A Brief Linguistic Outline of the Hobongan Language

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ABSTRACT

Hobongan, an Austronesian language spoken by approximately two thousands people in the Indonesian parts of Borneo, is an as yet undescribed language. This outline is a brief report on the major typological, social, discourse, sentential, morphological, and phonological structures of Hobongan. The Hobongan language is spoken by a community that is under typical pressures toward attrition: political, economic, educational, generational. Within discourse, it tends to prioritize spatial information (location, navigation) over other types of information (information about character, temporality). Hobongan is a strongly subject-verb-object language, with adjectival verbs. Morphologically, Hobongan is primarily analytic and uses exclusively prefixes to make morphological distinctions currently, and there is some evidence of other morphological processes in the language. There is some lexical flexibility in the language, but prefixes clarify lexical category for many uses of terms. Hobongan is phonologically typical of the languages spoken in that part of the world, being non-tonal, having five vowels, and using a typologically expected inventory of consonants. Allophonic nasalization is common, and vowel length is phonemic. This outline should not be considered comprehensive, and analysis of materials collected during field visits continues.

Keywords: Austronesian, Hobongan, Hovongan, linguistic description

INTRODUCTION

The following is a brief report on the basic typological, social, discourse, sentential, morphological, and phonological structures of Hobongan. The report is based on ongoing field work that I am conducting among the Hobongan, with data collected during site visits in 2012-2015 and 2019.[1] A longer and more thorough description is in progress, but in the interests of providing language documentation in a more

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[1] I wish to thank all of the Hobongan who have participated in my linguistic research. They have been generous with their time and expertise and have answered many questions and introduced more. They are ideal linguistic partners. They have given consent for the use of the material that they have provided for written analyses of the language, but they reserve the right to present themselves in images and as individuals. For those who are interested, the following is a link to content that they made available via a government program to document minority populations. Although most of the clothing is traditional for ceremonies, the song was composed and written for this video and is about modern ideas; the dances are also traditional, but traditionally performed only by women. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7X1gVMxNqT8. Link active as of January, 2022. I would also like to thank Rachel Searcy, a missionary and friend who works among the Hobongan to facilitate a translation of the Bible. She has provided access to her language materials, including sections of completed translation, and many other types of support during my field visits. Her cultural and language expertise have been indispensable.

timely manner, I have prepared this shorter outline. In this document, I include information on my research methods, a brief argument toward how linguistic descriptions could be improved if the descriptions were written descriptively, background information on the Hobongan language, and the outline of a linguistic description.

Hobongan is an Austronesian language (Eberhard er al, 2021; Hammarström et al., 2022) spoken by approximately two thousand people located primarily along the upper Kapuas River, in Kalimantan Barat. A few individuals and small family groups also live in Kalimantan Timor. Most of the Hobongan live in five main villages and travel freely and frequently to maintain their swidden rice fields, to gather plants for food, to hunt and fish, and to trade, both with other groups in and in the town of Putussibau. They travel by boat most of the time, on foot when necessary, and by motor scooter in town.

METHODS

When in the field, I engage in Community-Based Language Research (CLBR; Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009). CBLR prioritizes research on a language or languages, for the language community, with the language community, and by the language community. In other words, the linguist(s) involved are active participants in the everyday lives of the people with whom they work, not attempting some kind of external observation (Dimmendaal, 2001), and consult language speakers regarding insights about language, not just for data-collection. Language speakers are the experts, and linguists assist those language experts in meeting their and their communities' language needs.

In CBLR, linguistic work must benefit the community of language users in some way. Most of the Hobongan live and travel in what is now a national park (*Taman Nasional Betung Kerihun*), and they have some of the protections afforded to the national park, such as being a recognized part of a valuable ecosystem, and suffer some of the consequences of the inadequate protection of that park (trespassing resulting in poaching, illegal logging, illegal mining, etc.). However, they are still under all of the usual modern pressures to conform to modern language and culture. For example, education and trade take place in Bahasa Indonesian (BI) or a local trade language. Opportunities outside of the villages require working knowledge of BI. Gaining a government-issued form of identification requires at least some level of conversion to one of the six government-recognized religions, etc. (see Arka, 2013, for an overview of challenges to language conservation in (eastern) Indonesia). In order to gain minority rights, the Hobongan must prove that they are who they say they are, and documenting language, oral literature, and culture are part of that proof.

Because CBLR is a set of basic principles guiding field work, how those principles can be put into use varies across researchers. I first began work with the Hobongan in 2012, when I was invited to visit a friend of mine, Rachel Searcy, who works among the Hobongan, at their invitation, toward a translation of the Bible. I have made several other visits since then. While there, I began working with Searcy's assistance with translation (because I was not yet able to communicate with Hobongan speakers directly), cultural norms (how to be polite), and interactions (introducing me to people who might be interested in discussing language, for example). As I learned more, I did more independent interaction. Using CBLR, I minimized formal elicitations, although the narrative included in this analysis was produced through a formal elicitation, and involved myself in whatever task or event was already in progress. Among other activities, I helped harvest fruit, prepare foods for community gatherings, and care for children. I made recordings and began working through the process of transliterations and translations, assisted by both Searcy and Hobongan participants. Searcy also made available language materials that she had collected with the Hobongan (see the first footnote), and Hobongan participants assisted in discussing the materials that Searcy had made available, including, for example, pronouncing hundreds of individual words while working toward an analysis of syllable structure and stress patterns. Members of the Hobongan community are therefore both the sources of all of the language materials and the experts who answer questions about

those materials.

