SEDANG PRONOUNS

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0. Introduction. The ten principal Sedang personal pronouns are charted in the traditional manner in Chart 1. These same pronouns have also been analyzed utilizing the four features: + hearer, + speaker, + non-singular, and + non-specific number (Smith, 1969, 115-122) as shown in Chart 2. This analysis was made to relate Sedang pronouns to the Reciprocal Transformation with Prefix td-, for which there is the following Pronoun Restriction for Reciprocal td- Affixation Transformation:

If either Pron₁ or Pron₂ is marked [+ Hearer] the other must be marked [- Hearer]; similarly, if either Pron₁ or Pron₂ is marked [+ Speaker] the other must be marked [- Speaker].

It was not within the scope of the Smith (1969) article, however, to give consideration to the matter of pronoun reference.

Of other Vietnam languages, pronoun reference has been discussed only for Chrau (Thomas, 1971); cf. the use of the pronoun nêh '3rd person' in paragraph topic (page 203-206) and in presubject focus (page 82-83). Otherwise the matter of pronoun reference has
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Chart 1. Sedang pronouns

![Chart 2. Sedang pronouns: feature analysis](image_url)

It is the purpose of this paper to define the mechanism of some Sedang pronoun reference—or, given the occurrence of a pronoun in a Sedang text, what rules govern determination of its nominal referent. For first-inclusive and second person pronouns, this is only a matter of identification of speaker and/or hearer; this paper will discuss only two other pronouns: namely, gá 'he, she, it' and má 'we two--exclusive'. Prior to a discussion of pronoun reference, however, it is necessary to identify the syntactic functions involving pronouns (section 1) and the semantic domain of pronoun referents (section 2).

1. Pronoun Functions. Sedang pronouns occur in the following six syntactic functions (for a fuller syntactic statement see Smith (1975)).

1.1 Subject.

(1) A xiam gá a kó.
originally he here
'Originally he was here.'

(2) 'Nai gá ái drei ôh.
know he has knife no
'I don't know whether he has a knife.'

(3) Gá ái hnuæ.
he has sheath
'He has a sheath.'

(4) Gá chai 'trôh a hngei.
he return approach toward house
'He went back home.'

(5) Me gá cha preó dei pôlê.
then he able return to village
'Then he can return to the village.'

1.2 Direct Object.

(6) Vai tú gá a go tokah.
they kick him toward cliff
'They kicked him over the cliff.'

(7) Á ko gá ai.
I chop him ptl
'I just killed him.'

1.3 **Indirect Object.**

(8) Vai ám gá hme.
they give him rice
'They gave him rice.'

(9) Ok gá kóc hāi hmeng me ai.
pour him vegetables black ptrl
'She poured out some more vegetables for him.'

1.4 **Object of a Preposition.**

(10) Á pro kūan pā 'bâng gá tē.
I make son father with him ptrl
'I'll have a father-son ceremony with him.'

(11) Vai drōh hā tōpui 'bâng gá.
they girls also talk with him
'The young girls also talked with him.'

(12) Ah vai ôh ta rōe kī gá.
future they not buy of him
'Thereafter they didn't buy from him.'

(13) Vai xo kī gá.
they get of him
'They got his.'

1.5 **Head of a Noun Phrase.**

(14) Gá kō lo hōdu hōdeā tai mōi hōmōu me.
he this out carry all one rice house ptrl
'This one is able to carry a whole rice house.'

(15) Gá me rōdei.
he that strong
'That one is strong.'

1.6 **Possessor.**

(16) Tréng ... to kōnei gá kō.
clip ptrl fingernail him this
'He clipped this one's fingernails.'

(17) Mōng gá kō mōng méam.
beak him this beak metal
'This one's beak was a beak of metal.'
(18) Hдолг gá a kó.
knife him here

'His knife is here.'

(19) Kodrai gá chai hôda a hngei néô me.
wife him return run to house again ptl

'His wife ran home again.'

