PRONOUN RETENTION IN KHMER AND THAI RELATIVE CLAUSES

Natchanan Yaowapat
Department of Linguistics
Chulalongkorn University
Natchanan.y@student.chula.ac.th

Abstract
The construction to be investigated here is the ‘Relative Clause’ in Khmer (Cambodian) and Thai. This study aims to consider only one aspect or one characteristic of relative clauses in both languages, namely, pronoun retention. The occurrence of resumptive pronouns, pronouns which are coreferential with head noun phrases, in relative clauses will be investigated and some of the constraints on their occurrence in the two languages will be discussed.

1. Pronoun Retention
According to Comrie (1981), pronoun retention is typologically a way to encode the role of the head noun in the embedded sentence (relative clause). The head noun remains explicitly in the embedded sentence in pronominal form. Pronoun retention is one strategy used to form relative clauses in many languages. An example of pronoun retention in non-standard English is this is the road that I know where it leads. In this example, the relative clause is that I know where it leads functions to modify the head noun phrase the road in the main clause. The resumptive pronoun it in the relative clause refers to the head noun road and it remains in the normal position of the clause subject, the grammatical relation that it encodes.

The following examples illustrate relative clauses formed by pronoun retention in Khmer and Thai.

Khmer
(1) kpom skoal kruu m-neak [dael koat bagrien phiesaa ?apkleih]
    I know teacher one-person REL s/he teach language English
    ‘I know a teacher who teaches English.’

The noun phrase being relativized in the above example is kruu mneak ‘a teacher’. The resumptive pronoun koat ‘s/he’ which is coreferential with the noun phrase kruu mneak occurs in the normal position of the subject in the relative clause, that is, preceding the main verb bagrien ‘teach’ (the basic word order in Khmer is S-V-O).

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Thai
(2) ชาน รู้คัก ครู [ที่ธิ ค้ำสื่อน ผ่าสื่าน ปาฏิikt]
I know teacher REL s/he teach language English
‘I know a teacher who teaches English.’

The pronoun ค้ำสื่อน ‘s/he’ in the relative clause above is coreferential with the
head noun ครู ‘teacher’ in the main clause. The grammatical role of that pronoun is
subject of the embedded clause and the pronoun occurs in the subject position, that is,
precedes the verb ผ่าสื่าน ‘teach’ (the basic word order in Thai is also S-V-O).

With the pronoun retention strategy, it is found that it allows more NPs to be
relativized. Some languages like Basque don’t normally allow relativization on Genitive
NPs. But with this strategy, Genitive NPs are relativizable. (Keenan 1985).

2. Relative Clauses in Khmer and Thai²
2.1 Relative Clauses in Khmer¹
Relative clauses in Khmer are marked by the word daoel, the general marker for
linking subordinate clauses with head nouns (Comrie & Horie 1995). Typologically,
relative clauses in this language are of the postnominal type, that is, relative clauses
occur following head NPs, as in (3).

(3) ต้มอัค ที่อะไรสื่าน ก่อน ตัว ลงมูลถว่ย [daoel ริงสั๊ก?ah]
crow fly toward river one REL dry
‘The crow flies to a river which is dry.’ [written text]

In (3), the relative clause which modifies the head NP ตัว ลงมูลถว่ย ‘a
river’ is daoel ริงสั๊ก?ah ‘which is dry’. The marker daoel occurs clause-initially and the
relative clause follows the head NP.

Besides the pronoun retention strategy, relative clauses in Khmer can be formed
by the gap strategy, the least explicit way of encoding the role of the head NP in
embedded clauses. Instead of having a personal pronoun remaining in the relative
clause, there is a missing NP which is coreferential with the head noun. In example (3)
above, from the basic word order S-V-O and from the argument structure of the main
verb in the embedded clause, there is a missing argument in the relative clause daoel
ริงสั๊ก?ah ‘which is dry’, that is, the subject NP of the clause. Since the missing noun
phrase in the relative clause formed by the gap strategy is coreferential with the head
NP, the missing subject argument in the example (3) can be retrievable as ตัว ลงมูลถว่ย
‘a river’.

