

On the Role of Natural Discourse Data on Grammar Writing

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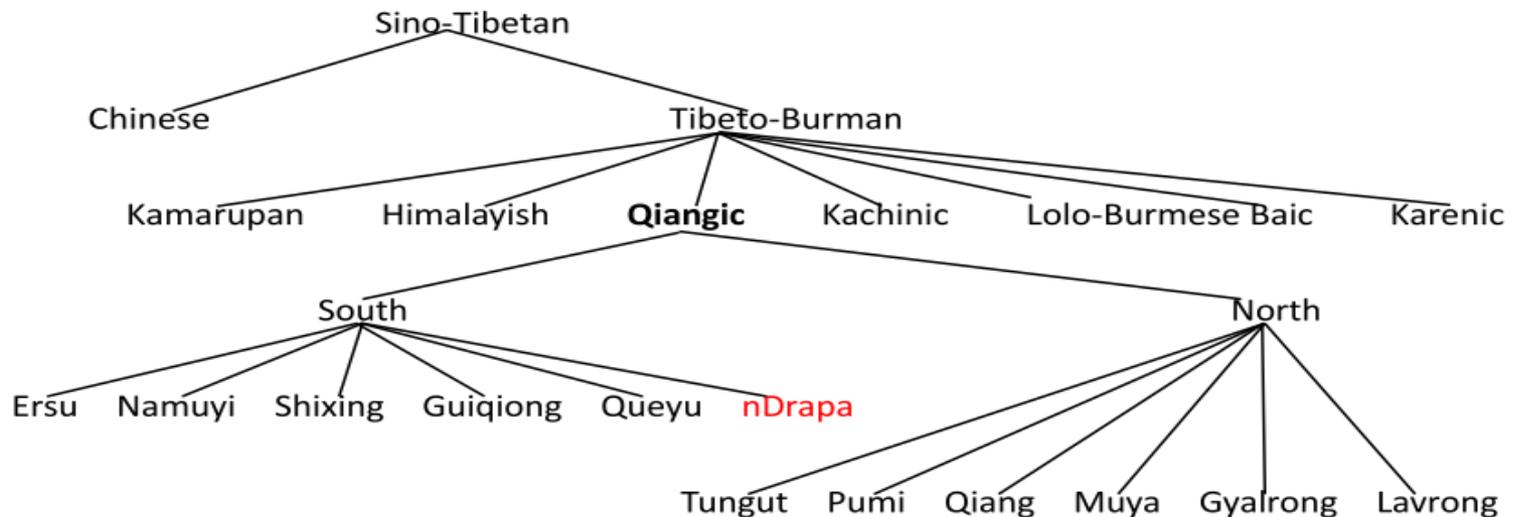


Preamble

- Himmelmann (2006) suggested the field of language documentation as ‘concerned with methods, tools...and lasting multipurpose record of a natural language’. Particularly, grammatical features often show **different degrees of elaboration in different kinds of discourse** (cf. Mithun 2014).
- Language documentation can be so multi-purpose because it has discourse, that is, **records of naturally occurring speech of any kind, as its core**, even if it also includes such linguistic-specific products as paradigms, word lists, and recorded elicitation sessions (Woodbury 2014).
- A grammar should flow. Write in a clear style, avoiding pedantic or obscure prose...Don’t write in a complicated way, as if to show how clever you are. One thing should NEVER do is just record texts in the field and try to transcribe them later on back at base (Dixon 2007: 2007).

The nDrapa Language

- nDrapa 扎巴語 (Qiangic, Tibeto-Burman; ISO 639-3: zhb) is a severely endangered language spoken by approximately 11,230 Tibetan people in Daofu 道孚 and Yajiang 雅江 county in western Sichuan province of China (Huang ; Sun). The nDrapa people are the indigenous residents living along the Yalong River 雅砻江, who are thought to be connected with the culture of 'East Female Country' 东女国 in early Tang Dynasty (approx. 6th—7th century A.D) by some anthropologists and ethnologists (i.e., Ren 1930).



