A HISTORICAL STUDY OF TIME MARKERS IN THAI

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0 Introduction
To understand an event fully, one has to locate it in real time. Such a calendric expression as ‘at 8 a.m. on the first of May 2003’ can best fulfill the location task. However, in real life, for the purpose of everyday communication, one does not always want such an exact time to locate all events. Instead, one usually wants to understand an event in relation to another event, whether it occurs before or after that event or at the same time. When we talk about the time of an event in relation to a certain point of time or a temporal reference point, we are talking about time deixis.

According to Fillmore (1997), time deixis refers to the time at which the communication act takes place. Linguistic time markers or time expressions as the formal properties for time deixis include both calendric expressions such as 8 o’clock, to-day, the past ten years, and non-calendric expressions which range from bound morphemes known as tense to lexical items and composite lexical constructions such as now, then, this, that, when, in the past. This paper deals with non-calendric expressions excluding tense which is not used in Thai. These time expressions will be referred to as deictic time markers or sometimes time markers.

The paper studies deictic time markers within a limit of a simple sentence and a subordinating clause in a complex sentence. Its purpose is first to examine the structure of the deictic time markers; secondly, to group the time markers into semantic types on the basis of their relation to the present moment or in relation to another event; and thirdly, to study how time markers reveal the concept of time in Thai. Since materials studied are drawn from the four periods: Sukhothai (SK) (1283-1350), Ayutthaya (AY) (1350-1767), Mid-Ratanakosin (RN) (1851-1910), and Modern Thai (MT), a historical study is therefore taken into account.

It will be assumed that the materials of all four periods are phonologically more or less of the same dialect, that is, the Bangkok dialect. Following this assumption, the transcription of the materials of all four periods is based on the phonemic system of Bangkok Thai given at the end of this paper

1 Structure of Thai deictic time markers
Comrie (1985) proposed three classes of time expressions: lexical items, lexically composite expressions and grammatical categories. Since in Thai, time is expressed lexically, the third class is not relevant here.

1.1 Lexical items as deictic time markers
By lexical item, I mean a one-word structure. Based on the data of the four periods, deictic time markers of one-word structure can be grouped into two types: monosyllabic and nonmonosyllabic words. The monosyllabic time markers are few in number. They are nti45 (SK, AY, RN, MT) (this)2 ‘now’, nai45 (SK, AY, RN, MT) (that) ‘before’, naa12 (SK, AY,
RN, MT) (front) ‘future’, koon\(^{22}\) (SK, AY, RN, MT) (preceding) ‘before’, mua\(^{42}\) (SK, AY, RN, MT) (point of time) ‘when’, doam\(^{33}\) (AY, RN, MT) (origin) ‘before’. Except for the last two which can occur independently, these monosyllabic time markers must co-occur with a preposition in a preposition phrase (see 1.2.2) or a noun in a noun phrase (see 1.2.1). Some of the preposition phrases developed into lexical time markers in later periods as discussed below. As can be seen, these monosyllabic time markers except for mua\(^{42}\) do not basically denote time. nii\(^{45}\), nan\(^{45}\) are demonstratives; naa\(^{42}\) is a noun denoting a body organ, a face; koon\(^{22}\) is an adverb meaning ‘in front’.

Non-monosyllabic lexical time markers include bat\(^{22}\) nii\(^{45}\) ‘now’ (SK, AY, RN, MT), mua\(^{42}\) koon\(^{22}\) ‘before’ (SK, AY, RN, MT), tee\(^{22}\) koon\(^{22}\) ‘before’ (SK, AY, RN, MT), tee\(^{22}\) koon\(^{22}\) nii\(^{45}\) ‘before’ (RN, MT), diaw\(^{24}\) nii\(^{45}\) ‘now’ (RN, MT), phaay\(^{33}\) lan\(^{24}\) ‘later, time ahead’ (AY, RN, MT), phaay\(^{33}\) naa\(^{42}\) ‘time ahead’ (RN, MT), lan\(^{24}\) lan\(^{24}\) (MT) ‘recently’. These lexical time markers either developed from noun phrases or preposition phrases.

From noun phrases:

i) \(\text{bat}^{22} \text{nii}^{45}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{bat}^{22} \text{‘breath’ nii}^{45} \text{‘this’}\)

ii) \(\text{mua}^{42} \text{koon}^{22}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{mua}^{42} \text{‘point of time’ koon}^{22} \text{‘preceding period’}\)

iii) \(\text{phaay}^{33} \text{lan}^{24}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{phaay}^{33} \text{‘side’ lan}^{24} \text{‘back’}\)

iv) \(\text{phaay}^{33} \text{naa}^{42}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{phaay}^{33} \text{‘side’ naa}^{42} \text{‘front’}\)

v) \(\text{lan}^{24} \text{lan}^{24}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{tcoon}^{33} \text{lan}^{24} \text{lan}^{24} \rightarrow \text{tcoon}^{33} \text{lan}^{24} \text{lan}^{24} \rightarrow \text{tcoon}^{33} \text{‘portion’ lan}^{24} \text{lan}^{24} \text{‘back’}\)

from preposition phrases:

vi) \(\text{tee}^{22} \text{koon}^{22}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{tee}^{22} \text{‘from’ koon}^{22} \text{‘preceding period’}\)

vii) \(\text{tee}^{22} \text{koon}^{22} \text{nii}^{45}\)  \(\rightarrow\) \(\text{tee}^{22} \text{‘from’ koon}^{22} \text{‘preceding period’ nii}^{45} \text{‘this’}\)

