

A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON EARLY CHANGES OF VERBAL NEGATORS IN THAI*

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0 Abstract

This preliminary study on the evolution of the Thai negative system aims to set forth a hypothesis on part of the early development of the system. It focuses on two erstwhile verbal negators: *b̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n*. The hypothesis is that during the time in which both *b̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* were used, these two negators were in a marked contrast with respect to the factuality status of the situation described: they were, respectively, irrealis vs. realis negators.¹

1 The variety of Thai negative expressions

Standard Thai has a number of negators with different forms and functions. Examples (1) to (7) below illustrate a variety of Thai negative expressions containing a negator, which is a single negative morpheme (such as verbal negator *m̂y* in (1), *m̂?* in (2) and *h̀̀̀n* in (3)) or a concatenation of two negative morphemes, one of which may be an erstwhile negative morpheme (such as verbal negator *b̀̀̀ m̂?* in (4)² and nominal negator *m̂y cĥy* in (5)³)

* The present article represents a further development of two conference papers, one of which was given at LSJ136 (the 136th General Meeting of the Linguistic Society of Japan) in Tokyo, June 21-22, 2008, and the other at SEALS19 (the 19th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society) in Ho Chi Minh City, May 28-29, 2009. I wish to express my gratitude to the audiences at these two conferences for thoughtful comments. I am indebted to Bruce Horton and Heiko Narrog for stylistic suggestions and helpful comments on an early draft of this article. Thanks are also due to anonymous reviewers for important suggestions and constructive criticisms of some sections of the article. Any remaining shortcomings are entirely my own responsibility.

¹ Although a reviewer suggests that the nomenclature ‘counterfactual vs. factual’ would be more appropriate for characterizing the two negators: *b̀̀̀ mii* vs. *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n*, in this paper I use the nomenclature ‘irrealis vs. realis’ since recently linguists tend to use the nomenclature ‘irrealis vs. realis’ for the notional contrast of ‘non-factual vs. factual’, or of ‘unreal vs. real’ (Palmer 2001: 1). The term ‘irrealis’ was used by Sapir (1930) in his description of Southern Paiute grammar. He notes that the ‘irrealis’ modal suffix in the language indicates that the activity expressed by the verb is ‘unreal’, i.e. either merely potential or contrary to fact (Sapir 1930: 168, 1992: 186). So far many other terms for the concept ‘irrealis’ have been used in linguistics literature. Examples are: ‘manifesting’ (Whorf 1950: 59), ‘nonfactive’ (Hooper 1975: 91), ‘non-factivity’ (Lyons 1977: 795), ‘irrealis-assertion’ (being asserted with doubt, as hypotheses; being weekly asserted) (Givón 1982: 24; 1994: 268), ‘non-actual’ (Chung & Timberlake 1985: 241), ‘non-assertion’ (Bybee et al. 1994: 239; Bybee & Fleischman 1995: 9), ‘nonfactuality’ (being undetermined with respect to its factual status, i.e., is neither positively nor negatively factual) (Narrog 2005: 182, 184), and so forth.

² I consider *b̀̀̀ m̂?* as compound verbal negator consisting of the erstwhile authentic negative *b̀̀̀* and another negative *m̂?* on the grounds that the following syntactic structure of a negative expression, which is found in an inscription produced around the 19th century, shows that *b̀̀̀* and *m̂?* were functioning as a single negator: *b̀̀̀ [m̂? VP1 m̂? VP2]* ‘neither VP1 nor VP2’.

³ In old days *cĥy* by itself was a nominal negator (Bradley 1873: 170).

or a composite form consisting of at least one negative morpheme plus other morpheme(s) (such as formulaic verbal negator *hǎa ... mây* in (6) and formulaic nominal negator *hǎa chây ... mây* in (7)).⁴

- (1) **mây** yàak
NEGATIVE want
(I) do not want. [NWRP_EN016]
- (2) nǎŋ **míʔ** dây còp loŋ troŋ nán
movie NEGATIVE REALIZATION end descend there
The movie does not really end up at that point. [NWRP_EN015]
- (3) ɲaa sǎan ruuu **hòon** hīan hòt
ivory big elephant INTERROGATIVE NEGATIVE be worn out
Is it the ivory of a big elephant that would not be worn out? [POET018]
- (4) mòʔ sǒm kèe chaay yǐŋ thīi **bòo míʔ**
fit DATIVE man woman RELATIVIZER NEGATIVE
sǒm thaŋ phēet maa lǎay pii dii nák
copulate come many year good INTENSITIVE
(This vitamin) is fit indeed for a couple who have not had sex for many years.
[NACNS024]
- (5) **mây chây** chaaw rooman
NEGATIVE people Roman
(They) are not the Romans. [NACHM070]
- (6) **hǎa** rúu tua **mây**
NEGATIVE (front part) be aware NEGATIVE (rear part)
(He) is not aware. [NACHM]
- (7) **hǎa chây** sǐnlapàʔ **mây**
NEGATIVE (front part) the arts NEGATIVE (rear part)
(They) are not the arts. [ACHM054]

