神戸市外国語大学 学術情報リポジトリ

Impersonal Construction with the Noun ‘Thing’ in Subject Position in Pwo Karen

メタデータ	言語: English
	出版者:
	公開日: 2021-09-08
	キーワード (Ja):
	キーワード (En):
	作成者: 加藤, 昌彦
	メールアドレス:
	所属:
URL	https://kobe-cufs.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/2586

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 International License.

CHAPTER 7

Impersonal Construction with the Noun 'Thing' in Subject Position in Pwo Karen

Atsuhiko KATO

[ABSTRACT]

Pwo Karen has an impersonal construction, in which *chə*, a noun meaning 'thing', assumes the subject position without the original lexical meaning. In this paper, clauses exhibiting this feature are called "*chə*-clauses". The usages of *chə*-clauses can be classified into four types, considering the motivations with which they are used, as follows: (i) the agent is generic, (ii) information about the agent is irrelevant, (iii) the clause denotes a meteorological phenomenon, and (iv) a physiological/psychological state is uncontrollable. Usages (i) and (ii) are discourse motivated, while (iii) and (iv) are semantics motivated. The functions of *chə*-clauses can be considered to be related to agent defocusing, and Usages (i) and (ii) can be seen as covering the lower three rows of the cline of agent defocusing proposed by Sansò (2006).

1. Introduction

Pwo Karen is an analytic language belonging to the Karenic branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages (Matisoff 2003). The Karenic languages are of the subject–verb–object (SVO) type, which is unusual among the SOV-dominant Tibeto-Burman languages. The present paper treats the Hpa-an dialect of Pwo Karen, which is spoken around Hpa-an, the capital city of Karen State, Myanmar. This dialect belongs to the Eastern Pwo Karen group. For the classification of the Pwo Karen dialects, see Kato (2009b) and Phillips (1996, 2018). Furthermore, for an overview of the phonology and morphosyntax of the Hpa-an dialect, see Kato (2017, 2019b).

The noun *chə* in Pwo Karen has a generic meaning of 'thing'. However, this noun may be used in the subject position of a clause without this meaning. Thus, (1a) and (2a) are examples of ordinary clauses without *chə*, whereas (1b) and (2b) are examples of clauses with *chə* that does not mean 'thing'.

(1) a. ʔəθí lì̱ cáiɴkwè lə́ klòɴləkōʊɴ klə̀ lɔ̂.
3PL go go.around LOC Shwedagon always EMP
'They always visit Shwedagon Pagoda.'

b. **chə** lì̱ cáiɴkwè lə́ klòɴləkōʊɴ klə̀ lɔ̂.
thing go go.around LOC Shwedagon always EMP
'People (in general) always visit Shwedagon Pagoda.'

(2) a. ʔəwê ʔáɴɣʉ́ jə cɛ́pēiɴ.
3SG steal 1SG bicycle
'He stole my bicycle.'

b. **chə** ʔáɴɣʉ́ jə cɛ́pēiɴ.
thing steal 1SG bicycle
'My bicycle was stolen.'

In (1a) and (2a), *ʔəθí* '3PL' and *ʔəwê* '3SG' occur, respectively, in the subject position. In contrast, in (1b) and (2b), *chə* occurs in the subject position in place of these pronouns. As it was already mentioned, the noun *chə* originally means 'thing'. However, since both the verb predicates *lḭ̄ cáiɴkwè* 'to visit' in (1) and *ʔáɴɣʉ́* 'to steal' in (2) require an animate subject, it is obvious that *chə* in (1b) and (2b) does not mean 'thing'. As we will see in Section 3, *chə* in (1b) shows that the agent is generic, and in (2b), it shows that information about the agent is irrelevant.

The noun *chə* that does not mean 'thing', as is the case in (1b) and (2b), can only occur in the subject position. To examine this, we compare the following two sentences:

(3) ʔəwê dʊ́ jə̀.
3SG hit 1SG
'He hit me.'

(4) ʔəwê dʊ́ **chə̄**.
3SG hit thing
'He hit a thing.'

When we use *chə̄* in place of *jə̀* in Example (3), we obtain (4). As we will see in Section 2, *chə* takes the form *chə̄* in the object position. The noun *chə̄* in (4) means 'thing', unlike *chə* in (1b) and (2b). It is a general point that *chə/chə̄* only means 'thing' in a position other than the subject position.

In this paper, a clause in which *chə* that does not mean 'thing' occurs in the subject position, as is the case in (1b) and (2b), is called a "*chə*-clause", and *chə* in a *chə*-clause is called "impersonal *chə*". Siewierska (2008: 116) says that from a structural point of view, an impersonal construction is associated with the lack of a canonical subject. Since a *chə*-clause allows the noun that means 'thing' used in place of a human subject, it is a clause with a non-canonical subject. Siewierska (2008: 116) also says that from the functional perspective, an impersonal construction is associated with agent defocusing. As we will see in Section 4, *chə*-clauses are related to agent defocusing. Thus, there would be no problem in considering *chə*-clauses as a kind of impersonal construction.[1]

[1] Siewierska (2004: 210–213) calls forms denoting people in general "impersonal forms". Usage (i) discussed later fits this definition. Malchukov and Siewierska (2011: 1) widely define impersonal constructions as constructions lacking a referential subject. Since *chə*-clauses are related to agent defocusing, a procedure that decreases referentiality of the subject, they also fit this definition.

The purpose of this paper is to describe usages of *chə*-clauses, motivated by discourse or semantics, on the basis of viewing them as an impersonal construction.

In the remainder of this paper, Section 2 observes the use of *chə* as a noun that means 'thing'. Subsequently, Section 3 divides the usages of *chə*-clauses into four types, based on the motivations of using *chə*-clauses, and discusses the characteristics of each usage. Section 4 attempts to position the discourse-motivated usages of *chə*-clauses in the cline of agent defocusing that Sansò (2006) proposed. Section 5 concludes the paper, suggesting the origin of *chə*-clauses.

As Shibatani (1985), Myhill (1997), and Sansò (2006) point out, in many languages, agent defocusing is achieved by passive constructions. However, Pwo Karen does not have a passive construction. Nevertheless, it has a middle construction, and middle constructions are generally assumed to be associated with agent defocusing. The functional difference between *chə*-clauses and the middle construction in Pwo Karen is discussed in Section 4.

2. Lexical *chə* 'thing'

Before turning to the main discussion, it is necessary to look at the use of *chə* meaning 'thing'. This use of *chə*, which can be called "lexical *chə*", has two forms: the atonic form *chə* and the form with the mid-level tone *chə̄*. Historically, the former is derived from the latter, as is evident from comparison with other Karenic languages such as Sgaw Karen (for the Sgaw Karen form, see Section 5). The form *chə* is used when it occurs bare in the subject position, as in (5), and in the non-final position of a noun phrase, as in (6). The form *chə̄* is used when it occurs bare in the object position of a verb (or a preposition), as in (7), and in the final position of a noun phrase with a modifying element before it, as in (8). Since the impersonal *chə* also occurs bare in the subject position, it is not pronounced as *chə̄*. In this paper, the form *chə*, which occurs in *chə*-clauses, is used as the representative form.

(5) **chə** làɴthé.
thing drop
'The goods dropped.'

