

Title: Event coercion with the completive particle *lei* in Makuri Naga.

Subfield: Semantics and Syntax

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Makuri Naga, spoken in north-west Myanmar, and in north-eastern India, has recently been the subject of an unpublished grammar sketch (Kwan Bei 2006) and ongoing thesis work by Vongsuh shi (in progress), a native speaker. These studies show that like many SOV Tibeto-Burman languages, this language has a rich system of verbal particles that modify the event denoted by the sentence. These particles occur primarily post-verbally (though a few can occur immediately before the verb). The information provided by these particles is a mix of directional, aspectual, temporal, and to a lesser extent manner, epistemic, and mitigation information. Deciding on the specific contribution of each particle is vexed because there are clear compositional effects that derive from apparent hierarchal relationships among the particles. In the course of investigating these verbal particles we became intrigued by one particle which seemed to correlate highly with providing event-“completion” and yet often was part of sentences denoting imperfective events and states. That particle, *lei*, is the focus of this paper. In (1) *lei* can be seen as part of an event that is clearly culminated and yet in (2a) the same particle is associated with an event that is not culminated. Interestingly the appearance of a past realis maker (2b) can create ungrammaticality.

(1) hüh pē shit shit sūv vu lei le  
DEM CASE Adv Adv V V TAM TAM  
this TOP now now rise.up go.dir BE.AT PRS.RLS  
this (pig) has just now got away

(2) a. Amitpi o sha *lei* le b. \*Amitpi o sha *lei* net  
N.PRO CASE ADJ V TAM N.PRO CASE ADJ V TAM  
3S ABS old BE.AT PRS.RLS 3S ABS old BE.AT PST.RLS  
He is old \*He had been old

We suggest that the event based semantic proposals coming from a variety of sources: Herweg (1991), de Swart (1997), Parsons (1990), and others, give good insight into the behavior of this particle. In particular when the semantic notion of STATE is defined as a homogeneous temporal interval relative to the event that it is associated with (Herweg 1991), then the various behaviors of *lei* can be accounted

for by proposing that its function is to associate the event description it dominates to a homogeneous interval. This means, surprisingly enough, that perfective interpretations are being created by turning an event into a state. Turning events into states (event coercion) has been suggested by others and an informal adoption of de Swart (2000) is used to do that here.

This paper looks at the use of *lie* with 11 different event types (some of which are compositionally created by other verbal particles) and provides a single semantic proposal for *lie* which accounts for its behavior in these environments. Necessarily some basic claims about the structural hierarchy of verbal particles are also implied.