

(L) Is This Problem Intelligible? (1/6) [Solution]

Background and Notes

First, let's learn a little more about Hawu and Dhao history and culture. It's nice to get some broader context, and it also shows respect for the people who speak and who have historically spoken the languages presented in this problem.

Today the majority of Hawu people practice Protestant Christianity, but until the 1970s most of the Hawu people maintained their ancestral religion, Jingi Tiu, and traditional ways of life. In pre-colonial times, the Hawu people maintained six religio-political domains on the island of Hawu (Savu), including the domain of Seba (after which the modern-day Seba, mentioned in the problem, is named). Each domain had a Council of Priests (of Jingi Tiu). These domains were reorganized during and after the colonial era until a 2001 autonomy law, which the East Nusa Tenggara province of Indonesia used to create new districts that largely reflected the structure of the ancient domains. The Hawu people traditionally transmitted their knowledge orally in a number of ways, for example by naming places in remembrance of key events in Hawu history and naming people by the roles they played in society. The Hawu remember long genealogies over tens of generations that have links at certain stages to the various parts of Hawu island. They recognize two matrilineal lines descended from two sisters as well as patrilineal descent groups and lineages. These genealogies structure Hawu society and are recited during ritual performances; for example, at funerals the reciting of the departed's genealogy memorializes the connection of the departed to his or her ancestors.

Source: Duggan, G. (2009). The Genealogical Model of Savu, Eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2, 163–177. LIPI / KITLV Press. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120302193735/http://www.kitlv-journals.nl/index.php/jissh/article/viewFile/URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-100162/8444>

The Dhao people say their language and culture is similar to that of Hawu island. They recount that the first settlers of their island were three people named Rika, Jote, and Pesa Kèli. Pesa Kèli came from the island of Hawu and brought the indigo plant, dhao, from which Dhao (Ndao) island and the Dhao people get their names. (The Hawu also tell a version of this history.) Traditionally, many Dhao men practiced gold- and silversmithing, traveling around the region to sell their creations. Today, most Dhao men have shifted away from smithing to fishing and local business activities. Women traditionally wove fabrics dyed with a technique known as ikat and are still productive in ikat weaving today. They leave their homes to sell their products, to seek orders for new weavings, or to collect debts from their customers. Thousands of jewels and ikats are produced each year and are traded with neighboring islands. The men tend to leave the island during the dry season to sell jewelry and other products of smithing and the ikat weaving products made by the women. In contrast to the Hawu, the Dhao trace their descent only patrilineally.

Source: Balukh, J. I. (2020). *A grammar of Dhao: An endangered Austronesian language in Eastern Indonesia*. <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2967898/view>



(L) Is This Problem Intelligible? (2/6) [Solution]

Explanation of Grammar

Sound correspondences (identified using the table at the beginning of the problem):

Hawu	Dhao
h	s
u	u
p	p (but bh in subha)
a	a
r	r
d'	d
e	a
b'	b
è	è
i	i (but e in dedha)
d	dh
n	n
t	t
l	l
o	o/u
j'	j'

Using the differences between Hawu and Dhao shown in the table above, we can figure out which sentences in **L1** are in Hawu and which are in Dhao. For example, **s** is a sound unique to Dhao, so any sentence with an **s** will be in Dhao. Then we can match the six sentences in Hawu and the six sentences in Dhao to their translations and analyze the grammar.

Grammatical descriptions of Hawu and Dhao are in the table on the next page. Each grammar has been simplified according to the data presented in this problem.



(L) Is This Problem Intelligible? (3/6) [Solution]

Hawu grammar	Dhao grammar
<p><u>word order:</u> either Verb (Object) Subject (Prepositional Phrase) or V S (O) (PP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in this problem, pronoun objects were only used in VOS order <p><u>tense/aspect/mood:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ta V = non-past tense; otherwise the default interpretation is past tense - ke in this problem always appears immediately following ta V - V ... teruu = keep Ving, continue to V - b'ole V = don't V <p><u>verbs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pe-V = to cause to V (so we call pe- a <i>causative</i> prefix) - this changes an intransitive verb to transitive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - so, hewina = remember, pehewina = remind - huti = spill, pehuti = spill (something) (this was tricky!) <p><u>pronouns:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - noo = she (or he), 3SG - roo = they, 3PL <p><u>noun phrases:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ne marks the object of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb (this is called <i>absolutive case</i>) - ne cannot be used with pronouns, unlike ri - ri marks the subject of a transitive verb (this is called <i>ergative case</i>) - if there is a possessor, order is Possessed Possessor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - so, ngidi dahi, lit. <i>edge sea</i> = the edge of the sea <p><u>prepositional phrases:</u></p> <p>the order is Preposition NounPhrase</p>	<p><u>word order:</u> S V (O) (PP) only</p> <p><u>tense/aspect/mood:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no visible tense-marking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - V ... taruu = keep Ving, continue to V - baku V = don't V <p><u>verbs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pa-V = to cause to V <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analogous to Hawu - another example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> puru = descend, papuru = lower (something) <p><u>pronouns:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - na = she (or he), 3SG - ra = they, 3PL <p><u>noun phrases:</u></p> <p>no visible case-marking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if there is a possessor, order is Possessed Possessor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - so, kètu na, lit. <i>head 3SG</i> = her head <p><u>prepositional phrases:</u></p> <p>the order is Preposition NounPhrase</p> <p>Note: in Dhao, the word meaning <i>if</i> is ladhe, the same as the word ladhe, meaning <i>see</i>. This illustrates the process known as <i>syntactic change</i>. The word ladhe was probably originally just a verb, but speakers reinterpreted it to also mean <i>if</i> and to serve a different grammatical function.</p>



(L) Is This Problem Intelligible? (4/6) [Solution]

Answers to Exercises

L1.