One limitation that I faced when using CBLR is that, as a female researcher, it was most appropriate for me to work with women. Most of the groups in which I could participate were comprised of women and children.[2] Because of what I am, most of the language materials are based on the Hobongan language as spoken and used by women and children. Church meetings were one context in which I could consistently observe and record language from men. Although segregated (women on one side of the room, men on the other), both women and men participated in discussions led by men in church meetings. The information on r/d/l alternations below was another aspect of formal elicitation (I identified the alternations based on recordings made in church and other community meetings, then elicited speaker insights about those alternations later), was provided by a couple of men, however. Wherever language differences in age, gender, or other sociolinguistic factors occur, I note the differences.

APPROACH

This report is somewhat different from most traditional language descriptions or outlines in that I begin with narrative discourse and conclude with the sound system. Organizing this abbreviated description from discourse to sound allows the description itself to be descriptive, in that I place the aspects of the language that are most important to the Hobongan—narrative discourse and the sound system—at the rhetorically strongest positions in the descriptions (first and last; rhetorical strength is based on psycholinguistic research for speakers of Germanic languages (the serial position effect: Ebbinghaus, 1885/1913), because I am writing in English; rhetorical strength for the Hobongan could differ). The Hobongan take narrative discourses to be the fundamental units of language and consider sub-units when circumstances require (see sections on those sub-units for more information.[3]

Starting the description with narrative discourse also allows for emphasis on what makes Hobongan unique, at least among analyses of languages for which any analysis of patterns in discourse structures has been completed. Given the strong history of linguistic analysis for Indo-European languages, discourse structures have often been assumed to be like patterns noted by linguists who are speakers of Indo-European languages. For example, Longacre (1983/1996; more below), defined narrative discourse in terms that emphasize information about character in narratives, arranged chronologically. At this point in history, it is well-known that not all languages fit that pattern (e.g., Japanese, which is event-framed rather than character-framed; see Rothman, 2015, for an especially interesting examination of the ways in which different framing affects how and which information is presented and how those presentations correlate with approaches to addressing the situations that afforded the information), but information in non-Indo-European narrative discourses continues to be under-analyzed. As this study shows, I keep concepts of discourse and information in narrative discourse as part of the language data that need to be analyzed and described, rather than assuming universality that is already known not to be universal. I hope that this short description helps to make the case for more analysis and description of narrative discourses in the world's languages.

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[2] I use the terms 'women' and 'men' to designate people who take female or male roles in Hobongan society. In part because the Hobongan community is relatively small, non-binary individuals are relatively few. In the case of the one non-binary individual I met, that person was accepted when engaged with women in culturally female activities.

[3] I suspect that the phenomenon of taking narrative discourse to be the fundamental unit of language is relatively common among the world's languages, and particularly among languages that remain primarily oral, but investigating the distribution of possible fundamental units of language is left to future research. Other researchers have suggested the possibility that there are still other fundamental units of language, such as a full conversational turn (Pascual, 2014: participation by turn by at least two conversants, for example). I further suggest that fundamental units can vary across languages. If that is the case, including evidence that a given unit is fundamental in a given language would need to be included in language descriptions.

What is a narrative discourse? According to SIL (2024, based on works by Longacre), "narrative discourse is a discourse that is an account of events, usually in the past, that employs verbs of speech, motion, and action to describe a series of events that are contingent one on another".[4] In my dissertation (Perkins, 2009), I developed a definition of narrative discourse that was based on psycholinguistic research on what speakers of Indo-European languages typically include in narrative discourses: character, causality, time, space. By my definition, any discourse (unit of language that is larger than a sentence: Pike, 1964) that contains each of those elements, broadly construed, is a narrative discourse, even if it does not include other aspects of narrative that researchers have argued for (e.g., experientiality in Fludernik, 1996, or emphasis on doer in SIL, 2024). By keeping the definition flexible and the elements of the definition broad, I intend to keep the analysis of narrative discourses across the world's languages open for description of what narrative discourses are and do in those languages as well as for comparison of similarities and differences in narrative structures cross-linguistically.

It is possible that the four elements of narrative discourse as identified in psycholinguistic research to this point will not turn out to be universal, in which case, the definition(s) of narrative discourse will need to be updated. However, for the purposes of Hobongan narrative discourse, as well as the narrative discourses that I have analyzed thus far (Perkins 2009, 2019), the four elements are available in each of the narrative discourses, but not always realized in exactly the same ways or emphasized equivalently.[5] As an example, in the languages of the world, causality appears to be the fundamental aspect of narrative discourse, with the other aspects (character, time, space) tied more or less closely to causality (see Perkins, 2017, for analysis and examples).

Ultimately, beyond SIL's or my definition, what counts as a narrative discourse in Hobongan is what the Hobongan take to be a narrative discourse. In Hobongan narrative discourse, spatial information (especially locational and navigational information) is the *sine qua non* for narrative discourse. Information about character is somewhat likely to be underspecified, as in the narrative discourse provided below. Temporal information is the least well developed and the most likely to be ambiguous. Hobongan narrative discourses include causal information[3], most closely linked to spatial information: locations make available certain possible activities for the characters to undertake. The Hobongan prioritization of causal-with-spatial information might be somewhat unusual when considering the English-language dictum to develop character in order to drive narrative discourse, but it is also recognized that North American English speakers do not go swimming at Walmart, nor do they buy groceries at the furniture store. The place facilitates some possibilities and eliminates others, and in Hobongan discourse, the possibilities of place are of fundamental importance.

