Tense-Aspect Markers in Modern Cambodian and their Interaction: Grammatical Category Interactions Revisited

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1. Preliminary remarks

On the face of it, the issue of grammatical category interactions seems to be irrelevant for the isolating languages of the Indochina Schprachbund, including Modern Cambodian as one of its typical representatives. A widely spread opinion, shared by the present authors, is that languages like Cambodian lack traditionally recognized grammatical categories since they lack, for example, adverbal or adnominal markers whose omission would render utterances grammatically infelicitous. Moreover, where these languages do express meanings correlative with grammatical meanings found in “European-standard” languages (e.g., via auxiliary words as in mainland languages of the Southeast Asia), these do not build paradigms. For instance, even the availability of specialized future or perfect markers in a given language does not imply that they are opposed, respectively, to the past, to the imperfect, or to unmarked forms with default past or imperfect reading. This said, we shall, however, endeavor to explore here some cases of interaction between the meanings of what most experts in Cambodian believe to be grammatical markers.

This paper builds on the material collected by the authors during their field research backed by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (in 2013) and the Russian Foundation for Humanities (in 2014-2016). Other sources include texts from Cambodian fiction, online periodicals, and, to a lesser degree, the Cambodian National Corpus (http://sealang.net). Examples provided by consultants (or generated by the authors and later elicited from consultants) are marked below with (Cons.). Other examples from Cambodian fiction and periodicals come from the authors’ private card file.

2. The system of aspect-tense markers in Modern Cambodian

Although Cambodian tense and aspect markers have been targeted in many linguistic publications, none of their descriptions seem to be complete or exhaustive, with some markers ignored or treated as lexical, rather than grammatical devices. Proposed below is our own perspective on the system of these markers in Cambodian. Cambodian totally lacks inflectional morphology. Its word-formation processes, fairly productive in its earlier history (in the Old and Middle Khmer periods), have practically stopped, although word-formation affixes, both prefixes and infixes, are still identifiable; for more detail, see [Long Seam 1975], [Elkovov 1977], and [Bisang 2015b: 683–686] among others. Grammatical (voice, tense, aspect, taxis, modal, etc.) meanings are rendered by auxiliary words occupying their relevant structural slots in verb phrases, clauses, or bipredicative constructions. By their major phonological characteristics such as syllable structure and syllable component features (initials, medials, terminals), these auxiliaries fully coincide with respective lexical words and can be likewise represented by single (“strong”) syllables, or by combinations of “strong” and “weak” syllables or of two “strong” syllables, etc.; see, e.g., [Krylov 2014: 111–156].

Considered below, are only markers of tense and aspect meanings. Their occurrence with verbal or serial-verb predicates is always optional and irregular. They are rare in oral speech, and their frequency in written texts, although perceptibly higher, is rather a reflection of authors’ personal preferences.

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Thus a plethora of factors speak against the existence of corresponding grammatical categories (e.g., of aspect or tense) in Cambodian. These include: a) optional occurrence of markers, b) dependence of their use on the speaker’s communicative intent, and c) lack of any semblance of paradigmatic relations between their meanings. Cambodian auxiliaries marking tense and aspect meanings are discussed in 2.1–2.8 below.

2.1. **nuŋ**. We treat **nuŋ** as the irrealis marker. In what follows, “irrealis” is understood as a specific meaning pertaining to the semantic domain of “reality of situations” [Urmanchienova 2004; Plungian 2011: 427]. When using **nuŋ**, the speaker/observer ascribes the situation to a “possible world”, in most cases represented by an unrealized (at the speech moment) situation whose alleged realization is relegated to the future time frame. That is why **nuŋ** typically has future reading (1). It is also commonly found in constructions with modal verbs which impart the sentence a context of potential possibility or irreality (2).  

1 (1) **nuŋ** maok (Cons.)  
1SG IRR come  
‘I’ll come.’  

2 (2) **nuŋ** a: c bamphe: c nʊŋ te: (Cons.)  
3SG NEG can IRR forget girl NEG  
‘He won’t be able to forget her.’

This marker is also common in dependent clauses of posteriority taxis constructions – again, in irreality contexts where the dependent situation is treated as irreal from the main situation’s perspective and either can, or cannot be realized. In such cases, **nuŋ** may be more aptly described as a part of a compound posteriority taxis conjunction, which rather supports the “irreal interpretation” of its underlying meaning:

3 (3) **nuŋ** ca:n sat prauh **nuŋ** daum rɔka: ka: mɪm  
but before IRR tie beast sambar PREP tree wild kapok NARR have  
preːniw maok siːsok2 bo:t sraː bandaw  
visitor come eat1,2 take in alcohol together  
‘But before they tied the sambar to a wild kapok, visitors came to eat and drink together.’