The syntactic configuration of negative expressions with a simple negator (a single negative morpheme and a concatenation of two negative morphemes) like those in (1) to (5) is relatively simplex; that is, the negator is placed immediately before the negated verb

⁴ Sample negative expressions in (1) to (7) are derived from the Thai National Corpus (TNC) which is the largest electronic Thai corpus that comprises numerous corpora of various discourse genres (e.g. ‘fiction’, ‘newspaper’, ‘academic’, ‘law’, etc.) [<http://www.arts.chula.ac.th/tnc2/>]. The English glosses and translations are mine. The sequence of signs following my free translation of each sample expression (e.g. [NWRP_EN016]) is the ID code given to a component corpus that includes the expression. I would like to thank Wirote Aroonmanakun for directing my attention to the public availability of the TNC corpus. Besides, negative expressions in old-day Thai cited in this paper, which are transcribed into phonetic equivalents in modern Thai, are all from *Corpus of Thai Inscriptions* (see the reference section below).

phrase or noun phrase. On the other hand, the syntactic configuration of formulaic negative expressions with a composite negator like those in (6) and (7) is complex; that is, the negated verb phrase or noun phrase is put between the front and the rear parts of the negator. Thus, negative expressions in present-day Thai are quite diverse in form. In order to identify the exact period in which the diversity of Thai negative expressions became conspicuous, I have consulted the corpus of Thai inscriptions (for the details of this corpus, see the reference section at the end of this paper) which contains Thai inscriptions from the end of the 13th century (the Sukhothai dynasty) through the 20th century (the present Ratanakosin dynasty). With this diachronic corpus data, I have learned that Thai negative expressions had been of great variety all the time since the earliest period in the documented history of the Thai language, namely since the end of the 13th century. The number of tokens of negators that I have found in the inscriptions is approximately 550 in total (Takahashi 2008). In examining the inscription discourses, I found a variety of verbal and nominal negators.⁵

This preliminary study on early development of the Thai negative system focuses on two erstwhile verbal negators, *b̀̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n*, as well as their probable descendants, *mii* / *mí?*⁶ and *h̀̀̀̀n*. These negators were frequently used in inscriptions produced in the period from the 14th century to the middle of the 19th century (Takahashi 2008). Their possible historical changes are shown in diagrams (8) and (9).

- (8) a. *b̀̀̀̀ mii* ‘not exist’, negative existential construction
[negation of existence]

> b. *b̀̀̀̀ mii* VP
[irrealis negative situation (unwitnessed non-factual situation)]

> c. *mii* / *mí?* VP
[regular negation]

- (9) a. *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* ‘not accustomed’, negative experiential construction
[negation of experience]

> b. *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* VP
[realis negative situation (witnessed factual situation)]

> c. *h̀̀̀̀n* VP
[regular negation]

Some twenty years ago, Kullavanijaya (1996 [original ms., 1988]: 89) raised a question about the relationship between *b̀̀̀̀ mii* and *mii*, as follows: “Could it be that the form *b̀̀̀̀ mii* ‘have not’ has gradually developed into *mii* ‘not’?” Since then, however, this question has been left open. This study, therefore, will investigate a plausible development

⁵ For example, *b̀̀̀̀* VP, *p̀̀̀̀* VP, *h̀̀̀̀n* VP, *mii* VP, *mí?* VP, *m̀̀̀̀* VP, *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* VP, *b̀̀̀̀ mii* VP, *b̀̀̀̀ mí?* VP, *h̀̀̀̀a* VP *m̀̀̀̀*, VP *h̀̀̀̀a mí?* *d̀̀̀̀y*, *ch̀̀̀̀y* VP, *ch̀̀̀̀y* NP, *ch̀̀̀̀y* (NP) *c̀̀̀̀?* VP *h̀̀̀̀a mí?* *d̀̀̀̀y*, *mí?* *ch̀̀̀̀y* NP, *m̀̀̀̀ ch̀̀̀̀y* NP, *h̀̀̀̀a ch̀̀̀̀y* NP *m̀̀̀̀*, and so on are attested (Takahashi 2008: 356-357).

⁶ The negative morpheme *mii* had several variants such as *m̀̀̀̀*, *mí?* and *mí?*.

from *b̀̀̀ mii* to *mii / mĩ?*, as indicated in (8) above. I will also examine a plausible development of *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* to *h̀̀̀̀n*, as indicated in (9) above, in order to show a parallel between the two plausible developments (8) and (9).

