

## Chapter 4

### Participant rank

Chapter 3 discussed the inventory of referring expressions in the Bru KS language. This chapter examines the concept of reference participant rank, i.e. the relative importance of a participant within a text. A participant's rank is signaled by how a participant is introduced in the text, the number of times it is mentioned and its continuity throughout the text.

The following sections analyze Bru KS narrative discourse in order to determine what classes of rank exist in Bru KS and then to rank each participant in its particular class.

#### 4.1 Theoretical approach to participant ranking

Generally, animate objects are considered to be participants and inanimate objects are props. There are exceptions to this rule as sometimes inanimate objects are participants when they “are directly involved in the plot of the story” (Somsonge 1991:123). Sometimes animate objects are not involved with the plot and can be labeled as props.

Somsonge (1991) argues that participants can be ranked in a narrative according to their importance. She ranks participants in Thai narrative as main, secondary and tertiary. The highest ranking participant, the main participant, will be the “initiator of most of the actions” and sometimes the recipient of other participant's actions. The main participant is present in the narrative, i.e. on stage more than the secondary and tertiary participants.

Givón (1983:8) proposes that one topic/participant (he treats a participant as a kind of topic) within a thematic paragraph is likely to be a “continuity marker”. He argues that this topic/participant is the most crucial and is the one most closely tied to the theme of the paragraph. This same topic/participant is the one “most likely to be coded as the primary topic - or grammatical subject - of the vast majority of sequentially ordered clauses/sentences comprising the thematic

paragraph.” Therefore, the main participant will be “the most continuous of all the topics mentioned in the various clauses of a paragraph.” By “most continuous”, Givón means the topic/participant which has the most number of contiguous mentions in the clausal chain which make up the thematic paragraph.

**4.2 Methodology**

The simplest method for calculating the importance of a participant would be the total number of times that participant is mentioned, including zero anaphora. Table 14 below shows each participant's rank and number of occurrences using this simple method.

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Table 14: Participant rank by number of mentions.

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfather r Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
Most Important Participant	Snake/ Husband 36	Elderly Mother 58	Seven Brothers 109	Younger Brother 79	Orphaned Grandson 86	Grand- father 74
2 <sup>nd</sup> Most important participant	Youngest Daughter 34	Daughter 58	Old Gndfather 86	Wicked Witch 28	Gndfather Ghost 47	Buffalo ear/woman 57
3 <sup>rd</sup> Most important participant	Mother 23	Older Brother 38	Old Mother 37	Soldiers 16	Ghost Friends 33	Grandson 50
4 <sup>th</sup> Most important participant	Father 14	Younger Brother 33	Big Bird 18	Older Brother 13	Birds 11	Hunters 13
5 <sup>th</sup> Most important participant	Seven Sisters 11	Old Man 27	7 Sisters 14	Old Woman 12	Deer/ Grasshopper 7	Leaf 8
Other participants	Crow 9	Snake 23 Pumpkin 16	Oldest Brother 13 Oldest Sis. 5 King 9	Wolf 10 Fish 7 Deer 7 King 5 Parents 4		Grass 5 Dog 3 Angel 2 Rice 3

However, the issue is more complicated than this simple method would imply.

Givón proposes a framework to quantify participant rank by measuring topic continuity. These measurements are expressed in terms of “referential distance” (look-back) and “persistence” (decay). Referential distance measures the number of clauses between references to a particular participant. Contiguous references are given the measurement of '1'. If there is a clause between references, the measure will be '2'. The first mention of a referent will be given an arbitrary value of '20', and the value of '20' will be given to any distance twenty clauses or larger. Following

Somsonge (1991), relative clauses and clauses in a quote phrase will not be counted. Also, there will be one subject for any series of verbs.

The following paragraph from The Big Snake S-I-L will be used to illustrate the two measurements.

1. *pʰɔː paŋ a.ru:p sɛ:m a.ləh ka? pɛa a.jək tʰiː*  
 when shine morning younger youngest so invite husband who  
*pɛn ku.tʃʰan pa? tʃi.tal tʰrai* 2. *pʰɔː Ø tʰ? tʰrai* 3.  
 be snake go clear.field field when (they) come field  
*ku.tʃʰan huək ka? tuajh ŋ.kʰoːl ku.tʃʰan loah* 4. *Ø pɛn kuaj*  
 snake big so take.off skin.snake snake out (He) become person  
*tʃi.tal tʰrai tʃon tʃɛː* 5. *sɛ:m a.ləh kuət naŋ mɪt paɯ*  
 clear.field field until finish younger youngest think in heart C

1)When morning came, the youngest daughter invited her husband who was a snake to go clear the fields. 2)When they arrived at the field, 3) the big snake took off his snake skin and 4) (he) became a person until they finished clearing the fields. 5)The youngest daughter thought in her heart ...

