

## Chapter 5 Internal structure of the NP

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the words and phrases that modify noun heads within the noun phrase. Section 5.2 will present the relative ordering of these constituents, and the remainder of the chapter will present and discuss each constituent. Two previously unanalyzed constituents are analyzed here and assigned to word classes. *Mang* and other number markers are discussed in section 5.5, and case markers are discussed in section 5.6.

### 5.2 Constituent order

The noun phrase (NP) consists of a head which can be modified by the following constituents: a pre-head genitive noun, pronoun or NP (GEN), and post-head elements consisting of modifier noun phrase(s) (ModNP), adjective(s) (ADJ), relative clause (REL), classifier phrase (CLPhr), deictic expression (DE), number phrase (NUMPhr), and case marker (CASE).

Relative ordering presented as a formula:

NP = (GEN) Head (ModNP) (ADJ) (REL) (CLPhr) (DE) (NUMPhr) (CASE)

### 5.3 Pre-head noun phrase modifiers

#### 5.3.1 Genitives: GEN

Genitive constructions consist of a NP functioning as a possessor, followed by the head noun, which is the possessed item. The terms “possessor” and “possessed item” are used because this syntactic construction is used “to express the concept of possession or ownership” (Kroeger 2005:92), “even though the semantic relationship

is not always one of possession, e.g., the phrase *my professor* does not refer to a professor that I ‘possess’ in the same way that *my clothes* refers to clothes that I possess” (Payne 1997:104). In the following discussion, the terms “possessor” and “possessed item” are used as syntactic rather than semantic labels.

For example, in Example 84) below the possessor is *kaseui mang* “the monkey” and the possessed item is *ang-caw* “waist.” These are in a genitive part-whole relationship.

Example 84) E&T.089

*Kaseui mang ang-caw yang kiv liv shi ae*  
 monkey 1spec waist SUB little/weak die go(down,S)  
*hkeu ye*  
 arrive PRT  
 FT: the monkey’s waist weakened until [he] died

Some languages mark different genitive relationships, such as possession, kinship, and part-whole, in different ways. As the following examples demonstrate, in Bisu all genitive relations are marked in the same way, by juxtaposing the possessor and possessed item.

### 5.3.1.1 Possession

In Example 85), the object NP includes a genitive construction. The pronoun *yang* “3POS” modifies the head noun *salawng* “basket” to form the possessive construction *yang salawng* “his basket.”

Example 85) PS.125

*Haeng’ ya yang salawng na cha hu*  
 \*\*\* 3S 3POS basket OBJ FUT watch  
*sha chi*  
 find PRT  
 FT: he is going to search for his basket

### 5.3.1.2 Kinship

In the following example, the pronoun *ga* “IPOS” modifies the head noun compound *ya chang mawng nam* “family” to form the genitive kinship construction *ga ya chang mawng nam* “my family.”

Example 86) E&T.023

*ga ya chang mawng nam ui na pi ma pi up*  
1S family relatives 3+ OBJ give tell give tell(story)

*la pa no*  
Q PRT(plead) PRT

FT: Please let me tell my family [the story of what has happened to me]

### 5.3.1.3 Part-whole

In Example 87), the proper name *Kari* modifies the head noun *la luin* “arm” to form the genitive part-whole construction *Kari la luin* “Kari’s arm.”

Example 87) GN1:33

*Kari la-luin da chi*  
Kari arm hurt PRT

FT: Kari’s arm hurts

### 5.3.1.4 Material

In the following two examples, the pre-head modifying noun specifies the material that the head noun is made of. First, in Example 88) the noun *pun* “rock” precedes and modifies the noun *hpung* “dust.” Second, in Example 89) the noun *nuing hkong* “vine” precedes and modifies the noun *la tui* “rope.”

Example 88) E&T.042

*Yao pun hpung yang ang-tu veu pya chi chi*  
then rock dust 3POS head at sprinkle put PRT

FT: then [he] sprinkled rock dust on his head

Example 89) E&T.087,088

*Yao nuing hkong la tui yang Kaseui mang*  
then vine rope subject monkey 1spec

*ang-caw veu hkat kan nae cak sheu lae chi*  
waist at tighten add,increase and \*\*\* drag PRT PRT

FT: Then the vine rope around the monkey's waist tightened and dragged

### 5.3.2 Complex genitive constructions

Complex genitive constructions are often seen in postposition phrases, where the object NP consists of a “possessed” localizer noun head and a NP “possessor.” In Example 90), the localizer noun *kawng htang* “side” is possessed by the NP *vaeya ka htang* “flower pot” to form the postposition object *vaeya ka htang kawng htang* “the flower pot’s side” (or in more natural English “the side of the flower pot”).

Example 90) P7,8.051

*Vaeya ka htang kawng htang veu ya ke hka baya 2 hkun*  
flower pot side at child female 2 CLF:person

*ka pawng htolasap taeng yao ci baw chi*  
can telephone make then speak play PRT

FT: At the side of the flower pot, 2 girls are making and then play-talking with can-telephones

## 5.4 Post-head modifiers

### 5.4.1 Modifier noun phrases: ModNP

Heads may be modified by post-head NPs, as shown in the following example. In Example 96), the noun *la-pawng* “sleeve” and the adjective *ang-mawng* “long” form the modifier NP *la-pawng ang-mawng* “long-sleeved.” This modifies the head noun *hka lao* “shirt.”

Example 91) PS.008

*Ya hka lao la-pawng ang-mawng si ang-plang tum lae chi*  
3S shirt sleeve long colour black wear PRT PRT  
FT: he is wearing a long-sleeved black shirt

In the following example, the head noun *ya ke* “child” is modified by two NPs:  
*hka lao ang-nae* lit. “shirt red” and *tuingchawng’ ang-kheo* lit. “trousers green.”