This marker is also fairly frequent in conditional and concessive constructions.

2.2. **baːn** marks the perfect meaning, understood here in terms of [Plungian 2011: 388–389]: The situation, described by the verb with the corresponding marker, has taken place by/preceded the speech/observation moment. Furthermore, the speaker views the consequences of a given situation as essential for understanding the state of affairs at the speech/observation moment [ibid.].

4 (4) baːn dael koat niːw touc nɪŋbaːn twiː riːn aksaː  
time REL 3SG CONT be.little girl PRF go learn letter  
niːw saːlaː koːt poː thiːviːl  
be.situated.in school monastery Pouthiviel  
‘When a little girl, she learnt reading and writing at the Pouthiviel Monastery school.’

For a proper interpretation of (4), which was gleaned from a novel, it is important to know that the heroine could read and write. This was rarely typical of provincial Cambodian girls in the first half of the 20th century, so the information is crucial for understanding the plot: in particular, this means that the girl could exchange letters with her beloved. It was, apparently, for this reason that the author chose to mark the corresponding verb with **baːn**.

The source of the following example is a modern rendition of a fairytale where a character attempts to replicate the sequence of steps accomplished earlier by the central figure. Since the reader is already familiar with the chain of events, it is presented in a truncated version to quickly bring the story to its dramatic end. The storyteller achieves this by putting **baːn** before every verb/serial construction:

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2 This marker gets various interpretations in literature. Most researchers define it as a future marker [Elovkov 2004: 8; Gorganiev 1966: 152–153, Haiman 2011: 263; Thon Thin 2011: 127–128; Bisang 2015b: 706] or, sometimes, as an unrealized action marker [Spatari 1990; Elovkov 2004: 10]. Notably, Enfield treats the Lao markers ca’ and si’, fully matching the Cambodian **nuŋ** in both function and meaning, as irrealis markers that often admit future reading [Enfield 2007: 214–216]. As mentioned earlier, we treat the meaning of the Cambodian **nuŋ** along the same line.

3 See, however, a different treatment of similar examples in [Elovkov 2004: 10], where **nuŋ** is classified (at least, on several occasions) as a formal connector in constructions with predicate arguments.
imitating him, went to ax down the forest for a kitchen garden.

In (6), ba:n marks an irreal situation: the speaker describes a future outcome that is only possible on the condition that the sambar comes free if his vis-a-vis does take pity on him and cuts down the snare. What is noteworthy here is the absence of the irrealis marker (although ba:n is used), the author apparently finding it redundant in a situation that is “surreal” enough as it is. One might assume in such cases that that “part of the meaning” of ba:n which is involved in “flagging” the importance of the marked situation for further developments (see above) is foregrounded. Albeit infrequent, similar examples can be found in other Cambodian texts as well:

(7) pu:k mae ba:n cnoe:m m:n ci:ɔ1 craun2

‘My parents have a lot of chickens to feed.’

One cannot exclude, of course, that in the last two examples ba:n carries the modal meaning ‘can’, since the prepositive marker ba:n has a postpositive homonym (?), the modal verb ba:n ‘have’. The latter can also be treated as a grammatical habilitive marker. Moreover, both the prepositive and the postpositive ba:n emerged through grammaticalization of the verb ba:n ‘have’ (the modern ba:n results from the monosyllabilization of the Old Khmer amban, a morphological causative of the verb man ‘have”). For a review of the various uses of ba:n in Cambodian, see [Bisang 2105a], and a detailed study of its meanings and functions, including in the areal setting, is provided in [Enfield 2003] and [Haiman 2011].

2.3. Hauj is the iamatitive marker. The iamatitive combines two meanings: one is the perfect, and the other is that rendered in many languages by lexical instruments like the Russian uže or the English already [Olsson 2013]. Unlike both markers considered in 2.1 and 2.2 above, hauj is found after the verb and can be separated from it by noun phrases (adjuncts with attributes). In addition, hauj can serve to delimit the right-hand boundary of the utterance. The affinity between the iamatitive and the perfect can explain why hauj and ba:n ‘perfect’ frequently occur together in texts (for more detail, see 3. below).