(6) **chə** lə́ ʔəθàklà
thing LOC middle
'the thing in the middle'

(7) nə ʔáɴchâ **chə̄** bátəkè ʁâ.
2SG sell thing convenient Q
'Are you selling the product well?'

(8) nə **chə̄** ʔɔ́ khɔ̂ lɛ̂.
2SG thing be where Q
'Where is yours?'

A large difference between lexical and impersonal *chə* is that lexical *chə* can be modified by a demonstrative, whereas impersonal *chə* cannot. For example, in (9) and (10), *chə* in (5) and (7) is respectively modified by the demonstrative *jò* 'this':

(9) **chə** **jò** làɴthé.
thing this drop
'This one dropped.'

(10) nə ʔáɴchâ **chə** **jò** bátəkè ʁâ.
2SG sell thing this convenient Q
'Are you selling this product well?'

However, when impersonal *chə* in (1b) and (2b) is modified by *jò*, we obtain unacceptable sentences, as shown in (11) and (12):

(11) ***chə** **jò** lḭ̀ cáiɴkwè lə́ klòɴləkōʊɴ klə̀ lɔ̂.
thing this go go.around LOC Shwedagon always EMP

(12) ***chə** **jò** ʔáɴɣʊ́ jə cɛ́pēiɴ.
thing this steal 1SG bicycle

This incapability of being modified by a demonstrative is true of *chə* in all the usages of *chə*-clauses.

There are two functional morphemes that are considered to have been grammaticalized from lexical *chə*. One is the nominalizer *chə*, which nominalizes a verb phrase (VP). In (13), the VP *ɣɛ̂ kɛ́ tháɴ θâ bɛ̂jòθò* 'to have become like this' is nominalized, and in (14), the VP *mà ʔáɴ xàʊ* 'to make a living on swidden agriculture' is nominalized.

(13) **chə** **ɣɛ̂** **kɛ́** **tháɴ** **θâ** **bɛ̂jòθò** θí bálɛ̂ nə lə lɔ̀.
thing come become up CONT like.this TOP why 2SG NEG tell
'Why didn't you tell me **the fact that things have become like this**?'
(Movie <*khwījànwêchînî*>)

(14) **chə** **mà** **ʔáɴ** **xàʊ** nɔ́ dɔ̀ bá mà ʔáɴ wê
thing do eat swidden TOP again must do eat EMP

lə́ ɣáɴkhʊ́ tháɴthɔ̂ khɔ́lòɴ kòmèiɴlá phə̀ɴ nɔ́ lɔ́.
LOC ground high mountain jungle inside that AST
'**Making a living on swidden agriculture** has to be done in highlands inside the jungles.' (Essay III-02)

The other is the prefix *chə*-, which derives nouns. In many cases, it derives nouns from verbs, as in (15) through (19), whereas it may also form derivative nouns from nouns,[2] as in (20) and (21).

(15) chəchə̀ɴ 'rain' < chə- + chə̀ɴ 'to rain'
(16) chəkhlàiɴ 'language' < chə- + khlàiɴ 'to speak'
(17) chədóɴ 'wall' < chə- + dóɴ 'to fence'
(18) chəmà 'job, work' < chə- + mà 'to do'
(19) chənáiɴ 'mark' < chə- + náiɴ 'to put a mark'
(20) chəpərə̂ɴ 'information' < chə- + pərə̂ɴ 'news about somebody'
(21) chəɣàɴ 'picture' < chə- + ɣàɴ 'appearance, figure'

3. Usages of *chə*-clauses

According to Sansò (2006) and Siewierska (2008), impersonal constructions are functionally related to agent defocusing (for a detailed discussion on agent defocusing, see Shibatani 1985, especially pp. 830–840). Myhill (1997) points out that there are two types of motivations for agent defocusing, that is, discourse motivations and semantic motivations. In Pwo Karen, these two kinds of motivations for using *chə*-clauses are observed. The usages of *chə*-clauses can therefore be classified into two groups, discourse-motivated and semantics-motivated usages, and each of the two can be further classified into two types; thus, there are four usages.

In the discussion of this paper, the term "agent" is used in a non-strict sense, as is the case in Myhill (1997). It is meant to indicate an entity that the subject argument of a verb refers to. Accordingly, agent covers not only a genuine agent, but also an experiencer, theme, or patient. The term "patient" is also used for an entity to which the object argument refers.

3.1 Discourse-motivated usage

There are two discourse-motivated usages, which are observed when (i) the agent is generic and (ii) information about the agent is irrelevant. Because the genericity and relevance of the agent are issues that depend on discourse contexts, we can say that both usages are discourse motivated.

3.1.1 Usage (i): Generic agent

Usage (i) denotes that the agent is generic. See (22)(=(1b)).

(22) **chə** lì̱ cáiɴkwè lə́ klòɴləkōʊɴ klə̀ lə̂. (=(1b))
thing go go.around LOC Shwedagon always EMP
'People (in general) always visit Shwedagon Pagoda.'

This sentence expresses that everyone frequently visits Shwedagon Pagoda, a famous sightseeing place located in Yangon, Myanmar. A *chə*-clause of Usage (i) denotes that the agent is generic, as can be seen in this example. However, its

[2] Shibatani (2018) calls this type of nominalization "nominal-based nominalization".

genericity varies from one context to another in which *chə*-clauses of this usage occur. A proposition expressed by a *chə*-clause may sometimes be true of every human being, but it may sometimes be only true of a subgroup of human beings. To be precise, (22) would suppose that the agent is people of Myanmar or foreign tourists who visit Myanmar, that is, not all people in general. Further in text, we will see various cases of genericity that *chə*-clauses of this usage express.

In (23), the agent of the clause *chə ʔáɴ thîlá* is every human being. This sentence further states that those who eat salt are not limited to human beings, suggesting that every creature eats salt.

(23) **chə** ʔáɴ thîlá jò mwɛ̄ həmənī lə mèiɴ lɔ̂ ʔé.
thing eat salt TOP COP human.beings one kind only NEG
'Those who eat salt are not only human beings.' (Essay II-03)

In (24) through (28), the agent is not people in general, but a subgroup of human beings (or creatures) in a certain sense. In every example, the *chə*-clause expresses that the proposition is true for every member of the subgroup. In (24), the agent is people in general that meet "you" for the first time.

(24) **chə** thi̱ɴ wá nà dē ʔəphlòʊɴ lɔ̂.
thing think Pv(ina) 2sg COM Karen EMP
'[People] will take you for a Karen.' (Conversation 003)

In (25), the agent is people in general that know the speaker.

(25) jə mèiɴ nɔ́ **chə** kò wê kəlâiɴ.
1SG name TOP thing call EMP Kalaing
'They call me Kalaing (a personal name).' (Movie <*khwījànwêchînî*>)

Example (26) is taken from a folk tale. The characters in the folk tale are anthropomorphized fish. The addressees are many kinds of fish. The agent of the *chə*-clause is all the members in general that constitute the society of fish excluding the hearers.

(26) nəθí phàɴ nəθí nòʊɴ nɔ́ **chə** bá θàmɛ́ ʔəlāɴ ʔɔ́ ʔé.
2PL spear 2PL horn TOP thing must fear place exist NEG
'As for your spears and horns, we don't have to be scared of them.' (Folk tale II-05)

The following example is taken from another folk tale. A tortoise and a swamp eel are talking. They claim that if they hide in the mud, nobody can see them. The agent would be all the creatures in general, excluding them.

