Derivatives in Khmer compound words

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Abstract
Normally compound words in Khmer and Thai languages are formed by at least two base words. This article, however, compares some particular Thai and Khmer compound words. It is found that Thai usually creates compound words with base words whereas Khmer forms compound words with a base word and a derivative. Derivatives used to form Khmer compound words can be nominal, causative, reciprocal or intensified ones. This article aims to help Khmer learners, especially Thai students, to use Khmer compound words properly.

Derivation and compounding are two very important types of word formation in Khmer. Morphologically derived words – here called ‘derivatives’ – are formed by a base word and affixes (mostly a single affix in Khmer) whereas compound words are formed by at least two base words or free morphemes. These two types of Khmer word formation are explained in detail in many textbooks of Khmer grammar, for instance Lak Phasā Khamēn (Principles of the Khmer Language) by Cham Thongkhamwan (1977); The Khmer Language by Gorgoniye (1966); An Outline of Cambodian Grammar by Huffman (1967); A Lexicon of Khmer Morphology by Jenner and Pou (1980-1981); Introduction to Cambodian by Jacob (1990); La grammaire du khmer moderne by Khin Sok (2002), among others.

Thai native speakers first learning the Khmer language are fascinated by derivative words, which rarely occur in Thai, rather than by compound words, which are very common in Thai. Although Thai grammar books mention derivation in the Thai language (Upakitsilpasarn 1988:29-35, Kamchhai 2004:90-128, etc.), most examples in derivation are Khmer or Pali-Sanskrit loans. Thai native speakers themselves seem not to perceive derivation as one way to form words in their language. (Poets or writers, trying to create new

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\footnote{Uraisi Varasarin (1984) discusses in detail Khmer derivation and Khmer loan words in Thai whereas Karnchana Nacauskel (1971:294-329) compares the parallelism between Thai and Khmer compound words. All her examples are real compounds, formed by base words.}

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words for their work, may be the exception to this claim.) Moreover, Thai native speakers use “the derivative word” in Thai as one free word. For example, when they say the word มหาวิทยาลัย [mā?hā:wīthā?jaːlaj] “university” วิทยาการ [camrān] “to progress, develop, grow”, they think of them as one word rather than words formed by [mā?hā: + wīthā?ja? + aːlaj], originally from Sanskrit or ซริ [saː] + an infix -am-, originally from Khmer. In contrast, Thai people have no difficulties to understand that a compound word โรงเรียน [roːŋrian] “school” is formed by โรง [roːŋ] “building” and รียน [rian] “to study, learn.”

To classify which words are derivatives is not difficult for Thais who learn the Khmer language, however, to use them properly is not an easy matter. For instance, the verb [fùk] in Thai can be either a transitive verb or a causative verb, as shown in (1) and (2). When sentence (1) is translated into Khmer, the base form [fok] “to train” is used just in the same way as Thai uses [fùk]. This is shown in (3). However, when sentence (2) is translated to Khmer, as in (4), the causative derivative [baŋvāk] “to practice”, not the transitive base form, has to be used. Thai students have to select a base word or a derivative in the right position when speaking or writing the Khmer sentences.

1) dể dể fùk tham ?aːhān children practice do food “Children are practicing cooking.”

2) khru: fùk dể dể tham ?aːhān teacher practice children do food “The teacher is teaching children to cook (the children do the cooking themselves).”

3) koon kme̖ŋ fīk tveə mhoop small children train do food “Children are practicing cooking.”

4) look kruu baŋvāk koon kme̖ŋ tveə mhoop teacher practice small children do food “The teacher is practicing children to cook (the children do the cooking themselves).”

Although compound words are formed by at least two base words, it is observable in Khmer that derivatives can also be co-occurred with another base word to form compound words. In this article, Khmer compound words will be classified into 3 major types, based on types of words compounded; free or base forms and derivatives. The Khmer data will also be compared to Thai words.

1. base form + base form

This is the normal type of Khmer compound words. They are formed by at least two free forms: the first base word is the head word, and the second
modifier can be either a noun or a predicate³. As this type of compound words is very common in both Khmer and Thai, I will just show only two examples.

The data will have the English and Thai translation of the compound words, the glossing as well as information about the base form of each derivative. The Thai equivalences are illustrated to compare the sameness or the difference with the Khmer examples. Some discussions may be added to examples when needed.

