get their message across. Thus, translation plays an integral part in this inter-language scenario.

Generally, translation refers to the process of transferring the meaning of a text written in one language into a text in another language. Clearly, the goal of the process is that the *meaning* of the original text is conveyed, not the *form* of the text. Since each language has its own distinctive forms for representing meaning, accurate translations may require expression of meaning in another language to be a very different form than in the original language (Larson, 1998). Therefore, to properly translate a Thai text into English, the syntactic forms representing the meaning would likely be rather dissimilar. When Thai and English grammatical features are compared, many characteristics differ significantly. One of the differences which is readily apparent is verb structure.

In English, a verb which involves various grammatical aspects

like modality, tense, aspect, and voice, is not allowed to co-occur with another verb in a series.   However, this phenomenon frequently occurs in Thai.   Serial verb construction (SVC) is one of the most common linguistic features in the Thai syntactic system and refers to situations in which two or more verbs are used in juxtaposition without any linker (Thepkanjana, 2006).  The following is an example of a Thai SVC and its English translation taken from the Thai story named "ฟื้นความหลัง" (Looking Back, 1967) with an accurately translated English version done by professional translators of the Translation Center, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University (1996):

Thai (original):

นาย   วิลเลียม    นันท์  ก็      <u>ลา    กลับ  ไป</u>   อังกฤษ

naaj0  wil0liam2 nan0  k@@2  <u>laa0  klap1  paj0</u>  ang0krit1[13]

English (translation):   Mr. William Nan <u>left for</u> England.

The serialized verbs above are 'ลา+กลับ+ไป' /laa0+klap1 +paj0/. It can be seen that the directional concept of the SVC is syntactically conveyed through the form of a verb followed by a preposition in English.  This conforms to Masica (1976: 150-153 cited in Thepkanjana, 1986; Aikhenvald, 2006) who views an SVC's meaning as being carried over into non-serial verb languages like English through varied linguistic devices such as adverbs, prepositions, inflections and conjunctions.  It can also be represented by another finite verb with a conjunction, or sometimes be omitted in English (Mallikamas, 2013).

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[13]   The LRU Transcriptions (Luksanaeeyanawin, 1993) developed at the Linguistics Research Unit of Chulalongkorn University is used to illustrate the examples of SVCs in this research since the study does not deal with the phonological issue (see Appendix).

In terms of the translation perspective, translations of the SVC do not contain word-by-word equivalence to the original as experienced translators do not look at the original text word by word or phrase by phrase, but look for the overall idea of the entire text (Sangaramruang, 1999 cited in Tayjasanant, 2013). However, it is notable that it is the first verb in the series that is interpreted as most important to be transferred into the main verb in English, not the last two verbs.

In the context of inexperienced translators like the Thai students in this study, translations of the above SVCs may not result in the same level of accuracy as professional ones. According to Mallikamas (2013), verb serialization is a construction that does not occur in formal English, so Thai learners often face problems in using this feature in English. Using double finite verbs is completely erroneous in standard written English as the language does not allow more than one finite verb to occur sequentially without changing any form of another verb or having any conjunction in between (Hongthong, 2013). In addition, a verb in English is also associated with tense.

According to the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Richards et al, 1985 cited in Mallikamas, 2013), tense is about the relationship between a verb form and time in which an action, an event or a state happens. In other words, actions, events or states are expressed through verbs in different forms. So, tense is not the same thing as time even though they are associated. On the other hand, to refer to time in Thai, auxiliary verbs or time markers are required to indicate the time of an action's occurrence (Pinmanee, 2012;

Mallikamas, 2013). For this reason, using tense accurately in English is one of the most difficult problems for Thai learners (Mallikams, 2013).

Therefore, it would be interesting to determine how novice translators, namely, Thai students who are taking a translation course, interpret the meaning of SVCs and whether they encounter problems in translating this feature into English. If problems do arise, what kinds of errors are most frequently committed? Even though a number of problems of Thai-English translation have been addressed in various textbooks, the SVC issue has been rarely mentioned. For this reason, exploring Thai students' ability to translate SVCs would be extremely useful as the findings of the study will help raise awareness of problems in conveying the meaning of SVCs among teachers and students alike. This, in turn, could help students more accurately translate Thai SVCs into their English equivalents.

**Literature Review**

### 1. Translation

Translation is defined differently based upon which theory a linguist relies. Catford (1965: 20), in his linguistic theory of translation, defines translation as 'the replacement of textual material in one language (Source Language or SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (Target Language or TL)' whereas Nida (1964), using a sociolinguistic approach, emphasizes the involvement of communication within the context of interpersonal relations. Nida's concept has been influential on other succeeding theorists like Newmark (1981) and Larson (1998), whose definitions are based on a

communicative or semantic approach in which context is the major consideration when doing translation. Moreover, Sangaramruang (1999 cited in Tayjasanant, 2013) proposed that translation is not simply language or code changing, as translators need to have an overall idea of the whole text and particular conditions that influence the text. This is consistent with Pinmanee (2006 cited in Tayjasanant, 2013), who believes that translators should look beyond the literal meaning of words and expressions. Therefore, contextual considerations are the main concern that translators should keep in mind when translating texts from the SL into the TL.

To determine the precise meaning is a critical step of a translation process that translators must deal with carefully; otherwise, incorrect translation of meaning could result (Borisut, 1997 cited in Pinmanee, 2009). According to Nida (1975) and Newmark (1981), a process of translation consists of three steps – firstly analyzing the text in the SL, then transferring the meaning of the SL text into the TL, and finally restructuring the result so that it fits appropriately and naturally in the TL text. Therefore, the analysis of the SL text is the key first step in conveying an accurate message over in the TL.

However, although translators can interpret a source text and comprehend its original meaning correctly, they may produce an inaccurate translation due to the use of the inappropriate or ungrammatical language in the TL. This situation occurs often in the case of translation from Thai into English. Pinmanee (2009) notes that Thai translators rarely face a problem in reading to comprehend the meaning of the source text in Thai, but have significant difficulty

creating the necessary sentence structures to express that meaning in English.  According to Pinmanee (2000), problems in translation can be categorized into two main groups. The first group involves a serious problem of translation i.e., the translated meaning is distorted from the original meaning, while the second one entails a minor problem i.e., the translation does not flow naturally in the language in the TL text.  This categorization may seem broad and subjective since it does not address the extent of the meaning distortion and because the classification is based on the author's personal judgement regarding the problem.  On the other hand, Tayjasanant (2013), based on Supol (1998), outlines more detailed types of translation problems in the Thai context as follows:

1. Mistranslation – involving the use of wrong words or grammatical constructions due to misinterpretation of certain ambiguous words in the SL.

2. Over-translation and under-translation – involving adding too lengthy and sometimes unrelated explanations or leaving out certain parts of the SL, which may distort the aim and meaning of the original text or affect the reader's understanding of the translated text.

