
Final particles *ná?* and *châj máj* in Thai oral narrative

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Abstract

In this paper I illustrate how two final particles in Thai function in the context of oral narratives. Earlier studies of these final particles have proved inadequate when they did not refer to specific contexts of occurrence. Examined in the context of spoken narratives, I found that *ná?* serves many functions.

Ná? serves both a cataphoric and an anaphoric foregrounding function in the discourses. It sometimes highlights details which have significance at a later point in the story. It may also underline the general evaluative focus several times throughout the story. Where *châj máj* occurs, it seeks to confirm understanding based on the listener's own knowledge of the world or of the story situation.

I suggest that these particles reflect the overall importance that socio-cultural expectations play in the telling of a story. Speakers evoke shared expectations as a means of creating a wider interpretative context in which the stories make sense (Tannen 1979). While *châj máj* signals background information which serves as the frame of expectations for the narrative events, *ná?* often highlights a break in that frame.

By acknowledging the audience, these particles serve to involve listeners at every step. The frequent use of these particles in Thai conversational narrative is supporting evidence for the claim that storytelling, like conversation is an interactional achievement (cf. Schegloff 1981).

1.0 Introduction

There are two final particles which I have found to occur frequently in oral Thai narratives, *ná?* and *châj máj*. These particles have sometimes been identified as question markers (cf. Bhamoraput 1972, Noss 1964), sometimes as 'intonation bearers' (cf. Panupong 1970). Previous studies of final particles have proved that these particles are difficult to describe as their uses in discourse are many and varied.

Both of the particles to be described here occur in sentence final position and have high tone relative to preceding syllables. The phonemic forms for the two markers are /*ná?*/ and /*châj máj*/. /*Ná?*/ is both phrase and clause final in its distribution; /*châj máj*/ is clause final only.

The data which I have used for the analysis of these final particles consists of twenty oral narratives which were recorded

in Bangkok, Thailand during 1984 and 1985.¹

These stories were told in the context of an informal interview. The primary interviewer was a 21-year-old Thai woman who also helped to transcribe the data. In a few cases, I was the interviewer. After some preliminary questions, the informants were asked about their beliefs in the supernatural. In most cases, this discussion led to the presentation of either a first or second-hand account of an encounter with ghosts by the informant.

In the first section of this paper, I discuss previous findings on final particles in Thai. Next, I compare the distribution of these two particles with respect to the presentation of given and new information in the discourse. I then discuss the specific functions which I have observed *ná?* to have in oral narratives. I compare these functions with the functions of *châj máj* in the discourse. Finally, I summarize my conclusions.

- 1) intensifying : *caŋ, náq, khâw, sǎa, sía, paj*
- 2) emphasizing : *?>>q, r>>q, léew, ná, ləəj, n>j, thii*
- 3) hortative : *chiaw, thiaw, sii, sí?, sì?, thə?*
- 4) definite : *lè?, là?, nǐi, hé?*
- 5) question : *mâŋ, máj, rǎy, rý?, rá?, rǎa, châj máj, rǎy plàaw, rǎy jaŋ, ná?, nàa, kramaŋ*
- 6) post-question : *lâw*
- 7) status : *khá, khráb, cá?, há?, ?əəj*

Bhamoraput categorizes both *châj máj* and *ná?* as question particles. In another study which treats only Thai question patterns, however, Brukwathananda (1966) includes *châj máj*, which she glosses as 'yes?', but not *ná?*.

1.1 Background

In recent years, final particles in Thai have been studied by numerous scholars. Still these particles are not well understood, partly because they are a feature of conversation which itself has not been thoroughly investigated (but, see Moerman 1988 for a recent study of Thai conversation), and partly because they have varied functions in discourse, hence are describable only in the context of their occurrence in discourse.

In an early study of particles, Chuenkongchoo (1956) noted that particles in Thai are comparable to English stress and intonation. Panupong (1970) has also described particles as "intonation bearers", as they frequently signal the speaker's attitude.

