

COMPLICATIONS IN TEMPORAL PREVERBS AND THEIR SEMANTIC INTERPRETATION¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'temporal preverb'² is used in this paper, in some sense, overlaps with the more familiar terms 'aspect', 'tense', and 'auxiliary'. The terms 'aspect' and 'tense' which are normally used in the Indo-European languages are mostly concerned with affixing, and the term 'auxiliary', which is not concerned with affixing, covers a wider range than the term 'temporal preverb' in this paper. The author will exclude some other preverbs such as *khon* 'may', *khuan* 'ought to', *ʔaat* 'probably', and *tôn* 'must' which are not temporal preverbs. This analysis posits that all of the Thai temporal preverbs occur preverbally in the deep structure; they, thus, are legitimately called 'preverbs'.

2. TEMPORAL PREVERBS AND THEIR SEMANTIC FEATURES

This paper presents three kinds of temporal preverbs.

2.1. *cà* AS A PREVERB

Normally *cà* is interpreted as a future particle³ containing the feature [+future]. Let us consider the following sentences.

- (1) *khǎw cà kin khâaw*
he future eat rice
'He is going to eat.'
- (2) *khǎw cà mây kin khâaw*
he future not eat rice
'He is not going to eat.'

cà in (1) and (2) signifies a regular future.⁴ A negative may be introduced to the position following *cà* by a negative transformation in the surface structure.

2.2. kamləŋ-yùu AS PREVERBS

This analysis proposes that kamləŋ⁵ and yùu⁶ preverbs can occur as syntactic echoes⁷ to each other in the deep structure where both or either one of the two may occur in the same simple sentence. The features [+progressive] and [+definite] are assigned to kamləŋ and the features [+progressive] and [-definite] to yùu. Let us consider the following sentences.

- (3) khǎw kamləŋ kin khâaw
 he progressive eat rice
 'He is (definitely) eating.'
- (4) khǎw kin khâaw yùu
 he eat rice progressive
 'He is (indefinitely) eating.'
- (5) khǎw kamləŋ kin khâaw yùu
 he progressive eat rice progressive
 'He is eating.' (emphatic)

yùu, an indefinite syntactic echo of kamləŋ, is transformed to the position following a verb phrase in the surface structure. (3) and (4) have nearly the same semantic interpretation. (3) is taken to be more definite than (4) in the speaker's view. Any one of the sentences (3) to (5) can be the answer to any one of the following questions.

- (6) khǎw kamləŋ tham ?àray
 he progressive do what
 'What is he (definitely) doing?'
- (7) khǎw tham ?àray yùu
 he do what progressive
 'What is he (indefinitely) doing?'
- (8) khǎw kamləŋ tham ?àray yùu
 he progressive do what progressive
 'What is he (definitely) doing?' (emphatic)

When the feature [+definite] precedes the feature [-definite] in the same simple sentence, the feature [-definite] becomes [+emphatic]. Thus either (5) or (8) conveys emphaticness in its semantic interpretation.

(9) [-definite] → [+emphatic] / [+definite] ____

- (10) khǎw kamləŋ cà kin khâaw
 he progressive future eat rice
 'He will be eating.' ('He is about to eat.')

- (11) khǎw cà kin khâaw yùu
 he future eat rice progressive
 'He will be eating.'
- (12) khǎw kamləŋ cà kin khâaw yùu
 he progressive future eat rice progressive
 'He will be eating.' (emphatic)

When cà is preceded by kamləŋ, yùu, or kamləŋ-yùu as in (10), (11), and (12), kamləŋ cà,⁸ yùu cà, or kamləŋ-yùu cà will be interpreted as a near future where the action will occur sooner than the one without either kamləŋ or yùu, or both. It can be stated by the following rule.

- (13) [+future] → [+future2]⁹ / [+progressive] ____

(11) is taken to be ambiguous with two readings. It either says that he will be (indefinitely) eating in the near future, or (I expect that) he will be (indefinitely) eating. The first reading is considered regular but the second reading must be derived from a different deep structure which will not be treated here.¹⁰

cà in (12) behaves in the same manner as cà in (10) but its semantic interpretation of emphaticness should be taken into account because both kamləŋ and yùu appear in the same simple sentence as explained in 2.2.

