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Expressing Property Concepts in Dagaare

Justine Bakuuro
Ph.D. Student, Department of English, University of Ghana-Legon, Ghana

Abstract:
This study investigates Property Concepts (PCs) in Dagaare using the Framework-free Grammatical theory (Haspelmath 2008). The study examines four main syntactic categories namely adjectives, verbs, nouns and adverbs that are used to express property concepts in Dagaare. The morphological, syntactic and semantic properties of these four categories were investigated. The instruments used include tape recorders and native intuition. The study revealed that three of the four major word classes in English can be used to express property concepts-nouns, adverbs and adjectives. The only one that was not found in the oral corpus to have expressed property concepts is the verb. Data was collected from only primary sources. This was made up of twelve (12) live recordings of native speakers of Dagaare in Wa and Jirapa. From the 12 recordings, 3 were found to have structures in which a noun, adverb and adjective each were used to express PCs. The verb was never used in any structure to express PCs. A further study in this area regarding the verb and property concepts would be worth undertaking.

Keywords: property concepts, morphological, frameworkfree grammatical theory, word classes, structures

1. Introduction

Expression of property concepts in Dagaare language is an area which has not received much research attention. Scholars and students alike always associate the term property concept with the syntactic category adjective because most property concept words are found in the adjectival category. Property concepts are also known as "adjectival" concepts because adjectives are words commonly used to express property in most languages (Palancar 2006:326). It must be noted that the adjective is just one category that is used to express a property concept in a particular language. Property concepts (PCs), according to Thompson (1988:167), name properties or qualities of an entity and may be attributive or predicative by communicative function. In other words, PCs refer to properties, qualities and characteristics of referents. A PC having the role of attribution serves to modify the head noun in the Noun Phrase and the PC that serves as complement of verb normally plays the role of predication. There is normally a relationship between the head noun and the PC word used. It should be noted that PCs are not only adjectives but nouns, verbs, and adverbs as well, depending on the language under consideration. PCs are therefore expressed in languages with different lexical categories, depending on the particular language under discussion. Dixon (1982:16) proposed various semantic categories for PCs in a wide variety of languages and stated further that languages vary in the number of the members they have in the adjective class. Dagaare has adjectives which may be derived or of deep level (Bodomo 2007). The thesis therefore studies how features or characteristics that are attributed to an entity are realized in syntactic constructions in Dagaare. The syntactic constructions will be studied at both the morphosyntactic level and the semantic level. The syntactic discussion focuses on the lexical category that the word used to express the property of an entity belongs to, its morphological properties in relation to the head noun and its semantic features. The study investigates what happens when a particular lexical word is used to modify an entity, especially nouns, in the Dagaare language. The modification of these lexical items is examined in terms of their being attributes of the noun, or are in predicative positions denoting features of entities. The predicative position, in this instance, refers to when the PC used serves as a complement of a verb or a copula verb and also when the PC plays the role of intransitive predicate. In terms of attribute, the word is used to modify the noun within the noun phrase.

1.1. Dagaare alphabet (Burkina Faso)

Dagaare in Burkina Faso was first written by colonial administrators to record the names of people and places. French missionaries produced religious literature in the language, mainly during the 1950s and 1960s, using a spelling based on French. Since then Dagaare spelling has been reformed and improved a number of times, with the current orthography being established in 1998.

A a	B b	B ɓ	C c	D d	E e	Ɛ ɛ	F f	G g
a	ba	ɓa	ca	da	e	ɛ	fa	ga
[a]	[b]	[ɓ]	[c]	[d]	[e]	[ɛ]	[f]	[g]
Gb gb	H h	'H 'h	I i	Ɩ ɩ	J j	K k	Kp kp	L l
gba	ha	'ha	i	ɩ	ja	ka	kpa	la
[gb]	[h]	[ɦ]	[i]	[ɪ]	[ɟ]	[k]	[kp]	[l]
'L 'l	M m	N n	Ny ny	Ŋ ŋ	Ŋm ŋm	O o	Ɔ ɔ	P p
'la	ma	na	nya	ŋa	ŋma	o	ɔ	pa
[ˀl]	[m]	[n]	[ɲ]	[ŋ]	[ŋm]	[o]	[ɔ]	[p]
R r	S s	T t	U u	Ʊ ʊ	V v	W w	'W 'w	Y y
ra	sa	ta	u	ʊ	va	wa	'wa	ya
[r]	[s]	[t]	[u]	[ʊ]	[v]	[w]	[ˀw]	[j]
Y̌ y	Z z	'						
ya	za	a'						
[ˀj]	[z]	[ʔ]						

Figure 1

There are three tones in the Dagaare of Burkina Faso: the high tone is indicated by an acute accent (á), the low tone with a grave accent (à), and the middle tone is not marked.

