

Harvard University

GSAS Indo-European & Historical Linguistics Workshop

Speaker: Tamisha Tan (Nanyang Technical University)

Title: “Aspects of object agreement in Early Irish and related matters”

Date: April 17 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Location: by Zoom, and Boylston 335

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Title: Hawu voice and vowel alternations in comparative perspective

Abstract: Like many Malayo-Polynesian languages of the East Indonesian region, Hawu (ISO: hvn) and its closest relative Dhao (ISO: nfa) have radically restructured the traditional Austronesian Voice system to the point of lacking productive voice alternations altogether. At the same time, a subset of verbs in these languages attest final vowel alternations of the form *a, i, o ~ e* and *u ~ o* (e.g. PMP *stab 'pierce' > *loro ~ lore* 'slit'), conditioned by a complex range of factors yet to be fully ascertained. In drawing on a mix of archival data, naturalistic corpora, and the intuitions of native speaker consultants, this work proposes a diachronic source for these vowel changes as originating in the resumptive usage of the PMP 3SG pronoun **ia* > **=e*, accounting for this marking's continued association with transitivity, topicalisation, and specificity. Moreover, preliminary investigation suggests that these vowel alternations synchronically imitate conventional Austronesian Voice usage patterns, suggesting that the languages may be re-innovating Austronesian Voice, potentially due to contact with Indonesian.