

# Number Marking in Lai Chin and its Theoretical Consequences

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**0. Introduction.** It is commonly said of many languages such as those of Southeast Asia, not least Tibeto-Burman languages, that their nouns are 'unmarked', or at least not obligatorily marked for number, and this has become a commonplace about such languages. Unfortunately, this is at best inexplicit and at worst misleading. It is certainly not true of lexical nominals; pronouns, for instance, are invariably marked for number as well as for person. So, what is the correct description of nouns (proper and common) with regard to number (not just with regard to its 'marking')?

We want to show here that certain facts about Lai Chin, a Tibeto-Burman language of the Kuki-Naga branch in far Western Myanmar (Burma), suggest the correct solution, and that these facts are mirrored and supported by similar facts about, for instance, Burmese. In fact we shall argue that nouns are in fact labels for only the semantic features, i.e., what is commonly given as the set of necessary-and-sufficient conditions that any entity should be seen to instantiate (see Lehman 1985, Keller and Lehman 1991), i.e., an Intensional Description (hereafter ID). As such it is *neither singular nor plural* and the question of its being marked for number is beside the point. Pronouns, on the other hand, are not unique to any ID and in fact inherently point to sets or elements of sets associated with any such ID and, as such, are inherently distinguished as to number; for, in particular, it is the sets and their elements into which quantification (including ordinary enumeration) applies (Lehman 1985). We shall therefore argue on specific evidence from Lai Chin and secondarily Burmese that the noun phrase (technically — cf. Lehman in press — determiner phrase / DP) in such languages invariably contains both an ID and a pronominal element referring to the associated set<sup>1</sup>. In these typically free empty category (FEC) languages either may be phonologically null; more particularly this is the default (non focal, non contrastive) condition of all pronominals. In any case, it is the pronominal element (for which we shall use the greek letter  $\epsilon$ , the usual symbol for an element/member of a set) to which any quantifier, including ordinary numbers apply. We shall therefore end up claiming that all such languages, where

the lexical noun names *only* an ID rather than the pair {ID,S}, will almost of necessity be languages where enumeration (and often as in Tai, other sorts of logical quantifiers such as demonstratives and even relative clauses — both being quantifiers because they partition sets) is associated with so-called numeral classifiers; so that if a language has classifiers it will not mark nouns lexically as either singular or plural, although the converse fails — some non-'classifier' languages mark nouns only optionally for number (Quechua, for example<sup>2</sup>). This having been said, let us proceed to the facts of Lai Chin.

**Number marking and agreement.** Here are some examples of plural nouns in Lai

- (1)           Cauk khoika'h dah na-chiah *hna*  
               Book where-at ? 2sg put 3pl-obj  
               Where did you put the books?
- (1')          Cauk khoika'h dah *an-um*  
               Book where-at ? 3pl stay  
               Where are the books?

Where preverbal agreement clitics are subject agreement unless otherwise marked. It will be noticed that the plurality of the noun, 'book', whether subject or object, is marked (in fact obligatorily) in agreement if 'book' is a subject or an object (if a verb is ditransitive, then non-subject agreement is with the indirect object). Notice too that these agreement clitics (e.g., Bedell 1996) are not themselves, for instance, resumptive pronouns or parts of any noun/demonstrative phrase, as we can see from an answer to (1)

- (2) Keimah-nih khin-ah ka-chiah *hnaI*  
       I       'erg' there-at 1sg put 3pl obj  
               I put them there.

But this requires a rather extensive digression having to do with *hna* and other postverbal agreement affixes, without which I cannot usefully proceed farther.

In general, in colloquial Lai, every (finite) verb is prefixed with a subject agreement clitic; if a verb be transitive, then it will also have an object agreement clitic. The latter follows the former (for full paradigms<sup>3</sup>, see Lehman 1990) with the following qualifications. The third person object as only a

null representation, and if it be plural, the plurality is indicated by postverbal *hna* as above (2). However, it will be seen that *hna* is in itself simply a bare plurality marker of agreement, not in itself bearing any features of person. This is best shown by looking more systematically into other post-verbal markers of aspects of person-and-number ('phi-features' in current formal grammar terminology).

