THE SYNTAX OF DEIXIS IN LAI[1]

George Bedell
International Christian University, Tokyo

Lai has a set of four deictic particles:

hi:	this, near me	485
kha:	that, near you	973
khi:	that, over there (visible)	43
cu:	that, over there (not visible)	1994

A rough characterization of their meaning[2] is given, together with a count of tokens of each in a Lai text[3] of substantial length. Our task in this paper is to explore the syntactic contexts in which they are found.

The most frequent context in which a deictic particle is found is following a noun phrase. Examples (1) to (6) illustrate the simplest type of noun phrase, consisting of a single noun.

(1)　　*mi hi*
　　　'these people' (14: 15; 22: 23)

(2)　　*mi kha*
　　　'people' (6: 2, 3; 9: 25, 32; 10: 21; 14: 23; 23: 13; 27: 64)

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[2] These meanings follow Barnes (1998). As he shows, the deictic particles may function to contrast things referred to in a discourse, or to relate them to the speech context. Though his discussion leaves some unanswered questions, we do not attempt to pursue semantic or pragmatic issues further here.

[3] This paper is based on an examination of the distribution of deictic particles in the Lai translation of the gospel according to Matthew, in *Lai Baibal Thiang*, 1978. Examples accompanied by a chapter and verse citation (the great majority) are taken from that text. It would be preferable to base such studies as this on original Lai texts rather than translations; at the present time, the Bible is the only extended text which is both carefully prepared and readily available. We include detailed counts of the occurrences of deictic particles in this text for those who may be interested, but attach no great significance to them.

(3)   ***mi cu***
        'people' (3: 5; 12: 12; 14: 19; 15: 11, 18)

(4)   ***vawlei hi***
        'the world' (13: 38)

(5)   ***vawlei kha***
        'soil' (13: 5; 27: 51)

(6)   ***vawlei cu***
        'the earth' (5: 35)

Two Lai nouns are illustrated: ***mi*** 'person, human being', and ***vawlei*** 'soil, ground, the earth, the world'. The English glosses given reflect the original context of each example (when an example occurs more than once the first cited is used). Lai noun phrases may be marked for plural number (see examples (19) or (20) below), but such marking is optional. Thus (1) to (3) are clearly plural in context. Lai noun phrases are not marked for definiteness, and may be understood either as definite or indefinite depending on context.

There is a sense, however, in which the final deictic particle plays a syntactic role similar to that of articles in English. It serves to close off the syntactic expansion of a noun phrase.[4] Since Lai is a consistent head final language, it seems reasonable in the context of X' Theory to assume that a deictic particle in noun phrase final position is a syntactic head which combines with an NP complement.

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{DP} \\ \overbrace{\quad\quad\quad} \\ \text{NP} \qquad \text{hi} \end{array}$$
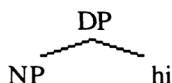
The category D to which the deictic particles belong is called 'determiner' in English, where it includes articles and demonstratives, and perhaps also the genitive suffix. As noted above, Lai has no articles and the genitive construction usually has no suffix. This in Lai it may be that D represents 'deictic', and its projection DP 'deictic phrase'.

Lai deictic particles occur in a variant form in the kinds of phrases illustrated in (7) to (11).

(7)   ***mi nih hin***
        'a person' (16: 26)

(8)   ***mi nih khan***
        'people' (9: 8; 21: 10)

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[4] In Van Bik (1996), the English definite article 'the' is glossed as ***cu*** or ***kha***.

(9)   *vawlei ah hin*
        'on earth' (6: 19)

(10)   *vawlei ah khan*
        'on the ground' (15: 35)

(11)   *vawlei ah khin*
        'to the ground' (4: 6)

That is, when the words *nih* or *ah* intervene between a noun phrase and a deictic particle, the latter acquires a suffix *-n*. *Ah* corresponds to English 'in' or 'to'; i.e. to a locative or directional preposition. As a head final language, Lai should have postpositions rather than prepositions, and we take *ah* to belong to the category P. *Nih* is regarded by Barnes (1998) and elsewhere in the literature as the Lai ergative case marker. But 'case marker' seems to be a functional rather than a syntactic category; we assume that it too is a P.[5]

Compared to Lai, English has a semantically rich set of Ps, and therefore English prepositions often correspond to a more complex Lai structure, as illustrated in (12) and (13).