(20) Inai gá Krua me.
nname him Krua ptl

'His name is Krua.'

(21) Gá me hnoi pochan dei ... vai và gá me.
he that immediately tell to they in-laws him ptl

'He immediately told it to all his in-laws.'

2. The Content of 3rd-person Singular Pronoun gá Referents.

Sedang 3rd-person singular pronoun gá referents belong to the following categories of nouns (for a sentential referent see 3.3.5 below).

2.1 Animate.

(a) Natural, both humans and animals (all the pronouns used in examples (1) through (21) above are of this type)

(22) Pôi ta ái kónaí mot ka óh báu me.
don't have rat enter eat no rice that
Gá ói to kôja tê.
he stay ptl husks only

'Don't have rats enter and eat the rice. They stay outside with husks only.'

(b) Supernatural, i.e. ghosts, spirits

(23) Kia Chai Klam me gá ái 'nai óh.
ghost sick liver that he aux know not

'That Sick Liver Ghost, he didn't know it.'

(c) Fictitious, i.e. story animals

(24) Drôh ket dro kó a xiam gá a kó.
girl frog this originally she here

'Originally the frog girl, she was here.'

2.2 Inanimate, i.e. things of nature

(25) Ngo Êang gá a kó.
mount Êang it here

'Mount Êang (Ngok Linh), it's here.'
(26) Lôang kôdra...me môi chat hohâm gâ’ai pok ôh. wood hard then one ten year it aux rot- not ten 'Iron wood...Then after ten years it hasn't rotted.'

(27) Tôro kô pian xau hâ gâ kotôu. thunder this we afraid also it thunders 'This thunder, we also are afraid when it thunders.'

(28) Me gâ, gâ româng tung kong u me. but it it dark in jungle place there 'But it's dark in that jungle.'

3. The Determination of 3rd-person Singular Pronoun gâ Reference. Determination of Sedang 3rd-person singular pronoun gâ refers includes consideration of the preceding discourse (3.2 to 3.5) as well as of the following discourse (3.1). The following rules are a guide to the determination of pronoun referents. The rules appear to be ordered inasmuch as several cases have been found where utilization of a succeeding rule would give a different referent.

3.1 Anticipatory Pronominalization. Anticipatory pronominalization is identification of the referent of a pronoun immediately after the occurrence of the pronoun, whereas in the pronominalization of sections 3.2 to 3.5 the identification of the referent of a pronoun is made prior to the occurrence of the pronoun. If the pronoun gâ and an immediately following or "anticipated" noun are in the same syntactic slot that noun is the referent of the pronoun; or:

\[ R_{gâ} = N_1/\#_N_1 \]

(Read: the Referent of gâ is N1 when...)

In Sedang anticipatory pronominalization is utilized to identify discourse initial, remote, and ambiguous referents.

3.1.1 Discourse Initial. Discourse initial, anticipatory pronominalization is used to supply the referent when there is no preceding context.

(29) Kô gâ tea româng nah. Gâ Pa this it water flood formerly he father

Xêang va 'nhie dei kong. spirit want destroy prep earth

'Once upon a time there was this flood.
God, he wanted to destroy the earth.'

3.1.2 Remote Referent. If the key to referent identification is distant, anticipatory pronominalization is used to restate the referent. For example, a preceding gâ in the discourse, following section 3.3
below, technically identifies the referent of ꞧ in the following sentence as chó 'dog', but the intervening five sentences is sufficient span to require repetition of the referent by anticipatory pronominalization.

(30) Chó... ꞧ... ꞧ...(5 sentences)...Me ꞧ chó...
dog he he then he dog

3.1.3 Ambiguous Referent. Anticipatory pronominalization is used if application of a following rule would give an incorrect referent. For example, a text may have a major topic identifying each pronoun ꞧ (see section 3.3 below). But if a minor topic has been inserted since the last preceding pronoun of the major topic, then, to avoid ambiguous or mis-identification, anticipatory pronominalization is used to clarify or restate the referent.