Some observations should be made here. First, from the Sukhothai period until now there has been an increase of lexical time markers in the non-monosyllabic group. By way of contrast, the monosyllabic lexical time markers seem to be a closed class with members almost all of which do not occur independently. Secondly, some non-monosyllabic markers are analyzed as phrases in the Sukhothai period and probably in the Ayuthaya period. They have become lexical words, no longer analyzable synchronically, in the latter two periods. These include bat\(^{22}\) nii\(^{45}\), mua\(^{42}\) koon\(^{22}\) and tee\(^{22}\) koon\(^{22}\). Thirdly, the noun phrases formed in the later periods show the use of nouns denoting a portion or a part as the head noun. These lexical time markers include phaay\(^{33}\) lan\(^{24}\) ‘in the future’ with the head noun ‘phaay\(^{33}\) meaning ‘a side’; phaay\(^{33}\) naa\(^{42}\) ‘in the future’ again with ‘phaay\(^{33}\) meaning ‘a side’; tcoon\(^{33}\) lan\(^{24}\) ‘afterwards’ with the head noun tcoon\(^{33}\) meaning ‘a portion’. Lastly, the reduplication in tcoon\(^{33}\) lan\(^{24}\) lan\(^{24}\) may illustrate that tcoon\(^{33}\) lan\(^{24}\) has not yet been finalized as a one-word time marker. lan\(^{24}\) lan\(^{24}\) which shows a further development from tcoon\(^{33}\) lan\(^{24}\) lan\(^{24}\), however occurs as a one-word time marker. (see also 1.2.1 b) Fourthly, the time markers given here usually denote a stretch of time except bat\(^{22}\) nii\(^{45}\) which means the present point of time. diaw\(^{24}\) nii\(^{45}\) may denote either a point of time or a period of time, i.e. the present time.
1.2 **Lexical composites as deictic time markers**

Lexical composite deictic time markers can be grouped into two types of construction: a noun phrase, and a prepositional phrase. Each construction displays several patterns. But although some new patterns are added, what actually gives variety is the introduction of new lexical items in the slots of the patterns.

1.2.1 **Noun phrase deictic time markers**

Noun phrase deictic time markers in the data of the four periods illustrate three main patterns:

a) **temporal noun – demonstrative nii\(^{45}/nan\(^{45}\)**

b) **temporal noun – spatial noun naa\(^{42}/lan\(^{24}\) – direction word pay\(^{33}/maa\(^{33}\)**

c) **spatial noun – locative preposition - demonstrative pronouns nii\(^{45}/nan\(^{45}\)**

a) **Temporal noun - demonstrative nii\(^{45}/nan\(^{45}\)**

viii) \(mua^{42} nan^{45}\) ‘the past’ (SK, AY, RN)

ix) \(chua^{42} nii^{45}\) ‘the present’ (SK, AY, RN)

x) \(chua^{42} nii^{45}\) ‘this life time’ (SK)

xi) \(chua^{42} nii^{45}/nan^{45}\) ‘this that period’ (RN, MT)

xii) \(tsoo^{32} nii^{45}/nan^{45}\) ‘this that moment’ (MT)

xiii) \(ra^{45} ya^{45} nii^{45}/nan^{45}\) ‘the present past period’ (MT)

xiv) \(khoo^{33} naa^{22} nii^{45}/nan^{45}\) ‘at present at that time’ (AY, RN, MT)

xv) \(wee^{33} laa^{33} nii^{45}/nan^{45}\) ‘the present past time’ (MT)

It can be seen that in the first slot, a variety of nouns occur. The data show that in the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods, only temporal nouns, \(mua^{42}\) ‘when’, \(chua^{42}\) ‘life time’, \(khoo^{33} naa^{22}\) ‘while’ are used in this slot whereas in the Ratanakosin and Modern Thai periods, words with spatial notions as a portion \(tsoo^{32}\) or distance \(ra^{45} ya^{45}\) are introduced. The first nouns except \(mua^{42}\) usually denote a portion or a part in the stretch of time specified by \(nii^{45}/nan^{45}\). The last example, \(wee^{33} laa^{33} nii^{45}\) (time this) ‘now’ in Modern Thai illustrates a semantically indefinite temporal word which when modified by demonstrative \(nii^{45}\) denotes a specific portion of time i.e. the present time.

