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Caritive expression in Suansu

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ABSTRACT

This contribution describes caritive constructions (i.e., those structures expressing the non-involvement of a participant, object, or circumstance in a situation) in Suansu, an endangered Trans-Himalayan language spoken in Manipur, northeast India.

Suansu expresses caritive semantics via a biclausal construction with a negated secondary clause embedded in the main one. The verbs used in the secondary clause vary depending on the functions and meanings of the absentee. Some absentees choose the verb form making up the caritive phrase from a coherent set of semantically related verbs, while others select a specific verb. Notably, the use of the verb *tʰõn* 'be inside' in the secondary clause appears to be the most common choice among speakers and extends to unexpected semantic contexts, signaling a possible grammaticalization process of this verb into caritive expression.

KEYWORDS

caritives, clause combining, Suansu

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Caritive expression in Suansu

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1 Introduction

In this contribution, I provide a descriptive account of caritive expression in Suansu, an endangered Trans-Himalayan (Tibeto-Burman) language spoken on the Indo-Myanmar border in Manipur state, India. The term caritives (also found as abessives and privatives in the literature) refers to those structures signaling the non-involvement or absence of a participant in a situation. These can be exemplified in English by *without*, such as in *She returned without him* and *A room without windows*. Caritives have been overlooked in past cross-linguistic research, while the respective "logical positive counterpart" (adapted from Stolz et al. 2007: 63), comitatives and instrumentals, have received substantial attention in the literature (Stolz 1997a; Stolz et al. 2005, 2006; Lehmann & Shin 2005, among others).

Suansu features a distinct morphosyntactic strategy to express caritive semantics, illustrated in the example below (1).

- (1) Jason *gogdapuj-di* [*furi t^hɔ̃n-ma gəne*] *p^ha-t^he*
PN can-OBJ knife be.inside-NEG CVB open-COMPL
'Jason opened the can without a knife.'

The expression in (1) features a biclausal construction, with a secondary clause embedded in the main one (signaled in the example with square brackets). The secondary clause contains a negated verbal predication expressing caritive meaning. The verbs used in the secondary clause vary depending on the context and semantic properties of the absentee, with some recognizable tendencies. The goal of this contribution is to describe the morphosyntactic properties and semantic variation of this construction and to frame its features into the proposed typologies of caritive expressions (i.e., Stolz et al. 2007).

The study is structured as follows. In the second part of this Introduction (§ 1.1), I briefly introduce Suansu and the linguistic domains relevant to understanding caritives, such as comitatives and instrumentals. In § 2, I touch upon the literature available on caritives, introduce the typologies of caritive expressions, and describe the type of data used for this study. Section 3 describes the morphosyntactic properties of Suansu caritives (§ 3.1) and their semantics (§ 3.2). The study concludes (§ 4) with a summary of the findings and frames Suansu caritives in a broader cross-linguistic perspective.

1.1 Suansu

Suansu (suan1234) is an underdescribed and endangered Trans-Himalayan (Tibeto-Burman) language spoken by approximately 2,000 people in a cluster of villages on the Indo-Myanmar border in Manipur state, India. Unreported until recently, it is now under documentation (Ivani 2019; 2022; 2023; 2024). Undoubtedly Trans-Himalayan, its lower-level affiliation still needs to be clarified (Mortensen & Picone 2021; Ivani 2023). In broad typological terms, Suansu exhibits relatively rigid verb-final word order, an agglutinative morphological profile, and no verb agreement. Suansu displays optional ergative marking, and overt marking of core cases is pragmatically conditioned. Suansu case marking system includes several separative monoexponential formatives attached to the NP (Ivani 2023). The aspects of Suansu grammar relevant to the discussion of caritives include comitatives and instrumentals.

