

## Adjectives in Qiang

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### 1. Introduction

Qiang is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by 70,000–80,000 people in Northern Sichuan Province, China, classified as being in the Qiang or Tibetan nationality by the Chinese government.<sup>1</sup> The language is verb final, agglutinative (prefixing and suffixing), and has both head-marking and dependent-marking morphology.

Nouns can be defined as underived forms which can take (in)definite marking, numeral-classifier phrases, and/or number marking, all of which follow the head. Aside from being the head of an NP, nouns can be used to modify other nouns directly (appearing immediately before the modified noun) or in a genitive phrase (also pre-head, with or without a genitive postposition), and an NP can appear as the complement of a copula clause. Reduplication of nouns (other than pronouns) is rare, but when it occurs it has a distributive meaning. Reduplication of personal pronouns has a reflexive sense.

Verbs are defined as those forms which can take the orientation/direction prefixes, the negative prefix, and/or the causative suffix. They are generally clearly transitive or intransitive, though there are some ambitransitive verbs (S=A or S=O), and intransitive verbs can be made transitive by use of the causative suffix. Reduplication of transitive verbs can result in an intransitive reciprocal predicate. Verbs can modify nouns in NPs, though they must take a nominalizing suffix to do so, forming a pre-head relative clause.

A class of intransitive stative verbs can be distinguished from the other (intransitive and transitive) verbs by the semantics of the members of the set (words for DIMENSION, AGE, VALUE, COLOUR, QUALITY, and SHAPE) and their morphosyntactic behaviour (see also Huang 1994). Members of this class, which we can identify as 'adjectives', can be predicates, as can verbs, and take the same person marking (agreement) forms, orientation/direction marking, causative marking, evidential marking, and most aspect and negation marking as non-stative intransitive verbs, but unlike non-stative verbs, they can be nominalized using the definite and indef-

<sup>1</sup> The name 'Qiang' is an exonym given by the Chinese. The speakers of this language call themselves /zme/ (or a variant of this word) in their own language.

inite markers, many can act as adverbials (taking the adverbial particle /-pi/), and many can take the postpositive adverb /-wa/ 'very'.<sup>2</sup> Non-stative verbs can only modify a noun in the form of a pre-head relative clause construction, while adjectives can modify a noun directly in post-head position. The meaning of reduplication for most non-stative verbs is reciprocity, while the meaning of reduplication for adjectives is intensification or plurality.<sup>3</sup> There is no morphology for deriving adjectives from non-adjectival verbs, although adjectives can take causative marking and become transitive verbs.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Semantics

The class of adjectives is an open class, currently with roughly 200 members, although the majority of new members are loanwords from Chinese. The class includes items related to DIMENSION, AGE, VALUE, COLOUR, PHYSICAL PROPERTY, HUMAN PROPENSITY, SPEED, DIFFICULTY, QUALIFICATION, and QUANTIFICATION. Words expressing the semantic field of POSITION are (locational) nouns (/steke/ 'behind', /məq/ 'top, above', /zekù/ 'between, centre', /sqəl/ 'below', /piəna/ 'near, (be)side', and /qəʔ/ 'before'), NUMBERS form a separate word class (they must appear with a classifier when used as modifier or predicate), and there are no words for SIMILARITY (see discussion below). Within some of the semantic types mentioned there a number of words that are not adjectives. For example, within the QUANTIFICATION type, the meanings 'all' and 'only' are represented by adverbs, and the meaning 'some, a few' is represented by the numeral for 'one' plus the plural marker ([a-hə]), or 'one' + 'two' plus a classifier ([ə-jə-u]). Some concepts are not represented by basic words, but by negation of basic words, e.g. in QUALIFICATION, 'correct' is a basic word, /pe/, but there is no native word for 'incorrect', only the negation of 'correct', /mɛ-pe/.

There are no ordinal numerals in Qiang. The meanings 'first', 'second', 'third', and 'last' are expressed by phrases involving locational nouns:

- |     |     |  |   |
|-----|-----|--|---|
| (1) | (a) | <i>tsi-qəʔ-le</i> : (most-front-DEF:CL)  | 'the most front one' (= 'the first one')            |
|     | (b) | <i>tsə-steke-le</i> : (this-back-DEF:CL) | 'the one after this (one)' (= 'the second one')     |
|     | (c) | <i>tha-steke-le</i> : (that-back-DEF:CL) | 'the one after that' (= 'the third one')            |
|     | (d) | <i>tsi-steke-le</i> : (most-back-DEF:CL) | 'the most back one' (= 'the last one') <sup>5</sup> |

<sup>2</sup> This is a sufficient but not a necessary condition for adjective status: except for /topu/ 'to like (something)', any verb that can take /-wa/ will be an intransitive state predicate verb, but a verb that cannot take /-wa/ may also be an intransitive state predicate verb.

