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. 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. Replication of nouns (other than pronouns) is rare, but when it occurs it has a distributive meaning. Replication 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. Replication 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-

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, /maq/top, above, /peki/ between, centre, /sqa/ below, /pien/ near, (be)side, and /qel/ 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-ha]), or 'one' + 'two' plus a classifier ([a-ja-ulu]). 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', /me-pel/.

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

(i) (a) tet-qes-le (most-front-def-cl) 'the most front one' (= 'the first one')
(b) tse-steke-le (this-back-def-cl) 'the one after this (one)' (= 'the second one')
(c) thu-steke-le (that-back-def-cl) 'the one after that' (= 'the third one')
(d) tai-steke-le (most-back-def-cl) 'the most back one' (= 'the last one')

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

9 It could be that the sense of plurality is involved in both types, as the reciprocal must involve more than one person.

10 See LaPolla (2002) and LaPolla with Huang (2003) for more extensive discussions of the Qiang language.

This is an anomaly given by the Chinese. The speakers of this language call themselves /seme/ (or a variant of this word) in their own language.
For ordinals higher than 'third', the cardinal numbers plus classifiers are used as ordinal numbers, e.g. /ŋɔ-tse/ ('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-zc] ('one + ct.(default classifier)) 'a little' can be added before the adjective (2c).

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

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

(3) (a) ɛtści:mi-zdži 'sad' < 'heart' + 'painful'
(b) ɛtści:mi-ba 'brave' < 'heart' + 'big'
(c) ɛtści-kid-na 'happy' < 'heart' + 'base' + 'good'

A number of the adjectives in Qiang are Chinese loanwords. When verbs, including adjectives (4c–(sh)), 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 /pa/ 'to do' is added to polysyllabic borrowed verbs. Following are some examples:

(4) (a) tuen-tha 'squat' < Chinese dān + AUX
(b) sa-tha 'spend (money)' < Chinese shī + AUX
(c) tain-tha 'busy' < Chinese jin 'tight' + AUX
(d) lan-tha 'tender' < Chinese nèn + AUX
(e) wen-tha 'steady' < Chinese wēn + AUX
(f) talau-tha 'cunning' < Chinese jiāo + AUX
(g) pen-tha 'stupid' < Chinese bēn + AUX
(h) teawkau-pa 'proud' < Chinese jiāo-ão + 'to do'
(i) sunyian-pa 'train' < Chinese zǔnlàn + 'to do'
(j) tetsui-pa 'offend' < Chinese dësū + '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 for example, /pʰtshī-iu-tha/ 'to lose one's temper' (< Chinese pīqi [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 /sa-phīn-tha/ 'become level' (< Chinese pīng), and if it is an adjective, it can take the postpositive adverb /-wa/, as in /khudia-tha-wa/ 'very fast' (< Chinese kuāf).

the case of those loanwords that take the native verb /pa/, the prefixes are added to this verb, as in /θuun-su-θa-pa/ 'notified' (< Chinese tèngชี). For a small number of adjectives, possibly older loans, instead of having the /-tha/ suffix, the form /-ti/ follows the borrowed form, e.g. /ni-ni-ti/ 'fragmentary, piecemeal' (< Chinese láng), /lan-ti /'blue' (< Chinese lān), /fu-yuon-ti /'round' (< Chinese yuán). This suffix is itself a loan form of the Chinese associative/nominizing 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 /-pa/ 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 markings: 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 complete aspect marker (|-das|-), unless it is first causativized, due to the native 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 occurred, but not yet completed.

