

Applicative in rGyalrong

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Summary

This paper outlines applicative and/or applicative-like syntactic phenomena in the Bola dialect of rGyalrong. rGyalrong is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the northwestern part of Sichuan, China. This language has long attracted the attention of scholars because of the striking similarity of its lexical items to Written Tibetan. Some scholars have regarded rGyalrong as representing a substratum of Old Tibetan. It is true that the rGyalrong area and people have historically and culturally close relationships with Tibet. However, Wolfenden and consequent researchers have revealed linguistically that the language has no direct genetic relation with Tibetan, but shares a common origin with the Qiangic languages. On the other hand, rGyalrong shares certain characteristics with several subgroups of the Tibeto-Burman family and is thus considered one of the link languages that connect languages that share close genetic relations. In this sense, further research on its typological features is indispensable.

The applicative is a linguistic form that, if it appears, increases the number of arguments within the sentences by one. In most cases, when a verb becomes applicative through the addition of the applicative affix, an extra argument (usually benefactive, recipient, or goal) occurs according to Peterson (2007) and Polinsky (2005). In previous monographs on rGyalrong, this affix was regarded as a simple manner-specifier, but it has recently been redefined as an applicative marker by Jacques (2013) and Prins (2011). In this paper, I investigate whether rGyalrong has an applicative construction and, if so, attempt to describe how it functions in this dialect.

关键词：藏缅语、嘉戎语、适用体、羌语支、动词组

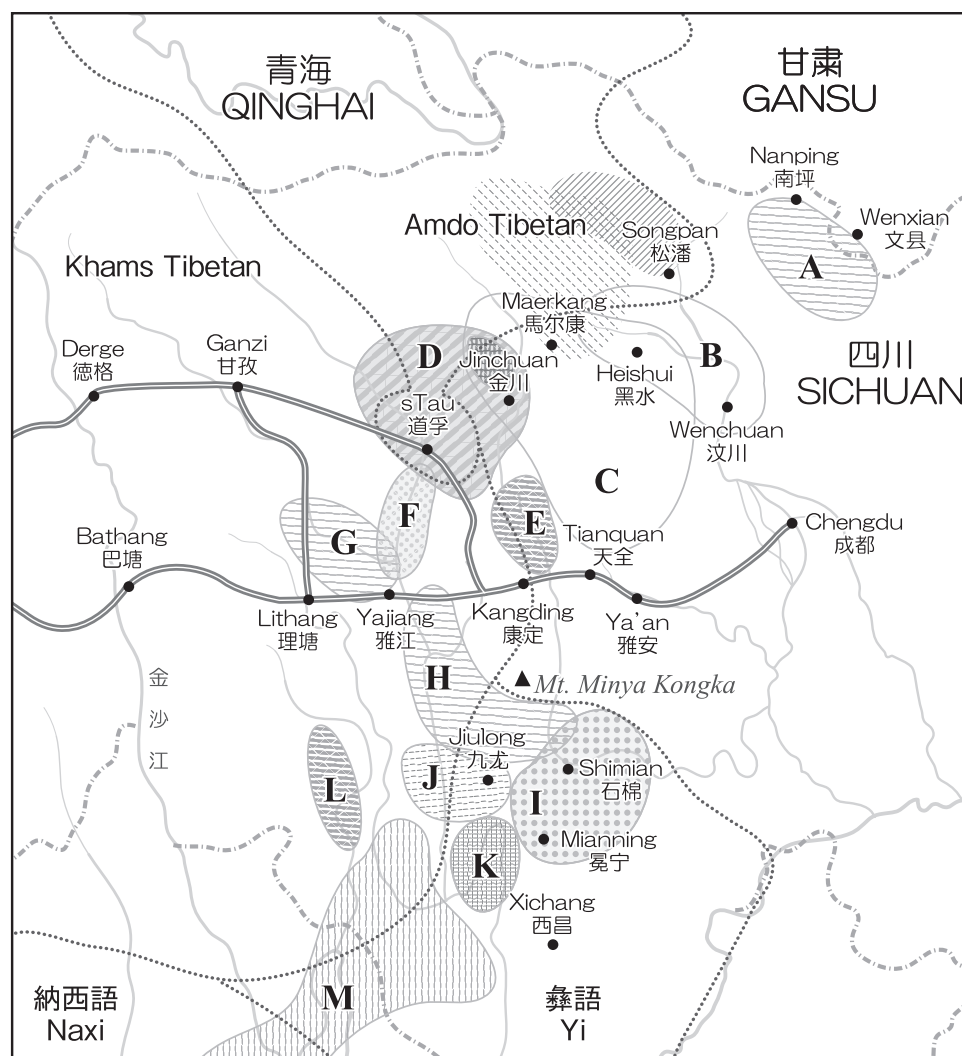
Key words: Tibeto-Burman, rGyalrong, applicative, Qiang, verb phrase

