

## THAI SENTENCE-FINAL IMPERATIVE DISCOURSE PARTICLES

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### Abstract

The Thai imperative discourse particles include *sì*, *ná*, *nâa*, *tɔ̀*, *nɔ̀i*, and *dâi*. The distribution of these imperative discourse particles depends on the illocutionary forces and Searlean felicity conditions that constitute the forces. *sì* and *tɔ̀* appear in a wide range of illocutionary forces but in a complementary distribution. *sì* signals the preparatory condition in which the speaker is socially or epistemically superior to the hearer. In contrast, *tɔ̀* indicates that the speaker does not have control over the hearer and assumes that the act might not be fulfilled. *ná* is found with illocutionary forces that part of face-threaten acts to make them more polite. *nɔ̀i* and *dâi* signal request and permission respectively.

**Keywords:** discourse particle, imperative, illocutionary force, Thai  
**ISO 639-3 codes:** tha

### 1 Introduction

Discourse particles in Thai appear in the sentence-final position and modify the entire sentence by signaling various information about the context within which the utterance takes place (Cooke 1989). These sentence-final discourse particles are better studied by the clause types of the host utterances. Bayer and Obenauer (2011) have outlined German discourse particles by their syntactic distributions in different clause types and how their distributions influence semantic/pragmatic interpretation. German discourse particles such as *ja*, *doch*, and *eben* can take place in other positions besides sentence-final position. Although much progress has been made for the analysis of particles in many languages, such as Japanese (Maynard 1991), English (Schriffin 2001), Chinese (Zhang 2019), and Hungarian (Gyuris 2009), the unified issue of the contribution of discourse particles is still precarious cross-linguistically (Grosz 2016). In this study, I will only investigate the sentence-final discourse particles in Thai (which often do not have a one-to-one equivalent in English or German). Thai discourse particles appear in all sentence types, but their contributions to the interpretation of their utterance hosts have not received much analysis. This paper explores the syntactic behavior of Thai discourse particles and the pragmatic factors that influence their use in imperative sentences.

Thai imperative sentences are grammatical without discourse particles, although certain discourse particles are allowed in the sentence-final position.

- (1a) *gɔ̀n*      *khâaw*      *jɔ̀-jɔ̀*  
 eat      rice      much-much  
 ‘Eat a lot!’
- (1b) *gɔ̀n*      *khâaw*      *jɔ̀-jɔ̀*      *sì/ná/nâa*  
 eat      rice      much-much      FP  
 ‘Eat a lot!’

- (1c) *thîaw hâj sà.nùk*  
 travel give fun  
 ‘Have fun travelling.’
- (1d) *thîaw hâj sà.nùk #sì/ná/nâa*  
 travel give fun FP  
 ‘Have fun travelling.’

In (1a) and (1b), the sentences are grammatical without the discourse particles found in (1b), and the semantics of the sentences are identical. However, (1c) and (1d) show that not all particles are felicitous in the imperatives. *sì* is felicitous in (1c) but not in (1d), which suggests that the pragmatic factors must play an important role in the use of this particle. The examples used in this study are from the author’s own native speaker intuition and consultation with other central Thai native speakers.

In Section 2, I define and enumerate Thai imperative discourse particles. In Section 3, I discuss the distribution of imperative discourse particles with respect to illocutionary forces. In Section 4, I provide the account for the imperative discourse particles that are found in a wide range of illocutionary forces.

## 2 Thai Imperative Discourse particles

In this section, I define the scope of Thai imperatives and enumerate the discourse particles that are licensed in imperatives. The discourse particles that are licensed in an imperative sentence are *sì*, *ná*, *nâa*, *t̃x̃*, *ñi*, and *dâi* although Thai has many sentence-final discourse particles (Cooke 1989). Thai is a pro-drop language, and finite verbs are not inflected, so declarative and imperative sentences are easily confused. The pro subject of the sentence can be dropped in both spoken and written language if the subject can be inferred easily from the discourse context. In addition, Thai also does not differentiate finite and non-finite verbs, so the finiteness of the matrix verb cannot distinguish declarative and imperative sentences.

- (2) *sǒm.tẽh̃āaj rúusùk mâj khôj sǎ.bāaj (khǎw) d̃n ʔòɔkpāj khāaj.ñɔk*  
 Somchai feel no quite fine (he) walk out go  
 outside  
 ‘Somchai feels a bit sick. He walks outside.’

