

The *who* and *how* of Nyaheun /hi/

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Abstract

This paper explores the various functions of Nyaheun morpheme /hi/ (glossed variously as English ‘(one)self’, and Lao: ທີ່ in my data and the data of Davis (1968, 1973), Kommala (1978) or glossed in French as ‘soi, soi-même’ in the data of Ferlus (1998) and Wall (1975)). In the examples where /hi/ appears in isolation as a noun phrase substitutive, it does not appear to function as a reflexive anaphor (substituting a core argument/role in a clause and at the same time co-referencing it with the Subject of the main clause). Rather, the true reflexive anaphoric function is filled by the compound /cǎk hi/ (lit. ‘body self’), and this anaphor can be used to co-index Subject (or Agent) with a Direct Object (Animate Patient/Experiencer/Goal).

In my data (which comprise elicited narratives and spontaneous isolated sentences) /hi/ occurs more frequently without the /cǎk/ ‘body’ antecedent, and as such, has many different syntactic distributional and semantic properties, including:

- (1) substituting a pronoun in a ‘possessive’ noun phrase structure (indicating alienable/inalienable possession, partitive and kin relationships, which always co-refer with the Subject of the clause);
- (2) compounding with the morpheme /bʌn/ ‘other (person)’ to mark reciprocity (/bʌn/ alone can indicate reciprocity in conjunction with inherently reciprocal verbs, but only in an intensifying role);
- (3) filling an adverbial position as an ‘intensifier’ of a preceding verb (Vintr, Vtr, or Vditr) meaning something like the Subject acts ‘alone/without help’ (much like ‘I ate it *myself*’ in English);
- (4) immediate postposition to a small set of complement-taking verbs which denote (mental) feeling, thought or reported speech (of unclear function/semantics)

I argue that although /hi/ has the common characteristic of coding co-referentiality with the Subject of a clause (or Topic in discourse reference-tracking), its most common functions are never truly reflexive.

1. Introduction and outline

The morpheme /hi/ in Nyaheun is variously glossed as ‘(one)self’ (French: ‘soi, soi-même’) in the available literature for Nyaheun (Davis, 1968,

1973), Wall (1975), Ferlus (1998) and my own field data (1999-2002)¹. This morpheme is also readily translated into Lao by my Nyaheun informants as ໂຕເອງ also meaning ‘(one)self’. I assumed, therefore, that it was the reflexive morpheme in the language. However, many examples collected during my field trips reveal a use of /hi/ which does not seem to correspond with a true reflexive meaning/function, e.g.

- (1) /ʔa baʔ kuan hi/
 1sg carry.on.back child SELF
 a. ?‘I carry (the/my?) child on (the/my?) back’.
 b. ?‘I carry the child (itself) on (the/my?) back’.
 c. ?‘I carry the child on the back, myself’.
 d. *‘I carry myself on the back’. [= a true reflexive]

Example (1), above, /hi/ could be interpreted to either indicate (a) the kin term /kuan/ ‘child’ is related to the protagonist (i.e. *my (own) child*), or (b) an adnominal intensifying function (*the child itself*) (i.e. singling the child out apart from other potential Patient/Direct Object referents), or (c) an adverbial intensifying function (*do it myself*), which excludes, in this case, other subject/agent referents than 1sg. In any case, a true reflexive interpretation is not found in example (1) as it is nonsensical or impossible in the real world to carry oneself on one's own back; yet /hi/ is present².

So is there another reflexive candidate in the language? The criteria often used for selecting a form as ‘reflexive’ are where co-referentiality between subject/agent and another argument/core semantic role is encoded, and/or syntactic properties such as binding properties. While reference to a subject antecedent seems to be a consistent property of /hi/ in Nyaheun, in most examples³ /hi/ does not fill a pronominal role (replacing any argument

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Note that some English glosses are tentative and these are indicated by a question mark in the interlinear gloss, as I have been unable to check the semantics exhaustively (I only had a Lao gloss/translation to work from). Many loans from Lao and Jru’ (a neighbouring related West Bahnaric language) are present in the data (Mih Done and I spoke all three languages), and are indicated as such in the interlinear gloss in square brackets (e.g. [L.] for Lao, and [J.] for Jru’).

²Mih Done, when questioned in June 2005 by Awerck on my behalf, suggests alternative constructions such as using /cǎk hi/ ‘on (my) body’ to focus on *whose body* it is being carried (/ʔa baʔ kuan cǎk hi/ ‘I carry the child on *my* back’), or to replace /hi/ with a pronoun (e.g. /ʔa/ ‘1sg’) indicating possession (which focuses on *whose child* it is rather than where/how one is carrying it), e.g. /ʔa baʔ kuan ʔa/ ‘I’m carrying *my* child on the back’. [My emphasis].

³Section 5 presents possible counter-examples in the data, where /hi/ could be functioning anaphorically as a pronominal.

or core semantic role in the clause)—thus, it cannot be referred to as a reflexive marker.