1.2. Dagaare alphabet (Ghana)
In Ghana, the Dagaare Language Committee publish a *Guide to Dagaare Spelling* in 1976, and revised it in 1982.

A a	B b	D d	E e	Ɛ ɛ	F f	G g	H h	I i
a	ba	da	e	ɛ	fa	ga	ha	i
[a]	[b]	[d]	[e~ɪ]	[ɛ]	[f]	[g]	[h]	[i]
J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	Ɔ ɔ	P p	R r
ja	ka	la	ma	na	o	ɔ	pa	ra
[ɟ]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[o~ʊ]	[ɔ]	[p]	[r]
S s	T t	U u	V v	W w	Y y	Z z		
sa	ta	u	va	wa	ya	za		
[s]	[t]	[u]	[v]	[w]	[j]	[z]		
gb	gy	kp	ky	ng	ngm	ny		
[gb]	[ɟ]	[kp]	[c]	[ŋ]	[ŋm]	[ɲ]		

Figure 2

Mid tones are unmarked and nasal vowels are marked with a tilde (˜).

1.3. Sample text in Dagaare
Nengsaala zaa ba nang dɔge so la o menga, ka one o taaba zaa sengtaa noba emmo ane yɛlɛsoobo sobic poɔ. Ba dɔgɛɛ ba zaa ne yɛng ane yɛlɛ-iruu k'a da seng ka ba erɛ yɛlɛ korɔ taa a nga yɔɔmine.

1.4. Translation
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

1.5. Definition of Key Terms and Meaning of Research Topic

The key concept in this work is 'property concept'. The definition of property concept in this work is grounded on Thompson's (1988) and Palancar's (2006) definitions. The term 'property concept' used here has to do with words that are used to modify nouns and serve as predicatives. The study investigates how content lexical categories (major word classes) namely nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs are used to denote PCs. The function of these PCs in terms of attribution and predicative roles would be examined, that is, how they are expressed in relation to nouns. That is to say the work is a detailed study of how adjectival meanings are expressed in Dagaare using the four main lexical categories-nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Epithet which is another concept is used here to refer to nouns or phrases that are employed to modify the head nouns. These nouns or phrases precede the head noun. These are ordinary nouns (Dzameshie 2007:76) and the term epithet is a function name given to these nouns, therefore it is more of function nature in relation to the head noun. In this work, I prefer to use the term epithet which was also posited by Dakubu (2002, 2003) for nouns that precede the head nouns and modify them as I examine the function in relation to the head noun.

1.6. Statement of the Problem

PCs have received some amount of research over the years (Sergio & Gildea 2005, Dorvlo 2010, Palancar 2006, Holton 2001, Jenks et al 2013, Bobuafor 2013). Most languages use adjectives, if present in that language, to express the property of an entity.

It is either to modify the noun (attributive) or to serve as a complement of a verb or copula verb or as an intransitive predicate (predicative).This study describes the morphological, syntactic and semantic properties of lexical categories which may be employed and the types of constructions used.

There are inadequate materials on the morphology, syntax and semantics of the Dagaare language. Apart from that there is little work done in the area of property concepts in Ghanaian languages in general (Akan, Osam 2003, Saah & Osam 2010, Leteh, Akrofi-Ansah 2013). I believe that an in-depth research into the expression of Dagaare PCs will lead the way in this area of linguistic study. Syntactic studies conducted on Dagaare as a language largely center on naming the lexical categories and how they are used or identified in structures as well as literary textbooks in Dagaare (Bodomo 1997, Kyoore2009, Bemile1983, Angsotinge2006, Bangnikon 1999). No work has however been done specifically on property concepts in Dagaare. This study will therefore investigate whether property concepts can be expressed in Dagaare in all the four content lexical categories (nouns, verbs, adjectives & adverbs), whether PCs are expressed attributively or predicatively and to identify the morphosyntactic properties of lexical categories which express property concepts. The problem of the study here is therefore one of an interest on the part of the researcher to investigate into this linguistic domain of the Dagaare language. The insufficiency of written material on Dagaare poses problems for researchers, students and educators in this linguistic field of study. These are some of the reasons why this work attempts to do a further study in this area of the Dagaare language. This will help to facilitate the production of textbooks in the language for teaching and learning as well as the general improvement of the grammar of Dagaare.

