A functional categoriality of adjec-tives in Chichewa and Chiyao[*]

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Introduction

In formal linguistic frameworks, adjectives form a class of grammatical forms that specify the attributes of nouns. In English, for example, four criteria are generally used to define this class (Crystal 1977). First, forms in this class perform an attributive func-tion and occur within the noun phrase. Second, forms for these property concepts can also occur post verbally or in a predicative position. Third, adjectival forms may be pre-modified by intensifiers or degree modifiers; and finally, they may be used in a com-parative and superlative form, either periphrastically or by inflection. The following examples illustrate the four criteria outlined above.

1. the crazy soldier (attributive)
2. the soldier is crazy (predicative)
3. the soldier is very crazy (intensifier and adjective)
4. crazy, crazier, craziest (comparative and superlative forms)
5. interesting, more interesting, most interesting (periphrastic, comparative, and superlative forms)

Although formal linguistics treats the relations of adjectives and the nouns or noun phrases they qualify as essentially formal matters related to syntagmatic and paradig-matic grouping or even to simple relative order of word classes (see Ferris 1993), it should be noted, however, that not all adjective forms meet the criteria outlined above. As a matter of fact, the sub-classification of adjectives has proved quite complex. It is a well known fact that not all languages have the category "adjective", especially in the form defined above. There are cases in which property concepts are conveyed by claus-es. It is, in part, for this unresolved complexity that functional frameworks of syntax attempt to provide an alternative characterization of property concepts beyond simple statements about formal grouping of lexical items.

Thompson (1988), working within a functionalist framework, shows that adjectives or property concepts can be classified in terms of two major discourse functions. The first

function is that adjectives predicate a property of an established discourse referent. The second one is that they introduce new discourse referents. Although she claims that these discourse functions constitute a universal trend among property concepts, her data are invariably drawn from two languages only, English and Mandarin, and she admits that more work with other languages needs to be done (see note 5. p182). This paper, therefore, attempts to test Thompson's findings against two Bantu languages, Chichewa and Chiyao. The paper will also attempt to ascertain whether the degree of categoriality of the property concepts in these languages has any bearing on the morphology of the lexical items that realize these concepts.

General observations on word morphology of Chichewa and Chiyao

It is necessary to provide some background information on these two languages, particularly on the morpho-syntactic nature of adjectives. Chichewa and Chiyao are Bantu languages with agglutinative word morphologies and classified by Guthrie (1971) as belonging to the Zone N and Zone P language groups respectively. Chichewa is widely spoken in Malawi and in parts of Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Chiyao, on the other hand, is spoken predominantly in Southern Malawi, and in Tanzania, and Mozambique. As typical of most agglutinative languages, every part of speech in Chichewa and Chiyao consists of a stem or root and various prefixes and suffixes which modify the primary meaning of the root. The property concepts in these two languages are post-nominal, although it is not uncommon to hear speakers reverse the order in spontaneous discourse.

There are basically two groups of adjectives that are identified on the basis of their morphological composition. The first group is made up of adjectives that are formed from adjectival roots while the second group has adjectives that are derived from other parts of speech. It will be argued here that Chichewa and Chiyao have a distinct class of lexical items that qualify to be called "adjectives". As Dixon (1977) points out, however, to prove that a language has a class of adjectives, one must show that the forms in question are different, morphologically and syntactically, from the universal classes of Noun and Verb.

As pointed out above, Chichewa and Chiyao are agglutinative languages and there is no lexical item in these languages that can get as morphologically complex as the verb. The verb in Chichewa and Chiyao, like in other Bantu languages, shows, among other elements, both subject and object agreement.[1] In finite verbs, the subject agreement

marker is obligatory while the object marker is optional. It is not uncommon for agglutinative and polysynthetic languages to omit a nominal head noun altogether because it is already marked on the verb. Apart from the examples used in this paper, Mithun (1992) notes a similar trend in Cayuga, an Iroquoian language spoken in Ontario, in which verbs can stand alone as predications in themselves because of the presence of pronominal prefixes on the verb.

The example in (6), which is used here merely to illustrate the complexity of verbal morphologies in Bantu languages, is the structure of the verb in its most complex form in Chichewa. Example (7), drawn from Chimombo and Mtenje (1989:105), shows a Chichewa verb that instantiates this complex morphological form.