The second sentence in (2) seems like an imperative on the surface because the sentence has a subjectless VP as the root node. The pronoun *khǎw* can be dropped here because the discourse context strongly prefers the two subsequent sentences in the discourse to have the same subject. To not confuse declaratives and imperatives, I use sentences with the reduplication of an adjectival verb of peripheral type (Dixon (2004), Post (2008)) as this structure is not licensed in a declarative sentence.

- (3a) *láaj teāan rēw-rēw*  
 wash dish quick-quick  
 ‘Wash dishes quickly!’
- (3b) *sǒm.tẽh̃āaj, láaj teāan rēw-rēw*  
 Somchai, wash dish quick-quick  
 ‘Somchai, wash dishes quickly!’
- (3c) *\*sǒm.tẽh̃āaj láaj teāan rēw-rēw*  
 Somchai wash dish quick-quick  
 ‘Somchai, wash dishes quickly!’

The reduplication of an adjective in (3) changes the word class to an adverb. The adverb that is derived through this morphological mechanism can only be allowed in an imperative clause like in (3a) and (3b) and in a VP complement position, so (3c) is not grammatical. I will use the reduplication construction to test imperative discourse particles.

I define an imperative discourse particle to a sentence-final particle that is licensed in an imperative sentence. I will examine the basic distribution of six imperative discourse particles: *sì*, *ná*, *nâa*, *t̃x̃*, *ñi* and *dâi*.

These imperative discourse particles do not behave identically syntactically, and an imperative discourse particle is sometimes required for grammaticality.

- (4a) *kān khâaw rēw-rēw*  
Eat rice quick-quick  
'Eat quickly!'
- (4b) *kān khâaw rēw-rēw sì/ná/nâa/tỳ/nỳi/\*dâi*  
Eat rice quick-quick FP  
'Eat quickly!'
- (5a) *\*pēn khōn sǔuŋ-sǔuŋ*  
be person tall-tall  
'Be a tall person, please!'
- (5b) *pēn khōn sǔuŋ-sǔuŋ \*sì/\*ná/\*nâa/tỳ/\*nỳi/\*dâi*  
be person tall-tall FP  
'Be a tall person, please!'
- (6a) *klàp bâan*  
return home  
'Go home!'
- (6b) *klàp bâan sì/ná/nâa/tỳ/\*nỳi/dâi*  
return home FP  
'Go home!'

The (a) sentences in (4) to (6) show that discourse particles are sometimes required for grammatical imperative sentences. The (b) sentences in (4) to (6) show the idiosyncratic properties of individual discourse particles, and in fact only a handful of Thai discourse particles are allowed in imperatives. Interestingly, there is no discourse particle that is allowed in all imperative sentences, and verb types do not seem to determine the allowable set of imperative particles. For example, *tỳ* can appear in all (b) sentences in (4) to (6), but *nâa* can only appear in (4b) and (6b). On the other hand, sentences like (5a) suggest that some imperatives without the right imperative discourse particle are not acceptable.

### 3 Imperative Discourse Particles and Illocutionary Force

Pragmatic context plays a crucial role in determining the distribution of Thai discourse particles in imperative constructions. The social rank of the speaker and the hearer, for example, can determine the felicity of the particle:

- (7a) A child talks to his/her parent  
Child: *súuu khà.nǒm māa jỳ-jỳ ná/nâa/#sì*  
buy snack come much-much FP  
'Buy a lot of snack.'
- (7b) A parent talks to his/her child  
Parent: *súuu khà.nǒm māa jỳ-jỳ ná/nâa/sì*  
buy snack come much-much FP  
'Buy a lot of snack.'

The speaker and the addressee who utter the imperative sentences affect the acceptability, or more precisely felicity, of the utterances. In (7a), the child could not felicitously use *sì* in the utterance, but the parent could. These examples illustrate that pragmatic factors play a crucial role in the felicity of imperative discourse particles.