Example 92) P7,8.009

*A hu’ na ya ke hka lao ang-nae tuingchawng’ ang-hkiyo*  
grandfather OBJ child shirt red trousers green  
*htui mang plawng taeng chi*  
one 1spec help make PRT  
FT: a red-shirted, green-trousered child is helping grandfather make  
[bamboo hoops]

#### 5.4.2 Adjectives: ADJ

Adjectives follow head nouns and provide descriptive information about the nouns they modify. Following are examples of DIMENSION, VALUE, and COLOUR adjectives. Dixon (2004) calls these “core semantic adjective types.” For a detailed discussion of adjectives in Bisu please refer to section 3.3.

##### 5.4.2.1 Dimension

In Example 93), the adjective *ang-mawng* “long” is modifying the object head noun *tuing’chawng* “trousers.”

Example 93) P7,8.006

*Tuing’chawng ang-mawng chawng lae chi*  
trousers long wear PRT PRT  
FT: [he is] wearing long trousers

##### 5.4.2.2 Value

In Example 94), the adjective *ang-maen* “good” modifies the object head noun *kaw* “rice (crop).”

Example 94) Ma.023

*yao kaw ang-maen hae yang kaw-chong han kan*  
then rice (crop) good that 3POS storehouse \*\*\* add, put in

*lae ngae*

go (up, N) SFP

FT: then [he] will put that good rice into his storehouse

#### 5.4.2.3 Colour

In the texts collected for this thesis, colour adjectives vary in form between native Bisu (which includes the prefix *ang-*, e.g. *ang-pawn* “white”), a combined Bisu-and-Tai form (e.g. *si-ang-pawn* “(colour) white”), and the Tai form (e.g. *si-fa* “(colour) light blue”).

Four native Bisu colour adjectives have been identified: *ang-plang* “black,” *ang-pawn* “white,” *ang-nae* “red” and *ang-shui* “yellow.” In Example 95), the colour adjective *ang-pawn* “white” modifies the conjoined noun head *hka lao nae tuing chawng* “shirt and trousers.”

Example 95) P7,8.013

*ya ke hka hpa ya htui mang hka lao nae tuing chawng ang-pawn*  
child male one 1spec shirt and trousers white

*ka tum lae chi*  
wear PRT PRT

FT: One boy wears a white shirt and trousers

Native Bisu colour words are undergoing change as a result of pressure from surrounding Tai languages. For example, in Example 96) the borrowed Thai word *si* “colour” has been added to *ang-pawn* “white,” which results in the adjective phrase *si-ang-pawn* “colour white -or- white coloured.”

Example 96) PS.010

*Nae hpa kan-peun si-ang-pawn kan lae chi*  
and apron colour.white add, put in PRT PRT

FT: and wearing a white (coloured) apron

Other colour words have been borrowed directly from Thai, such as *si-fa* “(colour) light blue” in Example 97). Several colour words occur in texts in this Tai form, with no *ang-* prefix.

Example 97) P7,8.004

*A hu' hka lao si fa' tum lae chi*  
 grandfather shirt colour.light.blue wear PRT PRT  
 FT: grandfather is wearing a light blue (coloured) shirt

#### 5.4.3 Relative clauses: REL

Head nouns may be modified by relative clauses. In Example 98), the subject head noun *hka baya* “female” is modified by the relative clause *hka lao angpawṅ tuing ka si som ka tum lae chi* “wearing a white shirt [and] orange skirt.”

Example 98) P7,8.015

*hka baya hka lao angpawṅ tuing ka si som ka tum lae*  
 female shirt white wrap.skirt colour.orange wear PRT  
*chi mang anghpae tawṅ cawṅ mang na chu chi*  
 PRT 1spec younger.bro(title) naked 1spec OBJ hold PRT  
 FT: The female wearing a white shirt [and] orange skirt holds the naked younger brother

Example 99) includes two relative clauses. The primary object head noun (“child”) is modified by a relative clause (“walking [the] bicycle”) and the secondary object head noun (“hat”) is also modified by a relative clause (“[that he is] holding”).

Example 99) PS.112

*Yao ya-ke hka lao si-fa' mang tu-chawṅ htam*  
 then child shirt colour.light.blue 1spec hat hold  
*ya-ke hka-hpa-ya lot-htip chuṅ mang na pi lae chi*  
 child male bicycle lead,steer 1spec OBJ give PRT PRT  
 FT: then the light-blue-shirted child gives the hat [that he is] holding to the boy walking [the] bicycle

#### 5.4.4 Classifier phrases: CLPhr

Classifier phrases occur after the head in a NP. They are headed by classifiers and also include deictic expressions or quantifiers. As noted in section 3.8, many classifiers are Tai loan words, raising the question of whether classifiers and classifier phrases are a late addition to the language caused by pressure from majority languages such as Thai and Mandarin.

Example 100) shows the numeral two and the classifier *hkun* “person” forming a classifier phrase that modifies the compound head noun *ya ke hka hpa ya* “boy(s) (lit. male child/children).” Together they form the NP *ya ke hka hpa ya 2 hkun* “two boys.”

Example 100) P7,8.037

<i>ya ke</i>	<i>hka hpa ya</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>hkun</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>ngae</i>
child	male	2	CLF:person	exist	PRT

FT: There are two boys

In Example 101), the deictic expression *hae* “that” modifies the classifier *lang* “building” to form the classifier phrase *hae lang* “that CLF:building.” This phrase modifies the head noun *yum* “house,” forming the NP *yum hae lang* “that house.”

