Reference point constructions in Tai Khamti using the proximal deictic $mai^2$

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Reference point constructions in Tai Khamti using the proximal deictic *mai*²

Tai Khamti (Khamti Shan)

- 14,000
- NE India
- NW Myanmar
Reference point constructions in Tai Khamti using the proximal deictic *mai*²

Endangered Language

Community-based Language Project

(2005-present)
Reference point constructions in Tai Khamti using the proximal deictic $\textit{mai}^2$

A = Putao, Myanmar, the heartland of the Tai Khamti

Also:
Assam region, NE India

Chindwin River Valley
NW Myanmar
A long time ago, it was said there was a cat and mouse. The mouse said to the cat, “Hey, cat, let's us two play counting the stars. The one who wins counting eats the one who loses counting,” he said. The cat said, “Good.” When the cat said, “who will start first” the mouse wanted to win so badly so said, “I will start first.” and he started to count when the stars first came out…
1) Tai Khamti language characteristics:

- Isolating language of mainland Southeast Asia
- Tai-Kadai language family
- SOV basic word order
- Conouns are used instead of case, number, or gender affixation on nouns.
  (Conoun is a lexical word that has grammaticalized as a complete wordform and cooccurs with a head noun to signal case.)
- The proximal deictic $\text{mai}^2$ ‘here’ is a polyfunctional conoun in Tai Khamti.
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  (Conoun is a lexical word that has grammaticalized as a complete wordform and cooccurs with a head noun to signal case.)
- The proximal deictic *mai*² ‘here’ is a polyfunctional conoun in Tai Khamti.
2) In Inglis (2012), I describe the polyfunctional distribution of $mai^2$
using a 100,000 word corpus of natural text (Inglis 2006). The basic analysis is
as follows:
3) Lexical $mai^2$ ‘here’ expresses a location in reference to/proximal to the speaker.

a. $man^4$ $mai^2$ $yau^1$
   3SG here PERF
   ‘he’s here now’

b. $mai^2$ $kaw^1$ $maeu^4$ $kiin^3khau^2$ $nai^2$ $uu^5$
   here also 2SG dine can IMPF
   ‘you can dine here also’
4) *Mai*[^2] is a conoun in a post-specifier position of the nominal that signals the location in a locative construction.

a. `[tsuang^4 mai^2 ] man^4 yang^4 yau^1`
   school   LOC   3SG   be   PERF
   (topological coincidence)
   ‘she’s at school now’

b. `meeu^3nai^1 [kat^5 mai^2 ] man^4 kaa^5 yau^1`
   today   market   LOC   3SG   go   PERF
   (allative)
   ‘she went to the market today’
5) Mai\textsuperscript{2} also functions as a marker of the possessor nominal in a predicative possessive construction.

\[ \text{[man}^4 \text{ mai}^2 \text{]} \text{ tsaang}^1 \text{ suang}^5 \text{ too}^1 \text{ yang}^4 \text{ uu}^5 \]
3SG POSS elephant two CLF.THING be

lit. ‘two elephants are at him’
‘he has two elephants’
6) Mai^2 is a marker of all goal-like referents of a ditransitive construction. In a ditransitive, both objects are preverbal, the IO is obligatorily marked with mai^2 and the DO is never marked.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
kau^3 & [man^4 \quad mai^2] & pap^1 & haeu^2 & kaw^5 \\
1SG & 3SG & IO & book & give & INTENT \\
\end{array}
\]

‘I will give her a/the book’
7) However, for monotransitive DOs, Khamti has three object-marking patterns. One pattern is marked with \textit{mai^2} and two are not marked.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lccccc}
\textbf{a.} & \textit{hau}^4 & [ \textit{paa}^{5}tsa^1 & \textit{mai^2} & \textit{kaw}^1 & \textit{han}^5 & \textit{saa5saa}^5 & \textit{nam}^5 ] & [O-\textit{mai^2} V] \\
1PL & cemetery & FGD & then & see & clearly & CONT \\

\end{tabular}
\end{center}

`we, then, clearly see a/the CEMETERY'
7) However, for monotransitive DOs, Khamti has three object-marking patterns. One pattern is marked with \textit{mai}^2 and two are not marked.

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a.] \textit{kau}^3 [\textit{paa}^5\textit{tsa}^1 \textit{mai}^2] \textit{kaw}^1 \textit{han}^5 \textit{saa}^5\textit{saa}^5 \textit{nam}^5
  \begin{tabular}{lllll}
    & 1SG & cemetery & FGD & then & see & clearly & CONT \\
  \end{tabular}

  I, then, clearly see a/the CEMETERY

  \item[b.] [\textit{haang}^5 \textit{ngoo}^4] \textit{too}^3 \textit{leeung}^3 \textit{tiap}^5 \textit{yau}^1
  \begin{tabular}{lllll}
    & tail & cow & CLF.BODY & one & lop.off & PERF \\
  \end{tabular}

