



**University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>**

# **In search of Austro-Asiatic I: Relative clauses**

**SEALS XXI, Kasetsart University, Bangkok  
May 11-13, 2011**

**Mathias Jenny**

**jenny@spw.uzh.ch**

## 1. Preliminaries - what are we looking for?

### Cross-linguistic comparability (Croft 2003:14)

- (i) Determine a particular semantic(-pragmatic) structure/situation type
- (ii) Examine morphosyntactic constructions or strategies used to encode it
- (iii) Search for dependencies between the constructions and other linguistic factors (other structural features, other functions encoded by construction)

### Cross-linguistic identification (Stassen 2011)

*External criteria (function, meaning)*



***Mixed functional-formal definitions***

*Formal criteria (form of encoding)*

## 2. Relative clauses

“A relative clause (RC) is a subordinate clause which delimits the reference of an NP by specifying the role of the referent of that NP in the situation described by the RC.” (Andrews 2007:206)

**Types of RC** (Andrews 2007:208ff):

Embedded Rcs

*External Rcs (preceding NP, following NP, variable)*

*Internal RCs (NP inside RC)*

*Free RCs (no NP head)*

Adjoined RCs (RC outside the NP)

## **Canonical Relative Clause Construction** (Dixon 2010:314)

- a. The construction involves a main clause (MC) and a relative clause (RC)
- b. Common argument (CA) shared by MC and RC
- c. RC functions a syntactic and semantic modifier of CA in MC
- d. RC must have the structure of a clause (predicate, required arguments)

RC may lack marking for some grammatical categories marked in MC

"It is important to distinguish between an RC - which has the structure of a clause [...] - and a participle - which is an adjective derived from a verb [...]. [...] In Russian and German, participles can take objects [...] [b]ut an RC shows subject agreement on the same principles as an MC, whereas a participle agrees in number and gender with the head noun [...]. And while RCs allow the same tense choices as as MCs, participles have only past and present forms (no future)." (Dixon 2010:316)

“At the level of surface realization, the CA may be stated in its fullest form within the MC, or within the RC, or in both, or in neither. Irrespective of which of these applies in a particular language, within a canonical relative clause construction the RC is always a modifier to the CA in the MC (even if this occurrence of the CA has zero realization).”

(Dixon 2010:317)

“Detailed studies of the grammars of a wide range of languages do suggest that each one has something which can be recognized as a relative clause construction, in terms of the characterizations presented above.”

(Dixon 2010:316)

