

Syntactic Distribution and Communicative Function of the /kh/ Polite Particles in Thai¹

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the syntactic and pragmatic roles of the /kh/ polite particles in Thai (/khá/~khâ/ and /khráp/~khráp-phǒm/). Based on a sample of dialogues from the J.S. 100 radio program, the analysis shows that the /kh/ particles are *discourse markers* that operate simultaneously on both the syntactic and pragmatic levels. Syntactically, they can occur alone or after a word, a group of words, a clause, or a complete sentence. Pragmatically, they are used most in consultative style and mark politeness in interpersonal communication, which can be divided into two dichotomous parts: *giving* and *demanding*.

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งวิเคราะห์บทบาททางวากยสัมพันธ์และวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ของคำอนุภาคสุภาพ “ค” ในภาษาไทย ซึ่งได้แก่ คำว่า “คะ~ค่ะ” และ “ครับ~ครับผม” ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ได้มาจากบทสนทนาทางวิทยุ จ.ส.100 ผลการวิเคราะห์แสดงว่าคำอนุภาค “ค” เป็นตัวบ่งชี้สัมพันธ์สารซึ่งทำหน้าที่ทั้งในระดับวากยสัมพันธ์และวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ ในด้านวากยสัมพันธ์ อนุภาค “ค” สามารถปรากฏตามลำพัง หรือตามหลังคำ กลุ่มคำ ประโยคย่อย หรือประโยคสมบูรณ์ ในทางวัจนปฏิบัติศาสตร์ อนุภาค “ค” ใช้มากที่สุดในวัจนลีลาหรือและบ่งชี้ความสุภาพในการสื่อสารระดับบุคคลสัมพันธ์ ซึ่งแบ่งเป็นสองส่วน คือ การให้ และการเรียกร้อง

1. Introduction

The final particles that seem to occur most frequently in Thai conversations are /khá/ or /khâ/, used by women, and /khráp/ or /khráp-phǒm/², used by men. They are normally the final elements in an utterance. If there are several final particles co-occurring, these particles will follow all the other final particles. They mark several degrees of respect the speaker wants to show to the addressee and are used among common people (that is, not used by monks or when talking to royalty). Since they all begin with a /kh/ sound, I will generally call them /kh/ polite particles.

Previous studies that deal with Thai word classes treat the /kh/ polite particles as members of the class of *particles* or *final particles*, which are placed at the end of a sentence. Haas (1964: xxii) defines “particles” as sentence-ending words that “fall into two classes, those indicating mode and those connoting the social status and sometimes the sex of the speaker.” The /kh/ polite particles belong to the latter category. Bhamoraput (1971) calls these particles “status particles” because they indicate the social status and the sex of the speaker. Even though she does not explain how these particles connote social status, we may infer this from the fact that the /kh/ particles are more likely to be used by a speaker whose social status is lower than the hearer’s, rather than the other way round. Noss (1964: 55, 200, 215-216) regards the /kh/ particles as a kind of “sentence particle”. According to him, /khráp/, /khá/ and /khâ/ are used for speaking to a superior, elder or non-intimate equal. As for /khráp-phǒm/, it is used by a male speaker for speaking to a highly superior, revered or noble personage. Panupong (1989: 62-63) explains that all the /kh/ particles are used by a subordinate speaker to a person of a higher status to show respect.

Even though a number of studies recognize /kh/ particles as sentential elements, as the above review suggests, in real usage these particles do not play a significant role at the sentence level but are essential in interpersonal discourse. Booppanimit (1996), Vasavarnond (1996) and Suwannoy (1998: 84-87) regard these particles as *discourse markers*, the main function of which is to show politeness and turn-taking. However, their analyses seem to ignore the syntactic distribution of these particles.

Discourse markers have been found to serve numerous pragmatic functions. According to Otsman (1981: 39-40, 1982: 150-152), discourse markers may operate simultaneously on two levels; on the structural level, they may serve a clausal or a textual function, and on the pragmatic level, they may serve an interactive or an attitudinal purpose. Schifffrin (1987: 31-32) defines discourse markers “in relation to *unit of talk*, rather than a more finely defined unit such as sentence, proposition, speech act, or tone unit”. According to her, discourse markers often precede sentences-- i.e., syntactic configurations of an independent clause plus all clauses dependent on it-- but they are independent of sentential structure. In other words, removal of a marker from its sentence initial position leaves the sentence structure intact.

