wâa and complement-taking predicates in Thai

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The grammaticalized functions of the verb 'to say' as a marker to introduce or to link clauses are a common phenomenon in many Asian and African languages (Lord, 1976; Jaisser, 1985; Saxena, 1988). Semantic fluctuation is obvious in this type of development when a lexicon becomes generalized and acquires different syntactic functions. The verb wâa 'to say' in Thai is no exception. In reported speech wâa occurs as a quotative marker (QT). In complex constructions, wâa can occur as a complementizer (COMP) linking an argument to its predicate, or as a part of connectives linking various co-ordinate clauses. This paper focuses on the gradation of semantic changes of wâa and its relationship with the main verbs that precede it. The findings include a wide range of both loss and gain in meaning. There are cases of syntactic and semantic depletion of the original verb 'to say' when wâa together with a certain verb form a verbal compound with new meaning. There are also cases of semantic nuances in which a concept of evidentiality is expressed when a complementizer wâa occurs with certain predicates.

As a verb, wâa has two closely related meanings of 'to say'.[1] Examples are the following:

1. hŭanâa ŋaan khău wâa yaŋŋai ná
   boss   s/he say   how   PAR

   What did the boss say?

2. thâa mâi dii lέεu yàa maa wâa chán na
   if   NEG good ASP NEG DR blame I PAR

   If it doesn't turn out well, don't blame me.

wâa in Example 1 simply means 'to say'. In Example 2, wâa also carries a complex meaning equivalent to 'to verbally express dissatisfaction and accusation through descriptive reasoning'.[2] The verbal meaning of wâa has extended usage when wâa also functions as a QT marker for both direct and indirect quotes as in Examples 3 and 4, respectively, below:

3. khău bɔ̀ɔk phɔ̂ɔ wâa "phɔ̂ɔ, khɔ̆ɔ ŋan sìp
   s/he speak father QT father request money ten
   bàat dâi mái"
   baht Q

   S/He said to her/his father, "Father, may I have ten dollars?"

4. khău bɔ̀ɔk wâa khău pai kunmiŋ sɔ̆ɔŋ khráŋ lέεu
   s/he speak QT s/he go Kunming two times ASP

   S/He said that s/he has already gone to Kunming twice.

Previous analyses such as Tasanee's (cited in Namthip 1989) consider wâa occurring with communication or mental state verbs to be a quotative compound verb (i.e., essentially 'say-say' or, for example, 'think-say').

Namthip (1989) further proposes that in these occurrences <u>wâa</u> is still a verb and can take its own subject. The following discussion and examples will demonstrate that this is not so. The so-called mental state verbs consist of not just phatic and 'think' type verbs, but a large number of complement-taking predicates (CTP).[3] There is a wide variety of both syntactic and semantic changes when <u>wâa</u> is preceded by these predicates.

There are extreme cases in which <u>wâa</u> occurs in a verbal compound which takes on a new meaning remotely deriving from the meaning of the main verb. Examples are:

5. hăa 'to find'   hăa wâa 'to accuse'
6. thŭw 'to carry'   thŭw wâa 'to consider'
7. tɔ̀ɔ 'to continue'[4]   tɔ̀ɔ wâa 'to complain'
8. ráp 'to receive'   ráp wâa 'to admit'
9. náp 'to count'   náp wâa 'to be taken as'

<u>wâa</u> in the above examples is no longer an independent verb, but becomes semantically transparent with the main verbs. The loss of the original verbal meaning 'to say' is clear in cases of double occurrences of <u>wâa</u> in which the second occurrence is a grammatical marker. For example:

10. lûukcan cwŋ rɔ́ɔŋ thăam kháu pai wâa mɛ̂ɛ thɔɔŋdii
    lûukcan PT call out ask s/he DR   Thɔɔŋdii

mɛ̂ɛ   kɛɛ pen yàaŋrai bâaŋ khá lûukcan nán thăam
mother PRO be how   PAR lûukcan DM ask

khàau mɛ̂ɛ phŭa   phûu thîi phaai rwa pay <u>sămkan wâa</u>
news mother-in-law one who row boat DR take it to be