3. Inappropriate styles and registers – using styles and registers in an unsuitable manner.

4. Lack of smoothness – employing form-based translation by maintaining the grammatical construction of the SL in the TL text.

5. Lack of cultural understanding – not having sufficient understanding of the TL culture to create an accurate translation.

It can be seen that the above classifications do not directly

include the grammatical aspect as one might anticipate for translation from Thai into English.  In regards to this, Baker (1992) states that translators may encounter certain grammatical problems concerning the five major categories of number, gender, person, tense and aspect when translating across languages.  These problems, based on contrastive analysis, may derive from the linguistic differences between two languages.  In terms of error analysis, these ungrammatical products should not be viewed negatively as they provide significant insights into the strategies employed by learners in their second language learning process (Corder, 1967).

According to Richards (1971), there are three types of errors including interference errors generated by L1 transfer, intralingual errors resulting from incorrect (incomplete or overgeneralized) application of language rules, and developmental errors caused by the construction of faulty hypotheses in L2.  In addition, based on a study on a corpus-based approach to translation error analysis with Romanian EFL learners (Popescu, 2013), the researcher divided learner errors into three types: linguistic errors (morphological, syntactic and collocational), comprehension errors (misunderstanding of lexis or syntax), and translation errors (distorted meaning, additions, omissions, inaccurate renditions of lexical items).

## 2. Serial verb constructions (SVCs)

Serial verb construction (SVC)—where two or more verbs are concatenated—is one of the most common linguistic features in the Thai syntactic system (Thepkanjana, 1986).  Apart from the syntactic-based definition, SVCs in general are also widely discussed using

semantic-based criterion. They are semantically considered by a number of linguists as providing certain types of information and serving a variety of functions e.g. directional, comparative, instrumental, purposive, aspectual, etc. (Voorhoeve, 1975; Jansen et al., 1978; Thepkanjana, 1986).

Moreover, some linguists view them as a single event (Lord, 1973; Filbeck, 1975; Hale, 1991), meaning that all the verbs in the series jointly designate an event in which the initial verb carries the true predicate meaning of the proposition and any subsequent verb indicates a functional meaning which is related to the meaning of the initial verb (which can be considered the main verb) (Filbeck, 1975). Durie (1997) states that the perception of this single event expressed by serial verbs is intuitively clear to native speakers. For non-native speakers who study serializing languages, it may be problematic for them to have the same perception as the native speaker. In a study by Hongthong (2013), it was found that English undergraduates and postgraduates who studied Thai did have the limited competence in error awareness of basic Thai SVCs.

In terms of linguistic comparison of serial verb and non-serial verb languages like English, it was found that many grammatical devices in non-serializing languages are employed to represent SVCs. A previous study by Westermann (1930 cited in Sebba, 1987), who compared SVCs in Ewa (a Niger-Congo language) with English, shows that several Ewa verbs may often be expressed by a single verb in English as a leading event, while subordinate events are likely to be rendered by means of a preposition, adverb, conjunction, or a prefix

on the verb.  Moreover, when SVCs are compared to the surface grammar of English, they are represented by a formally disparate array of subordinating devices including complementary infinitives, *-ing* complements, modal auxiliaries, adverbs, prepositional phrases, or even whole subordinate clauses (Matisoff, 1969 cited in Aikhenvald, 2006).  Supporting these studies, Aikhenvald (2006:3) states that "SVCs are a grammatical technique covering a wide variety of meanings and functions.  They do not constitute a single grammatical category. They show semantic and functional similarities to multi-clausal and subordinating constructions in non-serializing languages."

From the perspective of translation, a number of studies have been conducted which compare Thai SVCs with their English translations by using a corpus as a tool in collecting data.  However, little empirical research has been conducted with non-native speakers of English, such as Thai students, translating these linguistic features into English. According to a study by Sutthichatchawanwong (2006) investigating professional translators' translations of Thai SVCs to examine their semantic and syntactic equivalence in English, one significant finding shows that a variety of linguistic realizations are employed to convey different concepts of Thai SVCs.  These forms range from even a small unit of language like morpheme, single words (verbs, adverbs, prepositions, adjective, nouns, participles, conjunctions), phrases (verb phrases, noun phrases, prepositional phrases), clauses, to complete sentences (active or passive).  Clearly, it can be seen that the results of this empirical study are consistent with those linguists' statements mentioned previously.  In performing a translation task,

professional translators are known to use a variety of techniques in translating Thai SVCs into English like the addition of conjunctions, or the omission of one or two verbs (Decha, 2006).

### Objectives of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To investigate and analyze students' interpretations of the directional concept of Thai SVCs

2. To explore students' problems in translating the concept of Thai SVCs into English

### Scope of the Study

This research examines students' translation ability of Thai SVCs with only the directional verb (DV) /paj0/ 'go' into English. This DV was chosen because of its high frequency of occurrence with other verbs in a series. According to Sutthichatchawanwong (2006), among the six DVs i.e., /paj0/ 'go', /maa0/ 'come', /khaw2/ 'enter', /?@@k1/ 'exit', /khvn2/ 'ascend', and /long0/ 'descend', not only does /paj0/ occur most often in verb serialization, but it also denotes the directional concept more frequently than the other concepts e.g. purposive, sequential, etc. For this reason, SVCs with this DV denoting the directional concept were chosen to be studied for this research.

## Research Procedures

### Participants

The participants were 20 (out of a total 40) fourth year students of the Faculty of Communication Arts studying at

Chulalongkorn University and enrolled in the course Translation for Communication Arts II (translating texts from Thai into English) provided by Chulalongkorn University Language Institute. Only 20 students volunteered to participate in the study by returning a translation task (the research instrument) to the researcher. These students were selected from two sections of the translation course and had different levels of language competency according to their CU-TEP score and grade in the previous English course. This selection process was used to ensure that the participants would create diverse translations reflecting their individual ability in translating Thai SVCs into English. Since this qualitative research aims to investigate students' translations in terms of their interpretations and problems, such number of participants are deemed to produce a sufficient amount of data for analysis in this study.

### Research instrument and data collection

A task translating texts at a sentence level from Thai into English was employed to examine participants' translation ability of Thai SVCs with /paj0/ 'go' denoting the directional concept. The task contained ten sentences taken from a narrative discourse in the Thai story named "ฟื้นความหลัง" (Looking Back) written by Phraya Anuman Rajdhon (1967). This story was selected as a sample in the research by Sutthichatchawanwong (2006) because of its high standard of translation between the TL (English) and the SL (Thai) meaning mapping. The story was evidentially found to provide a large corpus of 1,541 Thai SVCs with six DVs. Out of this total, only 280 SVCs with /paj0/ co-occurring with different verbs denote a directional concept.

So, it would appear to provide an appropriate level of diversity in the task for participants.

