HEAD AND DEPENDENT-MARKING IN ISOLATING LANGUAGES: THE CASE OF COMPARATIVES IN SINITIC

Umberto Ansaldo & Stephen Matthews[*]

Introduction

The typological distinction between head and dependent-marking patterns (HM/DM: Nichols 1986) has so far been applied largely to morphological marking of grammatical relations. This distinction has yet to be systematically applied to grammatical markers in the syntactic domain in isolating languages, where affixation of grammatical morphemes is at most limited. The consequent exclusion of isolating languages from typological investigations involving the HM/DM parameter presents an important theoretical gap, which we aim to bridge in this paper.

In this paper we suggest an extension of Nichols' notion from morphological marking to cases where the marker is *in constituency with* the head or the dependent within a given grammatical construction, constituency being established through standard constituency tests. To illustrate this we focus on comparative constructions in Sinitic languages, where the comparative relation may be marked by a marker in constituency with the adjectival predicate (head) or standard NP (dependent).

By applying the HM/DM typology in this way, we obtain a particularly interesting result with respect to the diversity of the Sinitic languages. We will see that five different marking patterns are found, corresponding to the main logical possibilities described in Nichols' (1986) typology: head-marked, dependent-marked, double-marked, zero-marked and possibly neutral-marked. Thus, the HM/DM distinction helps to capture and reveal diversity within a single language family. This is an especially unexpected result in the case of Chinese, which is widely assumed to be, if not grammatically, then at least typologically homogenous.

The theoretical implication of this approach is that even in strongly isolating languages such as Sinitic, head-marking and dependent marking grammatical patterns can be established.

1. Head-marking and dependent-marking in isolating languages

The distinction between head-marking (HM) and dependent-marking (DM) grammar as made by Nichols (1986) has proved to be a productive one in several areas of both synchronic and diachronic investigation. The typological significance of the HM/DM distinction includes the following considerations:

[*]National University of Singapore, University of Hong Kong

(i)   basic word order has proved a less precise and less holistic parameter than was once hoped;

(ii)   Unlike word order, HM/DM type is diachronically relatively stable (Nichols 1992)

(iii)   HM/DM does correlate with other typological characteristics, including word order patterns (in particular, head-marking favours verb-initial order: Nichols 1992)

One question to arise is this: since the HM/DM distinction applies most readily to languages of some morphological complexity, what of isolating languages such as those of the Southeast Asian mainland? We see at least three logical possibilities:

(i)   The HM/DM distinction is generally inapplicable in isolating languages because there is little or no "marking" of the requisite kind;

(ii)   The distinction is applicable but most of the "marking" of grammatical relations is of the 'neutral' (Nichols 1986) or 'detached' (Nichols 1992) type, i.e. neither HM nor DM;

(iii)   The distinction is applicable but "marking" needs to be understood in an extended sense.

We may ask why the possibility of applying the HM/DM distinction in isolating languages (hinted at by Nichols 1986: 59) has not been pursued, to our knowledge. We suspect that linguists have assumed answer (i) or (ii), neither of which suggests a productive research area. If (i) is actually the case, then the distinction is less pervasive than it might have appeared, since it rules out by definition the possibility of including morphologically less complex languages in any typology referring to the HM/DM parameter; with regard to (ii), we shall show that although there are indeed cases of neutral marking, there are many cases where HM or DM patterns can be identified. Pursuing answer (iii), we shall suggest that the distinction can usefully be made, but that "marking" needs to be understood in an extended sense of "in constituency with". After showing how this applies in the case of possession and complementation, we shall show how it provides a valid typological parameter in the analysis of comparative constructions in Sinitic languages, which we take to be representative of isolating typology in general. We will develop in particular a synchronic typology of comparative constructions based on the HM/DM distinction (originally developed in Ansaldo 1999).

