

# **Kui narrative repetition**

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#### **Abstract**

The study of Kui narrative repetition is based on four texts narrated by a native speaker of Kui spoken at Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin Province.

Repetition is frequent in Kui narrative discourse. It has different forms and functions. It is presented in the forms of verbatim, reduction, expansion, synonym, cycle, pro-verb, and negated antonym. The most notable function of repetition is to spread out the information load so that a theme line is highlighted. Repetition is usually used for linkage, preview, repeated attempt, rhetorical underlining at the peak, contra-expectation, amplification, and summary.

## 0. Introduction

Repetition can be found in all discourse genres. It is mostly used to control the rate or speed at which information is presented. As pointed out by Callow (1974), different languages convey information at different rates. Some languages may present the information slowly, with a great deal of redundancy or repetition whereas other languages convey close-packed information by using minimum of words and little repetition. Languages which use a great deal of repetition have a spread-out information structure whereas languages which use little repetition have a compact information structure.

Kui is an example of languages with a spread-out information structure which is obviously seen in narrative discourse. To slow down the rate at which *information is presented*, Kui uses repetition which takes various forms and serves different functions. This paper focusses on forms and functions of repetition as found in four texts narrated by a speaker of Kui<sup>1</sup> spoken at Khuton village, Amphoe Kapchoeng, Surin province. The titles of texts are as follows:

Text 1 ?atɕiiŋ	'An elephant'
Text 2 ksan	'A snake'
Text 3 kaan sipsoŋ ne?	'Twelve children'
Text 4 ?atɕaa thiiŋ	'A fox'

## 1. Forms of repetition

The term repetition is used to mean "referring to the same event twice, whether the same words are repeated or not" (Callow 1974: 74). There are various ways of referring to the same event twice as discussed below.

### 1.1 *Verbatim*

Verbatim is a word for word repetition. An event or action may be exactly repeated. In example 1 the event in which a woman drinks an elephant's urine is exactly repeated in a relative clause when the woman is rementioned.

- (1) pa? tɕii pthəh daa? klɔm tɕiiŋ ka? lɔyɔŋ ɲaoc daa?  
walk go find water urine elephant then then drink water

klɔm tɕiiŋ  
urine elephant

[When the woman] found an elephant's urine, [she] then drank it.

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<sup>1</sup> Kui or Kuai is a language of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic phylum. It belongs to the Katuic Branch (Thomas and Headley 1970).

kpaj      deel      ɲaoc      daaʔ      kloom      tɕiian  
 woman    who      drink    water    urine    elephant

The woman who drank the elephant's urine...

### 1.2 Reduction

When the same event is referred to the second time, it is usually reduced in form as in example 2.

(2) kʌʌt      niaʔsroʔ    muuaj    klum  
 there is    villager    one      group

There was a group of villagers.

tɕii    bɔɔj      tphoʔ    ʔabaŋ            paa    kah  
 go      find      dig      bamboo shoot    in      forest

[They] went to find bamboo shoots in the forest.

tɕii    bɔɔj    kʌʔ    buuun    khuneʔ  
 go    find    then    get      everybody

[When they] went to find [the bamboo shoots], everybody got [the bamboo shoots].

### 1.3 Expansion

When an event is restated, more information may be added. In Kui narrative, there are few examples of expansion. Example 3 illustrates a repetition via expansion.

(3) læʔ            kaan    lah    tɕoo    fææt    kpaj    muuaj    ɲthruh    muuaj  
 give birth    baby    out    come    twin    female    one    male    one

[The woman] gave birth to a twin, a girl [and] a boy.

### 1.4 Synonym

Another method of referring to an event twice is by using different words to state exactly the same thing as in example 4.

(4) tɕon    tuaʔææŋ    thet    tɲyh            læh  
 till      himself      run      out of breath      die

Till [he] himself ran out of [his] breath [and then] died.

ksan phɔɔ taa diinj paaj ɲthruḥ kee læh lææw  
 snake when but know that man that die already

When the snakes knew that the man died.

