

On idiomatically combining expressions containing the inward/outward motion verb in Thai

Idioms are grammatical units larger than a word which are idiosyncratic in some respect (Croft and Cruse 2004: 230). Essentially, idioms are conventionalized (Nunberg et al. 1994: 492). Their meaning or use cannot be predicted, or at least entirely predicted, on the basis of a knowledge of the independent conventions that determine the use of their constituents when they appear in isolation from one another. Idioms vary in their schematicity (Croft and Cruse 2004: 248). Substantive, or lexically filled, idioms are fixed except for grammatical inflectional categories (e.g. ‘He’s gonna kick the bucket’), while schematic idioms are composed of lexically open elements (e.g. [NP Verb NP XP] ‘She kissed him unconscious’). Constructions except atomic ones are schematic idioms in that a large construction may specify a semantics and/or pragmatics that is distinct from what might be calculated from the associated semantics of the set of smaller constructions that could be used to build the same morphosyntactic object (Fillmore et al. 1988: 501). Furthermore, idioms may be semantically compositional (Nunberg et al. 1994: 496). Idiomatic phrases such as ‘kick the bucket (= die)’ are non-compositional; they do not distribute their meanings to their components. In contrast, idiomatically combining expressions such as ‘pull strings (= exploit personal connections)’ are compositional; they consist of parts that carry identifiable parts of their idiomatic meanings.

Experimental studies regarding motion descriptions by Thai speakers reveal that the Thai inward and outward motion verbs (*khâw* ‘enter’ and *ɔ̀ɔ̀k* ‘exit’) often form idiomatically combining expressions. In the expressions, *khâw* ‘enter’ and *ɔ̀ɔ̀k* ‘exit’, respectively, are in combination with *hǎa* ‘approach’ and *hàaŋ* ‘be remote’ and metaphorically refer to ‘attachment’ and ‘detachment’ (e.g. [2a] and [2b] in Figure 1). The goal or source noun phrase occurring in this ‘attachment/detachment construction’ metaphorically refers to ‘attraction-getting or -losing entity’ (i.e. a goal or source entity in a covertly enclosed region). The two verbs also take part in other constructions at the meso-level such as ‘fictive motion’ constructions (Talmy 2000: 103). These meso-level constructions, in common, involve inheritance from the macro-level motion construction as well as other related constructions. If the attachment/detachment construction comes from the diachronic process of ‘constructionalization’ (i.e. the creation of a form_{new}–meaning_{new} pairing) (Traugott and Trousdale 2013: 1), the process is a kind of ‘lexicalization’ (i.e. change into a more substantive and contentful construction) (Trousdale 2008: 169). This paper aims at making clear a taxonomic network of constructions related to the attachment/detachment construction.

Macro-Cxn	Motion construction			
Meso-Cxns	Inward/outward motion construction			
	Attachment/detachment construction		Fictive inward/outward motion construction	
			Inward/outward emanation construction	Inward/outward access path construction
Micro-Cxns	[[khâw+arrive/near/narrow/short/pull/retract-V] / [attachment]]		[[ɔ̀ɔ̀k+remote/far/wide/long/separate/extend-V] / [detachment]]	
	[[khâw+look-V] / [inward emanation of vision]]		[[ɔ̀ɔ̀k+look-V] / [outward emanation of vision]]	
	[[khâw +near/deep-V+be/exist/located-V] / [inward access path]]		[[ɔ̀ɔ̀k+far/remote-V+be/exist/located-V] / [outward access path]]	
Constructs	1a) wŋ khâw paj run enter go ‘run away into (it)’	2a) wŋ khâw paj <i>hǎa</i> run enter go <i>approach</i> ‘run near toward (it)’	3a) <i>mɔ̀ɔ̀ŋ</i> khâw paj <i>look enter</i> go ‘look away into (it)’	4a) <i>lúk</i> khâw paj <i>mii</i> phuukhǎw <i>be.deep enter</i> go <i>exist</i> mountain ‘Deep into (it) is a mountain.’
	1b) wŋ ɔ̀ɔ̀k paj run exit go ‘run away out of (it)’	2b) wŋ <i>hàaŋ</i> ɔ̀ɔ̀k paj run <i>be.remote</i> exit go ‘run far away’	3b) <i>mɔ̀ɔ̀ŋ</i> ɔ̀ɔ̀k paj <i>look exit</i> go ‘look away from (it)’	4b) <i>klaj</i> ɔ̀ɔ̀k paj <i>pen</i> kòɔ̀ <i>be.far exit</i> go <i>be</i> island ‘Far off is an island.’

Figure 1: Constructional taxonomy for inward/outward motion expressions in Thai

<References>

- Croft, William and D. Alan Cruse. 2004. §9 From idioms to construction grammar. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 225–256.
- Fillmore, Charles J., Paul Kay and Mary Catherine O'Connor. 1988. Regularity and idiomaticity in grammatical constructions: The case of *Let alone*. *Language* 64(3), 501–538.
- Nunberg, Geoffrey, Ivan A. Sag and Thomas Wasow. 1994. Idioms. *Language* 70(3), 491–538.
- Talmy, Leonard. 2000. §2 Fictive motion in language and “ception”. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics, Volume 1: Concept Structuring Systems*, 99–175.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs and Graeme Trousdale. 2013. *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Trousdale, Graeme. 2008. A constructional approach to lexicalization processes in the history of English: Evidence from possessive constructions. *Word Structure* 1(2), 156–177.