What makes a story a story in Plang?

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1. Introduction

What makes a story a story? All of us can quickly identify the key characters, the major events, the important features of a story in our own languages. We have the ability to summarize a lengthy tale into several sentences because of that learned knowledge. Many of us, however, would not be able to tell a non-native speaker just what the clues were that enabled us to do that. That those clues exist is clear, and to gain adequate control of another language those must be identified and controlled.

To the Plang people, as well as the speakers of any language, there are specific features which must be included in the telling of a story in order for it to be a well told story. Several first person oral narratives in the Plang language have been studied to isolate those features in terms of a theory of discourse grammar. These features are discussed after an introduction to the Plang people and a brief summary of the theory of discourse grammar based on Robert Longacre’s work.

1.1 The Plang People

The Plang people recently arrived (mid 1970’s) in Thailand from southern China. They fit into the Thai culture so well that few people know of their uniqueness outside the villages to which they have migrated. They are predominantly Buddhist in their beliefs. In China the Plang are an official minority group called Blang or Bulang. They are described as an agricultural people, and this fact is reflected in the texts studied in this paper. Another piece of evidence of an agrarian heritage is their lifestyle in Thailand, where they remain highly involved in agriculture for their livelihood.

The Plang people are found in northern Thailand, eastern Myanmar, and southwestern Yunnan Province in China. They live in the Sipsong Panna area of Yunnan Province, which is the southwestern-most part of the province. It is situated across from the Shan State of Myanmar and directly north of Thailand. In Myanmar they live in the town of Kengtung and the Muang Yong area in Shan State. In Thailand (Grimes 1992:745) approximately one thousand live in Chiang Rai Province, with another two hundred living west of Bangkok working mostly as gardeners. Data for this research was collected in Baan Huay Nam Khun, Chiang Rai province.

1 This paper is a revision of parts of the author’s M.A. thesis (Block, 1994).
1.2 Classification of Plang

Plang fits into the Northern Division of Mon-Khmer. Within the Northern Division of Mon-Khmer, it is a member of the Waic group of the Western sub-branch of Palaungic. Within this sub-branch Plang is included with the Waic group together with the Lawa and the Wa languages. An abbreviated form of the Austro-Asiatic family tree appears in Figure 1 as taken from Diffloth (1980).

Austro-Asiatic
   Mon-Khmer
      Northern Division
         Khmuic
         Palaungic
            Eastern sub-branch
               Palaung languages
               Riang dialects
               Danau
            Western sub-branch
               Waic
                  Bulang (Plang)
                  Lawa languages
                  Wa languages

Figure 1. Position of Plang in Mon-Khmer

2. Review of the theory

The theory of discourse grammar proposed by Longacre examines features which mark the main-line (storyline/event-line) vs. supportive material. In a narrative text it examines the manner in which the storyline, routine events (script predictable events), backgrounded actions or events, backgrounded activity (durative), the setting, irrealis, evaluation (from the author), and cohesive and thematic elements are marked, which tells us what makes a story a story. In many languages this distinction is marked by tense/aspect/mode in the verb. Longacre (1981:340) refers to the total range of information as the spectrum and introduces it by saying:

the analysis of a narrative text reveals a cline of information which ranges from the most dynamic elements of the story to the static (depictive) elements; successive positions along the cline correlate well (as a whole) with distinctions among the verb forms of a language (i.e., with the tense/aspect/mode/ voice system), but other features (word order, use of affixes, particles or adverbs) must sometimes be invoked to round out the picture
This spectrum follows the hierarchy of information types which Longacre proposes along the lines originating with Grimes (1975), but ranks the elements as they pertain to the storyline. That is, there is a ranking in terms of "progressive degrees of structural departure from the storyline" (Longacre 1987:52). This ranking has to do with the way a story adds information to the storyline, not with semantic ranking; indeed, an item may be ranked very low in the hierarchy of discourse information and yet be crucial to the understanding of the story. Longacre defines a storyline in the following way:

it presents actions and events which are (a) sequential, (b) punctiliar, (c) at least in part causally connected. Since a discourse is not a story unless it is so characterized, it follows then that the structurally most important part of the story is its storyline, i.e., the sequence of sequential, punctiliar and (at least partially) causally connected actions and events which are represented in the narrative. A storyline reports not simply events but actions, i.e., voluntary doings of animate (usually human) agents (1987:51).

1. Primary storyline (augmentation of 1)
   1. Primary storyline
   2. Secondary storyline*
      3. Routine (script predictable)
      4. Backgrounded actions/events
      5. Backgrounded activity (durative)
      6. Setting (exposition)
      7. Irrealis
      8. Evaluation (author intrusions)
      9. Cohesive and thematic elements

* Flashback: as an ill-defined category, it can group with (2) or (4); as a well-defined morphosyntactic category it can be added after (5).

Figure 2. Longacre’s Etic Bands of Salience in Narrative (1989:443)

Longacre (1989:443) proposes an etic nine-band hierarchy of information as shown in Figure 2. This information is presented in order of saliency, that is, clauses which advance the storyline are considered of highest importance, followed by those bands which are successively more removed from the storyline.

According to Longacre there is a major break in this hierarchy between that of the primary storyline and all the other bands. This break is due to the desire to isolate the "backbone", that which is absolutely necessary to moving the narrative forward, from all that which is the "flesh", those clauses which add details and color. Longacre has focused on verb morphology as markers of the information bands in narratives, and he has proposed that verb marking can distinguish the various bands in each type of discourse within a given language. But Plang, like many Southeast Asian languages, has very little verb morphology. Therefore, in Plang, factors other than verb morphology must be used as surface markers of this spectrum of information.
3. Plang texts

"Life in China?" (LC), the primary text analyzed for this paper, is a narrative. This text, along with the other texts analyzed, are all first person orally narrated experiences gathered in a village in northern Thailand. The narrators of these texts were both grandmothers who had come to Thailand from China in the mid-1970's or so. The narrator of LC was prompted to tell this story through a request for information on what life was like in China.

