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Squib

East Nusantara: Genetic, Areal, and Typological Approaches

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Three approaches to language comparison are distinguished. An areal approach leads to the conclusion that East Nusantara and the Bird's Head constitute a linguistic area.

The linguistic situation of East Nusantara is extremely complex. It is therefore useful to distinguish between three different (though often overlapping) ways to study this area linguistically: a genetic, an areal, and a typological approach.

A genetic approach studies features of the East Nusantara languages in order to reconstruct the genetic relations that might exist among them. An areal approach is concerned with the diffusion of structural features across language boundaries within East Nusantara. In a typological approach to this area, a particular set of languages is compared with respect to their synchronic structural features.

The three approaches render different results, because the data under consideration are selected on different grounds. A typological approach selects a set of languages to compare structurally. This selection can take place using various criteria such as the geographical position of the languages or their genetic affiliation. The outcome of a typological comparison is a list of structural similarities among the selected languages. If, for example, the languages are selected on their geographical position in Eastern Indonesia, as well as on their genetic affiliation as Austronesian, the outcome of the comparison is a list of structural similarities that exist among *this* particular set of languages. An areal approach, on the other hand, begins with selecting one or more structural features that are then traced through a set of languages in a particular geographical area in an attempt to define a linguistic area within it. The hypothesis in an areal approach is always that the feature(s) under observation spread through language contact, and in the ideal situation there is extralinguistic evidence that such contact has existed. In other words, both the typological and the areal approaches look at “features” of languages, but these features are selected on different grounds, and are used for different purposes. The primary goal of a typologist is to list structural similarities among languages (often with the long-term goal of getting an idea of which type of features are universal properties of human language). In contrast, the primary goal of an areal linguist is to define a linguistic contact area: “The term linguistic area refers to a geographical area in which, due to borrowing and language contact, languages of a region come to share certain structural features” (Campbell 1998:299–300).

Thus, the typological and the areal approach are fundamentally different in their goals and data selection. Yet, when a particular geographical area is involved, they are easily confused. Such confusion is evident in Donohue's (2004) squib. He applies the *areal* approach in attempting to define the East Nusantara region as a linguistic area and he evaluates the usefulness of the *typological* features proposed in Klammer (2002) in doing so. He concludes that they are not adequate to define a linguistic area. From the above, it may be clear that I find this conclusion, though disappointing, not at all surprising. Not every feature that results from typological research is also adequate to define a linguistic area. A linguistic area should be defined using features that can be argued to have played a role in language contact, and that are found throughout the area. Most of the features discussed in my typological paper do not meet either of these criteria, because they were not designed for the purpose of defining a linguistic area,¹ but rather to get an idea of the structural similarities among the Austronesian languages of a *predefined* geographical area.

In addition, one look at the linguistic map of East Nusantara shows that there are Austronesian as well as non-Austronesian languages in this area, so that, in case we want to define East Nusantara as a single linguistic area, our language sample should at least include Austronesian *as well as* non-Austronesian languages. As indicated in the title of the paper, my sample only contained Austronesian languages, which again indicates that the aim was to characterize a set of Austronesian languages within East Nusantara typologically, rather than to define it as a linguistic area.² A similar remark pertains to Donohue's repeated argument that some of the features are not unique to this area, but are also found in Papuan and Oceanic languages to the east. This may be true, but because the paper focuses on typological contrasts with western languages, possible contrasts with other areas are another issue.

The conclusion is simple. It is a mistake to define East Nusantara as a "linguistic area" using the typological features in my paper because they (i) come from a geographically demarcated sample of (ii) only Austronesian languages in East Nusantara, and (iii) were selected only in comparison to Austronesian languages towards the west. Features that derive from typological research should not be used indiscriminately in an areal linguistic approach.

In addition to using the areal approach, Donohue (2004) also addresses typological issues and asserts that the region [of East Nusantara] is part of a "typological continuum," and that there is no "major typological divide" in this region. This position contrasts markedly with that of Himmelmann (in press). As one result of his research into the typology of non-Oceanic Austronesian languages, Himmelmann proposes (section 1.2) that these languages should be divided into two major typological groups: (i)

1. For example, consider features such as "prenasalised consonants," "metathesis," or "parallelism," which were only found in a subset of the languages and were not claimed to result from language contact. From the outset it is thus clear that such features could never adequately define East Nusantara as a single linguistic area.