Comitatives, defined as “the gram[matical morpheme] used to encode the relation between two participants in a situation as being one of accompaniment” (Stolz et al. 2007: 66), are encoded in Suansu by the particle *tsidə* ‘with’ when the companion denotes a human referent (example 2).¹ In the case of non-human companionship, comitative meaning is primarily expressed via a secondary clause embedded in the main one (3).² With animate non-human companions, the use of *tsidə* is dispreferred but allowed (4). The verb used in the secondary clause in expressions such as (3) is selected from a subset of semantically coherent verbs specific to the context of the utterance. In example (3), the verb used in the secondary clause is *lap^hu* ‘carry’ (lit. “Jason came carrying the dog”). Semantically coherent verbs, such as *lala* ‘bring’ can be used interchangeably in the secondary clause.

The main and dependent clauses that make up the comitative expression are linked by *gəne* (or *gne* with a strong reduction of the central vowel). This formative strictly follows the verb of the secondary clause and has the primary function of locating the two predications at the same temporal level in the event. Formatives of this kind have been labeled in the Trans-Himalayan literature as simultaneous converbs.³ Verb forms carrying this formative usually lack finite morphology and depend on the main clause with respect to the expression of tense and aspectual categories. Similar behavior is observed in the Suansu verbs inflected with *gəne*: these forms lack finite morphology and depend on the main clause.

(2) Jason Mercy *tsidə* *re*
 PN PN COM come.PST
 ‘Jason came with Mercy.’

(3) Jason [*pa-va* *hui* *lap^hu* *gəne*] *re*
 PN 3SG-GEN dog carry CVB come.PST
 ‘Jason came with his dog.’

¹ The glossing conventions follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie et al. 2008). Additional glosses include: PN personal name; COOR coordination (marker); MOD modal.

² In the examples throughout the paper, the boundaries of the secondary clause are marked by square brackets.

³ The same construction is used elsewhere in Suansu to express other categories, including progressive aspect (cf. Ivani 2023, 2024).

- (4) *a miaowi-gli hui tʂidə ki-le*
 1SG cat-COOR dog COM reside-PRS
 ‘I live with a cat and a dog.’

Inanimate comitatives, expressing the presence of an object with the participant and not intended as an instrument in the context of the utterance, are encoded via secondary clause (5), similarly to what is observed with the encoding of non-human animate companions. This structure diverges from the coding of instrumentals in Suansu. Instrumentals, defined as “the gram[matical morphemes] used to encode the relation between two (or three) participants in a situation as being one of instrumentality” (Stolz et al. 2007: 66), are expressed in Suansu by adding the formative *də* to the instrument NP (6).⁴

- (5) *a [a-va fartin lala gəne] re*
 1SG 1SG-GEN umbrella bring CVB come.PST
 ‘I came with my umbrella.’

- (6) *pa gogdapuŋ-di furi-də p^ha-t^he*
 3SG can-OBJ knife-INS open-COMPL
 ‘He opened the can with a knife.’

2 Background

Caritives have been overlooked in cross-linguistic research and often mentioned only in passing in language-specific descriptions. Systematic descriptions of caritive expressions on a broad scale include mainly Stolz’s (1997b; Stolz et al. 2007, among others) body of work. Stolz et al. (2007) explores, among other aspects, the assumed interdependency of caritive and comitative/instrumental categories and the respective markedness properties; in addition, it sketches a coarse typology of caritives based on their morphosyntactic features. This typological classification of caritive expressions distinguishes three main types (enriched by internal variation), briefly summarized in the following.⁵

The languages assigned to the first type (type A) construe caritives by negating the corresponding comitative/instrumental construction. In these languages, caritives do not exist as independent forms. An example reported by Stolz and colleagues is from Hixkaryana (Cariban, South America) and is illustrated below (7, 8).⁶

- (7) Negative comitative (Stolz et al. 2007: 70)
ro-hetx y-akoro-hra k-omok-hni
 1SG-wife 3SG-with-NEG 1SG-come-PST
 ‘I have come without my wife.’

⁴ I analyze *tʂidə* as an individual morpheme rather than consisting of the form *tʂi* plus the instrumental marker *də* since I haven’t found any synchronic attestation of *tʂi* in the corpus, and the speakers do not report the existence of *tʂi* as a separate morpheme in the language in use.

⁵ I refer the reader to Stolz et al. (2007) for a detailed discussion of this categorization and the theoretical assumptions supporting this classification.