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² Although relative clauses in Khmer and Thai allow the omission of the relative clause markers,
the present study includes only relative clauses with the overt markers.
Both written and spoken data were collected in the two languages. Examples from written
texts are marked as [written text], all other examples are elicited spoken examples. There are
around 150 relative clauses collected in each language.
Restrictive and non-restrictive types are not distinguished in the study.
³ The written data were collected from newspapers, journals, and short stories. The spoken data
were elicited from two native Khmer informants in Thailand, one male graduate student and
one female graduate student at Chulalongkorn University)
Concerning the NP positions that can be relativized in Khmer, subjects, direct objects, indirect objects and possessors can all be relativized. Subjects and indirect objects can be relativized by using either the gap strategy or pronoun retention. Direct objects are relativized only by the gap strategy whereas possessive NPs can be relativized only by pronoun retention. The examples (4) – (7) will illustrate the relativization of those NP positions.

(4) ឃ្លាំង មុខ កាត់រុង បាហេស ជឿរាជ ថ្ងៃមួយ ឃ្លាំង តែបុរស រង្វាន់ តែនឹង​ទឹកាំង ថ្ងៃមួយ ឃ្លាំង តែបុរស រង្វាន់ តែនឹង​ទឹកាំង
day one fox invite cat REL be friend visit
srok កាស្បែង រុបាប កូន
village birth belong to him
‘One day, the fox invites a cat which is his friend to visit his hometown.’
[written text]

The subject NP ជឿរាជ ‘cat’ is relativized and leaves a gap in the subject position of the relative clause.

(5) កូន ស្រី កុង ពិពី នាយក ស្រុង ពីរនាំ កន្លែង និង នាយក ស្រុង ពីរនាំ
daughter their two CLF not know do exercise REL person
kruu ដាក់ ចាញ់ ព្ ការ តារាង នន និង ពីរេះ
teacher assign work at house
‘Their two daughters don’t know how to do the exercise which the teacher assigns to be done at home.’ [written text]

The direct object NP កន្លែង ‘exercise’ is relativized in the above example and leaves a gap in the direct object position, that is, after the verb ពីរេះ ‘work’.

(6) ក្រមេឈ ទឹការ ឃ្លាំង រុបាប មាន ំរួល ំរួល ឥត ៥ ឆ្នាំ
child REL I give money age five year
‘The child to whom I gave some money is five years old.’

The indirect object ក្រមេឈ ‘child’ is relativized and leaves a gap in the clause-final position of the relative clause ទឹការ ឃ្លាំង រុបាប.

(7) ការេឈ ទឹការ ឃ្លាំង ជឿរាជ បាល បាំ បន់ ការេឈ ជឿរាជ បាល បាំ បន់ ការេឈ
chair REL leg it PAST break be chair of him
‘The chair the leg of which leg is broken is his chair.’

The possessor ការេឈ ‘chair’ is relativized. The personal pronoun ជឿរាជ ‘it’ occurs in the relative clause to encode the possessive role of the head noun ការេឈ ‘chair’.

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2.2 Relative Clauses in Thai

Unlike relative clauses in Khmer, relative clauses in Thai can be introduced by one of the three markers, namely, ที่, อยู่, and ที่. The ที่ marker is the most frequent and neutral choice whereas อยู่ is used in more literary and formal style. ที่ and อยู่ are mostly used interchangeably. The ที่ marker is quite archaic. It is still used in present day Thai as the least frequent choice.

Relative clauses in Thai are also typologically of the postnominal type and can be formed by the two strategies, the gap strategy and the pronoun retention strategy. Unlike Khmer, subjects, objects (direct and indirect objects), and possessors can be relativized by either the gap strategy or pronoun retention. However, the gap strategy is more frequently used in both written and spoken Thai. The examples (8) – (11) will illustrate the relativization of all possible NPs.

(8) คุณเห็นที่ดิน [ที่ อยู่ กาย ด้านทางที่ดิน ข้างน้ำ ร่อง][มาย] 
you see REL adjoin with side west of us Q
‘Do you see the land which is next to our west side?’ [written text]

The subject NP ที่ดิน ‘land’ is relativized. The gap in the subject position, preceding the verb อยู่, in the embedded clause is coreferential with that NP.