2.3. lǎaw¹¹ AS A PREVERB

This analysis will treat lǎaw as a temporal preverb preceding kamləŋ-yùu and cà in the deep structure. lǎaw is analysed to have the feature [+cessative] and it is later transformed postverbally to the end of the sentence in the surface structure before a performative transformation is applied.¹²

It must be noted here that this analysis will not consider lǎaw as the past tense marker as some authors do.¹³ The author believes that lǎaw has nothing to do with the past tense: it only shows that whatever the action is, it is ceasing and the state or condition of the action is changing. Let us consider the following sentences.

- (14) khǎw kin khâaw lǎaw
 he eat rice cessative
 'He has already eaten.'
- (15) khǎw cà kin khâaw lǎaw
 he future eat rice cessative
 'He is going to eat soon.'
- (16) khǎw kamləŋ cà kin khâaw lǎaw
 he progressive future eat rice cessative
 'He will definitely be eating very soon.'

- (17) khǎw cà kin khâaw yùu lǎ̌aw
 he future eat rice progressive cessative
 'He will indefinitely be eating very soon.'
- (18) khǎw kamləŋ cà kin khâaw yùu lǎ̌aw
 he progressive future eat rice progressive cessative
 'He will definitely be eating very soon.' (emphatic)

(14) indicates that the action of eating is ceasing or has ceased. When cà preceded by lǎ̌aw as in (15), the sentence should be interpreted as the future is ceasing; thus, the action will occur in the nearer near future and sooner than the one with kamləŋ cà as in (11), and kamləŋ-yùu cà as in (12) in 2.2. It can be represented by the following rule.

- (19) [+future] → [+future3] / [+cessative] ____

lǎ̌aw kamləŋ cà in (16), lǎ̌aw yùu cà in (17), and lǎ̌aw kamləŋ-yùu cà in (18) indicate that the near future is ceasing and their semantic interpretation becomes the nearest near future which can be expressed by the following rule.

- (20) [+future2] → [+future4] / [+cessative][+progressive] ____

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis of temporal preverbs is obviously different from that of many others who have written about Thai. It aims to reveal the semantic functions of temporal preverbs and their interpretation in sentences which express progressiveness, futurity, and cessativeness. Combinations of any of the three kinds of temporal preverbs lead to different semantic interpretations. Especially when futurity is involved, there are four degrees of the future, the regular future as expressed by cà, the near future as expressed by kamləŋ cà, yùu cà, or kamləŋ-yùu cà, the nearer near future as expressed by lǎ̌aw cà, and the nearest near future as expressed by lǎ̌aw kamləŋ cà, lǎ̌aw yùu cà, and lǎ̌aw kamləŋ-yùu cà. It is hoped that this analysis will be beneficial to linguists and language scholars interested in the Thai language. Further investigation of another use of cà, deriving from a higher sentence in the deep structure, is needed to support this analysis.

N O T E S

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Ninth International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics in Copenhagen, Denmark, October 22-24, 1976. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Søren Egerod and William J. Gedney for their comments which persuaded me to clarify certain points in this paper.
2. The term 'preverb' is used in Anthony, French, and Warotamasikkhadit 1968, but the term 'temporal preverb' is adopted for this paper only. Haas and Subhanka (1948:582) use the term 'adverb-auxiliaries'.
3. See Anthony, French, and Warotamasikkhadit (1968:101).
4. This analysis posits four degrees of the future. *cà* normally conveys the meaning of futurity unless it is derived from a performative sentence or it is in a restricted environment.
5. See Warotamasikkhadit 1976. *kamlaŋ* usually precedes a nonstate verb. A state verb like *pen* 'to be' which is derived from *kh++* cannot be preceded by *kamlaŋ*.

(i) **khǎw kamlaŋ pen phîi khǝŋ phǝm*
he progressive be brother of I

(ii) *khǎw kamlaŋ pen wàt*
he progressive be cold
'He is having a cold.'

pen in (i) is derived from *kh++* in the deep structure but *pen* in (ii) is an experiential process verb.

6. *yùu*, a syntactic echo of *kamlaŋ*, may convey a slightly similar meaning to the verb *yùu* 'to stay, to remain' in some senses. Noss (1964:182, 186-8) treats *yùu* as a frequent echo of *yaŋ* 'still' and he also defines *yùu* as 'remaining on the scene, unchanged, action continuing, temporary, without necessary future significance'. He correctly states that the sentence containing the preverb *yùu* signifies temporariness. This analysis also realises that temporariness plays a certain role in *yùu* as well as in *kamlaŋ*. The feature [+temporariness] will not help in distinguishing *yùu* from *kamlaŋ*; thus, the feature [+temporariness] is not employed here. Instead this analysis emphasises the definiteness versus the indefiniteness of the action in the speaker's view.