A simple substitution test using a verb such as /tə/ ‘to see’ (avoiding inherently reflexive verbs such as grooming verbs ‘shave’, ‘bathe’, etc.) shows that to index co-referentiality of the subject/agent and the direct object/patient in Nyaheun, one must use the construction /cǎk hi/ (Lit. ‘body self’), as in (2) and (5) below:

- (2) /ʔa tə cǎk hi/ (3) */ʔa tə ʔa/ (4) *⁴/ʔa tə cǎk/
 1sg see body SELF 1sg see 1sg 1sg see body
 ‘I see/saw myself’.

- (5) /tǎm ʔε, mε hʌŋ cɔh cǎk hi,
 from there person.CL Nyaheun pierce body SELF
 ʔʌn naʔ mʌt bʌm ʔwian bʌm, ʔnǎn miən/
 NEG yet like make rice.paddy make only swidden
 ‘Since the time the Nyaheun person ‘pierced’ himself (with iron dibble stick), they (the Nyaheun as a whole) have no longer wished to do wet-rice cultivation, only dry rice’. (Jacq, 18/9/2002)

- (6) /bǐt kluat cǎk hi/
 twist (joints?) body SELF
 ‘Stretch one’s body’. (បំពង់បំពង់) (Jacq, 23/9/2002)

Note that reflexivity can be conveyed by overtly expressing the co-referential noun phrases, e.g. /cǎk ʔa/, e.g.

- (7) /giat cǎk ʔa/
 scratch body SELF
 ‘Je me gratte’. (Ferlus, 1999)
 Eng. translation: ‘I scratch myself’. (Jacq)

Example (7) could perhaps be translated literally as: ‘(I) scratch my body’.

Note that I first interpreted the following example (7) (recorded by Wall, 1975:208) of /hi/ as a reflexive pronoun, and thus a possible counter-argument that /hi/ is indeed a reflexive anaphor. However, I now analyse it as an adverbial intensifier (see section 3), noting Wall's original French translation ‘Je me lave’ (English translation: ‘I wash myself’) must be incorrect.

⁴Example (4) is grammatical but means ‘I saw the body’ (i.e. the Direct Object is not co-referential with the Subject).

- (8) /ʔa roh hi/
 1sg launder SELF
 ‘I wash(ed) it myself’. (Jacq) (not: ‘Je me lave’. Wall, 1975:208)

Example (8) should instead be correctly translated as ‘I washed (it) myself’, as /roh/ means ‘to launder (clothes)’. /ʔa hom dak/ ‘I bathe’ is the only way to say ‘I wash myself’ in Nyaheun, and /hom dak/ (literally: ‘bathe water’) is an inherently reflexive (or perhaps strictly intransitive?) compound verb, and thus cannot take the reflexive pronoun /cǎk hi/).

So the question which followed on from this was WHAT is the function of /hi/ when it occurs without /cǎk/ ‘body’? An examination of the data reveals that there are 4 other types of constructions where /hi/ typically occurs in Nyaheun. These can be categorised into two general syntactic positions (adnominal, adverbial) which each correspond with two semantic functions:

I. Nominal Adjunct (Who): Identifying a noun as co-referential with the subject of that clause

- a) a co-referential ‘possessor’ (substituting an attributive pronoun or noun phrase in a ‘possessive’ noun phrase construction)
- b) immediately after /bʌn/ ‘other(s)’ the compound construction /bʌn hi/ functions as a marker of reciprocity

II. Verbal Adjunct (How): Giving intensifying information about the predicate

- a) an intensifier indicating exclusive reference of the action to the subject of the clause (e.g. English ‘I did it myself’.)
- b) immediately after a set of verbs (typically complement-taking) which refer to emotions, thoughts, reported speech and feelings (of uncertain function/meaning)

It is not very surprising to find a variety of functions of /hi/, as reflexive markers cross-linguistically are often associated with valence reduction or increase, middle or passive voice, reciprocity, etc.

“The importance of reflexive markers in the study of language structure cannot be underestimated. They participate in the coding of the argument structure of a clause; in the coding of semantic relations between arguments and verbs; in the coding of the relationship between arguments (reciprocal function), in the coding of aspect; in the coding of the point of view, and in the coding of the information structure of a clause”. (Frajzyngier 1999:vii)

Each of these 4 construction-types for /hi/ will be explored in more detail with examples in the first part of this paper below. A following second section explores /hi/ as a possible reference-tracking device, with examples from the Nyaheun origin myth (recorded from Done in 1999 by Paul Sidwell and myself), and also some shorter process-type texts about traditional wedding, initiation and funeral rites (all texts by my main informant, Dot, are spontaneous uninterrupted narratives). Finally, I make some conclusions about the single common attribute which /hi/ seems to share across all the constructions in which it occurs, that is, *subject-orientation* and not *reflexivity*.

2. Adnominal position

2.1 ‘Possession’ and ‘Relation’

When /hi/ fills what would normally be a possessive or otherwise attributive noun/pronoun position (after the head noun phrase)⁵, it may follow different classes of nouns:

- concrete alienable nouns (e.g. dog, canoe, house, etc.) marking ‘ownership’, e.g.

