FOREGROUNDING IN SOME SELECTED SOUTHEAST ASIAN NARRATIVES

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1. Introduction

This paper presents the syntactic devices which are used to foreground the parts of the narrative which relate events belonging to the skeleton structure of the discourse. These events determine an 'event line' or 'storyline.'

The data consist of narratives from eight Southeast Asian languages selected from available texts which are transcribed in phonetic symbols with word by word translation and free translation. The eight Southeast Asian languages belong to the Tai-Kadai language family and Mon-Khmer language family. The former includes Thai, Lue, Bouyei, Northern Zhuang, and Kam; the latter has Northern Khmer, So, and Vietnamese. The Thai narratives are drawn from *The Structure of Thai Narrative* (Somsonge 1991); the Lue, Bouyei, Northern Zhuang, and Kam narratives from *Kam-Tai Oral Literatures* (Somsonge et al 1998); the Northern Khmer narratives from *Discourse Level Cohesion in Northern Khmer* (Somkiet 1982); the So narratives from *A Grammar of So---A Mon-Khmer Language of Northeast Thailand* (Migliazza 1998); and the Vietnamese narratives from *Cohesive Devices in Vietnamese Folktales* (Suksiri 2000).

2. The notion of foregrounding

Jones and Jones (1979:6) mention that some scholars have viewed discourse information as "an essentially bipartite structure composed of more significant information (often called backbone or foreground) and less significant *information (background)."*

Hopper (1979:213) refers to events as "the language of the actual storyline" and nonevents as "the language of the supportive material." The former is referred to as foreground and the latter as background.

Hopper and Thompson (1980:280) refer to grounding as "linguistic features associated with the distinction between foreground and background." Each language makes use of particular features to mark foreground and background.

Longacre (1996) uses the term "storyline" to refer to foreground, i.e., the main line of development in a discourse which is foregrounded in varying ways in various languages. In languages with tense-aspect systems, such as English, the verb systems facilitate discourse. That is, differing tense, aspect, mood, and voice forms have different functions in discourse. In narrative discourse, for example, simple past-tense forms report successive actions and events which advance the story, whereas past-progressive forms report concomitant activities or nonstoryline. On the other hand, the languages which do not have much richness of structure in regard to tense-aspect distinction may distinguish foreground and background by a conspiracy of nonsystemic way.

Kanchana (1970:39) points out that "There are many languages in which verbal inflections are grammatical devices to reflect human time concepts; whereas many other languages use other devices to fulfill the same purpose without having to do with verbform changes or requiring any verbform marker (auxiliaries)." The languages of the Tai-Kadai language family and Mon-Khmer language family under this study have neither verbal inflections nor auxiliaries to convey time concepts. Instead, context or the juxtaposition of an adverb of time signals whether a spoken event is in the present, past, or future. As mentioned above, the foreground or storyline of English narrative is characterized by verbs in the past tense or in the completive/perfective aspect. On the other hand, the languages of Tai-Kadai family and Mon-Khmer family have no specific markers of past versus present tense. Clauses are ambiguous as to time reference. Types of verbs, such as nonstative verbs having perfective meaning, perfective auxiliaries, temporal expressions, and context will work in conjunction with each other to imply time. It is, therefore, the purpose of this paper to investigate how languages without a tense system, such as the languages of Tai-Kadai family and Mon-Khmer family, foreground the main line of narrative discourse.

This study has found that the major grammatical devices which are used to foreground certain parts of the

narratives include serial clause construction, the temporal auxiliaries, and aspectual auxiliaries as discussed below.

3. Serial clause construction

Sequentiality is a significant feature of foreground clauses. The events realized by foreground clauses succeed one another. Hopper (1979:214-15) refers to this succession as being in iconic order, i.e, "the same order as their succession in the real world." The sequentiality of foreground events requires that an event occur after the completion of a prior event. He also refers to foreground events as being dynamic and active.

The languages of Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer family use the serial clause construction to foreground the main events which are sequentially tied. The serial clause construction consists of a series of clauses which report events that are salient and are the most dynamic element in a discourse. The series of clauses has only one overt subject present in the initial clause. The following clauses have zero anaphors as their subjects. All clauses in a series are very strongly sequential. The serial clause construction is exemplified in the Bouyei and Vietnamese languages in examples (1) and (2), respectively. In these two examples, the clauses following the initial clause have zero anaphors as subjects. All clauses in each series are foregrounded and strongly sequential.

