TYPES OF ELABORATION IN SOME SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAG

Karnchana Nacaskul
Chulalongkorn University

It is well known that the major languages of
Southeast Asia, whilst not necessarily genetically
related to one another, show an impressive number of
linguistic features in common. For example, honorif
titles and terms marking rank or kinship are widely
used in place of personal pronouns. Nearly all of
these languages make use of reduplication, and numer
classifiers usually constitute a grammatical categor
From one language to another, moreover, given lexica
items appear to have remarkably similar ranges of
meaning. Collectively, all such shared features not
only reflect a certain community of cultural heritag
but also suggest interchanges close enough to have
favored their transmission across linguistic
boundaries.

I propose to discuss here yet another areal
feature of Southeast Asian languages, limiting mysel
to Burmese, modern Khmer, Malay, and Thai. I tenta-
tively term this feature *elaboration*, by which I ref
to a set of specific processes of expression.

When we examine the lexicon of Southeast Asian
languages or analyze Southeast Asian literary works
we are apt to be struck by the ways in which essen-
tially simple ideas are expressed by strings of word
which, while supporting each other, convey more or
less the same notion. The effect of this style of
expression is, depending upon the requirements of th

ext, to give emphasis, to introduce a certain
lety of meaning, or to embellish. We may also
unter various florid styles making much use of
plications and compounded synonyms. In other
s, several modes of expansion are operative in
e languages by which base forms can be 'inflated'
out altering their lexical meaning. While such
orated forms are occasionally more figurative
the forms on which they are based, this modifi-
on of meaning is probably not inherent in the
ess: usually the topic or the context is felt
lemand a particular style of utterance for which
e elaborations are appropriate. The following
ples illustrate how elaboration is manifested.

er:
    /ʔɔmnɤh tɔ: tɤu so:m nɛək tɛəŋ ʔɔs pinit
iscay ʔaoy put pra:kɔt/ 'From now on, will you
ase examine it clearly?'

        /pinit/ 'to examine'
        /piniscay/ (Sanskrit *viniscaya* 'exami-
            nation'), no meaning in modern Khmer.
        /put/ 'true, clear'.
        /pra:kɔt/ 'true, clear, exact'.

    /vi:ə thvɤ: ʔaoy khmae yɤ:ŋ phey khla:c
slot ʔɤt seckdɤy khla:ha:n/ 'They frightened us
oodians'.

        /phey/ 'to fear'.
        /khla:c/ 'to fear'.
        /tɔkslot/ 'to be shocked'.
        /ʔɤt seckdɤy khla:ha:n/ 'to have no
            bravery'.

i:
    /ca tham ʔaray coŋ phinít phíca:rana: hây laʔìət

laʔɔ: thì:thûən kɔ̀:n/ 'Before doing anything, you should examine it thoroughly'.

/phiní̇t/ 'to examine'.
/phíca:rana:/ 'to examine, consider'.
/laʔì̇ət/ 'fine, thorough, all through'.
/laʔɔ:/ 'fine, beautiful'.
/thì:thûən/ 'thoroughly, fine'.

Malay:

kita mesti hapuskan seteru madu yang maseh merbak di segenap hutan rimba 'We should wipe out ou enemies who are spreading in the jungle'.

seteru 'enemy'.
madu 'bee'.
hutan 'jungle'.
rimba 'jungle'.

To non-native speakers of these languages the use of successive words of the same or similar meaning in the same grammatical position may seem no only redundant but also excessive. One naturally wonders why native speakers use two or more words when one would do, and one is surprised to learn that the 'superfluous' words add little or nothing either to the sense or to the understanding of what is to be expressed.

To native speakers of these languages, on the contrary, such elaborations introduce a definite polish and fluidity. This is a simple esthetic or stylistic datum, which it behooves us to analyze and understand but which does not have to be justified. The skillful combination of words with similar meaning and the use of reduplications give color and force to what is said and respond to an interest in overtones above and beyond lexical meaning in the

ct sense.

