

Himalayan linguistics

A free peer-reviewed web journal and archive devoted to the study of the
languages of the Himalayas

Himalayan Linguistics

Khumi elaborate expressions

David A. Peterson

Dartmouth College

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the phenomenon of elaborate expressions (EEs) as manifested in Bangladesh Khumi, a language belonging to the Kuki-Chin branch of Tibeto-Burman. In strictly formal terms, Khumi EEs are quasi-reduplicative, compound-like structures consisting of an element which imparts meaning to the whole expression, and a second element which ranges from reduplicative template (e.g., *mi-maay*, ELAB(ORATION)-fire ‘fire’) to formally constrained nonce elements (*srúng-sraaw*, ELAB-tobacco ‘tobacco’), to otherwise meaningful elements which bear some semantic resemblance to their paired element (*uy-klaay*, dog-monkey ‘dog’). Consideration of the use of EEs in a large naturalistic text corpus suggest that their occurrence in Khumi encodes relatively expectable meanings associated with reduplicative structures, rather than simply being used for stylistic or aesthetic effect. EEs often appear to be involved in marking the intensified or distributed nature of the event, hardly surprising given the tendency for reduplication to code such categories cross-linguistically. More noteworthy, however, is the incidence of EEs in contexts where they indicate a more abstract nuance, attributed to the emotional intensity of what a speaker or narrator is expressing. EE use in these contexts may nevertheless be accounted for under the general rubric of intensification.

This is a contribution from *Himalayan Linguistics*, Vol. 9(1): 81–100.

ISSN 1544-7502

© 2010. All rights reserved.

This Portable Document Format (PDF) file may not be altered in any way.

Tables of contents, abstracts, and submission guidelines are available at
www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/HimalayanLinguistics

Khumi elaborate expressions*

David A. Peterson
Dartmouth College

1. Introduction

A frequently cited areal tendency for Southeast Asian languages is the use of *elaborate expressions* (Matisoff 1973; Solnit 1995; Goddard 2005). For initial purposes, elaborate expressions can be described as reduplicative or quasi-reduplicative, compound-like structures used in place of simpler structures for expressive or aesthetic effect. Bangladesh Khumi speech of most sorts is typically rich in such structures. For instance, consider sentence (1), from a folkloric narrative, and sentence (2) from conversation.

(1) nayboeloe	khieeng=te	sangkáng=aa	<u>tuydí-tuydueéng</u>
then	look=EVID	fireplace.shelf=LOC	<u>ELAB-water.gourd</u>
<u>l'i-l'aawng</u>	saybii	soraa	plang-noe='oe
<u>ELAB-pot</u>	plate	bowl	move-past=EMOT
			thúy-raemo=te
			say-NEG.IMP=EVID
noekhaa=poe	ngo'-lae=te		
then=also	get-NEG=EVID		

'Then he (a tiger) looked (for her) on the fireplace shelf, he moved the water gourds and the pots, and the plates and the bowls so much I can't tell you, but again, he didn't get her.' (1.33)¹

* My research on Khumi has previously been supported by a Fulbright fellowship and by the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology; currently work is supported by NSF grant #BCS-0349021. An earlier version of this work was presented at SEALS 14. Special thanks go especially to Lelung Khumi for our extended collaboration on Khumi grammar and to all members of the Khumi community who have contributed to our work. I am also grateful to two anonymous reviewers whose insightful suggestions have greatly improved the final result.

¹ The Khumi orthography used here requires a bit of explanation. Clitic boundaries are indicated by =, and – indicates an affix boundary. Most symbols have their usual IPA value, with a few exceptions: *Cʰ* indicates an aspirate plosive, *ng* indicates a velar nasal, *j* is an alveopalatal affricate, *y* is a palatal glide, and *s* indicates an alveopalatal fricative, except for certain lexical items where it freely varies with [s]. Apostrophes indicate glottal stop or the short vowel associated with a sesquisyllabic structure in case it is unpredictable for a syllable-initial consonant sequence (e.g., for the initial sequence *tk-*, as in the word 'tiger' in example (3h), this short vowel is predictable, since initial *tk-* sequences are impossible. In other cases *Cʰ* indicates an inaspirate plosive-initial sesquisyllable as opposed to an aspirate plosive (*Cʰ*). In addition, ' sometimes occurs syllable-finally, where it indicates an extremely checked tone variant associated with the negative suffix or corresponding to an omitted genitive case clitic, as in example (1), *ngo'* '(not) get' or (17) *nang'* '2S.GEN'. The orthography conflates representation of the Khumi tonal system (five underlying distinctions) and representation of the vowel system. For a vowel indicated by a single symbol ([a], [i],

- (2) atlae-ahuung-noe=poece poo-waa vaay
kill.each other-ELAB-NZ=also increase-IRR now

diwng=aa=loee=baee luútkhue=poece=baee
 generation=LOC=TOP=EMOT wergeld=also=EMOT

‘The one [a fine in the Khumi traditional legal system] for killing each other will also increase, in this generation, also the fine for killing someone.’ (43.38)

In these sentences, the underlined portions consist of two parts. The part given a full lexical gloss (e.g., *tuydueéng* ‘water gourd’ in the first sentence), would be sufficient to convey what the speaker wants to express. However, in these instances, the speaker has chosen to use a more extended expression. The extension in question is the part of the form glossed here as ELAB for *elaboration*; all elaborations are underlined in subsequent examples.

This study has two goals. First, it will provide an account of the phenomenon of elaborate expressions as manifested in Bangladesh Khumi (a Tibeto-Burman language belonging to the Kuki-Chin subgroup)² in terms of their overall structure and composition. Looking at this issue is important, because Khumi elaborate expressions do not entirely correspond in terms of structure to what have been designated as elaborate expressions in the study of other languages, although they do appear to have the same general functional motivation that has previously been cited. This account of Khumi elaborate expression structure is based primarily on their occurrence in a text corpus³ collected in southeastern Bangladesh since 1999, supplemented by directly elicited or offered forms. As a second goal, I will examine representative examples of their use from the corpus and will make some observations concerning tendencies in their text

[e], [u], [o]), there are five possible representations, depending on tone: e.g., *a* (low checked tone), *á* (high checked tone), *aa* (low falling tone), *áa* (high falling tone), and *áá* (rising-falling tone). Several digraphs (and trigraphs) are used to represent additional vowels of the system (*iel/iee* is a tense vowel intermediate between [i] and [e], *uel/uee* is approximately [y], *oe/oe* is close to [ə], and *aw/aarw* is [ɔ]); for these vowels, the accent associated with high checked and high falling tones is written over the first vowel, and with the rising-falling tone it is written over the last vowel of a trigraph. E.g., for *oe/oe*: *oe* (low checked tone), *óe* (high checked tone), *oe* (low falling tone), *óee* (high falling tone), *oeé* (rising-falling tone).

