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A note on the quantifier float in Pwo Karen

Atsuhiko Kato

1. Introduction

Pwo Karen is a language that belongs to the Karenic branch of Tibeto-Burman. This language has several dialectal groups. Kato (2017, 2019) lists four Pwo Karen dialectal groups that are not intelligible to each other: Western Pwo Karen, Htoklibang Pwo Karen, Eastern Pwo Karen, and Northern Pwo Karen. For classification of the Pwo Karen dialects and a detailed discussion of their characteristics, see Kato (1995, 2009), Phillips (2000, 2017), and Dawkins and Phillips (2009a,b). The dialect treated in this report is the Hpa-an dialect, which belongs to Eastern Pwo Karen. The Hpa-an dialect is spoken in the capital of Karen State, Myanmar, and the Pwo Karen dialects spoken in nearby cities such as Hlaingbwe and Kawkareik can be included here. In this report, the language name “Pwo Karen” refers to this Hpa-an dialect.

Pwo Karen is an analytic SVO-type language, which is the same as the other Karenic languages. The structure of a verb-predicate clause in Pwo Karen can be represented as in (1). The bracketed elements are optional.

\[(\text{NP1}) \ (\text{verb particle(s)}) \ V \ (\text{verb particle(s)}) \ (\text{NP2}) \ (\text{NP3}) \ (\text{adverbial elements})\]

verb complex

Basic structure of the Pwo Karen verb-predicate clause

‘NP’ represents a noun phrase. In the case of an intransitive verb, only NP1 can
appear. In the case of a monotransitive verb, NP1 and NP2 can appear. In this case, NP1 is typically the agent and NP2 is typically the patient. In the case of a ditransitive verb, NP1, NP2, and NP3 can appear. To take the typical ditransitive verb *phi lá̄n* ‘to give’ for example, NP1 is the agent, NP2 is the recipient, and NP3 is the theme. In this report, I call NP1 the ‘subject’; NP2 of a monotransitive verb and NP3 of a ditransitive verb the ‘direct object’; and NP2 of a ditransitive verb the ‘indirect object’. Before and after the verb, various verb particles may appear. I call the part consisting of the verb and the verb particle(s) a ‘verb complex’. In the position of ‘adverbial elements’, adverbs, adpositional phrases, adverbial particles, and undermentioned NC phrases may occur. In addition to the elements shown in the schema, after the adverbial elements, another verb complex may occur, which is the second verb of a separated type serial verb construction (see Kato 2004, 2017, 2019). Furthermore, some adverbial elements may appear clause-initially.

In a Pwo Karen noun phrase, the constituent ‘numeral + NC(numeral classifier)’, which I will call an ‘NC phrase’ in this report, is used to quantify the referent of the head noun. Since NC phrases are important in the discussion of this paper, I will explain a little about Pwo Karen NC phrases here. An NC phrase is placed after the head noun, as in *thwí lə dɯ̀* (dog - one - NC[animal]) ‘one dog’. In this example, the part *lə dɯ̀* (one - NC[animal]) is the NC phrase. An NC phrase alone can be used as a noun phrase in a clause; thus, *lə dɯ̀* can be used as a noun phrase that has a syntactic function such as the subject, object, or adjunct. Numeral classifiers cannot be used without a numeral; thus, *dìù jò* (NC[animal] - this), *thwí dɯ̀* (dog - NC[animal]), and *thwí dìù jò* (dog - NC[animal] - this) are all ungrammatical. Numeral classifiers of frequent use are: *dìù* for animals (mainly mammals) and also as a general classifier for an object that is difficult to classify; *yà* for a human; *béiɴ* for a flat thing; *bòn* for a long thing; *thòun* for a tree; *phlòɪn* for a round thing; *cóɴ* for a place; and *khó* for a tool. Insects, birds, and fish are counted with *béiɴ* (NC[flat]). Snakes and lizards are counted with *bòn* (NC[long]). Crocodiles are counted with either *dìù* (NC[animal]) or *bòn* (NC[long]). Some nouns are quantified with a classifier that has the same shape as
the noun. I call these classifiers ‘auto-classifiers’, following Matisoff’s (1973: 89) terminology. Examples of auto-classifiers are: tawăn la tawăn (village - one - NC[auto]) ‘one village’; chî la chî (race - one - NC[auto]) ‘one ethnic group’; and kò la kò (island - one - NC[auto]) ‘one island’.

