

Where are the adjectives in Yueqing?

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Baker 2004 treats adjectives as a category distinctive from nouns and verbs. Even in those languages where the adjectives are verb-like, argues Baker, they are distinguished from verbs in the attributive constructions, by either having different markers, or being in a different order with the adjective closer to the head noun when conjoined. Similarly, Dixon 1986 and 2006 suggest that, even though in world languages adjectives can be verb-like, noun-like, neither verb-like or noun-like, or both noun-like and verb-like, they CAN be grammatically distinguished, even though only subtly in some languages, from the categories of nouns and verbs.

The understudied Southern Wu Chinese dialect Yueqing is a language with verb-like adjectives. The adjectives and verbs of Yueqing do not exhibit any categorical differences in various constructions such as being predicates, in attributive constructions, in negation, after modal Vs, after manner Vs, in imperatives, and after the copular verb. All of the adjectives representing the main adjectival concepts such as value, color, size, age, physical property and human propensity can appear in those constructions like verbs do, as well as being conjoined with verbs. Here is an example of verb-adjective conjunction:

- (1) NG [nje-cchang - ku]_{AP} [kei - ku mou-tou]_{VP} bei.
 1sg young - Asp.exp drive - Asp.exp motorcycle Asp.perf
 ‘I have been young and driven motorcycle before.’

Here *-ku* is the experiential aspect particle and *bei* is the perfective aspect particle. I thus argue that in the language adjectives are a subcategory of verbs.

The literature recognizes five classes of verbal lexical aspects: state, activity, accomplishment, achievement and punctual. In Yueqing, each of these classes has a distinct set of friendly aspectual particles—a profile of grammatical aspects markers that are compatible with their lexical aspect as shown in the table below:

verb classes	inchoative	terminative	imperfective
activity	√	*	√
accomplishment	√	√	√
achievement	*	√	*
semelfactive	√	√	√ (iterative)
state	*	*	*
adjective	√ / *	√ / *	*

Interestingly, adjectival verbs have their own set of friendly particles. And adjectival verbs seem to be different from state verbs in that most adjectives allow the inchoative and/or the terminative possibilities.

- (2) ziu-je xgong -jji bei
 leaf red -Asp.inch Asp.perf
 Leaves are starting to turn red.
- (3) *ziu-je zoe-zei -jji bei
 leaf exist -Asp.inch Asp.perf
 *Leaves are starting to exist.

For example, (2) indicates a starting point for the adjectival verb *red*.

Based on careful exploration of aspect particles that are associated with the five aspectual classes and those associated with adjectival verbs, I found that adjectival verbs, depending on their gradability and scale properties, work with either, both or neither of the inchoative and the terminative aspect markers. This sets most of adjectival verbs apart from the other five lexical aspectual classes. I therefore hypothesized that they compose distinct lexical aspectual classes in verbs. To prove my hypothesis, I took 20 representative verbs (or verb phrases) from each of the five established aspectual classes, and 36 words expressing core adjectival notions, and tested their compatibility with all possible aspectual particles. My data come from secondary sources including Bao 2004's *Dictionary of Yueqing*, and native-speaker intuitions. The results confirmed my hypothesis.

This position challenges the view of both Baker and Dixon in that it argues that the differences between adjectives and verbs reduce to lexical aspectual differences like the difference between activity verbs and achievement verbs. If this is correct, it raises the possibility that in languages where adjectives are verb-like, we can apply this criteria and attempt to determine if adjectives are a subcategory of verbs based on their lexical aspectual properties.

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