The Plang texts under evaluation all use a cyclical method of story telling, where each major episode constitutes one cycle. Each cycle focuses on a different aspect of the story. Each major episode is introduced by stating the setting. This is done using virtually the same clause each time "We lived in China." and is closed by another clause, which is repeated almost verbatim each time "It was difficult." Three episodes of "Life in China" deal primarily with the same issue, that of the difficulties encountered in China. The first episode deals with difficulties due to the geography of where they lived, while the second and third episodes deal with the journey from China. The second episode focuses on the difficulties due to traveling with small children, and the third on the lack of food and the journey itself. Each of these three episodes introduces new information while highlighting repeated information, that of how difficult life was. The fourth and final episode deals with life in Thailand and does not state difficulties so much as it recounts how they have prospered there.

4. Tentative Plang salience scheme

As stated earlier, Longacre reported salience schemes which are primarily based on the tense, aspect, and mode of the verb in the languages to which they apply (Longacre, 1989). The term salience refers to the relative importance of the clauses included in a given type of text. In narrative, for example, those clauses deemed most crucial to the storyline, or immediately qualifying it, are considered to be highest in saliency. Those clauses which are less crucial to "rounding out" storyline give information in subsidiary lines of development and are considered less salient, although no less necessary to the telling of a story in good form.

Longacre also claims that for many languages affixation of the verb phrase proves to be a method of marking those clauses that present storyline events and actions as opposed to those which are back grounded. In languages like Plang and Thai, however, which do not regularly mark tense, aspect, or mode (or do so in a very limited manner), one must look for additional clues as to what marks the storyline. (Plang does to a very limited degree mark tense/aspect/mode: tense with a future particle kənang, aspect with a completive particle ac, and mode with a negative particle nang.)

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2 The text "Life in China" was collected in the village of Huay Nam Khun, Chiang Rai province, Thailand. The dialect spoken is Konto Plang. See Block (1994) for the complete text.
3 See Block (1994) for a complete discussion of the macrostructure of this text.
Figure 3 presents a tentative salience scheme for Plang first-person narrative texts. There are many details of each level which are as yet unknown and will require further research. This figure will be discussed in detail in the following sections of this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Storyline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Backgrounded activities (routine/script predictable actions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Setting (exposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Irrealis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evaluation (author intrusions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cohesive and thematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Plang bands (tentative)

4.1 Storyline

Clauses in the storyline (band 1) contain verbs which propel the story forward. Storyline clauses are usually sequential, punctilious, and at least partially causally connected. In Plang the main verb in a storyline clause occurs in the independent clause and denotes an action, motion, or event (cf. example [1]). The verb phrase is often a series of verbs: a main verb with directional or auxiliary verbs preceding or following it. A complete or finite list of each of these needs to be researched. There are also some instances which do not seem to fit the pattern, again further research will be needed before this tentative salience scheme can be accepted. In example (2) the verb phrase consists of the main verb (action) remx ‘weed’ and the directional verb hul ‘go/walk’. (The portions in focus will appear in bold.)

(1) LC 7

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{iq} \\
\text{1.p(3+)} \\
\text{pron}
\end{array} \to \begin{array}{c}
\text{ngrom} \\
\text{then burn} \\
\text{conj v}
\end{array} \text{aq.}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{pron}
\end{array}
\]

We then burned it.

(2) LC 9

\[
\begin{array}{c}
mol \\
\text{plant(drop.seed)} \\
v
\end{array} \to \begin{array}{c}
\text{ac} \\
\text{compl DCM} \\
v
\end{array} \begin{array}{c}
\text{si} \\
\text{go/walk} \\
part v \\
\end{array} \begin{array}{c}
hul \\
\text{weed.(out)} \\
part v \\
\end{array} \begin{array}{c}
\text{remx} \\
\text{aq.} \\
\text{pron}
\end{array}
\]

Planting finished, (we) go weed it.

4.2 Backgrounded Activity

Longacre (1989:440) says that all languages have backgrounded activity

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4 The bold portion of each example is that which is referred to in the prose section—the verb phrase, the marking of irrealis, the evaluation, a conjunction, etc.

5 See appendix A for chart showing IPA equivalents of the romanized phonemic orthography used for Plang.
(band 2 of Fig. 3). Any activities that are non-punctiliar, repetitive, on-going, prolonged, and gradual, are included in the category of backgrounded activities. Some of these activities are customary or routine. At this point in the analysis of Plang several bands (Fig. 2) have been collapsed into this band (backgrounded activities). More texts need to be analyzed before these details can be sorted out.

Table 1 (only independent clauses shown) demonstrates a “farming” script, from “Life in China.” There are clauses in this episode which appear to be storyline clauses (from the criterion given above); however, due to the manner in which they demonstrate ongoing and repetitive activities, these clauses are demoted to the band of backgrounded activities. At this point, pragmatic distinctions come into play in defining the distinction between bands 1 and 2. The order in which the events are presented is both logical and predictable as prescribed by the narrator’s culture.

