

PARTICIPANT REFERENCE IN NORTHERN KHMER¹

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The purpose of this paper is to offer a brief description of participant reference rules in Northern Khmer. The latter is spoken by some 550,000 people in six provinces of Thailand, namely, Surin, Buriram, Srisaket, Mahasarakham, Prachinburi, Trat, and Ubolratchathani (Dhanan and Chartchai, 1978), the densest concentration of speakers being in the first three.

My description is based on eighteen texts, specimens of the speech of Mrs Phen Piyaram, a forty-four-year-old native speaker of Buriram Northern Khmer. These were first recorded on magnetic tape, which was then transcribed with the help of two other native speakers, Mr Prathueng Piyaram and Miss Anong.

I shall confine myself to describing how participants are introduced, how they are reintroduced, and how reference to them is maintained.

1. *Initial introduction of participants*

Main, secondary, incidental secondary, and nonhuman secondary participants² are introduced in different ways at their first appearance.

1.1. *Main participants*

Main participants of the text or episode are usually introduced in an existential miien clause with the numeral phrase muuj 'one' or nuu muuj 'be one'. After this introduction the next clause usually has the same participant as a zero subject,³

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²A *main* participant is one who occurs throughout all or most of the text. A *secondary* participant is one who occurs only in some parts, or as a member of an action group or assemblage.

³Symbolized as \emptyset .

and that participant is automatically in focus. Examples:

main participant of text:

miən mɛɛ ʔəw nuv muuj ∅
 there-is mother-father be one
 'There were parents.... (they)'

main participants of episode:

miən kmom koon kmom muuj ∅
 there-is girl child girl one
 'There was a daughter.... (she)'

miən mɛɛ cah nuv muuj
 there-is mother old be one
 'There was an old mother....'

1.2. *Secondary participants*

Secondary participants are usually introduced in an existential miən clause without a numeral phrase but with an optional kii 'third-person pronoun'. After this introduction the same participant usually appears in the next clause and is referred to as kii. This participant is not in focus. Examples:

miən niəʔ sɔʔ kii kii
 there-is person village they they
 'There were neighbours.... they'

miən ʔaakii kii
 there-is someone she
 'There was someone.... she'

miən phooŋ priən
 there-is group hunter
 'There were some hunters'

1.3. *Incidental secondary participants*

Secondary participants who are incidental — that is to say, nonspecific participants — are usually introduced in the object slot of a clause in the form of a noun phrase, noun or pronoun kii 'third person', with or without modifiers. They may be referred to as kii in the subject slot of the following clause.

Depending on whether they are to be in focus or not, main and secondary participants may be reintroduced in various ways, such as by a noun phrase (with or without modifiers) or pronoun. They may be reintroduced in the subject, object, or possessive slots.

2.1. *In-focus reintroduction*

Participants, both main and secondary, may be reintroduced and brought into focus in the subject slot by use of a noun phrase with or without modifiers. The noun phrase may consist of a noun plus description, demonstrative, possessive, or the like. Examples:

S

moo kəʔ mɛɛ tneŋ thaa

come L mother ask that

'(When she) came, the mother asked that.....'

S

phoo tə ʔəw tamrɛɛj moo Ø

when father elephant come

'When the father elephant came (he)'

S

koon nuh kəʔ plɛɛk knoŋ cəət

child that L be-surprised in heart

'That child was surprised'

S

mii ckɛɛ nih kəʔ liic koon

mother dog this L delivered child

'This mother dog had delivered (she)'

S

mɛɛ ʔɛɛŋ nuh həj phoo tə phlɯɯ

mother herself that Part when be-bright

'That mother, when the day began'

S

snɛɛh kəʔ pdəj kii kəʔ tneŋ thaa

then husband her L ask that

'Then her husband asked that.....'

2.2. *Non-focus pronoun reintroduction*

Participants who are out of focus may be reintroduced in the object slot of a clause by use of pronoun *kii* 'third person'. Examples:

O

khniə kə? tuu lɔŋ nɔŋ kii.⁶
 she L go play with them
 'She went to play with them.'

O

thəə cniik da? kum tampiəŋ dec kii cəh həj.⁷
 do spade put-into clump bamboo like her Part
 '(She = the second daughter) made her spade lost in the
 clump of bamboo like her (= as the first daughter had done).'

2.3. *Non-focus noun reintroduction*

Participants who are out of focus may be reintroduced in the object slot by use of a noun phrase with or without modifiers. The noun phrase may consist of a noun plus description, demonstrative pronoun, possessive, or the like. Examples:

O

nəʃ kə? pɒuul pɒuən thaa
 then persuade wife that
 'Then (the husband) persuaded his wife that

O

kii kə? haw thaaŋ nuh həj moo
 he L call soldier that Part come
 'He called that soldier

⁶*Kii* reintroduces the daughter's friends, who are now out of focus.

⁷*Kii* reintroduces the first daughter, now out of focus.

nɛʃ kə? tuu tu? kə? khəp̚ p̚dɛj̚ kii
 then go Part L see husband her

'Then (she) went to see her daughter's husband.....'

3. *Maintaining reference to participants*

Depending on whether they are in focus or not, reference to participants is maintained in various ways by use of a pronoun, noun, noun phrase, or zero.

3.1. *In-focus chain of zeroes*

A focused participant is normally not referred to overtly at all: for one participant as subject of successive main clauses there may be a chain of zeroes until the series is terminated or interrupted.

