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Description of reciprocal situations in Lao

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This chapter describes the grammatical resources available to speakers of Lao for describing situations that can be described broadly as 'reciprocal'. The analysis is based on complementary methods: elicitation by means of non-linguistic stimuli, exploratory consultation with native speakers, and investigation of corpora of spontaneous language use. Typically, reciprocal situations are described using a semantically general 'collaborative' marker on an action verb. The resultant meaning is that some set of people participate in a situation 'together', broadly construed. The collaborative marker is found in two distinct syntactic constructions, which differ in terms of their information structural contexts of use. The chapter first explores in detail the semantic range of the collaborative marker as it occurs in the more common 'Type 1' construction, and then discusses a special pragmatic context for the 'Type 2' construction. There is some methodological discussion concerning the results of elicitation via video stimuli. The chapter also discusses two specialised constructions dedicated to the expression of strict reciprocity.

1.   Introduction

Reciprocal situations – as in *They gave each other diamonds* – are among those situation types whose description is handled less straightforwardly by the world's grammars than more canonical types like simple transitives ('see', 'hit') and intransitives ('sneeze', 'walk'). In describing less canonical situation types, grammars go for work-around solutions, more complex and sometimes less obvious ways of structuring the description of events and other states of affairs. Examples include situations with three or more participants (Hudson 1992, Newman 1996, 1997, Narasimhan et al. 2007), with unusual configurations of transitivity parameters (Hopper & Thompson 1980), and with actor and undergoer arguments that do not show the standard asymmetrical alignment, as in reflexives (where actor and undergoer are one and the same entity; Frajzyngier & Curl 1999a, Kemmer 1993, Geniušienė 1987) or reciprocals (where distinct entities map onto multiple semantic roles; Dalrymple et al. 1998, Frajzyngier & Curl 1999b).

The present volume is partly about the range of ways in which languages distinguish the grammatical encoding of reciprocal situations from the encoding of other types of situation. Each language should have a formal way of distinguishing the description of symmetrically reiterated events like *They saw each other* from asymmetrical ones like *He saw her*. A second issue is cross-linguistic variation in the (extensional and intensional) semantics of constructions which may be used for the description of canonical reciprocal events. The broader theoretical issues concerning comparative research on how languages cope with the non-canonical argument structure configurations that reciprocal situations give rise to are dealt with in the introduction to this volume (cf. also Frajzyngier & Curl 1999b, Dalrymple et al. 1998). This chapter contributes to the comparative project described in the introduction, with an account of the lexico-grammatical resources which Lao speakers possess for the description of reciprocal situations, as well as the broader expressive functionality of those resources.

To preview the descriptive content of the chapter, Lao speakers have two main lexico-grammatical resources for describing reciprocal situations. One of these is a narrowly specialised, relatively seldom occurring construction, which I call the reciprocal mirror construction. It has the structure 'I V_α you, you V_α me', typically appended to a differently worded description of the event. The reciprocal mirror construction is confined to the description of events that are strictly reciprocal; that is, where for some predicate for which A and B are participants, A acts upon B *and* B acts upon A (see Section 4.2, below). The other of the two main constructional means for describing reciprocal situations in Lao is far more common and is the main focus in this chapter. This construction, featuring the nominal particle *kan3* occupying an (erstwhile) object slot in the verb phrase, is more general in meaning than strict reciprocity of action or orientation. The *kan3* construction is used for the description of a range of situation types in which multiple participants map onto multiple roles of a single predicate. This covers reciprocal situations (*They saw each other*) as well as situations in which people carry out some activity together (*They celebrated together*), or are inherently or properly complementary in action or orientation (*One gives while the other receives*, *One is a clone of the other*). The data are consistent with an analysis of the *kan3* construction as having a single, general meaning applying across this range of situations (as opposed to a polysemy account whereby *kan3* would entail strict reciprocity in some cases and something else in other cases).

The findings are the combined result of two distinct complementary procedures of data collection and analysis: (1) showing prepared, focused stimuli to consultants for description, and eliciting a set of linguistic types which target the description of these tokens (a set of videoclips; see introduction to this volume for a description of these stimuli); (2) searching existing texts (narratives, conversations collected for general grammatical description) for the range of token

situations in which the target types are used (the target type being the particle *kan3*). These are complemented by interviews with native-speaker consultants in a fieldwork setting, probing possible descriptions of possible situations (to test hypotheses suggested by 1 and 2). This combination of multiple methods is the ideal approach to semantic typology (Enfield, Majid & Van Staden 2006: 138– 139). Each method can shed light on the problem which the others may not.[1] In the context of this volume, procedure 1 forms a basis for comparison across languages, and contributes to the formation of hypotheses of language-specific meaning. Procedure 2 and the interviews with consultants target the intensional analysis of language-specific types.