Table 1. Backgrounded Activity from “Life in China”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S #</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Object/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>iq  tō</td>
<td>ḥul kācx</td>
<td>aq...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+) then</td>
<td>go/walk light fire</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8b</td>
<td>iq  tō</td>
<td>ngrom</td>
<td>aq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+) then</td>
<td>burn</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9b</td>
<td>iq  tō</td>
<td>ḥul mol</td>
<td>aq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+) then</td>
<td>go/walk plant</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10c</td>
<td>iq  kōn tō</td>
<td>ṭāćx</td>
<td>aq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+) gradually then</td>
<td>reap</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>iq  tō</td>
<td>tum tō cap</td>
<td>aq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+) then</td>
<td>pile then thresh</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>kōn</td>
<td>ṭūhx ēng</td>
<td>āaqx re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gradually</td>
<td>carry on back return/come</td>
<td>house poss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>iq  tō</td>
<td>tāhx</td>
<td>aq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+) then</td>
<td>husk</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>tō</td>
<td>plīn ne ēhx</td>
<td>aq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>build refl take</td>
<td>apol mortar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>som</td>
<td>nang apol loc mortar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>add (put in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16b</td>
<td>iq</td>
<td>kam</td>
<td>ngkuq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.p (3+)</td>
<td>winnow</td>
<td>husked rice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... we made it burn. 7 We then burned it. 8 ...we went to plant it. 9 ... we weed it. 10 ...we would gradually harvest it. 11 We then piled, then threshed (it). 12 Gradually (we) carried it back to our house. 13 We then pounded it. 14 (We) built a large mortar. 15 ... (we) put (rice) into the mortar. 16 Pounded it... (sound of pounding), we winnowed the rice.
4.3 Setting

In Plang the verb phrase of the clause which denotes the setting (band 3) is often filled by a stative (3), equative, or descriptive verb, i.e., a non-dynamic verb. These verbs usually occur alone as in (3), without any other verbs in the verb phrase. Predicate adjectives in the verb phrase (4) may also be used alone or in conjunction with one or more of the other elements which mark the setting.

(3) LC 1
 iq  muk  nang  kānghuq.
 1.p(3+) live at China
 pron  v-st loc  prop.n
 We lived in China.

(4) LC 27
 iq  tō  kōy  um  sī  um  iq  tō  et
 1.p(3+) then have water DCM water 1.p(3+) then small
 pron  conj  v  n  part  n  pron  conj  adj
 nōy  nōy.
 little  little
 adj  adj
 We had water, our water supply was very small.

4.4 Irrealis

Irrealis (band 4) refers to those clauses which express ideas that have not or will not occur. Irrealis may be marked in two major ways. First, irrealis may be marked by stating that the action is yet to occur because it refers to a future event, happening, etc., or that it depends upon some condition to be fulfilled. Secondly, it may be marked by the negation of a clause. There is no sense of completion or punctuality to the verb in these clauses.

There is a conjunction at the clause level, nūgx ‘if/when’, (6) which conveys that a certain action must occur in order for the next action to be carried out. The sense that this conjunction gives is that the action expressed in the verb phrase of the next clause, is conditional to another. In example (6) the condition which is stated is: if or when the fields are cut.

(6) LC 6
 tō  nūgx  iq  tō  mōkx  ac  sī
 then if/when 1.p(3+) then cut compl DCM
 conj  conj  pron  conj  v  part  part
 iq  tō  hul  kākx  aq  yuḥx  aq  haq.
 1.p(3+) then go/walk light.fire it do/make it burn.(intr)
 pron  conj  v  v  pron  v  pron  v
 Then if (when) we have cut the fields, then we go set fire to them, making them burn.
The future particle did not appear in this corpus of data, but has been found in elicited material (7).

(7) elicited sentence
\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
khraw & ac & k\text{onang} & hul & h\text{äm} & ne.\\
\text{moment} & \text{compl} & \text{future} & \text{go.down} & \text{bathe} & \text{refl} \\
temp & part & part & v & v & part
\end{array}
\]
In a moment, (I) will go bathe myself.

Negation is the second means by which Plang indicates irrealis. Negation indicates that the state, event, or action in the verb phrase has not and will not occur, as in (8).

(8) LC 28
\[
\begin{array}{llll}
t\text{o} & ng-k\text{hrug} & c\text{änx}.\\
\text{then neg-enough carry.water}
\end{array}
\]
There was not enough water.

4.5 Evaluation

Evaluation (Band 5) is marked by descriptive clauses by which the author addresses the audience directly and expresses a judgment (good or bad). The author of LC interjects five evaluative remarks into her story. These are of two types. The first (9, 10) has the verb phrase filled by a predicate adjective followed immediately by an intensifier or followed by the sentence final evaluative particle so (which indicates that the situation described is one that is contrary to expectation). The second (11, 12) has the verb phrase filled with a stative verb followed by the sentence final evaluative particle so (which indicates that the situation described is one to be pitied).

With four of the occurrences (9 (LC-S# 78) and LC-S#: 37, 38, 59) it is virtually the same remark: hñap mot ‘Too difficult!’ The fifth evaluation (10) compares China with Thailand.

(9) LC 78
\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
h\text{ñap} & mot. & \\
difficult & too
\end{array}
\]
It was too difficult!

(10) LC 64
\[
\begin{array}{llllllllll}
n & \text{cölêtx} & \text{sun} & \text{caw} & \text{kängthuy} & \text{teqx} & \text{so}.\\
\text{neg good same people Thailand here contr.expect.}
\end{array}
\]
It was not good like the Thai people here have it.

There are two instances where the narrator uses a stative verb plus the sentence final particle so ‘pitiable’ to mark an evaluative statement:
4.6 Cohesive band

The cohesive band or thematic band (band 6) is the “glue” that holds a text together. The cohesive band refers to the manner in which a language links each sentence to the next—the manner in which the action is kept moving, through temporals, back referencing, paraphrase, and parallelism.

At this time we have not found many overt conjunctions like ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘but’, ‘in order to’, etc. in this language. Plang mostly seems to simply juxtapose the clauses and in that way indicate a conjoining of ideas.

