

# Whether de<的> is Needed or Not

## —A Static Study of Adj.-Attributes

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0. Attribute is one of the basic syntactic functions of Chinese adjectives. Whether "de"<的> is needed or not while being an attribute (i.e. modifying nouns) is an old problem which has been discussed in many works but never thoroughly settled in the past. I'm sorry not to be able to list the works concerned one by one because of the limited space here.

Generally speaking, adj.-attribute has three Forms: I. modifies a noun directly (Adj.+N.); II. must or can be followed by "de" <的> while modifying a noun (Adj.+de+N.); and III. follows "hěn" <很> (or its equivalents) firstly and be followed by "de" while modifying a noun (很 hěn [or its equivalents]+Adj+de+N). Most adjectives can be used freely or alternatively in the three Forms above according to the different context, mood and style in texts or speech; but the others must have a choice and can be used in one Form or two. For example, jiǔ <久> can be used only in Form III: hěn jiǔ de shì <很久的事 a long-existed thing>, but never in Form I: \*jiǔ shì <久事> or Form II: \*jiǔ de shì <久的事>.

The studies before are often illustrated with wishful examples and almost never based on a certain amount of random materials. Without a thorough study of a certain amount of random materials, of course we can not clearly tell which adjectives can be used in which Form. And the paper here aims at making a thorough investigation of the concrete usage, distribution and frequency of adjectives in the three Forms according to concrete materials, which we hope to be able to supply a useful reference for the computational linguistics or the Chinese teaching as a foreign language.

For this reason, we've collected 2098 Chinese adjectives<sup>[1]</sup> and

[1] The adjectives analyzed in this paper are mainly extracted from the concerned papers & books at home and abroad. At first, we collected all the words marked as adj. (2500 in all), then according to language habit or perception, we cancelled those which are obviously not adjectives, such as 快速, 乎乎, 谅解, 普及, 熟悉, 泰然, 无数, 絮叨, 原先, etc., from Hanyu Shuiping Cihui yu Hanzì Dengjī Dagang (《汉语水平词汇与汉字等级大纲》, Press of Beijing Languages' Institute, 1992); 口口声声, 纵情, 依稀, 尊严, 眼睁睁, 许久, 久险, etc., from Xinbian Hanyu Duogongneng Cidian (《新编汉语多功能词典》, International Culture Press, 1989) chief-edited by 冯志纯, 周行健; and 英雄 from Xingrongci Yongfa Cidian (《形容词用法词典》, Hunan Publishing House, 1992) by 郑怀德 and 孟庆海.

made an overall study and statistical analyses of their syntactic functions, with which the paper here has been written. And the beneficial advices about it from the readers or scholars are always welcomed. It's necessary to state that the sub-classification and the terms used here somewhat differ from the others, but for the convenience of writing style, we've to adopt it of which the general frame is like the following:

Adj.	Common Adj. (the essential part of Adj.)	Pure Adj., e.g. dà <大>, hóng <红>, gāoxìng <高兴>, rènzhēn <认真>, duō <多>, kèkǔ <刻苦>...
		Non-pure Adj., e.g. búlǜ <碧绿, AB>, rèhūhū <热乎乎, ABB>, yōuyōu <悠悠, AA>, hōnghōnglièliè <轰轰烈烈, AABB>...
	Special Adj. (the subsidiary part of Adj.)	non-predicative adj., e.g. dàxíng <大型>, ruǎnxíng <软性>...
		non-attributive Adj., e.g. tuō <妥> ānxīn <安心>...

## 1. Monosyllabic Adjectives

1.0. Monosyllabic adjectives can be divided into three kinds when they modify nouns: A, B and C.

### 1.1. Classification

1.1.1. Adjectives of Kind A can be used in Form I and Form II, and the ones with a small plus sign + on the right side also can be used in Form II. The underlined words can follow dà <大> when modifying nouns directly, e.g. dà měirén <大美人>, dà nántí <大难题>, dà lěngtiān <大冷天>. The dà <大> here is something like hěn <很> in meaning, but not the same in grammatical structure, because if we use hěn <很> instead of dà <大> here, "de" <的> is needed: hěnměi de rén <很美的人>, hěnnán de tí <很难的题>, hěnlěng de tiān <很冷的天>. There are 113 words of Kind A:

ǎi 矮+	àn 暗	bái 白	bàng 棒	báo 薄+	bèn 笨
biǎn 扁	biē 瘪	chán 馋	cháng 长+	chǒu 丑	chún 纯+
cì 次	cū 粗	dà 大+	dāi 呆	dī 低	dǒu 陡
dú 毒	duǎn 短+	è 恶	féi 肥	fēng 疯	gāo 高+
gǔ 古	guāi 乖	guài 怪	guāng 光	guǐ 鬼	hǎo 好+

hēi 黑+	hóng 红+	hòu 厚+	huá 滑	huáng 黄+	hún 浑
jí 急	jiān 尖	jìng 近	jiù 旧+	jué < 绝2, unique > [2]	
kōng 空	kǔ 苦+	kuài 快	kuān 宽	kuáng 狂	kuò 阔
lán 蓝+	lǎn 懒	lǎo 老	liáng 凉	lěng 冷	liè 烈
lǜ 绿+	luàn 乱	máng 忙	měi 美	mèn 闷	měng 猛
mì 密	miào 妙	nán 难	làn 烂	nèn 嫩	nóng 浓
pàng 胖	píng 平	pò 破	qiǎn 浅	qiáng 强	qiǎo 巧
qīn 亲	qīng 轻+	qióng 穷	shǎ 傻	rè 热	ruǎn 软+
ruò 弱	sāo 骚/臊	sè 涩	shǎ 傻	shēn 深	shēng 生+
shī 湿+	shòu 瘦	sǐ 死	sú 俗	sù 素	tàng 烫
suān 酸1. of acid >	suān < 酸2, pedantic >	suì 碎	wān 弯+	wǎn 晚	
tián 甜+	tiě 铁+	wāi 歪+	xiǎo 小+	xīn 新+	
xì 细+	xián 咸+	xiāng 香+	zá 杂	zhà 榨	
yě 野	yìng 硬+	yuán 圆+			
zǎo 早	zhí 直	zhòng 重			

