

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT IN ISAAN STORYTELLING

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Information Management in Isaan Storytelling

This study is an investigation of information packaging or information structure properties associated with selected productive morphosyntactic constructions in Isaan narrative texts. The description and analysis of grammatical constructions draws from the Spoken Isaan Corpus. Information packaging properties associated with Isaan constructions are examined primarily from within the Construction Grammar framework, supplemented by collexeme analyses.

The study assumes that a speaker's assessment of the listeners' states of mind guides the linguistic choices that they make in terms of referring expressions, single vs. serial verb clauses, and other morphosyntactic structures. Some constructions and contexts require *ka* immediately after the subject of a construction (if overt) and before the predicate; but in other instances, *ka* is structurally optional. Special attention is given to the speakers' choice in using or not using the morpheme *ka* when it is structurally optional. The study argues that *ka* is a coherence building device that enables speakers to explicitly signal a particular range of underlying semantic and information-structure relationships between units of propositions. In certain constructions, *ka* is found to be associated with given or accessible referents and sequences of events that push forward the narrative timeline. The study concludes that *ka* is more related to the concept of a "focus of assertion" than to any concept of "topic".

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ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	NUM	numeral
2	second person	PL	plural
3	third person	PO	polite
ADJ	adjective	POSS	possessive
CLF	classifier	POSSD	possessed
COLL	collective	POSSR	possessor
COMP	complementizer	PRESUP	presupposed
CONT	continuous	PROG	progressive
COP	copula	PROX	proximal
DEM	demonstrative	PRT	particle
DIST	distal	Q	question
EMEL	embedded main event line	QUANP	quantifier phrase
EXCL	exclusive	RECIP	reciprocal
EXP	experiential	REL	relative clause
FA	familiar	RELVZ	relativizer
FEM	feminine	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	TPC	topic
HUM	human	VP	verb phrase
INCL	inclusive		
INTERJ	interjection		
IRR	irrealis		
MASC	masculine		
MEL	main event line		
MIR	mirative		
MODP	modifier phrase		
NEG	negation		
NMLZ	nominalizer		
NO	non-restraint		
NP	noun phrase		

(3) mə: nī: **ka** lɔ:j ʔaw Ø san-ləw
 guy PROX KA sneak take PRT
 ‘**And so**, the young man stole [it]. (Pearfilm_sm31)

(4) **ka** pən c^hauŋ lu:du: fon ni la
 KA COP period season rain this PRT
 ‘It was the rainy season like it is now.’ (Tragedy_sm3)

(5) ca:k ti:-nuŋ hɔ:t ti:-ha: law **ka** lap səj
 from CLF.TIME-one arrive CLF.TIME-five 3.NO KA asleep be.still
 ‘From 1 am until 5 am, he was fast asleep.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm51)

But in other cases, the presence or absence of *ka* does not result in an appreciable difference in semantic interpretation, as shown in the sentence pair (6) and (7).

(6) law **ka** k^hut-nam su k^hon want^hɔ?pǎj
 3.FA KA think-with every person PRT.EXPLAIN
 ‘Because she was worried about everyone’ (Tragedy_oi38.2)

(7) law k^hut-nam su k^hon want^hɔ?pǎj
 3.FA think-with every person PRT.EXPLAIN
 ‘Because she/he was worried about everyone’ (Self-elicited)

This study’s main interests are in the ways in which the content of a message is transmitted and in explaining why Isaan speakers would choose one structure over other semantically equivalent ones (e.g., alternative referring forms, clauses with or without *ka* seen in (6) and (7), and selected clause types and combinations). Also, in functional and usage-based approaches, the fact that one linguistic form can be used to express multiple meanings is assumed to be motivated by contextually based communicative needs. Therefore, multi-functionality of a morpheme like *ka* in the examples (1) through (5) is not surprising. As part of the explanation for both why speakers may develop multiple constructions to convey the same propositional meaning and why a single form may come to have multiple meanings, the study assumes that speakers take into account the varying states of information in the mind of the person they are talking to (Chafe 1976: 27–28).

This study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides theoretical background, key assumptions, and methodology for the study. Chapter 3 offers a grammatical description of various morphosyntactic constructions in Isaan. Subsequent chapters describe how Isaan speakers use a sub-set of constructions in managing information in narrative texts. Chapter 4 focuses on information relating to referents. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which verbs are combined in Isaan multi-verb clauses. Chapter 6 discusses the distribution of *ka* relative to sequence relationships between event units. Chapter 7 examines other semantic relationships between propositions marked by *ka*, information structure management that *ka* plays a role in, and identifies some syntactic constructions in which *ka* is required. Appendices present selected analyzed texts from the Spoken Isaan Corpus.

As for the rest of this chapter, §1.2 provides brief socio-historical context for the Isaan language. §1.3 describes previous work regarding the Isaan language. §1.4 gives a brief overview of information packaging constructions as a cross-linguistic phenomenon.

1.2 Isaan as a language variety

Isaan is a linguistic variety closely related to Lao, within the Tai-Kadai family. Isaan (also written as Isan, Isarn, Esan or Esarn) is spoken predominantly in the northeast region of Thailand by approximately 15.9 million speakers (Alexander & McCargo 2014). Isaan shares several features with Lao including grammatical morphemes (e.g., the negation word *bɔ́*: ‘not’, the irrealis marker *si*), and discourse particles (e.g., the informative or weak imperative *də̀*:, and the quotative *wa-san* ‘say-thus’). Enfield (2002a) has argued that whether Isaan is to be regarded as the same language as Lao has to do with ideology and ethnic identity more than objective linguistic criteria. This is because, even though there are a few lexical items that correspond well to the geo-political line between Laos and Isaan (e.g., Laotian *pò:ŋ-iam* vs. Isaan *na:-tʰaŋ* ‘window’ and Laotian *pùm* vs. Isaan *nan̄su:* ‘book’), there is simply not enough evidence to establish, on convincing linguistic grounds, the distinction between the two varieties. In part, this study, and especially compilation of the Spoken Isaan Corpus, aims to gather more evidence which will allow future researchers to address the problem of how Isaan can be best classified in relation to Lao and other Southwestern Tai languages. Thus, we shall take Isaan and Lao as languages each on their own merits because doing so allows us to examine differences and similarities with respect to each other.

Another compelling reason to study Isaan grammar is that we may observe linguistic changes due to external factors. Speakers of Isaan and Lao supposedly share common ancestors who spoke Southwestern Tai languages. However, a century-long geographical and political separation have undoubtedly affected the ways the two language varieties have changed, sending Lao and Isaan in different directions. After French colonization of the East bank of the Mekong River, the Isaan region was absorbed into Siam (pre-modernized Thailand). This was followed by a period of linguistic suppression known as “Thaification” where Isaan and other minority languages were banned by Thailand’s government during the mid-19th century (Breazeale 1975). The northeast region underwent language shift to Central (Bangkok) Thai, especially in the urban areas (Chantao 2002; Sansamak 2002), but Isaan persisted as a language of home. During this period, the Tai Noi script, which has historically been used in Laos and the Isaan region, was eradicated entirely from Thailand’s educational system. In contrast, in Laos the Lao language has achieved national language status beginning from 1975. With funding from the Laotian government, linguistic research on languages in Laos has flourished since 2002. Speakers of Lao have had more access to grammatical descriptions, pedagogical materials, and conventionalized writing systems, although most of these materials represent efforts to standardize what really were different varieties of Lao. Enfield (2007a: Sec. 2.1) provides an excellent list of references of previous linguistic research on the Lao language.

Nowadays, Isaan speakers are bilingual and regularly codeswitch between Isaan and Thai in speech. But because modern-day Isaan lacks its own orthography, Isaan speakers use Thai scripts to express their language in writing. Figure 1 shows different orthographic representations of Thai, Isaan, and Lao, respectively. The morphosyntactic patterns and pronunciation of some lexical items are very similar across Thai, Isaan, and Lao. Their tone systems are found to be distinctive, but are highly mutually intelligible (see Palikupt 1983; Chantao 2002; Enfield 2002a; Akharawatthanakun 2004). This certainly raises the question of whether Isaan, Lao, and Thai are distinct languages.

English	Where do you write the address of the receiver?			
Thai	เขียนที่อยู่ผู้รับที่ไหน			
	k ^h ian	t ^h i-ju:	p ^h u-rap	t ^h i:-naj
	write	address	CLF.HUM-receive	where
Isaan	เขียนที่อยู่ผู้รับหม่องใต้			
	k ^h ian	t ^h i-ju:	p ^h u-lap	มวญ-daj
	write	address	CLF.HUM-receive	where
Lao	ຂຽນທີ່ຢູ່ຜູ້ຮັບບ່ອນໃດ			
	k ^h ian	t ^h i-ju:	p ^h u-hap	ບ່ວນ-daj
	write	address	CLF.HUM-receive	where

Figure 1: Thai, Isaan and Lao orthographic representations (Mollerup 2001: 39)

Despite the political and social changes following the decentralization of Thailand’s government in 1981, negative attitudes associated with the use of the Isaan variety still persist. For example, Isaan speakers are often stigmatized as being uneducated, *ban nok* ‘country bumkins’ and socio-economically backward. As a result, many Isaan parents refrain from speaking Isaan with their children in an attempt to prevent them from acquiring an Isaan accent when speaking Thai (Alexander & McCargo 2014). Children are generally discouraged from using vocabulary items that are closely related to Lao. For example, the Lao word *soŋ* for ‘pants’ is replaced by the Thai word *ka:ŋke:ŋ*. This situation where “the language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children” places the vitality status of Isaan as “Threaten[ed], Vulnerable” (Lewis & Simons 2010; Draper 2016).

Research that examines the issue of language and identity has found that Isaan speakers, particularly the younger, more urbanized university students, demonstrate a degree of confusion over their Lao-Thai identities due partly to Thailand’s historically successful promotion of Isaan identity as a tool to distance its Northeastern population from the feeling of Lao-ness (McCargo & Hongladarom 2004). Identifying the name of the language that they speak was not a straightforward task for speakers in McCargo & Hongladarom’s study. For Isaan speakers in northeastern Thailand, the terms /p^ha:sa: ʔisa:n/ ‘Isaan language’ and /p^ha:sa: la:w/ ‘Lao

language’ can be used interchangeably in in-group communication with no issue. However, when interacting with someone they perceive as an outsider, speakers would prefer the word */p^ha:sa: ʔisa:n/* ‘Isaan language’. In fact, an outsider (e.g., a Central Thai speaker) referring to the language as */p^ha:sa: la:w/* ‘Lao language’ is perceived as offensive.

The identity confusion is related to the symbolic functions of language and is perhaps an indication of a power struggle between ethnic/local and national identities. In this case, Isaan, which is perceived by its users as a language of the home, an in-group means of communication, and a regional symbol, appears to be losing its privilege to Thai, which is associated with a sense of national unity, modernity, and upward social mobility (Alexander & McCargo 2014). Nevertheless, a recent resurgence of the Lao/Isaan ethnic identity in Thailand, as seen in developments in the media, academia, the public sphere, and displays of traditional customs, indicates a cultural revival as well as linguistic pride (Draper et al. 2019). This has also sparked a debate on whether Thai people should call the language variety of the northeast region */p^ha:sa: ʔisa:n/* ‘Isaan language’ or */p^ha:sa: la:w/* ‘Lao language’ because many Isaan speakers believe that they are technically the same language (Palikupt 1983; Enfield 2002a).

Personally, as someone who was born and raised in the northeast region of Thailand, I opt for the term */p^ha:sa: ʔisa:n/* ‘Isaan language’ for the variety spoken in Thailand because it symbolizes the reclamation of identity restored from decades of socio-economic disintegration (see also Songkunnatham 2020). On both political and technical grounds, calling the language */p^ha:sa: ʔisa:n/* ‘Isaan language’ is appropriate because this term captures the hybrid, yet distinct nature of the Isaan language variety, recognizes its genealogical connections with other Tai languages, challenges pre-existing socio-political biases, and proclaims its growing influence in both Thailand and Laos.

1.3 Previous linguistic work and pedagogical materials

Even though there is a plethora of scholarly work done on the Northeastern region of Thailand, linguistic materials on the Isaan language are underwhelming. Some scholarly materials are not necessarily accessible to researchers who do not read Thai. Some notable contributions include an Isan-Thai-English dictionary (Phinthong 1989), a discussion of sound symbolism and iconicity in the lexicon (Wayland 1996), a few comparative studies (Pankhuenkhat 1998; Luemsai 2001), and tonal variation analyses (Gedney 1972;

Akharawatthanakun 2004). Most studies on “Lao Isaan” focus on socio-linguistics aspects, such as codeswitching, language attitudes, and language contact (Chantao 2002; Sansamak 2002; McCargo & Hongladarom 2004; Vail 2006; Alexander & McCargo 2014; Promkandorn 2016).

Recent work toward Isaan culture and language promotion, maintenance, and revitalization has, to my knowledge, so far minimally produced linguistic or pedagogical materials. The work by John Draper and colleagues (Draper & Nilaiyaka 2015; Draper 2016) notably assesses proficiency level and language use domains in an urban area of Khon Kaen province. However, these studies focus more on the awareness of a historical Isaan written literacy, and on promoting its visibility via installation of multilingual signage that includes the Tai Noi heritage scripts. Even though the installation of place and road signs with Tai Noi scripts was met with remarkably positive sentiments and high levels of approval from the locals, it does very little to promote language use in everyday situations, such as in market/shops and workplaces. Nevertheless, with an increased popularity in mass media and local visibility, Isaan language revival is underway.

Isaan is not officially taught in school, but with its growing popularity among Thai-speaking folks, Isaan language pedagogy has informally taken off online. Based on the work of Phinthong (1989), an online Isaan-Thai dictionary was developed as part of a website at Esan108.com. The dictionary is regularly updated and is beginning to include an English translation for some lexemes. The website also includes a comment function which allows for crowdsourcing of Isaan vocabulary and a blog feature that allows users to post questions/answers about trending Isaan words or phrases. Associated with the Esan108.com website is a YouTube channel that has a compiled list of “teaching Isaan” videos for those who are interested in learning the language. The target audience appears to be the Thai-speaking population.

There are a few pedagogical resources targeting a non-Thai speaking audience. For example, SiamSmile.webs.com includes a webpage that lists a few Isaan phrases and a little bit of grammar for foreigners visiting Thailand. Another is LearnSpeakThai.com which offers courses in both Thai and Isaan, and one could purchase a book *Speak Isaan Thai Volume 1* that comes with a DVD (Charles 2009). The content of the book includes a pronunciation guide, tone practice exercises, units on greeting and meeting people, and basic everyday conversations. Apart from these, websites that include a page about the Isaan language typically use information from Wikipedia. The most comprehensive self-learning material to-date is *Thai-Isan-Lao*

Phrasebook by Mollerup (2001). This book includes audio files accompanying word and phrase lists covering topics like everyday conversations, health, geography, and plants, a section on grammar, and writing guides for Thai, Isaan, and Lao.

1.4 Information packaging: Cross-linguistic background

As mentioned earlier, this study offers a descriptive analysis of Isaan discourse grammar with a focus on information packaging properties associated with frequent morphosyntactic patterns, particularly that often co-occur with the morpheme *ka*. Across different languages, linguists have identified a typological range of constructions whose purpose is to express differences in information packaging. Such information packaging constructions include, but are not limited to, those known as topic-comment constructions and contrastive focus, as found, for instance, in Mandarin (8), Japanese (9), Xibe (10), and English (11).

(8) Mandarin (Li & Thompson 1976: 462)

neì-xie shùmu shù-shēn dà
those tree tree-trunk big
'Those trees (topic), the trunks are big'

(9) Japanese (Shibatani 1991: 99)

tori wa tobu toki naku
bird TPC fly time cry
'The bird, when (it) flies, cries.'

(10) Xibe (Jang & Payne 2012: 7)

min ame-ni da ovur-ni ambu
1SG.GEN father-POSS PRT nose-POSS big
'As for my father, he has big nose.'

(11) English (Chafe 1976: 37)

It was RONALD who made the hamburgers.

Certain formal properties are singled out as constituting significant elements of information packaging constructions. In Mandarin (8), information packaging is expressed mainly via

syntactic position; the first NP position expresses the “topic” that the sentence proposition is about. Japanese (9) uses a combination of syntactic position and morphology. Xibe (10) uses a morphosyntactic pattern that comprises the particle *da* to indicate that the assertion ‘he has big nose’ is to be interpreted with respect to the referent ‘my father.’ In English (11), the pattern *It was/is X* followed by a relative clause is used to express contrastive focus; in this construction, the referent *X* is selected from a set of alternative referents (e.g., Ronald vs. Susan vs. someone else) and the relative clause contains presupposed information. Furthermore, *Ronald* carries prominent stress (indicated by small capital letters).

In part, the current study will investigate whether Isaan *ka* functions as a “topic” marker, a “focus” marker, or what other functions it might have. In *A Grammar of Lao*, Enfield (2007a) comments that for Lao, the presence or absence of *ka* does not affect the (propositional) semantic interpretation in a number of constructions, i.e., it can be inserted without major semantic change. Enfield claims that

the general function of [*ka*] is to link an assertion back to a something which serves as a topic. The proposition marked by *ka* is foregrounded as an assertion whose relevance is computed with reference to the now backgrounded prior proposition (Enfield 2007a: 199).

It is clear, according to Enfield, that the use of *ka* in Lao is tied to information management in on-going discourse. Since he analyzes the proposition carrying *ka* as “foregrounded as an assertion” whose interpretation is to be related somehow to a prior information unit, it leads Enfield to describe *ka* as a “topic linker.” This suggests that whether or not speakers use *ka* in structurally eligible constructions depends partly on their assessment of the listeners’ mental states in a given discourse situation. The idea that *ka* creates a “link” between units of a proposition is also apparent in Phinthong’s (1989: 1) Isaan dictionary entry; Phinthong defines *ka* as “a conjunction word or word that connects propositions.” It is translated as ‘then, also’ and is said to be able to “mark ellipsis of subject and some discourse-level functions.”

The current study aims to identify the discourse-level functions along with any pragmatic factors that constrain the use of *ka*, as observed in narrative texts. I will refrain from giving *ka* a specific gloss due to its multi-functional nature. As we shall see, the use of *ka* in Isaan narratives, to varying degrees, relates to information management of discourse participants (Chapter 4), events (Chapters 5-6), and relationships between propositions (Chapters 6-7). The main argument of this study is that Isaan speakers use *ka* to explicitly signal a particular range of

underlying semantic and information-structure relationships between units of propositions. The relevant types of inter-propositional relations include sequence, cause-result, conditional-consequence, and circumstances. The study also finds that information packaging pattern of *ka*-marked clauses generally matches the pragmatically unmarked (or preferred) pattern in Isaan—present known information first, (optionally) followed by *ka*, and then introduce something new. In certain constructions, *ka* is found to be associated with given or accessible referents and sequence of events that push forward the narrative timeline. However, a non-canonical morphosyntactic pattern [A *ka* Y, B *ka* Y] exhibits a distinct information packaging pattern—present new information first, followed by *ka*, and then repeat the known information. The study argues that *ka* is more related to the concept of “focus of assertion” than to any concept of “topic”.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Empirical evidence supports the idea that the choice of morphosyntactic configuration is at least partly constrained by discourse-pragmatic considerations (Givón 1983a; Arnold et al. 2000; Meyerhoff 2002; Arnold et al. 2013; Schnell & Barth 2018; Quesada & Lozano 2020; among many others). For example, Goldberg (2006: 138) argues that the information status of arguments “plays a role in conditioning whether the ditransitive construction is chosen over the dative paraphrase.” Her corpus studies show that the theme argument of the English ditransitive construction tends to be new or accessible information, while the recipient argument rarely introduces a new participant into the discourse; that is, the existence of the ditransitive recipient is presupposed (see also Polinsky 1998). Similarly, a study by Belligh (2018) has shown that referential givenness influences the alternation between a set of possible presentational constructions in Dutch. On the other hand, the choice of morphosyntactic configuration can also be driven by the content-related demands of the narration (Schnell, Schiborr & Haig 2021). Thus, our examination of information packaging properties for productive morphosyntactic constructions in Isaan will partly spell out how the choice in linguistic forms interacts with discourse-pragmatic statuses, while also considering interpretative aspects of discourse that relate to the relationships between units of propositions (van Dijk & Kintsh 1983; Mann & Thompson 1986).

While there exists a unifying idea that certain formal properties of a sentence cannot be fully explained without an examination of the linguistic and extralinguistic contexts, the study of information structure is notoriously difficult, in part due to problems with terminologies. As background for the principal foci of this dissertation, §2.1 gives an overview of key theoretical assumptions that underly the study, and §2.2 reviews major features of discourse and information categories. §2.3 discusses the relevance of discourse coherence, contextual information, and characteristics of narrative texts. Finally, §2.4 describes the process of data collection and annotation methods used in the study.

2.1 Key theoretical assumptions of this work

2.1.1 Construction Grammar and discourse-pragmatic use

Functional and cognitive linguists have argued that knowledge of grammar emerges from language use (e.g., Bybee & Hopper 2001; Goldberg 2006). Accordingly, grammar is seen as a “dynamic system consisting of fluid structures and flexible constraints that are shaped by general mechanisms of communication, memory, and processing” (Diessel 2019: 1). In order to understand grammar as a dynamic system, we must also accept a view that different sub-systems of grammar work together to perform communicative functions. Put differently, “different components of grammar—syntax, morphology, prosody, semantics, information structure—compete and interact with each other, regulated by universal principles and language-specific constraints” (Lambrecht 1994: 12). While the meanings we desire to communicate are infinite, the linguistic system only allows for a limited number of possible formal configurations. This limitation naturally results in pairings of one form with multiple meanings and in a constant restructuring of the linguistic system over time. The information structure component of the language interacts with all levels of grammar, matching form-meaning pairs with context-specific mental representations created in the minds of the interlocutors in the ever-changing process of communication (Lambrecht 1994: 37).

Construction Grammar takes pairings of form-meaning (i.e., constructions) as fundamental units of linguistic investigation. For the purpose of the study, constructions are defined as meaningful, already-made templates that include slots for other linguistic expressions (cf. Langacker 1987; Goldberg 1995; Croft 2001; Diessel 2019: 11). Constructional meanings are regularly accessed in language comprehension (cf. Bencini & Goldberg 2000). Constructions are subject to semantic interpretation rules that can be very general (i.e., semantically compositional constructions), very specific (i.e., idiomatic expressions), or somewhere in-between (i.e., “collocation proper”). Some Construction Grammarians (e.g., Goldberg 1995) lump the lexicon, morphology, and syntax together under “form” while semantics and pragmatics are grouped together under “meaning” for theoretical and analytical purposes.

While I accept that different components of grammar work together to perform a communicative function, it is useful to make a distinction between semantic meanings versus pragmatic “meanings” or functions associated with the use of a morphosyntactic structure in discourse. In other words, I distinguish *what the utterance X means* vs. *what the speaker means*

by *X* in the speech setting (cf. Levinsohn 2007). Assuming that speakers constantly evaluate how to best put together a message to meet specific communicative needs of the listeners, their word choices and sentence forms will change throughout the discourse based on their assumptions of the listeners' states of mind and on available linguistic means. For example, speakers may believe that some information is part of the knowledge they share with the listeners (personal experiences, prior conversations, etc.) and other information is brand-new. With specific situational or inter-personal assumptions in mind, a speaker may choose to deliver a message as though the listeners are already familiar with some units of information. These assumptions have morphosyntactic consequences (e.g., *he* vs. *a friend of mine*). Thus, separating semantic and pragmatic functions allows us to analyze the choice of morphosyntactic expressions more effectively. Especially in Isaan discourse grammar, there are many cases where the absence or presence of the morpheme *ka* does not result in appreciable semantic differences. Given that a difference in form typically implies a difference in function, it follows that the sentences with *ka* and without *ka* are not truly equivalent alternatives. I hypothesize that they are instances of different pragmatic structuring that has formal consequences; the sentences may comprise the same pieces of propositional information but are associated with different discourse-pragmatic implications.

2.1.2 *Frequency of occurrence*

In accordance with the view that grammar is emergent from language use, frequency of occurrence of the linguistic elements is taken as one factor that has great impact on language development, acquisition, and change (Bybee & Hopper 2001; Goldberg 2006; Hilpert 2006). Frequency “strengthens the representation of linguistic elements in the memory, it facilitates the activation and processing of words, categories, and constructions, which in turn can have long-lasting effects on the development of linguistic structure” (Diessel 2019: 1). For purposes of this study, frequency of a construction co-occurring with certain types of presumed mental representations in particular discourse circumstances shall be characterized in terms of degree of pragmatic association. The term “pragmatic association” can, though does not necessarily, refer to culturally specific social connotations associated with a linguistic expression. For example, some question forms in English can serve as a polite, and even welcoming, invitation (e.g., *Why*

don't you come sit over here?) but the direct translation into Isaan, shown in (12), sounds less welcoming as it implies that the addressee has done something wrong.

- (12) *caw* *k^hu* *bɔː* *maː* *naŋ* *niː* *p^hiː*
 2SG.FA be.like NEG come sit this here
 ‘Why don’t you come sit over here?’

The analysis of this study, however, is more concerned with another type of pragmatic association, namely the discourse circumstances under which particular pieces of information are expressed via one rather than another possible morphosyntactic configuration. These may include the interlocutors’ impression of what the story is about, what was (not) said before, whether the speaker believes the listeners can identify who is involved in the story, what they think constitutes the prominent actions running through the story, and how propositional units are understood to be related to one another. For example, this type of the pragmatic meaning of (12) can be interpreted differently depending on contextual information (e.g., a conversation between friends vs. a dialogue within a story). The use of deictic expressions such as the second person familiar pronoun *caw*, and the locative expression *niː p^hiː*: ‘over here’ in (12) suggests that the speaker believes the listeners can identify the discourse participants involved as well as the relative location between those participants in a particular discourse context.

The pragmatic function associated with a construction is assumed to be determined by grammatical convention which native speakers acquire from repeated exposure to the use of one linguistic form in multiple discourse situations (cf. Fillmore, Kay & O’Connor 1988). Examining corpus frequency of the linguistic elements co-occurring within a construction or linguistic phrase helps us uncover the conventionalized patterns and determine the strength of association of a form to a pragmatic function.

2.1.3 *Information structure and sentence form*

As already noted, languages may have multiple ways to say the “same” thing. More often than not, one and the same propositional content can be coded with different formal structures that are readily available to the speakers. Lambrecht (1994) discusses prosody being one of the formal properties English speakers use to code information that they deem important and worthy of the listeners’ mental effort. Sentence stress placement, indicated by small capital letters in the

examples below, is dependent on the discourse contexts or situations. For example, (13) is a felicitous answer to “What happened?” while (14) is a felicitous answer to “What happened to your car?”

(13) My CAR broke down.

(14) My car broke DOWN.

In another discourse situation (e.g., in response to “I heard that your motorcycle broke down?”), it is possible to express the same propositional content as in (13) and (14) (‘the speaker’s car broke down’) using yet a different combination of morphosyntactic pattern and prosody, shown in (15); this is a type of cleft construction.

(15) It is my CAR that broke down.

What, then, motivates grammar to allow for different formal expressions of essentially the same propositional content? Lambrecht argues that the main difference between sentences like (13), (14), and (15) lies in their pragmatic function specifications. Unlike (13), the discourse circumstances for (14) and (15) require that the interlocutors previously establish a “topic” of discussion. Thus, the constructions exhibit differences in their information packaging properties, which have to do with a speaker’s assessment of the listeners’ states of mind and how the speaker tailors an utterance to meet the particular assumed needs of the listeners. Listeners, in turn, interpret these structures in terms of how they package information into such units in particular discourse contexts (see also Chafe 1976: 27; Prince 1981: 224).

According to Lambrecht (1994: 35), there exists a range of discourse-pragmatic functions associated with different sentence forms. He distinguishes three major types of sentence-level constructions, namely 1) constructions whose purpose is to express speakers’ attitudes, 2) constructions that mainly express speech-act differences (i.e., declarative, interrogative, or imperative sentences), and 3) constructions that exhibit differences in information packaging. While all clausal/sentential constructions package information in some way, certain constructions are thought to be “pragmatically marked” in the sense that their overall distribution is somewhat restricted to certain discourse contexts, circumstances, or situations compared to

their propositional-equivalent alternatives. Meanwhile, the constructions that are under-specified for pragmatic function constitute the “canonical”, “normal”, or “basic” ways to form a sentence in a given language because they are found more frequently and in more diverse contexts. The canonical patterns generally receive more attention from linguists and grammarians, while comparatively little attention may be given to the pragmatically marked patterns. However, both types of constructions provide meaningful insights to our understanding of human language.

2.2 Major features of discourse and information categories

Following Lambrecht (1994), my analysis of the information packaging properties of morphosyntactic constructions that may co-occur with the discourse particle *ka* is centered around the so-called text-internal world, an abstract system of linguistic representations. We begin with an assumption that speakers use linguistic expressions to compose a message with an aim to update information in the listener’s mind while maintaining mutual understanding between one another. When someone is telling a story, they are using linguistic signals as instructions to conjure up an image or create a corresponding mental representation of the discourse world. The interlocutors need to keep track of information about entities, attributes, and links activated during such discourse processes with respect to assumed familiarity (Prince 1981). With the limitations of human working memory and attention span, information ought to be disseminated in particular manners (e.g., gradually and cumulatively) to ensure that all parties are on the same page.

With the aim to update information in the listeners’ minds, speakers generally have to make assumptions about the current state of the listeners’ mental representations of the universe of discourse and produce linguistic expressions based on those assumptions. Conveying information requires the speakers to constantly change hypotheses about the state of knowledge of the listeners as speech progresses (Lambrecht 1994: 46). In that respect, statements about participants, events, and states of affair of a given discourse world are produced under the assumption that they are informative (i.e., all the information is not already stored in the listeners’ mind), and that they are coherent with information assumed to be already shared.

2.2.1 Pragmatic presupposition, assertion, and focus of assertion

Within an utterance, information that is presented as if the listeners should be familiar with/already know it and accept it without challenge is called the presupposition. On the other hand, information that the speaker expects the listeners to know or accept as a result of hearing the utterance is called assertion. Informative statements increase the content of the presupposition pool where general knowledge, information about the discourse context, and information about the states of affairs in the ongoing discourse is negotiated and stored (Vennemann 1975: 314; Brown & Yule 1983: 79). The presupposition pool is similar or related to the notion of common ground, which is said to comprise information that is mutually known to be shared between the interlocutors (cf. Stalnaker 1974; Krifka 2008).

Utterances typically contain information that is presupposed, which serves to anchor what is being said to the preceding discourse, and information that is asserted, which serves to adjust the listeners' mental representation in some way. It is often not possible to put a boundary within a sentence structure and say that one syntactic part is the presupposition, and a distinct syntactic part is the assertion (Lambrecht 1994: 49). For example, in a proposition *Tom no longer speaks Spanish*, the presupposition is that at some point prior to the time of utterance, a person named Tom was able to speak Spanish (perhaps fluently) and the assertion is that Tom does not speak Spanish anymore. Thus, the presupposition and the assertion can co-exist in the same sentence and together co-form an informative statement. Moreover, propositions may contain the component called focus of assertion whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition (Lambrecht 1994: 213). In *Tom no longer speaks Spanish*, the negative meaning is the focus of assertion.

To identify what is pragmatically presupposed in an utterance, various scholars have pointed out that a pragmatic presupposition cannot be felicitously challenged or negated. For example, using a negation test, Goldberg (2006: 135) shows that a number of island phenomena in English, such as complex NPs, sentential subjects, complements of manner-of-speaking verbs, and some adverbials involve presupposed information. She points out that “the propositional content is implied by both the positive and negative form of the sentence.” Examples are shown in Table 1.

We may also apply the “lie-test” (cf. Erteschik-Shir & Lappin 1979; Erteschik-Shir & Lappin 1983) to confirm that the speaker indeed assumes that the listener takes for granted some

component of the proposition expressed in a sentence. In the following example, Lambrecht (1994: 52) states that if the addressee were to challenge the statement in (16) with a reply *That's not true*, the reply would be understood as challenging only the fact that “I met my new neighbor, not that someone moved in downstairs from me.” The portion of the utterance that the lie-test does not challenge is part of the presupposition.

- (16) Speaker: I finally met the woman who moved in downstairs. (from Lambrecht 1994: 51)
 Hearer: That's not true.
 That's not true, you didn't.
 #That's not true, she didn't.

Table 1: Islands that involve presupposed information, based on Goldberg (2006: 135)

Example sentences	Presupposed information
1. a. She saw the report that was about him.	The report was about him.
b. She didn't see the report that was about him.	The report was about him.
2. a. That she knew it bothered him.	She knew it.
b. That she knew it didn't bother him.	She knew it.
3. a. She whispered that he left.	He left.
b. She didn't whisper that he left.	He left.
4. a. She left the movie after they ate it.	They ate it.
b. She didn't leave the movie after they ate it.	They ate it.

Pragmatic presupposition subsumes what philosophers call “existential presupposition” (i.e., the addressee is able to identify the individual designated by the noun phrase), which Lambrecht (1994: 54) calls “consciousness presuppositions” (i.e., “some mental representation of that individual is [assumed to be] at the forefront of the addressee’s consciousness at the time of utterance”). It also subsumes “relevance presuppositions” meaning that “sentences can be contextually construed as constituting relevant information with respect to this individual.” In using the noun phrase *the woman who moved downstairs* in (16), the speaker hypothesizes that the addressee is more or less aware of her presence in the building. Furthermore, mentioning the individual as such at the time of utterance is also bound to be relevant in the speech setting. We

can imagine the speaker saying (16) to some next-door neighbors in the hallway, but hardly to a police officer at a traffic stop.

A comment is necessary also about the pragmatic presupposition and assertion with relation to semantic (logical) truth conditions of a proposition. Information packaging analysis is primarily concerned with the assumptions of speakers regarding the communicative situation rather than with truth-conditional values (i.e., whether a statement is either true or false). Even though the above-mentioned negative and lie tests probe the truth conditions of a statement, they emphasize the difference between information and meaning. As seen in Table 1, the truth-conditional property of presupposed information is held constant under changes in the sentence's polarity. From the semantic point of view, all there is to say is negation affects the semantic interpretation of the sentence as a whole. However, from the pragmatic point of view, the communicative functions of negation are more interesting. For instance, it would be inappropriate to say *That's not true, she didn't* when replying to *I finally met the woman who moved in downstairs* (cf. (16)). While I do not claim that semantic truth-conditional consideration plays no part in constructing propositional meaning and in producing linguistic expressions, I concur with Lambrecht (1994: 60) that when there is more than one grammatical construction that could express the same semantic content, the difference in constructions is likely to be more relevant to information structuring than to the truth value of the proposition.

2.2.2 *Information statuses: Old/given and new*

The notions of presupposition and focus of assertion are often confused with the terms old/given and new information in the literature. For example, the term “old” was made equivalent to the term “presupposed” in the following quote from Dahl (1976):

Let us consider one important use of declarative sentences, namely as means to influence the addressee's picture of the world. In such cases, the speaker assumes that the addressee has a certain picture—or model—of the world and he wants to change his model in some way. We might then identify the old or the given with the model that is taken as a point of departure for the speech act and the new with the change or addition that is made in this model. Old will here be equivalent to presupposed in one sense of the term. We can say that the addressee receives “new information” in the sense that he comes to know or believe more about the world than he did before. (Dahl 1976: 38)

Dahl's notion of old/givenness as “a point of departure” implies that the speaker assumes that the listener has or could have an appropriate representation, i.e., model, of a corresponding discourse

world at the time of utterance. Accordingly, in order to change or add to this model, the listener ought to first be able to identify some particular things, entities, or conceptual domains in his or her consciousness and, if necessary, infer a particular thing about the discourse world that was not explicitly uttered. Thus, this characterization of old/given information is related to the notion of presupposition in that the speaker assumes that the listener already knows or is familiar with some pieces of information in the uttered sentence.

But departing from the above characterization, the notions of old/given and new are often defined with respect to cognitive or activation status of information expressed in an intonation unit or a clause (cf. Chafe 1994; Lambrecht 1994). Specifically for Chafe (1994: 72–73), given information is cognitively already active at a given point of the discourse, while new information refers to the newly activated information at a given point of discourse. These two types of information status differ by the time of activation. Chafe also recognizes a third category of accessible information whose cognitive status is semiactive, referring to things that one is aware of but are not currently in their focus of attention.¹ Generally, accessible information can be indirectly activated by lexical items through a cognitive system of related concepts or frame (Fillmore 1985). For example, the word *teach* evokes a certain cognitive frame and to understand the concept *teach*, one must also understand the cognitive structure of its frame. Within the frame of *teach*, there are an agent (*teacher*), a recipient of the knowledge (*student*), an object of teaching (*lesson*), a place where the teaching occurs (*classroom*), and so on. Chafe's (1994: 71) trinary distinction between given, new, and accessible information can be applied directly to the individuals that participate in events and states of affairs within narrative discourse contexts.

Along the same lines, Prince (1981) offers an etic way to identify information statuses of discourse entities based on a scale of assumed familiarity. In this approach, a discourse entity is taken as a discourse-model object—a referential representation that has been or is being evoked in the discourse. It may represent an individual which exists in the real world, an individual which exists only in the text-internal world, an exemplar, a substance, a concept, and so on. The referential representation may be of various, ever-changing statuses as the discourse progresses. First, discourse entities may be new, an etic status which is further divided into brand-new and unused. Brand-new entities are said to be either anchored or unanchored depending on whether

¹ Importantly, Chafe's focus of attention and Lambrecht's focus of assertion are distinct concepts and must not be confused. The former is a cognitive notion. The latter relates to the content of a proposition.

the NPs representing them are linked to some other discourse entity by means of another NP. Unused entities are said to be more relevant to written text of non-narrative types. According to Prince (1981: 235-236), the presence of unused entities is “suddenly taken for granted in a recipe (e.g., salt)”, and “assumed to be in the hearer’s model.” Chafe (1994) would likely call this given information.

Second, discourse entities may be evoked textually or situationally. Evoked entities are defined from the hearer’s perspective: “either the hearer had evoked it earlier, on textual grounds, by following instructions from the speaker...or the hearer knew to evoke it all by himself, for situational reasons” (Prince 1981: 236). Finally, Prince’s third major category is called inferable, which is further sub-divided to containing and noncontaining types. Inferable as a category relies on the speaker’s assumption about the hearer’s ability to infer, via logical or plausible reasoning, the existence of another discourse entity. These statuses and their characteristics of corresponding mental representations are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Assumed familiarity of discourse entities from Prince (1981: 235) and givenness-newness from Chafe (1994: 72–73); see also Chafe (1987)

Prince (1986)		Mental Representation	Chafe (1987; 1994)
New	Brand-new	Unanchored	Inactive (“New”)
		Anchored	
	Unused		Active (“Given”)
Evoked	Textually	already active in the model	
	Situationally	active discourse participants and salient features of the extratextual context	
Inferable	Non-containing	already evoked, infer by logical or plausible reasoning	Semi-active (“Accessible”)
	Containing	a set-member, part-whole inference	

Indeed, such characterizations of information statuses provide insights and useful tools for discourse analysis, but not without any issues. The first issue has to do with the psychological reality of information status categories, given the lack of access to the hearer’s brain activity.

When discourse is being processed, does one make a binary choice, trinary, or something else with respect to referential information? The other issue is how to go about identifying information statuses in the text, given the blurry lines between categories, e.g., what is unused versus what is inferable; cf. Prince (1981: 251).

Much of the psycholinguistic research on discourse comprehension focuses on the binary distinction between given vs. new information, perhaps for practical reasons (e.g., O’Neillm 2005; Brown, Savova & Gibson 2012; Junge, Theakston & Lieven 2015). However, even more categories could be added to Prince’s (1981) etic taxonomy, for example, in cases where the information status cannot be determined with certainty; Loock (2022) calls this “the (hearer) indeterminables”. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the current study, discourse entities are analyzed as given if they were previously mentioned in the narrative text; first-mentions are new by this definition. Although this cut-and-dry operationalized distinction presents some limitations (e.g., not differentiating inferable or accessible information), it allows us to tag referents in the corpus objectively and consistently and to consider finer-grained information status categories after making the objective two-way categorizations.

In sum, to avoid terminological confusion, in this study the terms presupposition and (focus of) assertion will be used as relating to the speakers’ assessment of how to meaningfully increase the content of the presuppositional pool, thus changing or adding to the mental representation in the mind of the listeners. The terms given and new, then, have to do with an on-line management of referential information within the mental representations of a story. Next, we turn to how information is organized relationally in the discourse.

2.2.3 *Pragmatic relation: “Topic”*

Linguists who investigate the interaction between syntax and language-in-use often discuss the term “topic” as an information-structure category, but they do not always use the term in reference to the same conceptual category. There has also been an objection in the literature that the term “topic” (as well as “focus” and related notions) is too vague to operationalize and problematic on both theoretical and empirical ground (Matić & Wedgwood 2013; Ozerov 2018). Ozerov (2018), for instance, advocates for a bottom-up approach which suggests that we set aside the term “topic” when analyzing morphosyntactic forms that exhibit discourse-level functions. However, previous work by Enfield has suggested that the use of *ka* in

Lao relates to “topic of some sort” (Enfield 2007a: 199; Enfield 2008: 166). Therefore, in this section I shall review selected senses of the term “topic”, discuss a few terminological problems, and explain my use of the term as relating to how units of information are organized in the mental representation of the discourse or are incorporated into the presuppositional pool. Later in Chapters 4 and 6, I will present analyses of *ka*-marked clauses from a bottom-up corpus linguistic approach. I will argue in Chapter 7 that *ka* in Isaan is not related to “topic”; instead, it is more related to some notions of “focus”, which will be reviewed in §2.2.4.

First, let us consider topic as a cognitive or information-structure category, not primarily with reference to morphosyntactic forms such as topic-comment constituents within a sentence (contra Li & Thompson (1976) for Mandarin Chinese and Aissen (1992) for some Mayan languages). Topic as an information-structure category has been prominently associated with “aboutness”, a term which is used in library and information science, linguistics, and philosophy of mind. One common characterization of aboutness topics relates to a process of formulating some kind of semantic condensation of the content of the whole text—an expression which “summarizes” the content of a book that allows librarians to assign an index entry or classifications such as selection of key words (cf. Hutchins 1977). In the linguistic literature, topic is generally described as the information that the sentence, proposition, or (section of) discourse is about. Below are different information-related ways that the term topic has been defined in linguistic literature:

- (17) Selected senses of the term topic (cf. Payne 2022: 17)
- a. **(Discourse) topic**: A summarizing macro-proposition for a (section of) discourse (van Dijk 1977).
 - b. **(Participant) topic**: A participant or objectified non-physical concept that a (section of) discourse is about (van Dijk 1977); see also Givón (1983a: 8) who writes “the participant most crucially involved in the action sequence running through the paragraph.”
 - c. **(Sentence) topic**: The participant or objectified non-physical concept that a sentence is about (Hockett 1958: 201; Dik et al. 1981: 50; Reinhart 1981: 54); see also Lambrecht (1994: 118) who writes “the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about.”

The following are notions closely related to, if not used synonymously with, “topic” in one sense or another. Note, however, that these notions are defined structurally as well as functionally, except for (18c).

- (18) Notions closely related to the term “topic”
- a. **Theme:** An initial constituent of a clause which establishes “what is being talked about, the point of departure for the clause as a message” (Halliday 1967: 212; cf. Prague School work, e.g. Firbas (1964)).
 - b. **(Back)ground:** a part of a sentence that is noninformative, known, or expected that anchors the sentence (or the utterance) to the previous discourse or the hearer’s mental world (Vallduví & Engdahl 1996; see also Dufter & Jacob 2009).
 - c. **“Delimiting” element:** A certain restricted domain or scope (spatial, temporal, individual or propositional) within which the main predicate applies (see Yang 1973; Chafe 1976; Haiman 1978; Krifka 2008).

I will not expand on all notions in (17) and (18), but make a few comments that will be relevant to the analysis of discourse grammar in Isaan. As the literature reveals, it is extremely difficult (and not helpful) to formulate a definition for the term topic, even in an information-related way, that would allow for a uniform analysis across levels of grammar.

Identifying “topic” according to any sense in the analysis of discourse patterns is a complicated matter. First, identifying a “discourse topic” in sense (17a) is highly subjective, as two people listening to the same story may very well disagree on what the story is about. Second, topic in sense (17c) is actually highly dependent on the discourse context, and it is not always possible to determine a topic item for each individual sentence by considering the sentence’s proposition alone without an analysis of contextual information, both in the previous discourse and/or in the pragmatic context and the cognitive context (van Dijk 1977; Payne 2022). While one could imagine saying, *Hey, there is coffee* to let someone know/accept upon hearing it that ready-to-drink coffee exists (and perhaps it is that case that coffee is being introduced as a new “discourse topic”), the utterance does not have a “sentence topic” in sense of (17c) because it contains only asserted information and no presupposition (i.e., it is athetic sentence). Hence, the

notion of a sentence topic is not universally relevant to all sentence types nor discourse situations.

Analyzing narratives or other text types for topic in sense (17b) can yield some interesting, but not categorical results. Specifically, Givón's (1983) approach to topic as a scalar concept (i.e., degree of participant continuity) is consonant with terms like primary and secondary topic on the pragmatic level, which for Givón (1984a) are associated with the grammatical subject and object on the syntactic level. Further, Givón predicts that participants who are readily available, accessible, or predictable tend to be linguistically expressed with minimal coding or form. Thus, participants that are highly continuous, or highly topical in Givón's sense, may be expressed with pronouns or zero anaphora in certain contexts, while most discontinuous topics are expressed via maximum linguistic means. Note that Givón's characterizations of continuous topics come very close to the notions of given information (Chafe 1994), although experimental evidence suggests that the notions of topic and given should be kept apart (see Hung & Schumacher 2012). Givón's approach provides a concrete way to go about identifying "relative topicality" of participants within a section of discourse, which I shall discuss further in Chapter 4.

Despite the lack of uniformity in how the term "topic" is used, a common thread of meaning can be identified for the various notions in (17) and (18). I find that all of them use "topic" with reference to the on-line process of identifying a pre-established cognitive domain for data inputs. That is, topic as an information-structure category serves as a foundation for processing and networking of incoming information. My understanding of topic in this way is closely aligned with van Dijk and Kintsch (1983: 155) who provide a cognitive definition stating that "topics function both as an instruction to search the text representation of the discourse (at a particular moment) and as an indication of how and where to connect propositions of the textbase" (where "textbase" is roughly what I previously characterized as the content of the presupposition pool). Using the metaphor of a library, an inventory of topics can be seen as a file storage system where incoming catalog cards containing bibliographic information are to be stored (Reinhart 1981; see also Gernsbacher 1990; Vallduví & Engdahl 1996; Gernsbacher 1997). When a new book is added to a library, a new card entry (or with digitization, a new record) must be created and filed properly to maintain the organization of the library as a whole. In order to create and file the card, a librarian who processes this new book must perform various

tasks, including evaluating the content of the book, indexing the new book with respect to the book-organizing schemes, and locating its place on the shelves, thus, creating a knowledge bank or a knowledge network.

Language users as comprehenders partly build their mental representation of a discourse by mapping new information to topics as foundations (Gernsbacher 1997). Identifying topic has to do with deciding where an incoming piece of information should go with respect to everything else that is already stored in the mental representation of the discourse at the time of the utterance.

To help clarify the differences among the senses of topic in (17), I would like to bring some Isaan vocabulary into discussion. The Isaan word *luan* ‘topic/subject matter, case, affair, story’ refers to the broader sense of “topic” that is in the discourse-level domain, also known as topic of interest or topic of discussion, roughly (17a).² In contrast, the Isaan word *kiaw-kap* ‘about’ (literally ‘connect-with’) refers to a different sense of “topic”, such as primarily with who or with what the sentence, utterance, or section of upcoming discourse is concerned (17b-c). These words capture some of the differences in how the term “topic” has been used in the linguistic literature. The broader sense lexicalized in *luan* has to do with semantic condensation of the discourse content, while the sense lexicalized in *kiaw-kap* points to the relationships within the knowledge network under a given discourse domain. This clear distinction of the two senses of the English term “topic” is informed by evidence from the Isaan narrative discourse excerpt in (19) that uses both of these terms, where the speaker is proposing a new topic of discussion: *bun* ‘merit’.

- (19) k^han ∅ wao **luan** bun ni man tɔŋ **kiaw-kap** prawe:t
 if speak topic merit TPC 3.NO must connect-with Vessantara
 ‘If [we] were to talk about merit, it has to be about Vessantara.’ (Genesis_kb73)

In example (19), the speaker suggests a *luan* which limits the following discourse to be within the abstract domain of merit (or good deeds). The rest of the discourse is restricted to, or *kiaw-kap*, a man called Vessantara who was Buddha in his tenth existence—an individual domain. After uttering (19), the speaker went on to describe how Vessantara gave away everything

² The Isaan expression *wao bɔ̄ lu: luan* literally means ‘speak not know topic’, and is a saying for when a speaker or a discourse is incoherent.

including his kingdom, all his possessions, his wife, and children to pursue enlightenment. Hence, while I endorse the bottom-up approach in data gathering and analysis of discourse-pragmatic phenomena as advocated by some scholars (e.g., Matić & Wedgwood 2013; Ozerov 2015; Ozerov 2018; Stefanowitsch 2020), I recognize both *luan* and *kiaw-kap* as different types of topics in my analysis of Isaan discourse grammar. This will become relevant in understanding the occurrences of *ka* in various morphosyntactic constructions in Chapter 7.

2.2.4 Pragmatic relation: “Focus”

Similarly to the multiple senses associated with the term “topic”, the term “focus” proves equally complicated. (20) presents many senses related to the term “focus” in the linguistic literature, although they do not always contain the word *focus*.

- (20) Selected senses of the term “focus” (cf. Payne 2022: 17)
- a. Focus (of assertion): “The semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition” (Lambrecht 1994: 213)
 - b. Focus: “An informative, newsy, dominant, or contrary-to-expectation part” of a sentence (Vallduví & Engdahl 1996: 462)
 - c. The evocation of relevant alternatives (Rooth 1992; Krifka 2008)
 - d. Focus of attention or attentional shift: bringing something into the cognitive laser-like center of attention or “spotlight” (Tomlin 1995; Posner & DiGirolamo 1998; Myachykov 2007: 23)
 - e. Contrastive or marked focus subtypes: exclusive focus, restricting focus, expanding focus, predicate-centered focus, argument focus, polar focus, counter-expectation, etc. (Watters 1979; Dik et al. 1981; Vallejos Yopán 2009)

Many linguistic definitions of the term “focus”, including those just above, allude to humans’ cognitive ability to selectively attend to specific information inputs in various ways. For example, the notion of focus of assertion (20a) hints at the process where interlocuters can sieve through information put forth by an utterance and identify the part where the presupposition differs from the assertion (i.e., asserted information minus presupposed information equals x ; cf.

§2.2.1). In accordance with this sense, one may very well identify the focus scope or the focused item for each and every utterance. The focus element may fall under “predicate focus”, “argument focus”, or “sentence focus”, depending on the propositions and discourse situations (Lambrecht 1994). This definition of “focus” as meaning “focus of assertion” is useful but not without analytical problems. Following Lambrecht’s (1994) analysis, we may identify where the asserted information of (19) differs from the presupposed information as follows:

- (21) Context: The speaker is nominating a new topic of discussion or *luan*
 Sentence: If [we] were to talk about merit, it has to be about Vessantara
 Presupposition: “The *luan* topic of merit must involve discussion of x”
 Assertion: “The *luan* topic of merit must involve discussion of Vessantara”
 Focus of assertion: x = “Vessantara” (i.e., “argument focus”)³

Based on the proposition in (19), I deduce that the speaker is asking the listener to accept upon hearing and without challenge a new *luan*-topic of discussion (about merit). The information expressed by the *if*-clause, though brand-new since it was mentioned for the first time in this sentence in the discourse, is treated as pragmatically presupposed. Meanwhile, it is not already agreed upon which aspect of making merits will follow. To increase the content in the presuppositional pool, the speaker calls attention to a well-known story of Buddha’s tenth existence as a man called Vessantara. The thing which the proposition in the main (second) clause of (19) is “about” is the event/action of talking about merits, designated by the pronoun *man* ‘3.NO’ (NON-RESTRAINT) in the subject position of the main clause. The focus of assertion is on the man named Vessantara, designated by the clause-final NP. After uttering (19), the speaker proceeds to tell a story where Vessantara is the main character (i.e., the most continuous topic in Givón’s (1983) sense). The issue now is that the argument focus of the proposition in (19) following Lambrecht’s (1994: 228) approach is not distinguishable from the topic in Givón’s sense.

Selective attention is also involved in the evocation of relevant alternatives (20c).

According to Krifka (2008: 247), the most successful understanding of focus is that it “indicates

³ Lambrecht’s (1994: 213) expression [x = ___] indicates “a relation between the element which is, and an element which is not, part of the presupposition.” He sometimes calls this the assertion and other times a focus domain (see also Lambrecht 1994: 226).

the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions.” This notion of focus at least implies a process of activating and/or disregarding (other members of) a set of related concepts, individuals, properties, or propositions which are made available by some lexical or construction meaning. At an intuitive level, speakers would call attention to some part of a proposition when they believe that something needs to be emphasized, corrected, or confirmed. This may happen when the speaker perceives a potential mismatch between their own and the interlocutors’ mental representations. For example, the speaker may be led to believe that the listeners misunderstood them somehow, and thus the speaker tries to correct the misunderstood information in order to maintain mutual understanding, e.g., *It was Ronald that made the hamburgers* (not Sue, and not me!). In English, this type of focus can be marked by certain cleft sentences, signaling an exhaustive interpretation that a canonical sentence construction (e.g., *Ronald made the hamburgers*) lacks. In this case, it is the communicative situation that calls for an explicit emphasis on some elements of the message, which presupposes the presence of a set of alternatives.

Contrary to Lambrecht’s (1994: 213) analysis of focus of assertion, Rooth (1992: 108) theorizes that the focus effects (in the semantic interpretation) should be gradable but always be optional because they rely on the presence of some competing or contrasting logical motivation. In the context of (19) above, the speaker has not yet established the scope of their discussion about merit in the preceding discourse. Thus, there is nothing that forces a focus interpretation in Krifka’s or Rooth’s sense at the level of the main clause due to the lack of competing and relevant alternatives in the communicative situation. There may be reason to believe that the listeners were prompted to think about a number of things that are culturally associated to making merit in the Isaan-speaking community (such as going to the Buddhist temple, giving food to the monks, or obeying one’s parents). But there is no communicative demand to emphasize certain elements of the message because the competing set of people, activities, or things that constitute making merit cannot be determined.

In this work I will use the term “pragmatic focus” with reference to the adjustment of the content of the presuppositional pool, in line with Lambrecht’s “focus of assertion”. To use the metaphor of the mental representation as a library again, focus in this sense indicates that incoming information results in a minor or major reorganization, or even renovation, of a section in the library. Along the same lines as Lambrecht’s (1994: 218) use of the term, I will use

“(pragmatic) focus” as pertaining to the asserted new relationship between units of information within a single utterance. The focus relationship is assumed to be unpredictable or non-recoverable for the addressee at the time of the utterance. Such a new relationship may (or may not) stand in contrast with relevant alternative ones. Therefore, the focus interpretation has varying informational effects depending on how incoming information is to be integrated into the assumed shared knowledge.

To summarize this section, discourse production involves multiple cognitive tasks. So far, we have assumed that there is a process of assessment where the speaker forms hypotheses about what the listeners already know and/or are familiar with and what they will find relevant in a given context. There is also a process of activation where the speaker (strategically) evokes a concept, idea, or cognitive frame in the listener’s mind by using linguistic expressions. We also assume that there is a process of integration of in-coming information into the presuppositional pool or the network of knowledge in the listeners’ mind. All of these processes are interactional in nature; they happen (roughly) simultaneously and dynamically.

The next section lays out the basic assumptions regarding strategies of discourse comprehension which bear on morphosyntactic choices that speakers make during storytelling.

2.3 Building a mental representation of a discourse

Discourse coherence refers to the ways linguistic forms are used to express (logical) connections or semantic relations between complex ideas within a text. To ensure that the listeners understand (“make sense of”) what is going on in a story, the speaker must create a set of linguistic instructions regarding which story segments are meaningfully related to each other in such a way that they form a coherent and cohesive whole.

As listeners, we assume there will be a certain degree of coherence in the stories we hear. It is also expected that speakers will provide sufficient grammatical signaling (i.e., not too many nor too few signals) in discourse to facilitate mutual understanding of how each proposition is to be interpreted as related to others (cf. Grice 1975). Speakers also have options to use anaphoric pronouns, definite noun phrases, and other elements to indicate the ties between propositions (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976) and to help with inter-propositional content management involving conditionality, sequentially, (dis)continuity, etc. In Chapter 7, I will argue that the Isaan

morpheme *ka* is one of many cohesion building devices that enables speakers to explicitly signal a particular range of underlying semantic coherence relationships between units of propositions.

2.3.1 *Mental representation of narrative texts and its interpretation*

People who understand narrative events are able to construct a mental representation of those events and assign some kinds of interpretation (semantic, pragmatic, and/or social meanings) to the mental representation. One must at least handle information about who is involved and what happens while creating a coherent network of how participants and events come together as “a story”. Consider the following excerpt from van Dijk and Kintsh (1983):

Suppose someone witnesses a car accident. We assume that such a person constructs a mental representation of that accident, and that his or her understanding of the observed events consists in that process of construction and its memorial consequences. Now, suppose that another person hears a story about the same accident. We assume that understanding such a story also involves the construction of a mental representation of the story. Of course, a representation of the accident itself and a representation of the story about the accident will not be identical...But the common characteristic of both cognitive processes is that the person who witnesses the accident and the person who listens to the story each constructs a representation in memory, on the basis of visual and linguistic data respectively...[Both] the witness of the accident and the listener of the accident story do not merely represent the visual and the verbal data, such as movement of objects or persons (events) or the sounds uttered when the story is told, but also, or rather, an interpretation of the events and the utterance...In both cases they construct a meaning: The events are interpreted as ‘an accident’, and the story utterances is interpreted as a story about an accident.” (van Dijk & Kintsh 1983: 4–5)

Though the mental representation of a story constructed on the basis of linguistic data is not identical to that constructed based on visual data, they will have a few things in common. First, the mental representations will involve some participants, particular events, and relationships events and situations; the last are constructed on the basis of local and global coherence strategies. With regard to linguistic input, we understand meaning relations between the successive sentences in the discourse. Groups of sentences are further organized into larger meaningful units. According to Dijk and Kintsh (1983: 151–153), in the process of constructing a representation of a discourse, local relatedness is cyclically matched against other cognitive information such as world knowledge and episodic memories. This means that we access and compare similar situations, allowing us to interpret a story as “an accident”. Language users are

assumed to be strategic in the ways they produce and process discourse information. For example, if no coherence obtains between immediately adjacent clauses or propositions, language users would likely apply a wait-and-see strategy, expecting that coherence will eventually result.

Second, the mental representation of a story constructed based on linguistic or other inputs is laced with individualistic interpretations. As a social activity, stories are told with particular goals or interests. However, speakers and listeners each bring in their own “take” to storytelling/story interpreting. The inter-personal experience will inform what style of speech the speaker uses as well as influencing their morphosyntactic choices. For example, the person who witnesses a car accident will likely tell the story differently to a friend than to a police officer who is taking an accident report. The nuances that inter-personal experience bring may present a challenge to text coherence analysis because the speakers’ intentions may not always map up with the listeners’ expectations.

Finally, building the mental representation of a story requires construction of at least two sub-units for time: one for the events that occur in the text-internal world, and another for the facts pertaining to the real world. For example, as shown in (22), speakers regularly shift between different cognitive spaces when telling stories as they work to provide enough information to allow for listeners to interpret them accurately. Listeners rely on such additional information to form a coherent interpretation of the story. In (22), the speaker is describing events within the narrative world in lines (22a–d), before shifting to the real-world in lines (22e–g).

(22) Excerpt from Tragedy Story

a. ba:t-ni tɔ:n-nan man pen na: het nǎ:
 now time-that 3.NO COP face make rice.paddy
 ‘Now, that time, it was the season for growing rice.’

b. na: het nǎ: bat-ni
 face make rice.paddy now
 ‘(Being) the rice growing season, now,’

- c. lu:k-sa:j p^hu-nî: ka si het nǎ:
 child-male CLF.HUM-PROX KA IRR make rice.paddy
 ‘this son would (soon) work on the rice field.’
- d. mɛ: kap lu:k ka si het nǎ: nam kan la
 mother with child KA IRR make rice.paddy with RECIP PRT
 ‘The mother and the son would probably work on the rice field together’
- e. samai kɔn si bɔ: mi: ca:ŋ
 era before IRR NEG have hire
 ‘In the past, there would be no hiring.’
- f. t^haj ka t^haj bɛ:p samaj bo:la:n
 plow KA plow type era ancient
 ‘As for plowing, (they) plowed the ancient way.’
- g. t^haj nǎ: samaj bo:la:n mi: t^haj lewka mi: k^hua:j
 plow rice.paddy era ancient have plow and.then have buffalo
 ‘The ancient plowing method includes a plow and a buffalo.’ (Tragedy_oi16-19)

The linguistic encoding of time generally relates to the notion of tense (Givón 1984b; Comrie 1989). However, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 5, Isaan lacks systemic formal marking for tense. Thus, managing information about time becomes more dependent on discourse context and on a multi-dimensional conceptualization of time which requires one to situate oneself in the locus of temporal reference and viewpoint of the discourse participants, and on whether the stream of events, and/or time is conceptualized as moving (cf. Botne & Kershner 2008). For example, the Isaan ‘irrealis’ marker *si* typically indicates that something will happen in a future time with respect to the time of the speech act (i.e., real-world present).⁴ However, the occurrences of *si* in (22c), (22d) and (22e) are not in the future relative to the storyteller’s time of speaking. Rather, (22c) and (22d) are interpreted as about to happen in the future relative to a given point within the narrative world (i.e., the mother and the son were about to work the

⁴ I follow Enfield’s (2007a: 214) gloss for the Lao *si* here; however, the gloss may not be appropriate for Isaan data because speakers sometimes use *si* to describe real events or states of affairs that actually happened prior to the time of speech act. The interrogation of its functions is beyond the scope of this study.

fields). In contrast, (22e) has to do with the future of the real-world past (i.e., no hiring happened some period prior to the storyteller's time of speaking). The temporal interpretation of Isaan clauses will be further discussed in Chapter 5 and 6.

2.3.2 *Building coherence: Relationships between propositions*

Following Mann and Thompson (1986), in the normal situation listeners assume that a text they are hearing forms a coherent whole and that speakers intentionally arrange the propositions within a text in a particular way. This excludes the possibility that the text arrangement along with the selected linguistic expressions were produced by some random processes such that interpreting them as meaningful and mutually relevant would be inappropriate.

According to Mann & Thompson (1986), propositions in a text can sometimes be meaningfully connected even without an explicit marker of the type of relationship between them. Consider their example in (23) where neither part of the text explicitly suggests any semantic relationship between the propositions. But it is understood that the first part presents a problem, while the second part presents a solution to the problem.