6 Negative - Subject - Aspectual - Tense - Object - Verb Root - Extensions - Final
    Marker   Marker   Marker   Marker   Marker   —   Vowel

7. Sindikanangomupitira
si   ndi ka   na   ngo mu   pit   ir   a
not I   conditional   past just him go   benefactive   final vowel
'I would not just have gone for him.'

Nominal and adjectival morphology

The noun is less complicated; it is generally made up of a noun root and a classifier prefix. For instance, the idea of 'existence' or 'being' is generally expressed by the root -nthu for Chichewa and *-ndu* for Chiyao.[2] By adding the classifier prefix mu- to these roots, the idea of 'being' is crystallized into the conception of a living person, mu-nthu, *mu-ndu* (a person). When the prefix *chi-* is added you get chi-nthu, *chi-ndu* (a thing). However, during the process of evolution, this method of building up nouns has naturally become obscured except in cases where the noun is derived from other parts of speech (also see Givón 1971).

The adjective, on the other hand, is morphosyntactically less complex than the verb because it does not take all the agreement and selectional suffixes that the verb takes. Like the verb, however, the adjective has to agree in number and gender with the noun it modifies and consequently takes an obligatory agreement prefix, specifically a possessive marker which refers to the class of the noun. This nominal agreement marker on the adjective has the function of limiting the adjective's scope of modification to the nominal element it represents.

The true adjectives, briefly identified earlier on, are made up of a possessive agreement marker (Poss), a class [Pr]efix (also referred to as a relative marker in some literature), and an adjectival [S]tem, in that order. The only exceptions among the true adjectives are colour stems which only take the agreement prefix because the stems are considered to be nouns. The class prefix converts the stem to which it is attached into a noun; it adds an element equivalent to the English "-ness". The colour stems, however, do not take this class prefix because they are already nominal in nature. The whole adjective literally translates into something like "of-stem-ness". The adjective has, therefore, a partitive structure. The following are examples of some of the true adjectives, arranged according to Dixon's categories. Apparently, the true adjectives only fall within the "Dimension", "Colour" and "Physical Property" categories. The other categories are made up of adjectives that are formed from other word classes.

8.   Dimension

wa-m-fupi,	wa-m-tali,	wa-m-kulu,	wa-m-ng'ono
jua-m-jipi	*jua-m-leu*	*jua-m-kulungwa*	*jua-m-nandi*
Poss-Pr-S:short	Poss-Pr-S:tall	Poss-Pr-S:big	Poss-Pr-S:little

9.   Colour

wo-fiila	wo-yela	wa-kuda
Poss-red	Poss-white	Poss-black
jua-m-chejewu	*jua-m-swela*	*jua-m-piliwu*
Poss-Pr-S:red	Poss-Pr-S:white	Poss-Pr-S:black

10.   Physical property

wa-m-wisi	wa-m-kazi	wa-m-muna
cha-chi-wisi	*cha-chi-kongwe*	*cha-chi-lume*
Poss-Pr-S:raw	Poss-Pr-S:female	Poss-Pr-S:male

As pointed out above, other words which express such property concepts as human propensity, age, value, and speed are derived from other word classes, especially from verbs, nouns, and adverbials. Just like the true adjectives, these too must take an obligatory possessive agreement prefix that agrees in person and number with the entities that they modify. These forms, however, do not carry the class prefix. As pointed out earlier the class prefix added to an adjective stem turns the stem into a noun.

Adjectives derived from nouns do not need to take the class prefix since the stem is already a nominal form. Similarly, the adjectives that are derived from verbs do not take the class prefix because the verbal forms used are gerundive/infinitival in form. It is a well known fact that gerunds and infinitives sometimes function like nouns. Adjectives derived from other parts of speech form a subclass which Hagege (1974) labels as relational adjectives. Although Hagege further claims that this subclass of adjectives does not accept degree modifiers, this claim is not true for all adjectives in the languages discussed here (the details are not discussed in this paper). The examples in (11 - 14) show the morphology of these adjectives that are derived from other lexical forms.