The purpose of the present study is to motivate a hypothesis on early changes of the two erstwhile verbal negators, *b̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n*, drawing on Croft's (1991) account of the typical evolution of negation (see Section 2). The organization of the remainder of this paper is as follows. Section 2 first reviews Croft's proposal on the course of historical changes in negative existential expressions, which he named 'negative-existential cycle'. In line with this suggestion, Sections 2.1 to 2.3 present a hypothesis on the early changes of Thai negative expressions based on examination of actual tokens gathered from the inscription data. Essentially, I am suggesting the following. As diagrams (8) and (9) above show, expressions for 'negation of existence' (8a) changed into those for 'irrealis negative situation' (8b), which is parallel to the change from expressions for 'negation of experience' (9a) to those for 'realis negative situation' (9b). Furthermore, the two contrastive negative expressions (8b) and (9b) were similarly transformed into expressions for 'regular negation' (8c) and (9c). In Section 3, then, I will clarify the types of language change probably involved in the early development of Thai negative system. In particular, I will explain my hypothesis that three well-known types of the diachronic process of language change (i.e. syntactic reanalysis, generalization by analogy and phonological reduction) were involved at different phases of the developments (8) and (9). Section 4 is a brief summary of this study.

2 Negative-existential cycle

Croft (1991) posits a historical linguistic process of 'negative-existential cycle', shown graphically in Figure 1 which is adopted from Figure 2 in Croft (*ibid.*: 6).

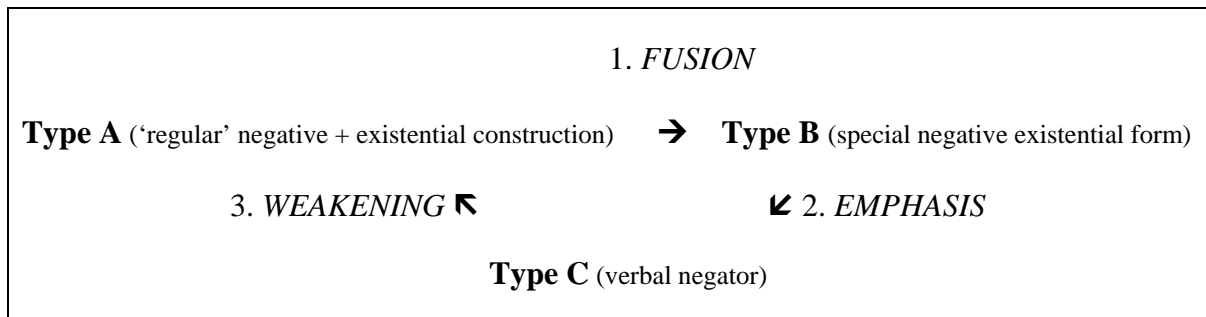


Figure 1: *Croft's (1991) proposal for a diachronic 'negative-existential cycle'*

In a negative-existential cycle, a special negative existential form (Type B) arises and comes to be used as a verbal negator (Type C) and then is supplemented by the positive existential predicate in its existential function, restoring a 'regular' negative + existential construction (Type A). Croft (1991: 22) states that in this diachronic cycle, fusion of negative and existential occurs first, then the emphatic use of the negative existential as a verbal negator, and finally the analogical use of the positive existential predicate in negative existential constructions being accompanied with attenuation of emphasis. However, he adds that the sequencing is not absolute. For example, in Mandarin Chinese, fusion (Type B) did not occur but the 'regular' negative existential (Type A) jumped straight to the emphatic verbal negator (Type C). Diagram (10) illustrates this.

(10) Development of the negative existential *méi* in Mandarin Chinese:

Type A ('regular' negative existential): *méi* NP 'NP does not exist'

> Type B: none

> Type C (verbal negator): *méi* VP [for negation of complete action]
cf. *bu* VP [for normal declarative negation]

The negative existential *méi* in Mandarin Chinese came to function as verbal negator for negating the completion of an event (Li & Thompson 1981: 421) without any phonological fusion taking place.

Likewise, one of the erstwhile negators in Thai, *b̀̀̀̀ mii*, is supposed to have consisted of the negative *b̀̀̀̀* 'not' and the existential verb *mii* 'exist'. A plausible evolution of *b̀̀̀̀ mii* is diagrammed in (11).

(11) Development of the negative + existential construction in Thai:

Type A ('regular' negative + existential construction): *b̀̀̀̀ mii* NP (e.g. (12))

> Type B: none

> Type C (verbal negator): *b̀̀̀̀ mii* VP (e.g. (13))

(12) *b̀̀̀̀* *mii* *ŋuan* *b̀̀̀̀* *mii* *thə̀̀̀̀*
NEGATIVE exist silver NEGATIVE exist gold
There was not silver; there was not gold. [1](1292)⁷

(13) *b̀̀̀̀ mii* *khananaa* *thii* *lə̀̀̀̀*
NEGATIVE recount careful INTENSITIVE
(We) do not recount (what he did) in a careful manner at all (because it was too much to be fully described). [2](1341-1367)

Examination of the inscription corpus data reveals that *b̀̀̀̀ mii* NP (Type A) was used until the 16th century and *b̀̀̀̀ mii* VP (Type C) until the 18th century (Takahashi 2008).