### 1.5 Cycle

Cycle is defined as repetitions of similar facts with new information added each time (Thomas 1978). Cycle is a prominent feature of Kui narratives. It appears in all four texts. Each text has at least two cycles. All repeated cycles have a similar setting and the new information added is a different event. A set of cycles may have only one thematic participant attempting to do something again and again in each cycle. Another set of cycles may have a thematicity switch between two cycles but the settings and the actions will be the same. In text 4 there is a set of five cycles at the beginning of the story. A fox attempts to eat the livers of two sisters. He comes to see the sisters five times and asks how large their livers are. Each time the setting and the action are the same but the livers grow bigger and bigger. Each attempt is represented in each cycle. Example 5 illustrates the first two cycles of this set.

#### (5) *First cycle*

tbuu kʌ? tɕoo mah naaŋ loom mej phuuut mahnaa  
 evening then come ask children liver your large how much

In the evening [the foxes] came to ask the children, “How large are your livers?”

ʔʌj mah mah ʔanææ sensɑ?  
 Introductory particle at the extent this one hair

[The children answered that the livers were] as large as the hair.

ʔʌ tɕii lopkrɔɔj  
 yes go return

[The fox said] yes [and] returned.

#### *Second cycle*

na? tbuu thɣn tɕoo mah naaŋ loom phuuut mahnaa  
 it is evening again come ask children liver large how much

In the next evening [the foxes] came to ask the children how large the livers were.

mah ɲthraḥ  
 at the extent nail

[The children answered that their livers were] as large as a nail.

### 1.6 *Pro-verb*

Repetition can be further expressed by a pro-verb, that is the verb is repeated and the demonstrative and comparative reference are added. The pro-verb is usually embedded in a cycle. In text 3 the father tries to lose his sons in the jungle three times. Each attempt is represented in each cycle. When the father repeats his action, a pro-verb is used to refer to the action described previously in the text as in example 6.

- (6) ʔow    tɕii    klaaŋ    kaʔ    waa    naʔ    ɲaj ɲuaŋ  
 father   go    defecate   then   do    the same   the other day

The father went to defecate, then did the same way as the other day.

### 1.7 *Negated antonym*

An event may be stated twice as a negated antonym. This form of repetition is rare in Kui narratives. Example 7 illustrates negated antonym.

- (7) kaʔ        pthəh    taa    klaaŋ  
 then        find    only    feces

[The children] then found only the feces.

phiʔ    pthəh    ʔow  
 not    find    father

[They] did not find the father.

## 2. Functions of repetition

The most notable function of repetition is to spread out the information load in order to highlight a theme line. An occurrence of repetition anywhere in the text enables the listener to be aware that the information being conveyed is significant.

Repetition in Kui narrative is mostly used for linkage. Old information is repeated before new information gets started. This repetitive back reference can be found throughout the text. Other dominant usages of repetition are preview, repeated attempt and rhetorical underlining at the peak. Some other usages of repetition which are infrequent include contra-expectation, amplification and summary. These functions of repetition will be discussed in detail below.

### 2.1 *Linkage*

Kui uses a large-scale repetition for linkage. The previous crucial event is frequently repeated by the back referential clause which indicates a completion of the previous event and serves as a point of reference for the following crucial event.

The following part of text 3 exemplifies a frequent occurrence of the repetitive back reference.

(8) juur klaa sah ?ow kʌ? nam tɕii thɣɣn  
wake up morning up father then take go again

In the morning the father woke up [and] then [he] took [the children] to go [into the forest] again.

tɕii kʌ? nam moot  
go then take go in

[When they] went, [he] then took [the children] to go [into the forest].

tɕii n̄thruu dziaŋ deel  
go deep more former

[They went] deeper than the last time.

?ow kʌ? n̄tee kaan paaj ?ow tɕii klaaŋ nuaŋ dɣɣ  
father then tell child that father go excrete first Fp

The father then told the children that he would go to defecate first.

kaan kʌ? namnɔɔ rap paaj ?ʌʌ  
child then together answer that yes

The children together said yes.