 And most importantly, none of these scholars, Ghanaian or non-Ghanaian have done a study specifically on property concepts in Dagaare. It is this linguistic vacuum in Dagaare that this study seeks to fill.

1.7. Research Questions

The main objective of the work is to find answers to the following:
1. What lexical categories are used to express PCs in Dagaare?
2. Are there differences in terms of morphosyntactic properties (attribution & predication) among structures in which PCs are expressed?

1.8. Brief Review of Literature

There have been a lot of studies on the adjective class as a lexical category in Ghanaian languages, like Akan (Osam 1999, 2003), Ewe (Dzameshie 2007, Ameka 2003), Ga (Dakubu 2002, Otoo 2005), Siyase (Adjei 2007), Dagaare (Bodomo 2007, Kyoore1999, Angsotinge 2013). However, the topic under investigation will not be dealing with only adjectives but all kinds of words used in describing or modifying nouns in Dagaare. The study also reviews some literature related to PCs and other works that have studied the adjective class. Some relevant works on adjective classes are reviewed as well, because most often, the adjectives, when available in the language, tend to be the primary PCs that are used to qualify nouns.

Works done specifically in the area of property concepts in Ghanaian languages are very few, only about three studies in two languages (as far as I know). These include; (1) Akan (Osam 2003, Saah& Osam 2010) and (2) Leteh/Larteh (Akrofi-Ansah 2013). This must be a worrying trend to functional linguists who study Ghanaian languages, including myself.

Non-Ghanaian scholarly works on PCs are however many, a few of which include Dixon (2004,2006), Palancar (2006), Thompson (1988), Holton (2001), Jenks et al (2013), Bobuafor (2013) and Sergio & Gildea 2005) among others. Arguably, the most prominent study in this area is credited to Dixon (2006) with his semantic classification of adjectives/PCs.

Atintono & Adjei (2008),Ameka (2003), Amfo et al (2007), Ansah (2005), Dorvlo (2009 & 2010), Osam (1999 & 2003),Pokuah,Saah & Osam (2007), Otoo (2005), Bodomo (2007),Kyoore (1999),Angsotinge (2013) and Pokuah (2003) are among Ghanaian scholars who did some studies in relation to lexical categories in Frafra,Logba,Ewe, Akan,Ga and Dagaare. They all concluded that adjectives exist in the respective languages they investigated which are listed above.They also agree that these languages do not have many basic adjectives and therefore derive their adjectives from reduplication, suffixation and compounding among other morphological forms.

None of these scholars, Ghanaian or non-Ghanaian have, however, done a study specifically on property concepts in Dagaare. It is this linguistic vacuum in Dagaare that this study seeks to fill.

