The Functions of kAʔ in Oral Kui Narrative

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0. Introduction
1. Functions of kAʔ as occurring within story line information
   1.1 Marking temporal sequence
   1.2 Marking consequence
   1.3 Marking change of orientation
   1.4 Marking simultaneous events
2. Functions of kAʔ as occurring within non-story line information
   2.1 Conditional connector
   2.2 Adversative connector
   2.3 Marking conclusion and formulaic finis
   2.4 Marking sequential nonevents
3. Discussion

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the functions of kAʔ in oral Kui narrative in terms of the bipartite structure of discourse information, i.e. story line vs. non-story line. When kAʔ functions as a story line marker it marks the following four types of relationships: temporal sequence, consequence, change of orientation, and simultaneous events. Within non-story line information kAʔ functions as a conditional connector or adversative connector. It also functions to mark conclusion and formulaic finis or sequential nonevents.

0. Introduction

This paper presents discourse functions of the auxiliary kAʔ in oral Kui narrative. The data were drawn from three texts narrated by a native speaker of

1kAʔ may be translated as 'Well,...; so then; also', and it is often not translatable (Prasert 1978).
2Kui or Kuai is a language of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic phylum. It belongs to the Katuic Branch (Thomas and Headley 1970). The Kui people are sometimes called Suai by the Thai and Lao. Suai (in Thai) means 'those who pay tribute' whereas Kui (in the Kui language) means 'human being' (Oranuch 1984:1).
3Miss Somklin Cajkwang, aged 23 years, was my informant, fluent both in Kui and Thai. She came from Khuton village, Surin province, in which half of the population speak either the northeastern Thai dialect, another dialect of Kui or a dialect of Khmer, and the other half of the population speak her Kui dialect. She came to Bangkok to work with me for a year. In transcribing the texts narrated by this informant, I also used Prasert 1978 and Wanna et al. 1975 as references.
Kui from Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin province. As the functions of 
*kλʔ* are closely related to the notion of information structure of narrative discourse,
it is necessary to discuss this notion first.

The information in a narrative discourse is classified into the following types: 
participants (and props), events, and nonevents (Grimes 1975). Participants (and 
props) are concerned with the agent line, which tracks the main participant through 
the discourse. Events which are successive determine an event line or story line, 
i.e. the theme of narrative backbone. They include any happening that pushes the 
story forward. Nonevents are all supportive material other than the story line or the 
main line of development in a discourse. They include setting, background, 
evaluation, and collateral (Grimes 1975).

The auxiliary *kλʔ* usually occurs before a verb phrase and occasionally before a 
noun phrase. It first appears in Kui narrative when the story line actually gets 
underway. After that, *kλʔ* appears throughout the text. It has been found that *kλʔ* 
occur with great frequency in the parts of the text which are story line information. 
If we write down all the clauses introduced by *kλʔ* we have a good abstract of the 
whole text. In a ten-page text, *kλʔ* occurred forty-two times. It occurred within 
story line information thirty-four times and within non-story line information only 
eight times. The functions of *kλʔ* within these two kinds of discourse information 
are different, so its functions will be discussed in terms of this story line vs. non-
story line structure.

1. Functions of *kλʔ* as occurring within story line information

The major function of *kλʔ* in Kui narrative is to mark relationships between 
events on the story line. *kλʔ* marks the following four types of relationships: 
temporal sequence, consequence, change of orientation, and simultaneous events.

1.1 *Marking temporal sequence*

**Example 1**

*Paragraph 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 1</th>
<th>ɲdleel ɲtee paaj mɔɔŋ bah</th>
<th>'The wife asked [her husband]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wife tell say you throw</td>
<td>'Can you throw the wood well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>?alaŋ ?aan ñaa kλʔ nɔɔ</td>
<td>[enough not] to hit me?&quot;'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wood let- well to-be pt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nʊŋ kraj haj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>will hit me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Event 2 | kjaʔ kλʔ paaj ?yy          | 'The husband then said "yes. [1] |
|---------|-----------------------------| did not intend [to hit you]."' |
|         | husband then say yes        |                               |
|         | phuʔ buuun tanjeaj           |                               |
|         | not able/get intend         |                               |
Paragraph 2

Event 1 kjaa? ka? mbeē husband then turn back
         twii pe? ?alaan buun go cut wood able

Event 2 ka? seeē twoo waa then take come make
         men men thaaan sharpen again

Event 3 ka? bah seeē twoo then throw down come

Event 4 seeē ka? kraj intro.pt. then hit
         ndii phun deel middle belly wife

Event 5 ndeel ka? leh wife then die

Paragraph 3

Event 1 phaa taa phun khlaj break-open when but belly
         leeēw ka? ksan lah already then snake out
         twoo run phun ndeel come at belly wife

Event 2 ka? seeē twoo tam then down come hit
         (tam mahnaa ka? hit how advers.mk.
         phi? dzim) not all

Event 3 dan̄ tam tam twon seeē [He] still hit [and] hit [the snakes]
         still hit hit until oneself until he himself died.
         them thy? leh run-out-of breath die
Within Paragraph 2 all five events are linked chronologically by *kaʔ*. Within the fourth event *kaʔ* not only functions to signal temporal sequence but also functions together with the introductory particle\(^4\) *snee* to signal change of orientation. (See Sec.1.3)

Paragraph 2 is linked to Paragraph 3 by the *kaʔ* in the first event of Paragraph 3. The first two events of Paragraph 3 are tied chronologically by the *kaʔ* that appears within the second events. The third event does not have *kaʔ* because the second event and the third event are interrupted by non-story line information. As the third event is a consequence of the previous action, it is also on the story line.

