

Seeing is thinking: semantic extension of the verb of ‘Seeing’ in Thai

Abstract

It has long been problematic for the learners of Thai as the verb of ‘seeing’ *hěn* can have different meanings and functions. To help overcome the difficulty, the corpus-based study aims its focus on investigating different functions and meanings of the verb of ‘seeing’ *hěn* in Thai in three constructions; namely, (1) quotative, (2) negative and (3) equative constructions. The study reveals the interface of its structure (syntax) and meaning (semantics) that the basic sense of ‘seeing’ which is ‘to perceive with the eyes’ came to have sense of ‘to think’ with micro-senses of ‘evaluative’, ‘assertive’, and ‘evidential’ owing to the different selection of complement.

1.0 Preliminary

Cross-linguistically, there are a number of researches on the verb of visual perception ‘see’ in various fields of linguistics most of which contribute to its polysemous status and its change over time (Aurelia Usonien: 1999; 2001; Chinfa Lien: 2005; Nikolas Gisbourne and Jasper Holmes: 2006; Rattanaphanusorn: 2006).

As for Thai, Rattanaphanusorn (2006) found that the verb *hěn* ‘see’ tends to have quite a number of extended meaning which extends from the basic sense of ‘perceive with the eyes’ to ‘think’, ‘know’, ‘believe’, ‘be familiar with’ and grammatical meaning as ‘evidential’¹ and ‘epistemic’ as exemplified below:

- (1) ‘perceive with the eyes’:

chăn	hěn	khon	doon	rót	chon
I	see	person	get	car	hit

‘I saw someone get hit by a car.’

- (2) ‘think’ :

phôm	hěn	wâa	năṅsuṭuphim	thamhây	săṅkhom	sǎḥăay
I	see	COMP	newspaper	cause	society	spoiled

‘I think that newspaper spoiled our society.’

¹ Evidential markers are mainly define in two ways. (1) to refers to a lexical expression that is used to indicate the source of information (Oswalt 1986; Fitneva 2001; Faller 2002; Aikhenvald 2004 and De Haan 2004), (2) it refers to lexical expressions used to indicate the source of information and simultaneously indicate speaker's attitude with degree of certainty (Chafe 1986; Mithun 1986; Palmer 1986; Willet 1988 and Matlock 1989). This paper adopts the latter definition as the insertion of *hěn* in all constructions not only denotes the source of information but also speaker's judgment and evaluation within the scope of 'thinking'.

- (3) ‘know’:

phǒm pĕeŋ cà cay ʔòon hĕn kwamdii khǒŋ kháw
 I just ASP heart soft see goodness POSS she
 ‘I just gave in and realized the good aspect of hers.’

- (4) ‘believe’

dichǎn hĕn wâa kaancàtham ʔaray nán tōŋ tham
 I see COMP doing what PRT must do
 nay sĭŋ thĭi thùuktōŋ in
 thing REL right ‘I believe
 that we should do something right’

(Rattanaphanusorn 2007)

- (5) ‘be familiar with’

sùkhon hĕn hàat kamalaa maa tâŋtĕe kòot Sukhon
 see beach Kamala come since birth ‘Sukhon has seen
 Kamala Beach since her birth.’

- (6) ‘evidential’

hĕn thân naayók bòk wâa thĭa thúkkon mây
 see HON-TITLE prime minister tell COMP if everybody not
 rûamkan prayàt nâmmān ʔiiknòy kôo kŋ cakāt
 jointly save fuel soon PRT probably limit import
 kaannamkhâw
 ‘The prime minister said that if nobody saved fuel, a quota on imported fuel might be imposed soon.’

(Rattanaphanusorn and Thepkanjana 2007)

According to the examples above, the verb *hĕn* can be seen to have extended meaning but it, as the matter of fact, still functions as a main verb except for example (6). Based on Thai National Corpus (TNC), there appear a number of distinctive uses of the verb of ‘seeing’ *hĕn* as well as in example (6) which tends to behave like grammatical word as exemplified below:

- (7) **hĕn** dāyyin wâa mưâwaan phrá? mɔɔraʔnáʔphâab paj
 See hear that yesterday monk pass away go
 ‘I heard that a monk died yesterday.’
 ?‘(I) **see** I heard that a monk died yesterday.’ (literal)