2.   Lao

Lao is a Southwestern Tai language, spoken in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. It is the national language of Laos (Enfield 1999, 2007). It is closely related to Thai (Iwasaki & Horie 2005) in all structural respects. Lao is isolating and analytic in morphological organisation, with no case-marking, and no cross-referencing or verbal agreement. Grammatical relations in a transitive clause are canonically signaled by constituent order (SV/AVO):

(1)   *dèèng3   cuup5/phop1   sèèng3*
       Deng   kiss/meet   Seng
       'Deng kissed/met Seng.'

Widespread zero anaphora (almost any contextually retrievable argument can be ellipsed) along with heavy topic prominence (fronting) and common post-placement of arguments means that surface constituent order varies a lot. This, combined with the fact that there is no morphological marking of grammatical relations (whether on clausal heads or dependents), results in significant context-dependence for mapping of arguments onto semantic roles. These morphosyn-tactic features are highly characteristic of languages of the immediate mainland South East Asia area (Enfield 2005).

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1.   The methodological critique leveled at an earlier draft of this chapter in an otherwise use-ful article by Wierzbicka (2009: 162–4) misrepresents my view (and misquotes it; the draft was not final), implying that I and colleagues privilege 'objectivist' and 'neo-behaviourist' stimulus-based elicitation methods, thereby failing to tap into the native concepts under study. This is baffling, as I am at pains in this chapter to stress the opposite, namely that while stimulus-based techniques are a useful comparative tool, they alone are not sufficient for semantic analysis (the 'Nijmegen School' has never proposed otherwise), hence my heavy reliance on non-elicited examples, and my attention to methodological limitations (see Sections 3.3.4 and 3.4).

3.   'Reciprocal' marking with *kan3*

The key resource in Lao for describing the kinds of situations included under the reciprocal rubric is the particle *kan3*.[2] I refer to it as a collaborative marker (glossed COLL), since its meaning is more general than 'reciprocal'. This is an independent word and does not belong in a larger form class. It appears in an object slot, typically immediately after a verb (though there are some occasions in which it may appear after a noun, for example when the noun is incorporated; cf. Examples (5), (22), below).

   Verbs with inherently reciprocal meanings require explicit marking using *kan3*. Thus, while English has reciprocal readings of objectless strings like *John and Mary met (Ø) at the park* and *They kissed (Ø)*, these zero objects in Lao are taken to be contextually retrievable, tracked arguments. Example (2) is interpreted as having an ellipsed object argument whose referent is not (included in) the plural subject *khacaw4*:

(2)   *khacaw4   cuup5/phop1*
       3PL.P   kiss/meet
       'They kissed/met him/her/them.' (NOT: 'They kissed/met each other.')

For the reciprocal reading, *kan3* is required:

(3)   *khacaw4   cuup5/phop1   kan3*
       3PL.P   kiss/meet   COLL
       'They kissed/met each other.'

The marker *kan3* conveys a general idea that a predicate is true of multiple individuals 'together', covering not only actions done *to* each other but also those done *with* each other, and even entirely asymmetrical relations (where one of the participants does not correspond to the actor role of the verb at all), as long as the people involved are consensually or otherwise rightfully playing their part in the activity or state of affairs as a whole.

   There are two main types of *kan3* construction, which I shall call Type 1 and Type 2.

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2.   There is a complex variant *sùng1 kan3 lèq1 kan3*, made up of *sùng1* a relative marker 'which', and two instances of the reciprocal marker *kan3*, in coordination marked by *lèq1* 'and' (see Example (46) in this chapter). It is a stylistically high form of expression, suitable for writing and for more formal speech such as in traditional narratives. There is a homonym, the verb *kan3* 'hold back, constrain, resist, block'. In the closely related language Thai, there is an 'intimate' third person pronoun *kan3* (presumably cognate).

3.1   Type 1 *kan3* construction: 'A and B V *kan3*'

The most common type of *kan3* construction involves (a) a single subject argument whose meaning is plural (either inherently plural like the plural pronoun *khacaw4* in Example (3), or a compound of more than one noun conjoined by *kap2* 'with/and' as in Example (4)), (b) a main verb, and (c) *kan3* in postverbal position:

(4) *dèèng3   kap2   sèèng3   hên3/vaw4/tii3/khaa5   kan3*
     Deng   with   Seng   see/speak/hit/kill   COLL
     'Deng and Seng saw/spoke-to/hit/killed each other.'

If an incorporated object of the verb is expressed (usually a body part such as *naa5* 'face' in the following example, see also Example (22), below),[3] it comes in the immediate postverbal slot, with *kan3* in the main object slot:

(5) *dèèng3   kap2   sèèng3   hên3   naa5   kan3*
     Deng   with   Seng   see   face   COLL
     'Deng and Seng saw each other's faces.'