1. Introduction

rGyalrong is a Tibeto-Burman (TB) language spoken in the northwestern part of Sichuan Province, China. Refer to Map 1 for the distribution of the TB and TB-related languages in northwestern Sichuan and to Map 2 for the rGyalrong's dialects and rGyalrongic languages. This language has long attracted the attention of scholars. Some of them regarded rGyalrong as representing a similar taxonomic level to Written Tibetan (WT) because some lexical items of rGyalrong are very close, even identical, to the WT orthography; others have tried to position this language as a link among TB languages in general because of its characteristic morphological components. In fact, it shares some characteristics with several subgroups of the TB family and thus is considered to be one of link languages that connect languages that have genetic relations among them. While existing link languages are diverse in type, many of them still retain their archaic forms at different levels, and their descriptions are thought to be indispensable for the reconstruction of Proto-Tibeto-Burman.

The rGyalrong area has had close connections with Tibet, both historically and culturally. Especially, this area is known for its religious importance, as it served as a major shelter for Bon followers and produced many great Tibetan Buddhist scholars. Mainly for this reason, the rGyalrong people borrowed many WT words and those lexical shapes along with Tibetan affixes were incorporated into the rGyalrong language. That is why the rGyalrong language was once considered to represent an ancient form of Tibetan. However, Wolfenden (1929, 1936) and consequent studies denied any direct genetic relation between Tibetan and rGyalrong based on the analysis of a larger inventory of lexical items collected, while discovering the fact that rGyalrong retains lexical forms and morphosyntactic mechanisms as old as those of Proto-TB, and that a number of its grammatical characteristics, such as its sophisticated personal affix system and their agreement can be thought to have been invented in later times. Also, the theory that rGyalrong shares a common origin with the Qiangic languages, not with Tibetan, is now widely accepted. These studies rely on two methods—comparison of basic vocabularies and analysis of verb structures in terms of morphosyntax. The former is a generally used method in historical linguistic studies while the latter is unique to rGyalrong studies, which helps us to recognize the developmental role of a number of affixes and precisely identify the grammatical meanings of rGyalrong verb phrases. In rGyalrong, highly complex, yet well-structured syntactic rules are working, and these rules in turn provide important clues in the study of the Proto-TB syntax. That is why many of the preceding rGyalrong studies have focused on the analysis of verb structure.

In the rGyalrong verb phrase, many affixes are quite active and productive. Although the pronominal affixes and their agreement were proved to be a later development, many others still remain unexamined. Among those, I would like to describe 'applicative' of rGyalrong in this small paper as the first trial to check whether or not it is archaic.

