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Projective Meanings of Thai Passive-type Constructions, and Implications for East Asian (Chinese bei) Passive Constructions

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Abstract

Following the idea advanced and developed by a growing number of researchers in which a sentence may involve two tiers of meaning (e.g., Karttunen 1973, Karttunen and Peters 1979, Potts 2005, Roberts et al. 2009, Bosse et al. 2012, Bruening and Tran Ms., Kim, to appear), this paper suggests that (i) in Thai *thuuk* and *doon* are syntactic heads which are associated with two dimensions of meaning in multidimensional semantics, an at-issue meaning (i.e., the main assertion of a sentence) and a not-at-issue meaning, and that (ii) the adversative meaning that is implicated in *thuuk* and *doon* constructions is projected as a not-at-issue meaning, similar to the case in the Vietnamese *bị* constructions (Bruening and Tran, Ms.). Further, I shall show that only the short form is a passive construction and the long form is not (Bhatt and Pancheva 2006, Bruening and Tran, Ms.). Despite this distinction, I will show that the two forms involve a null operator A'-movement. Therefore, the long form and the short form receive the same semantic analysis; *thuuk* and *doon* contribute the adversative meaning, yet, they can be distinguished by the complement that *thuuk* and *doon* select.

Projective Meanings of Thai Passive-type Constructions, and Implications for East Asian (Chinese *bei*) Passive Constructions

Lan Kim[*]

1 Introduction

This paper investigates *thuuk* and *doon* constructions in Thai, which have often been noted as passive(-like) constructions (e.g., Kullavanijava 1974, Wongbaisaj 1979). As illustrated in (1), *thuuk* and *doon* constructions are divided into two forms regarding the presence of an overt agent: the long form with it in (1a) and the short form without it in (1b), which are similar to *bei* constructions in Mandarin Chinese (Ting 1998, Huang 1999) and *b* constructions in Vietnamese (Simpson and Ho 2008, Bruening and Tran Ms.). Semantically, *thuuk* and *doon*, meaning 'to suffer, to undergo', are used to express an adversative meaning of the sentences; that is, both the long form and the short form in (1) have an implication that the surface subject *Nit* suffered from the punching event.

(1) a. Nít *thùuk/dōon* Achārā tòj.   *long form*
      Nit *thuuk/doon* Achara punch
      'Nit was punched by Achara, and Nit suffered from it.'

   b. Nít *thùuk/dōon* tòj.   *short form*
      Nit *thuuk/doon* punch
      'Nit was punched by someone, and Nit suffered from it.'

(2) a. Zhangsan *bei* (Lisi) da le.   Mandarin Chinese
      Zhangsan *bei* Lisi hit Perf
      'Zhangsan was hit (by Lisi).'   Huang 1999

   b. Nam *b* (Nga) ánh.   Vietnamese
      Nam *b* Nga hit
      'Nam was hit (by Nga).'   Simpson and Ho 2008

Given the data presented in (1), this paper addresses three research questions. First, what invokes the adversative meaning associated with *thuuk* and *doon* constructions? Second, do the long form and the short form both qualify as passive constructions? Third, what does this study tell us about the semantics of East Asian passive(-like) constructions regarding the adversative implication? Scholars such as Sudmuk (2003) have shown that *thuuk* and *doon* constructions are comparable to *bei* constructions in Mandarin Chinese (e.g., they involve A'-dependent properties), but relatively little attention has been given to the semantics of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions in Thai. In a recent paper, Bruening and Tran (Ms.) have investigated the semantics of *b* and *duoc* constructions in Vietnamese, another language which is said to have a Chinese-type *bei* construction, and suggested that the adversative and the benefactive meanings contributed by *b* and *duoc* respectively are an implicature or a presupposition in favor of multidimensional semantics (Karttunen 1973, Karttunen and Peters 1979, Potts 2005, Bosse et al. 2012, inter alia).

In this paper, I put forth a similar analysis to data in Thai, and claim that *thuuk* and *doon* are syntactic heads which are associated with two tiers of meaning in multidimensional semantics and that the adversative meaning associated with *thuuk* and *doon* is a projective meaning like a not-at-issue meaning, which is independent of a truth-conditional meaning of a sentence. In addition, I suggest that only the short form is a true passive construction and the long form is not. Despite this distinction, it will be shown that the two forms both involve a null operator A'-movement.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 spells out my proposal. Section

3 describes the meaning of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions, and puts forth a multidimensional semantic analysis. Section 4 focuses on syntactic properties of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions and provides evidence for a null operator A'-movement. In Section 5, I summarize the paper. In Section 6, I briefly discuss implications of the current work in connection with other East Asian passive(-like) constructions.