4.6.1 Temporals

There are, however, temporal words which serve to mark cohesion between clauses and sentences and episodes in Plang. A few of these are: hāc ‘moment of time’, pōnsaq ‘tomorrow’, caw ‘early in the morning’, khrac ‘soon’, rotx ‘just then’, numaq ‘in the past’, anloq ‘right now’, and kən ‘gradually’. (Several of these temporal words are also used in the setting band). Plang also uses a series of particles which indicate temporal progression ṭa, la, and lət ‘then’ as a cohesive force. These particles appear to link clauses together in the sequential manner essential for narrative discourse.

In example (12) the temporal adverb kən ‘gradually’ and the temporal particle lət ‘then’ serve to link the action of buying a house for themselves with the condition of getting much rice as well as with all that has occurred previous to this sentence.

4.6.2 Initial phrase

A sentence initial temporal phrase can also show cohesion across sentences and paragraphs and sections. In (13) the initial phrase hāc pōnsaq ‘every day’ links the action described in the following clause to that in the previous sentences.
This sentence (13) links the episode which follows to previous references to the field (LC2-17 and 25).

(13) LC 34

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
\text{hāc} & \text{panseq} & \text{sl} & \text{caw} & n & \text{caw} \\
\text{moment.of.time} & \text{tomorrow} & \text{DCM} & \text{early.morning} & \text{at} & \text{early.morning} \\
\text{adv} & n & \text{part} & n & \text{loc} & n \\
\text{sl} & \text{hul} & m & \text{hmal}. \\
\text{DCM} & \text{go/walk at} & \text{dry.rice.field} \\
\text{part} & v & \text{loc} & n \\
\end{array}
\]

Every day, early in the morning, (we) went to the field.

4.6.2 Backreference

Backreferencing in this text consists of tail-head linkage, that is, by the repetition in a dependent clause of the verb from a preceding (or closely preceding) independent clause. Example (14) below consists of three consecutive sentences in which the dependent clause of the next sentence (LC 8, 9), repeats the verb phrase of the independent clause of the preceding sentence (LC 7, 8). The repeated clause usually has the completive particle ac, or occasionally hoc ac (LC 8), added to the end of the verb phrase, followed by the clause final particle sl.\(^6\)

(14) LC 7

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
iq & \text{to} & \text{ngrom} & \text{aq.} \\
1.p(3+) & \text{then} & \text{burn} & \text{it} \\
\text{pron} & \text{conj} & v & \text{pron} \\
\end{array}
\]

We then burned it.

LC 8

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
to & \text{ngrom} & \text{hoc} & \text{ac} & \text{sl} & iq & \text{to} & \text{hul} \\
\text{then} & \text{burn} & \text{finish} & \text{compl} & \text{DCM} & 1.p(3+) & \text{then} & \text{go/walk} \\
\text{conj} & v & v & \text{part} & \text{part} & \text{pron} & \text{conj} & v \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{mol} \\
\text{aq.} \\
\text{plant(drop.seed)} \\
v \\
\text{pron} \\
\end{array}
\]

When we finished burning it, we went to plant it.

LC 9

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
mol & \text{ac} & \text{sl} & \text{hul} & \text{remx} & \text{aq.} \\
\text{plant(drop.seed)} & \text{compl} & \text{DCM} & \text{go/walk} & \text{weed.(out)} & \text{it} \\
v & \text{part} & \text{part} & v & v & \text{pron} \\
\end{array}
\]

Planting finished, (we) go weed it.

---

\(^6\) It appears that the particle sl is acting as a cohesive particle as well as in some way marking the dependent clause. More research is needed before this particle's discourse function is truly understood.
From LC 9 we see that only the main action verb is repeated, for the directional verb is not included in the backreferencing clause.

4.6.3 Paraphrase

Repetition by paraphrase can also serve as a cohesive device. LC 20, example (15), is an expanded paraphrase of the last clause of LC 19.

(15) LC 19

\[\text{iq \ hul \ nang \ phrêq \ si \ congx \ eqx}\]
1.p(3+) go/walk at jungle DCM foot/leg this

\[\text{pron \ v \ loc \ n \ part \ n \ dem}\]

\[\text{mahx \ kat \ uc.}\]

\[\text{to.be \ thorn \ all}\]

\[\text{v \ n \ adj}\]

We went to the jungle, and got thorns all over (our) feet.

LC 20

\[\text{cap \ kat \ râc \ pûkx \ re.}\]
step.in,put.on thorn caught.in calf refl

\[\text{v \ n \ v \ n \ part}\]

Stepped in thorns which caught on our calves.

A predicate adjective can be repeated with different adverbs (16, 17). These show the cohesion of the whole discourse as well as serving to bind various parts of the text together.

(16) LC 37

\[\text{iq \ lo \ khrâh \ hflap \ mot.}\]
1.p(3+) then leave difficult too

\[\text{pron \ conj \ v \ adj \ adv}\]

We then left, it was too difficult.

LC 38

\[\text{muk \ ng \ kânghuq \ sô \ hflap.}\]
live at China pitiable difficult

\[\text{v-st \ loc \ prop.n \ part \ adj}\]
(We) lived in China - it was difficult.

(17) LC 59

\[\text{muk \ nang \ kânghuq \ na \ thu \ hflap \ paraparoq.}\]
live at China affirm exclaim difficult very

\[\text{v \ loc \ prop.n \ part \ part \ adj \ adv}\]
(We-st) lived in China-- Man!--it was very difficult!

