

## TYPOLGICAL FEATURES IN AKHA

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Akha is a Lolo language, and as such belongs to Lolo-Burmese within Tibeto-Burman. It is spoken in the region where Burma and Laos meet and in adjoining areas of Yunnan and Thailand.

The initial consonants are labial, dental, alveolar (affricates), velar, glottal, labio-palatal, or dento-palatal; and within each of these classes voiceless, voiced, or nasal, except that there is no alveolar nasal but as corresponding continuant a lateral *l*. The glottal class has no voiced or nasal members. Alveolars, velars, and dento-palatals include voiceless and voiced fricatives (s, z; x, ʃ; ʃ, ʒ ~ j).

There are two laryngeal phonation types, creaky and breathy. All syllables belong to one or the other type although in some phonetic manifestations a type is represented by the absence of its opposite (the syllable ba with no creakiness will count as breathy, even if there is no audible breathiness). In breathy syllables initial voiceless stops and fricatives are aspirated. The aspirated glottal is an ordinary h. Initial voiced consonants are never aspirated in breathy syllables. q̣ indicates creaky.

Akha possesses three tones high, mid, and low, which are all level, or are manifested with a non-phonemic rise in creaky syllables and a non-phonemic fall in breathy syllables. We mark high tone as ´, low tone as `, and leave mid tone unmarked. All syllables have an inherent tone. Words are of one or two syllables, rarely three syllables (four in some reduplication patterns). Most, but not all, syllables in polysyllabic words are meaningful morphemes.

There are no phonemic final consonants in that m and n [nasalization] enter the vowel system in such a way that to non-labialized i, e, ɛ correspond labialized ü, ö, m; to labialized u, o, ɔ correspond labialized y [i̯], ə, ŋ. There is also an a, which occurs as a monophthong and in the diphthongs ai, aŋ [a], au. Of these, however, only aŋ is a common and constant part of the phonological inventory. ai is found e.g. in mái 'exclamation of surprise', am e.g. in mam 'Burmese', au e.g. in bau 'authority' (from Burmese). au is also the end product of contractions as in jò Yà na lù 'everybody' > jò Yà nau (pronunciation of older generation) and > jò Yà nau? ~ nauq ~ nàq̣ (pronunciation of younger generation). m occurs as a syllabic with or without an initial consonant, ŋ syllabically as an allophone of aŋ. ü is rather a rare sound (e.g. in sjhü 'tò urinate').

The distinction between voiceless unaspirated and voiceless aspirated initials is found in stop consonants in languages all around Akha (Burmese, Lahu, Tibetan, Chinese, Thai); in Akha the aspiration feature is however not independently phonemic, but part of the bundle of features which make up the breathy (non-creaky) phonation type. This Akha aspiration also hits the voiceless spirants in breathy phonation.

Structurally contrastive phonation types are found a in number of Southeast Asian and East Asian languages (including Burmese, several Chinese and Thai dialects, Mon, Khmer, Vietnamese) with a historical origin in consonant features at the beginning or at the end of the syllable. The proto-tone (corresponding to Ancient Chinese shang sheng and its equivalents in Thai, Burmese and Vietnamese), which in its modern form often displays voiced (non-breathy) laryngeal phonation type as a concomitant feature, does not cause creaky laryngealization in Akha (where it is the low breathy tone), which is also true of Lahu and such South Chinese dialects as Cantonese and Hakka. The Akha creaky phonation type derives from loss of final stops, corresponding to Burmese final glottal stops (different from Burmese creaky "tone"). In regular development creaky syllables occur in two of the three Akha tones (mid, cf., in breathy syllables, qusheng of Ancient Chinese; and low, cf., in breathy syllable, shang sheng of Ancient Chinese). In some loan words from Thai and in a few deictic words like loq 'as, like' we find a high tone in a creaky syllable. Such syllables are also found in connection with a tonal sandhi phenomenon, for which see further on.