<sup>3</sup> It could be that the sense of plurality is involved in both types, as the reciprocal must involve more than one person.

<sup>4</sup> See LaPolla (2003) and LaPolla with Huang (2003) for more extensive discussions of the Qiang language.

<sup>5</sup> Locational nouns can take the adverbial /tsi/ 'most', but they are not adjectives; they cannot modify nouns directly and cannot be predicates.

For ordinals higher than 'third', the cardinal numbers plus classifiers are used as ordinal numbers, e.g. /yzə-zɛ/ ('four' + classifier) 'the fourth (one)' (= 'four (of something)').

Adjectives can be comparative even without overt marking of comparison (2a). Adding the adverb /-wa/ can clarify that a non-comparative sense is intended (2b). To specify a comparative sense, an adverbial such as [a-za] ('one' + CL (default classifier)) 'a little' can be added before the adjective (2c).

- (2) (a) *the: tiwi.* (b) *the: tiwi-wa.*  
3sg tall 3sg tall-very  
'He is tall/taller.' 'He is very tall.'  
(c) *the: a-za tiwi.*  
3sg one-CL tall  
'He is a bit taller.'

Some adjectives are formed from noun + verb combinations with metaphorical meanings. Following are some examples using the noun /ɛtɕi:(mi)/ 'heart':

- (3) (a) *ɛtɕi:mi-zdɕi* 'sad' < 'heart' + 'painful'  
(b) *ɛtɕi:mi-ba* 'brave' < 'heart' + 'big'  
(c) *ɛtɕi-kúá-na* 'happy' < 'heart' + 'base' + 'good'

A number of the adjectives in Qiang are Chinese loanwords. When verbs, including adjectives (4c)–(4h), are borrowed into Qiang, they are borrowed as nouns. In order to be used as verbs in Qiang, the suffix /-tha/ is added to monosyllabic borrowed verbs, while the verb /pə/ 'to do' is added to polysyllabic borrowed verbs. Following are some examples:

- (4) (a) *tuen-tha* 'squat' < Chinese *dūn* + AUX  
(b) *sə-tha* 'spend (money)' < Chinese *shǐ* + AUX  
(c) *tsin-tha* 'busy' < Chinese *jīn* 'tight' + AUX  
(d) *lan-tha* 'tender' < Chinese *nèn* + AUX  
(e) *wen-tha* 'steady' < Chinese *wěn* + AUX  
(f) *tsiau-tha* 'cunning' < Chinese *jiǎo* + AUX  
(g) *pən-tha* 'stupid' < Chinese *bèn* + AUX  
(h) *teaukau-pə* 'proud' < Chinese *jiǎo-ào* + 'to do'  
(i) *sunyan-pə* 'train' < Chinese *xùnliàn* + 'to do'  
(j) *tetsui-pə* 'offend' < Chinese *dézui* + 'to do'

Even if the total phrase borrowed from Chinese involves more than one syllable, if the verbal part of it is monosyllabic, then /-tha/ is added, as in, for example, /phitʂhi fa-tha/ 'to lose one's temper' (< Chinese *fā píqì* [emit temper]). In the case of verbs with the /-tha/ suffix, the borrowed verb, with the affix attached, is treated the same as a native verb, to the extent that it can take the directional prefixes, as in /sə-phin-tha/ 'become level' (< Chinese *píng*), and if it is an adjective, it can take the postpositive adverb /-wa/, as in /khuai-tha-wa/ 'very fast' (< Chinese *kuài*). In

the case of those loanwords that take the native verb /pə/, the prefixes are added to this verb, as in /thuntʂə-tə-pə/ 'notified' (< Chinese *tōngzhī*). For a small number of adjectives, possibly older loans, instead of having the /-tha/ suffix, the form /-ti/ follows the borrowed form, e.g. /nin-ti/ 'fragmentary, piecemeal' (< Chinese *líng*), /lan-ti/ 'blue' (< Chinese *lán*), /jyuan-ti/ 'round' (< Chinese *yúan*). This suffix is itself a loan form of the Chinese associative/nominalizing particle *de*.

There is no noun-adjective overlap, and no way to derive an adjective from a noun except in the case of the auxiliaries /-tha/ and /-pə/ mentioned above. This is done only with borrowed words, not with native words.

### 3. Functioning as predicate

The adjectives function as intransitive predicates much the same way other verbs do. They can take aspect marking, negation, person marking, causative marking, and/or interrogative marking. Many adjectives, due to the semantics of stative verbs, do not take imperative marking or prohibitive marking unless causativized.