- (8) năŋ **mâj** **hĕn** naăduu ləŋ
 movie not see interesting PRT
 ‘The movie doesn’t seem interesting at all.’
 ?‘The movie, (I) **see**, is not interesting at all.’ (literal)

- (9) khà?buankaankluânwǎj thîi duu cà? prà?sòpkhwaamsǎmrèt
 activist group REL look ASP successful
 thîisùt hěn cà? dâajkêe khà?buankaan prà?chaathíppà?taj
 most see ASP be group democracy
 ‘The most successful activist group seems to be the Democracy.’
 ?‘The activist group that looks most successful, **(I) see**, is the Democracy.’ (literal)

It should be noted from (7), (8) and (9) that *hěn* cannot be literally translated into English.² Given that, *hěn* should be translated as ‘seem’ in (8) and (9) and rather unique in (7) as *hěn* is differently translated as “I heard...” Syntactically speaking, *hěn* in each example above always occurs in its own highly-constrained syntactic environment. As seen in (7), *hěn* can precede a quotation or a reported speech, whereas *hěn* in (8) usually co-occur with the negative word *mǎj* which can not be put asunder in order to make affirmative sentence. Besides, *hěn* in (9) co-occur with two copular verbs, namely, *pen* and *dâykêe*. When taken together, they can also be used to express ideas denoted by subject argument and object argument that are semantically identical.

However, *hěn* in all of the examples mentioned above is ultimately a matter of options, since it provides an extra element to specify additional information. As for Rattanaphanusorn and Thepkanjana (2007), they propose that *hěn*, particularly in (6) and (7), functions as an ‘evidential marker’ which is used to indicate the source of information so as to lessen the degree of judgment and certainty towards the proposition being uttered. More specifically, *hěn* does not syntactically behave like lexical word but grammatical word, simply because it does not constitute its semantic core. That is to say, *hěn* in the examples does not denote any situation or event but rather extra information i.e. the source of information.

To summarize thus far, *hěn* in the examples above is syntactically manifested in quite particular patterns with an idiosyncratic interpretation. This being so, the use of *hěn* can be syntactically categorized into three interesting constructions: quotative, equative and negative. In each construction, *hěn* seems to have different functions and convey a wide range of meanings. Two questions are then raised: *what function does hěn serve in Thai spoken language?* and *what does hěn in three special patterns mean?* What is more, as the extension of meaning is naturally structure-dependent, the paper also aims to show how syntax and semantics are intertwined by looking into different structures of complement of the verb *hěn* in the three constructions. Since each use of *hěn* is realized in different constructions, it should be considered semantically different.

With regard to Thai literatures, Rattanaphanusorn (2006) as well as Rattanaphanusorn and Thepkanjana (2007) claim that the meaning of *hěn* in the examples has extended to a grammatical sense of evidentiality. It functions as an evidential marker indicating the source of information that implies speaker’s less degree of certainty. As so, the speakers do not have a strong commitment to the fact they convey as they put aside their responsibility towards its

² Recall that a question mark put in front of the literally translated versions signifies an unlikely reading.

correctness to the his/ her perception per se. The propositions being uttered with *hěn* are, therefore, interpreted as neutral or objective. However, since the use of *hěn* is realized in three explicitly different patterns, it then should be considered to have more senses than just 'evidential'. So, this paper takes rather different view that not only the evidential the verb *hěn* can be but also such pragmatic element as 'mitigator'. In addition, it reveals speaker's certainty although it is lexically manifested as a lexeme associated with objective truth for Traugott and Dasher (2002) points out that there is paradoxical fact in the expression of certainty as subjective meaning is possibly concealed behind objective seeming expression.

To answer the question, the data in which *hěn* exists are collected from the two major corpora in Thailand: Thai National Corpus with approximately 11 million words (<http://www.arts.chula.ac.th/~ling/TNC>) and also Thai Concordance with approximately 3 million words (<http://www.arts.chula.ac.th/~ling/ThaiConc/>). The two corpora contain a vast array of examples of the uses of the verb *hěn* from various sources of both spoken and written Thai: newspapers, fictions, articles, non-fictions, and so on. To conduct this research, 300 tokens of the each use of the verb *hěn* are sorted out with the 50-word surrounding context. Only *hěn* which fits in the three constructions- quotative, equative and negative- are taken into account.