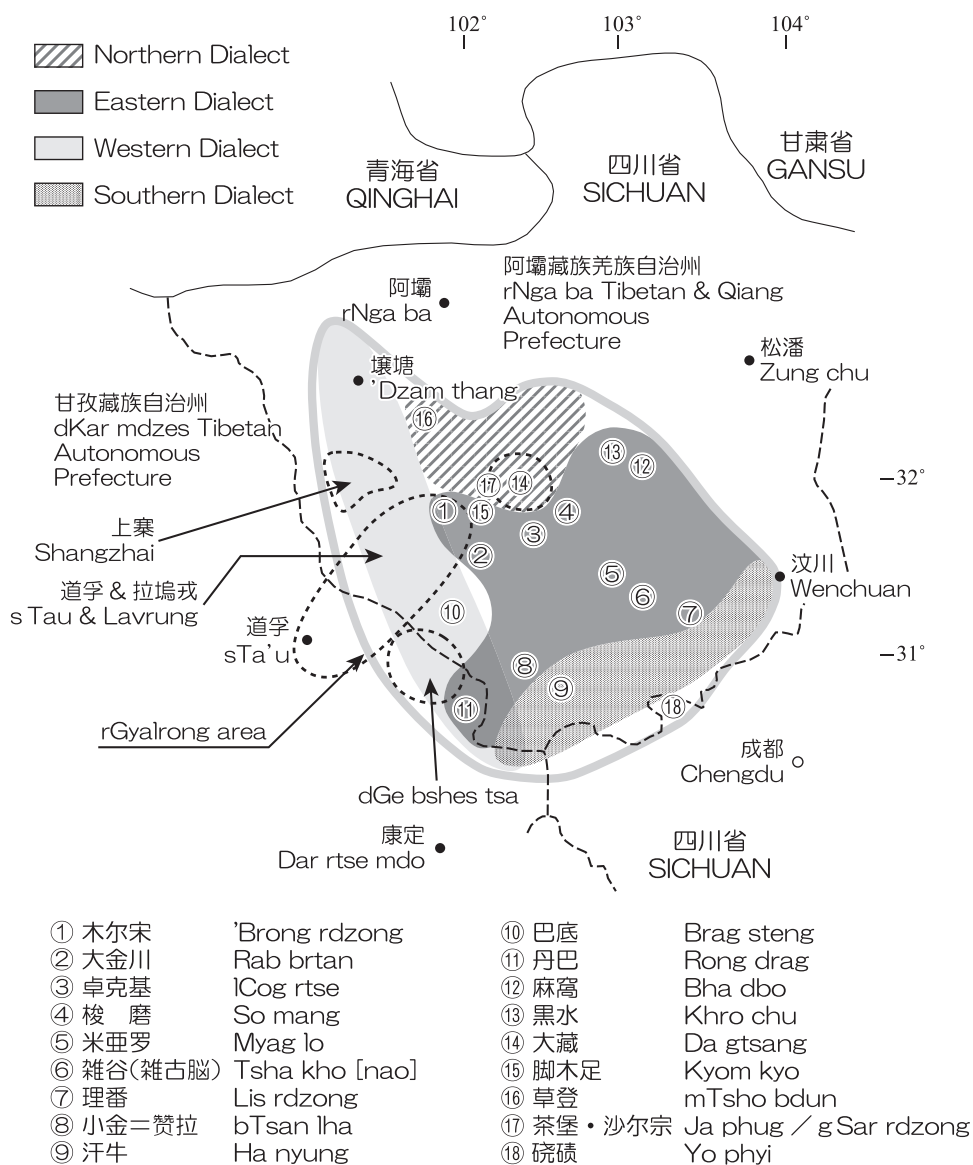


A	白馬語	Baima language	G	卻域語	Queyu language
B	羌語	Qiang language	H	木雅語	Muya language
C	嘉戎語	rGyalrong language	I	爾蘇語	Ersu language
D	道孚語	sTa'u language	J	呂蘇語	Lyuzu language
C & D	拉瑪戎語	Lavrung language	K	納木義語	Namuyi language
E	貴瓊語	Guichong language	L	史興語	Shihing language
F	扎壩語	nDrapa language	M	普米語	Prinmi language

The broken line stands for language boundary.

Map 1 Languages in northwestern Sichuan (based upon Nishida 1993, Ikeda 2007 and Shirai 2009)

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Map 2 Distribution of the rGyalrong dialects and rGyalrongic languages © Yasuhiko Nagano 2018

2. Outline of Phonology

2.1 Syllable structure

The syllable canon of the rGyalrong Bhola dialect can be generalized as (C1)Ci(G)V(Cf) (C2), where the parenthesized portions are optional. C1 can be occupied by p-, t-, k-, r-,

l-, s-, š-, m- or n-. All the consonants shown in the next section except fi, can stand at Ci. V stands for vowel and G is glide which includes -r-, -l-, -w- and -y-. The following may appear at (Cf): -p-, -t-, -k-, -ʔ-, -č-, -s-, -fi-, -m-, -n-, -ñ-, -l-, -r-, -w and -y. C2 is -s or pronominal suffix S1, including n, ñ, ñ̃, č, w, y.

2.2 Consonants

Consonant phonemes are the following:

p ph b	t th d	ʈ ʈh ɖ	k kh g	ʔ
	ts tsh dz	č čh ǰ	c ch j	
	s z	š ž		h fi
m	n		ñ	ñ̃
	r			
w	l		y	

2.3 Vowels

Vowels are: /a, i, u, e, o, ə, ɐ/. Tones are not distinctive.