2. What may have caused the misunderstanding is that I did not set this out explicitly in the paper. To add to the confusion, I included in the last section a brief discussion of two sets of features as "defining" particular "linguistic (sub)areas" (feature 8+9 and 10+11 in section 4). See also the discussion below.

“symmetrical voice” languages (which include the Philippine-type and Indonesian-type languages, and are predominantly found in western AN languages); and (ii) “preposed possessor” languages (including the Austronesian languages of Timor, the Moluccas, and West Papua, as well as the pidgin-derived Malay varieties).³ The two typological groups contrast on the features given in table 1. Because the typological group of “preposed possessor languages” coincides roughly with the languages of East Nusantara, it appears that, unlike Donohue (2004), Himmelmann observes a “major typological divide” of a particular sort in the region, a position that coincides with mine in Klamer (2002).

Two of the features mentioned by Himmelmann as typical of the “preposed possessor” type of languages are also mentioned in my paper: (i) the morphological distinction between alienable and inalienable nouns, and (ii) clause-final negators. Because these two features occur in both Austronesian and Papuan languages in Hal-mahera, the Moluccas, and the Bird’s Head, they can be argued to define a linguistic area in Campbell’s sense (Klamer 2002:377, and fn. 11). They are therefore among the crucial features to evaluate if we want to define (a part of) East Nusantara as a single “linguistic area.” In his squib, however, Donohue dismisses the feature alienable/inalienable as insignificant because only “three” of the languages in the core set have it. Recall, however, that the core set was selected for *typological* comparison. For the definition of a linguistic area, there is no reason to stay within this particular set. In the paper, I list a total of 20 languages (15 AN, 5 non-AN) in East Nusantara and the Bird’s Head that have the feature alienable/inalienable. The dense occurrence of this particular feature across genetic boundaries in this particular area suggests that this feature could indeed be an “areal feature,” that is, used to define a linguistic area, as I hypothesize on page 373. The other feature proposed as a possible areal feature of East Nusantara is the feature “final negation” (based on Reesink 2002); a feature that Donohue (2004) chooses not to evaluate.

**TABLE 1. THE TWO MAJOR TYPOLOGICAL GROUPS
IN THE NON-OCEANIC AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES[†]**

SYMMETRICAL VOICE LANGUAGES	PREPOSED POSSESSOR LANGUAGES
Symmetrical voice alternations	No or asymmetrical voice alternations
Postposed possessor in adnominal constructions	Preposed possessor in adnominal constructions
No morphosyntactic distinction between alienably/ inalienably possessed items	Morphosyntactic distinction between alienably/ inalienably possessed items
Person-marking only sporadically attested	Person-marking prefixes or proclitics for S/A arguments
Numerals/quantifiers precede head	Numerals/quantifiers follow head
Negators in prepredicate position	Clause-final negators
V-initial or SVX	V-second or -final

[†] From Himmelmann, to appear.

3. The preposed-possessor criterion refers to the most common or unmarked order found in possessive constructions. That is, it is not required that all possessive constructions in a preposed possessor language show the order possessor-possessum, and conversely, nonpreposed possessor languages may optionally allow a possessor-possessum order.

In sum, of all the typological features of a set of Austronesian languages in a pre-defined geographical area, two appeared to be *also* interesting criteria to define a linguistic area within Central/Eastern Indonesia. I suggested that this area would at least include Halmahera, the Moluccas and the Bird’s Head, and exclude Sumba, Flores, and Sulawesi (among others).

In subsequent research that was carried out in cooperation with Ger Reesink and Miriam van Staden (Klamer, Reesink, and Van Staden, to appear), we have further addressed the topic of East Nusantara and the Bird’s Head as a linguistic area. We propose five linguistic features as “areal” and trace their (non)existence in some 40 Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages of South Sulawesi, Flores, Sumba, Timor, Alor and Pantar, the Moluccas, Halmahera, the Bird’s Head, and the Cenderawasih Bay. The evidence we find suggests that of these five areal features, three may be originally Papuan and diffused into Austronesian, while two are Austronesian and diffused into Papuan languages.