Evidence that narrative discourses are fundamental units of language for the Hobongan is as follows:

1. The Hobongan are clear on what works as a narrative discourse (it includes at least spatial information), but what counts as other units of language are open to debate. The Hobongan are willing to consider what words, sentences, or phonemes are, when their projects require them to do so, by participating in

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[4] The SIL/Longacre definition goes on to emphasize doers of those actions, but in Hobongan, as I describe below, the emphasis is on location and navigation more than on the characters who are located or navigating. The character-focused part of the definition is one reason why it is important to describe and analyze narrative discourse structures, rather than assuming universality of the ways in which language speakers organize information and discourses.

[5] Cross-linguistic variation in how the elements are used and instantiated are why the definitions of each element should be broadly construed, not only to keep the descriptive possibilities open but also to accommodate researcher limitations. For example, I am not an expert on the philosophical aspects of causality, nor on every language ever spoken, but some evidence exists that the Hobongan have a somewhat different notion of causality than I do as a naive user of English-language based causality. The need for descriptive field work in philosophy is enormous and rarely undertaken.

the translation project, or because they begin to write in Hobongan, or because the Hobongan language is changing in ways that can impinge on what they prefer to do with language (more information in the relevant sections). However, they do not need to consider what makes a narrative discourse, because that is clear to them.

2. Hobongan speakers consistently ask where an event (potentially a sentence) took place before they are willing to consider additional content. Other types of discourses are not recognized as discourses until information at least about location is available. The prioritization of spatial information became evident during the translation project (Searcy, personal communication, 2012), when the Hobongan refused to consider the New Testament book of Romans, a heavily philosophical discourse, as translatable until they knew where the discourse had been considered or written.

3. Story-telling, in various genres of narrative, is a common activity for the Hobongan. Even in conversations, one side of a conversational turn often consists of relatively brief narrative discourses. People's actions, feelings, and opinions gain more meaning from the narrative in which those occur than the narrative gains from the people involved.

As part of my commitment to describing the Hobongan language in the most accurate way possible, and to incorporate Hobongan insights about their language whenever possible, I take narrative discourse to be the fundamental unit of the Hobongan language, as the Hobongan do.

NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

The narrative discourse used as the foundation for this brief description was collected in 2019 when I asked high school students to write in Hobongan. Although formal elicitation has its problems (Dixon, 2009), in order to answer more questions, it is often necessary to seek out material that might not occur spontaneously, such as accessing Hobongan writing before many prescriptive rules had been developed for writing Hobongan. The students who participated had been taught to write in Bahasa Indonesian at school, with all of the prescriptive rules available. The students participated eagerly, and their writings were collected, printed, and distributed to interested members of the community. The writings have also become part of the collection of literacy materials that Searcy uses to teach the Hobongan to read Hobongan. All of the personal names in the narrative have been changed.

∼∼ This space intentionally left blank∼∼

Tikun	*nong*	*kajaq*	*icing*	*ketou*
story	loc	way.of	cat	1st.tri.exc

'The Story of Our Kitten'

(1) *De*   *nong*   *nyuap*   *joq*   *ketou*   *nomu*   *lua*   *moq*   *be*

before   when   morning   foc   1st.tri.exc   bathe   then   and   upriver

sa   *Lelo*   *a*   *HP*   *moq*   *beong*   *mang*   *oniq*   *icing*   *ketou.*

there   Lelo   get   HP   and   want   see   small   cat   1st.tri.exc

'Earlier when it was morning, we bathed and then went up there to Lelo's to get the cell
phones and see our kitten.'

(2)   (2) *Ho*   *mono*   *nong*   *ketou*   *be*   *joq*   *Lelo*   *neho*   *icing*

3rd.sg.nonhuman   now   when   1st.tri.exc   upstream   foc   Lelo   say   cat

ketou   *kobo.*

1st.tri.exc   die.

'It was then when we were upstream that Lelo said our kitten died.'

(3)   *Lua*   *nan*   *joq*   *ketou*   *ce*   *masaq*   *mang*   *ho.*

then   that   foc   1st.tri.exc   perpendicular.to.river   come.in   see   3rd.sg.nonhum

'Then we went in away from the river to see it [the kitten].'

(4)   *Moq*   *na*   *itup*   *joq*   *ho*   *lagiq*   *piqang*   *Mola.*

and   emph   one   foc   3rd.sg.nonhum   again   with   Mola

'And there it [our kitten] was again with Mola.'

(5)　　*Lua*　　*joq*　　*Lelo*　　*neho*　　*ho*　　　　　　*kobo*　　*ture*　　*kanon.*

　　　　then　　foc　　Lelo　　say　　3rd.sg.nonhum　　die　　to.cause　　animal

‘Then Lelo said it had been killed by an animal.’

(6)　　*A*　　　　　　　　*nyian*　　*toqo*　　*ho*　　　　　　*kanon*　　*mon*　　*baqan*　　*tapi*

　　　　One　　　　　　　neg　　able　　3rd.sg.nonhum　　animal　　any　　modal　　but (BI)

　　　　ho　　　　　　*sajaq*　　*kobo*　　*ture*　　　　*kanon*　　nen.

　　　　3rd.sg.nonhum　　to.be　　dead　　to.be.caused　　animal　　emph

‘One was not able to do anything, and the death was caused by that animal.’

(7)　　*Moq*　　*kanon*　　　*nan*　　*joq*　　　　*ketou*　　*ngala*　　*ngomon*　　*ni*　　*ngobo*

　　　　and　　animal　　　that　　foc　　　1st.tri.exc　　very　　think　　this　　to.kill

　　　　icing　　*ketou*　　　*joq*　　*eot.*

　　　　cat　　1st.tri.exc　　foc　　mongoose

‘And the animal that we’re very sure killed our kitten was a mongoose.’