These occur in two sorts of contexts: (a) poetical speech, and (b) 'imperative' clauses. As for (a), as Delancey (1988) has set forth clearly, historically there have been both pre- and postverbal systems of agreement affixes. Mizo (Lushai) preserves a major reflex of these in that the ordinary second-person object marker is postverbal *-ce*. Tedim (Northern) Chin uses both systems in different stylistic registers (Henderson 1965). But Lai uses postverbal agreement affixes in finite clauses only in poetical language. Thus where in colloquial sage one would say

- (3) ka-that  
       1sg kill  
       I killed [it/him/her]

One finds in poetical usage

- (4) Mawra       that si-ing e, Mual Beo, Mual Beo  
       [a large bird] kill is-1sg !, Mual Beo  
       It's I, Mual Beo, that have killed the Mawra!

with first person singular agreement affix *-ing*. Now, this we may compare with, say,

- (5) Mawra that si-(*hna*)-using, kanmah, kanmah  
       It's we, we, who've killed the Mawra!

Where postverbal *-using* indicates a first person plural subject (agreeing with *kanmah*, the pronoun 'we'), ambiguously either dual or plural, whereas with preceding *-hna* it is explicitly plural (greater than two persons). Or, we can have

- (6) Mawra that si-(*hna*)-*uce*  
       It's you-all who killed the Mawra

Where, once again, *-hna* indicates a plurality greater than merely two. And *-uce* indicates second person (the *-ce* surely cognate

with the Mizo ordinary second person object agreement affix aforementioned).

We can, moreover, further analyse *-using* in (5), which is composed of the *-ing* affix of first person subject agreement in (4) preceded by *-usi*, which is found independently, as in certain imperatives (b)

- (7) kal cang (*hna*)*usi*  
go perf. let's  
let's go now!

And once again, without *-hna* the second person is ambiguously dual or plural, but definitely plural with *-hna*. Furthermore, the *-u* is itself an independent affix indicating, essentially, [+speech act participant], and plurality/duality. This is easily seen because *usi* is really a first person plural *inclusive*, whilst *-uce* as in (6) is *exclusive*,<sup>4</sup> save that it is virtually impossible to use it in an imperative utterance; after all, how can one say 'let's go!' without including the addressee?

In fact, the postverbal affix *-u* itself can be used in imperatives where it seems to refer, like *-uce* to simply second person plural (or dual, of course).

- (8) Nan rawl atu ei u  
Your food now eat  
Eat your food now! (Hay-Neave nd: 69)

- (8') kal u law, kan hmuh lai  
go U cond.2pl see fut.  
If we/you were to go, we'd see<sup>5</sup>

But in actuality the suffixed *-u* means simply [+dual,  $\alpha$ plural, = speech-act participant], and we may suppose that *-uce*, as in (6) is not used because it would be redundant it being virtually impossible to issue an order to a set of persons without effectually excluding oneself.

We therefore end up with the following analysis of postverbal affixes of agreement

- (9)  
*u* [+ participant,  $\alpha$ speaker - sg]  
*usi* [+ participant, + speaker,  $\alpha$  non-participant, - sg]  
*using* [+participant, +speaker, -nonparticipant, -sg]



*uce* [+ participant, - speaker, - sg]  
*hna* [+plural]

With the last optionally preceding the others to indicate true plurality unambiguously. Then, as for postverbal subject agreement in poetical register, note that there is no third person marker as such (in N'men Chin it is even lacking in the colloquial preverbal clitic subject agreement — see Lehman 1990) as we see in

(10) *chiah cang Ø hna*  
       put   perf.   pl.  
       They have put them

Which in colloquial would be

(10') *an-chiah cang Ø hna*  
       3pl put   perf. pl.  
       They have put them

Now, this long digression has been necessary in particular to support the conclusions that *-hna* is indeed a bare plural marker, together, of course, with the auxiliary conclusion that in colloquial Lai the actual reflex of the postverbal agreement system is in the case of the third-person object, which is postverbal  $\emptyset$  in the singular, *hna*  $\emptyset$  in the dual/plural, so that (1), repeated here, is more properly

(1) *Cauk khoika'h dah na-chiah Ø hna*  
       Book where-at ? 2sg put 3pl-obj  
       Where did you put the books?

With the singular being

(1') *cauk khoia'h dah na-chiah Ø*  
       Where did you put the book?

We can now return to our main line of argument concerning number marking as such. We see that *-hna* is a bare plural indicator. But is it in fact inherently a 'marker' of plurality? Is it, as an agreement marker an indication that, if not overtly at least covertly, nouns as such are after all somehow marked for number? We claim the answer is no. In order to see why, we must examine more ways in which it is used. And first

of all, we see that it is used to mark agreement with co-ordinately conjoined singular nouns, as in

- (11) Nito le Zathat le Saikap ka-fial hna  
                     and           and           1sg ask pl.  
 I request Nito and Zathat and Sialkap [to do it]

Then, more interestingly, *hna* occurs not only as an agreement affix of plurality, but also as one member of a set of what turn out to be pronominal elements suffixed to nouns and indicating, in various senses 'ones'. Note that in such uses *hna* is not as such marker of number on the noun itself! Consider first

- (12) mah mi       *hna*   cu  
           such person ones dem  
       persons such as this one

where we understand 'ones' such as this person, and where *hna* signifies a plurality of persons like or associated with this person and does not mark *mi* (person) as plural at all. This is one of a series of elements<sup>6</sup>, such as

- (13) Kawl-te  
       Burma-ones  
       Burmese people  
  
       Ngakchia *hna* , ze! dah nan tuah?  
       Kids                   what part. You do?  
       Hey, kids! What are you up to?