2.1 From 'negation of existence vs. of experience' (Type A) to 'negation of irrealis vs. realis situation' (Type C): the process of emphasis

Although in Thai there has been no negative existential with a unique form distinct from other negators (like *méi* 'not exist' in Mandarin Chinese), I assume that the development of the Thai negative existential construction *b̀̀̀̀ mii* basically corresponds to that of the Mandarin Chinese negative existential *méi* in that both are not fully associated with

⁷ The bracketed number (e.g. [1]) and the parenthesized number (e.g. (1292)) after my free translation of each sample expression from the inscription corpus are, respectively, the ID number and the estimated production year of the source inscription.

phonological fusion. The change occurred in the negative existential construction in Thai, however, has something different from its Mandarin Chinese counterpart. Crucially, it is likely that the evolution of *b̀̀̀ mii* was not an isolated change in the Thai negative system, but another erstwhile negator *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* appears to have undergone a similar change, as shown in (14) below. *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* is composed of the negative *b̀̀̀* ‘not’ and the experiential verb *h̀̀̀̀n* ‘be accustomed’. Therefore, we may call *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* a negative experiential construction.

(14) Development of the negative + experiential construction in Thai:

The negative + experiential construction: *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* ‘not accustomed’

> verbal negator: *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* VP (e.g. (15))

- (15) **b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n** khàat sàk wan sàk khuuun
NEGATIVE lack just day just night
(*He did*) without missing a single day or a single night. [3](1357)

I hypothesize that the verbal negator *b̀̀̀ mii*, which likely originates from the negative existential construction, and the verbal negator *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n*, which likely originates from the negative experiential construction, were once contrastive in terms of modal sense (whether the described situation in question is non-factual or factual): irrealis (non-factual) versus realis (factual) negator. The grounds for this hypothesis is my observation of the inscription corpus data that all the 13 tokens of ‘*b̀̀̀ mii* VP’ could be interpreted as representing negative situation of the irrealis kind (non-factual situation such as non-realization, impossibility, hypotheticals, dispositional necessity, and generalization) whereas all the 6 tokens of ‘*b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* VP’ could be interpreted as representing negative situation of the realis kind (factual situation such as experience and perception). Note that unfortunately the number of tokens of negation by the verbal negators *b̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* that I have found in the inscriptions is very small: in total, 13 tokens of ‘*b̀̀̀ mii* VP’ (see Appendix A) and 6 tokens of ‘*b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* VP’ (see Appendix B).

As exemplified in (16) to (18) below, *b̀̀̀ mii* is used to express an irrealis situation: such as a non-realized or impossible situation (16), a conditional situation (17), or a habitual or generalized situation (18).

- (16) **b̀̀̀ mii** sadèt loŋ maa
NEGATIVE proceed descend come
(*The relics*) did not come down. [3](1357)

- (17) phì? **b̀̀̀ mii** kaŋwon ...
if NEGATIVE worry
If (they) do not worry ... [64](15C)

- (18) maa **ბბ მii** khàat
 come NEGATIVE lack
 (*Usually they*) come without missing an occasion. [78](1796)

In contrast, *ბბ hðn* is used to express a witnessed or experienced negative situation, as illustrated in (19) and (20).

- (19) **ბბ hðn** khâa fan
 NEGATIVE kill hit
 (*He*) has not killed or hit (the person quarrelled with him). [5](1361)

- (20) ñan thooŋ **ბბ hðn** mii
 silver gold NEGATIVE exist
 As for silver and gold, they have not existed. [160](1782-1925)

Hence, in past ages there seems to be division of labour between the irrealis negator *ბბ mii* and the realis negator *ბბ hðn*.

2.2 From ‘irrealis vs. realis negator’ (Type C) to ‘neutral negator’ (Type A): the process of weakening

I further hypothesize that the two negators *ბბ mii* and *ბბ hðn* both changed into simplified neutral negators *mii / mif?* and *hðn*, as respectively diagrammed in (21) and (24) below.