<u>wâa</u> kháu thăam thŭŋ mɛ̂ɛ   tua cuŋ rɔ́ɔŋ   wâa kɛɛ
COMP s/he ask about mother self PT call out COMP PRO

sǐa tɛ̀ɛ mûa khɯɯn níi lɛ́ɛu khâ
die since   last night ASP PAR

    Luukcan, with a loud voice, asked " Mɛ̂ɛ Thɔŋdii ,
how is your mother?" Luukcan was asking about
(her own) mother-in-law. The woman, who was
rowing a boat passing by (i.e. Mɛ̂ɛ Thɔɔŋdii), took
it that Luukcan was asking about her own mother.
She answered "Mother passed away last night."
<p align="right"><u>Roikaeo Naeomai Khong Thai</u>, p.79</p>

11. --- fàai thɔɔŋdii cuŋ bɔ̀ɔk wâa chán bɔ̀ɔk wâa
    side Thongdii then say COMP I   say COMP

mɛ̂ɛ chán taai tàaŋhàak   thammai klàp   maa
   Chan   die on the contrary why   in return DR

<u>wâa wâa</u> chán bɔ̀ɔk wâa mɛ̂ɛ phɔ̌ɔ sùtcai taai
blame COMP I say COMP mother Sutchai died

    Thongdi then said that I told you that it was my
mother who died. Why are you blaming me that I
said Sutchai's mother died?
<p align="right"><u>Roikaeo Naeomai Khong Thai</u>, p.80</p>

12. thîi kháu <u>wâa wâa</u> khun nûŋ krapooŋ sân nán mâi
    that s/he say COMP you wear skirt short DEM NEG
    ciŋ
    true

    That they said your skirt is too short is not true.

In Example 10, <u>sǎmkan</u> 'to be important' and the first
occurrence of <u>wâa</u> form a verbal compound which takes
on a new meaning of 'take it to be'. The second
occurrence of <u>wâa</u> as a COMP links the complement

clause 'someone was asking about her own mother' to the predicate sămkan wâa. It is not possible that the second occurrence of wâa is a verb. The lexicon meaning of sămkan wâa and the context that follows do not allow such interpretation. Examples 11 and 12 also show the unlikely redundancy if both occurrences of wâa are verbs. Phonological evidence shows that wâa is unstressed when it is preceded by a main verb. This is in contrast to, for example, a reduplicated verb such as:

13. khĭan   khĭan   hâi   sèt   ca   dâi ʔɔ̀ɔk   pai
    write   write in order to   finish PT AUX out   DR

    lên   dâi
    play able to

    Finish writing it; then you can go out and play.

In Example 13, the stress is on the second khĭan. Both occurrences of khĭan are verbs.

In many cases, the COMP wâa is strictly a marker and carries no meaning. Notice the following examples:

14. phǒm chûa   lúakaan   wâa   kháu pen khon   dii
    I   believe exceedingly COMP s/he be person   good

    I really believe that s/he is a good person.

15. chán nɛ̂ɛcai wâa   khun thamŋaan níi dâi
    I   certain COMP you work   DEM able to

    I am sure you can do this work.

16. chán rúu maa   naan   lɛ́ɛu wâa   kháu mâi chɔ̂ɔp
    I   know ASP long time ASP COMP s/he NEG like

duu   nǎŋ
watch   movie

I knew all along that s/he doesn't like to watch
movies.

17. chán kà   wâa chán ca pai hɔ̆ɔŋkoŋ pii nâa
    I   estimate COMP I PT go Hong Kong next year

    I plan to go to Hong Kong next year.

18. khruu   khían bon   kradaan   wâa   yaŋŋai   ná
    teacher write on blackboard COMP   what   PAR

    What did the teacher write on the board?

The COMP wâa in Examples 14-18 is obligatory in each
case. Notice that all the above CTP are mental action
verbs. The adverbial clauses in Examples 14 and 16 or
the locative phrase in Example 18 demonstrate that CTP
and wâa do not form a verbal compound unit. The above
examples also show different types of complements
which can occur with the complementizer wâa.
Complements can also be non-sentential. wâa in this
occurrence makes semantic distinctions. Examples from
historical writings and modern usages are:

19. nai narók nán mii   mɛ̂ɛnám yài ʔan chɯ̂ɯ wâa
    in hell   DEM exist river   big one name COMP
    wêetaranii
    Wettaranii

    There is a big river in Hell called Wettaranii.
                    "Traiphum Phra Ruang" (15 century)
                    Wannakam samai Sukhothai

20.   kham níi ?àan wâa monlaphaawá
       word DEM read COMP monlaphaawá

This word is read "monlaphaawá."