- (9) /mε tāk ppuon hi da? bε/
 3p. discard canoe SELF at/on there
 ‘They (the family) abandoned their canoe there’. (Jacq, 18/9/2002)

- inalienable nouns (e.g. body parts, partitive nouns), e.g.

- (10) /mε bΛm tɔŋ hmɔ druop tɔŋ hmɔ di
 3p. make tool dibble.stick jab tool dibble.stick INSTR
 mam hmɔ ban ti drāk ti păt.
 iron similar two hand walk hand backward
 nnuih muj ra trɔ cět ǰǰ hi di tɔŋ
 person one person.CL hit stab foot SELF INSTR tool
 hmɔ mam hjāk hloh kuo ǰǰ/
 dibble.stick iron still/yet pierce sit foot
 ‘The people planted (wet rice) (with) dibble sticks the kind made of iron, with two hands and walking them backwards (method involved). One person stabbed his foot with the dibble stick so that a hole pierced his foot’.

⁵23 examples in my data reveal /hi/ in this adnominal ‘possessive/attributive’ role referencing a Subject in the same utterance/clause. Two additional examples of /hi/ in this adnominal position refer to a subject (which, incidentally, must always be the main Topic of the text) in the *preceding* utterance (see section 6 for discussion of /hi/ as a discourse reference-tracking device).

- kin terms and complex attributive noun phrases explaining kinship (marking kin relation of the protagonist to the subject whether through blood, marriage or friendship or other relationship), e.g.

(11) /nwe muj naʔ nɔn nʌ meʔ bʌp pāk trie pāk klo
 day one yet begin mother father side woman side man
 bʌm cāk ɲɲieh kwǎn hi di dwǎj ʔian/
 make body remove child SELF INSTR sacrifice chicken
 ‘On the first day, to begin with, the parents of the bride and of the groom ‘give away’ their (respective) children, with (i.e. through the performance of) a chicken sacrifice’. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

Note the construction can also appear within a complex relative clause, as the following example illustrates:

(12) /ʔɛ nwe ʔɛ caw ʔanuʔ klo k^hu ba ʔacan
 and day that king[L.] Anu[L.] call.for monk[L.] teacher[L.]
 tihtih ʔi ʔɛ mi mɛ p^hiʔ ppa ca kwǎn
 big(redup.) 3p(FOC) CAUS 3p. lure crocodile eat child
 hi, p^hiʔ ʔʌn bǐc/
 SELF lure NEG able
 ‘And that day, King Anu asked for the highest monk. He made him lure the crocodile (that) ate his child, but lure he couldn’t’. (Jacq, 18/9/2002)
 (It is not ‘lure the crocodile to eat his child’ because it had already happened in the story and would be undesirable)

This attributive kinship function of /hi/ cross-referencing the subject may also occur within the same conjoined noun phrase (i.e. the complex noun phrase which fills Subject slot), not only between different arguments within the same clause:

(13) /nwe t^ham wa trie klo hi loh reʔ hoʔ
 day eight also woman man SELF able go into
 miən cɛh/
 swidden rice
 ‘On the eighth day (of the wedding rite), the bride and her groom can enter the dry rice field’. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

(14) /nwe ban wa trie klo ʔnʌw hi ciʔ kuo
 day two also woman man new SELF return sit
 ɲram ʔnʌw/
 house new
 ‘On the second day, the bride and her new husband go and live in their new house’. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

- abstract noun phrases. These are symbolically referred to as ‘owned’ but are really just linking (political) association as these abstract entities are beyond the power of possession of a single person and are more an association with a person’s identity (concept of ‘self’, ethnicity and belonging) (e.g. realm, province, village, name, language), e.g.

(15) /dah ʔa ciʔ hoʔ srŭk hi ʔa wɔj mɛ
if/when 1sg return to village SELF 1sg miss person.CL

hɔp/

Nyaheun

‘When I go back to my village, I’ll miss the Nyaheun people’.
(Jacq, 19/9/2002)

(16) /ʔindiaŋ dɛŋ ceh bɔm wiak daʔ bɛ mɛn
indian[L.] red[L.] finish make work[L.] at there exist[L.]

ŋaj ciʔ wŋ hoʔ miəŋ hi/
1pl.ex return back to district SELF

‘(When) the Native Americans finished work there, we went back to (their /*our) district’. (Jacq, 23/9/2002)

(17) /juo ʔɛ wŋn bo cin pʰəj pʰɛ satsana lɛʔ ŋoŋ
time that exist war Chinese conquer[L.] and[L.] want

nat cɔk ŋaj hɔp wŋn bre

? take 1pl.ex Nyaheun exist realm/kingdom/subjects, etc.

hi/

SELF

‘At that time there was the war with Chinese empire and (they) wanted to take us Nyaheun as their vassals (i.e. slaves or subjects under their rule)’. (Jacq, 13/9/2002)

Note in examples (16) and (17) long-distance tracking of /hi/ to the subject in the main (first) clause, rather than the subject of the immediate clause in which it occurs. Both examples are single utterances according to the intonation contour, so the range of /hi/ is utterance-, and not clause-, bound.