Formally, the semantics of imperative sentences does not involve truth conditions in a straightforward way. Following Portner (2004), the denotation of imperatives is a property which depends on the context of utterance  $c$  and the world of evaluation  $w^*$ .

$$\llbracket \text{Leave!} \rrbracket_{w^*,c} = [\lambda w \lambda x : x = \text{addressee}(c) \wedge x \text{ leaves in } w]$$

This function returns true if the addressee leaves, and the function returns neither true nor false when applied to other individuals that are not the addressee. Another consequence of the denotation of imperatives is that imperatives themselves do not encode the so-called illocutionary force such as promising, requesting, apologizing, commanding, and so on. Such force must be inferred from the context of utterance  $c$ . Moreover, Schmerling (1982) found that the use of imperative has gone beyond this directive semantic notion because imperatives can express a wish, offer, or advice. From the data presented in the previous section, imperative discourse particles do not change the semantics of the predicates in the utterance, so I argue that the meaning of the particles must be a function of  $c$ , which affects both the truth value and the felicity of the utterance.

An utterance is felicitous if and only if it meets all the felicity conditions: preparatory condition, propositional content, sincerity condition, and essential condition (Searle 1969b). Each illocutionary force requires (and is constituted of) its own idiosyncratic set of such felicity conditions. Here, I argue that the imperative discourse particles signal one or more of the felicity conditions, which constitute more specific illocutionary forces. In the following subsections, I will present the data and analysis for imperative discourse particles in the four groups of imperative sentences: directives, wishes, permissions, and disinterested advice (Condoravdi and Lauer 2012). In all of the examples, I suppose speaker  $S$  utters sentence  $T$ , which expresses act  $A$  denoted by  $T$ , to the hearer  $H$  (Searle 1969b).

### 3.1 Group I: directives

In a directive situation, the addressee is intended to do or not do something. The illocutionary acts in this group are command, warning, request, plea, and advice (Condoravdi and Lauer 2012). All the illocutionary acts in this group have the same propositional content and sincerity conditions. The propositional content is future  $A$  of hearer  $H$ , and the sincerity condition is that  $S$  wants  $H$  to do  $A$ .

- (8) [Command] A teacher talks to a group of students.
- |    |                             |             |            |                  |                          |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| a. | <i>yók</i>                  | <i>mūuu</i> | <i>kùn</i> | <i>sūuη-sūuη</i> |                          |
|    | raise                       | hand        | up         | high-high        |                          |
|    | 'Raise your hands up high!' |             |            |                  |                          |
| b. | <i>yók</i>                  | <i>mūuu</i> | <i>kùn</i> | <i>sūuη-sūuη</i> | <i>sì</i>                |
|    | raise                       | hand        | up         | high-high        | FP- <i>sì</i>            |
|    | 'Raise your hands up high!' |             |            |                  |                          |
| c. | <i>#yók</i>                 | <i>mūuu</i> | <i>kùn</i> | <i>sūuη-sūuη</i> | <i>ná/nâa/tỳ/nỳi/dâi</i> |
|    | raise                       | hand        | up         | high-high        | FP                       |
|    | 'Raise your hands up high!' |             |            |                  |                          |

The teacher wants the students to raise their hands up high, and the illocutionary act of commanding is felicitous here with or without *sì* because the teacher (at least in the Thai context) is socially superior to the students. However, *ná*, *nâa*, *tỳ*, *nỳi*, and *dâi* are not felicitous here because they are not consistent with the illocutionary force.

- (9) [Warning] A hiker talks to a fellow hiker who is walking up high scary stairs behind them.
- |    |  |            |                |              |             |            |
|----|--|------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| a. | <i>chàb</i>                                      | <i>rāo</i> | <i>nên-nên</i> | <i>điao</i>  | <i>lóm</i>  |            |
|    | grab   | rail       | tight-tight    | otherwise    | fall        |            |
|    | 'Hold on to the railing! Or you will fall down.' |            |                |              |             |            |
| b. | <i>chàb</i>                                      | <i>rāo</i> | <i>nên-nên</i> | <i>sì/ná</i> | <i>điao</i> | <i>lóm</i> |
|    | grab   | rail       | tight-tight    | FP           | otherwise   | fall       |
|    | 'Hold on to the railing! Or you will fall down.' |            |                |              |             |            |

- (9) c. #*chàb* *rāo* *nên-nên* *nâa/t̄̀/̀n̄i/dâi* *điao* *lóm*  
 grab rail tight-tight FP otherwise fall  
 ‘Hold on to the railing! Or you will fall down.’