However, these 280 serialized verbs occurred in clauses and sentences with and without a subject. Since this study focuses on how students translate SVCs, only short clauses or sentences with a subject were chosen to avoid other difficulties which might affect students' ability and effort in doing the task. Moreover, different verbs co-occurring with /paj0/ were also purposively selected to elicit the understanding of various meanings of verb co-occurrence from students.

Based on these criteria, ten sentences containing two, three or four verbs including /paj0/ in a series were ultimately selected as the model constructions for the task in this study. Having a varied number of serial verbs in a sentence would hopefully provide a chance to observe students' ability to tackle translation of simple to more complex constructions of Thai SVCs. Moreover, each sentence was carefully chosen with a given context for students to understand or interpret the sentences. Therefore, using ten sentences selected based on the above criteria and resulting in a total of 200 student-translated sentences was deemed to provide ample data for analysis in this case study.

In collecting the data, since this study has a small corpus of 200 sentences of English translations of Thai SVCs, it was deemed appropriate to use only the Microsoft Excel program to collect the data for further comparison of students' translations of SVCs. First, each original text in Thai including SVCs was recorded in one column

with its English translations of the 20 students in the next column. Then the English representations of the SVCs of each participant were underlined in the target texts.   After that, only all these representations were entered into another column in order to be sorted easily by the program.

This sorting was done to aid in the examination of the students' interpretations of the SCVs based on those representations and to determine their frequency of occurrence.   After that, each English representation of the 20 students was again analyzed for their problem type.   At this stage, a linguistic code was assigned for each type.   For example, MT stands for mistranslation, UT stands for under-translation, and T stands for tense.   Then each representation was identified according to its type of problem with an assigned code in another column.   Eventually, these codes were also sorted to be counted for their frequency of occurrence.

### Data analysis

The analysis of the data was divided into two steps:

Step 1 – Examine students' interpretations of the SVCs with /paj0/ 'go' from their English representations to determine whether they were translated based on the meaning of the overall idea of all verbs or the meaning of any particular verb in focus in a series.

Step 2 – Determine whether students have problems in translating the Thai SVCs. And if they do, what are the major errors that the students most commonly make?

**Findings**

**1. Students' interpretations of the directional concept of SVCs**

It was found that the 20 students translated the meaning of the SVCs with /paj0/ 'go' differently. Some analyzed the meaning of the SVCs as a whole while others interpreted them by focusing on a particular verb in the series. From the corpus of 200 English translated sentences, students' interpretations of SVCs can be categorized into four groups based on the position of verbs in a series – the first verb, the second verb, the third verb, and the combination of the first and second verbs, which are considered as a main verb in English. For each group, tables showing all of the students' translations of SVCs are also presented in which English tokens employed by students are systematically displayed based on similar English representations. These four groups are as follows:

**1.1 V1 of SVCs as a main verb in English translations**

1.1.1 SVCs consisting of two verbs

Among four sentences with Thai SVCs consisting of two verbs, there are two sentences in which the first verbs are given more importance than the second one; as a result, they are carried over as main verbs in the English translations. See Tables 1 and 2 below for more detail.

Table 1 Two serialized verbs – ผ่าน+ไป /phaan1+paj0/ 'pass+go' and their
interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-V | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 1. เมื่อ อาจารย์ ผ่าน ไป | - | pass(ed) | by/on/through/away | 7 | 35 |
| mvva2 aa0caan0 | - | passed | - | 3 | 15 |
| phaan1 paj0 | is | passing | - | 1 | 5 |
| when teacher | | | | Total | 55 |
| pass go | - | walk(s/ed) pass(ed) | - | 5 | 25 |
| | - | walked | away | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 30 |
| | - | was pass | - | 1 | 5 |
| | - | went pass | - | 1 | 5 |
| | - | was | past | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 15 |

Table 1 above shows that 11 students (55%) simply thought
that the first verb /phaan1/ 'pass' is the main action of the SVC, so
they used only the equivalent verb 'pass' as the main verb but in
different forms i.e., pass, passed, and passing. Interestingly, six students
(30%) interpreted the meaning of /phaan1/ as the action of walking;
consequently, the verb 'walk' was used to convey the original
meaning. However, out of these six students, five of them (25%) also
tried to preserve the meaning of /phaan1/ in the TL by giving the
equivalent word 'pass' as the second verb after 'walk', resulting in
double verbs in the translations which is ungrammatical in English.
Nevertheless, if the overall picture is taken into consideration in terms
of its semantic aspect, most students' English translations reflect the
correct comprehension of the original meaning of the SVC.

Table 2  Two serialized verbs - เดิน+ไป /dqqn0+paj0/ 'walk+go' and their
interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-V | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 2. เมื่อ   ข้าพเจ้า<br>เดิน   ไป   ตอน<br>  mvva2  khaa2pha1cao2<br>dqqn0  paj0    t@@n0<br>  when   I<br>walk   go      section<br>  กลาง   สะพาน<br>  klaang0  sa1phaan0<br>  middle   bridge | - | walk | (to) | 7 | 35 |
| | - | walked | to | 6 | 30 |
| | - | walk(ed) | along at/ into/through | 4 | 20 |
| | am | walking | to | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 90 |
| | - | was | in | 1 | 5 |
| | - | went | to | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 10 |

Compared to the first table, Table 2 presents more explicit evidence of the verb students focused on. Since 18 students (90%) understood that the first verb /dqqn0/ 'walk' is the main action, the equivalent English verb 'walk' was overwhelmingly employed to express the same meaning as the original. On the other hand, one student translated this SVC by using only 'went' (the past form of 'go') as the main verb.  Clearly, this translation leads to meaning loss in translation.

1.1.2 SVCs consisting of three verbs

One out of three sentences with SVCs was found to show that students again interpreted the first verb in a series as a main verb in English. ( See Table 3 below.)

Table 3   Three serialized verbs - เขียน+ไป+ถึง /khian4+paj0+thvvng4/
'write+go+reach' and their interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 7. ข้าพเจ้า ก็ <u>เขียน</u> จดหมาย <u>ไปถึง</u> | wrote | a/the letter to | 12 | 60 |
| khaa2pha1cao2 k@@2 <u>khian4</u> cot1maaj4 <u>paj0 thvvng4</u> | write | a/the letter to | 5 | 25 |
| I then <u>write</u> letter <u>go reach</u> | write | Mr. William Nunn the letter | 1 | 5 |
| นาย วิลเลียม นันท์ | | | Total | 90 |
| naaj0 wil0liam2 nan0 | send | William a letter | 1 | 5 |
| Mr.    William    Nan | sent | letter to | 1 | 5 |
| | | | Total | 10 |

Similar to Table 2, Table 3 strongly indicates that the majority of students (90%) interpreted the first verb /khian4/ 'write' as the main action. Therefore, they transferred the same meaning using the equivalent word 'write' or 'wrote' in English as the main verb. For the other two students (10%), they misinterpreted the meaning of the first verb of SVC as 'send', which resulted in the incorrect meaning in the TL.

