PARTICIPANT REFERENCE IN NORTHERN KHMER

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The purpose of this paper is to offer a brief description of participant reference rules in Northern Khmer. The latter is spoken by some 550,000 people in six provinces of Thailand, namely, Surin, Buriram, Srisaket, Mahasarakham, Prachinburi, Trat, and Ubolratchathani (Dhanan and Chartchai, 1978), the densest concentration of speakers being in the first three.

My description is based on eighteen texts, specimens of the speech of Mrs Phen Piyaram, a forty-four-year-old native speaker of Buriram Northern Khmer. These were first recorded on magnetic tape, which was then transcribed with the help of two other native speakers, Mr Prathueng Piyaram and Miss Anong.

I shall confine myself to describing how participants are introduced, how they are reintroduced, and how reference to them is maintained.

1. Initial introduction of participants

Main, secondary, incidental secondary, and nonhuman secondary participants are introduced in different ways at their first appearance.

1.1. Main participants

Main participants of the text or episode are usually introduced in an existential miian clause with the numeral phrase muuj 'one' or nuu muuj 'be one'. After this introduction the next clause usually has the same participant as a zero subject,

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2A main participant is one who occurs throughout all or most of the text. A secondary participant is one who occurs only in some parts, or as a member of an action group or assemblage.

3Symbolized as Ø.
and that participant is automatically in focus. Examples:

**main participant of text:**

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miën  mëÊ  ?aw  nuu  muuj  .....  Ø
there-is mother-father be one
'There were parents.... (they)'
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**main participants of episode:**

```
miën  knom  koon  knom  muuj  .....  Ø
there-is girl child girl one
'There was a daughter.... (she)'
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miën  mëÊ  cah  nuu  muuj  .....  Ø
there-is mother old be one
'There was an old mother....'
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1.2. **Secondary participants**

Secondary participants are usually introduced in an existential *miën* clause without a numeral phrase but with an optional *kii* 'third-person pronoun'. After this introduction the same participant usually appears in the next clause and is referred to as *kii*. This participant is not in focus. Examples:

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miën  niirÊ  sro?  kii  .....  kii
there-is person village they they
'There were neighbours.... they ....'
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miën  ?aakii  .....  kii
there-is someone she
'There was someone.... she ....'
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miën  phooq  priiôn  ....
there-is group hunter
'There were some hunters ....'
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1.3. **Incidental secondary participants**

Secondary participants who are incidental — that is to say, nonspecific participants — are usually introduced in the object slot of a clause in the form of a noun phrase, noun or pronoun *kii* 'third person', with or without modifiers. They may be referred to as *kii* in the subject slot of the following clause.
Incidental secondary participants may also be introduced in possessive form. Examples:

S

tuu som mii nuh ..... kii

O

'Ask that woman for some (water) ..... she .....'

O

kii kə? liic koon moo jaag cəch

she L deliver child come Part

'She delivered a child like that .....'

O

moo pah tamrəej coh preŋ

come meet elephant in heat

'(They) went to meet an elephant in heat .....'

Poss

sneçh kə? ?aa ppuuən kii moo ..... Ø

then PreN wife his come

'Then his wife came ..... (she) .....'

1.4. Non-human secondary participants

Secondary participants who are non-human may be introduced by a noun in the subject slot of the main clause. Example:

S

jum kə? puəh kə? ramkhaan

cry L snake L be-bothered

'(When she) cried, the snake was bothered .....'

2. Reintroduction of participants

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4Grammatical abbreviations: Dem = demonstrative; L = lexical linker; Mod = modifier; N = noun; O = object; Part = particle; Poss = possessive; PreN = prename; PreN(F) = female prename; Ref = reflexive pronoun; S = subject.

5Kii and mii nuh represent the same person.
Depending on whether they are to be in focus or not, main and secondary participants may be reintroduced in various ways, such as by a noun phrase (with or without modifiers) or pronoun. They may be reintroduced in the subject, object, or possessive slots.

2.1. In-focus reintroduction

Participants, both main and secondary, may be reintroduced and brought into focus in the subject slot by use of a noun phrase with or without modifiers. The noun phrase may consist of a noun plus description, demonstrative, possessive, or the like. Examples:

S
moo ke? mee tneq thaa ....

'When she) came, the mother asked that.....'

S
phee tə ?ew tamreej moo ..... Ø

'When the father elephant come

'S
koon nuh ke? plëk knog ceət
child that L be-surprised in heart

'That child was surprised .....'

S
mii ckəc nih ke? liic koon ..... mother dog this L delivered child

'This mother dog had delivered ..... (she) .....'

S
mee ?eeq nuh həj phee tə phluə ..... mother herself that Part when be-bright

'That mother, when the day began .....'

S
sneeq ke? pəej kii ke? tneq thaa ..... then husband her L ask that
'Then her husband asked that.....'

2.2. *Non-focus pronoun reintroduction*

Participants who are out of focus may be reintroduced in the object slot of a clause by use of pronoun kii 'third person'.

Examples:

O
khniie ko? tuu lung noq kii.⁶
she L go play with them
'She went to play with them.'

O
thee cniik da? kum tampiiaq dec kii coh hej.⁷
do spade put-into clump bamboo like her Part
'(She = the second daughter) made her spade lost in the clump of bamboo like her (= as the first daughter had done).'  

2.3. *Non-focus noun reintroduction*

Participants who are out of focus may be reintroduced in the object slot by use of a noun phrase with or without modifiers. The noun phrase may consist of a noun plus description, demonstrative pronoun, possessive, or the like.

Examples:

O
nsh ko? pbuul ppuuen thaa
then persuade wife that ......
'Then (the husband) persuaded his wife that ......'

O
kii ko? haw thaan nuh hej moo
he L call soldier that Part come
'He called that soldier ......'

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⁶Kii reintroduces the daughter's friends, who are now out of focus.

⁷Kii reintroduces the first daughter, now out of focus.
nœch ke? tuu tu? ke? khœan pdoj kii
then go Part L see husband her

'Then (she) went to see her daughter's husband.....'

3. Maintaining reference to participants

Depending on whether they are in focus or not, reference to participants is maintained in various ways by use of a pronoun, noun, noun phrase, or zero.

3.1. In-focus chain of zeroes

A focused participant is normally not referred to overtly at all: for one participant as subject of successive main clauses there may be a chain of zeroes until the series is terminated or interrupted.

3.1.1. Subject-initial chain

After either introduction or reintroduction a focused participant is usually referred back to by zero in the subject slot of the next clauses. Example:

I-F⁸

| miœn mee ?œw nuu muuj nœch ke? miœn koon |
| --- | --- | --- |
| there-is mother father be one then there-is child |

| proh nuu te muuj FØ slap ?œoj FØ slap |
| --- | --- | --- |
| male be - one (parents) love - (parents) love |

| FØ ke? lœej cuun koon tuu riin FØ ke? mot |
| (parents) so send child go study (parents) L lose |

| ?at FØ mot staŋ FØ miœn srœxe |
| money (parents) lose money (parents) have ricefield |

| FØ miœn ckaa FØ ke? lœej cuun koon mot |
| (parents) have garden (parents) L sell send child entire |

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⁸Discourse symbols: Ø = zero; ¶ = structural paragraph; # = paragraph boundary; FØ = zero focused participant; I-F = introduction of focused participant; NonF = nonfocused participant.
tuu riin mawngkook thonburii.
go study Bangkok Thonburi

'There were parents. And there was a son. The parents loved him very much, so they sent him off to study. They used up all of their money. They had fields and gardens. They sold all of these to send their son to study in Bangkok.'

3.1.2. Object-initial chain

A participant first introduced in the object slot must be brought into focus in the subject slot before it can be represented by a chain of zeroes. Examples:

O
tak slak woowjaaj ?ooj kii niia? sro? cuuj roo
shout sharply for them person village help seek
..... senh koe? phoog niia? sro? kii koe? cuuj numbom
then group person village they L help bring
khniia-khnaan ...... FØ [11 times] ..... together (they)

'(The mother) shouted sharply for the neighbours to help her look for (her daughter). ..... Then the neighbours helped together ..... (They) .....'

O
phooc to banjoeen tuu pah tamrjj soo ...... tamrjj
when by-chance go meet elephant white elephant
con-cowet ...... FØ ...... be-stumped (he)

'(The daughter) met the white elephant by chance. .... The elephant was stumped ..... (He) .....'

3.1.3. Interruption by quotation

A chain of zeroes may be interrupted by a direct quotation. After the latter, even though he was previously in focus as Ø, the participant is frequently referred to by a pronoun or noun phrase, being represented by Ø again in any following clauses. Examples:
FØ 2 times + direct quotation + ?aa khniie man meen baan
(she) PreN she not really get
tuu luŋ nøy pröh naa chmool naa ..... FØ ..... go play with male what male what (She)

'She really didn't have sexual contact with any man. ...'

Reference to the focused participant had been maintained by zeroes. The introduction of the direct quotation interrupted this chain of zeroes. The first subject was then brought back into focus with the pronoun following the quotation. Once this was done, the chain of zeroes resumed.

FØ 3 times + direct quotation by elephant + snëch kə?
(elephant) then
tamrëej kə? thaa + direct quotation by elephant.
elephant L say

'Then the elephant said, ......'

The elephant had been in focus and reference to him had been maintained by zeroes. Both quotations interrupt the chain of zeroes.

3.1.4. Interruption by settings

When a paragraph begins with a time setting or location setting the chain of zeroes is frequently interrupted, even though the same participant is still in focus. A pronoun or noun phrase occurs in the first main clause, zeroes resuming in any following clauses. Examples:

..... FØ # #Ί location setting ..... + khniia kə? tuu
(she) she L go
kreet phə? ..... FØ 4 times.
dip drink (She)

'She went to drink... She ......'

..... FØ # #Ί time setting + niiŋ nuh kə? ləəj lumk
(she) daughter that so lift
push da? ciier ..... FØ (2 times)
snake put-into basket (She) ..... 

'The daughter put the snake into her basket ... She...' 

3.1.5. Chain-final reidentification

At the end of a paragraph or episode, or when he is being removed from the scene, a focused participant is occasionally referred to by a pronoun or noun phrase. Example:

...... FØ ..... + direct quotation + khniie kə? ?oo teh # (she) She L be-glad Part
...... FØ ..... tuu kə? thom ckə kə? thom thom thom (she) go L be-big dog L be-big be-big be-big ram # (end of introductory paragraph).
continually

# ¶ ..... FØ ..... khniie phəəm nuu nuu tuu kii kə? she conceive be be go she L liic koon moo jaag cəəh # (end of episode, with participant removed from scene) deliver child come Part

'...... She was glad.

'...... (She = the dog) ..... went, the dog grew bigger.

'...... (She) ..... She was pregnant for a long time, then she delivered ......'

3.1.6. Changing chains

When a new participant is brought into focus, the chain of zeroes for the previous focused participant will be ended and a new chain will start for the new focused participant. Examples:

khniie ..... FØ (4 times) ..... phoŋ priiŋ kə? ktra?
She group hunter L pull
phrump moo ..... FØ ..... suddenly come (hunters)

'The hunters suddenly pulled ..... (They) .....'
khniia ..... FØ (5 times) ..... mii koon tuuc nuh
she (= the dog) PreN(F) child be-small that

mæ man baan haw ?cj mii koon tuuc nah wiiæ
mother not get call what PreN(F) child be-small that she

ruæt ..... FØ ..... run (She)

'It (the dog) ..... (it) ..... That younger daughter, the
mother didn't call her yet. That younger daughter ran to her...
.. (She) .....'

3.2. Non-focused participants

A non-focused participant cannot have a chain of zeroes.
Reference to such a participant is maintained by nouns or pro-
nouns, or by single zeroes in specific situations.

3.2.1. Non-focused subject pronoun

A non-focused participant in the subject slot of a clause
will be referred to by pronouns: normally kii 'third person',
sometimes wiiæ 'third person'. Examples:

NonF

tuu som mii nuh ..... kii kæ? man ?cj phæ? ..... go ask PreN(F) that she L not let drink

'(The orphan) asked the girl for (some water), but she did-
n't give her any to drink...'

NonF NonF

joo mii nuh høj moo kæ? wiiæ kæ? man gmmæp take PreN(F) that Part come L she L not die

'(The neighbours) took the girl out. She didn't die...'

3.2.2. Non-focused object pronoun

A non-focused participant in the object slot of a clause
may be referred to by niæ 'third person'. Example:

NonF NonF NonF

kii kæ? moo sœpsuun niæ banthukbanthaæ niæ mot ..... he come investigate him record him entirely
’He (the officer) investigated him (a soldier) and recorded everything about him...’

3.2.3. Non-focused object noun

A non-focused participant in the object slot of a clause is usually referred to by a noun, commonly a kin term or a noun phrase. Examples:

NonF
kə? loej cuun koon tuu riin
so send child go study

’Sof (the parents) sent their child to study .....’

NonF
phoo to baq?e'en tuu pah tamrəej səo tuu kə? tuu haw
when by-chance go meet elephant white go go call

NonF
tamrəej səo ..... elephant white

’(The daughter) met the white elephant by chance. She went and called the white elephant...’

3.2.4. Non-focused complex subject deletion

When there is joint action by two or more non-focused participants, they will be represented by zero in the subject slot of the clause immediately following. Examples:

NonF       NonF
nath kə? miian niiə? srə? kii tuu nənum ə tuu ciik besides there-is person village they go bring (her) go dig

NonF       NonF
	
tamlooŋ ..... ə ə ..... taro root (they all)

’There were neighbours. They brought her (the orphan) to dig taro roots .....’ (i.e., the neighbours and the orphan).

NonF
phooŋ niiə? srə? ciik tamlooŋ kə? tuu chŋaaj tuu chŋaaj group person village dig taro root L go far go far
NonF NonF

...... ø ø ......

(they all)

'The neighbours and the orphan went to dig taro roots. They (the neighbours and the orphan) went very far...'

3.2.5. Non-focused repeated subject deletion

If a verb is repeated or paraphrased, its non-focused subject may be deleted in the second occurrence. Examples:

NonF NonF NonF

miën ?aakii lum _ pkoo kii lum _ pkoo phųŋ nah ø
there-is someone hear thunder she hear thunder rain much she

lum _ _pkoo nong phųŋ
hear thunder will rain

'There was someone who heard thunder. She heard much thunder (and) rain. (She) heard thunder; it would rain...'

NonF

phoo te bąʔeon ηaj krooj kii ke? haw thaan nhu hęj
when by-chance day next he call soldier that Part

NonF

ø haw moo ......
he call come

'It just happened that the next day he called the soldier. (He) called ......'
REFERENCES