⁶ The glossing for these quoted examples is reported verbatim.

(8) Negative instrumental

watma-hni ke makmetxo ke haxa we-taha-hni
 club-NEG with hammer with FOC 1SG-hit-PST
 ‘It wasn’t a club but a hammer with what I hit him.’

The second type, type B, comprises those languages where the respective caritive expression requires an additional negative proposition contrasting a positive proposition. Caritives are structured around a biclausal expression, and both clauses are obligatory. Kobon (Trans-New Guinea, PNG) is an example. The two clauses are enclosed in square brackets (9, 10).

(9) Negative comitative (Stolz et al. 2007: 73)

[yad Laule aip au-ag-in] [yad nöp au-bin]
 I Laule with come-NEG-PAST.1SG I EMPH come-PERF.1SG
 ‘I came without Laule.’

(10) Negative instrumental

[yad kilaul ur pak-ag-in] [ihariñ pau-bin]
 I fowl stick strike-NEG-PAST.1SG just strike-PERF.1SG
 ‘I killed the fowl without a stick.’

The third type (type C in Stolz et al. (2007)) includes those languages with specialized caritive constructions unrelated to the respective comitative/instrumentals forms. Persian (Indo-European, Asia) is an example (11, 12).

(11) Negative comitative (Stolz et al. 2007: 79)

bedun-e bæcce-ha šam xord-im
 without-EZ child-PL dinner eat:PST-1PL
 ‘We ate dinner without the children.’

(12) Negative instrumental

dær-o bedun-e kilid baz kærd
 house-OBJ without-EZ key open do:PST
 ‘He opened the door without a key.’

As mentioned in § 1, Suansu caritives are encoded through a biclausal construction featuring a secondary negated clause embedded in the main one. The structure is similar to the second type (type B) identified in Stolz et al. (2007)’s classification, with some key morphosyntactic and semantic differences. The morphosyntactic and semantic properties of Suansu caritives are briefly discussed in § 3.1. and § 3.2., respectively.

The data used in this study includes about 5 hours of linguistic material, comprising narratives, conversations, and elicited data from four native Suansu speakers. The data elicitation was

performed through an ad-hoc questionnaire, and each entry was verified across speakers.⁷ For practical reasons, and to ensure formal comparability with comitatives and instrumentals, this study focuses on those caritive realizations characterized by one predicate (main event or state) and an absentee. The results and the findings of the study were actively shared and discussed with the Suansu-speaking community during the write-up phase, ensuring their active involvement and input throughout the research process.

3 Caritive expression in Suansu

3.1 *Morphosyntactic properties*

Caritives in Suansu are encoded via a negated secondary clause embedded in the main clause (example 1, repeated in 13). The strategy mirrors the encoding of non-human and inanimate companionship discussed in § 2 and repeated for convenience in (14).

- (13) *Jason gogdapuŋ-di* [*furi tʰõn-ma* *gəne*] *pʰa-tʰe*
 PN can-OBJ knife be.inside-NEG CVB open-COMPL
 ‘Jason opened the can without a knife.’

- (14) *Jason* [*pa-va* *hui lapʰu* *gəne*] *re*
 PN 3SG-GEN dog carry CVB come.PST
 ‘Jason came with his dog.’

The verb of the secondary clause in the caritive expression takes the negation marker *ma*. The simultaneous converb *gəne* follows the negated verb of the secondary clause. The converb is not used when the main relation between predications is not simultaneity, for example when the secondary clause sets up a condition (15). The arguments of the secondary clause do not exhibit case marking (16), similar to the biclausal comitatives and instrumentals (see § 1.1).

- (15) [*bodəle famkase* *tʰõn-ma-gu*] *bu* *bodəle-di* *fam-ga-ma*
 bottle corkscrew be.inside-NEG-COND 3PL bottle-OBJ open-MOD-NEG
 ‘Without a corkscrew, they couldn’t open the bottle.’

- (16) *bu* [*pia lapʰu-ma* *gəne*] *re*
 3PL money carry-NEG CVB come.PST
 ‘They came without money.’