(23) *I am hungry. Let's go to the Fuji Garden.* (from Mann & Thompson 1986: 60)

Such inter-propositional semantic relationships have also been referred to as "rhetorical predicates" (Grimes 1975) and "relations between predicates" (Longacre 1976). Relationships between propositions are claimed to be basic to the process of inference-making and understanding the discourse as a whole (see Mann & Thompson 1986: 68 for detailed discussion).

The relationships between propositions are inherently combinational and often times implicit. However, certain morphosyntactic configurations can be used to make such relationships more explicit. In (23) the implicit problem-solution type relationship is not derived from either part of the text but arises when two parts are put together. The sentence can alternatively be more explicitly expressed by using a conjunctive word: *I am hungry. So, let's go to the Fuji Garden.*

The ways in which conjunctive words are used to express inter-propositional relations are rather complex. Depending on the language, the form-meaning pairing is not always one-to-one, but many-to-many. On one hand, this means that one phonological form could express several types of relationships between propositions. For example, the word *so* in *Be quiet so he can sleep* presents a different kind of inter-propositional relation from that of a problem-solution type in *I am hungry. So, let's go to the Fuji Garden*. One analysis of *so he can sleep* is that the speaker might be presenting a “motivation” for someone to comply with the preceding directive *Be quiet*. On the other hand, a single inter-propositional relation could be expressed by multiple forms. Conjunctive words like *so*, *therefore*, *consequently*, depending on contexts, can all be used to signal a cause-result relationship between two propositional units.

Mann & Thompson (1986) suggest that the function of conjunctions is best understood as a means to constrain the interpretation of the relationship between propositional units in a text. Their overall analysis concerns the relationship between parts of texts, not just between adjacent clauses, and each part of a text may potentially contain many clauses. This means that a clause may hold one relationship with an immediately adjacent clause (e.g., “sequence” where the proposition expressed in the second clause is understood to follow the proposition expressed in the first clause) and another relationship with a different clause (e.g. “circumstance” where the first clause establishes the situation within which the other clause is interpreted); this is shown in a made-up example in (24). The relationship between propositions is therefore layered and interconnected.

(24) (A) *Having arrived at the Fuji Garden*, (B) *I realized they were closed*. (C) *I ordered Chinese food to-go instead*.

Understood relationships:

- B is in a temporal sequence relation with A.
- B is a circumstance of C.
- B is in a temporal sequence relation with C.

2.3.3 *Referring forms and contextual information*

Referring forms, i.e., speaker’s choice among morphosyntactic configurations which explicitly mark speech act or event participants, play a key role in discourse cohesion (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 308). In natural, spontaneous spoken discourse (e.g., when someone is telling a

story), the interlocutors routinely refer to some entities and predicate various things about them later on. Thus, the re-occurrence of linguistic forms used to mention these entities is part of what “ties” the clauses together, such that the interpretation of one clause often depends on the meaning of the other, thus creating cohesion (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 3). The reference ties can take many forms in English. For example, the sentences in (25) illustrate the use of zero and pronominal expressions with anaphoric interpretation (indicated by the subscripts).

- (25) a. John_i came in and Ø_i sat down
b. John_i came in and he_{i/j} sat down

The interpretation of the gap in sentence (25a) is restrictive such that the “form” with no phonological realization can only refer back to an individual called John. Somewhat similarly, the interpretation of the pronoun *he* in sentence (25b) is also dependent on possible antecedents, but this may be within or outside the immediate sentence (especially dependent on intonation). Note that such reference ties are one of many relationships that exist between informational units. The restrictive nature of the referential interpretation for the sentences in (25) suggests that a meaningful and cohesive relationship exists between the referring forms, what was said before, and perhaps who is understood as present in a given context.

Contextual information is taken into consideration as the speaker makes choices among the linguistically available forms to instruct the hearer to create the mental representations for discourse referents. Context is defined as a set of premises used to interpret an utterance (Sperber & Wilson 1995). With this definition, context includes more than the immediately preceding discourse or the situational or physical environment of the interlocutors. It is a psychological construct informed by the speaker-hearer’s assumptions about the world (personal experience, attitudes, cultural knowledge, prior interaction with the speaker, etc.) Context plays an important role in information processing because it is a basis for the decision whether an utterance is felicitous or not, for evaluating the most relevant part of incoming information, and for identifying what is worthy of attention and processing efforts.

The morphosyntactic form that speakers use for referents is taken by some as a reflection of different degrees of cognitive activation, information accessibility, or recoverability; cf. §2.2.2 (Givón 1983a: 17; Ariel 1985; Chafe 1987: 25; Chafe 1994: 75; Lambrecht 1994: 93; Goldberg

2006: 130). A longer form, such as a full NP, might suggest that the intended referent is presumed to not be among the most cognitively accessible (i.e., not yet activated) in the listeners' mental representation of the discourse world. Many cross-linguistic studies have found that speakers use proper names or full NPs when mentioning the referent for the first time (cf. Givón 1983a; Arnold 1998; Du Bois, Kumpf & Ashby 2003; Givón 2017). In contrast, a shorter form or a null form suggests a higher degree of accessibility where the intended referent is either already salient or contextually retrievable. Many have argued that zero expressions and reduced participant indexation forms are associated with given or accessible information; however, it is also possible for longer overt expressions, such as pronouns and full NPs, to occur with given or accessible information.

2.3.4 Main event line and supporting materials in narrative texts

Following from the aforementioned basic assumption that propositions in a text are intentionally combined to form a cognitively coherent structure, I assume that speakers are motivated to make clear to the listeners the particular, non-contradicting relations between any two or more information units when telling a story. The sequence relation between units of propositions is a particularly important part of a coherent narrative text. A string of clauses is considered a narrative text when it reports actions, events, and states of affairs as happening in a temporal order which may be separated by one or more temporal junctures (Labov & Waletzky 1967/1997: 226). The sequence relation is taken to be neutral or basic to narrative event information.

In general, narrative texts can be described as comprising groups of propositions that have different discourse-level functions. Some (groups of) propositions advance the plot of the story by relating events in sequence. Others provide information about the narrative participants, the situations, and so on (Grimes 1975). These functions have received different names in the literature: foreground vs. background, main route or events of a text vs. supportive materials, and so on (see Shirtz & Payne 2015 for a review). To avoid further terminological confusion, I follow Payne's (1992) operational definitions of "main event line" (MEL) versus non-MEL information, summarized below.

In this study, an event is defined as a proposition which asserts that somebody did something or something happened to someone in the universe of discourse. The propositions

which linguistically assert events in the order which they are understood to have temporally occurred in the universe of discourse are (operationally) considered part of the narrative MEL materials. The MEL includes only the events that are sequential and non-overlapping in the narrative timeline. By this definition, hypothetical events (possibly occurring in the future or which might have occurred in the past, e.g., as typically expressed in conditional clauses) as well as states are excluded. I will consider a change of state as part of the MEL if it is sequential to other events (e.g., *He heard the news and he became sad.*) Payne also notes that:

“Although there may be a sequence relation between two events or situations, the speaker may wish to downplay that sequence relation and make some other relation more prominent, presenting only the second event in a series, say, as part of the MEL chain ” (Payne 1992: 377).

I consider elements which are not part of the MEL to be supportive materials for the purpose of this study’s discourse analysis. Supportive materials give additional information about the events, participants, or the discourse situations. This type of information is similar to what some call “background” (Grimes 1975), which refers to the information that clarifies the narrative MEL. Other examples of supportive materials include a speaker’s explanations (e.g., of why someone did something), evaluations (e.g., of whether what happened was a normal course of action), and collateral (speaker’s comment on what did not happen). Further discussion of the MEL and supportive materials will be in Chapter 6

2.4 Data collection and annotation methods

2.4.1 Spoken Isaan Corpus

The data for this study is drawn from the Spoken Isaan Corpus, which I have been building since 2018 to gather naturalistic and usage-based evidence for grammatical description. The corpus currently consists of five hours of text recordings of various genres including teaching or sermons, personal stories, folk stories or legends, traditional practices, and “Pear Stories” which speakers recall from watching a wordless video (Chafe 1980).⁵ Most of the texts are monologues, but some parts contain the speech of the interviewer, and some include conversational exchanges among characters within a story. Isaan speakers whose speech is

⁵ The Pear Story video is downloadable from <https://shorturl.at/qFPS5>.

included in the corpus are native to Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, and Kalasin, but some may have moved to reside in other provinces during their upbringing.

The language data is transcribed in Thai script, and has been fully morphologically parsed and (partially) glossed in English. The corpus is tagged for part of speech, sentential boundaries, and codeswitching between Isaan and Thai. The total word count is currently 36,182 (where 3,597 words were said in Thai during codeswitching). The XML version of the corpus is publicly available via a GitHub repository (Raksachat 2023). I access the corpus via a software tool for language and cultural data called FieldWorks Language Explorer (FLEX).⁶ The narrative text samples were exported into Microsoft Excel for annotations and collocation analyses.

For this study, I have analyzed nine narrative texts taken from the Spoken Isaan Corpus. These include four tellings of the Pear Story by four different speakers. Additionally, two of the same speakers gave their own versions of a story well-known in Isaan culture, known as *kɔŋ kʰaw noi kʰa: mɛ:*. One of the four speakers, who is an expert storyteller, provided three additional stories that he has told before. For reference, the examples taken from the corpus are accompanied by an identifier: a text's name followed by an underscore, followed by two-letter codes representing the speaker (i.e., oi, sm, yt, and sw).

I have conducted an in-depth analysis of each narrative text, separating the utterances into clausal units, and identifying discourse and grammatical features in each clausal utterance (referring expression types, activation statuses, clausal construction type, etc.) The summary of the plot of each story is given below. Full transcriptions of selected stories are presented in the appendices.

2.4.1.1 Pear Stories

Four speakers were instructed to tell the Pear Story to someone who had not seen the video stimulus, in such a way that the hearer could envision the images that the speaker saw (see Appendix A). The video stimulus was presented in a quiet environment (with minimal distraction) in each speaker's home. Each speaker was given a few minutes to collect their thoughts before the audio recording took place. The audience comprised me as the interviewer

⁶ FLEX software is downloadable from <https://software.sil.org/fieldworks/>.

and at least one other person who was also an Isaan speaker (e.g., a member of the speaker's family). Most speakers retold the story roughly as follows:

There was a farmer who was collecting fruits from a tree. The farmer is middle-aged. He went up on the tree, collected the fruits, put them in an apron, came down, and put them in the baskets. There are three baskets, two of them were full. Then there was a man pulling a goat towards the tree shade where the farmer was. They came and went without greeting one another. The man walked away pulling the goat while the farmer remained on the tree. A little while after that, a boy came riding a bicycle. The boy arrived at the scene; seeing the farmer not paying attention to him, the boy took a basket of fruit, placed it on the front of the bicycle, and rode away. While he was riding, there was a girl riding a bicycle approaching in the opposite direction. He looked at her and the bicycle crashed onto a rock. He, the bicycle, and the fruit basket fell, causing the fruits to scatter everywhere. The girl rode away without paying attention while the boy remained where he had fallen. Then, there was a group of three boys that came and helped this boy pick up the fruits and put the basket on the bicycle. The boy gave each of them a (piece of) fruit and they left the scene. The group of three boys walked along the road and came to where the farmer was collecting fruits in the first scene. They walked away eating the fruits without greeting the farmer. The farmer appeared to be confused about the fruits; one basket was missing. And the story ends.

The way each speaker told the story differs in various aspects, including what details were or were not included. For instance, most speakers did not mention a hat that belonged to the boy who stole the fruit. Some speakers added commentary about what did (or did not) happen in the video (e.g., noting that the participants did not say anything to each other, that the boy went home, that the farmers asked the three boys where they had gotten the fruits, and so on).

2.4.1.2 *Tragedy Stories*

Two of the four speakers were asked to tell a well-known folk story called *kɔŋ k^haw noi k^ha: mɛ:* literally ‘small rice container kills mother.’ It is a legend about a young man named Tong who lived with his elderly mother somewhere in the southeastern Isaan region. The two speakers gave somewhat different accounts of what happened in the story; however, both described Tong as a diligent young man who woke up early and went to plow the field during rice planting season. They described the mother as a nurturing and caring person.

On the day of the events of the story, the mother – who normally delivered a meal to her son in the rice field – was running late. One of the speakers says that the legend says the mother was a midwife and had to go tend to someone giving birth. The other speaker says that the mother had an accident in the kitchen; the rice steamer caught on fire and the rice burned. As a result, she had to soak and cook the rice again. (This rice-soaking process normally takes about two additional hours). As for Tong, the son, he worked on the farm diligently, plowing the field with his buffalo. Around noon, he started to wonder where his mother was as he became hungrier and hungrier. He removed the yoke and the plow from the buffalo and went to rest.

A little while after that, the mother arrived with the meal. However, Tong saw that the rice container was unexpectedly small, and he got angry. He took the yoke and struck his mother on the neck. Afterwards, he went and ate, but after a few bites he became full. Realizing that his mother had died, he became sad and cried out for her to come back. One speaker ends the story here with a proverb “think before you act.” The other speaker goes on to tell the aftermath: the villagers and the village chief came and saw that Tong had killed his mother. They then took Tong to the temple to see the head monk. The monk ordered that Tong redeem his sin by building a stupa by hand. This stupa would have to be as tall as a dove soars and would contain only his mother’s ashes. It is said that the stupa is now an archeological site located in Yasothon Province.

2.4.1.3 Monk and His Novice Story

One of the speakers, who is an expert storyteller, told a story of a monk and his young novice; they would always miscommunicate and play pranks on each other. The story describes the time when someone had come to invite the monk to attend a ceremonial breakfast in the village. The monk then asked the novice to wake him up in the early morning as soon as the Pek Star (Venus) rose. The novice became nervous that he would also not wake up in time. So, he decided to wait up for the star to rise. However, when it became 11 p.m., the novice became sleepy. The novice got an idea to take a torch up on a palm tree and tie it there. If someone looked at it, it would look like a star. After he had tied the torch neatly, he went to wake up the monk. The monk, seeing the fire of the torch, believed that it was time to wake up. So, he got up and got dressed to go the village. Along his way there, he looked for the Pek Star but did not see

it anywhere. When he arrived at the village, nobody was up and about because at that time it was mid-night or 1 a.m.

Because he did not feel like walking all the way back to the temple, the monk decided to rest in some forested area around the village where winter melons grew. He sat there for a long time and fell asleep. At 5 a.m., the lady who had invited the monk to breakfast came to find some winter melons to cook for the monk. In the dark, she felt her way towards and through the winter melon field. She arrived at the monk's head and the monk was still fast asleep. Thinking his head was a melon which was ripe enough to cook, the lady twisted the monk's head. The monk woke up thinking a ghost had come upon him. Both of them yelled, and the story ends.

2.4.1.4 Siang Miang Story

Siang Miang is a well-known folklore character in Isaan and Lao traditions. Siang Miang is described as an eccentric and clever character in Lao (Enfield 2007: 54). The same is true in this Isaan oral story. The speaker describes a series of events where Siang Miang confronts a king who often seeks his help to solve problems. Each confrontation between them ends with Siang Miang outwitting the king. Below is part of what the speaker described out of the culturally shared stock of events that Siang Miang is known for.

Once upon a time, the king asked Siang Miang to meet him early in the morning. Siang Miang, who liked to wake up late, asked how early the king wanted to meet. The king replied, "before the rooster." In ancient times, the expression "before the rooster" normally referred to the time of day before sunrise; the rooster would crow starting at around 3 a.m. On that day, the king came and waited for Siang Miang at 6 a.m. By 9 a.m, Siang Miang still had not shown up. After a while, the king commanded his soldiers to go and find out what Siang Miang was up to. They went out and found Siang Miang standing at the palace gate about to come in and seek an audience with the king along with a rooster. Once he arrived at the throne, the king said to him "Did I not tell you to come meet me before the rooster?" So, Siang Miang replied, "Do you not see this? Here I came before the rooster. I am in the front; the rooster is in the back."

2.4.1.5 The Widow Story

Once there was a beautiful widow who loved her late husband and had sworn not to marry anyone unless her husband reincarnated. Her beauty was the talk of the town, and the

news of her beauty (and presumed availability for marriage) travelled far and wide. In a neighboring kingdom, there was a handsome prince who, having heard the news of this beautiful widow, came to ask for her hand in marriage. The widow denied the offer graciously, but the prince became angry at this rejection.

The prince returned to his kingdom and announced to the citizens, “If anyone manages to marry this widow, they shall receive half the kingdom’s wealth.” And so, one guy went and signed up for the challenge. Having received permission from the king, the guy went and bought a boat, filled it with goods, and set sail to the widow’s house. On the ship, he brought some ash made of pig’s bones wrapped in white cloth. When he arrived at the widow’s house, he introduced himself as a merchant needing a place to dock his boat for a few days. On the second or third day, the rain was falling so heavily that the “merchant” asked if he could stay at her house. The widow, who was kind-hearted, agreed to let him stay in the space under the house to shelter from the rain. He observed her routine every day and noticed that the widow would take her husband’s ashes out and chat with the ashes. And so, the merchant would do the same, pretending to talk to his own wife’s ashes, which were actually made from pig’s bones. The widow also noticed this. She pitied the merchant and his (presumably) dead wife. So, she invited him to stay in the spare room on the second floor of the house and his wife’s ashes would be placed in the common area near where the ancestral shrine was kept.

After the widow had gone to bed, the crafty merchant came out, took the widow’s husband’s ashes, and placed them right next to his pig ashes. In the morning, the widow would come to speak to her husband. The merchant then cried, “Look at your husband, he is sleeping with my wife! I can’t accept this!” The widow saw that and got angry at her husband. She took her husband’s ashes and flung them down the river. Now, she turned to the merchant and said, “What are we going to do?” She offered to do whatever the merchant wanted because her husband was a cheater. And so, the merchant asked her to marry him. He took her to see the king and received half of the kingdom’s wealth.

This story involves a lot more management of physical space concepts than other stories. The speaker also spent a lot of time explaining the characteristics of the house in which the widow lived because the kind of house depicted in the story is not commonly seen anymore.

2.4.2 Collocation analyses

In addition to investigating aspects of the morphosyntax, information statuses and relationships, and distribution of *ka*-eligible morphosyntactic constructions in the Isaan narrative text sample described above, in the study that follows I conduct a number of collocation analyses focusing on the co-occurrence of linguistic elements within constructions (i.e., filler-slot relations). For the statistical analyses, I follow a family of methods developed by Stefan Gries, Anatol Stefanowich, and colleagues to determine whether a co-occurrence between two linguistic elements, such as a word and a construction is grammatically conventionalized (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003; Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004; Gries, Hampe & Schönefeld 2005). The methods mainly focus on comparing the frequency of observed phenomenon (i.e., the raw frequency) against the expected frequency in a sample data set. Throughout this study, I will report the raw and expected frequencies of the target items under investigation in a contingency table like Table 3, which illustrates how expected frequency is calculated based on the total raw frequency of each variable. The strength of associated measures as well as statistical significance are calculated using a publicly available R package (Flach 2021).

Table 3: Calculating expected frequencies from observed frequencies (Stefanowitsch 2020: 156)

		DEPENDENT VARIABLE		
		CONSTRUCTION 1	CONSTRUCTION 2	Total
INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	ITEM 1	$\frac{A \times C}{E}$	$\frac{B \times C}{E}$	C
	ITEM 2	$\frac{A \times D}{E}$	$\frac{B \times D}{E}$	D
Total		A	B	E

The expected frequency represents the number of times a linguistic expression is expected to occur in a certain (sequential) position with respect to another linguistic element, based on logical probability; it is a null hypothesis which assumes that linguistic items are randomly distributed. Two high-frequency items have an inherently higher probability of co-occurring. Thus, determining the collocations that are expected due to mere chance (i.e., random distribution) allows us to evaluate the likelihood that a particular combination of forms is indeed conventionally associated with a certain function. These methods have been widely applied in

studies on various topics including constructional semantics, variation, and change (e.g., Stefanowitsch 2003; Hilpert 2006; Jing-Schmidt 2017).

CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ISAAN GRAMMAR

This chapter gives an overview of Isaan grammar including constituent order, different sentence and clause constructions, and other characteristic features. This overview focuses on parts that are more relevant for the discussion of Isaan information packaging patterns in the following chapters.

3.1 Basic typology

Isaan is an analytic, isolating tone language with no inflectional morphology. The pragmatically unmarked order is subject-verb-object, where the term “subject” refers to the most agent-like (A) argument of a transitive clause or the single (S) argument of an intransitive clause (cf. Comrie 1978; Dixon 1979). These three syntactic roles are shown by subscripts on the NPs in (26) and (27). The temporal readings of sentences are open to interpretation based on context, as there is no grammaticalized means of marking tense.

- | | | | | | | | |
|------|-------------------|------------------------|--|------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| (26) | NP _S | V | | (27) | NP _A | V | NP _O |
| | p ^h ɔː | taj | | | mu-haw | het | hian |
| | father | die | | | 1PL.PO | make | house |
| | i. | ‘The father died.’ | | | i. | ‘We built a house.’ | |
| | ii. | ‘The father has died.’ | | | ii. | ‘We are building a house.’ | |

Phrase and clause structure is generally head-initial. Not only do aspectual and modal operators precede the verb, and the verb precedes the object, but the adposition precedes its NP complement, as seen in (28).

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|-----|-----|-------------------|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|---------------------------|
| (28) | haw | si | paj | c ^h an | k ^h aw | naj | ba:n | dəː | |
| | 1.FA | IRR | go | eat | rice | in | house | PRT | |
| | ‘I will go have a meal in the village.’ | | | | | | | | (Monk and his Novice_sm5) |

The verb word can function as a sentence without overt expressions of its arguments, as in (29)–(32). Isaan speakers make use of so-called argument “omission” somewhat freely in discourse, especially when the referents are retrievable from contextual clues. As we shall see in Chapter 4, referents are often not phonologically realized.

- | | | | |
|------|---|------|---|
| (29) | ta:j cə:j
die unfortunately
‘(He) died unfortunately.’ | (30) | het caŋdəj nɔ: ba:t-ni
make how THOUGHT.PRT now
‘What do (I) do now?’ |
| (31) | buat do:n
ordain long.time
‘(He) had been a monk for a long time.’ | (32) | hu:cak bɔ:
know NEG
‘Do (you) know (it)?’ |

Discourse particles are a notable feature of Isaan grammar. Discourse particles refer to “words that are uttered not because of their contribution to propositional content but the pragmatic function for ongoing discourse” (Stede & Schmitz 2000: 129). They constitute one of the formal properties significant in communicating the discourse-pragmatic aspects of a message including speakers’ attitudes (33), speech-act differences (34), and information packaging differences (35).

- | | | |
|------|--|-------------------|
| (33) | ma: naŋ ni: dɔ:
come sit this PRT
‘Come sit here (if you would).’
(i.e., ‘I am letting you know that it is okay for you to sit here.’) | |
| (34) | man ma: caŋsi: ti?
3.NO come like.this PRT.Q
‘It came like this, is that so?’ | (Genesis_kb46) |
| (35) | bɔ: mi: malaja:t de: mə: kada:j
NEG have manners PRT dog PRT
‘Haven’t got good manners, as for the dog.’ | (Sompong_19.19.1) |

While their precise meanings are beyond the scope of the study, the discourse particles play a central role in information management of Isaan narrative texts. (See Enfield 2007a, Chapter 4 for detailed discussion on final particles in Lao.) Discourse particles do not work alone in actual communication. Rather, they interact with grammatical constructions in intricate ways (see Crisfield 1974; Cooke 1989; Enfield 2007a: 43; Enfield 2017 for discussions of discourse particles). For example, in (34) the ending particle is a mandatory formal component of the

construction without which the intended interrogative speech-act meaning cannot be achieved. Future research examining the roles of discourse particles in Isaan will require analyses of morphosyntactic patterns that naturally co-occur with them.

When Isaan speakers do not entertain argument “omission”, the constituent order in a clause can deviate from the pragmatically unmarked subject-verb-object pattern. Many such utterances include the use of discourse particles (again in bold) and/or specific prosodic patterns. (The forward slash represents a pause break followed by a pitch reset.) The interpretations are pragmatically marked in some ways. For example, (36) and (37) cannot felicitously answer the question “What happened?” Isaan speakers might say (38) under the presumption that it is expected of them to build a house (i.e., they are within the age or social status to move out of their parents’ house and live on their own), while (39) carries an overtone of disbelief.

(36) V / NP_S
 ta:j lɛ:w / luaŋ-p^hɔ: ni
 die already TITLE.MONK-father TPC
 ‘Died already, the monk did.’

(37) NP_O / NP_A V
 hian ni / p^hən het lɛ:w
 house TPC 3.PO make already
 ‘This house, he/she/they finished building (it).’

(38) V NP_O / NP_A
 het hian de: / p^hən **kadaj**
 make house PRT 3.PO PRT
 ‘Built a house, he/she/they did.’

(39) NP_O / V NP_A
 hian ni / het lɛ:w **de:** p^hən
 house TPC make already PRT 3.PO
 ‘This house, finished building (it), he/she/they did.’

The various orders illustrate that Isaan speakers do not necessarily rely on a strict constituent order to distinguish who from whom. Enfield (2007a) would describe a language such as Isaan

(as well as Lao and Thai) as having a pragmatically-oriented grammar where the grammatical and/or semantic role relationships of arguments are not marked by morphosyntactic features such as rigid constituent order, agreement, or case. Rather, understanding the relationship arises “from the normal discourse asymmetry inherent in argument structure. One argument will, all things being equal, be higher on a scale of animacy, agency, topicality, than the other” (Enfield 2007a: 272; see also Hopper & Thompson 1980: 287; Langacker 1991: 294)

3.2 Independent clauses

3.2.1 *The declarative construction*

The basic declarative clause in Isaan follows the schematic template in (40), where PRT indicates discourse particles.

(40) Subject Aspectual/Modal Verb (Object) Aspectual/Modal PRT

The subject precedes the predicate unit. Aspectual/modal words can occur preverbally and/or after the verb phrase. Objects (if any) immediately follow the verb. Declarative clauses often end with discourse particles that make a range of distinctions in illocutionary force, status, and evidentiality (Enfield 2007a: 5).

The negation marker *bɔ́:* generally occurs after the subject and before the verb. The negation may occur after the irrealis marker, as seen in (41), or before an aspectual/modal word *tʰan* ‘yet’, as in (42). There are a number of aspectual/modal words that occur only before or only after the negation marker (see Enfield 2007a: 174 Table 25 for a full list of such items in Lao). The irrealis marker *si* strictly occurs in the pre-negation slot.

(41) haw si bɔ́: paj cʰan kʰaw naj ba:n də:
 1.FA IRR NEG go eat rice in house PRT
 ‘I will not go have a meal in the village.’

(42) haw bɔ́: tʰan paj cʰan kʰaw naj ba:n də:
 1.FA NEG yet go eat rice in house PRT
 ‘I have not yet gone to have a meal in the village.’

3.2.2 Imperative constructions

Imperative clauses follow the same schematic template as the declarative clauses, but canonically occur without an overt subject. In discourse, Isaan speakers often use the sentence final particle *də:* to soften the command/request (i.e., letting the listeners know they are not obligated to follow the request).

(43) ma: naŋ nì:
come sit here
'Come sit here!'

(44) ma: naŋ nì: də:
come sit here PRT
'Come sit here (if you would).'

Example (45) shows a common Isaan greeting expression (used, for instance, to greet a neighbor who is walking by your house while you are having lunch). While it is unclear whether the phrase *kin k^haw* 'eat rice' is a command or a statement without an overt subject, such a distinction is unimportant to the interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning.

(45) ma: də: / kin k^haw
come PRT eat rice
i. 'Come, eat (with us)!'
ii. 'Come! (We) are having a meal.'

With negation, imperative clauses include the word *ja:* 'do not.' This negation form is used only with the imperative meaning. Without the overt subject, the default interpretation of the negative imperative is a command directed at the listeners, as in (46).

(46) ja: naŋ na:-buŋ la:j
do.not sit face-pout many
'Don't sit (there) pouting.' (Sompong_4.14.3)

However, the negative imperative construction may also felicitously occur with an overt subject that specifies the discourse entities prohibited to do the action of the verb, as in (47).

The polar question particle *ti?* conveys the idea that the speaker is certain about the presumption s/he is making and seeks confirmation from the listeners. The text examples in (58) illustrate the use of *ti?*. The speaker is giving a sermon at an event with a large audience. He asks the audience members to raise their hands if they want to be rich, but no one raises their hands. The speaker is surprised that no one raises their hands.

(58) Interrogative particle *ti?* ‘Surely, X is the case?!’

a. ʔǎ:w ∅ bó: ja:k luaj ti? ni
 INTERJ NEG want be.rich Q.PRT TPC
 ‘Wait, don’t you want to be rich?’

b. ∅ ja:k con t^huk k^hon ti? ni
 want be.poor every person Q.PRT TPC
 ‘Everyone here wants to be poor, is that so?’

(Sompong_10.2)

Isaan speakers use the polar question particle *bɔ?* when seeking confirmation from the listeners. This item is not to be confused with *bó:*, as seen in (57). The main difference between *bó:* and *bɔ?* relates to the speaker’s assumption prior to the time of speech act. The questions that end with the negation marker *bó:* are plain yes/no questions that are pragmatically unmarked. For those that end with *bɔ?*, the speaker has some idea of what is likely the case. Thus, *bɔ?* is pragmatically similar to *ti?* in this respect.

The difference between *ti?* and *bɔ?* in rhetorical contexts perhaps lies in whether the speaker has direct evidence for the presumed information, though this remains to be tested in future research. After uttering (58) above, the speaker asks the question in (59) using the polar question particle *bɔ?*. The speaker essentially speculates about a reason why the audience did not raise their hands, drawing upon the general cultural knowledge that one is entitled to receive certain financial and tax benefits from the Thai government if their income meets the poverty requirement.

(59) Interrogative particle *bɔ?* ‘(Potentially) X is the case?’

∅ ja:n bó: daj paj loŋ-t^habian k^hon-con san bɔ?
 fear NEG gain go go.down-register person-poor that.manner Q.PRT
 ‘Are you afraid you won’t be able to go register as a poor person?’

(Sompong_10.3)

Example (60) is from a story where an Isaan speaker explains how courtship worked in the past; the polar question particle *bɔʔ* is used in a question from a parent who greets a boy who presumably comes to court their daughter.

- (60) Ø si ma: len nam nɔ:ŋ bɔʔ la:
 IRR come play with younger.sibling Q.PRT young.one
 ‘Are you here to chat with (i.e., court) her, dear?’ (Wedding_sm24)

Finally, Isaan speakers may add the particle *kɔʔ* to questions when they are essentially asking for a reminder of presupposed information. In the examples below, “the information sought after is either previously known to the speaker but now forgotten or is as yet known to the speaker” (Enfield 2007:50), for example, when one walks in on a conversation.

- (61) ʔi-nǎŋ kɔʔ
 what Q.PRESUP
 i. ‘What did you just say?’
 ii. ‘What was it again?’

- (62) mu-ʔun haw si paj bɔ: kɔʔ
 tomorrow 1.FA IRR go NEG Q.PRESUP
 ‘About the event tomorrow, are we going?’

- (63) Ø ʔaw baj nǎŋ kɔʔ hu we:la: ja:ŋ
 take leaf what Q.PRESUP huh time grill
 ‘What kind of leaf [do you use again] when resting on fire?’ (Sompong_25.14)

3.3 Dependent clauses

3.3.1 Adverbial clause constructions

Adverbial clauses are marked by various clause-initial subordinators expressing temporal and other semantic concepts. Adverbial dependent clauses normally precede their main clauses and are often without overt subjects. The subjects of the dependent and main clauses are typically co-referential, as seen in (64) and (65). An example of non-coreferentiality of subjects

Table 4: Isaan adverbial-time words that occur in clause initial position

mu:-ni: day-this 'today'	muu-ʔu:n day-other 'tomorrow'	muu-lɛ:ŋ day-evening 'evening'
ta-ki: from-before 'previously'	ta-kɔ:n from-before 'in the past'	samaj kao era old 'in the ancient past'
p ^h ɔ: when 'when'	p ^h ɔ-ta when-from 'once, since'	laŋ-ca:k back-from 'after'
lawa:ŋ-t ^h i: between-at 'while'	naj k ^h anaʔ-t ^h i: in moment-at 'while'	k ^h anaʔ-nan moment-that 'at that time'

3.3.2 Relative clause constructions

In Isaan, relative clauses follow their head nouns and may be optionally marked by the relativizer *t^hi* 'that'. The internal subject may be overt, as in (67) where we find the pronoun *man* inside the relative clause. Alternatively, the internal subject may be null, as in (68). In the following examples, relative clauses are presented in square brackets.

(67) Relative clause with overt internal subject

muak_i [(t^hi) [man_i hia]]
 hat that 3.NO fall
 'the hat that fell'

(68) Relative clause with zero-form internal subject

ʔaj_i [(t^hi) [∅_i lak paj keŋ nuŋ]]
 older.brother that steal go basket one
 'the boy who had stolen one basket'

When the head noun is the P argument of a transitive verb of a relative clause, as shown in (69), the relativizer *t^{hi}*: is required. An overt object inside the relative clause is not allowed.

(69) Object relative clause

nit^ha:n [t^hi [∅ hen (*man) naj p^ha:p wi:di?o:]]
 tale that see (3.NO) in picture video
 ‘the story that [I] saw in the video’

Moreover, noun classifiers (CLF) in Isaan are sometimes involved in relative clause constructions. Noun classifiers typically accompany nouns depending on their physical characteristics or other inherent properties. First, note that classifiers are required after a noun when the noun is being counted or numerically modified, as in (70) and (71).

(70) kata: law ni man si mi: ju: sǎ:m baj
 basket 3.FA TPC 3.NO IRR have be.at three CLF.leaf
 ‘His baskets, there are three of them.’ (Pearfilm_sm19)

(71) pla-t^hu: sɔ:ŋ to:
 fish-mackerel two CLF.body
 ‘two mackerels’

In the following examples, noun classifiers function as relativizers. In (72), *to:* is used with a non-human noun, while in (73), *p^{hu}* introduces a relative clause modifying the human head noun *mɛ: ʔɔ:k* ‘lady.’

(72) Relative clause with non-human classifier

kai_i [to: [∅_i lɛ:n han]]
 chicken CLF.BODY run fast
 ‘the chicken that runs fast’

(73) Relative clause with human classifier

mɛ:ʔɔ:k_i [p^hu [p^hən_i mon luaŋ-p^hɔ: ma:]]
 lady CLF.HUM 3.PO invite TITLE.MONK-father come
 ‘the lady who had invited the monk’

3.3.3 Complement clause constructions

There are three types of complement clause constructions in Isaan. Depending partly on the matrix verb type, one of the following complementizers may be used: *wa:* ‘say’, *haj* ‘give’, and zero complementizer. In the examples below, the matrix verb and the complementizer are in bold, and the complement clause is bracketed for clarity.

Matrix verbs that take *wa:* ‘say’ as a complementizer are semantically psychological process and speech verbs. This includes (but is not limited to) *hen* ‘see’, *dajjin* ‘hear’, *wao* ‘speak’, *sua* ‘believe’, *k^hut* ‘think’, *tua* ‘lie/trick’, *wǎŋ* ‘hope’, *bɔ:k* ‘tell’, and *lusuk* ‘feel’. The aspectual/modal markers may differ between the matrix and complement clauses.

(74) ∅_i **lusuk wa:** [∅_j si ka:j paj laja nuŋ]
 feel say IRR pass go distance one
 ‘[I] feel like [he] might have gone past a certain distance.’ (Pearfilm_sw28)

(75) ∅_i **hen wa:** [p^hən_j ʔaw ∅_k ma ta:k dɛ:t waj]
 see say 3.PO take come dry sun.ray put
 ‘[I] saw that she brought [it] (and) sun-dried (it) here.’ (Genesis_kb28.2)

Verbs that take *haj* ‘give’ as a complementizer include *ja:k* ‘want’, *k^hɔ:* ‘beg’, *bɔ:k* ‘tell’, and *t^ha:* ‘wait.’ The subject of the *haj* complement clause is always non-coreferential to the subject of the main clause, as in (76). This is true even when the subject of the complement clause is not overt, as in (77) and (78). The matrix clause does not share aspectual/modal meanings with the complement clause. The events, actions or states of affairs described by the complement clause may not take place at all, as shown in (77).

(76) ∅ tɔŋ **t^ha: haj** [p^hu-p^hɔ: ni ma het]
 must wait give CLF.HUM-father TPC come make
 ‘[I] have to wait for my father to come do (it).’ (Raising Pigs_yl162)

- (77) mu: bɔ:k haj [∅ k^ha:j] ∅_i ka bɔ: k^ha:j
 friend tell give spit KA NEG spit
 ‘The friends asked [her] to spit (chewed betel nuts) but [she] did not spit.’
 (Sompong_40.1.3)

- (78) k^hɔ:j ja:k haj [∅ hen]
 1SG.FA want give see
 ‘I want [you/her/him/them] to see.’

Finally, no overt complementizer appears after the matrix verbs *hen* ‘see’ found in (79), *k^hɔ:* ‘beg’ (80), and *fəw* ‘wait’ in (81). The complement clause can take an aspectual/modal maker that is independent from the matrix clause, as in (81).

- (79) ∅ **hen** [t^han wao kap p^hanlaja: t^han] / mɛ:n bɔ:
 see 3SG.PO speak with wife 3SG.PO COP NEG
 ‘[I] saw you speaking with your wife, was that right?’
 (Widow_sm148)

- (80) ∅ si ma k^hɔ: [na:ŋ ni paj pen mahě:sǐ:]
 IRR come beg lady TPC go COP queen consort
 ‘[We] have come to ask the lady to go be a queen consort.’
 (Widow_sm55)

- (81) ∅ **fəw** [da:w-p^hek si k^hu:n]
 wait star-Pek IRR go.up
 ‘[He] waited for the Pek star to rise.’
 (Monk and Novice_sm17.1)

The surface structures of matrix-plus-complement clauses may resemble that of a serial verb construction, which will be introduced in the next section.

3.4 Multi verbal predicates

Isaan predicates often consist of multiple verbs. The ways in which these verbs are combined and the relationships among the verbs are heterogeneous. This section discusses what is considered a single predicate that comprises more than one verb.

3.4.1 Serial verb constructions

According to one definition, a serial verb construction (SVC) is “a sequence of verbs which act together as a predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort” (Aikhenvald 2006: 1). We will briefly introduce SVCs here but will discuss several types of SVCs more in depth in Chapter 5. SVCs are a grammatical technique covering a wide variety of meanings and functions in Isaan, including expressing motion/direction as in (82), and valency change as in (83). In the following examples, verbs within SVCs are highlighted in bold.

(82) Motion/Direction SVC

∅ **ɲa:ŋ** **k^hàw** **paj** naj ba:n ba:t-ni
 walk enter go in house now

‘[He] walked into the village now.’

(Monk and His Novice_sm34)

(83) Valence changing SVC

∅_i **ʔaw** mu: **lu:p** ∅_j **haj** ∅_k p^hɔ:m
 take hand caress give also

‘[She] also spread [the powder] for [the tree].’

(Sompong_6.29.2)

Isaan SVCs grammatically behave like single verb predicates. The verbs in the sequence typically share the subject argument, occupy a single prosodic unit, and carry one aspect/mode value, as seen in (84). Any overt aspectual/modal morpheme must precede the entire the verb string, as shown in (85) with the progressive marker *kamlan*. An attempt to insert *kamlan* between the verbs, as in (86), is ungrammatical.

(84) dek-nô:j mu: ni: ka **ɲa:ŋ** **kin** ma:k ʔan-nân
 child-small group PROX KA walk eat fruit CLF.thing-DIST

i. ‘These children walked while eating those fruits.’

ii. ‘These children ate those fruits while walking.’⁷

⁷ It is rather challenging to represent the aspect/modal sharing property of Isaan SVCs in the English free translation since this type of meaning in English is expressed via subordination or coordination; but the meaning of (84) ‘walk-eat’ contrasts with (85) ‘walk-eating’.

(85) dek-nô:j mu: ni: ka **kamlaŋ ɲa:ŋ kin** ma:k ʔan-nân
 child-small group PROX KA PROG walk eat fruit CLF.thing-DIST
 ‘These children were/are walking and eating those fruits.’

(86) *dek-nô:j mu: ni: ka **ɲa:ŋ kamlaŋ kin** ma:k ʔan-nân
 child-small group PROX KA walk PROG eat fruit CLF.thing-DIST
 Attempted: ‘These children were/are walking and eating those fruits.’

Syntactically, each verb in an Isaan SVC cannot be individually negated; that is, there is only one slot for negation marker *bó:*. However, as in (87), the negation gives rise to two possible interpretations. The scope of negation always includes the first verb *ɲa:ŋ* ‘walk’, suggesting that it is the head of the verb phrase. The scope of negation in SVCs will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

(87) Example of a motion SVC with negation

- a. dek-nô:j mu: ni: ka **bó:** **ɲa:ŋ kin** ma:k ʔan-nân
 child-small group PROX KA NEG walk eat fruit CLF.thing-DIST
 i. ‘These children did not walk nor eat those fruits.’
 ii. ‘These children did not walk while eating those fruits.’ (but they did eat the fruits.)
- b. *dek-nô:j mu: ni: ka **ɲa:ŋ bó:** **kin** ma:k ʔan-nân
 child-small group PROX KA walk NEG eat fruit CLF.thing-DIST
 ‘These children walked while not eating those fruits.’

Another type of SVCs is in (88). Again, each verb cannot be negated individually, and the negation marker may occur only before the first verb in the string. In this kind of SVC, the negative meaning applies to all the verbs.

(88) Example of a transfer SVC with negation

∅ **bó:** **ʔaw** kʰɔ:ŋ-wǎ:n **saj** fǎ: pinto:
 NEG take thing-sweet put.into lid tiffin
 ‘[They] did not take (nor) put the dessert in the tiffin’s lid.’

- (89) *∅ **ʔaw** k^hɔ:ŋ-wǎ:n **bó:** **saj** fá: pinto:
 take thing-sweet NEG put.into lid tiffin
 ‘[They] took the dessert (and) did not put (it) in the tiffin’s lid.

Even though the surface structure appears similar, SVCs are to be distinguished from other multi-verbal predicates such as certain matrix-plus-complement clauses due to their grammatical behavior and distinctive functions. Recall from §3.3.3 that verbs in some matrix-plus-complement clauses may take independent subjects as well as separate aspectual/modal expressions, while verbs in SVCs cannot. Isaan SVCs have only one slot for a subject, which is expressed in the first NP, and one slot for the negation marker.

3.4.2 Compound verb

“Compound verb” refers to when two verbs are combined to create a new stem. Compound verbs occur with a single subject and a single object (if transitive). In Isaan, two verb roots in a compound are usually near synonyms and “may be interpreted as lexical compound or syntactic coordination of verbs” (see Enfield 2007a: 458 for Lao).

- (90) ∅_i **bó:** **daj** k^hàw ma: p^həa **kot-dan** ∅_j p^hana
 NEG gain enter come for press-push quotative
 ‘[I] did not come to pressure [you], she said.’ (Sompong_12.71)

- (91) **man** **ləj** **k^hut-p^hɔ:**
 3.NO exceed think-meet
 ‘So, he realized...’ (Pearfilm_yt20)

- (92) ∅ ka **bó:** **daj** soncaj wa: ɲǎŋ **kə:t-k^huɯn**
 KA NEG gain interested that what born-go.up
 ‘[She] didn’t pay attention to what happened.’ (Pearfilm_sw43)

3.4.3 Other multi-verbal expressions

Many verb-verb expressions do not behave like a matrix-plus-complement construction, a compound verb, nor any of the serial verb constructions discussed so far.

Finally, clauses that occur with a marker of coordination *lewka* ~ *laka* ‘and then’, as seen in (99) and (100), also differ from Isaan SVCs.

(99) *lewka* connecting VPs with sequential reading

∅	ka:p	pap	lewka	nɔ:n
	prostate	promptly	and.then	sleep

‘[He] prostrated himself and then slept.’

(100) *lewka* connecting VPs with non-sequential reading

t ^h aj	nā:	samaj	bo:la:n	mi:	t ^h aj	lewka	mi:	k ^h ua:j
plow	rice.paddy	era	ancient	have	plow	and.then	have	buffalo

‘The ancient plowing method includes a plow and a buffalo.’ (Tragedy_oi19)

The insertion of *lewka* between verbs within what is otherwise an SVC may produce a well-formed sentence, but there is a drastic meaning difference between the SVC and the coordinated construction. For instance, the motion SVC previously seen in (84) describes simultaneous activities ‘walk while eating/eat while walking’ (literally ‘walk-eat’). The result of *lewka* insertion between *na:ŋ* ‘walk’ and *kin* ‘eat’, as shown in (101), is grammatical. However, the SVC meaning no longer applies. The semantic change results from the fact that inserting *lewka* imposes a sequential interpretation to the verb string.

(101) *lewka* ‘and then’ construction based on (84)

dɛk-nɔ̃:j	mu:	ni:	ka	na:ŋ	<i>lewka</i>	kin	ma:k	?an-nân
child-small	group	PROX	KA	walk	and.then	eat	fruit	CLF.thing-DIST

‘These children walked and then ate those fruits.’

Therefore, SVCs and clauses with *lewka* ‘and then’ are considered different constructions in Isaan due to the form-function differences. Even though the event phases of some SVCs may be temporally sequential (e.g., the instrumental SVC; see §5.4.4), inserting *lewka* after *?aw* take’, as seen in (102), creates gibberish because, functionally, SVCs communicate different aspects or phases of a single event.

(102) *lɛwka* ‘and then’ insertion within an otherwise instrumental SVC

*Ø_i ʔaw muː lɛwka luːp Ø_j haj Ø_k p^hɔːm
 take hand and.then caress give also
 ‘[She] took the hand and then spread [the powder] for [the tree] too.’

3.5 Copular Predicates

Isaan speakers make use of various strategies to code the relationship between a subject and a nominal or prepositional phrase predicate. There are four copula forms in Isaan: *mɛ:n*, *pen*, *k^hu:*, and *ju:*. Each form has specialized functions, summarized in Table 5. The copulas *pen* and *mɛ:n* are used with referent equation or identification (e.g., ‘John is the mayor of our village’) as well as categorization (e.g., ‘John is a mayor’). The copula *k^hu:* ‘be.like’ are more associated with predicating attributes or qualities (e.g., ‘John is quiet’), while *ju:* ‘be.at’ is used solely with predicating location (e.g., ‘John is at home’).

Table 5: Copulas and their predicating functions in declarative and interrogative sentences⁸

PREDICATIVE FUNCTION	AFFIRMATIVE DECLARATIVE	NEGATIVE DECLARATIVE	INTERROGATIVE
Equation	mɛ:n, pen	mɛ:n	mɛ:n, pen
Categorization	pen	mɛ:n	mɛ:n, pen
Attributive	k ^h u:	k ^h u:	k ^h u:, pen
Location	ju:	ju:	ju:

3.5.1 Equation

Both *mɛ:n* and *pen* can be used when identifying referents as being the same entity. For example, in (103) the subject of the clause *p^ha:m to: ni:* ‘this Brahman’ refers to the same entity as the husband of Lady Amithata.

(103) tɛ-wa: p^ha:m to: nî: mɛ:n p^hua na:ŋ-amit^hata:
 but-COMP Brahman CLF.BODY PROX COP husband lady-A
 ‘But this Brahman was the husband of Lady Amithata.’ (Genesis_kb89.2)

⁸ The distinctions are not always sharp between the functions listed in the first column of Table 5 in actual text. Tests for sharper differentiation of the predicative functions are left for future work.

Similarly, in (104) the referent *tʰɛ:w nân* ‘that area’ equates to the area where winter melons grow.

- (104) *tʰɛ:w nân man pen pa: pʰum bak-kato:n*
row DIST 3.NO COP forest bush CLF.fruit-winter.melon
‘That area, it was an area covered with winter melon bushes.’
(Monk and his Novice_sm48)

The copulas *mɛ:n* and *pen* are used in questions that equate or identify the subject with a (presupposed) nominal predicate. In (105) and (106), the speaker is asking the listener to identify the same entity, i.e., the one who (selflessly) give.

- (105) *kʰan wao luan tʰa:n mɛ:n pʰu-dǎj tʰa:n kɔ:n ba:t-ni*
if speak story give COP CLF.HUM-which give before now
‘If [we] speak about the act of giving, who was the first one to give?’
(Genesis_kb74)

- (106) *pʰǎj pen pʰu-tʰa:n kɔ:n*
who COP CLF.HUM-give before
‘Who was the first person to ever give?’
(Genesis_kb75)

Negation is only grammatical with the copula *mɛ:n* for the equative function.

- (107) **tʰɛ:w nân man bɔ: pen pa: pʰum bak-kato:n*
row DIST 3.NO NEG COP forest bush CLF.fruit-winter.melon
‘That area, it was not an area covered with winter melon bushes.’
- (108) *pʰa:m to: nî: bɔ: mɛ:n pʰua na:ŋ-amitʰata:*
Brahman CLF.BODY PROX NEG COP husband lady-A
‘This Brahman was not the husband of Lady Amithata.’
(Genesis_kb89.2)

3.5.2 Categorization

The copula *pen* is used when speakers indicate that a referent is a member of a category, but not necessarily the only member of that category. In (109) the speaker is identifying the type of soil that was brought to his house.

- (109) *din sum p^hən ʔaw ma: man pen din sɔ:ŋ si:*
 soil group 3.PO take come 3.NO COP soil two color
 ‘The soil that they had brought, it was soil of two colors.’ (Genesis_kb41)

In (110) the speaker identifies the previous occupation of a monk that he knew.

- (110) *luaŋ-p^hɔ: sə:m law pen nak-p^ha:k kaw*
 TITLE.MONK-father S 3.FA COP NMLZ-narrate old
 ‘Father Serm, he was a voiceover artist.’ (Sompong_12.1)

However, *pen* is not grammatical with negated statements. Instead, the copula *mɛ:n* is used for negative categorization.

- (111) **luaŋ-p^hɔ: sə:m law bɔ: pen nak-p^ha:k kaw*
 TITLE.MONK-father S 3.FA NEG COP NMLZ-narrate old
 ‘Father Serm, he was not a voiceover artist.’

- (112) *luaŋ-p^hɔ: sə:m law bɔ: mɛ:n nak-p^ha:k kaw*
 TITLE.MONK-father S 3.FA NEG COP NMLZ-narrate old
 ‘Father Serm, he was not a voiceover artist.’

Both *pen* and *mɛ:n* are used with interrogative categorization sentences; however, the questions have slightly different meaning. *Pen* in (113) gives the idea that something is wrong with the subject, while *mɛ:n* does not have this connotation.

- (113) *ʔan-nî: pen ɲăŋ*
 CLF.thing-PROX COP what
 ‘What is the matter with this thing?’

- (114) *ʔan-nî: mɛ:n ɲăŋ*
 CLF.thing-PROX COP what
 ‘What is this thing?’

- (118) ʔǎw ∅ k^hu: ɲiap t^hɛ:
 INTERJ be.like quiet truly
 ‘Eh? Why are [you all] so quiet?’ (Sompong_25.16)

Negation with *k^hu:* ‘be.like’ is shown in (119). Again, the speaker is using the copula in the context of comparing two referents. Specifically, children who live in Bangkok have some qualities or characteristics that differ from children who live in the northeast region of Thailand.

- (119) dek-nô:j kuŋt^he:p bó: k^hu: ba:n haw de:
 child-small Bangkok NEG be.like house 1.FA PRT
 ‘The children in Bangkok are not like (those in) our hometown.’ (Sompong_16.7)

On the other hand, no copula is used when a subject is related to a stative predicate that describes a quality or feature of someone or something such as *se:p* ‘delicious’, *ɲaj* ‘big’, and *luaj* ‘be.rich’. Enfield (2007a) also regards these words as a subclass of verbs in Lao because they share many verbal properties such as occurring with aspectual/modal words, as shown in (120) and (121) for Isaan.

- (120) haw ɲaj lɛ:w
 1.PO big already
 ‘I am grown.’ (Sompong_6.28.2)

- (121) k^haj man ka si se:p ju: la
 egg 3.NO KA IRR delicious PRT PRT
 ‘Their eggs might have been rather delicious.’ (YaKinPing_sm56)

However, unlike prototypical verbs, stative verbs can be used in the comparative construction with *kwa:* ‘more than’, as in (122).

- (122) bəŋ-paj bəŋ-ma: ∅ ka ɲaj kwa: ba:n ʔa:tama:
 look-go look-come KA big more.than house 1SG.MONK
 ‘After a careful examination, [it] is bigger than my house.’ (Sompong_10.8)

(128) Location question

salap^han daŋ-daŋ **ju:** səj
choir be.loud-be.loud be.at where

‘Where is the famous choir?’

(Sompong_40.42)

(129) Negation with *ju:* ‘be.at’

p^hən bɔ́: **ju:** hian
3.PO NEG be.at house

‘They are not home.’

3.6 Possession

There are two types of possession constructions in Isaan. The possessor may be expressed by the possessive NP construction (§3.6.1), or the possessor may be the subject of a verb meaning ‘have’ (§3.6.2).

3.6.1 Possessive NP construction

Possession can be expressed by the constructional template in (130). The head noun is optionally followed by the marker of possession *k^hɔ̀ŋ* and the possessor is expressed by an NP (which might contain a noun or just a pronoun). The word *k^hɔ̀ŋ* is also a noun itself, meaning ‘thing’ or ‘stuff’. It is also found in other words like *cao-k^hɔ̀ŋ* ‘owner’ or ‘oneself’ and *k^hɔ̀ŋ-kin* ‘foods’ (lit. ‘thing-eat’).

(130) Possessive NP construction

NP_{POSSD} [(k^hɔ̀ŋ) NP_{POSSR}]

(131) man pen caŋdǎj **lotsa:t k^hɔ̀ŋ** **man**
3.NO COP how taste thing 3.NO

‘How is it, its taste?’

(Genesis_kb29.2)

- (132) t^ha:ŋ p^hu-sa:w ka ləj wa: kə:p ?i-p^hɔ:
 way CLF.HUM-young.lady KA exceed say shoe TITLE.FEM-father
 ‘As for the young lady, (she) replied “my father’s shoes.”’ (Wedding_sm40)

3.6.2 Possessive predicate

A possessive relationship can also be expressed by using the verb *mi*: ‘have’ in the constructional template represented in (133). The possessor is in the subject position, followed by the verb *mi*: ‘have’ and the possessed noun. The possessive predicate is often accompanied by a locative expression, as in (135).

- (133) Possessive predicate construction

NP_{POSSR} mi: NP_{POSSD}

- (134) law_i bɔ́ mi: sak^hip de: we:la: Ø_i te:t
 3.FA NEG have script PRT time give.sermon
 ‘He doesn’t have a script when he gives sermons.’ (Sompong_25.3.8)

- (135) law si mi: t^huŋ-pa:j nɔ? ju: k^ha:ŋ na:
 3.FA IRR have bag-carry AGREE.PRT be.at side face
 ‘He had a bag, right? In the front.’ (Pearfilm_sm14)

For verbal predicates that involve an action or experience with a body part, the possession of the body part is always implied. In the following examples, the possessor is always understood as co-referential to the subject. This is also found in Isaan, as the following examples show. (See Enfield (2007a: section 6.1) for similar examples in Lao where a possessive relationship is understood but is not explicitly marked.)

- (136) luaŋ-p^hɔ: mu:n ta: k^hu:n
 TITLE.MONK-father open.eyes eye go.up
 ‘The monk opened (his) eyes.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm30)

- (137) man si saj t^ha:w ji:ap ji:ap ji:ap paj nam hɔ:ŋ
 3.NO IRR use foot step step step go with furrow
 ‘It (i.e. the buffalo) would use (its) feet to step repeatedly away along the furrow.’
 (Tragedy_sm40)

We will see in §4.3 that *mi*: ‘have’ is also used in existential and presentational constructions.

3.7 Pre-predicate discourse particles

While most discourse particles in Isaan take the sentence final position, as discussed in §3.2, a variety of forms occur immediately after the subject (if overt), before any aspectual/modal markers and the verb. There are three forms that may occur in this syntactic position: *ka*, *p^han* ~ *p^hat*, and *la*. For current purposes, I shall compare their usage here.

3.7.1 The particle *ka*

The particle *ka* is the most frequent form and has multiple functions. It is most commonly found in multi-clausal constructions and in extended discourse including sermons, conversations, and narratives. The following examples preliminarily illustrate typical instances of *ka* in Isaan. Subsequent chapters will address the functions of *ka* in detail.

- (138) mɔ: nî: **ka** lɔ:j ʔaw Ø san-lɛw
 guy PROX KA sneak take PRT
 ‘And so, the young man stole [it]. (Pearlfilm_sm31)

- (139) ca:k ti-nuŋ hɔ:t ti-ha: law **ka** lap səj
 from CLF.time-one arrive CLF.time-five 3.FA KA asleep be.still
 ‘From 1 am until 5 am, he was fast asleep.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm51)

As a result of null subjects, on the surface, *ka* can appear between an extra clausal element and the main verb phrase. In (140), the second clause begins after *bai-t^hi-sɔ:ŋ*, which refers to ‘the second basket’.

- (140) ∅ t^he: tem bai-t^hi-sɔ:ŋ ∅ **ka** k^hu:n paj kep ʔi:k
 pour filled CLF.leaf-at-two KA go.up go collect more
 ‘[He] poured and filled the second basket, and then went up to collect more.’
 (Pearfilm_sm17-18)

For Lao, Enfield (2007a: 199) describes *ka* as a “topic linker” whose “general function is to link an assertion back to something which serves as a topic”. He makes this analysis partly because *ka* can be used in conditionals, and conditionals are considered to be functionally similar to “topics”, following Haiman (1978).

- (141) Conditional clause followed by *ka*
- k^han ∅ ju: ba:n ∅ **ka** saj t^ha:n t^hi:lǎŋ
 if be.at house KA put.into charcoal later
 ‘If [you are] at home, add some charcoal afterwards.’ (Sompong_14.42)

The particle *ka* is also used various in contrastive focus constructions. For instance, in (142) we have what may be called a multiple foci of contrast situation, where the speaker calls attention to the different activities that each distinct story participant is doing at the same time. Note that the predicate information is not new nor unexpected; the action of neck-twisting and the monk thinking a ghost had come upon him were presaged earlier in the story. This particular function of *ka* is discussed in Chapter 4 (§4.5).

- (142) Contrastive focus construction
- a. mɛ:ʔɔ:k **ka** cap k^hɔ: bit /
 lady KA hold neck twist
 ‘While the lady was twisting his neck,’
- b. luaŋ-p^hɔ: **ka** ʔo p^hi:lɔ:k wa:san
 TITLE.MONK-father KA oh ghost say-thus
 ‘the monk (yelled) “Oh! A ghost!” (Monk and his Novice_sm64.1-2)

3.7.2 The particle *p^han ~ p^hat*

The particle *p^han ~ p^hat* is used much less frequently than *ka*. Enfield (2007a: 202) suggests that *p^hat* in Lao is a “contrast linker” that signals “a shift in the direction of the discourse, often where the main assertion is counter to expectation in some way.” The following Isaan examples support Enfield’s analysis. However, *p^han ~ p^hat* may better be understood as a kind of mirative marker (DeLancey 2001), marking information which is new or unexpected to a narrative participant. The term “contrast” is not appropriate for *p^hat* since *ka* can also be used to express contrast, as shown in (142) above.

- (143) me: **p^han** bɔː paj soŋ k^haw Ø
mother MIR NEG go send rice
‘The mother, however, did not go deliver lunch [to him]’ (Tragedy_oι29)

- (144) kɔŋ-k^haw **p^han** kɔŋ nɔːj-nɔːj
box-rice MIR box small-small
‘The rice container was unexpectedly small.’ (Tragedy_sm49)

3.7.3 The particle *la*

Occasionally, the particle *la* is used before the predicate of the main clause. For Lao, Enfield (2007a: 203) states that the particle *la* is a reduced form of the perfective marker *leːw* ‘already’, and is a clausal connector meaning ‘and, and then’. If Enfield is correct about the source for *la*, it would suggest that a sentence-final aspectual marker *leːw* ‘already’ has come to take the post-subject position in Isaan. However, it remains unclear what functions are associated with the use of *la* in discourse, and I simply mention it here to show that *ka* is part of a set of elements that occur in this particular syntactic position.

- (145) sum-ni **la** paj soŋ
group-this LA go send
‘This group (of friends) went to send [him] off.’ (Wedding_sm192)

- (146) k^hana ʔuːn **la** hom p^haː ʔuːnuʔaːna deː
group other LA cover cloth disorderly PRT
‘Other (performer) groups robbed themselves poorly.’ (Sompong_13.32)

- (147) Ø paj hɔ:t / t^hajba:n **la** mit-ʔimsim ju:
 go arrive villager LA quiet.and.empty PRT
 ‘When [he] arrived, the village was deserted.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm41)

Having now presented key concepts and literature relevant to the whole dissertation (Chapter 2) and a brief overview of key aspects of Isaan grammar, subsequent chapters will turn to examining selected morphosyntactic constructions frequently found in Isaan narrative texts and the pragmatic associations and discourse functions related to them.

CHAPTER 4

REFERENCE MANAGEMENT

In narrative discourse, reference management concerns the introduction of referents into the storyline and tracking of those referents throughout the story. The general assumption is that in effective, strategic communication, the speaker monitors activation statuses of referents in the minds of the listeners and quite automatically chooses from available forms that which allows the listeners to correctly establish or retrieve the intended discourse referent. This chapter discusses the varying morphosyntactic configurations Isaan speakers use to introduce and track discourse entities, objects, or participants involved in the story. One question explored in this chapter concerns how the choices of referring expressions (REs) in Isaan intersect with clause-level constructions which bear on the discourse-pragmatic properties of narrative participants. I will show that in Isaan, certain special clausal patterns are used to handle participants who are continuously mentioned or potentially important in the story, while a different clausal pattern is used to provide extra information about an already established referent, thus creating a rich mental representation of the story.

In the following sections, I first summarize previous proposals specifically related to concepts that I will call on for accounting for the choice of morphosyntactic form of REs cross-linguistically, notably proposals put forth by Givón (1983a), Du Bois (1987), and some concepts from Lambrecht (1994), as aspects of their proposal will be reflected on from the perspective of Isaan reference patterns. I will describe the main types of REs in Isaan and their statistical distributions in §4.2. I will also examine the intersection between the choice of RE and discourse-pragmatic properties of the presentational construction (§4.3), the resumptive pronoun construction (§4.4), and the [NP *ka* predicate] construction (§4.5). I will show that the presentational construction is associated with introduction of new participants that tend to be continuously mentioned and/or important to the plot of the story. In contrast, the resumptive pronoun construction can be used for first mentions of a discourse entity, but such entity tends not to be continuously mentioned. Furthermore, the [NP *ka* predicate] construction tends to be used with participants whose existence is already established in the discourse. Isaan speakers also use the [NP *ka* predicate] construction to describe what two or more participants are doing in a particular scene or location.

4.1 Background on reference management

In Chapter 2, I reviewed information structure literature relevant to the dissertation as a whole. Here I briefly elaborate on selected studies specifically about reference management, which is the main concern of Chapter 4.

