THE SYNTAX OF QUESTIONS IN THAI

By

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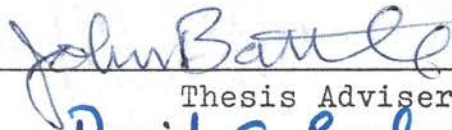Bachelor of Arts

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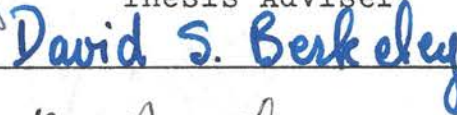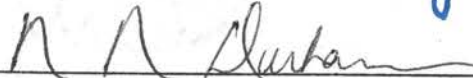the Degree of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Thai language to be discussed here is limited to
standard Thai, the primary language of the people of
Bangkok, which is used as an official language throughout
the Thai kingdom. It is a best known member of the Tai
language group which forms a branch of the Sino-Tibetan
language family. Local dialects which are slightly
different from standard Thai include the Northern (around
Chiengmai), the Northeastern (Ubon and Lao), and the
Southern (peninsular). At present the Thai language is
spoken by over 40,000,000 people including those of the
neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, Assam in India,
and the state of Shan in Burma.

Since World War II many scholars with specific
education and training in descriptive and comparative
linguistics have worked on the description of the Thai
language. Primarily their work has been on the basis of
comparative phonological and lexical rules, and only a
few linguists have worked on syntactic analysis of Thai.
In reviewing those works on the syntax of Thai interroga-
tion, it is found that many grammarians, including Thai
traditional grammarians, consider the question markers or

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question words of Thai interrogation as a group of words
consisting of different forms and meanings. In Thai
Reference Grammar, Richard B. Noss considers the question
marker of the yes-no question as two different forms,
/ríi/ and /máj/; for content questions he discusses the
formation of all question words and also mentions that
/raj/ is the allomorph of those question words.[1] In the
dissertation written by Chalao Chaiyaratana, the author
regards all question markers as different words which
have different functions without considering the relation
of the word forms.[2] Udom Warotamasikkhadit sets the rules
in his work of the Thai language taking /raj/ as the
question marker of the content questions.[3]

It seems that these linguists consider Thai question
markers in different ways and come to different conclusions.
In this analysis of the question in Thai, the scope of the
study will be based on the assumption that there are only
two pure question markers in standard Thai; one is /ríi/
for yes-no questions, and the other is /raj/ for content
questions. The discussion is divided into three parts:

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[1]Richard B. Noss, Thai Reference Grammar (Washington,
D.C. : Foreign Service Institute, 1964), p.205.

[2]Chalao Chaiyaratana, "A Comparative Study of English
and Thai Syntax," Dissertation, Indianna University, 1961,
pp. 217-226.

[3]Udom Warotamasikkhadit, Thai Syntax (The Hague: Mouton,
1972), p. 56.

1. The general characteristics of the Thai language
as to the simple structure of a sentence, the word order,
the obligatory and optional constituents of a sentence.

2. The various types of yes-no question which
include the study of the simple question, the negative
question, the tag question, and the mild question noted
by the particle /ná/. The answer to yes-no question is
also discussed in this part to present the negation to
the question.

3. The formation of content questions, the use of
question words, which include /ʔàraj/'what', /khraj/'who',
/jàanraj/'how', /mîəraj/'when', /thammaj, hètraj/'why',
and /nǎj/'which,where'. Because the answer to the content
question is not concerned with the use of the question
marker, it is not discussed in this study.

The theoretical framework and method of investigation
used in this paper follow the linguistic theory proposed
by Noam Chomsky in 1957 and 1965.[4]

[4]Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Hague: Mouton,
1957).
_____, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax
(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965).

CHAPTER II

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE

Phonologically Thai is a tonal language, each syllable has one of five phonemically differentiated tones. There are twenty-one consonant sounds and nine distinguished vowels in the language.

1. Consonants

		Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	vl. unasp.	p		t		k	ʔ
	vl. asp.	ph		th		kh	
	vd. unasp.	b		d			
Affricates	vl. unasp.				c		
	vl. asp.				ch		
Fricatives	vl.		f	s			h
Nasals	vd.	m		n		n	
Lateral	vd.			l			
Flapped	vd.			r			
Semivowels	vd.	w			j		

2. <u>Vowels</u>

	Front	Central Unrounded	Back Rounded
High	i,ii	ɨ,ɨɨ	u,uu
Mid	ɛ,e	ə,əə	o,oo
Low	æ,ææ	a,aa	ɔ,ɔɔ

3. <u>Diphthongs</u>

ia   ɨa   ua

4. <u>Tones</u>

Unmarked	=	mid-level
`	=	low
´	=	high
^	=	falling
˅	=	rising.