(31) Tea Mih me ꞧ lo pêng PiPho river Mih that it out above PiPho
a tai neó. Gá tróh Tea Mekong. Me up more it approach river Mekong that
vai khèn tea tôxí. Gá tea hiáng they call water ocean it river already
lui me ai.
finish ptl

'That Mih River flows out above PiPho way up there. It goes into the Mekong River, which they call the ocean. That river (Mih) is all done then.'

3.2 Identical Phrase Pronominalization. If the pronoun is in an attributive position in a noun phrase whose noun head is identical to a previous (but recent) noun phrase, the referent of the pronoun will be the attributive aspect of that previous noun phrase, despite what may have intervened; or

\[ R_{\text{gap}} = N_2/#N_1N_2...N_1 \]

(32) Xuán kô ꞧ xua. Vai u ai Vietnamese this he clever they still have
tôkang lôang nah.... Gá xo pêang ki branch tree formerly he get side poss
hlá, pêang ki tôkang ꞧ me vai leaves side poss branch it then they
chiang kô kro kô môdrong me.
become ptl rich ptl rich ptl

'These Vietnamese are clever. They got the branches ... They got the end with the leaves, the end with its leaves, so they have become very rich.'
3.3 Topic Pronominalization. Except as either of the two above rules may overrule, the referent of a pronoun in the subject slot will be the topic of the discourse at that point. The topic is determined by one of the following five means, though not necessarily unambiguously.

3.3.1 Immediate Subject. The topic may be the subject of the immediate (present) sentence in which case the pronoun directly follows the subject noun phrase; or

\[ \text{Rgá} = N_1/#N_1 \]

(33) \text{Xúan kò gá xúa.} Vietnamese this he clever

'These Vietnamese, they're clever.'

(34) \text{Ngo Éang gá a kò.} mount Éang it here

'Mount Éang, it is here.'

(35) \text{Lóang me gá páng hủan xak xoa.} tree that it able grow hair chest

'Those trees—they could grow chest-like hair.'

(36) \text{Rótéang gá ái kuat cho.} Sedang it has comm. house certainly

'The Sedang, they of course have a communal house.'

3.3.2 Subject of Previous Sentence. The immediate topic may be the subject of the previous sentence; or

\[ \text{Rgá} = N_1/#N_1 \ldots #N_1 \]

(37) \text{Kónhông préi tdochuam ti kò. Gá péang páng Dúan tá.} headwater those two together like this it side by Duan that

'The headwaters of those two (rivers) come together like this. It's near the Duan people.'

(38) \text{Gá pa xéang va 'nhie dei kong. it father spirit want destroy ptl earth} Kò gá pro kong i lém néo. this he make earth ptl good again

'God wanted to destroy the earth. Now he makes the earth good again.'

3.3.3 Subject of Previous Embedded Sentence. The immediate topic may be the subject of an embedded sentence within the previous sentence; or:
Rgá = N₁/#…(N₁…#)...#_

(39) Pôi ta ái kôkái mot ka ôh báu don't have rat enter eat no rice
me. Gá ői to kôja tê. that he stay ptl husk only

'(We) don't let rats enter and eat the rice. They stay among the husks only.'

(40) Me pian cha ka rôkái... mot. Me ching and we able permit wild pig enter but if
pian ta pro sông...gá pak tro ôh. we not make spike it stab no

'And we can let the wild pigs enter. But if we haven't made spikes it won't get stabbed.'

3.3.4 Object of Previous Sentence. The immediate topic may be the object noun phrase of the previous sentence; or:

Rgá = N₁/#…N₁#

(41) Khén vai ko lôäng nah, lôäng kan say they chop tree formerly tree big
nah. Kôi gá tôngia tê...
formerly top it up

'(They) say they once chopped a tree, a big tree. Its top (fell) heading up-land...'