The forms of REs and their associated discourse-pragmatic properties have been empirically examined via multiple approaches (see Arnold et al. 2013 for a review). The findings regarding the nature of the form-function relationship vary greatly across different studies and linguistic varieties. For example, psycholinguistic research on discourse processing shows mixed results regarding cognitive implications related to the choice of REs. Some studies on English find that reduced phonological forms correlate to referents that are predictable from the context (Arnold 1998; Tily & Piantadosi 2009), while others do not (Kehler et al. 2008; Fukumura & van Gompel 2010; Kaiser 2010). On the other hand, experimental studies with speakers of so-called “pro-drop” languages, such as Japanese and Mandarin Chinese, find that pronominal forms and zero anaphora are selected when speakers believe that the referent is already within the activated memory of the hearer during the discourse production time; thus, the referents are assumed to be cognitively recoverable via inferencing or other processes (Clancy 1980; Tomlin & Pu 1991; Tao & Healy 2005; Shimojo 2015; Yang et al. 2021). Noun classifiers as participant-referring forms are attested cross-linguistically, but such phenomenon is far less studied; one hypothesis is that the use of deictic classifier expressions relate to information accessibility as well as evidentiality (Messineo & Cúneo 2019). Furthermore, grammatical complexity (i.e., information “heaviness”), information newness, and topicality (i.e., topic-worthiness) have also been found to play a significant role in the selection of REs in discourse production (Arnold et al. 2000; Hung & Schumacher 2012). One important conclusion from such studies is that speakers of different languages may employ some similar, and some different strategies in keeping track of referents in a given discourse (Tao & Healy 2005).

Many researchers have found it revealing to examine the choice of REs in natural discourse (i.e. a text-based or corpus approach), which takes into account the fact that REs occur as part of a larger complex structure that comprises inter-related units of information (Jones & Jones 1979; Du Bois 1980; Givón 1983; Fox & Thompson 1990). Text-based studies may examine the frequency with which various RE forms occur in certain morphosyntactic constructions, or co-occur with certain other grammatical features; and thus contribute to

understanding how grammatical patterns emerge as a response to cognitive and discourse needs (Du Bois 1987; Bybee & Hopper 2001; Goldberg 2006; Hilpert 2006). A cross-linguistic corpus study by Schnell et al. (2021), for example, shows that there is a strong statistical tendency for new referents to be introduced as direct objects of transitive constructions in nine languages including English, Mandarin, and Vera'a (Austronesian, Oceanic). They also argue that "discourse production is most efficient when new referents are integrated seamlessly with content-driven demands of the narration" (Schnell, Schiborr & Haig 2021: 11). Their findings support the claims made by many previous scholars (e.g., Firbas 1964; Daneš 1974; Chafe 1976; Halliday & Hasan 1976: 271) that a certain pattern of information organization is generally preferred, roughly, present known information first, and then introduce something new. They also highlight the role of the narrative content in speakers' choice of morphosyntactic constructions and in argument selection (cf. also Goldberg 1995; Du Bois, Kumpf & Ashby 2003).

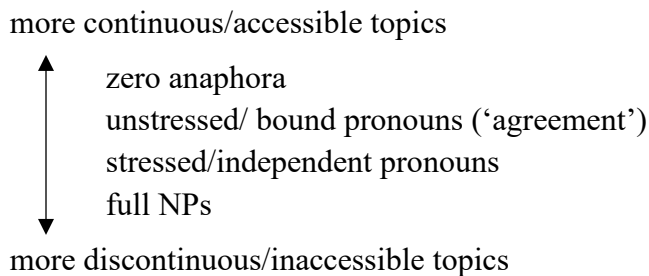
It is important to note that there also exist "priming effects" where the forms speakers use earlier in discourse can affect the forms that occur later (see Bock 1986; Travis 2007; Torres Cacoullos & Travis 2014; Barth & Kapatsinski 2017). This phenomenon may affect data patterns in both experimental and corpus approaches. Additionally, even though general patterns can be shared across different languages (e.g., full NPs tend to be used with new referents while reduced phonological forms are used for non-new referents), many language-specific patterns, such as RE choice relative to clause-level morphosyntactic constructions, may not be general cross-linguistic patterns. One important point to keep in mind is that discourse reference management is co-constructed by the interlocutors for a specific discourse setting in a particular moment in time. Hence, "one cannot just say anything in any situation," but one can say certain things in a particular situation as determined by what is socially appropriate in the context (van Dijk & Kintsh 1983: 7).

Though the preceding brief literature survey certainly suggests that a much fuller study of Isaan reference management awaits, this chapter's investigation of reference management will especially draw upon three oft-cited studies, by Givón (1983), Du Bois (1987; 2003), and Lambrecht (1994). Below I summarize their cross-linguistic proposals regarding the discourse-pragmatic constraints that inform the speaker's choice of REs as well as clause-level morphosyntactic constructions used to handle referent information.

4.1.1 Givón's Topic Continuity framework

Givón (1983) aims to provide a functional and psychological explanation for choices among various REs. He argues that topic continuity (or “availability” as well as “importance”) affects the choice of REs to some extent. As discussed in Chapter 2, his notion of “topic” refers to “participants most crucially involved in the action sequence running through the paragraph” (Givón 1983: 8). Two hypotheses he makes are that i.) a systematic correlation exists between the intended message and the grammatical coding devices, and ii.) what is most continuous and/or accessible requires little coding because “what is continuing is more predictable” and “what is predictable is easier to process” (Givón 1983: 12). His prediction is that new discourse referents (which are the least continuous and least predictable) will be overtly expressed as full noun phrases and that non-new (and more continuous) referents will be expressed as pronouns or zero anaphora. Givón has proposed the following scale of topic continuity with respect to the type of RE:

(148) Givón's (1983: 18) topic-continuity scale with respect to phonological size of REs



Givón also proposes discourse measurements for the degree of difficulty that the interlocutors may experience when identifying a topic (in his sense) in discourse, namely *referential distance* (“look-back”), *potential interference* (“ambiguity”) and *persistence* (“decay”). According to Givón, a shorter “look-back” predicts that discourse entities that are mentioned most recently will more likely be expressed as pronouns or zeros. Speakers’ consideration for potential ambiguity among referents may lead to use of lexical NPs when the target entity is confusable with another entity present at the scene, despite a referent’s continuous mentions in the preceding clauses. Finally, a mental representation or “file” created for a referent may become deactivated (“decay”) overtime due to its inactivity in the discourse. Thus, speakers are predicted to use full NPs for a non-new referent when there is a large gap between the previous mention and its

current mention. Givón operationalizes referential distance and persistence by counting the number of clauses back and forwards, respectively, from a particular clause in which a referent is mentioned. The mentioning of referents at some preceding or following points may be represented by a zero expression provided that the referent is a semantic argument of the predicate of the clause.

One criticism that I have for Givón’s topic continuity framework is its failure to capture how REs may interact with clause-level morphosyntactic constructions and their information packaging properties. As has been shown by studies within the Construction Grammar framework, certain argument slots in argument structure constructions may be biasedly filled by certain types of RE forms (e.g. Goldberg 2006: 165; Hilpert 2014: 6). For instance, in some languages a lexical noun phrase might be used more frequently than expected by chance in the syntactic object position, simply as part of a language-specific transitive clause construction. Also, as we will see in Chapter 5, the subject (i.e., the first NP slot) of verb serializing clauses in Isaan tends to be filled with definite nulls. Raksachat (2022) shows that the object of *ɲaw* ‘take’ in Isaan instrumental SVCs tends to be filled by a lexical NP, compared to objects of *ɲaw* ‘take’ in other SVCs.

4.1.2 *Du Bois’ Preferred Argument Structure framework*

Unlike Givón (1983), Du Bois (1987; 2003) proposes what he calls the “Preferred Argument Structure” hypothesis which does begin to address some issues regarding the relationships among RE form, argument role in simple clauses, and discourse-pragmatic status. This hypothesis predicts that “certain configurations of arguments are systematically *preferred* over other grammatically possible alternatives” (Du Bois 2003: 33 emphasis mine). Evidence for such preference has been found in a number of languages (see Table 6). Regarding the statistical tendencies of co-occurrence between information statuses and certain types of argument expressions, Du Bois (2003: 44) points out that “new (referent) information is not as common as is typically imagined” and “given/accessible arguments are far more common than new ones in spoken discourse, and more evenly distributed.” He argues that while referents may occur as the single argument of an intransitive verb (S), as the most agent-like argument a transitive verb (A), or as the most patient-like argument of a transitive verb (P), speakers tend to avoid introducing new referents in the A role (see Table 6 below).

Following the observed frequencies for new core arguments in different syntactic roles, Du Bois (2003: 34) proposes two major constraints which concern i.) the number of lexical core arguments used in a clause (“avoid more than one new lexical core argument” per clause) and ii.) the syntactic role new core arguments can take (“avoid new A”). Du Bois points out that these are to be taken as soft constraints which can be violated without producing ungrammaticality, although they tend not to be violated in spontaneous language use.

Table 6: New argument roles: Syntactic role of new core arguments (Du Bois 2003: 39)

Role:	A		S		P		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hebrew	6	(6)	40	(43)	47	(51)	93	(100)
Sakapultek	6	(6)	58	(55)	42	(40)	106	(101)
English	0	(0)	15	(21)	57	(79)	72	(100)
Spanish	2	(1)	56	(28)	142	(71)	200	(100)
French	0	(0)	75	(34)	143	(66)	218	(100)

One of my criticisms of Du Bois’ approach concerns the fact that, in some languages, clausal constructions with a single verb, and hence prototypical S, A, and P argument roles, may account for only a small portion of the referents in natural spoken data. As shown in Table 7, Isaan narrative discourse comprises not only clauses with a single verb stem but also clauses that include multiple verb stems, with varying syntactic/semantic relations such as serial verb clauses and/or serial VPs, and complement clauses. Serial verb clauses where the verbs often share an argument, as in (149), makes it hard to say that a referent or argument counts only as S, A, or P.

(149) Example of argument-sharing serial verb clause

	A			P/S			
wa:	ku:	si	k ^h a:	man	taj	káná:	
say	1SG.NO	IRR	kill	3.NO	die	THOUGHT.PRT	
	‘(What if) I killed it, (he thought).’						(Tragedy_oi59)

Other problematic Isaan clause types for S, A, P counting include “non-verbal predicate” clauses which involve copula expressions, clauses without any verb stems, and clauses that involve the verb *mi*: ‘have’ with existential and/or presentational functions (further discussed in §4.3). It is not straightforward how all of these should be considered relative to simple intransitive and transitive clauses that yield prototypical S, A, P roles. From Table 7, note that the single verb clauses only make up about 36.2% of the data; this table represents all clauses (dependent and independent) in the nine narrative texts discussed in §2.4.

Table 7: Clause count from Isaan narrative text sample

Single verb clauses	Multiple verb clauses	Other clauses	Total
474 (36.2%)	598 (45.7%)	236 (18.01%)	1308 (100%)

In addition to argument sharing properties, another challenge concerns whether certain referents (or NPs) in SVCs ought to be considered core arguments or obliques (i.e., analogous to objects of prepositions in English; see Stine (1968) for a discussion regarding Thai). Due to the lack of inflectional morphology and formal case distinctions in Isaan, the task of identifying core arguments in SVCs is not as straightforward as in some other languages. For example, the Isaan verb *p^ha*: ‘lead’ must be combined with another verb stem (e.g., *lom* ‘fall’) to express comitative meaning. Compare (150) with (151). In the latter, *p^ha*: ‘lead’ is followed by an intransitive verb *lom* ‘fall.down’. The subject (A/S argument) of the serial verb construction is shared between the two verbs (i.e., both the boy and the bicycle fell down). The leader can be human like ‘the boy’ in (151a), or non-human, like ‘the bicycle’ in (151b).

(150) Single verb clause *lom* ‘fall.down’

S
cakaja:n **k^han** **nân** ka ləj lom
bicycle CLF.vehicle DIST KA exceed fall.down

‘And so, that bicycle fell down.’

(Pearfilm_sm40)

Because many Isaan verb words like *p^ha* have developed a more grammatical function, yet have not fully grammaticalized into prepositions, it is difficult to say whether the additional participant in a comitative SVC, for instance, constitutes a syntactic core argument of an SVC construction, versus an oblique. While this is a question relevant to the analysis of some SVC constructions, it complicates an application of Du Bois’ approach to Isaan data.

Setting aside the issue of what counts as a “core argument” in SVCs in Isaan, Du Bois’ approach brings into discussion the role that morphosyntactic constructions play in argument selection and argument realization. Indeed, if we restrict our attention to just single lexical-verb constructions, we find a strong tendency for Isaan speakers to avoid using two lexical NPs in transitive verb clauses and to avoid introducing new participants in the A role. Only 32 out of 239 transitive clauses have two overt NP arguments. Table 8 shows observed frequencies for first vs. non-first mentions in each syntactic role with expected frequencies in parentheses. The table includes all RE types: lexical NP, free pronoun, zero anaphora, etc. If we adopt the null hypothesis that referent mentions are randomly distributed, we would expect to encounter more instances of new referents in the A role. However, referents mentioned for the first time in the A role are lower than expected by chance. The results of the collocation analysis suggest that the A role is associated with non-first mentions (add $\chi^2 = 9.03$, log likelihood = 10.8, $p < .01$), while the P role is associated with first mentions ($\chi^2 = 11.78$, log likelihood = $p < .001$). In accordance with Du Bois’ proposal, Isaan speakers indeed exhibit the tendency to avoid introducing new discourse referents in the A role (in single-verb clauses).

Table 8: First vs. non-first mentions in Isaan single verb clauses (all RE types)

	First mentions	Non-first mentions	Total
S	11 (12.2)	224 (222.8)	235
A	4 (12.4)	235 (226.6)	239
P	22 (12.4)	217 (226.6)	239
Total	37	676	713

4.1.3 Lambrecht’s (1994) information structure and sentence form

Lambrecht’s (1994) seminal work addresses another important component in reference management, namely the information structure of a sentence’s proposition. While Givón’s and

Du Bois' approaches focus more on the textual characteristics and the role of morphosyntactic constructions respectively, Lambrecht's analysis is more concerned with how the presumed mental representations of the discourse referents in the interlocutors' minds at the time of the utterance affect the speaker's choice of referring form along with the clausal/sentential construction (and prosody, in some languages) used. Speakers attend to the addressees' current state of mind and evaluate how to send their messages in the way that they judge would be most informative. Thus, Lambrecht's analysis incorporates the discourse and/or situational context in which referent information is transmitted. The discourse context forms the basis for interpreting a proposition's lexicogrammatical structures as pragmatic units of information. These units of information within a proposition hold certain pragmatic statuses and relations to one another. As discussed in Chapter 2, the statuses include presupposition and assertion, which have to do with "the structuring of propositions into portions which a speaker assumes an addressee already knows or does not yet know" (Lambrecht 1994:6). The relations include "topic" and "focus", which for Lambrecht have to do with "the speaker's assessment of the relative predictability vs. unpredictability of the relations between propositions and their elements in given discourse situations (discussed in Chapter 2).

Speakers may be doing a number of communicative tasks in a given discourse situation. They may be predicating about an already established discourse referent, reporting events, or setting a scene for another proposition. The morphosyntactic pattern that corresponds to more than one of these functions is said to be "pragmatically unmarked", meaning that

"Given a pair of allosentences, one member is pragmatically unmarked if it serves two discourse functions while the other member serves only one of them. While the marked member is positively specified for some pragmatic feature, the unmarked member is neutral with respect to this feature." Lambrecht (1994: 17)

A pragmatically unmarked construction has greater "distributional freedom" in a discourse sense and thus greater overall frequency of occurrence relative to a marked one. In contrast, a so-called "specialized" construction will tend to co-occur with a more specific discourse function; it is positively marked for a particular pragmatic feature. For example, in English, the transitive clause construction can report an event, predicate something about a referent, and/or introduce a new referent. In contrast, the presentational construction is marked because it has a more limited functional distribution; speakers use it to introduce a referent into the discourse rather than predicate something about the said referent (Lambrecht 1994: 114). Lambrecht also observes that

non-canonical configurations such as the presentational construction “allow speakers to separate the referring function of noun phrases from the relational role their denotata play as arguments in a proposition.” Following from this, he proposes “a simple pragmatic maxim: Do not introduce a referent and talk about it in the same clause.” (Lambrecht 1994: 184–185).

4.1.4 *This study’s approaches to reference management*

This study incorporates contributions from the three frameworks reviewed above to understanding how the choices of REs in Isaan intersect with clause-level constructions which bear on the discourse-pragmatic properties of narrative participants.

In Isaan, new referents may be introduced into the narrative discourse via many morphosyntactic configurations including what are considered the “basic”, “normal”, or “canonical” simple clause constructions. An example of a transitive clause in (154) shows two new referents, ‘a small boy’ and ‘a bicycle’, in the A and P roles, respectively. Speakers may also introduce new referents as arguments in more marked constructions such as the presentational construction (155), the resumptive pronoun construction (156), or the [NP *ka* predicate] construction (157).

(154) Simple Clause Construction

tɛ:-wa:	bak-nôj-nôj	nuŋ	k^hi:	cakaj:n	
but-COMP	TITLE.MASC-small-small	one	ride	bicycle	
‘But a small boy was riding a bicycle.’					(Pearfilm_oi25)

(155) Presentational Construction with *mi:* ‘have’

ba:t-ni	mi:	?i-na:ŋ	nuŋ	
now	have	TITLE.FEM-lady	one	
‘Once there was a lady.’				(Widow_sm8)

(156) Resumptive Pronoun Construction

samai ta-ki:	t^hiaŋnǎ:_i	maŋ_i	ka	si	bó	mi:	dɔ:k
era	from-before	hut	3.NO	KA	IRR	NEG	have
‘In the past, as for a hut (to rest in while working the fields), I don’t think there was any.’							(Tragedy_oi52)

(157) NP *ka* Predicate Construction

tawen ka k^hum lɛ:w
sun KA go.up already

‘The sun has risen already.’

(Tragedy_oi)

Indeed, speakers have a number of choices of morphosyntactic configurations that can achieve the same communicative goal, yet they may choose certain ones to convey slightly different messages. Given the choices Isaan speakers have, this chapter explores the meanings each construction illustrated in (154) through (157) conveys regarding referent information, and the contexts in which one construction is chosen over another. Does a speaker have a particular referent in mind when using certain referring forms within some construction? Do they mean to set the listeners up to certain expectations, for instance that a referent will be mentioned again later in the story?

Based on the linguistic characteristics of a narrative text, we may deduce information portions in a proposition which the speaker assumes an addressee already knows or does not yet know. Specifically for referents, we may also identify activation status (given/accessible/new), specificity, and identifiability based on the surrounding text. Previous literature has used terms like referent, participant, and topic to refer to the discourse entities expressed by various syntactic forms. Therefore, some terminological clarification is warranted here.

Following Du Bois (1980), I will use the term MENTION to indicate the concept or conceptual entity denoted by all referring forms; it is a pre-theoretical construct that is not intended to have any psychological or linguistic significance but is intended to help gather all the data into groups for explanation (Du Bois 1980: 206). Formal manifestations of mentions include lexical noun phrases, anaphoric classifier or pronominal phrases, and covert expressions (discussed in §4.2).

A mention may have different cognitive or conceptual statuses. The term REFERENTIAL will be used specifically for discourse entities for which a corresponding mental representation or “file” has been established in a specific discourse world. A mention is referential when/if its referent has continuing identity as the same individual or entity in the mental representation of the discourse world. A referential mention can be followed by another RE form referring to the same entity.

In natural discourse, many nominal mentions do not actually refer; these are called NONREFERENTIAL mentions. I assume that no “file” is created for nonreferential mentions in a given discourse world because no individual is set up as existing by such mentions (cf. Du Bois 1980). Nonreferential mentions indicate some attributes or relate a target referent to an abstract concept of a noun (e.g., the word *pear* in *the pear tree* indicates a type of tree, not an existing pear). Syntactic arguments may be nonreferential in certain constructions (e.g., the subject pronoun *it* in *It is raining*). Though it will not be central to our investigation, the information provided by nonreferential mentions can be quite important to the process of constructing rich details of the discourse world.

Two discourse pragmatic features of referents that will be especially relevant in this chapter are SPECIFICITY (a speaker-oriented status) and IDENTIFIABILITY (a hearer-oriented status). Referents are SPECIFIC when it can be shown that the speaker has a particular individual in mind; otherwise, they are NON-SPECIFIC (Du Bois 1980: 224). For example, imagine working at a bookstore and a customer says *I am looking for a book*, as in (158a); it is unclear to the clerk (as addressee) whether the customer has a specific book in mind, or if any book would do. Thus, more information is needed for the clerk to identify which book(s) are to be sold. Alternatively, if the customer says, *I am looking for this book*, as in (159a), then the customer as speaker has a particular book in their mind. The hearer may even expect that the speaker will provide some kind of further information about the book such as the book’s title or the author’s name. In this scenario, it would be infelicitous to ask the customer *What kind of book are you looking for?*

- (158) a. I am looking for a book.
b. What kind of book are you looking for—children’s books, non-fiction, or something else?
- (159) a. I am looking for this book.
b. #What kind of book are you looking for—children’s books, non-fiction, or something else?

A referential mention is IDENTIFIABLE if the speaker assumes the addressee can establish the link between the form and a particular corresponding mental representation in the discourse;

otherwise, it is NON-IDENTIFIABLE. Sometimes, speakers may not overtly mention the discourse entity if its identity is assumed to be already known to the addressee. The contrast between IDENTIFIABLE vs. NON-IDENTIFIABLE is not applicable to non-specific mentions (Du Bois 1980: 217). Both the expressions *a book* in (158a) and *this book* in (159a) are non-identifiable mentions, meaning that the speaker doesn't expect the hearer to know which book they are talking about yet in that context (at least until more information is given). Identifiability is analyzed with respect to the on-going discourse, partly based on what is said afterwards. The use of an anaphoric pronoun, for example, may indicate that the referent is presumed to be IDENTIFIABLE in a non-first mention. Referents' specificity and identifiability are routinely negotiated between the interlocutors in different discourse contexts, but the speaker has "facultative control" over specificity marking (Du Bois 1980: 219).

A PARTICIPANT is a type of referent that is crucially involved in the events and happenings of a discourse. For purposes of this study, I will use the term "participant" to exclusively refer to narrative participants (i.e., those referents set up as existing in the world of a narrative text). This is not to be confused with "speech act participants" who exist in the real world and can be readily mentioned at any point in time during storytelling. Narrative participants can be persons, animals, or inanimate objects. They can vary in terms of importance to the plot, but they must be introduced as existing in the narrative discourse world (thus, they are always referential). Participants have the potential to be re-mentioned later in the story, though this opportunity is not always taken by speakers.

Finally, as discussed in §2.2.3, the term "topic" in its many senses is not always helpful for a uniform analysis across levels of grammar since it is generally the case that the "topic of a sentence" cannot be determined without an analysis of contextual information (van Dijk 1977), and sentences may lack a topic. However, one may be able to deduce from a textual analysis that some participants are in fact selected as a topic in Givón's (1983b: 8) sense for at least a portion of the narrative. Thus, this chapter will engage with the idea that some participants are more topical than others. These participants are often deemed worthy of discussion and/or are important to the plot of the story. This means that topic participants are generally followed by a number of predicate units that assert information about them or which is relevant to them. As a result, the mental file representing topic participants is likely to be rich in detail by the end of the story.

With this background, the rest of the chapter is organized as follows. §4.2 describes REs of discourse referents in Isaan and their associated discourse-pragmatic profiles. §4.3 examines the properties of the existential/presentational construction with respect to reference information. §4.4 discusses the resumptive pronoun construction and the discourse-pragmatic factors that condition its use. Finally, §4.5 presents an analysis of the [NP *ka* Predicate] construction with a focus on single verb predicates.

4.2 Referring expressions (REs) and their discourse profiles in Isaan

Discourse referents can be syntactic arguments of predicates or obliques and may take the form of lexical noun phrases, deictic expressions such as anaphoric classifiers followed by demonstratives, pronouns, or covert expressions (among other possible forms). Choice among the REs is constrained by different cognitive and discourse-pragmatic factors.

The following examples show how any of the forms just mentioned can be used as the S argument of the intransitive verb ‘go’. I translated the third person pronoun in (160c) and the zero in (160d) as ‘he’ to reflect the same message as example (160a-b), but the pronoun *law* and the zero are not grammatically specified for gender, number, nor case (e.g., ‘he/him, she/her, it, they/them.’).

- (160) a. **p^hɔ-jaj** **ni:** paj lɛ:w
 father-big this go already
 ‘This man went.’
- b. **p^hu-ni:** paj lɛ:w
 CLF.HUM-PROX go already
 ‘This one (a person) went.’
- c. **law** paj lɛ:w
 3.FA go already
 ‘He went.’
- d. ∅ paj lɛ:w
 go already
 ‘[He] went.’

4.2.1 Lexical noun phrases

Noun phrases in Isaan can vary in internal density and complexity. Isaan NPs generally follow the basic template in (161). Lexical noun phrases include slots for a noun, followed by potentially multiple modifying phrases (MODP) such as a relative clause or phrases that describe physical characteristics or attributes. Other optional slots include those for a quantifying phrase (QUANP) and a demonstrative (DEM).

(161) NOUN (MODP)ⁿ (QUANP) (DEM)

The following examples show NP constituents within square brackets.

(162) [dek-nôj p^hu-sa:j bak-nuŋ]_{NP} k^hi: [cakaja:n]_{NP} wajwajwaj ma:
 child-small CLF.HUM-male TITLE.MASC-one ride bicycle swiftly come
 ‘A small boy rode a bicycle swiftly this way.’ (Pearfilm_sm28)

(163) [dek-nôj sə:m k^hon nî:]_{NP} ka ləj ʔaw [muak]_{NP} ma: k^hu:n
 child-small three CLF.person PROX KA exceedtake hat come return
 ‘And so, these three children brought the hat back.’ (Pearfilm_sm50)

(164) [bak-dek-nôj p^hu- t^hi: lak mak-maj nân]_{NP} ka ləj
 TITLE.MASC-child-small CLF.HUM- that steal CLF.fruit-wood DIST KA exceed
 ‘That boy who stole the fruits, then, ...’ (Pearfilm_sm52)

(165) [mɛ: p^hu-nî:]_{NP} ka pen [mɔ:tamje:]_{NP} di: bat-ni
 mother CLF.HUM-PROX KA COP midwife PRT now
 ‘Now, this mother was a midwife (you know?).’ (Tragedy_oi27.1)

(166) [ma:k ʔan-nî:]_{NP} ma:k ɲăŋ
 fruit CLF.thing-PROX fruit what
 ‘What is this fruit?’ (Pearfilm_oi1)

The (semantic) head noun in Isaan can stand alone in an NP without any modification. Bare nouns are typically interpreted as singular (unless indicated otherwise in the context). For person reference, Isaan speakers use a system of title words, followed by names, attributes, or kin and

social relations (cf. Enfield 2007a on Lao NPs). Following is a non-exhaustive list comprising title words found in the Spoken Isaan Corpus.

(167) Some title words in Isaan

Form	Gloss	Notes and Examples
<i>ʔi-</i>	TITLE.FEM	Typically used with female entities, e.g., <i>ʔi-mɛ</i> ‘mother’, <i>ʔi-la</i> : ‘young female child’; but can also be used with familiar male entities such as <i>ʔi-pʰɔ:</i> ‘father’ (also used as a vocative term for one’s father).
<i>bak-</i>	TITLE.MASC	Typically has pejorative associations, e.g., <i>bak-dek-nô:j</i> ‘boy,’ <i>bak-ʔan-nân</i> ‘that guy,’ <i>bak-siaŋmian</i> ‘a guy called Siangmiang’
<i>luan-</i>	TITLE.MONK	Associated with religious or royal entities such as <i>luan-pʰɔ:</i> ‘monk’, <i>luan-ta</i> : ‘older monk,’ and <i>naj-luan</i> ‘the king’ (literally ‘in holiness’)

Nominal modification in Isaan involves the use of classifiers. Noun words themselves can function as classifiers when appearing in the particular classifier constructional slot. Classifiers are obligatory in adjective phrases and numeral phrases, but are optional in relative clauses and demonstrative phrases. The classifiers in numeral phrases are syntactically distinctive from other classifier constructions. Notably, classifiers occur after numbers (except for the number *nuŋ* ‘one’, discussed below), while they precede adjectives, relative clauses, and demonstratives.

(168) Constructions that involve classifiers in Isaan

	[CLF ADJ]	[NUM CLF]	[(CLF) REL]	[(CLF) DEM]
	‘small X’	‘three X’	‘the X that you saw’	‘this X’
<i>kʰon</i> ‘person’	kʰon nôjnô:j	să:m kʰon	kʰon tʰi caw hen	kʰon nî:
<i>pʰu-⁹</i> ‘CLF.HUM’	pʰu-nôjnô:j	*să:m pʰu	pʰu- tʰi caw hen	pʰu-nî:
<i>to:</i> ‘CLF.BODY’	to: nôjnô:j	să:m to:	to: tʰi caw hen	to: nî:
<i>baj</i> ‘CLF.LEAF’	baj nôjnô:j	să:m baj	baj tʰi caw hen	baj nî:

⁹ The classifier for human *pʰu-* is represented with a hyphen here to show that it is a bound morpheme. It may be considered a clitic because its pronunciation is unstressed (with no tone) and phonologically bound to the following word or phrase (cf. Payne 2006: 18).

Person referents co-occur with two distinct classifiers, namely *p^hu-* ‘CLF.HUM’ and *k^hon* which as a noun means ‘person.’ (168) illustrates that *p^hu-* cannot be used in the numeral classifier construction; instead *k^hon* is used (e.g., *dek-nô:j sǎ:m k^hon* ‘three children’; cf. (163)). Other classifiers (*to:* ‘CLF.BODY’ for animals, shirts, etc.) maintain the same form across different types of modification.¹⁰

Relative clauses may contain both a classifier after the head noun and the relativizer *t^hi:*, as seen in (169). However, a NP containing a relative clause may alternatively lack the overt relativizer *t^hi:* ‘that’, as in (170); or they may lack both a classifier and a relativizer, as in (171). As a result, relative clauses sometimes surface as just a verb phrase following a head noun, as in (171). In this situation, the NP resembles a full sentence with a subject-predicate structure. In both (170) and (171), the speakers have already established a mental representation for the referent *p^hɔ-jaj* ‘the guy’ in the narrative discourse world. The NPs containing relative clauses in (169), (170) and (171) represent one of the strategies for referring back to an identifiable, specific narrative participant, where the relative clause contains already-known information.

- (169) [bak-dek-nô:j [p^hu- t^hi: lak ma:k-maj]_{REL} nân]_{NP}
 TITLE.MASC-child-small CLF.HUM- that steal CLF.fruit-wood DIST
- ka ləj ʔaw ma:k-maj haj Ø ma: bɛŋ kan
 KA exceed take CLF.fruit-wood give come share RECIP
- ‘That boy who had stolen the fruits gave some fruits [for them] to share with one another.’
 (Pearfilm_sm52)

- (170) [p^hɔ-jaj [p^hu- pen caok^hɔŋ suan]_{REL}]_{NP} ka kao hua
 father-big CLF.HUM- COP owner field KA scratch head
- i. ‘The orchard-owner guy scratched his head.’
 ii. ‘The guy who is the owner of the fruit orchard scratched his head.’ (Pearfilm_yt46)

- (171) [p^hɔ-jaj [k^hu:n ton-maj ju:]_{REL}]_{NP} ka bɔ́ daj soncaj de:
 father-big go.up CLF.tree-wood CONT KA NEG gain interested PRT
- i. ‘The climbing-tree guy did not pay any attention.’
 ii. ‘The man who was up in the tree did not pay any attention.’ (Pearfilm_sm27.2)

¹⁰ For detailed discussion of nominal classification in Lao, see Enfield (2007b Ch.7)

Note that relative clauses can come before or after quantifier and demonstrative phrases; any of the orders in (172) is grammatical. (Depending on the position, there are potential semantic or information structure distinctions, but such an investigation is beyond the scope of this study.) In (172), multi-word phrases within the NP are each bracketed for clarity.

(172) NP with relative clause and quantifier phrase¹¹

- a. mɛ:w nɔ̃j [sǎ:m to:]_{QUANP} [t^hi cǎw hen]_{REL} nî:
 cat small three CLF.BODY that 2SG.FA see PROX
 ‘these three small cats that you saw’
- b. mɛ:w nɔ̃j [sǎ:m to:]_{QUANP} nî: [t^hi cǎw hě̃n]_{REL}
 cat small three CLF.BODY PROX that 2SG.FA see
 ‘these three small cats that you saw’
- c. mɛ:w nɔ̃j [t^hi caw hen]_{REL} [sǎ:m to:]_{QUANP} nî:
 cat small that 2SG.FA see three CLF.BODY PROX
 ‘these three small cats that you saw’

In an NP that contains a quantifier phrase, the (semantic) head noun may be omitted when its mental representation has been previously established. Compare the bracketed NPs in (173) and (174).

- (173) ∅ ma: hen / ?a: / [kɛj bak-ɛpən sɔ:ŋ kəŋ]_{NP}
 come see uh basket CLF.FRUIT-apple two basket
 ‘[The boy] came and saw, uh, two baskets of apples.’ (Pearfilm_yt17)

¹¹ Isaan speakers tend not to use classifiers repeatedly if one has already been used. For these cases, if a classifier is used in the quantifier phrase, then it is not used in the relative clause.

(174) ∅ wa: mɛ:n ∅ si ʔaw [∅ **nuaj** **diaw**
 say COP IRR take CLF.round only.one

sɔŋ **nuaj**]_{NP} nan mɛ:
 two CLF.round TPC PRT

‘[I] thought [he] would take only one [fruit] or two.’

Lit. ‘[I] thought [he] would take only one or two round things, you know?’

(Pearfilm_sw31)

As noted above, bare nouns are normally interpreted as singular unless otherwise indicated in the discourse context. Example (175) is technically ambiguous as to how many thieves were present at the scene, but a few clauses later in the story, the speaker makes it clear that there was more than one thief via the reciprocal pronoun *kan* ‘each other’; this is shown in (176).

(175) ba:t-ni mi: co:n
 now have thief

i. ‘Now, there was a thief.’

ii. ‘Now, there were some thieves.’

(YaKinPing_sm93)

(176) ba:t-ni co:n man bɛ:ŋ kan bɔ́ tu:k
 now thief 3.NO divide RECIP NEG touch

‘Now, the thieves, they cannot decide how to divide (the gold) amongst themselves’

(YaKinPing_sm95)

There are cases where speakers overtly specify the number of a singular referent as *nuŋ* ‘one.’ In the context of (177), the speaker is describing the characteristics of a two-colored type of soil. In (177b-c), *nuŋ* is clearly serving to enumerate ‘one’. The NPs are bracketed for clarity.

(177) a. man pen [**din** **sɔ:ŋ** **sɿ:**]_{NP}
 3.NO COP soil two color

‘It is two-colored soil.’

b. [**din** **sɿ:** **nuŋ**]_{NP} pen sɿ: dɛ:ŋ
 soil color one COP color red

‘One color of the soil is red.’

- c. [sǐ: nuŋ]_{NP} man pen sǐ: k^hǎ:w
color one 3.NO COP color white
‘Another color, it is white.’
- d. man p^hasǒm kan
3.NO mix RECIPIENT
‘They (the colors) are mixed together.’ (Genesis_kb40-41)

The number ‘one’ exhibits a syntactic pattern that differs from all other numerals. The word *nuŋ* ‘one’ appears after its classifier/head noun while other numerals must occur before their classifiers or head nouns (if any). Furthermore, while some instances of *nuŋ* ‘one’ are accompanied by a classifier, as in (178) and (179), other instances occur without a classifier, as in (180).

- (178) mi: [p^hu-saj k^hon nuŋ]_{NP} / lu:pla:ŋ t^huam-t^huam
have CLF.HUM-male CLF.person one appearance chubby-chubby
‘There was a guy, (he’s) rather chubby.’ (Pearfilm_sw2-3)
- (179) ∅ paj su: [lwa-samp^hao ?an nuŋ]_{NP}
go buy boat-junk.boat CLF.THING one
‘[He] went and bought a junk boat (a type of Chinese sailing ship).’ (Widow_sm80.1)
- (180) [bak-nǒj-nǒj nuŋ]_{NP} k^hi: cakaja:n
TITLE.MASC-small-small one ride bicycle
‘A small boy rides a bicycle’ (Pearfilm_oi25.1)

Isaan speakers can also use the word *nuŋ* ‘one’ with entities that are semantically plural. This shows that some function of *nuŋ* ‘one’ has developed into something other than a numeral. Example (181), taken from a Pear Story, illustrates such an instance whereby the speaker first mentions the Three Boys.

- (181) te:wa: ba:t-ni: [sǎ:m k^hon nuŋ]_{NP} cak ma: ta sǎj
 but-COMP now three CLF.person one not.know come from where
 ‘But now, a (group of) three people came from I don’t know where.’¹² (Pearfilm_oi42)

These examples suggest that the word *nuŋ* ‘one’ does not always serve to quantify or specify a semantic singularity, but rather the pragmatic category of specificity and/or importance (Du Bois 1980: 224; Givón 1983b: 14; Lambrecht 1994: 77–78). We shall return to this issue and present evidence for this claim in §4.3.1.

4.2.2 *Deictic classifier expressions and pronominals*

Unlike proper nouns such as names and titles, where the identity of the referent does not usually shift by a change in context, the interpretation of personal pronouns like *I* vs. *you* and phrasal expressions like *that one* depends entirely on contextual information. This section examines the use of certain words and phrases whose referential interpretation depends crucially on contextual information. In particular, we focus on deictic classifier expressions and prototypical or “true” pronouns, both of which are essential for referent tracking in Isaan discourse.

Deictic classifier expressions in Isaan can be used anaphorically and cataphorically. They can also be used to point out something in the immediate extra-textual environment, e.g., *nuaj nan* ‘that round thing’, where the interpretation does not involve an anaphoric or cataphoric relationship. In this work, “anaphoric classifier” refers to an expression that makes use of a classifier without a semantic or main head noun; its referential interpretation relies on information from the preceding discourse. (182) and (183) show prototypical examples. In (182), the speaker refers to an already established narrative participant. Prior to (183), the speaker comments on the fact that the participants in the Pear Story did not greet each other.

- (182) p^hu-nân tu:n-k^huŋ
 CLF.HUM-DIST wake-go.up
 ‘That one (a person) woke up.’ (Widow_sm184)

¹² The free English translation ‘group of’ included here is not really part of the Isaan sentence’s meaning. Different expressions for ‘group’ include *mu:* ‘group, friend’ and *p^huak* ‘collective’; cf. Table 9.

intimacy, assertiveness, or downright anger” (Uckaradejdumrong 2016: 9). The forms in angle brackets are borrowed from Thai.

Table 9: Isaan personal pronouns (non-exhaustive list)

Number		1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person	
SINGULAR	non-restraint (NO)	<i>ku:</i>	<i>muŋ</i>		
	familiar (FA)	<i>k^hɔj</i>	<i>caw</i>		
	polite (PO)		<i>to:</i>		
	formal (FO)	<i>c^han~san</i> (FEM.)	< <i>k^hun</i> >		
		<i>p^hɔm</i> (MASC.)	< <i>t^han</i> >		
PLURAL	non-restraint		<i>sǔ:</i>		
	familiar	<i>mu-haw</i> ~	<i>mu-caw</i> ~		
		<i>sum-haw</i> (INCL.)	<i>sum-caw</i>		
		<i>mu-k^hɔj</i> (EXCL.)			
	polite			<i>k^hacaw</i>	
	formal		<i>p^huak-t^han</i>		
UNSPECIFIED	non-restraint			<i>man</i>	
FOR	familiar	<i>haw</i>		<i>law</i>	
NUMBER	polite			<i>p^hən</i>	
	formal			<i>k^hǎw</i>	

The singular pronoun forms correspond pretty well with what Enfield (2007a: 77 Table 10) presents for Lao, but some of the plurals are phonologically different (e.g., Lao *cu-haw* vs. Isaan *mu-haw* or *sum-haw* for the inclusive ‘we’ form). There are also pronouns used for monks or royalty which are not shown in Table 9, e.g., *ɔatama:* is a first-person pronoun Buddhist monks use to refer to themselves when speaking to commoners; *jo:m* is the term monks use to address the commoners; and *p^haɔoŋ* can refer to either a second or third person who is a member of the royalty.

Special attention is given here to the set of pronouns with unspecified number because these occur most frequently compared to other pronouns. Table 10 shows the list of pronouns as well as their frequency in the Spoken Isaan Corpus. The pronouns bolded in Table 10 present a challenge for referential interpretation, specifically in identifying the entity or entities to which the speaker intended to refer. I highlight a few issues here. Further discussion will be in §4.4.

Table 10: Most frequent pronouns in the Spoken Isaan Corpus

Form		Count	Form		Count
<i>man</i>	3.NO	482	<i>k^hacaw</i>	1PL.PO	80
<i>p^hən</i>	3.PO	298	<i>caw</i>	2SG.FA	62
<i>haw</i>	1.FA	245	<i>k^hə:j</i>	1SG.FA	38
<i>k^haw</i>	3.FO	123	<i>p^hǝm</i>	1SG.MASC	28
<i>law</i>	3.FA	102	<i>c^han ~ san</i>	1SG.FEM	22

The first-person pronoun *haw* can be interpreted as singular ‘I’ or plural ‘we.’ It is typically used with friends, family, or those within the speaker’s inner circles, but the use can be extended to include a larger social circle indicating solidarity within the group (e.g., *ba:n haw* means ‘our/my house,’ ‘our/my village,’ or ‘our people’). Example (187) is from a story in which a monk spoke to his novice who is within the monk’s inner circle. Example (188) is from when two strangers found themselves in the same difficult situation.

- (187) **haw** si paj c^han k^haw naj ba:n də:
 1.FA IRR go eat rice in house PRT
 ‘I will go have a meal in the village.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm5)

- (188) **haw** si het caŋdǎj la wa-san
 1.FA IRR make how PRT say-thus
 ‘What are we going to do? (They asked each other).’ (Widow_sm191)

The number value is also unspecified for the non-restraint pronoun *man*, which can refer to human (189) or non-human things (190). Accordingly, the gloss for *man* is 3.NO (i.e., unspecified for number) and corresponds to English *he/she/they/it* in the subject position and *him/her/them/it* in the object position. The pronoun *man* carries a pejorative sense when referring to humans.

- (189) **man** mun nɔ? / dek-nɔ:j mu-nân
 3.NO naughty AGREE.PRT child-small group-DIST
 ‘They are naughty, those children.’ (Pearfilm_yt23)

(190) nok-k^haw ni wela: **man** ma: kin jia ni
 bird-dove TPC time 3.NO come eat prey TPC
 ‘Dove(s), when they are/ it is hunting...’ (Tragedy_sm80.2)

The other third person pronouns, *p^hən*, *k^haw*, and *law*, can only refer to humans. For *p^hən* 3.PO, the pronoun can refer to specific (191) or non-specific (192) individuals.

(191) **p^hən** ka ju: nam kan sɔ:ŋ k^hon ʔomlom-ʔomlom ma:
 3.PO KA be.at with RECIP two CLF.person bundled-bundled come
 ‘They lived there together peacefully, just the two of them.’ (Tragedy_sm16.1)

(192) **p^hən** wa: man pen la:ŋ-la:j
 3.PO say 3.NO COP omen-bad
 ‘They say it is a bad omen.’ (Tragedy_sm26)

The pronoun *k^haw* 3.FO can refer to specific or non-specific humans that are socially or relationally distant from the speaker. For example, *k^haw* refers to the government (193a-b), and to some non-specific person who is not related to the participant in the story (194b).

(193) a. ʔɔ:j / **k^haw** pakan la:k^ha: de:
 sugarcane 3.FO insure price PRT
 ‘As for sugarcanes, they guarantee the price.’
 b. rat^haba:n **k^haw** pakan lej de:
 government 3.FO insure exceed PRT
 ‘The government, they set price control (for sugarcanes).’ (Sompong_18.2-3)

(194) a. Ø pen mə:tamje:
 COP midwife
 ‘[She] was a midwife.’
 b. Ø paj ʔaw **k^haw** ʔɔ:k-lu:k
 go take 3.FO exit-child
 ‘[She] went to help someone give birth.’ (Tragedy_oi34)

The third person pronoun *law*, glossed as 3FA, is used for socially familiar referents. This means that speakers can use *law* to refer to someone with a familial or a personal connection to themselves (195). Note that it is odd to use *law* to refer to the government (196), but it is perfectly acceptable to use *law* for the prime minister (197). I have not found any case in the current corpus where *law* refers to non-specific individuals.

(195) ni: ʔi-pʰɔ: ʔi-mɛ: **law** si daj bun
this TITLE.FEM-father TITLE.FEM-mother 3.FA IRR gain merit
'See here, (your) parents, they will receive merits...' (Sompong_16.2)

(196) #ratʰabam **law** pakan lej de:
government 3.FA insure exceed PRT.
'The government, they set price control (for sugarcanes).'

(197) na:jok / we:la **law** ɲa:ŋ
PM when 3.FA walk
'The prime minister when he walks...' (Sompong_33.5)

In narrative contexts, an established participant in a story can be referred to as *law*. In (198b), the speaker uses *law* to refer back to the participant *pʰɔ:-ɲaj* lit. 'big father', who is assumed to be already familiar to the listeners by this point in the story.

(198) Excerpt from a Pear Story

a. pʰɔ:-ɲaj kʰuun ton-maj ju: ka bɔ: daj soncaj de:
father-big go.up CLF.tree-wood CONT KA NEG gain interested PRT
'The man who was climbing the tree did not pay attention.'

b. **law** ka kep ma:k-maj kʰɔŋ **law** səj
3.FA KA collect CLF.fruit-wood of 3.FA be.still
'He continued to collect those fruits of his without paying attention.'

(Pearfilm_sm27)

Isaan pronouns can occur with demonstratives, creating pronominal phrases. The use of such a phrase is pragmatically marked and is very rare in the Spoken Isaan Corpus (only five examples

occur, all from a single speaker). It is possible that the speaker uses the construction to call special attention to a certain referent. These examples are found in highly contrastive contexts. For example, (199) is used when the referent signs up for a quest along with many other people—an announcement of his willingness to compete. Similarly, (200) is part of a dialogue from the same story. The emphasis is represented by italics in the free translation.

(199) **p^hom** **ni:** si sa:ma:t paj teŋ Ø haj daj
 1SG.MASC this IRR be.able go marry give gain
 ‘I will be able to marry [her] successfully.’ (Widow_sm76)

(200) ʔoj san bɔ: ɲɔ:m de: wa:san **p^hən** **p^hu-ni:**
 oi 1SG.FEM NEG consent PRT say-thus 3.PO CLF.HUM-PROX
 “‘Oi, I refuse to accept this’ said *this one* over here.’ (Widow_sm190)

Finally, to complete this survey of deictic and pronominal forms, kinship terms and proper names can be used as pro-forms for person referents. This pronominal usage of what double as lexical nouns is also very common in Lao and Thai (see Enfield 2007b for Lao; Uckaradejdumrong 2016 for Thai). Example (201) shows a dialogue between a son and his mother. The term *ʔi-mɛ* ‘mother’ is vocative in (201a) because the son is asking a question, but the word *mɛ:* ‘mother’ is pronominal in (201b) as the speaker uses it to refer to herself. When the son is referring to himself, he uses the word *lu:k* ‘kid’ (202) or his name *Tong* (203).

(201) a. caw k^hu ma: sauŋ tɛ: ʔi-mɛ:
 2SG.FA be.like come be.late truly TITLE.FEM-mother
 ‘Why did you come so late, mother?’

b. **mɛ:** ka paj wat
 mother KA go temple
 ‘I (lit: mother) went to the temple.’ (Tragedy_sm55)
 (Note: the mother is speaking referring to herself)

(202) *caw saŋ lu:k bɔʔ*
 2SG.FA hate kid Q.PRT
 ‘You hate me (lit: kid), don’t you?’ (Tragedy_sm52)
 (Note: the son is speaking to his mother using ‘kid’ to refer to himself)

(203) *tʰɔ:ŋ ʔim le:w*
 Tong be.full already
 ‘I am full.’ (Tragedy_sm73)
 (Note: the son is speaking to his mother using his name to refer to himself)

To summarize, the Isaan pronominal system comprises a large number of forms which expresses features of socio-pragmatic relations between the interlocutors. Several of the personal pronouns are not semantically specified for number values. For example, the pronoun *haw* can be used to refer to the speaker ‘I’ or the speaker plus someone else ‘we.’ The third person forms *man*, *kʰǎw* and *pʰən* can be used for either singular or plural, specific or non-specific referents. Names, kinship terms, and deictic classifier expressions are extensively used as pronominals in spoken discourse. Therefore, identifying which individual these forms refer to often requires an in-depth analysis of discourse situations.

4.2.3 Covert expressions

Covert expressions are referential expressions which have no phonological form. These are also known as zero expressions. I recognize two types of zero forms in Isaan, namely “definite null” and “indefinite null” in the sense of Fillmore & Kay (1993). Definite null is a type of zero expression whose interpretation is specific-identifiable; that is, speakers have in mind a particular discourse referent that the zero refers to and assume that the hearer also can identify the specific referent. For Isaan, an insertion test (e.g., inserting *law* 3.FA) can overtly reveal whether there is a specific-identifiable (“definite”) discourse referent to which the definite null corresponds.

(204) Example of definite null

a. *kʰeŋ sɔ:ŋ Ø ka kʰu:n paj ʔi:k*
 basket two KA go.up go more
 ‘As for the second basket, [he] went up again.’ (Pearfilm_sm17.2)

- b. k^hej sɔ:ŋ law ka k^hu:n paj ʔi:k
 basket two 3.FA KA go.up go more
 ‘As for the second basket, he/she (e.g., the farmer) went up again.’ (self-elicited)

Isaan definite nulls can refer to any person. In the context of (205), the speaker is commenting on the Pear Story scene where the Goat Guy passed the Farmer and neither greeted the other. The zero in (205a) refers to the narrative participants. In (205b), the zero refers back to the first-person familiar pronoun *haw*. The questions in (205c) and the request in (205d) are what the Goat Guy should have said to the Farmer; these zeros are understood as referring to a second person and a first person, respectively. Finally, the zero in (205e) refers to the speaker plus the addressee; it is perfectly acceptable to use the pronoun *haw* instead because the referent is the same entity as in (205b).

(205) Excerpt from a Pear Story with multiple definite nulls

- a. Ø bɔ: t^ha:m kan de:
 NEG ask RECIPIENT PRT
 ‘[They] didn’t even greet each other.’
- b. k^han mɛ:n t^hammada haw_i ni Ø_i si wa:
 if COP ordinary 1.FA TPC IRR say
 ‘If it was us typically, [we] would say...’
- c. ʔə: Ø het ɲəŋ Ø k^hu:n ʔi:ŋəŋ Ø ʔaw ʔi:ŋəŋ
 hey make what go.up what take what
 ‘‘Hey, what are [you] doing? What are [you] going up for? What are [you] taking?’’
- d. haj Ø nam nɛ: caŋsi: nɔʔ
 give with a little like.this AGREE.PRT
 ‘‘Give [me] some’’, like this, right?’
- e. Ø tɔŋ k^hɔ: wa: caŋsi:
 must beg that like.this
 ‘[We] must ask like this’ (Pearfilm_oi22)

The presentational construction in Isaan involves the verb *mi:* ‘have’ in the initial position of a clause without any subject argument preceding it. As part of the presentational construction, the verb *mi:* may take a nominal or a clausal argument after it, in what would be the “object” position for a lexical verb. The same pattern is found in Lao, and the presentational construction has been said to be “a standard way to introduce a new referential argument into discourse” (Enfield 2007a: 158). For Isaan, adverbial-time words such as *ba:t-ni* ‘now’ and *do:n-tə:p* ‘long time, after a while’ generally occur but are not a crucial component of the construction. I propose the template in (211) for the presentational construction, which accounts for the data in (212) – (215), all of which illustrate the introduction of a brand-new referent.

(211) Presentational Construction with *mi:* ‘have’

Form: (adverb) *mi:* [NP (VP)]

Referent Function: introduce new and *potentially important* referent into the discourse.

Discourse context: “staging” the scene rather than chronologically “advancing” the story line.

(212) *ba:t-ni* *mi:* [*co:n*]_{NP}
 now have thief

i. ‘Now, there was a thief.’

ii. ‘Now, there were some thieves.’

(YaKinPing_sm93)

(213) *tə:-wa:* *mi:* [*luk-saj* *k^hon* *nuŋ*]_{NP}
 but have child-male CLF.person one

‘but there was a son’

(Tragedy_oi5)

(214) *ba:t-ni* *mi:* [*p^ha-ʔo:lot_i* *k^hɔ:ŋ* *kasat* *muaŋ* *nuŋ*]
 now have royal-son of king city one

suŋ \emptyset_i *pen* *k^hon* *so:t* *want^hɔ?*]_{NP}
 RELVZ COP person single PRT.EXPLAIN

‘Now, there was a son of a king of another city (i.e., a prince), who was a bachelor.’

(Widow_sm49)

- (215) *mi:* [[luk-kampa: kap me:]_{NP} (ju: nam kan so:ŋ k^hon)_{VP}]
 have kid-orphan with mother stay with RECIP two CLF.person
 ‘There was an orphan and his mother living together just the two of them.’(Tragedy_sm7)

In the nine narrative texts examined, the presentational construction with *mi:* occurred 24 times, and the post-*mi:* NP in 18 of these 24 instances introduces one or more brand-new participants into the story. Note that speakers may use the presentational construction to present two new participants into a story, as we see in (214) where ‘prince’ and ‘king’ have a particular relationship; but these two participants can be individuated in later mentions. In total, 21 new referents are introduced as overt NPs via the presentational construction.

As we know from §4.1.2, introducing new referents as core arguments is quite rare in discourse; most arguments of single verb clauses actually constitute non-first mentions, which are presumed to correlate to the cognitive status of given information (see also Table 8). However, most instances of the presentational construction present first mentions which are presumed to correlate to the cognitive status of brand-new information. Thus, this supports the hypothesis that the presentational construction is associated with a specialized function, namely establishing a new referent as existing (or “opening a file for a new referent”) in the discourse model.

Table 12 compares NPs in the presentational construction and the single verb clause construction relative to their use for introducing new referents into the narrative texts. The new referents were expressed as overt NP arguments of the presentational construction extremely more frequently than expected by chance ($\chi^2 = 163.85$, log likelihood = 73.29, $p < .00001$). Note that this data accounts for 43% of all first mentions in the narrative text sample (N = 126). Other first mentions occur in multi-verb constructions but are not reflected in Table 12.

Table 12: Distribution of new vs. non-new arguments in the presentational construction and the single verb clause

	New	Non-new	Total
Presentational	18 (1.8)	6 (22.2)	24
Single verb clause (All roles)	37 (53.2)	676 (659.8)	713
Total	55	682	737

The information packaged in the presentational construction need not merely involve communicating that a referent is new and entering the scene. In fact, speakers sometimes also use the presentational construction to elaborate what the participant was doing when they first appeared in the discourse world. In this way, the speaker also introduces a new, non-presupposed event. In this situation, the NP is immediately followed by a VP without any intervening pause. Examples in (216) – (219) illustrate the introduction of a brand-new participant as well as information regarding what they were doing when they entered the narrative world.

- (216) do:ntə:p mi: [[dek-nôj p^hu-sa:j bak-nuŋ]_{NP}
 long.time have child-small CLF.HUM-male TITLE.MASC-one

 (k^hi: cakaja:n wajwajwaj ma:)_{VP}
 ride bicycle swiftly come
 ‘After a while, there was a small boy riding a bicycle swiftly this way.’
(Pearfilm_sm28)

- (217) ka mi: [[dek-nôj]_{NP} (ɲa:ŋ p^ha:n ma:)_{VP}
 KA have child-small walk pass come
 ‘There were some children passing by on foot.’
(Pearfilm_sm42)

- (218) mi: [[bak-nuŋ]_{NP} (cu:ŋ be: daŋ ʔɛʔ-ʔɛʔ-ʔɛʔ pa:n ma:)_{VP}
 have TITLE.MASC-one pull geep be.loud bah-bah-bah pass come
 ‘There was a man pulling a geep making bah-bah-bah noise.’
(Pearfilm_oi19)

- (219) kaŋ-nuŋ mi: [[k^hon]_{NP} (ma: mon Ø)_{VP}
 time-one have person come invite
 ‘One time, someone came/had come to invite [the monk]’ (Monk and His Novice_sm3)

The presentational construction can also be used to set a new temporal frame of reference for major events of the story. In the context in which (220) was used, the referent ‘son’ and the idea of farming have already been mentioned prior to the time of the utterance. The sentence itself does not present a new participant performing brand-new actions. Rather, (220) asserts that it is a new day.

- (220) mi: mur:-nuŋ lu:k-sa:j paj t^haj nǎ:
 have day-one kid-male go plow rice.paddy
 ‘There came a day (when) the son went to plow the field.’ (Tragedy_oi27.2)

4.3.2 Formal properties of the presentational construction

The presentational construction inherits properties from a more general construction which also involves the verb *mi*: ‘have,’ namely the existential construction. Functionally, the existential construction asserts the (non)existence of an entity or concept within the world of narrative discourse, while the presentational construction is related to establishing a unique referent as an important participant in a story (see further discussion in §4.3.3 and §4.3.4). Formally, the existential construction may take a subject, while the presentational construction lacks an overt (pre-verb) subject. The overt subject of the existential construction (if any) does not refer (i.e., it is like a dummy ‘it’). Also, the existential construction may occur with or without negation, while the presentational construction is always positive. Some variations of the existential construction are presented in (221) – (223).

- (221) samai kən mi: kabɔ:ŋ want^hɔ?
 era before have torch PRT.EXPLAIN
 ‘In the past, there were torches.’
 More literally, ‘The past had torches.’ (Monk and His Novice_sm22)

- (222) le:w man si mi: bandaj k^hu:n t^ha:ŋ t^həŋ
 already3.NO IRR have stairs go.up way above
 ‘And there are stairs leading up to the second floor.’ (Widow_sm27)

- (223) si bɔ́ mi: lo:ŋba:n ʔɔ:k
 IRR NEG have hospital exit
 ‘There were no hospitals for child-birthing.’ (Tragedy_oi15)

The argument of the Isaan presentational construction tends to be syntactically more complex than that of the existential construction. There are reasons to believe that the NP of the presentational construction forms a constituent with any immediately following VP, rather like a reduced relative clause, and that the VP is not an independent clause with a zero anaphoric

subject. In support of this structural analysis of the presentational construction, I will show that the VP may not take the morpheme *ka*, and that the VP may not be moved outside of the main clause headed by *mi*: ‘have’; instead, an [NP (VP)] unit after *mi*: ‘have’ must be moved all together as one constituent. The only known situation where the [NP (VP)] unit can be separated by something is in (220) above where *ka* can be grammatically inserted after the referent ‘son’. However, there is a slight semantic change to the original sentence if *ka* is inserted; the additional meaning that arises is highlighted in italics in the free translation of (224).

- (224) *mi*: *muu:-nuuŋ* *lu:k-sa:j* ***ka*** *paj* *t^haj* *nǎ:*
 have day-one kid-male KA go plow rice.paddy
 ‘There came a day (when) the son went to plow the field *too/also*.’

In all other cases of the Isaan presentational construction with both an NP and a VP, the morpheme *ka* cannot occur between the NP and the following VP. An ungrammatical example is shown in (225).

- (225) **mi*: [*bak-nuuŋ*]_{NP} ***ka*** [*cu:ŋ be: daŋ* *?εʔ-?εʔ-?εʔ* *p^ha:n ma:]*_{VP}
 have TITLE.MASC-one KA pull geep be.loud bah pass come
 ‘There was a man pulling a geep making bah-bah-bah noise.’ (cf. example (218)).

In many other independent clause constructions, *ka* regularly occurs after the subject and before the predicate. So, the fact that *ka* cannot occur in (225) may suggest that the syntactic sequence NP VP in the presentational construction does not constitute an independent clause (though this does not rule out the possibility that the VP might be a clause with a definite null subject).

This leads us to examine where *ka* naturally occurs when the presentational construction is used. During storytelling, Isaan speakers normally would place *ka* (if it occurs) immediately before *mi*: ‘have’ in the presentational construction. Since the presentational construction lacks a structural subject, this shows that overall *ka* occurs before the predicate of a construction and not strictly after the subject (cf. §3.7). Furthermore, *ka* co-occurs with the presentational in the middle of the story. In (226a), the speaker describes the last thing an established participant did before a new participant enters the scene. In (226b), the speaker uses *ka* before the presentational construction. Even though *ka* is optional in (226b), its presence contributes to a sequential

subject position in the main clause. In (229), the relative clause (bracketed) in the right position is modifying the head noun *muak* ‘hat’ because the verb *hia* ‘fall’ subcategorizes for non-human objects.

(228) [t^{hi} Ø_i daj lə:w]_{REL} / man_i ka t^{hi}:p paj
 that gain already 3.NO KA kick go
 ‘[The one] who has gotten (the fruits), he pedaled away.’ (Pearfilm_oi31)

(229) muak si pen k^hɔŋ mə:-nî: la /
 hat IRR COP thing guy-PROX PRT
 [t^{hi} man hia ni la]_{REL}
 that 3.NO fall this PRT
 ‘The hat might have belonged to this boy, [the hat] that fell’ (Pearfilm_sm46)

In contrast, the (optional) VP unit of the presentational construction cannot be moved to the left position. Instead, the entire [NP (VP)] must be moved all together. Example (230a) shows the original form of the sentence when the speaker introduced a new participant (i.e., the Three Boys in the Pear Story). When only the VP is fronted, as in (230b), the result is ungrammatical. Example (230c), though is grammatically well-formed, is pragmatically awkward in the original context.

(230) a. ka mi: [dek-nô:j]_{NP} [ɲa:ŋ p^ha:n ma:]_{VP}
 KA have child-small walk pass come
 ‘There were some children passing by on foot.’ (Pearfilm_sm42)

b. *[ɲa:ŋ p^ha:n ma:]_{VP} ka mi: [dek-nô:j]_{NP}
 walk pass come KA have child-small
 ‘Passing by on foot were some children.’

c. [dek-nô:j]_{NP} [ɲa:ŋ p^ha:n ma:]_{VP} ka mi:
 child-small walk pass come KA have
 ‘Children passing by on foot, there are some.’ (self-elicited)

Given all the preceding, for the purposes of this study, the [NP (VP)] unit following the verb *mi:* ‘have’ is analyzed as comprising a single clausal argument of the presentational/existential construction. The clausal argument itself may include one or multiple verb words. This analysis is supported by the presentational instance in (231a). All the clauses in (231) are continuous lines from a single Pear Story. In addition to the presentational in (231a), a negative existential is in (231c); both have a clausal argument.

- (231) a. ka mi: p^hu-sa:j ?aj-nuŋ / cu:ŋ p^hε? ma:
 KA have CLF.HUM-male older.brother-one pull sheep come
 ‘Then, there was a man pulling a sheep this way.’
- b. ∅ cu:ŋ ∅ ma: laka p^ha:n paj
 pull come and.then pass.through go
 ‘[He] pulls [it] this way and then went that way.’
- c. bɔ: mi: ɲǎŋ kə:t k^huŋ
 NEG have what born go.up
 ‘There’s nothing happened.’ (Pearfilm_sw20-22)

In short, the presentational construction inherits properties from the more general existential construction; both involve the verb *mi:* ‘have’ as part of their constructional templates. However, the presentational lacks a structural subject and never occurs with the negation marker. The argument of the presentational construction may include just an NP or be syntactically more complex (i.e., NP VP structure). In both the presentational and the existential, the particle *ka* occurs before the predicate, but is not a required formal component of the construction.