(1) Bouyei

CL1	$\theta o \eta^1$	$pi^4 nua\eta^4$			te^1	ςi^3	pa^4
	two	brother and sister			that	then	PREP

	υdan^1	te^1	$\upsilon buut^7$	ma^1	la^3		
	CLS	that	pick	come	down		

CL2	υau^1	$wa^6 ta{:}u^1$	tai^5	$ne\eta^2$	te^1	$kuen^2$
	use	knife	from	top	it	carve

	pan^2	$so\eta^6$	deu^1			
	have	hole	ne			

CL3	υau^1	$wa^6 kuuu^3$	pa^4	ηui^6	te^1	wau^6
	use	hoe	PREP	seeds	it	dig

$$ma^1 \quad \eth o^6$$
come   out

CL4 leu^4 ςi^3 $?au^1$ su^5 $kuu^2 ?da{:}t^7$ pa^4
      finish   then   take   in   hot place   PREP

$$te^1 \quad ta^3 \quad \eth o^2$$
it   dry   dry out

'CL1 The two brother and sister picked the biggest gourd.
CL2 (They) used a knife to carve a hole on it top.
CL3 (They) used a hoe to dig the seeds out.
CL4 Then (they) took the gourd to dry in a hot place.'

(2) Vietnamese
    CL1   *Nàng*   *nhớ*   *chồng*   *thương thân*
         [3rd]PER   miss   husband   self-pity

    CL2   *bế*   *con*   *ra*   *ngoài*   *chùa*
         carry   child   out   outside   temple

    CL3   *trèo*   *lên*   *một*   *mỏm*   *đá*   *cao*   *chót*   *vót*
         climb   up   one   top   stone   tall   very   tall

    CL4   *nhìn về*   *hướng*   *chồng*   *đi*
         look forward   direction   husband   go

'CL1 She missed her husband very much.
CL2 (She) carried her child out of the temple.
CL3 (She) climbed up to the top of the mountain.
CL4 (She) looked at the direction that her husband went.'

Diller (1992) studies all the Tai varieties of Assam and has found that binary discourse structures are quite common. The binary discourse structures are parataxis with asyndeton in which clauses are coordinated without the use of overt conjunctions. These structures may be iconic in indicating repeating or continuing actions or events. The parataxis with asyndeton structure is also common in the languages under this

study as found in the serial clause construction discussed above.

4. The temporal auxiliaries

Dry (1983) mentions that the more salient happenings are reported in foreground clauses—clauses in which the action of the narrative takes up and time begins to move forward. The foreground clauses make reference to sequenced temporal points, rather than spans of time, and these points are usually the endpoints of situations. These clauses are on a narrative timeline and constitute the foreground of a narrative.

In the languages studied the foreground clauses are signalled by the juxtaposition of chronological successive clauses in iconic order, i.e., prior clauses refering to prior actions or events in a reported event sequence discussed as serial clause construction above. Other devices include the use of temporal auxiliaries, expressions, or an adverbial clauses to indicate the temporal succession of happenings and the use of aspectual auxiliaries to mark the completeness of actions or events. The major concern of this section is the use of temporal auxiliaries and the next section will discuss the aspectual auxiliaries.

The most dominant feature which accompanies the foreground clauses to move the story forward is the temporal auxiliary. The appearance of this grammatical form in the narrative past time frame signals that the following happenings are foregounded. All eight languages of the Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer family have this grammatical device which is realized in various forms as listed below in Table 1. These forms are glossed in various ways such as 'then, particle, topic marker.' The given meanings of these forms suggest that these forms are discourse particles which signal the chronological succession of happenings and the thematic or foreground events or actions.

Table 1. Discourse particles for foregrounding
Tai-Kadai Language Family

Languages	Locations	Forms
Thai	Bangkok, Thailand	$k\mathfrak{I}{:}^3$, $cu\eta^1$
Lue	Sipsongbanna, PR China	$k\mathfrak{I}{:}^4$
Bouyei	Guizhou, PR China	φi^3
Northern Zhuang	Guangxi, PR China	φou^6
Kam	Guizhou. PR China	φu^{33}

Mon-Khmer Language Family

Languages	Locations	Forms
Northern Khmer	Buriram, Thailand	ka^2
So	Sakonnakorn, Thailand	$ka:$, pat
Vietnamese	Hanoi, Vietnam	$th\grave{i}$, $b\grave{e}n$

The Northern Zhuang language illustrates the use of the temporal auxiliaries.

