SEDANG PRONOUNS

Kenneth D. Smith

0. Introduction
1. Pronoun functions
2. The content of 3rd-person singular pronoun gá referents
3. The determination of 3rd-person singular pronoun gá referents
4. The determination of 1st-person-exclusive dual pronoun má referents

0. Introduction. The ten principal Sedang personal pronouns are charted in the traditional manner in Chart 1. These same pronouns have also been analyzed utilizing the four features: + hearer, + speaker, + non-singular, and + non-specific number (Smith, 1969, 115-122) as shown in Chart 2. This analysis was made to relate Sedang pronouns to the Reciprocal Transformation with Prefix to-, for which there is the following Pronoun Restriction for Reciprocal to- Affixation Transformation:

If either Pron₁ or Pron₂ is marked [+ Hearer] the other must be marked [- Hearer]; similarly, if either Pron₁ or Pron₂ is marked [+ Speaker] the other must be marked [- Speaker].

It was not within the scope of the Smith (1969) article, however, to give consideration to the matter of pronoun reference.

Of other Vietnam languages, pronoun reference has been discussed only for Chtau (Thomas, 1971); cf. the use of the pronoun nêh '3rd person' in paragraph topic (page 203-206) and in presubject focus (page 82-83). Otherwise the matter of pronoun reference has
Chart 1. Sedang pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st person</th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
<td>á</td>
<td>má</td>
<td>ngian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inclusive</td>
<td>é</td>
<td>pá</td>
<td>pian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>eh</td>
<td>pó</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>gá</td>
<td>préi</td>
<td>vai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2. Sedang pronouns: feature analysis

MKS 5:165-178 (c)1976 See archives.sealang.net/mks/copyright.htm for terms of use.

It is the purpose of this paper to define the mechanism of some Sedang pronoun reference—or, given the occurrence of a pronoun in a Sedang text, what rules govern determination of its nominal referent. For first-inclusive and second person pronouns, this is only a matter of identification of speaker and/or hearer; this paper will discuss only two other pronouns: namely, gā 'he, she, it' and mà 'we two--exclusive'. Prior to a discussion of pronoun reference, however, it is necessary to identify the syntactic functions involving pronouns (section 1) and the semantic domain of pronoun referents (section 2).

1. Pronoun Functions. Sedang pronouns occur in the following six syntactic functions (for a fuller syntactic statement see Smith (1975)).

1.1. Subject.

(1) A xiam gā a kô. originally he here 'Originally he was here.'

(2) 'Nai gā ái drei ôh. know he has knife no 'I don't know whether he has a knife.'

(3) Gā ái hnuá. he has sheath 'He has a sheath.'

(4) Gā chai 'trôh a hngai. he return approach toward house 'He went back home.'

(5) Me gā cha preô dei pôlê. then he able return to village 'Then he can return to the village.'

1.2 Direct Object.

(6) Vai tú gā a go tokah. they kick him toward cliff 'They kicked him over the cliff.'

(7) Á ko gā aí. I chop him pîl
'I just killed him.'

1.3 Indirect Object.

(8) Vai ám- gá hme.
    they give him rice
    'They gave him rice.'

(9) Ok gá kóchái hmeng me ai.
    pour him vegetables black ptl
    'She poured out some more vegetables for him.'

1.4 Object of a Preposition.

(10) Á pro kúan pa 'báng gá tê.
    I make son father with him ptl
    'I'll have a father-son ceremony with him.'

(11) Vai drôh hâ tópuí 'báng gá.
    they girls also talk with him
    'The young girls also talked with him.'

(12) Ah vai ôh ta rôe ki gá.
    future they not buy of him
    'Thereafter they didn't buy from him.'

(13) Vai xo ki gá.
    they get of him
    'They got his.'

1.5 Head of a Noun Phrase.

(14) Gá kó lo hòdu hòdéa tai môi hòmôu me.
    he this out carry all one rice house ptl
    'This one is able to carry a whole rice house.'

(15) Gá me rôdei.
    he that strong
    'That one is strong.'

1.6 Possessor.

(16) Tréng ... to kônei gá kó.
    clip ptl fingernail him this
    'He clipped this one's fingernails.'

(17) Mông gá kó mông mèam.
    beak him this beak metal
    'This one's beak was a beak of metal.'
(18) Hôlong gá a kô.
knife him here

'His knife is here.'

(19) Kôdrai gá chai hôda a hngei neô me.
wife him return run to house again ptl

'His wife ran home again.'

(20) Inai gá Krua me.
name him Krua ptl

'His name is Krua.'

(21) Gá me hniôi pochan dei...vai vá gá me.
he that immediately tell to they in-laws him ptl

'He immediately told it to all his in-laws.'