5) ស្រីស្រី “a cook” (ស្រីស្រី)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neak</td>
<td>person (pt.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tvão</td>
<td>do (p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thooop</td>
<td>food (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khon</td>
<td>person (pt.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tham</td>
<td>do (p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?ahè:n</td>
<td>food (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) ជំេរី “a clean place” (ជំេរី)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tii</td>
<td>place (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s?aat</td>
<td>clean (p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thii:</td>
<td>place (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sâ??a:t</td>
<td>clean (p.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. derivative + base form

In this second type of Khmer compound words, derivatives, occurring in the first position of compound words, are usually nominal derivatives. Thais don’t have problems understanding or using derivatives in this position, as the head word of Thai compounds is normally a noun. If a predicate រះៗ is used instead of a noun ឈឺកពេញ /camnaek/ in (7), រះៗរះៗ /caek baay/ “to distribute a meal” is considered as a verb phrase, not a compound word. Thai learners understand why nominal derivatives have to be used in this position.

7) ឈឺកពេញ “a portion of meal” (ឈឺកពេញ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>camnaek</td>
<td>part, portion (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baay</td>
<td>meal (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sûanbèn</td>
<td>share (n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?a:hè:n</td>
<td>meal (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The noun ឈឺកពេញ /camnaek/ “part, portion” is derived from the predicate រះៗ/caek/ “to divide, to distribute, to share.”

8) ក្រម្លៃ “a shortage of land” (ក្រម្លៃ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khmer</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kâŋvah</td>
<td>shortage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day</td>
<td>land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kâ:n khràt khle:n</td>
<td>shortage(n.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thii:</td>
<td>land (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³Adjectives and verbs are grouped in the class predicate as I follow the classification in the Cambodian-English Dictionary (Headley 1977). The transcription and the meaning of most Khmer words in this article is also based on Headley's Cambodian - English Dictionary. The Thai glossing is from Haas's Thai - English Dictionary (1964).
The noun ការឈុត /kən̄yah/ “shortage” is derived from the predicate ឈុត /kvah/ “to be lacking, to be short or running short of (something), less, insufficient.”

9) នាគ ឈុត “a drop of water” (ឯតិរិ)⁴

្វៃ គ្មៈ
damnak  tık

action of accumulating or making puddles (n.) water (n.)

(Th.) មន្ដ ម៉ា
jót  nám

drop (n.) water (n.)

The noun នាគ /damnak/ “action of accumulating or making puddles” is derived from the predicate ឈុត /dák/ “to make puddles, to accumulate (of liquid).”

10) ផ្លែឈុត “a size of land” (ការឈុតឈុត)

ោ ឈុត
tumhum  day
(Th.) ការឈុត បាលឈុត
khāʔnabt  thî: din

size (n.) land (n.)

The noun ផ្លែឈុត /tumhum/ “size” is derived from the predicate ឈុត /thom/ “to be big, tall, vast, important.”

I cannot find other types of derivatives which can occur in this position. More data needs to be collected.

3. base form + derivative

The third type of Khmer compound words has a base form as the head noun and various types of derivatives as the modifier in the second position. It can be further classified as follows:

3.1 base form + nominal derivative

There are many examples of compound words with nominal derivatives in the second position. The head noun មន្ដ /neak/ “person, one who (used as an agentive particle to create nouns from predicates)” is normally followed by a nominal derivative to specify types of person in Khmer, as in (11) - (13).

⁴The word ឯត /jót] can be classified as a noun, a classifier or a verb, meaning “a drop or to drip, drop” (Royal Institute 2003:1264). Thai would not consider ឯត [jót] in this position as a verb. I have found out that in the old version of Royal Institute’s Thai dictionary, ឯត [jót] is classified only as a verb or a classifier (Royal Institute 1982:875). The different classification of the two versions of the dictionary may be due to the fact that there is no clear cut line between nouns and classifiers in Thai.
11) អ្នកជ្រូ$i$ “a traveler” (កនុងដី)

ដុំ/damnae/ គូ/kho/ ដែន/daetha/
្ម៉េ/person (pt.) ប្រាក់/trip, travel (n.) សុំ/person (n.) ទស្សនា/travel (p.)

The nominal derivative នឹង/daet/ “way, trip, travel” is derived from the predicate នឹង/daet/ “to walk, to go, to move.”

12) អ្នកជ្រូ$i$ “a refugee” (កនុងដី)

ដុំ/cumlien/ អ្មេ/popphaijop/
្ម៉េ/person (pt.) ប្រសិនបើ/mobilization (n.) សុំ/person (n.) ទន់/to imigrate (p.)