3. General Structure of the rGyalrong Verb Phrase

rGyalrong sentences are either simple or compound. Simple sentences have one verb complex that is necessarily the final one, while compound sentences have any number of non-final verb complexes and a final one. The structure is illustrated schematically as:

$[(NP) + VP_{\text{non-final}}]^n(\text{particle})[(NP) + VP_{\text{final}}] (\text{AUX}) (n = 0, 1 \text{ or } 2)$

$VP_{\text{non-final}}$ is infinitive, where ka- prefixes action verbs while kə- appears with stative verbs.

A VP_{final} has the following general structure and it constitutes a word:

$VP_{\text{final}} \rightarrow P1-P2-P3-P4-P5-ROOT-(s)-S1$

P1 is the mood marker, which represents the speaker's attitude and judgment towards the state and/or the other party.

P2 is the tense/aspect marker, which specifies the past/non-past distinction and various aspects of motion that verbs express. For the sake of past/non-past distinction, directive markers play important roles. Directive markers are descriptively tense markers, but historically they seem to have been aspect markers.

P3 is the evidential marker, which indicates the information's directness/indirectness and mirativity of utterance.

P4, pairing up with S1, represents pronominal affix. P4 and S1 specify agreement.

P5 is the voice marker as well as adverbial affixes of manners, indicating causative, repetitive, reciprocal, applicative and some others.

A morpheme -s is a single derivative suffix to the root. It may appear between the root and S1 only with ‘process’ verbs. It also marks that the verb is in perfective.

The shape of verb root is single. Lin (2000) and Prins (2011) claim that past/non-past contrast is expressed by different root forms (different vowels or existence of ?), but my present informant says that the roots of past and of non-past are identical. Lin’s observation (1993) seems to be the same as mine.

4. Applicative marker na-

4.1 Typical cases

Among the P5 prefixes, “applicative” has drawn attention of scholars from the viewpoint of linguistic typology. If this affix appears at the P5 slot, it increases the number of arguments within the sentences by one. This affix was formerly regarded as a simple manner-specifier, but it has been interpreted as an applicative marker since Jacques’ intervention (2013, 2016). Generally, when a verb becomes an applicative verb through the addition of the applicative affix, an extra argument, which is called an *applied object*, appears. In Herero of Bantu, for instance, the following contrast is seen:

- (1) omunéné wá-rand-a ozombanda.
 parent SM/PAST-buy-F clothes

‘The parents bought clothes.’ (Yoneda 2009: 7)

- (1a) omunéné wá-rand-ér-é ovánátje ozombanda.
 parent SM/PAST-buy-AP-F children clothes

‘The parents bought clothes for the children.’ (Yoneda 2009: 7)

The appearance of applicative affix -ér- parallels the increase of benefactive argument. This phenomenon is widely observed in Bantu and Maya-Aztec languages, in which increased arguments are mostly either benefactive or goal arguments. Polinsky also claims that generally, ‘Applicative formation results in adding arguments other than agent and theme, and may thus be constrained by the general hierarchy of semantic roles: agent > theme (patient) > goal (recipient, benefactive) > location > other’ (Polinsky 2005: 443).

The rGyalrong examples parallel to these general usages are,

- (2) wuǰo w-ənǰi? w-əčhes suwe ta-na-šmo.
 3s 3s:GEN-friend 3s:GEN-for barley PST-APP-steal

‘(I hear that) He stole barley for his friends.’

- (3) *ña to-mərtsap.*
1s PST-feel pain

‘I felt pain.’

- (4) *ña ñ-ən-məs to-na-mərtsap.*
1s 1s:GEN-wound PST-APP-feel pain

‘I felt pain at the wound.’

In (2), a benefactive argument ‘for his friends’ and **-na-** are simultaneously present. By comparing (3) and (4), it can be understood that, if the location of pain is indicated, **-na-** appears. The following are examples.

- (5) *wuʃo ya-pho.*
3s PST-flee

‘He fled.’

- (6) *wuʃo ʃimgu kə-na-pho ya-čhe.*
3s house INF-APP-flee PST-go

‘He fled to (detoured) the house.’