(12)   *vawlei cungah hin*
        'on this earth' (6: 10; 9: 6; 18: 7; 23: 9)

(13)   *vawlei cungah cun*
        'on the earth' (20: 25)

The word *cung* 'top' is a noun referring to a spatial relation; the noun *vawlei* in turn modifies *cung*. This is a Lai genitive construction, and these phrases might be more literally glossed as 'on top of'. Lai has a set of 'relational nouns' like *cung* which correspond to much of the semantic content of English prepositions.

There are cases in which the suffixed form of a Lai deictic particle directly follows a noun phrase and no postposition appears.

(14)   *inn cun*
        'from the house' (13: 1)

(15)   *tlang cung khan*
   'from on the mountain' (8: 1)

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[5] One of the functions of Ps (whether prepositions or postpositions) is to case mark a complement NP. Thus there may be no essential incompatibility between the two analyses. However, since *nih* is used with the agent phrase in passive sentences (see Bedell 1996), and can be used with objects in some causative sentences (see Bedell 1997), it cannot be considered an ergative marker in any straightforward sense.

Lai has a postposition *in* which contrasts with *ah* as a directional; it corresponds to the English preposition 'from'.[6] Phrases like (14) and (15) invariably express an ablative meaning; if the deictic particle is removed, in will appear as in (16).

(16)   *inn in*
        tlang cungin

This suggests that the suffix -n which appears in *hin*, *khan*, *khin* and *cun* in (7) through (13) originated as the postposition *in* suffixed to a deictic particle, and has been grammaticalized in current Lai. It also suggests a shift in the order of the D and P.

It seems, then that Lai differs from English in the hierarchical relation between the projections of D and P. Lai phrases like (10) or (11) correspond to what would be in English '*the on ground' or '*the to ground'.

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            DP
          ⌒⌒⌒
     PP          hin
   ⌒⌒⌒
 NP      ah
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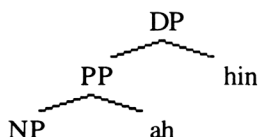
A count of deictic particles which follow postpostions in our text (including cases like (14) and (15) where no overt postposition appears) is as follows:

hin   78
khan   327
khin   21
cun   597

These were included in the overall count given at the outset; from a quarter to a half of all occurrences of deictic particles are of this type.

In addition to their DP final position, deictic particles also appear preceding NPs and PPs, as in (17) and (18).

(17)   *hi mi hi*
        'this person' (27: 54)

(18)   *cu thil cu*
        'those things' (18: 17, 31)

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[6] Lai has at least one other postposition: comitative *he* 'with'. In Van Bik (1996), English 'herewith' is glossed *hi ca he hin*, and 'therewith' as *cu he cun*. These are to be compared with examples like (20), (38) or (40) below. The word *ca* 'letter' in the former is a head noun.

These phrases are characterized by the NP being enclosed between two identical deictic particles. In (19) the plural marker *hna* appears, and in (20) the plural NP is inside a PP, the second deictic showing the variant form as in (7) to (11) above.

(19) ***hi mi hna hi***
'these people' (13: 15; 15: 32; 17: 27)

(20) ***hi mi hna nih hin***
'these people' (15: 8)

Lai deictic particles may enclose other particles which in English would be outside DP: quantifiers as in (21) or discourse links as in (22).

(21) ***hi thil vialte hi***
'all these things' (13: 56; 24: 8, 33, 34; 26: 56)

(22) ***hi pa zong hi***
'also this man' (26: 71)

Literal glosses here might be '*these all things' or '*this also man'. A somewhat different case is represented by (23), which has an apparent modifier of the noun *thil* 'thing'. It is possible that here the initial *hi* belongs with *bantuk*.

(23) ***hi bantuk thil hi***
'a thing like this' (9: 33)

Not every Lai noun phrase admits a preceding deictic particle. The clearest case is lexical pronouns, which may be followed but not preceded by such particles.

(24) ***keimah hi***
I   here
'I' (24: 5)

(25) ****hi keimah hi***

Also, a clause which modifies *bantuk* 'like, as' as in (26) cannot have a preceding deictic.[7]

(26) ***nanmah nan si bantuk hin***
'as you are' (23: 15)

(27) ****hi nanmah nan si bantuk hin***

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[7] It is likely that no clause may have a preceding deictic. However this is not easy to verify since a clause initial NP may have one, as in (32) or (33).