(42) …vai ôh ta khôh ka chô me nah they not permit eat dog ptl formerly
xúâa gá u pro kûân mongê. because it ptl made child person

'It was taboo to eat dog, because it has given birth to a human child.'

3.3.5 Previous (whole) Sentence. The immediate topic may be the entire previous sentence; or:

Rgá = S₁/#S₁#

(43) Pôi ta lôi ôh triâng 'di'do. Gá ôh ta lêm. don't leave no straw always it not good

'Don't leave the straw (in the wine) all the time. It's not good (to do that).'

(44) Pian pei chiak. Gá hiâng kei ki me pôih. we work field it already fin-like that ptl ish
'We work in the field. And it's all done just like that.'

3.4 Successive Pronominalization. If none of the above three rules pertain, then the referent of the pronoun ńa is, in successive fashion, the same as the referent of the (recently) preceding pronoun, unless that pronoun belongs to an inserted, intervening minor topic in which case that pronoun is used. This may be an iterative process whereby a series of successive pronouns will be extending the pronoun referent through a number of sentences. In one case in text the same pronoun referent is extended with the use of ten ńa through 18 sentences; in another case with fourteen ńa through 38 sentences. Thus:

\[
R_{ńa} = R_{ńa_1/ńa_1} \ldots \#(\ldots \#)\]

The actual identification of the referent, of course, ultimately is dependent upon one of the preceding rules and the first pronoun occurring in the series. Determination of pronoun referents by this rule accounts for about two-thirds of all pronoun occurrence, because of the frequent repetitious or successive use of pronouns.

(45) ...ńa pak tro ôh. Ti me ńa lôhla.  
it stab not like that it die 
ńa va lo ka bâu me ah. Ti 
it want enter eat rice future like 
me. Me ńa ka reh. 
that but it eat live

'...It (an animal) doesn't get stabbed. 
That's how it dies. It wants to enter and eat rice. It eats to live.'

3.5 Ambiguous Pronominalization. Sometimes application of the above rules does not definitively identify a pronoun referent. There may be multiple or ambiguous choices. In such cases the referent is determinable by deduction from the context.

(46) Me chô me kômôu ?. Môngê me kôdrai ?.  
and dog that husband person that wife 
Prêi pro dei pó. Prêi xo ti me 
those make together those get like that two 
two
u pâng âi kùn âi vai 'nêng kôdrai ?. 
ptl able have child have baby girl 
neô. Me ńa thê dei kùn tôkôreô dei pa. 
more and ? said to child call to father

'And the dog was the husband. The person was the wife. Those two lived together and so had a child, a baby girl. And (he/she/it)? told the child to call its father.'
The above rules would not clarify whether the referent of the pronoun \( \text{gā} \) is the husband/father, wife, or child. By deduction, however, it cannot be the child who is being addressed nor the father to whom following reference is made; thus it is the wife.

'...and she told the child to call its father.'

3.6 Illustration of Rule Application. The following example illustrates some pronoun referent identification as rule applications interact or overlap within a given context.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(47) (S1) } & \quad \text{Vō } \text{kan\textsubscript{1} hā. (S2) Ching } \text{gā\textsubscript{1} 'nang kō me ōu} \hfill \\
& \text{pūn } \text{potām hāi xuan } \ddot{\text{ōi}} \text{ lēm ti me... (S3) Ching pían} \hfill \\
& \text{toh tea me pían } \text{tah } \text{triāng\textsubscript{2}}. \quad (\text{S4) Pían } \text{chōu } \text{gā\textsubscript{2}} \ldots \hfill \\
& \text{it } \text{straw} \hfill \\
\text{(S5) Pōi ta lōi } \ddot{\text{ōh}} \text{ triāng } \text{'di' do.} \hfill \\
& \text{don't leave the straw in always} \hfill \\
\text{(S6) Gā\textsubscript{3} } \ddot{\text{ōh}} \text{ ta lēm. (S7) Me } \text{kōdō } \text{gā\textsubscript{1} cham} \hfill \\
& \text{it } \text{it} \hfill \\
& \text{vai xa hlá, hlá xá.}
\end{align*}
\]

'Big jars\textsubscript{1} also. If it\textsubscript{1} is really big to drink four or five days it stays good. If we add water then we take out the straw\textsubscript{2}. We put it\textsubscript{2} away. Don't leave the straw in all the time. That\textsubscript{3} is not good. And it's bottom is stuffed with xá leaves.'

