Tone in Binumarien Loans: Incorporating Tok Pisin Words in a Kainantu (Papuan) Tonal System
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This abstract explores the adoption of Tok Pisin loanwords (of English origin) into the Binumarien language. Binumarien is characterized by its tonal system and the absence of lexical stress. In contrast, Tok Pisin is a non-tonal language presumed to have word stress. This study investigates how Binumarien assigns tone to Tok Pisin loanwords, emphasising the role of syllable structure rather than stress, which is remarkable considering the minor influence of syllable structure on tone in other Binumarien words.

Binumarien is spoken by approximately 1200 people in the Eastern Highland Province, Papua New Guinea. Binumarien features a two-level system, comprising L (low) and H (high) tones. Tones are assigned at the mora level, where moras can be classified as L, H, or toneless. Toneless segments are realized as either L or H, depending on the surrounding context. Binumarien does not seem to exhibit lexical stress (van Dasselaar, 2019). While certain syllable structures in Binumarien words appear to align with specific tonal patterns, my ongoing analysis suggests no one-on-one correspondence. Moreover, there appears to be no link between metricality and tone.

Previous research by Wurm (1985) on Eastern Highlands Tok Pisin suggests that Tok Pisin exhibits lexical stress, primarily marked by higher pitch. Stress typically falls on the first syllable, but there are exceptions. Wurm also notes that the distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables in Tok Pisin is less prominent compared to English. He also observes that considerable variation exists depending on region and familiarity with English. Moreover, Faraclas (1989), who examined Tok Pisin stress in East Sepik, found variations based on the speaker's gender but surprisingly not on the substrate language.

The Tok Pisin loanwords are from a recently collected corpus and originate from English. The analysis compares the stress and syllable structure of these loanwords in Tok Pisin with their tonal assignment in Binumarien. The processing of data was not yet fully completed when this abstract was written, but several noteworthy observations emerge:

1. Tone assignment is primarily based on syllable structure rather than the original metrical structure in Tok Pisin.
2. The original Tok Pisin metrical structure has minimal influence on tonal assignment in Binumarien. This contrasts with findings in other languages, for example for English loans into Mandarin (Glewwe, 2021).
3. Most loanwords exhibit a floating L tone.
4. In contrast to other Binumarien words, /st/ onsets receive tone, while consonants in other Binumarien words never carry tone.

For instance, CVCV words like "kara" (car) are assigned the HH(L) tonal pattern. Similarly, CVVCV words such as "koofi" (coffee) receive the LLH pattern, unless the final vowel is not present in Tok Pisin, as observed in "beeta" (bed), where the tone pattern is HHH(L). CVVV words like "gitaa" (guitar) exhibit the LHL tonal pattern. The onset in e.g. stoora ‘story’ is assigned tone: LHHH, where L is assigned to /st/.

This study sheds light on the process of tone incorporation in Binumarien, particularly in the context of adopting Tok Pisin loanwords. The findings indicate that syllable structure plays a significant role in tone assignment, overriding the influence of stress and metrical structure. These results contribute to our understanding of the interaction between tonal and
non-tonal languages, highlighting the characteristics of Binumarien's tonal system in accommodating loanwords from Tok Pisin.