2.0 The semantic extension and the emergence of the verb *hěn* in the three constructions

According to Rattanaphanusorn (2007), it is claimed that the semantic extension of the verb *hěn* is a result of metaphorical change from 'concrete to abstract,' as Sweetser (1993) calls 'the Mind-as-Body Metaphor,' to the visual perception. The verb *hěn* thus describes perception or experience so intellectual and internal that it can be compared to such cognition verbs like 'think' or 'believe' as shown in the schema below.

SEEING —————> THINKING/ BELIEVING

However, the nature of semantic extension is structure-dependent as previously mentioned that *hěn* with intellectual readings like 'think' appears to fall into three specific complex constructions: quotative, negative and equative and occur in specific context with specific sub-senses of 'THINK'. Hence, there should potentially be a linkage i.e. relationship among the three constructions which is to be clarified in this paper afterwards.

2.1 The prototypical sense of *hěn*

The basic meaning of the verb *hěn* is 'to perceive with the eyes' of which prototypical event involves at least two basic participants: perceiver (experience) and the perceived (stimulus).

- (10) chán hěn lòn mư̄awaannı̄
 I see her yesterday
 'I saw her yesterday.'

In the example, *chán* is the perceiver and *lòn* is the perceived (stimulus). Such use in the example (10) shows the most prototypical scene of the verb of 'seeing' where there are two participants in the event. However, not only things/ person, the perceived (stimulus) or the object of perception denoted by noun phrase can also be situation whereby the object argument, takes another verb especially action verb describing event perceived; thus, it become the embedded clause with optional complementizer *wâa*.

- (11) *chán hěn (wâa) lòn maa thiîniî muâwaanní*
 I see COMP her come here yesterday
 'I saw her here yesterday.'

In (11), *chán* is still the perceiver, but the perceived has changed from entity *lòn* 'she' to the situation denoted by subordinate clause *lòn maa thiîniî muâwaanní* 'she came here yesterday'. Still, this shows the prototypical scene of the verb 'seeing'. The verb *hěn* 'see' in (10) and (11) is apparently the main verb being denoted by a person in (10) and the event of someone coming in (11). The use of *hěn* in the two examples shows its basic meaning 'perceive something with the eyes' of which target of perceiving can be both entities manifested by a noun phrase and an event manifested by a noun phrase + a verb phrase, i.e. embedded clause.

2.2 *hěn* in the quotative construction

Generally speaking, the object argument of *hěn* is allowed to take another verb expressing event or experiential stance. Hence, the use of *hěn* as having another verb after object argument is regularly found in the corpus. It is commonly found that the use of *hěn* with object argument takes reporting verbs or verbs of saying; verb with the complementizer *wâa* or communicative verbs (Prasithrathsint, 2007) in the corpus such as *bòðk* 'tell', *phûut* 'say', *sày* 'to command'.

- (12) *ʔchán hěn kháw bòðk wâa lòn maa thiîniî muâwaanní*
 I see he tell that she come here yesterday
 'I was told that she had been here yesterday.'

It should be noted that Thai is a pro-drop language, i.e. sentences can be uttered without referring to the speaking ground with pronouns. Therefore, it is more common to find the zero-anaphoric use of *hěn* and other verbs.

- (13) *ø hěn kháw bòðk wâa lòn maa thiîniî muâwaanní*
 ø see he tell that she come here yesterday
 'I was told that she had been here yesterday.'

And

- (14) *ø hěn ø bòðk wâa lòn maa thiîniî muâwaanní*
 ø see ø tell that she come here yesterday

‘I was told that she had been here yesterday.’

However, it might sound odd in spoken language to add first person pronoun before the verb as a subject argument for a question mark is put in the example (12) although it is comprehensible that the speaker, iconically manifested by ‘I’, is the referent ground (speaking ground, i.e. speech event participants) for the verb *hě̃n*. In addition, the referent subject for *hě̃n* in such use is pragmatically bound to the speaker since it is hardly found coexisting with other pronouns like ‘he’, ‘she’ or other proper nouns before such use of *hě̃n* in the corpus.

Thus, *hě̃n* with reporting verbs is normally used without any subject arguments. It is unsurprising that *hě̃n* can be found in everyday conversation and in general text, especially newspaper, inasmuch as it usually quotes or reports what others have said to the readers. Such use of the verb *hě̃n* illustrates its status as a grammatical element, since *hě̃n* does not denote the main event but the matrix quotative clause. Rather, *hě̃n* is added to denote extra information, i.e. hearsay information. Note that a sentence with the negative word *mây* preceding *hě̃n* is scarcely found.