(9) พวกเขาวายมาย คุณที่บ้าน เดิน ลำพูน [อยู่ ยาย] 
they still not return area around garden Lumpini REL use 

อยู่ [อยู่ ใน อานา ชั้นทำขาว][ว่]
be office temporary
‘They haven’t returned the area around the Lumpini Garden which is used as the temporary office.’ [written text]

The direct object ที่บ้าน เดิน ลำพูน ‘the area around the Lumpini Garden’ is relativized and then leaves a gap in the direct object position in the relative clause, that is, after the verb ยาย ‘use’.

(10) ติ่ม [ที่ อยู่ ยาส อยู่ ยาย][มาย] 
ติ่ม ที่เด็ก เด็ก ผ้า อยู่ใน ยาย [มาย]
‘The child to whom the parents easily give money is often spoiled.’

The indirect object ติ่ม ‘child’ is relativized and then leaves the gap after the direct object ยาย ‘money’ in the relative clause.

(11) ฉันรู้ว่าพวกเขายินดี [ที่ ร้าน][อยู่]
I know man REL wife sick
‘I know the man whose wife is sick.’

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4 The written data were collected from the online Thai corpus (newspapers, magazines, short stories, etc.) via the program Thai Concordance Online by the Department of Linguistics, Chulalongkorn University. URL: http://www.arts.chula.ac.th/~ling/ThaiConc
The spoken Thai data used in this study were elicited in the workshop on relative clauses in Thai at Chulalongkorn University, May 2003.
The possessor  phûuchaay ‘man’ is relativized and the gap after the possessed NP phanrayaa ‘wife’ is coreferential with that noun.

3. Pronoun Retention in Khmer

3.1 Pronoun Retention in Simple Sentences

Pronoun retention, likewise the gap strategy, can be said to be the ‘primary relativization strategies’ in Khmer since they can be used to relativize subject NPs, the most easily accessible NPs (Keenan & Comrie 1977). However, pronoun retention with relativized direct object is unacceptable to native speakers. Like the relativized subjects, relativized indirect objects are found with pronoun retention and the occurrence of the resumptive pronoun is optional. On the other hand, the occurrence of a resumptive pronoun is obligatory for relativized possessive NPs. The examples (12) – (15) will illustrate these findings.

(12) (subject)
kpom skoaI m.muh klah [ dæl kei ræ-kæa nuv tii nuh]
I know human some REL s/he work at place there
‘I know someone who works there.’

(13) (direct object)
*ckæ [ dæl kpom sraæp vie ] baan slap
dog REL I love it PAST die
ckæ [ dæl kpom sraæp Ø ] baan slap (Gap)
dog REL I love PAST die
‘The dog which I love a lot has died.’

(14) (indirect object)
kmeëg [ dæl kpom ñaoy luy vie ] ñaayu? præm cnam
child REL I give money it age five year
‘The child to whom I gave some money is five years old.’

(15) (possessor)
bo'ráh [ dæl ckæ (ræboh) koaI ræshot ] mum sbaay-çæ
man REL dog of him run away not happy
*bo'ráh [ dæl ckæ (ræboh) Ø ræshot ] mum sbaay-çæ
man REL dog of run away not happy
‘The man whose dog ran away is sad.’

The distribution of pronoun retention in Khmer is particularly interesting from a more general theoretical perspective. According to Keenan and Comrie (1977), if the primary relativization strategy, in this case ‘pronoun retention’, in a language is possible for a particular position on the Accessibility Hierarchy, then it must also be possible for all positions lower on the Accessibility Hierarchy. In other words, in the pronoun retention case, the higher NPs on the hierarchy imply the lower NPs.
SUBJECT

DIRECT OBJECT

INDIRECT OBJECT

OBLIQUE

GENITIVE

OBJECT OF COMPARISON

From the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy proposed by Keenan & Comrie above, Direct Object is lower in position than Subject, Indirect Object is lower than Direct Object and Subject, and so on. The lower NP on the hierarchy is, according to the claim, more accessible, in this case easier to relativize, than the higher NP. So Subject is the most accessible NP, in this case, is the easiest NP to relativize. Direct Object is more accessible than Indirect Object and so on. Oblique, according to the hierarchy, means the major Oblique case NP which expresses an argument of the main predicate, as the table in Janie put the glass on the table. The Oblique here doesn’t mean the one with the adverbial function as in China in Wen Ling studies in China. Oblique NPs in Khmer and Thai are mostly in adverbial function so Oblique is excluded in the present study.

