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Lai Quoted and Reported Speech

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Lai is spoken in and around the town of Hakha, present administrative capital of Chin State, Myanmar. It is often called (Hakha) Chin in linguistic literature. According to *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009), the total speaking population is 131,260, including a large number in Mizoram State, India. Lai is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Kuki-Chin subgroup; as such it has the characteristic agreement system of verbs with their subjects and objects, and the alternation of verb stems subject to morphosyntactic conditions. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 42nd International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, hosted by Payap University, November 2009.

1. Quoted versus reported speech. What people say is reflected in language in two different ways. Consider the following Lai sentences.

- (1) a *Pa Sui* *nih*, "***Ka ra***," *a* *ti*.
 Pa Sui BY 1 come 3 say
 'PS said, "I am coming."
- b *Pa Sui* *nih* ***a*** ***rat*** *kha* *a* *chim*.
 Pa Sui BY 3 come that 3 say
 'PS said that he was coming.'

In (1a), the words *ka ra* 'I am coming' claim to mirror the exact words spoken by Pa Sui. This is indicated by the quotation marks (" ... ") surrounding them; traditionally it is termed 'direct discourse', but we will call it here 'quoted speech'. In (1b), the corresponding words *a rat* 'he was coming' are not intended to repeat Pa Sui's words, but rather to convey the meaning of what he said. As opposed to direct discourse (or quoted speech), this is traditionally termed 'indirect discourse' and will be called here 'reported speech'. As in sentences (1), the quoted and reported portions of our examples will be marked in boldface.

We immediately notice at least three differences between quoted speech as in (1a) and reported speech as in (1b). The most salient is probably the interpretation of grammatical person. There are no pronouns in (1ab), but *ka ra* in (1a) implies a first person singular subject, while *a rat* in (1b) implies a third person singular subject. *Ka* and *a* are subject agreement markers, respectively first and third person singular. In this paper, Lai agreement markers are glossed with person and number features (e. g, 2 or 1-2) but Lai pronouns are glossed with English pronouns. For details on Lai agreement, see Bedell 1998. Nevertheless, the particular person said to be coming is the same in both sentences: Pa Sui. More accurately, in (1) the person who is coming must be Pa Sui, and in (2) that person may be, and without context probably is, Pa Sui. But in an appropriate context it might be someone else: *Pa Hu tah?* 'What about PH?' *Pa Sui nih a rat kha a chim*. 'PS said that he (=PH) was coming.' If (1b) is changed to (2), with first person agreement as in (1a), then the person said to be coming is not Pa Sui, but the speaker of (2).

- (2) *Pa Sui nih ka rat kha a chim.*
 Pa Sui BY 1 come that 3 say
 'PS said that I was coming.'

On the other hand if (1b) is changed to (3), then the person said to be coming is someone other than Pa Sui. Note that Lai agreement does not distinguish gender.

- (3) *Pa Sui nih, "A ra," a ti.*
 Pa Sui BY 3 come 3 say
 'PS said, "She is coming."'

If that person was in fact being addressed by Pa Sui, then (4) might have the same meaning.

- (4) *Pa Sui nih, "Na ra," a ti.*
 Pa Sui BY 2 come 3 say
 'PS said, "You are coming."'

The explanation for all this is that in quoted speech, not only are the exact words repeated, but the context in which they were said is carried over. In reported speech, the meaning is conveyed in the context of the entire sentence. Thus, for example, *ka* in (1a) is interpreted in a context, supplied by the verb *ti* 'say', in which the speaker is Pa Sui. The same word in (2) is interpreted in the context of the sentence as a whole, whose speaker is not Pa Sui, but is unnamed and not otherwise mentioned.

