

The Conceptual Extendedness of 'Excrement' in Lao, Thai, Malay and Chinese

Thananan Trongdee

Maharakham University, Thailand.

Abstract

In natural language the concept of a lexeme can be extended to many senses. It is usually extended in continuum from the basic literal sense to more and more figurative senses. In this article the senses of the lexeme meaning 'excrement' or simply 'feces' in Lao, Thai, Malay and Chinese are investigated – this kind of extension is not found in Vietnamese and Khmer. Data gathered from dictionaries and informants were analyzed in order to see how this lexeme can be extended through an analysis of its 'semantic features'.

The findings revealed that there are more words related to 'excrement' in Lao *khi4* than those found in Thai *khi3*, Malay *tahi* and in Chinese *shi3*. From the concept of 'waste matter discharged from the intestines through the anus', it is extended to 'waste matter discharged from other parts of body', to waste matter from plants and to the figurative meaning of 'unimportant things'. Moreover the '*khi*' in Lao and Thai behaves like a prefix of pejorative meaning in many words. It is found that its sense can be extended to 8 types in Lao, 7 types in Thai, 4 types in Malay and 3 types in Chinese.

Keywords: Conceptual Extendedness, Semantic Extension, Lao, Thai, Malay, Chinese