A warning is a particular kind of directive where the speaker is aware of a potential danger or negative consequence if an act is not fulfilled by the hearer. For this type of directive illocutionary force, only *sì* and *ná* are felicitous but not necessary as shown by (9a). An imperative without a final particle could exert this type of force if it is clear from the context that the speaker knows of the negative consequence (e.g., falling down) from the lack of action (e.g., holding on to the railing.)

- (10) [Request] A person who cannot get his cellphone wants to ask his friend to get it for him.

- a. *jìp* *mũuuthũuu* *māa* *hǎi* *rāo*  
 grab cellphone come give me  
 ‘Hand me my cellphone, please’
- b. *jìp* *mũuuthũuu* *māa* *hǎi* *rāo* *n̄i*  
 grab cellphone come give me FP  
 ‘Hand me my cellphone, please’
- c. #*jìp* *mũuuthũuu* *māa* *hǎi* *rāo* *sì/ná/nâa/t̄̀/dâi*  
 grab cellphone come give me FP  
 ‘Hand me my cellphone, please’

*n̄i* is the only particle that can signal request as shown in (10b). *sì* is infelicitous here because two friends are socially equal. *sì* would have turned this utterance into a command. *ná* is infelicitous here because it is not clear that negative consequences will ensue for the lack of action on the speaker’s part.

- (11) [Plea] A person talks to his stubborn sick grandparent.

- a. *pāi* *hǎ* *m̄*  
 go see doctor  
 ‘Please go see the doctor’
- b. *pāi* *hǎ* *m̄* *nâa/t̄̀*  
 go see doctor FP  
 ‘Please go see the doctor’
- c. #*pāi* *hǎ* *m̄* *sì/ná/n̄i/dâi*  
 go see doctor FP  
 ‘Please go see the doctor’

In (11) utterances, the speaker wants to express his strong desire for his sick grandparent to go see the doctor, which is the sincerity condition for this illocutionary force. Both *nâa* and *t̄̀* are felicitous in pleas as shown in (11b) without noticeable effect. It is also felicitous to not use an imperative discourse particle here.

- (12) [Advice] A person asks his mother for a marital advice, and his mother answers.

- a. *kūi* *gān* *ȳ-ȳ*  
 talk together much-much  
 ‘You should talk to each other a lot.’
- b. *kūi* *gān* *ȳ-ȳ* *sì/n̄i/ná*  
 talk together much-much FP  
 ‘You should talk to each other a lot.’
- c. #*kūi* *gān* *ȳ-ȳ* *nâa/t̄̀/dâi*  
 Talk together much-much FP  
 ‘You should talk to each other a lot.’

To signal advice in imperative utterances, one can use *sì*, *nòi*, or *ná*, but *nâa*, *tỳ*, and *dâi* are infelicitous. And like the other directives, imperative discourse particles are not necessary as long as the discourse context is clear. The fact that multiple imperative discourse particles are allowed here suggests that advice might have a different ‘flavor’ to it. The use of *sì* to signal advice suggests that the speaker might be socially or epistemically superior to the hearer, so giving an advice based on this superiority is felicitous. Advice signaled by *ná* is motivated by the preparatory condition that the speaker is aware of the potential negative consequences if the hearer does not follow the advice.

We can see from the a. utterances in (8)-(12) that no discourse particles are actually needed when directive illocutionary forces are being exerted. When no discourse particle is used, the hearer needs to infer the propositional content from the discourse context imperative discourse particles provide a direct linguistic cue that helps narrow down what illocutionary forces are being exerted. However, these imperative discourse particles do not uniquely signal illocutionary forces except for *ná* and *nâa*, which signal warning and plea respectively. All of the imperative discourse particles are acceptable within this group except for *dâi*.

### 3.2 Group II: Wishes

For wishes, the speaker expresses his desire for the act to be fulfilled, and the hearer is not expected to perform the act that the speaker expresses. The preparatory condition is that the hearer has no ability to realize the act. The illocutionary forces that fall within this group are well-wishes, curses, addressee-less wishes, and absent wishes.