In this use, **bantuk** is followed by **in** unless a following deictic is present, just as in (14) and (15). Proper nouns, by contrast, may have both preceding and following deictics.

(28)   **Johan hi**
       'John' (3: 3; 11: 10, 14)

(29)   **hi Johan hi**
       'this John'

Example (29), but not (28), is restricted to unusual situations in which there is more than one person named Johan 'John' in the speech context, just as in the English glosses given.

The great majority of phrases with both initial and final deictic particles have the same particle repeated, as in (17) to (23) above. As in (30) or (31), it is also possible for distinct deictics to be used.

(30)   **hi thil cu**
       'this thing' (2: 15; 16: 22; 21: 24)

(31)   **khi canah khan**
       at that time (11: 25)

In all such cases in our text, the final deictic is either **kha** or **cu**.[8]

There are also examples like (32) and (33) in which a preceding deictic particle appears without any following deictic.[9]

(32)   **hi vawlei cung (khuasak tintuknak kong i lungretheihnak)**[10]
       '(worries about the strife of living) in this world' (13: 22)

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[8] At least one native speaker, Albert Ceu Hlun, finds these 'pragmatically odd' (personal communication).

[9] Barnes (1998) claims that this is possible only with (what we take to be) PPs. He explains this by the further claim that head deictics serve to case mark their complement NPs. Not only is **nih** the ergative case, but **ah** is the locative/illative case, and presumably **in** is the ablative case and **he** the comitative case. In the absence of one of these, a head deictic is required. There is no evidence that deictics serve as case markers, and the existence of examples like (32) and (33), however few, shows that the original claim is mistaken.

[10] The entire context of this example includes an additional conjunct:

hi vawlei cung khuasak tintuknak kong i lungretheihnak le chaw le va duhnak nih
'the cares of the world and the delight in riches'

Here *hi vawlei cung* 'in this world' might be taken to modify both *khuasak tintuknak kong i lungretheihnak* 'worry about the strife of living' and *chaw le va duhnak* 'desire for wealth'. In that case, the final **nih** might be taken to show that the whole is a PP. But in the original context, as shown in the RSV wording above, it modifies only the first conjunct, as in the citation in the text.

(33)   *hi ka bia (a thei i a zulmi cu)*
'(whoever hears and follows) these words of mine' (7: 24, 26)

In (32) and (33) there is no deictic following the noun phrase which is semantically modified by *hi*. In the latter case, there is a *cu*, but it clearly belongs with a larger noun phrase containing the clause whose object is *hi ka bia*.

On the basis of these facts, it is not easy to determine the syntactic position of the initial deictic particle in phrases like (17) through (33). We propose that it originates as a noun phrase specifier, but appears as the specifier of the deictic phrase.[11]

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              DP
            /    \
         hi_i     D'
          ↑      /   \
          |    NP      hi
          |   /   \
          ei     N'
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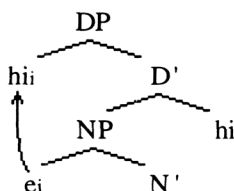
In DPs containing postpositional phrases, such as (20) or (31), it will also pass through the specifier of the latter. A count of initial deictic particles in our text is given below; the count in parentheses represents those unaccompanied by a final deictic:

hi	85 (11)
kha	5 (0)
khi	5 (3)
cu	247 (132)

An extension of the pairs of enclosing deictic particles discussed above are pronouns like (34) or (35), which are frequent in our text.

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[11] The structure below is intended to indicate that the (lower) spec of NP is the only position where an initial deictic may appear unsupported (and where it is semantically interpreted). If it appears in a (higher) spec of DP, then it must be supported by co-indexing with a lower spec of NP. In some theories there may be actual movement as suggested by the arrow, but this is not independently required.

Barnes (1998) calls the initial position 'demonstrative', distinguishing it from the final position 'deictic' due to the semantic differences which the restriction on initial deictics imposes. But this difference is not (in our view) sufficient to motivate a distinct syntactic category. In particular, the Lai spec deictics are not more similar to English 'this' and 'that' than are the head deictics.