The nominal derivative នឹង/daet/ “mobilization; requisitioning confiscation” is derived from the predicate នឹង/daet/ “to mobilize (due to an emergency).”

13) អ្នកជ្រូ$i$ “a patient” (កនុងដី សុំជាមួយ)

ដុំ/nummii/ ដុំ/nummii/ កនុងdings, illness (n.)

ប្រសិនបើ/khon/ ប្រសិនបើ/khon/ សេរី/cep/ សេរី/puaj/
្ម៉េ/person (n.) រាម/fever (n.) សុំ/person (n.) មី/to be sick, កូន/be in pain (p.)

The nominal derivative នឹង/daet/ “disease, illness” is derived from the predicate នឹង/daet/ “to be sick, ill, have a disease, to be hurt.”

ដុំ/cumlien/ can be translated to Thai as either កនុង/khon/ ប្រាក់/khon/ ប្រសិនបើ/cep/ ប្រាក់/puaj/, formed by a head noun and a noun, or កនុង/khon/ ប្រាក់/khon/ ប្រាក់/puaj/, formed by a head noun and a predicate.

It can be seen from the Thai translation of the above examples that Thai normally uses predicates rather than nouns to modify the head noun. Khmer, in contrast, does not use predicates in this position, as shown in the following ungrammatical compound words *ដុំ/daet/ *ដុំ/daet/ *ដុំ/cumlien/ *ដុំ/cumlien/.

More examples which have nominal derivatives in the second position are as follows:

14) បុគ្គលិក “a bus” (រាជរាល)

ដំ/laan/ ខ្នាប/ctoe/ រូ/rot/ ជាល/chaw/
្មេ/car (n.) ប្រាក់/rent (n.) សុំ/car (n.) ទស្សនា/to rent (p.)
The nominal derivative ក្រោយ /cnuəl/ “rent, a hired hand” is derived from the predicate ឆាប /cual/ “to rent, hire.”

15) ក្រោយក្រោម /kromnaat/ “a hometown, birthplace, native country” (ប្រទេសការី)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>(Th.)</th>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ក្រោយ (n.)</td>
<td>ក្រោម (n.)</td>
<td>ប្រទេស (n.)</td>
<td>ការី (n.)</td>
<td>ប្រឹក (p.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nominal derivative ក្រោម /kamnaat/ “birth, origin” is derived from the predicate ការី /kaet/ “to be born, to be created.”

16) ក្រោយក្រោម /kromnaat/ “a bad student” (នាខាថាក់ថ្នាក់)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>(Th.)</th>
<th>khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ក្រោយ (n.)</td>
<td>ក្រោម (n.)</td>
<td>នាខាថាក់ (n.)</td>
<td>ថ្នាក់ (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nominal derivative ក្រោម /kamnaat/ “bad person (insult)” is derived from the predicate ការី /kaet/ “bad (of behavior), vile, nasty.”

17) ក្រោយក្រោម /kromnaat/ “loaned money” (ដៃដូល)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>(Th.)</th>
<th>khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ក្រោយ (n.)</td>
<td>ក្រោម (n.)</td>
<td>ដៃ (n.)</td>
<td>ដូល (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nominal derivative ក្រោយ /kamnaat/ “loan” is derived from the predicate ការី /kaet/ “to borrow.”

18) ក្រោយក្រោម /kromnaat/ “a litter, palanquin” (ការេកស្រាប)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>(Th.)</th>
<th>khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ក្រោយ (n.)</td>
<td>ក្រោម (n.)</td>
<td>ការេ (n.)</td>
<td>កស្រាប (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nominal derivative ក្រោយ /kamnaat/ “bar used to carry a load between the shoulders of two or more persons (n.)” is derived from the predicate ការេ /snaet/ “to carry something by means of a pole supported on the shoulders of two (or more) persons.”

19) ក្រោយក្រោម /kromnaat/ “a supporting troop” (ការេការី)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>khmer</th>
<th>(Th.)</th>
<th>khmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ក្រោយ (n.)</td>
<td>ក្រោម (n.)</td>
<td>ការេ (n.)</td>
<td>ការី (n.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nominal derivative ញ្ចុះ /cumnuøy/ “assistance, aid, help” is derived from the predicate ញ្ចុះ /cumuy/ “to assist, to help, to provide help or assistance.” ញ្ចុះ /cumnuøy/ is literally translated to Thai as กำชែត /kaːm chhûaj/ but, however, Thai does not use the verb ช่วย /chûaj/ “to help” in this context.

