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# NewSit - an “aspectual” category in SEA languages

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CRLAO/EHESS

24.6.2015

## Observation:

A verb meaning 'finish' (or rather 'be finished') tends to have grammatical functions in SEA languages (*lé:w, jêw, pi/bi, həɽj, ...*)

These functions are described variously as

PERFECT

PAST

PERFECTIVE

'already'

...

## Question:

What can we do about those grammaticalized 'finish' markers?

Aspect?

Tense?

Something else?

What?

## Aspect theory - general assumptions

Aspectuality is about boundaries and phases of States of Affairs

Distinction between *lexical aspect* and *grammatical aspect*

(not accepted by all authors)

These types of aspect interact in systematic ways

## Lexical aspect (actionality, aktionsart, situation aspect):

Part of the semantics of the verb or the collocation of a verb with an object

Language-specific tests are applied to determine aktionsart of a given V

### ***Major distinctions:***

telic vs. atelic, dynamic vs. stative, punctual vs. durative

## Grammatical aspect (viewpoint aspect):

- Grammatical category expressed morphologically or periphrastically
- Expresses the inner temporal structuring of the event described
- Two or three main categories with sub-categories:

Perfective	<i>inchoative, completive, ...</i>
Imperfective	<i>progressive, habitual, ...</i>
Perfect	<i>experiential, resultative, ...</i>
- Some languages express only certain sub-categories
- Grammatical aspect is frequently linked to the expression of tense

**The grammatical aspect categories are mutually exclusive**



# Interaction of lexical and grammatical aspect

## Phases and boundaries

state	'be clever'	_____φ_____
atelic activity	'eat'	-----φ-----
telic activity	'eat an apple'	-----φ----- τ
initial-transformative	'hide'	τ -----φ-----
punctual	'arrive'	τ

Imperfective chooses (highlights) phase ---φ---(τ) *She **is eating** an apple.*

Perfective chooses (highlights) boundary (-----)τ *She **ate** an apple.*

Perfect adds phase after final boundary (-----τ)\_φ\_ *She **has eaten** an apple.*

## **Problem for aspectual analysis in SEA:**

**Aspect in SEA languages does not always fit into the frameworks suggested cross-linguistically for different reasons:**

- The distinction of Aktionsart types is far from clear
- Aspectual values are often combined with modal and manner values
- Aspect is not an obligatory category, but has pragmatic besides semantic functions

## Lexical aspect in SEA languages?

### Thai

*nǎŋ.suǐ:*      *lêm*      *ní:*      *c<sup>h</sup>án*      *ʔà:n*      *lɛ́:w.*  
book            CL            PROX      1SG      read      finished  
'I have (already) read this book.'

*Default interpretation: 'read a book' as telic PRED*

→ **The speaker has read the whole book.**

**But:** Telicity of the verb-object collocation can be canceled by context:

...    *tè:*            *ʔà:n*      *dâj*      *k<sup>h</sup>ɛ́:*      *k<sup>h</sup>ruîŋ*    *nuìŋ.*  
...    but            read      get      extent    half      one  
'... but I finished only half of it.'

Telicity can be expressed overtly by an appropriate V2:

<i>nǎŋ.suǐ:</i>	<i>lêm</i>	<i>ní:</i>	<i>c<sup>h</sup>án</i>	<i>ʔà:n</i>	<i>còp</i>	<i>lé:w.</i>
book	CL	PROX	1SG	read	end	NSIT

‘I have read this book to the end.’

\* ... *tè:*      *ʔà:n*      *dâj*      *k<sup>h</sup>ê:*      *k<sup>h</sup>ruîŋ*      *nuìŋ.*  
 ... but      read      get      extent      half      one  
 ‘... but I finished only half of it.’

**The collocation *ʔà:n nǎŋ.suǐ:* ‘read a book’ is not telic in Thai, but can be made telic by the addition of the V2 *còp* ‘end, conclude’.**

## Grammatical aspect in SEA languages?

Mon *ʔa* 'go'

*dɛh*     *k<sup>h</sup>ʔt*     *ʔa*     *raʔ*.  
3SG     die     go     FOC  
'He died.'

