

OBSERVATIONS ON FORM AND MEANING OF *dây*

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1. Introduction

The documentation analyzes the usage of a Thai verb *dây* in various syntactic structures and determines the essential meaning of *dây* which is the core concept that links all *dây* expressions together.

The Thai verb *dây* is known as polyfunctional; i.e., it performs multiple syntactic functions. When *dây* forms a simple predicate taking an object noun phrase, it means ‘get (something).’ *dây* in complex predicates occurs in the different positions in the string of serial verbs. When *dây* is regarded as a complement-taking verb, it means ‘have a chance to’ or ‘get to.’ Taking the same construction and functioning as an auxiliary preverb, *dây* marks perfectivity. When *dây* lies between two coordinating clauses and is preceded by con ‘until’ it is a clause linker marking the action-result structure of the situation. When *dây* follows a verb phrase and precedes a noun or verb phrase, it is used as a phrase linker, which marks the modifying complementation. And when *dây* follows a verb phrase and with nothing else following it, it is used as an auxiliary postverb meaning ‘can’ or ‘is allowed.’ To figure out the essential meaning of *dây*, we need to examine the usage of *dây* in various syntactic structures, and find out the core concept that links all

dây expressions together.

Studies mentioning the function of *dây* are Noss (1964), Scovel (1970), Sindhvananda (1970), Clark (1989), Sookgasem (1990), Matisoff (1991), Bisang (1991), Li (1991), Enfield (2000), etc. So far, the basic notion of *dây* has been known as a word corresponding to an English verb or an adjective like 'get,' 'obtain,' 'acquire,' 'have,' and 'able' which pertain to agency. For example, Sindhvananda (1970) regards the core meaning of *dây* as 'able.' Enfield (2000) considers the core meaning of Lao counterpart of *dây* as 'acquire' or 'come to have.' In this study we discover a new perspective, which describes the meaning of *dây*. It is this meaning that relates various *dây* expressions as shown below.

First, *dây* expressions are all motivated from the concept of 'emergence' or 'coming into existence.' The situation denoted by *dây* does not have to presuppose the existence of an agentive human being. Instead, it signifies the emergence of the situation itself and this is the core meaning of *dây*.

Second, different interpretations of *dây* arise from different types of mood. When *dây* is used in the indicative mood, it describes an emergence of an event in the actual world. When *dây* is used in the subjunctive mood, it describes an emergence of an event in the potential world. The actual and potential worlds overlap each other and the overlapping ambiguous space is regarded as the neutral world in this study. *dây* describes an emergence of an event in the neutral world if it is used in a neutral mood. It is found that those different types of mood are systematically related to the different syntactic patterns of *dây* expressions.

2. Five Main Patterns of *dây* Expressions

This section describes the overall view of various syntactic structures of *dây* expressions. Each pattern of *dây* expressions has its particular syntactic structure, semantic domain and characteristic concept as shown below.

<Syntactic Pattern>	<Semantic Domain>	<Characteristic Concept>
1. [(NP) <i>dây</i> NP]	ontology, space	emergence
2. [(NP) <i>dây</i> VP]	space, time	realization
3. [(NP) VP] <i>con</i> [<i>dây</i> VP]	time	action-result realization
4. [(NP) VP <i>dây</i> (NP/VP)]	time	resultant realization
5. [(NP) VP (<i>kô</i>) <i>dây</i>]	mood	potentiality

The patterns 1 to 4 describe situations in the actual world and the pattern 5 describes situations in the potential world. We will show that realization concept in the spatial and temporal domains 2 to 4 arises from the semantic interaction between *dây* and the following noun or verb phrase. The concept of potentiality in the modal domain arises from the speaker's supposition regarding the property of the subject. Below is the discussion of how the forms and the meanings of the patterns indicated above interact.

Pattern 1: [(experiencer NP) *dây* NP] (emergence)

Taking a person as the subject and an entity (or relationship) as the object, *dây* denotes a situation of someone getting something.

- (1) *maaná? dây* *raaywan* *thîi nuèn*
 Mana get prize first
 'Mana got the first prize.'

- (2) *maaná? dây fɛɛn sǔay*
 Mana get girlfriend beautiful
 ‘Mana got a beautiful girlfriend.’

In this pattern, the subject of *dây* is not an agent (a conscious, willful, and responsible instigator). Unlike ‘get’ in English, *dây* is a non-volitional verb and its subject is an experiencer (an undergoer with no volition). A piece of evidence in support of this opinion is that *dây* does not co-occur with manner verb describing agency such as *coŋcay* ‘set one’s mind on, intentionally’ and *phayaayaam* ‘make an effort, with all one’s might.’ Therefore, the example below is not used in Thai expression.

- (3) **maaná? phayaayaam dây ɣən*
 Mana make an effort get money
 ‘(intended meaning) Mana tried to get money.’

The emergence of the first prize at the locus of Mana leads to the interpretation that eventually the first prize belongs to Mana. However, the resultative state of possession or ownership is not included in the lexical meaning of *dây*. As Enfield (2000: 125) points out, *dây* is an achievement verb in Dowty’s (1979) sense. An achievement verb describes a non-controlled/ non-agentive momentaneous event leading to inception of a state. To express the state of possession or ownership in Thai, the stative verbs *pen* ‘be, exist’ and *mii* ‘have’ are usually employed as in (4) and (5).

- (4) *raaŋwan thîi nùɲ pen khǝɯ maaná?*
 prize first be thing Mana
 ‘The first prize belongs to Mana.’
- (5) *maaná? mii fɛɛn sǔay*
 Mana have girlfriend beautiful