7. Formerly the term 'doublet' was used, but it may mislead some readers to understand that *kamlaŋ* and *yùu* are philologically derived from the same original.

8. Noss (1964:137) gives the meaning of *kamlaŋ cà* as 'about to' and so do Haas and Subhanka (1948:647). *kamlaŋ cà*, *yùu cà*, and *kamlaŋ-yùu cà* will be compared to *lǎaw cà* in 2.3.

9. The numeral following the feature [+future] signifies the degree of the future approaching the present time. The greater the numeral is, the closer to the present time the action will be. The numeral used here starts with 2.

10. *cà* of the second reading can also precede *kamlaŋ* as follows:

- (i) (m̄t̄a khun t̄t̄+n) khǎw cà kamlaŋ kin khǎaw yùu
 when you wake up he future progressive eat rice progressive
 '(When you wake up), (I expect that) he will definitely be eating.' (emphatic)

(12) can also have *cà* preceding and following *kamlaŋ* as follows:

- (ii) khǎw cà kamlaŋ cà kin khǎaw yùu
 he future progressive future eat rice progressive
 '(I expect that) he will definitely be eating.' (emphatic)

cà in the above sentences clearly indicates a different semantic interpretation from a regular future as in 2.1. The performative transformation of the higher level sentence either superimposes the feature [+determination] on *cà* following *lǎaw kamlaŋ-yùu* or the feature [+determination] in the performative sentences becomes *cà* preceding *lǎaw kamlaŋ-yùu* as expressed by the following rules:

(iii) $\left[\begin{array}{l} [+performative] \\ [+determination] \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \left[\begin{array}{l} [+future] \\ [+determination] \end{array} \right] / \left\{ \begin{array}{l} (l\acute{a}aw)(kaml\grave{a}n-y\grave{u}u) _ \\ _ (l\acute{a}aw)(kaml\grave{a}n-y\grave{u}u) \end{array} \right\}$

(iv) $\left[\begin{array}{l} [+future] \\ [+determination] \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \text{c\grave{a}} / _ (l\acute{a}aw)(kaml\grave{a}n-y\grave{u}u)$

11. At first glance anyone who knows Thai may conclude that *l\acute{a}aw* and *d\acute{a}ay* are syntactic echoes as *kaml\grave{a}n* and *y\grave{u}u* in 2.2. *d\acute{a}ay* can occur before a verb in the surface structure and many authors seem to take *d\acute{a}ay* as the past tense marker. Panupong and Dhanvarjara (1975:370) state that *d\acute{a}ay* should be semantically interpreted as the past tense but Haas and Subhanka (1948:403) warn their students not to use *d\acute{a}ay* in all sentences which have the past tense in English.

This analysis will consider *d\acute{a}ay* as a verb meaning 'to obtain, to get' rather than a preverb. It requires either a noun phrase complement or a complement noun following it to complete the sentence and it can be negated as all other verbs by taking *m\acute{a}y* in front of it. The temporal preverbs cannot be preceded by *m\acute{a}y*. Let us consider the following sentences.

(i) *kh\acute{a}w d\acute{a}ay kin kh\acute{a}aw*
he get eat rice
 'He gets to eat.'

(ii) *kh\acute{a}w m\acute{a}y d\acute{a}ay kr\acute{o}ot khun*
he not get angry you
 'He was not angry with you.'

Actually the translation of *d\acute{a}ay* as the past tense is not far-fetched but it does not always signify the past tense in English as in (i). *d\acute{a}ay* frequently occur with negative as *m\acute{a}y d\acute{a}ay* as in (ii) but it can also occur without *m\acute{a}y* as in (i). This analysis will consider *d\acute{a}ay* neither as a syntactic echo of *l\acute{a}aw* nor a temporal preverb; it is merely a verb.

12. See Warotamasikkhadit (1975:342-54).

13. Noss (1964:121) treats *l\acute{a}aw* as a specific adjective meaning 'already'. Haas and Subhanka (1948:144) also give the meaning of *l\acute{a}aw* as 'already', and so does Panupong (1970:20-1). Panupong and Dhanvarjara (1975:365) refer to *l\acute{a}aw* as the past tense.

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