The Mysterious Prefix *Ang-* in Bisu

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1. **The Bisu Language**
   - Tibeto-Burman, Lolo-Burmese Language
   - Bisoid languages: Bisu, Pyen, Phunoi, Laopan, Laomian, Mpi
   - Related to Akha, Akheu and more distantly to Lahu
2. **Data Collection**
   - Data collected in Doi Chompu Village, Mae Lao District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand.
3. **The Mystery**
   - The glottal prefix exists in two forms, a full form *ang-* and an abbreviated form *a-*.
   - The prefix appears at first to occur randomly on nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs.
   - In some instances it is obligatory and in some instances it is optional.
4. **Research Objectives**
   - To determine the function of the glottal prefix. Does it have any semantic content? What is its grammatical or phonological role?
5. **The Prefix in Other TB Languages**
   - 6 Functions observed in other Tibeto-Burman Languages (Matisoff)
     1. Kinship Terms
     2. Third Person Possessive (Himalayish)
     3. Verb prefix agreement with 3rd person subject (Lai Chin).
     4. Nominalizer of Verb (Lepcha, Lahu, Burmese, Shan)
     5. "Aspectual" verb prefix indicating stativity or intransitivity.
     6. With nouns (added to roots) as phonological bulk providers so that nouns can serve as larger constituents.

   Other Suggestions:
   - Used on body parts in Tibeto-Burman Languages
   - Dummy head on bound morphemes in Bisu (Lehman 1975)
6. **Bisu**
   - 1 Kinship Terms
   - 6 Bulk provider on nouns
   - However, it also appears elsewhere!
7. **Nouns and *Ang-***
   - The prefix appears does appear on body parts in Bisu (as well as most other nouns),

Table 1 Body Parts With *Ang-*

angtu 'head'	*angtsin* 'liver'	*angmeu* 'body hair'	*angbat* 'scar'
angjaw 'waist'	*anggu* 'ligament'	*anghkaw* 'neck	

anggaw 'bone'	*angto* 'body	*angmao* 'lung'	

Table 2 Body Parts Without *Ang-*

lapu 'hand'	*lasuing* 'ear'	*maehkiomeu* 'eyebrow'	*sawphae* 'teeth'
lapuplanyuing 'finger	*lahkeulanyu* 'toe'	*nuingeak* 'chest'	*bawngbawng* 'stomach'
lahkeu 'foot, leg'	*maenui* 'eye'	*lawngpaek* 'breasts'	
laluing 'arm'	*maenuisui* 'eyeball'	*tanghkang* 'back'	

8. Examples of Bound Morphemes Body Parts

la -'Extemity'
mae- ' eye or vision'
sui- 'ball shaped object'
nyu- 'digit'
nuing- 'heart'

9. Other Types of Nouns With *Ang-*

Table 3 Other Types of Nouns With *Ang-*

Animals	People and Spirits	Common Objects	Nature
amaeng 'cat'	angchang 'friend'	angyuing 'pillar'	anghpan 'beetle nut'
amyang 'cow'	angjeu 'tribe'	angjae 'corner'	anghpa 'leaf'
awam 'bear'	angsuing 'owner'	angsae 'deadbolt'	angjawm 'forest plants'
agao 'crow'	angdae 'spirit'	angna 'pit'	anghkao 'chaff'
amawng 'horse'	anghkawngangla 'soul'	anghawn 'hole'	angga 'husk'
awang 'type of bird'		angsawng 'plastic bag'	angshu 'thorn'
			angsui 'seed'
			angji 'tree sap'

Table 4 Dai Loans Words With *Ang-*

angseng 'sound, voice'	angweng 'city market'	anggeung 'thing'
anghup 'image'	angleung 'story'	angjao 'master, lord'
angmeng 'city, region'	angjet 'trash'	anggu 'twins'

Table 5 Nouns Not Taking *Ang-*

yawhka 'headman'	hkayang 'frog'	tsuingtsuing 'tree'
hkabaya 'woman'	lawngtae 'fish'	lawngam 'branch'
hkahpaya 'man'	bawngna 'water buffalo'	langba 'river'
	yaba 'elephant'	lawba 'rock'

Table 6 Examples of Very Common Nouns Without *Ang-*

hang- rice	*hkat- market*	*hya- chicken*	*bap- book*
lang- water	*hkawng- village*	*na- wet rice field*	*bya- bee*
chang- person	*hkep -shoe*	*ya- hill rice field*	*hplu- money*
pawng- window	*hkeu - dog*	*pla -tip*	*mya-* knife
hpai- dam	*wa- pig*	*yum- house*	

10. Summary of Observations on Nouns

There is a phonotactic restriction in Bisu that Says that Bisu words must have at least two syllables. There are exceptions on many commonly used nouns.