In this text there are two participants; *sɛ:m a.ləh* 'youngest daughter' and *a.jək* 'husband'. Both participants appear in the first clause. Since the *sɛ:m a.ləh* 'youngest daughter' had been mentioned in the previous clause, she receives a look-back value of '1'. The *a.jək* 'husband' had been mentioned three clauses previous and so receives a look-back value of 3. If it had been their first mention, they would have received a look-back value of 20. In the second clause both participants are referred to with a zero anaphora and receive a look-back value of '1'. In clauses 3 and 4, the snake is mentioned and receives a look-back value of 1 for each. In clause 5, the youngest daughter is mentioned with a NP and receives a look-back value of '3'.

The average look-back value is derived by dividing the sum of all the look-back values by the total number of appearances for each referent. The total look-back value for the husband/snake was 96 for the whole narrative divided by 35 references for a total of 2.74. The total look-back value for the youngest daughter was 82 divided by 32 references for a total of 2.56. Somsonge (1991:126) states that "the participant who receives the least amount of look-back value is considered to be the most important participant in a discourse." In the case of the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L. narrative, look-back values indicate that the youngest daughter is the most important participant.

### 4.3 Participant ranking according to look-back and decay

This section ranks the top five participants of each narrative according to their look-back score, adjusted look-back score and persistence score. Those that were not in the top five, like the old man in the second episode of The Big Snake S-I-L were left out.

Table 15 below lists the most important participants in each narrative as indicated by their respective look-back values.

Table 15: Look-back values of most important participants.

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfather Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
<b>Most Important Participant</b>	Youngest Daughter 2.56	Younger Brother 1.76	Old Gndfather 1.58	Younger Brother 1.37	Orphaned Grandson 1.64	Grand- father 2.02
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Most important participant</b>	Snake/ Husband 2.74	Elderly Mother 2.00	Seven Brothers 1.85	Wicked Witch 2.21	Ghost Friends 2.30	Grandson 2.20
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Most important participant</b>	Mother 3.17	Daughter 2.45	Big Bird 2.17	Soldiers 2.31	Grandfather Ghost 2.62	Buffalo ear/woman 2.68
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Most important participant</b>	Father 3.43	Old Bro 2.47	7 Sisters 2.93	Old Wom. 2.58	Birds 4.18	Hunters 4.00
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Most important participant</b>	Crow 3.56	Pumpkin 2.5	Old Mother 2.97	Old Bro 3.62	Deer 7.42	Grass 5.00

While the look-back data in table 15 indicates the most important participant, some factors work to skew the results. This is particularly true in the second episode of The Big Snake S-I-L narrative where the youngest brother receives the lowest look-back score even though he only participates in 38 of the 123 clauses counted in the

narrative. This is because he is a local VIP who is very active in only a portion of the narrative.

To correct the skewing effect of a strong local VIP, the data in Table 16 has been adjusted to reflect the total amount of occurrences within the text. This is done by taking the total number of clauses and dividing that by the number of occurrences for each participant. This number is multiplied to the look-back score in Table 15. This will adjust the look-back score to reflect the percentage that the participant was present in the total number of clauses. Thus the more occurrences a participant has, the lower the multiplier will be. In the case of the younger brother in the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L, he receives a multiplier of 3.72, yielding an adjusted look-back score of 6.55.

Table 16 shows the original (orig.) unadjusted look-back score first and then the adjusted (adj.) look-back score as described above. The participants are ranked according to the adjusted look-back score. Shading in the table indicates a change in position.

The adjusted look-back scores caused a change of participant ranking in some of the narratives. In the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L, the husband/snake participant received a higher adjusted look-back score than the youngest daughter. But the scores are so close, it would be better to consider both participants as equally ranked major participants.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L, the younger brother is demoted from first rank to third rank, behind the elderly mother and the only daughter. Ranking the elderly mother as the most important participant logically fits as she is introduced at the beginning of the episode, and it was her envy that caused the snake to eat her daughter.