Where Kawl is not 'Burmese' but the name of the country, Burma, and the compound literally indicates 'ones' associated inherently with Burma. This suffix, *-te* , is commonly also added to a personal name, indicating ones associated with that person, as in particular his family

- (14) Khar Mang te  
 The Khar Mangs (he, his wife and kids/his household).

This is significant on comparative grounds. Thus, in another Tibeto-Burman language, Burmese, we find three so-called optional markers of plurality following nouns: *mya* (မ္ယ), *dou* (ဝ္ထ), and *tei /twei*. (တိ). The first indicates one-or-more,

the non-specific number (*sa-ouk mya*: 'some book(s)'); the second is added only to personal names or personal pronouns — in the first case indicating the person named and his or her family, in the second indicating plurality proper: *U Chit Hlaing dou*. (ဦး ချစ် လှိုင်တို့.), 'the U Chit Hlaings', *thu-dou*. (သူတို့.) 'they' (*thu* (သူ) = 'he'/'she'). The third is like Lai Chin - *hna*, namely, it is inherently a pronominal element meaning something like 'ones', with the noun itself referring only to the ID.<sup>7</sup>

Now, it is of crucial importance to observe that there is an overriding reason for claiming that these suffixal elements are not simply optional plural markers. It is the fact that they are in strict complementary distribution with enumerative phrases! It is convenient here to use Burmese examples here because, as we have seen, in Lai Chin it is actually very difficult to use any suffix to indicate ordinary (rather than 'associational') plurality. But in Burmese one can indeed add *tei /twei*. (၆၀၀) or *mya* (၆၀၀:) to ordinary nouns to refer to a plurality, as in the examples in the immediately receding paragraph. However, these suffixes may not be present if the noun is followed by a number-plus (so-called) classifier. Thus,

- (15) *sa-ouk dei*  
       books  
       *sa-ouk thoun:ouk*  
       book 3 cl.  
       three books

but

- (15') \**sa-ouk dei thoun:ouk*

And this seems inescapably to suggest that the suffixes in question are actually pronominal elements following a noun (no doubt sometimes morphologically suffixed to it) representing the member or members of a set associated with the ID named by the noun. If the plurality be an algebraic number, we can use one of the pronominals whose very meaning is that of an algebraic (non-integer, non 'real') number, but if the number is an integer (or a fractional real number), no such suffix can be used. In that latter case one expresses a definite number (integer) which is coupled with a so-called classifier, the latter being in fact (see Lehman 1979, 1990) pronouns referring to unit-elements of the associated sets, with partial feature agreement

between the unit-element pronoun and the ID, or, in the case of integral powers of the base ten, nouns referring to elements of such cardinality as elements of the Power Set. (roughly, the set of n-tuples of unit elements of the set in question).

(16) sa-ouk thoun:hse  
       book 3 'tens'  
       thirty books

sa-ouk thoun:hse. ta-ouk  
       book 30's [in/of] 1 unit  
       thirty-one books

with the number being (as we see when the number is '1' or '2') morphologically affixed to the so-called classifier. In Lai Chin, with trivial exceptions if any, there is no parallel to the use in Burmese of *tei/twei* or *mya*: to indicate ordinary plurality, so the commutability between the two sorts of enumerative expressions associated with nominal phrases is almost impossible to illustrate directly. The suffixes like *-hna*, *-te* and so on are used only as a sort of derivational compounds, and with these enumeration can in fact be used, as it can also in Burmese

(17) U Chit Hlaing dou. thoun:yauk  
       [name] ones 3 cl.  
       The U Chit Hlaings, [all] three [of them]

Halkha-te pa-za  
       Hakha-people cl. Hundred  
       One hundred Halkha folk

Where, in Chin, the morphology of numerical phrase is the opposite of that in Burmese — the classifier being prefixed and cliticised to the number. I shall suggest in the conclusions to this paper what this means for the phrase structure syntax of nominal phrases, more accurately determiner phrases (see Lehman in press for the argument in favour of the DP hypothesis), revising in a principled way the phrase structure of such expressions in Lehman 1990..

