

SUMI AGENTIVE AND TOPIC MARKERS: *NO* AND *YE**

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Abstract: Sumi, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nagaland, typically marks S and A arguments with one of two enclitics: *no* and *ye*. A preliminary analysis of these two markers posits *no* as an agentive marker that can also mark contrastive focus on the argument and *ye* as a topic marker that can also mark a referent for low agentivity. By presenting new data, the paper highlights how the boundary between their semantic and pragmatic functions is not always clear and that categorising *no* and *ye* is not always unproblematic.

Keywords: case, agentive, ergative, pragmatics, topic, grammaticalisation, Naga, Sumi, Tibeto-Burman

1. INTRODUCTION

In Sumi (also known as Sema and Simi), a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nagaland, North-east India, S and A arguments in intransitive and transitive clauses are typically accompanied by one of two enclitics: *no* or *ye*. This paper offers a preliminary analysis of the semantic and pragmatic functions of these two markers.

Like other Tibeto-Burman languages of the region, including Mongsen Ao (Coupe 2007b, 2011) and Meithei (Chelliah 2009), Sumi does not fit an ergative-absolutive grammatical system that is motivated purely by syntactic factors. The enclitic *no* generally functions as an agentive marker but can also carry pragmatic functions such as the marking of contrastive focus on the argument, while the marker *ye* acts as a topic marker, but may occasionally mark the argument for low agentivity, i.e. lack of volitionality or purpose. However, the boundary between their semantic and pragmatic functions is not always clear and it will be shown that categorising *no* and *ye* is not always a straightforward task.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 provides some background on Sumi, including a brief summary of some of the typological features of the language. Section 3 examines the semantic functions of *no* and *ye*, while Section 4 explores their pragmatic functions. Finally, Section 5 looks at the marking of *no* and *ye* on adverbial adjuncts.

The data used here come from spontaneous speech, elicitation and texts. Examples from elicited data are labelled explicitly as such, while textual data are

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accompanied by the name of the text from which they were drawn. While most of the examples come from my own fieldwork, a few examples were also taken from the Sumi translation of the Good News Bible.

The dialect represented here is the standard Sumi dialect spoken around the town of Zunheboto, as well as the dialect of the neighbouring Satakha region, which is very similar apart from a few lexical and phonological differences. Both these dialects appear to be subsumed under what Sreedhar (1976: 4-5) calls ‘the Central dialect’, which has become the official dialect chosen for published works.

2. LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Sumi is one of the main languages of Nagaland, India with an estimated 242,000 speakers living primarily in Zunheboto district, as well as in the major cities of Kohima and Dimapur. Figure 1 gives the main distribution of Sumi (referred to as Simi) vis-à-vis other languages of Nagaland and Manipur.

As seen in Figure 2, Burling (2003) places Sumi (Simi) in an ‘Angami-Pochuri’ group that includes Angami, Kheza and Mao. However, the exact genetic relationship between Sumi and these other languages remains unclear.

Like most other Tibeto-Burman languages, Sumi is verb-final. The unmarked word order is SV in intransitive and AOV in transitive clauses. The O argument, typically a semantic patient or recipient, is morphologically unmarked, with the exception of when it is topicalised and takes the topic marker, or when it is realised as a pronoun, which is realised as a proclitic, prosodically bound to the following verb, as demonstrated in (1) and (2).¹

(1) *Pano ohe.*

pa = nò ò = hè²
 3sg=AGT 2sg=hit
 ‘He hit you.’ [elicited]

(2) *Itsiivelo.*

ì = tʃi-ve-lo
 1sg=give-TAM³-IMP
 ‘Give (it) to me.’

¹ The data are presented in four tiers: the first gives the example in the standard orthography, the second a morphemic representation using IPA symbols, the third an interlinear gloss of the data, and the fourth is the free translation.

² In this tier, the grave accent (à) indicates low tone; no accent (a) indicate mid tone; and the acute accent (á) indicates high tone.

³ Unfortunately it is still unclear what the function of the common verbal marker *ve* is. With the imperative marker *lo*, *ve* appears to indicate temporal proximity – the listener is viewed as being able to obey the command immediately. However, this reading of temporal proximity is not always present in non-imperative clauses. For the moment it is glossed as a marker of tense, aspect or mood.

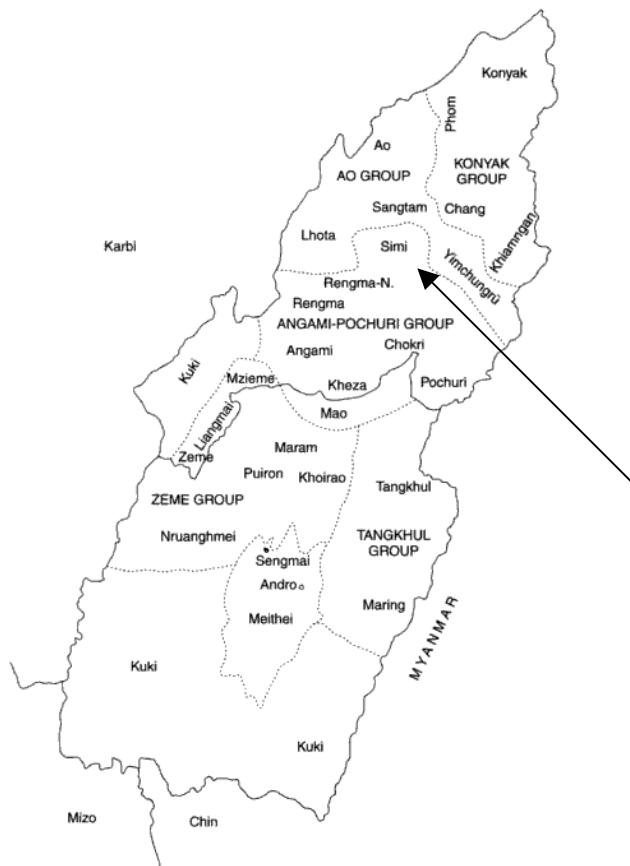


Figure 1: Map showing distribution of languages in Nagaland and Manipur (Burling 2003: 185)

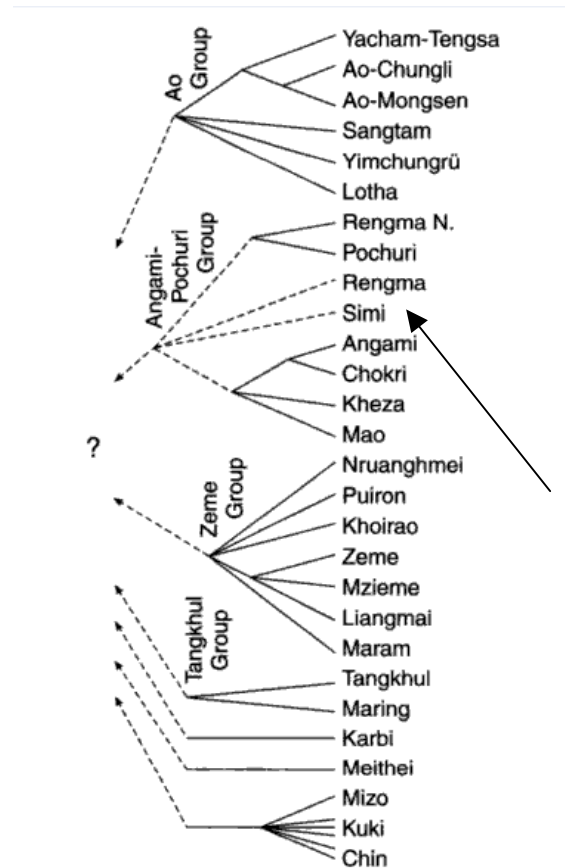


Figure 2: Genetic classification of languages of Nagaland and Manipur (Burling 2003: 184)