In the Seven Orphans narrative, the adjusted results promoted the seven orphan brothers to the highest rank. It is ambiguous as to how to count a group which sometimes is referred to as a whole and at other times an unspecified individual is chosen to represent the group. In this case, references to the whole group and to a generic representative were considered as one participant.

In the Buyeang Fish narrative, the younger brother is a global VIP and is ranked much higher than the other participants in both the original and adjusted look-back scores. No participants changed ranking due to the adjusted scoring.

In the Grandfather Ghost narrative, the adjusted ranking promoted the Grandfather from third position to second position over the Ghost Friends who are local VIPs.

Finally, in the Wild Buffalo Ear narrative the adjusted look-back scores did not change the ranking of any of the participants.

Table 16: Adjusted look-back values of most important participants.

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfather Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
Most important Participant	Snake/Husband 2.74 (orig.) 6.90 (adj.)	Elderly Mother 2.0 (orig.) 4.2 (adj.)	Seven Brothers 1.9 (orig.) 3.2 (adj.)	Younger Brother 1.4 (orig.) 2.2 (adj.)	Orphaned Grandson 1.6 (orig.) 2.3 (adj.)	Grand- father 2.0 (orig.) 4.4 (adj.)
2nd Most important participant	Youngest Daughter 2.6 (orig.) 7.1 (adj.)	Daughter 2.5 (orig.) 5.2 (adj.)	Old Gndfather 1.6 (orig.) 3.4 (adj.)	Wicked Witch 2.2(orig.) 8.5 (adj.)	Gndfather Ghost 2.62(orig.) 6.8 (adj.)	Grandson 2.2 (orig.) 6.2 (adj.)
3rd Most important participant	Mother 3.2 (orig.) 12.1 (adj.)	Younger Brother 1.8 (orig.) 6.6 (adj.)	Old Mother 3.0 (orig.) 14.7 (adj.)	Soldiers 2.3 (orig.) 15.6 (adj.)	Ghost Friends 2.3 (orig.) 8.6 (adj.)	Buffalo ear/woma n 2.7 (orig.) 8.8 (adj.)
4th Most important participant	Father 3.4 (orig.) 21.6 (adj.)	Old Bro 2.4 (orig.) 8.0 (adj.)	Big Bird 2.2 (orig.) 22.0 (adj.)	Old Wom. 2.6 (orig.) 23.3 (adj.)	Birds 4.2 (orig.) 46.8 (adj.)	Hunters 4.00 (orig.) 76.5 (adj.)
5th Most important participant	Crow 3.6 (orig.) 34.8 (adj.)	Pumpkin 2.5 (orig.) 19.2 (adj.)	7 Sisters 2.9 (orig.) 38.3 (adj.)	Old Bro 3.6 (orig.) 30.0 (adj.)	Deer 7.42 (orig.) 131.0 (adj.)	Grass 5.00 (orig.) 187 (adj.)

Another measure of participant continuity is labeled persistence or decay. Givón (1983:15) presents a methodology to measure persistence by counting the number of clauses to the right (i.e. following in the text) of a participant in which that participant is maintained without interruption. The minimal value to a participant

reference will be zero if the next clause to the right does not refer to the participant. In this case, the participant decays immediately. There is no max value to the measurement of decay. The sum of all the persistence values is the persistence score of the participant.

Table 17 below ranks the participants of each narrative according to their persistence score.

Table 17: Decay values of most important participants.

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfath er Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
Most Important Participant	Youngest Daughter 74	Elderly Mother 303	Seven Brothers 420	Younger Brother 347	Orphaned Grandson 320	Grand- father 187
2nd Most important participant	Snake/ Husband 59	Older Brother 235	Old Gndfathe r 412	Wicked Witch 100	Ghost Friends 114	Grandson 121
3rd Most important participant	Mother 56	Younger Brother 214	Big Bird 136	Old Woman 66	Gndfather Ghost 81	Buffalo ear/woma n 115
4th Most important participant	Father 37	Daughter 208	Old Mother 87	Soldiers 59	Birds 5	Hunters 14
5th Most important participant	Crow 13	Pumpkin 47	7 Sisters 19	Older Bro 37	Deer 4	Dog 3