1.9. Theoretical Framework
The work will employ the Framework-Free Grammatical Theory by Haspelmath (2008).
This is mainly a descriptive framework. It is a framework or theory of morphosyntax.
It is not a restrictive theoretical framework, but allows the researcher to examine the language and describe it in its own terms. It is agreed by most linguists, according to Haspelmath (2008), that in analysing an unfamiliar language, efforts should be made not to be biased or be influenced by our native language or other languages we know. For instance, he claimed that pre-modern linguists who described non-European languages in terms of Latin using grammaras abase are discredited in recent times. The Framework-Free Grammatical Theory proposed that a language should be described in its own terms. In employing Framework-Free Grammatical Theory (FFG), you are able to discover unsuspected connections between phenomena and be guided only by the data you have gathered. This is because in analyzing language, sometimes new puzzles, new categories come up that may not fit into a particular bound framework you may be employing. Every language has its own categories, similarities also occur among languages and therefore one can learn from other languages that have been investigated to use certain terminologies like noun or verb, but should not be bound by these occurrences, so that completely new discoveries can be accounted for in that language. It is therefore better to use Framework-Free Grammatical theory to give better analyses of the real issues in a language as it is descriptive and allows the researcher to analyse issues as they occur and account for exceptions and irregularities that may come up.
In this study therefore, there could not have been a better theory to analyse PCs in Dagaare, since it is a 'virgin' language as far as this particular study is concerned. It is proper to allow the unfolding of linguistic concepts which may be peculiar to Dagaare and which the researcher may not have known or intended to investigate in this study. That may go a long way to create further gaps for future research in the language and even probably fill in the gaps in some studies already done in the area.
Of striking similarity to this theory is the formalist theory in which language is studied only within the boundaries of the features that it presents textually. External features or influence are not considered in analysing language in this theory and this study, in my opinion, would yield better results if the analysis of primary data would not be subjected to some already codified criteria. This is not to say that the study will not be guided by any form of laid down linguistic procedures. The results from analysis of primary data, which contains the free style use of language, will be cross-checked with findings from secondary sources such as books, interviews, questionnaire, etc and Dixon's semantic classification of adjectives for instance.
The Framework-Free Grammatical (FFG) theory, which embodies other theories including the formalist theory, is thus the most suitable in arriving at more valid and reliable findings in this study.

1.10. Analysis of Data
From the twelve (12) tape recordings of native speakers, the researcher identified three (3) constructions which use noun, adverb and adjective to express PCs in three separate conversations. The three (3) separate recorded conversations that contain these three word classes that express PCs are transcribed and translated below.

1.10.1. Conversation 1
 (Recorded in a local *pito* drinking bar in Jirapa) NB: *Pito* is a locally produced liquor from millet
Dagaare: A: Aa, zinɛ̪ zaa ngmenaa ba booro k'o puri…..
English:*Aa,the sun doesn't want to shine the whole of today….*
B: Mã seo sang la wɛ̪…wola k'a ngmenaa na mang bang pur bibiri zaa?
English:*But we are in the rainy season...how can the sun shine everyday?*
A : Kye a pãã la te zuo la wɛ̪…..a koseɛɾa nga poo ing gba naani,…..bibir zaa saa,bibir zaa saa……aba!
English: *But it is simply too much now,...especially this week,..everyday rain,everyday rain....aba!*
C : Too…k'a mãã yong la yɛ̪ vɛ̪ng k'o deɛ̪ waana.Diyɛ̪ng kong da le la a tengɛ̪….
English: *Well, left with me alone it should continue to rain.Last year there was famine in our community…..*
D: Yawaaaaa…,n ba ka lɛ̪n ne fo langɛɛ̪ teɛɾong….o die waana yeeee…. hahahahaha….
English:*Yawaaaaa…,my friend then we share the same thought...it should just continue to rain...hahahahaha….*
B: Ang la a soba nga nang wa tɔl neng a lɔɔre a lɛ̪?
English: *Who is it that came and passed with the car like that?*
C: N teɛ̪ ka La Frans la ooo…., bii ka wola.
English: *I think that is La Frans ooo…., or what…?*
A:A lɔɔre waa velaa….
English:*The car is nice...*
B; Paaa…., aba n saa Naangmen, dabor kate mine meng daana   na wa da te meng toɔra lɔɔre?
English:*Indeed…., aba my good God, when shall some of us also buy our own cars?*

1.10.2. Conversation 2
(Recorded in a casual chat among locales in Jirapa resting under a tree after returning from the farm)
A : Dakurah deɛ̪ diree dɔgɛɛ̪ a neng o dunni nga,gang a zaa a boore.,

Dakurah is suffering a lot with the rearing of his animals..
B: Yelminga n paa la,….a biiri ba mooro n'o koraaa…
It is actually true,...the children are not helpful to him at all...
C : A bi bobo? …A bidɔɔ kyelaa gaa nasaaltingɛ̗…
Which children?...The smart boy travelled abroad...
A : Lɛɛ̗?
Is that so ?
C : Ah, a ba buo soba la gaa a nasaaltinge?
Ah, which of the children?
D : Joseph….
Joseph....
C : Haai,mãã ba wongãã…..
I see, I didn't know about that...