4.3.3 Referential specificity

I now turn to pragmatic properties of the presentational construction. In addition to newness, the information introduced by the presentational construction tends to be referential-specific.

Two pieces of formal evidence support this claim. First, arguments of the presentational construction frequently co-occur with the morpheme *nuŋ* ‘one’ which relates to the referents’ specificity. Second, any VP within the presentational construction (i.e., the VP element in [*mi*

[NP (VP)]], as well as the clauses occurring after the presentational construction assert information relevant to the same referent—information which serves to establish the uniqueness and identity of the participant in the narrative discourse model.

As discussed in §4.2.1, Isaan nouns are not required to be formally marked for the pragmatic feature of specificity. Thus, for the addressee to infer referential specificity in the mind of the speaker depends partly on discourse context and partly on the form of the NP. Recall that “specific” means “although the hearer is not able to identify the intended referent, the speaker has a specific object in mind. If the speaker has no particular object in mind, the mention is nonspecific” (Du Bois 1980: 224). To evaluate whether the speaker has a particular object in mind when *nuŋ* occurs in the presentational construction, I have conducted an in-depth examination of the linguistic forms that speaker used, the discourse contexts surrounding the forms, and the narrative content. I illustrate an examination of one such example here.

The following excerpt is from the very beginning of a story. In this excerpt, the speaker has a particular female character, a ‘lady’, in mind; the following predications refer back to this individual. The first mention in (232a) uses the presentational construction and the NP contains *nuŋ* ‘one.’ The referent ‘lady’ is not yet identifiable by the listeners. The speaker then asserts that the lady is a widow in (232b). After this point in the discourse, the speaker treats the referent ‘lady’ as identifiable by the listeners; this is evidenced by the use of anaphoric zeros in (232c) and (232d).

(232) Excerpt from a narrative text

a. ba:t-ni mi: ʔi-na:ŋ **nuŋ**
 now have TITLE.FEM-lady one

‘Now, there was a lady.’

b. ʔi-na:ŋ **nuŋ** pen mɛ:ma:j
 TITLE.FEM-lady one COP widow

‘A lady who was a widow.’

c. ∅ pen mɛ:ma:j p^hua ta:j nĩ: ca:k
 COP widow husband die escape depart

‘[She’s] a widow whose husband had passed away.’

b. ∅ hak kan /∅ ta:j t^hɛ:n kan daj want^hɔ?

 love RECIP die in.place.of RECIP gain PRT.EXPLAIN

[p^hua kap mia k^hu: nɪ:]_{NP}
 husband with wife pair PROX

‘[They] loved each other such that they could die for each other, as for this pair of husband and wife.’

Note: this particular pair

c. ∅ daj sa:ba:n tɔ: kan wa:
 gain vow connect RECIP say

‘[They] had vowed to each other saying,’

d. t^ha: [p^hua [p^hu- ta:j paj lɛ:w p^hǎo paj lɛ:w]_{REL}]_{NP}
 if husband CLF.HUM- die go already burn go already

‘if the husband, who has passed away and has been cremated,’

Note: a specific husband

e. bɔ: kap k^hu:n ma: / bɔ: kə:t ma pen k^hon
 NEG reverse return come NEG born come COP person

‘did not return (from the dead) and was not reborn as a person.’

f. ∅ si bɔ: ʔaw [p^hua]_{NP} ʔi:k naj sa:t ni:
 IRR NEG take husband more in life this

‘[she] would not take another husband in this life.’

(Widow story_sm11-15)

Note: a non-specific husband

Bare nouns such as *p^hua* ‘husband’ could refer to a specific person, as in (232c), or to a more generic kind of category, as in (233f). But to clearly communicate that an Isaan noun should be interpreted as specific within a narrative context, the speaker can accompany the noun by a modifier such as *nunɿ* ‘one’ (232a-b) or *k^hu: ni:* ‘this pair’ (233b). The possessive phrase in (233a), however, does not tell us whether the speaker has a particular objectified concept of *k^hwam-rak* ‘love’ in mind. In fact, out of context, the whole NP *k^hwam-rak k^hɔŋ rawa:ɿ k^hon sɔ:ɿ* *k^hon* ‘love of between two persons’ could be interpreted as a specific love pertaining to a specific couple, or it could be interpreted more generally as a love between any two persons. Following Du Bois’ (1980: 218) analysis, which states that a “possessive noun phrase presuppose[s] identifiability,” the use of the possessive phrase [NP *k^hɔŋ* NP] in (233a) suggests that ‘love’ is

objectified as a more referential and identifiable concept here, meaning that “the hearer can establish the link between the noun phrase and the concept it refers to.” Based on the meaning of (233b), it is likely that the speaker was talking about the particular love belonging to the particular husband and wife in the story, rather than to a general concept. The meaning of the rest of the excerpt in (233) also supports this analysis.

The next example in (234) from a Pear Story further supports the idea that the pragmatic function of *nuy* ‘one’ involves referential specificity. (234a) shows the first mention of the referent *sǎ:m kʰon* ‘three people’ via a single verb clause. The expression itself is semantically plural, but it co-occurs with *nuy* ‘one’ which functions more like a determiner in this case. The speaker continues to describe who each of the three people was in (234b), in which case the morpheme *nuy* ‘one’ following the human classifier indicates that the head noun is semantically singular and referential-specific.

(234) Example of NP with *nuy* ‘one’ that is semantically plural, specific referent

a. tɛ:wa: ba:t-ni: **sǎ:m kʰon** **nuy** cak ma: ta sǎj
 but-COMP now three CLF.person one not.know come from where
 ‘But now, a (group of) three people came from I don’t know where.’

b. pʰu-sa:j pʰu-nuy / dek-nɔ̃:j pʰu-ɲiŋ pʰu-nuy
 CLF.HUM-male CLF.HUM-one child-small CLF.HUM-female CLF.HUM-one

 pʰu-sa:j pʰu-nuy pen sǎ:m kʰon
 CLF.HUM-male CLF.HUM-one COP three CLF.person

 ‘A man, a girl, and a boy make up three people.’ (Pearfilm_oi42-43)

To summarize, I have discussed the fact that bare nouns and even some modified nouns in Isaan can be interpreted as referring to a specific individual or less specifically as denoting a more generic category. In general, contextual analysis is necessary to evaluate whether the speaker likely has a particular referent in mind and whether they assume the hearer can identify which referent is being talked about. However, NPs modified by *nuy* ‘one’ are often interpreted as referring to a specific entity. As we have seen in (232) and (233), all the clauses following the text-initial presentational construction in the Widow story assert some kind of information relevant to one specific widow character.

This brings us back to the question of when a speaker chooses to mention a referent via the presentational construction. I conclude that speakers tend to use the presentational construction when they have a particular object/person in mind. This is supported by the data in Table 13. The data first show that the vast majority of overt NPs in the Isaan narrative text sample occur without *nunη*. However, *nunη* occurs much more than expected by chance in the presentational construction, and much less than expected by chance in the single-verb clause construction. When speakers do use the presentational construction, the majority of the NPs in the construction include *nunη*. The difference between the observed and expected frequency is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 128.43$, log likelihood = 69.66 $p < .00001$).

Table 13: The frequency of the morpheme *nunη* ‘one’ in the presentational versus single verb clause constructions

	NP [+ <i>nunη</i>]	NP [- <i>nunη</i>]	Total
Presentational	16 (1.9)	8 (22.1)	24
Single Verb Clause	4 (18.1)	230 (215.9)	234
Total	20	238	258

The distribution of *nunη* ‘one’ relative to the NPs of the presentational construction and the single verb clause in Table 13 provides insight into the degree of markedness of overt NPs co-occurring with *nunη* ‘one.’ We can also infer something about the pragmatic profile of the presentational construction from the frequency bias in Table 13. In addition to introducing new participants into the narrative discourse world, the speakers tend to have a particular object in mind and/or are asking the listeners to assume such an object exists in the mental representation of the ongoing discourse.

While it can be shown, for the most part, that Isaan speakers have a specific referent in mind when they use the presentational construction, they sometimes use the construction to introduce non-specific participants into a story. In these cases, the NP argument of the presentational construction is a bare noun, e.g., *dek-nôj* ‘child’ as shown in (235). The English free translation ‘some child/children’ is an attempt to reflect the lack of specificity; the interpretation of the bare noun could be singular or plural.

- (235) ka mi: [[dek-nôj]_{NP} (ɲa:ŋ p^ha:n ma:)_{VP}]
 KA have child-small walk pass come
 ‘There were some child/children passing by on foot.’ (Pearfilm_sm42)

In conclusion, the presentational construction allows for either referential specific or non-specific mentions in its NP slot. However, Isaan speakers prefer to overly indicate referential specificity when they use the presentational construction by marking the NP with *nunŋ* ‘one.’ The next section further considers how Isaan speakers can choose the presentational construction to help express participant importance as well as referential specificity.

4.3.4 Potentially important to the plot

Referential specificity also relates to a referent’s importance in discourse. A referent that is important to the plot is more likely to be mentioned again over an extended narrative text. The frequent re-mentioning may be taken as a reflection of its degree of importance in the discourse. According to Givón (1983: 15) “More important discourse topics appear more frequently in the register, i.e., they have a higher probability of persisting longer in the register after a relevant measuring point.” Recall that in his analysis, Givón’s persistence measurement is based on the number of clauses in which a participant continues its uninterrupted presence as a semantic argument of a clause. In my analysis, persistence is quantified in two ways: the total number of mentions a participant has within a given narrative text (“total mentions”) and the number of groups of adjacent clauses in which a participant has an uninterrupted presence after a pause or intermission (“segment count”).

Overall frequency of first mentions occurring as arguments of the single verb clause construction and of the presentational construction in the narrative texts is presented in Table 14. The first column shows the number of narrative participants first mentioned via a single verb clause (as S, A or P) and via the presentational construction (after *mi:*). Recall that two participants may be introduced together within a complex NP, but they can be individuated later in the story (e.g., a son and his mother). The “Total mentions” column shows the average number of times each participant was mentioned again throughout the entire story; the numbers suggest that participants first introduced as S or P do not get re-mentioned as frequently as those introduced in the A role or in the presentational construction. The “Segments count” column follows the same pattern. Notably, referents that are first mentioned in the presentational

constructions exhibit both higher total mentions and segment counts compared to those first mentioned as S, A or P arguments of the single verb clause construction. Table 14 also shows clause count per segment (length), along with standard deviations. The segment length for first mentions via the presentational construction is about three clauses on average; but the longest segment of uninterrupted mentions belongs to this category and is 13 clauses-long. In contrast, the range of segment length for first mentions as S, A, P arguments is between 1–6 clauses.

Table 14: Overall persistence count of first mentions in sample narrative texts

First mentions		Total mentions		Segment count		Segment length	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
S	n = 11	4.9	4.8	2.5	2.1	1.7	0.84
A	n = 4	18	16.53	7.25	6.65	2.35	1.04
P	n = 22	4.6	8	2.59	3.51	1.4	0.75
<i>mi</i> : NP	n = 21	27.5	23.21	10.9	10.6	3	1.4

Table 14 also shows that there is a lot of variation within the nine narrative texts examined pertaining to how frequently new A arguments will be mentioned again: though the average total mentions is 18 times, the standard deviation is 16.53 which is very wide variation. Notably, two of the four new A arguments refer to fairly important participants in the same Pear Story told by a single speaker; namely, the Farmer (35 total mentions) and the Bike Boy (29 total mentions), which we will unpack in §4.3.5.

Discourse persistence does not necessarily equate to importance. Importance can be defined in narrative discourse as something central to the plot. In this sense, participants that are important can be associated with information essential to the narrative structure. Without these participants, the narrative structure no longer holds together. Evaluating importance according to this criterion requires an in-depth analysis of each story. I will elaborate the analysis of the Widow story here.

Table 15 shows each entity in the Widow story in the order that they were introduced, the morphosyntactic form of their first mentions, along with the number of recurrences. The Widow is introduced by the presentational construction at the beginning of the story (cf. excerpt (232)). The Husband is first introduced as the single argument (S) of a clause that comprises three verb stems (V³). Both these participants have continuing identity throughout the entire story but are

mentioned only intermittently. Nevertheless, the Widow is mentioned much more extensively than any other participant and has the highest segment count of 34 units. The persistence category (or degree) is shown in the right-most column; the value for this category is assigned based on the frequency relative to other participants within the same narrative text. The Widow and the Merchant are determined to have a high degree of persistence, having the highest total mentions and segment counts. On the other hand, the Kid and the King are assigned a low degree of persistence; the Kid was mentioned once and as not existing in the narrative discourse world (cf. excerpt (233)), and the King was mentioned in only four non-contiguous clauses. All other participants are determined to have a medium degree of persistence.

Table 15: Persistence analysis in the Widow Story (Total clause count = 298)

Discourse entities	First Mention	Total Mentions	Segment Count	Segment Length (Mean)	Segment Length (SD)	Persistence degree
Widow	Presentational	68	34	2	1.45	high
Husband	S V ³	35	13	2.69	2.32	medium
Kid	V P	1	1	1	n/a	low
House	Copula expression	24	10	2.4	2.71	medium
Prince	Presentational	25	6	4.16	2.78	medium
King	Possessive Phrase	4	4	1	0	low
Merchant	S V ²	113	26	4.34	3.96	high
Boat	V ² P	20	10	2	1.49	medium
Pig's bones	V ² P V	39	14	2.78	2.6	medium

The presentational construction introduces participants only twice in the entire Widow story: 1) the Widow when the story starts and 2) the Prince in the middle of the story. The Prince turns out to be a participant who sets a course of events which has a major impact on the plot. In other words, the Prince is essential to the plot because without his actions the rest of the story would not make sense. After he came to ask the Widow to marry him and she refused (out of undying love for her late husband), the Prince went to his home country and sent people out on a quest to marry the Widow in exchange for half of his wealth. The Merchant character was introduced as one of the people who went to sign up for the quest, shown in (236b).

(236) Excerpt from a narrative text

a. ba:t-ni ∅ ti: k^hɔ:ŋ lɔ:ŋ-pa:w pɔŋlɛŋ-pɔŋlɛŋ
 now hit gong sing-announce (gong sounds)
 ‘Now, [they/he] hit the gong and announced (sounding all over the town).’

b. ba:t-ni p^hən p^hu-nuŋ ka lej paj lapʔa:sa:
 now 3.NO CLF.HUM-one KA exceed go volunteer
 ‘Now, a certain somebody went to volunteer.’ (Widow story_sm72-73)

In another story about a monk and his novice, the presentational construction introduces an initially non-specific participant but who becomes important much later in the story. In this story, the presentational construction was used only once at the beginning, shown in (237a). The speaker may have a particular person in mind when using *k^hon* ‘person’ in the presentational construction, but they are certainly not sharing this piece of information with the listeners at the beginning of the story. This participant has a vague identity and is not continually mentioned in the clauses that immediately follow, but is picked up 68 clauses later. The participant is now treated as identifiable with information re-reminding the listener about this participant (237d).

(237) Excerpt from the Monk and his Novice story

a. k^haŋ nuŋ mi: k^hon ma mon ∅
 time one have person come invite.monk
 ‘One time, someone came to invite [he/them].’ (Monk and his Novice_sm3.1)

b. ma mon ∅ paj c^han k^haw naj ba:n
 come invite.monk go monk.eat rice in house
 ‘invite [him/them] to have a meal in the village.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm3.2)

---[66 clause gap]---

c. p^hɔ:-ta hɔ:t ti ha: lɛ:w
 when-from arrive CLF.time five already
 ‘When it became 5 am,’

- d. **mɛ:ʔɔ:k** **p^hu-** **p^hən** **mon** **luaŋ-p^hɔ:** **ma:**
 lady CLF.HUM- 3.PO invite.monk TITLE.MONK-father come
- ka si ma ʔaw bak-kato:n paj kɛ:ŋ saj kaj
 KA IRR come take CLF.fruit-winter.melon go cook put.into chicken
- ‘The lady, the one who invited the monk, would come to take winter melons for cooking with chicken.’
 (Monk and his Novice 52)

In sum, in the Monk and His Novice story, the presentational construction introduces a participant whose action initiates an event sequence for a good portion of the story. This is what I mean by “potentially important” to the plot. In the story from which (237) is excerpted, the fact that someone had come to invite the monk forms the basis for all the main events—the monk asking the novice to wake him up early, the novice tricking the monk to wake up too early, the monk walking into the village, and falling asleep in the winter melon fields. Although its first mention might appear to be non-specific *k^hon* ‘person’, the referent is later presumed to be identifiable, i.e., the listener is presumed to be able to connect the expression *mɛ:ʔɔ:k* ‘the lady’ as referring to the same participant *k^hon* ‘person’ that was mentioned at the beginning of the story. The fact that the speaker felt the need to also mention the action *mon* ‘invite (the monk)’ in (237d), first introduced together with the ‘person’ in (237a), is also significant; it shows that the speaker is attentive to the presumed needs of the listeners and their working memory since the listeners might have already forgot about this individual.

So far, I have argued that the presentational construction is typically used to introduce new referents that are specific and potentially important. As Isaan speakers use the presentational construction often, if not always, with a particular individual in mind, the NP of the construction frequently involves the morpheme *nun* ‘one’, the demonstrative *ni:* ‘this’, or some other kind of nominal modification. This choice of form asks the listener to establish a new file for a specific referent whose discourse file will be enriched over time as more information becomes associated with it. The next section discusses inter-speaker variations pertaining to new referent introduction in the four Pear Stories.

4.3.5 *Variations among speakers*

The introduction of new participants plays out differently among the Isaan speakers in the narrative corpus used for this study. Table 16 illustrates the various choices of morphosyntactic

constructions used to introduce new participants in the Pear Stories. Notably, the presentational construction was used only for human participants. Thus, comparisons of all morphosyntactic choices are included here only for human participants. Speaker 4 uses the presentation construction only once in her telling of the Pear Story and introduces other new participants via single verb and serial verb constructions.

Table 16: Isaan speakers' construction choice for introducing new human participants in tellings of the Pear Story

Participant:	Speaker's construction choice			
	Speaker 1 (sw)	Speaker 2 (yt)	Speaker 3 (sm)	Speaker 4 (oi)
Farmer	Presentational	Presentational	Presentational	Single Verb (A)
Goat Guy	Presentational	Presentational	Presentational	Presentational
Bike Boy	Presentational	Serial Verb (A/S)	Presentational	Single Verb (A)
Bike Girl	Presentational	--No mention--	Object of PP	Serial Verb (A/S)
Three Boys	Presentational	Presentational	Presentational	Single Verb (S)

The patterns in Table 16 might seem to suggest that the presentational construction is the standard way of introducing new referents into the discourse, but it is only true for human referents. For example, Speaker 1 consistently introduces human participants via the presentational construction. He introduces the Goat Guy in (238) and the Bike Boy in (239) using almost identical structures. Both NPs in (238) and (239) are marked with *nun* 'one' and are immediately followed by VPs that assert information about the newly introduced participants. The VPs in both (238) and (239) comprise serial verb clauses that have a transitive verb, an object, and the deictic motion verb *ma*: 'come.'

(238) Goat Guy (Speaker 1)

ka	mi:	[p ^h u-sa:j	ʔaj-nun]	NP	/	(cu:ŋ	p ^h ε?	ma:)	VP
KA	have	CLF.HUM-male	TITLE.MASC-one			pull	goat	come	

‘Then, there was a man pulled a goat this way’

(Pearfilm_sw20.1-2)

(239) Bike Boy (Speaker 1)

ba:t-ni	mi:	[bak-nô:jnô:j	ʔan	bak-ʔan-nuŋ]	NP	ba:t-ni
now	have	TITLE.MASC-small	filler	TITLE.MASC-CLF.thing-one		now

(k ^h i:	cakaja:n	ma:)	VP
ride	bicycle	come	

‘Now, there was a small boy riding a bicycle this way.’ (Pearfilm_sw25.1-2)

Most new non-human participants are introduced as objects within the VPs of the presentational construction or via some other constructions. The goat and the bicycle are first mentioned as objects of the transitive verbs *cuy* ‘pull’ (238) and *k^hi:* ‘ride’ (239), respectively. In (240), the fruit is introduced as the P of a transitive clause (cf. Table 14).

(240) Fruit (Speaker 1)

law	kalaŋ	kep	p ^h onlamai	c ^h anit	nuŋ	ju:
3.FA	PROG	collect	fruit	type	one	CONT

‘He was collecting fruits of some/a kind’ (Pearfilm_sw7)

Deviations from using the presentational construction in these tellings may be due to speakers’ stylistic choices in storytelling or other “content-driven demands of the narration” (Schnell, Schiborr & Haig 2021). For instance, Speaker 2, who appears to use the presentational construction fairly consistently, uses a serial verb clause to introduce the Bike Boy (241), adding to it his uncertainty about where the Bike Boy came from.

(241) Bike Boy (Speaker 2)

dek-nɔ:j	p^hu-nuŋ	k ^h i:	lot	ma	ca:k	t ^h a:ŋ-dăj	bó:	lu:
child-small	CLF.HUM-one	ride	vehicle	come	from	way-which	NEG	know

‘A child came riding on a vehicle from I don’t know where.’ (Pearfilm_yt15)

Similarly, Speaker 3 introduces the Bike Girl as an object of a preposition in (242b). This choice allows him to seamlessly integrate a new referent while also narrating an event.

(242) Bike Girl (Speaker 3)

a. lawa:ŋ tʰa:ŋ Ø kʰi: lot ba:t-ni
 between path ride vehicle now

‘On the route that [the Bike Boy] was riding,’

b. paj kʰi: suan-kan kap dek-nô:j pʰu-ŋiŋ de: ba:t-ni
 go ride pass.opposite-RECIP with child-small CLF.HUM-female PRT now

‘[He] encountered a girl riding in the opposite direction.’

Lit. ‘[He] went riding and passing each other in the opposite direction with a girl.’

(Pearfilm_sm37)

Speaker 4 can be said to be stylistically different, opting for more canonical sentence forms and using the presentational construction only once in her Pear Story. In telling the Tragedy story, Speaker 4 uses the presentational construction not only to introduce important participants but also to introduce an event that is crucial to the plot. This was shown in (224), repeated again in (243). At this point in the narration, the speaker has already introduced the ‘son’ and his mother, along with other contextual information (e.g., that they are farmers). The new information presented in (243) is the specific day that main events of the story occurred.

(243) mi: mu:nuŋ lu:k-sa:j paj tʰaj nǎ:
 have day-one kid-male go plow rice.paddy

‘There came a day when the son went to plow the field.’

(Tragedy_oi27.2)

In conclusion, the presentational construction normally introduces new persistent referents (as appearing or doing something) into a narrative discourse world. In general, it is a specific human referent who maintains continuous identity over the course of the narrative text. The construction occurs in “staging” discourse portions such as in the beginning of the story and while transitioning to another major scene. Speakers can also use it to report an event that is important to the plot, in the VP slot of the [NP (VP)] portion, though the VP is not structurally required. This suggests that the presentational construction is positively marked for the referent identification function and is neutral for the event reporting function (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 126).

4.4 Resumptive pronoun construction

4.4.1 Structure of the resumptive pronoun construction

Isaan speakers sometimes mention entities or concepts for the first time in a narrative discourse via the resumptive pronoun construction. The constructional template is presented in (244). The initial NP slot is usually filled with a lexical noun, as in (245) – (247), but some pronoun use is also possible, as in (248). The resumptive pronominal subject of the construction (in bold) is often filled by a third person form, most frequently the non-restraint form *man* 3.NO which is unspecified for number. This pronoun is necessarily co-referential with the NP occupying the initial slot. The predicate slot may be filled by verbal (single or multiple) or non-verbal predicate types.

(244) Resumptive pronoun construction

Form: NP_i [[Pro_i]_{SUBJ} [VP]_{PRED}]

Function: predicating about an accessible referent

Discourse context: describe or define “background” information

(245) ʔe: [ʔi-mɛ:]_{NP} [law het ɲaŋ ju: nɔ:]
 eh TITLE.FEM-mother 3.FA make what PROG PRT.WONDER
 ‘‘Eh! my mother, she is doing what?’’ (He wondered.)’ (Tragedy_sm44)

(246) [k^hwaj ni]_{NP} / [man si saj t^ha:w ni
 buffalo TPC 3.NO IRR use foot TPC
 samp^hat lɔŋ-t^haj-na: ju: naj na:m de:]
 touch furrow-plow-rice.paddy be.at in water PRT
 ‘As for buffalos, they would use their feet to feel for the plow lines under the water.’
 (Tragedy_sm37)

(247) p^hɔ-wa: [kɔŋ-k^haw]_{NP} [man ka bɔ kɔŋ ɲaj]
 because box-rice 3.NO KA NEG box big
 ‘Because the rice container, it was not so big.’ (Tragedy_oi50.2)

- (248) a. ni / [p^hom]_{NP} [man ju: t^ha:ŋ na:]
 here 1SG.MASC 3.NO at way front
 ‘Here, as for me, I am in the front.’
- b. [kaj]_{NP} [man ju: t^ha:ŋ laŋ]
 chicken 3.NO at way back
 ‘As for the rooster, it is behind (me)’ (Siangmiang_sm28)

Enfield (2007a: 162) suggests that in Lao, the resumptive pronoun construction is “possible if the referent’s [first] mention is not completely unexpected, but is in some way already contextually available or semiactive.” A similar proposal is made for the Thai counterpart, that the referent occupying the initial NP slot is somehow contextually salient (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 368). These statements predict that first mentions may occur in the initial NP position when the speaker believes that the listener can readily identify the intended referent and/or retrieve the information via a network of semantic associations or frame (Fillmore 1982; 1985). Regarding Isaan, in the following sections I analyze how such first mentions can be considered contextually available based on association to information from prior in the text, examine the pragmatic properties of the referents, and propose that the resumptive pronoun construction is mainly used to provide extra information about an already established referent and to help create a rich mental representation of the story.

4.4.2 *Referent accessibility and partial identifiability*

The resumptive pronoun construction appears to prefer given (or at least semi-active) over new information in the initial NP position slot. There are 38 instances of the construction in the nine narrative texts; only two instances (roughly 5%) involve first mentions. Nevertheless, these two instances provide useful insights about the referent profile, showing that the first mentions can be nonreferential and nonspecific but partially identifiable. (249) and (250) are excerpts that include such first mentions. Both excerpts present contiguous utterances from a story widely known within Isaan-speaking communities, a tragic story called “Small Rice Container Kills a Mother”. The story involves a mother and her son who were farmers. In (249a), the expression *t^hiaŋna*: ‘a hut to rest while working the fields’ may be accessible via the idea of farming, which had been

evoked prior to the time of the utterance; no hut is mentioned again in the rest of the story after (249b).

(249) Context: The speaker describes the location where crucial story events occurred.

a. Ø paj hət luk
go arrive kid

‘When she arrived at where her son was...’

b. samai ta-ki: [t^hiaŋnǎ:]_{NP} [man, ka si bǔ mi: dɔ:k]
era from-before hut 3.NO KA IRR NEG have PRT

‘In the past, as for a hut (to rest in while working the fields), I don’t think there was any.’

c. si ju: nǎm p^ho:n nǎm hom-maj ham-ŋǎŋ paj nɔ?
IRR be.at with mound with shade-wood shade-what go AGREE.PRT

‘[They] would have been staying on a high ground, under a tree shade or places like that.’

d. luk ka t^haj nǎ: ju:
kid KA plow rice.paddy CONT

‘The son was plowing the field.’

(Tragedy_oi52)

In another version of the same story told by another speaker, the resumptive pronoun construction is used in a dialogue between the son and his mother. The referent ‘monks’ in (250c) is frame-available via the mention of *wat* ‘temple’ in the previous sentence (250b); the referent ‘monks’ is mentioned two more times towards the end of the story.

(250) Context: The speaker describes a dialogue between the son and his mother when she finally arrived at the rice field with foods.

a. caw k^hu ma: sauj te: ?i-mɛ:
2SG.FA be.like come be.late truly TITLE.FEM-mother

‘Why did you come so late, mother?’

b. mɛ: ka paj wat
mother KA go temple

‘I (lit: mother) went to the temple.’

- c. [ɲa:k^hu: ɲa:sa:_i] _{NP} [p^hən_i ka bɔ mi: p^hu- paj wat]
 TITLE.monks TITLE.monks 3.PO KA NEG have CLF.HUM- go temple
 ‘The monks, they did not have anyone else who’d go to the temple.’
 or ‘The monks, they did not have temple-goers.’ (possessive; transitive single verb)
 (Tragedy_sm55-56.1)

Note that both (249b) and (250c) involve the verb *mi*: ‘have’ but with different constructional meanings, i.e., existential and possessive predications, respectively.

The mention of ‘hut for resting while working the fields’ in (249b) would be considered nonreferential (i.e., no existing hut is indicated by this mention) because ‘hut’ falls under the scope of negation (Du Bois 1980). However, the pronoun *man* 3.NO in (249b) refers back to this concept of ‘hut’, treating the concept as type-identifiable by the interlocutors. The closest interpretation would be that the pronoun *man* refers to some nonspecific huts or to an abstract concept of huts, but not a particular hut. This bit of data is perplexing to me as it challenges the analysis that identifiability is not applicable to nonreferential and nonspecific mentions. However, Du Bois (1980: 215) states that “speakers often make a pronominal mention based on a referential concept which has been introduced nonreferentially”, suggesting that initially-nonreferential mentions may become referential and identifiable afterwards. This is possible because some information is made available or already evoked through a network of semantic associations. The concept ‘hut’ can be evoked (and at least be semi-active) by knowing that the narrative participants were farmers. That is, the listeners can be expected to know that, within the frame of ‘farming’ in Isaan culture, there exists an association with a well-defined set of places that farmers can rest while working the fields. This set of places is elaborated in (249c) where the speaker lists out ‘a high ground, under a tree shade or places like that’. Thus, with the resumptive pronoun construction in (249b), the speaker does not necessarily ask the listeners to create a new file for a referentially existing ‘hut’. Instead, they presuppose a (culturally) shared semiactive concept and assert that none existed in this particular story world.

Similarly, the Isaan phrase *ɲa:k^hu: ɲa:sa:*, translated as ‘the monks’ in the possessive predication in (250c), would be interpreted as referential but probably nonspecific. The following pronoun *p^hən* 3.PO refers back to the monks, treating the referent as having a presupposed identity within the discourse world. The use of the word *wat* ‘temple’ specifically means Buddhist temples. Although it is unclear if the speaker has a particular group of monks in mind

upon first mention in line (250c), a general expectation is that there is at least one Buddhist temple in each village or town in the Isaan-speaking region. This suggests that contextually available information, that formally manifests as an NP in the initial position, maintains a partial identity (i.e., not fully identified). This leads to the hypothesis that referents introduced via the resumptive pronoun construction will tend to have lower degree of persistence (i.e., will not be mentioned again or as frequently) compared to those introduced via the presentational construction.

4.4.3 Background establishing function

The majority (95%) of the initial NPs in the resumptive pronoun construction are non-first mentions, and the predicates present newly asserted information that serves to contextualize rather than advance the storyline. Most occurrences of the resumptive pronoun construction provide information about time (251), location (252), and characteristics of the referents (253). Moreover, speakers can also use the construction to express a participant's internal thoughts about what happened in the story, as in (254). Thus, I conclude that the main discourse function of the resumptive pronoun construction is to identify and predicate some property of an already evoked, semi-active, if not already-established discourse referent.

(251) [k^hana?-nân]_{NP} [man pen wela ti: nuŋ lu hok t^hum]
 moment-DIST 3.NO COP time CLF.TIME one or six CLF.time
 ‘(At) that time, it was around one am or midnight.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm42)

(252) [mɔŋ nì:]_{NP} [man si bó ?ɛ:m]
 place here 3.NO IRR NEG enclose
 ‘This place (i.e., right here), it is not closed off.’ (Widow_sm34)

(253) [bak-ɛpən nɔ:]_{NP} [man k^hu caŋ k^hun-k^hun]
 CLF.fruit-apple PRT.WONDER 3.NO be.like such familiar-familiar
 ‘The apples, (the guy) wonders, why do they look so familiar?’ (Pearfilm_yt44)

(254) ?ǎw / [mak-maj ni]_{NP} [man paj caŋdǎj]
 INTERJ CLF.fruit-wood TPC 3.NO go how
 ‘Wait a second, the fruits, how did they get there?’ (Pearfilm_sm60.2)

What Lambrecht (1994: 126) calls a “background establishing” function accounts for the occurrences of the resumptive pronoun construction in (251) – (254), as well as in (255c) where the speaker uses the construction to explain the meaning of an idiomatic expression. The meaning of the idiom comprises important information for understanding the story but does not move the narrative timeline forward.

(255) Excerpt from the Siang Miang Story

a. palasa: ka lej wa: haj Ø ma: kɔ:n kaj
king KA exceed say give come before chicken

‘And so, the king said “come before chicken”

b. bo:la:n samaj kɔ:n kʰan kʰam-wa: ma: kɔ:n kaj ni
ancient era before if word-say come before chicken TPC

ka kʰu: ma:jtʰuŋ wa:
KA be.like mean COMP

‘In the ancient time, in the past, the saying “come before chicken” means that’

c. [kaj kʰan ni]_{NP} [man jaŋ dək ju:] men bɔ:
chicken crow TPC 3.NO still night.time be.at COP NEG

‘The roosters crowing, it (i.e., the time) is still dark out, right?’ (Siangmiang_sm13-14)

In (255c), *kaj kʰan* is formally a clause, semantically indicating the action or time when roosters crow. The speaker refers back to this expression by the pronoun *man* and goes on to define it, rather than describing an event of the story itself. The idea of roosters crowing was made available through use of the word *kaj* ‘chicken’, which is a cover term for hens, roosters, and chicken meat. This is yet another instance of how the background-establishing function of this construction goes hand in hand with the construction’s preference for expressing accessible information in its initial phrase. The information provided by the predicate serves to ensure that the listeners understand how to interpret the story as the speaker intends.

To summarize, the resumptive pronoun construction prefers a given (accessible or semi-active) referent in the initial NP or phrasal position, and there appears to be no restriction in terms of pragmatic referentiality. The initial slot can contain a lexical noun, an NP, a pronoun, or

even a clause. These expressions generally do not constitute brand-new information because they are either previously mentioned in the text or are contextually accessible via frame semantics. First mentions via the resumptive pronoun, though rare, occur with referents or concepts that are considered not as important to the plot of the story compared to first mentions via the presentational construction. The referents first mentioned as the initial NP of the resumptive pronoun are not always re-mentioned later in the discourse.

In the next section we turn to a third clausal construction that Isaan speakers use to handle participant information.

4.5 [NP *ka* Predicate] construction

This section discusses the choice of REs in the initial position of the [NP *ka* predicate] construction, focusing on arguments of simple (non-serial verb) clauses. I will argue that the referents that occupy the pre-*ka* slot tend to be cognitively accessible and/or situationally available. This is supported by the distribution of REs in the pre-*ka* slot as well as in-depth analysis of the narrative discourse.

4.5.1 Structure of the NP *ka* Predicate construction

The examples (256) – (259) are considered instances of the [NP *ka* predicate] construction. The morpheme *ka* (in bold) occurs immediately after the subject and before the predicate of each example. It may be removed without any appreciable semantic change.

(256) Simple clause containing a copula verb

na:ŋ nî: **ka** pen k^hon mi: me:ta nɔ?
 lady PROX KA COP person have grace AGREE.PRT

‘This lady is indeed a gracious person, right?’

(Widow_sm101)

(257) Simple clause containing a transitive verb

lu:k **ka** t^haj nǎ: ju:
 child KA plow rice.paddy CONT

‘The son was plowing the field.’

Lit. ‘The child was plowing the field.’

(Tragedy_oi53.2)

(258) Simple clause containing an intransitive verb

bak-nôj-nôj **ka** paj
 TITLE.MASC-small-small KA go

‘The small boy went.’ (Pearfilm_sw51)

(259) Simple clause containing no verb word

kəŋ-k^haw nôj **ka** bɔ̌ kəŋ ɲaj de:
 box-rice small KA NEG box big PRT

‘The small rice container (was/is) not large, as a matter of fact.’ (Tragedy_oi39.2)

(260) Clause containing multiple verb words

luaŋ-p^hɔ̌: **ka** nɔ̌:n lap səj
 TITLE.MONK-father KA sleep asleep be.still

‘The monk was fast asleep and unconscious.’ (Monk and Novice_sm56)

The initial NP slot of the [NP *ka* predicate] may also be filled with a definite null (261) or a pronoun (262). In the context of (261), the speaker is commenting on the size of the rice container, a referent that has been fully established as existing in the story, while the speaker gestures to a cup that was present in the location of the interview. In (262), the speaker is speculating about the state of a narrative participant, the son, who awaits his mother’s arrival with the rice container.

(261) ∅ **ka** si kəŋ sam kɛ:w ni tua
 KA IRR box equal cup TPC PRT

‘[It] probably was the size of this cup, I suppose.’ (Tragedy_oi42.2)

(262) man **ka** si ja:k k^haw nɔ̌? k^hon nɔ̌?
 3.NO KA IRR want rice AGREE.PRT person AGREE.PRT

‘[He] must have been hungry, (it’s only) human.’ (Tragedy_oi44.3)

Unlike the presentational and resumptive pronoun constructions, the initial NP slot in the [NP *ka* predicate] construction may be filled with any kind of RE. This leads to the question of what kind of referent information and pragmatic features are associated with the construction, given

the fact that the [NP *ka* predicate] construction occurs much more frequently than the two clausal constructions previously discussed in this chapter.

Limiting the investigation to just single verb clauses, Table 17 only includes clauses that could structurally occur with *ka* (without any semantic change), whether or not *ka* is actually used (N = 292). These numbers exclude instances of the presentational/existential construction with *mi*: ‘have’ as a single verb and instances of the resumptive pronoun construction where the predicate includes only one verb. The table presents the distribution of REs in the A/S slot for arguments that do and do not occur with *ka*.

Table 17: Frequency of co-occurrences between the A/S argument of single verb clauses that could structurally take *ka*, and actual occurrences of the morpheme *ka*

A/S	+ <i>ka</i>	- <i>ka</i>	Total
Def. Null	50 (56.4)	92 (85.6)	142
NP	43 (31.4)	36 (47.6)	79
Pronoun	23 (28.2)	48 (42.8)	71
Total	116	176	292

Table 17 shows that the number of overt NPs that co-occur with *ka*-marked single verb clauses is higher than expected by chance compared to the other REs, but the difference between the observed and expected frequency is quite small ($\chi^2 = 9.77$, log likelihood = 9.6, $p < .01$). This finding suggests that some relationship exists between the referential property of pre-*ka* NPs and the clausal construction. This leads us to examine the discourse context where *ka* occurs (§4.5.2) and the referential properties of the lexical NPs in the pre-*ka* position (§4.5.3–4.5.4).

4.5.2 *Where do we find ka in a story?*

The morpheme *ka* is found dispersed throughout a story. I illustrate the overall distribution of *ka* in a narrative text using the excerpt in (263) from a Pear Story. Each line is part of the same text (though some lines are omitted for brevity). Lines (263a–b) occur at the beginning when the speaker introduces a new participant. Lines (263c–f) are from the middle of the story when the speaker talks about more than one participant. Finally, (263g–h) occur at the end of the story.

(263) Excerpt from a Pear Story

a. naj p^ha:p wi:diʔo nân mi: p^hu-sa:j k^hon nuŋ
in picture video DIST have CLF.HUM-male person one
'In the video, there was a man' (Pearfilm_sm3)

b. ʔaju ka si prama:n cak sə:m-sip si:-sip ni la
age KA IRR about just three-ten four-ten TPC PRT
'His age might be around 30-40 years old.' (Pearfilm_sm4)

...

c. p^hɔ:-ta Ø liew namkon k^haw
when-from look after 3.FO
'After [he] did a double take at her,' (Pearfilm_sm39.1)

d. lot ka læj paj tam kɔ:n-hin
vehicle KA exceed go bump.into rock
'The bike, as a result, crashed into a rock.' (Pearfilm_sm 39.2)

e. cakaja:n k^han-nan ka læj lom
bicycle CLF.vehicle-DIST KA exceed fall
'That bike, thus, fell down.' (Pearfilm_sm 40.1)

f. kata: ma:k-maj ka læj saʔ tem t^ha:ŋ
basket CLF.fruit-wood KA exceed scatter be.filled way
'The fruit basket scattered all over the road.' (Pearfilm_sm 40.2)

...

g. p^hɔ:-ta dek-nɔ:j ɲa:ŋ p^ha:n paj
when-from child-small walk pass go
'After the children passed by,' (Pearfilm_sm62.1)

h. law ka ŋoŋ ju: p^hu-diaw
3.FA KA confuse stay CLF.HUM-only.one
'he was alone and confused.' (Pearfilm_sm62.2)

Some instances of the [NP *ka* Predicate] construction occur in highly contrastive discourse contexts. By “highly contrastive”, I mean two or more participants are present at the scene; each of the participants is described as doing different things or having different things happen to them. The contrastive effect might be a result of the use of the referring form rather than a discourse function of *ka*, as Givón (1983) would argue that the presence of multiple participants creates potential interference or ambiguity in the discourse context, making the use of lexical NPs more appropriate.

With respect to discourse referent management, it appears that *ka* is used in simple clauses when the speaker switches reference among already established participants in highly contrastive contexts. In the excerpt in (264), the speaker narrates the climax or peak of the story where the son, blinded by hunger and anger, kills his own mother. Note that the participant ‘son’ is covertly expressed by definite nulls in (264a) and (264d), while the mother is overtly mentioned throughout. Although the excerpt contains a variety of *ka*-marked constructions, I will focus on explaining the near minimal pair with the verb *ta:j* ‘die’ in lines (264c) and (264g), which I have highlighted in bold.

(264) Excerpt from a Tragedy story

a. ∅ ʔaw ʔɛ:k ni la fa:t hua mɛ:
 take yoke TPC PRT strike head mother

‘[The son] took the yoke (and) struck the mother’s head.’

b. mɛ: ka lom loŋ
 mother KA fall go.down

‘The mother fell down.’

c. **mɛ: ləj ta:j de: bat-ni**
 mother exceed die PRT now

‘The mother, as a result, died at this point.’

d. ∅ ləj si paj kin k^haw de: bat-ni / ∅ ja:k
 exceed IRR go eat rice PRT now want

‘[He] then would go to eat the rice now, [he] was hungry.’

- e. kɔŋ-k^haw nɔ:j pen ɲǎŋ bat-ni
 box-rice small COP what now
 ‘What’s wrong with the small rice container, now?’
- f. kɔŋ-k^haw-nɔ:j k^haw la:j-la:j kin ka bɔ loŋ de:
 box-rice-small rice many-many eat KA NEG go.down PRT
 ‘The small rice container, (it has) so much rice, (he) ate but (rice) did not go down.’
- g. mɛ: ka ta:j le:w bat-ni
 mother KA die already now
 ‘The mother had died already at this point.’
- h. ni: la man si pen caŋsi: la / nit^ha:n luan k^hɔŋ man
 this PRT 3.NO IRR COP like.this PRT tale story of 3.NO
 ‘This is how it goes, the story of it.’ (Tragedy_oi75-79)

In (264a), the referent *mɛ:* ‘mother’ is mentioned in a possessive phrase *hua mɛ:* ‘mother’s head’ in an object position. The mother is overtly mentioned again as the subject in (264b), which is followed by *ka*. The target clause with the verb *ta:j* ‘die’ (264c) continues to overtly mention the ‘mother’ in subject position, but *ka* is not used here. After this point, clauses (264d-f) contain information about other participants, namely the son and the small rice container. The speaker then switches back to talk about the mother in (264g). Again, the intransitive verb *ta:j* ‘die’ is used here, and the referent *mɛ:* ‘mother’ is the subject of the clause. Furthermore, the word *mɛ:* ‘mother’ in (264c) can be omitted while in (264g) it must be overtly expressed. This may be explained by the fact that ‘mother’ is continuous in the former case and less so in the latter. The lexical NP refers to a single participant ‘mother’ as subject in both (264c) and (264g); however, the referent is not marked by *ka* in (264c), even though it would be structurally and semantically acceptable. I suggest that the speaker uses the [NP *ka* Predicate] construction in (264g) to highlight the fact that different participants are performing different activities within a single scene. This is similar to the English *As for* expression, and (264g) could be alternatively translated as ‘As for the mother, (she) had died already at this point’.

The analysis that [NP *ka* Predicate] construction is associated with contrastiveness is also supported by (265) below. While the participants are described as doing the same action with the

representations are either active or semi-active at the time of the utterance. We will see in Chapter 7 that such contractiveness does not accompany all uses of *ka*.

4.5.3 *The referent is cognitively accessible and/or situationally available*

Lexical NPs in the pre-*ka* slot of the single verb clause construction may include both first and non-first mentions; this is shown in Table 18. The majority of NPs in the pre-*ka* slot are overwhelmingly non-first mentions; however, this is somewhat expected by chance ($\chi^2 = 0.96$, loglikelihood = 0.95, *p* is not significant). Further evidence from discourse analysis points to the conclusion that the referents first mentioned with *ka*-marked single verb clauses are cognitively accessible via logical association.

Table 18: Frequency of co-occurrences between first and non-first mentions as A/S argument of single verb clauses expressed as lexical NPs and the morpheme *ka*

	+ ka	- ka	Total
first mentions	4 (5.4)	6 (4.6)	10
non-first mentions	39 (37.6)	30 (31.4)	69
Total	43	36	79

The four instances of *ka*-marked first mentions from Table 18 are in the S role. One example is in (266). Reference to the sun is not completely unexpected since the story took place during the day.

(266) NP *ka* Predicate Construction

tawen ka k^hun lɛ:w
 sun KA go.up already

‘The sun has risen already.’

(Tragedy_oi44.2)

The NP referents first mentioned in *ka*-marked simple clauses are not participants in the story. Instead, they are salient features of the situational contexts. In the excerpt in (267) from the Widow story, the rain and the wind are mentioned for the first time via *ka*-marked simple clauses. At this point in the story, the Merchant comes to ask for the Widow’s permission to dock the boat at her house. The speaker is reporting the speech of the Merchant; the reference to

the weather condition in (267e) is situationally salient and/or already accessible in the discourse world.

(267) The subject in pre-*ka* position is situationally salient/available

a. mʉ:ni man kʰam lɛ:w
 today 3.NO evening already

“Today, it is already dark.”

b. kʰɔ: cɔ:t lua na: ba:n mɛ:na:ŋ daj bɔ:
 beg park boat front house lady CAN NEG

“May (I) dock my boat in front of your house?”

c. ʔa kʰan mʉ-ʔu:n caŋ si ʔɔ:k-lua paj tɔ:
 ah if tomorrow so.that IRR exit-boat go connect

“Ah, when tomorrow comes, [I] would continue sailing away.”

d. pʰɔ-wa: mʉ:ni man kʰam
 because today 3.NO evening

“Because today it is dark.”

e. tʰəŋ fɔ̃n ka tok / lom ka hɛ:ŋ wa:san
 both rain KA fall wind KA strength say-thus

‘“Moreover, the rain is falling, and the wind is strong”, he said’ (Widow_sm98-100)

Speakers can also use the [NP *ka* Predicate] construction to mention salient features of a participant and predicate about it. In (268), when the speaker introduces ‘a man’ as a new participant in the Pear Story, his age is brought into the discussion briefly, but it is never mentioned again.

(268) The subject in pre-*ka* position is a participant’s age

a. naj pʰa:p wi:di?o nan mi: pʰu-sa:j kʰon nuŋ
 in picture video that have CLF.HUM-male person one

‘In the video, there was a man’

b. ʔaju **ka** si prama:n cak sǎ:m-sip si:-sip ni la
 age KA IRR about just three-ten four-ten TPC PRT
 ‘His age might be around 30-40 years old.’

c. ∅ bɔː tʰan daj tʰao pa:ndǎj dɔ:k
 NEG yet gain old how.much PRT
 ‘[He] was not very old.’ (Pearfilm_sm3-5)

4.5.4 *The referent is assumed to be identifiable*

In addition to the accessible information trend, the referent in the pre-*ka* slot of the single verb clauses tends to be identifiable. In other words, the speaker assumes that not only is the information activated in the mind of the listener, but they can also identify which participant is being talked about. This is true even when the speaker switches reference from one participant to another without resorting to using an overt NP in the pre-*ka* slot. I illustrate a few cases below. The referent’s identity is indicated by subscripts, and overt NPs or pronouns can be used instead of definite nulls.

The excerpt in (269) from the Tragedy story demonstrates a case where a human participant (i.e., the mother) is the only one present at the scene. The referent ‘mother’ is assumed to be identifiable since it was previously introduced into the discourse world and is referred to by definite nulls throughout the excerpt.

(269) Context: The speaker describes the actions of the mother in the Tragedy story. One legend says that the mother steamed the rice in the early morning, but the fire burned the rice steamer and the rice pot. They say it is a bad omen. Since the fire had burned the rice pot, she had to re-start the rice-cooking process all over again.

a. pʰɔː-ta ∅_i maj mɔː-kʰaw lɛ:w
 when-from burn pot-rice already
 ‘Since [the fire] had burned the rice pot,

b. ∅_j **ka** ləj ma: ∅_k maj
 KA exceed soak new
 ‘[she] soaked new [rice].’

- c. \emptyset_j **ma:** k^haw_k maj
 soak rice new
 ‘Having soaked the new rice.’
- d. \emptyset_j **ka** ləj nuŋ \emptyset_k
 KA exceed steam
 ‘[she] steamed [it].’
- e. \emptyset_j **ka** nuŋ \emptyset_k ta dək ju: dɔ:k
 KA steam from early.morning PRT PRT
 ‘It is the case that [she] steamed [it] in the early morning (when it was still dark).’
- f. \emptyset_j nuŋ \emptyset_k lə:w lə:w
 steam finish already
 ‘Having finished steaming [the rice],
- g. \emptyset_j **ka** ʔaw \emptyset_k paj / ʔa paj wat
 KA take go uh go temple
 ‘[she] took [it] to, uh, to the temple.’ (Tragedy_sm27.2)

The fact that Isaan speakers can switch from one referent to another without overtly mentioning them, as in (269a-b) where the first definite null necessarily refers to ‘fire’, but the second to ‘mother’, may raise a question regarding how referent tracking works in the minds of Isaan listeners. The process includes accessing real-world knowledge regarding culturally normal events and event structure, as well as understanding of the argument structure and lexical semantics of particular verbs. In this case, the mother is described as doing something which is culturally known: rice cooking methods. The listeners have to access the cognitive structure of the events evoked by the particular verbs as well as verb semantics to interpret what is going on. For example, the verb *maj* ‘burn’ in Isaan is not as versatile as *burn* in English (e.g., *the fire burned the pot*, *she burned the pot*, and *the pot burned* are all good English sentences). Rather, *maj* ‘burn’ sub-categorizes for a non-human cause (fire, sun, hot soup, etc.). The verb *ma:* ‘soak’ only ever applies to the soaking of sticky rice which is the main staple food in Isaan-speaking communities. The actions in (269) are understood as temporally sequential to one another, due to the listener’s assumed familiarity with the normal process of rice cooking.

The pre-established identity of the discourse referents, real-world knowledge, and verb meanings similarly play parts in referent interpretation in (270), which describes what happened much later in the same text as (269). Here, the speaker describes a scene in which a human and a non-human ‘rice’ are involved. Assuming situational normalcies, the human participant is logically interpreted as the one who takes the role of the eater in (270a) and undergoes the change of state described by the verb *ʔim* ‘be.full’ in (270c-d). The presence of *ka* in (270e) suggests that the speaker assumes that the listeners can make a mental connection that the word *kʰaw* ‘rice’ refers to the portion of rice previously mentioned in (270a) and in other moments in the story (and not the rice that got burned in (269), for instance). This identifiability assumption follows from the fact that the referent of a particular portion of rice has been cognitively active or accessible.

- (270) a. \emptyset_h ʔaw kʰaw_k ma: kin
 take rice come eat
 ‘[He] took the rice to eat (it).’
- b. \emptyset_h kin \emptyset_k daj sə:m kʰam
 eat gain three bite
 ‘[He] ate three bites,’
- c. \emptyset_h ʔim saŋmaŋ
 be.full rooted.to.one.spot
 ‘(and) got full (and) couldn’t move.’
- d. pʰɔ-ta \emptyset_h ʔim saŋmaŋ le:w
 when-from be.full rooted.to.one.spot already
 ‘Once [he] got full,’
- e. kʰaw_k ka lua
 rice KA remain
 ‘The rice still remained.’
- (Tragedy_sm64-65)

To summarize, the [NP *ka* predicate] construction is primarily used to describe events, actions, and happenings in the narrative discourse when one or more participants mentioned by the initial NP are already established as existing in the narrative world. A lexical NP occurs in the pre-*ka*

slot more frequently compared to other referring expressions (but this is somewhat expected by chance). In-depth analyses of discourse contexts reveal that lexical NPs are followed by *ka* in cases where two or more participants are present at the scene and are doing different things or different things happen to them. Definite nulls are also found in the pre-*ka* slot. I have suggested that the speaker only needs to name the action or event related to participants when their roles have been clearly established (e.g., in prior text). The findings suggest that the use of *ka* in this construction relates to referent tracking as speakers assume that the listeners maintain an understanding of the cognitive structure events in which each participant is involved.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, will discuss common event structures and different clause configurations which help manage event information.

CHAPTER 5

EVENTS AND MULTI-VERB CLAUSES

In narrative discourse, much of event-related information is provided by the predicate of the clause, which heavily interacts with how many and what kinds of participants are involved as well as when the event took place within the world of discourse. Isaan predicates often consist of multiple verbs. In Chapter 3 (§3.4), I have discussed grammatical properties of some multi-verb expressions, showing that the relationships between the verbs are heterogeneous. This chapter further explores the ways in which verb words are often combined within a single clause and the kinds of messages that are being communicated when Isaan speakers use certain multi-verbal clauses in storytelling.

In this chapter, §5.1 discusses how events are operationalized in this study, §5.2 presents some issues relating to analysis of Isaan multi-verb clauses, and §5.3–5.4 describe grammatical patterns of single clauses that comprise multiple verbs. §5.5 presents a case study of verb combining patterns that involve the deictic motion verbs *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’. Finally, §5.6 concludes with a discussion of potential discourse explanations for the choice between a single verb clause construction versus a multi-verb clause construction involving *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’.

5.1 Operationalized definitions of “clause” and “event”

A clause is defined as a grammatical structure that consists of a predicate and its argument(s). Clauses in Isaan may contain more than one verb stem, occur with or without an overt subject, and take temporal/aspectual/modal-meaning words. In particular, any clause is expected to have the ability to take an overt subject or grammatical items such as *le:w* ‘already,’ *daj* ‘CAN,’ and *bat-ni* ‘now.’

An event is defined as a proposition which asserts that somebody did something or something happened to someone in the universe of discourse. An event may be broken down into sub-events or phases of temporally sequenced units. In narrative contexts, the term “event” will apply to those propositions that can felicitously answer the question in (271a), “Now, what happened/happens/is happening?” Propositions expressed in clauses with stative verbs (whether containing a single verb, or a multi-verb clause that includes some stative verbs) may not qualify as events by this definition. For example, the infelicitous response in (271b) would be considered

a non-event even though it describes an action or process, while (271c) represents a felicitous answer and is considered an event.

- (271) a. mi: ɲǎŋ kə:t k^hu:n ba:t-ni:
 have what be.born go.up now
 ‘Now, what happened/happens/is happening?’
- b. #p^hu-nuŋ naŋ cə:p t^ha: lak kaj
 CLF.HUM-one sit sneak wait steal chicken
 ‘A person is sitting (and) hiding (and) waiting to steal some chicken.’
- c. p^hu-nuŋ ɲa:ŋ ma lak kaj
 CLF.HUM-one walk come steal chicken
 ‘A person walked over (and) stole some chicken.’

Thus, narrative information expressed as a clause can encompass both events and non-events whose distinction relies heavily on the semantic content of the predicate. Predicates of being, categorization, and identification which involve the copular verbs *pen* ‘be,’ *mən* ‘be,’ *ju:* ‘be.at,’ and *k^hu:* ‘be.like’ represent non-events by definition.

5.2 Some issues with Isaan multi-verbal clauses

In this section, I will briefly highlight some analytical issues that Isaan multi-verbal clauses can present in identifying the temporal/aspectual dimensions of narrative events and discuss the problems with definitions of serial verb constructions (SVCs). Examples in the following discussion are meant to illustrate difficulty that Isaan grammar poses for analyses of the surface strings of syntactic patterns that contain more than one verb words.

5.2.1 *Do Isaan clauses provide any temporal or aspectual information?*

For Indo-European languages like English and French as well as others, affixed verbs and auxiliary forms are grammatical devices that communicate temporal/aspectual meanings. Speakers make propositions about what happens in the story by alternating the verb forms and the morphosyntactic constructions (e.g., *I went to the store* vs. *I am going to the store*). For the

Isaan language, the form of a verb word alone does not say much about whether something is happening, has happened in the past, or will happen in the future. Instead, certain verb combination patterns may communicate temporal/aspectual meanings. Speakers also rely on discourse-contextual information when interpreting the meaning of multi-verbal clauses. In the absence of verbal inflection and overt markers of coordination/subordination, an analysis of the temporal/aspectual relationships between surface forms in which multiple verbs or verb phrases are strung together depends more on the discourse context and the ways in which the verbs are combined.

To initially see how some temporal information can be expressed in the absence of grammatical tense, (272) shows an instance where the deictic motion verbs *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ participate in expressing when and where the event of buying occurs; this sentence can be interpreted as (i) an imperative with present or future time reading out of context, or (ii) a declarative with a present or past perfect reading in the narrative discourse context in which it was used. With the use of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ combined, it is understood that the event of ‘buying’ must happen or have happened in a different location from where the speech act occurred.

(272) Ø paj su: kadu:k mu: ma:
 go buy bone pig come

- i. ‘Go buy some pork ribs (and) bring them back here.’
- ii. ‘[He] has/had bought some pork ribs.’

(Widow_sm84)

Similarly, out of context the events in (273) could be interpreted as being situated in the past (i), present (ii), or future time (iii).

(273) Ø_i kin k^haw ?im lɛ:w Ø_i caŋ paj ?ə:n mɛ:
 eat rice be.full already then go call mother

- i. ‘Having finished his meal, [he] then went (and) called his mother.’ (Tragedy_oi91)
- ii. ‘[He] finishes his meal, then [he] goes to call his mother.’
- iii. ‘[He] will finish his meal, and then [he] will go call his mother.’

Even though Isaan single and multi-verb utterances are open to all kinds of temporal/aspectual interpretations, discourse analysis allows us to examine how the temporal information about an

event is expressed and organized. For instance, in both (272) and (273), the (sub)events are linguistically reported in the order that they happened in the discourse world. Particularly for (273), *caŋ* ‘then’ is an overt marker of coordination which also expresses the meaning that two events happen(ed) in succession.

Also, consider the examples in (274) from a single narrative text. The story is about a Monk and young Novice that often play pranks on each other. Each verb word is labelled as V₁, V₂, and so on. Each line numbered (a), (b), etc., corresponds to an independent clause. Again, the verb words in each clause are ordered according to the chronological sequence in which the (sub)events occurred.

			V ₁		V ₂	V ₃	V ₄	
(274)	a.	ne:n-nô:j _i	ka	ləj	ʔaw	faj-kabə:ŋ _j	k ^h u:n paj mat	
		young.monk-small	KA	exceed	take	fire-torch	go.up go tie	
		V ₅						
		waj	t ^h əŋ	ton-ta:n				
		put	on.top.of	CLF.tree-palm				
		‘The Novice, as a result, took a flaming torch (and) went up to tie (it) securely on top of a palm tree.’						
		V ₁	V ₂	V ₃	V ₄	V ₅		
	b.	∅ _i	pi:n	k ^h u:n	paj	p ^h u:k	∅ _j waj	
			climb	go.up	go	bind	put	
		‘[He] climbed up (and) bound [it] there.’					(Monk and Novice_sm20-21)	

5.2.2 One clause or more?

With respect to the grammatical structure, the idea that the number of clauses equals the number of predicates does not work well for the patterns like those seen in (274), which I consider instances of Isaan SVCs. (274a) and (274b) describe a single narrative main event involving the same participants. While the first clause (274a) asserts what the Novice did, the second clause (274b) elaborates on how he managed it. Each verb in the series in each line shares an agent argument which is the syntactic subject. The verb words are said within a single intonation unit, uninterrupted by any overt marker of coordination, unlike what we saw in (273). Additionally, the verb words in each line together express a semantically coherent event construal; each verb within a line serves to break the event down into temporally sequenced sub-

events or phases. Some of the verb words serve a more grammatical function than others. For instance, the deictic motion verb *paj* ‘go’ in (274a) indicates a direction away from a location.

Some linguists have argued from a typological perspective that SVCs are monoclausal constructions, and that the verbs act together as a single predicate, communicating different facets of a single event (cf. Aikhenvald 2006: 1). Others have argued that though SVCs are fundamentally monoclausal, they consist of multiple predicates (cf. Foley & Olson 1985: 20). Evidence from psycholinguistic experiments supports the claim that SVCs represent conceptually single events in the native speakers’ minds (Cole 2016; Defina 2016). However, the distinction between single vs. multiple predicates is muddled with the distinction between single or multiple clauses whose diagnosis relies heavily on grammatical and semantic behaviors like sharing of argument(s) and a verb’s ability to take an independent tense/aspect/mood/polarity (TAMP) marker (Foley & Olson 1985; Bisang 1998; Aikhenvald 2006). Specifically for SVCs, it has been proposed that all verbs in the series must share an argument (whether this be a subject or an object). However, analyzing SVCs with a prescribed list of grammatical properties can be quite limiting since multi-verb patterns that express single events across different languages do not always fit such a narrow definition in terms of grammatical properties. As a result, many language-specific verb-verb patterns may be excluded from the description (Haspelmath 2016; Lovestrland 2021).

If we accept that SVCs are fundamentally monocausal constructions expressing conceptually single events, just like clauses with only one verb word, we may also ask why would Isaan speakers often choose to express what is essentially a single event using an SVC instead of a single verb clause? Aikhenvald (2006: 46) states that “[SVCs] can be a powerful means for providing coherent information packaging, and elaborate breakdown of a complex event” (cf. Durie 1997: 325). However, what is conceptually a coherent, single event can depend on cultural factors (Enfield 2002b; Diller 2006). The rest of this chapter will try to clarify the kinds of information packaged inside Isaan SVCs.

5.3 Features of Isaan SVCs

This study considers Isaan SVCs as surface structures of two or more verb words that occur in a single clause without any overt marker of coordination or subordination under a single intonation contour. Multiple-verb sub-units (i.e., “blocks” of SVC sub-patterns) can co-occur,

creating surface structures of four or five verbs. SVCs in Isaan and closely related Tai-Kadai languages serve a diverse set of functions including expressing cause or result of an action, indicating direction or motion of an event, communicating temporal/aspectual meaning of an event, and introducing additional arguments. Some patterns of verb-verb combination found in these languages exhibit cross-linguistically common functions of SVCs, for example, the instrumental SVC with the verb *ʔaw* ‘take’ in Isaan (Raksachat 2022), motion/direction SVCs in Thai (Thepkanjana 1986; Muansuwan 2002; Sudmuk 2005; Diller 2006), and the Lao consequential and resultative SVCs (Cole 2016).