2. Quantifier float in Pwo Karen

The phenomenon of so-called “quantifier float” can be observed in Pwo Karen. Let us look at sentence (2) first. In this example, the NC phrase θə̄n ɣà (three - NC[human]) represents that the number of concerned students in the event that this sentence expresses is three.

(2) təwâphjā θə̄n ɣà ɣɛ̂ lə jò
student three NC[human] come LOC here
‘Three students came here.’

In (2), the NC phrase θə̄n ɣà inside the noun phrase təwâphjā θə̄n ɣà ‘three students’ can be moved to the position of adverbial elements. See (3):

(3) təwâphjā ɣɛ̂ lə jò θə̄n ɣà
student come LOC here three NC[human]
‘Three students came here.’

As is seen from this, Pwo Karen has a phenomenon in which the NC phrase inside a noun phrase can be moved to the position of adverbial elements. I define this phenomenon as the quantifier float in Pwo Karen. It would also be possible to consider that the NC phrase in the position of adverbial elements is placed in this position from the beginning, not being “floated” from a noun phrase. However, in order to examine what kinds of noun phrases can be quantified by a NC phrase in the way of either (2) or (3), it is useful to assume a movement from inside a noun phrase to the position of
adverbial elements. Thus, in this report, I will use the term “quantifier float”.

The quantifier float shown in (3) is a float from the subject of an intransitive verb. I will examine other cases. Sentence (4a) can be paraphrased as sentence (4b). This is a quantifier float from the subject of a transitive verb.

(4) a. ʨwâphjà 0õn ŋà ʔáɴ mì
    student three NC[human] eat rice
    ‘Three students ate rice.’

b. ʨwâphjà ʔáɴ mì 0õn ŋà
    student eat rice three NC[human]
    ‘Three students ate rice.’

Next, (5a) can be paraphrased as (5b). This is a quantifier float from the object of a transitive verb.

(5) a. ʔəwê dò ʨwâphjà 0õn ŋà lò dàʊ phə̀ɴ
    3sg hit student three NC[human] LOC room inside
    ‘He hit three students in the room.’

b. ʔəwê dò ʨwâphjà lò dàʊ phə̀ɴ 0õn ŋà
    3sg hit student LOC room inside three NC[human]
    ‘He hit three students in the room.’

Observing quantifier floats from non-subject noun phrases, as in (5b), requires some ingenuity. See (6) below:
(6) ?əwê dô təwâphjā θə̄ ɴ ɣà

3SG hit student three NC[human]

‘He hit three students.’

In this example, the NC phrase θə̄ ɴ ɣà cannot be separated from the noun təwâphjā because the object noun phrase təwâphjā θə̄ ɴ ɣà ‘three students’ is the sentence-final constituent in this sentence. When we examine quantifier floats from non-subject noun phrases, this problem may always occur. For this reason, I put the adpositional phrase lə́ dàʊ phə̀ ɴ (loc - room - inside) ‘in the room’ in the sentence-final position of (5a). Since adpositional phrases occur in the position of adverbial elements, we can say that an NC phrase that is placed after an adpositional phrase is an adverbial element. Thus, the NC phrase θə ̄ ɴ ɣà in (5b) is an adverbial element. In other words, it has floated to the present position from the object.

