

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background to the Discipline of Discourse

When people communicate, they do it at the level of discourse, as described by Grimes (1978:vii), "We say most of what we say in strings of sentences, but not in random strings of sentences." For decades, however, most linguists had fixed their attention on features belonging to the sentence level or lower. It was not until the middle of the 1960s when some linguists began to realise the importance of the study of an entire discourse, that some aspects of grammar (e.g., clause and sentence types, pronominalisation, etc.) could be determined only if they were studied in the context of a discourse.

Among the early publications on discourse was Pike's article "Beyond the Sentence" (1964). Later in 1968, Gleason wrote his article "Contrastive Analysis in Discourse Structure". This was followed soon afterwards by the publications in the Tagmemic framework on the discourse-level grammar of some Philippine and New Guinea languages (edited by Longacre 1968). Moreover, Longacre also produced *An Anatomy of Speech Notions* (1976) and *The Grammar of Discourse* (1983), which are still widely used as models for discourse analysis.

Apart from the tagmemic approach, the study of discourse has also been developed by linguists of other schools of linguistics. In 1972, van Dijk of the Generative Semantic school produced his dissertation entitled *Some Aspects of Text Grammars*. Then in 1975, Joseph Grimes produced *The Thread of Discourse* which was followed shortly afterwards by *Cohesion in English* (1976) written by Halliday and Hasan of the Systemic school. In this book they discuss English grammar above the sentence level, focusing on one aspect

of discourse: cohesion. According to Walrod (1979:2), the book is "the most thorough treatment in print of this 'intersentence' level of grammar in English".

1.2 The Concept of Cohesion

If a speaker of English hears or reads a passage of the language which is more than one sentence in length, he can normally decide without difficulty whether it forms a unified whole or is just a collection of unrelated sentences. (Halliday and Hasan 1976:1)

The above statement applies not only to English but, in fact, to any language. We can infer from Halliday and Hasan's statement above that a series of related sentences constitutes a text. A "text", in linguistics, is "any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole" (Halliday and Hasan 1976:1). A passage that forms a unified whole, then, exhibits cohesion.

The concept of cohesion is conceived of as a semantic one. It refers to relations of meaning within the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) note that:

Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it.

When such recourse is made, a tie is created, which represents "one occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items" (Halliday and Hasan 1976:3). This corresponds to Pickering's (1980:29) view of cohesion as "anything that signals redundancy as well as anything that serves to tie a discourse together in a linear way" (emphasis added).

Based on both Halliday and Hasan's and Pickering's definitions, cohesion itself is a broad category covering several aspects. Cohesion may be achieved by the theme and sub-theme(s) of a story (Chuwicha 1986:41-82). It may also be signalled by the various

forms of grammatical agreement (Pickering 1980:29-30). In addition, Grimes (1984:272-298) describes cohesion of discourse information signalled by information blocks, information centres, overlays and information rate.

This thesis attempts to describe five sources of cohesion in Sgaw Karen folk narrative discourse: Cohesion through Linkage and Conjunction (Chapter 3), Cohesion through Participants (Chapter 4), Cohesion through Lexical Items (Chapter 5) and Cohesion through Substitution and Ellipsis (Chapter 6). The final chapter (7) will conclude the discussion presented. Before considering these specific types of cohesion, I shall give a broad overview of Sgaw Karen narrative discourse structure by presenting an analysis of the macro-structures of the Sgaw Karen folk narratives (Chapter 2).

1.3 General Information of Sgaw Karen

The Karen are the largest indigenous minority tribe in both Burma and Thailand. The Karen live along the western border of Thailand, covering all the provinces bordering Burma, i.e., from Chiang Rai to the isthmus of Kra in Ranong province.

"Sgaw Karen" is a term which scholars have typically used to refer to the most populous Karenic group who identify themselves as "Pwgakanyaw"¹, which literally means "people" or "human being". The vast geographic area covered by the Sgaw Karen has gradually given rise to various dialects. The dialect studied in this thesis is the Tavoyan Sgaw Karen dialect spoken in southeastern Burma. According to my language informants, this dialect is considered by Sgaw Karen speakers as being the standard Sgaw dialect.