2 Proposal

Following the idea advanced and developed by a growing number of researchers in which a sentence may involve two tiers of meaning (e.g., Karttunen 1973, Karttunen and Peters 1979, Potts 2005, Roberts et al. 2009, Bosse et al. 2012, Kim 2014, Kim, to appear), this paper suggests that (i) in Thai *thuuk* and *doon* are syntactic heads which are associated with two dimensions of meaning in multidimensional semantics, an at-issue meaning (i.e., the main assertion of a sentence) and a not-at-issue meaning, and that (ii) the adversative meaning that is implicated in *thuuk* and *doon* constructions is projected as a not-at-issue meaning, similar to the case in the Vietnamese *b* constructions (Bruening and Tran, Ms.). (3) is a semantic representation of *thuuk* and *doon* illustrating that *thuuk* and *doon* are associated with two tiers of meaning; the adversative meaning which I suggest to be on a not-at-issue dimension is indicated after the colon.

(3) ⟦*thuuk/doon*⟧ = P$_{<e,st>}$. x . e . P(x)(e)∃e'(Suffer(e') & Experiencer(e',x)) & CAUSE(e')(e)

   In addition, I claim that only the short form is a passive construction and the long form is not. Despite this distinction, I will show that the two forms involve a null operator A'-movement. Under this analysis, the two forms are, then, distinguished by the complement that *thuuk* and *doon* select; they select a PassiveP in the short form and an InverseP in the long form. I suggest that the long form can be treated as an inverse construction because it instantiates a structure in which an external argument (an overt agent) is hierarchically subordinate to an internal argument. Based on Kratzer (1996), the proposed syntactic structures of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions are illustrated in (4a) for the long form and (4b) for the short form.
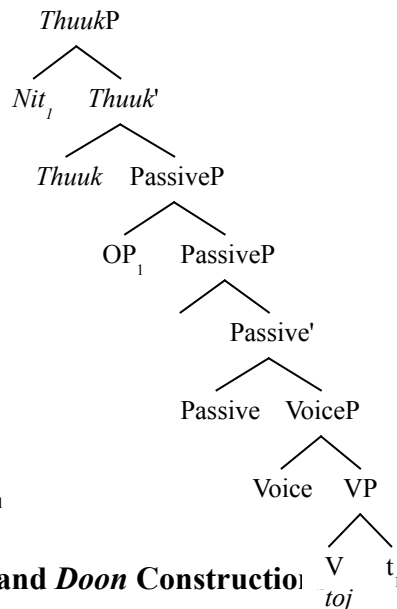
(4) a. Long form
       Nít *thùuk/dōon* Achārā tòj.
       Nit *thuuk/doon* Achara punch
       'Nit was punched by Achara.'
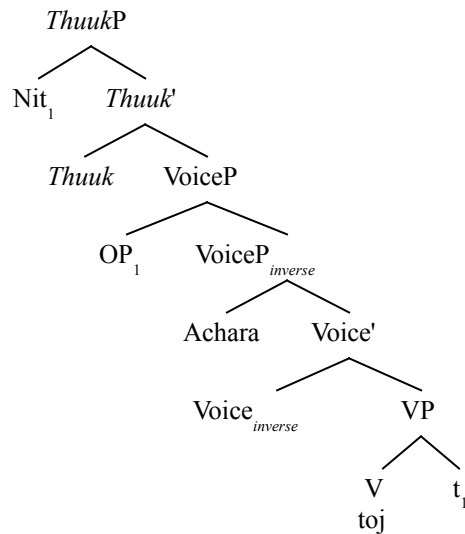
    b. Short form
       Nít *thùuk/dōon* tòj.
       Nit *thuuk/doon* punch
       'Nit was punched by someone.'

3 Multidimensional Semantics of *Thuuk* and *Doon* Construction

In Section 3.1, I describe the meaning of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions. Section 3.2 makes claims that (i) *thuuk* and *doon* are syntactic heads which are associated with multidimensional semantics and that (ii) the adversative meaning associated with *thuuk* and *doon* constructions is projected as a not-at-issue meaning.

