SINGAPOREAN HOKKIEN ADJECTIVES

KRISSDA TAN

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Krisda Tan
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Researcher: Krisda Tan
Degree: Master of Arts in Linguistics
Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Advisor: Dr. George Bedell
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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien by looking at types of adjectives, the constraints of adjectival phrase modification and negation of the adjective. First, Singaporean Hokkien adjectives are divided into monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic types. Next, the adjective is analyzed in phrase level context by looking at the grammatical rules of adjectival phrase modification. The adverb modifies the adjectival phrase as a degree expression by stating the extent of the adjective. Degree expressions are divided into intensifier degree expressions, comparative constructions and reduplication. Finally, this study discusses the ways an adjective can be negated. An adjective can be negated in three ways depending on the modal auxiliary verb. It is found that the adjective word class functions similarly to the verb word class in terms of grammar. The adjective can be negated like a verb in Singaporean Hokkien. To differentiate between the adjective and the verb, the adverb is used. The adjective can be modified by an adverb, which in this case is a degree expression whereas the verb cannot.
บทคัดย่อ
วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ศึกษาค่าคุณศัพท์ในภาษาฮ็กเกี้ยนสิงคโปร์ โดยการศึกษาประเภทของค่าคุณศัพท์ กฎเกณฑ์การขยายคุณศัพท์ และการปฏิเสธค่าคุณศัพท์ ค่าคุณศัพท์สามารถแบ่งเป็น 3 ประเภท คือ ค่าคุณศัพท์ที่มีพยางค์เดียว ค่าคุณศัพท์ที่มีสองพยางค์ และค่าคุณศัพท์ที่มีหลายพยางค์ ซึ่งต่อไปเป็นการวิเคราะห์ค่าคุณศัพท์ในบริบทระดับวลี โดยศึกษาหลักเกณฑ์ไวยากรณ์ของการขยายคุณศัพท์ในภาษาฮ็กเกี้ยนสิงคโปร์โดยการแปลงปริมาณของค่าคุณศัพท์ คำวิเศษณ์ชนิดนี้เรียกว่าข้อความเฉพาะขอบเขต สามารถจำแนกได้เป็น 3 ประเภท คือ ข้อความเฉพาะขอบเขตเพิ่มความเข้มข้น โครงสร้างเปรียบเทียบ และการซ้ำพยางค์สุดท้าย เป็นการศึกษาวิธีการปฏิเสธค่าคุณศัพท์พบว่ามี 3 วิธี โดยขึ้นอยู่กับประเภทของค่าคุณศัพท์ปรากฏว่า ค่าคุณศัพท์มีความคล้ายคลึงกับคำวิเศษณ์ในภาษาฮ็กเกี้ยนสิงคโปร์ ค่าคุณศัพท์สามารถปฏิเสธได้เช่นเดียวกับคำวิเศษณ์ การแยกและระบุคำคุณศัพท์กับคำวิเศษณ์สามารถทำได้โดยการใช้คำวิเศษณ์ คำวิเศษณ์สามารถขยายคำคุณศัพท์ได้แต่ไม่สามารถขยายคำ กิริยาได้
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<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJP</td>
<td>Adjectival Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV&lt;sub&gt;COMP&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Comparative Adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVP</td>
<td>Adverbiaal Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLF</td>
<td>Classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMPL ASP</td>
<td>Compleitive Aspect</td>
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<td>COP</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoV</td>
<td>Coverb</td>
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<td>Direct Object</td>
</tr>
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<td>Noun</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nominalizer</td>
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<td>NP</td>
<td>Noun Phrase</td>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUM</td>
<td>Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFX</td>
<td>Prefix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROG</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q&lt;sub&gt;DEG&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Degree Question Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QNT</td>
<td>Quantitative Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QPRT</td>
<td>Question Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Reduplicated Morpheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFP</td>
<td>Sentence Final Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFX</td>
<td>Suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Verb Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P</td>
<td>First Person Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P</td>
<td>Second Person Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P</td>
<td>Third Person Pronoun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Singaporean Hokkien Adjectives

I begin this chapter first by mapping out the diaspora of Hokkien speakers globally. Following that, I list the various names by which this language is being referred to. Next, I describe the orthography used to write this language followed with a phonological and a grammatical sketch. After that, I present the methodological approach of this thesis and the literature review of previous studies in this language. Then, I state the objectives, propose the hypothesis and define the scope of study in this thesis. Finally, I end this chapter by reporting the limitations encountered while conducting this thesis as well as providing definitions of technical terms addressed in this thesis, and offering the possible contributions of this thesis to future scholaristic works.

1.1 The Hokkien Population

Hokkien is a Southern Min language belonging to the Sinitic Branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Although there are a significant number of speakers of this language (approximately 49 million), it is not recognized as a major language due to political issues of the People’s Republic of China. Speakers of this language according to the Ethnologue\(^1\) (Lewis 2009) are scattered from the southern region of the People’s Republic China down to as far as the State of Brunei Darussalam. To be precise, the geographical spread of this language can be located in the following areas: the Republic of China (Taiwan), the People’s Republic of China, Thailand, Malaysia, the Republic of Singapore, the Republic of Philippines, the Republic of Indonesia and the State of Brunei Darussalam. The number of speakers in Taiwan account for approximately 15 million (1997), which is estimated to be 66.7 percent of the nation’s population (1993). In Mainland China, the number of speakers is approximately 25.7 million (1984) and that number is estimated to be 2.5 percent of the total population of the country. For Thailand, there are estimated to be 17,600 speakers of this language which is approximately 0.3 percent of the total population. The numbers of speakers in Malaysia is approximately 24,600 people residing in

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\(^1\) The figures presented in Section 1.1 are obtained via Ethnologue
Sabah (1980). In Singapore, the number of speakers approximates 736 thousand people which accounts roughly for 28.8 percent of the total population (1993). For the Philippines, the number of speakers of this language is estimated to be about 5 to 6 thousand which approximates 98.7 percent of the Chinese population residing in the country. Indonesia has approximately 700 thousand people speaking this language mainly in Java and Bali (1982) and Brunei has about 10 thousand speakers (1979). The Ethnologue also states that there are speakers of this language in the United States of America. However, whether the number is significant or not is obscure.

### 1.2 The Hokkien Language

Hokkien is called by various names e.g. Fujian, Fukien, Fulao and Hoklo, etc. There are several varieties of Hokkien. The variety that is considered the most prestigious is the Xiamen variant spoken in the southern region of Fujian province, Guangdong province and several other scattered areas in Mainland China. The Xiamen variant is also spoken in Taiwan despite the fact that the local one, being the Taiwanese variant, exists as well. Nonetheless, the two variants are mutually intelligible. On the other hand, other Southern Min varieties such as Teochew and Hainanese are less mutually intelligible or totally unintelligible with Hokkien. The former is lexically and phonologically similar to Hokkien whereas the latter is totally different from the other Southern Min varieties mentioned above.

Apart from the Xiamen variant, it is worthy of mention that there are two other variants of Hokkien; the Quanzhou and the Zhangzhou language variants. These two variants are mainly spoken in Southern Fujian and they vary from each other to a slight extent in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation. The Xiamen variant is a hybrid of both the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou variants, as it contains vocabulary and pronunciation belonging to both variants.

The Taiwanese variant is also a hybrid of the two abovementioned variants, differing from the Xiamen variant in terms of the combination of vocabulary and pronunciation. The term “hybrid” is applied to this linguistic phenomena in order to explain the way a word is uttered in terms of morphological composition and phonological make up. A word in the Xiamen variety of Hokkien may be of the same pronunciation to the Quanzhou variety. On the other hand, another word in the Xiamen variety may be of the same vocabulary to the Zhangzhou variety. Applying this term “hybrid” further leads to the realization that a Hokkien variant may have a
The X:Y ratio of Quanzhou to Zhangzhou vocabulary/pronunciation similarities while another variant might have a A:B ratio of Quanzhou to Zhangzhou vocabulary/pronunciation similarities. The representation of the comparison of the ratios X:Y to A:B demonstrates the fact that different variants of Hokkien have a undeterminable ratio of Quanzhou/Zhangzhou resemblances in vocabulary and pronunciation.

Other than the major variants of Hokkien found in Southern Fujian province of Mainland China and in Taiwan, there are also regional varieties spoken in other parts of the world especially in the region between East Asia and Southeast Asia. To mention a few, they are Penang Hokkien and Singaporean Hokkien. The former variety is spoken in Penang state of Malaysia and the latter in Singapore. The latter variety is the variety that is discussed in this thesis and will therefore be referred to as Singaporean Hokkien hereafter to correspond to the thesis title.

1.2.1 Hokkien Orthography

Hokkien is traditionally written in Sinitic script along with innovated characters exclusive to that place where the language is used depending on necessity of usage. Due to these characters, which are not standardized, confusion often occurs in written communication. For instance, if a Mainland Hokkien character is used in Singapore the speakers of Singaporean Hokkien may not be able to understand what is being written and vice versa. Apart from Sinitic characters, The Roman alphabet is also used to write Hokkien. The Presbyterian missionaries in Mainland China were the first to develop them and the indigenous Presbyterian Church in Taiwan developed them further. For other places like Singapore, there is a tendency for Hokkien to be transcribed in a non Sinitic method by utilizing Roman letters without any tone indications. For this thesis, I shall transcribe all utterances in IPA with tone markers.

1.3 Singaporean Hokkien Phonological Sketch

The focus of this thesis is on Singaporean Hokkien, which is not the same as the prestigious and standard Xiamen variant. Therefore, the phonological inventory of Singaporean Hokkien may or may not be identical to its Xiamen counterpart. As a result, this is a tentative phonological sketch of the language and the sketch may or may deviate from the standard language variety in various degrees.
1.3.1 Singaporean Hokkien Consonant Chart

This consonant chart is a tentative chart of consonant sounds which are realized phonetically from the data collected for the thesis. It is not based on a systematic phonological analysis of Singaporean Hokkien.

Table 1. Singaporean Hokkien Consonant Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labio-Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Alveo-Palatal</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voiceless Aspirated Stop</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voiceless Unaspirated Stop</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>k</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voiced Stop</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>η</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voiceless Aspirated Affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tsʰ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voiceless Unaspirated Affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voiced Affricate</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>s</td>
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<td>Glide</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.2 Singaporean Hokkien Vowel Chart

The number of vowels in Singaporean Hokkien charted in this thesis is a partial one due to the fact that the researcher deems that the data collected is insufficient for a complete analysis.
Table 2. Singaporean Hokkien Vowel Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>Back</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Unrounded</td>
<td>Rounded</td>
<td>Unrounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-Mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.3 Singaporean Hokkien Tone Chart

According to a Hokkien language learning book and other linguistic sources, there are 8 tones present in this language. However, the researcher has not conducted a systematic study of Singaporean Hokkien and therefore the tones represented in this thesis may not be complete. As presented in Table 3, there are 5 tones discovered while exploring adjectives in this thesis.

Table 3. Singaporean Hokkien Tone Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone Number</th>
<th>Tone Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>High Level</td>
<td>tsʰim⁴⁴ 'deep'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>High Falling</td>
<td>gwa⁴² 'I'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Low Rising</td>
<td>hin²⁴ 'dizzy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Mid Level</td>
<td>tsʰam³³ 'mix'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Low Falling</td>
<td>lak²¹ 'six'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.3.1 Singaporean Hokkien Tone Sandhi

Tone sandhi is a very prominent phonological feature in Sinitic languages and Singaporean Hokkien is no exception. Nonetheless, the aim of this thesis is to provide grammatical insights of Singaporean Hokkien and thus tone sandhi will not be discussed in great detail. Despite the fact that tone sandhi is not accounted for in this thesis, the researcher is aware of its prevalence and observed the effect it has on
data throughout the grammatical study of adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien. The effects of tone sandhi on Singaporean Hokkien are included in Appendix A.

1.4 Singaporean Hokkien Grammatical Sketch

Singaporean Hokkien is an analytic language. A sentence is made up of sequences of free morphemes strung together. Each word is composed of a single morpheme with intact meaning. Though the structure of this language is considered analytical, words can be constituted by the use of prefixes or suffixes other than being expressed by the use of separate words. The general word order of Singaporean Hokkien is Subject-Verb-Object. Nevertheless, the typological pattern of this language is similar to Mandarin in that many grammatical structures of Singaporean Hokkien follow the Subject-Object-Verb sequence.

The modifying configuration of Singaporean Hokkien is left-branch modification. This type of modification is reflected by the occurrence of the adjective which precedes the head noun, the adverb which also precedes the adjective and the relative clause which has a head noun following it. As it is a language located in the eastern part of the world and in the East to Southeast Asian linguistic area, the Singaporean Hokkien noun classifier construction is prevalent and sentence particles are not uncommon. Question words do not get moved to the initial position of a sentence and question particles occur in sentence final position. Zero Anaphora is also frequently employed in discourse to indicate the presence of an already established participant in a narrative.

1.5 Methodology

This thesis has been conducted by the following procedures: data collection, which consisted of transcription, translation and checking. The researcher employed multilingual elicitation in acquiring data from the language resource persons, who commanded a multitude of other languages other than Singaporean Hokkien. The main language used in acquiring oral data was Mandarin as it was the language both the researcher and language resource persons were most comfortable with. There were two language resource persons whom the researcher elicited data from; Ms. Suat Hong Tan and Mr. Teng Wah Tan.

The first language resource person is Ms. Suat Hong Tan, who is the aunt of the researcher. She is 71 years old. Ms. Tan was born in Singapore. When she was nine
years old, the entire family moved to Pontien, Malaysia. Five years later, the family moved back to Singapore and she has lived in Singapore since. Ms. Tan is a retired Mandarin teacher who taught in grade school. She obtained a teacher’s diploma after three years of training at the Teacher’s Training College of Singapore. Before that, she completed her high school education of Grade Three which is equivalent to Matayom Six by Thai standard.

Ms. Tan speaks six languages: 1) Singaporean Hokkien, 2) Mandarin, 3) Cantonese, 4) Teochew, 5) Bahasa Melayu and 6) English. She is most fluent in Singaporean Hokkien as it is the ethnic tongue spoken in the family domain. Mandarin is her second most dominant tongue due to the fact that it is the language used in her teaching career. Cantonese is her third language which is used to communicate with other members of the society in Singapore who are usually ethnic Cantonese. Teochew is her fourth language because of the genetical resemblance between Singaporean Hokkien and Teochew which are both languages belonging to the Southern Min branch of the Sinitic language family. Moreover, her husband is of Teochew descent. Bahasa Melayu is her fifth dominant language due to the reason that she spent five years in Malaysia and as a result picked it up as a language used to communicate with ethnic Malays. English is her least dominant language due to the fact that she attended a Mandarin medium school. Of all of the languages she knows, it is only English that she tends to engage in one-way communication; she has a tendency to be able to listen better than speak.

Ms. Tan’s father was born in Xiamen, Fujien Province, the People’s Republic of China. Her mother was born in Singapore. Both her parents are of Hokkien ethnicity and therefore speak Hokkien as the language of communication. They both lived in Singapore and her mother passed away due to tuberculosis when Ms. Tan was only a year of age. The researcher utilized a combination of Mandarin and Singaporean Hokkien to elicit oral data from Ms. Tan. Her grammaticality judgements were the most natural of the two language resource persons due to limited non-Sinitic language contact and influence.

The second language resource person is Mr. Teng Wah Tan. He is Ms. Tan’s half brother and the father of the researcher. Mr. Tan is 67 years old and was born in Singapore. Like his half sister, when he was five he moved to Pontien in Malaysia with his family. He spent five years living there before going back to Singapore. When he was forty-five years of age, he retired early due to poor health and
migrated to Thailand and has been living there since. He first lived in Pang Mo Puang Village, Pasak Sub-District, Chiang Saen District, Chiang Rai Province during the beginning of his migration. He lived there for four years before moving to Chiang Mai for the sake of his children’s education. Mr. Tan lived in Nai Fun Residence, Padad Sub-District, Muang District, Chiang Mai Province for 7 years before moving to Hod District to venture into Longan plantation business. He currently resides in Nong Baen Village, Hang Dong Sub-District, Hod District, Chiang Mai Province and has been living there for 9 years. Mr. Tan is a once-retired businessman who now has become a longan cultivator. He holds a pre-university degree which is equivalent to Matayom Six by Thai standard.

Mr. Tan speaks seven languages: 1) Singaporean Hokkien, 2) Mandarin, 3) Teochew, 4) English, 5) Cantonese, 6) Thai and 7) Bahasa Melayu. He is most proficient at Singaporean Hokkien as it is his mother tongue and the language of communication used most extensively in the family. Mandarin counts as his second language due to the reason that he was educated in Mandarin medium. Teochew is his third best language as it is very similar to Singaporean Hokkien in terms of phonology and grammar. In fact, his best friend is of Teochew ethnicity and he picked up the language by communicating with his friend’s family members and the Teochew in Singapore are considered a major community as well. Mr. Tan speaks English as his fourth language due to the fact that he once dealt with business selling fitness equipment both domestically and internationally. Cantonese as his fifth language is the language used to communicate with Cantonese people residing in both Singapore and Malaysia. Thai is his sixth language as he learned it while living in Thailand. As he did not receive formal and proper education in Thai, his vocabulary is a mix of Northen Thai and Standard Thai. He speaks Thai with a dominant Chinese accent and sometimes aligns his Thai grammar with Sinitic influence. Bahasa Melayu is his least dominant lanaguage as he has not been in contact with Malay speakers except in Singapore and Malaysia.

Mr. Tan’s father is from Xiamen, Fujien Province, the People’s Republic of China who migrated to Singapore. He married Ms. Tan’s mother. After she passed away, he married Mr. Tan’s mother. Mr. Tan’s mother was born in Singapore. Both the parents are of Hokkien ethnicity and thus use Hokkien in the family domain. They both lived in Singapore until the end of their lives. The reasercher elicited oral data from Mr. Tan utilizing a variety of languages. The most commonly used language was Mandarin as the researcher had limited competence in Singaporean Hokkien. The
researcher also had limited competence in Mandarin. When he was at loss of words, he resorted to English or Thai. Mr. Tan was considered less natural than Ms. Tan in terms of grammaticality judgement due to the fact that he had had more contact with non-Sinitic languages especially Thai. Moreover, Mr. Tan had a tendency to respond to the researcher’s questions after lengthy ponderances. Upon inquiring why he took such a long time to answer certain questions, he related that he wanted to supply best examples in explaining ideas. As a result, he may have thought too hard and therefore provided less natural language data.

Data collection was conducted by collecting oral data. The collected oral data consisted of utterances that contained adjectives. The adjectives were discovered by the utterances of them in the form of isolated articulation, as part of a phrase, as part of a clause and as part of a sentence. Upon completion of data collection, the oral data was transcribed by Leipzig Glossing Rules (www.mpg.de). Data that were interlinearized consisted of sentences, clauses, noun phrases, verb phrases and adjectival phrases. A grammatical analysis was carried out in order to provide a brief grammar sketch.

The data were subsequently scrutinized in detail for all nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and classifiers, and these are characterized for structure and function at both phrase and clause levels. Following that, the identification process of the adjective construction was conducted. The position of occurrence of the adjective was determined by implementing basic syntactic classification and by observing the language from the researcher’s native speaker’s insight. After that an analysis of adjectives, using an adaptation of Susie Cheng’s methodology (1979), was utilized.

A classification of adjectives was established by investigating the internal structure of Singaporean Hokkien adjective formation in terms of phonological and morphological features. Next, the relationship between the adjective and the degree expression was examined to discover how the adjective in Singaporean Hokkien could be modified in terms of grammar. Then, the negation of the adjective is accounted for in terms of grammar and semantics. Finally, a report of findings is presented.