The arguments of the main clause may take case markers (17). The absentee (or the absent property) can be found in subject, object, and indirect object positions, and the head takes the respective argument marking (18, 19, 20).

⁷ The questionnaire used in this study heavily relies on the one developed by the project *Grammatical periphery in the languages of the world: a typological study of caritives*, that can be found on <https://www.caritive.org/questionnaire>.

- (17) *a norere hanrui-di [mazu tʰõn-ma gəne] mõn-le*
 1SG always soup-OBJ salt be.inside-NEG CVB drink-PRS
 ‘I always eat the soup without salt.’
- (18) *kəswa-re tʰak-ma misu-di ano la-le*
 face-hair sprout-NEG person-ABS here be-PRS
 ‘The beardless man is here.’
- (19) *a kəsware tʰak-ma mizu-di tʰai*
 1SG face-hair sprout-NEG person-OBJ see.PST
 ‘I saw a beardless man.’
- (20) *a kasware tʰak-ma misu-la no mie*
 1SG face-hair sprout-NEG person-DAT cooked.rice give.PST
 ‘I gave rice to the beardless man.’

Absentees may refer to nouns and pronouns (21, 22); absentees can be modified in the caritive expression (cf. *furi*, ‘knife’, in (23)). Most adjectives do not form a separate class from verbs in Suansu and behave accordingly in a caritive expression, by taking the negator *ma* (23).

- (21) *[a tʰõn-ma gəne] ba petʰe gəne la-le*
 1SG be.inside-NEG CVB 3SG eat CVB be-PRS
 ‘She’s eating without me.’
- (22) *pa [pa-va furi kasu lapʰu-ma gəne] tʰe tʰo-i*
 3SG 3SG-GEN knife good carry-NEG CVB do hunt-PST
 ‘She went hunting without her good knife.’
- (23) *hui ama saŋa-ma-e*
 dog tail be.long-NEG-NMLZ
 ‘A dog without a long tail.’

The verbs found in the secondary clause vary depending on the functions and semantic properties of the absentee (see § 3.2). Insights from the data reveal a more frequent occurrence of the verb *tʰõn*, ‘be inside’, used in the negated secondary clause to express caritive semantics. This verb is found with various absentees and extends to unexpected contexts, such as human absentees. Notably, *tʰõn* is the only verb permitted with human absentees, while other absentees allow a wider choice of verbs (including *tʰõn*) in the respective caritive clause. In addition, some absentees disallow the use of *tʰõn* altogether, as will be illustrated in § 3.2.

Outside the caritive domain, *tʰõn* is used to locate an object on the referent that is invisible (or barely visible) to the outside. This includes small objects in pockets, bags, and baskets (24). The etymology of *tʰõn* likely connects to Proto Tibeto-Burman *(t/d)uŋ, ‘middle, center, navel’ (Benedict 1972; Chou 1972; LaPolla 1987; Matisoff 2003).

- (24) *a-fon-di* *tʰõn-le*
1SG-phone-OBJ be.inside-PRS
'I have my phone.' (lit. 'My phone is inside (in pocket).')

Following the classification proposed by Stolz et al. (2007), Suansu caritives can be assigned to the biclausal type (type B), with some key distinctive properties. The biclausal type described in Stolz et al. (2007) is realized through repeating the verb of the main clause in a secondary negated clause; in Suansu, the verb of the main clause is not repeated in the secondary clause. In addition, Suansu lacks the comitative and instrumental marker in its caritive expression, which instead occurs in many of the languages assigned to the biclausal type in the typology proposed by Stolz and colleagues. The biclausal caritive construction found in Suansu resembles Japanese caritive expressions for the double predication and the absence of the comitative and instrument markers. At the same time, Suansu caritives differ from Japanese caritives by lacking a generalized verb form used across all absentees (cf. Stolz et al. (2007)).

3.2 *Semantic properties*

This section focuses on the semantic properties of Suansu caritive expressions, and primarily on the variation in the functions and semantic properties of the absentees⁸ and the verb(s) selected in the respective caritive expression. Absentees vary in the choice and types of verbs they can select in the secondary clause.

