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A Descriptive Grammar of Sgaw Karen

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Abstract

This thesis presents a grammatical description of Sgaw Karen, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken mainly along the border between Myanmar and Thailand, in Southwestern Myanmar, and in the Andaman Islands, as well as overseas in Europe, North America, and Australia. The corpus of data used for the thesis combines primary data collected by the researcher and secondary data collected by other scholars. The primary data comes from speakers representing three different regions: (1) Mawchi–Taungoo, Myanmar, (2) Kayin–Tak (Tak Province in northwestern Thailand, near the border of Kayin State, Myanmar), and (3) Northern Thailand (Mae Hong Son Province). Rather than focusing on one data set, the dissertation considers all collected data and indicates regional variation where applicable. The data is analysed within a functional–typological framework known as Basic Linguistic Theory, a set of functionally-oriented comparative concepts based on extensive previous typological research.

The following are some significant results obtained: The sound system of Sgaw Karen, on the segmental level, comprises twenty-seven initial consonants and nine vowels. No final consonants are posited, which sets Sgaw Karen apart from most other Tibeto-Burman languages. Five tones are identified in the three varieties investigated, pronounced differently depending on the region. Morphosyntactically, Sgaw Karen can be described as an isolating language with scarce bound morphology. In the absence of grammatical affixation, the language uses verbs, exhibiting varying degrees of grammaticalization, to express grammatical meanings such as benefaction, aspect, and causation. Additionally, unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages, most of which are verb-final, Sgaw Karen features an SVO constituent order that closely follows the Greenbergian head-initial word order correlations for verb-medial languages (Greenberg 1963; Dryer 2008; Yurayong & Sandman 2023). The overt morphological marking of core arguments found in some Tibeto-Burman languages is also absent in Sgaw Karen. On the other hand, Sgaw Karen has several features associated with the Mainland Southeast Asian (MSEA) language area (Enfield 2005; Enfield & Comrie 2015), such as the use of sentence-final particles, classifiers, relator nouns, and descriptive verbs as clausal modifiers.

The thesis is organized as follows: The introductory chapter provides an overview of the sociolinguistic and typological characteristics of Sgaw Karen, along with the theoretical framework and methods used in the analysis. Chapter 2 introduces the Sgaw Karen sound system, followed by Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, which describe noun phrases and basic clauses, respectively. Individual chapters are dedicated to verb serialization (Chapter 5), a primary strategy for expressing various grammatical categories, and elaborate expressions (Chapter 6), a particular type of coordinate compound common in Tibeto-Burman and MSEA languages. Chapter 7 on closed word classes concludes the description of the word classes, followed by a discussion of some major clause-level phenomena in Chapter 8. The three final chapters address sentence-level and discourse phenomena: Chapter 9 discusses subordination, Chapter 10 sentence types and final particles, and Chapter 11 information structure. Chapter 12 provides a conclusion and directions for further research.

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List of abbreviations

INTERLINEAR GLOSSING ABBREVIATIONS ¹			
1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	HON	honorific
~ s	~ singular	HORIZ	horizontal direction
~ p	~ plural	HUM	human
~ sx	~ singular possessive	IDEO	ideophone
~ px	~ plural possessive	IMPRS	impersonal
~ e	~ emphatic	INS	instrument
~ i	~ independent, unbound	INTJ	interjection
1D	one-dimensional	INTS	intensifier
2D	two-dimensional	IRR	irrealis
3D	three-dimensional	LOC.N	locative noun
ABIL	ability	LOC.P	locative preposition
AGR	agreement-soliciting	M	male
ALL.P	allative preposition	MAL	malefactive
ANIM	animate	N	noun
APPR	apprehensive	NEG	negative
BEN	benefactive	NMLZ	nominalizer
CAUS	causative	NS	new situation
CLF	classifier	ONOM	onomatopoeia
CC	coordinate compound component	OPP	opportunitive
CMPR	comparative	OPT	optative
CNTR	contrastive	P	preposition
COLL	collective	PL	plural
COM	comitative marker	PN	proper noun
COMP	complementizer	PQ	polar question
CONC	concessive	POSS	possessor
CONF	confirmative	PREP	preparative

¹ Apart from a few glosses, the interlinear glossing abbreviations listed here are based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules: Conventions for Interlinear Morpheme-by-Morpheme Glosses, edited by the Department of Linguistics of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology (Bernard Comrie, Martin Haspelmath) and by the Department of Linguistics of the University of Leipzig (Balthasar Bickel), <http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php> (accessed 3 January 2025). Glosses not listed here, including **FIXED**, **LEARN**, **AWAY**, and **RETURN**, indicate the meaning of morphemes that fail to occur independently (e.g. **FIXED**, **LEARN**) or have a derived meaning in certain contexts (e.g. **AWAY**, **RETURN**). A glossing abbreviation is sometimes subscripted after a gloss in lower case (e.g. **thing_{NMLZ}**). In such cases, the lower-case gloss conveys the lexical meaning of the morpheme, while the subscripted gloss indicates its grammatical function in the example sentence.

CONN	connective	PREV	preventive
COP	copula	PRF	perfect
COR	coreference marker	PROH	prohibitive
CQ	content question	PURP	purpose
DES	desiderative	PTCL	particle
DOWN	move downward	RDP	reduplicated
ELAB	elaborate expression morpheme	RECP	reciprocal
EMPH	emphatic	REFL	reflexive
EXC	excessive degree	REL	relative
EXCL	exclusive	RLN	relational marker
EXIST	existential verb	SIM	similative
EXT	extent	SOC	sociative
F	female	SUPL	superlative
FACT	factive	SUPP	suppositive
FP	final particle	TOP	topic
FRAME	frame-setting particle	UP	move upward
GNR	generic	WD	<i>wē.dâ?</i> (see §11.3.3)
B	brother	M	mother
e	older	SI	sibling
F	father	y	younger
G	grand-	Z	sister
~	separator of reduplicated morphemes		
()	contains additional information about the preceding gloss		
elab.	elaborate expression		
intr. / tr.	intransitive / transitive		
n. / v.	noun / verb		

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

A	subject of a transitive verb
GNT	Good News Translation of Bible passage
KJV	King James' Version of Bible passage
NP	noun phrase
P	patient, object
S	subject of an intransitive verb
V	verb
V₁	first verb / verbal modifier occurring before the main verb
V₂	second verb / verbal modifier occurring after the main verb
*	ungrammatical expression
?	pragmatically infelicitous expression
()	(In the free translation:) addition not present in the Sgaw Karen sentence or phrase
 	(In the free translation:) addition not present in a translation originating from the cited source
{}	(In the free translation:) indicate alternative translations

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Sgaw Karen language

Sgaw Karen is a Southeast Asian language belonging to the Karenic branch of Tibeto-Burman, referring to one of two daughter branches of the Sino-Tibetan (also known as Trans-Himalayan) language family. With around 2,456,000 L1 speakers, roughly two million residing in Myanmar, 200,000 in Northern and Western Thailand,² and 100,000 overseas,³ Sgaw Karen has the largest number of speakers of the Karenic languages. It is on level 3 (“Wider communication”) on the EGIDS scale, indicating that it is used “in work and mass media” by both L1 and L2 speakers in intergroup communication. (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2024) Regarding official recognition, Myanmar recognizes Sgaw Karen as one of 135 ethnic groups, *Sgaw* being one of eleven subgroups in the broader Kayin category. In Thailand, it belongs to the Karen group, which is one of 62 constitutionally recognized ethnic groups in Thailand.⁴

Although long identified as Sino-Tibetan, Karenic has only recently been recognized as a subgroup within Tibeto-Burman due to its SVO word order and, by some counts, relatively few Tibeto-Burman cognates. Paul K. Benedict, for example, placed Karenic alongside Tibeto-Burman under a Tibeto-Karen branch (Benedict 1972) but later revised his position (Benedict 1976). According to the phylogenetic study by Zhang et al. (2019), following a primary split into Sinitic and Tibeto-Burman (TB), a subsequent split occurred between four and five thousand years BP in the TB branch, with one branch developing into the Karenic and Kuki-Chin–Naga subgroups and another branch leading to other TB daughter languages. The results thus suggest that within TB, Karenic is most closely related to the Kuki-Chin–Naga languages of northeastern India and northwestern Myanmar. The most widely accepted view regarding the genetic position of Karenic, that is, as a subbranch under TB, is shown in Figure 1.

² Teerarojanarat reports 242,411 Sgaw Karen speakers in Thailand and mentions that the number is increasing due to immigration (Teerarojanarat 2012).

³ The numbers in different countries are: “68,500 in United States (2022 census), 5,030 in Canada (2021 census), all users. L1 users: 4,230 (2021 census). 740 monolinguals (2021 census), 13,200 in Australia (2021 census)” (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2024). In Finland (2023), based on self-identification, 445 persons identified as “Karen”, 74 of whom identified as Sgaw (Statistics Finland).

⁴ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Thailand State Party’s Report 2011, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cerd>. Accessed 10 August 2022.

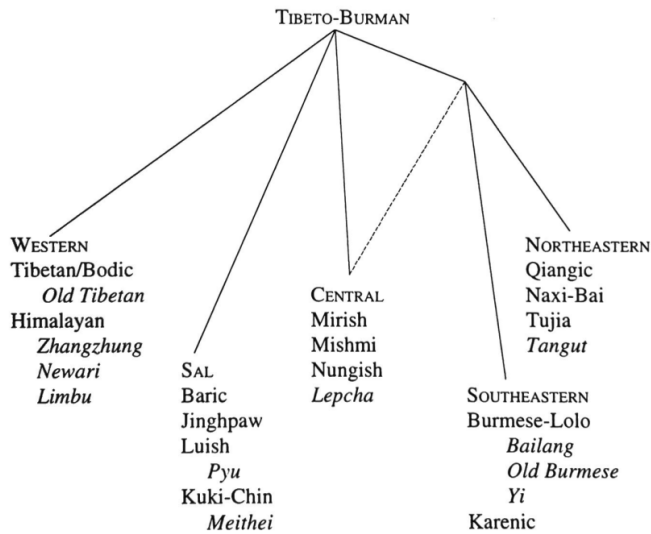


Figure 1 Subgroups of Tibeto-Burman (Bradley 2002: 75)

Although the Karenic languages form a clearly delineated group within Tibeto-Burman, the task of internal classification has proven to be complicated. Figure 2 shows a recent internal classification of Karenic (dotted lines indicate tentative connections). Manson’s (2017) classification differs from previous ones, most notably because of the positioning of Pwo and Sgaw in separate subbranches. Luce (1959), Jones (1961), Bradley (1997), and Solnit (2017) place Pwo and Sgaw together in a Southern subbranch.

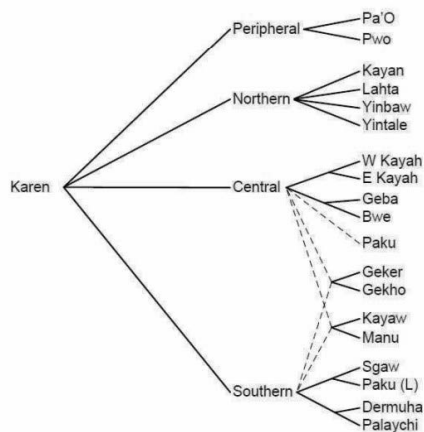


Figure 2 The subgrouping of Karen languages (Manson 2017a:152)

Thus, in each proposal, Sgaw Karen belongs to the Southern branch, which is characterized by a complete loss of final consonants, as seen in *mī* [mi˧]⁵ ‘be ripe’ from Proto-Karen *hmin^A, and *jê* [jɛ˧] ‘five’ from Proto-Karen *ŋjat^D (proto-forms are from Luangthongkum 2019). Sgaw Karen appears to be unique within Karenic in possessing a medial [u] (see §2.2.6). On the other hand, numerous features are shared between Sgaw Karen and the other Karenic languages (see §1.4).

Sgaw Karen is spoken in Myanmar and Thailand in most parts of the Karenic-speaking area. In Myanmar, based on previous linguistic descriptions, news media, and informal discussions with native speakers, Sgaw Karen is spoken in Kayin State, Mon State, Yangon Region, Ayeyarwady Region, eastern Bago Region, and Tanintharyi Region, and also, at least as a lingua franca or church language among Christians, in parts of Kayah State and Shan State. In Thailand, according to Teerarojanarat (2012), Sgaw Karen is spoken in the following twelve provinces, arranged according to the number of speakers (highest to lowest): Tak, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Lamphun, Chiang Rai, Kanchanaburi, Prachuap Khirikhan, Lampang, Sukhothai, Phrae, Kamphaeng Phet, and Phetchaburi (see Teerarojanarat 2012 for exact numbers). The Ethnolinguistic Maps of Thailand also contain data of Sgaw speakers in Ratchaburi, which Teerarojanarat’s study does not include (Premrirat et al. 2004). Thus, the Sgaw Karen language seems widespread in the provinces near the border to Myanmar, and due to increasing mobility, pockets of Sgaw Karen speakers exist in cities such as Bangkok and other provinces. There is also a Sgaw-speaking community on the Andaman Islands of India, descending from the Karen who emigrated there from Lower Myanmar in 1925 (Bradley 2002: 107; Maiti 2010).

Sgaw Karen differs from other Karenic languages, such as Pwo, in having developed a type of standard variety understood and spoken with comparatively minor differences across the Sgaw-speaking area. This is due in large part to the spread of Christianity, the Bible translation, and widespread proficiency in the written language (see also Manson 2017a). Nevertheless, many speakers report considerable regional variation. In a rough estimation, Manson (2017a) posits three to five major varieties. This thesis mainly considers three varieties, labelled Northern Thailand (Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai provinces), Kayin–Tak (Eastern Kayin State, Tak Province), and Mawchi–Taungoo (Kayah State and neighbouring areas to the west and southwest).⁶ A Delta variety (Ayeyarwady Region, Yangon, Andaman Islands) and a Mawlamyine–Hpa-an variety can also be distinguished based on phonological descriptions and sporadic first-hand observations. The Delta variety appears to be close to the Mawchi–Taungoo regional standard. In addition, several Sgaw-speaking areas remain, notably Tanintharyi and Western Thailand (comprising Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi, and Prachuap Khiri Khan), from which limited or no information

⁵ Phonetic transcriptions are based on the Kayin–Tak variety spoken in eastern Kayin State and Tak Province.

⁶ Regarding the Mawchi–Taungoo variety, one speaker (LTP) states that most people in this region speak local varieties of Paku Karen, which he considers a dialect of Sgaw (Paku is the Kayah name for the Sgaw). The Mawchi–Taungoo variety in this thesis, as he explains, is a regional standard based on the written language.

has been obtained. Also note that each main variety has local sub-varieties (see also Footnote 6).

Linguistically, the differences between varieties are primarily phonological, but variation also exists in the lexical and grammatical domains. For example, tones differ in register (high, low, or mid) so that a high tone in one dialect is mid or low in another. Lexical differences include using different words for the same meaning, for example *s^hō* ‘classifier for vehicles’ (Northern Thailand) and *k^hō’* ‘classifier for vehicles’ (elsewhere), or the same word with different meanings, for example *sī’*, which means ‘run’ in Kayin–Tak (pronounced [tʃi^hʔ]) and Northern Thailand (pronounced [tʃi^hʔ]) and ‘jump’ in the Karen Hills variety (pronounced [si^hʔ]). Additionally, speakers use lexical elements from other languages in colloquial speech, such as English or some variety of Burmese or Thai. Grammatical differences so far discovered are few. In northern Thailand, probably due to influence from Central or Northern Thai, some normally contiguous serial verbs are optionally separated from the main verb, as in *lè θē-s^hō sī* [go wash-be.early hand] versus *lè θē sī s^hō* [go wash hand be.early] ‘Go wash your hands first.’ Another major area of variation, which is possibly regional, is the head-final (modifier–modified) constituent order in the case of relativized objects (see §9.2). Additional isoglosses and their geographical spread constitute an area for further research.

The Sgaw Karen call themselves *pyà-kəŋō*. The word *pyà* means ‘person’ while *kəŋō* means ‘Karen’, or more generally, ‘human’. The word *kəŋō* usually encompasses Sgaw and Pwo, the two largest Karen groups. Sgaw (*syò*), pronounced [swəʔ], [tʃi^hʔ] or [tʃi^hʔ] depending on the variety, is used for specification, for example, *ʔə-mé pyà-kəŋō syò* [3-be.true_{COP} person-Karen Sgaw] ‘(s)he is Sgaw Karen’. The word *syò*, according to Bradley (1997: 48), comes “from the word for ‘person’”⁷. The common word for ‘person’, however, is *pyà.kəŋō*. In volume 2 of the *Thesaurus of Karen Knowledge* (Sau Kau-Too 1848b), the word *syò* is defined as follows: “*syò* is a Karen tribe; the men wear *s^hē.θī’.xē* (checked shirts) and red *já’.tò.kwē* (narrow-striped tubeskirts), and the women wear *nī’.θō.mō* (multicoloured tubeskirts), *s^hē.byē’* (beaded tunics), and *k^hō’.p^hō’.kī’* (turbans); and we call them *syò*; and sometimes we call them *pəsyò*.”

The designation *Karen*, according to Gravers, is an English transliteration of the Burmese word *karang*, pronounced [kəŋi] in modern Burmese, which denotes the Kayin (Sgaw and Pwo) ethnic minority in Myanmar, and Burmese *karang*, in turn, may come from the Mon word *karean* (Gravers 2007: 253–254). In Thailand, the Karen are called *karian* (กะเหรี่ยง) or *karàan* (กะหร่าง),⁸ and in northern Thailand, the Karen were at least formerly known as *yang* (ยาง) [ja:ŋ] and the Sgaw Karen as Yang Khao (ยางขาว) [ja:ŋ.k^ha:w]

⁷ *syò* also means ‘grasp (in the hand)’, but a connection between the two meanings seems unlikely.

⁸ The word *karàan* is used at least in Ratchaburi and Phetchaburi, probably also in Prachuap Khiri Khan, and refers specifically to the Sgaw, while *karian* refers to the Pwo. More generally in Thai, (*karian*) *paka:kə’jə*: can be used to refer to Sgaw Karen.

‘White Karen’ (*ibid.*). Luangthongkum (2019) notes that the Karen in Thailand prefer to be called *pyà.kəŋ̃*.

Karen, *karang*, and *kariang* seem to derive ultimately from a proto-form of the Sgaw Karen word *kəŋ̃*, which exists in various shapes used as autonyms by different Karenic groups, such as *kayah* (Karenni or Red Karen), *kayan*, and *kayaw*. The designation *yang* may derive from the last part of the word following the prefix. The proto-form has been reconstructed as *k-rjaŋ^A (Luangthongkum 2019), but the etymology of this word is unclear. Marshall (1922) writes that *Karen* derives from the word *Ch’iang*, which is now the name of the Qiang ethnic minority in China: “The first part of the name, ‘Ch,’ means ‘people,’ and the latter part, ‘Yang,’ is the distinctive tribal name” (Marshall 1922: 6–7). Rajah (2008) connects *yang* with the name of the Yangtze River.

1.2 History of the Sgaw Karen

1.2.1 Origins of the Karen

Karen legends, transmitted orally through generations in the form of *hta* [t^haɬ] poetry, include many stories about the origins of the Karen. Two stories related to the origins of the Karen have gained particular interest among Western scholars and writers. One tells about the Karen leader and progenitor, *t^hō̃²-mē-pā* [pig-tooth-father] ‘Father Boar Tusk’, who in ancient times tried to lead his people to a better dwelling place when their original home in the Karen Hills became overcrowded (e.g. Smeaton 1887). Another story used to trace the original homeland of the Karen tells about a place called *t^hī̃-s^hē̃²-mē̃²-jwà* [water-stab-sand-flow], sometimes transcribed as Htee-Hseh-Meh-Ywa or Htee-Set-Met-Ywa. Wade defines *t^hī̃.s^hē̃²* as “the striking of a current against a bank” (Wade 1896), and Gilmore (1911: 81) interprets *t^hī̃.s^hē̃².mē̃².jwà* as “water which washes sand as it flows” or “a river that flows through the sands”.

The latter story appears in volume three of the Thesaurus (Sau Kau-Too 1849) and describes a group of Karen who crossed *t^hī̃.s^hē̃².mē̃².jwà* to establish a dwelling place at *sō̃.mē̃* (Chiang Mai), only to discover that the Shan already occupied the place. Mason (1843; 1951), translating the name *t^hī̃.s^hē̃².mē̃².jwà* as “the river of running sand”, believed it to be a reference to “the great desert north of Burmah, and between China and Thibet” and concluded that “the Karens are emigrants from the borders of China and Thibet” (Mason 1951: 476). Following Mason, Smeaton (1887) arrived at the following conclusion: “It seems very probable, then, that the Karen are a people from the borders of Thibet, who crossed the great desert of Gobi into China, and found their way by gradual descents into Burma.” Gilmore (1911), on the other hand, cites a version of the story written down by the Reverend Justus H. Vinton, in which *t^hō̃²-mē-pā* crosses the river on his search for a better land, but his descendants are too slow and are left behind. Gilmore (1911: 82) writes:

[The story] seems to me to point to the hills east of Toungoo as the earliest known habitat of Karens, and the centre from which they have been distributed over Lower Burma and Siam. I find no indications in this story of any previous habitat of the race. [...] It seems to point to an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Karens, at some time in the past, to get a foot hold in the plains west of the Sittang river.

Marshall (1922), arguing for early relations with the Chinese, speculates that the river referred to is the Yellow River. He mentions the belief by the first Baptist missionaries that the Karen had been in contact with Jewish colonies in modern-day Southwestern China, which they saw as an explanation for some alleged parallels between Karen and Judeo-Christian traditions. One parallel is the belief in an almighty creator god, called *jwà* in Sgaw Karen.⁹

More recently, Rajah (2008) has proposed that the word *Yang* in the name of the Yangtze River is the same *yang* used to refer to the Karen. He speculates that their homeland was in modern-day Xinjiang and that the route from China to Myanmar went along three major rivers: the Mekong, Irrawaddy, and Salween. This is also the view of the Karen National Union (KNU), first presented by Saw Aung Hla in his 1932 book *The Karen History* (cited by Cheesman 2002). The official history of the Karen National Union (KNU) states that the name of the homeland itself was Htee-Hset Met Ywa ‘Land of Flowing Sand’, located at the source of the Yangtze River in the Gobi Desert. According to this view, the Karen entered Myanmar (called *kô-lā* [country-be.green] ‘the Green Land’ by the Karen) in 739 BC, the start of the Karen calendar era.¹⁰ The KNU further state that “the Karen descend from the same ancestors as the Mongolian people”.¹¹

Based on linguistic and archaeological evidence, van Driem (2005) states that Tibeto-Burman peoples have been descending into Southeast Asia from southwestern China at least since 1000 BC. Since Karenic belongs to the earliest branches to split off from Tibeto-Burman, they were likely among the first Tibeto-Burman groups to emigrate south from their original abode in China. Sidwell (2014) holds that their southward route went along the Salween River. In a scenario outlined by Luce, the Sgaw (and the Pwo) continued and came into contact with Austroasiatic speakers and learned wet rice cultivation on the central plains of Myanmar, to be later pushed southward by Burmese intruders from the north (Luce 1985: 28). According to Sidwell & Jenny (2021: 9), Karenic was likely one of several Tibeto-Burman language groups in the plains of Myanmar before the Burmese became dominant in the area, but many of the other languages, including Kachinic, were subsequently replaced by Burmese and are now spoken in the northern part of the country

⁹ The Karen legend of Ywa has received much attention due to its similarity with the Christian creation myth. Both tell about a man and a woman tempted by a serpent to eat forbidden fruit. However, as noted by Gravers (2001), there are several versions of the Ywa legend, and it is possible that the story has been adapted to accord with the Christian myth.

¹⁰ <https://knuhq.org/en/about/background>, accessed 5 April 2024.

¹¹ <https://knuhq.org/en/about/background>, accessed 5 April 2024.

and near the border to India. According to Keyes (1979: 28–29), citing personal communication with R. B. Jones, the area of greatest diversity, and, hence, the origin of the dispersal of the modern Karenic languages, is in southern Shan State.

Stern (1968: 299) states that “[t]he major center of the Sgaw in historic times was to be found in the Toungoo Hills vicinity,” which may have been the location from where they spread further south. According to another Karen legend entitled *θəkê’ pū* ‘The story of Thakeh’, a conflict between the Sgaw (known as the “father” tribe among the Karen) and the Pwo (the “mother” tribe)¹² arose when a Pwo Karen killed a Sgaw man named Thakeh, which eventually led to the Pwo being pushed southward to the sea “to drink brackish water” (Smeaton 1887: 70). Later, the Sgaw spread down to the plains and continued southward re-encountering their kinsmen. In 1843, Mason wrote that, according to Karen elders, the Karen were “comparatively recent emigrants in Tavoy” (Mason 1843: 107). The homogeneity across modern Sgaw Karen dialects also supports the hypothesis that the Sgaw spread relatively recently from a smaller place of origin. A hundred years ago, Marshall (1922: 1) wrote about the Sgaw language that “[o]ne dialect, with only slight variation, is used through this region [from the Irrawaddy delta to Thailand and down to Tanintharyi].”

One indication of early contact between the Karen and the Mon people comes from two Mon inscriptions written sometime before 1056, according to which Karen bronze drums, or “frog drums”, were used in Mon courts (Cooler 1986: 108–110). As Cooler notes, it is remarkable that bronze drums used in animist ceremonies by the Karen came to be used in royal courts in the lowlands (Cooler 1986: 115). Cooler goes on to state that the use of Karen drums (*klôʔ*) by Mon and Burmese kings is “an instance of the reversal within the general flow of cultural influences from the lowlands to the hill tribes” (Cooler 1986: 115).

When the Sgaw Karen first migrated to Thailand is unclear. Karen legends mention that the Karen intended to settle in Chiang Mai centuries ago, but Tai people already occupied the region (Mason 1843: 108; Rajah 2008; Sau Kau-Too 1848b). This belief could be corroborated by mentions of the Karen in chronicles of the Lan Na and Siamese kingdoms in modern-day Thailand, which refer to the Karen as *yang* and *kariang*, respectively. Keyes (1979) notes that the earliest references to *yang* in Tai records date as far back as the 13th century, but after a gap of some centuries, mentions of the Karen re-emerge only in the 18th century. What is certain is that Karen people have been migrating to Thailand at least since the 18th century, some captured by the Tai or forced to flee due to armed conflicts and oppression (Renard 1980). In 1757, for example, a group of Karen fled to Thailand following the suppression by the Burmese of a Buddhist rebellion (Gravers 2001). Keyes (1979: 39) further writes that “[s]ome Karen (probably Sgaw) were forcibly resettled [...] in the heartland of Chiang Mai” and that the Sgaw Karen living in Thailand today likely are descendants of those 18th-century emigrants. Such migrations also occurred in present-day

¹² From the Karen story of a father named Saw Pa Sgaw and a mother named Nan Pa Oh, whose sons are the ancestors of the Sgaw and whose daughters are the ancestors of the Pwo (as told in Saw Aung Hla’s *The Karen History*, cited in Naw Veronica 2011).

Kanchanaburi Province. The Karen in central Thailand established connections with the Thai people, who recognized their importance in defending the Thai western border (Renard 1980). Further south, Mason mentions “Siamese Karens” living across the border from Tanintharyi, Myanmar, in a report from 1832. Linguistic evidence for such early settlements by Sgaw Karen in northern and western Thailand is the retention of the [s] pronunciation of the /θ/ phoneme in both regions (see §2.2). Subsequent Burmese-Siamese wars in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as the civil war in the 20th and 21st centuries, have continued to produce Karen refugees in Thailand. In June 2022, there were nine refugee camps along the Thailand–Myanmar border hosting 91,221 people, of which the Karen (Sgaw and Pwo) proportion was 80.40%.¹³ Linguistic evidence that Sgaw Karen have lived in Thailand is that northern and western dialects have preserved the affricates and sibilant pronunciations (see §2.2).

1.2.2 Christian missionaries and the beginning of Karen nationalism

The first Westerner mentioning the Karen is probably the Catholic missionary Nerini in a biography from 1781. According to Griffini (1781: 96), Father Nerini “went into the woods” and met a savage people, who “lived separately from others, and in total liberty, called *Cariani*, and their language, Nerini described as “full of monosyllables, which they pronounce gurgling in the throat, and with a buzzing, and an unpleasant whistling” (Griffini 1781: 123; my trans.). Nerini lived from 1711 to 1756, and thus, his encounters with the Karen must have taken place around the middle of the century.

Adoniram Judson, the first Protestant missionary in Myanmar, arrived with his wife Ann Judson in Yangon in 1813. In 1826, after the First Anglo-Burmese War, they relocated to Amherst in modern-day Kyaikkhami, Mon State (Mason 1843). Modern-day Mon State and Tanintharyi Region in southern Myanmar were the sites of the missionary work among the Sgaw and Pwo Karen in the early years of the Baptist mission in Myanmar. The first Karen convert, baptized in Dawei in 1828, was Koh Thah-byu (in Burmese, *ko θà pyo*; in Sgaw Karen, *kô²-θâ²-p^hjû²*), a Sgaw Karen man originally from a village north of Pathein (Mason 1843). Koh Thah-byu became central in the conversion of Karen to Christianity because the American missionaries, including Judson and Boardman, preached in Burmese, which was not widely understood among the Karen in southern Myanmar (Hayami 2018). Koh Thah-byu reportedly travelled to Karen villages around the region, preaching and distributing tracts (Mason 1843). Many other Karen converts followed Koh Thah-byu’s example, contributing to greater success in spreading Christianity among the Karen than there had been among the Buddhist Burmese (Hayami 2018). See also Hayami (2018) for a

¹³ The Border Consortium, infographic “Camp Population”, <https://www.theborderconsortium.org/resources/key-resources/camp-population/>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

discussion on the role of native evangelists and the motivations behind Karen conversions to Christianity.

As recounted by Wyeth (1891), the American Baptist missionary couple Jonathan and Deborah Wade arrived in Amherst in 1826. Wyeth (1891) writes that the Judsons and the Wades soon moved to Mawlamyine, where Jonathan Wade started the creation of the Burmese-based Karen alphabet in the early 1830s, and that the first Karen text (a religious tract) was completed in 1832. During a preaching tour that year along the Gyaing River (in modern-day Mon and Kayin State), Wade met a Karen village chief who told him the legend about the white brother and the Golden Book (Wyeth 1891). According to the legend, a “younger, white brother” of the Karen had left and taken their Golden Book with him. The Karen fell into ignorance, but the prophecy told that their brother would return the book and give them back their literacy. This legend, representing a common narrative among illiterate hill tribes with a literate neighbour, allegedly inspired Wade to commence his work on creating the Karen alphabet. With the help of his Karen assistants (one was a man named Panlah), he devised the alphabet based on the Burmese script, with which he was already familiar (Wyeth 1891). Wyeth further writes that, soon after its completion, Karen students started learning the alphabet to read texts and books prepared for the mission. In late 1834, Reverend Abner Webb wrote that one tract and one spelling book had been printed in Karen, and he had also received fourteen letters written in Karen from Mawlamyine addressed to Karen Christians in Hmaubi (Mason 1843: 68).

In Wade’s biography, Walter N. Wyeth writes about the first Karen travelling to a Western country (Wyeth 1891). In 1832, due to health issues, the Wades embarked for America, bringing two Christian converts, one Bamar and one Karen (Wyeth 1891). Wyeth (1891) states that, upon their arrival in America the following year, it was decided that the two foreign guests were to teach Burmese and Karen (presumably Sgaw) at Jonathan Wade’s alma mater The Baptist Education Society of the State of New York (present-day Colgate University). Lasting for nine months before the company’s return to Myanmar, it was the first course in a Karen language ever taught overseas (Wyeth 1891).

The first grammar written in Sgaw Karen was *Karen Vernacular Grammar* by Jonathan Wade, published in 1861. The grammar was used in missionary schools to train the Karen to be able to read the Karen Bible independently; as Dr. Joseph G. Binney wrote in his report from the Rangoon mission, a Sgaw Karen grammar was needed “to make the [Karen] pupils independent in their study of the Bible, to break up their habit of merely trusting the teacher’s word”.¹⁴ Before this grammar, the Baptist missionary Francis Mason had written his grammar sketch of Sgaw and Pwo Karen in 1846 in English (Mason 1846).

Shortly after the Wades arrived in southern Myanmar, Francis Mason came to Dawei (formerly Tavoy) in 1831 and continued the missionary work that had been started there, visiting several villages in the Tanintharyi Region (Mason 1870). In 1870, he wrote: “I

¹⁴ “The Baptist Magazine” (1864), volume 44, issue 7

traveled among the Karens in both districts [=Dawei and Myeik] every dry season. There was scarcely a Karen village in either province in which I did not preach the gospel” (Mason 1870: 267). As stated in his 1870 biography, Mason became proficient in Sgaw Karen and could preach without an interpreter. In 1842, he was the leading founder of the Morning Star (Hsa Too Ghaw, *sʰáʰ.tù.yò*, 1842–1942), the first monthly periodical written entirely in Sgaw Karen (Mason 1870). The following year, the translation of the New Testament into Sgaw Karen supervised by Mason was published,¹⁵ followed by the Sgaw Karen Old Testament in 1853 (Mason 1870).

A large body of literature thus soon emerged after the creation of the alphabet in 1832. Since then, it has grown steadily, encompassing children’s books, news reports, religious literature, fiction, research, and other genres. In recent decades, Drum Publication Group, based in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, have become the most important publisher of Karen (Sgaw and Pwo) literature, with the express mission “to promote literature in both Karen and Burmese languages with the overall objectives of developing education for Burmese people wherever they might reside”.¹⁶

Several writing systems besides the Mon–Burmese (“Christian”) script are used to write Sgaw Karen. A Latin-based writing system was devised in 1954 by Father Joseph Séguinotte, a French Catholic missionary in northern Thailand, and is used in some religious texts and a Sgaw-English-French-Thai dictionary compiled by Séguinotte (Smalley 1976: 5). At least two other abugida systems exist, known as *liʰ-təlāʰ.nā* [script-wisdom] ‘script of wisdom’ or “Buddhist Sgaw Karen Script” and *liʰ.kwê.kwô* ‘Kwekor script’ or “Myaing Gyi Ngu Script” (also referred to as *liʰ-sʰw̄-wēʰ* [script-chicken-scratch] ‘chicken scratch script’¹⁷; see Picture 1) (Kato 2021: 338–339; Kato 2022; Kato 2023). The *liʰ-təlāʰ.nā* script is used by some Buddhist Karen, while *liʰ.kwê.kwô* is used primarily by followers of a Buddhist sect in Myaing Gyi Ngu, Kayin State, Myanmar (Kato 2023; Kato 2024). Users of the Kwekor script believe it is the lost ancient Karen script recovered by the Myaing Gyi Ngu abbot U Thuzana, who died in 2018 (Seekins 2017: 540).

¹⁵ In his autobiography, Mason notes that Wade, Abbot, and Vinton on his request had translated parts of the New Testament, but that he was “reluctantly compelled to re-write the manuscripts in whole or in part” mainly due to lack of consistency in the terminology (Mason 1870: 297).

¹⁶ Drum Publication Group website, <https://www.drumpublications.org/>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

¹⁷ There appears to be at least two different Karen scripts referred to as “chicken scratch” scripts. The other one is a script used by the Leke/Lehkai sect, another Buddhist sect based near Hpa-an whose members are primarily Pwo Karen (Stern 1968).



Picture 1 The *li? sʰɔ̃.wɛ̃?* ('chicken scratch') script. Picture: Richard Kerbs

Hayami (2018) argues that the Sgaw Karen (Mon–Burmese) script “enormously enhanced” the “ethno-linguistic connectivity” among the Karen. The written language was thus an essential factor in the emergence of pan-Karen (in Karen *dɔ̃-kəlì?* ‘entire tribe’) nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. The nationalist sentiments and Karen identity strengthened by the Baptist mission later became embodied in the first Karen political organisation, the Karen National Association (KNA), formed in 1881 in Yangon (see Fujimura 2020 for a perspective on the motivations behind its creation). The KNA was later disbanded and succeeded by the Karen National Union (KNU), founded in 1947. Like its predecessor, KNU is strongly associated with the Christian Sgaw Karen, although it officially represents all Karen (Sgaw and Pwo). Dissatisfied with the terms regarding the establishment of Kayin (formerly Karen) State in 1947, the KNU launched a war for independence against the Burmese central government in 1949, which has continued to this day. The independent state envisaged by the KNU was named Kawthoolei¹⁸ (Garbagni & Walton 2020). See also Cheesman (2002) for a history and emergence of a pan-Karen nationality, and Gravers (2007) and South (2011) for detailed overviews of the Karen conflict in Myanmar.

1.3 Sgaw Karen culture, life, and vitality today

Based on personal observation, owing to factors such as the nationalist political movement that commenced in the early 1900s, the Sgaw Karen script, and the ongoing conflict with

¹⁸ Kawthoolei is the most common English transliteration of *kɔ̃-θū-lè* [country-be.black-be.bald], consisting of *kɔ̃* ‘country’ and *θū.lè*, which means ‘be desolate’ but also refers to a type of insect and a type of plant with edible leaves.

the Myanmar central government, the sense of pride among Sgaw Karen about their Karen identity remains strong. Traditional art forms such as weaving (see Picture 2), Karen *hta* poetry, and folk music are still popular, and many actively preserve these ancient traditions. For example, Hill (2022) mentions that *hta* poetry has found a new form of expression in the rap music of displaced Karen youth. Important celebrations, including Karen New Year (*ni²-t^hʒ²-θ⁵* [year-come.up/appear-be.new]), the wrist tying ceremony (*kī-sī ʔə-mū²* [tie-hand 3x-ceremony]), and Martyr's Day, are celebrated to various extents in different Karen communities in Myanmar, Thailand, and overseas. Traditional forms of livelihood, such as upland rice farming (see Picture 3), river fishing, and hunting, are still practised but are increasingly being replaced or complemented by other types of agriculture and occupations. In addition, grassroots activism is vibrant in many Karen communities. The civil war and government oppression have inflicted immense suffering on the Karen people and continue to affect Karen people worldwide. The acute necessity and urge to help has sparked the emergence of several Karen-led NGOs and other community-based activist groups with various missions.



Picture 2 A Sgaw Karen weaver. Picture: Richard Kerbs



Picture 3 An upland rice field in Mae Hong Son Province (May 2023). Picture: Richard Kerbs

Religion has both united and divided the Karen. Before contact with Christians and Buddhists, the Karen had their native animist belief system. Essential aspects of this belief system include the concept of *pyò*, an omnipresent force, *kàlà* spirits, offerings to appease the gods, and divination by chicken bones. Animist practice appears to be limited nowadays, but Sgaw Karen Buddhists have incorporated animistic elements in their Buddhist practice, and some heterodox sects have also emerged (Stern 1968). Animist traits are also still seen in traditions such as the wrist-tying ceremony, which is performed to summon a person's *kàlà* spirit. Christianity entered Karen communities in the 1830s and is still practised by many Sgaw Karen in Southeast Asia and overseas. Despite a considerable number of Christians, Buddhism is still the religion adhered to by most Sgaw Karen. According to Stern (1968), Buddhism was likely transmitted to the Sgaw via the Pwo, who in turn had been taught the religion by the Mon. See Gravers (2001) for a description of Karen Buddhist movements in Myanmar and Thailand.

The vitality of the Sgaw Karen language varies widely in different communities. In the Yangon Region, for example, Sgaw–Burmese bilingualism is reportedly widespread, and there is ongoing language shift from Sgaw Karen to Burmese. During fieldwork near the

town of Mae Hong Son in Northern Thailand, it was observed that Sgaw Karen is still used in the home and village sphere, but children speak predominantly central Thai while having a passive knowledge of Sgaw Karen. The situation is radically different in the border area between Kayin State and Tak Province, for example, where people of all ages actively use Sgaw Karen in daily life and social media. Sgaw Karen also functions as a *lingua franca* among speakers of Karenic languages in the Kayin–Tak border area and in the Christian communities in Taungoo District, Myanmar (Naw Veronica 2011), among Geba in northern Kayin State (Naw Hsar Shee 2008), and in Northern Thailand (Dawkins & Phillips 2009). Thus, the status of Sgaw Karen among the Karen is generally high, so much so that language shift to Sgaw Karen reportedly threatens the survival of other Karenic languages in places like Taungoo District in Myanmar and northern Tak Province in Thailand (Dawkins & Phillips 2009; Manson 2017a; Naw Veronica 2011).

Education is highly valued by the Karen. Oh et al. (2021), for example, argue that education has been a cornerstone in Karen nationalist ideology and identity building since its inception. A curriculum developed by KECD, the Karen Education and Culture Department of the KNU, in cooperation with International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) is taught mainly in Sgaw Karen in 1,637 non-governmental schools in KNU-controlled areas and refugee camps along the Thai–Burmese border (Oh et al. 2021). Unfortunately, access to affordable and high-quality education is still limited for many Karen, especially in Myanmar. In Myanmar, Karen students can attend government, KNU-run, and Bible schools. Since the enactment of Myanmar’s National Education Law in 2014, Karen language and culture can be taught in schools. However, reports show that the actual implementation of ethnic education is often limited in scope or non-existent.¹⁹ In Thailand, education can be accessed in refugee camps or migrant learning centres near the Thai–Myanmar border or in Thai government schools. Thoo Mweh Khee Learning Center for migrants in Tak Province is exceptional in providing post-secondary education to Karen students.

¹⁹ Karen Human Rights Group, *Foundation of Fear: 25 years of villagers’ voices from southeast Myanmar* (2017). Chapter 3: Education, <https://khr.org/2018/05/chapter-3-education>. Accessed 5 August 2022.



Picture 4 Thoo Mweh Khee Learning Center. Picture: Richard Kerbs

1.4 Areal context and typology of Sgaw Karen

This section describes the essential typological features of Sgaw Karen and the areal context in which the modern language has been formed. The areal influence on Sgaw Karen is extensive, although some distinctively Karenic features can be observed.

The contact influence in Sgaw Karen is often areal and difficult to attribute to a specific language. The earliest influence is from Tai and Austroasiatic (Monic and Palaungic), as seen in an early layer of loan words, the sesquisyllabic word structure, and the SVO constituent order, which diverges from the verb-final syntax of the proto-Tibeto-Burman ancestor language (Manson 2017a; Solnit 2017). One example of the Tai influence on Karenic, as noted by Solnit (2017), is the tone development based on the interaction between initial consonants and tones.

In terms of loanwords, some of the earliest loans are from Mon, including words such as *blā* (from *pləh*; Kato 2004) ‘recover’ and *pāni*[?] (from *həndōik*; Mon form from Shorto 1962) ‘trade, goods’. Some Indic religious vocabulary has been introduced to Sgaw Karen via Mon, including *bū*[?] ‘merit; feast (n.)’ from Mon *pon*, ultimately from Pali *puñña* (Gravers 2001). Burmese loanwords are of both ancient and more recent date, including *tjō* (from *teàun*) ‘school’, *pjā*[?] (from *pjā*) ‘show’, *s^hé* (from *s^hain*) ‘store’, *tō[?].tè[?]* ‘gecko’ (from *tau[?].tè*), and *ʔā.nā[?]* (or *ʔā.nà*) ‘be considerate, modest, careful not to inconvenience or offend’ (from *ʔā.na-de*; cf. Thai *kre:ŋ-jai*). Both recent and some possibly quite old borrowings are from Tai languages, including *lō[?]* (from Thai *rót*) ‘car’ and *kā[?]* ‘market’

(from Northern Thai *kà:t*)²⁰ and, possibly, *sò.pà* ‘king’ (cf. Shan *tsaw3 p^haa5* ‘hereditary prince, Shan prince, *saopha*’²¹), and the honorific particles *sò* (cf. Shan *tsaw3* ‘lord, master, sir’) used before male names and *nô* (cf. Shan *naaη4* ‘miss, sister; female name prefix’) used before female names. English-based vocabulary started entering the language following contact with Americans and the British in the 19th century, and the influx of English loanwords continues. Examples include *nē.s^hǎʔ* ‘nature’, *ʔi.mē* ‘email’, *t^hēʔ* ‘(send a) text (v.)’, and *pāʔ.tiʔ* ‘(political) party’.

Due to its geographical position between Thailand and Myanmar, Sgaw Karen shares several properties characteristic of two linguistic areas, known as the Mainland Southeast Asian language area (Enfield 2005) and the Greater Burma Zone (e.g. Müller & Weymuth 2017). These are defined as linguistic areas where languages of different genetic affiliations have converged and become typologically similar. Müller & Weymuth (2017: 409) define the Greater Burma Zone as “a region encompassing modern Myanmar and bordering areas within China, India, Bangladesh, Laos, and Thailand”. Features characteristic of this region in Sgaw Karen include a verbal prefix as negator (in Sgaw Karen, *tə-*) and the use of an existential verb (in Sgaw Karen, *ʔəʔ*) in predicative possessive (‘have’) constructions (Jenny 2023). A feature that Sgaw Karen shares with Shan and Burmese is the use of a locative noun with human goal arguments (for example, ‘go to him’ is expressed as ‘go to his place’).

Mainland Southeast Asia (MSEA) is the geographic region which minimally comprises Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and sometimes Peninsular Malaysia (Enfield & Comrie 2015; Sidwell & Jenny 2021). Enfield and Comrie (2015) present eighteen diagnostic features characterizing the MSEA language area. As Table 1 demonstrates, fourteen of these occur in Sgaw Karen.

²⁰ The variant *kāʔ* ‘market’, possibly borrowed from Shan *kaat2*, is heard in the Mawchi–Taungoo variety. Cf. Jingpho *gát* ‘market’, which is a confirmed Shan borrowing (Kurabe 2017: 996).

²¹ All Shan forms and definitions are from Sao Tern Moeng (1995).

Table 1 MSEA features and their presence in Sgaw Karen

	MSEA feature (based on Enfield 2005; Enfield and Comrie 2015)	Present/prominent in Sgaw Karen?
1	large vowel system including diphthongs	no
2	nine-place, symmetrical vowel phoneme inventory	yes
3	long–short vowel distinctions	no
4	onset-rhyme syllable structure	yes
5	one syllable per word	yes
6	pitch and phonation	yes
7	velar gap	yes
8	lack of inflectional morphology	yes
9	nouns and verbs serving as functional morphemes	yes
10	verb serialization	yes
11	flexible constituent order	yes
12	zero anaphora	yes
13	topic–comment sentence structure	yes
14	ambitransitive verbs	no
15	sentence-final particles	yes
16	ideophones, elaborate expressions	yes
17	numeral classifiers	yes
18	complex pronominal system	no

The following are some differences and similarities between Sgaw Karen and the MSEA prototype in Table 1. Two major differences in the phonology are the lack of a distinction between long and short vowels in Sgaw Karen and the lack of diphthongs (the Hua Hin variety described by Jitwiriyant 2012 and Kerdpol 2012 is an exception). Areal (MSEA) features include a large vowel inventory, contrastive pitch, and phonation (creaky and breathy). The “velar gap” feature refers to the lack of the voiced velar /g/ in the consonant inventory, another common feature in MSEA. According to Sidwell & Jenny (2021), this gap exists because the voiced stops /b/ and /d/ were originally implosive (and remain so in some MSEA languages, including some Sgaw Karen varieties). Since the implosive velar is cross-linguistically rare, it was never part of the consonant inventory of the MSEA languages.

A notable feature of the syllable structure is the lack of final nasals and vowel nasalization, distinguishing Sgaw Karen from most other MSEA languages, even within Karenic. Another is the division between minor (reduced) and major (full) syllables, as in the words *pəjə* ‘Myanmar’ and *jə-θəkə* [1sx-friend] ‘my friend’, where the syllables containing *ə* are examples of minor syllables (see §2.1). Only some of the minor syllables can be traced etymologically. Nearly every major syllable has a meaning, but some only occur in compounds.

Regarding morphosyntax and the lexicon, Sgaw Karen is a typical MSEA language. First, Sgaw Karen is an analytic language with scarce inflectional morphology both in the nominal and verbal domains. Some bound morphology can be found, such as personal prefixes, the numeral *tə-* ‘one’, the homophonous negative prefix *tə-*, personal prefixes, and

the irrealis marker *kə-*. A third-person pronominal enclitic, *wē*, is also posited (see §11.3.3). Apart from these prefixes and the enclitic, Sgaw Karen possesses several functional morphemes, many of which are grammaticalized nouns and verbs that no longer occur as independent words. Notable examples include the relator nouns (see §3.2), numeral classifiers (see §3.4), and verbal modifiers in V_2 position (see §5.5). The latter can be considered a type of verb serialization, another widespread areal feature described in Chapter 5.

The Karenic verb-medial constituent order has received much attention in the literature. Karenic is one of three Sino-Tibetan branches in which the unmarked constituent order is SVO, as illustrated in (1) and (2).

- (1) *tʰwɪʔ* *mə*
 dog bark
 ‘the dog is barking’ [LTP]
- (2) *məhā.kəʔ* *jə-pʰɔ̄-ʔəʔ* *klɔ̄-ɲáʔ* *lə*
 yesterday 1s-cook-eat cow-meat FACT.FP
 ‘Yesterday I cooked beef.’ [LTP]

However, objects are often topicalized and placed before the main verb, as in (3). In this case, the fronted object (P) is referred to anaphorically by the resumptive pronoun *ʔə* ‘them’ in the main clause (this object can also be omitted).

- (3) [*tì.θəkōʔ* *lə* *ʔə-ɣɛʔ*]_P *néʔ*
 friend REL 3-be.good that_{TOP}
hā²-xɪ̄-báʔ *ʔə* *kɔ̄* *lə*
 walk-search-HIT 3i be.difficult FACT.FP
 ‘As for good friends, they are hard to find.’ [HUR]

The number of ambitransitive verbs and words belonging to more than one word class does not seem very high in Sgaw Karen. Examples of ambitransitive verbs include *tʰɔ̄ʔ* ‘go up; ascend (tr.), attend (e.g. a class)’, *báʔ* ‘hit, encounter; be correct’, and *ʔəʔ* ‘exist, be (somewhere); visit’, but many verbs that are ambitransitive in other languages have a fixed transitivity value in Sgaw Karen (see Chapter 8). Examples of word class ambivalence include *tʰɔ̄* ‘be long; length’ and *ʔəʔ*, which functions as both the existential–locative verb ‘exist, be located’ and a locational noun, as in *sʰū̄ jə-ʔəʔ* [ALL.P 1SX-LOC.N] ‘to me’.

Expressive forms such as ideophones and elaborate expressions are pervasive in MSEA and Sgaw Karen. Only a few ideophones occur in the data, but the Thesaurus (Sau Kau-Too 1848a; 1848b; 1849; 1850) and Wade’s 1896 dictionary include several entries which potentially classify as ideophones. Quadrisyllabic elaborative expressions, such as *θū²-tɔ̄-θā²-lə* [liver-be.true-heart-be.straight] ‘be honest’, constitute an important part of the vocabulary (see Chapter 6).

Specifically Karenic features include the loss of final consonants, prefix consonant variation, and recipient-theme constituent order (Manson 2017a).²² Sgaw Karen has lost all of the proto-Karenic final nasals and converged all final stops into *-ʔ*. There is prefix consonant variation in words such as *təkh^hɔ̃* ‘mango’, in which *tə-* is pronounced variously as [tə], [θə], [sə], or [d̥zə], depending on the region. Recipient–theme is the unmarked constituent order, as in *hē jà lā t^hɪ* [give 1si GNR.P water] ‘Give me water’, but the reverse order also occurs. Manson (2017a) mentions that the location preposition **ta* (Sgaw Karen *lā*) and topic marker **nu* (Sgaw Karen *nē* ‘that’) are common across Karenic. Another characteristic of Sgaw Karen, which is possibly also found in other Karenic languages, is the extensive use of clause-modifying descriptive verbs to express meanings often conveyed by verb complement–taking verbs in English, as in *jə-dē tə.nā.pyō.sī θē lō* [1s-strike piano be.skilled FACT.FP] ‘I can (know how to) play the piano’ (see §4.3). More descriptions and comparative research are needed to uncover more typological similarities between Karenic languages.

1.5 Data and sources

This thesis presents both primary and secondary data derived from several sources. The firsthand data and the data in previous descriptions roughly represent four varieties of Sgaw Karen. The regional differences were deemed minor enough to include in the same description, leading to the decision to incorporate this variation rather than base it on a single variety. The most apparent differences lie in the sound system. However, lexical and, to a lesser extent, grammatical differences also exist and are indicated throughout the thesis.

The primary data was collected in Finland, online, and during two field trips to Thailand in February–June 2022 and May–June 2023. Three main language consultants have enabled me to collect the data and introduced me to several other members of their respective communities. Data collection started in early 2021 with LTP in Helsinki, Finland, and continued throughout the thesis project. This data consists of elicited words, phrases, and sentences, grammaticality judgements, and short stories narrated by LTP. LTP grew up in Kayah State, Myanmar, and relocated to Finland in 2007, where he studied and worked as a language teacher and interpreter. He speaks Sgaw Karen, Paku (Karenic), Burmese, Finnish, and English fluently. Furthermore, he has extensive knowledge of the differences between Sgaw Karen spoken in different areas and other Karenic languages, including Kayah (Karenic). In 2022, I visited KWH, LTP’s relative, in Mae Hong Son, Thailand, where I collected elicited sentences, grammaticality judgements, and stories by KWH reflecting his vast expertise in various aspects of Karen traditional life and culture. During the same field trip in northern Thailand, I also made shorter visits to Tha Ton, Chiang Mai,

²² This is a common order cross-linguistically. Looking at MSEA languages, the same order is found in Spoken Mon (Jenny 2005: 91) while a theme-recipient order is found in Thai (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 113–115). In Burmese, the order of recipients and themes is pragmatically based (Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016: 290).

where I collected a small amount of observational data, as well as to Tak Province, where I met HUR, a then-student and now teacher at Thoo Mweh Khee school in Phop Phra District, Tak Province, near the border with Myanmar. Since then, HUR has assisted with remote elicitation and data validation in Thailand and online throughout the project.

A range of written and spoken material available online has been utilized to supplement the data recorded firsthand. This data includes fictional and non-fictional literature, news articles and reports, blog posts written in Sgaw Karen, and YouTube vlogs by Sgaw Karen creators. Important sources include publications by Drum Publication Group based in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand, and news articles and videos by Karen Information Center, a Karen media organization based in Tak Province, Thailand. In addition, the 1853 and 1992 Bible translations have been used to a lesser extent, mainly for comparing diachronic differences.

During the process of assessing the quality and accuracy of the example sentences derived from the above-mentioned online sources, with either HUR or LTP, various idiolectal differences naturally emerged. The native speaker judged some expressions as characteristic of a specific region (e.g. “In Chiang Mai, they say it like that.”) or as belonging to a formal or literary style of language use. They considered other expressions marginal or even “incorrect” (“Some people say it like that, but the correct way to say it would be like this.”). Based on the native speaker judgements and the distribution and frequency of certain constructions in the corpus data, a distinction has been made between a spoken and written form of Sgaw Karen. Differences between common (cross-regional) constructions and region-specific constructions and phonetic forms have also been identified. The *doculect* (Cysouw & Good 2013) in this thesis, then, unless otherwise specified, is intended to represent a conventional core of phonetic realizations and morphosyntactic constructions used widely across the Sgaw Karen-speaking area. This division into common language use and variation can be illustrated by the diagram in Figure 3, based on Cobbinah et al. (2016), here reproduced as provided by Lüpke (2019). In our case, each circle represents the repertoire of one Sgaw Karen speaker. The centre (“Language”, i.e. the *doculect* of this thesis) represents the shared parts of the speakers’ repertoires. Each speaker uses expressions that are not part of the repertoire of the other speakers.

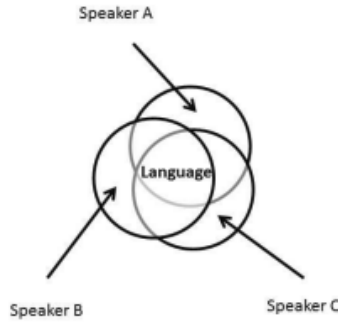


Figure 3 Common language use and variation (Lüpke 2019: 476)

Most of the example sentences in this thesis belong to a repertoire that most Sgaw Karen speakers share. However, the examples also include variant expressions (non-overlapping language use) that occur with sufficient frequency in the data. These examples include specifications about why they lie outside the common core. A third language use category contains linguistic forms and expressions that no Sgaw Karen speaker uses. While any language use that serves its intended communicative purpose can be considered good and acceptable, the term *ungrammatical* (indicated in example sentences by an asterisk) refers to examples which a native speaker deemed non-existent in the linguistic repertoires of most or all Sgaw Karen speakers. Most of these are constructed sentences used for illustrative purposes. As previously mentioned, whether an expression or phonetic form lies within or outside the core, is ungrammatical or non-existent, is based on, firstly, the intuition of native speakers and, secondly, the distribution and frequency of the concerned expression or sound in the corpus data.

Apart from belonging to a common repertoire, the data presented in this thesis also intends to represent colloquial, spoken language. For this reason, some sentences from written sources have been edited to reflect everyday, spoken discourse, while some are not, for example, to highlight a difference between the two types of language use. Himmelmann (1998) classifies communicative events along a spontaneity–plannedness parameter. On the spontaneous end of the scale, we find unplanned speech, such as exclamations and unstaged conversations. Examples of planned discourse include public speeches, translations, constructed sentences, and most types of writing (Himmelmann 1998: 176–183). This thesis includes both types of data, depending on the purpose of a given section. For example, the benefactive construction can be described using easily accessible, planned data, such as elicited sentences, while examining final particles requires access to spontaneous dialogue.

A significant amount of secondary data has also been at my disposal due to previous scholars' and authors' extensive efforts to describe different varieties of Sgaw Karen. The most notable sources are the grammar sketch and texts by Jones (1961), the Sgaw Karen textbooks (parts 1, 2, and 3) by Ballard (1973), and Thai–Sgaw dictionary in two volumes by Ratanakul (1986). In addition, *The Anglo-Karen Dictionary* Wade (1883), his Sgaw–

English dictionary *The Dictionary of the Sgaw Karen Language* (Wade 1896), and *The Drum Dictionary* by Drum Publications have been used extensively.²³

Lastly, older sources published before 1950 have been used to a lesser extent to trace the diachronic development of lexemes and constructions. These include the four-volume opus *Thesaurus of Karen Knowledge* written by Sau Kau-Too (*sə kə.tʰi*) and compiled by Jonathan Wade, the 1853 Bible translation, and articles in the monthly periodical Morning Star published from 1842 to 1942 by the American Baptist Mission Press in Myanmar.²⁴

Table 2 lists the data types and sources. A question mark following a variety in the Variety column indicates that the area is not stated explicitly in the source but has been estimated indirectly based on characteristic features.

Table 2 Data and sources

Designation / Source	Variety	Description
LTP	Mawchi–Taungoo	male, 30+, main consultant, elicitation, stories, conversations, observational data LTP.D = TMA questionnaire in Dahl (1985) LTP.P = Questionnaire on Information Structure (Skopeteas et al. 2006) LTP.W = translation of “Woman with bag” in Vaux & Cooper (1999)
HUR	Kayin–Tak	male, 30+, main consultant, elicitation, stories, conversations, observational data
KWH	Mae Hong Son	male, 40+, main consultant, elicitation, stories, conversations, observational data
Chiang Mai	Chiang Mai	observational data from Chiang Mai
Vlog	Kayin–Tak	YouTube vlogs, observational data (a title describing the content of the video is given within quotation marks)
Karen drum	n/a	book entitled <i>klóʔ dɔʔ kəŋɔ.pʰɔ</i> ‘The Bronze Drum and the Karen People’ (2011) by Drum Publications; the page number is indicated after the colon in each example
Karen nationalism	Hpa-an–Mawlamyine?	article by Karen writer Tee Noe entitled <i>jəpàʔ.kəpʰɔ jəθāʔ lə jəmɛ kəŋɔ.kəlɪʔ lə məni ʔəxɔ lɛʔ</i> ‘Why am I proud to be Karen?’ published 2021 by KIC News
Karen proverbs	n/a	book entitled <i>kəŋɔ tɑ.kətò.dɔ tɑ.kətò.kʰwɛʔ təpʰáʔ</i> ‘Karen Proverbs’ (2007) by Drum Publications; the page number is indicated after the colon in each example

²³ These three dictionaries are searchable online at <https://www.drumpublications.org/>.

²⁴ Issues of Morning Star are available online at <https://ursa.mercer.edu/ursa/>.

The Benefit of Education	n/a	children’s story by Drum Publications (recounted orally in a YouTube video)
Karen village	Chiang Mai?	cartoon magazine entitled <i>kè.θə̀kō̄? sʰū hī?</i> ‘Let’s Go Back Home’ published 2021 by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
Gilmore (1898)	Mawlamyine?	grammar sketch
Jones (1961)	Mawlamyine	grammar sketch and texts, transcription and interlinear glosses have been adapted according to this thesis
Ballard (1973)	Chiang Mai	three books, interlinear glosses have been added
Ratanakul (1986)	Chiang Mai	two volumes
1853 Bible	Mawlamyine?	based on the King James Version (KJV)
1992 Bible	Southwestern Myanmar?	published by The Bible Society of Myanmar; this translation revision was completed in 2018 and is based on the Good News Translation (GNT)
News broadcast/ interview	n/a	video broadcast by KIC News’ “The Karen News” YouTube channel
News article	n/a	news article by KIC News
Saw Kay	Hpa-an?	novel by Theradoh Saw Htoo entitled <i>tʰwī?.mê.kê? bl̄.tʰɔ̄?</i> ‘Crooked Dog’s Tail Turned Straight’

The transcription system used throughout this thesis is a romanization of the Sgaw Karen writing system devised by Jonathan Wade in the 1830s based on the Mon–Burmese script. Thus, each Latin letter or diacritic in the transcription represents one grapheme in the Mon–Burmese script. See the Appendix for tables showing the grapheme correspondences. Unless otherwise stated, all example sentences from other sources are given in this transcription system.

1.6 Theory and methods

The thesis is set within the theoretical framework known as Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT) (Dryer 2006; Dixon 2010a). As explained by Dryer (2006), BLT is an informal framework that avoids theory-specific terms, employing instead notions often known from traditional grammar, such as passive, verb, and other names of word classes. In addition to the traditional terminology, BLT uses concepts from modern linguistics, including structuralist notions such as *phoneme* and, more recently, comparative concepts from the last few decades of typological research. The result is a framework that has proven suitable for describing entire languages on their own terms. Important works which define some of the most central concepts used in this description include Shopen (2007a; 2007b; 2007c), Dixon (2010a; 2010b; 2000), Vendler (1967) on the categorization of verbs according to lexical aspect, and Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) on voice constructions.

The data analysis process consisted of three main steps. In the first step, firsthand data was collected by recording interviews with native speakers. The data collection methods include elicitation, grammaticality judgements, storytelling, and translation tasks. Secondly, transcriptions of the recorded data were made using ELAN. Additionally, field notes and other written data were assembled. When needed, the data was converted into machine-readable text using the Transkribus tool by READ-COOP SCE. In the third step, all the data combined (referred to as “the data” throughout the thesis) was transferred to Fieldworks Language Explorer (FLEX), software for linguistic data management produced by SIL International. The result is a searchable corpus of 135,390 words (19,933 unique words) and 11,409 sentences.

2 Phonology

This chapter describes the phonology of Sgaw Karen, including its phonemes and tones and their phonetic realisations. Sgaw Karen is a geographically widespread language and can, based on phonetic properties, be divided into several regional varieties. The transcription used in this study is largely a transliteration of the Wade script (see §1.2.2). The Latin symbols chosen for the transliteration most closely reflect the sound system of the Kayin–Tak variety, as represented by speakers from the border area between Kayin State in Myanmar and Tak Province in Thailand. For example, Tone 2 in this variety is realized as a high-falling tone, accompanied by breathy phonation, and hence this tone is represented by a circumflex (\hat{v}), as in *pá* [páʎ] ‘father’. On the other hand, Tone 3 ($\hat{v}^?$) and Tone 6 (\hat{v}), which in this and most other varieties have merged, are differentiated in the transcription. Furthermore, the symbols *s* and *s^h* are chosen based on how the sounds they represent are pronounced in most Myanmar varieties. In Thailand, they are pronounced as palatal affricates. See Appendix I for symbol correspondences. The chapter begins with a review of the relevant literature and follows, in §2.1, with a description of the syllable structure. The subsequent sections describe, in turn, the consonants (§2.2), vowels (§2.3), and tones (§2.4).

Several previous studies describe the sound system of Sgaw Karen, covering both phonetic and phonological aspects. The earliest published study is Francis Mason’s grammar sketch of Sgaw and Pwo (Mason 1846). Mason was the head of the Baptist mission in Dawei but also had connections with speakers from Mawlamyine. He noted that “the dialects spoken at Tavoy and Maulmain differ in many respects” but provided no details (Mason 1843: 107). Gilmore (1898) provides a description similar to the one by Mason.

Several recent publications focusing on morphosyntactic phenomena or lexicon provide sketches of the sound system. Jones (1961) describes the phonology of the Mawlamyine and Pathein varieties of Sgaw Karen. The Thai-Sgaw Karen dictionary by Ratanakul (1986) includes a phonological sketch based on data from six provinces in Thailand. Chappell (1992) outlines the phonology of the Hpa-an dialect of Kayin State, Myanmar, while Saw Lar Baa (2001) describes the phonology of the Yangon variety. Two master’s theses, Fischer (2013) and Olson (2014), include phonological descriptions. The most recent study appears to be van Schie (2019), which provides a sketch based on data from a speaker born in Dawei.

Studies dedicated exclusively to phonetics and phonology include Rattanaporn (2012), which is a phonetic description of the Chiang Mai variety, and Jitwiriyanont (2012) and

Kerdpol (2012), both focusing on a variety spoken in Hua Hin District in Western Thailand. Sarvestani's (2018) doctoral thesis is an in-depth analysis of the phonetics and phonology of Sgaw Karen based on data from a Karen community in Buffalo, New York.

Previous descriptions differ due to regional variation and analytical approach, mainly regarding the number and nature of tones and whether marginal consonant phonemes have been included or excluded in the phoneme inventory. Regarding the vowels, most studies report nine, while some include the schwa vowel of minor syllables as a separate phoneme, resulting in a ten-vowel system. See also Sarvestani (2018) for a detailed overview of previous studies.

2.1 Syllable structure

There are two types of syllables in Sgaw Karen: major and minor syllables. Minor syllables are so called because they are phonologically reduced compared to major syllables. This section describes major syllables first, followed by minor ones.

2.1.1 Major syllables

A Sgaw Karen major syllable consists of one or two initial consonants, a vowel, and no final consonants. Every major syllable also has a tone. The syllable structure is thus C(C)V+T, where C stands for consonant, V for vowel, and T for tone. Examples can be seen in (4).

- (4) *jí* 'rat' (CV)
 tɔ̃ʔ 'be thick' (CV)
 klē 'road' (CCV)

Most Sgaw Karen varieties lack diphthongs (the Hua Hin variety described by Jitwiriyant (2012) and Kerdpol (2012) is a notable exception). The final ^ʔ in words such as *tɔ̃ʔ* in (4) represents final glottal constriction, which some scholars analyse as a final segment, while others treat it as a non-segmental, tonal feature. This thesis takes the latter view, as argued for in more detail in §2.4.

As in any isolating language, almost every Sgaw Karen syllable has a meaning. Some syllables occur only in compounds, but most are semantically transparent. An exception is polysyllabic loanwords, such as *θɔ̃.kʰā* 'monk' (ultimately from Sanskrit/Pali *saṅgha*). Another exception is the minor syllables, which will be described next.

2.1.2 Minor syllables

In contrast to the major syllables seen so far, minor syllables are reduced and have no tone. Also, they do not occur independently. Examples include *kə-* and *pə-* in (5).

- (5) *kəθêʔ* ‘horse’
pəklā ‘spring onion’

Minor syllables only contain the vowel ə (pronounced as [ə~ʌ]), as previously noted by Saw Lar Baa (2001), and only one of ten consonant initials is allowed: *k, t, p, s, θ, m, n, l, j,* and *ʔ*. The most common are *k, t, p,* and *θ*. No consonant clusters are allowed in minor syllables. In the orthography based on the Mon–Burmese script, minor syllables appear as plain consonant graphemes without vowel marks, as in ကထဲʔ *kəθêʔ* ‘horse’, where က represents the minor syllable *kə*.

Minor syllables have been discussed only briefly in previous studies on Sgaw Karen. Jones (1961) does not divide syllables into major and minor. Instead, he analyses the latter as major syllables with Tone 4, a mid or high creaky tone (see §2.4). Sarvestani (2018), on the other hand, recognizes minor syllables as a special type but excludes them from his discussion. Similarly, Saw Lar Baa (2001: 27) differentiates minor from major syllables, noting that the former are atonal and stressless.

Morphemes combining a major and a minor syllable are known as *sesquisyllabic*, meaning ‘consisting of one and a half syllable’, a term introduced by Matisoff (1973a: 86) describing Austroasiatic. Sesquisyllabic morphemes have also been reconstructed for Proto-Tibeto-Burman (Matisoff 2003), but Blench (2019) argues that they result from contact with Austroasiatic. As Pittayaporn (2015) and Butler (2015) note, the distinction between initial consonant clusters and sesquisyllabic word structure is not always clear-cut. In Sgaw Karen, examples of sesquisyllabic words contrasting with monosyllabic ones containing a consonant cluster occur, as seen in (6).

- (6) *prā* ‘compete’
pərā ‘letter (written document)’
klā ‘slash’
kəlā ‘be empty’

In traditional Karen Hta poetry, minor syllables have the same metric weight as major syllables, while CCV syllables are equal to CV syllables. A distinction thus exists between consonant clusters and minor syllables.

On the other hand, several words exist which may be pronounced with or without ə, such as *k(ə)rā* ‘group’. A noncontrastive ə also occurs when two initial consonants violate the Sonority Sequencing Principle (e.g. Clements 1990), which states that a consonant with a higher sonority value cannot precede a consonant with a lower sonority value in a consonant cluster. Examples include *ləpā* ‘wave’, an Austroasiatic loanword (cf. Mon *lèəʔpəh*, Sakamoto 1994: 585) and *θəkōʔ* ‘friend’. Since *l* and *θ* are more sonorous than the consonants following them, ə must occur as a separator (see also Pittayaporn 2015).

Sgaw Karen minor syllables can be lexical, grammatical, or both. Lexical prefixes are parts of lexical nouns but often lack a clearly identifiable meaning. The minor syllables *sə-*, *θə-*, *mə-*, and *lə-* lack grammatical functions and occur exclusively as lexical prefixes. In

contrast, *kə-*, *tə-*, and *pə-* are both lexical and grammatical, while *jə-*, *nə-*, and *ʔə-* occur only as pronominal prefixes representing the first, second, and third persons, respectively. Some types of minor syllables can be combined, as seen in (7). No sequences containing more than three consecutive minor syllables occur in the data.

- (7) *pə-θəw̄* [1px-village] ‘our village’
jə-kə-kənâʔ [1s-IRR-listen] ‘I will listen’

Many minor syllables are contractions of full syllables, but their etymology is often difficult to trace. One etymologically transparent example is *pədôʔ* ‘official’, which consists of *pə-*, a contraction of *pɣà* ‘person’, and *dôʔ* ‘be big’. Some words are contracted in fast speech, including *məɣâ* (from *mî.ɣâ*) ‘aunt’ and *pəkəŋ̄* (from *pɣà.kəŋ̄*) ‘human, Karen’. In some cases, the full disyllabic form is retrievable, but the meanings of the individual syllables are unclear (e.g. *pəj̄*, from *pì.j̄*, ‘Burma’ and *kəl̄*, possibly from *kʰ.ɫ̄*, ‘be empty’). Sesquisyllabic words that lack a disyllabic source include Austroasiatic loans, such as *pədəē* ‘rabbit’ (cf. spoken Mon [haʔtai]; Sakamoto 1994: 350), *kəθēʔ* ‘horse’ (cf. Old Mon *kʰeħh*; Jenny 2005) and *θəw̄* ‘village’ (cf. Old Mon *twāñ*; Jenny 2005). A more thorough examination of Sgaw Karen prefixes is still needed. Solnit (1994) provides one for the related Karenic language Kayah Li. He draws attention to the fact that Kayah Li “presyllables” display variant degrees of morphemic autonomy. While a dichotomy between minor and major syllables has been posited here, further study might reveal the need for a more fine-grained distinction.

Blench (2019) notes that, in some languages, minor syllables (or “pre-syllables”) can indicate the semantic category of a word. In Sgaw Karen, however, the function of minor syllables as word class prefixes appears minor. The prefix *kə-*, for instance, occurs in such semantically unrelated words as *kəθiʔ* ‘medicine’, *kənâʔ* ‘listen’, *kəʔō* ‘cavity’, and *kəj̄* ‘fishtail palm (*Caryota mitis*)’.

2.2 Consonants

Initial consonants occupy the first slot in a syllable. Table 3 presents the 27 consonants in the Kayin–Tak and Mawchi–Taungoo varieties, but note that the number of consonant phonemes in Sgaw Karen varies depending on the region.

Table 3 Sgaw Karen consonant phonemes

	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Palato- alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	<i>p p^h b</i>		<i>t t^h d</i>		<i>k k^h</i>	<i>ʔ</i>
Nasal	<i>m</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	
Fricative		<i>θ</i>	<i>s s^h z</i>	<i>ʃ</i>	<i>x ɣ</i>	<i>h h̥</i>
Affricate				<i>tʃ tʃ^h</i>		
Approximant	<i>w</i>		<i>r</i>	<i>j</i>		
Lateral			<i>l</i>			

The phonemes *ŋ*, *z*, *ʃ*, *tʃ*, and *tʃ^h* are marginal, occurring exclusively in loanwords, onomatopoeic words, and ideophones. The pronunciations [tʃ] and [tʃ^h] exist in Sgaw Karen but have shifted to [s] and [s^h] in most Myanmar varieties. Another rare consonant is *ɲ*, which only occurs in a handful of words in the data. Unlike the other marginal consonants, however, *ɲ* is native and derives from the proto-language. The voiced glottal fricative *h̥* occurs in final particles, and its status as a phoneme is not obvious.

Sarvestani (2018: 51) notes that previous studies report 21 to 28 initial consonants in Sgaw Karen, depending on the variety. Differences mainly concern the marginal initials, *z*, *h̥*, *ʃ*, *ŋ*, *tʃ*, and *tʃ^h*, and the aspirated sibilant *s^h* is often not identified as a distinct phoneme.

Subsections 2.2.1–2.2.6 discuss the initial consonants in more detail. Unless otherwise stated, the IPA pronunciations are based on the Kayin–Tak variety.

2.2.1 Stops

Sgaw Karen has nine stop phonemes, which exhibit some regional variation. There is one glottal stop, a three-way distinction between aspirated, unaspirated, and voiced stops in the bilabial and alveolar series, and a two-way distinction between aspirated and unaspirated stops in the velar domain. The aspiration in *p^h*, *t^h*, and *k^h* is more audible than in English aspirated stops. The stops are listed in (8) with examples.

(8)	<i>p</i> [p]	<i>pū</i>	[pu˧]	‘story, fable’
		<i>pəhiʔ</i>	[pə.hi˧ʔ]	‘teak’
	<i>t</i> [t]	<i>tū</i>	[tɯ˧]	‘suffer, endure’
		<i>tələ</i>	[təlɔ̌]	‘Mon’ (from Burmese <i>təlàin</i>)
	<i>k</i> [k]	<i>kôʔ</i>	[ko˧ʔ]	‘bread, cake, snack’
		<i>kətò</i>	[kətɔ̌]	‘speak, talk’
	<i>b</i> [b]	<i>bō</i>	[bo˧]	‘spear (n.); be yellow’
		<i>būʔ</i>	[bu˧ʔ]	‘be near’
	<i>d</i> [d]	<i>dāʔ</i>	[dɑ˧ʔ]	‘house, room (N.Th.)’
		<i>dēʔ</i>	[de˧ʔ]	‘frog’
	ʔ [ʔ]	<i>ʔō</i>	[ʔo˧]	‘drink (v.)’
		<i>ʔōʔ</i>	[ʔo˧ʔ]	‘open (v.)’ (colloquially, [ʔo˧ʔ])
	<i>p^h</i> [p ^h]	<i>p^hō</i>	[p ^h o˧]	‘cook (v.); flower; granary’
		<i>p^hīʔ</i>	[p ^h i˧ʔ]	‘skin, bark; work (v.) (in compounds)’
	<i>t^h</i> [t ^h]	<i>t^hāʔ</i>	[t ^h ɑ˧ʔ]	‘iron’
		<i>t^hōʔ</i>	[t ^h o˧ʔ]	‘bird’
	<i>k^h</i> [k ^h]	<i>k^hī</i>	[k ^h i˧]	‘two; rear (n.)’
		<i>k^hīʔ</i>	[k ^h i˧ʔ]	‘be cool’

Regarding regional variation, Jones (1961: 63) reports palatalization of *k* and *k^h* before the front vowels /i/, /e/, and /ɛ/ in the Pathein variety. In addition, the two voiced stops /b/ and /d/ are described as implosive in some varieties (Fischer 2013; Jones 1961; Saw Lar Baa 2001). Luangthongkum (2019) reconstructs them as preglottalized stops (*ʔb and *ʔd), while Manson (2009) reconstructs them as voiceless unaspirated stops (*p and *t).

2.2.2 Nasals

The four nasals are exemplified in (9). They are pronounced similarly in all varieties.

(9)	<i>m</i> [m]	<i>mēʔ</i>	[mɛ˧ʔ]	‘eye, face’
		<i>mənì</i>	[mənɨ˧]	‘what’
	<i>n</i> [n]	<i>nā</i>	[nɑ˧]	‘ear’
		<i>nì</i>	[nɨ˧]	‘day; laugh’
	<i>ɲ</i> [ɲ]	<i>ɲō</i>	[ɲo˧]	‘be easy’
		<i>ɲōʔ</i>	[ɲo˧ʔ]	‘swell’ (colloquially, [ɲo˧ʔ])
	<i>ŋ</i> [ŋ]	<i>ŋā</i>	[ŋɑ˧]	‘rent’ (from Burmese <i>hŋà</i>)
		<i>məŋā</i>	[məŋɑ˧]	‘last year’

The palatal nasal *ɲ* is rare, but note that [ɲ] is an allophone of /j/ in words with *j-ɲ* alternation in some varieties. According to Luangthongkum (2019), *ɲ* is the modern reflex of *hɲ or *ɲ, except in the case of *ɲā* ‘front’, which comes from *hŋɑ˧.

The velar nasal *ŋ* is the rarest of all consonants, occurring only in a few non-native words. A potentially native word is *məŋā* ‘last year’, a synonym of which is *məhō* or

məhō.kàʔ. Both Luangthongkum (2019) and Manson (2009) reconstruct velar nasals for the proto-language, but these have become *j* in modern Sgaw Karen (e.g. *jê* ‘five’, from **ŋjat*^D).

2.2.3 Fricatives

The fricatives have undergone the most radical changes compared to the proto-language and synchronically exhibit the greatest regional variation among the consonants. The sibilant pronunciations in (10) and (11) are from the Mawchi–Taungoo variety.

(10)	θ [θ / s]	<i>θō</i> <i>θəròʔ</i>	[$\theta\text{ɔ}ɔ$] [$\theta\text{ɔ}.\text{ɪ}\text{ɔ}.\text{ɔ}$]	‘oil’ ‘church, <i>zayat</i> ’ (from Burmese <i>zajaʔ</i> , ultimately from Old Mon <i>jrap</i> , Mathias Jenny p.c.)
(11)	s [s / \widehat{tj}]	<i>sī</i> <i>sərō</i>	[$s\text{ɪ}ɪ$] / [$\widehat{tj}\text{ɪ}ɪ$] [$s\text{ə}ɔ$ ɔ]	‘press, massage’ ‘list, account (n.)’
	s^h [s^h / \widehat{tj}^h]	<i>s^hō</i> <i>s^hē.kà</i>	[$s^h\text{ɔ}ɪ$] / [$\widehat{tj}^h\text{ɔ}ɪ$] [$s^h\text{e}ɪ.k\text{ə}ɪ$] / [$\widehat{tj}^h\text{e}ɪ.k\text{ə}ɪ$]	‘chicken’ ‘shirt’

The consonant represented by θ is close to a dental stop and is realized with little if any fricativity, similar to its equivalent in Burmese (see Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016: 15). Saw Lar Baa (2001), describing the Yangon variety of Sgaw Karen, transcribes θ as [t]. Originally pronounced as [s], θ retains this pronunciation in Northern Thailand varieties. The western Thailand variety spoken in Hua Hin District, as reported by Luangthongkum (2019), also pronounces θ as [s], while in other regions, it has shifted to a dental fricative or stop.

s and s^h are pronounced in two different ways depending on the region: in most Myanmar varieties, as [s] and [s^h], while in Kayin–Tak and most Thailand varieties, as [\widehat{tj}] and [\widehat{tj}^h], respectively. The latter pronunciation is original, while the shift to [s] and [s^h] is due to areal influence. The actual realization of s^h when pronounced as a sibilant is often close to a non-aspirated [s], but in careful speech, it is heard as [s^h] or a sequence of [s] and [h]. In varieties with sibilant pronunciations, some words are invariably pronounced with affricate initials, hence the recognition of the affricates as separate phonemes (see §2.2.4). Also note that some words, such as *sərō* ‘list (n.)’, may be realized with an initial sibilant even in varieties which have retained the affricate pronunciation in other words.

Table 4 summarizes the pronunciations of θ , s , and s^h . Determining the exact boundaries of each isogloss requires further research.

Table 4 The pronunciation of θ , s , and s^h across Sgaw Karen dialects

	Myanmar	Kayin-Tak	Northern and Western Thailand
/θ/	[t̚-θ]	[θ]	[s]
/s/	[s]	[t̚]	[t̚]
/s ^h /	[s~sh]	[t̚ ^h]	[t̚ ^h]

The fricatives f and z , seen in (12), occur exclusively in non-native vocabulary. Only one loanword with the consonant z ($zē$ ‘market’) appears in the data. Note, however, that [z] is the Northern Thailand pronunciation of j (see §2.2.5).

- (12) f [f] $ʔē, fāʔ$ [ʔeɰ.fəʔ] ‘Asia’
 $jēʔ, fūʔ$ [jeʔ.fuʔ] ‘Jesus’
 $māʔ, fāʔ$ [maʔ.fəʔ] ‘March’
 z [z] $zē$ [zeɰ] ‘market’ (from Burmese $zē$)

Finally, two glottal and two velar fricative initial consonants are pronounced similarly in all varieties. Examples can be seen in (13).

- (13) x [x] $xē$ [xɛʔ] ‘run (v.)’
 $xōʔ$ [xoʔ] ‘eight’ (colloquially, [xoʔ])
 y [ɣ] $yāʔ$ [ɣaʔ] ‘cross to the opposite side’
 $yī$ [ɣiʔ] ‘snake’
 h [h] $hō$ [hoɰ] ‘be salty’
 $hīʔ$ [hiʔ] ‘house, village (N.Th.)’
 $h̄$ [ɦ] $h̄ā$ [ɦaɰ] interrogative particle
 $h̄ō$ [ɦoɰ] vocative particle

Note that there is no palatalization of x before front vowels. Jones (1961: 6) reports a short, unrounded velar glide [ɰ] before /i, e, ε, ə, a/ and a short [ɰ] before /o, ɔ/, but no glide before /u/ and /i/. In natural speech, the glide is usually barely heard.

Jones (1961: 6) further notes that [h] and [ɣ] are in complementary distribution in modern Sgaw Karen, since [h] occurs with tones 1, (\bar{v}), 4 ($\bar{v}ʔ$), and 5 ($\hat{v}ʔ$), while [ɣ] occurs with tones 2 (\acute{v}), 3 ($\acute{v}ʔ$), and 6 (\grave{v}). Consequently, Jones (1961) considers them allophones of the phoneme /h/ in his study. This thesis treats h and y as separate phonemes since they derive from two different phonemes in Proto-Karen, h from *h and y from *r (cf. $hīʔ$ <*how^B ‘steal’ and $yī$ <*row^B ‘snake’). They are represented by <ɰ> (h) and <ɣ> (y) in the orthography based on the Mon-Burmese script, and in this study by h and y to reflect their actual pronunciation.

The status of *h* as a phoneme is questionable since it only occurs in a few particles, and minimal pairs are difficult to find. The Mon–Burmese symbol for this consonant is <e>. Note that glottal constriction is often minimal, as in *m̄.ɣâ h̄ə̄* [m̄ī.ɣāī.(h̄)ə̄] ‘Auntie!’.

2.2.4 Affricates

The affricates *tʃ* and *tʃʰ* are among the less common consonants in Sgaw Karen, occurring chiefly in loanwords. As noted above, the sounds [tʃ] and [tʃʰ] are common allophonic pronunciations of the phonemes *s* and *sʰ* in Thailand and some bordering areas in Myanmar. The examples in (14) contain initial consonants consistently realized as postalveolar affricates.

(14)	<i>tʃ</i> [tʃ]	<i>tʃə̄</i>	[tʃə̄]	‘school’ (from Burmese <i>teàun</i>)
		<i>tʃə̄.hē̄</i>	[tʃē.hē̄]	‘Chiang Rai’
		<i>tʃə̄.tē̄ʔ</i>	[tʃə̄.tē̄]	‘Thai’
	<i>tʃʰ</i> [tʃʰ]	<i>tʃʰə̄.kə̄lē̄ʔ</i>	[tʃʰə̄.kə̄lē̄]	‘chocolate’
		<i>tʃʰē̄</i>	[tʃʰē̄]	‘basket’ (Jones 1961)

2.2.5 Approximants and the lateral //

The three approximants *w*, *r*, and *j*, and the lateral *l* are exemplified in (15). Minor regional differences occur in the pronunciations of all except *l*.

(15)	<i>w</i> [w]	<i>wə̄</i>	[wə̄]	‘town, city’
		<i>wì</i>	[wì]	‘finish (intr.)’
	<i>r</i> [ɾ~ɾ]	<i>rə̄</i>	[ɾə̄]	‘taste (n.)’
		<i>tə̄rìʔ</i>	[tə̄rì]	‘turn (intr.)’
	<i>j</i> [j]	<i>jə̄ʔ</i>	[jə̄]	‘be deep’
		<i>jì</i>	[jì]	‘be far away’
	<i>l</i> [l]	<i>lwì</i>	[lwì]	‘four’
		<i>lə̄rə̄ʔ</i>	[lə̄rə̄]	‘hell’

In Northern Thailand, *w* is realized as a voiced labiodental fricative [v]. The proto sequences **gw* and **ɔbw* have become *w* in most Sgaw Karen varieties, but reflexes of the old consonant clusters remain in some varieties spoken in northern Thailand. In Chiang Mai, the word *wā* ‘be white’ (<**ɔbwa*^A) is in some areas pronounced [gwā], and in Chiang Rai, the word *wìʔ* ‘be delicious’ is pronounced *kwìʔ* (Chiang Rai data are from Luangthongkum 2019). The only enclitic posited for Sgaw Karen in this thesis, *wē̄*, also starts with this consonant (see §11.3.3).

The rhotic is commonly heard as an approximant but occasionally and in careful speech as an alveolar trill [r]. The [r] pronunciation is widespread in northern Thailand.

The pronunciation of *j* as [z~ʒ] occurs in northern Thailand. Also, as mentioned in §2.2.2, *j* is sometimes pronounced [ɲ], but what conditions the variation is unclear. Examples of words with [j~ɲ] alternation include *θá².mī.jə* [θaʔ².mi¹.jə] / θaʔ².mi¹.ɲə] ‘cat’ and *tá.kī².já²* [təʔ².ki¹.jə] or [təʔ².ki¹.ɲə] ‘cloth’. Diachronically, *j* stems either from proto *ɲ or *j, as in *jí* ‘rat’ from *jow^B and *jə* ‘be deep’ from *jə^D (reconstructions are from Luangthongkum 2019).

2.2.6 Medial consonants

Medial consonants refer to the second member of a consonant cluster occurring between the initial consonant and the vowel, as *l* in *kʰlī* ‘boat; seed’ and *w* in *kwá* ‘look’. Five consonants occur in the medial position in Sgaw Karen: *r*, *l*, *j*, *w*, and *y*, each having a voiceless allophone when combined with an aspirated initial. Note that *y*, when occurring as a medial consonant, represents the approximant [ɥ] (see Henderson 1985). Diachronically, many of the Sgaw Karen consonant clusters appear to derive from Proto-Tibeto-Burman words with pre-initial consonants, for example, *klī* ‘flea’ from PTB *s-liy (Manson 2017a: 162), but some may be innovations in Karenic.

In total, 42 consonant clusters reportedly occur across Sgaw Karen varieties, but no individual description includes all clusters (Sarvestani 2018: 68). Some consonant combinations are missing because they are difficult to produce, while others are articulatorily possible but fail to occur. Table 5 shows the attested initial (C₁)–medial (C₂) consonant clusters.

Table 5 Karen onset clusters

		C ₁										
		p / p ^h	b	t / t ^h	d	k / k ^h	m	n	s	θ	x / ʃ	r / l
C ₂	w			+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+
	r	+	+	+	+	+				+		
	l	+	+			+	+					
	y	+	+				+					
	j	+	+				+					

The stop consonants and *m*, *s*, and *s^h* combine more readily in clusters with a medial consonant than other initial consonants. The consonants that do not occur in clusters are /h/, /w/, /z/, /ʃ/, and /y/. Many combinations are rare, and some are found only in borrowed or expressive words. The rarest medial is *j*, which is absent in the native vocabulary.

The pronunciations of the medial consonants are essentially the same as those described for the corresponding initial consonants. Examples can be observed in (16).

- (16) *prə̄* [p.rə̄ɬ~prə̄ɬ] ‘compete’
tə̄mlò [tə̄mlɔ̄ɬ] ‘trunk (of an elephant)’
lwí [lʷíɰ] ‘four’
pɣè [pɣɛ̄ɬ] ‘buy’
mjō [mjɔ̄ɬ] ‘kind (n.)’ (from Burmese *myò*)

Each medial consonant has a voiceless allophone after aspirated initials, as in *kʰli* [kʰliɬ] ‘boat’ and *sʰɣíʔ* [tʰɰiʔ] ([sxiʔ / sxiʔ] in Myanmar variants) ‘wash (laundry)’.

In terms of regional variation, *kl-* and *kʰl-* are pronounced [tɬ] and [tʰɬ], respectively, in the Mae Hong Son variety, as in *klē* [tɬɛ] ‘road’ and *mèʔ.kʰlī* [mɛʔ.tʰiɬ] ‘eye’. More widely in northern Thailand, medial *w* has a palatalizing effect on the alveolar initials, as in *tʰwíʔ* [tʰwíʔ] ‘dog’, *dwéʔ* [dʷwɛʔ] ‘burn (tr.)’, and *nwī* [nʷi] ‘seven, week’. Many speakers in Myanmar pronounce the velar medial *ɣ* [uɣ] as [w]. Examples from the Mawchi–Taungoo variety include *pɣà* [pɣaɬ] (in Kayin–Tak, [puɣaɬ]) ‘person’ and *sɣò* [sɣɔ̄ɬ] (in Kayin–Tak, [tʰuɣɔ̄ɬ]) ‘Sgaw; grasp, clutch (v.)’.

2.3 Vowels

Most previous phonological descriptions of Sgaw Karen identify nine vowel phonemes, presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Sgaw Karen vowels

Close	/i/	/i/	/u/
Close-mid	/e/		/o/
Mid		/ə/	
Open-mid	/ɛ/		/ɔ/
Open	/a/		

As Sarvestani (2018: 66) observes, all back vowels are rounded, and all front vowels are unrounded. There is no vowel length distinction in Sgaw Karen, but the vowel length can differ depending on the syllable’s tone. For example, Tone 6 (*v̄*) is usually described as associated with long vowel duration, while Tone 4 (*v̄ʔ*) syllables have the shortest vowel durations (see §2.4).

Previous studies describe the vowel phonemes similarly. Minor differences exist, mainly concerning the vowels *ə* and *i*, as explained below. (17) lists the vowels with examples.

(17)	a [a]	<i>mā</i>	[ma˦]	‘wife’
		<i>kâ</i>	[kã˦]	‘break (intr.)’
		<i>s^hâʔ</i>	[tʰa˦ʔ]	‘star’
ɔ [ɔ]	<i>lô</i>	[lɔ˦]	‘field, place’	
		<i>dôʔ</i>	[dɔ˦ʔ]	‘and, with; ride (v.)’
		<i>k^hôʔ</i>	[k ^h ɔ˦ʔ]	‘foot, leg’
ɛ [ɛ]	<i>mē</i>	[mɛ˦]	‘tooth’	
		<i>jê</i>	[jɛ˦]	‘five’
		<i>lê</i>	[lɛ˦]	‘go’
ə [ə]	<i>hə</i>	[hə˦]	‘steam (tr.v.)’	
		<i>tə</i>	[tə˦]	‘ant’
		<i>ləʔ</i>	[lə˦ʔ]	‘be finished, used up’
o [o]	<i>mô</i>	[mɔ˦]	‘mother’	
		<i>kôʔ</i>	[ko˦ʔ]	‘bread, cake, snack’
		<i>tô</i>	[tɔ˦]	‘bridge’
e [e]	<i>xê</i>	[xɛ˦]	‘run’	
		<i>hêʔ</i>	[hɛ˦ʔ]	‘give’
		<i>kê</i>	[kɛ˦]	‘return’
u [u]	<i>lū</i>	[lu˦]	‘pour; pool’	
		<i>s^hūʔ</i>	[tʰu˦ʔ]	‘be strong’
		<i>pū</i>	[pu˦]	‘hole; pass by’
i [i]	<i>sī</i>	[tʰi˦]	‘hand’	
		<i>nīʔ</i>	[ni˦ʔ]	‘enter’
		<i>k^hīʔ</i>	[k ^h i˦ʔ]	‘be cold’
i [i]	<i>mī</i>	[mi˦]	‘sleep (v.); be ripe, cooked’	
		<i>t^hī</i>	[t ^h i˦]	‘water’
		<i>hīʔ</i>	[hi˦ʔ]	‘house, village (N.Th.)’

Note that ə is different from the minor syllable vowel ə [ə~ʌ], which is atonal and has a shorter duration.

A phonotactic restriction involves the vowel *e*, which rarely occurs in words with the creaky tones 3 ($\check{v}^?$) and 4 ($\check{v}^?$), except in loanwords and onomatopoeic words. The other vowels combine with these tones but often have an allophonic variant due to the final glottalization. The most common alternation concerns the vowel *o*, which surfaces as [ɔ]. An example is the word *kôʔ* ‘each; call (v.)’, which in most varieties is pronounced as [kɔʔ] rather than [koʔ]. With other tones, this vowel variation is phonemic, as seen in *tô* [tɔ˦] ‘pound (v.), coin (n.)’ and *tô* [tɔ˦] ‘hit, beat (v.)’. In words like *kôʔ* [kɔ˦ʔ] ‘island’ – an Austroasiatic loanword (cf. Spoken Mon *kɔʔ*, Jenny 2005) – and *dôʔ* [dɔ˦ʔ] ‘and, with’, the vowel is invariably pronounced [ɔ]. In contrast, *lôʔ* (Tone 3) in *lôʔ.kwē* [lɔ˦.kwɛ˦] ‘play (v.)’ and *s^hôʔ* (Tone 4) in *s^hôʔ.kē* [tʰɔ˦ʔ.ke˦] ‘be unwell’ have the pronunciation [o] despite the tone. This thesis uses the $-\check{o}^?/-\check{o}^?$ transcriptions with tones 3 and 4 for consistency.

Two regional varieties have especially extensive vowel alternation induced by the glottalized tones. First, Jones (1961: 8) notes that the Mawlamyine variety has allophonic variation in the vowels *i*, *u*, *e*, *ə* and *ɛ*, when co-occurring with the glottalized tones. In short,

/i/ has a [i] allophone and /u/ a [u] allophone with Tone 3 and 4; /ə/ “has a slightly raised and fronted allophone before /ʔ/ with the mid tone [=tone 4]” (note that Jones considers /ʔ/ as a segment rather than as part of the tone). He also notes that /ɛ/ has an “occasional raised allophone with mid and low tones [tones 2, 3, 4, and 6]” and “an occasional lowered allophone with the high tone [=tones 1 and 5]” (Jones 1961). Second, based on data from Luangthongkum (2019), the Hua Hin variety exhibits several vowel changes, even diphthongs, in syllables with glottalized tones. For example, the diphthong *ai* occurs with Tone 4 ($\bar{v}^?$), whereas other varieties have *i*, as in *phai^{ʔʔ}* (*p^{hʔ}*) ‘bark, leather, skin’. Allophonic variation only occurred in the *o* phoneme in the firsthand data collected for this thesis.

The vowel *o*, based on Luangthongkum (2019), is pronounced [u] in the Hua Hin variety, as in *t^hô^ʔ* ‘bird’, Hua Hin *thu⁴⁵*, and *mô* ‘mother’, Hua Hin *mu³¹*. Furthermore, in Mawchi–Taungoo, *i* has merged with *u*. For example, the word *sī* ‘hand’ is pronounced [su]. Jones (1961: 8), discussing the Mawlamyine variety, represents *i* as <y>, describing it as “unrounded but with slight lip protrusion”. Some studies represent this vowel as /u/ (Saw Lar Baa 2001; Fischer 2013; Olson 2014). Sarvestani’s (2018) phonetic analysis showed that it was pronounced closer to [i] than [u] by his speakers.

A phonemic difference noted in the Hpa-an variety of Sgaw Karen, as described by Kato (2024), is the identification of the vowel *u* as a distinct phoneme. This adds one more vowel phoneme to the nine listed in Table 6 in this variety.

2.4 Tones

The tones in Sgaw Karen are composed of two types of suprasegmental features: pitch (high, mid, low) and phonation type (creaky/glottalized, breathy, modal). The number of tones depends on the variety. The transcription in this thesis, a transliteration of the Mon–Burmese script, distinguishes six tones. This script was devised in the 1830s and is likely based on a Mawlamyine variety (see §1.2). Modern descriptions of Sgaw Karen tones distinguish two to six tones depending on the variety and the analysis method. As for the analysis method, there is a major division between scholars who regard glottalization as a segmental feature and those who analyse it as a tonal feature. In his segmental analysis of final glottalization, Jones (1961) finds six allotones in the Mawlamyine variety, three tones (i.e. tonemes) with two allotones each, “depending on the presence of final /ʔ/ or its absence”. In a similar analysis, Jitwiriyant (2012) posits four tones in the Ban Pa La-U variety spoken in Western Thailand, regarding the tones in “checked syllables” (syllables ending in a glottal stop) as allotones of tones in “non-checked” syllables. Chappell (1992), in contrast, analyses glottalization as part of the tone, describing a six-tone system for the Hpa-an variety. The first instrumental study on Sgaw Karen tones and tone perception is Brunelle & Finkeldey (2011), and Sarvestani (2018) provides another phonetic account. See also Phillips (2018) for a tonal analysis of glottalization in West-Central Thailand Pwo Karen. This thesis agrees

with the tonal rather than segmental analysis of the glottal constriction associated with some of the tones.

Table 7 presents an overview of the tone systems of seven different Sgaw Karen varieties based on firsthand data and previous descriptions. For conformity, numerical pitch values (where 5 is the highest and 1 the lowest pitch) have been converted to letters (see Footnote 25). The descriptions of the Yangon and Hpa-an varieties do not mention breathiness, and it is unclear whether this means that the feature is absent or not indicated. Chappell (1992) reports breathiness in Tone 2 and Tone 6 for the Hpa-an variety.

Table 7 Sgaw Karen tones in seven regional varieties

Tone	Kayin-Tak	E. Myanmar	N. Thailand	Yangon (Saw Lar Baa 2001)	Hpa-An (Kato 2023)	Mawlamyine (Jones 1961)	Hua Hin (Luangthongkum 2019)
1 (ṽ)	M ²⁵	H	MHS: H CM: M / H, - [?]	H	H	H	H
2 (ṽ̃)	HF, - ^h	L, - ^h	L, - ^h	L (11)	MF (41)	L, - ^h	MF
3 (ṽ̃ ²)	(=T6)	(=T5)	(=T5)	L, - [?]	L, - [?]	L, - [?]	L, - ^h
4 (ṽ̃ ³)	L, - [?]	H, - [?]	H, - [?]	H, - [?]	M, - [?]	M, - [?]	L, - [?]
5 (ṽ̃ ⁴)	HF, - [?]	L, - [?]	L, - [?]	ML (22)	HF (51)	H, - [?]	H, - [?]
6 (ṽ̃ ⁵)	L, - ^h	M, - ^h	MHS: M, - ^h CM: M	M	M	M, - ^h	M

²⁵ M=mid, L=low, H=high, F=falling, ML=mid-low, -^h=breathy, -[?]=glottalized, (=T6)=merged with Tone 6, MHS=Mae Hong Son, CM=Chiang Mai

Two breathy tones (2 and 6) and three glottalized tones (3, 4, and 5) occur in most varieties. Glottalization in Tone 5 is an innovation in Sgaw Karen that does not derive from the proto-language. Tones 3 and 4, on the other hand, both derive from proto-tones that end with a stop consonant. Note that laryngeal features like breathiness and glottal constriction are most clearly audible in isolated and utterance-final contexts but often lost in connected speech. Regarding pitch, a division between southern and northern varieties is noticeable in tones 2 and 5, where southern varieties (e.g. Tak Province and neighbouring parts of Kayin State) have a high-falling contour, and northern varieties (e.g. Northern Thailand and Taungoo, Yangon, and Patheingyi in Myanmar) have a low pitch. There are no rising tones, but rising intonation can override tones in phrase- and sentence-final contexts (see below).

Tone 1 (\bar{v}) is pronounced with mid or high pitch, depending on the variety, and with modal voice quality. An occasional rising pitch has also been reported in some studies. Two different reflexes of Tone 1 are observed in some Northern Thailand varieties (Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai). In data presented by Ratanakul (1986) and Luangthongkum (2019), some Tone 1 words are pronounced with mid pitch and some with high pitch and glottalization. The glottalized pronunciation is unexpected since Tone 1 is reconstructed as a non-glottalized tone in the proto-language (see Table 8). Examples of two glottalized followed by two non-glottalized reflexes of Tone 1 can be seen in (18).

- Chiang Mai** (Ratanakul 1986)
- | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| (18) | <i>sī̄</i> [t̪īʔ] | ‘hand’ | (Kayin–Tak: [t̪īʔ]) |
| | <i>kē̄</i> [kɛ̄ʔ] | ‘act as, become’ | (Kayin–Tak: [kɛ̄ʔ]) |
| | <i>wā̄</i> [gwaʔ] | ‘be white’ | (Kayin–Tak: [waʔ]) |
| | <i>kənē̄</i> [kənɛ̄ʔ] | ‘honeybee’ | (Kayin–Tak: [kənɛ̄ʔ]) |

Tone 2 (\hat{v}) is pronounced with breathy phonation, with a high-falling or mid-falling contour in southern varieties and low pitch in Mawlamyine and northern varieties. Examples from Kayin–Tak and Mae Hong Son are given in (19).

- | | | | |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| | Kayin–Tak | Mae Hong Son | |
| (19) | <i>lâ̂</i> [l̪â̂] | <i>lâ̂</i> [l̪â̂] | ‘stone’ |
| | <i>mê̂</i> [mɛ̂] | <i>mê̂</i> [mɛ̂] | ‘be true’ |
| | <i>tâ̂</i> [t̪â̂] | <i>tâ̂</i> [t̪â̂] | ‘thing’ |

Tone 3 (\check{v}) derives from a proto-glottalized tone but has both glottalized and non-glottalized reflexes in the modern varieties. Due to glottalization, Tone 3 changes the quality of some vowels, including in varieties like Kayin–Tak and Hua Hin, where glottalization in Tone 3 syllables has been lost. In most varieties, the only vowel affected is *o*, which has the allophonic variant [ɔ] with this tone. Other vowels are also affected in some southern varieties (at least Mawlamyine and Hua Hin). Examples of the words *li̋* [li̋] ‘writing, script, book’ (via Austroasiatic, cf. Literary Mon *lik* ‘writing, book’; Mon form from Jenny 2005) and *lâ̋* ‘be finished, used up’ in three varieties can be seen in (20).

	Kayin–Tak	Mae Hong Son	Hua Hin	
			(Luangthongkum 2019)	
(20)	<i>li</i> [?] [li̯]]	[li̯]]	[lai̯]]	‘writing, script, book’
	<i>l̂</i> [?] [l̂]]	[l̂]]	[lou̯]]	‘be finished, used up’

In Kayin–Tak, Tone 3 has merged with Tone 6 (\check{v}), while in the Mawchi–Taungoo and Mae Hong Son varieties, it has merged with Tone 5 (\hat{v}). Thus, in Kayin–Tak, words such as *nà*[?] [n̂] ‘believe’ and *nà* [n̂] ‘you (sg.)’ and *li*[?] [li̯] ‘writing, script, book’ and *li* [li̯] ‘grandchild’ are pronounced identically. Mae Hong Son speakers, on the other hand, pronounce words such as *sì*[?] [t̂i̯] ‘poison’ and *sì*[?] [t̂i̯] ‘hammock’ the same way. Additionally, in some Chiang Mai varieties, Tone 3 causes aspiration on initial stops and affricates, as seen in (21), showing data from Ratanakul (1986) and data collected in Tha Ton Subdistrict of Chiang Mai Province.

	Chiang Mai	Chiang Mai	
	(Ratanakul 1986)	(Tha Ton Subdistrict, field data)	
(21)	<i>pyi</i> [?] [p ^h xi̯]]	<i>pyi</i> [?] [p ^h xi̯]]	‘intestines’
	<i>sò</i> [?] [t̂ ^h ɔ̯]]	<i>sò</i> [?] [t̂ ^h ɔ̯]]	‘carry’

Tone 4 (\bar{v}) is high-pitched in some northern varieties and low-pitched in southern varieties. It is glottalized in all varieties and affects vowels in the same way as Tone 3. Examples can be observed in (22).

	Kayin–Tak	Mae Hong Son	Hua Hin	
			(Luangthongkum 2019)	
(22)	<i>θā</i> [?] [θa̯]]	<i>θā</i> [?] [sa̯]]	<i>θā</i> [?] [sa̯]]	‘heart’
	<i>t^hō</i> [?] [t ^h ɔ̯]]	<i>t^hō</i> [?] [t ^h ɔ̯]]	<i>t^hō</i> [?] [t ^h ɔ̯]]	‘pig’
	<i>kū</i> [?] [ku̯]]	<i>kū</i> [?] [ku̯]]	<i>kū</i> [?] [kɔ̯]]	‘couch (v.)’

Note that some Tone 4 words with this vowel are consistently pronounced as [ɔ̯], such as *sē.kō*[?] ‘also’.

Tone 5 (\hat{v}) has a high or low pitch depending on the region. It is a glottalized tone in the modern varieties despite deriving from a non-glottalized proto-tone. Since glottalization in Tone 5 has arisen later in the language, it does not affect vowels. Thus, in (23), the vowel *o* remains unchanged, and *e* readily occurs with Tone 5 (unlike the glottalized tones 3 and 4).

	Kayin–Tak	Mae Hong Son /	
		Mawchi–Taungoo	
(23)	<i>dô</i> [?] [do̯]]	<i>dô</i> [?] [do̯]]	‘be big’
	<i>hê</i> [?] [he̯]]	<i>hê</i> [?] [he̯]]	‘give’
	<i>k^hâ</i> [?] [k ^h a̯]]	<i>k^hâ</i> [?] [k ^h a̯]]	‘be bitter’

Tone 6 (v̇) is a breathy tone with medium or low pitch, depending on the variety. It is non-breathy and pronounced like Tone 1 (non-glottalized reflexes) in Chiang Mai and, based on the data from Luangthongkum (2019), in Chiang Rai. Examples from three varieties can be seen in (24).

	Kayin–Tak	Mawchi–Taungoo	Chiang Mai	
(24)	<i>mà</i> [m̩a↓]	<i>mà</i> [m̩a↓]	<i>mà</i> [ma↓]	‘heart’
	<i>nì</i> [n̩i↓]	<i>nì</i> [n̩i↓]	<i>nì</i> [ni↓]	‘laugh; day’
	<i>lù</i> [l̩u↓]	<i>lù</i> [l̩u↓]	<i>lù</i> [lu↓]	‘chase’

To understand the nature of the tones at the synchronic stage, it is necessary to examine the proto system. As explained by Manson (2009), proto-Karen had four tones, labelled A, B, B’ and C. He reconstructs Tone A as high, B as low, B’ as mid-pitched, and C as mid-pitched and stop-final. Tone B’ merged with A in Sgaw Karen; thus, only A, B, and C are relevant for present purposes. At the proto stage, Sgaw Karen had a division between (1) aspirated stops and voiceless sonorants, (2) voiceless unaspirated stops, and (3) voiced stops and sonorants (Manson 2009). Between three and nine centuries ago, a merger of voiced and voiceless initials caused a split of the three tones into six tones in a wave of sound change known as the Great Tone Split, which affected languages from China in the north to Southeast Asia in the south (Brown 1975). Proto-voiced initials have developed into plain initials, leading to breathy phonation in modern Sgaw Karen (Manson 2009).

Table 8 illustrates the tonal split that occurred when proto-voiced initials were lost. Proto-forms are from Luangthongkum (2019) (tone D corresponds to Manson’s tone C).

Table 8 Reflexes of proto-Karen tones in modern Sgaw Karen

GROUP 1 INITIALS		GROUP 2 INITIALS
Proto-aspirated/ voiceless	Proto-unaspirated/ preglottalized	Proto-voiced
*thej ^A (A1) > t ^h ī ‘water’	*ʔde ^A (A2) > dē ‘navel’	*dim ^A (A3) > t̃ə ‘half a yard’
*tha ^B (B1) > t ^h â [?] ‘loom’	*ʔdej ^B (B2) > dī [?] ‘egg’	*dəŋ ^B (B3) > t̃ə ‘ant’
*tha ^{ʔD} (C1) > t ^h ā [?] ‘iron’	*ʔde ^{ʔD} (C2) > dī ^ʔ ‘wing’	*de ^{ʔD} (C3) > t̃ə ^ʔ ‘fall down’
*hma ^A (A1) > mā ‘wife’		*ma ^A (A3) > m̃à ‘to do, make’
*hme ^B (B1) > mē [?] ‘fire’		*mu ^B (B3) > m̃ô ‘mother’
*hme ^{ʔD} (C1) > mē ^ʔ ‘sand’		*me ^{ʔD} (C3) > m̃ə ^ʔ ‘eye, face’

The tonal split explains why the aspirated initials /p^h/, /t^h/, /k^h/, the fricatives /θ/, /h/, and the voiced stops /d/ and /b/ (“Group 1 initials”) only combine with three tones while the rest (“Group 2 initials”; except /ɣ/) occur with all six tones in modern Sgaw Karen. The former remained unaffected by mergers; consequently, no tonal split occurred. The Group 2 initials, in contrast, have resulted from proto-consonant mergers, causing the original segmental contrast to shift to the suprasegmental level in the form of a contrast in pitch and phonation. Proto-voiced initials “caused the following vowel to be pronounced with breathy phonation”

(Manson 2009: 15). Consequently, the modern tones 2, 3, and 6 remain breathy in most varieties, although breathiness is sometimes lost in connected speech.

Proto-stop-final (tone C) syllables are still associated with glottal constriction in the form of creakiness or, occasionally, a full glottal stop in modern Karenic. Luangthongkum (2019) reconstructs the final consonants finals *-ʔ, *-k, and *-t, while Manson (2009) reconstructs only *-ʔ. Tone 5 (\hat{v}), which corresponds to the open-syllable proto-tone B with aspirated and voiceless initials, also has final glottal constriction, an innovation unique to Sgaw Karen within Karenic. As with breathiness, final glottal constriction is frequently lost in connected speech. The word *lêʔ.jô* ‘bicycle’, for example, is typically pronounced [le.jɔ̰] without glottal constriction. Complete glottal constriction usually occurs in isolated and pre-pausal contexts, as noted also in other Karenic languages (e.g. Luangthongkum 2019: vii [Kayah and Kayaw], Manson 2017 [Kayan]). As mentioned above, proto-final -ʔ has left traces in the form of vowel alternation in nearly all modern varieties.

Another important characteristic of Sgaw Karen tones is their tendency to be replaced by intonational contours, which Hyman (2018) terms intonational “overwriting”, a phenomenon also mentioned by Brunelle & Finkeldey (2011). In Sgaw Karen, this means replacing the tone with a rising contour in utterance-medial but phrase-final contexts. In utterance-final contexts, the tone-replacing contour can be rising, falling or concave depending on the illocutionary force of the utterance. Example (25) shows rising intonation replacing the tone of the syllables *nêʔ*, *pʰô*, and *tâ* occurring at the end of an intonational phrase.

- (25) *d̄ɔʔ* *kʰē.ʔi* ***nêʔ*** [neʔ] *jə-mê* *tʃō-pʰô* [pʰoʔ]
 and now **that**_{FRAME} 1s- be.true_{cop} school-**child**
- jə-mà.lō* ***tâ*** [taʔ]
 1s-study **thing**
 ‘And now I’m a student, I study.’ [LTP]

The use of an extra high pitch or falsetto phonation on certain syllables as an intensification strategy has been reported for some Tibeto-Burman languages (Solnit 1997: 27–28 for Kayah Li; Mazaudon 2016: 472 for Tamang, who also mentions that it is an areal phenomenon in Nepal). It is commonly used in everyday speech situations and in storytelling to intensify the concept of the targeted syllable (it does not extend over more than one syllable). Extra-high pitch is illustrated in (26), falsetto in (27)–(28).

- (26) *d̄ɔʔ* *nə-sʰō.kəmôʔ* *l̄ə*
 and 2s-think COMP
- nə-tə-kē.blīʔ.kē.pʰyôʔ* ***n̄ɔ*** [n̄ɔ] *tə-mi* *bâʔ*
 2s-NEG-be.useful **EXT** one-kind NEG.FP
 ‘and you think that you’re not of *any* use at all (completely useless)’
 (Vlog, “Worthless”)

- (27) $\rho\partial w\bar{\epsilon}$ $\rho\delta^?$ $l\bar{\alpha}$ $h\bar{i}^?$ $t^h\bar{\epsilon}$ [F t^hε F] $t\partial-\gamma\grave{\alpha}$ $h\bar{o}$
 3 EXIST GNR.P home only one-CLF(HUM) only
 ‘She was at home *all* alone.’ (Vlog, “Missing Family”)
- (28) $n\hat{\alpha}-w\bar{\alpha}$ $p^h j\bar{\epsilon}^?$ $\theta\bar{i}$ [F θi F] $l\bar{\alpha}$
 F.HON-W. be.clever die_{INTS} FACT.FP
 ‘Naw Wah is *super* smart!’ [HUR]

2.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the phonology of Sgaw Karen, focusing on its syllable structure, consonant and vowel phonemes, tones, and their phonetic realizations, particularly in the Kayin–Tak variety spoken along the Myanmar–Thailand border. It has highlighted regional phonetic variations, including differences in the realization of consonants and tones.

Prior studies on Sgaw Karen reveal variations in phoneme inventories and tonal systems due to regional differences and the researcher’s analytical approach. Syllable structures were classified into major syllables, which are tonal and have the form C(C)V+T, and minor syllables, which are atonal and subject to phonological restrictions. The 27 consonants include five to seven that are not widely used. Some regional distinctions are apparent; notably, θ , s , and s^h , have changed significantly in some regions as compared to their original phonetic values. The vowel inventory largely aligns across varieties, with notable allophonic variations due to final glottalization. The number of tones varies across varieties, but up to six are recognized, distinguished in terms of pitch and phonation (breathy, modal, or glottalized).

Diachronically, the tone system developed due to a historic process known as the “Great Tone Split”, whereby an initial voicing distinction in the consonant inventory was replaced by tonal contours and phonation types. Lastly, it was shown that intonation influences the realization of tones by replacing tonal inflections with an intonational contour in a process known as intonational “overwriting” (Hyman 2018).

This concludes the phonological description of Sgaw Karen. We now examine the major word classes in Sgaw Karen, starting, in Chapter 3, with nouns and noun phrases.

3 Nouns and noun phrases

This chapter describes the major types of nouns and the classification and modification of nouns in Sgaw Karen. Elements that classify and modify nouns are part of the noun phrase (NP), which is headed by a head noun. As a cross-linguistic category, nouns refer to categories of objects, people, places, and abstract entities, and as such, nouns, in contrast to verbs, typically denote permanent rather than temporary states (e.g. Wierzbicka 1986). In terms of semantic roles, nouns often represent the participants of an event who perform or are affected by an action, while a verb expresses the action itself. In a typical transitive sentence with an agent and a patient, such as in (29), the verb is flanked by two nouns representing the A (subject of a transitive verb) and the P (object) argument, respectively. Note that nouns in Sgaw Karen are number neutral. Example (30) shows an intransitive sentence with one noun as the S argument (subject of an intransitive verb) and another as the core of a locative argument. In (31), the noun *tjō.θərāʔ* ‘schoolteacher’ acts as the predicate of a copula clause.

(29) [sʰɔ̃]_A hī [dīʔ]_P
 chicken brood egg
 ‘{Hens brood eggs. / The hen is brooding (its) eggs.}’ [KWH]

(30) [tʃɔ̃]_S kə-mī.lò [lā sīʔ pù]_{LOC}
 eB IRR-lie.down GNR.P hammock inside
 ‘I (older brother) will lie down in the hammock.’ [KWH]

(31) ʔə-kē [tjō-θərāʔ]_{Predicate}
 3-act.as_{COP} school-teacher
 ‘She is a teacher.’ [KWH]

Unlike many other Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Burmese and Lahu, Sgaw Karen lacks argument flagging, that is, “case morphology and adpositional marking” (Kittilä & Zúñiga 2019: 7). Instead, core semantic roles of nouns are determined based on constituent order. One exception is ditransitive clauses, where the second (direct) object is occasionally marked using the generic preposition *lā*, as seen in (32). The preposition *lā* is usually optional in ditransitive clauses (see §4.1.2).

- (32) *mətà* *kə-héʔ* *nà* *lā* *ʔə-pʰō.míʔ* *lɛʔ*
 who IRR-give 2si GNR.P 3x-daughter CQ
 ‘Who would give you his daughter?’ (Jones 1961: 211, 214)
 (Note: rhetorical question by a grandmother to her grandson, who is in the shape
 of a fish.)

In §3.1, a distinction is made between proper and common nouns based on a combination of syntactic and semantic criteria. Common nouns can be divided semantically into count nouns, representing countable referents (e.g. *híʔ* ‘house’) and mass nouns, representing non-countable referents (e.g. *tʰí* ‘water’). Relator nouns, discussed in §3.2, are another subtype of common nouns occurring in spatial or adverbial NPs.

As in most languages, nouns constitute an open word class in Sgaw Karen. This means that the number of nouns continuously grows as terms for new concepts enter the vocabulary. The most common way of forming new words in Sgaw Karen is by compounding existing morphemes. Nominal compounds, discussed in §3.3, include head-initial compounds, such as *kəθíʔ-dō.θədō* [medicine-protect] ‘vaccine’ and *kəbō-jù* [ship-fly] ‘airplane’, and head-final compounds such as *θwíʔ-klò* [blood-pipe] ‘vein’ and *kəθíʔ-θərāʔ* [medicine-teacher] ‘doctor’. Another way of introducing new vocabulary is by borrowing words from other languages, with some phonetic accommodation. Some examples are mentioned in §1.4.

As previously mentioned, nouns are the heads of noun phrases (NPs), which minimally contain a head noun, often also classifiers and modifiers. The head noun is a proper or common noun, which may be a monomorphemic noun or a nominal compound. Several constituents other than the nominal head may occur in an NP. This chapter describes six such constituents: classifiers (§3.4), *ʔəyà* ‘other’ (§3.5), quantifiers (§3.6), intensifying particles (§3.7), *nō* ‘extent’ (§3.8), demonstratives (§3.9), and possessive attributes (§3.10). Two further types of noun modifiers, descriptive verbs and relative clauses, are discussed in §4.2 and §9.1, respectively.

Each of the modifiers occupy dedicated syntactic slots in the NP. The constituent order in a typical NP is possessor, head noun, verbal modifier, classifier phrase (quantifier and classifier), and demonstrative, as seen in (33) to (35).

- (33) *jə-tʰəʔ* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *ʔi*
 1sx-bag one-CLF(3D) this
 ‘this bag of mine’ [LTP]
- (34) *tʰəʔ* *pʰāʔ-dōʔ* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *ʔi*
 bag INTS-big one-CLF(3D) this
 ‘this (very) big bag’
- (35) *pəyà* *ʔəyà* *lwi* *yà*
 person other four CLF(HUM)
 ‘the other four people’

Bare nouns (NPs containing only a head noun) are used in a generic sense or for anaphoric reference. Examples (36) and (37) show the use of the bare nouns *θâʔ.mī.nɔ̄* ‘cat’ and *θəkʰɔ̄ʔ.θâʔ* ‘mango’ in a generic (non-referential) sense.

- (36) *θâʔ.mī.nɔ̄* *θɔ̄ʔ* *dī.lēʔ*
cat sound how
 ‘What do cats sound like?’ [LTP.D]
- (37) *θəkʰɔ̄ʔ-θâʔ* *ʔə-sâ* *sʰiʔ*
mango-fruit 3-be.young be.sour
 ‘Unripe mangoes are sour.’ (Ballard 1973b: 49)

Bare nouns also occur in existential clauses, as in (38). In (39), the sentence contains the bare, generic noun *liʔ* ‘book, script, writing’ in the object position.

- (38) *liʔ* *ʔɔ̄ʔ* *lā* *səbyē* *ʔə-pʰɔ̄.kʰɔ̄ʔ* *dɔ̄ʔ* *ʔə-pʰɔ̄.làʔ*
book EXIST GNR.P table 3x-above and 3x-below
 ‘There are books above and below the table.’ (Ballard 1973b: 158)
- (39) *ʔəwē* *kwēʔ* *liʔ*
 3 write **book/writing**
 ‘He is writing.’ [LTP.D]

The general view has long been that bare nouns in “classifier languages” are essentially denotational, or in other words, function as labels of classes of nouns rather than referring directly to individual referents (Bisang 1999; Dik 1997: 142–145; Lyons 1977). Referring to separate units of a class necessitates the use of classifier phrases. This denotational function of bare nouns explains why many classifier languages require classifiers for counting and lack number marking on nouns (Greenberg 1990; Sanches & Slobin 1973). Compare the generic, non-referential bare noun *liʔ* in (39) with *liʔ təbêʔ* in (40); the classifier phrase *təbêʔ* enables reference to an indefinite but specific letter.

- (40) *ʔəwē* *kwēʔ* *liʔ* *tə-bêʔ*
 3e write **piece.of.writing** **one-CLF(2D)**
 ‘He is writing a/one letter.’ [LTP.D]

Another example can be seen in (41), where the indefinite NP is the S argument of an existential phrase.

- (41) *ji* *tə-dī* *nēʔ* *ʔɔ̄ʔ* *lā* *tā.dā* *kʰlā*
rat **one-CLF(ANIM)** that_{TOP} EXIST GNR.P box outside
 ‘There is a rat outside the box.’ [HUR]

On the other hand, a definite reference is often expressed by adding both a classifier phrase and a demonstrative, as in (42).

- (42) *tʰwɪʔ-pʰõ tə-dī nêʔ sʰɪʔ.sʰɪʔ.kòʔ.pʰõ lə*
dog-DIM one-CLF(ANIM) that be.very.small FACT.FP
 ‘That dog is so tiny.’ [HUR]

Bare nouns can indicate definite reference, as is typically the case when reference is made anaphorically to a referent previously introduced (see §11.3.1 for further details).

In §3.1, §3.2, and §3.3, the three main types of nouns – common and proper nouns, relator nouns, and nominal compounds – are described in turn, followed by the discussion of classifiers and modifiers.

3.1 Common and proper nouns

Two groups of nouns are commonly distinguished cross-linguistically: common and proper nouns. Proper nouns are names of specific referents. As such, each proper noun represents one real-world referent, typically a city, building, organization, or person. Three examples can be seen in (43).

- (43) *sə-wā* [M.HON-be.white] ‘Saw Wah’
kəsā kʰəriʔ [lord Christ] ‘Lord Christ’
kī.mē [PN] ‘Chiang Mai’

An honorific often precedes personal names. The male honorific is *sə*, as in *sə-mò.fē* [M.HON-Moses] ‘Moses’, and its female equivalent is *nə* ‘Naw, big sister’, as in *nə-lā.sē.pʰõ* [F.HON-L.] ‘Naw Lah Say Paw (Karen actress)’. Other titles include *pʰɪ* ‘grandfather’, as in *pʰɪ-mə.tə* ‘Old Maw Taw (the main character in a Karen legend)’, *kəsā* ‘Lord’, *θəráʔ* ‘teacher’ or *θəráʔ.míʔ* ‘female teacher’. The latter two are common forms of address for schoolteachers and other tutors and experts.

Proper nouns referring to places are typically preceded by a specifier, or class noun, such as *wé* ‘city, town’ or *kə* ‘country’, as seen in (44).

- (44) *wé-blíʔ* [city-Myeik] ‘Myeik’
kə-tʃəʔ.tèʔ [country-Thai] ‘Thailand’²⁶

In some proper nouns, most notably names for buildings, organizations, and administrative divisions, the specifier occurs as the second rather than first component of the compound, as in (45).

²⁶ Some speakers use *kə-tʃəʔ.tèʔ* to refer to the Karen-speaking part of Thailand and *jə-kə* to refer to Thailand as a whole, but see also example (1367), Chapter 9.

- (45) *θū.mwē.kʰī-tfō* [PN-school] ‘Thoo Mweh Khee School’
kəŋᵛ-kᵛ.sēʔ [Karen-state] ‘Kayin State’

The word *kᵛ* ‘country’ generally appears first, but for some names, such as *kᵛ-pəjᵛ* and *pəjᵛ-kᵛ* ‘Myanmar’, both orders are accepted.

Common nouns represent large classes of referents. Scholars often divide common nouns into count nouns and mass nouns; count nouns are bounded, while mass nouns are unbounded (Langacker 1987b: 58–61). For example, *house* is a spatially bounded referent, while the referent of *sand* lacks inherent boundaries. A grammatical consequence in many languages is that count nouns are countable while mass nouns are uncountable without a measure word. However, in a “classifier language” like Sgaw Karen, unit counters (classifiers) are required in both cases. A generally held view is that count nouns in such languages, just like mass nouns, denote “collectives” rather than individuals, which also explains the absence of number as a grammatical category (Greenberg 1990; Grinevald 2004: 1020).

Nevertheless, two grammatical differences between proper nouns and common nouns follow because proper nouns refer to specific referents, while common nouns refer to categories of referents. First, proper nouns limit the scope of reference of proper nouns, which restricts the possibilities for modifying them. Second, proper nouns are uncountable and definite and generally do not co-occur with classifiers or demonstratives. A proper noun such as *wē.təkūʔ* ‘Yangon’ thus rarely takes modifiers, classifiers, or demonstratives. When used with proper nouns, classifier phrases function as markers of referentiality and demonstratives as phrasal delimiters. In (46), the NP indicated by square brackets contains the proper noun *pʰā.tī sᵛ.bᵛ* ‘Uncle Saw Baw’. The classifier phrase *tə-γà* signals definite referentiality while the demonstrative *nēʔ* functions as a phrase-final topic particle.

- (46) *[pʰā.tī sᵛ.bᵛ* *tə-γà* *nēʔ]* *ŋᵛ.ní*
 uncle M.HON-be.yellow one-CLF(HUM) that_{TOP} usually
ʔəwē *kətᵛ-tā-tē-tā* *tʰᵛ* *dᵛ.māʔ* *lᵛ*
 3s speak-thing-tell/say-thing be.long a.lot FACT.FP
 ‘When Uncle Saw Baw speaks, he is usually very long-winded
 (lit., he tells things very long).’
 [Another possible literal translation: ‘As for Uncle Saw Baw, usually,
 he is very long-winded.; RK] (Ballard 1973c: 84)

To summarize, proper nouns refer to specific real-world entities, while common nouns denote categories of referents. Many proper nouns are names of persons or places. Names of persons are often preceded by an honorific or title, and names of places frequently contain a term specifying the type of place. Common nouns can be divided into count and mass nouns based on the spatial boundedness of the referent they refer to. A grammatical

difference between proper nouns and common nouns is that proper nouns are rarely accompanied by modifiers or classifiers than common nouns.

3.2 Relator nouns

Relator nouns are a subtype of common nouns that do not function as core arguments of verbs. Instead, they occur as possessed nouns at the end of adverbial phrases indicating location, time, reason, or other meanings. Examples (47) and (48) contain the relator noun *pù* ‘hole, inside’.

(47) *lā* *θəwā* *ʔə-pù*
 GNR.P village 3x-**inside**
 ‘in the village’ (lit., ‘at village its inside’)

(48) *lā* *nə-pù*
 GNR.P 2sx-**inside**
 ‘inside you’ (lit., ‘at your inside’)

Relator nouns are widespread in Southeast Asia. Kurabe (2012) uses the term “case nouns” to describe corresponding nouns in Jingpho (Tibeto-Burman), while Kato (2004) uses “adpositional noun” and “location noun” to describe similar nouns in Eastern Pwo Karen. Jenny & Hnin Tun (2016: 168 ff.) call Burmese equivalents to the Sgaw Karen locational relator nouns “location markers”. The term *relator noun* (Starosta 1985) has been used for similar postpositional markers of nominal origin in many languages, including Mesoamerican, Oceanic, and Tibeto-Burman.

Figure 4 demonstrates four types of relator noun constructions. The relator noun phrase typically consists of three components: a preposition, a possessor NP or clause, and the possessed relator noun. POSS represents a possessive prefix agreeing with the possessor in number and person, which in the case of clausal possessors is the third person prefix *ʔə-*.

Preposition	NP or clause	POSS-	RN	Gloss
<i>lā</i>	<i>hīʔ</i>		<i>kʰlā</i>	‘outside the house’
<i>lā</i>		<i>nə-</i>	<i>pʰā.lāʔ</i>	‘underneath you’
<i>sʰū</i>	<i>θéʔ</i>	<i>ʔə-</i>	<i>pʰā.lāʔ</i>	‘to (the space) under the tree’
<i>pʰē</i>	<i>nə-hē</i>	<i>ʔə-</i>	<i>kʰā</i>	‘when you came (lit., at the time of your coming)’

Figure 4 Structure of RN phrases

Omitting the possessor prefix is common if no intervening element exists between the main noun and the relator noun. In (49), the main noun *hīʔ* is directly followed by the relator noun *kʰlā*.

- (49) *jə-ʔôʔ lā hīʔ kʰlā*
 1s-EXIST GNR.P house **outside**
 ‘I am outside the house.’ [HUR]

An accepted alternative to *hīʔ kʰlā* ‘the outside of a house’ is *hīʔ ʔə-kʰlā* [house 3x-outside], which has the same meaning. According to two speakers, however, *hīʔ kʰlā* sounds more natural. Similarly, *hīʔ pù* [house inside] ‘the inside of a house’ is a common phrase while *hīʔ ʔəpù* [house 3x-inside] was absent in the data.

Example (50) demonstrates the separation of the relator noun from the main noun when preceded by a modifier. Again, the possessive prefix is optional, as indicated by brackets.

- (50) *jə-ʔôʔ lā hīʔ pʰāʔ.dôʔ (ʔə-)kʰlā*
 1s-EXIST GNR.P house be.big **3x-outside**
 ‘I am outside the big house.’ [HUR]

Table 9 lists the most common relator nouns in Sgaw Karen. If a relator noun occurs as a regular noun, independently or in compounds, its meaning is given within brackets.