→ *ʔa* = **COMPLETIVE**

*dɛh*     *k<sup>h</sup>ʋh*     *ʔa*     *raʔ*.  
3SG     good     go     FOC  
'He got/is getting better.'

→ *ʔa* = **INCHOATIVE**

*dɛh*     *hɔm*     *ʔa*     *ʔt*     *ʔa*     *nədi*     *raʔ*.  
3HUM     speak     go     about     two     hour     FOC  
'He went on talking for about two hours.'

→ *ʔa* = **CONTINUOUS**

***ʔa* can be used to highlight a phase or a boundary → it is neither a perfective nor an imperfective marker**

## Grammatical functions of ‘finished’

**Shan:** *jêw* ‘finish’ (data from Sao Tern Moeng 1995)

*mén*     *má*     *jêw.*  
3SG     come     finished  
‘S/he has (already) come.’

τ φ

*mén*     *hû*     *jêw.*  
3SG     know     finished  
‘S/he knows it (now).’

φ

*jò*                     *sǎ*             *lǒŋ*             *má*     *jêw.*  
INTERJ             tiger     big     come     finished  
‘Here comes the big tiger!’

φ

Cushing (1914:528):

“ωδ̄ [jêw] to be done, finished; *part.* denoting the past; *also* the completion of the beginning of an act.”



*mén*    *ʔəm*    *má*    *jêw.*  
 3SG    NEG    come    finished  
 ‘S/he is not coming after all, he will not be coming anymore.’

φ

*sêm.pó*    *tě*    *kwà*    *jêw*    *há.*  
 already    FUT    go    finished Q  
 ‘Are you going already?’

τ

*mén*    *má*    *jêw*    *jew.*  
 3SG    come    finished YAW  
 ‘S/he has (already) come.’

τ (φ)

*má*    *hət*    *jêw*    *jew.*  
 come    arrive    finished YAW  
 ‘S/he has already arrived.’

τ (φ)

*huǎŋ*    *jêw*    *jew.*  
 long.time    finished YAW  
 ‘It has been a long time.’

φ

**Thai:** *lɛ̀:w* ‘perfect, past, perfective’ - or what?

Functions of *lɛ̀:w* according to previous studies:

- Completive (‘has finished doing, has done’)
- Inchoative (‘has started doing’)
- Imminent (‘is about to do’)
- New situation (‘is doing now, wasn’t doing before’)
- General perfective (‘has done’)
- Anterior (‘has finished doing’)
- Sequential (‘and then’)

*kin kʰâ:w lɛ̀:w.*  
eat rice LEEW

‘I have eaten.’  
‘I am eating now.’  
‘I am going to eat now.’

*mâj kin lɛ̀:w.*  
NEG eat LEEW

‘I don’t eat anymore.’  
‘I’m not eating anymore.’  
‘I’m not going to eat anymore.’

## Perfective? Anterior? Perfect? 'Already'?

*p<sup>h</sup>õm rú: lɛ:w.*  
1SG.M know LEEW  
'I know.'

*man di: lɛ:w.*  
3 good LEEW  
'It's good now.'

*k<sup>h</sup>ǎw pen ʔa:ca:n lɛ:w.*  
3HUM be teacher LEEW  
'He is a teacher now.'

*p<sup>h</sup>û:t p<sup>h</sup>a:sǎ: t<sup>h</sup>aj pen lɛ:w.*  
speak language Thai be LEEW  
'She can speak Thai now.'

*raw dâj ráp cõt.mǎ:j cà:k k<sup>h</sup>un lɛ:w.*  
1PL get receive letter from 2 LEEW  
'We have (\*already) received your letter.'