Example 101) Mar.10 data

<i>yum</i>	<i>hae</i>	<i>lang</i>	<i>yawhka</i>	<i>heu</i>
house	that	CFL:building	headman	owns

FT: the headman owns that house

#### 5.4.5 Deictic expressions: DE

Deictic expressions almost always occur within classifier phrases or number phrases. In rare instances, a deictic expression modifies a head noun directly, as in Example 102).



Example 102) SRS.004

*Nae kaw-pang haeng' tawn yao pi-pi taeng*  
and rice stalks those cut then whistle make

*mi baw, ngaē*  
blow play PRT

FT: and (we) cut those rice stalks, then made whistles to blow

### 5.5 Analyzing *mang*

The behaviour of Tai loan-words in classifier phrases is clear and predictable. But in addition to these, the word *mang* needs to be accounted for. *Mang* behaves similarly, but not identically, to a classifier.

#### 5.5.1 Hypothesis 1: *mang* is a native Bisu classifier

The claim that *mang* is a native Bisu classifier is made by Beaudoin in his 1991 dissertation. Beaudoin (1991:85) notes that *mang* or *ma* is the Bisu classifier for living things, but in alignment with Thai, Bisu is moving to Thai classifiers after definite numbers. He gives the following examples of shift from *mang* (a Bisu “B” word) to Thai (“T”) classifiers:

Example 103) Beaudoin p.85

putang' mang  
sorcerer CLF:living thing (B)  
FT: the/a sorcerer



putang' 3 hkun  
sorcerer 3 CLF:person (T)  
FT: three sorcerers

hkui mang  
dog CLF:living thing (B)  
FT: the/a dog



hkui 3 to  
dog 3 CLF: “legged thing” (T)  
FT: three dogs

As for other grammar studies of Bisu, Nishida’s 1973 grammar sketch does not mention *mang*. Person (2000) does not deal specifically with *mang* in his grammar sketch but glosses it as a classifier in his data. And Xu (2001:109) identifies *mang*

as an individual classifier of animals in her grammar of Chinese Bisu. The data collected for this thesis makes it clear that Chinese Bisu and Thai Bisu diverge in this area.

If Beaudoin is correct then *mang* was a classifier in the past. However, it can no longer be simply categorized as a classifier today. *Mang*'s present behaviour suggests that in some respects it is changing, and also supports the hypothesis that *mang* is a singular number marker. The following discussion presents some key features of *mang* in order to explore its classifier behaviour and its number marker behaviour. Note that in sections 5.5.2 through 5.5.3.3 *mang* is glossed with “\*\*\*” since its classification is the issue in question (elsewhere *mang* is glossed as “1spec”).

### 5.5.2 Key features of *mang*

**Feature 1:** *Mang* (almost) never occurs with classifiers.

One reason to think that *mang* may be a classifier is that *mang* almost never occurs with other classifiers. One lone example of *mang* occurring in a NP along with another classifier (*kaen* “CLF:container”) exists as shown in Example 104). This may be a feature of ordinal counting (see also section 5.5.3.3).

Example 104) PS.018

*Yao salawng kaen hti 2 mang la-ka' veu*  
 then basket container ORD \*\*\* in front of at

*pa-tu-hku duing chi*  
 kneel sit PRT

FT: then [the man] kneels in front of the second basket

**Feature 2:** Unlike other classifiers, *mang* never occurs with numerals other than *htui* “one.”

*Mang*'s occurrence with numerals is restricted to the numeral *htui* “one.” This does not support the hypothesis that *mang* is a classifier, since classifiers typically occur

with any and all numerals. If *mang* was a classifier in the past, this feature suggests it is passing out of use. Note that *htui* “one” is one of only two native Bisu numerals still in use (the rest are borrowed Tai numerals).

In Example 105) *mang* occurs with *htui* “one” in modifying *ya ke ang-i* “little child.”

Example 105) P7,8.010

*a hu' laka' veu ya ke ang-i htui mang ca ngae*  
 grandfather in front of at child little one \*\*\* exist PRT

FT: in front of grandfather, there is one little child

**Feature 3:** Like classifiers, *mang* occurs with deictic expressions *ni* “this” and *hae* “that.”

In Example 106) *mang* occurs with the deictic expression *hae* “that” in modifying *ya ke hka hpa ya* “boy.”

Example 106) PS.098,099

*ya -ke hka -hpa -ya hae mang lot-htip chuing yaw*  
 child male that \*\*\* bicycle steer on foot walk

*laen lae chi*  
 go(up,N) PRT PRT

FT: that boy walks the bicycle away (northward)

**Feature 4:** Consistent with *mang* being a classifier, when a person (a human or a talking animal) is counted with *htui* “one,” *htui* is followed by *mang* (with minor exceptions).

**Feature 5:** Consistent with *mang* being a classifier for persons, when a non-person is counted with *htui* “one,” *htui* is followed by a non-*mang* classifier.

The Bisu numeral *htui* “one” occurs 39 times in the texts collected for this thesis. Out of these, 26 are paired with *mang* and modify a human or talking animal, and

nine occur with some other classifier and modify a non-person noun (such as a dog, a goat, a bamboo sprout, a guava tree and a guava fruit).

There are four exceptional cases: in two instances *htui* “one” is paired with *hkun* “CLF:person” and modifies a human, and in two instances *htui* “one” is paired with *to* “CLF:legged thing” and modifies a talking animal. In these exceptions Bisu more closely resembles the Thai classifier system.

Features 4 and 5 suggest that if *mang* is a classifier, then its occurrence may be increasingly restricted to persons (here defined as humans or talking animals such as the characters in the Elephant, tiger, rabbit and monkey story). If *mang* is a classifier undergoing change, then this restriction contrasts with its older scope of “living things” (Beaudoin 1991:85).