- (21) **ბბ mii** VP
 [irrealis negation]

 > **mii / mif?** VP
 [neutral negation] (e.g. (22), (23))

- (22) náp læε **mii** thûan
 count and NEGATIVE in full
 (*They*) are countless. [5](1361)

- (23) **mif?** raŋkîat
 NEGATIVE object to
 (*He*) does not conceive a dislike. [64](15C)

- (24) **ბბ hðn** VP
 [realis negation]

 > **hðn** VP
 [neutral negation] (e.g. (25))

- (25) *cà?* *luum* *mii* *sǐi* ***hòon*** *dây*
 IRREALIS forget exist glory NEGATIVE emerge
 It is improbable to forget the existence of the glory. [245](1925-1978)

Typically, when contrasting negators are being neutralized, one of them drops out of use as there is no need for having two generalized negators with the equal status.⁸ However, this story does not go for the contrasting negators *bðo mii* and *bðo hòon*. After shifting to modally neutral negators *mii / mǐ?* and *hòon* which can be used irrespective of the factuality status of the situation described, there existed differences in the distribution of their usages. *mii / mǐ?* served as a neutral negator occurring in non-specific, ordinary discourse; *hòon* became a neutral negator, too, but it appeared only in verses, which is a peculiar type of discourse. Nowadays *mǐ?* is still used as neutral negator but it is rather infrequent since it is confined to formal or literary language. The most frequent negator in present-day Thai is *mây*, which is supposed to have risen from the fusion of *mǐ?* and a versatile functional morpheme *dây* or *hây* (see Section 2.3).

Table 1 below indicates the use time span of each of the above-mentioned old verbal negators, which I have attested in surviving available inscriptions produced during the period from the end of the 13th century to the 20th century.

Table 1: Use time span of old verbal negators in Thai

	13C	14C	15C	16C	17C	18C	19C	20C
<i>bðo</i> VP	-----							
<i>bðo mii</i> ‘exist’ NP	-----							
<i>bðo mii</i> VP	-----							
<i>mii / mǐ?</i> VP	-----							
<i>bðo hòon</i> VP	-----							
<i>hòon</i> VP								-----

From Table 1, we can see the following:

- (i) the negator *bðo* was used in the inscriptions until the 19th century, and the negative existential construction ‘negative *bðo* + existential verb *mii* + NP’ in particular was used until the 16th century;
- (ii) the negator *bðo mii* lasted until the 18th century, and its probable descendants *mii / mǐ?* until the 20th century;
- (iii) the negator *bðo hòon* persisted until the 20th century, and its probable descendant *hòon* appeared in the 20th century.

⁸ This was pointed out by an anonymous reviewer.

In the 20th century, when *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* and *h̀̀̀̀n* coexisted, *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* barely remained as realis negator while *h̀̀̀̀n* was given a special function as a literary negator, or so to speak, an elegant negator. Regarding the pair of *b̀̀̀̀ mii* and *mii / miiʔ*, *b̀̀̀̀ mii* disappeared around the 18th century while *mii / miiʔ* was getting more and more common and became the most common neutral negator by the 19th century. I suppose that the extinction of the irrealis negator *b̀̀̀̀ mii* should have some connection with the establishment of the irrealis marker *càʔ* before the 18th century (cf. footnote 9), but in this paper I shall make no further inquiry into this point.

Because I could not find a sufficient number of actual tokens of these negators in the inscription corpus data (nor could I utilize documents written in Thai before the end of the 13th century since writing did not exist), these findings concerning the period of use of these negators are clearly speculative, and so they cannot be regarded as decisive evidence for verifying my hypothesis of the evolutions of *b̀̀̀̀ mii* to *mii / miiʔ* and of *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* to *h̀̀̀̀n*. Yet, my findings suggest at least that this hypothesis entails no contradiction. The findings that the surviving time of *mii / miiʔ* is longer than that of *b̀̀̀̀ mii* and that *h̀̀̀̀n* came to be used later than *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n*, for example, are not in contradiction to the hypothesis at all, but we could rather say that the findings form circumstantial evidence in favour of the hypothesis.

2.3 *Plausible negative-existential cycle in Thai*

So far I have analysed the evolution of the negative existential construction (negative *b̀̀̀̀* + existential verb *mii* ‘exist’) and its parallel evolution of the negative experiential construction (negative *b̀̀̀̀* + experiential verb *h̀̀̀̀n* ‘be accustomed’) by relying on Croft’s model of negative-existential cycle (Figure 1 above, which is repeated as Figure 3 below). The result of the analysis is that the negative-existential cycle in Thai, as appears to be manifested in inscriptions, is similar but not completely identical to the model postulated by Croft. Figure 2 below graphically depicts a plausible negative-existential cycle in Thai. Compared with the cycle in Figure 3 (= Figure 1), it is notable that the cycle in Figure 2 does not involve phonological fusion in the shift from Type A (regular negative *b̀̀̀̀* plus existential verb *mii*) to Type C (verbal negator *b̀̀̀̀ mii*), but instead it has partial phonological loss in the shift from Type C (irrealis negator *b̀̀̀̀ mii*) to Type A (regular negative *mii / miiʔ*).

