ICAAL 13 Abstracts Booklet

The 13th International Conference on Austroasiatic Linguistics was held online 29-31 October 2025. Some 32 talks were presenated, and one page abstracts for each are provided here. For furhter information on ICAAL13 please visit the website at icaal.net.

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Topicalization in Vietnamese: A reinterpretation of the "double subject"

Mayumi Adachi

Vietnamese is often characterized as a topic-prominent language. In this language, topicalized noun phrases (for instance, *chị Lan* 'Ms. Lan') typically appear at the left of a sentence and are frequently accompanied by a topic marker with a contrastive meaning, such as *thì*, as shown in example (1):

(1)	*Chị*	*Lan*	(*thì*)	*hay*	*đến*	*Ise*	*mà*.
	elder.sister	PN	TOP	often	come	PN	UFP

'Ms. Lan often goes to Ise (restaurant).'

However, there are instances where Vietnamese sentences seem to contain a phenomenon referred to as "double subject," as illustrated in example (2):

(2)	*Em*	*Hương,*	*nó*	*bị*	*chuyển*	*lớp*	*đấy.*
	younger.sibling	PN	she	PASS	transfer	class	UFP

'As for Hương, she was being transferred to another class.'

This paper examines such sentences as manifestations of topicalization. These constructions consist of a noun phrase topic (such as a person's name *em Hương*, meaning 'my dear Huong') combined with a coreferential noun phrase (such as the personal pronouns such as *nó*, meaning '(s)he,' or kinship terms followed by anaphoric demonstratives like *em ấy*, meaning '(s)he') within a comment clause. The aim of this study is to clarify the pragmatic functions produced by this redundancy through the analysis of natural conversations using conversation analysis methods. The findings are as follows:

(a) The individual referred to is familiar to both the speaker and the addressee.
(b) The comment clause and subsequent utterances of the speaker provide new information to the addressee, typically regarding the past actions of that person.
(c) Unlike the topic marker *thì*, this construction does not convey a contrastive meaning.

This study contributes to a better understanding of related phenomena, such as information structure, resumptive pronouns, and expletives in Vietnamese and other languages.

Vowels in Early Chinese Loanwords in Vietnamese with Comparative Data from Vietic

Mark Alves

Abstract: In this talk, I will present research on the vowels in early Chinese loanwords (ECLs) in Vietnamese borrowed in the 1st millennium, that is, before the layer of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary associated with Late Middle Chinese. Crucially, the vowels of ECLs are studied with respect to developments in vowels in native Vietic words from Proto-Vietic or Proto-Austroasiatic. In this talk, I will (a) review issues of Vietic, Sinitic, and Vietnamese historical phonological matters and describe the methods of this study; (b) present data for three categories: ECLs with vowels likely retained from early Chinese, words with possibly retained vowels, and words with diphthongs; and (c) summarize the key findings. While some patterns of vowels in native vocabulary are shared by those in ECLs, and others show observable patterns that are distinct from those in native etyma, a number of vowels in ECLs exhibit as yet unexplainable distinct historical developments. Accounting for the history of vowels in posited ECLs is challenging due to (a) variations in vowels potentially due to varied borrowing situations, (b) variations in early Chinese reconstructions of different scholars, and (c) assumed variation in the source varieties of Chinese in time of borrowing and dialectal diversity. Despite such complications, the updated observations of the data increase the certainty of the status of ECLs as loanwords. They also give insights into the timing of the borrowing of ECLs and could offer comparative data to consider in reconstructions of vowels in Vietic and potentially early stages of Sinitic.

The tonemes of Malieng

Albert Badosa, Tạ Thành Tấn, Trần Quang Minh

This paper presents the tonation categories of Malieng (Vietic) both from a phonological and panchronic point of view and from a phonetic and synchronic point of view. The phonological analysis is based on more than two years of work with the Malieng language in Central Vietnam (in three Malieng villages in the Vietnamese provinces of Quảng Bình and Hà Tĩnh) spawn across different field trips and tentative analyses. The phonetic data supporting the phonological analysis was carried out in August 2024 by the authors of the paper after having understood the phonology of the language. All the data are in process to be archived in the Pangloss collection.

Malieng is a language with a simple tonation system, but showing tendencies toward the development of a more complex one. Malieng preserves final occlusives (checked syllables) and final aspirates (-h and *-s) in some contexts. The final occlusive -ʔ has been transphonologicised into a rising tone with a final glottalisation. Similarly to other Vietic languages, open and final sonorant syllables behave equally, and can belong to the A category or the B category in Gedney's boxes terms. Malieng therefore presents only three clear tonation categories: A1 (a mid, level tone, slightly falling and breathy towards the end), A2 (a falling, breathy tone) and B (a rising tone), plus a borrowed tonal category from local Vietnamese that we have called B2v. Malieng is arguably developing a C tone compensating for the progressive loss of final -h.

Diachronically, Malieng is analysed as having developed registrogenesis before tonogenesis. This explains why there are no differences between high register B tones and low register B tones. The existence of register differences in the A tonation category, A1 and A2, is also explained thanks to registrogenesis: the most common syllables, open and final sonorant, developed a pitch distinction upon the registrogenesis process that the other categories did not develop, relying on other register contrasts, mainly vowel quality.

Our theory defending registrogenesis before tonogenesis argues against Ferlus's (1999) paper and recovers an idea already defended in Tạ (2023), which considered that all Vietic languages had developed tones before registers, and simpler tonal systems were caused by tonal category mergings. The consideration of registrogenesis as a process that can happen before tonogenesis in Malieng can be extended to other Southern Vietic languages, challenging previous assumptions and supporting new descriptions of tonogenetic development paths.

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Title: **Exploring the Pronominals in South Munda Languages: A Comparative Study**

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the pronominal systems in five South Munda languages of the Austroasiatic family namely Gorum, Remo (Bondo), Didayi (Gtaʔ), Gutob Gadaba, and Sora. These languages are primarily spoken in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. Despite their diverse sociolinguistic contexts and degrees of vitality, these languages exhibit similar morphosyntactic patterns in their pronominal systems, pointing to a shared historical and typological foundation within the South Munda subgroup.

A major finding of this study is the integration of first and second-person pronouns into the verb stems. This incorporation typically involves the attachment of pronominal markers directly to the verb, forming a tight verb-pronoun unit. In contrast, third-person pronouns are often marked minimally or not at all, suggesting a functional asymmetry in person marking. This pattern is consistent across the languages studied and may reflect a broader typological tendency within the Austroasiatic family.

Furthermore, inclusive and exclusive distinctions in the first-person plural and dual form are found in few of these languages, providing insight into how social relationships and participant roles are encoded grammatically. Some languages also employ pronominal forms that reflect spatial deixis, indicating aspects such as proximity, distance, and the visibility of distant objects. This reflects a rich deictic system relative to the speaker, which adds a spatial dimension to reference tracking.

These shared features support the notion of a coherent South Munda typological profile, while also revealing language-specific innovations that enrich the linguistic diversity of the subgroup. The findings not only contribute to Austroasiatic linguistic typology but also offer valuable data for documentation and revitalization initiatives, especially as several of these languages face declining speaker populations and increasing language shift.

Keywords: Pronominals, South Munda, Austroasiatic, Incorporation

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TRAPS AND TRAPPING IN EARLY AUSTROASIATIC

Roger Blench

The broad association between the SE Asian Neolithic and the expansion of Austroasiatic is now uncontroversial. Reconstructions for Proto-Austroasiatic which depict a farming society with a continuing dependence on hunted and aquatic resources support this association. Material culture in mainland Southeast Asia is quite conservative and many forms remain widespread across the region up to the present. The presentation focuses on potential reconstructions of traps for both hunting and fishing. These are interconnected with reconstructions for baskets, since many of the traps are made of cane and bamboo and require the same artisanal skills.

The paper reviews the archaeological evidence for traps (extremely weak) and the distributional evidence from synchronic ethnography. It includes both field photos of traps and museum specimens. It then presents a series of quasi-reconstructions based on the comparative lexical evidence, and where possible ties these to particular types of trap. In some cases, the application of a term is very precise, for example the spring-trap for rodents, but in other cases, a generalised term for 'trap' is found with a broad spectrum of definitions. It is notable that the main types of trap which show a common lexicon are for small animals, including birds, and there is an absence of terms for large animal traps.

It is generally considered that the southward expansion of Trans-Himalayan fragmented an early Austroasiatic continuum from Vietnam to Meghalaya and there is some evidence for borrowing into individual Trans-Himalayan branches. The comparisons reflect close contact between core branches of Austroasiatic in the Vietnam/Laos/Cambodia area. Outlier branches, such as Munda and Nicobaric, virtually never show cognates, even though their cultures can preserve the same technology.