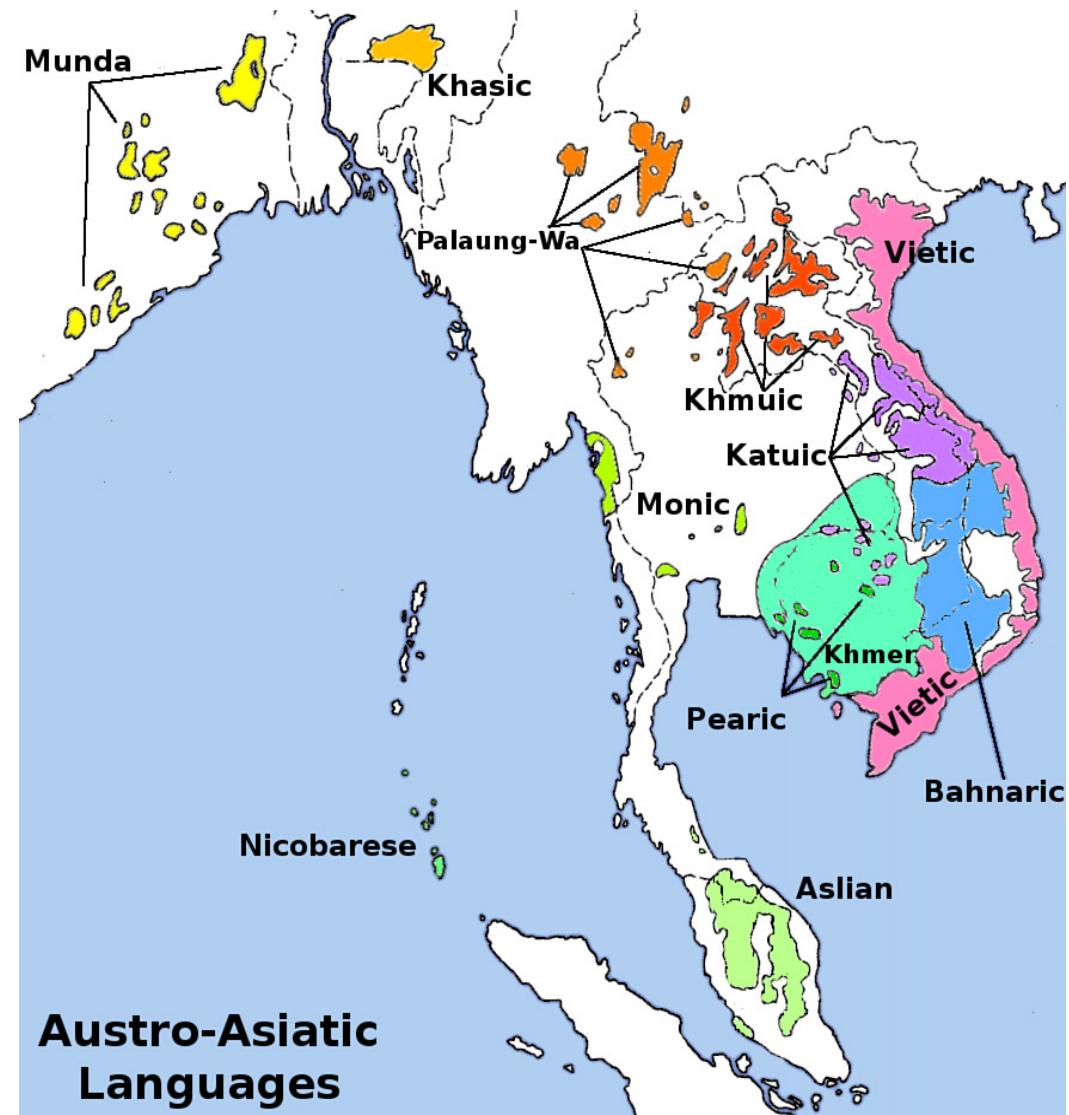
### **Accessibility hierarchy (for relativised function of CA)**

(Comrie 1989:156; Song 2001:223)

**SBJ > DO > IO > [OBL >] GEN [> OCOMP]**

### 3. The Austro-Asiatic languages

<b>Munda</b>	-	<b>Western</b>
<b>Khasic</b>		
<b>Palaungic</b>		<b>Northern</b>
<b>Khmuic</b>		
<b>Vietic</b>		
<b>Katuic</b>		
<b>Bahnaric</b>		<b>Eastern</b>
<b>Pearic</b>		
<b>Khmer</b>		
<b>Monic</b>		
<b>Aslian</b>		
<b>Nicobarese</b>		<b>Southern</b>



## Data available for Austro-Asiatic languages (morphosyntactic)

	<i>Grammars</i>	<i>Texts</i>	<i>Spec. topics</i>	<i>Dict.</i>
Munda	good	some	good	good
Khasic	some	few	some	some
Palaungic	few	few	few	some
Khmuic	few	few	few	some
Vietic	good	good	good	good
Katuic	some	some	some	some
Bahnaric	few	few	few	some
Pearic	few	few	few	some
Khmer	good	good	good	good
Monic	some	good	some	good
Aslian	good	some	some	few
Nicobarese	few	few	few	some

## 4. Relative clauses in Austro-Asiatic languages

### 4.1 Munda

**Kharia** (Peterson 2008)

- (01) *ho=ki [ho=kaf=te yo=du?]*<sub>RC</sub> *dinu somto?* *aw=ki.*  
that=PL that=SG.HUM=OBJ see=PART day Monday COP=M.PST  
'The day they saw him on was a Monday.'
- (02) *[in=a? likha]*<sub>RC</sub> *phonten=te kuy=o?*<sub>j</sub>.  
1SG=GEN write pen=OBJ find=A.PST.1SG  
'I found the pen I had written with.'
- (03) *[biru qeb=na-qeb=na ba?.ruŋku?*<sub>b</sub> *ro?=ki]*<sub>RC</sub> *kay=e=bar.*  
mountain ascend=INF-RDPL rice spill=M.PST lift=A.IRR=2<sub>HON</sub>  
'Pick up the rice which spilled while you were walking up the hill.'

**Form:** **[RC-PART] NP<sub>MAT</sub>; [RC] NP<sub>MAT</sub>; [<NP<sub>MAT</sub>> RC]**  
**± Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO, IO, OBL (+ other functions ?)