### 1.1.3 SVCs consisting of four verbs

Although increasingly complex SVCs were presented to students, they still considered the first verb of SVCs as more important than the others. This is illustrated in Tables 4, 5 and 6 below respectively.

Table 4    Four serialized verbs - แล่น+ลดเลี้ยว+ไป+ตาม /lxn2+lot3liew3+paj0+taam0/ 'run+zigzag+go+follow' and their interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-V | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 8. เรา ก็ <u>แล่น ลดเลี้ยว</u> <u>ไป ตาม</u> rao0 k@@2 <u>lxn2 lot3liaw3 paj0 taam0</u> we then <u>run zigzag go follow</u> ไหล่ เขา laj1 khaw4 shoulder mountain | - | drive | Ø* along | 6 | 30 |
| | - | drove | (a car) along | 4 | 20 |
| | - | drive | (ziazag) on/ dizzy around | 3 | 15 |
| | - | drive | along circuitous | 1 | 5 |
| | - | drive | a car follow | 1 | 5 |
| | was | driven | circuitous along | 1 | 5 |
| | zigzagly | drove | on winding | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 85 |
| | - | wind | along | 1 | 5 |
| | - | snaked | along | 1 | 5 |
| | - | Ø* | - | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 15 |

* Ø = No translation given by a student

As the SVC above is more complicated than those in Tables 1, 2 and 3, it can be observed that a wider variety of translations was produced. However, most students (85%) still shared the same understanding that the first verb /lxn2/ 'run' plays a more important role than the other three verbs; as a result, they employed various grammatical forms of 'drive', interpreted as having the equivalent meaning to /lxn2/, as the main verb in English. Unsurprisingly, with the greater number of verbs in the series, one student appeared to have hit an obstacle in interpreting the meaning of the above SVC, so

he/she did not produce any translation for the original sentence. Table 5 below presents another example showing results similar to those in Table 4.

Table 5   Four serialized verbs - พูด+เลย+ไป+ถึง /phuut2+lqqj0+paj0+thvvng4/
'talk+pass+go+reach' and their interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 9. แล้ว ก็ <u>พูด เลย ไป ถึง</u> แหนมส้ม | talk | about | 6 | 30 |
| lxw3 k@@2 <u>phuut2 lqqj0 paj0 thvvng4</u> | talk | to/up to/ with | 3 | 15 |
| | talks | about/further to | 2 | 10 |
| nxxm4som2 | talked | about | 2 | 10 |
| already then <u>talk</u> | | | Total | 65 |
| <u>pass go reach</u> | said | about/to | 2 | 10 |
| 'naem som' | | | Total | 10 |
| | refered* | to | 1 | 5 |
| | added | about | 1 | 5 |
| | continued | to talk about | 1 | 5 |
| | - | including | 1 | 5 |
| | - | past through | 1 | 5 |
| | | | Total | 25 |

* Misspelling by a student

Verb serialization in Table 5 above firmly demonstrates the understanding of most students that the first verb /phuut2/ 'talk' is the major action of this SVC. This is supported by the word 'talk(s)' or 'said' being used by 15 students (75%) to represent the meaning of /phuut2/ in the translations. However, five students (25%) demonstrated an effort to interpret this complex SVC meaning as a

whole with different words or phrases in English. Unexpectedly, only one of these used the phrase 'continued to talk about,' which was the most appropriate translation among the group. This shows that this student possessed a good understanding of the meaning of the SVC before rendering it into English.

### 1.2 V2 of SVCs as a main verb in English translations

Only SVCs consisting of two verbs were found to illustrate students' interpreting the second verb as the main action. This is unlike the two-verb SVCs in Tables 1 and 2 since the two-verb SVCs in Tables 6 and 7 present interpretations of SVC meaning in the opposite order.

Table 6 Two serialized verbs - ตรง+ไป /trong0+paj0/ 'straight+go' and their interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 3. ...ต้อง <u>ตรง ไป</u> กรม ศุลกากร | go | to | 15 | 75 |
| tong2 <u>trong0 paj0</u> krom0 | go | - | 1 | 5 |
| sun4la3kaa0k@@n0 | go | straight to | 1 | 5 |
| must <u>straight go</u> department | | | Total | 85 |
| customs | head | to | 1 | 5 |
| ทันที | rush | to | 1 | 5 |
| than0thii0 | Ø* | - | 1 | 5 |
| immediately | | | Total | 15 |

\* Ø = No translation given by a student

Although the SVC in Table 6 contains two verbs in which

/paj0/ 'go' occurs in the same position as those in Tables 1 and 2, most students interpreted the second verb /paj0/ as the main action. Therefore, 85% of them employed 'go' as the main verb in English. However, two students attempted to interpret the first verb /trong0/ 'straight' in the SVC as 'head' and 'rush' as the main verb. More surprisingly, even though the SVC is relatively simple, one student was found to be unable to transfer the meaning of the SVC into English as he/she did not provide any translation.

Table 7  Two serialized verbs - กลับ+ไป /klap0+paj0/ 'return+go' and their
interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-V | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 4. เตี่ย นาย ยักซ้ง ก็ <u>กลับ ไป</u> เมือง จีน | - | went | back to | 6 | 30 |
| tiia1 naaj0 jak1song3 | - | go(es) | back to | 4 | 20 |
| k@@2 <u>klap1 paj0</u> mvvang0 | | | | Total | 50 |
| ciin0 | - | - | back(ed) to | 4 | 20 |
| father Mr. Yaksong then | - | came | back to | 2 | 10 |
| <u>return go</u> city China | - | was/get | back to | 2 | 10 |
| | - | arrived | back to | 1 | 5 |
| | are | heading | back to | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 50 |

The SVC in Table 7 above is another example indicating that students view the second verb /paj0/ 'go' as more important than the first verb /klap1/ 'return' because 50% of them used the equivalent item 'went' (30%) and 'go(es)' (20%) as the main verb in English. On the other hand, the others (50%) tried to analyze the SVC and ended

up with different lexical verbs including 'came', 'get', 'was', 'arrived', and 'heading'. However, it is notable that all of them employed the equivalent phrase 'back to' to denote the meaning of the first verb /klap1/ in the SVC. It is even more interesting to note that four of the students (20%) used only this phrase without any preceding verb to convey the meaning of the SVC. Furthermore, it is apparent that no student using the equivalent item 'return', which carries both meaning of each individual verb of /klap1+paj0/.

### 1.3 V3 of SVCs as a main verb in English translations

In addition to the first or second verb of SVCs being seen as the focus of meaning, the third verb in the series is sometimes also considered the main verb in English as shown in Tables 8 and 9 below.