4.6.4 Parallelism

Parallel structure is a cohesive device. It is seen in the three sentences below (18), where the parallelism is seen in the statements regarding the various villages that were encountered by the author, Lahu, Akha, and Chinese.
(18) LC 42
\[ kaq \, kloc \, mähx \, musu. \]
\begin{align*}
& \text{it} & \text{then} & \text{to.be} & \text{Lahu} \\
& \text{pron} & \text{part} & \text{v} & \text{prop.n} \\
& \text{There were Lahu.}
\end{align*}

LC 43
\[ kaq \, kə \, kloc \, mähx \, kə. \]
\begin{align*}
& \text{it} & \text{also} & \text{then} & \text{to.be} & \text{Akha} \\
& \text{pron} & \text{part} & \text{part} & \text{v} & \text{prop.n} \\
& \text{There also were Akha.}
\end{align*}

LC 44
\[ kaq \, kə \, mähx \, huq. \]
\begin{align*}
& \text{it} & \text{also} & \text{to.be} & \text{Chinese} \\
& \text{pron} & \text{part} & \text{v} & \text{prop.n} \\
& \text{There also were Chinese.}
\end{align*}

5. Summary

So what is it that makes a story a story in Plang? The tentative salience scheme presented in this paper gives a guideline (Figure 4). The storyline (band 1) verb phrases include a main verb; that is, an action, motion, or event verb. The verb phrase may also have a series of verbs; that is, directional and auxiliary verbs augmenting the main verb.

Band 2, the backgrounded activities, includes the use of script-predictable actions in independent clauses. (In Plang the script-predictable information is treated as cohesive when it occurs in dependent clauses.)

The setting (band 3), in Plang, includes stative verbs, predicate adjectives, and the presence of certain temporal elements, and these usually occur in the independent clause as well.

Band 4—irrealis—in Plang is marked by clauses which have been negated or which indicate that the action or event has not taken place, and may be conditional upon other actions or events.

Evaluations (band 5) are marked by the use of a predicate adjective in a clause in which one makes a judgment statement, such as saying something is good or bad. The particle əs, which expresses the judgment of ‘a pitiable state’, is also used in the evaluation band. In oral (not written) text, intonation and body language (i.e. addressing the audience directly) reinforce that these are evaluative clauses or sentences.

Finally, the cohesive band (6) makes use of repetitive back-referencing, temporal references (using temporal phrases, words or particles), paraphrase, and parallelism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 1</th>
<th>Storyline</th>
<th>(in the INDEPENDENT CLAUSE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Verb(s)</td>
<td>{directional auxiliary} +Verb {action motion event} +*Verb {directional auxiliary}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 2</th>
<th>(usually in the INDEPENDENT CLAUSE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Back-grounded Activities</td>
<td>class of verbs - repetitive, ongoing, and gradual activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>customary or routine actions (script-predictable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>temporal overlap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 3</th>
<th>(often in the INDEPENDENT CLAUSE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>stative verbs and predicate adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>temporal elements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 4</th>
<th>(in either CLAUSE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis</td>
<td>conditional clause (introduced by <em>nûq</em> ‘if/when’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>negative clause (with or without the particle <em>sə</em> ‘contrary to expectation’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 5</th>
<th>(in either CLAUSE)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>predicate adjectives stating a judgment (good or bad) or stative verbs accompanied by an evaluative particle (<em>sə</em> ‘pitiable’ or <em>sə</em> ‘contrary to expectation’) or by an intensifier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 6</th>
<th>(in the DEPENDENT CLAUSE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive</td>
<td>backreferencing (ac ‘completive’ + <em>s</em> ‘dependent clause marker’ - DCM), temporal particles and words, paraphrase, and parallelism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.** Tentative salience scheme and markers for Plang narrative

In these texts the flashback band is not seen to be at work, perhaps because in one sense the entire text is in a ‘flashback’ mode. The setting of these texts could arguably be said to be completely in a flashback mode since they deal almost exclusively with the past, with a journey made some twenty to twenty-five years prior to this telling.

These features, while needing more clarification, defining, and confirmation, would seem to tell us what makes a story a story in Plang—at least a first person narrative story which was set in the past. Much more research is needed before we can know the finer details and what differentiates between types of narratives and differing genres of discourse.

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7 NOTE: * denotes an item which is optional but occurs frequently.
REFERENCES


Appendix 1. Orthographic representation of Plang phonemes and equivalent IPA symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plang orthography</th>
<th>IPA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>low tone</td>
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<tr>
<td>ŭ</td>
<td>ŭ (breathy vowel)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. "Text of life in China" (LC)

LC 1
iq muk nang kānghuq.
1.p live at China
pron v-st loc prop.n
We lived in China.

LC 2
iq muk nang kānghuq sl iq hul mōkx hmal.
1.p live at China DCM 1.p go/walk cut dry.rice.field
pron v-st loc prop.n part pron v v n
We lived in China, we went to cut the fields.

LC 3
mōkx hmal iq hul yuhx hmal.
cut dry.rice.field 1.p go/walk do/make dry.rice.field
v n pron v v n
Cut fields, we went to work the fields.

LC 4
iq yuhx vácx sölēq.
1.p do/make reap.rice corn
pron v v n
We harvested corn.

LC 5
iq pōnx nə phraq pōnx nə som nāka.
1.p get ben food get ben eat/food indeed
pron v part n v part v/n part
We got food to eat.

LC 6
tə niûqx iq tə mōkx ac sl
then if/when 1.p then cut compl DCM
part conj pron part v part
iq tə hul kācx aq yuhx aq haq.
1.p then go/walk light.fire it do/make it burn.(intr)
pron part v v pron v pron v
Then if (when) we have cut the fields, then we go set fire to them, making them burn.

LC 7
iq tə ngrom aq.
1.p then burn it
pron part v pron
We then burned it.
When we finished burning it, we went to plant it.

Planting finished, (we) go weed it.

Weeding finished, and then if it had sprouted, we gradually then harvest it.

We then piled it; then threshed it.

Gradually (we) carried it back to our house.

Then we pounded it.

(We) built ourselves a mortar.

build refl mortar δCM then neg-have mill same person DCM

v part n part part part-v n adj n part
som nang apol.
add(to.food),put.in at mortar
v loc n
Built ourselves a mortar, not having a mill like other people, (we) put (rice) into the mortar.