Barnes (1998) also assumes that (what we take to be) spec deictics are embedded deeply in the NP, below other modifiers. His argument for this is that head deictics may take conjoined NPs as complements, but spec deictics may not belong with more than one conjunct. The observation is accurate, but adequately accounted for by our supposed syntax.

(34)   **hihi**
        'this'   (2: 5; 5: 34; 6: 2, 5, 16; 6: 29; 7: 12; 8: 9, 11; 10: 2, 23,
                  42; 11: 11, 22, 24; 12: 31, 41, 49; 13: 13, 17; 15: 6, 20;
                  16: 28; 17: 12, 20; 19: 9; 21: 21, 38; 22: 17; 23: 34, 36;
                  24: 2, 34, 43; 25: 25, 40; 26: 13, 26, 28, 29, 64; 27: 37;
                  28: 20)

(35)   **cucu**
        'that'   (5: 46, 47; 9: 8; 11: 25; 12: 2, 15; 15: 27; 16: 18; 21: 20,
                  32, 42; 22: 22, 33; 23: 2; 26: 8, 65; 27: 4, 6)

These seem to be deictic phrases which enclose an empty noun phrase. Additional combinations which do not all occur in our text are shown in the table below.[12]

	hi	*kha*	*khi*	*cu*
hi	*hihi*			
kha		*khaka*		*cukha*
khi			*khikhi*	
cu	*hicu*	*khacu*	*khicu*	*cucu*

The postpositions and many of the particles illustrated in (19) to (23) may also be stranded within enclosing deictics.[13]

(36)   **hi hna hi**
        'these'   (8: 28; 23: 23)

(37)   **cu hna cu**
        'those'   (4: 18; 13: 4)

(38)   **cu nih cun**
        'by that'   (12: 28; 27: 8)

(39)   **cu hna nih cun**
        'those things'   (15: 18)

(40)   **cu ah cun**
        'there'   (20: 6)

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[12] I am grateful to Kenneth Van Bik for this information. It would appear that **cukha** occurs in the phrase used for the title of Barnes (1998): *cukha ti hlah*. Barnes interprets this as 'don't say *cu* or *kha*', but a better (if less colorful) interpretation is simply 'don't say that'.

[13] If nothing overt is enclosed, as in (34), (35) or (41), the two deictics are written as a single word; otherwise, as in the remaining examples, they are written as separate words. In certain other cases, such as adverbials like **hitihin** 'this way' or **cuticun** 'that way', they are similarly fused. On this Lai orthographic convention, see also Bedell 1999.

(41) *cucun*
'thereby' (23: 26)

(36), (37) and (39) are marked plurals; (38) to (41) contain stranded postpositions, with (41) showing the same pattern as (14) and (15). (42) and (43) are to be compared with (21) and (22).

(42) ***hi zong hi***
'this also' (18: 19)

(43) ***hi vialte hi***
'all this/these' (4: 9; 13: 51)

(44) and (45) illustrate a stranded relational noun ***kong*** 'about' similar to ***cung*** as in (12), (13) or (15). ***Kong*** may, but need not, be accompanied by the postposition ***ah***.

(44) ***hi kong hi***
'about this' (28: 14)

(45) ***cu kong cu***
'about that' (8: 33; 19: 1; 20: 24)

(46) to (48) contain a stranded ***bantuk***; (46) and (47) are parallel to (23), while (48) is parallel to (26).

(46) ***hi bantuk hi***
'a thing like this' (18: 23)

(47) ***hi bantuk cu***
'a thing like this' (17: 21)

(48) ***hi bantuk hin***
'like this' (6: 9)

In a limited number of cases, the deictic particle ***cu*** may appear following a deictic phrase headed by a distinct particle, as in (49) to (52).

(49) ***hihi cu***
'this' (15: 5)

(50) ***profet hna hi cu***
'the prophets' (23: 30)

(51) ***pakhat sinah khan cun***
'to one' (6: 24)

(52) ***pakhat tu kha cu***
'the other' (6: 24)

Examples like these reflect the wider use of *cu*: not only is it a deictic particle but it may also serve as a topic or contrast particle. In examples like these i apparently has no deictic character, but even when no other deictic directly precedes it, it can be bleached in this way. This may in part account for it relatively higher frequency.[14] Phrases (49) and (50) are clearly topics in thei original context, while (51) and (52) are in contrast within the same sentence Possibly a second (restricted) DP is called for (as below) or possibly this *cu* heads some sort of topic/contrast phrase.

