

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 1956, the first thesis about particles in a Tai language was written by Terd Chuenkongchoo. He concentrated on the prosodic characteristics of particles in spoken Thai. His task stimulated Amara Bhamoraput to study Thai final particles in 1972.

Then in 1981, Patcharin Peyasantiwong did her dissertation on the topic of “A Study of Final Particles in Conversational Thai”. She recommended the study of final particles in other dialects of the Tai family.

More recently, M.A theses which have been done in the Tai dialect family include: “Final Particles in Chiangmai Dialect” by Rung-Arun Teekhachunhatran (1983), “A Study of Final Particles in Sisaket Dialect” by Khanitha Wansorn (1987) “A Study of Final Particles in Lao Khrang” by Wanleeya Watcha-raporn (1991), and a research “Final Particles in Khon Kaen Dialect” by Rung-Arun Teekhachunhatran and Vilaiwan Somsobhon (1988).

Thai linguists present a sampling of final particles along with a brief description of them as a part of their traditional Thai grammar books. Nawawan Bhandumeda (1983:72) made the interesting observation that they only appear in oral expression.

There are a few documents about the Tai Lue people in Nan province. They describe Lue immigration, their significant role in rebuilding temples, houses, etc. in the period of Nan rehabilitation, and their way of living. The study of the Lue in Nan province, and their language in particular deserves more attention.

In Tai languages final particles form an integral part of communication. Udom Warotamasikkhadit (1975:342-354) stated that “A foreigner studying Thai always complains that final particles give him a big problem in learning spoken Thai”. That is to say many of the final particles have more than one meaning and can be used in different contexts depending on the emotion and the attitudes of the speaker to the item he is talking about and to the emotions and attitudes of his audience. Because of this, it is often difficult to determine precisely the meanings of a particle. Hartmann (1976:88) rightly noted that “A complete analysis of particles in Lue would be a major undertaking calling for more natural, conversational data than are found in oral narratives”. He re-commended that in order to find important distinctions of final particles it would be necessary to consider pragmatics and semantic-syntactic structures. This study will attempt to follow his recommendation.

1.2 Purpose of the study

1. Describe every final particle overheard in actual use by considering pragmatics along with semantic-syntactic structures.
2. Survey co-occurring particles.

1.3 Scope of the study

This thesis is a study of final particles based on a large corpus of data collected from overheard Tai Lue conversation during field work in Donchai village, Pua district, Nan province. Normally in looking for language associates to collect linguistic data one has particular requirements in mind. The qualifications the researcher looked for were having Lue as the mother tongue. In addition they should have been born in that village and have never moved to another village. They should be over 30 years old. There is no variation in occupation: all of the language associates who were observed for this research are agriculturalists. However in the real life setting in which the researcher was collecting the data the researcher overheard, some of the speakers may not have fit the ideal qualifications. There is a broad sampling of people of both sexes ranging in age from about 30 to 80.

1.4 Methodology

There are several steps involved in this research. First the survey of related documents, books, theses, and research both in Thai and in English including a survey of the source materials on Tai Lue. Reading was done in past and current issues in final particles studies and in Tai Lue language and culture. Finally, the researcher spent 4 months living and doing field research in a Tai Lue village listening to the daily conversations of life in their normal everyday settings. The researcher overheard and recorded conversations constantly during this time. Many different kinds of informal dialogue were overheard. Some instances are as follows:

- Discussing about the weather
- Asking about harvesting
- Talking about T.V. programmes
- Giving general information
- Talking during washing the clothes
- Complaining about the kids
- Expressing needs for such things as rain, a good harvest etc.
- People talking to themselves about such things as how the hens get in the house
- Feeding pigs
- Telling about life in the past

The conversations included persuading, greeting, asking, commanding, warning, complaining, etc. The actual data of this study was gathered from these conversations among the Lue people by tape recording and sometimes writing in field notes. The total written data is about 1,800 sentences and 15 hours of tape recording. In order to get very natural Lue dialogue, elicitation was rarely used in the field work.

Because of the wide variety of data collected in natural informal settings, a complete analysis of Lue final particles can be attempted with some confidence. The researcher's guesses and intuition about the functions of final particles are constantly constrained by reference to the actual data and evidence of how people actually use the particles in daily life.

To begin the analyzing process the tape recordings of Tai Lue conversations were transcribed. Then the final particles were classified within Peyasantiwong's system.

1.5 Relevant Literature

Research on final particles in the Tai language family has been published about central Thai, the Chiangmai dialect, the Sisaket dialect, and Lao.