Table 9 The most common relator nouns (RNs)

Type	RN	Meaning as RN
LOCATIONAL	<i>pù</i>	inside (< ‘hole’)
	<i>kʰlā</i>	outside (< ‘back (anat.)’)
	<i>kʰl̄</i>	behind, after (< ‘rear, tip’)
	<i>kəpà</i>	beside (< ‘side’)
	<i>mèʔ.nā</i>	in front of (< <i>mèʔ</i> ‘face’ + <i>nā</i> ‘front part’)
	<i>pʰā.kʰôʔ</i>	above (< <i>pʰā</i> ‘granary?’ + <i>kʰôʔ</i> ‘head’)
	<i>pʰā.làʔ</i>	below, under (< <i>pʰā</i> ‘granary?’ + <i>làʔ</i> ‘underside?’)
	<i>lò</i>	on top of (< ‘surface’)
	<i>bəʔ.sə</i>	between
	<i>klā</i>	among, amidst, MIDST
	<i>kəsʰūʔ</i>	between (< ‘middle’)
	<i>ʔôʔ</i>	location
OTHER	<i>yə</i>	about (< ‘rattan’)
	<i>yə</i>	for the sake or purpose of
	<i>xō</i>	because of
	<i>θōʔ</i>	as, like
	<i>lō</i>	instead of (< ‘place, field’)
	<i>θōʔ</i>	sound of (< ‘sound’)

Two types of relator nouns, locational and non-locational (“other”), are distinguished. Locational relator nouns are discussed in §3.2.1, non-locational ones in §3.2.2.

3.2.1 Locational relator nouns

Locational relator nouns correspond to English nouns like *front*, *top*, and *midst*. This section describes the ten most common locational relator nouns. As demonstrated in Figure 4, they occur in prepositional phrases in which the first component is one of the prepositions *lā* ‘at, to, from’, *p^{hē}* ‘at’ or *s^{hū}* ‘to’. The second component is a possessor NP or clause, followed by the locational relator noun. The noun preceding the relator noun (the possessor) is termed the LANDMARK, while the entity located in relation to the landmark is called the TRAJECTOR (Langacker 1987a). An example is shown in (51).

- (51) [mē[?] təp^{hā}?]_{Trajector} jwà-lò lā [t^{hī}]_{Landmark} ʔə-[klā]_{RN}
 sand COLL flow-DOWN GNR.P water 3x-among
 ‘The sand flows in the midst of the water.’

The relator noun *pù* ‘hole, cavity’ has the derived meaning ‘interior, inside’ when used as a relator noun. The construction *lā* NP *ʔəpù* thus means ‘at the inside of NP’ or, more idiomatically, ‘in NP’. Examples of relator noun phrases can be seen in (52).

- (52) *lā dē ʔə-pù* [GNR.P hut 3x-inside] ‘in the hut’
lā t^{hī}.kô ʔə-pù [GNR.P country 3x-inside] ‘in a country’
lā ʔə-tā.kwē[?] ʔə-pù [GNR.P 3x-text 3x-inside] ‘in her texts’

Example (53) demonstrates *pù* occurring without a possessive prefix, while in (54), *pù* is the possessee of *dē xā[?].θī* ‘dilapidated hut’.

- (53) *nə-dā[?] **pù** tā k^{hī}? jā*
 2sx-room **inside** thing_{IMPRS} be.dark INTS
 ‘It is so dark in your room.’ [HUR]
- (54) *lā dē xā[?].θī ʔə-**pù***
 GNR.P hut be.dilapidated 3x-**inside**
 ‘in a dilapidated hut’ (Jones 1961: 213–214)

Abstract examples include nominalized forms of descriptive verbs expressing feelings. Examples (55) and (56) show nominalized descriptive verb as the landmark component. Note that, unlike in other Karenic languages, such as many varieties of Pwo, *tā* ‘thing’ in Sgaw Karen retains its full form as a nominalizer (it does not reduce to *tə-*).

- (55) *ʔəwē.θē[?] lē=wē lā tā-pālō.pədō-θā[?] ʔə-**pù***
 3.PL go=COR GNR.P thing_{NMLZ}-beware-heart 3x-**inside**
 ‘They went cautiously (lit., in cautiousness).’ (Saw Kay)
- (56) *pə-bá[?] mǎ-θəkō[?] tā lā tǎ-θā[?].swī.kəti ʔə-**pù***
 1p-must do-SOC thing GNR.P thing_{NMLZ}-be.resilient 3x-**inside**
 ‘We must work together resiliently (lit., in resilience).’ (Blög)

The antonym of *pù* is *kʰl̩* ‘back (anat.)’, also meaning ‘surface’ in words like *h̩ʔ.kʰôʔ-kʰl̩* [earth-surface] ‘world, the Earth’ and *kʰl̩ôʔ-kʰl̩* [snail-surface] ‘snail shell’. In relator noun phrases, *kʰl̩* expresses ‘outside’, occurring either without a possessive prefix (57) or as a possessed noun (58).

(57) *mū.kʰôʔ sù l̩ t̩ kʰl̩*
 heaven rain(v.) GNR.P thing **outside**
 ‘It is raining outside.’ [HUR]

(58) *dī.θōʔ kə-hāʔ-tʰôʔ mà t̩ l̩ dē-kəwə ʔə-kʰl̩*
 so.that IRR-walk-UP do thing GNR.P hut-area **3x-outside**
 ‘so that (they could) go out to work outside the refugee camps’ (News report)

The antonyms *pʰᵛ.kʰôʔ* ‘space above’ and *pʰᵛ.làʔ* ‘space below’ occur only as relator nouns, expressing ‘above’ and ‘below, under’, respectively, as seen in (59) to (61).

(59) *j̩ʔ tʰī t̩-tʰôʔ l̩ hīʔ pʰᵛ.kʰôʔ*
 carry water arrive-UP GNR.P house **ABOVE**
 ‘carry the water to the top of the house’ (Jones 1961: 217, 219)

(60) *kwá l̩ nə-l̩-mī ʔə-pʰᵛ.làʔ*
 look GNR.P 2sx-place-sleep **3x-BELOW**
 ‘Look under your bed.’ (Ballard 1973b: 158)

(61) *j̩ə-ʔōʔ l̩ nə-pʰᵛ.làʔ*
 1s-EXIST GNR.P **2sx-BELOW**
 ‘I am under/below you (with or without physical contact).’ [HUR]

The second components of *pʰᵛ.kʰôʔ* and *pʰᵛ.làʔ – kʰôʔ* ‘head, top part’ and *làʔ* ‘underside’ – also occur in compounds such as *kəsə-kʰôʔ* [mountain-head] ‘mountain top’ and *t̩-kədī-làʔ* [thing-shade-below] ‘(the space in the) shade’. However, *kʰôʔ* and *làʔ* are not used productively as locational relator nouns. The first component is probably *pʰᵛ* ‘granary’.

Another noun, *lò* ‘surface’, is also used to express ‘on’. Example (62) shows the use of *lò* as a main noun denoting the surface, or skin, of a human. In contrast to *pʰᵛ.kʰôʔ*, which refers to the space above the landmark, *lò* denotes the surface itself. Examples (63) and (64) illustrate this difference.

(62) *nə-lò k̩*
2sx-surface be.hot
 ‘You have a fever.’ (Lit., ‘Your surface is hot.’) [LTP]

- (63) *tâ.p^hõ.xâ* *ʔô[?]* *lā* *nə-lò*
insect EXIST GNR.P **2sx-surface**
‘There is an insect on you(r body).’ [HUR]
- (64) *tâ.p^hõ.xâ* *jù* *lā* *nə-p^hʒ.k^hô[?]* *tə-bê[?]*
insect fly GNR.P **2sx-ABOVE** one-CLF(2D)
‘There is an insect flying above you.’ [HUR]

In (65), *p^hõ.k^hô[?]* conveys an abstract sense with the verb *dõ[?]-θənè(-t^hʒ[?]) ʔəθā[?]* ‘depend on (something)’. In contrast, *lò* generally refers to physical location, as in (66).

- (65) *pə-s^hē.kà* *ʔə-lwē* *nē[?]* *dõ[?].θənè* *ʔəθā[?]*
1px-shirt 3x-colour that_{TOP} lean 3x.REFL
lā *θē[?]-bē[?]* *ʔə-mjō* *təp^hā[?]* *ʔə-p^hʒ.k^hô[?]* *lò*
GNR.P tree-bark 3x-kind COLL **3x-ABOVE** FACT.FP
‘The colour of our shirts depends on the types of tree bark.’ (Karen village)
- (66) *mī-lò* *lā* *jə-sī.tò* *lò*
lie-DOWN GNR.P 1sx-arm **surface**
‘Sleep in my arms.’ [LTP]

The noun *klā* does not function as a main noun in the data but refers to the midst of something when used as a relator noun. The possessor NP of *klā* (the landmark) can be either a count noun (‘among’) or a mass noun (‘in the midst of’), as seen in (67) and (68).

- (67) *lā* *ʔəwē.θē[?]* *ʔə-klā* *nē[?]*
GNR.P 3.PL **3x-MIDST** that_{FRAME}
ʔô[?] *dõ[?]* *tā.blā[?]* *tə-γà* *lò*
EXIST with thief one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
‘There is a thief among them.’ [HUR]
- (68) *tā* *ʔi* *tə-dī[?]-ʔô[?]-t^hʒ[?]*
thing this NEG-CAUS-EXIST-UP
tā.sī[?].tā.plā *lā* *mū.k^hô[?]-t^hī* *klā* *bā[?]*
poison GNR.P heaven-water **MIDST** NEG.FP
‘This does not cause acid rain (lit., poison in the rainwater).’ (News report)

The nouns *bā[?].sà* and *kəs^hū[?]* both refer to a space between two reference points, expressing ‘between’ when used as relator nouns. The former, *bā[?].sà*, is more common than *kəs^hū[?]* in the data. Semantically, *bā[?].sà* is used for physical as well as abstract space, while *kəs^hū[?]* refers exclusively to physical space. Additionally, while *kəs^hū[?]* also occurs as a regular noun in nominal compounds, such as *kəsā-kəs^hū[?]* [mountain-middle] ‘mountain pass’, *bā[?].sà* is only found as a relator noun. Example (69) illustrates the use of *kəs^hū[?]*, while *bā[?].sà* is exemplified in (70) and (71).

- (69) *jə-hiʔ* *ʔoʔ* *lā*
 1sx-house EXIST GNR.P
tʃo *dəʔ* *tā.sʰā.hiʔ* *ʔə-kəsʰūʔ*
 school and hospital **3x-BETWEEN**
 ‘My house is between the school and the hospital.’ [HUR]
- (70) *lā* *nə* *kʰi* *pʰləʔ* *ʔə-bəʔ.sə*
 GNR.P palace two CLF(3D) **3x-BETWEEN**
 ‘between these two palaces’ (Jones 1961: 212, 214)
- (71) *lā-jū.lī* *dəʔ* *lā-dī.sē.bəʔ* *ʔə-bəʔ.sə*
 month-July and month-December **3x-BETWEEN**
 ‘between July and December’ (News report)

The noun *mèʔ.nā* (from *mèʔ* ‘eye, face’ and *nā* ‘front part’) occurs in the relator noun construction *lā* NP POSS-*mèʔ.nā* expressing ‘in front of NP’, as in (72) and (73).

- (72) *jə-ʔoʔ* *lā* *nə-mèʔ.nā*
 1s-EXIST GNR.P **2sx-front**
 ‘I am in front of you.’ [HUR]
- (73) *ʔəwē* *sʰeʔ.nə* *lā* *kʰi* *mèʔ.nā*
 3s sit GNR.P boat **front**
 ‘She was sitting in the front part of the boat.’ (News report)

The antonym of *mèʔ.nā* ‘front’ is *lā.kʰi* ‘back part’ (from *lā* ‘field, place’ and *kʰi* ‘rear’), expressing ‘behind’, as in (74) and (75). Note that both *mèʔ.nā* and *lā.kʰi* refer either to a part of the landmark itself (front or rear part) or to the space in front of or behind it.

- (74) *sʰā.tʰəʔ* *lā* *nə-pi* *ʔə-lā.kʰi*
 stand GNR.P 2sx-ySI **3x-back**
 ‘Stand behind your younger sibling.’ (Ballard 1973b: 212)
- (75) *jə-ʔoʔ* *lā* *tā* *lā.kʰi* *tə-miʔ* *bāʔ*
 1s-EXIST GNR.P thing **back** NEG-be.enjoyable NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t like staying at the back (lit., the back part of things).’ [HUR]

A figurative use of *mèʔ.nā* is seen in the phrase *lā nəʔ ʔəmèʔ.nā* ‘besides that (lit., in front of that)’, as in (76).

- (76) *lā* *nəʔ* *ʔə-mèʔ.nā* *pə-hiʔ.nə* *sé.kəʔ* *θeʔ.miʔ*
 GNR.P that **3x-front** 1p-take also firewood
 ‘(in the forest we look for things to eat and)
 on top of that, we also collect firewood’ (Karen village)

The word *l̄̄.kʰɪ̄* ‘back side’ also expresses ‘after’ in a temporal sense, as in (77). Similarly, *m̄̄.ɲā* ‘front’ can be interpreted temporally, as in (78). The more common way to express ‘before’, however, is using *təkʰɪ̄* (see §9.4.1).

(77) *nē* *nə-hē-tì* *l̄̄* *jə-l̄̄.kʰɪ̄*
 2se 2s-come-arrive GNR.P **1sx-behind**
 ‘You arrived after me (lit., behind me).’ (Ballard 1973b: 212)

(78) *kəɲɔ̄-pɣô* *təpʰāʔ* *hē-tì* *l̄̄* *kô.pəjɔ̄*
 Karen-Pwo COLL come-arrive GNR.P Myanmar
l̄̄ *kəɲɔ̄-sɣɔ̄* *təpʰāʔ* *ʔə-m̄̄.ɲā* *nēʔ.l̄̄*
 GNR.P Karen-Sgaw COLL **3x-front** FP
 ‘The Pwo Karen arrived in Myanmar before (lit., in front of) the Sgaw Karen.’
 (Karen drum)

3.2.2 Other adverbial relator nouns

Sgaw Karen also uses relator nouns with non-locational adverbial meanings. This section describes nine such relator nouns: the temporal nouns *kʰā* ‘time’ and *sʰā.kət̄* ‘time’, *θōʔ* ‘likeness’, *xō* ‘reason’, *ɣɔ̄* ‘sake’, *ɣé* ‘matter’, *ʔôʔ* ‘place’, *l̄̄* ‘stead’, and *θɔ̄ʔ* ‘sound’.

The most common temporal nouns are *sʰā.kət̄* ‘time’ and *kʰā* ‘time’, of which only *sʰā.kət̄* occurs as an independent noun. The words are largely synonymous when used as relator nouns. Examples (79) and (80) demonstrate the use of *kʰā* and *sʰā.kət̄* forming temporal adverbials with a preceding prepositional phrase.

(79) *l̄̄* *lā* *ʔē.pʰr̄éʔ* *nwī* *θō* *ʔə-kʰā*
 GNR.P month April seven days(CLF) **3x-TIME**
 ‘on April the seventh’

(80) *pʰē* *tā-sù-kʰā* *ʔə-sʰā.kət̄*
 LOC.P thing-rain-TIME **3x-time**
 ‘in the rainy season’

Note that it is more common for the possessor component to be a clause than an NP (see §9.4.1).

The similitive relator noun *θōʔ* is semantically equivalent to the English preposition *like*. Wade (1897: 58) suggests that this word is related to the verb *θōʔ* ‘put on, wear’, translating the noun *θōʔ* as ‘dress, likeness’. In the data, *θōʔ* does not occur as an independent noun, only as a relator noun and as a verb. Additionally, *θōʔ* occurs in a few compounds such as *dīʔ-θōʔ* [be.like-SIM] ‘be equal to, be like’ and *pɣè-θōʔ* [be.full-SIM] ‘be equal’. In formal and written language, *θōʔ* is used as a relator noun forming adverbial similitive phrases with the

verb *dīʔ* ‘be like’, which precedes the adverbial phrase. Examples (81) and (82) demonstrate *θōʔ* functioning as a relator noun.

- (81) *ʔə-kê-ʔə-γə* *lə.γàʔ* *dīʔ* *kì* *ʔə-θōʔ*
 3x-form-3x-shape resemble **be.like** mushroom **3x-SIM**
 ‘It (=bronze drum) is shaped like a mushroom
 (lit., its shape looks like a mushroom’s shape).’ (Karen drum)
- (82) *lā.kʰī* *ʔəwē* *hē* *ʔōʔ* *pʰē.nēʔ*
 later 3s come EXIST there
dīʔ *pyà-θəwō-pʰō* *ʔə-θōʔ* *lō*
be.like person-village-child **3x-SIM** FACT.FP
 ‘Later, he came to live there like a villager.’ (Moon rabbit)

A more colloquial way to express ‘as, like’ is to use the descriptive verb *dī.θōʔ* ‘be equal to’, as in (83). A colloquial equivalent of (81) can be seen in (84).

- (83) *pyà* *təbâʔ* *sūʔ.kā²⁷* *ʔə* *dī.θōʔ* *nàʔ* *bâʔ*
 person NEG.OPT use 3i **equal** rice.basket NEG.FP
 ‘People should not use it (=bronze drum) like a rice basket’ (Karen drum)
- (84) *ʔə-kê-ʔə-γə* *lə.γàʔ* *lā* *kì*
 3x-form-3x-shape resemble **GNR.P** mushroom
 ‘Its shape is like (that of) a mushroom.’ [HUR]

More commonly, *θōʔ* occurs with a clause rather than NP as possessor, as described further in §9.4.6.

Causal phrases contain the relator noun *xō*, which expresses ‘reason’ but does not occur as an independent noun. The relator noun construction *lā* NP POSS-*xō* ‘because of X’, seen in (85) and (86), is widespread (see also §9.4.3).

- (85) *lā* *tā.dīʔ.tā.jà* *ʔə-xō*
 GNR.P war **3x-REASON**
 ‘because of the war’
- (86) *kʰī.pʰlō* *lā* *jə-xō* *nēʔ*
 go.through GNR.P **1sx-REASON** that_{FRAME}
pyà *kōʔ* *γà* *dēʔ* *kə-θāʔ.hē* *nà* *lō*
 person each CLF(HUM) each IRR-hate 2si FACT.FP
 ‘Because of me, everyone will hate you.’ [HUR]

²⁷ The word *sūʔ.kā* ‘use’ is literal and formal; a colloquial synonym is *θū* ‘use’.

The purposive relator noun $\gamma\hat{o}$ expresses ‘for (the sake of)’ and conveys three meanings: benefit, purpose, and reason. Animate possessor NPs preceding $\gamma\hat{o}$ are typically beneficiaries, as in (87) and (88). Also note the use of the benefactive marker $n\hat{e}$, discussed in §8.1.1.

(87) $\gamma\hat{o}$ - $p\gamma\hat{e}$ - $n\hat{e}$ $t\hat{a}$ - $p^h\hat{a}r\hat{a}.s^h\hat{a}^?$ [$l\bar{a}$ $p\hat{o}^?m\hat{i}^?$ $\gamma\hat{o}$ - $\gamma\hat{o}$] $l\hat{o}$
 3-buy-get_{BEN} thing-present GNR.P woman **3x-PURP** FACT.FP
 ‘he bought a present for the girl’ [LTP.D]

(88) $m\hat{a}t\hat{a}\gamma\hat{a}$ $m\hat{a}$ - $n\hat{e}$ [$l\bar{a}$ $\gamma\hat{o}$ - $\gamma\hat{o}$] $t\hat{a}$ - $\theta\hat{e}^?.n\bar{a}=w\bar{e}$ $b\hat{a}^?$
 who do-get_{BEN} GNR.P **3x-PURP** NEG-know=COR NEG.FP
 ‘[she] did not know who was doing it for her’ (Jones 1961: 211, 214)

When the preceding NP is inanimate, $\gamma\hat{o}$ often expresses purpose, as in (89). Further common examples are seen in (90) and (91).

(89) $t\hat{a}$ $m\hat{e}$ $\gamma\hat{e}^?.d\hat{o}^?$ $\theta\bar{u}$ $\gamma\hat{o}$ [$l\bar{a}$ $n\hat{i}^?.t^h\hat{o}^?.\theta\bar{o}$ $\gamma\hat{o}$ - $\gamma\hat{o}$] $n\hat{e}^?$
 thing_{IMPRS} COND want use 3i GNR.P new.year **3x-PURP** that
 ‘if (someone) wants to use it (=drum) for the Karen New Year’ (Karen drum)

(90) $j\hat{a}$ - $b\hat{a}^?j\hat{o}^?$ $t\hat{a}$ [$l\bar{a}$ $\gamma\hat{o}$ - $\gamma\hat{o}$] $l\hat{o}$
 1s-worry thing GNR.P **3x-PURP** FACT.FP
 ‘I’m worried about him.’ (Lit., ‘I worry for his sake.’) (Say Kay)

(91) $kl\bar{e}$ $s^h\bar{u}.n\bar{a}$ $t\hat{a}$ - $\gamma\hat{e}$
 road ahead NEG-be.good

 $l\bar{a}$ $k\hat{a}\theta\hat{e}^?$ $\gamma\hat{o}$ $b\hat{a}^?$ $\gamma\hat{a}x\bar{o}$
 GNR.P horse **PURP** NEG.FP 3.REASON
 ‘Since the road ahead was no good for horses [I gave my horse away in a village and went ahead on foot.]’ (Jones 1961: 234, 245)

Another common relator noun is $\gamma\hat{e}$ ‘rattan’, which, as a relator noun, expresses ‘matter, about’. The word $\gamma\hat{e}$ (or, possibly, a homonym) also occurs in the coordinate compound $\gamma\hat{e}$ - $kl\hat{o}$ ‘information (lit., rattan and channels)’. The main verb in the modified clause is typically a verb indicating inquiry or discovery, as in (92) and (93).

(92) $t\bar{e}$ - $n\hat{e}$ $j\hat{a}$ $l\bar{a}$ $n\hat{a}$ - $p^h\bar{o}$ $\gamma\hat{a}$ - $\gamma\hat{e}$
 tell-get_{BEN} 1si GNR.P 2sx-child **3x-MATTER**
 ‘Tell me about your child.’ (Lit., ‘Tell me about your child’s matter’)
 (Ballard 1973a: 133)

- (93) a. *nə-xī-tʰī?* *tā* *mənī?* *lê?*
 2s-search-see thing what CQ
- b. *sə.pà* *θī* *ʔə-ye* *lò*
 king die **3x-MATTER** FACT.FP
- a. ‘What did you discover?’ b. ‘That the king had died.’ [LTP.D]

The existential–locative word *ʔə?* functions as a verb and a noun. As a relator noun, *ʔə?* is used with non-locational referents, such as humans, to express location at or movement to or from that referent. With referents denoting a location, *ʔə?* is not used. Compare (94) and (95) with human referents and (96) with a non-human referent.

- (94) *bā?θē?θē?* *ʔə-kə-kwē?* *lī?* *sʰū* *jə-ʔə?*
 maybe 3-IRR-write writing ALL.P **1sx-LOC.N**
 ‘Maybe he will write a letter to me.’ [LTP.D]
- (95) *krə?* *hī?.nē* *tā.hē?.kū?* *lā* *θā?.pyá* *ʔə-ʔə?*
 should take advice **GNR.P** **be.old** **3x-LOC.N**
 ‘(the young) should take advice from the elders’ (Karen proverbs)
- (96) *jə-kə-lè-hā?* *sʰū* *wé* *ʔəyà* *tə-pʰlā?* *lò*
 1s-IRR-go-visit ALL.P city other one-CLF(3D) FACT.FP
 ‘I will travel to another city.’ [LTP]

The noun *lā* ‘field, place’, among its many functions, is used as a relator noun to indicate the place where an event happens, as in (97) and (98).

- (97) *lè=wē* *lā* *tā.lā* [*lā* *pʰī.θā?.pyá* *mà.θī* *tʰɔ?* *ʔə-lā*]_{RC}
 go=COR GNR.P **place** REL old.man kill pig **3x-place**
 ‘They went to the place where the old man killed the pig’
 (Jones 1961: 226–227, 231)
- (98) *pʰē* *wá?* *ʔə?* *ʔā* *ʔə-lā*
 LOC.P bamboo EXIST be.much **3x-place**
 ‘at a place where there was a lot of bamboo’ (Saw Kay)

A figurative meaning of *lā* is ‘instead of (lit., in NP’s stead)’, as seen in (99) and (100).

- (99) *pə=wē* *tā* *lā* *ʔə-mì.pyá* *ʔə-lā* *lò*
 rule=COR thing GNR.P 3x-father.in.law **3x-place** FACT.FP
 ‘[they chose him to become king and] rule in his father-in-law’s place’
 (Jones 1961: 214–215)
- (100) *lā* *pʰī* *ʔə-lā* *nē?* *tē* *lā* *jə-pā* *ʔə-pā*
 GNR.P GF **3x-place** that_{FRAME} say/tell QUOT 1sx-F 3x-F
 ‘Instead of “grandfather”, say “my father’s father”.’ [HUR]

Lastly, *θɔ̃ʔ* ‘sound (v./n.)’ co-occurs with the verb *nâ.hū* ‘hear’. The preceding NP denotes a referent emitting a sound. In Sgaw Karen, it is thus more common to say ‘hear the sound of X’ than ‘hear X’. The possessor of *θɔ̃ʔ* can also be a clause, as in (101).

- (101) *ɔ̃wɛ.θɛʔ nâ.hū [kəsʰɔ̃ ɔ̃ʔ-sʰâʔ] θɔ̃ʔ lɔ̃*
 3.PL hear elephant eat-food **sound** FACT.FP
 ‘They heard (the sound of) an elephant eating.’ (Saw Kay)

The following section describes nouns consisting of more than one lexical morpheme.

3.3 Nominal compounds

This section describes headed noun–noun and noun–verb compounds that function as nouns. Headless nominal couplets, which occur in various configurations known as elaborate expressions, are described in §6.1. Aikhenvald (2007: 24) notes that compounding as a word-formation strategy “is found in languages of any type, but is dominant in isolating languages”. In this regard, Sgaw Karen is no exception.

Matthews (2014) defines a compound as “[a] word formed from two or more units that are themselves words or forms of words”. In Matthews (1991), he writes that the meaning of a compound, such as *greenhouse*, typically cannot be predicted based on the meaning of its parts, and compounds are rarely formed productively. In Sgaw Karen, on the other hand, while compounds exhibit various degrees of semantic idiosyncrasy, compounding is often highly productive, playing a significant role in the grammar of the language. Aside from the lack of prosodic gaps between morphemes, no sandhi-induced sound changes are identified in Sgaw Karen.

Next, §3.3.1 discusses noun–noun compounds and §3.3.2 noun–verb compounds.

3.3.1 Noun–noun compounds

A significant portion of Sgaw Karen noun–noun compounds are endocentric compounds, composed of a head noun and a modifier noun specifying the type of referent (e.g. *songbook* is a type of book). In the examples shown in (102), the components *tjō*, *tʰɪ̃*, and *tərūʔ* are modifiers of the head nouns *θərâʔ*, *θəpə̀*, and *kɔ̃* respectively.

- (102) *tjō-θərâʔ* [school-teacher] ‘school teacher’
tʰɪ̃-θəpə̀ [water-pot] ‘water jar’
tərūʔ-kɔ̃ [Chinese-country] ‘China’

A further subdivision can be made based on the order of the head and its modifier into head-initial and head-final endocentric compounds. Head-final compounds are the more common type in Sgaw Karen. For example, *tʰɪ̃* is taken to be the head of *mɛ̀²-tʰɪ̃* [eye-water]

‘tear (n.)’ since the compound refers to a type of water. Three head-final examples are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Head-final noun–noun compounds

Modifier (N ₁)	Head (N ₂)	Meaning
<i>mē̄</i> [?] ‘eye’	<i>t^hl̄</i> ‘water’	‘tear (n.)’
<i>kə̄s^hō̄</i> ‘elephant’	<i>γō̄</i> ‘multitude’	‘elephant herd’
<i>p^hlō̄[?].k^hl̄</i> ‘trousers’	<i>t^hə̄[?]</i> ‘bag’	‘trouser pocket’

Jones (1961) calls Sgaw Karen head-final noun–noun compounds “genitival compounds” because they resemble possessive NPs and are not always easily distinguishable from them.

Several semantic relations exist between the components in head-final noun–noun compounds, but in general, N₁ indicates a specific type of N₂. More specifically, the head component (N₂) can denote a product of N₁ (103a), a piece of equipment or material (103b), the form of a substance (103c), or something that originates from the modifier, such as the meat of an animal (103d).

- (103) a. *kənē̄-sō̄* [bee-juice] ‘honey’
 b. *k^hō̄[?]-p^hl̄[?]* [foot-leather] ‘shoe’
 c. *t^hā̄[?]-t^hl̄* [metal-water] ‘molten metal’
 d. *tə̄k^hū̄[?]-ŋā̄[?]* [lizard-meat] ‘lizard meat’

Part–whole compounds typically denote parts of animals or plants:

- (104) *b̄l̄-k^hl̄* [paddy-seed] ‘rice seed’
θē̄[?]-lā̄[?] [tree-leaf] ‘tree leaf’
t^hō̄[?]-mē̄ [pig-tooth] ‘pig’s tusk’
pənā̄-p^hl̄[?] [buffalo-skin] ‘buffalo hide’

In some cases, the part noun is possessed, occurring as the possessee component in a possessive construction, as in *ŋā̄[?] ʔə̄-r̄l̄* [fish 3x-dorsal.fin] ‘dorsal fin of a fish’.

In plant-related compounds, N₁ denotes a genus and N₂ a unit of that genus, such as a fruit or tree. For example, *nē̄[?]* in (105) represents the *Ananas* genus. Typically, the N₁s in such compounds do not occur as independent nouns. The morphemes *nē̄[?]*, *xō̄*, and *θə̄k^hō̄[?]* in (105), for example, are only found in compounds.

- (105) *nē̄[?]-θā̄[?]* [pineapple-fruit] ‘pineapple fruit’
xō̄-θā̄[?] [coconut-fruit] ‘coconut’
θə̄k^hō̄[?]-t^hū̄[?] [mango-trunk] ‘mango tree’

The word *tā̄* ‘thing’ is frequent as a generic N₁ in compounds in which the head noun is unspecified, as in (106).

(106)	<i>tâ-kʰlī</i>	[thing-seed]	‘seed’
	<i>tâ-nâʔ</i>	[thing-flesh]	‘meat’
	<i>tâ-dōʔ-tâ-lâʔ</i>	[thing-new.leaf-thing-mature.leaf]	‘leaf vegetables’
	<i>tâ-kəmûʔ</i>	[thing-powder]	‘dust’

Many *tâ*-N compounds have the same meaning when expressed as a possessive construction. For example, *tâ-nə* and *tâ ʔənə* ‘horn (lit., the horn of a thing)’ are both accepted variants.

The word *pʰō* ‘child’ is used in two ways in head-final noun–noun compounds: as a diminutive marker and as a marker indicating a member of a group. In both functions, *pʰō* is productive, co-occurring with various modifier nouns. Four examples of *pʰō* denoting the member of a group are shown in (107).

(107)	<i>pyà-kō-pəjō-pʰō</i>	[person-country-Burma-child]	‘Burmese person’
	<i>kəŋ-pʰō</i>	[group-child]	‘member’
	<i>pyà-būʔ.dāʔ-pʰō</i>	[person-Buddha-child]	‘Buddhist’
	<i>θīʔ-pʰō</i>	[military-child]	‘soldier’

The second use of *pʰō* is as a diminutive marker. In compounds such as *pʰōʔ.xē-pʰō* [orphan-child] ‘orphan’ and *tʰwīʔ-pʰō* [dog-child] ‘puppy, small dog’, *pʰō* retains its literal meaning ‘child’. As a diminutive marker, *pʰō* indicates a smaller kind of the prototype referred to by the preceding noun (N₁), as in (108).

(108)	<i>kʰlī-pʰō</i>	[boat-DIM]	‘small boat’
	<i>kəŋ-pʰō</i>	[group-DIM]	‘small group’
	<i>nōʔ.tə-pʰō</i>	[spoon-DIM]	‘small spoon, teaspoon’
	<i>tə-sō-pʰō</i>	[one-while-DIM]	‘a little while’
	<i>tə-sēʔ-pʰō</i>	[one-bit-DIM]	‘a little bit’

In some cases, *pʰō* is used to express endearment, as in *pʰō-pʰō* [flower-DIM] ‘little flower’ and *mēʔ.kʰlī-pʰō* [eye-DIM] ‘little eyes’, both words occurring in children’s stories. Conventionalized meanings can be seen in words such as *pʰlōʔ.kʰlī-pʰō* [trousers-DIM] ‘underwear’ and *nāʔ-pʰō* [fish-DIM] ‘fish’, the common word for fish in Northern Thailand (*nāʔ* is used in other regions).

In head-initial endocentric noun–noun compounds, the modifier follows the head noun. Some such compounds contain a class-denoting term as N₁. Enfield (2007: 147) defines class terms as denoting the “taxonomic or biological essence of the marked noun”. As seen in (109), the head noun (N₁) is typically a generic noun such as *wē* ‘city, town’ or *pyà* ‘person’, while the modifying noun (N₂) indicates the name or type of N₁. Compounds in which N₂ specifies material also belong to this group.

(109)	<i>wê-təkúʔ</i>	[city-Yangon]	‘Yangon’	name
	<i>pɣà-kəŋɔ̄</i>	[person-Karen]	‘Karen person’	name
	<i>li²-tá.plē</i>	[writing-permission]	‘permit (n.)’	type
	<i>θədā-mî</i>	[umbrella-sun]	‘umbrella’	type
	<i>lé²-mé².ɔ̄u</i>	[cart-fire]	‘train’	type
	<i>pli-tʰāʔ</i>	[string-iron]	‘wire’	material
	<i>pʰē-tʰū</i>	[necklace-gold]	‘golden necklace’	material

Finally, morphemes indicating sex (male or female) occur as the second component of noun–noun compounds. The female morpheme for animals is *mô* ‘mother’, and the male morpheme is *pʰā* (found only in compounds) or *pʰā.tî* ‘uncle’. Ratanakul (1986: 687) also includes the word *θā².mī.ŋə-tî* ‘tom cat, male cat’ with the syllable *tî* as a male gender marker. Examples include the words in (110).

(110)	<i>sʰɔ̄-mô</i>	[chicken-mother/F]	‘hen’
	<i>kəsʰɔ̄-pʰā</i>	[elephant-M]	‘male elephant’
	<i>kəsʰɔ̄-pʰā.tî</i>	[elephant-uncle/M]	‘male elephant’
	<i>θā².mī.ŋə-tî</i>	[cat-M]	‘tom cat, male cat’

For humans, *mîʔ* or *pòʔ.mîʔ* ‘woman’ are used for females while *kʰwā* denotes males:

(111)	<i>dē-mîʔ</i>	[y.sibling-F]	‘little sister’
	<i>pʰō-kʰwā</i>	[child-M]	‘son’

3.3.2 Noun–verb compounds

Noun–verb compounds function either as verbs or nouns. The nominal type described here is widespread and can be divided into several semantic types. One way to categorize noun–verb compounds is by comparing the compound with an inferred relative clause. For example, the inferred relative clause of the noun–verb compound *kələ-bɔ̄* [python-be.yellow] ‘Burmese python’ is *kələ lə ʔə-bɔ̄* [python REL 3-be.yellow] ‘a python which is yellow’. As shown in Table 11, the noun in the inferred relative clause can have one of the core roles S, A, or O, or be an oblique argument, such as an instrument or location.

Table 11 Types of nominal noun–verb compounds

Type	Noun–verb compound	Morpheme glosses	Compound meaning
S-V	<i>pʰō-sʰɔ̄ʔ</i>	[child-be.small]	‘baby’
A-V	<i>kəθi²-dɔ̄.θədā</i>	[medicine-protect]	‘vaccination’
O-V	<i>li²-rà.lə</i>	[book-distribute]	‘brochure’
Loc-V	<i>tʃō-bā.jwà</i>	[school-worship(v.)]	‘church’
Instr-V	<i>tʰā²-lwāʔ</i>	[iron-saw(v.)]	‘saw (n.)’

The difference between a noun–verb compound and an inferred relative clause is that compounds typically have conventionalized, specific meanings, while relative clauses can

be semantically ambiguous. For example, the compound $p^h\bar{o}-s^h\bar{i}$ [child-be.small] means ‘baby, infant’, usually not ‘small child’.

The first type is S/A-V compounds, for which the inferred clause is N $l\bar{a}$ \bar{a} -V [N REL 3-V] ‘N which/who V’. In many cases, the verb is descriptive, indicating a property of the noun. This group of compounds includes several names of animals and plants. Examples can be seen in (112).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|-------------------------|------------------|
| (112) | $t^h\bar{w}\bar{i}^2-m\bar{i}$ | [dog-be.wild] | ‘wolf’ |
| | $t^h\bar{o}^2-k\bar{i}^2$ | [bird-be.multicoloured] | ‘parrot’ |
| | $p\bar{a}t^h\bar{o}^2-p^h\bar{a}^2.t^h\bar{s}$ | [bean-be.long] | ‘asparagus bean’ |
| | $p\bar{a}\theta\bar{a}-w\bar{a}$ | [onion-be.white] | ‘garlic’ |

Apart from plants and animals, one common group of S-V compounds (with an N_1 functioning as the S argument in the inferred relative clause) contain the descriptive verb $d\bar{o}^2$ ‘be big’ combined with nouns denoting people of high importance or rank, as in (113).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------|------------------|
| (113) | $\theta\bar{s}.k^h\bar{a}-p^h\bar{a}^2.d\bar{o}^2$ | [monk-INTS.be.big] | ‘abbot’ |
| | $\theta\bar{a}r\bar{a}^2-d\bar{o}^2$ | [teacher-be.big] | ‘reverend’ |
| | $\theta\bar{i}^2-k^h\bar{o}^2-d\bar{o}^2$ | [army-head-be.big] | ‘senior officer’ |

Additional examples of S-V compounds can be seen in (114).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| (114) | $k\bar{a}b\bar{s}-j\bar{u}$ | [ship-fly] | ‘airplane’ |
| | $p\bar{o}^2.m\bar{i}^2-p\bar{y}\bar{a}$ | [woman-be.old] | ‘married woman’ |
| | $m\bar{e}^2-p\bar{o}$ | [fire-crack(intr.)] | ‘bomb’ |
| | $l\bar{i}^2-s\bar{s}.s^h\bar{y}\bar{i}$ | [book-be.holy] | ‘bible’ |

Most A-V type compounds are agent nouns with $p\bar{y}\bar{a}$ ‘person’ as N_1 , but a few additional examples occur. Two are listed in (115), where N_1 represents the A while the inferred P argument is covert.

- | | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| (115) | $k\bar{a}\theta\bar{i}^2-d\bar{s}.\theta\bar{a}d\bar{s}$ | [medicine-protect] | ‘vaccine’ |
| | $s\bar{e}-s^h\bar{s}^2.t^h\bar{w}\bar{e}$ | [money-support] | ‘subsidy, allowance’ |

The diminutive marker $p^h\bar{o}$ ‘child’ commonly occurs after the verb in $p\bar{y}\bar{a}$ -V (‘-er’) compounds. The verbal constituent intervening between $p\bar{y}\bar{a}$ and $p^h\bar{o}$ is a verb phrase consisting of the verb and its P argument, as seen in (116).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| (116) | $p\bar{y}\bar{a}-m\bar{a}-t\bar{a}-p^h\bar{o}$ | [person-do-thing-child] | ‘worker’ |
| | $p\bar{y}\bar{a}-k\bar{w}\bar{e}^2-l\bar{i}^2-p^h\bar{o}$ | [person-write-book-child] | ‘writer’ |
| | $p\bar{y}\bar{a}-\bar{a}\bar{s}-\theta\bar{i}^2-p^h\bar{o}$ | [person-drink-liquor-child] | ‘drinker, alcoholic’ |
| | $p\bar{y}\bar{a}-\theta\bar{a}^2.w\bar{i}^2-t\bar{a}-p^h\bar{o}$ | [person-sing-thing-child] | ‘singer’ |
| | $p\bar{y}\bar{a}-x\bar{i}.t^h\bar{i}^2-\theta\bar{e}^2.p\bar{a}-t\bar{a}-p^h\bar{o}$ | [person-find-know-thing-child] | ‘researcher’ |

Compounding of the type *pyà*-VP-*p^hō* is a highly productive strategy for forming agent nouns in Sgaw Karen.

O-V compounds are less common. The inferred relative clause is N *l̄̄̄ t̄̄̄ V ʔ̄̄̄* [N REL thing_{IMPRS} V 3i] ‘N which is V-ed’, in which the noun is the inferred P argument of the verb. Examples are provided in (117).

- (117) *l̄̄̄-k^hh̄̄̄* [thread-wind(v.)] ‘ball of thread’
l̄̄̄-sō̄̄.plā [writing-carve] ‘inscription’
p^hl̄̄̄-t^hh̄̄̄ [ball-kick] ‘football (ball or sport)’

Several culinary nouns belong to this class, in which the noun is the main ingredient, while the verb specifies the preparation method, as in (118).

- (118) *kō̄̄.sī̄̄.θā̄̄-tō̄̄* [papaya-pound] ‘(pounded) papaya salad’,
ɲā̄̄-hā̄̄ [fish-steam] ‘steamed fish’
s^hh̄̄̄.ɲā̄̄-kā̄̄ [chicken.meat-grill] ‘grilled chicken’

The most common type of O-V compound, exemplified in (119), is the *t̄̄̄-V* (‘thing V-ed’) type with the generic noun *t̄̄̄* ‘thing’ as the noun component.

- (119) *t̄̄̄-ʔ̄̄̄* [thing_{NMLZ}-eat] ‘food’
t̄̄̄-θā̄̄.wī̄̄ [thing_{NMLZ}-sing] ‘song’
t̄̄̄-kwē̄̄ [thing_{NMLZ}-write] ‘writing’
t̄̄̄-sī̄̄.s^hh̄̄̄ [thing_{NMLZ}-answer] ‘answer (n.)’
t̄̄̄-tō̄̄.kl̄̄̄ [thing_{NMLZ}-plan] ‘plan, project’

In other noun–verb compounds, the noun is an oblique argument in the inferred relative clause, most commonly a place (120a) or an instrument used for performing the action represented by the verb (120b–f).

- (120) a. *l̄̄̄-mī̄̄* [place-sleep] ‘bed’
 b. *t^hā̄̄-plā* [iron-carve] ‘chisel (n.)’
 c. *b̄̄̄-p^hlā̄̄* [spear-hoe(v)] ‘hoe (n.)’
 d. *k^hā̄̄-s^hh̄̄̄.n̄̄̄* [chair-sit] ‘chair’
 e. *sī̄̄-nē̄̄* [finger-point] ‘index finger’
 f. *l̄̄̄-θā̄̄.wī̄̄* [book-sing] ‘hymn book’

Another highly productive noun–verb compound is the *t̄̄̄-V(-N)* type, where *t̄̄̄* is used as a nominalizer to derive a noun from a verb. The compound meaning is ‘(the action of) V-ing (N)’. With intransitive verbs, the compound structure is *t̄̄̄-V*, as shown in (121).

- (121) *t̄̄̄-mī̄̄* [thing_{NMLZ}-sleep] ‘sleep (n.)’
t̄̄̄-xē̄̄-myī̄̄-hā̄̄-p^hlō̄̄ [thing_{NMLZ}-run-randomly-walk-spurt] ‘fleeing’

When the verb is transitive, the compound structure is *tâ*-V-N, where N is the object of the preceding verb. The object has generic reference, and the emphasis is on the performance of the action rather than the result, as in (122).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| (122) | <i>tâ-s^hē[?]-kəθi[?].dɔ̄.θədɔ̄</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -stab-vaccine] | ‘vaccination’ |
| | <i>tâ-tē-klē</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -create-road] | ‘road construction’ |
| | <i>tâ-k^hū[?]-t^hū</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -dig-gold] | ‘gold mining’ |
| | <i>tâ-s^hā-tâ</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -sell-thing] | ‘selling (things)’ |

In contrast, compounds containing a transitive verb but no object emphasize the result of the action. Compare the *tâ*-V-N type above with the *tâ*-V compounds in (123).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (123) | <i>tâ[?]-bô[?]</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -wrap] | ‘package, wrap (n.)’ |
| | <i>tâ[?]-bô[?]-tâ</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -wrap-thing] | ‘packing, wrapping’ |
| | <i>tâ-mà.lō</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -study] | ‘lesson’ |
| | <i>tâ-mà.lō-lī[?]</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -study-book] | ‘studying’ |

With state verbs, the meaning of the *tâ*-V compound is ‘the state of V-ing’, as in (124), or ‘things that V’, as in (125).

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| (124) | <i>tâ-kəs^hγɔ̄</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -be.clean] | ‘cleanliness’ |
| | <i>tâ-k^hī[?]</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -be.dark] | ‘darkness’ |
| | <i>tâ-kō</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -be.hot] | ‘heat’ |
| | <i>tâ-θā-k^hī</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -heart-be.elated] | ‘happiness’ |
-
- | | | | |
|-------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (125) | <i>tâ-hē</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -be.spicy] | ‘spicy food’ |
| | <i>tâ-ʔə</i> | [thing _{NMLZ} -be.evil] | ‘bad things, evil (n.)’ |

Note that *tâ* ‘thing’ retains its full form as a nominalizer, unlike in most Pwo Karen varieties, where the corresponding word has a reduced form when functioning as a nominalizer (see e.g. Kato 2004: 104; Phillips 2018: 55).

A large group of verb–noun compounds expressing tools contain the instrument-denoting noun *nɔ̄[?]*, which does not occur as an independent noun. The noun *nɔ̄[?]* is followed by a verb denoting the method of usage:

- | | | | |
|-------|--|------------------------|----------------------|
| (126) | <i>nɔ̄-wi[?]</i> | [INS.N-twist] | ‘key’ |
| | <i>nɔ̄[?]-γī</i> | [INS.N-count] | ‘number’ |
| | <i>nɔ̄-ti[?]</i> | [INS.N-pinch] | ‘clothes peg; tongs’ |
| | <i>nɔ̄-k^hē[?]-mē</i> | [INS.N-pick.out-tooth] | ‘toothpick’ |

A small number of nominal compounds that are neither noun–noun or noun–verb also occur. Two are shown in (127).

- (127) *k^hā-s^hū-nā* [time-to-front] ‘future’
p̄ō-l̄ō-pl̄ò [story-from-past] ‘old story’

The rest of this chapter examines classifiers and modifiers. We first turn to a description of Sgaw Karen classifiers in §3.4, after which, in §3.5–3.10, six types of modifiers are discussed.

3.4 Classifiers

Classifiers are one of three major ways in which languages categorize nouns. The other two are noun classes in Bantu languages and gender in Indo-European languages (Aikhenvald 2000; Vittrant & Allasonnière-Tang 2021). Classifiers are free forms common in isolating languages, while noun class and gender systems more commonly occur as morphemes in agglutinative languages (Dixon 1986; Grinevald 2000).

Classifiers play an essential role in the grammar of Sgaw Karen. Example (128) contains the sortal classifier *dī* used for animate, non-human referents, (129) the classifier *bēʔ* used for flat referents, and (130) the mensural classifier *p^hī* denoting groups.

- (128) *t^hwīʔ t̄ō-dī ʔi*
 dog one-CLF(ANIM) this
 ‘this dog’
- (129) *j̄ō-s^hē.kā ʔō-θ̄ō t̄ō-bēʔ ʔi*
 1sx-shirt 3-be.new one-CLF(2D) this
 ‘this new shirt of mine’
- (130) *p̄yā t̄ō-p^hī*
 person one-group(CLF)
 ‘one group of people’

The constituent order is noun-numeral-classifier, following the typical Tibeto-Burman pattern (Dryer 2008). The numeral and classifier are inseparable, forming a classifier phrase, but the noun and the classifier phrase can be separated by modifiers. Since classifiers always follow a numeral in Sgaw Karen, they can be termed numeral classifiers (Croft 1994; Aikhenvald 2000; Grinevald 2000).

Several scholars (e.g. Croft 1994) have noted that the term *classifier* is commonly used to refer to two semantically distinct types of morphemes due to their syntactic similarity across languages. Since Lyons (1977: 463–466), these have often been divided into SORTAL and MENSURAL CLASSIFIERS. Sortal classifiers group count nouns together based on some intrinsic property, such as shape or animacy (Vittrant & Allasonnière-Tang 2021: 738; Gil 2013). In contrast, mensural classifiers are units of quantity used with both count and mass nouns and thus lack a classificatory function.

Based on semantic aspects, this thesis distinguishes two types of mensural classifiers: measurement and arrangement classifiers, leading to a three-way categorization into sortal, measurement, and arrangement classifiers. The arrangement type, distinguished by Allan (1977), contains classifiers that identify referents in a “non-inherent configuration”. As explained in more detail in §3.4.2, they form a continuum with measurement classifiers with primarily arrangement-based classifiers on one end and primarily measurement-based classifiers on the other. Measurement and arrangement classifiers co-occur with both count and mass nouns, while sortal classifiers are used only with count nouns, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Types of classifiers and nouns

CLF type	Noun type(s)	Example
sortal	count	<i>pɣà tɔɣà</i> ‘a person’
measurement	mass	<i>pɣà tɔp^hi</i> ‘a group of people’
	(count >) mass	<i>mè tɔmɔ</i> ‘a mouthful of rice’
arrangement	mass	<i>s^hɔ.ná^ʔ tɔlɔ^ʔ</i> ‘a piece of chicken’
	(count >) mass	<i>li^ʔ tɔpú^ʔ</i> ‘a pile of books’

In the corpus compiled for this thesis, 163 different morphemes occur in the classifier position in the NP, but only approximately ten of them are commonly used sortal classifiers (see Table 13). The remainder consists of mensural classifiers and nouns serving as AUTOCLASSIFIERS (from Matisoff 1973, who coined the term *auto-classifier*). In her previous study on Sgaw Karen classifiers, Ratanakul (1998) lists 87 different classifiers (excluding autotransformers), categorizing them into three groups: unit classifiers (20 morphemes), which only occur in classifier position, noun-derived classifiers (39 morphemes), defined as “common nouns which are used in the position of classifiers”, and measurement classifiers (28 morphemes). Following the functional-semantic classification into sortal and mensural classifiers, the first two categories contain both sortal and mensural classifiers, while the last group contains only mensural classifiers.

As noted in §3.1, bare nouns are non-referential, functioning instead as labels of classes of referents. In contrast, classifiers refer to a specific member, or unit, of a class of referents. They are thus referential, expressing either indefinite or definite reference, and cannot be interpreted as expressing a generic meaning. Note, however, that bare nouns referring to contextually given referents can indicate definite reference. Compare the use of the bare noun *li^ʔ* ‘book’ used generically in (131) with the use of the referential phrase *li^ʔ tɔbê^ʔ* in (132).

- (131) *jə-p^há^ʔ* *li^ʔ* *wi* *li*
 1s-read book finish NS
 ‘I have finished studying’ [HUR]

- (132) *jə-p^hā^ʔ li^ʔ tə-bê^ʔ ʔi wi lī*
 1s-read **book one-CLF(2D)** this finish NS
 ‘I have finished reading this book.’ [HUR]

Classifier phrases can also express contrastive focus. Example (133) contains the phrase *ʔəwē təkù^ʔ* ‘that one’, referring to *nī^ʔ* ‘sarong, longyi’ (see §11.2 for further details).

- (133) *nī^ʔ tə-kù^ʔ ʔi ʔə-pyè pyè.θō^ʔ*
 sarong one-part(CLF) this 3x-price be.equal
dō^ʔ ʔəwē tə-kù^ʔ nē^ʔ
 with **3 one-part** that
 ‘This sarong is the same price as that one.’ (Ballard 1973b: 227)

Etymologically, all Sgaw Karen sortal and most mensural classifiers likely originate from nouns. However, not all are etymologically traceable. A large group of classifiers, aut classifiers (Matisoff 1973), also known as “repeaters” (Hla Pe 1965), serve double roles as main nouns (mainly occurring in compounds) and classifiers. An example is *θē^ʔ-dē tə-dē* [tree-branch one-branch] ‘a tree branch’, where *dē* ‘branch’ is simultaneously part of the main noun and a classifier. Some classifiers (Ratanakul 1998 mentions 20) have lost their function as independent nouns.

As noted in §3.1, classifiers can also emphasize nominals with unique reference, such as possessed nouns, proper nouns, and pronouns, as in (134).

- (134) *nē tə-yà nə-ʔē^ʔ.dō^ʔ tē dī^ʔ.lē^ʔ*
 2se **one-CLF(HUM)** 2s-want say/tell how
 ‘How do *you* want comment (on this)?’ (Chiang Mai)

Lastly, a group of classifiers only occurs in fixed classifier phrases of the type *tə*-CLF, containing the numeral *tə*- ‘one’. These include the focus particle *tə-k^h5* [one-side] ‘for (someone’s) part’ (see §11.2), the adverbial particles *tə-sī* [one-time] ‘as soon as’, *tə-bl5* [one-time] ‘as soon as’, and *tə-sē^ʔ* [one-bit] ‘a bit’ (see §7.1), and the collectivizer *təp^hā^ʔ* (see §3.4.3). Next, sortal and mensural classifiers are examined in §3.4.1 and §3.4.2, respectively.

3.4.1 Sortal classifiers

Sortal classifiers, as previously mentioned, classify count nouns based on a shared intrinsic characteristic, most commonly the animacy or shape, of the classified referent. Example (135) illustrates the use of the animacy-based classifier *yà* and (136)–(138) demonstrates three shape-based classifiers.

- (135) $\theta\bar{f}^2-p^h\bar{o}$ $lw\bar{i}$ $y\bar{a}$
 army-child four CLF(HUM)
 ‘four soldiers’
- (136) $m\bar{i}$ $\rho\bar{a}-j\bar{e}$ $k^h w\bar{i}$ $b\bar{o}$
 sun 3x-ray nine CLF(1D)
 ‘nine sun rays (on the tympanum of a bronze drum)’ (Karen drum)
- (137) $l\bar{i}^?$ $k^h\bar{t}$ $b\bar{e}^?$
 book two CLF(2D)
 ‘two books’
- (138) $\rho\bar{a}-m\bar{e}^2.k^h l\bar{i}$ $b\bar{o}$ $k^h\bar{t}$ $p^h l\bar{a}^?$
 3x-eye be.yellow two CLF(3D)
 ‘its two yellow eyes’ (Saw Kay)

Most Sgaw Karen count nouns are associated with one sortal classifier, but some are classified according to different inherent properties. In (137), for example, $l\bar{i}^?$ ‘book, writing’ takes the shape-based classifier $b\bar{e}^?$ (the classifier for flat things) but can additionally take the (less common) arrangement-based classifier $k\bar{a}t\bar{r}\bar{u}$ ‘bundle’. With $k^h\bar{a}$, the classifier for abstract concepts, $l\bar{i}^?$ refers to pieces of writing or scripts, as in $l\bar{i}^? t\bar{a}-k^h\bar{a}$ [writing one-CLF] ‘a script’. Conversely, the classifier-to-noun ratio varies for different classifiers. Some sortal classifiers like $b\bar{o}$, the classifier for long objects, are used with a wide range of nouns, while others like $p^h\bar{o}^?$, a classifier for flowers, are highly restricted in their usage.

Allan (1977: 297–306) identifies seven features commonly occurring in classifier languages as bases for classification: material (animate, inanimate, abstract or verbal nouns), shape, consistency, size, location, arrangement, and quanta. The present classification of Sgaw Karen sortal classifiers distinguishes six categories, demonstrated in Table 13.

Table 13 The most common sortal classifiers

Category	Classifier	Referent type
Animacy	$y\bar{a}$	humans
	$d\bar{i}$	animals, animate entities
Shape	$b\bar{o}$	long things
	$b\bar{e}^?$	flat things
	$p^h l\bar{a}^?$	round things
Abstract	$k^h\bar{a}$	items
	$m\bar{i}$, $k\bar{a}l\bar{i}^?$, $mj\bar{o}$	kinds of things
Location	$p\bar{u}$, $l\bar{o}$, $t\bar{o}$, $l\bar{o}^?$	places
Other	$k^h\bar{o}^?$, $s^h\bar{o}$	vehicles, machines
	$p\bar{a}$	one of a pair

Next, the sortal classifiers will be described in turn.

3.4.1.1 Animacy-based classifiers

Sgaw Karen noun classification makes a distinction between human and non-human referents. The classifier *ɣà* is used for words denoting people or human-like referents. Unlike languages such as Burmese and Thai, which have different human classifiers based on social rank, Sgaw Karen uses *ɣà* for most types of people, including children, teachers, and kings. Besides humans, *ɣà* includes human-like referents such as angels (*kəlūʔ təɣà* ‘an angel’).

Another animacy-based classifier is *dī*, used for animate, non-human referents. The most common referents in this category are animals of different sizes, such as elephants, tigers, monkeys, water buffaloes, dogs, and rats. Apart from animate beings, *dī* is also the classifier for demons, dolls, Buddha images, Karen drums (*klōʔ*), and Karen baskets (*kī*). The connection between animals, supernatural beings, and non-animate referents classified by *dī* could have its roots in the traditional Karen animist belief system, where these referents may have been considered entities possessing a spiritual essence. Some animals, such as birds, fish, and reptiles, are classified with the shape-based classifiers *bēʔ* (flat things) and *bō* (long things).

Ratanakul (1998: 103) notes that *dī* is also used for “ordained persons” such as monks, and her dictionary includes the phrase *θ̄.5.kʰā tədī* [monk one-CLF(ANIM)] ‘a monk’ (Ratanakul 1986: 646). The only classifiers for *θ̄.5.kʰā* found in the data used for this thesis, however, were the human classifier *ɣà* and *pā* (probably borrowed from Burmese *pà*).²⁸

Table 14 provides an overview of the two animacy-based classifiers.

Table 14 Animacy-based classifiers

Classifier	Example referents
<i>ɣà</i>	(people:) <i>θəráʔ</i> ‘teacher’, <i>pòʔ.kʰwā</i> ‘man’, <i>pʰō.θáʔ</i> ‘child’, <i>sə.pà</i> ‘king’
<i>dī</i>	(animals:) <i>tʰwīʔ</i> ‘dog’, <i>kəsʰ</i> ‘elephant’, <i>pənā</i> ‘water buffalo’, <i>jī</i> ‘rat’ (other:) <i>tā.nā</i> ‘wizard, nat, demon’, <i>tā.ɣə.pʰō</i> ‘doll’, <i>klōʔ</i> ‘bronze drum’

3.4.1.2 Shape-based classifiers

The shape-based classifiers *bō*, *bēʔ*, and *pʰlāʔ* are among the most frequent classifiers in Sgaw Karen. The first, *bō*, classifies long (saliently one-dimensional), *bēʔ* classifies flat (saliently two-dimensional), and *pʰlāʔ* classifies round (saliently three-dimensional) objects.

First, *bō* derives from a noun meaning ‘stalk, stem’, occurring as a noun in compounds such as *bī-bō* [paddy-stalk] ‘paddy stalk’ and *wáʔ-bō* [bamboo-stalk] ‘bamboo stem’. By

²⁸ As for the word *θ̄.5.kʰā* ‘monk’ (ultimately from Sanskrit *saṅgha*), the Sgaw Karen Thesaurus states that ‘*θ̄.5.kʰā* is what the Pwo call Buddhist monks, and the Sgaw call them *sə.θ̄.5*’ (Sau Kau-Too 1850: 257; my trans.). The word *sə.θ̄.5* ‘monk’, which seems to be the less common of the two, was found only with the classifier *ɣà*.

semantic extension, *bō* also refers to other long, predominantly cylindrical things, as seen in *tək^hwē-bō* [fish(v.)-stalk] ‘fishing rod’, *sā-bō* [lead-stalk] ‘pencil’, and *dī²-bō* [egg/testicle-stalk] ‘penis’. As a classifier, *bō* co-occurs with rigid or flexible, thin or thick referents, such as sticks, poles, snakes, bridges, roads, rivers, strings, and strands of hair. The noun *klē* ‘road’ has the extended, abstract meaning ‘way, method’, as in *klē k^hī bō* [road two CLF(1D)] ‘two roads, two methods’. Trees typically use different classifiers, including *k^hō²* ‘head’, *t^hū²* ‘stem’ or *t^hī²* ‘base, origin’, depending on the region.

The classifier *bē²*, a classifier for flat, saliently two-dimensional things, derives from a noun meaning ‘skin, rind’, as in *θək^wī ʔā-bē²* [banana 3x-skin] ‘banana peel’ and *t^hō²-mī ʔā-bē²* [pig-be.wild 3x-skin] ‘wild boar’s skin’. As a classifier, *bē²* is used for rigid or flexible, predominantly flat entities, such as books, sheets of paper, fields, boats, teeth, clothing, and leaves. Objects with flat functional parts, such as spoons, swords, machetes, and hoes, are also included in this class. Abstract and non-physical nouns commonly classified by *bē²* include geographical terms such as *kō*, or *t^hī.kō*, ‘country’, *kō²* ‘island’, and *kō.sē²* ‘state (administrative unit)’, as well as electronic pictures and texts, such as websites, emails, and news articles. In addition, winged and other saliently flat animals are classified using *bē²*, including turtles, crabs, frogs, and birds.

The most common shape-based classifier is *p^hlā²*, a classifier for round, saliently three-dimensional things. As a noun, *p^hlā²* means ‘ball (of something)’ as in *p^hlā²-t^hū* [ball-kick] ‘football’. As a classifier, *p^hlā²* is used with any ball-shaped object, but also non-round objects like buildings. Cities, villages, and mountains also belong to this group, as well as some abstract concepts such as words and phrases. Another classifier used for three-dimensional things is *lō²* ‘lump’, an arrangement classifier (see §3.4.2.2). The semantically related classifier *tō²* classifies small, round things, including drops of liquid, seeds, beans, and eyeballs. For most of these nouns, *p^hlā²* is also used.

Examples of shape-based classifiers can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15 Shape-based classifiers

Classifier	Features	Example referents
<i>bō</i>	[1D]	(elongated objects) <i>tō</i> ‘bridge’, <i>tʰī.klō</i> ‘river’, <i>pli</i> ‘string’, <i>mē.tū</i> ‘eyebrow’ (animals) <i>γī</i> ‘snake’, <i>ɲāʔ</i> ‘fish’ (abstract/intangible) <i>klē</i> ‘way, method (also: road)’ Note: the classifiers for trees are <i>kʰōʔ</i> , <i>tʰūʔ</i> , and <i>tʰīʔ</i>
<i>bēʔ</i>	[2D]	(flat objects) <i>liʔ</i> ‘book’, <i>θēʔ.lāʔ</i> ‘tree leaf’, <i>nōʔ.tà</i> ‘spoon’, <i>jàʔ</i> ‘blanket’, <i>sʰē.kà</i> ‘shirt’ (animals) <i>sʰō</i> ‘chicken’, <i>tʰōʔ</i> ‘bird’, <i>kwē</i> ‘bee’, <i>sʰwēʔ</i> ‘crab’, <i>kʰlīʔ</i> ‘turtle’ (other) <i>tʰī.kō</i> ‘country’, <i>li</i> ‘vagina’
<i>pʰlāʔ</i>	[3D]	(objects) <i>θəkwi</i> ‘banana’, <i>kʰāʔ</i> ‘chair’, <i>tʰāʔ</i> ‘bag’, <i>sʰō.dīʔ</i> ‘chicken egg’, <i>θəpə</i> ‘pot’, <i>kəsə</i> ‘mountain’ (constructions) <i>wē</i> ‘city’, <i>θəwō</i> ‘village’, <i>tʃō</i> ‘school’, <i>pʰjāʔ</i> ‘pagoda’ (other) <i>tā.kətō</i> ‘word, phrase’, <i>tʰā</i> ‘poem’, <i>tā.θī.kwāʔ</i> ‘question’, <i>liʔ.mēʔ.pʰlāʔ</i> ‘letter, character’
<i>lōʔ</i>	[3D, IRREGULAR SHAPE]	<i>sʰō.dīʔ kʰwēʔ</i> [egg fry] ‘fried egg’, <i>tā.ʔāʔ</i> ‘cloud’, <i>tʰū təlōʔ</i> [gold one-lump] ‘a lump of gold’
<i>tōʔ</i>	[3D, SMALL]	<i>θwīʔ tətōʔ</i> [blood one-CLF] ‘a drop of blood’ <i>mēʔ.kʰlī kʰī tōʔ</i> [eye two CLF] ‘two eyes’

3.4.1.3 Abstract classifiers

The most common classifier for abstract nouns is *kʰā*. One meaning of *kʰā* is ‘step (n.)’, which may be the origin of the classifier *kʰā* used for bamboo traps, but it is unclear whether this word is related to the classifier for abstract things. The most common noun classified with *kʰā* is *tā* ‘thing’. Noun–verb compounds with *tā* as the first component and most countable nouns representing abstract concepts also belong to this group. Additionally, *kʰā* is used for small pieces or chunks. Examples can be seen in (139).

- (139)
- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>tā kʰī kʰā</i> | [thing two CLF] | ‘two things’ |
| <i>tā-tʰīʔ tə-kʰā</i> | [thing-see one-CLF] | ‘a view, an opinion’ |
| <i>tā-hēʔ tə-kʰā</i> | [thing-give one-CLF] | ‘a gift’ |
| <i>lī.lā tə-kʰā</i> | [custom one-CLF] | ‘a habit, custom, tradition’ |
| <i>liʔ tə-kʰā</i> | [writing one-CLF] | ‘a script’ |
| <i>sʰō-ɲāʔ tə-kʰā</i> | [chicken-meat one-CLF] | ‘a piece of chicken’ |

Classifiers for kinds include *mī* ‘name, kind’, *kəlīʔ* ‘ethnicity, kind’, and *mjō* (from Burmese *myō*) ‘kind’. The most generic of the three is *mī*, used as a classifier for *tā* ‘thing’ and kinds of things, as seen in (140).

(140)	<i>kʰôʔ.wīʔ ʔə-kəliʔ</i>	[Covid 3x-kind	‘a new variant of
	<i>ʔə-θ̄5 tə-mì</i>	3-be.new one-CLF]	(coronavirus causing) Covid’
	<i>tâ.yé.k̄5 tə-mì</i>	[problem one-CLF]	‘a problem’
	<i>tâ.ʔ̄5ʔ tə-mì</i>	[food one-CLF]	‘a kind of food, a dish’

The classifiers *kəliʔ* and *mjō* both mean ‘kind, type, variety’ and like *mì* function as classifiers for varieties of things. They are largely interchangeable, and no regional tendencies have been observed, but *kəliʔ* is considerably more common in the data. Examples are shown in (141).

(141)	<i>klôʔ lwī kəliʔ</i>	[language four kind(CLF)]	‘four languages’
	<i>tâ.pʰō.tâ.li tə-kəliʔ</i>	[material one-kind(CLF)]	‘a (kind of) material’
	<i>sʰē.kà tə-mjō</i>	[shirt one-kind(CLF)]	‘a kind of shirt’
	<i>kəsʰ5-mì tə-mjō</i>	[elephant-be.wild one-kind(CLF)]	‘a type of wild elephant’

3.4.1.4 Location classifiers

Four classifiers for locations appear in the data: *pù*, *t̄*, *lôʔ* and *l̄5*. First, *pù* ‘hole’ occurs as an autclassifier for holes, as in *tʰi-pù-pʰō kʰīpù* [water-hole-DIM two CLF] ‘two small wells’, but also as a classifier for places and pieces of land. Similarly, *t̄* ‘section’ is both a location classifier and an autclassifier for sections and grades at school. The two classifiers also co-occur in the quantifier compound *ʔā-pù-ʔā-t̄* [many-CLF-many-CLF] ‘many places’. The word *lôʔ* is more commonly found as the classifier for lumps (see below), but at least in the Kayin–Tak variety, it is also used with *tâ.l̄5* ‘place’. Examples of *pù*, *t̄*, and *lôʔ* are given in (142).

(142)	<i>h̄5ʔ.kəw̄ə tə-pù</i>	[region one-CLF]	‘one region’
	<i>kʰīʔ tə-t̄</i>	[upland.field one-CLF]	‘one upland rice field’
	<i>tâ.l̄5 tə-lôʔ</i>	[place one-lump]	‘one place’

The word *l̄5* ‘field’ occurs in nouns referring to cultivated fields and as a classifier for such fields:

(143)	<i>sīʔ tə-l̄5</i>	[paddy.field one-field(CLF)]	‘a paddy field’
	<i>kʰīʔ tə-l̄5</i>	[upland.rice.field one-field(CLF)]	‘an upland rice field’
	<i>səpīʔ-l̄5 tə-l̄5</i>	[grape-field one-field(CLF)]	‘a vineyard’

3.4.1.5 Other sortal classifiers

Although this description of sortal classifiers cannot be exhaustive, four more deserve to be mentioned. The first two are *pà* (or *kəpà*) ‘side’ and *kʰ5* ‘side’, which refer to sides or one component in a pair. Four examples can be seen in (144).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| (144) | <i>sī k^hī pà</i> | [hand two CLF] | ‘two hands’ |
| | <i>k^hḥ^ḥ p^hī^ḥ tə-pà</i> | [shoe one-CLF] | ‘a shoe’ |
| | <i>k^hḥ^ḥ k^hī k^hḥ</i> | [leg two CLF] | ‘two legs’ |
| | <i>nā ʔə^hwē tək^hḥ</i> | [ear right one-CLF] | ‘the right ear’ |

Another common classifier is *s^hō*, which, according to Wade (1849: 325), is used for “things in pairs, also [for] small fire-arms, carts, ploughs, and suits at law, or things where the whole is made up of several parts adapted to, or corresponding with each other”. Common examples include those in (145).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|-----------------|-------------------|
| (145) | <i>lē^ḥ tə-s^hō</i> | [cart one-CLF] | ‘a cart’ |
| | <i>klō tə-s^hō</i> | [rifle one-CLF] | ‘a rifle’ |
| | <i>kā / lō^ḥ tə-s^hō</i> | [car one-CLF] | ‘a car’ |
| | <i>k^hḥ^ḥ p^hī^ḥ tə-s^hō</i> | [shoe one-CLF] | ‘a pair of shoes’ |

Ballard (1973c: 11) also mentions *xō tə-s^hō* [ladder one-CLF] ‘a ladder’.

The classifier *k^hō^ḥ* ‘head’ is used as a classifier for trees and bushes. It is also largely synonymous with *s^hō*. Ballard (1973c) notes that *s^hō* is common in Northern Thailand, while *k^hō^ḥ* is predominant in Central Thailand and Myanmar. Examples can be seen in (146).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------------|-------------------|
| (146) | <i>təp^ḥḥ^ḥ tə-k^hō^ḥ</i> | [bush one-CLF] | ‘a bush’ |
| | <i>kā tə-k^hō^ḥ</i> | [car one-CLF] | ‘a car’ |
| | <i>k^hḥ^ḥ p^hī^ḥ tə-k^hō^ḥ</i> | [shoe one-CLF] | ‘a pair of shoes’ |

Lastly, autoclassifiers are nouns that function as classifiers for themselves (Aikhenvald 2000: 103–104). Examples from Sgaw Karen include *kō tə-kō* [country one-country] (also, more commonly, *kō tə-bē^ḥ* [country one-CLF(2D)]) ‘a country’, *wē tə-wē* [city one-city] (more commonly, *wē tə-p^hlā^ḥ* [city one-CLF(3D)]) ‘a city’, and *kwī tə-kwī* [pool one-pool] ‘a (water)pool’.

3.4.2 Mensural classifiers

Mensural classifiers, or measure words, typically refer to units of measurement such as *bottle* in *a bottle of water* and occur in most languages worldwide. Their primary function is to specify a referent’s quantity, arrangement, or both. Gil (2013) notes that mensural classifiers “provide nouns of low countability with a unit of measure by means of which they may then be counted”. As noted above, mensural classifiers occur in the same syntactic slot as sortal classifiers but lack a classificatory function, so they are sometimes not considered classifiers proper.

More specifically, mensural classifiers refer to all classifiers that do not classify count nouns based on some intrinsic feature of the classified referent. Examples of the two types of mensural classifiers, arrangement and measurement classifiers (see Table 12), can be seen in (147).

(147)	<i>bī θā nàʔ</i>	[rice three basket]	‘three <i>nàʔ</i> baskets of rice’
	<i>θākwī tā-θīʔ</i>	[banana one-comb]	‘a bunch of bananas’
	<i>nāʔ-kāʔ kʰī kâʔ</i>	[fish-roast two skewer]	‘two skewers of roasted fish’
	<i>tâ.kātò tā-klò</i>	[phrase one-line]	‘a sentence, line of text’

The four examples in (147) illustrate the fact that mensural classifiers are on a continuum with primarily measurement-based classifiers like *nàʔ* ‘basket(ful)’ on one end and primarily arrangement-based (configurational) classifiers like *klò* ‘line’ on the other end. First, the measurement classifier *nàʔ* ‘basket’ specifies the amount of a mass noun, *bī* ‘unhusked rice’. The arrangement classifier *klò* specifies how a referent is arranged, whereas the quantity can only be inferred. Most mensural classifiers are in the middle of the scale, like *θīʔ* ‘comb, bunch’ and *kâʔ* ‘skewer’, providing information about both arrangement and quantity.

Next, the two subtypes of mensural classifiers are described in §3.4.2.1 and §3.4.2.2.

3.4.2.1 Measurement classifiers

Most mensural classifiers are measurement classifiers. Table 16 lists some of the most common ones by type.

Table 16 Sgaw Karen measurement classifiers

Type	Classifier examples and glosses
Container	<i>kʰwāʔ</i> ‘cupful’ <i>nàʔ</i> ‘basketful’
Numeric	<i>sʰī</i> ‘ten’ <i>pō</i> ‘hundred’
Temporal	<i>nīʔ</i> ‘year’ <i>nāʔ.rīʔ</i> ‘clock, hour’
Instances	<i>blō</i> ‘time’, <i>wō</i> ‘round’ <i>sī</i> ‘time’, <i>tʰīʔ</i> ‘instance’
Groups	<i>pʰī</i> ‘group, flock’ <i>dūʔ</i> ‘clan, family’
Pairs	<i>sūʔ</i> ‘pair, set’ <i>kʰōʔ</i> ‘pair’, <i>sʰō</i> ‘pair (N.Th.)’
Length	<i>plā</i> ‘cubit’
Weight	<i>kī.lò</i> ‘kilogram’
Monetary	<i>bāʔ</i> ‘baht’, <i>tāʔ</i> ‘kyat’ <i>dō.lā</i> ‘dollar’

An open class of measurement classifiers consists of names for containers, which function as both nouns and classifiers similar to words like *bottle* and *cup* in English. A related group includes classifiers associated with measures formed by parts of the human body. Examples are provided in (148).

- (148) *lâʔ.pʰāʔ.tʰī tə-kʰwāʔ* [tea one-cup] ‘a cup of tea’
bī kʰī sʰəʔ [paddy two mortar] ‘two mortars of paddy’
mè tə-m̄ [rice one-mouthful] ‘a mouthful of rice’
kəpiʔ tə-syɔ [mud one-handful] ‘a handful of mud’

A few verb-derived measurement classifiers denote amounts related to the action represented by the verb; for example, *syɔ* ‘grab, clutch’ as a classifier means ‘unit corresponding to a handful’ and *wī* ‘carry (on the back)’ has the classifier meaning ‘load carried on the back’.

Another subtype is group classifiers, used when referring to groups of entities. The most common group classifiers are *pʰī*, *dūʔ*, *kəɾə*, and *kəɾû*. The classifier *pʰī* ‘group, flock’ is used with animals and people. Examples can be seen in (149).

- (149) *tʰəʔ kʰī pʰī* [pig two CLF] ‘two flocks of pigs’
pɣà tə-pʰī [person one-CLF] ‘a group of people’
pā.tīʔ kʰī pʰī [party two CLF] ‘two (political) parties’
θīʔ kʰī pʰī [army two CLF] ‘two armies’

The morpheme *dūʔ*, occurring in words like *dūʔ.tʰə* ‘family’ and *kəliʔ.dūʔ* ‘tribe’, is related to families and used as a classifier for families, but also herds of animals: *klô tə-dūʔ* [cow one-CLF] ‘a herd of cows’. The words *kəɾə* and *kəɾû*, both meaning ‘group’, are used as classifiers but more commonly occur as nouns in the data.

More precise quantities, absolute or relative, are expressed by numeric classifiers, classifiers denoting standard measures, classifiers for pairs of things, and temporal classifiers. The classifier *wàʔ* ‘half’, as in *nì tə-wàʔ* [day one-half] ‘half a day’, also belongs to this group. First, numeric classifiers indicate powers of ten. In contrast to the numerals from one to nine, powers of ten are expressed by classifiers like *sʰī* ‘unit of ten’. Table 17 lists the numeric classifiers occurring in the data.

Table 17 Sgaw Karen numeric classifiers

Classifier	Meaning
<i>sʰī</i>	‘ten’
<i>kəjà / pô</i>	‘hundred’
<i>kətʰə / m̄</i>	‘thousand’
<i>kəlāʔ / θə</i>	‘ten thousand’
<i>kəlô</i>	‘hundred thousand’
<i>kəkwe</i>	‘million’

The variants *pô*, *m̄*, and *θə*, used with money, have been attested in Northern Thailand and the Kayin–Tak border area but are possibly less widely used than their sesquisyllabic counterparts in other regions. An example of *m̄* ‘thousand’ is given in (150).

- (150) *hê²-lô* *jà lā* *nə-sē* ***tə-mā*** *θē* *hā*
 give-borrow 1si GNR.P 2sx-money **one-thousand** ABIL PQ
 ‘Can you lend me a thousand [baht]?’ [KWH]

The use of numeric classifiers is exemplified in (151) and (152). For round numbers, the sortal classifier indicating units of the counted referent forms a possessive NP with the head noun, which is followed by the numeric classifier phrase.

- (151) *təkwī.θā²* *ʔə-pʰlā²* ***tə-kəjā***
 banana 3x-CLF(3D) **one-hundred**
 ‘a hundred bananas’ (lit., ‘one group of a hundred units of banana’)

- (152) *pɣà* *ʔə-ɣà* *xō²* ***kətʰō***
 person 3x-CLF(HUM) eight **thousand**
 ‘eight thousand people’

Example (153) demonstrates the stacking of classifier phrases (*nwī sʰī* and *jê nī²*) in the case of non-round numbers.

- (153) *jə-pʰī* *ʔə-nī²* *ʔô²*
 1sx-GF 3x-year EXIST
nwī ***sʰī*** ***jê*** ***nī²*** *lī*
seven **ten** **five** **year** NS
 ‘My grandfather is 75 years old.’ (Ballard 1973b: 154)

Mensural classifiers denoting standard units of measurement include monetary units such as *bā²* ‘baht’, *tjā²* ‘kyat’, and *dō.lā* ‘dollar’, as well as length and weight units such as *kī.lò* ‘kilogram’ and *kī.lò.mī.tʰō²* ‘kilometre’. As noted by Ratanakul (1998: 108), metric units have become more widespread at the expense of native Karen measures such as *plā* ‘cubit’ and *tʰā* ‘handspan’.

Temporal classifiers, which delimit sections of time, include words such as *nī²* ‘year’, *lā* ‘month, moon’, *nwī* ‘week, seven’, *nī* ‘day, sun’, *θō* ‘day’, and *nā².rī²* ‘hour, clock’. Temporal classifiers often do not require a head noun, as in the common phrase *təni ʔi* ‘today (lit., this day-long unit)’. Another example can be seen in (154).

- (154) *ʔəwē.θē²* *lē* *ji²=wē* ***tə-nā².rī²*** *xā².xā²*
 3.PL go last.long=COR **one-hour** approximately
 ‘They went for about an hour.’ (Saw Kay)

A subgroup of temporal classifiers represents instances in time used to express how many times an event takes place. Three largely synonymous classifiers are common: *blō*, *wō*, and *sī*. Of these, *blō* is the most frequent one in the data. The classifier *wō* derives from a verb meaning ‘wind around (e.g. a cord around a bundle)’ and is used to count rounds or turns around something in a literal or abstract sense. Compare (155) and (156).

- (155) *lè.tərīʔ hīʔ tə-bl̩ / tə-w̩*
 go.around house **one-time / one-round**
 ‘Go around the house once.’ [HUR]
- (156) *pʰāʔ t̩.kətò ʔi θ̩ bl̩ / θ̩ w̩ / θ̩ s̩*
 read phrase this **three time three round three time**
 ‘Read these phrases three times.’ [HUR]

The classifier *s̩* mostly occurs in the fixed phrase *təs̩* ‘once, as soon as’. Moments or instances, but also dreams, sentences, utterances, and topics, are counted with *tʰiʔ*:

- (157) *t̩.kətò tətʰiʔ* [phrase one:CLF] ‘a phrase’
t̩.θ̩.kw̩ tətʰiʔ [question one:CLF] ‘a question’
kūʔ tətʰiʔ [cough one:CLF] ‘cough once’

Finally, classifiers for pairs that have been attested are *sūʔ*, *sʰō* (used chiefly in Northern Thailand), and *kʰōʔ* (used more widely). These classifiers appear to be most commonly used with objects occurring in sets of two. They are not, for example, used for pairs of human beings. Examples are shown in (158) and (159).

- (158) *kəsʰm̩ tə-sūʔ*
 elephant-tooth **one-pair**
 ‘a pair of elephant tusks’
- (159) *kʰōʔ.pʰiʔ tə-kʰōʔ / tə-sʰō*
 shoe **one-pair**
 ‘a pair of shoes’

3.4.2.2 Arrangement classifiers

Arrangement classifiers are a subtype of mensural classifiers that specify the amount and temporal configuration of the counted referent. A typical example is *lōʔ* (possibly from Burmese *loun*), used with lump-like things, mostly food, such as pieces of meat, fried eggs (*pʰl̩* is the classifier for boiled eggs, as Ratanakul 1998 also notes), or pieces of cake, but also clouds and lumps of stone. Other primarily feature-based mensural classifiers belonging to the arrangement category include *tʰū* ‘roll’, *kədōʔ* ‘bundle’, *kʰiʔ* ‘cluster’, *kāʔ* ‘skewer’, *lōʔ* ‘lump’, and *bōʔ* ‘wrap’, *klō* ‘row, classifier for rows’, and *pūʔ* ‘heap’. Three examples are shown in (160).

- (160) *t̩.ʔəʔ tə-lōʔ* [cloud one-lump] ‘a cloud’
t̩.sʰy̩ʔ tə-pūʔ [laundry one-pile] ‘a pile of laundry’
θəkwi̩.θāʔ tə-kədōʔ [banana one-bundle] ‘a bunch of bananas’
kəpiʔ tə-pē [mud one-puddle/stain] ‘a puddle/stain of mud’

3.4.3 Pluralizers and collectivizers

As established above, Sgaw Karen bare nouns are neutral with respect to number. Thus, a bare noun such as *tʰwɪʔ* ‘dog’ can have either singular or plural reference depending on the context. Two morphemes exist, however, that are often used to indicate plural reference. The first is *θêʔ*, which occurs exclusively with human referents in the data:

(161) *pʰõ.θáʔ θêʔ hã*
 child PL VOC
 ‘Children!’

(162) *kəŋõ-pʰõ kʰẽ.làʔ θêʔ θ̄ hã*
 Karen-child all PL 2p VOC
 ‘All (you) Karen!’

(163) *pəlē θêʔ x̄-θêʔ.nā t̄-ñìʔ.l̄-h̄-t̄*
 police PL search-know thing_{NMLZ}-enter-steal-thing
l̄ h̄ʔ pù l̄
 GNR.P house inside FACT.FP
 ‘The police are investigating a burglary (lit., [an act of] going in to steal things in a house).’ [LTP.D]

The pluralizer (or plural marker) *θêʔ* also occurs in the pronouns *pəwẽ.θêʔ* ‘we’, *θ̄.wẽ.θêʔ* ‘you (pl.)’, and *ʔəwẽ.θêʔ* ‘they’, where it combines with the emphatic pronouns *pəwẽ* ‘we’, *θ̄.wẽ* ‘you (pl.)’, and *ʔəwẽ* ‘he, she, it’.

A more frequent marker indicating plural reference is the collectivizer *təpʰáʔ*, a fossilized classifier phrase consisting of the numeral prefix *tə-* ‘one’ and a now-defective classifier *pʰáʔ*. According to Wade (1849: 411), *pʰáʔ* indicates ‘combination, collection, association’. Examples are shown in (164) and (165). In (165), an elicited sentence, *təpʰáʔ* is optional but emphasizes reference to more than one plant.

(164) *pʰõ.θáʔ təpʰáʔ nêʔ l̄.dõ mè*
 child COLL FP starve rice
 ‘The children are starving.’ [HUR]

(165) *ʔəwẽ lū θêʔ (təpʰáʔ) ʔə-tʰ̄ m̄.kàʔ l̄*
 3 pour tree COLL 3x-water just.now FACT.FP
 ‘He just watered the plants.’ [LTP.P]

The collectivizer *təpʰáʔ* also co-occurs with interrogative pronouns:

(166) *t̄ ʔì t̄ mənì təpʰáʔ l̄êʔ*
 thing this thing what COLL CQ
 ‘What are these things?’ (Saw Kay)

- (167) *jə-kə-bâʔ kwē.mìʔ mətəyà təpʰâʔ lēʔ*
 1s-IRR-must invite who COLL CQ
 ‘Whom (pl.) should I invite?’ (Vlog)

Like any classifier phrase, *təpʰâʔ* appears to be mostly referential, indicating indefinite or definite reference. A phrase such as *tʰwīʔ təpʰâʔ* [dog COLL] can thus mean ‘a group of dogs’, ‘the (group of) dogs’, but not ‘dogs’ in a generic sense. An example of indefinite reference is seen in (168). With mass nouns, the meaning of N *təpʰâʔ* is ‘a collection of N’, as in example (169).

- (168) *pə-mē lē sʰū wē-pù nēʔ*
 1p-be.trueCOND go ALL.P city-inside thatFRAME
pə-kə-tʰīʔ-bâʔ hīʔ təpʰâʔ dōʔ-dōʔ-mī~mī lō
 1p-IRR-see-hit house COLL be.big(RDP)-be.big(RDP) FACT.FP
 ‘If we go to the city, we will see many large and spacious houses.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 86)

- (169) *bōʔ-kè mè ʔōʔ.blēʔ təpʰâʔ ʔi*
 wrap-RETURN rice be.left.over COLL this
 ‘Wrap up this left-over rice.’ (Ballard 1973c: 95)

The use of *təpʰâʔ* with nouns denoting generic plural reference is rare in the data. In (170), for example, one speaker prefers not to use *təpʰâʔ* after the nouns *θ̄.5.kʰā* ‘monk’ and *pʰī.wā* ‘nun’.

- (170) *lē.kē tā-bā θənàʔ.kē ʔə-θ̄.5.kʰā*
 L. thing-worship likewise 3x-monk
d̄ʔ pʰī-wā (?təpʰâʔ) tə-ʔōʔ bāʔ
 and GM-be.white COLL NEG-EXIST NEG.FP
 ‘The Leke religion also does not have monks and nuns.’ (Karen religions)

A combination of *θēʔ* and *təpʰâʔ* (*θēʔ.təpʰâʔ*) also occurs, apparently synonymous with *təpʰâʔ* but particularly common in the spoken language. Ballard (1973a: 222) notes that “[*θēʔ.təpʰâʔ*] is used in north Thailand more often than [*təpʰâʔ*]”. Both occur with nouns representing animate as well as inanimate referents. An example can be seen in (171).

- (171) *ʔəwē.θēʔ θēʔ.təpʰâʔ mē pɣà*
 3.PL PL.COLL be.trueCOP person
l̄ə ʔə-tā.lē.kʰ.5.pʰlō ʔā-nē pɣà
 REL 3x-experience be.many-CMPR 1pi
 ‘they are people who have more experience than us’ (Karen proverbs: 10)

The position of (*θēʔ*) *təpʰâʔ* within the NP is the same as that of regular classifiers, after modifiers and before demonstratives. In (172), a locative phrase intervenes between the

main noun $p\gamma\grave{a}.p^{h\bar{o}}.\theta\hat{a}^?$ and $t\grave{a}p^{h\hat{a}}^?$ while in (173), $t\grave{a}p^{h\hat{a}}^?$ is preceded by two modifiers, as indicated by square brackets.

(172) $p\gamma\grave{a}.p^{h\bar{o}}.\theta\hat{a}^?$ $l\bar{\alpha}$ $w\acute{e}$ $p^{h\bar{a}}-d\acute{o}^?$ $p\grave{u}$ $t\grave{a}p^{h\hat{a}}^?$
 person-child GNR.P city INTS-be.big inside COLL
 ‘Children in large cities’ (Ballard 1973c: 179)

(173) $p\gamma\grave{a}.p\acute{o}^?.m\acute{i}^?$ [$l\bar{\alpha}$ $\gamma\acute{a}-t^{h\bar{a}}$ $t\acute{a}$
 person-female REL 3-weave thing
 [$l\bar{\alpha}$ $k\acute{a}r\acute{u}-p\grave{u}$ $\gamma\acute{i}$]] $t\grave{a}p^{h\hat{a}}^?$
 GNR.P group-inside this COLL
 ‘the women in this weaving group (lit., who weave things in this group)’
 (News report)

Several other collectivizers exist in the spoken language and different varieties. Ballard (1973b: 238), for example, mentions that the expressions $t\grave{a}kl\bar{\alpha}^?$, $t\grave{a}\gamma\bar{u}$, $t\grave{a}r\bar{\alpha}$, and $t\acute{s}^{h\gamma}\bar{\alpha}$ are colloquial variants of $t\grave{a}p^{h\hat{a}}^?$.

3.4.4 Reduplication and joined classifiers

Classifiers can be reduplicated or joined in different ways. This section describes three constructions containing reduplicated or joined classifiers: indefinite, distributive, and successive classifier constructions.

First, ‘some’ or ‘any’ are expressed using the indefinite classifier construction $t\grave{a}$ -CLF~CLF, where $t\grave{a}$ - ‘one’ is prefixed to a reduplicated classifier. Examples (174) contains the reduplicated classifier phrase $t\grave{a}-b\acute{e}^?-b\acute{e}^?$ ‘some/any flat unit’, quantifying the head noun $l\acute{i}^?$ ‘book’; (175) illustrates the use of the reduplicated classifier phrase $t\grave{a}-t\grave{a}\sim t\grave{a}$ ‘somewhere, anywhere’, quantifying $t\acute{a}.l\acute{\alpha}$.

(174) $\gamma\acute{a}w\bar{e}$ $p^{h\bar{a}}^?$ $w\acute{i}$ $l\bar{i}$ $l\acute{i}^?$
 3 read finish NS book
 $t\grave{a}p^{h\hat{a}}^?$ $\gamma\acute{i}$ $\gamma\acute{a}-kl\bar{\alpha}$ $t\grave{a}-b\acute{e}^?-b\acute{e}^?$ $h\bar{\alpha}$
 COLL this 3X-MIDST **one-CLF(2D)~CLF(2D)** PQ
 ‘Has he read any of these books already?’ [LTP]

(175) $m\bar{\alpha}$ $\gamma\acute{a}-l\acute{e}$ $l\bar{\alpha}$ $t\acute{a}.l\acute{\alpha}$ $t\grave{a}-t\grave{a}\sim t\grave{a}$
 order 3-go GNR.P place **one-section(RDP)**
 ‘tell him to go somewhere’ (Ballard 1973a: 63)

The distributive classifier construction $t\grave{a}$ -CLF- $t\grave{a}$ -CLF has the meaning ‘each one’. Again, the same classifier is reduplicated, but $t\grave{a}$ - precedes both classifiers, as in (176) and (177).

- (176) *pòʔ.míʔ kōʔ tǎyà~tǎyà*
 woman call **one:CLF(HUM)~one:CLF(HUM)**
 ‘the woman called each person’ [LTP]
- (177) *ʔǎ-kwē ʔóʔ nwī bō dōʔ ʔǎ-kwē*
 3x-stripe EXIST seven CLF(1D) and 3x-stripe
tǎbō~tǎbō ʔǎ-lê nēʔ ʔóʔ tǎ-sī.mī.dōʔ lō
one:CLF(1D)~one:CLF(1D) 3x-width that_{TOP} EXIST one-inch FP
 ‘It [=a Karen tunic] has seven stripes, and each stripe is one inch wide.’
 (Karen clothes)

A distributive meaning is also expressed by inserting the connective *dōʔ* ‘and’ between the classifier phrases, as seen in (178).

- (178) *kǎnō θǎwō tǎpʰáʔ tǎ-pʰlǎʔ dōʔ*
 Karen village COLL **one-CLF(3D)** **and**
tǎ-pʰlǎʔ ʔóʔ-sǎ.sǎ jì-lòʔ ʔǎ-θāʔ dōʔ.māʔ
one-CLF(3D) EXIST-be.separate be.distant-RECP 3.REFL a.lot
 ‘[in the past] Karen villages were far away from each other
 (lit., one was separate by a far distance from the other)’ (Karen drum)

Another distributive construction consists of two different classifiers occurring in a quadrisyllabic pattern, expressing a certain number of one unit for each number of another unit. The CLF1-CLF2-CLF1-CLF2 pattern in (179) expresses one unit A per one unit B. In a more typical pattern, the classifiers are preceded by numerals, as in (180).

- (179) *pòʔ.kʰwáʔ kʰē.lǎʔ pʰǎʔ-tʰǎʔ xǎʔ yà-bêʔ~yà-bêʔ*
 man all grab-UP machete **CLF(HUM)-CLF(2D)**
 ‘all the men took up one machete each’ (Saw Kay)
- (180) *ʔǎwē.θēʔ bǎʔ mǎ-sē.kōʔ tǎ*
 3.PL must do-also thing
ʔǎ-syà-kǎtǎ tǎ-nwī xī θō
 3-be.few-SUPL **one-week** **six** **day**
 ‘they also had to work at least six days a week’ (News broadcast)

In successive classifier constructions, one of the connectives *wì* ‘finish’ or *bǎʔ* ‘hit’ occurs between two identical classifiers, as in (181) and (182). The construction pattern is *tǎ-CLF bǎʔ tǎ-CLF* or *tǎ-CLF wì tǎ-CLF*, meaning is ‘one after the other’.

- (181) *pǎ-lê lǎ hīʔ tǎ-pʰlǎʔ bǎʔ tǎ-pʰlǎʔ*
 1p-go GNR.P house **one-CLF(3D)** **CONN** **one-CLF(3D)**
 ‘we went from house to house’ (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)

- (182) *pəjə* *sə.pà* *pə-kəd5ʔ* *tá*
 Myanmar king rule-again thing
tə-yà *wì* *tə-yà*
one-CLF(HUM) **finish** **one-CLF(HUM)**
 ‘Burmese kings ruled again one after the other’ (Karen nationalism)

3.5 *ṛəyà* ‘other’, ‘another’

The NP modifier *ṛəyà*, with the elaborate variant *ṛəyì.ṛəyà*, has the two interrelated meanings ‘other’ and ‘another’. The word class of *ṛəyà* is not easily determined, and its etymology is uncertain. Typically, *ṛəyà* occurs between the head noun and a classifier phrase, as shown in (183). The classifier phrase can be omitted, as in (184). If the head noun is known from the context, it is often not overtly expressed, as in (185). In these examples, *ṛəyà* expresses ‘other’ in the sense ‘a different one’.

- (183) *jə-kə-lè* *hāʔ* *sʰū* *wé* *ṛəyà* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *lò*
 1s-IRR-go walk ALL.P city **other** one-CLF(3D) FACT.FP
 ‘I will travel to another city.’ [LTP]

- (184) *ṛəwē* *tē-bāʔ* *θəw5-pʰō* *ṛə-yì-ṛə-yà* *təpʰāʔ*
 3 say/tell-hit village-child **3-other(CC1)-3-other(CC2)** COLL
 ‘So she tells the other villagers [that she will be leaving to see the doctor]’ [LTP]

- (185) *pɣà.kən5* *ṛəʔ* *jé* *yà* *d5ʔ* *ṛəyà* *təpʰāʔ*
 Karen EXIST five CLF(HUM) and **other** COLL
mé *pɣà.pəjə* *kə.là.θū* *təruʔ* *d5ʔ* *tələ* *lò*
 be.true_{cop} Burmese Indian Chinese and Mon FACT.FP
 ‘There are five (thousand) Karens and the others are Burmese, Indians, Chinese, and Talings.’ (Jones 1961: 193–194)

The use of *ṛəyà* expressing ‘another, an additional one’ occurs sporadically in the data, mainly in texts translated from English, but is generally rare. In Kayin–Tak, the expression *ṛəθ5* ‘be new’ is used, and sometimes the verbal modifier *ṛə.tʰ5ʔ* ‘increase (intr.)’ is also added, as illustrated in (186). Compare this with (187).

- (186) *hèʔ-ṛə.tʰ5ʔ* *jà* *ṛəθ5* *kʰī* *kō*
 give-increase(intr.) 1si **be.new** two bottle
 ‘Give me two more bottles.’ [HUR]

- (187) *hèʔ* *jà* *ṛəyà* *kʰī* *kō*
 give 1si **other** two bottle
 ‘Give me two different bottles.’ [HUR]

Additive meaning is also expressed by the continuative marker *dīʔ* ‘still’ (see §8.7.3).

In a few cases, *ʔəyà* is preceded by *lā*, as in (188) and (189). In this case, *lā* may be a relativizer (see §9.2), suggesting that (*ʔə*)*yà* ‘other’ may be a descriptive verb.

(188) *lè-tì=wē.dāʔ lā kō lā ʔəyà tə-bêʔ lī*
 go-arrive=WD GNR.P country REL? **other** one-CLF(2D) NS
 ‘they had already arrived in another country’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

(189) *xī tā.lō ʔə-θō lā ʔəyà lō*
 search place 3-be.new REL? **other** FACT.FP
 ‘they had to find a new place to live’ (Jones 1961: 227, 231)

3.6 Quantifiers

Quantifiers are “modifiers of nouns that indicate quantity or scope” (Schachter & Shopen 2007: 37). In Sgaw Karen, quantifiers can be defined syntactically as the element preceding the classifier in an NP. Two types of quantifiers are distinguished: numerals and non-numeral quantifiers. Numerals, such as *kʰwī* ‘nine’ in (190), indicate specific amounts, while non-numeral quantifiers, such as *ʔā* ‘many’ in (191) express non-numerical quantity.

(190) *jə-liʔ ʔōʔ kʰwī bêʔ*
 1sx-book EXIST **nine** CLF(2D)
 ‘I have nine books.’ [LTP]

(191) *jə-liʔ ʔōʔ ʔā bêʔ*
 1sx-book EXIST **many** CLF(2D)
 ‘I have many books.’ [LTP]

Syntactically, both types occur in the same slot in the NP immediately before the classifier. Also note that only one kind of quantifier (numeral or non-numeral) can appear in the same NP.

3.6.1 Numerals

Numerals are a closed word class in Sgaw Karen with nine members, shown in Table 18.²⁹ These numerals, together with the numeric classifiers used for expressing ten and powers of ten (see §3.4.2), form the decimal number system of Sgaw Karen. All Sgaw Karen numerals except *tā* ‘one’ are of Tibeto-Burman origin (e.g. Benedict 1972: 130–131).

²⁹ Additionally, the word *wāʔ* ‘zero’ is used, for example, when telling one’s phone number.

Table 18 Sgaw Karen numerals

Sgaw Karen numeral	Gloss	Sgaw Karen numeral	Gloss
<i>tā</i>	‘one’	<i>xī</i>	‘six’
<i>kʰī</i>	‘two’	<i>nwī</i>	‘seven’
<i>θā</i>	‘three’	<i>xōʔ</i>	‘eight’
<i>hwī</i>	‘four’	<i>kʰwī</i>	‘nine’
<i>jē</i>	‘five’		

Quantifiers are always followed by a classifier; thus, the structure of an NP containing a numeral is N NUM-CLF. The numeral *tā* ‘one’ is realized as a prefix when followed by a classifier, as seen in (192).

- (192) *θākwī tā-pʰlāʔ* [banana one-CLF(3D)] ‘one banana’
θākwī kʰī pʰlāʔ [banana two CLF(3D)] ‘two bananas’

Like other reduced syllables, *tə-* is atonal and has a shorter duration than when pronounced in isolation. Other numerals retain their full form.

Ordinal numbers such as ‘second’ and ‘third’ are expressed using the construction NUM CLF *tə*-CLF, as in (193) and (194).

- (193) *jə-pʰō kʰī yà tə-yà*
 1sx-child two CLF(HUM) one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘my second child’

- (194) *klē θā bō tə-bō*
 road/way three CLF(1D) one-CLF(1D)
 ‘the third road’

The Sgaw Karen equivalent of ‘first’ differs from the other ordinal numbers and can be expressed in two ways, seen in (195).

- (195) a. *tjō ʔə-kʰʔʔ.tʰīʔ(-kətā) tə-pʰlāʔ*
 school 3x-base(-SUPL) one-CLF(3d)
 b. *tjō tə-tā tə-pʰlāʔ*
 school one(RDP) one-CLF(3D)
 Both: ‘the first school’

3.6.2 Non-numeral quantifiers

Seven non-numeral quantifiers occur in the data: *syà* ‘a few’, *ʔā* ‘many’, *tāblīʔ* ‘several’, *kōʔ* ‘each’, *jā* ‘both’, *dā* ‘whole’, and *pyè* ‘how many’. Unlike numerals, non-numeral

quantifiers express relative quantities, but they occupy the same slot in the NP as numerals, immediately before the classifier.

The quantifier *ʔā* ‘many’ and its antonym *syà* ‘(a) few’ refer to a relatively large or small number of units, respectively. Both are also used as descriptive verbs meaning ‘be many’ and ‘be few’ (see §4.2). First, an example of *ʔā* is given in (196). The quantifier *təblīʔ* ‘several, quite a few’, in (197), is similar in meaning, but typically indicates a smaller number than *ʔā*.

- (196) *pyà-hɔʔ.kʰɔʔ-pʰɔ* **ʔā** *yà*
 person-earth-child **many** CLF(HUM)
tə-θéʔ.jā *jwà* *dīʔ* *bàʔ*
 NEG-know god CONT NEG.FP
 ‘Many of the people of the earth don’t know God yet.’ (Ballard 1973b: 142)

- (197) *lā.ʔi nēʔ* *bàʔ* *kʰɔʔ.wīʔ* **təblīʔ** *yà*
 here that_{FRAME} hit/contract(v.) Covid **several** CLF(HUM)
 ‘several people got Covid here (in the village)’ [KWH]

The quantifier *syà* expresses the opposite meaning ‘a few’, as in (198).

- (198) *bàʔ.sʰàʔ* *pyà* *mà-tʰwē* *tá.héʔ.kúʔ* *ʔi*
 however person do-follow advice this
ʔɔʔ-dāʔ *tʰē* **syà** *yà*
 EXIST-EXCL only **few** CLF(HUM)
 ‘But only a few people followed this advice.’ [HUR]

Another quantifier is the scope quantifier *dɔ* ‘whole’, exemplified in (199). It often co-occurs with the intensifier *jā*, which follows the classifier, as in (200).

- (199) *ʔə-pʰāʔ* *līʔ* *ʔi* **dɔ** *béʔ* *lī*
 3-read book this **whole** CLF(2D) NS
 ‘He finished this whole book.’ [LDP.D]

- (200) *θə-kʰɔʔ.θáʔ* *tə-tʰúʔ* *nēʔ*
 mango one-trunk that
lō-bɔ **dɔ** *tʰúʔ* *jā*
 go.down-be.yellow **whole** trunk(CLF) INTS
 ‘that mango tree has turned yellow all over’ (Ballard 1973c: 232)

The scope quantifier *jā* ‘both’ is rare in the data, occurring only in the phrase *jā kʰɔ* [both side] ‘both sides’, as well as *jā-kʰɔ-jā-kʰɔ* [both-side-both-side] and *jā-pà-jā-pà* [both-side-both-side], meaning ‘both sides, bilaterally’. The more common way to express ‘both’ is using *ləʔ* (see §4.3).

The distributional quantifier *kōʔ* ‘each’ typically co-occurs with the intensifier *dēʔ*, which follows the classifier phrase, as in (201) and (202). Other expressions common in the data are listed in (203).

- (201) *jə-ʔə* *kʰə.pʰiʔ* *kōʔ* *ɣə* *dēʔ* *lə*
 1s-drink coffee **each** morning(CLF) INTS FACT.FP
 ‘I drink coffee every morning.’ [HUR]
- (202) *θəʔ-hò-wáʔ-hò* *kōʔ* *tʰúʔ* *dēʔ* *ʔəʔ* *dəʔ*
 tree-ELAB-bamboo-ELAB **each** trunk(CLF) INTS(**each**) EXIST with
ʔə-dē-ʔə-trá *lā* *tə-tʰúʔ-xə*
 3x-branch(CC1)-3x-branch(CC2) GNR.P one-trunk-same
ʔə-lò *ʔā* *māʔ* *lə*
 3x-surface be.many INTS FACT.FP
 ‘Every tree has many branches on the same trunk.’ (Karen proverbs: 34)
- (203) *kōʔ ɣà dēʔ* [each CLF(HUM) INTS] ‘everyone’
kōʔ mi dēʔ [each kind INTS] ‘everything’
kōʔ pù dēʔ [each CLF(places) INTS] ‘everywhere’

Lastly, the interrogative quantifier *pyè*, a descriptive verb meaning ‘be full’, is used to express ‘how many’, as in (204) and (205).

- (204) *nə-θāʔ* *níʔ* *ʔəʔ* *pyè* *níʔ* *lēʔ*
 2sx-heart year EXIST **how.many** year(CLF) CQ
 ‘How old (lit., how many years) are you?’ [HUR]
- (205) *nəʔ-wiʔ* *pyè* *bə*
 INS-twist **how.many** CLF(1D)]
 ‘how many keys’ [LTP]

Jones (1961: 18) mentions the variant *pyi* ‘how many (humans)’ occurring in the following example:

- (206) *nə-ʔəʔ* *wé* *pù* *pyà-kəŋə* *ʔəʔ* *pyi* *ɣà* *lēʔ*
 2s-stay city inside Karen EXIST **how.many** CLF(HUM) CQ
 ‘How many Karens live in your town?’ (Jones 1961: 193–194)

In the data from the Northern Thailand, Kayin–Tak, and Mawchi–Taungoo varieties, only *pyè* occurs, suggesting that *pyi* may be a regional variant in Mawlamyine. A speaker representing the Kayin–Tak variety translates the sentence as in (207).

- (207) *wê lā nə-ʔôʔ ʔə̌ (tə-pʰlâʔ) nêʔ*
 town REL 2s-EXIST 3i one-CLF(3D) that_{FRAME}
pɣà-kəŋɔ̄-pʰō ʔôʔ tʰē.lêʔ
 person-Karen-child EXIST how.many
 ‘How many Karens live in the town where you live?’ [HUR]

3.7 Intensifying particles

Intensifiers refer to a group of NP-internal, particle-like morphemes found immediately following a classifier phrase. They often combine with another word, whose meaning they intensify. Only a handful of words belong to this group, the most common ones being *hò* ‘only’, *xɔ̄* ‘same’, *dēʔ* ‘each’, and *ɲā* ‘very’. Three of them – *hò*, *xɔ̄*, and *dēʔ* – always co-occur with a classifier, while *ɲā* also occurs with descriptive verbs.

The intensifier *hò* ‘only’ commonly combines with the particle *tʰē* ‘only’, which precedes the classifier phrase, as seen in (208).

- (208) *tʰē tə-ɣà hò* [only one-CLF(HUM) INTS] ‘only one human unit’
tʰē kʰɪ dī hò [only two CLF(ANIM) INTS] ‘only two animate units’
tʰē θə̄ pʰlâʔ hò [only three CLF(3D) INTS] ‘only three round units’

According to Wade (1896), the meaning of *tʰē* is derived from the noun *tʰē* ‘loincloth’, found in *tʰē.kū* ‘*paso* (tube skirt for men)’.

The intensifier *xɔ̄* ‘same’ is the only intensifier that does not combine with another word. It occurs after a classifier phrase containing the numeral *tə-* ‘one’. Examples can be seen in (209) and (210).

- (209) *tə-tə xɔ̄* [one-CLF same] ‘the same place/grade (in school)’
tə-bêʔ xɔ̄ [one-CLF(2D) same] ‘the same flat unit’
tə-ʝi xɔ̄ [one-CLF same] ‘the same piece (of poetry)’

- (210) *pə-ʔəʔ mē dɔ̄ʔ nəʔ.tə tə-bêʔ xɔ̄ lə̄*
 1p-eat rice with spoon one-CLF(2D) same FACT.FP
 ‘We eat with the same spoon.’ [HUR]

The NP-final particle *dēʔ* expresses ‘each’ but is nearly always found together with the quantifier *kōʔ* ‘each’, occasionally with a numeral preceding the classifier. Four examples are given in (211).

- (211) *kōʔ ɣà dēʔ* [each CLF(HUM) INTS(each)] ‘everyone’
kōʔ dī dēʔ [each CLF(ANIM) INTS] ‘each animate unit’
kōʔ nìʔ dēʔ [each year INTS] ‘each year’
pə-mèʔ.tú kʰɪ bō dēʔ [1px-eyebrow two CLF(1D) INTS] ‘both our eyebrows’

Lastly, the intensifier *nā* often combines with the quantifier *d̄* ‘whole’, as seen in (212). It is also optionally used after temporal classifiers, as in (213).

(212) *h̄s̄.k̄h̄ō̄? d̄ b̄ē̄? nā*
 earth whole CLF(2D) INTS
 ‘the whole world’

(213) *t̄-ñi nā ?i* [one-day INTS this] ‘today (lit., this very day)’
t̄-bl̄ nā ?i [one-time INTS this] ‘this time’

3.8 *n̄* ‘extent’

The particle *n̄* ‘(not) so much as (one)’ precedes a classifier phrase containing the numeral *t̄-* ‘one’ and occurs only in negative contexts. For this reason, Jones (1961: 17) calls *n̄* an “intensive negative marker”. As suggested by Wade (1897: 58), however, *n̄* means ‘extent; be equal to (v.)’ or ‘as much as’ and thus lacks negative semantics by itself. An example of *n̄* in an affirmative context can be seen in (214).

(214) *p̄ȳà l̄-̄t̄ē m̄ā? n̄ lw̄i ȳà*
 person go-ABANDON INTS EXT four CLF(HUM)
j̄ē ȳà n̄ n̄ē?
 five CLF(HUM) INTS FP
 ‘As many as four or five persons have already gone; [why do you contemplate going? Come back.]’ (Wade 1897: 58)

In modern Sgaw Karen, *n̄* occurs exclusively in negative contexts. Five common expressions containing *n̄* are listed in Table 19, along with their meanings in negative contexts. The construction pattern is *n̄ t̄*-CLF [EXT one-CLF].

Table 19 Phrases with *n̄*

<i>n̄</i> phrase	Meaning of phrase in negative context
<i>n̄ t̄-ȳà</i>	‘nobody’
<i>n̄ t̄-m̄i</i>	‘nothing’
<i>n̄ t̄-bl̄</i>	‘never’
<i>n̄ t̄-t̄</i>	‘nowhere’
<i>n̄ t̄-s̄ē?</i>	‘not at all’

Examples (215) to (217) demonstrate the use of *n̄* in negative sentences. Note that the *n̄* phrase always occurs after the negated verb.

- (215) *lò.yàʔ* *lā* *nə-də.pí.wé-kʰwā* *pʰāʔ* *liʔ*
 resemble COMP 2sx-sibling-M read book
tə-wì *nā* *tə-béʔ* *bāʔ*
 NEG-finish EXT **one-CLF(2D)** NEG.FP
 ‘It seems like your brother never finishes any books.’ [LTP.D]
- (216) *kʰóʔ.nùʔ* *xā* *θənáʔ.kē* *tə-báʔ* *nā* *tə-mì* *bāʔ*
 brain be.heavy even.so NEG-hit/occur EXT **one-kind** NEG.FP
 ‘Even though (he) is a slow learner, it doesn’t matter.’ [HUR]
- (217) *tò-tʰí-íʔ* *mē* *tə-ʔóʔ*
 grade-be.high-school COND NEG-EXIST
nā *tə-pʰlāʔ* *bāʔ* *dōʔ*
 EXT **one-CLF(3D)** NEG.FP and/then
 ‘if there is no high school (in the village)’ (News article)

Next, §3.9 discusses the two demonstrative particles *ʔi* ‘this’ and *néʔ* ‘that’.

3.9 Demonstratives

Two demonstratives exist in Sgaw Karen: the proximal demonstrative *ʔi* ‘this’ and the distal demonstrative *néʔ* ‘that’. Syntactically, they occur last in the NP, preceded by an intensifying particle, if present, or a classifier. The constituent order is thus NUM CLF INTS DEM, as in (218).

- (218) *nóʔ.təjā* *tə-béʔ* *xā* *ʔi*
 flag one-CLF(2D) same **this**
 ‘this same flag’ [HUR]

The meanings of *ʔi* and *néʔ* correspond to ‘this’ and ‘that’; *ʔi* refers to something close to the speaker, as in (219), and *néʔ* to something which is far from the speaker, as in (220).

- (219) *lā* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *ʔi* *ʔə-blē* *ɲā*
 stone one-CLF(3D) **this** 3-be.slippery INTS
 ‘This stone is very slippery.’ [HUR]
- (220) *θəwā* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *néʔ* *jə-tʰíʔ* *nə-lē* *tʰí.bō*
 village one-CLF(3D) **that** 1s-see 2s-go always
 ‘I see that you always go to that village’ (Ballard 1973c: 229)

When used as demonstratives proper, *ʔi* and *néʔ* are preceded by a classifier and typically refer to something physically present. Otherwise, when occurring after a bare noun, they function as markers of anaphoric reference, as described further in §11.1.

Emphatic forms of the post-nominal demonstratives are formed using the particle *wē* followed by a demonstrative, illustrated in (221) and.

- (221) *tā.lā* *ʔəwē.ʔi* *xī.là* *dôʔ.māʔ* *lā*
 place **this(EMPH)** be.beautiful a.lot FACT.FP
 ‘This place is very beautiful.’ [HUR]

Plurality is expressed by adding the plural marker *təpʰāʔ* or *θéʔ.təpʰāʔ*, as in (222).

- (222) *tā* *ʔəwē.néʔ* *θéʔ.təpʰāʔ* *mé* *mənì* *lêʔ*
 thing **that(EMPH)** PL:COLL be.true_{COP} what CQ
 ‘What are those things?’

Note that, unlike bare demonstratives, emphatic demonstratives cannot follow classifiers. Consequently, (223) is ungrammatical.

- (223) **tā* *tə-kʰā* *ʔəwē.ʔi*
 thing one-CLF **this(EMPH)**
 Intended: ‘this thing’

Demonstrative pronouns which occur on their own consist of *ʔi* ‘this’ or *néʔ* ‘that’ and *tā* ‘thing’ or the prefix *ʔə-* or *ʔəwē-*. The three forms of each demonstrative pronoun can be seen in (224). Based on their distribution in the data, *ʔəʔi* and *ʔənéʔ* appear to be predominant in northern Thailand, while the other forms are more widespread.

- (224) *tā.ʔi* / *ʔəwē.ʔi* / *ʔəʔi* ‘this’
tā.néʔ / *ʔəwē.néʔ* / *ʔənéʔ* ‘that’

Lastly, demonstratives are also used with prepositions to form locative and other adverbials. See §7.1 on adverbial phrases.

3.10 Possessive noun phrases

Two types of possessive constructions exist in Sgaw Karen. The first is attributive possession, or NP-internal possession (Dixon 2010), in which the POSSESSOR is an attribute of the POSSESSEE (thing possessed), corresponding to such English expressions as *the teacher’s house*. The second is predicative possession, which is expressed using the existential verb *ʔôʔ* ‘exist, be (somewhere)’. This section is concerned with attributive possession and the types of possessive attributes that occur as modifiers in NPs.

Attributive possession is a type of nominal modification that indicates a possessor–possessee relationship in which the reference of the possessed noun is restricted through the specification of a possessor. Sgaw Karen possessive NPs are of the head-marking type

(Nichols & Bickel 2013a). The construction is Pr POSS-Pe, where Pr is a possessor, Pe a possessee, and POSS a possessive prefix agreeing with the person and number of the possessor. Examples (225) to (227) demonstrate three different possessive constructions in Sgaw Karen.

- (225) $[\theta\hat{a}^?m\bar{i}.n\hat{o}]_{Pr}$ $\text{ʔ}\partial\text{-}[s\bar{i}\text{-}m\hat{e}^?]_{Pe}$
 cat 3x-hand-nail
 ‘a cat’s claws’
- (226) $[n\partial\text{-}]_{Pr}$ $[m\hat{o}]_{Pe}$
 2sx-mother
 ‘your mother’
- (227) $[p\hat{o}^?.k^hw\hat{a}^?-p^h\bar{o}$ $n\hat{e}\text{-}b\hat{a}^?$ $s\bar{e}]_{Pr}$ $\text{ʔ}\partial\text{-}[k^h\bar{a}]_{Pe}$
 male-child get-HIT money 3x-TIME
 ‘when the boy got the money’
 (lit., ‘the time of the boy getting the money’) [LTP]

The possessor can be a noun, as in (225), a pronominal prefix, as in (226), or a clause, as in (227), which is common when the possessee is a relator noun such as $k^h\bar{a}$ (see §3.2).

The attributive possessive construction in Sgaw Karen expresses various semantic types of possession. Typologically, Sgaw Karen follows the typical Eurasian pattern using the same possessive construction for several possessor–possessee relationships (Nichols & Bickel 2013b). Heine (1997: 87–88) lists seven categories of possession: physical, temporary, permanent, inalienable, abstract, inanimate inalienable, and inanimate alienable possession. All of these can be expressed by the same possessive construction in Sgaw Karen. Broadly, the possessee in Sgaw Karen can be a thing owned (permanently or temporarily), a part of a whole, a family relative, a location, something otherwise associated with the possessor, or a nominalized verb. Table 20, based on Heine (1997), lists nine categories according to possessee type.

Table 20 Semantic relationships between possessor and possessee

Type of possessee	Example
1 Material possession	<i>pā ʔaliʔ</i> [F his-book] ‘father’s book’
2 Part of whole	<i>pənā ʔənà</i> [buffalo 3x-horn] ‘buffalo horn’
3 Person	<i>ja-θakōʔ</i> [1sx-friend] ‘my friend’
4 Attribute	<i>liʔ ʔa-tôʔ</i> [book 3x-thickness] ‘the thickness of a book’
5 Abstract possession	<i>θəw̄-pʰō ʔa-tā.ʔōʔ.mū</i> [village-child 3x-life] ‘a villager’s life’
6 Unit	<i>kʰôʔ.θū ʔa-bō</i> [hair 3x-CLF(2D)] ‘strand of hair’
7 Relator noun	see §3.2
8 Produced by or originates from the possessor	<i>tī.nō ʔa-tā-kwēʔ</i> [T. 3x-thing-write] Ti Noe’s writings
9 Theme argument/IO	see below

The first five categories in Table 20 are common cross-linguistically. Category 1 contains material objects that can be permanently or temporarily possessed, while Category 2 includes body parts and parts of animals, plants, and objects. Persons as possesseees can be either relatives or non-relatives.

Category 4 contains attributes of the possessor, such as nouns denoting measurements, including *tʰō* ‘be long, length’, *tôʔ* ‘be thick, thickness’, and *lê* ‘be wide, width’, which function as both descriptive verbs and nouns. Further examples are given in (228).

- (228) *sʰē.kà ʔa-lwê* [shirt 3x-colour] ‘a shirt’s colour’
pəθō.wā ʔa-pyè [garlic 3x-price] ‘the price of garlic’
mò ʔa-kəlî [gong 3x-sound] ‘the sound of a gong’

The *Unit* category consists of possessed nouns commonly occurring as classifiers (see §3.4). The classifiers *pʰlôʔ* and *bō*, for example, denote a sphere-shaped unit and an elongated unit, respectively, as shown in (229). Example (230) illustrates that unit-denoting possesseees also occur in numeric expressions containing round numbers (see §3.4.2).

- (229) *θáʔ ʔə-pʰlâʔ* [hail 3x-round.unit] ‘hailstones’
mēʔ ʔə-pʰlâʔ [sand 3x-round.unit] ‘grains of sand’
θéʔ ʔə-bō [tree 3x-long.unit] ‘wooden bars’
- (230) *pyà.kəŋō* *ʔə-γà* *tə-sʰĩ*
human/Karen 3x-human.unit(CLF) one-ten
‘ten humans’

Category 8 contains nouns denoting referents produced by or originating from the possessor. The possessor is often a creator, country, or people that the possessed noun is associated with:

- (231) *jəpáʔ ʔə-tá.ʔóʔ* [Japan 3x-food] ‘Japanese food’
(lit., ‘Japan’s food’)
pyà.kəŋō ʔə-klòʔ [Karen 3x-language] ‘the Karen language’

Category 9 lacks an equivalent in English. Possessed nouns in this category are indirect objects of two-place verbs that typically take a receiver or beneficiary as their first object. In (232), the second object *tʰĩ* ‘water’ is possessed by *θéʔ* ‘tree’, which is the indirect object of *lū* ‘pour’.

- (232) *tʰē* *sə-γè* *lū* *θéʔ* *ʔə-tʰĩ* *lò*
only M.HON-be.good pour tree 3x-water FACT.FP
‘Only Saw Gay watered the plants.’ [LTP.P]

The indirect object is typically a beneficiary, as in (233) to (235), where it occurs as a possessive prefix (*jə-*). See §8.1.1 for more details.

- (233) *nə-ʔōʔ-tʰóʔ-ʔéʔ* *jə-pē.trō* *tə-sēʔ* *nō*
2s-open-UP-BEN 1sx-door one-bit AGR.FP
‘You open the door for me, okay?’ [KWH]
- (234) *pyà* *pʰlāʔ-né* *jə-hóʔ.kʰóʔ* *báʔ.sʰáʔ*
person hoe-get_{BEN} 1sx-ground although
jə-nó.kəsá *báʔ* *pʰlāʔ* *sé.kōʔ*
1sx-self must hoe also
‘Although people hoed my ground for me, I myself had to hoe also.’
(Ballard 1973b: 146)
- (235) *məhā* *néʔ* *ʔəwē.θéʔ* *mà-né* *jə-tá* *lò*
yesterday that_{FRAME} 3.PL do-get_{BEN} 1sx-thing FACT.FP
‘They worked for me yesterday.’ [HUR]

The word *tá* ‘thing’ can be used as an anaphoric placeholder for a preceding possessee. In (236), *tá* refers anaphorically to *liʔ təbēʔ ʔi* ‘this book’, in (237) to *kā təkʰóʔ ʔi* ‘this car’.

(236) *liʔ tə-béʔ ʔi mé mó ʔə-tá*
 book one-CLF(2D) this be.true_{COP} mother **3x-thing**
 ‘This book is mother’s.’

(237) *kā tə-kʰóʔ ʔi néʔ*
 car one-CLF this that_{TOP}
tə-mé=wē.dáʔ ʔə-tá lə báʔ
 NEG-be.true_{COP}=WD **3x-thing** anymore NEG.FP
 ‘This car was no longer his.’ (Vlog, “Missing Family”)

The possessor is sometimes omitted, typically when the possessee is a location, as in (238). Another example is seen in (239).

(238) *xáʔ lā ʔə-séʔ tə-kəpà*
 turn GNR.P **3x-left** one-side(CLF)
 ‘Turn to the left.’ [HUR]

(239) *ʔə-nǝʔ.yí ʔəyà ʔóʔ-dīʔ hā*
3x-number other EXIST-CONT PQ
 ‘Do you have another size (lit., number of it)?’ [HUR]

An example from a proverb can be seen in (240), where *mī.nǝ* ‘cat (abbreviated form of *θáʔ.mī.nǝ*)’ is understood and omitted before *ʔəpʰā* ‘male (n.) (lit., the males of them)’.

(240) *mī.nǝ-mó kʰwē lā klò-lò*
 cat-mother/female jump GNR.P beam-surface
ʔə-pʰā kʰwē lā təd̥s.sō
3x-male(n.) jump GNR.P ridgepole
 ‘A female cat jumps on the roof; a male cat jumps on the very top of the house. (Women work hard, men work even harder.)’ (Karen proverbs: 28)

Lastly, there is a close relationship between the possessive construction and genitival noun–noun compounds. However, further investigation is needed to uncover the range of variation and semantic differences.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has described nouns and NPs in Sgaw Karen. In a typical NP, the head noun comes first, followed by modifiers and classifiers. A possessor NP and a possessive prefix can occur before the head noun. The first slot after the head noun is occupied by verbal modifiers, followed by the slot for classifier phrases. The position after the classifier phrase can be filled by an intensifying particle, and the last NP position belongs to the demonstrative particles *ʔi* ‘this’ and *néʔ* ‘that’.

Two main types of nouns exist in Sgaw Karen: regular nouns and relator nouns. Regular nouns can be divided into common and proper nouns, referring to classes of referents (e.g. *b̄ʔ.θ̄δʔ* ‘tiger’) and individual referents (e.g. *b̄ʔ.k̄ʔ* ‘Bangkok’), respectively. The main structural difference is that common nouns can be modified and classified while proper nouns generally cannot. Common nouns, in turn, can further be divided into count and mass nouns, denoting spatially bounded entities (e.g. *x̄δʔ* ‘pagoda’) and masses (e.g. *t̄h̄δʔ.n̄āʔ* ‘pork’), respectively. Structurally, they differ primarily concerning the type of classifier they co-occur with (sortal or mensural).

In contrast to many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Sgaw Karen lacks overt morphological argument marking of the NPs in a clause. As in other Karenic languages, the most important indicator of argument roles in Sgaw Karen is constituent order (SVO). An exception is ditransitive clauses, where the second (direct) object is sometimes preceded by the generic preposition *l̄ʔ*. Furthermore, as discussed further in §11.1, topicalization often changes the constituent order, such as when a topicalized object is fronted to preverbal position.

Relator nouns, in contrast to regular nouns, are found in prepositional phrases which modify or function as an oblique argument of a preceding clause. Two semantic types are distinguished: locational RNs (e.g. *p̄ù* ‘inside’), which specify the position of a trajector in relation to a landmark, and non-locational RNs (e.g. *x̄δ* ‘reason’), used in adverbial phrases expressing meanings such as reason, purpose, and manner.

A large part of the Sgaw Karen lexicon consists of compounds, many of which are nominal. Compounding is a highly productive word formation strategy essential to Sgaw Karen grammar. This chapter discussed compounds functioning as nouns, which are either head-initial or head-final.

Apart from regular nouns, relator nouns, and compounds, which function as the head of an NP, NPs also often consist of classifiers and modifiers. Bare nouns in Sgaw Karen denote classes of referents rather than individuals; therefore, classifiers are used to individuate entities (in the case of count nouns) or specify an amount (in the case of mass nouns). Classifiers are generally preceded by a numeral or (non-numeral) quantifier. True classifiers, known as sortal classifiers, classify entities based on an intrinsic feature, such as animacy (e.g. *ȳà* ‘classifier for humans’) or shape (e.g. *b̄δ* ‘classifier for elongated objects’). The second major type of classifiers is mensural classifiers (e.g. *θ̄əp̄à* ‘pot, potful’), which lack a classificatory function but are formally identical to sortal classifiers. A special type of classifier phrase is the collective marker *t̄əp̄h̄āʔ*, often preceded by the plural marker *θ̄ēʔ*.

Lastly, NPs can include various types of modifiers. Major types are quantifiers (e.g. *ʔā* ‘many’, *d̄ʔ* ‘whole’), intensifying particles (e.g. *h̄δ* ‘only’), the demonstratives *ʔi* ‘this’ and *n̄ēʔ* ‘that’, and possessors. Two modifiers with unclear word class affiliation are *ʔəȳà* ‘other, another’ and *n̄ʔ* ‘extent’. Descriptive verbs also serve as modifiers in NPs (see §4.2).

The second major word class in Sgaw Karen is verbs, which we will go on to discuss in Chapter 4, along with some types of clauses that they head.

4 Verbs and clauses

This chapter describes four major types of verbs, two types of verbal compounds, and independent clauses in Sgaw Karen. Roughly, verbs in Sgaw Karen describe either actions, like *xê* ‘run’, or states, like *γò* ‘be red’. Verbs typically head clauses, which minimally contain a verb and one or more core arguments, depending on the valency of the verb. The arguments are typically noun phrases or prepositional phrases (a preposition followed by a noun phrase), sometimes verbs or clauses. Consider the two independent clauses, containing an A and a P argument and an S and a Goal argument, respectively, in (241) and (242).

(241) [nə]_A-kə-sā'-ɽê' [ɽò]_P dī'.lê'
 2s-IRR-ask-love 3i how
 ‘How will you ask him to be your boyfriend?’ [HUR]

(242) [jə-p^hō.k^hwā]_S kə-lê [s^hū t/ō-bā-jwà]_{Goal} lō
 1sx-son IRR-go ALL.P school-worship-God FACT.FP
 ‘My son will go to church.’ [LTP]

Examples (241) and (242) demonstrate the canonical constituent order in Sgaw Karen, in which the verb follows the subject (S/A argument) and precedes the object (P) or other non-S/A argument.

As an isolating language, Sgaw Karen largely lacks grammatical verb morphemes, resorting instead to unbound marking and verb serialization to express verbal categories such as aspect and modality. Three types of bound verbal morphology exist: the personal prefixes *jə-*, *nə-*, *ɽə-*, and *pə-*, the negative prefix *tə-*, and the irrealis marker *kə-*. In addition, the conditional prefix *mə-* ‘if, when’ (from *mê* ‘be true, be the case’) is realized as a prefix in some Northern Thailand varieties, including Mae Hong Son, while it retains its full form in others. Of the seven prefixes listed in Table 21, *tə-*, *kə-*, and *mə-* are exclusively verbal, while the person prefixes also occur as possessive prefixes on nouns. Note that the second-person plural marker *θī* ‘you (pl.)’ is analysed as a free morpheme, since it is a full, tonal syllable (see §2.1).

Table 21 Verbal prefixes

Form	Used for marking	Example
<i>jə-</i>	first person singular	<i>jə-lê</i> ‘I go’
<i>nə-</i>	second person singular	<i>nə-lê</i> ‘you (sg.) go’
<i>ʔə-</i>	third person	<i>ʔə-lê</i> ‘he/she/it goes’ or ‘they go’
<i>pə-</i>	first person plural	<i>pə-lê</i> ‘we go’
<i>tə-</i>	negation	<i>jə-tə-lê</i> ‘I don’t/won’t go’
<i>kə-</i>	irrealis	<i>jə-kə-lê</i> ‘I will go’
<i>mə-</i>	conditionality	<i>jə-mə-lê</i> (or <i>jəmê lê</i>) ‘if I go’

Up to two grammatical prefixes can co-occur on a verb stem: one personal prefix and one of the three other prefixes. If the verb stem has a semi-syllabic prefix, up to three prefixes can occur in a sequence, as in *nə-kə-kətò* [2s-IRR-speak] ‘you will speak’, where the second *kə-* is part of the verb stem. Note that the negative prefix *tə-* and the irrealis prefix *kə-* cannot be combined, as seen in (243).

- (243) **jə-tə-kə-lê* / **jə-kə-tə-lê*
 1s-NEG-IRR-go / 1s-IRR-NEG-go
 Intended: ‘I won’t go’

The intended meaning in (243) is expressed as in (244).

- (244) *jə-tə-lê* *bâʔ*
 1s-NEG-go NEG.FP
 ‘{I don’t (habitually) go. / I won’t go.}’

The coreference markers *jē*, *nē*, or *wē* are another group of markers that distinguish verbs from other word classes. They are sometimes augmented with the independency marker *dâʔ* as *jē.dâʔ*, *nē.dâʔ*, *wē.dâʔ*, respectively. These markers index coreference with a preceding subject (S/A argument), typically when one or more constituents separate the subject and the verb. In (245), the third-person coreference marker *wē* occurs as the last component of a verb sequence, referring anaphorically to the subject *ʔəti.θəkōʔ* ‘his friends’. The subject is separated from the main verb by a relative clause.

