

FORM AND FUNCTION OF ADJECTIVAL ELEMENTS IN TIKAR

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Tikar<sup>1</sup> has a class of adjectival elements which is separate and distinct from both nouns and verbs. There are, within this class, two types of adjectival elements: those which are clearly derived from verbs, and those which reveal no underlying derivation. These types are further distinguished from one another by their comportment in the attributive NP.

Le tikar<sup>1</sup> possède une classe d'éléments adjectivaux séparée et distincte des substantifs ainsi que des verbes. Elle comprend deux types de constituants: ceux qui sont visiblement dérivés d'un verbe et ceux qui ne révèlent aucune dérivation. Ces types se distinguent également par leur fonctionnement dans le syntagme déterminatif.

It is the purpose of this article<sup>2</sup> to discuss the adjectival elements in Tikar, both the derived and the non-derived, with regard to their form and their function. Reasons will be given for distinguishing the derived from the non-derived, as well as for distinguishing adjectival elements as a class distinct from other syntactic elements. The derived forms will be distinguished from the non-derived forms on the basis not only of their form, but also of the tone changes that they condition as they function in an attributive NP.

I. Derived vs. non-derived

In Tikar there are two types of adjectival elements: those which are derived from verbs and those which reveal no underlying derivation. These elements can be used either attributively or predicatively, as is shown by the following examples. (Note: High tone is unmarked in all examples.)

Examples:

- Non-derived

kwæ'	'small'
seansean	'clear'

	kyikyí	'different'
	kukun	'round'
	nywæb	'new'
1.	kòn nywæb	'a new pot'
2.	kòn sí nywæb	'The pot is new.'
3.	lon kwæ'	'a little money'
4.	lon yí kwæ'	'The money is little. (= There's not much money.)'

- Derived

Verb root:

kimmí	'strong, hard'	-kím-	'to become hard'
læbbi	'long'	-læb-	'to become long'
panni	'tight, narrow'	-pan-	'to become tight, shrink'
sèan	'hatched'	-san-	'to hatch'
ngea	'dirty'	-nga'-	'to become dirty'
lo	'black'	-lɔ'-	'to become black'
twun	'big'	-twu-	'to grow'
yíli	'somber'	-yí-	'to become somber'
5.	ndí twun		'a big root'
6.	ndí yí twun		'The root is big.'
7.	mwen tǎ twu		'The child is growing.'
8.	le' læbbi		'a long word, speech'
9.	le' sí læbbi		'The word, speech is long.'
10.	à tǎ ndú læbsi		'He is lengthening the cord.' (Suffix -si = causative)
11.	she kimmí		'a hard work'
12.	she sí kimmí		'The work is hard.'
13.	à kím kè fè'		'It has not hardened yet.'

Following the terminology of Welmers (1973:250) I shall refer to the non-derived elements as *adjectives*, and to the derived ones as *adjectivals*. Another designation has been suggested by Canu (1970:2) who makes a distinction between what he calls "real adjectives" and "false adjectives". He makes this distinction on the basis of their

relationship to nouns, "real" indicating those which differ in form and function from nouns, and "false" those which are identical to nouns. Since in Tikar the derivation is from verbs rather than nouns, the situation is not identical to that discussed by Canu. In addition, since the adjectivals in Tikar are almost never identical to verb roots, the designation "false adjectives" would be misleading. They are distinct from verbs in function, as well as, with a very few exceptions, in form.

Since, however, the adjectivals are derived from verbs, the question arises: are they simply a sub-type of verbs, as Welmers (1973:250) proposes in the case of Senari? This sub-type would then be defined by its use attributively after a noun stem. However, in Tikar, as in Bariba (Welmers 1973:250), there seems to be a "stronger case for recognizing a separate class of adjectives", since attributive forms are rarely identical with the verb roots. In addition, they manifest a certain amount of concord, conditioned by the class membership of the noun with which they enter into an attributive or a predicative relationship, as shown by examples 43, 44 below.

The class of adjectivals in Tikar is an open class. In contrast, the class of adjectives is a closed class. As is the case in most Niger-Congo languages which have a class of adjectives, the class is small.<sup>3</sup>

The adjectivals divide into several categories, according to the means of derivation which they undergo.