3.1 Meaning of *Thuuk* and *Doon* Constructions

As has been described in the literature (e.g., Kullavanijava 1974, Wongbaisaj 1979, Warotamasikkhadit 1997, Sudmuk 2003), the surface subject of *thuuk* and *doon* is commonly understood as suffering an unpleasant experience. For example, a sentence like (5) means that from the speaker's perspective the surface subject *Nit* was adversely affected by the punching event.[1]

(5) Nít *thùuk*/*dōon* (Achārā) tòj.
    Nit *thuuk*/*doon* Achara   punch

'Nit was punched (by Achara), and Nit suffered from it.'

However, when the surface subject is inanimate, a sentence like (6) has an implication that a salient individual may suffer.

(6) hôngsāmùt *thùuk*/*dōon* (Achārā)   phǎw.
    library   *thuuk*/*doon* Achara   burn
    'The library was burned (by Achara).'

In (6), the library itself needs not be an experiencer or sufferer that is adversely, psychologically affected by the event. Rather, the entity suffering from the burning event is a contextually salient individual; that is, in terms of the speaker's perspective, the burning event brought out some sense of adversative implication to a contextually salient individual (e.g., a library user or owner).

Note that *thuuk* can often be distinguished from *doon* in that, while *doon* conveys a strong sense of negativity, *thuuk* often simply predicates the subject as it can occur in a neutral context without the adversative meaning, the result of a process of grammaticalization also observed in other South East Asian langauges such as Thai and Khmer (e.g., Haspelmath 1990, Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2005, Prasithrathsint 2001, 2004, 2006, Cole et al. 2011, Kim to appear).

(7) Achārā *thùuk*/*dōon* (khrūu) thāmtôd.
    Achara *thuuk*/*doon* teacher punish
    'Achara was punished (by the teacher).'
(8) bâan lǎa níi *thùuk* (Nít) sâa   pīi   thîilɛ́ɛw.
    house Clf this *thuuk* Nit   build year last
    'This house was built last year (by Nit).'

In (7), *doon* can be used over *thuuk* if a speaker intends to clearly indicate an adversative affectedness to the surface subject *Achara*. Unlike *doon*, *thuuk* can be used to describe a neutral context; (8) can be used to describe a museum catalogue with which no adversative meaning is necessarily associated.

3.2 Multidimensional Semantic Approach

Based on the facts presented in the previous subsection, I show from the family-of-sentence tests (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1990, Roberts et al. 2009) that the adversative meaning associated with *thuuk* and *doon* constructions is projected as a not-at-issue meaning, but it need not be if

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[1]Note that when a surface subject is animate, it is also possible that a contextually salient individual (rather than a surface subject itself) may suffer. For example, a sentence like (5) can mean that in terms of the speaker's perspective, Nit suffered from Achara's punching event; Nit himself could have thought that the event was not bad at all for him. However, since a surface subject is a contextually salient individual (when it is animate), it is usually interpreted as an experiencer.

thuuk is associated with a neutral context. The semantic representation I suggest is illustrated in (3), repeated below as (9).

(9)   〚*thuuk/doon*〛 = P$_{<e,st>}$. x. e. P(x)(e)∃e'(Suffer(e') & Experiencer(e',x)) & CAUSE(e')(e)

Central to my claim is the assumption that as mentioned earlier a sentence may involve two tiers of meaning in multidimensional semantics, an at-issue meaning (i.e., the main assertion of a sentence) and a not-at-issue meaning (like a presupposition or implicature) in the spirit of Karttunen (1973). As various researchers have discussed in the literature (Langendoen and Savin 1971, Karttunen 1973, Potts 2005, Roberts et al. 2009, Bosse et al. 2012, Kim to appear), a not-at-issue meaning is distinguished from an at-issue meaning in that it is not affected by truth-conditional operators such as question and negation. For example, the content of a non-restrictive relative clause, a well-known instance of a not-at-issue meaning, escapes the scope of negation, as illustrated in (10).

(10) a. Jill, who lost something on the flight from Ithaca to New York, likes to travel by train.
       b. Jill, who lost something on the flight from Ithaca to New York, doesn't like to travel by train.   Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 1990

More recently, Bruening and Tran (Ms.) show that the adversative meaning contributed by *b* and the benefactive meaning contributed by *duoc* in Vietnamese are projected as an implicature or presupposition; they do not fall under the scope of various truth-conditional operators.