In contrast, S and A arguments are almost always accompanied by one of two enclitics: *no*, which is typically realised as /nò/ with low tone (but /no/ with mid tone is also possible), and *ye*, which is typically realised as /je/ with mid tone. These markers cannot both occur on the same argument in a clause and they never attach to O arguments. Monosyllabic pronouns obligatorily take one of the two markers, presumably to fulfil a prosodic requirement that nominals be minimally disyllabic, e.g. *niye* 'I' (**ni*). There are also certain situations where an S or A argument is unmarked for *ye* or *no* but these do not occur frequently and will be discussed in more detail at the end of the next section.

In his grammar of Sumi, Sreedhar (1980) analyses *no* as a nominative case marker (1980: 107) and *ye* as a marker of focus on the noun to which it attaches (1980: 108). It will become apparent from examples presented here that there is little evidence of a 'nominative-accusative' system in Sumi and that *ye* is better analysed as a topic marker.

3. SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS OF NO AND YE

The marker *no* occurs mainly with A arguments in transitive clauses. In (3), the marker *no* is prosodically bound to the last element of each co-ordinated NP

(marked by the square brackets) and is clearly a constituent of each NP. In the first instance, *no* attaches to the indefinite article *lakhi* ‘one’,⁴ while in the second it attaches to the 3rd person plural pronoun *panongu*. This appositive pronoun is added here to indicate that the scope of the marker extends to both co-ordinated NPs *kipitimino sholokumi* ‘a man’s family’ and *kipitiu* ‘the man’.

- (3) ... *kipitimi lakhi no momu kipitimino sholokumi ngo kipitiu panongu no totimi anipu shini keu tipau ithulu ...*

[kìpìtì-mì lak^hí = nò] mòómú
[man-person one=AGT] or

[kìpìtì-mì-nó-ʃòlòkúmì ɲò kípìtì-u panónɲù = nò]
[man-person-PL-family and man-DEF 3pl=AGT]

totí-mì à-nìpù ʃi-ní-keú tìpa-ù ì^hulù
woman-person NRL-wife make-PROS-REL MED-DEF see

‘... a man or a man’s family and the man see the woman that he would like to marry ...’ [‘Courting a wife’ text]

The enclitic *no* is analysed as an agentive marker because it is generally used with an A argument whose referent displays a high degree of agentivity – typically, a high degree of volitionality and purpose. It can be used with referents that are human, as in (4); non-human and animate, as in (5); or even inanimate, as in (6).

- (4) ... *atianu a-uvemu akimi no lisapiusa.*

à-tìanu à-u-ve = mú
NRL-children EXST-go-TAM=NEG

[à-kìmì = nò lí = ʃàp̃ʃà]
[NRL-husband=AGT 3sg.f=mistreat]

‘... despite having children, the husband mistreated her.’ [‘Kutili bird’ text]

- (5) *Akhi no Pikato quhva.*

a-k^hi = nò Pikato qù-va
NRL-bee=AGT PN sting-PRF

‘A bee has stung Pikato.’

- (6) ... *azüno kiima yipesü-uve.*

à-ʒì = nò kímá jipeʃi-u-ve
NRL-water=AGT 3du sweep-go-TAM

‘... the water swept them both away.’ [‘Kutili bird’ text]

⁴ This is evidence that the marker *no* does not mark an argument for definiteness.

Events associated with the use of the agentive *no* tend to be situated in the past, as seen in (4)-(6). They also tend to be punctual and telic in nature, as in (5) and (6) where each event has a clear outcome, although this is not always the case, as in (4). As a point of comparison, in Lhasa Tibetan the ‘ergative’ case is required with the perfective aspect, and only infrequently appears in non-perfective clauses (DeLancey 1985, 2011).

However, agentive marking is not confined to transitive clauses in Sumi. It can also be found in intransitive clauses when the referent is seen as being particularly volitional or powerful. A notable example of this comes from Sumi translations of the Bible, where agentive marking is used in intransitive clauses, like (7), and existential clauses, like (8), when the referent is a higher being.

(7) ... *Ampeu no iqie*.

ampeu = no iqi-e [tones not given]

lord=AGT descend-EMPH

‘... the Lord came down.’ [from Genesis 11:5]

(8) ... *kughengu pano igholo ani*.

kuyenju pa = no i = yo = lo a-ni [tones not given]

because 3sg=AGT 1sg=vicinity=LOC EXST-NPST

‘... because He is with me.’ [from Psalms 23:4]

In summary, the following remarks can be made of *no* that support its analysis as an agentive marker:

- It indicates a high degree of agentivity, i.e. high level of volitionality and purpose.
- It can occur with human, non-human animate, and inanimate referents.
- It is associated with past events which are often punctual and telic.
- It is typically found in transitive clauses, but can appear in other clause types when the referent is seen as being particularly volitional.

Note that the use of the term ‘agentive’ over the term ‘ergative’ follows Coupe (2007b), who reserves the latter for grammatical systems where agent marking is systematic and predictable based on syntactic factors. Likewise Chelliah (2009), in her description of Meithei case markers, also prefers the term ‘agentive’. However, not all analyses make this distinction in terminology: McGregor (2009) reports that ‘optional ergative marking’ of Agent NPs is not uncommon in numerous languages that have been analysed as having an ‘ergative-absolutive’ system. Hyslop (2010) also prefers to use the term in the analysis of Kurtöp, to capture some degree of syntactic systematicity in the language.

Having looked at the semantic functions of *no*, we can now look at the marker *ye*, which is also prosodically bound to the last element of the NP it attaches to. One reason for treating *ye* as a topic marker is that it usually occurs in equative clauses, as in (9) and (11). Equative clauses in the affirmative are verbless, while in the negative they take the negated copula *kumo*. The use of *ye* in such clauses is

obligatory, as demonstrated by (10).⁵ Note that in (11), *ye* is used even when the referent is viewed as being highly agentive / volitional (cf. (7) and (8)).