Elaborations, then, are associated with style
tterance. An essential ingredient of literary
mentation, they are by no means confined to
rature or even to the self-conscious embellishment
peech. They are an indispensable feature of
ial discourse. Even on the most ordinary levels
ommunication one finds elaborations without
iculty. It is not too much to say in fact that
ial speech purged of elaborations, though unambig-
s and grammatically correct, sounds unpleasantly
sh and alien to native speakers. In some cases
porations have an intensive effect in the sense
t they elicit more than ordinary attention from
hearer or reader. In other cases they offer
hing but expansion for reasons of stylistic
ference alone. In all situations they are much
reciated by speakers and writers in most Southeast
an languages.

le Elaboration

Elaborations consist essentially of a base word
an accompanying elaborator either preceding it or
lowing it. In some cases it is not possible to
which term of the combination is the base word
which is the elaborator; in these cases both
ns may be regarded as collateral elaborators. The
borator may show various values in relation to the
e word: it may have precisely the same lexical
ning or it may have a meaning which is less close,
elated, or even in opposition to that of the base.
tever meaning the elaborator may have, its force
usually diminished in the process of elaboration.

Four types of elaboration are in common use in
theast Asian languages. These are identified

here, according to the semantic relationship between
their components, as *iteratives*, *polymers*, *redupli-
catives*, and *antonymies*.

Iteratives

Iteratives are combinations of two words of
the same or similar meaning. The two components of
iteratives, namely the base word and its iterative
elaborator, confirm or emphasize each other's meaning.
Though extra meaning is gained by iteration, words
and sometimes constructions are lengthened, and in
the case of words having more than one meaning the
process of iteration may help to clarify, intensify
and/or specify the meaning selected. It should be
noted that I use the word "meaning" in a very broad
sense. By "words of the same or similar meaning" I
refer to the lexical meaning of words that a user of
the language readily thinks of. It is generally held
that there are no such things as true synonyms.
Therefore, in my investigation, the components of
iteratives are either words which yield approximately
the same translation or words which fall within a
common field of association. Iteratives can be easily
found in Modern Khmer, Malay, Burmese and Thai.

Khmer:

/vuəŋ trəku:l/	(family + family)	'family'
/mho:p cəmnɤy/	(food + food)	'food'
/piphup lo:k/	(world + world)	'world, earth'
/niyi:əy sdɤy/	(say + say)	'say'
/sɔp krup/	(all + all)	'all'
/cas cɛəri:ə/	(old + old)	'old'
/ʔəthiba:y puənyuəl/	(explain + explain)	'explain'

ay:[1]

hutan rimba	(jungle + jungle)	'jungle'
sawah ladang	(farm + farm)	'farm'
chepat ligat	(quick + quick)	'quick'
tempik surak	(shout + shout)	'shout'
tari menari	(dance + dancing)	'dance'

mese:[2]

/pyò hsou/	(speak + speak)	'speak'
/kauñ muñ/	(good + good)	'be good'
/cí hyú/	(look + look)	'look'
/ăhceiñ ăhka/	(time + time)	'time'
/αyu wadǎ/	(belief + belief)	'belief'
/badha sakà/	(language + lan-guage)	'language'

ai:

/sáp sŏmbàt/	(treasure + trea-sure)	'treasure'
/pà: doŋ/	(jungle + jungle)	'jungle'
/fă: phanăŋ/	(wall + wall)	'wall'
/bè:p yà:ŋ/	(kind, sort + kind, sort)	'kind, sort'
/hɔ̂:m lɔ́:m/	(surround + sur-round)	'surround'
/khîən ti:/	(beat + beat)	'to beat'

Polymers

Polymers are one step removed from iteratives.
e meanings of the components of a polymer are
lated in the speaker's thought; they are put
gether because one of them makes him think of the
er. A polymer reflects the speaker's efforts as
searches his lexicon and brings to the surface
rds that immediately strike his mind. The structure
a polymer may coincide with that of a kind of
ditive compound. Any decision on where to put the

dividing line between polymers and additive compounds
rests with individual speakers. If one of the com-
ponents is reduced to being an incidental elaborator,
i.e., if its lexical meaning is almost ignored, the
combination may then be considered a polymer and henc
an elaboration. Additive compounds, on the semantic
level, must be derived from adding something to some-
thing, not from adding something to almost nothing.