The principle difference between Sgaw Karen (and all other Karenic languages) and other Tibeto-Burman languages is that Sgaw Karen has S-V-O word order typology, which is characteristic of the Mon-Khmer stock, while the word order typology of other Tibeto-

¹In the dialect used in this thesis, this term is pronounced *pɯŋa³kəŋa⁶*.

Burman languages is S-O-V (Solnit 1986:2). Benedict (1972:6) classifies Karen as belonging to the Tibeto-Karen family under the Sino-Tibetan stock, as illustrated in the following figure.

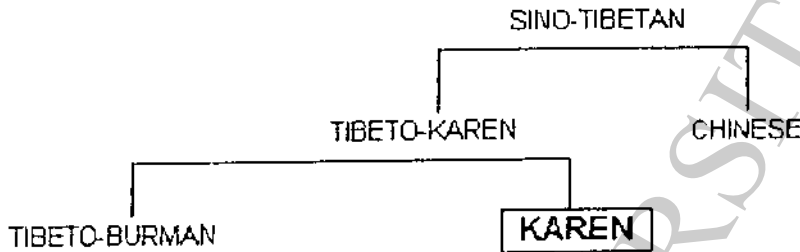


Figure 1. Schematic Chart of Sino-Tibetan Groups.

The Karen, particularly the Sgaw, have been of interest not only to linguists but also to scholars in related fields. One of the early linguistic studies of Sgaw Karen was Rev. Dr. Jonathan Wade's development of the Sgaw Karen writing system which was done in 1832. This script is still widely used today (Jones 1961:v). Jones (1961) presents in his *Karen Linguistic Studies* analyses and comparisons of various Karenic languages spoken in Burma. In Thailand, linguists and other scholars have also studied the Sgaw Karen. Professor Ronald Renard (1980) of Payap University has written on the history of the Karen people in Thailand, as well as on other topics related to the Karen. Professor Suriya Rattanakul (1987) of Mahidol University recently published a Sgaw Karen Dictionary. However, no linguistic study of Sgaw Karen has gone beyond sentence level.²

²Griffiths (1986) recently published a book on the application of discourse analysis to narrative discourse in Pwo Karen, a related language.

1.3.1 Phonological Overview

The Tavoyan dialect of Sgaw Karen has twenty-seven consonant phonemes, nine vowel phonemes and six tones³, as illustrated in Figures 2-5. The consonant and vowel phonemes (Figures 2-4) are represented by the IPA script and tones (Figure 5) by superscript numbers.

Places of Articulation		Bilabial	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Manners of Articulation							
Plosives	Voiceless	p		t		k	ʔ
	Voiceless Aspirated	p ^h		t ^h		k ^h	
	Voiced	b		d			
Fricatives	Voiceless		θ	s	ʃ	x	h
	Voiceless Aspirated			s ^h			
	Voiced					ɣ	ɦ
Affricates	Voiceless				tʃ		
	Voiceless Aspirated				tʃ ^h		
Nasals		m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
Liquids				l			
				r			
Semi-vowels		w			j		

Figure 2. Sgaw Karen Consonant Phonemes.

In addition to the above consonants, Sgaw Karen has forty-nine possible consonant clusters which occur only in syllable-initial position. A cluster consists of a maximum of two consonants. Figure 3 shows which consonants co-occur with the positions of their co-occurrences.

³In the Sgaw Karen examples in this thesis, consonants and vowels are represented phonemically.

First Consonants	Second Consonants
p p ^h b m	j
k k ^h p p ^h b m	l
k k ^h ɣ s s ^h t t ^h d p p ^h b m θ	r
k k ^h x ŋ s s ^h ɲ t t ^h d n p p ^h b m θ r ʃ l j	w
s s ^h p p ^h b m	y

Figure 3. Sgaw Karen Consonant Clusters.

