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) *dây* NP]	ontology, space	emergence
2. [(NP) *dây* VP]	space, time	realization
3. [(NP) VP] *con* [*dây* VP]	time	action-result realization
4. [(NP) VP *dây* (NP/VP)]	time	resultant realization
5. [(NP) VP (*kɔ̂*) *dây*]	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) *maanáʔ dây raaŋwan thîi nùŋ*
　　 Mana　 get 　prize 　first
　　 'Mana got the first prize.'

(2)   *maaná? dây   fɛɛn   sŭay*
           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   ŋən*
           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 nùŋ   pen   khɔ̌ɔŋ   maaná?*
           prize   first   be   thing   Mana
           'The first prize belongs to Mana.'

(5)   *maaná? mii   fɛɛn   sŭay*
           Mana   have   girlfriend   beautiful

'Mana has a beautiful girlfriend.'

Based on this view, (1) and (2) can be recognized to express a passive-like situation that something emerged at the locus of Mana or Mana received something, rather than that Mana got something. In other words, the conceptual meaning of *dây* is BECOME but not CAUSE.

Pattern 2: [(NP) *dây* complement VP] (realization)

In (6), *dây* indicates the realization of the situation in question. That is, the event of Mana's going to Bangkok is realized.

(6)   *maaná? dây*   *pay*   *kruŋthêep*

Mana   get/PERF   go   Bangkok

A. 'Mana got a chance to go to Bangkok.'

B. 'Mana went to Bangkok.'

According to Enfield (2000: 179), a preverb *dây* in Lao indicates that there is an implicit background cause for the realization of the event represented by the following verb phrase. That is, the event stated here results from some prior event which is pragmatically retrieved from the given discourse context. This seems to be also the case with the preverb *dây* in Thai. (6), therefore, implies that 'the going to Bangkok' is a result of some prior event, for example, he won the first prize in some competition and was invited to the prize-giving ceremony to be held in Bangkok.

If Mana already went to Bangkok at the time of speaking, then *dây* in (6) functions as an auxiliary preverb marking perfectivity. A purely perfective interpretation is given in (6B). However, realization of an action does not exclusively mean that the action was carried out. Hence, the interpretation (6A)

which does not specify the realization time of Mana's going to Bangkok is quite normal. One situation for which the interpretation (6A) properly fits is that Mana was informed of the news that he got a chance to go to Bangkok by his friend who received the news and said the sentence (6) to him. In addition, seeing Mana's unwilling reaction, his friend may utter the sentence (7) with a blaming flavor.

(7)   *dây*   *pay*   *léɛw*   *thammay*   *mây pay*
       get   go   PERF   why   NEG go
       'You got a chance to go, why won't you go?'

Thus, it is obvious that the action represented by the verb phrase after the preverb *dây*, e.g., going to Bangkok in (6) might not happen. Nevertheless, the action is undoubtedly realized in the sense that the speaker conceives the idea of action physically taking place at a certain time.

dây expressions of this type usually have a connotation of desirable result. In (6), Mana's getting a chance to go to Bangkok is a result of his winning the first prize, and it is desirable for him or for his friend. The failure to bring out a desirable result, in contrast, is expressed by *ʔòt* 'fail, miss' as in (8), which is semantically similar to the negative form (9).

(8)   *maanáʔ*   *ʔòt*   *pay*   *kruŋthêep*
       Mana   miss   go   Bangkok
       'Mana missed going to Bangkok.'
       (Unfortunately, Mana failed to go to Bangkok.)

(9)   *maanáʔ*   *mây*   *dây*   *pay*   *kruŋthêep*
       Mana   NEG   get/PERF   go   Bangkok
       'Mana did not go to Bangkok.'

In passing, the perception verbs like *hěn* 'see,' *rúu* 'learn,' *rúucàk* 'know' are stative verbs describing the present cognitive

competence. When the inchoative sense of these verbs (i.e. come to perceive or conceive) is focused, *dây* should be put in front of these verbs as in (10) and (11). In these examples, *dây* functions as a perfect marker telling that the perception has occurred.