- The most productive pattern is the suffixation of a CV syllable to the verb root.<sup>4</sup>

Examples:

		<u>Verb root:</u>	
pfɛbbi	'white'	-pfɛb-	'to become white'
mwummi	'rotten'	-mwum-	'to rot'
lwinni	'full'	-lwɪn-	'to become full'
ɔwæli	'soft'	-ɔwæ -	'to become soft'

- Another means of derivation is the replacement of the final syllable of the verb root.

Examples:

-ɔ' becomes -o

		<u>Verb root:</u>	
klɔ̃	'hard'	-k ɔ̃'-	'to become hard'
lo	'black'	- ɔ̃'-	'to become black'
		<u>-a'</u> becomes <u>-ea</u>	
ɖwikea	'bitter'	-ɖwika'-	'to become bitter'
klwɔ̃kea	'big'	-klwɔ̃ka'-	'to become big'
		<u>-an</u> becomes <u>-ean</u>	
pɛan	'red, ripe'	-pan-	'to become red/ripe'

- In a few cases, there is no change in the verb root, and therefore the adjectival is identical to the verb root in form.

Examples:

		<u>Verb root:</u>	
ɖwu	'wet'	-ɖwu-	'to become wet'
nyeni	'angry'	-nyeni-	'to become angry'

Each of these means of derivation can also be used to give the transitive verb root a special object focus form. Since this is described in detail by Jackson (1979), it will simply be illustrated here by several examples.

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 14. plè mɛanni       | 'a tight dress' (m-: concord) |
| 15. sɛnnza panni     | 'a tight pagne'               |
| 16. sɛnnza si panni  | 'The pagne is tight.'         |
| 17. plè tã wù panni  | 'The dress is tight for you.' |
| 18. ñshe kpæmmi      | 'an attached load'            |
| 19. ñshe yi kpæmmi   | 'The load is attached.'       |
| 20. à tã ñshe kpæmmi | 'He is attaching the load.'   |

In spite of the similarity in form between the adjectivals and the object focus forms, the former cannot be considered as simply a sub-class of the latter, because they alone are subject to concord according to the noun class system, i.e. they are susceptible to undergo the prefixation of a homorganic nasal, its presence or absence being determined by the noun class to which the noun belongs (compare examples 14, 15, 17).

The question also arises as to the relationship of adjectives and adjectivals to nouns. In certain Benue-Congo languages of Cameroon, "un adjectival ne diffère en réalité d'un nominal que sur le plan structurel et non fonctionnel" (Bot Ba Njock, 1976:18), that is to say they can be used, for example, as the head of a noun phrase. Welmers (1973:261) cites a similar case in Igbo. In Tikar, however, an adjectival form can never function as the head of a noun phrase. Such constructions as "the big (one)", "your big (one)" and "the other big (one)" which are possible in certain other Benue-Congo languages (see Bot Ba Njock, 1976:18) are not possible in Tikar. In order to produce such a construction it is necessary to use an anaphoric pronoun, which concords with the noun it replaces.

Examples:  $\text{y}\epsilon$  twun 'the one which is big' (the noun in question is a y $\epsilon$  class noun)  
 she twun 'the one which is big' (the noun in question is a s $\epsilon$  class noun)

In Tikar, adjectival elements differ not only syntactically, but also morphologically from words which are clearly nouns.<sup>5</sup> Nouns are pluralized by the addition of a plural particle, whereas adjectivals are pluralized by a change in form, and adjectives have no separate singular-plural form.

Examples:

21.	gba'	'chair'	mè gba'	'chairs'
22.	kòn	'pot'	yì kòn	'pots'

Note: the form of the plural particle is conditioned by the noun class to which the noun belongs.

23.	kě byebi	'a bad mat'	yì kẽ byiboa	'bad mats'
24.	gwè mpèan	'ripe corn' (m-: concord)	mè gwè pànggea	'ripe corns'
25.	ngà' niàbbí	'a tall tree'	mè ngà líbea	'tall trees'
26.	kòn lo	'a black pot'	yì kòn lokea	'black pots'

Adjectives, as well as adjectivals also differ from nouns in the tonal alternations they condition in a NP. The order of elements in a NP is always Head + Modifier, regardless of whether the modifier is a noun or an adjectival element. In an attributive noun phrase the noun is subject to tone changes, the inherent tone of the adjectival element remains unchanged. In an associative noun phrase, however, it is often the second noun, i.e. the modifier, that undergoes tone changes. The tonal alternations in both

instances are conditioned by the noun class membership of the first noun, i.e. the head of the NP.