Word Order

The lexical stems in the Thai language are mostly monosyllabic, but occasionally polysyllabic stems may occur. Grammatical inflection is completely lacking and morphology is restricted to derivation. In syntax, constituent transfer or movement is rare since the word order is usually quite rigid. The typical sentence contains a subject, verb, and object, in that order. The nucleus of a simple sentence is usually a verb phrase (V) while subject and object may be optional. Thus, if X is

any circumstance which may occur at the beginning of a
sentence, NP is a noun phrase, and Y is any circumstance
which may occur at the end of a sentence, a simple state-
ment can be :

S ⟶ (X) + (NP) + V + (Y)

mîəwaanníi   chǎn   síɨ   rót   thîinîl
yesterday   I   buy   car   here

'Yesterday I bought a car here.'

chǎn   cà   síɨ   bâaŋ
 I   will buy   too

'I will buy a car too.'

It should be noted here that whenever the context
is understood, the word is optional and usually is omitted.
Therefore, if the above two examples are spoken in conver-
sation, the second speaker will not mention the understood
object /rót/ 'car' again.

A simple negative statement can be made by presenting
the negative particle /maj/ with the main verb or the
adjective which is used as a verb as follows:

(X) + (NP) + V + (Y) ⟶ (X) + (NP) + mâj + V + (Y)

chǎn   mâj   síɨ   rót
 I   not   buy   car

'I do not buy a car.'

nǎŋsɨ̌ɨ   mâj   dii
book   not   good

'The book is not good.'

Sentence Particles

Another characteristics of the Thai language which should be mentioned here is the use of sentence particles. These particles are used quite commonly in speech to make the sentence sound gentler. Some particles can be used to state the persuasion or interrogation, and sometimes they are used only for the purpose of politeness. There are three types of these sentence particles as follows:

1. /ná/ and /nâ/

The particle /ná/ when added to a preceding statement indicates a mild question, sometimes with an addition element of invitation, or suggesting. In all cases /ná/ is a particle used to make an utterance gentler, milder. It is used optionally in the Thai language comparable to English 'may I? won't you? isn't it? okay?' when the tone of the particle is high. In some cases the tone may be changed to falling when used as an element of urging or suggesting.

yàa   paj   ná
don't   go

'Please don't go.'

maa   ná
come

'Will you come?'

maa   nâ

come

'Come on, please come.'

2.   /lá/ and /lâ/

Standing by itself /lá/ has no meaning. This particle
is used often with mildly entreative force. When used in a
question the tone is a falling one. Either /lá/ or /lâ/
is used at the end of a sentence to make the statement
more certain, and sometimes it is used at the end of a
conditional clause, often with additional emphasis on the
statement to which it is attached. For example:

thùuk   lá

correct

'Of course.'

thammaj lâ

  why

'Why? How come?' (as when surprised or irritated)

3.   Particle Used As Sentence Ending

This type of sentence particles has many forms.
Actually all forms have two tones, the high tone is used
for interrogation and the other, which is the falling tone,
is for answering questions or is used at the end of statement
and command. The main function of the particle is to
make the statement or question more polite and gentler;
only a few forms are used for emphasis of the preceding

statement without the purpose of politeness. It may be
used optionally with any type of statement or question and
in itself contains information on the sex and status of the
speaker with respect or reference to the hearer. The
classification of these particles are listed as follows:

Statement Form	Question Form	Situation
payàkhâ	payàkhâ	Male speaking to the king, queen, and their royal family
phekhá	phekhá	Female speaking to the king, queen, and their royal family
khrápǒm	khrápǒm	Male speaking to highly superior or noblemen
câwkhâ	câwkhâ	Female speaking to highly superior or noblemen
khráp	khráp	Male speaking to superior, elder, or non-intimate person
há	há	Male speaking to non-intimate person, less formal than /khráp/
khâ, hâ	khá, há	Female speaking to superior, elder, or non-intimate person (/há/ and /hâ/ are less formal)
câ	cá	Person speaking to inferior or younger person, occasionally used among equals
jâ	já	Female speaking to inferior or younger person, rarely used by male
wâ, wóoj	wá, wóoj	Male speaking to inferior, younger, or intimate person; rarely used by female.

Examples:

wanníi   mâj   paj   thamŋan   khráp
today   not   go   work

'Today I do not go to work.' (Male speaking to superior)

jàa   paj   ná · khá
don't   go

'Will you please not go?' (Female speaking to superior)

CHAPTER III

YES-NO QUESTIONS

To produce an interrogative form in Thai there is no rule of auxiliary or verb constituent fronting, but the question is noted by a question marker shown with the statement. For a yes-no question /rǐi/ will be suffixed to a sentence of declarative type and the formation is possible in the following rule:

(X)+(NP)+V+(Y) ⟶ (X)+(NP)+V+(Y)+ rǐi

khun cà síi rót rǐi
you will buy car

'Are you going to buy a car?'

cà síi rǐi
will buy

'Are you going to buy a car?'

For producing a negative question, /mâj/ which implies negation occurs in the preceding statement as in:

(X)+(NP)+V+(Y)+ rǐi ⟶ (X)+(NP)+ mâj +V+(Y)+ rǐi

khun mâj síi rót rǐi
you not buy car

'Won't you buy a car?'

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máj   síi   rǐi
not   buy

'Won't you buy a car?'