(27) **chə** dá pə̀ nàɴ ɣà ʔé.
thing see 1PL any NC[human] NEG
'Nobody will see us.' (Folk tale III-15)

In (28), *pə* '1PL' refers to the Pwo Karen people. Accordingly, the agent is all the people in general that belong to all ethnic groups in the world, excluding Pwo Karen.

(28) pə lái jò ʔè lə ɣəɯɴkhə̂ɴ,
1PL script this if NEG solid

chə mə nī̱tòʊɴ ʔáɴkɔ́ chə̀ɴ pə lái jò.
thing IRR laugh criticize Pv(pl) 1PL script this
'If our [Karen] alphabet is not strong, [other peoples] will laugh at and criticize our alphabet.' (Essay IV-10)

In (29) and (30), the agent is many (not "all") members of a certain subgroup of human beings. In the situation that (29) expresses, it is difficult to suppose that all people living in Pegu used to make salt. Instead, there would have been many people who would make salt in Pegu. As is seen in this example, the agent of a *chə*-clause that expresses genericity is not always general, but it may be just "many" of the members belonging to a certain group. This is also the case in (30). It would not be the case that all the people in the towns and villages catch the disease, but "many" of the people are catching the disease.

(29) lɔ́ ʔəwī ʔò dòʊɴ pəkō ʔə chəpə̀ɴ
LOC past that town Pegu 3SG territory

chə ʔáɴphôɴ thîlá ʔá wê ʔəkhɔ́còɴ,
thing cook salt many EMP because

ʔəmèiɴ phlɔ́ dɔ́ mā lɔ́.
name appear big very AST
'Because they used to make salt in the territory of Pegu Kingdom in old times, it was fairly famous.' (Essay II-03)

(30) dòʊɴ təwâɴ phə̀ɴ nɔ́ **chə** ɕáiɕáʊ, **chə** bá chəcàʊchəchâ.
town village inside TOP thing in.trouble thing bump disease
'In the towns and villages, people are in trouble because they are catching a disease.' (Folk tale 021)

Lastly, some situations that *chə*-clauses of Usage (i) express are related to an arbitrary agent. In (31), the *chə*-clause expresses the death of an arbitrary villager; however, the proposition that this sentence expresses is generic in that it is true of every member of the village.

(31) ʔē thà nī̱ châiɴ bákə̀ɴ nɔ́ dɔ̀,
if weave get shirt excellent TOP again

təwâɴ	phə̀ɴ	nɔ́	**chə**	θîthé	nī	bá	ʔé.
village	inside	TOP	thing	die.suddenly	get	right	NEG

'When [they] weave a shirt of top-quality, anyone must not die suddenly in the village.' (Essay V-02)

As discussed above, Usage (i) expresses that the agent is generic in some sense.

3.1.2 Usage (ii): Irrelevance of information about the agent

Usage (ii) indicates that information about the agent is irrelevant in the context in which a *chə*-clause is used. Let us first take (32) as an example:

(32) **chə** ʔáɴɣʉ́ jə cɛ́pēiɴ. (=(2b))
thing steal 1SG bicycle
'My bicycle was stolen.'

Example (32) is used, for example, when one finds that his bicycle, which he put near the market, has been stolen after he finished shopping and got out of the market, and informs a police officer about what happened. In such a situation, informing the hearer the fact of having his bicycle stolen is important because the speaker does not know who stole his bicycle. By using Example (32), the speaker can express the informational importance of the action itself of stealing his bicycle. This is an effect that is achieved by the *chə*-clause that denotes the irrelevance of information about the agent.

There are two important aspects in characterizing Usage (ii). First, (32) is not a sentence that is used to make prominent the patient (=object) "bicycle". When one wants to make the patient prominent, the object noun is topicalized by left-dislocation. We get (33) when the object in (32) is left-dislocated (the dislocated noun is usually followed by a topic marker). The patient can be made prominent in this way.

(33) **jə** **cɛ́pēiɴ** nɔ́ chə ʔáɴɣʉ́.
1SG bicycle TOP thing steal
'As for my bicycle, it was stolen.'

Therefore, the motivation of using a *chə*-clause as in (32) is not to make the patient prominent.

Second, unidentifiability of the agent is not the determining motivation for using a *chə*-clause of this usage. The speaker of (32) does not know the agent when he finds his bicycle stolen. However, whether the speaker can or cannot identify the agent is not the primary determining factor in using a *chə*-clause of Usage (ii). See Example (34), which was taken from a folk tale. Mann Phado, the protagonist of the story, decided to sell his elephant. Two or three days later, a man came to buy his elephant. They reached an agreement on the trade, and the elephant was pulled away by the man.

(34) mànphàdɔ́ kəlôɴ ɣɛ̂ thàiɴ thàiɴ ɣòɴ,
MannPhado hurry come return again after

ʔánchâ kəchâɴ kɛ́ thánɴ,
sell elephant become up

chə thàiɴ mjòɴ khwái wê ʔə kəchâɴ chī lɔ́.
thing return drag Pv(thour) EMP 3SG elephant too AST
‘After Mann Phado hurried back [to the man], they (=Mann Phado and the man) reached an agreement on the trade of the elephant, and his elephant was pulled away [by the male].’ (Folk tale VI-12)

The agent of this *chə*-clause is the referent of the noun *ʔəkhwâ* ‘man’, which has already appeared in the preceding context; therefore, both speaker and hearer can identify the agent. The noun *ʔəkhwâ* can be used as the subject instead of an impersonal *chə*. Despite this, a *chə*-clause is used here because it is not important here who bought the elephant, but the event that the elephant was sold and pulled away is more important. As we can see in this example, unidentifiability of the agent is not the primary determining factor of Usage (ii).

We will see other examples of Usage (ii) further in text.

Example (35) is the dialogue between a husband and wife, taken from a scene of a Pwo Karen movie. The husband (speaker A) concealed his gun in the forest, but when he went to see it one day, it had disappeared. Thus, he says that someone must have taken it. After listening to her husband, the wife (speaker B) says that the gun cannot be found any longer because they did not see someone take it away.

(35) A: θêiɴná nɔ́ jə ʔɔ́kī thōɴ nɔ́.
gun TOP 1SG put around there

jə lì ʔánxû̀ thàiɴ lə dá nɔ́,
1SG go look.for again NEG find because

ʔəphlòʊɴ bá mànī nāɴ ɣà.
person must take some NC[human]

mwɛ̄ pɔ̂dù̀ lɛ̂ jə lə θíjâ bá.
COP who Q 1SG NEG know NEG
‘I put the gun around there. Because I couldn’t find it, someone must have taken it. I don’t know who it was.’

B: **chə** mànī hə lə dá dù̀.
thing take 1PL NEG see SFP

nə θíjâ ʁá bò.
2SG know Q SFP
'We didn't see it taken way. [So,] how do you know [who stole it]?'
(Movie <*chəchâ θàmɛ́ mâ*>)

In the wife's lines, *chə mànī* '(someone) took (it)', is the complement sentence that the verb *dá* 'see' takes as its object. Instead of impersonal *chə*, the noun *ʔəphlòʊɴ* 'person; another person', which appears in the husband's lines, can be used in the subject position. However, in this sentence, whether they saw just the action of taking the gun away is important; therefore, a *chə*-clause is used.