#### 1.3.1    SVCs consisting of three verbs

Even though the SVC in Table 8 contains three verbs, unlike the one in Table 7 containing two verbs, many students misinterpreted the meaning of the former as being the same as that of the latter resulting in using 'back to' (25%), 'went back to' (20%), 'go(es) back to' (10%), and 'come back to' (5%) respectively. This suggests that most students (35%) considered the third verb /paj0/ as the main action since they employed 'went' and 'go(es)' as the equivalent to this Thai verb whereas two students (10%) gave more importance to the first verb /laa0/ 'leave' and carried it over into English in the main verb position. At the same time, one student attempted to convey the meaning of this SVC by using a longer phrase than the others as in 'took the time off to come back to'.

Table 8   Three serialized verbs - ลา+กลับ+ไป /laa0+klap0+paj0/ 'leave+return+go'
and their interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-V | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 5. นาย วิลเลียม นันท์ ก็ <u>ลา กลับ ไป</u> | - | - | back to | 5 | 25 |
| naaj0 wil0liam2 nan0 | | | | Total | 25 |
| k@@2 <u>laa0 klap1 paj0</u> | - | went | back to | 4 | 20 |
| Mr. William Nan | - | go(es) | back to | 2 | 10 |
| then <u>leave return go</u> | is | go | back to | 1 | 5 |
| ประเทศ อังกฤษ | | | | Total | 35 |
| pra1thet2 ang0krit1 | - | come | back to | 1 | 5 |
| country England | - | quited* and went | back to | 1 | 5 |
| | | is | back to | 1 | 5 |
| | | are | back to | 1 | 5 |
| | - | turned | back to | 1 | 5 |
| | - | took | the time off to come back to | 1 | 5 |
| | - | left | for | 1 | 5 |
| | will | leave | to | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 40 |

* Misspelling by a student


### 1.3.2    SVCs consisting of four verbs

Table 9 explicitly illustrates the various ways students translated a complicated SVC containing four verbs. These translations include certain verbs which were seen as the equivalent of certain Thai verbs e.g. 'bend', 'curve', 'broke', 'turn', 'changed', etc. It was revealed that ten students (40%) separately employed the verbs

Table 9   Four serialized verbs - หัก+เบน+โค้ง+ไป /hak1+been0+khoong3+paj0/
'bend+veer+curve+go' and their interpretations by students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) | | | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-V | Main Verb(s) | Post-V | | |
| 10. ถนน  สุรวงศ์  ตอน นี้ | | bend(s) | to | 3 | 15 |
| tha1non4 su1ra1wong0 t@@n0  nii3 | (are) | bended | (a way) to | 2 | 10 |
| | is | bend | according to | 1 | 5 |
| road  Surawongse section  this | | | | Total | 30 |
| | Ø* | curve(s) | to | 2 | 10 |
| หัก  เบน  โค้ง  ไป ทาง  เหนือ | | | | Total | 10 |
| | is/was | broken | to | 2 | 10 |
| hak1 been0  khong3  paj0 | | broke | down to | 1 | 5 |
| thaang0  nvva4 | | broke and went | to | 1 | 5 |
| break veer  curve  go | | | | Total | 20 |
| way  north | (is) | turn | (away) to | 2 | 10 |
| | | benched | to | 1 | 5 |
| | curve | leads | to | 1 | 5 |
| | | refracts | to | 1 | 5 |
| | | moves | to | 1 | 5 |
| | was | changed | direction to ...in a curve form | 1 | 5 |
| | | Ø* | into | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | Total | 40 |

Ø * = No translation given by students

'bend' (30%) and 'curve' (10%) in different forms as the main verb to represent the meaning of the third verb /khong3/ 'curve' of the SVC.  On the other hand, some students (20%) determined the first verb /hak1/ 'break' to be the main action, so the word 'broke' or 'broken' was placed in the main verb position in English.  In addition,

as anticipated, two students translated some parts of the SVC in a way they indicated they had a problem in interpreting the meaning of this multi-verb SVC.

**1.4 V1 and V2 of SVCs as a main verb in English translations**

Unlike the previous nine SVCs in which one individual verb plays a more significant role than the others, this following three-serialized verb in Table 10 contains two verbs in combination as the main verb.

Table 10  Three serialized verbs - มอง+ดู+ไป /m@@ng0+duu0+paj0/
'look+watch+go' and their interpretations by  students

| Sentence with Thai SVCs (SL) | Students' Translations of SVCs (TL) Main Verb(s) | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. ท่าน  ก็  <u>มอง   ดู   ไป</u>  ที่  ขา thaan2 k@@2 <u>m@@ng0 duu0  paj0</u> thii2  khaa4  master then  <u>look   watch  go</u>  at leg | look | 8 | 40 |
| | looks | 6 | 30 |
| | looked | 5 | 25 |
| | | Total | 95 |
| | saw | 1 | 5 |
| | | Total | 5 |

In this case, the first verb /m@@ng0/ 'look' and the second verb /duu0/ 'watch' are semantically associated and then carried over into the TL by nineteen students (95%) with the single word 'look' in different forms. This could happen when the meaning of each verb in concatenation is closely connected to each of the others and can be adequately represented by only a lexical item in another language like

English.

## 2. Students' problems in translating the SVCs

It was found that the majority of the 20 students produced incorrect English translations for each Thai SVC. These incorrect translations were analyzed and categorized based on two main aspects i.e., grammatical and semantic problems. Table 11 below shows the number of students whose translations are correct and incorrect for comparison.

Table 11 Correctness of students' translations of Thai SVCs and their overall number of occurrences

| Students' Translations | Number of Students Translating Each Sentence | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Group 1* | | | | Group 2* | | | Group 3* | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Incorrect Translations | 17 (85%) | 14 (70%) | 18 (90%) | 13 (65%) | 19 (95%) | 15 (75%) | 12 (60%) | 20 (100%) | 19 (95%) | 20 (100%) |
| Correct Translations | 3 (15%) | 6 (30%) | 2 (10%) | 7 (35%) | 1 (5%) | 5 (25%) | 8 (40%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) |

* Group 1 = SVCs with 2 verbs, Group 2 = SVCs with 3 verbs, and Group 3 = SVCs with 4 verbs

Clearly, incorrect translations heavily outnumbered correct translations in all three groups. Sentences 8, 9 and 10 in group 3, which consist of four serialized verbs, proved the most difficult as it can be seen that there was only one correct translation compared to the sentences in the other two groups which show a higher rate of accuracy. This significant result indicates students' difficulty in tackling the meanings of the complex serial verbs, consequently leading to ungrammatical sentences or incorrect meanings. Furthermore, the proportion of incorrect translations between groups 1 and 2 as a

whole is surprisingly not much different.  Table 12 below shows sub-types of problems in translating SVCs in each aspect.