One might suspect that the NC phrase θə ̄ ɴ ɣà in (5a) and (6) is in the position of adverbial elements, not inside the noun phrase headed by təwâphjā ‘student’, because the position of the object and that of adverbial elements are adjacent. However, in this report, I consider that θə ̄ ɴ ɣà in (5a) and (6) is inside the noun phrase headed by təwâphjā ‘student’. The reason is as follows: NC phrases that are placed immediately after the head noun on the surface never lower the acceptability of the sentences. It is only the NC phrases separated from the head noun on the surface that may lower the acceptability of the sentences (see, e.g., (9b), (10b), (11b), and (13b) below). Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that NC phrases that are placed immediately after the head noun on the surface are always inside the noun phrase; thus, the NC phrase θə ̄ ɴ ɣà in (5a) and (6) can also be considered a constituent inside the noun phrase headed by təwâphjā.

Next, I will examine quantifier floats from the object of a ditransitive verb. In (7) and (8), the ditransitive verb phílâɛn ‘to give’ is used. When the NC phrase is floated from the indirect object of (7a), we get (7b). When the NC phrase is floated from the direct object of (8a), we get (8b). Thus, quantifiers can float from both the direct object...
and indirect object of a ditransitive verb.

(7) a. jə phí̱ lâɴ təwâphjā 05n ɣà láiʔàʊ
   1sg give student three NC[human] book
   ‘I gave three students books.’

   b. jə phí̱ lâɴ təwâphjā láiʔàʊ 05n ɣà
   1sg give student book three NC[human]
   ‘I gave three students books.’

(8) a. jə phí̱ lâɴ təwâphjā láiʔàʊ 05n béiɴ lə́ ləkōʊɴ
   1sg give student book three NC[flat] loc Yangon
   ‘I gave a student three books in Yangon.’

   b. jə phí̱ lâɴ təwâphjā láiʔàʊ lə́ ləkōɴ 05n béiɴ
   1sg give student book loc Yangon three NC[flat]
   ‘I gave a student three books in Yangon.’

As we can see above, NC phrases can be floated from the subject and the object. Then, what about adjuncts? In Pwo Karen, many adjuncts are introduced by adpositional particles (Kato 2004: 129–143). I call the adpositional particles ‘adpositions’ in this report. Here, I will examine dē and lō, which are used most frequently among the adpositions.

The adposition dē denotes semantic roles such as accompaniment and instrument (see Kato 2010 for details). (9a) is an example of it denoting accompaniment and (10a) of it denoting instrument. When the NC phrases are floated from the noun phrases introduced by dē in (9a) and (10a), we get (9b) and (10b), both of which are unacceptable.
(9) a. ʔəwê tháunlí dē ʔəmú ʔə̄ ɴ  ɣà ló dào phòn
   3sg dance with woman three NC[human] LOC room inside
   ‘He danced with three women in the room.’

   b. *ʔəwê tháunlí dē ʔəmú ló dào phòn ʔə̄ ɴ  ɣà
   3sg dance with woman LOC room inside three NC[human]
   IM: ‘He danced with three women in the room.’

(10) a. ʔəwê khà dē ʔəθí ʔáɴchâ  phjājò lə́ phjâ θə̄ ɴ  cóɴ
   3sg shoot with pistol two NC[tool] loc
   ‘He shot with two pistols today.’

   b. *ʔəwê khà dē ʔəθí ʔáɴchâ  lə́ phjâ  θə̄ ɴ  cóɴ
   3sg shoot with pistol loc three NC[human]
   IM: ‘He shot with two pistols today.’

The adposition lə́ denotes semantic roles such as location, goal, and source (see Kato 2010 for details). I gloss this adposition as ‘LOC’ in this report. (11a) is an example of it denoting location, (12a) of it denoting goal, and (13a) of it denoting source. When the NC phrases are floated from the noun phrases introduced by lə́ in (11a), (12a), and (13a), we get (11b), (12b), and (13b). Among these, only (12b) denoting goal is acceptable, while (11b) denoting location and (13b) denoting source are unacceptable.

(11) a. ʔəθí ʔáɴchâ phjājò ló phjâ ʔə̄ ɴ  cóɴ  lə́nijò
   3pl sell this.one LOC market three NC[place] loc
   ‘They sold these in three markets today.’
b. *ʔəθí ʔáɴchâ  phjâjò  ló  phjâ  lə́nijò  0₃N  cón
3PL  sell  this.one  LOC  market  today  three  NC[place]
IM: ‘They sold these in three markets today.’

