

Perception Types of Emanation Fictive Motions in Thai

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1. Introduction

“Emanation” is one subtype of “fictive motion” which has been investigated by Talmy (1989, 1990, 1996). Fictive motion is spatial motion that does not objectively take place but is subjectively construed. Fictive motion (“abstract motion, subjective motion, virtual motion” in Langacker’s (1986, 1987, 1998) terminology) is an abstract, subjective motion on the part of the conceptualizer, which occurs in the conceptualizer’s mental space, as opposed to a concrete, objective motion on the part of the conceived entity, which occurs in the physical space. Emanation is characterized as the fictive motion of an intangible entity away from a source entity in relation to a reference entity (e.g. ‘The cliff wall faces toward the island’ (Talmy 1996: 211)). The function of emanation, I propose, is to create a conventional setting for the predication of entities around us by spatially connecting them to each other. Emanation expressions are linguistic realizations of such conventional cognitive impositions of emanation. Our motivation to use emanation expressions is the need to spatially and globally relate, by means of the fictive path of emanation, entities that otherwise are disconnected, and further to convey to others our experiences and ideas about relationships the entities hold. The imagined emanation is a crucial component of an idealized framework for describing entities that do not physically interact but are related in one’s perception and conception.

This study focuses on emanation related to perception (“line of sight, sensory paths” in Talmy’s terminology) in Thai. Four perception types of emanations are commonly expressed in Thai, namely, visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile emanations, as exemplified in (1) to (4) respectively. The intangible movers in those perception emanation events are a line of vision, a sound, an odor, and an air in motion.

- (1) a. sǎay taa phûŋ troŋ maa yaŋ raw
 line eye dart go straight come toward PRON.
 (Her) line of vision beamed straight at us.
- b. kháw mɔɔŋ pay yaŋ dɔ̀ɔk máy
 PRON. look go toward flower
 She looked toward the flower.
- c. kháw kwàat sǎay taa mɔɔŋ thúk khon
 PRON. sweep line eye look every CLASSIFIER
 She moved her line of vision to look at everybody.

- (2) a. šiaŋ lét lôɔt ʔðək maa
 sound sneak exit come
 The sound sneaked out.
- b. sǎamii sabàt šiaŋ sày phanrayaa
 husband whip sound put in wife
 The husband roared at the wife.
- (3) a. kflin lɔɔy taam lom maa krathóp camùuk
 odor float follow wind come hit nose
 An odor came along in the wind and struck (her) nose.
- b. plaa sòŋ kflin mǎn ʔðək maa
 fish send odor bad-smelling exit come
 The fish gave off a bad smell.
- (4) a. lom nǎaw phûŋ patháʔ bay nâa
 air in motion cold dart crash face
 A cold wind blasted into (her) face.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate Thai speakers' construals with respect to perception emanation that are reflected in Thai expressions of perception emanation. Data used in this study are hundreds of Thai perception emanation expressions which I collected from a number of published literary books. With the assumption that linguistic structures are associated with conceptual structures in the mind, I will examine how Thai speakers conceptualize and structure perception emanations. I argue that Thai perception emanations are language-specific even though they are subject to certain conditions related to human cognition that is assumed to be universal.

2. Basic semantic types

The analysis of my data shows that an "idealized cognitive model (ICM)" (i.e. mental structure of our knowledge of the world (Lakoff 1987: 68)) for Thai perception emanation may include two or three "role archetypes" (i.e. semantic roles of event participants that are sufficiently fundamental and cognitively salient enough to be considered archetypal: Agent, Patient, Instrument, Experiencer, Mover and Absolute (Langacker 1991a: 210)) as its participants. According to the number of role archetypes, Thai perception emanations can be categorized into two basic semantic types: thematic and agentive types. The thematic type involves two role archetypes: (a) a mover that undergoes a change of position relative to an absolute; (b) an absolute that serves as a reference point

with respect to which a mover moves. The agentive type involves three role archetypes: (a) a mover; (b) an absolute; (c) an agent that moves a mover. Thus, the two types differ in the scope of predication. The thematic type excludes, while the agentive type includes, an agent. A mover (a line of vision, a sound, an odor, an air in motion) is the most central participant in a perception emanation event whether the event is thematic or agentive. In all perception emanation events the presence of a mover is presupposed. Even though in some perception emanation expressions a nominal mover may be unnamed, as in (1b), the direction of its motion must be represented by a motion verb or a preposition. A mover moves of its own accord in the thematic type of perception emanation, while it is moved by the instigation of an agent in the agentive type. The agentive type involves, while the thematic type does not involve, some force-dynamic interaction between a mover and an agent.

What fundamentally distinguishes the two types is their difference in degree of conceptual complexity. Conceptually, thematic ICM is less complex and agentive ICM is more complex. In this regard, Langacker (1991a: 245; 1991b: 286-291) states that a thematic participant and the change it undergoes or the state it exhibits provide the minimum semantic content required for a processual predication, and thus constitute its irreducible conceptual core. This means that a thematic participant's change or state (i.e. thematic relationship) has conceptual autonomy, functioning as the bottom layer of the organization of a more complex event conception. This opinion is relevant to Talmy's (1976, 1988) argument that non-agentive expressions are more basic than expressions containing an agent since the inclusion of an agent in an expression involves an additional semantic complex.