(5) pie-le: ba-ji.
   pig-dep.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', /tɔ-('/ 'vertically down', /tɔ-'/ 'upstream', /tɔ-'/ 'downstream', /tə-/ 'towards the centre', /tɔ-'/ 'outward from centre, /tɔ-'/ 'in', /tɔ-'/ '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' > tawa 'become big'
   (b) y̞iša 'small' > ḫa-y̞iša 'become small'
   (c) su 'dizzy' > ḫosu '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 /ts-/ is for upward direction, and /tza-/ 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) tza - "become big"  
 hafysa - "become small"

tapa - "become fat"  
 harsi - "become thin"

tshi (fidi) - "become white"  
 taniq - "become black"

tuapu - "become red"  
 hixtasp - "become dark"

tuxuelsii - "become hard"  
 hamaapa - "become soft"

tape - "become light"  
 hiatsha - "become deep"
	ina - "become good"  
 haisi - "become bad"

tapa - "become swollen"  
 hise - "become less swollen"

tiikku - "become dry"  
 ani - "become wet"

tsi - "become hot"  
 zamapa - "become cold (weather)"

txumpe - "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 /tsa-/, presumably because the water seeps into something to make it wet, and the form for "become cold (feel cold)" takes the 'towards the center' prefix /tsa-/ (though /zamapa/ 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 continuous aspect marking is used together with it, marking the sense that a state will continue to exist or develop.

(8) ma tse-xga.  
 "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-ke:  
 za-mapa-i-jii.  
 sky/weather-DEF-PCL OR-cold-TT-CSM  
 'It has become cold again.'

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

(10) (a) qa "tiv".  
 3sg say-nom thus cop:pros:link 3sg OR-neg:wrong 3sg U  
 'I am tall/taller.'  
 'We are tall/taller.'

(b) ta "ti"  
 3sg tall:3sg  
 'I am tall/taller.'  
 'We are tall/taller.'

(c) ti "tiv".  
 2sg tall:2sg  
 'You are tall/taller.'  
 'We are tall/taller.'

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

(11) (a) qa j-x "two:de-me-tshi-wu.  
 1sg say-nom thus cop:pros:link 3sg OR-neg:wrong 3sg U  
 '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 /-nu/):

(12) (a) mi "wu:nu/ma-wu:nu/ma  
 people many-Q neg:many-Q  
 'Are there many people?'

(b) pies-la-ha "ma-mi:nu/ma  
 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_entity being compared] [NP_standard of comparison] compar | Predicate]

In positive sentences, the comparative marker is /-s/), while in negative sentences it is /-pik/). 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 adverbal 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-"nu/ma ba-"nu/ma.  
 3sg-top 1sg-compar big:1sg U  
 'He is bigger than me.'
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).

The imperative is marked by use of one of the orientation/direction prefixes,\(^7\) and the prohibitive is marked by the prefix [tso- ~ tso- ~ tso-]. 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.

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

7 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 /tso-~ because the arm would move outward to smooth the flour, but this adjective would normally take the prefix /ta-~ in a non-imperative clause.
Certain auxiliaries relate to the ability of an actor (e.g. /♀♀♀/ for learned ability, /♀♀♀/ or /♀♀♀/ 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, /♀♀♀/’able; long, as in (20a) and (21a), and /♀♀♀/’possible; good to eat in (21b):

(21) (a) qa u-tsu ma-la.
    1sg OR-see NEG-able:2sg
    ‘I can’t see.’

(b) tsə qə-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. /♀♀♀ na/ (‘look + ‘good’) ‘good looking’, /♀♀♀ 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. /♀♀♀-ma-na/ (‘look + NEG + ‘good’) ‘not good looking’. The adjective can also take the adverb /♀♀♀/, e.g. /♀♀♀-na-wa/ (‘look + ‘good’ + ‘very’) ‘very good looking’. These combinations become idiomatic or lexicalized to different degrees. In the case of /♀♀♀ na/ ‘good looking’, we might say this has lexicalized into an adjective; in the case of /♀♀♀ na/ it has the idiomatic meaning ‘there is enough room to sit; while in the case of /♀♀♀ kuai-tha/ ‘eat quickly’ in (22) we don’t find any degree of idiomization or lexicalization.