(10)　*tɔɔn*　*pây*　*tàaŋ*　*prathêet dây*　*rúu*
　　　when　go　foreign countries get/PERF　know

　　　dây　　　*hĕn*　*ʔaray*　*mâak maay*
　　　get/PERF　see　what　a lot

　　　'When I went abroad, I learned and saw a lot (I gained new knowledge)'

(11)　*yindii*　*thîi*　*dây*　　*rúu càk*　*khun*　*maaná?*
　　　glad　REL　get/PERF　know　Mr.　Mana

　　　'I am pleased to know Mr. Mana.'

Pattern 3: [(agent NP) VP] *con* [*dây* VP] (action-result realization)

　　　This pattern includes two clauses linked by the conjunction *con* 'until.' *dây* in this pattern expresses the realization of a successful event or a desirable situation after a purposive activity.

(12)　*phŏm*　*phayaayaam*　*bïat*　*pay*　　*con*
　　　PRON　try　　　squeeze　go　　until

　　　dây　　　*yuuun*　*yùu nâa sùt*
　　　get/PERF　stand　stay foremost

　　　'I tried to squeeze my way until I got to stand in the front.'

　　　In (12), the first clause represents the agent's activity (pushing ahead through the crowd) and the second clause represents the resulting situation (standing in the front). The two clauses are connected by the conjunction *con* 'until' which

indicates some transition in time from the first activity situation to the second resultative situation. The general meaning of this pattern is that the agent intentionally keeps doing the action until reaching the goal. The conditions concerning the usage of *con* 'until' is discussed in Kessakul & Methapisit (2000).

Pattern 4: [(NP) VP *dây* (complement NP/VP)] (resultant realization)

This pattern involves the concept of resultant realization. It subsumes the following three subpatterns.

Pattern 4.1: [(agent NP) VP *dây* (physical quantity NP)] (accomplishment)

A predicate of this pattern is composed of an activity verb phrase, *dây*, and a complement noun phrase for quantity. This pattern describes an accomplishment event consisting of activity and achievement subevents. *dây* is used to signify the achievement or culmination of the activity.

(13) *maanáʔ càp   plaa   dây   sɔ̌ɔŋ   tua*
       Mana   catch   fish   get/PERFtwo   CLAS
       'Mana caught two fishes.'
       (Mana went fishing and caught two fishes as a result.)

In (13), the first verb phrase denoting Mana's fishing represents the action, and *dây* with complement denoting quantity represents the result which is the culmination of the activity of fishing. The accomplishing event in (13), therefore, can split into two clauses as in (14).

(14) *maanáʔ càp   plaa   léʔ dây plaa sɔ̌ɔŋ tua*
       Mana   catch   fish   and get fish   two CLAS
       'Mana went fishing and got two fishes.'

In (14), the two clauses are linked by the conjunction *lɛ́ʔ* 'and' and the object of the first verb (*plaa* 'fish') is recited as an object of *dây*. *dây* in (14) is a full-fledged achievement verb meaning that two fishes 'came into existence' at the locus of Mana (and naturally they became Mana's belongings), which is the same as the pattern 1. Generally, the accomplishment meaning is given on the condition that a result of an activity is realized. Specifically, the accomplishment reading of (13) owes to the fact that 'two fishes being caught' has emerged. With *dây* marking realization, this pattern yields the sense of accomplishment.

In addition, the complement in this pattern is sometimes suppressed but marked by the perfect marker *lɛ́ɛw* which overtly marks the perfect sense, i.e., 'getting a fish' occurs prior to the reference time, and is relevant to the situation at the reference time as in (15).

(15) *maanáʔ càp   plaa   dây   lɛ́ɛw*
      Mana catch fish   get/PERF PERF
      'Mana got a fish.'

Pattern 4.2: [(NP) VP *dây* (temporal quantity NP)] (effect)

A predicate of this pattern is composed of a verb phrase, *dây*, and a complement noun phrase for temporal quantity. The subject is not necessarily an agent, so the first verb phrase is either volitional or non-volitional. The stative verb phrase yen 'cool' is used in (16) and *dây* in this pattern no longer expresses a physical event of getting a concrete object. Rather, it functions as an aspect marker strengthening the sense of perfectivity.

