

## Domain Specificity and Language Change: Evidence South Central (Kuki-Chin) Tibeto-Burman

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**Abstract :** In the studies of language change, mental factors including analogy, reanalysis, and frequency have received considerable attention as possible catalysts for language change. In comparison, relatively little is known regarding which functional domains or construction types are more amenable to these mental factors than others. In this regard, this paper will show with data from South Central (Kuki-Chin) Tibeto-Burman languages how language change interacts with certain functional domains or construction types. These construction types include transitivity, person marking, and polarity distinctions. Thus, it will be shown that transitive clauses are more prone to change than intransitive and ditransitive clauses, clauses with 1st person argument marking are more prone to change than clauses with 2nd and 3rd person argument marking, non-copular clauses are more prone to change than copular clauses, affirmative clauses are more prone to change than negative clauses, and standard negatives are more prone to change than negative imperatives. The following schematic structure can summarize these findings: transitive>intransitive, ditransitive; 1st person>2nd person, 3rd person; non-copular>copular; and affirmative>negative; and standard negative>negative imperatives. In the interest of space, here only one of these findings is illustrated: affirmative>negative. In Hyow (South Central, Bangladesh), the innovative and preverbal 1st person subject k(V)- occurs in an affirmative construction, and the archaic and postverbal 1st person subject -ŋ occurs in a negative construction. Similarly, in Purum (South Central, Northeast India), the innovative and preverbal 1st person subject k(V)- occurs in an affirmative construction, and the archaic and postverbal 1st person subject \*-ŋ occurs in a negative construction. Like 1st person subject, we also see that in Anal (South Central, Northeast India), the innovative and preverbal 2nd person subject V- occurs in an affirmative construction, and the archaic and postverbal 2nd person subject -t(V) in a negative construction. To conclude, data from South Central Tibeto-Burman languages suggest that language change interacts with functional domains as some construction types are more susceptible to change than others.

**Keywords :** functional domains, Kuki-Chin, language change, south-central, Tibeto-Burman

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