1.10.3. Conversation 3
(Recorded in a Hospital ward in Wa)
A : Ang la seng k'o be a '*ward*'nga poɔ?
Who is supposed to be in this ward?
B : Mãã aneng, Latifa a poɔ pɔlɔ bayi mine….
Myself, and Latifa together with two other young guys...
A: Ka yeng k'aba zaa gaa kyɛ̗ kyɛ̗re fo yong?
But where have they all gone leaving you alone?

B: Latifa yel ka k'o gaa da bondirii wa kye a polo bayi na eng n ba bang ba gaa zie…..
Latifa said she was going to buy food to come but for the two guys I don't know their whereabouts....
A : K'a bi baalaa na ba nang wa neng a baguo nga?
And where is the sick child that was broad in this morning?
B : A bi baalaa kpiee tɔntɔba…..
The sick child died suddenly…
A : Oh! Soo ba wa d'o la gaa neng bii o bee mɔɔkyere?
Oh! So have they already taken the body home for mourning or it is deposited at the morgue?
B : A yideme wa d'o la gaa neng a baguo na zaa o nang deɛ̗ kpi…
The family took the body away immediately he died that morning...
A ; Nyɛ̗ wɛ̗ A seng k'aba meng mang kyɛ̗li fĩĩ nyɛ̗ kyɛ̗ bang kono wɛ̗…. kyɛ̗ k'o soba pãã wa zeɛ̗?
Just imagine. They should also learn to wait a bit before a bit before mourning their dead…. what if the fellow was in coma?

The three sentences which contained lexical categories that express property concepts are the ones in bold in the transcribed conversations above. They are grammatically analysed below.
(1) The car is nice.
(2) The smart boy travelled abroad.
(3) The sick child died suddenly.
 The construction in (1) syntactically makes use of a Noun Phrase (NP) 'The car' and a Verb Phrase (VP) "is nice". The NP, which is in subject position, is headed by the noun 'car' and the definite article 'the' serves as the determiner. The VP consists of the verb 'to be'(is) and an adjective 'nice'. The adjective 'nice' is in predicative position within the VP, that is the adjective serves as a complement of the verb (Copula Complement) in (1).
In example (2) the sentence is made up of an NP and a VP. The NP which contains a PC word 'smart', which is an adjective, serves as a modifier for the noun 'boy'. The adjective 'smart' in (2) is in attributive position.
Whereas the adjective plays the communicative role of predication in (1), the adjective functions as an attribute in (2). In example (3) the adjective 'sick' has been used to modify the head noun 'child' in the NP in an attributive manner.
 In Dgaaare,these sentences are translated and analysed in (4), (5) & (6) below.
(4) A lɔɔre waa velaa. =The car is nice.
A=The, lɔɔre=car, waa=is, velaa=nice.
In this construction, there is a noun phrase (NP) "A lɔɔre" (The car), headed by the noun 'lɔɔre' (car) and pre-modified by the determiner/article "A" (The). Also, there is a verb phrase (VP) "waa velaa" with the verb "waa"(is) (intransitive) and the adjective "velaa"(nice) forming the intransitive predicate. The PC "velaa" (nice), an adjective by lexical category, is therefore used predicatively to modify the noun "lɔɔre" (car).The communicative function of the PC "velaa" (nice) is therefore the fact that it is used predicatively on the noun "lɔɔre" (car).
(5) A bidɔɔ kyilaa gaaɛ̗ nasaaltingɛ̗ =The smart boy travelled abroad.
A= The, bidɔɔ=boy, kyilaa=smart, gaaɛ̗=travelled, nasaaltingɛ̗=abroad.

In this structure, we have an NP "A bidɔɔ kyilaa" (The smart boy), headed by the noun "bidɔɔ" (boy), pre-modified by the determiner/article "The" and post-modified by the adjective "kyilaa" (smart). The PC "kyilaa" (smart), an adjective by lexical classification, is used in attributive position to modify the noun "bidɔɔ" (boy). So, whilst the PC "velaa" in (4) is used predicatively, that in (5) (kyilaa) is used attributively.

(6) A bi baalaa kpiee tontoba. = The sick child died suddenly.