Discourse markers that are initial elements of a unit of talk are, for example, *well, I mean, oh, and, because, you know, you see*, in English (see Fraser, 1980, 1990; Ostman, 1981; Edmondson, 1981; Schifffrin, 1987) and *¿me entiendes?* “do you understand”, in Spanish (see Chodorowska, 1997). Final particles, including /kh/ polite particles in Thai, are examples of discourse markers occurring in the final position of a unit of talk (see Buppanimit, 1996).

It is important to note that previous studies dealing with polite particles in Thai are split into two sides: those that consider them within the unit of “sentence” and ignore their pragmatic function, and those that look at their function in conversational discourse without paying attention to how they are used or in what context they normally occur. Neither approach seems to be able to yield a complete picture of such particles. This study thus aims to fill in the gap and serve as an interface between the syntactic and pragmatic approaches to final particles, a kind of discourse marker in Thai.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the syntactic and pragmatic roles of the /kh/ particles in Thai; i.e., their syntactic distribution and their communicative function in usage.

The data on which the analysis is based are from a corpus of approximately 70,000 words in the form of dialogues purposely sampled from the J.S.100 radio program.³

2. Politeness conveyed through the use of /kh/ particles

Not only linguists but any native speaker of Thai would regard the /kh/ particles as “polite” particles. The word for “polite” in Thai is /suphâap/, the meaning of which is composed of the following semantic features derived from the denotations of the word given in two dictionaries of Standard Thai (Royal Institute 1982: 81, Haas 1964: 464, 478, 611).

/riâpróoy/	[tidy, in good order]
/wónyoon/	[gentle]
/prâphrítii/	[well-behaved]
/lamunlamôn/	[good-mannered]

The /kh/ particles signify politeness on the part of the speaker; they make his/her speech sound ordered (intentionally thoughtful) and gentle. This also implies that he/she is well-behaved and good-mannered. To be polite in Thai also means that one has to talk appropriately to one's status, especially female or male status. So the language has two sets of these particles; one for a female speaker and the other for a male speaker. Each set is exclusive and conveys femininity or masculinity on the part of the speaker.

In this study two forms of female polite particles are found; i.e., /khá/ and /khâ/, which are in complementary distribution. Broadly speaking, the former is used in the “demanding function” of conversational exchange and the latter in the “giving function” (see details in 4.2). As for polite particles for a male speaker, two forms are found: /khráp/ and /khráp-phǒm/. They are not in complementary distribution and the reasons for the choice of either are not clear in the data (see 4.2 for details).

It may be interesting to note that many languages do not have particles such as the /kh/ polite particles in Thai to mark politeness. Therefore, they must use other devices, such as inflectional honorifics in Japanese (Ide, 1999), modality in English (Collins, 1999), discourse markers (e.g., *¿me entiendes?*) and diminutives in Spanish (Chodorowska, 1997; Mendoza, 1999), and certain paralinguistic features in several languages. It seems that /kh/ particles in Thai have no equivalent in English. That is why an utterance in Thai with or without them is normally translated into the same utterance in English

(see examples (4) and (5)). In some contexts, however, they may be translated into "please", such as in invitations and requests (see examples (1), (2)), or into some address terms such as "Sir" or "Madam" in English, such as in questions (see example (3)).

The following are examples of the use of /kh/ particles (i.e., female polite particle, or FPP, and male polite particle, or MPP) to convey politeness. Each example is followed by an impolite counterpart; i.e., one without such particles. Any speaker of Thai can see that without /kh/ particles, an utterance may sound brusque and thus impolite.