As an outcome of this analysis, an identification of the major constructions in which a Singaporean Hokkien adjective can occur as well as a description of the structures and meanings of such constructions are proposed.
1.6 Literature Review

There have been studies conducted in Southern Min in mostly the sinospheric region of the world. The venue in which the studies have been carried out rendered most works in Mandarin Chinese. Quite a number of researches have been done in Taiwanese Hokkien. However, their availability is in question. The researcher has strived to search for dictionaries but to no avail. For the case of Singaporean Hokkien, the researcher suggests that more studies should be done. The scarcity of data of this language stems from two factors; a lack of a grammatical description in English and the lack of a dictionary. Nonetheless, the researcher has reviewed literature from various sources in order to consider relevant analyses.

Hokkien:

This article attempts to explain how morpholexical rules (initially based on Lexical Mapping Theory in Bresnan 1989, Bresnan and Kanerva 1989, and Huang 1991) interact with phonological processes as well as how they affect syntactic and semantic classification of reduplicated adjectives. The theoretical framework was based on Cheng 1981 and Chang 1987.

An analytical comparison of reduplication between Mandarin and Taiwanese Southern Min in terms of the discourse feature, radial structure. The radial structure which takes on ‘tentativeness’ as the focus is used by the two related languages to form reduplication differently. This analysis is utilized to account for adjectival reduplication in this thesis.

A functional grammatical description of Mandarin (which is similar to a certain extent to Hokkien) is adapted in lieu of a grammar of Singaporean Hokkien for which no grammars are available.

*A brief, yet non-technical explanation of basic grammatical rules of Mandarin Chinese and a useful classification and features in the functions of words and phrases as well. This book is used adapted to account for grammatical structures in Singaporean Hokkien.*

**Theoretical/Methodological Approach:**


*A practical method of grouping adjectives, describing the constraints of the occurrence of the adjectives, identifying the different types of negation of the adjective and discussing the functions of the adjectival phrase. Cheng’s approach in analyzing adjectives serves as the main framework of this study. Her methodologies are adapted and modified in terms of comparison between Taiwanese and Singaporean adjectives.*


*The modified Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) framework utilized in analyzing verb classes in Thai proved to be most useful for adapting in analyzing Singaporean adjectives, which behaved more like verbs than nouns.*


*This study presents the phonological and semantic structure of reduplicated forms of words in Standard Thai. The methodological approach of this paper can be adapted to fit in the analysis of Singaporean Hokkien reduplicated adjectives.*

**1.7 Objectives**

This thesis attempts to explore Singaporean Adjectives by adapting the framework of Susie Cheng (1979). The objectives are threefold as follows:

1. To identify and demonstrate commonly used adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien
2. To categorize Singaporean Hokkien adjectives according to their types of formation
3. To identify and demonstrate possible constructions in which a Singaporean Hokkien adjective can occur as well as describe the structures and meanings of such constructions

1.8 Hypothesis

1. Other than phonology and morphology, semantics also play a substantial role in determining the forms and functions of adjectives.
2. The functions of the adjectival phrase are discourse driven, having cultural constraints as the motivation of the constitution of such phrases.
3. The outcome of the analysis should help explain typological issues in the Southeast Asian linguistic area.

1.9 Scope

This thesis is centered on oral data which consist of utterances that contain adjectives in isolation, as part of a phrase, as part of a clause and as part of a complete sentence. The spoken data were analyzed and an interlinearization was conducted to come up with a basic grammar overview.

More attention is given to a detailed analysis of adjectival phrase structure, the types of degree expressions that modify it, the negation of it and the functions of the adjectival phrase. I attempt to describe the constraints that constitute an adjective construction, to study the modifications of the adjective, to discuss the method of negating an adjective and to investigate the cultural motivation that determines the functions of the adjectival phrase.

Word classes that lack an apparent interrelationship with the adjective are considered outside the scope of this study. Furthermore, tone sandhi which is a prominent phonological phenomenon in Singaporean Hokkien will not be discussed in any detail as the approach I employ is more of a grammatical one. An estimated outcome of this research is to enable a better understanding of Singaporean Hokkien in the light of how a noun is described in terms of language and culture.

1.10 Limitations

This thesis was conducted on the basis of exclusively oral utterances. Data examples were collected by interviews. The language informants are native Hokkien speakers.
However, they are not monolingual speakers. The wordlist implemented for the research was limited. As the majority of the language resource persons lived in Singapore, the researcher who resides mainly in Thailand had limited time and access to them.

The sentences collected were mostly narratives, and idiosyncrasies which may have occurred during data collection were not accounted for. As mentioned above, the language informants are multilingual and thus emerged the problem of language interference. The informants can not only speak Hokkien but also other languages as well e.g. other Southern Min languages, Non Min languages and non Sinitic languages. Related Southern Min languages such as Teochew and Hainanese, non Min languages such as Mandarin and Cantonese and non Sinitic ones like English and Bahasa Melayu all played a part in interfering with the language resource people’s linguistic realization. At times, they would formulate a Hokkien utterance under the influence of the abovementioned languages be it on a phonological, grammatical or morphological scale. These interferences have been borrowed, loaned and assimilated with the variety of Hokkien spoken in Singapore and native speakers from time to time had difficulties in distinguishing Hokkien from other languages due to approximate and prolonged language contact.

Analysis, interlinearization and translation of examples are limited by the fact that the researcher has not enough intuition and competence in Singaporean Hokkien, and has relied on a series of Singaporean Hokkien speakers, to assist him in understanding the data accurately. Coupled with limited competence in Singaporean, the lack of a Singaporean Hokkien dictionary and the lack of a sufficient grammatical description in Singaporean Hokkien also contributed to the limitation of the study.

1.11 Definitions of Technical Terms

Adjective: a lexical item that can take on a degree expression. In this study, the phrase structure rule of the adjectival phrase is as follows: ADJP $\rightarrow$ (NEG) (ADV) ADJ.

Adjectival phrase: a phrase that consists of an adjective with or without a degree expression and with or without negation. It is a type of stative verb phrase, being a non-action verb phrase.

Degree Expression: a lexical item or construction that answers degree question words like ‘to what extent’ or ‘how much’.
Verb: a lexical item that describes events, actions, states, processes and experiences.
Verb Phrase: the construction of a simple sentence in which the nucleus is the verb.

1.12 Contributions or Benefits of the Thesis

It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to a better and larger body of scholarly work focused on Southern Min languages, which have been little documented in English. So far, not much academic study has been done in this variety of Hokkien. There may be studies done about this language in Chinese. However, there is need to conduct a study in English to expand its recognition to a wider global scale.
A study of Singaporean Hokkien adjectives will not only contribute to better documentation of the Southern Min language group, but will also help in distinguishing minute details in different varieties of Hokkien which is a language widely spread over many parts of East and Southeast Asia.
Chapter 2
Types of Singaporean Hokkien Adjectives

This chapter is a discussion of the types of adjectives found in Singaporean Hokkien. Before categorizing the adjectives I discuss relevant word classes to establish criteria that make up word classes. The relevant word classes that are brought up for discussion are as follows: the noun, the verb, the adjective and the adverb. Each word class is discussed by describing grammatical behavior followed by examples and prose explanations to support the claim that makes the word class. Following that, adjectives and verbs which are similar to each other grammatically are differentiated from each other using language examples and prose explanations. Finally, types of adjectives are discussed followed by examples and prose explanations according to the following order: the monosyllabic adjective, the disyllabic adjective, which is subcategorized into simple, compounded and derived disyllabic adjectives and the polysyllabic adjective.

2.1 Relevant Word Classes

In this research, I shall discuss only word classes that are relevant and deserve attention. The word classes that I deem central to this study are as follows: 1) The noun, 2) the verb, 3) the adjective and 4) the adverb. Of the four word classes mentioned above, the adjective is the main focus of discussion while the others are addressed according to their relevance in analyses. Examples of each word class are given according to requirements followed by brief explanations for the sake of clarity. Concepts that call for additional elaboration will have entire sections dedicated to them for discussion in later parts of the study.

2.1.1 The Noun

In identifying nouns of Singaporean Hokkien, I adhere to a generic approach adapted from Givón (1984) based on the following hierarchically arrayed features illustrated in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Noun Hierarchy (Adapted from Givón 1984)

The notion on the leftmost of the Noun Hierarchy is “entity”, which means ‘that which exists’, most commonly refers to an abstract noun. In Singaporean Hokkien, examples of such entity nouns are $hi^{21}$ baŋ$^{21}$ ‘hope’, $hɔk^{45}$ kyen$^{21}$ ?ue$^{21}$ ‘the Hokkien language’ or seŋ$^{33}$ li$^{42}$ ‘business’.

The notion “temporal”, which means ‘exists at a particular time’ often refers to semi-abstract nouns such as $ni^{24}$ ‘year’, gwe$^{233}$ ‘month’ or $tsa^{45}$ kʰi$^{42}$ ‘morning’.

The notion positioned in the middle of the Noun Hierarchy is “concrete”, which means ‘exists in both time and place’, refers to general nouns that have spatial dimensions and other concrete qualities having to do with physical objects such as $tsu^{21}$ ‘house’, $hɔŋ^{33}$ ‘wind’ or swǎ$^{33}$ ‘mountain’.

The notion “animate”, which means ‘living organism’, refers to concrete nouns that are generally living things such as be$^{42}$ ‘horse’, $hi^{24}$ ‘fish’ or tsyaw$^{42}$ ‘bird’.

The notion on the rightmost of the Noun Hierarchy is “humans”, which means all of the abovementioned features added with the feature ‘be human’, refers to human nouns such as $lo^{24}kun^{33}$ ‘doctor’, $peŋ^{21}yu^{42}$ ‘friend’ or syen$^{33}si^{33}$ ‘teacher’.

If a noun contains a feature of the above hierarchy, it inherently also contains the features to the left of the hierarchy. The noun has grammatical functions. However, that is outside the scope of the thesis and therefore is left out of this study.

2.1.2 The Verb

In the identification of Singaporean Hokkien verbs, I adapted Li and Thompson’s (1981) approach. The fact that they deal with grammar with focus on Mandarin, which is similar to Singaporean Hokkien because they both are languages belonging to the Sinitic family makes their approach a good choice for me to adapt to in order to analyze verbs in Singaporean Hokkien.
Verbs are words that describe events, actions, states, processes, and experiences. They dictate what kind of participants, namely noun phrases, which can possibly occur with them in a sentence. In this thesis, a basic identification of types of verb phrases is illustrated as follows: the transitive and intransitive verb phrase.

Transitive verb phrases are verb phrases that require one or more object complements. The one that requires one object complement is a typical transitive verb phrase as in (1) while the one that requires more than one object complement is a ditransitive verb phrase as in (2).

(1) ʔi³³ ti²¹ le²⁴ tʰaat⁴⁵ tsit²¹ lyap²¹ kyu²⁴

he (she) kick one ball
3P PROG V NUM CLF D.O

‘He (She) is kicking a football.’

(2) ʔi³³ ho²¹ gwa⁴² tsit²¹ pun²⁴ tsʰeʔ²¹

he (she) give I one book
3P V I.O NUM CLF D.O

‘He (She) gave me a book.’

In (1), the object complement tsit²¹ lyap²¹ kyu²⁴ ‘a football’ of the transitive verb tʰaat⁴⁵ ‘to kick’ is the direct object as it is the participant of the verb to which the action is directed.

In (2), there are three participants in the sentence. In other words, three nouns phrases are present. The first noun phrase ʔi³³ ‘the third person pronoun’ is the subject of the sentence, being the doer of the action ho²¹ ‘to give’. The following noun phrases gwa⁴² ‘the first person pronoun’ and tsit²¹ pun²⁴ tsʰeʔ²¹ ‘a book’ are coded as the indirect object and direct object complements respectively. The noun phrase tsit²¹ pun²⁴ tsʰeʔ²¹ ‘a book’ is the direct object complement, being the entity that is being conveyed whereas the noun phrase gwa⁴² ‘the first person pronoun’ is the
indirect object complement, being the entity which is not coded as the doer of the action \( h_{21} \) ‘to give’ nor the entity that was directly affected by the action but rather described better as a recipient or goal in terms of semantic roles.

Another interesting fact about the ditransitive verb phrase is that the direct object occurs always after the indirect object, unlike in English where the direct and indirect objects can be transposed in terms of precedence.

A way to test the validity of verbs is to negate them. If the word in question can be negated, it contains qualities that a verb has. An example of negating the verb phrase is given in (3) as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
  \text{He (she)} & \text{not} & \text{eat} & \text{vegetable} \\
  3P & \text{NEG} & \text{V} & \text{D.O} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘He (She) does not eat vegetables.’

The underlined part of the sentence shows negation by the occurrence of the negative particle \( b_{21} \). Negation most commonly occurs preceding the verb. Another instance of negation is given in (5) where the example negatively responds to the question given in (4).

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
  \text{He (she)} & \text{come} & \text{SFP} & \text{NEG} \\
  3P & \text{V} & \text{CMPL ASP} & \text{QPRT} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Has he (she) come yet?’

Note that the negative particle \( b_{21} \) is placed at the end of the sentence to form a question in (4).
In (5), the verb \( \text{lay}^{24} \) ‘to come’ is negated by the negative particle construction \( \text{a}^{33} \text{ bwe}^{21} \) ‘not yet’. The third person pronoun as well as the verb has been elided due to zero anaphoric discourse context. The person in question and the verb \( \text{lay}^{24} \) ‘to come’ have already been established as schema or background (old) information in (4) thus, rendering the third person pronoun and verb optional in (5). A positive response to (4) is given in (6) as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
(5) & \quad (\text{ʔi}^{33}) \quad \text{a}^{33} \text{ bwe}^{21} \quad (\text{lay}^{24}) \\
& \quad \text{he (she)} \quad \text{not} \quad \text{yet} \quad \text{come} \\
& \quad 3\text{P} \quad \text{NEG} \quad \text{V} \\
& \quad ‘(\text{He or she}) \ (\text{has}) \ (\text{not} \ (\text{come}) \ (\text{yet}).’
\end{align*}
\]

In responding to a question like in (4), the positive response is to answer with the verb which in this case the verb \( \text{lay}^{24} \) ‘to come’ whereas the negative response is to answer with the negative construction \( \text{a}^{33} \text{ bwe}^{21} \) ‘not yet’.

There are other cases where the negative particle precedes the predicate verb. Furthermore, there are various types of negation in Singaporean Hokkien and that will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Apart from classifying types of verbs according to Li and Thompson’s methodology, there are semantic roles to consider as well. Due to the fact that the focus of this thesis is on adjectives, the concept of semantic roles is left out of this study.
2.1.3 The Adjective

In identification of the adjectival word class, I modified Li and Thompson's (1981) as well as Cheng’s (1979) methodologies to suit Singaporean Hokkien Adjectives. Before going into detail of this word class, a generic description is deemed necessary for establishing a background in understanding Singaporean Adjectives.

Payne (1997:63) remarks that an adjective is a word that is able to be utilized in a noun phrase in order to indicate certain properties of the head noun of the phrase. He further addresses the problems of adjectives, which occur in almost every language. His claim holds that adjectives, unlike their noun and verb counterparts, cannot be categorized in terms of a prototype as there exists no semantically definable class of concepts that can be universally grouped into a characterization.

That characterization, the adjective word class, lexicalizes properties or characteristics that cannot be determined or varied in terms of time stability. To sum up, they stand somewhere in between nouns and verbs as shown in Figure 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOUNS</th>
<th>ADJECTIVES</th>
<th>VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>most time-stable</td>
<td>intermediate states</td>
<td>rapid change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Time-Stability Scale of Nouns, Adjectives and Verbs (Adapted from Givón 1984)

Payne (1997) further explains that adjectives exhibit certain properties such as age (young, old, etc.), dimension (big, little, tall, short, long, etc.), value (good, bad), color (red, yellow, green, etc.), physical characteristics (hard, smooth, light, etc.), shape (round, square, etc.), human propensity (sad, happy, jealous, etc.), and speed (slow, fast, quick), etc.

Adhering to Payne’s description of adjectives, I posit several examples of Singaporean Hokkien adjectives by adapting Li and Thompson’s functional methodology of example description according to the adjectival properties mentioned above:
2.1.3.1 Age adjectives: *sin³³ ‘new’, ku²¹ ‘old’, syaw⁴² lyen²¹ ‘young’, law²¹ ‘old’

‘old’

Note that the adjectives *sin³³ ‘new’ and ku²¹ ‘old’ can describe nouns that are generally inanimate in nature like house and car as in (7) and (8) respectively.

(7)  *sin³³  tsʰu²¹

    new   house  
    ADJ   N

    ‘A new house.’

(8)  ku²¹  tsʰya³³

    old   car  
    ADJ   N

    ‘An old car.’

As for the age adjectives syaw⁴² lyen²¹ ‘young’ and law²¹ ‘old’, they modify nouns that are generally humans. Examples of these types of adjectives are given in (9) and (10) respectively.

(9)  syaw²¹  lyen²¹  lag²⁴

    young    human  
    ADJ   N

    ‘Young people.’
The explanation offered below is an adaptation of Cheng’s methodology of describing adjectives according to their morphological make-up coupled with original analysis of my own dealing with the semantic content of age adjectives.

For animate nouns like animals, the young are referred to as ‘offspring of animal’. A puppy is called kaw²⁴ kya²⁴ ‘dog offspring’. This construction of animal followed by kya²⁴ ‘offspring’ holds valid for young animals in general. The noun kya²⁴ ‘offspring’ means child when uttered in isolation. When it is preceded by a noun which generally is an animal, the semantic content of kya²⁴ ‘offspring’ shifts from the human domain to the animal domain.

Animals that are old can take on the adjective law²¹ ‘old’ as a modifier. A cat that is old is called law²¹ ŋyaw⁴⁴ ‘old cat’. For age adjectives, syaw⁴² lyen²¹ is used exclusively for humans that are young whereas the noun construction X + kya²⁴ applies only to animals that are young. The adjective law²¹ is more flexible as it can be used for both humans and animals.

2.1.3.2 Dimension adjectives: twa²¹ ‘big’, swey²¹ ‘small’

Examples of noun phrases modified by these adjectives are given in (11) and (12) respectively.

(11)  twa²¹  pat⁴⁵  tɔ⁴²

big  stomach

ADJ  N

‘Big stomach.’
Note that in (11), the adjective-noun combination has both a literal and metaphorical meaning. The noun phrase *twa*²¹ *pat*⁴⁵ *t*³⁴² either means 1) ‘fat’ or 2) ‘pregnant depending on context and these two connotations should be distinguished from reference.

(12)  *swey*⁴²  *tsya*²¹

    small

    ADJ  CLF

    ‘A small one.’

The noun phrase in (12) is worthy of notice in that the phrase is composed of merely an adjective *swey*⁴² ‘small’ followed by a classifier *tsya*²¹ (used for nouns that have limbs) and the head noun is not present. There is discourse context excluded from this sentence. The elided noun has been established in a sentence uttered before (12) and therefore zero anaphora is applied to it, rendering it old information that can be deleted yet retrievable by referring to context clues in earlier utterances. The example sentence in (12) is actually a response to the example below:

a)  *to*⁴² *lo*⁴² *tsit*²¹ *tsya*²¹ ∅

    where  one

    QPRT  NUM  CLF  N

    ‘Which one?’

b)  *swey*⁴²  *tsya*²¹  (ʔe²¹) ∅

    small  of

    ADJ  CLF  NOM  N

    ‘The small one’

As shown in a), a context has been established by questioning in specification between two entities. The interlinearization suggests that a noun has been already omitted in the utterance. This means that the omitted noun has already been understood by both the questioner and answerer. Therefore, the response is as
shown in b) by specifying the selected entity which in this example is the small one swey⁴² tsya?²¹.

2.1.3.3 Value Adjectives: ho⁴² ‘good’, pʰay⁴² ‘bad’

Value adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien do not only function as modifiers to noun phrases but also have other functions as well. Section of 2.4.3.1.1 is dedicated to the study of these adjectives.

