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 Ubonratchathani (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 miën 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:**

miïn  mœ ¿?œw  nuv  muuj  .....  Ø
there-is mother-father  be  one  
'There were parents....  (they)'

**main participants of episode:**

miïn  kmom  koon  kmom  muuj  .....  Ø
there-is girl  child  girl  one  
'There was a daughter....  (she)'

miïn  mœ  cah  nuv  muuj  .....  
there-is mother  old  be  one
'There was an old mother....'

1.2. **Secondary participants**

Secondary participants are usually introduced in an existential miïn 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:

miïn  niï¿ sro?  kii  .....  kii
there-is person  village  they  they
'There were neighbours....  they ....'

miïn  ¿aakii  .....  kii
there-is someone  she
'There was someone....  she ....'

miïn  phoog  priïïn  ....
there-is group  hunter
'There were some hunters ......'

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:

\[ S^4 \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tuu som} & \quad \text{mii} \quad \text{nuh} \quad \ldots \ldots \quad \text{kii} \\
\text{go ask} & \quad \text{PreN(F)} \quad \text{that} \\
& \quad \text{'Ask that woman for some (water)\ldots\ldots she \ldots\ldots'} \quad 5
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kii ke? liic} & \quad \text{koon} \quad \text{moo} \quad \text{jaan ceth} \\
\text{she} & \quad \text{L deliver} \quad \text{child} \quad \text{come} \quad \text{Part} \\
& \quad \text{'She delivered a child like that\ldots\ldots'}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{moo} & \quad \text{pah} \quad \text{tamcethj coh preen} \\
\text{come} & \quad \text{meet} \quad \text{elephant} \quad \text{in heat} \\
& \quad \text{'(They) went to meet an elephant in heat\ldots\ldots'}
\end{align*}
\]

Poss

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sneth ke?} & \quad \text{?aa ppuuan kii} \quad \text{moo} \quad \ldots \ldots \quad \emptyset \\
\text{then} & \quad \text{PreN wife his come} \\
& \quad \text{'Then his wife came\ldots\ldots (she) \ldots\ldots'}
\end{align*}
\]

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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{S} \\
\text{jum ke? puah ke? ramkhaan} \\
\text{cry} \quad \text{L snake} \quad \text{L be-bothered} \\
& \quad \text{'(When she) cried, the snake was bothered\ldots\ldots'}
\end{align*}
\]

2. Reintroduction of participants

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

\[ ^5 \text{Kii and mii nuh represent the same person.} \]
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:

\[ S \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{moo ke? mæɛ tæŋ thaa ....} \\
\text{come L mother ask that}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[ S \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{phɔɔ tə ?ɔw tæmæɛj moo ..... ø}
\end{align*}
\]

'When father elephant come

'When the father elephant came ..... (he) .....'

\[ S \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{koon nuh ke? plɛck knoŋ cæt}
\end{align*}
\]

child that L be-surprised in heart

'That child was surprised .....'

\[ S \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mɪi ckeɛ nih ke? liic koon .....}
\end{align*}
\]

mother dog this L delivered child

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

\[ S \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mæɛ ?ɛɛŋ nuh hɔj phɔɔ tə phlumø .....}
\end{align*}
\]

mother herself that Part when be-bright

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

\[ S \]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sneɛh kə? pɖeŋ kii kə? tæŋ thaa .....}
\end{align*}
\]

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 kə? tuu luy non kii.6
she L go play with them
'She went to play with them.'

O
theo cniik da? kum tampiieŋ dec kii coh heŋ.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
neeh ke? pbuul ppuuŋŋ thaa
then persuade wife that ......
'Then (the husband) persuaded his wife that ......'

O
kii ke? haw thaam nuh heŋ moo
he L call soldier that Part come
'He called that soldier ......'

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

7Kii reintroduces the first daughter, now out of focus.
neeh ke? tuu tu? ke? khean peej 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-F^8

¶ miyen mee ?aw nuu muuj neeh ke? miyen koon
there-is mother father be one then there-is child

pruch nuu te muuj FØ slan ?ooj FØ slan
male be - one (parents) love - (parents) love

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

FØ mot staŋ FØ miyen sree
money (parents) lose money (parents) have ricefield

FØ miyen ckaa FØ ke? lua? cuun koon mot
(parents) have garden (parents) L sell send child entire

^8Discourse symbols: Ø = zero; ¶ = structural paragraph; # = paragraph boundary; FØ = zero focused participant; I-F = introduction of focused participant; NonF = nonfocused participant.
tUU riin mUwNkooK 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
O & \\
\text{sneeh ke? phoong niie? src? kii ke? cuuj nunowem} & \\
\text{then group person village they L help bring} & \\
\text{khnnie-khnaan} & \quad \text{FØ [11 times]} & \\
\text{together} & \quad \text{(they)}
\end{align*}
\]

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

\[
\begin{align*}
O & \\
\text{phoo te baq?een tuu pah tamrejej sco} & \quad \text{tamrejej} \\
\text{when by-chance go meet elephant white elephant} & \\
\text{con-ceet} & \quad \text{FØ} & \\
\text{be-stumped} & \quad \text{(he)}
\end{align*}
\]

'(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 ltuq noq prch 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 + snæch kə?
(elephant) then
tamrcəj 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 # # impoverishment location setting ..... + khniie kə? tuu
(she) she L go
kreet phə? ..... FØ 4 times.
dip drink (She)

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

..... FØ # # impoverishment time setting + niiəq nuh kə? ləəj lumuk
(she) daughter that so lift
puəh da? ciières .... 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 + khnīa kə? ?o o teh #
  (she)            She L be-glad Part

.... FØ ..... tuu kə? thom c̄kə kə? thom thom thom
  (she)       go L be-big dog L be-big be-big be-big

ram # (end of introductory paragraph).
continually

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

'..... 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:

khnīa ..... FØ (4 times) ..... phoog priəən kə? ktra?
 She group hunter L pull
 phr̄w̄p moo ..... FØ ..... (hunters)
suddenly come

'The hunters suddenly pulled ..... (They) .....'
khniie ..... FØ (5 times) ..... mii koon tuuc nuh
she (= the dog) PreN(F) child be-small that
mee man baan haw ?oj mii koon tuuc nah wiie
mother not get call what PreN(F) child be-small that she
ruuet ..... 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 wiie 'third person'. Examples:

NonF
tuu som mii nuh ..... kii ke? man ?ooj pha? ..... go ask PreN(F) that she L not let drink

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

NonF
joo mii nuh hej moo ke? wiie ke? man ?u?uap 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 niie 'third person'. Example:

NonF NonF NonF
kii ke? moo scoopsuun niie banthukbanthaa niie mot ..... he come investigate him record him entirely

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'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? ləəj cuun koon tuu riin
so send child go study

'So (the parents) sent their child to study ...'

NonF
phooŋ baŋʔeẽn tuu pah tamrεɛj sɔɔ tuu kə? tuu haw
when by-chance go meet elephant white go go call

NonF

tamrεɛj sɔɔ ..... 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
nəŋ kə? miiɛn niieʔ sроʔ kii tuu nuuməm ə tuu ciik
besides there-is person village they go bring (her) go dig

NonF NonF

tamloŋ ...... 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 niieʔ? sроʔ ciik tamloŋ 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 phuŋ nah Ø

there-is someone hear thunder she hear thunder rain much she

_lum _ _pkoo _ _ _ _ phuŋ

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 baŋ?een ngaj krocj kii _ kə? haw thaan nuh hej

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