Two terms are found in the literature about final particles. They are sentence particles (SPs) and final particles (FPs). The researcher have chosen to use the latter one in this study since the particles not only appear at the end of the sentence but also at the end of verb phrase and noun phrase.

The researcher agree with Rung-Arun Teekhachunhatean (1983) that the entire literature can be classified in 2 main divisions. These are the studies based on the function or usage of FPs, and the studies which concentrate on the forms and meanings of FPs or those which involve FPs intonational characteristics.

The first division is described in terms of the interactive functions it performs. It focuses on the relationship of the FPs and interpersonal setting or in social interaction, for instance the function of FPs to denote attitudes, ideas, and a type of utterance as question, command, request, and so on.

The second one refers to those which are studied based on grouping together the similar forms and the semantic structure. For instances the /ná²/ group consists of /ná²/, /nâ²/, /na:/, /nâ:/, /ná:/ and the /sî²/ group includes /sî²/, /si/, /sí:/, and /sî:/.

The sampling of grouping based on semantic structure or understanding of sentence is found in Amara's thesis. The details will be presented in turn.

We shall begin this part of the discussion with the first division. Panninee Rudaravaniya (1965:91-99) described briefly that the particles in Thai are a special word class. Syntactically they play a significant role in the sentence. They are often found at the end of sentences, in consequence they are called sentences particles. She classified them according to their function into three groups. The particles that signal question are called question particles. Those which show the status of the speaker and his audience are called status particles. The particles which indicate the attitude of the speaker toward the situation are attitude particles.

The same classification is found in a book about Thai transformational grammar by Nawawan Bandhameda (1983:72). She mentions that FPs are used in spoken language. The attitude particles reveal the attitude of the speaker. The question particles are those which change affirmative sentences to interrogative sentences. They include /*rǔ̃*:/ and /*mǎj*/. The distinction between them is that the /*rǔ̃*:/ has an presupposition, whereas the /*mǎj*/ does not have this presupposition. In her study, the question particles always precede attitude particles when they co-occur.

The dissertation of Patcharin Peyasantiwong (1981) attempts to describe the usage of particles. Their meanings are considered based on her native speaker intuition. She looks at pragmatic as well as sociolinguistic factors. The exact definition of FPs is not presented, but she mentions that most of them characteristically occur in spoken language. They have no meaning in isolation. Practically, they do not fit any traditional grammar array and also, grammatically they are not necessary. Patcharin accepts the same 3 way classification of FPs but uses the term mood whereas others use attitude. The status particles include polite and impolite particles. The question particles /*rǔ̃*:/ and /*mǎj*/ are presented when they occur alone and when they co-occur with positive particles /*chǎjmǎj*/ and with negative particles /*rǔ̃:plaàw*/ and /*mǎjchǎj rǔ̃*:. She examines combinations of question particles /*rǔ̃: mǎj*/, /*rǔ̃*:/ /*jaŋ*/ and combinations between question particles and interrogative pronouns. She

observes that question particles always follow the interrogative pronouns. The examples are as follows:

1. *tôŋ bð: khray mǎy*
 must tell who FP.
 Do I have to tell anybody?

2. *cà pay thî:nǎj rǔ: plaàw*
 will go where FP.
 Are you going anywhere?

In her study, the mood particles are grouped according to phonological reduction. The first one is the /a/ group; vowels reduce to an /a/ round, they share initial consonants, they may or may not contain glottal stop, and vowel are in mid tone e.g /lǎʔ/, /lǎʔ/, /rð:k/, /lǎw/ and etc. The processes of reduction occurring in this group are vowel shortening, vowel shifting, glottal stop replacing final. In case of the /rð:k/, not only the phenomena above but also initial consonant deletion and tone neutralization. The other type of mood is the non /a/ group. The vowels of this group cannot be reduced to an /a/ sound; they have different vowel and initial consonants, and the tones change e.g /nǎʔ/, /sǐ/, /sǐ/, /sǐa/, /chiaw/, /thiidiaw/, /kràmay/, etc. The phonological alternation in the FPs variation includes vowel shortening, vowel lengthening, vowel shifting, deletion of initial or final consonant, weak stress and tone neutralization.

Khanitha Wansorn writes her thesis “A study of Final Particles in Sisaket dialect”. She defines the FPs as statement ending words or noun phrase ending words whose

meanings relate to the entire sentence. She sets up 3 criterion for judging FPs: they must occur at the end of an statement or noun phrase, their meaning relates to the whole sentence, and their prosodic characteristics are such that the quality of tone often varies. Her classification follows Patcharin's. The status particles include polite and impolite particles. They indicate politeness, intimacy, and sex of speaker. She defines the question particles as words which alter a statement into a yes-no question. The mood particles are those which express the attitude and feelings of the speaker, and the relationship between speakers. Then she presents clusters of FPs. In Sisaket dialect, the phonological changes which result in variant forms include tone changing, vowel lengthening and final glottal stop dropping.

