ALLATIVE PREPOSITION IN THAI

Kiyoko Takahashi
Kanda University of International Studies
kiyoko@kanda.kats.ac.jp

1. Introduction

ALLATIVE case expresses motion to or toward the referent of the noun phrase it marks, which is a ‘schematic vector’ of the path of motion (cf. Talmy 2000: 53-57). The concept ALLATIVE roughly refers to a dynamic spatial relation where a moving entity moves to a reference point. This concept of ALLATIVE entails the whole kinetic PATH schema consisting of SOURCE, PATH and GOAL (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 32-34). A language may have a number of ALLATIVE markers with different nuances. For example, the English language has several ALLATIVE prepositions: toward (GOAL noun phrase), to (GOAL noun phrase), onto (GOAL noun phrase), and into (GOAL noun phrase).

(1) He walked toward the shop. (PATH-oriented, unbounded path)
(2) He walked to the shop. (GOAL-oriented, bounded path)
(3) He put the files onto a CD. (GOAL-specific, affected target entity)
(4) He put the files into a box. (GOAL-specific, enclosed goal space)

The preposition toward in (1) represents directional or PATH-oriented ALLATIVE implying an unbounded path. The preposition to in (2) represents GOAL-oriented ALLATIVE implying a bounded path. The preposition onto in (3) represents GOAL-specific ALLATIVE implying an affected target entity. And the preposition into in (4) represents GOAL-specific ALLATIVE or ILLATIVE implying an enclosed goal space. Likewise, the Japanese language has two main ALLATIVE particles: (GOAL noun phrase)-e and (GOAL noun phrase)-ni.

(5) kare wa arui-te mise-e mukat-ta.
PRONOUN TOPIC walk-TE shop-toward go-PAST
‘He went toward the shop, walking.’
(PATH-oriented)

(6) kare wa arui-te mise-ni mukat-ta.
PRONOUN TOPIC walk-TE shop-to go-PAST
‘He went to the shop, walking.’
(GOAL-oriented)

The particle -e in (5) represents directional or PATH-oriented ALLATIVE and the particle -ni in (6) represents GOAL-oriented ALLATIVE.

By contrast, the Thai language, I claim, has only one ALLATIVE preposition proper, namely ยาว. This preposition is derived from a verb meaning ‘maintain,’ ‘sustain,’ ‘exist,’ or ‘bring about.’ In modern Thai the lexical item ยาว expresses two grammatical concepts, namely CONTINUOUS aspect and ALLATIVE case. When it precedes a verb phrase, as in (7), it represents CONTINUOUS aspect, that is, to

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Kiyoko Takahashi

continue doing or being. When it precedes a noun phrase, as in (8), it represents ALLATIVE case, that is, _to or toward_ a goal.

(7) kháw _yan_ dæn rɔɔp rāan
PRONOUN CONTINUOUS walk around shop

‘He was walking around the shop.’
(CONTINUOUS aspect)

(8) kháw dæn _pay_ _yan_ rāan
PRONOUN walk go ALLATIVE shop

‘He walked to the shop.’
(ALLATIVE case)

This study focuses on the latter grammatical meaning of _yan_, namely ALLATIVE. The aim of this study is to attest to _yan_’s grammatical status as ALLATIVE preposition by examining actual tokens gathered from corpus data including published literary works, magazines and newspapers.

This paper is organized in the following way. In Section 2, I will make some remarks on the nature of _yan_ to which little attention has hitherto been given. In Section 3, I will point out some distinctive features lying between the ALLATIVE preposition proper _yan_ and ARRIVAL verbs in order to show their different nature and use. And Section 4 provides concluding remarks.

2. The nature of ALLATIVE preposition _yan_
Let us start with outlining the nature of the Thai ALLATIVE preposition _yan_.

2.1. Non-obligatory ALLATIVE marker
_yan_ is not an obligatory ALLATIVE marker. It is observed that motion expressions with the ALLATIVE preposition _yan_ abound in literary works, but the expressions are seldom used in everyday conversation. This is partly because without the overt ALLATIVE marker, a default ALLATIVE sense of Thai motion expressions could emerge from serialization of a PATH verb (e.g. _pay_ ‘go’) and a GOAL noun or prepositional phrase, as illustrated in (9) and (10).

(9) kháw dæn khǔn _pay_ [yõːt kháw]
PRONOUN walk ascend go mountaintop
[GOAL Noun Phrase]

‘He walked up to the mountaintop.’