(8)　　*Lua*　　*naq*　　　　*nan*　　*joq*　　*Lelo*　　*nacong*　　*ketou*　　　*baqe*　　　*sekola*　　*baqan.*

　　　　then　　in.that.way　　rel　　foc　　Lelo　　ask　　1st.tri.exc　　downriver　　school　　modal

‘Then Lelo asked us to go downriver to school.’

(9)	*Naqa*	*po*	*so*	*ngubur*	*ho*		*keheo*	*so.*
	for.that.reason	not.yet	3rd.sg.fem	bury (BI)	3rd.sg.nonhum		said	3rd.sg.fem

'So she wouldn't bury the kitten yet she said.'

Structures in Narrative Discourse

Titling the narratives was a decision that the students made themselves, as they were engaged in writing. Each student provided more than one narrative, and in order to keep track of authors and materials, they created titles. Some of the titles, such as this one, were provided along with the narratives. Other titles were developed later in the process, particularly as they were helping to organize their collected works.

The writer of this narrative, a woman of about age fourteen at the time of the writing, provided temporal background information that was embedded in a relative clause. Background information occurred in a syntactically backgrounded structure.

In the first main clause, the writer introduced the main locational information (*be*, upstream), which was shorthand for the location for most of the remainder of the narrative. She did not specify *be* (upstream) further because she was writing with and for people who knew what she meant. The contrast later in the narrative between *be* (upstream), and *baqe* (downstream) provided a spatial frame within which the writer organized the events of the narrative. The narrative concluded when the action moved away from the original location.

Locational and navigational information are noted in nearly every sentence of the discourse, with the writer's location and progress given throughout. *Joq* is a common discourse marker, occurring in seven of nine sentences in this narrative. According to Hobongan speakers, *joq* typically directs audience attention to spatial information in the discourse, helping to link sentences together into a discourse, analogous to pronominal reference across sentences in many Indo-European languages. Syntactically, elements such as *joq* scope over the material, especially the clause, that follows them (see below), indicating that focus can be directed to other elements of the narrative, such as the mongoose (sentence 7). However, Hobongan speakers insist that *joq* should be understood as referring across sentences, and usually to the spatial information that is relevant to the clauses marked by *joq*: readers should attend to the downriver and traveling downriver aspects of the school, rather than to being asked to go to school. Given speakers' intuitions about *joq*, it could be analyzed as a discourse-level pronominal that refers back to the most recently available spatial information, providing spatial continuity and coherence across entire narratives.

The case of *joq* being used for both certainty and the mongoose in a single sentence (7) suggest that *joq* is not always about locational information. It is possible that audience members are expected to focus on the location of the mongoose, who was in an inappropriate place, rather than the mongoose as a character in the narrative, but in discussing this event with the writer, she made clear her horror of the events that the mongoose caused, rather than reviewing the location.

Another information marker, *nan*, is homophonous with a relativizer. When *nan* occurs without a subsequent dependent clause, it indicates information that is inferable from the context, which can include discourse context, general knowledge, or typical assumptions. *Nan* (inferrable) occurs in the third sentence, where the writer indicates that, as expected (*nan*), she and some others relocated themselves to see the kitten.

Information that is not specified in this narrative is also revealing. Although nearly every sentence contains some spatial information or at least a possible link to spatial information, the other people involved in the inclusive trial 'we' (*ketou*) are never identified. Additionally, the other kittens were never mentioned. There were three kittens, and the mongoose presumably took two of them. The writer only wrote about the one that had been killed and left behind. The narrative ends but does not conclude in a way that might be more satisfying to non-Hobongan readers. The Hobongan writer concluded the story with the last relevant location (school), rather than with the last relevant event for the people involved. Readers must infer that the burial probably took place once the students were back from school, an example of temporal underspecification. A return from school would have been redundant, because that location was already in the narrative.[6]

The Lexicon and Semantics

The status of lexical categories in Hobongan is open to some question. Like many Austronesian languages, lexical categories, and lexical items, can be somewhat flexible. Following Sawaki (2016) and Diessel (2019), I take lexical categories to be instantiations in use, rather than fixed properties of terms. However, there are distinctions between most verbal items and most nominal items, with morphological processes in places to switch between those two major categories (e.g., komon, a thought + verbalizing /N/ → ngomon, to think, in sentence 7).

Closed-class items appear to have several categories, including verbal markers for tense, aspect, and mood (*baqan*, in sentences 6 and 8), and verbal modifiers such as *mongala* (very, as in sentence 7)*;* prepositions (*piqang*, with, in sentence 4); pronouns (personal pronouns are exemplified throughout the narrative discourse); relativizers *nan* (that/which/what, as in sentence 8) and *nong* (when, sentences 1 and 3); morphological markers such as the verbalizing nasal N-; information markers such as the emphatic *nen* (sentence 6); and narragraph markers such as *lua* (then) and its co-occurring elements (sentences 3, 5, and 8).[7,8] Most of the closed-class items, such as those included here, are considered separate words by Hobongan speakers; the exception is the morphological verbalizer N-, which is considered part of the baseline lexical item.

All three of the cardinal-direction terms occur in this brief narrative: *be* (upriver), *ce* (perpendicular to river), and *baqe* (downriver). The fact that all three of these terms occurred and were used explicitly in almost fifty percent of the sentences indicates the importance of these terms to narrative organization in Hobongan. The directions that were already in place were also referred to pronominally at least once, as with *na* (emphatic, here emphasizing where the kitten was, sentence 4). Even when the river is not conveniently accessible, as in the location for this narrative (the nearest water was a stagnant irrigation ditch), the Hobongan monitor where they are in relation to the river and report their movements according to their direction relative to the river, as exemplified in sentences 1-3 and 8.

