CHAPTER 4
ADJECTIVES AND ADJECTIVAL PHRASE

4.1 Introduction
Payne (1997) defined an adjective as “a word that can be used in a noun phrase to specify some property of the head noun of the phrase”. Indeed, an adjective is basically understood as an abstract entity which describes the property of a noun or an object. The study of adjective recently deviates from the traditional typological approaches towards looking at the cross-linguistic features. Different opinions arose on the property and status of adjectives. In many of the South Asian languages, the status of adjective has become a complex issue till date. Scholars like Panini and others are of the opinion that some languages do not seem to have a separate category called adjective (Dixon 2004); some other languages have it as a separate category whereas there is an intermediary group of languages such as Hocank which does not have a clear boundary (Helmbrecht 2004) at all with the other lexical categories. According to Dixon (2004: 20), “an adjective class can be recognized for every language, although sometimes the criteria for distinguishing adjectives from nouns, or adjectives from verbs, are rather subtle”. In line with this, Dixon (1982[1977]) in Madugu (1976: 6) classified three types of languages based on adjectives: those which have a clear large category of adjectives, those which have a very small such class and those which lack adjective entirely. With regard to its function, adjectives express property concepts as nouns (i.e. nominalizations) when modifying, and as stative verbs when predicating in Tibeto-Burman languages (Grunow-Harsta 2011).

Omamor (1986) used the term quality verbs to refer to the qualifying NP in two Nigerian languages: Okpe and Uvwie. LaPolla and Huang (2004: 306-322) in Dixon and Aikhenvald (2004) classed adjectives in Qiang as a separate category but they had also argued that adjectives are semantically stative verbs and it formed a subset within the class of verb due to many feature similarities.
4.2 Semantic Classification of Adjectives

Dixon (2004) had made some criteria to determine whether a language exhibits a separate category of adjective in the language. This classification is based on the semantics and size of the word class ‘adjective’. This size shows us whether the language has a small class or large class adjective. Payne (1997) also established a semantic classification of adjectives. These lists are, however, smaller in size compared to Dixon’s list. Except for shape, the other properties are included in Payne’s work. This study follows the classification of adjectives made by Dixon (2004) as shown below:

4.2.1 Dimension

\[(242)\text{ liàn } \quad \text{‘big’}\]
\[\text{ neú } \quad \text{‘small’}\]
\[\text{ sāŋ } \quad \text{‘tall/high’}\]
\[\text{ niám } \quad \text{‘low’}\]
\[\text{ tóm } \quad \text{‘short’}\]

4.2.2 Physical Property

\[(243)\text{ xaùɁ } \quad \text{‘hard’}\]
\[\text{ nēm } \quad \text{‘soft’}\]
\[\text{ gìk } \quad \text{‘heavy’}\]
\[\text{ záŋ } \quad \text{‘light’}\]
\[\text{ xūm } \quad \text{‘sweet’}\]
\[\text{ tʰúk } \quad \text{‘sour’}\]

4.2.3 Colour

Colour terms are of two types in Tedim- basic and derived. The basic colour terms in Tedim are monosyllabic and have no referent to other entity. Some of the basic colour terms are shown in (244).
Colour terms | Gloss
---|---
(244) v₃m | black
kāŋ | white
sān | red
dūm | blue
hīŋ | green
puāŋ | grey
ēŋ | yellow

For richer colour or darker shades, *-dùp* is suffixed to the existing colour term.

(245) sān-dùp ‘maroon’

hīŋ-dùp ‘dark green’

Some colour terms are derived either from names of plants or animals. The term used for brown is *ẕŋ-ṟŋ* derived from an animal. *ẕŋ* literally means monkey and *ṟŋ* is a borrowed word from Indo-Aryan languages meaning ‘colour’. Similarly, *màntá-ṟŋ* ‘violet’ comes from brinjal. This consisted of a small size adjective. The derived colour terms are listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour terms</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
(246) ẕŋ-ṟŋ | brown
màntá-ṟŋ | violet/purple
sèkxūm-ṟŋ | saffron/orange

**4.2.4 Human Propensity**

(247) házá ‘jealous’
lūŋdām ‘happy’
ciŋ ‘generous’
4.2.5 Age
(248) tʰák ‘new’
    naūpáŋ ‘young’
    luĩ ‘old’

4.2.6 Value
(249) hɔìʔ ‘good’
    siá ‘bad’
    mànʔʰà ‘precious’

4.2.7 Speed
(250) hát ‘fast’
    mánláŋ ‘quick’
    dàk ‘slow’

4.3 Derived Adjectives
In addition to the inherent adjectives, Tedim Chin also has derived adjectives. Some of these are derived from the combination of nouns, verbs and adjectives where the noun is one of the body parts like heart, brain, ear, face etc. Thang (2002) studied Tedim Chin heart idioms and put the lexeme “lùŋ” as the center of a person’s thought and emotion.
(251) lùŋ-dām
    heart-heal/fine
    ‘happy’

(252) lùŋ-nēm
    heart-soft
    ‘kind hearted’
4.4 Degrees of Comparison

Adjective is used for comparing varying degrees. The comparative is morphologically marked by *saŋ*. There is a type of gradable adjectives in Tedim which function as a comparison.