Abbreviations in interlinears include: 1 ‘first person’, 2 ‘second person’, 3 ‘third person’, ACCID ‘accidental’, AFFIRM ‘affirmative’, ALL ‘allative’, APP ‘applicative’, AUG ‘augmentative’, AUGVCL ‘augmentative verbal classifier’, CAUS ‘causative’, CL ‘classifier’, COM ‘comitative’, COND ‘conditional’, COP ‘copula’, DIM ‘diminutive’, DIMVCL ‘diminutive verbal classifier’, ELAB ‘elaboration (in an elaborate expression)’, EMOT ‘emotive’, EVID ‘hearsay evidential’, EXHAUST ‘exhaustive’, FOC ‘focus’, GEN ‘genitive’, IMP ‘imperative’, IMPFV ‘imperfect’, INCL ‘inclusive’, INTENS ‘intensifier’, INTERJ ‘interjection’, INTERR ‘interrogative’, IRR ‘irrealis’, LOC ‘locative’, MID ‘middle’, NEG ‘negative’, NZ ‘nominalizer’, P ‘plural’, PERF ‘perfect’, PFV ‘perfective’, PST ‘past’, QUOT ‘quotative’, REFL ‘reflexive’, S ‘singular’, TOP ‘topic’ VOC ‘vocative’.

² In Bangladesh there are two varieties of Khumi, one spoken in more northerly communities, in the vicinity of Ruma, and the other spoken south and southeast of Thanchi towards the Burmese border. The southerly variety appears to be more similar to varieties spoken over the border in Burma, although the level of mutual intelligibility between the Bangladesh varieties is extremely high. The data in this paper all comes from the Ruma dialect.

³ Numbers following translations refer to a text attestation of the elaborate expression, although absence of such a number does not preclude attestation of it in the corpus.

distribution. Ultimately, I will suggest that at least in Khumi, the use of elaborate expressions is tied to the marking of intensification, either of a fairly ordinary sort, or at a more abstract level.⁴

2. The elaborate expression prototype

The term elaborate expression was apparently first used by Haas 1964 to refer to a particular type of structural parallelism manifested in Thai. For Haas, the following quote sums up the essential characteristics of Thai elaborate expressions:

[Elaborate expressions are] frequently based on compounds...expanded by repeating a part of the compound and adding a new part, by inserting a syllable for the sake of rhyme, or by inserting a syllable which has some vague semantic relation to one of the original parts. Most of these expressions are made up of four parts. The semirepeated expressions have the same item as the first and third or as the second and fourth part. [e.g., *phûu-làg-phûu-jàj* 'reduplication (person)-basis/principle-person-great'='one's superiors, elders' or *hũŋ-hăa-ŋaahăan* 'cook (rice)-look.for-food'='to cook, prepare food']. The expressions that are characterized by rhyme always show internal rhyme (i.e., the rhyming of adjacent syllables) between the second and third parts. The rhyming part is the one in second position and may be an item which (1) has no meaning and therefore functions only as a rhyme, (2) has a meaning inconsistent with the rest of the expression and again functions only as a rhyme, or (3) has a meaning of greater or less consistency with the rest of the expression and also rhymes [e.g., *mũu-hèd-pèd-kàj* 'pig-mushroom-duck-chicken'='meats of various kinds', where *hèd* 'mushroom' may have greater or lesser consistency of meaning]. (xvii-xviii)⁵

Matisoff describes a highly comparable phenomenon in Lahu:

Elaborate expressions are a particularly interesting type of construction which are typical of Southeast Asian languages in general, and which are intermediate in structure between ordinary compounds and reduplications....An elaborate expression (Elab) is a compound containing four (usually monosyllabic) elements, of which either the first and third or the second and fourth are identical (A-B-A-C or A-B-C-B). They characteristically convey a rather formal or elegant impression. Skillful speakers sprinkle Elab's liberally thorough their conversation, using four syllables where two would have conveyed the same information... (1973: 81-82)

⁴ A reviewer suggests that reduplicative structures like these indicating intensification is predictable, as this is the most common function of reduplication throughout South and Southeast Asia. I am not aware of any study that has actually demonstrated that intensification is *the* most common function of reduplication in this part of the world, and am not even sure how such a hypothesis would be reliably tested. So I would opt to characterize this finding as *unsurprising* rather than predictable, as I believe the cross-linguistic association of reduplication and intensification worldwide to be relatively uncontroversial.

⁵ Haas gives further examples, but most appear to instantiate her 'semi-repeated' rather than the 'rhyme' type of elaborate expression, and it is not entirely clear which examples are meant to represent which subtype. The examples I include here give a taste of the structures she is concerned with, however.

Solnit recognizes elements which exhibit a quadrisyllabic structure involving repetition of specific syllables in his discussion of the more general phenomenon of parallelism in Kayah Li (1995).⁶ However, he also allows disyllabic structures which involve no reduplication and larger structures with no repetition to be included under the same rubric as items that have a more canonical-looking elaborate expression structure. Finally, it is also noteworthy that Mortensen 2003, in his treatment of Hmong elaborate expressions, likewise appears amenable to treating structures which deviate from those involving repetition of an element as a kind of elaborate expression.