The current situation of language use of the Bru-Van Kieu people in Quang Binh, Vietnam

Bùi Thị Ngọc Anh

This study presents findings from a sociolinguistic field survey conducted in September 2019 in Quang Binh Province. Here, we conducted a survey using questionnaires to investigate the language use of the Bru-Van Kieu ethnic community, in all four dialect groups: Van Kieu, Tri, Khua, Mang Coong located in Quang Ninh, Bo Trach and Minh Hoa districts, Quang Binh province. The focus of the article is to analyze and compare the language choice trends of local people in different communication contexts, considering three social variables such as gender, age and education level. The survey results (processed using SPSS - *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) show that: (1) Social factors have a significant influence on the level and context of mother tongue and Vietnamese use, with clear differentiation between groups by gender, age and education level; (2) Provide evidence that the bilingualism process is taking place in the Bru - Van Kieu community with uneven characteristics according to each social group. These findings contribute to clarifying the current linguistic status of the Bru - Van Kieu community in the modern context, which has practical significance for the preservation of ethnic minority languages, and at the same time suggests an approach suitable to the social characteristics of the locality to build a language policy.

Keywords: *Bru-Van Kieu, social factors, language use, language preservation, Quang Binh*

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Tone and Syntactically Conditioned Tone Alternations in Vax (En): An Acoustic Study

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Vax (En) is an understudied Palaungic language of the Waic sub-branch, spoken in Eastern Shan State, Myanmar. Devereux (2024) identifies three contrastive lexical tones (falling, rising, and low) based on minimal set evidence, and suggests that the low tone may be associated with breathy voice quality. Devereux's findings are in harmony with Sun's (2018) who studied Va in Yunnan, but Shintani (2016) proposes just two tones for Va in Myanmar. These analyses, based on auditory impression and native speaker intuition, remain to be tested through quantitative acoustic analysis. Furthermore, we observe an apparent systematic phonetic alternation of tones in three syntactic contexts which have not yet been described or investigated.

In this paper, we present an acoustic study of data collected from seven Vax (En) speakers (2 female). We divide the study into five experiments, each targeting acoustic correlates of tone in different phonosyntactic contexts:

(1) **nouns** in isolation (e.g., /**săŋ**/ ***elephant***)
(2) **verbs** in noun-verb collocations within a noun phrase (e.g., /săŋ **tìŋ**/ *elephant* ***large***)
(3) **verbs** in topic-comment constructions (e.g., /ăn săŋ nì **tìŋ**/ *that elephant, it (is)* ***large***)
(4) **nouns** in disyllabic demonstrative-noun constructions (e.g., /ĕn **săŋ**/ *this* ***elephant***)
(5) **3sg pronoun** in noun-pronoun possessive constructions (e.g., /săŋ **hɤ̀n**/ *elephant* ***his***).

Experiments 1 and 2 set a baseline acoustic profile for tones on nouns and verbs in unmarked grammatical contexts, while experiments 3-5 investigate the observed syntactically conditioned tone alternations. In experiments 3 and 4, using the same nouns and verbs from experiments 1 and 2, we show a pattern of variation whereby an underlying falling tone is realized with a rising pitch contour in two environments: when verbs occur in topic-comment constructions (e.g., /ăn săŋ nì **sû**/ *that elephant, it (is)* ***warm*** > [ăn săŋ nì **sǔ**]) and when nouns follow a demonstrative (e.g., /ăn **sâŋ**/ *that* ***bone*** > [ăn **săŋ**]). In experiment 5, we show conditioned variation affecting the realization of the third person singular pronoun /hɤ̀n/. Although this word appears to carry an underlying low tone, it is realized with a rising pitch contour in possessive constructions when it modifies a noun with underlying rising or falling tone (e.g., /săŋ **hɤ̀n**/ *elephant* ***his*** > [săŋ **hɤ̌n**]).

Preliminary findings suggest that pitch, voice quality and also rime duration differences work together redundantly to cue the three tones in isolation. We suspect, based on auditory impressions, that despite the convergent realization of pitch between falling and rising tones in experiments 3 and 4, voice quality differences may remain. The results of this study contribute to the documentation and phonological analysis of Waic languages and to our understanding of the multidimensionality of tonal articulation at the interface of phonetics, phonology, and syntax in an atypically tonal Austroasiatic language.

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Vowel Length and Glottalization in Proto-Austroasiatic "Open" Syllables

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It has been proposed that Proto-Austroasiatic (pAA) should be reconstructed with a typologically unusual constraint against vowel-final syllables, such that "open" syllables are in fact predictably glottalized (Shorto 2006, Sidwell & Rau 2014, Gehrmann 2022, Sidwell 2024). This constraint persists mostly unchanged in a few languages from non-contiguous branches, suggesting that it should be reconstructed to the proto-branch level for Palaungic, Khmuic, Monic & Aslian and ultimately to pAA itself. Sidwell & Alves (2023) expand on this theme, proposing that pAA vowel-final rimes were indeed predictably glottalized, but also marked by a contrast of vowel duration. This duration contrast would have been retained into Proto-Vietic (pVietic) as a contrast of plain rimes (pVietic *VØ < pAA *V:ʔ) vs. glottalized rimes (pVietic *Vʔ < pAA *V̆ʔ), which in turn became a major conditioning factor underlying tonogenesis in Vietic languages. Elsewhere, the duration contrast would have been neutralized.

This paper presents new evidence in support of Sidwell & Alves's proposal, highlighting previously unrecognized cases of shared retention for the pAA *V:ʔ vs. *V̆ʔ contrast. Using the 90 pAA lexical reconstructions of glottal-final syllables proposed by Sidwell (2024), we conduct pairwise comparisons between pVietic's open syllable glottalization contrast (a proxy for pAA *V:ʔ vs. *V̆ʔ) and potentially cognate contrasts in various other AA languages. Using the exact binomial test, we identify statistically significant patterns of correspondence with contrasts in languages from four other branches: tonal contrasts in Mang (< Mangic) and Bolyu (< Pakanic), vowel splits in Wa (< Palaungic) and rime glottalization contrast in Semelai (< Aslian).

These results corroborate the reconstruction of a contrast of vowel length in pAA glottal-final rimes and suggest that this contrast was retained at the proto-branch level in four additional branches. This helps us to distinguish modern contrasts that can be traced back to this contrast from those that arose through other, secondary processes. Moreover, this study provides an expanded set of criteria for reconstructing vowel length values before coda glottal stops in pAA etyma, and refinements to several of Sidwell's (2024) lexical reconstructions are accordingly proposed.

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Proto-Khmuic Presyllable Contrasts

Nathaniel Hiroz

One of the challenges in Khmuic historical phonology is the reconstruction of phonological contrasts in Proto-Khmuic presyllables. The progressive reduction of these contrasts in the history of the branch, in some varieties going all the way to complete deletion of presyllables, leaves us with somewhat limited clues to reconstruct with precision this part of the Proto-Khmuic phonological word.

This talk will explore this issue, looking at two aspects of Proto-Khmuic presyllables that deserve special attention: 1) initial obstruent voicing contrasts and 2) vowel contrasts. I will show that, despite the aforementioned difficulties, careful comparative work based on the testimony of all Khmuic languages allows us to gain a picture of Proto-Khmuic presyllables that aligns well with what is preserved or reconstructed elsewhere in Austroasiatic.

With respect to Proto-Khmuic presyllable obstruents, a voicing contrast can be demonstrated in words with main syllable initial sonorants, *ʔ- and *h-. In words with main syllable obstruents, *ts- and *s-, there is at present no evidence for a presyllable voicing contrast. It seems that in these cases voicing of the presyllable obstruent was conditioned by the main syllable initial, through voicing dissimilation. Such a pattern is still found in some Khmuic varieties in the case of prefixes that show voiced and voiceless allomorphs, such as the Mlabri causative prefix ba-/pa- (Rischel 2007).

As for presyllable vowels, a case can be made for the presence of phonologically real vowels contrasting with -Ø-, at least in the case of sesquisyllabic/disyllabic words of the shape *CV.r/l-, which contrasted with monosyllables with true clusters *Cr/l-, paralleling a similar situation in Katuic (Gehrmann 2017). There is also extremely limited evidence, in the form of traces left on other segments, for the existence of contrasting vowel qualities, which also find parallels elsewhere in Austroasiatic and might go all the way back to Proto-Austroasiatic itself (Hiroz 2024).

Using Khmuic data from published sources as well as original data from recent fieldwork in Laos and Thailand, this talk will provide an updated look at all these issues, putting them into a broader Austroasiatic perspective.

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Outstanding issues in Santali vocalism and vowel harmony

Luke Horo, Gregory Anderson

There are several regional lects of Santali that differ from each other in terms of their phonological systems. Some varieties, e.g., that of East Singbhum, Jharkhand are described as having only five vowels like its sister languages Mundari and Ho (Minegishi and Murmu 2001), while others, e.g., the variety of West Bengal described by (Bodding 1929-32, Ghosh 2008) are reported to have as many as eight vowel phonemes, with a range of diphthongs as well. Indeed, the West Bengal variety of Santali has a proposed vocalic inventory (Ghosh 2008) that has re-converged to a system very close to the short vowel and diphthong inventories of Proto-Austroasiatic offered by Sidwell and Rau (2015).