The Sino-Tibetan languages and the Qiangic group by Matisoff (2001) and Sun (2001)



The area where nDrapa is spoken



Previous Works on the Writing of nDrapa Grammar

- Scattered

Huang (1991) on a bird-view of nDrapa

Shirai (2006a) on aspectuality

Shirai (2006b) on existential/ locative verbs

Shirai (2007) on evidentials

Shirai (2009) on directional prefix

Shirai (2012) on locative nouns

Shirai (2018) on clause linkage

Insufficient, limited, and sentence-by-sentence annotated

- Sinitic-oriented framework

Gong (2007) on a description of the nDrapa language

$sI^{55}z_u^{55}$ $t\upsilon^{31}z_I^{55}$ $t\zeta e^{55}$ $mt\zeta\partial^{31}\eta_I^{55}$ $pe^{55}pe^{31}$ a^{55} $k^h ui^{31}$.

government 3pl AUX rice many PREFIX give

$sI^{55}z_u^{55}$ $t\upsilon^{31}z_I^{55}$ $-t\zeta e^{55}$ $mt\zeta\partial^{31}\eta_I^{55}$ $pe^{55}pe^{31}$ $a^{55}-k^h ui^{31}$.

government 3pl-LOC rice many DIR-give

‘The government gave many rice to them.’

$ji^{35}k^h\partial^{55}$ $z\partial^{31}$ $te^{31}nt_I^{55}$ ts_I^{55} $fs^h o^{55}$ ze^{31} .

In the house AUX light also on AUX

$ji^{35}-k^h\partial^{55}$ $z\partial^{31}$ $te^{31}nt_I^{55}$ ts_I^{55} $fs^h o^{55}$ ze^{31} .

house-LOC GEN light also on FACT

‘The light in the house (the house’s light) is on.’

Hard to be referred by western scholars

- Discourse elements are ignored

Discourse categories are treated as moods, or totally ignored by previous authors (cf. Gong 2007:256).

Where is the discourse?

...ndza³¹ʃte⁵⁵ zɪ³¹ I⁵⁵ stɕi⁵⁵ nda⁵⁵ va⁵⁵ k^hə⁵⁵ vli⁵⁵
nDrapa people **PREF** hang before pig inside air
a⁵⁵ ʃka³¹ ŋi³¹ tə³⁵ ptʃu⁵⁵ tʃ^hu³¹, ndza³¹ʃte⁵⁵ zə³¹
PREF put **AUX** **PREF** swell **CAUS** nDrapa **GEN**
va⁵⁵ko⁵⁵ kə³¹ta³¹a³¹ a⁵⁵ mui⁵⁵ ts^hə³¹pɪ⁵⁵ ju³¹zɪ⁵⁵ le³¹
meat like this **PREF** do then long time put
ndza⁵⁵ tʃə⁵⁵ze³⁵ t^hə³¹mə⁵⁵gu³¹ də⁵⁵zɪ³¹ wo³¹ le⁵⁵ji³¹
can **AUX** not only forty year put something
zɔ³⁵ nə³¹ tʃə³¹ze³¹ ndza³¹me⁵⁵ zɪ³¹ va⁵⁵ko⁵⁵ ju³¹zɪ⁵⁵
also have **AUX** nDrapa people meat long time
I⁵⁵ʃtɕi⁵⁵ mə⁵⁵ tʃ^hɪ⁵⁵ tʃə³¹ze³⁵.
hang **NEG** will **AUX**

➤ *Humble vs. Pejorative Modals*

- nDrapa uses a preverbal modal marker ***nba³³ti³³*** to encode both humble and pejorative modals.
- ***nba³³ti³³*** is syntactically attached to nominals rather than predicates.
- What distinguishes the two functions is based on the distinctive agents in conversation: When the addresser stresses on the self-person expression, ***nba³³ti³³*** works as a humble modal marker; When the addresser stresses on the other-person expression, ***nba³³ti³³*** functions as a pejorative modal marker.
- ***nba³³ti³³*** is exclusively discourse-oriented.