Selection of affirmative or negative question depends
on the speaker's belief. When using an affirmative
question, the speaker inclines to believe that the answer
is 'yes'; on the other hand, he expects a negative answer
when using a negative question. According to this rule,
he is seeking confirmation of his belief as indicated in
the preceding statement.

Under certain conditions fronting of the question
marker may occur as follows:

$$S + rǐi \longrightarrow rǐi + S$$

In this case the sentence is not definitely a question,
but it still implies some sort of interrogation. For
example:

rǐi   khun   cà   síi
       you   will buy

'Maybe you will want to buy.'

It is also possible to combine the affirmative and
negative questions into one sentence when the speaker does
not have any idea whether the answer will be 'yes' or 'no'.
It is in this case that he is purely seeking information.
One way to phrase a neutral question is by using both
affirmative and negative forms in full combination. How-

ever, this type of question implies that the speaker wants
to emphasize and make his question clear; otherwise the
transformation in Thai grammar would generate other forms.
An example of this type of emphatic question may be:

khun cà sɨ́ɨ rót rɨ̌ɨ khun cà mâj sɨ́ɨ rót
you   will buy car   you   will not buy car

'Will you buy a car or not?'

According to the nature of Thai syntactic structure, iden-
tical elements rarely occur in the same string, except
when they are emphasized as above. Whenever the element
is understood in the linguistic or situation context, it
is omitted; therefore, the above example is rarely spoken.
The transformation in Thai grammar combines the affirmative
and negative questions and, according to its rule, the
deletion occurs as follows:

$$(X)+(NP)+V+(Y) + r\check{\mathrm{ɨ}}\mathrm{ɨ}$$
$$(X')+(NP')+ m\hat{a}j +V'+(Y')+ r\check{\mathrm{ɨ}}\mathrm{ɨ} \Bigg\} \longrightarrow$$

$$(X)+(NP)+V+(Y)+ r\check{\mathrm{ɨ}}\mathrm{ɨ} + m\hat{a}j$$

where X = X', NP = NP', V = V', Y = Y'

khun cà sɨ́ɨ rót rɨ̌ɨ mâj
you   will buy car   not

'Will you buy a car or not?'

At each step in the deletion, every resulting string
is grammatical. Thus it is possible to produce the follow-
ing questions:

khun   cà   sɨ̌ɨ   rót   rɨ̌ɨ   khun   cà   mâj   sɨ̌ɨ   rót
you   will buy   car   you   will not   buy   car

khun   cà   sɨ̌ɨ   rót   rɨ̌ɨ   khun   cà   mâj   sɨ̌ɨ
you   will buy   car   you   will not   buy

khun   cà   sɨ̌ɨ   rót   rɨ̌ɨ   cà   mâj   sɨ̌ɨ
you   will buy   car   will not   buy

khun   cà   sɨ̌ɨ   rót   rɨ̌ɨ   mâj
you   will buy   car   not

'Will you buy a car or not?'

Before discussing further on the negative questions,
it should be noted that /mǎj/ is a negative form which
is derived from /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/ and that /mǎj/ is not a pure
question marker as it has been mistaken by many grammar-
ians. The transformation which produces /mǎj/ from /rɨ̌ɨ
mâj/ deals with the phonological rule rather than the
syntactic rule. Considering the terminal contour of a
yes-no question, it is found that the tone of the last
word of a question is usually rising. It may have
either rising tone as in the question marker /rɨ̌ɨ/, or
high tone as in the particle /khá/ 'yes' when used as a
question, or the change of tone of an indicative sentence
to high tone when interrogation is implied. The only
exception in this case occurs when the speaker wants to
emphasize his question; then the terminal contour may be
falling as in the previous example: 'khun cà sɨ̌ɨ rót
rɨ̌ɨ mâj.'

The interrogative form /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/ may be changed to
/mǎj/ when the speaker does not intend to emphasize his

question, but only wants to seek information. Since he
does not expect a particular answer, it is appropriate
to use /rɨɨ mâj/. But since there is no emphasis on his
question, the nature of yes-no question terminal contour
tends to change the final falling tone to a rising one.
Thus the second transformation, producing /mǎj/ from /rɨɨ
mâj/, may occur :

'   (X)+(NP)+V+(Y)+ rɨ̌ɨ + mâj ⟶ (X)+(NP)+V+(Y)+ mǎj

khun   cà   sɨ́ɨ   rót   mǎj
you   will   buy   car

'Will you buy a car or not?' ⟫

⟪The change from /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/ to /mǎj/ does not affect the
identical meaning of these two interrogative forms at all.
Just as a question denoted by /rɨ̌ɨ/ has a meaning differ-
ent from /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/, /mǎj/ also has a different meaning
from /rɨ̌ɨ/⟫as seen in the following examples:

1. khun   cà   paj   rɨ̌ɨ
    you   will   go

    'Will you go?'

2. khun   cà   mâj   paj   rɨ̌ɨ
    you   will   not   go

    'Won't you go?'

3. khun   cà   paj   rɨ̌ɨ   mâj
    you   will   go

    'Will you go or not?'