With this background, I show that as in Vietnamese (Bruening and Tran, Ms.) the adversative meaning associated with *thuuk* and *doon* constructions in Thai is a level of meaning independent of the main assertion of a sentence. As I shall show, this meaning passes the family-of-sentence tests.

First, the adversative meaning cannot be questioned, and this projects above a yes/no question, as illustrated in (11).

(11) a. Achārā *thùuk*/*dōon* khrūu   thāmtôd rǔ͙ɯ?
          Achara *thuuk*/*doon* teacher punish   Q
          'Was Achara punished by the teacher?'

       b. Mâj.
          Neg
          'No.'

(11) asks about whether Achara was punished by the teacher. Answering *no* cannot mean that Achara was punished by the teacher, but Achara did not suffer from it. This indicates that the utterer and the listener accept the not-at-issue meaning of 'suffer' irrespective of the answer to the question.

Next, negation can only be used to negate a truth-conditional meaning of the sentence in which the teacher punished Achara. As illustrated in (12), the negation marker *maj* cannot target solely the adversative meaning.

(12) Achārā mâj *thùuk*/*dōon* khrūu   thāmtôd.
       Achara Neg *thuuk*/*doon* teacher punish
       'Achara was not punished by the teacher.'
       *'Achara was punished by the teacher, but Achara did not suffer from it. '

It thus follows that *thuuk* and *doon* involve two tiers of meaning to which meaning can contribute, the main assertion on an at-issue dimension and the adversative meaning on a not-at-issue dimension.

4 A Null Operator A'-movement

This section examines various syntactic properties of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions. In Section 4.1,

I show that only the short form is a true passive construction and the long form is not. Section 4.2 demonstrates that *thuuk* and *doon* constructions are formed through a null operator A'-movement.

4.1 Short Form Versus Long Form

In a recent paper, Bruening and Tran (Ms.) provide a detailed discussion of passive constructions drawing on data from Vietnamese and Mandarin Chinese; they show that a true passive construction must involve a deletion or demotion of an external argument to an oblique like a PP and that object promotion is not a core property of a true passive construction (see also Perlmutter and Postal 1984, Bruening 2012).

To illustrate, unaccusative verbs, unlike unergative verbs, cannot undergo passivization because they lack an external argument.

(13) a. *The alien was existed.   b. The chair was sat on (by Tommy).

Also, some passive constructions lack object promotion.

(14) There was believed to have been a spy at the DOD.   Bruening and Tran, Ms.

The data (13) and (14) follow if it is said that for passive operation an external argument must be deleted or demoted to a *by*-phrase, and object promotion is not an essential process of passivization. In what follows, I take this as a basis for my discussion on Thai, and suggest that in Thai only the short form qualifies as a true passive construction and the long form does not.

First, the short form in *thuuk* and *doon* constructions has no external argument; instead, a missing element is understood as an existential, as in a *be*-passive in English (Bhatt and Pancheva 2006, Bruening and Tran Ms., inter alia).

(15) thúk   khōn   wǎa   wâa   Achārā càʔ *thùuk/dōon* tòj.
      every person hope Comp   Achara Fut *thuuk/doon* punch
      'Everyone hopes that Achara will be punched by someone.'
      *'Everyone[1] hopes that Achara will be punched by them[1].'

In (15), a missing external argument in the lower clause cannot be bound by the universal quantifier in the matrix clause.

In contrast, in the long form, an external argument is still present, and it has an argument status as a subject (see also Sudmuk 2003).[1] As shown in (17), the *thuuk/doon*-NP sequence cannot move, unlike a putative PP in (16).

(16) a. Nít kīn thúrīan bōn tóʔ nīi.   b. bōn tóʔ   nīi Nít kīn thúrīan.
          Nit eat durian on table this   on   table this Nit eat durian
          'Nit ate the durian on this table.'   'Nit ate the durian on this table.'

(17) a. Nít *thùuk/dōon* Achārā tòj.   b. *thùuk/dōon* Achārā Nít tòj.
          Nit *thuuk/doon* Achara punch   *thuuk/doon* Achara Nit punch
          'Nit was punched by Achara.'

Putting the facts together, an overt agent in the long form is an external argument, occupying a Spec-VoiceP, and a missing subject in the short form is existentially quantified over, as a subject of a passive construction. Despite this distinction, I shall demonstrate in the following subsection that both the long form and the short form are formed through a null operator A'-movement.