2. The Content of 3rd-person Singular Pronoun gá Referents.

Sedang 3rd-person singular pronoun gá referents belong to the following categories of nouns (for a sentential referent see 3.3.5 below).

2.1 Animate.

(a) Natural, both humans and animals (all the pronouns used in examples (1) through (21) above are of this type)

(22) Pôït ta âi konái mot ka ôh bûu me.
don't have rat enter eat no rice that

Gá ói to koja tê.
he stay ptl husks only

'Don't have rats enter and eat the rice. They stay outside with husks only.'

(b) Supernatural, i.e. ghosts, spirits

(23) Kia Chai Kliam me gá âi 'nai ôh.
ghost sick liver that he aux know not

'That Sick Liver Ghost, he didn't know it.'

(c) Fictitious, i.e. story animals

(24) Drôh ket dro kô a xiam gá a kô.
girl frog this originally she here

'Originally the frog girl, she was here.'

2.2 Inanimate, i.e. things of nature

(25) Ngo ́Eang gá a kô.
mount Eang it here

'Mount Eang (Ngok Linh), it's here.'
(26) Lôang kôdra...me mòi chat hònám gá āi pok öh. wood hard then one ten year if aux rot- not ten 'Iron wood...Then after ten years it hasn't rotted.'

(27) Tôro kô pian xau hâ gá kotôu. thunder this we afraid also if thunders 'This thunder, we also are afraid when it thunders.'

(28) Me gá, gá rômâng tung kong u me. but it it dark in jungle place there 'But it's dark in that jungle.'

3. The Determination of 3rd-person Singular Pronoun gá Referents. Determination of Sedang 3rd-person singular pronoun gá referents includes consideration of the preceding discourse (3.2 to 3.5) as well as of the following discourse (3.1). The following rules are a guide to the determination of pronoun referents. The rules appear to be ordered inasmuch as several cases have been found where utilization of a succeeding rule would give a different referent.

3.1 Anticipatory Pronominalization. Anticipatory pronominalization is identification of the referent of a pronoun immediately after the occurrence of the pronoun, whereas in the pronominalization of sections 3.2 to 3.5 the identification of the referent of a pronoun is made prior to the occurrence of the pronoun. If the pronoun gá and an immediately following or "anticipated" noun are in the same syntactic slot that noun is the referent of the pronoun; or:

$$R_gá = N_1/#N_1$$

(Read: the Referent of gá is N1 when...)

In Sedang anticipatory pronominalization is utilized to identify discourse initial, remote, and ambiguous referents.

3.1.1 Discourse Initial. Discourse initial, anticipatory pronominalization is used to supply the referent when there is no preceding context.

(29) Kô gá tea rômâng nah. Gá Pa this it water flood formerly he father Xéang va 'nhie dei kong. spirit want destroy prep earth 'Once upon a time there was this flood. God, he wanted to destroy the earth.'

3.1.2 Remote Referent. If the key to referent identification is distant, anticipatory pronominalization is used to restate the referent. For example, a preceding gá in the discourse, following section 3.3
below, technically identifies the referent of $gá$ in the following sentence as $chó$ 'dog', but the intervening five sentences is sufficient span to require repetition of the referent by anticipatory pronominalization.

(30) Chó...gá...gá...(5 sentences)...Me $gá$ chó...
dog he he then he dog

3.1.3 Ambiguous Referent. Anticipatory pronominalization is used if application of a following rule would give an incorrect referent. For example, a text may have a major topic identifying each pronoun $gá$ (see section 3.3 below). But if a minor topic has been inserted since the last preceding pronoun of the major topic, then, to avoid ambiguous or mis-identification, anticipatory pronominalization is used to clarify or restate the referent.

(31) Tea Mih me $gá$ lo pêng PiPho
river Mih that it out above PiPho
a tai neó. Gá trôn Tea Mekong. Me
up more it approach river Mekong that
vai khên tea tôxí. Gá tea hiáng
they call water ocean it river already
lui me ai.
finish ptr

'That Mih River flows out above PiPho way up there.
It goes into the Mekong River, which they call the
ocean. That river (Mih) is all done then.'

3.2 Identical Phrase Pronominalization. If the pronoun is in an attributive position in a noun phrase whose noun head is identical to a previous (but recent) noun phrase, the referent of the pronoun will be the attributive aspect of that noun phrase, despite what may have intervened; or

$Rgá = N_2/#N_1N_2...N_1$

(32) Xuân kô $gá$ xuà. Vai u ài
Vietnamese this he clever they still have
tôkang lóang nah.... Gá xo péang ki
branch tree formerly he get side poss
hlá, péang ki tôkang $gá$ me vai
leaves side poss branch it then they
chiang kô kro kô módrong me.
become ptrl rich ptrl rich ptrl

'These Vietnamese are clever. They got the branches
...They got the end with the leaves, the end with its
leaves, so they have become very rich.'
3.3 Topic Pronominalization. Except as either of the two above rules may overrule, the referent of a pronoun in the subject slot will be the topic of the discourse at that point. The topic is determined by one of the following five means, though not necessarily unambiguously.