- (15) **mây* *hě̃n* $\emptyset$ *bòòk wáa lòn maa thiĩniĩ muuwaannĩĩ*
not see $\emptyset$ tell that she come here yesterday
‘I was told that she had been here yesterday.’

As shown in (15), *hě̃n* does syntactically lose its lexical status, since it cannot be negated with *mây* for the ability to be negated is one of lexical properties. Semantically speaking, it does not constitute itself a semantic core in that it does not denote situation, but provide extra information (hearsay information) nonetheless. The use of *hě̃n* with the embedded clause (typically verbs of saying) consequently gives rise to the use of *hě̃n* in a particular construction, the so-called ‘quotative construction’.

As the name implies, the occurrence of *hě̃n* in quotative construction signifies experience or situations in which the speaker is not in fact a participant but rather a reporter or an observer. In other words, the information acquired becomes indirect or second-handed. In the example (13) and (14), the event that someone had been to somewhere in a particular point of time in the past is not directly perceived by the speaker, but is indirectly told or reported by someone else.

Pragmatically, *hě̃n* in this construction seems to function as one of the strategies of *face-preserving*³ following Brown and Levin (1978). The evidential markers indicate the

³ According to Brown and Levin (1978), the concept of “Face” refers to a speaker’s sense of *linguistic and social identity*. For any speech act may impose on this sense, and is therefore *face threatening*. There are strategies for the speaker to lessen the threat. *Positive politeness* means being complimentary and gracious to the addressee, *Negative politeness* is found in ways of mitigating the imposition:

- Hedging: Er, could you, er, perhaps, close the, um, window?
- Pessimism: I don’t suppose you could close the window, could you?
- Indicating deference: Excuse me, sir, would you mind if I asked you to close the window?
- Apologizing: I’m terribly sorry to put you out, but could you close the window?

source of information so that what the speaker convey would be considered more reliable by mentioning what have been (visually) experienced. They denote the speakers' attenuation in the degree of commitment and diffusion of responsibility to their ultimate conclusion.

To be specified, *hễn* is used to lessen the speakers' degree of certainty, since they put aside their responsibility towards the accuracy of the fact by shifting hearer's focus of attention to its possible but not actual stance of the fact. In other words, *hễn* is to mitigate speakers' judgment to the imposition; consequently, it can be falsifiable so as to prevent *face threatening* from the hearer.

2.3 *hễn* in the negative construction

In addition, *hễn* 'see' is also frequently found co-occurring with complementizer *wâa* which is claimed to be used with verbs referring expression, communicating ideas, information, and opinions (Prasithrathsint 2007). In (10), *hễn* 'see' can thus be used with *wâa* as illustrated below.

- (16) chán hễn lòn maa thiini muâwaanni
I see her come here yesterday
'I saw her here yesterday.'

chán hễn **wâa** lòn maa thiini muâwaanni
I see that her come here yesterday
'I saw that she had been here yesterday.'

In a similar vein, the use of *hễn* collocated with *wâa* appears to have two complement structures of *hễn* followed by *wâa*, i.e. adjectival verbs or clauses which nearly all of them is used with auxiliary *cà*. It should be noted that the complementizer *wâa* is optional in all sentences; therefore, it would sound more natural to omit *wâa* in some contexts.

- (17) chán hễn **wâa** naăsõncaj dii
I see that interesting well
'I find it interesting.'

- (18) hễn **wâa** lòn **cà** maa thi ñaan duwaj ni
see that she ASP come at party also PRT
'I heard that she'll be at the party as well.'

The adjectival verb in (17) conveys opinions, judgments or evaluations towards entities or situations perceived- meaning that it is interesting. For *cà* after *wâa* in (18), it is

- Impersonalizing: The management requires all windows to be closed.

used to express predictive judgment or irrealis situation that someone may or may not come to the party.

As it is found prevalent in Thai expressions talking about others without referring to the speaking ground (speech event participants), (18) can be more natural in Thai spoken language without referring to it.

- (19) hễn **waâ** **cà** maa thiĩ ɲaan đưậj òi
 see that ASP come at party also PRT
 ‘I heard that she’ll be at the party as well.’

