

## Functions of the modality suffix “-a” in nDrapa

Satoko SHIRAI

xirai@bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp

### Abstract

nDrapa is a member of the so-called Qiangic group of languages spoken in the “Ethnic Corridor” of western Sichuan, China. Similar to spoken Tibetan, the language has a form of modality-marking system to express the locutor’s point of view or the degree of commitment. During usage, the suffix *-a* is typically found in the sentence-final position when the speaker utters a finished event objectively.

In preceding studies, *-a* has been regarded as the suffix of the “inferred evidential (測知語氣)” of the past tense.

In nDrapa, the past tense of the active event can be expressed without any suffixes or auxiliaries. Such predicates without the suffix *-a* imply that the locutor directly knows or has experienced the process of the action. When the suffix *-a* is added, the predicate implies that the locutor has either observed only the result of the action or has been informed by others about the event.

Inactive stems with the suffix *-a* imply that the change of state is over or that the state was experienced momentarily.

The suffix *-a* is also found in some sentence-final expressions. It is used in combination with the sentence-final particle *ba* to express anxiety about the future. When the suffix *-a* is used in combination with another sentence-final particle *re*, the predicate is interpreted either as the future tense or as the distant past depending on the context. It may be problematic because the suffix *-a* in each expression is identical; however, this suggests that one of the functions of the suffix *-a* is to indicate “remote time.”

Every pattern of the suffix *-a* cannot be used in predicates with the locutor’s point of view, i.e., in subjective predicates. In other words, the suffix *-a* functions consistently as a modality marker. This point is contrastive to its imperfective counterpart.