With respect to pronoun retention in Khmer, the strategy applies to Subject, so it should apply to all other lower NPs, that is, Direct Object, Indirect Object and Genitive. However, pronoun retention in Khmer is a counterexample to this particular claim since pronoun retention doesn’t apply with a relativized Direct Object, although this is lower than Subject. Yet, it starts to apply again to Indirect Object and Possessor. In addition, pronoun retention in Khmer also violates the first Hierarchy Constraint which is stated that ‘any relative clause forming strategy must apply to a continuous segment of the Accessibility Hierarchy.

According to Keenan (1985), the lower an NP is on the hierarchy, the more common it is to find it expressed by pronouns. That is, Indirect Object is more commonly expressed by a pronoun in a relative clause than Direct Object. Direct Object more commonly encodes the role of the head NP in the relative clause than Subject. Khmer, again, provides a counterexample to this generalization.

Concerning pronoun retention with relativized subjects in Khmer, it is found that not all subjects can be encoded by the resumptive pronouns. Only animate subjects like humans and animals can be relativized with the pronoun retention strategy, as in the examples below. (Note that relativizing a possessor, where pronoun retention is obligatory, does allow, indeed require a resumptive pronoun even with inanimate heads, as in example (7).)
Pronoun retention in Khmer and Thai relative clauses

(16) \textit{bo\textbar rh\textbar a\textbar h} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{koo\textbar at}, \textit{cu\textbar y}, \textit{kme\textbar e\textbar y}] \ cie \ taa \ r\textbar rh\textbar a\textbar h \ k\textit{pom} \ \textit{man} \ \textit{REL} \ he \ help \ child \ be \ grandfather \ of \ I
‘The man who helps the child is my grandfather.’

(17) \textit{c\textbar kae} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{vie}, \textit{k\textbar am\textbar puy\textbar de\textbar ek}] \ cie \ c\textbar kae \ r\textbar rh\textbar a\textbar h \ k\textit{pom} \ \textit{dog} \ \textit{REL} \ it \ PROG \ sleep \ be \ dog \ of \ I
‘The dog which is sleeping is my dog.’

(18) \textit{m\textbar e\textbar ek} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{bak}]

\textit{branch} (of tree) \ \textit{REL} \ break
‘The branch which is broken’

\textit{*m\textbar e\textbar ek} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{vie}, \textit{bak}]

\textit{branch} \ \textit{REL} \ it \ break

(19) \textit{k\textbar an\textbar t\textbar ray} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{cak}, \textit{k\textbar ra\textbar da\textbar a\textbar h}]

\textit{scissors} \ \textit{REL} \ prick \ paper
‘The scissors which prick the paper’

\textit{*k\textbar an\textbar t\textbar ray} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{vie}, \textit{cak}, \textit{k\textbar ra\textbar da\textbar a\textbar h}]

\textit{scissors} \ \textit{REL} \ it \ prick \ paper

(20) \textit{la\textbar an} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{c\textbar o\textbar l}, \textit{kme\textbar e\textbar y}]

\textit{car} \ \textit{REL} \ collide \ child
‘The car which hits the child’

\textit{*la\textbar an} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{vie}, \textit{c\textbar o\textbar l}, \textit{kme\textbar e\textbar y}]

\textit{car} \ \textit{REL} \ it \ collide \ child

(21) \textit{pte\textbar ah} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{nu\textbar v}, \textit{k\textbar ha\textbar et}, \textit{siem\textbar reap}]