... “ma³³-ç^hu⁵⁵”-dε³³ dzε⁵⁵ ts^hə⁵⁵pe⁵⁵, tə³³mts^ho⁵⁵ ts^hə⁵⁵pe³³~ts^hə⁵⁵pe⁵⁵
 NEG-need-QUOT say after that LNK after that
 na⁵⁵wo⁵⁵, s^he⁵⁵wo⁵⁵-nba³³ti³³-t^ha³³, tə³³mts^ho⁵⁵ t^ha⁵⁵ptç^ha⁵⁵nba³³ti³³,
 two years three years-HUM-LOC LNK accept unsatisfactory
 ta²⁴ lε³³ηe⁵⁵nba³³ tʊ³³zε⁵⁵ tçə²⁴-nba³³ti³³ a⁵⁵-fçe⁵³...
 LNK pitiful 3pl lawsuit-PJT DIR-buy
 tʊ³³ptçə⁵⁵-k^ha³³ tə⁵⁵-tç^ho⁵⁵-ηi³³, xa²⁴, tçə⁵⁵te⁵⁵-nba³³ti³³ t^ha⁵⁵ptç^ha⁵⁵
 school-LOC DIR-go-AUX LNK book-HUM unsatisfactory
 nbe³³lɪ⁵⁵ a⁵⁵-ndzi³³-ηi³³ wu⁵⁵-a³³-zε³³... tə³³ta⁵³
 all DIR-read-AUX finish-ALLO-FACT DEM
 po⁵⁵t^ho³³-nba³³ti³³ t^ha⁵⁵ptç^ha⁵⁵ ti³³ kə⁵⁵-h^ti⁵³.
 son-in-law-PJT unsatisfactory NUM:CL DIR-put

‘My daughter told him that she did not want to live with him even for two or three years (**two or three years is actually very short**). What a poor woman! My daughter then **went to court** with him...(My daughter) used to go to a normal school...(**while she is not well educated, she is still my good daughter**)...her life is unsatisfactorily destroyed by a **bad son-in-law**.’

- **Typologically**, a particular morpheme associated with humble modal is apt to derive a pejorative overtone induced by negative context (cf. Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015). Moreover, the versatile functions of *nba*³³*ti*³³ only appear in discourse and speech genre.

- **In the course of grammar writing**, I intentionally concentrate on the *positive vs. negative* register of the discourse data, refraining from a sentence-by-sentence elicitation, in order to include all the possible contexts where $nba^{33}tI^{33}$ occurs and how its grammatical character looks like. To illustrate the findings:
 - I. When the prior role of the statement is the speaker himself/herself or the one intimate to the speaker, the register is positive, $nba^{33}tI^{33}$ works as a humble marker; or a pejorative marker if it associates with the second/ third person who has a distant relationship.
 - II. In nDrapa, people have the ability to recognize a different perspective from ourselevies. This marker, however, does not depend on egophoricity

➤ ***Thetical in Discourse***

- nDrapa enjoys a wide range of SAY verbs. By changing word orders, some SAY verbs have derived the function as evidential, such as: $-d\varepsilon^{33}$, $-d\varepsilon^{33}dz\varepsilon^{33}$ (hearsay); $-d\varepsilon^{33}dz\varepsilon^{33}$ (hearsay and story-telling); $-dz\varepsilon^{33}d\varepsilon^{33}$ (third-hand hearsay); $-d\varepsilon^{33}$ (quotative); $-mba^{33}$ (inference); $-\zeta tI^{33}$ (visual/perfective) (Huang forthcoming).
- In some instances, the combination $d\varepsilon^{55}mba^{33}ra^{33}$ may serve as a thetical that is added at the periphery of an utterance. The thetical $d\varepsilon^{55}mba^{33}ra^{33}$ consists of a SAY verb $d\varepsilon^{33}$ and the demonstrative enclitic $mba^{33}ra^{33}$. It forms utterances of its own, and its meaning is determined essentially by the situation of discourse rather than syntactic relation within a sentence (cf. Kaltenböck et al. 2011:851-852).

...tə³³mtsho⁵⁵ lĩ²⁴tʂha³³ #dɛ³³mbə³³rə³³# -khə³³ ʒi²⁴ ɕhu⁵⁵-tʂɛ³³.