?ow tɕii klaaŋ kʌ? waa na? n̄ajnuan  
father go defecate then do as day before

The father went to defecate, then did the same way as the other day.

klaaŋ ruac kʌ? n̄tee klaaŋ paaj bɔɔ kaan kyɣ  
defecate finish then tell feces that if child my

kjaa ?aan m̄bɔɔŋ dɣɣ  
call let answer Fp

[After he] had defecated, [he] then told the feces that if the children called him, the feces should answer the call [for him].

kaan phɣɣ? ?ow tɕii duun kʌ? kjaa kjaa kʌ? saŋ  
child see father go long then call call then hear

taa sneeŋ m̄bɔɔŋ  
but voice answer

[When] the children saw the father go so long, [they] then called [the father].  
 [When they] called, [they] then heard only the answering voice.

kʌ?    tɕii            tpoon            sneeŋ  
 then    go                follow          voice

[The children] then went to follow the voice.

tɕii        kʌ?        pthəh    taa        klaaŋ  
 go        then        find      only      feces

[When the children] went [to find the father, they] then found only the feces.

kʌ?        khuyt    paaj    ʔow    tɕii    duŋ    lææw  
 then        think    that    father go    home    already

[The children] then thought that the father had already gone home.

tɕii    tʌ?        duŋ    kʌ?    phɣɣ? ʔow    kuua    ʔuɯ    duŋ  
 go    arrive    home    then    see    father stay    at    home

[When they] arrived home, then [they] saw [that] the father was at home.

Most examples of repetitive back reference are represented by the forms of reduction and synonym. Verbatim is also found but rare. In example 8 the repetitive back reference via reduction is illustrated as diagrammed below.

**The previous event**

**The repetitive back reference**

a.	ʔow father	kʌ? then	nam take	tɕii go	thɣɣn again	reduction ----->	tɕii go		
b.	ʔow father	tɕii go	klaaŋ defecate				reduction ----->	klaaŋ (ruac) defecate	
c.	kʌ? then	kjaa call				reduction ----->	kjaa call		
d.	kʌ? then	tɕii go	tpoon follow	sneeŋ voice				reduction ----->	tɕii go





## Cognitive experience (Thought)

## Preview of theme–line event

## Theme–line event

c.	kʌ?	khujt	paaj					
	then	think	that					
	ʔw	tɕii	duŋ	lææw	synonym	tɕii	tʌ?	duŋ
	father	go	home	already	----->	go	arrive	home
						kʌ?	phɣv?	ʔw
						then	see	father
						kuua	ʔuu	duŋ
						stay	at	home

## 2.3 Repeated attempt

Repetition is further used for a repeated attempt of participant. The devices which are mostly used to fulfill this function are cycle and pro–verb as illustrated in examples 5 and 8. Example 5 is from text 4. A repeated attempt of foxes to eat the livers of two sisters is represented by a set of five cycles. Example 8 is from text 3. There are three cycles with pro–verbs embedded in the second and third cycles. This set of cycles represents the repeated attempt of the father who tries to lose his children in the forest. Each time they return but in the third cycle the children are rescued by an elephant’s keeper and stay with him in the forest until they grow up.

Both sets of cycles in text 4 and 3 focus on the theme which is represented in repeated pattern in cycles. The purpose of the cycles in text 4 is to focus on the repeated attempt of a fox to eat the livers of two sisters. In text 3 the focus is on the repeated attempt of the father to lose his children in the forest. The repeated pattern has to do also with a style of narration that makes the story enjoyable.

## 2.4 Rhetorical underlining at the peak

According to Longacre (1983) a climactic narrative discourse has climax as a notional structure feature. A story reaches a climax when there is a highest point of tension and frustration (cf. Burusphat 1991). Climax corresponds to the surface structure peak which has features peculiar to itself. There are various devices to identify peak and rhetorical underlining is one of them. Kui underlines the peak by slowing down the information rate via repeated words. Repetition is used to draw attention to the repeated word (cf. Rugaleva 1983). The following examples are the identification of peak via repeated words in all texts.