The effects of the phonation types in Akha tend to permeate the whole syllable, the creaky ones characterized by a general overarticulation and the breathy ones by a general underarticulation. With voiced stop initials this may manifest itself through preglottalization and prenasalization respectively. Consonants of these types are well known in Southeast Asia (preglottalization in Thai and Vietnamese; prenasalization in Miao, and in some Austro-Asiatic languages which also have distinctive preglottalization), but in Akha they occupy a subphonemic redundant status. The final -ŋ [nasalization] represents a coalescence of all nasals, and the syllables in which the phoneme occurs are intrinsically non-creaky. Final -m and syllabic m can in rare cases be found with creaky phonation (nŋq 'to stuff', i nŋq 'brain', jo nŋq 'tense-faced').

So phonation types, aspiration, preglottalization, and prenasalization are all areal, non-inherited features in Akha. Basically the Akha vowel system contains the 3 times 3 system of e.g. Lahu, Thai and Cantonese, but the patterning has been altered by the addition of two front rounded vowels and two syllabic nasals. In any case vowel proliferation is an areal feature (as opposed to the simpler systems of e.g. Northern Chinese and Malay-Indonesian). The vowel proliferation has taken place in connection with consonantal losses and through borrowings.

Tonal sandhi in Akha in all cases consists in movement to or towards mid level. High before high becomes high-mid (still phonemically high) or mid (morpho-phonemically high, but phonetically mid), and low before low becomes low-mid (phonemically low) or mid (morpho-phonemically low, phonetically mid). In a series of three identical tones, the middle one is usually mid. An inherent mid tone never changes.

Particles (which will be further treated below) have their own rather complicated tonal sandhi rules which are, in contradistinction to the ordinary regressive sandhi described above, mostly progressive. Noun particles usually keep their inherent tone, except that the possessive particle ə has mid tone after another low tone syllable. The marker of adverbs ɛ and the marker of verbs in series ɔ́ always keep their tone, as does the verb particle ə, whereas the verb particle ə has mid tone after high and low tone syllables. Most sentence particles with an inherent high tone are manifested as mid tone after syllables with high tone, if they are followed by zero or a high tone syllable; if they are followed by a low tone syllable the tone is high or mid, followed by a mid syllable always high (special rules pertain to strings of sentence particles, especially as regards high tone sentence particles). Sentence particles with an inherent low tone are always low, except after another low tone syllable where they are mid or low before zero and high, mid before low. The sentence particle nja has an inherent mid tone, but can be preceded only by a high tone (different from the secondary verb nja 'able to' and the sentence particle njá), so that a mid or low tone syllable before the sentence particle nja adds an extra syllable consisting of the vowel on a high tone maintaining its phonation type (e.g. guq + nja > guquq nja 'I am scared'; thereby creating instances of the diachronically unexpected combination of high tone and creaky phonation). The modal sentence particles njá and á never change their inherent high tone, but can change a preceding high tone into a mid. The sentence particle a (which in negative sentence replaces the sentence particle á) has an inherent mid tone which of course never changes. The quotation particle djé (which follows sentence particles), the question particle lá (which stands in final position), and the topic markers à and è keep their tone. Bisyllabic particles (as mía and míá) never change.

Akha tonal sandhi is dissimilatory, except in the few cases where a preceding high pulls a following low up to mid. There is no obvious genetic connection between Akha tonal sandhi and the sandhi of Northern and some Coastal Chinese dialects which is also dissimilatory in nature, but based on the inherited (laryngeal) phonation categories. Typologically Akha in this respect belongs with the Chinese dialects in questions, especially the Min dialects which like Akha offer examples of both regressive and progressive sandhi. The Southern languages, such as Cantonese, Thai and Vietnamese have little or no sandhi. The same is true of Lahu and Burmese. The tones of Akha particles, which are morphological in nature (low tone for past tense, high tone for non-past tense), are non-inherited. All particles have the non-creaky phonation type and they never begin with a glottal (stop or aspiration, except that some older speakers pronounce hɔ́ instead of ɔ́ 'particle marking the first of two verbs in a series'; cf. the verb hɔ́ə 'together with', used like 'and' between nouns).