3. Specific semantic types

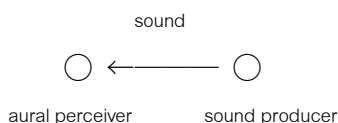
1. Visual	2. Auditory	3. Olfactory	4. Tactile
Line of vision <u>MOVER</u>	Sound <u>MOVER</u>	Odor <u>MOVER</u>	Stream of air <u>MOVER</u>
Visual perceiver <i>AGENT</i> or ABSOLUTE	Sound producer <i>AGENT</i> or ABSOLUTE	Odor producer <i>AGENT</i> or ABSOLUTE	
Seen entity ABSOLUTE	Aural perceiver ABSOLUTE	Olfactory perceiver ABSOLUTE	Tactile perceiver ABSOLUTE
Other reference entity ABSOLUTE	Other reference entity ABSOLUTE	Other reference entity ABSOLUTE	Other reference entity ABSOLUTE

3.1. Visual emanation



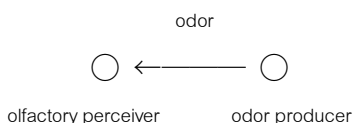
A line of vision emerges from the eyes of a visual perceiver and moves to a seen entity and then its head may further move away from it toward another entity. The visual perceiver controls a line of vision all the time, and so it can pull the line back or make it stay at rest.

3.2. Auditory emanation



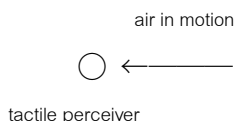
There are two different configurations of auditory emanation: proceeding in a single direction and diffusing into multiple directions. A sound producer brings forth a sound and directs it in some direction, but has no control over its motion afterward. Unlike lines of vision, sounds cannot move laterally or backward. However, a sound may bounce back after hitting something and may turn back to the original place. A sound is somewhat forceful, since its motion can be described by lâý 'chase' with a slight force-dynamic connotation.

3.3. Olfactory emanation



Motion verbs used for representing olfactory emanations indicate no specific orientation (such as verbs for blowing, spreading and diffusing) and normally intermediate points of olfactory emanations are not profiled. Olfactory emanations are thus fuzzy. Like sounds, odors are free from control of the agent, and they keep advancing until they terminate at some perceiver. However, unlike lines of vision and sounds, odors cannot move at a high velocity.

3.4. Tactile emanation



Tactile emanation events do not entail an agent. A current of air moves about freely from any arbitrary control but abides by natural laws. The configuration of tactile emanations is very simple. Tactile emanations proceed along a path. That is all.

The analysis of my data also suggests the following. First, in general, clause patterns for the

visual and auditory types are relatively more various than those for the other types. Thai speakers imagine visual and auditory emanations more richly than olfactory and tactile emanations. Second, clause patterns for thematic emanation events of the visual type are less various than those of the other types. By contrast, those for agentive emanation events of the visual type are more various than those for the other types. This means that a line of vision tends to be imagined to move with a visual perceiver's instigation rather than to move spontaneously. Third, clause patterns for thematic emanation events of the olfactory and tactile types are no less various than those of the other types. On the other hand, those for agentive emanation events of these types are much less various than those of the other types. This can be interpreted to mean that an odor and an air in motion are preferably imagined to move spontaneously in many ways. (cf. Takahashi 2001)

4. Conceptual solidity

The degree of "conceptual solidity" (i.e. phenomenological substantiality that are linguistically expressed) differs among perception emanation subtypes. I adopt the notion conceptual solidity as a cognitive-functioning parameter for evaluating the abstractness of perception emanations. The degree of conceptual solidity is inversely proportional to the degree of abstractness. I assume that the degree of conceptual solidity of perception emanations is determined by the following two points: (1) whether or not they are manipulated by an agent for some purpose (i.e. controllability); (2) how their goal entities are characterized (i.e. goal region). The rationale on which this assumption is based is that an emanation is controllable if it is conceptualized as being solid, and that an emanation ending up at a point or other relatively specific goal such as a surface is more solid than an emanation diffusing everywhere or spreading out in space.

4.1. Controllability

(a) visual	may be launched and controlled by an agent
(b) auditory	may be launched by an agent
(c) olfactory	might be launched by an agent
(d) tactile	usually is not launched by an agent

4.2. Region of Goal

(a) visual	point; upper or middle surface; surrounding, pervasive, inner, outer, or side space; way
(b) auditory	pervasive, inner, outer, or side space; way
(c) olfactory	pervasive or inner space
(d) tactile	surrounding, inner or upper space; way

high <----- the degree of conceptual solidity -----> low

(a) visual

(b) auditory

(c) olfactory

(d) tactile

The degree of conceptual solidity of different perception emanations is thus graded. Visual emanations are the most solid (least abstract) and olfactory and tactile emanations are less solid (more abstract).