(18) /mɛ hɔp nnuih ban mmɔ hmah cɔk măt
person.CL Nyaheun person two answer name body face

hi ca luon/

SELF Ca Luong

‘The second Nyaheun person answered his name was Ca Luong’. (Jacq, 13/9/2002)

In example (19), note how the easily inferable Subject (addressee) is ellipsed from the first clause, yet /hi/ still cross-references it in the second clause:

- (19) /wΛj srŭk, ɲon ci? ho? srŭk hi/
 miss village want return to village SELF
 ‘(You) miss (your) village, and want to return to your own village’.

Sometimes these ‘possessive/attributive’ relationships can be expressed using pronouns (indexing person/number), a noun or even a full noun phrase, regardless of whether it repeats the same subject pronoun, e.g.

- (20) /ʔa wwiəɲ hup ʔa ho? pram/
 1sg forget picture 1sg at house
 ‘I forgot (left behind) my photos at home’.
- (21) /ʔi? klak ʔa mən tah ʔa ca hăm/
 sore stomach 1sg because 1sg eat spicy
 ‘(My) stomach hurts because I ate spicy (food)’.
- (22) /ʔa tə sa muj hnie bΛp sa/
 1sg see 2sg one kind father 2sg
 ‘I think you look like your father’. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

My conclusion from this additional counter-evidence is that /hi/ is optional as an adnominal ‘possessive’ attribute. Its presence in this construction type could possibly be an intensifying one (excluding other possible implied ‘possessors’) but mostly it serves a discourse function of tracking the main protagonist through the conversation/text (see section 6).

2.2 Reciprocal /bΛn hi/ ‘each other’

Only 9 examples were found of /bΛn hi/ in the data, including:

- (23) /trɔ cět bΛn hi/
 buffalo stab other SELF
 ‘Buffalos are stabbing (i.e. goring) *each other*’. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)
 (Context = 2 buffalos goring one another, thus this is an example of a true reciprocal)
- (24) /(mɛ) mmăn bΛn hi/
 (3p) quarrel other SELF
 ‘(They) quarrel with *each other*’. (Jacq 29/9/2002)
 ‘Se disputer ensemble’. (Ferlus 1999)

The addition of /bΛn hi/ to some verbs, such as /mmăn/ means ‘dispute, argue’, /tăk/ ‘discard, throw away’, /cre/ ‘say’ (see example (43))

changes the semantics of the verb. For example, /tăk bΛn hi/ is an idiomatic expression meaning ‘to divorce’, not literally ‘throw each other away’:

- (25) /bΛc cǎk klo, tăk bΛn hi/
 already take man discard other SELF
 ‘(I’ve) already married (“taken a husband”) and (we’ve) divorced (each other)’. (Jacq, 14/9/2002)

Example (25) is one instance where the subject of the main clause (ellipsed ‘I’) and the subject of the conjoined clause (implied ‘we’, the addition of Subject/Object in the preceding clause) changes, yet /hi/ is retained and co-indexes both referents.

Often /bΛn/ occurs without /hi/ yet it still suggests reciprocity, e.g.

- (26) /ʔian pruoh bΛn/
 chicken peck other
 a. ‘The hens are pecking each other’.
 b. ‘The hen is pecking the other’. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

Example (26) above can also mean ‘the hen is pecking the other (hen)’, so it is not truly reciprocal. one could argue that true reciprocity⁶ is being focussed upon or emphasised only when /bΛn hi/ is used rather than simply /bΛn/ ‘other’ (paralleling the marking of true reflexivity with the compound /cǎk hi/). However, note that /bΛn hi/ does not always imply true reciprocity, as examples (27, 28) illustrate below. Should /bΛn/ have appeared in place of /bΛn hi/, it would imply ‘they accompanied/helped other people/friends’, as /bΛn/ is an independent noun meaning ‘friend’.

- (27) /ceʔ ʔε mε ppren bΛn hi drǎk toc
 after that 3p. accompany/guide other SELF walk all
 ra toc cǎk krien kraʔ rit k^hon
 person.CL all body wiseman old ritual tradition
 drǎk broc/
 walk together
 ‘After that, they accompanied each other, everybody with the elders and wisemen (who know the customs) (all) walked together’. (Jacq, 13/9/2002)

⁶I.e. where all NP referents implied by the subject are indeed acting on every referent, e.g. ‘They (2 people) fought each other’ versus emphatic reciprocity where most or all of the referents are acting on at least one of the other referents, but probably not *each* and *every* one. For example, ‘the plates were stacked on top of each other’ cannot mean every individual plate is on top of each of the others, and ‘They (hundreds of people) fought each other’ is ambiguous.