\textit{house} \ \textit{REL} \ locate/situate \ province \ Siem \ Reap
‘The house which is situated in Siem Reap’

\textit{*pte\textbar ah} \ [\textit{dael}, \textit{vie}, \textit{nu\textbar v}, \textit{k\textbar ha\textbar et}, \textit{siem\textbar reap}]

\textit{house} \ \textit{REL} \ it \ locate/situate \ province \ Siem \ Reap

From example (16) – (21), the NP \textit{bo\textbar rh\textbar a\textbar h} ‘man’ and \textit{c\textbar kae} ‘dog’ can be relativized with the pronoun retention strategy since they are animate, whereas the NP \textit{m\textbar e\textbar ek} ‘branch of tree’, \textit{k\textbar an\textbar t\textbar ray} ‘scissors’, \textit{la\textbar an} ‘car’ and \textit{pte\textbar ah} ‘house’ cannot be relativized since they are inanimate.

3.2 Pronoun Retention in Complex Sentences

This section will illustrate the occurrence of the resumptive pronoun with relativized NPs in subordinate clauses, such as in verb complement clauses. In Khmer, the occurrence of the coreferential personal pronouns in subordinate clauses follows by and large with that in simple sentences. That is, subjects, indirect objects, and possessors in subordinate clauses can be relativized by pronoun retention whereas with direct objects this is impossible, as in the example below.
(22)
a. kmeeg kth thaa bo?-rah viy ckae
   child think that man hit dog
   ‘The boy thinks that the man hits the dog.’

b. bo?-rah [ dael kmeeg kth thaa koat viy ckae ] kthw (Subject)
   man REL child think that he hit dog be
   puu r-rah kpom
   uncle of I
   ‘The man who the boy thinks hit the dog is my uncle.’

c. bo?-rah [ dael kmeeg kth thaa thd viy ckae ] kthw (Subject)
   man REL child think that hit dog be
   puu r-rah kpom
   uncle of I
   ‘The man who the boy thinks hit the dog is my uncle.’

d. ckae [ dael kmeeg kth thaa bo?-rah baan viy thd ] (Direct Object)
   dog REL child think thaa man PAST hit
   ro?rr-ruw bat haay
   run away disappear already
   ‘The dog that the boy thinks the man hit ran away.’

e. ckae [ dael kmeeg kth thaa bo?-rah baan viy vie ] (Direct Object)
   dog REL child think thaa man PAST hit it
   ro?rr-ruw bat haay
   run away disappear already
   ‘The dog that the boy thinks the man hit ran away.’

(23)
a. kpom d?g thaa bo?-rah ?aoy luy kmeeg
   I know that man give money child
   ‘I know that the man gives the child some money.’

b. kmeeg [ dael kpom d?g thaa bo?-rah ?aoy luy vie ]
   child REL I know that man give money he (younger)
   kampung crie navi chaa
   PROG sing on stage
   ‘The child to whom I know the man gives some money is singing on the stage.’

c. kmeeg [ dael kpom d?g thaa bo?-rah ?aoy luy thd ]
   child REL I know that man give money
   kampung crie navi chaa
   PROG sing on stage
   ‘The child whom I know the man gives some money is singing on the stage.’
Pronoun retention in Khmer and Thai relative clauses

The resumptive pronouns in the subject and indirect object positions are optional with relativization in simple sentences but they are obligatorily present with relativization in subordinate clauses as in 22b. and 23b. The reason may be that the retrieval of the information in the simple sentences is easier than in the complex sentences. The obligatory occurrence of the resumptive pronoun with relativized NPs in complex sentences may help the hearers to retrieve the information.

4. Pronoun Retention in Thai

4.1 Pronoun Retention in Simple sentences

Pronoun retention in Thai, and likewise the gap strategy, are also the ‘primary relativization strategies’ since they can be used to relativize subject NPs. Relative clauses formed by the pronoun retention strategy are mostly found in colloquial speech, and are rarely found in written texts, whereas the relative clauses formed by the gap strategy are found in both colloquial and written styles. Pronoun retention in Thai is much more flexible than in Khmer. The resumptive pronouns can occur if the relativized noun phrase is any of subject, direct object, indirect object, or possessor, as in the examples below.