Another domain that shows considerable variation across the different Santali varieties is vowel harmony (Anderson et al. 2024). Harmony appears to operate on the domain of the foot in Santali (Horo et al. 2025a). Some dialects show robust patterns of several kinds of vowel harmony, e.g., West Bengal, while others (southern Jharkhand/Northern Odisha) have less developed systems, or harmony appears in only a restricted set of contexts. Least restricted is the co-occurrence of high vowels and mid vowels in the same foot attested in all Santali lects, where we find, for example, a process of *o* > *u* /__(C)*i* as in proximal demonstrative stems *noa* 'this (inanimate)' vs. *nui* 'this (animate)'–a pattern also robustly attested in Santali's close sister language Mundari (Gogoi et al. 2024, Horo et al. 2023). None of the varieties we have studied attest the front/back harmony reported by Anderson et al. (2008) and Pucilowski (2013) for Ho. Some lects which show an upper mid : lower mid contrast may show an ATR-like pattern restricting *o* and *e* vs. *ɔ* and *ɛ* to occur in the same foot *gomke* 'master' vs. *hɔʈlɛ*^{ʔ}*ʈʃ* 'cooking pot'. However, this pattern does not hold beyond the domain of the foot and trisyllabic and tetrasyllabic forms can be disharmonic *rɔbejɔ*^{ʔ}*t* 'emaciated with big belly', *bɛhebajo*^{ʔ}*t* 'neglect'. Another harmonic pattern that shows an interesting regional distribution is the co-occurrence restriction on [*a*] with high vowels in the same foot. Some lects require the /*a*/ to raise to [*ə*] in such environments, e.g., the West Bengal doculects of Bodding and Ghosh–the latter of which has a /*ə*/ that has been proposed to be phonemic–while other lects never show this alternation nor this vowel in their vocalic inventory, e.g., the doculect of Minegishi and Murmu. In varieties spoken in northern and eastern Jharkhand, we see a range of phenomena within the domain of raising of /*a*/ to [*ə*] within a foot, e.g., in Giridih and Dumka districts, Jharkhand, we see a raising of /*a*/ to [*ə*] in the context of (C)*i/u*C*a*(C) > (C)*i/u*C*ə*(C) but not in the context of (C)*a*C*i/u*(C). In other words, when in a prominent position, which the second syllable in Santali is (Horo and Anderson 2021, 2023; Horo et al. 2025b) we find /*a*/ to be incompatible with *i/u* in one foot, but if it is in non-prominent first syllables.

In this study, based on a survey of Santali spoken in six locations, one in West Bengal, one in Odisha and one in Assam, as well as in three different parts of Jharkhand, we show there is a cline of observed phenomena relating to both the number of vowel phonemes and the different types of systems of vowel phonemes attested. Additionally, we will present new insights into Santali vocalism in relation to word prosody, more specifically, the correlation between prosodic prominence and vowel quality. Initial observations suggest that, while phonetic categorization of peripheral mid vowels is not robust, the non-peripheral mid vowel forms a distinct category. However, a tendency is also found in speakers to obscure the phonetic distinction of the mid vowels in less prominent positions. Analysis of Santali vowels in this study is based on speech data of native speakers producing target words in citation form and in prosodically controlled sentences and the findings are supported by acoustic analysis.

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The Htanaw noun phrase: Relative expressions

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A relativizing morpheme of the shape pV(N) occurs across the Palaungic group of AA (Lee and Jenny 2022), making it a distinguishing feature of the group. In Htanaw (dnu, dana1225) the relativizer appears as the verbal prefix *pə-* in all types of relative expressions (Si 2014: 1122-1123, Jenny et al. 2024). The overt marking of relative expressions is optional in Htanaw in most (all?) cases, and the topic marker *núʔ/nɯʔ/nùʔ* usually marks the end of the NP. Unlike other Palaungic languages, Htanaw places the relative expression after or before the modified nominal in transitive relative clauses, the latter being the preferred order (ex. 1a, b).

1a. စာ့အိုူအ်အာဥ်ပဖာအ့်နိုူအ့် က္လိုူ့အ်ယား။

sá.ʔòuʔ	*ʔàɴ*	*pə-pʰáʔ*	*núʔ*	*klùʔ*	*ja*
book	3s	REL-to.read	TOP	be.good	Q

b. အာဥ်ပဖာအ့်စာ့အိုူအ်နိုူအ် က္လိုူ့အ်ယား။

ʔàɴ	*pə-pʰáʔ*	*sá.ʔòuʔ*	*nùʔ*	*klùʔ*	*ja*
3s	REL-to.read	book	top	be.good	Q

‘Is the book he is reading good?’

Intransitive relative expressions always follow the head noun, with the relativizer usually dropped (ex. 2).

2. တူ့ပစိုူအ်နိုူအ်း မဲအ်တိုူအ်။

tú	*(pə-)sùʔ*	*nɯʔ*	*mὲʔ*	*tùʔ*
curry	(REL-)be.delicious	TOP	be.all	NSIT

‘All the good food is gone.’

The general patterns for NPs with relative modifiers are [[S pə-V] N TOP] and [N [S pə-V] TOP] for transitive and [N [(pə-)V] TOP] for intransitive relative clauses. Htanaw shows features of the verb-medial Palaungic model (REL pV, post-nominal REL) as well as likely imported patterns of the verb-final Sino-Tibetan type (REL as verbal affix rather than clausal subordinator, pre-nominal REL). In contrast with other Palaungic languages, there appears to be no verb-initial syntax in relative expressions.

In this study we explore the relativization patterns found in Htanaw and put the findings in a Palaungic/AA and areal perspective. The study is based on published material as well as new data collected with native speakers in Shan State, Myanmar.

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The origins and development of the so-called incopyfixation in Aslian languages

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Incopyfixation refers to the reduplicative infixation in Aslian verbs and verbal nouns that copies the final consonant (C_f) of CCVC roots and inserts it between the initial (C_i) and the medial (C_m) consonants: $C_iC_mVC_f > C_i\text{-}C_f\text{-}C_mVC_f$ as in Temiar (Tem.) *sglag* [sɛglag], the imperfective (Impf.) of *slag* [sᵊlag] 'sleep' (Matisoff 2003). If the root is CVC, the process is said to copy the initial consonant to prepare for incopyfixation of the final: $C_iVC_f > *C_i\text{-}C_iVC_f > C_i\text{-}C_f\text{-}C_iVC_f$ as in Tem. *kw-kɔ̄w*, Impf. of *kɔ̄w* 'to call'. This paper argues that this peculiar reduplicative infixation originated as a partial prefixal reduplication of the initial and final consonants (C_iC_f-), causing one of the two identical C_i's, usually the middle one in the cluster, to be eliminated through 'synergy' of dissimilation and cluster simplification (Kim 2019): $C_iC_mVC_f > *C_iC_f\text{-}C_iC_mVC_f > C_iC_fØC_mVC_f$. Since this consonant cluster reduction (CCR) applies preferentially to a long four-consonant group, the reduplicant remains unreduced in CVC roots: $C_iVC_f > *C_iC_f\text{-}C_iVC_f >$ idem. It is argued that this diachronic development has been reanalyzed synchronically as an infixation of the final consonant copy: $C_iC_mVC_f > *C_iC_f\text{-}C_iC_mVC_f > *C_iC_f\text{-}ØC_mVC_f > C_i\text{-}C_f\text{-}C_mVC_f$. Both internal and external changes observed independently across languages support this supposition.

The internal argument is morpho-phonological: both the imperfectives of CVC and CCVC roots derive from the same $*C_iC_f$- prefix. This consistent underlying prefix is possible because a similar CCR of *KCK* → *CK* or *KC*, which drops one of two identical consonants in a cluster, occurs in many languages: Gk *lasko* < **lak-skō* 'I speak' (cf. aor. *elakon*), even though a three-consonant group is generally retained in Greek, e. g. Gk *arktos* 'bear'; Eng. *asportation* < **abs-portation* 'carrying away', but Eng. *abstention* < **abs-tention* 'holding away', in which the Latinate prefix *abs-* 'away' is reduced to *as-* when it combines with a stem-initial /p/ but not otherwise (Kim 1991). Note that this CCR is the result of dissimilation and cluster simplification. CCR of *KCK* occurs because of the sufficient similarity condition on dissimilation (Foley 1977, 1981); while the preferential condition on cluster simplification, that the longer a consonant group, the more likely it is to reduce, explains why CCR occurs in Tem. Impf. *sglag* < **sg-slag*, but not in Tem. Impf. *kw-kɔ̄w*.

The external argument comes from the observation that continuation/repetition is one of the typical grammatical functions of reduplication, which corresponds semantically to imperfective/continuative aspects that incopyfixation refers to in Aslian languages, suggesting that it is of reduplicative origin. Interestingly, expressives in Temiar and Semai often repeat the first and last consonants of the base, e.g., Tem. *rg-rweeg* 'conspicuously upright' (cf. *rweeg*, *rgweeg* 'to stand erect'; Benjamin 2022) and Sem. *dldyɔ̄l* 'appearance of an object which goes on floating down', from the root /dyɔ̄l/ (Diffloth 1976b: 252). According to Bybee et al. (1994: 172), such expressive repetitions are grammaticized on the evolutionary path of 'iterative > continuative > progressive > imperfective > intransitive'. Expressives such as Tem. *rg-rweeg* 'conspicuously upright' are then at the very beginning of this path and are exceptions to phonological rules like CCR, due to their extra-grammaticality (Zwicky and Pullum 1987): Had CCR occurred to Tem. *rg-rweeg* 'conspicuously upright, it would have lost its expressivity.