Next, see (36). It was taken from an interview in a Pwo Karen Internet news program.

(36) jə nánɴ thàiɴ thánɴ lə châɴ lə néiɴ.
1SG remember back attend one grade one year

lìθà ʔèiɴθâ, **chə** ʔánmə̂ɴ pjâɴ lə́ phlòʊɴ khɔ̂,
about toilet thing order translate LOC Karen side

pjâɴ bá ʔé. hə θíjâ bá ʁá nɛ̂.
translate right NEG 1SG know right Q SFP

chə ɣɛ̂ lə́ təwâɴ khâ,
thing come LOC village time

chə kò "ʔèiɴθâ" θɛ́θɛ́.
thing call toilet only
'I remember when I attended the first grade [of the Pwo Karen alphabet class]. I was told to translate "toilet" into Pwo Karen. I couldn't translate [it]. How could I have known [it]? When people are in the village, they call it "èiɴθâ" only.' (Interview 001)

The speaker tells about her experience when attending a lecture on Pwo Karen alphabets. In the class, the teacher told her to translate the Burmese word *ʔèiɴɖà* 'toilet' into Pwo Karen, but she only knew the word *ʔèiɴθâ*, a loanword from Burmese, and could not answer the quiz. In the second line, the noun *chərâ* 'teacher' can be used in place of impersonal *chə* in bold face because the speaker knows that the agent is the teacher. However, she does not do so probably because she wants to emphasize the fact that she was told to translate a Burmese word into Pwo Karen. In this interview, the word *chərâ* 'teacher' never occurs. However, from the context, the hearer (=the interviewer) can easily assume that the agent is the teacher of the class. In this respect also, the speaker does not have to mention the agent. In the last two lines of (36), two *chə*-clauses appear. These are *chə*-clauses of Usage (i).

The next example is taken from the same folk tale as (26). The characters in the folk tale are anthropomorphized fish in the rice field. One day, a fish trap was set

near the footpath of the rice field. Example (37) is the sentence that indicates this event:

(37) lə́ chə chə̀N làN θâN kàləpà thánN ʔəkhâ,
LOC thing rain(v) down just fish go.up time

thî dɔ́ thánN nɔ́, lə́ cháipràN cháipəŋāN ʔò
water big up because LOC rice.field footpath that

chə dò làN thá dè phôʊN.
thing set down Pv(kr) COM trap
'When the rainy season just began and fish came upstream, because the river had risen, a water trap was set at the footpath of the rice field.' (Folk tale II-05)

In the preceding context, the person that set the fish trap never appears. The person is referred to as *phôʊNchā* 'the owner of the trap' for the first time in the second sentence from the end of the story. The reason that it does not appear until near the end of the story would be because information about this person is unimportant. Thus, a *chə*-clause is used in (37) also because information about the agent is irrelevant throughout the story.

Next, Example (38) is taken from a conversation collected during my fieldwork in a refugee camp near Mae Sot, Thailand. When the speaker was about to go to Mae Sot from the refugee camp without permission, his friend persuaded him not to go there. This sentence was used in such a context.

(38) jə mə lì mɛ́chàʊ jò, **chə** màthái thá jə̀.
1SG IRR go MaeSot when thing obstruct Pv(kr) 1SG
'When I was going to go to Mae Sot, I was obstructed.' (Conversation 001)

The hearer, another friend of the speaker, knows that the speaker's friend persuaded him. Thus, both the speaker and hearer know who the agent is. However, the speaker does not use the friend's name in the subject, but impersonal *chə* because the fact that he was persuaded not to go is more important to him than information who persuaded him.

The next example is also taken from a conversation collected in the refugee camp. When a refugee was about to go to Mae Sot, his friend said to him:

(39) nə ʔè lì, **chə** mə phóN nə̀.
2SG if go thing IRR catch 2SG
'If you go, you will be arrested.' (Conversation 001)

In this context, the agent is a Thai police officer. The word *pəlái* 'police officer' can be used as the subject; however, both speaker and hearer know who will arrest an illegal resident. Thus, the information that the hearer can be arrested is more important than the information that the agent is a police officer. This would be the reason that a *chə*-clause is used.

Next, Example (40) is taken from a Pwo Karen movie. Young women are speaking about a handsome man, who is the leading character of the movie. One of the women says to another woman, who will later become his girlfriend, that he was looking at her and that maybe he is interested in her. However, she denies it:

(40) ʔə lə dá hə̀ nāɴ phə̂ɴ dālɔ̂.
3SG NEG see 1SG any time EMP

chə dá hə̀.
thing see 1SG
'He had never seen me. So [he] was just looking at me.' (Movie <*mái θəphjāɴ*>)

All four women know that the agent of the *chə*-clause is the handsome man. To the speaker, the claim about his action, that is, the claim that he was just looking at her, is important. Here, it seems that a *chə*-clause is used because the speaker wants to emphasize the action itself.

In the following, (41) is also taken from a Pwo Karen movie. A woman asks two brothers if their parents expelled them from their house, and one of them answers yes:

(41) A: mwɛ̄ nəθí mōphā θɛ̀ nâɴ cáiɴ làɴ khwái
COP 2PL parents PL drive.out go.out down Pv(thour)

nəθí khɔ̂ ʁâ.
2PL in.contrast Q
'Did your parents expel you guys [from your house]?'

B: mwɛ̄. **chə** nâɴ cáiɴ làɴ hə̀ ʔəkhâjò.
COP thing drive.out go.out down 1PL now
'Yes. We have been expelled this time.' (Movie <*ɣéiɴ*>)

In (41B), *ʔəθí* '3PL', which refers to the boys' parents, can be used in the subject position instead of impersonal *chə*. However, the speaker can show that the fact that they have been expelled is important by using impersonal *chə*.

At the end of this section, there are two noteworthy points.

First, in Usage (ii), the agent is always non-SAP (speech act participant). In other words, impersonal *chə* is never used in place of a first-person or second-person pronoun. In Usage (i), the usage of genericity, since the agent is generic, the agent may include the speaker or hearer. However, in this second usage, the agent never includes the speaker or hearer.

Second, one *chə*-clause can be interpreted as either Usage (i) or Usage (ii), depending on the context. For example, in (1b), since the action of visiting Shwedagon Pagoda is a general action that many people carry out, the sentence is likely to be interpreted as an example of Usage (i). However, if one is speaking about a foreign tourist that often visits Myanmar, (1b) may be interpreted as Usage (ii) to emphasize that the tourist always goes to Shwedagon Pagoda. In contrast,

(2b) is likely to be interpreted as an example of Usage (ii) because it denotes a highly individual event. However, if the action of stealing the speaker's bicycle continues to happen many times, it is possible that (2b) is used with the meaning of Usage (i) because several people can be assumed to be the agent. Furthermore, although the distinction between Usages (i) and (ii) is clear from the context in many cases, sometimes a *chə*-clause in a certain context can be ambiguous between Usages (i) and (ii). For example, it is possible that the *chə*-clause in (39) expresses not only the irrelevance of the agent, but also the genericity of the agent, that is, the agent is general police officer in Mae Sot. Therefore, it seems reasonable to consider that we cannot draw a clear line between Usages (i) and (ii). Nevertheless, the genericity of the agent cannot be explained by the concept of irrelevance, and conversely, the irrelevance of the agent cannot be explained by the concept of genericity. Therefore, Usages (i) and (ii) must be treated as different usages.