(3) Northern Zhuang

$tu^2 pja^3$	ςou^6	$hun^3 pa{:}i^6$	hun^2		pai	lo
Thunder God	then	go up	upper part		go	PART

$tu\eta u{:}k^8$	ςou^6	$\gamma o\eta^2 pa{:}i^6$	la		pai^1	lo
dragon	then	go down	lower part		go	PART

'The Thunder God then went up to heaven. The dragon then went down into the water.'

The temporal auxiliaries $k\mathit{\jmath}{:}^3$, $k\mathit{\jmath}{:}^4$, ςi^3, ςou^6, ςu^{33}, ka^2, $ka:$, and $th\grave{i}$ have the same function, that is, they highlight succeeding events which form the foreground or storyline of the narrative. Syntactically, the word $th\grave{i}$ in Vietnamese is different from other temporal auxiliaries in that $th\grave{i}$ is the sentence conjunctive which occurs between two clauses whereas the rest are preverbal. If the second clause has the same subject as the first one, it is usually omitted and $th\grave{i}$ has a preverbal structure in the same manner as other temporal auxiliaries.

The temporal auxiliaries $cu\eta^1$, pat, and $b\grave{e}n$ in Thai, So, and Vietnamese are all preverbal. They function in a similar way to $k\mathit{\jmath}{:}^3$, $ka:$, and $th\grave{i}$, respectively, but they also imply a consequence of the previous event as illustrated in comparison with $k\mathit{\jmath}{:}^3$, $ka:$, and $th\grave{i}$ in the examples below.

(4) Thai:

$k\mathit{\jmath}{:}^3$

mua^3	$sa\eta^2$	$khon^1$	$?aw^1$	$na{:}m^4 r\mathit{\jmath}{:}n^4$	pay^1
when	order	person	take	hot water	go

$ra{:}t^3$	$m\mathit{\ae}{:}^3$	$kh\mathit{\jmath}{:}\eta^5$	ton^1	$l\varepsilon{:}w^4$
throw	mother	of	self	already

na:ŋ¹lu:k³sa:w⁵   *kɔ:³*   *ʔɔ:k³ma:¹*   *tɔ:n³rap⁴*   *na:y¹phra:n¹*
daughter   then   come out   welcome   hunter
'When she told someone to throw hot water on her mother,
the daughter came back to welcome the hunter.'

cuŋ¹
pra:¹kot²   *wa:³*   *sop²*   *mɛ:³*   *ma:⁵*   *nin¹*   *da:y³*
appear   that   corspe   mother   dog   Nin   get

kla:y¹pen¹   *thɔ:ŋ¹*   *pay¹*   *thaŋ⁴*   *tua¹*
become   gold   go   all   body

cuŋ¹   *wiŋ³*   *pay¹*   *thu:n¹*   *sa¹wa:⁵mi:¹*
so   run   go   tell   husband
'It appeared that the Nin's corspe became gold all over.
She then ran to tell her husband.'

(5) So
   ka:
   bat   *an*   *ci.tah.ra.mɯa*   *cʏ:*
   when   3PSG   wake up   already

   an   *ta.waŋ*   *sɛ:ŋ*   *puɨn*
   3PSG   look for   go down   story

   an   *ka:*   *hʏ:m*   *maŋ*   *ci.ḷi:a*   *cum*   *ɲi*   *cʏ:*
   3 PSG   then   see   only   thorn   to pile   all   already
   'When he woke up already, he looked down and he saw
   only thorns piled up everywhere already.'

   pat
   muɨʏy   *sa.ŋa:t*   **pat**   *ku.ci:t*
   tired   withered   then   die
   'The banana tree got tired of withering so then it died.'

(6) Vietnamese
   thì
   Đến khi   *người*   *mẹ*   *về*   **thì**
   until   person   mother   return   then

con gái	*đã*	*ngồi dậy*	*được*
girl	to experience	sit up	able

'When their mother returned, To Thi could sit up.'

bèn

Bấy giờ	*hồn*	*trăn tinh*	*và*	*Đại Bàng*	*khổsở*
at that time	spirit	python	and	eagle	unhappy

đói	*khát*	*đi*	*lang thang,*	*thất thểu,*
hungry	thirsty	go	wander	stumble on

tình cờ	*gặp*	*nhau*	**bèn**	*bàn định*
unexpectedly	meet	together	then	discuss and decide

mưu kê	*trả thù*	*Thạch Sanh*
trick	revenge	Thach Sanh

'Now both the dragon and the eagle spirit were unhappy, hungry and thirsty. They roamed around and unexpectedly they met each other. Then they planned their revenge on Thach Sanh.'