## (9) Text 1

kʌ?	tɕii	tpoon	bɔɔj
then	go	follow	see

[The elephant] then went to follow [the tiger].

poon	tɕii	poon	tɕii	poon
follow	go	follow	go	follow

[He] went to follow, went to follow, followed.

kʌ?	poon	mahnaa	kʌ?	phi?	phɣɣ?
then	follow	how	then	not	see

No matter how [he] followed [the tiger], [he] could not see [it].

In text 1 a woman goes to find fruit in the forest and drinks an elephant's urine. Later she gives birth to a twin, a boy and a girl, and tells them that their father is an elephant. She asks her children to go find their father. When they first meet their father, the elephant does not know that they are his children so he kills his son. After he finds out the truth he takes his daughter home. Later a tiger tricks the daughter and eats her while the elephant is away. The story reaches its climax when the elephant is highly frustrated and tries to find the tiger to kill. The climax is marked on the surface by the repeated word *tɕii (t)poon* 'to go to follow'.

## Text 2

phɔɔ	taa	phɯŋ	khlɔaj	lææw	kʌ?	ksan	lɔh
when	but	belly	break-open	already	then	snake	out

tɕoo	ruu	phɯŋ	ŋdææɭ
come	at	belly	wife

When the belly was already broke open, the snake came out of the wife's belly.

kʌ?	sææŋ	tɕoo	tam	tam	mahnaa	kʌ?	phi?	dzim
then	down	come	hit	hit	how	then	not	all

[The husband] then came down to hit [them], but no matter how [he] hit, [he] could not [hit] all [of them]

daŋ	tam	tam	tɕon	tɕa?ææŋ	thet	tɣɣh	læh
still	hit	hit	till	himself	run	out of breath	die

[He] still hit [and] hit [the snakes] until he himself died.

In text 2 a woman goes to dig bamboo shoots. Her shovel is stuck in the ground. She says if a man helps her pull out the shovel she will be his wife (even though she is married). A snake helps her pull the shovel so she tells him to go to

her home during the night. Several months later she is pregnant. Her husband finds out the truth so he kills the snake. He takes his wife to cut wood in the forest. He climbs up a tree, cuts a stick, sharpens it and throws it down to his wife's belly. Then the belly is broken and the snakes come out from the belly. Here is the climax of the story. The husband is in trouble. He tries to hit all the snakes but he cannot. The surface feature peak is identified by the repeated word *tam* 'to hit'.

## Text 3

namnɔɔ	bɔɔj	knaa	tɕii	duŋ
go together	seek	way	go	home

[The children] went together to seek the way to go home.

bɔɔj	mahnaa	kʌ?	phi?	phɣv?
seek	how	then	not	see

No matter how [they] sought [they] could not see [the father].

rawaŋ	pa?	bɔɔj	knaa	tɕii	duŋ	tɕii'	pthəh
while	walk	seek	way	go	home	go	come across

kuuaj	siian	ʔatɕiiəŋ
person	take care	elephant

While [they] were walking to seek the way home, [they] came across an elephant's keeper.

In text 3 a poor couple cannot afford bringing up their twelve children. The father attempts to lose the children in the forest. The story reaches the climax on the last attempt as the children are highly frustrated. They cannot find the way home. The peak as the corresponding surface feature of climax<sup>2</sup> is marked by the repeated word *bɔɔj* 'to seek'.

## Text 4

tɕoo	tʌ?	kʌ?	ta?	toon	muuaj	laa	læh	tɕii
come	arrive	then	pick up	coconut	one	throw	die	go

[When the foxes] arrived, [each of the two sisters] then picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

<sup>2</sup> See a discussion of correlation of notional and surface features in Longacre (1987, 1983).

tʃoo naʔnææ taʔ plaj toon muuaj laa kʌʔ læh  
 come like this pick up fruit coconut one throw then die

[When other foxes] came like this [again, each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

taʔ plaj toon laa læh  
 pick up fruit coconut throw die

[Each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

taʔ plaj toon laa læh  
 pick up fruit coconut throw die

[Each of the two sisters] picked up a coconut [and] threw [it at a fox until it] died.

læh dzim læh dzim  
 die all die all

[The foxes] died all.