The second point of difference is the presence in (1b) of the word *kha* 'that', which may not appear with quoted speech:

- (5) **Pa Sui nih, "Ka ra," kha a ti.*

The word *kha* belongs to a set of deictics, including also *hi* 'this', *khi* 'that' and *cu* 'that'. When used in a sentence like (1b) or (2), its effect is to mark what precedes it as a noun phrase, and therefore as an argument of the verb it accompanies. Quoted speech like *ka ra* in (1a), whatever its semantic relation to the verb *ti* may be, is not syntactically a noun phrase obeying Lai grammar, but can be something said in a foreign language or even a non-linguistic sound. Reported speech like *a rat* in (1b) by contrast, is subject to the grammar of Lai and though internally a clause is externally a noun phrase as marked by *kha*. This is an effect of its integration into the entire sentence of which it forms a component. For details on Lai deictics, see Bedell 2001, and citations given there.

The third point of difference is the form of the verb stem:

- (6) **Pa Sui nih, "Ka rat," a ti.*
 (7) **Pa Sui nih a ra kha a chim.*

Like many Lai verbs, *ra* 'come' has an alternate stem, *rat*. Intransitive verbs like *ra* use the base form in simple clauses like *ka ra* 'I am coming', but use the alternate form in subordinate or nominalized clauses like *a rat kha* 'that he is coming'. Sentences like (6) in which the alternate stem appears in a simple clause, or like (7) in which the base stem appears in a subordinate or nominalized clause, are ungrammatical. Like the use of *kha*, the use of the alternate stem is an effect of the integration of reported speech into the sentence in which it is contained. For details on Lai verb stem alternation see Kathol 2003, and citations given there.

2. Reported interrogatives. Compare sentences (8a) and (8b) with (1a) and (1b); (8a) is quoted speech corresponding to reported speech in (8b).

- (8) a *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na ka daw maw?" a ti.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 1 love Q 3 say
 'ZZ said to PS, "Do you love me?"'
- b *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu amah a dawt le dawt lo kha a hal.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that he/she 3 love or love NEG that 3
 ask
 'ZZ asked PS whether he loved her.'

A major difference between the two pairs of sentences is that while the quoted or reported speech in (1) contains an intransitive verb *ra* or *rat*, that in (8) contains a transitive verb *daw* (base form) or *dawt* (alternate form) 'love'.

Some of the differences between (8a) and (8b) parallel those between (1a) and (1b). In (8b) both the subject and object of the verb *daw* or *dawt* become third person instead of first or second, because they are interpreted in the context of the whole sentence rather than the original context of the quoted speech as in (8a). In (9) we see the same agreement markers interpreted as referring to persons other than Zingzing or Pa Sui.

- (9) *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu na ka dawt le dawt lo kha a hal.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 1 love or love NEG that 3 ask
 'ZZ asked PS whether you love me.'

And just like (3) and (4) in relation to (1), the quoted speech version corresponding to (8b) can vary depending on aspects of the context not directly represented in the sentences.

- (10) a *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "A daw maw?" a ti.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 3 love Q 3 say
 'ZZ said to PS, "Does he love her?"'
- b *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na daw maw?" a ti.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 love Q 3 say
 'ZZ said to PS, "Do you love her?"'
- c *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Aan daw maw?" a ti.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 3-2 love Q 3 say
 'ZZ said to PS, "Does she love you?"'

If Zingzing is asking about Pa Sui, (10b) or (10c) will be an appropriate form; otherwise (10a). Just as in (6), the word *kha* in (8b) cannot appear in (8a), and for the same reason:

- (11) **Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na ka daw maw?" kha a ti.*

In (8a) the quoted speech is a polar (yes-no) question, marked in Lai by the word *maw*. *Maw* may appear only in main clause questions, but not in subordinate questions. Thus (12) is ungrammatical.