(9) *Papuh ye Sūmi kumo.*

pa-pù = je ʃimì kùmò
3sg-father=TOP Sumi NEG.COP

‘His father is not Sumi.’ [a man was explaining another man’s parentage]

(10)**Papuh Sūmi kumo.*

(11) *Ampeu ye Ikheu*

ampeu=je i-k^heu [tones not given]
lord=TOP 1sg-shepherd

‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ [from Psalms 23:1]

The marker *ye* is also typically found in existential clauses indicating possession, as in (12), where it attaches to the NP denoting the possessor.⁶

(12) *Niye atsü ani.*

nì = je à-tʃĩ à-ni
1sg=TOP NRL-dog EXST-NPST

‘I have a dog.’ [elicited]

In addition, *ye* can accompany an A or S argument in both intransitive and transitive clauses. In these cases, the referent of the NP it modifies displays a low degree of agentivity. For instance, *ye* occurs in intransitive clauses containing a stative verb, where the S argument has the semantic role of theme, as in (13). It also occurs in transitive clauses where the A argument has the semantic role of experiencer, as in (14) and (15).

(13) *Hiye ighono chuvi ani.*

hi = je iyóno tʃu-vi à-ni
PRX=TOP very eat-be.good PROG-NPST⁷

‘This is very tasty.’ [‘Origin of axone (fermented soya bean dish)’ text]

⁵ While it was mentioned previously that monosyllabic pronouns obligatorily take *ye* or *no*, the NP in such equative clauses must take *ye* or *no* here regardless of its shape. That *ye* is much more common in such clauses is perhaps one reason why speakers often translate *ye* as the verb ‘to be’.

⁶ Note that Sumi also has a locative *lo* and a dative *vilo*, but neither are used in such possessive constructions. The locative *lo* is only used when expressing proximity between the possessor and possessed.

⁷ The auxiliary verb here, which marks progressive aspect and non-past tense, is derived from the existential verb *ani*.

(14) *Niye ninga sütsa chumlavai.*

nì = je ni-ŋá-ʃitʃa tʃù-m̀la-va-i
 1sg=TOP 1pl.pos-daughter-sound hear-NCAP-PRF-EMPH

‘I no longer hear any news from my daughter (lit. ‘our daughter’s news’).’
 [‘Kutili bird’ text]

(15) *Noye axone alo cheni kea?*

nò=je à-xónè alo tʃè-ni keà
 2sg=TOP NRL-fermented.soya.beans good HAB-NPST INT

‘Do you like axone (fermented soya bean dish)?’ [listener was asked this
 as he was serving himself a large portion of *axone*]

Events associated with the use of *ye* tend to be atelic and non-punctual, as seen in (16), which describes a habitual event; and in (17), in which the action of eating was not completed.

(16) *Paye ale phe cheni.*

pa = je à-lè p^hè tʃè-ni
 3sg=TOP NRL-song sing HAB-NPST

‘He sings (usually).’ [elicited]

(17) ... *küma ye akishina chukhamove kehu ...*

kímá = je à-kìʃinà tʃù-k^hà-mò-ve = ke = hu
 3du=TOP NRL-lunch eat-NCPL-NEG-TAM-NZR=DIST

‘... they were unable to finish their lunch...’ [‘Origin of axone’ text]

In summary, the following remarks can be made of *ye*:

- It is typically found as a topic marker in equative clauses and existential clauses indicating possession.
- It can also appear in intransitive and transitive clauses when the referent is seen as having a low degree of agentivity.
- It is associated with events which have duration and which are atelic.

A comparison of *ye* and *no* in transitive clauses shows that the use of *no* can coincide with an instance of a noteworthy event or activity. For example, in (18), *no* is used to mark the A argument of the first clause, which describes the first instance of an activity – this event is situated in the past and viewed as telic. Conversely, the marker *ye* is used with the A argument of the second clause once the action is established as being routine. (The use of *ye* with *alau* will be discussed later in Section 5 when we look at the marking of adverbial adjuncts.)

(18) *Tishino küma no axone lhochuphe püzüino tinguno alau ye Sümi qo ye axone lhochu-uve.*

tifi = nò [kímá = nò à-xónè
 like.that=CONN [3du=AGT NRL-ferm.soya.beans

l^ho-tʃù-p^hè = piʒí = no] tìjúno à-lá-u = je
 cook-eat-start=CONJ=CONN] because.of.that NRL-path-DEF=TOP

[ʃimì = qó = je à-xónè l^ho-tʃù-u-ve]
 [Sumi=PL=TOP NRL-ferm.soya.beans cook-eat-go-TAM]
 ‘Henceforth, the two sisters started to cook and eat *axone* (a fermented soya bean dish) and consequently from then on, the Sumis have cooked and eaten *axone*.’ [‘Origin of *axone*’ text]

This use of the agentive to render a routine activity as being noteworthy or unexpected has also been noted in Meithei (Chelliah 2009). It would be interesting to investigate further this notion of ‘noteworthiness’ in Sumi, as the use of *no* also seems to tie in with notions of telicity and duration.

More generally, we can see that *no* and *ye* correspond to different levels of agentivity of the referent of the S or A argument. If we consider how dialogue is introduced in Sumi, the person speaking is usually marked by *no*, as in (19) and (20). The verb *pi* can also be omitted entirely before the quoted speech, while the speaker is still marked by *no*, as in (21). The use of *no* here is reasonable given that a speaker is viewed as being more volitional vis-à-vis a listener / addressee. Lidz (2011) similarly notes the use of an agentive marker with direct speech complements in Yongning Na.

(19) ... *afo no atsünipu vilo ishi pi*, “...”
 á-fò = nò à-tʃínipù = vílo ifi pì
 NRL-elder.sister=AGT NRL-younger.sister=DAT⁸ like.this⁹ say
 ‘... the elder sister said to the younger one, “...”’ [‘Origin of *axone*’ text]

(20) *Jisu no pi*, “...”
 ʒiʃi = nò pì
 Jesus=AGT say
 ‘Jesus said, “...”’ [from Luke 15:11]

(21) *Tileno, aza no, “Ei...”*
 tìlénò à-ʒá = nò ei
 then NRL-mother=AGT EXCL
 ‘Then the mother said, “Ah! ...”’ [‘Kutili bird’ text]

It should be noted that in example (21) the mother is actually speaking to herself, but it is likely *no* is used here because in the story she is seen as having a strong sense of purpose, having gone to the effort of travelling to a different village to find her daughter who has not contacted her in a long time.

⁸ The dative marker appears to be derived from the locative *lo* and is used to mark the addressee.

⁹ The forms *ishi* and *tishi* appear to be derived from the proximal and medial demonstratives *hi* and *ti* respectively and the verb *shi* ‘do’.

In contrast, when her daughter, who is viewed as being powerless in the face of an abusive husband, speaks (to herself), *ye* is used, as in (22). (Note in this example that *ye* also occurs with the NP *ghulo lakhi* ‘one day’. This will be discussed in Section 5 when we examine the marking of adverbial adjuncts.)

(22) *Ishikehu liye ghulo lakhi ye, "Ei ..." ipi kümsüve.*

iʃi-ke-hu	[lí=je]	ɣùló	lak ^h í=je
like.this-NZR-DIST	[3sg.f-TOP]	day	one-TOP

ei	...	i-pìi	kĩmʃi-ve
EXCL	...	like.this-say	think-TAM

‘So one day she thought to herself, “Oh ...”’ [‘Kutili bird’ text]

Examples (23) and (24) provide a final comparison of how *no* and *ye* correspond to different levels of agentivity. In (23), the use of agentive *no* is expected, since the referent, ‘the chief’, is a powerful person and the encoded event is past and telic in nature, i.e. it has achieved a definite change of state. However, when asked to replace *no* with *ye*, as in (24), the language consultant reported that the chief is now seen as being less able to effect change through his command (and hence less agentive). The utterance is thus interpreted as being sarcastic, with the speaker expressing contempt for the chief.