(16) *ʔɛɛ   man   kɔ̂   yen   khûn*
      air-conditioner PRON   also   cool   ascend

maa	*dây*	*sɔ̌ɔŋ*	*sǎam*	*wan*	*lɛ́ɛw*		
come	PERF	two	three	day	then		
man	*kɔ̂*	*klàp*	*mây yen*	*khûn*	*maa*	*ʔìik*
PRON	also	return	NEG	cool	ascend	come	again

'The air-conditioner returned to its normal state by making cool air for a few days; then it stopped making cool air again.'

(16) includes three stages. The first stage is the air-conditioner's recovering its efficiency in making a cool air. The second stage is that the resultant state (the cool) lasted for two or three days. The third stage is the air-conditioner's breaking down again. It may be said that *dây* with the complement phrase in (16) metaphorically represents the existence of the air-conditioner's effect. The period of time (two or three days) in the complement ascertains the truth of the event of becoming cool was realized and finished.

Pattern 4.3: [(NP) VP *dây* (subjective quality VP)] (attainment)

A predicate of this pattern is composed of a verb phrase, *dây*, and a complement phrase for quality of situation. *dây* in this pattern gives the sense of attainment or completion via adding the speaker's evaluation towards the activity from the aspects of its manner or result.

(17)

kháw	*tham*	*ŋaan*	*dây*	*dii*
PRON	do	job	PERF	good

A. 'S/he did a good job.'

B. 'S/he can do a good job.'

(18)

kháw	*wâat rûup*	*dɔ̀ɔk máy*	*dây*	*mǔan*	*ciŋ*	*mâak*
PRON	draw picture	flower	PERF	resemble	real	very

A. 'S/he drew a picture of flowers very much like the real one.'

B. 'S/he can draw a picture of flowers very much like the real one.'

In (17) and (18), the first verb phrase expresses the agent subject's activity. The complement phrases *dii* 'good' in (17) and *mŭan ciŋ mâak* 'resemble very much' in (18) describe the speaker's evaluation towards the attainment of the activity. The speaker's evaluation is based on how s/he witnessed the actual situation as interpreted in A. This motivates the speaker to think that it might as well recur at anytime in the future, which further leads to completely subjective modal interpretations as interpreted in B. (See our discussion on the pattern 5 below.)

A situation represented by this pattern can be either actual or potential as illustrated in (17) and (18). The expression (19), however, is scarcely interpreted as potential.

(19)   *phŏm   cam   nâa   khon ráay dây thanàt*
         PRON   remember face   criminal PERF clear
         'I remember the criminal's face clearly.'

In (18), the first verb phrase denotes the subject's cognitive process (remembering a criminal's face). The complement phrase *thanàt* 'clear' refers to the quality of attainment of his remembering a criminal's face that has already occurred in the past, rather than may occur at anytime in the future. Although it might be possible that the subject has a good memory to remember a criminal's face clearly anytime, but this interpretation seems to be a minor one.

Pattern 5: [(NP) VP (*kɔ̂*) *dây*] (potentiality)
     dây in this pattern indicates the speaker's attitude towards

the proposition. It marks modality with respect to potentiality. A situation described in the potential mode is not related to the space and time in the real world. Therefore, the concept of emergence in *dây* in this pattern cannot mark realization of a situation at a specific time.

To explain why *dây*, which means 'emergence,' signifies potentiality, recall *dây* in the pattern 4.3. It expresses attainment or emergence of completion associated with the speaker's evaluation. The evaluation is based on the attainment witnessed by the speaker. As the speaker witnesses an attainment and gives some evaluations, the speaker is well motivated to assume that such an attainment would recur at anytime in the future. The meaning of potentiality is generated out of this assumption or belief on the part of the speaker.

The interpretations of *dây* here include ability, capability/ capacity, possibility, probability and permissibility. These various interpretations correlate with different semantic role of the subject in *dây*.