3.2 Semantics-motivated usage

Some meteorological phenomena are always expressed by *chə*-clauses in Pwo Karen. Since this usage is observed in a particular semantic field, that is, meteorology, we can say that it is semantics motivated. Physiological/psychological phenomena may also be expressed by *chə*-clauses. In this case, *chə*-clauses indicate an additional meaning of the uncontrollability of a physiological/psychological state. Thus, this usage is also semantics motivated.

3.2.1 Usage (iii): Meteorological phenomena

Some meteorological phenomena are expressed by *chə*-clauses. We call this Usage (iii). This usage semantically differs from the other three usages in that there is no agent. The following are the examples:

(42) **chə** khō.
thing hot
'It is hot.'

(43) **chə** khléiɴ.
thing cold
'It is cold.'

(44) **chə** lə̀ɴ.
thing warm
'It is warm.'

(45) **chə** khōʔwì.
thing hot.and.humid
'It is hot and humid.'

(46) **chə** ɣōɴ.
thing freezing
'It is freezing.'

(47) **chə** jɔ̀.
thing sunny
'It is sunny.'

(48) **chə** chə̀ɴ.
thing rain(v)
'It is raining.'

(49) **chə** ʔə́ɯɴ.
thing cloudy
'It is cloudy.'

(50) **chə** khɯ́.
thing dusty
'It is dusty.'

(51) **chə** phàɴ.
thing light
'[The sky is] bright.'

(52) **chə** khài.
thing dark
'[The sky is] dark.'

Each of the verbs shown in (42) through (52) requires *chə* as the subject noun when it expresses a meteorological phenomenon. Let us take *khō* 'be hot' in (42) as an example. When some entity is hot, the noun that denotes the entity can occur in the subject position, as in *ʔə lòɴ khō* (3SG / body / hot) 'His body is hot', whereas when the verb expresses a hot weather, it is necessary to use impersonal *chə* as in (42). The one-word sentence *khō* (hot) '(Something) is hot' constituted only of the verb *khō* can be used as a sentence meaning that some entity, which is not referred to in the sentence, is hot, but cannot be used for indicating hot weather. Among the verbs used in the examples above, *jɔ̀* 'be sunny', *chə̀ɴ* 'to rain', and *ʔə́ɯɴ* 'be cloudy' are not used for purposes other than expressing meteorological phenomena; therefore, when these verbs occur in the predicate of a clause, impersonal *chə* always occurs in the subject position.

It must be noted that not all the meteorological phenomena are expressed using *chə*-clauses. Such cases follow: *chàɴ khú* (fog / to smoke) 'to fog', *chəchə̀ɴ tháʊ* (rain / to stop) 'to stop raining' (here, *chəchə̀ɴ* is a derived noun with the prefix *chə-* [see Section 2] and the verb *chə̀ɴ* 'to rain'), *lâɴ xwèiɴ* (thunder / to sing [as cuckoos]) 'to thunder', *lâɴ wēdài* (thunder / to light) 'lightning lights', and *lì ʔú* (air / to blow) 'wind blows'. An exhaustive list of meteorological verbs that requires impersonal *chə* is not yet available.

3.2.2 Usage (iv): Uncontrollable physiological/psychological states

Chə-clauses are sometimes used to express physiological or psychological states. We denote this type of *chə*-clauses Usage (iv). For example, in each of Examples (53) through (59), sentence (b), which is a *chə*-clause, may be used in place of sentence (a).

(53) a. jə pwài θà.
1SG tired MID
'I am tired.'

b. **chə** pwài θà.
thing tired MID
'[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] tired.'

(54) a. jə θàwī mì̱.
1SG hungry rice
'I am hungry.'

b. **chə** θàwī mì̱.
thing hungry rice
'[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] hungry.'

(55) a. jə θàwī thî.
1SG hungry water
'I am thirsty.'

b. **chə** θàwī thî.
thing hungry water
'[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] thirsty.'

(56) a. jə máʊ θà.
1SG comfortable MID
'I am comfortable.'

b. **chə** máʊ θà.
thing comfortable MID
'[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] comfortable.'

(57) a. jə xwíkàiN.
1SG exhausted
'I am exhausted.'

b. **chə** xwíkàiN.
thing exhausted
'[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] exhausted.'

(58) a. jə jâN θà.
1SG feel.pity MID
'I feel pity.'

b. **chə** jâN θà.
thing feel.pity MID
'[I feel / You feel / S/he feels, etc.] pity.'

(59) a. jə θà làN châ mā.
1SG heart drop much very
'I am very disappointed.'

b. **chə** θà làN châ mā.
thing heart drop much very
'[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] very disappointed.'

In this usage, *chə*-clauses indicate that a physiological or psychological state cannot be controlled at all by the agent (strictly, experiencer). In other words, physiological or psychological phenomena expressed by *chə*-clauses of this usage are situations that are brought about highly spontaneously. These physiological or psychological states are non-volitional; thus, they are somewhat spontaneous by nature, but with impersonal *chə*, this spontaneity is emphasized.

The agent of Usage (iv) can be any person and number. For this reason, in (53b), for example, the translation is given as '[I am / You are / S/he is, etc.] tired.' In addition to these, 'We are', 'You(pl) are', or 'They are' are of course possible. Moreover, in Usage (iv), in the topic position, a noun that denotes the agent may occur, as shown in (60) through (63). Without such a noun, the agent must be inferred from the context if one wants to know who the agent is.

(60) **jə̀** (nɔ́) chə pwài θà.
1SG TOP thing tired MID
'As for me, I am tired.'

(61) **nə̀** (nɔ́) chə pwài θà.
2SG TOP thing tired MID
'As for you, you are tired.'

(62) **ʔəwê** (nɔ́) chə pwài θà.
3SG TOP thing tired MID
'As for her/him, s/he is tired.'

(63) **jə** **mō** (nɔ́) chə pwài θà.
1SG mother TOP thing tired MID
'As for my mother, she is tired.'

This feature can never be observed in the other three usages. For example, (64) and (65), which are modified from (1b) (=(22)) and (2b) (=(32)), respectively, are unacceptable. Example (64) is Usage (i), and (65) is Usage (ii). In Usage (iii), which expresses meteorological phenomena, no agent can be assumed; therefore, as a matter of course, Example (66), which is modified from (48), is unacceptable.

(64) *ʔəθí (nɔ́) chə lì̱ cáiɴkwè lə́ klòɴləkōʊɴ klə̀ lɔ̂.
3PL TOP thing go go.around LOC Shwedagon always EMP

(65) *ʔəwê (nɔ́) chə ʔáɴɣɯ́ jə cɛ́pēiɴ.
3SG TOP thing steal 1SG bicycle

(66) *ʔəwê (nɔ́) chə chə̀ɴ.
3SG TOP thing rain(v)

Physiological and psychological phenomena that can be expressed by *chə*-clauses are limited to phenomena denoted by stative verbs. As Kato (2008a) discusses, Pwo Karen verbs can be classified into dynamic verbs and stative verbs. The verbs *kà* 'to yawn' in (67) and *kàʊ* 'to cough' in (68) are both dynamic verbs. For this reason, (67b) and (68b) with impersonal *chə* are not acceptable. The reason for this unacceptability is not yet known.