## Santali (Ghosh 2008)

- (04) *[jāhā kɔlɔm-te-m ɔl-akad-a]RC ona dɔ oka-re.*  
any pen-INSTR-2SG.SBJ write-PERF.A-FIN that TOP which-LOC  
‘Where is the pen which you have written with?’

- (05) *[jāhā dare-re-m dec'-len-a]RC on-re mit'-tay*  
any tree-LOC-2SG.SBJ climb-PLUP.M-FIN that-loc one-CL  
*terɔm.cak mena-k'-a.*  
honey.comb exist-M-FIN  
‘here is a honey-comb in the tree which you climbed.’

**Form:** [CREL<NP<sub>MAT</sub>> RC] RSUM (TOP)  
- Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>, Correlative construction

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO, (IO ?), OBL (+ other functions?)

## 4.2 Northern AA

### 4.2.1 Khasic

Khasi (Subbarao and Temsen 2009)

(06)	<i>ka-mē<sup>y</sup>d</i>	<i>(ha-ka) [ba]</i>	<i>u-lam</i>	<i>u-bō?</i>
	F.S-table	LOC-3F.S ADJR (REL)	M.S-Lam	3M.s-put

*ya-ka-köt]RC*      *ka-la?-kd̥a?*  
ACC-F.S-book      3F.S-PERF-break

‘The table on which Lam put the book is broken.’

(07)	<i>ka-khinna?</i>	<i>[ba]</i>	<i>u-ban</i>	<i>u-ya-šč?]</i> <sub>RC</sub>	<i>ke-dei</i>
	F.S-child	ADJR (REL)	M.S-Ban	3S.M-V <sub>REC</sub> -meet	3F.S-be

*ka-paralōk*    *jɔŋ-ŋa.*  
F.S-friend      GEN-1S

‘The girl Ban is fighting with is my friend.’

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> (CASE-REF) [REL RC] (ADJR = REL = SUB; V<sub>RC</sub> marked for OBL)  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO, IO, OBL, GEN**

## 4.2.2 Palaungic

Ta'ang (Milne 1921)

- (08) *[h̥.dīn p̥ə hw̥i yū kan.nyōm dyāt]RC ān ka.bē.*  
yesterday 2PL finish see child small 3 be.ill

*or*

- kwōn kan.nyōm [p̥ə p̥ən mēn h̥.dīn]RC ān ka.bē.*  
child child 2PL REL lok.at yesterday 3 be.ill  
'The child you saw yesterday is ill.'

- (09) *[aŋāū ga? yām]RC i.ār hā dīn ū tō.*  
cat bite die fowl place that one CL

*or*

- i.ār [p̥ən ga? aŋāū]RC gwāi hā dīn.*  
fowl REL bite cat stay place that

'The fowl that the cat killed is there.'

**Form:** [ $\langle \text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \rangle \text{ RC}$ ] RSUM; [RC]  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$ ;  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [\text{RC} \langle \text{REL} \rangle]$  RSUM;  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [(\text{REL}) \text{ RC}]$   
**±Gap in RC for  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$**

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO, POSS (+ other functions?)

### 4.2.3 *Khmuic*

**Mlabri** (Rischel 1995)

- (10)    *kheep [mrm ma? poh ?a noj]RC ?a tac.*  
slipper father give 1SG PERF finish PERF break  
‘The slippers father gave me are used up (they broke).’

**Form:**  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \text{ [RC]}$

Gap in RC for  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$

**Relativised functions:** DO (+ other functions?)

## 4.3 Eastern AA

### 4.3.1 Vietic

Vietnamese (Thompson 1987, Miller 1976)

- (11) *Tôi đã tìm thấy quyển sách [mà anh nói hôm.nó]*<sub>RC</sub>.  
1SG ANT seek see book SUB 2SG speak other.day  
'I found the book you were talking [about] the other day.'

- (12) *Đứa con [I(đứa) (mà) tôi sẽ cho một cái áo]*<sub>RC</sub> (*thì*)  
CL child CL SUB 1SG FUT give one CL dress LNK  
*là học sinh.*  
be student  
'The child to whom I'm going to give a dress is a student.'

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [(CL)+(SUB) RC] (LNK)  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO, IO (+ other functions?)