Finally, let us look briefly at the use of *-hna* in wh-questions. This will raise some interesting further considerations that in the final analysis will allow us to make principled proposals about the phrase structure syntax of nominal phrases, proposals alluded to briefly in the Introduction.

Consider

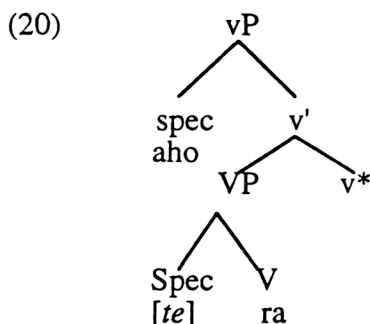
- (18) aho-te dah a-ra hna  
 who ones ?prt 1sg come pl  
 who-all came?

where the wh-question word is affixed with a plural pronominal, but the subject agreement clitic is third singular, with a third-plural *object* agreement clitic after the (intransitive) verb. What is going on here? Now, there is no reason to suppose that the wh-argument is preposed into CP; in fact there is no evidence for A>A' movement in the language at all. Wh-question words in particular remain *in situ*, as can be shown by the fact that a subject can easily come after a preposed adverbial/prepositional phrase, as in

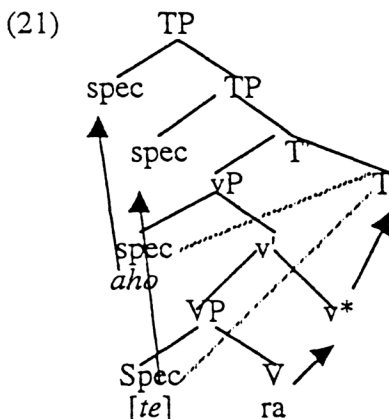
- (19) inn-ah aho-te dah a-ra hna  
 house-to .....  
 Who came into the house?

The order of phrases here is due solely to the fact that scrambled argument-and-adjunct order is common.

So, let us assume the proposal from Chomsky's more recent Minimalist framework (1999MS) to the effect that agreement has to do with a probe, here the functional phrase category of the T-V (tense-plus-raised verb) complex, seeking an argument goal, in fact (see Lehman in press) a goal that is structurally a subject at some level. Let us also assume something I have argued for elsewhere (*ibid*, 1990), namely, that in general intransitive verbs in this language are unaccusative verbs (possibly excepting the copula, *si*) — a proposal in good part required for a proper account of ergativity (Lehman in press b), where it is argued that Absolutive Case, the case of objects of transitive verbs and subjects of intransitive verbs, is always the case of the subject of a lower verb in a Larson Shell VP (cf. Hale and Keyser 1993). Then we can see that (20) has to be at least close to the verb-phrase structure of (18) (omitting representation of the particle *dah*, for which see Lehman 1998),



where *aho* ('who') is inherently singular<sup>8</sup>, *te* represents an abstract plural subject pronominal, phonologically null except when affixed, as already explained above. This latter fact is unsurprising since this is a free empty category language (FEC), in which the default form of pronouns is in any case 'zero', equal to pro-arb, the non-specific 'someone-or-other'. In turn, then, *te* is the deepest subject of the vP, the object of the surface verb derived by v\*-V raising, but not accusative in case, the latter complex ultimately further raising to TP. When the latter complex has been formed, *aho* raises to spec-TP, and *te* to a second spec-TP, defining object agreement. Now we let the complex T+V+v\* be a probe; in fact this, along with the usual EPP, is what triggers the argument raisings mentioned. Then, because the language has both subject and object agreement morphology on the verb, the primary/subject agreement will be with the specifier of the foot of the chain defined by the T-part of the complex, *aho*. This later being as stated singular will ensure that the subject agreement is third person singular. The v\* part of the complex will have then to probe down farther to the specifier of the trace of v\*, which is *te*. This being as stated plural, ensures that the object agreement will likewise be singular in this example. Note, by the way, that putting the matter this way allows one to avoid having to state somewhat *ad hoc* minimality conditions to ensure that the two probes go precisely as far as they need to, respectively. We can conveniently diagram this as



where the dotted lines represent probes from the T-v\*-V complex to argument traces in vP. Note, by the way, that *te*, being inherently affixal, is automatically suffixed to *aho* by morphological processes we need not consider here.