Absentees denoting non-human and inanimate referents, as well as instrument (including means of transportation) relations allow relative freedom in the verbs used in the caritive clause. The most common verb these absentees select is *tʰõn* 'be inside'. Less frequently, the verb of the caritive clause is chosen from a small set of semantically linked and coherent verbs. Verbs of this kind include *lapʰu* 'carry' and *lala*, 'bring', or *kate* 'use' and *kʰuitʰe* 'take with oneself', depending on the context of the utterance.

Other absentees are more restrictive in the types of verbs they allow in the caritive clause. Absentees denoting human referent allow only *tʰõn*, 'be inside'. The use of *tʰõn* with human absentees and other absentee types suggests a possible semantic bleaching of this verb in the caritive expression. Other absentees select a specific verb, disallowing other verbs. Absentees denoting body part - possessor and part-whole relations use the verb *dzən*, 'attach', in the respective caritive secondary clause. Absentees denoting kinship and locality relations feature the verb *la* 'exist', 'be'. The verb *tʰõn* 'be inside' is not allowed with these absentees. It is found again when the absentee has the primary function of content (i.e., "*A bag without potatoes*"), where *tʰõn* expresses its original lexical meaning. A schematic representation indicating the semantic properties of the caritive secondary clause in Suansu is illustrated in Table 1.

⁸ The functions of the absentees presented in the following are in large part derived from the questionnaire developed by the project *Grammatical periphery in the languages of the world: a typological study of caritives*, accessible at <https://www.caritive.org>. Accessed on November 7th, 2022.

specific verb	human absentee	<i>tʰõn</i> 'be inside'
choice of verbs	non-human absentee	context relevant verb
	inanimate absentee	~ <i>tʰõn</i>
	instrumentals	'be inside'
specific verb	kinship	<i>la</i>
	locality	'exist'
	body part - possessor	<i>dzən</i>
	part -whole	'attach'
	content	<i>tʰõn</i> 'be inside'

Table 1. Semantic variation of Suansu caritives

In what follows, I briefly discuss these absentee types. In § 3.2.1, I illustrate examples of human absentees. In § 3.2.2., I discuss absentees denoting non-human and inanimate absentee referents, and instrument relations. In § 3.2.3., I illustrate and discuss absentees that require a specific verb in the respective caritive clause.

3.2.1 Human absentees

Human absentees are expressed in Suansu via a biclausal construction that features the negated verb *tʰõn*, 'be inside' in the secondary clause (25). Other verbs, such as *lala* 'bring' or semantically related verbs are not allowed. The use of *tʰõn* with human absentees is limited to lack of companionship. It does not extend, for example, to those contexts where the absentee signals a kinship relation (see § 3.2.3).

- (25) *a* [Pem *tʰõn-ma* *gəne*] *re*
 1SG PN be.inside-NEG CVB come.PST
 'I came without Pem.'

3.2.2 Non-human and inanimate absentees and instrument relations

Non-human and inanimate absentees, as well as instrumentals, are primarily encoded by negating *tʰõn* 'be inside' in the caritive secondary clause (26, 27, 28). Although the use of *tʰõn* is the preferred choice among speakers, these absentees may alternatively select other verbs in the respective caritive clause, as long as these are semantically coherent with the functions and meanings of the respective absentees and the context of the utterance. Non-human and inanimate absentees may select, for example, verbs like *laphu* 'bring' or *lala* 'carry'. Absentees denoting instruments may select similar verbs, including 'use' or 'take' in the respective caritive secondary clause.

- (26) *pa* [*ba-va* *fartin* *tʰõn-ma* *gəne*] *re*
 3SG 3SG-GEN umbrella be.inside-NEG CVB come.PST
 'She came without her umbrella.'

(27) *pa* [miaowi t^hōn-ma gəne] kari t^he gəne la-le
 3SG cat be.inside-NEG CVB play do CVB exist-PRS
 ‘She is playing without the cat.’

