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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).[1] 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

TABLE 1. Distinguishing properties of the *substantive* and *verb* classes

Property	Substantives	Verbs
Can be head of Noun phrase in subject position	+	−
Can be possessor in a possessive construction	+	−
Can take direct marking of negation	−	+
Can be a modifier linked to a head by the relativizer *thii1*	−	+

no bound morphemes or morphologically marked distinctions of subordination or finiteness. A great many central tasks of the grammar are performed by periphrasis. For example, manipulations of valency are handled by multi-verb constructions (Enfield forthcoming a). Verbs show great flexibility in argument structure, often showing multiple patterns of transitivity. Finally, the language features a system of numeral classifiers (Enfield 2004), a feature which has been claimed to have consequences for the structure of the noun phrase (Gil 1987).

TABLE 2. A selection of properties distinguishing verbs from nouns, stative verbs from active verbs, and adjectives from other verb sub-types

	Properties (see key)	Noun (e.g. *maa3* 'dog')	V. achievement (e.g. *hêŋ3* 'see')	V. accomplishment (e.g. *tam1* 'weave')	V. activity (e.g. *lèèn1* 'run')	V. state (e.g. *huu4* 'know')	V. adjective (e.g. *dii3* 'good')
Verb-only properties	1	−	+	+	+	+	+
	2	−	+	+	+	+	+
Stative-only properties	3	n/a	−	−	−	+	+
	4	n/a	−	−	−	+	+
Adjective-only properties	5	−	−	−	−	−	+
	6	−	−	−	−	−	+
	7	−	−	−	−	−	+
	8	−	−	−	−	−	+

Key to properties:
1. As NP modifier, linked by *thii1* (§3)
2. As predicate, directly preceded by negator *bòø* (§3)
3. V with perfective marker, entails 'V now' (§3)
4. Negation does *not* give future reading (§3)
5. Type A reduplication (§4, §4.2)
6. Intensification with *khanaat5* 'really, very' (§4)
7. Comparative in frame NP1 __ *kua1* NP2 (§4, §4.3)
8. Superlative in frame NP1 __ *thii1 sut2* (§4, §4.3).

Two major categories of the Lao lexicon are *substantives* and *verbs*. Substantives typically refer to things and people. Verbs typically refer to actions, events, and properties. Table 1 identifies some basic distinctions between these two higher level classes.

There are sub-distinctions within the class of substantives, with pronouns a separate class, and nominals dividing into nouns and classifiers. Nominals do many things that pronouns cannot do. They form heads of noun phrases in combination with demonstrative determiners, they form heads of possessive constructions, they can be direct complements of the copula verb *pên3*, they enter into numeral classifier constructions, and they take modifiers linked by the relativizer *thii1*. Other distinct word classes of relevance to this chapter are ideophones, numerals, and quantifiers. These will be discussed as they arise, below. Further details on the broader sub-division of the Lao lexicon are beyond the scope of this discussion.

Table 2 sets out a set of specific properties which distinguish various word classes, featuring different verb sub-classes (including adjectives), as discussed in this chapter.

2. Preliminaries on nominals and noun phrase structure

2.1. NOMINALS AS VERBLESS CLAUSE COMPLEMENTS

Nominals can be used as verbless clause complements, as in the following text example:[2]

(1) [*ñaϕ-thaan1 nan2*]$_{NP_1}$ [*khon2 müang2 phiin2*]$_{NP_2}$
     monk   DEM.NONPROX person district P.
     'That monk (was) a Phiin District person.'

However, no verbal trappings are available for clause complements of this kind. The following examples show that the noun phrase which functions as complement in (1) (subscripted 'NP2') cannot take direct negation (2), irrealis marking (3), achievement marking (4), or progressive marking (5), nor can it function as a modifier of a nominal linked by the relativizer *thii1* (6):

(2) **ñaϕ-thaan1 nan2*   *bòϕ khon2 müang2 phiin2*
     monk   DEM.NONPROX NEG person district P.
     (That monk (was) not a Phiin District person.)

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[2] There is no standard romanization of Lao. Examples are transcribed according to the following conventions:

Consonants					Vowels			Tones	
b	*d*				*i*		*u*	*1* /mid level/	
p	*t*	*c*	*k*	*q* (glottal stop)			*ü* (unrounded)	*2* /high rising/	
ph	*th*		*kh*		*ê*	*e*	*o*	*3* /low rising/	
m	*n*	*ñ*	*ng*					*4* /high falling/	
f	*s*		*h*		*è*	*a*	*ò*	*5* /low falling/	
w	*l*	*j*						*ϕ* /unstressed/	

(3) *ñaɸ-thaanı nan2   siɸ khon2 mùang2 phiin2*
    monk   DEM.NONPROX IRR person district P.
    (That monk will (be) a Phiin District person.)

(4) *ñaɸ-thaanı nan2   dajɸ khon2 mùang2 phiin2*
    monk   DEM.NONPROX ACHV person district P.
    (That monk got to (be) a Phiin District person.)

(5) *ñaɸ-thaanı nan2   kamlang2 khon2 mùang2 phiin2*
    monk   DEM.NONPROX PROG   person district P.
    (That monk (was) being a Phiin District person.)