Thiengburanatham (Thai *lǎw*: between Tense and Aspect; 2014, CLAO)

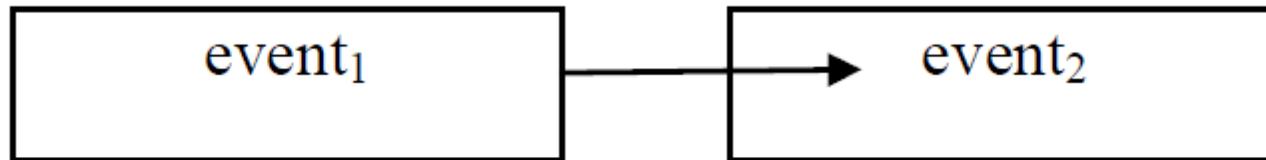


FIGURE 1 *A transition from one event to another*



FIGURE 2 *The relation of support*



(6a) *ʔâaw, Pìtì paj talàat léew rǽtí k<sup>h</sup>á*  
oh Piti go market already or PT  
'Oh, Piti has gone to the market?'

(6b) *ʔâaw, Pìtì paj talàat rǽtí k<sup>h</sup>á*  
oh Piti go market or PT  
'Oh, Piti went to the market?'



(11) \**lôok*    *mŭn*    *rôɔp*    *tuaʔeeŋ*    *léew*  
world    revolve    around    itself    **already**

‘The world revolves around itself already.’

(12) \**kaa*    *sŭi*    *dam*    *léew*  
crow    color    black    **already**

‘Crows are black already.’



(15a) Ref: [http://www.elib-online.com/doctors3/child\\_study02.html](http://www.elib-online.com/doctors3/child_study02.html)

<i>lûuk</i>	<i>sòɔp</i>	<i>tòk</i>		<i>t<sup>h</sup>am</i>	<i>ɲaj</i>	<i>dii</i>
son	test	fail		do	Q	good

'My son failed the exam. What should I do?'

(15b)	<i>??lûuk</i>	<i>sòɔp</i>	<i>tòk</i>	<i>léɛw</i>		<i>t<sup>h</sup>am</i>	<i>ɲaj</i>	<i>dii</i>
	son	test	fail	<b>already</b>		do	Q	good

'My son failed the exam already. What should I do?'



(16b) ??wan      kòɔn      k<sup>h</sup>amooj      k<sup>h</sup>hîn      bâan      raw      léɛw  
 day      before      thief      ascend      house      is      already  
 ‘A burglar already entered my house the other day.’

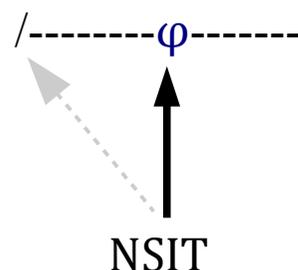
(17a) Ref: *Free conversation*  
 ??k<sup>h</sup>ɔmp<sup>h</sup>íwtâə      Mɛɛrûi      hǎaj      léɛw  
 computer      Mary      lose      already  
 ‘Mary’s computer was already lost.’

(17b) k<sup>h</sup>ɔmp<sup>h</sup>íwtâə      Mɛɛrûi      hǎaj  
 computer      Mary      lose  
 ‘Mary’s computer was lost.’

(18) \*k<sup>h</sup>ont<sup>h</sup>ai      kin      k<sup>h</sup>âaw      léɛw  
 Thai.people      eat      rice      already  
 ‘Thai people have eaten rice.’

## NSIT as SEA aspectual category

*lɛːw, jɛːw* and similar lexemes in SEA languages, often < ‘finished’ describe a situation after a change of situation → label NSIT (‘New Situation’)



The change of situation **does not have to be a semantically inherent boundary**

The change of situation can be **the beginning or end of the described situation**

The change of situation can be **any crucial point during the described situation**

The change is backgrounded, **NSIT highlights the following phase**

NSIT is not compatible with **situations without possible beginning**

In certain contexts NSIT can lead to a **perfective- or perfect-like reading**



## Application of NSIT

*mén*      *má*      *jêw.*  
3          come      NSIT                      **highlights phase after change [-come]→[+come]**

*mén*      *hû*      *jêw.*  
3SG      know      NSIT                      **highlights phase after change [-know]→[+know]**

*mén*      *ʔèm*      *má*      *jêw.*  
3SG      NEG      come      NSIT                      **highlights phase after change [+come]→[-come]**

*tě*      *kwà*      *jêw*      *há.*  
FUT      go      NSIT      Q                      **highlights phase after change [-will go]→[+will go]**

**[+V]** may describe the **intention/possibility to V** or the **situation of V**



*p<sup>h</sup>ǝm rú: lɛ:w.*  
1SG.M know NSIT  
'I know now.'