Contact-Driven Phonological Divergence in Lawa: The Role of Internal Change and External Pressure

Pawarut Kratognok

Abstract

This study investigates how differing levels of language contact have contributed to phonological divergence between Lawa varieties in Northern Thailand. While Eastern and Northern Lawa share a common linguistic ancestry, they differ significantly in their exposure to Tai influence. Eastern Lawa communities experience frequent contact with Northern and Central Thai, while Northern Lawa remains geographically and socially insulated.

By comparing segmental inventories, syllable structures, and lexical borrowing patterns, this study explores how internal phonological developments have been shaped or accelerated by external pressure. In Eastern Lawa, structural innovations include vowel regularization, increased borrowing, and expanded syllable complexity, especially through the emergence of productive sesquisyllabic patterns. These contrast with the more conservative, cluster-preserving profile of Northern Lawa.

The findings suggest that contact does not merely introduce lexical items but also catalyzes broader phonological restructuring. The case of Lawa demonstrates how languages within the same subgroup can diverge significantly depending on local sociolinguistic conditions—even without large-scale language shift. This work contributes to understanding how different levels of contact intensity yield divergent phonological outcomes within a single language group.

Title

Digital Multilingualism in Vietnam's Austroasiatic Communities: Sociolinguistic Insights and English Digital Literacy Innovations

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Bidata

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Abstract

This study explores digital multilingualism among Vietnam's Austroasiatic communities (Muong, Khmer Krom, Bahnar, Stieng), focusing on code-switching and identity expression on platforms like Zalo, Facebook, and X in the Central Highlands, Mekong Delta, and northern provinces. Using qualitative content analysis of 300 online texts and surveys with 100 speakers, we examine how these communities mix Austroasiatic languages with Vietnamese and English, highlighting language contact patterns (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Lee, 2017). Figure 1 shows code-switching frequency across platforms, revealing regional and platform-specific trends. A digital literacy framework is suggested that incorporates Austroasiatic linguistic features, such as Khmer Krom politeness markers, to improve minority learners' engagement and proficiency while supporting heritage language revitalization (Nguyen & Hamid, 2021; Schliesinger, 2015).

This research introduces a digital sociolinguistic approach to Austroasiatic languages, contributing to sociolinguistics, typology, and applied linguistics by situating Vietnam's minority languages within global digital communication contexts (Tagg, 2015). It offers educators culturally responsive strategies to strengthen multilingual skills in Vietnam's diverse classrooms. By highlighting Austroasiatic languages in digital spaces, this study advances linguistic theory and promotes sustainable language preservation, with implications for educational policy and practice.

Keywords: Digital sociolinguistics, Austroasiatic languages, multilingualism, English digital literacy, Vietnam

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Revisiting register contrast in Mon: Production and perception

Sireemas Maspong, Patrick McCormick, James Kirby

Register is a contrast typically marked by a combination of phonetic properties, including voice quality, F0, and vowel quality. Even though this contrast is common in the Austroasiatic and Austronesian languages, the relative weighting of these cues varies. Some languages rely primarily on F0 (e.g., Suai; Abramson et al. 2004), others on vowel quality (e.g., Chru; Brunelle et al. 2020). Interestingly, despite early descriptions emphasizing the role of voice quality, recent studies have rarely identified it as the primary cue to register contrast.

Mon, an Austroasiatic language spoken in Myanmar and Thailand, is often described as a prototypical register language, with voice quality as the primary cue and F0 treated as a secondary by-product (Abramson et al. 2015). However, despite a substantial body of work on the acoustics of Mon register, the role of these cues in perception remains underexplored. This study addresses that gap by examining how register is realized in Mon, both in production and in perception.

Production. We collected acoustic and electroglottographic (EGG) recordings from 17 native Burma Mon speakers. From the vowel intervals, we extracted F0, F1, F2, H1*-A3*, cepstral peak prominence (CPP), and the EGG-based open quotient (OQ). Analyses using functional principal components analysis (FPCA) and linear mixed-effects regression revealed that head and chest registers in Mon differ systematically in both F0 and voice quality. The head register exhibited higher F0 and more modal voice quality, while the chest register showed lower F0 and breathier voice quality (Figure 1). Multidimensional FPCA further revealed strong covariation between F0 and voice quality.

Perception. We performed a perception experiment that systematically manipulates potential acoustic cues to Mon registers. A forced-choice identification study with 29 Burma Mon listeners showed that both F0 and voice quality were used as perceptual cues to distinguish head and chest register, aligning with the production results. However, F0 was more heavily weighted: listeners prioritized it over voice and vowel quality, especially when cues were in conflict (Figure 2).

Conclusion. Our production and perception results show that head and chest registers in Mon differ systematically in both F0 and voice quality, with larger differences in F0. However, in production, Mon speakers do not appear to control F0 and voice quality independently, nor do they treat one as primary and the other as a secondary by-product. Instead, the findings point to a unified production strategy, likely a lax laryngeal setting, that simultaneously gives rise to both cues (see Shorto 1967; Thongkum 1987,1990). In contrast, perception results suggest that listeners rely more heavily on F0, treating it as the primary cue to register. This asymmetry between production and perception suggests that Mon speakers may use different strategies for producing and perceiving register contrasts.

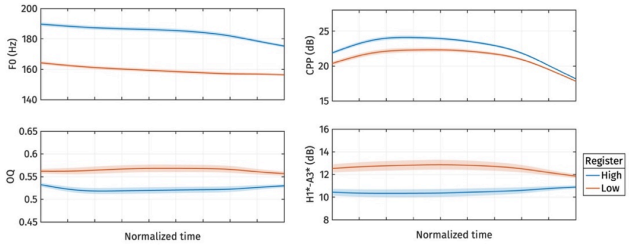

Figure 1. Reconstructed normalized F0, H1*−A3*, CPP, and OQ trajectories based on estimated marginal means of s_1 for each register.

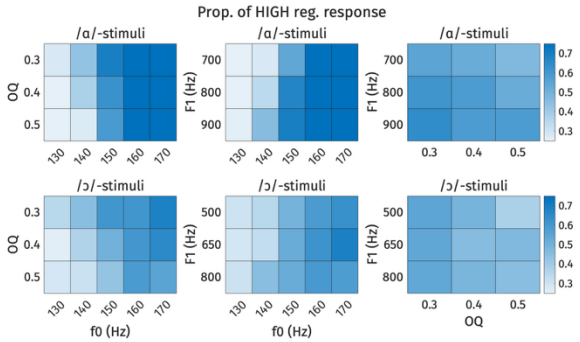

Figure 2. Heat plots of high register responses across each combination of F0, F1, and OQ. Each cell represents the proportion of high register responses for each stimulus. Darker shades represent higher proportion of high register responses.

SYMBOLIC NAMING IN VIETNAM'S URBAN LANDSCAPE: LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND ASPIRATIONAL DISCOURSE

Nguyễn Đức Long[1], Lương Thị Hiền

Abstract

This article examines naming practices in large-scale, master-planned housing projects in Vietnam as a form of *aspirational discourse*. The dataset comprises 205 proper names of mid- to high-end residential developments funded by private investors, spanning three major urban regions (North, Central, and South) between 2018 and 2025. The study adopts a three-tier analytical framework that integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2001) with the Linguistic Landscape approach (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), focusing on: (1) linguistic form, (2) symbolic discourse, and (3) semiotic urban landscape. Findings suggest that the naming of real estate projects functions as a form of *"soft architecture"*, in which language not only serves a referential function but also reflects and reproduces value systems linked to modernization, ecological orientation, and elite distinction in a market-oriented urbanization context. This research contributes to expanding the theoretical scope of linguistic landscape studies into the realm of privatized spatial production and proposes a novel interdisciplinary approach to urban linguistic analysis in the Vietnamese context.

Keywords: linguistic landscape, aspirational discourse, urban semiotics, critical discourse analysis

The Sound Changes of D in Vietnamese

Nathan Nguyen

This study examines reflexes in various Vietnamese dialects to reconstruct diachronic sound change from the original attested *d* phoneme and posits hypothesized paths for this change. The grapheme *d* in modern Vietnamese orthography represents the phoneme /z/ in Standard Vietnamese and /j/ in the other regional standard varieties of Vietnamese (Hwa-Froelich et al., 2002). The *d* phoneme is separate from the phoneme represented by *đ* which itself is /d/ or /ɗ/ (Haudricourt, 2010; Hwa-Froelich et al., 2002). When comparing Standard Vietnamese lexemes with cognates in other dialects, the Standard Vietnamese *d* sound corresponds to various phones including /j/, /dj/, /d/, /t/, /t^h/, /ð/, and /ʒ/ (Michaud et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2019; Pham, 2019). In reconstructions of Proto-Vietic, the original sound is said to be the initial obstruent /*t/ or /*d/, which split into two different phonemes *d* and *đ* due to natural sound change influenced by the position of the stop (Ferlus, 1992; Michaud et al., 2015). Specifically, an earlier form of Vietnamese permitted a CCV(C) syllable structure, and obstruents in the medial position likely experienced lenition of stops into fricatives (Michaud et al., 2015). Thus, a medial /*t/ or /*d/ became Middle Vietnamese /*ð/, while the Proto-Vietic /*t/ or /*d/ in an initial position evolved into modern *đ* /d/, according to reconstructions and evidence from neighboring languages with Vietnamese borrowings (Ferlus, 1992; Haudricourt, 2010). Using evidence from present-day Vietnamese dialects as well as historical documentation of Vietnamese, this study proposes various pathways of sound change from Old Vietnamese, including /*t/-/*d/ > /*ð/ > /*ʒ/ > /j/ > /z/.

