

DIRECTIONAL MODIFICATION IN THAI FICTION: THE USE OF 'COME' AND 'GO' IN TEXT BUILDING

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INTRODUCTION

When we listen to speech we are not just decoding a single melodic line of sound, we are responding to a complicated harmony of several different kinds of signal all reaching the ear at the same time. When speech is written down in print most of the harmony is left out, but the reader is able to feed it back again because he 'knows the language'.

Edmund Leach (1971:146)

Every learner of a second language has experienced the frustration of not being able to understand a given utterance, or a passage in a text, even after carefully translating every word in it. Students of literature are often similarly frustrated because their laborious efforts at translation produce a dull and lifeless text; they know what the author has written, but not why he or she has bothered to write it in the first place. The crucial factor is, of course, that the non-native speaker doesn't 'know the language', in the way that Leach uses that phrase. The non-native speaker doesn't know what sort of signals to listen for, and cannot feed the harmony back into the written word to bring it to life. True comprehension eludes even the most diligent student until he or she knows which elements of the language under study are manipulated by native speakers in order to create coherence and texture, to create 'harmony'. And only after those elements are identified can the student begin to master them.

This study is an examination of one element of the Thai language that is available for exploitation in text building, but that is usually overlooked by the native speaker of English trying to master Thai. That element is the use of the Thai equivalents of the English verbs 'come' *maa* and 'go' *pay*, and the discussion will show how the unit of contrasting meaning formed by *pay* and *maa* is available for manipulation in text building, and that that unit is part of the 'harmony' of the Thai language that native speakers of Thai use to give texts life and power. Of course, not all Thai authors exploit this feature of the language, and of those who do, not all do so to the same extent. But the discussion will show that the manipulation is there, and that a native speaker of English who wishes to understand the workings of Thai prose must be sensitive to it in order not to miss at least part of the expressive power of Thai.

It is assumed here that the use of any element of a language in normal conversation is more basic than the use of that feature in literary work. If one is to explain how a piece of literature 'works' one must first study the various elements under consideration as they appear in the spontaneous conversation of competent native speakers of that particular language. The insight gained by that study can then be applied to the more contrived realm of literature. Thus the first section of this paper is a brief discussion of the uses of *pay* and *maa* in everyday conversational Thai, both in terms of deixis, and in more traditional terms as well. Both approaches will be of use for the analysis of the text under study. The second section is a detailed consideration of a Thai language short story which was selected because it makes extensive use of *pay* and *maa* and therefore is a convenient item for study.

Appendix I is a copy of the complete text of the story entitled 'Jaemnapha' by Chuwong Chayajinda, which first appeared in a collection of stories entitled *Phuang Chom Phuu* (1962). This version is from *Introduction to Thai literature*, edited by Robert B. Jones, et al. (1970).

This study deals with points that can only be appreciated by examining a text as a complete entity, and so a translation of the entire short story has been given in Appendix II. The translation is intended to be as natural as possible so that the feeling of the original might be conveyed correctly. In places, however, the reader will see that the wording of the Thai text has influenced vocabulary selection and phrasing in the translation, especially in places in which comparison of a free translation and a word-by-word gloss would be confusing. In each such case the translation provided tries to be more faithful to the sense of the Thai than to the dictates of English usage.

Appendix III is a word-by-word gloss of the relevant passages in the original, and the English translation of those passages. The passages cited are full sentences, clauses, or sometimes phrases, depending on how well the relevant portion can be isolated without distorting the significance of the word selection in the original. It should be noted that some words from the Thai original are given several different English glosses, depending on the sentence in which the word appears. In most cases this represents a change in meaning required by changes in the context, but in others it represents a felt need to avoid repetition found in the original which would make for an awkward translation. In either case care was taken to try to avoid distortion of the sense of the Thai wording.

The story has been divided into five more or less arbitrary scenes, mainly to break up the original text into convenient blocks for discussion. The divisions conform roughly to changes in

the location of the action, with the exception that scenes 2 and 3 are separated only by the passing of a rather long period of time.

Items discussed in the paper are numbered in sequence according to their position in the original Thai text. In those cases in which *pay* or *maa* translate directly into the English verbs 'go' or 'come', the number has been placed in brackets immediately after that verb. In other cases English requires a preposition, or some other lexical item, and in still other cases no single English word takes the place of *pay* or *maa*; in such cases the number is usually placed after the main verb of the English construction or, where no verb is used in the English translation, after the word which most clearly conveys the meaning of the entire construction in the original. This method was decided upon in order to emphasise the essentially verbal nature of the two Thai words.