4. khun   cà   paj   mǎj
    you   will   go

'Will you go or not?'

In testing these four examples, all informants agree
that there is a difference in meaning between sentence 1
and 2, 1 and 3, 1 and 4, 2 and 3, and 2 and 4; but there
is no difference between 3 and 4. In fact, /mǎj/ can
replace /rǐ$\pm$ mâj/ in every circumstance. Thus it can be
proved that /mǎj/ is a derivation from /rǐ$\pm$ mâj/, not a
pure question marker.

Negative Questions

There are two other interrogative particles which are
similar to /rǐ$\pm$ mâj/ and can be used as an alternative
with similar meaning and function in this circumstance,
but they are not identical. In a negative question the
morpheme /plàw/ or /jaŋ/ may follow the question marker
/rǐ$\pm$/ in the same way as /mâj/ does. These two interrog-
ative forms /rǐ$\pm$ plàw/ and /rǐ$\pm$ jaŋ/ must be produced in
full and have no derived form as /mǎj/ which is derived
from /rǐ$\pm$ mâj/. The formation of negative question is:

$$(X)+(NP)+V+(Y) \longrightarrow (X)+(NP)+V+(Y)+ \begin{Bmatrix} \text{rǐ}\pm \text{ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \\ \text{rǐ}\pm \text{ plàw} \\ \text{rǐ}\pm \text{ jaŋ} \end{Bmatrix}$$

The morpheme /mâj/ is a simple negative form which
implies the absolute negation, /plàw/ also conveys simple
negation but in many cases it has a sense of past tense.
The only situation in which /rǐ$\pm$ plàw/ can be used in the

same meaning as /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/ is when it is used in a future

sense.   Thus the following sentences have the same meaning:

    khun   cà   sɨ́ɨ   rót $\left\{\begin{matrix} \text{rɨ̌ɨ mâj} \\ \text{mâj} \end{matrix}\right\}$
    you   will   buy   car

    'Will you buy a car or not?'

    khun   cà   sɨ́ɨ   rót   rɨ̌ɨ   plàw
    you   will   buy   car

    'Will you buy a car or not?'

A slight difference between these two sentences is that

/rɨ̌ɨ mâj/ is more formal and is used mostly in writing

while /rɨ̌ɨ plàw/ is often used in speech.

    When /rɨ̌ɨ plàw/ is used with a statement which does

not imply future tense it means that the speaker is seeking

information of what he believes has happened in the past.

For example:

    khun   sɨ́ɨ   rót   rɨ̌ɨ   plàw
    you   buy   car

    'Did you buy a car?'

The morpheme /jaŋ/ itself means 'still, yet'.   When

used in yes-no question, either in the interrogative form

/rɨ̌ɨ jaŋ/ or in answering the question, /jaŋ/ has negative

meaning 'not yet' and implies both negation and aspects,

i.e. reference to time up to the moment of speaking.   This

interrogative form /rɨ̌ɨ jaŋ/ can be used either with the

preceding statement which implies past, present, or future

tense. The difference in its meaning is that the speaker
is inquiring if something has happened up to the moment of
speaking when he uses /rɨ̆ɨ jaŋ/ with a preceding statement
of past or present tense. But if /rɨ̆ɨ jaŋ/ is used with
the statement of future tense, it implies that the speaker
inclines to believe that if something has not happened, it
will happen soon. For example:

    khun   sɨ́ɨ   rót   rɨ̆ɨ   jaŋ
    you   buy   car

    'Have you bought a car?'

    khun   sɨ́ɨ   rót   lɛ́ɛw   rɨ̆ɨ   jaŋ
    you   buy   car   already

    'Have you bought a car already?'

    khun   cà   sɨ́ɨ   rót   rɨ̆ɨ   jaŋ
    you   will   buy   car

    'Are you going to buy a car now, or later?'

Considering the function and meaning of these three
negative interrogative forms of yes-no question, it is
found that /rɨ̆ɨ mâj/ or /mâj/ is used generally while /rɨ̆ɨ
plàw/ and /rɨ̆ɨ jaŋ/ have restricted meanings. The preced-
ing statement of either /rɨ̆ɨ mâj/, /rɨ̆ɨ plàw/, or/rɨ̆ɨ jaŋ/
must not contain negative particle /mâj/, otherwise the
meaning of the question will be contradictory in itself
since these three interrogative forms imply negation al-
ready.

Tag Questions

In the Thai language there are three forms of tag
question which can be simply attached to the preceding
statement of declarative type in the same way as the
question marker /rɨ̌ɨ/ works. The three forms of tag
question include:

$$\text{ciŋ} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rɨ̌ɨ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$\text{thuuk} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rɨ̌ɨ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$\text{chaj} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rɨ̌ɨ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \end{array} \right\}$$

Unlike the negative form of the question marker **/rɨ̌ɨ/**,
although the tag questions have the negative particle in
their formation, they can be attached to either affirma-
tive or negative statements. Structurally the tag ques-
tion is not linked with any particular element in the
preceding statement, but it is dependent since it always
co-occurs with a sentence of declarative type and never
stands by itself.