- (13) [Well-wish] A person talks to a sick friend.
- |    |                  |                |                          |  |
|----|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|--|
| a. | <i>hǎi</i>       | <i>rēw-rēw</i> |                          |  |
|    | recover          | quick-quick    |                          |  |
|    | ‘Get well soon!’ |                |                          |  |
| b. | <i>hǎi</i>       | <i>rēw-rēw</i> | <i>ná</i>                |  |
|    | recover          | quick-quick    | FP                       |  |
|    | ‘Get well soon!’ |                |                          |  |
| c. | <i>#hǎi</i>      | <i>rēw-rēw</i> | <i>sì/nâa/tỳ/nòi/dâi</i> |  |
|    | recover          | quick-quick    | FP                       |  |

Note first that a well-wish is not a directive, so the speaker is not expected (or actually not able) to fulfill the act at all. In utterances (13a) and (13b), the sick friend cannot do anything to directly make himself recover quickly. *ná* is the only felicitous discourse particles here. And, interestingly, the warning reading is not obtained because the semantics of the verb hosted by the utterance is more like a stative verb than an action verb. The other discourse particles seen used in directives (*sì*, *nâa*, *tỳ*, and *nòi*) are not felicitous for a well-wish. If *nòi* is used instead of *ná* in (13c), the utterance gets an odd reading of the speaker requesting the hearer to get better fast. Similarly, the utterance exerts a command if *sì* is used instead, which is very odd.

- (14) [Curse] Two friends get into a bad fight.
- |    |  |                |                          |            |             |             |                 |             |             |
|----|--|----------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| a. | <i>tāi</i>                                   | <i>wāi-wāi</i> | <i>gūu</i>               | <i>māi</i> | <i>yàak</i> | <i>chǎ:</i> | <i>mūη</i>      | <i>ʔiik</i> |             |
|    | die  | quick-quick    | I                        | neg        | want        | see         | you             | more        |             |
|    | ‘Go to hell! I don’t want to see you again!’ |                |                          |            |             |             |                 |             |             |
| b. | <i>?tāi</i>                                  | <i>wāi-wāi</i> | <i>sì</i>                | <i>gūu</i> | <i>māi</i>  | <i>yàak</i> | <i>chǎ:</i>     | <i>mūη</i>  | <i>ʔiik</i> |
|    | die  | quick-quick    | FP- <i>sì</i>            | I          | neg         | want        | see             | you         | more        |
|    | ‘Go to hell! I don’t want to see you again!’ |                |                          |            |             |             |                 |             |             |
| c. | <i>#tāi</i>                                  | <i>wāi-wāi</i> | <i>tỳ/ná/nâa/nòi/dâi</i> | <i>gūu</i> | <i>māi</i>  | <i>yàak</i> | <i>chǎ: mūη</i> | <i>ʔiik</i> | die         |
|    | quick-quick                                  |                | FP                       | I          | neg         | want        | see             | you more    |             |

Curse differs from the other illocutionary forces in this group. The verb hosted by the utterance has no semantic relation with the propositional content of the illocutionary force. The speaker wants to express annoyance or anger toward the hearer. In (14), the speaker does not want the hearer to actually die. No discourse particle is required, *sì* is marginally felicitous, and none of the other particles is felicitous here.

(15) [Addressee-less wish] A pedestrian who is waiting impatiently for the rain to stop.

- |    |                        |      |             |                   |
|----|------------------------|------|-------------|-------------------|
| a. | #jùt                   | tòk  | rēw-rēw     |                   |
|    | stop                   | fall | quick-quick |                   |
| b. | jùt                    | tòk  | rēw-rēw     | sì                |
|    | stop                   | fall | quick-quick | FP                |
|    | ‘Stop raining please!’ |      |             |                   |
| c. | #jùt                   | tòk  | rēw-rēw     | ná/nâa/tỳ/nỳi/dâi |
|    | stop                   | fall | quick-quick | FP                |

One of the preparatory conditions of an addressee-less wish is that the hearer is not the addressee. In (15b), the hearer is not even the subject of the verb *jùt*. *sì* is obligatory to signal an addressee-less wish.

(16) [Absent wish] A man is talking to his friend on the phone, while waiting for his blind date to come.