As previously discussed, complementizer *wâa* appears to be usually dropped so sentence (12) can only be:

- (20) hễn **cà** maa thiĩ ɲaan đưậj òi
 see ASP come at party also PRT
 ‘I heard that she’ll be at the party as well.’

(19) and (20) is understandable on the condition that there is a previous context about who will come to the party. That is why it is unnecessary to refer to the speech event participants.

The sentence (20) conveys an irrealis interpretation specifically because of *hễn* (*wâa*) together with *cà*. *hễn* (*wâa*) exhibits the mental process of what is going to happen and *cà* simultaneously signifies the irrealis dimension for the speaker use *cà* to mark that what he/she is saying is a prediction. Thus, the collocation of *hễn* (*wâa*) and *cà* can be said to be within the mental process of ‘thinking’ (evaluative) as Chafe (1995: 364) states that:

“The realis-irrealis dimension has a consistent functional basis in people’s judgments concerning the degree to which their ideas accord with what they believe to be objective reality.”

It should be noted that sentence (18) without *hễn* (*wâa*), the auxiliary *cà* entails the subject's intention to come to the party.

- (21) lòn **cà** maa thiĩ ɲaan đưậj
 she ASP come at party also
 ‘She’ll be at the party as well.’

From the example (21), it is the fact that someone has a strong intention to go to the party. In comparison to (18), the property of the event expressed by the verb’s complement with the insertion of the verb *hễn* is rather *potential* than actual. That is to say, it is not the case whether someone will go to the party, but this leads to the speaker's prediction on the high probability that someone will do so.

In addition, sentences with the verb *hěn* (*wâa*) together with *cà* is frequently found to be used in negative sentence.

- (22) kaanbaâ **mâj** hěn (**wâa**) **cà?** yâak lɣɣj
 homework not see (COMP) ASP difficult PRT
 ‘The homework doesn’t look difficult at all.’

- (23) năŋ **mâj** hěn (**wâa**) **cà?** naăduu lɣɣj
 movie not see (COMP) ASP interesting PRT
 ‘The movie doesn’t seem interesting at all.’

As mentioned before that the complementizer *wâa* is usually optional in spoken language, *hěn* (*wâa*) with negative word *mâj* often co-occurs with only *cà* more than *hěn wâa cà* as the optional *wâa* shown in the examples within the parentheses. The frequent use of *hěn* in negative sentences becomes fossilized since it is unable for the sentence like example (23) to be de-negated by deleting *mâj* as exemplified below;

- (24) * năŋ hěn naăduu
 movie see interesting
 ‘The movie seem interesting.’

Instead of saying so, the grammatical version of (24) must be:

- (25) năŋ naăduu
 movie interesting
 ‘The movie is interesting.’

This shows that *hěn* does not constitute its semantic core, i.e. denoting situation, and *mâj hěn* lends itself to one particular unit, the so-called ‘negative construction,’ with the sense of concessive evaluative judgment which is derived from *hěn wâa* (evaluative sense).

The occurrence of the negative construction is constrained to occur in a context where the opposite opinions are presumably previously stated. As for the example (22), the homework may be construed easy for the speaker but not for the others, and in the example (23), the speaker’s opinion towards the movie that it seems interesting may run contrary to what others think.

This is why (22) and (23) with an affirmative reading need no *hěn* owing to the fact that the verb *hěn* indicates speaker’s own opinion. When the speaker agrees with the others, there is no need to show strong opinion by inserting *hěn* to insist that this is the speaker’s very own point of view towards the entity or the event being talked about.

In addition to *hěn* in the quotative construction, instead of making negative judgment or evaluation on something directly, *hěn* is to lessen the degree of commitment towards the entities or events being judged, since it can be falsified so that the speaker's self-image can be preserved. Thus, it functions as a hedge.

2.4 *hěn* in the equative construction

Apart from *hěn* in negative construction, there is another use of *hěn* that seems to derive from the *hěn wâa* construction as well. Due to the fact that *wâa* in *hěn wâa* construction is normally omitted, it is found that *hěn* can also co-occur with *cà* without *wâa* in affirmative sentences. In other words, only *hěn cà* is retained.

- (26) khwaamdòotdèn khǒŋ wát hēŋ níi hěn
 Uniqueness POSS temple CLF this see
 cà pen bòot pròkphoo
 ASP be ordination hall Prokpho
 'The uniqueness of this temple seems to be the Prokpho ordination hall.'

