

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This thesis has characterised the nominal grammatical structures of Kmhmu' and examined their functions as referring expressions in discourse. Having established the inventory of referring expressions in Kmhmu', it has described how they are used to identify participants in narrative texts. In the following sections these findings are summarised, the methodology of the study is evaluated, the significance of the findings is discussed and suggestions for further research given.

5.1 Summary of findings

The Kmhmu' NP consists of a noun head followed by optional attributive modifiers, such as nouns or adjectives, and/or a quantitative modifier, such as a classifier phrase, and a determiner, such as a demonstrative. Typically, Kmhmu' NPs contain only one attributive modifier, or a classifier phrase or a determiner. For more extensive descriptions, appositional constructions are used. Personal pronouns have a singular, dual and plural distinction in number, and a gender distinction in the 2nd and 3rd person singular forms. There is an unspecified pronoun *dee* which is not specified for person or number. Pronouns may take dependent elements to form pronoun phrases. They also occur in apposition to NPs. There is a particle, *siŋ*, which functions as a nominaliser or a dummy NP, and as a relativiser and complementiser.

Kmhmu' has an extensive range of referring expressions which includes complex modified NPs, simple NPs, proper nouns, kin terms, pronouns, pronoun phrases, classifier phrases, demonstratives, *siŋ* constructions and zero anaphora. Each form is used in a unique way to signal the identifiability, activation status and thematic salience of referents in discourse. For example, on phrase level, classifier phrases function as quantifiers, while on discourse level, they signal specificity and the thematic salience of unidentifiable referents.

In narrative text, these referring expressions are used in discernible patterns to introduce and track participants. Kmhmu' narratives have central, major, minor and peripheral participants. The participant identification system reflects both a sequential strategy and a local VIP strategy. These strategies interact to form patterns which are described by default encoding rules. Although the default form accounts for the majority of references, other factors, such as highlighting of participants, disambiguating participants, discontinuities in the text, and the expectations set up through the text and shared cultural knowledge, impact the reference pattern in predictable ways which are noted in the rules. Motivations for more or less than the default encoding include peak marking, stylistic issues, extended speeches and self-correction by the speaker, as is typical of oral discourse.

5.2 Evaluation of methodology

Because the texts in this study were unrehearsed oral narratives, they provide natural language data. Unedited oral texts, however, are more difficult to analyse than those that have been edited into a written form. One of the applications of this study is in translating written materials into Kmhmu'. Analysis of written texts would give a more valid basis for guiding translation. Because of difficulty of access to speakers, this was not possible in this study. For future similar studies, I would recommend that oral texts are edited into well-formed written texts before analysis is done.

In terms of the content of the texts, it was helpful to have stories with at least three participants interacting on the stage, and for some to be of the same gender, in order to see the full scope of participant identification patterns.

The Dooley and Levinsohn (2001) method of participant reference analysis is particularly applicable to participant reference systems based primarily on a sequential strategy. Although this is a good place to start, it is worth considering alternative approaches if this does not result in clear patterns of use. In this study, where a local VIP strategy was also affecting participant identification patterns, the method was adapted to consider the patterns of reference for each separate participant. This resulted in a clearer analysis.

5.3 Significance of findings

The findings of this analysis will contribute to a more detailed knowledge of the grammar of the Kmhmu' language and thus to the documentation of the world's languages. There is a limited corpus of interlinearised texts available in this dialect of Kmhmu', and this study will not only augment that collection, but will facilitate accurate interlinearisation and translation of other texts which may be collected in the future.

This description of referring expressions and participant reference patterns will contribute to knowledge of the Kmhmu' language, and also have implications for translation into Kmhmu'. Community development is closely linked with language development, and generally requires the translation of materials for education, whether in formal or nonformal areas such as agriculture, health, or religion. In order for such materials to be translated clearly, accurately, and naturally, an understanding of the discourse structures of the language is a prerequisite. Thus this study will contribute to better translation of helpful materials into Kmhmu'.

5.4 Further research

Further research is needed into other areas of discourse study that are also particularly relevant to translation: studies in information structure and cohesion, to name two. Other text types such as hortatory, expository and procedural prose forms need further investigation as well. In order to do this, more texts must be collected and accurately translated and analysed to provide confirmation or re-analysis of findings thus far, and to enable new areas to be explored.

There is always room for revision or fuller description of the grammatical structures of a language. In this study, lists of relativisers and classifiers are known to be incomplete, and the functions of the particle *siŋ* are not fully clear. There is much work still to be done in studying the Kmhmu' language.