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# Abstracts

(in alphabetical order by surname of first author)

## Sociolinguistic research on Tagin of Arunachal Pradesh

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Tagin is a tribal community found mostly in the Daporijo area of Upper Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh in India. Their main centres of habitation are in and around the Daporijo administrative headquarters. The Tagin area extends in altitude from 1000 feet to 18,000 feet above sea level. The Tagins themselves seem to have always used this name.

The language spoken by the Tagin community is Tagin, which belongs to the North Assam branch of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family (and has affinities with the Adi languages of the Tibeto-Burman family). The language is an unwritten one. The other languages spoken by the Tagins are Hindi, Assamese, English, Nepali, and the languages of their neighbours, Gallong and Hill Miri. The scripts used are Devanagiri, Assamese and Roman.

| **Year** | **Population** |
|---|---|
| 1981 | 27,122 |
| 1991 | 32,720 |
| 2001 | 38,244 |

**1. Population figures according to government census**

In this paper my attempt is to bring out some general conclusions about lexical similarity, language use, attitude and vitality of Tagin varieties using the data I collected from the region.

*Lexical similarity* study was carried out using six wordlists (307 item word list) collected from different locations among Tagin. This is a common method of measuring the relationship among speech varieties to compare the degree of similarity in their vocabularies. This process of evaluation was carried out according to standards set forth in Blair (1990: 30–33) and facilitated through the use of a computer program called *WordSurv* (Wimbish 1989).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (l) **Baki/U.Subansiri** | | | | | |
| 83 | (d) **Taliha/U.Subansiri** | | | | |
| 75 | 78 | (n) **Maskia/U.Subansiri** | | | |
| 77 | 74 | 70 | (k) **Nacho/U.Subansiri** | | |
| 69 | 69 | 68 | 66 | (j) **Sippi/U.Subansiri** | |
| 67 | 65 | 72 | 64 | 59 | (f) **Takseng/U.Subansiri** |

**2. Lexical Similarity percentages Among Tagin**

Although it is difficult to say that there is no dialectical variation within the varieties, reported comprehension within each variety is not low as portrayed here.

As analysis of the questionnaire responses from the speakers proves that Tagin is used widely almost in all important domains and the mother tongue speakers have a very positive attitude towards it, the vitality of this variety may not be a factor to be questioned. It would be hard to conclude that there is no dialectical variation within Tagin. However, it appears that Tagins like to see their language developed.

The variety that could be considered as central for Tagin would be that spoken in and around Nacho and Siyum Circle of Upper Subansiri District although few people from one area (Sippi) mentioned this variety as a little different one from theirs.

However, it is hard to state about the dialectical variation within Tagin with the given data, which would probably be more clarified through further investigation.

## Gender in Aimol

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Aimol is a recognized tribe of Manipur. The total population of Aimol according to census-2001 is 2,643. The Aimol tribe is found in Chandel, Churachandpur and Senapati district of Manipur. The Aimols are mostly found in the plain or valley of Manipur. The Aimol language belongs to the Old Kuki sub-group of Kuki-Chin of the Tibeto-Burman language family (Grierson 1904: 245). It is an agglutinative as well as tonal language. The word order of Aimol language is subject-object-verb. Here the paper attempts to find out different types of gender found in both animate and inanimate objects in Aimol. Details will be discussed in the conference.

There is no grammatical gender in Aimol. Human and animate nouns are referred to as masculine or feminine on the basis of natural sex. For human beings, the suffix *-pa* indicates 'male' and *-nu* indicates 'female'.

| | **Male** | | **Female** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | *kəpa* | 'father' | *kənu* | 'mother' |
| (b) | *puənrəsukpa* | 'washer man' | *puənrəsuknu* | 'washerwoman' |

There are other nouns which do not possess any generic name. Male and female are distinguished by using words indicating opposite sex.

| | **Male** | | **Female** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | *ətərpa* | 'old man' | *ətərnu* | 'old woman' |
| (b) | *pəsəl* | 'boy' | *numəj* | 'girl' |

Male and female are also indicated by *-k$^h$oŋ* for 'male (bird)', *-cəl* for 'male (animal, insect or plant)' but the female suffix *-puj* is used for animal, birds, insects and plants.

| | **Animal** | | | | **Bird** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Male** | | **Female** | | **Male** | | **Female** | |
| (a) | *serat-cəl* | 'bull' | *serat-puj* | 'cow' | *ar- k$^h$oŋ* | 'cock' | *ar-puj* | 'hen' |
| (b) | *uj-cəl* | 'dog' | *uj-puj* | 'bitch' | | | | |

## Grammatical Function Changing Rules in Assamese

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This paper looks into two Grammatical Function (GF) rules namely passives and causatives in Assamese, a language spoken in North East India. Passives are best known of GF changing processes. Assamese allows both periphrastic and morphological passive constructions along the lines of Keenan and Dryer (2007). In periphrastic passive constructions, auxiliary verbs like *ho* 'be' and *ja* 'go' follow the main verb. The auxiliary *ho* 'be' is the *being* or *becoming* type verb and *ja* 'go' is a motion type verb. In (1a) and (2a) we have the active sentences and in (1b) and (2b) the passive counter part.

1a. *ram-e* *kaam-tu* *kor-il-e.*
Ram-AGT work-CL do-PST-3P
'Ram did the work.'

1b. *kaam-tu* *kor-a* *hol.*
work-CL do-NF be-PST
'The work has been done.'

2a. *moi* *ta-k* *iyar pora* *dek$^h$-ũ.*
I-NOM him-ACC here POSP see-1$^{ST}$ P
'I see him from here.'

2b. *ta-k* *iyar pora* *dek$^h$-a* *ja-i.*
him-ACC here POSP see-NF go-3P
'He can be seen from here.'

The periphrastic passives in (1b) and (2b) show that the subject of the active sentences (1a) and (2a) gets deleted. The main verbs of the passive sentences *kor* 'do' and *dekh* 'see' take the non-finite marker *-a* and the auxiliary verbs take tense and agreement markers. The objects NP *tak* 'him' in (2a) retains the accusative case marker *-ak* in (2b). The grammatical subject in (2b) retains the accusative case marker if [+ animate]. Though Assamese allows the

subject → oblique phrase (or null), the second rules of passivization namely object → subject need investigation.

Morphological passives do not take an auxiliary verb; instead, the passive morpheme *-i* suffixes to the main verb as in (3):

3. *iyar pora kamakhya dek$^{h}$-i.*
here POSP kamakhya see-PASS
'Kamakhya is seen from here.'

In (4), we have an instance of a causative construction.

4. *moi tar-dwara / hotuwai kaam-tu kor-a-l-u.*
I he-GEN POSP work-CL do-CAUS-PST-1$^{ST}$ P
'I got the work done by him.'

Assamese causative markers have three forms *-a*, *-uwa,* and *-owa*. These three forms are mainly phonological variants of the causative morpheme *-uwa*. Causative constructions in Assamese do not conform to the hierarchical steps of Comrie (1976). The causee, i.e., the lower subject does not surface with dative case but instead with oblique case, thereby going lower in the hierarchy than predicted by Comrie. In Assamese the hierarchical precedence does not work. The case system seems more a case of "extended demotion" as per Comrie (1976). The two GF rules can operate in one construction as in (6) below, where causitivazation precedes passivization.

6. *(mu-r dwara) ram-ar hotuwai hari-k pit-uwa-ho-l.*
me-GEN POSP ram-GEN POSP hari-ACC beat-CAUS-be-PST
'Hari was made to be beaten by Ram (by me).'

From the Assamese data it is evident that the case system of the language needs probing.

## A preliminary sketch of Bugun phonology

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Khowa or Bugun is one of languages of the Kho-Bwa group of languages. While the 2002 census conducted by the Indian government puts the number of Bugun speakers at 1384, van Driem (2007) estimates that the number of Bugun speakers is about 800 and it is a language on the verge of extinction.

This study aims at providing a basic sketch of Bugun phonology based on field recordings done by the first author of the paper. Bugun speech data was collected from the two Bugun speaking areas, Singchung and Wanghoo of West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Three Bugun speakers were recorded reading isolated words and phrases in Bugun. In total, there were 292 isolated words collected from the Bugun speakers. The data collected from the three speakers was transferred to a personal computer for acoustic analysis. The acoustic analyses of the Bugun sounds are expected to provide a sketch of the consonantal and vowel inventory available in the language. Apart from that, the acoustic study also attempted to see the number of tones available in Bugun phonology.

In terms of consonants, this study also sheds some light into the complex onsets of Bugun. Again, in case of onset consonants, the first author heard the [f] and [v] alternatively

produced as [ɸ] and [β], respectively. The current study uses acoustic measures to see if this distinction exists phonetically. The first author also reported hearing some of the Bugun stops alternating between being voiced and voiceless. Hence, the stop consonants will be subjected to VOT measurements to see if Bugun plosive consonants maintain the voicing distinction consistently or not.