The function of wâa to introduce a non-sentential complement occurs only with certain CTP such as ?àan 'to read' in Example 20 (also khǐan 'to write as in Example 18). The sequence of CTP chûw followed by wâa in Example 19 no longer occurs in modern usage. The COMP wâa such as in Example 20 makes the distinction between abstract and concrete objects for certain transitive CTP. A comparison to Example 20 is ?àan nǎnsǔwphim (read/newspaper) 'someone is reading a newspaper'. Also notice the following examples:

21.   rîak khwaai
       call buffalo

Someone called a buffalo.

22.   rîak wâa khwaai
       call COMP buffalo

(This kind of animal) is called a buffalo.

23.   rîak khwaai wâa tom
       call buffalo COMP Tom

(They) called the buffalo Tom.

wâa in Example 22 expresses an abstract concept that refers to a composition of an entity such as a buffalo. Similarly in Example 23, wâa expresses the designation of an abstract concept, which is a name in this case, for an entity, that of a buffalo. The occurrence of the COMP wâa with a non-sentential complement indicates

distinction in meaning. These CTP require the occurrence of <u>wâa</u> for their choice of objects.

Another semantic nuance of the COMP <u>wâa</u> is the concept of evidentiality. For example:

24. a. phŏm chɔ̂ɔp kháu tâŋtὲɛ pii thîi lέɛu
       I   like s/he since   year last

    I liked her/him since last year.

 b. phŏm khít chɔ̂ɔp kháu tâŋtὲɛ pii thîi lέɛu
    I   think like s/he since year last

    I got interested in (i.e. thought of liking) her/him since last year.

 c. phŏm khít wǎa chɔ̂ɔp kháu tâŋtὲɛ pii thîi lέɛu
    I   think COMP like s/he since year last

    I think I liked her/him since last year.

25. a. wan níi rúusὺk mâi khɔ̌i sabaai
       today   feel   NEG AUX well

    I don't feel good today.

 b. wan níi rúusὺk wâa mâi khɔ̌i sabaai
    today   feel COMP NEG AUX well

    I think I don't feel good today.

26. a. hĕn sǐi   dii ləi sύɯ maa fàak
       see color good so buy DR give

    The color is good so (I) bought it for you.

 b. hĕn wâa sǐi   dii ləi sύɯ maa fàak
    see COMP color good so buy DR give

I think the color is good so (I) bought it for you.

Without wâa in Examples 24a and b, 25a, and 26a, the sentences are descriptive statements. The occurrences of wâa in Examples 24c, 25b, and 26b demonstrate the uncertainty in the mind of the speaker. The optional occurrence of wâa creates semantic nuances in the predicates. wâa allows a speaker to express his/her attitude toward the truth value of an event.

Further evidence of evidentiality occurs in cases where a nominal COMP thîi can be an alternative for wâa. It is likely that historically a nominal COMP thîi developed from a nominal thîi 'place' (i.e., land/space). Its syntactic function is to specify both physical and non-physical entities. For example:

27.　khǐan　thîi　bâan
　　　write　PREP　house

(I) write at home.

28.　khon　thîi　sài　sûa　sǐi　dɛɛŋ
　　　person COMP　wear shirt　color　red

the person who is wearing a red shirt

In certain predicates, thîi is an alternative for wâa. Examples are:

29.a.　chán　sǒŋsǎi　thîi　kháu dâi　lûak　pai
　　　 I　suspect　COMP　s/he　AUX　select　DR

I am suspicious (at) the fact that he was selected to go.

b.　chán　sǒŋsǎi　wâa　kháu dâi　lûak　pai
　　　I　suspect　COMP　s/he　AUX　select　DR

(I am not sure but) I suspected that he was selected to go.

Example 29a is a descriptive statement. But when <u>wâa</u> occurs in Example 29b, the sentence express the attitude of a speaker on the uncertainty of an event. More evidence supporting the distinction between <u>thîi</u> and <u>wâa</u> is:

30.a.tòkloŋ cai thîi/wâa ca pai duu ŋaan   tàaŋ prathêet
    decide   COMP   PT go   work-tour abroad

    (I) decided to go on a work-tour abroad.

 *b.tòkloŋ cai thîi ca pai duu ŋaan tàaŋ prathêet sá nòi
    decide   COMP PT go work-tour abroad   a little

    (I) decided to go on a work-tour abroad.

 c. tòkloŋ cai wâa ca pai duu ŋaan tàaŋ prathêet sá nòi
    decide   COMP PT go work-tour abroad   a little

    (I) decided to go on a work-tour abroad.