According to the viewpoint of Thai linguist Vichin Panupong (1970:168), the particles are intonation bearers. They are always found at the end of the sentence and it's prosodic characteristics are not constant but varies from sentence to sentence and utterance being determined by the intonational requirement of the sentence as a whole. Thus it may be said that particles are intonation bearers. Vichin (1977) provides the particular characteristic of FPs that they often vary in tone or vowel shortening such as /*khà*[?], /*khá*[?], and /*khâ*:/. She proposes that the particle usage should depend upon the intimacy, social status, and the seniority between speakers. She divides the degree of social status into high and low social status. The degree of age division includes equal, seniority, and juniority. All of the authors mentioned previously unanimously divide FPs based on their function into 3 groups. A two way division by combining

question mode particles has been proposed by Haas (1970). The modal particles are those which signify mode and question. The status particles are those which indicate social relationships and sometimes the sex of the speaker.

The second major division of the literature about Fps is a detailed analysis which has been done on forms and meanings by Amara Bhamoraput (1972) in her M.A Thesis. She defines the criteria for judging words as FPs in the quote.

The meaning of a final particle in isolation is obscure and can be explained only in relation with the whole clause. Some final particles play a significant role in a clause, as question particles. Other contribute to the semantics of the entire clause, as intensifying particles.

She categorizes them based on syntactic and semantic into 7 groups.

1. Intensify Particles make the sentence sound firmer. They appear first when they co-occur with other particles.
2. Emphasizing Particles are similar to the intensifying particles. They occur after the intensifying particles.
3. Hortative Particles are applied in command and persuade. They may occur in a statement to reveal a speaker acceptance. They occur after emphasizing particles.
4. Definite Particles mark definiteness or distinctiveness. They follow hortative particles.
5. Question Particles alter a statement into a yes-no question.

6. Post-Question Particles usually appear after question particles. They indicate mild persuasiveness.

7. Status Particles can be either polite or impolite particles. They indicate social status and gender of the speaker and the addressee.

Setting up the co-occurring rules, she lists the seven groups of particles in a sequence. She says that they will appear in the same sequence, and it accords with her classification respectively. The particles in the same class will not combine at all. Constraints on co-occurrence include; specific meaning, contradictory, and syntactically different function. That is to say the particles and their co-occurring particles follow syntactic and semantic rules. According to her study, FPs in Thai are single lexeme. In spoken language, long vowels are shortened; rising tone, falling tone, and low tone become mid, or high tone.

The phonological modifications found in Amara's study are as follows.

1. In cluster /l/ and /r/ are left out.
2. In rapid speed /r/ is pronounced /l/.
3. Final consonants are not accounted.
4. Vowels are shortened.
5. The first vowels of diphthongs are deleted.

Literature from Tai languages outside of Thai includes "Lao Final Particles" by Crisfield (1974). He defines final particles in a page of his article as:

...final particles occur at the the end of the utterance. They may occur alone or in combination. They function as question words, imperative words or words of special emphasis. They indicate the speaker's feelings or attitude and the relationship between speakers and addressees.

They are similar to the other final particles in the Tai family in the way of tone and vowel variation. His analysis is based on forms and meanings. Some examples are *de~dee*, *ne~nee*. As a question particle this means who all, what all, etc.

Rung-Arun (1983) deals with the explanation of the relationship between the prosodic characteristics of FPs, and the semantic characteristics, and the description of the relationship between them. The prosodic characteristics include the intonation system; low level, high level, low falling, low raising, high falling, and mid level. The quantity system refers to the vowel lengthening and the vowel shortening. The terminal systems are glottalized and non-glottalized. She found that there are 6 types of semantic characteristics. These types of particles signal contrast, convincing, commanding, guessing, giving information, and expressing politeness. The relation between the prosodic characteristics and the semantic characteristics are the semantic type expressing the command has the low level or low falling intonation and the semantic type which shows the asserted meaning has the mid level intonation.

Rung-Arun Teekhachunhatean and Vilaiwan Somsobhon (1988) discuss final particles in Khon Kaen dialect based on the prosodic characteristics which involve the intonation system, the quantity system, and the terminal system. They also look at the

semantic characteristics which are presupposition, assertion, syntax and the semantic relationship between the speaker and the hearer. The researchers discover that the semantic features display the meaning of the utterances whereas the prosodic features elucidate the difference of each particle.