- (245) *ʔə-ti.θəkōʔ* [*lā* *ʔə-lê* *kwâ* *kʰē.jî* *təpʰâʔ*]_{REL}
 3x-friend REL 3-go look lion COLL
tə-hē-kè-pâ.tʰôʔ=wē *nō.tə.dī* *dīʔ* *bâʔ* *nêʔ.lò*
 NEG-come-return-appear=COR none CONT NEG.FP FACT.FP
 ‘none of [the fox]’s friends who had gone [inside the cave] to see the lion
 had come back out’ (The Lion and the Fox)
 (Note: *wē* is literary style, while *wē.dâʔ* would be more colloquial)

In the spoken language especially, the form *wē.dâʔ* is widely used even when the subject and the verb are adjacent. Example (246) demonstrates that *wē.dâʔ* is omissible without apparent change in meaning.

- (246) *pòʔ.míʔ nēʔ hēʔ(=wē.dâʔ) lìʔ sʰū ʔə-mô ʔóʔ l̥ò*
 woman that_{TOP} give(=WD) book ALL.P 3x-mother LOC.N FACT.FP
 ‘A woman is giving a book to her mother.’ [LTP.P]

A more detailed description of the coreference markers is given in §11.3.3. Crucially, no objects or other elements can intervene between the verb and the coreference marker. Also, no prosodic break is allowed between the coreference marker and the verb in natural speech. In light of this, the ability of a morpheme to directly precede a coreference marker is considered symptomatic of verbhood in Sgaw Karen. For example, *sê.kɔʔ* ‘also’ often precedes *wē*, as in (247), thus exhibiting syntactic evidence of verbhood although semantically equivalent to an adverb in English.

- (247) *dɔʔ θūʔ-tʰɔʔ-sê.kɔʔ=wē tā-bā ʔə-l̥ò l̥ə*
 and build-UP-also=COR thing_{NMLZ}-worship 3x-place GNR.P
pɣà kə-būʔ-tʰū-bā-jwà ʔəɣɔ nēʔ.l̥ò
 person_{IMPRS} IRR-worship-God(CC1)-worship-God(CC2) 3.PURP FP
 ‘and they also build temples for worshipping’ (Karen religions)

Bare verbs are unmarked by any aspectual operators and are neutral regarding tense and aspect. Hence, depending on the context, bare verbs express past or present time and either progressive or habitual aspect, as illustrated in (248).

- (248) *jə-ʔɔʔ m̥è*
 1s-eat rice
 Present: ‘I (habitually) eat.’ or ‘I am eating.’
 Past: ‘I (habitually) ate.’ or ‘I was eating.’

Important grammatical categories in the verbal domain include aspect and modality, discussed in §8.7. As a preliminary remark, an event’s location in time in Sgaw Karen depends on the discourse context and the presence of temporal adverbial phrases. In contrast, aspect and modality are grammatically marked using a variety of grammatical operators, principally grammaticalized verbs. The lexical aspect of verbs also plays a crucial role in the interpretation of the aspectual value of a clause.

Having considered some grammatical markers and categories pertaining to verbs, we now review the most common constructions that verbs can appear in. So far, we have encountered verbs as the heads of clauses, taking noun phrases or prepositional phrases as their core arguments. Some verbs take another clause as their subject or object; many descriptive verbs appear after a clause, taking it as their subject (see §4.3), and verb-complement-taking verbs have clauses as their objects (see §9.3). Most verbs can also

appear in various types of contiguous, serialized verb constructions. Two main types of contiguous verb combinations are distinguished: one in which the second verb is an argument of the first one, and one in which the verbs form a compound (see Chapter 5). Besides heading clauses, verbs also occur as modifiers in noun–verb compounds and as modifiers of nouns in noun phrases. Table 22 summarizes the verb constructions mentioned.

Table 22 Summary of verb constructions

Construction	Example
VERB AS MODIFIER	
noun–verb compounds (§3.3.2)	<i>tâ-ʔêʔ</i> [thing _{NMLZ} -love(v.)] 'love (n.)'
modifier in NP (§4.2)	<i>tâ.mà ʔə-θ̄</i> [job 3-be.new] 'a new job'
VERB AS THE HEAD OF A CLAUSE	
with nominal arguments	<i>tʰi kəl̄ə</i> [water be.warm] 'the water is warm'
with clausal subject (S) (§4.3)	<i>[jə-mi]s tə-nê bāʔ</i> [1s-sleep NEG-get _{ABIL} NEG.FP] 'I can't sleep'
with clausal object (P) (§9.3)	<i>jə-sʰō.môʔ l̄ə [ʔə-kə-l̄ə]p</i> [1s-think COMP 3-IRR-go] 'I think he will go'
SERIALIZED VERBS	
1. verb–argument (§5.1–5.3)	
a. secondary verb	<i>bāʔ l̄ə</i> [must go] 'must go'
b. prior motion	<i>l̄ə ʔəʔ-mê</i> [go eat-rice] 'go have a meal'
c. concurrent action/state	<i>hāʔ θ̄əʔ.l̄ə</i> [walk teach] 'go around teaching'
2. verb–verb compound (§5.4–5.5)	
a. head–modifier	<i>sʰā-ʔəʔ</i> [sell-eat] 'sell for a living'
b. modifier–head	<i>d̄iʔ-ʔəʔ</i> [CAUS-eat] 'feed'

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. After introducing independent clauses in §4.1, §4.2 discusses descriptive verbs and §4.3 their ability to modify a clause. Two types of clauses, existential and copula clauses, are discussed in §4.4 and §4.5, respectively. The last section, §4.6, is concerned with verbal compounds.

4.1 Independent clauses

An independent clause is defined as a syntactic unit consisting of a verb and its arguments that are not subordinated to another clause. A Sgaw Karen clause minimally contains a verb if its semantic arguments are not overtly expressed but retrievable from the context.

However, clauses often contain a verb and one or more nominal or clausal arguments. Clauses can also contain prepositional phrases, which can be oblique or part of the core argument structure of the verb. Note that oblique prepositional phrases frequently appear outside the clause in the pre-clausal position (see §11.1.2). Topics occasionally appear to be part of the clause but are in many cases clearly clause-external, such as when separated from the following clause by topic markers. When a lexical NP occurs immediately before the verb, as in (249) in §4.1.1, it is unclear whether this NP should be considered part of the clause or a preclausal topic.

The unmarked, canonical constituent order of a clause is relatively fixed (SVO), but alternative (marked) positions are available for different types of constituents (§4.1.1). A fixed word order is expected given that Sgaw Karen lacks flagging or indexing of core arguments (Haspelmath 2005; Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 7). Since core roles are morphologically unmarked, constituent order is the primary cue to determine the argument role of an NP. Another important parameter along which clauses differ is transitivity, which, as shown in §4.1.2, principally depends on the verb’s valency.

4.1.1 Constituent order

As previously mentioned, the unmarked constituent order of a Sgaw Karen clause is SVO, or SV/AVP, where S represents the single argument of an intransitive verb, A is the agent of a transitive verb, and P is the patient of a transitive verb. There is generally no syntactic need to distinguish between S and A arguments in Sgaw Karen; therefore, this thesis refers to them jointly as *subjects*. P arguments and other types of non-subject arguments of transitive verbs are called *objects*. Examples of an intransitive and a transitive clause are given in (249) and (250), respectively.

(249) [pòʔ.mîʔ]_S hŝʔ
 woman cry
 ‘The woman is crying.’ [LTP.P]

(250) [pòʔ.kʰwā]_A ʔʂ [tʰiʔ]_P
 man drink water
 ‘The man is drinking water.’ [LTP.P]

In ditransitive clauses, the most common constituent order in the data is the indirect object (typically a recipient, beneficiary, or causee) preceding the direct object. In (251), the indirect object *jà* ‘me’ precedes the direct object *liʔ* ‘book’.

(251) nə-pʰāʔ-nê [jà]_{IO} [liʔ]_{DO} θē hā
 2s-read-get_{BEN} I book be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘Can you read a book for me?’ [LTP]

The reverse order is possible but rarer. Analogous to the situation in English, reversing the order requires using a preposition (*lā*) before the indirect object, as seen in (252).

- (252) *s^ht̄[?].jì[?]* *nə-kə-hé[?]-kè* [*nə-kəmā*]_{DO} *lā* [*jā*]_{IO} *lê[?]*
 how.long 2s-IRR-give-RETURN 2sx-debt GNR.P 1si CQ
 ‘When (lit., how long [until]) will you return the money that you owe me?’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 1071; my trans.)

Naturally, subjects and objects are often larger constituents than simple bare nouns. Depending on the semantics of the main verb, the arguments can be NPs, prepositional phrases, or clauses. For example, the typical object of the existential–locative verb *ʔô[?]* ‘exist, be located (at)’ is a locative phrase, as in (253).

- (253) *pə-myì* *ʔô[?]* [*lā* *xô[?]* *ʔə-k^hɿ*]_{P(LOC)}
 1px-ancestor(CC1) EXIST GNR.P Salween 3x-rear.part
pə-pyā *ʔô[?]* [*lā* *xô[?]* *ʔə-k^hɿ*]_{P(LOC)}
 1px-ancestor(CC2) EXIST GNR.P Salween 3x-rear.part
 ‘Our ancestors lived at the source of the Salween.’ (Hta poem)

The unmarked SVO (or AVP) constituent order is permutable, a topic which has not received much attention in previous studies. Fronting, or “left-dislocation”, of a constituent to clause-external position topicalizes it, (re-)introducing a topic about which some new information is given (Foley 2007). Fronting is also pragmatically motivated, often expressing contrast (see §11.1). An object-first order is seen in (254) and (255), where [Ø] indicates the unmarked position of the object.

- (254) [*tā* *dī[?].né[?]]_P *nē[?]*
 thing like.that that_{TOP}
 [*pyā*]_A *mà* [Ø] *θē* *kō[?]* *yà*
 person do be.skilled_{ABIL} each CLF(HUM)
 ‘anybody can do that’ [lit., ‘A thing like that, everybody can do [it].’; RK]
 (Ballard 1973c: 43)*

- (255) *θəbā[?]-s^hī[?]* *nē[?]*
 mustard.leaf-be.sour that_{TOP}
dē.k^hwā *ʔō[?]-bā[?]* [Ø] *bl̄̄.bl̄̄* *fiā*
 yB eat-hit_{EXP} sometime PQ
 ‘As for sour (pickled) mustard leaves, have you (younger brother)
 ever eaten (them)?’ [KWH]

It is also common for a resumptive pronoun (the third person unbound pronoun *ʔə*) to occupy the unmarked, postverbal object position, as seen in (256).

- (256) [pɣà θā²-pɣà]ₚ nē² nə-bā² pà².kē ʔð
 person heart-be.mature that_{TOP} 2s-hit/must respect 3i
 ‘You have to respect old people.’
 (Lit., ‘As for old people, you must respect them.’) [LTP]

Example (257) demonstrates the fronting of a direct object, and (258) the fronting of a locative argument.

- (257) [tā lā nə-xē]ₚ(d.o.) nē²
 thing REL 2s-request that_{TOP}
 jə-kə-hē² nà [Ø] lə
 1s-IRR-give 2si FACT.FP
 ‘The thing that you ask for, I will give (it) to you.’ (The Benefit of Education)

- (258) [pʰē bəmɔ²]ₚ(loc) nē² jə-ʔə²-bā² [Ø] kʰī lā
 LOC.P PN that_{FRAME} 1s-EXIST-hit_{OPP} two month
 ‘I stayed there in Bhamo for two months.’ (Jones 1961: 243, 247)

4.1.2 Transitivity

Transitivity in the world’s languages has received considerable attention in the literature. Since Hopper & Thompson’s (1980) seminal article, transitivity has often been understood as a scalar property of clauses involving several factors, such as the valency and lexical aspect of the verb, the volitionality of the agent, and the affectedness and referentiality of the patient. Clauses are thus characterizable as having a low or high degree of transitivity when a group of factors are combined.

Valency is an important factor influencing a clause’s transitivity in all languages. In contrast to transitivity, valency indicates the number of arguments a verb takes in a given clause (Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019). In Sgaw Karen, a verb’s transitivity degree has little bearing on clausal syntax beyond the number of arguments in the clause. With transitive (bivalent) verbs, for example, this means that the arguments are coded in the same way irrespective of whether a clause contains a high-transitivity verb such as *mà.θī* ‘kill’ or a low-transitivity verb such as *θā².pè.nə²* ‘forget’. For the sake of simplicity, a *transitive verb* denotes a bivalent verb, which takes an A and a P argument. Correspondingly, *intransitive* and *ditransitive verbs* denote (syntactically) monovalent and trivalent verbs.

In terms of syntactic valency, then, Sgaw Karen verbs can be divided into intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive verbs, which take one, two, and three arguments, respectively. Syntactically aivalent verbs are non-existent since verbs expressing events with no obvious participants, like weather verbs, must take the impersonal (“dummy”) pronoun *tā* ‘thing’ in Sgaw Karen. Two examples can be seen in (259) and (260).

(259) *tâ* *sù*
 thing_{IMPRS} rain(v.)
 ‘{It is raining / It (usually) rains.}’

(260) *tâ* *kʰɪ̃ʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.dark
 ‘It is dark.’

As is typical of Mainland Southeast Asian languages, Sgaw Karen readily drops arguments that are understood in the context. As a result, clauses that on the surface consist of a mere verb are frequent, especially in the spoken language. Typical cases include commands or hortatives (261) and replies to yes–no questions (262). Example (263) illustrates the omission of the object in an imperative clause.

(261) *lê*
 go
 ‘Go!’ or ‘Let’s go!’

(262) a. *nə-sē* *ʔəʔ* *hā* b. *ʔəʔ*
 2sx-money EXIST PQ EXIST
 a. ‘Do you have money?’ (lit., ‘Does your money exist?’)
 b. ‘(Yes,) I do.’ (lit., ‘(It) exists.’)

(263) *tê-lò* [Ø] *lā* *kī* *pù*
 insert-DOWN GNR.P basket inside
 ‘Put [it] in the basket.’ [KWH]
 (Note: The addressee has just caught a tadpole.
 A Karen *kī* basket is used to collect them.)

As demonstrated in (249) and (250), intransitive verbs take a subject (S) while transitive verbs take a subject (A) and an object (P) argument. Two further examples are provided in (264) and (265).

(264) [*pʰə.θáʔ*]_S *nì*
 child laugh
 ‘The child is laughing.’ [LTP.P]

(265) [*pəʔ.míʔ*]_A *nēʔ* *ʔə* [*tʰɪ̃*]_P *lò*
 woman that_{TOP} drink water FACT.FP
 ‘The woman is drinking water.’ [LTP.P]

Ditransitive verbs such as *sʰyā.nē* ‘send for’ in (266) take a subject (A), a direct object (DO), often a theme or patient, and an indirect object (IO), usually a recipient, beneficiary, or causee. In most cases, the indirect object precedes the direct object, as in (266). A causee preceding the direct object is seen in (267).

(266) [pòʔ.kʰwáʔ-pʰō ʔə-pā]_A sʰyā-nē [ʔəʔ]_{IO} [sē tənəʔ]_{DO}
 man-child 3x-dad send-get_{BEN} 3i money some
 ‘The boy’s father sent him a sum of money.’ [LTP.D]

(267) pɣà ʔōʔ lā θəwə-pù təpʰáʔ
 person EXIST GNR.P village-inside COLL
 kə-dīʔ-kū.kà-tʰəʔ [ʔəʔ]_{IO} lā [kū.kà ʔə-θəʔ]_{DO}
 IRR-CAUS-get.dressed-UP 3i GNR.P clothes 3-be.new
 ‘The people in the village will dress him up with new clothes.’
 (Blog, “Saw Kanyaw”)

Thus, two types of ditransitive clauses exist: one in which the second object appears adjacently to the first object, and one in which the second object is preceded by *lā*.

The number of ambitransitive verbs in Sgaw Karen is low in comparison to other MSEA languages, many of which, according to Enfield and Comrie (2015: 8), feature “[l]arge set[s] of labile or ambitransitive verbs”. For example, the verbs *bōʔ* and *kā* both mean ‘break’, the former in a transitive and the latter in an intransitive sense, as seen in (268) and (269). In (270), they appear together in a cause–effect verb–verb compound (see §5.4.2.).

(268) nā.hū kəsʰə bōʔ θéʔ-dē-wáʔ-dē ʔə-θəʔ
 hear elephant **break(tr.)** tree-branch-bamboo-branch 3x-sound
 ‘(they) heard (the sound of) elephants breaking tree branches’ (Saw Kay)

(269) θéʔ kâ-lə
 tree **break(intr.)-DOWN**
 ‘The tree has fallen down.’ [KWH]

(270) bōʔ-kâ pē.jò tə-kùʔ
break(tr.)-break(intr.) p. one-piece
 ‘Break off a piece of *paenyō* (candy bar made from sugarcane).’ [KWH]

Instances of *bōʔ* ‘break (tr.)’ as the only verb are rare in the data, and it is unclear how it differs semantically from *bōʔ.kâ* ‘break (tr.)’.

The transitive verb *ʔəʔ.tʰəʔ* ‘open (tr.)’ (consisting of *ʔəʔ* ‘open’, which rarely occurs alone, and *tʰəʔ* ‘come/go up’) is another case in point. Expressing ‘open’ in an intransitive sense requires the addition of a reflexive pronoun. Compare (271) and (272).

(271) ʔəʔ.tʰəʔ-xàʔ pē.trə
open-FIXED window
 ‘Open the window.’ [LTP]

(272) pē.trə ʔəʔ.tʰəʔ-xàʔ ʔə-θāʔ
 window **open-FIXED** 3x-heart_{REFL}
 ‘The window is open (lit., has opened itself).’ [LTP]

The aspectual verbal modifier *xàʔ* in (272) indicates a resulting state (see §5.5.5.2).

Like *kâ* ‘break (intr.)’ and *ʔōʔ.tʰʂʔ* ‘open (tr.)’, most verbs have one transitivity value, but a handful of ambitransitive verbs exist. One is *tʰʂʔ*, which as an intransitive verb means ‘come up, go up’, as seen in (273), and as a transitive verb ‘raise’, ‘climb’ or ‘attend’, occurring with objects such as *kəsə* ‘mountain’ and *tʃō* ‘school’, as in (274).

(273) *pəθē-γə* *ʔə-pyè* *tʰʂʔ* *pʰā²-dōʔ* *nā*
 onion-be.red 3x-price **go.up** INTS-be.big INTS
 ‘The price of onion has gone up a lot.’ (News story, “The Price of Onion”)

(274) *jə-tʰʂʔ* *tʃō* *lā* *wē-pù*
 1s-**go.up/attend** school GNR.P city-inside
 ‘I go to school in the city.’

Another example is the existential-locative verb *ʔōʔ* ‘exist, be (at)’ (275), which can also mean ‘visit’ as seen in (276).

(275) *nə-ʔōʔ* *pʰē-lēʔ*
 2s-EXIST LOC.P-CQ
 ‘Where are you?’

(276) *tə-nì* *ʔi* *θī* *mē* *kʰlīʔ* *hē* *ʔōʔ* *pyà*
 one-day this 2p be.true_{COND} be.free come EXIST 1pi
 ‘Today if you’re free, come and visit us.’ (Ballard 1973b: 159)

Having considered independent clauses, we will now discuss three common verb types, starting with descriptive verbs, in §4.2.

4.2 Descriptive verbs

Words describing the properties of a referent are known by several names in the literature, depending on whether they behave morphosyntactically as verbs or nouns or form a distinct word class, as English adjectives do. In Sgaw Karen, properties of a referent are expressed using a subtype of state verbs. Like other verbs, property-describing verbs can take verbal affixes. Following Ballard (1973a; 1973b; 1973c) and Ratanakul (e.g. 1986: L), they are here termed DESCRIPTIVE VERBS. Jones (1961) and van Schie (2019) use “adjectival verb” to denote roughly the same class of verbs. An example of the descriptive verb *kəsʰyē.kəsʰyē* ‘be clean’ (an elaborate variant of *kəsʰyē*) is given in (277). It functions as the main verb of the clause, taking one S argument.

- (277) [nə-hiʔ]_s kəs^hyē.kəs^hyō̃ māʔ
 2sx-house **be.clean** INTS
 ‘Your house is very clean.’ [HUR]

As with English adjectives, Sgaw Karen descriptive verbs can function either as the main predicate of an intransitive clause or as attributes of a noun in a noun phrase. For example, γə̃ ‘be red’ functions as a modifier in (278) and a predicative in (279).

- (278) kā γə̃-γə̃ tə-k^hôʔ ʔi
 car **3-be.red** one-CLF this
 ‘this red car’

- (279) [kā tə-k^hôʔ ʔi]_s γə̃-γə̃
 car one-CLF this **3-be.red**
 ‘This car is red.’

As modifiers, descriptive verbs are relative clauses and may be introduced by the relativizer *lā*, although this marker is often omitted. In (280) and (281), the presence or absence of *lā* has no apparent effect on the meanings of the sentences.

- (280) *mē* *tā* *lā* *ʔə-rē.dôʔ*
 be.true_{COP} **thing** **REL** **3-be.important**
lā *pə-tā.ʔôʔ.s^hūʔ.ʔôʔ.k^hlē* *ʔəyỗ* *lō̃*
 GNR.P 1px-health 3X:PURP FACT.FP
 ‘[safe and nutritious food] is an important thing for our health’
 (Vlog, “Food safety”)

- (281) *klôʔ* *mē* *tā* *ʔə-rē.dôʔ*
 drum be.true_{COP} **thing** **3-be.important**
lā *kəŋō̃* *dō̃-kəlìʔ* *ʔəyỗ*
 GNR.P Karen whole-ethnicity 3.PURP
 ‘The drum is an important thing for the Karen ethnic group’ (Karen drum)

However, a distinction must be made between, on the one hand, noun–verb compounds in which the second component is a descriptive verb and, on the other, noun–modifier NPs. For example, the noun–verb compound *s^hē-wā* [shirt-be.white] ‘Karen white dress (worn by unmarried girls)’ is distinct from the NP *s^hē ʔə-wā* [shirt 3-be.white] ‘white shirt’, which can refer to any white shirt. As noted in §3.3, compounds often have idiosyncratic and specific meanings compared to the inferred noun–relative clause construction they derive from.

The verbhood of Sgaw Karen property words is evident from several factors. First, as opposed to nominal modifiers, descriptive verbs do not require a copula verb when used as predicates. Second, like any other verb, they readily occur with verbal morphemes such as

the irrealis marker *kə-* (282) and the coreference marker *wē* or its variant *wē.dāʔ* (283). They also form multi-verb constructions with other verbs, as seen in (284) and (285).

(282) *ɲ̄.ɲ̄i nēʔ tʰɿ kə-kʰliʔ l̄*
 be.usual that_{FRAME} water IRR-be.cold FACT.FP
 ‘Usually the water is cold.’ [LTP.D]

(283) *tʰɿ nēʔ kʰliʔ=wē.dāʔ l̄*
 water that_{TOP} be.cold=WD FACT.FP
 ‘The water is cold.’ [LTP.D]

(284) *jə-ɲ̄áʔ tʰɿʔ-θū*
 1sx-skin come.up-be.black
 ‘My skin got dark (tanned).’ [HUR]

(285) *h̄ʔ.kʰóʔ təpʰáʔ s̄.k̄ʔ tʰɿʔ-θū-kwiʔ=wē*
 soil COLL also come.up-be.black-AWAY=COR
 ‘The soil also turned black.’ (News article)

On the other hand, several features warrant a separation of descriptive verbs from other verbs. Most importantly, descriptive verbs are specifiable for degree in various ways that most other verbs are not. In addition, reduplication produces different meanings with descriptive and non-descriptive verbs (§4.2.1 discusses these two topics further).

Descriptive verbs are, by definition, intransitive, except in one context. When comparing two (or more) referents, the descriptive verb can take the thing compared as its object, as shown in (286) and (287).

(286) *ʔə-tʰɿ jà təsēʔ*
 3-be.tall 1si a.bit
 ‘He’s a bit taller than me.’ [HUR]

(287) *jə-kʰɿʔ.pʰɿʔ tə-kʰóʔ ʔi sʰɿʔ jà l̄*
 1sx-shoe one-pair this be.small 1si NS
 ‘These shoes are too small for me (already).’ [HUR]

4.2.1 Degree

The degree of a property can be modified in several ways. This section discusses the use of intensifiers (§4.2.1.1), reduplication (§4.2.1.2), excessive degree (§4.2.1.3), and moderate degree (§4.2.1.4).

4.2.1.1 Intensifiers

The number and use of intensifiers vary regionally, but this section describes a handful of the most common ones.

A frequent intensifier is *māʔ*, which according to Ratanakul (1986: 151, 729) means ‘be hard, tough (of consistency)’, as in *nāʔ māʔ* [meat be.hard] ‘tough meat’ and *lā māʔ* [stone be.hard] ‘hard stone’. As a clause-modifying verb, *māʔ* means ‘be tight’ as in *sā ʔā māʔ* [tie 3i be.tight] ‘tie it tightly’ (Ratanakul 1986). However, *māʔ* is rare as an independent verb, occurring most commonly as an intensifier. As seen in (288), *māʔ* immediately follows the descriptive verb, increasing the degree of the property denoted by that verb.

- (288) *pə-ʔəʔ* *mè* *wīʔ-māʔ* *lò*
 1p-eat rice **be.tasty-INTS** FACT.FP
 ‘we enjoyed our food greatly’ (Ballard 1973b: 119)

In the data, *māʔ* nearly always combines with clause-modifying descriptive verbs (see §4.3) rather than descriptive verbs that modify an NP. In (289), for example, *māʔ* is used with *ʔā* ‘be many’ in the compound *ʔā.māʔ*, which modifies the preceding clause headed by *ʔóʔ* ‘exist’. In (290), *ʔə.māʔ* ‘be very early’ modifies *lè tā* ‘go off (to do something)’.

- (289) *lā* *θəwɔ̄* *pù* *nèʔ*
 GNR.P village inside that
kò.θáʔ *ʔə-mí* [ʔóʔ] *ʔā-māʔ* *lò*
 coconut 3x-plant EXIST **be.many-INTS** FACT.FP
 ‘There are many coconut trees in the village.’ [LTP]

- (290) *mí.yá* *pʰā.tí* *kʰí* *yà* [lè tā] *ʔə-māʔ*
 aunt uncle two CLF(HUM) go THING **be.early-INTS**
 ‘Aunty and Uncle went off very early (in the morning).’
 (Ballard 1973b: 116)

The intensified clause-modifying descriptive verb often acts as an intensifier for another descriptive verb inside the modified clause. A pervasive example is *dóʔ.māʔ* [be.big-INTS] ‘be very big’, which as an intensifier expresses ‘very’, as in (291) and (292).

- (291) *nə-náʔ* [wā] *dóʔ-māʔ*
 2sx-skin be.white **be.big-INTS**
 ‘Your skin is very white.’ [LTP]

- (292) *kō.tʃí-θáʔ-tó* *lā* *klē-kəpà* | [wíʔ] *dóʔ-māʔ*
 papaya-fruit-pound(v.) GNR.P road-side be.tasty **be.big-INTS**
 ‘pounded papaya salad at the side of the street, very delicious’
 (Vlog, “At the market”)

Another widespread compound is *nāʔ-māʔ* [be.severe-INTS] ‘be very severe’, used when the modified verb denotes a negative property, as in (293).

- (293) *jə-pʰɪ̄* [*sʰə̄ʰ.kə̄*] ***nā²-mā²***
 1x-GM be.ill **be.severe-INTS**
 ‘my grandmother is extremely ill’ (Ballard 1973c: 128)

Negating the intensifier *mā²* or an intensifier compound containing *mā²* is not possible. On the other hand, the modified verb can be negated, in which case the scope of negation extends over the negated verb only. Thus, (284) is interpretable only as ‘very not-honest’. A further example can be seen in (295).

- (294) *tə-t̄ɔ̄-tə-lò* ***nā²-mā²***
 NEG-be.true-NEG-be.straight **be.severe-INTS**
 ‘very dishonest’ (Blog)

- (295) *jə-ʔò²* *tə-sʰū²* ***nā²-mā²***
 1s-EXIST NEG-be.strong **be.severe-INTS**
 ‘I am really unwell.’ (The Lion and the Fox)

The intensifying final particle *mā².lē²* is reportedly found in Western Sgaw Karen varieties and also occurs in the Mawlamyine data in Jones (1961):

- (296) *tā.sʰā* *ʔəwē* *nē²* *tə-k̄ɔ̄* ***mā².lē²***
 illness 3i that NEG-be.difficult **EMPH.FP**
 ‘That illness is not difficult at all!’ (Jones 1961: 195–196)

Another word which Ballard (1973a: 139) identifies as an intensifier is *pʰā²*, which may be related to the verb *pʰā²* meaning ‘crack, burst as grain in parching’ (Wade 1849: 774). Similarly, Wade (1897: 71) defines *pʰā²* as a verb denoting that something is “distinguished for” some property (as represented by the descriptive verb). For example, *pʰā²-tʰɔ̄* [INTS-be.long] is defined as ‘very high, very long’ in his dictionary (Wade 1849: 775). Syntactically, following Wade (1897), *pʰā²* is here seen as forming a compound with the descriptive verb it precedes, as seen in (297)–(299).

- (297) *jə-tʰɪ²* *hɪ²* ***pʰā²-dô²*** *məhā.kə²*
 1s-see house **INTS-be.big** yesterday
 ‘I saw a big house yesterday.’ [LTP.D]

- (298) *pɣà-pò².kʰwā²* *kʰē.lə²* *lè* *sʰū* *kwī* ***pʰā²-jò²*** *ʔə-pù*
 person-man all go ALL.P pool **INTS-be.deep** 3x-inside
 ‘All the men went to a deep pool’ (Saw Kay)

- (299) *nə-hē* *ʔò²* *l̄ɔ̄* *jò.k̄ɔ̄* *nē* ***pʰā²-jì²*** *lī* *hā*
 2s-come EXIST GNR.P Thailand PRF **INTS-be.long** NS PQ
 ‘How long have you been (lit., have you been long) in Thailand?’ [HUR]

Depending on the intonation with which $p^h\bar{a}^?$ is pronounced, its intensifying force can be moderate or strong. In some cases, the function of $p^h\bar{a}^?$ appears to be primarily euphonic. Jones (1961) glosses $p^h\bar{a}^?-d\hat{o}^?$ [INTS-be.big] and $p^h\bar{a}^?-t^h\bar{v}$ [INTS-be.long] simply as ‘big’ and ‘long’, respectively. According to one speaker, $h\bar{i}^? p^h\bar{a}^?-d\hat{o}^?$ [house INTS-be.big] ‘big house’, occurring in (297), is more common than $h\bar{i}^? d\hat{o}^?$ [house be.big] ‘big house’. Similarly, in (298), $p^h\bar{a}^?-j\hat{o}^?$ [INTS-be.deep] does not express a significantly deeper pool than a bare $j\hat{o}^?$ would, but sounds more natural. Also note that $p^h\bar{a}^?$ occurs with a handful of monosyllabic descriptive verbs only, primarily those indicating dimensions in space.

The intensifier $n\bar{a}$ may occur after the intensified descriptive verb in combination with $p^h\bar{a}^?$, as seen in (300)–(302). As noted in §3.6.2, $n\bar{a}$ is also used as an intensifier with quantifiers.

- (300) $t\bar{a}.bl\bar{i}^?$ $p^h\bar{a}^?-d\hat{o}^?$ $n\bar{a}$
benefit(n.) INTS-be.big INTS
‘Thank you very much!’
- (301) $m\bar{a}h\bar{a}.k\bar{a}^?$ $j\bar{a}-l\hat{o}$ $k\hat{o}$ $p^h\bar{a}^?-?n\bar{a}$ $n\bar{a}$
yesterday 1sx-surface be.hot INTS-be.much INTS
‘Yesterday, I had a very high fever.’ [LTP]
- (302) $n\bar{a}^?.p^h\bar{o}-k\bar{a}\theta\bar{u}$ $?i$ $p^h\bar{a}^?-w\bar{i}^?$ $n\bar{a}$
fish-curry this INTS-be.tasty INTS
‘This fish curry is extremely delicious.’ (Ballard 1973a: 200)

In (303), $p^h\bar{a}^?$ is omitted.

- (303) $x\hat{a}-\theta\bar{a}^?$ $?\bar{a}-b\hat{e}^?$ $s^h\bar{y}\hat{o}^?$ $n\bar{a}$
coconut-fruit 3x-skin be.hard INTS
‘The coconut skin is very hard.’ [HUR]

Possibly more regional intensifiers include $r\bar{a}^?$, $r\bar{a}^?.l\hat{e}^?$, and $\theta\bar{i}$. The first one, $r\bar{a}^?$, is a descriptive verb meaning ‘be numerous’, attested in the Northern Thailand variety. Two examples from Mae Hong Son can be seen in (304) and (305).

- (304) $\theta\bar{e}.x\hat{a}$ $l\bar{v}.k^h\bar{v}$ $s\bar{v}$ $r\bar{a}^?$
wash dish be.clean INTS
‘(You) cleaned the dishes really well.’ [KWH]
- (305) $t\bar{a}$ $k\hat{o}$ $r\bar{a}^?$
thing_{IMPRS} be.hot INTS
‘It is really hot.’ [KWH]

The intensifiers $r\bar{a}^?.l\hat{e}^?$ (306) and $\theta\bar{i}$ (from $\theta\bar{i}$ ‘die’) (307)–(308) were attested in the speech of young people in the Kayin–Tak border area.

- (306) *s^hɔ̄-náʔ* *tə-k^hā* *ʔi* *ʔə-k^hlɪʔ* ***rāʔ.lēʔ***
 chicken-meat one-piece this 3-be.cold INTS
 ‘This piece of chicken is cold!’ [HUR]
- (307) *jə-pā* *nēʔ* *ʔə-ɣi* *s^huʔ* ***θɪ***
 1sx-father that_{TOP} 3x-root be.strong INTS
 ‘My father is really strong!’ [HUR]
- (308) *mē* | *ʔə-ɣè* ***θɪ*** *lò*
 be.true 3-be.good INTS FACT.FP
 ‘Yes, it [=picture on phone] is really good.’ (Karen movie)

Lastly, two further important devices for intensification are intonation and final particles. The latter is described further in §7.5. Intonation can be the only indicator of increased degree but often combines with other intensification strategies. Frequently, the pitch rises significantly, resulting in extra-high tone or falsetto phonation on the intensified syllable. In (309), the descriptive verb *ʔā* ‘be many’ is intensified both by extra-high intonation and by the intensifier *māʔ*.

- (309) *pyà* *hē* ***ʔā [ʔá]*** *māʔ* *lò*
 person come **be.many** INTS FACT.FP
 ‘Many people came.’ (Vlog)

As seen in (310), not only descriptive verbs are intensified in this way.

- (310) *pyà-kəŋɔ̄* ***lā [lá]*** *plə* *nēʔ*
 person-Karen GNR.P old.times that_{TOP}
 ‘The Karen way back in the days ...’ (Chiang Mai)

As mentioned in Chapter 2, extra-high tone or falsetto never extends across more than one syllable. The exact mechanics of this intensification strategy, such as why a certain syllable is affected and not the other, is unclear.

4.2.1.2 Reduplication

Reduplicated descriptive verbs most commonly function as clause-modifying verbs, resembling adverbs (see §4.3), but also as attributes modifying NPs. They have not been attested as predicatives. For this reason, reduplicating *k^hlɪʔ* ‘be cold’ in (311) is ungrammatical (the sentence would be correct without reduplication).

- (311) **tə-nì* *ʔi* *t^hɪ* ***k^hlɪʔ~k^hlɪʔ*** *lò*
 one-day this water **be.cold~be.cold** FACT.FP
 Intended: ‘Today, the water is very cold.’ [LTP.D]

Wade (1897: 75) states that NP-modifying reduplicated descriptive verbs indicate “a more than ordinary degree”. An example from Wade’s grammar is reproduced in (312). He adds that *dôʔ.dôʔ* (the reduplication of *dôʔ* ‘be big’) indicates “larger than the ordinary size, though not the largest” (Wade 1897: 75).

- (312) *jə-tʰiʔ kəbō dôʔ~dôʔ tə-bō*
 1s-see ship **be.big(RDP)** one-CLF(1D)
 ‘I saw a largish ship’ (Wade 1897: 75)

Jones (1961: 25) describes reduplicated descriptive verbs as “intensified adjectivals”, providing examples such as *jì* ‘be far’ and *jì.jì* ‘be very far’. Similarly, Ballard (1973a: 125) states that when an attributive descriptive verb is reduplicated, “the meaning is intensified”. An example by Ballard (1973) can be seen in (313).

- (313) *dəʔ yè~yè tə-pʰləʔ*
 room/house(N.Th.) **be.good(RDP)** one-CLF(3D)
 ‘a really good house’ (Ballard 1973a: 125)

In the absence of a context, the semantic difference between a monosyllabic and reduplicated descriptive verb is often hard to identify or even felt to be non-existent by native speakers. When eliciting (314), the speaker spontaneously used the monosyllabic verb *bôʔ* ‘be fat’ but also accepted *bôʔ.bôʔ* as expressing essentially the same meaning.

- (314) *pəʔ.kʰwā bôʔ (/ bôʔ~bôʔ) tə-yà*
 man be.fat one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘a fat man’ [LTP.P]

In natural language contexts, the function of reduplication of attributive descriptive verbs in Sgaw Karen may be similar to the one described for other MSEA languages. In Thai, for example, reduplication is used to “make the meaning less precise” and sometimes to indicate “that the preceding noun is plural” (Smyth 2002: 90). Enfield (2007: 254) explains that, in Lao, the reduplication of a word like *suung3* ‘tall’ means ‘relatively tall’ indicating that, in a given context, someone is tall “with reference to some group” of people or to “the general set of all people” if no specific group is present in the context. Hence, reduplication indicates a *relatively* high degree, but if the reference group is small, the degree need not be particularly high in absolute terms. Conversely, if all referents in a group have some property, reduplication can denote a high degree. Non-reduplicated descriptive verbs, in turn, contrast with their reduplicated equivalents by conveying a sense of absoluteness and objectivity. In (315), a speaker asks for a can of Coke from a beverage cooler, using reduplication to ensure the drink is properly chilled.

- (315) *hêʔ jà lā ʔə-kʰl̥ʔ~kʰl̥ʔ tə-kō*
 give 1si GNR.P **3-be.cold(RDP)** one-bottle
 ‘Give me a (really) cold one.’ [HUR]

Reduplication also occurs when the modified NP denotes a plural referent, as Smyth (2002) has observed for Thai, possibly because reduplication indicates a lower degree of preciseness. Within a group of referents, some inevitably have more and others less of some characteristic. One example is given in (316).

- (316) *lā tā.kʰl̥ʔ nêʔ jə-tʰl̥ʔ*
 GNR.P outside that_{FRAME} 1s-see
tʰē tā wā~wā təpʰāʔ l̥
 only thing **be.white** COLL FACT.FP
 ‘everything was white [=covered with snow] outside
 (lit., I saw only white things)’ [HUR]

The diminutive marker *pʰō* (from *pʰō* ‘child’) occurs in the construction V-V-*pʰō* with some reduplicated descriptive verbs. Examples can be seen in (317) and (318). The diminutive marker *pʰō* in such compounds is often pronounced with an extra-high tone [pʰō̃].

- (317) *tā.ʔôʔ.mū pʰl̥ʔ.pʰl̥ʔ.pʰō* [life be.short(RDP):DIM] ‘short lives’
pʰō.θāʔ.sʰl̥ʔ.sʰl̥ʔ.pʰō [child be.small(RDP):DIM] ‘small children’
ʔə.nō xē.xē.pʰō [3x:body be.thin(RDP):DIM] ‘thin (body)’
jō.jō.pʰō [be.simple(RDP):DIM] ‘very simple (plain)’

- (318) *ʔəxō nêʔ ʔəwē hīʔ-tʰōʔ=wē.dāʔ ʔə-pī dōʔ*
 3.REASON that_{FRAME} 3s grab-UP=WD 3x-flute and
ʔū-tʰōʔ=wē tā-θāʔ.wīʔ mīʔ.mīʔ-pʰō tə-jī l̥
 blow-UP=COR thing-sing **be.enjoyable(RDP)-DIM** one-CLF FP
 ‘So he took up his flute and played a pleasant tune.’ (The Benefit of Education)

Reduplicated descriptive verbs can also be followed by the intensifier *kəl̥ʔ*, which denotes a high degree, as in (319)–(321). No instances of *kəl̥ʔ* occurring with a non-reduplicated verb appear in the data.

- (319) *ɣ̌.ɣ̌-kəl̥ʔ təkʰl̥ʔ mī wā*
be.early(RDP)-INTS before sun be.white
 ‘very early, before dawn’ (Karen proverbs: 9)

- (320) *pʰōʔ.xē-pʰō hīʔ.nē ʔə-nāʔ pʰāʔ-tʰō tə-bēʔ*
 orphan take 3x-sword INTS-be.long one-CLF(2D)
dōʔ klē ʔō ʔēʔ.ʔēʔ-kəl̥ʔ l̥
 and grind 3i **be.sharp(RDP)-INTS** FACT.FP
 ‘the orphan took his long sword and sharpened it very sharp’
 (Jones 1961: 222, 224)

- (321) *pʰlā lā ʔəwē sʰō².kē nā².nā²-kalē² lō*
 appear COMP 3s be.ill **be.severe(RDP)**-INTS FACT.FP
 ‘he looks seriously ill’ [HUR]

As noted above, reduplicated descriptive verbs are especially common when used adverbially as clause modifiers, resembling English adverbs. Three examples are given in (322)–(324).

- (322) *pʰē ʔi θərá².mī² kwā pyà.sʰā ʔō² tʰē syà*
 LOC.P this nurse look patient EXIST only few
yà ʔə.xō ʔəwē.θē² bā² mà tâ sʰū².sʰū²
 CLF(HUM) 3.REASON 3:PL must do thing **be.strong(RDP)**
 ‘Here there are only a few nurses, so they have to work hard.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 203)

- (323) *hā² kajō.kajō | pʰē.ʔi nē² tâ blē*
 walk **be.slow(RDP)** here that_{FRAME} thing_{IMPRS} be.slippery
 ‘Walk slowly, it’s slippery here.’ [HUR]

- (324) *pə-kə-bā² kwā.tʰi.kwā.sʰā² tâ yè.yè*
 1p-IRR-must examine thing **be.good(RDP)**
 ‘we must examine things carefully’ (Karen proverbs)

Finally, reduplicated descriptive verbs are non-negatable when modifying an NP or clause.

4.2.1.3 Excessive degree

Excessive degree is expressed by *kē².sʰō²* and *təlā*. The first, *kē².sʰō²*, is an adverb meaning ‘excessively, beyond what is fit or desirable’ (Wade 1849: 38). Two examples can be seen in (325) and (326). It is rare in the data and appears to be regional.

- (325) *tā.mà ʔā-kē².sʰō² jə-mà tə-pyè bā²*
 work(n.) be.much-EXC 1s-do NEG-be.full NEG.FP
 ‘The work is too great, I cannot do it.’ (Gilmore 1898; §151)

- (326) *kəθū ʔi hō-kē².sʰō²*
 curry this **be.salty-EXC**
 ‘This curry is too salty.’ (Ballard 1973b: 34)

A synonym significantly more common in the data is the verb *təlā* ‘exceed’. Like *kē².sʰō²*, *təlā* immediately follows the descriptive verb. Examples are shown in (327)–(329).

- (327) *θáʔ* *ʔóʔ* *lā* *kʰóʔ.θáʔ-lò* *nāʔ-tālā*
 louse EXIST GNR.P head-surface be.severe-EXC
kʰóʔ.θáʔ *tə-θāʔ* *lā*
 head NEG-itch anymore
 ‘Too many lice on your head and it doesn’t itch anymore. (A few mistakes or problems cause discomfort. Too many and it becomes the norm.)’
 (Karen proverbs: 32)
- (328) *tábāʔ* *mī* *sʰō~sʰō-tālā* *təyè*
 PREV sleep be.early(RDP)-EXC NEG.OPT
 ‘Don’t sleep too early.’ [HUR]
- (329) *tā* *mé* *kó-tālā* *kəpìʔ* *kə-xē.tʰō*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.true_{COND} be.hot-EXC clay IRR-dry.up
kʰlē *dōʔ* *kə-tè.pʰāʔ* *bāʔ.pʰēʔ*
 be.fast and IRR-crack(intr.) might
 ‘If it is too hot, the clay will dry quickly, and it might crack.’ (Karen drum)

Excessive degree is also expressed using *təsēʔ* ‘a bit’ (from *tə-* ‘one’ and *sēʔ* ‘bit’), which appears after the descriptive verb. The pragmatic inference is that something is ‘a bit V-er’ than what is preferred or suitable, as seen in (330) and (331).

- (330) *tʰō* *təsēʔ* *θənáʔ.kē* *tā* *móʔ-pʰāʔ* *jə-θāʔ*
 be.long **a.bit** even.so thing_{IMPRS} DES-read 1s-REFL
tì *ʔə-kətā* *lā*
 arrive/until 3x-end FACT.FP
 ‘Although [the book] is a bit long, I wanted to read it until the end.’ (Blog)
- (331) *mē.lā* *dāʔ* *tə-pʰlāʔ ʔì* *sʰīʔ* *təsēʔ* *ʔəxō*
 since room/house one-CLF this be.small **a.bit** 3.REASON
jə-kə-lè *ʔóʔ* *lā* *dāʔ* *ʔə-dóʔ* *tə-pʰlāʔ*
 1s-IRR-go EXIST GNR.P room/house 3-be.big one-CLF(3D)
 ‘Because this house is a bit small, we’ll go and stay in the big house.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 91)

When an implicit standard of comparison is present in the context, *təsēʔ* expresses ‘(a bit) V-er’ (see §4.2.2.2).

4.2.1.4 Low degree and ‘not very’

The two phrases *təpō* V and *tə-V ʔā.ʔā* are common ways to express a not-so-high degree. The first, *təpō* V, is encountered only in the data from northern Thailand, while *tə-V ʔā.ʔā* occurs more widely. Two examples of each are provided in (332)–(335).

- (332) *təp̄* *kəʂʰȳ* *bâʔ*
not.very **be.clean** NEG.FP
‘not very clean’ (Ratanakul 1986: 179; my trans.)
- (333) *tà.θâʔ* *tə-pʰlâʔ* *ʔi* *təp̄* *yè* *bâʔ*
fruit one-CLF(3D) this **not.very** **be.good** NEG.FP
‘This fruit is not very good.’ (Ballard 1973c: 132)
- (334) *ʔôʔ* *tə-ji* *ʔā.ʔā* *bâʔ*
EXIST **NEG-be.far** **be.much(RDP)** NEG.FP
‘It’s not very far.’ (Jones 1961: 190–191)
- (335) *jə-tē* *pyà.kəʂn̄-klòʔ* *tə-bûʔ* *ʔā.ʔā* *bâʔ*
1s-say/tell Karen-language **NEG-be.correct** **be.much(RDP)** NEG.FP
‘I can’t speak Karen very well.’ [HUR]

4.2.2 Comparison

The properties of a referent can be compared at different stages (e.g. *the water is colder now*) or between different referents (e.g. *Mary is taller than Susan*). In both cases, the standard of comparison (to which something is compared) is overtly expressed or implicit. In Sgaw Karen, comparative constructions differ primarily regarding whether the standard of comparison is overt and whether the compared entities are the same or different. Comparison with an overt and covert standard of comparison are discussed in §4.2.2.1 and §4.2.2.2, respectively.

4.2.2.1 With a standard of comparison

Comparison between two different referents uses the comparative particle *nê*.³⁰ Additionally, the continuative–additive particle *dīʔ* ‘still’ sometimes occurs after *nê*. Following the terminology in Dixon (2010a), the structure of the comparative construction is comparee, parameter, index, and standard, as indicated in (336).

- (336) COMPAREE PARAMETER INDEX STANDARD
[*jə-mèʔ.sʰúʔ*] [*tʰḥ-* *nê*] [*jə-kʰôʔ.sʰúʔ*]
1sx-eyelash be.long CMPR 1sx-hair
‘My eyelashes are longer than my hair.’ [LTP]

The comparative marker *nê* is part of the verb complex and always follows the descriptive verb. The result is a transitive verb compound, taking the comparee as its A

³⁰ The origin of *nê* is uncertain but does not seem to have grammaticalized from *nê* ‘get’. Etymologically, the Sgaw Karen comparative verb *nê* is cognate with Eastern Pwo *náiv* (see Kato 2004: 359), while Sgaw Karen *nê* ‘get’ is cognate with Eastern Pwo *nī* (see Kato 2004; Kato 2016).

argument and the standard of comparison as its P argument. The continuative marker *dīʔ* ‘still’ follows *nê*, as in (337), or the object, as in (338). A floating classifier phrase (CP) quantifying the difference between the comparee and the standard can occur after the comparative clause, as in (339).

(337) *jə-t/ɔ̃* *nêʔ* *kəʔ-nê-dīʔ* *jà* *lɔ̃*
 1_{SX}-eB that_{TOP} **be.lazy-CMPR-CONT** 1_{si} FACT.FP
 ‘My older brother is lazier than me.’ [HUR]

(338) *ʔəwɛ̃* *θāʔ-kəʔ-nê* *jà* *dīʔ*
 3 **heart-be.crooked-CMPR** 1_{si} CONT
 ‘She is more envious than me.’ [HUR]

(339) *ʔə-θāʔ.pyā-nê* *ʔɔ̃* [*lwi* *nīʔ*]_{CP}
3-be.old-CMPR 3_i four year
 ‘He is four years older than her.’ [HUR]

In northern Thailand, a tone change not attested in the other varieties occurs on syllables preceding *nê*, as Ballard (1973b: 56) notes. In (340) from Mae Hong Son, the underlying tone of *bāʔ* (Tone 5) is low and glottalized. When combined with comparative *nê*, /ba^{21ʔ}.ne²¹/ becomes [ba²⁵.ne²¹], with a sharp rising contour on *bāʔ*. This tone change does not affect the high tones (Tone 1 and Tone 4).

(340) *ʔi* *kʰā* *pyè* *bāʔ-nê* *ʔi* *kʰā*
 this CLF(GNR) price **be.correct-CMPR** this CLF(GNR)
 ‘This one is cheaper than this one.’ [KWH]

When comparing the degree at two stages of the same referent, *lɔ̃* ‘field, place’ appears as the standard of comparison. The construction is V-*nê* *ʔə-lɔ̃* [V-CMPR 3x-place] ‘V-er than before’, as in (341) and (342).

(341) *jə-pyè* *nīʔ* *ʔə-θɔ̃* *tə-kùʔ*
 1_s-buy sarong 3-be.new one-piece(CLF)
ʔə-kʰɔ̃ʔ *ʔīʔ-nê* *ʔə-lɔ̃*
 3_x-width **be.narrow-CMPR** **3x-place**
 ‘The new sarong I bought is narrower than the previous one.
 (I bought a narrower sarong than before.)’ (Ballard 1973b: 51)

- (342) *tā.s^hā.θətrò[?]* *ʔi* *ʔə.xō* *tā-lī.ʔō[?]* *nō.k^hō*
 pandemic this_{TOP} 3.REASON thing_{NMLZ}-feed body
θā[?].θəmū *ʔə-tā.ʔō[?].θā[?]* *kō.k^hē* *dō[?]-nē* *ʔə-lō*
 life 3X-situation be.difficult **be.big-CMPR** **3x-place**
 ‘Due to the pandemic, making a living became more difficult than before.’
 (News article)

Note in (342) that *nē* appears on the clause-modifying verb *dō[?]* ‘be big’ (see §4.3) rather than the descriptive verb denoting the compared property. In (343), the comparee consists of the descriptive verb *plī* ‘be crazy’ and its S argument. The parameter–index compound is *dō[?].nē (dī[?])* ‘is greater (still) than’. Two further examples can be seen in (344) and (345).

- (343) TOPIC COMPAREE PARAMETER-INDEX STANDARD
[nō-wā] *nē[?]* *[ʔə-plī]* *[dō[?]-nē]* *dī[?]* *[nō-lā]* *lō*
 PN that_{TOP} **3-be.crazy** **be.big-CMPR** CONT N.L. FP
 ‘Naw Wah is crazier than Naw Lah.’ [HUR]

- (344) *tənì.nā.ʔi* *nē[?]* *kō* *dō[?]-nē-dī[?]* *məhā* *lō*
 today that_{FRAME} **be.hot** **be.big-CMPR-CONT** yesterday FACT.FP
 ‘Today is hotter than yesterday.’ [LTP]

- (345) *nō-wā* *pə-nā[?]* *ʔō* *θē* *dō[?]-nē-dī[?]* *sō-wā* *lō*
 PN 1p-believe 3i **be.skilled_{ABIL}** **be.big-CMPR-CONT** PN FACT.FP
 ‘Naw Wah is more reliable than Saw Wah.’
 (Lit., ‘We can trust Naw Wah more than we can Saw Wah.’) [HUR]

Two dictionaries, Wade (1849) and Ratanakul (1986), mention the comparative marker *nō*, which did not appear in the firsthand data. Wade (1849: 668) mentions that *nō* is “used to denote the comparative degree” in the Mawlamyine variety. Example (346) is from Ratanakul (1986).

- (346) *jə-mō* *ʔē-ʔō[?]* *tā* *wī[?]-nō* *jā*
 1sx-mother move.about-eat thing be.tasty-CMPR 1si
 ‘My mother cooks better (makes tastier food) than me.’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 48; my trans.)

Finally, Gilmore (1898) mentions the use of *təkē* in comparative constructions. The word is a fossilized classifier phrase consisting of *tə-* ‘one’ and *kē*, which Wade (1849: 32) defines as a “num. afx. [=classifier] applied to small portions and degrees”. Wade (1897: 153) writes that “[*təkē*] is sometimes used instead of [*nē*], especially when the verb is not followed by an object [=the standard of comparison]”. However, in the data, *təkē* often co-occurs with *nē*.

The comparative use of *təkē* primarily occurs in older sources such as Gilmore (1896) and the Mason Bible (1853), possibly indicating that *təkē* as a comparative marker is either

regional or dated. More commonly, *təkê* appears in imperative and optative sentences (see §10.2). Examples (347) and (348) illustrate the use of *təkê* in comparative contexts. Compare (348) with the modern Bible translation in (349), where *təkê* is absent.

(347) *sò-wā* *xê* *kʰl̥-nê* *ʔə-wê* *təkê*
 M.HON-be.white(PN) run **be.fast-CMPR** 3X-eSI **a.bit**
 ‘Saw Wa runs faster than his brother.’ (Gilmore 1898: §194)

(348) *pə-kə-mà* *nà* *nāʔ-nê* *ʔəwē-θêʔ* *təpʰáʔ* *nêʔ* *təkê*
 1p-IRR-do 2si **be.severe-CMPR** 3-PL COLL that **a.bit**
 ‘[now] will we deal worse with thee than with them’ (Gen 19:9; KJV)

(349) *pə-kə-mà* *nà* *nāʔ-nê* *ʔəwē-θêʔ* *lò*
 1p-IRR-do 2si **be.severe-CMPR** 3-PL FACT.FP
 ‘we will treat you worse than them’ (Gen 19:9; GNT)

4.2.2.2 No standard of comparison

Sgaw Karen uses two strategies to make comparisons with an implicit and not overtly expressed standard of comparison: postposing the phrase *təsēʔ* ‘a bit’ after the descriptive verb or employing one of the directional verbs *tʰɔʔ* ‘come up, go up’ or *lò* ‘come down, go down’.

As previously noted, *təsēʔ* can also express excessive degree (e.g. *sʰɪʔ təsēʔ* [be.small a.bit] ‘a bit (too) small’). In comparative contexts, *təsēʔ* denotes ‘a little V-er than’, and only a comparee is present in the construction. In (350), the speaker compares the size of the bag to other bags previously seen at a market stall. The comparison in (351) is between buying things from a supermarket and buying them directly from the producer, which is cheaper.

(350) [*tʰɔʔ* *tə-pʰl̥ʔ* *ʔi*]_{Comparee} *dôʔ* *təsēʔ*
 bag one-CLF(3D) this be.big **a.bit**
 ‘This bag is a little bigger (lit., a bit big).’ [HUR]

(351) [*ʔə-pyê*]_{Comparee} *báʔ* *təsēʔ*
 3x-price be.correct **a.bit**
 ‘It is a bit cheaper (lit., a bit cheap).’ [KWH]

The directional verbs *tʰɔʔ* ‘come up, go up’ or *lò* ‘come down, go down’ combine with descriptive verbs to express an increasing degree of some property. The new-situation marker *l̄i* in such sentences signals that an increased degree has been obtained, as in (352) and (353).

(352) [*jə-tē* *kəŋɔ̄-kloʔ*]_{Comparee} *báʔ-tʰɔʔ* *ʔā.ʔā* *l̄i*
 1s-speak Karen-language **be.correct-UP** be.much(RDP) NS
 ‘I speak Karen much better already.’ [HUR]

- (353) *pɣà-sʰā* *tə-ɣà* *ʔi*
 person-be.ill one-CLF(HUM) this
 [*ʔə-lò*]_{Comparee} *kʰi²-lò-kè* *lī*
 3x-surface **be.cool-DOWN-RETURN** NS
 ‘This patient’s body has cooled back down (i.e., the fever has dropped).’
 (Ballard 1973b: 213)

Which directional verb each descriptive verb combines with is based on cultural and cognitive aspects; metaphorically speaking, positive attributes go up when they increase while negative attributes go down (Lakoff & Johnson 2003). This explains why *bá²* ‘be correct’ in (352) occurs with *tʰɔ²* ‘go up’ and *kʰi²* ‘be cool’ in (353) with *lò* ‘go down’. See §5.5.4 for further details on this metaphoric use of *tʰɔ²* and *lò*.

Finally, the verb *dī²* (possibly connected with the continuative marker *dī²*, which also has additive meaning; see §8.7.3) is used chiefly with descriptive verbs to express ‘(V) even more’. It most frequently occurs in the comparative correlative construction *dī²-V ... dī²-V* ‘the V-er ... the V-er’. Gilmore (1898: §192) calls *dī²* a “correlative conjunctive adverb”. According to the present analysis, *dī²* patterns with the secondary verbs (see §5.1), which modify an immediately following verb. The use of *dī²* can be observed in (354).

- (354) *jə-dī²* *θó²* *nà* *nə-dī²* *nā-ké²* *lò*
 1s-CMPR.V instruct 2si 2s-CMPR.V ear-be.crooked FACT.FP
 ‘The more I discipline you, the naughtier you become.’ [HUR]

Ballard (1973c: 247) notes that the most frequent pattern in which *dī²* occurs is where a descriptive verb ending with *tʰɔ²* ‘go up’ appears as the second verb, as in (355) and (356).

- (355) *tā.lā* *tā-mà.lō* *nē²* *pə-dī²* *mà.lō*
 as.for thing_{NMLZ}-study that_{TOP} 1p-CMPR.V study(v.)
pə-tā-θé².jā *dī²* *ʔā.tʰɔ²* *lò*
 1px-thing-know CMPR.V increase(intr.) FACT.FP
 ‘When it comes to studying, the more we study the more our knowledge increases.’ (Ballard 1973c: 245)

- (356) *tā.ʔó².θā²* *ʔi* *dī²* *jì²* *dī²* *nā²-tʰɔ²* *lò*
 situation this CMPR.V last.long CMPR.V be.severe-UP FACT.FP
 ‘The longer this situation prevails, the harder it becomes.’ (News broadcast)

4.2.2.3 Superlative degree

The most common marker of superlative degree is *kətā*, a verb meaning ‘end (intr.)’. Example (357) illustrates the use of *kətā* with its literal meaning, predicating over *ʔū pī* ‘play the flute’.

- (357) *p^hē lā ʔəwē ʔū pī kətā nēʔ*
 LOC.P COMP 3s blow flute **end(v.)** that_{FRAME}
 ‘when he finished playing his flute (lit., his playing the flute ended)’
 (The Benefit of Education)

In superlative constructions, *kətā* immediately follows the descriptive verb it modifies. The resulting verb compound is sometimes followed by a classifier phrase corresponding to *one in the tallest one*, as in (358)–(360).

- (358) *kōʔ lā ʔə-lē-kətā tə-bēʔ*
 island REL **3-be.wide-SUPL** one-CLF(2D)
 ‘the biggest (lit., widest) island’ (Blog)
- (359) *tā.lō ʔə-ye-kətā tə-pù*
 place **3-be.good-SUPL** one-CLF
 ‘the best place’ (Saw Kay)
- (360) *klē lā ʔə-ye-kətā tə-bō nēʔ*
 way REL **3-be.good-SUPL** one-CLF(1D) that_{TOP}
mē=wē tā-s^hē²-xàʔ kəθi²-dō.θədā
 be.true_{COP}=COR thing_{NMLZ}-stab-FIXED medicine-protect
 ‘The best way (to protect yourself) is to get vaccinated.’ (News broadcast)

The classifier phrase is occasionally omitted, as in (361) and (362).

- (361) *tʃō.p^hō lā ʔə-ŋā.bōʔ-kətā nēʔ mē mətəyà lēʔ*
 student REL **3-be.young-SUPL** that_{TOP} be.true_{COP} who CQ
 ‘Who is the youngest student?’ [HUR]
- (362) *ʔə-p^hō.mi²-θədā lā ʔə-dōʔ.tā xī.lā-kətā*
 3x-daughter-lastborn REL 3x-looks **be.beautiful-SUPL**
lā ʔə-p^hō.mi² nwī yà ʔə-klā
 GNR.P 3x-daughter seven CLF(HUM) 3x-MIDST
 ‘his youngest daughter, who was the most beautiful of all his
 seven daughters’ (Jones 1961: 215, 218–219)

Most examples of superlative constructions are attributive, but superlative verb compounds as predicates also occur, as seen in (363) and (364).

- (363) *tā-bōʔ tə-bōʔ ʔi ʔə-dōʔ-kətā lō*
 thing-wrap(v.) one-wrap this **3-be.big-SUPL** FACT.FP
 ‘This package is the biggest.’ [HUR]

- (364) *tâ.ʔôʔ.pʰyôʔ* *tə-bl̩* *ʔi* *m̩ʔ-kat̩*
 meeting one-time this **be.enjoyable-SUPL**
 ‘This meeting was the most enjoyable.’ (Ballard 1973b: 222)

In (365), *kat̩* follows a clause-modifying descriptive verb (see §4.3) modifying the preceding verb or clause.

- (365) *pyà* *l̩* *ʔə-mà-báʔ.dō* *pyà* *ʔə-sʰū-kat̩* *nēʔ*
 person REL 3-make-hurt 1pi **3-be.ill-SUPL** that_{TOP}
mē *pyà* *l̩* *pə-nàʔ.nē* *ʔə* *ʔə-dôʔ-kat̩* *l̩*
 be.true_{COP} person REL 1p-trust 3i **3-be.big-SUPL** FACT.FP
 ‘The people who harm us the most are the people we trust the most.’
 (Karen proverbs: 19)

Gilmore (1898) and Wade (1897) mention the word *t̩ʔ* ‘end, stop (intr.)’ as being synonymous with *kat̩*. Wade (1897: 60) states that when “affixed to verbs, [*t̩ʔ*] indicates the utmost degree”. In the Mason Bible (1853), *t̩ʔ* is used only in contexts without an overt standard of comparison, as in (366).

- (366) *l̩* *s̩.jôʔ* *tâ-x̩-t̩ʔ-l̩-t̩ʔ*
 GNR.P Sion thing-be.beaut.(CC1)-end-be.beaut.(CC2)-**end**
ʔə-pù *nēʔ* *jwà* *kəp̩-ʔʰôʔ=wē* *l̩*
 3x-inside that_{FRAME} God shine-UP=COR FACT.FP
 ‘Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.’ (Psalm 50:2; KJV)

In the firsthand data, only *kat̩* occurs as a superlative marker. However, *t̩ʔ* appears in a handful of phrases, many of which are elaborate expressions, such as *dôʔ-t̩ʔ-kʰôʔ-pyê* [be.big-end-head-be.full] ‘be full-grown’.

Similar to the use of *t̩ʔ* in (366), *kat̩* can mean ‘extremely V, as V as it gets’, as in (367) and (368).

- (367) *mē* *tâ* *l̩* *ʔə-rē.dôʔ-kat̩* *l̩*
 be.true_{COP} thing REL 3-be.important-SUPL FACT.FP
 ‘is an extremely important thing’ [HUR]

- (368) *pā.pā* *kə-kl̩-nē* *nà* *tâ* *ʔə-yè-kat̩*
 dad IRR-arrange-BEN 2si thing 3-be.good-SUPL
 ‘Dad will arrange things for you in the best way (=very well).’
 (Note: Father speaking to his daughter.) (Karen movie)

4.2.2.4 Equal degree

Equal degree (e.g. ‘A is as tall as B’) is expressed using the verb *tʰē.θōʔ* (*d̩ʔ*) ‘be equal (to)’ or *l̩.yà* ‘be like, resemble’. Examples (369) and (370) illustrate the use of *tʰē.θōʔ* and *l̩.yà* as independent verbs.

- (369) *tâ kōʔ mi dēʔ kōʔ kəliʔ dēʔ*
 thing each kind each each kind each
l̥ ʔə-kə-tʰē.θōʔ-l̥ʔ ʔəθāʔ nēʔ tə-ʔōʔ bāʔ
 COMP **3-IRR-be.equal-RECP** 3.REFL that_{FRAME} NEG-EXIST NEG.FP
 ‘there is no such thing that everything is equal (i.e. there is always inequality)’ (Karen proverbs)

- (370) *nə-pʰō-miʔ ʔə-mèʔ l̥.yàʔ ʔə-pá*
 2sx-child-F 3x-eye/face **be.like** 3x-father
 ‘Your daughter [lit., daughter’s face] looks like her father’
 (Ballard 1973c: 144; brackets in original)

Comparative constructions with *tʰē.θōʔ* (*d̥ʔ*) ‘be equal (to)’ and *l̥.yà* ‘be like’ have the structure Comparee V_{DSCR} *tʰē.θōʔ* / *l̥.yà* Standard, as seen in (371). Further examples are given in (372)–(374).

- (371) *[nə-l̥-nə-pyē]*_{COMPAREE} *sé.k̥ʔ ʔə-dōʔ*
 2sx-value(CC1)-2sx-value(CC2) also 3-be.big
*tʰē.θōʔ d̥ʔ [pyà ʔəyà]*_{STANDARD} *sé.k̥ʔ l̥*
be.equal with person other also FACT.FP
 ‘You are as valuable as (lit., your value is as great as) other people.’
 (Vlog, “Worthless”)

- (372) *kəsʰ̥ ʔə-mèʔ tʰiʔ t̥ tə-yè tʰē.θōʔ ʔə-nā.dē*
 elephant 3x-eye see thing NEG-be.good **be.equal** 3x-nose
 ‘elephants’ sight is not as good as their noses’ (Saw Kay)

- (373) *nə-k̥ʔ l̥.yàʔ jà*
 2s-be.lazy **be.like** 1si
 ‘You are as lazy as me.’ [HUR]

- (374) *jə-tə-k̥ʔ l̥.yàʔ nə bāʔ*
 1s-NEG-be.lazy **be.like** 2si NEG.FP
 ‘I’m not as lazy as you.’ [HUR]

4.3 Descriptive verbs with clausal subjects

Sgaw Karen has a group of mostly descriptive verbs, which take a clause rather than an NP as their subject (S argument). In (375), the S argument of *l̥é* ‘be wide’ is an NP, *ʔənā* ‘his ears’. In (376), *l̥é* takes the preceding clause as its S argument and expresses how the shirt was torn.

- (375) *jə-pʰō* *tə-γà* *ʔi* [*ʔə-nâ*]_s *pʰā²-lê*
 1sx-child one-CLF(HUM) this 3x-ear INTS-be.wide
 ‘The ears of this child of mine are very big (wide).’ (Ballard 1973b: 157)
- (376) [*nə-sʰē.kà* *jàʔ*]_s *pʰā²-lê* *pʰē.ʔi*
 2sx-shirt get.torn INTS-be.wide here
 ‘your shirt has a wide tear here’ [lit., your shirt’s tearing is wide]
 (Ballard 1973c: 179)

Constructions such as (376) contain two verbal nuclei. Syntactically, however, they are best considered monoclausal constructions in which the first verb is part of a clausal subject while the second is the main verb. The principal reason for this analysis is that constructions such as (376) differ from biclausal constructions; thus, (376) does not correspond to ‘your shirt got torn (and it) is very wide here’. Instead, the verb *pʰā²-lê* is the main verb in both (375), where the subject is an NP, and (376), where the subject is a clause. Clausal subjects are thus similar to nominalized clauses in languages with a grammatical distinction between finite and non-finite clauses. Also note that, while being the main verb syntactically, descriptive verbs with clausal subjects are modifiers on the semantic level (see also the discussion on secondary verbs in §5.1).

The cross-linguistic generalization that more grammatical distinctions can be made in finite clauses than nominalized (non-finite) ones also manifests when comparing clausal subjects with main verb clauses in Sgaw Karen. Most importantly, clausal subjects cannot be negated or contain the irrealis marker *kə-*.

Semantically, the second verb acts as a modifier of the preceding clause. In some cases, the second verb is semantically oriented toward one of the arguments of the first verb, resembling a type of secondary predication. Secondary predication has been discussed (since Jespersen 1924 chiefly in the generative literature) in English (e.g. *eat the meat raw*, where *raw* is a secondary predicate) and some other languages.

Example (377) contains the main verb *kʰlê* ‘be fast’, predicating over the clause *kwē² li².pəṛə wi* ‘finish writing a letter’.

- (377) [*ʔəwē*]_{TOP} [*kwē² li².pəṛə wi*]_s *kʰlê* *hā*
 3 write letter finish be.fast PQ
 ‘Did he finish the letter quickly?’ [LTP.D]

In (377), *kʰlê* ‘be fast’ functions like an English adverb, describing how the event takes place. When negating (377), however, the negative marker *tə-* appears on *kʰlê* rather than on *kwē²* ‘write’, as seen in (378). This shows that *kʰlê* is the main verb of the clause.

- (378) *tə-kʰlê* *bā²*
 NEG-be.fast NEG.FP
 ‘No.’ (Lit., ‘It wasn’t quick.’) (Reply to (377)) [LTP.D]

A type of verbal modification proper is the reduplication of descriptive verbs, as in (379). In this case, *kwēʔ* ‘write’ as the main verb receives the negative marker, while *kʰlē.kʰlē* ‘quickly’ acts as a modifier.

- (379) *tə-kwēʔ* *kʰlē~kʰlē* *bāʔ*
 NEG-write **be.fast~be.fast** NEG.FP
 ‘(No, he) didn’t write (it) quickly.’ (Reply to (377)) [LTP.D]

Irrealis modality, marked by *kə-*, is also marked on the main verb. In (380), the main verb *nē* ‘get, be able to’ (see §4.3.1.4) predicates over the preceding clause (S).

- (380) *dī.θōʔ* *dōʔ* *lā* *ʔəwē.dāʔ*
 so.that and COMP 3s(filler)
 [*pə*-control *ʔō*]_S *kə-nē* *ʔə-γō* *nēʔ*
 1p-c. 3i **IRR-get**_{ABIL} 3.PURP that_{FRAME}
 ‘For us to be able to, um, control it’ (News vlog, “Coronavirus variant”)

Note that descriptive verbs predicating over a clause, like *nē* in (380), rarely take personal prefixes.

Equivalents of descriptive verbs with clausal subjects exist in other Tibeto-Burman and Southeast Asian languages. Enfield (2007), for example, describes secondary predication in Lao. He distinguishes between depictive and resultative predication on the one hand, where the second verb predicates of one of the arguments of the preceding clause (e.g. in *eat the meat raw*, *raw* predicates of *meat*), and adverbial expressions on the other, where the property denoted by the verb is predicated of the whole clause, describing the manner in which an action is carried out (‘eat fast’) (Enfield 2007: 397 ff.).

Similar to Lao, Sgaw Karen descriptive verbs with clausal subjects predicate over the clause (called *event-oriented*) or one of the arguments of the preceding verb (called *subject-* or *object-oriented*). Some descriptive verbs classify straightforwardly as either subject-, object-, or event-oriented, but not all do. The classification relies on the assumption that the meaning of the descriptive verb is the same when taking an NP and a clause as its subject, if the verb does occur with both types of subjects. Nevertheless, a classification has been attempted for the purpose of this discussion.

The verb *wīʔ*, as a main verb, means ‘be tasty’, as seen in (381). It also occurs in the construction *ʔōʔ* (NP) *wīʔ* [eat NP be.tasty], which is the standard way to express ‘like (the taste of something)’, as in (382).

- (381) *ʔə-rō* *wīʔ* *l̄.tō.l̄.sʰō* *māʔ*
 3x-taste **be.tasty** be.extraordinary INTS
 ‘It tastes fantastic (lit., its taste is extraordinarily tasty).’
 (Vlog, “At the market”)

- (382) [jə-ʔɔʔ tũ.rêʔ-θáʔ] wĩʔ mǎʔ
 1s-eat durian-fruit **be.tasty** INTS
 ‘I like durian a lot.’ [HUR]

Syntactically, however, (382) is not a biclausal gap construction with *tũ.rê.θáʔ* ‘durian’ as the subject of *wĩʔ* (‘I eat durian, [it] is tasty’). As can be observed in (383), when *ʔɔʔ* ‘eat’ and *wĩʔ* ‘be tasty’ occur in different clauses, the meaning changes.

- (383) jə-ʔɔʔ tũ.rêʔ-θáʔ dɔʔ ʔə-wĩʔ mǎʔ
 1s-eat durian-fruit and **3-be.tasty** INTS
 ‘I ate durian, and it was tasty.’ [HUR]

Thus, given its semantics, *wĩʔ* ‘be tasty’ can predicate over a clause and is, in such cases, semantically object-oriented. In (384), *wĩʔ* predicates over *pʰɔ.ʔɔʔ* ‘cook (v.)’ and is semantically oriented toward *tá* ‘thing’.

- (384) ʔə-pʰɔ-ʔɔʔ tá wĩʔ-nê ʔə-mǎ
 3-cook-eat THING **be.tasty-CMPR** 3x-wife
 ‘He cooks better (lit., tastier things) than his wife.’ [LTP]

In (385) and (386), *ʔɔʔ* ‘eat’ and *wĩʔ* ‘be tasty’ coincidentally occur next to each other due to object fronting. Note, however, that it is not a case of compounding; [Ø] indicates the unmarked position of the object.

- (385) nēʔ.θáʔ nə-ʔɔʔ [Ø] wĩʔ hǎ
 pineapple 1s-eat be.tasty PQ
 ‘Do you like pineapple?’ (Vlog)

- (386) [pɣà pʰɔ-xáʔ-ʔɔʔ tá tə-mi dɔʔ tə-mi]p
 person cook-add.rice.flour-eat thing one-kind and one-kind
 jə-ʔɔʔ [Ø] wĩʔ kʰē.ləʔ
 1s-eat **be.tasty** all
 ‘I like anything cooked with roasted rice flour’ [lit., ‘Each thing people cook with roasted rice flour, I like it all.’] (Ballard 1973c: 39)

A common construction featuring object-oriented descriptive verbs has *kwá* ‘look’ as the first verb and expresses a speaker’s visual impression of something. In (387), *kwá yè* [look be.good] expresses ‘find attractive’ while in (388), *kwá xī.là* [look be.beautiful] means ‘find beautiful’.

- (387) jə-kwá nə-nɔ yè
 1s-look 2sx-eZ **be.good**
 ‘I like your sister (find her attractive).’ [HUR]

- (388) *jə-kwâ* ʔə̌ **xɿ.lâ** *dôʔ.māʔ*
 1s-look 3i **be.beautiful** INTS
 ‘it looked very beautiful’ (Blog)

Example (389) is another case of an object-oriented descriptive. The verb *pʰyɿ* ‘be light’ is semantically oriented toward the object of *wɿ(=wɛ̃)* ‘carry (on the back)’, which refers to packs of food.

- (389) *səkə̌-miʔ* *mà-lə̌-né* ʔə̌ *yà-bôʔ~yà-bôʔ*
 chief-F do-DOWN-get_{BEN} 3i CLF(HUM)-wrap(RDP)
dī.θōʔ [wɿ=wɛ̃]_s **kə̌-pʰyɿ** ʔə̌yɿ̌ lə̌
 so.that carry=COR **IRR-be.light** 3.PURP FACT.FP
 ‘the headman’s wife made one pack for each of them so that carrying
 [the food] would be easy (lit., light)’ (Saw Kay)

Subject-oriented predication typically occurs when V₁ is an intransitive verb, as in (390) and (391), or a transitive verb with a non-referential object, as in the phrase *mà.lō tã* ‘study’. Example (392) contains a transitive preceding verb, but the object *tã* is non-referential; thus, *kʰɿ* ‘be diligent’ is subject-oriented despite a transitive V₁.

- (390) [nə-ʔôʔ] **sʰuʔ** *hã*
 2s-EXIST **be.strong** PQ
 ‘How are you (lit., are you healthy)?’

- (391) *kʰɿ* *nɿʔ* ʔə̌-lə̌.kʰɿ *pə̌-kə̌-tʰiʔ* *lō*
 two year 3x-back 1p-IRR-see COMP
θēʔ [mɛ̃-tʰɿʔ] **pʰuʔ-tʰɿ** *lɿ*
 tree sprout-UP **INTS-be.tall** NS
 ‘Two years later (after burning the hill field), we will see that the trees have grown tall.’ (Karen village)

- (392) *pɿyà-pʰō.θãʔ* *lō* *wé* *pʰãʔ-dôʔ*
 person-child GNR.P city INTS-be.big
pù *tə̌pʰãʔ* [mà.lō *tã*] **kʰɿ**
 inside COLL study thing **be.diligent**
 ‘Children in large cities study diligently.’ (Ballard 1973c: 179)

The descriptive verb *sʰuʔ* ‘be strong’ is common as a subject-oriented descriptive verb expressing ‘energetically’ or ‘a lot’, sometimes indicating a propensity for doing something. The use of *sʰuʔ* predicating over a clause is illustrated in (393) and (394).

- (393) *pà* *yà* ʔi *θãʔ-tʰɿʔ* *tã* **sʰuʔ**
 person CLF(HUM) this heart-go.up thing **be.strong**
 ‘This person gets angry easily.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 759; my trans.)

- (394) *pəwē pɣà-kəŋɔ̄-kə̀lìʔ nêʔ pə-mèʔ.sʰɣāʔ sʰuʔ*
 1p person-Karen-ethnicity that_{TOP} 1p-be.shy **be.strong**
 ‘We Karen tend to be shy.’ (News interview)

Note that *sʰuʔ* ‘be strong’ also occurs as a V₂ in verb–verb compounds, in this case expressing ‘V by force’ (e.g. *hīʔ.nê-sʰuʔ* [take-be.strong] ‘confiscate, take by force’). Like *sʰuʔ*, most verbs express different meanings depending on their position in the clause. An exception is *tì* ‘arrive’, which has the same meaning regardless of whether occurring adjacent to the preceding verb or separated from it, as in (395).

- (395) a. *nə-kè lə hīʔ tì lī hā*
 2s-return GNR.P house **arrive** NS PQ
 b. *nə-kè-tì lə hīʔ lī hā*
 2s-return-**arrive** GNR.P house NS PQ
 Both: ‘Have you arrived home already?’ [HUR]

One group of descriptive verbs with clausal subjects are neither subject- nor object-oriented, predicating instead over the event as a whole. A widespread example is *mìʔ* ‘be enjoyable’, seen in (396) and (397), which only occurs with clausal subjects in the data.

- (396) [*nə-θāʔ.wīʔ tā*]_S *mìʔ hā*
 2s-sing things **be.enjoyable** PQ
 ‘Do you like singing?’ [LTP]

- (397) [*jə-ʔóʔ lə ʔəwē.θéʔ klā*]_S *tə-mìʔ bāʔ*
 1s-EXIST GNR.P 3:PL midst **NEG-be.enjoyable** NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t like being among them.’ [HUR]

The descriptive verb *jìʔ* ‘last (of time)’, when used in an event-oriented way, has a function equivalent to the English preposition *for* preceding time expressions. In (398) and (399), *jìʔ=wē* (more formal or literary) or *jìʔ=wē.dāʔ* (more colloquial) predicates over the preceding clause.

- (398) *ŋɔ̄.ní tā kī ʔə jìʔ=wē kʰī sʰī lwī nāʔ.ríʔ nêʔ.lə*
 usually thing_{IMPRS} bake 3i **last=COR** two ten four hour FP
 ‘Usually it (=drum mould) is baked for twenty-four hours.’ (Karen drum)

- (399) *jə-ʔóʔ=wē.dāʔ lə jə.kə nêʔ*
 1s-EXIST=WD GNR.P Thailand **that**_{FRAME}
jìʔ=wē.dāʔ ʔə-níʔ tə-sʰī lī
last=WD 3x-year one-ten(CLF) NS
 ‘I’ve lived in Thailand for ten years already.’ [HUR]

The intensifier compounds *dôʔ.māʔ* ‘very’ and *nāʔ.māʔ* ‘severely’, described in §4.2.1, are essentially event-oriented descriptive verbs with clausal subjects. An example of *dôʔ.māʔ* can be seen in (400).

- (400) *ʔə-θāʔ-pyā* *dôʔ-māʔ*
 3x-heart-be.mature **be.big-INTS**
 ‘He is really old.’

Some descriptive verbs can be either subject or object-oriented, depending on the context. A frequent example is *ləʔ* ‘be finished, get used up’. The use of *ləʔ* as an independent verb is illustrated in (401).

- (401) *kəθū* *ləʔ* *lī* *hā*
 curry **be.finished** NS PQ
 ‘Is the curry all gone?’

In its event-oriented function, *ləʔ* indicates the inclusion of all or the entirety of some referent in the event. When the verb in the clausal subject is intransitive, *ləʔ* modifies the S argument of that clause, as in (402).

- (402) *θarāʔ* *jê* *yà* *nêʔ* [*hē-tì*]_{VS} *ləʔ* *lī*
 teacher five CLF(HUM) that_{TOP} come-arrive **be.finished** NS
 ‘All 5 of the teachers have arrived.’ (Ballard 1973c: 142)

In the case of a transitive preceding verb, *ləʔ* typically has object-oriented meaning, as in (403) and (404). In (405), the object is covert.

- (403) *jī* *hē* *ʔəʔ* [*dī* *lā* *kʰɛʔ*]_P *ləʔ*
 rat come eat cucumber GNR.P upland.field **be.finished**
 ‘Rats came and ate all the cucumbers in the field.’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 1076; my trans.)

- (404) *jə-pʰāʔ* [*līʔ* *təpʰāʔ* *ʔi*]_P *ləʔ* *lī*
 1s-read book COLL this **be.finished** NS
 ‘I have read all of these books.’ [HUR]

- (405) *nə-θāʔ.pè.nôʔ* [Ø]_P *ləʔ* *lī* *hā*
 2s-forget **be.finished** NS PQ
 ‘Have you forgot all (of it) already?’ (Saw Kay)

The verb *ləʔ* ‘be finished’ frequently combines with a preceding classifier phrase specifying the number of referents, as in (406) and (407). With the numeral *kʰɪ* ‘two’, as in the latter case, *ləʔ* means ‘both’.

- (406) *s^hē.kà* *k^hī* *bē[?]* *ʔì* *ʔə-lwê*
 blouse two CLF(2D) this 3x-colour
yè [*k^hī* *bē[?]* *l̥əʔ*] *l̥ə*
 be.good two CLF(2D) **be.finished** FACT.FP
 ‘Both of these blouses have pretty colors.’ (Ballard 1973b: 142)

- (407) *pyà* *pò[?]* *klô[?]* *nē[?]* *pyà* *bâ[?]*
 person beat drum that_{TOP} person must
sū[?].kā *sī* [*k^hī* *k^hī* *l̥əʔ*] *l̥ə*
 use hand two side **be.finished** FACT.FP
 ‘(When) playing the drum, one must use both hands.’ (Karen drum)
 (Note: *sū[?].kā* ‘use’ is only used in formal contexts while *θū* ‘use’ is used colloquially.)

In summary, this section has described descriptive verbs that take clauses as their subjects. Syntactically, they are the head of the clause they occur in, while semantically, they modify the preceding, embedded clause. This type of modification is different from the use of adverbs like reduplicated descriptive verbs; in the latter case, the preceding verb is the head verb. A distinction can be made into descriptive verbs that predicate over the subject of the preceding clause and those that predicate over the object. Some descriptive verbs can be said to predicate over the clause as a whole. The following section discusses a group of descriptive verbs with clausal subjects related to the possibility of something occurring or being done.

4.3.1 Verbs of possibility

A subgroup of descriptive verbs taking a clause as their subject are termed VERBS OF POSSIBILITY. Similar verbs in neighbouring languages have been referred to as “postverbal auxiliaries” (of ability or possibility) in Burmese (Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016) and “auxiliary potentials” in Thai (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005). The term *possibility* covers various types of deontic modality related to the possibility of a subject to perform an action or for something to occur or be the case. Six verbs, listed in Table 23, will be described in the following subsections.

Table 23 Verbs of possibility

Verb	Base meaning	Meaning as verb of possibility
<i>θē</i>	‘be skilled’	‘have the skill to’ ‘be allowed to’
<i>kē</i>	‘be alive; act as, be’	‘have the strength to’
<i>bâʔ</i>	‘hit, be correct’	‘be able to (V) correctly’
<i>nê</i>	‘get’	‘succeed in, manage to’ ‘be allowed to’
<i>kʰl̥ʔ</i>	‘catch up with, reach’	‘have time enough to’
<i>bûʔ</i>	?	‘dare to’

The list is not exhaustive, since several other, less frequent verbs have similar possibility-denoting semantics with a clausal subject. One example is *pyè* ‘be full’, which as a verb of possibility typically occurs with *tû* ‘suffer, bear’, as in (408). In (409), the verb *l̥ʔ* ‘be finished, be used up’ is used as a verb of possibility.

- (408) *jə-tû* *tə-pyè* *bâʔ*
 1s-endure NEG-**be.full** NEG.FP
 ‘I can’t bear (it).’

- (409) *nə-sòʔ* *l̥ʔ* *hā*
 2s-carry **be.finished** PQ
 ‘Can you carry all of it?’ [HUR]

As explained in §4.3, descriptive verbs with clausal subjects are often semantically oriented toward one of the arguments of the preceding clause they predicate over. In the case of verbs of possibility, that argument is the subject (S/A argument) of the preceding verb. In (410), the descriptive verb *θē* ‘be skilled, be able (to)’ describes the ability of *jə-pô.tʰɪ* ‘I’, the subject of *pô.tʰɪ* ‘swim’.

- (410) *jə-pô.tʰɪ* *θē*
 1s-swim **be.skilled**_{ABIL}
 ‘I can (know how to) swim.’ [LTP]

As argued in §4.3, verbs such as *θē* ‘be skilled’ in (410) function as the main verb in a clause containing two verbal nuclei. The preceding verb (V₁) forms part of the clausal subject. Negation, conditionality, and irrealis mood are marked on the second verb and are disallowed on V₁. In (411), the negative of (410), the negator *tə-* occurs on *θē*, and in (412), the conditional verb *mê* precedes *θē* rather than V₁.

- (411) [*jə-pô.tʰɪ*]_S *tə-θē* *bâʔ*
 1s-swim NEG-**be.skilled**_{ABIL} NEG.FP
 ‘I cannot (do not know how to) swim.’ [LTP]

- (412) *x̄s̄ t̄ə-sʰō ʔì n̄ə-θū-ʔs̄? m̄é θ̄ē n̄ə-hī? ʔ̄ŋ̄?*
 ladder one-CLF this 1s-use-eat COND **be.skilled**_{ABIL} 2s-grab FP
 ‘If you can use this ladder, go ahead and take it.’ (Ballard 1973c: 112)

Also note that verbs of possibility generally do not take personal prefixes, although the third-person coreference marker *w̄ē* does occur in certain contexts.

4.3.1.1 *θ̄ē* ‘be skilled’

The descriptive verb *θ̄ē* ‘be skilled’ mainly occurs as a verb of possibility. It also appears in compounds such as *s̄ī-θ̄ē-kʰō?-θ̄ē* [hand-be.skilled-foot-be.skilled], meaning “[be] skilled in handi-work” (Wade 1849: 248). Additionally, Kato (1993: 200, fn. 20) mentions the use of *θ̄ē* as a transitive verb, as seen in his example in (413).

- (413) *ʔ̄ə-θ̄ē t̄ʃ̄? t̄è?-kl̄ò?*
 1s-**be.skilled** Thai-language
 ‘I know Thai.’ (Kato 1993: 200, fn. 20; my trans.)

Transitive *θ̄ē* is also seen in compounds such as *θ̄ē-li?-θ̄ē-l̄ē* [be.skilled-literature(CC1)-be.skilled-literature(CC2)] ‘be learned, well read’ and *θ̄ē-pʰī?-θ̄ē-m̄à* [be.skilled-labour-be.skilled-work] ‘be skilled in work of any kind’ (Wade 1896).

Another use of *θ̄ē* is as a modal verb preceding the main verb. Wade (1897: 152) notes that *θ̄ē* is found either before or after the modified verb, as demonstrated in (414).

- (414) *ʔ̄ə-m̄i.n̄ò θ̄ē* or: *ʔ̄ə-θ̄ē m̄i.n̄ò*
 1s-lie.down **be.skilled**_{ABIL} 1s-**be.skilled**_{ABIL} lie.down
 Both: ‘I can lie down.’ (Wade 1897: 152)

In more recent usage, the use of *θ̄ē* as a pre-main verb modifier is rare in the data, appearing only in written texts, as in (415).

- (415) *d̄s̄? k̄ə-θ̄ē p̄à.d̄ó? p̄à.kəpʰə-l̄ə-k̄è ʔ̄ə-θ̄ā?*
 and **IRR-be.skilled**_{ABIL} respect be.proud.of-DOWN-RETURN 3-REFL
d̄ī? ʔ̄ə-m̄é t̄á ʔ̄əθ̄ō? n̄é?.l̄ò
 be.like 3-be.true_{COP} thing 3.SIM FP
 ‘and (so that they) will be able to respect (and) be proud of themselves as they are’ (Karen nationalism)

Much more frequently, *θ̄ē* ‘be skilled’ occurs as a verb of possibility expressing three types of modality. Following the terminology used by Palmer (2001), *θ̄ē* denotes ability (‘have the skill to’), likelihood (‘it is possibly the case that’), and permission (‘may’). An example of ability can be seen in (416). In (417) and (418), *θ̄ē* expresses likelihood and

permission, respectively. Note that the expression of likelihood often requires the use of epistemic adverbs such as *bâʔ.θēʔ.θēʔ* ‘maybe’, in combination with or without *θē*.

- (416) *jə-wê.s̄ m̄à l̄s-sʰêʔ.n̄ò d̄s̄ʔ s̄əbyē θē*
 1sx-eB make place-sit and table **be.skilled**_{ABIL}
 ‘My elder brother can make chairs and tables.’ (Ballard 1973a: 190)
- (417) (*bâʔ.tabâʔ*) *tʰwīʔ kə-lù-kʰl̄ʰʔ pòʔ.kʰwáʔ θē l̄ò*
 maybe dog IRR-chase-reach man **be.skilled**_{ABIL} FACT.FP
 ‘The dog might catch the man.’ [LTP.P]
- (418) *jə-sʰə.tʰəʔ l̄ə nə-kəp̄ə θē h̄ā*
 1s-stand GNR.P 2sx-side **be.skilled**_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘May I stand beside you?’ [LTP]

Like other descriptive verbs, *θē* can be used in comparisons, as in (419), and specified for degree, as in (420).

- (419) *nə-tē kəp̄ə-kl̄òʔ θē-n̄ə j̄à d̄ʔ*
 2s-speak Karen-language **be.skilled**_{ABIL-CMPR} 1si CONT
 ‘You speak Karen better than me.’ [HUR]
- (420) *ʔə-θāʔ.wīʔ t̄ā θē r̄āʔ*
 3-sing thing **be.skilled**_{ABIL} INTS
 ‘He can sing really well.’ [KWH]

By metaphorical extension, *θē* also expresses that a person has a propensity for something:

- (421) *pyà l̄ə ʔə-m̄èʔ-sʰyāʔ θē*
 person REL 3-eye/face-avoid **be.skilled**_{ABIL}
 ‘a really shy person’
- (422) *ʔə-tē t̄ā θē*
 3-say/tell thing **be.skilled**_{ABIL}
 ‘He is good at talking.’ [KWH]
- (423) *t̄ā.l̄ə pʰā.t̄i θāʔ.yè.p̄ā t̄ə-yà n̄əʔ*
 as.for uncle PN one-CLF(HUM) that_{TOP}
ʔā.nāʔ t̄ā θē-m̄āʔ l̄s̄ʔ
 be.modest thing **be.skilled**_{ABIL-INTS} EMPH.FP
 ‘Uncle Tha Gay Pa is very shy [e.g. about asking from his host family for things he needs; rather he just makes do without].’ (Ballard 1973c: 242)

4.3.1.2 *kē* ‘have the strength to’

The verb *kē*, as a verb of possibility, indicates possibility in terms of possessing the physical or mental strength to do something. It rarely occurs as an independent verb, but (424) and (425) are two examples. In (424), likely from a Chiang Mai variety, *kē* means ‘be alive’.³¹ In (425), a Karen proverb, *kē* refers to being in a state of well-being.³²

(424) *yî* *lā* *nə-tō* *kē* *dīʔ*
 snake REL 2s-beat **be.alive** CONT
 ‘The snake that you beat is still alive’ (Ratanakul 1983: 96)

(425) *mē* *dō* | *dō* *tì* *ʔə-θī*
 be.true_{COND} beat beat arrive/until 3-die
mē *kwā* | *kwā* *tì* *ʔə-kē*
 be.true_{COND} look look arrive/until **3-be.well**
 ‘If you beat something, beat it to death; if you look after something,
 look after it until it gets better.’ (Karen proverbs: 30)

More generally in the data, however, *kē* occurs independently only as a (semi-)copula meaning ‘act as, become’ (see §4.5.1).

Several Mainland Southeast Asian languages, including Mon, Thai, and Burmese, have a morpheme with dual functions as a (semi-)copula and verb of possibility. Jenny (2005: 79) writes *təh* ‘be’ in Mon, which in postverbal position expresses ability, “is directly comparable to and may have been influenced by (or influenced) both Burmese *hpyi* ‘be’ and Thai *pen* ‘id.’”. Note, however, that the type of ability expressed is different in Sgaw Karen since *kē* refers to physical and mental capability, while Mon *təh* and Thai *pen* express acquired ability (Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 353–354; Jenny 2005). Nevertheless, it seems clear that the grammaticalization of *kē* is a shared innovation or the result of external influence, although the nature and source of that influence remain unclear.

In affirmative contexts, *kē* expresses “be practicable” (Wade 1896: 238) ‘be strong enough to’, that is, having the physical or mental capacity to perform an activity or bear something, as in (426).

³¹ One speaker representing the Kayin–Tak variety prefers *mū* ‘be alive’ rather than *kē* in this sentence.

³² According to Wade (1896: 238), *kē* also means ‘be well and strong’, probably an extension of the meaning ‘be alive’. This seems to be the meaning of *kē* in the compounds *kē-dōʔ-kē-pyā* [be.well.and.strong-be.big-be.well.and.strong-be.mature] (or simply *kē-dōʔ*) ‘be well-off, rich’ and *pāʔ-kē* [put-be.well.and.strong] ‘respect (v.)’. The former is analysed as a coordinate compound with the literal meaning ‘prosper and be great’ while *pāʔ-kē* is analysed as a causative verb–verb compound meaning, literally, ‘put (someone) in a state of being well and strong’ (cf. *pāʔ-kʰū.θūʔ* [put-be.secret] ‘hide (v.)’).

- (426) *klô* *nêʔ* *ʔôʔ* *lā* *tā.kô-klā* *kē*
 cow that_{TOP} EXIST GNR.P heat-MIDST ABIL
pānā *ʔôʔ* *tā-kē* *bāʔ*
 water.buffalo EXIST NEG-ABIL NEG.FP
 ‘Cattle can stay in the sun (lit., among the heat); water buffalo cannot.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 130)

Like other verbs of possibility, *kē* often occurs in negative and interrogative contexts, as in (427)–(429).

- (427) *p^hāʔ-liʔ* *tā-kē* *lā* *bāʔ*
 read-book NEG-ABIL anymore NEG.FP
 ‘(I) can’t read anymore (I’m bored).’ [KWH]
- (428) *ʔā-θāʔ.pyā* *dôʔ.māʔ* *dōʔ*
 3-be.old INTS and
xī-ʔôʔ *ʔā-s^hāʔ* *tā-kē* *lā* *bāʔ*
 search-eat 3x-food NEG-ABIL anymore NEG.FP
 ‘(The lion) was very old and couldn’t go around looking for food anymore.’
 (The Lion and the Fox)
- (429) *nā-kō* *kē* *hā*
 2s-bear ABIL PQ
 ‘Can you bear (the pain)?’ [HUR]

By metaphorical extension, *kē* also indicates having a propensity to do something:

- (430) *ʔāwē* *tē* *tā* *kē*
 3 say thing ABIL
 ‘she is a talker (lit., has the energy to talk)’ [KWH]
- (431) *ʔāwē* *hōʔ* *kē*
 3 cry ABIL
 ‘he cries a lot (lit., has the energy to cry)’ [KWH]
- (432) *sō* *θāʔ.pènōʔ* *tā* *kē*
 eB forget thing ABIL
 ‘I (older brother) forget things a lot.’ [KWH]

4.3.1.3 *bāʔ* ‘be correct’

The verb *bāʔ* ‘hit’, among its various functions, is used as a descriptive verb meaning ‘be correct’. It also appears as the second component in elaborate expressions with *krāʔ* ‘be proper’, as in *ʔā-krāʔ-ʔā-bāʔ* [3-be.correct(CC1)-3-be.proper(CC2)] ‘it is correct’.

When used as a verb of possibility, *bāʔ* denotes the ability to perform V₁ properly or correctly. In (433), *bāʔ* ‘be correct’ indicates that the subject can wear the shirt properly.

More typically, as in (434) and (435), *bâʔ* denotes possibility in terms of possessing the knowledge required to V_1 correctly.

- (433) [sʰē.kà bēʔ ʔi]TOP nə-θōʔ **bâʔ** hā
 shirt CLF(2D) this 2s-put.on **be.correct** PQ
 ‘Does this shirt fit you?’ (Ratanakul 1986: 1047)
- (434) tā tə-kʰā ʔi nēʔ jə-kōʔ **tə-bâʔ** bâʔ
 thing one-CLF(GNR) this thatTOP 1s-call **NEG-be.correct**ABIL NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t know what this is called.’ (Vlog, “At the market”)
- (435) θɿʔ-nōʔ.yī dɿ pə-təjāʔ **tə-bâʔ** bâʔ
 army-number TOP 1p-estimate **NEG-be.correct**ABIL NEG.FP
 ‘We can’t estimate the number of soldiers.’ (News broadcast)

The phrase *tē tə-bâʔ bâʔ* [say/tell NEG-be.correct_{ABIL} NEG.FP] ‘be unable to tell, not know’, seen in (436), is widespread.

- (436) kə-hēʔ=wē tə-hēʔ=wē pə-tē **tə-bâʔ-dɿʔ** bâʔ
 IRR-give=COR NEG-give=COR 1p-say **NEG-be.correct**ABIL-CONT NEG.FP
 ‘[We asked him for two days (but)] whether he will give them or not we can’t tell yet’ (Jones 1961: 202–203)

4.3.1.4 *nē* ‘manage to’

The verb *nē* ‘get’ has several functions, depending on its position in the clause. As a verb of possibility, *nē* indicates that the intended result of an action can be achieved, sometimes implying that some effort is required. The common expression *mī nē* [sleep get_{ABIL}], in (437), thus literally means ‘sleeping is achieved/successful’.

- (437) a. nə-mī mīʔ hā
 2s-sleep be.enjoyable PQ
 b. hā.ʔə jə-mī **tə-nē** bâʔ
 no 1s-sleep **NEG-get**ABIL NEG.FP
 a. ‘Did you sleep well?’ b. ‘No, I couldn’t sleep’ [KWH]

Given its semantics, *nē* is mainly (although not exclusively) used for describing specific events rather than general possibility.

The use of *nē* in (438) implies that the speaker, despite some effort, can no longer restrain himself, in this context, from going to sleep. Similarly, in (439) and (440), *nē* signals success (when negated, the lack thereof) in achieving something.

- (438) jə-kə jə-θāʔ **tə-nē** lə bâʔ
 1s-restrain 1x-heart_{REFL} **NEG-get**ABIL anymore NEG.FP
 ‘I can’t restrain myself any longer.’ [HUR]

(439) *lā nā nēʔ jə-ʔəʔ tā.hē tə-nē bāʔ*
 GNR.P front that_{FRAME} 1s-eat spicy.things NEG-get NEG.FP
kʰē.ʔi jə-ʔəʔ tā-hē nē lī
 now 1s-eat thing-be.spicy get_{ABIL} NS
 ‘Before I couldn’t eat spicy food; now I can.’ [HUR]

(440) *nə-sʰā nə-tʰōʔ tə-dī nē lī hā*
 2s-sell 2sx-pig one-CLF(ANIM) get_{ABIL} NS PQ
tə-nē-dīʔ bāʔ
 NEG-get_{ABIL}-CONT NEG.FP
 ‘‘Have you succeeded in selling your pig? (Have you been able to sell your pig yet?)’’ ‘‘No, not yet.’’ (Ballard 1973b: 25)

Despite its etymological origin as a non-descriptive verb (*nē* ‘get’), *nē* as a verb of possibility behaves like any other descriptive verb, for example, co-occurring with intensifiers, as in (441).

(441) *ʔə-tú tā pʰāʔ-nē nā*
 3-suffer thing INTS-get_{ABIL} INTS
 ‘He can really endure things (‘‘roll with the punches’’).’ (Vlog)

Lastly, like *θē*, *nē* also expresses permission, as in (442)–(444). The difference between the two is unclear, but *θē* is more frequent than *nē* as a marker of permission.

(442) *nə-ʔəʔ pʰē-ʔi tə-nē bāʔ*
 2s-EXIST LOC.P-this NEG-get_{ABIL} NEG.FP
 ‘You are not allowed to be here.’ [HUR]

(443) *pə-ʔəʔ tə-pù-xō tə-nē bāʔ*
 1p-EXIST one-CLF(hole)-same NEG-get_{ABIL} NEG.FP
 ‘We were not allowed to be together [during the COVID-19 pandemic]’ (Hill 2023)

(444) *pyà lā ʔə-tʰōʔ.pyà ʔə.dōʔ ʔə-wà*
 person REL 3-get.married have 3x-husband
blō nēʔ kà tə-nē là bāʔ
 time that_{FRAME} wear(upper.body) NEG-get_{ABIL} anymore NEG.FP
 ‘Once a person is married, has a husband, (she) can’t wear (the white tunic) anymore.’ (Vlog, ‘‘Karen weaving’’)

4.3.1.5 *kʰl̥ʔ* ‘have time enough to’

As a main verb, *kʰl̥ʔ* means ‘catch up with’ (Ballard 1973b), usually taking *kʰl̥* ‘(someone’s) rear’ as its object. Examples (445) and (446) illustrate this use of *kʰl̥ʔ*.

- (445) *pə-kʰl̥iʔ* *ʔə-kʰl̥iʔ* [*pʰē* *ʔəwē.θéʔ*
1p-reach 3x-rear when they
tə-kʰl̥iʔ *hāʔ.tʰɔʔ* *dīʔ* *bāʔ*]
NEG-reach leave CONT NEG.FP
‘We caught up with them before they left.’ (Ballard 1973b: 158)

- (446) *jə-mà* *tā* *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* *pɣà* *kʰl̥iʔ* *bāʔ*
1s-do THING NEG-reach person rear NEG.FP
‘I can’t keep up with their work.’ (Ratanakul 1986a: 258; my trans.)

Example (445) also contains the phrase *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* ‘before (lit., not having reached)’, which occurs with a complement clause as the object (see §9.4.1).

Additionally, *kʰl̥iʔ* occurs in compounds such as *kʰl̥iʔ-sò* [reach-era] ‘be modern’, in elaborate expressions such as *kʰl̥iʔ-sʰə-kʰl̥iʔ-kətɔʔ* [reach-time(CC1)-reach-time(CC2)] ‘be up to date’, and in verb–verb compounds such as *tʰiʔ-kʰl̥iʔ* [see-reach] ‘see/notice in time (before it is too late)’.

As a descriptive verb, *kʰl̥iʔ* means ‘be free, have spare time’, as in (447).³³

- (447) *mí-xí-nì* *néʔ* *nə-kʰl̥iʔ* *hā*
sun/day-six-day that_{FRAME} 2s-have.time PQ
‘Are you free on Saturday?’ (Vlog)

As a verb of possibility, *kʰl̥iʔ* expresses the possibility that something can be attained within a required period of time, that is, ‘have time enough to’, as in (448). As many of the verbs of possibility, *kʰl̥iʔ* occurs chiefly in negative or interrogative contexts, as in (449) and (450).

- (448) [*jə-lē* *sʰū* *ʔə-ʔóʔ*]_s ***kʰl̥iʔ***
1s-go ALL.P 3x-LOC.N **reach**
‘I have time to go to his place.’ (Kato 1993: 199; my trans.)

- (449) [*sʰɣíʔ*]_s *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* *dīʔ* *nō* *tə-blō* *bāʔ*
wash NEG-**reach** CONT EXT one-time NEG.FP
‘Haven’t had any time free to wash yet.’ (Jones 1961: 201–202)

- (450) *mà=wē* *ʔóʔ.byīʔ* *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* *ʔóʔ.θā* *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* *lə* *bāʔ*
do=COR rest(v.) NEG-**reach** rest NEG-reach NEG.NS NEG.FP
‘[people who keep postponing things must eventually do them and]
do them without having any time to rest’ (Karen proverbs: 25)

³³ In the Thesaurus (Sau Kau-Too 1848a), only the transitive meaning ‘catch up with’ is mentioned in the entry for *kʰl̥iʔ*, possibly indicating that ‘be free’ is a derived meaning that has become more widespread later.

4.3.1.6 *bûʔ* ‘dare to’

The descriptive verb *bûʔ* ‘dare to’ occurs exclusively as a clausal-subject verb in the data, most commonly in interrogative and negative contexts, as in (451) and (452), respectively.

- (451) *nə-dōʔ* *kəθēʔ* ***bûʔ*** *hā*
 2s-ride horse **DARE** PQ
 ‘Dare you ride a horse?’ (Gilmore 1898: §152)
- (452) *jə-hāʔ* *lā* *tā.kʰɿʔ* *klā* ***tə-bûʔ*** *bāʔ*
 1s-walk GNR.P darkness among **NEG-DARE** NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t dare to walk in the dark.’ [HUR]

In a somewhat different sense, *bûʔ* also expresses that the subject of the preceding clause acts uninhibitedly or, in negative contexts, feels too ashamed to do something, as in (453).

- (453) *bāʔ.jōʔ=wē* *lā* *pɣà* *kə-nì-bāʔ* *ʔə* *ʔəxō*
 worry=COR COMP person IRR-laugh-hit 3i 3.REASON
θāʔ.wīʔ=wē ***tə-bûʔ*** *lā* *bāʔ*
 sing=COR **NEG-DARE** NEG.NS NEG.FP
 ‘since he worried that people would laugh at him,
 he didn’t dare to sing anymore’ (Blog, “Saw Kanyaw”)

4.4 Existential and locative clauses

Existential clauses (as in *there is a cat in the room*) and locative clauses (as in *the cat is on the sofa*) are semantically interrelated. In Sgaw Karen, both contain the verb *ʔōʔ* ‘exist’. Typically, *ʔōʔ* takes one S argument and an oblique argument expressing a quantity or a location (or both), as in (454) and (455). Without a context, both examples allow a locative and existential reading.

- (454) *sē* ***ʔōʔ*** [*lā* *tō-tʰəʔ* *pù*]_{Loc}
 money/silver **EXIST** GNR.P coin-bag inside
 ‘There is money in the wallet.’
 or ‘The money is in the wallet.’ [HUR]
- (455) *θāʔ.mī.ɲə* ***ʔōʔ*** [*lā* *kʰāʔ* *ʔə-kəpà*]_{Loc}
 cat **EXIST** GNR.P chair 3x-side
 ‘The cat is beside the chair.’
 or ‘There are cats beside the chair.’ [HUR]

In actual conversation, the meaning (existential or locative) depends on whether the subject is an already-introduced or not-yet-introduced referent. In the latter case, *ʔōʔ* establishes the existence of the referent. In contrast, if the existence of a referent is already known, *ʔōʔ* expresses location.

When used existentially, *ʔəʔ* ‘exist’ is often followed by a phrase denoting the quantity of the S argument, as in (456) and (457).

- (456) *pòʔ.míʔ ʔəʔ=wē.dáʔ [tə-γà]QUANTITY lā ʔə-ʔəʔ lā*
 woman **EXIST=WD** one-CLF(HUM) REL 3-live GNR.P
θəwə ʔə-sʰíʔ tə-pʰlāʔ ʔə-pù lə
 village 3-be.small one-CLF(3D) 3x-inside FACT.FP
 ‘There was a woman who lived in a small village.’ [LTP]

- (457) *híʔ.pʰō.xə.pʰō tə-dúʔ ʔì nēʔ*
 family one-clan this that_{TOP}
ʔəwē.θéʔ ʔəʔ=wē.dáʔ [jé yà]QUANTITY
 3.PL **EXIST=WD** five CLF(HUM)
 ‘there are five people in this family’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

Existential sentences sometimes also contain a locative phrase specifying the location, as in (458). In (459), the locative argument is omitted.

- (458) [*lā həʔ.kʰəʔ.kʰlā tə-béʔ ʔì ʔə-pù*]_{LOC}
 GNR.P Earth one-CLF(2D) this 3x-inside
pγà ʔəʔ=wē [ʔā yà ʔā kəliʔ]QUANTITY lə
 person **EXIST=COR** many CLF(HUM) many kind FP
 ‘There are many people of many kinds on this earth.’ (Karen proverbs: 25)

- (459) *pəjə hə ʔəʔ pγà.kəpə hə ʔəʔ*
 Burmese both EXIST Karen both **EXIST**
 ‘There are both Karens and Burmese [in my town].’ (Jones 1961: 193–194)

Additionally, *ʔəʔ* frequently combines with the classifier phrase *tənə(nə)* ‘some’ in existential clauses, as in (460) and (461). In such cases, *ʔəʔ* is found at the end of the utterance, expressing that cases of the event denoted by the preceding clause exist; in other words, that the event occasionally occurs:

- (460) *dəʔ pγà ʔā-γà ... tənə~nə tə-θéʔ.ɲā-dīʔ bāʔ ʔəʔ*
 and person many-CLF **some** NEG-know-CONT NEG.FP **EXIST**
 ‘And many people ... there are some who don’t know (about this) yet.’ (Vlog)

- (461) *pγà tənə.nə lí.tʰí wì | ʔə-lə θāʔ dəʔ*
 person **some** bathe finish 3x-surface itch and
ɲáʔ lā nōʔ-pù tənə θī-kwíʔ=wē ʔəʔ nēʔ.lə
 fish GNR.P lake-inside **some** die-AWAY=COR **EXIST** FP
 ‘Some villagers got skin rashes after bathing, and fish died in some ponds.’
 (News article)

The constituent order in existential phrases is such that the S argument precedes $\text{ʔ}\delta^?$ ‘exist’, and the quantificational phrase, if any, follows it. The locative phrase can occur on either side of the verb. Similarly, relative clauses follow or precede the verb, as seen in (462) and (463), respectively.

- (462) *[lā θəw̄ dū.lā ʔəpù]_{LOC} pò[?].k^hwā[?]-p^hō ʔδ[?]=wē*
 GNR.P village D. 3x.inside man-child EXIST=COR
[tə-γà]_{QUANT} [lā ʔə-dò[?]-t^hɔ̄[?]-bā[?] d̄ɔ̄[?] ʔə-p^hī]_{REL}
 one-CLF(HUM) REL 3-be.big-UP-HIT with 3x-GM
 ‘In Doo Ler village, there lived a boy who grew up with his grandmother.’
 (Blog, “Saw Kanyaw”)

- (463) *pyà [lē-t^hɔ̄[?] tā.ʔò[?].p^hγò[?]]_{REL} ʔδ[?]=wē*
 person go-UP meeting EXIST=COR
[ʔə-γà jē s^hī]_{QUANT} xā[?].xā[?]
 3x-CLF(HUM) five ten approximately
 ‘About fifty people attended the meeting’ (Blog post)

When $\text{ʔ}\delta^?$ expresses location, the existence of the S argument is already known. In this case, the unmarked position of the locative phrase is after $\text{ʔ}\delta^?$, as in (464) and (465). As with object topicalization (see §11.1), the locative phrase can be fronted to the preverbal topic position, as in (466).

- (464) *k^hē.ʔì jə-ʔδ[?] [lā b̄ɔ̄.kɔ̄[?]]_{LOC} sē n̄*
 now 1s-EXIST GNR.P Bangkok also AGR.FP
 ‘now I’m in Bangkok too’ [KWH]
- (465) *pə-bā[?] ʔδ[?] [lā tā-pli-tā-p^hī[?] ʔə-pù]_{LOC}*
 1p-must EXIST GNR.P thing_{NMLZ}-fear- thing_{NMLZ}-be.startled 3x-inside
 ‘we are forced to live in fear’ (News article)
- (466) *[p^hē-nē[?]]_{LOC} jə-ʔδ[?]-θəkō[?] jə-wē-k^hwā kə-bā[?] tə-nwī*
 LOC.P-that 1s-EXIST-SOC 1sx-eSI-M IRR-hit one-week
 ‘There I visited [lit., was together with; RK] my older brother
 for about one week’ (Jones 1961: 244, 247)

In another type of existential clause, $\text{ʔ}\delta^?$ ‘exist’ combines with the preposition $d̄ɔ̄^?$ ‘with’, which, in turn, is followed by what would be the S argument in a $\text{ʔ}\delta^?$ clause without $d̄ɔ̄^?$. In all examples in the data, a locative phrase precedes $\text{ʔ}\delta^?$. The result is a clause which appears to lack a subject, as illustrated in (467).

- (467) *[lā θəw̄ ʔə-pù]_{LOC} nē[?] ʔδ[?] d̄ɔ̄[?] d̄ɔ̄[?] θ̄ p^hlā[?]*
 GNR.P village 3x-inside that_{FRAME} EXIST with room three CLF
 ‘in the village there are three houses’ (Ballard 1973a: 35)

Finally, the verb $\lambda\delta^?$ also expresses the transitive meaning ‘visit, stay with’, often preceded by one of the motion verbs $h\bar{e}$ ‘come’ or $l\bar{e}$ ‘go’, as in (468).

- (468) $p^h\bar{t}$ $h\bar{a}$ | $j\bar{a}-m\bar{o}$ $m\bar{a}$ $n\bar{a}-l\bar{e}$ $\lambda\delta^?$ $\lambda\bar{a}$ $t\bar{a}s\bar{o}$
 GM VOC 1sx-mother order 2s-go EXIST 3i a.while
 ‘Grandmother, mother asks that you go to her a moment.’ (Ballard 1973c: 153)

Two further examples of a transitive use of $\lambda\delta^?$ ‘exist, stay, live’ can be seen in (469) and (470).

- (469) $w\bar{e}$ $l\bar{a}$ $n\bar{a}-\lambda\delta^?$ $\lambda\bar{a}$ $n\bar{e}^?$ $py\bar{a}.k\bar{a}n\bar{a}$ $\lambda\delta^?$ $t^h\bar{e}.l\bar{e}^?$
 town REL 2s-EXIST 3i that_{FRAME} human EXIST how.many
 ‘How many people are there in the town where you live?’ [HUR]

- (470) $\lambda\bar{a}-k\bar{a}m\bar{a}$ $\lambda\delta^?$ $j\bar{a}$ $k^h\bar{t}$ $m\bar{a}$
 3x-debt EXIST 1si two thousand(CLF)
 ‘He owes me two thousand Baht.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 1071; my trans.)

The following section describes $\lambda\delta^?$ when used in possessive clauses.

4.4.1 Possessive clauses

The existential verb $\lambda\delta^?$ also expresses possession. The construction pattern is P(ossesso)r POSS-P(ossesse)e $\lambda\delta^?$, followed by an optional quantificational phrase, as in (471).

- (471) $[t^h\bar{o}^?]$ _{Pr} $[\lambda\bar{a}-k^h\bar{a}^?]$ _{Pe} $\lambda\delta^?$ $[l\bar{w}\bar{i}$ $k^h\bar{a}^?]$ _{QUANT.P}
 pig 3x-leg EXIST four side(CLF)
 ‘Pigs have four legs.’ (Ballard 1973b: 156)

In this construction, $\lambda\delta^?$ ‘exist’ takes a possessive NP containing the possessor and possessee as its subject. As Yurayong & Sandman (2023) note, this is a rare head-final construction in Karenic languages, where the existential verb is the head and the possessee is the dependent.

Sgaw Karen does not distinguish between alienably and inalienably possessed referents; $t^h\bar{a}^?$ ‘bag’ in (472) is an alienable possession while $m\bar{e}^?.k^h\bar{l}\bar{i}$ ‘eye’ in (473) is inalienable. The possessive construction is the same in both cases.

- (472) $j\bar{a}-t^h\bar{a}^?$ $p^h\bar{a}^?-d\bar{o}^?$ $\lambda\delta^?$ $t\bar{a}-p^h\bar{l}\bar{a}^?$
 1sx-bag INTS-big EXIST one-CLF(3D)
 ‘I have a big bag.’ (Lit., ‘Big bags of mine, there is one.’) [LTP]

- (473) $j\bar{a}-m\bar{e}^?.k^h\bar{l}\bar{i}$ $\lambda\delta^?$ $k^h\bar{t}$ $p^h\bar{l}\bar{a}^?$
 1sx-eye EXIST two CLF(3D)
 ‘I have two eyes.’ [LTP]

In negative contexts, the negative marker *tə-* is prefixed onto *ʔôʔ* ‘exist’. Otherwise, the construction remains the same, as seen in (474) and (475).

(474) *jə-nâʔ.rîʔ* *tə-ʔôʔ* *bâʔ*
 1sx-watch NEG-EXIST NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t have a watch.’ [HUR]

(475) *jə-tâ-mà* *tə-ʔôʔ* *lə* *bâʔ*
 1sx-thing-do NEG-EXIST anymore NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t have any more work. (I no longer have work.)’ (Ballard 1973a: 190)

Elements such as relative clauses (476) and modal verbs (477) can intervene between the possessee and the existential verb.

(476) *jə-kəθîʔ-kʰôʔ-sʰā* [*lā* *kəθîʔ-θəràʔ*
 1sx-medicine-head-hurt REL medicine-teacher/master
hèʔ-lə *jà* *nèʔ*]_{REL} *ʔôʔ-dīʔ*
 give-DOWN 1si that_{FRAME} EXIST-CONT
 ‘I still have some headache medicine the doctor gave me.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 214)

(477) *pə-tâ.kʰwēʔ.tâ.jàʔ* [*krəʔ*]_{ModV} *ʔôʔ-sê.kəʔ=wē.dâʔ* *lā*
 1px-right(n.) should EXIST-also=WD COMP
pə-kə-bâʔ *θūʔ=wē.dâʔ* *pə-pʰō-pə-lì* *dīʔ.lēʔ*
 1p-IRR-must raise=WD 1px-child-1px-grandchild how
 ‘We also should have the right to (decide) how we should raise
 our children and grandchildren.’ (Vlog, “Marriage”)

Dimensions, such as height, width, and depth, can also be expressed using an *ʔôʔ*. The pattern is illustrated in (478), and (479) shows an instance of *tʰə* ‘height’.

(478) *ʔə-tʰə* / *ʔə-lê* / *ʔə-jòʔ* *ʔôʔ* *tə-plâ*
 3x-height / 3x-width / 3x-depth EXIST one-cubit
 ‘it is one cubit (1.5 feet) tall / wide / deep’

(479) *tâʔ* *pʰāʔ-tʰə* *lā* *ʔə-tʰə*
 pillar INTS-be.tall REL 3x-height
ʔôʔ *tə-sʰī* *nwī* *kʰəʔ.jə*
 EXIST one-ten seven foot
 ‘a tall pillar which is seventeen feet tall (lit., whose tallness exists)’
 (Karen religions)

Possession is also expressed by using $\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ ‘be with’, as in (480) and (481). In this head-initial construction ($\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ ‘exist’ being the head and the possessee the dependent; see e.g. Yurayong & Sandman 2023), the possessee (Pe) occurs in an oblique argument introduced by $\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ ‘with’, rather than as the S of $\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$. A negative example can be seen in (482).

(480) $\text{j}̄\text{ə-ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ $[\text{j}̄\text{ə-n}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ.p}̄\text{h}̄\text{ɪ}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{ʔ}̄\text{ə-lw}̄\text{ɛ}$ $\text{ɣ}̄\text{d}̄]$ _{Pe} $\text{l}̄\text{ə}$
 1s-EXIST **with** 1sx-lip 3x-colour be.red FACT.FP
 ‘I have red lips.’ [LTP]

(481) $\text{t}̄\text{a.l}̄\text{ə}$ $\text{l}̄\text{i}̄\text{-s}̄\text{s.s}̄\text{h}̄\text{ɣ}̄\text{l}̄$ $\text{n}̄\text{ɛ}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$
 as.for book-be.holy that_{TOP} EXIST **with**
 $[\text{ʔ}̄\text{ə-s}̄\text{h}̄\text{ə-d}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{s}̄\text{h}̄\text{ə-p}̄\text{h}̄\text{d}̄]$ _{PE} $\text{k}̄\text{o}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{b}̄\text{ɛ}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{d}̄\text{ɛ}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{l}̄\text{ə}$
 3x-section-be.big section-DIM each CLF(2D) INTS FACT.FP
 ‘Every Bible has chapters and verses.’ (Ballard 1973c: 240)

(482) $\text{m}̄\text{ɛ-s}̄\text{ɛ.k}̄\text{s}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{s}̄\text{h}̄\text{a}̄\text{ʔ.p}̄\text{h}̄\text{o.k}̄\text{s.p}̄\text{h}̄\text{o}$ $\text{l}̄\text{ə}$ $\text{t}̄\text{ə-ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$
 be.true_{COP}-also animal REL **NEG-EXIST** **with**
 $\text{ʔ}̄\text{ə-d}̄\text{i}̄\text{ʔ-ʔ}̄\text{ə-d}̄\text{a}$ $\text{b}̄\text{a}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{n}̄\text{ɛ}̄\text{ʔ.l}̄\text{ə}$
 3x-enemy(CC1)-3x-enemy(CC2) NEG.FP FP
 ‘(Toads) are also animals that do not have enemies.’ (Karen drum)

In (483), $\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ ‘exist’ and $\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ ‘with’ are separated by the coreference marker $\text{w}̄\text{ɛ.d}̄\text{a}̄\text{ʔ}$, which is frequent in the spoken language, showing that $\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ} \text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ cannot be considered a compound.

(483) $\text{p}̄\text{əw}̄\text{ɛ.d}̄\text{a}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{k}̄\text{o}̄\text{-n}̄\text{d}̄\text{-ɣ}̄\text{a-d}̄\text{ɛ}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{n}̄\text{s}$
 1p_i each-body-CLF(HUM)-each AGR.FP
 $\text{p}̄\text{ə-ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}=\text{w}̄\text{ɛ.d}̄\text{a}̄\text{ʔ}$ $\text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ $[\text{t}̄\text{a-m}̄\text{i.m}̄\text{s}̄$ $\text{t}̄\text{ə-k}̄\text{h}̄\text{a.k}̄\text{h}̄\text{a}]$ _{PE}
 1p-EXIST=WD **with** thing-dream(v.) one-CLF(RDP)
 ‘Everyone of us has some dream’ (Vlog, “Advice”)

The difference between the head-final (‘my X exists’) and the head-initial (‘I am with X’) possessive constructions is unclear. (In)alienability of the possessee, for example, does not seem to be a relevant predictor as to which construction is used. However, two factors can be mentioned. First, in the head-final construction, the possessor is typically animate, while in the head-initial construction, there is no restriction or tendency regarding the possessor type. Second, the head-initial $\text{ʔ}̄\text{d}̄\text{ʔ} \text{d}̄\text{ʔ}$ construction is sometimes considered more formal than the head-final construction. For example, one speaker considers *b* more formal than *a* in (484).

- (484) a. *jə-sē* *ʔôʔ*
 1sx-money EXIST
 b. *jə-ʔôʔ* *d̄ʔ* *sē*
 1s-EXIST **with** money
 Both: ‘I have money.’ [HUR]

Both the possessor and the possessee of a *ʔôʔ* clause can be modified by a relative clause. In the case of possessor relativization, two patterns occur. In the first pattern (485), the possessed NP is the S of *ʔôʔ*, while in the second (486), it forms an oblique constituent with *d̄ʔ* ‘with’.

- (485) *pyà* *lā* *ʔə-tā.s^hā.kət̄* *ʔôʔ* (NEG: *tə-ʔôʔ* *bāʔ*)
 person REL 3x-time EXIST NEG-EXIST NEG.FP
 ‘people who have (no) time’

- (486) a. *tā* *lā* *ʔə-ʔôʔ* *d̄ʔ* *nà*
 thing REL 3-EXIST **with** 2si
 b. *tā* *lā* *tə-ʔôʔ* *d̄ʔ* *nà* *bāʔ*
 thing REL NEG-EXIST **with** 2si NEG.FP
 a. ‘things that you have’
 b. ‘things that you don’t have’

When the possessee of a *ʔôʔ* clause is modified by a relative clause, only the construction with *d̄ʔ* is possible. In this case, the position of the possessor and possessee is reversed. In (487), the possessee, *θéʔ.pyà* ‘forest’, is the S of *ʔôʔ*, while the possessor, *pyà* ‘we’, appears in the oblique *d̄ʔ* phrase.

- (487) *pə-bāʔ* *kət̄-kè* [*θéʔ.pyà*]_{pc} *lā* *ʔə-ʔôʔ* *d̄ʔ* [*pyà*]_{pr}
 1p-must keep-RETURN forest REL 3-EXIST with 1pi
 ‘We must preserve the forests that we have (lit., that exist with us).’
 (Karen village)

Next, §4.5 discusses the final major verb type, copula verbs, and the clauses they head.

4.5 Copula clauses

A copula clause is defined as a clause in which a copula verb links a subject with a nominal predicate, expressing an identificational or attributorial relationship between the two constituents. Ratanakul (1983) and Pustet (2002) discuss Sgaw Karen copula verbs at length, and much of the information in this section emanates from these studies. Example (488) contains a copula clause identifying the subject, *ʔəwē* ‘he’, as a photographer.

- (488) $\text{ʔəwē} \text{ mē} \quad \text{pyà-dō-tā.γò-p}^h\text{ō} \quad \text{tə-γà} \quad \text{lò}$
 3i be.true_{COP} person-strike-picture-child one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘He is a photographer.’ [HUR]

Sgaw Karen uses two copula verbs, *mē* and *kē*, corresponding to English *be*. Unlike English *be*, and similar linkers in other languages, however, *mē* and *kē* are not semantically void, purely functional “support verbs for nominal predicates” (Stassen 2003: 104). Ratanakul (1983) emphasizes this point, questioning the appropriateness of *copula* as a term describing verbs like *mē* and *kē*. For this reason, the term *semi-copula* has been used to denote copula-like verbs that “unlike copulas [...] add meaning to the predicate phrases in which they are contained” (Pustet 2003: 5). With this caveat in mind, *mē* and *kē* will, for simplicity, be referred to as COPULA VERBS.

Both *mē* and *kē* are clearly verbal; like any verb, *mē* and *kē* occur readily with verbal markers and can combine with other verbs in serialized predicates. In (489), *mē* is marked with the pronominal prefix *jə-* ‘I’ and the coreference marker *wē.dāʔ*, and in (490), *kē* takes the negative prefix *tə-*, which only occurs on verbs. Furthermore, *mē* is a descriptive verb occurring in the coordinate compound *mē-tō* ‘be true’, seen in (491).

- (489) $\text{jə-mē=wē.dā}^{\text{ʔ}} \quad \text{pyà} \quad \text{bā}^{\text{ʔ.ʔō}}$
 1s-be.true_{COP}=WD person be.dirty
 ‘I am a dirty person’ (Hta poem)

- (490) $\text{jə-tə-kē} \quad \text{pò}^{\text{ʔ.k}^h}\text{wā} \quad \text{bā}^{\text{ʔ}}$
 1s-NEG-act.as_{COP} man/male NEG.FP
 ‘I am not male / a man.’ (YouTube vlog)

- (491) $\text{tā-mì}^{\text{ʔ-tā-k}^h}\text{í}^{\text{ʔ}} \quad \text{lō} \quad \text{ʔə-mē-ʔə-tō}$
 thing-be.enjoyable-thing-be.cool REL 3-be.true(CC1)-3-be.true(CC2)
 ‘true peace (lit., peace which is true)’ (Blog)

Sgaw Karen copula-verb clauses consist of three constituents: the copula-clause subject (S), the copula verb (COP), and the copula complement (COMPL) (these terms are from Dixon 2010b). Examples can be seen in (492) and (493).

- (492) $[\text{ʔə-mā}]_S \quad [\text{kē}]_{\text{COP}} \quad [\text{θərá}^{\text{ʔ-mi}}]_{\text{COMPL}}$
 3x-wife act.as teacher-F
 ‘His wife is a teacher.’ [HUR]

- (493) $[\text{sò-wā}]_S \quad [\text{mē}]_{\text{COP}} \quad [\text{pyà} \quad \text{θū}^{\text{ʔ.s}^h}\text{ā}^{\text{ʔ.θā}^{\text{ʔ.s}^h}}\text{ā}^{\text{ʔ}} \quad \text{tə-γà}]_{\text{COMPL}}$
 M.HON-W. be.true person be.intelligent one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘Saw Wah is an intelligent person’ (Saw Kay)

Syntactically, *mê* and *kē* clauses are like transitive clauses in taking a subject and a non-subject argument. However, the verb does not indicate any affectedness of the non-subject argument, unlike in prototypical transitive clauses.

In semantic-functional terms, Dixon (2010b: 159) defines a copula verb as a predicate with relational meaning, as opposed to non-copulative verbs, which refer to an action or state happening in the real world. The relation between the subject and the post-copular NP can be of various kinds, but Dixon (2010b) holds that a copula should minimally express an IDENTIFICATIONAL (“he is my father”) or ATTRIBUTIVE relation (“my father is a teacher”) or both. The function of identificational copulas, according to Stassen (2003), is to label a conceptual category, while predicational (i.e. attributive) copulas add content into established categories (Payne 1997 calls this latter function “proper inclusion”). The identificational sentence *he is my father*, thus, serves to label the subject *he* as “my father”, while the attributive sentence *my father is a teacher* serves to add the referent *my father* into an already established conceptual category, *teachers*.

Examples (494) and (495) are identificational clauses where the complement denotes a unique referent. According to Pustet (2003: 29), “[a]n identificational predicate has only one possible referent in the specific universe of discourse it is embedded in.” An identificational clause thus presupposes some unique referent in a given discourse, equating S with that referent.

(494) [ʔəwē]_S **mê** [jə-θāʔ.θəmū-tì.θəkōʔ]_{COMPL} lə
 3 **be.true**_{COP} 1sx-life-friend FACT.FP
 ‘She is my soulmate.’ [HUR]

(495) ʔə-kē jə-pʰō
 3-act.as_{COP} 1sx-child
 ‘He is my child’ (Vlog, “Marriage”)

Attributive (also known as “predicative”, “ascriptive”, or “characterizational”) copula clauses are exemplified in (496) and (497). In attributive clauses, unlike in identificational ones as exemplified above, the post-copular complement is a “predicative expression” denoting a property ascribed to the subject (Lyons 1977). In other words, the complement expresses what is predicated of, or said about, the subject (Lyons 1977). The property-denoting complement is necessarily non-unique, representing a class of referents, like *tʃō.θərā* ‘schoolteacher’ in (496). A similar, predicative function is performed by *mê* in (497).