The phonetic transcription system used in this study is that developed by J. Marvin Brown for his *AUA Language Center Thai Course*.

Part I preliminary discussion of *pay* and *maa*.

The Thai verbs of motion, *pay* 'go' and *maa* 'come', are in many ways equivalent to their English counterparts. In ordinary literal usage, the two words in each language designate motion either toward or away from a reference point, and the speaker's choice of one word or the other depends largely on his or her location, either at the moment of speaking, or at some other moment referred to in that speech. Both English and Thai also make use of the two words figuratively in a variety of ways that are based ultimately on their use in ordinary literal speech.

A great deal of attention has been given recently to studies of deixis, and this approach is as helpful in a study of Thai as it is in a study of English. However, deictic analysis does not directly address the use of *pay* and *maa* in text building, and so the present study will approach the subject from two points of view. First, analysis of *pay* and *maa* as deictic verbs will be summarised, because this provides a good illustration of the general constraints under which the words are used in individual utterances. Studies by Fillmore (e.g. 1966, 1972) and Clark (1974) set out deictic constraints while concentrating on English. Gandour (1978) summarises points from those studies and also expands on Clark's work while concentrating on Thai. Second, analysis of the words on more traditional lines places them in the context of the larger Thai system, essential for a study of their function on the text level. Noss (1964) provides this analysis. Given below is a very brief summary of points that are relevant to the use of *pay* and *maa* in Thai text building.

In summarising points made by Fillmore (1966, 1972), Gandour points out the validity for Thai of the concept of deictic centre (although he notes a difference in the English and Thai constraints), and of the term 'speaker-addressee deixis' used to refer to motion relative to the speaker's location or deictic center. The following sentences are given as illustrations of the Thai pattern. Gandour notes that a sentence like (1d) is ungrammatical in Thai because 'the destination of *maa* 'come' may only be the speaker's location at either the time of the utterance or the time referred to in it (Gandour 1978: 382-383).

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| (1) a. <i>phǒm ca pay thūinān</i> | I will go there. |
| *b. <i>phǒm ca pay thūinī</i> | I will go here. |

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|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| c. <i>phǒm ca maa thūnūi</i> | I will come here. |
| *c. <i>phǒm ca maa thūnân</i> | I will come there. |

Clark (1974), refers to discussions by Fillmore on the English deictic verbs 'come' and 'go', pointing out

that the main difference between 'come' and 'go' lies in the goal or destination of the motion. In what has been called speaker-addressee deixis, the destination of 'come' may be the speaker's or the addressee's location at either the time of the utterance or the time referred to in it (Fillmore 1972)... The destination of 'go', on the other hand, is specified simply as somewhere other than where the speaker is at the time of the utterance... 'Come' is always interpreted as having a 'positive' or known destination (the deictic center itself), but 'go' always has its destination negatively specified (Clark 1974: 316).

It is speaker-addressee deixis that is most significant for the short story studied here, and as the analysis will show, the destination of 'go' is often made clear, and has great significance for the reader's interpretation of the story.

Clark discusses 'come' and 'go' in idiomatic uses referring not to motion, but to change of state in what is known as 'normal-state deixis'. The hypothesis is that for such idiomatic uses the deictic center is a normal state of being.

Normal states always involve acceptable or expected behavior of some kind, while non-normal ones do not. Since motion 'come' always has as its destination the deictic center itself, the hypothesis would predict that idioms with 'come' should always indicate entry into some normal state. At the same time, because the destination of motion 'go' is specified as somewhere other than at the deictic center, it should also follow that idioms with 'go' should occur only to indicate departure from a normal state. (Clark 1974: 316-317).

Several examples are offered, some of which are repeated in somewhat abbreviated form below.

- (2) He went out like a light. (= became unconscious)
- (3) He came around very slowly. (= regained consciousness)
- (4) The motor went dead.
- (5) The motor came to life again.

Gandour notes that Thai provides support for the hypothesis, and he offers the following examples.

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| (6) a. <i>khruaŋ sǎa pay</i> | The machine went out of order. |
| b. <i>phǒm luum pay</i> | I forgot. |
| c. <i>phǒm pen lom pay</i> | I fainted. |
| d. <i>kháw pen baa pay</i> | He went crazy. |