Examples: kòn 'pot' (Cl.3) gwè 'corn' (Cl.1)  
 klè 'bird' (Cl.1) dyìm 'work' (Cl.5)  
 lo 'black'

- |     |         |                              |
|-----|---------|------------------------------|
| 27. | kòn gwê | 'the pot of corn'            |
| 28. | kòn lo  | 'a black pot'                |
| 29. | mwũ lo  | 'a black head'               |
| 30. | klè nlo | 'a black bird' (n-: concord) |

Note: Only nouns whose inherent tone is low are given here as examples, because, with rare exceptions, no others undergo a tone change in a NP.

In certain Benue-Congo languages, such as Mbum (see Hagège 1974:127), where adjectival elements are derived from verbs, there is a parallelism between the process of formation of adjectives and that of the nominalization of verbs. In Tikar, however, this parallelism has not been found. Note the following examples:

Verb root: -lɔ' 'to become black'

- |     |           |                             |
|-----|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 31. | mbyi' nlo | 'a black dog' (n-: concord) |
| 32. | lɔ' mbyi' | 'the blackness of the dog'  |

Verb root: -pan- 'to become red, ripe'

- |     |           |                           |
|-----|-----------|---------------------------|
| 33. | nwǒ' pèan | 'red meat'                |
| 34. | mpǎn nwò' | 'the redness of the meat' |

Homburger (1941:251) suggests that in many West African languages "le qualificatif simple est un thème nominal qui peut être employé comme épithète, comme attribut ou comme un nom abstrait". Such is not the case in Tikar. As the above examples show, the simple qualifier is not identical to the corresponding abstract noun, formed by the nominalization of the verb. So, while the first two functions which Homburger speaks of are possible in Tikar (see examples 1-10), the third is not. Furthermore, nominalized forms in Tikar can take a causative suffix, adjectivals cannot.

Examples:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 35. gba' pèan                | 'a red chair'                           |
| 36. mpàn gba'                | 'the redness of the chair'              |
| 37. mpànzi gba' yi<br>kyibli | 'Making the chair red is<br>difficult.' |

Canu (1970:20) suggests that "quand une différence est manifeste au niveau fonctionnel entre les substantifs et les adjectifs, ... nous sommes parfaitement en droit de considérer que, dans les langues envisagées, il existe deux catégories différentes...". As has been shown, in Tikar, adjectival elements differ in form, as well as function, not only from nouns, but also from verbs. There are, therefore, three separate and distinct categories of words in Tikar: nouns, verbs and adjectival elements.

## II. Additional Criteria for Distinguishing between Adjectives and Adjectivals

We have already seen that adjectivals are derived elements, whereas adjectives are non-derived. There are, however, three other distinct differences, which an examination of the forms in their attributive function reveals: the tone changes which they condition in the head of the NP; the presence vs. absence of concord with the head of the NP; their form when the head of the NP is a plural noun.

- The adjectival, but not the adjective, conditions tone changes in the head of the NP.

In the case of low tone nouns belonging to Class 3 and Class 5, the low tone becomes an upglide before an adjectival, but it remains unchanged before an adjective.

Examples: kè 'mat' (Cl.3)      mwù 'head' (Cl.5)

- |               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 38. kě lo     | 'a black mat' -Adjectival     |
| 39. kè kyiki  | 'a different mat' -Adjective  |
| 40. mwù lo    | 'a black head' -Adjectival    |
| 41. mwù kyiki | 'a different head' -Adjective |

Each of these noun phrases can optionally have a relator morpheme.

Examples:

- |               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 42. kè she lo | 'the mat which is black...' |
|---------------|-----------------------------|

43. kè shé kyikyí... 'the mat which is different...'  
 44. mwù yé lo... 'the head which is black...'  
 45. mwù yé kyikyí... 'the head which is different...'

The tone change in the head of the noun phrase in examples 38 and 40 may be explained if we consider that the relator morpheme, when deleted, leaves behind its high tone, which in turn combines with the low tone of the head of the NP to produce a rising tone. For a similar situation where the tone of a deleted element is deposited on an adjacent element, see Heny (1972:208) and Hyman (1979:33). When the qualifier is an adjective rather than an adjectival, the tone on the head of the NP remains unchanged, even when the relator morpheme is deleted. (cf. Ex. 36, 41 with Ex. 43, 45).

- There is concord on an adjectival but not on an adjective.

When the head of the attributive NP is a Class 1 noun, the adjectival will undergo prefixation of a homorganic nasal, while an adjective remains unchanged.