20) ឈុះពូក “inundation, flood” (មាត់មាត់) ញិក ញិរៈ (Th.) នាម ធ្វើ

តុក មូសាដ៏ នាម ធ្វើ

water (n.)  flood (n.)    water (n.)  to flood (p.)

The nominal derivative ញិរៈ /cumnoea/ “flood” is derived from the predicate ញិរៈ /cọea/ “to flood, to rise (of water).”

Although most of the above examples show that Khmer uses derivative in compound words, it is found that some Khmer compound words can co-occur with either a base word or a derivative. In (21.a), the compound is formed by a head noun and a derivative whereas in (21.b), the word is compounded with a head noun and a base word. The meanings of these two compound words are slightly different. The one with a derivative is more intensified than the latter one with a base word.

21.a) តូឈុះពូកា “a very old woman” (មាត់មាត់)

តុក ឈុះពូកាង ស្មាញ ស្មារ

នាម មូសាដ៏ ស្មារ

woman (n.)  agedness, old age (n.)

(Th.) សុីង  ឆា: ឈុះពូកាង ស្មារ

woman (n.)  to be old, aged (p.)

21.b) តូឈុះពូកា “an old woman” (មាត់មាត់)

តុក ឈុះពូកាង ស្មារ ស្មារ ស្មារ

នាម មូសាដ៏ ស្មារ ស្មារ ស្មារ

woman (n.)  old, mature (p.)  woman (n.)  to be old, aged (p.)

The nominal derivative ឈុះពូកាង /cumnoa/ “agedness, old age” is derived from the predicate ឈុះពូកាង /cọa/ “to be old, mature.”

The head noun កុ /kœy/ “loom” can also be followed by either the derivative, as in (22.a) or the base word, as in (22.b). However, the meaning of these two examples are the same. Khmer native speakers, whom I asked, said that they cannot see the difference between the examples (22.a) and (22.b).

22.a) កុណ្តសិក “a loom” (ធាត់មាត់)

កុ ណ្តសិក  (Th.) កុ ណ្តសិក

kœy  tanbāan kœ: thọ:phâ:

loom (n.)  art of weaving (n.)  loom (n.)  to weave cloth (p.)
22.b) ក្បែង “a loom” (ki: thopeha:)

køy tbaaŋ (Th.) kি: thopeha:
loom (n.) weave (p.) loom (n.) to weave cloth (p.)

The nominal derivative បាត់ /tambaaŋ/ “art of weaving” is derived from the predicate ក្បែង /tbaaŋ/ “to braid, to weave.”

These data are also found in the written language. In one of the Khmer popular magazines, ព្រ័ន្ធបាអែ /praciapry/, it is observed that the writer switches between derivative and base words to form the word “loom.”

3.2 base noun + predicative derivative

The last type of Khmer compound words are formed by a base noun and a predicate. Derivatives in this type can be either causative, reciprocal or intensified predicates. Thai also uses predicates in this position but Thai people never distinguish if predicates in this position are transitive, causatives or reciprocals. Examples with causative predicates are illustrated in 3.2.1 whereas those with reciprocal predicates are in 3.2.2. I have found only one example of intensified predicate in my Khmer data.

3.2.1 base noun + causative derivative

There are quite a number of examples with causative predicates as modifiers. Some causative predicates in this section can also function as nouns. However, I classify them as predicate according to the translation.

23) ក្បែងបែ /koon baŋkaet/ “a legal child, rightful child, one’s own child” (koon phet)

koon baŋkaet (Th.) kű:k thè: thè:
child (n.) to give birth to (p.) child (n.) to be real (p.)

The causative predicate បែ /baŋkaet/ “to create, to produce, to give birth to” is derived from the predicate ដំ /kaet/ “to be born, to be created.”

24) ក្បែងដំ /koon daŋdaŋ/ “a fiancée” (koon nam)

koon daŋdaŋ (Th.) kű: măn
pair (nc.) to ask for couples (n.) to be engaged (p.)
(especially for a girl in marriage) (p.)

The causative predicate ដំ /daŋdaŋ/ “to ask for (especially to ask for a girl in marriage)” is derived from the predicate បែ /daŋ/ “to be informed.”
25) ក្រុងនឹង “a transportation group” (ក្រុងនឹង)

ក្រុង នឹង  (Th.)  ក្រុង  នឹង
krom  caōνcuun  klum  khōνsōη
group (n.)  to move, to transport (p.)  group (n.)  to transport (p.)