(496) jə-ʔōʔ.tō **kē** tʃō-θərāʔ pʰē.nēʔ tə-nīʔ lə
 1s-stay **act.as**_{COP} school-teacher there one-year FACT.FP
 ‘I stayed and became a school teacher there for one year’
 (Jones 1961: 244–245, 247)

- (497) [tʰɿ-sʰɛ̃²-mɛ̃²-jwà]s *mê* [tâ.lô lā ʔə-mì²-ʔə-kʰiʔ]COMPL
 water-stab-sand-flow **be.true**_{COP} place REL 3-be.enjoyable-3-be.cool
 ‘Hti Hseh Meh Ywa is a peaceful place.’ (Karen drum)

Both *mê* and *kē* express identificational and attributive relations. Ratanakul (1983) hypothesizes that *kē* is more often used attributively, while *mê* is more often identificational. Ratanakul (1983) provides two examples to illustrate this point (transcription and glosses are adapted while the translation is from the original). She states that the role of *kē* in (498) is to “describe [N]òmǎ’s quality”, while *mê* in (499) serves to “identify [N]òmǎ from other women” (Ratanakul 1983: 104).

- (498) *nô-mí* *kē* *pyà-yè-ʔô²-tâ* *θē*
 F.HON-PN **act.as**_{COP} person-move-eat-thing be.skilled_{ABIL}
 ‘[N]òmǎ is a good cook’ (Ratanakul 1983: 104)

- (499) *nô-mí* *mê* *pyà-yè-ʔô²-tâ* *θē*
 F.HON-PN **be.true**_{COP} person-move-eat-thing be.skilled_{ABIL}
 ‘[N]òmǎ is the one who is the good cook’ (Ratanakul 1983: 104)

However, this tendency alone does not adequately capture the difference between *mê* and *kē*. Pustet (2002: 603–604), further elaborating on the difference between *mê* and *kē*, states that *mê* induces a “nominal” reading of the post-copular complement, while *kē* induces an “adjectival” reading. In her seminal article, Wierzbicka (1986) states that nominal complements (e.g. *he is a Karen person*) classify subjects into categories associated with a collection of characteristics, while adjectival complements (e.g. *he is Karen*) ascribe one out of an array of possible attributes to the subject. Pustet’s (2002) view on the principal function of *mê* and *kē* is corroborated by the data collected for this thesis, as demonstrated in §4.5.1 and §4.5.2.

Table 24 provides an overview of the characteristics of *mê* and *kē*.

Table 24 Summary of semantics of the verbs *mê* and *kē*

	<i>mê</i>	<i>kē</i>
Identificational	the unmarked choice	in informal language
Attributive	labelling (assigns subject to a class of referents)	characterizational (specifies the functions of the subject)
Permanence	intrinsic (permanent)	non-intrinsic (temporary)
Dynamicity	static	dynamic

4.5.1 *kē* ‘act as’

The verb *kē* is rare as an independent, non-copular verb (but see §4.3.1.2 for examples and hypotheses about the original meaning of *kē*). As a copula, *kē* primarily occurs in attributive

copula clauses, connecting a subject with a complement that ascribes a characteristic to the subject. In (500), *ʔəwē.dāʔ* ‘he’ is characterized as *pyà.kʰəriʔ.pʰō* ‘a Christian’.

- (500) *[ʔəwē.dāʔ]_S kē=wē.dāʔ [pyà-kʰəriʔ-pʰō]_{COMPL} lə̌*
 3_S **act.as_{COP}=WD** person-Christ-child FACT.FP
 ‘He is a Christian.’ [HUR]

As noted above, *kē* conveys more semantic content than a true copula, such as English *be*. More specifically, *kē* conveys the meaning ‘have the properties of’, describing the role, functions, or duties typically associated with the class of referents represented by the post-copular complement. In (501) and (502), *kē* expresses ‘have the role of’ and ‘perform the duties of’.

- (501) *jə-kē [pʰō.θāʔ tə-yà ʔi ʔə-mō]_{COMPL}*
1s-act.as_{COP} child one-CLF(HUM) this 3_X-mother
 ‘I am this child’s mother.’ (Ballard 1973b: 171)

- (502) *ʔəwē kē [kō-ʔə.mē.rə.kà ʔə-kō-kʰōʔ]_{COMPL}*
 3 **act.as_{COP}** country-America 3_X-country-head
 ‘He is the president of the United States of America.’ [LTP]

With *mē* ‘be true’, in contrast, the properties associated with the complement NP are deemphasized. In (503), *mē* simply marks the subject as belonging to a class of referents without alluding to any characteristics related to that class.

- (503) *jə-mē pyà lə̌ tə-ʔəʔ tã.pʰĩʔ.tã.jáʔ tə-yà lə̌*
1s-COP person REL NEG-eat meat one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘I am a vegetarian.’ [HUR]

The difference between (504) and (505), as Pustet (2002: 603–604) explains, is that the *kē* complement is adjectival, indicating that the subject “has the properties typically associated with” the nationality, profession, or ethnicity denoted by the post-copular complement. The complement of *mē*, in contrast, is nominal, functioning as a label. Another example is given in (506).

- (504) *sə-tʰū kē pyà-kəjə̌*
 M.HON-T. **act.as_{COP}** person-Karen
 ‘Mr. Too is (a) Karen (tribesperson)’ (Pustet 2002: 603)

- (505) *sə-tʰū mē=wē pyà-kəjə̌*
 M.HON-T. **be.true_{COP}=COR** person-Karen
 ‘Mr. Too is a Karen tribesperson’ (Pustet 2002: 603)

- (506) [ʔəwē.dáʔ]s **kē** [pɣó]COMPL n̄s
 3s **act.as**_{COP} Pwo AGR.FP
 ‘He is Pwo.’ (Chiang Mai)

Pustet (2002: 603–604) further notes that, given the focus of *kē* on characteristics, it is unsurprising that *kē* rather than *mē* is preferred when the post-copular complement denotes a profession or nationality. In such contexts, *mē* is also possible but is considered more formal than *kē*.

Additionally, since *kē* expresses attributes rather than intrinsic and permanent features, *kē* is used when describing something that is or used to be the case for a limited period of time. This is evident in (507) and (508), where *kē* *tʃō.θəráʔ* ‘function as a teacher’ is temporary and, again, the focus is on roles and duties rather than on mere class assignment.

- (507) *lā* *ʔə-pù.kwìʔ* *ʔə-níʔ* *tə-sʰɿ* *nēʔ*
 GNR.P 3-pass(v.) 3x-year one-ten that_{FRAME}
jə-kē-té-jē.dáʔ *tʃō-θəráʔ* *tə-ɣà* *l̄*
 1s-**act.as**_{COP}-ABANDON-1s:WD school-teacher one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘Ten years ago, I was a schoolteacher.’ [HUR]

- (508) *n̄s.ní* *nə-kē* *θəráʔ* *báʔ.sʰáʔ* *ʔə.ʔì* *tə-bl̄s*
 be.usual 2s-**act.as**_{COP} teacher but this one-time
ʔì *nə-kə-báʔ* *kē.tʰóʔ* *pyà-mà.lō-tá-pʰō* *tə-ɣà*
 this 2s-IRR-hit become person-study-thing-child one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘You are usually the teacher, but this time you must become a student.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 171)

Similarly, in (509), the use of *kē* is due to the locative phrase *lā wē.təkúʔ* ‘in Yangon’, which is compatible with a dynamic verb like *kē*, but not with a stative verb like *mē* (cf. ?*The car is red in the garage*). Example (510) demonstrates an alternative way of expressing roughly the same meaning.

- (509) *kʰē.ʔì* [jə-tʃō]s **kē** [tʃō-θərá]COMPL
 now 1sx-eB **act.as**_{COP} school-teacher
lā *wē-təkúʔ* *l̄*
 GNR.P city-Yangon FACT.FP
 ‘Now my older brother is a schoolteacher in Yangon.’ [LTP]

- (510) *kʰē.ʔì* *jə-tʃō* *mà* *tʃō-θərá* *tá.mà*
 now 1sx-eB do school-teacher work
lā *wē-təkúʔ* *l̄*
 GNR.P city-Yangon FACT.FP
 ‘Now my older brother works as schoolteacher in Yangon.’ [LTP]

The adjectival nature of *kē* complements also explains why *kē* occurs when the subject matches some but not all of the characteristics typically associated with the copula complement (Wierzbicka 1986: 358). In (511), *kē* characterizes the subject, *θē².kʰō².sʰā²* ‘tree stump’, as having some of the characteristics of a friend. Similarly, (512) tells about the drawing of a house rather than a real house, hence the use of *kē*.

- (511) *mà* *tə-θē* *d̄s.pī.wē* ***kē*** *dā*
do NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} sibling **act.as_{cop}** enemy
mà *θē* *θē².kʰō².sʰā²* ***kē*** *tì.θəkō²*
do be.skilled_{ABIL} tree.stump **act.as_{cop}** friend
‘If we can not do (deal with people well), our siblings will be our enemies;
if we can do, a stump can be our friend’ (Karen proverbs: 31)

- (512) *dā²* *lā* *ʔə-ʔō²* *bū²* *dā²* *θərá²*
room/house REL 3-EXIST be.near with teacher
kə-kē *θərá²* *ʔə-dā²*
IRR-act.as_{cop} teacher 3x-room/house
‘The house [drawn on a piece of paper] which is near the teacher
will be the teacher’s house’ (Ballard 1973a: 52)

As a dynamic verb, *kē* can combine with the benefactive marker *nē* (the variant *ʔē²* occurs in northern Thailand). On the other hand, simply being categorized as something is unlikely to benefit others, explaining why *mē* does not occur with the benefactive marker in the data. In (513)–(515), performing the function following *kē* is seen as beneficial to others, hence the use of *nē/ʔē²*.

- (513) *sə-pʰō.γə* *mā* *jə-kē-nē* *ʔə-s̄.təlō.pā*
M.HON-P. order 1s-act.as_{cop}-get_{BEN} 3x-go-between
‘Saw Pho Gaw asked me to become [lit., act for (him) as; RK]
his go-between’ (Ballard 1973c: 28)

- (514) *mè* ***kē-ʔē²*** *pə-sʰā²*
rice **act.as_{cop}-BEN** 1x-food
‘Rice is [lit., functions for (us) as; RK] our food.’ (Ratanakul 1983: 106)

- (515) *mā-sē.kā²* *l̄s.kəwə* *kʰō².nā* *tə-γà*
order-also local leader one-CLF(HUM)
lā ***kə-kē-nē*** *ʔəwē.θē²* *pγà-nē²-klē* *nē².lō*
COMP **IRR-act.as_{cop}-get_{BEN}** 3.PL person-point-way FP
‘(They) also asked a local leader to be their guide’ (News article)

Additionally, the inchoative marker *tʰā²* ‘come up, appear’ and the marker of indirect causation *dī²* occur readily with *kē* but not with *mē*. Again, *kē* signals that the complement

is non-intrinsic, something that one can become (Ballard 1973b: 174). A change of state from not being to being is therefore naturally expressed with *kē*, as in (516) and (517).

(516) *nô-wā nâ.hū lā sô-yè kə-kē-tʰɔʔ θəmədā*
 F.HON-W. hear COMP M.HON-G. IRR-act.as_{COP-UP} president
 ‘Naw Wah heard that Saw Gay will become president.’ [LTP.P]

(517) *tā.ʔɔʔ.tā.ʔɔ lā mé tə-yè bāʔ nēʔ*
 food REL be.true_{COND} NEG-be.good NEG.FP that_{FRAME}
ʔə-dīʔ-kē-tʰɔʔ-sē.kɔʔ tā.sʰūʔ.tā.sʰā
 3-CAUS-act.as_{COP-UP}-also illness
 ‘Food which is not good causes illness.’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

Lastly, *kē* is more common in the spoken language, which explains the occurrence of *kē* also in identificational clauses, as in (518). The use of *kē* may also vary regionally, a topic which requires of further research.

(518) *būʔ.yè kē pyà yà ʔi ʔə-mì*
 B. act.as_{COP} person CLF(HUM) this 3x-name
 ‘Boo Gay is this person’s name.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 191)

4.5.2 *mé* ‘be true’

As established above, *mé* is a descriptive verb meaning ‘be true’, frequently used as a confirmatory exclamation similar to English ‘yes (it’s true)’, or, when negated, as a contradictory interjection ‘no (not true)’. Examples (520) and (521) are affirmative and negative replies, respectively, to the question in (519).

(519) *nə-ʔōʔ-tʰɔʔ-xàʔ pē.trɔʔ hā*
 2s-open-UP-FIXED window PQ
 ‘Did you open the window?’ [LTP.D]

(520) *mé | jə-ʔōʔ-tʰɔʔ-xàʔ pē.trɔʔ lə*
 be.true 1s-open-UP-FIXED window FACT.FP
 ‘Yes (lit., true), I opened the window.’ [LTP.D]

(521) *tə-mé bāʔ | jə-tə-ʔōʔ-tʰɔʔ-xàʔ pē.trɔʔ bāʔ*
 NEG-be.true NEG.FP 1s-NEG-open-UP-FIXED window NEG.FP
 ‘No (lit., not true), I didn’t open the window.’ [LTP.D]

As a copula verb, *mé* occurs in both identificational and attributive copula clauses. In identificational contexts, *mé* is the most common copula verb. This is because *mé* is primarily classificatory while *kē* is characterizational. Note, however, that *kē* is also used

identificational in informal language. In (522), some speakers accepted only *mê* as the correct copula verb.

- (522) *ʔə-mì* *mê* *sə-wā*
 3x-name **be.true**_{COP} M.HON-PN(be.white)
 ‘His name is Saw Wah.’ [LTP]

A subtype of identificational clauses is called specificational clauses which, as Higgins (1973) explains, contain a non-referential subject and a non-predicational complement. Rather than saying something about the subject, specificational statements contain a subject that serves to “delimit a domain” and a complement specifying a referent that fits into that domain (Higgins 1973: 198). Examples (523) and (524) are specificational statements in which the subject is a specification about the complement. According to one speaker from the Kayin–Tak region, *kē* is more informal than *mê* when used in specificational statements.

- (523) *pyà* *tə-γà* *ʔi* *ʔə-pá* *mê / kē* *jà* *lò*
 person one-CLF(HUM) this 3x-father **be.true**_{COP} / **act.as**_{COP} 1si FP
 ‘The father of this person is me.’ [HUR]

- (524) [*liʔ* *lā* *ʔə-γè-kətā* *néʔ*]_S *mê* [*pʰē.léʔ* *tə-béʔ* *léʔ*]_{COMPL}
 book REL 3-be.good this_{TOP} **be.true**_{COP} which one-CLF CQ
 ‘Which one is the best book?’ [HUR]

In attributive (or predicational) copula clauses, as explained above, *mê* evokes a nominal reading of the post-copular complement while the complement of *kē* ‘act as, function as’ is interpreted as adjectival (Pustet 2002). The primary function of *mê* in attributive contexts is to categorize the referent denoted by the subject as belonging to a certain class of referents. In other words, while *kē* assigns a single characteristic (one of many) to the subject, *mê* signals that the subject is something “intrinsically” (Ballard 1973b: 174). In (525) and (526), *mê* marks the post-copular complements as labels while any duties or functions associated with them are deemphasized.

- (525) *tā* *ʔəwē* *ʔi* *mê* *jəpáʔ* *ʔə-tā.ʔʔʔ* *lò*
 thing 3 this **be.true**_{COP} Japan 3x-food FACT.FP
 ‘This is (can be labelled as) Japanese food.’ [HUR]

- (526) *jə-pʰā.tí* *mê* *tʃō-θəráʔ* *lò*
 1sx-uncle **be.true**_{COP} school-teacher FACT.FP
 ‘My uncle is a teacher (i.e. has the title *teacher*).’ [LTP]

Ratanakul (1983) and Pustet (2002) note that copula-less clauses are possible, especially in the spoken language. Ratanakul (1983) considers them variants of *mê* clauses in which the copula has been dropped. Thus, verbless clauses, like *mê* clauses, express assignment of

the subject to a class of referents. Example (527) is a verbless clause where the insertion of *mê* or (colloquially) *kê* is possible. Two further examples can be seen in (528) and (529).

- (527) [Finland *θəmədā* *nêʔ*]_S [mətəyà *lêʔ*]_{CC}
 F. president that_{TOP} who CQ
 ‘Who is the president of Finland?’ [LTP.P]
- (528) *jà* *nêʔ* *nə-pā* *lò*
 1_{SI} that_{TOP} 2_{SX-F} FACT.FP
 ‘I’m your father.’ (Blog, “Saw Kanyaw”)
- (529) *tā.lā* *shē.mō.wā* *nêʔ* *kā* *nê-dāʔ*
 as.for white.tunic that_{TOP} wear.on.top get_{ABIL-EXCL}
t^hē *pɣà.pòʔ.míʔ* *lā* *ʔə-míʔ.kənò* *təp^hāʔ* *nêʔ.lò*
 only woman REL 3-unmarried.girl COLL FP
 ‘As for the white tunic, only unmarried girls can wear (them).’
 (Vlog, “Karen weaving”)

This concludes the description of the most common verb types. The next section, §4.6, discusses some major types of verbal compounds consisting of a verb and a noun.

4.6 Verbal compounds

Verbal compounds are compounds that function as verbs. Three types can be identified based on the word class of the components: noun–verb, verb–noun compounds, and verb–verb compounds. This section will be concerned with the first two types, while verb–verb compounds are treated in §5.4. Also, coordinate compounds, which are non-headed, are discussed in Chapter 6.

Noun–verb (NV) and verb–noun (VN) compounds bear close resemblance to subject–verb and verb–object phrases, respectively, and distinguishing between a compound and a phrase is not always straightforward. Examples of both types are given in (530).

- (530) *nā-lò* [ear-be.straight] ‘be obedient’ (NV compound)
ʔə-ní [drink-breast] ‘breastfeed (of a baby)’ (VN compound)

Regarding the difference between compounds and phrases, compounds generally have conventionalized meanings often unintelligible based on the meaning of the individual components, while phrases can be understood more literally. Syntactically, the two components of a compound are inseparable by other elements while VN and NV phrases represent a more loosely bound construction, albeit with some compound-like properties. NV and VN compounds are discussed in §4.6.1 and §4.6.2, respectively.

4.6.1 Noun–verb compounds

The most common type of noun–verb compounds which function as verbs contain a noun referring to a body part followed by a descriptive verb. Common body parts include *nâ* ‘ear’, *mêʔ* ‘eye’, *kʰôʔ* ‘head’, *θāʔ* ‘heart’, and *θûʔ* ‘liver’. Examples (531) and (532) show examples with *nâ* ‘ear’ and *mêʔ* ‘eye’.

- (531) *nâ-hū* [ear-be.heard] ‘hear’
nâ-pâ [ear-come.through] ‘understand’
nâ-kêʔ [ear-be.crooked] ‘be disobedient’
- (532) *mêʔ-sʰyāʔ* [eye-avoid] ‘be shy, ashamed’
mêʔ-kʰɪʔ-θû [eye-be.dark-be.black] ‘be dizzy’
mêʔ-blôʔ [eye-be.blind?] ‘be blind’

In negative contexts, the negative prefix *tə-* is attached to the verb or the noun component. For example, *nâ.hū*, consisting of *nâ* ‘ear’ and *hū* ‘be heard’ (as in ‘a noise is heard’), always remains intact in negative contexts in the data, as in (533). In contrast, *nâ.pâ* ‘understand’ is negatable in two ways, as shown in (534). The non-separated variant in *b* is significantly more common in the data.

- (533) *jə-tə-nâ.hū* *bâʔ*
 1s-NEG-**hear** NEG.FP
 ‘I can’t hear.’
- (534) a. *jə-nâ* *tə-pâ* *bâʔ*
 1sx-**ear** NEG-**come.through** NEG.FP
- b. *jə-tə-nâ.pâ* *bâʔ*
 1s-NEG-**understand** NEG.FP
 Both: ‘I don’t understand.’

Most verbal noun–verb compounds are separated when negated, indicating that some noun–verb constructions are more loosely compounded than others. It seems that the less semantically transparent the compound is, the more likely it is for the components to stick together. In (535), the noun, *mêʔ*, and the verb, *sʰyāʔ*, are separated.

- (535) *ʔə-mêʔ* *tə-sʰyāʔ* *bâʔ*
 3x-**eye** NEG-**avoid** NEG.FP
 ‘He’s not shy.’

The “psycho-noun” (Matisoff 1986) *θāʔ* ‘heart’ is especially common in noun–verb compounds, often combining with *θûʔ* ‘liver’ in elaborate expressions (see Chapter 6). Compounds with *θāʔ* are typically descriptive verbs referring to states or properties of the mind, as seen in (536).

- (536) *θā²-sâ* [heart-be.tender] ‘be young (of people)’
θā²-pyâ [heart-be.mature] ‘be old (of people)’
θā²-sʰī² [heart-be.small] ‘be timid’
θā²-dô² [heart-be.big] ‘be angry’
θā²-kô [heart-be.hot] ‘be worried’

In *θā²* compounds, negation is sometimes marked on the verb, sometimes on *θā²*. As mentioned above, *tə-* attaching to *θā²* rather than (as expected) to the verb may be due to a loss of semantic transparency; in other words, that the compound is treated as a verb rather than as a noun–verb phrase. Examples (537) and (538) illustrate the two ways of negating a *θā²* compound.

- (537) *θā² tə-kʰī bā²*
heart NEG-be.elated NEG.FP
‘not be happy’

- (538) *tə-θā².hē bā²*
NEG-hate NEG.FP
‘not hate’

A compound-like feature of *θā²-V* constructions distinguishing them from noun–verb phrases is that they can be nominalized using the nominalizer *tâ*. Furthermore, the resulting deverbal noun can be possessivized. Examples can be seen in (539).

- (539) *θā²-kʰī* [heart-be.elated] ‘be happy’
tâ-θā².kʰī [thing_{NMLZ}-be.happy] ‘happiness’
pə-tâ-θā².kʰī [1px-thing_{NMLZ}-be.happy] ‘our happiness’

A small number of transitive *θā²-V* compounds exist, three of which will be mentioned here: *θā².hē* ‘hate’, *θā².l̄* ‘desire, like’, and *θā².wī²* ‘sing’. According to Wade (1896), *hē* means ‘hate’ and *l̄* ‘covet’, but none of these verbs occur on their own in the data. The verb *wī²*, in turn, means ‘be tasty’. Note also the elaborate version of *θā².wī²*, which is *θū²-wī²-θā²-sʰē* [liver-be.tasty-heart-be.sweet] ‘sing’. All three are true compounds since the components are inseparable by verbal prefixes like *tə-* ‘not’ and *kə-* ‘will’, as seen in (540) and (541).

- (540) *jə-tə-θā².hē=jē nà bā²*
1s-NEG-hate=1se 2si NEG.FP
‘I do not hate you’ (Hta poem)

- (541) *jə-kə-θā².wī² wī θā².wī²-pò².tʰwē jə-kʰī nō²*
1s-IRR-sing finish sing-follow 1sx-rear FP
‘I’ll sing after which you sing after me.’ (Ballard 1973c: 228)

4.6.2 Verb–noun (quasi-)compounds

Another common compound-like construction consists of a verb followed by a non-referential object. Only a few verb–noun constructions are true compounds, while the majority consist of compound-like verb phrases, or quasi-compounds. The common denominator is that the noun following the verb is non-referential, akin to incorporated nouns like *baby* in *babysit* (see e.g. Mithun 1984). This type of VN phrases often correspond to one word in English, and many of them have highly conventionalized meanings.

Syntactically, however, the verb and the noun are loosely bound; elements such as another verb or the coreference marker *wē* can intervene between the two components. Example (542) illustrates the verb–noun phrase *ʔɔʔ mē* being separated by the sociative marker *θəkōʔ* ‘together’.

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| (542) | <i>ʔɔʔ mē</i> | [eat rice] | ‘eat, have a meal’ |
| | <i>ʔɔʔ-θəkōʔ mē</i> | [eat-SOC rice] | ‘eat together’ |
| | (* <i>ʔɔʔ.mē-θəkōʔ</i>) | | Intended: ‘eat together’ |

Although syntactically transitive, compound-like verb–noun phrases have a low degree of transitivity for several reasons. For example, the constructions express non-telic actions, and the patient, represented by the noun component, is non-referential and non-individuated (Hopper & Thompson 1980). The object is “semantically cognate with the V”, and the focus is on the action (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 258). As Næss (2007: 47) notes, the grammatically relevant fact about clauses involving such non-individuated objects is that they are less marked (more “natural”) than clauses involving “highly individuated objects”. The consequence is that the two types of objects are often coded differently (Næss 2007: 47). In Sgaw Karen, non-referential objects such as *liʔ* in *kwēʔ liʔ* [write writing] cannot be topicalized.

Further examples of VN phrases can be seen in (543).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------------|---|
| (543) | <i>ʔɔʔ-mē</i> | [eat-rice] | ‘eat, have a meal’ |
| | <i>p^hāʔ-liʔ</i> | [read-book/script] | ‘read’ |
| | <i>blā-t^hī</i> | [immerse-water] | ‘baptize’ |
| | <i>s^hēʔ-kīʔ</i> | [stab-pattern] | ‘tattoo (v.)’ |
| | <i>ʔɔ-mōʔ</i> | [drink/inhale-cigarette] | ‘smoke (v.)’ |
| | <i>p^hlō-t^hō</i> | [go.through-school] | ‘graduate’ |
| | <i>t^hōʔ-k^hīʔ</i> | [thrust-upland.field] | ‘plant upland rice (by thrusting a hole in the ground to drop the rice seeds in)’ |

The objects in (543) correspond to what Van Valin & LaPolla (1997: 123) call an “inherent argument”, described as “an argument which expresses an intrinsic facet of the meaning of the verb and does not refer specifically to any participants in an event denoted by the verb; it serves to characterize the nature of the action rather than to refer to any of the participants”.

The verb–noun phrases seen so far contain a noun component denoting a semantically specified referent. In many verb–noun phrases, however, the object is the generic noun *tâ* ‘thing’. In fact, transitive clauses generally must contain an object, which is minimally *tâ* ‘thing’, as demonstrated in (544). Compare this with the monovalent verb *nì* in (545) where no object occurs.

- (544) a. *nə-mà* *mənì* *lê?*
 2s-do what CQ
 b. *jə-θā?.wī?* *tâ* (**jə-θā?.wī?*)
 1s-sing THING
 a. ‘What are you doing?’ b. ‘I’m singing.’
- (545) a. *bâ?* *tâ* *mənì* *lê?*
 hit/occur thing what CQ
 b. *p^hō.θâ?* *nì*
 child laugh
 a. ‘What is happening?’ b. ‘The child is laughing.’ [LTP.P]

In contrast to the quasi-compounds seen so far, a few verb–noun constructions occur which appear to have been reanalysed as true compounds in the modern language. In such cases, the verb–noun compound (itself a verb–object phrase) can take an additional object, thus differing from loose verb–noun compounds such as *ʔə?.mè* ‘eat’ and *blā.t^hī* ‘baptize’. One example is *bâ?.θā?* ‘like’, seen in (546), a fully lexicalized verb–noun compound.

- (546) *nə-bâ?-θā?* *tâ-γè-lò?.kwē* *p^hē.lê?* *tə-kəlì?* *lê?*
 2s-hit-heart thing-move-play which one-kind CQ
 ‘What kind of sports do you like?’ (Vlog)

4.7 Summary

This chapter has explored the syntactic and semantic characteristics of Sgaw Karen verbs and clauses, addressing some characteristics of independent clauses, four main verb types, and two types of verbal compounds.

Sgaw Karen, an isolating language, relies on unbound markers and verb serialization to indicate aspect, and modality. Verbal morphology includes prefixes for person, negation, irrealis, and conditionality, which maintain strict ordering rules. Independent clauses follow a canonical SVO (SV/AVP) word order, with variations for topicalization or pragmatic emphasis. Transitivity, a gradable value, was distinguished from valency, which in Sgaw Karen describes a verb as being either intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive.

Four verb types were described. First, descriptive verbs function as predicates or modifiers and exhibit unique behaviours, such as degree specification through intensifiers, reduplication, or other markers, and the availability for comparison. Second, a subset of

descriptive verbs take clauses as their subjects. Of these, verbs of possibility constitute a semantically distinct group denoting ability, permission, or likelihood. Third, existential and locative clauses utilize the verb *ʔδʔ* ‘exist’, which is also used in possessive constructions. Possession is expressed either with the possessed noun appearing before *ʔδʔ* (head-final) or after it (head-initial). Fourth, copula clauses link subjects with nominal predicates by using the verbs *mē* and *kē*, expressing identity or attributes, respectively.

Finally, the chapter described two types of headed verbal compounds: noun–verb and verb–noun compounds. The former commonly consists of a noun denoting a body part and a descriptive verb, while the latter are more or less lexicalized verb phrases containing a verb and its object.

Having described single verbs and compounds consisting of a verb and a noun, we now turn to verb serialization, in Chapter 5, which denotes verb complexes featuring more than one verb.

5 Verb serialization

The verb slot in a Sgaw Karen clause often contains more than one verb. In (547), four verbs form the verb compound heading the clause.

- (547) *bɔ̌.θó̌ tɔ̌-dī ʔi nē̌ hā̌-lù-pʰɔ̌-ʔɔ̌ sʰā̌*
 tiger one-CLF(ANIM) this that_{TOP} **walk-chase-grab-eat** food
 ‘This tiger is hunting for food.’ [HUR]

Since hunting is an activity involving several subevents, Sgaw Karen has no single morpheme to express it.

This phenomenon – several verbs occurring in the same clause with no subordinative or coordinative morphology linking them – has been a topic of investigation since the late 19th century, when monoclausal verb sequencing was described for the West African language Akan (Aikhenvald 2006: 58–60). Authors writing on the subject have focused on different languages and research questions, resulting in various, sometimes mutually contradicting, definitions of the concept (e.g. Foley & Olson 1985; Sebba 1987; Lord 1993; Déchaine 1993; Bisang 1995; Durie 1997). As Lord (1993: 2) notes: “Verb sequences [...] come in a variety of surface forms and carry a range of interpretations, and some of these form/meaning correspondences have been called serial verb constructions.”

The use of the term *serial verb construction* (SVC) in modern linguistics goes back to the 1970s (Haspelmath 2016), appearing mostly in analyses of West African languages. Since then, the term has gained currency as a comparative concept for multi-verb sequences in numerous genetically unrelated languages, including Karenic (e.g. Solnit 2006). In her influential introductory chapter to Aikhenvald & Dixon (2006), Aikhenvald (2006) presents some syntactic and semantic features characterizing SVCs. These could be summarized as follows: SVCs are sequences of verbs (or VPs) which do not contain subordinative marking, lack an intonation break between the verbs, form a single predicate, have one tense, aspect, and polarity value, occur in the same clause, and express one event (Aikhenvald 2006: 4–21). The verb sequence in (547) meets this definition, while the verbs in *the tiger walks around searching for food to eat* do not, due to infinitive marking on *searching* and *to eat*.

The definition by Aikhenvald (2006) has been criticized for its circularity, since none of the key terms it contains are further defined (Haspelmath 2016). With the explicit objective of defining the SVC as a comparative concept (Haspelmath 2010), Cleary-Kemp (2015) and Haspelmath (2016) have attempted to limit the definition to make it better suited for cross-linguistic comparison. For example, Haspelmath (2016) excludes constructions in

which one verb is an argument of another verb from his definition of the SVC. An example is the Sgaw Karen verb sequence in (548), where *bâʔ* ‘must’ is a modal verb (see §5.1.1) taking the following verb as its non-S/A argument.

- (548) *nə-bâʔ hē.kè lā hīʔ lī*
 2s-**must** **come.back** GNR.P house NS
 ‘You must come back home now.’ [LTP]

Thus, while Aikhenvald (2006) includes verb sequences like *bâʔ hē.kè* ‘must come back’ in her definition, Haspelmath (2016) excludes them on the basis that a too broad definition makes the SVC less useful as a comparative concept.

Lord (1993) approaches SVCs from a diachronic perspective, observing clear parallels in the grammaticalization paths of various verbs in genetically unrelated languages. For example, serializing languages may employ verbs to perform functions often performed by prepositions or bound morphemes in non-serializing languages, such as using the verb ‘give’ in benefactive constructions (Lord 1993: 3, 44–45). This concept of serial verbs, as understood by Lord (1993), corresponds closely to the verbal modifiers in Sgaw Karen (see §5.5). In (549), for example, the verbal modifier *nê* ‘get’ has the grammaticalized meaning ‘for’, expressing benefaction (see §8.1.1).

- (549) *kâʔ-ʔʔʔ-nê jà lā tā.nâʔ tə-lôʔ təkê*
roast-eat-get_{BEN} 1si GNR.P meat one-lump(CLF) OPT.FP
 ‘Roast a piece of meat for me.’ [HUR]

Monoclausal verb sequences in Sgaw Karen resembling those described in the literature on SVCs are common. As anyone studying Sgaw Karen clauses will soon notice, the verb slot is more often than not occupied by more than one verbal morpheme. The prevalence of such sequences of juxtaposed verbs in Sgaw Karen can be seen as a corollary of the general lack of bound verbal morphology; grammatical categories, such as the benefactive in (549), are expressed by verbs rather than affixes. The result is verb sequences containing, for example, secondary verbs (*ʔêʔ.dōʔ lē* [want go] ‘want to go’), motion verbs (*lē pyè tā* [go buy thing] ‘go shopping’), and verb–verb compounds (*pyè-ʔʔʔ* [buy-eat] ‘buy for eating’).

Since defining these verb sequences as representing a single construction is problematic, the term VERB SERIALIZATION is used instead of SVC in the ensuing discussion. Verb serialization is used as an umbrella term for any monoclausal verb sequencing, defined morpho-syntactically as contiguous strings of verbs with no overt markers of sub- or coordination separating the verbs. Morphosyntactically, then, multi-verb sequences behave in the same way as monomorphemic verbs; verbal prefixes attach once to the initial verb, while postverbal elements such as coreference markers and objects follow the last verb. In (550), the serialized main verb, *bâʔ lə.tèʔ* ‘must fall off’, is flanked by the irrealis marker *kə-* and the coreference marker *wē.dâʔ*.

- (550) $\text{ʔə-k}^h\text{ə}^?.\text{θ}\hat{a}^?.\text{x}\bar{\text{I}}\text{-s}^h\hat{u}^?$ ***kə-bâ?*** ***ľ̩.tê? = wē.dâ?*** *tə-bō~bō*
 3x-head-hair **IRR-hit** **fall.off=WD** one-CLF(1D)~CLF(1D)
 ‘(Because she combed her hair) some strands of hair must have fallen down.’
 (Vlog, “Actress”)

Semantically, several types of verb serialization can be identified (see Table 25). The conditional verb *mê* ‘if, when’ (from *mê* ‘be true, be the case’; see §9.4.4) occupies the first slot in a verb sequence. The remaining verb types can be divided into, firstly, constructions in which one verb takes the following verb or phrase as its complement and, secondly, verb–verb compounds, in which V_2 is not a complement of V_1 . It is possible to posit a continuum with productive, semantically transparent verb combinations on one end and unproductive, lexicalized compounds on the other. For example, semantic transparency of V_2 typically correlates with the replaceability of this verb with the generic verb *mà* ‘do’. As seen in (551), this is possible in causative $d\bar{r}^? \text{-} V$ (‘cause to V ’) serialization but, as (552) demonstrates, not in $V\text{-}ʔ\hat{\delta}^?$ (‘ V for eating’) compounds.

- (551) a. $\text{ʔə-d}\bar{r}^? \text{-} ʔ\hat{\delta}^?$ *nà* *tâ* *mənì* *lê?*
 3-CAUS-eat 2si thing what CQ
 b. $\text{ʔə-d}\bar{r}^? \text{-} m\hat{a}$ *nà* *tâ* *mənì* *lê?*
 3-CAUS-do 2si thing what CQ
 a. ‘What did she feed you?’ b. ‘What did she make you do?’ [LTP]

- (552) a. $*n\hat{a}\text{-k}\hat{a}\text{-p}\hat{y}\hat{e}\text{-}m\hat{a}$ $\text{θ}\hat{a}k^h\bar{o}^? \text{-} \text{θ}\hat{a}^?$ *mənì* *lê?*
 2s-IRR-buy-do mango-fruit what CQ
 b. $j\hat{a}\text{-k}\hat{a}\text{-p}\hat{y}\hat{e}\text{-}ʔ\hat{\delta}^?$ $\text{θ}\hat{a}k^h\bar{o}^? \text{-} \text{θ}\hat{a}^?$
 1s-IRR-buy-eat mango-fruit
 a. Intended: ‘For doing what will you buy mango?’
 b. ‘I will buy mango (for eating).’ [LTP]

Hence, on a scale from productive verb serialization to lexicalized compounds, $V\text{-}ʔ\hat{\delta}^?$ combinations are considered more compound-like than $d\bar{r}^? \text{-} V$ combinations.

Table 25 shows the slots in a verb sequence organized by column, each of which can, in theory, be filled. Some verb combinations are not easily classified, as will be discussed. The first verb slot contains *mê* ‘if’ (from *mê* ‘be true’). The wavy vertical border indicates the possibility of *mê* and the following verb to be separated by the negative prefix *tə-* (see §9.4.4). In other cases, *tə-* precedes the first verb in the sequence. Group 2 includes secondary verbs, discussed in §5.1, which are further divisible into modal (§5.1.1) and non-modal (§5.1.2) secondary verbs. Group 3 consists of prior motion and action verbs, treated in §5.3, followed by cause–effect verbs in Group 4, the topic of §5.4.2. After the main verb in Group 5, Group 6 contains verbal modifiers that form a verb–verb compound with the main verb, discussed in §5.5. We begin the discussion with secondary verbs, in §5.1.

5.1 Secondary verbs

SECONDARY VERBS are a group of verbs that take a following verb as their complement. The term was first used in this sense by Dixon (2005), who further defines secondary verbs as “those providing semantic modification of some other verb” (Dixon 2005: 96). They are distinguished from primary verbs (in Sgaw Karen, the verbs following secondary verbs), which can occur in a clause without another verb (Dixon 2010b: 400). While Dixon’s definition is mainly semantic, encompassing syntactically distinct verbs and bound morphemes, this section is limited to those verbs which precede the primary verb, forming a verb complex with it. Also note that the terms *secondary verb* and *primary verb* (the latter being the same as the “Main verb” in Table 25) are used in a semantic sense; on a syntactic level, the complement-taking secondary verb is the main verb and the following verb its argument. Semantically, as Dixon (2010b: 400) explains, the primary verbs express the main lexical content of the clause, while the secondary verbs act as semantic modifiers. A similar distinction is made in the case of descriptive verbs with clausal subjects (see §4.3).

Examples of secondary verbs in Sgaw Karen include $\text{ʔɛ}^{\text{?}}.\text{d}\bar{\text{o}}^{\text{?}}$ ‘want’ and $\text{s}\bar{\text{a}}^{\text{?}}.\text{t}^{\text{h}}\bar{\text{ɔ}}^{\text{?}}$ ‘start’, seen in (553) and (554). Note that the verbal markers $\text{j}\bar{\text{ə}}-$ and $\text{w}\bar{\text{ɛ}}$ precede and follow the verb complexes, respectively, and cannot intervene between the verbs. The verb complexes are indicated by square brackets.

(553) $\text{j}\bar{\text{ə}}-[\text{ʔ}\bar{\text{ɛ}}^{\text{?}}.\text{d}\bar{\text{o}}^{\text{?}} \text{l}\bar{\text{ɛ}}]$
 1s-want go
 ‘I want to go.’

(554) $\text{ʔ}\bar{\text{ə}}\text{w}\bar{\text{ɛ}}.\theta\bar{\text{ɛ}}^{\text{?}} [\text{s}\bar{\text{a}}^{\text{?}}.\text{t}^{\text{h}}\bar{\text{ɔ}}^{\text{?}} \text{h}\bar{\text{a}}^{\text{?}}]=\text{w}\bar{\text{ɛ}} \text{l}\bar{\text{ɔ}} \text{k}^{\text{h}}\bar{\text{ɔ}}^{\text{?}}$
 3.PL start walk=COR GNR.P foot/leg
 ‘They started to walk on foot.’ (Saw Kay)

Syntactically, in (553) and (554), the primary verbs $\text{l}\bar{\text{ɛ}}$ ‘go’ and $\text{h}\bar{\text{a}}^{\text{?}}$ ‘walk’ are the non-subject complements of $\text{ʔ}\bar{\text{ɛ}}^{\text{?}}.\text{d}\bar{\text{o}}^{\text{?}}$ ‘want’ and $\text{s}\bar{\text{a}}^{\text{?}}.\text{t}^{\text{h}}\bar{\text{ɔ}}^{\text{?}}$ ‘start’, respectively.

Like most Sgaw Karen verb sequences, the secondary-verb and the primary-verb subjects must be shared. In the case of different subjects, a biclausal construction is used where the second verb heads a complement clause introduced by the complementizer $\text{l}\bar{\text{ɔ}}$. Compare (553) with the complement-taking verb construction in (555), which is not considered a case of verb serialization as per the definition given above.

(555) $\text{j}\bar{\text{ə}}-\text{ʔ}\bar{\text{ɛ}}^{\text{?}}.\text{d}\bar{\text{o}}^{\text{?}} [\text{l}\bar{\text{ɔ}} \text{n}\bar{\text{ə}}-\text{k}\bar{\text{ə}}-\text{l}\bar{\text{ɛ}}]$
 1s-want COMP 2s-IRR-go
 ‘I want you to go.’

Semantically, two types of secondary verbs are recognized: modal and non-modal secondary verbs. Although syntactically similar, Kato (1993: 194–195) presents evidence that modal verbs are more tightly bound to the modified primary verb than non-modal secondary verbs are. While non-modal secondary verbs can occur as the only verb in affirmative replies to yes–no questions, modal verbs cannot (Kato 1993). Kato (1993) provides (556) and (557) as examples.

- (556) a. *jə-kə-bâʔ* *lè* *hā*
 1s-IRR-hit/must go PQ
 b. *mê* *nə-kə-bâʔ* *lè* **mê, nə-kə-bâʔ*
 be.true 2s-IRR-hit/must go
 a. ‘Do I have to go?’ b. ‘Yes, you do.’ (Kato 1993: 194; my trans.)

- (557) a. *nə-ʔêʔ.dōʔ* *lè* *sʰū* *tʃō* *hā*
 2s-want go all school PQ
 b. *mê* *jə-ʔêʔ.dōʔ*
 be.true 1s-want
 a. ‘Do you want to go to school?’ b. ‘Yes, I do.’ (Kato 1993: 195; my trans.)

Modal and non-modal secondary verbs can co-occur in the same clause, in which case the former precedes the latter, as in (558).

- (558) *kʰē.ʔi* *pə-kə-bâʔ* *sāʔ.tʰʒʔ* *mà* *tā*
 now 1p-IRR-must **start** do thing
 ‘We must start working now.’ (Ballard 1973c: 84)

5.1.1 Modal secondary verbs

Modal secondary verbs, or MODAL VERBS for short, are verbs expressing modality occurring immediately before the primary verb. Example (559) contains two modal verbs, *krəʔ* ‘should’ and *bâʔ* ‘must’.

- (559) *pə-tə-krəʔ* *θāʔ.pè.nōʔ* *pə-yí.tʰr̄ʔ* *təyè*
 1p-NEG-should forget 1px-roots NEG.OPT
 pə-kə-bâʔ *kətə-kè* *pə-tā.sʰēʔ.tā.là* *dāʔ.wē* *təkè*
 1p-IRR-must preserve-RETURN 1px-culture own OPT.FP
 ‘We shouldn’t forget our roots; we must preserve our own culture.’
 (Karen village)

Modality refers to various formal means of expressing “alternative realities”, such as things that *should* or *might* happen, as opposed to things that actually take place (Timberlake 2007). According to Bybee & Fleischman (1995: 2), “the most neutral semantic value of the proposition of an utterance” is declarative and factual (i.e. non-modal). Modality, they

further state, is “the addition of a supplement or overlay of meaning” to a declarative proposition.

A division is traditionally made into deontic (roughly, rule-based) and epistemic (roughly, knowledge-based) modality (e.g. Palmer 2001). In Sgaw Karen, all modal verbs express deontic modality, pertaining to “social functions of permission and obligation” (Bybee & Fleischman 1995: 4). Other types of modality, such as epistemic modality, ability, and conditionality, are expressed in other ways, for example by complementation, descriptive verbs, and verbal modifiers.

Sgaw Karen modal verbs can be subcategorized into (non-volitive) deontic and volitive modal verbs. The former group contains *bâʔ* ‘must’, *krə̃ʔ* ‘should’, and *lôʔ* ‘need to’ while the latter contains a handful of verbs of which four will be mentioned in this section. Table 26 lists the seven most common modal verbs in Sgaw Karen, described in turn below.

Table 26 Modal verbs

	Verb and base meaning	Meaning in verb sequence
Volitive	<i>ʔɛʔ.dôʔ</i> ‘want’	want to V
	<i>bâʔ.θāʔ</i> ‘want’	want to V
	<i>θāʔ.ʔôʔ</i> ‘desire’	desire to V
	<i>sʰə̃</i> ‘wish’	wish to V
Deontic	<i>bâʔ</i> ‘hit’	must V
	<i>lôʔ</i> ‘need’	need to V
	<i>krə̃ʔ</i> ‘be proper’	should V

Note that the modal verbs in Table 26 differ from the list of modal verbs provided by Jones (1961: 16), since the latter belong to different syntactic classes.

Next, the seven modal verbs are described in turn.

5.1.1.1 Verbs expressing desire

Four verbs are commonly used for expressing volitionality, the state of wanting to do something: *ʔɛʔ.dôʔ* ‘like, want’, *θāʔ.ʔôʔ* ‘feel like’, *sʰə̃* ‘wish’, and *bâʔ.θāʔ* ‘approve of, like; want’. Additionally, some Sgaw Karen varieties express volitionality using the desiderative verb *môʔ*, which occurs in switch-subject verb–verb compounds (see §8.3).

The first verb, *ʔɛʔ.dôʔ* ‘want’ is the most common volitional verb in the data. It can take either a nominal object or a verb complement. The first component is *ʔɛʔ* ‘love, like’ while *dôʔ* (colloquially [dɔʔ]) is possibly related to *dôʔ* ‘receive’. An example is provided in (560).

- (560) *nə-ʔɛʔ.dôʔ* *sāʔ* *mətà* *lôʔ*
2s-want ask what CQ
 ‘What do you want to ask?’ [KWH]

Another common volitional verb is *bâʔ.θāʔ* ‘want’ (from *bâʔ* ‘hit’ and *θāʔ* ‘heart’), which, like *ʔɛʔ.dôʔ*, can express both wanting something and wanting to do something, either taking

a nominal object or modifying a primary verb. Example (561) demonstrates the use of *bâʔ.θāʔ* as a secondary verb.

- (561) *jə-bâʔ.θāʔ kwâ tâ.ɣò.mū*
1s-want look movie
 ‘I want to watch a movie.’ [HUR]

The ability of *bâʔ.θāʔ* to take a nominal object appears to be a recent innovation. A semantic change has occurred where the verb-object phrase *bâʔ θāʔ* [hit heart] with the original meaning ‘please (someone)’ has been reanalysed as a compound verb meaning ‘like, want’. Compare the 1853 translation of a Bible passage in (562) with the 1992 translation of the same sentence in (563); in the early translation, *bâʔ.θāʔ* retains its meaning ‘please’ while in the later version, *bâʔ.θūʔ.bâʔ.θāʔ* (the elaborate variant of *bâʔ.θāʔ*) is used as a transitive verb.

- (562) *θī tə-bâʔ bâʔ jə-θāʔ lè.təkè bâʔ*
 2p NEG-**hit** NEG 1sx-**heart** at.all NEG.FP
 ‘I have no pleasure in you’ (Malachi 1:10; KJV)

- (563) *jə-tə-bâʔ-θūʔ-bâʔ-θāʔ θī bâʔ*
 1s-NEG-**hit-liver-hit-heart** 2p NEG.FP
 ‘I am not pleased with you’ (Malachi 1:10; GNT)

Two other volitional verbs are *sʰə* ‘wish’ and *θāʔ.ʔôʔ* ‘have a desire to, feel like’, which do not occur with nominal objects in the data. The former, *sʰə*, exemplified in (564), expresses wishing, hoping, or longing to do something.

- (564) *sʰə tʰiʔ-bâʔ-kè=jē nà tâ-ʔêʔ*
wish see-hit_{OPP}-RETURN=1s.COR 2si thing-love
 ‘I wish to see you again, my love’ (Poem)

Examples (565) and (566) illustrate the use of *θāʔ.ʔôʔ* (from *θāʔ* ‘heart’ and *ʔôʔ* ‘exist’), which expresses ‘have a desire to, feel like’.

- (565) *jə-θāʔ.ʔôʔ tē nà tâ lō*
1s-feel.like tell 2si thing REL
ʔə-ʔôʔ lō jə-θāʔ-pù tə-mì lō
 3-EXIST GNR.P 1sx-heart-inside one-kind FACT.FP
 ‘I want to tell you something that is on my mind.’ (Saw Kay)

- (566) *nə-θāʔ.ʔôʔ kwâ tâ.ɣò.mū hā*
2s-feel.like look movie PQ
 ‘Do you feel like watching a movie?’ [HUR]

Finally, the volitional verb *θā* ‘intend’ occurs in the data from Northern Thailand and in the Mawlamyine–Hpa-an variety but is reportedly not used in the Kayin–Tak border region. As (567) and (568) demonstrate, *θā* is always followed by a verb marked with the irrealis marker *kə-*. The irrealis marker is never prefixed to *θā*, which distinguishes this verb from the other secondary verbs.

(567) *jə-θā* *kə-θī.kwā* *nà* *tā* *tə-mì* *jìʔ* *lī*
 1s-**intend** IRR-ask 2si thing one-kind last.long NS
 ‘I’ve been wanting to ask you something for a long time.’ (Jones 1961: 205–207)

(568) *pʰē* *ʔəwē* **θā** *kə-mī-lə̌* *pyà* *kəʔ* *ʔə* *kədəʔ*
 LOC.P 3 **intend** IRR-lie-DOWN person call 3i again
 ‘When she was intending to lie down, she was called again.’ (Ballard 1973b: 80)

The irrealis marker is sometimes omitted:

(569) *nə-θā* *lè* *pʰē.léʔ*
 2s-**intend** go where
 ‘Where are you going?’ [KWH]

5.1.1.2 *bāʔ* ‘must’

The verb *bāʔ* ‘encounter, hit’ has several functions, one of which is as a modal verb expressing deontic necessity (‘must, should’). As Bar Hso Wah (2011: 44) observes, “Sgaw makes no distinction between weak (“should”) and strong (“must”) obligation”. An example by Bar Hso Wah is given in (570) (transcription and glosses have been adapted while the translation is from the original).

(570) *ʔə-pò.kʰwā* *təwā* *nēʔ* ***bāʔ*** *tʰōʔ* *kʰēʔ*
 3x-man COLL that_{TOP} **must** thrust rice.field
 ‘Men have to drill the field [i.e. poke a hole in the ground in which to drop the rice seeds; RK]’ (Bar Hso Wah 2011: 44)

Most previous descriptions of *bāʔ* ‘must’ agree that the modal verb derives from the main verb *bāʔ* ‘hit, encounter’. Ballard (1973b: 57) states that the literal meaning of *ʔəwē bāʔ ʔəʔ mə-kʰl̩* [3i must eat rice-boil] ‘He has to eat boiled rice’ is ‘He encounters eating boiled rice’. Bar Hso Wah (2011: 81) argues that the modal meaning is derived via the sense ‘appropriate’ (‘touch’ > ‘fit’ > ‘appropriate’ > ‘obligation’ > ‘necessity’). As Manson (2017a) notes, cognates of *bāʔ* in other Karenic languages exhibit similar grammaticalizations from ‘hit’ into a modal verb of deontic necessity.

Semantically, *bāʔ* expresses several types of necessity, including necessity based on moral obligation, as in (571), outer circumstances, as in (572), and subjective attitude, as in (573).

(571) *kəθiʔ-θəráʔ* *báʔ* *kwá* *pyà-sʰā* *ʔā* *māʔ* *lò*
 medicine-teacher **must** look person-be.ill many INTS FACT.FP
 ‘Doctors have to examine many patients.’ [LTP]

(572) *ʔə-mô* *báʔ* *lè* *ʔóʔ* *lā* *ʔə-pʰā.tí* *híʔ*
 3x-mother **must** go EXIST GNR.P 3x-uncle house
 ‘Her mother had to go stay in her uncle’s house’

(573) *tá* *báʔ* *mà.là.kəpɔ̀=wē* *kəpɔ̀* *níʔ.tʰɔ̀.θɔ̀* *ʔə-mí.nì*
 thing_{IMPRS} **must** celebrate=COR Karen New.Year 3x-day
lā *mí.nì* *wē.néʔ*
 GNR.P day that
 ‘Karen New Year should be celebrated on that day’ (News interview)

The modal verb *báʔ* often appears as *kəbáʔ*, taking the irrealis prefix *kə-*, typically expressing event-specific future necessity (‘will have to’), whether immediate or remote future, or irrealis necessity (‘would have to’). In contrast, a bare *báʔ* indicates both general and event-specific necessity. Since *kebáʔ* also covers immediate future, it often corresponds to present tense (‘have to’) in English. Examples can be seen in (574) and (575).

(574) *jə-mō* *ʔóʔ* *lā* *tá.sʰā.híʔ* *ʔə-xō*
 1sx-mom stay GNR.P hospital 3x-REASON
jə-kə-báʔ *lè* *kwá* *ʔò* *lò*
1s-IRR-must go look 3i FACT.FP
 ‘My mom is at the hospital, so I must go see her.’ [LTP]

(575) *ʔəwē* *kə-báʔ* *kà=wē.dáʔ* *sʰē.mó.θū* *tíā.ʔì*
 3 **IRR-must** wear=WD black.tunic like.this
 ‘(Once Karen women get married) she has to wear a (traditional Karen) black tunic like this’ (Vlog, “Karen weaving”)

The negative form of *báʔ* is *təbáʔ*, which mostly functions as a preventive or prohibitive marker. As Kato (1993: 195) notes, apart from its prohibitive meaning (‘must not’), *təbáʔ* also has a non-necessitive meaning (‘not have to’), as in (576) and (577).

(576) *nə-tə-báʔ* *lè* *báʔ*
 2s-NEG-must go NEG.FP
 ‘You mustn’t go / you don’t have to go’ (Kato 1993: 195; my trans.)

(577) *tə-nì* *ʔì* *jə-tə-báʔ* *lè-tʰɔ̀* *tá.mà* *báʔ*
 one-day this 1s-NEG-must go-UP work NEG.FP
 ‘Today I don’t have to go to work.’ (Ballard 1973b: 76)

- (583) *krāʔ* *lā* [*ʔə-dīʔ-θēʔ.nā-kāʔ=wē.dāʔ*
be.proper COMP 3-CAUS-know-also=WD
ʔə-pʰō.mīʔ-dōʔ *sē.kāʔ*]COMP *nēʔ.lə*
3x-daughter-be.big also FP
‘they should have let their eldest daughter know also’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

In 19th century sources from southern Myanmar, *krāʔ* is only found as a descriptive main verb and in the *krāʔ lā* ‘it is proper that’ construction, as in (584).

- (584) *pγà* *lā* *ʔə-nā-kēʔ* *təpʰāʔ* *nēʔ* ***krāʔ***
person REL 3x-ear-be.crooked COLL that_{TOP} **be.proper**
lā *pə-klōʔ* *ʔə-kʰōʔ* *lā* *nōʔ.lēʔ* *lə*
COMP 1p-strike 3x-head GNR.P club FACT.FP
‘People who are disobedient should be hit in the head with a club.’
(Sau Kau-Too 1848b: 146)

5.1.1.4 *təlōʔ* ‘need not’

The verb *lōʔ*, likely borrowed from Burmese *lo* ‘need’, is used both as a main verb and as a modal verb expressing necessity. As a main verb, *lōʔ* occurs mostly in the compound *lōʔ-bāʔ* [NEED-hit] ‘need’, as in (585) and (586).

- (585) ***pə-lōʔ.bāʔ*** *kəsā-jwà* *ʔə-tā-mà.sə* *tʰō.bō* *lə*
1p-need lord-God 3x-thing-help always FACT.FP
‘We always need God’s help.’ (Ballard 1973c: 228)

- (586) *bāʔ* *mənì* ***pə-lōʔ.bāʔ*** *sē* *lēʔ*
hit what **1p-need** silver/money CQ
‘Why do we need money?’ [HUR]

As a modal verb, *lōʔ* is found chiefly in negative contexts, since the affirmative equivalent ‘need to’ is more commonly expressed using the necessitive modal *bāʔ* (see §5.1.1.2). Like *krāʔ*, discussed in §5.1.1.3, *lōʔ* is used in two ways: as a complement-clause-taking verb and as a modal verb. Examples (587)–(589) illustrate the *təlōʔ lā* ‘is not necessary that’ construction.

- (587) ***tə-lōʔ*** *lā* *jə-mà-lō* *lə* *bāʔ*
NEG-NEED COMP 1s-do-learn anymore NEG.FP
‘(Such things) I don’t need to study anymore’ (The Benefit of Education)
- (588) ***tə-lōʔ*** *nə-θē.xə* *bāʔ*
NEG-NEED 2s-wash NEG.FP
‘you don’t need to wash (it)’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

- (589) *tə-lôʔ* *pə-mèʔ-sʰyāʔ* *bāʔ*
 NEG-NEED 1p-eye-avoid NEG.FP
 ‘We don’t need to feel embarrassed.’ (Vlog, “Marriage”)

Somewhat more commonly in the data, *tə-lôʔ* occurs as a modal verb directly followed by its head verb, as in (590) and (591).

- (590) *tə-lôʔ* *ʔôʔ-kʰōʔ* *jà* *bāʔ* | *lè=nē* *təkʰɔ̃*
 NEG-NEED stay-wait 1si NEG.FP go=2se one.side_{CNTR}
 ‘No need to wait for me, go ahead.’ [HUR]

- (591) *tā.lā* *tā.nāʔ* *nēʔ* *pə-tə-lôʔ* *θē.xà* *bāʔ*
 as.for meat that_{TOP} 1p-NEG-NEED wash NEG.FP
 ‘as for meat, we don’t need to wash (it)’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

Although both the main verb and modal use of *lôʔ* are widespread in the modern language, *lôʔ* is not attested in 19th century sources.

5.1.2 Non-modal secondary verbs

This section describes five non-modal secondary verbs. Non-modal secondary verbs differ from modal verbs syntactically since they are less tightly connected with the primary verb and can be separated from it. An exception is *sʰēʔ* ‘continue’, which is semantically non-modal but patterns with the modal verbs because it fails to occur independently.

5.1.2.1 *sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘start, begin’

The verb *sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘start (tr.)’ consists of *sāʔ* ‘start’ and *tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘come/go up’. The first morpheme, *sāʔ*, which is not found as an independent verb, may be borrowed from Burmese *sá* ‘start’. According to Jenny (2005: 199), Burmese *sá* is also the source of Spoken Mon *caʔ* ‘begin, start’. The second morpheme is *tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘come/go up’, which occurs in verb compounds as an inchoative marker, as in *nì-tʰɔ̃ʔ* [laugh-UP] ‘burst out laughing’ (see §5.5.4.2). While inchoative *tʰɔ̃ʔ* as a verbal modifier in *V*₂ position signals the uncontrolled emergence of an action, *sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘start’ can indicate starting both in an uncontrolled and controlled sense. Example (592) shows the use of *sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ* as a secondary verb.

- (592) *dāʔ* *sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ* *lè=wē.dāʔ* *sʰū* *kəθiʔ.θəráʔ* *ʔə-rūʔ* *lò*
 and **start** go=WD ALL.P doctor 3x-office FACT.FP
 ‘and then (she) starts walking toward the doctor’s office’ [LTP.W]

Example (593) demonstrates the ability of *sā.tʰɔ̃ʔ* to occur as the only verb in an affirmative reply to a polar question.

- (593) *ʔə-sāʔ.tʰɔʔ* *θóʔ.lō* *tá* *lī* *hā*
3-start teach thing NS PQ
mé *sāʔ.tʰɔʔ* *lī*
be.true start NS
‘Has he started teaching already? – Yes, he has.’ [HUR]

Note that words for stopping, such as *pətiʔ* ‘stop (tr.)’, are rarely used as secondary verbs. More commonly, they take nouns or, as in (594), nominalized verbs as their objects.

- (594) *pətiʔ* *nə-tá-tē-lòʔ.kwē* *təkē*
stop(tr.) 2_{SX}-thing_{NMLZ}-say/tell-play OPT.FP
‘Stop kidding!’ [HUR]

5.1.2.2 *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* ‘forget’

The verb *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* ‘forget’ can be followed either by a nominal object or a verb. The components of *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* are *θāʔ* ‘heart’, *pè*, which is not used alone but according to Wade (1849: 723) “appears to signify a defection of original power or capacity once possessed”, and *nɔʔ* ‘recollect’. In (595), *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* takes a nominal object.

- (595) *pə-mé* *kətò-ʔā-kətò-θō*
1p-be.true_{COND} speak-be.evil(CC1)-speak-be.bad(CC2)
kətò-sʰūʔ-kətò-sʰā-báʔ *pɣà* *tə-ɣà-ɣà* *néʔ*
speak-be.ill(CC1)-speak-be.ill(CC2)-hit person one-CLF(RDP) that_{FRAME}
pɣà *tə-θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* *ʔɔ* *ɲō~ɲō* *báʔ*
person **NEG-forget** 3i be.easy(RDP) NEG.FP
‘If we speak evil of (and) hurt someone (verbally), they will not forget it easily.’ (Karen proverbs: 20)

Examples (596) and (597) illustrate *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* occurring as a secondary verb.

- (596) *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* *sīʔ.blīʔ* *jwà* *təɣè*
forget thank God NEG.OPT
‘Don’t forget to thank God.’

- (597) *jə-θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* *kōʔ* *nà*
1s-forget call 2si
‘I forgot to call you.’ [HUR]

The antonym of *θāʔ.pè.nɔʔ* ‘forget’ is *θéʔ.nɔʔ* ‘remember’, which is not attested as a secondary verb, only as a transitive verb taking a nominal object.

5.1.2.3 *ɣiʔ.klēʔ.səʔ* ‘try to’

The verb *ɣiʔ.klēʔ.səʔ* ‘try (hard), make an effort’ occurs both as a main and a secondary verb. It consists of *ɣiʔ* ‘do with effort’ (Wade 1849: 156) and *klēʔ.səʔ* ‘try, strive to’ (*klēʔ* and *səʔ*

have not been attested separately). As a secondary verb, $yì^?klē^?.sā^?$ expresses ‘try to, make an effort to’. The apparently synonymous form $klē^?.sā^?$, without $yì^?$, is also common. Examples can be seen in (598)–(600).

- (598) $pò^?.k^hwá^?$ $klē^?.sā^?$ $tō-θī$ $t^hwī^?$
 man **try.hard** beat-die dog
 ‘The man tried to beat the dog to death’ [LTP.P]
- (599) $ǰəwē.θé^?$ $yì^?.klē^?.sā^?$ $mà.sə$ $pɣà$ $lō$
 3.PL **try.hard** help 1pi FACT.FP
 ‘They try to help us.’ [LTP.P]
- (600) $ǰəwē$ $bā^?$ $yì^?.klē^?.sā^?$ $xé-pù.p^hlē^?$ $ǰəθā^?$ $ǰəbl̄$ $təp^hā^?$ $ǰəbl̄$ $né^?.lō$
 3s must **try.hard** run-be.free 3.REFL time COLL time FP
 ‘She had to try to escape many times.’ (News article)

The verb $yì^?$ occurs as a V_1 in a handful of verb–verb compounds in the data indicating ‘strive to V, V with effort’. According to one speaker, $yì^?$ conveys a sense of greed or desperation and the presence of opposition. Examples include $yì^?-mà.né^?$ [strive-get] ‘claim (i.e. try hard to get)’, $yì^?-kə̀tò$ [strive-speak] ‘try hard to speak, try to get a word in edgeways’, $yì^?-tē-θə̀kō^?$ [strive-tell/say-SOC] ‘negotiate’, $yì^?-lè s^hū-nā$ [strive-go ALL.P-front] ‘press forward’.

5.1.2.4 $s^hē^?$ ‘continue’

The verb $s^hē^?$ expresses the continuation of an action and only appears as a secondary verb followed by a main verb. It is homonymous with $s^hē^?$ ‘stab’, but an etymological connection seems improbable. More likely, $s^hē^?$ is a borrowing of the Burmese verb $s^hē^?$ ‘connect, continue’, which Jenny & Hnin Tun (2016: 188–189) have described. It appears to be absent in the Northern Thailand varieties, possibly indicating that $s^hē^?$ is a relatively recent borrowing. Two examples can be seen in (601) and (602).

- (601) $pɣà-lō.kə̀wə̀-p^hō$ $θé^?.təp^hā^?$ $s^hē^?$ $θū=wē.dā^?$ $t^hī$
 person-locality-child PL:COLL **continue** use=WD water
 $p^hē$ $t^hī.p^hō.klō$ $tə-bō$ $ǰì$ $ǰə-pù$
 LOC.P river/creek one-CLF(1D) this 3x-inside
 ‘The villagers kept on using the water in this river.’ (News article)
- (602) $s^hē^?-mà$ $ǰə$ $tə-bl̄$ $wì$ $tə-bl̄$
continue-do 3i one-time finish one-time
 ‘Keep doing it again and again.’ (Vlog, “Advice”)

Example (603) demonstrates that $s^hē^?$ differs from the other non-modal secondary verbs in not being separable from the following main verb.

- (603) *nə-kə-s^hɛ̃ʔ* *p^hāʔ* *liʔ* *hā*
 2s-IRR-CONT read book PQ
mê *jə-kə-s^hɛ̃ʔ* *p^hāʔ* *liʔ* (**mê*, *jə-kə-s^hɛ̃ʔ*)
 be.true 1s-IRR-**continue** read book
 ‘Will you continue reading? – Yes, I will.’ [HUR]

5.1.2.5 *nê* ‘get’

The multifunctional verb *nê* ‘get’ also occurs as a secondary verb meaning ‘get (the chance) to’. Secondary verb constructions with *nê* appear exclusively in the data from Northern Thailand, suggesting contact influence from Thai. In Thai, the verb *dāi* ‘get’ is used in a similar way as a modal verb occurring before the primary verb. Examples (604) and (605) illustrate the use of *nê*.

- (604) *dē.k^hwā* *kə-nê* *ʔɔʔ* *tā.θiʔ-dīʔ*
 y.brother IRR-**get** eat weaver.ant-egg
 ‘You (younger brother) will get to eat weaver ant eggs.’ [KWH]

- (605) *lā* *k^hī* *jə-tə-nê* *mà.lō* *liʔ* *lā* *bāʔ*
 GNR.P rear 1s-NEG-**get** study book anymore NEG.FP
 ‘Afterwards I didn’t get to study go to school any more.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 26)

In other regions, the usual marker of opportunity is the verbal modifier *bāʔ*. In (606), *nê* and *bāʔ* are combined.

- (606) *jə-nê* *lè-bāʔ* *s^hū* *tā-mà.lō* *liʔ-s^hγī*
 1s-**get** go-hit_{OPP} ALL.P thing-study book-be.holy
 ‘I got to go to the Bible training institute. (I got to go encounter the Bible training institute.)’ (Ballard 1973b: 53)

In (607), *nê* also appears to mark experience, which is another function more commonly performed by *bāʔ* when appearing as a V₂ in verb–verb compounds. The semantic range of *nê* as a secondary verb requires further investigation.

- (607) *jə-tə-nê* *phāʔ* *liʔ* *kō* *ʔū* *ʔi* *nō* *blō* *bāʔ*
 1s-NEG-**get** read book be.difficult COLL this EXT time NEG.FP
 ‘I have never read such difficult books before.’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 771–772; my trans.)

5.2 Prior motion verbs

Motion verbs are verbs that express movement, whether deictic or non-deictic, from one point to another. For example, the deictic verb *lè* ‘go’ expresses movement away from the

speaker, while the non-deictic verb *lò* ‘come/go down’ denotes downward movement. Prior motion, in turn, is movement that occurs before another action (Guillaume & Koch 2021a; Ross & Lovstrand 2022). In (608), the prior motion verb *hē* ‘come’ expresses the motion event preceding the second action, *ʔɔʔ* ‘eat’.

- (608) *tʰɔʔ tə-dī hē ʔɔʔ ʔəwē.θéʔ ʔə-kʰīʔ.lɔ*
 pig one-CLF(ANIM) come eat 3.PL 3x-upland.field
 ‘a pig came and ate their crops’ (Jones 1961: 225, 230)

Table 27 lists the prior motion verbs attested in the data.

Table 27 Prior motion verbs

Prior motion verb	Meaning in prior motion constructions
<i>hē</i>	‘come and/to’
<i>lè</i>	‘go and/to’
<i>kè</i>	‘go home/return and/to’
<i>tʰɔʔ</i>	‘go up and/to’
<i>lò</i>	‘go down and/to’
<i>nìʔ</i>	‘go in and/to’
<i>hāʔ / hāʔ.tʰɔʔ</i>	‘go out and/to’

Motion verbs express two grammatical categories: ASSOCIATED MOTION and DIRECTION (Ross & Lovstrand 2022). In associated motion, the motion verb (or affix) “modifies a verbal predicate by *adding* a motion component” while “directionals add information about the orientation of a path of motion to a predicate whose lexical meaning *already includes* a motion component” (Ross & Lovstrand 2022: 105, 110; italics added). This section focuses on associated motion while directionals are discussed in §5.5.4.

Prior motion is one of three types of associated motion constructions attested in the world’s languages (Guillaume & Koch 2021a). The other two are concurrent motion and subsequent motion (Guillaume & Koch 2021b: 8–9). In Sgaw Karen, prior motion events are common, concurrent motion events exist marginally, while subsequent motion events are unattested in the data. Two examples of the prior motion construction can be seen in (609) and (610).

- (609) *nɔʔ.pà.míʔ.pʰɔ lē pʰēʔ kʰīʔ dɔʔ ʔə-pʰī*
 little.princess go clear upland.field with 3x-GM
 ‘The little princess went to clear the fields with his [=Nyali]’s
 grandmother’ (Jones 1961: 213–214)

- (610) *pʰɔ.θáʔ tʰɔʔ sʰéʔ.nɔ lɔ ʔə-mó ʔə-lò*
 child go.up sit GNR.P 3x-mother 3x-surface
 ‘The child climbed up and sat down on her mother.’ (Ballard 1973b: 213)

Do prior motion verbs take the following clause as their purposive complement or form a compound with the following verb? Sporadic examples suggest a compound analysis. In (611), the allative preposition *s^{hū}* ‘to’ is compatible with *kè* ‘return’ but not with *mī* ‘sleep’, supporting the analysis of *kè-mī* [return-sleep] as a compound taking the *s^{hū}* phrase as its Goal argument.

- (611) *ɔ̀wē.θéʔ kè-mī [s^{hū} dē-pù]_{GOAL}*
 3.PL **return-sleep** ALL.P hut-inside
 ‘They went back to the hut to sleep.’ (Saw Kay)

If the above analysis is correct, a verb sequence such as *lè-pyè* [go-buy] ‘go to buy’ should be able to take a Goal argument introduced by *s^{hū}* ‘to’. In (612), however, *s^{hū}* ‘to’ is reportedly impossible since a goal argument is incompatible with *pyè* ‘buy’. Instead, the generic preposition *lā* must be used, as in (613), suggesting that the *pyè* clause is the purposive complement of *lè*.

- (612) **jə-kə-lè-pyè [nāʔ]_P [s^{hū} mā.kéʔ]_{GOAL}*
1s-IRR-go-buy fish ALL.P market
 Intended: ‘I will go to buy fish at (lit., to) the market.’ [HUR]

- (613) *jə-kə-lè [pyè nāʔ lā mā.kéʔ]_{COMP}*
1s-IRR-go buy fish GNR.P market
 ‘I will go to buy fish at the market.’ [HUR]

As Kato (1993: 181) notes, placing the Goal argument between the motion verb and the second verb is generally unaccepted, as in (614), although exceptions occur in casual speech.

- (614) **jə-lè s^{hū} p^hjā pù pyè nāʔ*
 1s-go ALL.P market inside buy fish
 Intended: ‘I went to the market to buy fish.’
 (Kato 1993: 181; intended meaning added)

To correct (614), the connective *dəʔ* ‘and’ can be inserted, as demonstrated in (615). The sentence can also be rendered into a prior motion construction, as in (616). Kato (1993) observes that the difference between the two alternatives is related to purposivity; in (615), *V₂* took place (fish was bought) but was not necessarily the initial purpose of the visit to the market. The prior motion construction *lè pyè* [go buy] ‘go to buy’ in (616), in contrast, indicates a purposive reading (‘*V₁* in order to *V₂*’).

- (615) *jə-lè s^{hū} p^hjā pù dəʔ pyè nāʔ*
 1s-go ALL.P market inside and buy fish
 ‘I went to the market and bought fish.’ (Kato 1993: 182; my trans.)

- (616) *jə-lè pyè jâ? l̄ə pʰjā pù*
 1s-go buy fish GNR.P market inside
 ‘I went to buy fish at the market.’ (Kato 1993: 182; my trans.)

Although purposivity is inherent in most prior motion constructions, sequentiality without a purposive connotation appears to be possible in past contexts, as (617) shows.

- (617) *ʔə-pʰī hē-kè tʰi? ʔə-dē kəsʰȳ*
 3x-GM come-RETURN see 3x-hut be.clean
 ‘his grandmother returned and saw her hut clean [i.e. that her hut was clean; RK]’ (Jones 1961: 211, 214)

Inserting *d̄ə?* ‘and (then)’ between the motion verb and the following verb is dispreferred although not entirely unacceptable. According to one speaker, *l̄ə ʔə? m̄ə* ‘go eat’, in (618), is one word that can have no prosodic pause between the morphemes in natural speech. In contrast, *d̄ə?*, in (619), creates a pause between *d̄ə?* and the following verb, sounding unnatural and “too emphasized”.

- (618) *ʔəw̄.θ̄ə? l̄ə ʔə? m̄ə l̄ī h̄ā*
 3.PL go eat rice NS PQ
 ‘Have they gone to eat already?’ [HUR]

- (619) *?ʔəw̄.θ̄ə? l̄ə d̄ə? | ʔə? m̄ə l̄ī h̄ā*
 3.PL go and eat rice NS PQ
 ‘Have they gone to eat already?’ [HUR]

A feature of purposive constructions (‘V₁ in order to V₂’) is the possibility of the event expressed by V₂ to fail to materialize. The same holds for prior motion constructions. Consider (620), where the intended action, *pyè* ‘buy’, does not take place.

- (620) *jə-lè pyè jâ? l̄ə mā.k̄ə? b̄ə?.sʰâ? jâ? l̄ə? l̄ī*
 1s-go buy fish GNR.P market but fish be.finished NS
 ‘I went to buy fish at the market, but the fish was sold out.’ [HUR]

Motion verbs can be specified for direction through the addition of a deictic or non-deictic directional. In (621), *hē* ‘come’ modifies the direction of *x̄ə* ‘run’, indicating motion towards the speaker. In (622), *hē* ‘come’ is the main verb modified by the directional verb *tʰə?* ‘go up’. Deictic modifiers thus precede the head verb while non-deictic directionals follow it. Example (623) demonstrates a head verb, *x̄ə* ‘run’, modified by a deictic and a directional verb.

- (621) *hē-x̄ə sʰū jə-ʔə?*
 come-run ALL.P 1SX-LOC.N
 ‘Run to me.’ [HUR]

(622) *mīʔ hē-tʰɔʔ lī*
 sun come-UP NS
 ‘The sun has risen.’ [HUR]

(623) *hē-xə-tʰɔʔ sʰū jə-ʔɔʔ*
 come-run-UP ALL.P 1SX-LOC.N
 ‘Run up to me.’ [HUR]

Prior motion compounds function in the same way as single prior motion verbs, as demonstrated in (624).

(624) *hē-tʰɔʔ ʔɔʔ mē*
 come-UP eat cooked.rice
 ‘Come up and eat.’ [HUR]

To summarize, prior motion constructions consist of two verbal components, one expressing a motion event, the other a non-motion event, as in *lè-ʔɔʔ* [go-eat] ‘go to eat’. The motion verb component is typically a deictic verb (e.g. *hē* ‘come’, *lè* ‘go’), a non-directional verb (e.g. *xə* ‘run’), a directional verb (e.g. *tʰɔʔ* ‘move up’, *lɔʔ* ‘move down’), or a compound consisting of two or more motion verbs. These occur in a sequence that cannot be interrupted by other elements. Inserting connectives like *dɔʔ* ‘and’ either changes the meaning or sounds unnatural. Structurally, the data suggest that the prior motion verb takes the following verb as its complement rather than forming a compound with it. The semantic relation between the motion verb and the following verb is often purposive, more rarely non-purposive (sequential), meaning that the action following the motion event is intended but may fail to occur. We proceed, in §5.3, by examining actions and states taking place simultaneously.

5.3 Concurrent action and concurrent state verbs

Concurrent action or concurrent state constructions consist of a V_1 and V_2 denoting two actions taking place at the same time. This section distinguishes three groups of V_1 s in such constructions: posture verbs, motion verbs, and the existential–locative verb *ʔɔʔ*.

5.3.1 Concurrent action

The first type of concurrent action construction has a posture verb as V_1 and an activity or state verb as V_2 . Examples (625)–(627) illustrate three posture verb occurring in a concurrent action construction.

- (625) *ʔəwē sʰə².nə̌ hɔ̌ lə̌ hɔ̌².kʰə̌² lə̌*
 3 **sit cry** GNR.P ground surface
 ‘He sat crying on the ground.’ [HUR]
- (626) *nə̌-sʰə̌.tʰə̌² kwá-sə̌ tá mənì lē²*
 2s-**stand look-from.above** thing what CQ
 ‘What are you standing looking off at?’ (Ballard 1973b: 147)
- (627) *kʰē.jí tə-dī mī.nə̌ ʔə²-xə̌-kə̌lù²*
 lion one-CLF(ANIM) **lie.down** EXIST-be.quiet-INTS
lə̌ ʔə-lə̌-kə̌ʔə̌ pù
 GNR.P 3x-stone-cavity inside
 ‘A lion was lying down quietly in his cave’ (The Lion and the Fox)

Constructions with a movement-to-posture verb as V₁ indicate sequential rather than concurrent action, sometimes with a purposive connotation. Example (628) contains the movement-to-posture verbs *yə̌.tʰə̌²* ‘stand up, move to standing position’.

- (628) *mō tə-γà yə̌.tʰə̌² pʰə̌².hī-tʰə̌²-kə̌ ʔə̌*
 mother one-CLF(HUM) **stand.up** embrace-UP-RETURN 3i
 ‘The mother stood up and embraced him.’ (Saw Kay)

V₁ in concurrent action constructions can also express other types of motion. The verb *hā²* ‘walk’ is productively used as V₁ in the construction *hā²* V expressing ‘move around V-ing’. The verb following *hā²* typically denotes an action that is performed repeatedly or continuously while moving about from one place to another. Examples can be seen in (629) and (630).

- (629) *pyà-θə̌².pyà təpʰə̌² hā² pʰyī-lə̌ tá-kʰī ʔəγà*
 person-be.old COLL **walk scatter-DOWN** thing-seed 3x-other
 ‘the older people walk along scattering other kinds of seeds’
 (Ballard 1973c: 157)
- (630) *bə² hā² xī-ʔə̌² tá mənì lē²*
 must **walk search-eat** thing what CQ
tē tə-bə² lə̌ bə²
 say/tell NEG-be.correct_{ABIL} anymore NEG.FP
 ‘I can’t tell what food to go looking for anymore’ (Jones 1961: 200, 202)

Although *hā²* literally means ‘walk’, *hā²* V constructions also denote other types of movements, such as driving in a vehicle. In (631) and (632), the verb constructions refer to movements by cars and airplanes, respectively.

(631) *kʰɔ̄.pənìʔ hāʔ lū=wē tʰĩ tʰē tə-blɔ̄ fò*
 company **walk pour**=COR water only one-time only
 ‘the company had only watered the road one time (to prevent dust emissions)’ (News article)

(632) *kəbɔ̄-jù təpʰáʔ nēʔ hāʔ jù-wè.wɔ̄=wē*
 ship-fly COLL that_{TOP} **walk fly-go.around**=COR
pʰē pə-pʰɔ̄.kʰóʔ nēʔ.lə
 LOC.P 1px-above FP
 ‘Airplanes were flying around above us.’ (News interview)

In some cases, *hāʔ* appears to focus more on the fact that V₂ occurs repeatedly in several different places than on actual movement. Consider (633) and (634).

(633) *pə-kə-hāʔ sɪʔ.tè.tē.lə ʔə-bɔ̄.mí tɑ̄-θāʔ.kʰĩ-kəsɔ̄ʔ lə*
 1p-IRR-**walk preach** 3x-kingdom thing-be.happy-news FACT.FP
 ‘we will preach the good news of his kingdom’ (Blog)

(634) *tə-mé=wē.dáʔ pyà lə ʔə-hāʔ tʰóʔ.θətrɔ̄ θāʔ*
 NEG-be.true_{COP}=WD person REL **3-walk compare REFL**
dɔ̄ʔ pyà ʔəyà bāʔ
 with person other NEG.FP
 ‘(People who are always cheerful and happy) are not people who compare themselves with others.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

Note that *hāʔ* is also used in prior motion constructions expressing ‘go out to V’. Kato (1993: 182) notes that, in this type of *hāʔ* V construction, “V₂ represents the purpose of V₁ [= *hāʔ*]”, as in (635).

(635) *jə-kə-hāʔ mĩ lə pyà híʔ*
 1s-IRR-**walk sleep** GNR.P person house
 ‘I am going to stay overnight in another person’s house.’
 (Kato 1993: 182; my trans.)

Another concurrent motion verb is *lù* ‘chase’, which indicates pursuing someone or something, before or at the same time as another action. A handful of combinations are attested. The verb compounds in (636) and (637) are common in the data. Compared to *hāʔ* V constructions, *lù*-V verb combinations are considerably less productive and hence analysed as compounds.

(636) *dɔ̄ʔ lè lù-xĩ tʰɔ̄ʔ*
 and go **chase-search** pig
 ‘and went to look for the pig’ (Jones 1961: 225, 230)

- (637) *p^hē lā tā lù-k^hā[?]=wē θō.lé[?] ʔə-s^h̄.kət̄*
 when COMP thing_{IMPRS} **chase-shoot**=COR car 3x-time
 ‘when the car was being chased and shot at’ (News article)

Combining *hā[?]* and *lù* is also possible, as in (638).

- (638) *θəw̄-p^hō ʔā yà hā[?] lù-xī ʔəw̄-θé[?]*
 village-child many CLF(HUM) **walk chase-search** 3-PL
lā θəw̄ ʔə-xà né[?].lò
 GNR.P village 3x-outskirts FP
 ‘Many villagers went looking for them in the outskirts of the village.’
 (News article)

5.3.2 Concurrent state

Concurrent state constructions have the existential–locative verb *ʔô[?]* ‘exist, be at’ as V₁. The verb *ʔô[?]* occurs productively in the construction *ʔô[?]-V* expressing ‘stay (somewhere) V-ing’. Frequently, the V₂ in *ʔô[?]-V* constructions is a state verb, in which case *ʔô[?]* reinforces the idea of staying in the state expressed by V₂. The descriptive verb *pyè* ‘be full’, although itself a state verb capable of occurring on its own, often combines with *ʔô[?]* in the expression *ʔô[?].pyè* (*d̄s[?]*) ‘be full (of)’, as in (639).

- (639) *t^hā[?] lā ʔə-ʔô[?]-pyè d̄s[?] tā.ʔé[?]*
 bag REL **3-EXIST-be.full** with faeces
 ‘a bag full of faeces’ [LTP.W]

Other common V₂s include verbs denoting location, such as *bū[?]* ‘be near’, in (640), and *ji* ‘be far’, in (641). Some state verbs, such as *k^hū.θū[?]* ‘be hidden’, seen in (642), only occur in combination with another verb.

- (640) *pə-lè lā t^hī.klō lā ʔə-ʔô[?]-bū[?] d̄s[?] pyà*
 1p-go GNR.P river REL **3-EXIST-be.near** with 1pi
 ‘We went to a nearby river.’ (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)

- (641) *ʔô[?]-ji=nē d̄s[?] jà təkè*
EXIST-be.far=2se with 1si OPT.FP
 ‘Stay away from me.’ [HUR]

- (642) *nā[?].lī[?]-p^hō tə-θé[?].nā lā ʔə-mā ʔô[?]-k^hū.θū[?]*
 Nyali-DIM NEG-know COMP 3x-wife **EXIST-be.hidden**
 ‘Nyali didn’t know that his wife was hiding.’ (Jones 1961: 213–214)

Apart from state verbs, *ʔô[?]* co-occurs with a limited number of verbs denoting stationary actions. As Kato (1993: 187; my trans.) points out, *ʔô[?]* “cannot co-occur with verbs

expressing actions that involve a change in position, such as ‘run’”, as evident from the ungrammaticality of (643).

- (643) * ʔəwē $\text{ʔō}^?$ xē
 3 EXIST run
 [no intended meaning given] (Kato 1993: 187)

The activity verb $\text{k}^h\text{ō}^?$ ‘watch, lie in wait for; guard’ (Wade 1896: 345), in contrast, readily combines with $\text{ʔō}^?$, as in (644). Other activity verbs co-occurring with $\text{ʔō}^?$ are the posture verbs $\text{shā.t}^h\text{ā}^?$ ‘stand’, $\text{s}^h\text{ē}^?.\text{nā}$ ‘sit’, and mì.nā ‘lie down’, the latter exemplified in (645).

- (644) ʔəwē $\text{ʔō}^?-\text{k}^h\text{ō}^?$ nā
 3 **EXIST-wait** 2si
 ‘He is waiting for you.’ (Kato 1993: 186)

- (645) $\text{t}^h\text{ā}.b\text{ō}$ ʔəwē $\text{ʔō}^?-\text{mī.nā}$ lā lō-mī ʔə-pù lò
 always 3s **EXIST-lie.down** GNR.P place-sleep 3x-inside FACT.FP
 ‘All the time she stayed lying in her bed.’ (News article)

When combining with telic verbs, $\text{ʔō}^?$ indicates staying in the state resulting from the completion of V_2 , as in (646).

- (646) $\text{ʔō}^?-\text{bē}^?-\text{s}^h\text{ē}$
 EXIST-take.off-shirt]
 ‘be naked’

Telic verbs combining with $\text{ʔō}^?$ are also common in agent-demoting reflexive constructions, discussed in §8.3. In (647), for example, the bolded phrase indicates that the S argument exists in the state of having been built.

- (647) $\text{t}^h\text{ō}^?.\text{lwī-wā-tfō}$ ʔì $\text{ʔō}^?$ $\text{θū}^?-\text{lō}$
 dove-be.white-school this **EXIST** **plant-DOWN**
 $\text{ʔəθā}^?$ lā tō.ʔū $\text{kā.rē}^?$ ʔə-pù
3.REFL GNR.P Taungoo district 3x-inside
 ‘Hto Lwee Wah School is located in Taungoo District.’ (News article)

The next topic we examine is verb–verb compounds, the most compound-like type of verb serialization.

5.4 Verb–verb compounds

The discussion about Sgaw Karen verb serialization so far has been concerned with productive or semi-productive types of verb serialization. VERB–VERB COMPOUNDS, in contrast, are in general less productive and less semantically transparent. A verb–verb compound consists of two verb components, a V_1 and a V_2 , each an individual verb or itself a compound. Crucially, unlike in secondary verb, prior motion, and concurrent action or state serialization, the V_2 of a verb–verb compound is not the complement of V_1 . Rather, verb–verb compounds form a single predicate with a unitary argument structure, like monomorphemic verbs. Verb–verb compounds are thus single grammatical words consisting of two or more phonological words (Dixon 2010b: 24). As with all types of verb serialization, no element can intervene between the verb components in a compound and, prosodically, there can be no pause between the verbs in natural speech.

In terms of event structure, most verb–verb compounds can be characterized as purposive, purposive cause–effect, or descriptive. In purposive compounds, V_1 is done for the purpose of doing V_2 . In purposive cause–effect compounds, the inferred subjects of V_1 and V_2 are different, meaning that V_1 causes the inferred, or understood, subject of V_2 to perform the action or be in the state denoted by V_2 . In descriptive compounds, V_2 modifies the way in which V_1 is carried out. Examples of each type can be seen in (648).

- (648) a. *pyè-ʔʔʔ* [buy-eat] ‘buy to eat’ purposive
 b. *tē-pli* [tell-fear] ‘threaten’ purposive cause–effect
 c. *tē-lò.kwē* [tell-play] ‘joke (v.)’ descriptive

Verb–verb compounds differ from other types of verb serialization in Sgaw Karen, and among themselves, regarding two interrelated aspects: semantic transparency and productivity. According to Matthews (1991: 82–84), prototypical compounds are characterized as featuring a low degree of semantic transparency and productivity. Consider the prototypical compound *greenhouse*, which is neither semantically transparent (the meaning of the compound cannot be straightforwardly deduced from the meaning of its components *green* and *house*) nor productive (*green-* is not productively used as a prefix denoting things related to horticulture). Semantic transparency, then, refers to the degree to which the meaning of a verb–verb compound is predictable based on the semantics of the individual verbs. As for productivity, some V_2 s, like *ʔʔʔ* ‘eat’, combine with a larger variety of V_1 s, while others, like *pli* ‘fear (v.)’, combine with a limited number of V_1 s.

As explained in §3.3, headedness in nominal compounds means that there is a head component, such as *θəpə̀* in *tʰɿ-θəpə̀* [water-pot] ‘water pot’, representing the referent denoted by the compound, and a non-head component adding a specification about the head noun. Similarly, compounds such as *pyè-ʔʔʔ* [buy-eat] ‘buy for eating’ and *tē-pli* [tell-fear] ‘threaten’ are acts of buying and telling, respectively, semantically modified by the non-head components *ʔʔʔ* ‘eat’ and *pli* ‘fear’.

Headedness also means that the head component determines the behaviour of a compound noun or verb in a clause. In the case of verb–verb compounds, the head component governs which type of arguments the compound can take. For example, the argument structure of *tē-pli* [tell-fear] ‘threaten’ is determined by *tē* ‘tell’. This verb takes an addressee, a complement clause (the thing told), or both, as its arguments, as in (649) and (650).

- (649) *tābāʔ tē-pli [jā]Addressee tāyè*
 PREV **tell-fear** 1si NEG.OPT
 ‘Don’t threaten me.’ [HUR]
- (650) *ʔāwē-θéʔ tē-pli=wē [lā]*
 3-PL **tell-fear**=COR COMP
*kā-dwēʔ-ʔū-ʔʔʔ θāwō dō tā-pʰlāʔ*Complement
 IRR-ignite-burn(intr.)-eat village whole one-CLF(3D)
 ‘They threatened to burn down the whole village.’ (News article)

To summarize, verb–verb compounds are a type of verb serialization which features a head verb and a modifier verb, exhibiting various degrees of semantic transparency and productivity. Whether compounding or other types of serialization, semantic transparency correlates with the degree of productivity of the construction. Prior motion constructions such as *lè ʔʔʔ* ‘go and eat’ are thus semantically transparent and productive, while compounds such as *V-ʔʔʔ* ‘V for a living’ are semantically idiosyncratic and have restricted productivity.

5.4.1 Argument structure of verb–verb compounds

A division into SAME-SUBJECT and SWITCH-SUBJECT verb–verb compounds can be made based on the argument structures of the individual verbs. The terms *same-subject* and *switch-subject* are probably from Crowley’s (1987) description of serial verbs in Paamese. In Sgaw Karen, verb–verb compounds are defined as single predicates with only one subject, but *same-subject* and *switch-subject* are used as theoretic terms referring to the structure of a verb–verb compound according to the understood S/A arguments of V_1 and V_2 . For example, based on the semantics of *pyè* ‘buy’, *kōʔ* ‘call, invite’, and *ʔʔ* ‘eat’, the compound *pyè-ʔʔʔ* [buy-eat] ‘buy for eating’ can be characterized as same-subject, while *kōʔ-ʔʔʔ* [call-eat] ‘invite (someone) to eat’ is a switch-subject compound. The semantic structure of switch-subject verb–verb (VV) compounds is illustrated in Figure 5. The subject of the clause, *pōʔ.kʰwāʔ* ‘man’, is the inferred A argument of V_1 , while the object (P), *tʰwīʔ* ‘dog’, is the inferred S of V_2 .

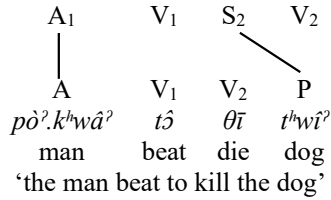


Figure 5 Semantic structure of a switch-subject VV compound

The example in Figure 5 is repeated in (651), and an example of a semantically similar biclausal construction is given in (652). Despite similar meanings, the result of the beating the biclausal construction is definite (the dog dies). In contrast, the result of the compound *tɕ-θī* [beat-die] ‘beat to kill’ is unasserted, as Kato (1993) has previously noted. Example (653) illustrates the unassertedness and the purposive nature of switch-subject compounds.

(651) *pòʔ.kʰwâʔ* ***tɕ-θī*** *tʰwīʔ*
 man **beat-die** dog
 ‘The man beat to kill the dog.’ [LTP.P]

(652) *pòʔ.kʰwâʔ* ***tɕ*** *tʰwīʔ* *tì* ***ʔə-θī*** *lò*
 man **beat** dog until **3-die** FACT.FP
 ‘The man beat the dog until it died.’ [LTP.P]

(653) *pòʔ.kʰwâʔ* ***tɕ-θī*** *tʰwīʔ* *bâʔ.sʰâʔ* *tʰwīʔ* *nêʔ* ***tə-θī*** *bâʔ*
 man **beat-die** dog but dog that_{TOP} **NEG-die** NEG.FP
 ‘The man beat the dog to kill it, but the dog didn’t die.’ [LTP.P]

Regarding the constituent order in clauses containing switch-subject verb–verb compounds, contiguous serialization is expected in verb-final languages, but unexpected in a verb-medial language like Sgaw Karen (Mathias Jenny, p.c.). In verb-medial languages, the object more commonly precedes the second verb (man beat dog die) than follows it. The same tendency for contiguous (or “nuclear”) serialization is observed in other Karenic languages, including Kayah Li (Solnit 2006). According to Solnit (2006: 159), this contiguity might be “a legacy of the old Tibeto-Burman verb-final typology”. A non-contiguous constituent order where objects intervene between the verbs is found in the neighbouring SVO language Thai. Presumably due to contact influence, the object-verb order has been attested as an optional variant in the dictionary by Ratanakul (1986), which is largely based on a Chiang Mai variety. Example (654) demonstrates two possible constituent orders.

(654) ***ʔə-bâʔ-θī*** *mê.hē* / *ʔə-bâʔ* *mê.hē* *θī*
 3-**hit-die** cancer 3-hit cancer die
 ‘S/he died of cancer.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 723; my trans.)

The purposiveness of switch-subject verb–verb compounds means that V₁ is done for the purpose of doing V₂ or for V₂ to occur, with the possibility that V₂ fails to materialize. Kato (1993) has previously observed that denying V₂ in same-subject compounds is typically impossible, although most transitive same-subject compounds are purposive. For example, the compound V-ʔɔʔ ‘V for eating’ necessarily involves the accomplishment of V₂, ʔɔʔ ‘eat’, as the ungrammaticality of (655) shows. Denial of the eating event requires using only *pyè* ‘buy’, as in (656). An example by Kato (1993) is given in (657).

(655) **məhā.kàʔ jə-pyè-ʔɔʔ θəkwi bāʔ.sʰāʔ jə-tə-ʔɔʔ bāʔ*
 yesterday **1s-buy-eat** banana but 1s-NEG-eat NEG.FP
 Intended: ‘Yesterday I bought a banana to eat it, but I didn’t eat it.’ [LTP.P]

(656) *məhā.kàʔ jə-pyè θəkwi bāʔ.sʰāʔ jə-tə-ʔɔʔ bāʔ*
 yesterday **1s-buy** banana but 1s-NEG-eat NEG.FP
 ‘Yesterday I bought a banana, but I didn’t eat it.’ [LTP.P]

(657) **jə-xō-ʔɔʔ jŋāʔ bāʔ.sʰāʔ jə-tə-ʔɔʔ bāʔ*
 1s-grill-eat meat but 1s-NEG-eat NEG.FP
 Intended: ‘I grilled meat to eat it, but I didn’t eat it.’
 (Kato 1993: 183; intended meaning added)

In terms of transitivity, verb–verb compounds can be intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive. Intransitive compounds are necessarily same-subject, in which case both verbs in the compound predicate of the S argument. Example (658) contains the intransitive same-subject compound *l̥.t̥²-θī* [fall-die] ‘fall and die’, and (659) illustrates a purposive intransitive compound.

(658) *pʰē l̥ ʔə-l̥.t̥²-θī=wē ʔə-l̥.kʰī nēʔ*
 LOC.P COMP **3-fall-die**=COR 3x-behind that_{FRAME}
 ‘after she had died from falling (off a boat)’ (Vlog, “Actress”)

(659) *jə-ʔē-sʰə.tʰəʔ ɣə-ɣə miʔ l̥*
 1s-move-stand be.early(RDP) be.enjoyable FACT.FP
 ‘I like to get up early.’ [LTP]

In negative contexts, as usual, the negative marker *tə-* is prefixed on the first verb in the sequence and has scope over both verbs, as in (660). Negating the verbs separately requires a biclausal construction, such as (661). Example (662) demonstrates the ungrammatical insertion of *tə-* between the verbs.

(660) *kʰwāʔ tə-l̥.t̥²-θēʔ.pʰāʔ bāʔ*
 dish NEG-fall-break(intr.) NEG.FP
 ‘The plate didn’t fall and break (it neither fell nor broke).’ [LTP.P]

(661) *kʰwāʔ l̩.t̩ɛʔ bāʔ.sʰāʔ t̩-θ̩ɛʔ.pʰāʔ bāʔ*
 dish **fall** but NEG-**break(intr.)** NEG.FP
 ‘The plate fell but didn’t break.’ [LTP.P]

(662) **kʰwāʔ l̩.t̩ɛʔ t̩-θ̩ɛʔ.pʰāʔ bāʔ*
 dish **fall** NEG-**break(intr.)** NEG.FP
 Intended: ‘The plate fell but didn’t break.’ [LTP.P]

Transitive compounds are typically switch-subject and consist of a transitive V₁ followed by an intransitive V₂. The bolded compound in (663) represents a common type in which V₂ is the resulting state that V₁ is intended to accomplish.

(663) *pʰɛ̄ kl̩ɔʔ ʔ̩ə-k̩ɛ-ʔ̩ə-ɣ̩ɔ̩ wì t̩s̩f̩*
 LOC.P drum 3x-shape(CC1)-3x-form(CC2) finish once
t̩á k̩ə-b̩áʔ l̩ɛ̄ l̩ɔ-x̩ɛ̄ ʔ̩ɔ̩ l̩á t̩á.k̩əɖ̩f̩-l̩áʔ n̩ɛʔ.l̩ɔ̩
 thing_{IMPRS} IRR-must go **spread-be.dry** 3i GNR.P shade-below FP
 ‘When the drum (clay) mould is finished, it must be put out to dry
 in the shade.’ (Karen drum)

Same-subject verb–verb compounds with two transitive verbs also occur, like *x̩f̩-θ̩ɛʔ.n̩á* ‘research’ in (664). In such cases, the two transitive verbs share the object.

(664) *t̩á l̩á p̩ə-m̩á ʔ̩ɔ̩ k̩ōʔ m̩i d̩ɛʔ n̩ɛʔ*
 thing REL 1p-do 3i each kind INTS(each) that_{TOP}
m̩ɔ̩ p̩ə-x̩f̩-θ̩ɛʔ.n̩á ʔ̩ə-ɣ̩ɛ̄ l̩ɔ̩.t̩f̩.l̩ɔ̩.sʰɛ̄ʔ t̩ək̩ɛ̄
 OPT **1p-search-know** 3x-MATTER be.accurate OPT.FP
 ‘Whatever we do we should (lit., may we) research it.’
 (Karen proverbs: 37)

The V-*p̩ɔ̩ʔ* ‘follow (someone) in V-ing’ construction represents a rarer type of transitive compound. In this case, V₂ rather than V₁ governs the object of the compound. The use of *p̩ɔ̩ʔ* as a main verb can be seen in (665).

(665) *p̩ə-k̩ə-b̩áʔ p̩ɔ̩ʔ m̩ət̩á ʔ̩ə-kʰf̩ m̩āʔ p̩ə-t̩ə-θ̩ɛʔ.n̩á l̩ə b̩áʔ*
 1p-IRR-must **follow** who 3x-rear even 1p-NEG-know NEG.NS NEG.FP
 ‘We don’t even know who we should follow anymore.’ (Karen proverbs: 32)

More commonly, *p̩ɔ̩ʔ* ‘follow’ co-occurs with both intransitive and transitive verbs as a verbal modifier. The object of V-*p̩ɔ̩ʔ* compounds is the relator noun *kʰf̩* ‘rear, buttocks’, often preceded by a possessive prefix agreeing with the person followed. In (666), *p̩ɔ̩ʔ* follows *h̩ɛ̄* ‘come’, attributing the object *ʔ̩əkʰf̩* ‘after me’.

- (666) *hē-pòʔ* *jə-kʰɪ̄*
come-follow 1sx-rear
 ‘Follow (come along) with me.’ [HUR]

V₁ can also be a non-motion verb, as in (667) and (668), in which case *pòʔ* expresses that the subject repeats V₁ after another person.

- (667) *θāʔ.wiʔ-pòʔ* *jə-kʰɪ̄*
sing-follow 1sx-rear
 ‘Sing after me.’ [HUR]

- (668) *tʃō-pʰō* *kwēʔ-pòʔ* *θəráʔ* *ʔə-kʰɪ̄*
 school-child **write-follow** teacher 3x-rear
 ‘The student writes after the teacher.’ [HUR]

The verb *tʰwē* also means ‘follow’, occurring only as a functional V₂ in the data. Its function is similar to that of *pòʔ*, and the two verbs are often combined, as in (669).

- (669) *tē-pòʔ-tʰwē* *θəráʔ* *ʔə-kʰɪ̄*
speak-follow-follow teacher 3x-rear
 ‘Say after the teacher.’ [HUR]

Ditransitive verb–verb compounds typically involve the verb *hēʔ* ‘give’ as V₁, followed by an intransitive or transitive V₂. Compounds with *hēʔ* are switch-subject, meaning that *hēʔ* and the following verb have different inferred subjects, as evident in (670) and (671).

- (670) *hēʔ-lō* *jà* *lā* *nə-sē* *tə-mā* *θē* *hā*
give-borrow 1si GNR.P 2sx-money one-thousand ABIL PQ
 ‘Can you lend me a thousand (Baht)?’ [KWH]

- (671) *pʰē* *nə-hēʔ-ʔō* *ʔə* *kəθiʔ* *ʔə-kʰā*
 LOC.P 2s-**give-drink** 3i medicine 3x-TIME
 ‘when you gave him the medicine (for him to consume it)’ [LTP]

Other ditransitive switch-subject compounds include benefactive compounds with *nē* ‘get’ as V₂. In this case, V₂ rather than V₁ licenses the indirect object (see §8.1.1).

One ditransitive same-subject construction has been attested: compounds with *xē* ‘request’ as V₁. The argument structure of *xē* contains a requestee and the thing requested, as in (672).

- (672) *pə-xē* *[ʔə]IO* *[kʰɪ̄ θə]DO*
1p-request 3i two day
 ‘We asked him for two days [off from school]’ (Jones 1961: 202–203)

In *xē*-V compounds, the subject both requests (V₁) and performs the requested action (V₂), as in (673). Expressing ‘ask (someone) to V₂’, requires the use of *mā* ‘order, ask to’ (see §9.3.1).

- (673) *tāblā.tāk^{h5}?* *ʔəwē* *lè* ***xē-ʔəʔ*** *tā*
 sometimes 3s go **request-eat** THING
lā *pyà* *yà* *ʔə-hi[?]* *lā*
 GNR.P person other 3x-house FACT.FP
 ‘Sometimes he went to other people’s houses to ask for food.’
 (Blog, “Saw Kanyaw”)

As mentioned in §4.1.2 (example (267)), the second object, or direct object (DO), in ditransitive constructions is often preceded by the generic preposition *lā*, as in (674).

- (674) *tì* *pyà* *ʔəʔ* *mè* *wì* *nē[?]*
 when person eat cooked.rice finish **that**_{FRAME}
dī[?]-ʔəʔ-kadō[?] [*ʔə*]_{IO} [*lā* *θak^{h5}-θā[?]*]_{DO}
CAUS-eat-again 3i GNR.P mango-fruit
 ‘When people have finished eating, feed them mangoes again.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 79)

5.4.2 Cause–effect verb–verb compounds

Most switch-subject verb–verb compounds have a causative connotation and consist of a transitive V₁ and an intransitive or transitive V₂. Two generic causative verbs, *mā* ‘do, make’ and *dī[?]* ‘confine; fight’, are especially productive as V₁s in cause–effect compounds (see §5.4.2), but several other types also occur. A common switch-subject compound has *θī* ‘die’ as V₂, expressing ‘V to kill’, as in (675)–(677) (see also Figure 5). Note that various types of verbs with either direct or indirect impact on the object can occur as V₁.

- (675) ***jə-s^{h5}-θī*** *ʔə* *dō[?]* *dō*
1s-stab-die 3i with knife
 ‘I stabbed him/her dead with a knife.’ (Kato 1993: 184; my trans.)

- (676) ***wi[?]-θī*** *s^{h5}*
twist-die chicken
 ‘kill a chicken by twisting (breaking its neck)’ [KWH]

- (677) *tā.nā* ***kə-kū[?]-θī*** *sə.pà*
 demon **IRR-deliberate-die** king
 ‘the warlock would plan [...] to kill the king’ (Jones 1961: 221, 224)

Frequent V₁s in cause–effect compounds include *kō[?]* ‘call’ and *pà[?]* ‘put’, seen in (678) and (679). As usual, the inferred subject of V₂ is different from that of V₁.

(678) *kō̃²-sʰē̃².nə̃* ʔə̃ lā̃ nā-kəpà
call-sit 3i GNR.P 2sx-side
 ‘Invite them to sit with you.’ (Blog)

(679) *pē̃².pʰā̃².nə̃.pʰā̃²* *pā̃²-lā̃.sʰə̃* | *tə̃-krə̃²* *dā̃²* *tā̃.lā̃* *kəsʰyā̃*
 judge **put-be.different** NEG-be.proper with place be.clean
 ‘(People) judge (me and) put (me) separately; (I’m) not worthy of clean places.’
 (“The Little Wastebin”, Hta poem by Ti Noe)

Resultative verb–verb compounds are a subtype of cause–effect compounds. In this case, V₂ is a descriptive verb indicating the resulting state caused by V₁. Examples can be seen in (680) and (681).

(680) *tà.θū̃.tà.θā̃²* *tā̃.dō̃².tā̃.lā̃²* *tə̃-kʰlī̃²* *pə̃-ʔə̃²* *bā̃²* *nē̃²*
 fruit vegetable NEG-reach 1p-eat NEG.FP that_{FRAME}
pə̃-krə̃² *θē̃.xə̃-kəsʰyā̃-kwĩ²-dā̃²* *sē̃.kə̃²* *nē̃².lā̃*
 1p-should **wash-be.clean-AWAY-EXCL** also FP
 ‘Before we eat fruit and vegetables, we should also clean (them).’
 (Vlog, “Food safety”)

(681) *ʔə̃-lā̃²* *nə̃-tʰī̃-kʰlī̃²*
drink-be.finished 2sx-water-be.cold
 ‘Drink up your cold drink.’ (Ballard 1973b: 142)

As with cause–effect verb–verb compounds in general, the generic causative verb *mà* ‘do, make’ can often replace a semantically more specific V₁. Example (682) shows an instance of a resultative *mà*-V compound.

(682) *mà-bā̃².sə̃²* *θā̃²* *tə̃yè̃*
make-get.wet heart_{REFL} NEG.OPT
 ‘Do not make yourselves wet.’ (HUR)

Some verbs mostly appear as V₂s in resultative compounds, rarely or never as independent verbs. One example is *bā̃* ‘be covered’, seen in (683), which indicates that something gets covered or concealed.

(683) *tā̃* *pʰyū̃-bā̃* ʔə̃ lā̃ *mè-tʰī̃*
 thing_{IMPRS} **smear-be.covered** 3i GNR.P cooked.rice-water
 ‘it (=drum-making mould) is covered (besmeared) with boiled rice water’
 (Karen drum)

Apart from the above-mentioned (semi-)productive compounds, numerous sporadic examples of cause–effect compounds occur in the data, including those in (684).

(684)	<i>sī-kō̄ʔ</i>	[press-emit.sound]	‘honk’
	<i>kʰl̄s-kəbyā̄ʔ (nāʔ)</i>	[boil-be.tender (meat)]	‘boil (meat [until]) tender’
	<i>wiʔ-θū</i>	[twist-be.dry]	‘twist dry (e.g. a towel)’
	<i>θē-kəsʰȳs̄ (sī)</i>	[wash-be.clean (hand)]	‘wash (one’s hands) clean’
	<i>tʰā-pʰȳōʔ</i>	[pick-be.assembled]	‘collect’

The next section, §5.5, describes verbal modifiers, which occupy the right-most slot in a main verb complex.

5.5 Verbal modifiers

Verbal modifiers refer to V_2 s in verb–verb compounds that serve as modifiers of a head verb (V_1). As modifiers, they do not govern any of the arguments of the compound; instead, the argument structure equals that of the main verb (V_1) when used on its own. Additionally, most modifiers do not affect the aspectual value of the first verb, except the aspectual modifiers discussed in §5.5.5. Thus, the primary function of verbal modifiers is to add a secondary meaning to a compound, specifying the way in which or for which purpose V_1 is carried out. This section identifies five subtypes: adverbial, temporal-relational, purposive, directional, and aspectual. In addition, a separate section, §5.5.6, is dedicated to the multifunctional modifier *bāʔ*. These modifiers are distinguished from valency-increasing modifiers (see Chapter 8).

As established in Chapter 4, *verb* refers to any morpheme that can take a verbal prefix or precede a coreference marker, typically the third-person coreference marker *wē*. The definition also includes morphemes that only occur as the modifier component (V_2) in verb–verb compounds. The V_2 s not attested as independent verbs may have lost their main verbhood due to grammaticalization or might still occur regionally. While most of these verbal modifiers must occur inside the verb complex, a few have progressed further on the grammaticalization path, appearing in other positions as adverbs or prepositions.

Semantically, verbal modifiers can broadly be categorized into adverbial modifiers (§5.5.1), temporal-relational modifiers (§5.5.2), purposive modifiers (§5.5.3), directional modifiers (§5.5.4), and aspectual modifiers (§5.5.5). The pervasive modifier *bāʔ* is described in §5.5.6.

5.5.1 Adverbial modifiers

Adverbial modifiers indicate the way in which an event (V_1) takes place. Other terms used to describe similar phenomena in other serializing languages include *ambient serialisation* (Crowley 1987) and *adverbial serialization* (Bradshaw 1993). Bradshaw (1993), discussing subject relationships in verb serialisation, characterizes this type of verb sequence as serialisation in which “the serialized verb is a predication about the event itself, not about any particular participant in the event” (Bradshaw 1993: 159). In Sgaw Karen, the modifying, or “serialized” (Bradshaw 1993), verb is an adverbial modifier. In (685), the

adverbial modifier *kəl̩* ‘be empty’ signifies ‘(V) for free, without receiving anything in return’.

- (685) *təbl̩.bl̩* *pyà* *dī̃.ʔʔ-kəl̩* ʔ̩
 sometimes person **feed-be.empty** 3i
 ‘Sometimes people gave him food for free.’ (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)

Table 28 lists some of the most frequent adverbial modifiers in verb–verb (VV) compounds in the data.

Table 28 Adverbial modifiers as V₂s in VV compounds

Adverbial modifier	Meaning as V ₂ and example
<i>kəl̩</i> ‘be empty’	‘V for free’ <i>mà-kəl̩</i> [do-be.empty] ‘do for free’ <i>hè²-kəl̩</i> [give-be.empty] ‘give for free’ <i>nê-kəl̩</i> [get-be.empty] ‘get for free’
<i>kəmâ</i> ‘be wrong’	‘V incorrectly’ <i>ʔɔ²-kəmâ</i> [eat-be.wrong] ‘eat the wrong thing, eat (sth) bad’ <i>kwɛ²-kəmâ</i> [write-be.wrong] ‘make a mistake in writing’ <i>pyè-kəmâ</i> [buy-be.wrong] ‘buy the wrong thing’
<i>s^hû</i> ‘be strong’	‘V by force’ <i>mà-s^hû</i> [do-be.strong] ‘force (v.)’ <i>hī²-s^hû</i> [take-be.strong] ‘confiscate’ <i>p^hl̩-s^hû</i> [marry(tr.)-be.strong] ‘force to marry’
<i>k^hũ.θũ</i> ‘be hidden’	‘V secretly’ <i>ʔɔ²-k^hũ.θũ</i> [EXIST-be.hidden] ‘hide (intr.)’ <i>sī²-k^hũ.θũ</i> [run-be.hidden] ‘flee in secret’ <i>ʔɛ²-k^hũ.θũ</i> [love-be.hidden] ‘secretly love’
<i>ɲɔ̃.ní</i> ‘be common’	‘commonly V’ <i>kɛ.t^hɔ²-ɲɔ̃.ní θā</i> [occur-be.common self] ‘commonly occur’ <i>θũ²-ɲɔ̃.ní</i> [use-be.common] ‘commonly use’ <i>ʔɔ²-ɲɔ̃.ní</i> [eat-be.common] ‘commonly eat’
<i>nɔ̃</i>	‘V for future recollection’ (gloss from Wade 1896) <i>tē-nɔ̃</i> [tell-remind] ‘remind (by telling)’ <i>kwɛ²-nɔ̃</i> [write-remind] ‘note down’
<i>sō</i>	‘V from above’ <i>k^hā²-sō</i> [shoot-from.above] ‘shoot above (an object)’ <i>kwā-sō</i> [look-from.above] ‘look out over’
<i>θəkō</i> ‘together’	‘V together’ <i>ʔɔ²-θəkō</i> [eat-SOC] ‘eat together’ <i>θā².wí²-θəkō</i> [sing-SOC] ‘sing together’ <i>bā-θəkō jwà</i> [worship-SOC God] ‘worship together’
<i>xí</i> ‘along with’	‘V (along) with’ <i>mà-xí tā</i> [suffer-COM thing] ‘work with’ <i>tú-xí</i> [suffer-COM] ‘suffer with’ <i>lè-sò²-xí</i> [go-carry-COM] ‘take along with’
<i>dā</i> ‘only’	‘only/just V’ <i>ʔɔ²-dā</i> [eat-EXCL] ‘only eat’ <i>lè-dā</i> [go-EXCL] ‘only go’ <i>pyè-dā</i> [buy-EXCL] ‘only buy’

As explained in §5.4, compounds display different degrees of semantic transparency; the meaning of some compounds is predictable based on the meanings of its parts, while

other compounds are semantically idiosyncratic. Compounds containing *kəmâʔ* ‘be wrong’ as V₂ belong to the semantically predictable type. As a verbal modifier, *kəmâʔ* indicates that V₁ was performed in the wrong way or that performing V₁ was a mistake (cf. English *mal-* and *mis-*). Thus, predicting the meaning of V-*kəmâʔ* compounds is straightforward. In (686), *kəmâʔ* occurs as an independent verb and, in (687) and (688), as V₂.

(686) *tâ.kəsôʔ* *lā* *ʔə-kəmâʔ*
 news REL **3-be.wrong**
 ‘fake news (lit., news which are wrong)’

(687) *nə-mê* *kwēʔ-kəmâʔ* *nêʔ* *nə-kə-bâʔ* *kwēʔ-kè*
 2s-be.true_{COND} **write-be.wrong** that_{FRAME} 2s-IRR-must write-RETURN
 ‘If you make a mistake, you have to rewrite it.’ (Kato 1993: 190; my trans.)

(688) *ʔə-ʔôʔ-kəmâʔ* *tâ* *mənì* *lêʔ*
3-eat-be.wrong thing what CQ
 ‘[That child is vomiting a lot,] what did he eat wrong?’ (Ballard 1973c: 151)

In contrast, compounds with *sʰûʔ* ‘be strong’ are semantically idiosyncratic. As a V₂, *sʰûʔ* expresses ‘(V) forcefully’ or ‘(V) by force’, as in (689) and (690).

(689) *mō-pā* *mā-sʰûʔ* *ʔəxō* *bâʔ* *hē* *kōʔ³⁴* *lō*
 mom-dad **order-be.strong** 3.REASON must come PTCL FACT.FP
 ‘I have to come because my parents force me.’ (Jones 1961: 206–208)

(690) *θīʔ-pʰō* *tə-γà* *pʰôʔ-sʰûʔ* *ʔō*
 army-child one-CLF(HUM) **hold-be.strong** 3i
 ‘A soldier raped her.’ [HUR]

Note that descriptive verbs occur in two distinct types of verb–verb compounds: adverbial and resultative, the latter being a cause–effect construction (see §5.4.2). Compare the use of the descriptive verb *kʰū.θūʔ* ‘be hidden’ in the adverbial compound in (691) and in the resultative compound in (692).

(691) *ʔə-ʔēʔ-kʰū.θūʔ-bâʔ* *nà* *lō*
1s-love-be.hidden-HIT 2si FACT.FP
 ‘I have a crush on you.’ (Lit., ‘I love you secretly.’) [HUR]

³⁴ The particle *kōʔ*, which Jones (1961) glosses as “generally” or “uncertain”, is pervasive in his texts from Mawlamyine. Elsewhere, *kōʔ* only appears in the data from northern Thailand as an abbreviated form of the sociative verbal modifier *θəkōʔ* ‘(do) together’.

- (692) *nə-pà²-kʰū.θū²* *jə-tʰə²* *pʰē.lē²*
2s-put-be.hidden 1sx-bag where
 ‘Where did you hide my bag?’ [HUR]

Lastly, adverbial modifiers are only one of several verb types that have an adverbial function. Two other constituent types that modify a verb or clause are descriptive verbs with clausal subjects, discussed in §4.3, and frame-setting adverbial phrases, described in §11.1. The descriptive verb *ɲɔ.ní* ‘be common’ is attested in three sentence positions. It largely retains its semantics but differs in scope depending on its position. In (693), *ɲɔ.ní* appears as a verbal modifier, in (694), as a secondary verb meaning ‘tend to’, and, in (695), in a preclausal frame-setting adverbial phrase.

- (693) *tā.ʔì* *mē* *tā* *tə-kʰā* *lā* *ʔə-kē.tʰə²-ɲɔ.ní* *θā²*
 this be.true_{COP} thing one-CLF REL **3-occur-be.common** heart_{REFL}
 ‘This is a commonly occurring thing.’ (News article)

- (694) *tə-nə* *ʔə²* *mē* *ʔā-nē* *ʔə-ɲɔ.ní* *ʔə²=wē*
 one-part eat cooked.rice be.much-CMPR **3-be.common** eat=COR
 ‘[People who get angry–some won’t eat any more,] some eat more than usual.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 167)

- (695) *pʰē* *jə-nə-sʰī²* *ʔə-kʰā*
 LOC.P 2sx-body-be.small 3x-TIME
ɲɔ.ní *jə-kwā-tʰə²* *sʰū* *mū.kʰō²*
be.common 1s-look-UP ALL.P sky
 ‘When I was young, I often looked up in the sky.’ (Moon Rabbit)

5.5.1.1 Sociative–comitative modifiers

The sociative modifier *θəkō²* ‘(V) together’ and the comitative modifier *xì²* ‘(V) along with’, expressing similar meanings, do not occur as independent descriptive verbs in the data. Their function can be characterized as adverbial, describing the way in which an event or situation takes place.

First, *θəkō²* is common as V₂ and as an independent noun meaning ‘friend’. As in English, *θəkō²* ‘(V) together’ can express that a group of referents perform an action together, as in (696), or that an action is performed together with a companion introduced by a prepositional phrase, as in (697).

- (696) *pʰē* *pə-ʔō²-θəkō²* *lā* *pə-θəkō²* *ʔə-hí²* *kʰā*
 when **1p-EXIST-SOC** GNR.P 1px-friend 3x-house TIME
 ‘when we were together at our friend’s house’ [LTP]

- (697) *dī.θōʔ* *kə-hē*
 so.that IRR-come
θūʔ-pʰyī-θāʔ-ɲō-θəkōʔ [*xīʔ.dōʔ* *ʔəwē.θéʔ*]_{Companion}
liver-be.light-heart-be.easy-SOC with 3.PL
 ‘so that (the ancestors’ spirits) would come and rejoice together
 with them’ (Karen drum)

As with adverbial verb–verb compounds in general, *θəkōʔ* has no effect on the argument structure. The arguments are determined by *V*₁, which can be intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive.

The comitative modifier *xīʔ* expresses ‘(V) along with’. It differs from *θəkōʔ* in that *V-xīʔ* clauses contain an object (when *V*₁ is transitive) or an oblique argument (when *V*₁ is intransitive). Example (698) illustrates a subject-oriented *V-xīʔ* compound, where the subject joins a group (in an inferred affirmative clause). In (699), *V-xīʔ* expresses an object-oriented meaning where the object (P) is a causee. Example (700) illustrates a companion argument.

- (698) *təbāʔ* *pāʔ-xīʔ* *lā* *ʔə-klā* *təyè*
 PREV **join-COM** GNR.P 3X-MIDST NEG.OPT
 ‘{Don’t join them. / Don’t be with them.}’ [HUR]
- (699) *təbāʔ* *pāʔ-xīʔ* [Ø]_P *lā* *ʔə-klā* *təyè*
 PREV **put-COM** GNR.P 3X-MIDST NEG.OPT
 ‘Don’t put [him] together with them.’ [HUR]
- (700) *nə-tū-xīʔ* *tā* *dōʔ* [*jā*]_{Companion} *lō*
 2s-**suffer-COM** thing with 1sī FACT.FP
 ‘you suffer with me’ (HUR)

As in (700), the preposition *dōʔ* ‘with’ often precedes the Companion argument of a *V-xīʔ* clause. As a result of *xīʔ* and *dōʔ* often occurring adjacently, *xīʔ.dōʔ* has been reanalysed as a preposition, frequently being detached from the verb complex. Examples (701) and (702) illustrate *xīʔ.dōʔ* ‘(along) with’ functioning as a preposition.

- (701) *tʰiʔ=wē* *tʰō.kʰlī* *pʰāʔ.dōʔ* *tə-kʰōʔ* *hē-kè-tʰōʔ* *lā*
 see=COR raft be.big one-CLF come-RETURN-UP GNR.P
tʰī.klō ***xīʔ.dōʔ*** [*pōʔ.kʰwā* *təblīʔ* *yā*]_{Companion} *néʔ.lō*
 river **along.with** man several CLF(HUM) FP
 ‘he saw a big raft come back on the river with several men (on it)’
 (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)
- (702) *ʔə-lè* *sʰū* *θəwō* *néʔ* ***xīʔ.dōʔ*** [*ʔə-mā*]_{Companion}
 3-go ALL.P village that **along.with** 3x-wife
 ‘He went to that village with his wife.’ (News article)

Note, however, that elements can intervene between *xìʔ* and *d̂ʔ*; in (703), the pronominal clitic *wē.d̂ʔ* follows *xìʔ*, showing that *xìʔ* is a verb.

- (703) *tâ* *θôʔ.lō=wē* *pədôʔ* *ʔə-liʔ.jôʔ.θôʔ.dôʔ* *təkāʔ.bāʔ* *ʔə-mèʔ.jnā*
 thing teach=COR government 3x-curriculum not.only 3x-front
tâ *θôʔ.lō-xìʔ=wē.d̂ʔ* *d̂ʔ* *kəj̄* *liʔ.lē* *nēʔ.lō*
 thing **teach-COM=WD** and/with Karen literature FP
 ‘In addition to the government curriculum, Karen literature is also taught (in the school).’ (News article)

5.5.1.2 *d̂ʔ* ‘only’, ‘autonomously’

The adverbial modifier *d̂ʔ* ‘only’ is not attested as an independent verb but occurs before coreference markers and is thus part of the verb complex. It expresses ‘only’ in two related but distinct senses: ‘exclusively (excluding all other alternatives)’ and ‘not more than’. The first sense can be seen in (704) and the latter in (705).

- (704) *ʔəwē* *kûʔ-tʰôʔ* *lō* *kə-ʔôʔ-d̂ʔ* *lō* *ʔə-lō.kəʔō* *pù*
 3 deliberate-UP COMP IRR-EXIST-EXCL GNR.P 3x-cave inside
 ‘He planned that (he) would only stay in his cave.’ (The Fox and the Lion)

- (705) *tə-dī* *nēʔ* *tâ* *sʰā* *ʔə*
 one-CLF(ANIM) that_{TOP} thing_{IMPRS} sell 3i
nē-d̂ʔ *tʰē* *jē* *kəlō* *hō* *lō*
get-EXCL only five hundred.thousand only FACT.FP
 ‘Selling one [drum], one gets only 500,000 (Kyat)’ (Karen drum)

Depending on the context, *d̂ʔ* can have focal scope over one of the arguments in a clause or the verb itself. With intransitive verbs, the focus can be on the verb or on a following oblique argument. In (706), *d̂ʔ* has scope over the locative argument (LOC).

- (706) *t̄* *pə-siʔ-lō* *lō* *hōʔ.kʰôʔ-pʰl̂ʔ*
 arrive/when 1p-jump-DOWN GNR.P land(n.)-ball
pə-ʔôʔ-d̂ʔ [*lō* *pyā.lā.klā*]_{LOC}
1p-stay-EXCL GNR.P jungle
 ‘[We looked for a paddy field to parachute into but didn’t find one, and] when we parachuted to earth we were just in the jungle’
 (Jones 1961: 242, 247)

In (707), *d̂ʔ* has scope over the classifier phrase, as reinforced by the particle *tʰē* and the postnominal intensifier *hō*. In (708), the focus is on the postcopular complement. In both examples, *d̂ʔ* expresses the meaning ‘not more than’.

(707) *ʔə-θā²-nīʔ ʔō²-dāʔ tʰē [tə-sʰɪ-θə nīʔ] hō nē².lò*
 3x-heart-year EXIST-EXCL **only** one-ten-three year **only** FACT.FP
 ‘She was only thirteen years old.’ (News article)

(708) *mō tə-yà ʔi mē-dāʔ θū-kʰō²-mīʔ lò*
 mother one-CLF(HUM) this **be.true**_{cop}-EXCL be.black-head-F FACT.FP
 ‘The mother was just an unbeliever (non-Christian).’ (Saw Kay)

Note that, when a speaker wishes to focus the subject, *dāʔ* is not used. Therefore, in (709), *dāʔ* is absent on the verb and the particle *tʰē* ‘only’ is used instead.

(709) *tʰē sə-yè lū θéʔ ʔə-tʰɪ lò*
 only M.HON-be.good pour tree 3x-water FACT.FP
 ‘Only Saw Gay watered the plants.’ [LTP.P]

Syntactically, a verb modified by *dāʔ* must minimally take the generic object *tā* ‘thing’. In (710), the verb, *ʔō²-dāʔ* ‘just live’, takes the object *ʔətā*. Thus, *dāʔ* increases the syntactic valence of intransitive clauses.

(710) *kəpɔ̄-pʰō təpʰāʔ ʔé².dōʔ ʔō²-dāʔ ʔə-tā mi².mi².kʰɪ².kʰɪ²*
 Karen-child COLL want EXIST-EXCL 3x-thing peacefully
 ‘The Karen just want to live in peace.’ [LTP]

Transitive V-*dāʔ* compounds focus on the verb or the object. In (711), *dāʔ* has scope over *pyè* ‘buy’, contrasting it with *kwēʔ* ‘write’.

(711) *sə-yè pyè-dāʔ līʔ lò | tə-kwēʔ=wē bāʔ*
 mhon-ne.good buy-EXCL book FACT.FP NEG-write=COR NEG.FP
 ‘Saw Gay has only *bought* the book; he did not write it.’ [LTP.P]

More commonly, the focus is on the object, as in (712). The object NP is often preceded by *tʰē* ‘only’, sometimes also followed by the intensifying particle *hō* ‘only’.

(712) *sə-yè lū-dāʔ tʰē [pʰɔ ʔə-tʰɪ] lò*
 M.HON-be.good **pour-EXCL** only flower 3x-water FACT.FP
tə-lū θéʔ ʔə-tʰɪ bāʔ
 NEG-pour tree 3x-water NEG.FP
 ‘Saw Gay only watered *the flowers*; he didn’t water the trees.’ [LTP.P]

By extension, *dāʔ* also expresses contrast, indicating ‘instead (rather than something else)’, as (713) illustrates.

- (713) *ʔəwē.θēʔ kʰē.ləʔ kē-dāʔ təkʰɔ̄ jə-tì.θəkɔ̄ʔ*
 3.PL all **act.as_{COP}-EXCL** instead 1sx-friend
 ‘[Amazingly, the people whom I feared came and asked help from me and ...] they all became my friends’ (Jones 1961: 241, 246)

Another function of *dāʔ*, by extension of the meaning ‘exclusively’, is to convey the sense that something happens without “extraneous influence” (Wade 1897: 56). In this case, *dāʔ* is subject-oriented, indicating that the subject acts autonomously. In (714)–(716), *dāʔ* emphasizes that the events occur despite the lack of an external agent

- (714) *tā mē tə-pòʔ ʔə dɔ̄ʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} COND NEG-beat 3i and_{FRAME}
ʔə-kəli mē θɔ̄ʔ-tʰɔ̄ʔ-dāʔ ʔə-tā nēʔ
 3x-sound COND **sound-UP-EXCL** 3x-thing that_{FRAME}
 ‘if nobody plays it (=the drum) and it starts making sound by itself’
 (Karen drum)

- (715) *θēʔ dōʔ kùʔ-lə-dāʔ ʔəθāʔ*
 tree be.big **chop-DOWN-EXCL** 3.REFL
 ‘Big trees fall down by themselves’ (Karen proverbs)

- (716) *tā.dīʔ.sēʔ.prēʔ kē.tʰɔ̄ʔ θē-dāʔ tā lə*
 skirmish occur **be.skilled_{ABIL}-EXCL** thing FACT.FP
 ‘skirmishes could break out (if tensions persist between the groups)’
 (News article)

Note that the presence of *tā* ‘thing’ in (714) is because *dāʔ* must be followed by an object, which is minimally the generic object *tā* ‘thing’, and the reflexive pronoun in (715) serves to reinforce the sense of spontaneity (see §8.3.3).

Similar markers of autonomously acting subjects have been discussed in other Tibeto-Burman languages. According to Solnit (1997: 109), the Kayah Li post-verbal particle *du*, possibly a cognate of *dāʔ*, expresses doing something ‘on one’s own, of one’s own accord’. Post & Modi (2021) discuss a similar phenomenon which they term “subject autonomy marking” in Macro-Tani (northeast India).

5.5.2 Temporal-relational modifiers

Three verbal modifiers are identified as expressing temporal-relational meanings: *sʰō* ‘early’, *pàʔ* ‘put’, and *tē* ‘cast away/down, abandon’ (Wade 1896: 751). The main function of these modifiers is to place the situation expressed by the verb–verb compound in relation to a situation taking place at some later point in time. For example, in *pʰɔ̄-pàʔ* [cook-put_{PREP}] ‘cook for later’, *pàʔ* signals that the action is performed in anticipation of another situation. Table 29 provides an overview of the modifiers described in this section.