### **4.3.2 Katuic**

**Pacoh** (Alves 2006)

- (13) *?a.co: [Pən po:k ?a.na:?]RC ?y.ki:.*  
dog REL go quickly poss.1SG  
'The dog that goes fast is mine.'

- (14) *?m.bar [Pən dɔ: pləj]RC ki: li: ?iŋ.*  
the.one REL 3SG buy 1SG very want  
'I really want the one that he bought.'

**Form:**  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \text{ [REL RC]}$   
**Gap in RC for**  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO (+ other functions?)

**4.3.3 Bahnaric (n. a.)**

**4.3.4 Pearic (n.a.)**

#### 4.3.5 Khmer

Old Khmer (Jenner and Sidwell 2010, Jenner 2009)

- (15) *oy ta ɻji yen [ta jmah teñ som]RC*  
give LNK ancestor 1PL LNK name *teñ* S.

*[ta kvan teñ pavitra]RC.*  
LNK child *teñ* P.

‘[He] gave [it] to a forebear of ours named *teñ* Som, daughter of the *teñ* Pavitra.’

- (16) *khñum [mañ chloñ prāṇa oy ta vraḥ kamtateñ Pañ]RC*  
slave sub *chloñ* P. give Lnk holy master 1sg  
‘slaves whom the *chloñ* Prāṇa has given to My Holy High Lord’

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [LNK RC]; NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL RC]

Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO (+ other functions?)

## Modern Khmer (Jacob 1968)

- (17)    *khnom*    *khṛ:jn*    *mənùs(s)*    *nùh*    *[dael*    *lò:k-krù:*  
      1SG        see        man              that        REL        teacher  
*ba:n*    *nìyì:əy*    *pi:.msrl]RC.*  
GET        speak        yesterday  
‘I see the man about whom the teacher spoke yesterday.’

**Form: NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL RC]**  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO, IO, OBL (+ other functions?)**

## 4.4 Southern AA

### 4.4.1 Monic

**Old Mon - Middle Mon - Spoken Mon** (Shorto 1971, Jenny 2005)

- (18) OM      *pun dān [ma smin] pa]*<sub>RC</sub>  
merit    donation    REL king    do  
'the acts of merit and charity which the king performed'
- (19) MM      *galān [smin ma həm]*<sub>RC</sub>  
word    kinh    REL speak  
'the words which the king spoke'
- (20) SM      *?ərè [dəh həm]*<sub>RC</sub> *kòh*  
language    3    speak    MEDL  
'the words he said'

**Form:**  $\mathbf{NP_{MAT} [REL\ RC]} \rightarrow \mathbf{NP_{MAT} [RC\ <_{REL}>]} \rightarrow \mathbf{NP_{MAT} [RC]\ (TOP)}$   
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO (+ other functions?)

#### **4.4.2 Aslian**

**Semelai** (Kruspe 2004)

- (21) *jkɔs [mə=ki=jəl la=cɔ]RC paloh.*  
porcupine REL=3A=bark A=dog flee  
'The porcupine that the dog barked at fled.'

- (22) *gprpm [mə=de=cəl]RC ki=lek ha? para?*  
salt REL=3PL.A=pronounce 3A=lick AT rack  
'Salt, that they called (it), he licked on the rack.'

**Form:**  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \text{ [REL=RC]}$   
**Gap in RC for  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$**

**Relativised functions:** **SBJ, DO (+ other functions ?)**

#### 4.4.3 Nicobarese

Nancowry (De Roepstorff 1884, Man 1889)

- (23) *io de tenmæla baiūhōōāl [doch-ne wē gñi  
want LNK mirror magic able-? do house  
doch-ne wē tiong doch-ne wē hifūe]RC.*  
able-? do ship able-? do boat  
'I want a magic looking-glass that can produce houses, ships, and boats.'

- (24) *[ka homkwòm men pōwah ten chüa]RC shīna leät dähnga.  
REL give 2SG paddle to 1SG CREL finish break*  
'The paddle you gave me is broken.'

**Form:**  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \left[ \begin{array}{l} (\text{LNK}) \text{ RC} \\ \text{REL } <\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}> \text{ RC} \end{array} \right] \text{ CREL}$  (REL = INTER; CREL = RSUM)  
**±Gap in RC for  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$**

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO (+ other functions ?)

