

Tone Variation for Grammatical Purposes in the Rawang Language of Kachin State

Randy J. LaPolla & David Sangdong
Nanyang Technological University

SEALS24, Yangon University, 27-31 May 2014

- The Rawang orthography (Morse 1962, 1963) is used in this paper.
- Most letters represent the pronunciations of English, except *i* = [i], *v* = [ə], *a* = [ɑ], *ø* = [ʉ], *q* = [ʔ], and *c* = [s]. Tones: high or high-falling á, low or low falling à, and mid level ā. Syllables ending in a stop consonant (-p, -t, -q, -k) are in the high tone. Open syllables with no tone mark are unstressed. A colon marks non-basic long vowels.

Examples of the tone contrasts:

(1) k ^á	‘chicken’	k ^á	‘debt’	k ^à	‘word’
r ^í	‘bundle, bunch’	r ^í	‘carry’	r ^ì	‘plural marker’
r ^ū	‘to write’	r ^ú	‘to be struck’	r ^ù	‘poisoned’
ng ^ā	‘fish’	ng ^á	‘borrow’	ng ^à	‘1sg’
g ^{ár}	‘CL(drop)’	g ^{ār}	‘protect’	g ^{àr}	‘large’

- Transitives: non-past third person P marker (ò) plus non-past affirmative/declarative particle (ē) in non-past forms (e.g. r^íòē ‘to carry (something)’) and transitive past tense marker (-à) in past forms (with third person P arguments).
- Ambitransitives (labile verbs): used as transitives or intransitives (v^{ín}òē / v^{ín}ē ‘to eat’). Both S=P type and S=A types.

1. Introduction

- Tibeto-Burman language; far north of Kachin State, Myanmar.
- Closely related to Dulong in China.
- Data from the Mvtwang (Mvt River) dialect of Rawang.
- Verb-final, agglutinative, both head marking and dependent marking.
- Verbs: take hierarchical person marking, aspect marking, directional marking (which also marks aspect in some cases), and tense marking.
- Word classes and transitivity are clearly differentiated.

2. Verb classes

Morphology in citation identifies form class (third person non-past affirmative/declarative):

- Intransitives: non-past affirmative/declarative particle (ē) alone in the non past (e.g. ng^øē ‘to cry’) and the intransitive past tense marker (-ì) in past forms (with third person argument). This includes what would be translated as adjectives on some other languages.

Prefix	Head	Benefactive	Modality	Agreement	Transitive	Cl. final particle
è-/nv-	VH	ā	daq nē	-ngl-ì		
dv-/shv-(-shì)		kē/ké	dv ^{ín} g ngut	-shì/-shòng	-ò	-e
mv-		v ^{ín} /v ^{ín}	dvshà nv ^{ín} /nám	-nòng		
			dvzaq pv ^{ín}		past tense particle	
			dvzv ^r pv ^{òng}			
			dóm rà(ng)			-à
			gv ^{ín} shā(ng)			-ì
			jāng shvlā			
			jò ^m vdu ^l àng			
			jò ^r yvk			
			vlòt yùl			
			lún rvzaq			
			lvvvn(v)lòt			
			mūn vnvp			
			mv ^{ín} vlé			
			mv ^{yó}			

3. Tone Variation for Grammatical Purposes

3.1. Deverbal nominals

•Tone variation alone:

dvshī 'a spirit who can make you die' (cf. dvshí 'cause to die')
vyá 'liar' (cf. vyàē 'to lie').

•Sometimes appears with intransitivizing prefix v-, but v- is optional, so not relevant to tone variation:

•vngó ~ ngó 'one who cries easily' (cf. ngōē 'to cry')

•vkó ~ kó 'thief' (cf. kōē / kōdē 'to steal').

•No tone variation with nominalizing prefix àng- (= 3sg pronoun and 3rd person possessive prefix):

àngwǎm 'lid' (cf. wǎmōē 'to cover').

•Tone variation in V-dvng(wā) nominals:

(3) pvlasdik rǐ yúl dvngwā ídár (Text 03-164).

pvlasdik rǐ-í yúl dvng-wā í-dvǐ
plastic PL-INST easy just-only/just COP-TMhrs

'nowadays (you can stop the water) easily with the plastics.'

(4) tun tadvng wekvt nō yvng dvng íám (Text 03-83).

tun ta dvng we kvt nō yvng dvng í-vín
basket place just that CLF(time) TOP see/look just COP-DIR

'you place a basket (another part of the trap) it is finished and (you) can just watch.'