In her discussion of *Final Particles in Thai*, Bhamoraput (1972) notes that the meaning of particles themselves can only be explained with reference to the clause as a whole. She classifies particles into seven categories, which are listed here :

In his *Thai Reference Grammar*, Noss (1964) describes a general class of sentence particles which express the "attitude of speaker toward what he is saying" (201). He uses the term 'sentence' particles rather than 'clause' or 'final' particles because he

observes that they do not occur more than once in a sentence. His sentence particles are distributed into four classes based on their juxtaposition in a series. (Four is the maximum number of sentence final particles which he observed to occur in sequence.) In most cases the members of a particular (HNb's story #1)

- (1) 12. ?əə thii baan ná? nɔɔn châj mâj⁴
uh huh at house FP sleep FP

‘Uh huh. At my house, ná? (I) was sleeping, châj mâj’

Noss includes both *châj mâj* and *ná?* in the /ryy/ class, all of which can occur second in the sequence of four sentence particles. The general meaning of this subclass he notes is “expected reaction from the hearer” (208). He glosses *châj mâj* as ‘is that so?’ and notes that, like *ryy*, it may be used to question a non-predicative element of a clause. Other glosses which he provides for *ryy* also bear some resemblance to meanings that I would include for *châj mâj*: ‘confirm my assumption’ or ‘confirm my understanding of what you have just said’ (208). I have sometimes translated *châj mâj* as ‘right’ because it appears to seek confirmation that knowledge is mutually shared.

Ná?, which Noss puts in the same distribution class as *ryy* and *châj mâj*, is described as a variant of *naa* or *nâ*. He (Samrid 's story)

- (2) 111. kô sǎŋ khlyyn bon lǎŋkhaa raw kô waa
then sound (sound word) on roof I then say
‘Then there was the sound of (khlyyn) on the roof.
Then I said,

112. ?éh sǔŋsǎj ná? khâw ná?
eh suspicious FP he FP
‘Eh, (I) suspect, ná? it's him, ná?’

class are in complementary distribution. However, I have found several instances where *châj mâj* and *ná?* co-occur, suggesting that their functions in the discourse differ sufficiently to warrant their use together. Where they co-occur in my data, *ná?* always precedes *châj mâj*, as in (1).²

observes that all three forms (*naa*, *nâ*, *ná?*) are weakly stressed forms which “occur in phrase and clause final position, with slightly different meanings” (211). *Naa* “urges acceptance of the speaker's wishes or instructions” (211). *Nâ* is more insistent, without being rude. The particle which concerns us, *ná?*, Noss notes, “implies merely a weak question or request for confirmation” in final position (211). In my data, however, I have observed that *ná?* emphasizes or highlights certain kinds of information on occasion.

As illustrated in example (1), it is possible for the two particles to occur in the same clause. Contrary to what Noss (1964) suggested, it is also possible for *ná?* to occur in the same sentence more than once. I have found that *ná?* can occur at the end of a phrase and again at the end of the sentence as in (2).

The words in line 112 reflect the words of the speaker to herself when she heard sounds on her roof and thought that it was a ghost. One function which I have frequently noticed in my Thai data for *ná?* is to highlight important information and characters. Here *ná?* draws attention to the moment in the story when Samrid hears the ghost of her cousin.

The last study of final particles in Thai which I will mention here is that of Peyasantiwong (1981). Peyasantiwong notes that the main problem with previous studies is that they have tried to specify the meanings of particles independent of particular contexts. Unlike previous studies, she used tape-recorded conversational data as the basis of her analysis. In her study she emphasizes that particles are a feature of spoken language and are more characteristic of casual speech than formal speech (with the exception of status particles which occur most frequently in formal speech).

Peyasantiwong classifies final particles into three groups: status particles, question particles, and mood particles. Status particles are those particles, such as *khâ*, *kh râb*, *hâ*, *hâ?*, *cá?*, etc, which indicate the status of the speaker vis-a-vis his/her addressee.

Question particles, such as *mǎj* and *rǎy*, are added to the end of sentence to produce a yes-no question. Peyasantiwong observes that *châj mǎj* is added to the end of a sentence "to question the addressee about the truth of the sentence" (1981: 57). She also notes that the hearer is not constrained to reply to such a question because an affirmative response is always expected.

The third group of particles is mood particles, which also occur finally and generally do not have a syntactic function.