The Akha word order accords with Tibeto-Burman in general: noun phrases (topic/subject/agent, beneficiary, object, place, instrument, in that order with certain possible variations; time less predictably placed) before finite verb phrase.

All particles follow their head, as all modifiers precede their head, except that adjectival and classifier phrases follow their head (historically these phrases are not modifiers, but appositions or further clarifications). Noun particles (including zero) indicate syntactic and case relationships (à

'statement about topic', è 'question about topic'; zero 'unmarked subject, object or place'; án 'beneficiary, goal'; nɛ 'origin, instrument, originator, agent'; ə̀ 'subordination, possession'). The construction unmarked subject-verb is found with non-past verbal phrases; marked agent-unmarked object-verb in past tense verbal phrases. nɛ as indicator of origin and instrument is phonologically identical with nɛ as indicator of originator, agent, but does not appear in the same place in the sentence (and the two may co-occur).

The phonemic shape /ə/ as a particle is not restricted to postnominal usage, but also functions as a verb particle. In the latter function it is (in the same way as sentence particles) inflected for tense, so that ə̀ is non-past and ə̀́ past tense. Both the ə̀-marked and the ə̀́-marked verb phrase can be used as a nominal or as a noun modifier. The ə̀-marked phrase takes an unmarked subject and the ə̀́-marked phrase a marked agent just like the finite verb phrases. In other words past tense, whether ə̀-marked or not, is ergative, non-past is not.

The verb itself is unchanged in ergative and non-ergative constructions, a phenomenon also known from Modern Northern Chinese: tā dǎ wǒ 'he beats me', (ràng) tā bǎ wǒ dǎ le 'he has beaten me', wǒ ràng tā dǎ le 'I was beaten by him' (ràng is marker of the energetic member, bǎ of the inertial; Frei 1957 p. 104), where however sometimes the verb is preceded by the particle gěi 'marker of verb in ergative construction' (Rygaloff 1973, p. 133). Uninflected bigeneric verbs (verbs functioning as active and as passive) without ergative noun phrases are known from Classical Chinese, yǎng mǐn 'he nourishes the people', mǐn yǎng 'the people are nourished'. Verbs which can enter such constructions have been named ergative verbs by Cikoski. This designation is somewhat confusing, but admittedly easier than uninflected bigeneric - it should in any case be borne in mind that in Classical Chinese the ergative verbs take no ergative noun phrase, whereas in Modern Chinese they can and do so and in Akha they always do. Uninflected bigeneric verbs are known for instance from Thai, inflected bigeneric verbs for instance from Indo-European.

The tendency for ergative constructions to concentrate on past or perfect statements is universal. Notice that the Classical Chinese "ergative verb" constructions are not thus restricted, whereas the ergative noun constructions in Modern Chinese and Akha (as well as Indo-Aryan, Caucasian, and Basque) are.

The bigeneric nature of the Akha verb will appear from the following examples:

- 1) àj̀d̥q m ə já j̥c m̀y ná 'the field he is doing looks good' [àj̀d̥q 'he', m 'do', ə 'sandhi form of ə̀ non-past tense verb particle', já 'field', j̥c 'prefix for adjective', m̀y 'good', ná 'sensorial sentence particle for non-expected, direct, visual perception']
- 2) àj̀d̥q nɛ́ m ə̀ já j̥c m̀y ná 'the field which was done by him looks good' [nɛ́ 'noun particle for origin, instrument, originator, agent', 'past tense verb particle']
- 3) ná m̥c nja ə́ má [~ ə́ə́ má] 'it is something I am able to see, I can see it' [ná 'I', m̥c 'see', nja 'can', ə́ 'non-past tense verb particle (also pronounced ə́ə́ before high tone which has not undergone sandhi)', má 'informational sentence particle for expected, non-past, first person prime mover']

