

CLASSIFIERS IN WEINING AHMAO: A FULLY INFLECTUAL SYSTEM IN AN ISOLATING LANGUAGE

ABSTRACT

Isolating or analytic languages are known for their scarcity of word forms and for their under-specification of grammatical categories (indeterminateness). Isolating languages in East and Southeast Asian languages involve classifiers – a word category used with numerals and, depending on the language, with functions like Number, Definiteness, Modification (marker of relative clause) or Contrast (cf. Thai). Similar to other parts of speech in these languages, the classifier generally constitutes a one-form word category with occasional sandhi-derivations. Weining Ahmao, a Miao language spoken in SW China, follows this general morphological pattern, but has developed a highly uncommon system of classifiers. Each of its ca. 50 classifiers can be declined in 12 forms expressing a complex cluster of meanings which can be broken down into 3-4 parameters: Number [Singular, Plural], Definiteness [Definite, Indefinite] and Size/Importance [Augmentative, Medial, Diminutive]. Moreover, gender register is attached to the parameter of Size/Importance. A classifier in the Augmentative form conveys a vague idea of greatness and is typically employed by men; that in the Medial form is size-neutral and typically used with women; the Diminutive version of a classifier attaches an idea of size reduction and correlates with speakers of lower social status, typically children. Concerning the sound structure of these inflections, a good part of the Ahmao classifiers follow the outline given in the subsequent chart (the Augmentative Definite Singular form is being taken as underlying):

Gender Register	Size/ Importance	Singular		Plural	
		Definite	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite
↓	↓				
Male	Augmentative	CVT	C*VT	ti ⁵⁵ a ¹¹ CV ¹¹	di ³¹ a ¹¹ C*V ¹¹
Female	Medial	Ca ⁱ⁵⁵	C*ai ²¹³	tia ⁱ⁵⁵ a ¹¹ CV ¹¹	dia ⁱ²¹³ a ¹¹ C*V ¹¹
Children	Diminutive	Ca ⁵³	C*a ³⁵	tia ⁵⁵ a ¹¹ CV ¹¹	dia ⁵⁵ a ¹¹ C*V ¹¹

Remarks: 1) C means “consonant” (simple, double, affricated, etc.)
 2) V means “vowel” (simple, double)
 3) T means “tone” using numbers 1-5 to indicate the pitch contours
 4) * means “suprasegmental phenomenon” (e.g. aspiration, but possibly also an absence of sound change)

Historically, this system is derived from the merger of earlier classifier versions with the two adjectives or prefixes a⁵⁵ŋie⁵³ ‘female’ and ŋa¹¹ ‘small’. Some weak tendencies of similar mergers can be observed in other Miao languages, although none of the other Miao classifier systems seems to exhibit inflectional features (as far as we know).

Rara & Rarissima Conference, Leipzig (Germany), 29 March - 1 April 2006

PROGRAM

Slot - Time	MPI EVA Lecture Hall		BioCity Lecture Hall	
	Name	Title	Name	Title
Wednesday, March 29				
0900-1400	REGISTRATION			
	Session: Number and Reduplication		Session: General Issues I	
01 1400-1445	Jeff Good	Rarum begets rarum: A rare clitic and morphosyntactic reduplication in Chechen and Ingush.	Jan Rijkhof	Rara and Linguistic Theory.
02 1450-1535	Hein van der Voort	Reduplication of person suffixes in Kwaza (isolate, Brazil).	Kaius Sinnemäki	Languages with SOV word order and no morphological marking of core arguments.
<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>		
03 1600-1645	Sebastian Nordhoff	The Subtractive Plural Morpheme in Sinhala.	Matthew Baerman	Tracking the amphisbaenic paradigm: morphological polarity.
<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>		
PL 1700-1830	Frans Plank	3rd Person Plural in Distancing Pronominal Address for Individuals: Rare by Chance or Necessity?	Please note: Because of the limited space in the lecture hall, there will be a video transmission of the plenary talks in the Seminar room at the 4 th floor at the MPI too!!!	
Thursday, March 30				
	Session: Phonetics/Phonology I		Session: Negation	
04 0900-0945	Didier Demolin & Marie Vuillermet	Voiceless implosives: a comparison between South American and African languages.	Christiane Pilot-Raichoor	The Dravidian zero negative: conceptualisation and diachronic context of its morphogenesis.
05 0950-1035	Christian DiCanio	The Phonetics of Laryngealization in Takean Thong Chong.	Matti Miestamo	Negatives without negators.
<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>		