(23) *Akükau no azah tsüve.*

à-kĩká-ù = nò	à-zà	ʃĩ-ve
NRL-chief-DEF=AGT	NRL-command	give-TAM

‘The chief gave a command.’ [elicited]

(24) *Akükau ye azah tsüve.*

à-kĩká-ù = je	à-zà	ʃĩ-ve
NRL-chief-DEF=TOP	NRL-command	give-TAM

‘The chief gave a command.’ (sarcastic) [elicited]

It should be pointed out that while *ye* is often associated with low agentivity, it is sometimes omitted in clauses. Consequently, it is not entirely clear if *ye* actually evokes the sense of ‘low agentivity of the referent’ or if it is simply the absence of the agentive *no* that signals this. Evidence that it does carry some semantic function comes from the fact that speakers are not willing to accept transitive clauses that lack both *no* and *ye* on the A argument, as in (25).

(25) **Akükau azah tsüve.* [cf. (23) & (24)]

In the above examples, argument NPs are obligatorily marked by *ye* or *no*. However, there are clauses that allow for both markers to be absent. These are typically intransitive clauses. For instance, we find no argument marking in existential clauses such as the one in (25). (In existential clauses that indicate

possession, as in (12), the possessor NP is the only argument that receives *ye* marking.)

(26) *Khaghi aghuloki lakhi lo*

k^hayí à-γùlòkí lak^hí = lo
long.ago NRL-time.period one=LOC

atsünipu kini ache keti,

[à-tʃinipù kini à-tʃè = ke = tì]
[NRL-sister two EXST-PST=NZR=MED]

‘Once upon a time there were two sisters.’ [‘Origin of axone’ text]

No argument marking is also possible in some intransitive clauses, as in (27)-(29), where the S arguments *ayikhu* ‘soya beans’, *küma* ‘they two’ and *akulu* ‘light’ are all unmarked.

(27) *ayikhu imho aghi kemu ...*

à-jìk^hú ìm^hò àyí = ké = mú
NRL-soya.bean ferment have¹⁰=NZR=NEG¹¹

‘although the soya beans had fermented, ...’ [‘Origin of axone’ text]

(28) *küma alu lo huniye kelo*

kímá à-lù = lo hu-níjé = ke = ló
3du NRL-field=LOC go-PROS=NZR¹²=LOC

ayikhu bepesü akishina ghenguno pe-u.

à-jìk^hú bè-pefì à-kìʃinà = yeŋúnò pe-u
NRL-soya.bean cook-take NRL-lunch=APPL carry-go

‘While going to work in the field, they took some soya beans with them for lunch.’ [‘Origin of axone’ text]

(29) *Akulu ighiva.*

a-kulu iyi-va
NRL-light come-PRF

‘The power has come back.’ (lit. ‘the light has come.’) [a commonly heard phrase when the power comes back on after scheduled blackouts]

Initial impressions suggest that the omission of *ye* or *no* is most likely when the verb denotes motion or a change of state, irrespective of whether the S argument is animate or inanimate. Crucially, such omissions occur in spontaneous speech: in elicited speech, speakers typically add *ye* or *no* to the S argument.

¹⁰ This verb seems to be derived from the existential verb root *a-*.

¹¹ Negated clausal nominalisation that is usually translated as ‘although’ or ‘despite’.

¹² Clausal nominalisation that is usually translated as ‘while’.

Speakers will also add *ye* to the S argument in utterances like (28) and (29) when they are asked to repeat and translate them afterwards, as seen in (30) and (31). Speakers often report that by adding *ye*, the sentence “sounds better”.

(30) *küma ye alu lo huniye kelo*

kimá = je à-lù = lo hu-níjé = ke = ló
 3du=TOP NRL-field=LOC go-PROS=NZR=LOC

‘While going to work in the field...’ [elicited, based on ‘Origin of axone’ text] [cf. (28)]

(31) *Akulu ye ighi va.*

a-kulu = je iyi-va
 NRL-light=TOP come-PRF

‘The power has come back.’ [elicited] [cf. (29)]

In summary, the following remarks can be made of the absence of *no* or *ye* marking:

- The argument is not marked in an existential clause.
- The absence of marking is possible in some intransitive clauses, particularly with verbs of motion or verbs marking a change of state.
- The marker *ye* can always be optionally added to intransitive clauses that do not have any marking.

A full summary of the syntactic distribution and the semantic functions of the markers *no* and *ye* is given in Table 1. It will be noted that ditransitive clauses are conspicuously missing from the data. The distribution of *no* and *ye* with such clauses is yet to be examined.

	<i>no</i>	<i>ye</i>	absence of marking
Clause types	transitive intransitive (w/ volitional referent)	equative existential (on possessor) intransitive	existential intransitive
Argument / referent	mainly A arguments, but S as well; referent can be human / non-human / animate / inanimate	both S and A arguments; referent can be human / non-human / animate / inanimate	only S arguments; referent can be human / non-human / animate / inanimate
Semantic function	marks a high degree of agentivity, i.e. volitionality, purpose	marks a low degree of agentivity	
Event type	typically situated in the past, punctual and telic; sometimes noteworthy	typically habitual and atelic	typically involving motion or change of state

Table 1: Summary of syntactic distribution and semantic functions of *no* and *ye* marking

4. PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF NO AND YE

The examples presented so far occur in what some linguists might consider to be ‘pragmatically neutral’ contexts. The notion of ‘pragmatic neutrality’ is not unproblematic, and for the purposes of this paper, it is useful to look at three of the four information-structure categories proposed by Lambrecht (1994):

<i>Information-structure category / Topic structure</i>	<i>Focus structure</i>	<i>Purpose of assertion</i>
Topic-comment type	Predicate-focus	“to pragmatically predicate some property of an already established discourse referent”
Identificational type	Argument-focus	“establishing a relation between an argument and a previously evoked open proposition”
Event-reporting type	Sentence-focus	“to express a proposition which is linked neither to an already established topic nor to a presupposed open proposition”

Table 2: Summary of information-structure categories (Lambrecht 1994: 126-127)

The examples in the preceding sections generally correspond to either the topic-comment type, answering questions like “What did so-and-so do?” or the event-reporting type, answering questions like “What happened?”. Lambrecht himself uses the term “pragmatically unmarked” to describe sentences of the topic-comment type (1994: 126). The only type we have yet to consider is the “identificational type”, which typically answers questions like: “Who / What did that?”.

Such distinctions are important to make. If we look back at the examples, we can see that *no* typically marks A arguments in transitive clauses and highly agentive S arguments in topic-comment and event-reporting utterances. However, if we consider utterances of the identificational type, we can see that *no* can occur in clause types where *ye* is expected.