Pattern 5.1: [(agent NP) VP *dây*] (ability)

dây in the example below gives the sense of ability. Here, the emergence of playing piano is attributed to the agent's property.

(20)   *maanáʔ lên   pianoo dây*
        Mana   play   piano   able
        'Mana can play piano.'

However, a human ability, such as a skillful ability and a physical ability, is normally expressed by pen 'be, exist, able' and wǎy 'move, able,' respectively.

(21) *maaná? lên   pianoo pen*
Mana   play   piano   able
'Mana can play piano (because he practiced piano for a long time).'

(22) *maaná? lên   pianoo wǎy*
Mana   play   piano   able
'Mana can play piano (even though he is tired now).'

Pattern 5.2: [(non-agent participant NP) VP *dâ̂y*] (capability/capacity)

dâ̂y is also used to indicate the sense of capability in quality or capacity of a non-agent participant.

(23) *túkkataa tua   nîi   hǔarɔ́? dây rɔ́ɔŋhây dây*
doll   CLAS   this laugh capable cry   capable
'This doll is capable of laughing and crying.'

(24) *rót   khan nîi   khûn phuukhǎw   dây*
car   CLAS this ascend mountain   capable
'This car is capable of going up a mountain.'

(25) *krapǎw bay nîi sày khrûaŋ khɔɔmphiwthə̂ə   dây*
bag CLAS this put in machine computer   capable
'This bag is capable of containing a computer.'

In (23), the doll is equipped with apparatus for laughing and crying so that it is able to laugh and cry. In (24), the car is described to have a capability to go up a mountain. The emergence of going up a mountain at anytime is guaranteed due to the power of the car. In (25), the bag is described to have a property of being able to contain a computer. The emergence of containing a computer in the bag is guaranteed due to the durability and the size of the bag. From the examples above, we can see that the potentiality of the emergence of such an event

(the doll's laughing and crying, the car's going up a mountain, and the bag's containing a computer) comes from the subject's inherent property.

Pattern 5.3: [(setting NP) VP *dây*] (possibility)

Sometimes *dây* is used to modify the property of the setting in which an event unfolds, such as time and place, and it generates the sense of possibility. In (26), the potentiality of the emergence of smoking is guaranteed due to the suitable or available condition. In (27), the potentiality of going to see someone is guaranteed due to the available time.

(26)   *thîi*   *nîi*   *sùup*   *bùrïi*   *dây*
         place   this   smoke   tobacco   possible
         'Smoking is allowed here.'

(27)   *wan nîi tït*   *thúráʔ pay*   *mây*   *dây*
         today   stick   business go   NEG   possible
         phrûŋ nîi   *lakɔ̂*   *pay*   *dây*
         tomorrow   then   go   possible
         'I am engaged for today so I can't go. But I can go tomorrow.'

Pattern 5.4: [(NP) *ʔàat càʔ* VP (*kɔ̂*) *dây*] (probability)

dây can be used to express probability. This type of information usually appears in the form [(NP) *ʔàat càʔ* VP *kɔ̂ dây*]. *ʔàat càʔ* is a modal adverb meaning 'probably' and *kɔ̂* 'also' preceding *dây* implies that there is a room for choosing other choices. The mentioned situation, therefore, may not actually happen. Below are the examples of the *dây* used to express the prediction of low certainty.

(28) *phrûŋ nîi* *fŏn* *ʔàat cà?* *tòk* *kɔ̂* *dây*
    tomorrow rain maybe   fall also   possible
    '(I suppose that) tomorrow it will rain.'

(29) *raw*   *maa*   *sǎay*   *pay*   *nɔ̀ɔy*   *kháw*
    we   come   late   go   a little PRON
    ʔàat cà? *klàp* *pay*   *lɛ́ɛw* *kɔ̂*   *dây*
    maybe   return go   PERF also   possible
    '(I suppose that) as we came too late, s/he might have gone back.'