- (28) /nwe ʔε ʔu ra p^hom bΛn hi k^hjɔp ssɔm/
 day that many person.CL help other SELF wrap “ssom”
‘On that day, many people help each other to wrap “ssom”
(i.e. rice boiled in the leaves of “hlaa rong” plant)’. (Jacq, 19/9/02)

3. Verbal adjunct implying ‘exclusive subject’

/hi/ also occurs (only 2 examples found in free discourse, 1 in the texts, and 2 elicited by questionnaire) immediately after a verb phrase (with intransitive, transitive or ditransitive predicates). In this syntactic position always refers to the subject of the clause or main clause (i.e. the subject in the same utterance), and even when the subject is inanimate as in (29). This is the case, even when the core arguments (including the subject of the clause) are ellipsed if they are readily retrievable from context or previous discourse.

- (29) /hăp ʔa sak hi/
 shirt 1sg tear SELF
‘My shirt tore of itself’. (Jacq and Awerck, 28/6/2005)
- (30) /ʔa sak hăp hi/
 1sg tear shirt SELF
‘I tore the shirt myself’. (Jacq and Awerck, 28/6/2005)
- (31) /sa bΛm hi di kɿn/
 2sg. make SELF PTCL Q.
‘Did you make (it) yourself?’ (Jacq, 19/9/2002)
- (32) /ʔa cɔk hi di/
 1sg take SELF PTCL
‘I’ll get (it) myself!’ (ຂ້ອຍເອົາເອງກໍໄດ້) (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

Often the Direct Object is ellipsed, but not always, as /dwe/ in (31) below:

- (33) /braŋ ʔε kɿŋ dwe nna klΛm cŭn,
 soon.after that “kling” alcohol food(?) liver pig
 pla dwe hi trəm cāk trəm ra/
 blade(?) alcohol SELF each body each person.CL
‘And then (they) “kling” alcohol (i.e. fill jar of fermented rice husks with water through a buffalo horn), (feast on?) the pig liver, and (divide?) the alcohol themselves, each and every person’. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

/hi/ is not obligatory in this pragmatic function of emphasising doing something on one’s own, if it is clear from context, e.g.

- (34) /sa do ʔŋkǎn ləh ʔʌn/
 2sg manage.physically hold.in.hand know NEG
 ‘Are you able to carry it (i.e. without help)?’ (Jacq, 26/9/2002)

And the quantifier phrase /muj ra/ ‘one person (classifier)’, and/or the adjective /pəhə/ ‘alone, lonely’ seem to be able to fill this function as well, e.g.

- (35) /ʔa kuo muj ra pəhə/
 1sg sit one person.CL alone
 ‘I stay by myself’. (ខ្ញុំស្ងៀម)(Jacq, 4/10/2002)

4. Emotion/speech verb adjunct

There are many verbs of speech, reported speech, thought, and emotions which tend to take /hi/ as an immediate adjunct, preceding the clause or phrase which describes the reason/effect/result.

- a) /ten/ ‘scold, criticise, reprimand’ (with /hi/ seems to mean ‘debate, discuss seriously, decide amongst each other’. Three examples found in the texts, none in spontaneous speech)

- (36) /mɛ brūk dəʔ ppuon, plɛw bwaj jroh dak
 3p. carry put canoe row float.downstream creek water
 nǎm kʰəŋ bih brɛh kʰmɛn. mɛ ten hi
 Mekhong[L.] come land Khmer[L.] 3p. criticise SELF
 dǎŋ srūk miəŋ daʔ bɛ/
 hunt village district[L.] at there
 ‘They (i.e. main topic/characters in the text: the two Nhaheun infidels) carried (the idol) to the canoe. They rowed down the Mekhong River reaching the Khmer lands. They debated whether to find a village/district there’. (Jacq, 18/9/2002)

- (37) /ceʔ ʔɛ mɛ hʌŋ ʔŋkǎn ʃəmŋaj,
 after that person.CL Nyaheun carry.in.hand chilli
 ʔŋkǎn ɲiə, ple trǎp, ten hi
 carry.in.hand ginger fruit.CL eggplant criticise SELF
 tieh ppə pa dɛk riaw tiəʔ
 descend exchange pickled.fish[L.] pickle down.at
 kʰɛt ʔatapi/
 province Attapeu[L.]
 ‘Then the Nyaheun people carried chilli, ginger and eggplants deciding to go down to exchange them for “pa dek” (pickled raw fish) down in Attapeu province’. (Jacq, 18/9/2002)

b) /hʔʌm/ ‘hate, contempt, feel contempt for/by’⁷

- (38) /ʔa hmoʔ sa hʔʌm hi/
 1sg fear 2sg disgust(ed) SELF
‘Je crains que tu me détestes’. (Ferlus, 1999)
 Eng. translation: *‘I fear that you are disgusted by me’*. (Jacq)
‘J’ai peur que tu ne nous méprise’. (Wall, 1975:207)
 Eng. translation: *‘I’m afraid, that you will(not?) despise us’*. (Jacq)

In example (38) above, /hi/ can be replaced by /ʔa/ without changing the meaning, e.g.

- (39) /ʔa hmoʔ sa hʔʌm ʔa/
 1sg fear 2sg disgust(ed) 1sg
‘I’m afraid you’re repulsed by me’. (Jacq, 29/9/2002)

c) /lɿŋ/ ‘think (that...)’