(8) an chup khanj nuyj kɔat hauj

1SG stop be.angry PREP 3SG IAM

4 One can find widely varying interpretations of ba:n in literature. D. Elovkov believes that ba:n “combines the meanings of: transition between two states; completion of action; result of action; possibility of action; and logical emphasis on the fact of an action or state”, with the “basic”, invariant meaning of ba:n being “logical emphasis on the fact of action” [Elovkov 2004: 37-38]. We subscribe to this definition of ba:n as the most integrated one. W. Bisang also notes the varying contextual readings of ba:n [Bisang 215a]. Other researchers treat ba:n as the marker of: the perfective aspect [Gorgoniev 1966: 146-148]; the past tense [Than Thin 2011: 123–125]; the inchoative [Haiman 2011: 345-347]; or the perfect [Spatari 1990].
'I have already stopped being angry with him.'

(9) 'ou! prapɔn khəm slap hauj
INTRJ wife 1SG die IAM

‘Ah! My wife has died.’

Similarly to ba:n, hauj is commonly used where the situation already took place before the speech/observation moment. The difference, however, is that hauj, unlike ba:n, does not imply any connection with the posterior developments. Also, hauj seems to convey a stronger emphasis on the completed status of the situation.3

Optional variants of hauj are mostly characteristic of the written speech: ruac hauj, ruac srec hauj, sap hauj;6

(10) a:le:w phdam 10:k nuh ruac hauj2 ka: dau coul tw knəŋ
PN advise master that IAM1,2 NARR walk enter go in
phteah con haw con nuh ceːŋ maok
house Chinaman call Chinaman that go.out come

‘Having given the Master that advice, Aleu entered the Chinaman’s house to call him (= to request to come out).’

(11) thvə: jaːŋ naː?: – taːsu:! douc khəm taen niːjij phrap
do method Q fight be.like 1SG ITER speak say
bəj mun mun sap raːŋ hauj
elder.sibling earlier earlier IAM1,2

‘What to do? To fight! As I have already told you many times.’

2.4. Thləap is the experientive marker denoting that the situation took place in the past for an indefinite number of times; e.g., see [Vostrikova 2010]. Historically, thləap goes back to the verb of the same form meaning ‘get used to’, ‘have habit’, which is practically extinct in Modern Cambodian (in contrast to its derivative noun tomləap ‘habit’).7

(12) kraŋ mlih aeŋ thləap jum daoŋ1 saː2 kət teː3 təw4
after.all PN 2SG EXP cry because.of1,2 3SG really3,4

‘After all, Mlih, you, too, had to cry because of him.’

As its extended version, the marker thəap includes the formant tae:

(13) məniː:cap1 phdaum2 samnə dəl neak thləap1 tae4 suː peːl cuːp
PN begin1,2 question REL 3SG EXP3,4 ask time meet
om3 proh5
father’s/mother’s.elder.brother5,6

‘Muni began with the question he would always ask when meeting his uncle.’

Its experiential meaning does not prevent thəap from occurring with adverbials like ‘once’ (14), whereby its prototypical meaning is neutralized and it is actually transformed into a past marker:

(14) oːm thləap kəh mdaːŋ maok hauj meːn1 teː2
younger.sibling EXP make.mistake once come IAM actuallyQ1,2
baːŋ
elder.sibling

‘I have indeed made a mistake once, did not I?’

5 Grammars treat hauj as: a completion marker or a situation-change marker [Elovkov 2004; Bisang 2015]; “the marker of a turning point or qualitative leap in the progression of an action” [Gorgoniev 1966: 155-157]; or a lexical component [Haiman 2011]. Enfield interprets its equivalent in Laotian (leːw) as the perfect marker [Enfield 2007: 200, 206].

6 D. Elovkov proposes a different solution and identifies four completion markers in Cambodian (hauj, ruac, srec, sap) that can combine with each other [Elovkov 2004: 24-29].

7 This marker is defined in literature as: the marker of usual, repeated past action [Elovkov 2004: 19]; the marker of the past in combination with “indefinite reiteration of action” [Gorgoniev 1966: 151-152]; the marker of the habitual past [Bisang 2015b: 366]; the habitual marker [Thon Thin 2011: 175]; or the marker of indefinite quantity of action [Spatari 1990]. Enfield interprets its equivalent in Laotian khəːj (also traceable to a verb with the meaning ‘get used to’) as the experiential perfect marker [Enfield 2007: 200, 245].
2.5. \textit{Kampuy} functions as a progressive marker signaling that the situation is in progress at the speech/observation moment:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textit{niəŋkampuy khɔŋ  khnom}
    
    \begin{tabular}{l}
      \textit{girl} \textit{PROGR} be.\textit{angry} \textit{1SG}
    \end{tabular}
    
    ‘She is angry with me.’
  