(6) *ñaɸ-thaanı thiiı khon2 mùang2 phiin2*
    monk   REL person district P.
    (a/the monk who (was) a Phiin District person)

2.2. NOMINALS AS NOUN MODIFIERS

Nominals can be used to modify nominals, as in the following examples:

(7) *saaj3 tholasap2*
    cable telephone
    'telephone cable'

(8) *kèèw4 nom2*
    bottle milk
    'milk bottle'

There are differences in grammatical behaviour between nominals and verbs in modifier function. First, nominal modifiers can never be linked to their heads by the relativizer *thiiı*:

(9) **kèèw4 thiiı nom2*
    bottle REL milk
    (milk bottle; i.e. 'bottle which (is) milk')

A second difference is that modification of nominals by verbs often involves the use of a modifier classifier (Enfield 2004). In the following, the (a) examples show a verb (stative and active, respectively) directly modifying a noun, the (b) examples show these same modifiers linked to their noun heads by the semantically general classifier *qan3*:

(10) (a) *còòk5 ngaam2*
          cup beautiful
          'beautiful cup'
     (b) *còòk5 qan3 ngaam2*
          cup CL beautiful
          'the beautiful cup'

(11) (a) *còòk5 tok2*
           cup fall
           'fallen cup' ('cup which has fallen')
      (b) *còòk5 qan3 tok2*
           cup CL fall
           'the fallen cup' ('the cup which has fallen')

When the modifier is a nominal, however, use of a linking modifier classifier is not possible:

(12) (a) *còòk5 din2*
           cup earth
           'earthen cup'
      (b) **còòk5 qan3 din3*
           cup CL earth
           (the earthen cup)

2.3. STRUCTURE OF THE NOUN PHRASE

It is difficult to make a definitive statement about relative ordering of modifiers within the Lao noun phrase, but some generalizations are possible. For example, possessors appear further from the head than other types of modifiers:

(13) (a) *khuaj2 dam3 phen1*
           buffalo black 3SG
           'his/her black buffalo'
      (b) *khuaj2 phen1 dam3*
           buffalo 3SG black
           'His/her buffalo is black.' (NOT: 'his/her black buffalo')

However, no obvious generalizations seem possible for the relative ordering of multiple adjectives. One difficulty in making a generalization about adjective ordering is that noun phrases in Lao can have a 'non-configurational' structure (Gil 1987). When multiple adjectives are used as modifiers of a single nominal head, often one or more of them is attached to its own classifier, in a phrase syntactically separate from the head noun. Consider the following alternative descriptions of a scene in which a big black buffalo ate my rice:

(14) (a) *khuaj2 dam3 ñaj1 kin3 khaw5 khòòj5*
           buffalo black big eat rice 1SG
           'The/a big black buffalo ate my rice.'
      (b) *khuaj2 dam3 too3   ñaj1 kin3 khaw5 khòòj5*
           buffalo black CL.ANIMAL big eat rice 1SG
           'Black buffalo, the/a big one ate my rice.'
      (c) *khuaj2 ñaj1 kin3 khaw5 khòòj5 too3   dam3*
           buffalo big eat rice 1SG   CL.ANIMAL black
           'The/a big buffalo ate my rice, the/a black one.'

Examples (14b) and (14c) have an 'appositional' feel, as conveyed by the English translations. Also note that presence of the classifier in the noun phrase suggests (but does not entail) definiteness of the referent (Enfield 2004).

Another point to note about modifier ordering is that while both adjectives and active verbs may be unmarked modifiers of nouns in noun phrases, they do not combine with each other readily:

(15)   (a)   *maa3 dam3*
          dog   black
          'black dog'

    (b)   *maa3 haw1*
          dog   bark
          'barking dog'

    (c)   **maa3 dam3 haw1*
          dog   black bark
          (barking black dog)

3. The class of verbs in Lao

The term *verb* may be used for members of the class of words accessible to a defined set of grammatical markings and processes associated with words denoting semantically prototypical actions/events (e.g. *tii3* 'hit', *lèèn1* 'run', *haj5* 'give', *hên3* 'see', *vaw4* 'speak'). This category in Lao includes words denoting not only actions and events, but also words denoting 'property concepts', which in some other languages are confined to a distinct *adjective* class (e.g. *suung3* '(be) tall', *dii3* '(be) good', *dèèng3* '(be) red').

Canonical main verbs such as *tii3* 'hit', *vaw4* 'say', or *hên3* 'see' in simple clauses have a number of distinguishing properties which they do not share with nominals, as illustrated in Figure 1.

- Verbs may be directly marked by aspect-modality elements, including:
  preposed   – irrealis markers *siϕ* and *caϕ*
                – negator *bòò1/bòϕ*
                – attainment marker *dajϕ*
                – progressive markers *kamlang2* and *phuam2*
  postposed – perfective marker *lèèw4*

- Verbs are commonly used alone in affirmative responses to polar questions ('yes-answers')

- Verbs may (in combination with their complements) form nominal modifiers linked to their heads by the relativizer *thii1*

- Verbs may be modified directly by ideophones

FIGURE 1. Distinguishing properties of Lao verbs

verbs

active

stative

activity

achievement

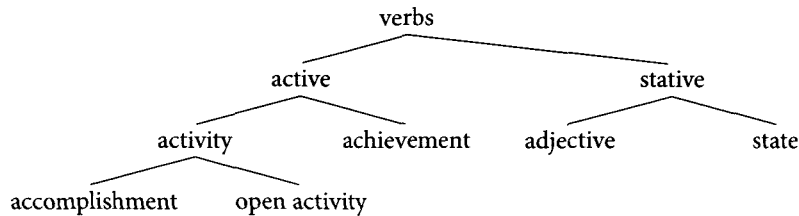adjective

state

accomplishment

open activity

FIGURE 2. A taxonomy of Lao verb sub-types

While all Lao verbs display these properties, they vary with respect to more subtle grammatical possibilities. This variation may be used as a basis for sub-categorization of the verb class, as illustrated in Figure 2.

A first division is between active and stative verbs. Unlike active verbs, stative verbs (a) do not normally take marking for progressive aspect, and (b) when marked with the postposed perfective *lèèw4*, entail their own truth at the moment of speech. For example, *mii2 ngen2 lèèw4* [have money PFV] means '(I) already have (the) money' (entailing that I have it now), while *hên3 ngen2 lèèw4* [see money PFV] means '(I) have already seen (the) money' (not entailing that I see it now). Semantically, active verbs entail 'something happens', while stative verbs do not. Within the class of active verbs, a first distinction is between achievements and activities, where for example only the latter may appear as a complement of *leem4* 'begin to'. Activities may be further subdivided into accomplishments and open activities, where for example only the former can take *bòø lèèw4* [NEG PFV] as a complement (e.g. *hùan2 kuu3 puk2 bòø lèèw4* [house 1SG build NEG PFV] 'My house is not finished being built'). The class of stative verbs is divided into adjective verbs and state verbs, with only adjective verbs being available for 'Type A reduplication'. This and other differences are discussed in later sections.

