

Paper Title:

Semantic Extension of the Verbs of Tactile Sensation in Thai and Zhuang

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Name of Author:

James N. Chancharu

Affiliation of Author:

**Department of Linguistics
Chulalongkorn University THAILAND**

Email Address:

naruadol@hotmail.com

It is known that there is a strong tendency for certain verbs in isolating languages to have semantically developed a wide range of extended senses, as evidenced by, for example, the work on transfer verbs as passive markers in Mandarin by Yin (2005), on directional verbs as success markers in Thai by Thepkanjana (2002), and on the verb of giving as a causative verb and agent marker in Hakka by Lai (2001). This paper has an aim to probe into another type of verb, i.e. the verb of tactile sensation, which has received relatively less attention in linguistic literature particularly on complex verbal constructions, grammaticalization, polysemy and polyfunctionality. The focus is placed on the contrastive semantic study of the verbs of tactile sensation: *tôŋ* in Siamese Thai and *tô:ŋ* in Zhuang, a member of the Northern Tai language family spoken in Guangxi, Southern China. Though historically derived from the same proto-verb meaning 'come into contact with,' the two words exhibit different patterns of semantic extension. It is found in this paper that synchronically Thai *tôŋ* functions as both lexical verb and modal, and encompasses four lexical meanings: touching, being correct, agreeing or corresponding with something, and being liable for punishment; and two grammatical functions as a deontic modal of necessity and an epistemic modal of certainty. On the other hand, Zhuang *tô:ŋ* functions as both lexical verb and modal, and expresses five lexical meanings of: touching, coming into contact with, being right to the target, being correct, and winning or gaining something with a stroke of luck; and one grammatical function as an adversative passive marker. The paper also argues that the meanings mentioned are by no means related in a haphazard or arbitrary fashion, but inextricably interwoven to form a semantic network, and finally the semantic extension of these two words can be accounted for in terms of the cognitive process of metaphorical and metonymic association, following Lakoff and Johnson (1980; 1999)

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