3.1.1. *Subject-initial chain*

After either introduction or reintroduction a focused participant is usually referred back to by zero in the subject slot of the next clauses. Example:

I-F⁸

¶ miiən mɛɛ ʔəw nuu muuj nɛʃ kə? miiən koon
 there-is mother father be one then there-is child
 proh nuu tɛ muuj FØ sləp̚ ʔooj FØ sləp̚
 male be - one (parents) love - (parents) love
FØ kə? ləɛj̚ cuun koon tuu riin FØ kə? mət
 (parents) so send child go study (parents) L lose
 ʔat FØ mət staŋ FØ miiən sɾɛɛ
 money (parents) lose money (parents) have ricefield
FØ miiən ckaa FØ kə? luə? cuun koon mət
 (parents) have garden (parents) L sell send child entire

⁸Discourse symbols: Ø = zero; ¶ = structural paragraph; # = paragraph boundary; FØ = zero focused participant; I-F = introduction of focused participant; NonF = nonfocused participant.

tuu riin munuŋkɔɔk thonburii.
go study Bangkok Thonburi

'There were parents. And there was a son. The parents loved him very much, so they sent him off to study. They used up all of their money. They had fields and gardens. They sold all of these to send their son to study in Bangkok.'

3.1.2. Object-initial chain

A participant first introduced in the object slot must be brought into focus in the subject slot before it can be represented by a chain of zeroes. Examples:

O

tək slɛɛk woojwaaɟ ʔɔɔɟ kii niiaʔ sɔʔ cuuj roo
shout sharply for them person village help seek
..... snɛɛh kəʔ phooŋ niiaʔ^S sɔʔ kii kəʔ cuuj nuwɛm
then group person village they L help bring
khniiə-khnaan F∅ [11 times]
together (they)

'(The mother) shouted sharply for the neighbours to help her look for (her daughter). Then the neighbours helped together (They).....'

O S

phɔɔ tɛ bəŋʔəən tuu pah tamrɛɛɟ sɔɔ tamrɛɛɟ
when by-chance go meet elephant white elephant
con-cəət F∅
be-stumped (he)

'(The daughter) met the white elephant by chance. The elephant was stumped (He)

3.1.3. Interruption by quotation

A chain of zeroes may be interrupted by a direct quotation. After the latter, even though he was previously in focus as ∅, the participant is frequently referred to by a pronoun or noun phrase, being represented by ∅ again in any following clauses. Examples:

FØ 2 times + direct quotation + ʔaa khniə man meen baan
 (she) PreN she not really get

tuu lɿŋ nɔŋ prɔh naa chmool naa FØ
 go play with male what male what (She)

'She really didn't have sexual contact with any man. ...'

Reference to the focused participant had been maintained by zeroes. The introduction of the direct quotation interrupted this chain of zeroes. The first subject was then brought back into focus with the pronoun following the quotation. Once this was done, the chain of zeroes resumed.

FØ 3 times + direct quotation by elephant + snɛh kə?
 (elephant) then

tamrɛɛj kə? thaa + direct quotation by elephant.
 elephant L say

'Then the elephant said,'

The elephant had been in focus and reference to him had been maintained by zeroes. Both quotations interrupt the chain of zeroes.

3.1.4. *Interruption by settings*

When a paragraph begins with a time setting or location setting the chain of zeroes is frequently interrupted, even though the same participant is still in focus. A pronoun or noun phrase occurs in the first main clause, zeroes resuming in any following clauses. Examples:

..... FØ # #ŋ location setting + khniə kə? tuu
 (she) she L go

kreet phə? FØ 4 times.
 dip drink (She)

'She went to drink... She'

..... FØ # #ŋ time setting + niiəŋ nuh kə? ləəj luruk
 (she) daughter that so lift

'He (the officer) investigated him (a soldier) and recorded everything about him...'

3.2.3. Non-focused object noun

A non-focused participant in the object slot of a clause is usually referred to by a noun, commonly a kin term or a noun phrase. Examples:

NonF

kə? ləəj cuun koon tuu riin
so send child go study

'So (the parents) sent their child to study

NonF

phoo tə baŋ?əən tuu pah tamrɛɛj soo tuu kə? tuu haw
when by-chance go meet elephant white go go call

NonF

tamrɛɛj soo

elephant white

'(The daughter) met the white elephant by chance. She went and called the white elephant...'

3.2.4. Non-focused complex subject deletion

When there is joint action by two or more non-focused participants, they will be represented by zero in the subject slot of the clause immediately following. Examples:

NonF

NonF

nɛɛh kə? miən niiə? sɾo? kii tuu nuuəm ∅ tuu ciik
besides there-is person village they go bring (her) go dig

NonF NonF

tamlooŋ ∅ ∅

taro root (they all)

'There were neighbours. They brought her (the orphan) to dig taro roots

NonF

phooŋ niiə? sɾo? ciik tamlooŋ kə? tuu chŋaaj tuu chŋaaj
group person village dig taro root L go far go far

NonF NonF

..... ∅ ∅

(they all)

'The neighbours and the orphan went to dig taro roots. They (the neighbours and the orphan) went very far...'

3.2.5. Non-focused repeated subject deletion

If a verb is repeated or paraphrased, its non-focused subject may be deleted in the second occurrence. Examples:

	NonF		NonF		NonF
miiən	<u>ʔaakii</u>	<u>lunur</u> _ <u>pkoo</u>	<u>kii</u>	<u>lunur</u> _ <u>pkoo</u>	phɿɿŋ nah <u>∅</u>
there-is	someone	hear thunder	she	hear thunder	rain much she
<u>lunur</u> _ <u>pkoo</u>	nɔŋ	phɿɿŋ			
hear	thunder	will	rain		

'There was someone who heard thunder. She heard much thunder (and) rain. (She) heard thunder; it would rain...'

	NonF	
phɔɔ tɛ	baŋʔəən	ŋaj krɔɔj <u>kii</u> kəʔ haw thaan nuh həj
when	by-chance	day next he call soldier that Part

NonF

∅ haw moo

he call come

'It just happened that the next day he called the soldier. (He) called

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