In the following subsections, I describe grammatical features associated with Isaan SVCs. These features include temporal iconicity in the linear order of the verbs, morphosyntactic patterns of TAMP meaning words within SVCs, as well as the placement of the morpheme *ka*.

5.3.1 *Linear order, temporal iconicity, and aspectual effects*

Isaan SVCs exhibit a high degree of iconicity with respect to the ways in which the verbs are combined. First, the linear order of the verb words usually aligns with the temporal order in which the subevents or phases, actions, or states described by the verbs occur. Second, through the process of grammaticalization, some verb words develop an association with certain temporal/aspectual meanings. These include the deictic motion verbs *ma:* ‘come’ and *paj* ‘go’, the achievement verbs *daj* ‘gain’ and *lɛ:w* ‘finish’, and the stative/copula verb *ju:* ‘stay, be.at’. The syntactic position of these verb-turned-grammatical items provide important clues to inferring the temporal/aspectual meaning of the clause.

The linear order of the verb words in Isaan SVCs reflects a certain degree of force dynamic or physical causal relations (cf. Croft 2012). That is, in some event construals there exists a force that leads to an effect. For instance, one participant may instigate an action that affects another participant leading to a change of location or a change of state. The causal force is expressed toward the beginning of a clause while the results are expressed toward the end. Many SVCs in Isaan are organized into a type of event schema [AGENT (CAUSE THEME) GO.TO LOCATION], understood literally or metaphorically. Following DeLancey’s (2000: 8) analysis, a change of state is comparable to a change in location; the (metaphorical) locative meaning is expressed towards the end of the sentence. Thus, the linear order of the verb stems generally matches the temporal order in which each sub-phase of an event or action occurs. A general

pattern of event and argument structure organization is shown in Figure 2, where V_n represents one or more verb stems.

Syntactic Role:	Subject	V_n	Object	V_n	Object or Oblique
Semantic Role:	AGENT/CAUSER		THEME/PATIENT		LOCATION/STATE
Meaning:	X causes Y go to/become Z				

Figure 2: General pattern of event and argument structure organization

In (274a) above, the agent first physically takes hold of an object (a flaming torch), causing it to change location. The agent's location also changes. The verbs in the series break this event down into sub-phases, and can be analyzed as comprising two blocks, illustrated with brackets in (275). The subject NP is omitted here for brevity. The first block contains three verb words expressing two sub-phases; the first phase comprised of V_1 plus an NP describes the action the agent does to the theme. The second phase comprised of V_2 and V_3 encodes a movement and direction; the agent and the theme are moving up and away from the starting point. The second block contains V_4 and V_5 , which describe another action phase that is sequentially related to the preceding phases and names the end goal expressed in a prepositional phrase. Finally, the second block represents the purpose of the action described in the first block. The purpose is represented by the infinitive verb form [*to* VERB] in the English free translation. I will further discuss blocks of SVCs in §5.4.

	V_1		V_2	V_3	V_4	V_5	
(275)	[ʔaw faj-kabɔːŋ		kʰuːn paj]	[mat waj	tʰəŋ	ton-taːn]	
	take fire-torch		go.up go	tie put	on.top.of	CLF.tree-palm	
	‘[He] took a flaming torch (and) went up to tie (it) securely on top of a palm tree.’						

The general event organization in Figure 2 applies to (276) which involves a motion event. The meaning of ‘X causes’ is not so clearly present here; however, there is still an agent who instigates the action of the transitive *kʰi*: ‘ride’ in V_1 . Again, the subsequent verbs describe various aspects of the path of motion, direction, and the end goal.

		V ₁		V ₂	V ₃		V ₄	
(276)	∅	ka	k ^h i:	lot	kap	k ^h u:r:n	mua	
		KA	ride	vehicle	return	go.back	return.home	

‘[The Bike Boy] rode the bicycle home.’ (Pearfilm_sm35)

Example (277) illustrates the same iconic pattern of event organization presented in Figure 2. In this case, instead of a human agent, there is a natural cause *fon* ‘rain’ affecting a human patient to undergo a change of state (i.e., from being dry to being wet all over).

		V ₁	V ₂	V ₃		V ₄	V ₅		
(277)	mu:r-ni:	fon	tok	t ^h am	haj	p ^h om	ni:	piak	mət
	today	rain	fall	make	give	1SG.MASC	this	be.wet	run.out

‘Today, it’s raining (and) I got wet all over.’
or ‘Today, rain falls (and) causes me to become wet entirely.’ (Widow_sm119)

In sum, examples (275) through (277) illustrate how the linear position of the verbs in Isaan is part of the formal mechanism for expressing sequentiality. However, when the linear order of verb words does not align with the temporal sequence of the sub-events/actions, the meaning of the SVC is shifted to an aspectual one, with focus on event-internal complexities. This usually involves reduplication of the same verb word or VP structure. In (278), the actions of *lian* ‘raise’ were not performed consecutively, but simultaneously or distributively with multiple patients (i.e., the villagers raised farm animals in general). Similarly, the reduplication of *ha:* ‘seek’ in (279) indicates concurrent actions.

(278)	t ^h ajba:n	lian	ŋua	lian	k ^h uaj	?iŋăŋ	∅	<u>ka</u>	het	nām
	villager	raise	cow	raise	buffalo	what		KA	make	with

‘The villagers raised cows, buffalos, and whatever animals, [he] did so as well.’ (Tragedy_sm13.1)

(279)	∅ _i	paj	săj	ma:	săj	∅ _i	<u>ka</u>	ha:	k ^h aw	ha:	nâ:m
		go	where	come	where		KA	seek	rice	seek	water

‘Wherever [they] go, [they] look for food and water...’ (Tragedy_sm10.1)

The deictic motion verbs *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ can be used in combination to signal that an event/action happened habitually, as in (279), or over an extended period of time, as in (280). In conveying this imperfective meaning, *paj* ‘go’ necessarily precedes *ma:* ‘come’ in the verb sequence.

- (280) *naŋ paj naŋ ma: Ø ka lap kʰa: pa:mak-kato:n*
 sit go sit come KA asleep be.stuck forest-CLF.fruit-winter.melon
 ‘Having sat there for a while, [he] fell asleep in the winter melon field.’
 (Monk and Novice_sm50)

Example (280) is a case where the lexical meanings of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ are irrelevant. Further temporal/aspectual interpretation of the deictic motion verbs, along with their relative linear order, will be discussed in section §5.5.

5.3.2 *Verbs grammaticalized with temporal/aspectual/modal meanings*

The Isaan verbs *daj* and *lɛ:w* have developed grammatical functions associated with perfective meaning. The verb *daj* ‘gain’ lexically indicates physical obtainment of an object, as in (281). However, the act of acquiring something has become associated with the notion of achievement or completion, as shown in (282). Physical obtainment has also become associated with the ability or possibility of someone doing something successfully, as seen in (283) where *daj* is glossed as ‘CAN’.

- (281) *daj kʰaw daj nɛ:w-kin ka paj wat*
 gain rice gain NMLZ-eat KA go temple
 ‘[She] got the rice and the foods, and then went to the temple’ (Tragedy_sm29)

- (282) *Ø daj sa:ba:n tɔ: kan wa:*
 gain vow connect RECIP say
 ‘[They] had vowed to each other saying...’ (Widow_sm13)

- (283) *mu-ʔu:n tʰan kʰu:n paj tʰəŋ ba:n ka daj*
 tomorrow 2SG.FO go.up go above house KA CAN
 ‘Tomorrow, you may go up onto (the second floor of) the house.’ (Widow_sm152.2)
 or ‘Tomorrow, it is okay for you to go up onto (the second floor) of the house.’

(292) SVC with negation marker

bó: kə:t ma pen k^hon
 NEG born come COP person

‘(The husband) did not become reborn as a person.’ (Widow_sm 14)

(293) SVC with irrealis marker

∅ **si** ɲok muəŋ haj k^hə:ŋ-nuəŋ ləj
 IRR lift city give half-one exceed

‘[He] would give half of the city away.’ (Widow_69.2)

(294) SVC with *le:w* ‘already’

∅_i lak ∅_j paj **le:w** bak-k^hi:-cakaja:n_i
 steal go already TITLE.MASC-ride-bicycle

‘Stolen [it], the bike rider boy.’ (Pearfilm_sw69.2)

Example (295) is not an instance of an SVC because there are two occurrences *si*, each in front of a verb. Instead, (295) is considered a type of coordinated VP without an overt marker of coordination. Note that an overt coordinator *lu:* ‘or’ can be used grammatically before the second occurrence of *si*.

(295) Coordinated VP (not SVC)

k^hon bó: mi: t^hamma man ka **si** ti: **si** k^ha: kan ɲaj
 person NEG have dharma 3.NO KA IRR hit IRR kill RECIP easy

‘Those who lack Dharma, they would hit or would kill each other easily.’ (Sompong_14-65.2)

5.3.4 Covarying collexeme analysis of V_1 - V_2 patterns

As an exploration of the ways in which Isaan verbs combine in a single clause, I identified the lexical verb(s) used in each clause within the nine narrative texts and created the frequency lists shown in Table 19 and Table 20. Table 19 shows the top 10 most frequent lexemes that occur as a single verb; many of these lexemes also occur in multiple verb clauses, as seen in Table 20. Included in Table 20 are instances of a diverse group of constructions including the presentational construction (see §4.3), the matrix plus complement clause (see §3.3.3), and SVCs. Some SVCs may occur within another clause-construction. For example, in

(296b), the verb combination *ma lɔ:k* ‘come spook’ is an SVC that appears inside a complement clause.

(296) SVC within a complement clause

a. *luaŋ-p^hɔ:_i* *tu:n* *k^hu:n*
 TITLE.MONK-father wake go.up
 ‘The Monk woke up,’

b. \emptyset_i *nu:k* *wa:* *mɛ:n* *p^hi:lɔ:k* ***ma:*** ***lɔ:k*** \emptyset_i
 think say COP ghost come spook
 ‘(and) [he] thought that a ghost had come upon [him].’
 or ‘thinking that it was a ghost that had come upon him.’ (Monk and Novice_sm63)

Table 19: Ten most frequent lexemes in the single verb clause construction

Verb	Gloss	Count
<i>pen</i>	‘be’	53
<i>mi:</i>	‘have’	45
<i>wa:</i>	‘say’	37
<i>het</i>	‘make’	21
<i>k^hu:</i>	‘be.like’	19
<i>k^hu:n</i>	‘go.up’	18
<i>ʔaw</i>	‘take’	18
<i>ʔə:n</i>	‘call’	16
<i>paj</i>	‘go’	16
<i>ta:j</i>	‘die’	15

Table 20: Ten most frequent lexemes in multi-verb clauses in slots V₁, V₂, and V₃

V ₁ slot			V ₂ slot			V ₃ slot		
Verb	Gloss	Count	Verb	Gloss	Count	Verb	Gloss	Count
<i>paj</i>	‘go’	67	<i>paj</i>	‘go’	91	<i>paj</i>	‘go’	33
<i>ma:</i>	‘come’	59	<i>ma:</i>	‘come’	87	<i>ma:</i>	‘come’	26
<i>ʔaw</i>	‘take’	52	<i>haj</i>	‘give’	26	<i>ju:</i>	‘be.at’	17
<i>mi:</i>	‘have’	25	<i>k^hu:n</i>	‘go.up’	22	<i>kin</i>	‘eat’	11
<i>na:ŋ</i>	‘walk’	23	<i>hɔ:t</i>	‘arrive’	20	<i>saj</i>	‘put.into’	10
<i>haj</i>	‘give’	23	<i>ʔaw</i>	‘take’	18	<i>kep</i>	‘collect’	10
<i>k^hi:</i>	‘ride’	18	<i>saj</i>	‘put.into’	13	<i>wa:</i>	‘say’	9
<i>k^hu:n</i>	‘go.up’	16	<i>loŋ</i>	‘go.down’	13	<i>haj</i>	‘give’	8
<i>kep</i>	‘collect’	14	<i>wa:</i>	‘say’	11	<i>loŋ</i>	‘go.down’	7
<i>loŋ</i>	‘go.down’	10	<i>waj</i>	‘put’	10	<i>k^hu:n</i>	‘go.up’	7

During the annotation process, I observed that SVCs occur much more frequently than other types of multi-verb clause construction in the narrative text sample. As a follow-up analysis, I undertake a covarying collexeme analysis (cf. Gries & Stefanowich 2004) in the SVCs where only two verb words are used (i.e., V₁-V₂ patterns). The results are found in Table 21. The table includes a list of the ten most highly conventionalized SVCs whose V₁ and V₂ co-occur with each other more than expected by chance. The table presents the lexemes in each verb slot, the overall frequency of occurrence of lexemes in each verb slot, the observed frequency vs. expected frequency (the latter in parentheses) of the two verbs combined, and the collocational strength measures (namely, log likelihood and *p* value) of the combination. The table shows the collocation pairs with the highest scores, in a descending order. The verb-verb combinations exhibit a diverse set of event types such as motion, causation, and change of state.

Table 21: Covarying collexeme analysis of V₁-V₂ patterns

	Verb Slot 1 (V ₁)	Freq in V ₁ slot	Verb Slot 2 (V ₂)	Freq in V ₂ slot	Freq of V ₁ -V ₂ pattern	log likelihood	<i>p</i> value
1	<i>na:ŋ</i> ‘walk’	14	<i>paj</i> ‘go’	51	11 (2.1)	30.11	< .00001
2	<i>laj</i> ‘chase’	4	<i>kʰa:</i> ‘kill’	3	3 (0)	29.83	< .00001
3	<i>lɔ:j</i> ‘sneak’	5	<i>ʔaw</i> ‘take’	8	4 (0.1)	27.39	< .00001
4	<i>buat</i> ‘ordain’	4	<i>pen</i> ‘be’	5	3 (0.1)	23.12	< .00001
5	<i>pʰa:</i> ‘lead’	3	<i>lom</i> ‘fall.down’	2	2 (0)	20.70	< .00001
6	<i>paj</i> ‘go’	46	<i>soŋ</i> ‘send’	5	5 (0.7)	20.46	< .00001
7	<i>ma:</i> ‘come’	39	<i>hɔ:t</i> ‘arrive’	20	10 (2.3)	19.91	< .00001
8	<i>nok</i> ‘lift’	4	<i>haj</i> ‘give’	9	3 (0.1)	18.41	< .0001
9	<i>kʰa:</i> ‘kill’	2	<i>ta:j</i> ‘die’	5	2 (0)	17.78	< .0001
10	<i>saʔ</i> ‘scatter’	2	<i>tem</i> ‘fill.up’	5	2(0)	17.78	< .0001

The covarying collexeme analysis gives us an idea of some of the highly conventionalized verb-verb patterns in Isaan, which allows us to further examine each pattern qualitatively. As seen in Table 21, when any two, and only two verb words are used together in the narrative text sample, *na:ŋ* ‘walk’ occurs 14 times in V₁ slot, and *paj* ‘go’ occurs 51 times in V₂ slot. Together, the combination *na:ŋ paj* ‘walk go’ occurs 11 times, which is much higher than expected by chance (which would be 2.1 times), and the combination *na:ŋ paj* ‘walk go’ has the highest collocation

score. The fact that the two lexemes *pa:ŋ* and *paj* are highly associated to one another (log likelihood = 33.11, $p < .00001$) may be explained by a number of reasons (other than chance). The sample texts include many instances of narrative participants walking or going somewhere due to the nature of the Pear Story video stimulus, as well as the plot of the Monk and Novice and the Tragedy stories. At the same time, the two verbs share semantic similarity in that they both describe the movement/action of a single subject participant (i.e., the theme in literal THEME GO.TO LOCATION events). Similar features hold for the combination *ma: hɔ:t* ‘come arrive’. Though the ‘walk go’ and ‘come arrive’ combinations are particularly striking, note that all of the combinations in Table 21 are significantly more highly associated than would be expected by chance.

5.3.5 Distribution of referring expressions for event participants in V_1 - V_2 patterns

We now turn to examining the ways arguments of SVCs are linguistically expressed. Table 22 presents the distribution of referring expressions (REs) of the arguments of the SVCs that comprise two verb words ($N = 335$). NP₁ refers to the argument position before V_1 , and NP₂ refers to the subsequent argument position (immediately after some transitive V_1 , otherwise after V_2). Based on the overall frequency in the sample narrative text, the expected frequency of each category is given in parentheses. I have highlighted in bold where the observed vs. expected frequencies drastically differ from one another.

Table 22: Referring expressions of arguments in V_1 - V_2 patterns

REs	NP ₁ Slot	NP ₂ Slot	Total
Def. Null	197 (131.6)	47 (92.4)	224
Pronoun	51 (44.7)	25 (31.3)	76
Lexical NP	51 (118.7)	151 (83.3)	202
Indef. Null	36 (28.2)	12 (19.8)	48
	335	235	570

Table 22 shows that the NP₁ slot tends to be empty, and the subject referent is covertly expressed ($\chi^2 = 84.95$ loglikelihood = 89.19, $p < .00001$). The null expression is referential (i.e., it refers to a particular individual whose existence in the discourse is assumed to be agreed upon by the interlocutors or at least the speaker has a particular individual in mind). The use of lexical NPs makes up roughly 64% of the referents occupying the second NP slot ($\chi^2 = 145.12$, loglikelihood

= 148.92, $p < .00001$). At first glance, this seems to suggest that the SVC comprising two verb words in Isaan prefers a given referent in the subject position and a new referent in the object position(s). However, we will see in the next sections that this is too simplistic a generalization once particular types of SVCs are examined. In fact, only three of the lexical NPs in NP₂ slot are first mentions of referents.

5.4 Different types of Isaan SVCs

The results in Table 21 especially highlight strong collocation between certain pairs of items of low token frequency, namely *k^ha: ta:j* ‘kill die’ and *buat pen* ‘ordain be’. Patterns of this type give us some insight into culturally specific information regarding characteristic events, semantics of particular verbs, and the linguistic expression choices. In the following subsections, I list out different types of SVCs and describe the ways verb words are combined in each type as well as their argument structures. Some of these patterns are actually combinations of multiple blocks of verbs or SVCs, which I will point out as relevant.

5.4.1 SVCs with highly idiomatic verb combinations

Some of the verb combinations are more idiomatic than others. For example, in (297) the intransitive verb *buat* as an independent verb means ‘be ordained into Buddhist monkhood’. In (297), *buat* occurs in a V₁-V₂ combination where the second verb asserts information regarding the event or modifies the event in some way. In

(298), which is part of the Siang Miang story, the speaker is defining who the title word *sian* can refer to. The verb-verb combination of *buat sik* in (298a) refers to the fact that the monkhood has terminated, and *buat pen* in (298b) specifies which state of monkhood the participant first entered. The general pattern of event organization in Figure 2 still holds. In the case of (298b), the change of state from being a commoner to being a monk is metaphorically analogous to a change of location.

- (297) a. samai-kɔ:n k^han bɔ: t^han **buat**
 era-before if NEG yet ordain
 ‘In the past, if (a man) has not been ordained.’

- b. k^hao bó: haj ?aw mia de:
 3.FO NEG let take wife PRT
 ‘They did not let (him) take a wife.’ (Wedding_sm198)

- (298) a. siaŋ ni **buat sik** de:
 TITLE.MASC TPC ordain quit.monk PRT
 ‘As for Siang, [someone who] was ordained and left the Buddhist monkhood.’

- b. mɛ:n / **buat pen** ne:n
 COP ordain COP young.monk
 ‘Yes, he was ordained young.’ (SiangMiang_sm45)

Another highly idiomatic expression that involves an SVC is shown in (299) which comprises three verb words in a row. The expression in (299a) is memorized as a chunk; it is what Isaan speakers would normally say to conclude with the moral of the story. This expression never occurs with a negation marker nor with temporal/aspectual words of any kind.

(299) Stating the moral of the story

- a. nit^ha:n luanj nî: **sɔ:n haj lu:** wa:
 tale story PROX teach give know COMP
 ‘This story teaches (us) that’

- b. mo:ho: nî: p^ha: to: tok-tam
 angry PROX lead self fall-low
 ‘anger leads oneself down.’ (Tragedy_sm94)

This highly idiomatic pattern utilizes the same general event and argument structure organization as other SVCs. The less idiomatic SVC patterns are discussed next.

5.4.2 Resultative SVC

The resultative SVC encodes a cause-result relation of the verbs in the series. The general meaning is ‘X causes Y to become Z’. In (300b) the transitive verb *k^ha:* ‘kill’ fills the V₁ slot, followed by its natural result *ta:j* ‘die’ in V₂. The agent/actor is expressed in the first NP slot, and the patient/undergoer is in the second NP. This type of event organization suggests that the

meaning of the first verb by itself does not necessarily entail an accomplishment. Hence, a second verb is necessary to specify that the (intended) result is accomplished (cf. Enfield 2008: 139; Cole 2016: 50–51).

(300) Resultative SVC (object sharing)

a. p^hən caŋ wa: b³: haj mo:ho: tɔ:n hiw
 3.PO so.that say NEG give angry at.time hungry

‘(That’s why) they say don’t get angry when you are hungry,’

b. man si k^ha: k^hon ta:j
 3.NO IRR kill person die

‘you could kill someone.’

(Tragedy_sm95)

Example (301) with the free English translation ‘I killed a mosquito, (but it) didn’t die’ makes perfect sense in Isaan. The meaning in the resultative SVC is that the agent performs an action of killing (e.g., beating); dying is not entailed. However, when the verb is used in a single verb clause, as seen in (302), dying is normally implied.

(301) k^hɔ:j k^ha: ɲuŋ b³ ta:j sām
 1.SG.FA kill mosquito NEG die unfortunately

‘I killed a mosquito (but it) didn’t die, unfortunately.’

(self-elicited)

(302) bak-t^hɔ:ŋ k^ha: mɛ:
 TITLE.MASC-Tong kill mother

‘Bak Tong killed his mother.’

(Tragedy_oi90)

The transitive verb V₁ *kin* ‘eat’ is followed by V₂ *ʔim* ‘be.full’ in (303). This type of verb combination is often categorized as an instance of resultative SVCs in Thai and Lao alike (cf. Muansuwan 2002: 206; Sudmuk 2005: 65; Cole 2016: 50). Here, the eater is the same referent as the one who becomes full.

(303) Resultative SVC (subject sharing)

t^hɔ:ŋ kin k^haw ʔim lɛ:w
 Tong eat rice be.full already

Each of the verbs in (306) and (308) are independent verbs with their lexical meanings. They can be used in a single verb clause. However, depending on their definition of SVCs, some scholars may disregard them as SVCs due to their distinctive negation pattern. However, it is my contention that the negation pattern is motivated by the non-telic lexical aspect of V₁ in the resultative SVC.

5.4.3 *Transfer SVC*

Transfer SVCs communicate a physical change of location, elaborating the movement or trajectory of an item to a clear end goal. The general constructional template is in (310).

(310) Argument structure of Isaan transfer SVCs

NP ₁	V ₁ _{TRANS}	NP ₂	(V _{GO/COME})	V _n	NP ₃
AGENT		Theme			GOAL/RECIPIENT

Isaan transfer SVCs are highly compositional. The construction normally involves transitive verbs of handling in V₁ such as *ɲaw* ‘take’, *kep* ‘collect’, etc., optionally followed by the deictic motion verbs *paj* ‘go’ or *ma:* ‘come’, followed by a verb in the final slot that encodes transfer, placement or dispatch of an object, e.g., *haj* ‘give’, *waj* ‘put’, *saj* ‘put.into’ (cf. Enfield 2007a: 366 for Lao) When a deictic motion verb occupies the final verb position, as in (313), it is non-optional (cf. Raksachat 2022: 23–24). The following examples are instances of Isaan transfer SVCs. The verb words are highlighted in bold.

(311) **kep** **saj** t^huŋ-p^ha:j k^ha:ŋ nà: de:
 collect put.into bag-carry side front PRT
 ‘[He] collected [the fruits] (and) put into the bag in front.’ (Pearfilm_sm14)

(312) ku: ɲaw Ø ma t^he: waj nì: sə:m kata:
 1SG.NO take come pour put here three basket
 ‘I brought [the fruits] (and) poured down right here, three baskets.’ (Pearfilm_sm59)

- (313) kɔŋ ɲai ni Ø ʔaw Ø paj wat lɛ:w
 box big TPC take go temple already
 ‘As for the big rice container, [she] took (it) to the temple.’ (Tragedy_sm50.1)

If the transfer sub-action is not achieved, the negation marker occurs before V₁ ‘take’ of the transfer SVC, as shown in (314b).

(314) Negation marker in Isaan transfer SVC

- a. kʰan Ø_i paj ka:ŋ-wen nan
 if go mid-day TPC
 ‘If [you] go during the day,’
- b. pʰən si bɔː ʔaw tʰɔːŋ haj Ø_i waː-san
 3.PO IRR NEG take gold give say-thus
 ‘they will not give [you] any gold, (she) said.’ (YaKinPing_sm139)

Within the nine narrative texts examined, referents that occupy NP₁ slot of transfer SVCs are never first mentions. In other words, the agent of a transfer SVC is always given information or currently active in the assumed mental representation of the discourse. In fact, the NP₁ slot often contains a null (44 out of 67 instances), but it is referential-specific (i.e., a definite null). The referents that occupy NP₂ also tend to be given or contextually recoverable information. In the texts, the NP₂ slot contains roughly equal number of definite nulls and lexical NPs (28 vs. 35 instances). First mentions tend to occur in the NP₃ slot for the goal. In (315b) from a Pear Story, the referent *tʰuŋ* ‘bag’ is mentioned for the first time.

(315) First mention in NP₃ of transfer SVC

- a. Ø_i kʰuŋ paj kep kep kep Ø_j
 go.up go collect collect collect
 ‘[He] went up to collect [fruits] repeatedly,’
- b. tɛː-waː Ø_i ʔaw Ø_j saj tʰuŋ caŋsiː deː
 but-COMP take put.into bag like.this PRT
 ‘but [he] put [them] in a bag like this.’ (Pearfilm_oi9)

5.4.4 Instrumental SVC

Instrumental SVCs share some semantic properties with transfer SVCs but they are distinctive constructions due to the difference in lexemes that conventionally fill the verb slots and the information packaging properties (Raksachat 2022). The V_1 slot in Isaan instrumental SVCs is regularly filled by *ʔaw* ‘take’ and follows the template in (316).

(316) Argument structure of Isaan instrumental SVCs

NP ₁	V ₁ = ʔaw	NP ₂	V _n	NP ₃
AGENT		INSTRUMENT		OPEN SEMANTIC ROLE

There are only two instances of instrumental SVCs in the narrative text sample. These are shown in (317) and (318). However, an examination of all instances in the Spoken Isaan Corpus has shown the instrument participant is almost always contextually non-recoverable (see detailed discussion in Raksachat 2022). That is, NP₂ of the transfer SVC and NP₂ of the instrumental SVC have different information packaging profiles.

- (317) Ø ʔaw ʔɛ:k ni la fa:t hua mɛ:
 take yoke TPC PRT strike head mother
 ‘[The son] took the yoke (and) struck the mother’s head (with it).’

- (318) siɑŋmiɑŋ ka ləj ʔaw suak p^hu:k k^hɔ: mɛ:w
 Siangmiang KA exceed take rope tie neck cat
 ‘Siangmiang, then, used a robe (and) tied around a cat’s neck.’ (Siangmiang_sm83)

Like the transfer SVC, the negation marker occurs before V_1 ‘take’ in instrumental SVCs. All the sub-events are negated together, as seen in (319).

(319) Negation marker in Isaan instrumental SVC

- t^hi:-ciŋ ka bɔ: tɔŋ ʔaw niw hɔ:ŋ dɔ:k
 at-true KA NEG must take finger support PRT
 ‘In fact, [you] don’t have to support it with fingers.’ (Sompong_16_28.1)

5.4.5 SVCs with *haj* ‘give’ in V_1 or V_2

The verb *haj* can occur in many SVCs. I will briefly discuss a few examples here. With its lexical meaning ‘give’, *haj* is used in the final verb position of transfer SVCs (see §5.4.3).

Two grammatical meanings are associated with *haj* when it occupies V_1 in other SVCs: permissive (320b) and causative (321).

(320) Permissive *haj* meaning ‘let’ in V_1

- a. na:ŋ nî: ka pen k^hon mi: me:ta nɔ?
 lady PROX KA COP person have grace AGREE.PRT
 ‘This lady is indeed a gracious person, right?’

- b. ka ləj **haj** p^hɔ:-k^ha:-wanit cɔ:t huua waj
 KA exceed give father-sell-commerce park boat put
 ‘And so, [she] let the merchant dock the boat.’ (Widow_sm101)

(321) Causative *haj* meaning ‘make’ in V_1

- bɛ:p wa: kɔŋ nɔ:j ka **haj** Ø_i ?im lu:k ku:i ni
 type say box small KA give be.full kid 1SG.NOTPC
 ‘Like, the small rice container would make [him_i] full, as for my son_i.’ (Tragedy_oi42.1)

The grammatical meanings ‘let’ and ‘make’ are metaphorically extended from the lexical *haj* ‘give’ sense, from a participant receiving a physical object to “receiving” something more abstract.

When *haj* ‘give’ is in V_2 , the SVC can express meanings other than physical transfer of an object. Again, a metaphorical extension process applies, to yield a benefactive meaning of *haj*, as seen in (322) and (323). In these cases, *haj* occurs in V_2 .

(322) Benefactive *haj* ‘for’ in V_2

- pɛ: **haj** p^hən faŋ ?aw dɔ:
 translate give 3.PO listen take PRT
 ‘[Someone] translate for him instead.’ (Sompong_11.11)

(323) Benefactive *haj* ‘for’ in V₂

k^hǎw ka het t^ha: haj bəŋ ju:
 3.FO KA make posture give look.at be.at

‘I have seen they enacted the story.’

(Tragedy_oi54.2)

Lit. ‘They made gestures for me to watch.’

Finally, *haj* ‘give’ in a non-initial verb position can indicate achievement of a process verb that occurs in an earlier position. This function is shown in (324) where the speaker is describing the pork-grilling process. The speaker started saying (324a), pauses, and restarts the utterance again in (324b). Since all verbs in the series are not said within a single intonation unit, *piŋ haj ʔɔ:k mǎ:t* ‘grill give exit run.out’ or ‘roast until (it) fell off’ was not counted an SVC. Nevertheless, it is normally the case that a process-achievement expression is said within a single intonation unit, as in (325).

(324) Achievement *haj* (translated as ‘until’)

a. lə:w Ø ka piŋ kadu:k haj man /
 already KA grill bone give 3.NO

‘and then [he] roasted the ribs until it,

b. haj man nuu: ʔɔ:k mǎ:t / mən bɔ:
 give 3.NO meat exit run.out COP NEG

‘until all the meat fell off them, right?’

(Widow_sm86)

(325) Achievement *haj* (translated as ‘until’)

kin haj mǎ:t də:
 eat give run.out PRT

‘Eat (rice, vegetables, etc.) until it’s gone.’

(self-elicited)

5.4.6 Motion SVC

Motion SVCs can elaborate the manner and the direction or path of a single motion event, following the template in (326). The first verb in the V₁ slot can be an intransitive or transitive motion verb like *lom* ‘fall’, *ɲa:ŋ* ‘walk’, *k^hun* ‘go.up’, *p^ha:j* ‘paddle’, and *k^hi:* ‘ride’, etc. The subsequent verb(s) in V_n slot(s) indicate direction or path, e.g., *ʔɔ:k* ‘exit’, *suan* ‘to pass in the opposite direction’, *kap* ‘to reverse, go back’, *loŋ* ‘go.down’, *ma:* ‘come’, *paj* ‘go’.

(326) Argument structure of Isaan motion SVCs

NP ₁	V ₁ (MANNER OF) MOTION	(NP ₂)	V _n DIRECTION/PATH	(PP/NP ₃)
AGENT		THEME		LOCATION

(327) Motion-path SVC with intransitive V₁

me: ka lom loŋ
 mother KA fall go.down
 ‘The mother fell down.’

(328) Motion-direction SVC with transitive V₁

∅_i p^ha:j lua ma:
 paddle boat come
 ‘[He] came paddling the boat.’

According to Muansuwan’s (2002: 43) analysis of Thai SVCs, up to five directional/path verbs can follow the SVC-initial manner of motion verb (cf. Thepkanjana 1986). However, in natural spontaneous Isaan discourse, I find that speakers use up to three verbs in any motion SVCs. Some examples are in (329) – (331).

(329) SVC with three directional/path verbs

∅ ka læj kap k^hàw ma:
 KA exceed reverse enter come
 ‘So, [he] came back (into under the tree shade).’ (Pearfilm_sw29.3)

(330) SVC with intransitive V₁ followed by two directional/path verbs

bat-ni dek-nô:j man ka læj ja:ŋ suan paj
 now child-small 3.NO KA exceed walk pass.opposite go
 ‘Now, the children, they walk past in the opposite direction away (from the Farmer).’ (Pearfilm_yt45)

(331) SVC with transitive V₁ followed by two directional/path verbs

∅_i k^hi: ∅_j ?ɔ:k paj nɔ:k ba:n
 ride exit go outside house
 ‘[The boy] rode [the bicycle] out of, away from the village.’ (Pearfilm_yt25)

The purpose meaning also applies to (335). In this context, the monk character instructs the novice monk to get up early in order to wake the monk up. Here, the action of ‘wake me’ is interpreted as the purpose of *luk* ‘get up’.

(335) Purposive SVC with two verbs

ʔo: mu-ʔu:n sao caw **luk** **puk** k^hɔj
 oh tomorrow morning 2SG.FA get.up wake 1SG.FA

te: dək kɔ:n də: wa:san
 from dark before PRT say-thus

“Oh, tomorrow morning you get up (and) wake me up early, will you?” (he) said.
 (Monk and Novice_sm7)

A purpose often occurs with other SVCs as an additional verb block towards the end of the sequence. The SVC blocks are bracketed for clarity in the examples below.

(336) Transfer-purposive SVC with three verbs

∅ [**ʔaw** k^hàw **ma**]_{TRANSFER} [**kin**]_{PURPOSE}
 take rice come eat

‘He took the rice for eating.’ (Tragedy_sm64.1)

(337) Motion-purposive SVC with four verbs

ne:n nɔ̃:j ka [**fa:w** k^haw **paj**]_{MOTION} [**puk** luanɲ-p^hɔ̃:]_{PURPOSE}
 young.monk small KA hurry enter go wake TITLE.MONK-father

‘The young monk_i hurried into [the monk’s bedroom] to wake the monk up.’
 (Monk and his Novice_sm24-25)

(338) Transfer-purposive SVC with four verbs

a. p^hɔ̃:-ta hɔ̃:t ti:-ha: ləw
 when-from arrive CLF.time-five already

‘When it became 5 am,’

b. mɛ:ʔɔ̃:k p^hu- p^hən mon luanɲ-p^hɔ̃: ma:
 lady CLF.HUM- 3.PO invite.monk TITLE.MONK-father come

‘the lady, the one who invited the monk,’

- c. ka si ma: / [ʔaw bak-kato:n paj]_{TRANSFER}
 KA IRR come take CLF.fruit-winter.melon go
 [kɛŋ saŋ kaj]_{PURPOSE} / mɛ:n bɔː
 cook put.into chicken COP NEG
 ‘would come (and) take the winter melon away for cooking with chicken, right?’
 (Monk and Novice_sm52)

It is not always clear whether the purpose sub-event happens at the time of the first (typically transfer) sub-event block within the SVC. For instance, the transfer SVC with purposive meaning in (336) ‘take come eat’ may be construed as an event where the participant has moved the rice but has not put it in his mouth, or he could be eating it right after he took it. However, the discourse context can help distinguish such meanings. I will resume the discussion in §5.6.

The following instance of a transfer SVC with purposive meaning can grammatically take the negation marker *bɔ* only in front of the first verb, as shown in (340). The negative meaning takes a wide scope, i.e., the truth value of the whole sentence’s proposition is altered.

- (339) Transfer-purposive SVC
 ne:n-nɔːj_i ka ləj [ʔaw faj-kabɔːŋ_j k^hu:n paj]_{TRANSFER}
 young.monk-small KA exceed take fire-torch go.up go
 [mat waj t^həŋ ton-ta:n]_{PURPOSE}
 tie put on.top.of CLF.tree-palm
 ‘The Novice, as a result, took a flaming torch (and) went up to tie (it) securely on top of a palm tree.’
 (Monk and his Novice_sm20)

- (340) Negation test for (339)
 ne:n nɔːj_i ka ləj bɔ [ʔaw faj kabɔːŋ k^hu:n paj]_{TRANSFER}
 young.monk small KA exceed NEG take fire torch go.up go
 [mat waj t^həŋ ton-ta:n]_{PURPOSE}
 tie put on top of CLF.tree-palm
 ‘And so, the young monk *did not* take a torch (and) go up to tie it securely on top of a palm tree’
 Meaning: ‘it is not the case that the young monk took a torch (nor) went up to tie it securely on top of the palm tree.’ (i.e., nothing happens)

The purpose events present a challenge in identifying narrative main event line elements (discussed in Chapter 6) because it is typically unclear at the time of utterance whether the purposive event is being reported as actually happening within the universe of discourse. Therefore, the analysis of a narrative discourse as a whole is required to gauge the meaning intended by the speaker.

5.5 The case of ‘go’ and ‘come’ in SVCs

In the following subsections, I present a case study of two of the most frequent verb words in SVCs, namely *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’. My interest in these deictic motion verbs concerns the extent to which Isaan speakers use them to indicate temporally sequenced action phases (or sub-events) in narrative discourse contexts, to add motion and direction to other non-translational motion verbs, or to support temporal/aspectual concepts. The temporal/aspectual meanings become relevant in examining whether events reported by a series of verbs are understood as overlapping or happening in succession. The particular interpretation of *paj* and *ma:* depends on their position within an SVC and on the other types of verbs they co-occur with.

In the following, §5.5.1 describes the basic functions of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’. §5.5.2 and §5.5.3 examine the occurrences of the deictic verbs in the initial and the non-initial positions of SVCs, respectively. Finally, §5.5.4 discusses the functions of *paj* and *ma:* relating to temporal/aspectual meanings.

5.5.1 Basic functions of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ in Isaan SVCs

The verbs *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ may indicate simple motion events. They are deictic, allowing speakers to manage attention flow and specify the viewpoint (DeLancey 1981: 635) that the speaker takes in reporting an event. Their function varies depending on whether *paj* and *ma:* are in V₁ position, where they are interpreted as prior lexical sub-events. In their lexical uses in V₁, the interpretation of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ involves physical translational movement of a participant, and reflects a locative point of reference. In particular, *paj* ‘go’ signals departure from the point of reference as the starting point and *ma:* ‘come’ indicates a movement towards the point of reference as the endpoint.

To illustrate, in (341), the point of reference is the Merchant’s boat. The speaker is describing the scene where the Merchant went to rest underneath the Widow’s house. Prior to

this point in the story, the Merchant had been resting on his boat on the river’s shore. In (341a) the verb *paj* ‘go’ occurs in the V₂ position after another motion verb *k^haw* ‘enter’ that specifies a path. The verb *ju:* ‘be.at’, which is in-process of developing into a preposition, may be omitted without changing the well-formedness or the semantics of the sentence. In (341c), the verb *paj* occupies the V₁ position and signals a departure from the locative point of reference (i.e., the boat), but such location need not be specified. Instead, the location where the movement ends is signaled by ‘there’.

- | | | | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₃ | | |
|----------|--|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|-------|
| (341) a. | p ^h ɔ | ∅ _i | k ^h àw | paj | ju: | tala:ŋ | ba:n |
| | when | | enter | go | be.at | underneath | house |
| | ‘When [the Merchant] went into the ground floor of the house...’ | | | | | | |
| b. | tala:ŋ | ba:n | ka | pen | lo:ŋ | nɔ? | |
| | underneath | house | KA | COP | empty | AGREE.PRT | |
| | ‘The ground floor is an empty space, right?’ | | | | | | |
| | | | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₃ | | |
| c. | ∅ _i | ka | lej | paj | p ^h ak | ju: | han |
| | | KA | exceed | go | rest | be.at | there |
| | ‘And so, [he] went (and) rested there.’ | | | | | | |
- (Widow_sm122.2-123.2)

Regarding the understood temporal sequence in the discourse world, the event of (341a) happened prior to the time of the event of (341c); the linguistic reporting overall matches the temporal order of the events. Regarding the temporal relationship between the subphases expressed by each verb word in (341a), the action expressed by V₁ did not happen before that of V₂. Rather, the V₁-V₂ combination ‘enter go’ in (341a) is understood as simultaneous features of the movement, where *paj* in V₂ is providing a direction ‘away’ from the reference point. Inserting *lewka* ‘and then’ shows that the reading of the SVC in (341a) is not compatible with a sequential reading which would be enforced by *lewka*, as seen in (342a).

In contrast, V₁-V₂ in the SVC of (341c) are sequentially related; both *paj* ‘go’ in the V₁ position and *p^hak* ‘rest’ in V₂ are fully lexical, asserting a movement event, and that the movement away from a source location and the resting happened in succession. The insertion of

lewka does not upset this basic semantics (342b), though the amount of space/time passing between the two sub-events of (341c) versus (342b) may differ.

(342) *lewka* ‘and then’ insertion tests for verb patterns in (341)

a. *k^hàw lɛwka paj ju: tala:ŋ ba:n
 enter and.then go be.at underneath house
 (Attempted: ‘(Someone) enters and then goes (to) be at under the house.’)

b. paj lɛwka p^hak ju: han
 go and.then rest be.at there
 ‘(Someone) goes and then rests there.’

5.5.2 *V*₁ *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ are fully lexical

When *paj* or *ma:* occurs in *V*₁, the verb expresses its lexical meaning of translational motion. For instance, when *paj* ‘go’ occurs in *V*₁, as in (343), it is interpreted as a prior sub-event that is sequentially related to the subsequent phases. The SVC in (343) comprises three verbs. In this case, *V*₂ and *V*₃ form a simultaneous unit *wa:ŋ loŋ* ‘put down’ that is understood to temporally follow the translational motion phase of *paj* ‘go’ in *V*₁. When *paj* ‘go’ is removed, the sequential relation also disappears, as seen in (344).

(343) SVC comprising three verbs with *paj* ‘go’ in *V*₁

		<i>V</i> ₁	<i>V</i> ₂		<i>V</i> ₃	
a.	p ^h ɔ:-ta	∅	paj	wa:ŋ	pap	loŋ
	when-from		go	put.down	promptly	go.down
	‘Once [he] went (and) put (the ash) down,’					

b.	∅	ka:p	kadu:k-mu:	pap-pap		
		prostate	bone-pig	promptly-promptly		
	‘[he] prostrated himself to the pig’s ashes promptly.’					(Widow_sm160)

(344) SVC with simultaneous actions

	p ^h ɔ:-ta	∅	wa:ŋ	pap	loŋ
	when-from		put.down	promptly	go.down
	‘Once [he] put (the ash) down’				(self-elicited based on (343))

Similarly, when *ma:* ‘come’ occurs in V₁ in an SVC comprising three verbs, as in (345), the ‘coming’ sub-event temporally precedes V₂ *sə:j* ‘help’ and V₃ *kep* ‘collect’. When *ma:* ‘come’ is removed, the SVC no longer has a sequential reading, as seen in (346).

(345) SVC comprising three verbs with *ma:* ‘come’ in V₁

∅ ka ləj **ma** **səj** **kep** ∅
 KA exceed come help collect
 ‘[they] came to help pick up [the fruits].’ (Pearfilm_sw74)

(346) SVC with simultaneous actions

∅ ka ləj **səj** **kep** ∅
 KA exceed help collect
 ‘[they] helped pick up [the fruits].’ (self-elicited based on (345))

Given that the presence of the deictic motion verbs in V₁ position in an SVC affects whether the phases of an event are understood as sequentially related, as a follow-up analysis I undertake a collocation analysis of instances of SVCs that comprise only two verbs to examine the temporal relationship between V₁ and V₂ in the SVCs. The goal is to evaluate the extent to which the deictic verbs in V₁ collocate with sequential meaning relative to the subevent in V₂.

The results in Table 23 suggest that the event phases V₁-V₂ tend to be sequentially related when the deictic motion verbs occur in V₁. While other lexemes occurring in V₁ may also be interpreted as preceding their respective V₂ in time, the sequential relationship between V₁-V₂ is much more frequent when *paj* ‘go’ or *ma:* ‘come’ occupies V₁.

Table 23: Relationship between V₁ and V₂ in two-verb SVCs where the deictic motion verbs occur in V₁ ($\chi^2 = 144.65$, loglikelihood = 141.89, $p < .00001$).

Slot V ₁	Semantic relations with V ₂		Total
	Sequential	Other relations	
‘go’ or ‘come’	71 (26.6)	15 (59.4)	86
other verbs	32 (76.4)	215 (171.6)	247
	103	230	333

When the deictic motion verb occupies V₁ in a two-verb SVC, the following V₂ is an open class verb. Some examples of the lexemes in V₂ position are listed in (347).

(347) Pattern 1: The two-verb SVC has a sequential reading

V ₁	V ₂
go/come	Open-class verbs

Examples of V₂: *soŋ* ‘send,’ *hen* ‘see,’ *kin* ‘eat,’ *su:* ‘buy,’ *tam* ‘crash,’ *t^he:* ‘pour,’ *nɔ:n* ‘sleep,’ *kep* ‘collect,’ *k^ham* ‘feel.for,’ *ʔɔk-lu:k* ‘give birth,’ *cɔ:t* ‘park (a vehicle),’ etc.

An example of Pattern 1 two-verb SVCs is found in (348). In this context, it is not specified where the son departed from or specifically where he went, though it is understood that he probably left from his house to go to the rice field. The ‘going’ and the ‘plowing the field’ are again sequential when *paj* is in V₁.

- | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | | | V ₁ | V ₂ | | |
| (348) a. | mi: | mur-nuŋ | lu:k-sa:j | paj | t ^h aj | nā: |
| | have | day-one | kid-male | go | plow | rice.paddy |
| | ‘There came a day (when) the son went to plow the field.’ | | | | | |
| b. | ∅ | paj | t ^h aj | ta | dək | |
| | | go | plow | from | early.morning | |
| | ‘[He] went (and) plowed in the early morning hours.’ | | | | | (Tragedy_oi27.2) |

For Pattern 1, the insertion of *lewka* ‘and then’, which enforces a sequential reading (though it creates a new clause or sentence type) does not upset the semantics of the original verb-verb combination. However, this is not the case for the verbs in Pattern 2, listed in (349), which exhibit other semantic relations with respect to *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’.

(349) Pattern 2: The two-verb SVC is not compatible a sequential reading

V ₁	V ₂
go/come	stative verbs

Examples of V₂: *ju*: ‘be.at’, *t^ha:m* ‘follow’, *suaj* ‘be.late’, *lop-fon* ‘hide from rain’ etc.

The insertion of *lewka* for sub-phase sequentiality in SVCs, for some reasons, does not work well with (350a) where the lexical meaning of *ju*: ‘be.at’, meaning ‘stay’, applies. It is possible to conceptualize the ‘going’ phrase as temporally prior (hence in sequence) to the ‘staying’ phase. However, based on the context in the narrative text, it appears the participant Siang Miang had already been staying at the temple prior to when the King wanted to talk to him. The use of *paj* ‘go’ here might relate more to managing the point of reference in space/time of the story. Based on the use of *paj* in (350f), the deictic center is at the king’s location, which was not the same place as the temple.

(350) Context: The speaker is starting a new narrative episode

- a. *k^haŋ* *nuŋ* \emptyset ***paj*** ***ju:*** *wat*
time one go stay temple
‘One time, [Siang Miang] had gone (and) stayed at the temple.’
- b. *p^hala:sa:_k* *si* *mi:* *ŋa:n* *lat^haka:n*
king IRR have work royal.duties
‘The king would have some royal work.’
- c. *si* *mi:* *ŋa:n* *lat^haka:n* *puksa: bak-siaŋmiang* *ni* *la*
IRR have work royal.duties consult TITLE.MASC-Siangmiang TPC PRT
‘(He) would have some royal work to consult with Siangmiang.’
- d. \emptyset_k *k^hit* *caŋdäj* \emptyset_k *ka* *k^hit* *bó:* *ʔɔ:k* / *ka* *ləj*
 think how KA think NEG exit KA exceed
‘No matter how much [the King] thinks, [he] couldn’t figure it out, and so...’
- e. *siaŋmiang* / *suaj* *ʔi:k* *ni* *kada:j*
Siangmiang be.late more TPC PRT
‘Siangmiang was late again, this guy!’

- f. ba:t^hínî: ∅ haj t^haha:n **paj** ta:m
 now give soldier go follow
 ‘Now, [the king] has/had his soldier go fetch [him].’ (SiangMiang_sm31-33)

The data overall suggests that when *paj* and *ma:* occur in V₁ of SVCs, their meaning tends to be lexical. That is, ‘going’ or ‘coming’ is asserted as actually occurring, regardless of its semantic relation to V₂. The only exception is found in the excerpt in (351) from the introductory portion of a Pear Story recording session. The speaker is speaking into audio recording equipment and is describing what he is about to do. Here, the verb *ma:* ‘come’ in V₁ lacks translational movement meaning entirely. Instead, (351a) could be interpreted as ‘I am about to tell a story’, or ‘I’m entering the storytelling mode’, signaling a metaphorical departure from the previous activity (i.e., watching the video).

- (351) a. sawadi: krap mur:-ni: ∅_i si **ma:** lao nit^ha:n_j
 greetings PRT day-this IRR come narrate tale
 ‘Hello, today [I] will tell a story,’
- b. wao la:w nɔ? ʔəm
 speak Lao AGREE.PRT filler
 ‘(I) speak Lao (Isaan variety), alright?’
- c. ∅_j t^hi ∅_i hen naj p^ha:p wi:di?o:
 that see in picture video
 ‘[the story] that [I] saw in the video.’ (Pearfilm_sm1)

5.5.3 *V_n paj ‘go’ and ma: ‘come’ have grammatical functions*

When *paj* or *ma:* occurs in V_n positions in SVCs, more grammatical meanings apply. By V_n, I mean non-initial verb positions, which could be V₂, V₃, or the final verb in a series. In (352b), the SVC comprises three verb words, and *ma:* occurs in V₂, indicating a direction ‘toward’ the point of reference ‘food’ and perhaps a slight difference in time, but the V₁–V₂ in a series, *lɛ:n ma* literally ‘run come’, are understood as temporally overlapping with one another. Both are sequentially related to V₃. As a unit, *lɛ:n ma* indicates the motion phase of the SVC, describing the manner of motion and the direction of motion. The final phrase expressed by the

verb *kin* ‘eat’ represents the purpose of running. The ‘running towards’ phase necessarily precedes the ‘eating’ phrase in time.

(352) SVCs comprising three verbs with *ma:* ‘come’ in V₂

a man wa: mɛ:n nɛ:w-kin
 3.NO say COP NMLZ-eat
 ‘They’d think it’s food,

V₁ V₂ V₃

b. man ka si **le:n** **ma** **kin**
 3.NO KA IRR run come eat
 ‘So, they’d run to eat [the food].’

(Tragedy_sm83)

The purposive and sequential meaning disappears when *ma:* ‘come’ is removed from (352); the resulting SVC in (353) means that ‘running’ and ‘eating’ happen at the same time.

(353) SVC with simultaneous actions

man ka si **le:n** **kin**
 3.NO KA IRR run eat
 ‘So, they’d run while eating.’

(self-elicited based on (352))

In (354), the use of *paj* ‘go’ mainly indicates the direction of ‘walking’ and ‘disappearing’. All actions happened simultaneously.

(354) SVCs comprising three verbs with *paj* ‘go’ in V₃

laka ɲa:ŋ hǎ:j **paj**
 and.then walk disappear go
 ‘and (they) disappeared by walking away.’

(Pearfilm_sw71)

This raises a question as to what extent *paj* and *ma:* in V_n position(s) of SVCs relate to the sequential meaning. Again, limiting my investigation to the SVCs comprising two verb words, I undertake another collocation analysis to determine whether the event phases of V₁-V₂ tend to be sequentially related when V₂ is one of the deictic motion verbs.

The results in Table 24 shows that when *paj* ‘go’ or *ma:* ‘come’ occurs in the V₂ position of two-verb SVCs, it is not typically sequentially related to V₁. Instead, the deictic verbs specify the direction of a motion event or support temporal/aspectual meanings (discussed in §5.5.4).

Table 24: Relationship between V₁ and V₂ in two-verb SVCs where the deictic motion verbs occur in V₂ ($\chi^2 = 40.99$, loglikelihood = 50.28, $p < .00001$)

Slot V ₂	Semantic Relations with V ₁		Total
	Sequential	Other relations	
‘go’ or ‘come’	5 (29.4)	90 (65.6)	95
other verbs	98 (73.6)	140 (164.4)	238
	103	230	333

Most of the lexemes that occur in V₁ combination with the deictic motion verbs in V₂, when only two verb words are used in SVCs, are motion/direction or manner of motion along a path. These verbs are considered part of the Motion SVCs (see also Thepkanjana 1986; Muansuwan 2002; Sudmuk 2005; Diller 2006 for analyses in Thai); the pattern is shown in (355).

(355) Pattern 3: Motion SVCs

V ₁	V ₂
motion/direction	go/come

Examples of V₁: *na:ŋ* ‘walk,’ *p^ha:n* ‘pass,’ *k^hun* ‘go.up,’ *k^hàw* ‘enter,’ *k^hi:* ‘ride,’ *t^hu:* ‘carry,’ *la:k* ‘drag,’ *liaw* ‘look, gaze,’ etc.

The only lexemes that occurred in V₁ that are sequentially related to the deictic verbs include one instance of *ɲaw* ‘take’ and four instances of *lak* ‘steal’. These are considered instances of the transfer SVCs where *paj* and *ma:* mainly specify the directions of transferred object ‘away’ or ‘towards’ a point of reference, and in some cases the agent’s location may change as well (cf. §5.4.3).

The findings regarding sequentiality and directionality associated with two-verb SVCs may be extended to understanding the occurrences of *paj* and *ma:* in SVCs that comprise three or more verbs. We have seen that SVCs with three verbs can have a sequential reading when *paj* or *ma:* occurs in V₁ or V₂ position. At the same time, Isaan speakers appear to use the deictic verbs in V_n positions to manage viewpoints in event reporting and/or to specify direction with respect to a point of reference. In an excerpt from the Widow story, presented in (356), both *paj* and *ma:* are used to manage the viewpoints and directions of motion events with respect to the house as the point of reference. The speaker is describing the time when the Merchant had left the Widow's house just to return in the evening. In (356a) *paj* 'go' is used in the V₂ position as a directional. Similarly, *ma:* 'come' as a directional is found in the V₃ position in (356d) and V₂ in (356e), specifying that the movement of 'paddle' and 'return' is towards the goal. In (356d), the actions denoted by all three verb words happen simultaneously (i.e., the participant is returning to the starting point while paddling). But in (356e), the paddling is simultaneous with the 'coming'; and these together necessarily precede in time the boat-docking expressed by *cɔ:t* occurs. These (non)sequential relations are reflected in the free translations.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|--------------------|-----|
| | | V ₁ | | V ₂ | | | | | | |
| (356) | a. | ∅ _i | p ^h a:j | hwa | paj | | | | | |
| | | | paddle | boat | go | | | | | |
| | | | ‘[He] paddled the boat away.’ | | | | | | | |
| | b. | bɔ́ | hu: | wa: | paj | k ^h a:j | lu | bɔ́ | k ^h a:j | la |
| | | NEG | know | COMP | go | sell | or | NEG | sell | PRT |
| | | ‘(I) don’t know if (he) really went to trade goods or not.’ | | | | | | | | |
| | c. | ∅ _i | paj | hɔ:t | | | | | | |
| | | | go | arrive | | | | | | |
| | | ‘[He] got there.’ | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₃ | | | |
| | d. | lɔʔ | k ^h am-k ^h am | ∅ _i | p ^h a:j | k ^h u:n | ma: | ʔik | | |
| | | about | evening-evening | | paddle | return | come | again | | |
| | | ‘Around the evening time, [he] came paddling back again.’ | | | | | | | | |

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|-----|------|-----|
| | | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₃ | V ₄ | | | | |
| e. | ∅ _i | p ^h a:j | ma: | cɔ:t | ju: | mɔŋ | kao | nan | la |
| | | paddle | come | park | be.at | place | old | that | PRT |
- ‘[He] paddled (the boat) towards (and) docked at the same old place.’
(Widow_sm107-110)

Without additional contextual information, it is still understood that in (357) the King character was supposedly sitting on a throne or standing somewhere outside the buffalo’s pit. The movement starts with the King’s original location, which is outside the pit. The end goal of the motion event is overtly expressed in a prepositional phrase following *paj* ‘go.’ The ‘walking’ and the ‘going’ are simultaneous with *paj* in the V₂ position.

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|----------------|------|----------------------|-----|-----|------|--|
| | | | V ₁ | | V ₂ | | | | |
| (357) | p ^h alasa: | ka | ləj | ɲa:ŋ | cuam-cuam-cuam | paj | naj | buak | |
| | king | KA | exceed | walk | splash-splash-splash | go | in | pit | |
- ‘And then, the king splashed his way into the (buffalo’s) pit.’ (Siangmiang_sm66)

I conclude that the deictic verbs *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ provide clues to orient the listeners to the location of the events as well as the viewpoint the speaker takes in reporting motion events. Their meanings tend to be lexical in V₁ position and directional in V₂ or V_n positions. In narrative texts, the reference location may change or be unspecified as the story proceeds.

The next section discusses other grammatical functions of *paj* and *ma:* in the V₂ position of SVCs.

5.5.4 Extended functions of ‘go’ and ‘come’ in SVCs

Many instances of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ in SVCs the Spoken Isaan Corpus do not involve actual physical movement of any kind, and even more grammatical meanings arise.

First, *paj* and *ma:* may be used to indicate the time and/or aspectual nature of an event relative to a temporal reference point. In the context in which (358) occurs, the speaker (a monk) was describing the agenda regarding the sermon he was giving. He explained that he was not in a hurry, and he could continue speaking about a non-sermon topic while waiting for a larger audience to arrive. Here, *paj* ‘go’ contributes to the present continuative reading. In (358), the

temporal reference point (i.e., the deictic center) is the time of the monk’s speech act. Note that *paj* is not in a V₁ position when it has this extended function.

	V ₁	V ₂		V ₃		V ₄		
(358)	wao	paj	lu:jlur:j	lɔ:	kan	bɔ	ɲa:k	dɔ:k
	Speak	go	continuing	wait	RECIP	NEG	difficult	PRT
	‘I (can) keep speaking unhurriedly, wait for each other [more audience], no worries’							
	(Sompong_02.1)							

A few clauses later, as part of the sermon proper, the speaker uses *ma:* ‘come’ to describe another event with no actual physical movement, but with regard to a temporal reference point. This temporal deictic center is the time of the monk’s sermon. The presence of *ma:* in (359b) contributes temporal/aspectual meaning; the entire clause is interpreted as present perfect. That is, the event of someone passing away happened prior to the time that the ash-celebration ceremony mentioned in (359a) took place, but still has relevance to the time of the sermon. Again, in (359) the temporal deictic center is the time of the monk’s speech act.

(359)	a.	tɛ:	p ^h ɔ:	pen	bun-ʔatt ^h i	ni	
		but	when	COP	ash-ceremony	TPC	
		‘But as for when it is an ash-celebration ceremony,’					
		V ₁	V ₂				
	b.	p ^h ən	sia:	ma	do:n	le:w	
		3.PO	lose	come	long.time	already	
		‘they have passed long time ago’					
		(Sompong_02.7)					

The notion of viewpoint applies to the extended functions of *paj* and *ma:* where the reference point is an abstract (non-locative) one. The temporal/aspectual meanings of these deictic elements rely on two key analyses: the metaphorical analysis of time as a location and the conceptualization of the space/time and events as potentially moving. One way that space/time can be construed is analogous to a flowing river (Botne & Kershner 2008: 148). The speaker as the observer of events has many viewpoints available with respect to a flowing river and selects some location as the point of reference in reporting an event. Events may be observed as

stationary, like trees on the river bank as the temporal river moves; or dynamically moving in time themselves, like objects flowing by beneath the bridge. In example (359) above, the speaker as the observer is conceptualized as stationary, and the event being reported is viewed as moving through the flow of time toward the location of the speaker. The deictic center is located at the time and place of the speech act. Thus, the use of *ma:* ‘come’ in (359) can be analyzed as describing how the event (or the effects of the event) expressed by the first verb stem *sia* ‘lose (i.e., pass away)’ moves through the flow of time towards the space/time of the speech act (when and where the speaker is located), thus expressing relevance to the space/time of speaking.

The fact that deictic motion verbs can sometimes exhibit properties of both tense and aspect has long been observed in languages related to Isaan. The verb *paj* in Thai, for example, has been analyzed as a past tense marker when used post-verbally (Supanvanich 1973: 72), a perfective marker (specifically in combination with disappearance and destruction verbs), an imperfective marker (Thepkanjana 1986: 161), and a continuative aspect form when appearing with verbs indicating durative actions (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 157). However, these types of analyses have been challenged and dismissed by Thiengburanathum (2013), who rejects that *paj* and *ma:* are grammaticalized tense/aspect morphemes. Thiengburanathum argues that the temporal/aspectual meanings of deictic verbs in Thai and related Southeast Asian languages are metaphorically extended from their basic lexical function to more abstract cognitive domains, and that the meanings related to tense/aspect arise primarily from linguistic and pragmatic inferences, which explains why their interpretations are quite flexible. While I am in agreement with Thiengburanathum’s (2013) analysis about the source of their multifunctionality, I propose that Isaan *paj* and *ma:* are lexical in some type of SVCs and undergoing the process of grammaticalization in others (Raksachat 2022: 24). Therefore, it is more fruitful to describe the morphosyntactic conditions in which the lexical meaning is present versus where the more grammatical meanings arise.

For Isaan, aspectual meanings may arise when *paj* ‘go’ or *ma:* ‘come’ occupy the V₂ slot of some SVCs. However, the aspectual interpretation is not achieved by the deictic motion verbs alone, but by a combination of adverbial uses, clause-chaining, contextual information, and the lexical aspect meaning of other verbs they co-occur with. I focus on the analysis of *paj* ‘go’ for the Isaan cases below.

Examples from the Spoken Isaan Corpus below show that categorizing the deictic motion verbs as having specific tense/aspect values would be incorrect. The use of *paj* ‘go’ in (360a) is interpreted as past imperfective, but past continuative in (361a), and past perfect in (362a). While the temporal interpretation is accounted for by the discourse contexts, the aspectual interpretation is at least partly explained by the morphosyntactic constructions and the position of *paj* and *ma:* relative to other verbs in the SVCs.

First, the use of *paj* ‘go’ in (360a) is in V₁ combination with atelic action-process verbs *ci:p* ‘court’ and *k^huj* ‘talk’, the repetition of the VP structure [*paj* VERB], and the adverb word *mu:-daj* literally ‘which day’. Together with these elements, *paj* helps indicate continuous and repeated activities over a long period of time.