(12) **Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu amah a daw maw kha a hal.*

The pattern of stem alternation is different for transitive verbs than it is for intransitive verbs. For the latter as illustrated in (1a) versus (1b), the base form is the default. But for transitive verbs, it is the alternate form which is the default. In (8a) the base form *daw* appears in the quoted speech because of the polar question structure: *maw* requires the base form. In (8b) *maw* does not appear and thus the alternate form *dawt* is used. One thing this shows is that verb stem choice in this case is not sensitive to semantics or pragmatics so much as to the morphosyntactic structure: the meaning of a polar question is equally present in both (8a) and (8b). In the reported speech variant (8b) *maw* is replaced by a disjoined structure *dawt le dawt lo* 'love or not love'. This disjoined structure can be used in main clauses or quoted speech, as in (13); (8a) can be regarded as an abbreviation of (13).

(13) *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na ka daw maw daw lo?" a ti.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 1 love Q love not 3 say
 'ZZ said to PS, "Do you love me or not?"'

3. Reported imperatives. Now compare (14) with the two previous pairs (1) and (8). Here (14a) is quoted speech while (14b) is reported speech.

(14) a *Zingzing nih, "Hi-ka ah ra (tuah)," a ka ti.*
 Zingzing BY this-place to come please 3 1 say
 'ZZ said to me, "(Please) come here."
 b *Zingzing nih cu-ka ah kal ding-in a ka fial.*
 Zingzing BY that-place to go should-P 3 1 tell
 'ZZ told me to go there.'

The shifts from *hika* 'here' and *ra* 'come' in (14a) to *cuka* 'there' and *kal* 'go' in (14b) are parallel to the shifts in grammatical person discussed for the earlier examples. That is, they are an effect of the shift of context. *Hika ah ra (tuah)* '(please) come here' in (14a) must be interpreted in the context of Zingzing's speech act, while *cuka ah kal* 'go there' in (14b) is interpreted in the context of the speech act constituted by (14b) itself. That there is no grammatical person shift between these sentences is due to the absence of any agreement markers in either the quoted speech or reported speech in (14).

The absence of agreement with *ra* 'come' in (14a) or *kal* 'go' in (14b) is in turn due to the fact that both the quoted and reported speech are imperative. Main clause imperatives in Lai are not marked by any particle like *maw*; rather they are base forms of either transitive or intransitive verbs, without subject agreement. The word *tuah* in (14a) is itself the imperative form of the verb *tuah* 'do', and serves to soften a possibly abrupt command. It cannot occur in reported speech.

(15) **Zingzing nih cuka ah kal tuah dingin a ka fial.*

The word *dingin* in (14b) consists of a noun *ding* meaning something like 'should' combined with a postposition *in* 'from'. It helps convey the imperative meaning in reported speech. But *dingin* is not required to convey the intended meaning; (16) is a possible variant.

(16) *Zingzing nih cu-ka ah kal a ka fial.*
 Zingzing BY that-place to go 3 1 tell
 'ZZ told me to go there.'

Here the imperative meaning is clear from the main verb *fial* 'tell'.

4. The verb *ti*, and *tiah*. In the sentences examined so far, the main verb in all examples of reported speech is *ti*, which was glossed uniformly as 'say'. Lai has a rich inventory of other verbs which can refer to speech acts, but they are not all easily accompanied by quoted speech. Two of (17), (18) and (19) containing the same verbs in (1b), (8b) and (14b), are ungrammatical.

(17) **Pa Sui nih, "Ka ra," a chim.*

(18) *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na ka daw maw?" a hal.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 1 love Q 3 ask
 'ZZ asked PS, "Do you love me?"'

(19) **Zingzing nih, "Hika ah ra (tua), a ka fial.*

If we wish to use verbs like *chim* 'say' or *fial* 'tell' with quoted speech, then we must insert a particle *tiah* after the quoted speech, which may also be used with *hal* 'ask'.

(20) *Pa Sui nih, "Ka ra," ti-ah a chim.*
 Pa Sui BY 1 come say-P 3 say
 'PS said, "I am coming."'

(21) *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na ka daw maw?" ti-ah a hal.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 1 love Q say-P 3 ask
 'ZZ asked PS, "Do you love me?"'