In the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L, we find that the ranking of Daughter, Snake/Husband, Mother, Father and Crow is the same as the ranking found in Table 15. This is contradicted by Table 16, where the Snake/Husband is ranked higher than the Daughter by 0.2 points. Most of the scores in Table 16 are separated by margins greater than one and it was determined that a difference of 0.2 was too



close to be significant. So with no significant difference in Table 16, the ranking in Tables 15 and 17 can be considered the correct ranking.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L, the participants are ranked as Mother, Older Brother, Younger Brother, Daughter and Pumpkin. This is different from the ranking in Table 15 and in Table 16 where the Younger Brother is ranked higher than the older brother. When the look-back chart is examined, we find that the data is skewed due to two isolated references to the Older Brother at the end of the narrative which greatly increase the look-back value. If those two isolated mentions are removed, then the Older Brother receives a lower look-back score than the Younger Brother. The daughter is in the 4<sup>th</sup> position because she plays mostly a passive role in the narrative and so is often absent for a line or two as the active participants take their focus off of her. The Mother's look-back score is skewed due to a long absence during the middle of the narrative. This skewing is removed in Table 16 where she is ranked as most important. Thus, Table 17 in this case is the most reliable in ranking the participants.

In the Seven Orphans narrative, the participants are ranked as The Seven Brothers, The Old Grandfather, the Big Bird, The Old Mother and the Seven Sisters. This contrasts with Table 15 where the Old Grandfather is ranked first. Since the Seven Brothers are present from the beginning of the narrative until the end, Table 16 is judged to be correct in ranking the Seven Brothers first. Ranking the last three participants of this narrative is problematic as each chart yields a different result. The easiest way to resolve this issue is to argue that the three participants are local VIPs with an equal rank: The Old Mother at the beginning, The Big Bird in the Middle and the Seven Sisters at the end.

In the Buyeang Fish narrative, the participants are ranked as the Younger Brother, the Wicked Witch, the Old Woman, the Soldiers and the Older Brother. Tables 15 and 16 have the Soldiers ranked higher than the Old Woman. This is due to the contiguous nature of the references to the Old Woman, who is present for 12 contiguous clauses. The Soldiers are found in 16 clauses with two one clause breaks. If the parameters of continuity were changed to disregard a break of one clause, then the soldiers would be contiguous for 16 clauses, thus ranking ahead of the Old Woman. In either case, the Old Woman and the Soldiers are essentially the same rank.

In the Grandfather Ghost narrative, the participants are ranked as the Orphaned Grandson, the Ghost Friends, the Grandfather Ghost, the Birds and the Grasshopper. It is interesting to note that the Grandfather Ghost for whom the narrative is named

is ranked third. He is present at the beginning of the narrative and the end, disappearing only for the two hunting scenes. He is mentioned 47 times as compared to the 33 mentions of the Ghost Friends. Yet the Ghost friends are more contiguous with no major breaks. Only Table 16 ranks the Grandfather Ghost above the Ghost Friends. One last factor involved in the ranking process is that the Ghost Friends are a group, from which generic representatives speak. The group references and the references to generic representatives were counted as being one participant. If they were treated as separate participants, the Grandfather Ghost would be ranked higher than the Ghost Friends.

Finally, in the Wild Buffalo Ear narrative, the participants are ranked as Grandfather, Grandson, Buffalo Ear/Woman, Hunters and Dog. All three tables agree on the top four participants. The fifth participant is Table 17 is the Dog while in Tables 15 and 16 it is the Grass. Both participants are considered to be ranked equally.

Table 18 below is a summary of the top five participants for each narrative.

**Table 18: Final ranking of most important participants.**

	<b>Big Snake S-I-L episode 1</b>	<b>Big Snake S-I-L episode 2</b>	<b>Seven Orphans</b>	<b>Buyeang Fish</b>	<b>Grandfather Ghost</b>	<b>Wild Buffalo Ear</b>
<b>Most Important Participant</b>	Youngest Daughter	Elderly Mother	Seven Brothers	Younger Brother	Orphaned Grandson	Grand- father
<b>2nd Most important participant</b>	Snake/Hus band	Older Brother	Old Gndfather	Wicked Witch	Gndfather Ghost	Grandson
<b>3rd Most important participant</b>	Mother	Younger Brother	Big Bird	Soldiers	Ghost Friends	Buffalo ear/woma n
<b>4th Most important participant</b>	Father	Daughter	Old Mother	Old Woman	Birds	Hunters
<b>5th Most important participant</b>	Crow	Pumpkin	7 Sisters	Older Bro	Deer	Dog and Grass

In summary, the four methods of calculating participant rank are a simple count of the number of times a participant is mentioned, Givón's look-back method, a modified look-back method combining the first two methods, and Givón's decay method. The simple count method accurately predicted the final ranking of the most important participant in five of the six narratives. The exception was the first episode of the Big Snake S-I-L in which the simple count method ranked the snake/husband participant higher than the youngest daughter.