Table 12

Types of problems in translating SVCs and their overall number of occurrences

| Types of Problems in Translating SVCs | Number of Occurrences in Each Sentence | | | | | | | | | | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Group 1* | | | | Group 2* | | | Group 3* | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | | |
| **1. Grammatical Aspect** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Tense | 1 | 12 | - | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 69 | 27.6 |
| 1.2 Tense/Subject-verb Agreement ** | 3 | - | - | - | - | 7 | - | - | 2 | 2 | 14 | 5.6 |
| 1.3 Lack of Main Verb | - | - | - | 4 | 5 | - | - | - | 2 | - | 11 | 4.4 |
| 1.4 Double Finite Verbs | 7 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | 2 | 11 | 4.4 |
| 1.5 Preposition | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | 2 | 8 | 3.2 |
| 1.6 Active/Passive Voice | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| 1.7 Subject Verb Agreement | - | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| 1.8 Article | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | - | - | - | 5 | 2 |
| 1.9 Aspect | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 1.2 |
| 1.10 Adverb | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 3 | 1.2 |
| 1.11 Misspelling | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | 3 | 1.2 |
| 1.12 Verb Conjugation | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | 0.4 |
| **2. Semantic Aspect** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Under-translation | 4 | 2 | 16 | - | 14 | - | - | 9 | 11 | 7 | 63 | 25.2 |
| 2.2 Mistranslation | 5 | 3 | - | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 41 | 16.4 |
| 2.3 No translation | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 3 | - | 2 | 6 | 2.4 |
| 2.4 Over-translation | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 0.8 |
| | | | | | | | | | | Total | 250 | 100 |

* Group 1 = SVCs with 2 verbs, Group 2 = SVCs with 3 verbs, and Group 3 = SVCs with 4 verbs
** Tense/Subject-verb Agreement = Students' translations could be either a tense or subject verb agreement problem.

In Table 12 it can be seen that in each sentence, different kinds of problems occurred in the translations.  In other words, some students were found to have more than one type of problem in translating a sentence with an SVC.  Among the 16 types of problems, it was found that tense errors occurred most frequently (27.6%), at a somewhat higher rate than under-translation (25.2%). Mistranslation was the third most common problem found in the students' translations (16.4%). When all three major problems are considered, it can be seen that it is the semantic aspect which is the main cause of students translating incorrectly.

As for the other types of problems, they were found at a much lower percentage (0.4% to 5.6%). Among these problems, some translations were found to be too ambiguous to identify directly whether the problem related to tense or subject-verb agreement since it could have been either one.  Clearly, students had significant difficulty translating sentences with four serialized verbs, as a number of them did not produce any translations for sentences 8 and 10.

Below are more detailed explanations and examples of some of the major types of problems affecting translation of SVCs in this study.

2.1 Tense

In the study, tense errors were most frequently made by Thai students in translating SVCs as the use of an incorrect tense was found in every translated sentence except sentence 3.  The use of correct tense in such sentences is likely because the serialized verbs in the SL are preceded by the modal verb i.e., /t@@ng2/ 'ต้อง' 'have to' or

'must', and all students know they must use the base form of an equivalent verb in English. Moreover, a high frequency of incorrect tense use can be seen in all translations of SVCs containing four verbs (sentences 8 to 10). However, it is evident that this problem was also made by 12 students (out of 20) when translating the following SVC consisting of only two verbs.

*Original language (sentence 2):*

| เมื่อ | ข้าพเจ้า | เดิน ไป | ตอน | กลาง | สะพาน |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| mvva2 | khaa2pha1cao2 | dqqn0 paj0 | t@@n0 | klaang0 | sa1phaan0 |
| when | I | walk go | section | middle | bridge |

*Some students' translations:*

1) When I <u>walk to</u> the center of bridge

2) When I <u>walk through</u> the middle of the bridge

3) When I <u>am walking to</u> the center of the bridge

Many students translated the SVC above with the equivalent phrases 'walk to/through/am walking to...'. They all used the present tense of 'walk', which indicates that the action happens in the present.  However, if the original text is carefully considered, it can be understood that the event had already happened in the past.

2.2 Under-translation

As a whole, the three original texts (sentences 8 to 10) in group 3 were all found to cause students to produce more incorrect translations in terms of meaning incompleteness than the other two groups.  Unsurprisingly, this is most likely due to difficulty in dealing with the meanings of SVCs with multi-verbs.  For example:

*Original language (Sentence 9):*

| แล้ว | ก็ | <u>พูด</u> | <u>เลย</u> | <u>ไป</u> | <u>ถึง</u> | แหนมส้ม |
|------|-----|------|------|------|------|---------|
| lxw3 | k@@2 | <u>phuut2</u> | <u>lqqj0</u> | <u>paj0</u> | <u>thvvng4</u> | nxxm4som2 |
| already | then | <u>talk</u> | <u>pass</u> | <u>go</u> | <u>reach</u> | 'naem som' |

*Some students' translations:*

    1) And he <u>talk about</u> Nam-Som.

    2) ..., and then he <u>said about</u> "Nam Som".

    In the example above, the meaning loss can be seen in students' translations as only the meaning of the first and fourth verbs /phuut2+thvvng4/ 'พูด+ถึง' in Thai SVCs are conveyed as 'talk+about', or 'said about' in English. If the entire string of the original SVC is considered carefully, its complete meaning is more extensive than what these students translated because it includes the idea of continuation, represented by the second and third verbs /lqqj0+paj0/ 'เลย+ไป', which occur sequentially after the action of 'talking' is already started. Yet, an appropriate translation of the SVC by one student was found i.e., 'continued to talk about'.

    However, this same problem also occurs with translating SVCs containing only two verbs as in the following example.

*Original language (Sentence 3):*

| ....ต้อง | <u>ตรง</u> | <u>ไป</u> | กรม | ศุลกากร | ทันที |
|---------|------|------|-----|---------|-------|
| tong2 | <u>trong0</u> | <u>paj0</u> | krom0 | sun4la3kaa0k@@n0 | than0thii0 |
| must | <u>straight</u> | <u>go</u> | department | customs | immediately |

*Most students' translations:*

    1) ... and I had to <u>go to</u> the customs in the same day immediately.

    2) ... and in that day I had to <u>go to</u> Department of Custom suddenly.

It is found that 16 students out of 20 translated the above SVC /trong0+paj0/ 'ตรง+ไป' with the phrase 'go+to' only. These linguistic representations do not cover the entire meaning of the original since the translated texts denote merely the movement away from the speaker with the word 'go', but not the manner of the movement existing in the original Thai word /trong0/ 'straight'.

2.3 Mistranslation

Students seemed to have more trouble translating SVCs that contain four verbs in group 3 as the number of occurrences of this problem type is rather higher than in the other two groups. The most frequently occurrence is found in sentence 10 as shown below.

