Two Faces of Linguistic Encoding in Thai Motion Events: Evidence from Thai Spoken Narrative Discourse compared with Japanese

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0. Introduction

Recent works in typology, especially the studies of how to express the core schema path, have been widely carried out. One of the major findings of Talmy's investigation (1985, 1991) is that many languages of the world fall into either satellite-framed languages, which express path in the form of verbal particles or affixes as English and German do, or verb-framed languages, which encode path in verbs as do Spanish and French. However, little is known about the nature of serial verb languages, e.g. Thai, Vietnamese, and Khmer. The only works concerning this issue that I have encountered so far are “Verb Concatenation in Lahu” by Matisoff (1969) and the diachronic study of Li (1997) on Chinese verb-complement compounds. These two papers provide evidence that certain verbs in the serial verb construction are considered as the secondary verbs, which function like English verb particles. Therefore, Lahu and modern day Chinese are classified into satellite-framed languages, according to Talmy's analysis.

Although I recognize the importance of Talmy's insight, for Thai I find it premature to decide which typological frames the language falls into, because there are two faces for the linguistic encoding of path in Thai motion events. Namely, certain Thai path verbs still maintain their verbhood, while they extend their semantics and functions in order to meet communicative needs. This paper addresses from a cognitive standpoint the idea that certain Thai path verbs have two faces, verbs and verbal particles, for encoding path in motion events. In this paper, the discussion is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the two main typological frames proposed by Talmy (1985, 1991). The second part concerns the evidence from syntax to show the distinct behaviors of Thai path verbs in three different motion events. The last part relates these
findings to rhetorical style in narrative discourse.

1. Two typological frames

Talmy (1985, 1991) proposes two main typological frames for encoding the core schema path in a motion event. That is, in satellite-framed languages, manner is represented in a main verb and path is expressed by the so-called satellites in various forms such as affixes in German and Russian, verb particles in English, verb-complement compounds in contemporary Chinese, and non-head versatile verbs in Lahu. The examples from (1) and (2) below depict the typical linguistic behavior of this frame featuring the English verb particle into and Chinese verb-complement compound jin, respectively.

Satellite-framed languages

(1) English (cited from Talmy 1991:488)
the bottle floated into the cave
Figure Motion+Manner Path Ground

(2) Chinese (cited from Huang Sumiao’s data)
瓶子溅湿踏脚松蔗
ping zi sui zhe shui liu liu jin le shan dong
bottle along with stream flow enter PERFECT cave

On the other hand, verb-framed languages encode path in the verbs while manner is to expressed by manner adverbiaal phrases or by gerundive constituents. The distinction can be illustrated with examples (3)-(5), featuring the Spanish verb entro, the French verb entrée and the Japanese verb haitte.

Verb-framed languages

(3) Spanish (cited from Talmy 1991:488)
La botella entro flotando a la cueva.
the bottle enter floating in the cave
Figure Motion+Path Manner PREP. Ground

(4) French (cited from Akamatsu’s data)
La bouteille est entrée a la caverne en flottant
the bottle be enter in the cave in float

(5) Japanese (cited from Takubo's data)
bin-wa ukanda-mama doukutsu no naka ni haitte itta
bottle-TOP float-STATE cave GEN inside LOC enter go

The question here is which typological frame Thai tends to fall into. At first sight, it appears to be a satellite-framed type. Consider the Thai equivalents of the above example. Note that both (6a) and (6b) yield the same meaning but they are different in the degree of preciseness in describing an event. In other words, (6a) gives a rough picture of the bottle floating into the cave, whereas (6b) sketches in more details, depicting a picture of the bottle floating into the inner part of the cave.

(6a) khuat^2 leey^1 khaw^3 tham^3 pay^1 leew^4
bottle float enter cave go ASP.
Figure Manner V. Path V. Ground Deictic ASP.

(6b) khuat^2 leey^1 khaw^3 pay^1 nay^1 tham^3
bottle float enter go in cave
Figure Manner V. Path V. Deictic LOC. Ground

Intuitively, in both these examples khaw^3 functions like English verb particle into or the so-called satellite. However, it would be false to claim that Thai is a genuine member of satellite-framed languages based on the above example alone. This question will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

2. Investigation into Thai data^1

2.1 Data

The Thai data cited here are mainly the elicited texts of 11 Thai subjects who narrated the Swiss animation video tape entitled "Pingu no hitori tabi", an episode from the Pingu stories. The Japanese data are provided by Kozue Takubo. Table 1 shows the details about subjects and recording styles for the Thai and Japanese.
Table 1. Details about the subjects and recording styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thai subjects</th>
<th>Japanese subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of subjects</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>8-40</td>
<td>23-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language</td>
<td>standard Thai</td>
<td>standard Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording style</td>
<td>on-line</td>
<td>post-view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Subcategorization of Thai motion domain

Returning now to the question of the behavior of Thai path verbs, I will focus on the two faces of Thai path verbs, which can be observed in the three subcategorized motion events. They are spontaneous motion events with volition of a figure, spontaneous motion events without volition and caused motion events. Each subcategory is discussed in the following subsections, moving from the highest degree of verbhood to the lowest degree.