1.1 HM/DM in analytic structures: the case of possession

Nichols (1986) focuses on morphological marking of grammatical relations such as possession, which offers a particularly clear illustration of the distinction:

(1)   dependent-marked: sensei-**no**   hon   (Japanese)

                      teacher-POSS book

                      'the teacher's book'

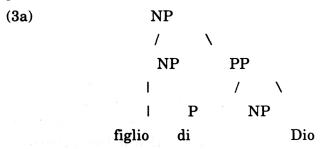(2)   head-marked: ɪstv̌n kocsi-**ja**   (Hungarian)

                      Steven car-3sg

                      'Steven's car'

In Japanese the possessive relationship is indicated on the dependent, by the suffix *no*, rather than the head of the NP (*hon* 'book'). In Hungarian, the same relationship is

indicated by a suffix , *-ja* on the head noun, while the dependent (possessor) is left unmarked.

While acknowledging the "fundamental distinction" made by Nichols, Vincent (1993: 140-1) raises the question about its application to analytic structures such as the Italian:

(3) figlio **di** Dio (Italian)
    son of God

Vincent notes that "In such instances there is a separate element, the preposition *di* or "of", whose function seems to be to mark the dependency" (ibid). What we wish to suggest in this paper is that the distinction can be made in terms of constituency. On this analysis, the marking of possession by *di* is a dependent-marked structure in the sense that [*di Dio*] forms a constituent, including the marker of possession and the dependent possessor, within the Noun Phrase:

(3a)
```
                NP
              /    \
           NP       PP
           |       /  \
           |      P    NP
        figlio   di    Dio
```

The evidence for constituency here includes:

(i) question-answer sequences:

(4) ⁀ figlio di chi? - [Di dio]
    is son of who   of God
    "Whose son is he? – God's"

(ii) preposing, whereby either the possessor or the possessed can be fronted:

(5a) [di Paola] non conosco il marito   (topicalization)
    of Paola not know-1sg the husband
    "Paola I don't know the husband of."

(5b) [il marito] non conosco [di Paola]   (focusing)
    the husband not know-1sg of Paola
    "The husband of Paola I don't know (but I know her sister, etc)"

In each case, the marker *di* remains in constituency with the possessor, *Paola*. These constituency tests argue that the construction is dependent-marked.

Similarly, consider a possessive construction found in several dialects of German, as illustrated in (6):

(6) **Dem** Wolfgang **sein** Lied (Austrian German)
    the-DAT Wolfgang his song
    'Wolfgang's song'

Here the possessive relation is marked by (a) the dative case assigned to the Determiner *dem* (cf. the Hungarian example (2) above, where dative is marked by a suffix) **and** (b) the possessive adjective *sein*. Clearly, the Determiner is in constituency with the name *Wolfgang* and *sein* with the possessed N, *Lied*. The construction may thus be characterized as double-marked using Nichols' typology; the only difference between

these and Nichols' examples is that neither of these elements indicating possession is morphologically attached to the Nouns concerned.

If this argumentation is correct for analytic structures in languages of moderate morphological complexity such as German and Italian, there is no reason why the same criteria should not apply in predominantly isolating (analytic) languages. In explicitly excluding isolating languages from her original typology, Nichols offers the following tantalising suggestion:

"Languages of the isolating type will be left out of the discussion entirely, although their 'grammatical words', 'function words', 'empty words' etc. presumably also exhibit head-marking and dependent-marking tendencies." (Nichols 1986: 59).

Although Nichols does not pursue this idea explicitly, she does so implicitly in the process of illustrating how the head/dependent-marking distinction applies with respect to subordination. Nichols gives the following English examples:

(7) dependent-marked: Since^M I was tired, I overslept

(8) head-marked: I was tired, so^M I overslept   (Nichols 1986, p. 64)

By treating the subordinate clause as a dependent of the main clause – an assumption which seems uncontroversial – Nichols assimilates the marking of subordination to the head/dependent-marking typology.[1] At the same time, given that the distinction can be made without any morphological marking, as in English (*since* and *so*), she effectively extends the notion of "marking" from bound morphemes to function words herself. This gives us every reason to believe that our extension of the HM/DM distinction is in line with Nichols' original insight.