*Original language (Sentence 10):*

| ถนน | สุรวงศ์ | ตอน | นี้ | <u>หัก</u> | <u>เบน</u> | <u>โค้ง</u> | <u>ไป</u> | ทาง | เหนือ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| tha1non4 | su1ra1wong0 | t@@n0 | nii3 | <u>hak1</u> | <u>been0</u> | <u>khong3</u> | <u>paj0</u> | thaang0 | nvva4 |
| road | Surawongse | section | this | <u>break</u> | <u>veer</u> | <u>curve</u> | <u>go</u> | way | north |

*Some students' translations:*

    1) Surawong Rd. <u>was broken</u>.

    2) Surawong Road <u>curve</u> just <u>moves to</u> the north right now.

In the above translations, it can be clearly seen that students misinterpreted the original SVC; therefore, their translations are all incorrect.  As seen in 1), the meaning of the SVC in English represented by 'was+broken' is completely different from the original since the word 'broken' here is not equivalent to the meaning of /hak1/ 'หัก' 'break' in this context. Moreover, the structure of passive voice applied with the verb 'break' takes it even further from the meaning

of the original.  Consequently, the first translation conveys the meaning that the road was destroyed by something and cannot be used.  As for 2), using the representation 'moves+to' as the verb followed by a preposition to the subject 'curve' also makes the meaning different from the original SVC.  That is, 'the road' in the original text has been semantically changed to 'the curve of the road' in the translated text.  Moreover, the word choice of 'move' for the inanimate subject is incorrect as it is impossible for such a thing to move from one place to another place.

### 2.4 Lack of main verb

This kind of translation error is a severe grammatical mistake in English since the verb system is an important element in a sentence structure.  See the following sentence:

*Original language (Sentence 5):*

| นาย | วิลเลียม | นันท์ | ก็ | <u>ลา</u> | <u>กลับ</u> | <u>ไป</u> | ประเทศ | อังกฤษ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| naaj0 | wil0liam2 | nan0 | k@@2 | <u>laa0</u> | <u>klap1</u> | <u>paj0</u> | pra1thet2 | ang0krit1 |
| Mr. | William | Nan | then | <u>leave</u> | <u>return</u> | <u>go</u> | country | England |

*Some students' translations:*

1)  Mr. William Nun also <u>back to</u> England.

In this example, five students do not use any verb but only the adverb 'back' followed by the preposition 'to' in the English translation to convey the meaning of SVC /laa0+klap1+paj0/ 'ลา+กลับ+ไป'.  This same English representation also occurs in students' translations of the SVC with two verbs i.e., /klap1+paj0/ 'กลับ+ไป'.  That means regardless of whether the original SVC contains two or three

verbs as mentioned earlier, their translations are the same in this case i.e., lacking a main verb in the translated text.

2.5 Double finite verbs

Unlike the previous problem, some students were found to have created their English sentences with two consecutive finite verbs to represent the SVCs. Interestingly, this problem was found most in the translations of the SVC containing two verbs as shown below:

*Original language (Sentence 1):*

เมื่อ      อาจารย์      <u>ผ่าน</u>      <u>ไป</u>
mvva2 aa0caan0   <u>phaan1</u>   <u>paj0</u>
when   teacher      <u>pass</u>      <u>go</u>

*Some students' translations:*

1) When teacher <u>went pass</u>

2) When teacher <u>walked pass</u>

3) When the professor <u>walked passed</u> us

All three translations above show students using two lexical verbs in a series in their sentences i.e., 'went+pass' in 1), 'walked+pass' in 2), and 'walked+passed' in 3) respectively to convey the meaning of the SVC.  As for 3), it is so surprising to discover that the student who wrote the sentence applied the past tense '-ed' to both verbs. On the other hand, for translations 1) and 2), even though two verbs are employed—the first one in the past form ('went' and 'walked') and the second one in the base form (pass)—it may be possible that students who created these sentences were confused by the difference between 'pass' and 'past' as the former is a verb and the latter is a preposition.

## Discussion

Examining students' interpretations of SVCs with /paj0/, it can be seen that there was a variety of different English translations. However, among these differences, one commonality relates to the position of individual Thai verbs in a series and how they are translated into English. It is apparent that most students considered the meaning of the first verb in the SVCs to be the most important, no matter how many verbs there were in the string. As a result, they carried over its meaning into the position of the main verb in English. On the other hand, the meanings of the subsequent verbs including /paj0/ 'go' were paid less attention and resulted in students' using other linguistic forms like a preposition instead of a verb.

In the second case, where /paj0/ occurs as the second verb, the majority of students considered it more important than the other verbs; therefore, the verb 'go' in different forms was employed as the main verb in English. Interestingly, although the position of /paj0/ in these two SVCs was the same as the other two SVCs categorized as the first group, students' understanding of the SVCs meaning differed. Probably, the semantic property of other verbs co-occurring with /paj0/ plays a more important role than the verb position in SVCs. In other words, the meaning of a certain verb co-occurring with /paj0/ guided the students' decision in choosing a main verb in the English translation.

Unlike the other three groups, the last group contains only one SVC, of which the two verbs were connectedly interpreted by almost all of the students as a main verb in English. This SVC consists

of three verbs of which the first two verbs have a semantic relationship. At the same time, in English there was also a specific verb that could represent the meaning of either one of these two verbs or of both in Thai.  For this reason, it is possible to say that in this case, students might consider the first two verbs of SVC as a main verb in English.

Regarding the other verbs in a series which are not considered as main verbs in English, it was found that students express their meaning through other linguistic representations such as adverbs or prepositions. This conforms with what Masica (1976 cited in Thepkanjana, 1986) and Mallikamas (2013) said earlier which was that SVCs are transferred into English via different linguistic devices such as adverbs, prepositions, inflections, and conjunctions. But, the correctness of the meaning in translations is another issue.  Although students' syntactic forms of English translations of SVCs are consistent with what linguists have claimed, it does not mean that those translations deliver the correct meanings.  Since the participants in this study were novice translators, their interpretations of SVCs were mostly found incorrect.  In other words, students have problems in translating this distinctive linguistic feature into English.

Noticeably, the more verbs an SVC contained, the more incorrect the translations were. That means SVCs consisting of four verbs tended to cause students to create fewer correct translations (or even none) than SVCs with two or three verbs. Perhaps, this could be due to the difficulty that students have to deal with in interpreting the meaning of a multiple number of verbs occurring next to each other in

order to come up with the overall meaning of these serialized verbs. Apart from the semantic interpretation, these inexperienced translators had to transfer these SVCs meanings into English in other syntactic forms. And once more, as anticipated, incorrect grammatical sentences in English were produced.

For Thai translators, tense is a particularly difficult problem of translation because in Thai there is no verb conjugation, only verb modifiers like adverbs or a context to serve as the time marker (Pinitphuwadol, 1999). It can be generally understood that this problem arises in translation of any sentences with only one verb in Thai. When many verbs occur in a series, the combination of the problematic feature of SVC and tense, which is necessarily inherent in the English verbs, increasingly causes students to have even more difficulty translating the feature into English. So in this study, it was highly anticipated that some students would be found to use an incorrect tense for the English verb.