**Feature 6.** Unlike classifiers in Thai, *mang* frequently occurs with nouns but without quantifiers or deictic expressions.

In several instances *mang* occurs with a head noun and other NP constituents but no deictic expression or quantifier. Like features 4 and 5, this behaviour correlates with “person” nouns. Out of 139 occurrences of *mang*, 128 occur with “person” nouns and only 11 occur with “non-person” nouns. In Example 107), *mang* occurs with only a head noun in the subject NP, *yaba mang* “elephant *mang*,” and occurs with only a head noun and a case marker in the object, *cha la mang na* “tiger *mang* OBJ.”

Example 107) E&T.006

*yaba mang ci ye cha la mang na chae ca nae*  
 elephant \*\*\* speak QUOT tiger \*\*\* OBJ bite eat PRT  
 FT: the elephant said, “[I will] devour the tiger”

*Mang* also occurs without quantifiers or deictic expressions in more complex NPs, such as Example 108) where it follows a relative clause, and Example 109) where it follows a modifier NP.

Example 108) PS.130

*hka* -*hpa* -*ya* *ba*-*koe* *chu* *chi* *mang* *ya*-*ke* *ni* *mu* *na*  
male guava pick PRT \*\*\* child this group OBJ

*hke* *hu* *chi*  
follow watch PRT

FT: The man picking guavas watches this group of children

Example 109) PS.120

*Yao* *ya*-*ke* *hka* *lao* *si*-*fa*´ *mang* *ping*-*pawng* *taw**k* *baw*  
then child shirt colour.light.blue \*\*\* paddle toy paddle play

*laen* *lae* *chi*  
go (up, N) PRT PRT

FT: then the light blue shirted child plays "ping pong"

This feature of occurring with nouns and without deictic expressions or quantifiers does not correspond to classifier behaviour in Thai. Parallel test sentences such as \**chang*´ *tua* *bok* *wa*´... “the elephant said...” (compare Bisu Example 107 above) or \**daek* *suiva*´ *sii* *faa*´ *khon* *laen*´“(the) light blue-shirted child CLF:person plays” (compare Bisu Example 109 above) in Thai are ungrammatical.

As noted above, *mang* occurs with non-person nouns only 11 out of 139 times. This *mang* behaviour is unpredictable, suggesting that it is in the process of changing. For instance, in one text the singular noun *salawng* “basket” occurs 13 times. In these 13 occurrences it is followed twice by *mang* plus no quantifier or deictic expression, twice by *kaen* “CLF:container” plus an ordinal number, once by *kaen* plus an ordinal number plus *mang*, and eight times by no classifier.

In reviewing these six features, while *mang* is consistent with classifiers in several ways (features 1, 2, 4 and 5), it is also inconsistent with classifiers in two important ways. The fact that *mang* never occurs with numerals other than *htui* “one” is an important departure from ordinary classifier behaviour (feature 2). The fact that Noun + *mang* constructions occur without an accompanying quantifier or deictic

expression is also an important departure from ordinary classifier behaviour (feature 6).

This analysis suggests that if *mang* is a classifier, it is a very unusual one. A look at a seventh feature of *mang* suggests an alternative hypothesis, namely that *mang* is a number marker.

### 5.5.3 Hypothesis 2: *mang* is a number marker

**Feature 7.** *Mang* occurs only with singular nouns, in complementary distribution with *mang yet* (dual) and *ui* (plurals greater than two).

#### 5.5.3.1 *Mang* and *ui*

*Mang* and *ui* never co-occur. *Mang* occurs only with nouns referring to single items, and *ui* occurs with nouns referring to groups of items. (Beaudoin (1991:87) states that *ui* is the native Bisu classifier for groups). Groups may either be collective nouns such as *anyam anyik* “noisy bugs” in Example 110), or nouns which can be inferred to be plural from the discourse context, such as Example 111).

Example 110) E&T.013

*anyam anyik ui kyap hko chi ye*  
noisy bugs noisy bugs 3+ quiet completely PRT PRT  
FT: the noisy bugs quieted completely

Example 111) P4.002

*ya ke ui na bawng-nang taeng pi chi*  
child 3+ OBJ stilts make give PRT

FT: [he] makes stilts to give to the children (the context is a picture of several children walking on stilts)

As well, *ui* cannot occur with *htui* “one” as shown in Example 112).

Example 112) Mar.11 data

\* *hkui htui ui huin*  
dog one 3+ run

### 5.5.3.2 *Mang yet*

In addition to *mang* which corresponds to singular nouns and *ui* which corresponds to groups, *mang yet* corresponds to noun pairs, as in Example 113) and Example 114).

Example 113) P7,8.058

*ya ke hka baya nae ya ke hka hpaya tawng cawn mang yet*  
child female and child male naked dual

*lot htaeng htaeng baw chi*  
can car play PRT

FT: the girl and the naked boy play with a can car

Example 114) PS.030

*salawng kaen hti 1 nae kaen hti 2*  
basket CLF:container ORD and CLF:container ORD

*mang yet kawng ba-koe kan pluing chi*  
dual \*\*\* guava add, put in full PRT

FT: the first and second baskets are full of guavas

### 5.5.3.3 Other “number marker” evidence

The foregoing data supports the hypothesis that *mang*, *mang yet* and *ui* mark nouns for number, namely singular, dual and plural. This is further supported by clauses elicited to count plural-marked nouns and to count the individuals within a collective noun.

Members of a group of children may be counted by a numeral plus *hkun* “CLF:person”. The plural marker *ui* may occur, as in Example 115), or may not, as in Example 116).

