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A Grammar of Dhao; An endangered Austronesian language in Eastern Indonesia

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Summary of PhD thesis

A grammar of Dhao

An endangered Austronesian language in Eastern Indonesia

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PhD in Linguistics

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INTRODUCTION¹

This artikel presents the summary of a grammatical description of Dhao, an endangered Austronesian language in Eastern Indonesia. The data used in this grammar are extracted from 82 texts including elicited texts and field notes, 33 purposive recorded items, and 1,878 headwords in lexicon database. Dhao is a language spoken by about 3000 people on Ndao Island, a tiny island west of Rote in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Some speakers are now also living on the other neighbouring islands, such as Rote, Timor, Sawu, and

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Sumba. This grammar consists of six chapters principally devoted to describing the phonology, morphology, and syntax of Dhao. The other linguistic aspects, such as semantics and sociolinguistics, are involved in the description only when related to the grammatical aspects under study.

THE PEOPLE, LANGUAGE, AND THE CULTURE OF DHAO

The best-known name of the island and its language is “Ndao”. However, it has been confirmed that this name is a mispronunciation and uses the spelling of the dominant neighbouring language, Rote (Charles E. Grimes 2010). The consonant cluster or pre-nasal /nd/ never occurs in any syllable position in the language. Speakers always pronounce the name without this nasal and with slightly retroflex and affricated pronunciation of the sound [dʒ̣]. The name is therefore written as *Dhao*. Other variants of the name are *Dauw* (D.W.C. van Lynden 1851), *Dao* (J.C.G. Jonker 1903), *Ndau* (F.J. Ormeling 1952), and *Dhau* (Grimes 2009). I use *Ndao* to refer to the island and the community, and will use *Dhao* to refer to the language. The people of Ndao believe that when their ancestors came from Sawu they brought the indigo plant *dhau* (*Indigofera tinctoria*) which is the origin of the name of the island. Most Ndao men used to occupy themselves with gold- and silver-smithing and the women with weaving the traditional ikat cloth. Nowadays, the men tend to leave the island during dry season to sell their handiwork and woven ikat products in the neighbouring islands. Unlike ikat weaving, smithing is no longer very productive and the majority of the men have shifted their economic ventures to fishing and local business activities.

The Dhao language is genetically classified into the Sumba-Hawu subgroup of the Austronesian family (Robert Blust 2008, 2013; M. Donohue and C.E. Grimes 2008). Dhao has three registers: *Lii Dhao*, the everyday language; *Lii Pacele*, the secret language, and *Lii Hini*, the ritual language. The secret language is basically a symbolic or figurative way of expressing the language used only by adults to prevent younger people or outsiders with only a basic knowledge of Dhao understanding the conversation. The ritual language is used only in customary ceremonies or events and is now under threat of endangerment as traditional ceremonies are being rejected or curtailed by youths.

On contemporary Dhao, people speak up to four languages, at least Dhao, Kupang Malay, Indonesian, and Rote. Consequently, lexical and grammatical calquing is to be expected. Of necessity, the people of Dhao have intense contact with people on the neighbouring islands for economic and educational reasons. Although Dhao is still used at home, language shifting is strikingly obvious. Children still learn Dhao but interference from Kupang Malay has been undeniably existent for many years. Dhao still has no significant role in any domain other than daily conversation.

PHONOLOGY

The Dhao phoneme inventory displays twenty-three consonant phonemes and six vowel phonemes. The consonants consist of nine plosives, four implosives, two affricates, two fricatives, four nasals, and two liquids, as presented in Tables 1 and 2 (see also Grimes 2010; Alan T. Walker 1982).

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p	b	t	d	c	ʔ <'>
Implosive		ɓ <b'>		ɗ <d'>	ɟ <j'>	ɡ' <g'>
Affricate		ɸβ <bh>		ɬɮ <dh>		
Fricative		(f)	s			h
Nasal		m	n	ɲ <ny>	ŋ <ng>	
Trill			r			
Lateral			l			
Approximants	(w)			(j)		

Table 1. Dhao consonants.

	front	central	back
high	i		u
mid	ɛ <e>	ə <è>	ɔ <o>
low		a	

Table 2. Dhao vowels.