- (40) /ʔa lɿŋ hi rɛʔ hnoh kɔŋ/
 1sg thing SELF go creek[J.] Kong[J.]
‘I think I’ll go to Houei Kong.’ (Jacq, 4/10/2002)

Note: the use of /hi/ with these complement-taking thought/speech verbs, is not obligatory:

- (41) /mɛ kla mriə tə ʔa sɔn sa, mɛ lɿŋ trie ʔa/
 3p who? some see 1sg give.lift 2sg 3p think wife 1sg
‘Some people who saw me give you a (motorbike) ride, thought (you’re) my wife’. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

d) /dũk/ ‘know (that...)’

- (42) /ʔʌn ʔa dũk hi mi mɛ mʌt/
 NEG 1sg know SELF give 3p. like
‘I don’t know (to whom) to give it, who’d appreciate (it)’.
 (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

e) /mʌt/ ‘like...’

Note example (42) is the “old way” of expression (q.v.). My informant states that the current way of saying the same thing is by using Lao ຜູ້ໃຈ /p^hu dǎj/ ‘who(ever)’ as in (43). This example illustrates the use of /hi/ with the emotion verb /mʌt/ ‘like’:

⁷/hʔʌm/ is a multi-valent verb, e.g. /ʔa hʔʌm sa/ ‘I hate you’, /ʔa hʔʌm ca/ ‘I hate/feel repulsed eating (it)’.

- (43) /ʔʌn ʔa dŭk mi p^hu dǎj mʌt hɨ/
 NEG 1sg know give who[L.] like SELF
'I don't know (to whom) to give (it), who'd appreciate it'.
 (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

f) /lɔh/ 'know, understand (that...)'

- (44) /(mɛ) mmaw hmoʔ bʌn lɔh hɨ, wŭn mɛ
 3p shy fear other know SELF exist person.CL
 hʌp/
 Nyaheun
'(They) are embarrassed others will know, that they are Nyaheun (ethnics)'. (Jacq, 4/10/2002)

One verb of speech /cre/ 'say' never appears with /hɨ/ in the data, but often occurs with the reciprocal pronoun /bʌn hɨ/ where it's meaning becomes 'consult, seek counsel, confer', e.g.

- (45) /mɛ cre bʌn hɨ rɛʔ la loŋ rit k^hɔŋ
 3p. say other SELF go ask (respect.term) ritual custom
 ʃɔʔ pprǎŋ nŋŋ caw ʔanu wienɕǎn/
 taboo ? up.at king[L.] Anu[L.] Vientiane[L.]
'They decided to go and seek counsel with the "knowers/keepers of custom" with King Anu in Vientiane'.
 (Jacq, 4/10/2002)

It is unclear what added meaning the presence of /hɨ/ gives with these verbs of reported speech/thought/feeling. /hɨ/ is just as often found absent after these same verbs. I hesitate to classify it as a relative pronoun or complementiser, or suggest that conveys any reflexive meaning here. In no cases in these examples, does it seem to indicate a switch referent or voice change.

5. Possible reflexive pronoun use?

Example (46) in my data, reveals what looks to be a true reflexive pronominal use of /hɨ/ (i.e. instead of the expected reflexive pronoun /cǎk hɨ/) for an Indirect Object argument (in a preposition phrase):

- (46) /caw ʔanuʔ cǎk ʔloŋ liŋ t^ham ppriak
 king[L.] Anu[L.] take wood heartwood eight[L.] sides.CL
 bŭc tǎm klʌm ppa dɔʔ daʔ hɨ/
 get from liver crocodile put at SELF
'King Anu took the octagonal-shaped heartwood which (they) got from the crocodile's stomach, and kept it for himself'.
 (Jacq 18/9/2002)

I do not know whether this is a mistake (where /daʔ cǎk hi/ would be grammatical), and did not have the opportunity to check this particular data in person. However, with the help of a Jru' speaker (Awerck), I received my Nyaheun teacher's feedback on similar (but simpler) sentences which I constructed myself. The feedback was that /daʔ cǎk hi/ (47b) is 'common' (grammatical or common?) and /daʔ hi/ is not 'not common' (ungrammatical or rare?)⁸:

- (47) a. */bi ʔa cǎk prǎk dɔʔ daʔ hi/
 daddy 1sg take money put at SELF
- b. /bi ʔa cǎk prǎk dɔʔ daʔ cǎk hi/
 daddy 1sg take money put at body SELF
 '*My daddy kept the money for himself*'. (Jacq and Awerck, 28/6/2005)

For now, I treat this data as inconclusive as to whether /hi/ can function pronominally, though the feedback suggests example (46) (where it does fill a pronominal position) is probably incorrect.

I also recorded a few cases where /hi/ seems to be used pronominally as a Subject NP referring to a plant/animal (i.e. lower-order animates)⁹. In these examples, /hi/ is not co-referential with any other NP in the immediate clause, only the Direct Object of the preceding clause. Note in these cases, it is consistently translated as ມັນ (impersonal pronoun) in Lao¹⁰.