3.3.1 Immediate Subject. The topic may be the subject of the immediate (present) sentence in which case the pronoun directly follows the subject noun phrase; or

\[
RgA = N_1/\#N_1
\]

(33) Xúan kô gà xúa.  
Vietnamese this he clever

'These Vietnamese, they're clever.'

(34) Ngo ́Eang gà a kô.  
mount Eang it here

'Mount Eang, it is here.'

(35) Lóang me gà păng húan xak xoa.  
tree it able grow hair chest

'Those trees--they could grow chest-like hair.'

(36) Rotéang gà ái kuat cho.  
Sedang it has comm. house certainly

'The Sedang, they of course have a communal house.'

3.3.2 Subject of Previous Sentence. The immediate topic may be the subject of the previous sentence; or

\[
RgA = N_1/\#N_1 \ldots \#
\]

(37) Konhông prãi tdchuam ti kô. Gá  
headwater those two together like this it
péang păng Dúan tá.  
side by Duan that

'The headwaters of those two (rivers) come together like this. It's near the Duan people.'

(38) Gá pa xéang va 'nhie dei kong.  
it father spirit want destroy ptl earth
Kô gà pro kong i lém néo.  
this he make earth ptl good again

'God wanted to destroy the earth. Now he makes the earth good again.'

3.3.3 Subject of Previous Embedded Sentence. The immediate topic may be the subject of an embedded sentence within the previous sentence; or:
RGá = N₁/#... (N₁... #)... #___

(39) Pōi ta ái kómái mot ka óh báu don't have rat enter eat no rice
me. Gá ôi to kōja tê.
that he stay ptl husk only

'(We) don't let rats enter and eat the rice. They stay among the husks only.'

(40) Me pian cha ka rōkái... mot. Me ching and we able permit wild pig enter but if
pian ta pro sōng...gá pak tro óh.
we not make spike it stab no

'And we can let the wild pigs enter. But if we haven't made spikes it won't get stabbed.'

3.3.4 Object of Previous Sentence. The immediate topic may be the object noun phrase of the previous sentence; or:

RGá = N₁/#...N₁#

(41) Khén vai ko lōang nah, lōang kan say they chop tree formerly tree big
nah. Kōí gá tôngia tê...
formerly top it up

'(They) say they once chopped a tree, a big tree. Its top (fell) heading up-land...'

(42) ...vai óh ta khoh ka chó me nah they not permit eat dog ptl formerly
xúa gá u pro kúan mongē.
because it ptl made child person

'It was taboo to eat dog, because it has given birth to a human child.'

3.3.5 Previous (whole) Sentence. The immediate topic may be the entire previous sentence; or:

RGá = S₁/#S₁#

(43) Pōi ta lōi óh trīāng 'di'do. Gá óh ta lēm. don't leave no straw always it not good

'Don't leave the straw (in the wine) all the time. It's not good (to do that).'

(44) Pian pei chiak. Gá hiāng kei ki me pōih. we work field it already fin- like that ptl

ish
We work in the field. And it's all done just like that.'

3.4 Successive Pronominalization. If none of the above three rules pertain, then the referent of the pronoun gá is, in successive fashion, the same as the referent of the (recently) preceding pronoun, unless that pronoun belongs to an inserted, intervening minor topic in which case that pronoun is used. This may be an iterative process whereby a series of successive pronouns will be extending the pronoun referent through a number of sentences. In one case in text the same pronoun referent is extended with the use of ten gá through 18 sentences; in another case with fourteen gá through 36 sentences. Thus:

\[ Rgá = Rgá_1 / gá ... #( ... #) \]

The actual identification of the referent, of course, ultimately is dependent upon one of the preceding rules and the first pronoun occurring in the series. Determination of pronoun referents by this rule accounts for about two-thirds of all pronoun occurrence, because of the frequent repetitious or successive use of pronouns.

(45) ... gá pak tro ōh. Ti me gá lōhla.
    it stab not like that it die

Gá va lo ka báu me ah. Ti
    it want enter eat rice future like

me. Me gá ka reh.
that but it eat live

'... It (an animal) doesn't get stabbed. That's how it dies. It wants to enter and eat rice. It eats to live.'

3.5 Ambiguous Pronominalization. Sometimes application of the above rules does not definitively identify a pronoun referent. There may be multiple or ambiguous choices. In such cases the referent is determinable by deduction from the context.