For instance, in examples like (32), *no* is used in an intransitive clause on the S argument. In this example, *no* is not marking the referent for a high degree of agentivity, but rather identifying him within a group of people. Note that the associated question, given in (33), also has *no* on the interrogative pronoun. (Bold font indicates where the phrasal stress would be placed in the English equivalents – even ‘pragmatically unmarked’ utterances receive phrasal stress.)

(32) *Pano nuva.*

pa = nò nu-va

3sg=AGT laugh-PRF

‘**He** laughed.’ (not anyone else in the group) [elicited]

(33) *Khuuno nuva?*

khúù = nò nu-va

who=AGT laugh-PRF

‘**Who** laughed?’ [elicited]

The pragmatically unmarked form of (32) would use *ye*, as in (34), which corresponds to both a predicate-focus and sentence-focus utterance that answers the questions “What did he do?” and “What happened?”.

- (34) *Paye nuva.*
 pa = je nu-va
 3sg=TOP laugh-PRF
 ‘He **laughed.**’ [elicited]

Another suitable response to the question in (33) would be to simply drop the predicate and use the pronoun marked with *no*, as in (35). This is not possible if the pronoun has the marker *ye*, with speakers reporting that they feel the sentence needs to be continued if *ye* is present.

- (35) *Pano.*
 pa = nò
 3sg=AGT
 ‘**He** did.’ [elicited]

- (36) **Paye.*

Contrastive focus on the S argument is also seen in (37) – in this situation, it was already known that a particular man was of both Nepali and Sumi parentage. When asked if his father was Sumi, the speaker wanted to emphasise that it was the mother, not the father, who was Sumi. The pragmatically unmarked form of this utterance is given in (38), which has predicate focus.

- (37) *Paza no Siimi.*
 pa-ʒá = nò ʃimì
 3sg-mother=AGT Sumi
 ‘His **mother** is Sumi.’ (as opposed to his father)

- (38) *Paza ye Siimi.*
 pa-ʒá = je ʃimì
 3sg-mother=AGT Sumi
 ‘His mother is **Sumi.**’ [elicited]

This particularising function of agentive *no* has been noted in a number of analyses of agentive markers of other Tibeto-Burman languages, including Mongsen Ao (Coupe 2007b, 2011), Meithei (Chelliah 2009) and Yongning Na (Lidz 2011). Chelliah analyses the agentive *nə* as being homophonous with a contrastive focus marker *nə*, which itself has developed from the agentive marker. This analysis is supported by the fact that Meithei allows the contrastive focus marker *nə* to occur with other semantic case markers on a single argument. Furthermore, the contrastive focus marker and agentive can both occur in a single clause on two different arguments.

In contrast, it is more difficult to separate ‘contrastive focus’ *no* from ‘agentive’ *no* in Sumi, since only one instance of *no* is permitted on a single argument. In certain clauses, it may also not be clear if the use of *no* is motivated by semantic factors (marking agentivity), pragmatic factors (marking focus) or a combination of both. At this stage, it would be prudent to treat Sumi *no* as a single marker with two related functions, although there are good reasons to want to separate the two functions, as we shall see in the next section.

A second pragmatic function of *no* can be posited from its tendency to occur with the S or A argument in the first clause of a story regardless of the agentivity of the referent, as seen in (39) and (40).

(39) *Timi lakhino anu kini ache.*

[tìmì lak^hí=nò] a-nu kini à-tjè
[person one=AGT] NRL-SON two EXST-PST

‘There was once a man who had two sons.’ [from Luke 15:11]

(40) *Khaghi aghuloki lakhilo anga lakhi no aphu küttau akemi sasü küla uve.*

k^hayí à-yùlòkí lak^hí=lo [a-ŋá lak^hí=nò]
long.ago NRL-time.period one=LOC [NRL-girl one=AGT]

à-p^hù küttau à=ke=mí jãfɪ kílà-u-ve
NRL-village another EXST=NZR=person with marry-go-TAM

‘Long ago, a girl married someone who was from another village.’ (lit. ‘a girl a married with someone’) [‘Kutili bird’ text]

In (39), the marker *ye* would be expected with the possessor NP *timi lakhi* ‘a man’ in this existential clause. In (40), it is unusual that the agentive would be used here, given that the clause is intransitive and the referent, a girl, would not be viewed as a volitional agent. In both cases, *no* cannot be considered an argument focus marker either since the referents in each example are not being contrasted with another referent.

It may be that *no* is used here because the use of the topic marker *ye* is less appropriate, given that the referents have not previously been introduced in the discourse. In Lambrecht’s “topic acceptability scale” (1994: 165) brand new unanchored referents are considered the least suitable to be topics. Therefore, a tentative analysis would posit that the marker *no* is used here to establish the participant(s) within each particular discourse.

The topicalising function of *ye* can be seen in the formation of the functional equivalent of the passive. For example, a typical transitive clause is given in (41). When the semantic patient *kaku* ‘book’ is topicalised, it is moved to the start of the clause and takes the marker *ye*, as in (42). The agent then comes immediately before the verb and takes the agentive / instrumental marker *no*.

- (41) *Pano kaku pūhave.*
 pa = nò kàkú pīha-ve
 3sg=AGT book lose-TAM
 ‘He lost the book.’ [elicited]

- (42) *Kaku ye pano pūhave.*
 kàkú = je pa = nò pīha-ve
 book=TOP 3sg=INSTR lose-TAM
 ‘The book was lost by him.’ [elicited]

That *no* in (42) is an instrumental marker is supported by a comparison with the example in (43), showing that *pano* is now an optional oblique marker. In (44), the presence of two instances of *no* in the same clause allows us to distinguish agentive *no* from instrumental *no*.

- (43) *Kaku ye pūhave.*
 kàkú = je pīha-ve
 book=TOP lose-TAM
 ‘The book was lost.’ [elicited]

- (44) *Papuh no angu no achequ qhive.*
 pa-pù = nò a-ŋu = nò a-tʃequ q^hì-ve
 3sg-father=AGT NRL-spear=INSTR NRL-porcupine pierce-TAM
 ‘His father impaled the porcupine with the spear.’ [elicited]

Such homophony between the agentive and the instrumental forms is not unusual in TB languages (LaPolla 1995). However, in some cases where only one argument is marked for *no*, it may not be possible to distinguish the agentive from instrumental on semantic grounds alone, as shown by the two possible readings of (45).

- (45) *Azù no ipukhu che ani.*
 à-ʒǐ = nò ì-pùkhú tʃè à-ni
 NRL-water=AGT/INSTR 1sg-leg spear PROG-NPST
 ‘Water is splashing on my leg.’ (lit. ‘Water is spearing my leg.’) or
 ‘(Someone) is splashing my leg with water.’ (lit. ‘Someone is spearing my leg with water.’)

Returning to the pragmatic functions of *no* and *ye*, to summarise, we can see that while *no* can be used in identificational utterances to mark argument focus, *ye* is used in topic-comment utterances to mark predicate focus or in event-reporting utterances to mark sentence focus. It was suggested that *no* be analysed as a single marker with a number of related semantic and pragmatic functions, given that there is not always a clear divide between the two. However, as we look at topic and focus marking on adverbial clauses, we will see that it might be necessary to separate ‘contrastive focus’ *no* from ‘agentive’ *no*.