(67) a. jə kà tháɴ.
1SG yawn up
'I yawned.'

b. ***chə** kà tháɴ.
thing yawn up
IM: '[I / You / S/he] yawned.'

(68) a. jə kàʊ.
1SG cough
'I coughed.'

b. ***chə** kàʊ.
thing cough
IM: '[I / You / S/he] coughed.'

4. Discussion

We have seen that the usage of *chə*-clauses can be classified according to the motivation with which they are used, as shown in (69). There are two groups of usages, that is, discourse-motivated and semantics-motivated usage, and each can be further classified into two types.

(69) Usages of *chə*-clauses
(a) Discourse-motivated usage
Usage (i): The agent is generic.
Usage (ii): Information about the agent is irrelevant.
(b) Semantics-motivated usage
Usage (iii): The clause denotes a meteorological phenomenon.
Usage (iv): A physiological/psychological state is uncontrollable.

As stated in Section 3, according to Sansò (2006) and Siewierska (2008), impersonal constructions are functionally related to agent defocusing. All usages of

chə-clauses are also related to agent defocusing. In Usage (i), since the agent is people in general, it is vague, and an individual agent cannot be identified. Usage (ii), denoting the irrelevance of information about the agent, can be said to be agent-defocusing itself. In *chə*-clauses of Usage (iii), which express meteorological phenomena, agents conceptually cannot be assumed. In Usage (iv), since the agent cannot control a phenomenon, its power is semantically weak. Therefore, the function that is common to all *chə*-clause usages can be said to be agent defocusing.

Sansò (2006) shows that there are various levels of agent defocusing and proposes the cline, as shown in Table 1. In his study, Sansò surveyed five languages: Italian, Spanish, Polish, Danish, and Modern Greek. The leftmost column shows, from the top to the bottom, "a functional cline of agent defocusing ranging from those cases in which the agent is easily recoverable from the context to cases in which it cannot be identified but generally" (p. 267). The rightmost column shows various constructions likely to be used in accordance with the levels of agent defocusing in the leftmost column. The middle column shows the situation types corresponding to the levels of agent defocusing.

Table 1: Sansò's (2006) cline of agent defocusing

Agent less discourse-central than the patient	**Patient-oriented process: the state of affairs is represented from the point of view of the patient**	Periphrastic constructions (agent expressed as an oblique); medial diathesis
Agent easily recoverable from the context; patient highly topical		Agentless periphrastic constructions; medial diathesis; (middle constructions)
Agent de-emphasised, irrelevant; patient not particularly topical	**Bare happening: the event is conceptualised as a naked fact, in summary fashion**	Periphrastic passives; medial diathesis; impersonal passives; middle constructions
Agent not specified but identifiable as a subgroup of humanity; patient not particularly topical	**Agentless generic event: the action/event is irrealis**	Middle constructions; *man*-clauses; vague *they* constructions
Agent representing virtually all humanity; patient not particularly topical		Middle constructions; *man*-clauses; vague *you* constructions

Here, we attempt to position the usages of Pwo Karen *chə*-clauses in Table 1. Since the cline that Sansò proposes is related to discourse conditions, only Usages (i) and (ii), which are defined in terms of discourse motivations, will be taken into consideration. In Section 3.1.1, it was shown that in Usage (i), the agent is people in general or members in general (or many members) of a subgroup of human beings. It can be said that this is equivalent to "agent representing virtually all humanity" in the bottom and "agent not specified but identifiable as a subgroup of humanity" in the second row from the bottom. Furthermore, it can be added that Usage (ii), which expresses irrelevance of information on the agent, is equivalent to "agent de-emphasised, irrelevant". Therefore, the discourse-motivated usages of *chə*-clauses can be connected with the lower three of the five rows in Sansò's cline.

In Sansò's cline, passive and middle constructions are also shown in the rightmost column, as constructions that have the effect of agent defocusing. Pwo

Karen does not have a passive voice, but it has a middle construction (see Kato 2019a). Among the uses of the middle construction in Pwo Karen, what is related to agent defocusing is anticausative use, in which demotion of the subject is involved. An example is shown in (70).

(70) pàitərâɴ pàʊ thánɴ θà.
window open(tr) up MID
'The window opened.'

As discussed in Kato (2009a, 2019a), the most important role of the anticausative use of the middle construction in Pwo Karen is to make an intransitive predicate from a transitive verb when a verb denoting an intransitive situation is lacking. In (70), the anticausative form of the transitive verb *pàʊ* 'to open(tr)' is used because Pwo Karen lacks a verb that means 'to open(intr)'. Therefore, it can safely be said that the discourse role of the middle construction in Pwo Karen is not large.

The two rows from the top of Sansò's table, that is, "agent less discourse-central than the patient" and "agent easily recoverable from the context; patient highly topical", are the cases in which the topicality of the patient (=object) is higher than that of the identifiable agent. In the discussion in Section 3.1.2, it was shown that the object has to be topicalized by left-dislocation to be prominent. An example is given in (33). The first sentence of (35), *θêiɴná nɔ́ jə ʔɔ́kḭ thōɴ nɔ́*, is also an example. As Kato (2019b) pointed out, topicalization in Pwo Karen can be applied to various elements. Example (71) is an ordinary monotransitive sentence with two arguments. When the subject is topicalized, we obtain (72), and when the object is topicalized, we obtain (73). Shaphang is a male name, and Phawshu is a female name.

(71) ɕáphàɴ dʊ́ phɔ̂ɕʊ́.
Shaphang hit Phawshu
'Shaphang hit Phawshu.'

(72) ɕáphàɴ nɔ́ dʊ́ phɔ̂ɕʊ́.
Shaphang TOP hit Phawshu
'As for Shaphang, he hit Phawshu.'

(73) phɔ̂ɕʊ́ nɔ́ ɕáphàɴ dʊ́.
Phawshu TOP Shaphang hit
'As for Phawshu, Shaphang hit her.'

Probably, the Pwo Karen equivalent that takes on the functions shown in the two uppermost rows of Sansò's table would be sentences with the topicalized object. However, since the purpose of the present paper is to consider the functions of *chə*-clauses, we will not inquire further into this issue.

Note that, in Pwo Karen, "zero pronouns" can occur in the subject position of clauses. Despite the formal weakness of having no phonological form, zero pronouns in the subject position do not have the function of agent defocusing.

Conversely, they can occur only when the agent is high in topicality. For example, the four zero pronouns that occur in Example (74) all refer to Nang Phaw Wa:

(74) nāɴphɔ̂ʔwà$_i$ jɔ̄thwê thàiɴ cɔ̀θéiɴlá
NangPhawWa watch continuously KyawTheinLa

thōɴ ø$_i$ lə dá lə̀ɴ bá ɣòɴ, ø$_i$ chîthɔ́ɯɴ thánɴ wê,
till NEG see anymore NEG after stand up EMP

ø$_i$ thàʊ thàiɴ ʔə méthî.
wipe again 3SG tears

ø$_i$ thàiɴ náʊ làɴ wê lɔ́ təwânɴ phə̀ɴ nɔ́ lɔ́.
return enter down EMP LOC village inside that AST
'Nang Phaw Wa saw off Kyaw Thein La until she could not see him anymore, stood up, and wiped her tears away. [After that, she] went back into the village.' (Short novel V-01)

The character that appears in this scene of the short novel is only Nang Phaw Wa; thus, the topicality of Nang Phaw Wa is high. As can be seen in this example, zero pronouns in the subject position are used only when the agent is high in topicality and recoverable.