In this study we would like to present a preliminary sketch of the Bugun phonology, supported by acoustic analyses of Bugun speech sounds. This study hopes to contribute towards the typology of Tibeto-Burman languages.

## The Wihu-song of the Tangsa (Naga): Poetry and linguistic forms, meaning and the transformation to a symbol of identity

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The Tangsa (Naga) people of NE India and Burma comprise many sub-tribes, almost all of them having distinctive varieties of oral language and cultural features. The distinctive language varieties are in some cases very similar, but in some cases so divergent that linguistic varieties spoken people from different Tangsa sub-tribes are not mutually intelligible.

Within Tangsa, the various sub-tribes that have migrated most recently into the plains of Assam and the hills of Arunachal Pradesh from the Burma side, are often grouped together under the title Pangwa. There are at least 20 Pangwa groups in India, some of which are also found in Burma and some not. These days most of the Pangwa are Christian but a small number maintain their traditional beliefs and practices. Older people of the Pangwa group can understand each other better than younger people.

In this paper, we will explore in more detail, the Wihu-song, found in all of the Pangwa groups that we have investigated. The Wihu song is sung in different cultural settings and can be considered as a form of oral discourse serving different purposes. It can also vary in its content and, in some versions, can be sung over several hours, involving one or more singers. Essentially however, it is a song of praise to the goddess or spirit of mother earth (Wihu) and can elaborate on pastoral prosperity and well-being or narrate a kind of migration history of the Tangsa.

There are several styles of Tangsa songs, of which Wihu is one. These styles can share the same content – the same set of words being used in a sacrifice song, a spirit calling song or even a love song. This suggests that each of these songs has a deeper meaning than that of the words alone. The words sung are both content words and poetic forms used for rhyming and metrical purposes. Moreover, the words found in the Wihu songs are often in special song language, not used in everyday speech and not understood by all. Some of these may represent forms that would have been found in a proto-Tangsa speech, and are thus archaisms in use, perhaps, in some communities but not in others. In the past Wihu song would have been understood by all Pangwa, even when their everyday speech was not mutually intelligible.

Today there are not many Tangsa left who can sing the Wihu song, even fewer who understand the archaic song language, and moreover younger people often cannot understand Tangsa varieties other than their own. The fact that the Tangsa languages are all oral has added to the problem of documentation and transmission of this unique oral tradition. Using actual examples, we would like to conjecture that soon the Wihu-song will be transformed into just a symbol of cultural identity for the Tangsa, and will be reinvented and retained in a

much shorter form which will continue to be ritually sung on festive occasions by the Tangsa in the years to come.

## Relational Nouns in Thadou

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Thadou, also called Kuki or Thadou Kuki, is a Kuki-Chin language primarily spoken in Manipur State, India and adjoining regions of India and Myanmar. According to *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009) the total speaking population is 231,200. The examples discussed are taken from *Pathen Thutheng Bu* (The Holy Bible in Thadou Kuki, 2008) and cited in the orthography used there.

In example (1), the word ***na****chung****u****va* appears to contain the prefix *na-*, which often indicates agreement of a verb with its second person subject, and the suffix *-u*, which often indicates agreement of a verb with its plural subject.

(1) *mihon* ***na****chung****u****va jouthua thugilou* ***a****sei teng****u****le*
person-PL-BY 2-about-PL-P various-P word-good-NEG 3-say time-PL-C
'when people say bad things about you' (Mt 5:11)

But *nachunguva* 'about you' is not an instance of subject-verb agreement, because *chung* is not a verb but a noun. Its literal meaning is something like 'top' and it often functions in Thadou like an English preposition. Syntactically it presupposes a genitive noun phrase; the latter is realized as *na-* and *-u*. The *a* which follows *-u* is a postposition, and the intervening *v* represents a phonological adjustment between the number agreement suffix and the postposition. The analogous English construction is something like 'on top of'. Nouns like Thadou *chung* or English 'top' are sometimes termed relational nouns.

Variations in the structure are seen in (2) through (4):

(2) *Aman mipi chengse chu amun mol chunga akaltouvin;*
s/he-BY people many TOP 3-see-C hill onto 3-go-PERF-C
'seeing many people, he went onto a hill' (Mt 5: 1)

(3) *naosen umna chunga chun akingan ahi.*
child be-NOM over -P TOP 3-stop-C 3-be
'it stopped over where the child was' (Mt 2:10)

(4) *Chunga leng vacha khu ngaitouvin,*
top-P palace bird TOP look-PERF-C
'look at the birds of the sky' (Mt 6:26)

(2) shows an overt genitive noun phrase: *mol chunga* 'onto a hill'; (3) a nominalized clause: *[naosen umna] chunga* 'where the child was'; and (4) non-specification of any genitive: *chunga leng* 'the palace above' (i. e. 'the sky'). The paper will explore this Thadou construction in comparison with other Kuki-Chin languages.

## A preliminary study on Hakhun phonology

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This paper is a preliminary description of the phonology of one of the Tangsa varieties, called *Hakhun*. Hakhun is a sub-tribe of the larger Tangsa Naga community, which consists of several other sub-tribes such as Cholim, Lochang, Youngkuk, Tikhak, Morang, etc. The Hakhun call themselves as well as their language /haʔkʰun/. Within India, they live in Assam, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. Outside India, they live in Burma.

This paper is based on data collected from a small Hakhun village called Molu Goan, located at Ledo in the District of Tinsukia, Assam. This variety of Tangsa has not yet been described. This paper offers a preliminary description of Hakhun phonology. It describes the syllable structure, consonants, vowels, and tones of Hakhun. Acoustic measurements are used to support the analysis.

Hakhun has a consonantal system consisting of a series of stops contrasting three voicing types (voiceless, aspirated, and voiced) at five places of articulation (bilabial, alveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal). Besides the stops there are four nasals, four fricatives, two liquids, and two glides. Hakhun contrasts seven vowels. Mean and standard deviation of voice onset time are given for each stop type. F1, F2, and F3 are provided for each of Hakhun vowels.

Pitch is contrastive in Hakhun. It contrasts between a high, low, and a low falling pitch. Length is not contrastive in Hakhun. However, high pitched words tend to be shorter than the low pitched counterparts. Measurements of the pitch are given for each of the pitch types.

## The "sixth vowel" in the Boro-Garo languages

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Most languages of the Boro-Garo subgroup of Tibeto-Burman have relatively simple vowel systems. Most, probably all, have the five vowels that are common to many of the world's languages: i, e, a, o, u. Most of them have just one additional vowel, and it is considerably more variable than the common five. The sixth vowel is never front, low, or rounded, but it varies in position from high back to mid-central, and it is often shorter than the other vowels. (B-G languages also have a few diphthongs, but these are ignored here.)

Tiwa is the only B-G language that I know to lack a sixth vowel. In Garo the sixth vowel is found only in closed syllables, where it is high, back, unrounded and quite tense. It is in near perfect complementary distribution with the high front unrounded [i] which almost always occurs only in open syllables, although a tiny number of recent borrowings have [i] in closed syllables. In the other B-G languages that have a sixth vowel, it contrasts with all other vowels.

In Dimasa the sixth vowel is lower and more central than it is in Garo, and also less tense. Oddly, it occurs only in open syllables, the opposite of Garo, where it is found only in closed syllables. The Dimasa version resembles the English schwa. It occurs most often in weak word-initial syllables. The sixth vowels of other languages have more variable properties than do the other five.

An attempt will be made to suggest a scenario by which an earlier set of vowels could have evolved into the vowel systems that we find in the present languages.

## Manipuri colour terms: A study

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The present paper is an attempt to study Manipuri colour terms. This paper has tried to categorise the basic and derived colour terms in Manipuri language (Meitei Long). It has been seen that the derived colour terms are highly culture specific. This paper offers a cultural explanation of the derivation of colour terms in the language. It tries to explain the inseparable relationship between derived colour terms and the exquisite Manipuri culture.

## Assamese Proverbs: An Ethnographic Interpretation

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The present paper is an attempt to study the ethnography of Assamese proverbs. According to Hymes, linguistic theory needs to be seen as a part of more general theory incorporating communication and culture. Hymes' theory of communicative competence involves a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. Proverbs are part of almost all the languages of the world; so is the case with Assamese. There are many proverbs that not only talk about cultural aspects of the community but are also important from the perspective of culture formation. Various symbolisms, metaphors and figures of speech are used in Assamese proverbs. In order for an individual to be part of a particular speech community, Hymes proposes the notion of Communicative Competence. Now, if we need to comprehend proverbs, what kind of knowledge is required apart from the knowledge of the particular language? There are proverbs which are related to many cultural artifacts, regional terms, mythical characters and social norms; it would be necessary to comprehend all these things in order to understand a proverb completely and correctly.

The present paper is thus an inquiry into the Assamese speaker's understanding of Assamese proverbs. The type of competence required here is the basic notion of inquiry.