2.1.3.4 Color Adjectives: aŋ²⁴ ‘red’, ʔɨ⁴² ‘yellow’, tsʰ³³ ‘green’

Like other types of adjectives, color adjectives upon preceding nouns can constitute compound nouns. The meanings of the compounds vary in a continuum of being unchanged, being changed while still retaining certain features of the both unbound morphemes in the compounds to being changed without retaining any related meanings pertaining to the adjectives and nouns in the compounds. Each example of noun compounding is given in (13), (14) and (15) according to the alterations of meanings in order of mentioning.

(13) aŋ²¹ tsʰya³³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>red</th>
<th>car</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘A car that is red.’

(14) aŋ²¹ pit²¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>red</th>
<th>pen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘A red inked pen.’
In (13) the new compound and the head noun are still the same entity in terms of meaning, being still a car. In (14), the head noun and the compound have related meanings instead of a one to one relationship as in the abovementioned example. The color adjective serves not to describe the pen in terms of color but rather describes the function of the pen, meaning that the pen writes in red and not a pen that is red in color.

In (15), the meaning of the compound becomes even less related to the adjective and noun uttered in isolation. This compound is actually a cultural description of a foreigner who may or may not possess the features as uttered in the sentence. During colonial times, foreigners who came to Singapore were mostly blond haired people from various parts of Europe. The people at that time might not know how to describe the color of the hair of the foreigners, thus using the color red to describe blond. The result is a coined word $aŋ²¹ mɔ²⁴ (laŋ²⁴)$ literally meaning ‘red haired’ which is used as a reference to all foreigners even though not all of them have blond hair.

2.1.3.5 Physical Characteristic Adjectives: $teŋ²¹$ ‘hard’, $kut^{44}$ ‘smooth’

Adjectives pertaining to physical characteristics in Singaporean Hokkien are less likely to modify the noun phrase by preceding it. Rather, they are more predicative in nature as illustrated in (16):

(16) $tʰaw²¹ kʰa^{33}$ $kut^{44}$

floor smooth

N ADJ

‘The floor is slippery.’
As the free translation suggests, it is more natural for the adjective \(kut^{44}\) ‘smooth’ or ‘slippery’ to follow the noun phrase \(t'aw^{21} k'a^{33}\) ‘floor’. It is observed that the adjective \(kut^{44}\) ‘smooth’ or ‘slippery’ functions as a predicate following the subject \(t'aw^{21} k'a^{33}\) ‘floor’. For the expression ‘the slippery/ smooth floor’, it is more appropriate to use the ADJ \(\hat{e}^{21}\) N construction and thus yielding the following expression: \(kut^{44} \hat{e}^{21} t'aw^{21} k'a^{33}\).

2.1.3.6 Shape Adjectives: \(\hat{n}^{24}\) ‘round’

Adjectives of this type follow noun phrases like their physical characteristic counterparts. An example sentence is given in (17).

(17) \(kyu^{24} si^{21} \hat{n}^{24} \hat{e}^{24}\)

\[\begin{array}{llll}
\text{ball} & \text{is} & \text{round} & \text{Of} \\
N & V & ADJ & NOM \\
\end{array}\]

‘A ball is round.’

Note that the adjective in (17) is followed by the nominalizer particle \(\hat{e}^{21}\) ‘of’. This particle normally denotes possession in a genitive noun phrase as in (18).

(18) \(gwa^{42} \hat{e}^{21} kyu^{24}\)

\[\begin{array}{llll}
\text{I} & \text{of} & \text{ball} \\
1P & GEN & N \\
\end{array}\]

‘My ball.’

In the case of (17), the particle \(\hat{e}^{21}\) ‘of’ indicates nominalization instead of possession due to the fact that the subject noun phrase \(kyu^{24}\) ‘ball’ is predicated by the copula \(si^{21}\) ‘is’ and therefore requires a nominal construction in the object position. The shape adjective \(\hat{n}^{24}\) ‘round’ in this case is more predicative than nominative. To comply with the aforementioned constraint, the nominalizer \(\hat{e}^{21}\) ‘of’ is suffixed to the adjective. In order to come up with the expression ‘a/ the round ball’, consider the example given in (19).

---

2 The items \(\hat{e}^{21}\) and \(\hat{e}^{24}\) both refer to the nominalizer particle. They exhibit different tones due to the influence of tone sandhi.
Token (19) complies with the ADJ ?e²¹ N construction to yield the free translation ‘a/ the round ball’. I have assigned the grammatical label of ?e²¹ ‘of’ as a nominalizer due to the reason that I analyzed the shape adjective being more predicative than nominative in nature. For the shape adjective to fit in the noun phrase construction, the nominalizer particle ?e²¹ ‘of’ has to be attached following the adjective before modifying the head noun. If I were to assign ?e²¹ ‘of’ a genitive, it would be ungrammatical because two noun phrases are required to demonstrate possession as shown in (18). The example given in (19) is composed of an adjective and a noun.

2.1.3.7 Human Propensity Adjectives: kek⁴⁵ sim³³ ‘sad’, hwä²¹ hi⁴² ‘happy’

Adjectives belonging to this class also cannot modify a noun phrase by preceding it. They behave more like physical characteristic adjectives as illustrated in (16). An example of human propensity adjectives is as follows:

(20) ʔi³³ kek⁴² sim³³

3P V N

‘He (she) is sad.’

In (20), the adjective kek⁴² sim³³ ‘sad’ is a compound noun comprised of a verb and a noun. The verb kek²¹ is better described as an action of voluntary muscle tightening either in moving bowels or as an action of getting ready to be physically assaulted. This action is associated with negative feelings. These two concepts, having difficulties in defecating and feeling tense in physical confrontations, share a radial structure (Lakoff 1987). The core meaning of the verb kek²¹ is having difficulty. For the noun sim³³ ‘heart’, it is an example of structural metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) which involves the structuring of one concept along the parameters by which another is structured. In this case the noun sim³³ ‘heart’ is conceptualized according
to this idea: HEART IS A MENTAL STATE. In prefixing the verb \(kek^{42}\) ‘to be tense’ with the noun \(sim^{33}\) ‘heart’, the compound noun is translated as ‘having difficulties mentally’ which means ‘sad’. Like its physical characteristic and shape counterparts, human propensity adjectives need to be followed by the nominalizer \(ʔe^{21}\) ‘of’ before modifying a head noun. Thus, to come up with the expression ‘a/ the sad person’, the construction is as follows: \(kek^{42} sim^{33} ʔe^{21} laŋ^{24}\).

### 2.1.3.8 Speed Adjectives: \(ban^{21}\) ‘slow’, \(kin^{42}\) ‘fast’

These adjectives, like their physical characteristic, shape and human propensity counterparts, are predicative in nature. They do not modify noun phrases by precedence. Conversely, they follow noun phrases. An example of a speed adjective is given in (21).

\[
(21) \quad ʔi^{33} \quad ban^{21}
\]

| he (she) | Slow |
| 3P | ADJ |

'He (She) is slow.'

Example (21) resembles examples (16), (17) and (20) in that the adjective occurs in the predicate slot. The adjective \(ban^{21}\) ‘slow’ is more predicative than nominative like its physical characteristic, shape and human propensity counterparts. Therefore, these adjectives need to be nominalized to become less predicative in order to function grammatically as noun modifiers. In other words, adjectives that are more predicative in nature need to be nominalized before they can precede nouns and modify them.

According to the abovementioned data examples, it is observed that Singaporean Hokkien adjectives can be categorized into two groups: 1) adjectives that can directly precede the noun and 2) adjectives that cannot directly precede the noun as illustrated in Table 4.
Table 4. Singaporean Hokkien Adjective Classification according to Grammatical and Semantic Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>ADJ N</th>
<th>ADJ ŋ²¹ N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Characteristic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Propensity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Singaporean Hokkien, adjectives can be classified according to their occurrences preceding the head noun in the noun phrase. There are two types of constructions in which the adjectives can be grouped into: 1) the ADJ N construction and 2) the ADJ ŋ²¹ N construction as illustrated in Table 4.

Adjectives that can take on both the ADJ N and ADJ ŋ²¹ N constructions are those that exhibit age, dimension, value and color. On the other hand, adjectives that can only take on the ADJ ŋ²¹ N construction are those that exhibit physical characteristic, shape, human propensity and speed.

The former types of adjectives that can take on both kinds of constructions exhibit characteristics that incline more to the nominative side of the word class scale. On the other hand, the latter types of adjective that can only take on one kind of construction exhibit characteristics that incline more to the predicative side of the word class scale.

From the evidence posited in abovementioned examples, it is found that Singaporean Hokkien adjectives portray characteristics belonging to both nouns and
verbs depending on what types of characteristics they portray. Nevertheless, they are more predicate-like than nominal-like. Section 2.2 supports the claim.

2.1.4 The Adverb

In identification of adverbs, I adhere to a general description which is presented below. Payne (1997:69) terms adverbs as a “catch all” category as they cannot be classified as a noun, a verb or an adjective. The semantic content of an adverb may or may not cover the following characteristics: manner, time, direction/location, evidentiality, etc.

In this study of Singaporean Hokkien, adverbs are observed to the limit of how they modify the adjectives in terms of degree. Grammatically, Singaporean Hokkien adverbs precede adjectives. One of the functions of adverbs is that they express degree and therefore are analyzed as a part of the degree expression which Chapter 3 has been devoted to.

2.2 Distinguishing Adjectives from Verbs

As observed in 2.1.3, Singaporean Hokkien adjectives are found to be of two types. The first type is adjectives that can modify a noun by preceding it without any intermediate constituent or constituents occurring in between. The second type is adjectives that cannot occur in front of a noun and therefore have to follow the noun in the predicative position.

In general, Singaporean Hokkien adjectives can be set in the predicative position of a sentence, In other words, adjectives are actually verbs. I support this argument with two kinds of evidences: 1) Adjectives and verbs are able to occur in the predicative slot of a sentence without the presence of a copula. 2) Adjectives and verbs can be negated. Examples of these evidences are given in (22), (23), (24) and (25) respectively.
(22) ʔi³³ swi⁴²
he (she) good looking
3P ADJ

‘He (She) is good looking.’

(23) ʔi³³ kʰun²¹
he (she) sleep
3P V

‘He (She) sleeps’ or ‘He (She) is sleeping.’

As illustrated in (22) and (23), the adjective swi⁴² ‘good looking’ and the verb kʰun²¹ ‘sleep’ both occur in the predicative slot following the subject noun phrase ʔi³³ ‘third person pronoun’. Furthermore, they both can also take on negation as illustrated in (24) and (25) respectively.

(24) ʔi³³ bo²¹ swi⁴²
he (she) not good looking
3P NEG ADJ

‘He (She) is not good looking.’

(25) ʔi³³ bo²¹ kʰun²¹
he (she) not sleep
3P NEG V

‘He (She) does (did) not sleep.’ or ‘He (She) is (was) not sleeping.’

Examples (24) and (25), are the negative counterparts of (22) and (23). Negation in Singaporean Hokkien is exhibited by inserting the negative particle before the adjective or the verb.
From the evidence illustrated in the abovementioned examples, I conclude that adjectives and verbs share the following identical grammatical features: 1) They can occur in the predicative position of an utterance and 2) they can be preceded by a negative particle.

From an empirical point of view, one may assume that adjectives and verbs in Singaporean Hokkien belong in the same word class. However, I would differ from this viewpoint by looking at these two word classes again from another perspective.

I deem it more appropriate to distinguish adjectives from verbs by utilizing Role and Reference Grammar. Van Valin (2005:31) classifies verbs based on a Vendlerian Aktionsaart approach. His methodology was applied to studies of verbs in various other languages, specifically Thai, which was carried out by Philips and Thiengburanatham (n.d). Thai verbs behave similarly to Singaporean Hokkien verbs and it has been observed that verbs in a lot of languages especially in the Southeast Asian peninsula share the same phenomenon.

Philips and Thiengburanatham designed a syntactic test to classify Thai verbs and identified seven verb classes: 1) Adjectival states, 2) verbal states, 3) achievements, 4) semelfactives, 5) accomplishments, 6) activities and 7) active accomplishments. Each verb class was tested according to the presence or absence of four conceptual properties: [±static], [±dynamic], [±telic] and [±punctual]. Adjectival and verbal states exhibit the [± static] property; they encode a condition which is opposed to an event (Philips and Thiengburanatham n.d:169). It is this feature that explains the similarity between adjectives and verbs in Singaporean Hokkien.

In order to come up with a clear cut distinction between an adjective and a verb, the comparative marker test was conducted in Philips and Thiengburanatham’s study of Thai verbs. The result was that the adjective can take on the comparative marker as a modifier whereas the verb cannot do so. I base my methodology on theirs to identify the difference between an adjective and a verb for Singaporean Hokkien. Other than utilizing a comparative marker, I have modified the test by utilizing a degree expression instead and therefore the test is a degree expression test.

As stated above, I proposed that in Singaporean Hokkien adjectives and verbs are not of the same word class. The argument I provide is exemplified in the following claim: Singaporean Hokkien adjectives have the ability to take on degree expressions.
whereas verbs do not. This statement is further supported by example sentences given below:

(26) ʔi³³ tsin³³ swi⁴²

he (she) real good looking
3P ADV ADJ

‘He (She) is very good looking.’

(27) * ʔi³³ tsin³³ kʰun²¹

he (she) real sleep
3P ADV V

‘He (She) very sleeps.’ or ‘He (She) is very sleeping.’

Example (27) substantiates the abovementioned assertion that adjectives and verbs are different. The verb kʰun²¹ ‘sleep’ cannot take on the intensifier particle tsin³³ and therefore fails the degree expression test. On the other hand, example (26) in which the sentence has an adjective swi⁴² ‘good looking’ passes the degree expression test as the adjective can take on the intensifier particle.

So far, a concise observation of relevant word classes has been carried out in order to provide the reader with a basic background of understanding Singaporean Hokkien adjectives along with other word classes that are relevant to the analyses conducted throughout the study. The remainder of this chapter deals with the classification of adjectives according to the following criteria: Morphology and phonology.

Morphology concerns the number of morphemes that make up a syllable in an adjective. According to morphological criteria, adjectives can be categorized into two types: simple and complex.

Phonology deals with phonemic features of the adjective such as syllabicity, alliteration and rhyming. According to phonological criteria, adjectives can be of monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic types. A general overview of Singaporean
Hokkien Adjective classification according to morphological and phonological features is presented in Table 2 as follows:

**Table 5. Singaporean Hokkien Adjective Classification according to phonological and Morphological Features (Adapted from Cheng 1979:17)**

2.3 Monosyllabic Adjectives

In Singaporean Hokkien, a monosyllabic adjective is an adjective that is composed of one morpheme. Its ability to occur in isolation meaningfully accentuates its characteristic in being a free morpheme. Monosyllabic adjectives can undergo reduplication to become XX forms. An example of a monosyllabic adjective is given in Figure 3 as follows:

\[
\text{ADJ} \rightarrow \text{ADJ ADJ}
\]

\[
\text{swi}^{42} \rightarrow \text{swi}^{24}\text{swi}^{42}
\]

‘good looking’ ‘very good looking’ or ‘rather good looking’

**Figure 3. Reduplication of a Monosyllabic Adjective in Singaporean Hokkien**

An interesting observation in Figure 3 above is the free translation of the reduplicated adjective. The reduplicated adjective \(\text{swi}^{45}\text{swi}^{42}\) can be either translated as ‘very good looking’ or ‘rather good looking’. The meaning is dependent on the context.

Another observation is the tone alternation in the first syllable of the reduplicated adjective, which is different from the second. This phenomenon is tone sandhi, of which the tone of one syllable is being altered due to the influence of another nearby.
Even though tone sandhi in Singaporean Hokkien is not discussed in any detail, I recognize the occurrence of this phenomenon and acknowledge any consequences it may convey to the data presented in this thesis due to the fact that the examples collected in this study do not constitute the entire tonal context of this language. Further elaboration on reduplication will be discussed in section 3.5.

2.4 Disyllabic Adjectives

Singaporean Hokkien disyllabic adjectives are adjectives that comprise of two syllables. Disyllabic adjectives can be categorized into three types: 1) simple disyllabic adjectives 2) compounded disyllabic adjectives and 3) derived disyllabic adjectives. Each type of disyllabic adjective can be identified according to their morphological formation.

The simple disyllabic adjective is distinguished from the other two by its unique morphological feature in that the entire adjective cannot be further divided into two words as they do not have the ability to function meaningfully when occurring in isolation.

The compounded disyllabic adjective is analyzed as being formed by a combination of two words which are free morphemes. Each composite element can function meaningfully when occurring in isolation.

The derived disyllabic adjective differs from the two formerly mentioned in the way it is formed. Of the two composite elements in this type of disyllabic adjective, either the preceding or the following element is a bound morpheme while the other one is a free morpheme. The bound morpheme, unlike its free counterpart, needs to be attached to the free morpheme of the disyllabic adjective despite the fact that it has a meaningful function of its own. Furthermore, transposing the order of each syllable will not yield a meaningful function as well.

The meaning of a disyllabic adjective can be realized only when the syllables of the adjective is uttered in correct sequence. Additional elaboration of each type of disyllabic adjective in Singaporean Hokkien is carried out in sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3.
2.4.1 Simple Disyllabic Adjectives

This category of disyllabic adjectives is analyzed as a single morpheme due to the fact that both syllables of the adjective contain no meaning when occurring in isolation. They cannot stand on their own to function meaningfully or in other words they are bound morphemes. An example of simple disyllabic adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien is given as follows:

(28) \( \text{pin}^{21} \text{twa}^{21} \)

lazy
ADJ
‘lazy’

In (28), the adjective \( \text{pin}^{21} \text{twa}^{21} \) ‘lazy’ cannot be separated further into the words \( \text{pin}^{21} \) and \( \text{twa}^{21} \) because both of these bound morphemes have no meaningful function at all when occurring in isolation. Their meaning can be understood only on the condition that they are both uttered consequently as a single disyllabic unit.

2.4.2 Compounded Disyllabic Adjectives

In the Singaporean variety of Hokkien, a compounded disyllabic adjective can be identified by its composite elements. The preceding element, the first syllable, is a free morpheme or a root word and so is the following element. The composite elements of the disyllabic adjective, either the preceding or the following syllable, when occurring in isolation often carry meanings that relate to the compound in one way or another. However, this generalization is not always necessarily true as there are cases where the meanings of the roots upon being combined do not equate to that of the compound. Examples of compounded disyllabic adjectives are given as follows:
In (29), the free morphemes \( Ϝ^{33} \) ‘black’ and \( tsʰ^{44} \) ‘green’ both have meaningful functions when occurring in isolation. They are adjectives which belong to the color domain. When these monosyllabic adjectives are uttered in this sequence, they form a compound disyllabic adjective according to the following equation: black + green = black and blue. The resulting compound contains a meaning which is somewhat related to the color domain of the composite monosyllabic adjectives. The compound meaning is a realization which is derived from visual impact.

In Singaporean Hokkien, when a person gets bruised either as a result of self-inflicted or non self-inflicted action, this compound disyllabic adjective is used to describe the abovementioned state. A bruise for a Singaporean Hokkien speaker is recognized as a visual color triggered concept ‘black and blue’. In order to utter the state of being bruised, the compound disyllabic adjective \( Ϝ^{33} tsʰ^{44} \) ‘bruised’ is used.

### 2.4.3 Derived Disyllabic Adjectives

The derived disyllabic adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien are comprised of two morphemes where one of them is a bound morpheme. Though the bound morpheme contains semantic content, it cannot occur on its own and therefore has to attach itself morphologically to a free morpheme. The bound morpheme when preceding the root is a prefix whereas when following the root is a suffix.