  (he) lopped off a cow’s tail

  \item[c.] \textit{uaa}^4 \textit{yum}^5 [\textit{khaam}^4 \textit{man}^4] \textit{sii}^5 \textit{lian}^3 \textit{meeu}^4 \textit{kaa}^5 \textit{uu}^5
  \begin{tabular}{lllll}
    & father & believe & word & 3SG & CONJ & run & back & GO & IMPF \\
  \end{tabular}

  father believes his word and runs back
\end{itemize}
8) For this DO-marking pattern, I proposed an information structure analysis where the three patterns concern **the degree of importance that a speaker places on a DO referent** (Inglis 1012; Mel’čuk 2001).

\[O-mai^2 V\] signals a *foregrounded* referent and is of special importance for communication,

\[OV\] is *neutral* and signals a referent that has no special importance for communication, and

\[VO\] is *backgrounded* and signals a referent that has a reduced importance for communication
8) For this DO-marking pattern, I proposed an information structure analysis where the three patterns concern the degree of importance that a speaker places on a DO referent (Inglis 1012; Mel’čuk 2001).

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9) Why $mai^2$?

In this paper, I propose that $mai^2$ grammaticalizes as a polyfunctional nominal marker due to its schematization as a cognitive reference point.
10) The reference point ability (Langacker 1993:6, 2009:82) is as follows:

\[ C = \text{conceptualizer} \]
\[ R = \text{reference point} \]
\[ T = \text{target} \]
\[ D = \text{dominion} \]
\[ \rightarrow = \text{mental path} \]
10) The reference point ability (Langacker 1993:6, 2009:82) is as follows:

C = conceptualizer
R = reference point
T = target
D = dominion

\[ \text{---} \rightarrow = \text{mental path} \]
11) Reference point characterization of the Khamti proximal deictic *mai*² ‘here’

3a. *man*⁴ *mai*² *yau*¹
   3SG here PERF
   ‘he’s here now’

3b. *mai*² *kaw*¹ *maeu*⁴ *kiin*³*khau*² *nai*² *uu*⁵
   here also 2SG dine can IMPF
   ‘you can also dine here’

3a. R= speaker  T = ‘he’
3b. R= speaker  T= ‘you can eat’

Deixis and Subjectivity (Langacker 2002)
12) As location-marker in Khamti locatives, \( \text{mai}^2 \) signals a topological coincidence relation with ‘be’ and an allative relation with ‘go’.

4a. \([\text{tsuang}^4 \text{ mai}^2]\) \(\text{man}^4\) \(\text{yang}^4\) \(\text{yau}^1\)  
   school \(\text{LOC}\) \(3\text{SG}\) \(\text{be}\) \(\text{PERF}\)  
   \(\text{‘she’s at school now’}\)  

4b. \(\text{meeu}^3\text{nai}^1\) \([\text{kat}^5 \text{ mai}^2]\) \(\text{kau}^1\) \(\text{kaa}^5\) \(\text{yau}^1\)  
   today \(\text{market} \text{LOC}\) \(3\text{SG}\) \(\text{go}\) \(\text{PERF}\)  
   \(\text{‘she went to the market today’}\)
14) Mai\(^2\) grammaticalizes as a possessor-marker in the ‘be’ possessive construction where the reference point is a metaphorical location.

5. [man\(^4\) mai\(^2\)] tsaang\(^1\) suang\(^5\) too\(^1\) yang\(^4\) uu\(^5\)
   3SG   POSS  elephant  two  CLF.THING  be
   lit. ‘two elephants are at him’
   ‘he has two elephants’

mai\(^2\) as a locative source for a BE possessive (Langacker 2009:98)

POSSESSOR is LOCATION
POSSESSEE is MOVER

R= he  T= two houses
15) IO-marker in the ditransitive construction extended from the allative function of the locative.

6. \( kau^3 \) [\( man^4 \) \( mai^2 \)] \( pap^1 \) \( haeu^2 \) \( kaw^5 \)

1SG 3SG IO book give INTENT

‘I will give her a/the book’

\( mai^2 \) as a spatial goal source with a verb of transfer (Rice and Kabata 2007:482)

RECIPIENT is GOAL
PATIENT/THEME is MOVER

R= her T= a/the book
16) Speaker importance in the foregrounded object construction extends from the subjective conception of the spatial deictic.

7a. \( hau^4 \quad [ \text{paa}^5 \text{tsa}^1 \quad \text{mai}^2 ] \quad \text{kaw}^1 \quad \text{han}^5 \quad \text{saa}^5 \text{saa}^5 \text{nam}^5 \quad \text{[O-\text{mai}^2 \text{V}]}
\)

1PL cemetery FGD then see clearly CONT

‘we, then, clearly see a/the CEMETERY’

\( \text{mai}^2 \) as a **maximally schematic deictic** source for foregrounded objects (Mel’čuk 2001:343)

R is SPEAKER
D is PYSCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE
T is OBJECT REFERENT
17) Conclusions:

a) Proximal deictic $\text{mai}^2$, as a locative source morpheme, emerges as a functional marker in a wide variety of nominal constructions vis-à-vis conceptual metaphor.

b) The motivation for $\text{mai}^2$ as source morpheme for grammaticalization processes is because of its underlying characterization as a schematic cognitive reference point.
18) References

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