(12) a. ʔəwê lì  ló  phjâ  θə̄ ɴ  cóɴ  lənìjò
3SG  go  LOC  market  three  NC[place]  today
‘He went to three markets today.’

b. ʔəwê lì  ló  phjâ  lənijò  0₃N  cón¹
3SG  go  LOC  market  today  three  NC[place]
‘He went to three markets today.’

(13) a. ʔəwê nī  khòθá  ló  khānmo̱nā  θə̄ ɴ  cóɴ  lənijò
3SG  get  mango  LOC  foreign.country  three  NC[place]  today
‘He got mangos from three foreign countries today.’

b. *ʔəwê nī  khòθá  ló  khānmo̱nā  lənijò  0₃N  cón
3SG  get  mango  LOC  foreign.country  today  three  NC[place]
IM: ‘He got mangos from three foreign countries today.’

Let me summarize what we have seen in this section. In Pwo Karen, NC phrases can be floated from the subject, the direct object, and the indirect object. Nevertheless, in the case of adjuncts, NC phrases cannot be floated from them with the exclusion of the noun phrase denoting goal.

In the next section, we will discuss the behavior of NC phrases with the negative polarity item nāɴ. By contrast, I will hereafter call the NC phrases without nāɴ that we

¹ Phrases or words denoting time are most naturally placed in the clause-initial or clause-final position. Although (12b) is grammatical, it is somewhat unnatural in the sense that the word meaning ‘today’ is placed clause-medially.
have seen in this section the ‘normal NC phrases’.

3. NC phrases with the negative polarity item nān

In this section, we will observe the behavior of NC phrases with the negative polarity item nān ‘any’ (for the concept of negative polarity items, see, e.g., Haspelmath 1997). This morpheme is always placed before a numeral classifier; thus, Kato (2004: 122-124) classifies it as a numeral. (14) is an example of nān with the numeral classifier ɣà.

(14) təwâphjā ɣɛ̂ ló jò nān ɣà ʔé

student come LOC here any NC[human] NEG

‘No students came here.’

NC phrases with the negative polarity item nān are placed in the position of adverbial elements, and never occur inside a noun phrase. (15) is ungrammatical because the NC phrase with nān appears inside the noun phrase headed by təwâphjā ‘student’. In (16), it looks at a glance as if the NC phrase nān ɣà occurs inside the noun phrase because nān ɣà immediately follows the noun təwâphjā. However, considering that (15) is ungrammatical, nān ɣà in this example should be considered as being placed in the position of adverbial elements.

(15) *təwâphjā nān ɣà ɣɛ̂ ló jò ʔé

student any NC[human] come LOC here NEG

IM: ‘No students came here.’

(16) jə dá təwâphjā nān ɣà ʔé

1SG see student any NC[human] NEG

‘I did not see any student.’
Thus, NC phrases with nān occur only in the position of adverbial elements; that is, they do not “float” from inside of the noun phrase to the position of the adverbial phrase. This means that we cannot discuss the behavior of NC phrases with nān in terms of quantifier float. However, NC phrases with nān quantify noun phrases as well as the normal NC phrases do. In (14) and (16), for example, nān yà quantifies the noun təwāphjā. In this regard, NC phrases with nān have the common function of normal NC phrases as discussed in Section 2, and it is worth discussing the behavior of NC phrases with nān. Despite this common function, NC phrases with nān show a large difference from normal NC phrases. The difference is that NC phrases with nān can quantify a wider range of noun phrases than floated normal NC phrases can.

In (14), the NC phrase with nān quantifies the subject of an intransitive verb, in the same way as the floated normal NC phrase in (3) does. I will examine cases other than the intransitive subject below.²

● The subject of a transitive verb, cf. (4b)

(17) təwāphjā ?ān mǐ nān yà ?é
    student eat rice any NC[human] NEG
    ‘No students ate rice.’