Wanleeya Vacharaporn (1991) in her M.A thesis “A Study of Final Particles in Lao Khrang”, at Ban Thungsilong, Amphoe Dontum, Nakhonpathom gives the definition of FPs as bound morphemes occurring in last position of a clause or sentence. The meaning of them is indistinct. It depends on context and speaker’s attitude. The underlying forms of FPs in Lao Khrang vary by tone changing, vowel lengthening, and final glottal stop dropping. She mentions the meanings which differ from the underlying forms. When they co-occur, the last one indicates the differentiation. The variation of tone 2 or mid level-falling-mid tone shows uncertainty, tone 3 or high level tone reveals politeness, tone 4 or mid-rising-falling tone indicates request and force, and the tone 5 or high rising tone indicates dissatisfaction. Vowel lengthening shows politeness whereas vowel shortening shows dissatisfaction and impoliteness. Losing the final glottal stop indicates politeness and retaining one indicates impoliteness. The usage of FPs in Lao Khrang depends upon the situation, status between speakers, and the attitude of the speakers.

In 1956, Terd Chuenkhongchoo studies “The Prosodic Characteristics of Certain Particles in Spoken Thai”. He mentions that the particles add colour to the clause, (1956):

...their prosodic characteristics may be said to colour the sentence in which they operate in a way comparable to the use in the English sentence of such features as stress and intonation....

He attempts to elucidate FPs based on the quantity system; long and short vowels. The intonation system includes various tones as falling, rising, high, mid, and low tones. The termination system includes the presence or absence of glottal constriction. According to his study, it is noticeable that the quantity system and the intonation system of particles vary from other word classes.

Another scholar, Cooke (1992), describes the FPs as lexemes modifying the whole sentence. In his view, it is impossible to assign the precise meaning or usage to the particles. He rightly mentions that "The exact meaning or function of some of these particles is almost impossible to discover; for neither reference materials nor native speakers are able to shed much light on the matter." The final particles involve a context and an emotion on the part of the speaker. According to Cooke (1989:5):

...SPs also turn out to be distinctive, in many cases unique in terms of their function within the larger verbal and situational or semantic context. For the different SPs have meanings and/or functions that are oriented either toward other utterances (that trigger or are called forth by the sentence in which the SPs occur), or toward some relevant element encountered or expected in the non-verbal situation.

They often occur at the end of the sentence and sometimes at the middle of the sentence. The term he calls them is sentence particle which then are referred to as SPs.

Some of them display statements. Some reflect commands. Some shows questions, and some indicate the relationship of speaker-addressee. He finds that SPs are described by 3 kinds of the prosodic or intonational variants processes.

The first process, Primary Variants, is the process of tone changing or vowel lengthening that adds meaning to the basic meaning. The boundary design of this phenomenon are described in the following way.

1.1. Falling tone shows statement, command, the like, and etc.

High tone signals question, calling attention, and etc.

1.2. Low tone uses for formal style.

Mid tone assigns for informal style.

High / Extra high tone illustrates jovial or lightly self assertive.

1.3. Short falling tone shows statements.

Short high tone reflects command and questioning.

Long falling tone is used to express urgency, and persuasion.

The second process the Phonological Simplification or Reduction includes:

2.1. The morphophonemic changes is the phenomenon that forms carry glottal stop changes to mid tone and that glottal stop is dropped. Another process is the co-occurring of 2 or more falling tones which then are uttered as a single falling tone.

2.2. The phonological changes include dropping of initial consonant for instance /r/ becomes /l/ or vowel is centralized as in *u:* > *ə:*.

The last process is Features of Voice Register which include the phenomenon shown below:

3.1. Normal Voice Registers are chiefly uttered in sentences.

- High Voice Registers carry some sort of feeling of surprise, questioning, disagreement, complaint, dismay, pleasure, emphasis, and etc.

3.2. Lowered Terminal Contour will be uttered with a lower pitch than an earlier term with the same tone.

Raised Terminal Contour increases personal concern, femininity, cuteness, and enthusiasm.

The type of variant forms of SPs he described gives the intonational expressiveness in the language.

In the discussion above, it can be found that FPs appear in spoken language. They have no meaning in isolation but relate to total phrases clauses or sentences. The studies based on the function define 3 major types: question particles, status particles, and mood particles.

Another group of studies does analysis based on forms and meanings in their distinctive context. Finally, there are studies which deal with the intonational characteristics or those concerning tone, vowel length, terminal glottal stop and voice register.