THE DAAI PRONOUNS AND PRONOMINAL AGREEMENT SYSTEM: ALTERNATE SETS AND FOCUS

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0. INTRODUCTION

Daai is a Southern Chin language, spoken by approximately 45,000 people in the townships of Matupi, Mindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa in the Southern Chin Hills of Myanmar. The data for this paper is based on the speech of a subgroup called “Yang”, who lives in the Kanpetlet township along the Pilong river.

In Daai, the agreement constituent of the verb phrase consists of pronoun-like elements, free morphemes that can function as separate units and can combine in a variety of combinations.

The verb phrase is complicated by a multitude of verbal auxiliaries. Most Daai verbs alternate between two stem forms, here referred to as ‘Stem A’ and ‘Stem B’. A complete account of this alternation goes beyond the limits of this paper. However, the alternation is triggered by factors relevant to the agreement system that will be mentioned below as it becomes pertinent to the discussion. The translation of the examples will show the usage of stem A or stem B. If the verb is marked with neither ‘A’ nor ‘B’, then it belongs to a verb class that does not show stem alternation.

Daai, like most Chin languages, is an ergative language. The subject of the transitive clause is marked with the ergative marker noh, the subject of the intransitive clause and the object of the transitive clause are unmarked.

This paper describes the interaction between pronouns within the noun phrases, functioning at clause level and the agreement constituent of the verb phrase.

1. PRONOUNS AND AGREEMENT IN THE INTRANSITIVE CLAUSE

1.1. First person Pronouns and Agreement

There is only one set of pronouns for both intransitive and transitive clauses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st Person</th>
<th>2nd Person</th>
<th>3rd Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Kei</td>
<td>nang</td>
<td>ah nih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dual exclusive</td>
<td>kei nih</td>
<td>nang nih</td>
<td>ah nih nih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dual inclusive</td>
<td>nih nih</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural exclusive</td>
<td>kei nih-e</td>
<td>nang nih-e</td>
<td>ah nih nih-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural inclusive</td>
<td>nih nih -e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Free Pronoun Forms

Subject agreement forms are the same for both intransitive and transitive clauses.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st Person</th>
<th>2nd Person</th>
<th>3rd Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>singular</td>
<td>kei</td>
<td>nah</td>
<td>(ah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du/pl exclusive</td>
<td>kah nih</td>
<td>nah nih</td>
<td>(ah nih)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>du/pl inclusive</td>
<td>nih</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Subject Agreement Forms (Parenthesized forms are omitted under conditions discussed in Section 1.3.)

These two tables make the contrastive categories of the free pronoun set and the set of subject agreement form apparent, as they show that there is no dual/plural distinction found with subject agreement forms.

Example 1

a. Kei  
   kah  
   dong  
   kti  
   I run/ran-B'  
   NP:1S  
   AGR:1S  
   run-  
   RL

b. Kah  
   dong  
   kti  
   'I run/ran-B'

Example 2

a. Kei nih  
   kah nih  
   sit  
   'We two (not you) will go-B'
   NP:1EX.D/PL
   AGR:1EX.D/PL  
   go FUT

b. Kei nih  
   uoong jah  
   kah nih  
   sit  
   khai  
   ‘We two, Ñng and Png, (not you) will go’
   NP:1EX.D/PL  
   Ñng  
   AGR:1EX.D/PL
   Png
   go FUT

c. Kah nih  
   sit  
   'We two (not you) will go-B'
   AGR:1EX.D/PL  
   kkhai  
   go FUT

Example 3

a. Nih nih  
   nih  
   ngdzi  
   kti  
   'We two stand/stood-B'
   NP:1IND/PL  
   AGR:1IN.D/PL  
   stand  
   RL

b. Nih  
   ngdzi  
   kti  
   'We two stand/stood-B'
   AGR:1IN.D/PL  
   stand  
   RL

Example 4

a. Kei nih-e  
   kah nih  
   ip  
   kti-e  
   'We (not you) sleep/slept-B'

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1.2. Second person pronouns and agreement

Example 5

a. **Nih nih-e**  
   **Nih** sit **kkhai-e.** 'We will go-B'
   
   NP:1IN.D/PL-PLM AGR:1IN.D/PL go FUT-PLM

b. **Nih** sit **kkhai-e.** 'We will go-B'

Example 6

a. **Nang nih-e**  
   **nah nih** **ngshut kti-e.** 'You sit/sat'
   
   NP:2D/PL-PLM AGR:2D/PL sit RL-PLM

b. **Nah nih** **ngshut kti-e.** 'You sit/sat'

c. **Nang nih** **asang-e**  
   **nah nih** **ngshut kti-e.** 'You leaders sit/sat'
   
   NP:2D/PL leader-PLM AGR:2D/PL sit RL-PLM

d. **Asang** **nah nih** **ngshut kti-e.** 'You leaders sit/sat'
   
   Leader AGR:2D/PL sit RL-PLM

For the first and second person the agreement form (exemplified in (1) by 'kah' AGR:1S) is an obligatory constituent of the clause and generally precedes the verb. The pronoun forms (exemplified in (1) a. by 'kei' NP:1S) are optional. If the noun phrase consists of a full noun, the pronoun form for first and second person can co-occur with the noun or can be omitted. See also examples (4) c. and d., (6) c. and d.

The key to the presence or absence of the pronoun form is found in the focus at clause level. If the subject is in focus, the pronoun form is used. Where the pronoun form is omitted, the focus recedes to the verb phrase, moving the emphasis from agent to action, even if the noun phrase, realized by a full noun, is present (see examples (4) d. and (6) d.). Pronouns distinguish singular, dual, and plural number.
as well as inclusive and exclusive within first person. Agreement forms are less rich, lacking the dual/plural distinction.

### 1.3. Third person

#### Example 7

a. Ah nih **dong**  **kti**  'He runs/ran-B'
   
   NP:3S run RL

b. Dong **kti**.  'He runs/ran-B'

c. Bebe **dong**  **kti**.  'The older brother runs/ran-B'

#### Example 8

a. Ah nih nih **lok**  **kti**  **xooi**  'They (two) come/came-B'
   
   NP:3D/PL come RL DU

b. Lok **kti**  **xooi**.  'They (two) come/came-B'

c. Mnaai jah Ngthang **lok**  **kti**  **xooi**.  
   
   Mnaai and Ngthang come/came-B'

d. Ngbe **ngna**  **xooi**  **lok**  **kti**  **xooi**  'The brothers(two) come/come-B'
   
   NP:older-brother younger-brother DU come RL DU

e. Ngma **xooi**  **lok**  **kti**  **xooi**  'The two brothers-in-law come/come-B'

#### Example 9

a. Ah nih nih-e **lok**  **kti-e**  'They come/come-B'
   
   NP:3D/PL-PLM come RL-PLM

b. Lok **kti-e**.  'They come/come-B'

#### Example 10

a. Ahtoi-e **sit**  **ktie-e**.  'The young people go/went-B'
   
   Youth-PLM go/went RL-PLM

b. Kpami **kking ni ah nih seh**  'Only men go/went-A'
   
   NP:Men just only AGR:3D/PL go/went

#### Example 11

Ah nih nih-a **seh**  **ni ah**  **khįh**  'Only their cow has disappeared-A'

NP:3D/PL-POS cow only AGR:3S disappeared