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A Phonological Sketch of War-Jaintia

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This paper offers a descriptive overview of the phonology of War-Jaintia, a Khasian language belonging to the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austroasiatic family. The analysis is based on data collected from 22 villages in the West Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, as part of an ongoing initiative to develop a practical orthographic system for the language.

War-Jaintia displays a moderately complex syllable structure, with the canonical pattern (C)(C)V(C). The language allows up to two consonants in the onset position and one in the coda. Attested syllable types include V, VC, CV, CVC, CCV, and CCVC. Notably, syllabic consonants such as /m̩/, /n̩/, /ŋ̩/, /r̩/ or /l̩/ function independently as syllable nuclei, a feature observed across the Khasian subgroup.

The onset position in War-Jaintia accommodates both simple consonants (e.g., /d/, /n/) and clusters (e.g., /pl/, /kr/, /pd/), with no restrictions on which consonants may occur. In contrast, the coda is more limited, permitting only a restricted set of consonants: [-p, -t, -c, -k, -ʔ, -m, -n, -ɲ, -ŋ, -r, -j, -w]. Aspirated stops, voiced obstruents, and fricatives such as [-pʰ, -b, -tʰ, -d, -kʰ, -g, -ɟ, -s, -h] are excluded from the coda position. The language does not permit complex codas. War-Jaintia also exhibits minor syllables, reinforcing a characteristic trait of Khasian phonology.

The consonant inventory consists of 23 phonemes, including twelve stops (/p/, /ph/, /b/, /t/, /th/, /d/, /c/, /ɟ/, /k/, /kh/, /ʔ/), three fricatives (/s/, /ʃ/, /h/), four nasals (/m/, /n/, /ɲ/, /ŋ/), a trill (/r/), a lateral (/l/), and two approximants (/w/, /j/). Consonant clusters are commonly found, especially in onset positions. These are typically two-member clusters and generally favour hetero-organic combinations, while homo-organic clusters are rare and three-member onsets are not attested. This pattern aligns well with broader Austroasiatic tendencies.

War-Jaintia has a five-vowel system: /i/, /ɛ/, /a/, /u/, and /ɔ/. The vowel inventory is symmetrical, with two front, two back, and one central vowel. There is no contrastive vowel length, consistent with other Khasian languages. Two diphthongs, /ia/ and /ua/, are also attested.

This phonological analysis forms the foundation for the creation of the first alphabet for War-Jaintia in the Roman script, developed through close collaboration with the community to ensure both linguistic accuracy and community relevance.

On Applicative Constructions in Vietnamese and Some Southern Chinese Varieties

Trần Phan, Xin-Tian Lau, Wei-Tien Dylan Tsai

Introduction An applicative phrase (ApplP) involves an applicative head introducing a peripheral argument (Pylkkänen 2002; Tsai 2017, 2018; a.o.). This study compares a range of ApplPs from a cross-linguistic perspective, focusing on data from Standard Mandarin Chinese (MC), Taiwan Southern Min (TSM), Malaysian Mandarin (MM), Penang Hokkien (PH), and Vietnamese. We show that TSM, MM and PH display syntactic and semantic properties distinct from their Northern counterpart (i.e., Standard MC), while patterning with Vietnamese with respect to certain applicative construals.

Observations First, a GIVE-applicative with an extremity/ferocity construal (Lau & Tsai 2021) is attested in TSM (*hōo*), MM (*gei*), and Vietnamese (*cho*), see (1). Such reading is only possible in MC if the GIVE-applicative *gei* is absent.

(1) a. Guá beh lim *hōo* i kàu-khuì! [TSM]
1SG want drink GIVE 3SG satisfied
'I want to drink to my satisfaction!'

b. Tao muốn uống *cho* nó đã. [VNM]
1SG want drink GIVE 3SG satisfied
'I want to drink to my satisfaction!'

Second, only PH (but not MC or other Chinese varieties) allows for an ApplP where a WITH-applicative (*ka*) occurs postverbally, see (2a). Vietnamese permits a similar ApplP as in (2b-i); it however also permits the *ii*-reading where the extra argument denotes comitativity, not the source of a state of affairs.

(2) a. Lu e si *ka* i ah. [PH]
2SG will die WITH 3SG SFP
'You will suffer because of him!'

b. Mày sẽ chết *với* nó. [VNM]
2SG will die APPL 3SG satisfied
i. 'You will suffer because of him!'
ii. 'You will die/suffer with him.'

Third, as shown below, only the *i*-reading is allowed in MC, whereas MM and Vietnamese allow both readings.

(3) a. Ta mai-le wo san-ping jiu.
2SG buy-PRF 1SG three-CL wine
i. 'He bought 3 bottles of wine from me.' [MC/MM]
ii. 'He bought 3 bottles of wine for me.' [MM]

b. Nó mua tao ba chai rượu. [VNM]
2SG buy 1SG three CL wine
i. 'He bought 3 bottles of wine from me.'
ii. 'He bought 3 bottles of wine for me.'

Analysis We analyze MC/MM *gei*, TSM/PH *hoo* 'give' and *ka* 'with', and Vietnamese *cho* 'give' and *với* 'with' as applicative heads constituting part of the functional spine of the clause. The extra argument licensed by an applicative head enters an unselective binding relation with an operator in the left periphery. TSM *i* (also MM *ta*) and Vietnamese *nó* in (1) (as nonreferential pronominals introduced by a GIVE-applicative) are bound by a null operator (Op) in an Attitudinal Phrase, deriving the extremity/ferocity reading. MM *i* and Vietnamese *nó* in (2) (as referential pronominals introduced by a WITH-applicative) are associated with an Op in a Cause Phrase, enabling their construal as the causer of a state of affairs. The *i*-reading of (2b) is possible with preposition *với* introducing a VP-internal adjunct instead. (3a/b) suggest that an applicative head can be phonologically unrealized; the different interpretations of the peripheral argument (the 1SG pronoun here) may correspond to distinct covert applicative heads at work. Our observations regarding how these Southern Chinese varieties pattern with Vietnamese—but not with Mandarin Chinese—also promise interesting implications for discussions of language typology and potentially language contact in the (South)East Asian context.

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Writing with Feeling: Paralinguistic Strategies for Emotion and Intonation in Khasi YouTube Comments

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Digital communication often lacks the audible cues of spoken language such as intonation and pitch that are crucial for conveying emotion and nuance (Ladd, 2008). This study examines how Khasi speakers use paralinguistic features to express emotion and replicate intonational effects in written comments on the YouTube videos "Ngan ïaid khlem maphi// inspired by true love story//Gilbert Thongni" and "Ngan ïaid Khlem Maphi (female version)// Evanisha & Bidalin Thongni." Khasi-language comments were collected, anonymized, and analyzed for paralinguistic strategies including spelling variations, capitalization, punctuation, interjections, code-switching, and onomatopoeia. The findings reveal that Khasi commenters employ repeated letters and punctuation to imitate rising or emphatic tones, ALL CAPS for strong emphasis, ellipses and scattered punctuation to mimic pauses or hesitations, and interjections to convey affective states. Onomatopoeic expressions and code-switching between Khasi and English further enrich the emotional tone and simulate aspects of spoken interaction. These written strategies allow Khasi speakers to compensate for the absence of vocal prosody and maintain expressive richness in digital communication, paralleling patterns observed in other languages (Crystal, 2006; Androutsopoulos, 2011). The study highlights the adaptability of Khasi digital discourse and underscores the importance of shared cultural conventions in interpreting paralinguistic cues online.

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On the etymology of the word *kɪttuŋ* 'god' in Sora Evgeniya Renkovskaya

The Sora people live in eastern India, in southern Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh. The Sora language is the largest language of the Koraput Munda group (< Austro-Asiatic), which also includes the languages of neighboring tribes - Gorum, Gutob, Remo and Gta. The Sora traditionally had their own animist belief system, including ancestor veneration and shamanic practices, but many later converted to Christianity of various denominations, as well as various branches of Hinduism. The traditional pantheon of Sora includes *sonums* and *kɪttungs*. If sonums directly participate in the daily life of the Sora, "attack" people, and are the main cause of illnesses, then kɪttungs are deities of a higher order, creators of the world and its elements. An important and interesting fact about Sora beliefs is that in many cases Kɪttung is the only god – the creator of the world, the legislator, the hero of myths [Elwin 1955]. This is largely why this word was chosen to denote God in the Christian context. While [Shorto 2006] suggests that the word *sonum* may be related to the Proto-Mon-Khmer word **sdəm* 'to be possessed by spirits', no suggestion has ever been made about the etymology and relationship of the word *kɪttuŋ*. Cognates of this word are found in all Koraput Munda, cf. *kituŋ* 'god, month' in Gorum, *kituŋ* 'god' in Gutob, *kituŋ ~ keʔtuŋ* 'sky' in Remo, *kitoŋ* 'god' in Gta, and also *kiʔthuŋ ~ keʔthuŋ ~ kiʔtuŋ* 'Heaven' in Kharia [Donegan, Stampe 2004; Peterson 2009].

