“Far More Remains”: Language Play and Digital Remediation in *Lilit Phra Lo*
《帕羅賦》中的語言遊戲與數位再媒介化

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摘要

儘管《帕羅賦》（*Lilit Phra Lo*）作為文學文本已受到學界相當程度的關注，其具有歷史語境的語言遊戲如何在當代數位環境中被接觸與詮釋，則較少受到討論。本研究探討《帕羅賦》森林段落中的語言遊戲，以及其在當代數位論述中的詮釋。本文採用質性文本分析，以泰國詩學中的「阿朗甘」（*alangkan*）概念為分析框架，特別關注語義修辭（*artha-alaṅkāra*）與聲音修辭（*śabda-alaṅkāra*），分析植物名稱如何產生語義聯想，以及逐漸強化的詞彙與語音模式。本文並以目的性取樣方式選取泰國主要網路論壇 Pantip 上的相關討論，作為當代讀者接觸此一詩作的質性材料。這些討論顯示，作品敘事具有相對較高的可及性，而其歷史語言則帶來理解上的困難；同時，歷史性的語言遊戲亦能透過數位再脈絡化獲得新的互動意義。本文主張，數位可得性並不意味著不同面向的可及性彼此等同：即使面對同一個數位可得的文本，文本可及性、語義可及性、指涉知識與詩學可及性之間仍可能存在差異。數位再媒介化因此將歷史性的語言創造力置於新的條件之中，使其得以持續被接觸、理解與再脈絡化。

Abstract

Although *Lilit Phra Lo* has received substantial attention as a literary text, less consideration has been given to how its historically situated language play is encountered and interpreted in contemporary digital environments. This study examines language play in the poem’s forest sequence and its interpretation in contemporary digital discourse. Using qualitative textual analysis, it draws on the Thai concept of *alangkan*, particularly semantic (*artha-alaṅkāra*) and sonic (*śabda-alaṅkāra*) ornamentation, to analyze how botanical names generate semantic associations and increasingly intensive lexical and phonological patterning. A purposive selection of discussions on Pantip, a major Thai-language online forum, is examined as qualitative evidence of contemporary reader encounters with the poem. These discussions reveal an asymmetry between the relative accessibility of the narrative and difficulties surrounding its historical language, while also demonstrating how historical language play can acquire new interactional meanings through digital recontextualization. The study argues that digital availability does not make different dimensions of access equivalent: textual and semantic accessibility, referential knowledge, and poetic accessibility may diverge even within the same digitally available text. Digital remediation thus places historical linguistic creativity within new conditions of access, interpretation, and recontextualization.

關鍵字：《帕羅賦》、語言遊戲、阿朗甘、數位論述、數位再媒介化、泰國文學

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1 Introduction

Lilit Phra Lo, a canonical work of Thai classical literature generally dated to the sixteenth-century Ayutthaya period (Ruengraklikhit, 2010; Veerawong, n.d.), is celebrated for its intricate interplay between sound and meaning. Composed in *lilit*, a poetic form combining *khlong* and *rai*,[1] the work makes extensive use of lexical association, repetition, and phonological patterning. These features are particularly concentrated in the forest sequence (*Lilit Phra Lo*, vv. 251–262), where the language progresses from semantically charged botanical names to lexical and phonological repetition and, finally, to a dense catalogue of plant names in which syntactic organization recedes and sound becomes increasingly prominent. Such interplay between semantic and sonic creativity can be situated within the Thai poetic concept of *alangkan* (อลังการ; Sanskrit: *alaṅkāra*), which recognizes both meaning- and sound-based forms of poetic ornamentation.

Previous scholarship on *Lilit Phra Lo* has focused primarily on the work as a literary text, including its literary interpretation (Chitchamnong, 1985; Ruengraklikhit, 2010), dating and versification (Delouche, 2000), and, more recently, problems of translation and lexical interpretation (Testard, 2024). Studies of Thai literary poetics have also established frameworks for examining semantic and sonic ornamentation through *alangkan* (Siricharoen, 1982; Raksamanee, 1991). Less attention, however, has been given to how such historically situated language play is encountered and interpreted when a classical literary text circulates in contemporary digital environments.