2. Comparative constructions in Sinitic

We have suggested that the HM/DM distinction can usefully be applied to analytic structures, along the lines originally implied by Nichols and Vincent. We now outline in some detail how a HM/DM typology might look. By looking at the patterning of comparative markers in comparisons of inequality we shall see that HM, DM and other patterns can be identified in Sinitic languages. This will illustrate how structural diversity in isolating languages can be usefully described in terms of the HM/DM distinction.

The elements at issue in the typology are:

(i)   Head: the head of the construction is the Adjective (or adjectival verb, to the extent that adjectives do not form a distinct category in Sinitic languages):

[AP more ADJ than me]

The status of the adjective as head of the phrase is consistent with fact that,

for example, the specifier *more* and the complement [than me] may be

omitted.

(ii)   Dependent: the dependent element is the standard (or object) of comparison:

more ADJ [than me]

The phrase [than me] is dependent on the Adjective since it can only be

interpreted with respect to the property stated by the Adjective.

---

[1] Nichols acknowledges that the term "subordination" carries a certain bias in favour of dependent-marked structures. Indeed, 'canonical subordination is a consequence of the choice of dependent-marking strategies.' (Nichols 1986:64) In HM languages we have dependency without subordination, or co-subordination.

(iii)   Grammatical relation: that of comparison of inequality. It is perhaps not self-evident that inequality is to be considered a grammatical relation: Nichols (1986, 1992) does not include it among the relations studied, while Langacker (1987: 102) uses the term 'asymmetrical relation' to describe it. Stassen defines a comparative construction of inequality as one which "has the semantic function of assigning a graded (i.e. non-identical) position on a predicative scale to two (possibly complex) objects" (Stassen 1985: 24). The comparative relation is treated as a transitive one in formal semantics, so that the logical representations for a transitive verb and a comparison of inequality are the same (cf. Saeed 1997):

Lxy   (x loves y)

Txy   (x is taller than y)

Just as transitive clauses may be head-marked (the verb indexing its object, e.g. by agreement) or dependent marked (the object indexing its objecthood, e.g. by case), so the grammatical relation of inequality may be marked on the adjective (e.g. by a degree marker) or its object (e.g. by an adposition).

Based on these notions we shall discuss the following five marking patterns:

(9) dependent-marked: Ta [**bi** wo] gao

s/he than me tall

"She's taller than me"

(10) head-marked: Gua [**khah** kuãi] i   (conservative Minnan)

I more tall s/he

"I'm taller than him."

(11) double-marked: Gua [**pi** i] **khah** kuãi   (modern Xiamen/Taiwanese)

I than him more tall

"I'm taller than him."

(12) zero-marked: I me wa   (Chaozhou)

he fast me

"He's faster than me."

(13) neutral-marked:Keoi gou **gwo** ngo   (Cantonese)

s/he tall than me

"She's taller than me."

2.1 DM comparison: Mandarin

The Mandarin marker *bi* is clearly in constituency with the standard of comparison. To show that the constituency is as stated, we may appeal to standard constituency tests:

(14)   [bi wo] gao

than me tall

"taller than me"

(i)   possibility of interpolation between [bi wo] and [gao]:

(15)   [bi wo] *hai* gao

than me still tall

"even taller than me"

(ii)   no interpolation between bi and wo

(16)   * bi hai wo gao

         than still me tall

(iii)   sentence fragments, e.g. in answer to questions:

(17)   A: Bi shei gao?

         than who tall

         "Taller than who?"

       B: [Bi wo] (a)

         than me PRT

         "Than me."

Mandarin appears to be the only Sinitic variety which has strictly DM comparisons.[1] One consequence of the dependent-marking pattern is that 'short' comparatives (those without a standard of comparison expressed) must be formed in a quite different way. It is interesting to note that while the long comparatives are dependent-marked, Mandarin uses a quite different structure for short comparatives:

(18)   Bijiao gao   (19)   gao yi dian

       Comparatively tall   tall one little

       "taller"

In this respect the DM pattern contrasts with the HM one described below, in which the marking of long and short comparatives is alike.