The referent of \( \text{gā\textsubscript{1}} \) in sentence 2 (S2) is identified as "the big jar", which is the immediate topic as subject of the previous sentence (3.3.2). The referent of \( \text{gā\textsubscript{2}} \) in S4 is identified as "the straw", which is the immediate topic as object of the previous sentence (3.3.4). The referent of \( \text{gā\textsubscript{3}} \) in S6 is identified as "don't leave the straw in all the time.", which is the immediate topic as the previous whole sentence (3.3.5). The \( \text{gā\textsubscript{1}} \) in S7 is in an attributive position with \( \text{kōdō} \), "its bottom"; its referent is the jar of S1 which is both (a) the overall topic (skipping over other intervening minor topics) and (b) the closest preceding noun which can be attributive to \( \text{kōdō} \) 'bottom'.

4. The Determination of 1st-person Exclusive Dual Pronoun \( \text{mA} \) Referents. Half of the referent of the 1st-person exclusive dual pronoun \( \text{mA} \) 'he and I' is the speaker himself. Question here then pertains to the determination of the non-speaker aspect. This depends upon whether the non-speaker referent is actually present with the speaker. In those cases where the non-speaker referent is present with the speaker, the referent of the dual exclusive pronoun is clearly the speaker and his companion.
(48) 'Bok xói eng ah khén: "Eh a hông va ngế ki kó?"
'Ô, á va. Má u hodzi dei pó nah.'
'The priest then asks: "Do you want this person?"
'Oh, I do want him. We two were engaged some
time ago.'"

(49) Préi cháu khén: "Eh loka má."
'The two grandchildren said, "You're going to eat
the two of us."'

If the non-speaker referent is not present with the speaker, there
is in the discourse information given to permit identification of the
non-speaker referent. Such information may be given by stating ex-
plicitly to whom reference is being made by using a phrase such as:

má o 'my younger brother/sister and I'
má nhông 'my brother-in-law and I'
má Gua 'Gua and I'
má mai eh 'your brother-in-law and I'

Or, the non-speaker referent will be identified by and equated
to a third-person pronoun reference in the (recently) previous dis-
course.

(50) Óh. Gá óh ta xök 'bàng kódó óh. Gá xo chém
má kleh tung xiam kólá.
'No. He wasn't fooling around with anybody. He was
getting a bird which we two had dropped in the bamboo
clump.'

FOOTNOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper, first written for a syntax course
requirement, was read by Richard Smaby and David Thomas,
whose comments are appreciatively acknowledged.

2. The pronouns ngiân 'all of us—not you', préi 'those two' and
vai 'they' are also eligible for this type of study, but have not
yet been included. Their referents include larger groups which
usually are not as subject to misunderstanding or question.

The basis of this study is a 27,000-word corpus of Sedang folk-
lore texts obtained from two Sedang informants, Bé and Hmôù, in
Kontum, South Vietnam, during May and June, 1969. A word-con-
cordance of the text was compiled by the University of Oklahoma Computer Laboratory with their IBM 1410 Computer by the Linguistic Information Retrieval Project of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Oklahoma Research Institute, and sponsored by Grant CS-934 of the National Science Foundation. This concordance was used for all examples cited in this paper. All occurrences of the pronoun mà (51 times) but only about 12% of the 1334 occurrences of gà were studied.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