- (1) *Polite:* เชิญ นั่ง ค่ะ
 chœn nâŋ khâ
 invite sit FPP.
 'Will you sit down, please?'
- Impolite:* เชิญ นั่ง
 chœn nâŋ
 invite sit
 'Sit down.'
- (2) *Polite:* ขอ น้ำ หน่อย ครับ
 khwǎw náam nǔy khráp
 ask water little MPP
 'Can I have some water, please?'
- Impolite:* ขอ น้ำ หน่อย
 khwǎw náam nǔy
 ask water little
 'Can I have some water?'
- (3) *Polite:* ท่าน จะ รับ กาแฟ ไหม ค่ะ
 thān cà rǎp kafee mǎy khâ
 you will take coffee Q. FPP
 'Would you like coffee, Sir?'
- Impolite:* ท่าน จะ รับ กาแฟ ไหม
 thān cà rǎp kafee mǎy
 you will take coffee Q.
 'Would you like coffee?'
- (4) *Polite:* a. พบ เห็น ผู้บาดเจ็บ ไหม ค่ะ
 phóp hên phǔu-bàat-cèp mǎy khâ
 find see person injure Q. FPP
 'Did you see any injured person?'
- b. ไม่ พบ ครับ
 mǎy phóp khráp
 not find MPP
 'No, I didn't.'
- Impolite:* a. พบ เห็น ผู้บาดเจ็บ ไหม
 phóp hên phǔu bàat-cèp mǎy
 find see person injure Q.
 'Did you see any injured person?'
- b. ไม่ พบ
 mǎy phóp
 not find
 'No, I didn't.'

- (5) *Polite:*
- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------|------|-------------|-----|
| a. | ขอบคุณ | มาก | ค่ะ | คุณนิชา | คะ |
| | khòəpkhun | mâak | khâ | khun níchaa | khá |
| | thank | very | FPP. | Khun Nicha | FPP |
| | 'Thanks very much, Khun Nicha.' | | | | |
| b. | สวัสดี | ค่ะ | | | |
| | sawətdii | khâ | | | |
| | Sawatdi | FPP | | | |
| | 'Good bye.' | | | | |
- Impolite:*
- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------|--|-------------|--|
| a. | ขอบคุณ | มาก | | คุณนิชา | |
| | khòəpkhun | mâak | | khun níchaa | |
| | thank | very | | Khun Nicha | |
| | 'Thanks very much, Khun Nicha.' | | | | |
| b. | สวัสดี | | | | |
| | sawətdii | | | | |
| | Sawasdee | | | | |
| | 'Good bye.' | | | | |

It should be noted that the "impolite" utterances above are not impolite in themselves. They are considered "impolite" because in such a context, they are *stylistically inappropriate*: they make the speaker sound superior to the addressee. This is intolerant in this particular situation in which the speaker and the hearer do not know each other well and the topic of the talk is not personal. If spoken by a superordinate to a subordinate or among friends and family members, those would be perfectly appropriate and not impolite. For instance, in examples (4) and (5), if the speaker were the hearer's close friend or a member of his family, then the impolite sentences in (4) and (5) would be considered polite. Here I will maintain that politeness is an unmarked or normal social phenomenon and that it is only when one is impolite that one will be noticed.

Another point that should be remarked on here is that the /kh/ particles are not the only devices for showing politeness in Thai even though they seem to be the most prominent ones. Other less salient devices include some other discourse markers, choice of words, expressions, sentence patterns, and paralinguistic strategies such as vowel lengthening, pitch lowering, and voice softening. However, in this paper I will be concerned only with the /kh/ polite particles.

From examples (1)-(5), we can see that /kh/ particles play an important pragmatic role. With or without them, a sentence remains grammatical but may or may not be *appropriate*. Nevertheless, to use them appropriately we need to know where to place them in an utterance. Native speakers of Thai have that kind of knowledge, which is part of their *communicative competence*; they can use the particles appropriately without consciousness. However, for non-native speakers of Thai, such words may be difficult to use. My study will practically contribute to the teaching and learning of Thai as a foreign language in addition to contributing to general theories of pragmatics.