2.2 HM comparison: Minnan

A construction found widely in the Minnan dialects of Fujian and Taiwan illustrates head-marked comparison:

(20)   khah kũi i   (conservative Minnan)

       more tall s/he

       "taller than him"

We call this 'conservative ' Minnan because it is increasingly replaced by the double-marked construction discussed below, as Crosland (1994) showed for the Xiamen area though it is still widespread in Taiwan (Randy La 'olla, p.c.). Here the clearest evidence for constituency comes from 'short' comparatives, where the standard is omitted:

(21)   gua khah kũi

        I more tall

       "I'm taller."

Unlike the Mandarin DM construction, the short comparative can be formed using the same marker as the full, 'long' comparative. Locally, HM favours short comparatives

---

[1] Here we exclude the use of the Mandarin construction in other dialects, especially in high registers thereof. For example, in Cantonese there exists a counterpart of the Mandarin construction which has the formal flavour of written syntax:

    bei ngo cungming
    than me intelligent
    "more intelligent than me"

This is an example of what Ramsey (1989) calls a 'Mandarinism'.

without a split between long and short comparatives. This may relate to Nichols' (1986) observation that HM patterns favour the occurrence of null arguments.

2.3 Double-marked comparatives

A number of dialects, especially in southeastern China, use double-marked strategies. These include many Minnan and Hakka dialects.

(22) Minnan: **pi** i **khah** kũi   (modern Xiamen)

        than him more tall

        "taller than him"

(23) Hakka: **bi** ki **go** tai

        than him more big

        "bigger than him"

These constructions appear to combine the Mandarin DM structure (as in (14) above) with HM structures like the conservative Minnan structure (20).

The Minnan and Hakka patterns may also interact, since these dialects are in contact in many areas of Fujian and Guangdong. At any rate, the result in synchronic terms is that the comparative relations are marked twice – once by the (dependent) marker in constituency with the standard, and once by a (head-) marker in constituency with the predicate.

2.4 Zero-marked comparatives

In many varieties in colloquial speech zero-marking constructions are possible, though they tend not to be represented in grammatical descriptions. In certain Minnan varieties such as Chaozhou, zero-marked constitutes a fairly common and standard comparative structure:

(24)   I me wa   (Chaozhou)

        S/he fast me

These resemble transitive constructions, the standard of the comparison appearing immediately after the verb like a direct object.[1]

2.5 Cantonese and Thai: Constituency and grammaticalization

Cantonese poses the most difficult case with respect to its main comparative construction, which is formed with *gwo*:

(25)   Keoi gou **gwo** ngo

        s/he tall than me

        "She's taller than me."

This is a typical case of the 'exceed' (Stassen 1985) or 'surpass' comparative (Heine 1997, Ansaldo 1999) which is widespread in Southeast Asia: there is a lexical verb *gwo* meaning 'cross' or pass' which has been grammaticalized as the marker of comparison (though as we shall see, different instances of the 'surpass' comparative might be at different stages of grammaticalization, and this makes for some difficult cases).

---

[1] The zero-marked constructions may be related to another widespread type, which begins as zero-marked but is followed by a measure phrase, as in Cantonese:

    Keoi daai ngo sap lin

    S/he big me ten year

    "He's ten years older than me."

2.5.1 Gwo as HM

We have introduced the Cantonese *gwo* construction as a potential case of neutral marking (as in (13)). However, there are constituency arguments favouring an HM analysis. The following are some arguments that *gwo* is in constituency with the adjective rather than the standard:

(i)   the verbal particle **saai** which intervenes between verb and object:

(26)   Keoi [gou gwo saai [keita tunghok]]

       S/he tall than all other classmate

       "She's taller than all her other classmates."

       Cf. **saai** with other property verbs:

(27)   Keoi [suk saai [keita tunghok]]

       S/he familiar all other classmate

       "She's familiar with all her other classmates."

The NP object here can be topicalized: [1]

(28)   [Keita tunghok] keoi dou gou gwo saai

        other classmate she all tall than all

       "She's taller than all her other classmates."

