The Errors in English Catenative Structures Arising from Thai Polysemy

By

Archara Pengpanich

Department of English and Linguistics,Faculty of Humanities
Ramkhamhaeng University

Abstract:

Apart from the errors in English catenative structures made by
Thai students which are derived from the different patterns in English
catenative verbs, certain errors can result from Thai polysemy. The
aspect of Thai polysemy to be discussed here concerns the verbs that
can occur in Thai catenative structures but which cannot occur likewise
in English. Certain error-inducing verbs, for example,'persuade',
'coax', 'convince' etc..are taught regardless of their semantic components;
thus, the way they are used productively is not appropriate for the
context, despite the fact that they are used grammatically.

Some of the Thai catenative verbs can be both structually and
semantically equivalent to English e.g. like (chɔ̌ɔp), stop (yud), practice
(fik), postpone (lɤ̂ankamnòd), start or begin (rɤ̂ɤm), want or wish (yàak
or tɔ̂ɤŋkaan), forget (liim),seem (hěncà), help(chûay),appear (duumian),
regret (sɯ̌aday), etc. Nevertheless, there are many Thai verbs which are
polysemous and can have many English equivalents. First,take the word
cháy as an example; cháy can be translated as use, employ, and tell.
Thus to illustrate:

a.

khǎw	cháy	kam	suphâab
he	use	word	polite

He uses a polite word.

b.

khǎw	cháy (employ) (use)	phaasǎa	pen	?aawút
he		language	as	weapon

He employs (uses) language as a weapon.

c.　　tim　　　　thuuk　　　| cháv |
　　　Tim　　　　PASS.　　　| use |

Tim has been used.

d.　　mɛ̂ɛ　| cháy |　　tim　　　láancaan
　　　mother | tell |　　Tim　　　do washing up.

Mother told Tim to do the washing up.

Because of its being polysemous, the word chay can induce many errors.
Examples:

a.　　mɛ̂ɛ　　cháy　　　tim　　　láancaan
　　　mother　tell　　　Tim　　　do washing up.

*Mother used Tim to do washing up.

Mother told Tim to do washing up.

b.　　tɔɔm　thuuk　cháy　　hây　　fâu　　baan
　　　Tom　PASS.　tell　　CA.　　watch　house

*Tom was (used　　) to watch the house.
　　　　(employed)

Tom was told to watch the house.

The second problematic word is chuan, which can
mean ask, urge, coax, persuade and convince. Examples:

a.　　khaw　| chuan |　chǎn　'pay　thaankhâaw　khaaŋnɔ̂ɔk
　　　he　　| (ask   )|　I　　go　　eat　　　　out
　　　　　| (persuade) |
　　　　　| (convince) |
　　　　　| (coax   )|

He (asked　　) me to eat out.
　(persuaded)
　(coaxed　　)
　(convinced)

b.　　phîanrûammaan | chuan |　hây　khaw　samàk　pen　prathaan
　　　colleagues　　| (urge   )|　CA.　he　　apply　be　chairman
　　　　　　　　 | (persuade)|
　　　　　　　　 | (coax   )|

His colleagues (urged　　) him to apply to be chairman.
　　　　　　(persuaded)
　　　　　　(coaxed　　)
　　　　　　(convinced)

c.　chǎn　| chuan | 　hǎy　khǎw　rian　phaasǎa　thay
　　I　　| persuade | 　CA.　he　learn　language　Thai

dǎysǎmrèd

with succèss.

(In this example, the word chuan can have exactly
the same meaning as convince.)

I convinced him to learn Thai. (and he did).

(In the English translation of the example (c) the Thai words
dây samred (with success) are deleted because the semantic component
of convinced also contains the notion of success.)

In examples (a) and (b), the word chuan can be translated into
many verbs in English which can occur in a phase structure. This is
ascribed to two reasons. One, the context is not made explicit. Two,
the word chuan does not hint whether or not the notion of success is
intended whilst the words persuade and convince are self-contained.

According to Bolinger (1975: 198-199), one has to use the notion
of 'goal' to elicit the difference between the words coax, persuade and
convince. Consider Bolinger's (1975: 198-199) examples:

"I was convincing him to go would not be used except to imply success --
he eventually did go. But with persuade it depends on the context: I
persuaded him to go implies that he went, but I was persuading him to go
leaves some doubt. We cannot say *I convinced him and convinced him
but he wouldn't do it, but I persuaded him and persuaded him but he wouldn't
do it is possible. At the other extreme, coax tells us nothing about
whether he went, even in I coaxed him to go. I coaxed him to go but he
wouldn't is a normal sentence." Also, the words ask and urge which do
not convey the meaning of success will be grouped with coax. From my
experience, Thai pupils are inclined to use the word persuade when they
intend to convey the meaning of chuan in Thai; indeed, when they use the
word persuade, they do not pay attention to whether or not success is
meant. Thus, these are typical errors.

a)　　* He persuaded me to go to the theatre, (but I did not go).

b)　　* The salesman was convincing him to buy a new car.