## Preliminary phonology and morphology of Ralte (Mizoram)

*Lalunthangi Chhangte and R. L. Thanmawia*

This paper is an introduction to the phonology and morphology of Ralte, especially in comparison to Mizo. Ralte is an endangered language spoken in Mizoram. There are no communities of speakers left and the remaining speakers are all over 60 years of age. Even though Raltes live in Mizoram, the language is quite distinct from Mizo. The paper will highlight the differences.

## An introduction to Nyishi grammar

*Lalnunthangi Chhangte and Khoda Tana*

This paper highlights some of the salient features of Nyishi grammar and morphology. Even though several grammars of Nyishi have been published, they were done by non-native speakers of Nyishi. The second author of the paper is a native Nyishi speaker, and the data is provided by him. The paper will present the morphological rules and some of the unique

features of the language such as generic-specific distinctions, demonstratives and evidentiality.

## Differential marking of cases in Asamiya

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The aim of this study is to investigate the factors underlying the assignment of various morphological cases in Asamiya. The case system in the language not only indicates grammatical relations, but also reflects semantic roles. While nominative case for subject closely correlates with agent, nominals with non-agentive properties may remain unmarked or be marked by non-nominative cases, viz., dative, genitive and locative in the semantic roles of patient or theme, recipient or benefactive, possessor or experiencer and location or instrument respectively. The marking of accusative case for direct objects is conditioned by an animacy hierarchy.

## Focal marking of core arguments with three poly-functional markers in War

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War (Mon-Khmer) has three focal markings of core arguments. These markers are constrained by the verb and they assign specific focal values to core arguments according to their semantic values. The first two markers, *ti* 'source' and *di* 'instrument', assign contrastive focal values to subjects with these two different agentive roles. The third marker *haʔ* marks a strong beneficiary, often a kind of chosen value, for a beneficiary role of an "animate" object. *haʔ* may also focalize an inanimate object expressing that the subject took benefit of that very object. With some verbs, *haʔ* and *di* may also involve an implicit secondary action or an implicit request, with *haʔ* indicating a beneficiary and *di* indicating agentivity. The agentive markings apply both to transitive and to intransitive verbs. The agentive and beneficiary markings may appear alone or together in the same utterance.

The focal agentive marking interacts with an auxiliation system, and produces complex values of agentivity (Daladier to appear). The auxiliation system produces many kinds of active and passive values, often associated with subjectivity values (e.g. volitional, happenstance, empathy, adversative). This auxiliation system also conveys valency changes such as intransitivizing and transitivizing on lexical elements. War has no passive voice in the sense of a verbal marking with passive auxiliation, which intransitives a transitive verb and conveys both a stative interpretation of this verb and an affectedness interpretation of its argument. In War, intransitivizing and transitivizing features of auxiliaries may foreground a subject argument with diverse agentive roles, while in a language like English the passive voice only foregrounds "affected" subjects. War has no kind of subject-verb agreement and pronominal subjects as well as pronominal objects are usually omitted.

Focal markers are polyfunctional: (1) *ti* and *di* are also used as deictics (2) *di*, *ti* and *haʔ* are used as adjunct markers (3) *di*, *ti* and *haʔ* are used as focal markers of core arguments (4) *haʔ* and *ti* are used as assertive markers: *haʔ* may be used as a declarative inferential marker and *ti.ə* (*ə* is a plain declarative marker) encodes an empathic request to the hearer to commit himself and in so doing to become the agent of the speaker's intended purpose.

Though the grammatical uses of these markers may seem very different, some kind of morphosyntactic and semantic continuity appear to link them. War appears to have developed, and to still use productively, a grammatical system with very little morphology and many so-called discursive and pragmatic values expressed by grammaticalized markers which are usually also lexically constrained. The focal marking of arguments takes place within a system that I term "assertive". I propose both an interpretation of focal markers and of the polyfunctionality of these markers in terms of this system of assertive marking.

## Verb agreement suffixes in Mizo-Kuki-Chin

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Mizo-Kuki-Chin is a low-level branch of Tibeto-Burman, consisting of two or three dozen closely-related languages (the number will depend on what we choose to count as distinct languages). The branch is defined as a genetic unit by several phonological shifts and important morphosyntactic innovations, in particular the grammaticalization of a morphophonemic alternation between two different stems of the verb (VanBik 2006) and the innovation of a unique paradigm of prefixal subject agreement on the verb. The MKC agreement paradigm is clearly a shared innovation which characterizes the MKC branch and sets it off from the rest of the family.

However, since the 1950's we have known of languages from the Northern Chin branch which also have an alternative set of postverbal agreement forms (Henderson 1957, 1965; Stern 1963). These occur either as independent words, as in exx. 1–2, or in combination with a set of grammatical particles, as in 3–4 (exx. from Tedim/Tiddim (Henderson 1965)), as in Jinghpaw and Nocte (DeLancey 2011).

We find the same thing in the MKC languages of Northeast India (mostly in Manipur, some also in Assam and Nagaland) which Konow (1909) categorized as "Old Kuki". As in the Northern Chin languages, these paradigms are in complementary distribution with the characteristic MKC prefixal paradigm: the typical Kuki-Chin agreement prefixes occur in most contexts, and the suffixed or sentence-final agreement in specific constructions, most commonly in negative constructions, as in Tarao, see exx. 5-6 (Singh 2002). The forms are the same across all the languages:

| | 1SG | 1PL | 2SG | 2PL | 3SG | 3PL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tedim | ìŋ | ùŋ | tɛ̲ʔ | úʔ tɛ̲ʔ | -- | úʔ |
| Tarao | iŋ / əŋ | uŋ | ce | cew | -- | əy |
| Moyon | iŋ | uŋ | cə | co | ə | əe |
| Koireng | iŋ | uŋ | si | siŋ | -- | u |
| Sukte | iŋ | uŋ | -- | -- | -- | uʔ |
| Monsang | ŋ | nɯ | sə/na | sɯ/nɯ | -- | hɛ̲ |

Also in Daai, in the Southern Chin branch, we find parts of this paradigm (So-Hartmann 2009:244-5), 1st person *=ngü* and plural *-u,* but no evidence of a 2nd person form. Again the postverbal agreement always occurs in a negated clause, as in ex. 7.

Since these forms have cognates outside of MKC, they must be older than the new prefixal agreement forms in the branch.

Examples

1) pài ìŋ (Tiddim)
go 1st
'I go.'

2) pài tɛ̲ʔ (Tiddim)
go 2nd
'you sg. go'

3) pài ní-ŋ (Tiddim)
go FUTURE-1st
'I will go.'

4) pài ní tɛ̲ʔ (Tiddim)
go FUTURE 2nd
'You will go.'

5) kipa dili se-no-tu (Tarao)
my.father Delhi go-NEG-UNREALIZED
'My father will not go to Delhi.'

6) kəy sinema ən-no-tu-ŋ (Tarao)
I cinema go-NEG-UNREALIZED-1st
'I will not see the picture.'

7) am pye:n vaai xa=ngü (Daai)
NEG speak go definitely-1st
'I definitely will not go and speak.'

## Non nominative Subjects in Assamese Sadri

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Assamese Sadri (henceforth, AS) is the link language of the Adivasis or tea garden population in Assam. It belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of Languages. The subjects of both transitive and intransitive sentences in AS bear nominative case. Nominative case in AS is unmarked (Ø) ; that is, there is no morphological affixation.

Besides the usual nominative subject case, there are constructions in which we find non-nominative subjects. That is, the subject NP receives dative, genitive, locative and instrumental case.

Dative case is usually assigned to the goal or recipient in a ditransitive sentence. The dative case marker in this language is *-ke*. Experiencer subjects or the subjects of psyche verbs like 'to feel', 'to like' or 'to perceive' bear dative case. Possessive and also some non-possessive NPs, in the subject position, get the genitive case *-r/-ker*. The subject NP, both animate and inanimate, takes the locative case marker *-e* or the locative post position *me* if it indicates location of the argument in terms of space and time. In the case of animate NPs, it generally refers to abstract locations. In AS, we also find instances of subject NPs taking the instrumental case marker *se*.

The main argument of this paper is that, like other Indo-Aryan languages, in AS, there is no one-to-one relation between the case feature, that is, the syntactic coding, the grammatical functions, and the thematic or grammatical roles. It depends purely on the verbal properties of that particular language. The objective of this paper is to look into the verbal properties of the constructions with various non-nominative subject cases in the language under study.

In AS, we find that the occurrence of dative and genitive subject case depends on volitional and non-volition verb types. Predicates which require a dative subject can form a complex predicate with light verbs like *aa* 'come' and *de* 'give'. The N+V conjunct here, mainly, indicates non-volitional action. Analysis of the AS data in this paper shows that the verbs indicating voluntary actions have a nominative subject case, whereas verbs indicating involuntary actions have a dative subject case. The difference in the semantic roles of those arguments with nominative and those with dative case can be in case of stative and dynamic or non stative predicates. Moreover, the difference between nominative subjects and genitive subjects can also be illustrated with the notion of volitional actions and non-volitional actions. The use of light verbs or the auxiliary *kar* 'do' implies the former and the use of verbs like *ho* 'become; happen' implies the latter.