3. Syntactic distribution of /kh/ particles in Thai

It has been generally claimed that final particles in Thai, including the /kh/ polite particles, occur in sentence-final position. My analysis of the data shows that /kh/ polite particles are not always sentence-final; they are also found to occur by themselves and in the final position of a word group or phrase either followed by other constructions or by turn taking. In a sentence, they may be in the middle or final position. The following are patterns of syntactic distribution of /kh/ particles with examples from the data. As shown below, it is not valid to say that the /kh/ polite particles are sentence-final elements, unless we define "sentence" according to Panupong (1989: 21) as any stretch of speech that is complete in itself; thus, one word can be a sentence if its meaning is complete; e.g., /mê:/ "Mother!", /niay/ "Tired! (I'm tired)". However, to avoid confusion, I prefer to reserve the word "sentence" for the traditional use in grammatical analysis. Here, I will instead use the term "utterance" following

Edmondson (1981: 55) and Chodorowska (1997: 363). The term “utterance” means the same as “unit of talk” as used by Schiffrin (1987: 31). Therefore, we can conclude that a /kh/ polite particle occurs at the end of an *utterance* or a *unit of talk* as represented structurally by a zero construction (as when the particle occurs alone), a word, a group of words, a clause, or a complete sentence (shown below as (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), respectively).

Note that a polite particle is represented by the symbol KH in Thai utterances and PP in the glosses. The symbol # is used here to mark the beginning and ending of an utterance. In (a) the polite particle itself forms an utterance. We can interpret that in (a) the utterance is in the form of zero or silence. Indeed, one of the communicative functions of a polite particle is to fill in silence (see Table 1).

It should also be noted that each utterance may be followed by other utterances spoken by the same speaker before turn-taking or followed by turn-taking. In (d) it is clear that a clause must be followed by another clause within a sentence uttered by the same speaker.

Syntactic distribution of /kh/ polite particles:

a) #_# (Occurring alone)

Example:

- (6) ค่ะ/ ครับ⁴
 #KH# (#khâ# or #khráp#)
 ‘Yes; right; O.K, etc.’

b) #WORD_# (following a single word)

Example:

- (7) สวัสดี ค่ะ/ ครับ
 #sawàtdii KH# ...
 ‘Hi; Good morning; Good afternoon, Good-bye, etc.’

- (8) ดี ค่ะ/ ครับ
 #dii KH# ...
 ‘good’

- (9) แมว ค่ะ/ ครับ
 #mæw KH# ...
 ‘(It’s) a/the cat.’

c) #GROUP_# (following a group of words)

Example:

- (10) เรื่อง นี้ ค่ะ/ครับ
 #rîaŋ nîi KH# ...
 Matter this PP
 ‘this matter...’

- (11) สำหรับ ผู้หญิง นะ ค่ะ/ ครับ
 #sāmrap phûu-yîŋ ná KH# ...
 for woman Prt. PP
 ‘for women...’

- (12)อนาคต ด้วย นะ ค่ะ/ ครับ
 #anaakhót duay ná KH# ...
 future also Prt. PP
 ‘also the future...’

- (13) บรรยากาศ เหล่า นี้ นะคะ/ครับ
 #banyaakaat laaw níi ná KH#
 atmosphere group this Prt. PP
 'these atmospheres...'

d) #CLAUSE__# (following a main clause or a subordinate clause in a sentence)

Example:

- (14) ไม่ใช่ ว่า เรา แพ้ นะคะ/ครับ แต่เรา...
 #mây chây waa raw phée ná KH# tée raw
 Not true that we be defeated Prt. PP but we
 'It's not that we were defeated, but we ...'
- (15) เป็นไปได้ ไหม นะคะ/ครับ ว่า เขา เสีย ชีวิต เพราะ...
 #pen-pay-dāy mǎy KH# waa khǎw sǎa chiiwít phró ...
 possible Q. PP that he lose life because
 'Is it possible that he died because ...?'
- (16) เพราะ คำ นี้ หรือเปล่า นะคะ/ครับ ที่ ทำให้ ขัดแย้ง กัน
 #phró kham níi rii-plaaw KH# thii tham-hây khát-yéeng kan
 because word this Q. PP that make conflict each other
 'Is it because of this word that they were in conflict with each other?'
- (17) คุณนิรันดร์ แจ้ง มา ตอน สิบ โมง ครึ่ง นะคะ/ครับ ว่า
 #khun níran cǎeng maa tawn sǐp moong khriṅ ná KH# waa
 (name) report come time ten o'clock half Prt. PP that
 'Khun Niran reported at 10.30 that ...'

e) #SENTENCE__# (following a complete sentence)

Example:

- (18) ขอ พูด อีก เรื่อง ได้ ไหม นะคะ/ครับ
 #khǔw phúut iik riang dāy mǎy KH#
 Let me speak more matter able Q. PP
 'May I talk about another matter?'
- (19) มัน ไม่ ค่อย ปลอดภัย นะคะ/ครับ
 #man mây khǔy plòot-phay KH#
 it not rather safe PP
 'It is quite unsafe.'
- (20) ผม ว่า คุณพิมพจันทร์ อย่า เพิ่ง ท้อใจ นะครับ
 #phǒm waa khun phimcan yaa phǎiṅ thǔw-cay ná KH#
 I (male) say Khun Pimchan don't just now discourage Prt. PP
 'I think that you should not be discouraged now.'

From the above examples, we may conclude that structurally polite particles, which are discourse markers in Thai, are placed at the end of an utterance. However, they are independent of sentence structure. Indeed, as Schiffirin (1987: 31-32) maintains, removal of the particles from those sentences would leave the sentence structures intact.

4. Pragmatic and communicative function of /kh/ polite particles

The data show that the /kh/ polite particles are used predominantly in *consultative style*. Following Joos (1961), I define consultative style as the form of speech used in business transactions and everyday activities among strangers or people who know each other only superficially. Broadcast conversations between non-acquaintances on the telephone, like those from the J.S.100 program, are in consultative style. This style is in the middle of the scale of five speech styles proposed by Joos (1961)--*frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate*. The fact that the /kh/ polite particles are regarded as "standard" in teaching Thai to both native and non-native speakers of Thai may be due to the fact that they are used in the style that is in the middle of the scale.

In *frozen* and *intimate* styles, the two contrasting extremes in the scale, /kh/ particles seem to be totally absent. In *formal* style, such as in report writing, academic writing, editorials, and legal writing, /kh/ polite particles are also likely to be absent, but in addresses and lectures they may occur (but very infrequently). In the *casual* style, it has been noticed that the use of /kh/ particles is rare in the speech of a person of higher status talking to his/her subordinate, but may occur to a considerable extent in the speech of subordinates talking to their superior.

In order to find out how the /kh/ particles behave pragmatically, I investigated the intention of the speaker through the meaning of the utterances and the regular occurrences of the /kh/ particles with certain key words or other constructions. The result of the analysis reveals that the /kh/ particles serve two purposes in the interpersonal function of language: *giving* and *demanding* (concepts adopted from Halliday, 1994).

According to Halliday (1994: 68), language has an interpersonal function, in which a clause is an "exchange". That is,

...either the speaker is *giving* something to the listener (a piece of information, for example) or he is *demanding* something from him. Even these elementary categories already involve complex notions: giving means 'inviting to receive', and demanding means 'inviting to give'. The speaker is not only doing something himself; he is also requiring something of the listener. Typically, therefore, an 'act' of speaking is something that might more appropriately be called an 'interact': it is an exchange, in which giving implies receiving and demanding implies giving in response.

Regarding "*giving*", the speaker uses /kh/ particles to show agreement, to fill in silence, to soften the statement he/she is making or the opinion he/she is expressing, or to add a sense of respect to formulaic expressions such as greetings and thanks (see Table 1). In short, when the speaker is on the giving side, he/she uses /kh/ particles to increase "positive politeness". According to Brown and Levinson (1990: 62), positive politeness strategies serve to imply common ground or sharing wants for the purposes of the interaction between the speaker and the hearer. The fundamental characteristics of the positive politeness strategies lie in their cooperative function. The use of /kh/ particles indeed helps to maintain cooperation between the speaker and hearer.

Regarding "*demanding*", I found that the speaker uses /kh/ particles to mitigate his/her directives, as when giving an order, coaxing, or asking a question (see Table 1). Also, when calling on a person to speak, a /kh/ particle helps to make terms of address sound less aggressive. In short, /kh/ particles bring about mitigation, and according to Fraser (1980: 344), mitigation entails politeness.

4.1 Use of /kh/ polite particles in interpersonal communication

Table 1 shows how /kh/ particles are used in interpersonal communication. Their functions are determined by particular contexts or their co-occurrences with certain key words.