(28) Jason k^horoŋ-di [ʃo t^hōn-ma gəne] p^ha-t^he
 Jason door-OBJ key be.inside-NEG CVB open-COMPL
 ‘Jason opened the door without a key.’

3.2.3 Kinship and locality, body part–possessor, part–whole, and content relations

Absentees denoting kinship and locality relations, body part–possessor (and part–whole relations in general) and content relations feature a specific verb in the respective caritive clause. The verb *t^hōn* is not allowed with these absentees. In caritive expressions with absentees denoting a kinship relation, the verb used in the caritive clause is *la* ‘exist’ (29, 30). Other verbs are not allowed. However, *t^hōn* is found when the main function of the kin absentee is not of kinship in the context of the utterance (31).

(29) *a* mazok-le Mercy [nə lai-pri] matam
 1SG remember-PRS PN child exist-yet time
 ‘I remember Mercy without children (yet).’

(30) [amai lai-ma gəne] t^haga-e nə-di madamazet vərene
 elder.brother exist-NEG CVB grow.up-NMLZ child-OBJ attitude quick

tria-le
 change-PRS
 ‘Boys without brothers grow up capricious.’

(31) [nə t^hōn-ma gəne] passenger-po-ne generalain la gereha
 child be.inside-NEG CVB passenger-PL-ERG general.line take MOD
 ‘Passengers without children should take the general line.’

Similarly, when the function of the absentee is of adjacent locality, the use of *t^hōn* is not allowed, and the caritive secondary clause is construed again with *la* (32, 33).

(32) *pu* ano p^hungp^he [tʃertʃ lai-ma gəne]
 3PL village build.PST church exist-NEG CVB
 ‘They built a village without a church.’

(33) *titi* [pokʃui la-ma] k^həsa ska
 DET.DIST pond exist-NEG garden one
 ‘That is a garden without a pond.’

Body part–possessor and part–whole relations encode caritive semantics using *dzən*, ‘attach’, in the secondary clause. This verb is used for human (34) and non-human (35) possessors. The same verb is used in caritive expressions denoting part–whole relations (36, 37).

- (34) *sapei ska [zəŋ ska dzən-ma gəne] woan ri suida*
 soldier one leg one attach-NEG CVB come.back.PST war after
 ‘A soldier came back without a leg after the war.’
- (35) *tie tʰoŋpʰoŋ-di [amai dzən-ma gəne] fui-no zam-tʰi-le*
 DET lizard-SBJ tail attach-NEG CVB house-LOC run-around-PRS
 ‘The lizard is running tailless around the house.’
- (36) *kapʰuŋ adra-no [uindo dzən-ma] fui ska la-le*
 hill top-LOC window attach-NEG house one exist-PRS
 ‘There’s a windowless house on top of the hill.’
- (37) *tie gari-di la-kʰam-də [garizaŋ dzən-ma-tʰe]*
 DET car-SBJ exist-year-ABL car.leg attach-NEG-COMPL
 ‘The car has been without wheels for a long time.’

Another context in which a specific verb is used in a caritive clause is when the absentee has the function or meaning of content. In these cases, the specific verb is *tʰōn* (38). This is expected given the lexical meaning of *tʰōn*, ‘be inside’.

- (38) *a alu [tʰōn-ma gəne] tʰabuŋ ska lala-tʰe*
 1SG potato be.inside-NEG CVB bag one bring.PST-COMPL
 ‘I brought a bag without potatoes.’

4 Summary and outlook

As shown in this study, Suansu expresses caritive semantics via a negated secondary clause embedded in the main clause. The biclausal construction is one of the types (type B) proposed in Stolz et al. (2007)’s typology of caritives (cf. § 2). However, Suansu biclausal caritives do not fit the type criteria neatly, as they show some key differences.

First, the verb of the main clause is not repeated in the secondary clause, unlike what is observed in many of the languages assigned to this type in Stolz et al. (2007)’s survey. In addition, Suansu caritive expressions do not feature the human comitative marker, as it is found in several of the languages assigned to this type (cf. § 2). Finally, while many languages featuring a biclausal caritive expression require a specific verb in the respective secondary clause (i.e., Japanese), Suansu is more flexible, as it allows the choice of semantically related verbs with certain absentees. As described above, Suansu biclausal caritives either use a context-relevant verb and *tʰōn* ‘be inside’, or a specific verb depending on the functions and meanings of the absentee.