  \item \textit{peːl nʊh koat kampuy \textbf{chɔː} doh liəŋ nsw pra lh snaeŋ}
    
    Time that 3SG \textit{PROGR} stand clean wash be.\textit{placed.in} \textit{space} \textit{horn}
    
    \textit{krabɛj}
    
    buffalo
    
    ‘He was standing near the buffalo then (lit. ‘between the buffalo’s horns’), washing it.’
  
  \item \textit{puː  mak kampuy, tae\textsubscript{2} thvː həp}
    
    unclePN \textit{PROGR\textsubscript{1,2}} make box
    
    ‘Uncle Mok is making a box.’
\end{enumerate}

2.6. The continuative meaning can be explicated as follows: \textit{although the situation is in progress at the speech/observation moment, it is essential for the speaker that it was also taking place prior to the speech/observation moment}. This meaning can be expressed in Cambodian in a number of ways:

1) By means of the preverbal marker \textit{nsw} (18), traced back to the verb ‘be located in’ which is still current and fairly frequent in Modern Cambodian. As its extended version, the marker \textit{nsw} includes the formant \textit{tae} (19).

2) By means of the distant postverbal continuative marker \textit{nsw lauj} used in negative constructions (20).

3) By simultaneous use of both the preverbal and the postverbal continuative markers as components of a bracket construction: \textit{nsw(tae)} \textit{... nsw lauj} (21), (22).\footnote{A similar treatment of this marker is also found in [Haiman 2011: 267].}

\begin{enumerate}
  \item \textit{neak nsw srəlaiŋ niəŋnəh}
    
    3SG CONT love girl very
    
    ‘He continued to love her.’
  
  \item \textit{viəjoː nsw, tae\textsubscript{2} bək bək thinŋ douŋ slək tərbaek}
    
    wind CONT\textsubscript{1,2} blow hit palm.branch coco leave guava
    
    ‘The wind was still swaying coco branches and guava leaves.’
  
  \item \textit{thmaːw nih loːk əwpuk ɲuːm\textsubscript{1} təə\textsubscript{2} samraːn loːk nsw, lauj\textsubscript{1} tɛː}
    
    time this master father not.yet\textsubscript{1,2} rest sleep CONT\textsubscript{3,4} NEG
    
    ‘Father was not asleep yet at the time.’
  
  \item \textit{pɛːl nsw chɔːː nsw, lauj\textsubscript{2}}
    
    PN CONT.stand CONT\textsubscript{1,2}
    
    ‘Peu was still standing.’
  
  \item \textit{sambɔːt nsw, tae\textsubscript{2} miəŋ klin kraːoup cəap nsw, lauj\textsubscript{4}}
    
    letter CONT\textsubscript{1,2} have smell scent strong CONT\textsubscript{3,4}
    
    ‘The letter still had a strong smell of scents.’
\end{enumerate}

\footnote{D. Elovkov treats \textit{nsw} (\textit{tae}) as a lexical unit (the verb ‘be, be located’), and \textit{nsw lauj}, as a continuative marker [Elovkov 2004: 23] that is also found with the \textit{nsw} (\textit{tae}) component. Yu. Gorgoniev defines \textit{nsw} (\textit{tae}) as a “continuative aspect” marker [Gorgoniev 1966: 145]. In [Bisang 2015b: 706], it is described as an uncompleted action marker (‘still, emphasis of incomple- tion (live, be at)’). N. Enfield, speaking of the identical Laotian marker \textit{naj}, only provides its lexical translation (‘still’), but treats it expressly as an aspectual uncompleted-action marker while describing its postverbal cognate \textit{yu}: as a continuative marker [Enfield 2007: 174].}
2.7. *Lauj* is an incontiguous marker used at the end of the sentence where it can only be followed by the final component of a “bracket” negator. Specifically, it occurs exclusively in negative constructions as opposed to the continuative marker *nrw lauj* (above) which can be found in non-negative sentences as well; see (21) и (22). *Lauj* marks “continuous absence” of the corresponding situation and signals that ‘situation p did/does/will not take place for a period of time’ (cf. in this connection the behavior of *lauj* as a part of the continuative marker in (23) – (25)). Thus in (23), *lauj* together with the negator ‘never’ signals that the situation did not take place prior to/at the speech moment. In (24) the speaker emphasizes that the situation is not taking/will not take place either at the speech moment, or in the future. In (25) the speaker treats the situation as totally impossible – in the past, present, or future. In the absence of a more pertinent designation for this marker, we shall gloss it after G. Himan as AT.ALL.10 *Lauj* was first attested in this auxiliary function as early as in Old Khmer texts (9th Century A.D); see (26), an example gleaned from a 13th Century inscription at the temple complex of Banteay Srei.