Figure 2 is a true taxonomy. This means that any node is a more narrowly defined instance of any of the nodes to which it is connected by lines above it. Adjectives, thus, cannot be said to be 'distinct from verbs' in Lao, because they *are* verbs in Lao. They possess all the defining properties of the verb class (Figure 1).

The following examples illustrate the common behaviour of various different verb sub-types. The examples used are *phop1* 'meet' (achievement), *puk2 hùan2* 'build house' (accomplishment), *ñaang1* 'walk' (open activity), *mii2 pùm4* 'have book' (state), and *suung3* 'tall' (adjective). First, all these verb sub-types may be directly marked (pre-verbally) by the irrealis markers *siø* and *caø*:

(16) *khòòj5 siø phop1 man2*
      1SG   IRR meet 3SG
      'I will meet him.'

(17) khòòj5 si∅ puk2 hùan2
      1SG   IRR build house
      'I will build a house.'

(18) khòòj5 si∅ ñaang1
      1SG   IRR walk
      'I will walk.'

(19) khòòj5 si∅ mii2 pùm4
      1SG   IRR have book
      'I will have a book.'

(20) khòòj5 si∅ suung3
      1SG   IRR tall
      'I will be tall.'

All verbs may be directly marked (pre-verbally) by the negator *bòò1* (which takes the unstressed form *bò∅* when pre-marking a verb):

(21) khòòj5 bò∅ phop1 man2
      1SG   NEG meet 3SG
      'I won't/don't meet him.'

(22) khòòj5 bò∅ puk2 hùan2
      1SG   NEG build house
      'I don't/won't build a house.'

(23) khòòj5 bò∅ ñaang1
      1SG   NEG walk
      'I don't/won't walk.'

(24) khòòj5 bò∅ mii2 pùm4
      1SG   NEG have book
      'I don't have a book.'

(25) khòòj5 bò∅ suung3
      1SG   NEG tall
      'I am not tall.'

Note that the two stative verb sub-types group together here in not giving future readings when appearing with the negation marker (24, 25).

All verbs may be directly marked (pre-verbally) by the achievement marker *daj∅*:

(26) khòòj5 daj∅ phop1 man2
      1SG   ACHV meet 3SG
      'I did/got to meet him.'

(27) khòòj5 dajǿ puk2 hùan2
      1SG ACHV build house
      'I did/got to build a house.'

(28) khòòj5 dajǿ ñaang1
      1SG ACHV walk
      'I did/got to walk.'

(29) ?khòòj5 dajǿ mii2 pùm4
      1SG   ACHV have book
      ?'I did have a book.'

(30) ?khòòj5 dajǿ suung3
      1SG   ACHV tall
      ?'I was/got to be tall.'

The use of the pre-verbal achievement marker *dajǿ* with stative verbs is somewhat marked (29, 30). Elicitation gets mostly negative responses, but these combinations are considered acceptable with inchoative readings and with negation. They certainly occur in spontaneous speech.

All verbs may be directly marked (pre-verbally) by the progressive markers *kamlang2* and *phuam2*:

(31) khòòj5 kamlang2 phop1 man2
      1SG PROG   meet 3SG
      'I am meeting him.'

(32) khòòj5 kamlang2 puk2 hùan2
      1SG PROG   build house
      'I am building a house.'

(33) khòòj5 kamlang2 ñaang1
      1SG PROG   walk
      'I am walking.'

(34) ?khòòj5 kamlang2 mii2 pùm4
      1SG   PROG   have book
      'I am having/getting (a) book(s).'

(35) ?khòòj5 kamlang2 suung3
      1SG   PROG   tall
      'I am being/getting tall.'

Again, this marking is unusual with stative verbs, unless some kind of gradability is construed (e.g. coming into possession of many books, getting tall).

All verbs may be used in combination with the post-verbal perfective marker *lèèw4* (elsewhere meaning 'finish'):

(36)   *khòòj5 phop1 man2 lèèw4*
        1SG   meet   3SG   PFV
        'I met him already.'

(37)   *khòòj5 puk2 hùan2 lèèw4*
        1SG   build house PFV
        'I built a/the house already.'

(38)   *khòòj5 ñaang1 lèèw4*
        1SG   walk   PFV
        'I have walked/did walk already.'

(39)   *khòòj5 mii2 pùm4 lèèw4*
        1SG   have book PFV
        'I already have a book.'

(40)   *khòòj5 suung3 lèèw4*
        1SG   tall   PFV
        'I am already tall.'

The 'perfective' *lèèw4* shows another contrast between stative and active verbs. When a stative verb combines with *lèèw4*, there is an entailment that '*p* is the case now'. This entailment does not hold with active verbs. In (36-40), both and only the examples featuring stative verbs entail that the verb is the case at the time of utterance. In other words, if a speaker utters (39), then he 'has a book' at the time of speech; if he utters (40), then he is 'tall' at the time of speech. In none of (36-8), however, does the combination 'V+*lèèw4*' entail 'V now'.

All verbs may (in combination with their complements) form nominal modifiers in combination with the relativizer *thii1*:

(41)   *khon2   thii1 phop1 man2*
        person REL meet   3SG
        'the person who meets him'

(42)   *khon2   thii1 puk2 hùan2*
        person REL build house
        'the person who builds a house'

(43)   *khon2   thii1 ñaang1*
        person REL walk
        'the person who walks'

(44)   *khon2   thii1 mii2 pùm4*
        person REL have book
        'the person who has a book'

(45)   *khon2   thii1 suung3*
        person REL tall
        'the person who is tall'

All verbs may be used alone as affirmative responses to polar questions (i.e. as 'yes-answers'), as illustrated in the following two examples:

(46) Q: *caw4 phop1 man2 bòò3*
          2SG   meet 3SG   PCL
          'Did/will you meet him?'