The corpus shows that there appears a number of data of which *hěn* together with *cà* co-occurs with two particular copular verbs, namely, *pen* and *dâykêe*. Hence, *hěn cà pen* as well as *hěn cà dâykêe* have quite a complex complement structure that there are a noun phrase with a adjective typically in a superlative form on the left-branched side of *hěn*, and a noun phrase which has qualitative characteristics denoted by the adjective (left-branched) on the right.

- (27) khà?buankaanklúanwǎj thīi duu cà? prà?sòpkhwaamsǎmrèt
 activist group REL look ASP successful
 thīisùt hěn cà? dāajkêe khà?buankaan prà?chaathíppà?taj
 most see ASP be group democracy
 'The most successful activist group seems to be the Democracy.'

- (28) khunná?laksà?nà? thīi sǎmkan thīisùt khǒŋ lôk tà?wantòk
 characteristics REL important most POSS world east
 hěn cà? pen kaanmûŋ phèekhà?jǎaj lé? tǎoptoo jàj khuín
 see ASP be determination expand and grow big up
 'The most important characteristics of the Western world seem to be the determination of expansion and growth of countries.'

The copular *pen* and *dâykêe* here functions as an equator since the right-branched noun phrase refers to the left-branched one. In the example (27), 'the Democracy' is semantically equivalent to 'the most successful activist group' and in the example (28) 'the determination of expansion and growth of countries' is also semantically equal to 'the most important characteristics of the Western world'. The adjectival verb, mostly in superlative, is to provide a strong qualitative evaluation about the entities mentally perceived by the speaker.

As well as in the example (28), while the others may come out of the significant characteristics of the western countries in other ways around such as their rich culture and history, the speaker strongly come out that the important characteristics of the western countries must be their determination of expansion and growth of countries.

(29) khàʔbuankaankluānwǎj thīi duu càʔ pràʔsòpkhwaamsămrèt
activist group REL look ASP successful
thīisùt **dâajkèe** khàʔbuankaan pràʔchaathíppàʔtaj
most be group democracy
'The most successful activist group is the Democracy.'

To compare the examples (27) and (28) with the examples (29) and (30), it is found that they are superficially the same. However, with *hě̃n* in (27) denoting the fact that the Democracy is the most successful activist group is highly assumed or strongly asserted as well as the fact that the most important characteristic of the western world is the strong intention to expand their lands in (28). This means that the speaker is quite confident about the what he/ she is conveying although others may not totally agree. On the contrary, to talk like examples (29) and (30), it sounds more neutral as these facts seem widely acceptable by the authority. Thus, *hě̃n* here is used to show speaker's very own judgment and evaluation.

(31) °khwaamdòotdèn khǒɔŋ wát hènŋ ní mǎy hǎn
 Uniqueness POSS temple CLF this not see
 cà pen bòot pròkphoo
 ASP be ordination hall Prokpho
 ‘The uniqueness of this temple seems to be the Prokpho ordination hall.’

615

thĩisùt **mây hẽn cà?** **dâajkêê** khà?buankaan prà?chaathíppà?taj
 most not see ASP be group democracy
 ‘The most successful activist group seems to be the Democracy.’

- (33) °khunná?laksà?nà? thĩi sẵmkan thĩisùt khỏ๑ lỏk tà?wantỏk
 characteristics REL important most POSS world east
mây hẽn cà pen kaanmủ๑ phẻekhà?jảaj lẻ? tẻ๑ptoo jẻj khuủn
 not see ASP be determination expand and grow big up
 ‘The most important characteristics of the Western world seem to be the
 determination of expansion and growth of countries.’

In fact, neither *hẽn* nor the copular verb *pen* as well as *dâykêê* can be negated with *mây*. Instead, to deny such propositions being assumed with high degree of insertion, *mây chây* ‘not right’ is preferred.

- (34) °khwaamdỏotdẻn khỏ๑ wát hẻ๑๑ nẻi **mây chây**
 Uniqueness POSS temple CLF this not right
 bẻ๑t prỏkphỏ๑
 ordination hall Prokphỏ
 ‘The uniqueness of this temple isn’t the Prokphỏ ordination hall.’

- (35) °khà?buankaankủ๑anwẻj thĩi duu cà? prà?sỏpkhwaamsẵmrẻt
 activist group REL look ASP successful
 thĩisùt **mây chây** khà?buankaan prà?chaathíppà?taj
 most not see ASP be group democracy
 ‘The most successful activist group isn’t the Democracy.’