The temporal auxiliaries *cuŋ[1]*, *pat,* and *bèn* are not as dominant as *kɔ:[3]*, *ka:*, and *thì* which play a more important role in the narratives. The preverbal temporal auxiliary *bèn* is not even productive anymore. It is no longer used in everyday conversation and appears only in the old texts.

5. The aspectual auxiliaries

Aspectual auxiliaries are verbal elements that modify the meanings of the co-occurring verbs in terms of aspect. Comrie (1981) classifies aspect into two main categories, i.e., perfective and imperfective. The perfective denotes a complete situation, with beginning, middle, and end. The semantic element of perfective is the termination of the situation, that is, the situation is viewed as a single complete whole. The imperfective indicates a situation in progress and pays esssential attention to the internal structure of the situation (duration, phasal sequences).

The aspectual auxiliary which is the main focus of this section is perfective. The perfective auxiliary which plays an important role in the narrative discourse is as follows:

Table2. Perfective auxiliary forms in Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer

Tai-Kadai language family

languages	meanings	
	'already'	'to experience'
Thai	$l\varepsilon{:}w^4$	$da{:}y^3$
Lue	$l\varepsilon{:}u^4$	day^3
Bouyei	leu^4	$\textipa{P}dai^4$
Northern Zhuang	$liu^4/le{:}u^4$	dai^3
Kam	$la{:}u^2$	li^3

Mon-Khmer language family

languages	meanings	
	'already'	'to experience'
Northern Khmer	$sn\varepsilon\varepsilon h$	$baan$
So	$c\gamma{:}$	$b\textipa{W}{:}n$
Vietnamese	$rôi$	$đã$

As mentioned earlier, the languages of the Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer families do not use verbal inflections nor auxiliaries as a grammatical device to indicate time. The perfective auxiliaries listed above are neutral as to time reference. They signal the completion of a situation in both accomplished and projected timeframes. However, since they usually mark a telic situation viewed in its entirety, they have a past or accomplished time implication. The timeframe of the narrative is usually in the past therefore the narrative is represented as having already taken place. So the clauses having the perfective auxiliaries have perfective aspect in the past timeframe.

The presence of the perfective auxiliaries meaning 'already' indicates the completion of the preceding foreground event. That is, the event tagged by the postverbal $l\varepsilon{:}w^4$ $l\varepsilon{:}u^4$, leu^4, $li{:}u^4/le{:}u^4$, $la{:}u^2$, $sn\varepsilon\varepsilon h$, $c\gamma{:}$, and $rôi$ has already happened before the following foreground event starts. It should be noted that these perfective auxiliaries usually co-occur with the temporal auxiliaries. The co-occurrences of temporal auxiliaries and perfective auxiliaries will encode foreground

events which are the most salient discourse information in the whole narrative as seen in examples (4) and (5) above.

Example 4 is drawn from a Thai narrative. The first event--she told someone to throw hot water on her mother—is tagged by the perfective auxiliary $l\varepsilon{:}w^4$ and is built upon by the second —the daughter came back to welcome the hunter. The second event is foregrounded by the temporal auxiliary $k\mathfrak{I}{:}^3$. Example (5) is from a So narrative. The first happening—he woke up already -- is built upon by the second event—he looked down--which is built upon by the last event—he saw only thorns piled up everywhere already. The first and the last happenings are tagged by the perfective auxiliary $c\underset{.}{y}{:}$ which signals the completion of both happenings. The last event is highlighted by the temporal auxiliary $ka{:}$ which signals that the last event is in chronological succession to the preceding one.

Another perfective auxiliary which indicates that an event or action has taken place and thus foregrounds that event or action is the word meaning 'to experience' which is realized by the forms $da{:}y^3$, day^3, $\mathit{?}dai^4$, dai^3, li^3, $baan$, $bw{:}n$, and $\tilde{d}\tilde{a}$ in Thai, Lue, Bouyei, Northern Zhuang, Kam, Northern Khmer, So, and Vietnamese, respectively. When perfective auxiliaries function to foreground a happening, they are preverbal as in example (7).