Though it shows the prediction of low certainty, this type of utterance basically arises from the speaker's belief towards the emergence of the situation due to her/his knowledge or the circumstantial evidence in the real world. It is these evidences that ascertain the speaker to draw such an inference and at the same time gives a room for both the speaker and the listener to think about it.

Pattern 5.5: [(allowed agent NP) VP (*kɔ̂*) *dây*] (permissibility)

When *dây* is used in the utterance in (30), which is addressed to a specific listener, it conveys the meaning of permissibility.

(30) *khun*   *cà?*   *maa*   *mûaràykɔ̂*   *dây*
    you   IRR   come   when also   possible
    'You may come whenever you want.'

In (30), the subject (the listener) is allowed to perform the action represented by the preceding verb phrase (coming at anytime). Here, potentiality of the emergence of the action arises from the speaker's granting permission.

3. Three Areas of Mood

Based on the analysis from the perspective of actuality and potentiality, the patterns of *dây* expressions are classified into three areas of mood as follows:

I. Indicative mood (describing events in the actual world)

1. [(experiencer NP) *dây* NP]   emergence > existence
2. [(NP) *dây* VP]   emergence > realization
2.1. [(experiencer NP) *dây* VP]

emergence > spatio-temporal realization

2.2. [(NP) *dây* VP]   emergence > temporal realization
3. [(agent NP) VP] *con* [(NP) *dây* VP]

emergence > action-result realization

4. [(NP) VP *dây* (NP/VP)]   emergence > resultant realization
4.1. [(agent NP) VP *dây* (physical quantity NP)]

emergence > accomplishment

4.2. [(NP) VP *dây* (temporal quantity NP)] emergence > effect
4.3. [(NP) VP *dây* (subjective quality VP)]

emergence > attainment

II. Neutral mood (describing events in the neutral world)

5. [(NP) VP *dây*]   emergence > potentiality
5.1. [(agent NP) VP *dây*]   emergence > ability
5.2. [(non-agent participant NP) VP *dây*]

emergence > capability/capacity

5.3. [(setting NP) VP *dây*]   emergence > possibility

III. Subjunctive mood (describing events in the potential world)

5.4. [(NP) *ʔàat càʔ* VP (*kɔ̂*)*dây*]   emergence > probability
5.5. [(allowed agent NP) VP (*kɔ̂*)*dây*]

emergence > permissibility

The main point here is that the patterns 1 to 4 represent a temporally bounded situation that actually happens at a specific time, whereas the pattern 5 represents a potential situation without specifying any reference time. Note that ability, capability/capacity and possibility are concepts to be described in a neutral mood which is neither the actual world proper nor the potential world proper. The pattern 5.1 to 5.3 describes the events that lie in between the actual world and the potential world. Which world it lies is based on the interpretation. Thus, we name this mood as 'the neutral world.' Another important point is that each pattern's characteristic concept does originate from the ontological concept of 'emergence' or 'coming into existence' that resides in the lexical meaning of *dây*. Therefore, all these patterns are related together and they are in a continuum linked together by the concept of 'emergence.'

4. Concluding Remarks

Based on our observations on the syntactic behaviors and the meanings of *dây*, we conclude that *dây* in different syntactic patterns designates 'emergence phenomena' in different semantic domains and *dây* expressions can be classified into five patterns. The pattern 1 designates an emergence in the ontological, spatial domain. The pattern 2 designates an emergence in the spatio-temporal domain. The patterns 3 and 4 designate an emergence in the temporal domain. Finally, the pattern 5 designates emergence in the mental domain.

The basic syntactic structure of the pattern 1 simply denotes the physical emergence of an entity at the locus of a human being. Through inference, we may understand that s/he possesses that entity eventually. On the other hand, the extended

patterns 2 to 5 denote abstract and subjective conceptualizations of emergence, ranging from realization regarded here as spatio-temporal emergence to potentiality which can be regarded as mental emergence.

Note

Abbreviations used in this paper are: IRR(EALIS); CLAS(SIFIER); NEG(ATIVE); PERF(ECT); PRON(OUN); REL(ATIVE PRONOUN)

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