While a Sgaw Karen syllable may have a complex onset slot, the peak and coda slots are simple, consisting of a single vowel and no diphthong or final consonant. Sgaw Karen has nine vowels, as shown in Figure 4 below.

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɨ	u
Mid	e	ə	o
Low	æ		ɔ
		a	

Figure 4. Sgaw Karen Vowel Phonemes.

Sgaw Karen is known to be a "tone-rich" language, having six contrastive tones plus a toneless schwa *ə*. In this thesis each tone will be represented by a superscript number following the vowel while a toneless schwa will be unmarked. Descriptions of the six tones are illustrated in the following figure.

Tones	Descriptions
Tone 1	Glottalised Breathy Low Tone
Tone 2	Breathy Low Tone
Tone 3	Mid Tone
Tone 4	Low Tone
Tone 5	Glottalised High Tone
Tone 6	High Tone
Toneless	Toneless Schwa

Figure 5. Sgaw Karen Tones and Tone Descriptions.

1.3.2 Morphological Overview

Like most other languages spoken in Southeast Asia, Sgaw Karen is an isolating language in which most words are "monosyllabic and monomorphemic" (Jones 1961:24) (e.g., *twʰʌ* 'dog', *ʔæ⁴* 'love', *ye³* 'good', etc.). While there are many disyllabic words (e.g., *kəθe⁴* 'horse', *θe⁴pa⁶* 'know', etc.), words with more than two syllables rarely occur (e.g., *θa⁴mʰjɔ³* 'cat', *sʰo⁶kəmo⁴* 'think'). In this language, compounding (e.g., *pʰye³kʰo⁵ta²pʰo⁶* 'person-wait-thing-fellow=guard', *ma³θʰ* 'make-die=kill', etc.), reduplication (*me³ho³tʰʰo³* 'rice-Rhyme-water-Rhyme=things like rice and water', *pʰyɔ⁴pʰo⁶ja¹pʰo⁶* 'poor-poor-hard-hard=poor', etc.) and straight repetition (e.g., *ye³ ye³* 'good-good=very good', *kʰæ⁶ʔi³ kʰæ⁶ʔi³* 'often-often=very often', etc.) are used productively while affixation, on the other hand, is absent.

1.4 Data Collection

The analysis presented in this thesis is based on eight oral folk narratives. Four are legends and four are entertainment stories. All stories were first tape-recorded and then transcribed into the Sgaw Karen script by the language associates. The stories were then phonemically transcribed and glossed.

Two language associates were employed, Mr and Mrs Paul John. Both are native speakers of the Tavoyan dialect (southeastern Burmese dialect) of Sgaw Karen. They are now working as medical volunteers at McKean Rehabilitation Centre, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Both informants know many Karen folktales. Some of the stories listed below are similar in content with some of the stories recorded by Jones (1961).

Following is the list of the eight oral folk stories used in the analysis.

Legends:

1. The Story of Khunawlei and Nawmuey ($k^h u^A n o^2 l e^6 d o^5 n o^2 m^A ʔ e^6 ʔ e p u^6$)
2. The Story of Thawmepa ($t^h o^5 m a e^6 p e^2 ʔ e p u^6$)
3. The Story of Mueyaephae ($m^2 j a e^3 p^h a e^6 ʔ e p u^6$)
4. The Story of Phue Mawtaw ($p^h f^6 m o^A t o^A ʔ e p u^6$)

Entertainment stories:

1. The Story of Nyali ($n a^A l i^A ʔ e p u^6$)
2. The Story of the Brave Orphan ($p^h o^A x a e^6 l e^6 ʔ e d f^6 t e y a^3 ʔ e y e^2$)
3. The Story of the Strong Orphan ($p^h o^A x a e^6 l e^6 ʔ e y r^2 s^h u^A t e y a^3 ʔ e y e^2$)
4. The Story of Saw Ker ($s o^3 k e^A ʔ e p u^6$)