The causative predicate នឹង /caōνcuun/ “to move, to transport” is derived from the predicate ដល់ /cuun/ “to give, to present to.”

26) មេឃួយ “a servant” (មេឃួយ)

មេឃួយ  ប៉ូន
neak  bamraeo
person (n.)  to be at someone’s service (p.)

(Th.)  ក្រុង  ឃើញ
khone  cháj
person (n.)  to use, spend (p.)

The causative predicate ឃើញ /bamraeo/ “to be at someone’s service or at someone’s disposal, to serve” is derived from the predicate រួច /prao/ “to order, give an order, to command.”

27) ស្លៀកគ្រួយប្រឹក “The bamboo shoot grows up to be bamboo. (Children reflect their parents; students reflect their teachers).” (ហ្វេសឈឺកណ្តាលមីកុង)

ស្លៀក គ្រួយ ប្រឹក
tumpeañ  snaañ  rihsøy
bamboo shoot (n.)  to represent (p.)  bamboo (n.)

(Th.)  ស្លៀកគ្រួយ  ប្រឹក
kokmá:j  the:xn  máiştphaj
bamboo shoot (n.)  to represent (p.)  bamboo (n.)

The causative predicate គ្រួយ /snaañ/ “to represent” is derived from the predicate គ្រួយ /snaañ/ “to return (an object), to pay back (debt), to pay for damage, to refund, to make restitution for something, to reimburse.”

3.2.2 base noun + reciprocal derivative

When the action is performed by at least two actors, Khmer will automatically apply reciprocal predicates. They are normally formed by derivation.

28) ក្រុងនឹងប្រឹក “a place for chicken fighting” (ដល់នឹង)

ក្រុង ប្រឹក  យន្ត
kanlaen  pracœəl  moan
place (n.)  to cause to confront one  chicken (n.)
another and fight (p.)

(Th.)  ដល់  ឃើញ  កាល
thi:j  chon  käj
place (n.)  to fight (of certain animals, esp. chicken (n.)
cocks, bulls) (p.)
29) ស្អាតឆ្លៀង “fighting chicken” (ធន)

moan ព្យាយា  
chicken (n.)  to cause to confront one another and fight (p.)

(The.) ណូ ចន
kaj ចូន  
chicken (n.)  to fight (of certain animals, esp. cocks, bulls) (p.)

The reciprocal derivative ព្យាយា /pracœl/ “to cause to confront one another and fight” is derived from the predicate ណូ /cœl/ “to collide, to hurt, to hit, to stumble, to fight one another.”

30) ក្រសតក្រុង “boxing sport” (កិត្តិជាតិ)

kaylaa ព្រាហារ  (Th.) កំរាល ចូរដម  
sport (n.)  to box (p.)  sport (n.)  to box (p.)

The reciprocal derivative ព្រាហារ /pradal/ “to box, to hit frequently” is derived from the predicate ណូ /dal/ “to box, to hit with the closed fist, to fight with the fist.”

Khmer never uses the base form in these compound words, that is, they never use ក្រសតក្រុង /kaylaa /dal/ ស្អាត /cœl moan/ *ស្អាត /moan /kaj pracœl, since the action is never performed by one actor.

3.2.3 Intensified derivatives

I have found only one example of an intensified derivative. Similar to the example (21.a) - (21.b) shown above, a derivative word in this example can be replaced by its base word. The meaning of the compound word with an intensified derivative is more intensified than that of the compound with a base word.

31.a) កញ្ចោះការេង “a very old mat/ a very worn out mat” (ដំបូងធន (ទសឹស ការេង))

kanteel kačah sūa kaw má:k mà:k  
mat (n.) worn out, very old (p.)  mat (n.) old (p.) very (adv.)

31.b) កញ្ចោះតាល “an old mat” (ដំបូងធន)

kanteel cah sūa kaw  
mat (n.) old, mature (p.)  mat (n.) old (p.)

One possible reason for allowing both base words and derivative words to occur with a slightly different meaning may be that both the base and derivative words are adjectival predicates.
The data about different types of derivatives in Khmer compound words can help Thai students to be aware when using Khmer words or translating some Thai words to Khmer. While Khmer word classes, either a noun, a causative predicate or other type of predicate, have to be properly used in the context, Thai hardly distinguish which word classes are used.

REFERENCES


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