- 4)  $\eta\grave{a}$   $ne$   $m\acute{o}$   $nja$   $\grave{e}$   $m\acute{a}$  'it is something that could be seen by me, it is by me it could be seen, I could see it' [ $\eta\grave{a}$  'form of  $\eta\acute{a}$  'I', used before some noun particles'  $ne$  'noun particle for origin, instrument, originator, agent',  $m\acute{o}$  'see',  $\grave{e}$  'past tense verb particle']

In examples 2 and 4, the past tense verb particle  $\grave{e}$  is combined with the non-past sentence particles  $\eta\acute{a}$  and  $m\acute{a}$  respectively. This is the only possible combination,  $\grave{e}$  does not occur with past tense sentence particles, therefore the literal translation 'it is something that could be seen by me'. This can be compared with Latin periphrastic passive perfect e.g. a me visum est 'it is something which has been seen by me, I have seen it'.

The fact that  $m\acute{a}$   $\grave{e}$  means 'which (he) is doing', but  $m\acute{a}$   $\grave{e}$  'which was done (by him)' can of course be compared with the corresponding English participles 'doing' which is active and 'done' which is passive. Closer to home (in terms of Akha) we find the Indo-Aryan perfect participle passive construction which has given rise to the modern past tense constructions (of ergative origin).

The Tibeto-Burman verb is characteristically impersonal, existential (as for instance in Classical Tibetan ergative constructions 'there has been killing by me', 'there has been beating by me'), to which the logical object can be added as an unmarked modifier of the verb ('king-killing', 'killing of the king', or as a place, goal 'beating on him'). There is reason to think that Akha has moved or is moving in the direction of personal verb construction, because each sentence is equipped with a sentence particle which, in addition to other information, in most cases indicates the grammatical person of the prime mover. In this connection a remarkable fact has to be noticed, viz., that the indication is identical whether the prime mover is an unmarked subject or a marked agent (ergative). Thus sentences 3 and 4 above both end in  $m\acute{a}$  'sentence particle for first person prime mover', even though 3 has a non-ergative and 4 an ergative prime mover, and the bigeneric verb  $m\acute{o}$  in 3 is active and in 4 is passive. (In Indo-European where the bigeneric verbs are inflected, the grammatical person changes with the inflection: video, vidi † a me videtur, visum est). Sentences 1 and 2 terminate with particles which do not emphasize the grammatical person as much as the kind of perception which takes place:  $j\acute{o}$   $m\acute{y}$   $\eta\acute{a}$  means 'looks good' different from  $j\acute{o}$   $m\acute{y}$   $nja$  'tastes good', 'sounds good', 'smells good' or 'feels good'.

There are four important groups of sentence particles each containing four members, if we do not count the tonal variations (inflexion). The first group, particles of non-sensorial knowledge or informational particles have different forms in positive and negative sentences. The three remaining groups are particles of sensation or sensorial particles, particles of assumption or contrastive particles, and particles of prediction or modal particles. Each group can be divided along two axes which we can call U/V and X/Y. With informational particles U/V indicate 'expectation'/'non-expectation', and X/Y indicate 'first person'/'non-first person prime mover' in declarative sentences, 'second person'/'non-second person prime mover' in questions, and 'third person'/'non-third person prime mover' in indirect reference.

The actual forms of the informational particles are in positive sentences:

	X	Y
U	ma	mɛ
V	e	a

and in negative sentences:

	X	Y
U	ma	mɛ
V	zero	a

All these forms have a high tone in non-past tense (except the negative a, which has mid tone, and the negative zero, which is meant to indicate absence of any overt form) and low tone in past tense (where all the four negative forms coalesce in à).