(23) klyom mun1 dael2 khv:jvio lauj (Gorgoniev 1984: 799)

1SG never1,2 see 3SG AT.ALL

‘I have never seen him.’

(24) neak pra:kat knoŋ ɕot nah th: neak mun a:c phdal sophea’mɲpl

3SG be.sure in soul very that 3SG NEG can bring happiness

aʊŋ nɲɔŋ bə:n lauj

BENEF girl can AT.ALL

‘At heart, he was absolutely sure that he would not be able to make her happy.’

(25) sralaŋ mnun1 mneak mun1 dael2 kut th: caŋ mion neak

love person one.CLF never1,2 think that want have person

thməj lauj

new AT.ALL

‘When one loves someone, one does not want anyone else.’

(26) cämpa srom sanstac’ ayat ‘anak mvəy ta ‘æc chpaŋ ley (K.227:22)

Chams surround king NEG person one ATTR can fight AT.ALL

‘The Chams surrounded the king, and no one could fight (for him).’

2.8. A peculiar feature of the tense-aspect system in Cambodian is a large number of preverbal auxiliaries with widely varying meanings, all of which, despite semantic differences, commonly show involvement with the aspectual-temporal domain. Sometimes their meanings overlap with those of verbal plurality (see [Marchenko 2017]) or with modality. They normally include the abovementioned formant *tae* (or, less frequently, *cia*): *tya tae* ‘just a moment before’, *kran tae* ‘just’, *str: tae (=vih tae)* ‘barely’, *taŋ tae* ‘often’, *ceh tae (=kut tae)’ ‘constantly’, *creun tae* ‘usually’, *kan tae (=nut tae)’ ‘more and more’, *chap tae (=pranap tae)’ ‘quickly’, *muk tae (=muk cia)* ‘by all means’, etc. As is evident from this list, paired synonymy features prominently in this cluster.11 Yu. Gorgoniev, who was apparently the first to identify this group, described them (rather infelicitously) as ‘semi-autosemantic adverbs’ [Gorgoniev 1966: 299-214].

In examples below, these auxiliaries, although treated as grammatical markers, are provided with lexical translation.

(27) kɔːt chap tae cuo (Cons.)

3SG QUICKLY believe

‘He believed [this] immediately (too hastily, from the speaker’s standpoint).’

(28) kan tae skal kan tae sa:sau (Cons., a cigarette brand commercial)

MORE_AND.MORE know MORE_AND.MORE praise

‘The more [you] know [it], the more [you] praise [it].’

(29) kɔːt taŋ ni’jiŋ douc nhi daumbej luoŋ lɔ:m2 niŋŋ

3SG OFTEN speak be.like this in.order to calm.down1,2 girl

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10 G. Himan gives a lexical translation of this marker — ‘at all’, treating it as a part of a bracket negator. N. Enfield, in his turn, proposes the following interpretation for the Laotian marker *leej2*, which is syntactically, semantically, and, apparently, etymologically equivalent to the Cambodian *lauj*: “In its postverbal aspectual-modal usage, *leej2* conveys the idea that a state of affairs is the case without anything else happening — e.g., without hesitation or other delaying action” [Enfield 2007: 188].

11 This list is probably not exhaustive.
'He often spoke like this to calm her down.'
(30)  nǐrī:khmae craun tə eion (Cons.)
girl Khmer MOSTLY be.shy

'Khmer girls are commonly shy.'
(31)  khnom cih la:n mun ba:n tə: pruh cih la:n ka:l na: hauj
1SG ride car NEG can NEG because ride car time which IAM
khnom ceh tae vil muk
I COMMONLY spin face

'I cannot ride in a car, because every time I rode in a car I always felt dizzy.'
(32)  kət srap tae lu: məat kə: sraek suə
3SG SUDDENLY hear mouth3SG/PL scream ask

'Suddenly, he heard someone scream.'
(33)  mae ha:m kom aøj maok lə:ŋ tuk knoŋ preŋ aŋ mun sədap
mother forbid PROHCAUS approach play water in forest 1SG NEG listen
samdej kət vih tae əŋ tuk slap
speech 3SG NEARLY die

'Mother forbade me to go to the forest to bathe, I did not listen to her and nearly drowned.'
(34)  peː lə anaːk təːp muk təː rət rəːk munh douc ɔiə
1SG time future property CERTAINLY run seek person be.like1,2
kət nih munj khaːnə
3SG this by.all.means3,4

'In the future, wealth will certainly find a person like him.'
(35)  khnom tsəp tae prap kaː₁ put₁ dal əwpuk khnom (http://sogi.sithi.org)
1SG JUST.NOW tell truth₁,2 PREP father 1SG

'I have just told Father the truth.'