•Tone variation with nominalizing suffixes:

○Locative nominalizer -rà:

lǐmrà 'dancing place' (cf. lǐmē 'dance')
rúngrà 'sitting place' (cf. rúngē 'sit')

○Agentive nominalizer -shú:

lǐmshú 'dancer'
rúngshú 'one who sits (a retired person)'

○Classifier used as nominalizer:

rúnggó [sit+CL(people)] 'the one sitting'.

•Tone variation in v-V-shaq nominals:

(2) wēlòng gō̄vyvngshaq íwē í rvt nō (Text 03-52).

wē lǒng gō̄ v-yvng-shaq í wē í rvt nō
that CLF(general) also INTR-see/look-PERF COP NOM COP because PS

'that has been checked out already for that...'

•Tone variation when adjectives are used as nominals or to modify a noun:

(5) a. Shǒngsvp rǐ mvshǒngē.

shǒng-svp rǐ mvshǒng-ē
wood-leaf PL be.green-N.PAST

'The leaves are green.'

b. Shǒngsvp mvshǒng.

shǒng-svp mvshǒng
wood-leaf red

'The green leaf.'

(6) tiqmóngmóng shórkéò nō̄mvshé dvngwā wvtnē (Text 15-7).

tiq-móng-móng shór-ke-ò nō̄ mvshé dvngwā wvt-ē
one-region-region bright-BEN-TNP TOP red.color just only blossom-N.PAST

'(The flowers) shine with red colour and bloom across the whole area.'

3.2. Inflected verbs

•Tone variation with suffixes (PART)-ì ‘I.PAST’, and -ò ‘TNP’

PART is the particles -vm, bø, long, ra, dar (these particles are appear with high tone), yàng, vp, vt and daq

○ The -ì suffix ‘intransitive past’:

tébó-ì	cf. tēē [~] ‘to be big’	#change of tone mid > high
bébó-ì	cf. bēē ‘to finish/used up’	
rúngbó-ì	cf. rūngē ‘to sit’	
vímbó-ì	cf. vīmē ‘to eat’	

But with some verbs there is no change, or a change to low tone:

zēbó-ì	cf. zē ‘cripple’	#no change of tone
døbó-ì	cf. dø [~] ‘dark’	
lōbó-ì	cf. lō ‘return home’	
vpōbó-ì	cf. vpō ‘turn into’	
vlēbó-ì	cf. vlē ‘pass by’	
døm̄bó-ì	cf. døm̄ ‘block up’	
dēbó-ì	cf. dē ‘break’ (débōi ‘did something foolishly)	

(7) shónggùng vtúngdaqì kvt (Text 09-32).

shóng	gùng	vtúng	daq-ì	kvt
tree/wood	CLF(tree)	collapse	DIR(down)-I.PAST	CLF(time)

‘When the tree falls down ...’

vìlbó-ì	cf. vī ‘stay’	#mid > low tone
didó-ì	cf. dī ‘go’	
wàbó-ì	cf. wā ‘say’	
zàbó-ì	cf. zā ‘sick’	

(8) wērvp wērvp katvím nō vī yàngì (Text 02-50).

wē	rvp	wē	rvp	kvt-vm	nō	vī	yàng-ì
that	CLF(family)	that	CLF(family)	plant-DIR TOP	exist	TMyrs-I.PAST	

‘Each family cooked separately.’

○ But no change with the -à suffix ‘T.PAST’:

bābó-à	cf. bā ‘astride’	= bābōē
chūbó-à	cf. chū ‘to plough’	= chūbōē
sābó-à	cf. sā ‘to wait’	= sābōē
dēbó-à	cf. dē ‘to break’	= dēbōē
jūbó-à	cf. jū ‘to bark’	= jūbōē
kwēbó-à	cf. kwē ‘to lend, to hook’	= kwēbōē
tābó-à	cf. tā ‘to receive’	= tābōē

○ The -ò suffix

Intransitive		Transitive			
kēē	kēbōē	ké-òē	kébó-òē	kébo-à	‘bite’
dōē	dōbōē	dó-òē	dóbó-òē	dóbó-à	‘wear’
lāē	lābōē	lá-òē	lábó-òē	lábó-à	‘search’
rīē	rībōē	rí-òē	ríbó-òē	ríbó-à	‘carry’
tāē	tābōē	tá-òē	tábó-òē	tábó-à	‘listen’
shāē	shābōē	shá-òē	shábó-òē	shábó-à	‘know’
rūngē	rūngbōē	rúng-òē	rúngbó-òē	rúngbó-à	‘sit’
vhōmē	vhōmbōē	vhóm-òē	vhómbó-òē	vhómbó-à	‘meet’
vīmē	vīmbōē	vím-òē	vímbó-òē	vímbó-à	‘eat’
zvīngē	zvīngbōē	zvīng-òē	zvīngbó-òē	zvīngbó-à	‘put it’

•Tone variation with benefactive marking suffix:

(9) àngwà í dǒ gǔlǎo (Text 14-298)
 àngwà í dǒ gǔl-ǎ-ò
 usually COP manner keep-BEN-TNP
 ‘(He) kept it as usual.’