Peyasantiwong calls them 'mood particles' because they reveal the speaker's mood, emotions, or attitudes at the time of speaking. For the mood particle *ná?*, she notes twelve discourse functions (1981: 135):

- 1) It "makes declaratives milder" (an affirmative response is expected).
- 2) It marks information which may be of significance later. The speaker wants the hearer to acknowledge the fact that the message has been noted.
- 3) It "softens a contradictory utterance".
- 4) It "makes the imperative mood more gentle".
- 5) It asks for opinions.
- 6) It is used in a request for repetition of information.
- 7) It suggests "mild surprise or disbelief".
- 8) It suggests "mild reproach or criticism".
- 9) It expresses "displeasure, disappointment, or complaint".
- 10) It is used with "statements of invitation, suggestions, or mild insistence".
- 11) It suggests "minor annoyance or a threat".
- 12) It marks topics which are given emphasis.

In examining these functions I have noted that there are six general categories into which they can be placed, though many of these functions seem to relate to the way in which *ná?* mitigates the force of the speaker's utterance. The first general category is hedging. Of the functions listed above, numbers 1 (makes declaratives milder), 3 (softens contradictory utterances), and 4 (makes imperative mood more gentle) are representative of how *ná?* can hedge the force of a speaker's utterance.

The second general function expresses the speaker attitude of surprise. The function which fits into this category is 7 (mild surprise or disbelief). The third general function expresses the speaker attitude of disapproval and is illustrated in 8 (mild reproach or criticism), 9 (displeasure, disappointment, or complaint), and 11 (minor annoyance or threat).

The fourth category of functions includes the two functions which relate most directly to the presentation of information in discourse: 2 (marks information which may be of significance later in the discourse) and 12 (marks topics which are given emphasis). The two functions which are included here seem to suggest that *nâ?* serves both a cataphoric and anaphoric highlighting function in discourse. *Nâ?* operates cataphorically to highlight information which will not become relevant until a later point in the story. *Nâ?* also operates anaphorically to highlight topics which are currently relevant in the discourse.

The fifth category contains the two functions which promote the resemblance between *nâ?* and other question forms. It can be used to ask for opinions (5) and to request that information be repeated (6). Unlike the other uses of *nâ?*, in these instances a definite response is in order.

The only function described by Peyasantiwong which does not clearly fit into any of the categories named above is 10 (used with statements of invitation, suggestions, mild insistence). While it resembles my fifth category because it also demands a response (either verbal or non-verbal) or consent from the addressee, I have considered it a separate category.

In brief, studies of the final particles, *nâ?* and *châj máj*, in relatively isolated

contexts have shed little light on the 'meaning' of these particles which must be identified with their 'function in the discourse'.

Peyasantiwong (1981), who bases her findings on conversational data, describes *nâ?* as a mood particle which reveals the speaker's mood or attitude at the time of speaking. She notes twelve functions for *nâ?* which I have classified into six general functions: (1) hedging, (2) expressing surprise, (3) expressing disapproval, (4) highlighting information, (5) requesting, and (6) urging. Of these many functions of *nâ?* in conversation, not all are applicable to narrative discourse. Peyasantiwong describes *châj máj* as a question particle which is added to the end of an utterance to question the addressee about the truth of the proposition.

One important, perhaps critical function of these final particles in discourse has not been discussed elsewhere. This function is that of tracking the listener's involvement and understanding. In narrative this seems to be of especial importance. One could argue that without some means of tracking the listener's understanding there could be no successful communication.

I will argue that these particles simultaneously contribute to topical cohesion by signalling information which is differentially relevant to the point of the story. In addition, I suggest that these two particles illustrate that speakers rely on their listeners to share expectations about the world and the social construction of talk throughout the storytelling event.

1.2 Given and new information

Prince's (1981) discussion of given and new information is a useful categorization which I have employed to clarify the func-

tions of these two particles in oral narratives. The two types of new information which Prince refers are 'brand new' and those which are 'unused'. Unused information refers to information which the speaker assumes is known to the addressee, but which is not in his consciousness at the time of speaking.

Given information includes information which is present in the immediate context of utterance ('situationally evoked') as well as information which has been mentioned explicitly in the text ('textually evoked') Prince also discusses 'inferrable' information which the speaker believes the addressee can infer from already evoked information.

In Table 1.1 I compare how these particles are used in clauses which contain either new ('brand new' or 'unused') or given ('textually evoked') information. The information which I have evaluated as either given or new is the proposition itself rather than the noun phrase. In the case of narrative clauses, the propositional event may either be new, in which case it is being introduced for the first time into the story, or it may be given. Narrative events which are given include those which have been mentioned at least once before in the text. I have noted elsewhere (Neill 1988) that Thai speakers sometimes repeat a narrative clause as a means of reestablishing the time frame for subsequent narrative action.