Today, *Lilit Phra Lo* also circulates through digital environments, placing these historically constituted forms of language play within new conditions of textual access and interpretation. The poem is not itself digitally born discourse; rather, its contemporary online circulation represents a process of digital remediation, through which linguistic creativity rooted in literary and oral-performative traditions is encountered as digital text. While digital transcription can preserve lexical sequences, the recognition of language play may also depend on phonological relationships, cultural knowledge, rhythm, and performative conventions. Digital preservation of a text, therefore, does not necessarily entail preservation of all the interpretive conditions through which its linguistic creativity becomes perceptible.

Against this background, the study addresses two related questions: How does the forest sequence construct language play through semantic and sonic ornamentation? How does digital remediation shape contemporary access to and interpretation of these linguistic features?

To address these questions, the study analyzes the forest sequence alongside its contemporary digital circulation. It argues that language play in *Lilit Phra Lo* cannot be reduced to lexical information alone but emerges through interactions among sound, meaning, cultural association, and performative potential. The sequence's concluding declaration—"I say only what I can remember; far more remains"[2]— accordingly points both to the limits of linguistic enumeration and to an interpretive remainder that persists in contemporary encounters with the poem.

2 Language Play and Digital Remediation

2.1 Language Play in Thai Poetics

The linguistic creativity of *Lilit Phra Lo* can be situated within the Thai poetic concept of *alangkan* (อลังการ), derived from Sanskrit *alaṅkāra*, broadly referring to poetic ornamentation. Thai literary criticism distinguishes between *artha-alaṅkāra*, or ornamentation through meaning, and *śabda-alaṅkāra*, or ornamentation through sound. The former includes devices such as metaphor, simile, and semantic association, while the latter encompasses alliteration, rhyme, homophony, and other forms of phonological patterning. Rather than functioning independently, these two dimensions frequently interact, allowing poetic

[1] *khlong* (โคลง) is a tonally governed measured verse, while *rai* (ร่าย) is a linked-verse form with greater flexibility.

[2] กล่าวแต่พอจำได้ กว่านั้นยังเหลือฯ

meaning to emerge through relationships between lexical reference and acoustic form.

This interaction is particularly important in *lilit*, which combines the regulated tonal and rhythmic structures of *khlong* with the more flexible linked form of *rai*. In *Lilit Phra Lo*, repetition and phonological correspondence therefore operate not simply as decorative embellishments but as resources for organizing perception and interpretation. The forest sequence makes this interaction particularly visible as semantic associations become increasingly intertwined with repetition and phonological patterning. Language play in the sequence can thus be understood as movement between semantic and sonic creativity rather than as a separation of meaning from sound.

2.2 From Oral Performance to Digital Text

The sonic dimension of Thai poetic language is closely connected to oral and aural reception. In the forest sequence, alliteration, rhyme, repeated consonantal clusters, and rhythmic accumulation acquire much of their aesthetic force through recitation, where words are experienced not only as lexical units but also as sequences of sound. In this context, *śabda-alaṅkāra* operates within an oral-performative tradition in which phonological patterning carries significance beyond straightforward semantic reference (Raksamanee, 1991, p. 76).

The contemporary circulation of *Lilit Phra Lo* in digital form introduces another condition of reception. Digitization makes the poem reproducible and searchable as text, while features dependent on historical knowledge or oral performance may remain less immediately perceptible. A botanical name may be preserved accurately as a sequence of characters while its culturally embedded secondary meaning remains unrecognized; repeated lexical forms may be identifiable while their rhythmic or kinetic effects depend upon recitation; and dense phonological sequences may remain textually intact while their organization through sound is less immediately apparent.

To examine how these linguistic features are encountered in contemporary digital discourse, the study uses a purposive selection of discussions from Pantip, a Thai-language online discussion forum. Relevant discussions were identified by searching Pantip for content concerning *Lilit Phra Lo*. From these results, the analysis selected discussions concerned specifically with textual reading, lexical meaning, and forms of language play related to *alangkan*. The Pantip material is therefore treated as qualitative evidence of particular reader encounters with the poem rather than as a representative corpus of its broader contemporary reception. All posts examined were publicly accessible, and users are cited only by the pseudonymous names displayed on the platform; no attempt was made to identify them beyond their public forum identities.

