

Loan Verbs in Southeast Asia

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In my ongoing dissertation research, I address the question as to whether and why most languages purportedly have more trouble borrowing verbs than nouns, and which – if any – typological features of the languages involved have any significant impact on the simplicity or difficulty as well as on the available mechanisms and paths of importing a verb from one language into the other.

These issues were briefly addressed by MORAVCSIK (1975, 2003) on the basis of a small sample of languages. Further examples of verbal borrowing were collected by GEORGE HUTTAR (2002) and later by SØREN WICHMANN (2004) through the *LinguistList*.

This paper will focus on verbal borrowings and loan verb accommodation strategies in the languages of Southeast Asia, using first tentative results from my large-scale cross-linguistic study of verbal borrowings.

Loan verbs from this region are of particular interest to the study, because these languages often challenge the notion of a clearly distinguished word class “verb” and thereby help to define the limits of what should be counted as verbal borrowing at all. Furthermore, these languages were in contact with several different colonial languages. Thus, the region can also serve as a model to test hypotheses as to whether borrowing mechanisms vary for different donor and recipient language combinations.

References:

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