Table 1.1

Final Particles and Information Structure

	Narrative clauses		Descriptive clauses	
	given	new	given	new
<i>ná?</i>	2 (1.2 %)	33 (7.1 %)	55 (6.9 %)	80 (10.9 %)
<i>châj māj</i>	8 (4.7 %)	14 (3.0 %)	38 (4.7 %)	29 (4.0 %)
no particle	159 (94.1 %)	420 (89.9 %)	710 (88.4 %)	624 (85.1 %)
Total	169 (100 %)	467 (100 %)	803 (100 %)	733 (100 %)

From this table one can notice that the final particle *ná?*, in both narrative (7.1 %) and descriptive (10.9%) clauses, is used more than twice as often as *châj māj* (3.0% and 4.0%, respectively) in clauses which contain new information. *Châj māj* is used more frequently in narrative clauses which present given information, though the frequencies are small for both particles.

Both particles occur more frequently in descriptive clauses than in narrative clauses, but there is not a noticeable difference between the two particles in relation to descriptive clauses which contain given information. It is clearly insufficient to compare these particles based on statistical means. We must examine each particle within the context of its occurrence.

1.2 The functions of *ná?* in narrative discourse

An important function which *ná?* has in all Thai discourse is that it sets phrases or clauses apart from the surrounding text. Moreover, in narrative discourse I observed that it has both a cataphoric and an anaphoric highlighting function: it topicalizes information which the listener will need to refer back to at a later point and it marks shared topics, as in the case where it underscores the evaluative focus several times throughout the story. As the topic is fore-

grounded with respect to the rest of the discourse, I suggest that *ná?* basically serves to foreground information in the text.

In the following table I list the most frequently observed functions of *ná?* in oral Thai narratives. Some of these are similar to those observed by Peyasantiwong (1981); some are clearly determined by the genre, narrative discourse. I do not intend to claim that any feature has a sole function in the discourse. Indeed, *ná?* often seems to highlight several aspects of the discourse simultaneously.

Table 1.2
The functions of *ná?*

	#	% Total
1. Transition		
Return to storyworld	34	20.0
Entry to storyworld	3	1.8
2. Summary		
Clarification	19	11.2
Paraphrase	15	8.8
Abstract	3	1.8
3. Highlighting Details		
Having future relevance	11	6.5
About time frame	12	7.0
About characters	16	9.4
4. Evaluative focus	24	14.1
5. Contrary to expectations	11	6.5
6. Other	22	12.9
Total	170	100.0

Of all the occurrences of *ná?* in these narratives, this particle corresponds most frequently with a shift from general background information to specific information

within the storyworld or on the storyline. It usually highlights the proposition pertaining to the storyworld, as in (3): (Nuy's story)

- (3) 75. sǎncháadti jaan raw raw rúu
 instinct I I know
 “My instincts knew.
76. ph⁷⁷?iig diaw n̄ŋ ná? núj k⁸ w̄ŋ
 when other moment one FP Nuj then run
 “After another moment, ná? then I ran.”

In this example the speaker returns to the storyline (line 76) after a brief side-sequence (Chodchoey 1986) in which she has explained that her instincts knew it was her father that came to her house one night (line 75). This occurrence of *ná?* is not clause final; rather, it follows the initial time phrase (“after another moment”) which sets the stage for the upcoming narrative event. This use of *ná?* after a time phrase also marks the beginning of a new episode in the narrative.

Of the only nine instances where *châj máj* is attached to a transition clause (from background to storyworld), three present new information in the story. The others repeat

information which was given earlier in the discourse. By comparison it seems that one common function of *ná?* in narrative is to highlight new information which is significant in the story.

Another pattern which I have observed in my data is that *ná?* is attached to clauses which serve to summarize or clarify a preceding clause. I have found that there are nineteen instances where *ná?* is attached to a clause which clarifies or qualifies a preceding clause. There are an additional fifteen clauses where the succeeding clause clearly paraphrases or restates an earlier clause. The next example illustrates how the particle *ná?* is used to emphasize a paraphrase.