(29)   [keita tunghok] keoi suk saai

        other classmate he familiar all

       "All her other classmates she's familiar with."

(ii)   zero object:

(30)   A: Lei jau-mou ngo gam faai aa?

          you have-not-have me so fast PRT

          "Are you as fast as me?"

      B: Ganghai **faai gwo** laa

          of-course fast than PRT

          "Faster, of course."

(31)   A: Ngo paai aa-Richard heoi

          I   send   Richard *go* ;   "I'm sending Richard."

      B: Lei zigei heoi zung **hou gwo** laa

          you self go still good than PRT

          "It's better to go yourself."

Mok (1998: 26) argues that *gwo* is 'a pure verbal clitic within V^0' and gives a structure which clearly implies the HM analysis:

(32)   V'
                 / \
               V   NP
              / \
            V   gwo

---

[1] The quantifying particle *dou* is required because the quantified phrase is now in preverbal position. This is a general property of quantification structures in Cantonese (Matthews & Yip 1994: 222, 262).

(adjectival)

In addition to the argument from zero objects which we make above, Mok gives arguments from topicalization (33) and relativization (34):

(33)   Aa Can, keoi paau dak faai gwo

        A-C. s/he run EXT quick exceed

    "A Chan, he runs quicker than."

(34)   Keoi lek gwo ge tunghok zinghai dak Aa Can

    s/he smart exceed ASSOC classmate only obtain

      "The only classmate that he was better than was Aa Can."

The topicalization structure (33) is rather marginal out of context, but becomes more natural when placed in an explicitly contrastive context. Both structures suggest that *gwo* is in constituency with the adjectival verb rather than the object.

2.5.2 Gwo as detached marking

Based on the possibility of zero-object comparatives and other arguments, the Cantonese comparative appears to be a HM pattern. However, there are some properties which might argue against this. In particular, it is possible, with a certain class of stative predicates, for an object to intervene between the predicate and *gwo*:

(35)   Lei zung [ganzoeng di sailouzai gwo ngo]

     you still worried CL kids than me

    "You're even more worried about the kids than I am."

(36)   Lei [cingco ni gin si gwo ngo]

     you clear this CL thing than me

    "You know more about this than I do."

Note that these examples show that *gwo* cannot be a verbal suffix (it could still be an enclitic, but not within V^0 as suggested in Mok 1998). The constituency might appear to be as follows, implying a dependent-marked analysis:

(37)   VP

       /   \

    VP   SurP

  / \   / \

V   NP M NP

cingco ni gin si gwo ngo

The third possibility is that *gwo* is neither DM nor HM – neither in constituency with the adjective nor the object of comparison. Nichols (1986) provided for **neutral** marking, which is reinterpreted in Nichols (1992) as **detached** marking:

"the marking is detached from the dependent but not attached to the head. Typically, a detached marker is positioned relative not to a particular but to a constituent boundary." (Nichols 1992: 55)

Such an analysis would be plausible for the case of Cantonese *gwo*, except that most cases Nichols describes are second-position phenomena:

"Constituent-second position is the most common location for detached markers." (ibid.)

The reason why the Cantonese case is problematic may be that it involves a diachronic transition from a DM to HM structure which is not fully complete. It is generally

assumed (especially in the creole literature: cf. Holm 1988: 188) that 'surpass;' comparatives originate as serial verb constructions of the form:

Vp [(sur)pass NP]

In the case of Cantonese this would mean that *gwo* was once a verb participating in an SVC:

(38)   VP
                      /   \
                    /   VP
                  /   /   \
              V   V   NP

          Gou   [gwo   ngo]

          tall   pass   me

This would be, in origin, a dependent-marking construction. As the *gwo* comparative becomes grammaticalized, however, and the verbal characteristics of comparative *gwo* disappear, *gwo* becomes increasingly attached to the property verb – like a clitic migrating towards the head.

