

Breathiness spreading in Magar, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal

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In the variety of Magar spoken in Nibuwakharka (Syangja; Nepal), a non-tonal language of the Central-Himalayan branch of Tibeto-Burman (Bradley 1997), a phenomenon of breathiness spreading is attested. This process is specific to verb roots of CV₁.HV₁(C) structure, and conditioned by the type of affixation (prefix, suffix, and circumfix). This root structure, whose initial consonant is voiced and non-breathy, features an intervocalic glottal gesture (marked H above) that has three freely alternating surface variants: voiced fricative, voiceless fricative, and approximant. When a root of this type is affixed, it undergoes a change in pitch, as well as a reduction of its syllable structure where the second vowel is deleted. In the mean time, the breathiness of the glottal gesture spreads either leftward to the root-initial consonant (as in 1), or rightward to the following consonant, whether root-final (2) or suffix-initial (3). Laryngeal features have been widely discussed in the context of the reconstruction of tone systems (Matisoff 1973; Haudricourt, 1954b), including from modern tonal and non-tonal Tibeto-Burman languages such as Tamang (Mazaudon 1977), Chepang (Caughley 1970), Khaling (Michailovsky 1975), or Kham (Watters 2003). This poster presents a preliminary investigation of the relationship between laryngeal features and F₀ change in Magar verbs, which may contribute to a better understanding of such phenomena within Tibeto-Burman.

(1) Verb prefixed with the Negation morpheme *ma-*

ma-CV.HV	ma- ja^hia -ke-rΛ	ma-tʃ ^h an-a	[ma.j ^h ̣a.ke.rΛ.ma.tʃ ^h a.na]
	NEG-give-NMLZ-EMP	NEG-become-PST	
	‘Not to give was not good.’		

ma-CV.HVC	ku-s-tʃΛ-e-rΛ	ma- wafiar -mΛ-le	[kus.se.rΛ.ma.w ^h ̣ar.mΛ.le]
	INT-DEF-REL-ERG-EMP	NEG-understand-PROG-IMPF	
	‘No one understands.’		

(2) Verb suffixed with the Past morpheme *-a*

CV.HVC-a	met	duhum -a	[mɛt.du.m ^h ̣a]
	greens	finish-PST	
	‘The vegetables are finished.’		

(3) Verb suffixed with the Imperfective morpheme *-le*

CV.HV-le-aŋ	ŋa-e	lofo -le-aŋ	[ŋɔe.lo.l ^h ̣aŋ]
	1SG-ERG	throw-IMPF-1SG	
	‘I’m going to throw [it].’		

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