(Eow’s story)

- (4) 83. man ? aàdcà ? pen paj dàaj 67 phr⁸ ? wàa w̄ŋ bon bàan 68
 it maybe be go can because run on house
 “It could have been because (we) were running in the
- dég w̄ŋ 69 pratuu ? aadca sàŋ 70 t̄èè mii wàa thúg
 child run door maybe shake but have that every
 house. The children were running. Maybe the door
- khon jùd ná? 71 léew mâj mii khraj w̄ŋ na? 72
 person stop FP and not have who run FP
 shook. But everyone stopped, na? And no one was
- léew thúg khon jyn jùd duu thii nâa h⁸ŋ
 and every person stand stop look at front room
 running, na? And everyone stoped and stood looking
- nán
 that
 in front of that room.”

In example (4), which takes place near the climax of Eow's story, the speaker first attempts to explain why the door began shaking (clauses 67–70): because the children were running through the house. Then in clause 71 she tells us a piece of information which contrasts with her previously stated hypothesis (introduced by contrastive *tèe* 'but'): "but everyone had stopped *ná?*". The next clause (72) is a paraphrase of the previous one ("and no one was running, *ná?*"). Both of these statements end with the particle *ná?*, which highlights them in

the text. The use of *ná?* in clause 72 also suggests that the information is contrary to what is expected because it is phrased in the negative. I will discuss this function of *ná?* more later.

There are three cases where *ná?* is adjoined to a clause which initially summarizes the general point of the story, which is what has been called the abstract (cf. Labov 1972). Here is an example of such a case where *ná?* highlights the evaluative focus of the story, presented initially in the abstract:

(Sam's story)

- (5) 4. *phǒm k̂cəə 5 tɔɔn thi* (1.67)
 I then meet time which
 "Then I met (one) the time when
5. *mii* (2.02)
 have
 there was
6. *khon khâaŋ bân sǎ*
 person side house die
 a neighbor who died
7. *ná? há? 6*
 FP PP
ná?

In this example the speaker introduces the topic of his story, which is about the time he encountered a ghost (line 4). This experience took place on the occasion of the death of a neighbor (lines 5–7).

In addition, *ná?* often highlights details which help to fill in the shape of the background context necessary for the hearer's full appreciation of the story's point. I have observed, for example, that *ná?* is sometimes attached to a clause specifying the time

frame or location of the narrative events. Often these time phrases represent the beginning of a new episode in the story. In this respect, *ná?* resembles some evaluative uses of repetition which I have discussed elsewhere (Neill 1988).

A related though separate function of *ná?* occurs when it is attached to a noun phrase rather than a main clause. It often highlights characters in the story, as in (6). (Kay's story # 1)

- (6) 5. $n\acute{a}?$ $s\acute{a}aw$ $kh\check{y}\eta$ $phy\grave{a}n$ $kh\acute{a}w$ $n\acute{a}?$ pen $khruu$
 younger sister of friend he FP be teacher

“The younger sister of his friend, $n\acute{a}?$ is a teacher.”

In (6) we observe the use of $n\acute{a}?$ to highlight a story character. In this line the speaker attempts to clarify person reference in the story. Of 170 occurrences of $n\acute{a}?$ 16 (9.4 %) serve the role of highlighting characters in these stories. The characters in a story are obviously one of its most important details. In addition, however, I would suggest that because person reference is often not clearly maintained in Thai through the choice of different lexical items (cf. Chodchoey 1986)³, Thai speakers often highlight either a full noun phrase or pronoun with $n\acute{a}?$. It is as if the speaker desired to “secure uptake” (Austin 1960) or some signal of recognition of the particular character to whom she is referring before continuing with her story.

Like Peyasantiwong (1981), I have observed that $n\acute{a}?$ occurs frequently in clauses to highlight information which will become

significant later in the discourse. Often these significant details are marked with $n\acute{a}?$ early in the story, before the listener has seen their relevance to the eventual outcome of the story characters. A related function is to signal the evaluative focus of stories which is usually presented initially, as in (5), and may be highlighted a number of times throughout the story.

One final function to be mentioned here is that $n\acute{a}?$ is used in clauses containing information which is in contrast with the expectations that have been created by the speaker in the story. As there is an element of surprise in those clauses which present unexpected information, this function of $n\acute{a}?$ resembles a similar function noted by Peyasantiwong for conversational uses of $n\acute{a}?$. Here the role of $n\acute{a}?$ differs sharply from that of $ch\grave{a}j$ $m\acute{a}j$, as I will discuss further below.

