THE SEMANTICS OF THE SYNTACTIC POSITION OF ADJECTIVES IN TRUKU SEEDIQ

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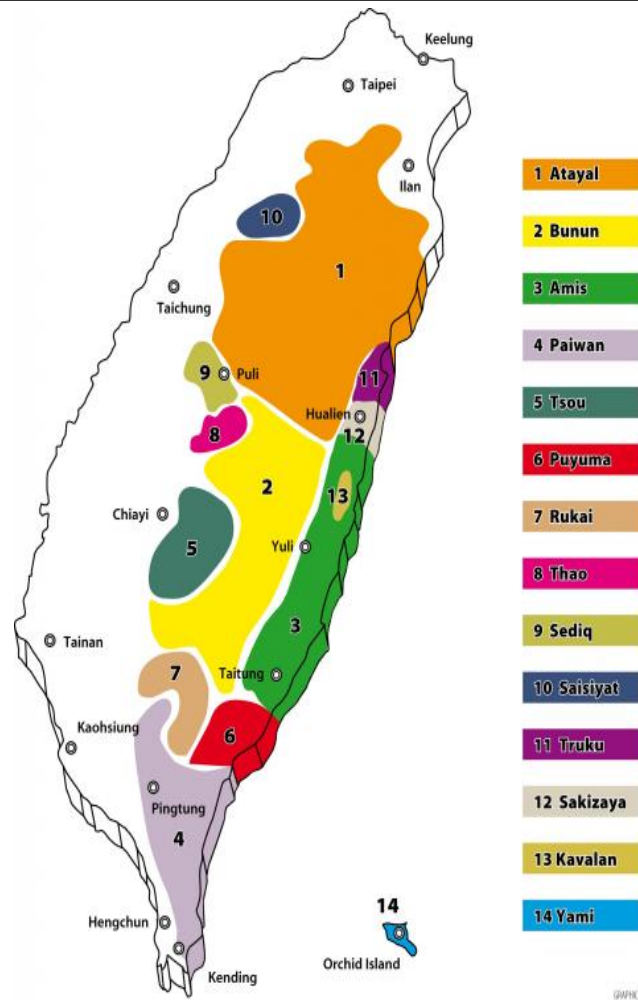
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APLL9 – June 2017, Paris

Acknowledgements

- CLAPOTY Project (Agence Nationale pour la Recherche ANR-09-JCJC-0121-01)

- LabEx EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LINGUISTICS

- Lowking NOWBUCYANG (許韋晟), National Tsing Hua University

- LU Yunfang (陆云芳), Université Paris Diderot

Localisation of the Truku language in Taiwan

Introduction

- Two possible positions for modifying adjectives as described by Pecoraro (1979: 50-51)

(1) Paru   sapax ka   sapax Diyan   [adapted from Pecoraro, 1979: 50-51.]
     big   house PRED house Diyan
     'Diyan's house is a big house'

(2) Sapax paru   ka   sapax Diyan [adapted from Pecoraro, *ibid.*]
     house big   PRED house Diyan
     'Diyan's house is the big house'

- A hypothesis stemming from Pecoraro's description: the position of adjectives depends on the definiteness value of the DP

□ An alternative hypothesis that will be substantiated in this talk: definiteness is not involved. Rather, what is at stake is another referential property, namely restrictiveness (Martin 2014)

(3) [17/1-19; A1]

Angal	ka	kingal	pratu
take	PRED	one	bowl
pratu	ga		
bowl	DEM		
m-banah		pratu	
AF-red		bowl	

'Take one bowl. That bowl. The red bowl (as opposed to the black bowl).'

- On the historical level, we claim that the pre-nominal position of adjectives is an innovation in Truku Seediq (as opposed to other Seediq dialects or to the closely related Atayal language)

- We will show that there is at least one syntactic constraint forcing adjectives to stand in the pre-nominal position, while the remaining factors may be exclusively semantic

- The key semantic notion to describe the positional contrast is *restrictiveness*

Data collection method

- 39 dyadic interactions for a total of 10,469 words, involving a total of 24 consultants.

- Collected in Tongmen (Hualien, Taiwan) in the summer of 2014 using a task design

- 3 age groups (A, B and C) based roughly on language proficiency in Truku and Mandarin Chinese

- All interactions videotaped and audio recorded, then thoroughly transcribed and annotated with the digital tools developed for the CLAPOTY project

The setting

The puzzle

Table 1. N/Adj order in DPs where both noun and adjectives are in Truku Seediq

Speaker	N-Adj	Adj-N	Adj-N-Adj
A1	2	1	
A3	15	1	1
A4	7	-	
A5	6	1	
A6	15	7	
A7	10	4	
A8	16	1	
A9	4	1	
A10	10	-	
B1	10	2	
B2	4	17	
B3	1	-	
B4	4	5	
B5	6	-	
B8	13	12	
B9	6	-	
B11	3	-	
B12	10	3	

Speaker	N-Adj	Adj-N
B13	-	1
B14	4	4
B15	3	-
B16	1	-
C4	-	-
C5	-	-
Total	150	60

The syntax of modifying adjectives in Truku Seediq

▫ A possible syntactic constraint on adjective placement

(4) [A3 elicitation]

paru	bluhing-su	lala	bi	napa-su
big	sieve-2SG;POSS	many	really	??-2SG;POSS

'Your big sieves are very many.'