The phrase <u>sá nòi</u> 'a little bit', which indicates a less serious attitude, can be added on to 30c with <u>wâa</u>. However, this is not so in 30b, where <u>thîi</u> indicates descriptive statement. The above examples demonstrate that in certain cases the COMP <u>wâa</u> can also be used to convey epistemically how a person thinks/feels about an event. In this case the attitude of the speaker regarding the uncertainty of an event is expressed.

The evidentiality concept does not, however, consistently occur. Unclear cases of semantic distinction are the alternative and co-occurrence of <u>thîi</u>, <u>wâa</u>, and <u>thîi wâa</u>, for example:

31. dèk man tɯ̀ɯntên <u>thîi/wâa/thîi wâa</u> man ca dâi
    child PRO excited   COMP   PRO PT receive

    túkkataa   pen khɔ̌ɔŋkhwǎn
    stuffed toy be gift

    The child is excited that s/he will get a stuffed toy
    as a gift.

32. chôok dii thîi/wâa/thîi wâa rót mâi   sǐa
    lucky   COMP   car NEG break down

    It was lucky that the car didn't break down.

33. kháu pralàat cai thîi/wâa/thîi wâa saphaa loŋ máti
    s/he surprise   COMP   congress agree

    than thii
    right away

    S/He was surprised that the congress passed the
    resolution right away.

34. dii cai thîi/wâa/thîi wâa kháu mâi kròot
    glad   COMP   s/he NEG angry

    (I) am glad that s/he was not angry.

35. chán plὲɛk cai thîi/wâa/thîi wâa kháu yaŋ yùu
    I   surprise   COMP   s/he still exist

    thîi nîi
    here

        I am surprised that s/he is still here.

36. kháu sǐa cai thîi/wâa/thîi wâa phɔ̀ɔ mâi maa yîam
    s/he sad   COMP   father NEG come visit

    kháu
    s/he

S/He was sorry that her/his father didn't visit her/him.

Only a handful of CTP such as in the above examples can take either <u>thîi</u> or <u>wâa</u> or both. Perhaps the overlapping occurrence of a nominal and verbal COMP indicates the development of a strictly grammatical marker status of <u>wâa</u>. Further evidence can be seen when <u>wâa</u> occurs as a COMP in a nominal. There are occurrences of <u>wâa</u> which link a clause, not to a predicate, but to a noun. Notice the following examples:

37. --- tɛ̀ɛ mâi tɔ̂ɔŋ chái kham wâa naai taam yàaŋ
        but NEG must use word COMP master follow

    thai
    Thai

    ---- but no need to use the word 'master' as in Thai.
                        "Phra baromrachoowâat Rama V"
                                        <u>wanwicak l.</u>

38.   kham wâa thêetsakìt pen kham mài
       word COMP thetsakit be word new

    The word 'thetsakit' is a new word.

39. khun mii khwaam hěn wâa rátthabaan khuan ca
    you have idea COMP government should PT

    tham yàaŋrai
    do what

In your opinion, what do you think the government should do?

40. mii   panhǎa   wâa khrûaŋbin loŋ thîi nîi mâi dâi
    exist problem   COMP   plane   land here NEG can

    ranway mâi dii
    runway NEG good

The problem is that the plane cannot land here (since) the runway is not good.

Predicates such as chɛ́i 'to use' in Example 37, and mii 'there exists' in Examples 39 and 40 cannot occur with the COMP wâa (i.e., *mii wâa, *chɛ́i wâa), unless the object nouns also occur. wâa links a modifier to its Head noun such as kham 'word' in Examples 37 and 38, khwaamhěn 'opinion' in Example 39, and panhǎa 'problem' in Example 40. The nominal COMP thîi cannot occur in these examples since these nominals make reference to abstract concepts. The complementary distribution of occurrences of thîi and wâa in these nominals indicates further development of wâa as a grammatical marker.

It has been pointed out that in the process of grammaticalization there is a natural shift toward the abstract and topological and away from rich lexical meaning (Sweetser 1988). In other words, the general meaning is used more frequently than the specific meaning (Bybee, 1985). This is also true for wâa. The verbal usage occurs less compared to QT, COMP, and the relatively recently increasing usage in connectives.

The occurrence of wâa in connectives is to conjoin various co-ordinate clauses. For example:

41. kháu maa nêɛ nɔ̂ɔk sía càak (wâa) kháu ca hǎa
    s/he come surely   except   COMP   s/he PT find

    bâan mâi caə
    house NEG RVC

    S/He definitely will be here unless s/he cannot find
    (our) house.