Table 1: Functions of /kh/ particles

GIVING		DEMANDING	
Context	Functions	Context	Functions
1) #__# (alone)	Responding Showing agreement Filling in silence	1) #.../ná/ __#	Calling attention Demanding a response Coaxing
2) #statement __#	Giving information Expressing a thought Confirming a fact	2) #question __#	Asking questions Showing disagreement
3) #greeting __#	Starting a talk Ending a talk	3) #address __#	Inviting to speak
4) #thanking __#	Showing appreciation		

As shown in Table 1, /kh/ particles play roles in both giving and demanding. We can infer from their occurrences that politeness in interpersonal communication in Thai is expressed through units of talk identified pragmatically by certain key words or contexts; namely, some other particles such as /ná/ and question markers, terms of address, greeting, and thanking. Each particular context in which /kh/ particles appear has certain functions, which are specified in the table.

The first group of functions on the part of giving found in this study consists of **responding**, **showing agreement**, and **filling in silence**. These are evident when /kh/ particles occur by themselves (#__#). By responding, I mean giving a response when one is invited to speak or the other side of the dyad demands a response by using /ná/, or responding to a yes-no question (see Example 23b). Showing agreement means using /kh/ particles alone to create harmony in conversation, as in (26b). Occurring alone, /kh/ particles can also fill in silence in order to make the conversation continue smoothly, as in (25b, 27b).

Occurring after any kind of statement, /kh/ particles soften it when one **gives information** (21), **confirms a fact** (22b), or **expresses a thought** (28a).

Following the greeting word /sawatdii/, which means either 'Hello' or 'Good-bye', and the thanking word /khòp-khun/, /kh/ particles help make those expressions sound less abrupt when they serve as a device for **starting a talk**, **ending a talk** and **showing appreciation** after the exchange of conversation ends (see Examples 24a, 24b, and 27a).

With respect to **demanding**, a speaker of Thai uses polite particles in **calling attention**, **demanding a response**, and **coaxing**. Actually, these functions are conveyed through the particle /ná/ with which /kh/ particles occur. According to Cooke (1972), /ná/ has various forms and meanings. In general, the forms and meanings suggest 5 functions altogether. They are: (1) expressing needs, (2) encouraging or coaxing, (3) making a request, (4) persuading or forcing, (5) warning. Vasavarnond (1996: 134) found that /ná/ has phonological variation and that the basic variant of /ná/ (the form that I found in my data) has the main function of calling attention from the addressee. Bhamoraput (1972: 29) explains that /ná/ indicates a mild question, sometimes with an additional element of invitation, coaxing, or suggesting. In this study, I conclude that the use of /ná/ with /kh/ particles signifies the functions of **calling attention**, as in (21), **demanding a response** (having the sense of a mild question), as in (22a), and **coaxing**, as in (29) and (30).

A speaker is also playing the part of demanding when he/she uses /kh/ particles after a **question**, which is used for asking any kind of question (see 23) and **showing disagreement**, as in (28b).

Finally, /kh/ particles are used with terms of address, which in my data serve the function of **inviting the addressee to speak**, as in (24a).

Examples (21)-(30) illustrate how /kh/ polite particles are used in the contexts specified in Table 1.

(21) calling attention; giving information

ใน	ด้าน	นี้	นะ	คะ	ยัง	ไป	ได้	เรื่อยๆ	ค่ะ
#nay	dâan	nîi	ná	KH#	yaŋ	pay	dâay	riay-riay	KH#
in	side	this	Prt.	PP	still	go	can	steady	PP

'On this side, (the cars) can still go at a steady pace.'

(22) a: demanding a response

ช่อง	ทาง	ซ้าย	นะ	คะ
#chǝwŋ	thaŋ	sáay	ná	KH#
lane	way	left	Prt.	PP

'On the left lane, right?'

b: confirming a fact

ใช่	ค่ะ
#chây	KH#
right	PP

'Right.'

(23) a: asking a question

อุบัติเหตุ	ที่	แจ้ง	เข้า	มา	สุขุมวิท 62	ใช่	ไหม	คะ
#ubàttihèet	thîi	cēyŋ	khâw	maa	sukhūmwít 62	chây	mây	KH#
accident	which	report	enter	come	Sukhumvit 62	right	Q.	PP

'The accident that has been reported, is it on Sukhumvit 62?'

b: responding

ค่ะ
#KH#
PP

'Right.'