LC 16
tähx aq öttongklong öttongklong sl
husk it sound.of.pounding sound.of.pounding DCM
v pron ono.s ono.s part

iq kam ngkuq.
1.p winnow husked.rice
pron v n
Pounded it... (sound.of.pounding), we removed the husk from the rice.

LC 17
tähx hok.
husk chaff
v n
Pounded the chaff off.

LC 18
iq muk nang känghuq so.
1.p live at China pitiable
pron v-st loc prop.n part
We lived in China. (A pitiable situation.)

LC 19
iq hul nang phrēq sl congx eqx māhx kat uc.
1.p go/walk at jungle DCM foot/leg this to.be thorn all
pron v loc n part n dem v n adj
We went to the jungle and got thorns all over (our) feet.

LC 20
cap kat rāc pūkx re.
step.in,put.on thorn caught.in calf refl
v n v n part
Stepped in thorns which caught our calves.

LC 21
cap kat tamoqtameqx.
step.in,put.on thorn this.and.that
v n dem
Stepped in thorns everywhere, here & there.

LC 22
ngkələŋxkəleq so.
eg-flatland contr.expect.
part-n part
This is not flatland.
LC 23
kəłumkhùq kətèngx pənuyc məkx hmal.
tree big this.much cut dry.rice.field
n adj adj v n
Big trees, like this, (we) cut to make fields.

LC 24
kəłumkhùq kətèngx kətèngx məkx aq.
tree big big cut it
n adj adj v pron
Very big trees, (we) cut them down.

LC 25
hul yuhx hmal singay paraparoq.
go/walk do/make dry.rice.field far very
v v n adj adv
Went and worked fields that were very far away.

LC 26
hul singay paraparoq iq ëng rətx ac tah sətung.
go/walk far very 1.p come/return arrive compl stay tired
v adv adv pron v v part v adj
Went very far, we returned tired.

LC 27
iq tə koy um sɨ um iq tə et nəy nəy.
1.p then have water DCM water 1.p then small little little
pron part v n part n pron part adj adj adj
We had water, our water supply was small.

LC 28
tə ngkhruq cənəx.
then neg.enough carry.water
part part-adj v
There was not enough water.

LC 29
yung iq tə hun.
village 1.p then many
n pron part adj
Our village was large.

LC 30
yung iq hun paraparoq.
village 1.p many very
n pron adj adv
Our village was very large.

LC 31
um iq tə et nəy nəy.
water 1.p then small little little
n pron part adj adj adj
Our water was little.
LC 32
kuq um ro pareq leng.
wait water ben each other long time.
v n part adv adv
We had to wait together for water a long time.

LC 33
al oy chumong kon pønx cänx um ne.
two three hour just until able carry water water refl
num num n adv v v n part
two to three hours just to get to draw our water.

LC 34
hac pønsaq si caw n caw si
moment of time tomorrow DCM early morning at early morning DCM
adv n part n loc n part

hul m hmal.
go walk at dry rice field
v loc n
every day early in the morning we went to field.

LC 35
hul hot khraq si te hük ngkongx
go walk along path DCM then climb mountain
v adv n part part v n

som üq khroc khroc khrac khrac khrac som üq khroc khroc khrac khrac.
rock rough rough rough rough rock rough rough rock rough rough rough
n adj adj adj adj n adj adj adj adj adj
(we) went along the path and climbed the mountain, the rocks were rough, the
rocks were rough.

LC 36
cap aq eqx te sãg raθe uc.
step in put on it this then pain sick all all
v pron dem part adj part adj
walking it caused pain all over.

LC 37
iŋ lɔ khräh hñaŋ mop.
1p then leave difficult too
pron part v adj adv
we then left it was too difficult.

LC 38
muk ng känghuŋ sɔ hñaŋ.
live at China pitiable difficult
v st loc prop n part adv
(we) lived in China it was difficult.
LC 39
iq lō khrāh sī lō khrāh.
1.p then leave DCM then leave
pron part v part part v
We then left, then left.

LC 40
lēhx khraq hul khraq talq khraq talq.
go.down path go/walk path name.village path name.village
v n v n prop n prop
Went down the road to go to the Talo road, Talo road.

LC 41
tah nang yung lahx māhx yung...
stay at village call.(name) to.be village
v loc n v n
Stayed at a village called... is village...

LC 42
kaq lō māhx musu.
it then to.be Lahu
pron part v prop.n
There were Lahu.

LC 43
kaq kə lō māhx kə.
it also then to.be Akha
pron part part v prop.n
There also were Akha.

LC 44
kaq kə māhx huq.
it also to.be Chinese
pron part v prop.n
There also were Chinese.

LC 45
iq lō hul khraq kətə rō cen.
1.p then go/walk path *** conj truly
pron part v n part part part
We went down the road....

LC 46
kətə rō ra sī nang kəy kən sə.
*** conj loc DCM not.yet/still have child contr..expect.
*** part part part adv v n part
At that time, did not have a child yet.

LC 47
kən muk may pareq mmiqx mpun.
gradually live with each.other man woman
adv v-st conj adv n n
We lived together (man & woman), just the two of us.
LC 48
ko\th the\th have\th child\th one
v\th n\th num
(The) had\th a\th child.

LC 49
ko\th puq\th n\th tit\th kaq\th re.
gradually\th carry\th.\th child\th.\th on\th.\th back\th at\th attached\th back\th refl
adv\th v\th loc\th v\th n\th part
Carried\th the\th child\th on\th my\th back.

LC 50
ko\th et\th may\th cay\th iqx\th non.
child\th small\th comparison\th male\th.\th child\th 1\th p\th that
n\th adj\th conj\th pron\th pron\th dem\th(Thai)
(This)\th child\th is\th smaller\th than\th our\th boy.