In Qiang there are several types of aspect marking: change of state aspect, perfective aspect, prospective aspect, continuative ('still') aspect, iterative aspect, completive aspect, and experiential aspect. The adjectives can take all of these types of aspect marking except the completive aspect marker ([-das]), unless it is first causativized, due to the stative nature of adjectives. Change of state aspect marking (/ -ji/) marks the beginning of an action or the coming into being of the state represented by the adjective, as in (5). If an adjective takes the change of state marking without perfective marking, the implication is that the change into the state has begun, but not yet completed.

- (5) *pie-le: ba-ji.*  
pig-DEF:CL big-CSM  
'The pig has started to become big.'

If the change of state is completed, then perfective aspect marking would be used together with the change of state marker. Perfective aspect is marked by the addition of one of the eight orientation prefixes: /tə-/ 'vertically up', /hə-/ 'vertically down', /nə-/ 'upstream', /sə-/ 'downstream', /zə-/ 'towards the centre', /də-/ 'outward from centre', /ə-/ 'in', /hə-/ 'out'. When adjectives take the orientation prefixes, the effect of adding the prefix is somewhat different from that with non-stative verbs. When one of the orientation prefixes is added to a non-stative verb, the meaning is either one of orientation or perfective aspect, but with adjectives, addition of an orientation prefix marks a change of state (a stative verb becomes an accomplishment verb).

- (6) State Accomplishment  
(a) *ba* 'big' > *təwa* 'become big'  
(b) *χtʂa* 'small' > *haxtʂa* 'become small'  
(c) *su* 'dizzy' > *hosu* 'become dizzy'

For this usage, usually only one of the eight prefixes is regularly used, but which prefix is used differs between adjectives. In the case of 'become big' and 'become small' there is a semantic basis for the choice of prefix, as /tə-/ is for upward direction, and /fiə-/ is for downward direction. This is also true for 'become fat' vs. 'become thin'. In fact these two prefixes are the most commonly used with adjectives. Following are examples of prefixed forms of some adjectives where addition of one of these two prefixes gives the sense of an accomplishment verb:

(7)	<i>tawa</i>	'become big'	<i>fiəxtʂa</i>	'become small'
	<i>təpha</i>	'become fat'	<i>fiəxəi</i>	'become thin'
	<i>təphi(φi)</i>	'become white'	<i>təniq</i>	'become black'
	<i>tueupu</i>	'become red'	<i>fiəxtʂəp</i>	'become dark'
	<i>tuxkustsi</i>	'become hard'	<i>fiəmətʂə</i>	'become soft'
	<i>təʂue</i>	'become light'	<i>fiətʂha</i>	'become deep'
	<i>təna</i>	'become good'	<i>fiəxəi</i>	'become bad'
	<i>təpha</i>	'become swollen'	<i>fiəʂe</i>	'become less swollen'
	<i>tujūku</i>	'become dry'	<i>əni</i>	'become wet'
	<i>təsi</i>	'become hot'	<i>zəməpa</i>	'become cold (weather)'
	<i>tətʂimpe</i>	'become smart'		(no corresponding antonym)

We can see from these examples that metaphorically becoming good or light is movement upwards, while becoming dark or bad is movement downwards (except in the case of 'become black'—colours all take the 'upwards' prefix; with 'become soft' either prefix is acceptable). We've given the antonyms of 'become dry' and 'become hot' in the lower right of this set of forms for the sake of completeness. These forms don't take the 'up' or 'down' prefixes; the form for 'become wet' takes the 'in' prefix, /ə-/; presumably because the water seeps into something to make it wet, and the form for 'become cold (feel cold)' takes the 'towards the centre' prefix /zə-/ (though [təməp] is also possible), possibly like in English when we say *the cold gets into your bones*. Some of these metaphoric associations are found in English as well, such as *smarten up* vs. *dumb down*. Also *heat up*, *lighten up*, *soften up*, and *dry up*.

Because of the semantic nature of adjectives as stative verbs, prospective aspect can only be used with an adjective if the continuative aspect marking is used together with it, marking the sense that a state will continue to exist or develop.

- (8) *mə tsa-xqa:* (*< xqa*)  
 sky still-clear:PROSP  
 'The sky is still going to become clearer or stay clear.'

Iterative aspect marks the repetition of an action with a non-stative verb, but marks the re-emergence of a state or situation with an adjective or other stative verb:

- (9) *mutup-le: zə-məpa-j-ji.*  
 sky/weather-DEF:CL OR-cold-IT-CSM  
 'It has become cold again.'