● The object of a transitive verb, cf. (5b)

(18) ?awè dō təwāphjā lá dào phòn nān yà ?é
    3sg hit student LOC room inside any NC[human] NEG
    ‘He did not hit any students in the room.’

² In Pwo Karen negative sentences with an NC phrase with nān, putting adverbial elements other than the NC phrase is generally not preferred. In this sense, sentences (18), (20), (21), (22), (23), (24), and (25) are somewhat unnatural. One of the ways to remove this unnaturalness is by topicalizing the adverbial element. Topicalization in Pwo Karen entails a left-dislocation of the topicalized element. To take (18) as an example, if the adverbial element lā dào phòn (LOC - room - inside) ‘in the room’ is topicalized and placed sentence-initially as in lā dào phòn nā ʔawè dō təwāphjā nān yà ?é (LOC - room - inside - TOP - 3sg - hit - student - any - NC[human] - NEG), the sentence becomes quite natural.
● The indirect object of a ditransitive verb, cf. (7b)

(19) jə phîlân tɔwâphjâ láiʔào nân yà ?é
    1sg give student book any nc[human] neg
‘I did not give books to any students.’

● The direct object of a ditransitive verb, cf. (8b)

(20) jə phîlân tɔwâphjâ láiʔào ló lækōn nân bēîn ?é
    1sg give student book loc Yangon any nc[flat] neg
‘I did not give the student any books in Yangon.’

● The adjunct with dē denoting accompaniment, cf. (9b)

(21) ʔəwê thəwûlî dē ʔəmû ló dàu phên nân yà ?é
    3sg dance with woman loc room inside any nc[human] neg
‘He did not dance with any women in the room.’

● The adjunct with dē denoting instrument, cf. (10b)

(22) ʔəwê khà dē pîcâtûθînà lənìjò nân khô ?é
    3sg shoot with pistol today any nc[tool] neg
‘He did not shoot with any pistols today.’

● The adjunct with lô denoting location, cf. (11b)

(23) ʔəθî ʔânxhâ phîjâ ló phjâ lənîjò nân cón ?é
    3pl sell this.one loc market today any nc[place] three
‘They did not sell these in any markets today.’

● The adjunct with lô denoting goal, cf. (12b)

(24) ʔəwê lî ló phjâ lənîjò nân cón ?é
    3sg go loc market today any nc[place] neg
‘He did not go to any markets today.’
The adjunct with *lô* denoting source, cf. (13b)

(25) ṭəwɛ̀ nî khɔ̀thâ lô khâⁿmañâ lə̱nìjò nāⁿ cṑn ʔé

3sg get mango loc foreign.country today any NC[place] neg

‘He did not get mangos from any countries today.’

In this way, NC phrases with *nāⁿ* can quantify various noun phrases. In this respect, NC phrases with *nāⁿ* significantly differ from normal NC phrases. Recall that normal NC phrases in the position of adverbial elements can only quantify the subject, direct object, indirect object, and adjunct denoting a goal. It is still unclear whether NC phrases with *nāⁿ* can quantify every noun phrase in the same clause; however, the range of noun phrases that NC phrases with *nāⁿ* can quantify is evidently wider than that of noun phrases that floated normal NC phrases can quantify.

Kato (2004: 119–121) noted that NC phrases can be floated from quite a wide range of noun phrases in a clause. This claim was based on the fact that NC phrases with *nāⁿ* can quantify many types of noun phrase, as I discussed above. However, since NC phrases with *nāⁿ* only appear in the position of adverbial elements, they have nothing to do with the phenomenon of quantifier float. Thus, one cannot discuss NC phrases with *nāⁿ* in terms of quantifier float; it is the normal NC phrases that can be discussed from this viewpoint. Since floated normal NC phrases can only quantify the subject, direct object, indirect object, and adjunct denoting a goal, Kato’s claim that NC phrases can be floated from quite a wide range of noun phrases may be misleading.