LC 51
la\th khræ\h.th.
then\th leave
part\th v
Then\th (we)\th left.

LC 52
khræ\th la\th hul\th ntu\th ntu\th re\th ng\th phræ\h.q.
soon\th shortly\th then\th go\th walk\th stay\th stay\th refl\th at\th jungle
adv\th part\th v\th v\th v\th part\th loc\th n
Soon,\th (we)\th went\th and\th stayed\th in\th the\th jungle.

LC 53
it\th it\th nang\th phræ\h.q.
sleep\th lay\h.\th down\th at\th jungle
v\th v\th loc\th n
We\th slept\th in\th the\th jungle.

LC 54
rotx\th to\th iq\th lo\th lehx\th rotx\th nang\th kæ\h.ng\th teqx\th sl
just\th then\th then\th 1\th p\th then\th go\h.\th down\th arrive\th at\th country\th.\th city\th here\th DCM
time\th part\th pron\th part\th v\th v\th loc\th n\th adv\th part
to\th kutx\th them\th ko\h.tlx\h.x.
then\th born\th more\th one
part\th v\th adj\th num
Just\th then,\th we\th then\th arrived\th in\th this\th country,\th then\th another\th child\th was\th born.

LC 55
ngat\th them\th ko\h.tlx\h.x\th ko\th ko\h.n.
give\h.\th birth\th more\th one\th have\th child
v\th adj\th num\th v\th n
Gave\th birth\th to\th another\th child.
LC 56
tang hñel hot hul.
begin pregnant along go/walk
adv adj adv v
Then got pregnant along the way.

LC 57
køy laqal tə muk muk teqx sl tə køy them laqoy.
have two then live live here DCM then have more three
v num part v-st v-st adv part part v adj num
Had two children then lived here, then had three more.

LC 58
tə yëmx laqal vang laqoy kon so.
them die two alive three child pitiable
part v/adj num adj num n part
Two are dead and three are alive. (This too is pitiable.)

LC 59
muk nang kænghuq na thu hñap paraparaoq.
live at China affirm exclam difficult very
v-st loc prop.n part part adv
(We) lived in China--Man!--it was very difficult!

LC 60
iq tə pönx ëp sl tə pönx ëp ëng
1.p then get cooked.rice DCM then get cooked.rice come/return
pron part v n part part v n v

sl pøyx tə tliqx re som aq rə iq uc.
DCM person then take/get/pick.up refl food it ben 1.p all
part n part v part n pron part pron adj
We then got rice, then got rice, the person took the food that was ours.

LC 61
pøyx tə tong kahx iq som nang can.
person then measure.out give 1.p food at bag/sack
n part v v pron n loc n
Someone measured out and gave us food in a bag.

LC 62
pönx ëng nayu.
get come/return indeed
v v part
Took it.

LC 63
pøyx tə tliqx re som aq rə iq.
person then take/get/pick.up refl food it ben 1.p
n part v part n pron part pron
Someone took our rice.
LC 64
$n$ ការ៉ែត្រ សន់ កាល់ កោះ តែម៉ា សរ
neg good same people country,city.Thai here contr.expect.
part adj ន  prop.n adv part
It was not good like the Thai people here have it.

LC 65
$pux  tlq  re  som  āp  iq.$
person take/get/pick.up refl food cooked.rice 1.p
$n$  v  part  n  n  pron
They took our rice.

LC 66
$iq  pōnx  ēn  nang  hāq  re  sī$
1.p get come/return at house refl DCM
pron  v  v  loc  n  part  part

$pux  tō  tong  iq  rō  khrāh.$
person then measure.out 1.p ben leave
$n$  part  v  pron  part  v
We brought to our house, the person then put our rice into a bucket and took it away.

LC 67
$pux  tlq  re  som  ag  rō  iq.$
person take/get/pick.up refl food it ben 1.p
$n$  v  part  n  pron  part  pron
They took our rice.

LC 68
$pux  kah  iq  som  lūn  taq  khrūg  som.$
person give 1.p food little neg enough food
$n$  v  pron  n  adj  part  adj  n
They gave us a little to eat, but not enough food.

LC 69
$kōn  iq  hmaṅ  ne  som  sī  taq  khrūg  som  poc.$
child 1.p ask.for/request refl food DCM neg enough food neg
$n$  pron  v  part  n  part  part  adj  n  part
Our children asked for food, there is not enough food.

LC 70
$kūh  āp  rō  sī  nūmāṅ  iq  kō  kūh  māhx$
cook cooked.rice ben DCM sometimes 1.p also cook to.be
$v$  n  part  part  adv  pron  part  v  v

(We) cooked our rice, sometimes we had cold rice.
LC 71
kahx kən ne som āp cet.
give child refl eat cooked.rice cool
v n part v n adj
(We) gave our children cold rice to eat.

LC 72
numnįŋ iq kə pōnx som āp sālul.
sometimes 1.p also get eat cooked.rice warm
adv pron part v v n adj
Sometimes we also got to eat warm rice.

LC 73
puyx tlqx āp r̄ iq.
person take/get/pick.up cooked.rice ben 1.p
n v n part pron
They took our rice.

LC 74
ńūqx iq pōnx oy pun sun kəle si
if/when 1.p get three f1.p parts like.this DCM
conj pron v num num n part part

puyx la tlqx enki khrāh yen.
person then take/get/pick.up they.(group) leave truly
n part v pron v part
If we got 3, 4 parts of it, the person then took it away (most).

LC 75
puyx la kahx iq som en yen.
person then give 1.p food this truly
n part v pron n dem part
They then gave us some food indeed!

LC 76
puyx tlqx khrāh r̄ iq laq̄y.
person take/get/pick.up leave ben 1.p three
n v v part pron num
They took away from us 3 (parts).