## 5. Summary

### 5.1 Types of RC found in AA languages:

1 a. [ $\langle \text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \rangle \text{ RC}$ ] ( $\text{RSUM}$ )  $\text{RC} < \text{NP}$  -Gap

b. [ $\text{CREL} \langle \text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} \rangle \text{ RC}$ ]  $\text{RSUM} (\text{TOP})$   $\text{RC} < \text{NP}$  -Gap

---

2 a. [ $\text{RC-PART}$ ]  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$   $\text{RC-NP}$  +Gap

b. [ $\text{RC}$ ]  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}}$   $\text{RC-NP}$  +Gap

---

3 a.  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} (\text{CASE-REF}) [\text{REL RC}]$   $\text{NP-RC}$  +Gap

b.  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [(\text{REL}) \text{ RC}] ; \text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [\text{REL=RC}]$   $\text{NP-RC}$  +Gap

c.  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [(\text{CL})+(\text{SUB}) \text{ RC}] (\text{LNK})$   $\text{NP-RC}$  +Gap

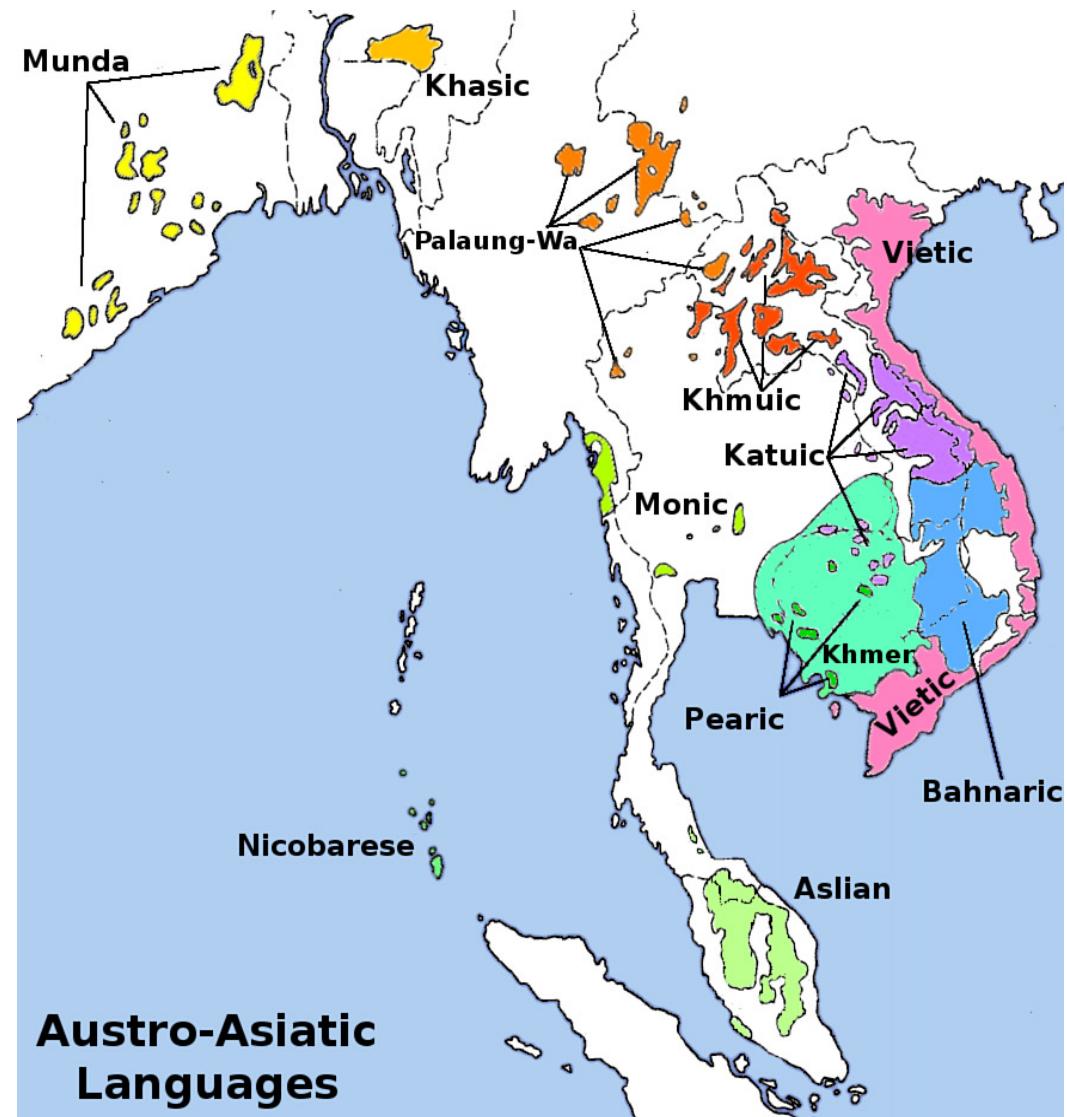
d.  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [(\text{LNK}) \text{ RC}]$   $\text{NP-RC}$  +Gap