‘House’ in (6) is not a theme but distal goal or location. *kə-na-pyor* may be used in place of *kə-na-pho*.

4.2 Benefactive or goal or theme?

In rGyalrong, the argument that increases is not necessarily benefactive or goal. Contrary to Polinsky’s claim, the theme increases or is presupposed. In this sense, rGyalrong’s applicative is not a typical case in linguistic typology. Jacques (2013, 2016) regards this phenomenon more broadly, stating that this affix turns an intransitive verb to a transitive one and it brings out the patient. Thus,

- (7) *ña nəzdañ {nə-zdar-ñ}.*
1s EVI-fear-1s

‘I fear.’

- (7a) *ña khuñ nənazdañ {nə-na-zdar-ñ}.*
1s tiger EVI-APP-fear-1s

‘I fear a tiger.’

- (7b) *ña* *wuʃo* *nənazdañ {nə-na-zdar-ñ}*.
 1s 3s EVI-APP-fear-1s

‘I fear him.’

The ‘tiger’ and ‘him’ are specified as the causes of ‘to fear’ and **-na-** appears in VP at the same time. The infinitive of the verb and **-na-** behave similarly. For instance,

- (7c) *ña* *wuʃo* *kə-nəya* *nənazdañ {nə-na-zdar-ñ}*.
 1s 3s INF-return EVI-APP-fear-1s

‘I fear him returning.’

In the following examples, **-na-** appears even though the *applied object* is absent:

- (8) *ka-šmo=tə* *ma-hao* *ños*.
 INF-steal=DEF NEG-good LKV

‘Stealing is not good.’

- (8a) *tərmi* *ñi-lakčhe* *ka-na-šmo=tə* *ma-hao* *ños*.
 man 3p(HON):GEN-object INF-APP-steal=DEF NEG-good LKV

‘It is not good to steal other person’s object.’

- (8b) *ka-na-šmo=tə* *ma-hao* *ños*.
 INF-APP-steal=DEF NEG-good LKV

‘It is not good to steal (object).’

The example (8a) shows its object and **-na-** is used. This is parallel to (7) through (7c). However, (8b) is also acceptable for native speakers. This is because while the notion that ‘stealing is bad’ is a generality, **-na-** can be present without an applied object if some concrete target to be stolen is present within the speaker’s mind.

- (9) *kəšmo=kə* *ña-poñyi* *sta* *to-šmo-w*.
 thief=ERG 1s:GEN-money container PST-steal-3

‘A thief stole my purse.’

- (9a) *ña-poñyi* *sta* *tunašmoñ {to-wu-na-šmo-ñ}*.
 1s:GEN-money container PST-INV-APP-steal-1s

‘(Someone) stole my purse.’ = ‘I had my purse stolen.’

- (9b) tənḍi khos tunašmoṅ {to-wu-**na**-šmo-ṅ}.
 leather case PST-INV-APP-steal-1s

‘(Someone) stole my leather case.’ = ‘I had my leather case stolen.’

The translations for (9a) and (9b) can be constructed to be suffering passive, but the sentences are not of passive construction. In (9b), the possessor of the leather case is not specified, but, we can guess it is the first person singular because of the S1 suffix.

4.3 Irregular examples

The following is rather an irregular example. *saksə* is a noun that means ‘lunch’ and we can make a VP ‘to take lunch’ by adding a directive marker. Thus,

- (10) yi-**na**-saksə ru.
 DIR-APP-lunch SFP

‘Let’s take lunch/go to lunch.’

We cannot find the *applied object* ‘lunch’ in (10), but because it is presupposed in the speaker’s mind, **-na-** is used. Incidentally, ‘afternoon’ is **saksənkhū**, which consists of **saksə** ‘lunch’ + **nkhu** ‘after.’

When we presuppose ‘food’ as the *applied object*, its theme frequently disappears.

- (11) wuḷo təmñok ka-ndza wu-sem no-we.
 3s bread INF-eat 3s:GEN-mind PST-come

‘He wanted to take bread.’

- (12) wuḷo šimomo kə-**na**-ndza ta-səyok.
 3s now INF-APP-eat PST-finish

‘He just finished eating.’

In (11), the theme ‘bread’ is stated, while in (12), no applied object is expressed, but the existence of **-na-** implies that either breakfast, lunch or dinner is presupposed. Similar examples are:

- (13) kə-**na**-ndza w-əke=y, təyak ka-šci.
 INF-APP-eat 3s:GEN-before=LOC hand IMP-wash

‘Wash your hands before eating.’