(46) Me chó me könjú ḥ. Móngé me kódrái ḥ. and dog that husband person that wife

Préi pro dei pó. Préi xo ti me those make together those get like that two
two

u páng ái kún ái vai 'néng kódrái ḥ.
ptl able have child have baby girl

néo. Me gá thè dei kún tókroē dei pa.
more and ? said to child call to father

'And the dog was the husband. The person was the wife. Those two lived together and so had a child, a baby girl. And (he/she/it)? told the child to call its father.'
The above rules would not clarify whether the referent of the pronoun �� is the husband/father, wife, or child. By deduction, however, it cannot be the child who is being addressed nor the father to whom following reference is made; thus it is the wife.

'...and she told the child to call its father.'

3.6 Illustration of Rule Application. The following example illustrates some pronoun referent identification as rule applications interact or overlap within a given context.

(47) (S1) Vó kan₁ hā. (S2) Ching �� 'nang kő me имв it
pún potám hài xuan имв lém ti me...(S3) Ching pian
tho tea me pian tah �� 酲 it
(S4) Pian chخوف �� .imp...
(S5) Pół ta lôi имв typings  NoSuchElementException
it don’t leave the straw in always
(S6) �� имв oh ta lém. (S7) Me kō dét �� it
vai xa hlá, hlá xá.

'Big jars₁ also. If it₁ is really big to drink four or five days it stays good. If we add water then we take out the straw₂. We put it₂ away. Don’t leave the straw in all the time.₃ That₃ is not good. And it’s bottom is stuffed with xá leaves.'

The referent of �� in sentence 2 (S2) is identified as "the big jar", which is the immediate topic as subject of the previous sentence (3.3.2). The referent of �� in S4 is identified as "the straw", which is the immediate topic as object of the previous sentence (3.3.4). The referent of �� in S6 is identified as "don’t leave the straw in all the time.", which is the immediate topic as the previous whole sentence (3.3.5). The �� in S7 is in an attributive position with kō dét, "its bottom"; its referent is the jar of S1 which is both (a) the overall topic (skipping over other intervening minor topics) and (b) the closest preceding noun which can be attributive to kō dét 'bottom'.

4. The Determination of 1st-person Exclusive Dual Pronoun 门外 Referents. Half of the referent of the 1st-person exclusive dual pronoun 门外 'he and I' is the speaker himself. Question here then pertains to the determination of the non-speaker aspect. This depends upon whether the non-speaker referent is actually present with the speaker. In those cases where the non-speaker referent is present with the speaker, the referent of the dual exclusive pronoun is clearly the speaker and his companion.
(48) 'Bok xối eng ah khến: "Ef a hôm va ngế ki kố?"
"Ô, á va. Má u hơdró dei pô nah."
'The priest then asks: "Do you want this person?"
"Oh, I do want him. We two were engaged some
time ago."

(49) Préi châu khến: "Ef lôka mà."
'The two grandchildren said, "You're going to eat
the two of us."

If the non-speaker referent is not present with the speaker, there
is in the discourse information given to permit identification of the
non-speaker referent. Such information may be given by stating ex-
<pagewarning>...</pagewarning>licitly to whom reference is being made by using a phrase such as:

má o 'my younger brother/sister and I'
má nhông 'my brother-in-law and I'
má Gua 'Gua and I'
má mai eh 'your brother-in-law and I'

Or, the non-speaker referent will be identified by and equated
to a third-person pronoun reference in the (recently) previous dis-
course.

(50) Ôh. Gá óh ta xốk 'bảng kôdô óh. Gá xo chêm
     má kleh tung xiam kolá.
'No. He wasn't fooling around with anybody. He was
getting a bird which we two had dropped in the bamboo
clump.'

FOOTNOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper, first written for a syntax course
   requirement, was read by Richard Smaby and David Thomas,
   whose comments are appreciatively acknowledged.

2. The pronouns ngian 'all of us--not you', préi 'those two' and
   vai 'they' are also eligible for this type of study, but have not
   yet been included. Their referents include larger groups which
   usually are not as subject to misunderstanding or question.

The basis of this study is a 27,000-word corpus of Sedang folk-
lore texts obtained from two Sedang informants, Bé and Hmôu, in
Kontum, South Vietnam, during May and June, 1969. A word-con-
cordance of the text was compiled by the University of Oklahoma Computer Laboratory with their IBM 1410 Computer by the Linguistic Information Retrieval Project of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Oklahoma Research Institute, and sponsored by Grant CS-934 of the National Science Foundation. This concordance was used for all examples cited in this paper. All occurrences of the pronoun má (51 times) but only about 12% of the 1334 occurrences of gá were studied.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