Either form of the three tag questions can be suffixed
to a statement to convert the declarative sentence to a
yes-no question. Thus the formation of this type of ques-
tion can be as follows:

$$S_1 \longrightarrow S_1 + \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \text{ciŋ} & \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rɯ̌ɯ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \end{array} \right\} \\[2ex] \text{thùuk} & \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rɯ̌ɯ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \end{array} \right\} \\[2ex] \text{châj} & \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{rɯ̌ɯ mâj} \\ \text{mǎj} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\}$$

Selection of the tag questions depends on the meaning of the first morpheme of the tag. Since /ciŋ/ means 'to be true,' the first form of tag question is used to inquire whether the hearer agrees that the preceding statement is a fact. The sample usage of /ciŋ rɯ̌ɯ mâj/ or /ciŋ mǎj/ can be seen in the following questions:

> hôônsàmùt níi dii thîisùt naj mɯəŋ ciŋ mǎj
> library this good most in town
>
> 'This library is the best in town, isn't it?'

> mɯəŋ thaj aakàat mâj nǎaw mâak ciŋ rɯ̌ɯ mâj
> country Thai weather not cold very
>
> 'The weather in Thailand is not very cold, is it?'

The word /thùuk/ in the second tag question means 'to be right'; therefore, /thùuk mǎj/ or /thùuk rɯ̌ɯ mâj/ can be used to ask if the hearer agrees that the preceding statement is correct according to his knowledge. For example:

> sɔ̌ɔn bùak sɔ̌ɔn pen sìi thùuk mǎj
> two plus two be four
>
> 'Two plus two is four, isn't it?'

```
  ^
mɨə    khun    paj    thamŋaan    sǎaj    khǎw    kɔ̂ɔ
when   you     go     work        late    he      then
  ^              ^
mâj    pɔɔcaj    thuùk rɨ̌ɨ mâj
not    please
```

'When you are late at work, he is displeased, isn't
he?'

The third type of tag question is the one which is
used commonly and more generally since its meaning is
not restricted as /ciŋ/ or /thuùk/. The word /châj/ in
this circumstance means 'to be so'; therefore, /châj mǎj/
or /châj rɨ̌ɨ mâj/ can be used to ask if the preceding
statement is the one meant or intended. For examples:

```
khun    yaàk    klàp      baân    wanníi    châj mǎj
you     want    return    home    today
```

'You want to return home today, don't you?'

```
baân     khun    thaa     sǐi      khǎaw    châj rɨ̌ɨ mâj
house    you     paint    color    white
```

'Your house is white, isn't it?'

The Use of Particles in Questions

A Thai yes-no question may be noted by some particles.
When /ná/ is used as a final element of a sentence, it
indicates a mild question. Thus the following sentences
can be considered as a sort of yes-no question:

```
phûujǐŋ    khon          nán     sǔaj         ná
woman      noun          that    beautiful
           classifier
```

'That woman is beautiful, isn't she?'

chăn   khɔ̌ɔyɨ̀ɨm   nǎŋsɨ̌ɨ   khun   sàk   wan   ná
I   borrow   book   you   just   day

'May I borrow your book for just a day?'

Thai questions may optionally contain either /lá/ or
/lâ/ in its formation, adding a sense of urgency and ear-
nestness. Therefore, besides the usual interrogative
formation /lá/ and /lâ/ have some possible use as follows:

khun   cà   paj   lá   rɨ̌ɨ
you   will   go

'Are you leaving now?'

khun   cà   chəən   khǎw   maa   mǎj   lâ
you   will   invite   he   come

'Will you invite him to come?'

khɨ̌ɨn   nǎŋsɨ̌ɨ   hâj   khǎw   rɨ̌ɨ   jaŋ   lâ
return   book   to   he

'Have you returned the book to him?'

chăn   bɔ̀ɔk   lɛ́ɛw   châj   mǎj   lâ
I   tell   already

'See, I told you, didn't I?'

chăn   aw   náam   sâj   loŋ   paj   lá   ná
I   take   water   put   down   into

'I pour in the water now, okay?'

In an elliptical sentence where context is omitted
and understood, the particle /lâ/ can function by itself
and serves as a question marker as in:

chăn   cà   paj   kàp   kanda   khun   lâ
I   will   go   with   Kanda   you

'I will go with Kanda. How about you?'

The particle type III, as mentioned in Chapter I on page 8, is used optionally in any question. It always occurs at the end of a sentence and after other particles. if they are also present. For example:

khun   mâj   chôop   sii   dææn   rɨ̌ɨ   khá
you   not   like   color   red

'Don't you like red color?'

aw   kaafææ   ìik   măj   khráp
take   coffee   more

'Do you want more coffee??'

phŏm   kɔ̀ɔjɨ̌ɨm   năŋsɨ̌ɨ   khun   sàk   wan   ná   há
I (masc.) borrow   book   you   just   day

'May I borrow your book for just a day?'

khɨɨn   năŋsɨ̌ɨ   hâj   khăw   rɨ̌ɨ   jaŋ   lâ   khá
return   book   to   he

'Have you returned the book to him?'