Of the four example verbs shown in the Type 1 construction in (4), *vaw4* 'speak' is intransitive and does not allow another human participant as a direct complement in a transitive construction (cf. (1), above):

(6) *dèèng3   hên3/khaa5/tii3   sèèng3*
     Deng   see/kill/hit   Seng
     'Deng saw/killed/hit Seng.'

(7) **dèèng3   vaw4   sèèng3*
     Deng   speak   Seng
     'Deng spoke Seng.'

For *vaw4* 'speak' in a regular two-place expression, the second argument is marked by *kap2* 'with':

(8) *dèèng3   vaw4   kap2   sèèng3*
     Deng   speak   with   Seng
     'Deng spoke with Seng.'

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3. On the status of the post verbal body part term as incorporated and thus distinct from a regular, full object noun phrase, see Enfield (2006: 195, 2007: 356ff).

3.2   Type 2 *kan3* construction: 'A V *kan3* with B'

A second type of *kan3* construction features separation of otherwise conjoined subject arguments, where the second of the two – marked by *kap2* 'with/and', as in the subject of Example (4), above – is moved into a postposed, peripheral position. The key difference between the two types of *kan3* construction is the separation of the noun phrase conjuncts. The verb remains marked by *kan3*:

(9)   *dèèng3   vaw4/tii3   kan3   kap2   sèèng3*
      Deng   speak/hit   COLL   with   Seng
      'Deng spoke-to/fought each other with Seng.'

(10)   **dèèng3   hên3/khaa5   kan3   kap2   sèèng3*
      Deng   see/kill   COLL   with   Seng
      'Deng saw/killed each other with Seng.'

Most discussion in this chapter concerns the more common Type 1 construction. The Type 2 construction is treated separately, in Section 3.4, below. It is more restricted in scope, partly because it does not allow most transitive verbs. Those verbs that may occur in the Type 2 construction can all also occur in the Type 1 (compare *vaw4* 'speak' and *tii3* 'hit, fight (with)' in Examples (4) and (9)). More significantly, the alternation between the two constructions is associated with different information structure construals (see Section 3.4, below).

3.3   Semantic range of the Type 1 *kan3* construction

The particle *kan3* has a strikingly wide range of use over situation types. This is revealed both by observation of its range of occurrence in natural texts, and by its very liberal use across video stimulus materials developed for the comparative field research documented in this volume. As the chapters of this volume show, it is typical for a grammatical resource which is used to describe a canonical reciprocal situation to also be extended to refer to other types of situation which are not literally reciprocal in a strong sense, but which relax certain defining components (cf. Langendoen 1978, Dalrymple et al. 1998, introduction to this volume). For the purpose of organising the Lao data in this section, I use the following informal categories of situation type associated with the use of *kan3*:

(11)   a.   Strict reciprocal (e.g. *They hugged each other, They gave each other diamonds*): where for some multiple of participants, *all* map onto *both* actor and undergoer roles of the predicate (with some logical variations depending on quantitative and temporal relations between multiplied events, etc.).

b. Loose reciprocal (e.g. *The dogs ate each other, The plates were stacked on top of each other*): where for some multiple of participants, multiple participants map onto the actor role and multiple participants map onto the undergoer role, but strict reciprocity does not apply.

c. Collective (e.g. *They celebrated together, They ate dinner together*): where for some multiple of participants, all map onto the same role of the predicate.

d. Complementary (yet asymmetric) (e.g. *She gave him a watch*, *One of them is a clone of the other*): where for some multiple of participants, some participant maps onto one role, and the other maps onto a complementary role. The respective roles are not the same, but they properly complement each other to make the situation complete.

In the rest of this section, I describe the range of application of the Type 1 *kan3* construction (for the more restricted Type 2 *kan3* construction, and the reciprocal mirror construction, see Section 3.4 and Section 4.2, below).

To give an idea of how surprisingly broad the extension of *kan3* is, in three speakers' descriptions of the full set of 64 reciprocal stimulus clips (Evans et al. 2004), there was only one clip whose target situation was unanimously described without using *kan3*. In this clip (#60), three people who are sitting side by side watch a fourth person walk by. For only a few other clips did one or more speakers omit *kan3* from the description. For example, in describing a clip in which one actor walks along and bumps into another, one speaker omitted *kan3*. The others described it as 'people bumping into each other' (although they acknowledged that only one actor bumps into the other; i.e., they would not break it down into two events, A bumped B and B bumped A). Most clips in the full stimulus set were spontaneously coded by all three speakers using a Type 1 *kan3* construction.

