Lawa Pronouns

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The term “Lawa” refers here to the language spoken by the Lawa people in Mae Hong Son province. Nowadays the Lawa live in Chiangmai and Mae Hong Son Provinces of Thailand. Their language belongs to the Palaungic branch of Mon–Khmer.

In this paper, I would like to outline the characteristics of Lawa personal pronouns, based on the La–up dialect of Mae Sariang district, Mae Hong Son province.

Lawa pronouns may be divided into two major groups: personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns. But in this paper I will limit myself to personal pronouns only.

a) First person pronouns

?ai? is used as singular first person pronoun ‘I’ and normally occurs in the subject and object positions, but sometimes in the possessor position.

   I see Mi
   ‘I see Mi.’

   Mi lazy see I
   ‘Mi hates me.’

   house I located here
   ‘My house is here.’

ko? ‘my’ occurs only as the possessor. It is used with almost all kinship terms, except pu? ‘younger sibling’, to show love or appreciation of the speaker to his family, cousins or relatives.

4. ma? ko? – ‘my mother’
   mother my
5. **yiə?**  **koʔ?**  
grandmother  my  

‘my grandmother’

6. **piə?**  **koʔ?**  
father  my  

‘my father’

Sometimes **koʔ?** co-occurs with **neʔ?** ‘ours’, but still preserves its original meaning. For example,

7. **piə**  **koʔ?**  **neʔ?**  
father  my  our  

‘my father’

This is a set of allomorphs with the general form **C₁V₁ʔ?** also meaning ‘my’. The **C₁** duplicates the **C_f** (final consonant) of the preceding word and the **V₁** duplicates the **V** of the preceding word. The preceding noun may be either a noun or **yuh** ‘of’.

8. **kuən**  **soʔ?**  **ʔoʔ?**  
grandchild  my  

‘my grandchild’

9. **puʔ?**  **ʔuʔ?**  
younger sibling  my  

‘my younger sibling’

10. **kuən**  **noʔ?**  
child  my  

‘my child’

11. **nagsi**  **yuh**  **huʔ?**  
book  of  my  

‘my book’

12. **mai**  **yuh**  **huʔ?**  
money  of  my  

‘my money’

When the preceding word is an open syllable the **C₁V₁** become **yə.**

13. **hməo**  **yəʔ?**  
friend  my  

‘my friend’

14. **phre**  **yəʔ?**  
brother  my  

‘my brother’

This **C₁V₁ʔ?** form for ‘my’ is often used in the answer to a question.

15. A:  **maʔ ʔaot  toʔ  thoŋ  poʔ?  se**  
what  located  in  bag  you  that  

‘What is in your bag?’

B:  **nagsi**  **yuh**  **huʔ?**  
book  of  my  

‘My book.’
16. A: hei mah pui
   this be who
   ‘Who is this?’

   B: hməo yə?
   friend my
   ‘My friend.’

   nei? is used instead of ?ai? ‘I’ when the speaker wishes the hearer to do something for him. It probably means ‘to me’ and often occurs in the imperative clause.

17. hoic nei?
    come
    ‘Come to me.’

18. kioh nei?
    give
    ‘Give to me.’

19. tui sut nei?
    bring mosquito net
    ‘Bring the mosquito net to me.’

   mo ?e? is used as a plural first person pronoun ‘we’. Sometimes mo ‘group’ is dropped and ?e? remains alone. Normally, it occurs in the subject or object positions but not in the possessor position.

20. mo ?e? rəot təo ləpun
    we dare not speak
    ‘We dare not speak.’

21. ma? kə? puh mo ?e?
    mother my hit we
    ‘My mother hit us.’

   pe? ‘our’ occurs only as the possessor. It is used when the speaker refers to himself and his family.

22. khrak pe?
    buffalo our
    ‘our buffalo’

23. kən so? pe?
    grandchild our
    ‘our grandchild’

   te? is used as either first or third person pronoun. It refers back to the subject of the action no matter if it is singular or plural [see sec. c)].
b) Second person pronouns

me? ‘you’ is used basically between men who are related to each other on the female side. For example, when a man speaks to his wife’s brother, he can address him as me?. In other cases, it is used between men who are not acquainted with each other to show respect. If me? occurs in the final position of a question, it usually appears as the open syllable me.

24. sa hao me? kama
   will go you where
   ‘Where will you go?’

25. ma sa yuh me
    what will do you
    ‘What will you do?’

pa? ‘you sg.’ normally occurs in the subject or object positions. When it is sometimes in the possessor position, it indicates emphasis on the possessor.