## Conclusions: Intensional Nouns, Number, and Classifiers

We may now return to the fundamental hypothesis of our Introduction, namely, the proposition that in languages that really do not mark nouns, as such, for number (not even 'optionally'), the lexical noun is simply the name of the Intensional Description of the Class, whereas it is pronouns and pronoun-like words and morphemes that refer to the associated sets and hence inherently bear number. We claim to have shown in this paper that in fact all the apparent number marking associated with nouns are in fact just such a species of pronominal elements, affixes generally. Moreover, it is crucially significant that, with at worst marginal exceptions, the affixes in question<sup>9</sup> commute with numeral expressions (number plus classifier). Lehman has previously published two papers on the morphosyntax of classifier expressions (1979, 1990), but it has to be admitted that in both of those papers part at least of the proposed embedding of a quantifier phrase within the DP (then understood as a NP) remained *ad hoc* and not otherwise well motivated. Given the demonstration in the present paper, it is clear we can do better.

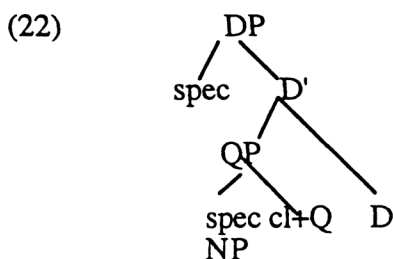
The evidence is indeed considerable that such a bracketing is correct, and that in such languages the phrase containing the quantifier does indeed either dominate or

asymmetrically command the lexical noun itself, but it is now clear that the very notion of a 'quantifier phrase (QP)' is doubtful. Still, it will be useful to review a version of the previous analysis, in order to show how another is better.

Previously, Lehman claimed that that the constituent bracketing of nominal expressions in Lai (and Modern Burmese) is

1. DP[ QP[ NP ] ]

or, schematically,

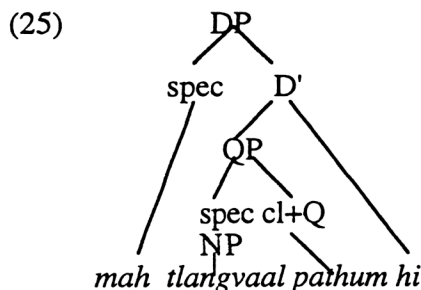


and we get the following:

(23) mah tlangvaal pathum hi an-kal  
       this young man cl+3 this 3pl-go  
       These three young men went

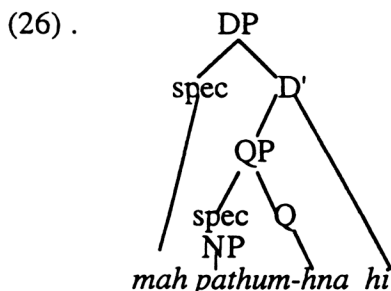
(24) mah pathum-hna hi an-kal  
       three-some

where *pathum-hna* is a noun compounded of classifier+number+*hna* (the plural morpheme), meaning something like a subset of cardinality 3. (23) would then have the tree-structure





whilst (24) would be



All of this indicates strongly that QP is within DP but superordinate over NP. However, in (24) *pathum-hna* (or *pathum pawl*) is a affixed ('compound') nominal, with *pawl/hna* not actually a head noun/pronoun, meaning 'a collectivity' or 'a set' but rather a pronominal element amounting to an algebraic number  $<2$ ; in any event, note the absence of any classifier here. We do not take lightly the assertion that elements like *hna* here are

One may useful compare the Burmese here:

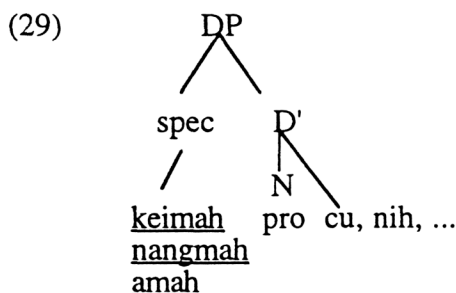
- (27) di-ha thoun: ouk ~ di sa-ouk thoun: ouk  
           ဒီ ဟာ သုံးအုပ်            ဒီ စာအုပ် သုံး အုပ်  
           this one three cl        this book three cl

where *ha*, the quasi-pronominal may be, as is usually taught, the overt pronominal equivalent of *sq-ouk* (book), otherwise producing the lexicalised contraction *da* (ဒါ), the demonstrative pronoun 'this', but may also be the true demonstrative itself, head of DP at its right edge, the equivalent of Written Burmese *thi* (ထို) (cf. *di sa-ouk thoun: ouk ha*). The second alternative seems to have an exact parallel in Lai Chin, namely, *mah-hi*.. Nor in Modern Colloquial Burmese is there a parallel to (26), where the numeral is directly compounded with the Noun, although in older and literary Burmese, we do get such constructions as

