

PHONOLOGICAL REDUCTION OF SOME FINAL PARTICLES IN MODERN THAI

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In spoken Thai, particles are used a great deal, especially in casual speech; it seems that the more casual the utterance, the greater the use of particles. Some particles, such as the following, occur before the verb.

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|-----------|--------|---|
| kô | as in: | chán kô khít yannán mǎnkan
I pt think like that also
'I think so too.' |
| ca | as in: | kháw ca pay mǎn thay phrûnfi
he pt go Thailand tomorrow
'He is going to Thailand tomorrow.' |
| mây | as in: | tháa mây thoo maa chán kô mây pay
if not call come I pt not go
'If you don't call, I won't go.' |
| cun(thǎn) | as in: | tháa tǎn thoo maa chán thǎn ca pay
you must call come I pt will go
'You must call, then I will go.' |

Most particles, however, whether they occur in phrases, clauses or sentences, appear in final position, as in the following examples:

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| ruǎ | as in: | tháa mây pay thamnaan ruǎ
you not go work Q pt
'Aren't you going to work?' |
| sǐ | as in: | pay sǐ
go pt
'Yes, I am.' (Of course I am.) |
| thè? | as in: | yùu bán thè?
stay home pt
'Please stay home.' |

læy	as in:	ya'a pay læy don't go pt 'Don't go.'
lâ	as in:	thammay lâ why pt 'Why?' (Why not?)
nòy	as in:	yuu pen phuan chǎn nòy stay be company I pt 'Please stay and keep me company.'
ròk	as in:	mây dǎy ròk chǎn tǒn thamnaan not can pt I must work 'I can't, I have to work.'
ná	as in:	thǎa yannǎn chǎn pay kǎp thee ná if like that I go with you pt 'In that case can I go with you?'
sǎa	as in:	thǎa ca pay kô pay tǝn tua sǎa if will go pt go get dressed pt 'If you want to go, then go get dressed.'
		etc.

Most of these final particles are used in utterances to reveal the speaker's attitude, thought, emotion, mood, etc. regarding the situation at the time of speaking.

The final particles which will be discussed in detail in this paper share a common pattern of phonological reduction of initials, finals, vowels and tones; they can, but do not always, reduce to a common form a, with or without final glottal stop (?), and with one of the three tones, mid, low, or low falling.

The particles to be discussed here are นะ /náʔ/, ละ /láʔ/, ัะ /lâʔ/, แหละ /lêʔ/, and วน /ròk/. The particle นะ /náʔ/, while it does not undergo consonant, vowel, or tone reduction, is also included in this discussion because of its close semantic relationship with นะ /náʔ/, which does undergo reduction.¹

Mary Haas (1964) gives a general description of these particles in her *Thai-English Student's Dictionary* which I have taken into account and to which I have added some detail. I have also taken into account Richard Noss's mention of these particles in his *Thai Reference Grammar* (Noss 1964).

We will now look at the way each of these particles is used in utterances, along with examples, most of which are taken from spontaneous conversation. Following this, we will examine the phonological reduction mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Note that reduction

to a with one of the tones mentioned above is not possible in all functions of a particle; in some cases only partial reduction occurs. Where complete reduction is possible, the example is marked with the symbol #.

PARTICLE USE

๖๖ /nâʔ/ is used in sentences:

1. Indicating urging, insisting, persuading, or importuning, such as in the situation in which one is invited to go somewhere and answers rather negatively, or shows reluctance to accept the invitation, the inviter might say:

- (1a) pay /nâʔ/
go pt
'(Come on!) Please go.'

or in persuading one's guest to stay as in:

- (1b) yuù kòon thè /nâʔ/
stay before pt pt
'Please stay for a while.' (Don't go yet.)

2. Expressing the speaker's belief,² which, the speaker realises, contrasts slightly with the addressee's belief, as in:

- (2a) chán wàa kháw maa lɛ́w /nâʔ/
I say he come already pt
'I believe he has already come.'
- (2b) thâw-níi ca phoo rǎw / khon phoo /nâʔ/
this much will enough Q / surely enough pt
'Will this be enough? / It should be.'

3. Marking the topic of that which immediately follows. The topic, which precedes the particle, can be a simple noun, a phrase or a clause (short or long), as in:

- (3a) nɛn /nâʔ/ khaykhay kô yàak-dáay
money pt anybody pt want
'Money.' Anybody wants it.'
- (3b) phǔu-yǐn /nâʔ/ tɛn-tua cháa thǐsùt
girl pt get dressed slow most
'Girls! They get dressed the slowest of all.'
- (3c) tɔon thəe pay dii-sii /nâʔ/ chán mây-sabaay
when you go Washington, D.C. pt I not well
'When you went to Washington, D.C., I was sick.'

Sometimes the topic comes after the main clause and functions as a declaration. Some people call this an afterthought topic, as in (3d). Examples (3a), (3b) and (3c) could also be rewritten or spoken in this form as well.

- (3d) *mây mii kh-ray maa káp khun læay rǔu thǐi sǔp khǎw dǎay*
not have person come with you at all Q that test enter able
 /nâ?/
 pt
'Didn't anybody come with you, from among those who passed the entrance exam?'

4. Indicating the speaker's annoyance. This is used with firm tone of voice.

- (4a) *yùt rǔng sǎa-thii thè /nâ?/*
stop cry pt pt pt
'Please stop crying.' (Would you please stop crying?)
- (4b) *ruú læ'ew /nâ?/, mây tǔn maa bǔok sǎmsǎm-sǎksǎk*
know already pt not must come tell repeatedly
'I know. You don't have to tell me over and over again.'

5. Indicating response of limited concession, acceptance or agreement on a result. This type of statement usually has the pattern 'verb₁ /nâ?/ verb₁ + clause' or 'verb₁ /nâ?/ neg. verb₁ + clause'. The clause that follows shows that there is some contradiction within the statement, and the pattern is used to show that the speaker is aware of the contradictory nature of his utterance.

- (5a) *ruú /nâ?/ ruú, tèe tham ?aray mây dǎay*
know pt know but do anything not able
'I know, but there is nothing I can do (about it).'
- (5b) *hǎn /nâ?/ mây hǎn rǔok, tèe ruú wǎa khǎw pen khon ?aw-pay*
see pt not see pt but know that he be person take
'I know I didn't see him taking it but I'm sure he is the one (who took it).'

6. Ending the utterance with some focus or emphasis, mostly in questions as in:

- (6a) *(ca) pay nǎy /nâ?/*
will go where pt
'And just where are you going?'
- (6b) *maa thammay /nâ?/*
come why pt
'And just what are you here for?'