3.3.1 *Strict reciprocal*

The *kan3* marker may be used for describing situations which are strictly reciprocal, in the sense defined in (11a), above. Here are two text examples:[4]

(12) *qaw3 hua3 laan4 son2 kan3*
     take   head bald butt COLL
     '(They'd) butt each other with (their) bald heads.'

(13) *jaan4 pajø   phop1 kan3 kòòn1*
     afraid DIR.ABL meet COLL before
     '(We're) afraid (they'll) meet each other before (the appointed time).'

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4. These cases are types of multi-verb constructions (Enfield 2007: 337ff), which act effectively like single verbs for the purposes of the syntax of *kan3* – that is, *kan3* is placed in the object slot of the whole verb complex.

Kan3 is also applicable where the reciprocated actions are separated in time. The following text example refers to two schools whose students would occasionally make visits to the other school – that is, at one time, students of School A would visit School B, at another time, students of School B would visit School A:

(14) *nakø-hian2   tòò1   nakø-hian2   naø   pajø   jaam3 kan3*
       CT.AGT-study connect CT.AGT-study TOP.PERIPH DIR.ABL visit   COLL
       'Student to student, (they'd) go (and) visit each other.'

Verbs of interpersonal communication and social relations are expressed using *kan3*, as in the following text examples:

(15) *ngùk1   hua3   saj1   kan3   lèkaø   lèèw4*
       toss.head   head   put   COLL   C.LNK   finish
       '(We'd) toss our heads at/towards each other, and that'd be it.'

(16) *tèè1   vaa1   mii2   ñang3   kaø   lom2*
       but   COMP   there.is INDEF.INAN T.LNK talk
       kan3   paj3   daj4   juu1
       COLL   go   can   FAC.WEAK
       'But whatever the (problems), (we) could talk (to) each other (about them).'

(17) *man2   mak1   duu3-thuuk5   kan3   lùang1   saa3sanaa3*
       3.B   tend   look.down.on COLL   concerning religion
       'They tend to look down on each other concerning religion.'

(18) *hêt1   siaw1   kan3*
       make   best.friend COLL
       '(We) became best friends (with) each other.'

Verbs of exchange encode a reciprocation of transfer. If *She and John exchanged diamonds*, then she transferred diamonds to John and John transferred diamonds to her.[5] Events of this kind of reciprocal exchange such as the compound *lèèk4-pian1* in the following example, are expressed using *kan3*:

(19) *khaa5   maa2   lèkaø   maø   lèèk4- pian1   kan3*
       kill   come   C.LNK   DIR.ALL   exchange-change   COLL
       '(We'd) kill (the cattle) and then (we and the other villagers would) exchange (the food) with each other.'

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5.   Verbs of exchange are therefore distinct from verbs of transfer such as *haj5* 'give' in Example (40), below, which encode a one-way event. If *She gave John diamonds*, only she corresponds to the actor role of the predicate 'give': Unlike in *They exchanged diamonds*, it doesn't mean that John gave her diamonds in return.

3.3.2 *Loose reciprocal*

Events which are loosely reciprocal in the sense defined in (11b), above, are readily described with *kan3*, as in these two examples from texts:

(20) *phuak4   daj3   kaø   hum4   kan3   qaw3   vaj4   bòø   fang2*
     group   INDEF   T.LNK   cover   COLL   take   keep   NEG   listen
     'They were all on top of each other, unrestrainable.'

(21) *bòòk5   haj5   huu4   kan3   thua1   thang2   mùang2*
     tell   give   know   COLL   all   whole   city
     '(They) told each other all across the city....'

The following example (overheard in context by the author) was shouted by an adult to a group of children playing boisterously with long sharp sticks. The speaker warns that someone could get their eye pierced. Despite the asymmetry of the situation described, *kan3* is used. The speaker is not saying that A will pierce B's eye *and* B will pierce A's eye. It doesn't matter which of the multiple participants would be actor and which would be undergoer, it could be any of them:

(22) *lavang2   suat5   taa3   kan3   dee4*
     watch.out   pierce   eye   COLL   FAC.ONRCD
     'Watch out for piercing each other's eyes, y'hear!'

A chaining type reciprocal relation (cf. *They followed each other in to the room*) may also be described by *kan3*:

(23) *saam3   sop2   lian2   kan3*
     three   corpse   be.in.a.row   COLL
     '(I saw) three corpses (lying) in a row.'

