

Property concepts in Kikisi

Deo Ngonyani

Michigan State University - USA

Dixon (2004) suggests that there are only two morphosyntactic types of language with respect to adjectives: those with a large open class adjective (eg English) and those with a closed small set of adjectives (Venda). Typological studies indicate that languages that lack a distinctive adjective category or have a restricted closed class are much more commonplace than the contrary (Beck 2000). To cover all concepts describing properties, Thompson (1988) uses the term "property concepts." Property concepts are concepts typically expressed by adjectives in European languages. They are also known as adjectival concepts. The question then is how are property concepts expressed in languages with a small closed class of underived adjectives.

*This paper examines property concepts in Kikisi (G67), an example of a language with a restricted class of adjectives. This previously undocumented language provides a good source of data to explore how other property concepts are expressed. With only 17 underived adjectives, Kikisi shows that other property concepts are expressed by noun, verbs and relative clause forms. Data show that physical properties tend to be expressed by verbs while human characteristics tend to be expressed by nominal forms, tendencies that Dixon notes in other languages of the world. The 17 adjectives are in four semantic categories that Dixon established, namely, Dimension (**-debe** small, **-baha** big, **-sekeli** thin, **-tali** tall, **-fupi** short, **-nene** fat, **-kolo** big), Age (**-pya** new, **-lala** old, **-fyele** infant), Value (**-nofu** good, **-bhibhi** bad), and Color (**-titu** black, **-bhalafu** white, **-dung'u** red).*

*An interesting question that arises is how a language such as Kikisi expresses intensification and comparison. This paper shows that intensification is accomplished by a degree adverb **nesu** (very) for adjectival and verbal property concepts or intonation for nominal property concepts. Comparison is by periphrastic devices.*