Khmer:

/cɤt thlaəm/	(heart + liver)	'heart'
/muk moət/	(face + mouth)	'face'
/thlok komphlaeŋ/	(clown + funny)	'clown'
/phlec trəciək/	(forget + ear)	'to forget
/khlaŋ khla:/	(strong + brave)	'strong'
/chluəh prəkaek/	(quarrel + quarrel)	'to quarrel

Malay:

seteru madu	(enemy + bee)	'enemy'
kurus kering	(be thin + be dry)	'to be thin
cherah chuacha	(clear + temper-ature)	'clear'
budi bahasa	(merit + language)	'merit'
reuh rendah	(be busy + be lower)	'to be busy
punah jehanam	(be spoiled + hell)	'to be spoiled

Burmese:

/hceʔ pyou/	(cook + boil)	'to cook'
/yei thà/	(write + inscribe)	'to write'
/yaʔ sè/	(stop + slacken off)	'to stop'
/kiñ hyiñ/	(be free from + be clear)	'to be free from'
/yá hyí/	(get, obtain + have)	'to get, obtain'

| /kùthàñ yaùñwe/ | (travel + trade) | 'to trade' |
| /úpãma pouñ/ | (example + picture) | 'example' |

.i:

/cay khɔ:/	(heart + neck)	'heart'
/rwə phɛ:/	(boat + raft)	'boat'
/bâ:n chɔ̂ŋ/	(house + hole)	'house'
/cèp khây/	(be ill + fever)	'to be ill'
/phɔ̌:m hɛ̂:ŋ/	(be thin + be dry)	'to be thin'
/rî:p rɔ́:n/	(hurry + hot)	'to hurry'

In modern Khmer, Burmese and Thai there are
:tain idiomatic expressions which can be classed as
lymers. Most of these consist of four main sylla-
:s or four words. The components of these expres-
ɔns are combined on grounds of their similar or
lated meanings: they may signify things of the same
ɪd, things that normally appear together, things
at are very much alike, or things that imply the
ne overall meaning as the whole combination. The
rangement of words is usually fixed in a certain
der either because such things occur in that
quence or because a certain euphonic effect is
hieved by that order. Rhyming, chiming and allit-
ation play an important part in the arrangement as
ll as in the selection of components. The meaning
a polymer of this type may be fairly literal and
compass all that its components suggest; more
mmonly, however, speakers want only one or two words
the total combination to be meaningful and put the
ner words in for the effect of elaboration.
lymers of this type have not been observed by my
lay informant.

mer:

/dɤk nɔəm pɔəm yu:ə/ (to lead + to take + to

carry in the mouth + to carry suspended in the
hand) 'to lead and help'.

/chmuəɲ cuəŋ luək do:/ (trader + to trade + to
sell + to exchange) 'to do business, trade'.

/das twən sdɤy prədau/ (to rouse + rouse + say +
teach) 'to instruct'.

/srae cɔmka: chba: dɔmnam/ (rice field + garden +
flower garden + plantation) 'land for planta-
tion'.

/mi:əs prak thuən-thi:ən/ (gold + silver +
treasure) 'wealth'.

Burmese:

/kɑuʔ pè ắthì ɑhnɑɲ/ (paddy + pulse + fruit +
grain) 'crops, agricultural produce'.

/où íɲ hkweʔ yɑuʔ/ (pot + bowl + cup + ladle)
'household goods'.

/nyi ắkou mɑuɲ hnắmá/ (brother + brother +
brother + sister) 'brothers and sisters'.

/seiʔ leʔ eìh càɲ/ (mind + limb + be calm, cool
feel cold) 'to be peaceful, serene'.

/hnouʔ hkùɲ hseʔ thá/ (mouth + word + join +
offer) 'greet'.

Thai:

/ti: ran fan the:ŋ/ (beat + poke + chop + pierce)
'fight, fighting'.

/dì:t sǐ: ti: pàw/ (pluck + rub + beat + blow)
'to play musical instruments'.

/yép pàk thàk rɔ́:y/ (sew + embroider + knit,
plait, crochet + to thread) 'needlework'.

/thûəy thõ: ʔo: cha:m/ (bowl + big jar with lid +
bowl-shaped vessel + plate) 'crockery'.

