Kui narrative repetition

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Abstract

The study of Kui narrative repetition is based on four texts narrated by a native speaker of Kui spoken at Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin Province.

Repetition is frequent in Kui narrative discourse. It has different forms and functions. It is presented in the forms of verbatim, reduction, expansion, synonym, cycle, pro–verb, and negated antonym. The most notable function of repetition is to spread out the information load so that a theme line is highlighted. Repetition is usually used for linkage, preview, repeated attempt, rhetorical underlining at the peak, contra–expectation, amplification, and summary.

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0. Introduction

Repetition can be found in all discourse genres. It is mostly used to control the rate or speed at which information is presented. As pointed out by Callow (1974), different languages convey information at different rates. Some languages may present the information slowly, with a great deal of redundancy or repetition whereas other languages convey close-packed information by using minimum of words and little repetition. Languages which use a great deal of repetition have a spread–out information structure whereas languages which use little repetition have a compact information structure.

Kui is an example of languages with a spread–out information structure which is obviously seen in narrative discourse. To slow down the rate at which information is presented, Kui uses repetition which takes various forms and serves different functions. This paper focusses on forms and functions of repetition as found in four texts narrated by a speaker of Kui spoken at Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin province. The titles of texts are as follows:

Text 1 ?aticiaŋ  
Text 2 ksan  
Text 3 ksan sipscoŋ ne?  
Text 4 ?aticaa thìiąŋ

‘An elephant’  
‘A snake’  
‘Twelve children’  
‘A fox’

1. Forms of repetition

The term repetition is used to mean “referring to the same event twice, whether the same words are repeated or not” (Callow 1974: 74). There are various ways of referring to the same event twice as discussed below.

1.1 Verbatim

Verbatim is a word for word repetition. An event or action may be exactly repeated. In example 1 the event in which a woman drinks an elephant’s urine is exactly repeated in a relative clause when the woman is rementioned.

(1) paʔ teii pthah daa? kloam teiiąŋ kaʔ lyyj nɔoɔ daa?  
walk go find water urine elephant then then drink water

kloam teiiąŋ  
urine elephant

[When the woman] found an elephant’s urine, [she] then drank it.

---

1 Kui 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 woman who drank the elephant’s urine...

1.2 Reduction

When the same event is referred to the second time, it is usually reduced in form as in example 2.

(2)  käät  niə?sro?  muuaj  klum
    there is  villager  one  group

There was a group of villagers.

tɕii  bɔoŋ  tphɔŋ?  ?aɓaŋ  paa  kah
    go  find  dig  bamboo shoot  in  forest

[They] went to find bamboo shoots in the forest.

tɕii  bɔoŋ  kəʔ  buuŋ  khuŋe?
    go  find  then  get  everybody

[When they] went to find [the bamboo shoots], everybody got [the bamboo shoots].

1.3 Expansion

When an event is restated, more information may be added. In Kui narrative, there are few examples of expansion. Example 3 illustrates a repetition via expansion.

(3)  ləʔ  kən  laŋ  tɕɔo  fəət  kpaj  muuaj  ɲtʰɾuŋ  muuaj
    give birth  baby  out  come  twin  female  one  male  one

[The woman] gave birth to a twin, a girl [and] a boy.

1.4 Synonym

Another method of referring to an event twice is by using different words to state exactly the same thing as in example 4.

(4)  tɕon  tuaʔaʔəŋ  thɛt  tɔŋh  ləʔ
    till  himself  run  out of breath  die

Till [he] himself ran out of [his] breath [and then] died.
ksan phocê taa diiŋ paaj nthrh hèe lah lææw
snake when but know that man that die already

When the snakes knew that the man died.