The compounded stem of the word *kɪttuŋ* is *tuŋ*. The form of the word *kɪttuŋ* suggests that it contains the prefix *kɪn-*, which has a number of phonetic variants and is commonly used in words denoting people, animals and plants, cf. *kəmboj* 'woman' (compounded stem *-boj*), *kɪnsoḍ, kɪssoḍ* 'dog' (*-soḍ*), *kəmbuḍ* 'bear' (*-buḍ*), *kɪnte* 'banana' (*-te*) etc. The original phonetic form of *kɪttuŋ* can thus be reconstructed as **kɪntuŋ*, where *kɪn-* is the prefix and *tuŋ* is the historical stem of the word. This stem coincides with the stem *tuŋ* of the word *atuŋ* 'gourd' (with prefix *a-*) with the cognates *atuŋ* in Gorum, *atuŋ* in Gutob, *kutuŋ* in Remo and *ntoŋ* in Gta [Donegan, Stampe 2004]. At first glance, it seems difficult to expect any connection, including etymological, between the god and the gourd. However, if we turn to Sora mythology, namely the myth of Kɪttung and the secondary creation of the world, it becomes clear that such a connection does exist. The myth tells of the ancestor deity who survived the Deluge together with his sister on a giant gourd and revived all living things anew. Subsequently, the creator god Kɪttung becomes a hypernym, a type of divine being, his name ceases to be associated with the gourd. At the same time, his biography is attributed to a new god named *Kurrajtuŋ* (also 'gourd') [Elwin 1955]. A similar cosmogonic and anthropogenic myth is widespread among most tribes of the southern regions of the states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh. An interesting linguistic parallel is found among the Dravidian-speaking tribes such as the Koya (Malkangiri district of Odisha) and the Gond-Maria (Bastar district of Chhattisgarh), whose ancestor is called *Dadaburka* (lit. brother-gourd) [Elwin 1949]. Outside India, the myth of escape in a gourd and the secondary creation of the world after the Deluge is widespread among the peoples of Southeast Asia and southern China [Dang 1993, Proschan 2001]; anthropologists also trace some names of the heroes of this myth to the word 'gourd'.

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Word order in Austroasiatic: Evidence from a parallel corpus

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Syntactic reconstruction has become a growing topic of interest for historical linguists, with methods and procedures for doing so being painstakingly developed (see Crisma & Longobardi 2009; Martins & Cardoso 2018 for a formalist perspective, Gerritsen & Stein 1992; Leino & Kuningas 2006; Barðdal & Gildea 2016 for a usage-based perspective). The general consensus is that any approach to reconstructing syntax needs to be data-driven, whereby annotated corpora from related languages can be compared in order to form hypotheses about syntactic proto-forms. Additionally, since all languages allow word order variation to some degree, this raises the question whether positing a "basic" word order for a proto-language is worth doing.

Recent broad comparative research indicates that the concept of "basic" word order is still valuable, noting that corpus-derived measures are highly correlated with expert determinations of word order in typological databases (Ring 2025a,b), allowing for the prediction of word order for historical languages. This suggests that observation of word order patterns in a language family may allow for insight into the historical development of the daughter languages.

The current research attempts to investigate this question with regard to Austroasiatic languages, leveraging data from the *taggedPBC*,[1] a large automatically-annotated dataset of portions of Bible translations from over 1,900 languages (largely based on the Parallel Bible Corpus [PBC]; Mayer & Cysouw, 2014). From this dataset I extract word order information from the 31 Austroasiatic languages in 9 branches that are represented, comparing word order proportions (Verb-initial, Verb-medial, Verb-final) between these languages (see Figure 1) with the pattern of proportions crosslinguistically. Of the 9 branches represented, the Bahnaric, Khasi-Palaung, Mundaic, and Katuic branches are represented by more than 2 languages.

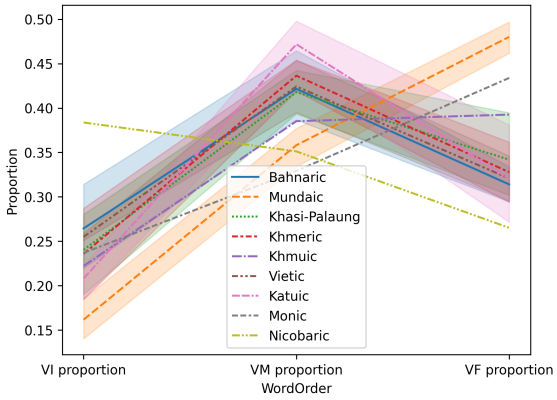

Figure 1: Word order proportions in 9 AA branches

Within these four branches, while Mundaic languages show a very clear Verb-final pattern, and Katuic languages show a clear Verb-medial pattern, the Bahnaric branch has a much higher proportion of Verb-initial structures than expected, while Khasi-Palaung has a much higher proportion of verb-final structures. This presentation interrogates the question of what such data can tell us regarding historical development, showing how individual verses from this dataset can be compared between these languages. Finally, I present concerns regarding this dataset, potential improvements, and propose some promising directions for reconstructing syntax.

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[1] https://github.com/lingdoc/taggedPBC/

The distribution of pitch accents in Khasi Intonation Structure

Ruth Rymbai, Barika Khyriem

This study investigates the complex interplay of factors that determine syllable accentuation within Khasi intonational phrases, with a particular focus on the role of pitch accents. Pitch accents are local intonational features associated with specific syllables, where prominence is achieved through a distinct change in pitch rather than by loudness or duration. Through acoustic analysis and elicited speech data from native Khasi speakers, this research examines how lexical stress, syntactic structure, information focus, and prosodic boundaries interact to govern the placement of pitch accents in Khasi. The findings reveal that syllable accentuation in Khasi emerges from the dynamic interaction of these linguistic and pragmatic factors, contributing new insights to the typology of pitch accent systems and the prosody of Austroasiatic languages.

To be precise, this study will analyse five factors that influence the distribution of pitch accents in Khasi:

1. Word Grouping: Prosodic structures often operate at the level of word groups or phrases, not just individual words.

2. Grammatical category of the word: Only stressed syllables in lexical words can be accented (e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs); function words (e.g. prepositions, determiners) are only accented when they occur at the end of the group, or when they are contrasted with another word.

3. Adjacency of stressed Syllables: The location of the stressed syllables relative to each other plays a role. If they are immediately adjacent, they can only both be accented when there is a major prosodic boundary between them.

4. Speaking rate and style: Accentuation depends on speaking style and rate of speech. Thus, if a speaker pronounces an utterance very quickly, he will not produce as many accents as in slow and careful speech.

5. Focus and emphasis: A speaker can use accents to convey emphasis or to highlight specific elements in an utterance.

Phonetic Analysis of Whistling Names in Kongthong: Patterns and Contexts

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Abstract

This study examines the phonetic characteristics of whistling names in Kongthong, a village in Meghalaya, India, renowned for its unique whistled naming system, where residents primarily speak the War variety of the Khasi language, a member of the Austroasiatic family. In this community, mothers assign each child a distinctive whistled name, derived from lullabies, in addition to their conventional names, shortly after birth. Despite growing interest in whistling languages, Kongthong's system remains underexplored, representing a gap in acoustic and cultural linguistics. This research primarily focuses on the phonetic analysis of approximately 20 whistling names from four families, investigating three distinct patterns: soft short names (used for intimate, close-range exchanges), sharp short names (conveying urgency or emotional intensity), and long full names (designed for long-distance communication), reflecting environmental adaptations. Using Praat, we extract acoustic features such as pitch, duration, intensity, and contour to reveal how these structures encode social and ecological functions. Supported by metadata and interviews, this study lays the foundation for broader future explorations of Kongthong's whistling names, including their relationship to Khasi's linguistic features, while contributing to ethnolinguistic and phonetic understanding of non-verbal communication systems within Austroasiatic communities.

Keywords: Whistling languages, phonetic analysis, Kongthong, Khasi language, Austroasiatic, ethnolinguistics, non-verbal communication

Finiteness and Subject-Verb Agreement in Santali Relative Clauses

Medha Sara Sam

Santali (Munda language spoken in the areas of Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal), a head final language, has both participial and correlative structures of relative clauses marked by distinct properties. One such property is the presence/absence of finiteness and subject-verb agreement in the relative structures. The reasoning of these distinct properties and the associated movements is the objective of this study.

The prenominal participial relative clause in Santali is marked by the lack of specific features, which distinguishes it from the correlative structures. The verb in the relative clause lacks - (a) the REL (relativizer); the verb is only marked by Aspect (b) the FIN (finiteness marker) (c) the subject-verb agreement. The data given below will demonstrate the same –

1. Ram-y asul-**akad** unɪ pusɪ dɔ dəʈ-ka-a
   Ram-SM raise-**PFV** DEM cat TOP run-PST-FIN
   The cat that Ram raised ran away.
2. Ram-y ɛm-**akad** kɪtəb Sita-y padhao-ked-a
   Ram-SM give-**PFV** book Sita-SM read-PST-FIN
   The book that Ram gave to Sita, she read (it).

The postnominal correlative structures has a relative pronoun/demonstrative (RP) *jãhãe* for [+animate], *jãha* for [-animate] and the verb is marked by aspect, by *-a* for finiteness (Anderson, 2015) and agrees with the animate relativized NP as shown in 3 and 4.