5. Conclusion and *chə*-clauses in a diachronic perspective

In this paper, we have investigated the usages of *chə*-clauses, which can be characterized as an impersonal construction in Pwo Karen. The usages of *chə*-clauses can be classified into two groups: discourse motivated and semantics motivated. In discourse-motivated usages, there are two subtypes: Usage (i), when the agent is generic, and Usage (ii), when information about the agent is irrelevant. In semantics-motivated usages, there are also two subtypes: Usage (iii), when the clause denotes a meteorological phenomenon, and Usage (iv), when a physiological/psychological state is uncontrollable. Among these, there is no clear dividing line between Usages (i) and (ii). When we compare these usages with the cline of agent defocusing proposed by Sansò (2006), we can say that discourse-motivated usages of *chə*-clauses cover the rows of "agent representing virtually all humanity", "agent not specified but identifiable as a subgroup of humanity", and "agent de-emphasised, irrelevant". *Chə*-clauses are not used to make the patient (=object) prominent, and for this purpose, topicalization of the object is employed. These are what we have discussed so far.

Here, a few remarks should be made concerning the diachronic aspects. The word *chə̄* meaning 'thing' can be traced back to the Proto-Karen form ***da**^{2} 'thing' (cf. Haudricourt 1946, Kato 2018). In a historical study, the form *chə̄*, which has a tone that is a reflex of an ancient tone, has to be used instead of *chə*, which has lost its tone. As a Proto-Pwo Karen form, ***thə**^{4} can be reconstructed (Kato 2009b: 201); see the Western Pwo Karen form *shâ* (Kato 2009b: 201), the Htoklibang Pwo Karen form *chá* (Kato 2009b: 201), and the Northern Pwo Karen form *t^{h}ə̀* (Phillips 2017: 70–80). Cognate forms in other Karenic languages include: Sgaw Karen *tà*

(Kato 1993: 187), Geba *dɛ̄* (Kato 2008b: 194), Bwe Karen *dɛ* (Henderson 1997: 58–61, Vol 2), Kayah Li *te* (Solnit 1997: 374), and Pekon Kayan *tạ̀* (Manson 2010: 105–107). As Kato (forthcoming) states, a phenomenon similar to Pwo Karen *chə*-clauses is also observable in Sgaw Karen. That is, Sgaw Karen has an impersonal construction, in which the noun *tà* 'thing', a cognate word with *chə̄*, is placed in the subject position. According to my own data, it seems that the impersonal construction with *tà* in Sgaw Karen also has at least four usages just like in Pwo Karen, as shown in (75), (76), and (77). The sentence in (75) can be interpreted as an example of either Usage (i) or (ii).

(75) **tà** tɔ̀ jā. (Sgaw Karen)
thing hit 1SG
'People hits me.' [Usage (i)]; 'I was hit.' [Usage (ii)]

(76) **tà** sū. (Sgaw Karen)
thing rain(v)
'It is raining.' [Usage (iii)]

(77) **tà** bɣíʔ ʔə θáʔ. (Sgaw Karen)
thing tired 3SG MID
'He is tired.' [Usage (iv)]

However, according to David Solnit and Ken Manson, Kayah Li (David Solnit, p.c., Feb., 2016) and Pekon Kayan (Ken Manson, p.c., Feb., 2016) have no similar impersonal construction to *chə*-clauses. According to my own data, Geba also has no similar construction. For example, in Geba, 'It is raining' has to be expressed as in (78), in which the noun *w̥ɛ̄* that means 'rain(n)' is placed in the subject position (Kato 2008b: 191).[3] The noun *dɛ̄* 'thing' cannot be used in place of *w̥ɛ̄*.

(78) w̥ɛ̄ zū. (Geba)
rain(n) rain(v)
'It is raining.'

The Geba noun *w̥ɛ̄* historically corresponds to the Pwo Karen noun *xwɛ́* 'rainwater'; however, in Pwo Karen, **xwɛ́ chàɴ* (rain[n] / rain[v]) is ungrammatical. It must be changed into *chə chàɴ*, as is shown in (48). I consider that Pwo Karen and Sgaw Karen are genealogically in a highly close relationship among the Karenic languages. Probably, the origin of *chə*-clauses cannot be traced back to Proto-Karen; however, it is possible that it can be traced back to Proto-Sgaw-Pwo, which corresponds to the proto-language of Shintani's (2003) Sgaw-Pwo-branch.[4]

---

[3] According to Shirai et al. (2018), languages that express 'it rains' with an impersonal construction are rare among Tibeto-Burman languages.

[4] Some Bwe Karen sentences with *dɛ* 'thing' in their subject position shown by Henderson (1997: 58–61, Vol 2) seem to indicate meteorological phenomenon. Therefore, Karenic languages other than Pwo and Sgaw might also have an impersonal construction, although it may not cover all the usages observable in Pwo and Sgaw.

Lastly, let us look at the possible origin of *chə*-clauses. Sansò (2016) discusses that many agent-defocusing constructions of various languages have diachronic sources in nominalized VPs. According to Sun (2005), in some rGyalrongic languages of Tibeto-Burman, generic human arguments are denoted by nominalizing prefixes. Siewierska (2008) cites Sun's analysis and points out the presence of such a phenomenon in Tibeto-Burman. In Section 2, we saw that *chə* functions as a nominalizing morpheme. Therefore, impersonal *chə* possibly originates in a nominalized VP. It has been stated above that it is possible that the origin of *chə*-clauses can be traced back to Proto-Sgaw-Pwo; besides, cognate forms of *chə* in other Pwo Karen dialects and Sgaw Karen, for example, Western Pwo Karen *shâ* (*shə* as a prefix) (my data), Northern Pwo Karen *tʰə̀* (*tʰə* as a prefix) (Phillips 2017), and Sgaw Karen *tà* (my data), generally have a nominalizing function. Thus, a nominalized VP of Proto-Sgaw-Pwo employing the protoform of these nominalizing morphemes might have already acquired the function of an impersonal construction at the Proto-Sgaw-Pwo stage.

Abbreviations

AST = particle indicating assertion; CAUS = verb particle indicating causation; COM = particle indicating accompanier or instrument; CONT = particle indicating contrastiveness; COP = copular verb; EMP = emphasis; IM = intended meaning; intr = intransitive; IRR = irrealis modality; LOC = particle indicating location, goal, and source; MID = middle marker; n = noun; NC = numeral classifier; NEG = negativity; PL = plural; PRF = perfect; Pv(ina) = verb particle indicating inadvertency; Pv(kr) = verb particle indicating keeping a result; Pv(pl) = verb particle indicating plurality of the subject; Pv(thour) = verb particle indicating thouroughness; Q = question; SFP = sentence final particle; SG = singular; TOP = topic; tr = transitive; v = verb; VP = verb phrase.