- (36) °khunná?laksà?nà? thĩi sẵmkan thĩisùt khỏ๑ lỏk tà?wantỏk
 characteristics REL important most POSS world east
mây chây kaanmủ๑ phẻekhà?jảaj lẻ? tẻ๑ptoo jẻj khuủn
 not right determination expand and grow big up
 ‘The most important characteristics of the Western world isn’t the determination of
 expansion and growth of countries.’

Evidently, *hẽn cà pen* as well as *hẽn cà dáykêê* are conventionally conceptualized as fixed phrases or fossilized units since they appear to be negated with *mây* preceding neither *hẽn* nor *pen* / *dâykêê*. This clearly shows that *hẽn* together with the two copular verbs have totally lost their lexical property; yet, they have already been grammaticalized. This illustrates the use of *hẽn cà pen* as well as *hẽn cà dáykêê* as frozen chunk; hence, they are so-called ‘equative construction’.

As previously exemplified, the occurrence of *hẽn* in an equative construction is in the context where the idea towards entities perceived is strongly assertive, though possibly not accepted by others. The speaker implicitly imposes something assertively, but with *hẽn* what is being judged or evaluated becomes softened. Not only does it signify speaker’s own opinion, but it also suggests the source of information through his/ her own visual perception;

therefore, *hě̃n* can have functions like a hedge following the previous claim about the nature of evidentiality.

3.0 Interaction of syntax and semantics

As shown in the figure below, the basic sense of *hě̃n* ‘perceive object with the eyes’ within the concrete domain of visual perception has extended to the sense of ‘think’ within the abstract domain of mental process. The super schema of *hě̃n* at the topmost represents the prototypical meaning of *hě̃n* as ‘perceive object with the eyes’ with the prototypical object ‘thing’ entities. Since the object argument, of the prototypical *hě̃n* is allowed to take another verb to denote the situation (embedded clause), it extended to another construction with the same prototypical sense of *hě̃n*.

In a complex sentence, *hě̃n* denoting physical action have complementizer *waâ*, but it is liable to be omitted. As for *hě̃n* with *waâ*, it can occur in the context in which NP of the embedded clause takes adjectival verb with an infinitivizer *cà*; moreover, it is used to express speaker’s opinion, evaluation and judgment, thereby emerging a new sense ‘think’.

On the right side of the figure, there comes another construction “quotative”. For *hě̃n* denoting event appears to have embedded clause complement. Quite a number of clause can report what is said, the so-called reported clause, as the object complement of the verb. As such, a subject tends to be dropped; *hě̃n* turns to be a evidential marker indicating the source of information.