Besides *kaʔ*, the two paragraphs are also linked by the adverbial clause *phaa taa phung khaaj leew* ‘When the belly was already broken open’ which repeats the fourth event within Paragraph 2 and thus marks the completion of the preceding event, whereas *kaʔ* introduces a new event which chronologically succeeds the previous event. This adverbial clause is also tagged by the completive marker *leew* which confirms the completion of the previous event.

1.2 Marking consequence

Besides signalling temporal sequence, *kaʔ* can also signal a consequence of the prior events, as in Ex.2. This consequence is considered a new event.

**Example 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 1</th>
<th><em>snee</em> kjaa?</th>
<th><em>kaʔ</em> soŋsaj</th>
<th>intro.pt. husband then suspicious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paaj mphaŋ?</td>
<td>nuŋ daj</td>
<td>pregnant with whom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(phaa paaj kjaa?</td>
<td>naw</td>
<td>because that husband he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phi? buuun bij?</td>
<td>nuŋ</td>
<td>not get sleep with)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Then the husband was suspicious who the wife was pregnant from. (because the husband did not sleep with [the wife]).'*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 2</th>
<th>kjaa? thon soŋsaj phi?</th>
<th>husband stand suspicious not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>buuun <em>kaʔ</em> tuac baaŋ</td>
<td>able so sneak watch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The husband could not stand being suspicious so [he] sneak to watch [the wife].'*  

\(^{4}\) The term 'introductory particle' is taken from Oranuch 1984:133 in which *sane*; and *ne*; are referred to as the introductory particles used in Kui narrative text "to focus the event and participant, or change the main participant or start a new event". In Northern Khmer there are also *neeh* and *snee* *kaʔ* which function as time markers and are translated as 'then'. These time markers signal non-specific time change (Somkiet 1982). Their function is similar to the introductory particle *neeh* *kaʔ* or *snee* *kaʔ* as discussed in this paper.
In this example, the second event (watching) is a consequence of the first event (suspicion). The suspicion is referred to again in the second event, and the two events are linked by ka?.

1.3 Marking change of orientation

Change of orientation includes changes of location, time, activity, and/or participants in focus. To mark change of orientation, ka? functions together with the introductory particle snee or nee as in exs. 1 and 3.

Example 3

Paragraph 1

Event 1
Final event ka? ntee kaan paaj then tell child that ‘Then [he] told the child "I am going".'

"?aw tcii dAA
father go final pt.

Paragraph 2

Event 1 nee ka? duun duun kua intro.pt. then long time be ‘Long time [passed] one day the
tiger then came across [the child].'

thaan tao than muaj another come another one

tnaj ka? ?aadzvy1
day then tiger

tao phAh
come meet

In this example nee ka? signals the change of time and the change of the participant in focus, and it introduces a new event.

1.4 Marking simultaneous events

As mentioned earlier, the events usually occur in succession. But sometimes two events may occur simultaneously. Simultaneous events may be of various kinds as described by Callow (1974:41):

Simultaneous events may completely overlap, beginning and ending together; they may partially overlap, without matching exactly; or a quick, momentary event may occur within the time-span covered by a process-type event.

Ex. 4 illustrates the partial overlap of two happenings which is signalled by ka?. In this example, ka? also gives prominence to the main participant ?aat?sjian ‘elephant’.
Example 4

Simultaneous  tam  ?aadźyyl  kee  leh  ‘[The elephant] hit that tiger
Event 1  hit  tiger  that  die  [until the tiger] died.’

Simultaneous  leew  snée  ‘[He] himself was also bitten [and]
Event 2  already  intro.pt.  then  died.’

?eeη  kαʔ  pah
oneself  also  pass.mk.

?aadźyyl  kap  leh  thee
tiger  bite  die  also

2. Functions of kαʔ as occurring within non-story line information

As kαʔ occurs with great frequency in the parts of text which are on the story
line, it is regarded as a marker of the main event line of a discourse. In other
portions of text which are non-story line, kαʔ scarcely occurs and appears to be
randomly distributed. When kαʔ occurs within non-story line information, it has
other functions as discussed below.

2.1 Conditional connector

kαʔ may function as a connector within a conditional sentence as in Ex.5.