11.* Adjectives and *Ang-

Table 6 Examples of Bisu Adjectives

angchao 'sweet'	*angmen 'good'*	*angjang* 'stupid'
angchen 'sour'	*angmawn* 'fun'	*angpeu* 'diligent'
anghka 'bitter'	*anghui* 'big'	*anghkiap* 'quiet'
anglawng 'hot'	*angtung* 'fat'	*angbya* 'many'
angtso 'cold'	*angyawng* 'skinny'	*angmang* 'beautiful'
angjen 'wet'	*angaen* 'clever'	*angi* 'small'

12.* Adjectives and *Ang-

Table 7 Adjectives with two occurrences of *Ang-*

anghuanghka 'expensive'	*anghtukanghpan* 'poor'
anggaenanghka 'strong'	*angshuingangshang* 'clean'

angplaenangsa 'bright'	*angsawkangsa* 'dirty'
angwuingangwang 'dark'	*anglawngangta* 'loud'
angjanganghpang 'rich'	*angsuinangpawng* 'honest'

Example Sentences with Adjectives

hkahpaya	angtung	**ang**mawng
man	fat	tall
The man is fat and tall.		

hkahpaya	nabata	nae	mawng	ma	**ang**tung
man	very	?	tall	art.	fat
The very tall man is fat.					

Observation on Adjectives
Phonotactic restriction on nouns also applies to adjectives.

13. **Verbs and *Ang-***

Table 8 Citation Forms of Verbs

maeng 'to be called'	*ja 'to have'*	*am* 'to carry in arms'	*huin* 'to run'
jam 'to remember'	*ga 'to be able'*	*tum* 'to wear' (shirt)	*tui 'to hit'*
bae 'to know'	*gya 'to hear'*	*pyao* 'to disappear'	*duing* 'to sit, reside'
tsa 'to eat'	*weu 'to buy'*	*hta* 'to climb'	*tsi* 'to speak'
hui 'to belong'	*saw* 'to like'	*hu* 'to look'	*hpao* 'to return'
hao 'to sing'	*lao 'to tell'*	*shi* 'to die'	*peun* 'to finish'
lak 'to love' (Dai)	*myang* 'to see'	*yaw* 'to walk'	*sha* 'to look for'

Table 9 Verbs Frequently Taking the Prefix

angsaw 'to like'	*angmyang* 'to see'
angbae 'to know'	*angmeng* 'to be called'

Example 1

ga	yang	na	angmyang	ya
1sg.	2sg.	ACC	see	INTS.
I already met him. or I MET him.				

14. *Ang-* and Negation

Example 2

na	yang	na	angmyang	la?
2sg.	3sg.	ACC	see	YNQ
Have you seen him?				

ba a	ga	yang	na	bamyang
no	1sg.	3sg.	ACC	NEG. see
No, I haven't seen him.				

15. *Ang-* and Temporal Marking

Example 3

muinghaw	sa	(*ang)lue	la?
rain	FUT	fall	YNQ
Will it rain?			

oi	sa	(*ang)lue	ya.
yes	FUT	fall	YNA
Yes, it will rain.			

16. *Ang-* and Aspect

Example 4

ya	(*ang)jung	la	chi
3sg.	stand	INCH	COMPL
He stood up.			

Dam	angge	weu	(*ang)ae	chi
Dam	outside	LOC	go	COMPL
Dam went outside.				

Observations on *Ang-* and Pre-syllables

Ang-, the negative *ba-* and the future *sa-* may not co-occur. They all appear in the same position immediately before the verb.

17. The Glottal Prefix and Evidentiality

Example 5

*ga	meut	ngae
1sg.	tired	SEN
I am tired.		

ga	angmeut
1sg.	tired
I am tired.	

Example 6

ja	lagan	niya	(*ang)ja	lae	ngae.
but	work	this	have	CONT	SEN
But there was always this kind of work.					

Observations on Ang-, Aspect and Evidentiality

The fact that ang- may not co-occur with the sensory evidential or completive aspect suggest there may be a semantic component to ang-.

18. *Ang-* and Questions

Example 7

tsuingtsuing	eu	**ang**leung	la?
tree	PL	fall	YNQ
Did the trees fall?			

Oi	**ang**leung	ya.
yes	fall	YNA
Yes, (they) did fall.		

Example 8

na	mawngmawng	tsa	na	angsaw	la?
2sg.	mango	eat	ACC	like	YNQ
Do you like to eat mangoes?					

oi	ga	mawngmawng	angaw	ya.
yes	2sg.	mango	like	YNA
Yes, I like to eat mangoes.				

Example 9

na	hang tsa	ya?
2sg.	rice. eat	YNQ
Have you eaten yet?		

oi	ga	hang tsa	ya.
yes	1sg.	rice.eat	already
Yes, I have eaten already.			

CONCLUSIONS

Bisu has a phonotactic restriction on nouns and adjectives that require them to have at least two syllables.

When it comes to verbs, multiple explanations may be needed. At times, *ang-* appears to have semantic content while at other times, it appears to be morphosyntactic.