

Paper title: The Role of Complementizers in Verb Classification in Thai

Sub-field: syntax

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Complementizers in Verb Classification in Thai

A complementizer is defined here as a function word that marks a complement clause, which is an argument of a matrix verb; for example, *that* in *I think that he will leave tomorrow* is a complementizer, and *that he will leave tomorrow* is a complement clause, which is an argument of the matrix verb *think*.

A review of previous literature related to complementizers in Thai shows that there has been no study focusing particularly on them. Most studies treat them as elements in other phenomena, such as parts of speech, embedding, subordinate clauses, etc. Despite the important role complementizers play in forming complex sentences in Thai, their syntactic behavior is still obscure. Besides, there is dispute as to which words should be analyzed as complementizers and what conditions their occurrence.

The purpose of this study is to identify complementizers in Thai and find out the conditions of their occurrence.

Based on an approximately three-million-word corpus of current Thai, the findings show that there are three complementizers in Thai: *thî*, *wâ*, and *hây*. They are grammaticalized words from the noun *thî* 'place', the verb *wâ* 'to say', and the verb *hây* 'to give', respectively. The occurrence of each of the complementizers depends on the type of verb in the matrix clause. The complementizer *thî* occurs with verbs referring to emotions or mental activities, such as *dii-cay* 'to be glad', *sǎ-cay* 'to be sad', *palàat-cay* 'to be surprised', whereas *wâ* is found with verbs referring to expressing or communicating ideas, information, and opinions, such as *phûut* 'to say', *athibaay* 'to explain', *thǎam* 'to ask'. As for *hây*, it occurs with verbs referring to making people do what the one wants, such as *sàŋ* 'to order', *mǎŋ-mǎy* 'to assign', *rǎk-rǎŋ* 'to demand'.

It can be concluded that complementizers in Thai distinctively classify verbs that take sentential complements into three main classes: *emotive verbs*, *communicative verbs*, and *directive verbs*.