Derived disyllabic adjectives can be further categorized into two types: 1) prefixed derived disyllabic adjectives and 2) suffixed derived disyllabic adjectives. These sub-types of derived disyllabic adjectives are discussed in details in sections 2.4.3.1 and 2.4.3.2 respectively.
2.4.3.1 Prefixed Derived Disyllabic Adjectives

In Singaporean Hokkien, a certain word class can be converted into another by undergoing derivation. The derivational process discussed in this section is the adding of a prefix. There are three kinds of prefixes that can be added to a word: 1) the ho⁴²/ pʰay ‘good/ bad’ prefixes, 2) the gaw²¹ ‘good at’ and 3) the ʔu²¹/ bo²⁴ ‘have/ not have’ prefixes. These prefixes are discussed further as follows:

2.4.3.1.1 The ho⁴²/ pʰay ‘good/ bad’ prefixes

This pair of prefixes can modify both verbs and nouns. The constructions are exemplified as follows:

a) ho⁴²/ pʰay⁴² + V
b) ho⁴²/ pʰay⁴² + N

In the former construction, the derivation process is productive which means that new adjectives can be formed by adhering to this construction. On the other hand, the latter construction is not productive as new adjectives cannot always be formed by this construction. Furthermore, certain root nouns may only be prefixed by either ho⁴² ‘good’ or pʰay⁴² ‘bad’.

A Singaporean Hokkien verb can change its word class by undergoing the derivation process of attaching an adjectival prefix onto the verb itself. The formation pattern of this class of adjectives is predictable as the adjectival prefixes that can be attached to certain verbs in Singaporean Hokkien are limited to only two which are ho⁴² ‘good’ and pʰay⁴² ‘bad’. This morphological process of derivation is productive in that a great number of verbs are able to take on these adjectival prefixes and become derived adjectives. Several examples of prefixed derived disyllabic adjectives are given as follows:

(30) ho²⁴ tsysa²¹

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ PFX</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘good to eat’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In (30) and (31), the verb tsya₂¹ ‘eat’ can be prefixed by the adjectives ho⁴² ‘good’ and pʰay⁴² ‘bad’ and change word class into an adjective meaning ‘good to eat’ and ‘bad to eat’ respectively. Most verbs can be preceded by these two adjectival prefixes to yield antonymic adjectives. In consideration of the occurrence of derived disyllabic adjectives which take on the positive prefix ho⁴² ‘good’, it is speculated that this construction may be a result of Mandarin Chinese influence as an identical construction is found as illustrated below:

(M-01)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tsya²¹</th>
<th>haw²¹</th>
<th>tfi³³</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ PFX</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘good to eat’</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘good to eat’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed in (M-01), the Mandarin adjective for the notion ‘good to eat’ corresponds to the Singaporean Hokkien adjective in (30). One might assume that the morphological formation of prefixed derived disyllabic adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien could be due to superstratal influence of Mandarin Chinese, the politically dominant language in Singapore. However, Cheng’s (1979) study of Taiwanese Hokkien adjectives also exemplifies prefixed derived disyllabic adjectives which share identical constructions as Singaporean Hokkien and Mandarin Chinese as well.

An alternative assumption is that the construction of the prefixed derived disyllabic adjective in Hokkien, either being Singaporean or Taiwanese, may be the one that influenced the prefixed derived disyllabic adjective in Mandarin. One reason is that comparative linguistic evidence that Hokkien is more conservative than Mandarin, of which the former retained most of its consonant endings whereas the latter lost most of them. There is not enough substantial evidence whether this phenomenon is of Mandarin influence or of shared common origins of Mandarin and Hokkien.
Given below are examples of the prefix-noun construction.

(32) $ho^{24}\sim sim^{33}$

good heart

ADJ PFX N

"good-hearted"

(33) $p^\text{hay}^{24}\sim sim^{33}$

bad heart

ADJ PFX N

‘ill-hearted’

For (32) and (33), these two examples are instances of nouns that are able to take on both the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ prefixes.

2.4.3.1.2 The $gaw^{21}$ ‘adept at doing an action’ prefix

This prefix can only modify verbs, unlike the $ho^{42}/p^\text{hay}$ prefixes. It not only modifies the verb, but also changes the word class of the verb into an adjective. The verbs that can take on the $gaw^{21}$ prefix are as follows: $tsaw^{42}$ ‘to run’, $sy^{21}\ p^\text{ya}^{21}$ ‘to fight’ or $ka^{21}\ lan^{24}$ ‘to bite people’, etc. Upon taking the $gaw^{21}$ prefix, the action verb changes its word class into an adjective. Moreover, the semantic content of the action verb changes from ‘to do that action’ into ‘being adept at conducting that action’. As illustrated in example (27) of Section 2.2, action verbs cannot take on degree expressions. However, they can do so by taking on the $gaw^{21}$ prefix as the prefix alters their word class from verb to adjective. Consider the following sentences:

(34) $^{2i^{33}}\ tsaw^{42}$

he (she) run

3P V

‘He (She) runs’
In Singaporean Hokkien, the action verb *tsaw⁴²* ‘to run’ can occur by itself as illustrated in (34). However, ungrammaticality occurs when the degree expression *tsin³³ (tsya⁴²)* ‘really’ precedes the action verb as illustrated in (35). To achieve grammaticality, the action verb has to take on the derivational prefix *gaw²¹* ‘adept’ as illustrated in (36).

2.4.3.1.3 The *ʔu²¹/ bo²⁴* ‘have/ not have’ prefixes

This pair of derivational prefixes can modify a variety of word classes. The word classes that can take on the *ʔu²¹/ bo²⁴* prefixes are the noun, the verb and the adjective. The prefixes *ʔu²¹* and *bo²⁴* are actually verbs denoting possession and the lack of possession respectively. As a result, the attachment of the prefixes changes the word class of the noun and verb into an adjective and alters the semantic content of all the modified word classes to ‘having or not having the features of the noun, verb or adjective’. Consider the following examples:
As seen in (37), the sentence conveys a literal meaning: ‘a person is in possession of money’. Nonetheless, this sentence can be reanalyzed as follows

(37) ʔi³³ ʔu²¹ luy³³

he (she) have money

3P V N

‘He (She) has money’

In (38), the sentence is seen in a new light and now conveys a metaphoric meaning: ‘a person has features of one who has wealth’. The verb phrase ʔu²¹ luy³³ ‘to have money’ has been changed into an adjective phrase ‘to be rich’. Grammatical evidence can support this claim by adding a degree expression tsin³³ (tsya⁴²) ‘really’ in front of the adjective phrase and grammaticality is valid in doing so. Similarly, the bo²⁴ ‘not have’ prefix functions grammatically like its positive counterpart to bring about the antonym of either having money or being rich.

Special notice should also be paid to the noun luy³³ ‘money’. This noun is not of Hokkien language but of Malay. Due to language proximity, the Hokkien word for money, which is actually ts¹²¹, has been replaced in the Singaporean variety by its Malay counterpart.
Token (39) is an example of an adjectival prefix modifying a verb. The verb yoŋ²¹ ‘to use’ upon taking on ʔu²¹ ‘to have’ as an adjectival derivational prefix gets altered in meaning to become ‘having features of usefulness’. To come up with the antonym, the prefix bo²⁴ ‘not have’ can be attached to the verb. Like example (38), verbs taking on the prefixes ʔu²¹ and bo²⁴ can be further modified by a degree expression, thus supporting the claim that they function as adjectives.

Example (40) is a type of Yes/No question. The positive response to this question is simply a sentence that begins with the verb ʔu²¹ ‘to have’. On the other hand, the negative response is a sentence in which the verb is negated by the negative particle bo²⁴ ‘no’. Upon occurring together, these two words undergo tone sandhi and therefore resulting in the sentence: bo²¹ ʔeŋ²⁴ ‘(I) do not have the free time.’

It is observed that the word ‘free time’ has been glossed as a noun. I have chosen to analyze it as a noun due to the fact that I deem this word as an object of the verb ʔu²¹ ‘to have’. This noun ʔeŋ²⁴ ‘free time’ when modified by the prefix ʔu²¹ to have changes word class into an adjective, enabling it to take on a degree expression. It is
interesting to note that the word ʔeŋ²⁴ when occurring in isolation can be analyzed as an adjective. Consider the following example:

(41)  li⁴²  tsin³³  ʔeŋ²⁴  si²¹  bo²⁴

you  real  free  is  no

2P  ADV  ADJ  COP  QPRT

‘You are very free, are you?’

In (41), the word ʔeŋ²⁴ is analyzed as an adjective. I support this claim by pointing out the preceding degree expression adverb tsin³³ ‘really’ that can modify adjectival constructions as evidence. However, ʔeŋ²⁴ can also be analyzed as a verb because adjectives by grammatical evidence posited in Section 2.2 (Distinguishing Adjectives from Verbs) do share verblike characteristics.

As for the negative prefixed derived disyllabic adjectives, not only pʰay⁴² ‘bad’ can be attached in front of the verb but the negative particles bwe²¹ ‘not able’, bo²⁴ ‘not have’ and m²¹ si²¹ ‘not be’ can also be attached to either to monosyllabic or disyllabic adjectives to form disyllabic or polysyllabic adjectives. Negation will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

2.4.3.2 Suffixed Derived Disyllabic Adjectives

In Singaporean Hokkien, suffixed derived disyllabic adjectives are uncommon. In fact, there is only one suffix that can be attached to an adjective. The composition of this disyllabic adjective is as follows:

ADJ  +  kʰwan⁴²

As mentioned above, an adjective in Singaporean Hokkien can take on the kʰwan⁴² suffix. This suffix approximates the meaning of ‘having the manner of’. It modifies an adjective by following the adjective. The resulting construction still retains its
word class as an adjective and this claim can be supported by grammatical evidence that this construction can take on degree expressions as illustrated in (42) below.

(42) \text{tsin}^{33} \text{ ho}^{24} \text{ kʰwan}^{42}

\begin{tabular}{lll}
\text{real} & \text{good} & \text{manner} \\
\text{ADV} & \text{ADJ} & \text{ADJ SFX} \\
\end{tabular}

‘really well mannered’

As in (42), the disyllabic adjective \text{ho}^{24} \text{ kʰwan}^{42} ‘well mannered’ is being modified by the degree expression \text{tsin}^{33} ‘really’. The outcome is the adjectival phrase \text{tsin}^{33} \text{ ho}^{24} \text{ kʰwan}^{42} ‘really well mannered’. Apart from the adjective \text{ho}^{42} ‘good’, there are only two more adjectives that can take on the adjectival suffix \text{kʰwan}^{42} to form a disyllabic adjective; \text{pʰay}^{42} ‘bad’ and \text{tsʰaw}^{21} ‘foul’. Upon taking on the adjectival suffix, they become disyllabic adjectives with their respective meanings as follows: \text{pʰay}^{24} \text{ kʰwan}^{42} ‘ill mannered’ and \text{tsʰaw}^{42} \text{kʰwan}^{42} ‘selfish’. The derivational process of this adjectival suffix affects the semantic content of an adjective. It does not result in the alteration of word class.

### 2.4.4 Disyllabic Adjectives: An Alternative Analysis

Disyllabic adjectives have been analyzed in sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 on the basis of morphology. This section aims at analyzing adjectives of the disyllabic category by another method; semantics. This alternative way of analyzing disyllabic adjectives focuses on the semantic structure of a disyllabic adjective.

The analysis is conducted by looking at how a word can be modified while still retaining a central semantic content. By looking at the different ways of how a word is modified to become an adjectival construction, explanations are suggested according to the understanding of the researcher. For the sake of clarity, I give an example of an analysis of an adjectival construction that centers on the concept of strength \text{lat}^{44}. This word when occurring in isolation belongs to the noun word class. Upon looking at the morphological make-up of this word, it can be derivated into becoming a disyllabic adjective by prefixing different types of morphemes in front of the bound morpheme \text{lat}^{44} as follows:
Examples a) to e) are all disyllabic adjectives pertaining to strength. They can take on the intensifier degree expression "tsin³³ tsya⁴² ‘really’. Example a) is a combination
of a verb and noun to form an adjective. It is a metaphorical expression for an event that is difficult to deal with. The metaphor for this example is that ‘TROUBLE IS STRENGTH CONSUMING’ and thus earning the expression ‘to eat strength’ to figuratively mean ‘troublesome’. Examples b) and c) are binary opposites due to the adjectival prefixes *twa*²¹ ‘big’ and *swey*²¹ ‘small’. The outcomes of these prefixes oppose each other in terms of using alot of force and using little force respectively. Examples d) and e) are binary opposites as well because of the verb *ʔu*²¹ ‘to have’ and its negative counterpart *bo*²⁴ ‘to not have’ resulting in the adjectives ‘having strength’ and ‘not having strength’ respectively. Regardless of how the noun *lat*⁴⁴ ‘strength’ is modified by verbs, affixes or negatives, the radial feature of all these adjectival constructions points to a single entity ‘strength’.

2.5 Polysyllabic Adjectives

In this section, adjectives that are polysyllabic in construction are discussed. In Singaporean Hokkien, there are a limited number of adjectives which are composed of more than two syllables in a morpheme. The majority of adjectives are derived ones which take on prefixes and suffixes to become meaningful and their occurrence is often predictable. However, there are other types of adjectives whose pattern of formation cannot be predicted so easily. This section accounts for adjectives that fall outside the category of being monosyllabic or disyllabic.

A polysyllabic adjectival construction is a morpheme composed of more than two syllables. This can be achieved by reduplication and the result will be a polysyllabic construction, which contains more than two syllables. In fact, the polysyllabic construction is more than a trisyllabic one. Hence, a quadrisyllabic construction or in other words a four syllable construction results. The process of coming to that construction is neither that of compounding nor derivation.

In the process of producing a quadrisyllabic adjective in Singaporean Hokkien, phonological rendering and semantic reduplication serve as the main processes. The former and latter function in unison and their functions cannot be individually segregated for analysis. As a result, the polysyllabic construction is considered an instance of reduplication. Reduplication is not discussed in this section, but in section 3.5 instead.
Chapter 3
Degree Expressions and Adjectives

In this chapter, I attempt to describe the grammatical constraints that govern the modification of the adjective in an adjectival phrase. In doing so, I begin with categorizing the types of degree expressions that modify the adjectival phrase.

Following that, each type of degree expression is further categorized into subtypes. In general, adjectival constructions modify nouns and adjectives themselves can be modified with the use of degree expressions. These degree expressions are adverbs that serve to modify adjectival constructions by answering the question of “how much” and “to what extent”.

The occurrence of certain degree expressions are in complementary distribution in that no two or more degree expressions can co-occur in the same environment to modify the same adjectival phrase. However, some degree expressions can be reduplicated to become intensifiers that modify the adjectival phrase with an even more intensified degree than their unreduplicated counterparts.

Degree expressions generally modify adjectival constructions. Their functions of modification serve a fundamental purpose in separating the adjective from the verb in Singaporean Hokkien.

3.1 Structure of the Adjectival Phrase

In Singaporean Hokkien, the adjectival phrase is composed of an adjectival head which can be modified by a degree expression. The degree expression occurs before the head adjective and its usage serves the purpose of denoting personal subjective extent measurement. In other words, degree expressions answer questions that ask “how much” and “to what extent”. Consider the question and response examples as follows:
Token (43) asks the extent of beauty, the response is (44), which is comprised of only an adjective phrase. In casual conversation discourse a participant who has been introduced into a context can be omitted in the following contexts if the introduced participant is constantly being referred to without change in participants. Therefore, the elided subject can be retained from previous context via this abovementioned discourse phenomenon; zero anaphora.

Regarding the adjectival phrase response, it is already appropriate for the sole adjective swi\(^{42}\) ‘good looking’ to occur as a response to the extent question. The underlined degree expression, which is an adverb, tsin\(^{33}\) ‘real’ serves as a modifier to the adjective to indicate that the degree of beauty exceeds normal.

At this point, I deem it crucial to remind the reader that the adjectival phrase is a type of stative verb phrase. Consequently, negation can be applied to the degree expression as well as to the adjectival phrase itself. However, negation will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

### 3.2 Types of Degree Expressions

The adjectival phrase in Singaporean Hokkien takes on a preceding degree expression. Degree expressions that modify the adjectival phrase can be
subcategorized into three types as follows: 1) intensifier degree expressions, 2) comparative constructions and 3) reduplication.

### 3.3 Intensifier Degree Expressions

Intensifier degree expressions are adverbs that modify an adjectival phrase. They cannot occur independently and thus they need to be attached in front of the adjectival phrase to achieve grammaticality. Functionally, they exhibit the extent of the semantic content of the adjectival phrase which they modify.

Intensifier degree expressions in Singaporean Hokkien can be further categorized into three types as follows: intensifying intensifier degree expressions, moderated intensifier degree expressions and excessive intensifier degree expressions. These three types of degree expressions show different degrees of the extent of the modified adjectival phrase’s semantic content.

#### 3.3.1 Intensifying Intensifier Degree Expressions

This type of intensifier degree expression magnifies the semantic content of the modified adjectival phrase. The meaning of the adjectival phrase gets intensified in terms of degree as illustrated in (45).

(45)  
\[
\begin{array}{lll}
& T i^{33} & t s i n^{43} \text{(tsya}^{42}) & h w a^{21} h i^{42} \\
3P & \text{he (she)} & \text{real} & \text{happy} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘He (She) is really happy’

In (45), the adjectival phrase \textit{hw}a^{21} \textit{hi}^{42} ‘happy’ is modified by the intensifying intensified degree expression \textit{ts}in^{43} (\textit{tsya}^{42}) ‘really’. This degree expression can comprise of either \textit{ts}in^{43} or \textit{ts}in^{33} \textit{tsya}^{42} with no difference in meaning. Furthermore, it can be reduplicated to indicate an even more intensified meaning as in (46).
Example (46) employs a duplication of the intensifying intensified degree expression to bring about an increased intensification of the semantic content of the adjectival phrase. Intriguingly, the construction that can take on reduplication is the entire intensifying intensified degree expression $tsin^{33} tsysa^{42}$ rather than $tsin^{33}$. Apart from $tsin^{33} tsysa^{42}$, another intensifying intensified degree expression that can modify an adjectival phrase is $si^{24} pe^{21}$ as illustrated in (47).

(47) $i^{33} si^{24} pe^{21} haw^{42} lyan^{42}$

he (she) die father boastful
3P ADV ADJ

‘He (She) is very, very boastful’

The intensifying intensified degree expression used in (47) is $si^{24} pe^{21}$, which literally means ‘dead father’. This expression is colloquial in nature and is considered a layman’s term which is deemed vulgar in all cultural contexts. However, a high level social intimacy can permit this intensifying intensified degree expression to occur. It functions no differently from $tsin^{33} tsysa^{42} ‘really’$. In fact, it resembles $tsin^{33} tsysa^{42}$ in that it can be reduplicated to achieve a even greater degree of intensification as well. Consider example (48):

(48) $i^{33} si^{24} pe^{21} si^{24} pe^{21} haw^{42} lyan^{42}$

he (she) die father die father boastful
3P ADV ADV ADJ

‘He (She) is very, very boastful’

The intensifying intensified degree expressions $tsin^{33} tsysa^{42}$ and $si^{24} pe^{21}$ can be used interchangably as permitted by the social factor of intimacy. The former is
appropriate in all situations and venues whereas the latter is limited to people with very close ties speaking in smaller conversation groups and is considered derogatory for unfamiliar people to hear. There is another intensifying intensified degree expression $\text{peŋ}^{42}$ which roughly transliterates to ‘very’. Consider token (49):

\[(49) \quad i^{33} \quad \text{peŋ}^{42} \quad \text{swi}^{42} \]

he (she)    very    good looking

3P  ADV  ADJ

‘He (She) is very good looking’

The intensifying intensified degree expression $\text{peŋ}^{42}$ ‘very’ can be interchanged with the two above mentioned intensifying intensified degree expressions. However, it cannot be reduplicated to increase intensification to another level like its disyllabic counterparts.