/rwə phɛ: na:wa:/ (boat + raft + ship) 'boat'.

/mǔ: hèt pèt kày/ (pork + mushroom + duck +
chicken) 'foodstuff'.

/hûəy nɔ̌:ŋ khlɔ:ŋ buŋ/ (brook + swamp + canal +
large swamp) 'waters'.

Reduplicatives

Reduplicatives, our third type of elaboration,

combinations of a base word and a reduplication
it.   In many languages reduplication may possess
her phonaesthetic or grammatical meaning.   This is
o true in modern Khmer, Burmese, Malay and Thai,
re both repetitive and partial reduplication occurs
many types of grammatical meaning can be observed.
e I am concerned only with the kind of partial
luplication which produces a euphonic effect, and
not dealing with the kind of reduplication which
an effect in grammar.   I regard reduplicatives as
istructions of two components: a base word and its
luplication.   The base word carries its own meaning
ereas the reduplication is a "nonsense" word and
Ly a reduplicative product of the base word.   In the
llowing examples the absence of the meaning of the
luplication will be presented by a zero (ϕ).

ner:

/manus mani:ə/	(human being + ϕ)	'human being'
/khme:ŋ khma:ŋ/	(children + ϕ)	'children'
/khsɤp khsiəv/	(whisper + ϕ)	'whisper'
/kɔmpri: kɔmpri:ə/	(ϕ + orphan)	'orphan'
/thŋuən thŋɔ:/	(heavy + ϕ)	'heavy, strong'
/tu:lom tu:li:əy/	(ϕ + wide)	'wide'

lay:

bukit bukau	(hill + ϕ)	'hill'
sekali sekala	(once + ϕ)	'once'
waris warah	(relatives + ϕ)	'relatives'
gunung ganang	(mountain + ϕ)	'mountain'
maki hamun	(curse + ϕ)	'curse'

Thai:[3]

/rûəŋ ra:w/	(story, matter + ∅)	'story, matter'
/manút mana:/	(human being + ∅)	'human being'
/thanàt thanì:/	(dexterous + ∅)	'dexterous'
/kracɤ̀:t kracɤ:ŋ/	(∅ + dispersed)	'dispersed'
/nèt nɯ̀əy/	(∅ + tired)	'tired'
/ʔûən thǔən/	(be stout + ∅)	'to be stout'

Burmese:

/thweʔ leʔ/	(be nimble + ∅)	'to be nimble'
/myañ hsañ/	(be quick + ∅)	'to be quick'
/nyì nyα/	(be even + ∅)	'to be even
/làñ pàñ/	(road + ∅)	'road'
/tăyà tăpauñ/	(law + ∅)	'law'
/nì nα/	(method + ∅)	'method'

Antonymies

The fourth and last type of elaboration comprise
antonymies, which are constructions the two members
of which have contrary meanings. These are not
elaborations in the strictest sense, but rather
additive compounds, inasmuch as the meaning of the
combination is derived from that of its first member
plus that of its second member. However, it is the
lexical opposition of the two members that brings
them together and it is the implications arising out
of their contrariety that justifies their inclusion
under elaborations. It should be noted, moreover,
that if the relationship between the members of all
four types of elaboration is represented on a grad-
uated scale we obtain a symmetrical continuum ranging

m components of the same meaning, components of
ilar or related meaning, components of non-related
ning, and finally components of opposite meaning,
below.