(22) *Zingzing nih "Hi-ka ah ra (tua), ti-ah a ka fial.*
 Zingzing BY this-place to come please say-P 3 1 say
 'ZZ told me, "(Please) come here."'

Tiah appears to consist of the verb *ti* combined with a postposition *ah*. *Ti* here takes no agreement, and *tiah* serves as a verbal 'close quote'.

Tiah cannot appear with reported speech, but it may be used optionally with the verb *ti*.

(23) **Pa Sui nih a rat kha tiah a chim.*

(24) **Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu amah a dawt le dawt lo kha tiah a hal.*

(25) **Zingzing nih cuka ah kal dingin tiah a ka fial.*

(26) to (28) are variants of (1a), (8a) and (14a).

(26) *Pa Sui nih, "Ka ra," ti-ah a ti.*
 Pa Sui BY 1 come say-P 3 say
 'PS said, "I am coming."'

(27) *Zingzing nih Pa Sui cu, "Na ka daw maw?" ti-ah a ti.*
 Zingzing BY Pa Sui that 2 1 love Q say-P 3 say
 'ZZ said to PS, "Do you love me?"'

- (28) *Zingzing nih, "Hi-ka ah ra (tuah)," tiah a ka ti.*
 Zingzing BY this-place to come please say-P3 1 say
 'ZZ said to me, "(Please) come here."

5. Variations (1). The pair of sentences (29) is to be compared with previous pairs such as (1), (8) and (14).

- (29) a *Pa Sui cu, "Ka ti a hal," ti in a au.*
 Pa Sui that 1 water 3 ask say P 3 shout
 'PS shouted, "I am thirsty."
- b *Pa Sui cu a ti-hal in a au.*
 Pa Sui that 3 water-ask P 3 shout
 'PS shouted that he was thirsty.'

One difference is that in (29) the verb in the quoted or reported speech is the compound *tihal*, which literally means 'ask for water', but is an idiom meaning 'be thirsty'. As in (29a), when it appears as a main verb, subject agreement (here *ka*) appears with the first member (*ti*) while a dummy third person singular (*a*) appears with the second member. In the corresponding reported speech (29b), not only does the subject agreement shift as in earlier examples, but the dummy third person singular marker disappears. The result is usually written as a single word, and could be interpreted as a noun, with the shifted subject agreement marker becoming a genitive. A second difference is the appearance of *ti in* in (29a) rather than *tiah*.

- (30) *Pa Sui cu, "Ka ti a hal," ti-ah a au.*
 Pa Sui that 1 water 3 ask say-P3 shout
 'PS shouted, "I am thirsty."

In and *ah* are two of the most common postpositions in Lai. In their basic locative or directional sense, *ah* means 'in' or 'to' and *in* means 'from', but they have a number of other uses. It is difficult to say what their meaning is in (29a) or (30). The use of *ti in* in (29a) suggests that *au* 'shout' is being used intransitively. (29b) also has the postposition *in* following *tihal* 'thirsty'; this *in* cannot be replaced by *ah*.

- (31) **Pa Sui cu a tihal ah a au.*

6. Variations (2). (32) is another set of quoted speech (32a) versus reported speech (32bc).

- (32) a *Keimah nih nangmah cu aho sin hmanh ah, "Amah cu*
 I BY youSG that who toward even to he/she that
mifir a si," kaan ti bal lo.
 thief 3 be 1-2 say ever NEG
 'I never said to anyone of you, "He is a thief."

- b *Keimah nih aho sin hmanh ah mifir na si kha ka chim*
 I BY who toward even to thief 2 be that 1 say
bal lo.
 ever NEG
 'I never said to anyone that you were a thief.'
- c *Keimah nih nangmah cu aho sin hmanh ah mifir in kaan*
 I BY youSG that who toward even to thief P 1-2
chim bal lo.
 say ever NEG
 'I never called you a thief to anyone.'