5. Active-determinative vs. agentive source entities

Talmy (1996: 226-230) claims that there is a cognitive basis underlying our conception of emanation, that is, the object taken to be active or determinative is conceptualized as the source of emanation. He termed this the “active-determinative principle.” According to him, this principle is based on the model of an individual’s experience of “agency,” namely the generation of an intention and the realization of that intention (Talmy 1976: 85). If an agent intends to affect some distant object, she must either move to it with her whole body, reach to it with a body part, or cause some intermediary object to move to it. The determining event (the act of intention) takes place at the initial locus of the agent; the ensuing agentivity progresses through space to the distant object; and finally, that object is affected (the accomplishment of intention). Talmy termed this pattern the “agent-distal object pattern.” The active-determinative principle corresponds to the agent-distal object pattern in that the more active or determinative entity is the source from which fictive motion emanates through space until reaching the less active or determinative entity, the distant object. Thus, the perception of an agent’s motion in the physical world is mapped onto the conceptualization of an emanation.

Endorsing Talmy’s active-determinative principle, I assume that in a perception emanation event an entity filling the role of the source of emanation (i.e. visual perceiver, sound producer, odor producer) is conceived to be active or determinative. However, I hesitate to apply Talmy’s agent-distal object pattern to all conceptualization patterns of perception emanations. The “agentive” is not identical with the “active/determinative.” Agentiveness requires volition and intention and is attributed to animate beings, while activeness and determinativeness do not. To be active means to be energetic, and to be determinative means to have the power to direct. Therefore activeness and determinativeness are attributable to inanimate beings such as natural forces as well as to animate beings. I do not believe that the ICM for perception emanations will always include an agent, and so agentive, rather than thematic, perception emanation events are basic. Thai perception emanation expressions suggest that agentless perception emanations are no more marked than agentive perception emanations are.

6. Difference between Thai and English perception emanation

The Thai way of conceiving perception emanation differs from the English way of conceiving perception emanation (cf. Talmy 1996), although the same human mental operations (such as schematization, landmark-trajector organization, idealized models, force-dynamic construals, conceptual blending, and so on) apply to the both. First, most Thai perception emanation expressions, unlike English perception emanation expressions, include the deictic verb *maa* ‘come’ or *pay* ‘go’ which signals the conceptualizer’s vantage point independent of event participants. It follows that Thai perception emanation events tend to be observed from a particular point of view. In other words, they are mostly designated in the “relative frame of reference” (Levinson 1996: 142-145). Second, perception emanation involving no agent (i.e. thematic perception emanation) is scarcely imagined by English speakers, but it is a common conceptualization for Thai speakers. One construal factor that distinguishes Thai and English perception emanations is whether or not the speakers put great emphasis on the “agentivity” of event participants. The semantic distinction between an agent that has body parts and volition/intention to act, on the one hand, and a non-agent including a mere mover, on the other hand, is significant in English, while it is not clear in Thai. For example, Thai vision verbs can take as their subject a perceiver’s eyes and even a line of vision, as illustrated in (5). In addition, it is not abnormal for Thai verbs for blowing to take only an object indicating an odor without taking a subject indicating an odor producer, as in (6) (cf. (7)). Moreover, the Thai verb *sòŋ* ‘send’ may take as its subject and object, respectively, an odor and the flow of the odor, as in (8) (cf. (9)).

- (5) {taa / sǎay taa} mǎwŋ khǔŋ pay sùu fǎak fǎa
 {eye / line of vision} look ascend go get to sky
 (Her) {eyes / line of vision} looked (stretched) up to the sky.
- (6) chooy kŋin nám khram khâŋ rúa sǎŋkasi
 blow gently odor water slime side fence galvanized iron
 An odor of the sewage at the side of the galvanized-iron fence blows gently.
- (7) kŋin cha?om thǎot chooy maa
 odor acacia fry blow gently come
 The odor of fried acacia came blowing gently in.
- (8) kŋin càak kǎwŋ khayà? sòŋ krasǎe khwaam nâw
 odor from heap garbage send flow NOMINALIZER rotten
 mǎn mǔa phǎm chiát phàn khâw pay klây
 bad-smelling when PRON. pass by enter go near

The odor from a heap of garbage sent the flow of the rotten odor when I passed by.

- (9) kɔɔŋ khayàʔ sòŋ kʰin nâw mǎn ʔðək maa
heap garbage send odor rotten bad-smelling exit come
The heap of garbage gave off a rotten odor.

7. Conclusion

In conceptualizing a perception emanation event, anchoring a vantage point, selecting the most focal participant, and characterizing the path and manner of emanation are all conventional. The findings of this study show that Thai perception emanations are language-specific in terms of such conventional conceptualizations. The findings on Thai perception emanations give us a certain clue to understand how Thai speakers mentally organize the world.

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