Answer to Yes-no Question

1.   /rɨ̌ɨ/

In answering an interrogation using the question marker /rɨ̌ɨ/, the particle type III may be used in an affirmative response as an introductory particle which is

comparable to English 'yes.' In this case a change of high tone of the particle to a falling one is necessary.

As for a negative response to a /rɨ̌ɨ/ question, the particle /plàw/ is generally used as the introductory particle in the same way as 'no' functions in English response. It may be used with or without the sentence ending particle which, in the negative response, serves as a particle making the sense of gentleness and politeness to the answer.

The full replies of this type of yes-no question may have the introductory particle followed by a sentence confirming the agreement or disagreement to the question. The introductory particle is selected according to the truth value of the statement form of the question. That is, the negative answer may have a 'yes' introductory particle; on the other hand, a negative particle may be used in an affirmative response, depending on whether the answer agrees or disagrees with the statement mentioned preceding the question marker. Thus the Thai 'yes' or 'no' introductory particle is absolutely independent of the following sentence. It may or may not agree to each other as seen in the following examples:

Question:	khun	cà	paj	lá	rɨ̌ɨ
	you	will	go		
	'Are you leaving?'				
Answer (affirmative):	khâ	chǎn	cà	paj	lá
	yes	I	will	go	

'Yes, I am leaving.'

Answer (negative):   plàw (khâ) jaŋ mâj paj

                         no   yet not go

                         'No, I am not leaving yet.'

Question: khun mâj chɔ̂ɔp duu nǎŋ rǐi

                         you   not like   see movies

                         'Don't you like to see movies?'

Answer (affirmative): plàw phom chɔ̂ɔp duu nǎŋ

                         no   I   like   see movies

                         'Yes, I like to see movies.'

Answer (negative):   khráp phǒm mâj chɔ̂ɔp duu nǎŋ

                         yes   I   not like see movies

                         'No, I don't like to see movies.'

However, in answering the negative question which contains /mâj/ in the statement preceding the question marker, the negative answer may have either 'yes' or 'no' particle, and the introductory particle may or may not agree with the following sentence. Therefore, the negative answer of the above question may also be:

    plàw phǒm mâj chɔ̂ɔp duu nǎŋ

    no   I   not like   see movie

    'No, I don't like to see movie.'

The answer to the /rǐi/ question may be given in full, as in the above examples; or in some cases the sentence following the introductory 'yes' or 'no' particle may be

omitted, and the particle may remain by itself as a verb-less sentence while other parts of the sentence are ellip-tical. Therefore, the following answers are possible:

Question: khǎw aw rót paj rɨ̌ɨ

he take car go

'Does he take the car?'

Answer (affirmative): khâ

yes

'Yes, (he takes the car).'

Answer (negative): plàw khâ

no

'No,(he doesn't take the car).'

2. /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/, /mâj/, /rɨ̌ɨ plàw/, /rɨ̌ɨ jaŋ/

The type of questions using /rɨ̌ɨ mâj/, /mâj/, /rɨ̌ɨ plàw/, or /rɨ̌ɨ jaŋ/ requires different answers from those using 'yes' or 'no' particle for /rɨ̌ɨ/ questions. In answering the negative question the verb form is obliga-tory, the introductory particle is optional, and the verb-less sentence using the particle alone is not applicable.

The affirmative answer may have the main verb alone as a full answer since all other parts of a Thai sentence are optional in the surface structure. The main verb is also obligatory in the negative answer where the negation is shown by /mâj/ or /plàw/ or /jaŋ/. The answer to this type of question may be produced as follows:

Question: khun hěn nǎŋsɨ̵̵ chǎn mǎj
           you see book I

           'Did you see my book?'

Answer (affirmative): hɛn
           see

           'Yes, I did.'

Answer (negative): mâj hěn
           not see

           'No, I didn't.'

Question: khun sɨ̵í kaafæ hâj
           you   buy coffee for
           chǎn rɨ̵ plàw
           I

           'Did you buy the coffee for me?'

Answer (affirmative): sɨ̵í

           buy

           'Yes, I did.'

Answer (negative): plàw

           'No, I didn't.'

Question: khun sòŋ còtmǎaj rɨ̵ jaŋ
           you send letter

           'Have you sent the letter?'

Answer (affirmative) sòŋ lǽæw
           send already

           'Yes, I have.'

Answer (negative):   jaŋ

                          no

                          'No, I haven't.'

3. Tag Questions /cin mǎj/, /thùuk mǎj/, /châj mǎj/

The answer to the tag question is similar to the answer to a /rǐɨ/ question. But instead of using the particle 'yes' or 'no' answer, the first word of the tag is repeated in the answer as a confirmation of the statement preceding the tag. This does not mean that the answer is always affirmative when taking the affirmative form. That is, the answer may be 'yes' or 'no' depending on the agreement or disagreement to the question in the same way as answering to /rǐɨ/ question. The negation of the preceding statement in the question can be answered by using a negative form /mâj/ with /ciŋ/, /thùuk/, or /châj/ so that the answer will deny that the statement in the question is not true, not correct, or not so, respectively.