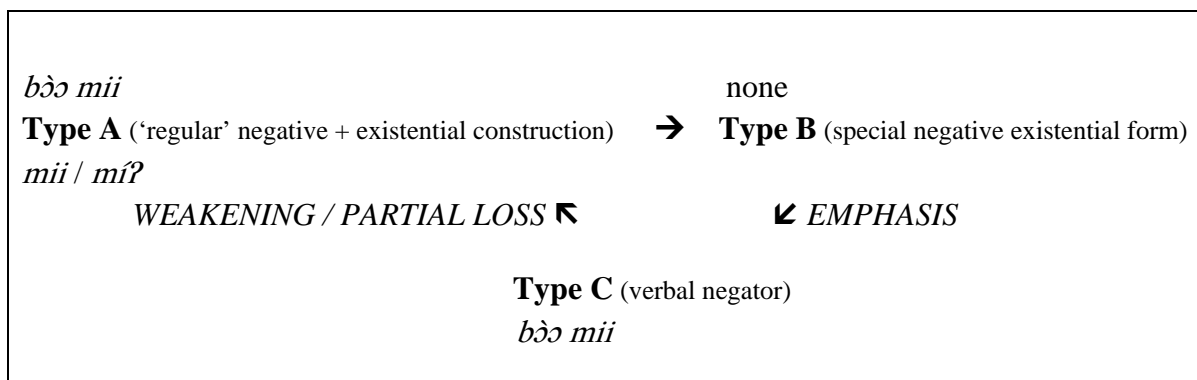


Figure 2: Plausible 'negative-existential cycle' in Thai

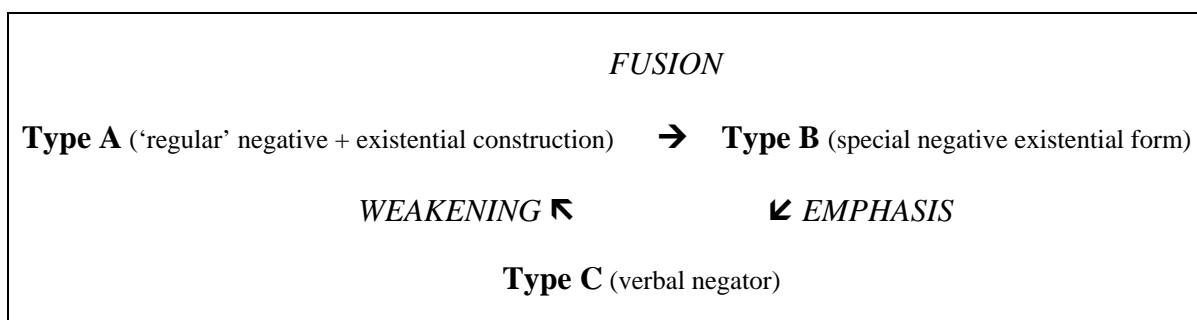


Figure 3: Croft's (1991) proposal for a diachronic 'negative-existential cycle'

It is evident that the plausible evolution of the Thai negative existential construction *b̀̀̀ mii* (Figure 2) is not in perfect accord with Croft's model of negative-existential cycle (Figure 3 = Figure 1). A salient feature of the plausible evolution of *b̀̀̀ mii* is that in the shift to the stage of Type C (verbal negator), *b̀̀̀ mii* gained the function of irrealis negator but did not involve phonological fusion.

The idea that formerly the negator *b̀̀̀ mii* and its variants *mii / mii?* had a function to mark irrealis negation is supported by Kullavanijaya's (1996: 84) observation on uses of *mii / mii?* in the Sukhothai inscriptions before the middle of the 15th century. She noted that *mii / mii?* usually occur before the modal morpheme *d̂ay* 'can, capable' and express the meaning of improbability (viz. something or an event would not happen or could not have happened), and that when they occur without *d̂ay*, there will be a specific lexical item co-occurring such as *ĉak* 'intend (not), shall (not)' or *m̂ua day l̂e* '(not) any time' which shows uncertainty in time. This is presumably because *mii / mii?* are a post-irrealis-negator whose original function is to mark irrealis negation. Their affinity with 'irrealis concept' (to be specific, the concept of non-factuality pertaining to futurity or uncertainty, including expectation, hope, non-realization, possibility, validity, supposition, generalized situation, etc., which is apt to be marked by the irrealis marker *ĉa?* in modern Thai⁹) may remain for some time after developing into a neutral negator, given that preservation of a certain aspect of the former properties of a changing element is by and large seen in language

⁹ According to Diller (1988: 286; 2001: 158), the irrealis marker *ĉa?* derives from the verb *ĉak* meaning 'desire, intend, consider'. In the middle of the 14th century the verb *ĉak* began to change its form into *ĉa?* by replacing the velar stop with a glottal stop, and the latter phonologically reduced form began to be frequently used in succeeding ages (Diller 1988, Takahashi 2007). The original form *ĉak* is now confined to a few formal formulaic expressions (e.g. *ĉak kĥəp khun ŷn* 'I would like to thank you very much.').

change.¹⁰ An additional piece of evidence in support of the identity of *míʔ* as post-irrealis-negator is my own observation of the inscription corpus that the irrealis marker *càʔ* did not co-occur with the former negative *bòʔ*, but around the 18th century at which time *bòʔ* gradually became less common, *càʔ* came to be used often in combination with *míʔ* (Takahashi 2008). This fact implies that the old negator *bòʔ* had nothing to do with irrealis concepts, whereas the new negator *míʔ*, which I assume to be a descendant of the irrealis negator *bòʔ mii*, was closely related with them.