1.5 Cycle

Cycle is defined as repetitions of similar facts with new information added each time (Thomas 1978). Cycle is a prominent feature of Kui narratives. It appears in all four texts. Each text has at least two cycles. All repeated cycles have a similar setting and the new information added is a different event. A set of cycles may have only one thematic participant attempting to do something again and again in each cycle. Another set of cycles may have a thematicity switch between two cycles but the settings and the actions will be the same. In text 4 there is a set of five cycles at the beginning of the story. A fox attempts to eat the livers of two sisters. He comes to see the sisters five times and asks how large their livers are. Each time the setting and the action are the same but the livers grow bigger and bigger. Each attempt is represented in each cycle. Example 5 illustrates the first two cycles of this set.

(5) First cycle

tbuuw kâ? tço m'h naan lôm mej phuùut mahnaa
evening then come ask children liver your large how much

In the evening [the foxes] came to ask the children, “How large are your livers?”

?✈✈✈ mah mah ?anææ sensâ?
Introductory particle at the extent this one hair

[The children answered that the livers were] as large as the hair.

?ââ tçii lopkrçuj
yes go return

[The fox said] yes [and] returned.

Second cycle

na? tbuuw thvyn tço m'h naan lôm phuùut mahnaa
it is evening again come ask children liver large how much

In the next evening [the foxes] came to ask the children how large the livers were.

mah nthrâh
at the extent nail

[The children answered that their livers were] as large as a nail.
1.6 *Pro-verb*

Repetition can be further expressed by a pro-verb, that is the verb is repeated and the demonstrative and comparative reference are added. The pro-verb is usually embedded in a cycle. In text 3 the father tries to lose his sons in the jungle three times. Each attempt is represented in each cycle. When the father repeats his action, a pro-verb is used to refer to the action described previously in the text as in example 6.

(6) ṭow tçii klaŋ̱ kâʔ wâa naʔ nâj nuaṉ
father go defecate then do the same the other day

The father went to defecate, then did the same way as the other day.

1.7 *Negated antonym*

An event may be stated twice as a negated antonym. This form of repetition is rare in Kui narratives. Example 7 illustrates negated antonym.

(7) kâʔ pthâh taa klaŋ̱
then find only feces

[The children] then found only the feces.

phiʔ pthâh ṭow
not find father

[They] did not find the father.

2. Functions of repetition

The most notable function of repetition is to spread out the information load in order to highlight a theme line. An occurrence of repetition anywhere in the text enables the listener to be aware that the information being conveyed is significant.

Repetition in Kui narrative is mostly used for linkage. Old information is repeated before new information gets started. This repetitive back reference can be found throughout the text. Other dominant usages of repetition are preview, repeated attempt and rhetorical underlining at the peak. Some other usages of repetition which are infrequent include contra-expectation, amplification and summary. These functions of repetition will be discussed in detail below.

2.1 *Linkage*

Kui uses a large-scale repetition for linkage. The previous crucial event is frequently repeated by the back referential clause which indicates a completion of the previous event and serves as a point of reference for the following crucial event.
The following part of text 3 exemplifies a frequent occurrence of the repetitive back reference.

(8) juur klaa sah ?ow ka? nam tcii thyn
wake up morning up father then take go again

In the morning the father woke up [and] then [he] took [the children] to go [into the forest] again.

tcii ka? nam moot
then take go in

[When they] went, [he] then took [the children] to go [into the forest].

tcii nthryu dzian deel
go deep more former

[They went] deeper than the last time.

?ow ka? ntee kaaan paaj ?ow tcii klaaj nuaaj dvy
father then tell child that father go excrete first Fp

The father then told the children that he would go to defecate first.

kaaan ka? namnoc rap paaj ?aa
child then together answer that yes

The children together said yes.

?ow tcii klaaj ka? waa na? naijuaaj
father go defecate then do as day before

The father went to defecate, then did the same way as the other day.

klaaj ruac ka? ntee klaaj paaj bco kaaan kyy
defecate finish then tell feces that if child my

kjaab ?aan mbocn dvy
call let answer Fp

[After he] had defecated, [he] then told the feces that if the children called him, the feces should answer the call [for him].

kaaan phyy ?ow tcii duun ka? kjaab kjaab ka? sga
child see father go long then call call then hear

taa sneen mbocn
but voice answer
[When] the children saw the father go so long, [they] then called [the father].
[When they] called, [they] then heard only the answering voice.

ka? tçii tpoon sneeŋ
then go follow voice

[The children] then went to follow the voice.

tçii ka? pthāh taa klaŋŋ
go then find only feces

[When the children] went [to find the father, they] then found only the feces.

ka? khut paaj ?ow tçii duŋ læȓw
then think that father go home already

[The children] then thought that the father had already gone home.

go arrive home then see father stay at home

[When they] arrived home, then [they] saw [that] the father was at home.