In a sub-category of this type, the subject is a singular noun, and the use of *kan3* coerces a plural reading of the subject participant, where multiple *parts* of the participant are in loose reciprocal relationship:

(24) *sùak4   kòòng3   kan3*
     string   heaped   COLL
     'The string is heaped on itself.' (From a director-matcher task, describing a mess of twine)

3.3.3 *Collective*

Kan3 may convey the sense that each participant performs the denoted action or situational role in the same way, quite distinct from any sense of reciprocity (as per (11c), above):

(25) *khacaw4   salòòng3   kan3*
3PL.P   celebrate   COLL
'They celebrated (together).' (overheard by author)

(26) *phanan2   kan3   kaø   lêkø-lêk1   nòjø-nòòj4*
gamble   COLL   T.LNK   RDP.A-little   RDP.A-small
'(They) gamble (with each other) a little here and there.'

(27) *pan3   kan3   kin3*
divide   COLL   eat
'(They) divide (the goat meat amongst each other) to eat.'
(overheard by author)

(28) *hoom2   ngen2   kan3   phuu5   lêkø-lêk1   nòjø-nòòj4*
assemble   money   COLL   person   RDP.A-little   RDP.A-small
'(They'd) pool their money together, a little each.'

Similarly, *kan3* marks togetherness in spatial orientation:

(29) *kaj1   phùùn4-mùang2   man2   ñèè5   kan3   kaø   daj4*
chicken   traditional   3.B   stuff   COLL   T.LNK   can
'Free range chickens, it's okay for them to be stuffed in together
(in their pens).'

(30) *mii2   thahaan3   laaw2   thahaan3   falang1   pon3   kan3*
there.is   soldier   Lao   soldier   French   mix   COLL
'There were Lao soldiers (and) French soldiers mixed together.'

(31) *taw4-hoom2   kan3*
converge-assemble   COLL
'to assemble (together)'

(32) *phuak4   qaaj4   pòk2   qaaj4   ñang3   nang1   kan3*
group   eBr   Pok   eBr   INDEF   sit   COLL
'(Brother) Pok and company sat together.'

Relatedly, a verb marked by *kan3* can serve as an adverbial adjunct referring to actions or qualities being somehow the same, done equally, at the same time, or together:

(33) *man2   ñòòn4   man2   khaj1   phòòm4   kan3*
3.B   because   3.B   lay.eggs   be.simultaneous   COLL
'It's because they lay eggs at the same time.'

(34) *haj5   dùng3   khêng1   samee3   kan3*
give   pull   be.tight   be.equal   COLL
'Pull (the ropes) equally tight.'

Similar adverbial expressions with *kan3* can appear in preverbal position:[6]

(35) *phaa2   kan3   khùn5*
      lead.along COLL   ascend
      '(They) went up (the bank) together.' (lit. 'led each other up')

(36) *khaw3 ñaat4 kan3   kin3   khaw5*
      3PL.B snatch COLL   eat   rice
      'They fought with each other to eat the meal.'

In the next examples, *kan3* denotes a kind of general applicability of the predicate's meaning across a collective of individuals:

(37) *bòø   phòò2   kan3   kin3*
      NEG   be.enough   COLL   eat
      '(It's) not enough (for everyone) to eat.'

(38) *khòòng3 man2 niñom2   kan3   nèèw2   nan4 dêj2*
      owing.to 3.B   be.popular COLL   manner   DEM   FAC.NEWS
      'Since that sort of thing was popular (with everyone), you know.'

(39) *kaan3 nap1 khanèèn2 caø nap1   kan3   bèèp5   nan4*
      NMLZ   count score   IRR count COLL   manner   DEM
      '(In the Lao sport *katòò*), regarding the counting of scores, (everyone)
      counts like that.'

3.3.4 *Complementary (yet asymmetric)*

So far we have encountered descriptions of situations in which multiple participants (or some coerced equivalent, such as the multiple *parts* of a single participant; Example (24), above) are participating in the same way. By contrast, in the next class of cases, *kan3* describes situations in which participants contribute in unalike yet complementary ways (as per (11d), above). Consider this description of a simple transfer scene: a videoclip in which one actor gives another actor a watch:

(40) *qaw3   moong2 haj5   kan3*
      take   watch   give   COLL
      '(They're) giving "each other" a watch.'

Only one actor gives. The other only receives. While the receiver does in a sense do something which rightfully contributes to the event as a whole (i.e., receive the gift), the two participants play distinct roles with respect to the predicate *haj5*

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6. These cases are not distinct *kan3* constructions, but incorporate verb+*kan3* units in adverbial functions; see Enfield (2007: 477).

'give'. What this *kan3*-marked description of an unequivocally asymmetrical event seems to have in common with the categories we have examined so far is that it conveys the idea that the participants are taking part together in the event. Giving is an event type which lends itself well to this construal, since there is a rightful complementary action: receiving.

