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► **To cite this version:**

Thomas M. Pinson. The Naxi aspectual particles 'teiq' and 'neiq': English version of a paper published in Chinese in the year 2000 in the journal Yunnan Minzu Yuwen, volume 1, pp. 18-24. 2000. halshs-02126137

HAL Id: halshs-02126137

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02126137>

Preprint submitted on 10 May 2019

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The Naxi Aspectual Particles ‘teiq’ and ‘neiq’

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Naxi, like other Tibeto-Burman languages, is rich in grammatical particles. The categories of particles include postpositions like the Naxi word *nee*, which indicates the grammatical relations of ergative subject, source and instrumental oblique. There are also particles that indicate aspect and mood. Understanding what particles do syntactically and semantically is vital to understanding languages such as Naxi. In this article, we will explain the two aspect particles, *teiq* and *neiq*. The particle *teiq* precedes the verb and *neiq* follows the verb, as do other aspect particles.

The syntactic concept of aspect is often confused with the concept of tense. The fact that many languages intertwine aspect with tense probably leads to this confusion. Stated very simply, tense locates an event in time. In contrast, aspect, as Chung and Timberlake (1985:213) describe it, “characterizes the relationship of a predicate to the time interval over which it occurs.” It is sometimes difficult to understand the difference between these two concepts. Tense deals with time, namely, the event took place (past), the event is now taking place (present), or the event will take place (future). Aspect, on the other hand, relates to the internal temporal structure of an event. Concepts like the completion or incompleteness of an event are the kind of things to which aspect relates. For example, the English sentence “He came” contains both the concept of tense and aspect. The tense is past and the aspect is perfective. In contrast, the Mandarin Chinese sentence, “他来了” contains no tense. The event of “his” arrival might have already happened or it might be about to happen, as when one sees “him” walking up to the door.

In their discussion of aspect, Chung and Timberlake go on to say that there are two types of temporal relationships involved. The first type is characterized by the notion of change. That is whether the event changes over some period of time or not. The second type of relationship expressed by aspect is how the event occurs over the selected time interval. Basically, the duration of the event can include all of the selected time period (imperfective) or the selected time period can include the entire event (perfective).

The Naxi aspectual particles, *teiq* and *neiq*, exemplify the first type of relationship just mentioned, that of change. A predicate can describe something that either changes or doesn’t change over some selected period of time. For example, when one says, “Yesterday was cold” the selected period of time was ‘Yesterday’ and the aspectual relationship is ‘static’, because “was cold” describes a state. When a predicate describes an event which changes over time, it is called ‘dynamic’. If it does not change it is called ‘static’. The two Naxi aspectual particles under consideration make this contrast: *neiq* indicates a dynamic predicate, while *teiq* expresses a state.

This contrast of dynamicity is not only expressed by these two aspectual words, certain verbs are inherently dynamic and other verbs are static. Verbs that are considered dynamic are verbs of processes or of action like *jjeq* ‘run’, *tvɩ* ‘cook’ and *co* ‘dance’. Verbs that are considered static include verbs of position like *zjeeq* ‘sit’, *hiul* ‘stand’ and *yil* ‘sleep’, verbs of cognition like *see* ‘know’ and *ddoq* ‘see’, and adjectival verbs like *hiuq* ‘red’, *shuaq* ‘tall’ and *gaddeeq* ‘fat’.

When one wants to emphasize that a predicate is dynamic the aspectual word *neiq* can be added to the VP following the verb. When a predicate is static the aspectual word *teiq* can be added to the VP preceding the verb. Consider the following:

- (1) Ngaf ddi tei'ee meil neiq.
 1S father book teach DYN
My father is teaching school. or
My father teaches school.
- (2) Neeggeeq nee zzee neiq gge liqhuaq tee ssei q nee ceeq lei?
 2PL.YTH ERG eat DYN GEN lotus TOP where from came QW
Where did the lotus you are eating come from? or
Where did the lotus you eat come from?
- (3) Kaqqzei zherl ddo neiq chee-rhee q tee, . . .
 corn section grow DYN this-time TOP
When the corn is jointing out. . .
- (4) Tee zhua-gv teiq yil sie.
 3S bed-on STAT lie EMCRS
He's lying on his bed!
- (5) Kaqqzei piel teiq herq zherq gge feiqial. . .
 corn leaves STAT green CAUS GEN fertilizer
Fertilizer that causes the corn leaves to be green. . .
- (6) Ngeq soqni seil xigua bbei teiq shee bbeq yel. . .
 1S tomorrow then trick ADVR STAT die go CONJ
Tomorrow I will pretend to be dead, so. . .
 Lit: *Tomorrow I am going to be dead in a deceptive manner, so. . .*