Question: bâan   khǎw   sǔaj   ciŋ mǎj
                    house   he   beautiful
                    'His house is beautiful, isn't it?'

Answer (affirmative): ciŋ
                    true
                    'Yes, it is.'

Answer (negative):	mâj	ciŋ
	not	true

'No, it is not.'

Question:	raw	tôŋ	mâj	hɛ̌n	kɛ̀ɛ	tua
	we	must	not	see	to	self

	thùuk	mǎj

'We must not be selfish, must we?'

Answer (affirmative):	thùuk
	correct

'No, we must not.'

Answer (negative):	mâj	thùuk
	not	correct

'Yes, we must.'

Question:	wannii	khun	mâj	thamŋaan
	today	you	not	work

	châj	mǎj

'Today you do not work, do you?'

Answer (affirmative):	châj
	it is so

'No, I do not.'

Answer (negative):	mâj	châj
	not	so

'Yes, I do.'

CHAPTER IV

CONTENT QUESTIONS

⟨ A content question is noted by one of the question
words which are listed with their implication as follows:

/ʔàraj/ 'what' inquires identification of impersonal
thing constituent

/khraj/ 'who, whom' inquires identification of
person

/jàaŋraj/ 'how, in what way' inquires a specification
of manner by which an action is performed

/mɨ̂əraj/ 'when' inquires the time by which an action
is performed

/thammaj, hètraj/ 'why' inquires the reason or
justification for an action

/nǎj/ 'where, which' inquires location or destination
or inquires a choice of two or more possibil-
ities when used with classifier

/thâwraj/ 'how much, how many' inquires value or
quantity

/kìi/ 'how many' inquires only numerative quantity. ⟩

In Thai Syntax the author forms the rules for Thai
content question using /raj/ as a common element in all

of these question words.[1] It seems exactly appropriate
that /raj/ is an allomorph and those question words are
anal zable. The only exception is /kìi/ which is a
numerative question word that /raj/ is not applied.

1. /ʔàraj/

This word can be analized as consisting of /ʔan/'unit'
+ /raj/ and the derived /ʔàraj/ is used as a question word
which may function as a subject of a clause or object of
a verb or preposition. For examples:

As a subject:

ʔàraj	juù	naj	klòŋ
what	be	in	box

'What is in the box?'

As an object of a verb:

khǎw	hâj	ʔàraj	khun
he	give	what	you

'What did he give you?'

As an object of a preposition:

klòŋ	juù	bon	ʔàraj
box	be	on	what

'What is the box on?'

---

[1] Udom Warotamasikkhadit, pp. 68-69.

2.   /khraj/

Since this question word is used to inquire identification of human being, it is possible that the word consists of /khon/ 'person' + /raj/ 'question'. The derived form /khraj/ may function as a subject of a clause, object of a verb, object of a preposition, or may be used with a noun as a possessive interrogative form when /khɔ̌ŋ/ which indicates possessive is omitted. For example:

As a subject:

khraj	maa	thîinîi
who	come	here

'Who come here?'

As an object of a verb:

khun	rák	khraj
you	love	who

'Whom do you love?'

As an object of a preposition:

khǎw	maa	kàp	khraj
he	come	with	who

'With whom did he come?'

Used with a noun as a possessive interrogative:

bâan	khraj	jùu	baaŋkɛɛ
house	who	be	Bangkae

'Whose house is in Bangkae?'

3. /jaàŋraj/

This question word is seen obviously to consist of
/jaan/ 'manner, type' + /raj/ 'question'. The response
to this question word specifies the manner or means by
which an action is performed. In questions,/jaàŋraj/ is
always used after a verb as in:

panhǎa   níi   kᴂ̂ᴂ   jaàŋraj
problem   this   solve   how

'How is this problem solved?'

dɛ̀k   dɛ̀k   paj   rooŋrian   jaàŋraj
child child   go   school   how

'How do the children go to school?'

4. /mîəraj/

The word /mîə/ refers to time and can be prefixed
to many other words to imply time, such as:/mîə/ prefixed
to /kɔ̀ɔn/ 'previously' means 'before'; /mîə/ prefixed to
a date /mîəwanthîi/ means on the day dated. When /mîə/
is prefixed to the question marker /raj/, it requires
a response which specifies a time or period of time as in:

khun   dâjráp   còtmǎaj   mîəraj
you   receive   letter   when

'When did you receive the letter?'

Usually /mîəraj/ is used after a verb as in the
above example. However, it may occur before the verb for

purpose of emphasis and sometimes indicating impatience
as seen in the following example:

```
mɨ̂əraj    khun    cà    tɔ̀ɔp    còtmǎaj    nán
when       you     will  answer   letter     that
```

'When will you answer that letter?'

5.   /thammaj/ and /hètraj/

The question word /thammaj/ consists of /tham/'perform'
and /raj/ 'question. It is used to ask for reason of an
action or performance and has the same meaning as English
'how come' or 'why'. /hètraj/ consists of /hèt/ 'reason'
and /raj/ 'question' and has similar meaning to /thammaj/
but is used more frequently in formal language while the
word /thammaj/ is used more often in colloquial speech.