There are in fact a number of relics of this process which can still be observed, notably a number of potential constructions:

(39)   Lei **leng dak gwo** keoi

        You pretty can pass him

        "You're better-looking than him."

(40)   Lei **gou keoi m gwo**   - relic of the SVC structure

        You tall him not pass

        "You're not as tall as him"

In these cases *gwo* is separated from the adjectival verb by the potential particle *dak* (39) or the pronoun object and the negator *m* (40).[1]

The syntax here is characteristic of resultative SVCs, cf:

(41)   Ngo bong lei m dou

        I   help you not succeed

        "I can't help you."

All these structures are conservative, harking back to a less grammaticalized stage in the development of *gwo* comparatives. Synchronically, then, *gwo* floats between DM and HM status and is perhaps best seen as a case of neutral marking. It would not be surprising if we found some instances of neutral marking in isolating languages (cf. answer (ii) to our introductory question). However, rather than being the rule, it appears to be the exception – a transitional stage in the drift from DM to HM structures.

---

[1] The negative potential construction with *gwo* as in (40) is judged by some speakers to be rather marginal, but can be heard in colloquial Cantonese. This status is consistent with the assumption that it is a relic of an earlier stage in the grammaticalization of *gwo* comparatives.

3. IMPLICATIONS: AREAL TYPOLOGY AND MARKING PATTERNS

Besides the purely theoretical value of extending a HM/DM typology to isolating languages, there are also immediate considerations of an areal and historical nature to be made.

The comparative marking patterns fit into a general pattern whereby northern Chinese varieties (in particular Mandarin) tend to share structural features with Altaic, and southern varieties with Tai-Kadai languages. These observations suggest that modern varieties of Sinitic represent a continuum from a Tai type toward an Altaic type at the morpho-syntactic and phonological levels. The idea of a continuum from Tai toward Altaic features found in Chinese varieties from south to north has some potential to explain the diversity within Sinitic and the relationship between southern Sinitic and Southeast Asian languages.

Considering the marking of comparatives in Altaic languages, we find that dependent-marked structures predominate. Typically, the comparative relation is marked by a case marker on the standard NP (dependent of the adjective), with no marking on the adjectival head:

(42)   Khalka (Mongolic, Street 1963: 221)

Jamc cham-**aas**   targam

J.   you -from   fat-Pres.3S

'Jamc is fatter than you'

(43)   Manchu (Tungusic: Stassen 1985:122)

Morin indaho-**ci** amba

Horse dog-from big

'The horse is bigger than the dog.'

This observation is in agreement with the theory that (northern) Sinitic may have undergone a change from Tai towards Altaic typology, as put forward in Hashimoto (1976) under the label of Altaicization. An alternative view is presented in Bennett (1979) whereby southern varieties would have undergone 'Taicization' under extensive contact influence from Tai languages. In Lao, for example, the 'surpass' marker *kua* (cf. (44)) is in constituency with the adjectival verb as the short comparative in (45) shows:

(44)   khịij sǔung kua ĉw   (Nick Enfield, p.c.)

           I   tall surpass you

"I'm taller than you."

(45)   di   kua   (mu)

good surpass (other)

"better (than others)"

While constructions like (45) with the object omitted are somewhat marginal in Cantonese (perhaps due to ongoing change – see above), Tai languages readily allow such 'short' comparative structures, as in Lao (45) and Thai (46) where the object of comparison is clearly optional:

(46)   Dii kŵa (NP)

Good more

'Better (than)'

There is indirect evidence for Thai *kùa* deriving from a verb 'to pass' but the lexical verb is no longer in use and the comparative function is correspondingly more grammaticalized than in Cantonese. It is a head-marked construction on the same grounds as the conservative Minnan described above.