This study therefore approaches the online circulation of *Lilit Phra Lo* as digital remediation rather than digitally born discourse. Bolter and Grusin (1999) use remediation to describe the process through which one medium refashions earlier media forms. From this perspective, the digital circulation of *Lilit Phra Lo* does more than reproduce an older literary text in a new format: it places historically constituted forms of linguistic creativity within new conditions of access and interpretation. The following analysis examines three manifestations of this creativity in the forest sequence: semantic play through botanical naming, lexical and phonological play through repetition, and sonic proliferation through accumulation.

3 Language Play in the Forest Sequence

The forest sequence of *Lilit Phra Lo* develops linguistic creativity through an intensification of semantic and sonic patterning. Its dense vegetal imagery can also be situated within the ecological richness of the region: Thailand's tropical climate, varied topography, and historically extensive forest cover support considerable biodiversity and a wide range of plant species (Baimai, 2010). In the poem, however, this botanical vocabulary functions as more than environmental description; plant names become lexical resources for language play.

Rather than treating *artha-alaṅkāra* and *śabda-alaṅkāra* as separate techniques, the following analysis examines how semantic and sonic forms of language play interact and shift in prominence across the forest sequence.

3.1 Semantic Play: Botanical Names and Desire

The first form of language play emerges through botanical names whose lexical meanings evoke human appearance, bodily gesture, and intimacy. As Phra Lo and his companions enter the forest, the

poem describes vegetation including *Nang yaem* (นางแย้ม), *Chong nang khli* (ช้องนางคลี่), and *Lep mue nang* (เล็บมือนาง). These names function as botanical references while simultaneously activating meanings associated with the female body. *Nang yaem*, literally "smiling lady," evokes feminine beauty; *Chong nang khli* suggests a woman's loosened or unfurled hair; and *Lep mue nang*, literally "a woman's fingernail," refers directly to the female body. Within the narrative context of Phra Lo's journey toward Phra Phuean and Phra Phaeng, two royal sisters whose love for Phra Lo drives the central romantic conflict of the narrative, these botanical names allow the forest to anticipate the beauty, intimacy, and desire toward which the protagonists are moving.

The linguistic creativity of the passage therefore does not depend upon the invention of new words, but upon the contextual activation of meanings already embedded in existing botanical names. Each lexical item operates on more than one semantic level: it identifies a plant while simultaneously producing an image of feminine appearance or bodily form. Botanical naming consequently becomes a form of semantic play in which the distinction between literal reference and associative meaning remains deliberately open. The plants remain elements of the forest, yet their names allow human affect and desire to emerge indirectly through the surrounding vegetation.

From the perspective of *alangkan*, this passage demonstrates predominantly semantic creativity associated with *artha-alaṅkāra*. Its effect depends upon the reader's recognition that a single lexical form can sustain botanical and culturally embedded meanings simultaneously. Language play therefore emerges through semantic multiplicity, as botanical reference remains present while additional associations of human appearance, intimacy, and desire are activated by the narrative context.

3.2 Lexical and Phonological Play: *Ling*

The forest sequence next moves from semantic association toward a more complex interaction between lexical meaning and sound. This is particularly evident in the *khlong* passage describing monkeys and slow lorises moving among trees:

lang ling ling lot mai lang ling
lae luk ling long ching luk mai
ling lom lai lom ting ling lot ni na
lae luk ling lang lai lot liaw lang ling (*Lilit Phra Lo*, v. 261)[3]

"Some monkeys slipped through the *lang-ling* trees. Young monkeys darted down to snatch fallen fruit. Chased by the wind, slow lorises leapt through the air. The young monkeys slid and curved through the branches of the *lang-ling* trees."[4]

The *khlong* passage repeatedly employs the syllable *ling* (ลิง), but its occurrences do not carry a single meaning. *Ling* refers to monkeys, *ling lom*[5] (ลิงลม) to slow lorises, while *lang ling* (ลางลิง) and related forms occur as plant names. The same or closely related phonological material therefore moves across different lexical and referential categories within a compact sequence. Plants and animals remain semantically distinguishable, yet their names become acoustically interconnected through repetition.