(10) Gvràyi dvgóā yàngà dvgò yàngākū iē (Text 02 179)
 Gvràyi-í dv-gò-ā yǎng-à
 God-AGT CAUS-complete-BEN TMyrs-T.PAST
 dv-gò yǎng-à kū í-ē
 CAUS-complete TMyrsT.PAST suppose COP-N.PAST
 ‘God has prepared abundance for them. (I) suppose (God) has prepared.’

•Tone variation with the reflexive/middle marking suffix *-shi*:

(11) paqzǎng vyá, vyá yǎng kèni wēdǒ vsǎng shí pǎngshì yàngi. (Text 26-14)
 paqzǎng vyá vyá yǎng kèni
 lizard lie lie place/at from
 wē dǒ vsǎng shí pǎng-shì yǎng-i
 that manner human.being die start/begin-R/M TMyrs-I.PAST
 ‘The dead of human begins because the liar bird/Pazang lied.’

In some cases there is a difference of tone on the verb in a direct reflexive situation relative to an indirect reflexive. In these cases a high tone marks a direct reflexive, while a mid tone marks an indirect reflexive. This can be seen by comparing the (a) and (b) examples in (12)-(13):

(12) a. àng nǒ àng vdǒrshìē ‘He’s hitting himself.’
 àng nǒ àng vdǒf-shì-ē
 3sg TOP 3sg hit-R/M-N.PAST
 b. àng nǒ àng vdǒrshìē ‘He is hitting his own (child, etc.).’
 àng nǒ àng vdǒf-shì-ē
 3sg TOP 3sg hit-R/M-N.PAST

In (12b) the form is that of a direct reflexive except for the tone on the verb, which marks the action as NOT a direct reflexive, so the referent hit must be something other than the actor, but something closely related to the actor.

(13) a. nà nǒ nà èwáshì bǒi ‘You did it to yourself.’
 nà nǒ nà è-wà-shì bǒ-i
 2sg TOP 2sg N.1-do-R/M PFV-IPAST
 b. nà nǒ nà èwáshì bǒi ‘You did it for yourself.’
 nà nǒ nà è-wà-shì bǒ-i
 2sg TOP 2sg N.1-do-R/M PFV-IPAST

In (13a-b) again the forms differ only in terms of the tone, but this makes the difference between the actor as P and the actor as Benefactive (with possibly some other assumed P).

Following is a list of the same verb as transitive, indirect intransitive, and direct intransitive:

ámòē	āmshìē	ámshìē	‘eat’
dvhòmòē	dvhòmshìē	dvhómshìē	‘meet’
dvkùmòē	dvkùmshìē	dvkúmshìē	‘raise/feed’
dvnàngòē	dvnàngshìē	dvnángshìē	‘carry always’
dvtìnòē	dvtìnshìē	dvtínshìē	‘to break, spoil’
làngòē	x	lángshìē	‘leave, abandon’
ládòē	lāshìē	lášhìē	‘look for’
lùòē	lūshìē	lúshìē	‘take’
púlòē	pūshìē	púshìē	‘pull up (plants)’
pvngòē	pvngshìē	pvngshìē	‘start’

ríòē	rìshìē	ríshìē	‘carry’
rómòē	ròmshìē	rómshìē	‘wear (sarong)’
shàlòē	shālshìē	shálshìē	‘drag, pull’
shòngòē	shōngshìē	shóngshìē	‘love’
shòndòē	shōnshìē	shónshìē	‘speak, talk’
tvriòē	tvrìshìē	tvríshìē	‘spin’
vdǒròē	vdǒfshìē	vdǒrshìē	‘beat, hit’
vrèòē	x	vréshìē	‘irritate’
vwùòē	vwūshìē	vwúshìē	‘roam’
vyàòē	vyāshìē	vyáshìē	‘handle carefully’
wàòē	wāshìē	wáshìē	‘do, make’
yàngòē	yāngshìē	yángshìē	‘see’
zìòē	zìshìē	zíshìē	‘give’

3.3. [V₁ V₂] structure, with V₁ in high tone.