The most glaring failure of the simple count method is its ranking the Daughter of the second episode of the Big Snake S-I-L as tied for Most Important Participant with the Elderly Mother. This is because while the daughter receives many mentions, she is rarely an active agent but rather a passive object being acted upon. Thus it is necessary to use the look-back and decay methods to gain a more accurate ranking of participant rank.

#### 4.4 Introducing participants

Section 4.3 ranked the top five participants of each narrative according to the parameters of persistence and decay. This section ranks participants according to the way they are introduced and tracked in the text.

A distinction must be made when analyzing referents between participants and props. Grimes (1975:43) argues that participants initiate or respond to actions, while props do not do anything. While props are usually inanimate, they can be animate if the referent never does anything. Conversely, animals and inanimate objects can be participants if they initiate or respond to actions.

In the Bru texts analyzed for this paper, many of the animals are participants and not props, particularly if they can talk. An example of an animal classified as a participant is shown in (87) where the crow is introduced and starts to speak with the youngest daughter. The crow thinks up a plan to prevent the youngest daughter's husband from turning back into a snake and then helps to execute the plan.

(87) The\_Big\_Snake\_S-I-L.043

*p<sup>h</sup>ɔː tɔ? muː ta.mai̯ an ka? waw muaj na? saː kɪː ɛn*  
 when come day new 3S so speak one Clf\_person like that again  
*tʃon tʃom si.aːk naŋ kal aluaŋ saŋ*  
 until bird crow on tree hear

The next day, she kept saying the same thing to herself out loud until a crow up in the tree heard her.

An example of a person who is a prop is the father of the daughter who gets swallowed by a snake in the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L narrative. He is not one of the top five participants of this narrative. He is introduced along with the mother as a married couple. Together they capture a snake and drag it back, but he is never mentioned specifically. Then when he is mentioned 8 times specifically, he never does or says anything. He functions as a foil for the mother who does most of the action. This is shown in example (88) below.

(88) The\_Big\_Snake\_S-I-L.093

m.pɛ? ɾ:t jah noa? lɿj waw kap a.ja:k pa:j maj jɛ:ŋ  
 mother LOC side outside so speak with husband C 2S watch  
 me?  
 Prt\_surprise

So the mother who was outside said to her husband, “Will you look at that!”

Following Osborne (2009), four categories of participants in Bru KS narrative discourse are proposed: central participants, major participants, minor participants, and peripheral participants. A central participant is one that is uniquely salient throughout the narrative and is ranked higher than any other participant. Major participants rank high where they are salient, but they may not be salient throughout the narrative. Some characteristics of central and major participants in Bru KS are: they are introduced within presentational clauses and with relative or stative clauses, they are present in much of the text, and they are the main agents of the events which occur in the narrative.

Minor participants are generally introduced with only a noun phrase and no relative clauses. Sometimes they are introduced within a presentational clause but often are not. They are on-stage for a small part of the narrative and are not as significant in the events of the story.

Peripheral participants play only a small role in the narrative and are present for only a small portion of the narrative.

#### 4.4.1 Central participants

Bru KS generally introduces central participants within a presentational clause, followed by 1 to 3 relative clauses. Osborne (2009:87) observes that in Kmhmu' central participants are formally introduced with an NP consisting of a head noun and a classifier phrase. Bru KS often introduces a central participant with a N + ClfP, but it is not obligatory. The ClfP tends to function to specify the number of

participants rather than to mark them as thematically salient because both major and minor characters are introduced by a N + Clfp.

The stative phrases in the introduction of a central participant often foreshadow the theme of the narrative. This is the case of sɛ:m 'younger brother' who is the central participant of the Buyeang Fish narrative. In example (89) below, sɛ:m is introduced first in a presentational phrase as one of the sons of the ruler; and secondly in an appositional NP as the younger of the two brothers. Then there is a sentence explaining that the mother and father only love the younger brother. This is followed with four stative phrases: 'the younger brother is a good person', 'he is smart in his studies', 'he likes to help people' and 'he likes to help animals'. The theme of this narrative is pity and helping others. The narrative follows the younger brother as he uses his wits and his goodness to escape from his older brother. The narrative shows his pity when he does not eat the Buyeang fish but saves it instead. Then the narrative concludes with the younger brother using his wits to fight a wicked witch and reaping the benefits of his friendship with animals.