While all other consonants have a complete distribution, the bilabial implosive /ɓ/ occurs only word medially. Turning to the vowels, while other vowels are able to appear as syllable nucleus, the schwa /ə/ lacks weight in this position; therefore, any consonant following it should be lengthened to satisfy the syllable weight. Whenever a schwa occurs in a final syllable, it requires a high vowel resulting in a diphthong. All simple vowels are pre-glottalized in the initial syllable. These glottal stops are apparently phonemic not phonetic. The evidence for this assertion has been extracted from the morphophonological analysis of prefixation and partial reduplication in which the initial glottal of the root is retained.

An analysis of syllables shows that Dhao has an open-syllabic system with an (C)V template. There are no codas. The main stress is on the penultimate syllable. For the quadri-syllabic words, the main stress remains on the penultimate syllable with secondary stress on the first syllable. The reduced forms follow the template of syllable units in which each unit is a trochaic foot. Words with two trochees, for example, are reduced to a single trochee. Most loan words in Dhao are from Indonesian through Kupang Malay. Dhao

always adapts loan words into its native phonological system. Since a Dhao syllable has no coda at all, the codas of loan words are all deleted which leaves the syllable open. A few words still maintain codas in word-medial position, which I consider as an incomplete adaptation as the consequence of the intense contact between Dhao and Kupang Malay.

WORD CLASSES

The categorical status of words in Dhao is determined by the integrated paradigms of constructions, and not by the semantics of the lexical items. Dhao does have noun, verb, adjective, and adverb classes (R.M.W. Dixon 2010). Nouns in Dhao have five defining features: (1) they can be modified by demonstratives; (2) in possessive constructions they refer either to a possession or a possessor; (3) they take numerals and classifiers; (4) they can be modified by the quantifier *aa'i* 'all'; and (5) they follow the existential verb *abhu* 'to get'. Nouns in Dhao are subclassified into four groups: proper nouns, common nouns, nouns of location, and direction and time nouns. Dhao has four sets of personal pronouns; three are morphologically independent and the other is a set of bound forms which require hosts. All full forms are bisyllabic, except for *èu* '2SG', and they have monosyllabic counterparts which are considered reduced forms in this grammar. Clitics are another monosyllabic set. The bound forms which require hosts are considered co-index affixes. These co-index affixes are apparently copies of the reduced pronominal clitics. While clitics can be true arguments, like full pronouns, affixes can be only referential elements.

	Pron.	Full	Reduced	Clitics	Affixes	
					Pref.	Suf.
First	1SG	<i>ja'a</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>k-</i>	<i>-ku</i>
	1PL-ex	<i>ji'i</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>(nga)</i> ²	<i>ng-</i>	<i>-a</i>
	1PL-in	<i>èdhi</i>	<i>(ti)</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>t-</i>	<i>-ti</i>
Second	2SG	<i>èu</i>	-	<i>mu</i>	<i>m-</i>	<i>-mu</i>
	2PL	<i>miu</i>	<i>(mi)</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>m-</i>	<i>-mi</i>
Third	3SG	<i>nèngu</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>na / ne</i>	<i>n-</i>	<i>-e</i>
	3PL	<i>rèngu</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>r-</i>	<i>-si</i> ³

Table 3. Dhao personal pronoun paradigms.

Dhao applies a three-deictic system, namely: proximal, distal, and remote. They have singular and plural forms. Each form has a reduced counterpart.

² This pronominal clitic has never been attested in any position.

³ The pronominal suffix *-si* '3PL' has most likely been grammaticalized from Dhao's remote plural demonstrative *sèi* 'REM.PL'.

	Singular		Plural	
	Full	Reduced	Full	Reduced
Proximal	<i>ne'e</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>se'e</i>	<i>se</i>
Distal	<i>èèna</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>sèra</i>	<i>sa</i>
Remote	<i>nèi</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>sèi</i>	<i>si</i>

Table 4. Demonstratives in Dhao.