ne meaning	similar or related meanings	non-related meanings	*opposite* meanings
teratives	Polymers	Reduplicatives	Antonymies
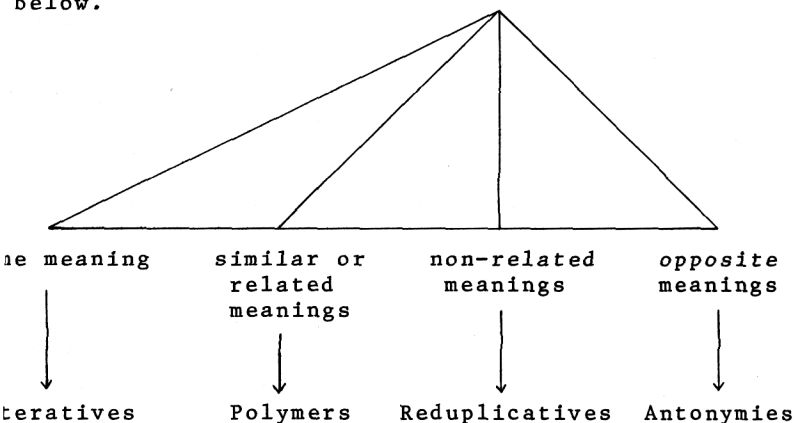
One further point justifies the inclusion of
tonymies with elaborations. In many *contexts only*
e member of the construction is really meaningful,
d one need not use both components in order to be
early understood. In Thai, for instance, the
mbination /sǔ:ŋ-tàm/ ('high' + 'low') means 'size'.
wever, when one asks about a person's "size" one
rmally wants to know his height and is not inter-
ted in the question of his shortness. Thus the
ntence /khǎw sǔ:ŋ-tàm khê: nǎy/ means precisely
e same thing as the sentence /khǎw sǔ:ŋ khê: nǎy/
ow tall is he?'

mer:

| /sok tuk/ | (happiness + suffering) | 'ups and downs of life' |
| /(ka:) khos tro:v/ | (matter + wrong + right) | 'whatever right or wrong, responsibility' |

/cɯt chŋa:y/	(near + far)	'all, every where'
/to:c thom/	(small + big)	'all sizes'
/ti:əp khpuəs/	(low + high)	'all, high and low'

Malay:

tuwa muda	(old + young)	'all, every body'
kechil besar	(small + big)	'all sizes'
tinggi rendah	(high + low)	'every level, every class'
lelaki prampuan	(male + female)	'everybody, all sexes'

Burmese:

/thà thãmi/	(son + daughter)	'children'
/hyei nau/	(front + back)	'front and back'
/ãmi ãhpá/	(mother + father)	'parents'
/yaùñ we/	(sell + buy)	'trade'
/thwà lα/	(go + come)	'travel about'

Thai:

/hè:t phõn/	(cause + result)	'reason'
/phìt chɔ̂:p/	(wrong + right)	'whether right or wrong'
/sùk thúk/	(happiness + suffering)	'ups and downs in life'
/nɔ́:y yày/	(small + big)	'all, large and small'
/nŭə tây/	(north + south)	'all directions, north and south'

mpound Elaboration

As has been said earlier, elaborations of the
pes just described are linguistic processes which
e highly appreciated by speakers of the languages
der discussion. However, such expansions may be
plied not only to simple words but also to compounds
d grammatical constructions, at least in modern
mer and Thai. In these two languages, if one member
a compound occurs also as a member of a simple
aboration the compound itself may be expanded into
four-member elaboration. In other words, if X
curs in composition with C (CX) and if X occurs also
a simple elaboration with Y (XY) the compound CX
y be expanded into CXCY or CYCX.

mer:

CX	/tɯk mɔət/	(water + mouth)	'saliva'
XY	/mɔət kɔ:/	(mouth + neck)	'to argue'
CXCY	/tɯk mɔət tɯk-kɔ:/		'saliva'

CX	/pruəy cɤt/	(worry + heart)	'to worry'
XY	/cɤt thlaəm/	(heart + liver)	'heart'
CXCY	/pruəy cɤt pruəy thlaəm/		'to worry'

ai:

CX	/ná:m-ta:/	(water + eyes)	'tears'
XX	/hǔ: ta:/	(ear + eye)	'eyes, ears'
CYCX	/ná:m hǔ: ná:m-ta:/		'tears'

CX	/khâw-cay/	(enter + heart)	'understand'
YX	/ʔɔ̀k cay/	(chest + heart)	'heart'
CYCX	/khâw ʔɔ̀k khâw-cay/		'understand'

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CX      /hɔ̂ŋ-náːm/    (room + water)        'water
                                              closet'
XY      /náːm thâː/   (water + water         'water'
                        site)
CXCY       /hɔ̂ŋ-náːm hɔ̂ŋ thâː/ 'water closet'
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Grammatical constructions of two constituents
may also undergo elaboration. For examples, if WX
represents a grammatical construction, and XY
represents a simple elaboration of one type or
another, then WX may be expanded into WXWY or WYWX.
*The grammatical constructions capable of elaboration
are of any type except that of the subject-verb
construction.*