Most examples of repetitive back reference are represented by the forms of reduction and synonym. Verbatim is also found but rare. In example 8 the repetitive back reference via reduction is illustrated as diagrammed below.

The previous event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>?ow</th>
<th>ka?</th>
<th>nam</th>
<th>tçii</th>
<th>thyun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>take</td>
<td>go again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The repetitive back reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b.</th>
<th>?ow</th>
<th>tçii</th>
<th>klaŋŋ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>defe cate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The repetitive back reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b.</th>
<th>reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c.</th>
<th>ka?</th>
<th>kjaa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>call</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The repetitive back reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c.</th>
<th>reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The previous event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>d.</th>
<th>ka?</th>
<th>tçii</th>
<th>tpoon</th>
<th>sneeŋ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>follow</td>
<td>voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The repetitive back reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>d.</th>
<th>reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are several points to be noted.

1. The repetitive back reference in (b) is tagged by the completive marker ruac ‘to finish’ to highlight the completion of the previous crucial event.

2. The previous event in (c) is already reduced in form as seen below so when it is repeated there is not much left for further reduction.

   reduction
   kəan    kə?    kjaa   𝜈w       --------->  kə?    kjaa   --------->  kjaa
   child    then    call    father

3. The events following the repetitive back reference are all crucial and constitute a thematic line of the story. These events are highlighted by the repetition of the auxiliary kə?. This lexical repetition functions to link successive events within chronological order (see Burusphat 1992 for detailed discussion of kə?).

4. The repetitive back reference may also link new information to old information mentioned somewhere in the text. This can be done via a relative clause as seen in example (1).

2.2 Preview

When the narrator aims to underline an event as a crucial information, she may alert the listener by letting a participant talk about that event before it actually happens. Therefore previews of events which constitute a thematic line can be made through the speeches or cognitive experiences of participants. The repetition of previews usually take the forms of reduction and synonym in the thematic–line events, as in example 8.

**Speeches**

**Previews of theme–line events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>ruw</th>
<th>kə?</th>
<th>ntee</th>
<th>kəan</th>
<th>paaj</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>tell</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruw</td>
<td>téi</td>
<td>kloañ</td>
<td>nuan</td>
<td>drr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>defecate</td>
<td>first</td>
<td>Fp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>ruw</td>
<td>téi</td>
<td>kloañ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>father</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>defecate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b.</th>
<th>kə?</th>
<th>ntee</th>
<th>kloañ</th>
<th>paaj</th>
<th>that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>tell</td>
<td>feces</td>
<td>that</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buo</td>
<td>kəan</td>
<td>krr</td>
<td>kjaa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>call</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>kə?</td>
<td>kjaa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>then</td>
<td>call</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>teañ</th>
<th>mbœon</th>
<th>drr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>let</td>
<td>answer</td>
<td>Fp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synonym</td>
<td>(kjaa)</td>
<td>kə?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>call</td>
<td>then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sneen</td>
<td>mbœon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cognitive experience (Thought)

2.3 Repeated attempt

Repetition is further used for a repeated attempt of participant. The devices which are mostly used to fulfill this function are cycle and pro–verb as illustrated in examples 5 and 8. Example 5 is from text 4. A repeated attempt of foxes to eat the livers of two sisters is represented by a set of five cycles. Example 8 is from text 3. There are three cycles with pro–verbs embedded in the second and third cycles. This set of cycles represents the repeated attempt of the father who tries to lose his children in the forest. Each time they return but in the third cycle the children are rescued by an elephant’s keeper and stay with him in the forest until they grow up.