Person marking takes the same forms and has the same meaning as with non-stative verbs:

- |      |     |   |     |   |                      |
|------|-----|---|-----|---|----------------------|
| (10) | (a) | <i>qa tiwia.</i><br>1sg tall:1sg<br>'I am tall/taller.'     | (b) | <i>teile tiwiə'.</i><br>1pl tall:1pl<br>'We are tall/taller.' | ( <i>&lt; tiwi</i> ) |
|      | (c) | <i>ʔü tiwi-n.</i><br>2sg tall-2sg<br>'You are tall/taller.' | (d) | <i>ʔile tiwi-i.</i><br>2pl tall-2pl<br>'You are tall/taller.' | ( <i>&lt; tiwi</i> ) |

Adjectives can also take the non-actor person marking in some contexts (this example also includes perfective and negative marking):

- (11) (a) *qa jə-s kə ŋua:-ʂə the: de-me-tʂhi-wu.*  
 1sg say-NOM thus COP:PROSP-LNK 3sg OR-NEG-wrong-3sgU  
 'If you ask me, he was not wrong.'

Interrogatives also have the same forms as with non-stative verbs (in this example the use of the 3rd person interrogative marker /-ŋua/):

- (12) (a) *mi wu-ŋua, mo-wu-ŋua?*  
 people many-Q NEG-many-Q  
 'Are there many people?'  
 (b) *pies-la-ha fiə-m-ji-ŋua?*  
 meat-DEF-pl OR-ripe-CSM-Q  
 'Is the meat ready (to eat)?'

Adjectives, and certain verbs which represent gradient concepts, can appear as the predicate in a comparative construction, which has the form in (13):

- (13) [NP<sub>entity being compared</sub> | NP<sub>standard of comparison</sub>-COMPAR | Predicate]

In positive sentences, the comparative marker is /-s(ə)/, while in negative sentences it is /-niki/. The sentence initial NP can take the topic marker, and the predicate can take actor person marking reflecting the person and number of the topic. It is also possible to have non-actor person marking reflecting a salient standard of comparison, as in (14a). The predicate can take negation ((14b)) and adverbial modification ((14c)–(14e)). Actions can be compared, when nominalized, as in (14e). As in English, once the compared referent is established in the discourse, it need not be mentioned again in the standard of comparison, as in (14d)–(14e), where only the actor or possessor needs to be mentioned in the standard of comparison.

- (14) (a) *the:-ŋuaŋi qa-sə ba-ʂa.*  
 3sg-TOP 1sg-COMPAR big-1sgU  
 'He is bigger than me.'

- (b) *qa lü-niki ma-wa.* (< ba)  
1sg 2sg-COMPAR NEG-big:1sg  
'I am not as big as you are.'
- (c) *qa the:-sə tee-fia.* (< phi)  
1sg 3sg-COMPAR still-white:1sg  
'I am lighter (in colour) than him (a lot lighter).'
- (d) *lū-teə-teixua-le: the:-sə tea-wa.* (< ba)  
2sg-GEN-house-DEF:CL 3sg-COMPAR still-big  
'Your house is bigger than his.'
- (e) *qa-kə-s-ta the:-sə tea-dza.*  
1sg-go-NOM-LOC 3sg-COMPAR still-early:1sg  
'I went earlier than him.' (lit. 'When I went was earlier than (when) he (went).')

In Qiang there is no way to say one referent is 'the same' as some other referent, but the same meaning can be expressed by saying that one referent and another are 'the same' in respect to some quality. If there are two NPs representing the two referents, they are joined by the comitative marker, /na/ (which comes between them), to form a single large NP, and so the person marking on the predicate, if there is any, is plural.

- (15) (a) *lū-na-qa a-qəs ba'.* (< ba)  
2sg-and-1sg one-form big:1pl  
'You are as big as me.' (lit. 'You and I are the same big')
- (b) *lū-na-the:-te-teixua a-qəs ba-tei.*  
2sg-and-3sg-GEN-house one-form big-3pl  
'Your house is as big as his.' (lit. 'Your house and his house are the same big')

It is also possible to have one plural NP representing the two referents:

- (16) (a) *teizzi zuaha a-qəs we'.* (< we)  
1pl height one-form have:1pl  
'The two of us are of the same height.'
- (b) *thizzi zuaha a-qəs we-(tei).*  
3pl height one-form have-3pl  
'Those two persons are of the same height.'

If a clause with an adjective as predicate has a second argument, it is marked with one of the locative postpositions, generally /-ba/, an inessive, illative, or elative locative marker, as in (17a), or /-ta/, a general locative, as in (17b). This is the same marking as that used for non-direct arguments of active verbs.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The form /-ta/ is also used to mark datives and human undergoers, but here the usage seems to be that for adverbial elements, such as temporal and locative expressions.

