Contrastive fragments in Thai: against the in-situ approach

1. Introduction: One theoretical question concerning clausal ellipsis is whether remnants move out of the ellipsis site, or they remain in situ and their surroundings are elided. This talk provides a set of novel evidence involving contrastive fragments (CFs) in Thai (a rigid SVO, *wh*-in-situ language) that favors the *movement-plus-ellipsis* view of clausal ellipsis see Merchant 2001, 2004. I show that (**i**) CFs are derived from focus fronting and deletion and (**ii**) that constraints on fragments closely track those on overt A′-movement to FocP. This view is empirically superior to competing in-situ analyses cf. Abe 2016, Ott & Struckmeier 2018 and cleft source analyses cf. Barros et al. 2014.

Properties	CF	Ex situ	In situ	Clefting
Island effects	√	√	*	√
Aspect markers	*	*	√	*
Negative Polarity Items (NPIs)	*	*	√	*
Obligatory presence of copula	*	*	*	√
PPs and adjuncts	√	√	√	*
Quantified NPs	√	√	√	*

2. Contrastive Fragments: Thai allows both embedded sluicing (Manowang 2024) and fragments. CFs are clausal ellipsis in which everything, except the focused phrase and the contrastive focus marker, goes missing (1b).

1) khǎw khít wâ: a. dɛ̀k mâj kin màmûaŋ b. { thùʔrian tàːŋhàːk | *thùʔrian* }
he think that child NEG eat mango durian FOC
'He thought…' 'the child didn't eat the mango' 'it's the durian <the child didn't eat>'

Both ex- and in-situ focus and CFs obligatorily employ the focus marker *tàːŋhàːk* or pitch accent (indicated by italics). The following arguments rule out in-situ structures (3.1-3.3) and clefts (3.4-3.6) as the (sole) source of fragment and are compatible with focus fronting as its sole source.

3.1 Island effects: The fact that CFs (2b), ex-situ focus (2d), and clefting (2c) but not in-situ focus are sensitive to island constraints indicates that in-situ structures (2e) do not feed CFs.

2) khǎw khít wâ: a. raw rucak khon thi phut thaj b. *****/??jîːpùn tàːŋhàːk
he think that we know man REL speak Thai Japanese FOC
'He thinks…' 'we know the man who speaks Thai'

c. *****jîːpùn tàːŋhàːk raw rúːcàk khon thîː phûːt d. *****jîːpùn thîː raw rúːcàk khon thîː phûːt
Japanese FOC we know man REL speak Japanese REL we know man REL speak

e. raw rúːcàk khon thîː phûːt jîːpùn tàːŋhàːk
we know man REL speak Japanese FOC (b-e):'we know the man who speaks **Japanese**'

3.2 Unmovable aspect markers: The post-verbal aspect markers are never clefted (3c), focus fronted (3d), nor do they occur as CFs (3b). They can be nevertheless focalized in in-situ (3e), which suggests that focus fronting rather than in-situ focus feeds CFs.

3) khǎw bɔ̀ːk wâː a. khǎw kin khâːw jùː b. *****lɛ̀ːw tàːŋhàːk c. *****lɛ̀ːw thîː khǎw kin khâːw
he tell that he eat rice IMPF PFV FOC PFV REL he eat rice
'He said...' 'he was eating rice'

d. *****lɛ̀ːw tàːŋhàːk khǎw kin khâːw e. khǎw kin khâːw lɛ̀ːw tàːŋhàːk
PFV FOC he eat rice he eat rice PFV FOC (b-e): 'he **already** ate rice'

3.3 NPIs: Indeterminate pronouns have an NPI-reading in-situ (4a), which is lost in clefts (4b), focus fronting (4c), and CFs (4d). This suggests that there is no in-situ source of CFs.

4) khǎw khít wâː a. dɛ̀k mâj kin ʔàʔraj tàːŋhàːk b. ʔàʔraj thîː dɛ̀k mâj kin
he think that child NEG eat what FOC what REL child NEG eat
'He thought…' 'the child didn't eat **anything**' 'what it was that the child didn't eat'

c. *ʔàʔraj tàːŋhàːk dɛ̀k mâj kin d. *ʔàʔraj tàːŋhàːk
what FOC child NEG eat what FOC (c-d): 'the child didn't eat **anything**'

3.4 Obligatory presence of copula: while embedded clefts require an overt specificational copula *khɯː* (5a), CFs, ex- and in-situ focus do not allow for the presence of a copula (5b-d):

5) khǎw khít wâː a. *(khɯː) thùʔrian thîː dɛ̀k mâj kin b. (*khɯː) thùʔrian tàːŋhàːk
he think that COP durian REL child NEG eat COP durian FOC
'He thought…' 'it's the durian that the child didn't eat' 'it's the durian'

c. (*khɯ:) thùʔrian tà:ŋhà:k dɛ̀k mâj kin d. (*khɯ:) dɛ̀k mâj kin thùʔrian tà:ŋhà:k
COP durian FOC child NEG eat COP child NEG eat durian FOC
'the child didn't eat **the durian**' 'the child didn't eat **the durian**'

3.5 PPs and adjuncts: PPs and manner adverbs are legitimate as CFs (6b), and they can be focalized in ex- and in-situ focus (6c-d). By contrast, they cannot occur as cleft pivots (6e).