      A: *phop1*
          meet
          '(Yes, I did/will) meet (him).'

(47) Q: *man2 suung3 bòò3*
          3SG   tall   PCL
          'Is he tall?'

      A: *suung3*
          tall
          '(Yes, he is) tall.'

Many verbs may be nominalized using either of the nominalizers *kaan3* 'work, activity' or *khuam2* 'sense'. These nominalizers have different meanings, *kaan3* appearing more often with activity verbs and *khuam2* appearing more often with adjectives (and other stative verbs):

(48) (a) kaan3 khaa5 [work kill] 'killing'
      (b) kaan3 lùùm2 [work forget] 'forgetting'
      (c) kaan3 khañaaj3 [work expand] 'expansion'

(49) (a) khuam2 dii3 [sense good] 'goodness'
      (b) khuam2 dang3 [sense loud] 'volume'
      (c) khuam2 ngaam2 [sense beautiful] 'beauty'

However, these tendencies are far from consistent. Sometimes adjectives can appear with *kaan3* (e.g. *kaan3 dii3* [work good] 'an appropriate action'), and sometimes active verbs can appear with *khuam2* (e.g. *khuam2 fan3* [sense dream] 'a dream'). Some verbs can appear with both (Prasithrathsint 2000: 264), and some with neither. And occasionally even nouns can appear with these nominalizers.

Finally, ideophones—a class of sound-symbolic expressions denoting highly specific semantic distinctions of appearance or other perceptual quality—can only appear in direct combination with verbs:

(50) *maa3 too3 nii4   *(dam3) pi∅-pii1*
      dog CL   DEM.GNL black EXPR.VERY.BLACK
      'This dog is really black.'

(51) *maa3 too3 nii4   *(nòòn2) sê∅-lêê2*
      dog CL   DEM.GNL lie   EXPR.AT.AWKWARD.ANGLE
      'This dog is lying at an awkward angle.'

4. Characteristics of the adjective sub-class of verbs

Lao adjectives have all the defining properties of verbs, as described in the previous section. Accordingly, they share none of the grammatical properties of nouns. In addition, and unlike other verb sub-types, Lao adjectives show the properties listed in Figure 3.

Compare the grammatical behaviour of the adjective *suung3* 'tall' with the active verb *lèèn1* 'run'. First, the active verb (in the (b) example) does not undergo Type A reduplication:

(52) (a) *khon2 sungφ-suung3 mèèn1 qaaj4 khòòj5*
        person REDUP-tall be   O.BRO 1SG
        'The tallish person is my brother.'

    (b) **khon2 lènφ-lèèn1 mèèn1 qaaj4 khòòj5*
        person REDUP-run be   O.BRO 1SG
        (The run-ing-ish person is my brother.)

Second, the active verb may not be marked directly by *kua1* 'more than' in a comparative construction:

(53) (a) *qaaj4 khòòj5 suung3 kua1   qaaj4 caw4*
        O.BRO 1SG tall   more.than O.BRO 2SG
        'My brother is taller than your brother.'

    (b) **qaaj4 khòòj5 lèèn1 kua1   qaaj4 caw4*
        O.BRO 1SG run more.than O.BRO 2SG
        (My brother runs more than your brother.)

Third, the active verb does not give a 'somewhat' reading when it appears with the complement-taking verb *jaak5* ('want'):

(54) (a) *qaaj4 khòòj5 jaak5 suung3*
        O.BRO 1SG want tall
        i. 'My brother wants to be tall.'
        ii. 'My brother is somewhat tall.'

- Adjectives may undergo Type A reduplication (if monosyllabic)

- Adjectives may be marked directly by *kua1* 'more than' in comparative and superlative constructions, and by *thii1-sut2* in superlative constructions

- Adjectives may take *jaak5* (elsewhere 'want') as a pre-verbal modal with the meaning 'somewhat'

- Adjectives may be intensified by postposed *khanaat5* 'extent' and *teep5* 'rather'

FIGURE 3. Distinguishing properties of Lao adjectives

    (b)   *qaaj4 khòòj5 jaak5 lèèn1*
           O.BRO 1SG   want run
           'My brother wants to run.'
           (NOT: My brother somewhat runs.)

Fourth, the active verb cannot be modified by intensifiers *khanaat5* 'extent' and *teep5* 'rather':

(55) (a) *qaaj4 khòòj5 suung3 khanaat5/teep5*
          O.BRO 1SG   tall   extent/rather
          'My brother is really/rather tall.'
    (b) **qaaj4 khòòj5 lèèn1 khanaat5/teep5*
          O.BRO 1SG   run extent/rather
          (My brother really/rather runs.)

Lao adjectives perform the two major adjective functions (see Ch. 1 of this volume), namely (1) making a 'statement of property', as the predicate of an intransitive clause, and (2) modifying a noun (in underived form) within a noun phrase. However, these properties are general properties of verbs in Lao, and are not exclusive to adjectives.

The following sub-sections discuss in more detail the properties of adjectives just described. We begin, however, with a discussion of some semantic distinctions within the adjective class.

4.1. DIXON'S SEMANTIC TYPES

Lao adjectives cover most of the semantic classes suggested by Dixon (1982; Ch. 1 of this volume). The four 'core adjective semantic types' are as follows:

DIMENSION   *ñaj1* 'big', *nòòj4* 'small', *ñaaw2* 'long', *san5* 'short' ('steep'), *naa3* 'thick' (and many more)
AGE   *thaw5* 'old (of a person)', *num1* 'young' (of a person), *kaw1* 'old (of a thing)', *kèè1* 'old (of fruit or other edible)'
VALUE   *dii3* 'good', *ngaam2* 'beautiful', *phèèng2* 'dear', *cop2* 'wholesome, fine' (and a few more)
COLOUR   *dèèng3* 'red', *lùang3* 'yellow', *khiaw3* 'green/blue', *khaaw3* 'white', *dam3* 'black' (five terms only)

Other semantic types are listed as follows:[3]

PHYSICAL PROPERTY *dip2* 'green, raw', *suk2* 'ripe, cooked', *naw1* 'rotten', *sot2* 'fresh', *lèèm3* 'sharp', *khêm2* 'salty', *vaan3* 'sweet', *nak2* 'heavy', *ñaq1* 'gritty', *lèèw3* 'sloppy', *khun4* 'opaque (of liquid)', etc. (many more: very large class)

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[3] SIMILARITY expressions and NUMBERS are not adjectives in Lao. Similarity is expressed by a verb *khùù2* 'like' (as in *caw4 khùù2 khòòj5* [2SG be.like 1SG] 'You're like me'). Numbers form a class of their own, distinct from other kinds of modifiers (for example, unlike other kinds of modifiers, numerals *precede* the nominal in their phrase).