\(mua^{42}\) is interpreted as a noun in the Sukhothai period and Ayutthaya because of the evidence such as thuk\(^{45}\) \(mua^{42}\) ‘every time’ where \(mua^{42}\) is apparently a noun. (In \(mua^{42} nan^{45} nii^{45}\) where \(nii^{45}\) and \(nan^{45}\) are demonstratives, \(mua^{42} nan^{45} nii^{45}\) denote the present period and the past period respectively. Because \(mua^{42}\) could be followed by a noun or a noun phrase as in \(mua^{42} chua^{42} phoo^{42} kuoo^{33}\) (the time - the life time - father - I) ‘in my father’s life time’, it is easy for \(mua^{42}\) to be grammaticalized into a preposition ‘when’ in later periods as in \(mua^{42} wee^{33} laa^{33} pee^{22} naa^{33} lii^{45} kaa^{33} wan^{33} nii^{45}\) (MT) (when - time - eight - o’clock - today) ‘at 8 o’clock today’.

Another observation must be made for \(mua^{42}\). In the Ayutthaya period there were a great number of occurrences of \(mua^{42}\) followed by a verb phrase that ends with \(nan^{45}\), for example, \(mua^{42} rap^{45} pra^{22} than^{33} ??aa^{33} haan^{24} nan^{45} - nii^{33} - mhoo^{33} - maa^{33} - duu^{33} - maak^{42}\) (when - eat - food - that - have - man - come - see - much) ‘When eating, many people came to look at us). Here it is likely that \(mua^{42}\) was modified by a kind of
verb nominal, with nan\textsuperscript{45} a demonstrative adjective marking the construction a noun phrase.

b) **Temporal noun - spatial noun** naa\textsuperscript{42}/laŋ\textsuperscript{24} - (pay\textsuperscript{33}/maa\textsuperscript{33})

\begin{itemize}
  \item xvi) mua\textsuperscript{42} naa\textsuperscript{42} ‘the time ahead, the future’ (SK, RN)
  \item xvii) tcoon\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} ‘recently’ (MT)
  \item xviii) tcoon\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} ‘recently’ (MT)
  \item xix) ra\textsuperscript{45} ya\textsuperscript{45} laŋ\textsuperscript{34} ‘in the immediate past’ (MT)
  \item xx) tcoon\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} maa\textsuperscript{33} ‘in the recent past to now’ (MT)
  \item xxi) khaan\textsuperscript{42} naa\textsuperscript{42} pay\textsuperscript{33} ‘in the future’ (MT)
\end{itemize}

This pattern appears most in Modern Thai and the lexical composites in this pattern have certain restrictions. One cannot have *taon\textsuperscript{33} naa\textsuperscript{42}, *ray\textsuperscript{45} ya\textsuperscript{45} naa\textsuperscript{42} or *khaan\textsuperscript{42} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} to convey temporal meaning. Because of the restriction, tcoon\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24}, khaan\textsuperscript{42} naa\textsuperscript{42}, ra\textsuperscript{45} ya\textsuperscript{45} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} are likely to become compound words in later time. In fact, phaay\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24}, which first appeared in the Ayutthaya period, was most probably a noun phrase which has become in Modern Thai a non-mono-syllabic lexical time marker (see 1.1). The use of naa\textsuperscript{42} ‘front’ and laŋ\textsuperscript{24} ‘back’ with spatial notions illustrate the front/back orientation as will be discussed later in section 3.

Tcoon\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} also found only in Modern Thai shows an extension of the construction where the spatial word is reduplicated. From this reduplicated expression, laŋ\textsuperscript{24} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} ‘recently’, a lexical time marker is derived.

In the Ratanakosin period maa\textsuperscript{33} ‘come’ and pay\textsuperscript{33} ‘go’ appeared after the non-mono-syllabic temporal nouns such as phaay\textsuperscript{33} laŋ\textsuperscript{24} maa\textsuperscript{33} (recent past-come) ‘later (in the past)’. From then, temporal expressions meaning a period of time may be followed by pay\textsuperscript{33} or maa\textsuperscript{33} with temporal relation to the present time, if not otherwise specified (see Section 3); thus we have khaan\textsuperscript{42} naa\textsuperscript{42} pay\textsuperscript{33} (future-go) ‘in the future’.

c) **Spatial noun - locative preposition - demonstrative pronoun** nii\textsuperscript{45}/nan\textsuperscript{45}

Deictic time markers of this type are found only in Modern Thai data. These are:

\begin{itemize}
  \item xxii) laŋ\textsuperscript{24} caak\textsuperscript{22} nan\textsuperscript{45} ‘afterwards’
    (back-from-from-that)
  \item xxiii) laŋ\textsuperscript{24} caak\textsuperscript{22} nii\textsuperscript{45} (pay\textsuperscript{33}) ‘from now (on)’
    (back-from-this-go)
  \item xxiv) koon\textsuperscript{22} naa\textsuperscript{42} nii\textsuperscript{45} ‘before now’
    (preceding-time-front-this)
  \item xxv) koon\textsuperscript{22} naa\textsuperscript{42} nan\textsuperscript{45} ‘before that time’
    (preceding time -front-that)
\end{itemize}

These time markers are best explained by means of metaphors i.e. the back of the referential time, nan\textsuperscript{45} or the front of the referential time, nii\textsuperscript{45}. It should be pointed out