

# THE PHONETIC REALIZATION OF VOICE QUALITY IN LOUMA UISHUI

Sigrid Lew

Linguistics Institute, Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

## Abstract:

The Uishui dialect of Louma, an Akoid language in Laos, has 30 consonants, one syllabic nasal and 11 distinctive vowels with two contrastive phonation types, lax and constricted. Like in other Tibeto-Burman languages, the so-called constricted vowels are typically realized with creaky voice or final glottal stops (Terrell 2009, Bradley 1982). A phonological analysis of Louma Uishui reveals that the contrastive feature constricted voice can also be realized through tense voiced onsets or vowels, or glottalized onsets. This phenomenon has not been described in literature on Akoid languages yet.

Whereas breathy or lax voiced vowels phonetically often have modal voice and can be accompanied by a non-contrastive voiceless glottal approximant [h] in wordfinal position, tense phonation is realized through creaky vowels, or creaky or tense vowels followed by a glottal stop. However, constricted syllables in Louma Uishui often also have tense, preglottalized or imploded consonant onsets. This means that the auditory cues for this phonation type are not only found in the vowel and a possible non-contrastive but phonation-related coda but also in the consonantal onset. The present study seeks to investigate in which way these three phonetic features interact. It will determine the linguistic context of the variation in phonation and examine what the four modifications preglottalisation, laryngealization, tense voice and postglottalization have in common to allow them to form one phonemic suprasegmental feature.

The articulatory organization of voice quality contrast suggests that phonation is not linked to any segment, like the onset or the vowel, providing a good example for the syllable as the underlying unit for phonological organization in this type of language (cf. Terrell 2009), and for Southeast Asian languages in general (Henderson 1985).

**Keywords:** Louma phonology, Akoid, phonation, lax, constricted, glottalized.

## Examples:

Realization of constricted syllables (tense voice is marked with subscript quotation marks):

/çí <sub>̣</sub> m̩m̩/	[çí. <sub>̣</sub> m̩a. <sub>̣</sub> m̩aʔ]	‘long’
/d̩n̩ẹ́/	[d̩n̩. <sub>̣</sub> nẹ́ ~ d̩aʔ. <sub>̣</sub> nẹ́]	‘short in length’
/tzy. <sub>̣</sub> m̩a. <sub>̣</sub> m̩a/	[d̩ʒy. <sub>̣</sub> ʔm̩a. <sub>̣</sub> m̩aʔ]	‘tall’

/pa.t <sup>h</sup> ɔ̣/	[ḥa.t <sup>h</sup> ɔ̣? ~ pá.t <sup>h</sup> ɔ̣?]	‘outside’
/bì.ɣ/	[ḥì?.ɣ? ~ bì.ɣ?]	‘to give’
/tá.le/	[tá?.le ~ tá.le]	‘sharp’
/jɔ̣.ɕi?/	[jɔ̣.ɕi? ~ ?jɔ̣.ɕi?]	‘urine’
/gù.ɣ/	[gù.ɣ? ~ gù.ɣ?/]	‘to sew’

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