(5) [19/8-15; A7]

p-sa-i	brah	m-qalux	pratu-su
CAUS-go-IMP	before	AF-black	bowl-2SG;POSS

'Put (it) before your black bowl.'

(6) [19/6-75; B8]

p-sa-i	qita:	m-banah	pratu-su	troma
CAUS-go-IMP	so_to_say	AF-red	bowl-2SG;POSS	under

'Put (it), let's say... under your red bowl.'

- Does this constraint apply to all cases of post-N modifiers?

(7) [17/2-30; A3]

Ni	bhgay	haya	bilaq	ga
and	white	car	small	DEM

'And that small white car.'

(8) [A3 elicitation]

Gasil	m-banah	qthur	gaga	o	nisu
string	AF-red	thick	DEM	TOP	2SG;POSS

'That thick red rope is yours.'

(9) [A3 elicitation]

Ubal	b-baraw	puurung
feather	RED-long	owl

'Very long owl's feathers."

The semantics of the position of adjectives in Truku Seediq

◻ The pre-/post-nominal position doesn't correspond to a distinction in definiteness (*contra* Pecoraro)

◻ This is shown by the following facts:
  ◻ Possessive DPs (arguably definite) only exhibit the Adj-N order;
  ◻ Both orders are found in clearly definite DPs (as shown by the presence of demonstratives, or their syntactic position) as well as clearly indefinite DPs (presence of the indefinite "one" numeral or inclusion in an existential sentence).

Definiteness and demonstratives/possessives

Table 2. Adjectives with or without possessives and demonstratives

		Without further elements	Followed by a demonstrative	Followed by a possessive
N+Adj	pratu 'bowl'	56	7	0
	pu(u)rung 'owl'	26	4	0
	haya 'car'	28	5	(1) see note 6
	Total	*109*	*16*	*(1)*
Adj+N	pratu 'bowl'	12	4	2
	pu(u)rung 'owl'	15	1	1
	haya 'car'	10	0	0
	Total	*37*	*5*	*3*

- In the pragmatic context of the task, the possessive DP in the following sentence has to receive a definite reading (there is only one red bowl belonging to the addressee)

(12) [19/6-75; B8]

P-sa-i	qita:	m-banah	pratu-su	troma
CAUS-go-IMP	so_to_say	AF-red	bowl-2SG;POSS	under

Put (it), so to say, under your red bowl.

(In)definiteness and numerals

- Cardinal numerals in Truku Seediq do not systematically yield indefinite meanings (*contra* Chang *2000:106 on* Tgdaya/Paran Seediq)

(13) [20/2-11; A8]

M-banah	ka	kingal	purung	ga,	m-pajiq	ka	kingal
AF-red	TOP	one	owl	DEM;D	AF-green	TOP	one

"That one owl is red, (the other) one is green."

(14) [17/2-24; A3]

Hmm:	kingal	purung	bilaq	tuma	hini
uh	one	owl	small	under	here

"Uh, (the) one small owl (goes) under here."

- Ordinal numerals, on the other hand, usually yield a definite meaning

- We also find pre-N adjectives in such cases

(16) [22/1-43; B14]

Ci-kingal	bhgay	ey	tduruy	do	p-sa-i	iril	ki	da
ORD-one	white	uh	car	TOP	CAUS-go-IMP	left	DEM	AS.PFV

The first, white car, put (it) on the left here.

Existential sentences

□ In the two following examples of existential sentences, first argument NPs have alternately an indefinite and a definite meaning

(17) [17/2-52; A1]
    Aji   niq-an kingal wawa roro?
    NEG   live-LF one   baby duck
    Isn't there one baby duck?

(18) [17/1-85; A1]
    Hay   niq-an kingal wawa roro   ga?
    NEG;INT   live-LF one   baby duck   DEM;D
    Isn't there that one baby duck?