In (32a), the quoted speech consists of a sentence with a predicate noun. The verb *si* serves as a copula in Lai. (32b), then is the corresponding reported speech, preserving the clausal structure of the quoted speech in (32a). But (32c) conveys the same meaning with the reported speech reduced to a noun phrase.

(32a) contains three pronouns: *keimah* 'I', subject of the main verb *ti*; *amah* 'he/she', subject of the quoted speech copula *si*; and *nangmah* 'you'. The *a* in quoted speech shows agreement with *amah*, and *kaan* shows agreement with *keimah* as subject and *nangmah* as object. But the status of *nangmah* is interesting. Normally object agreement with *ti* reflects the indirect human object as in sentences like (14a) or (28). But the indirect object in (32a) is the indefinite *aho sin hmanh ah* 'to anyone', which is third person. *Nangmah* here serves to shift the quoted pronoun *amah* into the context of the entire sentence (where it corresponds to second person). This can be done in English with prepositions like 'of' or 'about', but in Lai such noun phrases may be treated as objects. In (32b) *nangmah* is not needed for this purpose and its accompanying object agreement disappears. *Nangmah* might appear as part of the reported speech in (33), paired with the subject agreement agreement marker *na*.

- (33) *Keimah nih aho sin hmanh ah nangmah cu mifir na si*
 I BY who toward even to youSG that thief 2 be
kha ka chim bal lo.
 that 1 say ever NEG
 'I never said to anyone that you were a thief.'

In (32c) by contrast the reported speech clause is reduced to a noun phrase, and the same *nangmah* as in (32a) reappears with the accompanying object agreement.

7. Variations (3). (34) is a another set of quoted speech (34a) versus reported speech (34bcd).

- (34) a *Kipte sin-ah, "Amah cu ka duh lo," ti-ah na ka ti.*
 Kipte toward-P he/she that 1 love NEG say-P2 1 say
 'You said to K of me, "I don't love him.'"
- b *Kipte sin-ah na ka duh lo kha na chim.*
 Kipte toward-P 2 1 love NEG that 2 say
 'You said to K that you don't love me.'
- c *Na ka duh lo kha Kipte na chimh.*
 2 1 love NEG that Kipte 2 tell

'You told K that you don't love me.'

- d *Na ka duh-lo-nak kha Kipte na chimh.*
 2 1 love-NEG-NOM that Kipte 2 tell
 'You told K about your not loving me.'

(34a) resembles (32a) in containing an object (first person singular, but no overt pronoun) serving to shift the third person singular subject *amah* of the quoted speech to the context of the entire sentence. (34b) is the corresponding reported speech with two shifts incorporated. (34c) differs from (34b) in that the verb *chimh* takes an indirect object which *chim* does not. *Kipte* in (34ab) is an adverbial as indicated by the postposition *sinah* and the absence of object agreement. In (34cd) the same word is an object as indicated by the absence of *sinah* and the presence of object agreement. (34d) differs from (34c) in the use of a nominal marked by the suffix *-nak* in place of one marked only by *kha*.

8. Variations (4). (35) is still another set of quoted speech (35abc) versus reported speech (35bcd).

- (35) a *Pa Hu nih Tlemte cu, "Nangmah nih pei, 'Kaan duh lo,'*
 Pa Hu BY Tlemte that youSG BY FOC 1-2 love NEG
ti-ah na rak ka ti ko kha," ti-ah a ti.
 say-P 2 PERF 1 say EMPH that say-P 3 say
 'PH said to T, "You were the one who said to me, 'I don't love you,'"
- b *Pa Hu nih Tlemte cu, "Nangmah nih pei na ka duhlonak*
 Pa Hu BY Tlemte that youSG BY FOC 2 1 love-NEG-NOM
na rak ka chimh ko kha," ti-ah a ti.
 2 PERF 1 say EMPH that say-P 3 say
 'PH said to T, "You were the one who said to me that you didn't love me."