Table 29 Temporal-relational modifiers

Verbal modifier	Examples	Function as V ₂ in VV compound
<i>s^hō</i> ‘be early’	<i>lê-s^hō</i> [go-be.early] ‘go first’	<i>θē-s^hō</i> [wash-be.early] ‘wash first’ expresses that something occurs before something else or as the first of several events
<i>pà[?]</i> ‘put’	<i>ʔô[?]-pà[?]</i> [EXIST-put _{PREP}] ‘be ready/in place’	<i>p^h̄-pà[?]</i> [cook-put _{PREP}] ‘cook for later’ expresses that X is (made) ready in advance
<i>tê</i> ‘ABANDON’	<i>ʔô[?]-tê</i> [EXIST-ABANDON] ‘stay’	<i>pà[?]-tê</i> [put-ABANDON] ‘leave (tr.)’ expresses that (1) X remains in a state or (2) finished V ₁ -ing long ago or before some reference point

5.5.2.1 *s^hō* ‘(V) first’

The descriptive verb *s^hō* ‘be early’ sometimes retains its main verb semantics as a V₂, as in (717).

- (717) *tə-nwī nā ʔi jə-kə-bā[?] lê-s^hō s^hū t̄a.mà l̄*
 one-week INTS this 1s-IRR-must go-**be.early** ALL.P work(n.) FACT.FP
 ‘This week I have to go to work early.’ [LTP.D]

More frequently, *s^hō* as a modifier expresses ‘(V) first’ in contexts where one situation occurs before another, as in (718). In (719), *s^hō* expresses that an event is the first to take place in a series of events.

- (718) *tək^hlī[?] l̄ nə-ʔ̄-l̄ kəθī[?] bā[?] nē[?]*
 not-reach COMP 2s-drink-DOWN medicine NEG.FP that_{FRAME}
nə-bā[?] ʔ̄[?]-s^hō t̄a.ʔ̄[?] tə-k^hā~k^hā
 2s-must eat-**be.early** food one-CLF(RDP)
 ‘Before you take the medicine you must eat something.’ [HUR]

- (719) *pə-t̄-s^hō l̄ wē-t̄[?].hā[?]*
 1p-arrive-**be.early** GNR.P town-J.
 ‘First we arrived at the town of Jorhat’ (Jones 1961: 235, 245)

Syntactically, *s^hō* usually appears immediately following the main verb. However, a non-contiguous pattern was observed in the data from northern Thailand. In (720), the speaker spontaneously placed *s^hō* after the object, but also accepted placing it contiguously with the main verb. Detaching *s^hō* from the main verb might be due to influence from Thai, where the translation equivalent *k̄n* ‘first, before (something else)’ must occur after the object.

- (720) *tʃ̥ kə-ʔʔʔ mə sʰō* / *tʃ̥ kə-ʔʔʔ-sʰō mə*
 eB IRR-eat rice **be.early** eB IRR-eat-be.early rice
 ‘I (older brother) will eat first [before I go].’ [KWH]

5.5.2.2 *pàʔ* ‘(V) in advance’

The preparative modifier *pàʔ* means ‘put, place (v.)’ as a main verb. As a verbal modifier, *pàʔ* denotes that the action is carried out as a preparation for a future event (‘V for later’). Kato (1993) notes the similarity between *pàʔ* and the verb *oku* in Japanese, describing *pàʔ* as denoting “the preservation of the result of an action or preparation for an upcoming situation” (Kato 1993: 189; my trans.). Examples can be seen in (721)–(724).

- (721) *jə-kə-pʰʃ-pàʔ mə*
1s-IRR-cook-put_{PREP} cooked.rice
 ‘I’ll prepare food (for later).’ (Kato 1993: 189; my trans.)

- (722) *kʰē.m̄.sʰēʔ nə-kə-bàʔ sʰyā tā.bā*
 tomorrow 2s-IRR-must lead church.service
nə-kət̄ʔ.kət̄-pàʔ nə-θāʔ lī hā
2s-prepare-put_{PREP} 2SX-REFL NS PQ
 ‘Tomorrow you have to lead the service. Have you already prepared yourself?’ (Ballard 1973b: 224)

- (723) *pə-tā.pʰɿ.tā.mā lā pə-mà ʔə θēʔ.təpʰāʔ nəʔ~nəʔ*
 1px-work(n.) REL 1p-do 3i PL:COLL that_{FRAME}(RDP)
ʔə-tə-kē.tʰʔʔ=wē.dāʔ dī.θōʔ pə-kl̄-pàʔ ʔəθōʔ bāʔ nəʔ
 3-NEG-become=WD like **1p-arrange-put_{PREP}** 3.SIM NEG that
kə-ʔōʔ=wē.dāʔ θēʔ.θēʔ lə
 IRR-EXIST=WD perhaps FACT.FP
 ‘The jobs we do might not go as we planned.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

- (724) *lə.yàʔ dīʔ.θōʔ nə-plan-lə-pàʔ=wē.dāʔ nə-tā.ʔōʔ.mū*
 resemble be.like **2s-plan-DOWN-put_{PREP}=WD** 2SX-life
d̄ʔ pɣà tə-yà nəʔ kʰē.ləʔ.kʰē.sʰē mə hā
 with person one-CLF(HUM) that everything be.true PQ
 ‘It’s like you plan everything in your life with that person, right?’ (Vlog, “Suicide”)

As a modifier, *pàʔ* ‘put’ also combines with intransitive verbs. One example is *ʔōʔ-pàʔ* [EXIST-put_{PREP}], which expresses that the existence of something has relevance at a later point in time, as in (725).

- (725) [dīʔ tã.rêʔ.tã.klê ʔôʔ-pàʔ ʔəθōʔ] nə-tʰiʔ-lòʔ.θāʔ
 like plan EXIST-**put**_{PREP} 3.SIM 2s-see-RECP
 dōʔ jə-dō.pī.wê-kʰwā məhā dīʔ hā
 with 1sx-sibling-M yesterday CONT PQ
 ‘Did you meet my brother yesterday, as was planned (lit., according to the plan that existed)?’ [LTP.D]

In past contexts, the function of *pàʔ* often corresponds closely to the English Pluperfect, expressing that a past event occurred prior to another and is relevant at some later point in time. Examples (726) and (727) illustrate this particular use of *pàʔ*.

- (726) lā nêʔ ʔə-mèʔ.nā ʔəwē **kʰúʔ-lōʔ-pàʔ**
 GNR.P that 3x-front 3s **dig-DOWN-put**_{PREP}
 tã.pù lā kə-kʰúʔ-lòʔ ʔə-θī.sōʔ
 hole COMP IRR-dig-DOWN 3x-corpse
 ‘On top of that, he had dug a hole where he would bury her body (in preparation for the day she would die).’ (News article)

- (727) pyà kʰōʔ.tʰiʔ-kətə tə-dúʔ hē-niʔ-lōʔ-tì sʰū
 person first-SUPL one-tribe come-enter-arrive ALL.P
 kō.lā-pù ʔə-kʰā tʰiʔ=wē lā jò-dōʔ təpʰáʔ
 PN-inside 3x-time see=COR COMP Tai-be.big COLL
 hē ʔôʔ-pàʔ-lī ʔəwē.θéʔ ʔə-mèʔ.nā lī
 come EXIST-**put**_{PREP-NS} 3.PL 3x-front NS
 ‘When the first (Karen) tribe arrived in Kaw Lah (Myanmar), they saw that Shan people had already come to stay there before them’ (Karen nationalism)

The disyllabic variant *pàʔ.sə* ‘(V) in advance’, seen in (728) and (729), appears to be largely synonymous with *pàʔ*.

- (728) jə-kə-lè-pàʔ.sə
 1s-IRR-go-**in.advance**
 ‘I will go first (before you).’ [LTP.D]

- (729) pyà.kəp̄ kəliʔ ʔə-dúʔ-ʔə-tʰē təpʰáʔ ʔôʔ.sʰōʔ-tê-pàʔ.sə-lī
 Karen kind 3x-tribe-3x-clan COLL reside-ABANDON-**in.advance**-NS
 lā kō tə-béʔ ʔi ʔə-pù
 GNR.P country one-CLF(2D) this 3x-inside
 ʔə-nīʔ 270 bléʔ lī
 3x-year more.than NS
 ‘[When the Burmese entered “Kaw La”], Karen tribes had already lived in this country for over 270 years.’ (Karen nationalism)

5.5.2.3 *tê* ‘cast away, abandon’

The verbal modifier *tê* is attested as a main verb meaning “[c]ast away or down a large or heavy object” or “insert, put into” (Wade 1896: 751). Wade (1896: 751) also states that, when “affixed”, *tê* indicates “abandonment of the object”. An instance of *tê* as a main verb can be seen in (730).

- (730) *tê-lò* *kə̀li* *lā* *lō²-kʰɔ̃².rī²*
insert-DOWN air GNR.P car-tyre
 ‘Put air into the car tyres.’ [KWH]

The meaning of *tê* as a temporal-relational modifier might be related to the meaning ‘cast away or down’, indicating abandonment. The basic meaning of V-*tê* compounds is ‘be left V-ed’ or, with intransitive verbs, ‘remain V-ing’. Compare the subject-oriented meaning of *tê* in (731) with the object-oriented (switch-subject) meaning in (732).

- (731) *mē-mē* *ʔə-mō* *nē²* *ʔō²-tê* *lā* *hī²* *lò*
 COND-COP 3x-mother that_{TOP} EXIST-ABANDON GNR.P house FACT.FP
 ‘As for his mother, she stayed at home.’ [LTP]

- (732) *jə-θā²* *θē².pʰā²* *lā* *nə-pā²-tê* *jà* *ʔəxō* *lò*
 1sx-heart break(intr.) GNR.P 2s-put-ABANDON 1si 3.REASON FACT.FP
 ‘My heart broke because you left me.’ [LTP]

There are only a few examples, however, in which *tê* signals abandonment. In most cases, *tê* indicates that a situation took place in the past. Wade (1896: 751) calls *tê* a “particle of past tense”, and some native speakers see the function of *tê* as equivalent to the past tense in English. As previously shown, however, tense is not an obligatory grammatical category in Sgaw Karen; bare verbs often have past or future reference and thus by no means require special marking for tense.

Not only is *tê* often optional, but the verb also appears to be rare in informal contexts. It is particularly widespread in the modern Sgaw Karen Bible translation. According to one speaker, using *tê* in (733) is grammatically correct, but in the spoken language, *tê* would normally be omitted. Similarly, Ballard (1973b: 162) notes that *tê* “is not used very often in everyday speech”.

- (733) *ʔjə-pyè-tê* *li²* *məhā.kə²* *tə-bê²*
1s-buy-ABANDON book yesterday one-CLF(2D)
 ‘I bought a book yesterday.’ [LTP.P]

While past reference may not be an intrinsic feature, *tê* can serve to emphasize that a situation used to be the case and at reference point belongs to the past. In (734) and (735), the expression of remote past time seems to be the primary function of *tê*.

- (734) *lā* *ʔə-pù.kwiʔ* *ʔə-niʔ* *tə-sʰi* *nēʔ*
 GNR.P 3-pass(v.) 3-year one-ten that_{FRAME}
jā-kē-tē=jē.dāʔ *tʃō-θəɾáʔ* *tə-yà* *lò*
1s-act.as_{cop}-ABANDON=1s.WD school-teacher one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘Ten years ago, I was a teacher.’ [HUR]
- (735) *kəŋə-pʰō* *sò.pà* *lā* *ʔə-pə-báʔ-tē* *tā*
 Karen-child king REL **3-govern-hit_{EXP}-ABANDON** thing
təpʰáʔ *ʔə-nóʔ.yi* *ʔóʔ=wē* *tə-kətʰō* *θə*
 COLL 3x-number EXIST=COR one-thousand three
kəjà *kʰwī* *sʰi* *θə* *yà* *nēʔ.lò*
 hundred nine ten three CLF(HUM) FP
 ‘The number of Karen kings who used to rule is 1,393.’ (Karen nationalism)

Additionally, *tē* is sometimes similar to a perfect marker, expressing “the completion of an action previous to a certain moment of past time” (Gilmore 1898: §139–140). This function of *tē* is also mentioned by van Schie (2019). In such cases, one situation has already happened in the past and has relevance at a later point in time, as in (736)–(738). Note, in (738), that present relevance of the past event is reinforced using the new-situation marker *lī*.

- (736) *tə-mē* *ʔə-mi* *nó.kó* *lā* *ʔə-mō*
 NEG-be.true_{cop} 3x-name be.real REL 3x-mother
jī-nē-tē *ʔò* *báʔ*
give(name)-get_{BEN}-ABANDON 3i NEG.FP
 ‘(It) wasn’t his real name that his mother had given him.’
 (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)
- (737) *ŋə.ni* *təkʰə* | *θəwə-pʰō* *təpʰáʔ* *θū=wē* *tā.kʰlī*
 usually one.side_{CNTR} village-child COLL use=COR seed
lā *ʔəwē.θəʔ* *dōʔ.nē-tē=wē* *lā* *nīʔ*
 REL 3.PL **get-ABANDON=COR** GNR.P year
ʔə-pù.kwiʔ *təpʰáʔ* *ʔə-tā.tʰúʔ.tā.bō* *ʔə-pù*
 3-pass(v.) COLL 3x-plant(n.) 3x-inside
 ‘Normally, villagers use seeds that they have received from last year’s plants’
 (News article)

- (738) *mā* *pyà.tfō.p^hō* *lè* *ʔôʔ.θəkōʔ* *pyà.kəŋ̄* *dī.θōʔ*
 order student go visit Karen so.that
kə-kətò-lō *tā.kətò* *θéʔ.təp^hāʔ* *lā* *ʔə-mà.lō-tê-lī=wē*
 IRR-speak-LEARN phrase PL.COLL REL **3-study-ABANDON-NS=COR**
 ‘Tell the student to go visit Karen people so that (they) can practice the
 phrases that they have studied.’ (Ballard 1973a: 21; instruction to Karen teacher)

5.5.3 Purposive modifiers

Purposive modifiers describe the purpose for or the manner in which an action is performed. Based on their semantics as independent verbs, purposive modifiers differ from adverbial modifiers in that they predicate about one of the arguments of the verb rather than the verb itself. Thus, the modifier *kwā* ‘look’ in *ʔôʔ-kwā* [eat-look] ‘taste (lit., eat and see)’ is characterized as subject-oriented since both actions are performed by the subject. Table 30 lists eight common purposive modifiers.

Table 30 Purposive verbal modifiers

Purposive modifier	Meaning as V₂ and examples
<i>ʔɔʔ</i> ‘eat’	a. Cooking <i>bā-ʔɔʔ</i> [bake-eat] ‘bake for eating’ b. Hunting and fishing <i>təkʰwē-ʔɔʔ</i> [fish-eat] ‘fish (v.)’ <i>kʰāʔ-ʔɔʔ</i> [shoot-eat] ‘shoot to eat’ c. Doing for a living <i>sʰā-ʔɔʔ</i> [sell-eat] ‘sell for a living’ <i>bīʔ-ʔɔʔ</i> [raise-eat] ‘raise (livestock)’
<i>prā</i> ‘compete’	‘compete in V-ing’ <i>xē-prā</i> [run-compete] ‘compete in running’ <i>tʰō-prā-lō.θāʔ</i> [box-compete-RECP] ‘compete in boxing’
<i>pʰyôʔ</i> ‘come together’	‘V (sth) together’ <i>sā-pʰyôʔ</i> [tie-come.together] ‘tie together’ <i>pāʔ-pʰyôʔ</i> [put-come.together] ‘put together, compile’
<i>lôʔ.kwē</i> ‘play’	‘V for fun’ <i>hāʔ-lôʔ.kwē</i> [walk-play] ‘take a stroll’ <i>xē-lôʔ.kwē</i> [run-play] ‘jog’
<i>kwâ</i> ‘look’	‘V and see’ <i>ʔō-kwâ</i> [drink-look] ‘drink and see, try (sth drinkable)’ <i>pʰôʔ-kwâ</i> [grab/touch-look] ‘touch and see’
<i>lō</i> ‘train’	a. ‘practice V-ing’ <i>kətō-lō</i> [speak-learn] ‘practice speaking’ <i>hāʔ-lō</i> [walk-learn] ‘learn to walk’ b. ‘train by V-ing’ <i>θôʔ-lō</i> [teach-TRAIN] ‘teach’
<i>nē</i> ‘get’	‘V and get’ <i>pɣè-nē</i> [buy-get] ‘buy and get’ (For benefactive use, see §8.1.1)
<i>θī</i> ‘die’	a. ‘V and die’ <i>lō.tēʔ-θī</i> [fall-die] ‘fall and die’ b. ‘V to kill’ <i>kʰāʔ-θī</i> [shoot-die] ‘shoot to kill’

In terms of argument structure, most verbs discussed in this section are transitive. However, their argument structures as independent verbs do not impact the argument structure of the verb–verb compound, which is determined by V₁. The verb *lôʔ.kwē* ‘play’ illustrates this. In (739), *lôʔ.kwē* occurs as an independent verb.

- (739) *ʔā-lôʔ.kwē=wē.dâʔ* game *dō* *tā-nā* *klā* *lō*
3-play=WD whole one-night INTS FACT.FP
‘they played games the whole night’ [HUR]

As a purposive modifier, *lòʔ.kwē* ‘play’ combines with a variety of verbs, expressing ‘(V) for fun’. In (740), *lòʔ.kwē* modifies *hāʔ* ‘walk’, an intransitive verb. The valency of the compound remains equal to that of *hāʔ*. Note also, in (741), that *lêʔ.jō* ‘bicycle’ is the object of *dōʔ* ‘ride’ rather than *lòʔ.kwē* (**lòʔ.kwē lēʔ.jō* [play bicycle] is ungrammatical).

(740) *kʰē.məhā* *pə-kə-lê* ***hāʔ-lòʔ.kwē***
 this.evening 1p-IRR-go **walk-play**
 ‘This coming evening we’ll go take a stroll.’ (Ballard 1973b: 76)

(741) *tə-nì* *ʔi* ***jə-dōʔ-lòʔ.kwē*** *lêʔ.jō*
 one-day this **1s-ride-play** bicycle
 ‘Today I went cycling.’ [HUR]

The following subsections briefly describe five of the most frequent purposive modifiers in the data.

5.5.3.1 ʔōʔ ‘eat’

The verb ʔōʔ ‘eat’ commonly occurs as a verbal modifier in Southeast Asia languages, such as Burmese and Mon. In Sgaw Karen, ʔōʔ as a modifier expresses ‘(V) for eating’ or ‘(V) for a living’. While the modifier does not impact valency, ʔōʔ sometimes requires that the P be something edible. For this reason, (742) is odd. When the object denotes an edible item, ʔōʔ is optional, as in (743) and (744).

(742) *ʔʔəwē* ***pyè-ʔōʔ*** *lìʔ*
 3 **buy-eat** book

(743) *ʔəwē* ***pyè-ʔōʔ*** *nāʔ*
 3 **buy-eat** fish
 ‘He bought fish for eating.’ (Kato 1993: 182; my trans.)

(744) *jə-lê* ***pyè*** *nāʔ* *lā* *pʰjā-pù*
 1s-go **buy** fish GNR.P market-inside
 ‘I went to the market to buy fish.’ (Kato 1993: 181; my trans.)

The verb ʔōʔ ‘eat’ also occurs in verb–verb compounds denoting methods of food preparation, foraging, fishing, and hunting. Two examples can be seen in (745) and (746).

(745) *tə-hā* *ʔi* ***nə-pʰʃ-ʔōʔ*** *mənì* *lêʔ*
 one-evening this **2s-cook-eat** what CQ
 ‘What are you cooking tonight?’ (Jones 1961: 200, 202)

- (746) *tʰəʔ lù-ʔəʔ θéʔ-θáʔ pɣà.kəp̄ lù-ʔəʔ mè-wā*
 bird **chase-eat** tree-fruit human **chase-eat** rice-be.white
 ‘Birds chase fruit; people chase rice. (All creatures pursue a good life.)’
 (Karen proverbs: 15)

Frequently, *ʔəʔ* is also used when the object is edible only after preparation, as in (747). In (748), *ʔəʔ* expresses ‘V for a living’. Note that the action denoted by V₁ and the eating event can be separated by a considerable time period.

- (747) *jə-ʔéʔ.dəʔ hāʔ-dēʔ-ʔəʔ tā ʔā~ʔā*
 1s-want **walk-pick-eat** thing a.lot
 ‘I want to go pick lots of (edible) things (in the forest)’ (Vlog, “Hunting”)

- (748) *tə-nì ʔi jə-kə-lè mǎ-ʔəʔ nǎʔ lə*
 one-day this 1s-IRR-go **do-eat** fish FACT.FP
 ‘Today I will go fishing.’ [HUR]

Some V-*ʔəʔ* compounds do not need to take edible objects and are semantically highly idiosyncratic. Consider *sʰā-ʔəʔ* [sell-eat] ‘sell for a living’, in (749), where the object is *kā* ‘car’. This semantic idiosyncrasy indicates a high degree of lexicalization of some V-*ʔəʔ* compounds.

- (749) *pɣà lā ʔə-pɣè kā kʰī ɣà tə-ɣà nēʔ*
 person REL 3-buy car two CLF(HUM) one-CLF(HUM) that_{TOP}
sʰā-ʔəʔ-kədʔ=wē.dáʔ sʰū pɣà θā ɣà
sell-eat-again=WD ALL.P person three CLF(HUM)
tə-ɣà ʔə-ʔəʔ nēʔ.lə
 one-CLF(HUM) 3x-LOC.N FP
 ‘The second person who bought the car sold it again to a third person.’
 (Vlog, “Missing family”)

Compared to the Mon postverbal operator *eiəʔ* ‘eat’ (Jenny 2005: 199 ff.), the use of Sgaw Karen *ʔəʔ* in V₂ appears to be combine with a more restricted set of verbs. In the data, most V-*ʔəʔ* instances occur in contexts semantically connected to eating. Only a handful of exceptions exist, including the compounds in (750).

- (750) *θū-ʔəʔ* [use-eat] ‘use’
nǎʔ-ʔəʔ [believe-eat] ‘believe, trust’
liʔ-ʔəʔ [lie-eat] ‘deceive’
 (elaborate variant: *liʔ.ʔəʔ.lə.ʔəʔ* [lie(CC1)-eat-lie(CC2)-eat])

Examples (751) and (752) illustrate the use of *θū.ʔəʔ* and *tē.ʔəʔ*, respectively.

(751) *nə-liʔ tə-bêʔ ʔi nə-θā kə-θū-ʔɔʔ ʔɔ̃ dīʔ.lêʔ*
 2sx-book one-CLF(2D) this 2s-intend IRR-**use-eat** 3i how
 ‘How do you intend to use this book?’ (Ballard 1973c: 112)

(752) *nə-tē-ʔɔʔ pyà-yê-pyà-klò tʰɔ̃.bō lɔ̃*
 2s-**tell/say-eat** person-matter(CC1)-person-matter(CC2) always FACT.FP
 ‘You always gossip about others.’ [HUR]

5.5.3.2 *kwâ* ‘look’

The verb *kwâ* ‘look’ is used as a modifier expressing that an “action is performed by way of trial” (Ballard 1973b: 40). Similar modifiers or markers have been described for several Asian languages, being known by various names in the literature, including “tentative” (Matisoff 1973b), “conative” (Coupe 2018), and “attemptive” (Voinov 2013; Yurayong & Szeto 2020).

Most commonly, *kwâ* combines with a transitive V₁, expressing that some property of the object is tested, as in (753) and (754).

(753) *nə-tʰôʔ-kwâ sʰɪʔ-tʰɔ̃ lêʔ*
 2s-**measure-LOOK** be.small-be.long CQ
 ‘Measure and see how long (it) is.’ (KWH)

(754) *ʔəwē ʔɔ̃-kwâ tʰɪ ʔi*
 3 **drink-LOOK** water this
 ‘she tasted this water’ (News article)

In (755)–(757), *kwâ* ‘look’ signals observing the outcome of V₁, expressing ‘(V) and see what happens’.

(755) *kənâʔ-kwâ nɔ̃*
listen-LOOK AGR.FP
 ‘Have a listen!’
 (Lit., ‘Listen and see [what you think, how you feel, etc.]’)

(756) *sāʔ-kwâ ʔɔ̃*
ask-LOOK 3i
 ‘Ask them.’ [KWH]

(757) *sʰā-kwâ θəkʰɔ̃ʔ-θâʔ θêʔ təpʰâʔ ʔi*
sell-LOOK mango-fruit PL COLL this
mê pyà kə-pyè hā.
 be.true_{COND} person IRR-buy PQ
 ‘Try selling these mangoes and see if people will buy them.’ (Ballard 1973b: 37)

Note that *trying* in the sense ‘make an effort to’ is expressed using the secondary verb *ʔiʔ.klêʔ.səʔ* ‘try’ (see §5.1.2.3).

5.5.3.3 *lō* ‘learn’

The verbal modifier *lō* ‘(V) to learn/train’ does not appear as an independent verb. It is cognate with Pwo Karen *lō* as described by Kato (2004: 305–306). Like other grammaticalized verbal modifiers, *lō* likely originated as an independent verb, but its exact original meaning is unknown.

As a purposive modifier, *lō* indicates practicing or learning the action expressed by V_1 (‘ V_1 and learn’). The object of $V-lō$ is typically the object of study, as in (758) and (759).

- (758) *p^hō.θā[?].hō* *kwē[?]-lō* *lī[?]*
 child **write-LEARN** writing
 ‘The children practice writing.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 149; my trans.)

- (759) *tjō-θārā[?]* *lō* *ʔə-θō[?]-lō* *kəŋ[?]-klō[?]* *təp^hā[?]*
 school-teacher REL **3-instruct-LEARN** Karen-language COLL
 ‘schoolteachers who teach Karen’

In some cases, *lō* adds a reflexive pronoun, increasing the valency of the compound. In (760), the first object is the reflexive pronoun *jəθā[?]* ‘myself’, while the second object, *pī* ‘flute’, appears in an oblique NP.

- (760) *jə-kə-ʔū-lō* *jə-θā[?]* *lō* *pī*
 1S-IRR-**blow-LEARN** **1sx-heart_{REFL}** GNR.P flute
 ‘I will learn to play (lit., train myself blowing) the flute.’
 (The Benefit of Education)

5.5.3.4 *nē* ‘get’

The verb *nē* ‘get’ has various functions depending on its position in the clause. Bar Hso Wah (2011: 55) notes that *nē* rarely occurs on its own, appearing more frequently in compounds, such as *nē-bā[?]* [get-hit] ‘get, receive’ and *dō[?]-nē* [submit-get] ‘receive’.

As a V_2 in compounds, *nē* ‘get’ has two distinct functions depending on the context: firstly, *nē* functions as a benefactive marker and, secondly, it expresses ‘(V) and acquire’. Compare (761), where the receiver of the action (the beneficiary) is the non-subject participant, *p^hō.θā[?]* ‘child’, and (762), where the buyer is also the receiver.

- (761) *pō[?].mī[?]* *pyè-nē* *p^hō.θā[?]* *θək^hō[?]-θā[?]*
 woman **buy-get** child mango-fruit
 ‘The woman bought mango for her child.’ [LTP.P]

- (762) *ʔəxō* *pyè-nē-ʔā.t^hō[?]* *kəs^hō* *θā* *dī*
 3X.REASON **buy-get-increase** elephant three CLF(ANIM)
 ‘(His work had been profitable) so (he) bought three more elephants.’ (Saw Kay)

The benefactive use of *nê* in switch-subject constructions is described in §8.1.1. In same-subject verb–verb compounds, *V-nê* ‘V and get’ often conveys that the intended result of *V*₁ is acquired, as in (763) and (764).

(763) *jə-pî* *p^hʒ²-nê* *nâ[?]* *p^hā[?]* *dô[?]* *tə-bō*
 1sx-yS **catch-get** fish INTS big one-CLF(1D)
 ‘My younger sibling caught a big fish.’ (Ballard 1973b: 203)

(764) *ɿfō.p^hō* *lā* *ʔə-dō[?].nê-bâ[?]* *tā.ʔê[?]* *lā* *hî[?]* *təp^hâ[?]* *nê[?]*
 student REL 3-receive-HIT love GNR.P house COLL TOP
hē *lā* *ɿfō* *dī[?].θō[?]* *kə-mà.lō-nê* *tā*
 come GNR.P school so.that **IRR-learn-get** thing
 ‘students who receive love at home come to school to learn things’ [HUR]

Note that, unlike in several other Southeast Asian languages, the verb *hê[?]* ‘give’ has not developed a benefactive or causative meaning in Sgaw Karen. In both same-subject and switch-subject compounds, *hê[?]* ‘give’ retains its base verb meaning.

5.5.3.5 *θī* ‘die’

The purposive modifier *θī* ‘die’ has both subject- and object-oriented meanings, depending on the semantics of *V*₁. Example (765) illustrates the use of *θī* as a main verb.

(765) *dṣ[?]* *kṣ²-nī[?]-dē[?]* *nê[?]* *pyà* *θī=wē.dâ[?]*
 and each-year-INTS that_{FRAME} person **die=WD**
dṣ-dū[?]-dṣ-t^hṣ *nṣ* *k^hṣ.p^hlō* *lā* *ʔṣ[?]* *tā.ʔṣ[?]*
 whole-clan(CC1)-whole-clan(CC2) AGR.FP because GNR.P eat food
lā *ʔə-tə-γè* *bâ[?]* *θê[?].təp^hâ[?]*
 REL 3-NEG-be.good NEG.FP PL.COLL
 ‘And every year lots of people die because of eating bad food (lit. food that isn’t good).’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

As a subject-oriented modifier, *θī* ‘die’ co-occurs with intransitive *V*₁s denoting events resulting in the death of the subject. Examples (766) and (767) include some instances from the data.

(766) *lṣ.dō-θī* [starve-die] ‘starve to death’
lṣ.ʔī[?]-θī [be.submerged-die] ‘drown’
lṣ.xì-θī [fall.down-die] ‘fall dead’

(767) *pō[?].k^hwā* *lṣ.tē[?]-θī* *lā* *θê[?]* *lṣ*
 man **fall.down-die** GNR.P tree FACT.FP
 ‘A man fell down from a tree and died.’ [LTP.P]

More commonly, *θ̄* occurs in object-oriented contexts, indicating ‘V to kill’. Typically, *V*₁ expresses an action causing death directly, as in (768), or indirectly, as in (769).

(768) *ʔə-kʰā²-θ̄-bā²* *pyà* *θəpyà.tâ*
3-shoot-die-HIT person really
 ‘He really shot a person dead (it’s not a joke)!’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 224; my trans.)

(769) *pyà* *lā* *ʔə-xā²* *nē²* *sī².jɔ²-θ̄=wē.dā²* *nē².lō*
 person REL 3-lose that_{TOP} **judge-die=WD** FP
 ‘(As for) people who lose, he sentences (them) to death.’
 (The Benefit of Education)

5.5.4 Directional modifiers

Directional modifiers, indicating the direction in which a movement or action is oriented, are common in verb–verb compounds. Several directional verbs occur in the data and nearly all also function as independent verbs. The data contains six directional modifiers: *tʰɔ²*, *lō*, *xō*, *nī²*, *kē*, and *kwi²*. The last one, *kwi²* ‘AWAY’, also affects the lexical aspect of the compound and is described in §5.5.5.1. In (770), they are combined with *lē* ‘go’ and *hā²* ‘walk’, both expressing movement away from the speaker’s location.

(770) *lē-tʰɔ²* [go-UP] ‘go up’
lē-lō [go-DOWN] ‘go down’
lē-xō [go-HORIZ] ‘go horizontally’
lē-nī² [go-IN] ‘go into’
lē-nī²-lō [go-IN-DOWN] ‘go into’
lē-kē [go-RETURN] ‘go back’
hā²-tʰɔ² [walk-UP] ‘go out’
hā²-kwi² [walk-AWAY] ‘go away’
hā²-tʰɔ²-kwi² [walk-UP-AWAY] ‘go away’

Note, in (770), that *hā²* rather than *lē* is used with the directions ‘out’ and ‘away’. Additionally, ‘away’ is more commonly expressed using the combination *tʰɔ²-kwi²* [UP-AWAY] rather than just *kwi²*. Similarly, ‘into’ is often rendered as *nī²-lō* [IN-DOWN], although the monosyllabic *nī²* ‘enter’ is also common.

The verb *tʰɔ²* ‘come/go up’, as a directional modifier, expresses both ‘up’ and ‘out’. To express ‘go up’ and ‘go out’, two different compounds are used: *lē-tʰɔ²* ‘go up’ and *hā²-tʰɔ²* ‘go out’. For other actions, the direction (‘up’ or ‘out’) is determined based on the context. In (771), the *hē-tʰɔ²* means ‘come out’ and, in (772), it means ‘come up’.

(771) *tʰĩ* **hē-tʰɔ̃ʔ** *lā* *kəsə* *pù*
 water **come-UP** GNR.P mountain inside
 ‘Water comes out of a mountain crevice.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 1221; my trans.)

(772) *ɣè* *lā* *nə-hē-tʰɔ̃ʔ* *lā* *pə-də̃ʔ* *ʔi*
 be.good COMP 2s-**come-UP** GNR.P 1px-room/house(N.Th.) this
 ‘It’s a good thing you came up into our house.’ (Ballard 1973c: 24)

Non-deictic motion verbs, such as *xé* ‘run’ and *jù* ‘fly’, can take the same set of directional modifiers as deictic motion verbs can, as seen in (773).

(773) *jù-tʰɔ̃ʔ* [fly-UP] ‘fly up, fly out’
jù-lə̃ [fly-DOWN] ‘dive, fly down’
jù-xə̃ [fly-HORIZ] ‘fly horizontally’
jù-niʔ [fly-IN] ‘fly into’
jù-niʔ-lə̃ [fly-IN-DOWN] ‘fly into’
jù-kè [fly-RETURN] ‘fly back’
jù-kwiʔ [fly-UP-AWAY] ‘fly away’
jù-tʰɔ̃ʔ-kwiʔ [fly-UP-AWAY] ‘fly away’

Directional modifiers also readily co-occur with non-motion verbs. In the case of transitive verbs, the directional verb is object-oriented, specifying the movement of the P argument or its end position caused by V₁. In (774)–(776), the directional verbs specify the movement of the objects.

(774) *lè* **hĩ-kè** *kəmə*
 go **grab-RETURN** debt
 ‘Go get [your] money back.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 1071; my trans.)

(775) *lā* *ʔəwē* *kə-jɔ̃ʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ* *tʰĩ* *lə̃*
 COMP 3 IRR-**carry.on.shoulders-UP** water FACT.FP
 ‘[the king gave his permission] for him to carry up the water’
 (Jones 1961: 216–217, 219)

(776) *nə-mé* **pà-niʔ** *lā* *sʰū* *tʰɔ̃ʔ* *pù* *néʔ*
 2s-be.true_{COND} **put-IN** stone ALL.P bag inside that_{FRAME}
 ‘if you put a stone in the bag’ [LTP]

Many directional compounds, such as *θù-lə̃* [plant-DOWN] ‘plant, cultivate’ and *θù-tʰɔ̃ʔ* [plant-UP] ‘build’, have highly lexicalized and idiosyncratic meanings. Some, such as *béʔ* ‘take off’, only occur with a directional modifier. Examples (777) and (778) illustrate the use of *béʔ*.

- (777) *bê²-lò* *nə-p^hlò².k^hɿ*
take.off-DOWN 2sx-trouser
 ‘Take off your trousers.’ [KWH]
- (778) *dɔ̃²* *bê²-t^hɔ̃²* *ʔə-xê²*
 and.then **take.off-UP** 3x-machete
 ‘[then] he drew out his knife’ (Jones 1961: 209–210)

Sgaw Karen has several verbs of carrying, all of which are commonly used with directional modifiers.³⁵ In (779), *sò²* ‘carry (in one’s arms)’ combines with all the directional verbs.

- (779) *sò²-t^hɔ̃²* [carry-UP] ‘carry up/out; take up (e.g. from the ground)’
sò²-lò [carry-DOWN] ‘carry down’
sò²-xò [carry-HORIZ] ‘carry horizontally’
sò²-nì² [carry-IN] ‘carry in’
sò²-nì²-lò [carry-IN-DOWN] ‘carry in’
sò²-kè [carry-RETURN] ‘carry back’
sò²-kwì² [carry-AWAY] ‘carry away’
sò²-t^hɔ̃²-kwì² [carry-UP-AWAY] ‘carry away’

Direction can also be marked by verbs occurring before the main verb. Non-deictic motion and non-motion verbs can be specified by the pre-main verb directionals *kè* ‘return’ or by one of the deictic verbs *hē* ‘come’ or *lè* ‘go’. In (780), *sò²* and *xê* ‘run’ combine with the pre-main verb directionals *hē* ‘come’ and *kè* ‘return’ and the V₂ directional modifiers *t^hɔ̃²* ‘come/go up’ and *lò* ‘come/go down’.

- (780) *hē-sò²* [come-carry] ‘bring’
hē-sò²-t^hɔ̃² [come-carry-UP] ‘bring up/out’
kè-xê [return-run] ‘run back’
lè-xê-lò [go-run-DOWN] ‘go running down’

Examples of the use of the pre-main verb directional modifiers *kè* ‘return’ and *hē* ‘come’ in context can be seen in (781) and (782).

- (781) *ʔəwē.θê²* *pli* *tá* *dɔ̃²*
 3.PL fear thing and
kè-xê=wē *s^hū* *ʔə-θəwō* *nê².lò*
return-run=COR ALL.P 3x-village FP
 ‘they got scared and fled back to their village’ (News article)

³⁵ Examples of verbs of carrying include *jō²* ‘carry on the shoulders (with a neckyoke)’, *wī* ‘carry on the back (with a tumpline)’, and *tō* ‘carry on the head’.

- (782) *ʔəwē* **hē-sòʔ** *θéʔ* *lā* *pɣá-pù*
 3 **come-carry** tree GNR.P forest-inside
 ‘He brought wood from the forest.’ (Kato 1993: 185; my trans.)

Some more marginal directionals include *xə* ‘move horizontally’, *wè.wə* ‘move about (here and there)’, *təriʔ* ‘move around (in a circle)’, and *kʰɔ̄.pʰlō* ‘move through’. Examples of the last three can be observed in (783)–(785).

- (783) *kəbɔ̄-jù* *təpʰáʔ* *néʔ* **hāʔ-jù-wè.wə=wē**
 ship-fly COLL that_{TOP} **walk-fly-AROUND=COR**
pʰē *pə-pʰɔ̄.kʰóʔ* *néʔ.lò*
 LOC.P 1px-ABOVE FP
 ‘Airplanes were flying around above us.’ (News interview)

- (784) **kwá-təriʔ** *tá* *təyè*
look-turn thing PROH
 ‘Don’t look around.’ (Ballard 1973b: 201)

- (785) *wì* **jwà-kʰɔ̄.pʰlō=wē** *təriʔ-kó*
 finish **flow-through=COR** China-country
 ‘then it (=the Yangtze River) flows through China’ (Karen drum)

The directional *xə*, which is not attested as an independent verb, expresses horizontal movement and combines with both motion and non-motion verbs. Ballard (1973c: 261) describes *xə* as follows: “Very often when movement is on the horizontal plane it is not considered necessary to indicate this, but sometimes (perhaps especially in the mountains where most movement is either up or down) it is desired to specify that the movement is on the horizontal plane, in which case the action verb is combined with [*xə*]”. The compound in (786) indicates actual movement while (787) and (788) demonstrate the use of *xə* in a figurative sense.

- (786) *xé* *sʰū-néʔ* *təyè* **hē-xé-xə** *sʰū* *jə-ʔóʔ* *ʔi*
 run ALL.P-that PROH **come-run-HORIZ** ALL.P 1sx-LOC.N this
 ‘Don’t run over there. Come run over here to me [on the same level].’
 (Ballard 1973c: 256; square brackets in original)

- (787) *dɔ̄ʔ* *ʔəwē* **kwá-xə=wē.dáʔ** *sʰū* *pɣá.kəmlá* *ʔə-ʔóʔ*
 and 3s **look-HORIZ=WD** ALL.P public(n.) 3x-LOC.N
 ‘And (then) he looked at the audience’ (Vlog, “Worthless”)

- (788) **tì-xə-kədɔ̄ʔ** *pʰē* *lā-ʔē.pʰri* *ʔə-θɔ̄* *tə-sʰi* *ʔə-nì* *néʔ*
arrive-HORIZ-again LOC.P month-PN 3x-day one-ten 3x-day that_{FRAME}
 ‘And then on April 10th’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

Like *xə*, several directional verbs express various figurative meanings apart from denoting movement in a strictly spatial sense. Four such cases are discussed in §5.5.4.1–5.5.4.4.

5.5.4.1 Orientational use of *tʰəʔ* and *lə*

In a figurative sense, *tʰəʔ* ‘V up’ and *lə* ‘V down’ indicate the downward or upward orientation of an action. In (789), the stimulus of the act of crying is a dead person; thus, *lə* is used to indicate downward direction.

- (789) *dəʔ sɑ̃.tʰəʔ həʔ-lə-jə-lə=wɛ* *dɪʔ ʔi*
 and start cry(CC1)-DOWN-cry(CC2)-DOWN=COR be.like this
 ‘and they started crying over (the corpse) like this’ (Karen drum)

Verbs of giving, such as *həʔ* ‘give’ and *bɪʔ* ‘feed (animals)’, typically combine with *lə*. In (790), the recipient is a person in a crowd addressed by a public speaker, while in (791), the recipient is livestock.

- (790) *sɛ tə-bəʔ ʔi nəʔ*
 money one-CLF(2D) this that_{TOP}
jə-kə-həʔ-lə=wɛ.dɑʔ pɣà tə-ɣà~ɣà *lə*
1s-IRR-give-DOWN=WD person one-CLF(HUM)~CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘This banknote I will give to someone’ (Vlog, “Worthless”)

- (791) *pʰə-miʔ nəʔ kə-bɑʔ mə.sə tə*
 child-F that_{TOP} IRR-must help THING
lə-hiʔ-lə-xə dɪʔ mə sʰɪ-bɪ-jə-bɪ
 GNR.P-house-GNR.P-ladder like be.true_{COP} pound-paddy-step-paddy
bɪʔ-lə tʰəʔ bɪʔ-lə sʰɪ
feed-DOWN pig **feed-DOWN** chicken
 ‘Daughters must help with things in the household,
 such as pounding rice and feeding livestock.’ (Karen proverbs)

Sporadic examples of *həʔ-tʰəʔ* [give-UP] occur in the data. In these cases, the giver is either an abstract entity or a person of lower social rank than the receiver, such as a child or subordinate.

Additionally, *lə* ‘V down’ is used when an action is oriented toward oneself, often in reflexive clauses. The Bible passage in (792) illustrates that praising oneself requires *lə*, while praising others does not.

- (792) *plē pyà yà sī̄.tʰɔ̄.pətrə̀ nà təkē*
 permit person other **praise** 2si OPT.FP
sī̄.tʰɔ̄.pətrə̀-lə̀ nəθā̄-dā̄.nē nō tə-sī̄ təyè
praise-DOWN 2.REFL-self EXT one-time NEG.OPT
 ‘Let other people praise you, never praise yourself.’ (Proverbs 27:2)

See §8.3 for a discussion on reflexive clauses.

5.5.4.2 *tʰɔ̄* ‘appear’

As previously noted, the directional verb *tʰɔ̄* ‘come up, go up’ expresses upward movement. In addition, *tʰɔ̄* conveys the initio-transformative meaning ‘appear’, as in (793).

- (793) *kə.là-wā θf̄-pʰō tə-yà kəpʰō*
 foreigner-be.white army-child one-CLF(HUM) blister
tʰɔ̄ lā ʔə-mèʔ lə̀
come.up/appear GNR.P 3x-eye/face surface
 ‘One foreign white soldier had blisters all over his face’ (Jones 1961: 236, 245)

As a V_2 modifier, *tʰɔ̄* indicates the appearance of something previously non-existent, similar to *up* in *come up*. Frequently, *tʰɔ̄* combines with verbs of creation, as in (794).

- (794) *lə.kəwə̀ θəwə-pʰō θè̄.təpʰā̄ kə-bāʔ tē-tʰɔ̄ t̄fō*
 local village-child PL.COLL IRR-must **create-UP** school
 ‘Local villagers have to build schools.’ (News article)

In contrast to the patient-oriented function in (794), the modifier *tʰɔ̄* also expresses ‘start to V_1 ’, indicating the “appearance” of a new state or action, as in (795)–(797). This inchoative use of *tʰɔ̄* has only been observed with intransitive action verbs.

- (795) *nā.mū-tʰɔ̄ lī*
smell.fragrant-UP NS
 ‘It smells good’ (said having noticed the smell of food) [KWH]

- (796) *sə.pà kwā=wē.dāʔ tʰū-yè dōʔ nī-tʰɔ̄=wē.dāʔ*
 king look=WD gold-be.good(PN) and **laugh-UP=WD**
 ‘The king looked at Htoo Gay and burst out laughing’
 (The Benefit of Education)

- (797) *tā mé pòʔ klōʔ nēʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.true_{COND} beat drum that_{FRAME}
dēʔ təpʰā̄ kə-pyè-tʰɔ̄
 frog COLL **IRR-call-UP**
 ‘When the drum is beaten, frogs will start calling’ (Karen drum)

5.5.4.3 *tʰɔ̃ʔ* and *lɔ̃* expressing increased degree

As mentioned in §4.2.2.2, the vertical directional verbs *tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘come/go up’ and *lɔ̃* ‘come/go down’ are used with descriptive verbs to express increased degree of some property, as seen in (798).

- (798) *kʰɛ.ʔi* *lɔ̃* *wɛ* *pù* *nɛʔ* *klɛ* *yɛ-tʰɔ̃ʔ*
 now GNR.P city inside that_{FRAME} road **be.good-UP**
pɣà *dɔ̃ʔ* *lɛʔ-jɔ̃* *syà-lɔ̃*
 person ride cart-step **be.few-DOWN**
 ‘In the cities now the roads have improved, the number of people riding bicycles has decreased.’ (Ballard 1973c: 178)

In (798), *tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘come/go up’ and *lɔ̃* ‘come/go down’ can be said to instantiate the well-known metaphors “good is up” and “bad is down” (Lakoff & Johnson 2003), combining with descriptive verbs expressing positive and negative qualities. More precisely, however, *tʰɔ̃ʔ* and *lɔ̃* modify separate sets of verbs whose interpretation as negative or positive depends on the context rather than the modifying directional. Table 31 demonstrates that *lɔ̃* combines with a smaller set of descriptive verbs than *tʰɔ̃ʔ*, many of which have an antonym used with *tʰɔ̃ʔ*.

Table 31 Descriptive verbs used with *tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘up’ and *lɔ̃* ‘down’

Qualities used with <i>tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘up’	Qualities used with <i>lɔ̃</i> ‘down’
<i>dɔ̃ʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get bigger’	<i>sʰɿʔ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get smaller’
<i>lɛ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get wider’	<i>ʔiʔ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get narrower’
<i>ʔā-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘increase’	<i>syà-lɔ̃</i> ‘decrease’
<i>bɔ̃ʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get fatter’	<i>xɛ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get thinner (people)’
<i>sʰuʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get stronger’	<i>bū-lɔ̃</i> ‘get thinner (objects)’
<i>pyà-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get older’	<i>sā-lɔ̃</i> ‘get weaker’
<i>kô-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get hotter’	<i>kʰɿʔ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get cooler’
<i>tʰɔ̃-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘grow taller’	<i>yô-lɔ̃</i> ‘get colder’
<i>jiʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get longer (time)’	<i>pʰɿʔ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get shorter’
<i>pyɛ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get filled up’	<i>kô.nâ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get relieved’
<i>θɛ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get better at’	<i>kʰɿʔ-lɔ̃</i> ‘get darker’
<i>ji-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘go further away, drift away’	
<i>būʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get closer’	
<i>sʰɿʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get sourer’	
<i>nɔ̃-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get easier’	
<i>kɔ̃-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get more difficult’	
<i>yɛ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get better’	
<i>mɿʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get nicer’	
<i>nā-tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘get more severe’	

The qualities in Table 31 can be conceptualized as occupying two ends of a vertical scale, where *tʰɔ̃ʔ* ‘rise’ and *lò* ‘drop’ indicate movement, in a metaphorical sense, toward the positive and negative ends of the scale, respectively. Both *tʰɔ̃ʔ* and *lò*, then, denote an increased degree but are used with different descriptive verbs. Example (799) shows that *xè* ‘be slim’ is compatible with *lò*, and *bòʔ* ‘be fat’ with *tʰɔ̃ʔ*, but not vice versa. Similarly, *kʰɪʔ* ‘be cool’, in (800), only co-occurs with *lò*. In (801), the same modifier, *tʰɔ̃ʔ*, is used with semantically opposite verbs.

(799) *xè-lò* (**xè-tʰɔ̃ʔ*) / *bòʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ* (**bòʔ-lò*)
 be.slim-DOWN be.slim-UP be.fat-UP be.fat-DOWN
 ‘get slimmer’ / ‘get fatter’ [KWH]

(800) *pʰē tʰāʔ-tʰɪ kʰɪʔ-lò nēʔ*
 LOC.P metal-liquid **be.cool-DOWN** that_{FRAME}
 ‘when the molten metal cools down’ (Karen drum)

(801) *mē ʔə-mà-būʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ jà dɔ̃ʔ jwà mē.təmē*
 be.true_Q **3-CAUS-be.near-UP** 1si with god or
mē ʔə-mà-jì-tʰɔ̃ʔ jà dɔ̃ʔ jwà lēʔ
 be.true_Q **3-CAUS-be.far-UP** 1si with god Q
 ‘Do they bring me closer to God or push me further away from God?’ (Blog)

Descriptive compounds with *tʰɔ̃ʔ* and *lò* are either dynamic, emphasizing a process (‘become V-er’), as in (802), or initio-transformative, indicating a transition and subsequent state, as in (803).

(802) *tā kʰɪʔ-lò lī hā*
 thing_{IMPRS} **be.dark-DOWN** NS PQ
 ‘Is it getting dark (already)?’

(803) *mē.mē pəθē-ɣò nēʔ*
 as.for onion-be.red that_{TOP}
ʔə-pɣè dɔ̃ʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ kʰɪ sʰāʔ nā
 3x-price **be.big-UP** two fold INTS
 ‘As for red onions, the price has increased two-fold’ (News interview)

5.5.4.4 *kè* ‘return’

The verb *kè* ‘return’, as a V₂ modifier, has several non-spatial meanings. One is ‘(V) again’, indicating the reoccurrence of an event, as in (804) and (805).

(804) *nə-ʔɔ̃ʔ-tʰɔ̃ʔ pē.trɔ̃ dɔ̃ʔ nə-pɪʔ-kədā-kè ʔò lò*
 2s-open-UP window and **2s-close-reverse-RETURN** 3i FACT.FP
 ‘You opened the window and closed it again.’ [LTP.D]

- (805) *xī* *nīʔ* *ʔə-lɔ̄.kʰī* *pə-kə-tʰīʔ* *lā* *θēʔ*
 six year 3x-after 1p-IRR-see COMP tree
mē-tʰɔ̄ʔ-kè *pʰāʔ-tʰɔ̄* *lɔ̄.yàʔ* *dīʔ* *pyá.pù*
sprout-UP-RETURN INTS-be.tall resemble like forest
 ‘After six years (after clearing a hill field), we will see that trees have
 grown tall again resembling a forest’ (Karen village)

With transitive V₁s, *kè* ‘return’ also expresses the restoration of the object (P argument) to a prior location or state. The construction V-*kè* (P), meaning ‘V (P) back’, can thus be considered object-oriented and switch-subject, as opposed to the event-oriented constructions (‘V again’) seen in (804) and (805). Examples of the object-oriented use of *kè* can be seen in (806) and (807).

- (806) *pàʔ-kè* *līʔ-sɔ̄.sʰyī* *pʰē* *ʔə-lɔ̄*
put-RETURN book-be.holy LOC.P 3x-place
 ‘Put the Bible back in its place.’ (Ballard 1973b: 181)

- (807) *ʔəwē* *pyè-kè=wē.dáʔ* *kʰī* *tə-béʔ* *ʔi*
 3 **buy-RETURN=WD** boat one-CLF(2D) this
 ‘He bought back this boat.’ (Vlog, “Actress”)

Another figurative, non-spatial function of *kè* is to signal a contrast between two situations. Using *kè*, the situation at reference point is contrasted to a previous one, indicating that the situation has changed. In (808), *ʔɔ̄-kè* [drink-RETURN] and *θənè-kè* [lean-RETURN] are contrasted with the reversed situation where calves drink milk and children depend on their parents.

- (808) *klɔ̄-mô* *pyá* *kə-ʔɔ̄-kè* *klɔ̄-pʰō* *ʔə-nī-tʰī*
 ox-F be.old **IRR-drink-RETURN** ox-child 3x-breast-water
θāʔ.pyá *báʔ* *θənè-kè* *θāʔ* *lā* *pʰō.θáʔ* *nēʔ.lɔ̄*
 elder must **lean-RETURN** heart GNR.P child FP
 ‘A cow will drink calf’s milk. Elders must depend on their young.’
 (Karen proverbs)

Similarly, in (809), *kūʔ* ‘harvest’ is contrasted with the sowing season, which inevitably precedes harvesting. In (810), *kè* in *nè-kè* [get-RETURN] contrasts the present situation with the one before inflation.

- (809) *bī* *lā* *sīʔ-lɔ̄* *tənò* *tā*
 paddy GNR.P paddy-field some thing_{IMPRS}
kūʔ-kè *ʔò* *tə-θē* *là* *báʔ*
harvest-RETURN 3i NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} anymore NEG.FP
 ‘The paddy in some fields could not be harvested anymore (because of drought).’
 (News article)

- (810) *lā.jā nēʔ pə-ʔɔʔ pəθē.θāʔ*
 before that_{FRAME} 1p-eat onion
mē nē lwī pʰlāʔ nēʔ |
 COND get four CLF(3D) that_{FRAME}
kʰē.ʔi pə-ʔɔʔ nē-kè tʰē tə-pʰlāʔ lə
 now 1p-eat **get-RETURN** only one-CLF(3D) FACT.FP
 ‘For every four onions we could eat before, now we can eat only one
 (because of inflated prices).’ (Lit., ‘Before, if we could eat four onions, ...’)
 (News interview)

The verb *kè* ‘return’ frequently combines with *kədā*, which is not attested as an independent verb. Ballard (1973b: 240) suggests that *kədā* can be used together with *kè* for emphasis, noting that the meaning of *kədā* “is essentially the same as that of [*kè*] following another verb, but emphasizing the reversal of activity”. Example (811) demonstrates the event-oriented sense ‘(V) again’ and (812) the contrastive sense ‘(V) in contrast, in return’. Example (813) illustrates the object-oriented sense ‘(V) back’.

- (811) *pə-kə-kwā-kədā.kè tā-mà.lō kʰē.ləʔ*
 1p-IRR-look-BACK thing-study all
 ‘We’ll review (look back over) all the lessons.’ (Ballard 1973b: 236)
- (812) *təbl̩.təkʰɔʔ nēʔ pə-kə-mà-kəmāʔ-bāʔ tā d̩ʔ pə-kə-bāʔ*
 sometimes that_{FRAME} 1p-IRR-do-mistake-HIT thing and 1p-IRR-must
tū.bāʔ-kədā.kè ʔə-tā-pəʔ.tʰwē-tʰɔʔ ʔə-kʰī θēʔ.təpʰāʔ lə
suffer-BACK 3x-thing-follow-UP 3x-rear PL:COLL FP
 ‘Some time we will make a mistake and we will have to suffer the
 things that follow from it’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)
- (813) *pə-l̩-səʔ-kʰū.θūʔ klō ʔi d̩ʔ*
 1p-go-carry-hidden gun this and
pə-hē-kè p̩ʔ-kədā.kè ʔə kəsī.d̩f-pʰō
 1p-come-RETURN **put-BACK** 3i be.quiet-DIM
 ‘We take the gun in secret and (then) we come back and put it back quietly’
 (Saw Kay)

The modifier *sʰə* ‘RESPOND’ is semantically similar to *kè* ‘return’, indicating the reciprocation of or reaction to a previous action (‘(V) in return’). It does not occur independently in the data. Examples of V-*sʰə* compounds can be seen in (814) and (815). In (816), *sʰə* combines with *kè*.

- (814) *nə-tə-ʔēʔ-sʰə θā mē hā*
 2S-NEG-love-RESPOND 3.COR be.true PQ
 ‘you don’t love him [in return], do you?’
 (Ballard 1973c: 246; square brackets in original)

- (815) *nə-tē tā dī̄.lē̄²-dī̄̄.lē̄² ʔə-tə-tē-sʰə̄ tā bā²*
 2s-tell THING how-how 3-NEG-tell-RESPOND THING NEG.FP
 ‘Whatever you tell him, he doesn’t answer.’ [LTP.D]
- (816) *d̄ə² pʰē.nē² nē² tʰū.yè s̄ɿ²-sʰə̄-kè ʔə*
 and then that_{FRAME} T. say-RESPOND-RETURN 3i
 ‘ʔə² tə-bā² θā²-sʰɿ² təyè θəkō² h̄ə̄ nò
 yes NEG-must heart-be.small NEG.OPT friend VOC AGR.FP
 ‘And then Htoo Gay replied to him: “Yes, you don’t need to be sad, my friend.”’
 (The Benefit of Education)

The modifier *kè* ‘return’ occupies two different positions in a verb–verb compound depending on its function. As a directional modifier, it generally follows the main verb while as a non-directional modifier meaning ‘(V) again’, it is separable from the main verb by other modifiers. Compare (817), where *kè* conveys a direction, and (818), where *kè* is used non-directionally; the position of *kè* with respect to *bā²*, the verbal marker of opportunity, is different in the two examples.

- (817) *ʔəwē.θé² kə-hē-kè-bā² sʰū ʔə-tʰi-ʔə-kō lə*
 3.PL IRR-come-RETURN-hit_{OPP} ALL.P 3x-water(CC1)-3x-land(CC2) FP
 ‘They will get to return to their homeland.’ (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)
- (818) *pə-ʔə²-bā²-kè ʔə-mi² lə pə-ti*
 1p-EXIST-hit_{OPP}-RETURN 3-be.enjoyable COMP 1p-arrive
lə ti.θəkō² θəwō tə-pʰlā² mā² lə
 GNR.P friend village one-CLF(3D) only.then FACT.FP
 ‘[we] had pleasant conditions only when we arrived at the village
 of friends.’ (Jones 1961: 243, 247)

The meaning ‘(V) again’ is also expressed by *kəd̄ə²* ‘again’, which is syntactically a verb. Wade (1897: 15) has suggested that the prefix *kə-* is a contracted form of *kè* ‘return’. Example (819) illustrates the use of *kəd̄ə²*.

- (819) *tā.tò².klè ʔi kè-sū̄.tʰɿ²-kəd̄ə² ʔəθā² pʰē lā-nō².wē.bā²*
 project this return-start-again 3.REFL LOC.P moon/month-N.
 ‘the project resumed in November’

A prefix-less synonym of *kəd̄ə²* is *d̄ə²* ‘(V) again’, seen in (820). This variant is especially prevalent in northern Thailand, where prefixes are prone to be dropped. Jones (1961: 17) lists this morpheme (“d̄ə²”) under aspectual auxiliaries glossing it as “(continuing action) -ing”.

- (820) *lè-d5ʔ* *l̄* *ɲā* *n̄*
go-again GNR.P front AGR.FP
 ‘Let’s continue (driving).’ [KWH]

The word *d5ʔ* also occurs detached from the verb complex. As Ballard (1973a: 159) has shown, *d5ʔ* can be replaced with *kəd5ʔ* ‘again’ and *kəd5ʔ təbl̄* ‘one more time’, as evident from (821). The order *təbl̄ kəd5ʔ* [one:time again] also occurs, as in (822).

- (821) *jə-kə-mà.l̄* *liʔ* *d5ʔ* / *kəd5ʔ (tə-bl̄)*
 1s-IRR-study book **again** **again (one-time)**
 ‘I am going to study again’ (Ballard 1973a: 159)

- (822) *hē-p̄* *jə-kʰi* *pə-kə-l̄* *x̄* *tə-bl̄* *kəd5ʔ*
 come-follow 1sx-rear 1p-IRR-go search **one-time** **again**
 ‘Follow me and we will go look for it once again.’ (Jones 1961: 226, 231)

5.5.5 Aspectual modifiers

The aspectual modifiers *kwiʔ* and *xàʔ* are frequent as verbal modifiers in the data. The latter fails to occur as an independent verb, while *kwiʔ* as a main verb means ‘throw (v.)’. In V_2 position in compounds, *kwiʔ* has acquired the idiosyncratic meaning ‘(V) away’. Unlike the verbal modifiers seen so far, *kwiʔ* and *xàʔ* determine the aspect of the verb–verb compound they are part of (see also §5.5.4.2 on initio-transformative verbs with the directional modifier *tʰɔʔ* ‘appear’). The verb *kwiʔ* ‘throw’ adds a terminal boundary, making the compound telic, while *xàʔ* induces an atelic reading. Table 32 provides an overview of their functions. X refers to the affected participant, which is either the subject of the clause or, in the case of transitive verb–verb (VV) compounds, the object.

Table 32 Aspectual verbal modifiers

Verbal modifier	Examples		Meaning and effect on the aspect of the VV compound
<i>kwiʔ</i> ‘throw’	<i>l̄-kwiʔ</i> [go-AWAY] ‘go away’	<i>kwiʔ-kwiʔ</i> [throw-AWAY] ‘throw away’	a) expresses that X disappears b) makes VV compound telic (accomplishment/achievement)
<i>xàʔ</i>	<i>pʰɔʔ-xàʔ</i> [grab-FIXED] ‘hold’	<i>ʔəʔ.tʰɔʔ-xàʔ</i> [open.up-FIXED] ‘be open’	a) expresses that X remains fixed in a position b) makes VV compound atelic (state/activity)

The lexical aspect of V-*kwiʔ* and V-*xàʔ* compounds may differ from the lexical aspect of the modified verb, as evident from Table 32. Thus, while *l̄* ‘go’ is an activity verb (atelic), *l̄-kwiʔ* ‘go away’ is an accomplishment verb (telic). In contrast, *xàʔ* forms atelic compounds,

as the difference between $p^h\dot{\zeta}^?$ ‘grab’ (an achievement verb) and $p^h\dot{\zeta}^?-x\dot{\alpha}^?$ ‘hold (fast)’ (an activity verb) shows.

As previously mentioned, monomorphemic verbs in Sgaw Karen belong to three of the aspectual categories identified by Vendler (1967); they can denote states, activities, or achievements. States and activities are atelic while achievements are punctual and, therefore, telic. When individual verbs are combined into compounds, these simplex aspectual categories can interact with each other, forming accomplishment verbs, which are terminally bounded, and initio-transformatives, which are initially bounded. The types of lexical aspect are shown in (823), where “x” represents an event boundary.

(823)	state / activity	----	$\dot{\zeta}^?$ ‘love’ / $x\dot{\epsilon}^?$ ‘run’
	achievement	x	$k^h\dot{a}^?$ ‘shoot’
	accomplishment	---x	$\theta w\dot{\epsilon}^?-x\dot{\lambda}^?$ [slice-AWAY] ‘remove by slicing’
	initio-transformative	x---	$n\dot{i}-t^h\dot{\zeta}^?$ [laugh-UP] ‘burst into laughter’

Accomplishments, then, are compounds that combine an atelic V_1 and a punctual V_2 , while initio-transformatives consist of a state or activity verb as V_1 and the punctual verb $t^h\dot{\zeta}^?$ ‘come/go up, appear’ as V_2 . Regarding accomplishments, the topic of this section, the only productive example of a punctual V_2 is $kwi^?$ (and its regional variants), but other sporadic examples also occur, like the one in (824).

(824)	$\dot{\zeta}^?-l\dot{\alpha}^?$	$n\dot{\alpha}-m\dot{\epsilon}$
	eat-be.used.up	2sx-cooked.rice
	‘eat up your rice’	

The difference between atelic and telic verbs in Sgaw Karen becomes evident when the clause they head is modified by the new-situation marker $l\bar{i}$, which indicates the start of a new situation (see §8.7.1). With atelic verbs, $l\bar{i}$ indicates that the action or state has started, while with telic verbs, $l\bar{i}$ expresses that the event has finished, as (825) demonstrates.

(825)	a.	$\dot{\zeta}^?w\bar{\epsilon}.\theta\dot{\epsilon}^?$	$x\dot{\epsilon}^?$	$l\bar{i}$
		3.PL	run	NS
	b.	$\dot{\zeta}^?w\bar{\epsilon}.\theta\dot{\epsilon}^?$	$x\dot{\epsilon}^?-kwi^?$	$l\bar{i}$
		3.PL	run-AWAY	NS
		a. ‘They are running {now / already}.’		
		b. ‘They have run away {now / already}.’ [HUR]		

Next, $kwi^?$ and $x\dot{\alpha}^?$ will be described in more detail in §5.5.5.1 and §5.5.5.2, respectively.

5.5.5.1 $kwi^?$ ‘(V) away’

The verb $kwi^?$ ‘throw’ is found both as an independent verb and as a verbal modifier in compounds. As a modifier, $kwi^?$ expresses ‘(V) away’, indicating abandonment, disappearance, or dislocation of an object or person. The affected participant is either the

- (830) *təmlàʔ* *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ* *néʔ* *hē-nìʔ-lò* *d̄ʔ*
 robber PL:COLL that_{TOP} come-IN-DOWN and
təmlàʔ-néʔ=wē.dāʔ *tá.pʰō.tá.lì* *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ* *d̄ʔ*
 rob/plunder-get=WD thing/property PL:COLL and
pʰɔʔ-kwiʔ=wē.dāʔ *ʔəwē.θéʔ* *kʰē.làʔ* *nò*
grab-AWAY=WD 3.PL all AGR.FP
 ‘(A group of) robbers had come and robbed (their) things and taken away everything.’ (The Benefit of Education)

- (831) *kəsá* *hī̄* | *θē-s̄ʔ-kwiʔ* *jə-tá-dēʔ.bāʔ* *kʰē.làʔ*
 lord VOC **wash-be.clean-AWAY** 1sx-thing-sin all
 ‘Oh Lord, wash away all my sins’ (The Two Roads)

Frequently, elimination in some sense is inherent in the semantics of V₁, in which case *kwiʔ* can be seen as reinforcing this meaning. Examples include *hīʔ* ‘steal’, in (832) and *má.θī* ‘kill’ (*θī-kwiʔ* [die-AWAY] is also possible), in (833).

- (832) *ʔəwē.θéʔ* *hīʔ-kwiʔ* *jə-kʰɔʔ.pʰjū.tʰɔʔ*
 3.PL **steal-AWAY** 1sx-computer
 ‘They stole my computer.’ [LTP]

- (833) *jə-mē* *xáʔ* *nà* *néʔ*
 1s-be.true_{COND} lose 2si that_{FRAME}
nə-mà-θī-kwiʔ *jà* *θē* *lò*
2s-make-die-AWAY 1si be.skilled_{ABIL} FACT.FP
 ‘If I lose (to you), you can kill me.’ (The Benefit of Education)

In some cases, rather than removal or elimination, *kwiʔ* appears to signal deterioration or development into a worse or undesirable state. Examples can be seen in (834) and (835).

- (834) *ʔəwē.θéʔ* *kʰóʔ* *wā* *mē* *pòʔ*
 3.PL head be.white tooth break
ʔə-θāʔ.pyá-tʰɔʔ-kwiʔ *təkū.θéʔ*
3-be.old-UP-AWAY PL
 ‘their hair turned white, their teeth broke, they aged’ (Jones 1961: 229–230, 231)
 (Note: The plural marker *təkū.θéʔ* is not used in all regions.)

- (835) *mēʔ.ʔū* *ʔɔʔ-kwiʔ=wē* *wē* *d̄ʔ* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *ʔi*
 fire **eat-AWAY=COR** city whole one-CLF(3D) this
d̄ʔ *kē.tʰɔʔ-kwiʔ* *pʰáʔ.sʰā* *néʔ.lò*
 and **become-AWAY** ash FP
 ‘a fire burned down this whole city and (it) turned into ashes’ (Karen drum)

In Northern Thailand, the morphemes *xìʔ* and *xìʔ* express the same meaning as *kwiʔ*, when used as a verbal modifier. In contrast to *kwiʔ*, *xìʔ* and *xìʔ* do not appear as independent verbs

- (842) *pə-pàʔ-lə-xàʔ* *lā* Facebook *pù* *lī*
1p-put-DOWN-FIXED GNR.P F. inside NS
 ‘We have posted (it) on Facebook already.’ (News interview)

Also note, in (842), that the focus is on the result rather than the action leading to the result.

In contrast, with verbs indicating removal or elimination, *kwiʔ* ‘(V) away’ is used rather than *xàʔ*. Compare the antonyms *tō.nəʔ* ‘remember’ and *θāʔ.pè.nəʔ* ‘forget in (843) and (844).

- (843) *ʔəwē.ʔi nēʔ* *tō.nəʔ-xàʔ* *nā*
 this that_{TOP} **remember-FIXED** AGR.FP
 ‘Remember this, okay?’ [HUR]
- (844) *ʔəwē.ʔi nēʔ* *jə-θāʔ.pè.nəʔ-kwiʔ* *lī* (**θāʔ.pè.nəʔ-xàʔ*)
 this that_{TOP} **1s-forget-AWAY** NS
 ‘I have forgotten this already.’ [HUR]

As evident from the examples so far, V-*xàʔ* compounds tend to focus on the resulting state rather than on the action causing it. Compare (845) and (846), which describe the same situation but focus on different parts, depending on whether *xàʔ* is present or absent.

- (845) *jə-ʔōʔ-tʰəʔ* *pē.trā* *lə*
 1s-open(tr.)-UP window FACT.FP
 ‘I opened the window.’ (focus on the action) [LTP]
- (846) *jə-ʔōʔ-tʰəʔ-xàʔ* *pē.trā* *lə*
 1s-open(tr.)-UP-FIXED window FACT.FP
 ‘I have opened the window.’ (focus on the resulting state) [LTP]

5.5.6 *bāʔ* ‘hit’

The verb *bāʔ* is pervasive in the grammar of Sgaw Karen, occurring in several different slots in the clause. The base meaning of *bāʔ* is ‘encounter, hit’, in a non-agentive sense. As Bar Hso Wah (2011: 29) notes, *bāʔ* does not express intentional hitting, such as with a stick on a vase. This meaning is conveyed by verbs such as *tə* ‘hit, beat’ and *də* ‘hit, strike’.

As an independent verb, *bāʔ* has several related meanings, such as ‘occur’, ‘be (sth) o’clock’, and ‘contract (a disease)’ and, as a secondary verb, ‘must’ (see also Bar Hso Wah 2011). Furthermore, *bāʔ* occurs as the first component of some compounds indicating that the subject is adversely affected, including *bāʔ-səʔ* [hit-be.wet] ‘get wet’ and *bāʔ-kə-bāʔ-kʰē* [hit-be.difficult-hit-be.difficult] ‘face hardship’, and as a verb meaning ‘undergo’ in agent-demoting (“passive”) constructions (see §8.4.2). As a descriptive verb, *bāʔ* also has the intransitive meanings ‘be cheap, be correct’ and ‘able to (V correctly)’. This

multifunctionality of *bâʔ* is strikingly similar to the modern Mon verb *tèh* ‘hit’, as described by Jenny (2005: 231), in accordance with Jenny’s observation that “close parallels” of *tèh* and the semantic domains it covers exist in several Southeast Asian languages.³⁶

This section focuses on the use of *bâʔ* as the second component of verb–verb compounds, a function mentioned in several previous studies. The most comprehensive account is the master’s thesis by Bar Hso Wah (2011), in which she establishes that the various uses of *bâʔ* derive from the same morpheme. Jones (1961: 17) designates *bâʔ* as an aspectual auxiliary which indicates “emphasized action” but does not describe it in detail. Ballard (1973b: 57), rephrasing Gilmore (1898; §146), states that *bâʔ* as a modifying verb “indicates that the action passes over to the object”. Kato (1993: 190) provides another brief account, mentioning three main functions of *bâʔ* as a modifier, namely, the expressions of opportunity, experience, and, with descriptive verbs, ‘for, from someone’s perspective’, as in *something is good for someone*.

Based on these observations and the data compiled for this thesis, five meanings of *bâʔ* are posited: ‘happen to, have no choice but to’ (non-volitional event), ‘have ever’ (experience), ‘get to’ (opportunity), ‘for’ (from the patient’s perspective), and ‘affect’ (affectedness of the patient). As Figure 6 demonstrates, the former three can be characterized as subject-oriented and the last one as object-oriented.

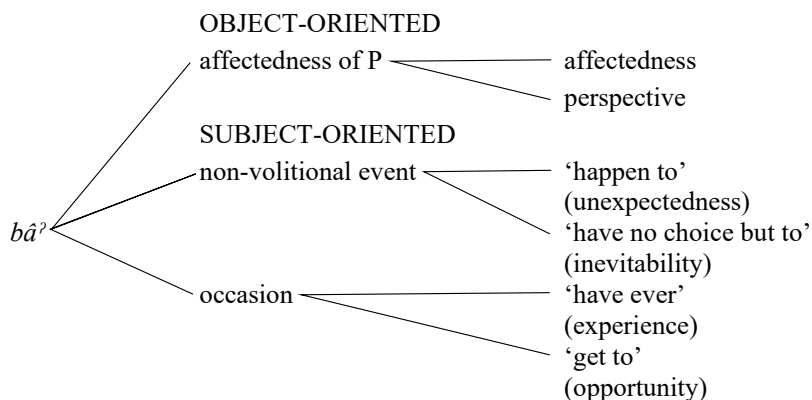


Figure 6 Semantic map of the use of *bâʔ*

In terms of lexical aspect, *bâʔ* contributes its achievement semantics to the verb–verb compound, making *V-bâʔ* compounds punctual. Thus, the compound *tʰiʔ²-bâʔ*, in (847), is more precisely rendered as ‘catch sight of’. Compare this compound with *tʰiʔ* ‘see’, which is a state verb.

³⁶ The Pwo Karen cognate *bá* ‘hit’, for example, according to Kato (2004: 343–8), has five meanings when used as a “verb particle” following the main verb, namely: involuntary action, experience, opportunity, with stative verbs ‘for, from someone’s perspective’, and urging.

A similar subject-oriented function of *bâʔ* is to indicate inevitability, similar to the function of *bâʔ* as a secondary verb meaning ‘must’ (see §5.1.1.2).³⁷ In this case, *V*₁ expresses something inescapable, often undesirable, as in (852) and (853).

- (852) *kəθiʔ-kō* *təpʰāʔ* *ʔi* *pàʔ-kè* *ʔə* *yè~yè*
 medicine-bottle COLL this put-RETURN 3i be.good
kʰē.kəʔ *pʰō.θāʔ* ***kə-ʔəʔ-bâʔ*** *bâʔ.pʰiʔ*
 next child **IRR-eat-HIT** might
 ‘Put these bottles back in their place securely lest the children might happen to consume them.’ (Ballard 1973c: 259)

- (853) *tʃō.pʰō-miʔ* *kʰi* *yà* *néʔ* ***lè-bâʔ***=*wē* *lā*
 pupil-F two CLF(HUM) that_{TOP} **go-HIT**=COR GNR.P
tʰi.lə.θəwiʔ *ʔə-pù* *ʔə-xō* *lə.ʔiʔ-θiʔ*=*wē* *kʰi* *yà* *lāʔ*
 whirlpool 3x-inside 3x-REASON drown-die=COR two CLF(HUM) both
 ‘Two schoolgirls drowned because of going (getting sucked) into a whirlpool.’
 (News article)

A closely related function of *bâʔ* is to express experience. In this case, *bâʔ* typically co-occurs with a classifier phrase expressing times of occurrences, as in (854), or, in questions, with the adverbial classifier phrase *təbl̩.bl̩* ‘anytime’, as in (855) and (856).

- (854) *jə-tā-ʔéʔ-t̩* ***ʔəʔ-bū-bâʔ*** *tə-bl̩*
 1sx-thing-love-be.true **EXIST-EXP-hit**_{EXP} one-time
 ‘I had a girl-/boyfriend once.’ [HUR]

- (855) ***nə-d̩ʔ-bâʔ*** *kʰi* *tə-bl̩~bl̩* *hā*
2s-ride-hit_{EXP} boat one-time~time PQ
 ‘Have you ever ridden a boat?’ [KWH]

- (856) *θəw̩* *tə-pʰl̩ʔ* *néʔ* ***nə-l̩-bâʔ*** *k̩* *tə-bl̩~bl̩* *hā*
 village one-CLF(3D) that_{TOP} **2s-go-hit**_{EXP} PTCL one-time~time PQ
 ‘Have you ever gone to that village?’ (Ballard 1973c: 58)

The final subject-oriented function of *bâʔ* is to express opportunity (‘get the chance to’). Usually, there is a condition that must be fulfilled, as in (857). In (858), as Bar Hso Wah explains, *bâʔ* is used because the subject has received the permission to drive a car (the interlinear glosses and transcription have been adapted and the translation is from the original).

³⁷ Compare also Geba Karen (Central Karenic) *bè* ‘have to’, likely cognate with *bâʔ*, which according to Naw Hsar Shee is used both before and after the main verb, apparently with a similar meaning in both positions (Naw Hsar Shee 2008).

(857) *nə-sē* *mē* *ʔôʔ* *nə-dōʔ-bâʔ* *kəb5-jù*
 2s-money be.true_{COND} EXIST **2s-ride-hit_{OPP}** ship-fly
 ‘If you have money, you can take a plane.’ (Karen song)

(858) *n5.n5* *n5-bâʔ* *θō-lêʔ* *l5*
 older.sister **drive-hit_{OPP}** oil-cart FACT.FP
 ‘Sister is allowed to drive car (by somebody).’ (Bar Hso Wah 2011: 56)

The modifier *bâʔ* is also commonly found as a marker of opportunity with verbs of receiving, as in (859).

(859) *pyà* *lā* *ʔə-kə-nê-bâʔ* *jə-pʰō-mīʔ*
 person REL **3-IRR-get-hit_{OPP}** 1sx-child-F
 ‘The one who will get my daughter’ (Jones 1961: 212, 214)

In object-oriented contexts, *bâʔ* emphasizes the affectedness of the object in various ways, depending on the meaning of *V*₁. In (860) and (861), *bâʔ* retains its meaning ‘hit’ indicating physical contact.

(860) *tʰi-kʰl5* *kô* *l5-bâʔ* *ʔə-kʰ5ʔ*
 water-boil be.hot **go.down-HIT** 3x-foot/leg
 ‘Boiling hot water spilled down on her leg.’ (Ballard 1973: 235)

(861) *ʔəwē* *j5-bâʔ* *mēʔ.pô*
 3 **step-HIT** land.mine
 ‘He stepped on a land mine.’ [HUR]

Other verbs, such as *kʰāʔ* ‘shoot’ and *sʰēʔ* ‘stab’, also frequently co-occur with *bâʔ* ‘hit’. The semantics of these verbs already includes the subevent of getting hit, in some sense; therefore, the addition of *bâʔ* has no significant impact on their meaning.

When no physical contact is involved, *bâʔ* can indicate affectedness on a mental level, as in (862). In such cases, the difference between the presence and absence of *bâʔ* can be subtle. Compare, for example, (863) and (864).

(862) *tì.θəkōʔ* *mē* *tē-sʰā-bâʔ* *nà*
 friend COND **say-hurt-HIT** 2i
 ‘if a friend says something hurtful to you’ (Blog)

(863) *tā.blīʔ* *lā* *nə-tē* *jà*
 thank.you COMP 2s-tell 1si
 ‘Thank you for telling me (e.g. that I did something wrong).’ [LTP]

Table 33 Types of verb serialization

Relation between the verbs	Characteristics of the verb sequence
verb–argument (non-compounds):	V ₁ is (1) a secondary verb, (2) a prior motion verb, or (3) a concurrent action/state verb V ₂ is a verbal argument of V ₁
verb–modifier (verb–verb compounds):	V ₁ is the main verb and V ₂ is a verbal modifier

Secondary verbs modify a following main verb and are either modal (e.g. *bâʔ* ‘must’) or non-modal (e.g. *sāʔ.tʰɔʔ* ‘start (to V)’). Apart from the semantic difference, it was also shown that modal verbs fail to appear independently, while non-modal secondary verbs do, for example, in an answer to a polar question. The two other groups of verbs taking a following verb as their complement are prior motion verbs (e.g. *hē ʔɔʔ* [come eat] ‘come to eat’) and verbs indicating a concurrent action or state (e.g. *hāʔ sʰō.môʔ* [walk think] ‘go around thinking’).

Verb–verb compounds were defined as consisting of a main verb and a verbal modifier. Based on the argument structure of the individual verbs, verb–verb compounds were characterized as same-subject (e.g. *pʰɔ-ʔɔʔ* [cook-eat] ‘cook to eat’), where the understood subject of V₁ and V₂ are the same, or switch-subject (e.g. *kōʔ-ʔɔʔ* [call-eat] ‘invite to eat’), in which case the subjects are different. In most compounds of the latter type, V₁ causes the understood subject of V₂ to perform an action, or be in a certain state, and are therefore termed cause–effect compounds (e.g. *kʰāʔ-θī* ‘kill by shooting’).

According to the semantics of V₂ (the modifier), five main types of V₂s were identified: adverbial, temporal-relational, purposive, directional, and aspectual. These verbs can be seen as predicating about one of the participants in an event or about the event itself. Adverbial and temporal-relational modifiers are defined as event-oriented, meaning that V₂ modifies (the event expressed by) V₁, for example, by conveying how an action is carried out. Purposive and aspectual modifiers, in contrast, are either subject- or object-oriented, predicating of one of the participants in the event. Directional modifiers can, depending on the type, be either event- or participant-oriented. Table 34 summarizes the types of verb–verb (VV) compounds.

Table 34 Summary of VV compounds

Type of modifier (V ₂)	Type of predication	Example
adverbial	event-oriented	<i>hī²-s^hū²</i> [grab-be.strong] 'confiscate'
temporal-relational	event-oriented	<i>lè-s^hō</i> [go-be.early] 'go early, go first'
purposive	participant-oriented	<i>hī²-nē</i> [grab-get] 'take'
directional	participant-oriented	<i>lè-t^hō²</i> [go-go.up] 'go up'
	event-oriented	<i>ye-t^hō²</i> [be.good-go.up] 'get better'
aspectual	participant-oriented	<i>mà.θī-kwi²</i> [kill-AWAY] 'kill'

One additional modifier, *bā²* 'hit', is frequent in the data but more difficult to categorize semantically.

Using several forms of serialization in one clause creates a verb chain with three or more contiguous verbs. In (867), the verb complex consists of the prior motion verb *lè* 'go (to V)', the concurrent-action verb *hā²* 'walk, go around (V-ing)', and the compound *k^hā²-θākō²* 'shoot together'.

- (867) *lè hā² k^hā²-θākō² tā*
 go walk shoot-SOC thing
 'go hunting together'

A few generalisations can be made regarding the order of verbal modifiers in a verb–verb compound. Components forming highly lexicalized compounds, such as *lō* in *mà-lō* [do-learn] 'learn' and *sō* in *kwā-sō* [look-be.elevated] 'look out over', stick close to their head verbs. Similarly, switch-subject compounds, such as *dī²-ō²* [CAUS-eat] 'feed' and *k^hā²-θī* [shoot-die] 'shoot (to kill)', are non-separable by other modifiers. Likewise, directional modifiers tend to occur close to the main verb, preceding other modifiers. On the other hand, more productive modifiers, such as *kwi* '(V) away', *bā²* 'hit', and *nē* 'get, (V) for', appear at the end of the verb complex, and the modifier *dā²* always appears as the last morpheme in a verb–verb compound.

Finally, like other compounds, verb–verb compounds can contain more than two verb components. Examples (868) and (869) illustrate two switch-subject compounds embedded in a same-subject construction.

(868) *sò-lā* [*xē-[jò²-nē]*] *sò-ké²* *ʔə-klō*
 M.HON-L. request-carry-get_{BEN} M.HON-K. 3x-gun
 ‘Saw Lah asked to get to carry Saw Kay’s gun for him’ (Saw Kay)

(869) *pò².mî²* [*pɣè-[dī²-ʔɔ²]*] *ʔə-pʰō* *θəkʰɔ²-θā²* *lò*
 woman buy-CAUS-eat 3x-child mango-fruit FACT.FP
 ‘The woman bought her child a mango.’ [LTP.P]

In (870), the cause–effect compound *mà-kô-tʰɔ²* ‘heat up’ consists of a causative verb (*mà*) and a descriptive verb (*kô*) modified by a directional (*tʰɔ²*). This compound, in turn, is followed by the adverbial modifier *kè* ‘(V) again’.

(870) *mà-kô-tʰɔ²-kè* *tā-ʔɔ²-tā²-ʔɔ* *təpʰā²* *ʔi*
 CAUS-be.hot-UP-RETURN thing-eat-thing-drink COLL this
 ‘Heat up this food again.’ (Ballard 1973b: 235)

In the next chapter, Chapter 6, we examine another type of compound, coordinate compounds, and the elaborate expressions they occur in.

6 Coordinate compounds and elaborate expressions

This chapter is concerned with the analysis and categorization of ELABORATE EXPRESSIONS, a type of emphatic quadrisyllabic compound pervasive in Southeast Asia and China, often found in poetic and formal, but also colloquial, expressive language (Haas 1964: xvii–xviii; Solnit 1995). Example (871) contains four Sgaw Karen examples with an A-B-A-C structure.

- (871) a. *jə-mô-jə-pâ* [1sx-mother-1sx-father] ‘my parents’
 b. *θô²-pʰô-θô²-li* [teach-child-teach-grandchild] ‘teach the young’
 c. *mè²-tʰr-mè²-nō* [eye-water(CC1)-eye-water(CC2)] ‘tear (n.)’
 d. *tə-yè-tə-wā* [NEG-be.good-NEG-be.white] ‘not good’

The bolded elements (A-B-A-C) in (871) are referred to as COORDINATE COMPOUNDS, headless compounds (*dvandvas*) consisting of two semantically related morphemes. Most elaborate expressions are composed of one coordinate compound. Unlike other compounds discussed so far, coordinate compounds are frequently separated by various types of morphemes, resulting in a four-syllable compound structure. Thus, in the nominal elaborate expression *jə-mô-jə-pâ* ‘my parents’, the coordinate compound *mô-pâ* ‘parents’ is split up due to *jə-* ‘my’ being prefixed to both components of the compound. This can be compared with headed compounds, in which the possessive prefix occurs once, before the first element of the compound, as in *jə-tfō-θərá²* [1sx-school-teacher] ‘my schoolteacher’. Verbal coordinate compounds can be separated by elements associated with verbs, such as the negative prefix *tə-*, seen in (869d). The components of a coordinate compound always belong to the same word class, whether nominal or verbal. Some components are unattested as independent words. For example, while *tʰr* ‘water’, in (869c) occurs widely as an independent noun, the co-occurrent morpheme *nō* is only found in elaborate expressions.

Since Haas (1964) coined the term *elaborate expression*, elaborate expressions have gained an ever-increasing attention in the literature. Reports on languages such as Lahu (Matisoff 1973b), Kayah Li (Solnit 1995; Solnit 1997), Hmong (Mortensen 2003), Khumi (Kuki–Chin; Peterson 2010), and Jingpho (Kurabe 2017: 996), to name a few, demonstrate the pervasiveness of elaborate expressions among the languages of East and Southeast Asia (see also Williams 2014).

Sgaw Karen elaborate expressions have also received some attention in previous studies. In his Sgaw Karen grammar, Wade (1897) refers to coordinate compounds as “paired words” in English, and as *d5-mô-p^hā* [COLL-female-male] ‘male–female pairs’ in Sgaw Karen. Wade (1897: 74) writes: “Paired words, whether nouns, verbs, or other parts of speech, give the Karen language a beauty, and force of expression unsurpassed perhaps by any other language in the world.” In a similar vein, Gilmore (1898: §25) finds that “couplets” (i.e. coordinate compounds) are “[a]mong the most striking peculiarities of the Karen language”. Jones (1961: 26) mentions coordinate compounds briefly under “coördinate compounds” but does not go into further details. In her recent study, van Schie (2019) considers elaborate expressions a type of noun serialization, which is compared to the more common phenomenon of verb serialization. In this study, however, *verb serialization* is reserved as an umbrella term for contiguous sequencing of verbs (see Chapter 5). Verbal elaborate expressions could be considered a type of non-contiguous verb compounding.

6.1 The structure of elaborate expressions

As previously mentioned, elaborate expressions consist of a coordinate compound, accompanied by two elements occurring on both sides of the first or second compound component. The type of the intervening element depends on the word class of the coordinate compound components, which are in most cases two nouns or two verbs. Most elaborate expressions have an A-B-A-C or A-B-C-B structure, where one element is repeated, but A-B-C-D-type elaborate expressions also occur, often when the elaborate expression consists of two coordinate compounds combined. Example (872) contains an example of each structural type.

(872)	<i>θf̄²-nì-θf̄²-θ5</i> [move(tr.)-day-move(tr.)-day] ‘postpone’	A-B-A-C
	<i>θû²-ʔʂ²-p^hlā²-ʔʂ²</i> [plant-eat-hoe(v.)-eat] ‘cultivate’	A-B-C-B
	<i>hī²-sf̄-nē²-klē</i> [grab-hand-point(v.)-road] ‘guide (v.)’	A-B-C-D

Noun–noun coordinate compounds occur in at least six semantic types of elaborate expressions based on the nature of the separating element. Table 35 shows that the pair of separating elements in elaborate expressions (EEs) occur in positions one and three (P1, P3) or positions two and four (P2, P4). These elements belong to the same word class and can be a noun, a preposition, a possessive morpheme, or a verb.

Table 35 EEs containing noun–noun coordinate compounds

POSITION:	P1	P2	P3	P4	
INTERVENING ELEMENT:					
relator noun (<i>pù</i>)	<i>tʰɿ</i> water	<i>pù</i> inside	<i>kɔ̃</i> land	<i>pù</i> inside	‘inside of a country, domestic country’
noun (<i>pyà</i>)	<i>pyà</i> person	<i>tʰɿ</i> water	<i>pyà</i> person	<i>kɔ̃</i> land	‘(other) people’s countries’
preposition (<i>lā</i>)	<i>lā</i> in	<i>θûʔ</i> liver	<i>lā</i> in	<i>θāʔ</i> heart	‘in the heart/soul’
possessive pronoun (<i>θī</i>)	<i>θī</i> your (pl.)	<i>θûʔ</i> liver	<i>θī</i> your (pl.)	<i>θāʔ</i> heart	‘your (pl.) heart/soul’
descriptive verb (<i>kʰɿ</i>)	<i>θûʔ</i> liver	<i>kʰɿ</i> happy	<i>θāʔ</i> heart	<i>kʰɿ</i> happy	‘be happy’
transitive verb (<i>kɔ̃</i>)	<i>kɔ̃</i> restrain	<i>θûʔ</i> liver	<i>kɔ̃</i> restrain	<i>θāʔ</i> heart	‘control oneself’

Thus, elaborate expressions are essentially echo constructions in which a bimorphemic phrase is repeated, each of the phrases containing one component of the coordinate compound. For example, the first elaborate expression in Table 35 consists of two nominal compounds combined (*tʰɿ-pù* [water-inside] ‘inside of water’ and *kɔ̃-pù* [land-inside] ‘inside of land’), and the last EE includes two verb–object phrases combined (*kɔ̃-θûʔ* [restrain-liver] ‘restrain liver’ and *kɔ̃-θāʔ* [restrain-heart] ‘restrain heart’). It is also possible for two compounds to form an EE, as in (873), where *θûʔ-θāʔ* [liver-heart] ‘heart’ combines with the compounds *tɔ̃-lò* and *pʰɿ-ɲɔ̃*, respectively.

- (873) a. *θûʔ-tɔ̃-θāʔ-lò* [liver-be.true-heart-be.straight] ‘be honest’
 b. *θûʔ-pʰɿ-θāʔ-ɲɔ̃* [liver-be.light-heart-be.easy] ‘be joyful’

The semantically void morpheme *hò* is common as a separating element in nominal elaborate expressions, like those in (874).

- (874) *nɿʔ-hò-lā-hò* [year-ELAB-month-ELAB] ‘year’
lɿʔ-hò-lɛ-hò [writing(CC1)-ELAB-writing(CC2)-ELAB] ‘books, literature’
klôʔ-hò-sē-hò [drum-ELAB-silver-ELAB] ‘wealth’

Verb–verb coordinate compounds are also divisible into different types based on the separating element. Table 36 demonstrates that the element, occurring in positions P1 and P3 or P2 and P4 in the elaborate expression (EE) can be another verb, such as a verbal modifier (e.g. *sà* ‘help’) or a prior motion verb (e.g. *hāʔ* ‘go out to’), a verbal prefix, a coreference marker, an intensifier, or a noun functioning either as a subject (P1, P3) or object (P2, P4). The coordinate compounds exemplified in Table 36 are *pʰɿʔ-mà* ‘work’, *ʔôʔ-sʰōʔ* ‘live, reside’, and *sʰāʔ-bē* [be.sweet-be.tasty] ‘be tasty’.

Table 36 EEs containing verb–verb coordinate compounds

INTERVENING ELEMENT:	POSITION: P1	P2	P3	P4	
verbal modifier (<i>sə</i> ‘help’)	<i>p^hɿʔ</i> work	<i>sə</i> HELP	<i>mà</i> do	<i>sə</i> HELP	‘help’
verb (<i>hā</i> ʔ ‘walk’)	<i>hā</i> ʔ go out	<i>p^hɿʔ</i> work	<i>hā</i> ʔ go out	<i>mà</i> do	‘go away to work’
NEG (<i>tə-</i>)	<i>tə-</i> NEG	<i>ʔô</i> ʔ EXIST	<i>tə-</i> NEG	<i>s^hô</i> ʔ live	‘do(es)n’t live’
personal prefix (<i>jə-</i> ‘I’)	<i>jə-</i> 1s	<i>ʔô</i> ʔ EXIST	<i>jə-</i> 1s	<i>s^hô</i> ʔ live	‘I live’
irrealis marker (<i>kə-</i>)	<i>kə-</i> IRR	<i>ʔô</i> ʔ EXIST	<i>kə-</i> IRR	<i>s^hô</i> ʔ live	‘will live’
nominalizer (<i>tā</i> ‘thing’)	<i>tā</i> NMLZ	<i>p^hɿʔ</i> work	<i>tā</i> NMLZ	<i>mà</i> do	‘work (n.)’
COR (‘ <i>wē</i> ’)	<i>p^hɿʔ</i> work	<i>wē</i> COR	<i>mà</i> do	<i>wē</i> COR	‘(s.o.) work(s)’
intensifier (<i>mā</i> ʔ)	<i>s^hō</i> sweet	<i>mā</i> ʔ INTS	<i>bē</i> tasty	<i>mā</i> ʔ INTS	‘very tasty’
noun (<i>lō</i> ‘field, place’)	<i>lō</i> place	<i>ʔô</i> ʔ EXIST	<i>lō</i> place	<i>s^hô</i> ʔ live	‘address (n.)’
noun (<i>tā</i> ‘thing’)	<i>p^hɿʔ</i> work	<i>tā</i> thing	<i>mà</i> do	<i>tā</i> thing	‘work (v.)’

Like other elaborate expressions, elaborate expressions containing a coordinate (headless) verb–verb compound are reduplications of a corresponding non-elaborate bimorphemic phrase. For example, the non-elaborate correspondent of *kə-ʔô²-kə-s^hô*ʔ ‘will live’ is *kə-ʔô*ʔ (the second component, *s^hô*ʔ, is not attested on its own). Similarly, a non-elaborate variant of *p^hɿ²-tā-mà-tā* is *mà-tā* ‘work (v.)’.

Apart from noun–noun and verb–verb couplets, a few other couplets occur. Example (875) contains two classifier elaborate expressions and one adverbial elaborate expression.

- (875) *ʔā-nì-ʔā-θō* [many-day(CLF)-many-day(CLF)] ‘many days’
ʔā-dī-ʔā-γà [many-CLF?-many-CLF(HUM)] ‘many people’
p^hē-lē²-p^hē-lō² [LOC.P-CQ-LOC.P-CQ] ‘where, in what places’

Lastly, while most elaborate expressions are quadrisyllabic, some include more than four syllables; (876)–(879) provide some examples.

- (876) *pəlō-θū²-pəlō-θā²*
 pay.heed.to-liver-pay.heed.to-heart
 ‘be aware, be cautious’

- (877) *p^hɿʔ* *tə-kē* *mà* *tə-kē*
 work(CC1) NEG-ABIL do(CC2) NEG-ABIL
 ‘is unable to work’
- (878) *kətò-ʔā* *kətò-θ̄*
 speak-be.evil(CC1) speak-be.evil(CC2)
 ‘speak evil (of someone)’
- (879) *kwēʔ-kè* *ʔə-liʔ* *p^hāʔ-kè* *ʔə-lê*
 write-RETURN 3x-script(CC1) read-RETURN 3x-script(CC2)
 ‘write and read their script again’

Examples also exist of coordinate compounds that fail to split, being marked only once, like headed compounds, including those in (880) and (881).

- (880) *s^hā-kət̄* [border-juncture] ‘time’
 as in: *ʔə-s^hā-kət̄* [3x-border-juncture] ‘the time of’
 (more rarely: *ʔə-s^hā-ʔə-kət̄*)
- (881) *s^hō-kəmōʔ* [think(CC1)-think(CC2)] ‘think’
 as in: *jə-s^hō-kəmōʔ* [1s-think(CC1)-think(CC2)] ‘I think’
 (more rarely: *jə-s^hō-jə-kəmōʔ*)

We now turn to the semantics and semantic types of elaborate expressions, in §6.2.

6.2 Semantics and types of elaborate expressions

Nominal and verbal elaborate expressions exhibit similar semantic properties as other nouns and verbs. A notable difference is that, in the nominal domain, some coordinate compounds denote masses or groups of referents rather than individuals, failing to co-occur with sortal classifiers. For example, Wade (1897: 27) notes that the expression *t^hôʔ.p^hō.liʔ.p^hō tə-bêʔ* [bird(elab.) one-CLF(2D)] (intended meaning: ‘one bird’) is ungrammatical. An example of a phrase where this elaborate expression can be used is *kwā.kō t^hôʔ.p^hō.liʔ.p^hō* [watch bird(elab.)] ‘watch birds, do bird watching’. On the other hand, many nominal elaborate expressions do occur with sortal classifiers in the same way as their non-elaborate counterparts.

Coordinate compounds can be divided into four semantic types. As Table 37 demonstrates, coordinate compounds can be cumulative, the components can be parts of a whole, the components can be synonymous or semantically related, or a component can be a partial reduplication of the other.

Table 37 Types of coordinate compounds

Type	Example
cumulative	<i>kū-kà</i> [wear.on.top-wear.below] 'clothes'
parts of whole	<i>klô²-sē</i> [bronze.drum-silver] 'wealth'
synonymous or semantically related	<i>sū-nà[?]</i> [believe(CC1)-believe(CC2)] 'believe'
partial reduplication	<i>tē-lí²-tē-lī⁵</i> [tell-lie(v.)-tell-lie(v.)] 'tell lies'

In the cumulative type, the meaning of the coordinate compound is the sum of its components, and both components contribute their own meanings to the compound. Most examples are kinship terms, such as the ones in (882). Some examples of verbal elaborate expressions in this group are provided in (883).

- (882) *p^hī-p^hī* [grandmother-grandfather] 'grandparents'
mō-pâ [mother-father] 'parents'
p^hō-lī [child-grandchild] 'children and grandchildren, descendants'
pī-wē [younger.sibling-older.sibling] 'siblings'
- (883) *tâ-s^hā-tâ-pyè* [thing-sell-thing-buy] 'trade (n.)'
t^hū²-mē-plâ-mē[?] [brush-tooth-wash-face] 'brush teeth and wash face'
ʔ²-mè-ʔ⁵-t^hī [eat-rice-drink-water] 'eat and drink'
tə-dô²-tə-s^hī[?] [NEG-be.big-NEG-be.small] 'be medium-sized'

Interestingly, in some compounds containing two semantically distinct components, only one of them contributes the meaning. For example, *t^hô²-p^hō-lī²-p^hō* [bird-DIM-squirrel-DIM] means 'birds' rather than 'birds and squirrels'.

A group of family-related compounds of the cumulative type co-occur with the preposed collective particle *d̄5*. The exact meaning of *d̄5* is unclear, but it indicates completeness ('the whole, all of') and "correlativeness" (Wade 1896), depending on the context. When preceding a coordinate kinship compound, *d̄5* expresses 'pair of' or 'group of', as in (884) and (885).

- (884) a. *d̄5-mō-wà*
[COLL-mother?-husband]
'couple (pair of wife and husband)'
- b. *d̄5-p^hō-pâ*
[COLL-child-father]
'(pair of) father and child'

Some coordinate compounds referring to groups of animals, like those in (889), also belong to this group.

- | | | | |
|----------|---|----|---|
| (889) a. | <i>tʰô²-hò-lî²-hò</i>
[bird-ELAB-squirrel-ELAB]
'birds' | b. | <i>dê²-hò-nâ²-hò</i>
[frog-ELAB-fish-ELAB]
'fish' |
|----------|---|----|---|

Note that elaborate expressions (EEs) which contain the semantically void particle *hò*, like (889a) and (889b), tend to refer to groups or masses of referents rather than single individuals. An example from the verbal domain is seen in (890).

- | | Coordinate compound | Example of EE in which the compound occurs |
|-------|---|---|
| (890) | <i>γè-wā</i>
[be.good-be.white]
'be kind, good-hearted' | <i>ʔə-γè-ʔə-wā</i>
[3-be.good-3-be.white]
'(s/he) is kind, (they) are kind' |

The fourth type contains coordinate compounds formed by partial reduplication of a morpheme. In such compounds, the second component resembles the preceding component phonologically but does not occur independently, akin to what Blench (e.g. 2021) has termed “paired collocations” or “echo expressives” in Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayas. Consider the examples in (891).

- | | Coordinate compound | Example of EE in which the compound occurs |
|----------|---|---|
| (891) a. | <i>θô²-θ̄</i>
[instruct(CC1)-instruct(CC2)]
'instruct, discipline (v.)' | <i>θô²-lō-θ̄-lō</i>
[instruct(CC1)-LEARN-instruct(CC2)-LEARN]
'teach' |
| b. | <i>mî²-m̄</i>
[woman(CC1)-woman(CC2)]
'woman' | <i>pô²-mî²-pô²-m̄</i> ³⁹
[?-woman(CC1)-?-woman(CC2)]
'women' |
| c. | <i>dî²-dā</i>
[enemy(CC1)-enemy(CC2)]
'enemy' | <i>n̄-dî²-n̄-dā</i>
[win-enemy(CC1)-win-enemy(CC2)]
'conquer the enemy' |
| d. | <i>kəθî²-kəθ̄</i>
[medicine(CC1)-medicine(CC2)]
'medicine' | (does not occur with a separating element) |
| e. | <i>lî²-lê</i>
[writing(CC1)-writing(CC2)]
'literature, writing' | <i>lî²-dô²-lê-tʰ̄</i>
[writing(CC1)-be.big-writing(CC2)-be.high]
'significant literature' |

³⁹ Wade (1896: 1001) glosses *pô²* as “human species, male or female”.

Note, in (891), that the initial consonant of the coordinate compound components is copied while the vowels and tones are different.

Next, in §6.3, we examine elaborate expressions as used in sentences.

6.3 Elaborate expressions in sentences

Elaborate expressions are widespread in the data, occurring both in ornate language and informal conversations. Most elaborate expressions have a synonymous, non-elaborate correspondent. elaborate expressions are thus often used optionally, as stylistic markers or to signal intensification. For example, one speaker considers the elaborate expression *mà-plì-mà-p^hĩ* [make-fear(v.)-make-be.startled] ‘scare, frighten’ “more extreme” than the non-elaborate corresponding expression *mà-plì* [make-fear] with roughly the same meaning. Peterson (2010) also discusses this intensifying function of elaborate expressions. On the other hand, some elaborate expressions, like (892), lack non-elaborate equivalents and are not used only for stylistic purposes or emphasis.

- (892) *pyà-bâ²-k̄-bâ²-k^hē*
 person-encounter-be.difficult(CC1)-encounter-be.difficult(CC2)
 ‘refugee’

Morphosyntactically, elaborate expressions function the same way as any other word; nominal elaborate expressions function as arguments of verbs just like non-elaborate nouns do, and verbal elaborate expressions have the same characteristics in a clause as other verbs. Furthermore, elaborate expressions can themselves be a component in headed nominal or verbal compounds. The elaborate expression *bâ².k̄.bâ².k^hē* ‘face hardship’, in (892), forms a noun–verb compound with *pyà* ‘person’. In (893), the elaborate expression forms a verb sequence with *bâ²* ‘must’ and the verbal modifiers *nê* ‘(V) for the benefit of’ and *kè* ‘(V) again, in return’.

- (893) *pyà tə-γà nê² mē mà tâ tə.mì.mì*
 person one-CLF(HUM) that be.true_{COND} do thing something
pyà bâ² [mà-l̄-mà-pyē]_{EE}-nê-kè ʔə t^h̄.bō
 person must **make-be.full-make-be.full**-get_{BEN-RETURN} 3i always
 ‘If that person does something, people have to complete the work for him every time.’ (Ballard 1973c: 22)

Generally, only one functional element can intervene between the components of a coordinate compound, since the elaborate expression would otherwise contain more than four syllables. In (894), the negative prefix *tə-* attaches to both components of the coordinate compound (in bold), becoming part of the elaborate expression. The personal prefix *jə-* ‘I’ precedes the elaborate expression and is not repeated. In (895), the repeated functional

element is *lè* ‘go’, while the coreference marker *wē* occurs only once after the elaborate expression. Similarly, in (896), the irrealis prefix *kə-* precedes the whole elaborate expression, which consists of four lexical morphemes, while the reciprocal marker *lòʔ* follows it.

- (894) *jə-[tə-tʰūʔ-tə-tò]*_{EE} *bāʔ*
 1S-NEG-**be.rich**-NEG-**be.rich** NEG.FP
 ‘I am not rich.’ [HUR]
- (895) *ʔəwē.θéʔ* *bāʔ* [*lè-ʔóʔ-lè-sʰōʔ*]_{EE=wē} *lā* *dū.θəwō* *ʔəʔà*
 3.PL must go-**stay**-go-**live**=COR GNR.P village other
 ‘They had to go and live in another village.’ (News article)
- (896) *kə-[tʰɔʔ-pʰō-né-mā]*_{EE-lòʔ} *ʔə-θāʔ* *ʔə-ʔó*
 IRR-**raise-child-get-wife**-RECP 3x-self 3x-PURP
míʔ.kənò *pʰō.θāʔ.kʰwā* *tə-ʔóʔ* *lā* *bāʔ*
 young.woman young.man NEG-EXIST anymore NEG.FP
 ‘for the purpose of marrying and raising families with each other, there were no longer any young women and young men’ (Jones 1961: 232–233)

Table 38 provides a list of common coordinate compounds and examples of elaborate expressions. Most compounds contain nouns or verbs, but a handful of other compounds occur.

Table 38 Some common coordinate compounds

Nominal coordinate compounds		
<i>lī-pyè</i>	[value?-price]	‘value’
- <i>lī-dô²-pyè-dô²</i>	[value?-be.big-price-be.big]	‘be valuable’
<i>hī²-x̄s</i>	[house-ladder]	‘house’
- <i>hī²-θ̄s-x̄s-θ̄s</i>	[house-be.new-ladder-be.new]	‘new house’
<i>l̄s-kl̄ē</i>	[field-road]	‘place’
- <i>θ̄ī²-l̄s-θ̄ī²-kl̄ē</i>	[move-field-move-road]	‘move (to another place)’
<i>θ̄ū²-θ̄ā²</i>	[liver-heart]	‘heart, mind’
- <i>p̄əl̄s-θ̄ū²-p̄əl̄s-θ̄ā²</i>	[beware-liver-beware-heart]	‘be careful’
<i>m̄ū-dā</i>	[duty-duty]	‘duty’
- <i>hī²-m̄ū-hī²-dā</i>	[grab-duty-grab-duty]	‘take responsibility’
Verbal coordinate compounds		
<i>p^hī²-mà</i>	[grasp-do]	‘work’
- <i>k^hī²-p^hī²-k^hī²-mà</i>	[be.diligent-work(RDP)]	‘be diligent’
<i>p^h̄s-tè</i>	[cook-cook]	‘cook’
- <i>p^h̄s-ṽṽ²-tè-ṽṽ²</i>	[cook-eat-cook-eat]	‘cook (for eating)’
<i>sū-nà²</i>	[believe(CC1)-believe(CC2)]	‘believe’
- <i>tā-sū-tā-nà²</i>	[thing-believe-thing-believe]	‘belief’
<i>mì²-k^hī²</i>	[be.pleasant-be.cool]	
- <i>ṽṽ²-mì²-ṽṽ²-k^hī²</i>	[live-be.pleasant-live-be.cool]	‘be/live in peace’
<i>h̄s²-j̄à</i>	[cry(CC1)-cry(CC2)]	‘cry’
<i>lī²-l̄s</i>	[lie(CC1)-lie(CC2)]	‘lie’
- <i>t̄ē-lī²-t̄ē-l̄s</i>	[tell-lie-tell-lie]	‘lie, speak untruthfully’
- <i>k̄w̄ē²-lī²-k̄w̄ē²-l̄s</i>	[write-lie-write-lie]	‘write untruthfully’
Other coordinate compounds		
<i>ṽṽ-nì</i>	[this-that]	
- <i>p^h̄ē-ṽṽ-p^h̄ē-nì</i>	[LOC.P-this-LOC.P-that]	‘here and there’
<i>dī-yà</i>	[CLF-CLF(HUM)]	
- <i>k̄ō²-dī-k̄ō²-yà</i>	[each-CLF-each-CLF(HUM)]	‘everyone’
- <i>ṽṽ-dī-ṽṽ-yà</i>	[many-CLF-many-CLF(HUM)]	‘many (people)’

This concludes the discussion of the two major word classes in Sgaw Karen, nouns and verbs. We proceed by examining some remaining ones in Chapter 7.

7 Closed word classes

We have so far discussed nouns and verbs, which are open word classes, categories of words that grow when new vocabulary enters the language. This chapter is concerned with closed word classes, which are defined as having a fixed number of members. In Sgaw Karen, many of the words in closed word classes have evolved from nouns or verbs, but their function and morphosyntactic behaviour has changed. As with nouns and verbs, some words in closed word classes belong to more than one word class. In (897), the bolded constituents represent four different closed classes: *d̄ɔ̄ʔ* ‘and’ is a connective, *n̄àʔ.kē* ‘also’ an adverbial particle, and *nēʔ* and *b̄àʔ* are final particles.

- (897) *d̄ɔ̄ʔ* [t̄à t̄ə-kʰā n̄ēʔ]_S ***n̄àʔ.kē*** ***nēʔ~nēʔ*** [ʔə-t̄ə-m̄e=w̄e.d̄àʔ]_V ***b̄àʔ***
and thing one-CLF that also that_{TOP} 3-NEG-be.true=WD NEG.FP
‘And that (claim) is also not true.’ (Vlog, “Actress”)

We begin the discussion of closed word classes with adverbial phrases and adverbial particles, in §7.1. The chapter continues to describe connectives, in §7.2, pronouns, in §7.3, prepositions, in §7.4, final particles, in §7.5, and, lastly, interjections and ideophones, in §7.6.

7.1 Adverbial phrases and adverbial particles

Schachter and Shopen (2007: 20) define adverbs as parts of speech which “function as modifiers of constituents other than nouns”, having scope over entire sentences or smaller constituents. Sgaw Karen employs several morpho-syntactically distinct ways of modifying non-nominal constituents; therefore, defining adverbs in Sgaw Karen as a single, syntactically coherent word class is problematic. Three types of constituents used to modify constituents other than nouns can be distinguished: post-clausal descriptive verbs, described in §4.3, adverbial phrases, and adverbial particles.

In §4.3, it was shown that descriptive verbs take clauses as their subjects when occurring in post-clausal position, semantically modifying the preceding clause. Furthermore, it was argued that reduplicated descriptive verbs modify the preceding clause, like non-reduplicated descriptive verbs, but do not take it as their subject. In (898), *n̄ɔ̄* is a main verb predicating over the preceding clause (S), as evident by the fact that the negative prefix

is attached to *ɲɔ̄* rather than the preceding verb. In (899), the reduplicated form *ɲɔ̄-ɲɔ̄* functions as an adverb proper by modifying the preceding clause headed by *dō.nē* ‘receive’.

- (898) [nə-kə-dō̄.nē-bā̄ʔ ʔə̄]s sē.kɔ̄ʔ nēʔ tə-ɲɔ̄ bā̄ʔ
 2s-IRR-recvie-HIT 3i also that_{FRAME} NEG-be.easy NEG.FP
 ‘Getting it also isn’t easy.’ (Vlog: “Comparison”)
- (899) pɲà lā ʔə-mà-nē lɔ̄.là təpʰáʔ ʔi
 person REL 3-do-get rank COLL this
 tə-mē [ʔə-dō̄.nē=wē̄]Clause **ɲɔ̄-ɲɔ̄** bā̄ʔ
 NEG-be.true_{COP} 3-recvie=COR **be.easy(RDP)** NEG.FP
 ‘People who get these ranks (titles) do not receive them easily.’
 (News article)

Thus, syntactically, non-reduplicated descriptive verbs function as verbs, while reduplicated descriptive verbs function as adverbs.

While most adverbs consisting of a reduplicated morpheme are reduplicated descriptive verbs, some reduplicated forms lack a non-reduplicated form in the data. These include *xáʔ.xáʔ* ‘approximately’, *kədə̄.kədə̄* ‘mutually’, *tīʔ.tīʔ* ‘exactly, (o’clock) sharp’, and *sìʔ.sìʔ* ‘respectively’. Other examples are partially reduplicated forms such as *kəs̄.d̄s̄* ‘indeed’ and *kəs̄.f̄d̄* ‘quietly’ and *kəs̄.d̄s̄* ‘indeed’, seen in (900) to (902).⁴⁰

- (900) tā ʔi pʰlā ɲɔ̄ kəs̄.d̄s̄ l̄
 thing this appear be.easy **indeed** FACT.FP
 bā̄ʔ.sʰáʔ tə-mē tā ɲɔ̄ bā̄ʔ
 but NEG-be.true_{COP} thing be.easy NEG.FP
 ‘This does seem easy, but it is not an easy thing.’ (Saw Kay)
- (901) jə-lè sʰū nə-ʔəʔ kəs̄.d̄s̄
 1s-go ALL.P 2sx-LOC.N **indeed**
 bā̄ʔ.sʰáʔ jə-tə-tʰiʔ nə bā̄ʔ
 but 1s-NEG-see 2si NEG.FP
 ‘I DID go to find you, but I didn’t see you.’ (Ballard 1973c: 241)
- (902) pə-ʔəʔ.l̄ə nə kəs̄.d̄s̄
 1p-agree 2si **indeed**
 ‘We do give our consent (for you to marry that boy).’ (Karen movie)

⁴⁰ The entry for *kəs̄.d̄s̄* in the Thesaurus states that “anything that is good, we say that it is *kəs̄.d̄s̄*” (my trans.). The Mason Bible translation includes examples such as *nə-siʔ.nəʔ tā kəs̄.d̄s̄ l̄* [2s judge thing ? FACT.FP] ‘Thou hast rightly judged’ (Luke 7:43; KJV), suggesting that *kəs̄.d̄s̄* is originally a descriptive verb meaning ‘be good, be proper’. In the modern language, *kəs̄.d̄s̄* is used at least in western parts of the Sgaw-speaking area in Myanmar, but is reportedly uncommon in the Kayin–Tak variety.

Another common post-clausal adverb is *tʰɔ̄.bō* ‘always’, the etymology of which is uncertain. Like post-clausal descriptive verbs, *tʰɔ̄.bō* usually occurs after the clause it modifies, as in (903). Occasionally, *tʰɔ̄.bō* is fronted in clause-external position, as in (904).

(903) *jə-hāʔ-lòʔ.kwē dɔʔ jə-tì.θəkōʔ tʰɔ̄.bō lə*
 1s-walk-play with 1sx-friend **always** FACT.FP
 ‘I always hang out with my friends.’ [HUR]

(904) ***tʰɔ̄.bō*** *nēʔ | pə-kə-bāʔ θē.xə pə-sī*
always that_{FRAME} 1p-IRR-must wash 1px-hand
 ‘Always, we must wash our hands.’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

Apart from reduplicated descriptive verbs and other similar forms, the second type of adverbial expressions consist of various types of nominal and verbal phrases used as adverbial phrases in different positions in the clause. These include the locational adverbs in (905) and the temporal adverbs in (906).⁴¹

(905) *pʰē-ʔi / pʰē-nēʔ* [LOC.P-this / LOC.P-that] ‘(at) here/there’
lā-ʔi / lā-nēʔ [GNR.P-this / GNR.P-that] ‘at/from/to here/there’
sʰū-ʔi / sʰū-nēʔ [ALL.P-this / ALL.P-that] ‘to here/there’

(906) *kʰē ʔi* [moment this] ‘now’
tə-nì jū ʔi [one-day INTS this] ‘today’
kʰē mə-sʰēʔ [moment sun-dawn] ‘tomorrow’
kʰē tə-sʰēʔ [moment NEG?-dawn] ‘day after tomorrow’
kʰē.kəʔ tə-lā [next one-month] ‘next month’
mə-hā (kəʔ) [sun-dusk (?)] ‘yesterday’
mə-nà (kəʔ) [sun-night (?)] ‘last night’
mə-hā tə-nīʔ [sun-dusk one-year] ‘last year’
məhō (kəʔ) [last.year (?)] ‘last year’
ʔəpù.kwìʔ tə-lā [3:pass one-month] ‘last month’

Several other phrases are used adverbially, often in clause-external position at the beginning of a sentence and followed by the frame-setting particle *nēʔ*. Some contain nouns, like (907) and (908), others verbs, like (909).

(907) *lā nēʔ ʔə-mèʔ.jū*
 GNR.P that 3x-front
 ‘additionally, on top (lit., front) of that’

⁴¹ The word *kʰē*, which according to Wade (1896) means ‘a short interval’ (below glossed as ‘moment’), is found in temporal adverbial phrases indicating future time, as well as in *kʰē.ʔi* ‘now (lit., this moment)’. *kʰē* also occurs in the compound *kʰē.kəʔ* ‘next’. The etymology of *kəʔ*, found in past time temporal adverbial phrases, is unclear. The prefix *mə-* also seen in temporal phrases is a contracted form of *mī* ‘sun’.

(908) *ɔə-xō*
 3X-REASON
 ‘therefore’

(909) a. *ɲō.nî* b. *tə-kāʔ* *dīʔ* *bāʔ*
 be.common NEG-exceed? CONT NEG.FP
 ‘usually’ ‘additionally, not only that’

Common interrogative adverbial phrases include example (910) and adverbs formed with *sʰɪʔ* ‘be small’, like the two examples in (911).

(910) *bāʔ* *mənì* *ɔəxō* *lêʔ*
 occur what 3X.REASON CQ
 ‘why’

(911) a. *sʰɪʔ-jì* *lêʔ* b. *sʰɪʔ-tʰɔ̄* *lêʔ*
 be.small_Q-be.far CQ be.small_Q-be.high CQ
 ‘how far’ ‘how high’

The third group of adverbs consist of particle-like words, which occur in different places in a sentence depending on which constituent they modify. The ability to appear in different positions sets these adverbial particles apart from words in other word classes, which tend to have their designated slots in a sentence. The adverbial particles discussed in this section are listed in (912).

(912) *sê.kɔ̄ʔ* ‘also’
māʔ ‘only (then), (not) even’
dāʔ.lêʔ ‘even’
nāʔ.kē ‘likewise, although’
dīʔ.ɲì ‘like this’
dīʔ.nêʔ ‘like that’
kʰē.ləʔ ‘all’

The adverb *sê.kɔ̄ʔ* ‘also’ has narrow scope over a verb or NP. It often precedes the pronominal coreference marker *wē*, which establishes the morphosyntactic status of *sê.kɔ̄ʔ* as a verb. Example (913) shows *sê.kɔ̄ʔ* as part of a verb complex. It has scope over the subject, Saw Lah.

(913) *sə-lā* *pāʔ-sê.kɔ̄ʔ=wē* *lə*
 M.HON-L. join-also=COR FACT.FP
 ‘Saw Lah also joined.’ (Saw Kay)

As typical of adverbial particles, *sê.kɔ̄ʔ* can also occur in other positions in a clause. In (914), the scope is, again, over the subject, Saw Gay. However, in this case, *sê.kɔ̄ʔ* occurs

outside the main clause. Yet another possible position of *sê.kɔ̃ʔ* with the same scope is seen in (915), where *sê.kɔ̃ʔ* directly follows the subject.

- (914) *sə-ɣè* *ɔ̃ʔ* *θəkwi* *wì* *lī* ***sê.kɔ̃ʔ*** *lò*
 M.HON-be.good(PN) eat banana finish NS **also** FACT.FP
 ‘Saw Gay also has eaten a banana.’ [LTP.P]

- (915) *sə-ɣè* ***sê.kɔ̃ʔ*** *pyè* *lìʔ* *lò*
 M.HON-be.good(PN) **also** buy book FACT.FP
 ‘Also Saw Gay bought a book.’ [LTP.P]

In (916), *sêʔ.kɔ̃ʔ* has scope over the main verb and appears immediately after it.

- (916) *sə-ɣè* *pʰāʔ* *lìʔ* *wì* *lī*
 M.HON-be.good(PN) read book finish NS
bāʔ.sʰāʔ *pyè-sê.kɔ̃ʔ* *lìʔ* *lò*
 but buy-**also** book FACT.FP
 ‘Saw Gay finished the book, but he bought it too.’ [LTP.P]

The spoken variant *sê* ‘also’ occurs clause-externally at the end of a sentence preceding any final particles, as in (917).

- (917) *nə-kə-lè* *ɔ̃ʔ* *pʰē.lēʔ* *nēʔ* *dīʔ-θéʔ.nā* *pyà* ***sê***
 2S-IRR-go EXIST where that_{FRAME} CAUS-know 1pi **also**
 ‘Also let us know where you will go to stay.’ (Ballard 1973b: 94)

As further described in Chapter 10, *sê* also functions as a particle to soften a command or a question.

Semantically similar to *sê.kɔ̃ʔ*, *θə̀nàʔ.kē* (or *nàʔ.kē*) ‘likewise, even so’ appears to verbal in origin. In (918), from northern Thailand, *nàʔ.yè* (probably a variant of *nàʔ.kē*) appears before the object.

- (918) *ɔ̃ʔ-tə-mà.lō-nàʔ.yè* *tā* *bāʔ* *ɔ̃ʔ-mà* *tā* *θē*
 3-NEG-study-even.so thing NEG.FP 3-do thing be.skilled_{ABIL}
 ‘Even though he hasn’t studied, he is good at working.’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 756; my trans.)

In most cases in the data, however, *nàʔ.kē* is detached from the verb. When following a noun, as in (919), *nà.kē* expresses ‘likewise, also’.

- (919) *jə-ʔɔ̌ʔ* *θəkwī* *tə-bē* *bāʔ*
 1s-eat banana NEG-be.tasty NEG.FP
sɔ̌-yè ***nàʔ.kē*** *ʔɔ̌ʔ* *tə-bē* *bāʔ*
 M.HON-PN **likewise** eat NEG-be.tasty NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t like banana; Saw Gay likewise doesn’t like (it).’ [LTP]

In contrast, when preceded by a clause, *nàʔ.kē* functions as a concessive adverb meaning ‘although, even so’. In (920), *nàʔ.kē* has a similar contrastive function as in (919), indicating the inclusion of a situation in addition to an alternative situation which is not explicitly expressed.

- (920) *ʔə-pʰō.miʔ* *nēʔ* *nēʔ* *ɣiʔ.klēʔ.səʔ* *sʰēʔ.klōʔ* *dīʔ.lēʔ~dīʔ.lēʔ*
 3x-daughter that that_{TOP} try.hard contact how~how
nàʔ.kē *nēʔ* | *sʰēʔ.klōʔ.wē.dāʔ* *tə-nē* *nō.təpù* *lə* *bāʔ*
even.so that_{FRAME} contact=WD NEG-get_{ABIL} anywhere anymore NEG.FP
 ‘No matter how hard their daughter tried to contact (them), she wasn’t able to reach them anywhere.’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

Prosodically, the pause between the clauses is after *nàʔ.kē* (in (920), after *nàʔ.kē nēʔ*), suggesting that this word is a clause-final adverb rather than a clause-initial connective like English *although*. The form *θənà.kē* is considerably more common as a concessive marker. See §9.4.5 for further details and examples.

The word *māʔ*⁴² (possibly from *māʔ* ‘be solid, hard (of consistency)’) is an adverbial particle that expresses emphasis. The function of *māʔ* as an intensifier of descriptive verbs, as in *sʰūʔ-māʔ* [be.strong-INTS] ‘very strong’, was discussed in §4.2.1.1. Apart from intensifying the degree of descriptive verbs, *māʔ* can also follow non-descriptive verbs and nouns. In (921), *māʔ* occurs after the subject *mətəyà* ‘who’, indicating ‘(not) even’. In (922) and (923), *māʔ* follows a clause, indicating ‘only after (V), not before (V)’.

- (921) *mətəyà* ***māʔ*** *tə-sāʔ-ʔēʔ* *nà* *bāʔ* *jəʔ*
 who **even** NEG-ask-love 2si NEG.FP FP
 ‘No one is going to hit on you.’ [HUR]

- (922) *mī* *tʰūʔ* ***māʔ*** *jə-kə-lè* *pɔ̌.tʰī*
 sun be.vertical **only.then** 1s-IRR-go swim
 ‘At noon I will go swimming.’ [HUR]

⁴² The particle *māʔ* is homophonous with the descriptive verb *māʔ* ‘be solid, be hard (of consistency)’, which only occurs as a main verb in data from northern Thailand. It is unclear whether these morphemes are related. Compare also *māʔ* with the Burmese “restrictive marker” *hmá* which has a similar function (Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016: 125, 274, 365–367).

- (923) *tì ʔə-mà=wē dīʔ-nēʔ māʔ ʔɔʔ-bàʔ=wē lə*
 when 3-do=COR be.like-that **only.then** eat-hit=COR FACT.FP
 ‘Only when they did it like that could they eat.’ (Jones 1961: 229, 231)

The emphatic adverbial particle *dāʔ.lēʔ* ‘even’ has scope over the preceding constituent, which can be a noun or clause. In (924), *dāʔ.lēʔ* modifies a noun (S) and, in (925), a clause (CL).

- (924) *pə-rē dɔʔ pyà yà*
 1p-deal with person other
mē tə-θē bāʔ nēʔ
 be.true_{COND} NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} NEG.FP **that**_{FRAME}
 [*pə-dɔ.pí.wē*]_S ***dāʔ.lēʔ*** *kē pə-dīʔ-pə-dā θē lə*
 1px-sibling **even** act.as_{COP} 1px-enemy-1px-enemy ABIL FACT.FP
 ‘If we cannot deal with other people, even our siblings can become our enemies.’ (Karen proverbs)

- (925) [*pyà tənɔ*]_{TOP} [*hāʔ-tʰɔʔ-hāʔ-lə*]_{CL} ***dāʔ.lēʔ***
 person some walk-UP-walk-DOWN **even**
tə-būʔ lə bāʔ lə
 NEG-dare anymore NEG.FP FACT.FP
 ‘Some people do not even dare to travel anymore.’ (News article)

Similarly, the adverbs *dīʔ.ʔi* ‘like this’ and *dīʔ.nēʔ* ‘like that’ (consisting of *dīʔ* ‘be like, resemble’ followed by the demonstrative particles *ʔi* ‘this’ and *nēʔ* ‘that’) are used after NPs, as in (926), and clauses, as in (927), modifying the preceding constituent.

- (926) *tā-kē.tʰɔʔ-θāʔ dīʔ.ʔi nēʔ hē kē.tʰɔʔ-sé.kɔʔ ʔəθāʔ*
 thing-occur-REFL **like.this** **that**_{FRAME} come occur-also 3.REFL
lə tɔ.ʔū-kɔ.rēʔ ʔə-pù kʰɪ blɔ nēʔ.lə
 GNR.P T.-district 3x-inside two time FP
 ‘Two similar incidents also took place in Taw Oo District.’ (News article)

- (927) *yè lī | mē mē dīʔ.nēʔ pə-tʰɪʔ-ləʔ.θāʔ kʰē.kəʔ*
 be.good NS COND be.true_{COP} **like.that** 1p-see-RECP in.a.while
 ‘All right, then (if it is like that), see you later!’ [HUR]

The word *kʰē.ləʔ* [moment?-be.used.up] ‘all’ morphosyntactically categorizes as an adverbial particle, appearing in different clausal positions. Depending on the main verb of the clause, *kʰē.ləʔ* modifies either the subject or the object. In general, if the modified NP is a subject, *kʰē.ləʔ* appears right after it, as in (928). If the subject is a bound pronoun, *kʰē.ləʔ* follows the clause, as in (929).

(928) *pɣà* *kʰɛ.làʔ* *ʔóʔ.kʰōʔ* *nà* *lī*
 person **all** wait 2si NS
 ‘Everyone is waiting for you already.’ (Karen village)

(929) *pə-hāʔ.tʰɔʔ* *tʃō* *kʰɛ.làʔ* *θəʔ*
 1p-leave school **all** SUPP.FP
 ‘we will all walk out of school for sure’ (Jones 1961: 203)

In (930), *kʰɛ.làʔ.kʰɛ.sʰɛ*, an elaborate variant of *kʰɛ.làʔ*, modifies the object.

(930) *ʔəwɛ* *sʰā-ʔɔʔ-kwiʔ=wɛ.dáʔ* *tʰōʔ* *lā*
 3 sell-eat-AWAY=WD bird REL
ʔə-biʔ=wɛ *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ* *néʔ* *kʰɛ.làʔ.kʰɛ.sʰɛ*
 3-raise=COR PL.COLL that **all**
 ‘He sold all the pigs that he had kept.’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

With transitive clauses, *kʰɛ.làʔ* sometimes modifies the subject, sometimes the object, depending on the context. In (931), *kʰɛ.làʔ* modifies the subject rather than the object, *ɟwà* ‘God’.

(931) *θəwɔ* *tə-pʰlāʔ* *néʔ* *tərīʔ-kè* *ʔə-kʰóʔ*
 village one-CLF(3D) that_{TOP} turn-RETURN 3x-head
lā *kə-bā-kè* *ɟwà* *kʰɛ.làʔ*
 COMP IRR-worship-RETURN God **all**
 ‘All of those villagers are deciding (turning back their heads) to worship God.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 201)

To summarize, three types of adverbial constituents can be distinguished based on their position in a clause: post-clausal adverbs, which are mostly reduplicated descriptive verbs, sentence-initial adverbial phrases, and adverbial particles, which appear in different positions in the sentence depending on their semantic scope.

7.2 Connectives

Connectives are a small word class consisting of the words *dɔʔ* ‘and’, *bāʔ.sʰáʔ* ‘but’, and *mɛ.təmɛ* ‘or’. They share the function of linking clauses or NPs but, morphosyntactically, could also be considered a subtype of adverbs. Prosodically, words in this word class can be connected to the preceding constituent (like the Japanese clause-final conjunction *to* ‘and’) or to the following constituent (like *but*), or they can be prosodically separate units (like *however*).

The coordinative conjunction *dɔʔ* ‘and’ is used both as a conjunction, as a preposition meaning ‘with’, and as a verbal modifier expressing ‘again’. As a conjunction, *dɔʔ* is used to conjoin NPs, classifier phrases, or clauses. In (932), *dɔʔ* links two NPs and, in (933), two

clauses. Example (934) shows *d̥ʰ* occurring between two classifier phrases. As explained in §3.4.4, expressions of the type *tə*-CLF *d̥ʰ* *tə*-CLF (lit., ‘one unit and one unit’) is a common way to express ‘each’.