(7) Northern Zhuang

$pau^5lok^8tau^2$	cou^6	γam^3	fai^4	$\varphi a{:}u^4$	fei^2
Pauloktau	then	cut	wood	make	fire

γun^2	cou^6	dai^3		kwn^1	cuk^8	lo
man	then	to experience		eat	cooked	PART

'Pauloktau then cut wood to make fire. Men then ate cooked food.'

In this example, the first event—Pauloktau cut wood to make fire—is foregrounded by the temporal auxiliary φou^6 'then.' This event is built upon by the second event—Men ate cooked food—which is made prominent by using both the temporal indicator φou^6 'then' and the perfective auxiliary dai^3 'to experience.'

The perfective auxiliaries $da{:}y^3$, day^3, $\mathit{?}dai^4$, dai^3, li^3, $baan$, $bw{:}n$, and $\tilde{d}\tilde{a}$ may co-occur with the temporal auxiliaries. Both auxiliaries work together to foreground a happening as seen in example (7) above and the Lue language

below. In this example the completion of the first event—
Xamtsan died—is also indicated by the word $(se{:}^1)$ $l\varepsilon{:}u^4$ which
foregrounds this event. The following event—He reborn as a
moon in the sky—is foregrounded by the temporal auxiliary
$k\jmath{:}^4$ and the perfective auxiliary dai^3.

(8) Lue language

$xam^2ts\varepsilon n^1$	$ta{:}i^1$	pai^1	$se{:}^1l\varepsilon{:}u^4$	$k\jmath{:}^4$	dai^3
Xamtsan	die	leave	after	then	experience

pai^1	$k\gamma{:}t^9$	$pi{:}n$	$d\gamma{:}n^1$	$ju{:}^5$	$fa{:}^4$
leave	birth	become	moon	stay	sky

'Xamtsan died. Then (he) reborn as a moon in the sky.'

It should be noted that in the Kam language the
perfective auxiliary $la{:}u^2$ is not frequent in the narrative under
study. Instead of $la{:}u^2$, the Kam language frequently uses the
the temporal word $ta{:}^{33}l\partial n^{11}$ to signal the completion of the
previous event and the beginning of a new event such as in
example (9).

(9) Kam

$ta^{33}len^{11}$	ju^{33}	mau^{55}	$ja{:}^{11}$	qe^{35}	$\underset{\cdot}{t}a^{453}$	$\underset{\cdot}{t}en^{11}$	pai^{55}
afterward	PREP	he/she	two	CLS	go up	mountain	go

'Afterward they went up the mountain.'

6. The occurrences of temporal and aspectual auxiliaries out of the narrative timeline

The narrative is presented as occurring in the
past/accomplished time, therefore the occurrences of the
temporal and aspectual auxiliaries within the narrative
timeframe signal foreground happenings. However, the
temporal and aspectual auxiliaries are neutral as to time
reference so they may occur both in accomplished and
projected timeframes.

When the temporal and aspectual auxiliaries occur in
projected time as in quotation, they indicate temporal
succession of events which have not yet occurred. Example
(10) illustrates the occurrence of the temporal auxiliary φi^3 and
the aspectual auxiliary leu^4 in quotation in the Bouyei
language.

(10) Bouyei

θu^1	pa^4	te^1	$\textit{?dam}^1$	su^2	$\textit{?dai}^1$	θuan^1
you	PREP	it	plant	in	inside	garden

$su\textit{ŋ}^2$	te^1	ma^3	$la{:}u^4$	leu^4	pan^2	$\textit{?dan}^1$	$\textit{leu}^4$
wait	it	grow	big	already	have	fruit	already

θu^1	ci^3	$\textit{?but}^1$	$\textit{?dan}^1$	$tsui^5la{:}u^4$	te^1	ma^1	la^3
you	then	pick	fruit	biggest	that	come	down

'(The Thunder God said to the two brother and sister)'
"You plant the gourd seeds inside the garden. Wait until the gourd plants have gourds. Then you pick the biggest one."'

In the above example the event sequence in quotation is displaced forward in time. This event sequence is foreshadowing which is said before the events are actually asserted to have taken place. Therefore, the temporal and aspectual auxiliaries do not function to propel narrative time.