## Relational nouns in Assamese

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A Relational Noun is a noun whose meaning involves a relationship between one noun and another; for example, *father*, *mother, brother, husband*, etc. Languages like English have only a few Relational Nouns, while Assamese, which is an Indo-Aryan language, has significantly large variety of this type of noun. Assamese Relational Nouns possess some unique morphological features, which are absent in other New Indo-Aryan languages like Bengali, Oriya, Maithili, Magadhi, Bhojpuri etc. Again, in Assamese, these nouns show agreement to person, which is rare in other Indo-Aryan languages.

One remarkable feature of Assamese Relational Noun is that it accepts double layered inflection. In Assamese, both Case inflection and Personal inflection are used with Relational Nouns, and the Case inflection always follows the Personal inflection. G. C. Goswami points out, "the nouns with Personal inflection form the base, with or without the Definitives following them, for the Case inflection" (Goswami, 1982: 270).

N(oun) ⟹ P(ersonal) I(nflection) ⟹ [D(efinitives)] ⟹ C(ase) I(nflection)

In Assamese, without the Personal inflection and the Case inflection, a Relational Noun cannot be used in a sentence.

Though Assamese Relational Nouns are unique for their special pattern of behaviour, no sufficient discussion is found on this item of grammar. The study of Assamese Relational Nouns, which may be an outcome of Non-Indo-Aryan influence, can throw new light onto the formation and development of the Assamese language. In this paper, therefore, an attempt has been made to study the Assamese Relational Nouns and their characteristic features.

# A sociolinguistic survey on how bilingual is the Adivasi community in Assam

*Luke Horo*
*PAJHRA*

The objective of the survey was to find the level of Bilingualism in Assamese among the Adivasis of Assam primarily the children. Adivasis in Assam include 6 major language groups, *Mundari*, *Kharia*, *Sawra* and *Santali* of Austro Asiatic and *Kurux* and *Gond* of Dravidian language family. This survey has concentrated on 5 language groups excluding *Gonds* due to unavailability of sufficient information on the group. *Sadri* of Indo Aryan stock functions as a Lingua Franca among the Adivasis in Assam. This survey has also verified the use of *Sadri*. For the survey people living in the villages and Tea-Gardens in the Districts of Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Golaghat, and Dibrugarh were taken.

Goals:

1. Determine the level of Bilingualism among the Adivasis in Assam.
2. Find the language use patterns of the Adivasis in Assam.

Methodology:

| No. | Study | Method | Description | Focus | Sample size from each location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Children Bilingualism | Assamese written text with questionnaire, informal interviews, observations | 2 Assamese stories with questionnaire | Proficiency level in Assamese | 10 children of 5-13 years old |
| | Adult Bilingualism | Self-evaluation questionnaire translated in Sadri and five Adivasi vernaculars | 15 questions | Vitality of Adivasi languages & Adult proficiency level in Assamese | 12 adults[1] |
| 2. | Language use (education related) | Questionnaire | 10 questions | Language Use patterns related to education | 10 adults (teachers and parents) |

Findings:

The first test shows that Adivasi children in Assam have a low proficiency in Assamese. In the test out of 90 children only 20 managed to score the average in the first 5 questions but not in the remaining 5. The rest of the children could not respond at all. Prior to this a Home Town Testing was done for the Assamese text. For this 20 native Assamese speaking children of same age and standard were taken. In this test 17 children scored high whereas 3 of them scored the average.

From the second test it is concluded that *Mundari*, *Kharia*, *Sawra*, *Kurux* and *Santali* are vital in limited areas and are spoken in the domains of house, market and some workplaces. There are areas in Sonitpur and Lakhimpur District where *Sadri* is spoken as the first language. The level of Bilingualism in Assamese of the adult group is varied. The variation depends on the following factors Location, Occupation, Literacy, Age and Gender. Thus there are different levels of Bilingualism in Assamese of the Adivasis based on the influencing factors.

The third study showed that due to the low level of proficiency in Assamese the Adivasi children have regularly dropped out. The concept of MTB-MLE was at the same time appreciated by the parents as well as by the teachers. The results from the survey indicate that language has been a major hindrance for the children of the community towards education.

[1] People from different age, sex and educational level

Thus, it is recommended that an effective MTB-MLE should be initiated for the community to make education child-friendly.

## The grammar of postpositions in Assamese

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Assamese, a member of the Indo-European family and developed from highly inflectional Old Indo Aryan sub-group, has turned into analytical nature with the formation of some post positions and clitics in the language. The post positions are used as the alternative to some case markers to show case relations (e.g. *pɔra* 'from' is used as an alternative to ablative case marker and *dwara* 'by' is used as an alternative to instrumental case marker) or to build other types of functional relations between two words. These words in Assamese and other some New Indo Aryan languages are similar to English prepositions in their functional behaviour but different in position of use and governing their complements mostly in genitive cases. These words have been derived from some original nouns or adjectives some of which have completely changed the class i.e. ceased to act as nouns or adjectives (e.g. *pɔra*'from') although some others retain their original uses too (e.g. The term *ɦɔloni* as a noun means change, but as post position it means instead of). On the other hand some of them are purely indeclinables (e.g. *nisina* 'like') but some are partially declinables (e.g. *lɔg-ɔt* 'with', *kaɦ-ɔt*/ *kaɦ-ɔloi* 'near'). The purpose of this paper is to analyze the functional behaviour of this class of words in Assamese in detail.

## A comparison between Khasi and Thadou: a phonological study

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*North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong and Assam University, Silchar*

Khasi, a Mon-Khmer language of the Austrossiatic language family, is spoken in the East and Jaintia Hills districts of Meghalaya. It is also found to be spoken in the Cachar Hills district of Assam as well as in Bangladesh. Thadou is a Kuki-Chin language of the Kuki-Chin-Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan languages, and is spoken mainly in the states of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. It is also spoken in some parts of Myanmar. Much linguistic work has been done in the both languages at the levels of phonology, morphology and syntax. However, no comparative work has been done in any linguistic aspects. This paper is the first attempt to look at a comparative study of the two languages at the phonological level. The main objective of this paper is to find out the similarities and differences between the two languages at the phonological level.

## The effect of borrowings on Tiwa phonology and numeral morphology

*U. V. Joseph*
*Don Bosco*

Tiwa as spoken in the hills around Umswai, 35 km south of Nellie, has a large number of lexical items borrowed from the Indo-Aryan language Assamese. The majority of such words, particularly older borrowings, have been naturalized into Tiwa in line with the Tiwa

phonological system. An analysis of such naturalized words reveals the phonological mechanisms that have been operative. On the other hand, some of the loan items tend to bend Tiwa's native phonology, introducing sounds that are new to Tiwa.

An area where there has been large-scale borrowing is the numeral system. Tiwa, like other languages of the Garo-Boro family, probably had full numeral and classifier systems of its own sometime in the past. Under the influence of contact with Indo-Aryan languages like Assamese, and probably Bengali, the native numeral system of Tiwa has been nearly wiped out, leaving behind only the words for 'one' and 'two'. Tiwa speakers in Umswai use numeral and classifier systems that are a mix of the native and the borrowed systems.

It appears that even this mixed strategy is slowly giving way to a system which is completely of Assamese origin. The introduction of non-native numerals has had the effect of altering the morphology of the classifier construction.

This paper proposes to analyse these two areas of Tiwa.

## Karbi *-lo* as a relationality marker of 'Reference to a Preconstructed Domain'

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Karbi, a Tibeto-Burman language from Northeast India, has previously been analyzed to have a *-lo* past tense or perfect marker (Jeyapaul 1987), or a *-lo* narrative past marker (Grüßner 1978). In this paper, I argue that *-lo* is a complex aspectual-pragmatic marker, whose occurrence can be motivated by the function of signaling 'Reference to a Preconstructed Domain', a term borrowed from Bisang and Sonaiya (1997) for Mandarin Chinese *le*.

Specifically, the occurrence of *-lo* can be subsumed under five situations:

1) Event sequences in a narrative
2) A (temporal) change of state
3) A (logical) cause-and-result situation
4) Correcting a wrong assumption
5) Progress so far

Examples (1) to (5) each show one instance of every situation type in the corresponding order. Example (1) is the first sentence of a personal narrative. All further predicates that provide the main sequence of events of the story are equally marked with *-lo*.

Example (2) shows that the statement 'there is no meat' without *-lo* as in (a) is a general statement which could be said in the context of a market seller who never sells meat, or a meal that is vegetarian. The statement with *-lo* in (b), however, involves a change of state, which could be translated by English 'anymore', and would apply in the context of a seller who has sold all the meat, or a meal that included meat, but all the meat is eaten up.

In example (3), the second statement 'the road was very dusty' actually results from the first statement 'the road was very bad', since bad roads have many potholes, and a lot of dust accumulates in them. Therefore, the second statement is a result of the first statement, and is marked with *-lo*.