The Cantonese and Lao/Thai comparative markers, which may even be cognates, share several common features:

(i)   both originate as verbs with the meaning 'pass/surpass';

(ii)   their syntactic contexts are similar (though Thai and Lao further along the pathway and its HM status is correspondingly clearer)

It therefore appears that while Mandarin may derive its marking pattern from contact-induced language change through interaction with heavily dependent-marking languages, the similarity observed between Cantonese comparatives and other languages of Southeast Asia could be seen as yet another trait that testifies to the areal diffusion of the region. The 'surpass' comparative marker/construction appears to have diffused across Southeast Asia, like a number of other constructions such as:

- 'give' passives (Yap & Iwasaki 1998)
- 'acquire' modals (Enfield 2000)
- 'say' complementizers (Matisoff 1986)
- 'complete' perfectives (Bisang 1996)

4. CONCLUSIONS

What we hope to have shown in this paper is that by reinterpreting the notion of marking in terms of constituency, we can successfully apply a head/dependent-marking typology to grammatical relations in isolating languages. This is not only of interest in its own right, but adds credibility to the HM/DM distinction as part of an approach to typology which aims at universal properties of languages (since languages of the isolating type no longer need to be left out).

The descriptive value of such a typology in this context is that it strengthens the growing evidence for syntactic diversity within Sinitic languages. The variation with respect to comparative constructions is such that all logically possible marking types do in fact occur within the Sinitic varieties considered here. Moreover, given that marking patterns have been observed to be diachronically more stable than other typological features such as word order (Nichols 1992), these observations lead to interesting perspectives on the nature of language contact and change in the history of Chinese.

Our case study has focused on comparative constructions of inequality. For the typology of comparison, as argued in Ansaldo (1999), the HM/DM distinction has the advantage of presenting a strictly synchronic view which complements earlier typologies based on lexical sources such as those of Stassen (1985) and Heine (1997). We believe that further research along these lines, extending into additional areas of grammar will lead to an improved understanding of issues including constituency in isolating languages, and the notion of grammatical categories.

REFERENCES

1.   Ansaldo, U. 1999. *Comparative constructions in Sinitic: areal typology and patterns of grammaticalization*. Ph.D. Stockholm University: Stockholm, Sweden.

2. Bennett, D. 1979. 'A critique of the Altaicization hypothesis'. *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale* 6: 91-104.

3. Bisang, W. 1996. 'Areal typology and grammaticalization: processes of grammaticalization based on nouns and verbs in southeast Asian languages'. *Studies in Language* 20:3, 519-97.

4. Crosland, J. 1994. 'The comparative in Xiamen'. *Paper presented at the fourth International conference on Chinese Linguistics*.

5. Enfield, N. 2000. 'Linguistic epidemiology: On the polyfunctionality of 'acquire' in mainland Southeast Asia'. Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne.

6. Hashimoto, M. 1978. *Yuyan dili leixingxue*. (Areal linguistic typology). Beijing Chubanshe: Beijing, P.R.C.

7. Heine, B. 1997. *Cognitive foundations of grammar*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

8. Holm, J. 1988. *Pidgins and Creoles Vol I. Theories and structure*. Cambridge University Press.

9. Langacker, R. 1987. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, vol. I: Theoretical Foundations*.

10. Stanford University Press.

11. Matisoff, J.1991. 'Areal and universal dimensions of grammaticalization in Lahu'. In

12. E.Traugott & B.Heine, *Approaches of Grammaticalization, Vol. II*. Amsterdam:

13. John Benjamins

14. Matthews, S.J. 1988. 'French in flux: typological shift and sociolinguistic variation.' *Proceedings of the Georgetown University Round Table in Language and Linguistics*.

15. Matthews, S.J. & V. Yip. 1994. *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar*. London: Routledge.

16. Nichols, J. 1986. 'Head-marking and dependent-marking grammar'. *Language* 62: 56-119.

17. 1992. *Linguistic diversity in space and time*. Chicago university Press: Chicago.

18. Ramsey, S.R. 1989. *Languages of China*. Princeton University Press.

19. Saeed, J. 1997. *Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

20. Stassen, L. 1985. *Comparison and universal grammar*. Blackwell: Oxford.

21. Street, J.C. 1963. *Khalka Structure*. Bloomington: Indiana.

22. Vincent, N. 1992. 'Head- versus dependent-marking: the case of the clause'. *Heads in grammatical theory*: 140-163. Cambridge University Press.