- (932) *jə-mō* *d̥ʰ* *jə-pā* *nēʔ* *lò.pʰā²-lòʔ.θāʔ* *lò*
 1sx-mother **and** 1sx-father that_{TOP} separate-RECP FACT.FP
 ‘My mother and my father got divorced / got separated.’ [HUR]
- (933) *nə-ʔʰ²-tʰʰʔ* *pē.trō* *d̥ʰ* *nə-pī²-kədə-kè* *ʔò* *lò*
 2s-open-UP window **and** 2s-close-REVERSE-RETURN 3i FACT.FP
 ‘You opened the window and you closed it again.’ [LTP]
- (934) *tʰṽ-kō* *tə-bēʔ* *d̥ʰ* *tə-bēʔ*
 water-land one-CLF(2D) **and** one-CLF(2D)
 ‘each country’

The question as to whether *d̥ʰ* is syntactically clause-final, like Japanese *to* ‘and’, or clause-initial, like English *and*, remains open. What seems to be clear is that *d̥ʰ* ‘and’ is not bound or compounded to any of the constituents it links. Generally, there is no pause either before or after *d̥ʰ* when it links constituents smaller than clauses, as in (932) and (934), while a pause may occur on either side of *d̥ʰ* when it links clauses, as in (933).

The alternative conjunction *mē tə-mé* (*tə-kʰṽ*) [COND NEG-be.true_{COP} (one-side)] ‘or’ (lit., ‘if not so’) has similar characteristics as *d̥ʰ* ‘and’, conjoining both NPs and clauses. In (935) and (936), *mē.təmē* connects two NPs and two prepositional phrases, respectively.

- (935) *pyà* *lā* *pə-nà²-ʔʰʔ* *ʔò* *θē* *tə-yà*
 person REL 1p-believe-eat 3i be.skilled_{ABIL} one-CLF(HUM)
kʰṽ.pəŋō *pə-pí-pə-wé* *mē.təmē* *pə-θəmū.θəkōʔ*
 meaning 1px-ySI-1px-eSI **or** 1p-friend
 ‘a person whom we can trust, I mean, our sibling or our friend’
 (News vlog, “Mental health”)
- (936) *jə-kə-mà.tā* *pʰē* Omaha *mē.təmē* *hṽ* *pʰē*
 1s-IRR-work LOC.P O. **or** **side** LOC.P
kō-ʔəmē.rəkà-pù *tə* uh *kʰṽ* *nīʔ* *θō* *nīʔ* *mò*
 country-US-inside one two year three year ATT.FP
 ‘(After graduation) I will work in Omaha or (somewhere) in the US one, uh, two, three years.’ (Wikitongues, “Sunkist”)

Frequently, *mē.təmē* ‘or’ is more properly analysed as a conjunctive adverbial phrase rather than as a clause-initial conjunction. The final negative particle *bāʔ* also sometimes occurs. In (937), *mē.təmē* conjoins two clauses.

- (937) *ʔəwē.θéʔ kʰɪ̄ yà nêʔ pàʔ tã-ʔéʔ-t̄5*
 3.PL two CLF(HUM) that_{TOP} put thing-love-be.true
mē tã-mē bãʔ nêʔ d̄5.θə̀kōʔ lã
 COND NEG-be.true_{COP} NEG.FP that_{FRAME} be.friends Q
 ‘Are the two of them dating or just friends?’ [HUR]

In colloquial contexts, the short form *mē* ‘or’ is also used, as in (938).

- (938) *nə-xē-ʔéʔ-sʰō ʔə mē ʔə-xē-ʔéʔ-sʰō nə*
 2s-request-love-be.early 3i or 3-request-love-be.early 2si
 ‘Did you ask him first or did he ask you first to be girlfriend and boyfriend?’
 (Vlog, “Girl talk”)

Another way of expressing alternatives is by using the adverbial phrase *mē.yè* ‘or’, which occurs at the end of an NP or clause, as in (939) and (940).

- (939) *tã-kʰɪ̄ʔ lã pə-ʔəʔ tã bãʔ mē.yè*
 NEG-reach COMP 1p-eat thing NEG.FP or
pə-ʔəʔ tã mē wì mē.yè
 1p-eat THING be.true_{COND} finish or
 ‘before we eat or when we have finished eating’ (Lit., ‘not [having] reached that we eat ...’) (Vlog, “Food safety”)

- (940) *d̄ɪ.θōʔ pyà ʔōʔ.pʰyōʔ.rō.pʰyōʔ mē.yè d̄5ʔ*
 be.like person be.gathered or and
pyà ʔōʔ-kə̀t̄ɪʔ.kə̀t̄uʔ mē.yè | tã d̄ɪʔ.nēʔ θéʔ.tə̀pʰãʔ nēʔ
 person EXIST-be.crowded or thing like.that PL:COLL that_{TOP}
pə-krəʔ hãʔ.sʰyēʔ ʔə
 1p-should avoid 3i
 ‘Like people being in a group or crammed together, things like that we should avoid.’ (News vlog, “Coronavirus variant”)

Note that while *mē.təmē* expresses ‘if not A, then B’, *mē.yè* indicates that both A and B could occur or hold for the proposition to be true.

The most frequent contrastive conjunction in Sgaw Karen is *bãʔ.sʰãʔ* ‘but’, the origin of which is unclear. It conjoins clauses, expressing a contrast between two predications. Similar to *d̄5ʔ*, the inter-clausal pause can occur either before or, as in (941) and (942), after *bãʔ.sʰãʔ* (as indicated by |).

- (941) *kʰwãʔ l̄ə.tèʔ | bãʔ.sʰãʔ tã-θéʔ.pʰãʔ bãʔ*
 glass fall but NEG-break(intr.) NEG.FP
 ‘A glass has fallen down but didn’t break.’ [LTP.P]

(942)	<i>kwē</i>	<i>θēʔ.təpʰāʔ</i>	<i>ʔə-mà.tā</i>	<i>sʰŭʔ</i>	<i>māʔ</i>
	bee	PL:COLL	3-work	be.strong	INTS
	<i>bāʔ.sʰāʔ</i>	<i>ʔə-ʔōʔ.mū-bāʔ</i>	<i>tə-jiʔ</i>	<i>bāʔ</i>	
	but	3-live-hit _{OPP}	NEG-be.long	NEG.FP	
	‘Bees work very hard, but they do not get to live long.’ (Vlog, “Bee story”)				

See also §9.4.5 on the use of *bāʔ.sʰāʔ* as a clause-final concessive marker (‘although’).

In many cases, *bāʔ.sʰāʔ* occurs as a clause-external adverb at the beginning of a sentence, often followed by *dōʔ* ‘and (then)’, in which case a prosodic break occurs after *dōʔ*. The phrase *bāʔ.sʰāʔ dōʔ* can thus be considered a clause-external adverb comparable to English ‘however’.

Similar to *(θə)nāʔ.kē* ‘likewise, even so’, *bāʔ.sʰāʔ* also occurs as a clause-final adverb expressing ‘although’, in which case the prosodic break follows *bāʔ.sʰāʔ*, as in (943). The combined form *bā.sʰāʔ θənāʔ.kē* ‘however, nevertheless’ is also common (see §9.4.5).

(943)	<i>nə-pàʔ-nìʔ</i>	<i>tə-mì-mì</i>	<i>mé.yè</i>	<i>lā</i>	<i>tʰəʔ</i>	<i>pù</i>
	2s-put-IN	one-kind(RDP)	whatever	GNR.P	bag	inside
	<i>bāʔ.sʰāʔ</i>	<i>nēʔ</i>	<i>ʔə-tə-hāʔ.yə</i>	<i>bāʔ</i>		
	but	that _{FRAME}	3-NEG-break(intr.)	NEG.FP		
	‘Whatever you put into this bag, it won’t break.’ [LTP.D]					

Chapter 9 provides further details on clause linking. The next section, §7.3, describes pronouns.

7.3 Pronouns

A pronoun is “a word used as a substitute for a noun or noun phrase” (Schachter & Shopen 2007: 24). Pronouns can be deictic (e.g. *you*), in which case the referent of the pronoun depends on the speaker and the context, or non-deictic (e.g. *someone*). Three types can be distinguished in Sgaw Karen: personal, reflexive, and impersonal pronouns, described in §7.3.1, §7.3.2, and §7.3.3, respectively. The section excludes demonstrative pronouns, which are nominal compounds formed with the demonstrative particles *ʔi* ‘this’ and *nēʔ* ‘that’, described in §3.9.

7.3.1 Personal pronouns

The pronominal system of Sgaw Karen distinguishes three persons: first, second, and third. As seen in Table 39, the first and second persons have distinct singular and plural forms, while the third person is unspecified for number in the bound and unbound forms. In the emphatic form of the third person, however, singular *ʔəwē* ‘he, she, it’ is distinguished from the third person plural by the plural marker *θēʔ*, which can also occur in the first and second-person plural pronouns.

Table 39 Sgaw Karen personal pronouns

Person	Bound form	Unbound form ⁴³	Unbound, emphatic form
1SG	<i>jə-</i>	<i>jà</i>	<i>jē(.dāʔ)</i>
1PL	<i>pə-</i>	<i>pɣà</i>	<i>pəwē(.dāʔ) / pəwē.θéʔ</i>
2SG	<i>nə-</i>	<i>nà</i>	<i>nē(.dāʔ)</i>
2PL	-	<i>θī / nəθī</i>	<i>θī.wē(.dāʔ) / θī.wē.θéʔ</i>
3SG	<i>ʔə-</i>	<i>ʔə / θā</i>	<i>ʔəwē(.dāʔ) / θā.wē(.dāʔ)</i>
3PL	<i>ʔə-</i>	<i>ʔə / θā</i>	<i>ʔəwē.θéʔ / θā.wē.θéʔ</i>

Table 39 largely replicates (with a few additions) the one given by Jones (1961: 18). Jones (1961) uses the terms “object form” and “topic form” for the non-emphatic unbound and emphatic forms, respectively. These unbound pronouns are distinguished morphologically from their bound counterparts, which appear as prefixes on the verb. An exception is the second person plural pronoun *θī* (the form *nəθī* is heard in the Kayin–Tak variety), which lacks a bound form. The independent forms are used when the pronoun is separated from the verb, for example when topicalized or when occurring as objects. An emphatic, or contrastive, form of each pronoun also exists, which consists of a personal prefix and the pronominal particle *wē* (*jē* and *nē* are contractions of *jəwē* and *nəwē*, respectively). These optionally combine with the exclusive or autonomous marker *dāʔ*, except in the case of the third person plural.

The bound pronouns function as subjects (S or A arguments) of the clause, appearing obligatorily as the first prefix on a verb, before any other prefixes. In (944), *jə-* ‘I’ is followed by the irrealis marker and the verb.

- (944) *jə-kə-kè sʰū hiʔ lə*
1s-IRR-return ALL.P house/home FACT.FP
 ‘I will go back home.’

The unbound forms, on the other hand, occur as topicalized pronouns in clause-external position, as in (945) and (946), or as objects after the verb, as seen in (947).

- (945) *nà nēʔ nə-tē pɣà.kəŋə bāʔ hā*
2si that_{TOP} 2s-say/tell Sgaw be.correct_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘(As for) you, can you speak Sgaw Karen?’
 (Said by a Sgaw person to a Pwo person) (Chiang Mai)

- (946) *jē jə-tə-kē pəʔ.kʰwā bāʔ jà nēʔ*
1se 1s-NEG-act.as_{SCOP} man NEG.FP 1si that_{TOP}
 ‘I am no man.’ (Vlog, “Marriage”)

⁴³ The unbound forms *jà*, *nà*, *pɣà*, and *ʔə* are probably contractions of a prefix plus *ɣà* used as a classifier for humans. Note also that the form *ʔə* deviates from the phonotactic rule prohibiting a syllable with a glottal initial to have Tone 6.

- (947) *tʃɔ̃ kə-lè hā²-ʔə² nà nò*
 eB IRR-go walk-EXIST **2si** AGR.FP
 ‘I (older brother) will go visit you.’ [KWH]

The emphatic forms are used for contrast (see §11.2). In (948), *nē* ‘you’, in the first clause, is contrasted with *jē* ‘me’, in the second. As Ballard (1973a: 222) notes, a bound pronoun is typically repeated on the following verb. In (949), the unbound pronoun has the longer *dā²* form.

- (948) *nē nə-kə-lè hā | jē jə-tə-lè lə bā²*
2se 2S-IRR-go PQ **1se** 1S-NEG-go anymore NEG.FP
 ‘Are you going? I’m no longer going.’ (Ballard 1973a: 91)

- (949) *jē.dā² ʔi | jə-mé tʰə².lwī-kʰā²*
1se thi_{STOP} 1s-be.true_{COP} dove-be.bitter
 ‘I am Bitter Dove.’ (Karen movie)

In imperative sentences, the emphatic pronoun appears after the verb, as in (950) and (951).

- (950) *tə-lə² ʔə²-kʰə² jà bā² | lè nē təkʰɔ̃*
 NEG-need EXIST-wait 1si NEG.FP go **2se** CNTR
 ‘No need to wait for me. Go ahead.’ [HUR]

- (951) *ʔə² nē mē lā jā jē jə-kə-ʔə²-kè lā kʰɪ*
 eat **2se** rice GNR.P front **1se** 1S-IRR-eat-RETURN GNR.P rear
 ‘You eat first; I’ll eat later.’ (Ballard 1973b: 50)

Postposed emphatic pronouns, seen in (952) and (953), are common in poetry but occasionally occur also in the spoken language. The use and semantics of emphatic pronouns requires further research.

- (952) *nə-mé tʰɪ² dī².né² məsā*
 2S-be.true_{COND} see like.that at.present
nì.kəmyī jē mē²-tʰɪ klā
 smile(v.) **1se** eye-water MIDST
 ‘Even though you see me like that, I smile amongst the tears’ (Hta poem)

- (953) *jə-ʔə²-θəʔi jē nà*
 1s-EXIST-miss **1se** 2si
 ‘I miss you.’ (Karen song)

The third-person emphatic forms are considerably more common and appear to be less emphatic than those of other persons. For example, any of the third-person forms can be used in (954).

- (954) *mê* *jə-tʰiʔ* { *ʔəwē* / *ʔəwē.dâʔ* / *ʔə* } *məhā.kəʔ*
 be.true 1s-see 3s 3.WD 3i yesterday
 ‘(Did you meet my brother yesterday?) Yes, I met him yesterday.’ [LTP.D]

As seen in Table 39, the third-person singular and plural are represented by two different unbound forms: *ʔə* and *θā* and their emphatic equivalents *ʔəwē.θéʔ* and *θā.wē.θéʔ*. Gilmore (1898: §72) mentioned that “[*θā*] takes the place of the personal pronoun of the third person in indirect discourse, referring to the speaker”. In (955), *θā* ‘he’ in the complement clause is coreferential with the subject of *sīʔ* ‘say’.

- (955) *sə-wā* *sīʔ* [*lā* ***θā*** *kə-hē*]_{COMP} *lə*
 M.HON-W. say COMP 3.COR IRR-come FACT.FP
 ‘Saw Wa says that he (Saw Wa) will come.’ (Gilmore 1898: §72)

In more recent sources, *θā* appears in the Mawlamyine data collected by Jones (1961) and in data from northern Thailand. It is reportedly not used in the Western and Kayin–Tak varieties. One speaker of the latter variety finds *θā* derogatory.

Typically, as in (955), *θā* ‘she, he, it’ and its emphatic variants *θā.wē* and *θā.wē.θéʔ* ‘they’ occur in the complement clause following a complement-clause-taking verb, referring anaphorically to the subject of the preceding clause. When preceding possessed nouns, *θā* is also a possessive pronoun expressing ‘her, his, their’, as in *θā mō* [3.COR mother] ‘her mother’. In (956), *θā* is the subject of the complement clause and is coreferential with *pʰō*, while in (957), *θā* occurs both in the complement clause and as the object of a separate clause. In (958), *θā* is an indirect object coreferential with *pʰā.tī pʰrāʔ.θū.wā* ‘uncle Hpra Thoo Wah’.

- (956) *pʰō* *tē* *mō* *lā* [***θā*** *lè* *təmlā* *tā* *θəpɣá.tə*]_{COMP}
 child tell mother COMP 3.COR go rob thing definitely
 ‘The son_i confessed to his mother that he_i had actually robbed him_j (the one who was robbed).’ (Ratanakul 1986: 224; my trans.)

- (957) *pʰō.dôʔ.miʔ* *jə-pʰō-kʰwā* *tē=wē* *lā* [***θā*** *ʔéʔ* *nà*]_{COMP}
 niece 1sx-child-M tell=COR COMP 3.COR love 2si
nē *nə-tə-ʔéʔ-sʰə* ***θā*** *mē* *hā*
 2e 2S-NEG-love-RESPOND 3.COR be.so PQ
 ‘Niece, my son says that he loves you; you don’t love him [in return], do you?’
 (Ballard 1973c: 246)

- (958) *p^hā.tī* *p^hrā[?].θū.wā* *mà.lò[?]* *jà* *lā* [*kəs^h5* *lā*
uncle PN order 1s_i COMP elephant REL
jā-k^hā[?]-nē *ʔā-s^hō-katā* *tā-dī* *jā-bā[?]*
1s-shoot-get 3-be.early-SUPL one-CLF(ANIM) 1s-must
hē[?] **θā** *lā* *ʔā-mē*]COMP
give 3.COR GNR.P 3x-tooth
‘Uncle Hpra Thoo Wah_i told me that I must give him_i the tusk of
the first elephant that I shoot.’ (Saw Kay)

In the following passage in (959), a speaker from Hpapun Township, Kayin State, recounts an event as told by the daughter appearing at the beginning of the passage. Note the use of *θā* in subsequent references.

- (959) a. *ʔā-p^hō.mī[?]* *dō[?]* *tā-γà* *nē[?]*
3x-daughter be.big one-CLF(HUM) that_{TOP}
tē=wē.dā[?] *lā* **θā** *pā* *nē[?]*
tell=WD COMP 3.COR father that_{TOP}
a. ‘The eldest daughter said that her father, -’
- b. *ʔatā* *θī.kwā* **θā** *lā* | *p^hō.mī[?]* *hā*
3s ask 3.COR COMP daughter VOC
nā-ʔō[?] *mè* *wì* *lī* *hā* |
2s-eat rice finish NS PQ
nā-mà *tā* *mānì* *lē[?]* | *dī[?]-ʔi-dī[?]-nì*
2s-do thing what CQ like-this-like-that
b. ‘he asked her: “Daughter, have you eaten? What are you doing?”
(Something) like that.’
- c. *dō[?]* **θā.wē** *nā.kē* *nē[?]~nē[?]*
and 3.COR likewise that_{TOP}
θā *kè* *tē-s^hō-kè=wē.dā[?]* **θā** *pā* *nē[?].lā*
3.COR return tell-RESPOND-RETURN=WD 3.COR father FACT.FP
c. ‘And she also (in return) replied to her father.’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

The Northern Pwo Karen third-person enclitic pronoun *ā[?]* is similar to *θā*. As Phillips (2017: 230–244, 299–301) describes in detail, *ā[?]* codes a thematic participant which is the topic of a discourse. As with Northern Pwo Karen *ā[?]*, *θā* tends to refer to highly topical participants.

The third-person pronoun *ʔatā* is rare in the data. It consists of the third person possessive prefix *ʔā-* and *tā* ‘thing’. The Karen vernacular grammar (Wade 1861: 41–42) states that *ʔatā* is sometimes used as a pronoun, mostly to represent inanimate referents, but sometimes also animate referents. Wade (1861: 42) provides the example in (960).

- (960) *ʔətá* *sī^ʔ-bá^ʔ* *ʔə* *nə-sī^ʔ.nə^ʔ* *tá* *kəs̄.d̄s̄* *l̄ə*
 3 say-HIT 3i 2s-judge thing rightly FACT.FP
 ‘And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged’ (Luke 7:43; KJV)

The third-person pronoun *ʔətá* is reportedly used also in the modern language in some regions, but no further information is available at present.

Kinship terms, such as *mī.yá* ‘aunt’ and *p^hā.tī* ‘uncle’, and professional titles, such as *θarā^ʔ* ‘teacher’, can be used as pronouns like in the neighbouring language Thai (e.g. Iwasaki & Ingkaphirom 2005: 57–60). Table 40 shows that some kinship terms have a familiar form when used as terms of address, which differs tonally from the more formal form. Reduplicated forms are more familiar and are also used with children.

Table 40 Kinship terms as terms of address

Familiar, term of address	Formal, general
<i>mī.yā</i> ‘auntie’	<i>mī.yá</i> ‘aunt’
<i>tī(.tī)</i> ‘uncle’	<i>p^hā.tī</i> ‘uncle’
<i>n̄s̄(.n̄s̄)</i> ‘older sister’	<i>w̄é.mī^ʔ</i> ‘older sister’
<i>t̄ʃ̄(.t̄ʃ̄)</i> ‘older brother’	<i>w̄é.k^hwā</i> ‘older brother’
<i>m̄ō(.m̄ō)</i> ‘mom(my)’	<i>m̄ō</i> ‘mother’
<i>p̄ā(.p̄ā)</i> ‘dad(dy)’	<i>p̄ā</i> ‘father’

Another example of a kinship pronoun is *k^hwā* ‘cousin’, which is used as a first-person singular pronoun. Chappell (1992: 16), using data by a speaker of the Hpa-an–Mawlamyine variety, characterizes *k^hwā* as a “familiar” pronoun. Ballard (1973c: 11) describes *k^hwā* as a term of address not used as a first-person pronoun but for addressing “people who are unrelated but of the same age range”. The use of kinship terms as pronouns requires further investigation.

7.3.2 Reflexive pronouns

Apart from personal pronouns, the data also contains five reflexive pronouns, which are coreferential with the subject of the clause they are part of. The paradigm in (961) shows that the reflexive pronouns consist of the word *θā^ʔ* ‘heart’ preceded by a personal prefix. The prefix is sometimes omitted. The reflexive pronouns occur as objects in reflexive and in reciprocal clauses (see §8.3).

- (961) *jəθā^ʔ* ‘myself’ *pəθā^ʔ* ‘ourselves’
nəθā^ʔ ‘yourself’ *θ̄θā^ʔ* ‘yourselves’
ʔəθā^ʔ ‘her-/himself/themselves’

The word *n̄-kesā* [body-lord] ‘self’ is used with a possessive prefix which is coreferential with the subject of the clause. It typically occurs in oblique phrases such as *l̄ə jən̄.kəsā* ‘by myself’, as in (962), or in possessive NPs, as in (963).

- (962) *jə-kə-p^h̄* *kəθū* *lā* *jə-n̄.kəsā* *l̄*
 1s-IRR-cook curry GNR.P **1sx-self** FACT.FP
 ‘I will make curry by myself.’ [HUR]
- (963) *pyà* *tən̄* *sī[?]=wē* *lī[?]-kəp̄* *ʔə-li[?].mē[?].p^hl̄[?]* *ʔi* *nē[?]*
 person some say=COR script-Karen 3x-alphabet this that_{TOP}
tə-mē ***pə-n̄.kəsā*** *ʔə-li[?].mē[?].p^hl̄[?]* *bā[?]*
 NEG-be.true_{COP} **1px-self** 3x-alphabet NEG.FP
 ‘Some people say (that) the Karen alphabet is not our own alphabet.’
 (Karen nationalism)

7.3.3 Impersonal pronouns

The Sgaw Karen nouns *tā* ‘thing’ and *pyà* ‘person’ are used as impersonal pronouns, “which are used to refer not to a specific individual or group of individuals but to people in general or a loosely specified collective” (Siewierska 2004: 210). Common examples in European languages are German *man* and generic English *you* (Siewierska 2004: 210). As non-referential, generic pronouns, *tā* ‘thing’ is pervasive in the language, occurring both as subject and object, while *pyà* ‘person’ appears to function chiefly as a subject.

The noun *tā* ‘thing’ serves various functions in Sgaw Karen. As an impersonal pronoun, *tā* can represent any of the core roles in the argument structure of a verb: S, A, or P. As a subject (S or A), *tā* is non-referential, corresponding to English ‘one, something, someone’ or the expletive pronoun ‘it’. In (964), *tā* ‘thing’ functions as an impersonal pronoun representing an unspecific referent. As discussed in §8.4.1, the function of *tā* can be described as agent-demoting, having a function similar to the English Passive. In (965), *tā* occurs in a patient-promoting *bā[?]* construction (see §8.4.2).

- (964) ***tā*** *təbā[?]* *sā* *d̄* *blā[?]-l̄* *ʔ̄*
thing_{IMPRS} PREV tie and hang-DOWN 3i
l̄ *p̄li-t^hā[?]* *n̄* *tə-kəli[?]* *bā[?]*
 GNR.P string-metal EXT one-kind NEG.FP
 ‘(The drum) should not be tied up and hung by a metal wire of any kind.’
 (Karen drum)
- (965) *k^h̄.p^h̄i[?]* *bā[?]* [***tā*** *θū[?]-l̄* *ʔ̄*] *l̄* *θē[?]* *ʔə-k^h̄.ʔ̄[?].t^h̄i[?]*
 coffee hit_{UNDERGO} **thing**_{IMPRS} plant.down 3i GNR.P tree 3x-base
 ‘Coffee is planted at the bases (under the canopy) of trees.’ (Cartoon)

The noun *pyà* ‘person’, like *tā*, also commonly functions as an impersonal pronoun, as in (966). Additionally, *pyà* can be a generic noun representing a person or people outside the familiar sphere, as in (967).

(966) *pyà* *k̄s̄ʔ* *ʔə-mì* *jə-tē* *tə-bāʔ* *l̄ə* *bāʔ*
 person_{IMPRS} call 3X-name 1s-tell NEG-be.correct anymore NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t remember what people call him any more’ (Jones 1961: 199–200)

(967) *kəŋs̄-pʰō* *bāʔ* *xē.myī.hāʔ.pʰlōʔ* *l̄ə* *pyà-tʰɪ-pyà-k̄s̄*
 Karen-child must flee GNR.P person-water-person-land
 ‘The Karen have to flee to other people’s countries.’ [HUR]

Several verbs related to the weather and the environment, like those in (968) and (969), take *tā* as their S argument. Note that ‘it is windy’ is expressed as *kəli hē* [wind come].

(968) *tā kʰɪʔ* [thing_{IMPRS} be.dark] ‘it is dark’
tā kəp̄ə [thing_{IMPRS} be.light] ‘it is light’
tā kō [thing_{IMPRS} be.hot] ‘it is hot’
tā blē [thing_{IMPRS} be.slippery] ‘it is slippery’
tā n̄ə ʔiʔ [thing_{IMPRS} smell be.rotten] ‘it smells bad’
tā sù [thing_{IMPRS} rain] ‘it rains / it is raining’
 (or: *mū.kʰōʔ sù*) [heaven rain]

(969) *bāʔ* *mən̄i* *ʔəxō* *d̄əʔ* *pù* [*tā* *kʰliʔ* *dōʔ.māʔ*] *l̄əʔ*
 hit what 3.REASON room inside thing_{IMPRS} be.cold greatly CQ
 ‘Why is it so cold in the room?’ [LTP.D]

Uncontrollable bodily sensations are also expressed using the impersonal pronoun *tā* ‘thing’. In such constructions, the object is a reflexive pronoun agreeing with the affectee of the event, as in (970). Example (971) shows a common phrase with optional elements in parentheses.

(970) a. *tā* *byīʔ* *jəθāʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.tired? 1sx-heart_{REFL}
 ‘I am tired.’
 b. *tā* *kəʔ* *jəθāʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.bored? 1sx-heart_{REFL}
 ‘I am bored.’
 c. *tā* *θū* *jəθāʔ* *l̄ə* *tʰɪ*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.thirsty? 1sx-heart_{REFL} GNR.P water
 ‘I am thirsty.’
 d. *tā* *θəʔi* *jəθāʔ* *l̄ə* *mō*
 thing_{IMPRS} miss? 1sx-heart_{REFL} GNR.P mother
 ‘I miss mother.’

(971) *tā* *θāʔ.wi(-ʔəʔ)* *jəθāʔ* (*l̄ə* *m̄ə*)
 thing_{IMPRS} be.hungry?(-eat) 1sx-heart_{REFL} GNR.P cooked.rice
 ‘I am hungry.’ [KWH]

The desiderative verb *môʔ* reportedly occurs chiefly in northern Thailand, likely also in some other regions that this thesis does not include. It combines with different verbs forming compounds which take *tâ* as their subject and a reflexive pronoun as their object (see §8.3). In (972), *môʔ* combines with *mī* ‘sleep’.

- (972) *tâ* *môʔ-mī* *θāʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} DES-sleep self
 ‘I am tired.’ [KWH]

In the case of *s^hā* ‘be ill’, seen in (973), the object is the pronoun representing the Affectee rather than a reflexive pronoun.

- (973) *pòʔ.mīʔ* *ʔōʔ* *pē* *θī.dīʔ* *dōʔ* [*tâ* *s^hā* *ʔō*]
 woman eat bean be.unripe and thing_{IMPRS} be.ill 3i
 ‘The woman ate unripe beans and got sick.’ [LTP.P]

As an object, *tâ* ‘thing’ functions as an expletive P argument used with transitive verbs, which in Sgaw Karen always take an object (see §4.6.2).

7.4 Prepositions

Prepositions are a small, closed word class consisting of grammatical words that mark different argument roles of NPs. Table 41 shows the four prepositions that are attested in Sgaw Karen: *lā*, *s^hū*, *p^hē*, and *dōʔ*. Note that *lā* is a generic preposition which can express all except one of the meanings of the other prepositions.

Table 41 Sgaw Karen prepositions

Type of argument	Preposition
Location (‘at’)	<i>lā</i> / <i>p^hē</i>
Source (‘from’)	<i>lā</i>
Goal (‘to’)	<i>lā</i> / <i>s^hū</i>
Instrument (‘with’)	<i>lā</i> / <i>dōʔ</i>
Companion (‘with’)	<i>dōʔ</i>
Oblique	<i>lā</i>

The locational prepositions *lā* ‘at, from, to’, *s^hū* ‘to’, and *p^hē* ‘at’ specify the location or path of a TRAJECTOR in relation to a LANDMARK referent (Langacker 1987a). The trajector is an object whose movement or location is described with respect to a landmark referent (Langacker 1987a; Kittilä, Västi & Ylikoski 2011). The terms “figure” and “ground” are also used in roughly the same sense (Talmy 1975). In (974), *sē* ‘money, silver’ is the figure while *tō.t^hōʔ-pū* ‘inside of a wallet’ represents the ground.

- (974) *sē* *ʔōʔ* *lā* *tō-tʰōʔ* *pù*
 money EXIST GNR.P coin-bag inside
 ‘The money is in the wallet.’ [HUR]

The locative preposition *pʰē* ‘at’ expresses a locational relation (‘at’), as in (975). The same meaning can also be expressed by the generic preposition *lā* ‘at, from, to’. The former, *pʰē*, is somewhat less frequent than *lā* as a locative marker in the data. On the other hand, *pʰē* is used more often than *lā* before temporal NPs, as in (976).

- (975) *pʰà* *lā* *ʔə-ʔōʔ* *pʰē* [*tʰi.klō* *kā.ni*]_{Location} *təpʰáʔ*
 person REL 3-EXIST LOC.P river bank COLL
 ‘the people who lived there on the river bank’ (Jones 1961: 228–229, 231)

- (976) *pʰē* *xōʔ* *náʔ.ríʔ* / *pʰē* *lā* *ʔs.kūʔ*
 LOC.P eight hour LOC.P month August
 ‘at eight o’clock’ / ‘in August’

The locative preposition *pʰē* is also commonly found in the adverbs *pʰē.ʔi* ‘here’ and *pʰē.néʔ* ‘there’, which are synonymous with *lā.ʔi* ‘here’ and *lā.néʔ* ‘there’.

Path relations are expressed by *sʰū* ‘to’ and by *lā* ‘from’, which precede a Goal and a Source argument, respectively. While *lā* is the only preposition expressing ‘from’, as in (977), both *lā* and *sʰū* can express ‘to’, as in (978). With numbers and time expressions, the phrase *tī lā* [arrive GNR.P] ‘until, to’ is used, as in (979).

- (977) *ʔə-ʔōʔ-hē* *lā* *wē-kí.mē*
 1s-EXIST-come GNR.P city-Chiang.Mai
 ‘I come from Chiang Mai.’ [HUR]

- (978) *pə-kə-lē* *sʰū* / *lā* *b̄s.k̄sʔ*
 1p-IRR-go ALL.P / GNR.P Bangkok
 ‘We will go to Bangkok.’ [LTP]

- (979) *liʔ.sʰs̄.rēʔ* *tā.prā* *nēʔ* *ʔəwē*
 essay competition that_{TOP} 3s(filler)
pə-hīʔ=wē.dāʔ *tā* *tī.lā* *ʔə* *n̄*
 1p-grab=WD one until five ATT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘(As for) the essay contest, we’ll take one to five (=mention the top five contestants).’ (Vlog, “Essay competition”)

The allative preposition *sʰū* ‘to’ also introduces animate (mostly human) goal arguments and, less commonly, recipients. Typically, recipients occur directly after the verb as the first of the two objects in ditransitive clauses. Animate goal and recipient arguments are expressed using the locative relator noun *ʔōʔ* combined with a possessive prefix, as seen in

(980) and (981). In both contexts, *s^hū* is interchangeable with *lā*, although some speakers consider *s^hū* to be more proper.

(980) *jā-lè* *s^hū* [*ʔā-ʔōʔ*]_{Goal} *k^hlīʔ*
 1s-go ALL.P 3x-LOC.N be.free
 ‘I have time to go to him.’ (Kato 1993: 199; my trans.)

(981) *bāʔ.θē.θē* *ʔā-kā-kwēʔ* *līʔ* *s^hū* [*jā-ʔōʔ*]_{Recipient}
 maybe 3-IRR-write writing ALL.P 1sx-LOC.N
 ‘Maybe he is writing a letter to me.’ [LTP.D]

In the case of instruments (including vehicles), both *lā* and *dāʔ* are commonly used, as in (982) and (983). With companions, however, only *dāʔ* is grammatical, as (984) demonstrates.

(982) *tā* *ʔā-bāʔ* *lè* *lā* [*ʔā-k^hʕʔ*]_{Instrument}
 thing 3-be.correct go GNR.P 3x-foot/leg
tā *tā-bāʔ* *jū* *lā* [*ʔā-dīʔ*]_{Instrument}
 thing NEG-be.correct fly GNR.P 3x-wing
 ‘The right walks, the wrong flies. (A good deed often goes unseen but mistakes are clearly seen.)’ (Karen proverbs: 12)

(983) *jā-kā-lè* *dāʔ / lā* [*lèʔ-méʔ.ʔū*]_{Instrument}
 1s-IRR-go with / GNR.P cart-fire
 ‘I will go by train.’ [HUR]

(984) *tē* *tā* *dāʔ (*lā)* [*nā*]_{Companion} *k^hē.kōʔ* *māʔ* *nō*
 tell/say thing with 2si in.a.while INTS AGR.FP
 ‘Talk to you later.’ [HUR]

The generic preposition *lā* also occurs before oblique arguments (see §4.1.2, example (267)). The oblique argument is the second object in a two-object ditransitive clause, as in (985), or the agent in agent-demoting (“passive”) constructions, as in (986). The use of *lā* in such cases occurs mostly in written contexts.

(985) *kē.t^hʕʔ-nē* *pyà* *lā* [*tā-ʔā-tā-θʕ*]_{OBL} *θē=wē*
 become-get_{BEN} 1pi GNR.P thing-be.bad(CC1)-thing-be.bad(CC2) ABIL=COR
 ‘(Chasing money too much) can become a bad thing for us (e.g. lead to criminal or immoral behaviour).’ (Karen proverbs: 2)

- (986) *li²-kwê-kô* *lā* *ʔə-bâ²* *tâ* *tʰi²-pʰlā-tʰɔ²-kè*
 script-Kwekor REL 3-hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS} pull-appear-UP-RETURN
ʔə *lā* [*mjê².tʃi.ŋu²*] *θɔ.kʰā* *pʰā²-dô²*]_{OBL}
 3i GNR.P M. monk INTS-be.big
 ‘the “Kwekor” script, which was revealed by the Myaing Gyi Ngu abbot’
 (News article)

Verb-derived prepositions include the phrase *tì lā* [arrive at] ‘to, until’, mentioned in (979), and *xì.dɔ²* ‘along with’, in (987), which consists of the comitative verbal modifier *xì²* (see §5.5.1) and *dɔ²* ‘with’.

- (987) *ʔəwē* *pʰɔ²-ʔɔ²* *ŋā²-pʰō* ***xì².dɔ²***
 3s cook-eat fish-DIM **along.with**
pəθā-γə *dɔ²* *θəkə-sʰi²-θā²*
 onion-be.red and eggplant-be.sour-fruit
 ‘She cooked fish together with onions and tomatoes.’ (Ballard 1973c: 154)

Less common examples include *θəkì* ‘be diffused throughout’ (Wade 1896), as in *θəkì kə dɔ təbè²* [throughout country whole one-CLF(2D)] ‘throughout the country’ and *dī.θō²* ‘be like, resemble’, as in *dī.θō² ʔə* [be.like 3i] ‘like her/him’ and *dī.θō² ʔi* [be.like this] ‘like this’.

7.5 Final particles

Final particles are non-referential, monosyllabic morphemes used for various, mostly pragmatic, functions. Two types can be identified in Sgaw Karen. The first type occurs after phrases or clauses, but mid-sentence, and serve to separate a preceding phrasal or clausal constituent from a following clause. The second type is sentence-final particles which add pragmatic meaning to or express the illocutionary force of a proposition. This section is concerned with the former type, while sentence-final particles are discussed in more detail in §10.3.

Sentence-medial final particles include the frame-setting particles *nè²* (from *nè²* ‘that’) and *ʔi* (from *ʔi* ‘this’). As final particles, *nè²* is more common than *ʔi* in the data. In many cases, *nè²* and *ʔi* mark the topic NP of an utterance, as in (988) and (989).

- (988) *pə-tā.tē.pū* ***nè²*** *kətə=wē.dā²* *pʰē.nè²* *lò*
 1px-story **that**_{TOP} end=WD there FACT.FP
 ‘Our story ends there.’ (The Benefit of Education)

- (989) *p^h̄-m̄.t̄* *θē[?].nā=wē* *l̄*
 GF-M. know=COR COMP
p^h̄-t^h̄.nā.θrē *ʔi* *ʔə-kl̄[?]* *ʔō[?]* *lwi* *d̄*
 GF-PN **this**_{TOP} 3x-drum EXIST four CLF(ANIM)
 ‘Hpu Maw Taw knew that Hpu Htaw Na Threh had four drums.’
 (Lit., ‘Hpu Maw Taw knew that, this Hpu Htaw Na Threh, his drums, there were four [of them].’) (Karen drum)

The particle *nē[?]* also separates other types of constituents (see §11.1). In (990), *nē[?]* occurs after a conditional clause.

- (990) *pə-mē* *kē.t^h̄ʔ[?]-bā[?]* *k^hō[?].nā* ***nē[?]*** *təbā[?]* *mà*
 1p-be.true_{COND} become-hit_{OPP} leader **that**_{FRAME} PREV do
d̄i.θō[?] *d̄ʔ[?]* *t^hō[?]* *ʔʔ[?]-l̄-kē* *ʔə-dī[?]*
 be.like with bird eat-DOWN-RETURN 3x-egg
 ‘If we become leaders, we must not do like a bird eating its own eggs
 (work only for our own benefit).’ (Karen proverbs)

As mentioned above, *nē[?]* is extremely common in Sgaw Karen texts (the third-most frequent word in the data after the generic preposition *l̄* ‘at, from, to’ and *d̄ʔ[?]* ‘and, with’), especially in the spoken language. In (991), *nē[?]* appears three times, in a demonstrative adverb, as a frame-setting marker, and following an NP.

- (991) *d̄ʔ[?]* *p^h̄ē-nē[?]* ***nē[?]*** *ʔəwē* *s^hwī-nī[?]=wē.dā[?]*
 and LOC.P-**that** **that**_{FRAME} 3S stuff-IN=WD
ʔə-sē ***nē[?]*** *l̄* *ʔə-s̄i.nā.θā[?]*
 3x-money **that**_{TOP} GNR.P 3x-palm
 ‘And then he stuffed the bank note in his hand.’ (Vlog, “Success”)

Previous studies have shown that demonstratives as topicalizers and phrase-final markers are common in Southeast Asia (Yurayong 2020: 80–82). There is a striking similarity between Sgaw Karen *nē[?]* ‘that’ and the multifunctional Modern Mon medial demonstrative *k̄h* (Jenny 2009), suggesting areal influence.

In the case of conditional clauses, *d̄ʔ[?]* ‘and, then’ is also often used as a frame-setting particle similar to *nē[?]*, as in (992). It is especially common after *wi* ‘finish, after’, as in (993).

- (992) *nə-m̄-nə-pā* *mē* *t^hi[?]-bā[?]* *nə-m̄.yā*
 2sx-mother-2sx-father be.true_{COND} see-HIT 2sx-aunt
p^h̄ā.ti *hē* ***d̄ʔ[?]*** *ʔə-θā[?]* *kə-k^h̄* *fiā*
 uncle come **and**_{FRAME} 3x-heart IRR-be.elated PQ
 ‘If your parents see your aunt and uncle come, will they be glad?’
 (Ballard 1973b: 93)

- (993) *nə-pɔ̌.tʰī mɛ wi dɔ̌ʔ nə-kə-mà tɑ mənì lɛʔ*
 2s-swim COND finish **and**_{FRAME} 2s-IRR-do thing what CQ
 ‘What will you do after swimming?’ [LTP]

The final particle *dī* [di³³~dɔ̌³³] appears only in the spoken language and is widespread across Sgaw Karen varieties. As Ballard (1973c: 31) notes, *dī* can be described as a colloquial equivalent of the more formal or neutral particle *nɛʔ*. Examples of *dī* can be seen in (994) and (995).

- (994) *tənì.jā.ɔ̌i dī kɛ mɛ m̄.nì l̄.sʰɔ̌ tə-nì mɔ̌ nɔ̌*
 today TOP (filler) COP day be.special one-day ATT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘Today is a special day.’ (Vlog, “Hunting”)

- (995) *kʰɛ.ɔ̌i dī pə-θuʔ-ɔ̌ɔ̌ʔ bī tə-buʔ lə bɑʔ*
 now FRAME 1p-plant-eat paddy NEG-dare anymore NEG.FP
 ‘Now we do not dare to plant (our) rice anymore.’ (News vlog)

The particle *hā*, which follows NPs, functions as a vocative marker (Gilmore 1898: §51). It is common in literary style, as in (996) and (997).

- (996) *pʰɔ̌.kʰwā hā nə-mà pʰjɛʔ kəsɔ̌.dɔ̌ lɛʔ*
 son VOC 2s-do be.clever quite EMPH.FP
 ‘Son, you did really well.’ (Saw Kay)

- (997) *jwà hā pə-siʔ.bl̄iʔ-kè nà*
 God VOC 1p-thank-RETURN 2si
 ‘God, we thank you.’

Lastly, the contrastive particle *mɔ̌ʔ~mɔ̌* (often pronounced with rising intonation) is described by Jones (1961: 22) as a topic marker which “implies a request that the topic be considered”. In (998) and (999), *mɔ̌ʔ~mɔ̌* expresses ‘how about’, similarly to what Enfield calls an “interrogative thematizer” in Lao (Enfield 2007: 68–69).

- (998) *ɔ̌ɔ̌ʔ jə-tó.də mɔ̌*
 oh 1sx-wallet Q.TOP
 ‘Oh! What about my wallet? (Where is it?) [HUR]

- (999) *pʰī mɔ̌*
 grandfather Q.TOP
 ‘What about grandpa? (Will he eat with us?)’ [KWH]

7.6 Interjections and ideophones

Apart from the phrase-final and inter-clausal particles discussed above, Sgaw Karen also has sentence-initial interjections, such as *ʔə~ʔī* ‘yes’, *həʔ.ʔə~hīʔ.ʔī* ‘no’, and *kē~kē* ‘so’. The last one is exemplified in (1000)–(1001).

(1000) *kē hā lā ʔə-γè kəʔ.dī.nə.γà dēʔ*
so evening REL 3-be.good everyone(elab.) each
 ‘So, good evening, everyone.’ (Vlog)

(1001) *kē.wē tənì.nā.ʔì dī kə-lè hāʔ lā pyà*
(filler) today TOP IRR-go walk GNR.P jungle
 ‘So, today we’ll go out in the jungle.’ (Vlog, “Hunting”)

In spoken discourse, various types of filler words are used as hesitation markers. The most frequent examples include the pronouns *ʔəwē(.dāʔ)* ‘it’, in (1002), and *ʔəwē.nēʔ* ‘that’, in (1003), the verb *kē.wē(.dāʔ)*, as well as the nasalized particle *hī* [hĩ], seen in (1004).

(1002) *ʔəwē jə-lè-tī lā Canada mə*
3s(fillers) 1s-go-arrive GNR.P C. ATT.FP
ʔəwē dī kʰī kətʰō kʰī sʰī kʰī nīʔ nò
3(fillers) TOP two thousand two ten two year AGR.FP
 ‘So, I went to Canada, right, um, in 2020.’ (News interview)

(1003) *ʔə-tə-ʔéʔ.dəʔ=wē.dāʔ lā ʔəwē.nēʔ ʔədōʔ.ʔəpyà dāʔ.wē.nēʔ nò*
 1p-NEG-want=WD COMP **that(fillers)** 1px:leader TOP FP
mā.nē.sʰúʔ pyà bāʔ nēʔ.lə
 force(v.) 1pi NEG.FP FP
 ‘We don’t want that, um, our leaders, you know, force us.’ (Vlog, “Marriage”)

(1004) *ʔə-tə-ʔéʔ ... hī ʔə-tə-ʔéʔ ʔə-kəʔ dīʔ.léʔ |*
 3-NEG-eat **uhm** 3-NEG-eat 1p-call how
ʔə-tə-ʔéʔ tā.pʰīʔ.tā.nāʔ bāʔ mə
 3-NEG-eat meat NEG.FP ATT.FP
 ‘They don’t eat, uhm, they don’t eat, how do we call it, they don’t eat meat.’
 (Chiang Mai)

Finally, Sgaw Karen has a group of onomatopoeic words similar to expressions traditionally termed *ideophones* in African linguistics. The few examples that have been encountered are reduplicated morphemes which occur immediately following a verb. Two examples can be observed in (1005) and (1006).

(1005) *jə-tʰiʔ* *pɣà* *lā* *klē-kapà*
 1s-see person GNR.P road-side
bɣōʔ *ʔwēʔ.ʔwēʔ* *bāʔ* *mənì* *lēʔ*
 vomit IDEO hit/occur what CQ
 ‘I saw someone retching at the side of the road, why was he?’
 (Ballard 1973c: 111)

(1006) *kətò* *tā* *tə-sō* *wì* *tə-ɣà* *bāʔ*
 speak thing one-while finish one-CLF hit
tə-ɣà *mī-bāʔ* *θāʔ* *θā* *krɔʔ.krɔʔ* *lò*
 one-CLF sleep-HIT heart breathe IDEO FACT.FP
 ‘After talking for a while, one by one they fell asleep and snored.’ (Saw Kay)

8 Clauses: argument modulation, aspect, negation, and modality

This chapter describes some major phenomena pertaining to clauses and the arguments of clauses in Sgaw Karen. The first topic to be discussed is argument modulation. Argument modulation refers to both valency-changing operations and other types of argument modulation that influence the transitivity of a clause but have no effect on its valency. A central principle underlying the analysis is the postulation of a base clause with which an operation can be compared. This idea is implicit in terminology such as ‘modulation’, ‘operation’, and ‘V-ization’. In his study on voice constructions, Bahrt (2020: 38–39) defines voice based on “a comparison between two clausal constructions” with “corresponding semantic meaning”; one construction has no marking in the verb complex, while the other has marking that represents the function of a particular voice. Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) define voice along similar lines, identifying an unmarked diathesis (roughly, clause type) with which a clause marked for voice can be compared. The analysis of argument modulation in this chapter is based on these assumptions by Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) and Bahrt (2020).

The first two subsections discuss the use of functional verbs occurring before and after the main verb that increase the valency of a clause. Affectedness constructions (§8.1) add a beneficiary, maleficiary or recipient, while causative constructions (§8.2) add a causee. In reflexive constructions, there is no valency change. Instead, the P argument is replaced by the reflexive noun *θāʔ* ‘heart’. In the case of argument backgrounding, discussed in §8.4, the valency of the main verb remains the same, but defocusing a participant reduces the transitivity of the clause (see Hopper & Thompson 1980). Lastly, §8.5, §8.6, and §8.7 discuss ways of expressing negation, modality, and aspect, respectively.

8.1 Affectedness constructions

This section deals with verbs occurring in V₂ position in a verb–verb (VV) compound that add an affectee argument to the clause. The added argument is commonly a human or animate participant that is advantageously or, more rarely, disadvantageously affected by the action. It was mentioned in §5.4 that most verb–verb compounds consist of a main verb (V₁) followed by one or more modifying verbs; V₁ determines the transitivity and governs the arguments of the compound, while V₂ acts as a modifier adding semantic or aspectual

content. In contrast to this general tendency, verbal modifiers in affectedness constructions license an additional object, increasing the valency of the base construction by one. The following subsections describe four verbal modifiers with this function: *nê* ‘get’ (§8.1.1), *sə̀* ‘help’ and *jì* ‘assist’ (§8.1.2), and *bâʔ* ‘hit, encounter’ (§8.1.3).

8.1.1 Benefaction and malefaction

Benefaction and malefaction refer, respectively, to the coding of events in which a participant, the P argument, is advantageously or adversely affected by an event. Despite expressing opposite meanings, benefaction and malefaction are often coded identically (Kittilä & Zúñiga 2010). This is the case also in Sgaw Karen, where two affectedness markers are attested, *nê* (from *nê* ‘get’) and *ʔêʔ*.⁴⁴ They appear to be syntactically and semantically identical, but the former is widespread across several varieties, while *ʔêʔ* occurs only in Northern Thailand.

As Chappell (1992: 11) explains in her detailed account of the Sgaw Karen benefactive construction, the benefactive construction “contains three core participants: the agent, undergoer and beneficiary (or recipient)”. The beneficiary always occurs as the first object, preceding the undergoer, as in (1007) (transcription and interlinear glosses have been adapted).

	Agent (A)	Verb- <i>nê</i>	Beneficiary (B)	Undergoer (U)
(1007)	[θ̄5.kʰā] _A	sòʔ-nê	[nā] _B	[nāʔ tə-pʰlāʔ] _U
	monk	carry-get _{BEN}	2si	basket one-CLF(3D)
	‘The monk carried the basket for you.’ (Chappell 1992: 11)			

The adapted transcription reflects the analysis of the benefactive construction in this thesis, which views *nê* as a verbal modifier sharing constituency with the main verb. In contrast, Chappell (1992) treats *nê* as the first element of a “benefactive phrase” introducing the beneficiary NP, arguing that *nê* can be detached from the main verb by the intervention of aspectual markers and adverbs. Example (1008) is used to support this claim (transcription, glosses, and translation are the same as the original).

(1008)	<i>Awēʔ</i>	<i>baʔ-kwiʔ</i>	<i>neʔ</i>	<i>(*kwiʔ)</i>	<i>jaʔ</i>	<i>taʔruʔkhaʔ</i>	<i>kuʔkaʔ</i>
	3SG	put-PFV	BEN		1SG	winter	clothes
	‘S/he’s put away my winter clothes for me.’ (Chappell 1992: 19)						

As shown in §5.5.5, however, despite the grammaticalization of *kwiʔ* ‘throw away’ into an aspectual verbal modifier, it remains syntactically a verb. For this reason, the ungrammaticality of (1008) has to do with the ordering of the verbs in a verb–verb (VV)

⁴⁴ Jones (1961: 29) notes that benefactive *nê* is sometimes pronounced as *nē*, which in the Mawlamyine variety of Sgaw means a change from a low-toned, breathy *nê* [nē²¹] to a high-toned *nē* [nē⁵⁵].

compound, which is such that only the verbal modifiers *kè* (or its variant *kəd̩*) ‘(V) again’, *tê* ‘remain’, and the autonomous marker *dâ* ‘(V) independently, on one’s own’ can follow *nê*. Thus, unless one of the markers *kè*, *tê*, or *dâ* is present, *nê* must be the last component in a compound. An alternative analysis is given in (1009), a modified version of (1008).

- (1009) *ɔ̀wē* *pà²-kwì²-nê* (**kwì²*) *jà* *tá.yú.kʰā* *kū.kà*
 3e put-AWAY-get_{BEN} Isi winter clothes
 ‘S/he’s put away my winter clothes for me.’ (Chappell 1992: 19; modified)

The analysis of *nê* ‘get’ as a verbal modifier is essentially the same as the one Kato (1993) proposes. Kato (1993: 191; my trans.) writes: “A verb sequence that has this auxiliary verb [i.e. *nê*] as V2 can take an object that represents a beneficiary”. Similarly, Wade (1897: 65–68) describes V-*nê* constructions as belonging to the “causative class” of “combined verbs”. By this he means that the action denoted by V₁ is performed to cause V₂. According to this analysis, the literal meaning of *sʰā²-nê* [stitch-get] in (1010) is ‘stitch for [recipient] to get’.

- (1010) *sʰā²-nê* *jà* *lā* *lì²* *tā-bê²*
 stitch-get_{BEN} Isi GNR.P book one-CLF(2D)
 ‘Stitch me a book.’ (Wade 1897: 68)

Note that the second object in ditransitive constructions, like *lì² tābê²* ‘a book’ in (1010), is sometimes preceded by the generic preposition *lā* (see §4.1.2, example (267)). In more recent sources, the presence of *lā* is less common in benefactive contexts as compared to other ditransitive constructions.

Following the terminology introduced in Chapter 5, benefactive V-*nê* constructions can be characterized as switch-subject, meaning that the object of the V-*nê* compound is the inferred subject of *nê* ‘get’. Compare this with the use of the “self-benefactive” use of *nê* ‘get’ in same-subject verb–verb compounds, such as *pyè-nê* [buy-get] ‘buy (and get)’ and *hī²-nê* [grab-get] ‘take’. As Chappell (1992) notes, *nê* as a verbal modifier in such same-subject compounds occupies a different syntactic slot in the verb sequence, occurring closer to the main verb than benefactive *nê*. The marker *kwì²* ‘discard, V away’, for example, precedes *nê* when used as a benefactive marker but follows *nê* in self-benefactive contexts, as in (1011).

- (1011) *θɪ̃².pʰō* *təpʰā²* ***hī²-nê-kwì²*** *l̩.kəwə̀* *θəwə̀-pʰō* *tá.pʰō.tá.lì*
 soldier COLL **grab-get-AWAY** local village-child property
 ‘Soldiers took the local villagers’ property.’ (News article)

Compare the positioning of *nê* in a verb sequence to the syntactic distribution of the verb *kè* ‘return’. As a verbal modifier in V₂ position, *kè* has the meanings ‘(V) back’ and ‘(V) again’. When *kè* has the former meaning, which is arguably more literal, it occurs closer to

the main verb than when it has the meaning ‘(V) again’ (see §5.5.4.4). There may thus be a correlation between the position of a verb inside the verb complex and its degree of desemantization.

Example (1012) demonstrates the use of the variant $\text{ʔé}^?$, which is semantically and distributionally identical to $nê$.

- (1012) $wà^?-\text{ʔé}^?$ $jə-k^hlā.xī$ $θē$ $hā$
 scratch-BEN 1sx-back be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘Can (you) scratch my back for me?’ [KWH]

The precise spread of $\text{ʔé}^?$ is unclear, but it has not been attested outside northern Thailand (Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son). In these varieties, $nê$ does not occur as a benefactive marker in the data.

Semantically, the beneficiary can be positively affected in different ways. Van Valin & LaPolla (1997: 384) identify three types of benefactives, which they term recipient beneficiaries (‘bake X a cake’), plain beneficiaries (‘for X’s benefit’), and deputative beneficiaries (‘on X’s behalf’). All three types can be expressed using $nê$ and $\text{ʔé}^?$ in Sgaw Karen. Example (1013) contains a recipient beneficiary ($jə-$ ‘I’), (1014) a plain beneficiary, and (1015) a deputative beneficiary.

- (1013) $pγà$ $lā$ $\text{ʔə-kə-nê-bā}^?$ $jə-p^hō.mī^?$ $kə-bā^?$
 person REL 3-IRR-get-HIT 1sx-daughter IRR-must
 $tē-nê$ $jà$ $nū$ ʔə-θō $xī.lā$ $k^hī$ $p^hlā^?$
create-get_{BEN} 1si palace 3-be.new be.beautiful two CLF(3D)
 ‘The one who will get my daughter will have to build me two beautiful new palaces’ (Jones 1961: 212, 214)

- (1014) ʔə-pā **$xī.t^hō-nê$** ʔə $tā.lō$ ʔi
 3x-father **choose-get_{BEN}** 3i place this
 ‘His father_i chose this place for him_j (for his_j benefit).’ (Saw Kay)

- (1015) **$nə-θī.kwā-nê$** $jà$ $θē$ $hā$
2s-ask-get_{BEN} 1si be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘Can you ask (her) on my behalf?’ [HUR]

Note, in (1013)–(1015), that omitting $nê$ alters the meaning of the sentence. For example, $s^hō-nê\ jà$ [send-get_{BEN} 1si] means ‘send to me’, while $s^hō\ jà$ [send 1si] means ‘send me off’.

As in English, beneficiaries in Sgaw Karen can also be encoded by a prepositional phrase. In Sgaw Karen, this phrase contains the purposive relator noun $\text{γ}ō$ ‘sake’ (see §3.2). The sentence with $nê$, in (1016), and the one with a prepositional $\text{γ}ō$ phrase, in (1017), are semantically similar.

(1016) *pò².mi² pyè-nê pʰõ.θá² θəkʰɔ².θá²*
 woman **buy-get**_{BEN} child mango
 ‘The woman bought the child a mango.’ [LTP.P]

(1017) *pò².mi² pyè θəkʰɔ².θá² [lā pʰõ.θá² ʔəyɔ]*
 woman **buy** mango GNR.P child 3.PURP
 ‘The woman bought a mango for the child.’ [LTP.P]

The difference between the verbally and lexically encoded constructions is subtle, but *yɔ* ‘sake’ appears to be less frequently used to index deputative benefaction (‘on X’s behalf’). In such cases, the relator noun *lā* ‘place’ can also be used. Given the semantics of *nê* ‘get’ as an independent verb, it is possible that *nê* was originally used with recipient beneficiaries and that other types of beneficiaries were added later through metaphorical extension.

Differences between the two constructions do, however, occur in the modern language. Chappell (1992) provides an explanation based on (1018) and (1019).

(1018) *jə-kə-ʔɔ²-nê nà kô²-kʰɛ²*
 1s-IRR-eat-**get**_{BEN} 2si snack-cake
 ‘I will eat the cake for you.’ (Chappell 1992: 22)

(1019) *jə-kə-ʔɔ² kô²-kʰɛ² lā nə-yɔ*
 1s-IRR-eat snack-cake GNR.P 2sx-PURP
 ‘I will eat the cake for your sake.’ (Chappell 1992: 22)

According to Chappell (1992), the beneficiary in (1018) is probably be aware of the act of benefaction and perhaps requested it, while in (1019), it is more likely the benefactor that takes the initiative to perform the act.

Chappell (1992) also notes that there appear to be no restrictions on the type of main verb which can co-occur with the benefactive marker *nê*. Although rare in the data, even intransitive V_{IS} are possible in benefactive compounds, as in (1020) and (1021).

(1020) *jə-θəkō² lē-nê jà*
 1sx-friend go-**get**_{BEN} 1si
 ‘My friend went for me.’ (Chappell 1992: 21)

(1021) *tì tã.pʰɪ².tã.mà kətə təsī tã.blɪ².tã.pʰyô² tə-ʔô²-nê ʔə bā²*
 when work(n.) end once benefit(n.) NEG-EXIST-**get**_{BEN} 3i NEG
 ‘Once the work ends, there is no benefit for them.’ (Karen proverbs)

The beneficiary can also be represented by a bound personal pronoun prefixed to the undergoer argument. Examples (1022)–(1024) demonstrate beneficiaries coded as bound pronouns.

- (1022) *məhā nêʔ ʔəwē.θêʔ mə-nê jə-tā lə*
 yesterday that_{FRAME} 3.PL do-get_{BEN} 1sx-thing FACT.FP
 ‘Yesterday they worked for me.’ [HUR]
- (1023) *θarāʔ.tjō-kʰōʔ tē=wē θā kə-plā-nê pə-tjō tə-θō*
 teacher-head say=COR intend IRR-release-get_{BEN} 1px-school one-day
 ‘The principle said he would release the school for one day.’
 (Jones 1961: 202–203)
- (1024) *jə-xō-ʔêʔ θāʔ.mī.nə ʔə-nāʔ-pʰō*
 1s-grill-BEN cat 3x-fish-child_{DIM}
 ‘I grill fish for the cat.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 1198)

Note, in (1022), that *tā* ‘thing’ is obligatory since transitive verbs in Sgaw Karen require an object, which is minimally the generic noun *tā*. Compare this with the base clause *ʔəwē.θêʔ mə tā* [3.PL do thing] ‘they work(ed)’. Also note, in (1024), that the beneficiary *θāʔ.mī.nə* ‘cat’ is referred to both by a separate noun and a possessive prefix.

In addition to its use as a benefactive marker, a previously unexamined malefactive use of *nê* is in evidence. In such cases, *V₁* expresses an event that is harmful to the P argument of the clause. Although Wade (1897) does not use the term *malefactive*, his grammar includes examples like (1025).

- (1025) *mī hā-nê pyà lə pyà.lā.klā*
 sun dusk/get.dark-get_{MAL} 1pi GNR.P jungle
 ‘The sun set upon us (i.e. night overtook us,) in the jungle.’ (Wade 1897: 68)

Examples of the use of *nê* or *ʔêʔ* as malefactive markers are sporadic in the data. Note in (1026)–(1028) that the main verbs are intransitive, which is rare in benefactive contexts.

- (1026) *ʔə jə-pʰō-θəḍā həʔ-nê jə lī*
 INTJ 1sx-child-youngest cry-get_{MAL} 1si NS
 ‘Oh, my baby is crying for me already.’ (Jones 1961: 201–202)
- (1027) *bāʔ.jōʔ lə tā kə-kʰīʔ-nê [ʔə təkūʔ.θêʔ]_{Maleficiary}*
 worry COMP thing_{IMPRS} IRR-be.dark-get_{MAL} 3i COLL
 ‘(They) worried that darkness would come over them’ (Saw Kay)
- (1028) *θāʔ.ʔīʔ=wē lə ʔə-līʔ.mèʔ.pʰlāʔ təpʰāʔ*
 be.sad=COR COMP 3x-alphabet COLL
kə-lə.mā-nê-kwīʔ ʔə
 IRR-disappear-get_{MAL-AWAY} 3i
 ‘(they) were sad that their alphabet would disappear (on them)’
 (Karen nationalism)

The northern Thailand variant $\text{ʔé}^?$ is also used in malefactive contexts, as in (1029), displaying the same semantics as $né$.

- (1029) ɣí $\text{ʔə-kē-ʔé}^?$ pə-dā tʰɔ̄.bō
 snake 3-act.as-**get**_{MAL} 1px-enemy always
 ‘Snakes are our enemy forever.’ (Ratanakul 1983: 106; my glosses)

Similarly, the relator noun ɣō ‘sake’ can be used in malefactive contexts, as in (1030).

- (1030) lā jəɣō $\text{dɔ̄}^?$ ʔəwē **ʔə-ɣō** $\text{né}^?$
 GNR.P 1s.PURP and 3e **3x-PURP** that_{FRAME}
 tā.kō.tā.kʰē $\text{tə-ʔō}^?$ $\text{bā}^?$
 problem NEG-EXIST NEG.FP
 ‘For me and for him there is no problem.’ (Ballard 1973c: 26)

Apart from $né$, a handful of other benefactive V_2 s with more specific meanings exist. Kato (1993) mentions $\text{pjā}^?$ ‘show’ (from Burmese pyá ‘show’), which as a V_2 expresses ‘show by V-ing’ and takes a beneficiary as its first object, as in (1031).

- (1031) **$\text{θā}^?.wī^?-pjā}^?$** jà pyà.kəŋɔ̄ $\text{ʔə-tā-θā}^?.wī}^?$
sing-show 1si Karen 3x-thing-sing
 ‘Sing a Karen song for me.’ (Kato 1993: 190; my trans.)

Even more productive are the native verbs sə ‘help’ and jì ‘assist’, described next, in §8.1.2.

8.1.2 sə ‘help’ and jì ‘assist’

Another valency-increasing verbal modifier is sə ‘help’, which occurs only in combinations with other verbs.⁴⁵ It follows a main verb or a compound, expressing ‘help (by V-ing)’. Comparing (1032) and (1033), it becomes evident that sə , in the latter example, adds a helpee argument to the clause. This argument always occurs as the first object after the verb.

- (1032) $\text{bɣɔ̄-tʰɔ̄}^?$ $\text{jə-hī}^?$
 repair-UP 1sx-house
 ‘Repair my house.’ [HUR]
- (1033) $\text{bɣɔ̄-tʰɔ̄}^?-sə$ $[\text{jā}]_{\text{Helpee}}$ $\text{jə-hī}^?$
 repair-UP-**HELP** 1si 1sx-house
 ‘Help me repair my house.’ [HUR]

⁴⁵ It is possibly related to the morpheme sə ‘indicating something intermediate or between’ (Wade 1896), found in words such as $\text{bə}^?.sə}$ ‘between’ and $\text{pə}^?.sə}$ ‘meanwhile, V in advance’.

The helpee argument is sometimes not overtly expressed, as in (1034) and (1035).

- (1034) *pyà.təmwì təbâʔ θē-sə kʰwāʔ bāʔ*
 guest PREV wash-HELP dishes NEG.FP
 ‘Guests mustn’t help wash the dishes.’ (Ballard 1973b: 180)

- (1035) *jə-təkʰwā tə-yà kōʔ jà lā jə-kə-lè*
 1sx-cousin one-CLF(HUM) take 1si GNR.P 1s-IRR-go
dōʔ ʔəwē.θéʔ dōʔ tē-klòʔ.tʰɿ-sə tã lò
 with 3.PL and say-translate-HELP THING FACT.FP
 ‘My cousin took me to go with them to help translate.’ (Moon Rabbit)

In all examples, omitting *sə* and its associated helpee argument is possible. Compare, for example, the transitive base construction in (1036) with the corresponding *sə* construction in (1037).

- (1036) *nə-pyè tã tə-kʰā ʔi θē hã*
 2s-buy thing one-CLF this be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘Can you buy this?’ [HUR]

- (1037) *nə-pyè-sə [jã]_{Helpee} tã tə-kʰā ʔi θē hã*
 2s-buy-HELP 1si thing one-CLF this be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘Can you help me by buying this?’ (Said by a seller to a customer) [HUR]

Note the difference between *sə* and the benefactive marker *né* in (1038) and (1039). In (1038), the helpee participates in the action, while in (1039), the action is done on the beneficiary’s behalf.

- (1038) *bɿʃ-tʰʂʔ-sə [jã]_{Helpee} jə-hiʔ*
 repair-UP-HELP 1si 1sx-house
 ‘Help me repair my house.’ [HUR]

- (1039) *bɿʃ-tʰʂʔ-né [jã]_{Beneficiary} jə-hiʔ*
 repair-UP-get_{BEN} 1si 1sx-house
 ‘Repair my house for me.’ [HUR]

While the typical main verb co-occurring with *sə* is a transitive activity verb, examples of other types of verbs can be found. Examples (1040)–(1042) contain intransitive verbs. In such cases, *sə* indicates sharing or understanding another person’s emotional experience.

- (1040) *sə.bléʔ θāʔ.kʰɿ-sə māʔ ʔə-pʰō.dōʔ*
 PN be.happy-HELP INTS 3x-nephew
 ‘Saw Bleh was very happy for his nephew.’ (Saw Kay)

(1041) *nə-wà* *mê* *pà'-tê-kwi'* *nà* *nê'*
 2sx-husband be.true_{COND} put-ABANDON-AWAY 2si that_{FRAME}
jə-θā'.ʔɪ'-sə [*nà*]_{Helpee} *tə-kē* *lə* *bā'*
1s-be.sad-HELP 2si NEG-ABIL NEG.NS NEG.FP
 ‘if [your husband] should leave you I would no longer have
 the energy to help you be sorry!’ (Ballard 1973c: 190)

(1042) *jə-sī'.blī'-bā'* *nə* *də-pī-də-wê* *tì.θəkō'* *θē'.təp'hā'*
 1s-thank-hit AGR.FP RLN-ySI-RLN-eSI friend PL:COLL
lā *ʔəwē* **xē.bā.t'ī.kəp'hā'-sə** *jə*
 REL 3s(filler) **pray-HELP** 1si
 ‘I thank my brothers and sisters (and) friends who have prayed for me.’
 (Vlog, “Newborn son”)

A rarer but productive verb with similar semantics as *sə* is *jì* ‘assist’. Like *sə*, *jì* is not found as an independent verb. As Gilmore (1898: §146) writes, *jì* indicates “that the act [expressed by V₁] is performed by way of assistance”. Ballard (1973c: 61) mentions the variant *yi* and states that *jì-yi* expresses “to do with someone something which he/she can not easily (or should not) do alone”, as in (1043).

(1043) *təni.ʔi* *jə-p'hō* *mā* ***jə-ʔō'-jì*** *jə-li* *lā* *də'*
 today 1sx-child order **1s-EXIST-ASSIST** 1sx-grandchild GNR.P room
 ‘Today my daughter asked me to stay at home with my grandchild
 (to look after her)’ (Ballard 1973c: 54)

The obligatory object is the person assisted, which immediately follows the verb. The agent, in turn, is someone with more authority, experience, or ability than the patient, who requires assistance, for example, due to inexperience, young age or illness (Ballard 1973c: 61). Examples of participants include a master and an apprentice, as in (1044), or an uncle and nephew, as in (1045).

(1044) *pyà-kə-klō'* *lā* *ʔə-mē* *pyà.pəjə.p'hō* *tə-yà*
 person-cast-drum REL 3-be.true_{COP} Burmese.person one-CLF(HUM)
kə-jì *ʔə* *klō'* *tə-s'hō* *bā'* *tə-s'hō*
cast-ASSIST 3i drum one-stage CONN one-stage
 ‘a Burmese drum maker led him through the casting of a drum
 step by step’ (Karen drum)

(1045) *jə-p'hā.ti* *ʔə'.lə* *jə* *lā*
 1sx-uncle promise 1si COMP
θā *kə-lē* ***k'hā'-jì*** *jə* *tā*
 intend IRR-go **shoot-ASSIST** 1si thing
 ‘My uncle promised me that he will go hunting with me.’ (Saw Kay)

The modifier *jì~yì* ‘assist’ is also used in the case of speech actions, as in (1046), where a vlogger shares his knowledge about a major news event.

- (1046) *tə-nà* *nā* *ʔi* *jə-kə-hē* ***tē-pjā'-yì***
 one-night INTS this 1s-IRR-come **tell-show-ASSIST**
tì.θəkō' *θē'.təp'hā'* *lā* *tā.kəsō'* *ʔə-mì-dō'* *tə-k'hā*
 friend PL:COLL GNR.P news 3-name-be.big one-CLF(GNR)
 ‘Tonight, I will tell you, friends, about a big news story.’ (Vlog, “News story”)

A different type of affectee occurs in verb–verb compounds containing the verbal modifier *bā'*, which we will discuss next.

8.1.3 Applicative *bā'*

Two main functions of the verb *bā'* ‘hit, encounter’ have been seen in previous chapters. First, §5.1.1 described *bā'* as a modal verb meaning ‘must’, and second, §5.5.6 discussed the use of *bā'* as a non-valency-increasing verbal modifier. This section focuses on *bā'* as a valency-increasing marker adding an affectee. Kato (1993: 190) has previously mentioned this function. In another study, Bar Hso Wah (2011: 52–54) describes the valency-increasing function of *bā'* as applicative. Cross-linguistically, applicative markers allow a verb “to take a direct or primary object (called the ‘applied object’) bearing a semantic role different from the one the base predicate would normally take (if any)” (Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 53). Bar Hso Wah (2011) illustrates the use of *bā'* as an applicative marker with the example in (1047), taken from the 1853 Bible translation (transcription and glosses have been adapted).

- (1047) *θā'.dō'-t'hō'-bā'* *sò-jà.kò'* *dō'* *sò-jò.hā'* *lò*
be.angry-UP-HIT M.HON-PN and M.HON-PN FACT.FP
 ‘They were angry at James and John.’ (Mark 10:41)

As an intransitive (descriptive) verb, *θā'.dō'* ‘be angry’ normally takes one (S) argument, the experiencer. In (1047), however, *bā'* occurs as part of the verb–verb compound licensing a patient argument, which occurs in the clausal core. Most intransitive main verbs co-occurring with *bā'* refer to sensations or reactions caused by a stimulus. Another example can be seen in (1048).

- (1048) *nə-nì-bā'* *jà* *hā*
2s-laugh-HIT 1si PQ
 ‘Are you laughing at me?’ [HUR]

Unlike the *V-bā'* clauses seen so far, where a sensation is directed towards an external stimulus, another construction exists in which the experiencer appears as the object and the

stimulus is an inanimate referent or not specified. The meaning expressed is that something causes the subject to experience (literally, ‘encounter’, ‘be hit by’) an unexpected sensation. As mentioned in §5.5.6, *bâʔ* as a verbal modifier in V₂ position expresses lack of control on the part of the subject. In (1049), the experiencer is coded as *ʔəwē.θéʔ ʔəmèʔ* ‘their eyes’.

- (1049) *kə̌ tə-béʔ ʔi xī.là-bâʔ ʔəwē.θéʔ ʔə-mèʔ*
 country one-CLF(2D) this **be.beautiful-HIT** 3.PL 3x-eye
 ‘This country looked beautiful to them.’ (Karen nationalism)

Commonly, the object in such constructions is *θāʔ* ‘heart’, as in (1050) and (1051).

- (1050) *kəsʰə̌ tə-dī pʰɪʔ-bâʔ ʔə-θāʔ*
 elephant one-CLF(ANIM) be.startled-HIT **3x-heart_{REFL}**
 ‘An elephant was frightened.’ (Bar Hso Wah 2011: 60)

- (1051) *ʔəwē θāʔ.kʰɪ tâ hə̌ʔ-bâʔ māʔ ʔə-θāʔ nēʔ.lə̌*
 3 be.happy thing_{IMPRS} cry-HIT INTS **3x-heart_{REFL}** FP
 ‘she was so overcome with joy that she cried’ (Ballard 1973c: 258)

Interestingly, verbs that do not themselves denote sensations also occur as V₁ in this construction, as in (1052) and (1053). Again, *bâʔ* signals unexpectedness and a lack of control over the action.

- (1052) *tə-blə̌-xə̌ ʔə-mā hə̌ʔ kə̌ʔ-ʔəθū-bâʔ ʔə-θāʔ lə̌*
 one-time-same 3x-wife cry **call-shout-HIT** 3x-heart_{REFL} FACT.FP
 ‘At once his wife began to weep and wail.’ (Jones 1961: 236, 245)

- (1053) *ʔə-tʰūʔ.plè.tʰɪ lə̌.sə̌-bâʔ ʔə-θāʔ*
 3x-saliva **drip-HIT** 3x-heart_{REFL}
 ‘He started drooling (an appetite grew in him).’ (Kato 1993: 190; my trans.)

The following section, §8.2, deals with causative constructions, another type of valency-increasing construction, where the added argument is a causee.

8.2 Causative constructions

Causative constructions express that an agent causes another participant, the causee, to perform an action (e.g. Dixon 2000; Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 15–20). As described in §5.4.2, one type of verb–verb (VV) compound in Sgaw Karen are cause–effect compounds, a subtype of switch-subject compounds, in which there is a causative relationship between V₁ and V₂ such that the subject of V₁ (the causer) causes the object of the clause (the causee) to perform the action denoted by V₂. In general, lexical causatives, such as the English verbs *kill* and *feed*, appear to be non-existent in Sgaw Karen. Instead, expressing a causative event

typically requires separate verbs for the causing and the caused subevents. Various types of verbs occur as the causative verb (V_1) in cause–effect verb–verb compounds, but this section focuses on two productive verbs, *mà* ‘do, make’ and *dīʔ* ‘fight; confine’. The former occurs in (1054), the latter in (1055).

(1054) *nə-mà-lò.pʰāʔ* *jà* *dʂʔ* *jə-tá.ʔéʔ-tʂ*
 2s-**make**-get.separated 1si and/with 1sx-love(n.)-be.true
 ‘You separated me from my boyfriend.’ [HUR]

(1055) *tá* *tə-kʰā* *lā* *ʔə-dīʔ-θúʔ.pó.θāʔ.wāʔ* *nà*
 thing one-CLF(GNR) REL 3-CAUS-be.excited 2si
 ‘a thing that makes you excited’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

As with any cause–effect compound, verb–verb compounds containing *mà* and *dīʔ* as V_1 are contiguous, and no morpheme can intervene between the verbs. Verbal prefixes thus attach to V_1 , and objects follow the last verb of the compound.

Seen as a voice operation, the valency of a causative clause is one more than that of a non-causative base clause (Dixon 2000; Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019; Bahrt 2020). As (1056)–(1058) demonstrate, intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive base verbs can be causativized. As Ratanakul (1981: 166) notes, *mà* ‘make’ is rare with other than intransitive verbs but productive as a causativizer combining with descriptive verbs. In contrast, *dīʔ* is productively used with non-descriptive verbs.

(1056) *ʔəwē* *mà-plì* *jà*
 3e **make**_{CAUS}-fear(v.) 1si
 ‘He frightens me.’ [HUR]

(1057) *dīʔ-ʔʂʔ* *sʰʂ* *sʰāʔ*
 CAUS-eat chicken food
 ‘feeding chickens’ [KWH]

(1058) *nə-dīʔ-héʔ* *jà* *lìʔ* *lā* *ʔə*
 2s-CAUS-give 1si book GNR.P 3i
 ‘You ordered me to give him a book.’ (Kato 1993: 196; my trans.)

Causativization with ditransitive main verbs, as in (1058), is rare in the data. Complementation would be a more natural strategy to express such events. Note the use of *lā* before the second object in (1058). As discussed in §4.1.2 (example (267)), the generic preposition *lā* sometimes precedes the last argument of clauses with more than one argument following the verb.

Cause–effect verb–verb compounds (see §5.4.2) are typically purposive, meaning that the realization of V_2 is intended but not necessarily materialized. Kato (1993: 197) illustrates this fact with the example in (1059).

- (1059) *jə-dīʔ-lè* ʔəʔ *bâʔ.sʰâʔ* ʔəwē *tə-lè* *bâʔ*
 1s-CAUS-go 3i but 3e NEG-go NEG.FP
 ‘I tried to let him go, but he didn’t go.’ (Kato 1993: 197; my trans.)

Kato (1993) summarizes the difference between *mà* and *dīʔ* as follows: “[*dīʔ*] is used when the causer does not have direct control over the realization of the event represented by V2. [*mà*] is used when the causer has direct control over the realization of the event represented by V2” (Kato 1993: 197; my trans.). Thus, *mà* indicates direct causation and *dīʔ* indicates indirect causation. Example (1060) illustrates this point.

- (1060) *jə-dīʔ-nàʔ* ʔə (**mà-nàʔ*)
 1s-CAUS-believe 3i
 ‘I made him believe.’ (Kato 1993: 197; my trans.)

As Kato (1993) explains, with a verb like *nàʔ* ‘believe’, the causee is ultimately the one who carries out V₂, so the direct causativizer *mà* cannot be used. With *mà*, in contrast, the causee is either an inanimate or animate referent which lacks control over the action denoted by V₂.

Due to these differences, *mà* and *dīʔ* are generally used with different V₂s. For example, ʔəʔ ‘eat’ is only found with *dīʔ*. While the compound *mà-ʔəʔ* ‘do for a living’ exists, *mà* ‘do’ is not a causativizer in this case. Examples can be found, however, where *mà* and *dīʔ* are used with the same V₂. Examples (1061) and (1062) by Kato (1993) involve the verb *θī* ‘die’ as V₂. While (1061) indicates a direct act of killing, such as by crushing, (1062) denotes an event in which the causee, the insect, is left to die naturally by itself, such as when an insect falls into a bottle and is not rescued (Kato 1993: 198–199).

- (1061) *jə-mà-θī* *tâ.pʰō.xâ*
 1s-**make**_{CAUS}-die insect
 ‘I killed the insect.’ (Kato 1993: 198; my trans.)

- (1062) *jə-dīʔ-θī* *tâ.pʰō.xâ*
 1s-CAUS-die insect
 ‘I killed the insect.’ (Kato 1993: 198; my trans.)

Another example is *ʔā.tʰəʔ* ‘increase’, which can be used either with *mà* or *dīʔ*, depending on whether the increase is caused directly or indirectly. Compare (1063) and (1064).

- (1063) *tâ-kà-klô* *dīʔ-ʔā.tʰəʔ* *tâ.pʰīʔ.tâ.mà* ʔə-kʰwēʔ.jâʔ
 thing-trade-cow CAUS-increase job 3x-opportunity
 ‘the cattle trade has provided more job opportunities’ (News article)

- (1064) *pyà.kʰòʔ.pyà.nâ tǎpʰáʔ mǎ-ǎ̄.tʰóʔ ʔǎbūʔ.ʔǎlē kǎʔ.nīʔ.dēʔ*
 leader COLL **make**_{CAUS-increase} 3x:salary each.year
 ‘The leaders increase their salaries every year.’ (Ballard 1973c: 182)

Kato (1993: 196) has also demonstrated that *mǎ* and *dīʔ* as causative verbs cannot be separated from their main verbs, which supports the analysis of *mǎ*-V and *dīʔ*-V verb sequences as compounds. Note, however, that both verbs can be used as main verbs. As independent verbs, *mǎ* ‘do’ is used in a similar way as English *do*, while *dīʔ* has the two interrelated meanings ‘confine’ and ‘fight’, as (1065) and (1066) show, respectively.

- (1065) *byéʔ-lǎ=wē.dǎʔ sʰǎ dǎʔ dīʔ-kè=wē.dǎʔ*
 drop(seeds)-DOWN chicken and **confine**-RETURN=WD
sʰǎ θéʔ.tǎpʰáʔ lǎ θīʔ ʔǎ-pù nēʔ.lǎ
 chicken PL:COLL GNR.P fowl.basket 3x-inside FP
 ‘(They) feed chickens (by sprinkling chicken feed) and keep the chickens in fowl baskets.’ (Vlog, “Karen life”)

- (1066) *dīʔ-né tǎ lǎ nǎ-hīʔ-pʰō-xǎ-pʰō ʔǎyǎ*
fight-get_{BEN} thing GNR.P 2sx-house(CC1)-child-ladder(CC2)-child 3.PURP
 ‘Fight for your family.’ [HUR]

It seems likely that the grammaticalization of *dīʔ* into a verb denoting indirect causation is via the meaning ‘confine’ rather than ‘fight’.

Another difference between *dīʔ* and *mǎ* is that *dīʔ* also has the meaning ‘let’ and is used when the causee acts willingly. Taken out of its context, the meaning of a *dīʔ*-V clause can thus be ambiguous, as (1067) illustrates.

- (1067) *dīʔ-kè ʔǎ*
 CAUS-return 3i
 ‘Get him to go home./Let him go home.’ (Ballard 1973a: 218)

Usually, however, the context makes it clear which meaning is intended. In (1068), *dīʔ* expresses ‘let, allow’.

- (1068) *pyà tǎ-dīʔ-tē ʔǎwē-θéʔ ʔǎ-klòʔ bǎʔ*
 person_{IMPRS} NEG-CAUS-say/tell 3-PL 3x-language NEG.FP
 ‘They were not allowed to speak their language.’ (Blog, “Mother language day”)

A context in which only *mǎ* can be used is with descriptive verbs to indicate an action resulting in the state indicated by V₂, as in (1069) and (1070). This is the most common use of *mǎ* as a causative verb.

(1069) *mà-môʔ.lôʔ* ʔò
make_{CAUS}-**be.round** 3i
 ‘Make it round.’ [HUR]

(1070) *tâ* *kə-bâʔ* *mà-kəsʰy̯ɔ̄* *dɔ̄ʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} IRR-must **make**_{CAUS}-**be.clean** and
dɔ̄ʔ *mà-blē-tʰɔ̄ʔ* ʔò *lò*
 and **make**_{CAUS}-**be.smooth-UP** 3pi FACT.FP
 ‘it (=tympanum of drum) must be cleaned and smoothened’ (Karen drum)

Like any verb–verb compound, cause–effect compounds with *mà* and *dīʔ* can themselves be used as constituents of verb–verb compounds. Examples of embedded *dīʔ*-V compounds can be seen in (1071) and (1072).

(1071) *lè* *jə-pyè-[dīʔ.ʔɔ̄ʔ]* *nà*
 go **1s-buy**_{V1}-[**CAUS-eat**]_{V2} 2si
 ‘Let’s go, I’ll buy you dinner.’ [LTP]

(1072) *ʔə-hèʔ-[dīʔ-mà]* *kəsʰɔ̄* *ʔə-tâ* *nāʔ*
3-give_{V1}-[**CAUS-do**]_{V2} elephant 3x-thing be.tough
kəsʰɔ̄ *xè*
 elephant be.skinny
 ‘He made the elephant work hard; the elephant is skinny.’
 (Ratanakul 1986: 1196; my trans.)

Another verb with causative semantics is *mā* ‘ask to, order (v.)’ (cf. PTB *mi:n ‘name, command’), seen in (1073). Unlike *mà* and *dīʔ*, *mā* does not form a compound with a following verb but instead takes a clause as its non-subject complement (see §9.3.1). It is also not a valency-increasing marker. Semantically, *mā* indicates that the order or request by the causer is communicated verbally, while *dīʔ* is inexplicit about the nature of the causing subevent. As Ratanakul (1981: 166–167) notes, this is why the causee in a *mā* construction must be animate and capable of understanding a verbal request. Non-human causees have not been attested in the complement clause following *mā*.

(1073) *jə-mô* *mā* [*jə-hē.sòʔ-né* ʔò *liʔ.sɔ̄.sʰy̯ɪʔ*]_P *lò*
 1sx-mother **order** 1s-bring-get_{BEN} 3i Bible FACT.FP
 ‘My mother told me to bring her the Bible.’ [LTP]

The verb *mā* also occurs in the compounds *mā-sʰúʔ* [order-be.strong/forcibly] and *mā-né-sʰúʔ* [order-get-be.strong], both expressing ‘force to’.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Apart from *mā* ‘order’, Ratanakul (1981: 166) mentions another causative verb, *mà.ʔéʔ*, stating that “[*mà.ʔéʔ*] emphasizes the causing event more than [*mā*]”. The verb *mà.ʔéʔ* was not attested elsewhere in the data.

Syntactically similar to *mā*, the verb *plē* ‘let, permit’ is another causative verb used with willingly acting causees. It is followed by a complement clause, as in (1074) (see also §9.3.1).

- (1074) *ʔawē.θēʔ ʔa-kʰōʔ plē [jə-nìʔ mə.tā d̄sʔ ʔə]P*
 3.PL 3X-head permit 1s-enter work with 3i
 ‘Their chief allowed me to work with him’ (Jones 1961: 234, 245)

Another semi-productive verb with causative force is *l̄ə* (possibly connected to *l̄ə* ‘go down, descend’). The verb *l̄ə* occurs as V₁ in constructions similar to what have been termed ‘emotive causative constructions’ in Finnish, as in *Minu-a harmi-tta-a* [I-partitive annoyance-CAUS-3sg] ‘I am annoyed’ (Helasvuo & Vilkuna 2008: 223–225). The verb *l̄ə* combines with a limited number of verbs related to emotions and cognition, expressing ‘invite to (V₂)’ (cf. the use of *-səya* in Burmese, described by Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016: 105–108). It indicates that a stimulus, the clause subject, causes a sensation of wanting or needing to do V₂ or of V₂ being worth doing. Common examples include those in (1075).

- (1075) *l̄ə-nì* [invite.to-laugh] ‘be funny, laughable’
l̄ə-ʔēʔ [invite.to-love] ‘be cute, lovable’
l̄ə-nàʔ [invite.to-believe] ‘be credible’
l̄ə-byōʔ [invite.to-vomit] ‘be disgusting’
l̄ə-hāʔ [invite.to-visit] ‘be tempting to visit (of a place)’
l̄ə-pyè [invite.to-buy] ‘look tempting to buy’

Unlike the valency-increasing causative verbs *mā* and *dīʔ*, *l̄ə* has an opposite, de-transitivizing effect when combining with transitive verbs, turning any verb it combines with into an intransitive descriptive verb. Adding a causee argument after a *l̄ə*-V compound is thus ungrammatical, as (1076) illustrates.

- (1076) *sʰē.kà bēʔ ʔi l̄ə-kà [*jā] klā*
 shirt CLF(2D) this invite.to-wear **1si** INTS
 ‘This shirt looks very nice to wear.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 490; my trans.)

A similar de-transitivizing function is performed by the reflexive noun *θāʔ* ‘heart’, which will be discussed next.

8.3 Reflexive constructions

This section describes reflexive constructions in Sgaw Karen, which take the noun *θāʔ* ‘heart’ as their P argument. Semantically, a prototypical reflexive clause is one in which “two arguments of a verb have identical reference” (Dixon 2012: 146) or, more specifically, in which the agent is coreferential with the patient in two-argument clauses and with the goal argument in three-argument clauses (Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 155). In terms of semantic

arguments, then, a reflexive event has one less participant than a comparable non-reflexive clause with the same main verb. As with causatives, seen in §8.2, lexical reflexive verbs such as *shave* (as in *you need to shave*) are absent in Sgaw Karen. Events in which an agent acts upon themselves thus always involve overt reflexive coding. We first discuss prototypical reflexives, in §8.3.1, then, in §8.3.2–8.3.4, some other clause types which use the reflexive noun *θāʔ* as the object.

8.3.1 Prototypical reflexives

In prototypical reflexive constructions, an agent intentionally acts upon themselves. Example (1077) demonstrates the Sgaw Karen reflexive construction containing the antecedent (or controller) *jə-* ‘I’, the transitive verb *kətèʔ.kətò.pàʔ* ‘prepare’, and the reflexive pronoun *nəθāʔ* ‘yourself’. A comparable non-reflexive clause can be seen in (1078).

(1077) *nə-kətèʔ.kətò.pàʔ* *nə-θāʔ* *lī* *hā*
 2S-prepare-put_{PREP} 2SX-**heart**_{REFL} NS PQ
 ‘Have you already prepared yourself?’ (Ballard 1973b: 224)

(1078) *nə-kətèʔ.kətò.pàʔ* *tā.θāʔ.wīʔ* *lī* *hā*
 2S-prepare-put_{PREP} song NS PQ
 ‘Have you already prepared the song?’ (Ballard 1973b: 223)

Syntactically, the Sgaw Karen reflexive lacks coding in the verb complex. Instead, reflexive clauses involve an overt reflexive NP, which consists of *θāʔ* ‘heart’ and a possessive prefix coreferential with the antecedent, the subject of the clause. The noun *θāʔ* corresponds to what Matisoff (1986: 9) has called a “psycho-noun”, “a noun with explicit psychological reference”. Wade (1896) has described *θāʔ* as denoting the part of a human that is the opposite of *kəsá* ‘(physical) body’, as illustrated by (1079).

(1079) *pə-kəsá* *ʔi* *θī* *lò* | *mē.mē* *pə-θāʔ* *θī* *tə-θē* *bāʔ*
 1px-body this die FP in.contrast 1px-soul die NEG-ABIL NEG.FP
 ‘The body can die, the soul can not.’ (Wade 1896)

A combined form, *kəsá-θāʔ* [body-heart] (or *nə.kəsá-θāʔ* [body-heart]) ‘self’, seen in (1080), also occurs, chiefly in the spoken language. It is used in the same way as *θāʔ*. Note also that the possessive prefix is occasionally dropped, as in (1081), especially in informal contexts.

(1080) *ʔəwē.dáʔ* *mà.θī-lò-kwīʔ* *ʔə-kəsá.θāʔ*
 3e kill-DOWN-AWAY 3X-REFL
 ‘He killed himself.’ (Vlog, “News story”)

- (1081) *mà-bâʔ.sɔʔ* *θāʔ* *təɣè*
 make-get.wet **heart**_{REFL} NEG.OPT
 ‘Don’t make yourselves wet.’ [HUR]

Similarly to what has been demonstrated for its Eastern Pwo cognate by Kato (2019: 27), the reflexive noun *θāʔ* (and *kəsá.θāʔ*) is different from prototypical nouns in that it cannot be topicalized.

Although obligatory reflexive marking on the verb is lacking in Sgaw Karen, the directional verb *lò* ‘come down, go down’ commonly forms part of the verb complex in reflexive clauses, as in (1080). Kato (2019) describes the Eastern Pwo Karen cognate *làn* ‘descend, down’ as expressing “movement toward a deictic center” (Kato 2019: 40). Similarly, in Sgaw Karen, *lò* ‘come down, go down’ often indicates movement ‘inside’, such as into a house or village. In contrast, *tʰɔʔ* ‘come up, go up’ expresses movement ‘out’ of something, also when there is no vertical movement. In reflexive contexts, *lò* is used especially with verbs expressing situations in which it is unusual for the agent and patient to be coreferential, like those in (1082). In such cases, *lò* not only reinforces the idea of reflexiveness but appears to be mandatory.

- (1082) *ʔéʔ-lò ʔəθāʔ* [love-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘love oneself’
mà-θī-lò ʔəθāʔ [kill-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘kill oneself’
pətrə-lò ʔəθāʔ [praise-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘brag (lit., praise oneself)’
kōʔ-lò ʔəθāʔ [call-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘call oneself’
sīʔ-lò ʔəθāʔ [say-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘say to oneself’
θī.kwá-lò ʔəθāʔ [ask-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘ask oneself’
tʰɪʔ-lò ʔəθāʔ [see-DOWN 3.REFL] ‘see oneself’

The reflexive noun *θāʔ* also occurs in less prototypical reflexive clauses, as in (1083). Here, the reflexive appears to emphasize the idea of self-awareness.

- (1083) *jə-θéʔ.nā-lò* *jə-θāʔ* *jə-kʰóʔ.nùʔ* *tə-pʰjēʔ* *báʔ*
 1s-know-DOWN 1SX-**heart**_{REFL} 1SX-brain NEG-be.clever NEG.FP
 ‘I know I’m not clever.’ [HUR]

The following subsections, §8.3.2–8.3.4, describe different types of clauses in which *θāʔ* occurs as the object.

8.3.2 Reflexive cause–effect verb–verb compounds

A number of cause–effect verb–verb compounds exist in which the V₁ obligatorily takes the reflexive noun *θāʔ* as its object and (semi-)productively combines with different types of V₂s. This section deals with three types of such compounds.

The first type has one of the verbs *kʰɔʔ* or *dōʔ* as V₁, both expressing ‘submit (self to V₂)’. The verb *dōʔ*, probably connected to *dōʔ* ‘receive’, is more productive than *kʰɔʔ* but both are

used in the same way, “to convey the idea that the subject voluntarily submits to an action” (Gilmore 1898; §122) or a resulting state. Consider the verb *kʰɔ̃²-θ̃* ‘submit (oneself) to die’ in (1084).

- (1084) *ʔəwē.θē² kʰɔ̃²-θ̃ θā² lā tʰi.kō ʔə-ɣɔ̃*
 3.PL submit-die **heart**_{REFL} GNR.P country 3X-PURP
 ‘They died for the sake of their country.’ (Chappell 1992: 26)

Unlike in other types of cause–effect compounds, where the inferred subject of V₁ is different from that of V₂ (see §5.4.2), in (1084), the subject of both verbs is *ʔəwē.θē²* ‘they’. Since the subject and the object of the verb–verb compound are coreferential, the reflexive noun *θā²* ‘self’ is used. This can be compared with the use of the switch-subject cause–effect compound *mà-θ̃* [make-die] ‘kill’ in (1085), where the core participants are different.

- (1085) *pyà mà-θ̃ ʔə*
 person_{IMPRS} make-die 3i
 ‘Someone killed her.’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

In the case of transitive V₂S, on the other hand, the inferred subject of V₂ is usually left unexpressed. The *dō²-V* compounds in (1086)–(1088) express ‘submit oneself to being V-ed’.

- (1086) *pyà.kʰā².tā tə-ɣà nē² kè dō²-pʰɔ̃² ʔə-θā²*
 shooter one-CLF(HUM) that return **submit-catch** 3X-heart_{REFL}
 ‘The shooter went back to turn himself in (lit., let himself get arrested).’
 (News article)

- (1087) *ʔəwē.θē² kə-bā² lè dō²-pjā² θā² lā*
 3.PL IRR-must go **submit-show** **heart**_{REFL} GNR.P
tā.sʰā.hī² ʔō² ʔə-lō nē² bā² lè=wē jì
 hospital EXIST 3X-place that_{FRAME} must go=COR be.far
 ‘They have to go far to get to a place with a hospital to get healthcare.’
 (News article)

- (1088) *nì-lò dō²-xī.tʰə ʔə-θā²*
 enter-DOWN **submit-choose** 3X-heart_{REFL}
 ‘to run in an election (lit., enter to let oneself get elected)’

Instances of *dō²-V* compounds in recent sources are sporadic and limited in number. Gilmore’s (1898) description of the construction might indicate that it was more productive in the variety he described: “When it is desired to convey the idea that the subject voluntarily submits to an action, the passive voice is differently expressed [i.e. using *dō²*].” An example by Gilmore is given in (1089). Wade (1897) also provides an example containing the overt expression of the agent of V₂, observable in (1090).

(1089) *jə-dōʔ-tʰiʔ* *jə-θāʔ*
 1s-submit-see 1sX-**heart**_{REFL}
 ‘I am seen, I permit myself to be seen.’ (Gilmore 1898: §122)

(1090) *pɣà* *tə-ɣà* *nēʔ* *dōʔ-ɣēʔ* *ɣə-θāʔ* *lā* *kʰē*
 person one-CLF(HUM) that submit-bite 3X-**heart**_{REFL} GNR.P tiger
 ‘That person gave himself to be eaten by a tiger.’ (Wade 1897: 66)

The second reflexive verb–verb compound construction, which seems to be productive only in some regions, has the verb *pàʔ* ‘put’ as V₁. The construction *pàʔ-V θāʔ* [put-V **heart**_{REFL}] expresses ‘pretend (lit., put self) to V’. Gilmore (1898) mentions the construction and provides the following example:

(1091) *pàʔ-θī* *ɣə-θāʔ*
 put-die 3X-**heart**_{REFL}
 ‘to assume the appearance of death’ (Gilmore 1898; §145)

The *pàʔ-V θāʔ* ‘pretend to V’ construction also occurs in the texts collected by Jones (1961), which represent the Mawlamyine variety of Sgaw Karen. Two examples from Jones (1961) are provided in (1092) and (1093).

(1092) *tə-pàʔ-θēʔ.nā* *ɣə-θāʔ*
 NEG-put-know 3X-**heart**_{REFL}
 ‘they pretended not to know’ (Jones 1961: 242, 247)

(1093) *ɣəwē* *pàʔ-lē* *ɣə-θāʔ* *sʰū* *kʰīʔ*
 3 put-go 3X-**heart**_{REFL} ALL.P swidden.field
 ‘they pretended to go to the field’ (Jones 1961: 213–214)

Finally, the desiderative verb *mōʔ*, glossed by Wade (1896) as ‘desire, wish to obtain’, is used in reflexive verb–verb compounds to express ‘want to V’.⁴⁷ This verb only occurs in the *mōʔ-V₂* construction, which takes the impersonal pronoun *tā* ‘thing’ as its subject and the reflexive noun *θāʔ* ‘heart, self’ as its object. Consider (1094).

(1094) *tā* *mōʔ-pô* *jə-θāʔ* *lā* *tʰī*
 thing_{IMPRS} DES-swim 1sX-**heart**_{REFL} GNR.P water
 ‘I want to swim.’ [HUR]

The experiencer argument is expressed overtly as a possessive prefix (*jə-*) attached to *θāʔ*, while *tʰī* ‘water’ occurs as the second object, here preceded by the generic preposition

⁴⁷ Kato (2009: 215) notes that the Eastern Pwo irrealis marker *mə-* is cognate with Sgaw Karen *mōʔ* and Western Pwo *mō* ‘want to’.

l̄ (see §4.1.2, example (267)). As explained in §7.3.3, the generic noun *tā* ‘thing’ is used as an impersonal pronoun with a handful of verbs relating to feelings and bodily sensations (e.g. *tā k̄əʔ jə-θāʔ* [thing_{IMPRS} bore 1sx-heart_{REFL}] ‘I’m bored’). Desire may be seen as an uncontrollable sensation, which explains the use of *tā* with this verb.

Like the *pàʔ-V* construction mentioned above, the *môʔ-V* construction is only encountered in some regions, chiefly Northern Thailand. It also occurs in the texts by Jones (1961) from Mawlamyine but is reportedly not widely used in the Kayin–Tak border region or in the Delta–Yangon and Mawchi–Taungoo varieties. As mentioned in §5.1.1.1, the more widely used strategy to express the desire to do something is by the use of secondary verbs, such as *ʔéʔ.dōʔ* ‘want’ or *bāʔ.θāʔ* ‘want’, directly followed by the second verb or verb sequence. Example (1095) is equivalent in meaning to (1094) but uses *bāʔ θāʔ* [hit heart] ‘want’ instead of *môʔ*.

(1095) *jə-bāʔ.θāʔ p̄ə t̄h̄*
 1s-want swim water
 ‘I want to swim.’ [HUR]

In Northern Thailand, the *môʔ* construction remains a common way to express ‘want to V’. Affirmative and negative examples can be seen in (1096) and (1097), respectively.

(1096) *tā m̄ôʔ-kè θāʔ l̄*
 thing_{IMPRS} DES-return heart_{REFL} NS
 ‘I want to go home now.’ [KWH]

(1097) *tā tə-m̄ôʔ-kè θāʔ d̄iʔ b̄āʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} NEG-DES-return heart_{REFL} CONT NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t want to go home yet.’ [KWH]

Note, in (1096) and (1097), that the experiencer argument (*jə* ‘I’) can be overtly expressed as a possessive prefix on *θāʔ* (as *jəθāʔ*) but is in this case omitted.

As is typical in double-object constructions, the second object (which follows *θāʔ*) is often marked by the generic preposition *l̄*. As Kato (1993) notes, however, *l̄* can be omitted, as in (1098). Also note that *θāʔ* is commonly realized without the possessive prefix, especially in casual speech, as in (1099).

(1098) *tā m̄ôʔ-ʔəʔ jə-θāʔ (l̄) m̄è*
 thing_{IMPRS} DES-eat 1sx-heart_{REFL} GNR.P rice
 ‘I want to eat.’ (Kato 1993: 195; my trans.)

(1099) *tā m̄ôʔ-l̄i [θāʔ]_{P1} [l̄ d̄éʔ]_{P2}*
 thing_{IMPRS} DES-feed heart_{REFL} GNR.P frog
 ‘They wanted to raise frogs.’ [KWH]

Kato (1993) mentions another *môʔ* construction, exemplified in (1100), where the experiencer rather than *tâ* occurs as the subject, while *θāʔ* remains as the first object.

- (1100) *nə-môʔ* *ʔɔʔ* *θāʔ* *tâ* *hā*
 2s-DES eat heart_{REFL} thing PQ
 ‘Do you want to eat something?’ (Kato 1993: 194; my trans.)

As a final note, the *môʔ* construction (the form *kəmôʔ* is also encountered) is frequent in 19th century sources such as the Thesaurus (Sau Kau-Too 1848a; 1848b; 1849; 1850), the Morning Star monthly, published between 1842 and 1942, and the Mason Bible translation from 1853.

8.3.3 Anticausative clauses

The reflexive noun *θāʔ* ‘heart’ is also used in clauses which denote events that happen spontaneously, without an intentionally acting agent. Compare the anticausative clause in (1101) with (1102).

- (1101) *pē.trɔ̄* *nêʔ* *ʔōʔ.tʰɔʔ* *ʔə-θāʔ* *lɔ̄*
 window that_{TOP} open(tr.) 3X-heart_{REFL} FACT.FP
 {‘The window is open. / The window opened.’} [LTP]

- (1102) *jə-ʔōʔ.tʰɔʔ* *pē.trɔ̄* *lɔ̄*
 1s-open(tr.) window FACT.FP
 ‘I opened the window.’ [LTP]

In (1102), *ʔō.tʰɔʔ* takes the arguments *jə-* ‘I’ and *pē.trɔ̄* ‘window’, while in (1101), there is no semantic agent, hence the use of *θāʔ*. Also note, in (1101), that either a stative or dynamic reading is possible depending on the context. Resultativity, as in ‘the window is open’, can be emphasized using the verbal modifier *xāʔ* ‘FIXED’ denoting a resulting state (see §5.5.5.2). In most cases, however, events involving an inanimate subject and *θāʔ* as the object indicate the resulting state of the action denoted by the verb.

Comparing with the more prototypical reflexive clauses seen in §8.3.1, it becomes evident that anticausative and reflexive clauses in Sgaw Karen are syntactically identical. Their main functions, however, are different; while reflexive clauses express that an agent acts upon themselves, the main function of the anticausative is to suppress the agent since it is unknown or irrelevant. The latter function of *θā* is thus similar to markers termed anticausative in other languages. According to the definition by Zúñiga & Kittilä (2019) of the anticausative diathesis, the P of a transitive base clause becomes the S in the anticausative clause, and the A argument is removed. In the case of *θāʔ* clauses with non-volitional subjects, the definition is met on the semantic level, but the clause remains syntactically transitive. Compare, the *θāʔ* clause in (1104) with the base clause in (1103).

(1103) *pə-kə-bá sʰɔ̄.təlɛ̄ t̄á mənì lɛ̄ʔ*
 1p-IRR-must change(tr.) thing what CQ
 ‘What do we have to change?’ (Blog)

(1104) *t̄á kə-bá sʰɔ̄.təlɛ̄ θāʔ ʔə-kʰā t̄ì l̄ī*
 thing IRR-must change(tr.) **heart**_{REFL} 3x-TIME arrive NS
 ‘The time for change (lit., when things must change) has come.’ (Blog)

Kato (2019) considers corresponding Eastern Pwo clauses with *θà*, which is cognate with Sgaw Karen *θāʔ*, as anticausatives proper. He argues that *θà* is an intransitivizing verb particle rather than a noun. Similarly, the Sgaw Karen reflexive morpheme *θāʔ* is non-referential and has a primarily grammatical function, namely, to enable the removal of the A of the base event. Based on the data examined for this thesis, there is no reason to doubt the nounhood of Sgaw Karen *θāʔ*, and it is therefore not considered part of the verb complex. However, further research might reveal more obvious signs of grammaticalization.

Semantically, then, *θāʔ* is used with inanimate referents to indicate that an event happens spontaneously. In the rather unusual case where no agent is identifiable in the event, as in (1105), *θāʔ* occurs as the obligatory object.

(1105) *mè-hò-tʰī-hò pʰɔ̄-pàʔ.sə ʔə-θāʔ*
 rice-ELAB-water-ELAB cook-in.advance 3x-**heart**_{REFL}
 ‘[she came back and saw] rice and water cooked by themselves’
 (Jones 1961: 213–214)

More commonly, an agent exists but is either unknown or irrelevant for the sake of relating an event, as is the case in (1106) and (1107).

(1106) *nə-t̄á-ʔəʔ.mū nɛʔ kə-sʰɔ̄.təlɛ̄ ʔə-θāʔ d̄ɔ̄.dúʔ l̄ò*
 2sx-thing_{NMLZ}-live that_{TOP} IRR-change(tr.) **3x-heart**_{REFL} a.lot FACT.FP
 ‘Your life will change a lot.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

(1107) *t̄á-θəʔ.l̄ò-t̄ò tənò.nò s̄āʔ.tʰɔ̄ʔ ʔə-θāʔ l̄ī*
 thing_{NMLZ}-teach-class some start(tr.) **3x-heart**_{REFL} NS
 ‘Some classes have already started.’ (Blog)

The resulting state of a spontaneous event can be emphasized using the existential verb *ʔəʔ* ‘exist, be at’, as in (1108) and (1109). The construction *ʔəʔ-V ʔəθāʔ* denotes that the subject is in the state of having been V-ed.

(1108) *jē* *jə-bâʔ* *sʰɣiʔ* *tâ* *bâʔ.ʔə*
 1se 1s-must wash(laundry) thing get.dirty
tərə *ʔôʔ-pûʔ.tʰɔʔ* *ʔəθāʔ* *ʔā-māʔ*
 COLL **EXIST-pile.up** 3.REFL be.many-INTS
 ‘I have to wash dirty things that have piled up a lot.’ (Jones 1961: 201–202)

(1109) *θɸ̄.mə.sə.rə* *ʔôʔ-kətəʔ.kətə-tʰɔʔ* *ʔəθāʔ* *lə* *kə-mà=wē* *tā.xī.tʰə*
 junta **EXIST-prepare-UP** 3.REFL COMP IRR-do=COR election
 ‘the junta is prepared to hold an election’ (News vlog)

Since intransitive verbs can take inanimate referents as subjects and denote spontaneously occurring events, *θāʔ* also co-occurs with intransitive verbs, further supporting the view of *θāʔ* as a functional morpheme, an anticausative or middle voice marker. Two examples are *hē ʔə-θāʔ* [come 3x-heart_{REFL}] ‘happen, turn out’, in (1110), and *lè ʔəθāʔ* [go 3.REFL] ‘go, proceed’ (the forms *ʔəθāʔ* and *θāʔ* appear to be in free variation), in (1111).

(1110) *tā.yé.tā.klə* *dɪʔ.néʔ* *mē* *hē* *ʔə-θāʔ*
 matter like.that be.true_{COND} come **3x-heart_{REFL}**
pə-mà *sʰū* *nā* *kə-kə*
 1p-do ALL.P front IRR-be.difficult
 ‘If the matter comes out like this, it will be difficult for us to work/do [anything] in the future.’ (Ballard 1973c: 22)

(1111) *tā.sʰə.kətə* *lè* *θāʔ* *kʰlē* *māʔ*
 time go **heart_{REFL}** be.fast INTS
 ‘Time has gone by quickly.’

Lastly, the number of ambitransitive verbs in Sgaw Karen is small, as previously mentioned. While the number of transitive verbs is significantly higher than intransitive verbs, *θāʔ* can be used as a purely functional marker to form intransitive equivalents of transitive verbs. Table 42 lists some agentive verbs, which take an intentionally acting A argument, with their intransitive (“anticausativized”) counterparts.

Table 42 Transitive and intransitive verb pairs

Transitive (agentive)	Intransitive (“anticausativized”)
<i>ʔɔ̃ʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘open (tr.)’	<i>ʔɔ̃ʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘open (intr.)’
<i>sʰɔ̃.təlē</i> ‘change (tr.)’	<i>sʰɔ̃.təlē ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘change (intr.)’
<i>təriʔ</i> ‘rotate (tr.)’	<i>təriʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘rotate (intr.)’
<i>sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘start (tr.)’	<i>sāʔ.tʰɔ̃ʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘start (intr.)’
<i>pətiʔ</i> ‘stop (tr.)’	<i>pətiʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘come to a stop’
<i>θēʔ</i> ‘move (tr.)’	<i>θēʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘move (intr.)’
<i>blāʔ.lò</i> ‘hang (tr.)’	<i>blāʔ.lò ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘hang (intr.)’
<i>kē.tʰɔ̃ʔ</i> ‘become’	<i>kē.tʰɔ̃ʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘happen’
<i>mā</i> ‘do, make’	<i>mā ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘behave, be like; happen’
<i>xā.xiʔ</i> ‘mix (tr.)’	<i>xā.xiʔ ʔəθāʔ</i> ‘be mixed (with)’

8.3.4 Reciprocal *lòʔ*

Reciprocal events in Sgaw Karen are expressed using the reciprocal marker *lòʔ*, which in most varieties pronounced with the vowel [ɔ̃]. It occurs as the last component of a verb compound and is typically followed by the reflexive noun *θāʔ* ‘heart’, which is the object of the construction. As in the case of causative and reflexive clauses, reciprocity is typically overtly marked in Sgaw Karen; inherently reciprocal verbs like *kiss*, as in *they kissed*, are non-existent. Examples (1112) and (1113) contain reciprocal clauses.

- (1112) *pɣà* *dɔ̃-pʰɿ-li* *kʰɿ* *ɣà* *nēʔ*
 person COLL-GF-grandchild two CLF(HUM) that
ʔɛʔ-lòʔ *ʔə-θāʔ* *pʰāʔ-dòʔ* *ɲā*
love-RECP **3x-heart_{REFL}** INTS-be.big INTS
 ‘That grandfather and grandchild love each other greatly.’ (Ballard 1973b: 169)

- (1113) *ʔə-mô-ʔə-pā* *nēʔ* *kwā.tʰwē-lòʔ* *θāʔ* *θē-dīʔ*
 3x-mother-3x-father that_{TOP} **look.after-RECP** heart_{REFL} ABIL-CONT
 ‘His parents (are healthy and) can still look after each other.’ (Vlog story)

The reciprocal constructions in (1112) and (1113) express the amalgamation of two subevents, one in which A loves or looks after B and one in which B loves or looks after A (Zúñiga & Kittilä 2019: 153). Note also that, although the origin of *lòʔ* is uncertain,⁴⁸ it is here analysed as part of the verb complex, as suggested by the fact that *lòʔ* never occurs separated from the main verb.

The reflexive noun *θāʔ*, the object in reciprocal clauses, is often combined with a possessive prefix agreeing with the subject of the sentence. As seen in reflexive and anticausative examples, in §8.3.1–8.3.3, the possessive prefix can be dropped, especially in casual speech and in the case of highly lexicalized compounds such as *tʰi-lòʔ-θāʔ*

⁴⁸ Kato (2004: 364) is equally agnostic about the Pwo cognate *ló* stating that its etymology is unknown.

[see-RECP-heart_{REFL}] ‘meet’. In most cases, the verb preceded by *lòʔ* is intransitive or transitive. Ballard (1973c) provides the example in (1114) containing two objects, the reflexive object *θāʔ* and a topicalized, preverbal object (P).

- (1114) *[tá.náʔ ʔóʔ-tê-dīʔ təp^háʔ ʔi]P*
 meat EXIST-ABANDON-CONT COLL this
nə-héʔ-lòʔ θāʔ yá-sēʔ~yá-sēʔ
 divide-give-RECP heart_{REFL} CLF(HUM)-bit~CLF(HUM)-bit
 ‘Divide up between you the meat that still remains, a bit to each of you.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 189)

Singular subjects appear to be marginally possible in the Sgaw Karen reciprocal construction, in which case *θāʔ* cannot be the only object. Two instances are demonstrated in (1115) and (1116), where the second object occurs as an oblique argument preceded by the preposition *dōʔ* ‘with’.

- (1115) *nə-θéʔ.nā-lòʔ nə-θāʔ dōʔ pyá*
 2s-know-RECP 2sx-heart_{REFL} with person
tə-yá néʔ p^hāʔ-jìʔ lī hā
 one-CLF(HUM) that INTS-last.long NS PQ
 ‘Have you and that person known each other for quite a long time?’
 (Ballard 1973b: 169)

- (1116) *nə-t^híʔ.lòʔ θāʔ dōʔ jə-dō.pí.wé-k^hwā dīʔ hā*
 2s-meet heart_{REFL} with 1sx-sibling-male CONT PQ
 ‘Have you met my brother yet?’ [LTP]

With descriptive verbs, *lòʔ* indicates that two referents possess some quality with respect to each other, as in (1117) and (1118).

- (1117) *ʔóʔ-sò.sì-lòʔ pə-θāʔ tə-yá dōʔ tə-yá*
 EXIST-be.distant-RECP 1px-heart_{REFL} one-CLF(HUM) and one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘(we should) stay at a distance from each other’
 (News vlog, “Coronavirus variant”)

- (1118) *klóʔ təp^háʔ ʔə-lwé lō.s^hlòʔ ʔə-θāʔ*
 drum COLL 3x-colour be.different-RECP 3x-heart_{REFL}
 ‘The colours of the drums differ from each other.’ (Karen drum)

In most cases seen so far, the object in reciprocal *lòʔ* constructions is *θāʔ* ‘heart’. Depending on the main verb, however, the object can be another body part, such as *k^hī* ‘rear, buttocks’, in (1119), or *sī* ‘hand’, in (1120).

- (1119) *klôʔ ʔə-mèʔ.θāʔ-lò déʔ lwí bēʔ pòʔ-lòʔ ʔə-kʰĩ*
 drum 3x-face-surface frog four CLF(2D) follow-RECP 3x-rear
 ‘On the surface of the drum, four frogs follow each other.’ (Karen drum)
- (1120) *pə-kə-bāʔ ʔôʔ.xũ.ʔôʔ.pʰôʔ pʰɔʔ-lòʔ pə-sĩ*
 1p-IRR-must live.in.harmony(elab.) grab-RECP 1px-hand
d̄ɔʔ pə-kə-bāʔ m̄ə-θəkōʔ t̄ə n̄éʔ.l̄ò
 and 1p-IRR-must do-SOC thing FP
 ‘we must live in harmony, take each other’s hands and we must cooperate’
 (Blog post)

Lastly, apart from the reciprocal marker *lòʔ* and the reflexive noun *θāʔ*, other elements that often occur in reciprocal clauses are distributive classifier phrases (see example (1117) above) and the reciprocal adverb *kədē.kədē* ‘mutually’, in (1121).

- (1121) *pə-lôʔ.bāʔ-lòʔ θāʔ kədē.kədē l̄ò*
 1p-need-RECP heart_{REFL} mutually FACT.FP
 ‘We need others [=each other].’ (Hill 2023: 11)

The next topic concerns grammatical means of backgrounding an argument that is pragmatically less significant in an event, another type of semantic detransitivization without a decrease in syntactic valency.

8.4 Argument backgrounding

An argument of a transitive base construction can be backgrounded, or defocused, in different ways when it is unknown or irrelevant from the point of view of the speaker recounting an event. The result is a clause which is less transitive, in the sense of Hopper & Thompson (1980), than a comparable transitive base clause in which both the A and P arguments are present and realized as referential NPs. Table 43 summarizes three principal ways to background an argument in Sgaw Karen.

Table 43 Argument backgrounding constructions

Construction	A-backgrounding	P-foregrounding
anticausative <i>θāʔ</i>	A > omitted	P > subject
P-promoting <i>bāʔ</i>	A > <i>t̄ə</i> (+ adjunct NP)	P > subject
impersonal <i>t̄ə</i>	A > <i>t̄ə</i>	none

Anticausativization, discussed in §8.3.3, involves the complete suppression of the agent and the promotion of the patient to subject. Similarly, in the *bāʔ* construction (§8.4.2), which has been likened to the English Passive, the patient is promoted to subject while the agent is optionally realized as an oblique NP. A third strategy for argument backgrounding is to

- (1127) *tâ.nâʔ ʔì pà mà-mī lī*
 meat this **person** make-be.ripe NS
 ‘This piece of meat was cooked.’ (Ratanakul 1981: 165)

In impersonalization, no sentence restructuring or syntactic demotion of arguments occurs. Instead, defocusing is performed by the replacement of a core argument (agent or patient) by a non-referential, impersonal pronoun. The resulting clause is less specific and less transitive semantically as compared to an analogous base clause containing referential NPs as core arguments.

Agent impersonalization, then, is possible with both *tâ* ‘thing’ and *pyà* ‘person’. Despite the basic meanings of these words, both *tâ* and *pyà* are used to represent animate and human agents. (As in most languages, inanimate agents are comparatively rare in Sgaw Karen.) Although they can often be used interchangeably, *pyà* is often preferred in the spoken language, while *tâ* is more frequent in written texts. For example, one speaker accepts both (1128) and (1129) but considers the sentence with *pyà* to be more idiomatic.

- (1128) *lā xòʔ-pù nêʔ pyà tō ʔò kōʔ mī.nì dēʔ*
 GNR.P prison-inside that_{FRAME} **person** beat 3i each day each
 ‘In prison, he was beaten every day.’ [HUR]

- (1129) *lā xòʔ-pù nêʔ tâ tō ʔò kōʔ mī.nì dēʔ*
 GNR.P prison-inside that_{FRAME} **thing** beat 3i each day each
 ‘In prison, he was beaten every day.’ [HUR]

Thus, while *pyà* ‘person’ is the more colloquial of the two, *tâ* ‘thing’ as an agent-defocusing impersonal pronoun is especially common in procedural (written) texts and news reporting, as seen in (1130) and (1131), respectively.

- (1130) *pʰē tâ lū-lō tʰāʔ ʔə-tʰī wì*
 LOC.P **thing**_{IMPRS} pour-DOWN metal 3x-water finish
tâ kãʔ.bē tā-ʔə-kē-ʔə-ʔə-dō dōʔ hōʔ.kʰōʔ
 thing cover mould with earth
 ‘Once the metal has been poured in, the mould is covered with earth.’
 (Karen drum)

- (1131) *tū lē-sʰyā ʔəwē.θēʔ lā tâ.sʰā.hīʔ*
thing_{IMPRS} go-send them GNR.P hospital
 ‘They have been taken to a hospital.’ (News article)

Impersonal *tâ* also occurs in a common phrase used to begin a story, as in (1132).

- (1138) *pə-lè tã lã mî-s^hã-k^hõ tə-bú[?]*
 1p-go thing GNR.P sun-dawn-side NEG-dare
 ‘We did not dare move in the daytime.’ (Jones 1961: 242, 247)

Lastly, unlike in the case of anticausatives and P-promotion constructions with *bã[?]*, which require a patient, impersonal pronouns readily occur with intransitive main verbs, as in (1139).

- (1139) *pyã ɔ[?] lã kɔ.pəjɔ[?]-pù tə-θé[?].nã bã[?] dī*
person EXIST GNR.P Myanmar-inside NEG-know NEG.FP FRAME
tə-ɔ[?] bã[?] | θé[?].nã kɔ[?].yà.dē[?] lò
 NEG-EXIST NEG.FP know everyone FACT.FP
 ‘There is nobody in Myanmar who doesn’t know (the place). Everyone knows it.
 (Lit., People [who] live in Myanmar [who] don’t know don’t exist ...)
 (Vlog, “News story”)

Next, in §8.4.2, a different construction involving syntactic restructuring will be examined.

8.4.2 The *bã[?]* construction

The pervasive verb *bã[?]* ‘hit, encounter’ has been seen both as a main verb and as a grammaticalized marker combined with other verbs in previous chapters (§5.1.1.2, §5.5.6, §8.1.3). The meaning of *bã[?]* as a main verb is patientive, ‘come into contact with’, as Bar Hso Wah (2011: 29–42) describes in detail. Intentional hitting or touching is expressed by other verbs, such as *tã[?]* ‘beat (v.)’ or *dõ[?]* ‘strike (v.)’. Examples (1140)–(1143) illustrate four main-verb uses of *bã[?]*.

- (1140) *bã[?] tã.kõ.tã.k^hē*
hit/face(v.) hardship
 ‘face hardship’
- (1141) *klõ.k^hlī bã[?]=wē.dã[?] kəmlã tə-yà*
 bullet **hit**=WD civilian one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘a bullet hit a civilian’
- (1142) *bã[?] tə-nì nē[?]*
hit one-day that_{FRAME}
 ‘(It happened) one day (that)’
- (1143) *bã[?] mē.hē*
hit/contract(v.) cancer
 ‘get cancer’

In verb–verb compounds, *bâʔ* also occurs as a V₁ expressing ‘undergo’, followed by a verb indicating a situation affecting the undergoer negatively. The examples in (1144) are included in the study by Bar Hso Wah (2011).

- | | | | |
|--------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| (1144) | <i>bâʔ sâʔ</i> | [hit _{UNDERGO} -be.wet] | ‘get wet’ |
| | <i>bâʔ.sʰēʔ</i> | [hit _{UNDERGO} -stab] | ‘get stung’ |
| | <i>bâʔ.ti</i> | [hit _{UNDERGO} -pinch] | ‘get pinched’ |
| | <i>bâʔ-sʰūʔ-bâʔ.sʰā</i> | [hit-be.sick(CC1)-hit-be.sick(CC2)] | ‘get sick’ |

In the agent-defocusing *bâʔ* construction described in this section, *bâʔ* demotes the agent and simultaneously promotes the patient of a base clause, similar to the English Passive. Gilmore (1898) refers to the *bâʔ* construction as an expression of the “passive voice”, providing the following example:

- | | | | | | | |
|--------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| (1145) | <i>sə.wā</i> | <i>bâʔ</i> | <i>tâ</i> | <i>tʰiʔ</i> | <i>ʔə</i> | <i>lə</i> |
| | PN | hit _{UNDERGO} | thing _{IMPRS/NMLZ} | see | 3i | FACT.FP |
| | ‘Saw Wa is seen.’ (Gilmore 1898, §119) | | | | | |

According to Gilmore’s analysis, “[*sə wā*] is the subject, [*bâʔ*], encountered, the predicate, [*tâ.tʰiʔ*], the seeing, the object of [*bâʔ*], and [*ʔə*] the object of the verbal noun [*tâ.tʰiʔ*]” (Gilmore 1898, §119). In other words, the main verb *bâʔ* takes a semantic patient as its subject and a nominalized clause, *tâ-tʰiʔ-ʔə* ‘(the) seeing (of) him’, as its object. Bar Hso Wah (2011) offers a similar analysis, providing the examples in (1146) and (1147) to illustrate the use of *bâʔ* with first and second-person subjects.

- | | | | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| (1146) | <i>jə-bâʔ</i> | <i>tâ</i> | <i>tʰiʔ</i> | <i>jà</i> | <i>lə</i> |
| | 1s-hit _{UNDERGO} | thing _{IMPRS/NMLZ} | see | 1si | FACT.FP |
| | ‘I am seen.’ (Bar Hso Wah 2011: 37) | | | | |

- | | | | | | |
|--------|--|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| (1147) | <i>nə-bâʔ</i> | <i>tâ</i> | <i>tʰiʔ</i> | <i>ʔə</i> | <i>lə</i> |
| | 2s-hit _{UNDERGO} | thing _{IMPRS/NMLZ} | see | 2si | FACT.FP |
| | ‘You are seen.’ (Bar Hso Wah 2011: 37) | | | | |

In terms of argument modulation, *bâʔ* also promotes the patient of a base clause to subject and suppresses the agent. Compare (1148) with the *bâʔ* sentence in (1149), which could be used to describe the same event.

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| (1148) | <i>ʔəwē.θēʔ</i> | <i>mà-θī</i> | <i>sə.pà</i> |
| | 3.PL | make-die | king |
| | ‘They killed the king.’ [LTP.D] | | |

- (1149) *sə.pà bāʔ tã mə-θĩ ʔə (lã ʔəwē.θēʔ)*
king **hit**_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} make-die 3i GNR.P 3.PL
‘The king was killed (by them).’ [LTP.D]

Example (1148) is a transitive base clause with explicit and referential core arguments. Comparing the *bāʔ* construction with this base clause makes it evident that the promotion of the patient, *sə.pà* ‘king’, to subject is concomitant with the demotion of the agent, *ʔəwē.θēʔ* ‘they’, to an oblique argument. This oblique phrase denoting the agent is often omitted.

The verb phrase functioning as the object of *bāʔ* is bound by several restrictions. Firstly, the verb must be a transitive, bare verb which cannot take any of the prefixes or postverbal coreference markers diagnostic of main verbs. In contrast, *bāʔ* readily occurs with all prefixes (although not with postverbal coreference markers since these are often not used when an object follows the verb). In (1150) and (1151), *bāʔ* co-occurs with the irrealis and the negative prefix, respectively.

- (1150) *ʔəwē.θēʔ kə-bāʔ tã sĩʔ.ɲəʔ ʔə*
3.PL IRR-hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} punish 3i
‘They will be punished.’

- (1151) *ʔəwē.θēʔ tə-bāʔ tã sĩʔ.ɲəʔ ʔə bāʔ*
3.PL NEG-hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} punish 3i NEG.FP
‘They were not punished.’ or ‘They will not be punished.’

Note that the equivalents of passivized intransitive verbs with unspecified agents (e.g. German *es wurde getanzt* ‘it was danced’) are expressed using impersonal pronouns (see §8.4.1).

Secondly, the obligatory first element in the clause following *bāʔ* is *tã* ‘thing’, a nominalizer or impersonal pronoun. No other noun can occur in this position, as the ungrammaticality of replacing *tã* with *ʔəwē.θēʔ* ‘they’ in (1152a) shows. Furthermore, the object within the clause is without exception an unbound third-person pronoun coreferential with the subject of *bāʔ*. Emphatic pronouns such as *ʔəwē.dāʔ* ‘he, him’ are disallowed, as seen in (1152b). Example (1152b) also demonstrates that this object cannot be omitted.

- (1152) a. **sə.pà bāʔ ʔəwē.θēʔ mə-θĩ ʔə / (ʔə)*
king **hit**_{UNDERGO} 3.PL make-die 3i
b. *sə.pà bāʔ tã mə-θĩ *(ʔə) / *ʔəwē.dāʔ*
king **hit**_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} make-die 3i / 3e
Intended: ‘The king was killed.’ [LTP.D]

Ratanakul (1981) mentions a variation of this construction which has not been attested elsewhere in the data. In her example in (1153), the noun representing the agent, *θāʔ.mĩ.ɲə* ‘cat’, rather than *tã* occupies the slot following *bāʔ*.

- (1153) *nâ²-p^hō* *bâ²* *θâ².mī.jə̀* *ʔə̀* *ʔə̀*
 fish aux.v. cat eat it
 (Ratanakul 1981: 161; original glosses)

As Ratanakul (1981: 161) explains: “The sense of [(1153)] comes close to the English passive ‘The fish was eaten by the cat.’” Ratanakul (1981: 161) further writes that rather than defocus the agent, the construction highlights it: “However [(1153)] is not a neutral emotional-free utterance, it implies that we regret the incident (the eating up of the fish so that nothing was left for us) or that we accuse the cat (the agent).” Hence, expressing the agent inside the complement clause, which functions as the object of *bâ²*, appears to be possible in some varieties. According to a speaker of the Kayin–Tak variety, however, (1153) would more commonly be expressed as in (1154).

- (1154) *nâ²-p^hō* *bâ²* [*tâ* *ʔə̀* *ʔə̀*]_P (*lā* *θâ².mī.jə̀*)
 fish-child_{DIM} hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} eat 3i GNR.P cat
 ‘The fish was eaten by the cat.’ [HUR]

Further research is required to determine whether (1153) and (1154) are regional variants expressing the same meaning or whether they should be considered different constructions.

Similar to adversative passives found in several MSEA languages, such as the *têh* passive construction in modern Mon (Jenny 2005: 108) and the *bī* passive in Vietnamese (e.g. Prasithratsint 2004), the *bâ²* construction appears to be most naturally used when the semantic patient is adversely affected. Examples of non-adversely affected patients are, however, not uncommon, which may be a consequence of the increased use of the *bâ²* construction in formal discourse (cf. the development of the *thiuk* passive in Thai, as discussed by Prasithratsint 2006). Examples (1155)–(1157) illustrate the use of *bâ²* where the undergoer is neither positively nor adversely affected.

- (1155) [*li²-kwê.kə̀*]_A *bâ²* [*tâ* *θə̀.lō* *ʔə̀*]_P
 script-K. hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} teach 3i
 [*lā* *kə̀.s^hâ²* *tə̀blī²* *bé²*]_{Location}
 GNR.P township many CLF(2D)
 ‘The Kwekor script is taught in several townships.’ (News article)

- (1156) *ʔə̀wē.né²* *mé=wē.dâ²* *tâ* *tə̀-k^hā* *lā* *ʔə̀-rē.də̀²* *də̀²*
 that COP=WD thing one-CLF REL 3-be.important and
lā *bâ²* [*tâ* *θū* *ʔə̀*]_P *kə̀²* *mī.nì*
 REL hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS} use 3i each day
 ‘That is a thing that is important and that is used every day.’ [HUR]

- (1157) *pəwē* *kəjɔ̄* *tə-kəliʔ* *ʔi*
 1p Karen one-kind this
pə-bāʔ [*tā* *θéʔ.jā* *pyà*]_P *dīʔ* *pə-mé*
1p-hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} know 1p be.like 1p-be.true_{COP}
pyà *tə-kəliʔ* *lā* *ʔə-ʔéʔ* *tā.mìʔ.tā.kʰiʔ*
 person one-kind REL 3-love peace
 ‘We Karen are known as a peace-loving people.’ (Blog post)

Adversely affected patients are the norm in older sources, such as the Mason Bible translation published in 1853, while the examples in later texts are significantly more varied. This suggests a semantic shift that has weakened the condition that the promoted patient be negatively affected. What remains an important feature of *bāʔ* ‘hit (into), encounter’, however, is that the subject of *bāʔ* is necessarily an undergoer which lacks control over the event. Consequently, positively affected animate referents with potential control over the event can be considered the most marked type of subject in a *bāʔ* construction.