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              DP
            /    \
         DP        cu
       /    \
   NP/PP     hi
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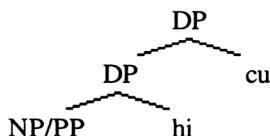
The only other construction in which a deictic particle is found within a larger phrase is in interrogative phrases, as in (53) to (57).

(53) ***aho hi dah***
      'who?' (27: 21)

(54) ***aho deuhdeuh hi dah***
      'who most?' (27: 17)

(55) ***aho cu dah***
      'who?' (24: 45)

(56) ***a zei cu dah***
      'which of them?' (23: 17, 19)

(57) ***zeitikte ah khan dah***
      'just when?' (25: 37)

These are the only examples in our text. Only one deictic particle may occur and it appears to be the head deictic rather than the specifier. Following Lehmar 1995, we may assume that the structure of (53) is something like:

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[14] This may apply to *kha* as well as *cu*, though *kha* does not appear in final positior following another deictic. See also footnote 4. It is of some interest in this connection tha Hay-Neave (1953) does not recognize the deictics as belonging to a single category. He call *hi* and *khi* demonstrative pronouns, as opposed to *cu* and *kha*, which he calls *conjunctive relative particles*. In the latter case this is in apparent reference to their use as topic marker for relative clauses. He also discusses *cu* (as opposed to *nih*) as a case marker (though h does not use this term) without being clear whether it is the same word as the conjunctive relative particle or not. There is some reason to think that the Lai he describes differs fron current usage.

```
        QP
      ⌒⌒⌒
   DP        dah
  ⌒⌒⌒
NP      hi
```
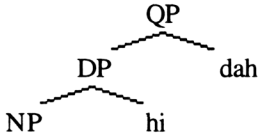
There are a substantial number of examples in which a deictic particle appears to follow a clause rather than a noun phrase. In example (58), the clause verb has the suffix *-tu*, in (59) it has the suffix *-mi*, and in (60) it has the suffix *-nak*.

(58)   ***khuachia thrawl khawhnak a ka petu hi***
         'he who gave me the power to cast out demons' (12: 28)

(59)   ***thil thra nan tuahmi hi***
   'the good things you do' (6: 1)

As suggested by the English glosses, the verbal suffixes *-tu* and *-mi* mark relative clauses in Lai, with *-tu* appearing when the relativized noun phrase is the subject of a transitive clause, and would be accompanied by *nih* if it were overt. By contrast, if the relativized noun phrase is the subject of an intransitive clause or an object of a transitive clause, and would not be accompanied by *nih* if it were overt, then *-mi* appears.[15] *-Nak* is also used as a relative marker (in case the relativized noun phrase is not an argument of the clause), but in (60) the clauses it marks are not relatives. However, that they are nominalized is clear from the coordination structure however: *le* 'and' may not be used to conjoin sentences in Lai.

(60)   *mitcaw nih khua an hmuhnak le*
         kebei an kal khawhnak le
         thinghmui mi an thiannak le
         hnachet nih khua an theihnak le
         mithi thawh thran an sinak le
         misifak mi hna sinah Thawngthra Bia chim a sinak hi

         'that the blind see
         and the lame walk
         and lepers are cleansed
         and the deaf hear
         and the dead are raised
         and good news is told to the poor' (11: 5)

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[15] Example (59) might be analyzed with a head noun *thil* 'thing' followed by the clause modifier *nan tuahmi* 'which you do'. Or possibly, as claimed in Kathol and Van Bik 1999, *thil* may be a clause internal head. Such clauses may appear without an overt head as in (33) above or (66) below.