The bounds of this group of markers are rather fuzzy as it is not clear, e.g., if they should include a number of predicates which regularly occur before other verbs and express meanings gravitating toward grammatical meanings, although in other environments they function as regular predicates. For instance, kra: 'be poor', when used in this position, denotes 'rare occurrence of p'; lue: 'steal' has the meaning 'do p secretly, on the sly'; and thvə: ciə, 'pretend, feign p'.

These markers' combinations with other tense and aspect markers fall outside the scope of the present paper but, in principle, they are possible in some cases:

(36)  həː jyː khnom tsəp tae baːn nɔam coul sac dael miːn kunaphiəp
shop 1SG/PL 1SG JUST.NOW PRF lead enter meat REL have quality
khpuh bamphot piː prateːh əpən
high most PREP country Japan

'Our shop has just received meat of highest quality from Japan.'

(37)  ruəŋ nihbəumun dah₁ sraːj₂ rəkəh təː muk təː nəuy nɔam aøj jvːy
problem this if NEG solve₁,₂ quickly NEG CERTAINLY IRR lead CAUS 1PL
khounɔ khaː tə kamləj hauj (khmerstorylovers1.yolasite.com)
lose₁,₄ force IAM

'As to this problem, if we don’t solve it quickly, we shall certainly lose [our] potential.'

3. Co-occurrence of tense and aspect markers

This section considers cases where adverbial tense and aspect markers co-occur in the same sentence. Subsection 3.1 deals with co-occurrence of preverbal tense and aspect markers, and 3.2, with that of preverbal and postverbal markers. Both types are captured in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 where "forbidden" and "allowed" combinations are demonstrated, followed by examples and brief comments. As mentioned above, co-occurrence of "semi-autosemantic adverbials" falls outside our present scope.

3.1. Co-occurrence of prepositional tense and aspect markers

Allowed combinations of prepositional tense and aspect markers are shown in Fig. 1.
The following example from a modern novel by Bisang Chut Khai can be interpreted similarly:

(39) ˈ loːk neak əːn nuːj baːn juːl ruːŋ nɪh nɪw pɛːl kraːo ɹ
sir madam read IRR PRF understand story this in time afterwards
bantɛc tɪət
a.little yet
‘You, dear readers, will be able to understand this after a little while.’

IRR – PROGR

Co-occurrence of the irrealis (nuːj) and the progressive (kampuːj) markers is possible, e.g., where the speaker anticipates progression of the situation in the future; see (40):

(40)  bantɔːp aɪ:ˈtɛːl laθɛ:tθ ˈpʰál pralaːŋ bɑkɜ dæpɜ trywɪ baːn ɪnɡ
after1.2 result exam higher.education.diploma3.4 PASS5.6
prakaːh rʊːsɛ rɔːdɜ haujɜ nʊh sɔhɔː nuːj kɔmpuːj svaːŋ jɔl ɹ
announce IAM7.9 that students IRR PROGR search understand PREP
damnau pʰlɪw ʧɪpʰʊh tryw ˈwɜːnəːkʊt ceə kɪəjʊ mʊn11 kʰaːn12 (http://sopheapfocus.com)
way road head.for go future clear surely10–12
‘After the exam results are announced and diplomas received, the students will surely think about (their) future.’

IRR – CONT

Co-occurrence of the irrealis (nuːj) and the continuative (nɪw tae) markers is admissible where the speaker believes that the situation, which is in progress at the speech moment, will continue into the future.

(41) The China Post baːn aʊj ɗɔn thəː iˈFʌn ɪn rʊˈbæh ˈAppl nuːj nɪw ɬtɛ2
82
Even in developed countries like England or US, homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals still continue (their) struggle, demanding equal rights.

‘The China Post informed that Apple’s iPhone 6 will use the same 8-megapixel camera.’

‘The Cuban Communist Party will continue to be the only party in the country.’

EXP – PRF
Co-occurrence of the experiencer (thlɔap) and the perfect (ba:n) markers is fairly frequent (if this definition is applicable to Cambodian tense and aspect markers at all). Both thlɔap ba:n and ba:n thlɔap sequences are allowed, with the first found much more often. The “motivation” behind the simultaneous use of the two markers is apparently clear: it serves to emphasize, on the one hand, the past reference and the present relevance of the situation, and on the other, its potential reiteration.