3. **Jãhãe** pusɪ kunj-rɛ ae nur-**len-a-e** unɪ dɔ gɔj-en-a-e
   anyone cat well-LOC ae fall-**PFV-FIN-3SG:SUBJ** that TOP die-PST-FIN-3SG:SUBJ
   The one that died, was the cat that fell into the well.
4. ərsɪ-rɛ **jũhũe** hoɽ Sita-y ɲɛl-ɲam-**led-a-e** unɪ
   mirror-LOC **anyone** person Sita-SM see-find-**PST.PFV-FIN-3SG:SUBJ** that
   dɔ aaye- gɛ kan-a-e
   TOP aaye-FOC be-FIN-3SG:SUB
   The person that Sita saw in the mirror was herself$_i$/her$_k$.

The above features are summarized as a template below :

- Correlative - postnominal → [RP … v-Asp-FIN-Agr …]
- Participial - pre-nominal → [… v-Asp …]

From the data above, it is observed that, in Santali, there is a lack of subject-verb agreement only in participial structure and not in the correlative. It is also such that, in the participial relative clause, the lack of the finiteness marker, is used as the strategy for relativization. These properties lead to the question - does the absence of finiteness in the embedded clause correlate with the lack of agreement on the verb ?

Earlier literature (Mayuri et al, 2020) did not take into account the difference in subject-verb agreement in the two types of relative clause structures. The current proposal will extend the earlier study and capture the structural relations in detail by considering the defective nature of finiteness in participial relatives. This "Absent/Defective Finiteness" analysis will be claimed to account for the differential subject-verb agreement marking in the participial and correlative structures in Santali.

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CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN TAMPUAN

Irina Samarina, Sergey Dmitrenko

1. Tampuan language (ISO 639-3 tpu) is spoken in northeastern Cambodia in Ratanakiri province. Like many other sesquisyllabic languages of the MSEA linguistic area, it can simultaneously accommodate more than one strategy for expressing the same grammatical meaning, reflecting different stages of the historical development of the language. The coexistence of three different types of causative constructions in modern Tampuan once again confirms this statement.

2. **Morphological causative** is now unproductive in Tampuan, as in most modern Mon-Khmer languages. There were encountered only a few dozen derivative verbs containing the causative prefix *paɴ-* : *taːw* ‘to stand’ → ***pan-****taːw* ‘to put upright’; *kɛh* ‘to finish; already’ → ***paŋ-****kɛh* ‘to finish (*work*)’ etc.; cf. also a) causative prefix *saɴ-*: *toʔ* ‘to be hot’ → ***san-****toʔ* ‘to make hot’; b) causative prefix *maɴ-* in northern dialects of Tampuan (Crowly et al. 2007).

3. **“Mixed“ causative** (the causative marker *taʔ* and the causative prefix ʔɴ- are used simultaneously to form a causative construction) is unproductive too: *par* ‘to fly’ → ***taʔ ʔm-****par* ‘to make X fly’; *ɗaʔ* ‘good, clean’ → ***taʔ ʔn-****ɗaʔ* ‘to improve, to clean’; *ʔi̯əŋ* ‘to be numerous’ → ***taʔ ʔŋ-****ʔi̯əŋ* ‘to increase’ (Crowly et al. 2007).

4. **Periphrastic causative** is constructed with grammaticalised verb *ʔɔn* ‘to give’ (1) or sometimes with the causative marker *taʔ* (2). Constructions with the grammaticalised verb *ʔɔn* ‘to give’ are an areal phenomenon (cf. Khmer *ʔaoj* ‘to give’). Beside general causative meaning periphrastic causative constructions can express also benefactive (3), purposive (2, 4), permissive, or jussive meaning.

5. Although causative constructions with the causative prefix *paɴ-* and the causative marker *taʔ* are “frozen”, unproductive, elicitation surveys indicate they are often understood as equivalents to periphrastic causative constructions (5a, 5b); cf. (6a, 6b), where the transformation of causative constructions is impossible.

Examples

(1) *koːn* ***ʔɔn*** *jaʔ* *kraʔ* *mot* *tɤŋ* *kanoŋ* *hɔi̯*
child to.give;CAUS grandmother old to.enter LOC inside house
‘The child let/helped the old woman to enter into the house’.

(2) *pu̯ː* *blɛh* *raɛoːm* *blɛh* *raɛoːm* *ʔi̯əŋ~ʔi̯əŋ* ***taʔ*** *ʔɛː* *ti̯ː* *ʔi̯əŋ* *nɔh*
3INDF to.pick rachom.grass to pick rachom.grass many~RED CAUS;PURP 3 to.have many DM
‘They pick rachom-grass, pick a lot of rachom-grass, so that there is a lot of it’.

(3) *mɤiʔ* *pi̯ʔ* *pu̯ː* *prn̥ʔ* *hɤi̯* ***ʔɔn*** *ka=* *koːn* *rouh* *pu̯ː* *nɔh*
mother father 3.INDF to.do house to.give;CAUS BNF child girl 3.INDF DM
‘Parents build a house for their unmarried daughter’.

(4) *paʔ* *ɗaːr* *jaŋ* *pu̯ː* *ci̯ək* *kɔh* *mpoŋ* *naːwʔ* ***taʔ*** *kɔh* *mpoŋ*
LOC d ay after 3INDF to.lead to.chop beam again CAUS;PURP to.chop beam

kɔh *ɲaː* *ti̯ː* *kɛh₁ nɔh₂ nɔː₃*
to chop what to.have DM1+2+3
‘They agree to cut more beams tomorrow, to cut beams and all that kind’.

(5a) *ʔaŋ* ***san-****toʔ* *ti̯ək*
1SG CAUS-hot water
‘I boiled water’

(5b) *ʔaŋ* ***ʔɔn*** *ti̯ək* *toʔ*
1SG to.give;CAUS water hot
‘I boiled water’

(6a) *kɛh₁ nɔh₂ nɔː₃* ***taʔ*** *ʔɛː* *trah*
DM1,2,3 CAUS 3 to.level.out
And then it (*the mixture of rice and chaff*) is leveled’

(6b) *ʔaŋ* ***ʔɔn*** *ʔɛː* *trah*
1SG to.give;CAUS 3 to.level.out
‘I leveled it’

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Paul Sidwell

*Au revoir *oa – moins c'est plus*

In this talk I discuss minor revisions to the proto-Austroasiatic (pAA) vocalism proposed by Sidwell & Alves (2023) and Sidwell (2024), with special attention to ***oa**. This nuclei was proposed for the correspondence of Nancowry (Nicobarese) **uá/úa** with **ɔː** elsewhere in AA.

A preliminary account of proto-Nicobarese vocalism is offered in Sidwell (2018). Broadly speaking, Car preserves AA length contrast in vowels but lacks diphthongs in closed syllables. At the same time, Nancowry does not contrast vowel length, but shows multiple diphthong nuclei: **uá, úa, iá, ía, ɯ́a** [**oa, uə, ea, iə, ɯə**] respecitvely in Radhakrishnan's (1970/1981) notation. Comparative reconstruction indicates that **ía**, **úa** and **ɯ́a** reflect earlier ***i**ː, ***u**ː, ***ɨ**ː, which is not an unusual pattern in AA (e.g. note the strong parallel in West-Bahnaric ***i**ː, ***u**ː, ***ɨ**ː > Laven ***ie**, ***uo**, ***ɨə**). This leaves examples as Nancowry **kúan** 'child', **júaj** 'housefly' indicating ***ku**ː**n**, ***ru**ː**j** respectively, while the bulk of AA reflexes of these etyma suggest ***kɔ**ː**n** and ***rɔ**ː**j**. Nonetheless, Written Khasi *khún*, pre-Angkorian Khmer *kūn* 'child', Mod. Khmer ឬញ *ruj* 'fly' etc. suggest pAA ***ku**ː**n**, ***ru**ː**j** variants alongside pAA ***kɔ**ː**n** and ***rɔ**ː**j** which are more strongly supported.

More problematic is Nancowry **uá** [**oa**]. It corresponds variously to Car **ɔː** and **ɛ(ː)**, the former is straightforward, but the latter corresponds to multiple back vowels elsewhere in AA (e.g. Car **fɛ**ː**n** 'four', **mɛh** 'nose', **tɛh** 'breast', cf. Khmu **puən**, **muh**, Old Khmer **ɗɔh**). In 2018 I reconstructed pNicobarese ***oa** for etyma with this **ɛ(ː)** reflex in Car, but this hardly explains the front vowel in Car. Given the consistency of rounded back reflexes elsewhere in all other AA branches, it is unlikely that these Car **ɛ(ː)** preserve some old fronting feature in pAA. At the same time, the differences in openness among reflexes also suggest that we are not dealing with a single pAA nucleus, but multiple merges. Perhaps these results from word games or ritual avoidance practices (word taboos are a strong feature of Nicobarese). On that basis I propose that in these cases priority be given to the timbre of the Nancowry reflexes, i.e. more likely to contextually support pNicobarese ***ua** or *ɔː. This removes the ***oa** nucleus from the emergent pAA reconstruction. Admittedly this relies on some element of speculation, but as a general rule I favour avoiding introducing complexity into pAA to explain facts that are isolated to individual languages or small subgroups.