23. Yap, F. H. & S.Iwasaki: 'A typological and semantic analysis of the relationship between

24. causatives and passives in the periphrastic 'give' constructions of some East and

25. Southeast Asian languages'. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, 1998.

HẬU GIỚI TỪ VÀ CÁC DANH TỪ LIÊN KẾT
TRONG NGÔN NGỮ LAI
(TÓM TẮT)

George Bedell

Tiếng Lai (còn gọi là Hakha Chin) là một ngôn ngữ thuộc nhánh Tạng- Miến được sử dụng chủ yếu ở Bang miền Trung Chin, Myanmar. Các từ như *ah*, và *in* trong các ví dụ (1) và (2) dưới đây dường như tương tự với các tiền giới từ định vị và định hướng "at" và "in" hay "from" trong tiếng Anh:

(1) *Hakha ah ka tlung*

I arrived in Hakha.

(Tôi đã đến Hakha)

(2) *Hakha in ka tlung*

I arrived from Hakha.

(Tôi từ Hakha đến)

Vì trong tiếng Lai các từ này thường theo sau các danh ngữ bổ ngữ, nên gọi chúng là các "hậu giới từ" (postposition) là thích hợp, dù rằng chỉ từ trung tâm ở cuối câu mới khác biệt với những từ đối chiếu trong ngôn ngữ trung tâm nằm đầu câu, như trong tiếng Anh chẳng hạn.

Tuy nhiên, số lượng các tiền giới từ (preposition) trong tiếng Anh nhiều hơn so với các hậu giới từ trong tiếng Lai. Các tiền giới từ tiếng Anh thường tương ứng với các từ ghép trong tiếng Lai như *cungah* "on" hay *cungin* "of" trong các ví dụ (3) và (4) dưới đây.

(3) *Cabuai cungah va chia*

"Hãy đặt nó trên bàn"

(4) *Cabuai cungin a tla*

"Nó rơi ra khỏi bàn"

Mặc dù ngữ pháp tiếng Lai gọi *cung* là một tiền giới từ, bài viết này sẽ minh chứng rằng tốt hơn hết là phân tích nó với tư cách là một danh từ thuộc vào một tiểu loại mà chúng tôi tạm gọi là *"các danh từ liên hệ"* (relational nouns). Nghĩa là chúng tương đương với một danh từ tiếng Anh, chẳng hạn như "top" trong cấu trúc trong cụm từ "on top of". Các hậu giới từ *ah* hay *in* có một danh ngữ với là bổ ngữ của chúng. Bổ ngữ này gồm có một danh từ liên kết đứng đầu đi kèm với một từ sở hữu liên hệ với toàn bộ phần bổ ngữ của một tiền giới từ tiếng Anh.

Ngoài các từ chỉ hướng vận động *ha* "to" và *in* "from", còn có hai hậu giới từ khác: *nih* "by" thường được xem như là một từ chỉ cách (case) và *he* "with". Tính đa dạng của các nghĩa quan hệ gắn kết với các tiền giới từ tiếng Anh nói chung cần phải được biểu đạt trong tiếng Lai bằng cách sử dụng danh từ quan hệ phù hợp. Ngoài *cung*, các từ sau trong tiếng Lai cũng thuộc loại các danh từ liên kết:

Chung	'inside'	*leng*	'outside'
Tang	'bottom'	*hmai*	'front'
hlan	'before'	*hnu*	'back, after'
tiang	'to, until'	*sin*	'a person'
pawng	'near'	*hrawng*	'around'
thawng	'about'	*kong*	'concerning'
lak	'among'	*pin*	'beyond'

và có lẽ còn một số khác nữa. Báo cáo này sẽ khảo sát một cách tỉ mỉ các một quan hệ về cú pháp và ngữ nghĩa giữa các hậu giới từ và các danh từ liên kết, nhằm làm rõ chức năng của chúng trong ngôn ngữ Lai và cả trong hệ thống ngữ pháp phổ quát.