PRF – HAB
‘Giant catfish is a variety of fish that is now under the threat of extinction in Cambodia. Have you seen, my young friend, a (fish) like that?’

PROGR – CONT
The motivation behind the co-occurrence of the progressive (kampuŋ) and the continuative (nɔw) seems to be clear: they equally involve situations unfolding at the speech moment, although the continuative meaning is more complex as it purports that the situation was also taking place prior to the speech/observation moment. Just as the previous pair, the continuative and the progressive markers are mutually unordered and either can precede or follow the other.

CONT – PROGR
‘Even in developed countries like England or US, homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals still continue (their) struggle, demanding equal rights.’
'Another person, a 23 year old man by the name of Mau Thut, is still under treatment at the same Hospital # 21.'

CONT – PRF

Co-occurrence of the continuative (ntw) and the perfect (ba:n) is rare, but possible:

(47) təh₁ bəj₂ ci₄ jə:ŋ₄ na₅ kə:₆ daol₇ kʰəm₈ kə: ntw₉ tæ₁₀ ba:n₁₁ thə₁₀ ru:p₁₁
     for.better.or.for.worse₁₋₇ 1SG NARR CONT₈,₁₀ PRF take.pictures₁₀,₁₁

jːɔː kən ruːŋ phioː pə!:ŋ laːŋ lːɔː (http://camnews.com.kh)

take obtain image can kind good

‘For better or for worth, I still could take good pictures.’

PRF – PROGR

By using the perfect (ba:n) and the progressive (kampuŋ) simultaneously, the speaker apparently indicates that the event: a) is important at the speech moment; b) has already taken place; c) is still in progress:

(48) krom kə:jlaː kaː kampuːcə baː:n kampuːŋ caːk ceːŋ piː santhoːkiə
     team athlete Cambodia PRF PROGR leave go.out PREP hotel
     chpuːh tsːw tiː jian₂ dəmund̥aj prəkwoːt₃ ciː₄ muːj₅ maːkaːw
     head.for go field₁,₂ in.order.to play.against₁₃,₁₄,₁₅ Makao
     jup nːih (http://www.freshnewsasia.com)
     evening this

‘The Cambodian team left the hotel and was heading for the field to confront the Makao (team).’

It is also interesting to note that the perfect and the progressive markers can be linked by a coordinating conjunction. Such combinations are rather frequent in modern writings:

(49) sat prəj touːc thom baː:n nɯŋ kəmpuːŋ səmːəp jəːŋ rɔŋiːl ntw
     animal forest small large PRF and PROGR kill kind cruel in
     khaet mondɔlkiːriː (skcnnews.com)
     province Mondolkiri

‘Large and small wild animals were, and continue to be, cruelly killed in Mondolkiri Province.’

3.2. Co-occurrence of prepositional and postpositional tense and aspect markers

As mentioned in 1 above, Cambodian has three postpositive markers: the iamitive hauj, the continuative ntw lauj, and the negative lauj. Occurrences of the first two with prepositional tense-aspect markers are considered in this subsection.

3.2.1. The postpositive iamitive marker hauj shows the broadest range of co-occurrence with all preverbal tense and aspect auxiliaries (Fig. 2).

![Figure 2. Co-occurrence of prepositional and postpositional tense and aspect markers](image-url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>CONT</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

HAB — IAM

(50) tʰlːap kʰɔːŋ jːuː hauj kə:₁ kʰəm ntw thvr:₁ kə:₂ ntw...
     EXP see long.ago IAM when 1SG be.located.in work₁,₂ be.located.in
     khaet rətəːmaʔə'kiriː
     province Ratanakir

‘I saw such (a tree) already, when I was working in Ratanakiri.’

IRR — IAM

(51) pːl dael bəːŋ aːŋ sambot nːih kʰəm nɯŋ couː məɾənʔiːp₂
     timeREL elder.sibling read letter this 1SG IRR die₁,₂
     bat₃ ruːŋ phioː hauj
     die₃,₄ go IAM

84
'As you are reading this letter, I will be already dead.'

PROF — IAM

52. baucay tralap twv vun niŋtrtw rət
   if want return go back girl be.oblighed run
   keːc ceːn pəː: səap sɨam hauj damtaːm sat
   hide go.out PREP army Siam CONJ go follow animal
dael prateah khːːn nuŋ nuŋbaːn twv cuəp cum saci niŋt2
   REL meet see that IRR PROF go meet gather relatives1,2
   vun hauj
   again IAM

'If you want to return, you must secretly run away from the Thai soldiers and follow the animals you meet. Then you will see your relatives again.'