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Dearth of case-marking in Noun Incorporation (NI) in Pnar

Imontre Sutnga

This paper examines case marking through noun incorporation (NI) in Pnar. Pnar is an understudied language spoken in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. Pnar belongs to the Mon-khmer family. In this paper, Sutnga, a variety of Pnar is taken for research study.Sutnga-Pnar is one of the 12 dialects of Pnar listed by Daladier (2010). Its speakers are widespreadaround the state and also in the bordering areas like Bangladesh and Assam. Pnar is grouped in theNorthern subgroup of the Mon-Khmer languagesof Austro-Asiatic (Sidwell, 2009) which mayhave basic word order patterns like SVO, VSO, VOS (Bareh 2007, 2014; Sutnga 2019).

Noun Incorporation (NI) is a case of head to head movement where an X^0 level category moves to another X^0 level category to form a morphologically complex category which is an X^0 level category.This kind of movement creates a syntactic link between the two positions in the phrase marker. This movement can be reduced to incorporation according to (Baker 1988, 2009).
In Sutnga, the NP object skur'school' occurs with a locative element *cʰa* and the verb *iaʔ*'drive' precedes the subject agreement element *u*(1a).However, in (b), after the incorporation ofthe NP *dukan*'shop', the locative element does not seem to occur with it.

1. (a) u jɔn iaʔ u o naŋroi cʰa dukan
3msg john take 3msg 3msg nangroi loc dukan
'John take Nangroi to shop'

(b) u jɔn iaʔ dukan u o naŋroi <cʰa dukan>
3msg john take shop 3msg 3msg nangroi
'John take Nangroi to shop'

From the above examples, it is shown that although the incorporation of the external elements to the verbal, leaving its case marker particles, the external element is still case marked. The same explanation holds for example 2(b).

2. (a) u jɔn e ja u ja u ksoo
3msg john give food 3msg acc 3msg dog
'John give food to the dog'

(b) u jɔn e ja ksoo u <ja u ksoo>
3msg john give food dog 3msg
'John give food to the dog'

This claim is further enhanced in terms of the distribution of predicate types and their relations with the various features of the incorporating object (Sutnga 2024).

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Capturing Khasi Voices: Language Documentation Through Folktale Storytelling

Evarisha Mercy Syiem

This paper explores the role of audio recordings of Khasi folktales, captured during a live storytelling session at the TALAWIAR Narrative Festival, in advancing language documentation and description. Conducted as part of a programme dedicated to celebrating Northeast India's vibrant oral traditions, the session provided a rich, naturalistic context for the collection of authentic spoken Khasi. These recordings serve as invaluable primary data for the narrative structures and discourse patterns unique to Khasi oral storytelling. By enabling detailed examination of grammar, vocabulary, and cultural expression as they occur in natural speech, the folktale recordings support comprehensive language description and contribute to the preservation of Khasi oral heritage. The study highlights the importance of recording storytelling in communal, culturally meaningful settings, demonstrating how such documentation efforts can bridge linguistic research and the safeguarding of indigenous knowledge and traditions.

The Grammatical role of Aesthetic Components in Pnar Discourse

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Abstract

Human language is often described as a mode of communication, which is true in essence. Often in the process of describing languages, we mostly focus on describing the functions of the basic grammatical categories, but ignore the aesthetic components used by native speakers. Diffloth (1972) was the first scholar to have mentioned the term 'Expressives' in the study of a Mon-Khmer language, calling it 'a totally different kind of linguistics animal.' According to him 'they represent a mode of meaning quite different from the analytic-synthetic noun-verb system'. In (1979) he further mentioned that –

> *'Expressives are not a sort of "pre-linguistic' form of speech, somehow half-way between mimicry and fully structured linguistic form.' He further stated that 'they are in fact, the other end of the spectrum, a sort of "post-linguistic" stage where the structural elements necessary for prosaic language are deliberately re-arranged and exploited for their iconic properties, and used for aesthetic communication.'* (p.58)

This paper will discuss the grammatical properties of aesthetic components which include (1) Reduplication (2) Echo Words and (3) Onomatopoeia in the discourse of Pnar. The expressive forms in Pnar are observed to have been more productive in the spoken form especially in the discourse of narratives. To elaborate on why it is important to look into the properties of aesthetic components in discourse, (1) to (3) exemplifies how the meaning of each structure varies from each other when aesthetic components are added to it.

(1) cʰɔŋ hɛjtu mɔ
sit *there* *EMPH*
'Sit there, okay.'

(2) cʰɔŋ cʰɔŋ hɛjtu mɔ
sit sit there EMPH
'Please sit there, okay.'

(3) cʰɔŋ hɛjtu tak nɛ, mɔ
sit there EXP EMPH, EMPH
'Please sit there for a minute, okay.'

(1) is an imperative sentence with a basic verb *cʰɔŋ*'sit' asking someone to sit down. Although (1) seems similar in structure to (2), the addition of another *cʰɔŋ* 'sit' i.e. when a word is reduplicated, implies a polite way of asking someone to sit. When an expressive like *tak*' an expression indicating wait for a moment' is added to the verb *cʰɔŋ* 'sit', the action implies a request for someone to sit and wait for a moment.

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Towards a diachronic typology of Nicobarese languages:
Uncommon features in the Austroasiatic context and how they can be explained

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Nicobarese languages are uncommon in several ways in comparison to other Austroasiatic (AA) languages. The present paper examines phonological, morphological and syntactic features that exhibit values in Nicobarese languages that are different from those in the majority of AA languages, especially those spoken in Mainland Southeast Asia (MSEA). It then aims at explaining these differences by investigating the diachrony of AA languages and also taking into account potential contact influence of Austronesian (AN) languages spoken in western Island Southeast Asia (WISEA).

The paper demonstrates that some deviations are the result of a more conservative diachronic behavior of Nicobarese languages. For instance, verb-initial word order found in Nicobarese languages is presumably a retention from proto-AA, whereas most other AA languages abandoned this word order pattern. Other deviations of Nicobarese languages, on the other hand, are innovations. The paper argues that some of these innovations can be explained in terms of language contact with AN languages.

Generally, Nicobarese languages are phonologically less complex than many AA languages of MSEA. For instance, they only have a single (voiceless unaspirated) stop series and no phonation (register) or tone contrasts. On the other hand, they are morphologically more complex than AA languages of MSEA (but they are not as complex as Munda languages). Some of these more complex patterns are also found in some AN languages of WISEA and might thus be the result of language contact. This includes, for instance, the presence of verbal agreement.

The data for this investigation are drawn from both language descriptions and typological databases.

Keywords: Nicobarese, typology, diachrony

The intensive prefix *kʌp-* in Rumai Palaung

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In Rumai Palaung, an Austroasiatic language of the Palaungic branch, there are several verbal affixes. Most of them are already described (Weymuth 2018), but during further analysis, the intensive prefix *kʌp-* turned up. The prefix is derived from the Rumai verb *kʌp* 'tight', and the verb is a loan from Shan *kêp* 'tight, not loose'. The verbal source of the prefix could be a hint that *kʌp* is a preverbal secondary verb. However, the preverbal secondary verbs take all the affixes like *bɛ* 'can' in example (1), while the main verb (here *cʰeəp* 'wear') appears without any affixes (Weymuth 2023). *kʌp*, on the other hand, is together with the other verbal affixes attached to the main (or preverbal secondary) verb (1, 2). Example (1) also shows that, besides the negative affixes, the irrealis *nʌŋ-* can occur together with the intensifier *kʌp-*. Whether this is also possible for other verbal prefixes is not yet clear.

(1) *ʔaːw-**bɛ**-maʔ lʌʔ cʰeəp nʌŋ-**kʌp**-ʔumbân tʌʔ ʔî*
NEG-can-NEG COMP wear IRR-INT-equal OBL others
'(He) could not wear what was equal to (what) others (wore).'

(2) *kʰaj duŋ pʰlâːn jê jê ʔaːw-**kʌp**-meəh-maʔ ca nʌŋ-hôm*
time when poor 1PL.EXCL 1PL.EXCL NEG-INT-exist-NEG PURP IRR-eat
'When our family was very poor, we didn't have much to eat.'

As already mentioned, the verb *kʌp* is a loan from Shan. In Shan, the source verb *kêp* 'tight, not loose' is not used as an intensifier. But there is the Burmese adverb *ʔətìn* 'harshly, violently, against one's will', derived from the verb *tìn* 'tighten, taut, unrelenting, stern', that has a similar function (Jenny and Hnin Tun 2016:437). That means, there is a loan from Shan, and a calque from Burmese. Example (3) is Rumai, and example (4) is the corresponding sentence in Burmese.

(3) *kʰəleəp nî ʔaːw-**kʌp**-dâːŋ-maʔ*
house PROX NEG-INT-big-NEG
'This house is not very big.'

(4) Burmese
*ʔein-gá **ʔətìn** mə-tɕì-bù*
house-SBJ by.force NEG-big-NEG
'This house is not very big.'

The translations for *kʌp-* are 'much' (2), 'very' (3), or 'really', but sometimes the prefix is not translated (1). When negated, the scope of negation is on the intensifier, as the verb itself is not negated, but only weakened.

The aim of this paper is to describe the intensifier *kʌp-*, to show the different features of its occurrence, and its position among the other verbal affixes.

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