- (48) /hla piən ʔlɔŋ nɛ ɲaj lɔh ca, hi hǎr/
 leaf flower wood this 1pl.incl know eat SELF spicy[J.]
 '*We can eat the leaves of this flower, they're spicy*'. (Jacq, 23/9/2002)
- (49) /ʔa cɛh ʔǎmɲaj, mi hi hǎm/
 1sg insert chilli CAUS SELF spicy
 '*I add chilli, to make it spicy*'. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)
- (50) a. /nwe se ʔa ciam piən ʔlɔŋ daʔ suan/
 day previous 1sg feed flower wood at garden[L.]
 '*Yesterday I planted flowers in the garden*'.

⁸This questionnaire was checked in my absence by my classificatory brother, Awerck (a Jru' speaker learning Nyaheun and Brao as second languages). The questionnaire consisted of 30 sample Nyaheun sentences (with English translations) which I made up purposely to test the syntactic position of /hi/ and optionality of the preceding element /cǎk/ and substitutability of /hi/ with other words such as pronouns. I asked Awerck to collect Done's attitude of acceptability and usage of these sentences. If they were found to be unacceptable, why, and what form would be acceptable? Most of the feedback is unclear as 'common' versus 'uncommon' and 'correct' versus 'incorrect' (sic) were Awerck's main comments, and I'm not sure which of these actually mean common/rare usage or grammatical/ungrammatical or something else.

⁹Note that all examples of /hi/ other than these in section 5, always refer to human subjects/topics.

¹⁰The use of 'reflexives' for impersonal pronouns and middle voice, is reported for other languages in the world (see König & Siemund (1999), Frajzygner (1999)).

- (50) b. /ʔa hmoʔ hɨ ket tro lot brūk p^hac hliat/
 1sg fear SELF die hit car[L.] transport sand pour.over
 ‘(But) I’m afraid they’ll die because the tip truck covered
 them (with) sand’. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

- (51) /mi sa pros cem, doʔ hɨ pǎn/
 CAUS 2sg release bird place SELF fly
 ‘(I) got you to release the bird, (for it) to fly’. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

In the above examples, the /hɨ/ never cross-references the subject of the clause, rather another referent. Should /cǎk hɨ/ be used instead of /hɨ/ this would give a nonsensical meaning to the sentence, rendering them unacceptable both semantically and grammatically. For example, (48) would then read: *‘We can eat the leaves of this flower, (my/the flower’s) body is spicy’.; (49) would read: ?‘I add chilli to make my body spicy’.; (50b) would read: *‘I’m afraid my body will die...’; and (51): *‘(I) made you release the bird (and) put it on (your) body (to) fly’. It is possible that I misheard /hɨ/ for /ʔi/ which is a Jru’ pronoun indicating ‘3p(non-human)/3sg.(human)’ in all these examples, as the following similar example indicates:

- (52) /ʔa cǎk cem bih pros mi ʔi
 1sg take bird come release CAUSE 3p.(non-human)[J.]
 drǎk hoʔ bri/
 walk at/in forest
 ‘I’ve brought birds to set them free in the forest’. (Jacq, 24/9/2002)

6. Discourse reference-tracking function

Many examples of /hɨ/ in the Nyaheun folk history (the longest recorded text which runs for about 20 minutes) do not seem to cross-reference a subject or other argument/semantic role within the same clause or main clause. Instead, /hɨ/ appears to be used syntactically as an adnominal ‘possessive’ marker (as illustrated in 2.1 above) but also has a pragmatic function of cross-referencing a referent mentioned in the preceding utterance(s). Most examples found with a reference-tracking function referred to the subject of the immediately preceding utterance. In such positions it appears either as an Adnominal modifier (with kin terms), and also as an Adverbial intensifier (with emotion verbs):

- (53) a. /nwe ʔε caw ʔanuʔ wienɕan ʔʌn hʔʌc
 day that king[L.] Anu[L.] Vientiane[L.] NEG happy
 ŋrɨnh hʔʌc klʌm/
 brain happy liver
 ‘That day, King Anu of Vientiane was miserable (not happy)
 in his heart and soul’.

- (53) b. /ppa ca kwǎn brəh hi/
crocodile eat child girl SELF
'A crocodile had eaten his daughter'. (Jacq, 18/9/2002)
- (54) a. /ju ʔɛ p^hu wǔn caw miəŋ ʔmah
time that person[L.] EXIST king[L.] province[L.] name
dɔŋ/
Dong
'There/at that time, the person who was the village chief
was called Dong'.
- (54) b. /ʔmah mɔ co hi, jaʔ din/
name answer grandchild SELF elder Din
'The address name (given) by his grandchildren was Ya'
Din'. (Jacq, 26/9/2002)
- (55) a. /nwe ʔɛ, wa trie klɔ ʔnaw kɿŋ dwe
day that also woman man new "kling" alcohol
nnet proh pac dak dwe baʔ/
drink.alcohol "proh pac" liquid alcohol "ba"
'On that day, the newly married wife and husband "kling"
(i.e. fill the jar of fermented rice husks with water through a
buffalo horn), drink alcohol, and perform a personal
incantation (i.e. spitting a mouthful of alcohol out off the
verandah followed by an incantation to the spirits) with
"ba"(?) alcohol'.
- (55) b. /ʔɛ brǎŋ ʔɛ wa hmaw proj hi nna
and soon.after that also parent-in-law SELF food
ppiet ppiet cǔn/
section.up section.up pig
'And soon after, their parents-in-law section up (and
distribute) the pig(s)'. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

In this function, /hi/ never cross-references (as the "possessor") the subject of the clause in which it occurs (e.g. 'crocodile' in example (53), 'grandchild' in (54b), and 'parents-in-law' in (55b)), but tracks the Subject of the previous clause/sentence (which simultaneously also functions as the Topic).