Examples: klè 'bird' Cl.1

lo 'black' -adjectival, verb root: -{ɔ}'-  
 'to become black'

pèan 'red' -adjectival, verb root: -pan-  
 'to become red'

kimmi 'strong' -adjectival, verb root: -kim-  
 'to become strong'

kyikyí 'different' -adjective

46. klè nlo 'a black bird'

47. klè mpèan 'a red bird'

48. klè nkimmi 'a strong bird'

49. klè kyikyí 'a different bird'

The insertion of a relator morpheme makes no difference to this concord.

Examples:

50. klè nyě nlo... 'The bird which is black...'

51. klè nyě kyikyí... 'The bird which is different...'

This phenomenon of prefixation is also true in the case of a predicative construction.<sup>6</sup>

Examples:

52. klè ni nlo 'The bird is black.'  
 53. klè ni kyikyí 'The bird is different.'

- There is a special plural form for the adjectival. Most adjectivals have a separate plural form; adjectives do not.

Examples:

54. <u>Adjectival</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>	<u>Verb root</u>
'broken'	ɓið	ɓiɔkea	-ɓiɔ'-
'spoiled'	gwean	gwanŋgea	-gwan-
'attached'	kpæmmi	kpimea	-kpæm-
'good, pretty'	lwen	lwukea	-lwu-
'long, far'	læbbi	libea	-læb-
'dirty'	ngea	ngakea	-nga'-
'big'	twun	klwɔkea	-twu-
'old, worn-out'	ywinni	ywinna	-ywin-
'soft'	ɓwæli	ɓwulɔa	-ɓwæ'-

Adjectivals:

55. ɓæm twun 'a big sack'  
 56. yì ɓæm klwɔkea 'the big sacks'  
 57. yì ɓæm yì klwɔkea 'The sacks are big.'  
 58. ñdu' læbbi 'a long cord'  
 59. mè ñdu' ni libea 'the long cords' (n-: concord)  
 60. mè ñdu' ni ni libea 'The cords are long.'  
 61. mwen niwen 'a pretty child'  
 62. ɓwen lwukea 'pretty children'  
 63. ɓwen ɓi lwukea 'The children are pretty.'  
 64. kòn nywæb 'a new pot'  
 65. yì kòn nywæb 'new pots'  
 66. nye kukun 'a round house'  
 67. mè nye kukun 'round houses'

### III. Conclusion

The following charts sum up the differences between adjectives and adjectivals, on the one hand; and between them and nouns and verbs, on the other hand.

Chart 1: Adjectives vs. Adjectivals

	Adjectives	Adjectivals
Derived	-	+
Concord	-	+
Separate plural form	-	+
Condition a tone change on head of NP	-	+

Chart 2: Adjectival elements vs. Nouns

	Adjectival Elements		Nouns
	Adjectives	Adjectivals	
Function as head of NP	-	-	+
Means of forming the plural	No plural	Separate form	Addition of a plural particle
Undergo tone changes in NP	-	-	+

Chart 3: Adjectivals vs. Verbs

	Adjectivals	Verbs
Concord according to noun class system	+	-
Undergo suffixation of aspect markers	-	+

In summary, adjectives and adjectivals in Tikar are distinct from one another, and, also, in a class apart from nouns and verbs.

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Tikar is a Benue-Congo language spoken by approximately 15-20,000 people in the west-central region of Cameroon.
- <sup>2</sup> This article was originally presented as a paper at the 14th Congress of the West African Linguistic Society in April 1980.
- <sup>3</sup> Givón (1969:20) states that "the number of morphologically underived adjectives in most Bantu languages is extremely small. Verb-to-adjective derivational channels are still synchronically productive in many Bantu languages." Also, Houis (1977:35) points out "il y a lieu de noter que nombreuses langues possèdent de lexèmes adjectivaux. Leur usage en discours est courant, toutefois l'inventaire est toujours limité (autour de 30 à 40 unités)."
- <sup>4</sup> The choice of CV syllable depends upon the final consonant of the verb root. It is -bí following a final b; -mí following a final m; -ní following a final n; and -íí elsewhere.
- <sup>5</sup> Welmers (1973:149) speaks of a similar situation in Efik.
- <sup>6</sup> A similar case occurs in Shona. Heny (1972:207) points out that in the case of both the attributive and the predicative forms, the adjective consists of a stem and a prefix, the latter determined by one of the nouns in its sentence.

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