- |    |                             |        |           |                   |
|----|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|-------------------|
| a. | #pēn                        | khōn   | sūuη-sūuη |                   |
|    | be                          | person | tall-tall |                   |
| b. | pēn                         | khōn   | sūuη-sūuη | tỳ                |
|    | be                          | person | tall-tall | FP                |
|    | ‘Be a tall person, please!’ |        |           |                   |
| c. | #pēn                        | khōn   | sūuη-sūuη | sì/ná/nâa/nỳi/dâi |
|    | be                          | person | tall-tall | FP                |

Both the addressee-less wish and absent wish must occur with a discourse particle in an imperative. These are the two uses where the speaker expresses a preference for what they want to happen, but the hearer is never assumed to have the ability to realize the act. In fact, the hearer is not part of the act. In (15), the speaker does not have the ability to stop the rain, and is not even the subject of the predicate. Similarly, in (16), the hearer, who is on the phone, is not referred to explicitly or implicitly in the sentence at all.

On the other hand, for well-wishes and curses (or ill-wishes) in (13) and (14), the speakers express his wishes for good things or bad things to happen to the hearers. Like addresseeless wishes and absent wishes, the hearer has not ability to realize the act.

### 3.3 Group III: permissions and invitations

In this group, the speaker communicates a slight preference for the act to be fulfilled. The preparatory condition is that the hearer desires to perform the act in contrast to the directive preparatory condition where the hearer’s desire is not necessary.

(17) [Permission] A tutor talks to her student who is working on homework but is anxiously waiting to go home.

- |    |                              |      |                  |
|----|------------------------------|------|------------------|
| a. | #glàp                        | bâan |                  |
|    | return                       | home |                  |
| b. | glàp                         | bâan | dâi              |
|    | return                       | home | FP               |
|    | ‘Okay, you may go home now.’ |      |                  |
| c. | #glàp                        | bâan | sì/ná/nâa/tỳ/nỳi |
|    | return                       | home | FP               |

The only one-to-one mapping between illocutionary forces and imperative discourse particles is the one between permission and the imperative discourse particle *dâi*, which is also a sentence-final modal particle allowed in declarative sentences to express ability. The meaning of (17b) is equivalent to the meaning of the declarative version uttered in the same situation (18):

- (18) *t̄:*        *glàp*    *bâan*    *dâi*  
 you        return    home    FP  
 ‘You may go home.’

Offer and invitation are quite similar in meaning. The propositional content of an offer is that the speaker expresses their preference to transfer the ownership of an object to the hearer, and the hearer is asked to accept or reject this transfer.

- (19) [Offer] A receptionist serves a glass of water to a new guest who has just arrived.

- a.        *dùuum*    *náam*    *gòn*        *ká*  
 drink    water    before    FP-polite-female  
 ‘Please have some water’
- b.        *dùuum*    *náam*    *gòn*        *sì/ná*    *ká*  
 drink    water    before    FP        FP-polite-female  
 ‘Please have some water’
- c.        *#dùuum*    *náam*    *gòn*        *nâa/t̄/n̄i/dâi*    *ká*  
 drink    water    before    FP        FP-polite-female

In (19), the politeness particle *ká* is almost obligatory because a receptionist needs to be polite to the guest, but the imperative discourse particle is not obligatory. *sì* and *ná* are felicitous. *nâa*, *t̄*, and *n̄i* are acceptable, in fact, but the directive reading obtained instead. *dâi* is not felicitous as it is only for permission.

Invitation differs a little bit from offer. The propositional content of invitation is that the speaker expresses their preference for the hearer to fulfill the act, but the hearer is also given a leeway to accept or reject this act as well.

- (20) [Invitation] A friend talks to another friend.

- a.        *thāan*    *khāo*    *t̄i*        *bâan*    *rāo*  
 eat        rice        at        home    I  
 ‘Come have a meal at my place!’
- b.        *thāan*    *khāo*    *t̄i*        *bâan*    *rāo*        *sì/ná*  
 eat        rice        at        home    I        FP  
 ‘Come have a meal at my place!’
- c.        *#thāan*    *khāo*    *t̄i*        *bâan*    *rāo*        *nâa/t̄/n̄i/dâi*  
 eat        rice        at        home    I        FP

For these uses of imperatives, the only acceptable discourse particles are *sì* and *ná* just like in offer, but they are not required. Also, if *nâa*, *t̄*, or *n̄i* instead as in (20c), the directive reading is obtained.