　　　　(But he didn't because he was hard up).

c)   * They convinced Tom to run for the Presidency.

     (But he didn't)

d)   He came to persuade me to go to the party.

     (In fact, the learner wants to say: He came to ask me to go
to the party.)

The third polysemy in Thai that can induce the learner to make errors is the verb lɔ̀ɔk meaning tempt, cheat, coax and deceive.

e.g. (a)   khonkhǎy   lɔ̀ɔk   hây   tim   sɨɨ   ród   mày

            salesman   tempt   CA.   Tim   buy   car   new

The salesman tempted Tim to buy a new car.

(b)   thəə | lɔ̀ɔk | lûuk   hây   kin   yaa

       she | coax | child   CA.   take   medicine

She coaxed her child to take medicine.

(c)   khǎw   thùuk | lɔ̀ɔk | aw   ŋen   pay

       he   PASS. | cheat | take   money   go.

He was cheated of his money.

(d)   khǎw   thùuk | lɔ̀ɔk |

       he   PASS. | deceive |

He was deceived.

Since the words tempt and coax meaning lɔ̀ɔk in Thai can occur in a catenative structure, a Thai learner will assume that deceive and cheat also meaning lɔ̀ɔk can be catenative verbs. As a result, these errors arise:

a)   khǎw   thùuk | lɔ̀ɔk | hây   sɨɨ   sǎysɔ̂ɔy   plɔɔm

       he   PASS. | tempt | CA.   buy   necklace   false

He was tempted to buy a false necklace.

*He was deceived to buy a false necklace.

*He was cheated to buy a false necklace.

b)   chǎn   phayayaam | lɔ̀ɔk | khunyaay   hây   pay

       I   try | coax | grandmum   CA.   go

       taaŋprathêed   tɛ̀ɛ   thâan   mây   pay

       abroad   but   she   not   go

I have been trying to coax my grandmum to go abroad but she didn't.

*I have been trying to deceive (or cheat) my grandmum to go abroad but she didn't.

The fifth error-causing polysemy is the word hây which literally means give. But in fact it can have ask, tell, permit, allow, let, command, order, want and force as English equivalents. Let us have a look at the following examples:

a) khǎw | hây | chǎn   maa

    he | ask | I   come

He asked me to come.

b) khǎw | hây | chǎn   khɔɔy   khǎw

    he | tell | I   wait   he

He told me to wait for him.

c) khǎw | hây | chǎn   yiim   nǎnsii   khɔ̌ɔŋ   khǎw

    he | (permit) | I   borrow   book   of   he

          | (allow)

          | (let   )

He (permitted) me to borrow his book.
   (allowed)
He let me borrow his book.

d) khǎw | hây | tim   pay   taam   mɔ̌ɔ

    he | order | Tim   go   send for   doctor.

He(ordered)   Tim to send for a doctor.
  (commanded)

e) nɔ́ɔy | hây | mɛ̂ɛ ɔɔ   lâu   nithaan   hây   faŋ

    Noy | want | mother   tell   tale   CA.   listen

    thúukwan

    everyday

Noy wanted her mother to tell her a tale every day.

f) tamrùad | hây | khonray   yùd   ród

    police | force | convict   stop   car

The police forced the convict to stop the car.

Indeed, there is a large variety of English equivalents that can be used for the word hây in Thai. Nevertheless, a Thai learner tends

to use a word-for-word translation technique. Hence the following deviant
sentences have cropped up:

a)   * He give me to come.

b)   * He give me to wait for him.

c)   * He give me borrow his book.

        * He give me to boorrow his book.

d)   * He gave Tim to send for a doctor.

e)   * Noy give her mother to tell her a tale everyday.

f)   * The police give the convict to stop the car.

In addition, the word have meaning want, wish and like can have
hây as a Thai equivalent. Consider Hornby's (1954: 28) examples:

a)

khun	cà	hây	chǎn	tham	?aray
you	will	like	I	do	what

What would you have me do?

b)

khun	cà	hây	chǎn	chîa	chénnán	rǐi
you	will	like	I	believe	that	Inter.

Would you have me believe that?

c)

khun	koncà	mây	hây	chǎn	tham	chénnán
you	will	not	like	I	do	that

However, Thai pupils tend to avoid this use of have because it
is totally different from Thai. Consequently, they will use the verbs
want, like or wish instead, as for example:

a)   What would you like me to do?

b)   Would you like me to believe that?

c)   You wouldn't like me to do that, would you?