While the responses to video stimuli clearly show that *kan3* may unproblematically mark events of non-reciprocated giving, this kind of response is more common in the stimulus descriptions than in natural texts. Perhaps the decontextualised nature of the watch-giving scene (the videoclip is only a few seconds long) makes the event look like it is part of a game the actors are playing. If informants surmise that there is no purpose to the depicted act of giving other than its being acted out for the camera, or more importantly that this moment of action is not embedded in a trajectory of narrative action, perhaps it doesn't matter who actually gave and who received (cf. Example (22), above). One way of putting it is that together the two actors engage in a joint activity of giving a watch – the 'together' notion licensing a *kan3* construction in describing the videoclip.

Following are examples from spontaneous language use where *kan3* is used in description of clips in which a true reciprocal meaning is clearly not intended, nor is the idea that the participants each perform the same action or contribute to the situation in the same way. Rather, in these cases, they 'together' take part in a situation defined by the action of a single participant, where the other's contribution is complementary.

Here is an example from a description of an accident on a wide country road in which a truck flattens a motorcycle (and the motorcycle does not flatten the truck in any sense):

(41) *khaw3 kaø   ñang2 pajø   jiap5   kan3   daj4*
     3PL.B T.LNK still   DIR.ABL flatten COLL   can
     '(The road was 15 metres wide, and) they were still able to flatten each other.'

Next, the single defining action is telling a story. This activity is rightfully complemented by a consenting listening audience:

(42) *haw2 caø   ñok1 qaw3 nithaan2 siang2-miang5   maø   law1 kan3*
     1.FA   IRR   raise take   tale   Siang Miang   DIR.ALL   tell   COLL
     'I'm going to offer the story of Siang Miang to tell "each other".'

The next example (overheard by the author) describes a situation in which a movie actor is extracting the someone's sore tooth with pliers, and the two are rolling around, tussling. While the action is distinctly asymmetrical, the tooth-pulling activity rightfully involves a consenting jaw:

(43) *lok1*   *khèèw5* *kan3*
     pull.out   tooth   COLL
     '(They're) pulling each other's teeth out.'

One evening in Vientiane, I telephoned B's house, trying to locate a friend A, who was visiting the city, and who I knew was dining with B that evening. A third person answered the phone. I asked for A, and was told he had already left. Then I asked for B, and was told this:

(44) *khacaw4 paj3 song1*   *kan3*
     3PL.P   go   send.home COLL
     'They're sending "each other" home.'

While the predicated action *song1* 'to send somebody (home)' is clearly asymmetrical – only one sends the other home – the two are equally collaborating in the overall event.

In the next example, a Lao speaker was watching a movie in which one of the characters had been cloned. Having missed the beginning of the film, and puzzled for a while as to why the same actor was playing two characters on the screen at the same time, the speaker realised what was going on and said:

(45) *qoo4* *khacaw4* *khloon2*   *kan3*
     INTJ   3PL.P   to.clone   COLL
     'Oh, they're clones of each other.'

One is the real character, the other is the clone. They are not literally clones of each other. Yet they are in a rightfully complementary relationship. Note that this asymmetrical situation is also readily described with a reciprocal marker in English, as shown in the translation of (45).

Finally, a cow is accosted by a tiger, and agrees for the tiger to eat it, but asks that it first be allowed to go home and bid farewell to its calf. Its resignation to the inevitability of being eaten is accompanied with this remark:

(46) *sùa3* *kap2* *ngua2* *man2* *pên3* *qaahaan3* *sùng1* *kan3*   *lèq1* *kan3*
     tiger   with cow   3.B   COP food   REL   COLL   and   COLL
     'The tiger and the cow are food for each other.'

The relation predicated here is portrayed as rightful, the way of the world – the cow and the tiger are in a symbiotic relationship defined by the cow's being food for the tiger. In a sense, they each play an equal part.

3.4   Type 2 *kan3* construction, and its information structure properties

The Type 2 *kan3* construction is less common in texts than Type 1, and significantly, was never once produced as a description of the video stimulus materials (despite *kan3* being used in describing all but one of the 64 stimulus videoclips). This appears to be due to an information structure difference between the constructions. In the Type 1 construction, the relevant participants are packaged into a single noun phrase either as an inherently plural noun or pronoun (including coerced plurals such as the multiple-parts reading of 'string' in Example (24), above), or a conjunct noun phrase. Irrespective of internal complexity of the subject argument, in the Type 1 *kan3* construction the members of this set of participants are expressed as a single information-structural unit. Members of the set therefore share a single discourse status (focused/presupposed, given/new, topical, etc). This type of information packaging is fitting for description of the stimulus videoclips, which run for just a few seconds, and which are devoid of any contextually framing trajectory or narrative action. Each clip is designed such that nothing in the situation, beyond any inherent asymmetry of respective roles in the behaviour taking place, encourages differential treatment of the participants with respect to discourse-level information structure. The reason the stimulus clips never elicited the Type 2 construction is because the Type 2 construction codes the participants in separate noun phrases and thereby construes the participants as distinct from each other in information status terms (e.g. with respect to reference-tracking).