If we take the most conservative possible definition of elaborate expression, that of a construction consisting of four monosyllables, of which two are identical, many of what I refer to in Khumi as elaborate expressions technically do not qualify. At best they would be regarded as quasi-elaborate expressions (as characterized by Matisoff 1973). In particular, we will see that a good number of what functionally correspond to elaborate expressions do not involve the repetitive pattern seen in the prototype elaborate expressions. In other cases, the elaboration of a monosyllabic form simply involves one additional syllable, which also does not conform to the quadrisyllabic canon. All of these structures nevertheless are recognized by speakers as representative of the same phenomenon, and from the perspective of their text distribution, they appear to be doing the same sorts of things.⁷

In light of elaborate expressions as seen in Khumi, I suggest a more general use of the term based on functional characteristics: as already noted, Khumi elaborate expressions occur in all discourse genres that I have data from, including conversation, folkloric narratives, historical accounts, procedural texts, etc. Invariably they are judged to be an optional device at any given point in a text, but they are regarded as indicative of the linguistic sophistication of the speaker using them—acknowledged good speakers of Khumi adorn their speech with elaborate expressions, much as speakers of Lahu do, according to Matisoff's account. However, later we will see that Khumi elaborate expressions in most cases appear to have an alternative general motivation besides their clear stylistic consequences.

⁶ For what it is worth, Khumi discourse also exhibits parallelism in other respects besides its use of elaborate expressions, just as Solnit claims for Kayah Li. Here I will concentrate on this subtype of parallelism, but want to underscore that Solnit appears to be on the right track in terms of trying to describe elaborate expressions as simply a particular manifestation of a more general preference given languages may have for parallelism.

⁷ One reviewer suggests that given Khumi's position in the South Asian linguistic area, it might be more fruitful to pursue a characterization of this phenomenon in Khumi based on South Asian patterns of reduplication (e.g., as described in Abbi 1992), in particular 'echo-word' formation. I agree that some formal patterns seen in Khumi, especially total reduplication, do bear some similarity to many South Asian reduplicative phenomena, but I want to emphasize that I do not view Khumi elaborate expressions as being all that different from those seen in Southeast Asia. Despite some formal discrepancies, in terms of their semantic and stylistic function, Khumi elaborate expressions ally the language more closely with the Southeast Asian linguistic area than with that of South Asia.

3. The structural composition of Khumi elaborate expressions

Since elaborate expressions are often assumed to be a subtype of compound and may involve reduplication, a few words are in order about compounding in general and other reduplicative structures in Khumi before we get into a detailed account of the strategies that the language has for forming elaborate expressions.

In Khumi, as in other languages, simple compounds involve two (or, rarely, more) usually independent bases which are morphosyntactically bound in the sense that they generally cannot have elements intervening between them; in phonological terms, the lefthand base of a compound in Khumi differs phonologically from an independent use of that base in not having the full range of possible tonal variation on its final syllable, such that there are tonally distinct allomorphs for lefthand compound elements when they occur in compounds rather than independently. For instance, *tuydueéng* ‘water gourd’, is a compound with *tuuy* ‘water’ as its lefthand component. Normally *tuuy* has a low falling tone, but in this compound, the tone is low and level; a further characteristic of the tone in the isolation form of this word is that it is unchecked, or the vowel is relatively long, but in the compound the ‘water’ portion is neither checked nor particularly long.

Khumi elaborate expressions show similar properties to compounds in terms of the tonal potential for their lefthand member, but do not always resemble compounds in terms of the free nature of their elements: not infrequently, an elaboration occurs *only* in an elaborate expression. Moreover, elaborate expressions differ from prototypical compounds in that their parts exhibit a higher degree of separability. Examples of this separability are rare in the corpus, so I do not discuss this phenomenon in detail here, but an example will be seen in example (26) below.

A further type of compound commonly seen in this part of world is the ‘father-mother’ type of coordinate compound. Khumi has a number of these, primarily, but not exclusively, based on relationship terms (e.g., *am-ampoo* ‘mother-father=parents’, *jay-báee* ‘elder sibling-younger sibling=siblings’). This is a distinct phenomenon from the one under discussion here.

We will see that some elaborate expressions make use of a reduplicative template, but the kind of reduplication involved is different from other reduplication observed in the language. One additional instance of reduplication is seen with verbal classifiers, which may undergo total reduplication (see Peterson 2008 for further discussion). The only other systematic use of reduplication that I am aware of is with one class of bound postverbal aspectual elements, which may have their initial consonant reduplicated, creating a sesquisyllable.⁸ The function of both of these reduplications is not clear at this point, but it is notable that the class of aspectual elements primarily involves meanings like ‘progressive’, ‘habitual’, ‘iterative’, and ‘durative’, which would seem especially amenable to expression involving reduplication. In Khumi reduplication is never used to indicate a distributive or collective meaning for nouns, with meanings such as ‘various kinds of N’ or ‘N and such things’, as is common in South Asia.

⁸ If the shape of the element is *CVng*, it may show full reduplication, as for the element *pueng* ‘EXHAUST(IVE)’, shown in its reduplicated form in example (14) below.

So, while elaborate expressions resemble compounds in terms of phonology, they may differ from them in other respects. Elaborate expressions built by reduplication involve a type of reduplication which is different from other reduplication phenomena seen in the language.

We can now move on to look at the specific strategies Khumi has for composing elaborate expressions. Structurally, elaborate expressions (henceforth, EEs) are left- or right-headed—either the left or the right member of the expression determines what entity or action the expression as a whole refers to. There are a handful of exceptions to this generalization fitting into two general categories:

- reversible EEs: *jawkhaawng-jangnóeeyng/jangnóeeyng-jawkhaawng* ‘old times’ (11.38, 14.32), in which *jangnóeeyng* is a meaningful element by itself, but *jawkhaawng* occurs only as an elaboration; *kliwng-pvúuy/pvúuy-kliwng* ‘snake’ (*kliwng* actually means ‘maggot’)
- EEs which involve a fixed sequence, but for which either member can function as the head: *tmiw-tmáay* ‘god-fog’=‘god’ (14.83) or ‘fog’ (15.44); *kni-khóeleewng* ‘sun-ground’=‘rain’ (in conjunction with the predicate *knií nay* ‘to rain’ (37.19)) or ‘ground’ (44.350)

3.1. Default elaboration templates

Depending on one’s analysis, there are either two or there is just one default template used for elaboration. The default structure for right-headed expressions involves total reduplication of the head and replacement of its final rhyme (including syllable final nasals) with the vowel *-i*. A selection of examples is given in (3); (3a-e) involve monosyllabic bases, (3f-i) involve sesquisyllabic bases, and the remainder involve disyllabic bases.⁹