The position of /thammaj/ in a positive question is
usually after the verb except that for emphasis purpose
/thammaj/ may be moved to the initial position of the
sentence. The negative question always has /thammaj/ in
the preverb position. For examples:

Positive:
```
paj    nâŋ    thîinân    thammaj
go     sit    there      why
```

'Why do you sit there?'

Emphasis:
```
thammaj    paj    nâŋ    thîinân
why        go     sit    there
```

'Why is it that you sit there?'

Negative:

thammaj	mâj	paj	nâŋ	thîinân
why	not	go	sit	there

'Why don't you sit there?'

The position of /hètraj/ in both positive and negative questions is initial position; and the question word itself implies more emphasis than the question noted by /thammaj/. For examples:

hètraj	paj	nâŋ	thîinân
why	go	sit	there

'Why is it that you sit there?'

hètraj	mâj	paj	nâŋ	thîinân
why	not	go	sit	there

'Why is it that you do not sit there?'

6. /nǎj/

This question word when used to inquire location is usually suffixed to the word /thîi/ which means 'place'. Thus the question word for location or destination may be analyzed as /thîi/ + /raj/ ⟶ /thîinǎj/ 'where'. However, sometimes the word /thîi/ may be omitted where context is understood and the question is not emphasized.

When /thîinǎj/ is the subject of the sentence, its position is initial, and it is used after a verb when serving as a complement. The word /thîi/ cannot be omitted when used as the subject, otherwise it may be used optionally.

For example :

>
> thîinaj   pɛn   khèt   tháhǎan
> where   be   region soldier
>
> 'Where is the military region?'
>
> khǎw   dɨənthaaŋ   paj   nǎj
> he   travel   go   where
>
> 'To where does he travel?'

Another usage of /nǎj/ is when the question word
inquires a choice of two or more possibilities. In this
case /nǎj/ must be suffixed to a noun classifier. In Thai
each noun has its own word as a classifier which may serve
as a noun substitution. For example, the classifier for
/nǎnsɨ̌ɨ/ 'book' is /lɛ̂m/; therefore, to produce a phrase
'that one' which refers to 'that book', /lɛ̂m/ may be used
with /nán/ 'that' as /lɛ̂m nán/. Different nouns have
different classifiers; thus, there are a lot of noun
classifiers in the Thai language. The one which may be
used generally for objects or things is /ʔan/, for human
is /khon/, and for animal is /tua/. To produce a question
word inquiring about 'which thing', /nǎj/ is suffixed to
/ʔan/, that is /ʔannǎj/. When suffixed to /khon/ produc-
ing /khonnǎj/ the word inquires for 'which man', or
/tuanǎj/ for 'which animal', etc.

The position and function of /nǎj/ when used with a
noun classifier is similar to /thîinǎj/ as seen in the
following examples:

nákrian   khonnăj   cháná   kaanpràkùat
student   which   win   contest

'Which student won the contest?'

mɛ̂ɛ   choôp   mɛɛw   tuanăj
mother   like   cat   which

'Which cat does mother like?'

7.   /thâwraj/ and /kìi/

These two question words have similar meaning in asking for quantity. /thâwraj/ consists of the word /thâw/ 'equal in size or quantity' and /raj/ 'question', but /kìi/ is a question word in itself to which /raj/ is not applied. The different function of these two question words is that /thâwraj/ is used to inquire about value or quantity and the answer may or may not be a specific amount. Generally, in asking for uncountable nouns /thâwraj/ is used as the question word while /kìi/ is used for asking about numerative quantity and the answer is more specific. It should be noted also that /kìi/ always requires a noun classifier when producing a question.

The position of /thâwraj/ and /kìi/ are always after verb. For example :

khun   mii   ŋən   thâwraj
you   have   money   how much

'How much money do you have?'

raw   li̯ə̆h   weelaa   iìk   thâwraj
we   left   time   more   how much

'How much time do we have?'

phôɔ   lián   kâ̰j   kìi   tua
father raise   chicken how many

'How many chickens does father raise?'

tôɔŋkaan   rót   kìi kan
want   car   how many

'How many cars do you want?'

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the studies of the Thai language performed by many grammarians, it is found that many of them, including the native speakers, have been mistaken for a long time in considering the questions in Thai. The lack of understanding in the derivation of all question words may create some confusion as to determine how and when to use each question word in what situation. This study of the syntax of questions in Thai is intended to reveal how the question words are derived in their monosyllabic characteristics. We can now conclude that in yes-no questions /rɨ̌ɨ/ is the main question marker from which the negative and tag questions are derived. When considering /rɨ̌ɨ/ as the main question marker, the negation in the negative question will be seen easily and then the negative question marker may not be taken as the pure question marker any more.

In content question we can say that /raj/ is the question marker for every question word except in the case of /kìi/ which seems to have its own question value. According to Thai characteristics in compounding, /raj/ is suffixed to the word in question to produce such question word with its own specific meaning.

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