This repetition also contributes to the representation of movement. The recurrence of *ling*, together with repeated /l/ sounds and closely spaced syllables, produces a rapid rhythmic pattern corresponding to the animals' movement through the vegetation. The description therefore operates simultaneously at lexical and phonological levels: individual words identify particular beings and actions, while their repeated sounds create a kinetic quality that reinforces the activity being described.

Unlike the predominantly semantic play of the botanical names discussed above, this passage brings *artha-alaṅkāra* and *śabda-alaṅkāra* into closer interaction. Meaning remains important, but phonological similarity becomes an organizing principle of the verse. The repeated ling forms connect otherwise distinct plants and animals

[3] ลางลิงลิงลอดไม้ ลางลิง
แลลูกลิงลงชิง ลูกไม้
ลิงลมไล่ลมติง ลิงโลด หนีนา
แลลูกลิงลางไหล้ ลอดเลี้ยวลางลิง

[4] Translation adapted from Phra Worawetphisit, Reading Manual to *Lilit Phra Lo* (1977), 188.

[5] *Ling lom* refers to the Bengal slow loris (*Nycticebus bengalensis*), a nocturnal arboreal primate native to Southeast Asia.

through sound, demonstrating how linguistic creativity can emerge from the tension between phonological similarity and semantic difference.

3.3 Sonic Proliferation and Semantic Excess

The interaction between meaning and sound reaches its greatest intensity in the botanical catalogue of verse 262. Unlike the preceding *ling* passage, where phonological repetition remains embedded within recognizable syntactic structures, this passage consists almost entirely of plant names. Because a word-for-word translation of the botanical catalogue would replace the Thai plant names with heterogeneous English equivalents and obscure the phonological relationships under analysis, the excerpt is presented in romanization, with selected botanical identifications provided in a note:

huat hiang hat haen han, chan chuang chan chaeng chik,

pring prong prik pru prang, khui khae khang kho khet,

mu mai phlet mai phlong, mu mai fong mai fai,

mu mai phai phai mai pho, mai tako taku, mai lamphu lampheang…[6]

(*Lilit Phra Lo*, v. 262, excerpt)

The *rai* verse contains minimal syntactic linkage. Rather than forming complete propositions about individual plants, botanical names accumulate as successive nominal units organized through juxtaposition, rhythm, and sound. Recurring initial consonants and consonant clusters—particularly /h/, /ch/, /p/, and /kh/, followed by repeated *m*-initial constructions—group different plant names acoustically and propel the catalogue forward. Sequences such as *pring–prong–prik–pru–prang* and *khui–khae–khang–kho–khet* are especially striking because phonological similarity occurs alongside lexical and botanical difference.

For contemporary readers, however, the catalogue also places demands on referential knowledge. Many of these terms function primarily as botanical names whose referents cannot readily be inferred from their lexical forms. A reader may be able to read or pronounce a name without knowing which plant it designates or what that plant looks like. This difficulty becomes greater when the plants themselves are distant from contemporary everyday experience. Linguistic recognition and referential recognition are therefore not identical: recognizing an item as a plant name does not necessarily enable a reader to identify or visualize its botanical referent.

Significantly, this referential distance does not eliminate the passage's language play. Even when individual plants are unfamiliar, their phonological relationships remain perceptible. A reader who cannot identify *pring*, *prong*, *prik*, *pru*, and *prang* botanically can nevertheless hear their patterned similarity. Meaning is not absent; it is dispersed across density. Each term retains its botanical reference, while the arrangement of these different names simultaneously creates an acoustic pattern. The linguistic creativity of the passage thus lies not in abandoning lexical meaning for pure sound, but in selecting and arranging actual plant names so that botanical enumeration simultaneously becomes sonic composition.

This organization can be understood through *śabda-alaṅkāra*, or sonic ornamentation. Drawing on Siricharoen's (1982) study of *Mahachat Kham Luang*, Raksamanee (1991) notes that such sonic patterning developed within Thai literary practice rather than simply reproducing Sanskrit models. In verse 262, *śabda-alaṅkāra* therefore provides a framework for understanding how botanical vocabulary is transformed through arrangement into an intensive form of language play.