LNK forest #say it like that# -LOC go MOD-DUR:FACT

‘Then, I should go to the forest...#say it like that#... into the forest.’

‘So why do you call him...#say it like that#...nDzese (the name of the king?)

tʊ³³zə⁵⁵ me³³və⁵³ ngə⁵⁵zɪ³³də³³ wo⁵³ du³³-wu⁵⁵-a³³-zɛ³³, ɲa⁵⁵

DIST old woman ninety-four year arrive-PFV-ALLO-FACT 1sg

#dɛ³³mbə³³rə³³# mə⁵⁵-ts^hɛ⁵³ ɲi³³lo⁵⁵ du³³-wu⁵⁵-a³³-zɛ³³.

THETI NEG-become twice arrive-PFV-ALLO-FACT

‘That old woman is ninety-four years old. But her age is not twice older than mine.’

...tə³³mts^ho⁵⁵ tʊ³³zə⁵⁵ me²⁴ pe³³ma³³ tʃe³³sɛ⁵³ #dɛ³³mbə³³rə³³#

LNK DIST name DM nDzese THETI

dze⁵⁵ tʃe⁵³dɛ³³tʃe³³?

call Q

‘So why do you call him...#say it like that#...nDzese (the name of the king?)

tʊ³³zə⁵⁵ a⁵⁵wo³³ tɕ^hi⁵⁵pe³³ ɕi⁵⁵tʃ^haŋ⁵⁵ #dɛ³³mbə³³rə³³# dze⁵⁵

DIST more LOC Xichang THETI wife

tɛ³³-ji⁵⁵ kə⁵⁵-mue³³-ʃtia³³-zɛ³³.

one-CL DIR-marry-PFV:ALLO-FACT

‘When we broke up, I found another wife in Xichang.’

- **In the course of grammar writing**, I concentrate on the synchronic description of theticals on one hand, and the diachronic development of this discourse item on the other hand. One contribution to the study of discourse grammar may be as follows:
 - I. Theticals are syntactically unbounded elements, not only attached to heads, but also to peripherals. They can work as clause linkers.
 - II. While many origins of theticals have been reported, one in nDrapa may be very fascinating: It can derive from demonstratives or a combination of SAY verbs and the demonstrative.

The Language Preservation Project in China

- Launched from 2015, the *Yubao* project is in an intention to document a range of Chinese dialects and ethnic/endangered languages in China by the end of 2019.

- A government-initiated project with a participation of thousands of linguists and native speakers in China.

- Languages archived in this data base cover numerous languages from *Sinitic*, *Tai-Kadai*, *Tibeto-Burman*, et al.

- The future of endangered language preservation in China. **What and how?**



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留下乡音

方言词语

立场上

我们为您提供一个词条列表, 请选择您熟悉的词条, 告诉我们在您家乡怎么发音, 是什么样子的。

说唱表演

立场上

具有地方特色的方言内容: 故事、歌谣、谚语、民谣故事、风俗习惯、骂人话等。

自选话题

立场上

不包含在前两类中的内容, 例如个人经历、对话、艺术、风景特产等。

立即上传

最新方言词语	最新说唱表演	最新自选话题
房子 (房屋建筑 - 住宅) 作者: 语保中心 时间: 2016-01-13	苏州话吟诵唐诗《岳阳楼记》 作者: 宋光磊 时间: 2016-01-13	房子 (房屋建筑 - 住宅) 作者: 语保中心 时间: 2016-01-13
灶 (日常用具 - 炊具) 作者: 语保中心 时间: 2016-01-13	蜜语瓜果谜语 作者: 杨才发 时间: 2016-01-13	灶 (日常用具 - 炊具) 作者: 语保中心 时间: 2016-01-13
上衣 (服饰 - 衣裤) 作者: 语保中心 时间: 2016-01-13	苍南话谜语《阿嫂阿嫂》 作者: 杨才发 时间: 2016-01-13	上衣 (服饰 - 衣裤) 作者: 语保中心 时间: 2016-01-13

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Thank you!

ʔa³³ga⁵³ !