(360) Imperfective with *paj* V₁

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| | | | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₁ | V ₂ | |
| a. | p ^h ɔʔwa: | law _i | [paj] | ci:p] | [paj] | k ^h uj] | mu:-daj |
| | because | 3.FA | go | court | go | talk | day-which |
- ‘Because he had gone courting (and) talking to (her) day in, day out,

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|-----------|-----|------|----------------|
| b. | ∅ _j | <u>ka</u> | bɔ́ | ʔaw | ∅ _i |
| | | KA | NEG | take | |

‘and [she] did not want [him]’

(Widow_sm70)

Second, the continuative meaning in (361a) arises from the repeated VP structure, not unlike that in (360a). In this case, *paj* ‘go’ is used with another atelic verb *k^hi:* ‘ride’ that indicates an action that can be done for an extended period of time. Note that the use of *paj* here also relates to the management of viewpoint, indicating the direction of motion.

(361) Continuative where with *paj* in V₂

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₁ | V ₂ | V ₁ | V ₂ |
| a. | [k ^h i: | paj] | [k ^h i: | paj] | [k ^h i: | paj] |
| | ride | go | ride | go | ride | go |

‘(He) kept riding away,’

5.6 Remarks on discourse functions of SVCs

Previous literature on verb serialization has heavily focused on describing the morphosyntactic properties or defining the grammatical behaviors of SVCs. Many have argued that at least some sub-set of multi-verb expressions, specifically those considered “true” SVCs, are monocausal expressions that describe what is conceptually a single event (e.g., Aikhenvald & Dixon 2006; Diller 2006; Enfield 2008; Cole 2016). Others have claimed that the notion of “conceptual events” should not be used to characterize such grammatically diverse phenomena that have been labeled “SVC” (see Foley 2010; Haspelmath 2016). The precise discourse-pragmatic conditions for combining the different kinds of verbs into a single clause has not been very much discussed in the literature. In this section, I offer some explanations for why Isaan speakers would use a single verb clause instead of an SVC, and vice versa, by exploring the discourse-pragmatic situations in which the choices were made in the narrative texts. In particular, I suggest that some SVCs are chosen to express intentionality for verbs that could otherwise be interpreted as stative (e.g., *cɔ:t* ‘park’, *pʰak* ‘rest’), that a particular phase of an action was actually accomplished (e.g., the resultative SVC), and that purposive SVCs can be used to foreshadow important events in the upcoming stretch of discourse.

5.6.1 Intentionality when V_n is a stative verb

When Isaan speakers choose to combine some other verb with a deictic motion verb to form an SVC instead of using a single verb clause, they do not merely report an event from a particular viewpoint or with respect to a particular point of space/time. Speakers can also communicate that the actions are carried out intentionally. To illustrate, I will first focus on the verb *cɔ:t* ‘park (a vehicle)’, which can occur alone or co-occur with the deictic motion verbs. As a single verb, *cɔ:t* ‘park’ can describe a state (363) or an action (364). Note that *ju:* ‘be.at’ in (363) is analyzed as a preposition.

(363) lot cɔ:t ju: pʰun
 vehicle park be.at over.there

‘The car/motorcycle/bus/etc. is parked over there’

Note: This is a felicitous answer to “Where is your car?”

(364) p^hən cət lot
 3.PO park vehicle

‘[He/she/they] parked the car/motorcycle/bus/etc.’

Note: This is a felicitous answer to “What is he doing?”

In the excerpt from the Widow story in (365) below, the speaker describes when the Merchant first arrived at the Widow’s house. The verb *cət* ‘park’ is used in a *ka*-marked single verb clause. The event described by the proposition in (365d) is the first linguistic reporting of the boat docking event and is understood to temporally follow the Merchant’s arrival in (365c). Recall that events that advance the narrative in a chronological order are operationalized as part of the main event line (MEL, further discussed in Chapter 6). (365a) is a second report of the event ‘[he] came paddling the boat’ in the text; hence, it does not advance the timeline and is not considered part of the MEL.

(365) Excerpt from the Widow story: Merchant’s first arrival

a. Ø_i p^ha:j lua ma: -MEL
 paddle boat come

‘[He] came paddling the boat,’

b. Ø_i p^ha:j lua ma: -MEL
 paddle boat come

‘[He] came paddling the boat,’

c. Ø_i ma: hət su: hian sa:w sa: ni la +MEL
 come arrive around house lady rumor TPC PRT

‘[He] arrived nearby the renowned lady’s house.’

d. Ø_i ka ləj cət +MEL
 KA exceed park

‘And so, [he] docked (the boat).’ (Widow_sm93-94)

It was only after this point in the story that the Merchant received the Widow’s permission to dock the boat near her house. The next day, the Merchant left the Widow’s house to allegedly do some trade. Later that evening, he came back to the Widow’s house. In excerpt (366), the

speaker describes the second arrival of the Merchant using the multi-verbal expressions: *p^ha:j ma: cɔ:t* ‘paddle come park’ in (366b), and *ma: cɔ:t* ‘come park’ in (366d).

(366) Excerpt from the Widow story: Merchant second arrival

a. lɔʔ k^ham-k^ham Ø_i p^ha:j k^hu:n ma: ʔik +MEL
 about evening-evening paddle return come again
 ‘Around the evening time, [he] came paddling back again.’

b. Ø_i p^ha:j ma: cɔ:t ju: mɔŋ kao nan la +MEL
 paddle come park be.at place old that PRT
 ‘[He] paddled (the boat) towards (and) docked at the same old place.’

c. ʔə: Ø_i mi: p^hɛ:n -MEL
 INTERJ have plan
 ‘Yes, [he] has a plan.’

d. ba:t^hini: Ø_i ma: cɔ:t ju: mɔŋ kao -MEL
 now come park be.at place old
 ‘Now, having docked (the boat) at the same old place,’

e. mɛ:na:ŋ mu:-ni: k^ha:j k^hɔ:ŋ bɔ́ di: -MEL
 lady today sell thing NEG good
 ‘(He said) “My Lady, today the trade wasn’t good.”’

f. Ø_i si kap ba:n lɛ:w -MEL
 IRR return house already
 ‘[I] would have gone home already.’

g. p^hɔ-di: k^ham p^hɔ-di: -MEL
 when-good evening when-good
 ‘But it is suddenly evening.’

(Widow_sm109.2-114.2)

The speaker of the story twice reported what is essentially the same type of event (i.e., involving the same set of participants performing the identical set of activities), which happened twice in the universe of discourse, but using different linguistic means. The first mention of the ‘boat-docking’ event was via the single verb clause (365d), and the subsequent mentions in lines (366b) and (366d) include SVCs. One possible motivation for combining verbs to express the

second event of boat docking may be that the speaker simply wishes to describe more about the manner and the direction of motion associated with the Merchant, taking a particular viewpoint, as already discussed in §5.5.1. Yet, this cannot explain why the speaker would choose to say *cɔ:t* ‘park’ at one moment in the narration, as in (365d), and *ma: cɔ:t* ‘come park’ in another moment, as in (366d). Furthermore, attempting to use the single verb clause structure in (367b) instead of the original SVC as in (366b) would be grammatical, but a bit awkward in my opinion, as it would disrupt the motion continuity running through the two clauses. The awkwardness is shown in (367b). The stative reading partly has to do with the lack of a deictic motion verb and the presence of *ju:* ‘be.at’.

- (367) a. *lɔ?* *kʰam-kʰam* \emptyset_i *pʰaj* *kʰu:n* *ma:* *?ik*
 about evening-evening paddle return come again
 ‘Around the evening time, [he] came paddling back again.’
- b. \emptyset_i *cɔ:t* *ju:* *mɔŋ* *kao* *nan* *la*
 park be.at place old that PRT
 ‘[He] was docked at the same old place.’ (self-elicited)

I hypothesize that Isaan speakers combine the deictic motion verbs in V_1 position with an open class verb in V_2 not only to describe the viewpoint they take in reporting an event but also to assert that the lexical event in V_2 was intentionally accomplished. This is especially apparent for verbs that could otherwise be interpreted as stative like *pʰak* ‘rest’ found in (368). Recall that an event is defined as a proposition that linguistically asserts that someone did something or something happened in the narrative discourse world. (368c) includes the first linguistic reporting of what the Merchant did after entering the ground floor of the Widow’s house, where *paj pʰak* ‘go rest’ is used; it is a felicitous answer to *mi: naŋ ku:t kʰun bat-ni:* ‘What happens/happened now?’ Compare this to the second reporting of *pʰak* ‘rest’ in (368d) which does not include the deictic motion verb and is interpreted as imperfective (if not stative) in meaning. From this contrast, I conclude that the deictic motion verbs in V_1 paint a more intentional and dynamic picture of the scene by highlighting a change of state/location.

(368) Excerpt from the Widow story: Merchant entering the ground floor of the house

a. p^hɔ̌ Ø_i k^hàw paj ju: tala:ŋ ba:n -MEL
 when enter go be.at underneath house

‘When [the Merchant] went into the ground floor of the house...’

b. tala:ŋ ba:n ka pen lo:ŋ nɔ̌? -MEL
 underneath house KA COP empty AGREE.PRT

‘The ground floor is an empty space, right?’

c. Ø_i ka lej **paj** **p^hak** ju: han +MEL
 KA exceed go rest be.at there

‘And so, [he] went (and) rested there.’

d. Ø **p^hak** ju: han bat-ni: -MEL
 rest be.at there now

‘[He] was resting there,’

e. ləwka hen kitcawatpracamwan k^hɔ̌j mə:na:ŋ t^huk-mu: -MEL
 and.then see daily.routine of lady each-day

‘And [he] was observing the daily routine of this lady every day.’ (Widow_sm122.2-125)

5.6.2 Lexical sub-event of V₂ is actually accomplished

The fact that the lexical event of V₂ occurred also applies to the cases when *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’ is in V₂. Note that the combination of *ma:* in V₁ followed by *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’ in V₂, as seen in (369), is highly conventionalized (cf. Table 21). The *paj* ‘go’ counterpart, as seen in (370), is also frequently found in the corpus.

(369) SVC with *ma: hɔ:t* ‘come arrive’

Ø **ma:** **hɔ:t** hom-maj
 come arrive shade-wood

‘[He] arrived at the tree shade

(Pearfilm_sm29)

(370) SVC with *paj hɔ:t* ‘go arrive’

Ø **paj** **hɔ:t** lu:k
 go arrive kid

‘[She] went (and) arrived at where her son was.’

(Tragedy_oi51)

At a glance, the verb combination *ma: hɔ:t* ‘come arrive’ might appear to encode redundant information, given the fact that both *ma:* ‘come’ and *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’ with their lexical meanings express an event meaning [THEME GO.TO LOCATION]. So, it is quite perplexing why Isaan speakers would opt to use *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’ in an SVC instead of in a single verb clause as seen in (371).

(371) Single verb clause with *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’

∅ **hɔ:t** hian lɛ:w
 arrive house already

‘[He] got home.’

(YaKinPing_sm92)

The deictic verb followed by *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’ pattern in (370) behaves like the resultative SVC where the second verb can be negated (discussed in §5.4.2).

(372) ∅ **paj** **bɔ́** **hɔ:t** cɔ:t p^hɔ:kathə:n
 go NEG arrive park incomplete

‘[I] went but didn’t get there (and I am) stuck.’

(SongLyric_Siriphon)

Note that V_1 and V_2 in (369) and (370) are sequentially related in time; however, inserting *lewka* ‘and then’ between the two verbs is pragmatically awkward in Isaan, though the free translation sounds fine in English (373).

(373) *lewka* ‘and then’ insertion to *ma: hɔ:t* ‘come arrive’ (pragmatically awkward)

#∅ ma: lɛwka hɔ:t hom-maj
 come and.then arrive shade-wood

‘[He] came and then arrived at the tree shade.’

We have discussed in §5.4.2 the fact that the V_2 can be negated, as in (372). This suggests that the instigation of V_1 does not always entail V_2 , depending on lexical verbs that occupy V_1 . Meanwhile, the awkwardness in (373) suggests that the phases of the conceptual event of *ma: hɔ:t* ‘come arrive’ or *paj hɔ:t* ‘go arrive’ cannot be forced to be separated by a great length of time. In the context where *paj hɔ:t* in (370) is used in the original discourse, the speaker is reporting for the first time that the participant arrives at the intended destination. The fact that the participant

plans to go there was foreshadowed in the prior text, as illustrated in (374). For the combination *paj hɔ:t* ‘go arrive,’ the focus of assertion is on the fact that V_2 is accomplished or on the final phase of the motion event.

(374) Prior text: The mother who was a midwife had to go tend to someone giving birth. As for delivering food to her son, she was running late. She stuffed the rice in a small rice container, took the rice container and some foods, and carried the load by the shoulder using a long wooden tool.

Sentence: ‘[She] went (and) arrived at where her son was.’
 Presupposition: The mother was on her way to her son
 Assertion: She went (and) arrived
 Focus of assertion: *hɔ:t* ‘arrive’ (expressed by V_2)

Alternative scenarios where a participant is going somewhere but might not arrive at their destination, or their destination may be unclear, are also possible; only one deictic motion verb word is used in this situation, as shown in the Pear Story example in (375).

(375) Single verb clauses with *paj* ‘go’

- a. bak-nô:j-nô:j ka **paj**
 TITLE.MASC-small-small KA go
 ‘Then, the boy went.’
- b. klum să:m k^hon ka **paj** k^hur:kan ba:t-ni
 group three person KA go be.like-RECIP now
 ‘The three-people group went too now.’ (Pearfilm_sw51-52)

5.6.3 Lexical sub-event of V_n is foreshadowed

Finally, we have seen that some Isaan SVCs can be used to express a purpose of someone doing something (i.e., what an agent intends to achieve by carrying out an action); cf. §5.4.7. To have a purpose meaning, multiple SVCs, including those with a deictic motion verb, are often combined to express the intended action or situation. I hypothesize that speakers use purposive SVCs to presage an upcoming (potentially important to the plot) event. In (376a), the linear V_4 - V_5 positions may represent the purpose of taking the torch up and away from the deictic center. The purpose is immediately reported as accomplished in (376b).

CHAPTER 6
THE MAIN EVENT LINE

In narrative, the sequence of events is a particularly important element of a coherent text. In general, groups of narrative events are linguistically reported in the order that they happen in the story world via multiple clauses and may be separated by one or more temporal junctures (Labov & Waletzky 1967/1997: 226). As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, some clauses in Isaan express a single-event proposition with multiple sub-phases that are sequentially related (e.g., transfer SVCs). Separate clauses express distinct events, but these are still semantically related to one another in various ways. The temporal sequence relation, where one event is understood as following another event in time, is assumed to be neutral or basic to narratives. This chapter focuses on the organization of multiple distinct events and on the propositional units that push the time of the narrative world along. Other semantic relations including cause-result, condition-consequence, and reasons will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Isaan clauses marked with *ka* can communicate sequentially related distinct events. When two clauses are conceptually linked in certain ways, including the notion of sequence, *ka* can occur after the subject of the second clause (if overt). In (378), *ka* appears between two independent clauses, while in (379) *ka* occurs after an adverbial clause and before the main clause. In both of these occurrences, removing *ka* does not change the semantics of the sentence in any appreciable way.

(378) Conjoining two independent clauses

- a. \emptyset_i t^he: tem baj-t^hi-sɔːŋ
 pour filled CLF.leaf-at-two
 ‘[He] poured and filled the second basket,’

- b. \emptyset_i **ka** k^hu:n paj kep ʔi:k
 KA go.up go collect more
 ‘**and then** went up to collect more.’

(Pearfilm_sm17-18)

(379) Adverbial clause followed by a main clause

- a. p^hɔː-ta \emptyset_i maj mɔː-k^hàw lɛ:w
 when-from burn pot-rice already
 ‘Since [the fire] had burned the rice pot,

Related to events told in temporal order are the notions of FOREGROUND and BACKGROUND. Both these terms have also been defined in several ways (see Dry 1992 for a review). In this chapter, I will use them to refer to what speakers do with language in the narrative discourse context. In this sense, foregrounding/backgrounding as a discourse move has to do with the speaker’s management of information saliency in a narrative episode.

Certain narrative contents are foregrounded because the speakers are presumed to believe that the information is important, cognitively salient, or unexpected in a given context. Events which advance the story—MEL materials—are typically foregrounded in narrative. On the other hand, some information may be backgrounded because speakers wish to let the listeners in on features of participants, reasons, potential consequences, times, locations, etc. that relate to events in order to make sense of what is happening in the story.

6.1.1 Operationalization of the main event line

According to Labov & Waletzky (1967/1997) and especially Payne (1992), the MEL can be operationalized as including only the propositions that assert events in a sequential iconic manner with the understood time sequence of the story world, and as non-overlapping on the narrative timeline. That is, MEL material advances the timeline of the story. Propositions expressed by a single verb or by verb serializing structures may not be part of the MEL if the event asserted by such structures overlaps in the story-world time with another event. A linguistic repetition of one and the same event is also not part of the MEL.

To illustrate how Payne’s methodology works, I apply it to the excerpt in (380) from a text that has instances of a sequence relation. Only lines (380a) and (380d) are considered part of the MEL (marked as +MEL) in this excerpt.

(380) Example of sequential events

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-------|------|--------|------|------|---------|-----------------|------|
| a. | mɔ: | nɪ: | ka | lɔ:j | ʔaw | ∅ | san-lɛw | | +MEL |
| | guy | PROX | KA | sneak | take | | PRT | | |
| | ‘So, this man stole [it], just like that.’ | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| b. | ∅ | lɔ:j | ʔaw | kata: | nuŋ | bak | ɲai | tem-tem | -MEL |
| | | sneak | take | basket | one | very | big | be.full-be.full | |
| | ‘[He] stole one big, very full basket.’ | | | | | | | | |

collection. The event of putting the fruits in the basket is linguistically reported twice; the second report in (381c) is understood to temporally follow an earlier instance of fruit collection.

(381) Same action happened multiple times: multiple events

a. lɛ:w ∅ ka loŋ ma saŋ k^heŋ waj +MEL
 already KA down come put.into basket put
 ‘And then [he] came down and put [them] into a basket.’

b. ∅ ka pi:n bandai k^hu:n paj kep maj +MEL
 KA climb stairs go.up go collect again
 ‘then [he] climbed back up to collect again.’

c. ∅ ka loŋ ma sai k^heŋ waj +MEL
 KA down come put.into basket put
 ‘[he] come down and put [them] in the basket.’

d. sɔ:ŋ k^heŋ daj tem -MEL
 two basket gain filled
 ‘Two baskets were filled.’

(Pearfilm_sw15-18)

An overt marker of simultaneity or temporal overlap sometimes helps identifying the MEL materials. The clause-initial adverbial-time phrase *naj k^hanaʔ-t^{hi}*, roughly translated as ‘while’, clearly indicates that events reported by two adjacent clauses happened at the same time or at least overlapped in time. In an excerpt from a Pear Story (382c-d), the events of the ‘boy returning’ and the ‘man collecting avocados’ are understood as overlapping in the narrative timeline; in this case, only the former is counted as +MEL.

(382) Simultaneous narrative events from a Pear Story

a. ʔan bak-nô:j-nô:j_k ka k^hoŋ si wa: -MEL
 filler TITLE.MASC-small-small KA probably IRR say
 “Uh, then the small boy might have thought,”

b. ku: paj lak bak-awokado p^hɔ:-ŋaj ʔan-ní: káná: -MEL
 1SG.NO go steal CLF.fruit-avocado father-big CLF.thing-PROX THOUGHT.PRT
 “(What if) I go steal this man’s avocado.”

c. Ø_k ka ləj kap k^hàw ma: +MEL
 KA exceed return enter come

‘So, [he] came back,’

d. ?an naj-k^hana?-t^hi: p^hɔ:-naj ?an-nî: kalaŋ -MEL
 filler in-moment-at father-big CLF.thing-PROX PROG

?an kep ma:k-awokado ju:
 filler collect CLF.fruit-avocado CONT

‘uh, while this man was collecting the avocado.’

(Pearfilm_sw29-30)

6.1.2 Dialogues in the narrative world

Speech events can be part of the MEL when they advance the timeline of the story, whether or not there is an overt verb of speaking. Thus, dialogic elements, or reports of participants’ speech, are analyzed as part of the MEL when turn-taking occurs. The advancement of time in the narrative world is apparent when the speaker role changes from one participant to another, as well as when a participant said something for the first time as a reaction to something else that happened. For the cases in (383) and (384), those lines that are analyzed as +MEL can felicitously answer the question *mi: nǎŋ kə:t k^hun ba:t-ni*: ‘Now, what happened?’

(383) A dialogue between two participants.

a. p^hala:sa: ka ləj t^ha:m wa: ?aw ?aj-bak-miaŋ / +MEL
 king KA exceed ask say INTERJ TITLE.MASC-TITLE.MASC-Miang

‘The king then asked saying “Well, Mister Miang”

b. k^ha:p^hacao k^hu: haj ?eŋ -MEL
 1SG.FO be.like give 2SG.FA

“Did I (not) ask that you...”

c. haj caw ni k^hàw ma fàw haw kɔ:n / kɔ:n kaj -MEL
 give 2SG.FA TPC enter come wait 1.FA before before chicken

“that you come see me before, before the rooster?”

d. siaŋmiaŋ ka ləj wa: +MEL
 Siangmiang KA exceed say

‘Siangmiang then said,’

(386) Supportive materials with embedded MEL material

- a. nok-k^hao hə:n k^hu: nok-k^hao ni -MEL
bird-dove soar be.like bird-dove TPC
'(The phrase) the doves soar means as for the doves,'
- b. we:la: man ma kin ɲia ni -MEL
time 3.NO come eat prey TPC
'as for when they are hunting,'
- c. man si bin bɛ:p ni: tap tap tap -MEL
3.NO IRR fly type this flap flap flap
'they will fly like this, flapping (their wings).'
- d. lɛ:w ba:t^hi:ni man si t^ha:j loŋ ma +EMEL
already now 3.NO IRR excrete down come
'And then, they will excrete down below.'
- e. t^ha:j loŋ ma pap-pap -MEL
excrete down come promptly-promptly
'Once, they have excreted down,'
- f. man si mi: p^huak-nu: p^huak-kop p^huak-k^hiat -MEL
3.NO IRR have COLL-mouse COLL-frog COLL-toad
'there will be mice, frogs, and toads
- g. hen k^hi: nok-k^hao tok loŋ ma +EMEL
see feces bird-dove fall down come
'(They) see the doves' feces fall down.'
- h. man wa: mɛ:n nɛ:w-kin -MEL
3.NO say COP NMLZ-eat
'They think it's food.'
- i. man ka si lɛ:n ma kin +EMEL
3.NO KA IRR run come eat
'So, they will run to eat it.'

(Tragedy_sm80.2-83.1)

I consider the EMEL to be functionally similar to the narrative MEL because both involve non-overlapping, sequential event management. Even though it can be said that embedded MEL belongs to a distinct conceptual space in the mental representation of the discourse world, I have yet to discover linguistic evidence in the Isaan narrative texts that suggests that the embedded MEL materials are grammatically distinctive.

Finally, in addition to managing information about events, speakers also need to manage information about the referents who participate in the events. The event participants must be introduced into the universe of discourse; this may be done in various ways as discussed in Chapter 4. When a participant is introduced into the universe of discourse as simply appearing (without doing anything yet), e.g., via the presentational construction, the clause is not considered part of MEL.

6.2 Formal markings that help determine temporal relationships

In this section, I describe a few noteworthy linguistic forms that help identify distinct events in the narrative text sample and analyze them relative to the MEL. These forms include the tail-head linkage structure, clause connectors that help show temporal relationships among events, and the form *bat-ni*, glossed as ‘now’, which indicates a shift in conceptual or mental space in the mental representation of the narrative text.

6.2.1 Tail-head linkage structure

One of the storytelling strategies that Isaan speakers use to signal temporal boundaries is the so-called tail-head linkage structure where (part of) the content of a clause is repeated in the next clause (Thurman 1975; de Vries 2005). Accordingly, the boundaries between events can be deduced from adjacent clauses with such a pattern. The tail-head linkage structure represents a way of organizing information that advances the story bit by bit in the background-foreground manner.

To illustrate, the clauses in (387) are temporally and logically interconnected. Specifically, these are series of distinct events with sequential and/or causal relations between them. The adverbial clause in (387a) sums up the immediately preceding event in the storyline ‘the fire burned the rice pot’. The event foregrounded in (387b) ‘she soaked new rice’ is new information, but then it is backgrounded in the next clause (387c); and so on. The backgrounded

clauses are represented by the relative past [*having* VERBED] construction in the English free translations. Backgrounded “tail” element can explicitly set the boundary of an old event just before the temporal onset of a new event that advances the timeline.

(387) Example of tail-head linkage structures

- a. BACKGROUND
 p^hɔː-ta Ø_i maj mɔː-k^hàw lɛːw -MEL
 when-from burn pot-rice already
 ‘Since [the fire] had burned the rice pot,
- b. FOREGROUND
 Ø_j ka ləj maː Ø_k maj +MEL
 KA exceed soak new
 ‘[she] soaked new [rice].’
- c. BACKGROUND
 Ø_j maː k^hàw_k maj -MEL
 soak rice new
 ‘Having soaked the new rice,’
- d. FOREGROUND
 Ø_j ka ləj nuŋ Ø_k +MEL
 KA exceed steam
 ‘[she] steamed [it].’
- e. BACKGROUND; CLARIFY (but contains a new assertion)
 Ø_j ka nuŋ Ø_k ta dək juː dɔːk -MEL
 KA steam from early.morning PRT PRT
 ‘It is the case that [she] steamed [it] in the early morning (when it was still dark).’
- f. BACKGROUND
 Ø_j nuŋ Ø_k lɛːw lɛːw -MEL
 steam finish already
 ‘Having finished steaming [the rice],
- g. FOREGROUND
 Ø_j ka ʔaw Ø_k paj / ʔa paj wat +MEL
 KA take go uh go temple
 ‘[she] took [it] to, uh, to the temple.’ (Tragedy_sm 27.2)

(390) Adverbial clause with *p^hɔ-ta* ‘once’

- a. **p^hɔ-ta** Ø_i tem t^huŋ-p^ha:j lɛ:w
 when-from be.filled bag-carry already
 ‘Once the bag had been filled [with fruits],’

- b. law_j **ka** loŋ ma tɛ: Ø_i saj kata:
 3SG.FA KA go.down come pour put.into basket
 ‘he came down (and) poured [the fruits] into a basket.’ (Pearfilm_sm17-18)

(391) Adverbial clause with *laŋ-ca:k* ‘after’

- a. **laŋ-ca:k** Ø_i p^hu:k Ø_j lɛ:w lɛ:w liaplɔi
 back-from tie finish already orderly
 ‘After [he_i] had finished tying [it] neatly,’

- b. nen nɔ̃:j_i **ka** fa:w k^hàw paj puk luaŋ-p^hɔ:
 young.monk small KA hurry enter go wake TITLE.MONK-father
 ‘the young monk_i hurried into [the monk’s bedroom] to wake the monk up.’
 (Monk and his Novice_sm24-25)

The events in (390b) and (391b) are set against the temporal frames provided by the propositions in their respective (a) clauses. In other words, the temporal interpretation of the (b) line event is tied to being sometime (potentially immediately) after the point in which the (a) line event occurred. This syntactic arrangement of clauses is quite productive and often occurs in the tail-head linkage structure previously discussed.

Another example of sequential events is shown in (392). However, the first clause does not have *laŋ-ca:k* ‘after,’ but the same effect is achieved by the juxtaposition of two clauses whereby the following (392b) clause includes the morpheme *ka*. In this Pear Story context, the speaker is reporting multiple occurrences of the events ‘poured and filled baskets’ and ‘going up the tree to collect fruits.’ Both clauses in (392) assert sequential events that advance the time line. Again, *ka* can be grammatically removed from (392b) without any appreciable semantic change.

(393) Excerpt from a narrative text

Group 1: Participant introduction and staging

- a. **ba:t-ni** mi: ?i-na:ŋ nuŋ -MEL
 now have TITLE.FEM-lady one
 ‘Now, once there was a lady.’
- b. ?i-na:ŋ nuŋ pen mɛ:ma:j -MEL
 TITLE.FEM-lady one COP widow
 ‘A lady who was a widow.’
- c. ∅ pen mɛ:ma:j p^hua ta:j nĩ: ca:k -MEL
 COP widow husband die escape depart
 ‘[She’s] a widow whose husband had passed away.’
- d. ∅ bó: t^han daj lu:k nam kan -MEL
 NEG not.yet gain kid with RECIP
 ‘[They] hadn’t got any children.’

Group 2: Flashback and background information

- e. **ba:t-ni** k^hwam-rak k^hɔŋ rawa:ŋ k^hon sɔ:ŋ k^hon ni / -MEL
 now NMLZ-love of between person two CLF.person TPC

 k^hwam-rak ja:ŋ
 NMLZ-love type
 ‘Now, the love between the two people was the kind of love [that]...’
- f. ∅ hak kan /∅ ta:j t^hɛ:n kan daj want^hɔ? -MEL
 love RECIP die in.place.of RECIP gain PRT.EXPLAIN

 p^hua kap mia k^hu: nĩ:
 husband with wife pair PROX
 ‘[They] loved each other to death, as for this pair of husband and wife.’
- g. ∅ daj sa:ba:n tɔ: kan wa: -MEL
 gain vow connect RECIP say
 ‘[They] had vowed to each other saying,’

- h. t^ha: p^hua p^hu- ta:j paj lɛ:w p^hǎo paj lɛ:w -MEL
 if husband CLF.HUM- die go already burn go already
 ‘if the husband, who has passed away and has been cremated,’
- i. bɔ: kap k^hu:n ma: / bɔ: kə:t ma pen k^hon -MEL
 NEG reverse return come NEG born come COP person
 ‘does not return (from the dead) and does not become reborn as a person.’
- j. Ø si bɔ: ʔaw p^hua ʔi:k naj sat ni: -MEL
 IRR NEG take husband more in life this
 ‘[she] would not take another husband in this life.’ (Widow_sm 8-15)

Unlike other temporal morphemes whose occurrences are restricted to clause-initial position only, *ba:t-ni* ‘now’ can occur in clause-initial or clause-final positions. Note also that *ka* does not occur in any of the clauses in (393), though new information is being asserted in various places. Furthermore, evidence from the use of *bat-ni* in the Pear Stories suggests that *bat-ni* does not function as a temporal marker at all. In the Pear Stories, occurrences of *bat-ni* are quite far apart, spanning 12 clauses on average, and it is typically found at transitional points of the story. In excerpt (394), the speaker describes the concluding scene of a previous episode where the Bike Boy stole the fruits (394a-b), the transition into a new episode where the Bike Girl appeared (394e-f), and the end of the episode (394j). Each occurrence of *bat-ni* is highlighted in bold. Each line corresponds well with the speaker’s pause breaks.

(394) Excerpt from the Pear Story

Episode A: ending

- a. ʔan bak-nô:j-nô:j_i
 filler TITLE.MASC-small-small
 ‘The small boy’
- b. ka ʔaw taj waj **bat-ni** Ø_i ka pan cakaja:n paj **bat-ni**
 KA take stand put now KA pedal bicycle go now
 ‘took (and) placed [the basket] now, and then pedaled his bicycle away, now.’

- c. p^hən_i ka lak paj p^hən_i k^hu: si saba:j-caj tí:
 3.PO KA steal go 3.PO be.like IRR be.comfortable-heart PRT
 ‘He had stolen [it]. He must have felt happy.’

Episode B: starting

- d. **bat-ni** Ø_i pan paj laja nuŋ
 now pedal go distance one
 ‘Now, [The boy] having pedaled for a certain distance,’
- f. ka mi: ?i-p^hu-ŋiŋ_k nō:j-nō:j ma: ?i:k **bat-ni**
 KA have TITLE.FEM-CLF.HUM-female small-small come more now
 ‘there was a little girl coming too, now’
- g. Ø_k suan t^ha:ŋ ma:
 pass.opposite way come
 ‘[She] was coming from the opposite direction,’
- h. ma tam kan
 come bump.into RECIPIENT
 ‘(and) crashed into each other.’
- i. bak-nō:j-nō:j ka p^ha: cakaja:n lom
 TITLE.MASC-small-small KA lead bicycle fall.down
 ‘The boy fell down with the bike.’
- j. keŋ bak-awokado ka lom sa? **bat-ni**
 basket CLF.fruit-avocado KA fall.down scatter now
 ‘The avocado basket also fell (and) scattered now.’ (Pearfilm_sw34-40)

In excerpt (395), the speaker is telling a tragic story that happened in a distant real-world past and provides background information about the participants and the time that the events occurred. The phrase *samai kao* ‘in the ancient past’ indicates that information in the following clauses pertains to the time prior to the speech act time (i.e., the real-world past). The occurrence of *bat-ni*: in lines (395e) and (395f) shifts the mental spaces from the real-world past domain to the narrative domain, which in this story happens to be aligned with the real-world past. The

word *tɔ:n-nan* ‘that time’ in (395e) refers back to the real-world past, mentioned in (395a) as a point in the narrative timeline.

(395) Excerpt from a Tragedy story

Group 1: Real-world past domain

a. **samai kao** k^hǎw ʔə:n mɔ:tamje:
era old 3.PO call midwife
‘In the ancient past, they called midwives.’

b. k^hon ʔɔ:k-lu:k ni si ʔɔ:k ju: hian
person exit-child TPC IRR exit be.at house
‘When people gave birth, (it) would be done at home.’

c. si bɔ: paj ʔɔ:k loŋba:n
IRR NEG go exit hospital
‘(They) would not go to give birth at the hospital.’

d. si bɔ: mi: loŋba:n ʔɔ:k
IRR NEG have hospital exit
‘There would not be a hospital for child birth.’

Group 2: Narrative text domain

e. **bat-ni** tɔ:n-nan man pen nà: het nǎ:
now time-that 3.NO COP face make rice.paddy
‘Now, that time, it was the season for growing rice.’

f. nà: het nǎ: **bat-ni**
face make rice.paddy now
‘(Being) the rice growing season, now,’

g. lu:k-sa:j p^hu-nî: ka si het nǎ:
child-male CLF.HUM-this KA IRR make rice.paddy
‘this son would work on the rice field.’

(Tragedy_oi13-17)

As we have just seen, *bat-ni* ‘now’ often occurs in narrative discourse to shift mental spaces. A different word *tɔ:n-ni*, translated as ‘right now’, is used in (396) to refer to the time of the speech act (i.e., the real-world present). In the context of (396), the speaker describes the process

of raising pigs. He states the number of pigs he has for sale at the time of the interview. If *ba:t-ni* were used instead of *tɔ:n-ni*, as seen in (397), the sentence is then interpreted as a narrative introduction, as illustrated in the free translation.

(396) **tɔ:n-nî:** mi: mǔ: pɛ:t to:
time-this have pig eight CLF.BODY
‘Right now, there are eight pigs.’ (Raising pigs_yt67)

(397) **ba:t-nî:** mi: mǔ: pɛ:t to:
now have pig eight CLF.BODY
‘Once a upon a time, there were/are eight pigs.’ (self-elicited)

6.3 *Ka*-marked clauses and the Main Event Line

As mentioned earlier, *ka* often occurs in action or event sequences, even though it is not required. Such frequent co-occurrence of *ka* with newly asserted events leads to the hypothesis that *ka* functions as a marker of MEL material.

However, it should be highlighted that not all instances of *ka* marked events are understood to happen in temporal sequence in the narrative timeline. There are also cases like (398) which does not seem to exhibit the sequential relation at all; yet *ka* is required. The *ka*-marked proposition in (398b) does not push the narrative time forward, though it contains an essential piece of new information that stands against or is contrastive to the assertion made in (398a).

(398) Excerpt from the Monk and Novice story

a. ʔǎw / Ø_i liew bəŋ daw-p^hek_k +EMEL
INTERJ look watch star-Pek
‘Curiously, [he] looked for the Pek Star’

b. Ø_i ka bɔ́ hen Ø_k -MEL
 KA NEG see
‘but [he] didn’t see [it],’

(401) Complement clause

∅_i (ka) lusuuk wa: [∅_j (#ka) si ka:j paj laja nuuŋ]
 KA feel say KA IRR pass go distance one

‘[I] feel like [he] might have gone past a certain distance.’ (Pearfilm_sw28)

As for the rest of the *ka*-marked clauses (94 instances), removing *ka* results in either a meaning change or ungrammaticality. For instance, *ka* is obligatory in (398b) above; the surface form without *ka* is ill-formed. This type of *ka* rarely co-occurs with new events; only 21 instances are considered part of the MEL. These construction-specific occurrences will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Table 26 summarizes the characteristics of the nine narrative texts with respect to the instances of *ka*, the number of main clauses that *ka* can and cannot be inserted into, and the overall main clause count.

Table 26: Characteristics of Isaan narrative texts

Story ID	<i>ka</i> count	<i>ka</i> is missing but insertable	<i>ka</i> is not insertable	Main clause count
Pearfilm_oi	38	70	21	129
Pearfilm_sm	36	45	9	89
Pearfilm_yt	17	35	16	68
Pearfilm_sw	42	37	15	94
Tragedy_oi	47	90	35	172
Tragedy_sm	52	105	45	202
Monk and Novice_sm	21	44	26	91
Siang Miang_sm	36	41	47	124
Widow_sm	67	132	66	265
Total	356	599	280	1234

Given that around 70% of the clauses in the texts allow *ka* to be inserted or removed without major semantic change, the question is why Isaan speakers would use *ka* when it appears to be syntactically and semantically unnecessary. I hypothesize that one of the factors that motivates using *ka* in these “optional” situations involves maintaining the understanding of the flow of

main events (+MEL) through the discourse. This predicts that the *ka* will likely occur in the “optional *ka*” clauses when speakers assert new events in the narrative world.

6.3.2 *Asserting new events on the main event line*

For this analysis, I identify the MEL propositions that assert sequential and non-overlapping events as described in §6.1. The sample data set includes the total of 373 clauses that are part of the MEL; these are matched against *ka*-optional clauses where *ka* does and does not occur. Note that due to how it is operationalized, +MEL material sometimes also includes clauses that may not structurally take *ka* such as adverbial clauses; these were removed from the statistical analysis since *ka* is disallowed there. Thus, the number of MEL clauses remaining for this analysis is 316. The results of the collocation analysis are presented in Table 27.

Table 27: Correlation of observed and expected frequencies of “optional” *ka* with Main Event Line (MEL).

	<i>ka</i> is overt (but removeable)	<i>ka</i> is missing (but insertable)	Total
+MEL	158 (96.3)	158 (219.7)	316
-MEL	104 (165.7)	440 (378.3)	544
Total	262	598	860

At first glance, it appears that half of +MEL clauses are marked by *ka*, based on the raw frequencies. However, when the expected frequencies are taken into consideration, *ka*-marked clauses co-occur with +MEL materials much more frequently than expected by chance. The finding suggests that instances where *ka* is overt significantly correlates with the linguistic expression of the MEL in Isaan narrative texts ($\chi^2 = 89.99$, log likelihood = 88.44, $p < .00001$). The propositions marked by *ka* are those that tend to push the narrative timeline forward and assert that new events happen in succession. The findings also suggest that the morpheme *ka* is associated with information saliency in a narrative episode. The events marked with *ka* may be more cognitively prominent in the mind of the speaker, or the speaker is making them prominent for the listeners (i.e., foregrounding), calling the listener’s attention to the fact that the discourse flow has moved forward.

- g. mɛ: **ka** ləj ma: suaj -MEL
 mother KA exceed come late
 “and so, I came here late.” (Tragedy_sm55.3-56.2)

Speakers not only use *ka* in clauses that assert series of events that happened in sequenced order but also in clauses that summarize a section of the narrative discourse; this is not unlike a thesis statement or a summarizing topic sentence in written language. This is shown in (402) as well as in (403). In (403), the subsequent clauses elaborate what the first *ka*-marked clause in (403a) asserts.

(403) *ka*-marked clause introduces a summarizing statement of an episode

- a. pokati Ø_i **ka** ju: nāmkan ʔɔmlɔm-ʔɔmlɔm ju: la
 regularly KA stay together bundled-bundled be.at PRT
 lu:k kap mɛ:_i
 kid with mother

‘Normally, [they] lived together with peace and harmony, as for the child and his mother.’

- b. Ø_i paj səj ma səj
 go where come where

‘Wherever [they] go,’

- c. Ø_i ka ha: k^hàw ha: nâ:m su: kan kin dǐ:di:
 KA seek rice seek water to RECIP eat well

‘[they] would help each other gather foods and water all the time.’

- d. lu:k ka hǔ:hu: dɔ:k
 kid KA well.behaved PRT

‘The child is well behaved (too).’ (Tragedy_sm9-10)

All of the clauses in excerpt (403) are considered as part of the supportive materials (-MEL) as they either represent non-events or do not advance the plot of the story. While (403b-c) do not necessarily push the narrative timeline forward, the sequential meaning is apparent because (403c) is understood to logically follow after (403b). This might suggest that *ka*-marked clauses

are associated with pragmatic assertions of not only new events but of new information in general; however, the new information introduced by *ka* is made with respect to certain inter-propositional domains. We shall return to the notion of topic and inter-propositional relations as relevant to *ka* in Chapter 7.

6.4 The use of *ka* with objectivization (“nominalization”) of an event proposition

Finally, I comment briefly on the use of *ka* to demarcate an event proposition which might be argued to serve as the topic (rather than a subject) of a following predicate. While speakers mostly report narrative events as part of the predicate of the clause, a handful of events can be objectified such that the events themselves are treated as (propositional) referents in Lambrecht’s (1994: 74) sense.

To illustrate this use of *ka*, consider the following example. The null subject can be replaced with the pronoun *man* 3.NO, but it cannot refer to a person as the predicate *kaj* ‘far’ is only applicable to distance.

(404) Objectified event followed by *ka*

ɲa:ŋ	ma:	∅	ka	kaj	le:w
walk	come		KA	far	already

‘Walking here was far already.’

(Monk and his Novice_sm44)

In (404), the event of ‘walking here’ is part of the presuppositional pool, based on the story events just prior to the speaker uttering (404). Though “presupposed” does not necessarily mean the information will be taken as “topic” (in any sense of the term), nor that a form will be “nominalized”, it is the case that the vast majority of subjects—which occur in the slot preceding *ka*—contain given or roughly presupposed information. Specially, the referents in the initial NP of the [NP *ka* predicate] construction discussed in Chapter 4 (§4.5) are either non-first mentions or are cognitively accessible and situationally available first mentions.

However, note that Isaan does not exclusively use *ka* to serve the function of “objectifying an event”. In fact, it is quite rare to do so. For example, (405a) represents a non-first mention of an event. The topic marker *ni*, which is derived from the proximal demonstrative *nî:*, is used after the verb string *paj lo:ŋp^hu:m* ‘go challenge’. In the preceding context, the speaker already described a scene where the king challenges Siang Miang’s wit by asking Siang

Miang to trick him to walk into a buffalo's pit. Siang Miang succeeded. (405) is what the speaker said at the end of the episode.

(405) Objectified event with the topic marker *ni*

a. k^hu: / paj lɔ:ŋp^hu:m kan ni
 be.like go challenge RECIP TPC

su: siŋmiŋ bɔ: daj cak t^hua
 fight Siangmiang NEG CAN how.many CLF.time

'That is, [when they] go test each other's wit, [the king] cannot beat Siangmiang at all.'

b. p^hala:sa: p^he: tɔlɔ:t
 king lose always

'The king always lost.'

(Siangmiang_sm 74-75)

To conclude, this chapter has explored the use of *ka* in expressing distinct but sequentially related events. I have shown that instances where *ka* is overt (but removable) significantly correlate with the temporal sequence relationship, which is assumed to be basic to narratives. I have suggested that these occurrences of *ka* represent one of its functions, which has to do with information saliency (i.e., that a new event is being made prominent and/or asserted as happening for the first time in the narrative world). However, temporal sequence is one of many inter-propositional relationships that propositions carrying *ka* may hold. The next chapter will explore the use of *ka* in communicating other types of inter-propositional relationships.

CHAPTER 7

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROPOSITIONS

Over any extended discourse, propositions are assumed to be organized into coherent units with one or more semantic relationships relating them (Mann & Thompson 1986). When telling a story, speakers do not merely report that someone did something or that things happened in a temporal order. Rather, they also describe details relating to the circumstances, consequences, reasoning behind certain actions or events, etc. Mann and Thompson (1986: 58–59) observe that these relationships hold between “parts of a text even though each of these parts may be longer than one sentence.” Inter-propositional relations are often implicit and arise when propositions are combined.

In this chapter, I will argue that the Isaan morpheme *ka* is one of many coherence building devices that enables speakers to explicitly signal a particular range of underlying semantic relations between units of propositions, namely sequence, cause-result, condition, circumstance, and consequence. In addition to semantic accounts, I will also give syntactic and information structure accounts for the presence of *ka* in some non-canonical morphosyntactic patterns and show how propositions expressed by these patterns are coherently related to other propositions in the narrative text. As noted in Chapter 2, the semantic and pragmatic functions are kept apart so that the various functions of *ka* may be analyzed more effectively. At the end of this chapter, we will find that there is a common thread between these semantic and pragmatic functions.

This chapter begins in §7.1 with previous accounts of the functions of *ka* in related languages, namely Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2005) for Thai and Enfield (2007a) for Lao. I discuss certain issues with their proposals with respect to Isaan data. §7.2 then presents semantic factors which explain the types of relationship between *ka*-marked propositions and other propositions in Isaan, following Mann and Thompson’s (1986) influential work. §7.3 briefly comments on a few cases where *ka* is required by the syntactic structures. As for the information structural factors, §7.4 proposes that at least some non-optional uses of *ka* can be analyzed as part of information packaging construction, including the expanding focus construction. Finally, §7.5 concludes that the semantic and pragmatic functions can be construed as instances of one general cognitive or conceptual model: [GIVEN X, IT FOLLOWS THAT Y], where X stands for referents, events, or propositions that are part of the presupposition, and Y refers to the assertion.

7.1 Previous accounts of *ka* in related languages

Previous literature on Southwest Tai-Kadai languages has long recognized the elusive nature of the morpheme *ka* because it serves multiple functions. The phonological forms /kɔ̌/ ~ /ka/ have been called a conjunction, a linking particle, a topic linker, and a focus particle by various authors (Phinthong 1989: 1; Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 171; Enfield 2007a: 197; Enfield 2008: 99). In the subsections which follow, I briefly summarize previous proposals regarding two related languages, namely Central Thai and Vientiane Lao, highlight some issues regarding *ka*, and present instances of Isaan *ka* that would appear to function similarly.

7.1.1 Functions of *kɔ̌* in Central Thai

In *A Reference Grammar of Thai*, /kɔ̌/ is described as a “linking particle” with five major functions: a nominal linker, a discourse linker, a clausal linker, a response marker, and a marker of criticism or disappointment (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 171). Table 28 summarizes the description of /kɔ̌/ for Thai.

Table 28: Five functions of /kɔ̌/ in Central Thai (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 171–177).

Term	Description	Morphosyntactic Position
Nominal linker	links a noun phrase (NPA) with another noun phrase (NPB) not in the same clause/sentence with the meaning of ‘in addition to’	after a subject/topic with the same additive function: John (= NPB) came. Lisa (= NPA) <i>also</i> came.
Clause linker	links two clauses with the meaning of ‘so’	after a subject if it is expressed; often co-occurs with /lɔ̌y/ as in /kɔ̌ lɔ̌y/
Discourse linker	appears between two sets of information in discourse with the meaning of ‘and (then)’	often expressed by /lɛ̌w kɔ̌/ or a shorted vowel /lɛ̌w kɔ̌/
Response marker	appears as a response to a question, but signals that the response may not satisfy the questioner completely	at the beginning of an utterance before the subject
Criticism and disappointment	adds a criticizing or disappointed tone of voice to a statement	occurs between two identical or similar expressions

Data from the Spoken Isaan Corpus appear to be compatible with at least some of the functions in Table 28. For instance, the excerpt in (406) can be described as illustrating the “nominal linker” usage. The speaker, who is a monk, is giving a sermon at someone’s house. After discovering that the host’s father was a farmer, the speaker comments on the types of farms the host family has surrounding their property. The lines in (406) form a continuous stretch of the original discourse. Each NP that occurs before *ka* refers to a type of economic agricultural plantation commonly found in Isaan region, and thus is not particularly unexpected or surprising.

(406) Examples of “nominal linker” usage of *ka* in Isaan

a. ʔo haj-ʔɔ:j ka mi: nɔʔ
 oh field-sugarcane KA have AGREE.PRT
 ‘Oh, sugarcane farms, (he) has (them) *too!*’
 or ‘Oh, there are sugarcane farms *too!*’

b. ʔo mi: su ja:ŋ
 oh have every type
 ‘Oh, (he) has everything’
 or ‘Oh, there is everything’

c. jaŋp^hala ka mi: ju: nì:
 rubber KA have be.at here
 ‘Rubber (trees), (he) has (them) here’
 or ‘There are *also* rubber trees here.’

d. man ka mi:
 cassava KA have
 ‘Cassava, (he) *also* has’
 or ‘There is *also* cassava.’

(Sompong_06.17)

Examples in (406) include instances of the [NP *ka* Predicate] construction discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.5). Semantically, the referents in lines (406a), (406c), and (406d) are linked by the “additive function” via the shared content of the predicate (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 171). Pragmatically, the referents in the initial NPs are cognitively accessible from prior discourse or from being plainly visible at the speech act location. This may exemplify a topic relation in the sense of Lambrecht (1994: 118) where “the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about” is linguistically expressed in the slot before *ka*. At the same time, the pre-*ka*

NPs represent a set of alternative things that are known to be cultivated by farmers in the Isaan region, and there is some degree of emphasis on the pre-*ka* NP as well as on the content of predicate—a situation where the focus reading, under a certain sense of “focus”, is appropriate (cf. Krifka 2008: 247). I contend that the asserted new relationship between units of information (i.e., focus of assertion in Lambrecht’s work) is translated into English as ‘too’ or ‘also’. Regardless of what one analyzes as the focus of assertion (whether ‘too/also’ versus the initial NP), based this text excerpt alone, it is not surprising that the terms “topic” and “focus” have been brought into explaining the functions of *ka*. But what exactly is the role of *ka*? This, again, highlights the importance of distinguishing semantics and pragmatics in the analysis of functions related to *ka*.

The description of the so-called “clause linker” function in Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom’s (2005) work is imprecise, and English *so* has multiple functions (cf. §2.3.2). Many examples in Isaan narrative texts are found to be compatible with some type of ‘so’ reading. The “link” here is not a formal property. Rather, it is a semantic relation between two propositions. For example, the form *ka ləj* ‘and so’ occurs after the subject of the second clause in (407), and there are no other formal properties that tie the two clauses together. Regarding the referent information, the two clauses may have overt subjects that are co-referential, as in (408), or null subjects with switch-reference, as in (409). Note that the focus effects that seem to be relevant for (406) are not quite apparent here.

(407) Multi-clausal expressions with *ka* ‘and so’ reading

- a. \emptyset_i ma: hɔ:t su: hian sa:w sa: ni la
 come arrive around house lady rumor TPC PRT
 ‘[He] arrived nearby the renowned lady’s house.’

- b. \emptyset_i ka ləj cɔ:t
 KA exceed park
 ‘And so, [he] docked (the boat).’

(Widow_sm94)

(408) Co-referential overt subjects with *ka* ‘so’ reading

- a man wa: mɛ:n nɛ:w-kin
 3.NO say COP NMLZ-eat
 ‘They’d think it’s food,

- b. man **ka** si lɛ:n ma kin
 3.NO KA IRR run come eat
 ‘so, they’d run to eat it.’ (Tragedy_sm83)

(409) Switch-reference with *ka* ‘so’ reading

- a. p^hɔː-ta Ø_i maj mɔː-k^hàw lɛ:w
 when-from burn pot-rice already

‘Since [the fire] had burned the rice pot,

- b. Ø_j **ka** ləj ma: Ø_k maj
 KA exceed soak new

‘(so) [she] soaked new [rice].’ (Tragedy_sm27.1)

Even though various examples from Spoken Isaan Corpus appear to be compatible with some of the functions described in Table 28, I often find examples like in (410) which do not neatly fit any of the five functions.

(410) Excerpt from Widow Story

- a. Ø_i paj hɔːt saj
 go arrive where

‘Wherever [she] goes,’

- b. **ka** mi: p^hu- ma: ci:p Ø_i
 KA have CLF.HUM- come court

‘[she]’d have someone who came to court her.’
 or ‘there would be someone who came to court her.’

- c. p^hu-dǎj ma:
 CLF.HUM-which come

‘Anyone came (to court her),

- d. law_i **ka** bɔ́ wao nǎm
 3.FA KA NEG speak with

‘she did not talk to [them].’ (Widow_sm22.2-3)

7.1.2 Functions of *ka* in Vientiane Lao

In *A Grammar of Lao*, Enfield (2007a: 202–203) argues that some uses of *ka* in Vientiane Lao (Enfield’s transcription: *kaø*, where the symbol ø indicates the lack of tone) have to do with the content of the propositions and “sentence-level focus.” The use of *ka* is “appropriate where the assertion in the second clause conforms with the first clause (while the subject arguments [may] alter)”. To illustrate this function of *ka*, Enfield uses the minimal pair in (411) and observes that the *ka*-marked version in (411b) “evokes something prior and makes a link to it...The prior proposition functions as a topic for the *ka*-marked one.” (2007a: 199). The sentence in (412) states explicitly the prior proposition that *ka* alludes to.

(411) Minimal pair of *ka* in Vientiane Lao (Enfield 2007a: 198)

a.	khòj5	kin3	siin4	b.	khòj5	kaø	kin3	siin4
	1SG.FA	eat	meat		1SG.FA	KA	eat	meat
	‘I eat meat.’				‘I too eat meat.’			

(412) Two-part sentence with *ka* in Vientiane Lao (Enfield 2007a: 199)

qaaj4	khòj5	kin3	siin4,	khòj5	kaø	kin3	siin4
elder.brother	1SG.FA	eat	meat	1SG.FA	KA	eat	meat
‘My brother eats meat; I too eat meat.’							

Enfield also has something inter-propositional in mind when he claims, “the proposition marked by *ka* is foregrounded as an assertion whose relevance is computed with reference to the now backgrounded prior proposition” (2007a: 199). Additionally, *ka* cannot be used with questions. He writes, “accordingly, the subject of a *ka*-marked predicate cannot be interpreted as an interrogative pronoun” (2007a: 200). The insertion of *ka* in clauses with indefinite pronouns can change the sentence from a content question, as in (413a), to a declarative sentence, as in (413b).

(413) Vientiane Lao examples from Enfield (2007a: 200)

a.	phaj3	kin3	siin4
	who	eat	meat
	i ‘Who eats meat?’		
	ii. ‘Anyone/everyone eats meat.’		

- b. phaj3 **kaø** kin3 siin4
 who KA eat meat
 ‘Anyone/anyone eats meat.’¹⁶
 (NOT: ‘Who eats meat?’)

The sudden change in the meaning from (413a) to (413b) is due to the information structural property of questions. Interrogative sentences carry no asserted information in them (instead they solicit information), and the use of *ka* in such a structure turns a question into a statement, marking an assertion. The *ka*-marked statement also evokes something said prior and makes a link to it. Thus, Enfield (2007a: 199) concludes that for Lao the general function of *ka* is “to link an assertion back to something which serves as a topic.”

While it is clear, according to Enfield, that the use of *ka* in Lao is related to the information structure of propositions (i.e., what is presupposed and what is asserted), it remains unclear how a prior proposition is recognizable as a “topic” for all of the Isaan *ka*-marked clauses. Consider the Isaan example in excerpt (414). The speaker is telling the story about a monk and his novice. *Ka*-marked clauses occur twice, in (414b) and (414c). The assertion in (414b) is interpreted as related to the immediately preceding clause (414a). But it is unclear whether and how (414a) is a topic of some sort for (414b).

(414) Excerpt from Monk and Novice Story

- a. Ø_i naŋ paj naŋ ma:
 sit go sit come
 ‘Having sat there for a long time,’

- b. Ø_i **ka** lap k^ha: pa: bak-kato:n nan la
 KA asleep be.stuck forest CLF.fruit-winter.melon TPC PRT
 ‘[he] fell asleep within the winter melon field.’

- c. ca:k ti:-nuŋ hɔ:t ti:-ha: law_i **ka** lap səj
 from CLF.TIME-one arrive CLF.TIME-five 3.NO KA asleep be.still
 ‘From 1 am until 5 am, he was fast asleep.’ (Monk and his Novice_sm50-51)

¹⁶ The form in (413b) is not an acceptable sentence in my Isaan variety. I would use *p^hu-dǎj* literally ‘which person’, instead of *p^haj* ‘who’.

The *ka*-marked clause in (414c) particularly calls into question whether there is a need for some notion of topic to account for the role of *ka*, at least in the context of (414c). The speaker is describing the scene where a single narrative participant, the monk, is present. The clause is interpreted based on the set of premises listed in (415) where the target proposition refers to (415c).

(415) Premises for interpreting (414c)

P1: The monk arrived at the village and found nobody up and about.

P2: At that time, it was around 1 am or mid-night.

P3: The monk assesses his options (what to do next).

P4: Walking here was far and he does not want to walk all the way back to the temple.

P5: He walked into some forested area around the village.

P6: He sat for a long time and fell asleep in the forested area where winter melons grew.

Target Proposition: **From 1 am until 5 am, he was fast asleep.**

By the time the target proposition in (414c) was uttered, the speaker is asking the listeners to accept upon hearing that the monk remains asleep at that particular moment in the story. Based on the information flow of the narrative text, the fact that the monk was asleep is part of the presupposition pool because it was asserted in the preceding clause (414b). Thus, the speaker is presenting new information regarding the length of time the sleeping process took place in the target proposition. The clause begins with this new piece of information—the focus of assertion—*ca:k ti:-nuŋ hɔ:t ti:-ha:* ‘from 1am until 5 am’, followed by a reference to the narrative participant in the subject position *law* ‘3.NO’, follow by *ka*, and ends with the piece of information which is already known to be related to this individual. (416) shows how information of the proposition is organized.

(416) Information Packaging of (414c)

Sentence: ‘From 1 a.m. until 5 a.m., he was fast asleep.’

Presupposition: ‘He was asleep for x amount of time.’

Assertion: ‘From 1 a.m. until 5 a.m., he was fast asleep.’

Focus of assertion: ‘x = ‘from 1 am until 5 a.m.’

Accordingly, the target proposition (414c) can be interpreted as most relevant to the immediately preceding proposition (414b) ‘[He] fell asleep within the winter melon field,’ since it is “the now

backgrounded prior proposition” in Enfield’s (2007a: 199) sense. However, precisely in what sense such a proposition would be considered a topic (or if it is a topic at all) remains to be clarified. We will return to the issue whether the notion of topic is actually necessary for defining the functions of *ka* in §7.4.

As for (414c), I argue that the notion of topic (in whatever sense) is not relevant to this particular instance of *ka*. Instead, the role of *ka* is accounted for by inter-propositional relations, following Mann and Thompson’s (1986) framework. Semantically, the target proposition relates to prior propositional units in a number of ways. It is sequentially related to the event of sitting stated in line (414a). It is also partly a restatement of the preceding lines (414a) and (414b) as some portions of the information overlap. It elaborates (414b). Additionally, it provides evidence for the fact that the monk indeed did not return to the temple. All these inter-propositional relationships are essential to the listeners’ understanding (i.e., making sense) of what happens in the story, and for building coherence. The next section will elaborate a particular range of underlying semantic relations between (units of) propositions that can co-occur with, if not be explicitly signaled by, *ka*.

7.2 Semantic factors accounting for *ka*

When *ka* appears in multi-clausal constructions in Isaan, the types of inter-propositional relationships include sequence, cause-result, condition, circumstance, and consequence.¹⁷ Following Mann and Thompson (1986), I discuss each of these inter-propositional relations and provide descriptive accounts for these semantic functions of *ka*. Moreover, I examine inter-propositional relations pertaining to parts of the narrative texts in which *ka* does not occur. We will see that Isaan speakers avoid using *ka* in parts of the text that explain a reason why something happens or the purpose of an action, even though the presence of *ka* would not produce ungrammatical forms. The types of relationships between propositions are indicated in square brackets for clarity. In my analysis, multiple relations can simultaneously hold true.

¹⁷ Due to the fact that propositions are semantically inter-related, there may be other types of inter-propositional relations that trigger the use of *ka* that await further research.

7.2.1 *The sequence relation*

The first type of relation is termed **sequence**. This is when two parts of a text convey events, the second is understood to (chronologically) follow the first. In Chapter 6, I have shown that temporal sequence is perhaps the most prominent meaning in *ka*-marked propositions in the narrative texts examined. We have seen that clauses marked by *ka* are strongly associated with events that advance the narrative timeline, i.e., that one event is understood as following another event in time, though *ka* is optional for temporally sequenced events. In (417), *ka* can be removed without disrupting the sequence reading of the text.

(417) Example of *ka* with sequence relation

a. \emptyset_j **n**uŋ \emptyset_k lɛ:w lɛ:w
 steam finish already
 ‘Having finished steaming [the rice],

b. \emptyset_j **ka** ʔaw \emptyset_k paj / ʔa paj wat
 KA take go uh go temple
 ‘[she] took [it] to, uh, to the temple.’

[sequence to (a)]
 (Tragedy_sm28.2-3)

Thus, in narrative discourse, I suggest that a *ka*-marked clause can explicitly signal that the event is understood as part of a sequence of events. (See Chapter 6 for a more comprehensive account of the sequence relation.)

7.2.2 *Cause-result relation*

The second type of inter-propositional relation is termed **cause-result**. A cause is defined as the part of a text that gives rise to the other part or forces the other event to occur; and a result is the part that logically or force-dynamically follows from the cause. In the Pear Story example in (418), *ka* occurs in (418b) which presents a result of (418a).

(418) Cause-result relation with *ka*

a. suj suj t^hu:k muak man
 brush brush strike hat 3.NO

‘[The Bike Girl] brushed, brushed onto his hat,’

[cause of (b)]

- b. muak man **ka** hia
 hat 3.NO KA fall
 ‘his hat fell off.’

[result of (a)]
 (Pearfilm_oi38-39)

With the inter-propositional meaning of cause-result, *ka* often co-occurs with *ləj* ‘exceed’; together, *ka ləj* is often translated into English with the vague (*and*) *so* expression or more precisely *as a result*, as seen in (419).

(419) Cause-result relation with *ka ləj*

- a. cakaja:n k^han-nân **ka** **ləj** lom
 bicycle CLF.vehicle-PROX KA exceed fall
 ‘That bike, as a result, fell down.’ [result of prior propositions, cause of (b)]
- b. kata: ma:k-maj **ka** **ləj** saʔ tem t^ha:ŋ
 basket CLF.fruit-wood KA exceed scatter be.filled way
 ‘The fruit basket, as a result, scattered all over the road.’ [result of (a)]
 (Pearfilm_sm40)

That two propositions are understood as having the cause-result relation also relies on the information in the presuppositional pool, which comprises all the preceding propositions. In the prior text for (419), the fruit basket had been placed on the bicycle. Thus, the ‘falling’ of the bicycle naturally gives rise to the ‘scattering’ of the fruit basket since the basket and the fruits it contains would also fall.

In my analysis, the result is considered a sub-type of the sequence relation, but one that has a cause. Events that are sequentially related can simply be temporally ordered as in (417), or also be a result of a cause as in (418).