For contemporary readers, the passage may remain accessible as patterned sound even when its botanical referents are unfamiliar. This divergence between textual availability, referential knowledge, and recognition of poetic language play becomes particularly significant when Lilit Phra Lo circulates within contemporary digital discourse.

4 Narrative and Linguistic Accessibility in Digital Discourse

The contemporary digital circulation of *Lilit Phra Lo* makes the work readily available to readers, but textual availability does not necessarily make its historical language equally accessible. The

[6] หวดเหียงหาดแหนหัน จันทน์จวงจันทน์แจงจิก ปริงปรงปริกปรูปราง คุยแคคาง ค้อเค็ด หมู่ไม้เพล็ดไม้พลอง หมู่ไม้ฟองไม้ไฟ หมู่ไม้ไผ่ไพไม้โพ ไม้ตะโกตะกู ไม้ลำภูลำแพง …

selected Pantip discussions reveal how this distinction operates in contemporary encounters with the poem, particularly in the contrast between engagement with its narrative and engagement with its linguistic features.

Narrative-oriented threads primarily discuss the plot, characters, relationships, and literary significance of *Lilit Phra Lo*, sometimes recontextualizing the story through contemporary concerns. One thread asks what makes *Lilit Phra Lo* a masterpiece of Thai literature, prompting discussion of its plot, characters, emotional intensity, narrative techniques, and refined language (Pantip Member 2194912, 2020). Other discussions reinterpret characters and relationships through contemporary questions. For example, one thread asks whether Phra Lo had a sexual relationship with his male attendants, Nai Kaeo and Nai Khwan, based on a claim the user had encountered but could not locate in the literary text (Pen Sot Di Kwa, 2022). Such discussions demonstrate the relative portability of narrative: although *Lilit Phra Lo* belongs to an earlier linguistic and literary environment, its story can be retold, debated, and assigned new meanings within contemporary digital interaction.

Language-oriented threads reveal a different pattern. In a Pantip post entitled "อ่านลิลิตพระลอ แต่ไม่เข้าใจ" ("Reading *Lilit Phra Lo* but I don't understand it"), the reader describes the problem directly: "When I read it, I don't understand the content; I can't make sense of it; I don't know what it means" (Tee Kha Hot Kradot Khi Pet, 2020).[1] The reader further notes that some words cannot be found even by searching the Royal Institute dictionary. Other threads ask for assistance in paraphrasing the poetic text into more readily comprehensible language (Pantip Member 7704640, 2023) or identifying figurative language (Pantip Member 5693056, 2020). Compared with the narrative-oriented discussions, these language-focused posts tend to frame the poem primarily as a problem of semantic access: readers want to know what unfamiliar words mean and what difficult passages are saying.

Digital discourse, however, does not engage with the language of *Lilit Phra Lo* only through difficulty and explanation. Historical language play can also be recontextualized for new communicative purposes. In a 2016 New Year post in Pantip's golf discussion forum, a user reproduced the entire *ling* stanza and explained that the arrival of the Year of the Monkey (*pi ling*) had brought *Lilit Phra Lo* to mind (Caddy Kae Kae, 2016). The verse was thus removed from its original forest context and inserted into an otherwise unrelated New Year conversation. Significantly, the repeated lexical form *ling* ("monkey") provided the associative link between the historical verse and the contemporary occasion. The example demonstrates how a memorable feature of historical language play can remain available for creative recontextualization in contemporary digital interaction.

Yet semantic comprehension represents only one dimension of access to the language of *Lilit Phra Lo*. As the *ling* passage examined in Section 3.2 demonstrates, its represented content can be conveyed relatively straightforwardly, while its linguistic construction depends upon the interaction of lexical meaning and phonological patterning. A contemporary paraphrase can therefore communicate what happens in the stanza while substantially reducing the sonic organization through which the original produces its aesthetic effect. Semantic accessibility and poetic accessibility are consequently not equivalent.

Verse 262 further complicates this distinction by showing that referential knowledge and poetic accessibility can also diverge. As discussed in Section 3.3, the phonological relationships among botanical names such as *pring–prong–prik–pru–prang* can remain perceptible even when their individual referents are unfamiliar.