In text 4 a group of foxes attempt to eat the livers of two sisters. When the livers are big enough to eat, the two sisters grow a coconut tree and stay up the tree. The story reaches its climax when the foxes come and the sisters try to protect themselves by hitting the foxes with coconuts. The surface feature peak is clearly marked by a great deal of verbatim repetition.

## 2.5 *Contra-expectation*

Repetition is also used when there is a contra-expectation which is represented in the form of negated antonym as illustrated in example 7. This example is from text 3. The father tries to lose his children in the forest. He tells the children to wait while he goes to defecate. After defecating, he tells the feces to answer the children's call for him. When the children come after the voice, they are disappointed because they see only the feces, not their father.

## 2.6 *Amplification*

Kui uses repetition for amplification in the same way as mentioned by Callow (1974:74) below:

Some languages use repetition frequently for amplification. Here the second mention of the event is used as a vehicle for carrying some added information, some new material that was not mentioned the first time.

The form of repetition for amplification is usually expansion as illustrated below:

- (10) **kʌ?**      **phɣɣʔ**      **khlɔ̌ɔŋ**      **ʔadzɣɣl**      **khlɔ̌ɔŋ**      **juuɔŋ**      **ʔadzɣɣl**  
 then      see      print      tiger      print      feet      tiger

[The elephant] then saw the print of the tiger, the footprint of the tiger.

Example 10 is from text 1. *khlɔ̌ɔŋ ʔadzɣɣl* ‘the tiger’s print’ is repeated with some added information.

### 2.7 Summary

Summary is “a type of brief, generalized repetition” (Callow 1974:78). There is only one instance of summary which is made through a speech of participant. In text 3 when the children come across the elephant’s keeper, they tell him about their father’s attempt to lose them in the forest. This summary is old information which is repeated again to highlight it as a theme line and is provided for those listeners who may miss it in a previous telling. Summary takes the forms of reduction and synonym.

- (11) **kʌ?**      **ntee**      **kuuaj**      **siian**      **ʔatɕiiŋ**      **paaj**      **ʔɔw**      **nam**      **tɕoo**  
 then      tell      person      take care      elephant      that      father      take      come
- bɔɔj**      **plajlaaŋ**      **ʔɔw**      **kʌ?**      **tɕii**      **duŋ**      **ɲuaŋ**      **mohaj**      **bɔɔj**  
 find      fruit      father      then      go      home      before      we      find
- knaa**      **tɕii**      **duŋ**      **phiʔ**      **phɣɣʔ**      **kʌ?**      **lvɣj**      **klʌʔkruaŋ**  
 way      go      home      not      find      then      then      get lost

[The children] then told the elephant’s keeper, “The father took [us] to find fruit, then he went home. We could not find the way home, then [we] got lost [in the forest]”.

### 3. Summary

Kui uses a large–scale repetition to spread out the information load in order that a theme line is highlighted. There are various ways to repeat the same event. The devices which are frequently used include cycle, reduction, synonym and pro–verb. Other forms of repetition which are infrequent are verbatim, expansion, and negated antonym. The notable functions of these forms are linkage, preview, repeated attempt and rhetorical underlining at the peak. Some other functions can also be found but rare. They are contra–expectation, amplification and summary. The relationship between forms and functions is diagrammed as follows:

Forms		Functions
Verbatim Reduction ]	----->	Rhetorical underlining at the peak
Reduction Synonym ]	----->	Linkage Preview Summary
Cycle Pro-verb ]	----->	Repeated attempt
Expansion Negated antonym ]	-----> ----->	Amplification Contra-expectation

Even though repetition is basically used for underlining a theme line, it has to do also with a style of narration as seen in the form of cycles.<sup>3</sup>

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