4.2 A'-Movement

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[1]Sudmuk (2003) argues that an NP following *thuuk* and *doon* is present as a subject, but not as an object. Given that in Thai, a heavy object can undergo a complex NP shift, whereas a heavy subject cannot, she shows that an NP following *thuuk* and *doon*, like a subject in an ordinary sentence, is unable to undergo a complex NP shift.

As has been discussed in Sudmuk 2003, *thuuk* and *doon* constructions involve A'-dependent properties such as long-distance dependencies across clauses and sensitivity to island effects.

First, a gap can occupy embedded subject and embedded object positions, in addition to a local object position, as illustrated in (18a) and (18b), respectively. Note that a gap may alternate with an overt pronoun (i.e., a resumptive pronoun) or a repeated name.[1]

(18) a. Jīm₁ *thùuk* tāmrùat sŏngsăj wâa   (khăw₁) tīi Nít.
      Jim *thuuk* police suspect Comp (3Sg)   hit Nit
      'Jim₁ was such that the police suspected that he₁ hit Nit (and this was bad for Jim or a contextually salient individual).'

    b. Nít₁ *thùuk* tāmrùat sŏngsăj wâa Jīm tīi (khăw₁).
      Nit *thuuk* police suspect Comp Jim hit (3Sg)
      'Nit₁ was such that the police suspected that Jim hit her₁ (and this was bad for Nit or a contextually salient individual).'

Second, the movement out of a relative clause island is not permitted; also, a resumptive pronoun does not rescue the island violation.

(19) *Jīm₁ *thùuk/dōon* khrūu tāmnì nákrīan thîi tòj   (khăw₁).
    Jim   *thuuk/doon* teacher scold student Rel punch (3Sg)
    'Jim₁ was such that the teacher scolded the student who punched him₁.'

I assume that relative clauses in Thai involve A'-movement of a relative head to the [Spec, CP] position following Jenks' (2011, to appear) argument. Then, in (19), a null operator which originates as the complement of the embedded verb *toj* 'punch' cannot target the [Spec-CP] position, as this position is occupied by the moved relative NP *nakrian* 'the student'.

Hence, I draw a conclusion that *thuuk* and *doon* constructions have the properties of A'-movement.

4.3 A Null Operator Movement

Having established that *thuuk* and *doon* constructions involve A'-movement, I advance to show that this movement is a movement of a null operator and not a movement of a surface subject itself. Arguments for a null operator movement include the lack of reconstruction effects regarding idiom expressions and a binding variable interpretation. If one supposes that a surface subject itself undergoes movement, there should be reconstruction effects because the moved element leaves behind copies of itself. As I shall demonstrate, however, this is contrary to fact.

Consider (20), where (20a) has the idiom expression *kɛp bia taithun raan* 'pick the shell under platform' and (20b) is an illustration of *thuuk* constructions containing this idiom.

(20) a. Achārā kèp bîa   tâithŭn ráan.
      Achara pick shell under   platform
      Idiomatic meaning: 'Achara made small savings.'

    b. bîa *thùuk* Achārā kèp tâithŭn ráan.
      shell *thuuk* Achara pick under   platform
      *Idiomatic meaning: 'Achara made small savings.'
      Literal meaning: 'The shell was picked by Achara under platform.'

On the assumption that idioms retain their meaning only when they appear together as a single constituent, the fact that a sentence like (20b), where part of the idiom *bîa* 'shell' is separated from other parts, has no idiomatic interpretation indicates that there is no reconstruction effect of idioms in *thuuk* constructions.[2]

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[1]Native speakers of Thai I have consulted prefer not pronouncing a repeated name unless they need some emphasis. Also, a gap may not be pronounced if it occurs in a local object position, whereas it may be pronounced, optionally, if it occurs in an embedded position.

[2]One might say that the reason why the idiomatic meaning is absent here is due to the adversative meaning associated with the semantics of *thuuk*. As I noted earlier, however, *thuuk* can also be used to describe a neutral context in which no adversative meaning is implicated.

Second, data regarding the variable binding reveal that a surface subject is itself base-generated in its position, an A-position.

(21) a. tɛ̀ælá khōn   *thùuk/dōon*   mɛ̂ɛ   khɔ̌ɔ   khǎw tīi.
      each   person *thuuk/doon* mother Poss   3Sg   hit
      'Each person was hit by his mother.'

   b. *lûuk khɔ̌ɔ khǎw *thùuk/dōon* tɛ̀ælá mɛ̂ɛ   tīi.
       kid Poss   3Sg *thuuk/doon* each mother hit
      'His kid was hit by each mother.'