Permission must be signaled by *dâi* when expressed in an imperative utterance. Offer and invitation behave very similarly with respect to the imperative discourse particles as they are quite similar in meaning. *sì* and *ná* are felicitous but not required for offer and invitation. *nâa*, *t̄*, and *n̄i* are acceptable in the same place in the utterance, but one of the illocutionary forces in the directive group is inferred instead as a result.

### 3.4 Group IV: disinterested advice

For disinterested advice, the speaker has very little interest in the act expressed by the imperative.

- (21) A person asks his friend how to get to the university. The friend responds:

- a.        *lōŋ*        *ród*        *t̄i*        *stāanī*    *sāamjǎn*  
 get-down vehicle    at        station    Samyan  
 ‘Get off at Samyan station’
- b.        *lōŋ*        *ród*        *t̄i*        *stāanī*    *sāamjǎn*    *ná*  
 get-down vehicle    at        station    Samyan    FP  
 ‘Get off at Samyan station’



- (21) c. #lōŋ ród t̄i stǎanī sāmjǎn s̄i/nāa/t̄x/n̄i/d̄ai  
 get-down vehicle at station Samyan FP

The data from (21) suggest that discourse particle is not obligatory and that only *ná* is felicitous for disinterested advice. This is different from advice in the directive group, which allows *s̄i*, *n̄i*, and *ná*. In (21c), *s̄i* and *n̄i* yield directive reading, which is not felicitous in this context where one simply gives a direction and does not take the interest in whether the hearer follows the advice.

**Table 1:** The summary of imperative discourse particles with respect to illocutionary forces.

Group	Force/Act	none	<i>s̄i</i>	<i>ná</i>	<i>nāa</i>	<i>t̄x</i>	<i>n̄i</i>	<i>d̄ai</i>
Directive	Command	•	•					
	Warning	•	•	•				
	Request	•					•	
	Plea	•			•	•		
	Advice	•	•	•			•	
Wish type	Well-wish	•		•				
	Curse	•	•					
	Addressee-less wish					•		
	Absent wish					•		
Permission	Permission							•
	Offer	•	•	•				
	Invitation	•	•	•				
Disinterested advice	Disinterested advice	•		•				

## 4 Discussion

The analysis in the previous section reveals that the mapping between illocutionary forces and discourse particles is a many-to-many mapping except for *d̄ai*, which is mapped uniquely to permission. This mapping is summarized in Table 1. Discourse particles are obligatory only for addressee-less wish, absent wish, and permission. So what is the use of discourse particles for imperatives? English imperatives do not use any discourse particles to indicate illocutionary force. The speakers use interpersonal and situational context and prosodic features to infer what force is being conveyed. In addition to using such contextual and prosodic features, discourse particles act to help disambiguate what illocutionary force is conveyed by the utterance. In this section, I present unifying explanations for *d̄ai*, *t̄x*, *s̄i* and *ná* from the seemingly unsystematic observations presented in the previous section.

### 4.1 *d̄ai*

Permission can be expressed in imperatives if and only if *d̄ai* is used as an imperative discourse particle. This use of *d̄ai* is consistent with its use in declarative sentences, where it is a sentence-final particle that indicates ability or permission.

### 4.2 *t̄x*

*t̄x* indicates the preparatory condition where the speaker assumes that the act might not be fulfilled. From the data provided in the previous section, *t̄x* is seen in plea, curse, addressee-less wishes, and absent-wishes, so the use of this particle spans across two groups of imperatives.

A plea is similar to a request. However, a plea also requires an extra preparatory condition that the speaker is afraid that the act might not be fulfilled otherwise. In (16), the speaker needs to plead, and not simply request, that his stubborn sick grandparent see the doctor because he knows previously that his grandparent does not like following his advice.

Similarly, one of the preparatory conditions of an addressee-less wish or absent-wish is that the speaker assumes that the act might not be fulfilled. As a consequence, a wish expressed by an imperative and *t̂* is a wish that the speaker assumes might not be fulfilled and that the hearer is not expected to fulfill. In contrast, well-wishing is an illocutionary force whose preparatory condition is that the speaker thinks that the act has a good chance of being fulfilled. Therefore, *t̂* is not felicitous here.