- (28) thoun:ze.khunhnit min:  
       သုံးဆယ်, ခုနစ်မင်း  
       thirty-three Lords

the Thirty-three 'Nats', traditional Burmese national guardian spirits, where this, as a whole, a name or title. But the parallel is incomplete because of the morphological fact that in Burmese numbers (integer names, more specifically) can be uttered as free forms, whereas in Lai Chin a number is exclusively a bound form and requires the generalised classifier to be prefixed to it (*pa-*). This is no doubt connected with the morpheme-order distinction whereby in Burmese we have number+classifier, whilst in Lai Chin we have classifier+number, with, in Burmese, the number cliticised (at least for numbers 'one' [*tit*], 'two' [*hnit*], and 'seven' [*hkuhnit*], as in *tahku.*, *hnahku.*, *hkunnahku.*) to the classifier, and in Lai the classifier cliticised to the number, in accordance with the fact that both languages are prosodically iambic.

Incidentally, it seems reasonably certain that Lai Chin personal pronouns have the structure



where the underlined elements are compound lexical words. This shows that my former (1997) analysis of these pronouns along the lines of Postal's (1970) paper cannot be right, and *mah* is not, contrary to my paper (Lehman 1978) on this etymon<sup>10</sup>, itself etymologically a (quasi-) pronoun on the order of English 'one', with *kei-*, *nang-*, and *a-* being simple demonstratives. That analysis now fails on two grounds: first, that the constituent order is wrong for this language—the demonstrative is not at the left edge of the nominal expression (DP); second, that the personal pronouns have got to be associated with an empty *pro* element in *N*, as shown by examples such as

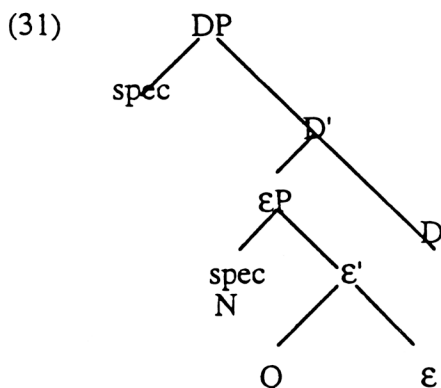
- (30) mah-hi cauk ukhnihi hi  
       this very book cl+2 this  
       Thése two books

mah-hi pro ukhnih hi  
 These two [books],  
 where, in spite of pro, the classifier  
 agrees uniquely with BOOK)

Notice that the *hi* in *mah-hi* is distinctly the basic element in spec/DP, and the *mah* cannot possibly be in Noun position because it precedes the *hi*, whilst Nouns in Lai Chin always follow the specifier of the superordinate determiner phrase in this strictly head-final language.

All of this is no doubt a good first approximation to a correct analysis of the DP, but, as stated above, there is something in it distinctly *ad hoc* and unmotivated; it assumes somewhat arbitrarily that there is something called a Quantifier Phrase (QP) within DP, asymmetrically related to the NP itself in as much as the former is the head of the QP, to which the NP is the specifier.

But it is already clear from the present paper and from the sort of general consideration referred to in Note (1) that in these languages we need to distinguish between the Intensional Description (ID), which is what the lexical noun 'means' (what its feature matrix denotes), and an associated Set, which is what is quantified over. Therefore, one has to conclude that so-called numeral classifiers in fact represent precisely the unit-element members of the Sets in question; or the elements of the Power Sets with cardinalities of integral powers of the base ten; or alternatively Power Set elements whose cardinality is given as quasi-algebraic numbers specified by so-called 'measure words' such as 'cupfull' and the like<sup>11</sup>. If so, then it makes more sense to hypothesise that instead of a QP we have something I shall call here  $\epsilon P$ , using the greek  $\epsilon$  as is standard to represent the element of a set, with the number, specifying (quantifying over?) the number of elements  $\epsilon$  of the Set or Power Set in question. We therefore propose as the proper phrase structure analysis of nominal expressions



where, as already stated, we must invoke morphological considerations to account for the fact that in Lai and related languages, with numerals being purely bound forms, requiring affixes (clitics) in order to surface as words, the head of  $\epsilon P$ , though naturally at the right edge, none the less appears affixed to the left of the number in word formation.<sup>12</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See again Lehman 1985 for the demonstration that lexical semantics must employ not the ordinary Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory but rather the von Neumann axiomatisation, which distinguishes between Sets and Proper Classes. A Proper Class is a pair  $\{S, ID\}$ , where the Proper Class as such cannot be a member of any other Proper Class, but where any two or more Proper Classes may share all or part of the same instantiating Set,  $S$ . The reason for this is outside the scope of this paper, but it is the only way to handle intuitively, the non-taxonomic relations between Classes containing much the same sets. For example, a knife can be both weapon and tool, and yet it is pointless to ask whether, say, tools are a 'kind of weapons' or weapons a kind of tools.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to George Bedell for reminding Lehman of this.