In examples (1) and (2) there are two possible interpretations for each sentence. Depending on the time frame that is selected, the sentences can either mean what is currently being done (i.e. at this precise moment) or what is being done at this extended period in time (i.e. at this time in one's life). Regardless of the time frame selected, examples (1) - (3) all indicate dynamic processes.

Examples (4) - (6) are three interesting examples of stative verbs used with the static aspect marker, *teiq*. In (4) the verb *yil* 'lie' is stative but the emphatic modal particle (i.e. currently relevant state), *sie*, indicates that it is a state that was entered into unexpectedly. (5) is an example of the adjectival verb *herq* 'green' embedded in a causative clause, which is all modifying the noun 'fertilizer'. The last example, (6), shows the stative verb *shee* 'die' where the state has not been entered into yet. Though examples (4) - (6) are fundamentally different, all three contain stative verbs modified with the static aspectual word, *teiq*.

What is interesting about the two words, *neiq* and *teiq*, is that they don't only have to be used with verbs with similar dynamicity. When *neiq* is used with stative verbs, the predicate is converted to a dynamic one. When *teiq* is used with dynamic verbs, the predicate is converted to a static one. First consider examples (7)-(9) showing stative verbs with *teiq* in the (a) examples and then *neiq* in the (b) examples.

- (7) a. Piqgo chee-derl teiq hiuq.
 apple this-MW STAT red
This tree of apples is red.
- b. Piqgo chee-derl hiuq neiq sie.
 apple this-MW red DYN EMCRS
This tree of apples is turning red.

- (8) a. Chee elcheegeeq teiq zzeeq ye.
 3S there STAT sit DECL
She is sitting over there.
- b. Chee mee q zzeeq neiq ye.
 3S down sit DYN DECL
She is (in the process of going from a standing position to) sitting down.
- (9) a. Kaikai bba'laq naq teiq muq seiq.
 Keith clothing black STAT wear CRS
Keith is wearing a black jacket.
- b. Kaikai bba'laq naq muq neiq.
 Keith clothing black wear DYN
Keith is putting on a black jacket.

The (a) examples demonstrate that when *teiq* is used with a stative verb the meaning is as one would expect. The (b) examples, on the other hand, show a change in the predicate from static to dynamic when *neiq* is used. Examples (10)-(12) show verbs of processes used with *neiq* in the (a) examples and then with *teiq* in the (b) examples.

- (10) a. Chee cher'ee ddeemaiq teeq neiq ye.
 3S medicine a.little drink DYN DECL
He is drinking a little medicine.
- b. Tee seiseiq mai sie, nal me dder, cher'ee ddeemaiq teiq teeq seil,
 3S cold catch EMCRS but not need medicine a.little STAT drink then
 lei ga bbee zo waq.
 again good will CERT be
He has caught a cold, but don't worry, when he has drunk a little medicine, he will definitely get well.
- (11) a. Chee ddee-siuq ddee-mei cherl neiq ye.
 3S one-kind one-MW grasp DYN DECL
He is picking up some kind of animal.
- b. Laq-pu la ddee-siuq ddee-mei teiq cherl ye.
 hand-in also one-kind one-MW STAT grasp DECL
(He) had some kind of animal in his hand.
- (12) a. Chee Nini nee berl neiq gge tei'ee waq.
 this Nenny ERG write DYN GEN book is
This is the book that Nenny is writing.
- b. Chee Nini nee teiq berl gge tei'ee waq.
 this Nenny ERG STAT write GEN book is
This is the book that Nenny wrote.

