

Associating Morphosyntactic Changes in Austronesian Languages  
with Human-migration Routes

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In this presentation, I will attempt to relate morphosyntactic changes proposed for Austronesian languages to the currently accepted migration hypothesis of the Pacific and discuss what kind of additional hypotheses could be made.

Linguistic subgrouping hypotheses have played an important role in identifying peoples' migration routes of early speakers of Austronesian languages. The major phenomena looked at in such work are sound correspondences and lexical innovations where the Comparative Method is applied. However, other linguistic aspects, such as morphosyntax and semantics, also undergo change and their developmental paths should also be traceable. Thus a question arises as to the kind of contributions that are potentially expected in understanding peoples migration in prehistory when examining such changes.

I will discuss how the development of basic sentence structures and actancy systems proposed in Kikusawa 2003 as a result of macro-comparison of Austronesian languages relate to the existing migration theory. More specifically, I will show that, assuming that the given hypothesis is correct, morphosyntactic remnants appear to support rapid spread of Austronesians and possibly longer periods of incubating areal features in each macro-region.