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[6] A reviewer asked to what extent these are the characteristics of written narratives from high school students vs oral narratives from older speakers. The patterns correlate well, allowing for individual variation. The two transliterated narratives that I have from older monolingual speakers are about trips that the tellers took. The narratives exist because movement happened, making the link between spatial information and narrative discourse even tighter than in the narrative included here. Many of the students' written narratives were also explicitly about travel, as opposed to embedding a narrative about a dead kitten within the frame of being at home vs at school.

[7] Narragraph is the term I am proposing to cover lexical items that do in spoken language what paragraph markers do in written language.

[8] Other categories probably exist, such as two-part negation, but are not analyzed here because they do not occur in the focal narrative and because this outline is not intended to be a comprehensive language description.

Hobongan has a limited inventory of prepositions, often marking general categories such as locative or instrumentive rather than having different prepositions for different types of locations or instruments. Typologically, most of the information that would be indicated by prepositions in English is included as semantic information in verbs, as with *masaq* (come in, enter, in sentence 3), making Hobongan a verb-framed language rather than a satellite-framed language (Talmy, 2000, vol 2:21-146).

Borrowings in Hobongan are both a lexical and a sociolinguistic phenomenon. As can be seen from the narrative, Hobongan has borrowed both open-class terms (*ngubur*, to bury, in sentence 9) and closed-class terms (*tapi*, but, in sentence 6). The Hobongan have noticed that there are more and more borrowings in the language, to the extent that older speakers sometimes complain that they cannot discuss their dreams with younger speakers (for the Hobongan, dreams are thought to be the factual activities of the non-physical aspect(s) of people). Despite the frustrations caused by borrowings, using borrowings from Bahasa Indonesian is a way for speakers to try to impress listeners with speakers' cosmopolitanism; listeners might be impressed, but they are also frequently annoyed by having to do that much work to understand what someone is saying and by the better-than-you aspects of choosing to use more borrowings. The writer of this narrative used two fairly common borrowings that speakers of any generation are likely to know and use. The writer is not trying to impress but is communicating clearly.

Syntactic Units and Sentences

What counts as a sentence in Hobongan is open to discussion, and when creating the written narratives, the students did discuss sentences and sentence boundaries: they treated the writing project as an oral project with a written outcome. One possibility that Searcy suggested was that sequential markers indicate sentences, such as the use of *lua* in sentences 3, 5, 8, or continuation markers, such as the conjunction *moq* in sentences 7 and 4. But such markers are not obligatory, nor used exclusively as sentence-break markers. Other students who participated in writing narratives used *moq* to join into single sentences what could have been split into multiple sentences.

I hypothesize that the students were making sentence breaks to indicate information that could have been indicated otherwise in speaking, such as with pauses. If the students were using sentence breaks transitionally between oral structures and written structures, those breaks/pauses would explain some of the variation across and within speakers/writers. Hobongan remains primarily oral, with the students' writing being the first attempts by Hobongan speakers to create written material in their own language. The question of what counts as a sentence and how to present information within a sentential format (e.g., capital letter, period at the end) does not arise when people are speaking. Presenting certain units of language as sentences for written purposes was a new consideration that was introduced in part by the task, in part by their prior training in writing Bahasa Indonesian (BI), and in part by what they have seen via the translation project, which are all sources of information that are outside what they typically do with language. The students' discussion, and preference for oral-accommodating flexibility in presenting sentences, was informative on the process and provides additional evidence that sentences are not the fundamental units of language in Hobongan.

Typologically, Hobongan clauses are Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), with relativizers preceding subordinate elements. Readers will note that I added 'to be' verbs where needed for idiomatic translation. Hobongan does have a copular verb (*sajaq*), but it rarely occurs, and occurs only for emphasis.

When tense is marked, it occurs as a word early in a sentence, and often early in a narrative, as *de* in sentence 1, which established past tense. Once given, tense is consistent until indicated otherwise. Tense occurs within a sentence, but applies across sentences, much as a discourse marker (and could be analyzed well as a discourse marker). Aspect markers, such as inchoative *lua* (then) in sentence 3, do not affect the overall pastness established by *de*.

The differing uses of aspect and modal markers indicate different syntactic effects within the lexicon, as well as different lexical categories. Aspect markers (*lua,* inchoative, as in sentence 3) precede the clauses to which they apply, and modal markers (*baqan,* sentences 6 and 8) follow the clauses to which they apply. In both instances of the use of *baqan*, the main verb in the clause introduced possibility or contingency, with the verbs being about ability and requesting. *Baqan* is therefore the subjunctive modal marker in Hobongan.

There are two main types of modifiers in Hobongan, those that are obligatorily adverbial, such as *mongala* (very) and *nyian* (negation), and those that are adjectival verbs, such as *oniq*, perhaps better thought of as to-be-small. In the case of *beong mang oniq icing* (want see be-small cat) in sentence 1, there are three verbs in a serial construction, followed by the direct object.[9] One major piece of evidence that adjectival verbs are verbs is that they can occur with serial verb constructions or as main verbs, while nouns or pronouns used attributively follow the nouns that they describe, as in *icing ketou* (lit. cat our: our cat).

In discussion about serial constructions, which are common and available for any open-class category, there appears to be no hierarchical ranking of the elements in the serial construction, but if a series of actions is described, the order of the verbs follows the order of the actions.

Clauses can be connected, as with moq (and, sentence 1) or with borrowing *tapi* (but) in sentence 6 or subordinated. Subordinate clauses can be marked as in sentence 7 (with *nan*) and sentence 2 (*nong*), or unmarked, which is less common. The markers for dependency precede the clauses that are subordinated. As with prepositions, subordinate markers indicate general categories of information (sequence in time or navigation, for example) rather than specific types of sequence (e.g. continuous or discrete sequence).