HUMAN PROPENSITY	*kêngı* 'adept', *salaat5* 'clever', *ngooı* 'stupid', *nguangı* 'sleepy', etc. (many more: large class)
SPEED	*vaj2* 'fast', *saa4* 'slow'
DIFFICULTY	*ngaajı* 'easy', *ñaak4* 'difficult'
QUALIFICATION[4]	*thèè4* 'real', *cing3* 'true'
QUANTIFICATION	*laaj3* 'much', *nòòj5* 'little, not much'
POSITION	*kaj3* 'far', *kaj4* 'near', *thiiı* 'close together', *haangı* 'far apart'

4.2. TYPE A REDUPLICATION

In Type A reduplication, an element σ^α becomes $\sigma^0\text{-}\sigma^\alpha_\cdot$ where σ^α takes full stress and bears lexically specified tone, while σ^0 is unstressed, with no lexical tone and with neutralization of the usual length contrast in the vowel:[5]

(56)   *khon2 suung3*
        person tall
        'the tall person'

(57)   *khon2 sungø-suung3*
        person REDUP-tall
        'the tallish person'

This type of reduplication is normally used in attributive function (58) rather than predicative function, although the latter occurs (59) (with constraints; e.g. while irrealis marking is possible (60), negation is not (61)):

(58)   *hùan2 sungø-suung3 mèènı hùan2 phenı*
        house REDUP-high be   house 3SG
        'The tallish house is his house.'

(59)   *hùan2 phenı sungø-suung3*
        house 3SG   REDUP-high
        'His house is tallish.'

(60)   *hùan2 phenı caø sungø-suung3*
        house 3SG   IRR REDUP-high
        'His house will be tallish.'

(61)   **hùan2 phenı bòø sungø-suung3*
        house 3SG   NEG REDUP-high
        (His house is not tallish.)

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[4] The two terms shown here are defective in that they do not take direct preposed aspect-modality marking (such as negation).

[5] A second type of reduplication—Type B—derives from σ^α the structure $\sigma^{2+}\text{-}\sigma^\alpha$, where σ^{2+} is a stressed and lengthened version of σ^α with tone 2 overriding the original a tone. This type is not restricted to adjectives, nor is it restricted to monosyllabic input. Note that Thai has the same two types of reduplication. Prasithrathsint (2000: 264–5) has argued that Thai adjectives are indistinct from other verbs, but she does not refer to Type A reduplication, which in fact does provide a clear basis for distinction.

None of the other verb sub-classes allow Type A reduplication. Many adjectives also cannot occur with Type A reduplication due to their being non-monosyllabic (e.g. *salaat5* 'clever'). Note also the case of *lùajϕ-lùaj4*, a common expression meaning 'all the time', which has the structure of Type A reduplication, but where there is no input verb/adjective form *lùaj4* (i.e. it is inherently reduplicated).

Very occasionally, nominals are used in a Type A reduplication structure, as in the following attested example:

(62) *juu1   theng2 phuϕ-phuu2   phunϕ*
     be.at top   REDUP-mountain DEM.PCL.FAR.DISTAL
     'far far away over in the mountains'

This is apparently an extended use of a nominal in an adverbial function; i.e. 'mountain' as 'in the mountains'. Another attested example is *thùùk5 bòòn1 sinϕ-siin4* [strike place REDUP-meat] '(It) struck (my rump) in the very meat.'

4.3. COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Comparative expressions involve a marker *kuaϕ* 'more than', which is derived from a verb *kua1* meaning 'cross, surpass' (cf. Ansaldo 1999).

(63) *khòòj5 suung3 kuaϕ caw4*
     1SG   tall   more.than 2SG
     'I am taller than you.'

None of the other verb classes can appear in this construction, as the following examples demonstrate:[6]

(64) **khòòj5 phop1 man2 kuaϕ caw4*
     1SG   meet 3SG   more.than 2SG
     (I meet him (more) than you.)

(65) **khòòj5 puk2 hùan2 kuaϕ caw4*
     1SG   build house more.than 2SG
     (I build (a) house(s) (more) than you.)

(66) **khòòj5 ñaang1 kuaϕ caw4*
     1SG   walk   more.than 2SG
     (I walk (more) than you.)

(67) **khòòj5 mii2 pùm4 kuaϕ caw4*
     1SG   have book more.than 2SG
     (I have (a) book(s) (more) than you.)

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[6] Note, however, that in all these examples, insertion of the quantification adjective *laaj3* 'much, very' before the comparative particle *kua1* gives a grammatical expression with the required meaning.

The comparative particle can be used in combination with *muuɩ* '(member of) group' to create a superlative expression, as in the following example:

(68) *khòòjʂ suung3 kuaɸ   muuɩ*
      1SG   tall   more.than member(s).of.group
      'I am the tallest (i.e. taller than the other members of the group).'

Another apparent 'superlative' construction—which lacks any noun phrase referring to a standard, but instead involves the word *sut2* 'extremity' in a locative adjunct—is often used not in a true superlative sense, but as merely strong emphasis ('really tall'):

(69) *khòòjʂ suung3 thiiɩ   sut2*
      1SG   tall   ORDIN extremity
      'I am the tallest.' (or 'I am really tall.')