Dhao also has a relative pronoun *dhu* which is used in turn as a relative marker. Two interrogative pronouns are identified: they are, *cee* 'who' for human nouns and *ngaa* 'what' for non-human nouns. For numerals and classifiers, the numbers from 'one' to 'nine' are expressed by separate bisyllabic lexemes. Only *èci* 'one' can be reduced to a monosyllabic morpheme *ci*. The multiples of ten are preceded by the classifier *ca* 'a, one'. Dhao does have an archaic term *kehi* which means 'million' but it is no longer used. The ordinal numbers use the prefix *ka-* plus the cardinal numbers. Fractions use *camalore* which means 'a half or 1/2'. Dhao has three different classifiers denoting the meaning 'one': *ca* 'one of, full of' (for generic words), *cue* 'one thing or fruit of' (for inanimate), and *ci'u* 'one body' (for animates).

Since Dhao lacks a morphosyntactic marker to distinguish verbal predicates from other non-verbal predicates, the syntactic function alone cannot be used as a defining feature of verbs. In Dhao, verbs have three features: (1) a limited number of verbs take co-index affixes for inflection, (2) verbs can be derived from nouns and adjectives by using the prefix *pa-*, which marks causative, reciprocal, and other meanings, (3) only verbs can be modified by the perfective marker *le* 'PERF' and the modal *nia* 'can'. To derive verbs, the prefix *pa-* is attached to nouns, for example, *angalai* (N) 'friend' > *pa-angalai* (V) 'to be friends' and adjectives, for example, *madhera* (Adj) 'long' > *pa-madhera* (V) 'make something long'. Dhao has a very few adverbs, but among them are *karohe* 'fast' and *mèri* 'quick'. Like other languages, adverbs in Dhao cannot function as main predicates or heads of arguments. Whereas these adverbs either modify verbs or the whole clause, Dhao has another sub-type of adverb which are classified as exclusive adverbs in this grammar. These exclusive adverbs are basically derived from idiophones and feature lexical reduplication which modifies only a specific verb. For example, the adverb *dhi-dhii* can only modify the verb *titu* 'to stand' and nothing else.

Adjectives in Dhao have two defining criteria: (1) an attributive function and (2) serial verb constructions involving the prefix *pa-*. Only five words are true adjectives in Dhao, because they can modify nouns directly in their bare forms, they are: *aae* 'big, great', *iiki* 'small', *aapa* 'bad', *to'a* 'in need', and *iaa* 'common'. Words denoting dimension and colours demonstrate a different syntactic behaviour when prefixed by the causative *pa-*; that is, they require another verb to precede them, resulting in an SVC. Dhao has eight words to create interrogative constructions. On the basis of their function, the interrogative words in Dhao are classified into four types: interrogative pronoun (*cee* 'who'

and *ngaa* 'what'), numeral (*pèri* 'how many'), classifier (*cangaa* 'how much'), and demonstrative (*mia* 'where'). The others (*tasamia* 'how', *ngaa tao* 'why', and *do* for yes/no questions) are considered derived forms. Dhao has ten "true" prepositions in that they can occur only before nouns or noun phrases, such as *ètu* 'LOC', *ngèti* 'from', and *asa* 'to'. The prepositions in Dhao are typically one-dimensional. For two- and three-dimensional grounds, location nouns are required to express a path, for instance, *dara* 'inside' and *dedha* 'above'. Dhao has five co-ordinating conjunctions and eight sub-ordinating conjunctions. Some conjunctions, such as *dènge* 'and' and some are complex, such as *ngèti èèna ka* 'therefore'. Functionally, conjunctions are also derived from other categories, for instance, *ladhe* 'if' is derived from the verb 'to see' and *lodo* 'when' from the noun 'day, time'. The particles in Dhao include words which indicate aspects, conjunction-like words, and negations. Tags in Dhao are used to mark particular expressions, such as a question tag *si*, politeness tag *ku*, et cetera. Interjections are typically used to express emotions. For example, to express surprise or astonishment, the interjection *irii* is used and to express amazement *boo* is used.

MORPHOSYNTAX: INFLECTION AND DERIVATION

Dhao lacks productive forms in morphosyntactic constructions. The co-index prefixes are restricted to only eight verbs, as shown in (1) and only one verb, *la-* 'to go', takes suffixes for co-indexing, as given in Table 7. Two verbs are considered irregular forms in which their initial vowels require phonological adaptation, as shown in Table 5.