LC 77
puyx kahx iq som kətlqx.
person give 1.p food one
n v pron n num
They gave us food one (part).

LC 78
hūrap mot.
difficult too
adv adv
It was too difficult!
LC 79
lot khräh.
then leave
part v
Then (we) left.

LC 80
iq lo luc luc luc luc ph rêq hul.
1.p then enter enter enter enter jungle go/walk
pron part v v v v n v
We then entered the jungle!

LC 81
ntay ngreh uc.
sarong tear all
n v adj
The sarongs all tore!

LC 82
ph rêq x ngreh uc.
shirt/blouse tear all
n v adj
The shirts all tore!

LC 83
chël x chël x chël x nang kəlumkhuiq hul yen.
rip rip rip at tree go/walk truly
v v v loc n v part
(The clothes) ripped on the trees as (we) went!

LC 84
chël x chël x nang kat hul.
rip rip at thorn go/walk
v v loc n v
They ripped on the thorns!

LC 85
khräh khräh khräh hul.
leave leave leave go/walk
v v v v
We left!

LC 86
rot x to hul rot x nang kāng thuy teq x ra
just.then then go/walk arrive at Thailand here ben
time part v v loc prop.n adv part
maw x sī lot māhx kəlunx uc.
amazed DCM then to.be flatland all
adj part part v n adj
Then we arrived here in Thailand, we were amazed! it was all flatland!
What makes a story a story in Plang?

LC 87

hul rotx teqx si payx la pañ kauq uc so.
go/walk arrive here DCM person then sell what all definitely
v v adv part n part v inter adj part
(We) arrived here, people then had to sell everything!

LC 88

koy màlx tlqx aq sa.
have silver/money take/get/pick.up it contr..expect.
v n v pron part
(We) didn’t bring any money.

LC 89

ew cang ne.
go.out/look.for hire refl
v v part
(we) hired ourselves out.

LC 90

cang ne pok hmal taqhuq kiq.
hire refl dig dry.rice.field grandfather-Chinese 3.p
v part v n n pron
Hired ourselves out to dig the fields of a Chinese man.

LC 91

hul rotx sōq numaq sī
go/walk arrive new in.the.past DCM
v v adj adv part

cang ne pok hmal taqhuq kiq.
hire refl dig dry.rice.field grandfather-Chinese they.(3+)
v part v n prop.n n pron
Just newly arrived, (we) hired ourselves out to dig the fields of a Chinese man.

LC 92

kahx rā iq sip vaxter.
give ben 1.p ten baht
v part pron num n
(He) gave to us 10 baht.

LC 93

filx sip sip vaxter.
day ten ten baht
n num num n
10 - 20 baht per day.

LC 94

kā āy kān ne rāka.
also raise.(child/animal) child refl all
part v n part part
Also (we) raised our children.
LC 95

*hul mokx re êhx hmal.*
go/walk cut refl take dry.rice.field

Went to cut fields.

LC 96

*lot hmañ ne êhx hmal rô pawx.*
than ask.for/request refl take dry.rice.field ben person

Then we asked for our own fields.

LC 97

*lot hul mokx re êhx hmal.*
then go/walk cut refl take dry.rice.field

Then went to cut our fields.

LC 98

*iq kô lot pônx áp hun.*
1.p also then able cooked.rice many

We then got lots of rice.

LC 99

*pônx áp hun hoc si kôn*
get cooked.rice many compl DCM gradually

lôt viqx rô iq ñaqx.
then buy ben 1.p house

Got lots of rice, eventually then bought for ourselves a house.

LC 100

*vïqx rô êhx tukaq.*
buy ben take property

Bought ourselves property.

LC 101

*lot pling ñaqx ka.*
then build house it

Then built a house on it.

LC 102

*iq muk teqx lêng lêng lêng lêng lêng*
1.p live here long.(time) long.(time) long.(time) long.(time)

hoc si iq kôn lot kôy kôy ñaqx.
compl DCM 1.p gradually then have have house

We had lived here a very long time, we then gradually got a house.
LC 102
iŋ  køŋ  lət  kəy  kəy  målx  sən  pəyx.
1.p gradually then have have silver/money same person
pron adv part v v n adj n
We gradually made money, like others.

LC 103
anləq  køŋ  iŋ  ew  rə  məhəx  həmay.
right.now child 1.p go.out/look.for ben to.be hired.hand
n n pron v part v n
Now our children go get jobs.

LC 104
pəyx  lət  mək  məy  pəyx  uc.
person then live with person all
n part v-st conj n adj
They all go and live with their employers.

LC 105
pləŋ  ńaŋəx  rə  nəng  ləkəxələx  nə  aysət  sɬ
build house refl at below at there.(down) DCM
v n part loc adv loc adv part

khərq  eqə  tə  cəp  ńaŋəx  iŋ.
path this then go.through house 1.p
n dem part v n pron
We built a house down there, this road then went through our house.

LC 106
cəp  ńaŋəx  iŋ  sɬ  pəyx  tə  kəhəx  iŋ  khrəh  sɬ
go.through house 1.p DCM person then give 1.p leave DCM
v n pron part n part v pron v part

pəyx  tə  pləŋ  iŋ  əhəx  teqə  yən.
person then build 1.p take here truly
n part v pron v adv part
Going through our house, someone then had us move, someone then built for us here.

LC 107
kəhəx  iŋ  həl  mək  teqə.
give 1.p go/walk live here
v pron v v-st adv
(They) had us move here.

LC 108
tə  həl  mək  teqə.
then go/walk live here
part v v-st adv
(We) had to move here.
LC 109

kon muk teqx pŏnx tə numx.
eventually live here able one year
adv v-st adv v num n
(We have) just lived here one year.

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