(24) (subject)

ม่าย [ที่่ิน man kin khn̄siam] mák càîp ḱhḗng-rc̄hḗŋ
dog REL it eat calcium often will healthy
‘Dogs which take calcium are often healthy.’

(25) (direct object)

ม่าย [ที่่ิน kuń rák man máak] taay lē̂w

dog REL you love it much die already
‘The dog which you love a lot has died.’

(26) (indirect object)

เด็κ [ที่่ิน chän háy ṛẹ̀n (kè̝e) khăw] ʔaayúʔ háa khūap
child REL I give money to s/he age five year
‘The child to whom I gave some money is five years old.’

(27) (possessor)

พุชชาอา [ที่่ิน máa (khooŋ) khăw nūi pay] kamlag s̀aw
man REL dog of s/he run go PROG sad
‘The man whose dog ran away is sad.’

Since Thai allows pronoun retention with all types of NPs, Thai doesn’t violate any NP Accessibility Hierarchy claim, constraint, or generalization proposed by Keenan & Comrie.

Unlike Khmer, there is no constraint on relativizing subject NPs with pronoun retention. All kinds of NPs, animate or inanimate, can be encoded in the relative clauses by the personal pronouns, as in the examples below.
(28) **phùuchaay** [thīi khāw chūay dēk] pen khuntaa khōyy chǎn
   man REL he help child be grandfather of I
   ‘The man who helps the child is my grandfather.’

(29) **māa** [thīi man kamlay lāp] pen māa khōyy chǎn
   dog REL it PROG sleep be dog of I
   ‘The dog which is sleeping is my dog.’

(30) **kỳmáay** [thīi man hàk] lōn maa cāak tônmáay
   branch (of tree) REL it break fall come from tree
   ‘The branch which is broken falls from the tree.’

(31) **rōt** [thīi man chon dēk] nīi pay léew
   car REL it hit child run away go already
   ‘The car that hit the child already ran away.’

(32) **bāan** [thīi man yuu nay bōriwseen diaw kān] mii sāam láy
   house REL it be in area one together have three CLF
   ‘The houses that are in the same area include three houses.’

Although the occurrence of pronoun retention in Thai doesn’t have any
constraint relating to the semantic properties of the relativized NPs, it seems to have
some limitation with the occurrence of the resumptive pronoun relating to the choice of
the relative markers. It is found that relative clauses introduced by the ʔan marker,
mostly found with relativized inanimate subjects, do not allow the resumptive pronouns
to occur, whereas there seems to be no restriction with relative clauses introduced by the
thīi marker and the sīj marker, as illustrated in the examples below.

(33) a. **khāw dāay háy neewkhít** [ʔan man pen prayōot sāmráp thúuk khon]
   he PAST give idea REL it be benefit for every people
   ‘He gave an idea which is beneficial for everyone.’

b. **khāw dāay háy neewkhít** [ʔan ʔĩ pen prayōot sāmráp thúuk khon]
   he PAST give idea REL be benefit for every people
   ‘He gave an idea which is beneficial for everyone.’

c. **khāw dāay háy neewkhít** [sīj man pen prayōot sāmráp thúuk khon]
   he PAST give idea REL it be benefit for every people
   ‘He gave an idea which is beneficial for everyone.’

d. **khāw dāay háy neewkhít** [thīi man pen prayōot sāmráp thúuk khon]
   he PAST give idea REL it be benefit for every people
   ‘He gave an idea which is beneficial for everyone.’
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(34)
a. *nīi pen raągwan [ʔan man yīŋyay thīsūt nay chiwīt]
   this be prize/reward REL it big/great superlatively in life
   ‘This is the prize which is the biggest in (my) life.’
b. nīi pen raągwan [ʔan ō yīŋyay thīsūt nay chiwīt]
   this be prize/reward REL big/great superlatively in life
   ‘This is the prize which is the biggest in (my) life.’
c. nīi pen raągwan [thīi man yīŋyay thīsūt nay chiwīt]
   this be prize/reward REL it big/great superlatively in life
   ‘This is the prize which is the biggest in (my) life.’
d. nīi pen raągwan [sīŋ man yīŋyay thīsūt nay chiwīt]
   this be prize/reward REL it big/great superlatively in life
   ‘This is the prize which is the biggest in (my) life.’