The aspectual auxiliaries $da{:}y^3$, day^3, $\textit{?dai}^4$, dai^3, li^3, $baan$, $bu{:}n$ and $\textit{đã}$ may occur in clauses encoding events or activities which are displaced backward in time such as flashback. Example (11) illustrates the flashback information which is signalled by the aspectual auxiliary $\textit{đã}$ in Vietnamese language

(11) Vietnamese

Chàng	hồi nhớ	lại	những	ngày	xa xăm,
3rd PER	recall	again	some	day	very far

cái	ngày	chàng	lỡ	tay	ném	đã	vào
CLF.	day	3rdPER	miss	hand	throw	stone	in

đầu	em,		tưởng	em
head	younger sister		think	younger sister

chết	nên	đã		đi lang thang	không
die	so	to experience		go roam	not

dám	trở về	nhà,	rồi	được	một
dare	return	house	already	get	one

người	*buôn*	*thuốc bắc*			*đem*
person	sell	chinese tradition medicine			carry

về	*nhà*	*nuôi*	*ở*	*Trùng Khánh,*
return	house	bring up	at	Trung Khanh

thuộc	*tỉnh*	*Cao Bằng.*
belong to	province	Cao Bang

'He recalled his past. It began when he had thrown a stone hitting his younger sister. He thought that she had died then ran away. One day, he had met a herbal seller who brought him up at Trung Khanh, Cao Bang province.'

In this example the event—running away-- has taken place in the previous part of the story. The preverbal *đã* indicates that the event has completed in the distant past. The postverbal *rồi* is also used to mark a sequence of events which is displaced backward in time.

Besides the foregrounding function discussed previously, some temporal auxiliaries also have other syntactic functions. For example, the words $k\jmath:^3$ and $k\jmath:^4$ in Thai and Lue, respectively also function as an additive conjunction and conditional marker and the word *thì* in Vietnamese functions as a topic marker and a conditional marker. Compare $k\jmath:^4$ and *thì* functioning as a conditional marker in example (12).

(12) Lue

kan^2	$h\jmath:t^8$	$ja:m^2$	$d\gamma:n^1$	$ho:k^7$	$d\gamma:n^1$	$tse:t^7$	$ma:^2$
if	arrive	time	month	six	month	seven	come

$ta:^1van^2$	$k\jmath:^4$	$h\jmath:n^4$	mai^3	$ma:^2$
the sun	also	hot	scalding	come

'If it is June and July, the sun will become very hot and scalding.'

Vietnamese

Hễ	*có*	*tai biến*	*gì*	**thì**	*cứ*	*gọi*	*ta,*
if	have	disaster	what	then	keep on	call	1[st]PER

Tasẽ   về   ngay!
1ˢᵗPER   will   return immediately
'If any problem occurs, call me. I will be back
immediately.'

The perfective auxiliary may have other functions in
other syntactic positions. The perfective auxiliaries $da:y^3$, day^3,
$\widehat{?dai}^4$, dai^3, li^3; *baan,* and *buɯ:n* may function as a main verb
meaning 'to get, to obtain' or as a modal in postverbal position
meaning 'able, can' as illustrated in the So language below.
(13)   So
       main verb
       *ɲcah   n̰aw   pi:t   pʰu: **buɯ:n** ɲcah   kuk*
       side   Mr.   turtle   person get   side   base

       an   ka: a.ɯ: a.dɯ:ŋ   cɔ
       3PSG   then   carry in arms   take   fight

       lo:t   lɛw?
       PRT cmd   PRT emph
       'For Mr. Turtle's side, who got the base part of the
       tree, he then quickly carried it to plant.'

       postverbal position
       pʰɔ   pa:y   an   cɔ:n   a.lu:a:ŋ   m̰pḭ:ayh
       because   said   3PSG   go up   wood   NEG

       ***buɯ:n**   nay   lɛw?*
       can   this   PRT emph
       'Because that he (turtle) cannot climb up the tree.'

The perfective auxiliary *đã* in Vietnamese is different
from $da:y^3$, day^3, $\widehat{?dai}^4$, dai^3, li^3; *baan,* and *buɯ:n.* It does not
occur as a main verb or a postverbal modal. In other syntactic
position besides the preverbal position, it tags a clause as an
adverb meaning 'first of all' as in example (14).[1]
(14)   Vietnamese
       Nghi   mot cai   đã.
       Rest   a while   first of all
       'Let's take a rest first.'

On the other hand, there is another Vietnamese word which occurs as a main verb and a postverbal modal in the same manner as *da:y³*, *day³*, *ˀdai⁴*, *dai³*, *li³*; *baan*, and *bɯ:n*. It is the word *được* meaning 'to get, to receive' in main verb position and 'able, can' in postverbal position (see example 6). This word also occurs in preverbal position but its function is not a completive marker as *đã*. In preverbal position, *được* occurs in the so-called passive construction which has a positive connotation in contrast to the passive construction which has the word *bị* 'passive marker' conveying an inherently adversative meaning as illustrated below.