\[
\text{hɔìʔ ‘good’} \Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-zɔ́ ‘better’} \Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-pēn ‘best’}
\]

There is also a possibility of putting one more gradable after \(\text{hɔìʔ-zɔ} \Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-zɔ-\text{-lai}}\) meaning ‘far better’ and also after \(\text{hɔìʔ-pen}\), there can be one more gradable that is, \(\text{hɔìʔ-pen-pen}\). This is done by repetition of the marker of comparison. It gives the meaning ‘best of the best’. By re-writing the above comparison, one can get the following sequence:

\[
\text{hɔìʔ ‘good’} \Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-zɔ́ ‘better’} \Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-zɔ́-\text{-lai ‘far better’}} \Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-pēn ‘best’}
\]
\[
\Rightarrow \text{hɔìʔ-pēn-pēn ‘best of the best’}
\]

\(\text{hɔìʔ-zɔ-deuʔ ‘little better} (\text{than the standard of comparison})\)’ is used to compare two things which has only slight differences in it.

Apart from the comparative-superlative degree of comparison, the function of adjectives on the basis of the position it occupies is also an interesting topic to be discussed. Compare the two sentences shown in (255) and (256):

(255) \(\text{ín hɔìʔ house good ‘Beautiful/good house’}\)
(256) á hɔìʔ pēn
3SG good TOP
‘The beautiful/good one (house)’

The noun án ‘house’ can be substituted by a third person singular marker a without repeating the same word if the context of utterance is still about the same topic that is, the beauty of the house. In the example in (256), the discussion was already on different houses and the good one among these is chosen by saying á hɔìʔpēn.

4.5 Attributive Adjectives
Adjective occurs after the noun, that is, it modifies the noun in examples (257) to (259). In an attributive construction, adjective follows the head noun (N-ADJ) and acts as a modifier. The adjectives describe the quality of the nouns.

(257) xèdàp vɔ̀m
shoe black
‘black shoe’

(258) sám saú
hair long
‘long hair’

(259) tuí vɔ̀t
water cold
‘cold water’

4.6 Predicative Adjectives
Adjectives function as a predicate in an intransitive sentence. Predicative adjective has similar function like a verb. It modifies the subject of a sentence. Unlike English, Tedim Chin does not have an overt linking verb in between the subject and the modifier. These are illustrated with examples in (260) and (261).
(260) à sâm kāŋ  
3POSS hair white  
‘His/her hair is grey’

(261) naũŋék pēn cídām máʔ~māʔ  
baby TOP healthy INTSF  
‘The baby is very/quite healthy’

4.7 Order of Adjective and Noun

The adjectives function as a modifier of a noun. So it always accompanies the object it modifies.

(262) hãi mîn  
mango ripe  
‘Ripe mango’

This phrase can be interpreted into two ways:
Firstly, it gives an information about the mango that it is ripe. It functions as a verb as the change of action/state from raw to ripe is in focus. Secondly, it means that there is a ripe mango. It describes the quality of the mango.

(263) nūmei-noú-în puán-tuál kāŋ sîlʔ  
FEM-young-ERG cloth-long white wear  
‘The girl is wearing a long white dress’

The adjectives tuál and kāŋ modify the noun puán which by itself is a simple cloth. Here the modifier length comes first followed by colour. Unlike the previous order of adjectives where colour follows length, in an adjectival phrase of two or more adjectives, colour is followed by size in example (264).

(264) āk-pî sän tʰaũ  
fowl-AUG red fat  
‘Big fat red hen’
With this, the order of adjectives can be of the following hierarchy: **Length-Colour-Size**.

(265) ín xàn sāŋ-pí
    house storey tall-AUG
    ‘Big tall building’

4.8 **Noun-like Adjectives**

Adjectives can be noun-like when the particle á preceded the adjective and definiteness marker follows it. Gil (2013: 6) suggested that “languages will allow adjectives without nouns to occur in bare form if and only if adjectives are themselves noun-like in their grammatical behaviour”. In addition to this, it can also function like a noun when adjectives are reduplicated. This is illustrated in the examples (266) and (267).

(266) á hɔìɁ pēn
    3SG good TOP
    ‘The good one’

(267) á hɔìɁ~hɔìɁ lá ɔù
    3SG good take.1 IMP
    ‘Take the good ones’

4.9 **Verb-like Adjectives**

Adjectives in Tedim Chin have verb-like characteristics in its grammatical properties. These are:

(i) Stem alternation
(ii) Derivational property
(iii) Adverbials modification of Adjectives
(iv) Negative particle as Adjectival suffix

From the above points, it can be seen that Dixon’s idea of ‘correlation between intransitive predicate and verb-like function of adjectives’ is true for Tedim Chin (a Tibeto-Burman language) which he claimed to be found in “most languages from South-
East and East Asia (including Sinitic, Tibeto-Burman, Tai-Kadai, and some Austroasiatic). In Mizo, a central Kuki-Chin language, adjectives behave syntactically like verbs (Chhangte 1989). They act as qualifier of the noun they follow in a noun phrase (NP).