- (17) (a) *the:ləyz su ba tshimpe wa.*  
3sg book study LOC smart very  
'She is very good at her studies.' (lit. she is smart in her studies)
- (b) *the:za ba bələ-s ta he-the wa.*  
3sg land LOC do/work-NOM LOC OR-capable very  
'She is very good at working in the fields.'

Adjectives can take causative marking and become derived transitive verbs. They are then treated grammatically the same as any other transitive verb (see also (20a) below).

- (18) (a) *a-zə χtəa-ka: a-bu, tsan-tea-γza-z.* (< buə)  
one-CL small-INDEF:one:CL OR-put too-NEG.IMP-spicy-CAUS  
'Put a little (hot pepper), don't make it too spicy.'
- (b) *ha-nə-wu qəpatš ho-su-zə-ša.*  
OR-sleep-INST head OR-dizzy-CAUS-1sgU  
'I felt dizzy from sleeping.'

The imperative is marked by use of one of the orientation/direction prefixes,<sup>7</sup> and the prohibitive is marked by the prefix [təa- ~ təə- ~ təo-]. Generally only causativized adjectives appear in imperative or prohibitive clauses, as in (18a) and (19a), though there are exceptions, e.g. (19b) and (39b) below. In cases like (19b), the sense of the imperative is causative, even without causative marking.

- (19) (a) *(lū) qhal-le: tə-teə-etsəp-zə!*  
2sg bread.roll-DEF:CL OR-NEG.IMP-burn-CAUS  
'Don't (you) burn the bread roll!'
- (b) *bolu-la-ha de-phin-tha!*  
flour-DEF-pl OR:IMP-level-AUX  
'Make the flour level!'

Adjectives can take some of the auxiliary verbs that non-adjectives can take, such as in (20a)–(20b):

- (20) (a) *misəq wu qa quaha tə-niχ-z dzə.*  
sun AGT 1sg face OR-black-CAUS able  
'The sun can make my face become black.'
- (b) *pəs mə ma-χqa, tshai tə-niχ bu.*  
today weather NEG-clear prickly.ash.peel OR-black will  
'Today the weather is not good, the prickly ash peel will become black.'

<sup>7</sup> The particular prefix used for the imperative is based on the semantics of the action involved, and will often differ from the usual prefix used for marking direction of action or perfective aspect. For example, /phin-tha/ 'level' in (19b) takes /də-/ because the arm would move outward to smooth the flour, but this adjective would normally take the prefix /sə-/ in a non-imperative clause.

Certain auxiliaries relate to the ability of an actor (e.g. /yzə/ for learned ability, /dzə/ or /qe/ for natural (physical) ability), and so only causativized adjectives can appear with these auxiliaries.

There are at least two adjectives that are used as auxiliary verbs, /dzə/ 'able; long', as in (20a) and (21a), and /je/ 'possible; good to eat' in (21b):

- (21) (a) *qa u-tsu ma-la.* (*< ma + dzə + a*)  
 1sg OR-see NEG-able:1sg  
 'I can't see.'
- (b) *tsa ze-s me-je.*  
 here write-NOM NEG-possible  
 '(You) can't write here.'

Adjectives can appear in a serial verb structure where they modify another verb, e.g. /tse na/ ('look' + 'good') 'good looking', /dzuə na/ ('sit' + 'good') 'good to sit, there is room to sit' (see also (22) below). In this structure, while the adjective semantically seems to function as an adverbial, it is syntactically the main verb, and so if the sentence is negated, the negative prefix is affixed to the adjective, not the verb, e.g. /tse-ma-na/ ('look' + NEG + 'good') 'not good looking'. The adjective can also take the adverb /-wa/, e.g. /tse-na-wa/ ('look' + 'good' + 'very') 'very good looking'. These combinations become idiomatic or lexicalized to different degrees. In the case of /tse na/ 'good looking', we might say this has lexicalized into an adjective; in the case of /dzuə na/ it has developed the idiomatic meaning 'there is enough room to sit'; while in the case of /tehə khuai-tha/ 'eat quickly' in (22) we don't find any degree of idiomization or lexicalization.

- (22) *the: stuaha tehə khuai-tha-wa.*  
 3sg food/rice eat fast-AUX-very  
 'S/he eats very quickly.'

Adjectives can also appear in adverbial subordinate clauses, as can verbs, as in (23), where the adjective takes the genitive marker as a nominalizer, and also takes negation, perfective aspect, and continuative aspect marking:

- (23) *tap-ni ha-mə-tei-xɬapə-tə, ʔü tsa i-pə-l-ən-pa.*  
 tomorrow-ADV OR-NEG-yet-black-GEN 2sg here OR-arrive-come-2sg-DTV  
 'Come here tomorrow before it gets dark.'