Example 115) GN2:2

*ya ke 5 hkun ui huin*  
Child 5 CLF:person 3+ run

FT: Five children run

Example 116) 7,8.021

*Ya ke hka hpa ya 6 hkun la mai la-vong yang'*  
child male 6 CLF:person bamboo wheel INST

*lan baw chi*  
race play PRT

FT: six boys race with bamboo hoops

Counting groups does not elicit a numeral followed by *ui*. It produces a numeral plus the loan-word classifier *mu* "CLF:group." The plural marker *ui* may occur, as in Example 117) or may be omitted, as in Example 118).

Example 117) P4.010

*Ya ke mu ui uin hku chi'*  
child CLF:group 3+ laugh all? PRT

FT: the group of children (all?) laugh

Example 118) GN2:2

*ya ke htui mu 5 hkun hui chi*  
child one CLF:group 5 CLF:person run PRT

FT: One group of five children runs

*Mang yet* behaves similarly. If a pair is counted, then a classifier occurs with the numeral and the dual marker *mang yet* is optional. Thus *mang yet* occurs in Example 119) and does not occur in Example 120).

Example 119) P7,8.014

*ya hkui 2 to mang yet na ma*  
3S dog 2 clf: "legged" things dual OBJ tell

*la mai la-vong veu peuk lawt baw pi chi*  
bamboo wheel at jump go through play give PRT

FT: he tells 2 dogs to jump through the bamboo hoop for him

Example 120) P7,8.028

*yake hka baya 2 hkun ca ngae*  
child female 2 CLF:person exist PRT

FT: there are two girls



*Mang yet* and *ui* sometimes occur with classifiers, such as *mang yet* in Example 119) above, and *ui* in Example 121) and Example 122) following. This further supports the hypothesis that these words are not classifiers but rather number markers.

Example 121) PS.100

*Ya-ke hka-hpa-ya 3 hkun ui yang yaw aen lae chi*  
 child male 3 people 3+ 3P walk go(down,S) PRT PRT  
 FT: the three boys, they walk away (southward)

Example 122) Mar.11 data

*hkui 3 to ui huin*  
 dog 3 CLF: "legged" things 3+ run  
 FT: three dogs run

As noted in the discussion of feature 1, typically *mang* does not occur with classifiers. In the data collected for this thesis, there is one case of *mang* occurring with a classifier:

Example 123) PS.018

*Yao salawng kaen hti 2 mang la-ka' veu*  
 then basket CLF:container ORD \*\*\* in front of at  
  
*pa-tu-hku duing chi*  
 kneel sit PRT  
 FT: then [the man] kneels in front of the second basket

This may be a feature of the ordinal counting system, because a similar classifier/number marker combination occurs elsewhere in the same story (see example Example 124 following). Here the classifier *kaen* "container" and two ordinal numbers occur with the dual number marker *mang yet*.

Example 124) PS.030

*salawng kaen hti 1 nae kaen hti 2*  
basket CLF:container ORD and CLF:container ORD

*mang yet kawng ba-koe kan pluing chi*  
dual \*\*\* guava add, put in full PRT

FT: the first and second baskets are full of guavas

#### 5.5.4 Drawing conclusions

Of the first six features considered, features 1, 3, 5 and 6 are either supportive of or at a minimum consistent with the hypothesis that *mang* is a number marker. Features 2 and 4 deal with the occurrence of *htui* “one” and *mang* together. These are not inconsistent with *mang* being a number marker, but provide the least support since it is redundant for a NP to include both a numeral and a number marker. Nevertheless, of the two hypotheses, the number marker hypothesis has more support and fewer inconsistencies.

##### 5.5.4.1 Does *mang* mark definiteness?

Some data suggests that *mang* may also have a function of marking nouns for a property like definiteness or specificity. This is suggested by environments where *mang* does not occur, such as with proper names. Proper names uniquely identify their referent, so a specifier is not needed. This feature emerged when eliciting ditransitive clauses, when *mang* occurred with kinship labels such as *ang-bong* “father” (as in Example 125) but not with the proper names *Somchai* or *Suphaap* (as in Example 126).

Example 125) GN1:45a

*Angya mang ang-bong mang na vaeya pi ngaе*  
Child \*\*\* father \*\*\* OBJ flower give PRT

FT: the child gives the father a flower

Example 126) GN1:45b

*Somchai Suphaap na vaeya pi ngaе*

Somchai Suphaap OBJ flower give PRT

FT: Somchai gives Suphaap a flower

*Mang* is also absent in clauses where the object is generic rather than specific, such as in Example 127) and Example 128) following.

Example 127) L2:55

*Ga umeng angya na ang saw*

1S cat offspring OBJ like

FT: I like kittens

Example 128) L2:56

*Ga gubalam na ba saw*

1S spider OBJ NEG like

FT: I don't like spiders

More data and analysis is necessary to confirm whether *mang* has a definiteness marking function. However, based on the preliminary evidence noted here, I will assume that *mang* marks “specific” as well as “singular” and will gloss it as “1spec.”

#### 5.5.5 Number phrases: NUMPhr

Having completed an analysis of *mang*, the NP constituent “number phrase” may now be described. Number phrases modify the head noun and consist of a number marker (NUM) and optional numeral *htui* “one” or deictic expression *ni* “this” or *hae* “that.” As shown in Table 16, the set of number markers consists of the singular marker *mang*, the dual marker *mang yet* and the plural marker *ui*.