Conversely, an error will arise, for example, if faced with the
following example with the word give meaning inform or assume, a Thai
learner will fail to grasp the meaning of it.

e.g. I was given to understand that you might help me to find employment.

In my opinion, this meaning and structure of give should not be
taught to pupils unless they are very advanced. If taught, it will only
confuse the learner.

The sixth error-inducing word is plǎay having let, leave, and

47

release as their English equivalents.

Examples:

a) khǎw | plɔ̌ɔy | maa ?ɔ̀ɔk caak kroŋ
    he | let | dog exit   from kennel
    He let the dog come out of the kennel.

b) yàa | plɔ̀ɔy | hây lûd   mii   pay
    IMPER.| let | CA. slip hand go
    Don't let it slip.

c) khǎw | plɔ̀ɔy | hây chǎn khɔɔy khâaŋnɔ̂ɔk
    he | leave | CA. I   wait   outside
    He left me waiting outside.

d) khǎw | plɔ̀ɔy | khâaw ?ɔ̀ɔk maa
    they | release| news   exit   come
    They released the news.

From these examples, we have seen that the words let and leave can act as catenative verbs but release cannot. This makes a Thai learner presume that release can also occur in a phase structure as well. Thus, to illustrate a typical error.

a) * He released me waiting outside.

b) * Don't release it slip.

Similarly, English polysemy will cause a Thai learner to make an error as well. For instance, the word bring, the one that can behave as a catenative verb. The Thai equivalent for bring is phaa...maaa and aw...maa as for example:

a) khǎw phaa   phîan   maa bâan
    he   bring friend D.   house
    He brought friends home.

b) khǎw aw   nǎŋsǐi maa   hây   chǎn
    he   bring books   PUR. give I
    He brought me a book.

But the catenative verb bring means induce or persuade. In this respect, a Thai learner will avoid using this bring productively as a catenative verb and fail to elicit the correct meaning of bring

receptively. As a result, most Thai pupils will not be able to under-stand these sentences:

a)   They could not <u>bring</u> themselves to believe the news.

b)   She couldn't <u>bring</u> herself to speak about the matter.

Next, it is the word <u>manage</u> with which a Thai learner is familiar in the same sense as the word <u>manager</u> and <u>management</u>. Again they will avoid using it as a catenative verb. The following examples are intended to exemplify this viewpoint, i.e. the examples a1) and b1) will contain the verb <u>manage</u> but a2) and b2) will be sentences a Thai learner uses.

a1)   She managed to keep her temper.

a2)   She could keep her temper.

b1)   He could manage to finish his assignment in time.

b2)   He could finish his assignment in time.

Then, there is a word <u>fail</u> meaning <u>omit</u>, <u>neglect</u> or <u>not remember</u>. Admittedly, a Thai learner will again avoid using this word. In the meantime, he will seek to express what he wants to say by means of another structure as in a2) and b2). Thus examples like:

c1)   He never fails to write to his mother every week.

c2)   He always writes to his mother.

d1)   His promises failed to materialize.

d2)   He didn't do what he has promised.

e1)   He failed to post the letter.

e2)   He forgot to post the letter.

The examples c2), d2) and e2) are sentences that Thai learners have a tendency to use.

Bibliography:

Bolinger,D. (1975),Aspects of Language, Second Edition, Harcourt Brace
    Jovanovich, Inc.

Catford, J.C. (1965), A Linguistic Theory of Translation, Oxford
    University Press.

Hornby, A.S. (1959), The Teaching of Patterns and Usage in English,Oxford
    University Press.

James,C. (1980), Contrastive Analysis, Longman.

Lado,R. (1961), Linguistics across Cultures:Applied Linguistics for
    Language Teachers, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

Punyodyana, T. (1976), The Thai Verb in Tagmemic Framework, Ph.D.
    dissertation, Cornell University.

Twaddell, W.F. (1960), The English Verb Auxiliaries, Providence R.I.

Widdowson, H.G. (1974), "The Deep Structure of Discourse and the Use of
    Translation", in S.P. Corder and E. Roulet (eds), Linguistics
    Insights in Applied Linguistics, Didier, Paris.

Abbreviations:

CA.	– Causative Verb	INTER.–	Interrogative Particle
PASS.	– Passive Voice Particle	IMPER.–	Imperative Particle
PUR.	– Purpose	D. –	Direction

Transcription and symbols

The phonemic transcription used in this study is fundamentally identical
with that of Mary Haas (1964) with a few modifications done by Punyadyana
(1976)