<sup>3</sup> <u>subject</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>
<u>singular</u>	ka-	na-	a-
<u>plural</u>	kan-	nan-	an-
<u>object</u>			
<u>singular</u>	-ka-	-in-	ø
<u>plural</u>	-kan-	-in-V-hna	o-V-hna

where 1<sup>st</sup> sg subject + 2<sup>nd</sup> sg object, *ka+in> kan* (ambiguously same as 1<sup>st</sup> plural subject alone). The reflexive object is *-a-* (sometimes *-i-*), as in *kaa-hmuh/kai-hmuh*, 'I saw myself'.

<sup>4</sup> George Bedell reminds me that Southern (N'men) Chin preserves a more systematic distinction between inclusive and exclusive first plural as well as a systematic distinction between duality and plurality — in the latter case indicated always by a postverbal marker of pure non-singular number (paralleling Lai *-hna*) — *goi* and *-gui* for, respectively dual and plural subject agreement.

<sup>5</sup> There is an interesting point here. The contrary-to-fact conditional first clause has as its implied subject that is properly marked as merely plural and [+speech-act participant]. Though it excludes possible third persons, it nevertheless is reminiscent of a fact about 'obviative' third person pronouns as in, for instance, French, where *on* as subject ('one', subsuming, in this instance, all persons) is always taken to include in particular both first and second persons, so that

- i. *on sait*  
one knows

is just as well translated into English as 'You know/we know', with 'we' and 'you' being the so-called editorial we or editorial you, following from interpreting *on* as 'one', meaning anyone whomsoever; in fact in some styles of speech at least (i) amounts to the so-called impersonal first person, then meaning in plain English 'I know'.

<sup>6</sup> *Rual, le, te, hna, tehna, tehnapawl* (where the head nominal refers to a human being); *kip, tete, pipi, pohpoh, dihlak, vialte, sena, lawngte, pawl, hliarhliar* (for inanimates/non-humans) — many of these meaning in various senses 'crowd', 'bunch' (*pawl*), multitude (*vial*) and the like, with various distinctions of an attitudinal or affective sort. Others are words referring to individual, person, fellow, either reduplicated to indicate a disjunct or non-specific number of individuals (one or more of them) or suffixed with *-hna*. Thus, for instance, *hna* is often pejorative or dismissive, as in

- i. *Siang Tum hawi/hawihna/hna cu, zeitin hme naa-lanter le?*  
S. T. chap/chap-ones/ones dem, 'how insignificant-pl'  
How insignificant people like S. T. are!

And *pawl* may be even more so, with

- ii. *Halkha-pawl*  
'that Hakha crowd'

the people of Halkha are being quite offensive in referring to the people from Hakha town. This may be compared with suffixed *-mi*, as in 'Halkha-mi', which means just Hakha people (affectively neutral). The latter affix is implicitly (but only implicitly) plural only when attached to an inanimate head noun, chiefly a place name as here, but is otherwise simply the word for

'ones' in the sense of one or more individuals. Properly speaking, then, 'Halkha-mi' refers to any person-or-persons of Hakha. Similarly, *-mi* is commonly used as a relativiser, as in

- iii. a-kal mi tlangvaal  
       3sg go mi young man  
       the man who goes/went  
       (lit. the man [of] 'one goes')

where, moreover, we see that *mi* being of non-specific number is compatible with either singular or plural agreement. With singular agreement the plurality, if needs be, is marked postverbally with *-hna*, as in

- iv. Farrawn-mi a-kal-hna ~ Farrawn-mi an-kal  
       Farrawn mi 3sg go pl.                               3pl go  
       Some person-or-persons from Farrawn go/went

In effect, this means the *mi* is semantically *pluralia tantum*, a collection or set (possibly a singleton).

*le* is quite interesting. It is basically the noun-conjunction 'and' (cf. i., above), but can be suffixed to personal names or nouns referring to personal relationships to indicate persons with an inherent natural association, as in *naule* (one's younger siblings), *hawi-le* (a group of mutual friends), *caw-le* (cows in a herd), *arpi a fa-le* (a hen's chicks), and so on. However this set of forms be analyzed, it seems that it involves a situation where the singular entails the successive plurality. Friend is undefined save with regard to another friend; a hen necessarily has more than a single chick in a clutch, and so on. So, one has to presume, the *le* is, at least etymologically, used periphrastically: 'chick and ...'.