1.1.2. Most monosyllabic adjectives of Kind A can be used only in Form I, but the ones with a small plus sign+ on the right side can also be used in Form II: fangzhuozi <方桌子>, fang de zhuozi <方的桌子>. There are 65 words of this kind which is divided into two groups (a and b):

- (a) cí 雌 dān 单 fǎn 反 fèi 废 fù 负  
 fù 副 gōng < 公 male (animal), opposite to mǔ 母 >  
 héng 横 huā 花 huī 灰 huó < 活, alive >  
 jué < 绝1, being cut off > [3] liáng < 良, fine >  
 mǔ < 母, female (animal) opposite to gōng 公 > nán 男  
 néng 能 nǚ 女 páng 旁 shí < 实1, solid, not empty >  
 shuāng 双 wū 污 xiōng < 凶2, inauspicious or ominous >  
 xióng 雄 yáng < 阳, open > yīn < 阴, hidden >  
 yuán < 原, crude > zhěng 整 zǒng < 总, overall, total >  
 (b) chà 差 fāng 方+ gān 干 hán 寒 hā 旱 huāng 荒  
 jiāo 娇 jùn 俊 kū 枯 mǎn < 满, full, filled: ~座, ~身 >  
 màn < 漫: ~天 > máo 毛 mì < 蜜: 甜言~语 >  
 mì 秘 mián 绵 míng < 明: ~月, ~码 > nuǎn 暖  
 qí 奇 qīng 青 qīng 晴 róu 柔 shí < 实2: true, honest >  
 shù 竖 shùn 顺+ tóng 同 wēn 温 wén 文 xián 闲  
 xié < 邪, abnormal or evil: ~劲, ~门儿 > xié < 斜, oblique: ~园锥 >  
 xiōng < 凶1, fierce, fearful > yán 严: ~师 yáng 洋  
 zhēn 真+ zhèng < 正1, straight, upright; situated in the middle >  
 zhuān 专: ~人 liàng 亮+

[2] 绝2 is different to some degree from other words of Kind A. It is collocated only with the word 活儿, and a solid word will be made if in Form I: 绝活儿; but if in Form II, a numeral-classifier compound is needed before 活儿 which also can be another noun, e.g. 很绝的一手活儿, 很绝的一手字 (一道菜, ...), etc.

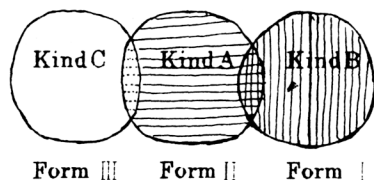
[3] 绝1 is a non-predicative adjective which means "unable to go through", "being cut off"; 绝2 is a common adjective which means "unique", "that no one catch up" and can be both attribute (绝活儿) and predicate (他那手活儿真绝).

1.1.3. Most monosyllabic adjectives of Kind C can be used in Form III, but the one with a small plus sign + on the right side also can be used in Form II. There are 44 words of this kind of which most are non-attributive adjectives<sup>[4]</sup>:

ào 傲	bǎo 饱	bó 薄	cán 残	cǎn 惨	chén 沉
chòng (冲, with vim and vigour; vigorous)					
diāo 刁	duì 对	duō 多	fán 烦	fàn 泛	guāng 广
guì 贵	jǐ 挤	jiāng 僵	jǐn 紧	jīng 精	jiàn 贱
là 辣	lèi 累	nào 闹	piān 偏	píng 平	quán 全
shuài 帅	jiǔ 久	shǎo 少	sōng 松	tōng 通	wàng 旺
xī 稀	xiǎng 响	xū 虚	yàn 艳	zāo 糟	
zhèng < 正 2, (of colour or flavour) pure; right >					zhuàng 壮
zhǔn 准	zú 足	suān (酸 3, tingle; ache) <sup>[5]</sup>			téng 疼
tòng 痛 +	yǎng 痒 +				

1.2. Grammatical Characteristics. In this part, we'll state the similarities or differences of the three kinds of monosyllabic adjectives.

1.2.1. Most words of kind C and B can be used in Form III and I respectively and never confused with each other; but A is very complicated. Very few words (only the last three: 痛 + 疼 + 痒 +) of Kind C and some of Kind A can be used in both Form III and I: some of kind A and some of group (b) in Kind B can be used in Form II and while the others of Kind A can be used freely. Broadly speaking, the three kinds of monosyllabic adjectives are quite different in substance and the frame of their relationships is just like a chain illustrated below:



The words of Kind C which can be used in Form II are so few that it's unnecessary to take it into consideration here. Thus the only coincidence we've to deal with is just that of Kind A and B. We know from above that the words with a small plus sign can be used in Form II but we should point out that the difference between them of

[4] Conditioned non-attributive adjective are adjectives that can be used only in Form III, as to which we'll discuss in another paper.

[5] As to suān < 酸 >, we have 酸 1, 酸 2, 酸 4 differently classified because of the different meaning items. And we regard 酸 2 (sad) as an absolute non-attributive adjective so that we'll not discuss it here.