Khmer:

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WX      /pum dɤŋ/     (not + know)          'not to
                                              know'
XY      /dɤŋ yuəl/    (know + under-        'know'
                        stand)
WXWY       /pum dɤŋ pum yuəl/ 'not to know'


WX      /craən baep/ (many + type)          'many
                                              types'
XY      /baep yaːŋ/  (type + type)          'type'
WXWY       /craən baep craən yaːŋ/ 'many types'


WX      /dɤŋ tuk/    (know + suffer-        'to know
                        ing)                   the
                                               hard-
                                               ships o
                                               life'
YX      /sok tuk/    (happiness +           'ups and
                        suffering)             downs o
                                               life'
WXWY       /dɤŋ tuk dɤŋ sok/ 'to know the hard-
                                ships of life'
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ai:

    WX   /khon kɛ̀:/   (person + old)   'old per-
                                                                        son'

    YX   /thâw kɛ̀:/   (old + old)   'old'

    WYWX   /khon thâw khon kɛ̀:/ 'old person'

    WX   /klay ta:/   (far + eye)   'out of
                                                                          sight'

    YX   /hǔ: ta:/   (ear + eye)   'eyes,
                                                                             ears'

    WYWX   /klay hǔ: klay ta:/ 'out of sight'

    WX   /pen rûəŋ/   (to be + matter,   'be a mat-
                                      story)   ter, be
                                                                         some-
                                                                             thing'

    XY   /rûəŋ ra:w/   (matter, story +   'matter,
                                      ø)   story'

    WXWY   /pen rûəŋ pen ra:w/ 'be a matter,
                                          be something'

    Elaborations, then, are yet another areal
linguistic feature of Southeast Asia. Far from being
tautological or mere word-play, they are a widely used
means of diversifying lexical meaning. As such, they
exercise an important function in ordinary discourse
as well as in writing; it is not too much to say that
they are an essential feature of effective speech and
a mark of good literary style. Neither the languages
nor the literatures of Southeast Asia can be fully
appreciated without knowledge of their patterns and
impact.

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[2]Examples of Burmese are taken from John Okell's
A Reference Grammar of Colloquial Burmese 1, London,
Oxford University Press, 1963. Okell classifies this
type of forms as "doubled verbs" and "doubled nouns"
and explains that they occur "especially in formal
or literary contexts" (*op. cit.*, p. 26).

[3]Characteristic of Thai alone is a type of
chiming reduplicative showing constant vowels. If
the base word is monosyllabic, the vowel of the
elaborator is limited to /ɤ, ɤ:/: *e.g.*, /kin/ >
/kin kɤn/ 'to eat', /tóʔ/ > /tóʔ tɤ́ʔ/ 'table',
/bɯ̀ə/ > /bɯ̀ə bɤ̀:/ 'to be bored'. This /ɤ, ɤ:/ vowel
chimes with any base-vowel except itself; when the
base word has this vowel, the elaborator shows
/ɛ, ɛ:/: *e.g.*, /yɤ́ʔ/ > /yɤ́ʔ yɛ́ʔ/ 'plentiful',
/dɤ:n/ > /dɤ:n dɛ:n/ 'to walk'. If the base word is
dissyllabic, a compound, or even a two-word grammat-
ical construction, the vowel of the elaborator may
show these same limitations. Alternatively, the
second member of the base word may yield an alliter-
ating reduplication with the fixed vowel + final
/-oŋ/ plus a tone in harmony with that of the base:
e.g., /ʔa:hǎ:n/ > /ʔa:hǎ:n ʔa:hɤ̌:n/ *or* /ʔa:hɤ̌ŋ
ʔa:hǎ:n/ 'food'; /nák-riən/ > /nák-riən nák-rɤ:n/
or /nák-roŋ nák-riən/ 'student'; /kin khâ:w/ >
/kin khâ:w kin khɤ̂:w/ *or* /kin khɤ̂ŋ kin khâ:w/ 'to hav
a meal'.