V₂ is auxiliary or same verb reduplicated.

V vdū; appropriate to V.

(14) wēdø⁻shvñgbēí sháò dø wá màdū (Text 10-109)

wē dø⁻ shvñgbē-í shá-ò dø⁻ wá mv-vdū
that manner all-AGT know-TNP manner do/make NEG-suitable

‘It is not appropriate for him to do in the manner that it will be known to all people.’

In this structure, V₁ does not take person marking:

(15) ngà dōngē vs. ngà dí vdūngē

ngà dī-ng-ē	ngà dí vdū-ng-ē
1sg go-1sg-N.PAST	1sg go suitable-1sg-N.PAST
‘I go’	‘I should go’

But some mid-tone verbs don’t change:

lō vdū ‘should return home’

wvñ vdū ‘should buy’

#V daq; capable of V.

(16) zaqlè góng daqē cf. gòng ‘enter’

zaqlè gòng daq-ē
visitor enter can-N.PAST

‘The visitor can enter.’

V mvn (shì); continue to V.

(17) dvdvñ-ò dvgvp-í shòn mvñ rà-ē (Text 30-193). cf. shòn ‘speak’

dvdvñ-ò dvgvp-í shòn mvñ rà-ē
think-TNP era/time-ADV say continue need-N.PAST

‘That manner, you should continue to speak about it when it is still in your mind.’

#V shá; being use to V, know how to V.

(18) yapèi nō kà shón sháòē (Text 13-30) cf. shòn ‘speak’

ya pè-í nō⁻ kà shòn shá-ò-ē
this/here CLF(male)-AGT TOP word say know-TNP-N.PAST

‘This man know how to speak.’

#V rà; necessity to V.

(19) ādō gvl ràē (Text 03-53). cf. gvl ‘keep’

ā-dō gvl rà-ē
DEM-manner keep need-N.PAST

‘It has to be kept this manner.’

[V₁ V₂] nò structure; reduplication, used to mark non-final clause in procedural text with sense of ‘having done V . . .’.

(20) Kōbūdè svng wā dídí nò àng shvntlòngí shā wvp dvzàrò (Text 14-803).

Kōbūdè svng wā dí-dī nò àng shvnt lòng-í
Khobude LOC just go-go NS 3SG gunⁱ CLF(general)-INST

sha wvp dvzàr-ò
meat shoot order-TNP

‘Having gone to the Khobude, (he) let/ordered others to shoot animals using his gun.’

(21) Waqshvngí dvgùng yvng maqí dvng dú dùò nò`chòm wāshìē (Text 20-9).

waqshvng-í dvgùng yvng maq-í dvng dù dù-ò nò`
wild.boar-AGT tusk long PL-INST even dig dig-TNP PS

chòm wà-shì-ē
house do/make-R/M-N.PAST

‘The wild boar even with its long tusk, having dug the mud, made its shelter.’

(22) Dvpó lúlūshì nò`pà mví rì shò`nò (Text 13-25).

dv-pó lù lù-shì nò` pà mv-í rì shò`n-ò
CAUS-expensive take take-R/M PS what NEG-COP PL say-TNP

‘Having took the valuable objects, (he) talked nonsense.’

3.4. Tone variation before the directional purpose clause marker *nvng*

(23) vbā dú-nvng dīē

vbā dù-nvng dī-ē
dirt dig-DIR.PUR go-N.PAST

‘(He) is going to dig dirt.’

(24) ūkaq svng dì yàngì wāē, vníshvlá zùng lóngnvng (Text 14-753).

ū-kaq svng dī yvng-ì wā-ē
that-AL LOC go TMyrs-I.PAST say-N.PAST

vní shvlá zùng lóng nvng
twoCLF(month) school study DIR.PUR

‘Some said that (he) went to that side (China) to attend a two-month school.’ (after-thought)

Conclusion

- If we can generalize the tone variation to a single function, we can take nominalization as the basic function, and see complementation as involving these nominalized verbs.
- In the case of many suffixes, we can see a clear development from verbs, but this analysis implies that even those suffixes that do not have an obvious verbal source, such as the reflexive/middle marker, should have been verbal at some point to trigger the tone variation.
- Another option is to choose an analysis like that for the Cantonese changed tone, and say that it simply marks markedness, that is, constrains the hearer’s interpretation such that the proper interpretation is not the “usual” one.

Thank you!

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