(21a) is grammatical because the quantifier contained in the surface subject in a higher clause can bind a variable in a lower clause. However, (21b) is ungrammatical because the quantifier in a lower clause cannot bind its variable in a higher clause. This contrast indicates that a surface subject is base-generated in an A-position. Also, note that if one posits that a surface subject itself has moved, the grammaticality of (21a) would be puzzling; because the movement of the quantifier *tæœla khon* 'each person' would cross its coreferential pronoun, this gives rise to a weak crossover effect, resulting in ungrammaticality of the sentence, contrary to fact.

I thus conclude that the A'-movement that takes place in *thuuk* and *doon* constructions is a null operator movement; a surface subject is itself base-generated in its position (an A-position) and related to a null operator through predication. What this means in the proposed structure, as illustrated in (4a) and (4b), is that a null operator adjoins to a PassiveP in the short form and an InverseP in the long form; with this adjunction, PassiveP and InverseP turn into a property.

5 Summary

In this paper, I have investigated the syntax and the semantics of *thuuk* and *doon* constructions in Thai. First, I have suggested, based on Bruening and Tran's (Ms.) study on Vietnamese, that (i) in Thai *thuuk* and *doon* are syntactic heads which are associated with two dimensions of meaning in multidimensional semantics, an at-issue meaning (i.e., the main assertion of a sentence) and a not-at-issue meaning, and that (ii) the adversative meaning that is implicated in *thuuk* and *doon* constructions is projected as a not-at-issue meaning; but it need not be if *thuuk* is associated with a neutral context.

Second, I have shown that only the short form qualifies as a true passive construction and the long form does not; rather, the long form seems to instantiate an inverse construction in which an external argument is subordinate to an internal argument. Therefore, the long form and the short form receive the same semantic analysis; *thuuk* and *doon* contribute the adversative meaning, yet, they can be distinguished by the complement that *thuuk* and *doon* select.

6 Implications for East Asian Passive(-like) Constructions

The present multidimensional semantic analysis, drawn from Bruening and Tran's (Ms.) work on Vietnamese, can extend to other East Asian languages such as Mandarin Chinese (as mentioned in Bruening and Tran Ms.), Khmer, and Korean. These languages reveal an interesting fact about the adversative meaning, in which what have been called passive(-like) constructions in these languages implicate some adversative meaning, and this meaning appears to behave as a not-at-issue meaning, independent of a truth-conditional meaning of a sentence.

For example, in Khmer, *trau* meaning 'to hit, to suffer' occurs both in the long form and short form, similar to *thuuk* and *doon* in Thai, and this *trau* construction necessarily implicates an adversative meaning for a surface subject; this meaning is added as a secondary content to the utterance in a way independent of the main assertion the speaker intends to make.[1] Likewise, Kim (to appear) shows in detail that in possessive passive constructions in Korean the adversative meaning (which is represented as 'suffer' in her analysis) is not part of the main assertion of a sentence and

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[1]Note that it has been pointed out that *trau* has been undergoing a grammaticalization process similar to *thuuk* in Thai where it can be used in a neutral context which does not involve the adversity meaning at all. So, it looks like a type of projective meaning is not embedded anymore.

arises as a not-at-issue meaning like an implicature.

(22)   Samnang *trau*   Bopha   dal.   Kim to appear
       Samnang *trau*   Bopha   punch
       'Samnang was punched by Bopha, and in speaker's point of view this event was bad for
       Samnang.'

(23)   Hana-ka   Chelswu-eykey meli-lul   ppop-*hi*-ess-ta.   Kim 2014
       Hana-Nom Chelswu-Dat   hair-Acc pluck.out-*hi*-Pst-Dec
       'Hana had her hair plucked out by Chelswu, and Hana suffered from it.'

Therefore, this line of approach has the potential to illuminate the commonalities regarding the semantics of passive(-like) constructions across a number of East Asian langauges, such as Thai, Vietnamese (Bruening and Tran, Ms.), and Korean (Kim, 2014) in which an adversative meaning is a level of meaning independent of a truth-conditional meaning of a sentence like an implicature or presupposition. I hope to continue to investigate these issues in future studies.

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