42. yàak ca súw tɛ̀ɛ (wâa) mâi mii ŋən
    want PT buy but COMP NEG have money

    (I) wanted to buy it, but I don't have money.

As a part of a connective, _wâa_ is optional. The likely
reason is that the juxtaposing of clauses is a prominent
feature in Thai. Topic-comment and serial-verb
constructions are the obvious examples. Therefore a
linker can and often is optional even in a causal
construction, for example:

43. pai nêɛ ø/phrɔ́/phrɔ́ wâa dâi ŋən dii
    go definitely   because   receive money good

    (I) definitely will go because the pay is good.

Summary
Although there seem to be four major types of
occurrences as shown above, _wâa_ essentially has two
syntactic functions. One is a verb. The other is a
grammatical marker to introduce a second clause,
whether it be a quotation, a complement, or a co-
ordinate clause. There is an underlying shared feature
in all these occurrences and at the same time there are
semantic nuances indicating different facets of meaning
in the course of the changes.

Syntactically, wâa changes from a verb to a linker, and semantically it extends its underlying meaning 'to state' to the concept of 'to refer to' or 'to make reference to'. Similar to other grammaticalizations, grammatical markers are related to their lexicon sources and do have meaning in certain cases.

The parallel development of gaining and losing occurs both syntactically and semantically. The semantic development of wâa involves the depletion of the original verbal meaning 'to say' but also the gaining of additional meaning. The gained meaning goes in different directions depending on CTP. These changes show semantic fluctuations in the process of a verb developing into a marker and that the changes depend heavily on the CTP that wâa occurs with.

Bybee (1988) points out that grammaticalization is not motivated by communicative necessity. She concludes "--- that human language users have a natural propensity for making metaphorical extensions that lead to the increased use of certain items." (Bybee 1988, p.75) For wâa, the unevenness in the course of semantic changes such as the concept of evidentiality demonstrates that it is not a need to express this concept that led to the development of the COMP wâa, but simply an extended usage of it. The variety of changes are not homogeneous and there is no consistent feature to be assigned to one particular syntactic category.

Unlike the historical stages of the verb 'to say' described in South Asian languages (Saxena, 1988), all occurrences of wâa, with the exception of the connective usage, can be found in historical writings such as in the 15th century writings in "Traiphum Phra Ruang" (Wannakam samai Sukhothai) or in short modern

novels at the end of the 19th century. There is no diachronic evidence to suggest stages in the evolution of these functions.

Abbreviations

ASP = aspect marker; AUX = auxiliary; COMP = complementizer; = CTP complement-taking predicate; DEM = demonstrative; DR = directional; EMP = emphatic marker; NEG = negative; PAR = particle; PREP = preposition; PT = potential; Q = question; QT = quotative marker

Notes

I would like to thank Shobhana L. Chelliah who pointed out the evidential aspect of grammaticalized markers, and also Suphot Chaengrew for insight into some of the examples.

1. There are many verbs 'to say/to speak/to tell' in Thai, for example, phûut, bòɔk, klàau, and lâu. None of these lexical items has developed other syntactic functions.

2. The second meaning overlaps with dàa 'to verbally attack, or to reprimand/to criticize'. However, dàa indicates the use of abusive language, while wâa does not.

3. It is difficult to define what exactly the terms "mental-state" (Tasanee, 1984) or "mental-action" (Lord, 1976) verbs refer to. CTP in Thai generally are predicates that have something related to mental accomplishment. However, there are a few exceptions. For example, tôɔŋkaan 'to want' cannot occur with wâa, but klua 'to be afraid' can. Adjectival type predicates

are usually not followed by wâa. nǜai 'to be physically tired', bǜa 'to be mentally tired', mǜai 'to have body aches' do not occur with wâa and yet ʔaai 'to be shy' is possible. For example:

36. ʔaai wâa lûuk sɔ̀ɔp tòk lai mâi yàak phaa
    shy COMP child exam fail then NEG want take

pai yîam yâat
DR visit relatives

S/He was embarassed that the kid failed an exam, so s/he didn't want to bring the kid to visit relatives.

4. The meaning of tɔ̀ɔ as in the saying:

    rák yaau hâi bàn rák sân hâi tɔ̀ɔ
    love long let cut love short let link

To continue (i.e., prolong comments) is to have a short-term relationship, but to stop (i.e., cut short) is to have a long term relationship.

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