- (14) *kə-na-ndza ma-tso-ñ.*
 INF-APP-eat NEG-have time to do-1s

‘I have no time to eat.’

4.4 Lexicalized **-na-**

In addition to these, the following are examples of lexicalized **-na-**.

- (15) *ña čorbo to-nazon {to-nazok-ñ}.*
 1s plate PST-lick-1s

‘I licked the plate.’

- (16) *khəna təndza to-nazok.*
 dog food PST-lick

‘The dog licked the food.’

There is no form ***ka-zok**, which lacks **-na-**.

- (17) *wuʃo gyagar-ne nə-naya-s.*
 3s India=ABL PST-return-PFV

‘He returned from India.’

- (18) *ña borso ripin naya-ñ.*
 1s next year Japan return-1s

‘I shall be returning to Japan.’

- (19) *ña wuʃo kə-naya nayo-ñ.*
 1s 3s INF-return wait-1s

‘I will wait for his return.’

We have no grammatical shape ***kə-ya** for ‘to return’ nor ***ka-yo** for ‘to wait.’ Similarly, there is no form such as ***ka-slot** nor ***ka-momi** for ‘to get lost, to be at a loss’ respectively.

- (20) *ña təla nənaslon {nə-naslot-ñ}.*
 1s road PST-lose-1s

‘I got lost.’

- (21) *ña* *nə-namomi-ñ.*
 1s PST-be at a loss-1s

‘I got lost.’

Another example of the lexicalized **-na-** would be **ka-na-mčara** ‘to read’.

From these examples, it could be said that rGyalrong has an applicative construction, but it is not typologically typical in the manner that Polinsky and Peterson assert. Rather than that, rGyalrong’s applicative can be considered to be functioning in VP as a signal that implies the existence of a theme argument as well as benefactive and goal arguments.

5. Some Speculation—by way of tentative conclusion

We have understood that the rGyalrong’s applicative belongs to either the ‘stimulus’ or ‘comitative’ type Peterson (2007) says. As Jacques clearly claims for Japhug rGyalrong, “The applicative is a valency-increasing derivation by means of which an oblique argument or adjunct is promoted to the O role, while the S of the original verb becomes the A of the applicative verb” (2013: 1–2). It means that the applicative marker derives a transitive verb from an intransitive one, where a P argument appears anew.

We have no concrete evidence that any nasal prefix to a verb had a function to causativize an intransitive verb to a transitive verb in the older syntax, while Matisoff directs his attention to the function of the Daai nasal prefix (2003: 119). Although he does not say that the Daai phenomenon can be traced back to PTB, I believe it deserves a further consideration, along with a wider comparison with other voice markers, such as the antipassive and the estimative (Jacques’ *tropative*) markers observed in more rGyalrong-Qiangic languages. The findings may be closely connected to the PTB morphosyntax.

Abbreviations

1	first person	{ }	underlying form
2	second person	ABL	ablative
3	third person	ABT	absolute tense
d	dual	ADVR	adverbializer
ex	existence	ALA	agentless action
neg	negative	APP	applicative
p	plural	ATT	attenuant
s	single	AUX	auxiliary verb
v	verb	CAUS	causative
<	originated from the right	COND	conditional
>	action going from the left to right	CONJ	conjunction

CONJP	conjunctive particle	NIF	new information
DEF	definite	NOM	nominalizer
DIF	direct information	Non1	non-first person
DIR	directive/direction marker	NonV	non-volitional
ERG	ergative	OPT	optative
EST	estimative	P	prefix
EVI	evidential	PFV	perfective
FOC	focus marker	PROG	progressive
GEN	genitive	PROH	prohibitive
HON	honorifics	PST	past tense
IDEF	indefinite	Q	question
IMP	imperative	S	suffix
IMPS	impersonal	SFP	sentence-final particle
INF	infinitive	ST	Sino-Tibetan
INS	instrumental	TB	Tibeto-Burman
INV	inverse	VP	verb phrase
IRR	irrealis	WT	Written Tibetan
LKV	linking verb	-	morpheme boundary
LOC	locative	=	constituent boundary one degree higher than “-”
NEG	negative/negation		

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