Reference point constructions in Tai Khamti using the proximal deictic $\textit{mai}^2$

Doug Inglis
University of Alberta

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Tai Khamti (Endangered)

- 14,000
- NE India
- NW Myanmar
Reference point constructions in Tai Khamti using the proximal deictic $ma'i^2$

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

Also:
Assam region, NE India
Chindwin River Valley NW Myanmar
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 $mai^2$ ‘here’ is a polyfunctional conoun in Tai Khamti.
2) In Inglis (2012), I describe the polyfunctional distribution of $\textit{mai}^2$
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’

(adverbial use)
4) *Mai* is a conoun in a post-specifier position of the nominal that signals the location in a locative construction.

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

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

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

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.

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

‘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{enumerate}
\item \textit{kau}^3 \text{ [ paa}^5 \text{ tsa}^1 \text{ mai}^2 \text{ ] kaw}^1 \text{ han}^5 \text{ saa5saa}^5 \text{ nam}^5 \text{ [O-mai}^2 \text{ V]}
\begin{tabular}{lllllllll}
1SG & cemetery & FGD & then & see & clearly & CONT &
\end{tabular}

‘I, then, clearly see a/the CEMETERY’

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

‘(he) lopped off a cow’s tail’

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

‘father believes his word and runs back’
\end{enumerate}
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-mai² 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).

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

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

[VO] is \textit{backgrounded} and signals a referent that has a reduced importance for communication
9) **Why \textit{mai}^2 ?**

In this paper, I propose that \textit{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** = conceptualizer
- **R** = reference point
- **T** = target
- **D** = dominion
- **= mental path**
10) The reference point ability (Langacker 1993:6, 2009:82) is as follows:

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

---→ = mental path
11) Reference point characterization of the Khamti proximal deictic \( \text{mai}^2 \) ‘here’

3a. \( \text{man}^4 \text{ mai}^2 \text{ yau}^1 \)  
3SG    here     PERF  
‘he’s here now’  

3b. \( \text{mai}^2 \text{ kaw}^1 \text{ maeu}^4 \text{ kiin}^3 \text{khau}^2 \text{ nai}^2 \text{ uu}^5 \)  
here     also    2SG     dine    can    IMPF  
‘you can also dine here’

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

4a. \begin{tabular}{llll}
\text{tsuang}^4 & \textit{mai}^2 & \text{man}^4 & \text{yang}^4 \\
\text{school} & \text{LOC} & \text{3SG} & \text{be} \\
\end{tabular} \text{ yau}^1 \text{ PERF} \\
\text{(topological coincidence)}

\quad ‘she’s at school now’

4b. \begin{tabular}{llllll}
\text{meeu}^3 \text{nai}^1 & \text{kat}^5 & \textit{mai}^2 & \text{kau}^1 & \text{kaa}^5 & \text{yau}^1 \\
\text{today} & \text{market} & \text{LOC} & \text{3SG} & \text{go} & \text{PERF} \\
\end{tabular} \\
\text{(allative)}

\quad ‘she went to the market today’

\text{objective}

\text{R= 4a. school/4b. market} \quad \text{T= she}
14) *Mai*² grammaticalizes as a possessor-marker in the ‘be’ possessive construction where the reference point is a metaphorical location.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{R= he} & \quad \text{T= two houses} \\
\text{POSSESSOR is LOCATION} & \quad \text{POSSESSEE is MOVER}
\end{align*}
\]

\[mai² \text{ as a locative source for a } BE \text{ possessive (Langacker 2009:98)}\]

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

lit. ‘two elephants are at him’
‘he has two elephants’
15) IO-marker in the ditransitive construction extended from the allative function of the locative.

6. \[ kau^3 \quad [\text{man}^4 \quad \text{mai}^2] \quad \text{pap}^1 \quad \text{haeu}^2 \quad kaw^5 \]
   1SG  3SG  IO  book  give  INTENT

   ‘I will give her a/the book’

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

`we, then, clearly see a/the CEMETERY`
17) Conclusions:

a) Proximal deictic $mai^2$, 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 $mai^2$ as source morpheme for grammaticalization processes is because of its underlying characterization as a schematic cognitive reference point.
18) References

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University of Alberta

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