These distinctions expose different dimensions of accessibility within the same digitally available text. For analytical purposes, this study distinguishes four such dimensions: textual accessibility concerns the availability of the text itself; semantic accessibility concerns comprehension of its historical vocabulary; referential knowledge concerns the ability to identify the entities designated by that vocabulary; and poetic accessibility concerns recognition of how lexical and phonological resources are organized through *artha-alaṅkāra* and *śabda-alaṅkāra*. These dimensions are related but not hierarchical, and access in one dimension does not necessarily entail access in another.

Digital discourse surrounding *Lilit Phra Lo* consequently reveals more than a simple opposition between an accessible story and difficult historical language. The selected discussions show that narrative can be readily

summarized and recontextualized, while historical vocabulary may require semantic explanation and botanical terminology may require increasingly unfamiliar referential knowledge. Comparatively less attention is given to poetic accessibility: the linguistic creativity through which meaning and sound are deliberately organized as *alangkan*. Digital availability makes the text present, but understanding what the text says and recognizing what its language does remain distinct interpretive processes.

5 "Far More Remains": Language Play and Interpretive Remainder

The forest sequence concludes its dense accumulation of botanical names with an explicit acknowledgment of incompleteness: "I say only what I can remember; far more remains." In its immediate context, the statement marks the limit of enumeration. Despite the density of plant names already assembled in the preceding verse, the poet does not present the catalogue as an exhaustive inventory of the forest. The act of naming instead ends by recognizing that the forest exceeds what can be recalled and articulated.

Within the present analysis, however, "far more remains" also describes the interpretive condition of the passage. The dimensions of accessibility identified above do not necessarily coincide, leaving aspects of historical linguistic creativity accessible in some respects while remaining distant in others. The persistence of the textual form therefore does not eliminate the interpretive distances through which its language is encountered.

This distinction is especially important for the digitally circulating *Lilit Phra Lo*. As the Pantip discussions considered above demonstrate, contemporary readers can access the work while still encountering difficulty with its historical language. Explanation and paraphrase can reduce this distance, but they do not exhaust the linguistic creativity of the poem. Semantic clarification can recover what a passage says without necessarily revealing how its lexical and phonological resources produce poetic effects.

"Far more remains" can therefore be read as a productive metalinguistic proposition for the contemporary interpretation of the poem. What remains is not simply the vegetation that the poet has left unnamed, but aspects of linguistic creativity that cannot be exhausted by lexical identification or semantic paraphrase. The digital circulation of *Lilit Phra Lo* places its historical language within new conditions of access, while its interpretation continues to require movement between word and referent, meaning and sound, historical knowledge and contemporary reading. In this sense, the linguistic richness of the forest sequence resides precisely in what continues to remain after its words have been made accessible.

6 Conclusion

This study has examined language play in the forest sequence of *Lilit Phra Lo* and its accessibility within contemporary digital discourse. Through the framework of Thai *alangkan*, the analysis demonstrates how linguistic creativity emerges through shifting relationships between meaning and sound, from semantic associations generated by botanical names to the interaction of lexical and phonological patterning in the *ling* stanza and the intensive sonic organization of botanical vocabulary in verse 262. Across these forms, *artha-alaṅkāra* and *śabda-alaṅkāra* operate not as isolated modes of ornamentation but as interacting resources of linguistic creativity.

The contemporary digital circulation of *Lilit Phra Lo* introduces a different question: not whether digitization creates this language play, but how historically situated linguistic creativity remains accessible to contemporary readers. The Pantip discussions examined here suggest an asymmetry between narrative and linguistic accessibility: the story and characters remain readily available for retelling, debate, and contemporary reinterpretation, while encounters with the historical language frequently take the form of requests for definitions, paraphrase, or explanation. Yet semantic comprehension does not necessarily entail poetic accessibility. Understanding what a passage says is different from recognizing what its language does.

The case of *Lilit Phra Lo* therefore suggests that research on creativity in digital discourse can extend beyond language play produced within digital environments to consider historically constituted forms of linguistic creativity that are recirculated and recontextualized through them. Digital remediation makes the historical text newly available without making its different dimensions of accessibility equivalent. In this sense, the

poem's declaration that "far more remains" continues to resonate: digital circulation can make historical language newly accessible while leaving aspects of its semantic, referential, and poetic organization open to further interpretation.

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