Morphology

Typologically, Hobongan is primarily an analytic language. Affixes are exclusively prefixes. The only prefix occurring in the given narrative is a generic nasal (*N-*) that makes a verb from a noun (see Blust, 2004, for a survey of this phenomenon in multiple Austronesian languages). For example, *ngobo* (to die) has the root *kobo* with the generic nasal forming the verb. The nasal assimilates to the place of articulation of the replaced consonant, not to voicing, as with the velar nasal replacing the velar plosive in *kobo → ngobo* shows. If the nasal is added to a word that begins with a vowel, the nasal is usually realized as a bilabial nasal (*anyam*, a design in weaving → *manyam*, to design or execute a woven design), although a few exceptions exist, in which a velar nasal is added to a word that begins with a vowel (*aba,* embarrassment → *ngaba,* to embarass). As can be seen from *ngubur* (from *kubur*, grave, sentence 9), borrowings follow the same morphological pattern.

The nasal marker makes transitive verbs. When nouns are used as verbal adjectives, the nominal form is retained, and the sentence structures indicates its use as an adjectival verb. For example, *kobo* (death, in sentence 6) occurs as a verb in other narratives, as an adjectival verb: be-dead.

Some verbs that are possible formations from nouns do not have an equivalent nominal form, such as *mang* (to see; possibly **pang/bang*, vision). And not all verbs have an initial nasal, indicating that they are verbs in the lexicon, as well (e.g., *beong* (want)). Likewise, verbs are not the only words that begin with nasals (e.g., *mitom*, iron)

There is some question and discussion of what should be considered free or bound morphemes. As noted, closed-class items that mark aspect, tense, or two-part negation are treated as free morphemes because they apply to clauses rather than with other morphemes. Fully lexicalized forms that appear to be multi-morphemic are treated as bound (e.g., *bocang-* (iterative roundness, such as for waves (*bocangkelok*, wavy) or somersaults (*bocangkuang*) occurs as the initial element in several lexical items but never independently), as are prefixes that are more synthetic, such as the generic nasal prefix. Between those two

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[9] 'The small cat' and 'the cat is small' would both be spoken the same way: *icing oniq*.

clear categories are some more questionable cases, such as the pronominal forms below, and reduplication.

A note on reduplication, because it is a common phenomenon in many Indonesian languages, but less so in Hobongan: Hobongan reduplication is productive only for emphasis or repetition, with the number of repetitions being an indicator of how much the repeated form is emphasized or occurring. Individual syllables can be reduplicated, meaning that parts of polysyllabic words or whole monosyllabic words can be reduplicated. It is also possible to reduplicate parts of syllables, as in the following example. There are a number of reduplicated forms that are in the process of lexicalization that occur primarily in fixed forms, such as *cian-ian* ('good-ood', more-less good). How those types of reduplications should be presented is a question that does not arise in spoken Hobongan. Presentations in writing vary across individuals, as do opinions about what makes a word in the language. In the narrative given, words are what the writer made them.

As can be seen throughout the narrative, case marking and plural marking are not available on nouns in Hobongan. Verbs do not change form for person, number, class, epistemic, etc. The most synthetic forms in the language are personal pronouns, as *ho, so,* and *ketou* illustrate.

The entire pronominal paradigm follows:

	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
First	*ku/kun*	*karo* (exc); *tuoq* (inc)	*ketou* (exc); *totou* (inc)	*kai* (exc); *to* (inc)
Second	*ko*	*kom duo*	*kom tou*	*kom*
Third Nonhuman	*ho* (nonhuman)	*doruo*	*hitou*	*hiro/do*
Third Human Spoken by Woman	*so* (feminine or masculine)			
Third Human Spoken by Man	anya (masculine); so (feminine)			

So is an interesting pronoun, in that it exhibits one of the few instances of an overtly gendered term in Hobongan. It can mean third-person-singular-feminine (she) as in the given narrative. It can also mean, depending on context, third-person-singular-masculine (he), when used by a woman. It is the only third-person-singular gendered pronoun used by women.

Third-person-singular pronouns are also the only instance of a grammaticalized animacy hierarchy in Hobongan.

The paradigm is not entirely complete with monomorphemic forms. Hobongan speakers use *duo/ruo* (two) and *tou* (three) to complete dual and trial forms. At this point, whether the numeric additives are separate words or parts of polymorphemic constructions is fluctuating, with different presentations appearing in different contexts.

Readers who are familiar with some other Austronesian languages, including Bahasa Indonesian, will notice the paucity of passive voice in the narrative. *Ture* in sentence 6 is likely an elision of to-ure (passive-marker do/make). *Ture* is an interesting case because of the elision. In most instances of passive voice in Hobongan, the prefix *to-* remains more recognizable (for example, *mori*, to throw away → *tomori*, to be thrown away).

Sound System and Orthography

Places of articulation or manners of articulation that are not included are omitted because they do not occur. Charts of phonemes, some produced sounds [in brackets], and written symbols (in wedges) follow. Capital 'V' represents any following vowel:

Consonants

	bilabial	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
plosive	p b	t d		k g	ʔ <q>
nasal	m	n	ɲ <ny>	ŋ <ng>	
trill/tap/flap		r <d> [ɾ]			
fricative	[β]	s			h
affricate			t͡ʃ <c> d͡ʒ <j>		
approximant		[w] <uV>	[j] <iV>		
lateral approximant		l			

In part because there are not many Hobongan speakers and in part because they travel routinely between villages, there are minimal dialectal differences in Hobongan. The tap/flap and trill appear to be in free variation among speakers. Some speakers use [l] where 'r/d' would be expected, again with free variation. Minimal pairs do exist for /l/ and /d/r/, such as *dabeng* (alongside) and *labeng* (wide), which establishes separate phonemes despite some variation in pronunciation. /S/ is one of the phonemes that is realized with extensive flexibility, sometimes being dental, lateralized, or palatal, thus taking up a lot of oral space that is not in use by other fricatives.