2.2.1 Spontaneous motion events [+Volition]

In spontaneous motion events with a volitional figure, some Thai path verbs are realized as main verbs. This property is a characteristic typical of verb-framed languages. This can be attributed to the possibility of manner verb omission, as shown in (7’). But this is not possible with path verb deletion, as (7’’) shows.

(7)  ləw⁴ kɔ³ dəel¹ ?ʊk² caak² hɔɔŋ⁴naam⁴

and Conj. walk exit leave:FROM toilet [Th 1A:21]
‘And then (Pingu) walked out of the toilet.’

The possibility of manner verb deletion

(7’)  ləw⁴ kɔ³ (dəel¹) ?ʊk² caak² hɔɔŋ⁴naam⁴

and Conj. (walk) exit leave: FROM toilet
‘And then (Pingu) went out of the toilet.’

The impossibility of path verb deletion

(7’’) ləw⁴ kɔ³ dəel¹ *(?ʊk²) caak² hɔɔŋ⁴naam⁴

and Conj. walk (exit) leave: FROM toilet
'And then (Pingu) walked from the toilet.'

It is worth noting that (7") can be both natural and grammatical, but its meaning is distinct from both (7) and (7") since (7") simply states the starting point of movement but does not include information about the direction of movement. Thus, it is clear that Thai path verbs still maintain their verbal properties. Likewise Chinese and Japanese also encode path in a similar way. That is to say, path is represented in a main verb, for instance Chinese chu in (8) and Japanese dete in (9). According to this fact, Thai and Chinese may be grouped together with Japanese as members of verb-framed languages.

(8) 然后之后出来之后 [Tape4]
    ran hou zhi hou chu lai zhi hou
    'And then after (Pingu) came out.'

(9) de senmenjo kara dete kuru-to [Tape 2]
    discourse toilet from exit come-LINK
    'Then (Pingu) came out of the toilet.'

2.2.2 Spontaneous Motion Events [-Volition]

Rather than being a main verb as shown above, a path verb spontaneous motion event verbs tend to lose some verbal properties. In the following example (10), it sounds somewhat unnatural when a manner verb is omitted.

(10) khuat^2 leey^1 ?ook^2 caak^2 tham^3
    bottle  float  exit: OUT  leave: FROM  cave
    "The bottle floated out of the cave."

(10') ?khuat^2 (leey^1) ?ook^2 caak^2 tham^3
    bottle  (float)  exit: OUT  leave: FROM cave
    '?The bottle went out of the cave.'

Again, a comparison with Chinese and Japanese is made. In the same way as the Thai does, the Chinese sentence in (11) sounds unnatural when the manner verb liu 'to float' is
omitted. Consequently, in motion events without a volitional figure, certain Thai and certain Chinese path verbs function like English verb particles, i.e. they mark the path of terminative location. This event type, to put it briefly, serves as evidence for Thai and Chinese being categorized as satellite-framed languages.

It sounds unnatural when Chinese ‘liu’ is omitted.

(11) 瓶子从山洞里 *(流)出来了
ping zi cong shan dong li mian (liu) chu lai le
bottle from cave inside float exit come PERFECT
‘The bottle came out of the cave.’

The impossibility of manner verb deletion in this motion event can be attributed to the inanimacy of the subject NP, in this case khuat² (瓶子) or the bottle. In other words, since an inanimate object has non-volitional, it cannot be the subject of a path verb whose lexical meaning has a volitional sense.

However, this is not the case in Japanese since manner verb deletion does not make any difference to a sentence with a manner verb, except that the motion details are unmentioned. Therefore, it may be sound to categorize Japanese as a verb-framed language with regard to this property.

The possibility of manner verb deletion in Japanese.

(12) sono bin-wa (ukan-de) doukutsu kara de-te kita
that bottle-TOP (float-LINK) cave from exit-LINK come-PAST
‘That bottle came out of the cave.’

