

Foreword:
Charting Austronesian Linguistics

Spoken by at least 300 million speakers (about 4% of the world population), the Austronesian language family includes languages in Taiwan and the Philippines to the north, and Malaysia and the Indonesian archipelago to the south; its geography stretches from Madagascar to the west and to Easter Island to the east. Since the early 19th century, these languages have been the focus of historical and comparative research, offering insights into human adaptability and cultural expression.

This special issue of *Foreign Language Studies*, guest edited by Siaw-Fong Chung and Michael Tanangkingsing, presents innovative research that advances our understanding of Austronesian linguistics. The works in this collection bring to light recent developments in these languages, which highlight their broad relevance to linguistic theory and typology.

The first paper examines the phonetic and perceptual features of onomatopoeia in Cebuano, a language spoken in the Philippines. Focusing on “click” and “knock” sounds, the study investigates how native speakers produce and interpret these forms using acoustic analysis and perceptual testing. It reveals how linguistic constraints and context shape sound-symbolic expression. A comparison with Spanish speakers sheds light on both universal and language-specific aspects of onomatopoeia, enriching our understanding of how phonetics and perception influence language use.

The second paper investigates causative morphology in Paiwan, an Austronesian language spoken in Taiwan. Drawing from over 10,000 examples, the study analyzes how the affixes *pa-Ø*, *pa-ka*, and *pa-pe* mark different types of causation. Using logistic regression, it shows that *pa-Ø* often signals direct causation with inanimate agents, *pa-ka* marks indirect causation involving animate agents or intervening factors, and *pa-pe* bridges the two. Cross-linguistic comparisons with Dutch and Mandarin further illuminate how languages structure causative meaning. This study also demonstrates the value of corpus-based research in documenting and analyzing lesser-studied languages.

The third is a research note discussing broader issues of language endangerment and revitalization with a focus on Taiwan's indigenous languages. It reviews current strategies such as immersion preschools, bilingual education, and master-apprentice models, pointing out the lack of quantitative evaluation. The note emphasizes the need for data-driven approaches to assess the impact of key factors like teacher training, instructional time, and community involvement. It raises important questions about policy and practice that affect language preservation in Taiwan and other Austronesian-speaking regions.

Together, these contributions reflect the vitality and interdisciplinary scope of Austronesian linguistics. From phonetic analysis and corpus methods to policy-oriented inquiry, this issue illustrates how diverse approaches can converge to deepen our understanding of language structure, use, and sustainability.

As one of the world's largest language families, Austronesian languages preserve vast stores of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Studying them not only enriches linguistic theory but also fosters respect for the communities that sustain them. Supporting documentation and revitalization efforts helps protect an essential part of our shared human heritage.

We thank all the contributors to this special issue for their thoughtful and rigorous work. Their research opens new directions for Austronesian linguistics and invites further exploration. We encourage readers to engage with this collection—from Cebuano sound symbolism and Paiwan causatives to the pressing questions of revitalization—and to appreciate the many ways these languages contribute to the study of language and life.

Special Issue Editors,

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