### 3.3.2 Moderated Intensifier Degree Expressions

Degree expressions of this type denote a certain degree of extent. The degree of extent is significantly that of lesser than intensifying intensified degree expressions. Consider the following examples (50), (51), and (52):

\[(50) \quad i^{33} \quad \text{syong}^{33} \quad \text{ton}^{33} \quad \text{swi}^{42} \]

he (she)    quite    good looking

3P  ADV  ADJ

‘He (She) is quite good looking’

The moderated intensifier degree expression $\text{syong}^{33} \text{ton}^{33}$ ‘quite’ in (50) modifies the adjective $\text{swi}^{42}$ ‘beautiful’. The degree of intensification of $\text{syong}^{33} \text{ton}^{33}$ is less than that of intensifying intensified degree expressions. There is another moderated intensifier degree expression illustrated in (51):
This moderated intensifier degree expression tsʰa³³ put³³ to³³ exhibits a neutral degree. Upon being modified by tsʰa³³ put³³ to³³, the adjective gets placed in the middle of the degree continuum and does not incline to either poles. The degree of tsʰa³³ put³³ to³³ ‘moderate’ is lesser than that of syoŋ³³ toŋ³³ ‘quite’. Another moderated intensifier degree expression is illustrated in (52):

(52)  tʰɨŋ⁴⁴  tam²¹ po⁴²  kyi’am²⁴

The moderated intensifier degree expression tam²¹ po⁴² ‘a little’ in (52) is suspected to be derived from the adjectives tam²¹ meaning ‘bland’ and po⁴² meaning ‘thin’. When used in a combination, these two adjectives change word class to become an adverbial degree expression. Their meanings also get transferred to the adjective being modified. The radial structure of the meanings of the adjectives tam²¹ ‘bland’ and po⁴² ‘thin’ which get carried to indicate degree is ‘mitigation’ or the degree of ‘lessness’. The moderated intensifier degree expressions syoŋ³³ toŋ³³ ‘quite’, tsʰa³³ put³³ to³³ ‘moderate’ and tam²¹ po⁴² ‘a little’ can be placed on a continuum ranking from more intense to less intense as follows:

\[
\text{syoŋ}^{33} \text{ toŋ}^{33} > \text{tsʰa}^{33} \text{ put}^{33} \text{ to}^{33} > \text{tam}^{21} \text{ po}^{42}
\]

‘quite’  ‘moderate’  ‘a little’

**Figure 4. Continuum of Moderated Intensifier Degree Expressions**

All of the abovementioned moderated intensifier degree expressions can be reduplicated. However, the reduplicated forms do not undergo intensity increase of meaning. Rather, they signify ‘tentativeness’ as portrayed in Tsao’s study (2001).
Tentativeness, according to Tsao (2001:305) is a metalinguistic term used to describe a situation in which a state or action cannot be classified into a category.

This sense of ‘tentativeness’ is used in application to Southern Min adjectival reduplication to describe the semantic values of adjectives reduplicated in the XX pattern. This definition extends partially to Singaporean Hokkien, which is a regional variant of Southern Min. The XX pattern of reduplication as described in Section 2.3 when applied to monosyllabic adjectives can have two results; either the adjective becomes tentative or superlative in meaning.

Discourse context plays a vital role in determining which meaning is valid. However, reduplicated moderated intensifier degree expressions possess only tentative meaning. Therefore, the results of each of the moderated intensifier degree expressions in the continuum exhibited in Figure 4 upon undergoing reduplication are as follows:

a) \( syoŋ^{33} \, ton^{33} > syoŋ^{33} \, ton^{33} \, syoŋ^{33} \, ton^{33} \)  
   ‘quite’                 ‘rather’

b) \( tsʰa^{33} \, put^{33} \, to^{33} > tsʰa^{33} \, put^{33} \, tsʰa^{33} \, put^{33} \, to^{33} \)  
   ‘moderate’             ‘rather moderate’

c) \( Tam^{21} \, po^{42} > tam^{21} \, po^{42} \, tam^{21} \, po^{42} \)  
   ‘a little’             ‘rather little’

From examples a) to c), it is observed that the entire moderated intensifier degree expression is analyzed as a whole regardless of being disyllabic or trisyllabic. No part of the expression can be analyzed in isolation as the segments are fused together in order to function meaningfully. Hence, the patterns of moderated intensifier degree expressions upon undergoing reduplication yield the following results:

a) \( AB \rightarrow ABAB \)

b) \( ABC \rightarrow ABCABC \)
Reduplication of moderated intensifier degree expressions causes semantic content alteration; the meaning changes to a lesser extent.

### 3.3.3 Excessive Intensifier Degree Expressions

In Singaporean Hokkien, I have found only one excessive intensifier degree expression so far: \textit{kwe}^{42} \textit{t\text{\textasciitilde}aw}^{21}. Consider example (53):

\begin{align*}
(53) & \quad i^{33} \quad \textit{kwe}^{42} \textit{t\text{\textasciitilde}aw}^{21} \quad \textit{p\text{\textasciitilde}ay}^{24} \textit{k\text{\textasciitilde}wan}^{42} \quad \textit{lyaw}^{42} \\
& \quad \text{He (she) over head bad mannered} \\
& \quad \text{3P ADV ADJ SFP} \\
& \quad \text{‘He (She) is too bad mannered’}
\end{align*}

In (53), the adjective \textit{p\text{\textasciitilde}ay}^{24} \textit{k\text{\textasciitilde}wan}^{42} ‘bad mannered’ is modified by \textit{kwe}^{42} \textit{t\text{\textasciitilde}aw}^{21}, which literally means ‘over the head’. This degree expression intensifies adjectives with a negative connotation. An adjective that contains bad or undesirable meanings can take on this degree expression to magnify the degree of the negative feature exhibited.

I suspect that there may be more than one excessive intensifier degree expression to be discovered. Due to the limited data collection, future studies might reveal more of this kind of excessive intensifier degree expression.

### 3.4 Comparison Constructions

Apart from the implementing of intensifier degree expressions, Singaporean Hokkien also employs comparison constructions to exemplify degrees of adjectives. Chao (as in Cheng, 1979) claims that adjectives in Chinese lack morphological forms for describing comparatives and superlatives. As a consequence, comparisons are expressed by the usage of adverbs. Cheng (1979:31) acknowledges that Taiwanese is subject to Chao’s observation as well. Similarly, Singaporean Hokkien also follows this observation as it is linguistically related to Taiwanese.

Comparative constructions in Singaporean Hokkien can be further classified into five subtypes: 1) equative comparison constructions, 2) figurative comparison
constructions, 3) differential comparison constructions, 4) comparative comparison constructions and 5) superlative comparison constructions.

3.4.1 Equative Comparison Constructions

When two entities have resembling qualities, an equative comparison construction is utilized to display their matching qualities. There are two constructions that show equative comparison. The first construction is illustrated in Figure 5 and the second one is illustrated in Figure 6.

\[ N_1 \text{ COVERB } N_2 \text{ COMPARISON DEGREE EXPRESSION } ADJ \]

Figure 5. Grammatical Structure of Equative Comparison Constructions

An equative comparison between two nouns can be done according to the construction shown in Figure 5. \( N_1 \) is the subject of the comparison and \( N_2 \) is the entity that is being employed as the standard of comparison.

The coverb between the two nouns is a verb that has undergone semantic bleaching or grammaticalization and thus has lost its lexical meaning and starts to fulfill grammatical functions.

Coverbs are prevalent in serial verb languages such as Mandarin and Thai. Singaporean Hokkien, which is a Sinitic language related to Mandarin, has serial verb constructions and thus implements coverbs to fulfill a prepositional function in the serial verb phrase.

The comparison is a verb phrase that indicates the event of comparing. The degree expression is an adverb or adverbial phrase that demonstrates the equality of the nouns in comparison.

The adjective correlates to the equal degree of quality or feature in comparison between the two abovementioned nouns. Below is a sentence exemplifying equal comparison:
The main event in (54) is the verb phrase of comparison is \( \text{pi}^{42} \text{kʰi}^{42} \text{lay}^{21} \). This verb phrase is a serial verb construction consisting of 3 coverbs which are derived from the verbs \( \text{pi}^{42} \) ‘to compare’, \( \text{kʰi}^{42} \) ‘to rise’ and \( \text{lay}^{21} \) ‘to come’.

The adverb \( \text{pē}^{21} \) ‘level’ denotes the equality of the physical attribute \( \text{twa}^{21} \) ‘big’. This adverb can be reduplicated, becoming \( \text{pē}^{21} \text{pē}^{21} \) and the outcome of the reduplicated adverb bears no difference in meaning from the unreduplicated one.

There are two other adverbs that exhibit equality: \( \text{syo}^{21} \text{syaj}^{24} \) and \( \text{pē}^{21} \text{ʔyə}^{21} \). The meanings of these adverbs are not much different from the abovementioned adverb and from each other. Therefore I approximate their meanings transliterally as ‘same’ as all of them share the radial feature of the semantic quality ‘sameness’.

Other than the standard structure, equative comparison constructions can omit the verb phrase of comparison \( \text{pi}^{42} \text{kʰi}^{42} \text{lay}^{21} \) on the condition that there is discourse context that can be retrieved. The abbreviated equative construction is illustrated in Figure 6 as follows:

\[
\text{N}_1 \text{ COVERB N}_2 \text{ DEGREE EXPRESSION ADJ}
\]

**Figure 6. Grammatical Structure of Abbreviated Equative Comparison Constructions**

As a result of applying discourse context realization that can be retrieved, an equative comparison construction can be formed by eliding the verb phrase to bring about an abbreviated equative comparison construction. Consider the following example:
I and ah Lian same good looking

‘Ah Lian and I are equally good looking’

Without the verb phrase of comparison pi⁴² kʰi⁴² lay²¹, this sentence is still understandable to the native speaker. There is actually no need for a verb phrase construction to be uttered. Grammatically, this phenomenon can be explained by evidence (see Section 2.2) that the adjective phrase is a verb phrase and therefore is the predicate of the two noun phrases.

In circumstances where the adjective has already been established, it is possible to omit the adjective as well. Participants of the conversation are well-informed of the adjective being referred to in comparison and thus will not get confused.

There is another intriguing observation about equative comparison constructions; they can take on negation and the negative particles occur preceding the adverb. More details shall be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.4.2 Figurative Comparison Constructions

When an entity is being compared to another in terms of figurative resemblance, a figurative comparison construction is employed to demonstrate that figurative similarity. Illustrated below is the structure of a figurative comparison construction:

\[ N_1 \text{ ADJ COVERB } N_2 \]

Figure 7. Grammatical Structure of Figurative Comparison Constructions A

The figurative comparison construction as demonstrated in Figure 7 is composed of the following grammatical elements: 1) the subject of the figurative comparison construction \((N_1)\), 2) the adjective that is figuratively portrayed (ADJ), 3) the figurative comparison coverb phrase, in which there are two types of figurative comparison coverbs; \(ka⁴² na⁴²\) and \(tsʰin³³ tsʰy²¹\), and 4) the entity that is the standard of the comparison \((N_2)\). Consider the given example:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
gwa⁴² & ka²¹ & \text{ same } & \text{ good looking} \\
1 & \text{ and } & \text{ ah } & \text{ Lian} \\
1P & \text{ CoV} & \text{ DIM} & \text{ ADV} \\
\end{array}
\]
In (56), the first noun phrase \(?ah^{33} han^{42}\) is being compared to the second \(ti^{33}\). In reality, the first noun phrase is a human whereas the second is an animal. The two noun phrases belong to two different species of animals. However, the human gets assigned a physical characteristic, which is the state of being fat. That particular characteristic is a stereotypical physical trait of the pig. Therefore, the adjective \(puy^{24}\) ‘fat’ is followed by the coverb phrase \(ka^{42} na^{42}\) to exemplify a figurative comparison. In other words, the human is metaphorically referred to a pig due to his excessively obese physique.

Other than utilizing the coverb phrase \(ka^{42} na^{42}\), a figurative comparison construction can be demonstrated by another coverb phrase as well: \(ts'hyn^{33} ts'hyn^{21}\). This coverb phrase can be used in complementary distribution with \(ka^{42} na^{42}\) to express figurative comparisons without any difference in meaning. There is another alternative construction that can be used to express figurative comparison as in Figure 8:

\[
\text{N}_1 \quad \text{COVERB} \quad \text{N}_2 \quad \text{DEGREE EXPRESSION} \quad \text{ADJ}
\]

**Figure 8. Grammatical Structure of Figurative Comparison Constructions B**

The subject of the figurative comparison (\(N_1\)) gets compared with the standard entity (\(N_2\)) by employment of the figurative comparison coverb phrase \(ka^{42} na^{42}\), which is inserted between the two noun phrases.

Following the standard entity of comparison (\(N_2\), a degree expression \(an^{33} ni^{42}\) is positioned preceding and modifying the adjective which is the characteristic shared metaphorically by the two abovementioned noun phrases. The degree expression \(an^{33} ni^{42}\) approximately means ‘to the extent of’ or ‘like this’.

Part of the degree expression, particularly \(an^{33}\) is described by Pulleyblank (1995:4) as a Classical Chinese interrogative pronoun glossed as ‘how?’ or “where?”.

\[
(56) \begin{array}{cccc}
?ah^{33} & han^{42} & puy^{24} & ka^{42} na^{42} & ti^{33} \\
\text{ah} & \text{Han} & \text{fat} & \text{as} & \text{pig} \\
\text{DIM} & \text{PROP} & \text{ADJ} & \text{CoV} & \text{N} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘Ah Han is as fat as a pig’
instance of the meaning of \( an^{33} \) Classical Chinese corresponds to that of Singaporean Hokkien. Based on this piece of evidence, I draw a conclusion for now that \( an^{33} \) \( ni^{42} \) is a degree expression as both the Singaporean Hokkien and Classical Chinese \( an^{33} \) share a radial structure: ‘degree of extent’. Illustrated below is an example of the alternative figurative comparison construction:

(57) \( \?ah^{33} \ hɔŋ^{33} \ ka^{42} na^{42} \ pʰ^{21} sat^{21} \ an^{33} \ ni^{42} \ ho^{42} \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ah</th>
<th>Hong</th>
<th>As</th>
<th>Bodhisattva</th>
<th>like this</th>
<th>good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIM</td>
<td>N&lt;sub&gt;PROP&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>CoV</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>ADJ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Ah Hong is as kind as the Goddess of Mercy’

In (57), the person \( ?ah^{33} \ hɔŋ^{33} \) is being figuratively compared to the Goddess of Mercy. The radial structure that is being discussed is the benevolent characteristic; ‘kindness’. The former noun phrase who is a person gets metaphorically referred to as being a Goddess of Mercy because of her desirable characteristic, kindness.

Both structures of figurative comparison posited in Figure 7 and Figure 8 can be used interchangeably with no difference in meaning. The former is more often used as it is shorter, thus fulfilling the balance between clarity and conciseness. Furthermore, the former construction is relatively productive. There are a significant number of figurative or idiomatic expressions that can be used to describe a characteristic of a noun phrase, which will not be covered in this thesis any further.

3.4.3 Differential Comparison Constructions

To express a difference between two entities in Singaporean Hokkien, differential comparisons are utilized. There are two ways to conduct differential comparison. The first method is to conduct differential comparison without degree of difference whereas the second method is to do so with degree of difference. Moreover, the structures of differential comparison will slightly vary according to the occurrence of the adjective in the differential comparison construction.

3.4.3.1 Differential Comparison without Degree of Difference

In Singaporean Hokkien, a differential comparison construction can be constituted without explicit reference to the degree of the compared entities. Structures of
An adjective influences the structure of a differential comparison by occupying one of the four grammatical functions: 1) a main predicate, 2) a verb object modifier, 3) a verb modifier and 4) a verb complement.

When the adjective functions as a main predicate, the differential comparison construction without degree of difference is illustrated as follows:

\[
N_1 \ (k^a_{33}) \ \text{ADJ} \ kwe^{42} \ N_2
\]

**Figure 9. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions without Degree of Difference with Adjective Functioning as Main Predicate**

In Figure 9, \(N_1\) is the subject of the construction. It is the compared entity of which the following adjective functions as the predicate, indicating the characteristic that is being compared.

The degree expression \(k^a_{33} \cdot kwe^{42}\) circumfixes the adjective \(kwāy^{24}\) ‘tall’. This degree expression functions as an adverb showing difference between the compared entity \((N_1)\) and the entity being used as the standard comparison \((N_2)\). An example sentence demonstrating differential comparison without degree of difference is illustrated below:

\[(58) \ gwa^{42} \ (k^a_{33}) \ kwāy^{24} \ kwe^{42} \ li^{42}\]

\[\begin{array}{cccc}
1 & \text{more} & \text{Tall} & \text{over} & \text{you} \\
1P & \text{ADV} & \text{ADJ} & \text{ADV} & 2P
\end{array}\]

‘I am taller than you’

In (58), the subject is a first person pronoun \(gwa^{42}\) being compared to the entity of standard comparison, the second person pronoun \(li^{42}\). These two persons differ in the physical characteristic: height. This characteristic is being predicated, thus the adjective \(kwāy^{24}\) ‘tall’ functions as a verb and takes on the circumfixing degree adverb indicating differential extent \(k^a_{33} \cdot kwe^{42}\) ‘over’. This first part of the circumfixing adverb ‘\(k^a_{33}\)’ can be omitted. The second part of the circumfixing
adverb ‘kwe⁴²’ is actually a verb meaning ‘to cross’ as in crossing a road as in the sentence kwe⁴² be²⁴ tsʰya³³ lɔ²¹. In this context, it denotes difference in comparison with the subject exceeding the compared entity.

Upon taking a closer look at the phrase kwāy²⁴ kwe⁴² ‘to be taller than (someone)’, this phrase can also be analyzed as a serial verb construction. This is due to the fact that both of the components of this phrase can be seen as verbs. The adjective kwāy²⁴ can contain a predicative meaning ‘to be taller’ and the verb kwe⁴² means ‘to cross’ respectively. Notwithstanding, I maintain my analysis that this phrase is an adjectival phrase comprised of an adjective modified by a degree adverb. To substantiate my claim, I hereby posit examples from Thai below:

(T-01) \( T^\text{33} \) swey²⁴

she, you beautiful

3P, 2P ADJ

‘She (you)’ is (are) beautiful’

(T-02) nang²⁴ sii²⁴ lem⁴² nii⁴⁵ dii³³

Book this good

N CLF DEM ADJ

‘This book is good’

(T-03) \( p^\text{42} u^\text{42} yin²⁴ \) kʰon³³ nan⁴⁵ swey²⁴ dii³³

female human that beautiful good

N CLF DEM ADJ ADV

‘That woman is somewhat beautiful’

For examples (T-01) and (T-02) some schools of grammar would analyze the adjectives swey²⁴ ‘beautiful’ and dii³³ ‘good’ as verbs to conform to a subject-predicate structure. As demonstrated in Section 2.2 (Distinguishing adjectives from verbs), Thai adjectives behave identically to Singaporean Hokkien adjectives in that they
can be predicated. Furthermore, they can be negated which is evidence that adjectives are somehow similar to verbs in both Thai and Singaporean Hokkien. Despite the fact that the adjective dii³³ ‘good’ is analyzed as a predicated adjective in (T-02), it is analyzed as a degree adverb in (T-03). The adjective ‘good’ undergoes grammaticalization when it follows an adjective and thus the original meaning ‘good’ gets weaken to ‘somewhat’. The radial structure shared by the words dii³³ ‘good’ in examples (T-02) and (T-03) is ‘degree’.

This instance of grammaticalization also occurs in Singaporean Hokkien in (58). The verb kwe⁴² ‘to cross’ undergoes grammaticalization when it follows the adjective kwäy²⁴ ‘tall’. The meaning of the verb gets reduced from a concrete action to a more abstract manner which in this case enters the domain ‘to exceed’. What remains is the radial feature ‘moving from a place to another’. It is the entity ‘place’ that becomes more abstract in the grammaticalization process. Because kwe⁴² ‘to cross’ modifies the adjective kwäy²⁴ ‘tall’, it is analyzed rather as an adverb denoting degree ‘of exceeding’ and thus achieving the meaning of ‘over’ in example (58). From the examples presented above, I maintain my analysis that the phrase kwäy²⁴ kwe⁴² is an adjectival phrase rather than a serial verb construction.