4. Conclusion

In this report, I referred to the phenomenon in which NC phrases inside noun phrases can move to the position of adverbial elements in Pwo Karen as ‘quantifier float’ and examined what kinds of noun phrase assume this phenomenon. As a result, it was observed that NC phrases can be floated from the subject, direct object, indirect object, and adjunct denoting a goal. In other words, normal NC phrases in the position...
of adverbial elements can only quantify the subject, direct object, indirect object, and adjunct denoting a goal. I also examined the behavior of NC phrases with the negative polarity item nān. NC phrases with nān do not “float”, but they are similar to normal NC phrases in that they occur in the position of adverbial elements and quantify noun phrases. The result of the comparison was that NC phrases with nān can quantify a wider range of noun phrases than can floated normal NC phrases. The table in (26) shows the difference in the ranges of noun phrases that floated normal NC phrases and NC phrases with nān can quantify.

(26) **Noun phrases that NC phrases in the position of adverbial elements can quantify**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subjects and objects</th>
<th>Adjuncts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal NC phrases</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, with the exclusion of the goal noun-phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC phrases with nān</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to normal NC phrases and NC phrases with nān, the other forms lə-NC-NC ‘some ~’ (lə is a numeral meaning ‘one’) and kò NC dè ‘every ~’ also function as elements that can quantify noun phrases. Both of them can appear either inside noun phrases or in the position of adverbial elements, the same as normal NC phrases. See examples (27) and (28):

(27) a. təwâphjā lə-ɣà-ɣàɣɛ̂ lə́jò
      student one-NC[human]-NC[human] come LOC here
      ‘Some student came here.’

b. təwâphjāɣɛ̂ lə́jò lə-ɣà-ɣà
      student come LOC here one-NC[human]-NC[human]
      ‘Some student came here.’
My observations in the research so far suggest that the kinds of noun phrase that the floated $l\alpha$-NC-NC and $k\theta$ NC $d\varepsilon$ can quantify are the same as those that floated normal NC phrases can quantify, i.e., the subject, direct object, indirect object, and adjuncts denoting a goal. In the future, I would like to examine in more detail the kinds of noun phrase that can be quantified by floated NC phrases including these forms.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>intended meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>locative marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>numeral classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC[auto]</td>
<td>auto-classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC[animal]</td>
<td>NC for an animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC[flat]</td>
<td>NC for a flat thing</td>
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<tr>
<td>NC[human]</td>
<td>NC for a human</td>
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<td>NC[long]</td>
<td>NC for a long thing</td>
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<td>NC[place]</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcription

The transcription used in this report is phonemic. Consonant phonemes are /p, t, k, ?, ph [pʰ], th [tʰ], ch [tɕʰ], kh [kʰ], b [ɓ], d [ɗ~ʔd], c [tɕ], k, h, y, k, m, n, n̥, n, w, j, l, r [ɾ~ɾ~ɻ]/. Rhymes are /i [ɨɪ], ɨ, ɯ [ɯ~ə̆ ɯ], i̠ [ɪ], ʊ, e, ə, o, ɛ, a, ɔ, ai,
aʊ, əɴ, aɴ [ɑ̆ ɔɴ], oɴ, eiɴ [eiɴ~ei], əɯɴ [əɯɴ~əɯ], oʊɴ [oʊɴ~oʊ]. There are four tones: /á/ [55], /ā/ [33~334], /à/ [11], /â/ [51]. Pwo Karen has atonic syllables, which can occur in all positions except the utterance final. The only rhyme that can occur in atonic syllables is /ə/, and atonic syllables are transcribed with no tone marking.

I used to transcribe the vowel phoneme /i̠/ [ɪ] as /ɩ/. The symbol /ɩ/ is difficult to distinguish from /i/ when they are written with a tone sign. Compare, for example, /ɩ́/ and /í/. Moreover, /ɩ́/ and /í/ are hard to distinguish from each other in some IPA fonts in italics. Therefore, I use /i̠/ instead of /ɩ/ in this report.

Acknowledgments

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References


所[ILCAA]. (In Japanese)