26. leic yuh pa?
    pig of you
    ‘your pig, not the pig of the other’

po? ‘you’ normally occurs as the possessor but not as the subject or object in a statement clause. But in a question, it can be the subject. It can be either singular or plural in the possessor position.

27. poana? yuh po?
    orange of your
    ‘your orange’

28. sa hao po? kama
    will go you where
    ‘Where will you go?’

po? differs from pa? (when they occur as the possessor and po? is singular) in that pa? is used when the possessor is emphasized.

29. pia? po?
    house your
    ‘your house’

30. pia? pa?
    house your
    ‘your house, not the house of another’
*mo pe? normally* means ‘you [plural]’ but it is sometimes used as a singular conversationally between two youthful speakers or between a husband and a wife. It can be the subject, the object or the possessor.

31. *?ai? hrak mo pe?* – object
    I love you(singular)
    ‘I love you.’

32. *mo pe? sə hoić niōmɔmɔ* – subject
    you will come when
    ‘When will you come?’

33. *pɔna? yuh mo pe?* – possessor
    orange of you
    ‘your orange’

Sometimes only *pe?* by itself follows *niə?* ‘house’ as *niə? pe?* ‘your house’, and *niə? pe?* is often used as attribute of the preceding noun.

34. *xe niə? pe?*
    chicken your house
    ‘chickens of your house’

35. *broic niə? pe?*
    chili your house
    ‘chillies of your house’

There is no major difference between *paʔ* ‘you (plural)’ and *mo pe?* ‘you (plural)’ when they occur in the possessor position. But it seems that *paʔ* is more general than *mo pe?*.

36. *hrak yuh paʔ / mo pe?*
    buffalo of you [plural]
    ‘your buffalo’

c) Third person pronouns

In Lawa there are no simple third person pronouns. The pronouns *teʔ* and *ʔi* may be first or third person depending on their referent.

*teʔ* refers back to the subject of the action no matter if it is singular or plural. It occurs as the possessor; it can also as the subject of the second clause of a complex sentence.

37. *?ai? sə teʔ nın niə? teʔ* – possessor
    I will return to house my
    ‘I will go to my house.’
38. *mo se hao ?mai ma? te?* – possessor group that go with mother their
'They went with their mother'

Mi drink water before eat she
'Mi drinks water before she eats rice.'

Sometimes *te? is preceded by ti? ‘one’ to mean ‘self’. It occurs only as the subject of the second clause of a complex sentence.

40. *?ai? ket tao ti? te? se hoic*
I think not myself will come

*niŋ rayum*
to Mae Sariang
'I have never thought that I would come to Mae Sariang.'

*?i* refers back to the subject of the action no matter if it is singular or plural. It occurs not only as the possessor but also as the subject in a complex sentence or a question.

41. *mi? hao hophian ma? ?i paŋma buk*
Mi go school mother her but ride

*pu? hao khian to? kat*
prog. mk. go bicycle in market
'Mi went to school but her mother is riding a bicycle to the market.'

42. *deŋ ka som ?i maic ?i pu? ra?aom*
Daeng before eat he must he drink water
'Before Daeng eats, he must drink water.'

*?i* differs from *te?* in that:

1) *?i* can be only a third person pronoun,

2) *?i* can occur after a preposition but *te?* cannot.

43. *dah deŋ cho? leic se so hloh*
if Daeng sell pig that will get

*mai niŋ ?i həon*
money from it many
'If Daeng sells that pig, he will get much money.'

3) *te?* refers back to its subject. But *te?* can be replaced by *?i* in the possessor position, if *?i* is understood to refer to another by the speaker and the hearer.
44. *mi? hrak ma? te?*
   Mi love mother her
   ‘Mi loves her mother.’

45. *mi? hrak ma? ?i*
   Mi love mother his, her, their
   ‘Mi loves the other’s mother’

4) *?i* can occur as the subject in question but *te?* cannot.

46. *mi? mə pən ?i*
   Mi what eat she
   ‘What did Mi eat rice with?’

Demonstrative phrases may also be used as pronouns, especially in the combinations *pui* ‘person’ or *mo* ‘group’ plus *hei* ‘this’, *se* ‘that (near)’, or *sət* ‘that (far)’. These phrasal pronouns may be used in subject, object, or possessor functions. *Pui se* and *mo se* are more often used than the others. But in normal speech people are usually referred to by name or by a genro rather than by a pronoun.

47. *nia? pui se ?aot kəmə*
   house person that located where
   ‘Where is his/her house?’

48. *mo se ?aot təo nĩŋ nia?*
   group that located not at house
   ‘They don’t stay at home.’