- (3) a. mi-maay
ELAB-fire
‘fire’
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| b. <u>i</u> -aang | ‘curry’ |
| c. <u>khí</u> -khoó | ‘hole’ (1.111) |
| d. <u>mi</u> -mang | ‘king’ |
| e. <u>i</u> -’áa | ‘chicken’ |
| f. <u>l’i</u> -l’aawng | ‘pot’ (1.33) |
| g. <u>m’ni</u> -m’náy | ‘which’ (29.11) |
| h. <u>tki</u> -tkáay | ‘tiger’ |
| i. <u>pghi</u> -pkhaw | ‘beat’ |
| j. <u>tupli</u> -tuplaa | ‘box’ (1.26) |

⁹ One reviewer suggests that it is misleading to treat (3a-e) as involving total reduplication, when an alternative account would be that really just a single consonant is involved; however, treating all of these cases as a unified phenomenon is surely preferable to positing different reduplication strategies for the monosyllabic vs. other base types.

k. <u>tuydí</u> -tuydueéng	‘water gourd’(1.33)
l. <u>ayti</u> -aytoeeng	‘drum’ (1.100)
m. <u>angngyi</u> -angyieeng	‘cymbal’ (1.100)
n. <u>bawhí</u> -bawhuú	‘swell up’ (1.111)
o. <u>jawytí</u> -jawytáang	‘marfa’ (15.39)
p. <u>saypi</u> -saypúeeng	‘railing’(15.58)
q. <u>koli</u> -kola	‘Bangali’
r. <u>krámi</u> -krámoo	‘Marma’
s. <u>phangli</u> -phanglá	‘bat’ (33.52)
t. <u>luvi</u> -luváang	‘wergeld’

As long as the base form is sesquisyllabic or disyllabic (as in example 3h or 3j, respectively), this templatic default produces EEs which essentially conform to the A-B-A-C prototype exhibiting identity between the first and third syllables. However, as seen here, forms for monosyllabic bases deviate from the prototype.

There is a possible left-headed template which would similarly involve total reduplication and substitution of either an *-o* or an *-a* rhyme for the final rhyme of the reduplicant, exemplified by those in (4).

- (4) a. skhí-skhaá
deer-ELAB
'deer'
- b. atá-ato 'prayer' (4.10)
- c. ayúeng-ayo 'vine' (4.15)
- d. pyo-pyaa 'enjoy, be happy' (15.21)
- e. khúmi-khúmaa 'Khumi'

However, these structures are far less common than right-headed default template EEs. Moreover, if these were treated as defaults, it would not be possible to predict whether the *-o* or the *-a* rhyme will occur in the reduplicant. An alternative to treating these as left-headed default elaborations would be to simply subsume these under a different category of EE discussed below (nonce-elaborations exhibiting similarity with the head). Since these are relatively rare, and for a given form the vowel of the template would have to be stated explicitly anyway, treating these as a type of arbitrary elaboration rather than as representative of a type of default would not tremendously complicate the description of elaboration types. Doing so would also have the potentially desirable consequence that all default elaboration involves right-headed structures, something which would simplify representation of how elaboration works for a given item in lexical descriptions.

3.2. Form-specific elaboration

Form-specific elaborations override default elaboration if they exist. The sources for these elaborations are highly varied.¹⁰

3.2.1. Nonce elaboration

An elaboration may be a nonce, unpredictable from the phonological structure of the base, though sometimes similar to it. Such nonce elaborations can be either right- or left-headed. (5) gives a number of right-headed cases where the nonce element bears some resemblance to the head.¹¹ Specifically, the initial syllable of the head usually corresponds to the initial syllable (or half-syllable, in the case of a sesquisyllabic head) of the elaboration; if the head has a final nasal consonant, sometimes the nonce element also will have a nasal, although this is not without exception.

- (5) a. srúng-sraaw
ELAB-tobacco
'tobacco'
- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| b. <u>klúng</u> -klaay | 'monkey' |
| c. <u>amso</u> -amnáy | 'friend' (3.2) (<i>ámsoo</i> means 'genuine (of a human)') |
| d. <u>apsi</u> -apthoe | 'sacrifice' (29.5) |
| e. <u>amúng</u> -amaang | 'dream' (4.8) |
| f. <u>tmung</u> -tmang | 'mistaken' (14.41) |
| g. <u>mrung</u> -mráang | 'betel' (15.20) |
| i. <u>smiwng</u> -stáang | 'gayal' (24.120) |
| j. <u>kasung</u> -kapay | 'business' (27.130) |
| k. <u>atewng</u> -amóo | 'spirit specialist, witch doctor' (44.7) |
| l. <u>biski</u> -paeski | 'name for children's game' (2.1) |

If the shared prefix is identified as a separate syllable or element at the relevant level of analysis, this group could be regarded as prototypical EEs in the sense of Haas and Matisoff. It

¹⁰ In the lists given below, it might appear that there is a tendency for these non-default elaboration types to be left-headed, such that while default elaborations would potentially all be right-headed, non-default elaborations would be predominantly left-headed; however, since the lexicon presently available (about 5000 items) has not been evaluated in its entirety, it is not possible to draw such a conclusion at this time.

¹¹ One reviewer is unconvinced that what I classify as nonce elements here are semantically empty and suggests instead that these are frozen compounds with the meaning of one stem lost. It indeed seems likely that some of these have frozen compounds as their source (ultimately, perhaps they all do), but these are nevertheless categorized together with elaborate expressions by speakers and the elaborations make no clear semantic contribution in any of them. Speakers may be able to discern relationships between the meanings of the parts, though they are usually opaque to them for this class of elaborations. In the lists below I will mention some potential frozen elements, although the meaningfulness of these elaborations is nowhere near as blatant for speakers as are those for the elaborations discussed in the next section, where both elements are clearly meaningful.

is not possible to do so for Khumi synchronically, although these may well have been analyzable prefixes historically.

(6) and (7) give comparable examples of left-headed nonce elaboration structures. In (6) there is no resemblance between the elaboration and its head, whereas in (7) there are similarities of the sort seen in (5).