There is another method to describe differential comparison without degree of difference while retaining the adjective as the main predicate. Consider Figure 10 illustrated as follows:

\[
N_1 \quad pi^{24} \quad N_2 \quad k^h a^{33} \quad ADJ
\]

**Figure 10. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions without Degree of Difference with Adjective Functioning as Main Predicate B**

In Figure 10, the subject (N₁) is being predicated by the construction pi²⁴ N₂ kʰa³³ ADJ which is a coverb pi⁴² ‘compare’ followed by a noun phrase and an adjectival phrase respectively. The noun phrase that follows the coverb is the entity used as the standard of comparison (N₂). The compared entity is in turn followed by an adjectival phrase which is comprised of the degree expression kʰa³³ and the adjective respectively. An example sentence is given as follows:

---

3 Both pi²⁴ and pi⁴² refer to the coverb of comparison ‘compare’. Their tones vary due to tone sandhi whereas their meaning do not vary.
In (59), the first entity li⁴² ‘you’ is being perceived as kʰa³³ puy²⁴ ‘more fat’ than the second gwa⁴² ‘I’. It is noteworthy here that the degree expression kʰa³³ is obligatory and therefore cannot be elided from the construction. In practice, sentences constituted according to (58) and (59) are considered identical. In English, both constructions yield the same transliteration: ‘N₁ is more ADJ than N₂.’

When the adjective functions as the modifier of the verb object, the differential comparison construction without degree of difference is illustrated as follows:

\[
N₁ \ V \ pi⁴² \ N₂ \ kʰa³³ \ ADJ \ (ʔe²¹) \ N_{OBJ}
\]

**Figure 11. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions without Degree of Difference with Adjective Functioning as Verb Object Modifier**

In Figure 11, there is a main verb in the construction. Comparison is indicated by the coverb pi⁴² and the degree of difference is demonstrated by the degree expression kʰa³³. The adjectival phrase modifies the main verb by functioning as an object. Consider the following example:

(60)  
\[
gwa⁴² \ kʰi⁴² \ pi⁴² \ li⁴² \ kʰa³³ \ tswey²¹ \ (ʔe²¹) \ tsʰu²¹
\]

\[
I \ rise \ compare \ you \ more \ many \ of \ house
\]

\[
1P \ V \ CoV \ 2P \ ADV \ ADJ \ NOM \ N
\]

‘I built more houses than you did’

In (60), the comparison is about the act of ‘building houses’ kʰi⁴² tsʰu²¹. The first noun phrase gwa⁴² ‘I’ is the subject of the predication of building houses. The verb kʰi⁴² ‘to build’ follows the noun phrase and functions as the main predicate of the sentence. The coverb pi⁴² ‘compare’ denotes comparison and precedes the second noun phrase li⁴² ‘you’ which is the standard of comparison.
The degree expression kʰa³³ ‘more’ depicts the difference of comparison and the adjective tswey²¹ ‘many’ modifies the following object noun phrase tsʰu²¹ ‘house’. The object noun phrase tsʰu²¹ can optionally take on the nominalizer ʔe²¹. Other than the nominalizer ʔe²¹, a classifier can also precede the noun in this type of construction. Consider the following construction:

\[(61)\quad gwa⁴² \quad kʰi⁴² \quad pi⁴² \quad li⁴² \quad kʰa³³ \quad tswey²¹ \quad (keŋ³³) \quad tsʰu²¹\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1P</th>
<th></th>
<th>2P</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>rise</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'I built more houses than you did'

In (61), the free translation ‘I built more houses than you did’ can be expressed in 3 ways: without any word between the adjective and noun object, with a nominalizer between the adjective and the noun object, and with a classifier between the adjective and the noun object. All of the above methods do not yield difference in meaning. Rather, they are merely varieties of expressing difference in comparison.

When the adjective functions as the modifier of the main verb, the differential comparison construction without degree of difference is illustrated as follows:

\[N_1 \quad pi⁴² \quad N_2 \quad kʰa³³ \quad ADJ \quad V\]

**Figure 12. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions without Degree of Difference with Adjective Functioning as Main Verb Modifier**

The constructions as of Figure 12 and Figure 11 are similar in that they both contain a main verb. However, the adjective in Figure 11 does not function like the one in Figure 12. The former functions as a modifier of the verb object whereas the latter functions as a modifier of the main verb. Consider the example sentence as follows:
In (62), the adjective tsə⁴² ‘early’ modifies the verb lay²⁴ ‘to come’. The differential comparison is demonstrated by the occurrence of the coverb pi²⁴ ‘compare’ and the degree difference adverb kʰa³³ ‘more’.

When the adjective functions as a verb complement, the differential comparison construction without degree of difference is illustrated as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{lllllll}
N_1 & V & pi^{42} & N_2 & kʰa^{33} & ADJ
\end{array}
\]

Figure 13. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions without Degree of Difference with Adjective Functioning as Verb Complement A

There are two ways to construct a sentence indicating differential comparison without a degree of difference with the adjective functioning as a verb complement. The difference between the two varieties of constructions lies in the occurrence of the verb. In Figure 13, the verb follows the entity that is used to compare (N₁).

Consider the following example sentence:

\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
(59) & ti^{33} & tsya^{21} & pi^{24} & li^{42} & kʰa^{33} & tsyo^{21}
\end{array}
\]

he (she) eat compare you more less

‘He (she) eats less than you do’

In (59), the adjective tsya^{21} ‘less’ is the complement of the main verb tsya^{21} ‘to eat’. The differential comparison between N₁ ti^{33} and N₂ li^{42} is indicated by the comparison

---

4 I have classified tsə⁴² ‘early’ as an adjective which may appear unorthodox as in the example sentence the word ‘early’ is actually a modifier of the verb lay³³ ‘come’. Modifiers of verbs are normally classified as adverbs. However, in Singaporean Hokkien adjectives can modify nouns as well as verbs.
coverb $pi^{24}$ and the differential adverb $kʰa^{33}$. An alternative method to bring about this type of differential comparison is shown in the following figure:

$$N_1 \quad pi^{42} \quad N_2 \quad V \quad kʰa^{33} \quad ADJ$$

**Figure 14. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions without Degree of Difference with Adjective Functioning as Verb Complement B**

The verb can also be preceded by the standard entity of comparison ($N_2$) as shown in Figure 14. As a result, a sentence constituted according to this construction yields the same outcome.

(64) $z^{33} \quad pi^{24} \quad li^{42} \quad tsya^{21} \quad kʰa^{33} \quad tsyo^{21}$

he (she) compare you eat more less

3P CoV 2P V ADV ADJ

‘He (she) eats less than you do’

As shown in (64), the free translation’s meaning is not different to that of (59) at all. The only difference is the occurrence of the verb that either follows the comparing entity or follows the entity of standard comparison. However, the focus is on the adjective that functions as a complement to the verb and therefore the position of the verb does not affect the meaning of the constructions.

### 3.4.3.2 Differential Comparison with Degree of Difference

In Section 3.4.3.1, differential comparison without degree of difference was demonstrated. In this section, differential comparison with degree of difference is discussed. Degree of difference between the compared entities can be indicated by a quantative expression or an adjectival phrase denoting quantity. Quantitative expressions are expressions that exhibit quantity. The construction of a quantitative expression is as follows:

NUMERAL $N_{\text{MEASURE}}$

As the construction suggests, quantitative expressions are demonstrated by noun phrases denoting measure. I support this claim by stating the fact that noun-like constructions can take on numerals (Givón, 1984:60).
Apart from quantitative expressions, adjectival phrases can denote measure as well. Adjectival phrases that indicate measures are of those which describe number such as ‘many’ or ‘little’. There are a variety of constructions that exhibit differential comparison with degree of difference. Consider Figure 15 as follows:

\[ N_1 \; pi^{24} \; N_2 \; ADJ \; ke^{33} \; QNT \]

**Figure 15. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions with Degree of Difference A**

The compared entity \((N_1)\) is the subject of the construction. The optional coverb \(pi^{24}\) demonstrates comparison. \(N_2\) is the standard entity of comparison. The adjective indicates the characteristic of comparison being used. Following the adjective is the coverb denoting difference of degree \(ke^{33}\) which literally means ‘to add’. The coverb \(ke^{33}\) is in turn followed by a quantitative expression (QNT) which is explicit reference to the degree of the difference between the compared entities \(N_1\) and \(N_2\). Consider the example sentence given below:

\[
(65) \; zi^{33} \; pi^{24} \; lî^{42} \; taŋ^{21} \; ke^{33} \; gɔ^{21} \; pɔŋ^{21}
\]

he (she) compare you heavy add five pound

3P CoV 2P ADJ CoV NUM N_MEASURE

‘He (She) is five pounds heavier than you are’

In (65), the degree of comparison in discussion is the weight domain. Weight can be measured and thus is expressed as an adjective \(taŋ^{21}\). Explicit reference to the comparison of weight is exhibited as a numeral-measure noun construction \(gɔ^{21} \; pɔŋ^{21}\) ‘five pounds’.

The difference of degree is demonstrated in the form of the serial verb construction \(pi^{24} \; N_2 \; ADJ \; ke^{33}\) ‘compared to \(N_2\) (\(N_1\)) is more ADJ than’. Both \(pi^{24}\) and \(ke^{33}\) are coverbs which can also function as main verbs meaning ‘to compare’ and ‘to add’ respectively. For the latter coverb \(ke^{33}\), a more appropriate transliteration should be ‘to exceed’. Therefore, the free translation should be rendered either as ‘He (She) exceeds you by five pounds in terms of weight’ or ‘He (She) is heavier then you by five pounds’ for a more logical understanding.
Apart from the construction exhibited in Figure 15, differential comparison with
degree of difference can be done with an alternative method as well. Consider
Figure 16 as follows:

\[ N_1 \text{ ADJ } ke^{33} \quad N_2 \text{ QNT} \]

**Figure 16. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions with
Degree of Difference B**

The variety of differential comparison with degree of difference exhibited in Figure
16 is slightly different from Figure 15. The coverb \( pi^{34} \) is omitted and the adjective is
predicated instead. The result is a different construction but still yielding the same
purpose. Consider the following example:

\[ \text{ʔah}^{33} \; ts\text{wan}^{44} \; kw\text{y}^{24} \; ke^{33} \; gwa^{42} \; tam^{21} \; po^{42} \]

\[ \text{dim} \quad N_{\text{PROP}} \quad \text{ADJ} \quad \text{CoV} \quad 1P \quad N_{\text{QNT}} \]

‘Ah Chuan is a bit taller than I am.’

As demonstrated in (66), differential comparison with degree of difference explicitly
expressed can be done without the use of a coverb. The meaning of the sentence
does not get altered with or without the coverb. In the abovementioned token, the
quantitative expression that occurs is not a numeral-measure noun but an adverb.
However, as it occurs in the QNT slot of the construction the adverb is analyzed as a
quantitative noun instead.

Apart from the two methods of demonstrating differential comparison with degree of
difference mentioned above, there is another alternative. Consider Figure 17
illustrated below:

\[ N_1 \text{ ADJ } kwe^{42} \quad N_2 \text{ QNT} \]

**Figure 17. Grammatical Structure of Differential Comparison Constructions with
Degree of Difference C**

Compared to Figure 16, Figure 17 differs only in the coverb \( kwe^{42} \) ‘to cross (a limit)’.
This coverb is similar to \( ke^{33} \) ‘to add’ in that both of them exhibit characteristics of
exceeding limits of an adjective used in comparison. Example (67) is given below in elaboration:

\[(67) \quad \text{ʔa}^{33} \text{ gek}^{44} \text{ kway}^{24} \text{ kwe}^{42} \quad \text{ʔa}^{33} \text{ heŋ}^{44} \quad \text{sd}^{33} \quad \text{ts}^{21}\text{un}\]

ah Gek tall over ah Heng three inch

‘Ah Gek exceeds Ah Heng three inches in terms of height’

The free translation in (67) may seem odd. A more idiomatic translation of this sentence should be ‘Ah Gek is three inches taller than Ah Heng’. In examples (65), (66) and (67), the degree of difference is explicitly demonstrated in the form of noun-like constructions. Constructions of this sort limit the occurrence of adjectives that can be used. They need to be those that can be measured. Thus, this observation leads to the assumption that quantitative expressions are utilized for the measurement of characteristics that are more specific in nature.

### 3.4.4 Comparative Comparison Constructions

Differential comparative constructions as discussed in Section 3.4.3 are used to express differences between two entities with or without explicit reference to the degree of differences. This section is about comparative comparison constructions.

There is a word used as a comparative degree expression which is the word ko^{42}. This degree expression functions similarly to an intensifier in that it takes the degree of difference to another level of difference. In other words, it resembles the comparative form in English according to the following example:

\[(E-01) \quad \text{he} \quad \text{is} \quad \underline{\text{even}} \quad \text{taller} \quad \text{than} \quad \text{you} \quad \text{are}\]

3P-masc-SG COP ADV_COMP ADJ PRT_COMP 2P COP

‘He is even taller than you are’

Notice the underlined comparative adverb ‘even’ in (E-01). The word ko^{42} functions most closely to it to formulate a comparative comparison construction in Singaporean Hokkien.
There are several methods of constituting a comparative comparison construction depending on how the adjective functions grammatically: 1) as the main predicate, 2) as a modifier of the object of the verb, 3) as a modifier of the main verb, or 4) as a verb complement. Consider Figure 18 as follows:

\[ N_1 \quad ko^{42} \quad k^{\alpha33} \quad ADJ \quad kwe^{42} \quad N_2 \]

**Figure 18. Grammatical Structure of Comparative Comparison Constructions with the Adjective Functioning as the Main Predicate**

As shown in Figure 18, a comparative comparison construction with the adjective functioning as the main predicate can be formulated by inserting \( ko^{42} \) after the comparing entity (\( N_1 \)) in a differential comparison construction. For the sake of clarification, consider (69) as given below:

\[
(69) \quad gwa^{42} \quad ko^{42} \quad k^{\alpha33} \quad puy^{24} \quad kwe^{42} \quad li^{42}
\]

1P even compare fat over you

1P ADV comp ADV ADJ CoV 2P

‘I am even fatter than you are’

As demonstrated in (69), the adjective \( puy^{24} \) is the main predicate of the sentence. In fact, this sentence resembles the differential comparison construction one presented in (58). The only difference is that (69) has incorporated the comparative adverb \( ko^{42} \) ‘even’. Thus the differential comparison is altered to a comparative comparison sentence.

A differential comparison construction with the adjective functioning as the modifier of the object of the verb can also be transformed into a comparative comparison construction. Consider the following figure:

\[ N_1 \quad pi^{24} \quad N_2 \quad V \quad ko^{42} \quad k^{\alpha33} \quad ADJ \quad (\text{"e"}^{2}) \quad N_{OBJ} \]

**Figure 19. Grammatical Structure of Comparative Comparison Constructions with the Adjective Functioning as Verb Object Modifier**

The construction in Figure 19 is slightly varied from the one in Figure 11. The difference is the insertion of the comparative adverb \( ko^{42} \) ‘even’ before the adjective
which functions as a modifier of the noun which in turn functions as the object of the verb.

Example (70) is actually a differential comparison construction that has incorporated the comparative adverb ko⁴² ‘even’ to formulate a comparative comparison construction. In other words, this example carries the differential comparative to another level of difference which is intensified.

A differential comparison construction with the adjective functioning as the modifier of the main verb can be transformed into a comparative comparison construction as well. Consider the following figure:

Figure 20. Grammatical Structure of Comparative Comparison Constructions with the Adjective Functioning as Main Verb Modifier A

As suggested in Figure 20, this construction is actually a differential comparison sentence that has inserted the comparative adverb ko⁴² ‘even’ after the standard entity of comparison (N₂) to indicate an intensified level of differential comparison.

Apart from the construction displayed in Figure 20, there is another alternative for formulating a comparative comparison construction with the adjective modifying the main verb. This is accomplished by inserting the comparative adverb ko⁴² ‘even’ after the comparing entity (N₁). Consider Figure 21 as follows:

Figure 21. Grammatical Structure of Comparative Comparison Constructions with the Adjective Functioning as Main Verb Modifier B

Figure 21 differs from Figure 20 in the position of the comparative adverb ko⁴² ‘even’ and the obligation of the intensifying adverb kʰa³³ ‘more’. The two constructions are
more or less identical to each other in terms of meaning regardless of their slightly different grammatical structure. For the sake of clarity, examples (71) and (72) are given as follows:

(71) $\tilde{n}^{33} \quad p^{24} \quad l^{42} \quad k^{o^{42}} \quad k^{a^{33}} \quad b^{a^{21}} \quad k^{y^{24}}$

he (she) compare you even more slow walk

3P CoV 2P ADV comp ADV ADJ V

‘He (She) walks even slower than you do’

(72) $\tilde{n}^{33} \quad k^{o^{42}} \quad p^{24} \quad l^{42} \quad (k^{a^{33}}) \quad b^{a^{21}} \quad k^{y^{24}}$

he (she) even compare you more slow walk

3P ADV comp CoV 2P ADV ADJ V

‘He (She) walks even slower than you do’

Upon observing the examples (71) and (72), it is found that the occurrence of the comparative adverb $k^{o^{42}}$ ‘even’ after the comparing entity (N$_1$) or after the standard entity of comparison (N$_2$) results in an identical free translation. The two sentences are merely variants of a comparative comparison construction.

A differential comparison construction with the adjective functioning as the complement of the verb can be transformed into a comparative comparison construction. Consider Figure 22 given below:

\[
N_1 \quad V \quad p^{24} \quad N_2 \quad k^{a^{33}} \quad k^{o^{42}} \quad ADJ
\]

**Figure 22. Grammatical Structure of Comparative Comparison Constructions with the Adjective Functioning as Verb Complement A**

As suggested in Figure 22, this construction is a variant of comparative comparison with the adjective functioning as a complement of the verb. The position of the verb is central to the analysis of this type of comparative comparison. Illustrated below is the construction which is given in comparison to the construction given in Figure 22:
Figure 23. Grammatical Structure of Comparative Comparison Constructions with the Adjective Functioning as Verb Complement B

The comparative adverb ko⁴² ‘even’ is inserted before the adjective phrase in both varieties. The only difference in the constructions in Figure 22 and Figure 23 is the occurrence of the coverb pi²⁴ ‘to compare’, which either gets inserted after the comparing entity (N₁) or after the standard entity of comparison (N₂) respectively. Examples (73) and (74) are given in elaboration of the abovementioned constructions:

(73)  gwa⁴² tyaw²¹ pi²⁴ li⁴² ko⁴² kʰa⁳³ hiŋ²¹
      I    jump    compare   you   even    more    far

       1P   V    CoV   2P   ADV_COMP   ADV   ADJ

‘I jump even farther than you do’

(74)  gwa⁴² pi²⁴ li⁴² tyaw²¹ ko⁴² kʰa⁳³ hiŋ²¹
      I    compare  you    jump   even    more    far

       1P   CoV   2P   V    ADV_COMP   ADV   ADJ

‘I jump even farther than you do’

As examples (73) and (74) suggest, the comparative adverb ko⁴² ‘even’ gets inserted before the adjectival phrase to transform a differential comparison sentence into a comparative comparison sentence. Regardless of the position of the coverb pi²⁴ ‘to compare’, the meaning of each sentence is identical. Moreover, it is observed that the coverb of comparison pi²⁴ always co-occurs with the second person pronoun li⁴². The difference in the occurrence results in a slightly varied structure of comparative comparison construction.

Apart from the different levels of comparison discussed: equative comparison, figurative comparison, differential comparison and comparative comparison constructions, there is a superlative comparison construction. This last type of comparison shall be discussed in Section 3.4.5.
3.4.5 Superlative Comparison Constructions

Sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 discussed comparison constructions of the equative, figurative, differential and comparative sort. There is another sort of comparative construction worthy of discussion; the superlative comparative construction.