#### 4. Functioning as head of an NP

Nouns can be formed from adjectives (reduplicated or not) by simply adding one of the two definite markers or the indefinite marker after the adjective, as in (24). This is not possible with other verbs except the existential verbs.

- (24) (a) *niq* 'black' + *le:* DEF:CL > *niql:* 'the black one'  
 (b) *ba* 'big' + *te:* DEF:CL > *bate:* 'the big one'  
 (c) *tiwi* 'tall' + *ke:* INDEF:CL > *tiwike:* 'a tall one'

Once it is nominalized, the adjective can then function as an argument of a clause:

- (25) *qa phiş-le: gua:* (*< gua*)  
 1sg white-DEF:CL wear:PROSP:1sg  
 'I want to wear the white one.'

Reduplicated forms are nominalized even without the (in)definite marking. There are three types of reduplication: AA, Au:A, AAu: (/u:/ is a syllable added to the reduplicated form—this type is only possible with adjectives); there is no ABB, ABAB, or AABB reduplication. The meaning of AA reduplication is plurality; the meaning of Au:A reduplication is intensification; the meaning of AAu: reduplication is plurality plus intensification. With AAu: and Au:A reduplication, the phonetic stress is on /u:/ (the stress is marked with an acute accent in the examples in (26)). Following are some examples:

- (26) (a) AA *patʂpatʂ* 'some round things'  
 (b) Au:A *patʂú:patʂ* 'very round things'  
 (c) AAu: *patʂpatʂú:* 'some very round things'

In most cases reduplicated forms do not modify a noun, but instead are simply nominalized by /-ke/ and used with the copula or /pe/ 'become', e.g.

- (27) *qhal patʂpatʂ-ke: ɲuə.*  
 bread.rolls round.round-INDEF:CL COP  
 'Bread rolls are round things.'

Reduplicated adjectives can appear together in a clause with a common noun, and are often followed by the indefinite marker /-ke/. They are then noun phrases in their own right in apposition to the common noun, clarifying the nature of the referent of the common noun. In this structure the nominalized adjective can precede or follow the common noun. Following are some examples:

- (28) (a) *qhal patʂpatʂ-ke:*  
 bread.rolls round.round-INDEF:CL  
 'some round bread rolls'
- (b) *fa niqniq-ke:*  
 clothing black.black-INDEF:CL  
 'some very black clothing'
- (c) *patʂu:patʂ pana la-ha tsa-la ʂə.*  
 round.round thing DEF-pl where-LOC have/exist  
 (could also be [*pana patʂu:patʂ*])  
 'Where are the very round things?'

## 5. Functioning as modifier of a noun

An adjective can modify a noun either in the form of a non-nominalized post-head adjective, in the form of a nominalized pre-head relative clause structure, or in the form of a post-head nominalized appositional structure. (In rare instances, a bare adjective can appear before the noun; see example (5) in Ch. 15.) Which structure is used often depends on the complexity of the modifier: a complex modifier will appear in the pre-head relative clause structure, while a simple adjective will generally appear in the post-head position. Compare the following three examples:

- (29) (a) *steimi na-te mi* (b) *mi na*  
 heart good-GEN person person good  
 '(a) good hearted person' '(a) good person'  
 (c) *mi na-m*  
 person good-NOM  
 '(a) good person' (lit.: 'a person, a nice one')

This is a common pattern found in Tibeto-Burman languages. In some languages within Tibeto-Burman, and in Chinese, the original post-head adjective pattern fell into disuse, and now only the pre-head relative structure or post-head nominalized structure is possible. The pre-head pattern results in a Noun-Noun structure, with the first noun modifying the second one, as in nominal compounds.

The nominalizers used in these modificational structures are two of the three used for nominalizing non-stative verbs, /-m/ for human referents and /-te/ for other referents. The instrumental nominalizer, /-s/, is not used with adjectives. In (29c), there are two NPs in apposition to each other, something like 'a person, a nice one'. This contrasts with the usual form of the adjective without nominalization, as in (29b). In the case of nominalization by /-m/ or /-te/, the form would generally be followed by the indefinite or definite marker, as in (30):

- (30) *fa eupu-te-ke: sə.*  
 clothing red-GEN-INDEF:CL have/exist  
 'There is an item of red clothing.'

Although this form looks similar to a single noun phrase which has both a post-head adjective and indefinite marking (i.e. [fa-eupu-ke:] (clothing-red-INDEF:CL)), it is clearly two noun phrases, as the order of the two NPs could be reversed. This structure is used for emphasizing the quality, such as in a contrastive context.