5. TOPIC AND FOCUS MARKING ON ADVERBIAL ADJUNCTS AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

Both *no* and *ye* can also occur with adverbial adjuncts, particularly NPs denoting periods of time, as seen in (45)-(47). Unlike previous examples, the arguments marked for *no* and *ye* cannot be considered direct arguments of the verb in these sentences. It is clear that *no* in these examples only has the pragmatic function of contrastive focus, glossed as ‘FOC’, in (46) and (47), where it marks saliency on the adverbial it is attached to. In contrast, the use of *ye* seems to bring focus to the rest of the sentence or to the predicate, as in (48).

(46) *Itehi no aki to ani.*

itehi = nò à-kì tò à-ni
now=FOC NRL-house arrive PROG-NPST

‘(I) am reaching home only **now**.’ [speaker was talking on the phone and was meant to have arrived at home much earlier]

(47) *Ishi no mko ani.*

ìjǐ = nò m̀kó à-ni
today=FOC be.cold PROG-NPST

‘It’s cold **today**.’ (as opposed to yesterday) [elicited]

(48) *Ishi ye mko ani.*

ìjǐ = je m̀kó à-ni
today=TOP be.cold PROG-NPST

‘It’s **cold** today.’ (as opposed to being warm) or (simply reporting this with sentence focus) [elicited]

As with core arguments, adverbial adjuncts can be unmarked for both *no* or *ye*, as in (49). It is not quite clear why no marking is permitted here, though it should be noted that this example was of the event-reporting type, with the speaker simply reporting that he had heard something the night before without a question prompt. However, the same speaker later said it was possible to add *ye* to *iji* ‘last night’ without changing the meaning of the sentence.

(49) *Iji niye asiütsa chilü.*

izi ǹ = je a-ʃitʃa tʃilu
last.night 1sg=TOP NRL-sound hear

‘Last night I heard a noise.’

It is possible for both an adverbial adjunct and a core argument in the same sentence to be marked for *ye*, as seen in (50) and (51). Note that in (50), the adjunct *alau* is derived from the noun *ala* ‘road, path’ and used here with the sense of ‘in that way’.

- (50) *Tishino kũma no axone lhochuphe pũzũno tinguno alau ye Sũmi qo ye axone lhochu-uve.*

tifi = nò kimá = nò à-xónè
like.that=CONN 3du=AGT NRL-ferm.soya.beans

l^ho-tfũ-p^hè = piʒĩ = no tĩnũno [à-lá-u = je]
cook-eat-start=CONJ=CONN because.of.that [NRL-path-DEF=TOP]

ʃimì = qó = je à-xónè l^ho-tfũ-u-ve
Sumi=PL=TOP NRL-ferm.soya.beans cook-eat-go-TAM

‘Henceforth, the two sisters started to cook and eat *axone* (a fermented soya bean dish) and consequently from then on, the Sumis have cooked and eaten *axone*.’ [‘Origin of *axone*’ text]

- (51) *Ishikehu liye ghulo lakhi ye, ”Ei ...” ipi kũmsũve.*

ifi = ke = hu lí = je [yùló lak^hí = je]
like.this=NZR=DIST 3sg.f=TOP [day one=TOP]

ei ... i-pii kĩmsi-ve
EXCL ... like.this-say think-TAM

‘So one day she thought to herself, “Oh ...”’ [‘Kutili bird’ text]

The data get more difficult to analyse when *ye* appears twice in the same sentence, questions arise as to whether we are dealing with the same topic marker / predicate focus marker *ye* in both instances – are we dealing with two contrastive topics? It seems odd that an adverbial adjunct would contrast with a core argument. This prompts the question of whether we are dealing with one or two different topic markers. At present no easy solution can be offered at this stage, though it should be noted that one speaker considered both instances of *ye* to be functionally the same, reporting that the ‘important information’ comes after each *ye*.

The same questions remain when we look at nominalised subordinate clauses that function as adjuncts and which can take *ye*, as in (52); *no*, as in (53); or no marking, as in (54).

- (52) *Tilau ngoche keloye ampe kini kũthũ shi-uve puno...*

[tĩlau ŋo-tʃe = ke = ló = je] à-mpè kini kĩt^hĩ
[there stay-HAB=NZR=LOC=TOP] NRL-year two three

ʃi-u-ve = pú = no
do-go-TAM=CONJ=CONN

‘There they lived for some years and...’ (lit. ‘While (they) lived there, two to three years passed and...’) [‘Kutili bird’ text]

(53) *Ipuno lino kathave kelono aziino küma yipesü-uve.*

ipú = no [lí = no kàt^hà-ve = ke = ló = no]
 CONJ=CONN [3sg.f=AGT cross-TAM=NZR=LOC=FOC]

à-ǝì = nò kímá jipesi-u-ve
 NRL-water=AGT 3du sweep-go-TAM

‘And as she crossed, the water swept them both away.’ [‘Kutili bird’ text]

(54) *küma alu lo huniye kelo*

[kímá à-lù = lo hu-níjé = ke = ló]
 [3.du NRL-field=LOC go.away-PROS=NZR=LOC]

ayikhu bepesü akishina ghenguno pe-u.

à-jìk^hú bè-peǝì à-kìǝinà = ǝeǝúnò pe-u
 NRL-soya.bean cook-take NRL-lunch=APPL carry-go

‘While going to work in the field, they took some soya beans with them for lunch.’ [‘Origin of axone’ text]

It is not always apparent why the speakers have used either marker (or omitted both), or if these markers are functionally equivalent to the contrastive focus *no* and topic marker *ye* presented earlier.

Nevertheless it is useful to note the link between verbal subordinators and the markers *no* and *ye* in Sumi, given that Genetti (1991) shows how nominal markers such as postpositions have developed into verbal subordinators in Kathmandu Newar. For instance, we have examples like *tishino* in (50) and *shiuve puno* in (52) where we see a connective morpheme that looks similar to the agentive / contrastive *no* mark a non-final clause.¹³ Conditional clauses in Sumi are also marked with the enclitic *aye*, often translated as ‘if’, which is placed clause-finally. This is almost certainly related to the topic marker *ye*, which is natural, given that, as Haiman (1978) argues, conditional clauses are topics.

Unfortunately, at this stage of the analysis, a full account of the full extent of marking of *ye* and *no* on subordinate clauses is not possible.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main aim of this paper has been to provide an analysis of the semantic and pragmatic functions of *ye* and *no*. The solution presented has been to gloss *no* on core arguments as an agentive marker that has the added pragmatic function of marking focus, but with adjuncts it is glossed simply as a focus marker that only has a pragmatic function. This solution is clearly not ideal since *no* can be used to mark focus on core arguments too – how different is the focus marking function of *no* when it occurs with core arguments and with adjuncts? The question remains as to whether one should split up *no* based on its syntactic distribution or by its semantic / pragmatic functions.

¹³ Genetti (1991) shows that the non-final marker in Kathmandu Newar developed from an associative marker.