(22) the: stuaha te-ho kuai-tha-wa.
    3sg good:rice eat fast-AUX-very
    ‘She 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 continuing aspect marking:

(23) tap-ni ha-ma-tse-xtsupa-te. ᶜ ṭə sə i-pa-i-n-pa.
    tomorrow-ADV OR-NEG-yet-black-GEN 1sg 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-CPL > niqle: ‘the black one’
    (b) ba ‘big’ + te: DEF-CPL > bate: ‘the big one’
    (c) tiwi ‘tall’ + ke: INDEF-CPL > tiwike: ‘a tall one’

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

(25) qa phiq-le: gua.
    1sg white-DEF-CPL WALK-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, AuA, AAu: (/♀♀/ is a syllable added to the reduplicated form—this type is only possible with adjectives); there is no ABB, ABB, or AAB reduplication. The meaning of AA reduplication is plurality; the meaning of AuA reduplication is intensification; the meaning of AAu: reduplication is plurality plus intensification. With AAu: and AuA reduplication, the phonetic stress is on /♀♀/ (the stress is marked with an acute accent in the examples in (26)). Following are some examples:

(26) (a) AA patspats ‘some round things’
    (b) AuA patsapats ‘very round things’
    (c) AAu: patspa: ‘some very round things’

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

(27) qhal patspats-ke: gua.
    bread-rolls round.ROUND INDEF-CPL 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 /♀♀/. They are then noun phrases in their own right in opposition 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 patspats-ke:
    bread-rolls round.ROUND INDEF-CPL
    ‘some round bread rolls’
    (b) fa nigniqu-ke:
    clothing black-black:DEF-CPL
    ‘some very black clothing’
    (c) patspats pana la-ha tsa-la go.
    round.ROUND thing DEF-PL where-LOC have/exist
    (could also be [pana patspats])
    ‘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 (3) 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:

(a) et̪mi na-te mi
   heart good-GEN person person good
   ‘(a) good hearted person’
(b) mi na
   person good
   ‘(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 adjectival 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 modificalional structures are two of the three used for nominalizing non-stative verbs, /-m/ for human referents and /-ta/ for other referents. The instrumental nominalizer, /-a/, 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 /-ta/, the form would generally be followed by the indefinite or definite marker, as in (30):

fa e aupu-te-ke: so
   clothing red-GEN-INDFCL. 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-e aupu-te-ke:] (clothing-red-INDFCL)), 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).

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 /topa/ ‘like’, can take /-wa/ (as well as /kan/). 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 /piq-wa/ ‘very black’. For the adjectives that cannot take /-wa/, the pre-verbal adverb /kan/ ‘very’ can be used. Following are some other examples of these two adverbs:

(a) ha-wa
   slow/late
   ‘very slow/late’
   ‘very big’
(b) ba-wa
   big
   ‘very big’
(c) kan piq
   very black
   ‘very black’
   ‘very wide’
(d) kan sta
   very white
   ‘very white’

Some adjectives can only take /-wa/, while some can only take /kan/, though some other adjectives can take either of the two adverbs, e.g. /gupu-wa = kan gupu/ ‘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-wa/ (fast < Chinese kuai + 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 phrase...
adjective combination, e.g. [mu-na-wa] (negative + 'good' + 'very') 'very not good' (this cannot have the meaning 'not very good'). The adverb /-wa/ is generally not used with verbs, though /kan/ can be used with some verbs, e.g. /kan topu/ ('very' + 'like') 'like very much'. An adjective modified by /kan/ can modify a noun (e.g. /fa-kan-niq/ ('clothing' + 'very' + 'black') 'very black clothing'), but this is not possible with /-wa/. The adverb /-wa/ can also be followed by a nominalizer, as in the following headless relative clause:

(33) sgu-wa-m-le-ze
    lovely-very-NOM-DEF-CL
    'the very lovely person' (lit. the person who is very lovely)

There is another post-verbal adverb, /quala/ 'very', used to modify adjectives and at least one auxiliary verb, e.g. /ma quala/ 'very good', /sepu quala/ 'very red', /dzep quala/ ('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, /-q/ can be used with most adjectives. Only /tsan/ can be used before the negative or prohibitive prefix (see (18a)).