Bisu	NUMBER	Gloss
<i>mang</i>	singular (specific)	1spec
<i>mang yet</i>	dual	dual
<i>ui</i>	plural greater than two	3+

Table 16 NUMBER markers

## 5.6 Analyzing case markers

“Case markers are words that indicate the syntactic and/or semantic role (e.g. subject and/or agent) of the noun phrase to which they belong” (Schachter and Shopen 2007:35). Bisu has a few NP constituents that mark a syntactic role, and occur depending on the animacy of the noun. These constituents tend to mark nouns that are not typical for their syntactic role – either because an inanimate noun is behaving like an animate item, or because an animate noun is being treated like an inanimate item. Thus *yang* marks an inanimate subject or an instrument. *Na* marks an animate transitive object or ditransitive primary object. *Kawng* is a comitative marker. The word *ma'* seems to be a focus marker for subjects. The function of *ma'* is best understood by looking at the discourse context (see section 5.6.4.3).

### 5.6.1 *Yang*

The word *yang* (variable tone) seems to serve two case marking functions. First, it marks an inanimate subject. Second, it marks an instrument. Note that there is an intuitive similarity between an inanimate subject and an instrument. Both are behave as though they were animate, but are not. Both are “causes.”

#### 5.6.1.1 *Yang* as a subject marker

*Yang* is a subject case marker that occurs when the subject noun is inanimate. When a subject is a typical agent (animate, able to act), it is not case marked. For example, in Example 129) the agentive *yaba mang* “elephant (1spec)” is unmarked in the subject role.

Example 129) E&T.006

*Yaba mang ci ye cha la mang na*  
elephant 1spec speak QUOT tiger 1spec OBJ

*chae ca nae*  
bite eat PRT

FT: the elephant said, “[I will] devour the tiger”

On the other hand, when the noun in the subject role is not a typical agent, for example a speech act or an inanimate object, it is marked with *yang*. In Example 130), the subject is the verb complex *ce ka* “argue together”. This non-agentive subject is marked as the subject with *yang*.

Example 130) E&T.008

*Ce ka yang laeng meu yet ma lang-ka*  
argue each other SUBJ go (up, N) time.when 3D tell each other

*chi*  
PRT

FT: when the arguing had continued [for a while], they told each other...

In Example 131), the subject is *nung hkong la tui*, an inanimate vine rope. Again, this subject is marked with *yang*.

Example 131) E&T.087,088

*Yao nung hkong la tui yang Kaseui mang ang-caw veu*  
then vine rope SUBJ monkey 1spec waist at

*hkat kan nae cak sheu lae chi*  
tighten add,increase and \*\*\* drag PRT PRT

FT Then the vine rope around the monkey’s waist tightened and dragged

This subject-marker analysis of *yang* determines the interpretation of Example 132) below. *Yang hpa-si-caeng* could be interpreted to mean “He (SUBJ), kerchief (OBJ)” in the clause “He ties the kerchief on as before.” This is a natural English translation. However, the presence of *yang* (CASE:SUBJ) determines an

interpretation of *yang hpa-si-caeng* as “his kerchief (SUBJ),” creating the clause “his kerchief ties on as before.”

Example 132) PS.026

*Yao yang hpa-si-caeng yang' ang-an mae nae hpui lae chi*  
then 3POS kerchief SUBJ old how? is tie PRT PRT  
FT: then his kerchief ties on as before

The occurrence of *yang* is not completely predictable. *Yang* does not always occur with non-agentive subjects. It may be that the subject must be acting like a self-motivated AGENT (not, for example, like an EXPERIENCER) to be so marked. In Example 133), a non-agentive subject (a guava) is not marked. However, it is falling (an experience) rather than acting.

Example 133) PS.015

*Nae yao ba-koe htui sui klan lui' chi*  
and.then guava one CLF: round.thing fall come(down,S) PRT  
FT: and then a guava fell

#### 5.6.1.2 *Yang* as an instrument marker

An elicitation exercise produced several clauses where *yang* marks the instrument, such as Example 134) and Example 135) below. In Example 134), the instrument is the noun *muy* “knife” and marked with *yang*. In Example 135), the instrument is the noun *paka* “pen” and is marked with *yang*.

Example 134) L2:43a

*Pattanan muy yang daengnam plak chi*  
Pattanan knife INST watermelon slice PRT  
FT: Pattanan slices the watermelon with a knife

Example 135) L2:43b

*Pattanan paka yang nangsui taem chi*  
Pattanan pen INST book writes PRT  
FT: Pattanan writes [in] the book with a pen

In addition to this elicited data, a few instances of *yang* functioning as an instrument marker occur in the texts collected for this thesis. In Example 136), *yang* marks the instrument *la mai la-vong* “bamboo hoop.”

Example 136) 7,8.021

*Ya ke hka hpa ya 6 hkun la mai la-vong yang*  
 child male 6 CLF:person bamboo wheel INST

*lan baw chi*  
 racing play PRT

FT: six boys are racing with bamboo hoops

This analysis of *yang* as an instrument marker does not account for all of the data. Example 137) was produced during a natural conversation, when the speaker was describing things he might do in his spare time. The context implies that the subject is the speaker *ga* “1S.” Here *lot kuing* “motorcycle” functions as the object but is marked with *yang*.

Example 137) GN2:7a

*ga lot kuing yang chi ngae*  
 1S motorcycle CASE? wash PRT

FT: I wash [the] motorcycle

I double-checked this clause by asking if the following was natural. This construction disambiguates *ga* as a personal (not possessive) pronoun and as the subject of the clause.

Example 138) GN2:7b

*ga yang lot kuing yang chi ngae*  
 1S 3POS motorcycle CASE? wash PRT

FT: I wash his motorcycle

Example 138) was accepted as natural speech. Again, *lot kuing* “motorcycle” functions as the object but is marked with *yang*. I cannot account for these instances of *yang* marking the object. At present they remain “residue.”