(89) The\_Buyeang\_Fish.003-.005

m.poa kruaŋ bu:n kɔ:n ba:w ba: na? aj kap sɛ:m tɛ:  
 father city have child young.man two Clf\_person older and younger but  
 m.pɛ? m.poa pɛ:ŋ tɛ: sɛ:m jua:n sɛ:m pɛn kuaj ɔ:  
 mother father love but younger because younger be person good  
 Ø lɿ:an pɔ:ŋ Ø mək tɕuaj kuaj ka.nɔh Ø tɕuaj  
 (younger) study clever (younger) like help person another (younger) help  
 tran prɯam  
 animal also

The ruler of the city had two sons who were young men, an older son and a younger son. But the mother and father only loved the younger brother because he was a good person. (He) was clever in his studies and (he) liked to help other people, and animals also.

This introduction of the younger brother is comparatively lengthy. The following clauses introduce the older brother who, in contrast to the younger brother, is not a good person and does not help other people. One could argue that the introduction of the older brother continues the focus on the younger because of the contrast of attributes. This extended description given to the younger brother and the fact that he is introduced first are signals that he is the central participant in the story.

Another aspect of central participants is that they are present through most of the narrative. Central participants are usually central in the peak episode and are

generally present at the end of the narrative. In the Buyeang Fish narrative, the central participant, the Younger Brother, is the object of the Witch's frantic search. He is not specifically mentioned except as a zero anaphora of the verb *t̃fuaj?* 'search'. He is the cause of the witch's demise. She searches for him in her magic mirror, but can not find him. In anger she throws down her wand and it breaks in half, pointing back at her and turning her to stone. All the while, the Younger Brother (central participant) is in a tunnel under her.

There were only two narratives which had central participants. In the Buyeang Fish narrative, the central participant is *se:m* 'the younger brother'. In the Grandfather Ghost narrative, the *kɔ:n ka.mɯ:t* 'orphan child' is the central participant. Both of these central participants are introduced at the beginning of their respective narratives with an extended introduction. They are both present throughout the narrative and they are involved in most of the events that occur in the story. Table 14 shows that *se:m* 'the younger brother' receives 79 mentions, almost three times the 28 mentions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important participant. Table 14 also shows that *kɔ:n ka.mɯ:t* 'orphan child' receives 86 mentions, almost two times the 47 mentions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important participant.

With only six narratives under study, it is difficult to conclude how frequently central participants occur in Bru narrative. The most that can be stated is that it is likely that central participants are a distinct class of participants in Bru narrative occurring in 33% of the narratives under study.

#### 4.4.2 Major participants

Major participants differ from Central participants in that they are not present as often in the narrative as are the Central participants. Major participants must share the stage with other major participants. While they are often introduced with a presentational clause, they do not receive as many descriptive stative clauses as a Central participant. Major participants may be introduced at the beginning of a story or in the middle, often at a major text boundary.

Major participants are active agents when they are present in the narrative. The daughter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L would seem to be a major participant as she is introduced with a presentational clause at the beginning of the narrative and she is present for much of the narrative. Yet she does not participate actively in the events of the story. Rather, she is the victim who is acted upon by her mother, the snake and the two brothers. Her only actions are to call to her mother, to cover her face, to offer herself in marriage and to plant a pumpkin vine. This

participant is the 4<sup>th</sup> most important participant listed in the final rankings of Table 17.

In the second episode of The Big Snake Son-I-L, two major participants are introduced in example (90), an older brother and a younger brother. They are introduced at a major boundary marked 120 lines into the story with an authorial intrusion *waw tɿ?* 'speak about' interpreted as “Now we will talk about ...”. They are not introduced in a presentational clause but as the object of the verb *waw tɿ?* 'speak about'. They are introduced with a ClfP before the NP. This NP is in apposition to the ClfP. They receive only one descriptive stative clause, *ɣt naŋ v? ra.kəŋ mɯaj na?* 'live with grandfather man one person'. The two brothers are present for half of the episode before the younger brother disappears and the older brother is only referred to in terms of his wife.