(34) (a) niaq-qs
    black-too
    'too black'

(b) bas-qs
    slow/late-too
    'too slow/late'

(c) ba-qs
    big-too
    'too big'

(d) po-qs
    thick-too
    'too thick'

(35) (a) tsan-ma-ns
    too-Neg-good
    'not too good'

(b) tsan-ma-niq
    too-Neg-black
    'not too black'

(c) tsan-me-sue
    too-Neg-bright
    'not too bright'

(d) tsan-me-niq
    too-Neg-sour
    'not too sour'

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

(36) (a) tea-wa (< ba)
    still-big
    'relatively big'

(b) tea-niq
    still-black
    'relatively black'

(c) tea-basta
    still-late
    'relatively late'

(d) sea-pu
    still-thick
    'relatively thick'

(37) (a) na-ma-tea-yps
    NEG-still-small
    'not so small'

(b) ha-ya-tea-yps
    OR-NEG-still-small
    'not so reduced'

The superlative of adjectives and some stative verbs is marked by the prefix /tei-/: (38) (a) tei-wa-la (< ba)
    most-big-DEF-CL(stick-like.object)
    'the biggest'

(b) tei-topu
    most-like
    'like (something the)
    most'

(c) tei-fi (< phi(q))
    most-white
    'whitest'

(d) tei-yps
    most-small
    '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 - tai] or /-nt/:

(39) (a) tei-ni
    most-adverb NEG-study
    'S/he doesn't study well.'

(b) tsu tap-ni
da-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 adpositional 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). These adverbial phrases precede

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8 The nominizer /-mi/ derives from the word /mi/ 'person', and so is usually used when the nominalizer refers to a person.

9 The behaviour of these words is not uniform. The form /ata/ can take the causative suffix /-q/ and then be used as a predicate, while the others cannot, and the form /faksha/ cannot be nominalized.
the verbs, and can sometimes be marked by /-pi/ or [-pi – tel]. Generally manner adverbs take /-pi/, though if formed from a reduplicated adjective, then the adverbial marker is not used:

(40) (a) akha-kha a-teh
slow OR-eat
'eat slowly'

(b) akha-pi a-teh
slow-ADV OR-eat
'eat slowly'

(41) (a) hama-pi dza
stealthy-ADV eat
'eat stealthily (on the sly)'

(b) ata-pi dza
fast-ADV eat
'eat quickly'

(42) (a) the: hama-le: nua.
3sg stealthy-DEF:CL COP
'He is the evasive one.'

(b) mi hama-le:
person stealthy-DEF:CL
'the evasive person'

This class of forms can generally take the intensifying adverbs /kan/ and /-wa/, and the superlative /tei/, but generally not the adverbs /kan/ and /-g/. They can appear before the noun as a modifier of the noun (e.g. [hama-le: mi] 'the evasive person'), but this is rather rare. More than one manner adverb can appear in a clause, with no change in marking, and no marking of coordination, and each conjunct may or may not have adverbial marking:

(43) the: hama-pi akhakha a-ga.
3sg stealthy-ADV slowly OR-go
'S/he slowly and quietly goes/went in.'

8. Summary

Following is a summary of the characteristics of each word class. Parentheses around a check means only a few words in that class have that characteristic, e.g. only certain mental verbs, such as /tupu/ 'like', can take the intensifying adverb /-wa/, and only nouns representing temporal expressions such as /tap/ 'tomorrow' can take the adverbial particle /-pi/.

We can see then that the class most often associated with the concept 'adjective' in Qiang is a sub-type of verb, having all of the characteristics which are used to define verbs in the language, but they form a sub-set within the class of verbs because of their ability to directly modify the noun, because of their special reduplication pattern, and because of the frequency with which they are nominalized by the (in)definite markers and then act as a noun head. We can also see that existential verbs are similar to adjectives in some ways, but differ from adjectives in being unable to modify nouns directly. The very small class of forms discussed in §7 may also be considered a type of adjective, as argued by Hajek (in Ch. 15), because of their ability to modify a noun directly, though they also share similarities with nouns, and as they are used mainly as manner adverbs and do not appear in the comparative construction, we consider them a sub-class of adverbs.
Adjectives in Lao

N. J. Enfield

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). 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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1 I gratefully acknowledge the valuable contribution to the contents of this chapter made by fellow participants of the International Workshop on Adjective Classes, Melbourne, August 2003. I am particularly indebted to Sasha Alkhimov, Felix Ameka, Wally Chafe, Greer Corbett, and Bob Dixon.