- (6) a. kási-táwkíee
star-ELAB
'star' (20.24a) (a *tawkie* is a species of lizard; it is unclear how this is related)
- b. areng-súraay 'king' (29.41-42)
c. tvó-l'híiwng 'river' (44.12)
d. tuy-saay 'sweet' (42.49)
e. ca-píi 'study' (44.8)
f. biwcueng-angka 'sacrifice type' (17.151) (*angkaa* means 'Tuesday', but speakers detect no association with this day)
- (7) a. ací-akhaang
story-ELAB
'story'
- b. asi-akhaang 'medicine' (44.25)
c. amúeng-aloo 'name' (12.37)
d. abáw-asaá(ng) 'perform a sacrifice' (14.34)
e. atho-ajíiwng 'strength' (42.68)
f. atlae-ahuung 'cut/attack each other' (43.38) (*huúng* means 'murder')
g. snoeyng-snaawý 'year' (44.182)
h. sra-smá 'cow' (23.9)
i. knu-ksaang 'breast'
j. kni-kthaawng 'blanket'
k. mócewng-mríi 'stream'
l. kewngsi-kewngngíee 'leprosy' (1.81)
m. lungsewng-lungcoeéyng 'stone' (23.91)
n. tuysi-tuydaáng 'place in river which never runs dry' (29.17)
(*daáng* means 'to get cooler', which is possibly related)
o. vaynoeyng-vaykew 'oath' (30.20) (*kew* means 'gather together')
p. rengpuy-rengtaang 'feast of merit' (30.75)
q. cónoeyng-cokraang 'uncooked, pounded rice' (44.71)
r. toeyng-tang 'correct' (29.88)
s. móey'e-m'awy 'eyesand' (44.321)
t. m'téwng-ataang 'old person, adult' (13.3) (*taang* means 'old', 'mature')
u. dayci-daeráeeng 'jungle' (28.80)
v. niena-thawngnaa 'skirt'

Again, many of the above examples fit the A-B-A-C prototype, as long as sesquisyllables are considered. Recall also that (7) represents the group that the left-headed default elaboration type discussed earlier could instead be included under.

3.2.2. *Semantically-motivated elaboration*

If the elaboration is not a default reduplicative form or a nonce, it may have a meaning similar or related to the meaning of the head. Some examples of right-headed and left-headed forms involving a semantically-motivated elaboration are seen in (8) and (9), respectively.

- (8) a. kási-lo
star-moon
'moon' (28.28)
- b. ákhu-cóeyngkang 'grasshopper-lizard'='lizard'
c. thoeyngpuy-thoeyngrií 'tree.AUG-hardwood'='hard, middle part of tree' (8.202)
d. húsi-húdaay 'small piece of bamboo'-'bamboo'='bamboo' (7.16)
e. khámuy-thoeyngbáeng 'tree stump-firewood piece'='firewood piece' (24.28)
- (9) a. tuy-maay
water-fire
'water' (29.20)
- b. doey-hoeyng 'die-live'='die' (4.18)
c. law-ueeng 'swidden-house'='swidden' (44.325))
d. móey-no 'eye-nose'='nose' (15.76)¹²
e. thi-naáy 'blood-pus'='blood' (31.73)
f. vǎng-núu 'bride price-female'='bride price' (6.6)
g. áju-cnaáy 'wife-child'='wife' (28.79)
h. lie-mroe 'paddy-city'='city' (27.76)
i. uy-klaay 'dog-monkey'='dog'
j. có-ploo 'rice-cotton'='rice'
k. plo-ktiíwng 'cotton-sesame seed'='cotton'
l. plewng-paang 'boat-raft'='boat'
m. reng-tlæ 'hold cattle ceremony-cut'='hold cattle ceremony'
n. pie-ksaaw 'spear trap-spear'='spear trap'

In most cases it is easy to see a semantic relationship between the elements; sometimes (e.g., (8d) and (9l)) they resemble synonym compounds (cf. Ourng and Haiman 2000). Other cases verge on antonymy, as in (9a) and (9b). A few cases are less straightforward, like (10m). A possible explanation for this particular collocation is suggested by a Khumi folktale in which some monkeys take a man's dogs as wergeld (a fine paid by the killer to family members of a murdered

¹² In fact, the full word for 'nose' is *notráeeng*, but only the first part of this reflects the etymological root.

individual) for their leader, who the man has killed (a context in which this EE failed to occur, however). Nevertheless, in this case, as in other such pairings, it is not possible to predict whether the left- or the right-hand member is the head.

Unlike the ‘nonce’ category of elaborations, few of the members of this category adhere to the formal prototype for EEs, although there are some fortuitous exceptions, such as (8c-d), which just happen to have the same initial lexical root (‘wood’ and ‘bamboo’, respectively) and those seen in (10), which all happen to consist of elements which share the same initial sesquisyllable.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| (10)a. ajo- <u>athuy</u> | ‘argue-talk’=‘fight with each other’ (30.55) |
| b. plíwng- <u>pthúeng</u> | ‘heart-liver’=‘heart’ (22.47) |
| c. plew- <u>plaáy</u> | ‘vomit-tongue’=‘vomit’ (17.180) |
| d. pci- <u>plaáy</u> | ‘spit-tongue’=‘spit’ (44.182) |
| e. knó- <u>kseewng</u> | ‘ear-flower’=‘ear’ ¹³ |

3.2.3. Elaboration with a borrowed element

The elaborating element may also be a loan from Marma, an Arakanese variety which exerts extreme lexical borrowing pressure on Khumi. By way of comparison, Matisoff discusses a number of Lahu elaborations stemming from Shan and elsewhere (1973:83). Some examples from Khumi are seen in (11).

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| (11)a. noéyng- <u>akhoeeyng</u> | |
| time-time [from Marma] | |
| ‘time’ (28.53) | |
| b. theewng- <u>kaayng</u> | ‘prison’ |
| c. priesu- <u>priesa</u> | ‘country’ (13.3) |

Sometimes an EE is simply borrowed from Marma in its entirety, as seen in (12):

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| (12) a. dúkha- <u>súkha</u> | ‘suffering, misfortune’ (27.128) ¹⁴ |
| b. <u>koeyng</u> -kaayng | ‘luck, fortune’ (4.18) |
| c. acora- <u>skhaang</u> | ‘government’ (17.158b) ¹⁵ |

¹³ For this one, it might be that some similarity is perceived between ears and flowers. A more likely motivation, though, is the association of these two items by virtue of the fact that Khumi traditionally wear flowers and other fragrant grasses and leaves in their ear holes in place of earrings.

¹⁴ As both reviewers suggest, this probably derives in its entirety from Pali via Burmese and/or Marma.

