

## 1. Introduction to Kelabit

- ❖ Kelabit is a **Western Austronesian** language of Northern Sarawak.
- ❖ It is a member of the **Apad Uat** subgroup that also includes Lun Bawang/Lundayeh, Sa'ban and Tring (Kroeger 1998)
- ❖ Transitional between **Philippine-type** languages with case marking and **Indonesian-type** languages without (Clayre 2005, Hemmings 2015)
- ❖ Like other Western Austronesian languages, Kelabit is characterised by a system of **symmetrical voice** alternations

AV	A = subject	U = object
UV	U = subject	A = object

## 2. Kelabit Pronouns

- ❖ Basic NOM pronouns demonstrate **singular, dual, trial** and **plural** number distinctions; **inclusive** and **exclusive** oppositions; and an **impersonal** pronoun *narih*
- ❖ There is a reduced set of **variant pronouns** in 1SG, 2SG, 3SG and 3PL which appear to be cognate with **GEN pronouns** in the more conservative Philippine-type languages.
- ❖ However, unlike Philippine-type languages, GEN pronouns are not the only way of marking **actors in non-AV contexts** – NOM pronouns can also be used...
- ❖ This leads to the question of **what motivates the differential use** of NOM or GEN in these contexts and what **differences in interpretation** emerge?

## What determines Differential Actor Marking in the Kelabit pronominal system?



	NOM	GEN
1SG	uuh	kuh
2SG	iko	muh
3SG	ieh	neh
3PL	ideh	deh

## 3. DOM and Information Structure

- ❖ Differential marking is known to correlate with both **semantic features** and **information structure** (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011)
- ❖ Out of context, **GEN pronouns** are favoured as a means of expressing actors in UV contexts.
- ❖ They typically represent **continuing topics** – which could be considered the expected function of pronouns.
- ❖ In contrast, where the pronoun represents **focus** information or a **contrastive topic**, NOM pronouns are preferred.
- ❖ This is common in **differential subject marking** (Fauconnier 2011)

GEN	expected	A = continuing topic
NOM	unexpected	A = focus/contrast

- ❖ Nb. In DSM often **ERG** marks focused actors not NOM. Does the difference relate to the fact that the **actor is an object** in Kelabit UV?

## 4. Conclusion

- ❖ The loss of case-marking in Western Austronesian develops through a stage where case has a **differential function**.
- ❖ Kelabit supports the idea that differential marking may indicate **unexpected mappings** of functions to information structure roles.
- ❖ GEN signals a **topical actor**, whilst NOM signals a **focus actor** - perhaps this reflects the different discourse functions of actors and objects?