Note the following example where /hi/ occurs marking attributive kin relationship, but embedded in a relative clause, tracking the Subject of the preceding utterance:

- (56) a. /nwe muj meʔ bʌp bʌm cǎk ssuok mmuan
 day one mother father make body ceremony shaman
 dwǎj ʔian/
 “dway” chicken
‘On the first day (of the ear-piercing initiation rite) the parents “dway” (sacrifice and read the intestines of) a chicken with the shaman’.
- (56) b. /nwe ʔε kľŋ dwe gjět ʔian proh pac mε
 day that “kling” alcohol kill chicken “proh pac” 3p.
 ʔmah ssuok mmuan kuan hi/
 call ceremony shaman child SELF
‘On the same day, they pour water into the jar (to make alcohol) kill a chicken and make an incantation (spitting alcohol from mouth and blessing spirits) (to) people who called the shaman to perform the ceremony’s child’. (Jacq, 19/9/2002)

One example only in the data shows /hi/ (in 57e) tracking the main topic of the text over a longer distance than the previous utterance; in this case, the last overt mention of the main character (King Anu) being five utterances previously (57a):

- (57) a. /caw ʔanu dǎŋ bǐc mam kwǎn sǔŋ pε
 king[L.] Anu[L.] hunt get iron child fishtrap three
 sɔŋ lεʔ brăt nan lieu muj
 container.CL and[L.] strap/bridle leather[L] one
 jǎr/
 cord.CL[J.?
‘King Anu searched for three small iron traps and one leather strap’.
- (57) b. /mε hʌŋ cǎk mam kwǎn sǔŋ bʌm bǎk
 person.CL Nyaheun take iron child fishtrap make hook
 cǎk brăt nan lieu bʌm kʰjε bǎk, kwǎn cɔ muj
 take strap leather[L.] make rope hook child dog one
 ppɔm lleh prǎŋ bǎk di/
 round.CL morsel bait hook INSTR
‘The Nyaheun people took the traps and made a hook, took the leather strap and made a fishing line, (and) baited the hook with one puppy dog’.

- (57) c. /ceʔ ʔε mε hʌŋ prǎŋ bǎk klʌm tǎk
 after that person.CL Nyaheun bait hook liver discard
 tiəʔ dak, ppa ca bǎk/
 down.into water crocodile eat hook
‘After the Nyaheun baited the hook with the liver, and threw it into the water; the crocodile swallowed the hook’.
- (57) d. /ceʔ ʔε bǐc ppa kliet daʔ tʌm braw
 after that get crocodile bind/fasten at trunk coconut
 tʌm hbiw/
 trunk tamarind
‘After that (they) got the crocodile and fastened it to a coconut and tamarind tree’.
- (57) e. /brǎŋ ʔε klo bre hi k^hu ba ʔacan
 after that call kingdom/subjects SELF masters[L.]
 toc trǎm miəŋ wiəŋcǎn mi mε
 all from province[L.] Vientiane[L.] CAUSE/give 3p.
 nε/
 here/this
‘After that (the King) called all his high officials/monks from Vientiane province to be there’.

Should we analyse /hi/ as cross-referencing the Subject/Topic of the immediate clause, in this case /bre/ in (57e), it would be only as an adverbial intensifier creating a sense ‘the kingdom/subjects themselves called the high officials’ (which is probably grammatically and semantically correct, but in the context of the story, not likely, as only the King/local ruler had the authority to call officials to duty). We cannot analyse /hi/ as a ‘possessive/attributive’ to /bre/ either, as there is no other nominal acting as ‘possessor’ and Subject in the immediate clause, to which we can say /bre/ belongs or is associated with (e.g. ‘whose kingdom/subjects). The only analysis possible is a reference tracking function cross referencing the Topic of the entire immediate prose (i.e. King Anu).

7. Generalisations and conclusions

The single common feature of /hi/ in all its syntactic positions is that it always indexes a co-referent (or partly co-referent) Subject antecedent in the same or preceding utterance, unless the referent is the Topic of the narrative (main character) in which case it may be involved in long-distance discourse tracking. Its use as an anaphor (the few examples in section 5) is quite shaky, and I'm not certain of whether these examples are grammatical. In any case, most examples of /hi/ show it functioning as an adjunct to either a noun or verb, rather than filling a pronominal role. Thus, although the semantic/pragmatic function of /hi/ is to cross-reference the subject in some way, it is not (by itself) a reflexive anaphor.

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