Neither of these constructions allow verbs from other verb classes.

4.4. ADVERBIAL FUNCTION IN SERIAL VERB STRUCTURES

Some adjectives can function adverbially in serial verb structures, describing the quality or property of an action rather than of a thing. The following example shows the 'HUMAN PROPENSITY' adjective *kêngɩ* 'adept' in adverbial function:

(70) *man2 vaw4 kêngɩ*
      3SG   speak adept
      'S/he's good at talking.' ('S/he speaks well.')

Also, adjectives can be used as 'depictive secondary predicates' (in the sense of Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004), predicating a secondary and temporally transient property of one of the participants of a main clause (Enfield forthcoming b). The following example shows *dip2* 'raw' in such a function:

(71) *man2 kin3 siin4 nan4   dip2*
      3SG   eat   meat DEM.NONPROX raw
      'He ate that meat raw.'

So-called 'subject depictives' are ordered differently, as shown by the position of *maw2* 'intoxicated' in the following example:

(72) *man2 maw2 maa2 hùan2*
      3SG   drunk come house
      'He came home drunk.'

These adverbial functions cannot be performed by all adjectives (at least DIMENSION, AGE, and COLOUR are excluded). Adverbial and depictive functions thus constitute a grammatical property which subdivides the adjective class.

4.5. INCHOATIVIZATION OF ADJECTIVES USING DIRECTIONAL COMPLEMENTS

There is variation within adjectives in how they are 'inchoativized'. Four directional verbs—*khaw5* 'enter', *qòòk5* 'exit', *khùn5* 'ascend', and *long2* 'descend'—can be used after an adjective to express the meaning that the adjective property becomes 'more':[7]

(73) *phêt1 khaw5*
      spicy enter
      'get spicier'

(74) *ñaj1 qòòk5*
      big   exit
      'enlarge'

(75) *dii3 khùn5*
      good ascend
      'improve'

(76) *nòòj4 long2*
      small descend
      'shrink, reduce'

Many verbs can take only one of the directional verbs in such a construction.

(77) *dii3   khùn5/*long2/*khaw5/*qòòk5*
      good ascend/descend/enter/exit
      'improve'

Other verbs can take more than one:

(78) *baa4 khaw5/khùn5*
      crazy enter/ascend
      'get crazier'

(79) *cèèng4 qòòk5/khùn5*
      clear   exit/ascend
      'become clearer'

One might expect there to be some systematicity relating to the apparent parallelism within the system, i.e. given that enter/exit and ascend/descend are opposites, and that many adjectives come in opposite pairs. But while one says *naaw3 khaw5* [cold enter] for 'get colder', one cannot say **hòòn4 qòòk5* [hot exit] for 'get hotter'.

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[7] Directional verbs are also used in combination with other verb types, but without 'inchoative' meanings. They regularly combine with active verbs which refer to a kind of action which can cause motion along some path (e.g. *khùn5* 'ascend' in *lèèn1 khùn5 khòòj4* [run ascend hill] 'run up a hill').

Rather, one says *hòòn4 khùn5* [hot ascend] 'get hotter'. The degree and nature of the systematicity of these patterns remains to be investigated.

4.6. VERBS OF STATE CHANGE AS ADJECTIVES

A number of verbs show properties of both active verbs and adjectives. These include state-change verbs such as intransitive *tèèk5* 'break, broken' and (S=O) ambitransitive *phang2* 'destroy, destroyed'. Such verbs can be functionally similar to adjectival participles in English, yet without any 'derivational' morphological marking:

(80) *caan3 nii4   caɸ tèèk5*
      plate DEM.GNL IRR break
      'This plate will break.'

(81) *caan3 tèèk5 mèèn1 caan3 khòòj5*
      plate break be   plate 1SG
      'The broken plate is my plate.'

So far, these are properties of any verb. However, verbs of this kind, in addition, show a number of full adjective properties. They appear with Type A reduplication and in comparative constructions:

(82) *caan3 tèkɸ-tèèk5   mèèn1 caan3 khòòj5*
      plate REDUP-break be   plate 1SG
      'The broken-ish plate is my plate.'

(83) *caan3 khòòj5 tèèk5 kua1   caan3 caw4*
      plate 1SG   break more.than plate 2SG
      'My plate is more broken than your plate.'

However, since verbs of state change always allow an 'event' reading, they do not show the stative-only property of not allowing a future reading under negation (see Figure 2).

The bridging context which allows reanalysis of some state change verbs as adjectives seems clear. As active verbs they predicate an event which entails a certain state change, where the resulting state is enduring. If the relevant event is understood as realized, such a verb can be equally regarded as predicating a 'past event' (where the result state automatically now holds) or a 'present state' (where a change-into-state event is assumed to have preceded).

Other state change verbs such as intransitive *taaj3* 'die' or (S=O) ambitransitive *peet5* 'open' do not display these adjective properties. It seems clear that these latter forms are excluded because they do not allow gradability, possibly a defining semantic component of adjectives in Lao.

4.7. CIRCADIAN TIME-PERIOD TERMS

Terms for time periods within the cycle of a day such as *kham1* 'evening', *saw4*

'early morning', *suaj3* 'late morning', *vên2* 'daytime', and *dek2* 'late at night' behave like adjectives (taking direct negation and Type A reduplication), but show fairly restricted possibilities for occurrence with nominal arguments. Mostly, they are used adverbially:

(84)   *tòòn3*   *dek2*
        time.period late.at.night
        'the period late at night'

(85)   *tòòn3*   *dek∅-dek2*
        time.period REDUP-late.at.night
        'the period late-ish at night'

(86)   *phen1 maa2 dek2*
        3SG   come late.at.night
        'S/he came late at night.'

Not all circadian time-period terms behave in this way. The terms *vên2* 'daytime' and *saw4* 'early morning' may be Type A reduplicated, but require the addition of *tèè1* 'from' in adverbial function:

(87)   *tòòn3*   *saw∅-saw4*
        time.period REDUP-early.morning
        'early-ish in the morning'

(88)   *phen1 maa2 *(tèè1) saw4*
        3SG   come from early.morning
        'S/he came in the early morning.'