Slot - Time	MPI EVA Lecture Hall		BioCity Lecture Hall	
	Session: Phonetics/Phonology II		Session: Agreement/Tracking I	
06 1100-1145	Pavel Iosad	Right at the Left Edge: Initial Consonant Mutations in the World's Languages.	Anna Berge	Unexpected non-anaphoric marking in Aleut.
07 1150-1235	Siri Tuttle	Syllabic obstruents in Ahtna Athabaskan.	Peter Schmidt	Agreeing adverbials: rare but (mostly) areal.
<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>		
	Session: Lexical Classes		Session: Agreement/Tracking II	
08 1400-1445	Matthias Gerner & Walter Bisang	Classifiers in Weining Ahmao: a fully inflectual system in an isolating language.	Gunther De Vogelaer & Johan van der Auwera	When typological rara become productive: the extension of grammatical agreement in Dutch dialects.
09 1450-1535	Teresa McFarland <i>(read by Christian diCanio)</i>	Ideophones and templatic morphology in Totonaco de Filomeno Mata.	Ruth Singer	Mawng lexicalized agreement in typological perspective.
<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>		
	Session: Lexical Classes (cont.)		Session: Agreement/Tracking II (cont.)	
10 1600-1645	Dmitry Idiatov	Rare and nonexistent interrogative pro-word types: interrogative pro-verbs and Co.	Tom Güldemann	"Janus-headed" nominals: the morphosyntax of agreement in Taa.
<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>		
PL 1700-1830	Larry Hyman	Affixation by Place of Articulation: Rare and mysterious	video transmission of the plenary talks in the Seminar room at the 4 th floor at the MPI	
Friday, March 31				
	Session: Case & Roles I		Session: Phonetics/Phonology III	
11 0900-0945	Seppo Kittilä	Ablative as a marker of benefaction.	Urmas Sutrop	Ternary oppositions, Estonian three-way quantity contrast, and the Baltic polytonic Sprachbund.
12 0950-1035	Sylvie Voisin	An uncommon type of valency operator in Wolof.	Johannes Helmbrecht	The accentual system of Hocank (Winnebago) - a typological rarity.

Slot - Time	MPI EVA Lecture Hall		BioCity Lecture Hall		
		<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>	
		Session: Case & Roles II		Session: Phonetics/Phonology IV	
13 1100-1145	Søren Wichmann	A cross-linguistically rare case system in Tlapanec.	Didier Demolin	The production of bilabial trills.	
14 1150-1235	Michael Daniel	Monotransitivity in 'give'-constructions (exploring the periphery of ditransitives).	Maria Butskhrikidze	The nature of consonant sequences in Modern Georgian.	
		<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>	
		Session: Agreement/Tracking III		Session: Numerals	
15 1400-1445	Alice Harris	Explaining Exuberant Agreement.	Harald Hammarström <i>Everett 2004; 2005</i>	Rarities in Numeral Systems.	
16 1450-1535	Denis Creissels	Person agreement in Akhvakh]	Thomas Hanke	The rarity scale of addition.	
		<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>	
		Session: Lexical Semantics		Session: General Issues II	
17 1600-1645	Mari Bogatkin-Uusküla & Urmas Sutrop	The puzzle of two terms for red in Hungarian.	Frederick Newmeyer	Accounting for Rare Typological Features in Formal Syntax: Three Strategies and Some General Remarks.	
		<i>break</i>		<i>break</i>	
PL 1700-1830	Ian Maddieson	Phonetic rara <i>Lecture in memory of Peter Ladefoged</i>	video transmission of the plenary talks in the Seminar room at the 4 th floor at the MPI		
Conference Dinner at the "Ratskeller", 19:30h					
Saturday, April 1					
		Session: Case & Roles I		Session: Verbs and Events I	
18 0900-0945	Márcia Cançado	Talking about Agents and Beneficiaries in Brazilian Portuguese.	Bernhard Wälchli	Positive and negative rarities in the cross-linguistic encoding of motion events.	

Everett (1996) The status of phonetic rarities. ³Language 72: 794-800
 [t̪ʲ] (Wari, Perou)

Slot - Time	MPI EVA Lecture Hall		BioCity Lecture Hall	
19 0950-1035	Andrej Malchukov	“Quirky case”: cross-linguistically rare phenomena in case-marking.	Marian Klamer & František Kratochvíl	Classifying events and referents: Rarissima in Abui verbs.
		<i>break</i>	<i>break</i>	
		Session: Case & Roles II	Session: Verbs and Events II	
20 1100-1145	Richard Rhodes	A unique grammatical relation in Algonquian syntax.	Katharina Haude	Nominal tense in Movima.
21 1150-1235	Nicole Kruspe	Split marking in Semelai.	Valentin Goussev & Maria Brykina	Three Rara from Nganasan.
		<i>break</i>	<i>break</i>	
		Session: Historical Linguistics	Session: Verbs and Events III	
22 1400-1445	Orin Gensler	Shared quirks, ancient areality, and homelands: A case study from Afroasiatic.	Boštjan Dvořák & Ilse Zimmermann	Imperative Subordination in Slovenian.
23 1450-1535	Balthasar Bickel	What favors the development of rara? A Himalayan case study.	Leena Kelkar-Stephan	Future to express habitual actions in the past or present, and past to express immediate future!
		<i>break</i>	<i>break</i>	
		Session: General Issues III	Session: Verbs and Events IV	
24 1600-1645	Michael Cysouw	The importance of rara for a theory of linguistics	Jan Wohlgemuth	Rare today – gone tomorrow
		<i>break</i>	<i>break</i>	
PL 1700-1830	Daniel L. Everett	Case studies of rara: the general vs the specific in the formation of American linguistics and philosophy <i>Lecture in memory of Peter Ladefoged</i>	video transmission of the plenary talks in the Seminar room at the 4th floor at the MPI	
informal Dinner at the “Bayrische Bahnhof” at 19:30h				