2.2.3 Caused Motion Events

Moreover, the particle-like function of Thai path verbs is obvious when these verbs are used to encode the change of location of a figure as shown in (13) and (14) below: รู้ in
'peet¹ ?ook²', equivalent to the English 'open out', and long¹ in 'say² (NP) long¹' which is equivalent to the English 'put (sth.) down'.
the deverbal path marker khyn\textsuperscript{3} to mark the change of state, that is, tyy\textsuperscript{n} khyn\textsuperscript{3} or 'wake up', whereas (16) illustrates the Japanese situation with the implication of change of state in the inherent semantics of the verb okite.

However, though the details may differ, both English and Thai have a pattern similar to the one Japanese. Namely, in order to describe the final phase of eating, Japanese uses the complex predicate tabe-owaru or 'eat-finish', Thai uses the serial verbs kin\textsuperscript{1} set\textsuperscript{2} or 'eat-finish' and English uses finish eating. Note that in all three languages the same verb is considered the head, that is, Japanese owaru, Thai set\textsuperscript{2} and English finish.

(17) ph\textsuperscript{4} phing\textsuperscript{1}ngu\textsuperscript{2} than\textsuperscript{1} khaaw\textsuperscript{3} set\textsuperscript{2} [Th 8A:29]
when Pingu eat rice finish
'When Pingu finished eating his breakfast,.....'

(18) de kondo tabe-owattara [J1:99]
discourse M. now eat-finish
'After (Pingu) finished eating,...'

Taking these two styles of linguistic encoding into consideration, it seems reasonable to investigate the rhetorical styles of each language.

3. Observation of rhetorical styles

It is necessary to look more carefully into the rhetorical style in order to grasp the character of Thai from a typological viewpoint. Recent investigations such as Ohori (1997) and Ohara (1999) of English and Japanese, and Slobin (1996) of English and Spanish, have shown the general rhetorical tendencies of these two typological frames. Namely, satellite-framed languages tend to be clause-compacting, to use a dynamic perspective, and to use fewer verbs. On the other hand, verb-framed languages tend to be clause-chaining, to depict events from a static perspective, and to use more verbs. Keeping this in mind, let's compare Thai and Japanese.
3.1 The optional encoding of a manner verb

The first point that requires clarification is the optional encoding of a manner verb. Table 2 shows the number and percentage of motion verbs in terms of both types and tokens from eleven subjects for each language.

Table 2. Number of motion verbs: types/tokens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thai</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of verb tokens</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of verb types</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type-token ratio</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of manner verb types</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of manner verb types</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we look at Table 2 we see that Japanese has more variety in verbs than Thai in terms of the type-token ratio for these two languages. But Thai is apt to use manner verbs more frequently than Japanese, based on the percentage of manner verb types. The example in (19) illustrates the higher frequency in the occurrence of manner predicates. Conversely, (20) features a Japanese example in which a manner predicate is omitted.

(19) leew⁴ ko³ deen¹ ?ook² caak⁵ hcong⁴naam⁴ [Th1A:21]
and CONJ. walk exit leave: FROM toilet
‘Then (Pingu) walked out of the toilet.’

(20) de sono basuruumu-kara dete [J1:28]
discourse M. that bathroom-FROM exit-LINK
‘Then (Pingu) went out of the bathroom.’

3.2 Linguistic behavior of path in a journey

3.3

Next, I will turn to the linguistic behavior of path on the so-called journey. Slobin (1996) defines this term as the extended depiction of motion across clauses and to go beyond the simple motion event. In other words, I will focus on the
way the speaker depicts at least two ground elements in a clause. Unfortunately, I cannot find a good example of a long journey from my collected spoken narrative texts, so in this section I use examples from the written narrative texts instead. It should be noted that for these written texts, the Japanese is the original version, while the English and Thai are translated versions.