Data

In the brackets after the English translation of each example, the author's material number is shown. Materials used in this paper are as follows: Conversation 001 and Conversation 003 are conversation data; Essay II-03, Essay III-02, Essay IV-10, and Essay V-02 are essays; Folk tale II-05, Folk tale III-15, Folk tale VI-12, and Folk tale 021 are folk tales; Short novel V-01 is a short novel; Movie <*khwījànwêchînî*>, Movie <*chəchâ θàmɛ́ mâ*>, Movie <*mái θəphjāɴ*>, and Movie <*yɛ́iɴ*> are Pwo Karen movies (many Pwo Karen movies have been being shot these days); and Interview 001 is an interview program from an internet Pwo Karen news. Examples without a material number were acquired through elicitation.

Sounds and transcription

The transcription used in this study is phonemic. Consonant phonemes are /p, θ [θ~t̪θ~t̪], t, c [tɕ], k, ʔ, ph [pʰ], th [tʰ], ch [tɕʰ], kh [kʰ], b [ɓ], d [ɗ~d], ɕ, x, h, ɣ, ʁ, m, n, ɲ, (ŋ), ɴ, w, j, l, (r [r~ɽ~ɹ])/. The bracketed consonants mainly occur in loan words. Rhymes are /i [ə̆i], ɨ, ɯ [ɯ~ə̆ɯ], i̱ [ɪ], ʊ, e, ə, o, ɛ, a, ɔ, ai, aʊ, əɴ [əɴ~ə̃], aɴ [ă̆ɔɴ~ã], oɴ [oɴ~õ], eiɴ [eiɴ~ei], əɯɴ [əɯɴ~əɯ], oʊɴ [oʊɴ~oʊ], aiɴ [aiɴ~aĩ]/. There are four tones: high-level /á/ [55], mid-level /ā/ [33~334], low-level /à/ [11],

and falling /â/ [51]. Pwo Karen has atonic syllables, which can occur in all positions except utterance final. The only rhyme that can occur in atonic syllables is /ə/, and atonic syllables are transcribed with no tone marking.

I formerly transcribed the vowel phoneme /i̲/ [ɪ] as /ɩ/. However, 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 presently use /i̲/ instead of /ɩ/.

In an example, a period shows the end of a sentence, and a comma shows the border of adjacent clauses.

Acknowledgments

I thank Mr. Saw Hla Chit, who has helped me as a native speaker of Pwo Karen for about 26 years. He gave me many example sentences with impersonal *chə* and helped me by judging the acceptability of sentences containing it. I also wish to express my gratitude to Yoshihisa Taguchi and Keita Kurabe for their helpful suggestions and comments to the earlier version of this paper, and to Norihiko Hayashi, who is the leader of the Middle Mekong Linguistics project and, at the same time, editor of the present volume.

References

Haudricourt, André-Georges. 1946. Restitution du karen commun. *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 42.1: 103–11.

Henderson, Eugénie J. A. 1997. *Bwe Karen Dictionary, with Texts and English-Karen Word List*. (2 Vols.) London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Kato, Atsuhiko. [加藤昌彦] 1993. Sugō Karen-go no dōshi renzoku.「スゴー・カレン語の動詞連続(Verb serialization in Sgaw Karen)」『アジア・アフリカ言語文化研究(Journal of Asian and African Studies)』45: 177–204.

___. [加藤昌彦] 2008a. Pō Karen-go ni keiyōshi to iu hanchū wa hitsuyō ka? 「ポー・カレン語に形容詞という範疇は必要か？(Is the category adjective necessary in Pwo Karen?)」『アジア・アフリカの言語と言語学(Asian and African Languages and Linguistics)』3: 77–95.

___. [加藤昌彦] 2008b. Gēbā-go kiso siryō「ゲーバー語基礎資料 (Basic Materials in Geba)」『アジア・アフリカの言語と言語学 (Asian and African Languages and Linguistics)』3: 169–219.

___. 2009a. Valence-changing particles in Pwo Karen. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 32.2: 71–102.

___. 2009b. A basic vocabulary of Htoklibang Pwo Karen with Hpa-an, Kyonbyaw, and Proto-Pwo Karen forms. *Asian and African Languages and Linguistics* 4: 169–218.

___. 2017. Pwo Karen. In Graham Thurgood & Randy LaPolla (eds.), *The Sino-Tibetan Languages, 2nd Edition*, 942–958. London/New York: Routledge.

___. 2018. How did Haudricourt reconstruct Proto-Karen tones? *Reports of the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies* 49: 21–44.

___. 2019a. The middle marker in Pwo Karen. *Reports of the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies* 50: 21–62.

___. 2019b. Pwo Karen. In Alice Vittrant and Justin Watkins (eds.), *The Mainland Southeast Asia Linguistic Area*, 131–175. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

___. (forthcoming) Typological profile of Karenic languages. In Mathias Jenny and Paul Sidwell (eds.), *The Languages and Linguistics of Mainland Southeast Asia: A Comprehensive Guide*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton

Malchukov, Andrej and Anna Siewierska. 2011. Introduction. In Andrej Malchukov and Anna Siewierska (eds.), *Impersonal Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Perspective*, 1–15. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Manson, Ken. 2010. *A grammar of Kayan, a Tibeto-Burman language*. Ph.D. dissertation, La Trobe University.

Matisoff, James A. 2003. *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Myhill, John. 1997. Toward a functional typology of agent defocusing. *Linguistics* 35: 799–844.

Phillips, Audra. 1996. Dialect comparison among the Pwo Karen of Central Thailand. *Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium on Languages and Linguistics Vol.III*, 1122–1162.

___. 2017. *Entities and the expression of grounding and referential coherence in Northern Pwo Karen narrative discourse*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta.

___. 2018. West-Central Thailand Pwo Karen phonology. *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, 11.1: 47–62.

Sansò, Andrea. 2006. 'Agent defocusing' revisited. In Werner Abraham and Larisa Leisiö (eds.), *Passivization and Typology, Form and Function*, 232– 273. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

___. 2016. Agent-defocusing constructions from nominalized VPs: A cross-linguistic type? *Studies in Language* 40.4: 894–954.

Shibatani, Masayoshi. 1985. Passives and related constructions: A prototype analysis. *Language* 61.4: 821–848.

___. 2018. Nominalization in crosslinguistic perspective. In Prashant Pardeshi and Taro Kageyama (eds.) *Handbook of Japanese Contrastive Studies*, 345–410. Boston/Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Shintani, Tadahiko. 2003. Classification of Brakaloungic (Karenic) languages in relation to their tonal evolution. In Shigeki Kaji (ed.), *Proceedings of the Symposium Cross-linguistic Studies of Tonal Phenomena: Historical Development, Phonetics of Tone, and Descriptive Studies*, 37–54. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

Shirai, Satoko, Keita Kurabe, Hiroyuki Suzuki, Kazue Iwasa and Shiho Ebihara. 2018. 'It rains' in Tibeto-Burman. In Satoko Shirai and Mitsuaki Endo (eds.) *Studies in Asian Geolinguistics VIII*, 35–39. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

Siewierska, Anna. 2004. *Person*. Cambridge: Camridge University Press.

___. 2008. Introduction: Impersonalization from a subject-centred vs. agent-centred perspective. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 106.2: 115–137.

Solnit, David. 1997. *Eastern Kayah Li: Grammar, texts, glossary*. Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press.

Sun, Jackson T.-S. 2005. Linguistic Coding of Generic Human Arguments in rGyalrongic Languages. Paper presented at the 11th Himalayan Languages Symposium, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.