The “Papuan” areal features that we propose are: (1) the possessor-possessed order in adnominal possession, (2) the overt marking of the distinction alienable vs. inalienable possession, and (3) clause-final negation. These features are not generally found in Austronesian languages to the west, while they do occur in many Austronesian languages in East Nusantara and the Bird’s Head (as well as in Oceania); see table 2 for examples.⁴ The Austronesian areal features we propose are: (4) SVO as primary constituent order, and (5) existence of an inclusive/exclusive opposition. These features are typical for Austronesian languages, and are not generally found in Papuan languages. Yet they are attested in Papuan languages of East Nusantara, as illustrated in table 3.

TABLE 2. NON-AUSTRONESIAN FEATURES IN AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES OF EAST NUSANTARA AND THE BIRD’S HEAD †

NON-AN FEATURE	AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES WITH THIS FEATURE ACCORDING TO REGION
Possessor-Possessed	Alor/Pantar (Alorese) Timor (Tetun Fehan, Tetun Dili, Idate, Mambai) Moluccas (Leti, Buru, Dobel, Wetar, Bandanese, Kei) Halmahera (Taba) east of the Bird’s Head in the Cenderawasih Bay (Wandamen, Ambai, Waropen)
Alienable/inalienable	Alor/Pantar (Alorese) Timor (Tetun Fehan, Tetun Dili, Lakalei, Isní, Lolein, Kemak, Waimaha) Moluccas (Kaitetu, Selaru, Kei, Buru) Halmahera (Taba) east of the Bird’s Head (Biak, Ambai, Waropen)
Clause-final negation	Alor/Pantar (Alorese) Moluccas (Buru, Alune, Kei) Halmahera (Taba) east and south of the Bird’s Head (Biak, Irarutu, Ambai, Mor, Waropen). No Timor languages

† For reasons of space, the Papuan languages with features 1–3 are not listed here, but because they are an integral part of the picture, they are, of course, included in the paper.

4. For the full references to these languages, see Klamer, Reesink, and Van Staden (to appear), <http://www.leidenuniv.nl/let/aapp>.

It is clear that the features in tables 2 and 3 do not all converge on the same isoglosses. Note, however, that all five of the features overlap in Halmahera and the Bird's Head; four of them (3 non-AN, 1 AN) overlap in Alor/Pantar, the Moluccas, Halmahera, and the Bird's Head and surroundings; while three of them (2 non-AN, 1 AN) overlap in Timor, Alor/Pantar, the Moluccas, Halmahera, and the Bird's Head and surroundings. Together the features appear to define a linguistic area that has Halmahera and the Bird's Head and surroundings as its core, and radiates outwards to first include the Moluccas and Alor/Pantar, and then Timor.

Our conclusion is that these regions together constitute a linguistic contact area. The data also indicate that this area was not defined by a single wave of diffusion, but rather that several waves, taking place at different points in time and going in various directions, have shaped it as it is now.⁵

In sum, if we apply the appropriate areal features, we find that East Nusantara and the Bird's Head together constitute a linguistic area.

TABLE 3. AUSTRONESIAN FEATURES IN NON-AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES OF EAST NUSANTARA AND THE BIRD'S HEAD

AN FEATURE	NON-AN LANGUAGES WITH THIS FEATURE ACCORDING TO REGION
SVO constituent order	Halmahera (Ternate, Tidore) All of the Bird's Head languages <i>except</i> the South Bird's Head family No Alor/Pantar languages No Timor languages Moluccan languages do not feature here because there are no non-AN languages in our Moluccan language sample.
INCL/EXCL DISTINCTION	All of the Alor/Pantar languages (including Teiwa, Lamma, Blagar, Adang, Abui, Kui, Klon, Kafoa, Hamap, etc.) Timor (Bunak, Makasai) Halmahera (Tidore) All of the Bird's Head languages except three isolates in the center (Maybrat, Abun, Mpur) Moluccan languages do not feature here because there are no non-AN languages in our Moluccan language sample.

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5. Some possible diffusion scenarios are outlined in the full paper. We also discuss historical evidence for the area as a linguistic contact zone.