By contrast, *ye* is analysed as a topic marker when it occurs on both core arguments and adjuncts, but how similar is *ye* on a core argument to *ye* on an adjunct? Moreover, even when *ye* marks a core argument, how can we be sure that it is marking the referent for low agentivity, or if it is simply topicalising an NP whose referent has low agentivity (or perhaps a bit of both)?

An uneasy solution is offered in the work of DeLancey (1997), who argues that given the ongoing nature of grammaticalisation,¹⁴ one should not expect that all synchronic forms in languages fit unambiguously into one category or another. Evidently, a neat synchronic analysis of *ye* and *no* is not possible. However, even if we adopt a diachronic perspective, this then prompts the question of the direction of the grammaticalisation.

Given what has been proposed concerning the development of other Tibeto-Burman languages: pragmatic markers in Meithei developed from semantic markers (Chelliah 2009); verbal subordinators developed unidirectionally from nominal markers in Kathmandu Newar (Genetti 1991), it seems reasonable to propose that similar developments have occurred / are occurring in Sumi. This would mean that the pragmatic function of *no* as a focus marker of A arguments has developed from its semantic function as an agentive and that its use in subordinate clauses is a further development from this pragmatic function.

On the other hand, it would be difficult to posit a similar pathway for Sumi *ye*, which appears to be primarily a pragmatic topic marker with only limited semantic functions. However, clues to its origins can be found by comparing A and O argument marking in languages of the putative Angami-Pochury group, as given in Table 3.

<i>Language</i>	<i>Agentive / Argument focus (A argument)</i>	<i>Topic / Predicate focus¹⁵ (A argument)</i>	<i>Patient (O argument)</i>
Sumi (field notes)	<i>no</i> [nò]	<i>ye</i> [je]	no overt marker
Tenyidie / Kohima Angami (Kuolie 2006; field notes)	no overt marker	<i>ê</i>	no overt marker
Khezha / Kheza (Kapfo 2005)	<i>nü</i> [nó]	no marker reported	<i>eh</i> [è]
Mao (Giridhar 1994)	<i>no</i> (tone not given)	no marker reported ¹⁶	<i>yi</i> (tone not given)

Table 3: A and O argument case markers in Angami-Pochury languages of Nagaland¹⁷

¹⁴ While grammaticalisation usually refers to the creation of grammatical morphemes from lexical items in a language, Genetti (1991) uses the term to refer to the creation of grammatical morphemes (verbal subordinators) from other grammatical morphemes (postpositions).

¹⁵ While two of the grammars used here for comparison appear to be quite thorough in their analysis of the agentive marker, it is difficult to ascertain if these grammars have missed a topic marker / predicate focus marker due to the elicitation methods used.

¹⁶ Mao also has *hi*, which marks an A argument of “uncertain responsibility” or of a “generic nature” (Gridhar 1994: 175). At present, it is unclear if this can be compared with Sumi *ye*.

At least two other languages in the group, Khezha and Mao, have an agentive marker with the form *nV*, which are undoubtedly cognate with Sumi *no*. Giridhar (1994) explicitly calls Mao *no* an ergative marker and considers the language a “partially ergative or split ergative language”, while Kapfo (2005) treats Khezha *nii* as an ‘agentive’ marker (though he considers it a sub-category of ‘nominative’), used to mark an agent or actor, and like Sumi *no*. In both languages, it is reported that the agentive marker can also serve to identify the agent, similar to the argument focus function of Sumi *no*. More cognate agentive forms can be seen in the Ao languages (see Coupe 2011).

In contrast, the only marker found to accompany A arguments in Tenyidie is the vowel-only form *ê*. Kuolie (2006) analyses this as a ‘nominative’ marker. From my own preliminary field notes, Tenyidie *ê* only occurs with A arguments but its use is often associated with a predicate-focus reading, answering the question “What did so-and-so do?”, rather than “Who / What did that?” This suggests that its function is much more similar to the Sumi topic marker *ye*, although it seems that *ê* appears less frequently in Tenyidie than *ye* does in Sumi – for instance, Tenyidie *ê* does not always appear in equative clauses.

One interesting observation is that while Mao and Khezha do not have topic / predicate-focus markers, they do have morphologically overt patient markers on O arguments, in addition to agentive markers on A arguments. These markers – *yi* in Mao and *eh* [è] in Khezha – are generally obligatory when the O argument denotes an animate being, though there are more specific conditions regarding their distribution that the researchers elaborate on.

Judging by their forms, these markers look to be potentially cognate with Sumi *ye* and Tenyidie *ê*. However, it remains to be seen how the Sumi and Tenyidie forms came to mark the A argument, while the Mao and Khezha markers came to be associated with the O argument.¹⁸

It is hoped that the analysis presented here is a useful starting point in understanding the functions of *ye* and *no* in Sumi. As noted earlier, more data needs to be collected on ditransitive clauses and further research is needed to examine their distribution with subordinate clauses, which will involve the collection and analysis of more textual data to see how speakers use these markers to orient the listener within particular discourses. However, what is certain is that

¹⁷ Tenyidie has been analysed as having 5 tones. The circumflex in *ê* represents a ‘low-high’ tone which appears to correspond to σ^{22} in Chao tone letters. Khezha, like Sumi has been analysed as having 3 tones. Mao has been analysed as having 4 tones, but Giridhar (1994) does not always provide tonal transcriptions for his examples.

¹⁸ Coupe (2011) proposes that pragmatics drives the use of an oblique marker to disambiguate core semantic roles. It is possible that Sumi *ye* is derived from an historic oblique marker that came to be associated with the A argument in Sumi (and Tenyidie), but with the O argument in its sister languages. On the other hand, Chelliah (2009) demonstrates how in Meithei an ‘adversative’ marker signifying “an NP whose existence or involvement in an activity is deemed by the speaker to be surprising and unfortunate” developed from a patient marker. Similarly, Sumi *ye*, which can take such an ‘adversative’ meaning, as seen in (24), may have developed directly from a patient marker.

Sumi, like other closely related languages like Khezha and Mao, does not follow a strict ergative-absolutive grammatical system, but one motivated by a combination of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE TEXT

Axone hukuthu ghili

à-xónè¹⁹ hukut^{hú} yìli
 NRL-ferm.soya.beans beginning²⁰ about
 Origin of Axone

Khaghi aghuloki lakhi lo

k^hayí à-yùlòkí lak^hí = lo
 long.ago NRL-time.period one=LOC
 Once upon a time,

atsünipu kini ache keti,

à-tʃinipù kini à-tʃè = ke = tì
 NRL-sister two EXST-PST=NZR=MED
 there were two sisters.

küma alu lo huniye kelo

kímá à-lù = lo hu-níjé = ke = ló
 3du NRL-field=LOC go-PROS=NZR=LOC²¹
 While going to work in the field,

ayikhu bepesü akishina ghenguno pe-u.

à-jìk^hú bè-pefì à-kìʃinà = yeṅúnò pe-u
 NRL-soya.bean cook-take NRL-lunch=APPL carry-go
 they took some soya beans with them for lunch.

Ikelo ye küma ye akishina chukhamove kehu

i=ke=ló=je kímá = je à-kìʃinà tʃù-k^hà-mò-ve = ke = hu
 ANAPH²²-NZR-LOC=TOP 3du=TOP NRL-lunch eat-NCPL-NEG-TAM-NZR=DIST
 During this time, they were unable to finish their lunch

¹⁹ Axone is a popular Sumi dish made by fermenting soya beans.