- In the following, despite the pre-nominal adjective, the NP has a definite reading due to the presence of demonstratives

(19) [22/1-31; B14]

Niq-an	ey:	qurug	kaji	ki	ga
live-LF	FILL	round	key	DEM	DEM;D

There is uh that round key (=key-chain)

- The reverse N-Adj order is also found as in:

(21) [20/4-74; B12]

hai	you	na	ge:	roro	bilaq	ga	huangse	de[9]
again	have	DEM;D	CL	duck	small	DEM;D	yellow	MOD

And there's that... that little duck, yellow

Our proposal (1): pre-nominal adjectives are restrictive

- Restriction enhances the identifiabilty of a noun phrase's reference

- In our data, restrictive adjectives are modifiers that insist on one quality of the modified noun in order for the addressee to differentiate its intended referent from another similar referent having a contrasting quality
  - for instance, a black bowl as opposed to a red one
  - or a small owl-shaped figurine as opposed to a bigger one

- In many cases, it is plainly apparent that pre-nominal adjectives are meant to restrict the reference to only one member of a pair, as opposed to the other

(22) [17/10-41; B2]

qarits	**xian**	**ma**	
scissors	first	FP	
ranhou:	bhgay		haya
after	white		car
zai	**lai**		
again	come		
m-banah		haya	
AF-red		car	

'First the scissors! Then... the white car. And then... The red car.'

(23) [17/5-23; B2]

hidani	rawa	**pangbian**		ey	purung
then	basket	beside		FILL	owl
paru	purung		**shi**	**ma**	
big	owl		be	INT	

'Then, beside the basket, uh, the owl. The big owl, isn't it?'

□ Speakers may use both orders in the same utterance when semantically and pragmatically appropriate.

(24) [19/8-23; A7]

gasil
string

gasil   bhgay
string   white

p-sa-i   ska   m-qalux   pratu
CAUS-go-IMP   middle   AF-black   bowl

'The string. The white string. Put (it) in the middle of the black bowl.'

□ While there is only one piece of (white) string ('white' is post-nominal), the black bowl contrasts with a red bowl present in the setting ('black' is pre-nominal).

- when speakers omit the noun, the relative order of adjectives still reflects the restrictive vs. descriptive distinction

(25) [19/8-27; A7]
kamut
truck
'haya' sun   kari   nihong ni
car   say   talk   Japan FP
bhgay   bilaq
white   small
p-sa-i   ska   m-qalux   pratu
CAUS-go-IMP middle AF-black   bowl
'The truck. The "car", as they say in Japanese, huh. The white small (car). Put (it) in the middle of the black bowl.'

- The existence of two syntactic positions available to restrictive vs. descriptive adjectives has also been evidenced in Mandarin Chinese (Paul 2005)

- In the following, a clear parallel is made between a pre-nominal adjective in Truku Seediq and an Adj + *de* structure in Mandarin Chinese, both restrictive

(26) [17/10-53; B2]

m-banah		pratu
AF-red		bowl
hong	**de**	**wan**
red	MOD	bowl

'The red bowl. The red bowl.'

Our proposal (2): post-nominal adjectives are either descriptive or restrictive

◻ Since the presence of pre-N adjectives in *Truku Seediq* seems to be an ongoing language change, post-nominal adjectives may well have retained both restrictive and descriptive values.

◻ This would parallel Martin's generalization regarding French non-neutral adjectives: in their canonical position, they may have both restrictive and descriptive functions, while in their marked position, they have only one of those two values (Martin, Op. Cit.:37).

□ The following utterance exemplifies the merely descriptive function of post-nominal adjectives, since 'small' is not a contrastive quality for toy cars in the task setting, as opposed to 'white' (there is a matching red toy car)

(27) [17/2-30; A3]
    Ni   bhgay haya   bilaq ga
    and   white car   small DEM;D
    'And that small white car.'

□ But we also find post-N adjectives with a clearly restrictive function, as in:

(29) [19/2-23-24; B9 & A6]

B9   Purung
     owl
     Niq-an   gasil   nini
     have-LF   string DEM;P
     'The owl. This (one that) has a string.'
A6   Purung   paru?
     owl   big
     Bilaq?
     small
     'The big owl? The small (one)?'

Variation and change: syntactic and semantic innovation

Table 3. N/Adj order in Truku, Mandarin Chinese and mixed DPs, by consultants' age class

Speaker	Truku DP			Mandarin Chinese DP		Mixed DP		
	N-Adj	Adj-N	Adj-N-Adj	N Adj	Adj N	N[trv]-Adj[cmn]	N[trv]-Adj[trv]-Adj[cmn]	Adj[cmn]-N[trv]
A speakers	75	16	1	2	7	-	1	2
B speakers	65	44			14	2	-	4
C speakers						-	-	4
Total	150	60	1	2	21	2	1	10

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- We hypothesize two distinct triggering factors:
  - a semantic factor, whereby the pre-nominal position of the adjective marks a semantic distinction (the restrictive function of modifiers) that is increasingly considered as salient by speakers of the language;
  - a language contact factor, whereby the pre-nominal position of adjectives matches the structure of Mandarin Chinese, of which the B consultants are fluent speakers, as opposed to the A consultants.

M-huway   su   balay!

AF-generous   2SG   really

Thank you!