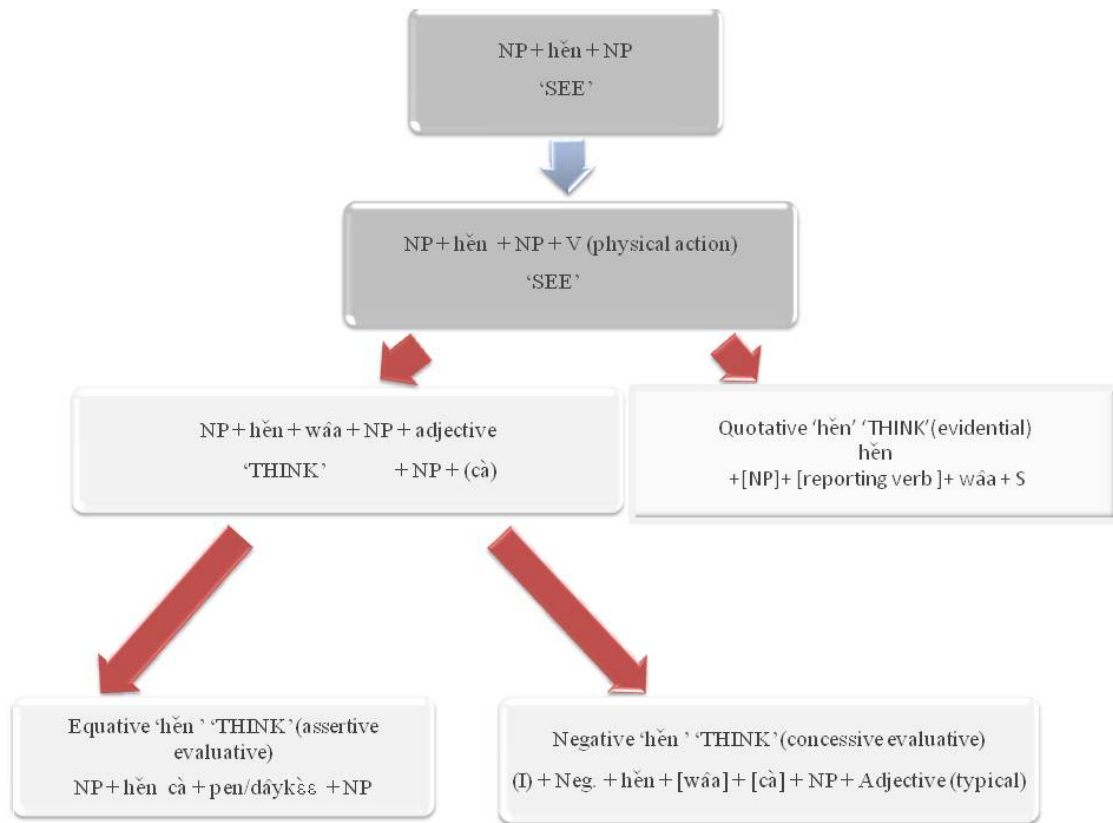


Figure 1. semantic extension schema of the verb of 'seeing' in Thai

Furthermore, for *hěn* in the negative construction, it should be regarded as the parallel construction of *hěn* with *wâa*. However, such a construction is unique in its own right, since it is not the converted version of *hěn* with the *wâa* construction and vice versa. The dichotomy between the two constructions is that *hěn* in the negative construction is the fixed phrase expression signifying only concessive evaluation, while *hěn* with *wâa* construction signifies thought or evaluation, either positive or negative.

Last of all, as previously discussed on *hěn* with *wâa* schema, there occasionally appears to be substituted with an infinitivizer *cà* clause. It is used to express speaker's judgment and evaluation with a rather high degree of imposition for the evaluative stance, which comes equipped with the superlative adjectival verbs. Notwithstanding that, it derives from *hěn* with *wâa* construction, it should be used as two separate constructions, since the asserted idea and the evaluated entity or event are realized in terms of equation;

evaluated idea = the evaluated entity/ event
(superlative adjectival verbs)

According to Usoniene (2001), the meaning of visual perception verb 'seeing' falls into two major categories, namely, (1) those related to vision (physical/ external experience) and (2) those related to mental process (mental/ internal experience). As previously discussed, the meaning of *hěn* in the three constructions is based on the latter for the speaker

expresses his/ her degree of certainty, judgment, and evaluation which is the mental process under the scope of ‘thinking’.

The extension of meaning involves with the concept of direct (as in NP object complement), and indirect (as in that-clause object complement) in complementation (Borkin 1973, Aijmer 1980, Duffly 1992), i.e. complement selection. It is found that the more indirect the complement is, the more abstract is the perception, since it can be seen that *hěn* in the three constructions with the extended meaning ‘think’ exist in indirect complement structures, that is, that-clause and full-infinitive clause or clause with *cà*, while *hěn* with the basic sense of visual perception prototypically takes only object argument.

4.0 Concluding remarks

In a nutshell, the semantic extension of the verb *hěn* involves the shift from concrete domain of visual perception with the basic sense ‘perceive with the eyes’ to the abstract domain of mental process with extended senses ‘think,’ i.e. from “propositional”, textual” or “expressive” or from describing external to evaluative perceptual or cognitive aspects “internal situation” (Traugott 1982, 1986 and 1988). For *hěn* in the three construction observed, it apparently shows the nature of semantic extension, i.e. attenuation or semantic bleaching (as in Givón’s original term) in meaning, since *hěn* in question obviously loses its verbal property and becomes more grammaticalized.

In addition, the semantic extension of the verb *hěn* is said to be structure-dependent or syntax-imposed. That is to say, the extension of meaning results from the different complement structures of *hěn* which can be syntactically realized in line with the three unique constructions: quotative, negative and equative. This presents the syntax-semantics interface with the concept of directness and indirectness in complementation that the more indirect the complement (Borkin 1973, Aijmer 1980, Duffly 1992) is, the more abstract is the perception.

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