¹⁵ In (12c), the first part is clearly from Marma, and the second part may be from the Marma word for ‘camp’ (*c’khaayng*), although nativization of a Marma loan would normally retain the diphthong of this form, so ultimately some other explanation may need to be offered.

3.2.4. A final source for elaborations

Rarely, the second element may be semantically synonymous with the root, but taken from an auxiliary language used in traditional song:

- (13) ksewng=khúraay
flower=flower [song language]
'flower'

It should be noted that other cases in which the elaboration appears to be a nonce may in fact fit into this category because I have not been able to check the status of all of these with speakers of song language. However, this elaboration source still appears to be highly uncommon.

3.2.5. Summary

To briefly wrap up this section on the structural characteristics of Khumi elaborate expressions, then, EEs are either right-or left-headed, depending on which portion of the structure determines the EE meaning. Elaborations, the non-meaningful portions, come from the auxiliary song language, borrowing, lexical items with some semantic relation to the head, nonce forms (which may ultimately come from frozen compound elements), or a default reduplicative template. In the latter case, it would appear that the simplest account is one in which only right-headed default elaboration occurs.

4. The text distribution of elaborate expressions

In this section I move on to a consideration of the use of EEs in discourse. Observations about the text distribution of EEs are based on a corpus of forty-five texts of various sorts, comprising approximately 1000 pages of interlinearized, translated material.

4.1. Lexical class and semantic domain

Although essentially any lexical item may be elaborated, if only by the default template, there are still some discernible tendencies in terms of lexical class and semantic domain of the elaborated elements if their use in discourse is considered. In terms of lexical word class, while they also occur for verbs or other categories (as indicated by some of the examples already given), EEs in texts usually involve nouns. In terms of semantic domain, EEs tend to be used for animal and plant names, natural phenomena, supernatural/spiritual elements, and for Khumi-specific material culture items.

4.2. Distribution according to other semantic/discourse factors

4.2.1. Intensification

EEs frequently appear when an action or state is particularly intense, often occurring in tandem with other dedicated intensifiers in the verb complex or syntax which emphasizes the speaker's perception of the event as intense. For instance, the following is drawn from a narrative in which a daughter seeks revenge on her parents who abandoned her in childhood by sending them home from a visit with boxes full of bees and instructing them not to open the boxes until they have completely sealed their house. The elaboration of the first instance of 'hole' reflects the intense and complete nature of closing up the house. The bound postverbal element-*puengpueng* in the verbal complex, rather than the preceding EE, however, is actually what indicates that the holes of the house are *all* affected by the action, and hence that the action was performed intensively or exhaustively.

- (14) ueéng toeéng=te khi-khoó pdoeyng-puengpueng=te
house.ALL arrive=EVID ELAB-hole close.up-EXHAUST=EVID

ha=poe khoó boe'-lae=te...
one=FOC hole exist-NEG=EVID

'They reached the house, (and) they closed up all the holes; not even one hole remained...' (1.111)

Just afterwards in the same text, the parents open the boxes filled with bees, and the following ensues, in which elaboration of the predicate *bawhuu* (itself consisting of *baw* 'swell up', and a verbal classifier indicating a large S participant, *-huu*) indicates the extreme nature of the swelling that occurs.

- (15) ...kháawy=moe ke-noe amoe-cie níngci knoó bawhii-bawhuu
bee=FOC bite-NZ REFL-P very ear ELAB-swell.up

k'noó bawhii-bawhuu=te doey-puengpueng=bo=te
ear ELAB-swell.up=EVID die-EXHAUST=PERF=EVID

'...the bees really stung them. Their ears swelled up, their ears swelled up, and they both died.' (1.111)

Here again, probably the primary expression of the intensity of the swelling is the adverb *níngci*, but the EE reinforces it. Similarly, in (16), where a wildcat gets rained on, the use of an EE correlates with the intensity of raining, although here the primary indication of intensity occurs in the postposed remark about the completeness of the drenching:

- (16) vaáwy vaáwy vaáwy-boeloe láwyáa kni-khóeleewng
 return return return-WHEN poor.thing sky-ELAB

náy-hay-noe suy-ple-ngaw=khue=coee...
 rain-APP-NZ wet- DIMVCL-ACCID=just=AFFIRM

‘He returned and returned and when he returned, the poor thing, it rained on him, he was maybe completely wet...’ (37.19)

Example (1) from the beginning of the paper also represents this sort of intensification through elaboration, the multiple EEs of that sentence underscoring the intensity of the tiger’s efforts to locate the girl, although as in (16), the main indication of intensity comes from the speaker’s parenthetical remark following the basic sentence.

It should be noted that sometimes intensification is implied without any accompanying syntax or morphology as its primary expression. For instance, in (17), the elaborations of ‘wound’ and ‘medicine’ serve to underscore the size of the wound (from a trickster-genre text in which treeshrew consistently gets the better of bear):

- (17) amnáay=oe nang’ tmoó-klieng lieng-noe asi-akhaang thie-noe
 friend=EMOT 2S.GEN wound-ELAB big-NZ medicine-ELAB spread-NZ

“‘Friend [treeshrew talking to bear], your wound has gotten big, where you spread the medicine.’” (31.109)

However, a caveat about (17) is in order. After considering a couple of other low-frequency types of EE use, I will suggest that a second high-frequency use of EEs is for the indication of emotional intensification. (17) would probably also be consistent with an analysis as such, although it is doubtful that treeshrew’s sympathy for bear is genuine.

4.2.2. Minor uses of elaboration

Another apparent trend, although not nearly as well-attested across the available corpus, is for an EE to cooccur with events which are durative, repeated or habitual, or somehow distributed in nature. In (18), elaboration of various elements appears to be relatable to the durative nature of the event in question.

- (18) nayboeloe mrung-mráang t’áy (m)
 then ELAB-betel chew (filler)
- asewng-ayaa caa-nee ahaawy-noetlaa
 lie.down-ELAB eat-drink do.together-PST
- nayboeloe vúngtoto pyo-pyaa-noetlaa
 then all.night enjoy-ELAB-PST

‘Then they chewed betel (um), they lay down and ate and drank together. Then they enjoyed themselves all night.’ (15.20-21)

However, it must be admitted that while durativity of the events may be one conditioning factor for the appearance of EEs, the events described in (18) might simply be in some sense intensified by their use.

An example with a slightly different semantic nuance is (19).