(21)  
\[
\text{ki-ga tsuku-to kuruma-wa itsunomanika notice-LINK car-TOP unawares hankagai-wo nuke juutakugai-wo shopping area- ACC pass through residential area-ACC nuke yamanote-e sashikakat-te-ita [p.13] pass through hilly area-DIR approach-LINK-PAST}
\]

(22)  
With so much merriment, hardly anyone noticed that the car had already passed through both the shopping district and the residential area of Hanaura and had started to enter the hilly area of the town. [p.15]

(23)  
\[
\text{ban'ya'kaat phaay'nay rot' khryyn'khreeng' atmosphere within car merry maak\textsuperscript{3} con\textsuperscript{1} may\textsuperscript{3} mii\textsuperscript{1} khray\textsuperscript{1} sang\textsuperscript{5}keet\textsuperscript{2} very until NEG. have who notice waa\textsuperscript{3} phaan\textsuperscript{2} yaan\textsuperscript{3} kaan'khaa\textsuperscript{4} le?\textsuperscript{4} say: THAT pass area shopping and kheet\textsuperscript{2} thii\textsuperscript{3}yuu\textsuperscript{2}aa\textsuperscript{1}say\textsuperscript{5} thii\textsuperscript{3} naa\textsuperscript{5}n\textsuperscript{3}en\textsuperscript{3} zone resident REL M. be dense ?cock\textsuperscript{2} maa\textsuperscript{1} ncock\textsuperscript{3}myang\textsuperscript{1} mya\textsuperscript{3}day\textsuperscript{1} [p.19] exit: OUT come suburb when}
\]
Examining the ways to depict a journey in these three languages makes it clear that Japanese tends to use more verbs than the other two. Thai uses the combination of the verb phaan² with ʔɔk² maa¹ which means to pass through from the speaker's viewpoint. English also uses two verbs to depict this journey. This may be because English has no satellite equivalent to the word sashikakat-te ita. Alternately, the result may be influenced by the original text.

3.3 Dynamic vs. static perspectives

Table 3. Number and percentages for sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
<th>Static</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The next point to be brought up has to do with the dynamic and static perspectives. These two perspectives adopted here are defined as follows. The former is a description of an event using a spatial movement pattern. The latter focuses on expressing where an action takes place without mentioning the spatial movement. Based on my analysis, it is obvious that Japanese often uses a static perspective to depict an event, whereas Thai tends to describe an event from a dynamic perspective, as shown in (24) and (25) respectively.

(24) de michi-no wakaremichi-de phingnguu-wa
discourse M. road-GEN crossroad-LOC Pingu-TOP

sono torakku-kara orite [J7:3]
that truck-from get off-LINK
‘Pingu got off that truck at a crossroad.’

(25) con¹ thync⁵ thaang¹yek³ thií³ ca² pay¹ baan³ paa³
until arrive crossroad REL M. MODAL go house aunt
‘Until they came to (Th: arrived at) a crossroad that
leads to Aunt Penguin’s house.’ [Th2:54]

The same phenomenon can be seen in the Chinese
verb dao (到) in (26) as well.

(26) 然后到路口之后  (Pingu:Chinese)
ran hou dao lu kou zhi hou
and then arrive intersection after
‘Then...after (they) came to an intersection...’

However, it’s worth noting that Japanese can also
express this scene in a dynamic style, but then the notion of a
crossroad is left unmentioned. Rather, Japanese is apt to use
the NP tochuu-made iku, which means ‘to go halfway’. Compare (24) with (27) below.

(27) tochuu-made iku-n desu-ne [J9: 29]
halfway-until go-EMPHASIS POLITE-PARTICLE
‘They went halfway.’

In order to describe the same event from a dynamic
perspective, Japanese has to use the verb iku or ‘to go’ instead,
together with the word tochuu ‘halfway’.

In this connection, Ohori (personal communication)
suggests that a plausible reason why Japanese tends to use the
phrase tochuu-made or tochuu-de, which means halfway,
instead of the verb tsuku ‘arrive’ is that it expresses the
speaker’s viewpoint. In other words, the Japanese verb tsuku
‘arrive’ is used to mark a destination, whereas Thai verb
thyng⁵ and Chinese verb dao (到) are used to mark not only
a destination but also a place on the way to the destination.
Thus the former has a broad scope, whereas the latter two cases
have a narrower scope. This property enables Thai verb thyng⁵
to be used in a concessive sense². The image-schema of
thyng⁵ is given below.
X does something or is at state Y
with a further reference to point Y'
X---------Y---------Y'

3.4 Degree of Transitivity in introducing new information

The next point, also related to the problem of perspective, is the degree of transitivity used in introducing new information. Ohori (1997) says that in a high transitivity rhetoric a new entity is introduced with reference to the human subject in English, while in a low transitivity rhetoric it is done with reference to the whole situation (as in Japanese), with the human subject only implied by the context.

In this paper, I will refer to the high transitivity pattern with the term finding and the low transitivity pattern with the term existing. In my interpretation, the data shown in Table 4 indicate that Japanese tends to use the existing pattern, while Thai tends to use the finding pattern in order to introduce new information.