6) khǎw khít wâ: a. khǎw khuj kàp khru jà:ŋkâ:wráw b.{ kàp pha:nro:ŋ | jà:ŋsuphâ:p } tà:ŋhà:k
he think that he speak to teacher aggressively to janitor politely FOC
'He thought...' 'he spoke to the teacher aggressively' 'it was to the janitor | politely'

c. { kàp phanrong tà:ŋhà:k khǎw khuj jà:ŋkâ:wráw | jà:ŋsuphâ:p tà:ŋhà:k khǎw khuj kàp khru: }
to janitor FOC he speak aggressively politely FOC he speak to teacher

d. { khǎw khuj kàp phanrong jà:ŋkâ:wráw tà:ŋhàk | khǎw khuj kàp khru: jà:ŋsuphâ:p tà:ŋhà:k }
he speak to janitor aggressively FOC he speak to teacher politely FOC

e. { *****kàp pha:nrong thî: khǎw khuj jà:ŋkâ:wráw | *****jà:ŋsuphâ:p thî: khǎw khuj kàp khru: }
to janitor REL 3SG speak aggressively politely REL he speak to teacher

(c-e): 'he spoke **to the janitor** aggressively | he spoke to the teacher **politely**'

3.6 Quantified NPs: The NPs modified by quantifiers/numeral-classifiers can occur as CFs (7b) and be focalized in ex- and in-situ focus (7c-d), but they cannot be clefted (7e). This strongly suggests that clefting cannot be a source of CFs.

7) khǎw khít wâ: a. raw ʔà:n naŋsŭ:-sǎ:m-lɛ̂m b. bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rûŋ tà:ŋhà:k
he think that we read book-three-CL article-five-CL FOC
'He thought…' 'we read three books' 'it's five articles'

c. bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rûŋ tà:ŋhà:k raw ʔà:n d. raw ʔà:n bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rûŋ tà:ŋhà:k
article-five-CL FOC we read we read article-five-CL FOC
'we read **five articles**' 'we read **five articles**'

e. *man khɯ: bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rûŋ thî: raw ʔà:n
it COP article-five-CL REL we read (e): 'it's five articles that we read.'

4. Blocking CFs: CFs cannot be licensed when ex-situ focus is blocked. Relativization is created via a dependency between the *thî:*-relative complementizer at C^0 and the gap inside the relative clause (RC) see Jenks 2014, but RCs are incompatible with ex-situ focus and CFs, as in (8).

8) a. khǎw hâj naŋsŭ: thî: ʔathíba:j kòt-bɔ:j (*tà:ŋhà:k) kàp nákrien *(tà:ŋhà:k)
he give book REL describe law-Boyle FOC to student FOC

b. *****khǎw hâj [$_{NP}$ naŋsŭ: $_i$ [$_{CP}$[$_{C'}$ thî: [$_{FocP}$ kòt-bɔ:j $_j$ [$_{Foc'}$ tà:ŋhà:k ([$_{TP}$ *t* $_i$ ʔathíba:j *t* $_j$])]]]]] kàp nákrien
he give book REL law-Boyle FOC describe to student

(a-b): 'He gives the book which describes **Boyle's law** to the students.'

The lack of CF in RC (8b) could be attributed to the two assumptions: (**i**) the *thî:*-complementizer takes an IP-sized complement while the *wâ:*-complementizer takes a Foc-sized complement (compare (8a/7c)), and (**ii**) moved foci follow from the theory of movement and islands (Abels 2012).

5. Discussion and implications: Apparently, Thai contrastive fragments are compatible with focus fronting. Under this view, A′-movement of contrastive foci is driven by the strong [Foc] feature on Foc^0, which may also host the [E]-feature responsible for ellipsis (see Manowang 2024 for sluicing). When the focused (*wh*-)phrases move to Spec,FocP, they enter into feature-checking relation with Foc^0 (Merchant 2001, see also Aelbrecht 2010), and [E], if present, carries the instruction to delete a constituent (Foc′ in the case of sluicing). Evidence for this analysis comes from the distributional fact that the focus marker as well as other discourse particles must be absent in sluices while the contrastive focus marker is obligatorily present in CFs. The proposed analysis constitutes additional support for the sententialist, isomorphic approach to ellipsis and the WH/Sluicing correlation proposed by van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2006, in particular. If focus fronting is attested in a certain language, it is a primary structure that feeds clausal ellipsis in that language. It appears necessary to say that sometimes the complement of Foc^0 and sometimes Foc′ is elided cf. Merchant 2001, Landau 2020, also Thoms 2010, a difference which will be discussed in a talk. Furthermore, the island sensitivity in clausal ellipsis e.g., CFs and contrast sluices, will be discussed cf. Merchant 2004, Fukaya 2012, Temmerman 2013, Griffiths & Lipták 2014.

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