(24) a: inviting to speak; starting a talk

คุณ	ต้ม	คะ	สวัสดี	ค่ะ
#khun	tâm	KH #	sawàtdii	KH#
Khun	Tam	PP	Sawatdi	PP

'Khun Tam, hello.'

b: starting a talk; inviting to speak

หวัดดี	ครับ	พี่	นัตตา	ครับ
#wàtdii	KH #	phîi	náddaa	KH #
Watdii	PP	Sister	Nadda	PP

'Hi, Phii Nadda.'

(25) a: giving information

ผู้ชาย	สอง	คน	ครับ
#phûu-chaay	sǝwŋ	khon	KH#
man	two	person	PP
ขา	หัก	แขน	หัก
khâa	hàk	khǝen	hàk
leg	break	arm	break
เจ้าหน้าที่	ยัง	ไม่	มา
cháaw-nâathîi	yaŋ	mây	maa
officer	yet	not	come

'Two men, they have broken their legs and arms. No police officer has come yet.'

b: calling attention; filling in silence

ยัง นะ ค่ะ ค่ะ จะ ได้ ประสานงาน ไป ให้
 #yaŋ ná KH# KH# cà dāay prāsāangaan pay hāy#
 not yet Prt. PP PP will get coordinate go for (it)
 'Not yet. I will coordinate with the police.'

- (26) a: ผม ว่า สมัย นี้ ทุกคน ต้อง ทำงาน นาน
 #phǒm wāa samāy nīi thúk-khon tǔwŋ tham-ŋaan nàk#
 I (male) say time this everyone must work hard
 'I think nowadays everyone must work hard.'

b: showing agreement

ค่ะ
 #KH#
 PP
 'Yes.'

- (27) a: showing appreciation; ending a talk

ขอบคุณ มาก ค่ะ สวัสดี ค่ะ
 #khòpkhun māk KH# sawatdii KH#
 thank you very PP good bye PP
 'Thank you very much. Goodbye.'

-----SILENCE-----

b: filling in silence

ค่ะ มี สาย รอ อยู่ แล้ว
 #KH# mii sǎay rǔw yǔu léew#
 PP have line wait be already
 'Yes. There is another line waiting.'

- (28) a: expressing thought

เรื่อง ธรรมชาติ นี้ เรา สามารถ เอาชนะ มัน ได้ ครับ
 #rīaŋ thammachāat nīi raw sāmāat aw-chaŋá man dāay KH#
 matter nature this we can defeat it able PP
 'Nature, we can defeat it.'

b: showing disagreement

จริง เหรอ ค่ะ
 #ciŋ rǔw KH#
 real Q. PP
 'Really?'

- (29) coaxing

ผม ว่า คุณพิมพ์จันทร์ อย่า เพิ่ง ท้อใจ นะ ครับ
 #phǒm wāa khun-phimcan yāa phǒŋ thǔw-cay ná KH#
 I (male) say Khun Pimchan don't just now discourage Prt. PP
 'I think that you should not be discouraged now.'

- (30) coaxing

ถ้า ใคร พบเห็น แจ้ง กลับ ที่ คุณสุมาลี ด้วย นะ ค่ะ
 #thāa khray phǒp-hǎn cēŋ klàp thīi khunsūmaalii dūay ná KH#
 if anybody meet-see inform return at Khun Sumali also Prt. PP
 'If anybody sees (that man), please inform Khun Sumali.'

4.2 Use of female and male polite particles

The results of the analysis show that the two polite particles used by a female speaker are in complementary distribution. The particle with the falling tone, /khâ/, is used for the “giving” function, while the particle with the high tone, /khâ/, is used for the “demanding” function.

What is found in this study--that the two forms of the female polite particle are in complementary distribution--fully supports the claim that they are variants of the same word rather than two separate words, as their spellings seem to suggest (see Panupong 1989: 61; Suwannoy 1998: 84-85).