In Singaporean Hokkien, superlative comparative constructions are utilized for expressing qualities that are considered on top of the differential comparison continuum. In other words, entities that are considered ‘the most’ in terms of a characteristic are described by using the following superlative comparative construction:

```
ADV CL   | SUPERLATIVE COMPARISON
(NP pi²⁴ kʰi⁴² lay²¹) | N₁ (si²¹) syaŋ²¹ (te²¹ ʔit⁴²) ADJ
```

**Figure 24. Grammatical Structure of Superlative Comparison Constructions**

To formulate a superlative comparison sentence, the construction illustrated in Figure 24 is utilized. NP stands for a noun phrase, which usually refers to at least two entities in comparison. The noun phrase can either be a numeral-classifier-noun construction, for instance, `nin²¹ te²¹ laŋ²⁴ ‘two persons’`, a collective noun `loŋ²⁴ tsong⁴² ‘all’`, or a compound noun construction consisting of two entities with a coverb occurring in between `N₁ ka²¹ N₂ ‘N₁ and N₂’`. Following the noun phrase is the verb phrase comprised of the coverbs `pi²⁴ ‘to compare’ kʰi⁴² ‘to rise’ and lay²⁴ ‘to come’`. The head of the verb phrase is the coverb `pi²⁴ ‘to compare’` as the semantic content of the coverb is retained whereas the coverbs `kʰi⁴² ‘to rise’` and `lay²⁴ ‘to come’` have undergone grammaticalization and thus have lost their lexical meanings to become part of the verb phrase `pi²⁴ kʰi⁴² lay²¹ ‘compared together’`.

The noun phrase and serial verb construction function as a unit to form an adverbial clause of comparison. `N₁` is the entity that functions as the subject of the main clause which describes the superlative characteristic. The copula `si²¹ ‘is’` functions as a main verb which requires an adjective that functions as an object complement. The adverbial phrase `syaŋ²¹ te²¹ ʔit⁴²`, transliterated as ‘(being the) same as the most first’, functions as the superlative comparison degree expression of the adjective. The adverb `syaŋ²¹`, transliterated as ‘same’, is actually a derivation of the equative comparison adverb `syo²¹ syaŋ³⁴` which is transliterated as ‘same’ as well. In the
context of superlative comparison, this adverb is utilized figuratively to reflect equality of an entity to having an extreme characteristic.

The adverbial clause of comparison NP $pi^{24} kʰi^{42} lay^{21}$, the copula $si^{21}$ and the last two words $te^{21}$ $ʔit^{42}$ can be omitted due to discourse context background information. The adverbial clause of comparison can be omitted from the utterance due to the fact that the context is usually apparent when the superlative comparison is being uttered. The omission of the copula is also not uncommon as verbs and adjective structures can occur following the noun phrase without it in Singaporean Hokkien.

It is optional to include $te^{21}$ $ʔit^{42}$ ‘the first’, which is an ordinal-numeral construction, in the sentence as the superlative comparative construction implies that the subject of the sentence ($N_1$) inevitably is the entity that is described as bearing the superlative characteristic in comparison. Therefore, the ordinal-numeral construction can be elided without loss of information during utterence of the sentence.

Example (75) is an instance of a superlative comparison construction of which the noun phrase of the adverbial clause of comparison is a numeral-classifier-noun construction $sə^{33}$ $ʔe^{21}$ $lan^{21}$ $pi^{24}$ $kʰi^{42}$ $lay^{21}$ $ʔi^{33}$ $syəŋ^{21}$ $te^{21}$ $ʔit^{42}$ $swi^{42}$ ‘Of the three people compared together, she is the most good looking’

The free translation reflects the source language. A more idiomatic translation may be ‘She is the most good looking among the three’ for the sake of naturalness. Consider example (76) below for a slightly varied superlative comparison construction:
As depicted in (76), the NP of the adverbial clause of comparison is a collective noun *loŋ⁴² tsong⁴²* ‘all’. The ordinal-numeral construction *te²¹ ?it⁴²* ‘number one’ following the superlative comparison adverb *syang⁴²* ‘same’ is left out of the main clause as background information which can be retained by contextual clues. The proper noun ‘Ah Meng’ is the subject of the construction and therefore hints that the collective noun refers to people. The last example of superlative comparison construction is given as follows:

(77)  
*ʔa³³ syu⁴² ka²¹ li⁴² pi²⁴ kʰit⁴² lay²¹ ʔi²¹ syaŋ²¹ te²⁴ kʰyaŋ²¹*  
Ah Siu and you compare rise come she same capable  
DIM NPROP CoV 2P CoV CoV 3P ADV ADV ADJ  
‘Comparing Ah Siu and you, she is the most capable’

Example (77) is another variation of making a superlative comparison sentence. The compound noun phrase of the adverbial clause of comparison is made up of a proper noun ‘Ah Siu’ and the second person pronoun *li⁴²* ‘you’ joined by a coverb *ka²¹* ‘and’. In the main clause, the third person pronoun is synonymous to the proper noun ‘Ah Siu’.

In practice, the subject of the main clause can be co-referential to either the preceding or following entity in the noun phrase of the adverbial clause of comparison. Commonly, the context will determine the subject of superlative comparison accurately.

### 3.5 Reduplication of Singaporean Hokkien Adjectives

Reduplication is very commonplace in East and Southeast Asian languages, especially of those that exhibit tones (Goddard, 2005:68). Singaporean Hokkien is
not an exception to this claim. Robert Cheng (in Cheng 1979:53) remarks that reduplication is utilized to express degree of adjectives by answering the question, ‘to what extent?’. Furthermore, he states that the reduplication of adjectives is in complementary distribution with other types of degree expressions.

Reduplication is related to phonology, which is not the primary focus of this thesis. However, I still acknowledge the fact that the phonological structure of reduplication plays a significant role in determining the semantic structure of adjectives. As a matter of fact, I shall describe the grammatical make up of reduplicated adjectives and attempt to provide sufficient phonological and semantic background information as required.

3.5.1 Reduplicated Expressives

In section 2.3, a type of reduplication was discussed. A monosyllabic adjective can be reduplicated into an XX form to result in either an intensified or mitigated meaning depending on the context of the utterance. This section focuses on another type of reduplication in which the pattern of the reduplication is not XX. The syllabic structure of this type of reduplication is composed of the adjective which functions as the base of the structure. Following the adjectival base is the reduplicated portion of the structure, which may be of the same word forming an ADJ-AA structure or may be of different words thus forming an ADJ-AB structure. Both structures are elaborated further in sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3.

3.5.2 ADJ-AA Reduplicated Expressives

This type of reduplicated expressives is formed by the emergence of a base adjective followed by two identical morphemes. Tone sandhi affects the way the construction is articulated. Illustrated below is a figure of ADJ-AA reduplicated expressives:

\[
\text{BASE ADJ} \quad A^{\text{TONE-X}} \quad A^{\text{TONE-Y}}
\]

**Figure 25. Construction of ADJ-AA Reduplicated Expressives**

As demonstrated in Figure 25, the base adjective is followed by two identical morphemes. The first morpheme following the base adjective is reduplicated, yielding the outcome of having two morphemes that resemble each other in terms of syllabic structure.
The tones of each of the morphemes following the base adjective are exhibited as X and Y to accentuate their differences. Consider the example given as follows:

a) ʔɔ³³ so²¹ so²⁴
   black
   ADJ    RDP    RDP
   ‘black’

In a), the adjective ʔɔ³³ ‘black’ functions as the base adjective of the reduplicated expressive construction. Following it is the morpheme so²¹, which has particularly no apparent meaning whether occurring on its own or being reduplicated. However, this reduplicated morpheme construction so²¹ so²⁴ upon modifying the base adjective adjective ʔɔ³³ ‘black’ does result in creating an extension of the semantic content of the base adjective. The semantic extension is of an idiomatic one which intensifies the meaning of ʔɔ³³ ‘black’ in a specific way, thus the free translation of ‘black’ in a) can be possibly suggested as ‘black (in a particular way)’. This category of reduplicated expressives exhibits reduplication of a morpheme and utilizes tone sandhi to differentiate between the base morpheme and the reduplicated counterpart. The result is an idiomatic expression that is arbitrary. One has to simply memorize these expressions and retrieve them for usage according to contextual circumstances.

3.5.3 ADJ-AB Reduplicated Expressives

This type of reduplicated expressives is made up of a base adjective followed by two unidentical morphemes. Consonance and alliteration are the phonological devices that influence the way the construction is uttered. Consonance reduplicates the same consonant or the set of consonants in the syllable excluding the vowel in the reduplicated construction and alliteration accounts for the reduplication of an initial consonant of the words in the reduplicated construction.

3.5.3.1 The Dilemma of Consonance and Alliteration

The reiteration of the consonant or the entire segment with the exception of the tone of the preceding syllable in the following reduplicated syllable is called consonance. Singaporean Hokkien utilizes this phonological device to formulate idiomatic
expressions regarding an adjective. Figure 26 illustrated below describes the constitution of ADJ-AB reduplicated expressives produced by consonance:

\[
\text{BASE ADJ C}_A VC_B C_A VC_B
\]

**Figure 26. Construction of ADJ-AB Reduplicated Expressives by Consonance**

As displayed in Figure 26, the base adjective is followed by a morpheme which may or may not have any semantic content. The tone of the morpheme is not reduplicated. Instead, the vowel of the syllable of the morpheme gets reduplicated and transferred to the second morpheme. Consider the following example given:

b) \( san^{24} \quad pi^{33} \quad pa^{44} \)

skinny

ADJ RDP RDP

‘skinny’

As shown in example b), \( san^{24} \) ‘skinny’ functions as the base adjective of the reduplicated expressive. Following it is the morpheme \( pi^{33} \) which carries no semantic content whether occurring in isolation or in a combination of morphemes. The initial consonant of the morpheme is reduplicated and transferred to the next morpheme. The reduplicated resultant is \( pi^{33} pa^{44} \), which is an idiomatic expression of the base adjective. The expression is a collocation that describes the adjective ‘skinny’ in a specific way. Therefore, the free translation of example b) can be suggested as ‘skinny (in a specific way)’. One can look at this phonological rendering of reduplication as alliteration as well. This is due to the fact that alliteration, in which the reduplication of the initial consonant of the preceding syllable gets duplicated and transferred to the initial consonant of the following syllable(s), can be considered as a subcategory of consonance. Of the data collected from language resources persons, there is only one example given in b) that exhibits consonance. Upon further collection of data, more light is expected to be shed on this phonological phenomenon.

Reduplicated expressives, whether it is of the ADJ-AA or ADJ-AB type, produces a massive compilation of idiomatic expressions that accompany an adjective. The meaning of the reduplicated adjectival expression still shares radial features of the
base adjective. However, an arbitrary and unique connotation gets entailed on that particularly reduplicated adjectival construction. In other words, reduplicated expressions are a special kind of adjectives in which random words which may or may not have meaning get attached to the base adjective. The result of the union is a type of degree extent of the adjectival phrase of which the semantic content shifts from the original meaning of the base adjectival to a certain extent while still retaining part of the base meaning determined by the base adjective.

3.5.3.2 Reduplicated Expressive Alternative Classification

In earlier sections (3.5.2 to 3.5.3.2), reduplicated expressives have been classified according to their phonological compositions. This section attempts to classify reduplicated expressions via methodology of semantic criteria.

Reduplicated expressives can be organized according to their semantic categories. As they are idiomatic extensions of adjectives, it is most appropriate to arrange them by taking into consideration the semantic properties of the base adjectives in the reduplicated expressives. Given below are several instances of classifying reduplicated expressives according to semantic categories:

a) Reduplicated Expressives Pertaining to Shape and Size

Expression | Meaning
--- | ---
$san^{24}$ $pi^{33}$ $pa^{44}$ | skinny (idiomatic connotation)
$kʰwa^{42}$ $λŋ^{42}$ $sŋ^{21}$ | baggy (as of trousers)
ʔ$we^{24}$ $tsʰak^{21}$ $tsʰak^{44}$ | short (as of stature)

b) Reduplicated Expressives Pertaining to Taste

Expression | Meaning
--- | ---
$kyam^{21}$ $lyu^{33}$ $lyu^{44}$ | salty
$kyam^{21}$ $tɔk^{35}$ $tɔk^{21}$ | salty (a stingy person)
$tsyä^{24}$ $pʰu^{21}$ $pʰu^{42}$ | very bland, tasteless
c) Reduplicated Expressives Pertaining to Color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʔaŋ²¹ ki³³ ki⁴⁴</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔaŋ²¹ koŋ⁴² koŋ²¹</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsʰe³³ sut³³ sut²¹</td>
<td>green (as of pale face)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʔaŋ²¹ koŋ⁴² koŋ²¹</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tʃʰaŋ³³ tsʰaŋ⁴⁴</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰam²¹ kʰam²⁴</td>
<td>black (as of sky when it is going to rain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰyat³³ kʰyat²¹</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lu³³ lu⁴⁴</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lu³³ lu⁴⁴</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰam²¹ kʰam²⁴</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰyat³³ kʰyat²¹</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰam²¹ kʰam²⁴</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰyat³³ kʰyat²¹</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰam²¹ kʰam²⁴</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʰyat³³ kʰyat²¹</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As given in examples a) to d), all of the reduplicated expressives are idiomatic extensions of single adjectives. When the base adjective is analyzed in isolation, the semantic property is basic in meaning. When the base adjective is followed by a reduplicated morpheme construction, the semantic property still retains its basic meaning. However, the connotation of the semantic property gets altered to apply to other domains. The radial structure of the basic meaning extends from its normal domain according to its collocation to other domains for which there are no rules to
govern the tendency of extension. Therefore, reduplicated expressives need to be learned individually according to their occurrences and domain applications.

Apart from phonological criteria, semantic properties can also be utilized to categorize reduplicated expressions. The phonological phenomena is associated with the production of the reduplication. Reduplication of the tones, consonance and alliteration determine whether the morpheme is entirely or partially reduplicated.

The semantic properties of the reduplicated expressions contribute to helping speakers or learners of Singaporean Hokkien comprehend them in order to learn how to apply them appropriately context-wise. As the constitution of these expressions are arbitrary, coupling their phonological constructions together with their semantic associations will benefit language learners greatly.

This chapter has analyzed how an adjectival construction can be modified. This modification is demonstrated by the use of degree expressions. Degree expressions are adverbs that modify the adjectival phrase by answering the questions “how much” and “to what extent”. Degree expressions have three functions: 1) to show intensification, 2) to show comparison and 3) to show unique language features via the usage of reduplication. In general, degree expressions occur in complementary distribution; it is not possible to demonstrate intensification and comparison at the same time. On the other hand, certain degree expressions can be reduplicated to achieve an intensifying effect. The degree expression can only modify the adjective and not the verb. This feature of degree expression acts as a useful instrument in making a boundary between the adjective and verb in Singaporean Hokkien.
Chapter 4
Negation of the Adjective in Various Contexts

This chapter is concerned with the negation of the Singaporean Hokkien adjective in contextual environments. Negation is discussed in detail in terms of categories and their usages in various contexts. The purpose of discussing negation is to confirm the similarities of the adjective and verb in Singaporean Hokkien.

4.1 Comparison of Negation across Mandarin and Singaporean Hokkien

In Mandarin, negativity can be expressed in two possible ways depending on the verb that occurs in the sentence. The first way is to insert the negative word pu⁴² ‘not’ in front of the verb shi⁴² ‘be’. The second way is to insert the negative word mei²⁴ ‘not’ in front of the verb you²¹ ‘have’. Singaporean Hokkien differs from Mandarin in that it renders negation in three different ways. As an introduction, I shall describe the different types of negation by establishing three modal auxiliary verbs that evoke three different types of negation.

4.1.1 The Modal Auxiliary Verb ʔe⁲¹ ‘can’ and Its Negative Counterpart bwe²¹ ‘can not’

In Singaporean Hokkien, there is a modal auxiliary verb that expresses ability called ʔe²¹ ‘can’. It precedes a verb in a question sentence in order to ask whether an action can be performed or not. Consider the token given as follows:

(78) tsit⁴⁴ teg⁴² tsʰya³³ ʔe²¹ tsaw⁴² bwe²¹
    this car can run not
    DEM  CLF N AUX V NEG

‘Can this car run or not?’
In (78), the auxiliary modal verb ʔe²¹ ‘can’ is accompanied by its negative counterpart bwe²¹ ‘cannot’ to form a question. The expected response is either the positive answer ʔe²¹ ‘can’ or bwe²¹ ‘cannot’. The auxiliary modal verb ʔe²¹ ‘can’ can also be followed by other words to form other variants of ability.

a) ʔe²¹ say⁴² bwe²¹ say⁴²

‘can’ ‘cannot’

b) ʔe²¹ hyaw⁴² bwe²¹ hyaw⁴²

‘know’ ‘not know’

As suggested in a) and b), the modal auxiliary verb ʔe²¹ ‘can’ along with its negative counterpart bwe²¹ ‘cannot’ can be followed by the words say⁴² and hyaw⁴² to form variants of abilities. Literally, ʔe²¹ say⁴² in a) should be translated as ‘able to do so’ as in permission and ʔe²¹ hyaw⁴² in b) should be rendered as ‘able to know’. Of all of the abovementioned modal auxiliaries, the latter couple are used exclusively for verbs whereas the former can be used for adjectives as well. Below is an example of the auxiliary modal verb ʔe²¹ ‘can’ preceding an adjective.

(79) tsuy⁴² ʔe²¹ syo³³ bwe²¹

water can hot not

N AUX ADJ NEG

‘Is the water hot (or not)?’ ANSWER: ʔe²¹ ‘yes’ or bwe²¹ ‘no’

In (79), the modal auxiliary verb ʔe²¹ ‘can’ is used in conjunction with its negative counterpart bwe²¹ to form a polar question. The negative bwe²¹ can be transliterated as ‘not’ or ‘no’ depending on the context in which it occurs.

4.1.2 The Modal Auxiliary Verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ and Its Negative Counterpart bo²⁴ ‘not have’

The second modal auxiliary verb which is being discussed in this section is ʔu²¹ ‘have’. It occurs before nouns, verbs and adjectives. The purpose of this modal auxiliary verb is to determine whether the noun, the verb or the adjective following it is
existent or not. The following examples (80), (83) and (84) are given to demonstrate the abovementioned environments in which the modal auxiliary verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ occurs:

\[(80) \quad lɨ⁴² \quad ʔu²¹ \quad luy³³ \quad bo²⁴\]

\begin{align*}
\text{you} & \quad \text{have} & \quad \text{money} & \quad \text{Not} \\
2P & & V & N & NEG \\
\end{align*}

‘Do you have money (or not)?’ 
ANSWER: ʔu²¹ ‘have’ or bo²⁴ ‘not have’

In (80), ʔu²¹ ‘have’ is analysed as a main verb instead of being a modal auxiliary verb. This example can be explained by referring to (37), which the verb phrase ʔu²¹ luy³³ ‘have money’ can be analysed as an adjectival construction due to the reason that the phrase can take on the intensifying degree expression tsin³³ tysa⁴² ‘very’. The inclusion of bo²⁴ ‘not’, the negative counterpart of the verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ results in a polar question which inquires about the existence of the verb phrase.

\[(81) \quad lɨ⁴² \quad ʔu²¹ \quad kʰwa⁴² \quad tyo²⁴ \quad ʔi³³ \quad bo²⁴\]

\begin{align*}
\text{you} & \quad \text{have} & \quad \text{see} & \quad \text{reach} & \quad \text{he (her)} & \quad \text{not} \\
2P & & AUX & V & LOC & 3P & NEG \\
\end{align*}

‘Did you see him (her) (or not)?’ 
ANSWER: ʔu²¹ ‘yes’ or bo²⁴ ‘no’

In (81), ʔu²¹ ‘have’ is analysed as a modal auxiliary verb. This modal auxiliary ʔu²¹ ‘have’ is different from the one explained in (80) because it precedes another verb kʰwa⁴² ‘see’, which is the main verb of the sentence. The verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ therefore undergoes semantic bleaching and gets demoted to a modal auxiliary verb demonstrating a grammatical function instead of a lexical one. The insertion of bo²⁴ ‘not’, the negative counterpart of the verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ leads to the product of a polar question which inquires about the existence of the verb.