**[-know]→[+know]**

*man di: lɛ:w.*  
3 good NSIT  
'It's good now.'

**[-good]→[+good]**

*k<sup>h</sup>ǎw pen ʔa:ca:n lɛ:w.*  
3HUM be teacher NSIT  
'He is a teacher now.'

**[-be]→[+be]**

*p<sup>h</sup>û:t p<sup>h</sup>a:sǎ: t<sup>h</sup>aj pen lɛ:w.*  
speak language Thai be NSIT  
'She can speak Thai now.'

**[-speak]→[+speak]**

*raw dâj ráp còt.mǎ:j cà:k k<sup>h</sup>un lɛ:w.*  
1PL get receive letter from 2 NSIT  
'We have received your letter.'

**[-receive]→[+receive]**

## NSIT highlights phase, implies boundary

### Thai

*k<sup>h</sup>ǎw*    *pen*    *ʔa:ca:n*    *tâŋ.tè:*    *pi:*    *sǎ:ŋ cèt*    *lɛ:w.*  
3HUM    be    teacher    since    year    two seven    NSIT  
'S/he has been a teacher since 2527.'

\* *k<sup>h</sup>ǎw*    *pen*    *ʔa:ca:n*    *muâ*    *pi:*    *sǎ:ŋ cèt*    *lɛ:w.*  
3HUM    be    teacher    TEMP    year    two seven    NSIT  
Intended: 'S/he became a teacher in 2527.'

**Burmese** *θí-dε* 'know'

*bε-lau?*      *ʔəjè.tɕì-ðə-lè*      *mìn θí-da*      *bɔ́.*  
INT-EQU      important-NFUT-Q      2SG know-NFUT.NML      INSIST  
'You do know how important it is.'

*bε-lau?*      *ʔəjè.tɕì-ðə-lè*      *mìn θí-bi*      *bɔ́.*  
INT-EQU      important-NFUT-Q      2SG know-NSIT      INSIST  
'You do know now how important it is.'

*mənέ.gá*      *tɕəŋɔ*      *θí-dε/-bi.*  
yesterday      1SG.M      know-NFUT/-NSIT  
'I (already) knew it yesterday.'

\*'I learned/came to know it yesterday.'



## NSIT not possible with situations without beginning

### Thai

\* *k<sup>h</sup>ǎw*    *pen*        *dèk*        *lé:w.*  
 3HUM    be            child        NSIT

\*[-be child]→[+be child]

### compare

*k<sup>h</sup>ǎw*    *pen*        *waj.rûn*        *lé:w.*  
 3HUM    be            youngster        NSIT  
 'S/he is a teenager now.'

[+be child]→[+be teenager]

*k<sup>h</sup>ǎw*    *kè:*        *lé:w.*  
 3HUM    old        NSIT  
 'S/he is old now.'

[+be young]→[+be old]

## Summary and conclusion

- **NSIT marks a situation after a change**
- **NSIT does not refer to the point of change, only to the changed situation (this does NOT mean that it ASSERTS the changed situation)**
- **The new situation is seen as expected/presupposed**  
→ the assertion is the change to the new situation, not the situation itself

or

- **The assertion of NSIT expressions is** **'change from [-SoA] to [+SoA]'**  
**'newness of [SoA]'** rather than [SoA]
  - negation naturally with '*not yet SoA*', rather than '*not SoA*'
  - [-SoA] is need as background for change
  - [SoA] is not asserted, i.e. it is presupposed
    - only expected changes are marked as NSIT
- **The use of NSIT is not obligatory → pragmatic function (contrastive, emphatic)**