With certain absentees, the verb *tʰōn* appears to be the default choice among the speakers, and it is used in ‘unexpected’ contexts, for example with human absentees. This, combined with the

fact that *tʰōn* is the default choice with other absentees may suggest a semantic bleaching process of *tʰōn* into caritive expression.

The biclausal caritive type is not uncommon in the languages of the world. Stolz et al. (2007: 75) observe that the caritive biclausal strategy is frequently encountered in verb serializing languages of East and Southeast Asia (and not limited to these). The scarce data available on the languages from Manipur, and especially from the Ukhrul district, does not allow for a comparative overview of caritive expressions in the languages of the area. Stolz et al.'s sample contains one Tibeto-Burman language, Tibetan, assigned to type C (Stolz et al. 2007: 121; Denwood 1999).

The use of a verb meaning 'be inside' in the secondary clause is found in other languages construing caritives through a biclausal strategy, notably in several Mesoamerican languages (Stolz et al. 2007: 76). The verb used in the secondary clause is 'be inside' in Trique (Hollenbach & de Hollenbach 1975), Mixtec (Daly & de Daly 1977), and Totonac (Levy 1990). Nahuatl and Huave, the other Mesoamerican languages in Stolz et al. (2007) sample, use the verb 'to carry' in the respective caritive clauses (Lastra 1980, Stairs & de Stairs 1983).

One of the central claims in Stolz et al. (2007) regarding the relationship between comitatives, instrumentals, and caritives is the cross-linguistic tendency of a formal distinction of comitatives and instrumentals that gets neutralized in caritives. The formal realizations of Suansu comitatives and instrumentals, together with the respective caritive counterparts, are summarized in Figure 1.

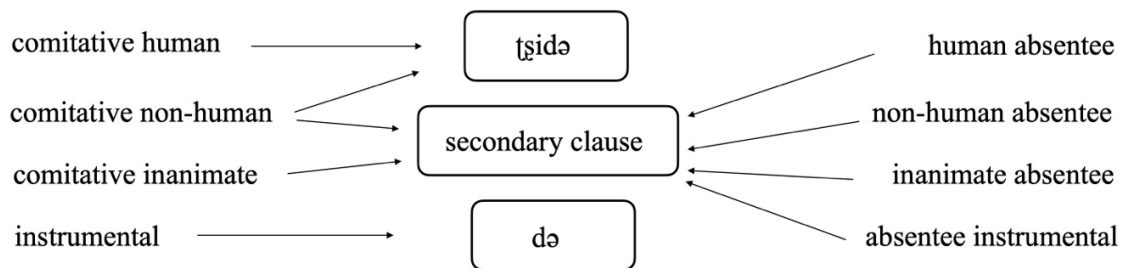


Figure 1. Mapping of comitative and caritive marking in Suansu. Note that caritives require the presence of the negator *ma* on the verb of the secondary clause.

The three-way split found in Suansu comitatives and instrumentals is reduced to one caritive construction, where all types of absentees, including instrumentals, are expressed via the biclausal construction.

The comitative/instrumental and caritive relation has also been explored in terms of markedness. Stolz et al. (2007) claim that caritives are the marked category compared to comitatives and instrumentals. Using the same battery of criteria adopted in their categorization, caritive constructions in Suansu are more marked, given that the presence of negation requires more grammatical morphemes. This is true especially of caritives instrumentals, where the instrumental suffix *də* is replaced by an entire secondary clause in its caritive counterpart.

To conclude, Suansu caritives show interesting semantic and morphosyntactic properties, including the potential ongoing grammaticalization process of the verb *tʰōn* 'to be inside' into caritive expression. Suansu and the languages of the Ukhrul district are currently under documentation: more data and a richer corpus, currently in development, will reveal further variation.

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