(10) kháw dæn khǔn _pay_ [bɔn yõːt kháw]
PRONOUN walk ascend go on mountaintop
[GOAL Prepositional Phrase]

‘He walked up to the mountaintop.’
2.2. Specific ALLATIVE marker
The ALLATIVE preposition ยัง indicates the endpoint of an ‘axial motion’ which is forward motion of an entity along an axial path, as exemplified in (8) above. The prepositional phrase beginning with ที่ can indicate the endpoint of an axial motion as well, as in (11).

(11) ข้าว ดื่น ไป ถ้าเข้า บ้าน ที่ ร้อง รียน
PRONOUN walk go from house to school
‘He walked from his house to the school.’
(Axial motion)

The endpoint of a ‘horizontal or vertical motion’ which is the shift of the head of a line extending from a fixed point along a horizontal or vertical path, on the other hand, is marked by ห้า, as in (12), and คอต, คอ or ที่, as in (13).

(12) ข้าว หัน น้า ข้าว ห้า เด็ก
PRONOUN turn face enter to child
‘He turned his face to the child.’
(Horizontal motion)

(13) มอง ข้าว ถ้า/ที่ เข้า คอต/คอ/ที่ ทาว
look PRONOUN from head to foot
‘(She) looked at him from head to toe.’
(Vertical motion)

At any rate, these lexical items (or ARRIVAL verbs) are not prepositions ‘proper’ but verbs that are capable of serving as prepositions in certain contexts. We shall return to this point in Section 3.4.

2.3. Fully grammaticalized ALLATIVE marker
The grammatical concept ALLATIVE expressed by ยัง is distinct from the verbal concept ARRIVAL expressed by a variety of ARRIVAL verbs (e.g. ที่ ‘arrive,’ ข้าว ‘enter,’ ยา ‘put in,’ ไป ‘collide,’ ยุต ‘halt,’ ที ‘lay flat against,’ สู ‘arrive and stay,’ etc.). Consider a contrastive pair of examples in (14) and (15).

(14) a. ข้าว ดื่น ขุน ไป ที่ ยัง ข้าว
PRONOUN walk ascendent go arrive mountaintop
‘He walked up and arrived at the mountaintop.’
(Complex event)

b. ข้าว ดื่น ขุน ไป (ยัง) ยัง ข้าว
PRONOUN walk ascendent go (to) mountaintop
‘He walked up to the mountaintop.’
(Simplex event)
Kiyoko Takahashi

(15) a. maa yût thîi râan
come halt at shop
‘(He) came and stopped at the shop.’
(Complex event)

b. maa (yan) thîi râan
come (to) at shop
‘(He) came to the location of the shop.’
(Simplex event)

(14a) and (15a) include an ARRIVAL verb (thuûn ‘arrive,’ yût ‘halt’) while (14b) and (15b) do not. The former expressions have a complex event structure consisting of a motion and an arrival as a result, which I call ‘ARRIVAL event’ (cf. Takahashi, to appear), while the latter expressions have a simplex event structure consisting of a single motion to an endpoint. In this study the concept ARRIVAL is defined as an event of a moving entity’s reaching an endpoint as a result of its prior motion along a path toward the endpoint. The concept ARRIVAL may involve the characteristic of a goal entity and/or the type of effect resulting from the arrival. Whereas the concept ALLATIVE is highly schematic and purely directional, the concept ARRIVAL is fairly rich in the content of event. In other words, the former is grammatical and semantically bleached; the latter is lexical and contentful.

3. ALLATIVE preposition yan vs. ARRIVAL verb sùu
To clarify the grammatical status of yan as ALLATIVE preposition proper, in this study I will compare yan with sùu as a representative of ARRIVAL verbs. The meaning of sùu is somewhat complex, namely ‘arrive and share/stay,’ as exemplified in (16).

(16) khâw kêp maŋkhút pay sùu phûán bâan
PRONOUN gather mangosteen go arrive and share/stay neighbours
‘He harvested mangosteens and went to share them with his neighbors.’ (Tomita 1990: 1835)

In (17) sùu follows a series of locomotion verbs. In such a context, sùu is often considered as an ALLATIVE preposition.

(17) lën rîi khâw pay sùu ?aarâam phrá?phûthtâcâw
run flee enter go arrive and share/stay temple
‘(He) ran away and got to the temple and stayed in.’
> ‘(He) ran away into the temple.’

Indeed, sùu can function as a preposition. However, as will be discussed later, it is the case with some marked contexts such as when being in combination with another particular preposition (e.g. câak krûnômph sùu manîla ‘from Bangkok to Manila’) or when used in more abstract domains than the spatial domain (e.g. sùu ?añåakhôt ‘into the future’).

Based on my examination of corpus data including many tokens of yan and sùu, I argue that yan has undergone the process of grammaticalization much further than sùu.