In (4), the negatively asked question in (a) is positively answered in (b). The emphatic sense of affirming a proposition against the presupposition underlying the question is conveyed by *-lo*.

Finally, the use of *-lo* in (5) can be explained as the situation type 'progress so far', where *-lo* occurs on verbs that do not indicate a change of state, but instead mark a gradual change consistent with the prior state.

The function of *-lo* as exemplified by these five types of usage is one that signals a temporal relationship (as in the change of state and the progress so far type), a logical relationship (as in the cause-and-result type), an information structure relationship (as in the 'correcting a wrong assumption' situation), or the relationship of events within a narrative (as it occurs on event sequences). This function of relating a statement to another statement, cultural knowledge, or past or future event appears to motivate the instances where *-lo* is used, and I will use the term 'Reference to a Preconstructed Domain' to refer to this concept.

(1) *a-dap* *prang* *ne-tum* *thur-**lo***
ATTR-morning dawn 1:EXCL-PL get.up-**lo**
'we got up early in the morning' SH, CS: 001

(2) (a) *ok* *ave* (b) *ok* *ave-**lo***
meat not.be.at meat not.be.at-**lo**
'there is no meat' 'there is no meat left/anymore'

(3) *tovar* *heno-pik* *anke* *tovar* *longle* *a-duk=ta* *do-pik-**lo***
road be.bad-very and.then road earth ATTR-dust=also be.at-very-lo
'the road was very bad, and so the road was very dusty' SH, CS: 031-032

(4) (a) {*nopak=ke* *pon-pe* *ma?*}
knife=TOP take.away-NEG Q
(b) *nopak=ta* *do-**lo*** *dak* *lahe*
knife=also be.at-**lo** here that.way
'{(he) wasn't carrying a knife?}... '(he) did have a knife also there.' HK, TR 027-028

(5) *lapen* *aphi=ke* *bang+so* *a-jangreso* *the-**lo***
and.then after=TOP this ATTR-single.parent.child be.big-**lo**
'and then, that single parent child grew older/became an adult' (Grüßner 1978:156)

## A comparative study of 'taste' words in Assamese and Korean

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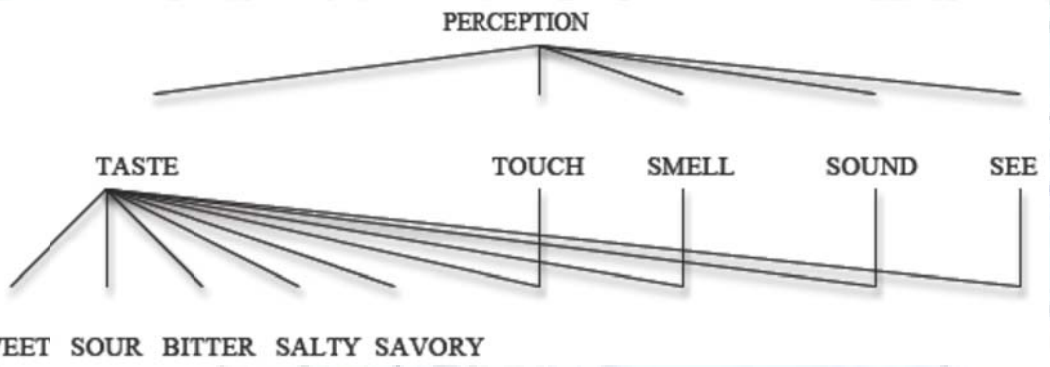
*Hankuk University of Foreign Studies*

In this paper, using an ontological method of linguistic typology, we investigate the words related to 'taste' in two languages: Korean and Assamese. Considerable progress has already been made in categorizing taste terms in various languages, based on the words' senses. Word nets created for English, German, Japanese and Korean can show the 'taste' terms and their categorization (Figure 1). Even though languages broadly employ these 'taste' categories, suggesting a psychological saliency of 'taste' concepts, their conceptualization remains dependent on the language and the culture (Hirst 2004).

**Figure 1: Basic taste categories in various languages**


In the case of Assamese, our background literature search did not provide us with any categorization of the Assamese 'taste' terms. Hence, we decided to test the feasibility of the 'taste' terms categorization used for Korean in a top-down ontological method (Lee and Kim, 2010). In the method described by Lee and Kim (2010), five basic concepts are proposed as basic concepts for taste: SWEET, SOUR, BITTER, SALTY and SAVORY. They argue that it is possible to classify taste related terms using these five proposed concepts of taste in combination with other 'sense' concepts. Hence, Lee and Kim (2010)'s proposed taste ontology can be conceptualized as in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Taste Ontology (Lee and Kim 2010)**




Collecting taste words from online and offline Assamese dictionaries, we investigate if the Assamese taste terms can be categorized in the manner described in Lee and Kim (2010). Secondly, we also try to determine the distribution of taste words according to the five basic concepts proposed. As the 'taste' or 'perception' words have never been analyzed in Assamese, particularly with the ontological method, we hope to provide a new perspective on analyzing 'sense' in Assamese with the current study.

## Some phonological features of Dimasa and Tedim Chin

*Monali Longmailai and Zam Ngaih Cing*
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Dimasa is a Bodo-Garo language spoken in Assam and in some parts of Manipur and Nagaland. Tedim Chin is a Kuki-Chin language spoken in Manipur, Mizoram and Myanmar. This is perhaps the first attempt to cross-linguistically analyse the phonological features of Dimasa and Tedim Chin, which belong to two different sub-groups of the same language family, which is Tibeto-Burman. The primary focus of our paper is on the sound changes which have influenced the phonological features of both the languages. For example, loss of the vowel /a/ in the initial syllable of a word, and the formation of consonant clusters thereby, is a very prominent feature of modern Dimasa. Besides, glottalisation is used extensively in

the language by the younger generation. Only Garo is known for its use of glottal stop among the Bodo-Garo languages so far. In Tedim Chin, glottalisation is used mostly in syllable-final positions. Vowel length, which is common in Kuki-Chin languages, is very much prominent in Tedim Chin. Diphthongisation is also commonly used in Tedim Chin.

In this paper, besides the above mentioned phonological features, we will discuss tone sandhi, deletion, insertion, gemination, and alternation. Finally, we will discuss the phonological typologies of Dimasa and Tedim Chin and trace out further problems in relation to these two languages.

## The Milang pronominal paradigm: A new type of clusivity?

*Yankee Modi and Mark W. Post*
*James Cook University*

Milang is a language provisionally aligned with, though ultimately somewhat distinct from, the Tani group of Tibeto-Burman languages (Post and Modi under review). Unlike the Tani languages documented to date, all of which appear to lack any sort of clusivity distinction in their pronominal paradigms, Milang exhibits an alternation in the plural pronoun set which seems to count as a variety of clusivity. However, unlike the cross-linguistically well-attested *inclusive/exclusive* distinction (Filimonova, Ed. 2005), which is generally exhibited among first person plural pronouns only, Milang exhibits a clusivity alternation among first and third person plurals. The goal of this paper will be to explain the functional basis for this distinction, with particular attention to the use of plural pronouns in Milang discourse.

## Typological survey of reciprocal constructions: A case study of Meitei, Nyishi, Assamese and Bangla

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*Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Across languages, strategies for making reciprocals are distinguished in terms of two major types: lexical and syntactic. Syntactic reciprocal constructions are formed by using a reciprocal pronoun; according to Heim, Lasnik and May (1991), these reciprocal pronouns are composed of a distributor and a reciprocator. This is clearly the case in Eastern Indo Aryan languages like Bangla and Assamese:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | *ɾam* | *aɾu* | *hɔɾi-ɛ* | *izɔn-e* | *xizɔn-ɔk* | *maɾilɛ.* |
| | Ram | and | Hari-ERG | self-ERG | self-ACC | hit.Pres Perf.3P |
| | ‘Ram and Hari hit each other.’ (Assamese) | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2) | *ram o/eboŋ/arhori* | *ɛke* | *anno-ke* | *merechilo.* | |
| | Ram and Hari | one | another-ACC | hit-PST PERF.3P | |
| | ‘Ram and Hari hit each other.’ (Bangla) | | | | |

The other strategy of creating a reciprocal situation is by marking the verb with either a verbal template as in Hebrew, a verbal suffix as in Russian, or using a clitic etc., as in Chichewa. The strategy is cross linguistically decided by looking at the class of the verb. Verbs can be classified into three types in terms of reciprocity: (i) inherently reciprocal, like *meet, quarrel*, etc. (ii) not inherently reciprocal but able to be used as reciprocals, like *love, kiss*, etc. (iii) in some languages (Maslova 2008), verbs like *sing* can be reciprocated.

Reciprocal constructions in two Tibeto-Burman languages (Meitei and Nyishi) look like the following:

[Main verb/root-reciprocal affix-aspect marker] or
[Main verb/root-collective affix-reciprocal affix-aspect marker]

However, these languages also allow a syntactic reciprocal to denote reciprocity.