Pro.	Pref.	-a'a 'to eat'	-are 'to take'
1SG	<i>k-</i>	<i>k-u'a</i>	<i>k-ore</i>
2SG	<i>m-</i>	<i>m-u'a</i>	<i>m-ore</i>
3SG	<i>n-</i>	<i>n-a'a</i>	<i>n-are</i>
1PL-in	<i>t-</i>	<i>t-a'a</i>	<i>t-are</i>
1PL-ex	<i>ng-</i>	<i>ng-a'a</i>	<i>ng-are</i>
2PL	<i>m-</i>	<i>m-i'a</i>	<i>m-ere</i>
3PL	<i>r-</i>	<i>r-a'a</i>	<i>r-are</i>

Table 5. Irregular verbal inflection.

Six verbs are considered regular. The assimilation demotes only the vowels of the prefixes and retains the initial vowel of the roots, as given in Table 6.

Pro.	Pref.	-e'a 'to know'	-èdhi 'to see'	-èti 'to bring'	-o'o 'to want'	-inu 'to drink'	-èd'u 'to hold'
1SG	k-	k-e'a	k-èdhi	k-èti	k-o'o	k-inu	k-èd'u
2SG	m-	m-e'a	m-èdhi	m-èti	m-o'o	m-inu	m-èd'u
3SG	n-	n-e'a	n-èdhi	n-èti	n-o'o	n-inu	n-èd'u
1PL-in	t-	t-e'a	t-èdhi	t-èti	t-o'o	t-inu	t-èd'u
1PL-ex	ng-	ng-e'a	ng-èdhi	ng-èti	ng-o'o	ng-inu	ng-èd'u
2PL	m-	m-e'a	m-èdhi	m-èti	m-o'o	m-inu	m-èd'u
3PL	r-	r-e'a	r-èdhi	r-èti	r-o'o	r-inu	r-èd'u

Table 6. Regular verbal inflection with prefix.

- (1) [ina =na] n-e'a le
 mother 3SG 3SG-know already
 'His mother already knew.'

The suffixes attached to the verb *la-* 'to go' are loans from Rotenese and are in turn historically grammaticalized from pronominals (Jonker 1903).

Pro.	Jonker's		Current usage	
	Suf.	la- 'to go'	Suf.	la- 'to go'
1SG	-ku	la-ku	-ku	la-ku
2SG	-mu	la-mu	-mu	la-mu
3SG	-ni	la-ni	-e	la-e
1PL-in	-ti	la-ti	-ti	la-ti
1PL-ex	-ku	la-ku	-a	la-a
2PL	-mi	la-mi	-mi	la-mi
3PL	-ri	la-ri	-si	la-si

Table 7. Verbal inflection with suffix.

- (2) ca lod'o hari ka Rika_i la-e_i dhasi
 a day again PART Rika to.go-3SG sea
 'One day Rika went to the beach.'

The affixes provide information about the person and number of their antecedents. The affixes and the NPs share the same referents and role in the clause. Therefore, such inflectional affixes are treated as a double expression. That is, the affixes confirm that the argument referent is available within the context. When the NP is present, the affix and the NP jointly constitute the subject argument. Therefore, in this regard, the argument is doubly expressed (Martin Haspelmath 2013).

The only derivational prefix is *pa-*. It carries a variety of meanings and

interacts with other morphological processes, such as inflection verbs, reduplication, and compounding. Interestingly, the prefix *pa-* carries both causative and reciprocal meanings. These two semantic features are in fact different in terms of syntactic construction. While causative is a valence-increasing phenomenon, reciprocal is valence decreasing. The majority of the verbs with a causative reading are derived from monovalent verbs and non-verbal categories. However, some base verbs are bivalent. In this regard, the causative meaning is construed as profiling a more volitional or controlled event. The example of causative meaning with the prefix *pa-* is given in (3). The reciprocal meaning of *pa-* with root verb is given in (4) and root noun in (5).