²⁰ The word *hukuthu* ‘beginning’ is derived from the verb *huthu* ‘to begin’ which was historically bimorphemic, with the nominalising prefix *kV-*, where V is a vowel displaying harmony with the following vowel. However, it appears that *hukuthu* has now been lexicalised. The verb *huthu* can also no longer be analysed morphologically.

²¹ This clausal nominalisation is usually translated as ‘while’.

²² What I am analysing as an anaphoric prefix *i-* is possibly derived from the proximal demonstrative *hi*.

aküghülo süveno ghopesü

à-kĩ̀yì = lo ʃì-ve-no yò-peʃì
 NRL-big.leaf=LOC put-TAM-CONN wrap-take
 so they wrapped the leftovers in a large leaf,

akikütsü qho lo chheveno wove.

à-kì-kĩ̀ʃì q^ho = lo ʃ^hè-ve-nò wò-ve
 NRL-house-head below=LOC slide.in-TAM-CONN go.back-TAM
 slid it under the roof of the (field) house and went home.

Atsala akiüthüiniu

à-ʃàlà a-kit^hini-ù
 NRL-day NRL-third-DEF
 On the third day,

alu lo ilesü hughino

à-lù = lo ìléʃì hu-yi-nò
 NRL-field=LOC return go.field-return-CONN
 they returned to the field

akishina chukhamove keu ani mala ju.

à-kĩ̀ʃinà ʃù-k^hà-mò-ve = keù à-ní mala ʒu
 NRL-lunch eat-NCPL-NEG-TAM=REL²³ EXST-FUT PRT²⁴ see
 to see if the leftovers were still there.

Ikeloye ayikhu imho aghi kemu

i = ke = ló = je à-jìk^hú ìm^hò àyí = ké = mú
 ANAPH-NZR-LOC=TOP NRL-soya.bean ferment have²⁵=NZR=NEG²⁶
 During this time, although the soya beans had fermented,

chuju kelo ye aloshi chulu

ʃù-ʒu = ke = ló = je a-lo-ʃì ʃù-lù
 eat-see=NZR=LOC=TOP NRL-good-ADV²⁷ eat-ABIL
 they tasted them and realised that the soya beans could still be eaten

²³ This relativiser *keu* appears to be derived historically from *ke-u* ‘NZR-DEF’.

²⁴ This presence of this particle suggests the speaker is wondering.

²⁵ This verb seems to be derived from the existential verb root *a-*.

²⁶ Negated clausal nominalisation that is usually translated as ‘although’ or ‘despite’.

²⁷ The verb *shi* ‘do’ often functions as a verbaliser, where I have glossed it as ‘do’, but it is also found on a number of adverbs, e.g. *papashi* ‘quickly’. I have tentatively glossed it as an adverbialiser here since there is already a main verb in the clause.

eno axo ghi aloshi münalü.

enò à-xò yí a-lo-fi miná-lù
 CONN²⁸ NRL-smell also NRL-good-ADV smell-ABIL
 and that they also smelled good.

Tileno, afo no atsünipu vilo ishi pi,

tilenò á-fò = nò à-tšinipù = vilo ifi pì
 CONJ²⁹ NRL-elder.sister=AGT NRL-younger.sister=DAT³⁰ like.this³¹ say
 Then the elder sister said to the younger one,

“*Ah, ninga*

a ni-ŋá
 EXCL 1pl-child³²
 “My sister,

ikujo hi ye ishi no chukichepu shi ani.

ìkužó hi = je ifi = nò tʃù-kìtʃèpù ʃi à-ni
 1du PRX=TOP like.this=FOC eat-obligation³³ do PROG-NPST
 we should (always) be eating like this.

Hiye ighono chuvi ani.”

hi = je iyóno tʃu-vi à-ni
 PRX=TOP very eat-be.good PROG-NPST
 This is very tasty.”

Tishi no

tifi = nò
 like.that=CONN/FOC
 Henceforth,

küma no axone lhochuphe püzüno

kimá = nò à-xónè l^ho-tʃù-p^hè = pizí = no
 3du=AGT NRL-ferm.soya.beans cook-eat-start=CONN=CONN
 the two sisters started to cook and eat *axone* and

²⁸ This is the standard co-ordinating conjunction for both verb and noun phrases, translated as ‘and’. Note that the *-no* can occur as an enclitic after verbs to give the sense that the sentence is continuing.

²⁹ Translated as ‘then’, this could be analysed as *ti-le-no* = ‘MED-?-CONN’, although it is unclear what *-le-* is.

³⁰ The dative marker appears to be derived from the locative *lo* and is used to mark the addressee.

³¹ The forms *ishi* ‘like this’ and *tishi* ‘like that’ are possibly derived from the proximal and medial demonstratives *hi* and *ti* respectively and the verb *shi* ‘do’.

³² Younger siblings are sometimes addressed as *ninga* ‘our child’.

³³ This is not exactly in the sense of ‘obligation’ but rather suggesting: ‘Why don’t we eat like this usually?’

tinguno alau ye

tìŋúno à-lá-u = je
because.of.that NRL-path-DEF=TOP
consequently from then on,

Sümi qo ye axone lhochu-uve.

ʃimì = qó = je à-xónè 1^ho-tʃù-u-ve
Sumi=PL=TOP NRL-ferm.soya.beans cook-eat-go-TAM
the Sumis have cooked and eaten *axone*.

Ishi kutolo Sümi qo ye

ìʃí kùtòlò³⁴ ʃimì = qó = je
today until-LOC Sumi=PL=TOP
Till today, to the Sumi people

axone ighono akhoto shi peitha cheni.

à-xónè iyóno à-k^hótó = ʃi peìt^ha tʃè-ni
NRL-ferm.soya.beans very NRL-important=ADV use HAB-NPST
axone is still very important. (lit. ‘the Sumi people use *axone* importantly.’)

ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	INSTR	instrumental
2	second person	INT	interrogative particle
3	third person	LOC	locative
ABIL	abilitative	MED	medial demonstrative
ADV	adverb	NCAP	non-capability
AGT	agentive	NCPL	non-completive
ANAPH	anaphoric prefix	NEG	negation
APPL	applicative	NPST	non-past
CONJ	conjunction	NRL	non-relational prefix
CONN	connective	NZR	nominalising phrasal affix
COP	essential copula	PL	plural
DAT	dative	PN	proper name
DEF	definite	PRF	perfect aspect
DIST	distal demonstrative	PROG	progressive aspect
du	dual	PROS	prospective aspect
f	feminine	PRT	particle
FOC	(argument) focus	PRX	proximal demonstrative
EMPH	emphatic	PST	past tense (with existential)
EXCL	exclamative	REL	relativiser
EXST	existential verb	sg	singular
FUT	future tense	TAM	tense/aspect/mood
HAB	habitual aspect	TOP	topic
IMP	imperative		

³⁴ This contains the locative *-lo* and might be derived from *kuto-lo* ‘later-LOC’.

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