Thus it is clear that in examples like (58) to (60) the final deictic particles head a DP which contains NP, just like the original (1) through (6). Thus their structure is something like:

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              DP
          ⌒⌒⌒⌒
      NP          hi
   ⌒⌒⌒⌒
 IP       tu/mi/nak
```
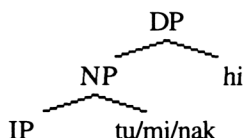
The count of structures like (58) to (60) in our text is as follows.

-tu hi	3
-mi hi	20
-nak hi	9
-tu kha	5
-mi kha	53
-nak kha	31
-tu khi	0
-mi khi	0
-nak khi	0
-tu cu	12
-mi cu	92
-nak cu	27

Examples like (61) to (63) on the other hand, do not show any overt nominalizing morphology. Still, there are indications that these too may be nominalized.

(61)   *zihmui ka pum i a ka toih hi*
        'her applying perfume to my body' (26: 12)

(62)   *kut lo le ke loin nunnak chung i luh cu*
        'to enter life without a hand or a foot' (18: 8)

(63)   *inn ngeitu nih mifir a rat lai can kha hngalh sehlaw cu*
        'should the house owner know when the thief will come' (24: 43)

Thus in (61) and (62) the directional postposition *ah* appears in the variant form *i*, which cannot be seen in simple clauses. Secondly, in (62), the verb *lut* 'enter' appears in its so-called Stem II form *luh*. The conditions for this verb stem alternation are complex, but they may include a type of nominalization.[16]

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[16] On Lai verb stem I and II forms, see Lehman 1996.

Finally, agreement of the verb with subject and object is optional in these clauses: it appears in (61), but does not in (62) or (63).[17] This is the case in the latter in spite of the overt subject (*inn ngeitu nih* 'the house owner') and mood particle *sehlaw* 'may it be'. These examples are reminiscent of infinitive or gerundive clauses in English (whose nominalized status is controversial).

Finally, there are also cases in which a deictic particle is found following a sentence, as in (64) to (66).

(64)   *Thlichia le tilet hmanh nih dahngai a bia an ngaih ko hi.*
'Even the wind and the waves obey him.' (8: 27)

(65)   *Kan thi dih cang lai hi ta.*
'We will all die!' (8: 25)

(66)   *A ka tuahpiakmi hi thil thra le thil dawh pei a si hi.*
'What she has done for me is a good and beautiful thing.' (26: 10)

These resemble the subordinate clauses in (61) to (63) in containing no overt nominalizing morphology. In (64), *ngaih* is a stem II form of the verb *ngai* 'obey'. It is striking that all examples of this type have obvious exclamatory force. This is overtly marked in (65) by the particle *ta* which follows the deictic, and in (66) by the particle *pei* attached to a constituent of the sentence which is followed by the deictic. These particles are restricted to sentences closed by a deictic. In the few cases like (64) which contain neither *ta* nor *pei*, there is often other material such as the emphatic particle *ko*. Nominalized exclamations are frequent on a cross-linguistic basis, and this may be case with these Lai examples as well. If so, then perhaps these too have the nominalized structure given above. If not, together with subordinate clauses like (61) to (63), they may illustrate a distinct use of deictic particles as complementizers:

```
            CP
        ╱──────╲
    IP            hi
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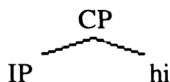
The count of structures like (61) to (66) in our text is as follows (where the number of cases in main sentences is in parentheses):

hi	13 (9)
kha	40 (6)
khi	0
cu	66 (40)

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[17] On Lai agreement, see Bedell 1995.

The aspects of the syntax of Lai deictics of greatest interest in a typological context are (i) the relation of PP and DP, and (ii) the stranding of postpositions and non-head NP elements within DP. There may be some comparability between the Lai double deictics, and informal English phrases like *this man here* or the dialectal *this-here man*, or French *cet homme-ci* and *cet homme-là*. But it is far from clear how the Lai facts might fit into the scheme proposed by Diessel 1999, based on a sample of some 85 languages (including four Tibeto-Burman languages). He argues for a fourway subclassification of demonstratives (what we here call deictics):

> pronominal demonstratives
> adnominal demonstratives
> adverbial demonstratives
> identificational demonstratives

Lai may lack the fourth type; in Lai we have claimed that the basic position of *hi, kha, khi* and *cu* is what Diessel calls 'adnominal demonstratives', though without regarding them as heads. Pronominals like (34) *hihi*, or adverbials like (41) *cucun* are in an obvious sense derived from these. In the diachronic part of his paper, Diessel surveys a variety of types of grammaticalization which demonstratives may undergo, which might account for what we called the spec position for deictics, or the comp position (if that analysis is appropriate). But these could not fall into Diessel's grammaticalization framework because they retain both deictic content and contrastive function.

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