## 5.6.2 *Na*

Nishida (1973:68) calls *na* a “dative” case marker (1973:68). Beaudoin (1991:105 [my translation]) states that “the complement noun is sometimes governed by a postposed particle” that specifies its function. *Na* is one of these *particules rectives* “specifying particles” (1991:105 [my translation]) and marks object/ recipient/ beneficiary (1991:84). In his grammar sketch, Person (2000:43) calls *na* “accusative-like.” I analyze *na* as an object/ primary object case marker based on the behaviour described below.

Typically, the object role in a clause is filled by inanimate, patient-like things. When an animate, agent-like person or animal is the object or primary object in a clause, it is marked with *na* to disambiguate it from the subject.

### 5.6.2.1 Object in transitive clauses

In Example 139), the agent-like *yaba* “elephant” functions in the object role and is marked with *na*.

Example 139) ET.047

*Yang Yaba mang na cha chae ca ye*  
3S elephant 1spec OBJ FUT bite eat PRT  
FT: He was going to devour the elephant

*Na* often occurs with the object when the subject is omitted, as in the following example. The subject is omitted in the elephant’s declaration “devour the tiger.”

Example 140) ET.006

*Yaba mang ci ye Cha la mang na chae ca nae*  
elephant 1spec speak QUOT tiger 1spec OBJ bite eat PRT  
FT: Elephant said, “[I will] devour the tiger”

The typical word order for a clause is SOV. *Na* occurs when the object is fronted (OSV word order), as in Example 141).



Example 141) P7,8.009

*A hu' na ya ke hka lao ang-nae' tuingchawng' ang-hkiyo*  
Grandfather OBJ child shirt red trousers green

*htui mang plawng taeng chi*  
one 1spec help make PRT

FT: a red-shirted, green-trousered child is helping Grandfather make  
[bamboo hoops]

Out of 50 occurrences of *na* in the data collected for this thesis, only two occur with inanimate objects. In both cases, the inanimate object is behaving somewhat like an agent. First, a boy's hat blows off while he is bicycling. In Example 142) he turns to watch as the wind blows it away. Here the hat is moving away from the boy as though it were animate.

Example 142) PS.070

*Yao yang tu-chawng na hke hu chi*  
then 3S hat OBJ follow watch PRT

FT: then he watches the hat

Second, in Example 143) a man discovers that one of his baskets is missing. Since he is not aware of anyone taking it, it seems to have disappeared under its own power.

Example 143) PS.125

*Haeng' ya yang salawng na cha hu sha chi*  
\*\*\* 3S 3POS basket OBJ FUT watch find PRT

FT: he is going to search for his basket

When an object is a typical patient, i.e. when the object is passive, acted-upon, and incapable of self-motivated action, it is unmarked for case. Thus in Example 144) the patient-like noun *hkanum* "candy" functions in the object role and is unmarked.

Example 144) P7,8.044

*Yang la pu la ma veu hkanum' htaṃ lae chi*  
3S hand right at candy hold PRT PRT  
FT: He is holding candy in [his] right hand

#### 5.6.2.2 Primary object in ditransitive clauses

In ditransitive clauses, *na* marks the primary object. When there are two objects in a Bisu clause, the primary object is more active (as the receiver of the secondary object) and the secondary object is more passive (as the item being given and received). The ditransitive secondary object is unmarked. In Example 145), *angya mang* “the child (lit. offspring)” is the subject and is unmarked, *vaeya* “flower” is the secondary object and is unmarked, and *ang-bong mang* “the father” is the primary object and marked with *na*.

Example 145) GN1:45

*Angya mang ang-bong mang na vaeya pi ngae*  
Child 1spec Father 1spec OBJ flower give PRT  
FT: the child gives the father a flower

In Example 146), both the subject and the secondary object are inferred from context and omitted in the clause. The primary object *ya ke hka hpa ya hka lao si-fa' mang* “the light-blue-shirted child” is marked with *na*.

Example 146) PS.114

*Ya ke hka hpa ya hka lao si-fa' mang na pi chi*  
child male shirt colour.light.blue 1spec OBJ give PRT  
FT: [the boy walking the bicycle] gives the light-blue-shirted boy [guavas]

#### 5.6.3 Kawng

*Kawng* is noted by Nishida (1973) and Beaudoin (1991) as a comitative marker, indicating a “with” relationship between two individuals. It occurs only once in the texts collected for this thesis, as shown in Example 147).

Example 147) E&T.081

*Kaseui na ga kawng' ang-chi ca pe,*  
monkey 2S 1S COM debt have insist  
FT: monkey, you have a debt with me

However, additional elicited data supports this analysis, as in Example 148).

Example 148) Mar.12 data

*na ga kawng' baw lui pe,*  
2S 1S COM visit come insist  
FT: (you) come visit (with) me

#### 5.6.4 *Ma'*

The final constituent observed in the NP is *ma'*. It occurs a total of 15 times, in two of the texts collected for this thesis. The function of *ma'* is best explainable in the discourse context; this section will not attempt to fully explain it, but will make several observations about its behaviour. In the following sections, *ma'* will be glossed as “FOC” (case marker, marking FOCUS) in anticipation of the conclusions drawn in section 5.6.4.4.

##### 5.6.4.1 Relative order

When *ma'* occurs, it is the final constituent of the subject NP. As well, in eight out of the 15 times it occurs, *ma'* follows the number marker *mang*, as in Example 149).

Example 149) PS.080

*Ya-ke htui mang ma' hka.lao la-pawng ang-kuin*  
child one 1spec FOC shirt sleeve short  
  
*si-fa' tum lae chi*  
colour.light.blue wear PRT PRT  
FT: ONE child is wearing a short-sleeved blue shirt

#### 5.6.4.2 Syntactic description

The only NP constituents observed after *mang* are case markers and *ma'*, which suggests that *ma'* is also a case marker. As well, *ma'* always occurs in the subject NP, and every subject it occurs with is a single individual. These features also support the hypothesis that *ma'* is some sort of special subject case marker.