While *khùùn2* 'night' does occur as a modifier in the expression *tòòn3 khùùn2* [time.period night] 'night time', it cannot be used at all as an adverbial modifier (89), nor can it be Type A reduplicated (90):

(89)   **phen1 maa2 (tèè1) khùùn2*
        3SG   come from night
        (S/he came at night.)

(90)   **tòòn1*   *khùn∅-khùùn2*
        time.period REDUP-night
        (the night-ish period)

4.8. COLOUR TERMS

There are two classes of words used to describe COLOUR in Lao. The class of primary colour terms consists of five adjectives: *khaaw3* 'white', *dam3* 'black', *dèèng3* 'red', *khiaw3* 'blue/green', and *lùang3* 'yellow'. These behave like regular adjectives, taking direct negation, acting as direct nominal modifiers, appearing in comparative expressions, and allowing Type A reduplication. Secondary colour terms are

nominal, derived from nouns (e.g. *faa4* 'sky; blue', *bua3* 'lotus; pink', *namφ-taan3* 'sugar; brown').[8] These do not display any of the properties of predicative adjectives. They cannot function as direct modifiers of heads in noun phrases:

(91) (a) *lot1*   *(sii3)*   *dam3*
          vehicle colour black
          'black (coloured) car'
    (b) *lot1*   **(sii3)*   *faa4*
          vehicle colour blue
          'blue coloured car'

They cannot be used alone as attributive predicates:

(92) (a) *lot1*   *khan2*   *nan4*   *bòφ dam3*
          vehicle CL.VEHICLE DEM.NONPROX NEG black
          'That car is not black.'
    (b) **lot1*   *khan2*   *nan4*   *bòφ faa4*
          vehicle CL.VEHICLE DEM.NONPROX NEG blue
          (That car is not blue.)

A more complex structure (involving the copula *mèèn1*) is required in order to express the meaning intended by (92b):

(93) *lot1*   *khan2*   *nan4*   *bòφ mèèn1 sii3*   *faa4*
      vehicle CL.VEHICLE DEM.NONPROX NEG be   colour blue
      'That car is not blue-coloured.'

Finally, secondary colour terms cannot be Type A reduplicated:

(94) (a) *lot1*   *damφ-dam3 mèèn1 lot1*   *khòòj5*
          vehicle REDUP-black be   vehicle 1SG
          'The blackish vehicle is mine.'
    (b) **lot1*   *faφ-faa4   mèèn1 lot1*   *khòòj5*
          vehicle REDUP-blue be   vehicle 1SG
          (The blueish vehicle is mine.)

5. Derivation

There are various patterns by which adjectival expressions can be derived.

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[8] The term *namφ-taan3* literally means 'water/juice of the toddy palm'. In former times (and still, in some cases), Lao villagers would reduce the juice of the toddy palm seed and use the resulting brown lumps as sugar. White cane sugar has long replaced this in most places in Laos, yet the term *namφ-taan3* is used for the white substance. Thus, while the substance *namφ-taan3* is white, the colour *namφ-taan3* is brown. This is a clear demonstration that the colour term is not a (synchronically) transparent reference to a thing or substance typically having the denoted colour, but is idiomatically specified.

5.1. COMPLEX ADJECTIVES

5.1.1. Compounds involving noun and verb

Some types of complex adjectives combine a verbal and a nominal element. Not being monosyllabic, these do not enter into Type A reduplication. They are nevertheless adjectives as defined by their behaviour in comparative constructions, with the modal *jaak5* 'want/tends to' and with the intensifiers *khanaat5* 'extent' and *teep5* 'rather'.

A set of some hundreds of terms involve *caj3* 'heart', such as *caj3-dii3* 'kind' (lit. 'good heart') and *dii3-caj3* 'glad' (lit. 'heart good'; cf. Diller and Juntanamalaga 1990 on the nearly identical Thai system). There appear to be different patterns of grammaticalization with respect to becoming a simple adjective. For example, *man2 caj3-dii3* [3SG heart-good] can be paraphrased as 's/he is good-hearted' or 'his/her heart is good', and accordingly negation can appear in two different slots:

(95)   (a)   *man2 caj3   dii3*
           3SG   heart good
           'He's good-hearted.'

      (b)   *man2 bòø caj3   dii3*
           3SG   NEG heart good
           'He's not good-hearted.'

      (c)   *man2 caj3   bòø dii3*
           3SG   heart NEG good
           'He's not good-hearted.' (i.e. 'He, (the) heart is not good.')

On the other hand, while *man2 caj3-dam3* [3SG heart-black] can be paraphrased as 's/he is black-hearted', it is odd paraphrased as ?'his/her heart is black', perhaps since it draws on a more tenuous metaphor. Accordingly, negation directly on the verb component *dam3* 'black' is not preferred:

(96)   (a)   *man2 caj3   dam3*
           3SG   heart black
           'He's black-hearted.'

      (b)   *man2 bòø caj3   dam3*
           3SG   NEG heart black
           'He's not black-hearted.'

      (c)   *?man2 caj3   bòø dam3*
           3SG   heart NEG black
           (He's not black-hearted; or, He, (the) heart is not black.)

Other examples of compound adjectival expressions involving noun and verb include body-part-plus-quality combinations such as *haang3 kut2* 'missing tail' or *phom3 dèèng3* 'red hair'. These appear as adjective type predicates in the following examples:

(97)   mèèw2 caw4 caφ haang3 kut2
        cat   2SG IRR tail   lopped
        'Your cat will be lopped-tailed.'

(98)   luuk4 man2 bòφ phom3 dèèng3
        child 3SG   NEG hair   red
        'Her children are not red-haired.'