Vowels

	front	central	back
close	i i: <ii>		u u: <uu>
close-mid	e e: <ee>		o o: <oo>
open		a a: <aa>	

Hobongan has an extensive inventory of diphthongs and triphthongs, as exemplified by *nyian* (not), *lua* (inchoative), *ketou* (first person trial exclusive) in the narrative. Triphthongs are rarer but do occur, for example *duai* (relationship of people married to siblings), *leou* (continue indefinitely). Most of the logical possibilities for diphthongs exist, to the extent that I suspect that my data is incomplete where one or two of the possibilities do not occur. With vowel length being phonemic (for example, *tut*, stomach gas; *tuut*, a curse) in Hobongan, and the extensive use of diphthongs, a question has arisen with regard to whether the long vowels could be analyzed as same-vowel diphthongs. That question would require psycholinguistic experimentation to answer and remains a topic for future research.

Although nasality is not phonemic for vowels in Hobongan, the vowels in a word following any nasal in a word are nasalized: /ɲian/ (NEG) → [ɲĩãn]; /kanon/ → [kanõn] (animal).

Stress in Hobongan is irregular and unpredictable. There is a general preference to stress the first syllable of a bisyllabic word, but there are many exceptions. Hobongan does not appear to have syllable-weight stress, morae, or utterance-level rhythm patterns that would affect the stress patterns on any given word.

Hobongan is not a tonal language. As is common across the world's languages (e.g., Vassière, 2009; Fox, 2012, which includes an overview of literature that has proposed cross-linguistic intonation patterns), Hobongan has a generally falling intonation pattern for statements and a generally even intonation pattern to indicate that speakers have not completed an utterance. Questions may be asked via syntactic means with interrogative pronouns and with question-closing markers, the markers of which receive a rising intonation, or with a generally rising intonation pattern on a statement. Because no questions occurred in the narrative selected for description here, I leave analysis of question forms to a more thorough description of the language.

Syllable structures include the following: V, VC, CV, CVC, where the V can be a lengthened vowel, diphthong, or triphthong. Each of these syllable types can be combined with other syllable types, although in the case of a single-vowel syllable, combining it with another single vowel would not occur across syllable boundaries. Syllables that end in consonants can therefore abut other syllables that begin with consonants, allowing for consonant combinations across syllable boundaries, such as [kang.ha.kit] (to skip or run). Hobongan does not have single-syllable consonant clusters phonemically, but /o/ in unstressed syllables is often reduced to the point of disappearing when it occurs before an approximant: /ko.laˈput/ (type of hard wood) → [klaˈput].

Prefixes that are consonants often assimilate to the place-of-articulation of the first sound of a free morpheme to which they attach. The verb-from-noun prefix, N- is a typical example: *kobo* (death) + N- →

ngobo (to kill). If a free morpheme begins with a vowel, the consonantal prefix appears as itself. If a prefix is syllabic, ending in a vowel, the prefix does not assimilate.

At this point, the writing system for Hobongan is mostly phonemic. Developing an orthography for the Hobongan language has been an ongoing process that initially started in the 1970s when the first group of missionaries who worked with the Hobongan in the Hobongan language began living with them. A notable exception is that Searcy has been using 'd' word-initially and 'r' word-medially to represent the same phoneme, which is variably produced as a trill or a tap/flap. The main recent change to the orthographic system is to use a 'q' for the glottal plosive rather than an apostrophe or single quote mark. That change was made because Hobongan readers did not work with the mark of punctuation as if it were a letter, despite its being used to represent a phonemic sound as other letters do. In addition, the mark's inconvenience when texting meant that Hobongan language users were routinely substituting other letters, usually 'k', for the glottal plosive, or omitting any representation at all for the glottal plosive, despite the occasional confusion that such uses could cause.

The approximants are not represented as consonants in the Hobongan orthography, for the most part, being represented instead as vowel glides. Some borrowed words that the Hobongan encountered first in religious texts written in Bahasa Indonesian, primarily names, do use other letters that are not needed for written Hobongan, such as *Yesus* (Jesus) and *Yohanes* (John) rather than Iesus or Iohanes.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have presented an outline of a language description based on a narrative discourse. With Longacre (1983/1996), I begin from the idea that language is language when in context and therefore began with a narrative discourse as the basis for description. Unlike Longacre and others, I have taken genre and elements of discourse to be necessary components of a language description, rather than assuming universality of some ways of managing and organizing discourse components. I suggested that determining which unit of language is fundamental to any given language is part of language description.

I noted that in the selected narrative, the writer presented background information in subordinated structures and framed the narrative spatially, locating narrative events between two locations. The writer also used specific lexical items, including cardinal directions and pronominal reference to cardinal directions, to specify those locations. By contrast, character and temporal information were less specified. These patterns are crucial in making a discourse a Hobongan discourse.

From the selected narrative, I also described major structures in the lexicon, syntax, morphology, and the sound system. Hobongan exhibits patterns that are common in Austronesian languages across the more traditional domains of linguistic inquiry, including having some flexibility in lexical category, often morphologically indicated, having SVO word order in clauses like other transitive-type languages, and having a basic five-vowel system with extensions from the main five. Unlike many other Austronesian languages, including Bahasa Indonesian, Hobongan speakers make minimal use of reduplication and passive voice.