#### 5.6.4.3 Function

The function of *ma'* is best explained by looking at the wider pragmatic context, which suggests that it has some sort of discourse function.

##### *Focus marking and referential cohesion*

In 11 out of 15 instances, two or more participants are introduced with a classifier phrase (e.g. *yake hka baya 2 hkun ca ngae* “There are 2 girls”). In 10 of these instances, this introduction is immediately followed by individual details about the new participants. The details are given in a clause with a subject NP that includes *ma'*.

For example, in Examples 150), 151) and 152) following, two boys are introduced in sentence 37, then one is described in sentence 38 and the other is described in sentence 39. *Ma'* directs and then redirects the audience’s attention to each individual participant, linking their description back to their first introduction. In this way *ma'* serves as a focus marker and a cohesive device.

Example 150) P7,8.037

*Yake hka hpa ya 2 hkun ca ngae*  
child male 2 people exist PRT  
FT: There are 2 boys

Example 151) P7,8.038

*Htui mang ma' hka lao si chomhpu nae tuing'chawng'*  
one 1spec FOC shirt colour.pink and trousers

*ang-hkiyo ka tum lae chi*  
green wear PRT PRT

FT: ONE is wearing a pink shirt and green trousers

Example 152) P7,8.039

*htui mang ma' hka lao nae tuing'chawng' ang-pawn ka tum*  
one 1spec FOC shirt and trousers white wear

*lae chi*  
PRT PRT

FT: ONE [i.e. the other one] is wearing a white shirt and trousers

#### *Focus on a local VIP*

In the other four (out of 15) instances where *ma'* occurs in texts, it focuses and refocuses attention on a local Very Important Participant (VIP). In *The pear story*, three different (human) participants are introduced in Sentences 6, 33, and 42. None are marked with *ma'*. However, after a fourth participant is introduced in sentences 55 and 56 (Example 153 below), she is described in sentences 57 and 58 (Example 154) with a clause that includes a subject NP ending in *ma'*.

Example 153) PS.055, 056

*Yao ya-ke hka -ba-ya htui mang lot-htip si-ang-plang*  
then child female one 1spec bicycle black

*ta lui chi*  
ascend,ride come(down, S) PRT

FT: then a girl rides a black bicycle coming down

Example 154) PS.057, 058

*Ya-ke hka-ba-ya ni ma' hka-lao la-pawng ang-kuin*  
child female this FOC shirt sleeve short

*si-fa' tum lae chi*  
colour.light.blue wear PRT PRT

FT: THIS GIRL is wearing a short-sleeved light blue shirt

Subsequent to the introduction and description of this girl, a previously-introduced main character is re-introduced with *ma'* in the NP. The action switches between the main character boy and the local VIP girl for a few sentences and each time he or she is mentioned, he or she is marked with *ma'*. Example 155) through Example 158) below shows this exchange (recapitulating *Pear story* sentences 63 through 68).

Example 155) PS.063, 064

*Ya-ke hka-hpa-ya ma' lot-htip ta lae ngaie*  
child male FOC bicycle ascend go (up, N) PRT

FT: THE BOY rides his bicycle up

Example 156) PS.065

*Ya-ke hka-ba-ya ma' lot-htip ta lui ngaie*  
child female FOC bicycle ascend come (down, S) PRT

FT: THE GIRL rides her bicycle down

Example 157) PS.067

*Yao yet ki-ba son lang-ka chi*  
then 3D road/path cross, go past each other PRT

FT: then the two of them pass each other on the road

Example 158) PS.068

*Ya-ke hka-hpa-ya ma' ya-ke hka-ba-ya mang na hplap*  
child male FOC child female 1spec OBJ turn

*hu chi*  
watch PRT

FT: THE BOY turns to watch the girl

#### 5.6.4.4 Drawing conclusions about *ma'*

*Ma'* occurs in the same phrase-final position as case markers *yang*, *na*, and *kawng*. *Ma'* never co-occurs with these case markers, and marks the subject in a way that is best understood at the discourse level. Based on the analysis of the existing data, I conclude that the best word classification for *ma'* is focus marker (FOC), a member of the case marker word class.

#### 5.6.5 CASE markers – conclusion

Bisu has marker words that occur when a NP's semantic content is a poor match for its syntactic role, such as when inanimate items function as subjects (marked with *yang*) and animate items function as objects (marked with *na*). Based on this behaviour, these words are assigned to the word class "case markers," along with instrument markers and comitative markers. It is interesting to note that the inanimate subject marker and the instrument marker are both *yang*. This suggests an intuitive link between "non-AGENTIVE" causes in Bisu. The focus marker *ma'* is also analyzed as a case marker, although *ma'*'s function is best understood in its discourse context. All of the case markers discovered to date are presented in Table 17 following.

Bisu	CASE	Gloss
<i>yang</i>	inanimate subject	SUBJ
<i>yang</i>	instrument	INST
<i>na</i>	animate object in transitive clause primary object in ditransitive clause	OBJ
<i>kawng</i>	accompaniment (comitative)	COM
<i>ma'</i>	subject focus (discourse function)	FOC

Table 17 CASE markers

## 5.7 Summary

This chapter has focused on the internal structure of the NP, with particular emphasis on number markers and case markers. The behaviour of these markers does not follow cross-linguistic patterns very closely. For this reason, a detailed analysis and description of each marker has been provided, along with a rationale for placing these constituents in these particular word classes.

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