In the text examples of the Type 2 *kan3* construction, half were in descriptions of events of interpersonal communication:

(47) *phit2   kan3 jaang1 ñaj1 kap2   cêk2*
       disagree COLL way   big   with   Chinaman
       '(He) disagreed in a big way with the Chinaman.'

(48) *haw2 kaø   vaw4 kan3 kap2   phòò1-baan4*
       1.FA T.LNK speak COLL with   father-village
       'I spoke with the village chief.'

Other examples of the Type 2 *kan3* construction involved *khùù2* 'to be like', expressing the notion of "like", "same as":

(49) *còq2   ngaa2 saj1 khùù2 kan3 kap2   tum4-paa3-khaaw3*
       insert tusk   put   be.like COLL with   "white fish basket trap"
       'Tusks are inserted (in this type of trap) like (in a) "white fish basket trap".'
       (From a video-recorded interview about fish traps.)

(50) *suung3 khùù2 kan3 kap2   naaj2*
       tall   be.like COLL   with   boss
       '(She's) tall like (her) boss.'

In each case, the subject (i.e. the noun phrase that appears before the verb) is a distinct, tracked participant in the discourse. Its reference is accessible, old, topical information relative to the other participant.

To summarise, there is one essential difference between the Type 1 and Type 2 *kan3* constructions: Type 1 refers to the multiple participants with a single, continuous noun phrase, while Type 2 splits them up. In this way, Type 1 treats the participants as a single unit for information structure purposes (e.g. focus, reference-tracking), while Type 2 treats them as distinct units. The need for this information-structural distinctness arises naturally in discourse, where a distinct narrative trajectory can impose differential values for otherwise equivalently involved entities.

4.   Ways to express strict reciprocity in Lao

The previous section established that the *kan3* construction does not entail reciprocity. Its meaning is more general, covering a broader range of situations, yet compatible with reciprocal situations. Reciprocal situations are aptly described by the *kan3* construction because they fit the general description of being situations in which multiple participants map onto multiple roles (and mostly, when each argument maps onto the actor role of the predicate, though not necessarily onto an undergoer role). When it is necessary to be more specific and unequivocally depict the situation as strictly reciprocal there are also a couple of ways to do this in Lao. Both ways involve the combination of a *kan3* construction with another type of construction.

4.1   The *suu1 NP suu1 VP* construction

The following text example illustrates the *suu1 NP suu1 VP* construction, meaning 'Each and every NP VP-ed':

(51) *suu1   khon2   suu1   maw2*
     each   person   each   intoxicated
     'Each and every person was drunk.'

(52) *suu1   hùan2   suu1   mii2   nam4-saang5*
     each   house   each   have   water-well
     'Each and every house has a water well.'

This construction can combine with the Type 1 *kan3* construction to unequivocally express strictly reciprocal situations. Thus, a videoclip in which two actors hug each other (A hugs B and B hugs A; #7) can be described with a simple Type 1

kan3 construction (*kòòt5 kan3* 'hug COLL'), and can also be combined with the *suu1 NP suu1 VP* construction:

(53) *suu1* *khon2* *suu1* *kòòt5* *kan3*
      each   person   each   hug   COLL
      'Each person hugged each other.'

The meaning of the combination of these constructions, illustrated in (53), is that for the set of actors, each acts upon the other in the way specified in the predicate. That is, each participant maps onto *both* the actor and undergoer roles of the predicate (regardless of whether the events are simultaneous or sequential). Thus, while examples like a videoclip in which A hugs B but B doesn't hug A may be described with a simple *kan3* expression (i.e. *kòòt5 kan3* "hug COLL"), the combined expression with *suu1* in (53) would be inapplicable. The *kan3*-plus-*suu1* construction cannot be used for any of the many less-than-strictly-reciprocal situations to which *kan3* alone may readily apply (see Sections 3.3.2–3.3.4, above).[7]

4.2   The reciprocal mirror construction: 'I V_α you, you V_α me'

In describing the reciprocal video stimulus clips, speakers would occasionally add to a simple *kan3* construction an explicit spelling-out of the reciprocal relation, using 1st and 2nd person pronouns (though where these do not necessarily refer to the speech-act participants). Here is a description of a videoclip (#3) in which A hits B and B hits A (sequentiality or simultaneity is irrelevant to the expression's applicability):

(54) *khacaw4* *tii3* *kan3* – *khòòj5* *tii3* *caw4* *caw4* *tii3* *khòòj5*
      3PL.P   hit   COLL   1SG.P   hit   2SG.P   2SG.P   hit   1SG.P
      'They hit each other – I hit you, you hit me.'