(34a) has two instances of quoted speech, one inside the other. In (35b) the innermost instance of quoted speech in (35a) has been converted to reported speech; the nominalized form with *-nak* is used as in (32d).

In (35c) the outermost instance of quoted speech in (35a) has been converted to reported speech, and in (35d), both instances.

- c *Pa Hu nih, amah Tlemte nih "Kaan duh lo," ti-ah a*
 Pa Hu BY he/she Tlemte BY 1-2 love NEG say-P 3
rak chim-mi kha Tlemte cu a chimh.
 PERF say-REL that Tlemte that 3 tell
 'PH told T that she was the one who said "I don't love you."'
- d *Pa Hu nih, amah Tlemte nih a duh-lo-nak a rak*
 Pa Hu BY he/she Tlemte BY 3 love-NEG-NOM 3 PERF
chim-mi kha Tlemte cu a chimh.
 say-REL that Tlemte that 3 tell
 'PH told T that she was the one who said that she didn't love him.'

Of interest here is the focus particle *pei*, which requires a deictic following the predicate of its clause (*kha* in this case). Like the question particle *maw* in (8a) and (10), or like *tuah* in (14a), *pei*

cannot appear in reported speech. In (35cd) its meaning is captured by a cleft construction *a rak chimmi kha* 'the one who said.'

9. Variations (5). (36) is a final pair of quoted speech (36a) versus reported speech (36b).

(36) a *Cerku nu nih sayamanu kha, "Maw ka bawi-nu te, ka fa cu zangfah ko sawh!" a ti.*
 Cerku mother BY teacher-F that VOC 1 lady HON
 1 child that have.mercy EMPH HON 3 say
 'C's mother said to the teacher, "Madam, have mercy on my child!"'

b *Cerku nu nih a fa ca-ahsayamanu kha trihzah ngai in a nawl-pat.*
 Cerku mother BY 3 child for-P teacher that veneration much P
 3 plead
 'C's mother pleaded with the teacher very respectfully for her child.'

(36a) contains a vocative phrase *maw ka bawinu te* 'madam' as well as the final particle *sawh*, which cannot appear in reported speech. In (36b) nothing corresponding to the vocative material appears, and the honorific particle *sawh* is reported by the descriptive adverbial *trihzah ngai in* 'very respectfully'. The verb of the quoted speech *zangfah* 'have mercy' is reported as a component of the main verb *nawlpat* 'plead for'.

10. Conclusion. The distinction between quoted and reported speech seems to be straightforward from a speaker's point of view: either you intend to give someone's exact words (which of course must be interpreted in their original context), or you don't and merely report the content of what was said in the context of your report. But it should be clear from the examples we have discussed that from a listener's point of view the matter is far from straightforward. Like other languages, Lai contains material which can appear only in main clauses, but not in subordinate clauses. When such material is to be conveyed in reported speech, paraphrases must be found. There may also be the contrary phenomenon: material which can appear only in subordinate but not in main clauses. But it is difficult to find clear evidence of this because there are no constraints on what can count as quoted speech. There is no question of providing well defined rules for finding reported speech forms which correspond to given quoted speech forms or vice versa. There is in general an indefinite number of reported speech forms for any particular quoted speech sentence and a similarly indefinite number of quoted speech forms for any particular reported speech sentence.

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---|
| 1 | first person |
| 2 | second person |
| 3 | third person |
| BEN | benefactive suffix |
| BY | agentive postposition (or ergative case marker) |
| CAUS | causative suffix |
| EMPH | emphatic particle |
| F | feminine suffix |
| FUT | future particle |
| HON | honorific particle |
| IMP | imperative particle |

| | |
|------|---------------------------|
| NEG | negative particle |
| NOM | nominalizing suffix |
| ORD | ordinal suffix |
| P | postposition |
| PL | plural suffix or particle |
| Q | interrogative particle |
| REL | relative suffix |
| PERF | perfect particle |
| youS | you (singular) |

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