A Brief Linguistic Outline of the Hobongan Language
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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 timely manner, I have prepared this shorter outline.

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 make possible potential benefits to the community of language users. 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, 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 (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

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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.

some level of conversion to one of the six government-recognized religions, etc.). In order to gain minority rights, the Hobongan must prove that they are who they say they are, and documenting language, oral literatures, and culture are parts of that proof.

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: the Hobongan take narrative discourses to be the fundamental units of language and consider subunits when circumstances require (see sections on those subunits for more information).[2]

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 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).

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.

Hobongan Language

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[2]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).

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

What counts as a narrative discourse in Hobongan is what the Hobongan take to be a narrative discourse. The elements of those narratives include the elements of what would count as a narrative discourse in any language (see Perkins 2009 for a review of the factors involved in comprising a narrative and Perkins 2017 for a cross-linguistic comparison of prioritizations of uses of narrative elements in various languages): narrative discourses must include elements of causality, character, temporality, and spatiality, broadly construed so as to facilitate descriptive considerations of those elements rather than erecting barriers to the definition.

In Hobongan narrative discourse, spatial information (especially locational and navigational information) is primary: spatial information is the sine qua non for narrative discourse. 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 provides some possibilities and eliminates others, and in Hobongan discourse, the possibilities of place are of fundamental importance.

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. My main goal with that elicitation was to access 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.

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[3] Again, each element should be broadly construed. I am not an expert on the philosophical aspects of causality, 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.

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	upstream

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.

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.nonhuman

‘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.nonhuman	again	with	Mola

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

5.

then FOC Lelo say 3rd.sg.nonhuman die to.cause animal

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

6.

A	*nyian*	*toqo*	*ho*	*kanon*	*mon*	*baqan*	*tapi*	*ho*
One	NEG	able	3rd.sg.nonhuman	animal	any	modal	but (BI)	3rd.sg.nonhuman

sajaq	*kobo*	*ture*	*kanon*	*nen.*
to.be	death	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	that	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	that	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 (Indo)	3rd.sg.nonhuman	said	3rd.sg.fem

‘So she wouldn’t bury the kitten yet she said.’

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. The reliably available distinction is between closed-class items such as

prepositions, cardinal directions, discourse and information markers, verb-complex markers such as aspectual markers, modals, etc., and open-class items such as verbs and nouns.

Closed-class items appear to have several categories, including verbal markers for tense, aspect, mood verbal modifiers such as *mongala;* prepositions; pronouns of all of the usual kinds (interrogative, relative, personal, etc.); morphological markers; information markers; narragraph markers[4]. There are also intrasentential markers such as the two-part negative, two-part interrogative, and two-part descriptor, none of which occur in the narrative provided. Where these two-part markers occur, the initiating element precedes the clause to which they apply, and the second part occurs at the end of the clause.

Open-class items are the most flexible for lexical category. They are open class not only for semantic content but also for lexical category. Verbs can be used as nouns, nouns can be used as verbs, and what would be considered adjectives in English are more effectively analyzed as adjectival verbs. Semantic content exists in the lexicon, and lexical category is established once words appear in syntactic units.

Most of the closed-class items, such as temporal (e.g., *de* in sentence 1), aspectual (*lua* throughout, indicating completed action), and modal markers (such as *baqan* in sentence 8) are considered to be separate words in Hobongan.

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 instrumentation. Typologically, most of the information that would be indicated by prepositions in English is included as semantic information in verbs, making Hobongan a verb-framed language rather than a satellite-framed language (Talmy, 2000, vol 2:21-146).

Direction markers for the Hobongan cardinal directions appear frequently in narratives, including in this narrative. The Hobongan cardinal directions are up-river (*be*), perpendicular-to-river (*ce*), down-river (*baqe*). 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, 8-9.

Elements of Hobongan Discourse

Titling the narratives that the students provided was a decision that the students made themselves, as they were engaged in writing. Each student provided more than one narrative, and

[4] The term I am proposing to cover lexical items that do in spoken language what paragraph markers do in written language.

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.

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 7/9 sentences in this narrative. According to native 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 that follows them (see below), indicating that focus can be directed to other elements of the narrative, such as the mongoose. 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 native-speaker 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 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.

With regard to *joq* scoping over information about certainty, it is possible that the location where the mongoose was relevantly active should be attended to, or it is possible that there is a location where mental states are taken to be (such as the head or brain for speakers of North American English). More likely, given the speaker's horror, the focus is intended for the certainty, much like establishing a case beyond reasonable doubt.

Another information marker, *nan*, is homophonous with a relative pronoun. 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* occurs in this type of use in the third sentence, where the writer indicates that, as expected (*nan*), she and some others relocated themselves to see the kitten. Hobongan also has markers for new information (*mokoq*) and directly stated information (*de/deen*) that did not occur in this narrative.

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. A return from school would have been redundant, because that location was already in the narrative. So the Hobongan conclusion was possible without belaboring the spatial information.

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. 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. As the students discussed where to make sentences, they rejected all of the usual constraints and decided that sentence breaks were up to individual writers.

In general, it seems that sentences must contain at least an implied subject and an implied verb, but any element that is already available in the universe of discourse may be omitted, leaving some sentences-presented-as-sentences that have only closed-class items such as information markers, aspect markers, modal markers, etc. These kinds of sentences do not occur frequently, and none appeared in this narrative.

It should be recalled that 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. The students took an oral-language approach to working with sentences: if it were something they would say, but not a whole narrative, it could be a sentence, and different speakers have different styles. 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, all sources of information that are outside what they typically do with language. Whether it is possible to introduce literacy to speakers of an oral language without introducing at least some prescriptive-type norms remains an open question. In any case, 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 is Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), with syntactic heads such as *joq* preceding subordinate elements. Readers will note that I added 'to be' verbs where needed for idiomatic translation. Hobongan does have a 'be' 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 *lua* 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. Aspect markers (*lua*) precede the clauses to which they apply, and modal markers (*bajaq*) follow the clauses to which they apply. In both instances of the use of *bajaq*, the main verb in the clause introduced the possibility of contingency, with the verbs being about ability and requesting. *Bajaq* 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 small cat) in sentence 1, there are three verbs in a serial construction, followed by the direct object. 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 *tapi* 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. For example, *ngobo* (to die) has the root *kobo* with the generic nasal forming the verb.

The marker is often conventional but not required. For example, *kobo* (death, in sentence 6) occurs as a verb in other narratives.

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 likely 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 or somersaults) 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 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. 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.

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.

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	ho (nonhuman) so (feminine, masculine when used by women) anya (masculine used by men)	doruo	hitou	hiro/do

The paradigm is not entirely complete with monomorphemic forms. The dual and trial forms have been completed with the addition of duo/ruo (two) and tou (three) to the plural forms or modified forms of the plurals. 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.

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 parentheses) 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	ɳ (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. Each of the available phonemes is variously realized depending on speakers’ dentition and use of betel nuts.

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*, *lua*, *ketou*. 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 exist. Triphthongs are rarer but do occur. With vowel length being phonemic 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: /ŋian/ (NEG) → [ŋ̃ãn]; /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, 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.

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.la.ˈput/ (type of hard wood) → [kla.ˈput].

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.

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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