In example (10), the verb *teeq* 'drink' is clearly a verb of process, though it is inherently telic in that one must finish drinking. When the dynamic particle, *neiq*, is used with the verb *teeq*, as in

(10a), the meaning is clearly that the process of drinking medicine is underway. It is a very dynamic predicate. When the static particle, *teiq*, is used with the verb *teeq*, (10b), the predicate is no longer dynamic. Basically, (10b) means that “once the state of having drunk the medicine has been entered into, then the patient will get well.” If the dynamic particle, *neiq*, was used in (10b) the meaning would be “once the drinking of the medicine is begun, then the patient will get well.” The difference is subtle but the difference hinges on whether it is the state of “having drunk” or the process of “drinking”.

Example (11) also displays this distinction of dynamicity. The difference being whether the motion of “grasping” the animal is underway or whether the animal “has been grasped”. (11b) comes from a text about a man who killed a leopard cat one night. When he brought it back home he was carrying it in his hand. Thus, “he had some kind of animal in his hand.” He was in the state of grasping the animal or better said “the animal was locked in his grip.”

The last example, (12), makes this contrast of dynamicity the clearest. “Writing” is clearly a process, so (12a) means that the book is still in the process of being written by Nenny. It has not yet entered into the state of having been written, as is the case in (12b).

This use of *teiq*, the static aspect marker, with verbs of motion or process is not as clear-cut as the use of *neiq*, the dynamic aspect marker, with stative verbs. This is more a pragmatic problem than one of grammar, since the contexts for states of “having been walked” or “having been jumped” are less abundant than contexts for processes like “turning red” or “getting fatter”.

Because the word *teiq* makes a predicate stative, it is often used in subordinate clauses which express a state, while the matrix clause expresses a process. Consider the following example:

- (13) Ngaf ni-gvl nee teiq hiul bbei Naqxi geezhee qge yu'fa shel neiq.
 1P two-MW ERG STAT stand ADVR Naxi language GEN grammar speak DYN
The two of us are standing around discussing Naxi grammar.

This type of sentence shows that the word *teiq* is somewhat similar to the Chinese verbal suffix *-zhe* 着. Li and Thompson (1989:217) call 着, a “durative aspect marker”. Consider the following Mandarin Chinese example from Li and Thompson (1989:224):

- (14) Tā tǎng-zhe kàn bào.
 3S lie-DUR look paper
He was lying down reading the newspaper.

Example (14) is parallel to (13) in that the first predicate indicates a state of posture while the second predicate indicates the event that took place. The Chinese example uses the suffix 着 to indicate the ongoing state of ‘lying down’. The Naxi example uses the word *teiq* to indicate the same concept.

The Chinese word *zài* 在 parallels the Naxi word *neiq* in the same way 着 and *teiq* are similar. Consider the following examples:

- (15) Wěilì zài dǎ tā gēge.
 Willy DUR hit 3S elder.brother
Willy is hitting his brother.

The verb ‘hit’ is an activity verb, and as Li and Thompson point out, it takes the durative aspect word 在 to indicate the event is currently underway. This is similar to the following Naxi sentence.

- (16) Wei'lil nee taf go lal neiq.
 Willy ERG 3S elder.brother hit DYN
Willy is hitting his brother.

The particle *neiq* indicates that the action is currently underway.

Based on facts like these, one might consider the Naxi particles, *teiq* and *neiq*, to be the same as the Chinese particles 在 and 着, but there are some differences. Consider first that only activity verbs in Chinese take the particle 在. Stative verbs, in particular adjectives, cannot take the particle 在.

- (17) *Tā zài pàng.
 3S DUR fat
- (18) *Wǒmen de kǎoxiāng zài huài.
 1P GEN oven DUR broken

Naxi stative verbs can take the particle *neiq*, as seen in examples (7)-(9) and the following examples.

- (19) Chee gaddeeq neiq.
 3S fat DYN
He is getting fat.
- (20) Ngaf gge kasiai piel neiq sieq.
 1S GEN oven broken DYN CRS
Our oven is breaking. or
Our oven has begun to break.

Likewise, Chinese adjectival predicates cannot take the suffix 着, but Naxi adjectival predicates can take the particle *teiq*. Compare the following:

- (21) *Tā pàng-zhe.
 3S fat-DUR
- (22) Chee teiq gaddeeq.
 3S STAT fat
He is fat (implying he has always been fat).