(15) *được*

hắn	*được*	*vua*	*phong*	*chức*	*Đô đốc.*
3rd PER	PASS.MK	king	nominate	position	admiral

'He was nominated as an admiral by the king.'

bị

yêu quái	*bị*	*giết*	*chết*
evil spirit	PASS.MK	kill	die

'The evil spirit was killed.'

7. Discussion

According to Longacre (1996), the main line of narrative discourse is foregrounded in varying ways in various languages. As a language with tense-aspect system, English uses the verb systems to report various kinds of discourse information. For example, in narrative discourse simple past-tense forms report successive actions and events which advance the story, whereas past-progressive forms report concomitant activities or nonstoryline.

The languages of Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer family under study do not have a tense system. The foreground part of the narrative is not characterized by the verbal inflection. It is the main purpose of this paper to examine the grammatical devices that these languages use to foreground the main line of development in narrative discourse.

The first grammatical device which is frequently used to foreground events or actions is serial clause construction. This syntactic construction is iconic in indicating continuing events or actions. It has one overt subject present in the initial clause. The subjects of the following clauses are realized by

zero anaphors. All clauses in a series are very strongly sequential and report events that are salient and are the most dynamic element in a discourse.

Another device is temporal auxiliary which is used to indicate the temporal succession of happenings. The clauses which are chronologically tied may be given prominence by flagging the clauses with the temporal auxiliary. The foreground clauses preceded by the temporal auxiliary make a good abstract of the narrative. All languages have the temporal auxiliaries meaning 'then.' They are $k\mathfrak{o}:^3$, $k\mathfrak{o}:^4$, φi^3, $\varphi o u^6$, φu^{33}, $k\partial^{\eth}$, $ka:$, and $th\check{\imath}$ in Thai, Lue, Bouyei, Northern Zhuang, Kam, Northern Khmer, So, and Vietnamese, respectively. Thai, So and Vietnamese also have other temporal auxiliaries meaning 'consequently,' namely, $cu\eta^1$, pat, and $b\grave{e}n$, respectively.

Comparing the forms of the temporal auxiliary meaning 'then,' we can conclude that the words $k\mathfrak{o}:^3$, $k\mathfrak{o}:^4$ in Thai and Lue have Khmer origin because all languages of Mon-Khmer family, except Mon and Vietnamese, have cognates of $k\mathfrak{o}:^3$ and $k\mathfrak{o}:^4$, whereas only the languages of the Southwestern group of the Tai-Kadai language family have these cognates and the languages of the Northern group have different forms. When Thai people migrated from China to the south, they adopted this form from Khmer during the time the Khmer empire was at the zenith of its civilization (Somsonge Forthcoming). Qin Qiaohang[2] (p.c) makes a remark that the forms φi^3, $\varphi o u^6$, and φu^{33} in Bouyei, Northern Zhuang, and Kam, respectively, are borrowed words from Chinese because they have similar pronunciation to the temporal auxiliary *jiu* 'then' in Chinese.

Besides the serial clause construction and the temporal auxiliaries, the languages of Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer family also use aspectual auxiliaries to foreground crucial events or actions. These aspectual auxiliaries are the words meaning 'already,' i.e., $l\varepsilon:w^4$, $le:u^4$, leu^4, $li:u^4/le:u^4$, $la:u^2$, $sn\varepsilon\varepsilon h$, $c\underaccent{\cdot}{y}:$, $r\grave{o}i$ and those meaning 'to experience': $da:y^3$, day^3, $\mathit{?}dai^4$, dai^3, li^3, $baan$, $bu:n$, and $\tilde{d}\tilde{a}$ in Thai, Lue, Bouyei, Northern Zhuang, Kam, Northern Khmer, So, and Vietnamese, respectively. The aspectual auxiliaries $l\varepsilon:w^4$, $le:u^4$, leu^4, $li:u^4/le:u^4$, $la:u^2$, $sn\varepsilon\varepsilon h$, $c\underaccent{\cdot}{y}:$, and $r\grave{o}i$ have perfective or completive aspect. They indicate a completion of a happening and signals a beginning of the following happening. In so doing, these aspectual

auxiliaries foreground crucial events which constitute the storyline of the narrative. The aspectual auxiliaries $da\text{:}y^3$, day^3, $^?dai^4$, dai^3, li^3, baan, buː:n, and $d\tilde{a}$ also have perfective or completive aspect. They indicate that someone has experienced something. The non-stative verbs which are preceded by these auxiliaries are usually thematic.