- (3) a. *kahibi èèna madhe le*
 goat DIST.SG to.die PERF
 'That goat was dead.'
- b. *rèngu pa-madhe kahibi èèna*
 3PL CAUS-to.die goat DIST.SG
 'They kill the goat.'
- (4) *dua rèngu pa-liku*
 two 3PL RECP-to.hug
 'They hug each other.'
- (5) a. *ngaa tao ka angalai mai?*
 what to.make PART friend to.come
 'Why do you come (here), friend?'
 (Literally, what makes (you) come, friend?)
- b. *èdhi dua ti pa-angalai*
 1PL.in two 1PL.in.CL RECP-friend
 'We are friends.'

Dhao has four types of reduplication in which (C)*a*-reduplication is distinguished from syllabic reduplication. While the former copies only the first consonant of the initial syllable followed by the fixed *a*; the latter copies the whole initial syllable. Other types of reduplications are not as productive, with the exception of the full reduplication of ideophones. (C)*a*-reduplication is productive and carries a variety of meanings, expressing instrument, nominalization, intensity, manner, and location. Other meanings are fairly metaphorical.

(6) (C)a~ reduplication

<i>bhèla</i>	'wide'	<i>ba~bhèla</i>	'width'
<i>dui</i>	'to carry (with yoke)'	<i>da~dui</i>	'k.o. yoke'
<i>g'ute</i>	'to cut (with scissors)'	<i>g'a~g'ute</i>	'scissors'
<i>j'èra</i>	'difficult'	<i>j'a~j'era</i>	'difficulty, affliction, in labour'
<i>laho</i>	'be destroyed'	<i>la~laho</i>	'powder'
<i>mea</i>	'red'	<i>ma~mea</i>	'red part (in weaving)'
<i>pèda</i>	'be sick'	<i>pa~pèda</i>	'sickness'

(7) Full reduplication

<i>(baka) pèri</i>	'how many'	<i>pèri~pèri</i>	'how many per group'
<i>(ka) mia,</i>	'where'	<i>(ètu) mia~mia</i>	'wherever'
<i>(ètu) mia</i>			
<i>cee</i>	'who'	<i>cee~cee</i>	'whoever'
<i>loli</i>	'to roll'	<i>loli~loli</i>	'rolled up'
<i>miri</i>	'be slanting'	<i>miri~miri</i>	'aslant'
<i>ngaa</i>	'what'	<i>ngaa~ngaa</i>	'whatever'
<i>paroa</i>	'to call'	<i>paroa~paroa</i>	'call repetitively'

Furthermore, the discussion on compounding demonstrates that some of the compounds have meanings associated with their stems, whereas others do not.

(8) Compounds

<i>ina-ama</i>	mother + father	'parents' ⁴
<i>loa-hèngu</i>	sheet + cotton	'yarn'
<i>isi-kasiro</i>	content + gun	'bullet'
<i>rai-haha</i>	land + below	'earth; world'
<i>èi-kabhète</i>	water + thick	'porridge'
<i>ana-aj'u</i>	child + wood	'plants, tree'
<i>lïi-dai</i>	voice-arrive	'to invite'
<i>lalau-lalo'o</i>	arrange-manage	'to serve'

Finally, the process of vowel change /a/ > /e/ marks agreement between certain verbs and their arguments, especially the undergoer. Many verbs have already lost such a feature and have changed their semantic function, for instance, valence increase and other semantic/pragmatic specificities.

- (9) *rèngu bisa saba mèdha ne'e*
 3PL can to.work thing PROX.SG
 'They can do this thing.'

⁴ *ana-èpu* 'descendant' and *ina-ama* 'parents' are similar to lexical parallelism, in which the lexemes involved in a compound are equal.

- (10) *ja'a sabe nèngu dua minggu*
 1SG to.work 3SG two week(IND)
 'I did it in two weeks.'