Example 5

nee  kαʔ  ṭaj
intro.pt.  then  daytime
‘[If it was] daytime, [the elephant]
made [the child] stay home.’

kαʔ  ?aan  kua  duŋ
condit.conn.  let  be  home

tweeʔ  kαʔ  ?aan
nighttime  condit.conn.  let
‘[If it was] nighttime, [the elephant]
made [the child] close all doors and
windows.’

pit  patuu  pit  naataŋ  dzim
close  door  close  window  all

2.2 Adversative connector

Adversative kαʔ may occur within non-story line information when the story
develops a conflict between two participants, or when there is an expectancy
reversal which results in frustration. In Paragraph 3 of Example 1, kαʔ expresses
the man’s frustration.

tam  mahnaa  kαʔ  phiʔ  dzim  ‘but no matter how [he] hit,
hit  how  adver.mk.  not  all  [he] could not hit all [of them].’
2.3 Marking conclusion and formulaic finis

At the end of a text, there may be a concluding result of all preceding events, as in Ex.6, or there may be a formulaic finis\(^5\) as in Ex.7. Both examples are interpolations of the speaker bringing the listener back to the real time. They are introduced by ka?.

Example 6

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ka?} & \quad \text{Iaaj} & \quad \text{kaat} \\
\text{concl.mk.} & \quad \text{therefore} & \quad \text{is} \\
\text{ksan} & \quad \text{kua} & \quad \text{ton} & \quad \text{khuu} & \quad \text{traj} & \quad \text{nee} \\
\text{snake} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{until} & \quad \text{every} & \quad \text{day} & \quad \text{this}
\end{align*}
\]

‘Therefore, snakes came into being and exist to this day.’

Example 7

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ka?} & \quad \text{top} & \quad \text{mahnee} \\
\text{concl.mk.} & \quad \text{end} & \quad \text{this} & \quad \text{much}
\end{align*}
\]

‘(The story) ended here.’

2.4 Marking sequential nonevents

Nonevents or unreal events belong to a different situation from the situation reflected in the text. They tell what did not happen and include all possible events and things which set up alternatives, for example quotations having the form of a denial, a question, or a prediction (cf. Grimes 1975).

A nonevent may be sequentially linked to the previous story line or to another nonevent by ka?. As found in Kui texts it may include either future actions within a quotation or nonverbal negative responses.

Future actions are off the story line, but ka? can sometimes be used to mark a sequence of future events (cf. Sec.1.1), as near the end of the quotation in Ex.8.

Dialogue involves a sequence of speakers. In dialogue within narratives the speech of one participant may not be followed by that of the other participant but by a nonverbal response which may be an event or a nonevent. In Ex.8, the nonverbal response is introduced by ka?, which signals that the action sequentially follows the verbal proposal and is a nonverbal response to it. The nonverbal response is not an event because it is a negation.

Example 8

\[
\begin{align*}
?aw & \quad \text{ka?} & \quad \text{sunttee} & \quad \text{paaj} \\
\text{father} & \quad \text{then} & \quad \text{tell} & \quad \text{say}
\end{align*}
\]

‘Then the father told [the children]

"I rushed [back] to tell [your]

mother to hurriedly cook rice for

\(^5\)According to Longacre (1983:25), the formulaic finis is a feature only of the surface and it is expressed by “a formulaic sentence like That’s all; we’re through or even the printed word Finis.”
"?aw waj t\text{o}o n\text{t}ee you [When] you come [back and]
father hurry come tell are tired then [you] can eat rice right
\text{m}ee \ ?\text{aan} waj \ ?\text{arj} away."
mother let hurry cook

do\text{o}j k\text{ua} t\text{eam} k\text{aan}
rice be wait child

k\text{aan} t\text{o}o l\text{ke}h l\text{ke}h
child come tired tired

\text{k}\text{\text{a}n} bu\text{\text{u}u}n \text{t\text{\text{a}a} d\text{oo}j l\text{\text{\text{a}a}j}}"
then able eat rice right-away

k\text{aan} k\text{aan} \text{k}\text{\text{a}n} \text{phi?}
child child then not suspicious at all.’

s\text{\text{\text{o}n}saj kn\text{\text{c}}} suspicious at-all

3. Discussion

The functions of Kui \text{k}\text{\text{a}n} have been discussed in terms of the bipartite structure of narrative discourse, i.e. story line vs. non-story line. Functioning as a story line marker, which is its normal function, \text{k}\text{\text{a}n} marks the following four types of relationships: temporal sequence, consequence, change of orientation, and simultaneous events. When \text{k}\text{\text{a}n} occasionally occurs outside the story line it may have the following functions: conditional connector, adversative connector, marking conclusion and formulaic finis, and marking sequential nonevents.

In comparison to the functions of \text{k}\text{\text{\text{a}n}} in oral Thai narrative (Yajai 1985), the functions of \text{k}\text{\text{a}n} in Kui narrative are not very different. Both \text{k}\text{\text{\text{a}n}} and \text{k}\text{\text{a}n} function as a marker of temporal sequence. Both function as a cohesive marker sequentially linking two paragraphs. Both function adversatively to highlight the conflicts in the story. In view of these similar functions of \text{k}\text{\text{\text{a}n}} and \text{k}\text{\text{a}n}, it would be worth investigating whether other Southeast Asian languages also have this kind of marker, and, if there has been areal diffusion of this feature, determining its source.
REFERENCES


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