1. Dhao, f
2. Hawu, d
3. Dhao, b
4. Dhao, e
5. Hawu, a
6. Hawu, f
7. Dhao, d
8. Dhao, a
9. Hawu, e
10. Hawu, c
11. Hawu, b
12. Dhao, c

<i>Reorganized for reference:</i>	5. Ta nèru ke noo oro ngidi dahi.	Hawu
	8. Na kako madhutu sebhe dhasi.	Dhao
	a. She is walking along the edge of the sea.	
	11. Ta nèru ke roo teruu la Hèb'a.	Hawu
	3. Ra kako taruu asa Sèba.	Dhao
	b. They keep walking to Seba.	
	10. Ta ngède ke ri roo ne kètu noo.	Hawu
	12. Ra ladhe kètu na.	Dhao
	c. They see her head.	
	2. Pehewina noo ri roo.	Hawu
	7. Ra pasanède na.	Dhao
	d. They reminded her.	
	9. Ki ta hewina ke ne ina noo, b'ole pekèd'i.	Hawu
	4. Ladhe ina na sanède, baku pakèdi.	Dhao
	e. If her mother remembers, don't leave.	
	6. Huti ne èi.	Hawu
	1. Èi suti.	Dhao
	f. The water spilled.	



(L) Is This Problem Intelligible? (5/6) [Solution]

L2.

- a. **Ra pasanède ina.** (Dhao)
They reminded the mother.
- b. **Ki ta pedutu ke roo ri ina noo, ta ngède ke noo ri roo.** (Hawu)
If her mother follows them, they see her.
- c. **Pehewina roo ri noo.** (Hawu)
She reminded them.
- d. **Ladhe na puru, na ladhe sebhe.** (Dhao)
If she descends, she sees the edge.
- e. **B'ole bèj'i.** (Hawu)
Don't sleep/lie down.

Each translation received a score based on (1) translations of words and phrases and (2) syntax.

Accepted variations:

Any variation in English verb tense was accepted.

In (a), “mother” and “a mother” were accepted in place of “the mother.”

In (d), “beach” and “shore” were accepted in place of “edge.”

In (d), “goes down” and “comes down” were accepted in place of “descends.”

L3.

- a. Don't walk to the sea.
Hawu: **B'ole nèru la dahi.**
Dhao: **Baku kako asa dhasi.**
- b. They keep seeing their mother.
Hawu: **Ta ngède ke ri roo teruu ne ina roo.**
Dhao: **Ra ladhe taruu ina ra.**
- c. She spilled the water.
Hawu: **Pehuti ri noo ne èi.**
Dhao: **Na pasuti èi.**

Each translation received a score based on (1) translations of words and phrases and (2) syntax.

Accepted variations:

In (b) and (c), the Hawu NPs and continuative aspect marker *teruu* could be permuted with respect to one another (additionally, one NP could move up before *ke*).

In (b), the Dhao NP *ina ra* and continuative aspect marker *taruu* could be permuted with respect to one another.

L4. madhutu (found in **madhutu sebhe dhasi**, lit. “following the edge of the sea”)

Note: ***padhutu** was given half-credit as it is the predicted word based on the Hawu word. ***kaku madhutu** was given half-credit.



(L) Is This Problem Intelligible? (6/6) [Solution]

L5. Responses received the appropriate score for mentioning strong/weak areas of evidence regardless of whether they were arguing for or against mutual intelligibility. For example, if a response argued that Hawu and Dhao were mutually intelligible, but acknowledged that there were significant differences in word order, this was scored the same (all else equal) as a response arguing that the differences in word order were enough to make Hawu and Dhao not mutually intelligible.

Responses were graded for the ideas presented, not the vocabulary they used. Responses were scored higher for depth of explanation and nuance (for example, acknowledging opposing evidence).

Strong areas of evidence **against mutual intelligibility** included:

- major differences in vocabulary (e.g. there are many non-cognate words)
- word order (e.g. Hawu is verb-initial)
- alignment (e.g. Hawu is ergative)
- Hawu marks agents and objects while Dhao relies on word order
- high degree of difficulty in conversion/translation between languages (as encountered when solving the problem!)

Weak areas of evidence **against mutual intelligibility** included:

- minor differences in vocabulary (e.g. regular sound correspondences with very different sounds)
- isolated examples of grammatical difference
- vague appeals to “grammatical differences” without further explanation

Weak areas of evidence **for mutual intelligibility** included:

- regular sound correspondences (with similar sounds) and shared vocabulary (e.g. pronouns)
- some degree of similarity in sentence structure

The important part was to briefly explain the relevant evidence and recognize which evidence might be more persuasive. For example, it is relevant that the pronouns are similar, but it is also relevant, and more persuasive, that the majority of the words used in the sentences in the problem are extremely different between Hawu and Dhao. As shown above, the strongest evidence suggests that Hawu and Dhao would *not* be very mutually intelligible.

This prediction seems to hold true in the real world. In a 2006 conference paper, Charles Grimes writes that he hasn't met a Hawu speaker who claimed to understand Dhao beyond a few words, and only two Dhao speakers claimed to understand Hawu -- one's mother was a Hawu speaker, and the other had to acquire Hawu to teach on the island of Hawu. At a workshop to train people to write using a computer, "it was immediately obvious to [the Hawu and Dhao speakers] that their languages had more similarities with each other than with other languages around. But they all found it impossible to understand each other in both oral communication and in written form" (p. 18).

He concludes: "How information is strung together in sentences is simply too different" (p. 18).