(3) *ɟɔn lo meri aṯam aṯe aŋa-minsu-do.*
John and Merry each other love-RCP-ASP
'John and Merry love each other.' (Nyishi)

(4) *jɔn-gə meri-ge nuŋsi-nə-i.*
John-AGT Mary-AGT love-RCP-ASP
'John and Mary love each other.' (Meitei)

(5) *ram-gə meri-gə-nə amana amabu ŋəi-ri.*
Ram-AGT Mary-AGT-NOM one other wait-ASP
'Ram and Merry waited for each other.' (Meitei)

The motivation of this paper is that all the four languages are spoken around the same region and yet they differ in terms of reciprocal strategy from each other. It is observed that Assamese and Bangla prefer a unified lexical strategy. Nyishi, a TB language, can allow the syntactic and the verbal reciprocal together in a construction. Manipuri has a clear choice in terms of choosing the reciprocity either by syntactic means or by putting the reciprocal suffix in the verb. It can thus be said that the TB languages are richer in terms of expressing reciprocity than their Indo-Aryan counterparts. This paper is an attempt to make a comparative study of these languages and their argument structures and relevant theoretical questions will be discussed.

## Variations in the *pagro* and *mo:jiŋ* dialects of Mising

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This paper is an attempt to investigate the variations that exist between the *pagro* (PM, hereafter) and *mo:jiŋ* (MM, hereafter) dialects of Mising, a language which belongs to the Eastern Tani sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman (TB) language family. The Indian census (2001) reports the existence of 587,310 Mising speakers, constituting 17.8% of the total tribal population (3,308,570) of Assam. A dialect survey has never been attempted until date and so the exact number of speakers of each of the dialects is not yet recorded. However, Taid (1995) assumes the *pagro* dialect to be spoken by most Misings. *pagro* speakers are primarily concentrated in Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, and Jorhat districts in Assam, as well as in the districts of Tinsukia,
Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, and Golaghat (also in Assam). The *mo:jiŋ* dialect has two sub-dialects, namely *ku:miŋ* and *ku:ri*. The first group, which is settled in the Brahmaputra valley (chiefly in Sonitpur, Golaghat and Jorhat districts in Assam), call themselves *mo:jiŋ* while the second (settled in Namsai Sub-Division in Lohit district, Arunachal Pradesh) has been referred to as *somua miri* (Grierson 1903, Prasad 1995) and now prefer to call themselves *adi somua*.

Linguistically and culturally, the somua people are in a transitional stage of adopting *adi (miɲoŋ*
and *padam*), which is spoken in Arunachal Pradesh. The *mo:jiŋ* data presented in this paper, for comparison, would be from the variety spoken in Assam.

We notice phonological variations between PM and MM dialects at different levels. The retention and the loss of syllable codas (the lateral *l* and the velar nasal *ŋ*) vary in the dialects considered for the study; the syllable coda *l* is preserved in MM but not in PM or any other Mising dialects, and the coda *ŋ* is prone to loss in MM while we find its retention in PM and other Mising dialects. We also observe variations in geminate/non-geminate consonant clusters and question words. The study also expounds the substitutability of various consonants (for instance, the lateral *l* ~ the tap *r* as in *lukkum* 'red ant' ~ *rukkum* 'red ant') and vowels (for instance, the central high vowel *ɨ* ~ the central mid-vowel *ə* as in *ɨmɨ* 'fire' ~ *əmə* 'fire') in the same environment of different lexical classes (nouns, verbs, and adjectives).

At the morphological level this paper focuses on the variations observed in the processes of word-formation (for instance, prefixation) and various grammatical suffixes. This paper also sheds light on the variations observed in different lexical categories and varied functional words that occur due to different geographical settings and/or its closeness to some *adi* dialects (*miɲoŋ* and *padam*) as spoken in the abutting areas of Arunachal Pradesh. Striking variations at the morphophonemic and morpho-syntactic levels are also noticed to a great extent. Thus, the paper is a study on the dialectal variations between PM and MM at the (1) phonological (2) morphological and (3) morphophonemic/morphosyntactic levels.

## Siangic: A new language phylum in North East India

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It has long been noted that Arunachali languages are somewhat unusual in the Tibeto-Burman context, even by North East Indian standards. In fact, although little-described Arunachali languages like Sherdukpen, Sulung, Bugun, Aka, Miji, Koro and Milang are widely assumed to be Tibeto-Burman – and certainly do exhibit at least some characteristically Tibeto-Burman roots – there has neither been a convincingly systematic demonstration of their genetic position within Tibeto-Burman, nor indeed has there been a clear demonstration that such Tibeto-Burman roots as they do exhibit are the result of genetic inheritance rather than contact. In some cases (such as Aka), the number of seemingly non-Tibeto-Burman roots is so great that the case for acquisition through contact seems at least as plausible as that of inheritance through contact (Blench and Post in press).

Whether or not we ultimately consider Arunachali languages to have a primarily Tibeto-Burman genetic core, the fact remains that we have a huge number of seemingly non-Tibeto-Burman roots to account for in all of these languages – usually, the statistical majority. There are only two plausible explanations here: either these are genetically Tibeto-Burman languages which have acquired massive non-Tibeto-Burman substrates (presumably from pre-existing isolate populations), or we have been wrong to classify these languages as Tibeto-Burman, as they are in fact language isolates which have simply been in contact with Tibeto-Burman languages at various points in their history.

With this backdrop in mind, the present paper will demonstrate two things: first, that Koro and Milang constitute a genetic unit at some deep but nevertheless partially-reconstructible period; second, that forms which reconstruct to this level are of mixed Tibeto-Burman and non-Tibeto-Burman cognacy. The ultimate assignment of the genetic unit

formed by Koro and Milang to Tibeto-Burman or to some phylum outside Tibeto-Burman is something that probably cannot be determined until more high-quality Koro data becomes available. But in a sense, the implications for pre-historical reconstruction are identical: there must have been at least one non-Tibeto-Burman language phylum in Central Arunachal Pradesh prior to the spread of Tani speakers throughout the area now separating the Koro and Milang language areas, and this phylum is now reflected either as a substrate in Proto-Koro-Milang or else as the primary genetic component of Koro and Milang themselves. We refer to this phylum using the provisional label *Siangic*.

## A study of quotative verb constructions in Manipuri

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The research reported here is an attempt to explore the multiple functions of *haybə* 'say' in Manipuri. It will further probe into the grammaticalization of *haybə*, discussing how various lexical and grammatical functions have come into being. It will be argued that the different functions of *haybə* represent its various stages of grammaticalization from the source meaning of 'saying', and that each function derives from another. According to Traugott (1982, 1989) and Traugott and Koenig (1991), grammaticalization is pragmatically-based; that is, a pragmatic function is the source concept that gives rise to other meanings. It is proposed that Manipuri *haybə* 'say' reflects Traugott's three-development change, that is, from utterance verb to cognitive verb, from cognitive verb to complementizer, and from complementizer to particle (a sentence final particle in the case of Manipuri *haybə*). It will also be shown that the path of its development follows universals of semantic change of verbs of saying into evidentials.

## Language shift among the Rabhas of Meghalaya

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In the year 1911, Endle said of Rabha,

> Their language, which would seem to be rapidly dying out, forms a very interesting link between Garo and Kachari(Bodo), having much in common with both, but some special features peculiar to itself. Like the tongue of the other branches of Boro race, the Rabha language, at one time undoubtedly agglutinative, seems to be in process of becoming inflexional, through contact and intercourse with the speakers of more or less broken-down Sanskritic languages e.g. Bengali, Assamese etc.

U. V. Joseph in his (2007) Grammar of Rabha says, "it is a recognized fact that in the past a large number of Rabha speakers gradually gave up their mother tongue and switched to Assamese. The process is still working its way into more areas". One of the instances cited by Joseph is that, "one kilometer to the west of Bonbahi and 3km. south-east of Dudhnoi is Silluk Sorokpara with 50 families, Siluk Bakrapara with 43 families and Mendima (in Meghalaya) with 43 families. In all these villages Assamese is slowly pushing Rabha out."

Rabha language comprises three principal dialects: Rongdani (Rongdanya), Maitori and Songga or Kocha. Dialectal variation between Rongdani and Maitori – spoken on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, in the Goalpara district of Assam, and along the northern slopes of Meghalaya – is minimal. The third dialect is spoken over the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River, and is mutually unintelligible with the first two dialects.

Language shift from Rongdani to Pati is evident from the villages in which Rabha speakers have been lost and converted into a Pati-speaking village. Although there is no census data as such to show the overall percentage of shift, there are several villages with few elderly persons speaking Rabha and the younger generation speaking Pati. Some villages which once had Rabha speakes have already lost them.

Looking at the factors of shift, it can be said that Pati Rabhas who live in areas contiguous to Rongdani villages, and where intra-community marriage is common, Pati-speaking wives never adopted the Rongdani dialect of the husband. The children of such couples are seen to be Pati speakers. Moreover, most of the Rabhas are educated in Assamese medium schools, and educated people have also accepted Assamese as a prestige language.