- (19) ee hnoe khaá=’iee a-pcáwy-aploeéyng-noe=loee hunoe nay=tew=bo
yes thus time=and MID-pay fine-ELAB-NZ=TOP thus thus=COP=PERF

‘Yes, and when this happens [when a man allows his anger to get out of hand with his wife and violence occurs], what we do is pay fines to each other.’ (36.48)

Clearly, while the action necessary to occasion the fines in question would be extreme, and possibly intense, in (19) elaboration does not appear to correlate with any intensity of fine paying; rather, it seems that here, if anything, the elaboration relates to the ritual or habitual nature of the event.

(20), on the other hand, contains an EE which perhaps underscores the distributed nature of the houses in a village as viewed by the participants in a narrative.

- (20) kníi sló=’iee kásii khieng-noe ataeng=te kási-táwkiee
Sky above=GEN star look-NZ like=EVID star-ELAB

khieng-noe ataeng=te kraro=khue=te uymíw avang
look-NZ like=EVID bright.motion=just=EVID ogre village

‘It was like looking up in the sky at the stars, like looking at the stars, it glimmered, the ogre village’ (35.97).

Next, EEs are occasionally situated at the beginning of a text, with the apparent purpose of capturing listeners’ attention, as in (21) or (22).

- (21) anglóo rempá=hawy cawngthinglang=hawy thaeng kníi-rie
young.girl name=COM name=COM small day-CL

khaá=dingday’ie ueeng pkáay=aa biski-paeski tpueéng
time=since house near=LOC ELAB-game.name move

kaso khaá=day’ie thodaeeng caeng-boeloe anglóo
after time=since bachelor grow.up-WHEN young.girl

caeng-boeloe áynii apung ngo-waa nay akdi-hawy-noe=te
grow.up-WHEN 1INCL.D marry get-IRR QUOT agree-together-NZ=EVID

‘A young girl named Rengpa and Cawngthinglang since childhood played paeski [a children’s game involving rocks and leaves] near the house; and when the bachelor and young girl grew up they agreed, “We’ll get married”.’ (2.1)

- (22) amso-’amnáay léewng nueng-rie t’aay khewng ahaawy-noe
ELAB-friend person two-CL crab dig.for do.together-NZ
- hní tvóo=loee tvóo háwy-pray=’íee psuy-raemo=baa
 this river=TOP river good-INTENS=AND whistle-NEG.IMP=EMOT
- psuy-boeloe uymíw kawng-noe awm=baa
 whistle-COND ogre become-NZ exist=EMOT

‘Two friends were digging for crabs together at this river, a very good river, but don’t whistle [when you’re there] because if you whistle it’s possible that you’ll become an ogre.’ (3.2)

When asked to explain why a speaker would use EEs in this sort of position, consultants speculate that by using elaboration here, perhaps the speaker attempts to draw listeners in with something that sounds exciting at the beginning. This sense of excitement that speakers evoke in these cases is perhaps related to the more abstract sort of intensification that EEs potentially involve, to which we now turn.

4.2.3. *Emotional intensification*

Besides their use in conjunction with events involving straightforward intensification, use of an EE is most commonly coupled with surprise or heightened emotional intensity from the perspective of a participant or the speaker, as in (2), where the speaker is indignant about the way that various costs seem to keep rising. A similar feeling of indignation on the speaker’s part is accompanied by an EE in (23) where an elephant disputes the charge that he is culpable for stepping on a king’s daughter; rather, as he explains (in the subsequent text), it was because a bat flew into his ear:

- (23) nayboeloe kaay=loee ciw-noe=poe apaeé-ngaw=khue=coee
 then 1S=TOP step.on-NZ=FOC encounter-ACCID=just=AFFIRM
- kaay=loee móey-no=poe niw’-lae=bo
 1S=TOP eye-ELAB=FOC see-NEG=PERF

“...then the one I stepped on, I came across only accidentally. I wasn’t able to see.”
 (33.37)

Later in the same sequence, (24), the jungle pig likewise denies responsibility for the death of the king's daughter due to her disturbance of the bat (which flew into the elephant's ear, such that it then stepped on the king's daughter), again, with an EE:

- (24) kaay='iee phangli-phanglá awm-noe amii
 1S=GEN ELAB-bat exist-NZ who
- pnóe=moo=noe piee
 know=INTERR=QUOT say

‘ “As for me, who could know that there was a bat (there)?” she said.’ (33.52)¹⁶

Another example is seen in (25), where a mother is filled with happiness at the return of her son after an extended absence; an EE coincides with this emotional intensity:

- (25) aw ngá'aay ang-toeéng=bo vaynií=loee
 INTERJ father (=son) 1-arrive=PERF today=TOP
- mnoee mnoee=moo ngá'aay='oo
 how how=INTERR father(=son)=VOC
- amúng-amaang anoee-taeng=loee kaay=loee=noe piee=te
 ELAB-dream like-AGAIN=TOP 1S=TOP=QUOT say=EVID

‘ “Oh, son, you've come back to us today. How are you son? It's like a dream to me,” she said.’ (34.230)

In (26), shortly afterwards, the same mother is instead concerned that her son is about to kill her and will so incur a fine (at least that is what she ostensibly is concerned about), and an EE emphasizes the deepness of her concern:¹⁷

- (26) amnuu=moe de ngá'aay='oo kláay ngo-noe ksíi ngo-noe
 mother=FOC no father (=son)=VOC fine get-NZ ELAB get-NZ
 ‘The mother said, “No, son, you'll incur a fine!” ‘ (34.243)

¹⁶ The genitive marking of the 1s pronoun here is anomalous; the topic marker =loee would sound more natural, according to speakers.

¹⁷ Here each part of the EE occurs in conjunction with the same predicate, which is repeated. It is not clear at this point what additional function separating the parts of an EE would have compared to simple use of the EE with a single occurrence of the predicate. Note also that another level of parallelism is involved here, in which the predicate occurs twice rather than just once. This is an instance of the more pervasive tendency towards parallel structures alluded to earlier.

In (27), two young women express, in part through elaboration, their surprise at a proposal by a male caller (actually a tiger in disguise) that he bring up a marfa, a cucumber-like vegetable (by which the tiger indirectly means a pig), to cook.