(90) The\_Big\_Snake\_S-I-L.120

<i>waw tɿ?</i>	<i>ba: na?</i>	<i>sɛ:m</i>	<i>a:j</i>	<i>ɣt</i>	<i>naŋ v?</i>	<i>ra.kəŋ</i>
speak about	two Clf_person	younger	older	live	with	grandfathe man
<i>mɯaj na?</i>						
one	Clf_person					

Now we will talk about **two people, a younger brother and an older brother** who lived with their grandfather.

Table 19 shows all of the major participants in the narratives under study based on the following criteria: they are introduced in a presentational clause, they are introduced at a text boundary, they are introduced with a ClfP and they are in the top three rankings of Table 17. For reference sake, central participants have been added.

Table 19: Major participants

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfat her Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
Central Participant				Younger Brother	Orphaned Grandson	
Major Participant	Youngest Daughter	Elderly Mother	Seven Brothers	Wicked Witch	Grndfather Ghost	Grand- father
Major Participant	Snake/ Husband	Older Brother	Old Grndfather		Ghost Friends	Grandson
Major Participant	Mother	Younger Brother				Buffalo ear/ woman

4.4.3 Minor participants

Minor participants differ from Major participants as they generally receive very little descriptive coding in their introduction and are likely to be present in only small parts of the narrative. When they are present, they play a role in the events of the story. Generally, they disappear after their role is finished.

The hunters in The Wild Buffalo Ear narrative are minor participants. They are introduced as a group in (91) below with a presentational clause and one stative clause describing that they lived in a village together. Also in their introduction is the classifier phrase *pa.ləaj? na?* 'many Clf\_person'. They are introduced after the Major participants, the grandfather and grandson. The most salient fact that makes them a minor participant is that they appear as a group in line 004, interact with the major participants for 13 lines and then disappear for the remainder of the 134 line narrative.

(91) The\_Wild\_Buffalo\_Ear.004

*bun muaj si.ɲaj bun prean ɣt vil ma.nɣj pa.ləaj?*  
EXIST one day EXIST hunter live village together many  
*na?*  
Clf\_person

One day there were many hunters who were living together in a village.



Within the 14 lines where the hunters are on stage, three of them are introduced as individuals. Each of the three interacts by speaking with the grandfather. They are introduced with only an NP and no Classifier Phrase as shown in (92). After one line of speech, they each disappear from the stage.

(92) The\_Wild\_Buffalo\_Ear.011

*prɛan kuaj nɯaŋ waw*  
 hunter person first speak

The first hunter said.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of The Big Snake S-I-L, the crow is a minor character who is introduced in a sentence final Prepositional Phrase (PP) as shown in example (93). Within the PP, the crow is identified with the NP *tʃom si.ək* 'bird crow' and no Classifier Phrase. A further PP describes the bird's location as being in a tree. The crow is on stage for 16 lines and immediately disappears after it fulfills its function of getting rid of the snake skin as shown in example (94).

(93) The\_Big\_Snake\_S-I-L.043

*pʰɔː tɿ? muː ta.maj an ka? waw mɯaj na? saː kɿː ɛn*  
 when come day new 3S so speak one Clf\_person like that again  
*tʃon tʃom si.ək nɯŋ kal aluaŋ saŋ*  
 until bird crow on tree hear

The next day, she kept saying the same thing to herself out loud until a crow up in the tree heard her.

(94) The\_Big\_Snake.058

*tʃom si.ək pa.tah ŋ.kʰoːl sɛŋ tʃo? ujh*  
 bird crow free skin descend in fire

The crow dropped the skin down into the fire.

Table 20 shows all of the minor participants in the narratives under study.

Table 20: Minor participants

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfath er Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
Minor Participant	Father	Pumpkin	Big Bird	Soldiers		Hunters
Minor Participant	Crow		Old Mother	Older Bro		
Minor Participant			7 Sisters	Buyeang Fish Deer Wolf		

4.4.4 Peripheral participants and props

Peripheral participants have very little introduction. They have a very short duration in the narrative and do not initiate the salient events of the narrative. An example of peripheral participants would be the six daughters in The Big Snake S-I-L which are introduced by a NP + ClfP in a presentational clause as shown in (95). They are mentioned in lines 020, 021, 022 with the NP *kɔ:n* 'children'. They are not mentioned again until the end of the episode in lines 074 and 075 when they are reintroduced with the NP *se:m ɾj* 'younger older'. In this reintroduction, they show jealousy after seeing the youngest sister's handsome husband and say they want to have husbands just like hers. Their comment drives the story to the next episode where the reader is shown a different family that tries to duplicate the first family's success in finding a good husband who was a snake.