While there are two basic forms of the female polite particle (i.e., /khâ/ and /khâ/, corresponding to two written forms in Thai), there is only one basic form of the male polite particle (i.e., /khráp/, represented by one written form in Thai). Therefore, it is generally assumed that a male speaker of Thai uses the same form for both the giving and the receiving functions. My data show that this is still true, but only to some extent. I have noticed that some male speakers vary the pronunciation of /khráp/ when they use it in making a statement or showing agreement by changing the tone from the original high tone to the falling or low tone; thus, the new variants are /khráp/ and /khráp/. However, this phenomenon is rather irregular and infrequent; therefore, I do not draw any conclusions about the new forms in this paper. Further study focusing on this variation would be more revealing.

Another variant of the male polite particle found in the data is /khráp-phǒm/. It is used less frequently than /khráp/. However, the two variants seem to be interchangeable. I have not found factors affecting the choice of either. More data are needed in order to draw a conclusion about their patterns of occurrence. Moreover, what is found here does not seem to support what Noss (1964: 215) says--that /khráp-phǒm/ is used for speaking to a highly superior, reverend, or noble personage. The data show that this word is used by a man speaking to a female interlocutor in consultative style, where status is irrelevant. However, more study is needed to find out exactly how Thai males choose between /khráp/ and /khráp-phǒm/.

Table 2 below shows how variants of female and male /kh/ polite particles are used in the giving and demanding functions.

Table 2: Female and male polite particles

	GIVING	DEMANDING
FEMALE	/khâ/	/khâ/
MALE	/khráp/~khráp-phǒm/	/khráp/~khráp-phǒm/

5. Conclusion

The findings about /kh/ polite particles in Thai presented in this study confirm what Otsman (1981: 39-40, 1982: 150-152) has stated--that discourse markers operate simultaneously on two levels: *the structural level and the pragmatic level*. They also support Schiffrin (1987: 31-32) in that they are independent of sentential structure--removal of them would leave the sentence structure intact.

Syntactically, /kh/ polite particles can occur alone and after a word, a group of words, a clause, and a complete sentence. They are defined here as discourse markers that occur at the end of an utterance or a unit of talk. Pragmatically, they are used alone or with some pragmatic markers such as the particle /ná/, the statement and question markers, formulaic words as such /sawàtdii/ ‘Hello’ or ‘Good-bye’, /khòpkhun/ ‘thank you’, and terms of address. Their pragmatic function is to mark politeness in interpersonal communication, which is interpreted here as the roles of giving and demanding. With respect to giving, /kh/ polite particles are used in responding, showing agreement, filling in silence, giving information, expressing a thought, confirming a fact, starting a talk, ending a talk, and showing

appreciation. With respect to demanding, a Thai speaker uses /kh/ polite particles in calling attention, demanding a response, coaxing, asking questions, showing disagreement, and inviting the addressee to speak.

The findings also support the claim that the two female polite particles are variants of the same word, and suggest that a variant (with the falling or low tone) of the male polite particle /khráp/ is developing. The balanced distribution of the two variants of female particles between the giving and demanding parts does confirm that the two interdependent functions really exist in interpersonal communication.

Notes

1. This study is part of my research on "Parts of speech in Thai: A syntactic analysis based on a two-million-word corpus of current Thai" financially supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the *International Symposium on Linguistic Politeness: Theoretical Approaches and Intercultural Perspectives*, Chulalongkorn University, December 7-9, 1999. I am grateful to Andre Wlodarczyk, Pranee Kullavanijaya, Peansiri Vongvipanond, and Nantana Ronakiat for their comments and suggestions, which helped me improve this paper.
2. The word /khráp-phǒm/ is a compound deriving from the polite particle /khráp/ plus /phǒm/ 'I/me (for a male speaker)'.
3. The J.S. 100 radio program originated about 8 years ago with the aim of reporting traffic conditions and car accidents in Bangkok to drivers. Today, the program has been modified to serve many purposes. It also reports news and important actual events and serves as a center for reporting and locating lost people, animals and things and as a floor for discussion of interesting social issues. It is an interactive program because its content is conveyed through dialogues between the announcer and the audience, who take turns at speaking.
4. There are two female polite particles: /khá/ and /khâ/, which are in complementary distribution. The choice of either form depends on pragmatic functions, as shown in 4.2. There are also two male polite particles: /khráp/ and /khráp-phǒm/. They are interchangeable but the former is more common. Therefore, in the Thai scripts in this paper, only /khráp/ is shown.

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