The study results confirm this, particularly when looking at the high frequency of problems with SVCs with four verbs. In this case, students must be aware that their TL is English, which grammatically requires the tense rules for time be reflected in the main verb of a sentence. Therefore, they must firstly analyze the event in the original Thai sentence as to whether it occurs in the past, present, or future from the context (e.g. words, phrases, situations, experiences, or knowledge of language users) and time markers (Pinmanee, 2012) and convey the time through the tense system in English. However, some translations of SVCs in the study were too

ambiguous to be classified as a tense or subject verb agreement problem as it is unclear whether students forgot to add a suffix to the main verb to agree with the subject, or had no idea that the action must be in a past tense.

Aside from the tense problem, many students were found to frequently create under-translations, even with a construction of two serialized verbs. This may suggest that these students did not read the SL carefully, and as a result, it led to the meaning loss of the original when translated into the TL. However, this problem can be prevented or lessened by reading and analyzing the source text carefully and deliberately even if the structure of the text is not complicated or is the mother-tongue language of translators (Saibua, 1999).

For the case of mistranslation of SVCs with multi-verbs, it could be that these inexperienced translators had trouble in deciding what the overall meaning of the complex SVC was or which verb in a series should be carried over into a main verb in English. Consequently, their translations of these SVCs turned out to have an incorrect verb choice that held a different meaning from the original. This could have been because the students considered language being only about vocabulary and translating only a matter of finding an equivalent word in the TL to replace the meaning of a word in the original text (Saibua, 1999).

In addition, the effort to find only an equivalent for each word and put them together to represent the original brings about the altered meaning or mistranslation, for example, in the case of phrasal

verbs since students were many times found to unknowingly use a phrasal verb which held an overall meaning different from the meaning of each separate word put together, to represent SVCs. As a result, this particular type of verb in English should be emphasized more so that amateur translators can avoid making this type of mistake.

For those whose English translations omitted a main verb, it can be understood that finding lexical words having the same meaning as the original text was the focus of students' translating process in this case. In other words, they only focused on thinking of a word in English that has the same meaning as a verb in the SVC, without considering its grammatical property to produce an accurate syntactic sentence. Rather than omitting a main verb, some students produced double consecutive finite verbs in a series in their translations. Probably, their understanding was interfered with by their mother tongue language as Thai syntactic structure does not have explicit rules regarding finite or non-finite verbs for verb co-occurrence (Mallikamas, 2013).

This also reflects the idea of 'transferred habits' (Lado, 1957), in which the grammatical structures of the native language tend to be transferred habitually to the foreign language by students. For this reason, inexperienced translators should be instructed more on how and when to use the finite and non-finite verbs in English, and provided more practice in translating SVCs which can be added into existing translation courses.

## Conclusion

This research presents a picture of how translation students interpret SVCs and the problems they have in translating this linguistic feature into English. The findings reveal that, even though 20 study participants is not a large sample size, the 200 translated sentences provided a variety of their interpretations of the meanings of SVCs. These interpretations can be categorized into four groups based on the position of verbs in a series that are viewed as a main verb in the English translations. That is, the first verb, the second verb, the third verb and the first and second verbs in combination. It can be seen that most students considered a single position of a verb independently as a main verb, except the last group in which two serialized verbs were connectedly interpreted by almost of all the students as a main verb in English. However, if all of the ten original sentences are closely examined, the majority of students are most likely to interpret the meaning of SVCs by focusing on the first verb.

It was also discovered that a large percentage of students produced incorrect English translations for each Thai SVC. These incorrectness occurs owing to a variety of problems deriving from two important aspects i.e., grammatical and semantic. The grammatical aspect includes 12 sub-types of problems i.e., tense, aspect, active/passive voice, lack of main verb, double finite verbs, verb conjugation, subject-verb agreement, tense/subject verb agreement (the problem that could be either due to incorrect tense or subject-verb agreement), adverbs, prepositions, articles, and misspelling. The semantic aspect consists of four sub-types i.e., mistranslation, under-

translation, over-translation, and no translation. Problems with tense were found to be the most frequently occurring issue in students' translations of SVCs, followed by under-translation and mistranslation problems as the second and third most frequent respectively. Other types of problems do occur but with a lower frequency.

All in all, even though there were a limited number of tasks, the participants in this study generated abundant data regarding SVCs translations for teachers in a practical context. Certainly, the findings cannot be considered applicable to all translation students, but they do present a broad overview of typical translations those students render as well as the problems they tend to encounter. Further study on a larger corpus of these types of SVCs would be suggested in order to provide more generalizable findings. Moreover, it would be useful for data analysis as well if interviews were conducted with these students to obtain a greater understanding of their perception of SVC meanings.

Overall, for teachers of translation courses, especially from Thai into English, the results of this study can provide helpful information to better understand students' thought process in making their translations and to better anticipate what kind of mistakes will likely be found in their work. Furthermore, based on this understanding and ability to anticipate students' mistakes, teachers should be able to adapt their teaching materials to better address the problems related to translations of SVCs. Such materials should include specifically targeted tasks or exercises which will help students deal with this rather difficult syntactic feature. Clearly, apart from

having good grammatical knowledge of the target text, appropriate interpretations of meaning of SVCs is also a must; otherwise, incorrect translations will take place in the TL since both grammatical and semantic aspects need to be considered together in order to produce accurate translations.

## Acknowledgements

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# Appendix

The LRU system (Linguistics Research Unit of Chulalongkorn University) is used in this research. The following are the tables of the Thai consonants, vowels, and tones used in the transcription of the data in this study.

Table 1 The transliteration system for Thai consonants

|                     | Labial | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Glottal |
|---------------------|--------|----------|---------|-------|---------|
| Stop, +voice –asp.  | b      | d        |         |       | ?       |
| Stop, –voice –asp.  | p      | t        | c       | k     |         |
| Stop, –voice +asp.  | ph     | th       | ch      | kh    |         |
| Fricative           | f      | s        |         |       | h       |
| Semivowel           | w      |          | j       |       |         |
| Nasal               | m      | n        |         | ng    |         |
| Lateral             |        | l        |         |       |         |
| Trill               |        | r        |         |       |         |

Table 2 The transliteration system for Thai vowels

|       | Front | | Central | | Back | |
|-------|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
|       | Short | Long | Short   | Long | Short | Long |
| Close | i     | ii   | v       | vv   | u     | uu   |
| Mid   | e     | ee   | q       | qq   | o     | oo   |
| Open  | x     | xx   | a       | aa   | @     | @@   |

Dipthongs: /ia/, /iia/, /va/, /vva/, /ua/, /uua/

Tones:  Mid     =     0

          Low     =     1

          Falling =     2

          High    =     3

          Rising  =     4

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