

Title: Polyfunctionality of the *sɛŋ* grammatical word in Thai

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Polyfunctionality of the *sɪ̀ŋ* grammatical word in Thai

In previous studies including Thai grammar books, the word *sɪ̀ŋ* is recognized as performing two grammatical functions. A few linguists recognize *sɪ̀ŋ* as an accusative case marker, whereas others recognize *sɪ̀ŋ* as a relative clause marker. However, the previous analyses of the two grammatical functions of *sɪ̀ŋ* do not cover and cannot explain the occurrence of *sɪ̀ŋ* in the following contexts.

(1) *sɪ̀ŋ r̂aŋ n̄i kháw yaN máy s̄aap*

SUENG story this s/he yet not know
'This story, s/he has not known yet.'

(2) *kháw thamŋaan n̄ak sɪ̀ŋ kháw wǎŋ w̄aa cà s̄ɔ̀ɔp
ph̄aan*

s/he work hard SUENG s/he hope that will take an exam pass
'S/he works hard. S/he hopes that s/he will pass the exam.'

So far, there has been no in-depth study as to what function *sɪ̀ŋ* performs in those contexts. Therefore, based on written data in present day Thai (e.g. newspapers, journals, novels, etc.), this study attempts to analyze *sɪ̀ŋ* in Thai so as to find out how many functions it has and what those functions are.

It is found that *sɪ̀ŋ* in the present day Thai has four functions: 1) a relative clause marker 2) a topic marker 3) an end-focus marker 4) a discourse marker. The *sɪ̀ŋ* relative clause marker indicates a clause as a noun modifier which contains a gap (or a pronoun) co-referential to the modified noun, as in (3).

(3) *kháw pay sanǎambin [sɪ̀ŋ (man) ȳuu klay mak]*

S/he go airport SUENG it be located far much
'S/he went to the airport which is very far.'

The *sɪ̀ŋ* topic marker indicates a part of sentence that is being talked about, for instance *sɪ̀ŋ* in example (1). The *sɪ̀ŋ* end-focus marker indicates an important part of sentence that is being emphasized at the end of the sentence, as in (4).

(4) *ǎkkhiiphay nam maa [sɪ̀ŋ kaans̄ũns̄iá chiiwít lé s̄áps̄in]*

fire bring come SUENG loss life and property
'Fire brings about the loss of life and property.'

The word *sɪ̀ŋ* as a discourse marker indicates that two sentences in the text are related and it shows continuity of thoughts or ideas for instance *sɪ̀ŋ* in example (2).

In conclusion, *sɪ̀ŋ* in present day Thai is a functional word that plays a role in both the Thai syntax and discourse. The case of *sɪ̀ŋ* is an evidence of a

grammaticalization in Thai, which adds a new discourse function to an originally syntactic function word.