

Tangsa-Nocte, also known as North Patkaian (Glottolog: kony1249) is a language group within Tibeto-Burman spoken along the northern end of the India-Myanmar border. There are approximately 80 language varieties within the group, with considerable differences in phonology and morphosyntax. A common phoneme in the languages is reconstructed as *r, and in most varieties, the realisation of the phoneme /r/ is an alveolar trill. In many varieties, it occurs both as the onset and the coda of the syllable. For example, in 'sky' *raŋ or 'fire' *βar. In order to ensure the trill in the onset position, the realisation of <r> often involves a noticeably late voice onset time (VOT), resulting in something more like [r̩raŋ] as the realisation. In light of recent efforts at orthography development among different communities speaking Tangsa-Nocte varieties, many community members have begun to analyse their languages phonology intently in order to determine the best way to develop their spelling systems. In nearly all cases, this is done without training in phonology nor a more academically focused interpretation of the languages' phonemic distinctions. Additionally, in many cases such efforts come from an interpretation of the Latin script as being much more restricted to English phonology, being the primary language to which communities are exposed which uses that script. Thus, great effort is made by speakers to reconfigure the letters of the English alphabet to cover both phonemic and phonetic realisations. This at times leads to transcriptions of onset /r/ as <hr>. This paper investigates the phonetic realisation of reflexes of *r in onset and coda position in multiple Tangsa-Nocte varieties in order to determine the degree to which VOT is delayed across those varieties. It also investigated three romanisation systems employed by speakers of three different varieties to determine how a delayed VOT may impact efforts at orthography development.

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Title

Phonetic realisation of <r> in Tangsa-Nocte varieties and the influence of community interpretations in orthography development