- (27) maá tahuu='oee kay-ní' jawytí-jawytáang=poe boe'-lae=baee
 where darling=EMOT 1.EXCL-D.GEN ELAB-marfa=FOC exist-NEG-EMOT
- jaw-noe=poe
 take.up/out-NZ=FOC

“Where, darling? We have no marfa for you to take up!” (15.39)

A final example is (28), from the same text about two women, where the narrative-internal speakers' tones can only be described as maudlin; at this point, the speakers (the two women the story is about, Sluy and Slay) realize that they are both going to die:

- (28) ahaawy=baa naang=loee kási-táwkíee laáwng=baa
 friend=EMOT 2S=TOP star-ELAB become=EMOT
- arreng-súraay=íee rengpuy-rengtaang thaw khaá
 king-ELAB=GEN fesast.of.merit-ELAB hold time
- avang-thlo=baa noe piee=te
 shine-AUGVCL-EMOT QUOT say=EVID
- sluy=loee kási-táwkíee laáwm-yo-noetlaa
 Slay=TOP star-ELAB become-IMPV-PST
- slay=loee ahaawy=baa naang=loee khuytmiíw laáwm=baa
 Slay=TOP friend=EMOT 2S=TOP bee.species become=EMOT
- (m) areeng-súraay-cie=íee laaw móo-tang=íee sewruú
 (filler) king-ELAB-P=GEN swidden section-middle=GEN bean.variety
- bayci paw p'yaaw=baa
 bean.variety flower suck=EMOT

“Friend, you become a star, and when rich people hold a feast of merit, you shine brightly!” Sluy said. And she became a star. And Slay said, “Friend, you become the white marking on the head of the *khuytmiíw* bee and suck (the nectar) from bean flowers in the middle of rich people's fields.” (15.93-95)

4.2.4. Summary

In summary, the preceding examples have demonstrated that we can characterize the text-function of EEs quite generally: they are used in situations where a speaker wants to indicate or underscore some kind of intensification, either of a prototypical sort (including various nuances that merge with aspect, such as durative, habitual, etc.), or of a more abstract, emotional sort. At the same time, the impression that speakers have when EEs are used is similar to what has previously been cited for their use, namely that they convey a sense of elegance and speaking competence.

There is a clear tendency for certain speakers to use specific EEs, such that it would appear that when put into a more or less formal speech situation (e.g., in relating a narrative, or conversing with someone in a higher social position, like a village leader or elder), speakers may have a repertoire of EEs that they draw on to embellish their speech. However, different speakers do appear to use the same EEs, at least for those attested in text material. For instance, compare (29) and (30), which are from two separate speakers on different occasions, but employ the same elaboration for ‘clothing’, in what are also remarkably similar situations, although the details of the surrounding narratives are quite distinct.

- (29) atewng-alang tláeeng(moe) loeeyng-pueng
 clothing-ELAB suddenly take.off- EXHAUST

ní=moe a-tewng-tlaw
3S=REFL MID-put.on-INSTAD

‘Suddenly she (an ogre) removed all her (another woman’s) clothing and put it on herself instead.’ (21.29)

- (30) atewng-alang loeeyng-pueng=’iee
 clothing-ELAB take.off- EXHAUST=AND

ní=moe’ kang-thúu-baaw p-tewng-tlaw
3S=REFL.GEN NZ-crazy-AUGVCL CAUS-put.on-INSTAD

‘She removed all her (a daughter’s) clothing and dressed her crazy one (another daughter) up in it instead.’ (24.95)

What the situations do share, however, is the sense that all of the clothing is involved in the switch, the intensity of the action associated with the change.

5. Concluding remarks

In this study, I hope to have shown that EEs in Khumi can be given a succinct formal characterization. There are only a small number of elaboration subtypes, many of which correspond to the EE prototype defined for languages like Thai and Lahu. The assumption that a default template only occurs for right-headed elaboration is a further simplification.

At the same time, there are semantic similarities that cross-cut given instances of EE use. Elaboration, a reduplicative or quasi-reduplicative process, tends to occur with various types of intensification, something which reduplication is otherwise well-known to correlate with cross-linguistically. While there are clear stylistic reasons for elaboration, which speakers are most acutely aware of, it would appear that it is not simply stylistic considerations that motivate the use of an EE on any given occasion in Khumi.

It is furthermore noteworthy that initial investigations of EE use in Mru, clearly an areally affiliated language although not in the same Tibeto-Burman subgroup, suggest that it has a use of EEs which exhibits similar semantic motivations. This raises the issue of whether the tendencies seen in Khumi are part of an areal phenomenon. Alternatively, a universal trend in the use of EEs, as a subtype of reduplicative structure, may be responsible. To the best of my knowledge, so far there have been no studies to test this question directly, and future research will have to address this issue

On a more practical note, the EE phenomenon in Khumi makes clear the need for lexical entries to include elaboration information, at least for EEs that do not make use of the default template. If form-specific elaboration exists for a given form, this is essential information that must be included for the lexical entry of that form. And while considered from a cross-speaker/cross-text perspective it would appear that there is consistency in speaker usage of EEs, as suggested in the summary of section 4, it is unclear that this will be the case when EE formation is tested for a variety of speakers and forms belonging to lexical fields not typically subject to elaboration. I will not attempt to delve further into these issues of lexicography here, but simply wish to bring them to the attention of linguists working on documentation of languages in South and Southeast Asia.

References

- Abbi, Anvita. 1992. *Reduplication in South Asian languages: an areal, typological and historical study*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited.
- Goddard, Cliff. 2005. *The languages of East and Southeast Asia: an introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haas, Mary R. 1964. *Thai-English student's dictionary*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Matisoff, James A. 1973. *The grammar of Lahu*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mortensen, David. 2003. "Hmong elaborate expressions are coordinate compounds". UC Berkeley Ms.
- Ourng, Noeung and John Haiman. 2000. "Symmetrical compounds in Khmer". *Studies in Language* 24.3:483-514.
- Peterson, David A. 2008. "Bangladesh Khumi verbal classifiers and Kuki-Chin 'chiming'". *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 31.1:109-138.
- Solnit, David. 1995. "Parallelism in Kayah Li discourse: elaborate expressions and beyond". In Leela Bilmes, Anita Lang, and Weera Ostapirat, (eds.). *Berkeley Linguistics Society 21, Special session on discourse in Southeast Asian languages*: 127-140.

David A. Peterson
david.a.peterson@dartmouth.edu