The preparatory condition of cursing is that the speaker expects the act will not be fulfilled. In (19), the speaker knows that the hearer will not die as quickly as the speaker expresses. So *t̂* is not felicitous for cursing because *t̂* is only allowed when the speaker knows that the act has a small but non-zero probability to be fulfilled.

#### 4.3 *sì*

*sì* can be used felicitously in commands, warnings, advice, curses, offers, and invitations. *sì* is only felicitous if and only if the preparatory condition is that the speaker has authority over the hearer. Without this preparatory condition, the “*sì*-type” imperatives are infelicitous. The speaker might have the authority through having a higher social rank (e.g., teacher and students in a typical Thai society context in (8)) or more knowledge than the speaker. So in some cases, students use the “*sì*-type” imperatives to their teachers if they are more knowledgeable than their teachers in the aspect being discussed in the imperative.

- (22) Teacher: *áp*      *nii*      *chái*      *yāng.ngāi*  
 App      this      use      how  
 ‘How do you use this mobile application?’  
 Student: *àan*      *trōng*      *níi*      *sì*  
 read      place      this      FP-*sì*  
 ‘Read this thing here’

In a Thai social context, students are in a lower social rank than their teachers, so the student’s utterance in (22) should have been infelicitous. Yet, the utterance is felicitous because the student is more knowledgeable in the usage of this mobile application than the teacher.

Warning is another illocutionary force whose preparatory condition is that the speaker has the authority over the hearer. The speaker knows the impending danger if the act is not fulfilled by the hearer. In (9), the first hiker knows that this stretch of the trail is particularly dangerous, which the hearer does not know. Therefore, *sì* is felicitous for warning.

Offer and invitation are only felicitous when the speaker has authority over the hearer. In (19), the receptionist has the authority over the hearer in that they can decide who is permitted to drink the water in the office. Similarly, in (20), the inviter has the authority over the hearer in that they can decide who is permitted to come to their home and have a meal there. Therefore, *sì* can be felicitously used in these illocutionary acts.

#### 4.4 *ná*

Unlike *t̂* and *sì*, the felicity of *ná* does not depend on the preparatory condition of the illocutionary forces of the imperative utterances. The forces where *ná* is felicitous, in fact, overlap with those where *sì* is felicitous: warning, advice, offer, and invitation. The imperative use of *ná* can be better understood under the notion of politeness and face-threatening acts (Brown et al. (1987)). According to Brown and Levinson, interlocutors have positive face, which is one’s self-esteem, and negative face, which is one’s freedom to act. Certain acts can threaten the positive face and/or negative face, the so-called face-threatening acts. To be polite, one employs positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies to save the hearer’s positive and/or negative face when face-threatening acts are inevitable or desired (Brown et al. (1987)). According to this politeness theory by Brown et al. (1987), *ná* is a lexical item that is part of the politeness strategy.

Thus, *ná*-type illocutionary forces cause damage to the hearer’s negative face. The speaker exerts authority over the hearer and puts the hearer under the pressure of fulfilling the act. The hearer’s negative face is being threatened because the hearer’s freedom of choice and action is impeded by the speaker. The use of *ná* is a negative politeness strategy to “soften” these illocutionary acts that are negative face-threatening acts. So it is not surprising that *ná* can be replaced by *sì* where *sì* is felicitous.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper analyzes the use of sentence-final discourse particles in imperative sentences, specifically the particles *sì*, *ná*, *nâa*, *tɔ̀*, *nòi*, and *dâi*. These imperative particles do not distinctly signal the illocutionary forces except *dâi*, which maps uniquely to permissive force. The preparatory conditions for *sì* assume that the speaker has some authority over the hearer. On the other hand, *tɔ̀* assumes that the speaker thinks that the act has a low but non-zero probability to be fulfilled by the hearer, while *ná* is a negative politeness strategy, so illocutionary forces that are also negative face-threatening acts allow the felicitous use of *ná* in imperative. As for future directions, more exhaustive list of discourse particles used in Thai imperatives could be compiled and analyzed for its roles in imperatives. In addition, imperative discourse particles could also be used in sequence, and it is still unclear whether the effects from using multiple discourse particles are compositional or non-compositional. Further investigation in this area is required for a more complete (and hopefully unified) account of Thai discourse particle system.

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**Reviewed:** Received 11 November 2021, revised text accepted 7 December 2021, published 1 February 2021

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