4.9.1 Stem alternation

In Tedim Chin, adjectives have distinct category on its own although the same adjectives can also have similar function like verbs. As in verbs\textsuperscript{25}, the adjectives can take two forms, appearing as Stem 1 and Stem 2, depending on the syntactic construction. These changes in shape involve tone, segment alternation etc. or no change at all.

Table 29: Adjectives Stem alternation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem 1</th>
<th>Stem 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hɔìʔ</td>
<td>hɔìʔ 'good/beautiful'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sāŋ</td>
<td>saǹ ‘tall’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tʰaû</td>
<td>tʰaû ‘fat’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above data in Table 29, it is observed that an adjective can take different forms which may or may not undergo segmental or tonal changes or both. hɔìʔ shows no change in both the stem and the tone. The changes in sāŋ are both segmental and tonal. The velar nasal (coda position) in Stem 1 becomes an alveolar nasal in Stem 2. With regard to tone, Stem 1 has Mid tone whereas Stem 2 has a Low tone. tʰaû does not change its form except for the tonal change from Mid tone to Low tone.

\textsuperscript{25} See Chapter 5 for more details on Verb stem alternation.
4.9.2 Derivational property

Adjectives can be used to derive an abstract noun with the addition of the nominalising suffix -nā. Hence, it is a class-changing suffix which has a derivational property. It changes the category of the word-class adjective to a noun.

Table 30: Noun derivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pīl ‘wise’</td>
<td>pīl-nā ‘wisdom’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haù ‘rich’</td>
<td>haùʔ-nā ‘richness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liàn ‘big’</td>
<td>liät-nā ‘greatness’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The derivation of a noun from an adjective can be clearly seen from (268) and (269).

(268) kûmpípá pīl-sà ìŋ
    king wise-feel 1SG.RLS
    ‘The king (I feel) is wise’

(269) mí pōlxát-ín pīl-nā ŋàʔ út ùʔ
    person some-ERG wise-NMLZ get want.1 PL
    ‘Some people want to get wisdom’

4.9.3 Adverbial modification of Adjectives

An adverbial particle can occur as an adjective modifier in Tedim Chin. This condition is possible probably due to the verb-like property of adjectives in Tedim. This feature of adjective is also seen in Qiang language in the work of La Polla and Huang (2004).

(270) sāŋ luā
    high very
    ‘Too/very high/tall’
(271) xūm luā
   sweet very
   ‘Too/very sweet’

(272) nī sā luā
   sun hot very
   ‘The sun is too/very hot’

4.9.4 Negative particle as Adjectival Suffix
Adjectives can take negative marker as its modifier. It can also be intervened by an
adverbial particle occurring in between the two as in:
(273) sān-lɔú
   red-NEG.1
   ‘Not red’

(274) sān luá-lɔú
   red very-NEG.1
   ‘Not too red/not so red’

4.10 Reduplication of Adjectives
Adjective shows similar pattern in reduplication like nouns and verbs though the
semantics varies. It has exact repetition of the same word. It denotes continuity of
something that has already happened in the past.
(275) hɔiʔ~hɔiʔ
   good
   ‘still good/continue to be good’

(276) dām~dām
   fine
   ‘still fine/healthy’
(277) à pīl-pīl
3SG wise
‘only the wise ones’

(278) à neú-neú
3SG small
‘only the small ones’

4.11 Intensifiers
Intensifying particles modifies adjectives and occurs before and after adjectives in an adjectival phrase. The examples in (280) and (281) express the same meaning although it is marked differently. It is not yet known about the difference between the two intensifiers in their function. Intensifiers can both precede and follow adjectives in a phrase in (282).

(279) ín lián-pí-tàk neì .ToDecimal
house big-AUG-INTSF have.1 1SG.RLS
‘I have a very big house’

(280) hɔìɁ luā
good INTSF
‘very good’

(281) hɔìɁ màɁ~màɁ
good INTSF
‘very good’

(282) nák lɔ̀ p luā
INTSF excite INTSF
‘very much excited’
4.12 Antonymy and Compensatory Use of Negative Markers

In Tedim, many adjectives do not inherently have antonymous counterpart to show opposition. The addition of the negative particle to the unpaired word gives a reversal in meaning. However, even for the paired items, the negative is often expressed with the help of negative particles itself. The use of negative marker is considered more polite over using antonym. This kind of similar occurrences is also observed in Yoruba, a language of the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family. There are some antonymously paired items (Madugu 1976) while some others did not have the opposite for it. The negative particle comes as a rescuer from the empty void by attaching next to the available item.

(283) hɔìʔ  ‘good’
    siá   ‘bad’
    hɔìʔlɔù ‘bad/not good’

Whereas the antonym of hɔìʔ is siá, it is often easy to negate the positive word to mean the contrary. There are certain adjectives which do not have antonyms for it. The examples (284) and (285) illustrates some basic colour terms with no lexical opposites. The negative particle acts as a marker of antonymy in this case.

(284) puāŋ  ‘grey’
    puāŋlɔú ‘not grey’

(285) sān  ‘red’
    sānlɔú ‘not red’