

A Study of “si?” in Lao

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1. Introduction

1.1. objective

- to define the functional meaning of “**si?**” from the viewpoint of ‘modality’
- Modality : the internal attitude of the speaker(Moriyama,2000)

1.2. Methods and procedures

- 1) Extracting “**si?**” sentences from modern novels, (only a pattern of “subject+ **si?**+main verb+.....”)
- 2) Considering the usage of “**si?**”
- 3) Considering “**si?**” from the modality
- 4) Comparing the change in meaning of a sentence when one includes “**si?**” versus not including “**si?**”
- 5) Considering sentences in which “**si?**” cannot be used
- 6) Defining the functional meaning of “**si?**”

1.3. Data collection

- Bounyavong, Douangdueane.ed.(2000) 'muu'
- Douangchampa(2002) 'faa piin'
- Daawnuea(2003) 'Phaanyu siivit'
- Doakkhemdaeng (2004) 'Saeng aloun nay maan moak'
- Saengmany, Bounseun(2005) 'papheeni lae siivit'
- Dokked (2006) 'aathan haengphongphay'

1.4. Previous studies

- future (Oanmanysoan, Thongkham(1992))
- auxiliary verb, true future(Ministry of Education(2000))
- aspect marker, unreal or not existing actions (Pamela (1996))
- irrealis marker (Enfield, Nick J.(2007))
- uncertainty (Kaneko, Wakako(2009))

1.5. Concerning “si?”

- ? indicate the future

1) **dồn dồn si? mũi lóm yển phat phaán**

‘A cool wind blows through once in a while.’

2) **thuk thuk léεη láaw si? lóoy nâm pǎyhǎa
féεn yuu fâak phûun**

‘Every night, he swims to see his girlfriend on the other side of the river.’

2. Usage of “si?”

2.1.intention

3) **khòy khǎw sǎnǎa waa si? kêε tũa may**

‘I promise that I will change myself to new person.’

4) **thàa dεε, khòy si? pǎy đǎawnũ**

‘Wait please, I am just going now.’

2.2.planning

5) phəw cāw sǎwn nǎŋsǔw yuu hóoŋhían
phûn, cáknòy kəw si? káp máa lêew

‘Your father teaches at the school far away, he
will come back soon.’

6) mûwnîi mɛɛn mûw thám?it thii láaw
si? sòɔpsǎŋ phua cóp sân

‘Today is the first day of her final examinations.’

2.3.assumption

7) **thǎŋ si? mii nǎŋ kət khùn kəɔ tǎam,
khòy tōŋ hían hà y cóp**

‘Even though the matter happened, I must graduate from school.’

8) **thàa ?anupâat hà y mɛɛ mwa, mɛɛ si? luk
naaŋ dâ y**

‘If allowed mother to go back to home, she could stand up and walk.’

2.4. guessing

9) **tεε phûak nôᵛᵛ tᵛᵛ khút khǔm say fun
khôk wáy kᵛᵛn, mán cᵛᵛᵛ si? ᵛᵛᵛay khùn
wáy**

‘But you must dig a hole and put manure at first, therefore, it will be growing up quickly.’

10) **láaw si? lᵛᵛ thàa cᵛᵛn nôᵛᵛ sǎmlet kǎan
súksǎa káp khúᵛᵛn máa**

‘He will wait until she graduates from school.’

2.5. recognition from experience

11) **dồn dồn si? mũi lóm yển phat phaan**

‘A cool wind blows through once in a while.’

12) **thuk thuk léεη láaw si? lóoy nâm
păyhăa féεn yuu fâak phûun**

‘Every night, he swims to see his girlfriend on the other side of the river.’

2.6. Result of the usage of “si?”

- five usages of “si?”

“intension” “planning”

“assumption” “guessing”

“recognition from experience”



- “si?” is used for expressing the speaker’s recognition towards the situation



- “si?” : modal marker

3. Modality of “si?”

3.1. The usage and Modality

- 1) usage of intention → modality of confirmation
- 2) usage of planning → modality of confirmation
- 3) usage of assumption
→ modality of confidence
- 4) usage of guessing → modality of guess
- 5) usage of recognition from experience
→ modality of confirmation
⇒ Epistemic modality

3.2. The difference between inclusion and absence of “si?”

13a) lot mée máa lêew

b)lot mée si? máa lêew

‘The buss will come’

14a) nak hían hòη pǎo hà náy wéeláa nân
suanlăay jay kuwaa khòy mót

b)nak hían hòη pǎo hà náy wéeláa nân
suanlăay si? jay kuwaa khòy mót

‘Almost all of the fifth grade students at that time, were taller than me.’

15a) thukmuũnĩi wéeláa kêew ?òok saděeη
khàaphacâw t̃η naη yuu thěw mốw sóm
láaykǎan cǎn sút yaaη suũnsóm jĩndĩi

b) thukmuũnĩi wéeláa kêew ?òok saděeη
khàaphacâw si? t̃η naη yuu thěw mốw
só m láaykǎan cǎn sút yaaη suũnsóm
jĩndĩi

‘Nowadays, when Keo plays, I must sit near the stage and praise her until the end.’

3.3. Sentence in which “si?” can not be used

1) Statement describing true fact

16)? **tǎawén si? khùn càak tháaη thit
tǎawén?òək**

‘The sun rises from the east.’

2) Requesting statement

17)* **si? ?át patũu dεε**

‘Please shut the door.’

3) Commanding statement

18)* **si? pǎy đǎaw n̄i**

‘Go now.’

4) Invitational statement

19)* **si? pǎy kǐn khàw námkǎn nɔ?**

‘Let’s eat together.’

5) Demanding statement

20)* **si? máa hap ?ǎw m̄e**

‘(Please) come to get it.’

6) Affirmative statement in which the subject is the second person

21)? **câw si? kǐn đǎawnǐi**

‘You eat right now’

7) Statement in which there is ‘**khóəy**

22)***khòy si? khóəy khii lot nám láaw**

‘I have ridden a car with her.’

- Sentence including “**si?**” : It is uncertain that the event outcomes or not
- Sentence in which can not include “**si?**” : The event has the certainty of the realization



- “**si?**” : the judgment of the uncertainty towards the outcome of the event

4. The functional meaning of “si?”

- ?“uncertainty” of the speaker

23) tǎonân ?ǎapu? si? mεεn pèεtpřii

‘At that time, I might be eight years old.’

△24) thōηfâa muwtkhúm khúw fǎn si?
tók

‘It is cloudy, it look like to rain.’

? 25) muw?wɯn khòy si? pǎy nεεnón

‘Tomorrow I will certainly go.’

- Each “**si?**” sentence can add ‘I think that’ at the head of the sentence.
- ‘Certainly’ can be added into some sentences.



- “**si?**” : the judgment of the probability of an outcome of the event

5. Conclusion

- The occurrence of “**si?**” depends on the internal attitude of the speaker
- “**si?**” is the marker of epistemic modality
- “**si?**” : the speaker reveals the judgment of the probability towards an outcome of the event.