

Reported intentionality in Trans-Himalayan: A case study of Monsang (South-Central)

In a number of Trans-Himalayan languages, the verb ‘say’ has grammaticalized into a quotative marker with a range of extended functions. According to Saxena (1988; 1995), these extended functions include causal, purpose, and conditional subordination, evidentiality, marking questions, indicating the deliberateness of an action, or marking onomatopoeic expressions. Saxena argues that this “quotative complex” is only found in languages that have been in long-standing contact with Indic languages. This idea builds on previous literature that considers versatile quotative constructions a characteristic of the South Asian linguistic area (Kuiper 1974; Klaiman 1977).

The present paper examines within Trans-Himalayan the status of a particular type of (semi-)grammaticalized quotative-based construction: ‘reported intentionality’ (cf. McGregor 2007; Spronck 2015). Although a systematic comparative study has not been carried out yet, a preliminary survey has identified the construction in languages from different areas, different branches, and different typological profiles within Trans-Himalayan. This includes languages that do not appear to have been in any but the most recent contact with Indic languages.

This study focuses on Monsang, where both synchronic and diachronic reported intentionality constructions are examined, based on a 10,000+ word corpus of various genres. Monsang does not have a history of immediate contact with Indic languages and yet makes extensive use of quotative constructions. In Monsang, we commonly find direct speech employed to express the causes or reasons as well as the purposes underlying the actions of third person participants. In addition to the synchronic functions of quotative constructions, Monsang also has several diachronic quotative constructions that reconstruct back to reported intentionality. Example (1) shows the desiderative construction of the language, which involves a desiderative suffix *-níŋ* as well as an auxiliary *té*, which derives from *té* ‘say’. Examples (2) and (3) illustrate two future constructions: in (2) the general, unspecified future with *-váŋ*, and in (3) the immediate future with *-róŋ*.

Reported intentionality(-derived) constructions as in (1) appear to be more widespread in Trans-Himalayan as examples exist from languages as diverse as Burmese, Karbi, Galo, or Wadu Pumi. The development from quotative to future constructions as in (2) and (3) appears to be more unusual in this family. Parallels outside Trans-Himalayan exist, however, for example in Papuan languages (Reesink 1993), African languages (Aaron 1996; Botne 1998; Güldemann 2008), or the Amazonian isolate Aikanã (Van der Voort 2009). This paper argues that reported intentionality-type constructions are genuinely Trans-Himalayan, and suggests that this provides us a new perspective on the versatility of synchronic and diachronic quotative constructions in the family.

Examples

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| (1) <i>sá-níŋ</i> | <i>kí-té-ná?</i> | | |
| eat:I-DESID | 1SG-AUX-IPFV:TR | | |
| ‘I want to eat’ | | | |
| (2) <i>sá-váŋ</i> | <i>kí-té</i> | (3) <i>sá-róŋ</i> | <i>kí-té-ná?</i> |
| eat:I-FUT | 1SG-AUX | eat:I-IMMED.FUT | 1SG-AUX-IPFV:TR |
| ‘I will eat’ | | ‘I’m about to eat’ | |

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