7.2.3 Condition-consequence relation

In many cases, the preceding proposition provides a **condition** under which the *ka*-marked one holds true. In (420), the assertion ‘people would believe [him]’ is presented as true if the preceding statement ‘[he] said anything’ is true. The first statement in (420a) is a condition, and (420b) is a consequence. The **consequence** relation differs from the sequence and result

In the next section, I discuss two types of semantic relations between propositions that do not occur with *ka*, despite the fact that inserting *ka* would produce a syntactically well-formed sentence. These are reason and purpose.

7.2.5 Reason for an event

A close analysis of the narrative texts reveals that speakers not only report the events in a story, but also explain why something happens. Reason is defined as the part of a text that “provides a rationale for the volitional action expressed in the other part” (Mann & Thompson 1986: 62). However, as we shall see below, speakers may also provide reasons for non-volitional affairs. The rationale for a narrative event is considered part of the supportive materials (§2.3.4), which stand outside of the narrative events and clarify them (cf. Grimes 1975).

Isaan speakers normally do not use *ka* within the propositions that provide a reason for a volitional act, even if these are expressed as main clauses, as in (423b). Instead, a reason may be overtly marked by the word *p^hɔ-wa:* ‘because’, as shown in (424b)

(423) Implicit reason between two main clauses

- a. mɛ: ka paj wat la
mother KA go temple PRT
“I went to the temple.” [response to a question in prior text]
- b. mûr-nî: pen mûr: bun k^hàw pradap din wa: san wa:
today COP day merit rice décor earth say-thus say
“(because) today is the day of the death”, she said [reason for (a)]
(Tragedy_sm 56.2)

(424) Overtly marked reason ‘because’

- a. ne:n nô:j ka ja:n caok^hɔ:ŋ nɔ:n bó tu:n k^hur:kan
young.monk small KA fear self sleep NEG wake be.like-RECIP
‘The young monk got nervous that he himself would not wake up either’
[sequence of prior text]
- b. p^hɔ-wa: t^həŋ ʔaka:t na:w t^həŋ nɔ:n di: , mɛ:n bɔ
because both weather cold both sleep good COP NEG
‘because the weather was cold and the sleep was good, right?’ [reason for (a)]
(Monk and his Novice_sm15.2)

the lady’s action in (426a). Inserting *ka* before the verb *wa*: ‘say’ in (426b) is semantically rather awkward even though it does not produce an ill-formed sentence (represented by *-ka*).

(426) Excerpt from Monk and Novice Story¹⁸

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-------|------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--|
| a. | ba:t-ni | ∅ | cap | hua | luan-p ^h ɔ: | bit | +MEL, ±ka |
| | now | | hold | head | TITLE.MONK-father | twist | |
| | ‘[she] took hold of the monk’s head (and) twisted, | | | | | | [cause of (c)] |
| b. | ∅ | wa: | mɛ:n | ma:k-kato:n | | | -MEL, -ka |
| | | say | COP | CLF.fruit-winter.melon | | | |
| | ‘thinking it was a winter melon.’ | | | | | | [reason for (a)] |
| c. | luan-p ^h ɔ: | | tu:n | k ^h u:n | | | +MEL, ±ka |
| | TITLE.MONK-father | | wake | up | | | |
| | ‘The monk woke up,’ | | | | | | [result and sequence of (a)] |
| d. | ∅ | nu:k | wa: | mɛ:n | p ^h i:lɔ:k | ma lɔ:k | -MEL, ±ka |
| | | think | say | COP | ghost | come deceive | |
| | ‘(and) thought a ghost had come upon him.’ | | | | | | [sequence with (c)]
(Monk and his Novice_sm62-63) |

I suggest that the fact that *ka* may not be used in (426b) is due to a clash between the rhetorical function of (426b) and the inter-propositional semantic relations that are allowed, if not signaled, by *ka*. At this point of the story, it has been already established that the lady believed that the monk’s head was a melon. Thus, the entire content of (426b) is presupposed, already familiar to the listeners, and could be accepted without challenge. The speaker uses (426b) not only to restate that belief but also to provide a reason for the volitional action in (426a). This means that the lady’s thinking the monk’s head was a melon must have happened before the head twisting occurred in the narrative world. Therefore, (426b) does not follow (426a) chronologically in the universe of discourse. For these reasons, it is not a felicitous discourse environment for *ka* to occur in. Figure 4 illustrates the understood sequence in the universe of discourse and the relative time of linguistic reporting of (426).

¹⁸ Shortly below, I will justify why I consider (426d) to have a sequence relation with (426c). Nevertheless, (426d) is not considered part of the MEL here because it is not a felicitous answer to ‘What happens, now?’ (See §5.1).

In contrast, a sentence construction similar to (426b), which occurs in (426d), can be used with *ka* felicitously and without a drastic semantic change. The proposition that the monk thought that a ghost had come upon him in (426d) necessarily follows from the event of head twisting in (426a). If we assume that the events denoted by verbs of perception such as seeing, hearing, and thinking require one to be conscious, it follows that the monk's thinking in (426c) can only occur after (even if just moments after) the monk had been woken up from sleep. Hence, the content of (426d) is identified as being in chronological sequence with another event and is more compatible with *ka* compared to (426b).

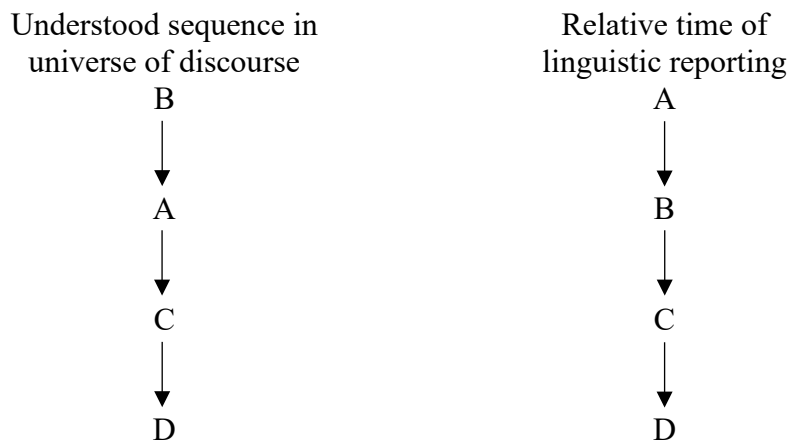


Figure 4: Understood sequence of events in the universe of discourse relative to the time of linguistic reporting of the sequence (A) *She took hold of the monk's head (and) twisted*, (B) *thinking it was a winter melon*. (C) *The monk woke up* (D) *(and) thought a ghost had come upon him*.

Furthermore, the semantic test of inserting the overt marker of reason *p^hɔ wa:* 'because' is grammatical for (426b), but it is pragmatically questionable for (426d). This affirms the validity of the analysis that (426b) represents a reason for the action in (426a), but (426d) does not provide a reason for (426c). Crucially, the overt reason expression *p^hɔ-wa:* could be used felicitously in the original context of (427b), while adding it to (428b) would be infelicitous.

(427) Semantic test for reason 'because' of (426); pass

- a. *ba:t-ni* ∅ *cap* *hua* *luan-p^hɔ:* *bit*
 now hold head TITLE.MONK-father twist
 '[she] took hold of the monk's head (and) twisted,

- b. **p^hɔ-wa:** ∅ wa: mɛ:n ma:k-kato:n
 because say COP CLF.fruit-winter.melon
 ‘because [she] thought it was a winter melon.’

(428) Semantic test for reason ‘because’ of (426); pragmatically questionable

- a. luaŋ-p^hɔ: tu:n k^hu:n
 TITLE.MONK-father wake go.up
 ‘The monk woke up,’

- b. **#p^hɔ-wa:** ∅ nuuk wa: mɛ:n p^hi:lɔ:k ma lɔ:k
 because think say COP ghost come deceive
 ‘because [he] thought a ghost had come upon him.’

In short, *ka*-mark clauses may be linked back to propositions that provide a reason, as seen in (425). However, *ka* does not normally occur in reason clauses themselves and it is incompatible with reason propositions that are told out of order to the sequence understood in the story world, as seen in (426). The next section will examine a second type of inter-propositional relations where *ka* does not co-occur, namely a purpose.

7.2.6 Purpose of an action

The concept of purpose can be seen as a metaphorical goal that an agent achieves or intends to achieve by carrying out another action, as in *Go jogging (in order) to be full of energy*. The purpose may or may not happen or hold true at the time of the action done to achieve it (Thepkanjana 1986; Sudmuk 2005). This is close to what Mann and Thompson (1986: 62–63) call “motivation”, which they more narrowly characterize as a proposition which motivates the “reader’s future action” to comply with a directive, as in the second proposition in *Go jogging with me this afternoon. You’ll be full of energy*.

The purpose of an action in Isaan may be expressed via an overt marker, as in (429b), or implicitly via two adjacent clauses, as in the SVCs shown in (430b-c). Forward slashes represent pause breaks.

(429) Overt marker of purpose

a. Ø_i paj lok ka: /
go uproot seedling
'(He) went to remove the seedlings,'

b. p^həa Ø_i si ?aw paj dam nǎ:
for IRR take go dive rice paddy
'in order to plant (them).' (Tragedy_sm29)

(430) No overt marking of purpose

a. bak-dek-nô:j p^hu- k^hi: cakaja:n
TITLE.MASC-child-small CLF.HUM- ride bicycle
'The boy who rode the bicycle'

b. p^hu- lak k^hɔŋ k^haw ma: ka k^hi: k^hàw naj ba:n /
CLF.HUM- steal thing 3.NO come KA ride enter in house
'the one who stole their stuff, then rode the bicycle into the village'

c. Ø paj ha: k^ha:j
go look.for sell
'to go sell [it].'
or '(and) went (and) sold [it]' (Pearfilm_yt38)

In the overt marking strategy (429b), the purpose is in a dependent clause whose subject is coreferential with the main (previous) clause. This strategy is quite rare, with only one instance in the narrative text sample and 14 instances total in the Spoken Isaan Corpus. In contrast, the implicit strategy, as in (430c), is found much more frequently, with 96 instances in the narrative text sample.

Semantically, (429) and (430) are very similar such that the overt marker of purpose *p^həa si* 'in order to' can be grammatically inserted in the SVC of (430c) with purposive meaning, as shown in (431). However, for us to be certain whether the purposive event actually occurs and whether the proposition presents a purpose at all would depend on the ways each story unfolds.

(431) Passes overt purposive test applied to (430c)

a. p^hu- lak k^hɔŋ k^haw ma ka k^hi: k^hàw naj ba:n /
 CLF.HUM- steal thing 3.NO come KA ride enter in house
 ‘the one who stole their stuff, then rode the bicycle into the village’

b. **p^həa si** paj ha: k^ha:j
 for IRR go look.for sell
 ‘in order to go sell [it].’

In the Pear Story illustrated above, the purposive event in line (430c) did not take place in the video stimulus. However, it is understood that the event of ‘ride the bicycle into the village’ in (430b) temporally precedes the (intended) event ‘go sell’ in (430c). Therefore, the understood sequence in the universe of discourse is isomorphic to the relative time of linguistic reporting. Crucially, the speaker is presenting additional information about where the boy might have gone without committing to whether the event of ‘go sell’ actually happens. Hence, a purpose is different from a reason which expresses why a volitional action is carried out (discussed in §7.2.5). One difference is that a purposive event must conceptually follow another event in time. This makes it more similar to the type of inter-propositional relations called sequence (discussed in Chapter 6 and §7.2.1), and one might think it should be compatible with *ka*.

(432) Fails overt reason ‘because’ test applied to (430c)

a. p^hu- lak k^hɔŋ k^haw ma ka k^hi: k^hàw naj ba:n /
 CLF.HUM- steal thing 3.NO come KA ride enter in house
 ‘the one who stole their stuff, then rode the bicycle into the village’

b. ***p^hɔ-wa:** paj ha: k^ha:j
 because go look.for sell
 ‘*because he’d go sell [it].’

Despite the structural eligibility, morphosyntactic constructions with purposive meaning in Isaan do not co-occur with *ka*. I propose that this is because the use of *ka* in clauses like (430c) would assert that the event *actually happened* in a temporally sequential way within the universe of discourse, as seen in (433) below. The now *ka*-marked clause no longer presents a purpose of a previous event or action (i.e., A *in order to* B), but a sequential event (i.e., A *and then* B.)

(433) Inserting *ka* to a purposive clause in (430c) makes it an event sequence

∅	ka	paj	ha:	k ^h aj
	KA	go	look.for	sell

‘And then [he] went (and) sold [it].’

Another compelling example occurs in (434). Line (434c) contains a purposive SVC. Again, this clause may not occur with *ka*, as doing so would disrupt the coherence of the text. Prior to this point in the story, the speaker has established that the participant ‘son’ does rice farming every day, and that the daily process involves taking the rice seedlings in order to go plant them, as stated above in (429) with the explicit purposive marker. In this scene, the son removed the yoke from the buffalo (434a) and let the buffalo graze on the grass (434b) in order to plant rice seedlings (434c). The son may or may not have started the process of rice planting (e.g., he may or may not have walked to the specific rice paddy, and picked up the rice seedlings), but according to (434d) he certainly decided against doing the rice planting for the reason provided in (434e).

(434) Excerpt from Tragedy Story

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----------|--------------------|------------|-------|------|---------|---------------------------------|----------|----------|--|
| a. | ba:tt ^h ini: | ∅ | ka | pot | ʔɛ:k | / | pot | k ^h waj | san-la / | +MEL,±ka | |
| | now | | KA | release | yoke | | release | buffalo | PRT | | |
| | ‘Now, [he] removed the yoke from the buffalo,’ | | | | | | | [in sequence with prior events] | | | |
| b. | ∅ | pɔj | k ^h waj | kin | ɲa: | | | | | +MEL,±ka | |
| | | let.go | buffalo | eat | grass | | | | | | |
| | ‘(and) let the buffalo graze on the grass,’ | | | | | | | [in sequence with (a)] | | | |
| c. | ∅ | ma | dam | nǎ: | | | | | | -MEL,-ka | |
| | | come | dive | rice paddy | | | | | | | |
| | ‘to come plant the rice.’ | | | | | | | [purpose of (a-b)] | | | |
| d. | nǎ: | ∅ | ka | bɔ | dam | dɔ:k | | | | -MEL,±ka | |
| | rice paddy | | KA | NEG | dive | PRT | | | | | |
| | ‘but [he] didn’t plant the rice’ | | | | | | | [contrast with respect to (c)] | | | |

- b. p^hɔː-k^haː-wanit ka ləj ma bɔːk waː mɛːnaːŋ
 father-sell-commerce KA exceed come tell say lady
 ‘the merchant came to say “Dear lady,”
- c. mûrː-nîː p^hom si paj k^haːj
 today 1SG.MASC IRR go sell
 t^haːŋ mwaŋ taj dəː waː-san
 way city under PRT say-thus
 “today, I will go trade towards the south city” (he) said
- d. lɛːw Ø paj k^haːj t^haːŋ mwaŋ taj
 already go sell way city under
 ‘and then [he] went to trade in the south city.’
- e. mɛːnaːŋ ni ka ʔăw k^hɔː haj t^han c^hoːk-diː mɛːn bɔː
 lady TPC KA INTERJ beg give 3SG.PO luck-good COP NEG
 “And so, the lady (said) “ok, I wish you a good luck”, right? (Widow_sm103-106)

The example in (442) from a different story includes a report of speech without a main verb in line (442b). Based on (441e) and (442b), it appears that the presence of *ka* stands in for the absence of a main speech verb. I hypothesize that the speaker uses *ka* to indicate turn-taking, which is functionally similar to the sequence relations previously discussed in §7.2.1.

(442) Report of speech from the Monk and Novice story

- a. mɛːʔɔːk ka cap k^hɔː bit /
 lady KA hold neck twist
 ‘While the lady was twisting his neck,’
- b. luan-p^hɔː ka ʔo p^hiː lɔːk waː-san
 TITLE.MONK-father KA oh ghost say-thus
 ‘the monk (yelled) “Oh! A ghost!”
- c. mɛːʔɔːk waː ʔoː baːk-katoːn
 lady say oh CLF.fruit-winter.melon
 ‘The lady said, “oh, winter melon!” (Monk and his Novice_sm64.1-2)

7.4 Information structure factors accounting for *ka*

In this section, I continue evaluating the extent to which Enfield’s following claim for Vientiane Lao applies to Isaan *ka*: “[it] evokes something prior and makes a link to it...The prior proposition functions as a topic for the *ka*-marked one” (2007a: 199). In terms of information structure, I will argue that the role of *ka* in Isaan discourse relates to the focus of assertion—the part of a proposition where the asserted information differs from the presupposed information—more so than to the topic of discussion (*luay* topic) or to an aboutness topic (*kiaw-kap* topic) as informational units. An asserted new relationship is always present with all instances of *ka*, whether *ka* is removeable or required.

7.4.1 Contrastive contexts

The first piece of evidence that *ka* relates to focus comes from the fact that it often occurs in contrastive contexts where the assertion made is not necessarily linked back to a topic. In Chapter 4 in the discussion of the [NP *ka* predicate] construction, I characterize “contrastive contexts” with respect to the number of participants currently on stage, which is one type of contrast. The use of *ka* also involves another type of contrast where there is “a shift in the direction of the discourse, often where the main assertion is counter to expectation in some way” (Enfield 2007a: 202). I will highlight here the contrastive effects of *ka* in negative assertions.¹⁹ Negation of all or part of a proposition is normally felicitous only when the speaker assumes that the listeners hold something contrary to be true, but the speaker indicates that all or some part of that presupposition is false. This is a more marked situation than a routine assertion in which the speaker does not expect the listeners to find the focus of assertion information to be opposite of what they already assume.

The excerpt in (434), repeated in (443), illustrates not only that the locus of new information is in its typical post-*ka* position, but also that *ka* is used when the new information is correcting (part of) the presupposition (cf. Dik et al. 1981: 60). By this point in the narrative, the speaker has established that the participant ‘son’ does rice farming every day, and that the daily process involves taking the rice seedlings in order to go plant them. Upon hearing (443c), the listeners are assumed to expect that the son would plant the rice seedlings as he normally would

¹⁹ Note, however, that not all negated sentences in the data set co-occur with *ka*.

(445) Ungrammatical example without *ka*

*liew bəŋ daw-p^hek bɔ̌ hen ɲa:ŋ paj nam t^ha:ŋ
look watch star-Pek NEG see walk go with way

Attempting ‘[he] looked for the Pek Star but did not see it, walking along the road’

7.4.2 *Expanding focus construction*

A second type of evidence that supports my claim that the use of *ka* in Isaan has to do with focus of assertion comes from a “special” information packaging construction which I shall term the “expanding focus construction” (cf. Dik et al. 1981: 65). The construction always contains two or more *ka*-marked sentences following the pattern [A *ka* Y, B *ka* Y] where A and B represent a proposed set of alternatives, and Y is a repetition of the same predicate. The information status of A and B is new and relatively unexpected, while the information of Y is given. The expanding focus construction’s information packaging pattern differs from other occurrences of *ka* where the pre-*ka* information tends to be given (cf. Chapter 4 §4.5).

An example of the expanding focus construction was shown at the beginning of this chapter, restated in (446). Each NP in the pre-*ka* position refers to a type of economic agricultural plantation commonly found in the Isaan region. Hence, the pre-*ka* NPs in (446a), (446c), and (446d) are part of a culturally presupposed set of alternatives (along with other possible plantation types). Additionally, the effects of fronting plus *ka* give the impression that the speaker is amazed or impressed by the extensive types of plantations.

(446) Presupposed set of agricultural plantations

a. ʔo haj-ʔɔj **ka** mi: nɔ?
oh field-sugarcane KA have AGREE.PRT

‘Oh, sugarcane farms, (he) has.’
or ‘Oh, there are sugarcane farms.’

b. ʔo mi: su ja:ŋ
oh have every type

‘Oh, (he) has everything’
or ‘Oh, there is everything’

c. janp^hala ka mi: ju: ni:
 rubber KA have be.at here
 ‘Rubber (trees), (he) has (them) here’
 or ‘There are *also* rubber trees here.’

d. man ka mi:
 cassava KA have
 ‘Cassava, (he) *also* has’
 or ‘There is *also* cassava.’

(Sompong_06.17)

To identify the focus of assertion and the content of the presuppositional pool for (446), I examine what the speaker said prior, as shown in (447). Recall from Chapter 3 (§3.2.3) that the interrogative particle *bɔʔ* relates to the speaker’s assumption as to what is likely true, i.e., ‘(Potentially) X is the case?’

(447) Context: The speaker is asking the host about their father’s occupation prior to (446)

a. p^hɔ: ma: law het nǎŋ ni
 father Ma 3.FA make what TPC
 ‘As for Father Ma, what did he do (for a living)?’

b. het haj het nǎ: ni bɔʔ p^hɔ: ma: ni
 make field make rice.paddy TPC Q.PRT father Ma TPC
 ‘Farming (in general)?’

c. het haj het nǎ: ni nɔʔ ba:n haw nɔʔ
 make field make rice.paddy TPC AGREE.PRT house 1.FA AGREE.PRT
 ‘Oh, (he) did farming, right? in our hometown, right?’

(Sompong_06.16)

Based on (447), I gather that the concept of farming is part of the presuppositional pool for the *ka*-marked constructions in (446) above, and that farming is nominated as a topic of discussion (*luan*-topic) for this section of discourse. Additionally, an individual topic domain (*kiaw-kap*-topic) is the guy named Ma who was the father of the host family where the conversation (actually, a sermon) took place. Thus, the fact that Father Ma had farms is completely expected, based on the fact that he was a farmer. The focus of assertion is then on the pre-*ka* NPs. The information structure of (446a) is shown in (448), where the concept of farmlands is part of the

presupposition (i.e., x = (type of) farmlands). This is in accordance with Dik et al. (1981: 65) who claim that for the expanding focus type, the “focus information is meant to be added to the antecedently given presupposed information”; this type of focus need not involve correction or contrast.

(448) Information packaging of (446a)

Sentence:	‘Sugarcane farms, (he) has’
Presupposition:	‘He has x; x = (type of) farmlands’
Assertion:	‘Sugarcane farm, (he) has’
Focus of assertion	x = sugarcane (farmland)

In the example from another narrative text in (449), members of the relevant set of alternatives are mentioned for the first time in the pre-*ka* positions of the expanding focus construction. The speaker is telling a Tragedy story and describing the scene where the participant ‘mother’ prepares to deliver a meal to her son. The referents ‘foods’, ‘grilled fish’, and ‘grilled chicken’ are arguably evoked via prior propositions which include multiple mentions of *k^haw* ‘rice’, but they have not been explicitly named. The theme arguments of transfer SVCs are overtly expressed in the pre-*ka* slot of the expanding focus construction. The ‘also, too’ reading is applicable here due to the shared content of the predicates.

(449) First mentions but presupposed information in pre-*ka* position

a. *nɛ:w-kin_f* \emptyset_i ***ka*** *?aw* \emptyset_f *paj*
 NMLZ-eat KA take go
 ‘[She] also took some food/different types of food.’

b. *piŋ-pa:* *piŋ-kaj* *?iŋaŋ_p* \emptyset_i ***ka*** *?aw* \emptyset_p *paj* *haj* *lu:k-saj*
 grill-fish grill-chicken what KA take go give kid-male
 ‘Be it grilled fish, grilled chicken, and/or other things, [she] took [them] to her son.’
(Tragedy_oi43)

Note that (449a) and (449b) are not felicitous answers to *law het nǎŋ* ‘What did s/he do?’; they are felicitous answers to *nɛw-kin law het caŋdǎj* ‘As for the foods, s/he did how?’ or *law ?aw nɛw-kin paj bó* ‘Did s/he take the foods?’ This suggests that the foods and the fact that the participant did something to them are part of the presuppositional pool. However, the type of

story, the exact content of the questions is not part of the presuppositional pool. Instead, I suggest that the only information unit that is clearly presupposed is the fact that the Farmer did not say anything. Accordingly, the information packaging of (450d) is as follows.

(452) Information packaging of (450d)

Sentence: ‘Where are you taking it? He [the farmer] didn’t say!’
 Presupposition: “The farmer did not say x”
 Assertion: “Where are you taking it? He didn’t say!”
 Focus of assertion x = “Where are you taking it?”, (neither)

Contrary to the common information packaging pattern in Isaan, namely [given (*ka*) new information], the status of the pre-*ka* information in the expanding focus construction can be brand-new information, as seen above and also in (453a-b) and (454a-b). The post-*ka* predicate is being asserted as true with respect to the pre-*ka* information.

(453) Context: the speaker describes the characteristics of the story’s main character Siangmiang

a. [\emptyset_i si wa: laklɛ:m]_k $\emptyset_{j/k}$ **ka** bɔ́ mɛ:n
 IRR say astute KA NEG COP

‘If [we] were to say astute, [he/it] is not quite so.’

b. [\emptyset_i si wa: kʰi:koŋ]_k $\emptyset_{j/k}$ **ka** bɔ́ mɛ:n
 IRR say sly KA NEG COP

‘If [we] were to say sly, [he/it] is not quite so.’

(SiangMiang_sm3)

(454) Context: the speaker has established that Siangmiang is witty

a. \emptyset_i wao caŋdǎj kʰon_k **ka** səa \emptyset_i
 speak how person KA believe

‘Whatever [he] says, people would believe [him].’
 or ‘(if) [he] says anything, people would believe [him].’

b. \emptyset_i tua caŋdǎj kʰon_k **ka** səa \emptyset_i
 trick how person KA believe

‘However [he] lies, people believe [him].’
 or ‘(if) [he] tells a lie, people would believe [him].’

(SiangMiang_sm56)

In sum, the pattern of information packaging in the [A *ka* Y, B *ka* Y] expanding focus construction is quite distinctive from the other *ka*-marked instances discussed in Chapter 6 and in §7.2, since new information precedes *ka*. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is not always possible to separate the presupposition and the assertion into distinct and non-overlapping syntactic constituents. Rather, both presupposed and asserted information can co-exist in a single utterance or part of an utterance. For the [A *ka* Y, B *ka* Y] pattern, elements of new information can sometimes be found in both the pre-*ka* position and the post-*ka* position. While the pre-*ka* element expands the content of the presuppositional pool, the post-*ka* element asserts that a coherent relationship exists between the current *ka*-marked proposition and prior propositions.

7.4.3 *Topic, is that you?*

Finally, even though I contend that the main information structure use of *ka* relates to focus of assertion, this is not to say some notion of “topic” plays no part in the discourse distribution of *ka*. In fact, the role of *ka* as an introducer of newly asserted relationships requires the listeners to create a connection—a relation—among the units of information within the mental representation of the discourse and to discern how the new piece of information links up to the presuppositional pool. We have seen that a focus of assertion is always present in all instances where *ka* is used. The existence of a “topic” is not always clear. Nevertheless, *ka* always signals that the incoming information has a particular range of coherent relationship with something already in the presuppositional pool. In some instances, that thing in the presuppositional pool may represent a topic of discussion (*luan*-topic), but it does not need to be.

There is another set of morphemes that participate in information packaging in Isaan, namely *ni* and *nan*. These are phonologically reduced (i.e., no tone) from the proximal *nī*: ‘this’ and distal *nān*: ‘that’ demonstratives. These morphemes could be considered topic markers as they can mark any of the types of “topics” discussed in Chapter 2 (see also Enfield 2007a: 101). For instance, *ni* can mark a discourse-level “summarizing” topic of discussion as in (455), a thing which the sentence’s proposition is about as in (456), a participant most crucially involved in the story as in (457), or a participant not crucially involved in the story as in (458). In each case, the “topic” is sentence initial.

(455) k^han Ø wao lwaŋ bun ni man tɔŋ kiaw-kap prawɛt
 if speak topic merit TPC 3.NO must connect-with Vessantara
 ‘If [we] were to talk about merit, it has to be about Vessantara.’ (Genesis_kb73)

(456) kaj k^han ni man ŋaŋ dək ju: mən bɔ:
 chicken crow TPC 3.NO still night.time be.at COP NEG
 ‘The roosters crowing, it (i.e., the time) is still dark out, right?’ (Siangmiang_sm14)

(457) na:ŋ p^hu-ŋa:m ni ka si ʔaw kadu:k p^hua
 lady CLF.HUM-beautiful TPC KA IRR take bone husband
 ʔɔ:k ma wa:
 exit come say
 ‘the beautiful lady would take her husband’s ashes out to chat.’ (Widow_sm126)

(458) k^hwaj ni / man si saj t^ha:w ni samp^hat
 buffalo TPC 3.NO IRR use foot TPC touch
 lɔŋ-t^haj-nā: ju: naj nā:m de:
 furrow-plow-rice.paddy be.at in water PRT
 ‘As for the buffalo, it would use its feet to feel for the plow line which is under the water.’ (Tragedy_sm37)

While the pragmatic functions of *ni* and *nan* are beyond the scope of the current study, their presence in Isaan discourse grammar has implications for understanding the pragmatic functions of *ka*. Therefore, let us assume for a moment that there is already a set of morphemes that can mark topics (in some sense), as the preliminary data just presented suggest (in accordance with Enfield’s (2007a: 101) claim for Lao and Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom’s (2005: 361) for Thai).

Then, if *ka* were indeed part of this set as a “topic linker” that “link[s] an assertion back to something which serves as a topic” (Enfield 2007a: 199), it would be difficult to see how this would account for *ka* in (459). The pre-*ka* focus of assertion elements are being listed or compared against one another as the speaker is trying to describe what the Farmer is picking in the Pear Story video. Particularly, how does (459a) serve as a topic of some sort for (459b)?

Rather, it is more accurate to say that (459a) and (459b) are coherently connected via the additive meaning ‘too, also’.

(459) Expanding focus construction

- a. k^hu: k^hu: ma:k-somp^hu: ni ka k^hu:
 be.like be.like CLF.fruit-rose.apple TPC KA be.like

‘It looks like a rose apple.’

(Meaning, ‘That it resembles a rose apple, (it) is true’)

(Literally, ‘It is like a rose apple, it is like [rose apple].’)

- b. k^hu: k^hu: ma:k-si:da:t^hep ka k^hu:
 be.like be.like CLF.fruit-guava KA be.like

‘It also looks like a Sida Thep (a kind of guava)’

(Meaning, ‘That it resembles a guava, is also true.’)

(Literally, ‘It is like a guava, it is also like [a guava]’)

(Pearfilm_oi2)

Enfield also states for Lao that “the proposition marked by *ka* is foregrounded as an assertion whose *relevance is computed with reference to the now backgrounded prior proposition*” (2007a: 199 emphasis mine). However, this is an overgeneralization given examples like the excerpt in (460) from a different Pear Story. The newly asserted information introduced by *ka* in (460a) indeed relates back to the prior text where the speaker first introduces the Farmer. And the proposition carrying *ka* in (460b) is relevant to (460a) because it further describes the ‘fruits’ first mentioned in (460a). But significantly, the same could be said for (460c), (460d), and (460h), which do not include *ka* but whose relevance is nevertheless computed with reference to (parts of) their respective prior propositions.

(460) Excerpt from a Pear Story portion about ‘fruit’

- a. law ka si paj kep ma:k-maj
 3.FA KA IRR go collect CLF.fruit-wood

‘He would go collect fruits.’

- b. ma:k-maj ka ton-paj tə:p ju: de: t^hao
 CLF.fruit-wood KA CLF.tree-big rather be.at PRT old

‘The fruit, the tree is quite big, I tell you, my lady.’

- c. ton-ɲaj
 CLF.tree-big
 ‘a big tree’
- d. ma:k-maj ma:k kʰu: ton-bak-muaŋ
 CLF.fruit-wood fruit be.like CLF.tree-CLF.fruit-mango
- ba:n haw ni la
 house 1.FA TPC PRT
 ‘The fruit, it is similar to the mango tree we find around our hometown.’
- e. ma:k ka kʰa:j-kʰa:j kan
 fruit KA similar-similar RECIP
 ‘The fruit is also similar.’
- f. bəŋ caŋ nuŋ ka kʰu: bak-muaŋ
 look.at such one KA be.like CLF.fruit-mango
 ‘Looking at it one way, (it) is like mangos.’
- g. bəŋ caŋ nuŋ ka kʰu: / ma:k-sompʰu: ni la
 look.at such one KA be.like CLF.fruit-rose.apple TPC PRT
 ‘Looking at it another (lit: one) way, (it) is like rose apples.’
- h. tɛ: wa: laksana? nuaj man kʰu: bak-muaŋ
 but say appearance CLF.round 3.NO be.like CLF.fruit-mango
 ‘But the shape of the fruit is similar to mangos.’ (Pearfilm_sm5.2-10)

If *ka* is a topic linker that links an assertion to a topic, we expect it to be able to occur felicitously in the propositions made about the fruit, which I identify as a “topic of discussion” (*luaŋ*-topic) for this particular portion of the text. However, the speaker avoids using *ka* in (460d) and (460h) even though inserting it does not produce ungrammatical forms. I suggest that this is because what is being asserted does not logically (nor chronologically in the story timeline) follow from the preceding statement. For example, the fact that ‘the tree is big’, as stated in (460b-c), does not entail that the ‘fruit is similar to a mango’ in (460d) where *ka* is absent. The relationship between the propositions is entirely unpredictable. This is in accordance with another of Enfield’s observations that the use of *ka* is appropriate where the assertion in the second clause conforms with the preceding clause while the subject arguments may alter. Altogether, the

content of the assertion and the semantic relations between propositions are more central to the function of *ka* than the notion of topic.

Therefore, I conclude that *ka* is used not so much to link new information to a topic, but to indicate the kinds of semantic or information structure relationship that the incoming piece of information should be stored relative to the content of the presuppositional pool. This characterization captures the following idiomatic expression involving *ka* where it is not clear what the topic is. (461) simply asserts that the portion preceding *ka* is true.

- (461) k^ha:p^hacao siɑŋmiɑŋ mi: k^hwam-loplu: **ka** ciŋ
 1SG.FO Siangmiang have NMLZ-knowledgeable KA true
 ‘I, Siang Miang, am knowledgeable, that is true.’ (SiangMiang_sm62)

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed semantic inter-propositional relations, and syntactic and information structure conditions for the use of *ka* in narrative discourse. I have argued that there are distinct constructions involving *ka*. In most instances, the presence of *ka* signals that new information is coming and instructs the listeners to search for something in the presuppositional pool to make a coherent connection to. That thing can be a topic of discussion or any other information that is presupposed.

Regarding the semantic inter-proposition relations, the different functions where overt but removable instances of *ka* can occur can be generalized as [GIVEN X, IT FOLLOWS THAT Y], where X stands for referents, events, or propositions that are part of the presupposition. Y refers to the assertion. However, *ka* does not merely say “relate this proposition to the presuppositional setting that has already been established.” It constrains the interpretation of how the incoming information will be related to the content of the presuppositional pool. The proposition marked by *ka* can relate back to a prior proposition via a particular range of semantic relationships, namely sequence of events, result of a cause, and consequence of a condition or circumstance. Speakers avoid using *ka* in part of a text that does not logically or chronologically follow from another proposition; thus, it is not used with propositions that have reason and purpose relations.

The use of *ka* is syntactically required for a few stative/descriptive predicates whose surface structures without *ka* could otherwise be interpreted as NPs containing a modifier, and

with the verb *səj* ‘be still’, which normally modifies another verb. Additionally, in certain reports of direct speech, when turn-taking occurs without a main speech verb, *ka* is required.

In terms of information structure, *ka* is used in expanding focus and in contrastive discourse contexts when something in the assertion may be contrary to expectation and is compatible with the evocation of alternatives. In the latter, it may surface in the non-canonical morphosyntactic pattern [A *ka* Y, B *ka* Y] where A and B represent a coherent set of alternatives and [*ka* Y] asserts a semantic relationship of addition via a shared predicate. However, the general conceptual model of [GIVEN X, IT FOLLOWS THAT Y] is not applicable to uses of *ka* in contrastive contexts or in the expanding focus construction. Instead, we may have a construction-specific conceptual model: “Presupposing this scope, the following is true, relevant, or felicitous.” What is always present is an element of focus of assertion that adds new information to the presuppositional pool in a semantically constrained sort of way.

“Topic” in the most general sense arguably has to do with where an incoming piece of information should be linked with respect to everything that is already stored in the mental representation of the discourse at the time of the utterance. Therefore, it is not surprising that the notion(s) of topic interact with *ka* in some ways. In non-contrastive situations, Isaan speakers tend to mention the thing which a sentence’s assertion is about first, followed by a phrase which includes the focus of assertion. Topic as an information domain supposedly puts no restrictions on the particular semantic relation of new information inputs. That is, the new information that the speaker asserts does not have to conform to or logically follow from what we might identify as a topic of discussion. But assertions marked by *ka* must logically or temporally follow from, or be specifically contrasted with, or in a very constrained way expand the set of elements related to some prior proposition. In other words, *ka* is used not so much to indicate where the incoming piece of information should be stored, but with what semantic or information structure relationship it should be stored relative to pre-existing information in the mental representation of discourse. The presence of *ka* points to a specific range of semantically and informational structurally coherent relationships within the knowledge network.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

This study has provided a description of various aspect of Isaan grammar from a usage-based approach, along with exploring motivations for why Isaan speakers would choose one structure over other semantically equivalent ones in a particular discourse situation. The study has investigated information packaging properties associated with selected productive morphosyntactic constructions from within a Construction Grammar framework, analyzed discourse and grammatical features of nine narrative texts sampled from the Spoken Isaan Corpus, and has undertaken collocation analyses of constructions co-occurring with certain types of linguistic expressions which bear on the interlocutors' presumed mental representations in particular discourse contexts. Special attention has been given to Isaan speakers' choice in using or not using the morpheme *ka* immediately after the subject of a construction (if overt) and before the predicate. This was motivated by to the fact that *ka* is the most frequent item in the Spoken Isaan Corpus and that its presence in different grammatical constructions has varying semantic and information-structural effects.

In Isaan narrative discourse, new referents may be introduced via various morphosyntactic configurations, including the “basic”, “normal” or “canonical” simple clause construction. In this construction, consonant with the Preferred Argument Structure hypothesis (Du Bois 1987; Du Bois 2003), Isaan speakers tend to avoid mentioning a referent for the first time as the A (most agent-like) argument of a single-verb transitive clause, but initial introduction of a participant as S and P is common. Speakers also use other non-canonical clause constructions to handle reference information. The presentational construction with the verb *mi:* ‘have’ introduces narrative participants who will be continuously mentioned or be potentially important in the plot of the story. Speakers also tend to have a particular individual in mind when first mentioning them as an NP in the presentational construction. Meanwhile, a different clause construction is used to handle accessible, but non-continuing, referents—the resumptive pronoun construction which names a referent in the initial phrasal slot and predicates something about its location, physical characteristics, etc. I have argued that the resumptive pronoun construction is associated with a “background establishing” function (Lambrecht 1994: 126), providing information which sets a scene for another more prominent piece of information. Referents first mentioned via the resumptive pronoun construction tend not to be re-mentioned later in the story.

Finally, the [NP *ka* Predicate] construction is primarily used to describe events, actions, and happenings in the narrative discourse when one or more participants mentioned by the initial NP are already on stage. A lexical NP occurs in the pre-*ka* slot more frequently compared to other referring expressions (but this is somewhat expected by chance).

Regarding event management, Isaan speakers often use serial verb clause constructions (SVCs) to communicate what happens in the story. This study considers Isaan SVCs as surface structures of two or more verb words that occur in a single clause without any overt marker of coordination or subordination, and under a single intonation contour. Isaan SVCs exhibit a high degree of iconicity with respect to the ways in which the verbs are combined. The linear order of the verb words usually aligns with the temporal order in which the subevents or phases, actions, or states described by the verbs occur. Through the process of grammaticalization, some verb words develop an association with certain temporal/aspectual meanings (e.g., the deictic motion verbs *ma:* ‘come’ and *paj* ‘go’, the achievement verbs *daj* ‘gain’ and *le:w* ‘finish’, and the stative/copula verb *ju:* ‘stay, be.at’). In seeking an explanation of the ways in which Isaan verbs are combined in a single clause, I undertook frequency analyses of lexical verbs that occur in each verb slots. The findings of the collexeme analysis of two-verb SVC patterns highlight some of the highly conventionalized verb combination patterns in Isaan, such as the *na:ŋ paj* ‘walk go’ combination and the *ma: hət* ‘come arrive’ combination. This allowed us to further examine each pattern qualitatively. Additionally, we have observed that *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ can occur in any verb positions in Isaan SVCs. But when *paj* or *ma:* occupies the first verb (V_1) position, its interpretation involves physical translational movement that is understood as a prior sub-event to the subsequent verbs in the SVC. More grammatical meanings of *paj* ‘go’ and *ma:* ‘come’ are found especially in the second verb position (V_2) of a two-verb SVC. These include specifying direction of motion or transfer events and helping communicate some temporal/aspectual meanings. However, I have argued that the temporal/aspectual meanings are not accredited to the deictic verbs alone but to the morphosyntactic patterns (e.g., the repeated VP structure and type of lexical verb aspect). Future research on Isaan SVCs may examine how the lexical verb aspect interacts with the deictic verbs as well as the temporal/aspectual meanings of the whole SVC pattern.

In addition to managing relationships between phases of events, Isaan speakers also typically organize multiple distinct events with respect to the temporal sequence order of the

narrative timeline. Various morphosyntactic strategies can be used to manage the flow of time in the story. Notably, Isaan clauses marked with *ka* can communicate sequentially related distinct events. In these uses, *ka* is an “optional” element; in fact, roughly around 70% of clauses in the narrative text sample allow *ka* to be inserted or removed without altering the semantics of the sentence in any appreciable way. The results from the collocation analysis suggest that the propositions marked by *ka* are those that tend to push the narrative timeline forward and assert that new events happen in succession. I have argued that Isaan speakers may choose to mark certain new events with *ka* to make them more cognitively prominent for the listeners, calling their attention to the fact that the discourse flow has moved forward.

Finally, narrative texts comprise multiple propositions organized into coherent units with additional types of semantic relationships relating them. I have argued that the Isaan morpheme *ka* is a coherence building device that enables speakers to explicitly signal a particular range of inter-proposition semantics. That is, the presence of *ka* constrains how the newly asserted proposition links up to the content of the presuppositional pool. In addition to temporal sequence, evidence from Isaan narrative texts shows that *ka* occurs with propositions that are understood as logically following in certain ways from another prior proposition. In particular, *ka* can link a result to its cause, and a consequence to its conditions, and an event to its circumstances. These logical relations may hold simultaneously with chronological sequence relations. Thus, at least some distributions and functions of *ka* are accounted for by inter-propositional semantic relations, which might not have anything to do with the notion of “topic” as Enfield (2007: 199) suggests for Vientiane Lao.

In terms of where it is linked to information structure, I have argued that *ka* is related more to the focus of assertion—the part of a proposition where the asserted information differs from the presupposed information, than to “topic”. *Ka* can be used in contrastive discourse contexts when something in the assertion may be contrary to expectation. It is a required element in the non-canonical morphosyntactic pattern [A *ka* Y, B *ka* Y] where A and B represent a coherent set of alternatives and *ka* Y asserts a semantic relationship of addition via a shared predicate. Additionally, the use of *ka* is syntactically required for a few stative/descriptive predicates whose surface structures without *ka* could otherwise be interpreted as NPs containing a modifier, and with the verb *saj* ‘be still’, which normally modifies another verb. A focus of

assertion in the sense of Lambrecht (1994) is, in fact, present in all instances of *ka*, adding new information to the presuppositional pool in a semantically constrained sort of way.

The study lays the groundwork for a much fuller study of Isaan grammar. Certainly, many questions remain. For instance, future research may examine referent-tracking strategies and their interaction with the argument structures of events. I have observed that Isaan speakers frequently use *ka*-marked clauses without overt mention of any of the participants involved. One hypothesis is that speakers may assume that the listeners are keeping track of the events/actions associated with certain narrative participants. As a result, they only mention the events or actions associated with the individuals in the subsequent clauses. One could suggest that mentioning the events/actions is perhaps sufficient to allow the listeners to identify the specific participant the speaker had in mind. Evidence from psycholinguistic approaches may help clarify how the presence or absence of *ka* interacts with the listener's attention during storytelling. Further work on information packaging in Isaan may also explore different types of marked focus, the roles of "topic" markers *ni* and *nan*, and the functions of final-position discourse particles as well as the ways they combine, such as *de:-la*, *san-dɔ:k*, *ni-la*, *san-lɛw* etc., which relate to the speaker's assumptions about the listeners' current states of mind.

APPENDIX A
PEAR STORIES

Four speakers were instructed to tell the Pear Story to someone who had not seen the video stimulus, in such a way that the hearer could envision the images that the speaker saw. Each speaker was given a few minutes to collect their thoughts before the audio recording took place. The audience comprised me as the interviewer and at least one other person who was also an Isaan speaker (e.g., a member of the speaker’s family). Transcriptions of two particularly good sessions are presented here.

In these transcriptions, each numbered line is said within a single prosodic unit, distinguished by the length of the pause. The items that have a continuous number (e.g., 1 and 2) are separated by a pause longer than one second. Those with a number followed by decimals (e.g., 2.2 and 2.3) are separated by a pause break of less than one second (but are said within a single breath).

Text 1: Pearfilm_sw_20190803

Speaker SW is a retired high school teacher. This Pear Story was told at SW’s house with his wife present. As he was about to start telling the story that he saw in the video stimulus, someone else showed up at his house and joined the audience.

1 นั่ง นี่ สิ เว้า ให้ ฟัง เว้า นิทาน ให้ ฟัง
 naŋ nì: si wao haj faŋ wao nit^ha:n haj faŋ
 sit here IRR speak give listen speak story give listen

‘Sit here, (I) will tell (you) a story.’

2 อ่า มี ผู้ชาย คน หนึ่ง
 ʔa mi: p^hu-sa:j k^hon nuŋ
 filler have CLF.HUM-male person one

‘There was a guy.’

3 รูปร่าง ท้วมๆ
 lu:p-la:ŋ t^huam-t^huam
 appearance large (body size)

‘(he’s) rather chubby.’

- 4 เมื่ง รูปร่าง หน้าตา กะ เป็น คน-เม็กซิกัน นั่น ละ
bəŋ lu:p-la:ŋ nà:-ta: ka pen k^hon-meksikan nan la
look.at appearance face-eye KA COP person-Mexican there PRT
‘Looking at his facial appearance, (he should) be a Mexican person.’
- 5 เป็น ฝรั่ง เม็กซิกัน ลพุง
pen faraŋ-faraŋ meksikan loŋ-p^huŋ
COP foreign-foreign Mexican chubby
‘(He) looks foreign, chubby.’
- 6 แต่ เมื่ง แล้ว กะ คง สิ เป็น ชาวนา
tɛ: bəŋ lɛ:w ka k^hoŋ si pen sa:w-ná:
but look.at already KA probably IRR COP farmer
‘But (it) seems like (he) was a farmer.’
- 7 เลา กะล้ง เก็บ ผลไม้ ชนิด นึ่ง อยู่
law kalaŋ kep p^honlamaj c^hanit nuŋ ju:
3.FA PROG collect fruit type one CONT
‘He was collecting fruits of some kind.’
- 8 เมื่ง แล้ว เอ้า ผู้ชาย คน นี้ ใส่ กางเกงยีนส์
bəŋ lɛ:w ?ǎw p^hu-sa:j k^hon nî: saj ka:ŋkɛ:ŋ-ji:n
look.at already INTERJ CLF.HUM-male person PROX wear jeans
ใส่ ผ้าพันคอ สีแดง
saj p^ha:-p^han-k^ho: si:-dɛ:ŋ
put.into scarf red
‘It seems, that, this man was wearing jeans and a red scarf.’
- 9.1 ขึ้น เก็บ ผลไม้
k^hu:n kep p^honlamaj
go.up collect fruit
‘(He) went up to pick fruits’

9.2 มัน ต้อง เป็น หมากอาโวคาได้ แน่ๆ เลข
 man ʈɔŋ pen ma:k-awokado ne:ne: loj
 3.NO must COP CLF.fruit-avocado surely exceed

‘It has to be the avocado fruits.’

10 หมากอาโวคาได้
 ma:k-awokado
 CLF.fruit-avocado
 ‘Avocado fruit’

11 คือ หมากสีดา หมากอาโวคาได้
 kʰu: ma:k-si:da: ma:k-awokado
 be.like CLF.fruit-guava CLF.fruit-avocado
 ‘It’s similar to guava, the avocado fruits.’

12 เล่า กะ เก็บ เทียบ ละ ลูก เทียบ ละ ลูก
 law ka kep tia la lu:k tia la lu:k
 3.FA KA collect times each fruit times each fruit

 เก็บ เก็บ เก็บ
 kep kep kep
 collect collect collect
 ‘He collected one at a time, collect repeatedly’

13 เก็บ ใส่ เสื้อ อันนี้ เล่า นิ
 kep saj sua ʔan-ni: law ni
 collect put.into shirt CLF.thing-PROX 3.FA TPC
 ‘and put (it) into this shirt of his’

14 เสื้อ คล้ายๆ ก้นเป็อน นั่น แหม เสื้อก้นเป็อน
 sua kʰaj-kʰaj kanpuan nân mǎ: sua kanpuan
 shirt similar.to apron there PRT shirt apron
 ‘The shirt (that is) similar to an apron, an apron.’

15 แล้ว กะ ลง มา ใส่ ข่ง ไว้
 le:w ka loŋ ma saj keŋ waj
 alreadyKA down come put.into basket put
 ‘then, (he) came down to put (the fruits) into a basket

- 16 กะ ปีน บันได ขึ้น ไป เก็บ ใหม่
ka pi:n bandaj k^hu:n paj kep maj
KA climb stairs go.up go collect again
‘then, (he) climbed back up to collect again’
- 17 กะ ลง มา ใส่ แข่ง ไว้
ka loŋ ma saj keŋ waj
KA down come put.into basket put
‘and down to put in the basket’
- 18 สอง แข่ง ได้ เต็ม
sɔw:ŋ keŋ daj tem
two basket gain be.filled
‘Two baskets were filled’
- 19 กะ ขึ้น ไป อยู่ ทั้ง ต้นไม้ อีก
ka k^hu:n paj ju: t^həŋ ton-maj ?i:k
KA go.up go be.at both CLF.tree-wood more
‘then, (he) went up on the tree again’
- 20.1 กะ มี ผู้ชาย อาย หนึ่ง
ka mi: p^hu-saj ?aj nuŋ
KA have CLF.HUM-male older.brother one
‘Then, there was a man.’
- 20.2 จูง แพะ มา
cu:ŋ p^hɛ? ma
pull goat come
‘pulling a goat this way’
- 21 จูง มา ละ กะ ผ่าน ไป
cu:ŋ ma laka p^ha:n paj
pull come and.then pass.through go
‘(He) pulled [it] this way and went that way.’

- 22 บ่ มี หยัง เกิด ขึ้น
 บ่: mi: ɲǎŋ kə:t k^hu:n
 NEG have what born go.up
 ‘There’s nothing happened.’
- 23 พ่อใหญ่ อันนี้ กะ เก็บ หมากอโวคาได้
 p^hɔ:-ɲaj ?an-ni: ka keɲ ma:k-awokado
 father-big CLF.thing-PROX KA collect CLF.FRUIT-avocado
 ‘This man collected the avocado fruit’
- 24 กะ ลง มา ใส่ แข่ง ไว้ ก็เก่า
 ka loŋ ma saɲ keŋ waj k^hu:-kaw
 KA down come put.into basket put be.like-old
 ‘then come down to put [them] into the basket like before’
- 25.1 บัดนี้ มี บักน้อยๆ อั้น บักอันนี้ บัดนี้
 ba:t-ni: mi: bak-nɔj-nɔj ?an bak-?an-nuŋ bat-ni:
 now have TITLE.MASC-small-small filler TITLE.MASC-CLF.thing-one now
 ‘Now, there was a small boy,’
- 25.2 จี่ จักรยาน มา
 k^hi: cakaja:n ma
 ride bicycle come
 ‘riding a bicycle this way’
- 25.3 จักรยาน เฮา แบบ คันใหญ่ๆ
 cakaja:n haw be:p k^han-ɲaj-ɲaj
 bicycle 1.FA type CLF.vehicle-big-big

 แบบ ผู้ชาย สมัย ก่อน นั้น แหม
 be:p p^hu-sa:ɲ samai kɔ:n nân mǎ:
 type CLF.HUM-male era before that PRT
 ‘the big old masculine-looking bicycle.’
- 26 จี่ มา
 k^hi: ma
 ride come
 ‘(He) rode this way.’

- 32 ยก ไป แข่ง นึ่ง
nok paj keŋ nuŋ
lift go basket one
‘(He) lifted the whole basket.’
- 33 เอา ไป ตั้ง หน้า มอเตอร์ไซค์
ʔaw paj taŋ nà: mɔtasaj
take go stand front motorcycle

มอเตอร์ไซค์ มัน สิ มี อั่น หม่องตั้ง อยู่ ข้างหน้า แหม
mɔtasaj man si mi: ʔan mɔŋ-taŋ ju: kʰa:ŋ-nà: mǎ:
motorcycle 3.NO IRR have filler location-stand be.at front PRT
‘(and) put (it) in front of the motorcycle, the motorcycle has the place for putting things
in the front’
Note: The speaker misspoke, saying motorcycle instead of bicycle.
- 34 อั่น บักน้อยๆ กะ
ʔan bak-nɔj:nɔj: ka
filler TITLE.MASC-small-small KA
‘The small boy,’
- 35 เอา ตั้ง ไว้ บัดนี้ กะ บั่น จักรยาน ไป บัดนี้
ʔaw taŋ waj bat-ni: ka pan cakaja:n paj bat-ni
take stand put now KA pedal bicycle go now
‘took (and) placed (the basket) and then pedaled his bicycle away, now.’
- 36 เพื่อน กะ ลัก ไป เพื่อน คือ สิ สบายใจ ดี
pʰən ka lak paj pʰən kʰu: si sabaj-caj tɿ:
3.PO KA steal go 3.PO be.like IRR comfortable-heart PRT
‘He had stolen [it], he must have felt happy.’
- 37.1 บาดนี้ บั่น ไป ระยะ นึ่ง
bat-ni: pan paj laja nuŋ
now pedal go distance one
‘Now, (the boy) having pedaled for a certain distance,’

37.2 กะ มี อีผู้หญิง น้อยน้อย มา อีก บัดนี้
ka mi: ?i-p^hu-ŋǽŋ nǔj-j-ŋǔj ma ?i:k bat-nì:
KA have TITLE.FEM-CLF.HUM-female small-small come more now

สวน ทาง มา
suan t^ha:ŋ ma:
pass.opposite way come

‘there was a little girl coming too. (She) was coming from the opposite direction.’

38 มา ต่ำ กัน
ma tam kan
come bump.into RECIP

‘(and) crashed into each other.’

39 บักน้อยๆ กะ พา จักรยาน ล้ม
bak-nǔj-j-nǔj ka p^ha: cakaja:n lom
TITLE.MASC-small-small KA lead bicycle fall

‘The boy fell down with the bike.’

40 แข่ง บักอโวคาโด กะ ล้ม ชะ บัดนี้
keŋ bak-awokado ka lom sa? bat-nì:
basket CLF.fruit-avocado KA fall scatter now

‘The avocado basket also fell (and) scattered now,’

41 กะจุยกระจาย
kacuj-kaja:j
scatter.all.over

‘(it) scattered in every direction.’

42 ต่ำ แล้ว อื่น เด็กผู้หญิง นี กะ
tam le:w ?an dek-p^hu-ŋǽŋ ni ka
bump.into already filler child-CLF.HUM-female TPC KA

กะ ไป เลย
ka paj ləj
KA go exceed

‘After (they) crashed, the girl just went away.’

- 43 กะ บ่ ใต้ สนใจ ว่า หยั่ง เกิด ขึ้น
ka bɔː daj soncaj waː ɲǎŋ kəːt kʰuːn
KA NEG gain interested say what born go.up
‘(She) didn’t pay attention to what happened.’
- 44 บาดนี้ บักน้อยๆ กะ
ba:t-niː bak-nɔːj-nɔːj ka
now TITLE.MASC-small-small KA

กะ อยู่ กับ หม่อง ละ
ka juː kap mɔŋ la
KA stay with place PRT
‘Now, the boy remained at that place.’
- 45 บาดนี้ มี
ba:t-niː miː
now have
‘Now, there was’
- 46.1 กลุ่ม เด็กน้อย อายุ ประมาณ รุ่นราวคราวเดียวกัน
klum dek-nɔːj ʔaju pramaːn run-ra:w-ka:w-diaw-kan
group child-small age about same-age

มี สาม คน
miː səːm kʰon
have three CLF.person
‘a group of children of roughly the same age, there are three of them.’
- 46.2 มี ผู้หนึ่ง ผู้ใหญ่ กว่า หมู
miː pʰu-nuŋ pʰu-ɲaj kwaː muː
have CLF.HUM-one CLF.HUM-big more.than friend

แล้ว อีก บัก น้อยๆ
leːw ʔiːk bak- nɔːj-nɔːj
already more TITLE.MASC- small-small
‘There was one larger than the others and another one was small.’

- 47 กะ เลย มา ซอย เก็บ
ka ləj ma soj kep
KA exceed come help collect
‘(They) came to help pick up’
- 48 บักอาโวคาโด เก็บ ใส่
bak-awokado kep saj
CLF.FRUIT-avocado collect put.into
‘the avocado, picked (it) up (and) put (it) into’
- 49 ให้ เต็ม กะ คือ เก่า กะ ยก ให้
haj tem kata: kʰu: kaw ka nok haj
give be.filled basket be.like old KA lift give
‘the basket until it is filled like before, then they lifted for (him)’
- 50 จักรยาน คือ เก่า
cakaja:n kʰu: kaw
bicycle be.like old
‘onto his bike, like it was before.’
- 51 บักน้อยๆ กะ ไป
bak-นวิจ-นวิจ ka paj
TITLE.MASC-small-small KA go
‘Then, the boy went.’
- 52.1 กลุ่ม สาม คน กะ ไป คือ กัน บัดนี้
klum sǎ:m kʰon ka paj kʰu:-kan bat-nì:
group three person KA go be.like-RECIP now
‘The three-people group went too, now.’
- 52.2 ไป คน ละ ทิศ ละ ทาง
paj kʰon la tʰit la tʰa:ŋ
go person each direction each way
‘(They) went to different directions.’

- 53 บาดนี้
 ba:t-nì:
 now
 ‘Now’
- 54 อ๋น อ้าย ที่ ลัก ไป แขง หนึ่ง นั้น กะ
 ʔan ʔaj tʰi lak paj keŋ nuŋ nan ka
 filler older brother that steal go basket one TPC KA
 ‘The boy who had stolen one basket,’
- 55 กะ ไป เลย
 ka paj ləj
 KA go exceed
 ‘(he) left right away.’
- 56 สาม คน นี้ กะ ไป มือ เปล่า
 sǎ:m kʰon nī: ka paj mu: pla:w
 three person PROX KA go hand empty
 โดย ที่ บ่ ได้ หยิบ อีหยัง เลย
 do:j tʰi bǔ: daj jǐp ʔiŋaŋ ləj
 by that NEG gain grab what exceed
 ‘These three people went empty handed, by not taking anything at all.’
- 57 สาม คน นี้ กะ ย่าง ไป
 sǎ:m kʰon nī: ka ɲa:ŋ paj
 three person PROX KA walk go
 ‘These three people walked away.’
- 58.1 ย่าง ไป จัก ระยะ หนึ่ง
 ɲa:ŋ paj cak laja nuŋ
 walk go about distance one
 ‘After walking a certain distance,’
- 58.2 กะ บ่ รู้ สิ คิด อีหยัง
 ka bǔ: lu: si kʰit ʔiŋaŋ
 KA NEG know IRR think what
 ‘(I’m) not sure what (they) would be thinking,’

62 อ่อน มัน สิ มี เหลือ อยู่ สอง ข่ง เมาะ
 ?an man si mi: ləa ju: sɔwŋ keŋ nɔʔ
 filler 3.NO IRR have remain be.at two basket AGREE.PRT

ข่ง หนึ่ง กะ
 keŋ nuŋ ka
 basket one KA

‘So, there were two baskets left, right? One was...’

63 กะ เต็ม เก็บ ไว้ เต็ม แล้ว
 ka tem keŋ waj tem lɛ:w
 KA be.filled collect put be.filled already

ข่ง หนึ่ง ทั้น ได้ ทั้น ได้ เอา ใส่
 keŋ nuŋ tʰan daj tʰan daj ?aw saj
 basket one not.yet gain not.yet able take put.into

‘was full, it was filled already. Another basket was not filled yet.’

64 ข่ง หนึ่ง บักน้อยๆ กะ ลัก ไป แล้ว
 keŋ nuŋ bak-nɔj:nɔj ka lak paj lɛ:w
 basket one TITLE.MASC-small-small KA steal go already

‘One basket, the boy had already stolen (it).’

65.1 บัดนี้ ชุม สาม คน กะ เลย มา
 bat-ni: sum sə:m kʰon ka ləj ma:
 now group three person KA exceed come

‘Now, these three boys then came,’

65.2 กะ เลย มา เก็บ
 ka ləj ma keŋ
 KA exceed come collect

‘and then collect

65.3 กะ เลย เอา บักอาโวคาโด นิ คน ละ หน่วย
 ka ləj ?aw bak-awokado ni kʰon la nuaj
 KA exceed take CLF.fruit-avocado TPC person each CLF.round

‘and then take one avocado each,’

- 65.4 แบ่ง กัน
 be:ŋ kan
 share RECIPIENT
 ‘(They) share with one another.’
- 66 เอา คน ละ หน่วย
 ?aw kʰon la nuaj
 take person each CLF.round
 สังเกต ว่า เอา คน ละ หน่วย นั้น ละ
 saŋkɛ:t wa: ?aw kʰon la nuaj nan la
 observe comp take person each CLF.round that PRT
 ‘(They) each took one, (I) noticed that (they) each took one.’
- 67 แล้ว ก็ ถือ ไป แล้ว ก็ ย่าง ไป
 le:w ka tʰu: paj le:w ka ɲa:ŋ paj
 alreadyKA carry go alreadyKA walk go
 ‘And then (they) carried (it) and walked away.’
- 68 พ่อใหญ่ นั้น ก็ เก็บ ก็็ อยู่ ฮัน ละ
 pʰw:-ɲaj nân ka kep kúp ju: han la
 father-big DIST KA collect happily be.at over.there PRT
 โดย ที่ บ่ ู้สึก โต ว่า
 do:j tʰi bô: lusuk to: wa:
 by that NEG feel body COMP
 ‘That man was happily collecting the fruits over there, not knowing that’
- 69.1 หนึ่ง บักอาโวคาโด บักน้อยๆ เอา ไป แล้ว
 nuŋ bak-awokado baknô:j-nô:j-nô:j ?aw paj le:w
 one CLF.fruit-avocado TITLE.MASC-small-small take go already
 หนึ่ง
 keŋ nuŋ
 basket one
 ‘First, the avocado, the small boy already took away one basket.’

69.2 ลัก ไป แล้ว บัก จี่ จักรยาน
lak paj le:w bak- k^hi: cakaja:n
steal go already TITLE.MASC- ride bicycle

‘Stolen (it), the bike rider boy.’