These body-part-plus-quality combinations show the full grammatical behaviour of verb/adjectives, as the following attested example shows, with *mên3 paak5* [stink mouth] in a comparative construction:

(99)   phakφ-hòòm3   mên3 paak5 kua1   phakφ-thiam2
        CT.VEGETABLE-onion stink mouth more.than CT.VEGETABLE-garlic
        'Onions are more mouth-stinking than garlic.'

5.1.2. Synonym compounds

Commonly, two or more adjectives are used together, in a pattern typical of the Lao tendency to elaborate parallelism. These often have specific idiomatic meanings:

(100)   (a) hang1-mii2 [wealthy-have] 'rich'
        (b) ñaj1-kuang4 [big-wide] 'expansive'
        (c) ñung5-ñaak4 [knotted-difficult] 'complicated'
        (d) dii3-ngaam2 [good-beautiful] 'good, proper'
        (e) kêng1-kaa4-saa3maat4 [adept-daring-able] 'brave, strong, able'

Such elaborative compounding is not adjective-specific, however. Here are some examples of elaborative compounds consisting of nouns and/or verbs:

(101)   (a) sùù4-khaaj3 [buy-sell] 'trade, engage in commerce'
        (b) khaa5-fan2-lan1-thèèng2 [kill-slice-cut-stab] 'annihilate violently'
        (c) kèèw4-vèèn3-ngen2-kham2 [gem-ring-silver-gold] 'valuables'

5.2. 'ZERO DERIVATION'

Sometimes a single verb has two meanings, one as an adjective and one as another verb sub-type. For example, the verb *khaw5* 'enter' has a second meaning 'sharp (for cutting)'. In this second meaning, *khaw5* behaves like a PHYSICAL PROPERTY adjective, and accordingly enters into adjective-specific grammatical behaviour, such as the Type A reduplication illustrated in the following example:

(102)   miit4 khawφ-khaw5
        knife REDUP-sharp
        'the/a sharp-ish knife'

The bridging context for such a meaning shift is the co-presence of sharpness of a knife and its 'entering' whatever it cuts (e.g. a piece of meat).

Another example is the transitive verb *mii2* 'have (something)', whose second meaning is intransitive 'wealthy'. These verb–adjective alternations do not show sufficient regularity to allow useful generalizations which would justify the term 'derivation'.

5.3. DERIVATIONAL PREFIX *KHIØ-*

The prefix *khiø-* derived from *khii5* 'shit' has a range of derivational functions, including derivation of adjectives.

(103)   *khiø-V → N*
   e.g. khiø-lak1 'thief' [*lak1* 'steal']

(104)   *khiø-N → N*
   e.g. khiø-dang3 'snot' [*dang3* 'nose']

(105)   *khiø-ADJ → ADJ*
   e.g. khiø-laaj4 'ugly' [*laaj4* 'awful']
      khiø-thii1 'stingy' [*thii1* 'closely spaced']

Since these derived expressions are not monosyllabic, they generally do not enter into Type A reduplication. One exception is *khiø-lajø-laaj4* 'rather ugly' (derived from *khiø-laaj4* 'ugly').

5.4. DERIVATIONAL CONSTRUCTION *PÊN3-TAA3-V* 'BE-EYE-V'

The 'be-eye-V' construction productively derives complex adjectives from verbs. It has the following structure:

(106)   *X pên3-taa3-V* 'X be-eye-V' = 'X is such that one would V it (or regard it as V)'

Here are some examples:

(107)   pên3-taa3-hak1 'lovable' [*hak1* v. tr. 'love']

(108)   pên3-taa3-juu1 'liveable' [*juu1* v. ambitr. (S=A) 'live somewhere']

(109)   pên3-taa3-jik2 'pinchable' (of small child) [*jik2* v. tr. 'pinch']

As a sub-type of verbs, adjectives may of course also appear in the 'V' slot in this construction. The result is a derived adjective:

(110)   pên3-taa3-sèèp4 'delicious looking' [*sèèp4* 'delicious']

The following examples contrast the base and derived forms of an adjective *sèèp4* 'delicious':

(111)   (a)   *qahaan3 nii4   sèèp4*
            food   DEM.GNL delicious
            'This food is delicious.'

(b)   *qahaan3 nii4*   *pên3-taa3-sèèp4*
       food   DEM.GNL be-eye-delicious
       'This food looks delicious'

The derived expression commonly appears with an adverbial function, as follows:

(112)   *laaw2 kin3 qahaan3 nii4*   *pên3-taa3-sèèp4*
         3SG   eat food   DEM.GNL be-eye-delicious
         'He's eating this food with gusto.' (i.e. it looks like he's finding it delicious)

6. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to describe the Lao adjective class, and in particular to catalogue its properties as a sub-type within the class of verbs. The evidence from Lao is sufficient to establish the adjective class as a distinct class, but not as a class distinct from verbs. Table 2, above, lists some relevant properties which establish Lao adjectives first as verbs (as opposed to nouns), second as stative verbs (as opposed to active verbs), and third as a sub-class of their own.

Grammatical analysis can be done at several levels of grain, and if pushed to the extreme, combinatoric behaviour can, theoretically, be used to establish a separate grammatical class for every morpheme in the language (Gross 1979). This would, of course, defeat the grammarian's purpose, namely to make useful generalizations about the combinatoric productivity of the lexicon. A list of significant properties identify Lao adjectives such as *dèèng3* 'red', *ñaj1* 'big', and *dii3* 'good' as members of a higher level class of verbs, along with words with rather different meanings such as *tii3* 'hit', *lèèn1* 'run', and *huu4* 'know' (and to the exclusion of words such as *khon2* 'person', *khaa3* 'leg', and *muu3* 'pig'). There are differences between verb sub-classes, but none are in significant opposition to all the rest together. To treat the adjective class as separate to the verb class in Lao would not only miss an important set of generalizations, but would misrepresent the structure of the Lao lexicon. I conclude, therefore, that Lao provides no evidence against the suggestion that a morphosyntactically defined class of adjectives can be found to be distinct in every language, but that it does provide evidence against the suggestion that this class will always be distinct from the class of verbs.

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