This paper attempts to highlight the extent of bilingualism among the Rabhas, Rabhas' attitude to their own language, and the nature of their shift to Pati, based on data collected during a pilot survey done for my PhD research topic, 'Language shift and language maintenance among the Rabhas of Meghalaya.'

## Assamese kinship terms

*Megna Roberts and Mousumi Chetia*
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This paper describes the kinship terms in Assamese from a sociolinguistic perspective. These terms reflect concepts such as power, age, gender and a strong family bond which emerge within the Assamese culture and attitudes. Frequent use of terms and influence of languages derived from Sanskrit and Bengali also have a subtle but consistent appearance. The terms tell us about the gender, generation of the relation, and gender of the speaker. These terms are descriptive and identify a role and position in the kinship network.

## Assamese colour terms: A study

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The present paper is an attempt to examine the Assamese colour terms. It is an effort to classify the basic colour terms and the derived colour terms in the Assamese language. It has been seen that the derived colour terms are highly culture-specific. Here, the paper will discuss Assamese colour terms from semantic and anthropological perspectives. Also, the paper will offer some discussion on the issue of linguistic determinism. The cultural explanation of the origin of the colour terms in the language will be discussed. The paper has tried to explain the inseparable relationship between the derived colour terms and the Assamese culture.

## Dual case marking and TAMing Bodo

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Bodo (a Tibeto-Burman language of North-east India) has eight main case markers. It is important to know that in Bodo, the genitive case marker can accommodate all the other case markers with it, excepting the ablative.

(1) *Ang-ni-khwo labw*
I-**GEN-ACC** bring (imperative)
'Bring mine!'

(2) *nwng-ni* ***bijab(-)phwr-a*** *Ang-ni-ao dong.*
you-GEN book-NOM I-GEN-LOC have
'Your book is with me.'

This feature (double case marking) occurs in some other Indian languages; the genitive case marker accommodates certain other case markers along with it. Why is the genitive being a laxative for the other case markers to be associated to the nouns or pronouns? Note also that in example (2), the sentence can have two orthographic forms with ***bijab-phwr-a*** written together or ***bijab phwr-a*** as two separate words. This paper also delves into the logic behind Bodo orthographic rules (which seem yet to be formulated) which explains morphology and Bodo grammar.

There is no present tense marker morphologically in Bodo, but the past tense is marked with *-mwn* and future with *-gwn* respectively. The present tense and its aspects are realized by adding suffixes to the verb roots and there are three aspects with morphological markers: simple *-w/-yw* Progressive *-dwng* and Perfect *-bay*.

Note: *tha-yw* (root verb-simple aspect). In fact, *ja-bay* without *tha-yw* becomes perfect but when it combines with *tha-yw* in a sentence, it loses its perfect sense and gives the meaning of habitual with progressive. Here also *ja-bay* without *tha-dwng* becomes perfect but when it combines with *tha-dwng*, its implication becomes present perfect (continuous) progressive. Bodo has past tense marker *-mwn* but it cannot occur without aspect marker in the verb. Past tense marker in Bodo is always preceded by aspect markers viz. simple *-w/-yw*, progressive *-dwng* and perfect *-bay* respectively. For example:

(3) *Ang* ***ja-yw-mwn ~ ja-yw mwn.***
I eat-SIMPLE.ASPECT-PAST
'I used to eat.'

Note: Here also *ja-bay* without *tha-dwng-mwn* becomes perfect but when it combines with *tha-dwng-mwn* in a sentence, its implication becomes past perfect (continuous) progressive.

Lexical suffixes occur next to the lexical verb, but otherwise they occur in no fixed order. Many can be sorted into broad (but very leaky) semantic categories, but these seem to have no reflection in grammar. What we see here is the very beginnings of a grammatical system, or perhaps more than one, which in Bodo has barely begun to coalesce out of its roots in what, must have been a system of very free verb serialization, with little or no formal marking. Plural markers likewise can occur separately or get attached to the noun it modifies, the texts of Bodo show a lot of discrepancy in terms of rules of orthography with respect to grammar. A fair link between the two can be deciphered and Bodo grammar and orthography can be well explained. This paper studies the above concerns in detail.

## Manipuri word contraction

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Most of the scholars working on Manipuri have not given much importance to the phenomenon of Manipuri word contraction. Word contraction happens due to the deletion of

a part/portion of a complete form without losing its original sense. In general, Manipuri displays a contraction pattern as deleting affixes from derived words. The present paper attempts to present a preliminary report on the easily identifiable contracted forms freely used in casual speech. First of all, the discussion is centred on plural personal pronouns. As the plural personal pronouns are disyllabic words, they undergo contraction except for the first person plural pronoun; for example, *nə́.khoy* > *nohoy* > *noy* '2PL'. This is followed with a discussion on the contraction found in a genitive phrase where *-ki* ~ *-gi* 'GEN' loses its initial sound and the final vowel comes into diphthongnization with the final vowel of the possessor noun, for example, *tombə-gi húy* > *tombəi húy* 'Tomba's dog'. Another type of contraction we see in a genitive phrase is the complete deletion of the genitive suffix such as *lí cə́ysu* < *lí-gi cə́ysu* 'a walking stick (made) of cane'. It is also seen as a normal tendency for a native Manipuri speaker to delete the suffix *-pə* ~ *-bə* 'NOM' from such a verbal noun that is followed by a finite verb, for example, *má pa-bə həy-te* [he read-NOM learn-NEG] > *má pa həy-te* [he read learn-NEG] 'He did not learn reading'. It is also interesting to note that the contraction of conditional suffix *-ləbədi* ~ *-rəbədi* as *-lədi* ~ *-rədi*. The final section is devoted to the discussion on contracted adverbs of manner. The contracted adverb is brought about with the deletion of the adverb suffix *-nə* from the derived adverb (i.e. verb root + *nə*). However, a verb root whose final sound is a stop gets changed into a nasal, for example, [p] > [m].

## Dichotomy between the auxiliaries *a:s* 'be' and *a:se* 'have' in Assamese

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This paper makes an attempt to resolve the dichotomy between the auxiliaries *a:s* and *a:se* in Assamese. Traditional grammarians are of the opinion that *a:s* and *a:se* are two different auxiliaries, *a:s* being equivalent to English 'be' and *a:se* being equivalent to English 'have'. Their assumption is based on the analysis that *a:s* takes different agreement markers with different persons whereas *a:se* remains as it is with all three persons. Traditionally, it is observed that *a:s* agrees with the subject whereas *a:se* does not agree with the subject. This paper analyses the fact at deeper level with empirical evidence and seeks to establish the fact that *a:s* and *a:se* are one and the same, namely *a:s*, which is equivalent to English 'be' as well as 'have'. It is found that *a:s* always takes nominative subject whereas *a:se* always takes genitive subject. Genitive subject construction sentence in Assamese generally takes third person object and the third person agreement marker in Assamese is *-e*. We have found a few instances in which the third person object in the genitive subject construction with the auxiliary *a:s* can be replaced by the first person and second person pronoun and in such cases, the auxiliary *a:s* takes different agreement markers depending on the person of the object as the genitive subject can not trigger agreement inflection in the verb. (It also can be pointed out that the constituent, which is considered to be the object, actually seems to be the subject in the genitive construction as it agrees with the verb). Negation is also taken into consideration to establish this fact and it is found that the negative counterpart for both *a:s* and *a:se* is *na:i* which is person neutral.

Considering the above facts, this paper seeks to propose that the auxiliary is *a:s* which agrees with the subject in a nominative construction and with the object in a genitive construction, and *na:i* is its negative counterpart which is person neutral.

## Non-interrogative uses of interrogative constructions in Assamese

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Interrogative sentences are normally used to perform the speech acts of asking questions or making requests, but it is not always so. Sometimes these sentences can be used as a means of expressing other illocutionary forces like refutation, negative attitude of the speaker, or suggestion, or they can act as a directive. In this study, various non-interrogative uses of interrogative structures and *k*-initial words (*k*-word) in Assamese will be discussed.

*K*-words in Assamese are used to form an open question, but in case of subordinate clauses and conditional sentences these words lack their property of forming a question. An example is cited below to clarify the statement.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | *kam-tʊ* | *kɷn-e* | *kɔr-il-e* | *moi* | *gɔm* | *pa-l-ʊ.* |
| | 3SG-ACC | kw-NOM | do-PAST-3 | 1SG | know | get-PAST-1 |

"I have come to know who has done the job."

In this example, even though the *k*-word *kɷn* 'who' is present, the sentence is understood as a statement instead of being a question.

## Language contact & convergence: Khasi Hindi in Meghalaya

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Languages in close proximity invariably influence each other even without any common parentage. Thus, convergence is the process of linguistic change in which languages become more like each other through contact, despite having no genetic relation. Languages in close proximity exhibit shared linguistic features that are not likely to have developed otherwise. Examples of such situations are found in the Balkans, Caucasus, Eastern Europe and South Asia. Such areas are called "linguistic areas". Contact-induced convergence can take place even without geographical adjacency of the languages in question; an example of this is Hindi, which is often used as a link language in non-Hindi speaking states. It is the language of wider communication and convenience, and Hindi is developing as a link language in the form of a lingua franca in the North-Eastern hills. Although Hindi has been there in this part for decades, recently it has started taking on definite shapes and forms in its own kind such as Arunachalee Hindi, Khasi Hindi (spoken in Meghalaya), etc.