Because this article is based on a single narrative discourse, it is not a comprehensive description, and some language phenomena have been omitted from this article. Work on a more thorough description, based on more narrative discourses and other types of discourses, remains in progress.

It is hoped that this approach to organizing linguistic descriptions will inspire other linguists not only to analyze discourse structures in more of the world's languages but also to consider ways in which language speakers' language priorities can modify the organization of linguistic descriptions to be more descriptive.

Word List: Leipzig-Jakarta
Hobongan words are written in the Hobongan orthographic system, not in IPA symbols.

Because Hobongan is a verb-framed language rather than a satellite-framed language (Talmy, 2000), it often lacks a single verb form that covers broad semantic domains (go, carry), instead having multiple forms that cover various portions of the semantic domain (e.g., carry in one's hands, carry on one's back, carry overhead, etc.). I have included many of the options, but the list should not be taken to be comprehensive or exhaustive.

Verbs that are potentially deictic and potentially part of the following list, such as *naka* (to go/come down), are often more about the direction of the river than about the direction of motion toward or away from a deictic origo (extrinsic-framing vs subjective-framing) (Bühler 1934/1990). A person who travels on the river is traveling upriver or downriver or across the river, whether that person comes or goes relative to the origo. The direction of the river provides an objective frame of reference that makes some of these terms non-deictics. I have not distinguished consistently between deictic elements and non-deictic elements; this is another area for future research.

English	Hobongan
fire	ikon
nose	urung
to go	lohot (to go down or back); mo (to go around); noresek (to go along an edge); nyokalo (to go around); nyoleong (to go around to avoid going through); nyoolo (to go along in water along the shore); poribung (to go around); purip/murip (to go up); taban/naban (to go along); bokobe (to go upriver); bokobaqe (to go downriver together); bokotohon (to go downriver); botohon (to go downriver); bokosa (to go toward)
water	taang
mouth	baba
tongue	ca
blood	daha
bone	tuqang
2nd.sg pronoun	ko
root	dariq/lariq

to come	habe (to come); bokohuriq (to come upriver); habe-habe (to come closer); kat/ngakat (to come suddenly or promptly); lai (to come across, as in movement across, not discovery); luhu (to come to, find); masaq (to come in); mosut (to come over); pusit (to come out)
breast	tusun
rain	hama
1st.sg pronoun	ku
name	nala
louse	kutu
wing	ilat
flesh/meat	usin
arm/hand	longon
fly	dorakang
night	maam
ear	kabeng
neck	tungok (specifically, the back of the neck); sangan (throat, inside the neck)
far	komoqoco
to do/make	ure
house	late (house with dirt floor); lobu (permanent house)
stone/rock	batu
bitter	paqip
to say	neho
tooth	tuko
hair	buq
big	hiuq
one	ci, ciq (number)

who?	heq
3rd.sg pronoun	anya (masc); so (fem); ho (non-human)
hit/beat	mabaq
leg/foot	hakot (foot); boti (leg, specifically the lower leg/calf)
horn	uhong
this	nin
fish	cien
yesterday	lo
to drink	nyotet
black	moqotom
navel	pusot (also placenta)
to stand	nokocop
to bite	mongot
back	taraq
wind	sorit
smoke	tuki
what?	hono/honon
child (kin term)	usit
egg	toa
to give	kan (to give); kolabun (to give some of one's spiritual power); mitak (to give a little bit from a larger portion); ngapaq (to give food to a bride and groom)
new	tongane
to burn (intransitive)	nutung
not	nyian
good	cian
to know	toqo

knee	bohokup
sand	lokori
to laugh	koraho
to hear	cohing
soil	tana
leaf	daqun
red	toboriq
liver	ate
to hide	sangkurem (to hide); bosangkurem (to hide completely); sokurem (to hide something); topikot (to hide behind)
skin/hide	katau
to suck	nguhom (to suck); nyinat (to suck through a straw); tongapet (to suck on for flavor or comfort); ngoluop (to suck on a seed)
to carry	bopuat (to carry more than one item or to carry more than once); bosoqon (to carry on shoulders); keetang (to carry in the hand); namung (to carry under an arm); napeng (to carry with the hands); ngatong (to carry by means of a handle); ngiang (to carry on the back); ngujung (to carry overhead); ngukun (to carry in the mouth, as a cat does); nuqang (to carry bones for burial); nyahatang (to carry in the hands while walking); nyoqon (to carry on the shoulder); sanglai (to carry between two people)
and	moq
heavy	bahat
to take	itet (to take); icu (to take to); naban (to take along); naq (to take from)
old	maum (old thing); tahakan (old person)
to eat	kuman
thigh	paqan
thick	kape
long	longeang
to blow	hituq (to blow); nguhubong (to blow on a horn); nyoput (to blow darts);

wood	kiu
to run	nokacung
to fall	lubit
eye	maton
ash	abu
tail	ikei
dog	asu
to cry/weep	nangi (to cry); botangi (to cry repeatedly); salap (to cry to be taken along); tosekon (to cry/weep)
to tie	mobot/obot (to tie); bopobot (to tie up many things); moton (to tie together); muhuq (to tie into bundles); ngaput (to tie closed); nobuku (to tie into small bundles); nosori (to tie so that the knot can be pulled loose); nyhoqong (to tie around a hat)
to see	mang
sweet	mi
rope	toqu; obot
shade/shadow	among (also reflection)
bird	asiq
salt	sio
small	iq
wide	daba; labung
star	hojabuq
in	nong (locative generally)
hard	dohon
to crush/grind	ngere (to grind); nahaban (to crush a root, especially to appease spirits); ngirok (to grind teeth)

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