It is particularly worthwhile to notice the response included for the two examples; in (80), the answer to the question sentence is glossed as ‘have’ or ‘not have’ whereas in (81) the answer is either ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Despite the fact that the anticipated response is identically ʔu²¹ or bo²⁴ in both examples, they are realized differently
because of the grammatical functions of the verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ in (80) and (81) do not match. The former is a main verb whereas the latter is a modal auxiliary verb.

\[(82) \ ʔa³³ \ hwa⁴⁴ \ ʔu²¹ \ swi⁴² \ bo²⁴ \]

ah Hua have good looking not
DIM NPROP AUX ADJ NEG

‘Is Ah Hua good looking (or not)?’

Answer: ʔu²¹ ‘yes’ or bo²⁴ ‘no’

In (82), the modal auxiliary verb ʔu²¹ ‘have’ precedes the adjective swi⁴² ‘good looking’ in order to confirm the existence of the descriptive quality of the subject of the sentence. The inclusion of the negative counterpart of the modal auxiliary at the terminal position of the sentence formulates a question inquiring the existence of the adjective. Identical to (81), the expected response to the abovementioned question is glossed either as ‘yes’ or ‘no’ due to the fact that the Singaporean Hokkien adjective resembles its verbal counterpart in terms of grammatical properties as described earlier in section 2.2.

4.1.3 The Modal Auxiliary Verb sì²¹ ‘be’ and Its Negative Counterpart ʔm²¹ sì²¹ ‘not be’

The third auxiliary verb that is worthy of discussion is sì²¹ ‘be’. It occurs before a noun or a nominalized adjective in order to confirm whether a state is valid or not. Consider the example given below:

\[(83) \ ʔi³³ \ sì¹¹ \ gwa⁴² \ ʔe²¹ \ pèn²¹ yu⁴² \]

he (she) be I of Friend
3P COP 1P GEN N

‘He (She) is my friend’

The modal auxiliary verb sì²¹ ‘be’ in (83) is grammatically glossed as a copula. The reason for this analysis is due to the similarities of the grammatical functions of Singaporean Hokkien sì²¹ ‘be’ and the English copula verb ‘be’. The Singaporean Hokkien modal auxiliary verb sì²¹ ‘be’ resembles the English copula ‘be’ in that they
both are utilized to describe noun-like words. Though the Singaporean Hokkien adjective functions similarly to a verb in that it does not need to have a copula to occur before it after it follows the subject, it can undergo nominalization by preceding a nominalizer ʔe²¹ ‘of’. The outcome is that the adjective becomes more noun-like and can take on the copula si²¹ ‘be’. Token (84) given below is an example that supports the abovementioned claim:

(84) hit⁴⁴ lyap²¹ tsim²⁴ taw²⁴ si²¹ ʔaŋ²⁴ (sek²¹) ʔe²⁴

that pillow head be red color of
DEM CLF N COP ADJ N NOM
‘that pillow is red (colored)’

The copula si²¹ ‘be’ in (84) precedes the adjective ʔaŋ²⁴ ‘red’ which in turn is followed by the nominalizer ʔe²¹ ‘of’. Whether the adjective ʔaŋ²⁴ ‘red’ is followed by the noun sek²¹ ‘color’ or not yields the same result; the nominalizer ʔe²¹ ‘of’ is still required to complete the sentence. In a polar question, the modal auxiliary si²¹ ‘be’ co-occurs with its negative counterpart ʔm²¹ si²¹ ‘not be’ as portrayed in example (85) below:

(85) tsit⁴⁴ tsya²¹ kāw²⁴ ti⁴² si²¹ ʔm²¹ si²¹ li⁴² ʔe²⁴

this chair be Not be you of
DEM CLF N COP NEG 2P GEN
‘Is this chair yours or not?’

As observed in (85), the position of occurrence of ʔm²¹ si²¹ ‘not be’ which is the negative counterpart of the modal auxiliary verb si²¹ ‘be’ immediately follows its positive counterpart in order to constitute a polar question.

4.2 Negation of the Adjectival Phrase

In Singaporean Hokkien, there are three possible methods to negate an adjectival phrase depending on the modal auxiliary verbs that precede the adjectival phrase.

a) If the modal auxiliary verb that occurs before the adjectival phrase is ʔe²¹ ‘can’, the negative equivalent bwe²¹ ‘can not’ is used to negate the adjectival phrase.
b) If the adjectival phrase follows the modal auxiliary verb \(?u^2!\) ‘have’, it is negated by \(bo^{24}\) ‘not have’.

c) When the modal auxiliary verb that precedes the adjectival phrase is \(si^2!\) ‘be’, the negative counterpart \(?m^2!\ si^2!\ ‘not be’ is employed to negate the adjectival phrase.

Examples (86), (87) and (88) are given below to demonstrate these three different types of negation:

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
(86) & tsit^{44} & k^h_9^{42} & hak^{21} \, seg^{44} & bwe^{21} & k^h_9^{yan^{21}} \\
 & this & student & not & clever \\
 & DEM & CLF & N & NEG & ADJ \\
\end{array}
\]

‘This student is not clever’

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
(87) & tsit^{44} & k^h_9^{42} & hak^{21} \, seg^{44} & bo^{21} & k^h_9^{yan^{21}} \\
 & this & student & not & clever \\
 & DEM & CLF & N & NEG & ADJ \\
\end{array}
\]

‘This student is not clever’

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
(88) & tsit^{44} & ki^{44} & pit^{21} & ?m^{2!} \, si^{21} & ho^{24} & ?e^{24} \\
 & this & pen & not & good & one \\
 & DEM & CLF & N & NEG & ADJ & NOM \\
\end{array}
\]

‘This pen is not a good one’

Consider tokens (86) and (87) which are negated using the different negatives \(bwe^{21!}\) ‘can not’ and \(bo^{24!}\ ‘not have’. They are perceived by native Singaporean Hokkien speakers to be the same as the translations of both tokens suggest. Cheng’s study of Taiwanese Adjectives (1979: 76-78) concludes that both kinds of negatives are different in the view that the former is correlated to pejorative qualities whereas the latter is associated with ameliorative or neutral qualities.
In Singaporean Hokkien, there seems to be no such judgmental analysis noticeable to the native speaker and thus both types of negatives are identical and equally effective in demonstrating the lack of a quality of a certain entity regardless of the quality being desirable or not. The sentence illustrated in example (88) differs from the two mentioned above in that the negative precedes a more noun-like construction. Even though the negative ʔm²¹ si²¹ ‘not be’ immediately precedes an adjective ho⁴² ‘good’, the adjective is merely a part of the noun phrase ho⁴² ʔe²⁴ ‘good one’ in which the adjective is being nominalized by ʔe²⁴ ‘of’. Nevertheless, this negative ʔm²¹ si²¹ ‘not be’ can occur before an adjectival construction as well.

Consider example (89) given below:

\[(89)\]  
\(\text{tsi}^{44} \text{ kʰɔ}^{42} \text{ hak}^{21} \text{ seŋ}^{44} \text{ ʔm}^{21} \text{ si}^{21} \text{ tsin}^{33} \text{ kʰyaŋ}^{21}\)

DEM CLF N NEG ADV ADJ

‘This student is not very clever’

As shown in (89), the negative ʔm²¹ si²¹ ‘not be’ is followed by an adjectival phrase tsin³³ kʰyaŋ²¹ ‘really clever’. The adjective kʰyaŋ²¹ ‘clever’ is modified by the intensifying adverb tsin³³ ‘real’ which accentuates the fact that the construction is of an adjectival one.

In this chapter, it has been shown that the adjective can be negated. The adjective can take on three kinds of negation depending on what type of modal auxiliary verb occurs in the sentence. The modal auxiliary verb denotes one of the following functions: 1) ability, 2) possession or 3) validity of a state. Although there are three types of negation to deal with, they all serve a single purpose; they negate the adjective. The fact that not only verbs but also adjectives can take on negation provides suggestive evidence that they may be of the same word class.
Chapter 5  
Summary of Findings and Conclusion

In this chapter, a summary of findings from the main body of the thesis, chapters 2 to 4, are presented. Highlights of interesting facts are discussed from each chapter. For complications, solutions are given as seen appropriate. If there is no answer to addressed problems, they will serve as implications for future studies.

Chapter 2 is a classification of types of adjectives in Singaporean Hokkien according to morphological, phonological and grammatical criteria followed with an alternate classification according to semantic criterion. By morphology and phonology, adjectives can be divided into monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic types.

The monosyllabic adjective is comprised of a single morpheme. It can undergo reduplication to become an XX construction of which the first and second syllables share a common morphological structure. Tone sandhi differentiates the first syllable of the first adjective from its reduplicated counterpart. Upon reduplication, the meaning of the monosyllabic adjective can either be magnified or mitigated depending on discourse context.

The disyllabic adjective is comprised of two syllables. It can be subdivided into simple, compounded and derived types according to their morphological formations. The simple disyllabic adjective is unique in that it can only be analyzed as a whole due to the fact that the two morphemes have no meaning when occurring in isolation. The compounded disyllabic adjective is comprised of two free morphemes and therefore each of them can be analyzed in isolation. The derived disyllabic adjective is comprised of a free morpheme and a bound morpheme of which both morphemes can occur in any position. The bound morpheme, though possessing a meaningful function of its own, requires attachment to its free counterpart to be analyzed appropriately. Each syllable has to be in exact order or the meaning of the derived adjective cannot be realized. The derived disyllabic adjective can be further divided into prefixed and suffixed ones. Attaching prefixes and suffixes causes the word class of a word to enter a derivation process in which the word changes from
either a noun or verb into an adjective depending on the type of prefixes and suffixes.

Other than analyzing disyllabic adjectives by giving importance to morphological criterion, another alternative of analyzing them is to adhere to semantic criterion. The alternate analysis concerns the radial structure which centers on a general concept of meaning which gets retained throughout the analysis.

The polysyllabic adjective is an adjective that contains more than two syllables. The process that brings about this outcome is reduplication. The reduplication process renders these type of adjectives unique in their formation, being a phonologically and a morphologically fused one. Their production is a semantic extension from their monosyllabic counterparts which was discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the grammatical constraints of the modification of the adjectival phrase. The adjective can be modified by an adverb which is a degree expression. The degree expression functions to modify adjectival phrases by stating the extent of the adjective. In other words, the degree expression modifies the adjective by answering the question of “how much” and “to what extent”.

Degree expressions are complementary in distribution, thus for two degree expressions to occur and modify the same adjectival phrase in the same environment is impossible. On the contrary, some degree expressions can undergo reduplication and become intensifying modifiers of the adjectival phrase displaying an even more intensified degree of modification. Degree expressions can be categorized into intensifier degree expressions, comparative constructions and reduplication. Intensifier degree expressions occur in front of an adjectival phrase to express the extent of the semantic content exhibited in the adjective. They can be further categorized into intensifying, moderated and excessive intensifier degree expressions.

The intensifying intensifier degree expression magnifies the extent of the modified adjective’s semantic content. The moderated intensifying degree expression demonstrates a significantly lesser extent of the modified adjective’s semantic content than its intensifying counterpart. The excessive intensifying degree expression is employed for adjectives which are comprehended to possess negative

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connotations. The outcome of this adverb is identical to the intensifying intensifier degree expression; the extent of the modified adjective's semantic content undergoes intensification.

Like intensifiers, comparative constructions also demonstrate degrees of adjectives as well. Constructions that portray comparison can be subdivided into equative, figurative, differential, comparative and superlative comparison constructions. Equative comparison constructions demonstrate resembling qualities of two entities. Figurative comparison constructions demonstrate figurative resemblance of two entities.

Differential comparison constructions illustrate differences between two entities and there are two alternatives to do so; without or with degree of difference explicitly referred to the compared entities. Differential comparison without the degree of difference being explicitly expressed can be executed in several ways, depending on whether the adjective functions as a main predicate, a verb object modifier, a verb modifier or a verb complement. The grammatical function of the adjective results in slightly varied structures of differential comparison sans degree of difference.

For differential comparison with degree of difference explicitly expressed, a quantitative expression or a quantity adjectival phrase is utilized. The domain of discussion influences the type of measure that serves as the degree of difference. Comparative comparison constructions express difference between two entities. The comparative degree expression in the construction places focus on the notion that one entity possesses a more intensified quality than the other.

Constructions that illustrate comparative comparison can vary according to the grammatical function of the adjective; whether the adjective is the main predicate, the adjective modifies the object of the main verb, the adjective modifies the main verb or the adjective is a verb complement. Superlative comparative constructions are employed to express qualities belonging to the extreme end of the differential comparison continuum. The superlative comparison construction is formulated by an adverb clause followed by the superlative comparison expression.

Reduplication is also another process utilized to express extent. The process is a phonological one which impacts the extent of the semantic content of the adjective.
When reduplication is in process, the adjective can be reiterated to achieve an either intensified or mitigated semantic alteration depending on the discourse context. Furthermore, reduplication can cause the adjective to function in an idiomatic way by adding a bound morpheme followed with its reduplicated counterpart. The meaningfulness of the bound morpheme’s semantic content is optional.

Reduplication can replicate the bound morpheme in various levels of phonology. The entire bound morpheme may be replicated with a difference in tone, where tone sandhi plays a crucial role in expressing the non-similarity of tones. The outcome of tone sandhi results in an adjective followed by two identical bound morphemes.

Partial reduplication can also be found in that either the same consonant or same set of consonants of the preceding syllable gets copied and transferred to the reduplicated portion. This phonological process is called consonance. Another type of partial reduplication is the copying and transferring of initial consonant of the preceding syllable to the reduplicated morpheme. This process is called alliteration. Both processes are identical in practice; the former is a hyponym of the latter. Moreover, both consonance and alliteration create an adjective followed by unidentical morphemes.

The production of reduplicated adjectives is arbitrary, as there is no consistent pattern in describing their formation. Hence, phonological production is utilized as an attempt to classify them for ease of understanding.

Another alternative method for categorizing these reduplicated adjectives is to account for their semantic content. Grouping them by semantic qualities can also possibly shed some light in comprehending them better. As it has been established that reduplicated adjectives are idiomatic extensions of their basic counterparts and they express degree, they are subsequently named reduplicated expressives.

The ultimate purpose of describing degree in this chapter is to provide substantial evidence to the reader that the word which is modified by it belongs to the adjective word class.

Chapter 4 deals with negation of the adjective. There are three methods of negating the adjective. The choice of negation is dependent on the modal auxiliary verb;
whether the modal auxiliary expresses ability, existence, or validity. Each modal auxiliary verb is different in form and meaning, thus the negation of each modal auxiliary reflects their difference. Nonetheless, the grammatical function of negation be it of the ability, existential or the validity type serves a single purpose; it negates the adjective.

An interesting observation is that the negation of ability and existence is comprehended in the same way in Singaporean Hokkien whereas in Taiwanese Hokkien they are not. This chapter serves its purpose in comparing the similarities between the adjective and the verb word class. The phenomenon of the adjective’s ability to take on negation highlights the fact that there is a fuzzy boundary between being an adjective and a verb. For a number of languages in the eastern part of the world, especially from East Asia downwards, this phenomenon holds true. However, an interesting question can be raised on whether the adjective is to be analyzed as a separate word class or as a sub-class of verb in Singaporean Hokkien.

The researcher’s stance regarding the adjective-verb dilemma is a neutral one. He is aware that in Singaporean Hokkien the adjective can modify the noun under two types of constraints. The adjective either precedes the noun functioning as a typical adjective or follows the noun functioning as a predicate of the sentence. The similarity of grammatical functions of the adjective and verb coupled with the fact that they both can be negated render it tempting to categorize them under the same word class of being verbs. Nonetheless, the adjective can also be isolated from the verb by taking on modification via the usage of degree expressions or adverbs. Upon considerable contemplation, the researcher has opted not to take sides in deciding whether to analyze an adjective as a different word class or as a verb. It is better to embrace both sides of the argument and be open-minded to all opinions.

Upon mounting on the task of completing this thesis, there are problematic issues that were encountered. In terms of phonology, the consonant and vowel charts merely reflect exclusively data that were collected orally. In terms of grammatical analysis, insights from language resource persons were insufficient due to limited access and time. Various discourse analysis details need to be accounted for a better in-depth analysis of adjective constructions. Moreover, this thesis has covered only the adjective word class in Singaporean Hokkien. More research is required for understanding this language in detail. For future implications, a more detailed
phonological analysis of this language, extended studies of other words classes; precisely nouns, verbs, coverbs, etc., as well as more discoveries about semantic and discourse issues could be conducted to bring more insight to Singaporean Hokkien. The researcher hopes that this thesis can contribute to areal studies as a first start to study how languages behave cross-linguistically across Asia.
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Appendix A

The Effects of Tone Sandhi on Singaporean Hokkien

It is discovered that tone sandhi carries an effect to tones positioned in proximity. Given below are several instances of tone sandhi:

1) \( X^{42}:X^{24} \rightarrow X^{24}:X^{24} \)

When a syllable containing a high falling tone is followed by another syllable which contains a low rising tone, the tone of the preceding syllable becomes assimilated.

a) \( ho^{42} \) \( lan^{24} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( ho^{24} \) \( lan^{24} \)

‘good’ ‘human’ ‘(a) good person’

b) \( pʰay^{42} \) \( lan^{24} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( pʰay^{24} \) \( lan^{24} \)

‘bad’ ‘human’ ‘(a) bad person’

2) \( X^{21}:X^{42} \rightarrow X^{42}:X^{42} \)

A syllable containing a low falling tone when followed by another syllable containing a high falling tone gets affected by tone sandhi. The tone becomes assimilated.

a) \( pʰa^{21} \) \( tʃaw^{42} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( pʰa^{42} \) \( tʃaw^{42} \)

‘hit’ ‘bird’ ‘to hit a bird’

b) \( si^{21} \) \( tʃam^{42} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( si^{42} \) \( tʃam^{42} \)

‘four’ ‘dot’ ‘four o’clock’

3) \( A^{33}:A^{33} \rightarrow A^{33}:A^{44} \)

When a syllable carrying a mid level tone undergoes reduplication, only the consonant and vowel segments get reduplicated. The tone of the following syllable gets altered into a high level one. Reduplicated tones for reduplicated syllables carrying a mid level tone are not allowed in Singaporean Hokkien.

a) \( tʃʰim^{33} \) \( tʃʰim^{33} \) \( \rightarrow \) \( tʃʰim^{33} \) \( tʃʰim^{44} \)

‘deep’ ‘deep’ ‘rather or quite deep’
b) \( kʰin^{33} kʰin^{33} \rightarrow kʰin^{33} kʰin^{44} \)

‘light’ ‘light’ ‘rather or quite light’

4) A¹²:A²¹ → A⁴²:A²¹

When reduplicating a syllable carrying a low falling tone, the preceding syllable changes tone into high falling one.

a) \( swey^{21} swey^{21} \rightarrow swey^{42} swey^{21} \)

‘small’ ‘small’ ‘rather or quite small’

b) \( ʔam^{21} ʔam^{21} \rightarrow ʔam^{42} ʔam^{21} \)

‘dark’ ‘dark’ ‘rather or quite dark’

The effects of tone sandhi presented in this appendix is not complete. Further studies on this phenomenon may provide more details and insights.
Name: Krisda Tan  
Date of Birth: 7 December 1979  
Place of Birth: Singapore  
Institutions Attended:  
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