Table 4. Degree of transitivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>finding</th>
<th>existing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(24) ato-wa tochuu-de akachan-ga iru
later-TOP halfway-LOC baby-NOM exist

o-uchi-ga atte [J4: 32]
POL.-house-NOM exist-LINK
‘After that there existed a house where a baby was lying.

(25) pay¹ ceo¹ baan³ lang⁵ nung² leew⁴
go find house CLF. one and
kɔ³ thak⁴thaay¹ kap² dek² [Th 1A: 51-52]
CONJ. greet with baby
‘(Pingu) then found a house and said hello to a baby.’

4. Conclusion
In the early part of this paper the question addressed was which typological frame, i.e. satellite-framed or verb-framed languages, does Thai fall into? To give a satisfactory answer to this question, this work set out to investigate the linguistic encoding of the core schema path in three different motion events and to clarify the rhetorical style based on the oral narrative texts.

To sum up the main syntactic point, certain Thai path verbs have two faces in the motion domain. That is, they maintain their verbal properties in spontaneous volitional motion events, but they behave similar to English verb particles in spontaneous motion events without volition and in caused motion events. In other words, their function in the latter two domains is to encode change of location or state.

In addition, the evidence from narrative discourse can be summarized as follows. It is possible to consider Thai path verbs as satellite-like entities. This is because Thai tends to use a clause-compacting pattern and adopt the dynamic perspective in rhetorical style, characteristics of satellite-framed languages. Meanwhile, Thai is likely to use fewer specific manner verbs compared to English and to use a path verb as the head verb in a clause, while a manner verb can be omitted, as in verb-framed languages. In my opinion, this makes it difficult at present to treat Thai as a typical member of either of these two frames. To conclude, it seems appropriate to remark that at present Thai seems to stand between the two frames, but nearer the English pole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite-framed</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Thai</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
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</table>
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Accusative</td>
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<td>Aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>Classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
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<td>LINK</td>
<td>Linker</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>POL</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL M.</td>
<td>Relative Marker</td>
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<td>RESULT M.</td>
<td>Resultative Marker</td>
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<td>TOP</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Notes

I am profoundly grateful to my academic advisor, Professor Toshio Ohori of the University of Tokyo for giving me valuable advice and for kindly checking my English. I am further indebted to Professor Yo Matsumoto of Meijigakuin University for his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1The transcription keys for Thai texts are as follows.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{ə} &= \text{schwa; central vowel} \\
\text{ʔ} &= \text{glottal stop} \\
\text{ɛ} &= \text{open-mid front vowel} \\
\text{ɔ} &= \text{open-mid back vowel} \\
\text{y} &= \text{close-back vowel} \\
\text{ng} &= \text{velar nasal}
\end{align*}\]

Tones are represented by numerals:

\[1 = \text{mid-flat}, 2 = \text{low}, 3 = \text{falling}, 4 = \text{high}, 5 = \text{rising}\]

2Kessakul R. and T. Ohori (to appear) discuss the use of thyn in a concessive sense, among others, from a cognitive viewpoint.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{thyn}^5 \text{ yang}^1 \text{ dek}^2 \text{ khaw}^4 \text{ kɔ}^3 \text{ mii}^1 \\
\text{although} \text{ still} \text{ child s/he} \text{ CONJ. have}
\end{align*}\]
khwaam¹ rap² phit³ chœp³

NOMINAL be responsible

'Although he is still a child, he has a sense of responsibility.

³The data in Table 4 are derived from the analysis of the Thai and the Japanese elicited texts for five scenes. The scenes are the appearance of a painter penguin, a house, a baby, a postman and Pingu's teddy bear.

Bibliography


Ohara, Kyoko Hirose. 1999. Linguistic encodings of motion events in Japanese and English: Observations from novels and their translations. A talk given at Prof. Ohori’s graduate seminar, the University of Tokyo, at Komaba.


**Data**

The data in Chinese, French, Japanese and Thai, which correspond to Talmy’s examples are cited from the collective data from Prof. Ohori’s 1998 academic year graduate seminar. The elicited texts are from Pingu’s stories in Thai, Japanese and Chinese. The written texts are from the original texts entitled “Futari-no Iida” along with a translated version in English and Thai.

“Futari-no Iida” by Miyoko Matsutani, Kodansha (1995 [originally published 1976])

“Two Little Girls Called Iida” translated by Pauline Bush, Kodansha English Library (1985)

“Dek^2 Ying^5 Ii^1 da^2” translated by Pusadee Nawawichit, Butterfly Publishing Ltd. (1996)