Comparing the forms of the aspectual auxiliaries $l\varepsilon\text{:}w^4$, $l\varepsilon\text{:}u^4$, leu^4, $li\text{:}u^4/le\text{:}u^4$, $la\text{:}u^2$, sneɛh, cɣː, and ròi, the forms of the Tai-Kadai languages are similar. It may be speculated that these forms are originally Tai-Kadai word. However, more data from other Tai-Kadai languages as listed below show that other different forms are also present.

LinGao	Dehong	Mulam	Sui	Maonan	Li
leu^4	he^1; he^1	lai^3	$ljeu^2$	$ljeu^4$	$ba\text{:}i^3$

(Minority Language Institute 1985)

Dehong and Li (Baoting) have different forms, he^1; he^1 and $ba\text{:}i^3$. Considering the word with the same function in Chinese, we observe that the word $l\partial/liau^{214}$ has a similar form to the Tai-Kadai languages (Qin Qiaohang p.c). Therefore the Tai-Kadai forms should be borrowed from Chinese. This conclusion agrees with the finding of Schlege (1902) that the word $l\varepsilon\text{:}w^4$ in Thai is a Chinese loanword.

The aspectual auxiliaries $da\text{:}y^3$, day^3, $^?dai^4$, dai^3, li^3 also have similar forms. Other languages of Tai-Kadai family also have cognates of these forms as illustrated below.

LinGao	Dehong	Mulam	Sui	Maonan	Li
lai^3	lai^3	lai^3	$^?dai^3$	dai^4	$^?ia^1$

(Minority Language Institute 1985)

Compared to the forms of the aspectual auxiliaries in Chinese, Northern Khmer and So, these languages have different forms. Chinese has $t\partial^{35}$ with a similar function (Qin Qiaohang p.c.). Northern Khmer and So have baan, and buː:n. Therefore, it is not likely that the aspectual auxiliaries of the Tai-Kadai languages are Chinese or Mon-Khmer loanwords. They must be originally Tai-Kadai words. It is also interesting that the aspectual auxiliaries in all languages under this study, except Vietnamese, have similar functions. They may be a main verb meaning 'to get, to obtain'; a preverbal meaning 'to have experienced'; and a postverbal meaning 'able, can.' Qin

Qiaohang (p.c.) mentions that the word $t\partial^{35}$ in Chinese, as spoken in the southern part of China, is used as a preverbal meaning 'to have experienced', as in the sentence $uo^{214} t\partial^{35} t\mathfrak{c}^h u^{51}$ Beijing uan^{35} 'I have been to Beijing', so it is possible that this syntactic construction is borrowed from Tai-Kadai languages which are spoken widely in that area. In Vietnamese the word *đã* functions as a preverbal meaning 'to have experienced' and an adverb meaning 'first of all.' This word does not occur as a main verb and a postverbal modal in the same manner that $da{:}y^3$, day^3, $\mathit{?}dai^4$, dai^3, li^3, *baan* and *buɯ:n* do. In these syntactic positions, the word *được* occurs instead. In a preverbal position, *được* does not function as a completive marker but as a passive marker conveying a positive connotation. In comparing the form of *đã* with its genetically-related languages such as Northern Khmer and So, it has a different form from the words *baan* and *buɯ:n*. As for the postverbal auxiliaries, *rồi*, *snɛɛh*, *cɤ:*, all three languages have different forms.

The temporal auxiliaries and aspectual auxiliaries are neutral in reference to time. They can be displayed in present, past, and future. The time settings in the narrative such as temporal words, phrases and clauses or the context will give a clue to specific time. The aspect auxiliaries $da{:}y^3$, day^3, $\mathit{?}dai^4$, dai^3, li^3, *baan*, *buɯ:n*, and *đa* are usually glossed as 'past tense marker.' However, it has been found that these words are not past tense markers but they imply past tense because of their perfective aspect value. As the default timeframe of the narrative is past time or accomplished time, when the temporal and aspectual auxiliaries occur in past time, they highlight foreground events. However, if these auxiliaries occur in clauses encoding events which are displaced backward in time such as flashback or events which are displaced forward in time such as quotation, they do not foreground the storyline.

Notes

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   specialist of the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural
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