(Na's story #2)

- (7) 105. $l\acute{e}ew$ $k\hat{y}$ $ly\grave{a}$ $krap\grave{a}w$ 69

and then remain conductor

“And then all that was left was the conductor.

106. $r\acute{i}ag$ $r\acute{i}ag$ $s\grave{a}ml\check{y}\eta$ $n\acute{a}?$ $ch\acute{u}a\eta$ $n\acute{a}n$ $s\grave{a}ml\check{e}a$ maa

call call taxi FP period that taxi come

(He) called, called a taxi, $n\acute{a}?$ During that time a taxi came.

107. $m\acute{a}j$ mii $khraj$ $c\check{y}d$ $l\check{e}aj$ $na?$ 70 ph $bee\check{b}$ $moon\eta$ hen

not have who stop EMP FP when like look see

There was no one who would stop, $n\acute{a}?$ $na?$ When (they)

$khon$ 71

person

like had seen the person, ..”

In example (7) there are two instances of *ná?*. In line 106 *ná?* occurs at the end of a narrative clause which marks a return to the storyline. Then in line 107 there is another occurrence of *ná?* which highlights unexpected information (“There was no one who would stop, *ná?*”). The reason that we know that this is unexpected is because it is phrased in the negative. In his discussion of evaluation in narrative, Labov (1972) observes that negatives express the defeat of an expectation. Tannen (1979: 170) also notes that “a negative statement is made only when its affirmative was expected”.

In summary, I have found that *ná?* has many functions in narrative discourse. Of the functions which I have presented here, some are relevant on a local discourse level while others have a more global discourse function. In Schiffrin’s discussion of discourse markers in English (1987), she notes that these markers establish contextual coordinates on different planes in the discourse. Similarly, I observed that *ná?* indexes the location of the utterance within its emerging context.

From the perspective of the discourse as a whole, some propositions are more central to the story’s main idea (the point) than others. I suggested that *ná?* frequently highlights details which become significant at a later point in the story. It also frequently underlines the general evaluative focus of a story.

On the local level, *ná?* corresponds to shifts in the discourse from non-storyworld to storyworld propositions. It also occurs following statements of clarification, e.g. paraphrases, which specify a preceding clause.

Another kind of information which *ná?* highlights is information which contrasts with the speaker’s (and/or hearer’s) expectations.

This function I suggest contrasts with a primary function of *châj máj* in narrative texts which is to build on listener involvement by making reference to shared background knowledge. The use of *ná?* to highlight contrastive information seems to be both a local and a global discourse function. On the local level, it sets apart an event or events from their immediate context or frame as being strange or unusual. On the global level, the highlighted event contrasts with the larger socio-cultural frame within which the story occurs.

1.3 The functions of *châj máj* in narrative discourse

The particle *châj máj* where it occurs in conversation has been described as a question marker which signals that confirmation is sought about the truth of the previous statement. Peyasantiwong (1981) and others have noted that as a question form it does not require a response, since an affirmative answer is always expected.

The most important role of *châj máj* in oral narratives is to acknowledge the sort of shared expectations which are critical in the presentation of any story. These expectations naturally evolve out of the interaction based on the information which is shared between speaker and audience. Two kinds of information contribute to these expectations: information which is shared outside of the discourse (Prince’s (1981) “unused” information) and information which has been previously mentioned in the discourse (Prince’s (1981) ‘textually evoked’ information). *châj máj* occurs following both of these kinds of information.

Shared information is that which is widely known, such as the names of cities

and provinces or other background facts which the listener demonstrates some knowledge of. By mentioning something in the discourse, it also becomes information which both speaker and listener share. It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that this particle serves these related functions.

The next table presents my findings on the relation of *châj mâj* to shared information.

Table 1.3

Final Particles and Shared Information

	Unused	Textually evoked	Brand New	Total
<i>châj mâj</i>	8 (23.5%)	46 (4.7%)	35 (3.0%)	89
<i>ná?</i>	3 (8.8%)	57 (5.9%)	110 (9.4%)	170
no particle	23 (67.7%)	869 (89.4%)	1021 (87.6%)	1913
Total	34 (100%)	972 (100%)	1166 (100%)	2172

In this table we see that of the clauses in these narratives which contain information which is shared based on mutual background knowledge between speakers and listeners ('unused'), 23.5% are followed by the particle *châj mâj*. Only 8.8% are followed by *ná?*. Once again, however, the frequencies are quite low. Both *ná?* and *châj mâj* occur following information which has been previously mentioned in the discourse.