With sensorial particles X/Y indicate 'non-visual'/'visual perception', U/V 'no surprise'/'surprise', 'luckily'/'unfortunately', or 'all the time'/'intermittently'. The actual forms are:

	X	Y
U	mia	ɲaa
V	nja	ɲa

The high tone/low tone distinction with these particles denotes 'direct perception'/'indirect perception' i.e. whether you only make an inference from something you perceive, or whether you actually experience the event yourself. The second syllable of the bi-syllabic particles mia and naa have mid tone in the high tonal category (i.e. mía and ɲáaa), high tone in the low tonal category (i.e. míá and ɲáá).

With the contrastive particles the X/Y distinction is one of grammatical person, but used somewhat differently from the informational particles, in that not so much prime mover as main actor or protagonist is involved - a statement about a thing I own, for instance, will be treated as X. With these particles U/V indicated 'exclusion'/'inclusion' (excluding one specific assumption or including one specific assumption). The forms are:

	X	Y
U	le	la
V	the	tha

The high tone/low tone distinction is the same as for informational particles.

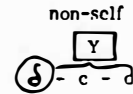
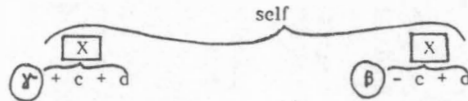
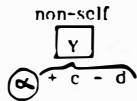
Finally with modal particles X/Y indicate 'first person involvement'/'no first person involvement', so that rather than referring to the prime mover (as is the case with informational and contrastive particles) the grammatical person refers to the speaker and his involvement or non-involvement in the event. U/V with modal particles indicate 'fear'/'threat' or 'doubt'/'certainty', so that the combination of X with U means that the speaker personally fears or doubts the outcome, X with V that the speaker expresses a threat or a certainty; Y with U indicates a general, often a ceremonial, ritual fear, Y with V a general acceptance like a duty or an obligation. The forms are:

	X	Y
U	á	ím
V	njá	má

The modal particles possess no low tone manifestations (and they never refer to past events). When treating the tonal sandhi of particles earlier in this paper, we noticed that the modal particle njá never changes its inherent high tone (which keeps it apart from the sensorial particle nja and the secondary verb nja), neither does á change. The two remaining modal particles do undergo tonal sandhi, so that má may coincide in form with the informational particle ma.

If we consider the relationship of the speaker (or the prime mover) to the utterance we find that the Akha system of sentence particles in each utterance takes a stand on whether it is a matter of a first move, a lead, a beginning, or not; whether it is an accord, an assertion or not; whether it is a matter of knowledge or not; and whether there is personal involvement or not. By designating these features as a, b, c, and d (and their possible combinations as  $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$ ), we can place our particles in the arrangement seen in the chart on the following page.

The usual placement of the sentence particles is after the predicate. If the predicate is nominal only non-low manifestations can be used, and the modal particles are excluded from usage with nominal predicates. The same non-low manifestations, excluding the modal particles, can, however, also be placed after the unmarked subject (but not after the marked agent in ergative construction) as a kind of predicativization of the subject ('cleft sentence', "I am the one who ... " etc). Topicalization of nouns (unmarked subjects or objects, and also marked beneficiary or goal, the later of which maintain their case particle án) is achieved (as mentioned earlier) by the particles à for statements about the topic, and è for questions about the topic. In a sentence with a nominal predicate the informational and the contrastive sentence particles (but not the sensorial or the modal ones) can be used in their high tone manifestation after the predicate to indicate S is P.



$\alpha$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$	$\alpha - b$	$\boxed{n}$	non-first/first person	$\boxed{c}$	non-past past
$\beta$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$	$a - b$	non-expected		non-expected	
$\gamma$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		expected	information	expected	
$\delta$ $\frac{Y}{-c-d}$	$a + b$	$\boxed{m\epsilon}$	non-first/first person	$\boxed{ma}$	non-past past
$\epsilon$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$	$a + b$	$\boxed{tha}$	non-first/first person	$\boxed{the}$	non-past past
$\zeta$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		inclusion		inclusion	
$\eta$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		exclusion	contrast	exclusion	
$\theta$ $\frac{Y}{-c-d}$	$a - b$	$\boxed{la}$	non-first/first person	$\boxed{le}$	non-past past
$\iota$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$					