The semantic agent is rarely overtly expressed but, as previously shown, can be realized as an oblique NP introduced by the generic preposition *lā* or, more rarely, *kʰɔ̄.pʰlō* ‘through’. Overt expression of the agent is unattested in older sources, possibly indicating that the optional oblique NP is patterned after the *by* phrase in the English Passive. In (1158)–(1160), the agent is overtly expressed.

- (1158) *lē.kē* *tā-bā* *ʔi* ***bāʔ*** [*tā* *dīʔ-ʔōʔ-tʰɔ̄ʔ* *ʔə*]_P
 Leke thing-worship this **hit**_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} CAUS-EXIST-UP 3i
lā *pʰi.ti.θɔ̄.tʰɔ̄ʔ* *dɔ̄ʔ* *pʰi* *mēʔ.kāʔ.liʔ*
 GNR.P PN and GM PN
 ‘The Leke religion was founded by Hputee Thaug Htaut and Hpee Mite Kah-lee’ (Karen religions)

- (1159) *ʔəwē* ***bāʔ*** [*tā* *mà-sʰuʔ* *ʔə*]_P
 3 **hit**_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} do-be.strong 3i
 [*lā* *pyà-pòʔ.kʰwáʔ* *tə-yà*]
 obl person-man one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘She is attacked by a man.’ [LTP.W]

- (1160) *klōʔ* *təpʰáʔ* *ʔi* ***bāʔ*** [*tā* *xī-tʰiʔ-né* *ʔə*]_P
 drum COLL this **hit**_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} search-see-get 3i
ʔə-sʰō-kətá [*lā* *pʰi-mə.tá*]
 3-be.early-SUPL GNR.P GF-PN
 ‘These drums were first discovered by Hpeu Maw Taw.’ (Karen drum)

Since the semantic patient in a *bāʔ* construction is fronted to topic position, P-promotion of a non-topic NP is impossible (see Chapter 11 on topicalization). The typical promoted patient in a *bāʔ* construction is thus definite and specific. In the case of agent-demotion with non-topical patients, *bāʔ* is typically not used. Instead, the subject is an impersonal pronoun,

Another aspect worth noting about the *bâʔ* construction is its restricted domain of use compared to the passive in English. The construction is rare in the spoken language, occurring mostly in written texts, such as news reports and formal announcements. Furthermore, the construction is over-represented in modern texts translated from English, such as the 1993 Bible translation and government information translated into Karen in Western countries. It is exceedingly rare in older sources, such as the Thesaurus (Sau Kau-Too 1848a; 1848b; 1849; 1850) and the 1853 Mason Bible, and the comparatively rare instances encountered exclusively involve non-human affectees. This suggests a recent increase and expansion of its domain of use due to influence from English, possibly attributable to the influential status of the Sgaw Karen Bible translation. Perhaps symptomatic of its increased use is the translation of Bible passages using a passive construction in English. Example (1164) is from the 1853 Bible and (1165) from a 1993 translation. As in several similar cases encountered, only the latter is translated using a *bâʔ* construction.

(1164) *pyà sòʔ nò ʔè.sətâ sʰū sò.pà ʔaxà.fəwē.rôʔ ʔə-ʔôʔ*
 person carry F.HON PN ALL.P king PN 3X-LOC.N
 ‘Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus’ (Esther 2:16; KJV)

(1165) *nò ʔè.sətâ bâʔ tâ lè-sʰyā ʔò*
 F.HON E. hit_{UNDERGO} thing_{IMPRS/NMLZ} go-send 3i
sʰū sò.pà ʔaxà.fəwē.rôʔ ʔə-ʔôʔ
 ALL.P king PN 3X-LOC.N
 ‘Esther was brought to King Xerxes’ (Esther 2:16; GNT)

Also, the *bâʔ* construction may be unique to or at least more widespread in Sgaw Karen compared to other Karenic languages. For example, Kato (2004: 52) notes that this construction is not found in Eastern Pwo Karen.

This concludes the discussion of alternations in transitivity and valency. We proceed, in §8.5, with negation, another major phenomenon pertaining to clauses.

8.5 Negation

Negation in Sgaw Karen involves two markers: the negative prefix *tə-*, which is one of four verbal prefixes in the language, and the clause-final negative particle *bâʔ*. Compare the affirmative sentence in (1166) with its negative equivalent in (1167).

(1166) *jə-θéʔ.nā ʔò lə*
 1s-know 3i FACT.FP
 ‘I know him.’ [LTP]

In older sources, such as the Thesaurus, *bâʔ* is consistently preserved in interrogative sentences.

In other contexts, there is a strong tendency for *bâʔ* to occur. For example, unlike in Burmese, where the final particle *pʰù/bù* is replaced by a subordinator in dependent clauses (Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016: 360–361), *bâʔ* is typically present in Sgaw Karen, as in (1173)–(1175).

(1173) *kʰôʔ-nâ lā tə-t̄-tə-lò bāʔ θêʔ.təpʰāʔ*
 head-ear REL NEG-be.true-NEG-be.direct NEG.FP COLL
 ‘dishonest leaders’ [HUR]

(1174) *jə-mê tə-sʰêʔ.nò lā ʔì bāʔ d̄sʔ*
 1s-be.true_{COND} NEG-sit GNR.P this NEG.FP then
jə-kə-bāʔ sʰā.tʰāʔ lā nêʔ l̄
 1s-IRR-must stand GNR.P that FACT.FP
 ‘If I don’t sit here, I have to stand there.’ [LTP]

(1175) *nə-kə-t̄ lā nə-pʰā.t̄əʔ*
 2s-IRR-arrive GNR.P 2sx-goal
[pʰē nə-tə-pəl̄.θāʔ bāʔ ʔə-kʰā] l̄
 when 2s-NEG-pay.attention NEG.FP 3x-time FACT.FP
 ‘You will reach your goals when you don’t expect it.’ (Vlog, “Advice”)

As for negated complement-clause-taking verbs, *bāʔ* tends to be used and in this case follows the complement clause, as in (1176).

(1176) *tə-kr̄əʔ lā ʔəwē.θêʔ d̄s-mō-wà kʰī yà nêʔ*
 NEG-be.suitable COMP 3.PL RLN-wife?-husband two CLF that
sīʔ.pù=wē.dāʔ ʔə-θāʔ dīʔ.nêʔ bāʔ
 flee=WD 3x-heart_{REFL} like.that NEG.FP
 ‘That married couple shouldn’t have run away like that.’
 (Vlog, “Missing family”)

The type of double negation in which “two negatives together make a positive” (Miestamo 2017: 430) also occurs in Sgaw Karen but appears to be restricted to more or less lexicalized compounds having the structure *tə-V tə-θē* ‘cannot not V’, as in (1177) and (1178).

(1177) *nə-bāʔ lè kâ | nə-tə-l̄ tə-θē bāʔ*
 2s-must go PROB.FP 2s-NEG-go NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} NEG.FP
 ‘Surely you have to go, don’t you? You can’t not go.’

- (1178) *tə-mà* *tə-θē* *lə* *bâ?* *tə-sī* *mà=wē*
 NEG-do NEG-ABIL anymore NEG.FP one-time do=COR
ʔə?.byī? *təkʰlī?* *ʔə?.θā* *təkʰlī?* *lə* *bâ?* *nē?.lə*
 rest(CC1) no.time.to rest(CC2) no.time.to anymore NEG.FP FP
 ‘(Some people do not get their job done and keep postponing it.) Once (the time comes when) there is no choice but to do it anymore, they do it without having any time to rest.’ (Karen proverbs: 25)

As van Schie (2019: 50) notes, the negative prefix *tə-* cannot co-occur with the irrealis marker *kə-*, as (1179) demonstrates, causing a neutralization of the distinction between irrealis and realis mood in negative clauses. Sentences such as (1179) are thus ambiguous when taken out of context.

- (1179) *jə-tə-ʔə?* *mè* *bâ?* **jə-tə-kə-ʔə?* / **jə-kə-tə-ʔə?*
 1s-NEG-eat rice NEG.FP
 ‘{I don’t eat / I’m not eating’ / ‘I won’t eat.}’

In the spoken language, especially, an emphatic cleft-type negation strategy is also used for pragmatic effect. This construction involves the copula phrase *tə-mé* (*lə*) [NEG-be.so (COMP)] ‘it is not the case (that)’, which negates a following complement clause. Examples (1180) and (1181) illustrate a cleft sentence and its pragmatically more neutral equivalent, respectively.

- (1180) *tə-mé* [*ʔə-kʰəʔ?.sā?=wē.dā?* *tʰī-pʰō-kə-pʰō*
 NEG-be.true_{COP} 3-represent=WD water-child-land-child
*ʔə-tā-bâ?-θū?-bâ?-θā?*_{COMP} *bâ?*
 3x-thing-hit-liver-hit-heart NEG.FP
 ‘It is not the case (that) it represents the will of the citizens’ (News vlog)
- (1181) *ʔə-tə-kʰəʔ?.sā?=wē.dā?* *tʰī-pʰō-kə-pʰō*
 3-NEG-represent=WD water-child-land-child
ʔə-tā-bâ?-θū?-bâ?-θā? *bâ?*
 3x-thing-hit-liver-hit-heart NEG.FP
 ‘It doesn’t represent the will of the citizens.’ [HUR]

The complementizer *lə* ‘that’ is absent in (1180) but can be used before the complement clause.

As Jones (1961: 52) notes, in the case of sentences containing a descriptive verb modifying a preceding clause, negation is marked on the descriptive verb. In (1182), the descriptive verb *θē* ‘can’, rather than *nō* ‘drive’, is negated. As explained in §4.3, sentences such as (1182) are considered monoclausal constructions with two verbal nuclei in which the descriptive verb is the main verb taking a clause as its subject.

- (1182) [jə-n̄ k̄ā]_s t̄ə-θē b̄â?
 1s-drive car NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t know how to drive.’ [KWH]

Note that two particles, *n̄* ‘extent’ and the negative new-situation marker *l̄* ‘anymore’, occur only in negative clauses. Examples of *n̄* and *l̄* are given in (1183) and (1184), respectively.

- (1183) ʔə-t̄ə-θē[?].n̄ t̄ā n̄ t̄ə-mì b̄â?
 3-NEG-know thing EXT one-kind NEG.FP
 ‘They don’t know anything.’

- (1184) ʔ̄ coffee t̄ə-k̄ē l̄ b̄â?
 drink c. NEG-ABIL anymore NEG.FP
 ‘(I) can’t drink coffee anymore (for now).’ [KWH]

As in the examples seen so far, most negation in Sgaw Karen takes place on the clausal level, and the possibilities for negating constituents smaller than the clause appear to be marginal. The descriptive verb *ɣè* ‘be good’ is one of few verbs that can function as a negative verb inside an otherwise affirmative clause. In (1185) and (1186), the scope of negation encompasses the verb rather than the clause. The verb *ʔ̄* ‘be bad, evil’ is similar in meaning to *t̄ə-ɣè* [NEG-be.good] ‘be not-good’ but more commonly refers to the quality of being morally wrong or wicked.

- (1185) p̄ə-wī t̄ə-ɣè d̄ô[?]-m̄ā[?] l̄
 1px-fate/luck NEG-be.good be.big-INTS FACT.FP
 ‘We were very unlucky.’ (Lit., ‘Our luck was very not-good’) [LTP]

- (1186) n̄ n̄[?] t̄ə-ɣè-b̄â[?]-k̄ət̄ t̄ə-ɣà l̄
 2s that_{TOP} NEG-be.good-NEG-SUPL one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘You are the worst one.’ [HUR]

Manson (2017b) mentions a post-main-verb use of negative *b̄â[?]*, where *b̄â[?]* occurs immediately following the main verb and additionally appears at the end of the clause, as in (1187) a passage from the 1853 Bible translation. The modern translation of the same passage, in (1188), also contains two instances of *b̄â[?]*.

- (1187) p̄ə-t̄ə-ʔ̄-b̄â[?] t̄ī l̄ t̄ī-p̄ù b̄â?
 1p-NEG-drink-NEG water GNR.P water-hole NEG.FP
 ‘neither will we drink of the water of the wells’ (Numbers 20:17; KJV)

- (1188) p̄ə-t̄ə-ʔ̄-b̄â[?] t̄ā l̄ θ̄ t̄ī-p̄ù t̄əp̄^hâ[?] b̄â?
 1p-NEG-drink-NEG THING GNR.P 2p water-hole COLL NEG.FP
 ‘we will not drink from your wells’ (Numbers 20:17; GNT)

This use of *bâʔ* in V₂ position is common in older sources and in the Bible translations but is not attested elsewhere except for some special cases of narrow scope seen above.

Finally, preventive mood is expressed by using the modal verb *təbâʔ* ‘must not’ and the negative optative final particle *təyè* (lit., ‘not good’), as in (1189). This construction is described in more detail in §10.2.

- (1189) *təbâʔ* *hîʔ* *tâ* *təyè*
 NEG.IMP steal THING NEG.OPT
 ‘Don’t steal.’ [KWH]

Another prefixal element altering the semantics of clauses is the irrealis marker *kə-*, to which we now turn.

8.6 The irrealis marker *kə-*

This section is concerned with the verbal prefix *kə-*, which marks various types of modalities within the IRREALIS domain of modal meanings. Irrealis mood refers to the ways in which languages express “alternatives” to reality, situations which will, might or should be but are not the case at some reference point (Timberlake 2007). Mithun (1993; cited in Palmer 2001: 1) describes the difference between realis and irrealis mood as follows: “The realis portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception. The irrealis portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination.” The binary distinction between realis and irrealis propositions is similar to the indicative–subjunctive distinction in many European languages (Palmer 2001). Following Palmer (2001) and Mauri & Sansò (2016), the term *irrealis* is preferred here since *subjunctive* is often restricted to the coding of unactualized situations in subordinate clauses, while *irrealis* can be understood as “covering the whole array of unactualized situations” (Mauri & Sansò 2016: 169). Also, this thesis follows Palmer (2001) and *The Oxford handbook of modality and mood* (2016) in regarding *mood* as the two “domains” of actualized (realis) and unactualized (irrealis) meanings and *modality* as grammatically coded subtypes of irrealis meanings (Nuyts 2016: 3–4).

Six subtypes of modality are here distinguished: epistemic (evidence-based), obligational–necessive (deontic, rule-based), volitional–optative (desire-based), directive (commanding), conditional–counterfactual, and ability-related modality (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Palmer 2001; Timberlake 2007). Table 44 demonstrates ways in which Sgaw Karen expresses modalities.

Table 44 Types of morpho-syntactic coding of modality

Coding	Examples	Type of modality
prefix (this section)	<i>kə-</i> ‘would, will’	any type
secondary verb (§5.1)	<i>bâ?</i> ‘must, should’ <i>təbâ?</i> ‘don’t’ <i>ʔê?.dō?</i> ‘want’	obligational–necessive directive volitional–optative
clause-complement-taking verb (§9.3.1)	<i>plē</i> ‘permit’	permissive
<i>lā</i>-complement-taking verb (§9.3.2)	<i>pli</i> (<i>lā</i>) ‘fear (that)’ <i>krā?</i> (<i>lā</i>) ‘it is suitable (that)’ <i>s^hā</i> (<i>lā</i>) ‘wish (that)’ <i>xē</i> (<i>lā</i>) ‘request (that)’	epistemic obligational–necessive volitional–optative directive
post-clausal descriptive verb (§4.3)	<i>θē</i> ‘can, may’	ability
adverb	<i>bâ?.θē?.θē?</i> ‘maybe’	epistemic
preclausal marker	<i>mē</i> ‘if’ (§9.4.4) <i>mō</i> ‘let’s’ (§10.2)	conditional, counterfactual volitional–optative
verbal modifier	<i>bâ?.p^hē?</i> ‘might’ (this section)	epistemic
final particle (Chapter 10)	<i>θā?</i> ‘surely’ <i>təkē</i> [OPT.FP]	epistemic directive, volitional–optative

Inside the clause itself, irrealis mood in Sgaw Karen is sometimes coded overtly using the irrealis marker *kə-*. In contrast, sentences representing situations that are or have been actualized are unmarked. The use of *kə-* in clauses denoting hypothetical, predicted, or desired situations is, however, not consistent. For example, *kə-* is not used in combination with secondary verbs, clause-modifying verbs, and causative verbs. In (1190), *kə-* does not occur before the verb *lê* ‘go’, which in this case represents an unactualized situation.

- (1190) a. *nə-bâ?* *lê* [2s-must go] ‘you must go’
 b. *jə-plē nə-lê* [1s-let 2s-go] ‘I let you go’
 c. *nə-lê θē* [2s-go be.skilled_{ABIL}] ‘you may go’

The remainder of this section will deal with clauses containing the irrealis marker *kə-*.

The irrealis marker *kə-* is one of four types of verbal prefixes in Sgaw Karen. The others are the personal prefixes, the negative prefix *tə-*, and the conditional marker *mə-* ‘if’ (which often retains its full form *mē*). The etymology of *kə-* is uncertain, but Wade (1897: 14–15) proposes that *kə-* may be a contraction of the verb *kū?* ‘deliberate, plan (v.)’ or the verb *kō?*, which is said to be synonymous with *bū?* ‘be near, about to’.

As previously mentioned, the function of *kə-* is to mark a situation as hypothetical or predicted to take place in the future. Syntactically, *kə-* is prefixed to the verb and occurs after any personal prefixes if present, as in (1191).

- (1191) *kʰā-sʰū-nā nêʔ nə-kə-mà mətà lɛʔ*
 time-ALL.P-front that_{FRAME} **2s-IRR-do** what CQ
 ‘What will you do in the future?’ [HUR]

Previous descriptions have described *kə-* as a future marker, since it is required for expressing future scenarios (e.g. Ballard 1973c; Gilmore 1898; Jones 1961). This also accords with the intuition of some native speakers who equate the use of *kə-* with the use of future-tense auxiliary verbs such as *will* in English. Omitting *kə-* in a sentence like (1192) is ungrammatical.

- (1192) *kʰā.sʰū.nā nêʔ nə-kə-mà (*nə-mà) mətà lɛʔ*
 future that_{FRAME} **2s-IRR-do** what CQ
 ‘What will you do in the future?’ [HUR]

Although *kə-* can refer to any time in the future, imminent future events can be expressed using *būʔ kə-* ‘about to’, exemplified in (1193) and (1194).

- (1193) *jɛ nāʔ.rɪʔ būʔ kə-bāʔ lɪ*
 five clock **be.near IRR-hit** NS
 ‘It’s almost five o’clock.’ [HUR]
- (1194) *tā-ʔôʔ.pʰyôʔ būʔ kə-sāʔ.tʰɔʔ lɪ*
 thing-be.gathered **be.near IRR-start** NS
 ‘The meeting is about to start.’ [HUR]

While it is true that *kə-* is required in clauses expressing future events, it is not the only context in which *kə-* occurs. Since hypothetical estimations can be made about past events, albeit more rarely, future tense reference is best seen as a statistical correlate rather than as a definitional feature of *kə-*.

One context in which *kə-* appears is in clauses expressing intention. In (1195), *kə-* occurs in a purposive clause introduced by the purposive complementizer *dī.θōʔ* ‘so that, in order to’.

- (1195) *bɛʔ.tʰɔʔ ʔə-xɛʔ dī.θōʔ kə-klɔ̃ ʔə lə*
 unsheathe 3x-machete so.that **IRR-slash** 3i FACT.FP
 ‘[He] drew out his knife to cut it’ (Jones 1961: 209–210)

Intention is also expressed in some varieties (mostly in the Northern Thailand and Hpa-an–Mawlamyine varieties) using the modal verb *θā* ‘intend to’, seen in (1196).

- (1196) *sə.kêʔ θā kə-kè lə*
 PN intend **IRR-return** FACT.FP
 ‘Saw Kay intended to go back.’ (Saw Kay)

Another domain frequently featuring *kə-* is statements expressing epistemic modality, which refers to the speaker’s estimation of whether a proposition is true or not. In most such cases, *kə-* combines with other types of modality markers, such as complement-clause-taking verbs, epistemic adverbs, and final particles. Examples of the latter include *bâʔ.θêʔ.θêʔ* ‘maybe’, used predominantly in the Kayin–Tak variety, and *bâʔ.təbâʔ* ‘maybe’, used elsewhere. In such cases, the event expressed by the verb marked by *kə-* can refer not only to future but also past or, as in (1197), ongoing action.

- (1197) *bâʔ.təbâʔ / bâʔ.θêʔ.θêʔ ʔə-kə-kwēʔ liʔ sʰū jə-ʔôʔ*
 maybe 3-IRR-write letter ALL.P 1sx-LOC.N
 ‘Maybe he’s writing a letter to me.’ [LTP.D]

The marker *kə-* is often present in the clauses following verbs taking a *lā* clause as their complement (see §9.3.2). The clausal complements of these verbs express different types of irrealis modality, such as an event which is estimated or intended to happen, as in (1198) and (1199), respectively.

- (1198) *ʔəwē bâʔ.jôʔ [lā ʔə-kə-ʔôʔ tə-sʰūʔ bāʔ]cc*
 3 worry COMP 3-IRR-EXIST NEG-be.strong NEG.FP
 ‘She is afraid that she may be sick.’ [LTP]

- (1199) *jə-sʰə.tēʔ-lə jə-θāʔ [lā jə-kə-siʔ.lə lā hiʔ-pù]cc lə*
 1s-decide-DOWN 1s.REFL COMP 1s-IRR-leave GNR.P house-inside FP
 ‘I decided to leave home.’ (Blog story)

In some regions, *kə-* can be prefixed to verbs indicating measurement, such as length of time and distance, to express ‘approximately’, denoting an estimation, as in (1200) and (1201).

- (1200) *pə-lē tā kə-jiʔ=wē ʔə-mīʔ.nīʔ kʰī sʰī*
 1p-go thing IRR-be.long(time)=COR 3x-minute two ten
θə sʰī xāʔ.xāʔ nēʔ.lə
 three ten approximately FP
 ‘We travelled (by car) around 20, 30 minutes.’ (Moon Rabbit)

- (1201) *dəʔ ʔə-yiʔ.xī kə-tʰə nwī plā lə*
 and 3x-rib IRR-be.long seven cubit FACT.FP
 ‘and [a pig] whose ribs are seven cubits long’ (Jones 1961: 230–231)

This use of *kə-* is reportedly not common in the Kayin–Tak region.

Note that *kə-* fails to occur in secondary-verb constructions where the subject is shared between the verbs (see §5.1.1). In (1202), the subject of *ʔēʔ.dəʔ* ‘want’ and *ʔəʔ* ‘be, exist’ is the same. In contrast, (1203) contains a different-subject construction, where *kə-* is used.

(1202) *jə-ʔé̃.dōʔ ʔóʔ=jē tʰē jə-nó.kəsá tə-yà lò*
 1s-want EXIST=1se only 1sx-self one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘I just want to be alone by myself.’ [HUR]

(1203) *jə-mí.lá lā nə-kə-blā.kè-dáʔ=wē kʰl̄ē~kʰl̄ē lò*
 1s-hope COMP 2s-IRR-recover-EXCL=COR be.fast(RDP) FACT.FP
 ‘Hope you get well soon.’ [HUR]

As previously mentioned, the use of *kə-* in irrealis clauses is not consistent. In many cases, omitting *kə-* is not considered ungrammatical and appears to cause little change in meaning. In (1204), *kə-* is left out before *lè* ‘go’ but would be grammatical in this position. Example (1205) demonstrates further contexts in which the use of *kə-* is optional.

(1204) *dē.kʰwā θā lè pɔʔ.léʔ pʰē.léʔ tò léʔ*
 yB intend go sea which place CQ
 ‘Which place by the sea are you (younger brother) going to?’ [KWH]

(1205) *nə-dō.pí.wé-kʰwā kwēʔ líʔ.pəʔā*
 2sx-sibling-M write letter
(kə-)wì ʔəyɔ̃ néʔ (kə-)jìʔ tʰē.léʔ
 IRR-finish 3.PURP that_{FRAME} IRR-take.long how.much
 ‘How long will it take for your brother to finish the letter?’ [LTP.D]

Thus, compared to the indicative–subjunctive distinction in languages such as Spanish referred to above, the use of *kə-* to mark irrealis modality can be considered less rigid.

The final major clause-level phenomenon to be described, in §8.7, is event aspect.

8.7 Aspect

In his seminal work, Comrie (1976) describes aspect as the indication of the temporal make-up of an event, which can be bounded (perfective) or unbounded (imperfective). Two types of aspect are generally distinguished: lexical aspect and event aspect. This section discusses the latter type. While both revolve around the perfectivity–imperfectivity contrast, the former denotes the inherent aspectual value of a verb, which is unmarked and part of a verb’s lexical meaning, while the latter refers to ways in which aspectual markers modify that inherent aspectual value (Timberlake 2007).

In Sgaw Karen, as in most languages, the event aspect of a clause is modified in various ways, either lexically or grammatically or through a combination of the two. This section is concerned with aspect modification using grammatical morphemes focusing on six aspect markers. Three of these are fully grammaticalized functional morphemes while the remaining three are verbs which have undergone semantic bleaching, having lost many of

their verbal properties. Syntactically, they belong to three different word classes: sentence-final markers, verbal modifiers, and clause-modifying descriptive verbs.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, imperfective aspect is not obligatorily marked in Sgaw Karen; lexically atelic verbs can express either progressive or habitual aspect depending on the context. The verb $\text{ʔô}^?$ ‘exist, stay, be (somewhere)’ combines with a limited number of verbs to form a state compound but retains much of its lexical meaning and is not considered a grammatical marker (see §5.3.2 for a description). One marker of imperfective aspect discussed in this section is $d\bar{t}^?$ ‘still, (not) yet’, which is used to emphasize that a state or action is ongoing.

The remaining aspectual operators indicate different types of perfective aspect. More specifically, they express subtypes of the perfect aspect which, broadly defined, “indicates the continuing present relevance of a past situation” (Comrie 1976: 52). As previous studies have shown (e.g. Jenny 2001), while sub-meanings of the perfect tend to be subsumed under one construction in European languages, they are often expressed using separate markers in East and Southeast Asian languages. As Table 45 shows, three groups of perfect aspect markers can be distinguished in Sgaw Karen.

Table 45 Perfect aspect markers

Type of perfect	Marker
new situation	$\bar{l}i / l\hat{\delta}$
persistent situation	$n\hat{e}$
experiential	$b\bar{u} / b\hat{a}^? / \text{ʔô}^?$

In short, the new-situation markers indicate the emergence of a new situation which is contrasted with a contrary situation prior to the change (§8.7.1), the marker of persistent situation expresses that a past situation still holds at reference point (§8.7.2), while the experiential markers signal that an event has occurred sometime prior to the present (§8.7.4).

The new-situation markers can be contrasted with the continuative marker $d\bar{t}^?$ ‘still, (not) yet’ (§8.7.2) regarding the way they relate a statement with respect to the boundaries between two opposite situations. The markers $\bar{l}i$ ‘already’, $l\hat{\delta}$ ‘(not) anymore’, and $d\bar{t}^?$ ‘still, (not) yet’ thus form the group of markers known in the literature as “phasal” markers which are used to “express that a state does or does not continue” (van der Auwera 1998). Using Timberlake’s (2007) notation, σ represents a situation and $\neg\sigma$ its negative counterpart.

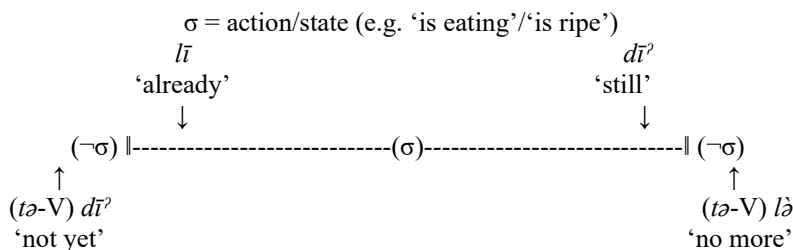


Figure 7 Phasal markers

As Figure 7 illustrates, $\bar{l}\bar{i}$ ‘already’ and $l\partial$ ‘(not) anymore’ both refer to a situation (V) which has just started or ended (‘it is now the case that $[\sigma/-\sigma]$). In contrast, $d\bar{i}$ indicates either that a situation is still ongoing or has not yet emerged (‘it is still the case that $[\sigma/-\sigma]$ ’).

Before commencing the discussion of the aspect markers, a brief description of the lexical aspect of Sgaw Karen verbs is useful since both types of aspect contribute to the aspectual meaning of a clause. As previously mentioned, Sgaw Karen monosyllabic verbs fall into three of the four aspectual classes identified by Vendler (1967), expressing states (e.g. $n\dot{a}$ ‘believe’, $\gamma\dot{\gamma}$ ‘be early; be red’), activities (e.g. $h\bar{a}$ ‘walk’, $k\bar{u}$ ‘cut, slice, harvest’), or achievements (e.g. $n\dot{\delta}$ ‘win, beat’, $n\dot{e}$ ‘get’). The fourth lexical aspect, accomplishments, which are terminally bounded, is typically expressed using a combination of an activity and an achievement verb. Examples of achievement verb compounds include $m\dot{a}-w\dot{i}$ [do-finish] ‘finish (tr.), complete’ and $\theta\dot{u}^2-t^h\dot{\gamma}$ ($h\dot{i}$) [build-UP (house)] ‘build (a house)’. Similarly, initiotransformatives (e.g. $n\dot{i}-t^h\dot{\gamma}$ ‘burst into laughter’), a subgroup of achievements which are initially bounded, are expressed by means of compounding. Verbal modifiers thus contribute to the lexical aspect of a verb–verb compound in various ways (see §5.5).

Next, the aspectual markers are described in turn.

8.7.1 New-situation markers

The new-situation marker $\bar{l}\bar{i}$ ‘already’ and its negative equivalent $l\partial$ ‘(not) anymore’ express the emergence of a new situation and emphasize the current relevance of that situation (cf. Li, Thompson & McMillan Thompson 1982). The markers combine the semantics of two of Bybee et al.’s (1994) gram-types, the anterior (roughly, perfect) and the resultative. While both express that “a past action has relevance in the present”, the former denotes actions that have been completed, while the latter indicates that “the state persists at reference time” (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 63). Due to this additional function of markers such as $\bar{l}\bar{i}$, a group of scholars propose a new crosslinguistic category termed “iamitive” (from Latin *iam* ‘already’) (e.g. Dahl & Wälchli 2016; Olsson 2013). The term employed here, *new situation*, proposed by Ebert (2001), has gained currency especially in East and Southeast Asian linguistics.

Semantic equivalents of $\bar{l}\bar{i}$ ‘already’ and $l\partial$ ‘(not) anymore’ are probably widespread across Karenic. Two known examples are the Kayah Li verb particle $\acute{\iota}$ (Solnit 1997: 109)

and the Eastern Pwo particle *jəv* (Kato 2004: 462–465). Interestingly, they all appear to derive from different sources, but little has been said about their etymologies. As for the Sgaw Karen markers *lī* and *lə*, some brief descriptions exist. Ballard (1973a: 67) describes *lī* as a particle indicating “that the action has already begun”. Jones (1961: 16) considers *lī* to be one of four secondary verbs. The other three are the verbs of ability *θē* ‘have the skill to’ and *kē* ‘have the energy to’ as well as the completive verb *wì* ‘finish’. Thus, although possibly verbal in origin, *lī* and *lə* have since lost much of their verbhood, as will be shown.

The marker *lī* and its counterpart *lə* both express ‘it is now the case that’ (cf. Jenny 2001: 128). The difference is that the former must be preceded by an affirmative and the latter by a negative proposition; compare (1206) and (1207).

(1206) *ɔəwē* *ɔʔ* *mè* ***lī***
 3 eat rice NS
 ‘She is eating {now / already}.’

(1207) *ɔəwē* *tə-ɔʔ* *mè* ***lə*** *bāʔ*
 3 NEG-eat rice NEG.NS NEG.FP
 ‘She is not eating anymore.’

Whether *lī* is best translated as *now* or *already* or left untranslated depends on the context, more specifically, on the degree of emphasis and whether the situation change is expected or unexpected.

Expressing that an action has finished requires the use of the completive verb *wì* ‘finish’, which occurs after the clause. Here, *wì* is a clause-modifying verb which takes the preceding clause as its S argument and is itself modified by *lī*, as in (1208). Since descriptive verbs with clausal subjects are the main verbs of a clause, negation is marked on this verb rather than on the preceding verb, as in (1209) (see also §4.3).

(1208) *ɔəwē* *ɔʔ* *mè* *wì* ***lī***
 3 eat rice finish NS
 ‘She has eaten (already).’ (Lit., ‘Her eating has finished.’)

(1209) *jə-ɔʔ* *mè* *tə-wì* ***dīʔ*** *bāʔ*
 1s-eat rice NEG-finish CONT NEG.FP
 ‘I haven’t eaten yet.’ [LTP]

As mentioned above, the etymologies of *lī* and *lə* are unclear. What seems likely, however, is that they share the same origin; *lə* is possibly a contraction of *lī* and another morpheme. Syntactically, they exhibit verbal qualities, such as the ability to precede the coreference marker *wē*, but they lack most other characteristics associated with verbs. In older texts, *lī* and *lə* tend to stick to the main verb and occur before any objects. The markers also occasionally occur twice in the same clause, once following the verb and the second time following the clause, as in (1210) and (1211).

- (1210) *pə-plá-lī* *ʔə-tá.dēʔ.bāʔ* *lī*
 1p-release-NS 3x-sin NS
 ‘We have absolved his sins.’ (Morning Star, 1951)
- (1211) *pɣà.kəp̄n̄* *l̄ə* *l̄àʔ.kʰɔ̄* *tə-kʰɔ̄*
 Karen GNR.P Lower.Burma one-side
tə-sīʔ-tē-l̄ə=wē *dīʔ.nēʔ* *l̄ə* *bāʔ*
 NEG-say-tell-**anymore**=COR like.that **anymore** NEG.FP
 ‘The Karens in Lower Burma do not tell it this way any more.’
 (Jones 1961: 232–233)

In the modern language, *lī* and *l̄ə* rarely occur post-verbally, appearing instead predominantly after the object (but before any final particles). There are some indications in the data that the position of *lī* and *l̄ə*, whether postverbal (i.e. post-verb complex) or postclausal or both, varies regionally. As early as in 1846, Mason (1846: 148) wrote about *lī*: “At Tavoy the affix is written immediately after the verb, and if words follow, after those words also; but at Maulmain it is often omitted in such instances with the verb, and written only at the end of the sentence”.

An important aspect to consider is the interaction between aspectual markers and the lexical aspect of the verbs they modify. With non-telic (activity and state) verbs, *lī* indicates that an action or state has come into being, contrasting this new situation (σ) with a previous opposite situation ($-\sigma$). In (1212) and (1213), *lī* indicates a change of state, while in (1214), it expresses that an action has begun.

- (1212) *jə-tʰəʔ* *tə-pʰl̄əʔ* *ʔi* *l̄ə.l̄i* *lī*
 1sx-bag one-CLF(3D) this be.old NS
 ‘This bag of mine {is old / has gotten old}.’ [LTP]
- (1213) *nə-l̄ə.ʔēʔ* *lī*
 2s-be.cute NS
 ‘You are pretty already (you don’t need to put on more makeup)!’ [HUR]
- (1214) *pɣà* *θāʔ.wīʔ* *tá* *lī*
 people sing things NS
 ‘People have begun singing already.’ (Ballard 1973a: 186)

Note that omitting *lī* in (1212)–(1214) is grammatical but removes the contrast with a preceding reverse situation.

With telic verbs, on the other hand, *lī* indicates that the event expressed by the verb has reached its endpoint, as in (1215) and (1216).

(1215) *d̥s̥ʔ* *kē.tʰɔ̃ʔ-kè* *θéʔ.pwá* *l̄*
 and become-RETURN forest NS
 ‘and (the hill field) has become a forest again’ (Karen village)

(1216) *s̥ɔ̃.pá* *θl̄* *l̄*
 king die NS
 ‘The king {has died / is dead}.’ [LTP.D]

Note that *θl̄ l̄*, in (1216), cannot be interpreted as ‘is dying’, since the meaning of *θl̄*, in contrast to *die*, includes an endpoint. Note further that the actual transition into a new situation expressed by *l̄* can be temporally distant from the time of the utterance. Thus, uttering (1216) is possible several days after the event occurred, depending on the context. The use of *l̄* with telic verbs, then, corresponds to what is known in the literature as the perfect of result, which refers to situations where an action has been completed and has present relevance (Comrie 1976: 56–58).

To achieve a perfect-of-result meaning with activity verbs, the completive verb *wì* ‘finish (intr.), come to an end’ is commonly used. Another telic verb with a similar function is *l̄ʔ* ‘be finished, be used up’. Compare (1217) and (1218); although both *wì* and *l̄ʔ* are telic (achievements), they convey different meanings.

(1217) *nə-mà* *nə-hiʔ-tá.mà* *wì* *l̄* *hā*
 2s-do 2sx-house-work **finish(intr.)** NS PQ
 ‘Have you done your homework?’ [HUR]

(1218) *nə-mà* *nə-hiʔ-tá.mà* *l̄ʔ* *l̄* *hā*
 2s-do 2sx-house-work **be.finished** NS PQ
 ‘Have you finished all your homework?’ [HUR]

With atelic verbs, *wì* is not and indeed cannot be used, as demonstrated in (1219).

(1219) *ʔəwē.dáʔ* *l̄.bɣiʔ* (**wì*) *l̄*
 3 get.tired NS
 ‘He {is / has gotten} tired.’ [LTP]

Compared with *l̄* ‘already’, *l̄ʔ* ‘(not) anymore’ occurs less frequently with telic verbs. Expressing $V_{[+telic]} l̄$ ‘(it is now the case that X) has V-ed’ is common while the opposite, $tə- V_{[+telic]} l̄ʔ bāʔ$ ‘(it is now the case that X) has not V-ed anymore’ is more difficult to imagine. Exceptions like (1220) can, however, be found.

- (1220) *mē.lā* *jə-kənāʔ* *tā.θāʔ.wīʔ* *mīʔ-māʔ* *ʔə-xō*
 since 1s-listen song be.enjoyable-INTS 3X-REASON
jə-tə-kè *lā* *bāʔ*
 1s-NEG-return **anymore** NEG.FP
 ‘(I had decided to leave, but then they started singing a song.)
 Since I really liked the song, I stayed.’ (Blog story)

The meaning of *tə-V*_[+telic] *lā bāʔ* is that the subject no longer intends to perform the action. It was mentioned in §8.6 that the irrealis marker *kə-* is used in clauses expressing intention. Since the irrealis marker *kə-* does not co-occur with the negator *tə-*, however, it is not present in (1220).

Compare this with the use of *lī* with clauses containing the irrealis marker *kə-*. The meaning expressed is ‘X now/already intends to V’, as in (1221).

- (1221) *nə-kə-kè* *təkʰɿ* *lī* *hā*
 2s-IRR-return instead NS PQ
 ‘are you already going back?’ (Ballard 1973c: 96)

Again, *lī* adds pragmatic meaning, in (1221) a sense of unexpectedness similar to what is conveyed by the word *already*. A plain *pə-kə-kè* ‘we will go back/home’ without *lī* is grammatical but lacks that pragmatic connotation.

8.7.2 Persistent situation

A type of perfect known as the perfect of persistent situation expresses that an event started prior to the speech situation and continues in the present (Comrie 1976). In Sgaw Karen, this is expressed using the new-situation marker *lī* previously discussed and a temporal classifier phrase. Together, they indicate the time a situation has been in place until reference point. In addition, the verb *nē* ‘get’ often occurs as the main verb taking the preceding clause as its subject, as in (1222) and (1223).

- (1222) [*jə-mā.lō* *kənɿ-klōʔ*]_s ***nē*** *tə-nīʔ* *lī*
 1s-learn Karen-language **get**_{PRF} one-year NS
 ‘I have studied Karen for one year now.’ [HUR]

- (1223) *təni.ʔi* [*jə-hē* *ʔōʔ* *dɿʔ* *nā*]_s ***nē*** *θā* *nì* *lī*
 today 1s-come EXIST with 2si **get**_{PRF} three day NS
 ‘Today I have been with you for three days already.’ (Ballard 1973b: 76)

In many cases, the classifier phrase and *lī* suffice to express the amount of time a situation has persisted, and *nē* ‘get’ is omitted. In (1224), *nē* can be omitted, as indicated, and in (1225), *nē* is not used but could be inserted before the temporal phrase.

- (1224) a. *nə-hē* *ʔōʔ* *lā* *jò-kô* ***nê*** *p^hāʔ.jìʔ* *lī* *fiā*
 2s-come EXIST GNR.P Tai-country **get_{PRF}** last.long NS PQ
 b. (*nê*) *tə-lā* *lī* / (***nê***) *tə-jìʔ-dīʔ* *bāʔ*
 get_{PRF} one-month NS **get_{PRF}** NEG-last-CONT NEG.FP
 a. ‘How long have you been in Thailand?’ b. ‘A month / not long yet.’ [HUR]

- (1225) *hē* *mà.tā* *p^hē.ʔì* *ʔā* *nīʔ* *lī*
 come work here many year NS
 ‘(I) have worked here for many years.’ (Karen village)

Other verbs performing a similar function as *nê* include *jìʔ* ‘last (for some time)’ and *ʔōʔ* ‘exist’, seen in (1226) and (1227). Due to the semantics of *nê* ‘get’, this verb is often used with human subjects, while *jìʔ* and *ʔōʔ* are also used with inanimate subjects.

- (1226) [*jə-ʔōʔ=wē.dāʔ* *lā* *jò.kô*]_S *nēʔ* ***jìʔ=wē.dāʔ*** *ʔə-nīʔ* *təs^hī* *lī*
 1s-EXIST=WD GNR.P Thailand that_{TOP} **last(v.)=WD** 3x-year ten NS
 ‘I have lived in Thailand for ten years (already).’ [HUR]

- (1227) *mēʔ.ʔū* *tə-hē* ***ʔōʔ*** *jê* *lā* *lī*
 fire/electricity NEG-come **EXIST** five month NS
 ‘There has been no electricity for five months.’ (News article)

8.7.3 Continuative *dīʔ*

The third phasal polarity marker is *dīʔ* ‘still’, which indicates the continuation of a state or action. As seen in (1228) and (1229), *dīʔ* is equivalent to ‘still’ in affirmative contexts but translates to ‘yet’ in negative and interrogative contexts.

- (1228) *pə-s^hē.t^hōʔ* *lā* *pə-kəsā* *k^hōʔ* *θē-dīʔ* *lò*
 1p-stand GNR.P 1px-self foot/leg be.able-CONT FACT.FP
 ‘we can still stand on our own’ (Hill 2023)

- (1229) *mī* *tə-θī* *lā* *tə-ʔīʔ* ***dīʔ*** *bāʔ*
 sun NEG-die moon NEG-be.rotten **CONT** NEG.FP
 ‘The sun isn’t dead; the moon hasn’t rotted yet. (There is still time.)’
 (Karen proverbs)

As with *lī* ‘already’ and *lò* ‘(not) anymore’ discussed in §8.7.1, an important aspect of *dīʔ* is the contrast it signals between a current situation (σ) and a contrary situation ($-\sigma$) expected to occur. Thus, (1230) implies an expectation that the reverse situation will eventually occur.

- (1230) *t^hōʔ-nāʔ* *nēʔ* *ʔə-kò-dīʔ* *fiā*
 pig-meat that_{TOP} 3-be.tough-CONT PQ
 ‘Is the pork still tough?’ [HUR]

In negative contexts, *dīʔ* often occurs in negative replies to clauses modified by *lī* ‘already’. Example (1231) illustrates the relationship between the two markers.

- (1231) a. *mī tʰūʔ* *lī* *hā*
 sun be.vertical NS PQ
 b. *mī tə-tʰūʔ* *dīʔ* *bāʔ*
 sun NEG-be.vertical CONT NEG.FP
 a. ‘Is it noon?’ b. ‘It’s not yet noon.’ [HUR]

When combined with the irrealis marker *kə-*, *dīʔ* indicates that the intention to perform an action, or the possibility of something to occur, still exists, as in (1232) and (1233).

- (1232) *jə-kə-kwā-sʰō.kəmōʔ* *dīʔ*
 1s-IRR-look-think CONT
 ‘I’ll still consider it.’ (Ballard 1973b: 89)

- (1233) *tə-θēʔ.jā-lə.tī=wē* *lā*
 NEG-know-be.exact=COR COMP
 mē *ʔə-pā* *kə-hē-kè-dīʔ* *hā*
 be.true_Q 3x-father IRR-come-RETURN-CONT PQ
 ‘(He) didn’t know for sure whether his father would still return.’
 (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)

The marker *dīʔ* ‘still, (not) yet’ does not occur independently (presuming that this marker has no connection with the verb *dīʔ* ‘be like’, for which see §9.4.6). However, the verbhood of *dīʔ* is evident from the fact that it can be part of the main verb complex, preceding the coreference marker *wē* and any objects, if present. In (1234), *dīʔ* occurs both in post-verbal and post-clausal position. As indicated, post-clausal *dīʔ* can be omitted in this case. Furthermore, as seen in (1235), for the same speaker it is also possible for *dīʔ* to occur only post-clausally.

- (1234) *nə-θēʔ.jā-dīʔ* *jə-dō.pī.wē-kʰwā* (*dīʔ*) *hā*
 2s-know-CONT 1sx-sibling-male CONT PQ
 ‘(A year ago,) did you know my brother (yet)?’ [LTP.D]

- (1235) *nə-nā.hū tā.kəsōʔ* *dīʔ* *hā*
 2s-hear news CONT PQ
 ‘Have you heard the news?’ [LTP.D]

Typically, *dīʔ* ‘still, (not) yet’ occurs only once in a sentence, but both the postverbal and post-clausal positions appear to be common. The variation apparently has little to no semantic implications but appears instead to be due to inter-speaker or regional differences.

Compare the distribution of *dīʔ* with that of *lī* ‘already’, which in the modern language nearly always occurs in post-clausal position (see §8.7.1).

Also note the use of *dīʔ* with the temporal complement-clause-taking verb *təkʰlīʔ* ‘before (lit., ‘not reached’)', as in (1236) (see also §9.4.1 on temporal clauses).

- (1236) *təkʰlīʔ-dīʔ* *lə* *nə-tì=wē.dāʔ* *nə-tā.mî.lâ-pʰŋ.tâʔ* *dīʔ* *bâʔ*
 NEG-reach-CONT COMP 2s-arrive=WD 2sx-hope(n.)-goal CONT NEG.FP
 ‘before you have reached your goals yet’ (Vlog, “Advice”)

As with *lə* ‘(not) anymore’ discussed in §8.7.1, *dīʔ* ‘still, (not) yet’ is most common with atelic verbs. With telic verbs, *dīʔ* can naturally modify a negative clause, but the opposite is rare, since the meaning ‘it is still the case that X has V-ed’ is not commonly expressed. In such cases, *dīʔ* instead expresses ‘as of yet’, as in (1237) and (1238), implying that something might still happen.

- (1237) *nə-θəwŋ* *nēʔ* *lə.yàʔ* *lə* *jə-lè-bâʔ* *tʰē* *tə-blŋ* *dīʔ*
 2sx-village that_{TOP} seem COMP 1s-go-hit_{EXP} only one-time CONT
 ‘It seems [to me] as though I have only been to your village once.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 114; brackets in the original)

- (1238) *nə-tʰŋʔ-bū-dīʔ* Lady Gaga *dīʔ* *hā*
 2s-see-EXP-CONT L. CONT PQ
 ‘Have you ever seen Lady Gaga?’ [LTP]

Apart from expressing the continuation of a situation, *dīʔ* also appears to convey additive meaning, indicating that an event occurs in addition to some other event. However, only sporadic examples of this use of *dīʔ* appear in the data. In (1239), *dīʔ* indicates that the event denoted by the second clause occurred in addition to the event.

- (1239) *pyà.pʰŋ.θâʔ* *tə-yà* *nēʔ* *lè* *ʔŋʔ* *tà.θâʔ*
 child one-CLF(HUM) that go eat fruit
lə *pyà* *dēʔ* *ləʔ* *ʔā-māʔ*
 GNR.P person house/room all be.much-INTS
təkāʔ *bâʔ* *kè-sòʔ=wē* *dīʔ*
 not.only NEG.FP return-carry=COR CONT
 ‘That child went and ate up a great deal of fruit at the person’s house;
 more than that he took some back with him as well.’ (Ballard 1973c: 259)

More commonly, additive meaning is expressed by the adverb *sé.kŋʔ* ‘also’.

8.7.4 Experiential aspect

Experiential aspect indicates that some action or state has occurred prior to some reference point, usually the speech situation (Comrie 1976). Sgaw Karen uses two markers to express

this: the multifunctional marker *bâʔ*, which is native, and the marker *bū*, which is likely borrowed from Burmese *-pʰù/bù* (described by Jenny & Hnin Tun 2016: 199–200). The latter does not occur in northern Thailand, where only *bâʔ* is used.

In terms of syntactic distribution, *bâʔ* and *bū* occur as verbal modifiers immediately following the main verb. They express that an event has taken place sometime prior to reference point, corresponding to ‘ever’ in affirmative contexts and ‘never’ in negative contexts, as in (1240) and (1241).

(1240) *jə-tʰiʔ-bū* ʔə lə
 1s-see-EXP 3i FACT.FP
 ‘I have seen him.’ [LTP.D]

(1241) *jə-tə-tʰiʔ-bū* ʔə nə tə-blə bâʔ
 1s-NEG-see-EXP 3i EXT one-time NEG.FP
 ‘I have never seen him.’ [LTP.D]

Example (1242) illustrates the use of *bâʔ* ‘hit, encounter’ as an experiential marker in the Mae Hong Son variety, where *bū* reportedly is not used. Similarly, *bâʔ* is the only experiential marker attested in Ratanakul’s Thai–Sgaw dictionary, which represents the Chiang Mai variety.

(1242) *nə-dəʔ-bâʔ* kʰi tə-blə~lə hā
 2s-ride-**hit**_{EXP} boat one-time(RDP) PQ
 ‘Have you ever ridden a boat?’ [KWH]

Combining the two markers is also possible, as in (1243). The reverse order has not been attested.

(1243) *nə-liʔ-bū-bâʔ* nə-θəʔ-áʔ-miʔ tə-blə~lə hā
 2s-lic-EXP-**hit**_{EXP} 2sx-teacher-F one-time(RDP) PQ
 ‘Have you ever lied to your teacher?’ [HUR]

After having described some major clause-level phenomena, we now turn to the discussion of subordinate clauses and clause combining, in Chapter 9.

8.8 Summary

This chapter started by described how the valency of a verb or the transitivity of a clause can be increased or decreased by overt morphosyntactic marking in Sgaw Karen. Affectedness constructions involve the verbal modifiers *nê* ‘get’ (benefaction or malefaction), *sə* ‘help’, *jì-yì* ‘assist’, and *bâʔ* ‘hit’, which add an argument to the clause. Similarly, the causative verbs *mà* ‘make’ and *dīʔ* ‘fight; confine’ license an extra argument, in this case a causee. Constructions in which the noun *θāʔ* ‘heart’ is the object are typically

reflexive, as when an animate referent is both the agent and patient in an event, or anticausative, as when an inanimate referent is portrayed as acting or having entered a state without external influence. Such clauses are low in transitivity but remain syntactically unchanged when compared to a base clause.

Core arguments of a clause can be semantically backgrounded when they are unknown or unimportant for the portrayal of an event. Argument backgrounding can involve syntactic demotion of an agent (the *bâʔ* construction) or the replacement of a core argument with one of the impersonal pronouns *tâ* ‘thing’ or *pyà* ‘person’. Argument backgrounding lowers the transitivity of a clause but does not involve any change in syntactic valency.

Other clause-level phenomena discussed in this chapter are negation, which is expressed by the prefix *tə-* and the negative final particle *bâʔ*, the use of the irrealis marker *kə-* in non-indicative (non-realis) clauses, and aspect, which is expressed in various morphosyntactic ways in Sgaw Karen. The aspects treated in this chapter are all subtypes of the perfect aspect, which conveys the relevance of a past action or situation in the present.

9 Subordination

Subordination refers to the use of clauses as constituents embedded within a main clause (Haspelmath 2007: 5–6; Noonan 2007: 52). This chapter discusses nominalization, which forms nouns out of verbs, relative clauses, which act as modifiers of nouns, complement clauses, which function as arguments of complement-clause-taking verbs, and adverbial clauses, which are used to modify a main clause.

Subordination in Sgaw Karen can be marked overtly by a marker introducing the embedded clause. The most common marker is *lā*, a generic subordinator used to introduce any of the three types of subordinate clauses. Regarding adverbial clauses, more semantically specific, often verb-derived (quasi-)adverbializers are also used, as described in §9.4. We begin with nominalization, §9.1, after which we turn to the three types of subordination. Relative clauses are described in §9.2, complement clauses in §9.3, and adverbial clauses in §9.4.

9.1 Nominalization

Nominalization refers to “the process by which we derive nominal expressions”, typically from verbs or clauses (Yap, Grunow-Hårsta & Wrona 2011: 3). In Sgaw Karen, nouns are derived from verbs or clauses using *tā* ‘thing’, which is also used as a regular noun.⁵⁰ One of the most frequent morphemes in Sgaw Karen, *tā* has appeared in previous chapters as a component of nominal compounds (§3.3.2) and as an impersonal pronoun (§7.3.3). As a nominalizer, *tā* enables a clause to function as an argument of a main verb. Consider (1244).

- (1244) *tā-kò-mè* *mē=wē* *tā* *lā* *mà* *kō*
thing_{NMLZ-resist-rice} be.true_{COP=}COR thing REL do be.difficult
‘Fasting is a difficult thing to do.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 66–67)

In (1244), *tā* ‘thing’ nominalizes the verb phrase *ʔōʔ mē* ‘eat rice’, and the nominalized verb functions as the S argument of the copula verb *mē* ‘be true’. Further examples can be seen in (1245) and (1246).

⁵⁰ Note that *tā* lacks a reduced form unlike many varieties of the closely related Pwo Karen language (see e.g. Kato 2004: 104; Phillips 2018: 55).

(1245) *mī.mə.sʰā tə-nì ʔi [tā-lē.tʰɔ̃?.lē.tʰɔ̃]s ʔóʔ ʔā.māʔ lə*
 day one-day this thing_{NMLZ}-develop(intr.) EXIST a.lot FACT.FP
 ‘Nowadays there is a lot of development.’ [HUR]

(1246) *tì.lə [tā-θī]_A tʰīʔ-pʰāʔ tə-sī*
 until thing_{NMLZ}-die pull-split one-time
 ‘until death sets (them) apart’ (Vlog, “Karen weaving”)

As mentioned in §3.3.2 regarding noun–verb compounds, *tā*-V combinations with a transitive verb indicate ‘thing V-ed’, as in *tā-θāʔ.wīʔ* [thing-sing] ‘song’. In contrast, nominalization of an action requires the addition of a postverbal, non-referential object. The nominalized action *singing* is thus *tā-θāʔ.wīʔ-tā* [thing_{NMLZ}-sing-thing] ‘singing (things)’. In (1247), *tʰā* ‘weave’ is followed by the non-referential noun *tʰāʔ* ‘loom’.

(1247) *tā-tʰā-tʰāʔ mē tā*
thing_{NMLZ}-weave-loom be.true_{COP} thing
lā ʔə-rē.dóʔ dóʔ.māʔ tə-mì
 REL 3-be.important a.lot one-kind
 ‘Weaving is a very important thing.’ (Vlog, “Karen weaving”)

Occasional examples of other types of nominalized VPs also occur. In (1248), *tā* nominalizes a reflexive verb.

(1248) *ʔəwē.θéʔ ʔə-mèʔ.θāʔ-pʰō təpʰāʔ*
 3.PL 3x-face-child_{DIM} COLL
pʰlā pɣè dōʔ tā-nàʔ.nē-lə-θāʔ
 appear be.full with **thing_{NMLZ}-believe-DOWN-heart_{REFL}**
 ‘Their little faces seemed to be full of confidence.’ (Moon rabbit)

Like nouns in general, nominalized verbs can be possessivized, as in (1249). Note that the use of a nominalized verb is due to the verb *mà.pətìʔ* ‘stop (tr.)’, which unlike its English equivalent takes a nominal object rather than a verb complement.

(1249) *pədē-pʰō lā lā pù mà-pətìʔ pʰō.θāʔ ʔə-tā-hɔ̃ʔ*
 rabbit-DIM GNR.P moon inside make-stop child **3x-thing_{NMLZ}-cry**
 ‘The rabbit in the moon makes children stop crying (lit., stops children’s crying).’
 (Moon rabbit)

There are also a few cases of nominalizations where the verb is negated, as in (1250). However, these seem to be limited to a few more or less lexicalized cases.

- (1250) *lā* *tā-tə-pàʔ.θūʔ.pàʔ.θāʔ* *ʔə-pù*
 GNR.P thing_{NMLZ-NEG-pay.attention} 3x-inside
 ‘accidentally (lit., in [a state of] not paying attention)’ (Vlog, “Actress”)

The construction in (1250), with a nominalized verb as the possessor of the relator noun *pù* ‘inside’, is a common way to form adverbial expressions in Sgaw Karen.

The rest of this chapter is concerned with subordinate clauses, starting with relative clauses, in §9.2.

9.2 Relative clauses

A relative clause is defined as a subordinate clause which modifies a noun (the head noun), forming together with this noun an relative clause construction (Lehmann 1986: 664). The head noun, in turn, is an argument of a matrix clause. Example (1251) demonstrates a sentence containing a relative clause (RC).

- (1251) [*pyà* *lā* [*ʔə-bā* *θ̄. kʰā*]_{RC}]_S *nēʔ* [*sɣà*]_{MC}
 person REL 3-worship monk that_{TOP} be.few
 ‘There are not many Buddhists (there).’
 (Lit., ‘People who worship monks are few.’) (Chiang Mai)

The relative clause is introduced by the subordinator *lā*, which follows the head noun *pyà* ‘people’. The matrix clause, in turn, consists of the intransitive verb *sɣà* ‘be few’, which takes the noun and its clausal modifier as its S argument.

The relativizer *lā* is a multifunctional morpheme used as a generic preposition (see §7.4) and generic subordinator introducing various types of subordinate clauses. It differs from relative pronouns such as English *which*, which fill an argument role in the relative clause, bearing instead closer resemblance to invariable relativizers, such as Swedish *som*. In languages like Swedish, however, a gap is required in the relative clause (e.g. *personen som (*han) såg mig* ‘the person who (*he) saw me’). In Sgaw Karen, the noun phrase is often repeated in the relative clause. Prosodically, a pause most naturally occurs after rather than before *lā*, as (1252) illustrates.

- (1252) *pyà* *lā* | *kəwè-ʔəʔ* *tā* *θ̄. təpʰāʔ*
 (?*pyà*) | *lā* *kəwè-ʔəʔ* *tā* *θ̄. təpʰāʔ*
 person REL fish.with.hand.net-eat thing PL.COLL
 Both: ‘the people who catch fish with hand nets’

Relative clause constructions take different surface forms with one or more components omissible in certain contexts. For example, the verb in relative clauses is often a descriptive verb, in which case *lā* may be used but is often omitted. In (1253), the descriptive verb *yè* ‘be good’ is preceded by *lā*, while in (1254), it is not.

(1253) *tâ.nàʔ mē tâ.dīʔ [lā ʔə-yè]RC l̄*
 faith be.true_{COP} fight(n.) REL 3-be.good FACT.FP
 ‘Faith is a good fight.’ [LTP]

(1254) *tâ-mī nēʔ mē tâ yè tə-mì*
 thing_{NMLZ}-sleep(v.) that_{TOP} be.true_{COP} thing be.good one-kind
l̄ jwà hēʔ-bâʔ pyà
 REL God give-HIT 1pi
 ‘Sleep is a good thing which God has given us.’ (Ballard 1973b: 80)

Although adding the relativizer *l̄* before *yè* in (1254) would be grammatical, *l̄* is often dropped when the head noun functions as S in the relative clause, especially when this noun is *tâ* ‘thing’ or *pyà* ‘person’.

A distinction is commonly made between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. While relative clauses are most commonly used in a restrictive sense, noun-modifying subordinate clauses may also add information about an NP that already has unique reference (Dixon 2010b: 314). According to Comrie (1989: 139), although scholars have paid considerable attention to the difference between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, most languages probably do not mark the distinction formally. In Sgaw Karen, likewise, no systematic formal distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses appears in the data. Example (1255) illustrates a non-restrictive relative clause.

(1255) *xê-θəpʰyō-xə dōʔ pʰōʔ.hī māʔ ʔə-θəkōʔ [lā ʔə-ʔéʔ=wē]RC nēʔ.l̄*
 run-rush-HORIZ and hug INTS 3x-friend REL 3-love=COR FP
 ‘(he) rushed over and hugged his beloved friend (lit., his friend, whom he loved)’
 (Saw Kay)

The head noun can be co-indexed either by a pronoun or by a gap in the relative clause (Comrie 1989: 147). In (1256), the head can be coreferenced by the bound pronoun *ʔə-*, or omitted, with no apparent change in meaning.

(1256) *pyà [lā (ʔə-)ʔōʔ-tʰōʔ pē.trōʔ]RC tə-yà*
 person REL 3-open-UP window one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘the person who opened the window’ [LTP.D]

Similarly, if the head noun is an object, it is either not co-indexed in the relative clause or realized as the resumptive, unbound third-person pronoun *ʔə*. In the elicited sentence in (1257), *ʔə* ‘them’ can be omitted, reportedly with no obvious change in meaning.

(1257) *tâ l̄ jə-ʔəʔ (ʔə) wīʔ*
 thing REL 1s-do 3i be.tasty
 ‘things that I like (to eat)’ [HUR]

In the case of a head noun functioning as the P argument in the relative clause, *wē* is commonly encliticized to the verb inside the relative clause. In (1258), *wē* appears on the relative clause verb. As §11.3.3 describes in more detail, *wē* refers anaphorically to a preceding subject and does not co-index the relativized object.

- (1258) *ɔəwē* *s^hā-ɔɔ[?]-kwì[?]=wē.dā[?]* *t^hō[?]* [*lā*
 3s sell-eat-AWAY=WD pig REL
ɔə-bî[?]=wē]REL *θē[?].təp^hā[?]* *nē[?]* *k^hē.lā[?].k^hē.s^hē* *nē[?]*
 3-raise=COR] PL:COLL that all.of.it that_{FRAME}
 ‘(The police found out that) he had sold all the pigs that he had been raising.’
 (Vlog, “Missing family”)

As mentioned above, the relativizer *lā* ‘which, who’ is often dropped when the head noun functions as the subject in the relative clause. In (1259), the head noun *pyà* ‘person’ is modified by a relative clause without the intervention of *lā*.

- (1259) *lā* *hō[?].k^hō[?]* *ɔì* *pyà* [*lā.yà[?]* *nā*]RC *tə-ɔō[?]* *nō.təyà* *bā[?]*
 GNR.P earth this person resemble 2si NEG-EXIST nobody NEG
 ‘There is nobody on this earth like you (lit., who resembles you).’ [HUR]

In general, omitting *lā* indicates a higher degree of lexicalization of the noun–modifier constituent or that it is a frequent collocation. Consider (1260) and (1261).

- (1260) *tā-ɔō[?]* [*ɔō[?].blē[?]*]RC *təp^hā[?]* *ɔì* *ɔō[?]* *tì* *ɔə-lā[?]*
 thing-eat be.left.over COLL this eat until 3-be.used.up
 ‘Eat up all of this left-over food.’ (Ballard 1973b: 142)

- (1261) *pyà* [*pyè* *kā*]RC *θā* *yà* *tə-yà* *nē[?]*
 person buy car three CLF(HUM) one-CLF(HUM) that_{FRAME}
 ‘{the third person who bought the car / the third car buyer}’
 (Vlog, “Missing Family”)

In contrast, when the head noun is an object in the relative clause, *lā* is mostly present.

Omission of the relativized noun is also possible. In (1262), the relativized direct object, a can of soft drink, is omitted since it can be inferred from the context.

- (1262) *hē[?]* *jà* [Ø]_{IO} [*lā* *ɔə-k^hlī[?]*]RC *tə-k^hā*
 give 1si REL 3-be.cold one-CLF(GNR)
 ‘Give me a cold one.’ [HUR]

Regarding the possible role of the relativized noun in the relative clause, Sgaw Karen exhibits few restrictions. In theory, any nominal argument in the well-known Accessibility Hierarchy proposed by Keenan & Comrie (1977) can be modified by a relative clause. The

hierarchy, given in Figure 8, proposes that arguments to the left in the scale are more accessible to relativization.

SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP⁵¹

Figure 8 Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977: 66)

In practice, however, while subjects and direct objects are frequent as heads in relative clause constructions, relativization is rare with the other types of arguments in the hierarchy. In (1263), the head is a possessor (GEN in Keenan & Comrie’s hierarchy).

- (1263) *pyà.kəŋō kə-ʔōʔ=wē.dāʔ lō lō ʔə-sē kə-ʔā-nē nà*
 human IRR-EXIST=WD FP REL 3x-money IRR-be.much-CMPR 2si
 ‘There will be people who have more money (lit., whose money is more) than you.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

Example (1264) shows relativization of an oblique NP.

- (1264) *klē lō pə-hē tə-bō*
 road REL 1p-come one-CLF(2D)
 ‘the road on which we came’ (Ballard 1973c: 114)

Rare examples of nouns which function as locations in the relative clause in English (e.g. *the place where he lives*) also occur, such as (1265)–(1267).

- (1265) *tā.lō lō jə-pā ʔōʔ=wē kʰē.ʔi*
 place REL 1sx-father EXIST=COR now
 ‘the place where my father is now’ (Ballard 1973c: 189)

- (1266) *wē lō nə-ʔōʔ ʔō nēʔ*
 city REL 2s-EXIST 3i that_{TOP}
 ‘the city where you live’ [HUR]

- (1267) *pʰē nə-ʔōʔ nēʔ pyà dī.θōʔ syò ʔōʔ fīā*
 LOC.P 2s-EXIST that_{TOP} person be.like Sgaw EXIST PQ
 ‘Where you live, are there people, like, Sgaw (people)?’ (Chiang Mai)

The relator noun *lō* ‘place, field’ (elaborate variant: *lō-klē* [field-road]) is also sometimes used when the type of place in question is unspecified. The possessivized relator NP *ʔəlō* (or *ʔəlō.ʔəklē*) ‘its place, the place of’ follows the clause which it possesses (see §3.2 on

⁵¹ SU=subject, DO=direct object, IO=indirect object, OBL=major oblique case NP, GEN=genitive (or possessor), OCOMP=object of comparison (Keenan & Comrie 1977: 66)

relator nouns). In (1268), the modified head noun *tâ.lô* is present, while in (1269) and (1270), only the relator noun appears.

(1268) *lê=wē lō tâ.lô* [*lō p^hē.θā[?].pyá mǎ.θī t^hô[?]*]_{RC} *ʔə-lô*
 go=COR GNR.P **place** REL old.man kill pig **3x-place**
 ‘They went to the place where the old man killed the pig’
 (Jones 1961: 226–227, 231)

(1269) *lō ʔə-p^hī[?]-θī-lô θā[?] ʔə-lô nē[?]*
 GNR.P 3-jump-die-DOWN heart_{REFL} **3x-place** that_{TOP}
 ‘at the place where he jumped down and died’ (Vlog, “Suicide”)

(1270) *ʔə-ʔô[?]-ʔə-s^hô[?] ʔə-lô-ʔə-klē nē[?] ʔô[?].pyè dō[?] yī*
 3-live(CC2)-3-live(CC2) **3x-place-3x-road** that_{TOP} be.full with snake
 ‘The place where they live is full of snakes.’ (Kato 1993: 185; my trans.)

Further research is needed regarding the difference between the use of a relative clause and the relator noun *lô* in such cases.

Regarding constituent order, the postnominal position of the relative clause correlates with the canonical SVO (or AVP) constituent order of Sgaw Karen. This constituent order differs from most Tibeto-Burman languages, where prenominal modification is the norm (Dryer 2008; LaPolla 2016: 46–47). However, sporadic exceptions to the modified–modifier (noun–relative clause) constituent order are encountered with relativized objects, in which case both post- and prenominal modification appear to be possible. Examples (1271)–(1273) illustrate head-final modification, where the relative clause precedes the head noun.

(1271) *lō [pəjò kwē[?]=wē]_{REL} ʔə-tâ.sī[?].sò.tē.sò ʔə-lī[?] ʔə-pù*
 GNR.P Burmese write=COR **3x-history** **3x-writing** 3x-inside
 ‘in the chronicles written by the Burmese’ (Karen nationalism)

(1272) *dō[?] [ʔəwē hē pà[?]-p^hlā-t^hô[?]=wē.dā[?]]_{REL}*
 and 3s come put-be.visible-UP=WD
tâ.yê nē[?] ʔô[?]=wē.dā[?] xī t^hī[?]
topic that_{TOP} EXIST=WD six CLF
 ‘And there were six things that he mentioned.’ (Vlog, “Actress”,
 speaker from Hpapun Township, Myanmar)

(1273) [*jə-lê ʔô[?]*]_{RC} *dā[?] tə-p^hlô[?] nē[?] s^hī[?]-nē ʔə-lô*
 1s-go EXIST **room/house** one-CLF(3D) that be.small-CMPR 3x-place
 ‘The house I have moved to is smaller than the previous one.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 50)

The exact distribution of the two constructions is unclear, but it may be more prevalent in some regions. In contrast to the variation seen in Sgaw Karen, prenominal relative clauses

are the preferred option in informal speech in the closely related Eastern Pwo language (Kato 2016: 952).

A special type of relative clause has the verb *bâ[?].xã[?]* ‘be related (with)’ as its main verb. This verb expresses that a matter, as represented by the modified noun, is *about* something. While *bâ[?].xã[?]* clauses can be introduced by the relativizer *lā*, they are often not. Example (1274) shows the use of *bâ[?].xã[?]* as a main verb. A word with similar semantics is *bâ[?].t^hwē*, exemplified in (1275).

- (1274) *tâ.mà* *ʔəwē.ʔi* ***bâ[?].xã[?]*** *tâ-mà.sə*
work this **be.connected(with)** thing_{NMLZ}-help
pyà-bâ[?].kə.bâ[?].k^hē *lā* *tâ.dī[?].tâ.jà* *ʔə-xō* *lə*
person-face.hardship GNR.P war 3X-REASON FACT.FP
‘This work was concerned with helping people in trouble on account of the war.’ (Jones 1961: 244, 247)
- (1275) *tâ.yé.tâ.klò* *lā* ***ʔə-bâ[?].t^hwē*** *də[?]* *pə-pyà.kəjə-p^hō*
information REL **3-be.connected** with 1px-Karen-child
lā *pə-krə[?]* *dī[?]-θē[?].jā-kè* *pə-p^hō-pə-lì*
REL 1p-should CAUS-know-RETURN 1px-child-px-grandchild
θē[?].təp^hā[?] *dī* *ʔō[?]=wē.dā[?]* *ʔā-mā[?]*
PL.COLL TOP EXIST=WD be.much-INTS
‘There is a lot of information related to us Karen which we should let our children and grandchildren know about. (Vlog, “Karen life”)

When modifying a noun, *bâ[?].xã[?]* can be preceded by *lā* and a personal prefix, as in (1276), but often occurs immediately following the head noun, as in (1277).

- (1276) *nə-tā.s^hō.kəmō[?]* [*lā* ***ʔə-bâ[?].xã[?]*** *də[?]* *tā.kē.t^hō[?].θā[?]*]_{RC} *tə-k^hā* *nē[?]*
2sx-thought REL 3-be.connected with incident one-CLF that
‘your thoughts about that incident’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)
- (1277) *ʔəwē* *tē* *tā* [***bâ[?].xã[?]*** *də[?]* *məhā.kə[?]*]_{RC}
3 say thing **be.connected** with yesterday
‘He is talking about yesterday.’ [LTP]

Yet more frequently, the noun modified by the *bâ[?].xã[?]* (‘about’) clause is not overtly expressed, as in (1278). In such cases, *bâ[?].xã[?]* functions similarly to a preposition, like its translation equivalent in English. Also note, in (1278), the use of the relator noun *yé* ‘matter’, which often combines with *bâ[?].xã[?]* (see §3.2).

(1278)	<i>jə-θêʔ.jā-ʔā.tʰɔʔ=wē</i>		<i>bâʔ.xāʔ</i>	<i>dɔʔ</i>
	1s-know-increase(intr.)=COR		be.connected	with
	<i>tʰɿ.kɔ̄</i>	<i>tə-bêʔ</i>	<i>ʔi</i>	<i>ʔə-ɣê-ʔə-klò</i>
	country	one-CLF	this	3x-matter(CC1)-3x-matter(CC2)
	<i>dɔʔ</i>	<i>ʔə-lí.lá.tʰū.θənu</i>	<i>təpʰâʔ</i>	
	and	3x-tradition	COLL	
	‘I knew more about this country and its traditions’ (Wikitungues, “Sunkist”)			

Next, we turn to complement clauses, which function differently from relative clauses in being arguments of verbs, rather than modifiers of NPs.

9.3 Complement clauses

Dixon (2010b) describes a complement clause as “a type of clause which fills an argument slot in the structure of another clause” (Dixon 2010b: 370). This section describes complement clauses in Sgaw Karen, specifically those which function as P arguments of verbs referred to as complement-clause-taking verbs.

In a typical sentence containing a complement-clause-taking verb, the verb is followed by the complementizer *lā* ‘that’ introducing the complement clause, as in (1279).

(1279)	<i>jə-mī.mɔ̄</i>	<i>lā</i>	[<i>jə-ʔɔʔ</i>	<i>kɔʔ</i>] _{COMP}
	1s-dream	COMP	1s-eat	snack
	‘I dreamt that I was eating snacks.’ [KWH]			

Another common structure is for the complement clause to be topicalized and occur as the first part of a sentence, as in (1280). In such cases, *lā* is not used.

(1280)	<i>ʔā.tʰā.nēʔ</i>	<i>ʔəxō.θətāʔ</i>	<i>nēʔ</i>	<i>hɔʔ.kʰɔʔ</i>	<i>dɔ</i>	<i>bēʔ</i>	<i>nēʔ</i>
	internet	3.REASON	that _{FRAME}	earth	whole	CLF(2D)	that _{TOP}
	[<i>tá.ʔɔʔ.θāʔ</i>	<i>dīʔ.lēʔ~dīʔlēʔ</i>] _{COMP}	<i>nēʔ</i>	<i>nɔ̄</i>			
	situation	how~how	that _{FRAME}	AGR.FP			
	<i>pə-tʰiʔ-bâʔ=wē.dāʔ</i>		<i>kʰē.làʔ.kʰē.sʰē</i>				
	1p-see-hit _{OPP} =WD		everything				
	‘Because of internet, we can see everything about (how) a situation (is) anywhere in the world.’ (Vlog, “Marriage”)						

Another type of complement clause is here called a bare complement clause. These are characterized by the fact that they cannot be introduced by *lā* but instead must immediately follow the complement-clause-taking verb.

Table 46 demonstrates different types of complement-clause-taking verbs, based on the classifications by Noonan (2007) and Dixon (2010b), and the complement clauses that are associated with them. A small group of verbs take bare clauses as their complements, as treated in §9.3.1, while most complement-clause-taking verbs take *lā* complements,

described in §9.3.2. The clause introduced by *lā* can be either indicative (Fact) or marked with the irrealis marker *kə-* (Potential), as indicated in square brackets.

Table 46 Types of clause-complement-taking verbs

Type of CTV	Examples	Type of complement
Perception verb	<i>tʰiʔ</i> ‘see’	bare clause (Activity)
	<i>nā.hū</i> ‘hear’	
Manipulative verb	<i>mā</i> ‘ask, tell’	” ” ”
	<i>plē</i> ‘permit’	
Utterance verb	<i>sīʔ</i> ‘say’, <i>tē</i> ‘tell’ <i>pā.pʰlā.tʰɔʔ</i> ‘express’ <i>tē.pli</i> ‘threaten’	<i>lā</i> complement (Fact)
Descriptive verb	<i>krāʔ</i> ‘be suitable (that)’ <i>lōʔ</i> ‘be necessary (that)’ <i>θāʔ.ʔɪʔ</i> ‘be sad (that)’	” ” ”
Discovery verb	<i>θēʔ.nā-bāʔ</i> ‘get to know’ <i>tʰiʔ-bāʔ</i> ‘see, catch sight of’ <i>nā.hū</i> ‘hear’	” ” ”
Cognitive verb	<i>nāʔ</i> ‘believe’ <i>sʰō.mōʔ</i> ‘think’ <i>bāʔ.jōʔ</i> ‘worry’	<i>lā</i> complement (Potential)
Volitional verb	<i>ʔēʔ.dōʔ</i> ‘want’ <i>sʰā</i> ‘wish’ <i>mī.lā</i> ‘hope’	” ” ”

Note that with some of the verbs in Table 46, complement clauses are used only when the subjects are different in the two clauses. For example, in the case of same-subject complementation with secondary verbs (e.g. *I want to eat*), complement clauses are not used. Next, the two types of complementation are described in turn.

9.3.1 Bare clause complements

Bare clause complements are clausal complements which are not introduced by *lā*. Also, bare clause complements cannot be negated or marked for irrealis modality with *kə-*. In Table 46, we see that two groups of verbs take this type of complement: perceptive verbs and manipulative verbs.

The first group includes the verbs *tʰiʔ* ‘see’ and *nā.hū* ‘hear’. With complement clauses expressing an ongoing action, corresponding to Dixon’s Activity type complements (Dixon 2010b: 392), the complement follows the main verb immediately and *lā* fails to occur. The meaning expressed is ‘see V-ing’ and ‘hear V-ing’, as in (1281) and (1282).

(1281) *sò-lā* *nā.hū* [*sò-kêʔ* *kōʔ* *ʔò*]_P
 M.HON-PN hear M.HON-PN call 3i
 ‘Saw Lah heard Saw Kay calling him’ (Saw Kay)

(1282) *jə-tʰiʔ* [*ʔə-lòʔ.kwē* *lā.nēʔ*]_P
 1s-see 3-play there
 ‘I saw him playing there.’ [HUR]

Note that, in the case of complements containing a pronoun, the pronoun must be prefixed to the verb and cannot be expressed using an unbound pronoun, as (1283) illustrates.

(1283) **jə-tʰiʔ* *ʔò* *lòʔ.kwē* *lā.nēʔ*
 1s-see 3i play there
 Intended: ‘I saw him playing there.’ [HUR]

When the complement clause does not express an ongoing action, a *lā* complement rather than a bare clause is used. In (1284), the main verb *tʰiʔ* conveys the non-state meaning ‘discover’, and the complement clause denotes an achieved state rather than an activity.

(1284) *xōʔ* *nīʔ* *ʔə-lō.kʰi* *pə-kə-tʰiʔ* *lā*
 eight year 3x-backside 1p-IRR-see COMP
tā.lō *ʔi* *mē-kè* *pyā* *pʰāʔ-dōʔ*
 field this be.true_{COP}-RETURN forest INTS-be.big
 ‘After eight years, we will see that the field has become a big forest again.’
 (Karen village)

The second group of verbs consists of the manipulative verbs *mā* ‘order, ask to’ and *plē* ‘permit to’. They are semantically close to the causative verb *dīʔ* ‘cause, let’ expressing indirect causation, which differs syntactically from *mā* ‘order, ask to’ and *plē* ‘permit’ (see §8.2).

The first verb, *mā* ‘order, command, tell to, ask to’ (cf. Proto-Tibeto-Burman *mi:n ‘name, command’⁵²), expresses indirect causation by a verbal command or request. On the argument structure of *mā*, Ballard (1973b: 184) writes: “The object of [*mā*] is usually a clause including the person being ordered and the action he/she is being asked to do”. Consider (1285).

(1285) *jə-mā* [*nə-lē* *dāʔ* *tʰi*]_P
 1s-order 2s-go draw water
 ‘I asked you to go and draw water.’ (Ballard 1973b: 184)

⁵² The Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus (STEDT) (<https://stedt.berkeley.edu/>; accessed 22.5.2024)

Ratanakul (1981: 166–167) describes *mā* as a “causativizer”, noting that the causee must be human and capable of understanding a verbal order. Examples (1286) and (1287) illustrate this point.

(1286) *pā mā ʔə-pʰō pʰĩʔ kənē hāʔ*
 father order 3x-child smoke.away bee go.out
 ‘The father had the son smoke away the bees.’ (Ratanakul 1981: 166)

(1287) **pā mā kənē hāʔ-xiʔ*
 father order bee go.out-AWAY
 (Ratanakul 1981: 167)

As Ratanakul (1981: 167) explains, while (1286) is felicitous, (1287) is nonsensical since “the bee would not understand [the father’s] order”.

Semantically, the coercive force of *mā* can be weak or strong, depending on the context. Thus, *mā* sometimes expresses a mild command (‘ask to’), as in (1288), while in other cases, *mā* indicates a higher degree of authority on the part of the person issuing the command, as in (1289).

(1288) *θĩʔ-kʰōʔ pʰāʔ-dōʔ mā jə-kwēʔ liʔ-pʰō*
 army-head INTS-be.big **order** 1s-write book-child_{DIM}
 ‘The commanding officer asked me to write some little books’
 (Jones 1961: 243, 247)

(1289) *kō.pəjəʔ-θĩʔ təpʰāʔ mā pə-lē*
 Myanmar-army COLL **order** 1p-go
tʰĩʔ.lōʔ.θāʔ dōʔ ʔəwē.θēʔ təpʰāʔ nēʔ.lō
 meet with 3.PL COLL FP
 ‘The Burmese army ordered us to meet with them.’ (News interview)

Finally, note that the clause following *mā* cannot be negative. Prohibitive commands are expressed by other means, such as by using *tē lā* [tell/say COMP] ‘tell (s.o.) that’ followed by the preventive clause (see §10.2).

The second manipulative complement-clause-taking verb is *plē* ‘let, permit, allow’, which as a main verb means ‘give way, permit to pass’, as in (1290).

(1290) *plē jā tāsēʔ θē hā*
permit 1si a.little be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
 ‘Can you move (and let me pass) a little?’ [HUR]

Compared to *mā* ‘order, ask to’, *plē* as a complement-clause-taking verb is syntactically more versatile, occurring in three different constructions. In the first construction, *plē* occurs as V₁ in cause–effect verb–verb (VV) compounds, as in (1291)–(1292).

(1291) *pyà plē-mī nà lā lō.mī kəpìʔ lō*
 person **permit-sleep** 2si GNR.P bed be.soft surface
 ‘(If you have money) you are allowed to sleep in a soft bed.’ (Karen song)

(1292) *plē-ʔōʔ ʔō pʰē.nēʔ*
permit-EXIST 3i there
 ‘Leave it there (lit., let it stay there).’ [KWH]

More commonly, *plē* is used as a complement-clause-taking verb taking a bare clause as its complement, as in (1293). In a few cases, *plē* is followed by a *lā* complement, as in (1294).

(1293) *plē jə-ʔēʔ nà mōʔ*
permit 1s-love 2si FP
 ‘Please let me love you.’ [HUR]

(1294) *jə-xē jə-kʰwēʔ lā θīʔ-kʰōʔ pʰāʔ-dōʔ lā*
 1s-request 1sx-right GNR.P army-head INTS-be.big so.that
kə-plē jà lā jə-kə-kè mǎ tǎ
IRR-permit 1si COMP 1s-IRR-return do thing
lā kə-pì.jə pù lō
 GNR.P country-Myanmar inside FACT.FP
 ‘I asked permission from my commanding officer to permit me to return and work in Burma’ (Jones 1961: 239, 246)

According to one speaker, using *plē* with a clausal object rather than in a verb–verb compound is more correct, but the verb–verb compound construction is also used colloquially. As (1295) illustrates, the meaning is roughly the same.

(1295) a. *jə-tə-plē nə-lē bǎʔ*
 1s-NEG-**let** 2s-go NEG.FP
 b. *jə-tə-plē-lē nà bǎʔ*
 1s-NEG-**let-go** 2si NEG.FP
 Both: ‘I won’t let you go.’ [HUR]

A semantic difference between clauses containing a *plē-V* compound and those in which *plē* functions as a complement-clause-taking verb may be related to the nature of the causation. The former appears more direct, indicating permission in the sense of release or removal of a physical obstacle, while the latter is less direct, often expressing verbal permission. This topic requires further investigation.

Another causative marker which can have permissive meaning is *dīʔ* ‘cause, let’. As discussed in §8.2, *dīʔ* expresses indirect causation, while *mǎ* ‘make’ indicates direct causation. The causativity of the permissive verb–verb compounds *dīʔ-V* ‘let V’ and *plē-V*

‘let V’ tends to be more direct compared to when *plē* is used as a complement-clause-taking verb, in which case it often indicates verbal permission. In the data, *dīʔ* is more common than *plē* in permissive verb–verb compounds, while *plē* more often takes a clausal complement, expressing more indirect causativity, such as giving verbal permission.

9.3.2 *lā* complement clauses

As seen in §9.3.1, only a handful of Sgaw Karen complement-clause-taking verbs take bare clauses as their complements. For most complement-clause-taking verbs, the clausal complement is introduced by *lā*, as in (1296).

- (1296) *jə-sʰō.mōʔ lā [ʔə-kwēʔ liʔ.pəʔrā]COMP*
 1s-think COMP 3-write letter
 ‘I think he’s writing a letter.’ [LTP.D]

The subordinator *lā* also functions as a generic preposition (see §7.4). In the spoken language, especially, *lā* is often absent before the complement clause. It is also omitted when the complement clause is topicalized and “fronted”. Even without the complementizer, however, the complements described in this section are distinct from the bare clause complements discussed in §9.3.1. Firstly, *lā* complements are formally unrestricted, similar to independent clauses, being negatable and available for irrealis marking. Furthermore, while bare clause complements are the sole arguments in the clauses they appear in, *lā* complements also occur as a second object in trivalent clauses.

As is typologically common, complementation is required when a sentence contains two verbs with different subjects. In contrast, serialization is common when the subjects are identical. Compare examples (1297) and (1298).

- (1297) *jə-ʔēʔ.dōʔ pʰō-ʔōʔ tʰōʔ-nāʔ-kəθū*
 1s-want cook-eat pig-meat-curry
 ‘I want to cook pork curry.’ (Ballard 1973b: 32)

- (1298) *jə-tə-ʔēʔ.dōʔ lā jə-pʰō təpʰāʔ ʔə-kʰōʔ.nùʔ xā bāʔ*
 1s-NEG-want COMP 1sx-child COLL 3x-brain be.heavy NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t want my children to be stupid.’ [HUR]

Note, in (1298), that in the case of a negative main verb, the negative final particle *bāʔ* occurs after the complement. See also §11.3 on the expression of same and different subjects in biclausal constructions.

Depending on the semantics of the complement-clause-taking verb, the complement can be one of four different types: a direct quote, factual complement, irrealis complement, or interrogative complement (cf. Noonan 2007; Dixon 2010b: 384–394). Direct quotes appear in (1299) and (1300).

(1299) *jə-tē jə-mō lā [nə-kə-lè dɔʔ jà hā]*_{COMP}
 1s-tell 1sx-mom COMP 2s-IRR-go with 1si PQ
 ‘I said to my mom: “Will you go with me?”’ [LTP]

(1300) *dɔʔ sīʔ=wē [pʰō.kʰwā pā.pā hē-kè lī]*_{COMP}
 and say=COR son dad come-RETURN NS
 ‘And he said: “Son, dad has come back.”’ (Blog story, “Saw Kanyaw”)

Note that *lā* is often dropped also in the case of direct quotes, as in (1300).

Apart from introducing clauses, *lā* also acts as a quotative marker, preceding verb phrases, as in (1301), or nouns, as in (1302).

(1301) *ʔi.kʰā pə-kɔʔ lā sʰē tʰī*
 this 1p-call QUOT set trap
 ‘This we call “setting a trap (for catching rats)”.’ [KWH]

(1302) *jə-mì lā nō-wā*
 1sx-name QUOT F.HON-be.white
 ‘My name is Naw Wah.’

Factual complements, as the name suggests, are propositions about actualized events, either past or ongoing, as in (1303).

(1303) *nə-θéʔ.nā=wē.dāʔ lā tā.mà tə-kʰā ʔi nēʔ*
 2s-know=WD COMP job one-CLF this that_{TOP}
nə-mà ʔò mīʔ
 2s-do 3i be.enjoyable
 ‘You know that you like this job.’ (Vlog, “Advice”)

In contrast, unactualized complements contain *kə-*, indicating intentions, predictions, and other potential scenarios, as in (1304) and (1305).

(1304) *jə-tē-bāʔ ʔò lā [jə-kə-lè dɔʔ lēʔ.méʔ.ʔū]*_{COMP} *lò*
 1s-tell-hit 3i COMP 1s-IRR-go with train FACT.FP
 ‘I told her that I will go by train.’ [LTP]

(1305) *tʰwīʔ.hōʔ.kʰōʔ ʔi plī lā [kʰē.jī kə-ʔɔʔ ʔò]*_{COMP}
 fox this fear COMP lion IRR-eat 3i
 ‘The fox was afraid that the lion would eat him.’ (The Lion and the Fox)

Since *kə-* cannot co-occur with the negative prefix *tə-*, it is disallowed in negative irrealis complements, as in (1306). In some contexts, *kə-* can be omitted also in affirmative hypothetical statements. Example (1307) shows that *kə-* can be omitted without any apparent change in meaning.

- (1306) *nə-mé* *ʔəʔ.lò* *nē* *lā* *nə-tə-mà-kədɔ̃-lə*
 2s-be.true_{COND} promise 2se COMP 2s-NEG-do-again-anymore
báʔ *dɔ̃ʔ* | *jə-tə-tɔ̃* *nà* *lə* *báʔ*
 NEG.FP and 1s-NEG-beat 2si anymore NEG.FP
 ‘If you promise that you won’t do it again, I won’t beat you again.’ (Saw Kay)
- (1307) *nə-sʰò.móʔ* *lā* *ʔə-(kə-)mà* *tá* *mənīʔ* *kʰē.ʔi* *lēʔ*
 2s-think COMP 3-IRR-do thing what now CQ
 ‘What do you think he’s doing now?’ [LTP.D]

As mentioned above, complements of complement-clause-taking verbs are often topicalized, occurring as the first constituent of a sentence. In such cases, *lā* is absent before the complement clause. Examples (1308) and (1309) illustrate this.

- (1308) [*míʔ.yè.dō* *lə.tèʔ*]_P *nēʔ* *θā* *tə-θéʔ.nā-kʰlīʔ* *báʔ*
 actress fall that_{TOP} 3.COR NEG-know-reach NEG.FP
 ‘(so) he didn’t notice when the actress fell’ (Vlog, “Actress”)
- (1309) [*lè* *kē* *hā* *tə-kē* *hā*] *dī*
 go be.able PQ NEG-ABIL PQ TOP
tē-lò.tī *tə-báʔ* *dīʔ* *báʔ*
 say/tell-be.accurate NEG-be.correct_{ABIL} CONT NEG.FP
 ‘whether I can [go] or not I can’t say for sure yet’ (Jones 1961: 198–199)

In interrogative sentences or complements, the indirect question marker *mé* ‘if, whether’ (from *mé* ‘be true, be the case’) is sometimes used to signal that the clause is a question. Example (1310) demonstrates *mé* used before an independent clause. In (1311), *mé* precedes an interrogative complement clause (note that the “true” complementizer *lā* can precede *mé* in these cases).

- (1310) *mé* *jə-mà-kəmáʔ* *nà* *tə-mì-mì* *hā*
 Q 1s-do-be.wrong 2si one-kind(RDP) PQ
 ‘Did I do something wrong to you?’ [HUR]
- (1311) *wī.θāʔ.sù* *hē-nìʔ-lò* *dɔ̃ʔ* *pʰɔ̃ʔ-kwá* *jə-kʰóʔ* *ʔi*
 please come-IN-DOWN and grab-LOOK 1sx-head this
 [*mé* *ʔə-kó=wē* *dóʔ* *tʰē.lēʔ*]
 Q 3-be.hot=COR be.big how.much
 ‘Please, come in and touch my head to see how hot it is.’ (The Lion and the Fox)

Some descriptive verbs can take a complement clause as their single argument. An example is *krəʔ* ‘be suitable, appropriate’, which expresses deontic modality (‘should’). In (1312), *krəʔ* is a subjectless verb whose single argument is realized as a complement clause.

- (1312) *nē tə-γà ʔi krəʔ lā nə-pʰə-ʔəʔ tɑ*
 2se one-CLF(HUM) this be.suitable COMP 2s-cook-eat thing
 ‘As for you, you should do the cooking.’ (Ballard 1973b: 214)

As discussed in §5.1.1.3, however, *krəʔ* also often functions as a secondary verb rather than as a complement-clause-taking verb. Two other common descriptive complement-clause-taking verbs are *lōʔ* ‘be necessary’ and *pʰlā* ‘be visible’, in (1313) and (1314).

- (1313) *tə-lōʔ lā pə-lè mə-xiʔ nō tə-mi lə bɑʔ*
 NEG-NEED COMP 1p-go do-COM EXT one-kind NEG.NS NEG.FP
 ‘We don’t need to go have any dealings with (them) anymore.’ (News interview)

- (1314) *pʰlā lā tə-tə-tə-lò bɑʔ*
 be.visible COMP NEG-be.true-NEG-be.direct NEG.FP
 ‘It seemed that (they) weren’t honest.’ (Vlog, “Actress”)

The final type of subordinate clauses have an adverbial function, expressing various semantic additions to a main clause.

9.4 Adverbial clauses

Adverbial clauses, as the name suggests, are adjunctive clauses that add adverbial meaning to a sentence. Unlike complement clauses, they do not fill an obligatory argument slot of a verb, serving instead to modify another clause (Thompson, Longacre & Hwang 2007). This section describes six adverbial meanings: temporal, purposive, causal, conditional, concessive, and similitive.

Adverbial clauses are introduced by a subordinating marker called an adverbializer (Schachter & Shopen 2007: 50–52). The two major adverbializers in Sgaw Karen are *pʰē* ‘when’ and the generic subordinator *lā*. Other quasi-adverbializers are also used which are derived from verbs, as will be shown in the upcoming subsections.

Besides the adverbializers, many adverbial clauses contain a relator noun, introduced in §3.2. Relator nouns occur after a clause and typically carry a possessive prefix, which in the case of clausal possessors is the third-person possessive prefix *ʔə-*. While the adverbializers can be semantically void, the relator noun specifies the adverbial meaning of the clause. This section discusses the relator nouns in (1315).

(1315)	<i>ʔə-kʰā</i>	[3X-TIME]	‘(at) the time of’	(temporal)
	<i>ʔə-sʰā.kətō</i>	[3X-time]	‘(at) the time of’	(temporal)
	<i>ʔə-pʰā.mī</i>	[3X-?]	‘during’	(temporal)
	<i>ʔə-γō</i>	[3X-PURP]	‘(for) the sake of’	(purposive)
	<i>ʔə-xō</i>	[3X-REASON]	‘(for) the reason of’	(causal)
	<i>ʔə-θōʔ</i>	[3X-SIM]	‘as, like’	(similative)

Note that conditional and concessive clauses use clause-final adverbial particles instead of relator nouns, as described in §9.4.4 and §9.4.5. Adverbial particles are also used in temporal clauses and function in a similar way as relator nouns. Next, the six types of adverbial clauses will be discussed in turn.

9.4.1 Temporal clauses

Temporal clauses place a situation in time by relating it to the situation expressed by the temporal clause. In general, the situation expressed by the main clause can occur before, simultaneously, or after another situation. It is also possible to express that the main situation has lasted since another occurred or came into being. The most important temporal morphemes are the adverbializer *pʰē*, verb-derived quasi-adverbializers, relator nouns, and clause-separating markers. In (1316) and (1317), the temporal clauses are introduced by the adverbializer *pʰē* ‘when’. Syntactically, the clause following *pʰē* is the possessee constituent of the relator noun *kʰā* ‘time’ (see §3.2).

(1316)	<i>pʰē</i>	<i>[nə-lē]_{Temp}</i>	<i>ʔə-kʰā</i>
	LOC.P/when	2s-go	3X-TIME
	‘when you go (lit., at the time of your going)’		

(1317)	<i>jə-kòʔ.jú</i>	<i>sʰā</i>	<i>pʰē</i>	<i>[jə-ʔōʔ</i>	<i>tə-sʰúʔ</i>	<i>bāʔ]_{Temp}</i>	<i>ʔə-kʰā</i>
	1sx-throat	hurt	when	1s-EXIST	NEG-be.strong	NEG.FP	3X-TIME
	‘My throat hurts when I am sick.’ [LTP]						

Note that, as a locative preposition, *pʰē* ‘at, in, on’ also appears in locative adverbial clauses (see §7.4).

Table 47 lists the most common temporal markers and expressions.

Table 47 Temporal markers and expressions

Temporal expression	Literal meaning	Idiomatic translation
<i>tək^hl̄iʔ (l̄ə)</i>	not reach	before
<i>t̄i</i>	arrive	until
<i>p^hē (l̄ə) ... ʔək^hā</i>	at ... the time of	when, during
<i>p^hē (l̄ə) ... ʔəp^hā.m̄i</i>	(unknown)	during, while
<i>t̄i (l̄ə) / t̄i.m̄ē (l̄ə) ... (təs̄i)</i>	arrive (at) ... once	when/once
<i>wi / (wi) ʔəl̄i.k^hɪ</i>	finish / (finish) backside of it	after
<i>təs̄i</i>	once, one time	once
<i>sā^ʔ.t^hɔ^ʔ l̄ə ... (l̄i.l̄i)</i>	starting from ... (since)	since

Temporal clauses feature three different relator nouns: *k^hā* ‘time’, *s^hā.kət̄ə* ‘time’, and *p^hā.m̄i* ‘during’. The meaning of *p^hā.m̄i* is unknown. The word *s^hā.kət̄ə* ‘time’, exemplified in (1318), is the common word for ‘time’ when used as a noun but is less frequent than *k^hā* as a relator noun.

- (1318) *p^hē mū.k^hō^ʔ s̄u ʔə-s^hā.kət̄ə*
 LOC.P heaven rain **3x-time**
 ‘when it rains’ [LTP]

The relator noun *p^hā.m̄i* ‘during’ is rarer than the other two. Its function and meaning is similar to *k^hā* and *s^hā.kət̄ə* and they are sometimes used interchangeably, as (1319) shows.

- (1319) *p^hē jə-t^hɔ^ʔ t̄fō ʔə-p^hā.m̄i / ʔə-k^hā nē^ʔ*
 LOC.P 1s-go.up school **3x-DURING / 3x-TIME** that
jə-dō.kənā^ʔ jə-θəɾā^ʔ-m̄i^ʔ ʔə-kəl̄i l̄ə
 1s-listen 1sx-teacher-F 3x-sound/voice FACT.FP
 ‘While attending class, I listen to (obey) my teacher.’ [HUR]

Also note that either the adverbializer, *p^hē*, or the relator noun, sometimes both, can be omitted, especially in the spoken language.

Another word occurring sporadically as a temporal adverbializer is *t̄i* ‘arrive’. It appears to be largely synonymous with *p^hē* but does not express ‘during, while’. Instead, *t̄i* often refers to moments in time, as in (1320) and (1321).

- (1320) *t̄i ʔə-pā plā-l̄ə-k̄ē ʔə təs̄i*
when 3x-father release-DOWN-RETURN 3i once
 ‘When his father released (untied) him (he fell down on the floor).’ (Saw Kay)

- (1321) **tì** pɣà ʔɔ̃? mè wì nêʔ
arrive/when person eat rice finish that_{FRAME}
dīʔ-ʔɔ̃ʔ-kədɔ̃ʔ ʔɔ̃ lā θəkʰɔ̃ʔ.θāʔ
CAUS-eat-again 3i GNR.P mango
‘When people have finished eating, feed them mangoes again.’
(Ballard 1973b: 79)

Note that, when taking a clause as its S argument (see §4.3), *tì* ‘arrive’ expresses ‘until’, as in (1322).

- (1322) pòʔ.kʰwā tɔ̃ tʰwīʔ **tì** ʔə-θī lò
man beat dog **arrive/until** 3-die FACT.FP
‘The man beat the dog until it died.’ [LTP]

The variant *tì.mê* ‘when’ (from *tì* ‘arrive’ and *mê* ‘be true, be the case’) occurs in written texts, often stressing a specific, anticipated moment in time (cf. the conjunctive use of *once* in English). It frequently co-occurs with the temporal particle *təsī* (from *tə-* ‘one’ and *sī* ‘time, instance’), as in (1323).

- (1323) [**tì.mê** klóʔ ʔə-kê-ʔə-ɣɔ̃ kē.tʰɔ̃ʔ **təsī**]
when drum 3x-form-3x-shape become **once**
pàʔ-xē.tʰɔ̃=wē lā tā.kədī làʔ nêʔ.lò
put-dry.up=COND GNR.P shade under FP
‘Once the drum-casting mould has been formed, it is put to dry in the shade.’
(Karen drum)

Apart from *təsī* ‘once’, in (1323), the synonym *təblɔ̃* ‘once’, its regional variant *təbɔ̃* ‘once’, and the multi-functional marker *dɔ̃ʔ* ‘and; with; (V) further’ also occur in similar contexts. As a clause-separator, *dɔ̃ʔ* means ‘and then, after that’ and is especially common with the conditional verb *mê* ‘if, when’ (see also §9.4.4), as in (1324). In (1325), *dɔ̃ʔ* combines with *nêʔ*, which is the most common clausal separator in the data.

- (1324) **mê** hāʔ-lù tā.pʰō.tā.lì **dɔ̃ʔ**
be.true_{COND} walk-chase animal **and/then**
bāʔ lē-tʰɔ̃.dā kəlì təkʰɔ̃
must go-against wind one.side_{CNTR}
‘When hunting animals, one must go against the wind.’ (Saw Kay)

- (1325) **mê** kədā.kè lā jò.kô **nêʔ** **dɔ̃ʔ**
be.true_{COND} return GNR.P Thailand **that**_{FRAME} **and/then**
‘if (they) return to Thailand’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

Note that, as a clause-separator, *dɔ̃ʔ* is prosodically connected with the preceding clause; thus, a prosodic pause most naturally occurs after rather than before *dɔ̃ʔ*.

The conditional verb *mê* ‘if, when’ also co-occurs with *wì* ‘finish (intr.)’. This is the principal way to express ‘after’ in Sgaw Karen, as in (1326).

- (1326) *nə-pə.tʰɪ̄ mē wì dɔ̄ʔ nə-kə-mà t̄a mənīʔ l̄ēʔ*
 2S-SWIM **be.true**_{COND} **finish** **then** 2S-IRR-do thing what CQ
 ‘What will you do after swimming (lit., when your swimming has finished)?’
 [LTP]

Syntactically, *wì* takes the preceding clause as its subject. The *wì* clause, in turn, often appears as a clausal possessee constituent of the relator noun *l̄ɔ̄-kʰɪ̄* [space-behind] ‘backside’, as in (1327).

- (1327) *pʰē [jə-ɔ̄ʔ mē wì] ɔ̄ə-l̄ɔ̄.kʰɪ̄ nēʔ jə-tʰūʔ mē*
 LOC.P/when 1S-eat rice finish **3x-after** that_{FRAME} 1S-brush tooth
 ‘After I have eaten (lit., at the backside of my eating having finished),
 I brush my teeth.’ [HUR]

A common expression including *wì* ‘finish’ widespread in the colloquial language is *mē wì bl̄ɔ̄* [COND finish time/instance] ‘then, after that (lit., once finished)’. Example (1328) demonstrates the use of this common phrase.

- (1328) *pyà.pòʔmīʔ nēʔ t̄i.mē l̄ə ɔ̄ə-mē tʰɔ̄ʔ.pyá*
 woman that_{TOP} when COMP 3-be.true_{COND} get.married
mē.wì.bl̄ɔ̄ nēʔ | ɔ̄əwē kə-báʔ kà=wē.dáʔ sʰē.mō.θū t̄f̄ā-ɔ̄i
after.that that_{FRAME} 3 IRR-must wear=WD black.tunic like-this
 ‘Once women get married (then) they must wear a black tunic like this.’
 (Vlog, “Karen weaving”)

Expressing ‘before’ requires the clause-complement-taking verb *təkʰl̄ɪ̄ʔ* ‘before (lit., not reach)’. As an independent verb, *kʰl̄ɪ̄ʔ* means ‘reach, catch up with’, as (1329) shows. (See also §4.3.1 on the use of *təkʰl̄ɪ̄ʔ* as a verb of ability expressing ‘not have the time to’.)

- (1329) *pə-tə-kʰl̄ɪ̄ʔ-nē ɔ̄ə-kʰɪ̄ báʔ*
 1p-NEG-**reach**-get 3x-rear NEG.FP
ɔ̄əwē l̄è t̄a t̄əɔ̄.ɔ̄i
 3s go thing this.morning
 ‘We didn’t catch up with him. He left this morning.’ (Ballard 1973b: 158)

When used as a clause-complement-taking verb, *təkʰl̄ɪ̄ʔ* occurs at the beginning of the sentence and is followed by a clausal complement. The verbal modifier *sʰō* ‘be early, (V) first’ is often compounded with the main verb, as in (1330).

- (1330) *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* *d̥iʔ* *l̥ə* [*jə-ɹɔʔ* *mè*] *nèʔ*
 NEG-reach CONT COMP 1s-eat rice that_{FRAME}
jə-ɹɔʔ-sʰə *tʰiʔ* *tə-kʰwāʔ* *l̥ə*
 1s-drink-**be.early** water one-cup FACT.FP
 ‘Before I eat (lit., not having reached yet that I eat rice), I first drink a glass
 of water.’ [HUR]

One or more of the components in the temporal *tə-kʰl̥iʔ* clause are frequently omitted in casual speech, as (1331) demonstrates.

- (1331) [*tə-kʰl̥iʔ* (*l̥ə*) *jə-hē* (*d̥iʔ bāʔ*) *ɹə-kʰā*] *jə-tʰiʔ* *ɹɔʔ* *l̥ə*
 before COMP 1s-come (yet NEG) 3x-time 1s-see 3i FACT.FP
 ‘I met him before I came here.’ [LTP.D]

Lastly, the meaning ‘since’ is expressed using *sāʔ.tʰɔʔ l̥ə* [start GNR.P] ‘start from’ or the adverbial particle *li.li* ‘since’. The two can also be combined in the same clause, as in (1332) and (1333).

- (1332) *sāʔ.tʰɔʔ* *l̥ə* *sə* *wē.nèʔ* *li.li*
start GNR.P era that **since**
 ‘since that era’ (Karen nationalism)

- (1333) *pɹà* *l̥ə* *hɔʔ.kʰəʔ.kʰl̥ə* *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ* *ɹi*
 person GNR.P earth PL:COLL this
mé *θéʔ.nā=wē* *nà* *sāʔ.tʰɔʔ* *l̥ə* *ɹəʔ.pʰl̥éʔ.tʰɔʔ* *li.li* *nèʔ*
 COND know=COR 2si **start** GNR.P be.born **since** that_{FRAME}
 ‘if people on this earth know you since you were born’ (Vlog, “Worthless”)

9.4.2 Purposive clauses

Purposive clauses take several different forms in Sgaw Karen. Most commonly, they contain an adverbializer and the purposive relator noun *ɹɔʔ* ‘purpose, sake’. The latter, *ɹɔʔ*, is usually possessivized, taking a clausal constituent as its possessee (see §3.2). Example (1334) contains both the generic subordinator *l̥ə*, in this case an adverbializer, and the relator noun *ɹɔʔ*.

- (1334) *pɹà* *tə-ɹà* *kə-pʰɛʔ-l̥ə* *kʰiʔ* *tə-l̥ə*
 person one-CLF(HUM) IRR-clear-DOWN upland.field one-field
 [*l̥ə* *kə-θúʔ-l̥ə* *b̥i* *ɹə-ɹɔʔ*] *l̥ə*
GNR.P IRR-plant-DOWN rice.plant **3x-PURP** FACT.FP
 ‘A person will clear a field for planting upland rice.’ (Karen proverbs)

Note that the clausal complement is marked for irrealis modality by the prefix *kə-*, which in this case indicates intentionality.

Apart from *lā*, a common purposive adverbializer is *dī̄.θō̄* ‘in order to’, which is also used as a main verb meaning ‘be like, resemble’. Examples (1335)–(1337) contain the adverbializer *dī̄.θō̄*. Note that the subjects of the main and the adverbial clause can be identical or different. Furthermore, as seen in (1336), *dī̄.θō̄* clauses often also occur at the beginning of sentences, unlike clauses introduced by *lā*.

- (1335) *ʔəwē hā̄.tʰɔ̄ lā ʔə-hī̄*
 3e leave GNR.P 3-house/village(N.Th.)
dī̄.θō̄ kə-lè mà.lō tā lā wē-pù
so.that IRR-go study THING GNR.P city-inside
 ‘He left his village to go study in the city.’ (Karen village)
- (1336) *dī̄.θō̄ pyà kə-ʔé̄ nà (ʔə-γɔ̄) né̄*
so.that people IRR-love 2si 3x-PURP that_{FRAME}
nə-bá̄ ʔé̄-sʰō pyà lā.jā
 2s-must love-be.early people first
 ‘In order for people to love you, you must love them first.’ (Ballard 1973c: 231)
- (1337) *dō̄ jù̄.tʰɔ̄=wē.dá̄ lā tā-pʰā̄.pʰɔ̄*
 and extend-UP=WD GNR.P thing-half
dī̄.θō̄ dō̄ pyà kəmlā̄ θé̄.təpʰā̄ kə-tʰī̄ lō̄
so.that and person public PL:COLL IRR-see FACT.FP
 ‘and lifted (the banknote) up in the air so that the audience would see (it)’
 (Vlog, “Worthless”)

Also note, in (1336), that the purposive relator noun *γɔ̄* can be present or absent, as indicated in the original source. Interestingly, Ballard (1973c: 231) states that the reverse order, where the main clause precedes the purposive clause, “is not considered to be correct”, but this order is not uncommon in the corpus data. Whether this is due to regional differences or diachronic change is uncertain.

In the case of negative purposive clauses, the *dī̄.θō̄* clause contains the preventive modal verb *θī̄*, which expresses a wish for something not to happen. Also, the negative optative final particle *təyè* usually occurs at the end of such sentences (see §10.2). The relator noun *ʔəγɔ̄* is mostly omitted, as in (1338) and (1339).

- (1338) *dī̄.θō̄ ʔə-θī̄ tə-θū̄ klē lā θəwō̄*
so.that 3-PREV NEG-use road GNR.P village
kʰī̄ pʰlā̄ ʔi ʔə-bā̄.sə̄ təyè
 two CLF(3D) this 3x-BETWEEN NEG.OPT
 ‘(He warned them) so that they would not use the road between these two villages’ (News article)

- (1339) *pə-θóʔ* *pə-pʰó-pə-lì*
 1p-discipline(v.) 1px-child-1px-granchild
dī.θóʔ *ʔə-θī* *tə-mà-kəmáʔ* *tá* *təyè* *nō*
 so.that 3-PREV NEG-do-be.wrong thing NEG.OPT AGR.FP
 ‘We discipline our children so that they don’t do the wrong things, right?’
 (Vlog, “Marriage”)

9.4.3 Causal clauses

Adverbial clauses indicating the reason for some event commonly feature the relator noun *xō*, which is not used as an independent noun. The adverbializer in causal clauses is usually the subordinator *lā*, in (1340), or the causal adverbializer *mé.lā* ‘since’, consisting of *mé* ‘be true, be the case’ and the complementizer *lā* ‘that’, as in (1341).

- (1340) *jə-θāʔ* *θéʔ.pʰāʔ* ***lā*** *nə-páʔ.té* *jà* ***ʔə-xō*** *lō*
 1sx-heart break(intr.) GNR.P 2s-leave 1si 3x-REASON FACT.FP
 ‘My heart broke because you left me.’ [LTP]

- (1341) *pə-kə-báʔ* *θūʔ* *sé.kōʔ* *pʰó-pʰó* *təpʰáʔ* *ʔā.ʔā*
 1p-IRR-must plant also flower-DIM COLL many(RDP)
mé.lā *kwē-pʰó* *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ* *lōʔ.báʔ=wē* *pʰó* *ʔā.ʔā.yó.yó*
since bee-DIM PL.COLL need=COR flower lots.of(RDP)
 ‘We must also plant many little trees and flowers, because bees need lots of flowers.’ (Vlog, “Bee story”)

Another common causal adverbializer is the verb *kʰó.pʰlō* ‘go through’. In (1342), *kʰó.pʰlō* appears as in a verb compound.

- (1342) *wì* *jwà-kʰó.pʰlō=wē* *təruʔ-kó*
 finish flow-go.through=COR China-country
 ‘and then (the Yangtze) flows through China’ (Karen drum)

In (1343), *kʰó.pʰlō* is followed by the complementizer *lā*, together forming the common expression *kʰó.pʰlō lā* ‘because’. In this case, the relator noun *xō* can be omitted, as in (1343). Example (1344) illustrates that *mé lā* and *kʰó.pʰlō lā* can be used interchangeably.

- (1343) *jə-sʰó.móʔ* *dī.néʔ* *lō* | ***kʰó.pʰlō*** ***lā*** *sʰā.katô* *kʰē.ʔì*
 1s-think like.that FACT.FP **because** **COMP** time now
ʔə-mà *tá* *wē.néʔ* *kōʔ* *mí.nì* *dēʔ* *lō*
 3-do thing that each day each FACT.FP
 ‘I think so, because he does that this time every day.’ [LTP.D]

- (1344) *ʔɔʔ mɛ tə-blɛ bɑʔ*
 eat rice NEG-have.enough.of NEG.FP
kʰɔ.pʰlɔ.lɔ | mɛ.lɔ mɛ tə-jɔ bɑʔ lɔ
because cooked.rice NEG-be.enough NEG.FP FACT.FP
 ‘I’m not full, because there’s not enough rice.’ [HUR]

Another way to introduce a causal expression employed especially in spoken contexts is the use of a rhetorical *why* clause. The function of the adverbial clause *bɑʔ mənɪ ʔəxɔ lɛʔ* (*nɛʔ*) [occur what 3.REASON CQ (that_{FRAME})] ‘why’ is similar to what has been described for a number of sign languages. In American Sign Language, according to Baker-Shenk & Cokely (1980: 137), the function of rhetorical questions, as opposed to true questions, is to “introduce and draw attention to the information that [the signer] will then apply”. Examples (1345) and (1346) represent common ways to use this strategy.

- (1345) *tə-mɛ-lə=wɛ.dɑʔ pyɑ-dɔ.mɔ.wɑ kʰɪ yɑ nɛʔ*
 NEG- be.true_{COP}-NEG.NS=WD person-couple two CLF that
ʔə-tɑ lɔ bɑʔ | bɑʔ.mənɪ.ʔəxɔ.lɛʔ nɛʔ~nɛʔ | ʔəwɛ.θɛʔ nɛʔ
 3x-thing NEG.NS NEG.FP **why** that_{FRAME} 3.PL that_{TOP}
sʰɑ-ʔɔʔ=wɛ.dɑʔ lɔ lɑ.ʔə.pʰrɪ nwi.θɔ ʔəkʰɑ nɛʔ lɪ
 sell-eat=WD GNR.P April 7th time that_{FRAME} NS
 ‘(The car) was no longer the couple’s property. Why? (Because) they had sold it already on April 7th.’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

- (1346) *tɑ.lɔ tɑ.ɲɑʔ nɛʔ pə-tə-lɔʔ θɛ.xə bɑʔ mɔ.nɔ*
 as.for meat that_{TOP} 1p-NEG-NEED wash NEG.FP FP
bɑʔ.mənɪ.ʔəxɔ nɛʔ | nə-mɛ θɛ.xə nɛʔ tɑ.ɲɑʔ
why that_{FRAME} 2s-be.true_{COND} wash that_{FRAME} meat
ʔə-θwɪʔ-ʔə-tʰɪ dɪ.nɛʔ ʔə-pʰlɔʔ-tʰɔʔ
 3x-blood-3x-water TOP 3-splatter-UP
lɔ tɑ.lɔ xɑ.xə θɛ mɔ nɔ
 GNR.P place beside ABIL ATT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘As for meat, we shouldn’t wash it. Why? If you wash meat, blood can splatter to the sides.’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

Lastly, a few descriptive verbs related to feelings are often followed by a clause expressing a cause. Examples include *θɑʔ.kʰɪ* ‘be happy’, seen in (1347), and *θɑʔ.ʔɪʔ* ‘be sad’, seen in (1348).

- (1347) *jə-θɑʔ.kʰɪ lɔ jə-tʰɪʔ-bɑʔ nɑ*
 1s-be.happy COMP 1s-see-HIT 2si
 ‘I’m glad to see you.’ (Ballard 1973b: 92)

- (1348) *jə-θɑʔ.ʔɪʔ dɔʔ.mɑʔ lɔ nə-tə-ʔɛʔ jɑ ʔə-xɔ lɔ*
 1s-be.sad greatly COMP 2s-NEG-love 1si 3x-REASON FACT.FP
 ‘I’m very sad that you don’t love me.’ [LTP]

9.4.4 Conditional clauses

Conditional clauses express a condition (the “if-clause”) that is required to be fulfilled for the statement in the main clause (the ‘then’ clause) to hold. Two types can be distinguished: conditional clauses which refer to real situations (e.g. *if it is raining, I won’t go*) and those which refer to unreal situations (e.g. *if it had rained, I wouldn’t have gone*) (Thompson, Longacre & Hwang 2007: 255–256). In Sgaw Karen, as Gilmore (1898: §223) and Ballard (1973a: 126) have previously mentioned, both types of conditional clauses contain the conditional verb *mê* (from *mê* ‘be true, be the case’). It is highly common for the conditional clause to precede the main clause while the reverse order is considerably rarer. In (1349), the conditional clause is within square brackets.

- (1349) [*nə-mê* *ʔêʔ.dōʔ* *lè* *d̄ʔ* *jà*]_{COND} *nêʔ*
 2s-be.true_{COND} want go with 1si that_{FRAME}
hē *sʰū* *ʔi* *kʰlē~kʰlē* *təkē*
 come ALL.P this be.fast(RDP) OPT.FP
 ‘If you want to go with me, come here quickly.’ [LTP]

As Ballard (1973a: 126) notes, the negative prefix in negative *mê*-clauses is attached to the main verb following *mê* ‘if’ rather than onto *mê* itself, as in (1350).

- (1350) *nə-mê* *tə-lê* *bāʔ* *nêʔ* *jə-kə-lê*
 2s-be.true_{COND} NEG-go NEG.FP that_{FRAME} 1s-IRR-go
 ‘If you don’t go, I’ll go.’ (Ballard 1973a: 126)

The irrealis prefix *kə-* appears to be rare in conditional clauses, but like the negator *tə-*, it precedes the main verb, if present. Only two other verbs, the volitional verb *θā* ‘intend to’ and the preventive verb *θī* ‘in order not to’, display the same syntactic behaviour as *mê* with respect to their position in relation to the verbal prefixes *tə-* and *kə-*.

Gilmore (1898: §223) mentions that conditional clauses end in the clause-separator *d̄ʔ* ‘and, then’. In the modern language, both *d̄ʔ* and *nêʔ*, as well as the colloquial frame-setting particle *dī*, occur in conditional clauses. These particles form constituency with the preceding clause, as indicated in (1351).

- (1351) *hē* *mê* *sʰō* **dī** |
 come be.true_{COND} be.early **FRAME**
nəθī *kə-nê.bāʔ* *kʰāʔ* *lā* *tā.mèʔ.nā*
 2p IRR-get chair GNR.P front
 ‘If you come early, you will get a chair in the front.’ (Vlog, “Music concert”)

Note further the position of the conditional marker *mê* in (1351). Since *sʰō* ‘be early’ in this case is a main verb taking a clausal subject (see §4.3), conditional *mê* precedes this verb rather than the preceding one, *hē*. Similarly, in (1352), *mê* precedes the descriptive verb *θē* ‘have the skill to’ rather than *rē* ‘socialize with, deal with (people)’.

- (1352) *pə-rē* *ʔō* *mē* *θē* *dōʔ* *kə-kē.tʰōʔ*
 1p-deal.with 3i COND be.skilled_{ABIL} and/then IRR-become
pə-tì.θəkōʔ *lō* *ʔə-γè-kətā* *tə-γà* *lō*
 1px-friend REL 3-be.good-SUPL one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘(No matter how bad a person is,) if we know how to deal with them,
 they will become our best friend.’ (Karen proverbs)

Besides *nēʔ*, *dī*, and *dōʔ*, the intensifier *māʔ* ‘not before, only then’ can also be used clause-finally to stress the condition, as in (1353)–(1355).

- (1353) *pə-mē* *kʰī* *māʔ* *pə-ʔōʔ* *bāʔ* *lō*
 1p-be.true_{COND} be.diligent **only.then** 1p-eat be.correct_{ABIL} FACT.FP
 ‘Only if we work hard, we will get to eat.’ (Karen proverbs: 20)

- (1354) *nə-mē* *mà.lō* *pyà.kəŋō-klōʔ* *māʔ*
 2s-be.true_{COND} study Karen-language **only.then**
nə-kə-kətō *tā* *dōʔ* *ʔō* *θē*
 2s-IRR-speak THING with 3i be.skilled_{ABIL}
 ‘Only if you study Karen will you be able to talk with them.’
 (Ballard 1973a: 147)

- (1355) *tì.lō* *nə-θāʔ.mī* *māʔ* *dōʔ* *nə-kə-kē.tʰōʔ* *nə-kʰī* *dōʔ*
 when 2s.be.satisfied **only.then** then 2s-IRR-pry.up 2sx-rear and
nə-kə-hāʔ.tʰōʔ-kwìʔ *lō* *mèʔ.tʰī.kəlà* *nēʔ* *ʔəmèʔ.ŋā* *lō*
 2s-IRR-leave-AWAY GNR.P mirror that 3x.front FP
 ‘Only when you’re satisfied (with how you look) you will stand up and go away
 from that mirror.’ (Karen sermon)

Also note that, apart from ‘if’, *mē* is equivalent to ‘when’ in cases where a future event can be expected to happen with certainty. Examples (1356) and (1357) illustrate this point.

- (1356) *nə-mē* *pʰlō-tʰōʔ* *tʃō* *wì* *ʔə-lō.kʰī* *nēʔ*
 2s-be.true_{COND} go.through-UP school finish 3x-back that_{FRAME}
nə-kə-mà *mənì* *lēʔ*
 2s-IRR-do what CQ
 ‘What will you do after you have graduated?’ [HUR]

- (1357) *tā.sù-kʰā* *kətō* *mē* *wì* *dōʔ*
 rain(n.)-time period **be.true_{COND}** finish then
 ‘{when the rainy season is over / after the rainy season}’ (News article)

“Unreality conditionals” (Thompson, Longacre & Hwang 2007) refer to constructions expressing hypothetical and counterfactual situations. As mentioned above, such clauses

also involve *mê* and do not differ significantly from clauses expressing reality conditionals. Counterfactual expressions can be seen in (1358) and (1359).

- (1358) *nə-mê* *tə-θêʔ.nā-sʰō* *bâʔ* *nêʔ* *nə-kə-sʰō.kəmôʔ* *lā*
 2s-COND NEG-know-be.early NEG.FP that 2s-IRR-think COMP
ʔə-kē *sāʔ.kʰō-kē* *tə-bêʔ* *lā* *ʔə-bâʔ.ʔā* *dōʔ*
 3-act.as paper-shred one-CLF(2D) REL 3-be.dirty and
ʔə-lí-ʔə-pyè *tə-ʔôʔ* *bâʔ* *lō*
 3x-value(CC1)-3x-value(CC2) NEG-EXIST NEG.FP FACT.FP
 ‘If you hadn’t known from before (that it was a bank note), you would have thought that it was a dirty shred of paper worth nothing.’ (Vlog, “Worthless”)

- (1359) *tā.ʔōʔ* *tə-kʰā* *ʔì* *pyà* *mà-pàʔ-né*
 food one-item this person do-put_{PREP}-get_{BEN}
pyà.kʰôʔ.pyà.nā *ʔə-γō* [*nə-mê*] *ʔōʔ-bâʔ.pʰīʔ*
 leader 3x-PURP 2s-be.true_{COND} eat-happen.to
məkōʔ *dī]* *tā* *kə-kō* *pʰāʔ.dōʔ* *nā*
 just.now TOP thing IRR-be.difficult a.lot INTS
 ‘This food was fixed for the leaders. If you had eaten it just now by any chance, it would have been very difficult (for us). (Ballard 1973c: 259)

Note the use of the verbal modifier *bâʔ.pʰīʔ* ‘happen to (V), (V) by chance’ in (1359). It commonly occurs in conditional sentences, expressing hypothetical scenarios. (See §5.5.6 for more details on the use of *bâʔ.pʰīʔ*.)

A final note concerns two variant realisations of the conditional verb *mê*. The first variant is *mē*, pronounced with Tone 1 rather than Tone 2 (see §2.4). In the Kayin–Tak variety, for example, the sequence *mē-mê* [COND-be.so] ‘if (it) is’ is pronounced [meɪ meɪ]. The second variant occurs in the Mae Hong Son variety, where *mê* is heard as an atonal prefix *mə-* [mə], as in (1360).

- (1360) [*mə-mêʔ.hīʔ*]_{COND} *nêʔ* | *nō* *kā* *tə-θē* *bâʔ*
 COND-be.drunk that_{FRAME} drive car NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} NEG.FP
 ‘{If / when} drunk (you) cannot drive.’ [KWH]

Also, it is common in colloquial contexts for *mê* to be dropped, as in (1361).

- (1361) [*kʰō* *klē*]_{COND} *nêʔ* *pə-bâʔ* *pəlō-lō* *θāʔ*
 cross road that_{FRAME} 1p-hit/must alert-DOWN heart_{REFL}
 ‘(When) crossing the road, we must be careful.’ [KWH]

9.4.5 Concessive clauses

Concessive (‘although’) clauses in Sgaw Karen also typically feature the conditional marker *mê*, discussed in §9.4.4. They often end with one of the clause-final adverbs *bâʔ.sʰāʔ* or

θə̀nà².kē (or its somewhat less common variant *nà².θəkē*), both expressing ‘but’ or ‘although’. The latter also functions as an additive marker (‘likewise, also’) in main clauses (see §7.1). In (1362), the concessive clause is within square brackets.

- (1362) [*ʔə-tʰu²* *mê* *tə-ʔo²* *ʔā* *bâ².sʰâ²*]_{CONC}
 3x-trunk **be.true**_{CONC} NEG-EXIST many **although**
ʔo² *ʔə-kəli²~kəli²* *lò*
 EXIST 3x-kind~kind FACT.FP
 ‘Although there were not many plants (in the garden), there were several different kinds.’ (Moon rabbit)

Like other clause-final particles, *bâ².sʰâ²* and *θə̀nà².kē* are prosodically linked with the preceding clause. As to the difference between the two, *bâ².sʰâ²* is by some speakers considered slightly more formal than *θə̀nà².kē*. Combining *bâ².sʰâ²* and *θə̀nà².kē*, in this order, is also possible, as in (1363).

- (1363) *nə-pʰɔ̄.nì²* *lâ* *sʰu* *tʰə²* *pù*
 2s-put.in stone ALL.P bag inside
bâ².sʰâ².θə̀nà².kē | *tʰə²* *tə-hā².ɣò* *bâ²*
although bag NEG-be.destroyed NEG.FP
 ‘Although you put a stone in the bag, it won’t break.’ [LTP.D]

Also note, in (1363), that *mê* is not present, which is frequently the case in concessive clauses. In conditional clauses, in contrast, *mê* occurs more consistently.

Lastly, hypothetical ‘even if’ clauses, also known as concessive conditional clauses (Thompson, Longacre & Hwang 2007: 261–262), do not differ formally from concessive clauses expressing real situations. Example (1364) represents the latter type, while (1365) exemplifies a hypothetical situation.

- (1364) *pə-mê².kʰl̄* *ʔo²* *kʰl̄* *tô²* *bâ².sʰâ²*
 1px-eye EXIST two CLF **CONC**
tʰi²-lò-kè *pə-kʰô²* *dɔ̄* *tə-pʰlâ²* *tə-θē* *bâ²*
 see-DOWN-RETURN 1px-head whole one-CLF(3D) NEG-ABIL NEG.FP
 ‘Although we have two eyes, we cannot see our whole head.’
 (Karen proverbs: 30)

- (1365) *nə-mê* *bâ²* *l̄ə-θəɣâ* *dɔ̄²* *tâ.l̄ə.kʰɔ̄.pʰlō* *kɔ̄.kɔ̄.kʰē.kʰē*
2s-be.true must go-meet with experience be.difficult(RDP)
nā².nā².pʰɣô².pʰɣô² *tʰē.l̄ē².tʰē.l̄ē²* *bâ².sʰâ².θə̀nà².kē* *nē²*
 be.tough(RDP) how.much(RDP) **although** that
 ‘no matter how many difficult and tough experiences you (might) have to face’
 (Vlog, “Comparison”)

9.4.6 Similitive clauses

Similitive clauses, or manner clauses, describe the manner in which something appears or is done (Thompson, Longacre & Hwang 2007). In Sgaw Karen, similitive clauses begin with *dīʔ* ‘be like’, a descriptive verb which in this case acts as an adverbializer. In the modern language, *dīʔ* fails to occur as a main verb, but older sources contain some examples, like (1366).

- (1366) *nə-liʔ* *tə-béʔ* *dīʔ* *ʔi* *hā*
 2sx-book one-CLF(2D) **be.like** this PQ
tə-dīʔ *néʔ* *bāʔ*
 NEG-**be.like** that NEG.FP
 ‘Does your book resemble this? – It does not resemble it.’ (Wade 1897: 58)

A more common verb with the same meaning is *dīʔ.θōʔ* ‘be like, be similar (to), be equal (to)’. This verb often co-occurs with the preposition *dōʔ* ‘with’, as in (1367).

- (1367) *jò* *néʔ* *kətò* *tā* *tə-dīʔ.θōʔ* *dōʔ* *tʃōʔ.tèʔ* *bāʔ*
 n.Thai that_{TOP} speak things **NEG-be.similar** with c.Thai NEG.FP
 ‘Northern Thai don’t speak like (central) Thai’ (Ballard 1973c: 99)

In similitive clauses, *dīʔ* is the only adverbializer encountered, as in (1368). Apart from *dīʔ*, the relator noun *θōʔ*, possessivized as *ʔə-θōʔ*, occurs at the end of the clause.

- (1368) *dīʔ* *pyà* *kōʔ* *yà* *dēʔ* *θéʔ.nā* *ʔə-θōʔ*
be.like person each CLF(HUM) each know **3x-SIM**
 ‘as everyone knows’ (News vlog)

As explained in §3.2, *θōʔ* is not used as an independent noun and its exact meaning is unclear. As a relator noun expressing ‘as, like’, *θōʔ* most commonly takes a clause as its possessee, in which case the possessive marker is the third-person prefix *ʔə-*. Nouns as possessors of *θōʔ* occur chiefly in literary language, while colloquially, ‘as a [NP]’ can be expressed using a copula clause, as in (1369).