Dynamic Chinese verbs typically cannot take the 着 suffix, but dynamic Naxi verbs can take the *teiq* particle. Li and Thompson (1989:217) point out that both 在 and 着 are durative in nature, meaning that the predicate is ongoing. This means that when a dynamic verb in Chinese can take the 着 suffix the verb itself contains the notion of ongoingness, for example 坐着'sitting'. Compare the following:

- (23) Nge nee teiq reeq gge bba'laq . . .
 1S ERG STAT sew GEN clothes
The clothes that I sewed. . .
- (24) Wǒ fēng-zhe de yīfu . . .
 1S sew-DUR GEN clothes
The clothes that I'm sewing. . .

- (25) Lal me niq shel mei, chee nee teiq lal heq.
hit not want say COMP 3s ERG stat hit went
(I) said don't hit (him), but he already did.
- (26) *Wǒ shuō-le bié dǎ tā, dān tā dǎ-zhe.
1s say-PFV don't hit 3s but he hit-DUR
- (27) Chee xi nee teiq malma gge waq.
this person ERG STAT make GEN be
This is something that someone made.
- (28) *Zhè shì rén zào-zhe de.
this be person make-DUR GEN

In example (23) the clothes have already been sewn, or stated differently, the clothes are already in the state of having been sewn. But in the Chinese example, (24), the clothes are still being sewn, the garment is not yet finished. Example (25) shows that in Naxi an event that is as highly telic as 'hitting' can become stative by using the word *teiq*. The state that the predicate expresses in (25) is one of having been hit. (26) shows that in Chinese highly telic verbs like 'hit' cannot be used with the durative aspect 着. Example (27) shows that the object being discussed has entered the state of being human made, whereas if the same thing were to be expressed in Chinese, (28) shows that it cannot be expressed using the durative suffix 着. Rather, it must be stated as *Zhè shì rén zào-de*, without the suffix 着.

At first glance it might appear that the Chinese durative aspect markers, 在 and 着, are the same as the Naxi aspect particles *neiq* and *teiq*, but on further examination it becomes clear that they are different. The basic difference is in the aspectual domains that each cover. The Chinese words are durative. They express an ongoing notion. The Naxi words express static and dynamic notions, though both contain the concept of ongoingness as expressed in the Chinese aspect markers.

There is one other fact about the word *teiq* that needs explanation. This static aspect marker is used in imperative predicates. Chung and Timberlake (1985:215) remark, "states do not occur in the imperative". What they mean is that one can't say "Be smart" or "Be fat". One can't command someone else to be in the state of something. A command can only be given for a dynamic process. As seen above *teiq* is clearly the static aspect marker, but following are examples of it used in imperative clauses.

- (29) Seeqzee ceeq seiq, ddee'laq bbei ggeq teiq hiul!
teacher came CRS everyone all up STAT stand
The teacher is here, everyone stand up!
- (30) Ddee bee teiq lal!
one time STAT hit
Give him a beating!

Both of the above examples are imperatives given in the positive. The particle *teiq* can be used in the negative, but the constraints are different. Consider the following:

- (31) Teiq hiul me niq, teiq zzeeq.
STAT stand not want STAT sit
Don't stand, sit!

- (32) **Teiq* lal *me niq*.
STAT hit not want
(Don't hit him.)

In (31) the command is given to discontinue standing. In other words, the one at whom the command is directed is already in the state of standing. This can be seen more clearly in (32), where *teiq* cannot be used, because the one at whom the command is directed is not already in the state of hitting. In fact, one cannot be in a state of hitting, rather one can only be in the process of hitting. Thus, if *teiq* is used with a negative command it must be used as the static aspect marker, whereas if the imperative is positive no sense of stativeness can be implied. It is simply the positive imperative marker in these cases, which means that at these times it is not an aspect marker but rather a marker of mood.

In summary, Naxi has two aspect particles, *teiq* and *neiq*, which at first look very similar to the Chinese durative aspect markers, 着 and 在, but in fact they are not the same. The primary difference between these is that Naxi *teiq* and *neiq* express the notions of static and dynamic predicates. But the Chinese 着 and 在 express the notion of ongoingness. The Naxi word *teiq* also does double duty as the positive imperative mood marker.

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Chinese version of this paper was published:

孙堂茂 (Pinson, Thomas M.), 《论纳西语中语体助词 "teiq" 和 "neiq"》云南民族语文, 2000年版, 第1期 18页-24页。