Both sets of cycles in text 4 and 3 focus on the theme which is represented in repeated pattern in cycles. The purpose of the cycles in text 4 is to focus on the repeated attempt of a fox to eat the livers of two sisters. In text 3 the focus is on the repeated attempt of the father to lose his children in the forest. The repeated pattern has to do also with a style of narration that makes the story enjoyable.

2.4 Rhetorical underlining at the peak

According to Longacre (1983) a climactic narrative discourse has climax as a notional structure feature. A story reaches a climax when there is a highest point of tension and frustration (cf. Burusphat 1991). Climax corresponds to the surface structure peak which has features peculiar to itself. There are various devices to identify peak and rhetorical underlining is one of them. Kui underlines the peak by slowing down the information rate via repeated words. Repetition is used to draw attention to the repeated word (cf. Rugaleva 1983). The following examples are the identification of peak via repeated words in all texts.
(9) Text 1

ka?  tɛii  tpoon  bɔɔj
then  go  follow  see

[The elephant] then went to follow [the tiger].

poon  tɛii  poon  tɛii  poon
follow  go  follow  go  follow

[He] went to follow, went to follow, followed.

ka?  poon  mahnaa  ka?  phi?  phɔy?
then  follow  how  then  not  see

No matter how [he] followed [the tiger], [he] could not see [it].

In text 1 a woman goes to find fruit in the forest and drinks an elephant’s urine. Later she gives birth to a twin, a boy and a girl, and tells them that their father is an elephant. She asks her children to go find their father. When they first meet their father, the elephant does not know that they are his children so he kills his son. After he finds out the truth he takes his daughter home. Later a tiger tricks the daughter and eats her while the elephant is away. The story reaches its climax when the elephant is highly frustrated and tries to find the tiger to kill. The climax is marked on the surface by the repeated word tɛii (t)poon ‘to go to follow’.

Text 2

phɔɔ  taa  phuŋ  khlaaj  lɔɔw  ka?  ksan  lah
when  but  belly  break–open  already  then  snake  out

tɔɔ  ruu  *phuŋ  ndææl
come  at  belly  wife

When the belly was already broke open, the snake came out of the wife’s belly.

ka?  saæŋ  tɔɔ  tam  tam  mahnaa  ka?  phi?  dzim
then  down  come  hit  hit  how  then  not  all

[The husband] then came down to hit [them], but no matter how [he] hit, [he] could not [hit] all [of them]

dɔŋ  tam  tam  tɔɔn  tɔaæŋ  thɛt  thɔŋ  lah
still  hit  hit  till  himself  run  out of breath  die

[He] still hit [and] hit [the snakes] until he himself died.

In text 2 a woman goes to dig bamboo shoots. Her shovel is stuck in the ground. She says if a man helps her pull out the shovel she will be his wife (even though she is married). A snake helps her pull the shovel so she tells him to go to
her home during the night. Several months later she is pregnant. Her husband finds out the truth so he kills the snake. He takes his wife to cut wood in the forest. He climbs up a tree, cuts a stick, sharpens it and throws it down to his wife’s belly. Then the belly is broken and the snakes come out from the belly. Here is the climax of the story. The husband is in trouble. He tries to hit all the snakes but he cannot. The surface feature peak is identified by the repeated word tam ‘to hit’.

Text 3

namnəc bəoj knaa tcii duŋ
go together seek way go home

[The children] went together to seek the way to go home.

bəoj mahnəa kaʔ phiʔ phiʔʔʔ?
seek how then not see

No matter how [they] sought [they] could not see [the father].

rawanŋ paʔ bəoj knaa tcii duŋ tcii pthah
while walk seek way go home go come across

kuuaj siian ?atɔiian
person take care elephant

While [they] were walking to seek the way home, [they] came across an elephant’s keeper.