When more than one adjective appears in an NP in the post-head form, the order of the adjectives in terms of type of adjective (VALUE, SHAPE, QUALITY, AGE, COLOUR; see Dixon 1982) is the mirror image of that in English, but the same if one thinks in terms of order relative to the head (i.e. HEAD^COLOUR^SHAPE^AGE^QUALITY^VALUE). Compare the examples in (31a)–(31j).

- (31) (a) *ɣuatʂa lapa ba* (b) *fa phiʂ dzə*  
 bowl flowery big clothing white long  
 'big colourful bowl' 'long white clothing'  
 (c) *fa phiʂ ba* (d) *fa dzə ba*  
 clothing white old clothing long old  
 'old white clothing' 'old long clothing'  
 (e) *mianpau phiʂ matʂa* (f) *tʂhetsə xsə na*  
 bread white soft car new good  
 'soft white bread' 'good new car'  
 (g) *xtʂepi dzə na* (h) *səf po tiwi*  
 knife long good tree thick tall  
 'nice long knife' 'tall thick tree'  
 (i) *stei xsə tse* (j) *mi xsə tshimpe*  
 axe new sharp person new smart  
 'sharp new axe' 'smart young person'

## 6. Adverbial modification of adjectives

There is some difference between the adverbs that adjectives take and those that other verbs can take. Most adjectives, when they act as predicates, can take the post-verbal adverb /-wa/ 'very' (e.g. /na-wa/ (good + very) 'very good'), whereas most verbs cannot take this adverb. Only certain mental state verbs, such as /topu/ 'like', can take /-wa/ (as well as /kən/). Some adjectives also cannot take this adverb, but there does not seem to be a semantic reason for this, as the adjectives that can take /-wa/ and those that cannot are often in the same semantic field, e.g. /phi-wa/ 'very white', but not \*/ɲiq-wa/ 'very black'. For the adjectives that cannot take /-wa/, the pre-verbal adverb /kən/ 'very' can be used. Following are some other examples of these two adverbs:

- (32) (a) *basta-wa* (b) *ba-wa*  
 slow/late-very big-very  
 'very slow/late' 'very big'  
 (c) *kən ɲiq* (d) *kən sta*  
 very black very wide  
 'very black' 'very wide'

Some adjectives can only take /-wa/, while some can only take /kən/, though some other adjectives can take either of the two adverbs, e.g. /eupu-wa/ ~ /kən eupu/ 'very red'. Some loanwords can also take /-wa/, even when the loanword is followed by the auxiliary loanword particle. In this case /-wa/ follows the auxiliary particle, e.g. /khuai-tha/ ('fast' < Chinese *kuài* + auxiliary loanword particle) > [khuai-tha-wa] 'very fast'.

The adverb /-wa/ can be used with the negative prefix, though the negative prefix appears before the adjective, with /-wa/ modifying the whole negative plus

adjective combination, e.g. [mɑ-nɑ-wɑ] (negative + 'good' + 'very') 'very not good' (this cannot have the meaning 'not very good'). The adverb /-wɑ/ is generally not used with verbs, though /kən/ can be used with some verbs, e.g. /kən topu/ ('very' + 'like') 'like very much'. An adjective modified by /kən/ can modify a noun (e.g. /fɑ-kən-niq/ ('clothing' + 'very' + 'black') 'very black clothing'), but this is not possible with /-wɑ/. The adverb /-wɑ/ can also be followed by a nominalizer, as in the following headless relative clause:

- (33) *sku-wɑ-m-le-ze*  
 lovely-very-NOM-DEF-CL  
 'the very lovely person' (lit. 'the person who is very lovely')<sup>8</sup>

There is another post-verbal adverb, /quəla/ 'very', used to modify adjectives and at least one auxiliary verb, e.g. /nɑ quəla/ 'very good', /ɛpu quəla/ 'very red', /dzə quəla/ ('able' + 'very') 'very capable'. Adjectives can also be reduplicated for expressing greater intensity.

For expressing the meaning 'too much, excessively', either a preposed adverb, /tsan/, or a postposed adverb, /-s/, can be used with most adjectives. Only /tsan/ can be used before the negative or prohibitive prefix (see (18a)).

- (34) (a) *niq-əs* (b) *basta-s*  
 black-too slow/late-too  
 'too black' 'too slow/late'  
 (c) *ba-s* (d) *po-s*  
 big-too thick-too  
 'too big' 'too thick'
- (35) (a) *tsan-ma-nə* (b) *tsan-ma-niq*  
 too-NEG-good too-NEG-black  
 'not too good' 'not too black'  
 (c) *tsan-me-šue* (d) *tsan-me-tsue*  
 too-NEG-bright too-NEG-sour  
 'not too bright' 'not too sour'

The adverb /təa/ ([təa ~ tɛi ~ tɛa ~ tɛo]) is used generally to mean 'still, yet', but when used in the comparative construction it has the sense of 'relatively adjective' or 'even more adjective'. When this adverb appears with the negative and a directional prefix, the word order is [prefix-negative-/təa/-verb].