In my discussion of *ná?* I observed that this particle was sometimes used to highlight the evaluative focus which might be mentioned several times throughout the narrative. As

Once again I have used Prince's (1981) terms. I have included my findings pertaining to new (i.e. 'brand new') information as well to contrast the role of *ná?* in the information structure with the role of *châj mâj*. *Ná?*, as one can see in the table, occurs more frequently than *châj mâj* following clauses which contain new information.

a result, *ná?* is more strictly evaluative than *châj mâj* because it underscores details which are useful in guiding the listener's interpretation toward the point of the story. When *châj mâj* occurred following previously mentioned information, it generally did not serve this evaluative function.

I have observed that *châj mâj* acknowledges shared knowledge between one or more characters within the story, as in the following example. In this scene from Meow's story the main character, (the speaker's uncle) and the speaker's mother have just arrived at the residence of a psychic (referred to as a "doctor").

(8) 35. t̃ẽ m̃ ʔ̃ th̃i ñãñ t̃h̃ãñ ñãj 23 p̃h̃ ʔ̃ p̃ãj t̃h̃ỹñ ñã? 24

but doctor who sit way inner when go to FP

"But a doctor with psychic powers. When (they) had

jãñ mẫj t̃h̃ãñ p̃h̃ũd̃ ʔ̃ãr̃ãj l̃ə̃j 25

yet not in time speak what EMP

arrived, ná? there wasn't even time to speak.

36. ñĩ k̃ãm̃l̃ãñ m̃ĩi k̃h̃r̃ə̃? châj mâj ñĩ

this CONT have bad luck FP this

'(You) are having bad luck, *châj mâj*'"

In the words of the psychic in line 36, (“You are having bad luck *châj māj*”), he demonstrates his powers by acknowledging that he recognizes what is going on without being told. The use of *châj māj* reinforces the interpretation of this particle as a signal that information is mutually shared, whether by the speaker and her audience or by story characters.

(Na’s story #1)

- (9) 43. *ság phág nỳn*
just rest one
“After a little while
44. *kô phajaa jaam lyyim taa châj māj*
then try open eye FP
then (I) tried to open my eyes, *châj māj*”

In this example the speaker notes that after hearing the strange noise as she slept she tried to open her eyes. Because we know that she slept with her eyes closed, one would infer that she would respond to this disturbance by awakening, i.e. opening her eyes. This example illustrates how *châj māj* serves to evoke shared expectations.

I noted before that one function of *na?* which differs sharply from uses of *châj māj* is that the former often indicates surprising or unexpected information. I am suggesting that *châj māj*, by contrast, builds on hearer expectations by requesting that the hearer reflect on a wider shared context in which the speaker’s words make sense.

The telling of any story requires some degree of cooperation on the part of speaker and listeners as they negotiate the point of a story and its appropriateness to the conversa-

Although it may be clear why *châj māj* is used to signal shared and previously mentioned events in the story, there are some cases where *châj māj* is used following clauses which present information which is new to the audience. Let us look at one such example. This example is taken from the story told by Na about an experience which she had one night as she slept. She was awoken by a strange sound which caused her head to ache.

tional context. I suggest that the telling of stories which are intended to illustrate fear or excitement require even more cooperation for the reason that the speaker cannot actually produce those same emotions in his audience. Through shared images a speaker can create a sense of involvement on the part of the listener (cf. Tannen 1987).

There seems to be a polarity in the narratives which I have analyzed between the reliance on shared expectations and a departure from expectations which produces surprise. These two processes are represented by the two particles which I have analyzed here: *châj māj* and *nà?*.