In the cycle in Figure 2, *bòʔ mii* at the stage of Type C (irrealis negator) then underwent partial phonological loss as well as attenuation of specificity in meaning, which gave rise to neutral verbal negators *mii / míʔ* at the stage of Type A (regular negative). In present-day Thai, *míʔ* is still used in formal contexts, but *mii* is no longer used. Ordinarily the latest negative form *mây* is used in both oral and written discourses. Kullavanijaya (1996) also offered a hypothesis on the development of *míʔ* into the currently most common modern negator *mây*. Example (26) is the earliest use of *mây* that I have found in the inscriptions.

- (26) **mây** thuun kèε câw thay ...
 NRGATIVEinform DATIVE the owner
(If that person) does not inform the owner ... [38](1313-1433)

Her hypothesis on the latest change in the Thai negative system is that *míʔ*, which usually occurred before *dây*, as in (27) below, may have become contaminated with the vowel in *dây* and become *mây* (Kullavanijaya 1996: 87-88).

- (27) **míʔ** dây rúucàk
 NEGATIVE REALIZATION know
(They) do not get to know (it). [3](1357)

However, it is possible that *mây* has developed from the combination of *míʔ* and another versatile functional morpheme *hây*. A serialization of *míʔ* and *hây* is exemplified in (28).

- (28) **míʔ** hây phón ʔàatyaa thân nán
 NEGATIVE INDUCEMENT escape crime the authority that
(They bring him) not to let (him) out of the crime. [38](1313-1433)

To investigate the latest development in the Thai negative system is another intriguing issue, but it is beyond the scope of this study.

3 Three types of changes in the early development of Thai negative system

There are three major types of the historical process of language change that are widely recognized: (i) syntactic reanalysis, (ii) generalization by analogy, and (iii) phonological reduction. ‘Syntactic reanalysis’ is defined as “change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its

¹⁰ Hopper (1991: 22, 28-30) calls this effect occurring particularly in the process of grammaticalization ‘persistence’.

surface manifestation” (Langacker 1977: 58). It is “a mechanism which changes the underlying structure of a syntactic pattern” (Harris 2003: 532). ‘Generalization by analogy’ here refers to generalization of construction¹¹ caused by analogy or “the attraction of extant forms to already existing constructions” (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 56). It is “a mechanism which results in changes in the surface manifestation of a [syntactic] pattern” (Harris 2003: 532). ‘Phonological reduction’ or ‘phonological attrition’ means “the gradual loss of phonological substance” (Lehmann 1995: 126). It brings about the shortening of forms. I suppose that these three types of change were all involved in the plausible early development of the Thai negative system which I have described in the preceding sections. My hypothesis is as follows.

First of all, the negative experiential construction followed by a verb phrase (‘negative *b̀̀̀̀* + experiential verb *h̀̀̀̀n* + VP’ meaning that ‘relevant person is not accustomed to situation denoted by VP’) underwent syntactic reanalysis leading to a new (covert) structure consisting of a novel verbal negator *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* plus a verb phrase, as depicted in (29). Concurrently, the function of *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* as realis negator was established.

(29) Syntactic reanalysis:

negative experiential construction: *b̀̀̀̀ [h̀̀̀̀n VP]*

> realis negator: *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n [VP]*

Then, the negative existential construction taking a noun phrase (‘negative *b̀̀̀̀* + existential verb *mii* + NP’ meaning that ‘entity named by NP does not exist’) began to take a verb phrase instead of a noun phrase (*b̀̀̀̀ mii VP*), which can be regarded as generalization of the construction as a result of analogy. In other words, it is a kind of construction-internal generalization resulting from the language users’ recognition of structural similarity and semantic contiguity existing between *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* and *b̀̀̀̀ mii*, or more specifically, their recognition that the form of *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* is similar to the form of *b̀̀̀̀ mii* and that the meaning of *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* is related (speciously contrary) to the meaning of *b̀̀̀̀ mii*. This change eventually gave birth to a new verbal negator *b̀̀̀̀ mii*, as shown in (30) below. The conventional meaning of irrealis negation associated with *b̀̀̀̀ mii* was promoted (i.e. the process of ‘emphasis’ in Croft’s terms) as the two contrastive negative constructions ‘*b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n VP*’ and ‘*b̀̀̀̀ mii VP*’ became equally productive and entrenched.