SIMPLE CLAUSES

Dhao simple clauses have two types of predicates – verbal predicates and nominal predicates. While verbal predicates take verbs, nominal predicates can take nominal, numeral, and prepositional phrases. True adjectives occur only in nominal predicates, whereas re-categorized adjectives occur in verbal predicates since they behave like mono-valent verbs. Adjectives cannot occur independently in the predicate slot. True adjectives always require a head noun, because of which they are classified as nominal predicate nuclei. Re-categorized adjectives behave as state verbs and are classified as verbal predicate nuclei. The predicate slot can be filled with either verbal or non-verbal constituents without any specific marker to distinguish them. The possessive predicate is classified separately in this thesis on account of its specific behaviour in both nominal and verbal constructions. Dhao has mainly an SVO order. Obliques and adjuncts cannot appear clause initially. The notion of valency and transitivity is not used interchangeably in this grammar. Valency is a semantic term, which concerns the number of participants in a verbal event. Transitivity relates exclusively to the number of arguments in a construction. There is often a mismatch between them. The discussion on the pragmatic variation in the constructions shows that Dhao employs word order variation to mark topic, whereas focus is marked by either reduced demonstratives or the particle *ka*. The reduced demonstratives can mark focus on both NPs and verbs, whereas the particle *ka* is confined to NPs.

CLAUSE COMBINING AND SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

The clause combining in this case includes the combination of clauses which are marked by conjunctions or clauses which are simply juxtaposed without any overt marking. Dhao has three types of co-ordination: (1) conjunctive co-ordination in which the conjunctive *dènge* 'with' and *aa* 'and' are employed; (2) disjunctive co-ordination which uses the disjunctive *tengaa* 'but'; and (3) adversative co-ordination which uses the disjunctive *do* 'or'. The juxtaposition constructions occur either on word, phrase, or clause level without an overt linker. Since there is no overt marking, intonation is the only means to identify the conjoined units.

Subordination in Dhao is distinguished into relative clauses, complement clauses, and adverbial clauses. Relative clauses are typically marked by *dhu*, which is post-nominal in that the relative clause follows the NP head. It is embedded in the main clause. Complement clauses in Dhao have specific features: (1) the structure of both complement clauses and matrix clauses follows the basic clause structure in Dhao; (2) complement clauses function as the object of the matrix predicate; (3) complement clauses can be marked by the particle *na* depending on the verbs of the matrix clauses. On the basis

of these general characteristics, complement clauses in Dhao are divided into three types according to their grammatical behaviour: (1) *na*-complements; (2) paratactic complements; and (3) clause union complements. Dhao employs several grammatical morphemes to mark adverbial clauses. The adverbial clauses can appear either before or after the matrix clause. They encode time, location, reason, condition, purpose, temporal sequence, or concession.

Serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Dhao include mono-clausal constructions consisting of multiple independent verbs with no element linking them and with no predicate-argument relationship between them. In Dhao, SVCs include at most three verbs. Dynamic verbs occur as the first verbs (V1), whereas in most instances direction verbs are second verbs (V2). Direction verbs can occur as V1 with a limited number of dynamic and state verbs as V2. One of the salient criteria of SVCs is that the constructions are mono-clausal. The argument sharing is very conspicuous in Dhao, especially when employing inflected verbs. Both verbs are inflected with the same person and number. Two prefixes involved within the same clause refer to the same referent. The semantic relationship between the verbs involved in serialization varies and the meaning is not always compositional. For example, the SVC with *rai* 'run' and *mai* 'come' is more transparent, since the meaning of the SVC is readily understood from the meaning of those two verbs. The SVC, like *ngee* 'think' and *kèdhi* 'see' is less transparent, since the meaning is not compositional, although it is still predictable. The types of SVCs are based on the semantics of the verbs involved in the series. The verbs can undergo semantic shifts and the category can also change. Therefore, some verbs overlap in terms of the meaning. For example, the verb *dai* 'reach' can overlap with the verb *-are* 'take' in terms of locational meaning. Similarly, the verb *tao* 'make, do' and *hia* 'give' overlap in terms of causation.

ABBREVIATIONS

1	First person	NP	Noun phrase
2	Second person	PART	Particle
3	Third person	PERF	Perfect
Adj	Adjective	PL	Plural
CAUS	Causative	Pref	Prefix
CL	Clitics	Pron	Pronoun
CV	Consonant vowel	PROX	Proximal
DIST	Distal	RECP	Reciprocal
ex	Exclusive	REM	Remote
in	Inclusive	SG	Singular
IND	Loanword from Indonesian	Suf	Suffix
k.o.	Kind of	SVC	Serial verb construction
LOC	Locative	SVO	Subject verb object
N	Noun	V	Verb

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