1.4 Contributions to social interaction

As I noted elsewhere (Neill 1988), I have observed that some features of narrative discourse contribute to the conversational

exchange as well as to the presentation of the story. The significance of these final particles to the conversational interactions in which these stories occurred relates to the fact that they acknowledge the presence of a listener. As I noted earlier, both particles have been described as question particles (cf. Bhamoraput 1972, Noss 1964). Noss (1964) observes that in conversational uses both particles acknowledge that some reaction is expected from the hearer. When they occur in narrative discourse, however, a response from the listener is not required. In spite of the fact that they are rhetorical, it is not unusual for the listener to offer some kind of feedback or remark after either particle. Of the two particles, *châj máj* is followed by a verbal response more frequently than *ná?* (21.3% for *châj máj*, 11.1% for *ná?*).

Based on previous analyses which suggest that these particles carry the force of questions, I suggest that the use of *ná?* and *châj máj* reflect the speaker's adherence to an exchange, or turn-taking format (cf. Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Stubbs 1983), whereby the current speaker selects the next speaker. Because they occur in phrase and clause final position, these particles coincide with widely recognized "transition relevance places" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974).

As the second speaker, who is selected by the first speaker's question, does not respond beyond simple acknowledgement, we can be sure that the participants in this conversation are operating within a larger frame of interaction which supercedes the local turn management structure. This larger frame is the storytelling event itself, within which roles of speaker and listener are

clearly identified and maintained up to the point when the speaker concludes his story.

In my data, the story's conclusion is generally signalled by a coda as well as a longer pause (see Neill 1988). It seems that the listener waits for both semantic and interactional cues before reclaiming an equal footing in the conversation with the storyteller. In doing so, the listener demonstrates her adherence to the role of listener in the participation framework (Schiffrin 1987). In using these particles, the speaker also ratifies the listener's role (Schegloff 1911).

In addition to signalling continued adherence to a basic exchange structure (Schiffrin 1987), these two final particles serve another important function: they track listener understanding and involvement. I noted that *na?* often follows noun phrases which introduce (or re-introduce) story characters. I suggested that Thai speakers probably do this in order to highlight reference which may become confused due to the same pronoun. I suggest that this may be true for other uses of *ná?* as well. Because clauses which contain *ná?* frequently introduce new information which may have significance at a later point, the role of this particle seems to be to track hearer understanding of important details.

Châj máj, on the other hand, typically follows clauses which contain shared or expected information. By building on shared cultural knowledge and expectations, the speaker creates further involvement by the audience in her story (see Tannen 1987).

1.5 Conclusions

In this paper I have shown how two final particles in Thai function in the context of spoken narratives. Earlier studies of these

final particles have proved inadequate when they did not refer to specific contexts of occurrence. Examined in the context of oral narratives, I found that *náʔ* serves many functions.

I have found that *náʔ* serves both a cataphoric and an anaphoric foregrounding function in the discourse. It sometimes highlights details which have significance at a later point in the story. It may also underline the general evaluative focus several times throughout the story.

I noted that where *châj mâj* occurs it seeks to confirm understanding based on the listener's own knowledge of the real world or of the story situation. I observed that *châj mâj* was used frequently in clauses which contain shared background knowledge as well as in clauses which contain information already mentioned in the text. I suggested that the clauses which contain *châj mâj* tend to evoke expectations which provide a socio-cultural frame within which the narrative events are interpretable. These expectations are the norm from which an unusual event

deviates. This, after all, is what makes a story worth telling.

I suggested that use of both particles illustrates the importance of expectations in the telling of a story. While *châj mâj* highlights background information which serves as the frame of socio-cultural expectations for the narrative events, *náʔ* often highlights a break in that frame. The use of *châj mâj* reminds us of the role of social values and expectations in the storytelling process. A storyteller relies on his or her audience to be able to draw on their mutually shared set of beliefs in order to understand why this set of events constitutes a story. Shared expectations about what is relevant to a particular social interaction also contribute to the story's shape.

By acknowledging the audience, these particles serve to involve listeners at every step. The frequent use of these particles in Thai conversational narrative is supporting evidence for the claim that storytelling, like conversation, is an interactional achievement (cf. Schegloff 1981).

Notes

1. This paper is based in part on research performed in 1984 in Bangkok, Thailand with the support of a Fulbright-Hays Award.
2. I have used the system of transcription employed in Haas (1964). The line numbers represent storylines which are based on pause breaks (see Neill 1988). The subscripts indicate clause numbers.
3. *Khâw*, for example, is used for all third person referents, singular and plural, male or female. In the case of one speaker, she also refers to herself (first person singular) as *khâw*.

The Author

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