- (36) (a) *təa-wɑ (< ba)* (b) *təa-niq*  
 still-big still-black  
 'relatively big' 'relatively black'

<sup>8</sup> The nominalizer /-m/ derives from the word /mi/ 'person', and so is usually used when the nominalization refers to a person.

- (c) *təa-basta* (d) *təo-pu*  
 still-slow/late still-thick  
 'relatively slow/late' 'relatively thick'
- (37) (a) *ma-təa-χtɕa* (b) *fiɑ-mə-təa-χtɕa*  
 NEG-still-small OR-NEG-still-small  
 'not so small' 'not so reduced'

The superlative of adjectives and some stative verbs is marked by the prefix /tɛi-/:

- (38) (a) *tɛi-wɑ-lɑ-lɑ (< ba)* (b) *tɛi-topu*  
 most-big-DEF-CL(stick-like.object) most-like  
 'the biggest' 'like (something (the))  
 most'  
 (c) *tɛi-fi (< phi(s))* (d) *tɛi-χtɕa*  
 most-white most-small  
 'whitest' 'smallest' (stick-like object)

The form of the superlative is similar to one of the harmony forms of the preverbal adverb for marking a relative degree, but the superlative does not undergo vowel harmony.

## 7. Adverbial phrases

Some adjectives can act as manner adverbs in adverbial expressions, usually followed by the adverbial marker [-ji ~ tɛi] or /-ni/:

- (39) (a) *thɛ: nɑ-ji mo-su.*  
 3sg good-ADV NEG-study  
 'S/he doesn't study well.'  
 (b) *ʔü tap-ni dala-ni tu-ju.*  
 2sg tomorrow-ADV early-ADV OR-rise  
 'Get up early tomorrow.'

Aside from the possibility of adjectives appearing in adverbial phrases, there is also a very small class of words that are used mainly in adverbial expressions, but can also modify nouns (in the form of appositional structures), or can act as head of a noun phrase themselves when nominalized by the definite or indefinite markers. Semantically they seem like adjectives, but they are unlike adjectives and verbs in that they cannot act as predicates (though they can appear as copula complement), cannot take negation, and cannot appear in the comparative construction; and they are also unlike other adverbs in the language in that they can modify nouns and take the (in)definite markers, (42b).<sup>9</sup> These adverbial phrases precede

<sup>9</sup> The behaviour of these words is not uniform. The form /ata/ can take the causative suffix /-z/ and then be used as a predicate, while the others cannot, and the form /akha/ cannot be nominalized.





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## Adjectives in Lao

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It has been suggested that in every language one may establish, on morphosyntactic grounds, a class of *adjectives*, which will be 'distinct from noun and verb' (Ch. 1 of this volume).<sup>1</sup> The two distinct claims made here should not be confused or confounded. The first is that a class of words can be found for which the term *adjectives* is appropriate. The second is that this class will be independent from the noun and verb classes. Evidence from Lao (south-western Tai, Laos) shows that support for the first claim does not necessarily provide support for the second.

The aim of this chapter is to establish and elaborate upon the following two related points. First, there does exist a morphosyntactically distinct form class in Lao which may be identified as an *adjective* class. This class has a large number of members (hundreds), covering most of the semantic types suggested by Dixon (1982; Ch. 1 of this volume). Second, however, this class is not *distinct from* the verb class. Lao adjectives are a sub-type of verbs. They are distinct from other verb subtypes, but are not distinct from verbs as a class.

## 1. Introductory remarks on Lao

Lao is a south-western Tai language, spoken in Laos, north-east Thailand, and north-east Cambodia (Enfield 1999). It is an isolating language with lexical tone, typical of languages of the mainland South-east Asia region (Enfield 2003a: ch. 2). There is no case-marking and no system of gender or other grammatical agreement. The language is neither head-marking nor dependent-marking, in any usual sense of these terms. Nominals are seldom grammatically obligatory. Ellipsis is widespread under contextual retrievability, making zero anaphora normal for definite/referential arguments. The unmarked constituent order is subject–verb–object, with a robust left position into which topics are placed, as well as a right position for afterthought constituents. There is sufficient evidence for a grammatical relation of subject, as well as one of object (or at least, direct verb complement). A copula normally has a nominal in copula complement function. There are next to

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