- (1369) *dīʔ* [*jə-mé* *pā* *təyà*] *ʔəθōʔ* *jə-θāʔ.kʰɿ* *rāʔ*
be.like 1s-be.true_{cop} father one-CLF(HUM) **3.SIM** 1s-be.happy INTS
 ‘As a father, I am really happy.’ (Vlog, “Newborn son”)

Typically, similitive clauses modify a main clause (MC), either following it, as in (1370), or preceding it, as in (1371).

(1370) [pə-bâʔ ʔôʔ.mū d5ʔ lè tâ]MC dīʔ mō.pâ
 1p-must live and go thing **be.like** parents
 ʔə-tâ-θôʔ.lō.nêʔ.lō pyà ʔôʔ=wē ʔə-θôʔ lō
 3-thing_{NMLZ}-teach(elab.) 1pi EXIST=COR **3x-SIM** FACT.FP
 ‘We must follow in the ways our parents taught us.’ (Karen proverbs)

(1371) dīʔ pyà k5ʔ-kəliʔ-dēʔ ʔôʔ-d5ʔ ʔə-tâ-ʔ5ʔ-tâʔ-ʔ5
be.like person each-kind-each EXIST-with 3x-thing-eat-thing-drink
 lā ʔə-pà.dôʔ=wē ʔə-mī.dôʔ.θâʔ.θ5 ʔə-θôʔ
 REL 3-respect=COR 3-be.well-known **3x-SIM**
 [pəwē pyà.kəŋ5.pʰō θêʔ.təpʰâʔ pə-ʔôʔ-sək5ʔ d5ʔ
 1pe Karen PL.COLL 1p-EXIST-also with
 pə-tâ.ʔ5ʔ lā pə-pà.dôʔ ʔ5]MC
 1px-food REL 1p-respect 3i
 ‘Like every ethnic group has their (own) food that they respect and that is well-known, we Karen also have food that we respect’ (Vlog, “Karen life”)

In (1372), rather than modifying the entire clause, the *dīʔ* clause modifies an individual argument, which is the NP *liʔ.mêʔ.pʰlâʔ* ‘letter (in a script)’.

(1372) dīʔ-kē.tʰ5ʔ-kè=wē kəŋ5-sy5 liʔ.mêʔ.pʰlâʔ
 CAUS-become-RETURN=COR Karen-Sgaw letter
 [dīʔ pə-kwēʔ-pə-pʰāʔ ʔ5 lā
be.like 1p-write-1p-read 3i GNR.P
 mī.məsʰā tə-nì ʔi ʔə-θôʔ]SIM kəd5ʔ nêʔ.lō
 day one-day this **3x-SIM** again FP
 ‘(Then) he (=rev. J. Wade) recreated the Sgaw Karen letters as we read and write them today.’ (Karen nationalism)

Having examined some common types of clauses and how clauses combine into sentences, we continue to sentence-level phenomena by looking at sentence-final particles and sentence types, in Chapter 10.

10 Sentence-final particles and sentence types

A noticeable characteristic of Sgaw Karen is the abundance of sentence-final particles, also known as pragmatic, discourse, or modal particles. It is one of the features that Enfield & Comrie (2015) identify as characteristic of the languages of Mainland Southeast Asia. Cook (1999: 181) describes pragmatic particles as follows:

“Since particles in general are not used as content words, they do not carry referential meaning. Pragmatic particles typically occur in face-to-face interaction and signal the speaker’s epistemic and/or affective stance toward the addressee(s), the content of talk, or other aspects of the speech context.”

More specifically, sentence-final particles express things such as a speaker’s epistemic stance (‘surely, probably’), mirativity (surprise), and illocutionary force (imperative, declarative, interrogative). For example, the most salient factor distinguishing the polar question in (1373) from the declarative sentence in (1374) is the interrogative particle *hā̄*.

(1373) *tʰī* *lāʔ* *lī*
water be.used.up NS
‘There is no water left.’ [KWH]

(1374) *tʰī* *lāʔ* *lī* *hā̄* [(h)aʌ]⁵³
water be.used.up NS PQ
‘Is there no water left?’ [KWH]

An important factor regarding final particles is their euphonic function, as when making an utterance sound “less abrupt” (Ballard 1973b: 72). Thus, while final particles are often omissible without altering the semantics of a sentence, they are commonly used to express various pragmatic meanings.

⁵³The utterances above are pronounced similarly with a pitch contour following the lexical tones of each syllable. However, final particles like *hā̄* are prone to intonational “overwriting” (Hyman 2018). Consequently, *hā̄* can be pronounced with a mid-falling contour, as in (1374), or another pitch contour depending on the context.

The use of Sgaw Karen sentence-final particles varies significantly depending on the region a variety is spoken in, the social context, intonation or other prosodic factors, among other things. Table 48 lists some common final particles and what they express. Some final particles appear only in one sentence type, others in more than one. Also note that some final particles occur only in some regions or have different meanings depending on the region (NT=Northern Thailand, KT=Kayin–Tak, M=Mawlamyine).

Table 48 Final particles

Final particle	Description (what the particle expresses)	Sentence type in which final particle occurs		
		statement	command	question
<i>lɔ̃</i>	factual	x		
<i>nɛ̃^ʔ lɔ̃</i>	factual (formal)	x		
<i>mɔ̃~mɔ̃</i>	attenuative	x	x	
<i>nɔ̃~nɔ̃</i>	shared assumption	x	x	
<i>hɛ̃^ʔ</i>	emphatic, corrective	x	x	
<i>hɔ̃</i>	emphatic		x	x
<i>lɛ̃^ʔ</i>	emphatic	x		
<i>nɛ̃^ʔ</i>	defensive, rebuking (NT)	x	x	
<i>mɔ̃~mɔ̃^ʔ</i>	hesitation, regret (KT) assuredness (NT, M)	x		
<i>bá^ʔ</i>	negative	x		
<i>ká</i>	‘probably’ (NT, M)	x		
<i>θá^ʔ / já^ʔ~ná^ʔ</i>	‘surely’ (NT, M)	x		
<i>hā</i>	polar questions			x
<i>lɛ̃^ʔ</i>	content questions			x
<i>nī</i>	mirative questions			x
<i>təké</i>	optative		x	
<i>təyè</i>	negative optative		x	

Regarding the tones of final particles, Enfield (2007: 73) notes that Lao sentence-final particles “are under-specified for tone, picking up their pitch contours from the kinds of natural principles of iconic-indexical motivation that determine pragmatically meaningful pitch contours in non-tonal languages”. This distinguishes final particles from other word classes, in which tones differentiate meanings. In Sgaw Karen, some final particles, such as the interrogative particle *hā* and the negative particle *bá^ʔ*, have conventionalized written forms, while final particles used chiefly in spoken contexts, such as *nɔ̃~nɔ̃*, do not. Regardless of their written form, the phonological tone of a final particle, if one can be identified, is nearly always “overwritten” (Hyman 2018) by an appropriate intonational contour. Next, the three sentence types and the final particles associated with them are discussed in turn.

10.1 Interrogative sentences

Questions in Sgaw Karen are obligatorily marked with an interrogative sentence-final particle. In the spoken language, several interrogative particles with various pragmatic meanings occur. Some are regional, but two of them are widespread: *hā*, used in polar questions, and *lêʔ*, used in content questions. The actual pronunciation of *hā* and *lêʔ* varies according to the context and speaker's attitude, among other factors. The transcription reflects the conventionalized spellings in the orthography that uses the Mon–Burmese script.

First, consider (1375), a polar question ending in *hā*. It is identical with the analogous non-interrogative sentence in (1376), except for the final particles.

(1375) *ʔə-lôʔ.bāʔ tā.mà.sə hā*
 3-need help(n.) PQ
 ‘Does he need any help?’ [HUR]

(1376) *ʔə-lôʔ.bāʔ tā.mà.sə l̥*
 3-need help(n.) FACT.FP
 ‘He needs help.’ [HUR]

Sentence-medially, *hā* is used in indirect questions. In (1377), the indirect question (IQ) functions as the complement of *θêʔ.nā* ‘know’.

(1377) [*jə-wê kə-ʔôʔ l̥ d̥əʔ hā*]_{IQ} *nêʔ*
 1sx-eB IRR-EXIST GNR.P room/house(N.Th.) PQ that_{TOP}
jə-tə-θêʔ.nā bāʔ
 1s-NEG-know NEG.FP
 ‘I don’t know whether my older sibling will be home or not.’
 (Ballard 1973a: 165)

Another use of sentence-medial *hā* is in alternative questions, such as those in (1378) and (1379). In such cases, *hā* follows each of the nouns that the question concerns.

(1378) *nə-ʔêʔ.dōʔ ʔə kʰôʔ.pʰī hā láʔ.pʰāʔ.tʰī hā*
 2s-want drink coffee PQ tea PQ
 ‘Do you want to drink coffee or tea?’ [LTP.P]

(1379) *pyà ʔôʔ l̥ nə-wé pù*
 person live GNR.P 2sx-city inside
mê pyà.kən̄ hā pəj̄ hā
 be.true_{COP} Karen PQ Burmese PQ
 ‘Are the people living in your town Karen or Burmese?’
 (Jones 1961: 193–194)

The attenuative particle *sê* ‘also’ is widely used in the spoken language to soften a question or command (see §10.1–10.2). In this case, the normal contrastive function of *sê* ‘also’ is less apparent and *sê* is instead used to signal politeness, as in (1380) and (1381).

(1380) *nə-ʔê².dō² lò².kwē dō² pəwē sê hā*
 2s-want play with 1pi **also** PQ
 ‘Do you want to play with us?’ [HUR]

(1381) *θərā² hā nə-xē-nē tā.mà.sə lā*
 teacher VOC 2s-request-get_{BEN} help(n.) GNR.P
pʰō.θā² tə-γà ʔi ʔə-γō kə-θē sê hā
 child one-CLF this 3x-PURP IRR-be.skilled_{ABIL} **also** PQ
 ‘Teacher, can you ask for and get help for this child?’ (Ballard 1973c: 168)

Another element appearing in polar questions is *mê* ‘be true, be the case’. In §9.3.2, *mê* was described as introducing indirect questions in biclausal constructions. As (1382) illustrates, *mê* also occurs in independent clauses, indicating that the sentence following it is a question. Omitting *mê* is mostly possible, but the pragmatic implications are unclear at this stage.

(1382) *mê pəwē.θē² pə-kə-sʰā sê.kō² hā*
 Q 1pe 1p-IRR-be.sick also PQ
 ‘Could we be sick too?’ [LTP]

Apart from the two sentence-final particles discussed so far, which could be considered pragmatically neutral, several other interrogative particles are used in the spoken language. Many of them are contractions of two final particles, such as *lā*, a contraction of *lò* and *hā*. As (1383) illustrates, it is more emphatic than the more neutral *hā*.

(1383) *nə-kə-lē θəpyā.kətā lā*
 2s-IRR-go really **EMPH.Q**
 ‘Will you really go?!’ [HUR]

Other colloquial variants of the interrogative final particle *hā* heard in the Kayin–Tak variety include *jā* and *hō*, expressing surprise, as in (1384) and (1385).

(1384) *nəθī mō | nə-kwā ʔō yè jā*
 2p Q.TOP 2s-look 3i be.good **PQ**
 ‘What about you guys? Do you think he’s handsome?’ [HUR]

(1385) *nə-tō.də hā.mā hō*
 2sx-wallet be.lost **Q**
 ‘You lost your wallet?’ [HUR]

A similar, mirative question particle, *nī-nī*, occurs in northern Thailand varieties (Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai) but is not attested in other regions. As Ballard (1973c: 31) has previously described, *nī* is used when “the speaker had thought that things would be other than stated”. In (1386), *nī* marks a question as rhetorical (the speaker can already guess the answer), signaling that the situation is contrary to what had been expected. In (1387) and (1388), also from northern Thailand varieties, *nī* has a similar function.

(1386) *tā* *tə-mōʔ* *mī* *θāʔ* *nà* ***nī***
 thing_{IMPRS} NEG-DES sleep heart_{REFL} 2si **MIRATIVE.Q**
 ‘You’re not tired (I expected you to be, but now I notice that you probably aren’t)?’ [KWH]

(1387) *nə-θāʔ* *tə-pʰyī* *bāʔ* ***nī* / *hā***
 2sx-heart NEG-be.light NEG.FP **MIRATIVE.Q / PQ**
 ‘Aren’t you feeling well?’ (Ratanakul 1986: 763; my trans.)

(1388) *pɣà* *tē* *tā* *dīʔ.nēʔ* *nēʔ*
 person say/tell thing like.that that_{FRAME}
nə-sʰō.kəmōʔ *jē* *jə-tē* *tə-θē* *hā* ***nī***
 2s-think 1se 1s-say/tell NEG-be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ **MIRATIVE.Q**
 ‘People talk like that, do you think I couldn’t talk the way they do?’
 (Ballard 1973c: 26)

Having described particles appearing in polar questions, we now proceed to content questions. The question particle *lēʔ* is used in interrogative sentences containing a content question word. The colloquial variant *lōʔ* is heard in northern Thailand but has not been attested in other varieties. Ballard (1973a: 38) notes that, in some areas, *lōʔ* is predominant, while in others, *lōʔ* and *lēʔ* are used interchangeably. Examples (1389)–(1391) illustrate the use of *lēʔ* with three different question words (QW). Note that *mənī* ‘what’ and *mətəyà* ‘who’⁵⁴ appear *in situ*, according to their role in the clause. The particle *lēʔ* also occurs in the question words in (1392).

(1389) *nə-mà* [*mənī*]_{QW} ***lēʔ***
 2s-do what **CQ**
 ‘What are you doing?’ [HUR]

(1390) [*mətəyà*]_{QW} *kī* *tā* ***lēʔ***
 who burn THING **CQ**
 ‘Who is burning something?’ [KWH]

⁵⁴ A common, short form of *mətəyà* is *mətà* ‘who’, which at least in the Kayin–Tak border region also expresses ‘what’.

(1391) *pâ* *hî* [*bâ[?].mənî*]_{QW} *lî* *pə-bâ[?]* *mà-ɔ̄[?]* *k^hɪ[?]* ***lî[?]***
 father VOC why COMP 1p-must do-eat hill.field CQ
 ‘Father, why do we need to do rotational farming?’ (Karen village)

(1392) *p^hē-lî[?]* [LOC.P-CQ] ‘where, which’
dī[?]-lî[?] [be.like-CQ] ‘how’, and
k^hē-lî[?] [moment?-CQ] ‘when’

Another use of *lî[?]* is to indicate emphasis in affirmative sentences, as in (1393). As Jones (1961: 23) notes, *lî[?]* as a non-interrogative particle is used in informal speech and can indicate a “deprecatory attitude or else a rhetorical question”. In (1394), *lî[?]* is preceded by *mā[?]*, another emphatic particle.

(1393) *tâ.ɔ̄[?].mū* *tə-yè-t^hɔ̄[?]* *nî* *tə-mì* ***lî[?]***
 life NEG-be.good-UP EXT one-kind EMPH
 ‘My life hasn’t improved at all.’ (Karen village)

(1394) *tâ.s^hā* *ɔ̄əwē.nē[?]* *tə-kɔ̄* ***mā[?].lî[?]***
 illness that NEG-be.difficult EMPH
 ‘That illness is not difficult at all [to cure; RK]!’ (Jones 1961: 195–196)

In §10.2, we go on to discuss imperative and preventive sentences, expressing commands or wishes for something to happen or not to happen, respectively.

10.2 Imperative and preventive sentences

Imperative sentences express commands, while preventive sentences convey a desire for something not to happen or be the case. The former type of sentence, in their simplest form, consist of only a verb or a verb and its object, as in (1395) and (1396). As the translations indicate, utterances of this type can have either an imperative or hortative (‘let’s’) meaning, depending on the context.

(1395) *lî*
 go
 {‘Go! / Let’s go!’}

(1396) *ɔ̄* *mè*
 eat rice
 {‘Eat! / Let’s eat!’}

The optative final particle *təkê* (from *tə-* ‘one’ and *kê* ‘small portion’; Wade 1896) is common in imperative and optative sentences, like (1397). (See also §4.2.2.1 on the use of *təkê* in comparative contexts).

- (1397) *bīʔ-lə̌* *pən̄.klē-θāʔ* *ʔə-tʰī* *nēʔ*
squeeze-DOWN lime-fruit 3x-water that_{FRAME}
lā *sʰɔ̄-nāʔ-kəθū* *ʔə-pù* *təkē*
GNR.P chicken-meat-curry 3x-inside OPT.FP
‘Squeeze the lime into the chicken curry.’ [HUR]

The attenuative particle *sē* ‘also’ is used in questions (see §10.1) and in commands, as in (1398), to soften the tone of a sentence, often when no obvious contrastive meaning is intended.

- (1398) *pələ-lə̌* *θāʔ* *sē*
be.aware.of-DOWN heart_{REFL} also
‘Be careful.’ [KWH]

Similarly, the attenuative final particle *məʔ~mə* ‘softens a command into a request’ (Gilmore 1898: §218), as in (1399).

- (1399) *hē* *lā-ʔi* *tə-sə* *məʔ*
come GNR.P-this one-moment ATT.FP
‘Come here for a moment (would you?).’ (Saw Kay)

The agreement-soliciting final particle *nə* ‘right?’ conveys a somewhat stronger imperative force. When used in commands, one speaker describes *nə* as indicating a request, but also a command, as when the speaker expects the addressee to comply with their wish. Compare the use of *nə* and *mə* in (1400) and (1401).

- (1400) *hē* *mà-sə* *jà* *nə*
come do-HELP 1si AGR.FP
‘(You’ll) come and help me (right?).’

- (1401) *hē* *mà-sə* *jà* *mə*
come do-HELP 1si ATT.FP
‘Come and help me (would you?).’

The confirmative particle *hə* occurs chiefly in informal contexts. Unlike *mə* and *nə*, *hə* is used to confirm or guarantee that the speaker’s command is fulfilled, as in (1402)–(1404).

- (1402) *mə-hē* *dəʔ |* *hē* *hāʔ.ʔəʔ-kəʔ* *jà* *hə*
COND-come and_{FRAME} come visit-SOC 1si CONF.FP
‘If you come (to northern Thailand), you’ll come and visit me, right?’ [KWH]

- (1403) *də-nē* *jà* *tā.ɣə* *tə-bēʔ* *hə*
strike-get_{BEN} 1si picture one-CLF(2D) CONF.FP
‘Take a picture of me.’ [HUR]

- (1404) $\text{ʔɔ}^2\text{-n}\acute{e}$ $\text{j}\acute{\alpha}\text{-}\gamma\acute{\delta}$ $\text{h}\acute{\delta}$
 eat-get_{BEN} 1sx-PURP CONF.FP
 ‘Eat (it) for me (I can’t finish it).’ [HUR]

Note that $\text{h}\acute{\delta}$ is also used in mirative questions, which are used when the speaker is surprised (see §10.1). The emphatic final particle $\text{h}\acute{e}$ occurs exclusively in colloquial contexts, as in (1405). The more exact pragmatic function of this particle is unclear.

- (1405) $\text{l}\acute{e}\text{-n}\acute{e}$ $\text{j}\acute{\alpha}\text{-}\gamma\acute{\delta}$ $\text{h}\acute{e}$
 go-get_{BEN} 1sx-PURP EMPH.FP
 ‘Go instead of me.’ [HUR]

Apart from sentence-final particles, two other particles deserve to be mentioned: $\text{m}\acute{\delta}$ and $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\text{b}\acute{\alpha}^?$. The optative, or “precative” (Gilmore 1898: §132), particle $\text{m}\acute{\delta}$ occurs as the first element in sentences denoting a wish for a situation to occur or be the case, as in (1406) and (1407).

- (1406) $\text{m}\acute{\delta}$ $\text{p}\acute{\alpha}\text{w}\acute{e}$ $\text{x}\acute{\imath}\text{-t}^{\text{h}\acute{\imath}^?}\text{-n}\acute{e}\text{-}\theta\acute{\alpha}\text{k}\acute{\delta}^?$
 OPT 1pe search-see-get-SOC
 $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}$ $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\text{-k}^{\text{h}}\acute{\alpha}$ $\text{l}\acute{\delta}$ $\text{p}\acute{\alpha}\text{-m}\acute{\alpha}$ $\text{ʔ}\acute{\delta}$ $\text{m}\acute{\imath}^?$
 thing one-CLF REL 1p-do 3i be.enjoyable
 ‘{Let’s / May we} find something that we enjoy doing.’ (Vlog, “Advice”)

- (1407) $\text{m}\acute{\delta}$ $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}.\text{m}\acute{\imath}^?$ $\text{ʔ}\acute{\delta}^?$ $\text{d}\acute{\delta}^?$ $\theta\acute{\imath}$ $\text{d}\acute{\delta}^?$ $\text{m}\acute{\alpha}\text{-n}\acute{e}\text{-}\text{ʔ}\acute{\delta}^?\text{-k}\acute{e}$
 OPT peace EXIST with 2p and do-get-eat-ABIL
 $\text{ʔ}\acute{\delta}^?.\text{s}^{\text{h}}\acute{\imath}^?.\text{ʔ}\acute{\delta}^?.\text{k}^{\text{h}}\text{l}\acute{e}$ $\text{k}\acute{\delta}^?.\text{d}\acute{\imath}.\text{n}\acute{\delta}.\gamma\acute{\alpha}$ $\text{d}\acute{e}^?$ $\text{n}\acute{e}^?$ $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\text{k}\acute{e}$
 be.healthy(elab.) everyone(elab.) each that OPT.FP
 ‘May peace and prosperity be with you everyone.’ (Vlog, “Missing family”)

Note that $\text{m}\acute{\delta}$ denotes a wish and generally expresses less imperative force than *let’s*. See also examples (1395) and (1396), showing hortative sentences with a bare verb.

In negative contexts, the negative imperative modal verb $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\text{b}\acute{\alpha}^?$ (from $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}$ - ‘not’ and $\text{b}\acute{\alpha}^?$ ‘must’) is used to introduce a prohibitive or preventive (‘don’t, shouldn’t’) sentence. In most cases, the prohibitive sentence ends with the negative optative final particle $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{e}$ (from $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}$ - ‘not’ $\gamma\acute{e}$ ‘be good’) ‘may (you) not’, as in (1408) and (1409). This particle is sometimes omitted, as in (1410).

- (1408) $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\text{b}\acute{\alpha}^?$ $\text{t}^{\text{h}}\acute{\delta}^?.\theta\acute{\alpha}\text{t}\text{r}\acute{\delta}$ $\text{n}\acute{\alpha}\theta\acute{\alpha}^?$ $\text{d}\acute{\delta}^?$ $\text{p}\gamma\acute{\alpha}$ $\text{ʔ}\gamma\acute{\alpha}$ $\text{n}\acute{\delta}.\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\text{b}\text{l}\acute{\delta}$ $\text{t}\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{e}$
 NEG.IMP compare 2s.REFL with person other never NEG.OPT
 ‘Never compare yourself with others.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

(1409) *nə-təbâʔ* *sēʔ.kʰɪ* *təlā* *təɣè*
 2s-NEG.IMP be.late too.much NEG.OPT
 ‘Don’t be too late.’ [HUR]

(1410) *kôʔ.rôʔ.nâʔ* *ʔə-sʰə.kətô* *nêʔ* *təbâʔ* *sʰéʔ.nɔ̄* *būʔ~būʔ-lòʔ.θāʔ* *bâʔ*
 corona 3x-time that NEG.IMP sit be.near-RECP NEG.FP
 ‘In corona times, don’t sit so close to each other.’ [LTP]

Negative optative sentences also often end with *təɣè*, combined with the preventive verb *θɪ* ‘in order not to’ (see §9.4.2). Example (1411) demonstrates a preventive sentence.

(1411) *mɔ̄* *ʔə-θɪ* *tə-θāʔ.pènɔ̄ʔ* *lā* *ʔəwē.dāʔ* *sé.kɔ̄ʔ*
 OPT 1p-PREV NEG-forget COMP 1pe also
ʔə-mé=wē.dāʔ *ʔɣà* *lā* *ʔə-rē.dôʔ*
 1p-be.true_{COP}=WD person REL 3-be.important
dī.θōʔ *dɔ̄ʔ* *ʔɣà* *ʔəɣà* *sé.kɔ̄ʔ* *nêʔ.lò*
 be.like with person other also FP
 ‘{Let’s / May we} not forget that we too are as important as other people.’
 (Vlog, “Worthless”)

We continue with the final sentence type, declarative sentences, in §10.3.

10.3 Declarative sentences

Declarative sentences represent the types of speech acts which “convey the belief of the speaker that the proposition expressed is true or will turn out to be true” (König & Siemund 2007: 284). This distinguishes them from interrogative and directive sentences, which cannot be said to be true or false.

Compared to interrogative and directive sentences, there is an even larger inventory of sentence-final particles in declarative sentences, expressing various types of pragmatic meanings. Thus, although semantically similar, sentences with different final particles can differ significantly with respect to their pragmatic meaning. Consider (1412)–(1414). In (1412), the factual final particle *lò* declares a fact that the speaker is certain to be true. The attenuative final particle *mɔ̄* in (1413) is similar but softens the utterance, making it less authoritative. The final particle *nɔ̄* in (1414), in turn, is used to solicit agreement.

(1412) *ʔəwē* *mé* *ʔə-mô* *lò* (factual)
 3 be.true_{COP} 1sx-mother FACT.FP
 ‘She is my mother.’ [LTP.P]

(1413) *ʔəwē* *mé* *ʔə-tâ.ʔéʔ-tɔ̄* *mɔ̄* (attenuated)
 3 be.true_{COP} 1sx-love-be.true ATT.FP
 ‘He is my boyfriend.’ [LTP.P]

- (1414) *ʔəwē mē jə-tā.ʔē²-t̄ n̄* (agreement-soliciting)
 3 be.true_{COP} 1sx-love-be.true AGR.FP
 ‘He is my boyfriend, okay? (So don’t touch him.)’ [LTP.P]

One of the most common final particles is the factual particle *l̄*, which conveys a sense of objectivity and certainty on the part of the speaker. Jones (1961: 23) calls *l̄* a “general narrative marker”, and Ballard (1973a: 69) describes it as a particle “used in literature to indicate the end of declarative sentence”. Ballard (1973a: 69) also mentions that *l̄* is used “in everyday speech [...] to end only declarative sentences which otherwise would seem to the Karen to end too abruptly”. Additionally, *l̄* is predominant in formal contexts, while other particles are more common in informal conversation (Ballard 1973b). In (1415), *l̄* ends a plain statement that the speaker utters with certainty.

- (1415) *jə-mē pyà-yè.kəlī²-pʰō tə-yà l̄*
 1s-be.true_{COP} person-dance(v.)-child one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘I am a dancer.’ [HUR]

The variant *nē².l̄* occurs in more formal language, especially in narrative, explanatory, and procedural texts, such as stories and news reports. Example (1416) is from a book about Karen proverbs (see Table 2).

- (1416) *l̄ tā.ʔō².θā² dī².ʔi ʔə-pù nē² pə-sī² θē*
 GNR.P situation like.this 3x-inside that_{FGR} 1p-say be.skilled_{ABIL}
l̄ “jə-tə-mà l̄ bā² jə-pʰū-wā ʔē²
 QUOT 1s-NEG-do NEG.NS NEG.FP 1s-besmeared-be.white faeces
l̄ tʰū² l̄ nē².l̄
 INSTR lime NS FP
 ‘In a situation like this, we can say: “I won’t do it again (anymore), I have polished my faeces white with lime (=I vow not to repeat my mistake)”.’
 (Karen proverbs: 26)

The difference between *l̄* and *nē².l̄* appears to be subtle, but *l̄* can be more assertive, while *nē².l̄* is more pragmatically neutral.

While *l̄* and *nē².l̄* are common in non-interactive contexts, such as informational texts, most final particles are interactional in nature. Their function is often to solicit a reaction from the addressee and, hence, only occur in dialogues. One example is *m̄²~m̄*, found in declarative and directive sentences. In (1417) and (1418), *m̄²~m̄* ends a declarative statement.

- (1417) *ʔə-tə-ʔō² tā-pʰī²-tā-nā² bā² m̄*
 3-NEG-eat thing-skin-thing-meat NEG.FP ATT.FP
 ‘They don’t eat meat (you see).’ (Chiang Mai)

- (1418) *θē* *m̂*
 be.skilled_{ABIL} ATT.FP
 ‘Sure, (you) can!’
 (Reply to: ‘Can I take a photo?’) [KWH]

The use of *m̂*~*m̂* is motivated by a need to “mitigate face-threatening acts” (Cook 1999: 182). In contrast to *l̂*, *m̂*~*m̂* has an agreement-seeking function, conveying a sense of consideration for the addressee’s perspective. By signalling a less authoritative stance, *m̂*~*m̂* lowers the risk of losing face by reducing the speaker’s responsibility for possible negative effects of the utterance. As a result of this function, *m̂*~*m̂* is pervasive in face-to-face interaction, while practically absent in written texts. (See also §7.5 on *m̂* as a post-NP particle expressing ‘how about [NP]?’.)

The agreement-soliciting particle *n̂*, often pronounced with a rising intonation, is frequent in spoken, dialogic discourse. It expresses that the speaker seeks or expects agreement from the addressee, as (1419) and (1420) illustrate.

- (1419) *t̂* *kə-l̂* *ʔô̂.k̂ō̂* *n̂* *l̂.n̂* *x̂* *n̂.r̂* *n̂*
 eB IRR-go wait 2si there six clock AGR.FP
 ‘I (older brother) will go wait for you there at six o’clock, okay?’ [KWH]

- (1420) *ʔəŵ.d̂* *k̂* *pŷ* *n̂*
 3 act.as_{COP} Pwo AGR.FP
 ‘He’s Pwo.’ (Chiang Mai)

Note here the difference between *n̂* and *m̂*. Firstly, *n̂* implies a higher degree of expectation that the addressee accepts a statement as true or acceptable, whether willingly or reluctantly. Furthermore, *n̂* implies that the speaker expects a certain level of understanding of what is stated, which is less so the case with *m̂*. In (1421), *n̂* in the statement by *b* is rejected since the addressee (*a*) was not expected to have any prior knowledge of the situation.

- (1421) a. *b̂* *m̂n̂* *l̂* b. *k̂* *ĥ.ŷ* *l̂* (**n̂*)
 occur what CQ car break(intr.) FACT.FP
 a. ‘What happened? b. ‘The car broke down.’ [LTP.P]

Similar to *m̂*, however, *n̂* also serves to attenuate a statement or command due to its agreement-soliciting function. In the imperative sentence in (1422), *n̂* gives the command a gentler tone in addition to seeking agreement. The same function appears to motivate the use of *n̂* in (1423).

- (1422) *ʔ̂* *ʔ̂~ʔ̂* *n̂*
 eat be.much~be.much AGR.FP
 ‘Eat plenty (don’t be too considerate), okay?’

- (1423) *θā².kʰī* *dō².mā²* *lā* *pə-tʰī²-lō².θā²* *ʔəθō* *təblō* *dō²* ***nō***
 be.happy greatly COMP 1p-see-RECP again once again AGR.FP
 ‘(I’m) very happy that we meet again.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

Apart from its use as a sentence-final particle, *nō* also occurs between constituents, as in (1424), to engage the listener or check their understanding of or agreement with what is said.

- (1424) *tā* *tē=wē.dā²* *tə-blō* *nē²* ***nō***
 thing_{IMPRS} tell/say=WD one-time that_{FRAME} AGR.FP
pɣà *dō-tī* *dō-θəko²* *ʔō²=wē.dā²* *kʰī* *yà*
 person RLN-friend RLN-friend EXIST=WD two CLF(HUM)
 ‘Once upon a time (*nō*) there were two friends.’ (The Benefit of Education)

Note that the pragmatic functions of *lō*, *mō*, and *nō* are not mutually exclusive. For this reason, the particles are readily combined. Highly frequent compounds include *lō.nō*, seen in (1425), and *mō.nō*, which occurs in (1426). The latter is widespread as a politeness marker, at least in the Kayin–Tak region.

- (1425) *tā.lō* *tuyen* *nē²* *ʔə-tā.kʰī²*
 as.for fridge that_{TOP} 3x-coldness
nō².yī *ʔā.təkē* *ʔō²* ***lō*** ***nō***
 number mostly EXIST FACT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘As for fridges, most of them have a thermometer.’ (Vlog, “Food safety”)

- (1426) *ʔəwē.dā²* *pə-ʔē².dō²* *θē².nā=wē.dā²* *lā*
 3s(filler) 1p-want know=WD COMP
lō *kʰā.sʰū.nā* *nə-tā.tō².pà²* ***mō*** ***nō***
 GNR.P future 2sx-plan ATT.FP AGR.FP
dī.θō² *ʔəwē* *ʔə-ʔō²* *dī².lē²*
 be.like 3s(filler) 3-EXIST how
 ‘So, we’d like to know, in the future, like, what plans do you have?’
 (News interview)

The final particle *hē* is common at least in northern Thailand and the Kayin–Tak border area. Like the factive particle *lō*, *hē* is often has a euphonic function, making an utterance sound “less abrupt” (Ballard 1973c: 40–41). It is less formal than *lō*, appearing chiefly in casual conversation, often in responses to a previous question or statement. Example (1427) is from northern Thailand.

- (1427) a. *nə-θā* *lè* *pɣè-ɔ̃ʔ* *mətà* *lèʔ*
 2s-intend go buy-eat what CQ
- b. *jə-θā* *lè* *pɣè-ɔ̃ʔ* *ɲáʔ.pʰō* *təsɛʔ* *hɛ̃*
 1s-intend go buy-eat fish a.little **FACT.FP**
- “What do you intend to buy?” “I was planning to buy some fish to eat.”
 (Ballard 1973b: 52)

The use of *hɛ̃* in (1427) was somewhat unexpected for a speaker of the Mawchi–Taungoo variety, demonstrating the regional variation in final particles.

Another, more widespread use of *hɛ̃* is to indicate emphasis, as it does in (1428) from Mae Hong Son. Sometimes *hɛ̃* is used “to correct a wrong assumption” (Ballard 1973c), as in (1429) from the Kayin–Tak variety. Example (1430) demonstrates the use of *hɛ̃ʔ* in a command.

- (1428) *tā* *kō* *rāʔ* *hɛ̃ʔ*
 thing_{IMPRS} be.hot a.lot **EMPH.FP**
 ‘(Gosh,) it’s hot (outside).’ [KWH]

- (1429) a. *nà* *mɔ̃ |* *nə-single* *jā*
 2si Q.TOP 2s-s. PQ
- b. *jə-wà* *ɔ̃ʔ* *lī* *hɛ̃ʔ*
 1sx-husband EXIST NS **EMPH.FP**
- a. ‘How about you, are you single?’ b. ‘I already have a husband.’
 (Vlog, “Girl talk”)

- (1430) *lè-né* *jəɣɔ̃* *hɛ̃ʔ*
 go-get_{BEN} 1sx.PURP **EMPH.FP**
 ‘Go instead of me.’

The suppositive final particle *θəʔ* indicates epistemic stance and has been mentioned in at least three previous sources based on varieties spoken in western Myanmar or northern Thailand. According to Gilmore (1898: §214), *θəʔ* “implies that the statement is a matter of course”. Ballard (1973b: 175) describes *θəʔ* as a “particle indicating that the speaker presumes or supposes that things are as stated”, stating further that the variant *ɲəʔ~jəʔ* has the same meaning. In his Sgaw Karen texts, Jones (1961) glosses *θəʔ* as ‘for sure, of course, certainly’. The use of *θəʔ* is illustrated in (1431) and (1432).

- (1431) *jə-pʰō.dōʔ* *ɔ̃-hīʔ* *ɔ̃ʔ-būʔ* *dɔ̃ʔ* *nə-hīʔ*
 1sx-nephew 3x-house/village(N.Th.) EXIST-be.near with 2sx-village
- ɔ̃xō* *nə-kə-tʰīʔ* *ɔ̃* *kʰɛ̃.ɔ̃.kʰɛ̃.ɔ̃* *θəʔ | ɲəʔ~jəʔ*
 3.REASON 2s-IRR-see 3i often **SUPP.FP**
- ‘Since my nephew’s village is near your village, you must see him often.’
 (Ballard 1973b: 173)

- (1432) *ɔ̄a yà m̄āʔ d̄5ʔ p̄jɔ̄ʔ l̄ò θ̄ɔ̄ʔ*
 many CLF(HUM) INTS then be.enjoyable FACT.FP SUPP.FP
 ‘A lot of people will be more fun, huh?’ (Jones 1961: 199–200)

Based on these observations, *θ̄ɔ̄ʔ* can be described as an epistemic final particle indicating a high degree of certainty.

Another final particle indicating epistemic stance is the probabilitive particle *k̄ā*. This particle indicates “that the speaker is reasonably sure of the statement made but seeks confirmation from the person(s) spoken to” (Ballard 1973c: 31). It is only attested in northern Thailand varieties, as in (1433) and (1434).

- (1433) *l̄ə k̄ə.là n̄ēʔ t̄h̄.ú.rian ɔ̄ɔ̄ʔ k̄ā*
 GNR.P West that_{FRAME} durian EXIST PROB.FP
 ‘There is durian in the West, I guess?’ [KWH]

- (1434) *j̄ə-sʰō.m̄ɔ̄ʔ l̄ə n̄ə-mà k̄ə-θ̄ē k̄ā*
 1s-think COMP 2s-do IRR-be.skilled_{ABIL} PROB.FP
 ‘I think you can do (it).’ (Chiang Mai)

Jones (1961), describing the Mawlamyine variety, mentions the final particle compound *k̄āʔ.θ̄ɔ̄ʔ* ‘probably’, seen in (1435), which appears to have a similar function as *k̄ā*.

- (1435) *j̄ə-sʰō.k̄am̄ɔ̄ʔ kw̄ā-n̄ē=w̄ē ɔ̄ə-d̄ō l̄ə lìʔ p̄ù k̄āʔ.θ̄ɔ̄ʔ*
 1s-think look-get=COR 3x-pattern GNR.P book inside probably
 ‘I think, probably, she found the pattern in a book.’ (Jones 1961: 204, 207)

Finally, a brief note is made about the final particles *m̄ā~m̄à* and *n̄ēʔ*. The former appears in the data from the Kayin–Tak region, where it expresses hesitation, as in (1436). Example (1437) is infelicitous since intensifiers such as *d̄ɔ̄ʔ.m̄āʔ* ‘very’ are not normally used when the speaker is hesitant. In some contexts, like in (1438), *m̄à* expresses regret.

- (1436) *m̄ìʔ m̄à*
 be.enjoyable HESITATIVE.FP
 ‘It was fun (I guess).’ [HUR]

- (1437) *?m̄ìʔ d̄ɔ̄ʔ.m̄āʔ m̄à*
 be.enjoyable a.lot HESITATIVE.FP
 Intended: ‘It was lots of fun (I guess).’ [HUR]

- (1438) *j̄ə-h̄āʔ-x̄ī t̄ə-b̄āʔ m̄à*
 1s-walk-search NEG-hit/encounter FP
 ‘I can’t find it.’ [HUR]

In the Chiang Mai variety described by Ballard (1973c), the phonetically similar final particle *m̄-m̄ʔ* is used to indicate that the “[s]peaker presupposes that the statement made is true”, as (1439) illustrates.

- (1439) *pyà tə-γà nêʔ ʔəʔ tâ pʰāʔ-wīʔ nā m̄ʔ*
 person one-CLF(HUM) that eat thing INTS-be.tasty INTS FP
 ‘That person certainly enjoys his food!’ (Ballard 1973c: 73)

The sentence-final particle *nêʔ* was not encountered in the firsthand data. Ballard (1973c: 72) describes *nêʔ* as indicating “a defensive statement” or “a rather chiding emphasis”, as evident in (1440).

- (1440) *ʔā pə-θā kə-pʰlāʔ-tʰɔʔ nêʔ nə-mà dīʔ.nêʔ θē hā*
 INTJ 1p-intend IRR-hoe-UP FP 2s-do like.that ABIL PQ
 ‘Hey, I was going to dig there! How can you do that?’ (Ballard 1973c: 10)

Chapter 11, the final topic before the summary, deals with information structure and grammatical coding related to topicalization, focus, and reference tracking.

11 Information structure

Information structure concerns how speakers express constituents and where they place them in a sentence according what Chafe (1976: 28) calls the “temporary state of the addressee’s mind”. By this he refers to the information that a speaker assumes to be active in the addressee’s mind or inferable from the context in a particular discourse situation. ACTIVE, or “given”, information is what the addressee is conscious about at a particular moment, while INACTIVE, or “new”, information is what is not in the addressee’s consciousness in that situation (Chafe 1976). A central concept in the domain of information structure is the COMMON GROUND, the information shared between interlocutors in a speech context (Krifka 2008). Interlocutors shape and structure their message according to the information present in the common ground and the givenness status of this information (active or inactive) (Chafe 1976; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Krifka 2008). Thus, a referent present in the common ground, which the speaker can assume to be active in the addressee’s mind, is likely to be expressed differently from one which is not part of the interlocutors’ shared knowledge.

In all languages, the same information can be packaged in different ways to optimize communication (Foley 2007). One optimization strategy is to rearrange the order of constituents in an utterance. In Sgaw Karen, given information tends to precede new information, and topicalization can affect the ordering of constituents resulting in non-canonical constituent order, as discussed in §11.1.

Focused referents, in contrast to topicalized ones, tend to appear later in Sgaw Karen utterances. Focus is used to highlight one or a subset of referents within a larger group of semantically comparable referents (Krifka 2008). In §11.2, we examine how Sgaw Karen expresses focus and how focus links to topicalization and givenness.

Apart from constituent order, the givenness status of a referent in the common ground, whether active or inactive, also determines the form it takes when referenced and (re-)introduced into the discourse. Taking nouns as an example, active referents are generally expressed using less linguistic material (e.g. unstressed pronouns or null forms) as compared to new referents, which often appear as lexical NPs (Chafe 1976; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997). Also, active referents tend to be associated with definite morphology, while inactive ones are coded as indefinite (Chafe 1976; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 204–205). The ways to introduce and refer anaphorically to discourse referents across sentences is discussed in §11.3.

11.1 Topicalization and frame-setting

Topicalization and frame-setting refer to identifying a phrase as the topic or frame setter of an utterance, respectively, and placing this phrase in the pre-clausal position at the start of the sentence. Topics are typically nouns or NPs, as described in §11.1.1. Frame setters, on the other hand, are commonly adverbial phrases, as shown in §11.1.2.

11.1.1 Topics

The notions of *topic* and *comment*, of which numerous variant terms exist in the literature, have proven difficult to define universally (Levinson 1983). Scholars on topicalization often state that the topic of a sentence, typically an NP, is what the sentence is about (Foley 2007; Lambrecht 1994; Reinhart 1981). The TOPIC is the entity about which new information is “stored” in the discourse content that interlocutors share in a particular situation (Krifka 2008; Reinhart 1981). Typically, speakers establish the topic using a lexical NP, and then refer to it anaphorically using more minimal linguistic forms, such as unstressed pronouns (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 204–205). Using a linguistic test, a topic is identifiable if the sentence (S) containing a topic can be reframed using the phrase *it is said about X_{TOP} that S* (Reinhart 1981: 64–65).

Another common definitional criterion is that topics are referents previously introduced in the discourse that remain the same over a certain stretch of sentences (e.g. Dixon 2010a). Under such a definition, topics must be part of the active information present in the common ground. Other scholars acknowledge that givenness (active or inactive) correlates with the acceptability of a referent as topic, but do not consider the givenness status of a referent as a definitional criterion. Van Valin & LaPolla (1997: 204; emphasis added) identify four levels of givenness, stating: “An *active* referent makes the most acceptable topic, an *accessible* but not active topic makes a somewhat less acceptable topic, an *inactive* referent makes an even less acceptable topic, and an *anchored brand-new* referent makes one of the least acceptable topics.” Hence, topics are frequently active but need not be.

As in many languages, the topic in Sgaw Karen typically appears at the beginning of a sentence before the main clause. Thus, utterances tend to first identify the entity which the rest of the sentence is about. In (1441), the topic expression (TOP) is the first constituent of the clause. It includes the topic NP and the foregrounding particle *nêʔ* ‘that’, which separates the topic from the rest of the clause.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Demonstratives are known to function as topic markers in several Southeast Asian languages (Yurayong 2020: 80–81). Also note that phrase- and clause-separators such as *nêʔ* or *dī* (see §7.5) are prone to tonal deletion and are often pronounced with a long, convex (rising-falling) tone.

- (1441) [kəθiʔ-θərâʔ l̄ə ʔə-ɣè təpʰâʔ nêʔ]_{TOP}
 medicine-teacher REL 3-be.good COLL that_{TOP}
 ʔôʔ=wē.dâʔ l̄ə wê pʰâʔ.dôʔ ʔə-pù
 EXIST=WD GNR.P city be.big 3X-inside
 ‘The good doctors live in the big city.’ [LTP.W]

The proximal demonstrative ʔi ‘this’ also commonly follows topics recently introduced to the discourse, as in (1442). Many topics preceding ʔi are easily “accommodated” (see e.g. Krifka 2008: 246), that is, implicitly made a new topic since the referent is present in the common ground between the interlocutors.

- (1442) pyà.kəŋə-pʰō ʔi tə-xū n̄ə tə-sēʔ~sēʔ bāʔ
 Karen-child **this** NEG-be.unified EXT one-bit(RDP) NEG.FP
 ‘The Karen aren’t unified at all.’ [HUR]

Note that if the referent is not recently activated or easily accommodated, the distal demonstrative nêʔ ‘that’ is more likely to occur as the topic marker. The two demonstrative particles can also be combined, as in (1443). Here, ʔi marks anaphorical reference to a recently mentioned topic, while nêʔ acts as a topic separator.

- (1443) liʔ-kwē.kwō ʔi nêʔ mē=wē liʔ
 script-K. **this** **that**_{TOP} be.true_{COP}=COR script
 l̄ə ʔə-rē.dôʔ nêʔ pə-tə-tū.lòʔ bāʔ
 REL 3-be.important that_{FRAME} 1p-NEG-accept NEG.FP
 ‘We don’t accept that the Kwekor script is an important script.’ (News interview)

Topic constituents in Sgaw Karen can be described as “loosely integrated” with the main clause (Jacobs 2001: 641). Firstly, topics are outside the clause by virtue of being separated from the main clause prosodically and often also by overt topic markers like nêʔ. The topic markers are also often omitted, in which case prosody (intonation and pause) marks the right boundary of the topic expression. Cognitively, according to Jacobs (2001), the topic constituent and the rest of the sentence are “informationally separated” since the topic involves one step in the “semantic processing” of an utterance and the rest of the sentence another. Hence, topic expressions can be considered clause external, often co-indexed by pronouns within the clause (see §11.3).

In many cases, as previously in (1443), the topic is coreferential with the subject (the S or A argument) of the main clause. However, non-subject constituents like objects are also commonly topicalized, at least in main clauses. A distinction between subject and topic is thus necessary. Example (1444) contains a topicalized object. In (1445), the topic is the subject of a complement clause.

- (1444) *tʰĩ-tâ* *nêʔ* *pə-wĩ* *ʔə* *nê=wē.dâʔ* *θā* *pʰlâʔ*
 water-container that_{TOP} 1p-carry 3i get_{ABIL=WD} three CLF
tʰĩ-tâ *mê* *dôʔ* *nêʔ*
 water-container be.true_{COND} be.big that
 ‘(As for) (bamboo tubes used as) water containers, we can carry (with a
 timeline) (up to) three (at a time), if the container is big.’ (Vlog, “Karen life”)

- (1445) [*pyà* *kʰĩ* *yà* *nêʔ*]_{TOP}
 person two CLF(HUM) that_{TOP}
jə-nâ.hũ *lā* [Ø]_S *kə-pʰlō* *ʔə-θāʔ*
 1s-hear COMP IRR-marry 3x-heart_{REFL}
 ‘I have heard that those two persons are getting married.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 56)

Fronting, which refers to the left-dislocation of a constituent whose unmarked position is postverbal, is especially common when the object of the verb is a clausal complement, as in (1446).

- (1446) [*ʔəwē.θêʔ* *tē* *tâ.yê* *mānì* *lêʔ*]_P *nêʔ*
 3.PL tell/say topic what CQ that_{FRAME}
jə-tə-nâ.pâ [Ø] *bâʔ*
 1s-NEG-understand NEG.FP
 ‘I didn’t understand what they said.’ [HUR]

The preverbal position in a Sgaw Karen sentence is typically available only for topics. Focused non-topics (e.g. *Fred* is his name, not *John*) are not attested in this position, whereas focused topics are commonly fronted (see §11.2). This explains why interrogative pronouns are unavailable for fronting, as (1447) demonstrates. Given the function of interrogative words to inquire about new information, they must be in the focus domain and cannot be made topics in a discourse, hence the ungrammaticality of (1447). The correct sentence is given in (1448).

- (1447) **mətəyà* (*nêʔ*) *nə-ʔôʔ.kʰũ.θũʔ* *lêʔ*
 who that_{TOP} 2s-hide.from CQ
 Intended: ‘Who are you hiding from?’ [HUR]

- (1448) *nə-ʔôʔ.kʰũ.θũʔ* *mətəyà* *lêʔ*
 2s-hide.from who CQ
 ‘Who are you hiding from?’ [HUR]

Frequently, the fronted constituent in a sentence is not a core participant in the event denoted by the main clause. This is the case with *kʰĩʔ* ‘hill field’, in (1449), which is “nonintegrated” (Jacobs 2001), that is, not co-indexed in the main clause.

- (1449) [tā.lā̄ kʰīʔ nēʔ]_{TOP} tə-bāʔ θū tʰī ʔā~ʔā bāʔ
 as.for hill.field that_{TOP} NEG-must use water a.lot NEG.FP
 ‘When it comes to hill fields, one doesn’t need to use a lot of water.’
 (Karen village)

Nonintegrated topics such as *kʰīʔ* in (1449) are equivalent to “frame setters” (Jacobs 2001; Krifka 2008), also called “external topics” (Foley 2007), to which we now turn.

11.1.2 Frame setters

In contrast to topics, FRAME SETTERS delimit a domain within which the proposition should be interpreted, and as such do not name an entity which the rest of the sentence is about (Krifka 2008: 268–271). Temporal phrases commonly occur as frame setters, as in (1450).

- (1450) [kʰā.sʰū.nā nēʔ]_{FRAME} nə-ʔēʔ.dōʔ
 future that 2s-want
 mǎ tā dōʔ pʰō.dī.pʰō.θāʔ hā
 do THING with child PQ
 ‘Do you want to work with children in the future?’ [HUR]

Furthermore, while topics are typically NPs, frame setters can be of various types, also clauses. As Krifka (2008) notes, however, what frame setters and topics have in common is the function of delimiting a domain within which an utterance should be interpreted. The new information in the utterance holds for the entity or within the frame indicated at the start of the utterance.

Frame setters and topics often co-occur in the same sentence. In (1451), the frame-setter *ʔəxō* ‘therefore’, is followed by a subject and an object NP, both of which denote core participants in the event represented by the main clause. Example (1452) contains three different frames, a temporal phrase, a conditional clause, and another temporal phrase.

- (1451) [ʔə-xō nēʔ]_{FRAME} [ʔəwē.θēʔ nēʔ]_{TOP1}
 3x-REASON that 3.PL that_{TOP}
 [ʔə-hōʔ.kʰōʔ nēʔ]_{TOP2} tə-ʔēʔ.dōʔ sʰā=wē bāʔ
 3x-land that_{TOP} NEG-want sell=COR NEG.FP
 ‘Therefore, they don’t want to sell their land.’ (News interview)

- (1452) [lā.nā nēʔ]_{FRAME1} [pə-ʔōʔ pəθē.θāʔ
 before that 1p-eat onion
 mē nē lwī pʰlāʔ nēʔ]_{FRAME2}
 COND get four CLF(3D) that
 [kʰē.ʔī]_{FRAME3} pə-ʔōʔ nē-kè tʰē tə-pʰlāʔ lō
 now 1p-eat get-RETURN only one-CLF(3D) FACT.FP
 ‘Before, if we got to eat four onions, now we get to eat only one.’
 (News interview, “The price of onion”)

Semantically, as previously mentioned, frame setters are of various types. A list of common adverbial expressions commonly occurring as frame setters can be seen in (1453). The most common separator is indicated within brackets.

(1453)	<i>tākāʔ.dīʔ.bāʔ (nēʔ)</i>	‘furthermore, not only that’	additive
	<i>ʔā.nē ʔənēʔ (nēʔ)</i>	‘additionally’	additive
	<i>mē tāmē bāʔ (nēʔ)</i>	‘otherwise, if not, alternatively’	alternative
	<i>ʔaxō (nēʔ)</i>	‘therefore’	consequential
	<i>ʔaxō.θətāʔ (d5ʔ)</i>	‘therefore’	consequential
	<i>bāʔ.sʰāʔ.θənāʔ.kē (nēʔ)</i>	‘however’	adversative

We now turn to focus, which is sometimes seen as the opposite of topicalization. As will become evident in §11.2, however, the topic and focus domains of an utterance can overlap. Topics and focused constituents both relate to the information in the common ground and the givenness status of referents.

11.2 Focus

Krifka (2008: 247), citing Rooth (1985; 1992), describes focus as a property that “indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions”. Also, focusing a constituent contrasts it with a finite set of semantically comparable referents (Krifka 2008). The existence of a limited set of alternatives in the common ground thus plays a role in the interpretation of utterances containing focused constituents (Chafe 1976: 34).

Like topicalization, focus is often not clearly defined or is defined in terms of tendencies. In terms of givenness, focused constituents are often said to represent inactive (new) information, but they can also be active (given), and inactive information need not be focused. Focused constituents are also commonly said to be highlighted and important. However, as Krifka (2008: 257) notes: “highlighting, importance, newness, or presupposition of existence [...] are statistical correlates, but not definitional features, of focus”. The important factor is thus that the focused referent is part of a limited set of alternatives that the addressee is assumed to be aware of. A linguistic test to identify a focused constituent is to insert it in the frame “X as opposed to Y”, where X represents the focused referent and Y the other referents in the set of possible candidates.

In Sgaw Karen, focus is expressed using both prosody and various types of overt markers and syntactic restructuring. The degree of marking and emphasis of the focused constituent, whether by prosodic or morphosyntactic means, depends on the type of focus. É. Kiss (1998) stresses the distinction between two types of focus: information (or presentational) focus and identificational focus. While the former “merely convey[s] nonpresupposed information”, often having entire utterances within its domain, the latter refers to the narrow type of focus on a subset of referents (often just one) within a set of alternatives (É Kiss

1998: 245). Thus, while all sentences must have a focus, the degree of contrastiveness depends on the size of the set of alternatives; the more limited the set the higher the degree of contrastiveness (Lambrecht 1994: 286–291).

Like other languages, there is a correlation in Sgaw Karen between the degree of contrastiveness and the level of markedness of a focus expression. In the case of information focus, there is comparatively little prosodic emphasis on the focused constituent, and it is morpho-syntactically unmarked. In (1454), the sentence lacks a topic constituent and consists entirely of new (non-presupposed) information.

- (1454) [tá tē=wē.dāʔ tə-bl̄ nēʔ pyà
 thing_{IMPRS} say/tell=WD one-time that_{FRAME} person
 d̄s.ū-d̄s.θakōʔ ʔōʔ=wē.dāʔ kʰɿ yà]_{FOC}
 be.friends(CC1)-be.friends(CC2) EXIST=WD two CLF(HUM)
 ‘Some people say that once there were two friends.’ (The Benefit of Education)

A somewhat narrower focus domain is seen in (1455). The set of alternatives is arguably more limited than in (1454), but (1455) also lacks overt morpho-syntactic marking for focus. This is typical in the case of content questions, where the focus domain is the information elicited through the question word.

- (1455) a. nə-pàʔ-kʰū.θūʔ [mətā]_{FOC} lēʔ
 2s-put-be.hidden what/who CQ
 b. jə-pàʔ-kʰū.θūʔ [sē]_{FOC}
 1s-put-be.hidden money
 a. ‘What are you hiding?’ b. ‘I’m hiding money.’ [HUR]

The rest of this section is concerned with the types of focus which involve more salient prosodic or morpho-syntactic marking for emphasis. The types of focus to be discussed can be subsumed under three broad types: exclusive, additive, and corrective focus.

Exclusive focus expresses that a proposition holds *only* for the focused referents. When focus is on an NP or classifier, the construction *tʰē* NP Clf (*hō*) is used, as in (1456) and (1457).

- (1456) tʰē tə-bl̄
only one-time
 ‘only once’

- (1457) ʔōʔ tʰē θēʔ-hō-wāʔ-hō
 EXIST **only** tree-ELAB-bamboo-ELAB
 ‘there were only trees’

In the case of verbs and clauses, exclusive focus is expressed using the exclusive marker *dâʔ*. A cleft construction is also possible though rare in the data. In (1458), the focused copula complement NP is *sə-yè* ‘Saw Gay’.

- (1458) *pyà pyè lìʔ mē-dâʔ tʰē sə-yè lə*
 person buy book be.true_{COP}-EXCL only S. FACT.FP
 ‘It was only Saw Gay who bought a book.’ [LTP.P]

The second type, additive focus, is most commonly expressed using the adverbial particles *sé.kōʔ* ‘also’ and *nàʔ.kē* ‘likewise’, discussed previously in §7.1. In a sub-type of additive focus known as scalar focus, the set of alternative referents are arranged on a scale with contextually expected referents on one end and unexpected referents on the other. The scalar focus particle *dâʔ.lèʔ* ‘even’ expresses an unexpectedly high degree of something, as in (1459) and (1460).

- (1459) *lā jə-tə-kʰlɿʔ ʔəʔ.pʰlèʔ dâʔ.lèʔ*
 GNR.P 1s-NEG-reach be.born even
 ‘even before I was born’ [HUR]

- (1460) *mē tə-mī bāʔ ʔə-mē ʔəʔ-θɿ.θō dâʔ.lèʔ nēʔ*
 COND NEG-be.ripe NEG.FP 3-be.true_{COND} EXIST-be.raw even that_{FRAME}
pə-ʔəʔ nēʔ ʔə-mà-sʰōʔ.kē pyà θē nō
 1p-eat that_{FRAME} 3-make-be.unwell 1pi ABIL AGR.FP
 ‘If it’s not cooked, (or) if it’s even raw, (if) we eat (it), it can make us sick.’
 (Vlog, “Food safety”)

The particle *māʔ* ‘even’ is semantically similar to *dâʔ.lèʔ* ‘even’ but is comparatively rare in the data as a marker of scalar focus. Examples can be seen in (1461) and (1462). (See also §7.1.)

- (1461) *ʔə-mèʔ-tʰɿ tə-təʔ māʔ tə-lə bāʔ*
 3x-eye-water one-CLF(round+small) even NEG-go.down NEG.FP
 ‘She didn’t shed a single tear.’ (Vlog, “Suicide”, speaker from Kayah State)

- (1462) *nə-tʰɿʔ pyà-hɿʔ-tā kəsá māʔ nēʔ*
 2s-see person-grab-thing lord/self even that_{FRAME}
nə-lè-lù tə-búʔ bāʔ
 2s-go-chase NEG-dare NEG.FP
 ‘Even if you see the thief yourself, you don’t dare to go after them (because some of them carry knives).’ (News interview with shop owner from Hpa-an)

More commonly, *māʔ* occurs as an intensifier following descriptive verbs (e.g. *kəsʰɣɔ̄ māʔ* [be.clean INTS] ‘very clean’) and as an exclusive particle expressing ‘only then, not until’, as in (1463).

- (1463) *jə-mê dōʔ.nê-bāʔ tâ ʔəwē.nêʔ māʔ jə-θāʔ kə-kʰɪ*
 1s-if get-HIT thing that INTS 1sx-heart IRR-be.happy
 ‘Only if I get that thing, will I be happy.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

Personal pronouns (see §7.3) have a non-emphatic and an emphatic variant. Example (1464) contains the non-emphatic form of the first-person pronoun while (1465) features the emphatic equivalent. While non-emphatic *jà* ‘I’ is a non-focused topic expression, *jē* ‘I’ (contracted form of *jə-* ‘I’ and *wē*) is both the topic and the focus constituent of the sentence, as indicated by the additive focus particle *sê.kɔʔ* ‘also’.

- (1464) [*jà*]_{TOP} *pyà kɔʔ=wē.dāʔ jà lə dē.dē*
 1si person call=WD 1si QUOT D.
 ‘My name is Day Day.’ (Lit., ‘[As for] me, people call me Day Day.’) (Vlog)

- (1465) a. *jə-θūʔ.pô.θāʔ.wāʔ dōʔ.māʔ lə*
 1s-be.excited greatly FACT.FP
 b. [*jē*]_{TOP}_{FOC} *sê.kɔʔ jə-θūʔ.pô.θāʔ.wāʔ dōʔ.māʔ lə*
 1se also 1s-be.excited greatly FACT.FP
 a. ‘I am so excited.’ b. ‘I am really excited, too.’ [HUR]

Emphatic pronouns are also used when no overt focus particles are present. In (1466), the emphatic form *jē* indicates delimitation (Krifka 2008: 252); the speaker emphasizes the entity that the proposition is about. In this case, *jē* is a contrastive topic.

- (1466) [*jē*]_{TOP}_{FOC} *jə-lê lɪ*
 1se 1s-go NS
 ‘(Nice talking to you.) I will go now.’ [LTP]

The particle *wē* is pervasive in the language and appears to have two main functions: the co-indexation of a core argument of the preceding clause (see §11.3.3), and the indication of focus, as in the case of *jē* in (1466). In non-pronominal contexts, *wē* is encliticized to the last verb of the main verb complex. Examples (1467) and (1468) each contain two clauses which are contrasted against each other.

- (1467) *pʰō.θāʔ nì bāʔ.sʰāʔ pòʔ.mīʔ nēʔ hɔʔ=wē lə*
 child laugh but woman that_{TOP} cry=COR FACT.FP
 ‘The child is laughing but the woman is crying.’ [LTP.P]

- (1468) $[\theta\bar{a}^2.p\bar{y}\bar{a}]_{\text{TOP}}$ $n\bar{e}^2$ $t\bar{a}$ $\theta\delta^2.l\bar{o}$ $\text{?}\bar{o}$ $k\bar{s}$ $d\bar{s}^2$
 be.old that_{TOP} thing_{IMPRS} teach 3i be.difficult and
 $[p^h\bar{o}.\theta\bar{a}^2]_{\text{TOP}}$ $n\bar{e}^2$ $t\bar{a}$ $\theta\delta^2.l\bar{o}-b\bar{a}^2$ $\text{?}\bar{o}$ $\text{p}\bar{s}=\text{w}\bar{e}.d\bar{a}^2$ $n\bar{e}^2.l\bar{o}$
 child that_{TOP} thing_{IMPRS} teach-HIT 3i **be.easy=WD** FP
 ‘Teaching old people is difficult and teaching children is easy.’
 (Moon Rabbit)

Example (1469) illustrates corrective focus, where $w\bar{e}$ occurs on the second verb. Note, however, that this is a biclausal construction, which could also explain the use of $w\bar{e}$ in this case (see §11.3.3).

- (1469) $s\bar{o}.\bar{y}\bar{e}$ $p\bar{y}\bar{e}-d\bar{a}^2$ $l\bar{i}^2$ $l\bar{o}$ | $t\bar{a}-k\text{w}\bar{e}^2=\text{w}\bar{e}$ $b\bar{a}^2$
 PN buy-EXCL book FACT.FP NEG-write=FOC/COR NEG.FP
 ‘Saw Gay has only bought the book; he did not write it.’ [LTP.P]

More explicitly, corrective focus can be expressed using a cleft construction containing the expression $t\bar{a}-m\bar{e} \text{ l}\bar{o}$ ‘it is not (the case/true) that’, as in (1470).

- (1470) $t\bar{a}-m\bar{e}$ $l\bar{o}$ $p\bar{a}-k\bar{a}-\text{?}\bar{o}^2.d\bar{s}^2$ $t\bar{a}.l\bar{o}.t\bar{a}.p\bar{y}\bar{e}$ $i^h\bar{s}.b\bar{o}$ $b\bar{a}^2$
 NEG-be.true_{COP} COMP 1p-IRR-have perfection always NEG.FP
 ‘(Contrary to what we might expect) we won’t always have perfection (things won’t always be perfect).’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

In many cases, including in (1470), $w\bar{e}$ appears outside the focus domain of the sentence. Whether $w\bar{e}$ indicates focus or something else in such cases requires further research.

Various other overt focus markers in contrastive contexts exist in Sgaw Karen. One phrase commonly found in focus expressions is $m\bar{e} \text{ m}\bar{e}$ ‘as for (lit., if it is)’, which as a pre-clausal adverb also means ‘instead’. In (1471), the price of onion is contrasted with that of other food products.

- (1471) $[m\bar{e}.m\bar{e} \text{ p}\bar{a}\theta\bar{e}.\bar{y}\bar{o} \text{ n}\bar{e}^2]_{\text{FOC}}$ $\text{?}\bar{a}-p\bar{y}\bar{e}$ $d\bar{o}^2-t^h\bar{s}^2$ $k^h\bar{i}$ $s^h\bar{a}^2$ $\text{p}\bar{n}\bar{a}$
 as.for onion that 3x-price be.big-UP two fold INTS
 ‘(Many food products have become more expensive.) As for onion, the price has doubled.’ (News interview, “The price of onion”)

Focused NPs often contain classifier phrases that indicate definite reference rather than amounts, as in (1472). Classifier phrases with this function also follow proper nouns, as seen in (1473).

- (1472) *pə-mé* *lè* *s^hū* *sò.lā* *ʔə-θəw̄* *né[?]*
 1p-be.true_{COND} go ALL.P PN 3x-village that_{FRAME}
pə-lè *klē* *lā* *k^hō* ***tə-bō***
 1p-go road GNR.P land **one-CLF(2D)**
k^hlē-né *pə-lè* *klē* *lā* *t^hī.klō* ***tə-bō*** *lò*
 be.fast 1p-go road GNR.P river **one-CLF** FACT.FP
 ‘When we go to Saw Lah’s village, it is faster to go by land than by river.’
 (Ballard 1973c: 99)

- (1473) *mē.mé* *sò.ké[?]* ***tə-γà*** *tə-dī[?]* *né[?]* *bā[?]*
 as.for PN **one-CLF(HUM)** NEG-be.like that NEG.FP
 ‘(Saw Lah was gripped with fear.) Saw Kay, on the other hand, was not like that.’ (Saw Kay)

A common contrastive classifier phrase is *tək^h̄*, which consists of *tə-* ‘one’ and *k^h̄* ‘side’. As a classifier, *k^h̄* refers to one part of a pair, such as hands and feet (see §3.4.1.5). When used for focus, *tək^h̄* expresses ‘as for X, for X’s part’, typically when contrasting two NPs, as in (1474).

- (1474) *mē* *mé* *pyà* *k^hē.ʔì* ***tə-k^h̄***
 COND be.true_{COP} person now **one-side**
tə-dī[?] *né[?]* *ʔəθō[?]* *lā* *bā[?]*
 NEG-be.like that 3.SIM anymore NEG.FP
 ‘As for people nowadays, they are not like that (i.e. like people in the past) anymore.’ (Karen proverbs)

Frequently, *tək^h̄* (lit., ‘one side’) is abbreviated as *k^h̄*. The combination *k^h̄ dī* is common in colloquial contexts. Note also that the initial *k^h* often undergoes lenition: [k^h̄³³.dī³³~x̄³³.dī³³~f̄³³.dī³³]. In (1475), the speaker uses the emphatic pronoun *pəwē.dā[?]* ‘we’ as well as the contrastive marker *k^h̄* to indicate contrast.

- (1475) *pəwē.dā[?]* ***k^h̄*** ***dī*** *pə-kə-θū* *kəŋ̄-pyô* *mī.nì[?]* *ʔə-lì[?]*
 1pe **side** **FRAME** 1p-IRR-use Karen-Pwo west 3x-script
d̄[?] *kəŋ̄-syò* *ʔə-lì[?]* *θé[?].təp^há[?]* *né[?].lò*
 and Karen-Sgaw 3x-script COLL FP
 ‘We, for our part, will use the Western Pwo script and the Sgaw script (as opposed to the Kwekor script).’ (News interview)

The final subsection, §11.3, concerns the form a referent takes when introduced and re-introduced into a discourse.

11.3 Reference tracking

Reference tracking refers to the way in which interlocutors “keep track of introduced referents in discourse” (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 285). The coding of a referent, as represented by an NP, depends on its givenness status (roughly, active or inactive) in a certain context. Thus, active and inactive referents are (re-)introduced in a speech situation differently. Once a discourse referent is introduced, it typically remains the topic for some time in the discourse (Krifka 2008: 267; Dixon 2010a). In Sgaw Karen, entities can be introduced and referred to anaphorically using lexical NPs (§11.3.1) or pronouns (§11.3.2). Additionally, classifier phrases and zero forms are also used for reference when an event participant is easily accessible in the speech context. These are discussed briefly in §11.3.1 and §11.3.2, respectively. The coreference marker *wē* is a special pronominal enclitic, described in §11.3.3.

11.3.1 Lexical NPs

Lexical NPs are the most explicit way of referring to a discourse referent. Table 49 demonstrates that the referentiality of lexical NPs varies depending on their form. Lexical NPs can be bare nouns, or they can contain a classifier phrase (numeral and classifier) or a demonstrative or both. Bare nouns are interpreted as definite or generic while demonstratives always indicate a definite reading. An NP containing a noun and a classifier phrase is either definite or indefinite, depending on whether the denoted referent is active or inactive.

Table 49 Referentiality of lexical NPs

NP	Definite	Indefinite	Generic
<i>tʰōʔ</i>	‘the pig’		‘pigs’
<i>tʰōʔ tədī</i>	‘the pig’	‘a pig’	
<i>tʰōʔ tədī {ʔi / nēʔ}</i>	‘{this / that} pig’		
<i>tʰōʔ {ʔi / nēʔ}</i>	‘{this / that / the} pig’		
<i>tʰōʔ təpʰāʔ</i>	‘the pigs’	‘(a group of) pigs’	
<i>tʰōʔ təpʰāʔ {ʔi / nēʔ}</i>	‘{these / those} pigs’		

As mentioned in Chapter 3, bare nouns can denote generic reference to a group of referents rather than to a specific individual, as in (1476) and (1477), in which case the NP corresponds to English indefinite NPs.

- (1476) *θāʔ.mī.ŋə nēʔ ʔə-mə tā hā*
 cat that_{TOP} 3-bark THING PQ
 ‘Do cats bark? [LTP.D]’

- (1477) *yî* *ʔə-θəbī* *ʔəʔ*
 snake 3x-scale EXIST
 ‘Snakes have scales.’ (Ratanakul 1986: 82)

The distinction between count and mass nouns is less obvious in Sgaw Karen than it is in English since reference to specific individuals requires the use of classifiers. An exception is if a referent has been previously introduced and is active in the common ground of the interlocutors. When it is clear what entity is referenced, bare nouns correspond to English definite NPs, as in (1478) and (1479).

- (1478) *pʰəʔ.xē.pʰə* *tā* *lə-bāʔ* *ʔə* *lā*
orphan thing_{IMPRS} go.down-HIT 3i COMP
ʔə-kə-lē-pəʔ *sə.pà* *ʔə-kʰī* *lə*
 3-IRR-go-follow king 3x-rear FACT.FP
 ‘The orphan was assigned to [lit., someone assigned him so that he would; RK] follow after the king.’ (Jones 1961: 220, 224)

- (1479) *pə-dəʔ.tʰəʔ* **θə-ləʔ** *dəʔ* *lə* *tā* *lə*
 1p-get.in **oil-cart** and go THING FACT.FP
 ‘We got in the car and drove off.’ (Moon rabbit)

Classifier phrases refer to both inactive and active entities in a discourse. In both cases, the NP consists of a noun followed by a classifier phrase, typically with the addition of an anaphoric demonstrative in the case of given referents. In (1480), the classifier phrase *tə-dī* occurs twice referring to *tʰəʔ* ‘pig’, first introducing the entity (*tʰəʔ tə-dī* ‘a pig’) and later indicating anaphoric reference to a given referent (*tʰəʔ tə-dī ʔi* ‘this pig’) functioning as topic in the second proposition.

- (1480) *bāʔ* *tə-blā* *tʰəʔ* *tə-dī* *hē* *ʔəʔ*
 occur one-time **pig** **one-CLF(ANIM)** come eat
ʔəwē.θēʔ *ʔə-kʰī.lə* *dəʔ* *ʔəwē.θēʔ* *mà-θī* *ʔə*
 3.PL 3x-field and 3.PL make-die 3i
tə-nē *bāʔ* *mē.lā* *tʰəʔ* *tə-dī* *ʔi*
 NEG-get NEG.FP since **pig** **one-CLF(ANIM)** **this**
dəʔ *dəʔ* *sʰūʔ* *ʔə-xə* *lə*
 be.big and be.strong 3x-REASON FACT.FP
 ‘One day it happened that a pig came and ate their crops and they couldn’t kill him because he was big and strong’ (Jones 1961: 225, 230)

As noted in §11.2, classifier phrases are often used to contrast different referents in a discourse. For example, phrases such as *mô təyà* [mother one:CLF(HUM)] ‘the mother’ and *kʰē.jī tə-dī* [lion one:CLF(ANIM)] ‘the lion’ are commonly used to shift focus to a previously introduced character. Furthermore, classifier phrases sometimes occur without their head nouns when it is clear what they refer to, as in (1481). (See also example (1262).)

- (1481) *dāʔ* *ʔəʔi tə-pʰlāʔ* *dōʔ* | *ʔənēʔ tə-pʰlāʔ* *sʰiʔ*
house(N.Th.) this one-CLF(3D) be.big that **one-CLF(3D)** be.small
‘This house is large; that one is small.’ (Ballard 1973b: 33)

We not turn to pronouns, which are a more minimal form of reference compared to lexical NPs and classifier phrases.

11.3.2 Pronouns

Pronouns frequently represent topics recently mentioned or otherwise easily identifiable by the hearer (Givón 1983; Lambrecht 1994). As shown in §7.3, three types of pronouns are identified: bound, unbound, and emphatic. An important factor determining the type of pronoun used is whether the subjects are the same or different in the clauses following each other. As in English, dropping the pronoun is common in topic chains where the subject remains the same over a number of connected clauses. In (1482), the topic is first established, lacks co-indexation on the first verb, but is coreferenced by the pronominal enclitic *wē.dāʔ* on the second verb. In (1483), the object *sē* ‘money’ is mentioned after the first verb, after which zero anaphora are used twice to refer to it (although see the discussion in §11.3.3 on the pronominal enclitic *wē.dāʔ*).

- (1482) *pɣà* *kōʔ.dī.nō.ɣà.dēʔ* *nēʔ* *jùʔ-tʰɔʔ* *ʔə-sī* *dōʔ*
person everyone that_{TOP} **extend-UP** 3x-hand and
θāʔ.lō=wē.dāʔ *sē* *tə-bēʔ* *ʔi* *lō*
desire=WD money one-CLF(2D) this FACT.FP
‘Everyone raised their hands and wanted the banknote.’
(Vlog, “Worthless”)

- (1483) *dōʔ* *pʰē.nēʔ* *nēʔ* *θəráʔ* *nēʔ* *tà.lō=wē.dāʔ* *ʔə-sē*
and then that_{FRAME} teacher that_{TOP} drop=WD **3x-money**
lō *ʔə-kʰɔʔ.tʰiʔ* *dōʔ* *jō-tí-lō=wē.dāʔ* **[Ø]**
GNR.P 3x-ground and step-be.compressed-DOWN=WD
dōʔ *ʔə-kʰɔʔ* *kʰi* *tʰiʔ* *θā* *tʰiʔ* *dōʔ*
with 3x-foot two time three time and
jùʔ-tʰɔʔ=wē.dāʔ **[Ø]** *lō* *tā-pʰāʔpʰɔ*
extend-UP=WD GNR.P thing-half
‘And then the teacher dropped the money on the ground, stepped on it with his foot two, three times, and lifted it up in the air.’ (Vlog, “Worthless”)

Gapping, or zero anaphora, occurs in topic chains where the topic, which in many cases coincides with the subject, remains the same across the clauses constituting a “thematic paragraph” (Givón 1983: 7–9). In (1484), the subject (S) is the same in the two clauses. In

(1485), in contrast, the subjects are different, explaining the use of the unbound third-person pronoun *ʔəwē.dāʔ* rather than zero reference.

- (1484) *tə-nì* *nēʔ* [*tʰū.yè* *ʔə-pāʔ*]_s *kōʔ* *ʔə*
 one-day that_{TOP} PN 3x-father call 3i
lā *ʔə-kəpà* *dōʔ* *Ø-tē-bāʔ* *ʔə*
 GNR.P 3x-side and 3-tell-HIT 3i
 ‘One day, Htoo Gay’s father called him to his side and said to him’
 (The Benefit of Education)

- (1485) *pʰē* *lā* [*ʔə-pāʔ*]_{s1} *tē* *ʔə* *wì*
 LOC.P GNR.P 3x-father say/tell 3i finish
 [*ʔəwē.dāʔ*]_{s2} *lē* *sʰū* *ʔə-θəkōʔ* *tʰāʔ.wā* *ʔə-ʔōʔ*
 3e go ALL.P 3x-friend PN 3x-LOC.N
 ‘When his father had told him_i (that), he_i went over to his friend Hta Wah.’
 (The Benefit of Education)

In (1485), *ʔəwē.dāʔ* is coreferential with the object of the preceding clause. Apart from *ʔəwē.dāʔ*, the shorter form *ʔəwē* ‘he, she, it’ also indicates a subject-switch in a following clause. In (1486), *ʔəwē* ‘he’ in the complement clause refers not to *sə.pà* ‘king’, the subject of the first clause, but to an orphan, another character in the story. In (1487), *ʔəwē* ‘she’ signals a change of subject from *wà* ‘husband’ to *phō.dōʔ.mīʔ* ‘young woman’.

- (1486) *θənàʔ.kē* *sə.pà* *ʔēʔ.dōʔ* *kwā-bāʔ=wē* *dōʔ* *hēʔ-lə*
 but king want look-HIT=COR and give-DOWN
ʔə-kʰwēʔ *lā* *ʔəwē* *kə-jōʔ-tʰōʔ* *tʰī* *lə*
 3x-permission COMP 3 IRR-carry-UP water FACT.FP
 ‘But the king wanted to see and [the king] gave his permission for him
 [the orphan] to carry up the water.’ (Jones 1961: 216–217, 219)

- (1487) *pʰō.dōʔ.mīʔ* *tə-yà* *nēʔ* *ʔə-wà* *tē-sʰā-mà-sʰā* *ʔə*
 young.woman one-CLF that 3x-husband say-hurt-do-hurt 3i
ʔə-kəlīʔ~kəlīʔ *bāʔ.sʰāʔ* *ʔəwē* *tū=wē* *kē*
 3x-kind(RDP) although 3 suffer=COR ABIL
 ‘Although that young woman’s husband treats her harshly both in word and
 deed, she is able to take it.’ (Ballard 1973c: 95)

Besides zero anaphora, the third-person pronoun *θā* ‘she, he, they’ is another way of indicating coreference with a previous subject in some varieties, such as Northern Thailand and Hpa-an–Mawlamyine (see also §7.3). In varieties where *θā* is not used, the third-person prefix *ʔə-* performs a similar function. Example (1488) is from Mawlamyine, while (1489) represents the Mawchi–Taungoo variety, where the pronoun *θā* is absent.

(1488) *tə-bl̄* *nêʔ* *pʰôʔ.xē.pʰō* *hē* *d̄ʔ* *tē=wē*
 one-time that orphan come and say/tell=COR
l̄ *θā* *ʔêʔ.d̄ʔ* *jōʔ-kwâ-d̄ʔ* *tʰ* *l̄*
 COMP **3** want carry-LOOK-also water FACT.FP
 ‘Then the orphan[*i*] came and said that he[*i*] wanted to try
 to carry the water also.’ (Jones 1961: 216, 219)

(1489) *jə-mō* *sīʔ.sʰō=wē* *l̄* *ʔə-tə-lê* *bāʔ*
 1sx-mom reply=COR COMP **3**-NEG-go NEG.FP
 ‘My mom answered that she won’t go.’ [LTP]

Note, however, that *ʔə-* is also used in contexts where there is a subject-switch, which can cause ambiguity. When needed, ambiguity can be eliminated using the unbound pronoun *ʔəwē* to signal a change of subject.

11.3.3 The coreference marker *wē*

A pervasive morpheme in Sgaw Karen is *wē*, the origin and exact meaning of which is unclear. According to Mason (1846: 155), *wē* signifies ‘property’ and is similar to the generic noun *tā* ‘thing’, the former being “definite” and the latter “indefinite”. Gilmore (1898) writes that *wē* and *tā* are used in “possessive pronouns”, such as *jəwē* or *jətā*, both meaning ‘mine (belonging to me)’, and “with nouns in the possessive case”. This can be seen in Gilmore’s examples in (1490), where the NP *Saw Wa* is said to be in the possessive case.

(1490) *ʔəwē.nêʔ* *mē* *s̄-wā* *ʔə-wē* *l̄*
 that be.true_{COP} M.HON-be.white **3x-property** FACT.FP
ʔəwē.nêʔ *mē* *s̄-wā* *ʔə-tā* *l̄*
 that be.true_{COP} M.HON-be.white **3x-thing** FACT.FP
 ‘That is Saw Wa’s.’ (Gilmore 1898: §74)

The use of *wē* as a possessed nominal in (1490) is not attested in the modern language. However, *wē* is likely derived from a noun synonymous with *tā* ‘thing’ and is now a third-person pronominal enclitic.

As discussed in Chapter 4, *wē* consistently follows the last verb in the main verb complex. Prosodically, *wē* forms a unit with the preceding verb or verb sequence; there can be no pause between *wē* and the preceding verb in natural speech. Despite this, *wē* is not characterizable as a bound morpheme, since it also occurs as the first morpheme of some words, most notably in the demonstrative pronouns *wē.ʔi* ‘this’ and *wē.nêʔ* ‘that’ (although these are frequently possessivized as *ʔəwē.ʔi* ‘this’ and *ʔəwē.nêʔ* ‘that’). For these reasons, *wē* is analysed as a pronominal enclitic rather than suffix.

On a general level, *wē* can be described as a third-person pronominal marker placed after the main verb complex of a clause co-indexing an argument in a preceding clause. The

typical occurrence of $w\bar{e}$ is thus in the second clause in a biclausal construction. According to Jones (1961: 17), $w\bar{e}$ is an aspectual auxiliary which indicates a “reported event”, but as will be shown, $w\bar{e}$ is also used in other biclausal constructions and is not found to influence the aspect of a clause. Instead, the main function of $w\bar{e}$ appears to be coreference with a preceding argument. Wade (1897), citing Dr. Francis Mason, specifically mentions that $w\bar{e}$ “cannot be made to refer to an objective or predicate in a preceding part of the same sentence” (Wade 1897: 41), inferring that $w\bar{e}$ can only refer anaphorically to subjects. Therefore, Wade states, (1491) is infelicitous since it “would affirm that [$\theta\bar{a}$] ‘heart’ slept, instead of [$\theta\bar{r}\bar{a}$] ‘teacher’], and the correct sentence is given in (1492) (Wade 1897: 41).

(1491) * $t\bar{a}$ $by\bar{i}$? $\theta\bar{r}\bar{a}$? $\gamma\bar{\theta}-\theta\bar{a}$? $d\bar{\delta}$? $m\bar{i}=w\bar{e}$
 thing_{IMPRS} tire? teacher 3x-heart and sleep=COR
 Intended: ‘The teacher was tired and slept.’

(1492) $\theta\bar{r}\bar{a}$? $n\bar{e}$? $t\bar{a}$ $by\bar{i}$? $\gamma\bar{\theta}-\theta\bar{a}$? $d\bar{\delta}$? $m\bar{i}=w\bar{e}$
 teacher that_{TOP} thing_{IMPRS} tire? 3x-heart and sleep=COR
 ‘The teacher was tired and slept.’

Strictly speaking, $w\bar{e}$ in this case coreferences a topic rather than a subject. It thus seems likely that $w\bar{e}$ coreferences topics or other contextually prominent referents, which often coincide with the subject of a sentence. Phillips (2017: 230–244) demonstrates that, in the related Northern Pwo language, the third-person absolutive pronoun $w\bar{e}$, which is cognate with Sgaw Karen $w\bar{e}$, references both subjects and objects. It is unclear whether this is the case also in Sgaw Karen.

A common context in which $w\bar{e}$ occurs is in the second clause in biclausal sentences, often when this clause is connected to the previous one by a conjunction, such as $d\bar{\delta}$? ‘and’, as in (1493), or $b\bar{a}$? $s^h\bar{a}$? ‘but’, as in (1494).

(1493) $p^h\bar{o}$? $x\bar{e}$ - $p^h\bar{o}$ $m\bar{i}.m\hat{\delta}$ $t\bar{a}$ $d\bar{\delta}$? [$t^h\bar{i}$?= $w\bar{e}$ $m\hat{i}.x\bar{a}$ $t\bar{\theta}-y\bar{a}$]_{CLAUSE2}
 orphan-child dream thing and see=COR fairy one-CLF(HUM)
 ‘the orphan dreamed and saw a fairy’ (Jones 1961: 221, 224)

(1494) $t^h\bar{w}\bar{i}$?- $h\hat{\delta}$? $k^h\bar{o}$? $\gamma\bar{i}$ $l\bar{e}-\theta\bar{i}$? $b\bar{u}$?- $t^h\hat{\delta}$? $\gamma\bar{\theta}-\theta\bar{a}$? $s^h\bar{u}$
 dog-earth this go-approach-UP 3x-REFL ALL.P
 $k^h\bar{e}.j\hat{i}$ $\gamma\bar{\theta}-\gamma\bar{\delta}$? $b\bar{a}$? $s^h\bar{a}$? [$t\bar{\theta}-l\bar{e}-n\hat{i}$?= $w\bar{e}$ $b\bar{a}$?]_{CLAUSE2}
 lion 3x-LOC.N but NEG-go-IN=COR NEG.FP
 ‘The fox_i moved closer to the lion but \emptyset_i didn’t go in(to its cave).’
 (The Lion and the Fox)

Additionally, $w\bar{e}$ occurs inside adverbial clauses following the main clause when the subject is the same in both clauses, as in (1495). Example (1496) from the same text shows a similar biclausal construction, but with different subjects, explaining why $w\bar{e}$ fails to occur.

(1495) *ʔəwē kə-bâʔ lē jē nâʔ.rîʔ mē.təmə xī*
 3 IRR-must go five hour or six
nâʔ.rîʔ dī.θōʔ kə-tʰiʔ=wē kəθiʔ.θəráʔ tə-yà lə
 hour so.that IRR-see=COR doctor one-CLF(HUM) FACT.FP
 ‘She will have to travel five or six hours to see a doctor.’ [LTP.W]

(1496) *ʔəxō ʔəwē kə-lē-səʔ-xiʔ.dōʔ ʔə-ʔēʔ*
 therefore 3s IRR-go-carry-along 3x-excrement
dī.θōʔ kəθiʔ.θəráʔ kə-mà-kwá ʔə-yô lə
 so.that doctor IRR-do-LOOK 3x-PURP FACT.FP
 ‘So she takes her stool sample for the doctor to examine it.’ [LTP.W]

In biclausal sentences containing a relative clause, *wē* sometimes occurs when the modified NP is the object in the relative clause. In contrast, *wē* is rare when the gapped NP is a subject of the matrix clause. In (1497), *wē* appears in the second relative clause that modifies *tā* ‘thing’, which is the object of *hīʔ.nē* ‘take’. When asking about the use of *wē* in (1498), an elicited sentence, the speaker reported that *wē* is needed to specify coreference with *pyà.tē.tā* ‘speaker’, the one who swam.

(1497) *tā [lā ʔə-ʔōʔ dōʔ nà] REL1 tə-mì*
 thing REL 3-EXIST with 2si one-kind
[lā pyà yà hīʔ.nē=wē tə-nē bāʔ] REL2 nēʔ
 REL person other take=COR NEG-get NEG.FP that_{FRAME}
mē=wē.dāʔ nə-lí-nə-pyè lə
 be.true_{COP}=WD 2sx-value-2sx-price FACT.FP
 ‘One thing you have that other people cannot take away from you is your value.’ (Vlog, “Worthless”)

(1498) *tʰi.klō lā pyà-tē-tā tə-yà pō=wē məhā.kəʔ*
 river REL person-say-thing one-CLF(HUM) swim=COR yesterday
 ‘a river in which the speaker swam yesterday’ [LTP.D]

In cases such as (1497) and (1498), it is possible that *wē* is used to emphasize the change of subjects that occurs in the relative clause.

If the object is overtly expressed by a resumptive pronoun in the relative clause, *wē* does not occur. In (1499), the object in the relative clause is represented by *ʔə* ‘it’; therefore, *wē* is not present.

(1499) *tā.yò.mū lā pə-kwá ʔə lā TV ʔə-pù*
 movie REL 1p-look 3i GNR.P 3x-inside
 ‘a movie that we watch on TV’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

Other exceptions also occur. Example (1500) is acceptable with or without *wē* despite lacking an object.

- (1500) *pyà lā ʔə-hē(=wē) tə-γà mē jə-pí*
 person REL 3-come(=COR) one-CLF(HUM) be.true_{COP} 1sx-yB
 ‘The person who came is my younger brother.’ [HUR]

As mentioned in §11.2, *wē* also signals contrast between two clauses, as in (1501) and (1502). In (1503), the form *wē.dāʔ* occurs rather than *wē*. Note that *wē* can only co-occur with a third-person subject, while *wē.dāʔ* lacks that restriction (see below).

- (1501) [*təbl̩.bl̩ lā kə-kʰɿʔ*]_{CLAUSE1} [*təbl̩.bl̩ lā kə-kəp̩ʔ=wē*]_{CLAUSE2}
 sometimes moon IRR-be.dark s.times moon IRR-be.light=CNTR
 ‘Sometimes the moon is dark, sometimes it is shining.’ (Moon Rabbit)

- (1502) [*pòʔ.kʰwā ʔə-n̩ tʰɿ ʔə-γà ʔɿ-m̩ʔ*]
 man 3x-body be.tall one-CLF(HUM) drink-cigarette
*lā tʰɿ.kl̩ kəp̩ʔ*_{CLAUSE1} *bāʔ.sʰāʔ* [*pòʔ.kʰwā*]
 GNR.P river side but man
*ʔə-n̩ pʰɿʔ tə-γà k̩=wē l̩*_{CLAUSE2}
 3x-body be.short one-CLF(HUM) return=COR NS
 ‘The tall man is smoking by the river, but the short man has already gone.’
 [LTP.P]

- (1503) *nə-sʰō.kəm̩ʔ tʰē tā lā ʔə-tə-ʔōʔ d̩ʔ*
 2s-think only thing REL 3-NEG-EXIST with
*nà θēʔ.təpʰāʔ*_{CLAUSE1} *d̩ʔ [nə-θāʔ.pē.n̩ʔ-kwiʔ=wē.dāʔ*
 2si PL.COLL and 2s-forget-AWAY=WD
*tā lā ʔə-ʔōʔ d̩ʔ nə θēʔ.təpʰāʔ*_{CLAUSE2} *nēʔ.l̩*
 thing REL 3-EXIST with 2si PL.COLL FP
 ‘You think only of the things that you don’t have, and you forget the things
 that you have.’ (Vlog, “Comparison”)

Again, *wē* is often optional, as indicated in the contrastive clause in (1504).

- (1504) *məhā.níʔ tā-kō-kʰā tʰɿ kʰl̩ʔ(=wē) l̩*
 last.year thing-be.hot-time water be.cold(=COR) FACT.FP
 ‘(Usually, the water is warm.) Last summer, the water was cold.’ [LTP.D]

In contrast to the cases seen so far, *wē* is also found in simple clauses which are not syntactically or prosodically connected to another clause. In such cases, *wē* may be used for different types of emphasis. One example can be seen in (1505).

- (1505) a. *mê jə-θ̄.kwâ nà tâ θ̄ təm̀.̀m̀ fā*
 Q 1s-ask 2si thing be.skilled_{ABIL} something PQ
- b. *mê | ʔə-θ̄=w̄ l̄*
 yes 3-be.skilled_{ABIL}=COR FACT.FP
 ‘Can I ask you something?’ b. ‘Of course you can.’ [HUR]

The enclitic *w̄* also occurs in another highly frequent postverbal marker, *w̄.dâʔ*, which consists of *w̄* and the autonomous marker *dâʔ* (see §5.5.1.2). The particle *w̄.dâʔ* is distinct from both *w̄* and *dâʔ*; it is used more frequently and is especially common in colloquial language. The prosodic pause, if there is any, naturally occurs after *dâʔ*, indicating that it marks the boundary of the verb constituent. Unlike *w̄*, the use of *w̄.dâʔ* is not restricted to biclausal constructions and the tendencies for the occurrence of *w̄* discussed above do not apply to *w̄.dâʔ*. Furthermore, *w̄.dâʔ* is compatible with other than third-person pronouns. An example of *w̄.dâʔ* used with a first-person subject can be seen in (1506).

- (1506) *jə-ʔəʔ=w̄.dâʔ l̄ jò.kô nêʔ jìʔ=w̄.dâʔ ʔə-níʔ tə-sʰĩ lĩ*
 1s-EXIST=WD GNR.P Th. that_{FRAME} be.long=WD 3x-year one-ten NS
 ‘I’ve lived in Thailand for ten years already.’ [HUR]

Lastly, note that *w̄* and *w̄.dâʔ* do not occur on the main verb in imperative and prohibitive sentences.

12 Conclusion

The last chapter provides a summary of the thesis (§12.1) and some directions for further research (§12.2).

12.1 Summary of the thesis

This thesis has introduced the history, culture, and linguistic context of Sgaw Karen and provided a grammatical description covering the phonology, two major word classes – nouns and verbs – and the phrases they head, some major types of compounding, closed word classes, and clause- and sentence-level phenomena. The data consist of elicited sentences and naturally occurring speech and have been collected on site in northern and northwestern Thailand, in Finland, and online.

On a general level, Sgaw Karen is a highly isolating language that largely lacks bound morphology, making the compounding of morphemes a central strategy for forming new words and expressing grammatical meanings. Most morphemes occur individually and have clearly identifiable lexical meanings, as is typical of isolating languages in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Only a few morphemes, such as the new-situation marker *li*, are difficult to trace semantically. Given its dominant function in the language, nominal and verbal compounding has been given special attention throughout this thesis.

In terms of phonology, Sgaw Karen features a relatively simple syllable structure. With no final consonants, the syllable structure of all words in the language is CV or CCV. A distinction has been made between minor and major syllables; the latter has the reduced, atonal vowel *ə* following the initial consonant, and only a limited set of consonants occur in minor syllables. In major syllables, all consonants and vowels are possible. Tones are a prominent feature of the Sgaw Karen sound system, being contrastive both in terms of pitch and non-pitch features, such as phonation type (breathiness and glottalization). The final glottal constriction associated with three of the tones (Tone 3, 4, and 5) is analysed as a tonal rather than segmental feature.

The structure of the noun phrase in Sgaw Karen, the topic of Chapter 3, is as follows: possessor, possessive prefix, head noun, verbal modifier, classifier phrase, intensifying particle, demonstrative. Regular nouns can be divided into common nouns and proper nouns based on whether they refer to a set of referents or a specific referent. A special type of nouns are relator nouns, which are the possessors of a preceding NP or clause. Their function resembles that of prepositions in English. Nominal compounds consist of a head

and its modifier, being either head-initial or head-final. Besides the head noun, an NP can also consist of classifiers and various types of modifiers. Classifier phrases consist of a quantifier and a classifier, which can be sortal or mensural, depending on the type of head noun it follows. Some classifier phrases have special functions, including the pluralizer *təp^hâʔ* and the contrastive marker *tək^hʃ* ‘for X’s part’. Modifiers include descriptive verbs, which are similar to English adjectives, intensifying particles, possessors, and demonstrative particles.

Clauses, described in Chapter 4, consist of a subject (S or A argument), a verb or verb combination, and one or two objects. The second object sometimes follows the first one directly, while in some cases, it is preceded by the generic preposition *l̄ə*. Four types of verbs are distinguished: regular verbs, descriptive verbs, the existential verb *ʔôʔ*, and the two copula verbs *mê* ‘be true’ and *kē* ‘act as’. Some descriptive verbs take clauses as their subjects, embedding them in their own clause structure. These constructions are analysed as monoclausal despite having two verbal nuclei.

In many cases, the verb slot is filled by two or more verbs, which either form a modifier–verb construction or a compound, as shown in Chapter 5. Common verbs that form a modifier–verb construction with a following main verb include secondary verbs, prior motion verbs, and concurrent action and concurrent state verbs. Some verb combinations can be analysed as compounds, due to their limited productivity and semantic idiosyncrasy. They contrast with complement-taking verbs, which combine more productively with large numbers of verbs and form semantically transparent verb combinations. Verb–verb compounding is a prominent strategy for conveying grammatical meanings, and its interplay between aspect – both lexical and event aspect – and argument structure is a major topic in the grammar of Sgaw Karen. In headed verb–verb compounds, a main verb and a modifier verb are identified. Typical grammatical functions of the modifier verb, whether V₁ or V₂, is to license an additional argument, such as a causee or beneficiary, or alter the aspectual value of the compound, as shown in more detail in Chapter 8.

A different type of compounding, coordinate compounds, were discussed in Chapter 6. These are non-headed and frequently occur in four-syllable constructions known as elaborate expressions. Elaborate expressions are common across a large area covering Southeast Asia and Northeast India.

Besides the two major word classes, some minor, closed word classes were distinguished in Chapter 7. The ones identified are adverbial phrases and adverbial particles, connectives, pronouns, prepositions, final particles, and, lastly, interjections and ideophones. Many of these have clear origins as either nouns or verbs but have acquired a different syntactic behaviour in current language use.

It has also been shown, in Chapter 8, that the valency of most Sgaw Karen verbs is fixed, either intransitive (monovalent), transitive (bivalent), or ditransitive (trivalent). As previously mentioned, modifier verbs can add an argument, as in affectedness and causative constructions, but individual verbs have a single valency value. Reflexive constructions, for example, in many languages involve intransitivizing morphology, but in Sgaw Karen, the

verb in reflexive clauses remains transitive, taking *θāʔ* ‘heart’ as its object. However, valency can be distinguished from transitivity, a gradable value, which can be altered in Sgaw Karen. Common strategies include using *θāʔ* as an anticausative marker or backgrounding one of the core arguments through impersonalization or the *bāʔ* construction.

Other clause-level phenomena include negation, modality, and aspect. Sgaw Karen uses discontinuous negation involving a negative prefix, *tə-*, and a final negative particle *bāʔ*. As for modality, clauses expressing non-indicative, or non-realis, modality often contain the irrealis marker *kə-*, which prefixes to the main verb. It expresses various irrealis modalities, such as speculation, estimation, desire, and hope. Most aspectual markers in Sgaw Karen convey a meaning subsumed under the perfect aspect, such as experience and present relevance.

Chapter 9 introduced clauses that occur beside a main clause in a sentence. Such clauses can be embedded in the main clause as an argument, as in the case of nominalization and complementation, or they can function as modifiers of NPs (relative clauses) or clauses (adverbial clauses).

Topics on the sentence level, discussed in Chapter 10, are the three major sentence types – interrogative, imperative, and declarative sentences – and the final particles associated with them.

Finally, in Chapter 11, it has been shown that Sgaw Karen possesses various strategies to modify or package a message for different pragmatic purposes. Utterances frequently start with a topic or frame-setter, which provide a topic or a frame, respectively, for the content that follows. Focus is used to contrast a referent with a limited set of semantically equivalent referents. Compared to topics, focused constituents typically appear later in an utterance and more often represent new information. Whether a referent is active (given) or inactive (new) in the minds of the interlocutors determines how it is expressed and where it is placed in a sentence.

12.2 Directions for further research

Much more work is needed on Sgaw Karen and its regional variants. This section provides some directions for further research. Many of the topics mentioned relate to the geographical spread and variation in various phonological and morphosyntactic features and their diachronic development.

Regarding the linguistic context of Sgaw Karen and its relation to neighbouring languages, little has been done in the morphosyntactic domain to uncover the typological similarities and differences between Sgaw Karen and other languages, whether Karenic or non-Karenic. Further research could reveal more isoglosses other than a few phonological ones already known and, ultimately, uncover patterns of past migrations and contact between language groups. Also, this thesis has only been able to provide limited knowledge on the regional variation of Sgaw Karen. While this variation appears to be less substantial than in other Karenic sub-branches, such as Pwo, it deserves more thorough investigation.

Although phonology is probably the most researched topic on Sgaw Karen, some aspects remain understudied. There are areas of the phonology, particularly the tones, that exhibit significant regional differences. A deeper understanding of this variation could be useful for delimiting the geographical boundaries between Sgaw Karen variants. Another topic that this thesis has only briefly addressed is the use of extra-high tone and falsetto for intensification, a strategy that appears to be common in a wider geographical area.

In the morphosyntactic domain, topics worth mentioning include the use of the pluralizer *təp^háʔ* and its connection with referentiality, regional differences regarding the copula verbs *mé* and *kē*, and the function and pragmatics of the emphatic pronouns (e.g. *jē* ‘I’, *nē* ‘you’). The origin and use of the pervasive third-person pronominal morpheme *wē*, which the emphatic pronouns contain, is also not fully understood. Additionally, there seems to be regional variation in the positioning of relative clause when it modifies an object; most object-modifying relative clauses in the data are head-final, occurring after the NP, while in a handful of cases, it appears before the NP.

A few mentions about the possible influence of English on Sgaw Karen have been made throughout this thesis. One is the apparently increasing occurrence of the *báʔ* construction, which many native speakers feel resemble the English Passive construction. A useful next step in the investigation of the *báʔ* construction would be a corpus study of its use and spread in texts from the 19th century compared to its current usage. A major obstacle is of course that, while a large body of Sgaw Karen texts exists, they have yet to be assembled in a digitally accessible corpus. Another topic for which this thesis has lacked sufficient material is ideophones and other expressive forms.

Many more topics on the grammar of this rich and multifaceted language could be mentioned. It is my sincere hope that this thesis will inspire many researchers on Sgaw Karen to come.

Appendix I: Transcription system

The transcription system used in this thesis is a transliteration of the writing system devised by Wade, which is based on the Mon–Burmese script. The following tables show the correspondences between Mon–Burmese and Latin symbols.

I. Initials (medials are within parentheses)				
က <i>k</i>	ခ <i>k^h</i>	ဂ (ဂ) <i>γ</i>	ဃ <i>x</i>	င <i>ŋ</i>
စ <i>s</i>	ဆ <i>s^h</i>	ဇ <i>z</i>		ည <i>ʃ</i>
တ <i>t</i>	ထ <i>t^h</i>	ဒ <i>d</i>		န <i>n</i>
ပ <i>p</i>	ဖ <i>p^h</i>		ဘ <i>b</i>	မ <i>m</i>
ယ (ယ) <i>j</i>	ရ (ရ) <i>r</i>	လ (လ) <i>l</i>	ဝ (ဝ) <i>w</i>	ထ <i>θ</i>
ဟ <i>h</i>	အ <i>ʔ</i>	ဧ <i>ɦ</i>		

II. Vowels		
က <i>kə</i>	ကို <i>kɔ</i>	ကဲ <i>kɛ</i>
ကါ <i>ka</i>	ကိ <i>ki</i>	ကီ <i>ki</i>
ကို <i>ko</i>	ကူ <i>ku</i>	ကု <i>ke</i>

III. Tones	
ကို <i>k̄</i>	ကိုး <i>k̄[?]</i>
ကို် <i>k̄[?]</i>	ကို်း <i>k̄[?]</i>
ကို်း <i>k̄[?]</i>	ကို်း <i>k̄[?]</i>

Appendix II: Texts

Two texts are provided in this appendix as samples of spoken Sgaw Karen as encountered in everyday life situations.

Text 1: “Phone conversations”

Phone conversations (voice messages) between a speaker from Mae Hong Son (A) and a speaker from Kayah State (B). Underlined sections are Thai.

A: *dē.k^hwā* *ʔôʔ* *p^hē.lēʔ* *tō* *lōʔ* *k^hē.ʔi*
 yB EXIST which place(CLF) CQ now
 ‘Where are you (younger brother) now?’

A: *nə-hē-tì* *lā* *bō.kōʔ* *lī* *hā*
 2s-come-arrive GNR.P B. NS PQ
 ‘Have you arrived in Bangkok already?’

B: *mē* | *ʔə-hē-tì* *lā* *bō.kōʔ* *k^hē.ʔi* *lò*
 be.true 1s-come-arrive GNR.P B. now FACT.FP
tʃō *ʔôʔ* *p^hē.lēʔ*
 eB EXIST where
 ‘Yes, I just arrived in Bangkok. Where are you?’

A: *tʃō* *ʔôʔ* *lā* Mae Hong Son *hē*
 eB EXIST GNR.P M. EMPH.FP
tʃō *tə-lē* *nō-pà* *bāʔ*
 eB NEG-go EXT-side NEG.FP
 ‘I’m in Mae Hong Son. I don’t go anywhere.’

A: *lā.k^hī* *dē.k^hwā* *mə-nē* *hē* *lā* Chiang Mai *nēʔ*
 later yB COND-get come GNR.P C. that_{FRAME}
hē-hāʔ.ʔôʔ *dōʔ ...* *hē.hāʔ* *lā* Mae Hong Son *dīʔ* *hō*
 come-visit with visit GNR.P M. CONT FP
 ‘Later, if you come to Chiang Mai, come visit ... come visit Mae Hong Son, too!’

A: *tʃō* *θēʔ.nōʔ-bāʔ* *nā*
 eB think.of/miss-HIT 2si
 ‘I miss you.’

- B: *mê tʃɔ̌ | nə-ʔəʔ²-sʰuʔ²-ʔəʔ²-kʰlɛ̌* *hā*
 yes eB 2s-EXIST-be.strong-EXIST-be.fast PQ
 ‘Yes, brother. Are you doing well?’
- A: *mê dɛ̌.kʰwā ʔəʔ²-sʰuʔ²-ʔəʔ²-kʰlɛ̌* *lə*
 yes yB EXIST-be.strong-EXIST-be.fast FACT.FP
 ‘Yes, I’m fine.’
- A: *tʃɔ̌ lɛ̌ lā* Chiang Mai | *tʃɔ̌ lɛ̌ sʰyā KO mō*
 eB go GNR.P C. eB go send K. mother
 ‘I went to Chiang Mai, I took KO’s mother (=my wife) there.’
- A: *ʔə-kə-lɛ̌ lā* Kanchanaburi *mə*
 3-IRR-go GNR.P K. ATT.FP
 ‘She will go to Kanchanaburi.’
- A: *tʃɔ̌ lɛ̌ sʰyā ʔə tì lā* Chiang Mai
 eB go send 3i arrive GNR.P C.
θwɛ̌~θwɛ̌ [swě~swě] *tʃɔ̌ ... tə-nì nā ʔi*
 and.then be one-day INTS this
tʃɔ̌ lɛ̌ mə-yè-dɔ̌ʔ kā
 eB go make-be.good-again car
 ‘I drove her to Chiang Mai, then I ... Today, I went to repair my car.’
- A: *mà kā wì nêʔ tʃɔ̌ hā²-xī-ʔéʔ tʃɔ̌ yò.mɔ̌ʔ ʔə-kā*
 do car finish that_{FRAME} eB walk-search-BEN eB friend 3x-car
 ‘After doing the car, I looked for a car for my friend.’
- A: *tʃɔ̌ yò.mɔ̌ʔ θā pyè kā mə*
 eB friend intend buy car ATT.FP
hā²-xī-ʔéʔ tʃɔ̌ yò.mɔ̌ʔ kā tə-kʰəʔ dɔ̌ʔ
 walk-search-BEN eB friend car one-CLF and
θwɛ̌~θwɛ̌ lɛ̌-yì KS lā tā.sʰā.híʔ
 and.then go-ASSIST PN GNR.P hospital
 ‘My friend is going to buy a car. (I) looked for a car for my friend
 and then went with KS to the hospital.’

- B: *tʃɔ̌ ʔəʔ²-sʰuʔ²-ʔəʔ²-kʰlɛ̌* *hā*
 eB EXIST-be.strong-EXIST-be.fast PQ
 ‘How are you?’

- A: *dē.k^hwā* *kə-ʔó²-dī²* *lā* *bō.kō* *s^hṽ².jì²* *lē²*
yB IRR-EXIST-CONT GNR.P Bangkok how.long CQ
p^hā².jì²-dī² *hā*
last.long-CONT PQ
‘How long will you still be in Bangkok? For long still?’
- B: *jə-tə-θē².nā-lò.tí* *dī²* *bā²*
1s-NEG-know-be.accurate CONT NEG.FP
‘I don’t know for sure yet.’
- A: *dē.k^hwā* *tə-hē-hā²* *lā* *tʃō* *ʔó²* *nī*
eB NEG-come-walk/visit GNR.P eB LOC.N MIRATIVE.Q
‘Aren’t you coming to visit me?’
- A: *hē* *hā².ʔó²* *tʃō* *lā* Mae Hong Son *sē* *mò*
come visit eB GNR.P M. also ATT.FP
‘Come visit me in Mae Hong Son, too, won’t you?’
- A: *dē.k^hwā* *bā²* *hē* *ʔó²* *dē²*
yB must come eat frog
lā Mae Hong Son *lī* *nò*
GNR.P M. NS AGR.FP
‘You have to come to Mae Hong Son to eat frog.’
- B: *mē* *tʃō* | *jə-lē-ʔó²-θəkō²* *nà* *k^hō.kà²* *tə-nwī* *θē* *hā*
yes eB 1s-go-EXIST-SOC 2si next one-week be.skilled_{ABIL} PQ
‘Yes, brother. Can I go and visit you next week?’
- A: *θē* *mò* *dē.k^hwā* | *tʃō* *ʔó²-k^hō²* *nà* *nò*
be.skilled_{ABIL} ATT.FP yB oB EXIST-wait 2si AGR.FP
‘Sure, brother! I’m waiting for you.’
- A: *dē.k^hwā* *kə-hē* *pɣè* *nì* *lē²*
yB IRR-come how.many day CQ
‘How many days will you stay (come here for)?’
- A: *hā²-lò².kwē* *dō²* *tʃō* *lā* *kəsâ* *tì* *hā*
walk-play with eB GNR.P mountain arrive PQ
‘Will you manage to go with me to the mountain?’
(Note: this use of *tì* ‘arrive’ is not widespread; see §4.3.)
- B: *jə-kə-ʔó²* *dō²* *nà* *lwī* *θō*
1s-IRR-EXIST with 2si four day
‘I’ll stay with you for four days.’

A: *dē.k^hwā t^hɔ̄[?] lō[?] lā* Chiang Mai *lī hā*
 yB ascend car GNR.P C. NS PQ
 ‘Have you got on the van in Chiang Mai already?’

A: *tʃō kə-lē ʔō[?].k^hō[?] nà lā* bɔɔ.k^hɔ̄.sɔ̄ *xī nā[?].rī[?] nō*
 oB IRR-go wait 2si there bus station six o'clock AGR.FP
 ‘I’ll go wait for you at the bus station at six o’clock, ok?’

B: *mē mē mē | t^hɪ[?]-lō[?] θā[?] lā.nē[?]*
 be.true be.true be.true see-RECP heart_{REFL} there
 ‘Sure, sure. See you there.’

A: *dē.k^hwā lē lā* Phitsanulok *lī hā*
 yB go GNR.P P. NS PQ
ʔō[?]-dī[?] lā Chiang Mai *dī[?] hā*
 EXIST-CONT GNR.P C. CONT PQ
 ‘Have you gone to Phitsanulok already or are you still in Chiang Mai.’

B: *k^hē.ʔi jə-hē lā.nē[?] ʔəp^hā.mi[?] |*
 now 1s-come there in.the.middle.of.it
jə-lē lā Phitsanulok *mē wì nē[?]*
 1s-go GNR.P P. COND finish that_{FRAME}
jə-pà[?]-lò θā[?] lā jə-kə-lē lā Sukhothai *lò*
 1s-put-DOWN heart_{REFL} COMP 1s-IRR-go GNR.P S. FACT.FP
 ‘I’m on my way there. After Phitsanulok, I plan to go to Sukhothai.’

A: *mē dē.k^hwā lā* Sukhothai *nē[?] kē* muaŋ.kào *nē[?]*
 be.true yB GNR.P S. that_{FRAME} act.as_{SCOP} old.city that_{FRAME}
 ‘Yes, brother, in Sukhothai is the old city.’

A: *dē.k^hwā mə-lē lā* *mī.yò.k^hɔ̄ dɔ̄[?] lā* *mī.hā nē[?]*
 yB COND-go GNR.P morning and GNR.P evening that_{FRAME}
ʔə-yè mò | tā k^hɪ[?] mò
 3-be.good ATT.FP thing_{IMPRS} be.cool ATT.FP
 ‘If you go in the morning and in the evening it’s good, it’s cool.’

A: *mə-lē lā* *mī.s^hā.k^hɔ̄ nē[?] tā* *kó |*
 COND-go GNR.P daytime that_{FRAME} thing_{IMPRS} be.hot
hā[?] tə-kē bā[?]
 walk NEG-ABIL NEG.FP
 ‘If (you) go during daytime, it’s hot, (you) won’t bear walking (in the heat).’

B: *kʰɛ.ʔi jə-ʔɔʔ lə kəbɔ-jù-plɔ*
 now 1s-EXIST GNR.P ship-fly-field
 ‘I’m at the airport now.’

A: *ʔɔ dɛ.kʰwā kə-kè lə Finland*
 INTJ yB IRR-return GNR.P F.
lɪ nɔ dɛ.kʰwā | mɛ hā
 NS AGR.FP yB be.true PQ
 ‘Oh, you will go back to Finland already, brother, is that right?’

Text 2: “Advice”

YouTube vlog post, motivational speech presented by a speaker representing the Kayin–Tak border region variety. Citation: “4 Advices”, uploaded by BM SuccessRoots, 17 March 2022, 00:00:00–00:01:10 and 00:04:07–00:05:47.

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn9KC4H0EaU>.

1.1 *θā².kʰĩ dō².mā² l̄ pə-tʰĩ²-l̄².θā² ʔəθ̄ b̄l̄ d̄s² n̄*
 be.happy a.lot COMP 1p-see-RECP be.new time again AGR.FP
 I’m very happy that we meet again.

1.2 *jə-mì l̄ b̄s.mĩ*
 1sx-name QUOT B.
 My name is Baw Mu.

1.3 *tā tən̄i.nā.ʔi nē² jə-ʔē².d̄s² hē².kʰ̄s.hē².n̄-l̄*
 thing this.day that 1s-want share(elab.)-DOWN
tā.γē ʔō²=wē.dā² lwĩ kʰā n̄ l̄
 topic EXIST=WD four CLF(GNR) AGR.FP REL
ʔəwē.dā² kə-sʰγ̄ pγà dī.θ̄s² pə-kə-t̄i
 3e(filler) IRR-send 1pi so.that 1p-IRR-arrive
l̄ pə-tā-m̄.lā pʰ̄s.t̄s² ʔə-γ̄ n̄
 GNR.P 1px-hope goal 3x-PURP AGR.FP
 ‘Today I want to share four topics which will lead us to reach our goals.’

1.4 *pəwē.dā² kō²-n̄-γà-dē² n̄ pə-ʔō²=wē.dā²*
 1pe each-body-CLF-each AGR.FP 1p-EXIST=WD
d̄s² tā.m̄.m̄ tə-kʰā~kʰā d̄s² pə-tā.m̄.lā
 with dream(n.) one-CLF and 1px-hope(n.)
pʰ̄s.t̄s² ʔō²=wē.dā² l̄ pə-kə-m̄=wē.dā²
 goal EXIST-WD REL 1p-IRR-do=WD
dī.θ̄s² pə-kə-t̄i ʔə-γ̄ l̄ n̄
 so.that 1p-IRR-arrive 3.PURP FACT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘We all have some dream, and we have a goal to strive to reach it.’

1.5 *bā².sʰā².θən̄à².kē nē² pγà ʔō²=wē.dā²*
 however that_{FRAME} person EXIST=WD
ʔā-mā² n̄ pγà ʔō²=wē.dā² d̄s.d̄u²
 be.many-INTS AGR.FP person EXIST=WD a.lot
l̄ ʔəθ̄ē².wē ʔō²=wē.dā² ʔə-tā-m̄.m̄
 REL 3pe EXIST=WD 3x-thing-dream
ʔə-tā-m̄.lā.kwā.sō bā².sʰā².θən̄à².kē nē²
 3x-thing-hope however that
 ‘However, there are many people who have dreams and wishes’

- 1.6 *ʔəθéʔ.wē.dáʔ* *mà=wē.dáʔ* *ʔə-tə-tì* *lā*
 3pe do=WD 3-NEG-arrive GNR.P
ʔə-tá.mí.lá *pʰṣ.táʔ* *báʔ* *dṣʔ* *ʔə-tá.mí.mṣ*
 3x-hope(n.) goal NEG.FP and 3x-dream(n.)
θéʔ.təpʰáʔ *néʔ* *tə-kē.tʰṣʔ* *báʔ* *nṣ*
 PL.COLL that_{TOP} NEG-become NEG.FP AGR.FP
 ‘but they don’t reach their goals and their dreams don’t come true.’
- 1.7 *tá* *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ* *ʔì* *néʔ~néʔ* *tə-mé* *lā*
 thing PL.COLL this that_{TOP} NEG-be.true_{COP} COMP
ʔəθéʔ.wē.dáʔ *ʔə-tá.θē.tá.báʔ* *tə-ʔóʔ* *báʔ* *ʔəxō*
 3pe 3x-skill NEG-EXIST NEG.FP 3.REASON
tə-mé *báʔ* *nṣ*
 NEG-COP NEG.FP AGR.FP
 ‘These things are not because they don’t have skill’
- 1.8 *ʔəθéʔ.wē.dáʔ* *tə-yìʔ.klēʔ.sāʔ=wē.dáʔ* *báʔ* *néʔ*
 3pe NEG-try.hard=WD NEG.FP that_{FRAME}
tə-mé *báʔ* *nṣ*
 NEG-be.true_{COP} NEG.FP AGR.FP
 ‘(or) that they don’t try hard.’
- 1.9 *ʔəθéʔ.wē.dáʔ* *ʔə-tá.θē.tá.báʔ* *ʔóʔ* *ʔə-tá.yìʔ.klēʔ.sāʔ* *ʔóʔ*
 3pe 3x-skill EXIST 3x-effort EXIST
báʔ.sʰáʔ.θənáʔ.kē *ʔəθéʔ.wē.dáʔ* *tə-tì=wē.dáʔ*
 however 3pe NEG-arrive=WD
lā *ʔə-pʰṣ.táʔ* *báʔ* *nṣ*
 GNR.P 3x-goal NEG.FP AGR.FP
 ‘They have skill and effort, but they still don’t reach their goals.’
- 1.10 *ʔə-xō* *néʔ* *təni.jā.ʔì* *nṣ* *jə-ʔéʔ.dṣʔ*
 3x-REASON that today AGR.FP 1s-want
héʔ.kʰṣ.héʔ.nṣ-lṣʔ.θāʔ *tá.yé* *hwí* *tʰíʔ* *lā*
 share-RECP topic four CLF REL
kə-mà.sə=wē.dáʔ *pɣà* *dī.θṣʔ* *pə-kə-tì=wē.dáʔ*
 IRR-help=WD 1pi so.that 1p-IRR-arrive-WD
lā *pə-tá.mí.lá* *pʰṣ.táʔ* *ʔəɣṣ* *lṣ* *nṣ*
 GNR.P 1px-hope(n.) goal 3x.PURP FACT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘So today I want to share four points which will help us reach our goals.’
- 1.11 *nṣʔ.yí* *tā* *néʔ* *mé=wē.dáʔ* work hard *nṣ*
 number one that_{TOP} be.true_{COP}=WD w. AGR.FP
 ‘Number one is “work hard”.’
- 1.12 *mé=wē.dáʔ* *mà* *tá* *sʰúʔ~sʰúʔ* *nṣ*
 be.true_{COP}=WD do thing be.strong(RDP) AGR.FP
 ‘It is to work hard.’

- 1.13 *jə-nàʔ* *θəpɣá.tá* *lā* *tá-kōʔ.mì.dēʔ* *lā nə-sʰā*
 1s-believe definitely COMP thing-each REL 2s-wish
dōʔ.nē-bāʔ *ʔə* *nə*
 receive-HIT 3i AGR.FP
 ‘I really believe that everything that you wish to get,’
- 1.14 *dəʔ* *dī.θəʔ* *nə-tá.mī.mə* *θéʔ.təpʰáʔ*
 and so.that 2sx-dream PL.COLL
kə-lā-tʰəʔ-pyè-tʰəʔ *dəʔ* *dī.θəʔ*
 IRR-be.full(CC1)-UP-be.full(CC2)-UP and so.that
nə-kə-ti=wē.dáʔ *lā* *nə-tá.mī.lā* *pʰə.təʔ* *ʔəɣə* *néʔ~néʔ*
 2s-IRR-arrive=WD GNR.P 2sx-hope goal 3.PURP that
 ‘and in order to fulfil your dreams and reach your goals,’
- 1.15 *nə-kə-báʔ* *ʔəʔ* *dəʔ* *tá-ɣiʔ.klēʔ.səʔ* *sʰúʔ~sʰúʔ*
 2s-IRR-must EXIST with thing_{NMLZ}-try.hard be.strong
dəʔ *tá-héʔ-lə-θāʔ* *sʰúʔ~sʰúʔ* *lə*
 and thing_{NMLZ}-give-DOWN-REFL be.strong(RDP) FACT.FP
 ‘you must have a lot of effort and commitment.’
-
- 1.16 *tá.ɣé* *lwí* *kʰā* *dəʔ* *ʔə-kətə* *tə-kʰā* *néʔ*
 topic four CLF(GNR) and 3-end(intr.) one-CLF(GNR) that_{TOP}
mé=wē.dáʔ Do what love *nə*
 be.true_{COP}=WD AGR.FP
 ‘The fourth and last topic is “Do what you love”.’
- 1.17 *mà=wē.dáʔ* *tá* *lā* *nə-ʔéʔ* *ʔə* *tə-kʰā* *nə*
 do=WD thing REL 2s-love 3i one-CLF(GNR) AGR.FP
 ‘Do something that you love.’
- 1.18 *tá* *tə-kʰā* *ʔi* *dī* *mé=wē.dáʔ*
 thing one-CLF(GNR) this TOP be.true_{COP}=WD
tá *lā* *ʔə-rē.dəʔ* *dəʔ.māʔ* *lə* *nə*
 thing REL 3-be.important a.lot FACT.FP AGR.FP
 ‘This is a very important thing.’
- 1.19 *báʔ* *mənì* *ʔəxō* *lêʔ* *néʔ* *nə*
 hit what 3.REASON CQ that_{FRAME} AGR.FP
 ‘Why?’

- 1.20 *tā.p^hī[?].tā.mà mē.yè.yè nò tā tə-k^hā~k^hā lā*
work(n.) whichever AGR.FP thing one-CLF(RDP) REL
nə-mà ʔò nə-mé ʔé[?] ʔò ʔas^hā.kətō né[?]~né[?]
2s-do 3i 2s-if love 3i 3.time that_{FRAME}
nə-θā[?] tə-lò.bγī[?] lā ʔəxō bā[?] nò
2sx-heart NEG-get.tired GNR.P 3.REASON NEG.FP AGR.FP
‘Whatever work, if you love to do it, you won’t get tired because of it.’
- 1.21 *nə-mé ʔé[?]=wē.dā[?] tā-lò[?].kwē né[?] nò tā.s^hā.kətō*
2s-be.true_{COND} love=WD thing-play(v.) that_{FRAME} AGR.FP time
mé ʔó[?] təsē[?]-p^hō dā[?].lè[?] nə-kə-yì[?].klē[?].sō[?]=wē.dā[?]
be.true_{COND} EXIST a.bit-child_{DIM} even 2s-IRR-try.hard=WD
dī.θō[?] nə-kə-lò[?].kwē-bā[?] lò nò
so.that 2s-IRR-play-hit_{OPP} FACT.FP AGR.FP
‘If you love games, even if you just have a little time you will try to get a chance to play.’
- 1.22 *nə-mé ʔé[?]=wē.dā[?] tā-θū[?].wī[?].θā[?].s^hā nò*
2s-be.true_{COND} love=WD thing_{NMLZ}-sing(elab.) AGR.FP
nə-θā[?].wī[?] tā t^hā.bō kō[?]-nì-dē[?]
2s-sing thing always each-day-INTS
kō[?]-nwī-dē[?] dā[?].lè[?] né[?] nə-tə-lò.bγī[?] bā[?]
each-week-INTS even that_{FRAME} 2s-NEG-get.tired NEG.FP
‘If you like singing, even if you sing all the time, every day, every week, you don’t get tired of it.’
- 1.23 *k^hō.p^hlō θā[?] lā nə-ʔé[?] ʔò ʔəxō lō*
go.through heart_{REFL} GNR.P 2s-love 3i 3.REASON FACT.FP
‘Because you love it.’
- 1.24 *lā hō[?].k^hō[?].k^hlā ʔì nò tā lā ʔə-nā[?]*
GNR.P Earth this AGR.FP thing REL 3x-be.severe
dō[?]-nē-dī[?] tā lā nə-kə-bā[?] mǎ=wē.dā[?]
be.big-CMPR-CONT thing REL 2s-IRR-must do=WD
tā.mà tə-k^hā lā nə-mà ʔò tə-mì[?] bā[?] né[?]
work(n.) one-CLF REL 2s-do 3i NEG-be.fun NEG.FP that
tə-ʔó[?] nō tə-mì bā[?]
NEG-EXIST EXT one-kind NEG.FP
‘There is nothing worse in this world than when you have to do a job that you don’t like doing.’

1.25 *ʔəxō nē²~nē² xī-tʰi²-nē tā tə-kʰā~kʰā lā nə-mà ʔò*
 3.REASON that_{FRAME} search-see-get thing one-CLF REL 2s-do 3i
mì² dō² nə-ʔē² ʔò dō² ʔə-hē² nà
 be.fun and 2s-love 3i and 3-give 2si
tā-θū².pó.θā².wā² tʰō.bō pʰē nə-sʰō.mō²-tʰō² lā
 thing_{NMLZ}-be.excited always LOC.P 2s-think-UP GNR.P
nə-kə-mà ʔò ʔə-sʰā.kətō θē².təpʰā² nē²~nē² nò
 2s-IRR-do 3i 3x-time PL.COLL that AGR.FP
 ‘Therefore, find something that you like to do and that you love and that always makes you excited when you think about doing it.’

1.26 *mē mē=wē.dā² tā tə-kʰā lā nə-mà*
 COND be.true_{COP}=WD thing one-CLF REL 2s-do
ʔò mì² dō² nə-ʔē² ʔò nē²~nē² nə-θā²
 3i be.enjoyable and 2s-love 3i that_{FRAME} 2sx-heart
tə-lò.byī² lā ʔəxō nō-tə-blō bā²
 NEG-get.tired GNR.P 3.REASON EXT-one-time NEG.FP
 ‘If it is something you like doing and you love it, you will never get tired of it.’

1.27 *nə-hē².lò tā.sʰā.kətō kē nə-hē².lò nə-γi-nə-bā*
 2s-give time ABIL 2s-give 2sx-root(CC1)-2sx-spirit(CC2)
kē nə-γi².klē².sā² ʔò kē tʰō.bō lā
 ABIL 2s-try.hard 3i ABIL always FACT.FP
 ‘You always have time and energy to give for it and can always try hard doing it.’

1.28 *ʔəxō nē²~nē² jə-hē²-γi-hē²-bā lā pī θē².təpʰā²*
 3.REASON that_{FRAME} 1s-give-root-give-spirit COMP yS PL.COLL
dō² dō-pī-wē θē².təpʰā² lā mò pəwē
 and RLN-yS-eS PL:COLL COMP OPT 1pe
xī-tʰi²-nē-θəkō² tā tə-kʰā lā pə-mà ʔò mì²
 search-see-get-SOC thing one-CLF REL 1p-do 3i be.fun
 ‘So, I encourage you, brothers and sisters, let’s find something that we like to do.’

1.29 *ʔə-mē tʰi² tā.sʰā.kətō jì² tʰē.lē².tʰē.lē²*
 3-be.true_{CONC} pull time last.long however.much
bā².sʰā².θəná².kē nē²~nē² pə-γi².klē².sā² ʔò
 however that_{FRAME} 1p-try.hard 3i
kē pə-hē².lò pəθā² kē nò kʰō.pʰlō.θā²
 ABIL 1p-give 1p.REFL ABIL AGR.FP because
lā pə-ʔē² ʔò ʔəxō nē² nò
 GNR.P 1p-love 3i 3.REASON that_{FRAME} AGR.FP
 ‘No matter how much time it takes, we can work hard and commit ourselves to it because we love it.’

- 1.30 *ʔəwē.nēʔ* *mē=wē.dāʔ* *tā-xī.tʰā* *ʔə-γè-kətā*
that be.true_{COP}=WD thing-choose 3-be.good-SUPL
tə-kʰā *lā* *nə-tā.ʔōʔ.mū* *ʔə-pù* *lò*
one-CLF(GNR) GNR.P 2sx-life 3x-inside FACT.FP
‘That is the best choice in life.’
- 1.31 *ʔəxō* *nēʔ~nēʔ* *mà* *tā* *tə-kʰā* *lā*
3.REASON that_{FRAME} do thing one-CLF REL
nə-mà *ʔì* *mìʔ* *dōʔ*
2s-do 3i be.enjoyable and
nə-kə-dōʔ.nē-bāʔ *tā-θāʔ.mī*
2s-IRR-receive-HIT thing_{NMLZ}-heart-be.ripe
‘So, do something that you like, and you will get satisfaction.’
- 1.32 *dōʔ* *nə-kə-tì* *lā* *nə-pʰā.tāʔ*
and 2s-IRR-arrive GNR.P 2sx-goal
pʰē *nə-tə-pəlō.θāʔ* *bāʔ* *ʔə-kʰā* *lò*
LOC.P 2s-NEG-pay.attention NEG.FP 3x-TIME FACT.FP
‘and you will reach your goals without expecting it.’
- 1.33 *jə-sʰā.mī.lā* *lā* *tā.γé* *lwī* *mì* *nēʔ*
1s-hope COMP topic four kind that
kə-kē.tʰōʔ *tā.blīʔ.tā.pʰyōʔ* *lā* *pyà* *lā* *ʔə-dō.kənāʔ*
IRR-become benefit GNR.P person REL 3-listen
tā *pʰō* *θēʔ.təpʰāʔ* *ʔəγō* *lò* *nò*
thing child PL.COLL 3.PURP FACT.FP AGR.FP
‘I hope that these four topics will benefit the listeners.’
- 1.34 *jə-sīʔ.blīʔ-bāʔ* *θī* *lā* *θī* *hēʔ-lò*
1s-thank-HIT 2p COMP 2p give-DOWN
tā.sʰā.kətō *lā* *θī* *kə-dō.kənāʔ-bāʔ=wē.dāʔ*
time GNR.P 2p IRR-listen-HIT=WD
video *tə-kʰā* *ʔì* *ʔəxō* *lò* *nò*
v. one-CLF(GNR) this 3.REASON FACT.FP AGR.FP
‘I thank you for giving your time to listen to this video.’
- 1.35 *dōʔ* *jə-nàʔ* *θəpyā.tā* *lā* *nə-tā.ʔōʔ.mū* *pù* *nò*
and 1s-believe definitely COMP 2s-life inside AGR.FP
nə-mē *ʔēʔ.dōʔ* *mà* *tā* *tə-mì~mì nēʔ* *nò*
2s-be.true_{COND} want do thing one-kind that AGR.FP
‘And I definitely believe that, in your life, if you want to do something.’

- 1.36 *jə-nàʔ* *θəpyá.tâ* *l̄ə* *nə-mà* *nê*
 1s-believe definitely COMP 2s-do get_{ABIL}
d̄əʔ *nə-mà* *θē* *l̄ə*
 and 2s-do be.skilled_{ABIL} FACT.FP
 ‘I definitely believe you can succeed in doing it and you have the
 skill to do it.’

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