$\alpha$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$	$\alpha - b$	$\boxed{njn}$	non-visual/visual	$\boxed{\eta a}$	direct indirect
$\beta$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		surprise, ill fortune, intermittency		surprise, ill fortune, intermittency	
$\gamma$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		no surprise, fortune, constancy	sensation	no surprise, fortune, constancy	
$\delta$ $\frac{Y}{-c-d}$	$a + b$	$\boxed{mia}$	non-visual/visual	$\boxed{Qaa}$	direct indirect
$\epsilon$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$	$a + b$	$\boxed{nji}$	first person involvement/non-first person involvement	$\boxed{ma}$	
$\zeta$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		certainty, threat		certainty, threat	
$\eta$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$		doubt, fear	mood	doubt, fear	
$\theta$ $\frac{Y}{-c-d}$	$a - b$	$\boxed{a'}$	first person involvement/non-first person involvement	$\boxed{m}$	
$\iota$ $\frac{Y}{+c-d}$					



The fact that the modal particles behave differently from other sentence particles (in admitting no low tone manifestations and being excluded from the predicativizing construction) can be compared to the situation in Late Archaic Chinese, which has however a very much simpler system of particles, where the particle yě 'marker of predication' occurs either after predicate (more commonly) or after subject (less commonly), whereas the particle yǐ 'marker of perfective aspect' occurs after predicate only, whether the predicate is postponed (more commonly) or preposed (less commonly). We can in other words in Akha as in Late Archaic Chinese distinguish between predication marker(s) and predicate marker(s). The informational and sensorial particles preceded by the negative mà form a very special construction which is not just the negating of a copula but which implies that the speaker is ignorant of what is happening (e.g. aj̄ṣq aj̄ṣq dì ə à shú Yà mà ḡá 'I don't know who (the person is who) is beating him', aj̄ṣq 'he', aj̄ṣq 'noun particle for goal, object marker', dì 'beat', ə 'sandhi form of ə non-past tense verb particle', à shú Yà 'who', mà 'negative', ḡá 'sensorial sentence particle for non-expected, non-past, visual perception'). The combination of a negative with a particle may be e.g. the origin of Archaic Chinese fēi 'is not' (piwər, cf. the negatives with initial p- and the copular particle diwər), but the meaning 'don't know' seems unique with Akha.

A system of sentence particles ("existential verbs", "copulae", etc.) is known from Tibetan, especially modern Tibetan, where such particles indicate tense, person, mood, source of knowledge etc. The Tibetan system is far from being as elaborate as the Akha one, but the salient point in both languages is the fact that the same particle by syncretism carries several kinds of unrelated information. To find a system of this kind which approaches Akha in intricacy we have to go to the Indo-European verb conjugations. In Indo-European languages the same verbal endings carry messages concerning tense, aspect, person, number, mood, and genus, in other words categories which also semantically resemble several of the Akha categories. Of course, some of the semantic features which in one language take part in verb desinence syncretisms, in the other language may be periphrastically expressed. It is the very presence of such syncretisms which is the common typological feature. However, such general features as tense, grammatical person, origin of knowledge, attitude or involvement of speaker are certainly present in many Indo-European languages as well as in Akha.

In our survey of typological features in Akha, which is far from complete, we have found points of contact with a number of related and unrelated languages, as well as, of course, lack of agreement on other points with these same languages. All of this must to a considerable degree be the product of contact and loss of contact with other languages over a long period. Some features, such as tones, phonation types, ergativity, participial genera and tempora, expression of grammatical person outside of the pronoun, and verbal desinence syncretisms, offer great similarities with Indo-European languages, past and present. Contacts with Indo-European in the form of sprachbünde and waves of diffusion cannot be ruled out as contributing factors in the development of the Akha language structure.