e.  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [\text{RC}] (\text{TOP})$   $\text{NP-RC}$  +Gap

f.  $\text{NP}_{\text{MAT}} [\text{RC} < \text{REL}] (\text{RSUM})$   $\text{NP-RC}$  +Gap

## 5.2 Distribution of RC types

<b>Munda</b>	<b>1a, b; 2a, b</b>
<b>Khasic</b>	<b>3a</b>
<b>Palaungic</b>	<b>1a; 2b; 3b, f</b>
<b>Khmuic</b>	<b>3e</b>
<b>Vietic</b>	<b>3c</b>
<b>Katuic</b>	<b>3b</b>
<i>Bahnaric</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
<i>Pearic</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
<b>Khmer</b>	<b>3b, d → 3b</b>
<b>Monic</b>	<b>3b → 3f → 3e; 3b</b>
<b>Aslian</b>	<b>3b</b>
<b>Nicobarese</b>	<b>1b; 3d</b>



## **6. Emerging picture / Outlook**

- ▶ Pre-NP RCs in Munda, Palaungic (participle, unmarked)
- ▶ Internally headed RCs in Munda, Palaungic, Nicobarese (CREL)
- ▶ Eastern languages RCs consistently post-NP
- ▶ Relativiser within RC in Palaungic, Monic (→ Ø in spoken Mon)
- ▶ RC-initial relativiser often general subordinator/linker
- ▶ Data on possible relativised functions deficient for most languages

### **Urgently needed:**

- ▶ Reliable data of many languages:  
Palaungic, Khmuic, Bahnaric, Pearic, Nicobarese

## References

- Alves, M. J. 2006. *A grammar of Pacoh: a Mon-Khmer language of the central highlands of Vietnam*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Andrews, A. D. 2007. Relative clauses. In T. Shopen (ed.) *Language Typology and syntactic description*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 206-236.
- Comrie, B. *Language universals and linguistic typology. 2nd edition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Croft, W. 2003. *Typology and Universals. 2nd edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Roeperstorff, F. A. 1884. *A dictionary of the Nancowry dialect of the Nicobarese language*. Calcutta: Home Department Press.
- Dixon, R. M. W. 2010. *Basic Linguistic Theory. vol. 2: Grammatical topics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ghosh, A. 2008. Santali. In G. D. S. Anderson (ed.) *The Munda languages*. London/New York: Routledge, 11-98.
- Jacob, J. M. 1968. *Introduction to Cambodian*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Jenner, Ph. N. 2009. *A dictionary of Angkorian Khmer*. (edited by D. Couper). Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Jenner, Ph. N. and P. Sidwell. 2010. *Old Khmer grammar*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Jenny, M. 2005. *The verb system of Mon*. Zurich: ASAS.
- Kruspe, N. 2004. *A Grammar of Semelai*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Man, E. H. 1889. *A dictionary of the Central Nicobarese language*. London: W. H. Allen & Co.

- Miller, C. P. 1976. Structural ambiguity in the Vietnamese relative clause. *Mon-Khmer Studies* V, 233-267.
- Milne, L. 1921. *An elementary Palaung grammar*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Peterson, J. 2008. Kharia. In G. D. S. Anderson (ed.) *The Munda languages*. London/New York: Routledge, 434-507.
- Rischel, J. 1995. *Minor Mlabri. A hunter-gatherer language of Northern Indochina*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.
- Song, J. J. 2001. *Linguistic Typology. Morphology and syntax*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Stassen, L. 2011. The problem of cross-linguistic identification. In J. J. Song *The Oxford Handbook of linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 90-99.
- Subbarao, Karumuri V. and Gracious M. Temsen. 2009. Comitative PP as head in externally-headed relative clauses in Khasi. Paper presented at the ICAAL, Mahidol University, Bangkok.
- Thompson, L. C. 1987. *A Vietnamese reference grammar*. Mon-Khmer Studies xiii-xiv.