In text 3 a poor couple cannot afford bringing up their twelve children. The father attempts to lose the children in the forest. The story reaches the climax on the last attempt as the children are highly frustrated. They cannot find the way home. The peak as the corresponding surface feature of climax\(^2\) is marked by the repeated word bəoj ‘to seek’.

Text 4

təoɔ tcʔ kaʔ tcʔ tooŋ muuaj laa làh tcii
come arrive then pick up coconut one throw die go

[When the foxes] arrived, [each of the two sisters] then picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

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\(^2\) See a discussion of correlation of notional and surface features in Longacre (1987, 1983).
Kui narrative repetition

tToo naʔnæʔ taʔ plaj toonq muuaj laa kαʔ læh
come like this pick up fruit coconut one throw then die

[When other foxes] came like this [again, each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

taʔ plaj toonq laa læh
pick up fruit coconut throw die

[Each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

taʔ plaj toonq laa læh
pick up fruit coconut throw die

[Each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

læh dzim læh dzim
die all die all

[The foxes] died all.

In text 4 a group of foxes attempt to eat the livers of two sisters. When the livers are big enough to eat, the two sisters grow a coconut tree and stay up the tree. The story reaches its climax when the foxes come and the sisters try to protect themselves by hitting the foxes with coconuts. The surface feature peak is clearly marked by a great deal of verbatim repetition.

2.5 Contra–expectation

Repetition is also used when there is a contra–expectation which is represented in the form of negated antonym as illustrated in example 7. This example is from text 3. The father tries to lose his children in the forest. He tells the children to wait while he goes to defecate. After defecating, he tells the feces to answer the children’ call for him. When the children come after the voice, they are disappointed because they see only the feces, not their father.

2.6 Amplification

Kui uses repetition for amplification in the same way as mentioned by Callow (1974:74) below:

Some languages use repetition frequently for amplification. Here the second mention of the event is used as a vehicle for carrying some added information, some new material that was not mentioned the first time.
The form of repetition for amplification is usually expansion as illustrated below:

(10)  ka? phnv? khlɔɔŋ ᵈadzvvl khlɔɔŋ jwvŋ ᵈadzvvl
    then see print tiger print feet tiger

[The elephant] then saw the print of the tiger, the footprint of the tiger.

Example 10 is from text 1. khlɔɔŋ ᵈadzvvl ‘the tiger’s print’ is repeated with some added information.

2.7 Summary

Summary is “a type of brief, generalized repetition” (Callow 1974:78). There is only one instance of summary which is made through a speech of participant. In text 3 when the children come across the elephant’s keeper, they tell him about their father’s attempt to lose them in the forest. This summary is old information which is repeated again to highlight it as a theme line and is provided for those listeners who may miss it in a previous telling. Summary takes the forms of reduction and synonym.

(11)  ka? ṇtee kuuaj siian ?atciian paaj ᵈow nam tsoo
    then tell person take care elephant that father take come
    bɔɔj plajlɔɔŋ ᵈow ka? tcii duŋ jwvŋ mohaj bɔɔj
    find fruit father then go home before we find
    knaa tcii duŋ phi? phnv? ka? lvyj klnʔkrɔɔŋ
    way go home not find then then get lost

[The children] then told the elephant’s keeper, “The father took [us] to find fruit, then he went home. We could not find the way home, then [we] got lost [in the forest]”.

3. Summary

Kui uses a large-scale repetition to spread out the information load in order that a theme line is highlighted. There are various ways to repeat the same event. The devices which are frequently used include cycle, reduction, synonym and pro-verb. Other forms of repetition which are infrequent are verbatim, expansion, and negated antonym. The notable functions of these forms are linkage, preview, repeated attempt and rhetorical underlining at the peak. Some other functions can also be found but rare. They are contra-expectation, amplification and summary. The relationship between forms and functions is diagrammed as follows:
Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbatim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negated antonym</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though repetition is basically used for underlining a theme line, it has to do also with a style of narration as seen in the form of cycles.³

REFERENCES


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³ I would like to thank Mrs. Dorothy Thomas for taking time from her busy schedule to read this paper and to make constructive comments.