70.1 สอง สาม คน นี้ กลับ คืน มา เอา อีก
sə:w sǎ:m k^hon nī: kap k^hu:n ma ʔaw ʔi:k
two three CLF.person PROX return go.back come take more

เอา คน ละ หน่วย
ʔaw k^hon la nuaj
take person each CLF.round

‘Second, these three boys came back, and each took one fruit.’

70.2 กะ ยัง บ่ รู้สึก โท
ka ɲaŋ bǔ: lusu:k to:
KA still NEG feel body

‘but (he) had not yet noticed.’

71 ละ กะ ย่าง หาย ไป
laka ɲa:ŋ hǎ:j paj
and.then walk disappear go

‘and (they) disappeared by walking away.’

72 จบ
cop
end

‘The end.’

- 10 แต่ ว่า ลักษณะ หน่วย มัน คือ บักม่วง
te: wa: laksana nuaj man k^hu: bak-muaŋ
but say appearance CLF.round 3.NO be.like CLF.fruit-mango
‘But the shape of the fruit is similar to mangos.’
- 11 หน่วย เขียว เขียว
nuaj k^hiew k^hiew
CLF.round green green
‘greenish’ (lit. ‘the round one green green’)
- 12 แล้ว ต้นไม้ กะ สูง พอ ประมาณ อยู่
le:w ton-maj ka su:ŋ p^hw: prama:n ju:
alreadyCLF.tree-wood KA high when about be.at
‘and the tree is quite tall.’
- 13 บัดนี้ เล่า / เล่า ได้ ใจ บันได ขึ้น ไป เก็บ
bat-ni: law / law daj saj bandai k^hu:n paj kep
now 3.FA 3.FA gain use stairs go.up go collect
‘He had to use the stairs to go up to collect (fruits).’
- 14.1 เก็บ ใส่ ถุงพาย ข้าง หน้า ได้
kep saj t^huŋ-p^ha:j k^ha:ŋ nà: de:
collect put into bag-carry side front PRT
‘(He) collected (the fruits) and put into the bag in the front.’
- 14.2 เล่า สิ มี ถุงพาย เนาะ อยู่ ข้าง หน้า
law si mi: t^huŋ-p^ha:j nɔʔ ju: k^ha:ŋ nà:
3.FA IRR have bag-carry AGREE.PRT be.at side front
‘He had a bag, right? In the front’
- 15 เก็บ ไว้ ไหน เล่า กะ ชัด ใส่ ถุงพาย
kep waj nǎj law ka nat saj t^huŋ-p^ha:j
collect put where 3.FA KA stuff put into bag-carry
‘How many (he) had collected, he stuffed (them) in the bag’

- 16 ข้ด ใส่ ถุงพาย
nat saj tʰuŋ-pʰaːj
stuff put into bag-carry
‘stuffed in the bag.’
- 17 พอตะ เต็ม ถุงพาย แล้ว
pʰwː-ta tem tʰuŋ-pʰaːj leːw
once be.filled bag-carry already
‘once the bag is full,’
- 18 เลา กะ ลง มา เท ใส่ เท ใส่ อ้น กะต้า
law ka loŋ ma tʰeː saj tʰeː saj ʔan kataː
3.FA KA down come pour put into pour put into filler basket
‘he then came down to pour (them) into a basket’
- 19.1 กะต้า เลา มัน สิ มี อยู่ สาม หน่วย
kataː law man si miː juː sǎːm nuaj
basket 3.FA 3.NO IRR have be.at three CLF.round
‘As for his baskets, there were three of them’
- 19.2 มี อยู่ สาม สาม ใบ
miː juː sǎːm sǎːm bai
have be.at three three CLF.leaf
‘there were three of them.’
- 20.1 มา เท
ma tʰeː
come pour
‘(he) came to pour (the fruits),’
- 20.2 เท เต็ม ใบ หนึ่ง แล้ว เลา กะ ขึ้น ไป เก็บ อีก
tʰeː tem baj-nuŋ leːw law ka kʰuŋ paj kep ʔiːk
pour be.filled CLF.leaf-one already 3.FA KA go.up go collect more
‘(and) filled one basket, then he went back up to collect more (fruits).’

- 21.1 เท เต็ม ใบที่สอง กะ
tʰe: tem baj-tʰi:-sɔ:ŋ ka
pour be.filled CLF.leaf-at-two KA
‘He filled the second basket,
- 21.2 กะ ขึ้น ไป เก็บ อีก
ka kʰu:n paj kep ʔi:k
KA go.up go collect more
‘then [he] went back to collect more.’
- 22 ระหว่าง ที่ เล่า อยู่ เหนือ ต้นไม้ นั่น
lawa:ŋ tʰi law ju: tʰɔ:ŋ ton-maj nan
between that 3.FA be.at on top of CLF.tree-wood TPC
‘While he was up on the tree,’
- 23.1 มัน สิ มี ผู้หนึ่ง จูง
man si mi: pʰu-nuŋ cu:ŋ
3.NO IRR have CLF.HUM-one pull
‘there was a person pulling’
- 23.2 จูง แพะ หรือ จูง แกะ นี ละ มา
cu:ŋ pʰɛ? lu: cu:ŋ bɛ: ni la ma
pull goat or pull geep TPC PRT come
‘a goat or a goat-sheep hybrid toward [him]’
- 24 จูง ผ่าน มา หมอง ใต้ ส่มไม้ เล่า เก็บ ละ
cu:ŋ pʰa:n ma muŋ taj hom-maj law kep la
pull pass.through come place under shade-wood 3.FA collect PRT
‘(He) pulled (it) toward, passing by underneath the tree he was collecting [fruit].’
- 25.1 หมอ นั่น กะ เห็น หมากไม้
mu: nân ka hen ma:k-maj
guy DIST KA see CLF.fruit-wood
‘That guy saw the fruits,’

- 25.2 กะ เสดย ละกะ ข้าง ผ่าน ไป
ka sɔj laka ɲa:ŋ pʰa:n paj
KA be.still and.then walk pass.through go
‘(and) did nothing, and then walked away.’
- 26 บ่ ใต้ ลัก
bɔ: daj lak
NEG gain steal
‘(He) didn’t steal.’
- 27.1 ผ่าน ไป
pʰa:n paj
pass.through go
‘(He) passed by.’
- 27.2 พ่อใหญ่ ขึ้น ต้นไม้ อยู่ กะ บ่ ใต้ สนใจ ได้
pʰɔ:-ŋaj kʰu:n ton-maj ju: ka bɔ: daj soncaj de:
father-big go.up CLF.tree-wood CONT KA NEG gain interested PRT
‘The man who was up in the tree didn’t pay attention.’
- 27.3 เล่า กะ เก็บ หมากไม้ ของ เล่า เสดย
law ka kep ma:k-maj kʰɔ:ŋ law sɔj
3.FA KA collect CLF.fruit-wood of 3.FA be.still

อยู่ เฝิง ต้นไม้
ju: tʰɔ:ŋ ton-maj
be.at on top of CLF.tree-wood
‘He continued to collect the fruits without paying attention on the tree.’
- 27.4 บ่ ใต้ ลง เหลียว มา เบิ่ง ตะล่าง วันเถาะ
bɔ: daj loŋ lieu ma bəŋ tala:ŋ wantʰɔ?
NEG gain down look come watch downstairs PRT.EXPLAIN
‘(He) didn’t come down or look down.’

28 โคนเดิบ มี เด็กน้อย ผู้ชาย บักนี้้ง
do:ntə:p mi: dek-nǝj p^hu-sa:j bak-nuŋ
long.time have child-small CLF.HUM-male TITLE.MASC-one

จี จักรยาน ไวไวไว มา
k^hi: cakaja:n wajwajwaj ma
ride bicycle swiftly come

‘After a while, there was a small boy riding a bicycle swiftly this way.’

29 มา ฮอด ฮ่มไม้
ma hɔ:t hom-maj
come arrive shade-wood

‘(He) arrived at the tree shade.’

30 เหลียว ขึ้น ทาง เียง เห็น พ่อใหญ่ นั่น เสย
liew k^hu:n t^ha:ŋ t^hɔ:ŋ hen p^hɔ:-ŋaj nân səj
look go.up way on top of see father-big DIST be.still

‘(He) looked upward and see that man not paying attention.’

31 หมอ นี้ กะ หลอย เอา ซั้นแหล่ว
mɔ: n^hi: ka lɔ:j ʔaw san-ləw
guy PROX KA sneak take PRT

‘So, the young man stole (it).’

32 หลอย เอา กะต้า นึ่ง บักใหญ่ เต็มเต็ม
lɔ:j ʔaw kata: nuŋ bak-ŋaj tem-tem
sneak take basket one very-big be.full-be.full

‘(He) stole one big, very full basket.’

33 หลอย เอา
lɔ:j ʔaw
sneak take

‘(He) took (it).’

34 เออ หลอย เอา
ʔɔ: lɔ:j ʔaw
INTERJ sneak take

‘(He) took (it).’

- 35 บาดทีนี้ พอดะ หลอย ใต้ กะต๋ำ นึ่ง
 ba:tʰiŋi: pʰw:-ta lo:j daj kata: nuŋ
 now when-from sneak gain basket one
- กะ จี่ รถ กลับ คืน เมื่อ
 ka kʰi: lot kap kʰu:n mua
 KA ride vehicle return go.back return.home
- ‘Now, once (he) had stolen one basket, (he) rode the bicycle home.’
- 36 ระหว่าง ทาง
 lawa:ŋ tʰa:ŋ
 between way
- ‘On the way’
- 37.1 ระหว่างทาง จี่ รถ บัดนี้
 lawa:ŋ-tʰa:ŋ kʰi: lot bat-ni:
 between-way ride vehicle now
- ‘On the route that (he) was riding,’
- 37.2 ไป จี่ สวน กัน กับ เด็กน้อย ผู้หญิง เต้ บัดนี้
 paj kʰi: suan kan kap dek-nw:j pʰu-ŋiŋ de: bat-ni:
 go ride garden RECIPIENT with child-small CLF.HUM-female PRT now
- ‘(he) encountered a girl riding in the opposite direction, now.’
- 38.1 เด็กน้อย ผู้หญิง กะ เลย เหลียว เบ็ง
 dek-nw:j pʰu-ŋiŋ ka loj lieuw bəŋ
 child-small CLF.HUM-female ka exceed look watch
- ‘The girl looked at him.’
- 38.2 โอ้ เด็กน้อย ผู้หญิง ก็ือ ตายัก แท้
 ʔo: dek-nw:j pʰu-ŋiŋ kʰu: ta:-hak tʰe:
 oh child-small CLF.HUM-female be.like eye-love truly
- ก็ือ ว่า ซั้นแหล่ว
 kʰu: wa: san-lew
 be.like say PRT
- ‘(And he might have) thought, “wow, why is this girl so cute?”’

- 38.3 กะ เลย เหลียว นำกั้น เขา
ka ləj lieu nāmkon kʰǎw
KA exceed look after 3.FO
‘So, [he] did a double take.’
- 39 พอตะ เหลียว นำกั้น เขา
pʰw:-ta lieu nāmkon kʰǎw
when-from look after 3.FO
- รถ กะ เลย ไป ตำ ก้อนหิน
lot ka ləj paj tam kɔ:nhin
vehicleKA exceed go bump.into rock
‘After (he) did a double take at her, the bike, as a result, crashed into a rock.’
- 40 จักรยาน คันนั้น กะ เลย ล้ม
cakaja:n kʰan-nân ka ləj lom
bicycle CLF.vehicle-DIST KA exceed fall
- กะด้า หมดไม้ กะ เลย ซะ เต็ม ทาง
kata: ma:k-maj ka ləj saʔ tem tʰa:ŋ
basket CLF.fruit-wood KA exceed scatter be.filled way
‘That bike, thus, fell down. The fruit basket scattered all over the road.’
- 41.1 หมดไม้ ซะ เต็ม ทาง อยู่
ma:k-maj saʔ tem tʰa:ŋ ju:
CLF.fruit-wood scatter be.filled way be.at
‘The fruits scattered all over the road.’
- 41.2 ลูก มา เก็บ
luk ma kep
get.up come collect
‘(He) got up to pick (them) up.’

42 บาทนี้ กะล้ง เก็บ อยู่ กะ มี เด็กน้อย
 ba:t-ni: kalaŋ kep ju: ka mi: dek-nôj
 now PROG collect be.at KA have child-small

 ข้าง ผ่าน มา
 ɲa:ŋ pʰa:n ma:
 walk pass.through come

‘Now, as (he) was picking up (the fruits), there were children passing by on foot.’

43.1 เด็กน้อย สาม สาม คน
 dek-nôj sǎ:m sǎ:m kʰon
 child-small three three person

‘three children’

43.2 ข้าง ผ่าน มา กะ เลย มา เก็บ ซอย
 ɲa:ŋ pʰa:n ma ka ləj ma kep soj
 walk pass.through come KA exceed come collect help

‘(They) walked by, so, [(they) helped (him) pick up (the fruits).’

44.1 เก็บ ซอย เก็บ ซอย แล้ว แล้ว กะ
 kep soj kep soj lə:w lə:w ka
 collect help collect help finish alreadyKA

‘Once they were done helping (him),’

44.2 มัน กะ จี่ จักรยาน ไป เลย ละ หมากไม้
 man ka kʰi: cakaja:n paj ləj la ma:k-maj
 3.NO KA ride bicycle go exceed PRT CLF.fruit-wood

‘He rode the bike away, the fruit (boy).’

45.1 โดน เดีบ เด็กน้อย สอง คน นั้น ข้าง ไป
 do:n tə:p dek-nôj so:ŋ kʰon nân ɲa:ŋ paj
 long.time rather child-small two person DIST walk go

‘After a while. the two children walked away.’

45.2 ไป เห็น หมวก
 paj hen muak
 go see hat

‘(They) went (and) found a hat’

- 46.1 หมวก สิ เป็น ของ หมอ นี้ ละ
 muak si pen kʰwɔːŋ mɔː nīː la
 hat IRR COP of guy PROX PRT
 ‘The hat might have belonged to this boy.’
- 46.2 ที่ มั่น มั่น เสีย นี้ ละ
 tʰi man man hia ni la
 that 3.NO 3.NO fall TPC PRT
 ‘(the hat) that fell’
- 47 กะ เลย ส่ง สัญญาณ เอ็น ว่า
 ka ləj sɔŋ sanjaːn ʔəːn waː
 KA exceed send signal call say
 ‘So, (they) sent a signal saying,’
- 48 ส่ง สัญญาณ เอ็น ว่า หมวก
 sɔŋ sanjaːn ʔəːn waː muak
 send signal call say hat
 ‘sent a signal saying “hat!”’
- 49.1 น่า จะ ว่า จังจี้ ละ
 nəː ca waː caŋsiː la
 probably IRR say like.this PRT
 ‘That might have been (what they said).’
- 49.2 บัดนี้ หมอ หมากไม้ นั่น กะ เลย หยุด รถจักรยาน
 bat-nīː mɔː maːk-maj nân ka ləj jut lot-cakajaːn
 now guy CLF.fruit-wood DIST KA exceed stop CLF.vehicle-bicycle
 ‘Now, that fruit boy, thus, stopped the bike.’
- 50 เด็กน้อย สาม คน นี้ กะ เลย เอา หมวก มา คืน
 dek-nɔːj sǎːm kʰon nīː ka ləj ʔaw muak ma kʰuːn
 child-small three person PROX KA exceed take hat come go.back
 ‘These three boys returned the hat (to him).’

- 51 บาดนี้ ด้วย แสดง น้ำใจ
 ba:t-nì: duaj sade:ŋ nâ:m-caj
 now with show water-heart
 ‘Now, to show appreciation,
- 52.1 บักเด็กน้อย ผู้ ที่ ลัก หมากไม้ นั้น
 bak-dek-nôj p^hu- t^hi lak ma:k-maj nân
 TITLE.MASC-child-small CLF.HUM- that steal CLF.fruit-wood DIST
 ‘That boy who stole the fruits’
- 52.2 กะ เลย เอา หมากไม้ ให้
 ka ləj ʔaw ma:k-maj haj
 KA exceed take CLF.fruit-wood give
 ‘then gave some fruits for them’
- 52.3 มา แบ่ง กัน ผู้ ละ หน่วย ละ หน่วย
 ma bɛ:ŋ kan p^hu- la nuaj la nuaj
 come share RECIP CLF.HUM- each CLF.round each CLF.round
 ‘to share with one another, one fruit for each of them.’
- 53 พอตะ แบ่ง แล้ว
 p^hɔ:-ta bɛ:ŋ lɛ:w
 when-from share already
- เด็กน้อย สอง คน นั้น กะ ย่าง ไป เรื่อยๆ
 dek-nôj sɔw:ŋ k^hon nân ka ɲa:ŋ paj lu:ŋ-lu:ŋ
 child-small two person DIST KA walk go continuously
 ‘Once they had divided the fruits, the two boys kept walking away.’
- 54 ย่าง มา มา สอด สุ่มไม้
 ɲa:ŋ ma ma hɔ:t hom-maj
 walk come come arrive shade-wood
 ‘(They) walked toward, and arrived at the tree shade.’
- 55 มา สอด ต้นไม้
 ma hɔ:t ton-maj
 come arrive CLF.tree-wood
 ‘(They) arrived at the tree.’

- 56 พ่อใหญ่ เก็บ หมดไม้ ลง มา พอดี บาดนี้
 pʰw:-ɲaj kep ma:k-maj loŋ ma pʰw:-di: ba:t-nì:
 father-big collect CLF.fruit-wood go.down come when-good now
 ‘The man who had been collecting fruits came down at that moment.’
- 57 ลง มา กะ เลย มา เห็น เอ้า หมดไม้
 loŋ ma ka ləj ma hen ʔǎw ma:k-maj
 down come KA exceed come see INTERJ CLF.fruit-wood
 ‘(He) came down (and) saw, (and) was surprised “wait, the fruits”
- 58 กะ เลย งง ว่า เอ้า หมดไม้
 ka ləj ɲoŋ wa: ʔǎw ma:k-maj
 KA exceed confuse say INTERJ CLF.fruit-wood
 ‘So, (he) puzzled that “the fruits,”
- 59.1 กู เอา มา เท ไว้ นี้ สาม กระต๋ำ
 ku: ʔaw ma tʰe: waj nì: sǎ:m kata:
 1SG.NOtake come pour put here three basket
 ‘I brought (and) poured (them) down right here, three baskets.’
- 59.2 มัน ก็ือ สิ เหลือ กระต๋ำ เดียว
 man kʰu: si ləa kata: diaw
 3.NO be.like IRR remain basket only.one
 ‘How come there is only one basket left’
- 59.3 กระต๋ำ นึ่ง บ่ เต็ม
 kata: nuŋ bʷ: tem
 basket one NEG be.filled
 ‘with another basket not even full?’
- 60.1 แก่ กะ เลย งง ว่า
 kɛ: ka ləj ɲoŋ wa:
 3SG KA exceed confuse say
 ‘So, he was confused that,’
- 60.2 เอ้า หมดไม้ นิ มัน ไป จังได้
 ʔǎw ma:k-maj ni man paj caŋdǎj
 INTERJ CLF.fruit-wood TPC 3.NO go how
 ‘Wait, the fruits, how did it go?’

- 60.3 เด็กน้อย หมู่ นี้ ก็ ่ได้ กิน แล้ว นั้นหนา
dek-nwǎj mu: nǐ: kʰu: daj kin le:w nana:
child-small group PROX be.like gain eat alreadyPRT
‘‘How come these children were eating them already?’’ something along this line’
- 61 ก็ บ่ ทัน ่ได้ เอา ไป ่ไส จัก เทีย ซี่หนา
kʰu: bǔ: tʰan daj ʔaw paj sǎj cak tia si:na:
be.like NEG not.yet gain take go where how.many times PRT
‘Given that (he) had not taken it anywhere, something like this.’
- 62.1 พอตะ เด็กน้อย ช่าง ผ่าน ไป
pʰw:-ta dek-nwǎj ɲa:ŋ pʰa:n paj
when-from child-small walk pass go
‘After the children passed by,’
- 62.2 เล่า กะ งง อยู่ ผู้เดียว
law ka ŋoŋ ju: pʰu-diaw
3.FA KA confuse stay CLF.HUM-only.one
‘he was alone and confused.’
- 63 เอวัง ประการ ละ ฉะนี้
ʔe:waj prakɑ:n la sani:
end type filler this.way
‘This is how it ends.’

APPENDIX B
TRAGEDY STORY

A well-known story called *kɔŋ kʰaw noi kʰa: mɛ:*, literally ‘small rice container kills mother’, is told by SM, who is an adroit storyteller. It is a legend about a young man named Tong who lived with his elderly mother somewhere in the southeastern Isaan region. There are somewhat different versions of what happened in the story. SM told the tragedy story in the narrative mode as well as in the traditional song mode, which includes rehearsed verses that rhyme with each other and occasional singing.

Kong Khaw Noi_sm_20190829

- 1 มื้อนี้ วันที่ ยี่สิบเก้า
 mû:n-nî: wǎn-tʰi: ji:sip-kaw
 today day-at twenty-nine
- สิงหาคม สองพันห้าร้อยหกสิบสอง
 sǐŋhǎ:kʰom sɔ:ŋ-pʰan-ha:lɔ:j-hǒk-sip-sɔ:ŋ
 August two-thousand-five-hundred-six-ten-two
 ‘Today is 29 August 2562.’
- 2 ขึ้น สิบสี่ ค่ำ เดือน เก้า
 kʰun sip-si: kʰam dɔan kaw
 go.up fourteen evening month nine
 ‘Waxing of the 14th night of the 9th lunar month.’
- 3 มื้อนี้ บุญ ข้าวประดับดิน
 mû:n-nî: bun kʰàw pradap din
 today merit rice décor earth
 ‘Today is the day of the death.’

4 มีวันนี้ กะ ติ มา เล่า นิทาน โบราณ
 mû:-nî: ka si ma lao nit^ha:n bo:la:n
 today KA IRR come tell story ancient

ตาม ประเพณี ที่ เล่า สืบต่อ กัน มา
 ta:m pap^he:ni: t^hi lao sur:ptɔ: kan ma
 follow tradition that tell pass.down RECIP come

‘Today I will tell a story of old, following the tradition that retells this story from generation to generation.’

5 เรื่อง ก่องข้าว น้อย ฆ่า แม่
 luanɯŋ kɔŋ-k^hàw nɔ̄j k^ha: mɛ:
 story box-rice small kill mother

‘the story of “small rice container kills a mother”’

6 เรื่อง มี อยู่ ว่า มี ลูกกำพร้า กับ แม่
 luanɯŋ mi: ju: wa: mi: lu:k-kampa: kap mɛ:
 story have be.at say have kid-orphan with mother

‘The story goes (like this). There was an orphan and his mother.’

7 อยู่ นำกัน สอง คน
 ju: nǎm-kan sɔ:ŋ k^hon
 stay together two person

‘living with each other, just the two of them.’

8.1 ลูกกำพร้า กับ แม่ อยู่ นำกัน สอง คน
 lu:k-kampa: kap mɛ: ju: nǎmkan sɔ:ŋ k^hon
 kid-orphan with mother stay together two person

‘The orphan and his mother lived with each other, just the two of them.’

8.2 กะ เป็น ช่วง ฤดูฝน นิ ละ
 ka pen cauŋ lu:du:-fǒn ni la
 ka COP period season-rain TPC PRT

‘It was rainy season like it is now.’

8.3 ฤๅสู ลี ใเฮ็ด ไส ใเฮ็ด นา
 lu:du: si het haj het nã:
 season IRR make field make rice.paddy
 ‘the time (people) would begin farming.’

9 ปกติ กะ อยู่ นำกัน อ่อมล่อม อ่อมล่อม
 pokati ka ju: nãmkan ?omlom-?omlom
 regularly KA stay together bundled-bundled

อยู่ ละ ลูก กับ แม่
 ju: la lu:k kap me:
 be.at PRT kid with mother

‘Normally, (they) lived together with peace and harmony, as for the child and his mother.’

10.1 ไป ไส มา ไส
 paj sǎj ma sǎj
 go where come where

กะ หา ข้าว หา น้ำ ตู้ กัน กิน ดีดี
 ka ha: k^hàw ha: nâ:m su: kan kin dí:di:
 KA seek rice seek water to RECIP eat well

‘Wherever they go, they would help each other gather foods and water all the time.’

10.2 ลูก กะ ใสูสู ดอก
 lu:k ka hũ:hũ: dɔ:k
 kid KA well.behaved PRT

‘The child was very well-behaved.’

11.1 ใสู / ใเฮ็ด เวียก ดี
 hu: het wiak di:
 know make chore good

‘(He) was well-behaved (and) hard-working.’

11.2 ใเฮ็ด เวียก บ่ มี ค้าน
 het wiak bɔ: mi: k^ha:n
 make chore NEG have lazy

‘(He) was not lazy with doing chores.’

- 12 คน ไทบ้าน ่เฮ็ด อีหยัง เลา กะ ่เฮ็ด นำ
k^hon t^hajba:n het ?iŋǎŋ law ka het nǎm
person villager make what 3.FA KA make with
‘Whatever the villagers did, he would also do them.’
- 13.1 ไทบ้าน ่เลี้ยง จั้ว ่เลี้ยง ควาย อีหยัง กะ ่เฮ็ด นำ
t^hajba:n lianŋ ɲua lianŋ k^hwaj ?iŋaŋ ka het nǎm
villager raise cow raise buffalo what KA make with
‘The villagers raised cows, buffalos, and whatever animals, (he) did so as well.’
- 13.2 ่เป็น คนคู่ คนหมั่น ่วนเถาะไป
pen k^hon-dǔ: k^hon-man wantɔʔpǎj
COP person-often person-diligent PRT.EXPLAIN
‘(He) was a hard-working, diligent person, simply put.’
- 14.1 เออ ่เป็น คนหมั่น
?ə: pen k^hon-man
INTERJ COP person-diligent
‘(He) was diligent.’
- 14.2 ใให้ ว่า ่เป็น คน ดี คน ึ่ง อยู่ ใน หมู่บ้าน
haj wa: pen k^hon di: k^hon nuŋ ju: naj mu:-ba:n
give say COP person good person one be.at in group-house
‘(You) can say (he) was a good person in the village.’
- 14.3 ่เป็น ลูกกำพร้า
pen lu:k-kampa:
COP kid-orphan
‘(He) was an orphan.’
- 14.4 พ่อ บ่ มี
p^hɔ: bǔ: mi:
father NEG have
‘(He) has no father.’

- 14.5 พ่อ ตาย
 p^hw: ta:j
 father die
 ‘His father died.’
- 15 ล้ม เสีย หาย ตาย เสีย จาก ตะ หลาย ปี แล้ว ละ
 lom sia: hǎ:j ta:j sia: ca:k ta la:j pi: le:w la
 fall lose disappear die lose depart from many year alreadyPRT
 ‘(The father) passed away, left (him/they) many years ago.’
- 16.1 บาดที่นี้^๓ เพื่อน กะ อยู่ นำกัน
 ba:t^hinî: p^hɔŋ ka ju: nǎmkan
 now 3.PO KA be.at together
 สอง คน อ่อมล่อมๆ มา
 sɔwŋ k^hɔn ʔɔmlɔm-ʔɔmlɔm ma
 two person bundled-bundled come
 ‘At this time, they lived there together peacefully, just the two of them.’
- 16.2 ตก มา ฤดูฝน สี เห็ด นา ๓^๔หันแล้ว
 tok ma luɔdu:-fɔŋ si het nǎ: san-lɛw
 fall come season-rain IRR make rice paddy PRT
 ‘When it became the rainy season, they would start working on the rice field.’
- 17 เห็ด นา
 het nǎ:
 make rice.paddy
 ‘(They) worked on the rice field.’
- 18 ฤดู ทำ นา กะ ก็ งาม นี้ ละ เนาะ
 luɔdu: t^ham nǎ: ka k^hw: ŋa:m nî: la nɔʔ
 season do rice.paddy KA be.like when PROX PRT AGREE.PRT
 ฤดู ทำ นา
 luɔdu: t^ham nǎ:
 season do rice.paddy
 ‘The rice-planting season is around this time of the year.’

- 19.1 ไป หลก กกล้า ไป ไว้
 paj lok ka: t^haj waj
 go up.root seedling plow put
 ‘(He) went remove the seedling (and) plowed (the field).’
- 19.2 ไป ไว้ เรียบร้อย
 t^haj waj liaploj
 plow put orderly
 ‘(He) plowed (in an) orderly (way).’
- 20 ไป หลก กกล้า เพื่อ สิ เอา ไป ดำ นา
 paj lok ka: p^həa si ?aw paj dam nǎ:
 go up.root seedling for IRR take go dive rice.paddy
 ‘(He) went remove the seedling in order to plant (them).’
- 21.1 ี่ด ชุ ี่ม ชุ ี่น ชุ ี่ม ชุ ี่น
 het su mǎ: su wen su mǎ: su wen
 make every day every daytime every day every daytime
 ‘(He) did this every day.’
- 21.2 ปกติ แม่ กะ ไป ส่ง ข้าว
 pokati mɛ: ka paj soŋ k^hàw
 regularly mother KA go send rice
 ‘Normally, his mother would go deliver meals.’
- 22.1 ไป ส่ง ข้าว อยู่
 paj soŋ k^hàw ju:
 go send rice be.at
 ‘(She) went to deliver meals.’
- 22.2 ตรง เวลา อยู่ ี่
 toŋ we:la: ju: de:
 striaght time be.at PRT
 ‘(She) was on time, in fact.’

- 22.3 แต่ ว่า มี ^{มือ}นั้น มี เหตุ ขัดข้อง
 te: wa: m^u:nân mi: he:t k^hat-k^hɔŋ
 but COMP day-DIST have incident obstruct
 ‘But on that day, there was a problem.’
- 23 อีหยัง กะ บ่ ^{ู้} บ่ ทราบ ละ
 ?iŋaŋ ka b^u: hu: b^u: sa:p la
 what KA NEG know NEG know PRT
 ‘What the problem was, I do not know.’
- 24 ตำนาน หนึ่ง บอก ว่า แม่ ^{ัน} ^{ัน} ^{ัน} ข้าว แต่ เช้า
 tamna:n nuŋ b^o:k wa: me: nan n^uŋ k^hàw te: sao
 legend one tell say mother TPC steam rice from morning
 ‘One legend says that the mother steamed the rice early in the morning.’
- 25 ^{ัน} ข้าว เป่า ไฟ ตะ เช้า แล้ว ไฟ ไหม้ หวดข้าว
 n^uŋ k^hàw pao faj ta sao l^e:w faj maj huat-k^hàw
 steam rice blow fire from morning already fire burn steamer
 ‘(She) cooked the rice (and) made fire early in the morning and then the steamer caught on fire.’
- 26.1 ไฟ ไหม้ หม้อข้าว ^{เ็น} ว่า มัน เป็น ลางร้าย ^{ไ้}
 faj maj m^o:k^hàw p^həŋ wa: man pen la:ŋla:j de:
 fire burn pot-rice 3.PO say 3.NO COP bad.omen PRT
 ‘Fire burned the pot, they say it is a bad omen.’
- 26.2 ไหม้ หม้อข้าว
 maj m^o:k^hàw
 burn pot-rice
 ‘(The fire) burned the pot.’
- 27.1 พอตะ ไหม้ หม้อข้าว แล้ว กะ เลข หม่า ไหม้
 p^ho:ta maj m^o:k^hàw l^e:w ka ləj ma: maj
 when-from burn pot-rice already KA exceed soak again
 ‘Since (the fire) had burned the pot, she then soaked the rice again.’

- 27.2 หม่า ข้าว ใหม่ กะ เลย นึ่ง
 ma: kʰàw maj ka ləj nùŋ
 soak rice again ka exceed steam
 ‘Having soak the new rice, (she) steamed (it).’
- 28.1 กะ นึ่ง ตะ ดึก อยู่ ดอก
 ka nùŋ ta dək ju: dɔ:k
 KA steam from dark be.at PRT
 ‘It is the case that (she) steamed [it] in the early morning (when it was still dark).’
- 28.2 นึ่ง แล้ว แล้ว กะ เอา ไป อ่า ไป วัด
 nuŋ le:w le:w ka ʔaw paj ʔa paj wat
 one finish alreadyKA take go filler go temple
 ‘Having finished steaming (the rice), (she) took [it] to, uh, to the temple.’
- 28.3 ไป วัด ไป จั๊กหัน วัด นิ ละ
 paj wat paj caŋhǎn wat ni la
 go temple go breakfast temple TPC PRT
 ‘(She) went to the temple to offer food to the monks.’
- 29 ได้ ข้าว ได้ แแนวกิน กะ ไป วัด
 daj kʰàw daj nɛ:w-kin ka paj wat
 gain rice gain CLF.thing-eat KA go temple
 ‘(She) got the rice and foods, and then went to the temple.’
- 30 ส่วน ลูกชาย กะ ออก ไป นา ตะ ดึก นะ ครับ
 suan lu:k-sa:j ka ʔɔ:k paj nǎ: ta dək naʔ kʰap
 part son KA exit go rice.paddy from dark PRT PRT
 ‘As for the son, (he) went to the field early in the morning.’
- 31 ทอง บ่ เป็น คนค้ำน ทำ นา อยู่ คี๋ หมู่
 tʰɔ:ŋ bɔ: pen kʰon-kʰa:n tʰam nǎ: ju: kʰu: mu:
 Tong NEG COP person-lazy do rice.paddy be.at be.like friend
 “Tong was not a lazy person. (He) worked on the field like others.”
 Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. (No singing)

- 34.2 ฮือ ฮือ ฮือ ไล่ ควาย
 hur: hur: hur: laj k^hwaj
 hhh hhh hhh chase buffalo
 ‘Hhh! hhh! (He) chased the buffalo.’
- 35 เสียง ไล่ ควาย ฮือฮ้อง ฮือฮ้อง ฮือฮ้อง อยู่ ฮั่น
 siaŋ laj k^hwaj hur:-hɔ:ŋ hur:-hɔ:ŋ hur:-hɔ:ŋ ju: han
 voice chase buffalo Hhh-hong Hhh-hong Hhh-hong be.at over there
 ‘the sound for chasing buffalo “Hhh-hong hhh-hong” over there’
- 36.1 ฮือฮ้อง นิ หมายถึง ว่า ให้ มีง ย่าง ไป
 hur:-hɔ:ŋ ni ma:jt^huŋ wa: haj muŋ ɲa:ŋ paj
 hh-hong TPC mean COMP give 2SG.NO walk go
 ‘As for “Hhh-hong”, (it) means you keep walking forward.’
- 36.2 แล้ว กะ ไป ตาม ร่องไถ เพราะว่า ฮ้องไถนา นิ
 le:w ka paj ta:m loŋ-t^haj p^hw-wa: hɔ:ŋ-t^haj-ná: ni
 alreadyKA go follow furrow-plow because furrow-plow-rice.paddy TPC
 ‘and then go along the plow lines because, as for the plow lines...’
- 37 ควาย นิ มัน สิ ไซ้ เท้า นิ
 k^hwaj ni man si saj t^ha:w ni
 buffaloTPC 3.NO IRR use foot TPC
- สัมผัส ร่องไถนา อยู่ ใน น้ำ เค็
 samp^hat loŋ-t^haj-ná: ju: naj nâ:m de:
 touch furrow-plow-rice.paddy be.at in water PRT
 ‘As for the buffalo, it would use its feet to feel for the plow line which is under the water.’
- 38.1 แล้ว มัน สิ ย่าง นำ ฮ้อง
 le:w man si ɲa:ŋ nám hɔ:ŋ
 already3.NO IRR walk with furrow
 ‘Then it would walk along the furrow.’

38.2 คำ ว่า ฮอง นิ คือ
 k^ham wa: hɔ:ŋ ni k^hu:
 word say furrow TPC be.like
 ‘The word “Hong” or furrow refers to’

39 ร่องไถ
 rɔŋ-t^haj
 furrow-plow

‘the plow lines.’

Note: The speaker codeswitches in this line to Thai and then switches back to Isaan in the next line.

40 ไถ แล้ว มัน สิ ไซ้ เท้าเหยียบ เหยียบ เหยียบ ไป นำ ฮอง
 t^haj lɛ:w man si saj t^ha:w ji:ap ji:ap ji:ap paj nām hɔ:ŋ
 plow already3.NO IRR use foot step.on step.on step.on go with furrow
 ‘After (you) plowed, it would use its feet to step, step, along the furrow.’

41.1 พอตะ ไป ฮอด หัวนา กะ สิ ล่วง
 p^hɔ:-ta paj hɔ:t hua-nǎ: ka si luanŋ
 when-from go arrive head-rice.paddy KA IRR go.beyond
 ‘Once arrived at the end of the section, (you) would go over.’

41.2 เขา เรียก ว่า ไถ ล่วง ไป
 k^hǎw liak wa: t^haj luanŋ paj
 3.FO call say plow go.beyond go
 ‘They call it “plow over” (away from where you began).’

41.3 แล้ว เขา กะ ไถ อ้อม มา จน ว่า แล้ว ฟิ้น ละ
 lɛ:w haw ka t^haj ʔɔ:m ma: con wa: lɛ:w p^hun la
 already1.FA KA plow encircle come until say finish DIST PRT
 ‘And then, we would plow around this way until it is done.’

42 เว้า ว่า ฮือ ฮือ ไป อย่า เคื่อ มึง สวย แล้ว
 wao wa: hu: hu: paj ja: dɔ: muŋ suaj lɛ:w
 speak say hhh hhh go do.not PRT 2SG.NO late already
 ‘He said “hhh! hhh! go, don’t wait, it is late already”
 Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. (No singing)

43.1 เอื๋ อัน ว่า มารดา แก้ว เฮ็ด หยั่ง
 ?e: ?an wa: ma:n̄da kɛ:w het ɲǎŋ
 eh CLF.thing- say mother glass make what

ทำ สั่ง เฮ็ด หยั่ง อยู่ น้อ
 tʰam sǎŋ het ɲǎŋ ju: nɔ:
 do what make what be.at PRT.WONDER

“I wonder what my dear mother is doing, or working on?”

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. (No singing)

43.2 กู สั่ง หิว อยาก ข้าว
 ku: haŋ hiw ja:k kʰàw
 1SG.NO so.much hungry want rice

“I am so hungry.”

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. (No singing)

43.3 เพ็ลคู้ม กะ บ่ มา ว่าซั๊น ทองคำ ว่า
 pe:n̄tum ka bɔ̄: ma wa:sa:n tʰɔ:ŋ kʰam wa:
 lunch.time KA NEG come say-thus Tong Kham say

“It’s lunch time (and) she has not come” Tong Kham said’

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. (No singing)

44 เอื๋ อีแม่ เลา เฮ็ด หยั่ง อยู่ น้อ
 ?e: ?i-me: law het ɲǎŋ ju: nɔ:
 eh TITLE.FEM-mother 3.FA make what be.at PRT.WONDER

ว่าซั๊น ว่า
 wa:sa:n wa:
 say-thus say

“Eh! My mother, what is she doing?” (He) said’

45.1 บาดทีนั๊ กะ ปลด แอก ปลด ควาย ซั๊นละ
 ba:tʰi:n̄i: ka pot ?ɛ:k pot kʰwaj san-la
 now KA release yoke release buffalo PRT

‘Now, (he) removed the yoke from the buffalo,’

- 45.2 ปล่อย ควาย กิน หญ้า
 pɔj k^hwaj kin ɲa:
 let.go buffalo eat grass
 ‘(and) let the buffalo graze on the grass.’
- 45.3 มา ดำ นา
 ma dam nǎ:
 come dive rice.paddy
 ‘to come plant the rice.’
- 46.1 นา กะ บ่ ดำ ดอก
 nǎ: ka bǔ: dam dɔ:k
 rice.paddy KA NEG dive PRT
 เพราะว่า มัน สาย แล้ว ได้ สิ เพลตุ้ม แล้ว
 p^hɔ-wa: man suaj lɛ:w de: si pe:ntum lɛ:w
 because 3.NO be.late alreadyPRT IRR lunch.time already
 ‘But he didn’t plant the rice because it was already late morning, almost noon.’
- 46.2 ขึ้น แอ้งแมง ขึ้น ไป สู่ เถียงนา ฟุ้น แห่ล่ว
 k^hu:n ʔɛŋməŋ k^hu:n paj su: t^hiɑŋnǎ: p^hun lɛw
 go.up motionlessly go.up go to hut DIST PRT
 ‘He exhaustedly went up to the hut (for resting while working the field) instead.’
- 47.1 น้อย บ่ ทั้น พอ คราว แม่ กะ เลย เอ็น ว่า
 nɔj bǔ: t^han p^hɔ: ka:w mɛ: ka ləj ʔɔ:n wa:
 little NEG not.yet when moment mother KA exceed call say
 ทอง เอ๊ย ทอง เอ๊ย
 t^hɔ:ŋ ʔɔ:ŋ t^hɔ:ŋ ʔɔ:ŋ
 Tong hey Tong hey
 ‘Not long after that, the mother called out “Tong! Tong!”’
- 47.2 ฟ้าว นำ ลูก
 fa:w nǎm lu:k
 hurry with kid
 ‘(She) hurried for her child.’

- 47.3 ทั้ง ล้ม ทั้ง มั่น คันแเท
 tʰəŋ lom tʰəŋ mu:n kʰantʰɛ:
 both fall both slip dike
 ‘(She) even fell and slipped on the dike.’
- 47.4 ล้มลุกกุกกลาน มา
 lom-luk-kʰuk-kʰa:n ma:
 fall-get.up-clamber-crawl come
 ‘(She) struggled along the way.’
- 47.5 พ้าว นำ ลูก นำ เต้า
 fa:w nǎm lu:k nǎm tao
 hurry with kid with breast
 ‘(She) hurried for her dear child.’
- 47.6 ย่าน ลูก หิว
 ja:n lu:k hiw
 fear kid hungry
 ‘(She) feared that her child was hungry.’
- 48.1 เพื่อน ผู้ทอง นิ นอน ถ้า อยู่ เลียงนา
 pʰəŋ pʰu-tʰwəŋ ni nɔ:n tʰa: ju: tʰiəŋnǎ:
 3.PO CLF.HUM-Tong TPC sleep wait be.at hut
 ละ หิว คัก แล้วย บาดนี้
 la hiw kʰak le:w ba:t-nì:
 LA hungry very already now
 ‘He, Tong, who laid waiting for (her) at the hut, was very hungry at this point.’
- 48.2 หิว จน ว่า ตาลาย ฟุ้ง เหลว
 hiw con wa: ta:la:j pʰun lew
 hungry until say dizzy DIST PRT
 ‘So hungry that his vision was blurry!’

- 49 พอตะ มา สอด ผั่น
 pʰw:-ta ma hɔ:t pʰan
 when-from come arrive MIR
- กล่องข้าว ผั่น กล่อง น้อยๆ ภาดทีนี้
 kwɛŋ-kʰàw pʰan kwɛŋ nɔ:wj-nɔ:wj ba:tʰíní:
 box-rice MIR box small-small now
- ‘When (the mother) arrived, the rice container was unexpectedly small.’
- 50.1 กล่องข้าว ปกติ สิ มี กล่อง ใหญ่ อยู่ ได้
 kwɛŋ-kʰàw pokati si mi: kwɛŋ ɲaj ju: de:
 box-rice regularly IRR have box big be.at PRT
- แต่ ว่า กล่อง ใหญ่ นิ เอา ไป วัด แล้ว
 te: wa: kwɛŋ ɲaj ni ʔaw paj wat lɛ:w
 but say box big TPC take go temple already
- ‘As for the rice container, (they) had a big one too, but the big one was taken to the temple.’
- 50.2 บัดนี้ เหลือ มา กล่อง น้อยๆ กล่อง ทอ กำปั้น นิ นะ
 bat-ni: læa ma kwɛŋ nɔ:wj-nɔ:wj kwɛŋ tʰw: kampan ni na?
 now remain come box small-small box equal fist TPC PRT
- ‘Now there remained the small one, about the size of my fist.’
- 51.1 เหลียว เห็น กะ บ่ เป็นตา อิ่ม ซ้นแหล่ว
 lieuw hen ka bɔ:w: pen-ta ʔim san-lɛw
 look see KA NEG seem be.full PRT
- ‘(The son) looked at (it) and thought (the rice) wouldn’t fill (him) up.’
- 51.2 บัดนี้ ทองคำ กะ เลข ว่า
 bat-ni: tʰw:ŋ kʰam ka lɔj wa:
 now Tong Kham KA exceed say
- ‘Now, as a result Tong Kham says,’

52.1 แม่ ทอง เอ๊ย แม่
 me: tʰɔːŋ ʔəj me:
 mother Tong hey mother

กล่องข้าว ใหญ่ เจ้า แพง ไว้ เอ็ด หยั่ง
 kɔŋ-kʰàw ɲaj caw pʰeːŋ waj het ɲǎŋ
 box-rice big 2SG.FA preserve put make what

“My dear mother, your big rice container, you keep it for what purpose?”

52.2 เจ้า ชัง ลูก เมาะ
 caw saŋ lu:k bɔʔ
 2SG.FA hate kid PRT.Q

“Do you hate me?”

53.1 หรือ เจ้า ชัง บุตรา
 lu: caw saŋ butra
 or 2SG.FA hate son

“or you hate your son?”

53.2 กะ เลย ด่า แม่ ว่า หรือ เจ้า ชัง บุตรา
 ka ləj da: me: wa: lu: caw saŋ butra
 KA exceed scold mother say or 2SG.FA hate son

อีहां ด่า มึง นี้ ว่าซัั้น ว่า
 ʔi-ha: tam muŋ nī: wa:saŋ wa:
 TITLE.FEM-plague bump.into 2SG.NO PROX say-thus say

‘(he) scolded his mother “or you hate your son, you disgusting woman!” (he) said that.’

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. (No singing)

53.3 ด่า แม่ ขึ้น ฎ ขึ้น มึง ฟู้น ด้
 da: me: kʰuŋ ku: kʰuŋ muŋ pʰuŋ de:
 scold mother go.up 1SG.NO go.up 2SG.NO DIST PRT

‘(He) scolded his mother with disrespectful pronouns.’

54.1 แม่ กะ เลย ว่า โอ้ย หล่า
 me: ka ləj wa: ?oj la:
 mother KA exceed say hey TITLE.youngest.child

กล่อง น้อย กะ กิน ชะ ก่อน เถาะ
 kɔŋ nɔ:j ka kin sa? kɔ:n tɔ?
 box small KA eat PRT before PRT

‘So, the mother said, “Oh, my dear child, despite the small rice container, (you) should eat first.”’

54.2 มัน อิ่ม อยู่ ดอก ว่าซัน
 man ?im ju: dɔ:k wa:-san
 3.NO be.full be.at PRT say-thus

‘‘It will fill (you) up.’’

54.3 เถียง กัน ไป เถียง กัน มา
 tʰiaŋ kan paj tʰiaŋ kan ma
 argue RECIP go argue RECIP come

‘(They) argued back and forth.’

55.1 ช่าน บ่ อิ่ม บ่ กิน
 ja:n bɔ: ?im bɔ: kin
 fear neg be.full neg eat

‘(The son) thought (it) would not fill (him) up, so (he) didn’t eat.’

55.2 กู บ่ กิน
 ku: bɔ: kin
 1SG.NONEG eat

‘‘I’m not eating.’’

55.3 เจ้า คื่อ มา สวย แท้ อี้แม่
 caw kʰu: ma suaj tʰɛ: ?i-me:
 2SG.FA be.like come be.late truly mother

‘‘Why were you late, mother?’’

- 55.4 โอ้ย แม่ กะ ไป วัด
 ʔoj me: ka paj wat
 hey mother KA go temple
 “Oi, I went to the temple.”
- 56.1 ขาคฐุ ขาชา เพื่อน กะ บ่ มี ผู้ ไป วัด
 ɲak^hu: ɲasa: p^həŋ ka b^o: mi: p^hu- paj wat
 TITLE.monks TITLE.monks 3.PO KA NEG have CLF.HUM- go temple
 “The monks, they did not have anyone else who’d go to the temple.”
- 56.2 แม่ กะ ไป วัด ละ
 me: ka paj wat la
 mother KA go temple PRT
 มื้อนี้ เป็น มือ บุญ ข้าวประดับดิน ว่าซัน ว่า
 m^u:-nⁱ: pen m^u: bun k^hàw pradap din wa:-san wa:
 today COP day merit rice décor earth say-thus say
 “I went to the temple (because) today is the day of the death”, (she) said’
- 56.3 แม่ กะ เลย ไป
 me: ka ləj paj
 mother KA exceed go
 “and so I went.”
- 57.1 แม่ กะ เลย มา สวย
 me: ka ləj ma suaj
 mother KA exceed come be.late
 “And so, I came here late.”
- 57.2 อดสา กิน ชะ หล่ำ มา ว่าซัน
 ʔōtsǎ: kin saʔ la: ma wa:-san
 be.patient eat PRT TITLE.youngest.child come say-thus
 “Just try to eat a little dear, come!” she said.’
- 58.1 ทั้ง ฮุน ทั้ง หิว ข้าว ทั้ง เหลียว เห็น ข้าว ก่องข้าว น้อย
 t^həŋ su:n t^həŋ hiw k^hàw t^həŋ lieuw hen k^hàw kəŋ-k^hàw n^o:j
 both angry both hungry rice both look see rice box-rice small
 ‘(He) was angry and hungry, while seeing the rice, small rice container.’

- 62.2 แม่ ล้ม ฟูบ ลง
 me: lom fup loŋ
 mother fall collapse go.down
 ‘The mother collapsed.’
- 63 พอตะ แม่ ล้ม ฟูบ ลง บ๊ีบ
 p^hɔ:-ta me: lom fup loŋ pap
 when-from mother fall collapse go.down promptly
 บาดนี้ เอา ข้าว มา กิน บาดนี้
 ba:t-nì: ?aw k^hàw ma kin ba:t-nì:
 now take rice come eat now
 ‘Once the mother fell down, now (he) took the rice for eating.’
- 64.1 เอา ข้าว มา กิน
 ?aw k^hàw ma kin
 take rice come eat
 ‘(He) took the rice for eating.’
- 64.2 กิน ได้ สาม คำ
 kin daj sǎ:m k^ham
 eat gain three bite
 ‘(He) ate three bites.’
- 64.3 อิ่ม ชั่งมั่ง
 ?im saŋmaŋ
 be.full rooted.to.one.spot
 ‘(and) got full (and) couldn’t move.’
- 65.1 พอตะ อิ่ม ชั่งมั่ง แล้ว ข้าว กะ เหลือ
 p^hɔ:-ta ?im saŋmaŋ le:w k^hàw ka ləa
 when-from be.full rooted.to.one.spot alreadyrice KA remain
 ‘Once (he) got full, the rice still remained.’

- 65.2 เหลียว เห็น แม่ นอนเหยียด ค้างแข็ง
 liew hen me: no:n jia:t k^hiŋniŋ
 look see mother sleep stretch motionlessly
- คือ กบ เฝ้ายาบ เฝ้ายาบ นี ละ
 k^hu: kop ?iap kia ni la
 be.like frog coated.with.salt salt TPC PRT
- ‘(He) looked (and) saw his mother lay unconscious, stretched out like salted frogs.’
- 66 เออ กะ เลย ซ้อง นำ แม่ อีแม่ อีแม่
 ?ə: ka ləj hɔ:ŋ nām me: ?i-me: ?i-me:
 INTERJ KA exceed cry.out with mother mother mother
- ‘(He) called upon his mother, “Mom! mom!”’
- 67.1 แม่ อีแม่ เจ้า ตาย แล้ว ตี แม่ ว่าซัน
 me: ?i-me: caw taj lə:w ti? me: wa:san
 mother mother 2SG.FA die already Q.PRT mother say-thus
- “Mom! Are you dead already? Mom?” (he) said.
- 67.2 แม่ กะ บ่ ปาก
 me: ka bɔ: pa:k
 mother KA NEG mouth
- ‘The mother didn’t reply.’
- 68 กะ เลย ว่า
 ka ləj wa:
 KA exceed say
- กะ เลย ซ้องไห้ นำ แม่ ว่า แม่ ทอง เอ๊ย
 ka ləj hɔ:ŋ-haj nām me: wa: me: t^hɔ:ŋ ?ə:j
 KA exceed cry.out-cry with mother say mother Tong hey
- ‘So, (he) said. So, (he) mourned after his mother, saying “O, Tong’s mother”’

69 แม่ ตาย ย้อน ก่องข้าว น้อย
 me: taj ɲw:n kɔŋ-kʰàw nɔ̌j
 mother die because box-rice small

หาบ กะต๋ำ มา สวาย ชั้น บ่ แม่
 ha:p kata: ma: suaj san bɔ̌: me:
 carry basket come late such neg mother

“You died because of a small rice container, coming late carrying the basket, just like that?”

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. The speaker is singing.

70 พอ มา ถึง คราว ซวย เกิด มา บ่ คือ บ้าน
 pʰw: ma tʰuŋ ka:w suaj kə:t ma bɔ̌: kʰu: ba:n
 when come to moment unlucky born come NEG be.like house

“It was unfortunate, I was born unlike others.”

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. The speaker is singing.

71.1 ตาย นำ นา กับ บ้าน ไกล กัน นอ ละ แม่
 taj nām nā: kap ba:n kaj kan nɔ̌ la me:
 die with rice paddy with house far RECIP PRT.WONDER PRT mother

“(You) died in the rice field, far away from home, mother”

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. The speaker is singing.

71.2 ตาย ย้อน ลูก กำ แท้ แท้
 taj ɲw:n lu:k kʰam tʰɛ: tʰɛ:
 die because kid gold truly truly

‘(You) died because of your precious child.’

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. The speaker is singing.

71.3 บักทอง แย่ ฆ่า แม่ โท ว่าชั้น ว่า
 bak-tʰw:ŋ jɛ: kʰa: me: to: wa:san wa:
 TITLE.MASC-Tong bad kill mother self say-thus say

“‘Tong is a bad child killing his own mother’ (he) said.’

Note: This sentence is a rehearsed verse. The speaker is singing.

72.1 อีแม่ ก็น มา ก็น มา
 ?i-me: kʰu:n ma kʰu:n ma
 mother return come return come

“Mother! Come back, come back!”

- 72.2 ท่อง อิ่ม แล้ว ท่อง อิ่ม แล้ว ว่าซั้่น
 tʰɔːŋ ʔim leːw tʰɔːŋ ʔim leːw waː-san
 Tong be.full already Tong be.full already say-thus
 ‘‘I am full, I am full!’’ (he) said’
- 73.1 ท่อง อิ่ม แล้ว
 tʰɔːŋ ʔim leːw
 Tong be.full already
 ‘‘I am full already!’’
- 73.2 ท่อง กิน ข้าว อิ่ม แล้ว อีแม่
 tʰɔːŋ kin kʰàw ʔim leːw ʔi-meː
 Tong eat rice be.full already mother
 ‘‘I ate rice (and) got full, Mom!’’
- 73.3 บ่ น่า สิ ตาย จาก ท่อง ไป เลย
 bɔː nàː si taj ca:k tʰɔːŋ paj ləj
 NEG probably IRR die from Tong go exceed
 ‘‘(You) shouldn’t have died on me!’’
- 74 นี้ ละ ความโมโห มัน ทำ ให้ คน ฆ่า คน ได้
 nìː la kʰwa:m-moːhoː man tʰam haj kʰon kʰaː kʰon daj
 here PRT NMLZ-angry 3.NO do give person kill person gain
 ‘You see. Anger can cause a person to kill another person.’
- 75 เป็น ที่มา ของ ก่องข้าว น้อย ฆ่า แม่
 pen tʰiː-ma kʰɔːŋ kɔŋkʰàw nɔːj kʰaː meː
 COP source of box-rice small kill mother
 ‘This is the source for ‘‘a small rice container kills mother’’

79.2 ให้ ี๊ด ให้ สูง ซ่ำ นกเขา เห็น เลข
 haj het haj su:ŋ sam nok-k^hao hən ləj
 give make give high equal bird-dove soar exceed
 ‘Let (him) build it tall, as tall as the dove flies.’

80.1 เคย เห็น บ่ นกเขา เห็น
 k^həj hen bə: nok-k^hao hən
 EXP see NEG bird-dove soar
 ‘Have you ever seen the dove soar?’

80.2 นกเขา เห็น คี๋ นกเขา นิ เวลา
 nok-k^hao hən k^hu: nok-k^hao ni we:la:
 bird-dove soar be.like bird-dove TPC time

เวลา มัน มา กิน เขี่ย นิ
 we:la: man ma kin jia ni
 time 3.NO come eat prey TPC

มัน สิ บิน แบบ นี้ ต๊ีบ ต๊ีบ ต๊ีบ
 man si bin be:p nî: táp táp táp
 3.no IRR fly type PROX flap flap flap

‘When the dove is hunting, it would fly up like this, flap, flap, flap!! (its wings)’

81 แล้ว บัดทีนี้ มัน สิ ถ่าย ลง มา
 le:w ba:tt^hinî: man si t^ha:j loŋ ma
 alreadynow 3.NO IRR excrete down come
 ‘And then, it will poop down.’

82.1 ถ่าย ลง มา บึ๊บๆ
 t^ha:j loŋ ma: pap-pap
 excrete go.down come promptly
 ‘Once it has pooped down,’

82.2 มั่น สิ มี พวกหนู พวกกบ พวกเขียด
 man si mi: p^huak-nǔ: p^huak-kop p^huak-k^hiat
 3.no irr have COLL-mouse COLL-frog COLL-toad

เห็น ซึ่ นกเขา ตก ลง มา
 hen k^hi: nok-k^hao tok loŋ ma:
 see poo bird-dove fall go.down come

‘there will be mice, frogs, toads that saw the dove’s poop which falls down.’

83.1 มั่น ว่า แม่่น แนวกิน มั่น กะ สิ แล่น มา กิน
 man wa: me:n nɛ:w-kin man ka si le:n ma kin
 3.NO say COP NMLZ-eat 3.NO KA IRR run come eat

‘They think it's food, so they will run to eat it.’

83.2 นกเขา มั่น เห็น มั่น กะ สิ
 nok-k^hao man hen man ka si
 bird-dove 3.NO see 3.NO KA IRR

‘(When) the dove sees it, they would...’

84 ก่อน มั่น สิ กิน มั่น สิ เห็น ตี
 kɔ:n man si kin man si hɔ:n ti:
 before 3.NO IRR eat 3.NO IRR soar hit

หลัง จาก ตั๊บ ตั๊บ ตั๊บ
 laŋ ca:k táp táp táp
 back from flap flap flap

‘Before it feeds, it will fly up in the sky, flapping its wings’

85 มั่น สิ ขึ้น ไป สูง สูง
 man si k^hu:n paj su:ŋ su:ŋ
 3.NO irr go.up go high high

แล้ว มั่น สิ เจ็ด ลง โฉบ เอา เหยื่อ มั่น
 le:w man si cət loŋ c^ho:p ?aw ju:a man
 already 3.NO irr soar down dash take prey 3.NO

‘and it will go up really high, then it will dive down sharply (and) grab its prey.’

- 86 นี่ ละ นกเขา เหิน
ni la nok-k^hao hə:n
TPC PRT bird-dove soar
‘This is how the dove soars.’
- 87 นกเขา เหิน ขึ้น สูง ทอ ได้
nok-k^hao hə:n k^hu:n su:ŋ t^hɔ: daj
bird-dove soar go.up high equal which

ให้ บักทอง เห็ด ธาตุ
haj bak-t^hɔ:ŋ het t^ha:t
give TITLE.MASC-Tong make stupa
‘As tall as the dove flies, let Tong build a stupa.’
- 88.1 ให้ ธาตุ ใส่ กระดูก แม่ ทอ นั้น
haj t^ha:t saj kadu:k me: t^hɔ: nân
give stupa put into bone mother equal DIST
‘(And) let the stupa contain only his mother’s ashes.’
- 88.2 บัดนี้ ทอง กะ ไป ขน หิน แหล่ว ก้อนหิน มา
bat-ni: t^hɔ:ŋ ka paj k^hǎn hĭn lew kɔ:nhin ma
now Tong KA go haul rock PRT rock come
‘Now, Tong went to transport rocks to (this location),’
- 88.3 ก่อ มือ ละ เล็ก มือ ละ น้อย
kɔ: m^hu: la lek m^hu: la nɔ:ŋ
build day each tiny day each small
‘(and) built a little bit each day.’
- 89 ก่อ มือ ละ เล็ก ละ น้อย ละ เล็ก ละ น้อย ขึ้น
kɔ: m^hu: la lek la nɔ:ŋ la lek la nɔ:ŋ k^hu:n
build day each tiny each small each tiny each small go.up

จน ว่า สูง ซ้ำ กับ นกเขา บิน ขึ้น
con wa: su:ŋ sam kap nok-k^hao bin k^hu:n
until say high equal with bird-dove fly go.up
‘(He) built (it) bit by bit each day, until (it) was as tall as the dove flies.’

- 90.1 คั่น แม่่น เปรียบเทียบ กะ ซ้ำ เสาไฟฟ้าแรงสูง นั้น ละ
k^han me:n piapt^hiap ka sam sao-fajfa:-le:ŋ-su:ŋ nan la
if COP compare KA equal high.voltage.post TPC PRT
‘If we were to compare, it is as tall as the high voltage post.’
- 90.2 เป็น พระธาตุ ก่องข้าว น้อย ฆ่า แม่ อยู่ บ้าน ตาดทอง
pen p^hat^ha:t kɔŋ-k^hàw nɔ̄j k^ha: me: ju: ba:n ta:t-t^hɔ:ŋ
cop holy.stupa box-rice small kill mother be.at house Tad-Tong
‘It’s the “small rice container kills mother” stupa at Tad Tong village.’
- 91 ตำบล ตาดทอง อำเภอ เมือง จังหวัด ยโสธร แต่ก่อน
tambon ta:t-t^hɔ:ŋ ?amp^hɔ: muan caŋwát ja?so:t^hɔ:n te:-kwɔ:n
sub-district Tad-Tong district city province Yasothon from-before
‘Tad Tong sub-district, Mueng district, Yasothon province in the past’
- 92 ตอนนี้ ยัง มี พระธาตุ อันนั้น อยู่
tɔ:n-ní: ŋaŋ mi: p^hat^ha:t ?an-nân ju:
right.now still have holy.stupa CLF.thing-dist be.at
‘Currently, the stupa still remains.’
- 93 ก่องข้าว น้อย ฆ่า แม่ กะ เลย จบ ลง ซ้ำ นี้
kɔŋ-k^hàw nɔ̄j k^ha: me: ka ləj cop loŋ sam ní:
box-rice small kill mother KA exceed end go.down equal PROX
‘This is the end of the story of a small rice container kills mother.’
- 94 นิทาน เรื่อง นี้ สอน ให้ รู้ ว่า
nit^ha:n luan ní: sɔ:n haj lu: wa:
story story PROX teach give know say
โมโห นี้ พา โต ตกต่ำ
mo:ho: ní: p^ha: to: tok-tam
angry PROX lead self fall-low
‘This story teaches us that anger leads oneself down’

95 ฉะนั้น เพื่อน จ้ัง ว่า บ่ ให้ โมโห ตอน หิว
 canan p^həŋ caŋ wa: b^o: haj mo:ho: t^o:n hiw
 therefore 3.PO then say NEG give angry at.time hungry

มัน สิ ฆ่า คน ตาย
 man si k^ha: k^hon ta:j
 3.NO IRR kill person die

‘That is why they say do not get angry when you are hungry, you could kill someone.’

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