<sup>7</sup> Note also that the suffixed pronominal *-hna* can be added to ordinary nouns with the entailment that the noun is being used (in the plural) only metaphorically. Thus, *rul* means 'snake', but *rul-hna* means 'snake-like ones', viz., people with crooked or devious minds; similarly, *ar* means chicken ~ domestic fowl, but *ar-hna* can only mean prostitutes, whilst although *ui-co* means 'dog' [male], *uico-hna* has to refer to hated persons, namely, 'sons-of-bitches'.

<sup>8</sup> As in Standard High German — as with the wonderful line from Ch. Morgenstern's poem 'Der Werwolf', 'Zwar Wölfe gab's im grosse Schar, doch Wer gäb's nur im Singular' [Of course wolves come in great quantities, though 'who' comes only in the singular].

<sup>9</sup> It will be noted that we have avoided taking explicit account of the fact that *hna* serves both as one of these affixes and as a mark of pure plurality within the verb agreement morphology. At worst it can make no difference to our analysis as a fairly low-level problem in lexical morphology. For after all, in Lai Chin there is generally a morphological resemblance between agreement clitics and pronouns proper. Thus 'I' is *kei-mah* whilst the first singular

agreement clitic is *ka-*. Similarly for second person singular: *nangmah/na-*, and for second plural *nanmah/nan-*.

<sup>10</sup> *mah* is still clearly some sort of emphatic element. Mizo (Lushai) provides evidence in as much as unemphatic 'I' is simply *kēi* rather than *kēimah*. Furthermore, (cf. 30)

i. *mah-hi cauk hi*

is itself emphatically 'this [very] book', as against the more neutral

ii. *hi cauk hi*

this book

<sup>11</sup> Thus for non-count nouns such as 'water', for which discrete unit elements are not defined conceptually, we say things like (Burmese example) 'water one cupful' — *yei tagwet* (ဧရ တခွက်). This simplifies considerably the usual discussions about classifiers *as against* measure words.

<sup>12</sup> The question still stands as to how one is to account for the fact that often an 'appropriate' classifier needs to be chosen for a particular noun. Lehman's earlier papers (1979, 1990b) have dealt with the latter fact adequately and shows that one cannot say that there is *a* correct classifier for a noun; there is only an open-ended list of potentially appropriate ones, so a system of classifiers has nothing to do, as such, with a supposed cultural cosmology or taxonomy of entities in the world, especially where a language uses one general purpose classifier for most things in its imagined world.

Nevertheless, how does one account for classifier choice? This is a linguistic question proper. Lehman has previously claimed that it is a matter of agreement, and we continue to stand by that claim. In spite of changes in current (Minimalist) syntactic theory reducing agreement to a probe from a functional head downward to a non-functional (e.g., argument) position, it seems to us there is still some evidence that a specifier-head relationship is essential — as, for instance, in the case of ordinary subject agreement, where, after all, the subject ends up in the position of a specifier of the V+Tns head of TP. Now, it is entirely sensible to say that  $\varepsilon$  is a functional category head (it is quantificational and it is associated with a lexical noun without being what the noun refers to, much as what can be said about tense relatively to a verb; just as in the latter case Tns converts a propositional class into a particular Event, so  $\varepsilon$  takes an ID instantiates it), and N is in its specifier. One must suppose that  $\varepsilon$  takes some subset of features of the ID in its specifier and uses that for 'agreement' with N, which may be construed as the semantic argument of  $\varepsilon$ . But whatever sort of feature sharing/percolation is involved here,  $\varepsilon$  cannot be thought of as a 'probe' in the intended sense because a probe must asymmetrically command its goal (Chomsky 1999 MS). This problem must be left for future consideration, however. Nonetheless, see Carstens (2000: 320, 328ff.) for the argument that what she calls NUM(ber)

and I am calling  $\epsilon$  is indeed a functional projection intervening between D and N, so that NUM (my  $\epsilon$ ) can indeed be a probe, in which case, were the formal structure of the present paper made to conform to the essentials of hers, the presence of N in spec of  $\epsilon$ P would arise from having, Q (in (31)) be in fact QP, with Head Q and complement N, N raising to spec of  $\epsilon$ P as in (31), with agreement motivated by the usual Minimalist device of feature checking. Adopting this view would solve the problem of this note and would otherwise not alter our account.

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