PROGR — IAM

53. viə pra:kat1 ciə2 kampuj thae rəbəh jutha'nio hauj
   3SG surely1,2 PROGR look.after wound PN IAM
   '(Now) she is surely looking after Yuthanna’s wounds.’

CONT — IAM

54. naːz naːz auːj keː nuŋcoul,danduŋjaeŋ nuŋ bau kuːː
day thaː aeŋ
   who1,2 EMPH 3SG/PL IRR propose,4 2SG that COND 3SG/PL know that 2SG
   nxw cuəps piək6 saṃdaʃʒ nuŋ cak bun thːaːn twv hauj
   CONT give.word s5,6,7 PREP uncle PN go IAM

'Who will come to propose, indeed, when everyone knows that you have already given your word to Uncle Bun Thon?’

Although the free occurrence of the progressive and the continuative markers with the iamitive appears somewhat surprising, the explanation may be that in both (53) and (54) hauj serves to emphasize that the situation progressing/continuing at the speech moment began in the past, and its beginning is treated as an “accomplished fact.”

3.2.2. Apart from combining with the prepositive continuative marker as in (21) and (22), the postpositive continuative marker can also occur with the progressive and the perfect markers:

PROGR — CONT

55. sta:nphiaʃ compuː rəbah loːk Lee Kuan Yew kampuj sthːt knəŋ
   State disease POSS mister PN PROGR remain in
   sta:nphiaʃ thʒoːni thʒaː2 nxw3 lauij4 (http://hangmeasdaily.com/index.php)
   state grave1,2 CONT3,4

‘Mister Lee Kuan Yew’s condition remains grave.’

PROF — CONT

56. peːl nuŋ khnom pum1 caːn2 baːn cuəp mut3 pheak4 khmae jxːŋ
   time that 1SG not.yet1,2 PROF meet friend3,4 Khmer IPL
   nxw5 lauij6
   CONT5,6

‘At that time I had not yet met anyone of our Khmer friends.’

4. Conclusion

As the above shows, Cambodian tense-aspect markers are freely compatible with each other. All prepositive markers show roughly the same mutual “co-occurrence potential” with a few exceptions. For example, the experientive marker thləap can only combine with the perfect marker baːn. The iamitive hauj stands out among the postpositive markers in that it can co-occur with absolutely every prepositive marker. This behavior of Cambodian tense-aspect markers provides yet more proof that they form neither oppositions, nor paradigms, nor make up a full-fledged grammatical category.
An earlier attempt by one of the present authors to describe Cambodian adverbial markers in terms of the position classes grammar (see [Dmitrenko 1998]), led to similar conclusions: the tense-aspect markers discussed above fall into different slots of the positional pattern as distinct from standard grammatical category grammeme markers that normally tend to occupy the same slot.\textsuperscript{12} On the other hand, interactions between these markers often resemble interactions between lexical, rather than grammatical units (see also [Elovkov 2004: 18]), which may be, among other things, indicative of an ongoing process of grammaticalization with at least some of them. It is also noteworthy that practically all combinations identified here are of the “compositional” type, i.e. each marker continues labeling its own lexical meaning, which evidently represents a classic case of trivial interactions between grammatical meanings [Malchukov, Xrakovskij 2016: 64]. The only exception seem to be relations between the irrealis marker \textit{nuug} and the perfect marker \textit{ba:n} which appear to demonstrate non-trivial interaction [ibid.: 65]. In this combination, \textit{nuug} retains its irreal or future meaning, while \textit{ba:n} is reanalyzed as a marker of “logical emphasis” on the importance of the provided information from the speaker’s viewpoint, or as a habilitive marker. In the latter case, the standard meaning of \textit{ba:n} it expresses in other positions is foregrounded.

\textsuperscript{12} Only mutually unordered markers (like the perfect and the experientive on the one hand, and the continuative and the progressive on the other) can be assigned to the same slot – as members of different sub-slots, though. For more detail on mutually unordered markers, see [Rezvin, Yuldasheva 1969].
### Abbreviations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>ATR</td>
<td>attribute</td>
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<td>AUX</td>
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### Literature


Spatari N. M. Služebnyje slova i glagol’nyje kategorii v izolirujuščix jazykax [Auxiliary words and verbal categories in isolating languages (Cambodian evidence)]. Avtoreferat kand. diss. SPb.: 1990.