(95) The\_Big\_Snake.003

*ba: na? bu: kɔ:n ka.mu:l ta.pət na?*  
two Clf\_person have child female.unmarried six Clf\_person

They had six unmarried daughters.

Another example of peripheral participants is the *a.tʃujh t<sup>h</sup>aw* 'grandfather old' who is introduced in the second episode of The Big Snake S-I-L narrative. In line 078, he and the old grandmother are introduced as well as their only daughter. The only overt signal as to participant classification in the introduction is that the parents do

not receive a human classifier but are classified as another household with *ɛ:n muaj doŋ* 'another one Clf\_house'. The daughter is introduced with an unmarked relative clause and the human classifier *na*. This signals that the daughter will be more salient in the narrative than her parents.

In the rest of the narrative, the old grandfather is only mentioned in conjunction with his wife. They catch a snake together and together they drag it home; but after that, the old man does nothing but listen to his wife. Since he never does anything essential on his own, he is classified as a peripheral participant.

(96) The\_Big\_Snake\_S-I-L.078

*wəw tɔ? a.jɛa? tʰaw a.tʃuɪh tʰaw ɛ:n muaj doŋ bu:n*  
 speak about grandmother old grandfather old again one house have  
*kɔ:n ka.mu:l muaj na?*  
 child female.unmarried one Clf\_person

Now we will talk about **an old man** and old woman of **another family** who had one unmarried daughter.

The last example of a peripheral participant is the *a.jɛa? tʰaw* 'grandmother old' in The Buyeang Fish narrative. It is revealing that this participant (like (96) above) is introduced with the classifier phrase *muaj doŋ* 'one Clf\_house' as found in example (97) below. One would expect the classifier for person *na* instead of the classifier for house. These two examples are indications that using a non-person classifier in the introduction of a person signals that the participant is peripheral.

The *a.jɛa? tʰaw* 'grandmother old' seems to be more than a peripheral participant as she is ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> most important participant in section 4.3 above. While she is contiguous for 12 consecutive clauses, she never does any overt action except for speaking and entering into the presence of the wicked witch. Her role is to act as a narrator, explaining the situation and then to act as a go-between with the witch. Thus she is classified as a peripheral participant.

(97) The\_Buyeang\_Fish.050

*ɾt tɛ: a.jɛa? tʰaw muaj doŋ tɔ bu:n pɛn kɔ:l*  
 LOC but grandmother old one house NEG have be stone

Except for **one old grandmother** in her house that had not been turned to stone.

The *a.jɛa? tʰaw* 'grandmother old' of the Buyeang Fish narrative and the *kɔ:n ka.mu:l* 'daughter' of the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode of the Big Snake S-I-L have characteristics of major

participants and minor participants. While the boundary between central participants and major participants is quite distinct, the boundary between major and minor participants is less distinct and points to the idea that participants below the central ranking are most likely on a continuum, not separated by strict boundaries.

Table 21 shows all of the peripheral participants in the narratives under study.

Table 21: Peripheral participants

	Big Snake S-I-L episode 1	Big Snake S-I-L episode 2	Seven Orphans	Buyeang Fish	Grandfather Ghost	Wild Buffalo Ear
Peripheral Participant	Younger sisters	snake	squirrel	Old Gdmother	grasshopper	god
Peripheral Participant		Father	King	King	birds	dog
Peripheral Participant						grass rice

#### 4.5 Summary

This chapter shows that participants in a narrative can be ranked by their relative importance within the narrative. This ranking can be measured statistically with a simple count of the number of occurrences, the look-back method, a modified look-back method and a measure of a participants rate of decay. The simple count of occurrences is a good initial indication of participant rank, but it requires the look-back method and decay method to account for participants who are mentioned often and yet are not that important to the story in what they do. The modified look-back method is a way of combining a simple count with the look-back method to account for skewing due to long absences of a participant in the text.

How a participant is introduced is another indication of a participant's rank. Participants introduced with a presentational clause along with additional coding material such as relative clauses signal more importance. There are four proposed participant categories: central participants, major participants, minor participants and peripheral participants. Central participants are more clearly defined as a category, requiring a participant to be present throughout the who narrative, to be

an active agent in most of the events of a narrative and to present in the peak of the narrative. Major participants, minor participants and peripheral participants are not as clearly defined as the boundaries of these categories are not as clearly drawn.

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