A=The, bi (bie)=child, baalaa=sick, kpiee=died, tɔntɔba=suddenly.

Finally in this sentence too, we have an NP "A bi baalaa" (The sick child), headed by "bi/bie" (child) with "A" (The) as pre-modifier and "baalaa" (sick) as post-modifier. The PC "baalaa" (sick), which is an adjective by word class, is also used in attributive position in modification of the noun "bi/bie" (child). That is, "baalaa" (sick) is a feature or quality of the noun "bi/bie" (child). Again, we have the PC "tɔntɔba" (suddenly), which is an adverb by lexical classification in the VP "kpiee tɔntɔba" (died suddenly), playing a predicative role with the intransitive verb "kpiee" (died). "Kpiee tɔntɔba" (died suddenly) is thus the intransitive predicate in the construction.

In languages that do not have adjectives, these concepts are expressed by other lexical categories. The work investigates how Dagaare uses adjectives and other lexical categories to express property concepts. According to Dixon (1982, 2004) the adjective class typically fills two roles. In Dixon (2004:10), he stated the following roles for adjectives:

a) in a statement that something has a certain property. There are two ways for

encoding it syntactically: i) adjective functions as an intransitive predicate as in the Boumaa Fijan language for instance or ii) the adjective functions as Copula Complement as we have in the Dagaare examples above.

b) as a specification that helps focus on the referent of the head noun in an NP that relates to predicate argument. The adjective is shown as a modifier within the NP.

The examples in Dagaare and English above illustrate this .To buttress this, Dixon (2004:10) gives the following examples:

A) [My father] CS [is] COPULA PREDICATE [tall] CC.

 B) [The tall man] S [laughed] INTRANSITIVE. PREDICATE.

Depending on the language under discussion, these two roles may be performed by the adjective class or not. It is also possible for the adjective to have only one of these functions in a particular language (Dixon 2004). Dixon (2004:28) further name two features of adjectives; namely;

i) as the parameter for comparison in comparative construction

ii) as modifiers to a verb, in adverbial function.

All these nouns used as modifiers can occur in subject positions by themselves without the nouns (as head nouns) and are from the noun class. In the examples examples below, the nouns in bold are used to serve as modifiers and they precede the head nouns. In terms of the position of the bolded nouns, they seem to be like the English structure, where the modifier precedes the modified. Dakubu (2000, 2002, 2003) refers to these nouns that precede the head nouns as epithet, whereas Dzameshie (2007:76) refers to these nouns as ordinary nouns.

1. **Sããkumã** yelbir ba lɔɔrɔ bara.= Tradition must not be abandoned.(literally)

   Saakuma=tradition, yelbir=word, ba=not/don't, looro=throwing, bara=away.

   In this sentence, the NP "saakuma yelbir" is the subject of the sentence and comprises two nouns: saakuma and yelbir. The first noun, saakuma plays the role of an adjective (PC) in relation to the second noun yelbir which it precedes immediately. It is clear then that nuns in Dagaare can function as PCs in syntactic structures.

2. A **daa** pɔge ba wa sɛṛe.=The market woman hasn't come yet.

   A=The,daa=market, pɔge=woman, ba=hasn't, wa=come, sɛṛe=yet.

   Very clearly in the example above, A daa pɔge (The market woman) is an NP with the head as pɔge (woman). The structure has in it two nouns: daa(market) and pɔge (woman), following each other concurrently. The first noun therefore, as you would find in English, changes function to an adjective. It becomes a PC by default since it represents an attribute or feature of the noun it precedes.

2. Conclusion

The illustrations in (4), (5), (6),1. and 2. above buttress the point that PCs are not only from the adjective category but from other syntactic categories as well. The study has investigated into detail how PCs are encoded in Dagaare. The study also seeks to answer the question: How are properties attributed to and predicated of entities? Since adjectives form a large class among PC items, the work first employs and investigates adjectives, then followed by nouns and adverbs that are used. In all twelve (12) recordings however, there is no instance where the verb is used to express PCs.On this ground therefore, one can conclude that all the major lexical categories in Dagaare can be used to express property concepts except the verb **(Research Qtn. 1)**.Whilst the nouns and adjectives are used attributively to express PCs,the adverbs on the other hand are used predicatively to express PCs (**Research Qtn. 2**).

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