(30) Generalization by analogy:

negative existential construction: *b̀̀̀̀ mii NP*

> irrealis negator: *b̀̀̀̀ mii VP*

cf. *b̀̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n VP*

¹¹ The notion ‘generalization of construction’ here roughly corresponds to what Himmelmann (2004: 32) calls ‘host-class expansion’, which is a context-expansion that construction-internally occurs in the process of grammaticalization (viz. the expansion of the class of elements with which a substantive grammaticalizing element is in construction).

Finally, the negators *b̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* underwent phonological reduction changing respectively into *mii* and *h̀̀̀̀n*, and the former further shortened yielding *míʔ*, as in (31) below. This phonological attrition was accompanied by semantic depletion (i.e. the process of ‘weakening’ in Croft’s terms), namely shift from specific to regular negator (shift from irrealis vs. realis negator to neutral negator).¹²

(31) Phonological reduction:

- a. irrealis negator: *b̀̀̀ mii* VP
 > neutral negator: *mii* / *míʔ* VP
- b. realis negator: *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* VP
 > neutral negator: *h̀̀̀̀n* VP

4 Conclusion

This study is a preliminary one intended to be an early step for future inquiry into the larger picture of the evolution of the Thai negative system. This work has paid close attention to the two now disused negators *b̀̀̀ mii* and *b̀̀̀ h̀̀̀̀n* and delved into their functions in the old negative system by analysing actual tokens of negative expressions with these negators occurring in the inscription corpus. It has offered a plausible hypothesis on their contrasting original meanings and correlated historical changes involving three major types of language change, namely, syntactic reanalysis, generalization by analogy, and phonological reduction. I hope that the ideas I have articulated in this paper can make a contribution not only to studies on the Thai grammatical system for negation in particular but also to typological studies regarding historical linguistic change in general.

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¹² The semantic depletion or weakening of these negators is equal to their ‘semantic-pragmatic context expansion’, which is the most important context-expansion involved in the process of grammaticalization (viz. the expansion of the semantic and pragmatic contexts in which the construction containing a grammaticalizing element is used) (Himmelman 2004: 33).

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Appendix A

13 tokens of ‘*bə̀v mii* VP’ found in the inscription corpus

1. บ่มีคนนาคี่เลย [2](1341-1367)
2. เขาอาราธนาพระบ่มีเสด็จลงมา [2](1341-1367)
3. บุษาทังคน ออกเข้าของทังหลายบ่มีว่าถี้เลย [2](1341-1367)
4. ...และบ่มีได้เซ็น [8](1369)
5. คาบนั้นบ่มีได้มาเฉพอย จึงให้ไปบ่บวงสรวงอาราธนาอัญเชิญพระมหาเถรเป็นเจ้าด้วยเคารพหนักหนาคาบหนึ่งโสด [62](1370)
6. พระมหาเถรเป็นเจ้ามาอยู่บ่มีนานเท่าใด ท่านจึงรำพึงไปมาพิจารณา... [62](1370)
7. ...ว่าดี และบ่มีพิจารณา หาก... [45](1392)
8. ท่านไปกราบคนกัถี้ ไปจอดเรือนกัถี้ คล้อยผู้นั้นอุเบกษาและบ่มีเอาและละให้ปล่อยไป [38](1313-1433)
9. ผู้รักษาบ่มีแท้ [306](1466)
10. ฝิบ่มีกัถ้วลกัถี้ ฝิจักมีหิฎุรียานใดว่าเรมกัถ้วมากท่านให้มาก เรมกัถ้วน้อยท่านให้ห้น้อย [64](15C)
11. สมบัติคนนองเนื่อง นามานูชาทุกปสี่ เดือนมาบ่มีขาด [78](1796)
12. วัดนี้บ่มีได้ออกสักแห่ง เท่าให้ออกเจ้าเมืองงาวผู้เดียวตาย [82](unknown)
13. บ่มีให้คลาดคลาจลาจล แท้จริงแล [83](unknown)

Appendix B

6 tokens of ‘*bə̀v hə̀vən* VP’ found in the inscription corpus

1. นบ...ส...รร...ในราชมนเทียรบ่ห่อนขาดสักวันสักคืน...ง...เดือนเพ็ญ [3](1357)
2. ...ผู้ลักข่าวลักของบ่ห่อน... [3](1357)
3. ชื่อผู้ใดคิดว่าง งราม เท่าใดกัถี้ บ่ห่อนฆ่าฟัน...สักคาบ [5](1361)
4. และจักให้ถึงที่ลั้มที่ตายดั่งอันกัถี้ บ่ห่อนฆ่าห่อนตีสักคาบ [5](1361)
5. เรบ่อวางไว้ของ เงินทองบ่ห่อนมี [160](1782-1925)
6. สีมามีห่อนปนเจือ [201](1925-1978)