So far, there seems to be no limitation for pronoun retention with relative clauses introduced by thīi and sīŋ no matter whether the relativized NPs are subjects, objects, or possessors, and no matter whether the relativized NPs are animate or inanimate, concrete or abstract.

4.2 Pronoun Retention in Subordinate Clauses
The resumptive pronouns can encode the role of relativized subjects, direct objects, indirect objects and possessive NPs in subordinate clauses. Unlike Khmer, the occurrence of the resumptive pronouns is optional for relativized subjects, direct objects, indirect objects. With respect to possessors, some relative clauses with relativized possessive NPs obligatorily require the resumptive pronouns but others don’t. It depends on the distance of the relationship between the relativized possessor and the possessed NP. If the relationship between the possessor and the possessed is quite close, like a man and his wife as in example (37), the resumptive pronoun is optional. If the relationship between the possessor and the possessed is quite distant, such as between a man and his house as in example (38), the resumptive pronoun is obligatorily present in the relative clause.

(35)
a. dēk khīt wāa phūuchaay tīi mãā
   child think that man hit dog
   ‘The child thinks that the man hit the dog.’
b. phūuchaay [thīi dēk khīt wāa (khōw) tīi mãā] nīi pay lēew
   man REL child think that he hit dog run away go already
   ‘The man that the child thinks hit the dog ran away.’
c. mãā [thīi dēk khīt wāa phūuchaay tīi (man)] nīi pay lēew
   dog REL child think that man hit it run away go already
   ‘The dog that the child thinks the man hit ran away.’

(36)
a. chān riū wāa phūuchaay hāy ʔon dēk
   I know that man give money child
   ‘I know that the man gives the child some money.’
Natchanan Yaowapat

b. ɗèk [thiŋ ch̪aŋ r̪uu w̪aa phûuchaay h̪aŋ ŋən (kh̪àw)] pen nákrian
   child REL I know that man give money he be student
   ‘The child to whom I know the man gives some money is a student.’

(37)
a. ch̪aŋ r̪uu w̪aa phanrayaa khɔ̄ŋ phûuchaay pɯaŋ
   I know that man of man sick
   ‘I know that the man’s wife is sick.’

b. phûuchaay [thiŋ ch̪aŋ r̪uu w̪aa phanrayaa (khɔ̄ŋ kh̪àw)] pɯaŋ maa
   man REL I know that wife of he sick not come
   ‘The man whose wife I know is sick doesn’t come.’

(38) phûuchaay [thiŋ ch̪aŋ yuŋ bân (khɔ̄ŋ) kh̪àw] pen yàat ch̪aŋ
   man REL I live/stay house of he be relative I
   ‘The man whose house I live in is my relative.’

5. Conclusion

It is found that the occurrence of pronouns in the relative clause is related to the
syntactic-semantic relation of the noun phrase being relativized. In Thai, the resumptive
pronoun can occur if the relativized noun phrase is any of subject, direct object, indirect
object, or possessor. The occurrence of the resumptive pronoun in Khmer relative
clauses seems to be more limited. Resumptive pronouns may occur with relativized
subject, indirect object, or possessor, but not with direct object. Unlike Thai, the
occurrence of the pronoun with a relativized possessor seems to be obligatory.

The distribution of pronoun retention in Khmer is particularly interesting from a
more general theoretical perspective. According to Keenan and Comrie (1977), if
pronoun retention is possible for a particular position on the Accessibility Hierarchy,
then it must also be possible for all positions lower on the Accessibility Hierarchy. Thai
does not violate this generalization, since pronoun retention is possible for all positions.
But in Khmer, pronoun retention is possible for subjects, but not for direct objects,
although direct objects are lower than subjects on the Accessibility Hierarchy, thus
providing a direct counterexample to this particular claim of Keenan and Comrie

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