In this paper we will be dealing with Khasi Hindi only. The target area holds vitality since three different language families are in contact, namely Austroasiatic (Mon-Khmer), Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan (Hindi lingua franca). Although English and Assamese have always been seen as the more probable means of communications across tribes in North-East India, Hindi has entered significantly into various roles. Scholars in the past have researched the several features of Hindi varieties, or Contact Hindis, such as lack of gender and number agreement, lack of oblique case, etc. But it is interesting explore whether there might be more beyond agreement which can be of linguistic importance. Thus, in this paper I wish to explore the following research questions: (a) is there any chronological model of Language Contact (as against the suggested models of Language Contact) for Khasi Hindi? (b) what are the sources of borrowing and convergence; the source language or the target language (Hindi or Khasi)? (c) after taking into account Khasi Hindi, do we find any direct interference of the

source language, Khasi? (d) are there any specific domains of its usage? (e) are these marked by specific social attitudes in the target areas?

Thus, the paper will present a brief typological and social overview of Khasi Hindi in North-East. I expect that since contact is in this case taking place between languages with different word orders, structural features and other typological features, the resultant link language will inevitably show traces of these linguistic variations.

## A dynamic approach to conversational implicature: Transactional meaning in the case of a Manipuri play

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This work proposes the Process of Interpersonal Communication in a dynamic approach to Grice's theory of conversational implicature in the case of a Manipuri play that was broadcasted at AIR, Imphal about 18 years ago. In goal oriented meaning, Grice's conversational meaning is similar with interpersonal communicative meaning; therefore, the communicative goals of both the meanings which are laid in transactional and conversational analysis are the same, and their processes are also similarly oriented within the process of conversational meaning. Thus, this paper investigates in terms of the broad approach of Conversational Implicature, adding a dynamic theory of communicative meaning which is commonly used in Transactional Analysis.

## A phonological study of Chiru

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Chiru is the language spoken by the Chiru people, one of the tribal communities in Manipur. According to the 2001 Census of India, the population of the Chiru tribe is 5,487. The Government of India recognized the people as a scheduled tribe in 1957. They mainly occupy Senapati, Bishnupur and Tamenglong districts of Manipur. The language itself is one of the languages recognized by the State of Manipur.

This paper will mainly highlight the phonological system of Chiru. In it, the consonants, vowels and their distribution, including consonant sequences, consonant clusters, vowel sequences, syllables and tones will be discussed. The language has 35 phonemes altogether. Out of these phonemes 33 are segmental and 2 are suprasegmental. Altogether 21 consonant phonemes are found in this language and 12 are vowel phonemes. Most of the consonants can occur initially, medially and finally in words. The majority of consonant sequences are found in medial position. Sequences in final position are not found. Diphthongs are also seen in this language. Consonant clusters are seen in this language, although in loanwords only. As in the case of consonants, vowels also can occur in initial, medial and final positions of words. Vowel sequences are very limited, though they are seen. Open and closed syllables are found in Chiru. Syllabic patterns are also seen. Monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic words are very abundant Chiru. The language has two tones: level and falling.

## Nepali Varnamala: Contemporary cleavages, claims and contentions

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The Indic scripts, as collectively called, were primarily based on articulatory phonetics, and the units of orthography were designed to exhibit one-to-one correspondence with the speech sounds (Murthy 2006: 273). However, despite having the same script, Devanagari, the respective *varnamala* of Sanskrit, Dogri, Hindi, Marathi, Bodo, Konkani and Nepali are different from each other due to the qualitative and the quantitative characteristics of their language specific speech sounds. This shows that there is a systematic relationship to language, and has a systematic internal organisation which qualifies to be called grammar, or script grammar in popular parlance.

With the advent of publication of Nepali grammar and text books, there are consistent inconsistencies in the Nepali orthography, particularly *varnamala*. A well known dictionary, the *Nepali Brihat Sabdakosh* (1983: 19-21), acknowledges the lack of standardisation of Nepali orthography, and points toward different issues and debates (Clark 1969). Although one can safely attribute the issues and debates to tradition, convention and approach, the existing observed variations and the lack of *the* Nepali *varnamala* have actually opened a Pandora's box. Among other consequences: in the realm of pedagogy, as in actual practice, Nepali learners following different text books will never end up learning the same Nepali *varnamala*. Similarly, the need of *the* Nepali *varnamala* has relevance to developing the script grammar of the language to meet the demands of modern day technological advancement and its use in emerging domains of language use.

At another level, in the Indian context, it is not just a distinct script which is a part of a language's identity (Masica 1991: 144), but also orthography as witnessed in Hindi and Marathi despite having the same script. It is in this context that it is imperative to mention that orthography contributes in a high degree to the formation of a sense of solidarity and ethno-linguistic consciousness. Hence as an effort towards carving a distinct orthographic identity, Nepali is a language worthy to possess its own *varnamala* as well as *the* Nepali *varnamala* apart from its spelling system (Turner 1931: xvii).

This paper discusses various cleavages, claims and contentions on the subject, and addresses the issue providing a new perspective towards the paradox. It primarily attempts to provide a malleable solution which can serve to be a merkmal of the Nepali orthography reconciling both the tradition and the science of orthography/language; and consequently, in the formation of the ethnolinguistic solidarity.

## Interrogatives in Vaiphei

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Vaiphei belongs to the Kuki-Chin subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Geographically, the Vaiphei are found to inhabit different parts of North East India. The majority of the speakers are found in the state of Manipur, though a comparatively smaller section of them are also found in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. The population of the speakers is 39,673 (Census of India 2001). The Vaiphei are also found in the Chin Hills of Myanmar along with other closely-related Kuki-Chin language groups.

This paper will discuss interrogatives in Vaiphei. By and large, there are three types of interrogatives in Vaiphei: Yes/No question, Wh-question and Tag question. In Vaiphei interrogatives are also derived by the use of particles, namely, *-e?*, *-em* and *-mo*.

Furthermore, this language also uses intonation, in which questions can be formed via distinctive patterns of pitch. Thus, in terms of the backdrop sketched above, the paper attempts to describe the construction of interrogatives in Vaiphei.

## Harmony and licensing in Chungli syllables

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In this paper, we look at the syllable structure of Chungli, a dialect of Ao, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nagaland in North East India.

In Chungli, the evidence for positing the syllable as a unit comes from phonotactic restrictions, segment harmony, licensing requirements and certain OCP-related constraints within the syllable. Considering the numerous arguments for the syllable, it would not be surprising if the syllable is considered to be an important unit in forming prosodic words.

One of the major observations on syllables in Chungli is the restriction within the syllable such that the nucleus and the coda must always be in a harmonic relation, making it a syllable-internal restriction as attested in some Chinese dialects (Duanmu 2003/2007) and Vietnamese dialects (Pham 2006).

In this paper, we lay out the descriptive facts of phonotactic restrictions in monosyllables and disyllables, examining CV, VC and CVC syllable structures. We also examine the allophonic distribution of vowels, two cases of OCP and the resulting restrictions. We further argue that the glottal stop has a dual function: segmental and suprasegmental.

Our conclusion is that such phonotactic restrictions in Chungli are a result of harmony, licensing and the OCP.

## Deverbal nominals in Sumi

*Amos Teo*

In Sumi, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nagaland, deverbal nominals are formed by adding the prefix *kV-* to a verb root, where *V* is a high vowel that displays vowel harmony with the vowel of the verb root. The nominal prefix *a-* is also added when the verb is monosyllabic. For example :

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) | *pi* | /pì/ | 'to say' | *akipi* | /akipí/ | 'saying; speech' |
| (2) | *ye* | /jè/ | 'to write' | *akiye* | /akijé/ | 'writing' |
| (3) | *sü* | /ʃɨ̀/ | 'to hurt' | *aküsü* | /àkɨ̀ʃɨ̀/ | 'hurting; pain' |
| (4) | *ba* | /bà/ | 'to defecate' | *aküba* | /akɨbá/ | 'defecating' |
| (5) | *phu* | /pʰù/ | 'to search' | *akuphu* | /akupʰú/ | 'searching' |
| (6) | *po* | /pò/ | 'to run' | *akupo* | /àkùpò/ | 'running' |

Accent marks (or lack thereof) on vowels indicate tone: low (à), mid (a) and high (á). Some verb roots undergo a change in tone while others do not. This paper looks at the kinds of regular tone variation that can be found as well as the conditions for such variation to occur. In this analysis, it will also be argued that verbs in Sumi are best analysed as monosyllabic, sesquisyllabic or disyllabic. Additional data from neighbouring languages such as Khezha, where available, will be presented to offer a brief cross-linguistic comparison.