As noted already, some clips which are not strictly reciprocal can nevertheless be described using a *kan3* construction, as in the following description of an asymmetrical scene (#51) in which one actor is delousing the hair of another:

(55) *khacaw4* *haa3* *haw3* *haj5* *kan3*
      3PL.P   seek   louse   give   COLL
      'They're seeking lice for each other.'

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7. To be clear, it is the *combination* of the *suu1* construction and the *kan3* construction that narrows the reading to strict reciprocity. It is not that the *suu1* construction is used when *kan3* has a more strictly reciprocal meaning, since I have argued that *kan3* is general with respect to symmetry of participation, and is compatible with stricter and looser senses of reciprocity.

If the mirror construction were added here, it could not describe the same event, but would only felicitously describe an event in which A delouses B's hair *and* B delouses A's hair. The next example describes a clip in which each acts upon the other, but it cannot describe a clip in which one participant is passive:

(56) *khacaw4* *haa3* *haw3* *haj5* *kan3*
      3PL.P   seek   louse   give   COLL
      khòòj5 *haa3* *haw3* *haj5* *caw4* *caw4* *haa3* *haw3* *haj5* *khòòj5*
      1SG.P   seek   louse   give   2SG.P   2SG.P   seek   louse   give   1SG.P
      'They're seeking lice for each other – you seek lice for me, I seek lice for you.'

The mirror construction is a dedicated constructional strategy for expressing reciprocal event relations. Its meaning is not derived from simple composition of distinct parts. This is clear from the fact that the pronouns meaning 'I' and 'you' do not refer to speech event participants, as they normally would.

5.   Conclusion

The particle *kan3* is the standard tool for describing reciprocal situations in Lao, but it is not a dedicated marker of reciprocality. Events and situations which may be felicitously described by *kan3* feature a multiplicity of participants in some event, possibly by acting equally upon each other as in strictly reciprocal type events, possibly by doing the same action or being in the same state together (collectively or at the same time), or even just by co-participating in a situation in which the participants are equally committed or rightfully co-participating, despite a distinct asymmetry. These are not separate meanings of *kan3*, rather the meaning of *kan3* is general across these types of situation. When it is necessary to be more specific and encode a situation as strictly reciprocal, Lao speakers can do this by using further resources in combination with a *kan3* construction.

The semantic typology methodology adopted here has featured the complementary data collection tasks of (a) eliciting descriptions of a set of stimuli, a collection of token instantiations of distinct areas of the semantic space under consideration (in this case, situations depicted in short videoclips), and (b) drawing examples of the target forms from corpora of natural language use and discussing what they refer to, complemented by (c) focused consultation with native speakers, exploring the limits of extensional applicability of the descriptive types. It is a two-way street, from token referents to type descriptions *and* from type descriptions to token referents (onomasiology meets semasiology; Geeraerts 1997). The combined approach supplies both an anchor for comparative work and a route to language-specific facts. In the case of the description of

reciprocal events in Lao, the set of videoclip stimuli helped to establish that the meaning of Lao *kan3* has a meaning more general than 'reciprocal', and subsequent consultation of spontaneous texts fleshed out the reach of the particle's broader, naturally occurring distribution. All components of the procedure played a role in discovery of the facts reported.

Abbreviations

The transliteration of Lao used here follows IPA standard except for the following: *e* = schwa; *ê* = high-mid front vowel; *è* = low front vowel; *ò* = low back vowel; *ù* = high back unrounded vowel; *ng* = velar nasal; *ñ* = palatal nasal; *q* = glottal stop. Lexical tone is indicated by syllable-final numeral, as follows: 1 = mid level (33); 2 = high rising (35); 3 = low rising (13); 4 = high falling (51); 5 = low falling (31); ø = unstressed/atonal. Abbreviations are:

1/2/3	1st/2nd/3rd person	INDEF	indefinite pronoun
ABL	ablative	INTJ	interjection
ALL	allative	IRR	irrealis
AGT	agent	NEG	negation
B	bare	NEWS	new information
C.LNK	clause linker	NMLZ	nominaliser
COLL	collaborative	ONRCD	on record
COMP	complementiser	PERIPH	peripheral
COP	copula	RDP	reduplication
CT	class term	P	polite
DEM	demonstrative	PL	plural
DIR	directional particle	REL	relativiser
eBr	elder brother	SG	singular
FA	familiar	T.LNK	topic linker
FAC	factive particle	TOP	topic
FOC	focus	WEAK	weakening position

Acknowledgements

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