11. **Human propensity**

wa-nsanje,	wo-sangalala,	*ja-litaka,*	*cha-kunyalaya*
Poss-jealousy	Poss-be.happy	Poss-soil	Poss-ugliness

12. **Age**

cha-tsopano,	wa-lero
cha-sambano,	*wa-lelo*
Poss-now	Poss-today

13. **Value**

cha-bwino	cho-koma '	*cha-kunyalaya*	*cha-kusangalasya*
Poss-good	Poss-be.tasty	Poss-ugliness	Poss-to.entertain

14. **Speed**

yo-thamanga	wo-fulumila	*cha-kuutuka*
Poss-run	Poss-be.quick	Poss-running

It is clear from the examples illustrated above that, just like the true adjectives, the property concepts that are derived from nouns are also partitive in nature and come after the noun they modify. It is also clear that the nominal-adjective and the nominal-genetive have the same morphological shape. The difference in their interpretation, however, appears to be pragmatically motivated. For instance, the reason for construing "yanjerwa" in (15) as a nominal-adjective has to do with the fact that we do not

expect "njerwa" (bricks) to possess anything, let alone a house. This nominal entity, therefore, attributes a "bricky" quality to "nyumba" (house); that is, the house is made of bricks. On the other hand, "yamfumu" (16), in spite of being similar in form to 'yanjerwa', is construed as a nominal-genetive because it is inconceivable to think of a house as being built of a chief, like some construction material, but rather that it was built by or for the chief; it is the chief's house.

15. Nyumba   ya-njerwa   yagwa.
    house   Poss-brick   has fallen
    'A brick house has fallen.'

16. Nyumba   ya-mfumu   yagwa.
    house   Poss-chief   has fallen
    'The chief's house has fallen.'

It must be emphasized here that some of the property concepts that are derived from other parts of speech depend on metaphorical, metonymic and other pragmatic associations for their interpretation. For instance, the dimension property concept, "wa-mng'ono" may also be used to indicate young age rather than size. The imputation for age here is obviously based on the fact that young things are usually small in size. Similarly, the association between running and speed (14) is based on the obvious notion that to be fast one has to run, both literally and metaphorically.

It has also been shown that adjectives which are derived from verbs do not show the full morphosyntactic trappings that verbs exhibit. What they share with the verb are the stem, and the nominal agreement marker; they do not exhibit tense, conditional, aspectual, and other extensional markers. It should also be noted in passing, that all forms of adjectives in these languages can take a negative marker to form antonyms. In light of Hagege's (1974) finding that languages in which the adjective cannot be introduced into the noun phrase without the use of a class prefix are languages whose adjectives are a subclass of verbs, it can be argued that all adjectives in Chichewa and Chiyao qualify as a class of "adjectives".

Discourse behaviour of adjectives

Having examined the morphological structure of the adjectives in Chichewa and Chiyao, the paper now examines their discourse functions. The data for this analysis are based on a small corpus of spoken Chichewa and Chiyao. The Chichewa data were

initially collected to solicit instances of code-switching. The Chiyao data comprise two informal political speeches by local leaders during a presidential function in Malawi. Given the limited nature of the data, no frequencies will be given as these may be misleading. The focus will be on the discourse functions rather than on how often the languages use adjectives for those functions.

Property predicates

One of the functions that postnominal attributive adjectives perform in Chichewa and Chiyao is that they can occur in an argument position, especially in the subject position, without the nominal referent they are supposed to modify. A property concept here performs a function which would otherwise be reserved for a noun. Such constructions are very marginal in English (for example, "small is desirable"). The examples in (17) and (18) illustrate this function. In (18), it is the first adjective whose nominal head is omitted. Also note that this adjective is preceded by a fronted degree modifier, which, in a sense, is filling in for the nominal head. It could be omitted though, without changing the meaning of the utterance since it does not have any descriptive content.

17. Wa-kuba   uja   anagwidwa   dzulo
    Poss-to.steal   that   he.past.catch.passive   yesterday
    'The thief was caught yesterday.'

18. **(talking at a political function)**

    Une ngudandaula   bwana; mtima   wangu uli   samusamusamu!
    I   I.complain   sir   heart   my   it.is   (ideophone)

    winji   ililo.   Winji   ya-kumsalila   ligongo mtakwasa
    much   complaints   much   Poss-to.you.tell   because you.may.lose

    mtima   ninjipi   sya-m'buluku.
    heart   with-lice   Poss-in.trousers

'My heart is unsettled; I have so much to tell you lest you lose heart because of insignificant things.'

The use of attributive adjectives in argument position should be understood in light of the role of nominal agreement prefixes outlined above. As pointed out earlier, pronom-

inal agreement prefixes provide a sufficient characterization of the nominal entities they represent. Their anaphoric nature (recall that adjectives are postnominal in these languages) makes them dislocatable from their antecedents. The "nominal adjective" can only be understood with reference to a nominal entity that has already been identified in the discourse. Thus, although adjectives have the basic value of providing a subordinate property to assist in the identification of some entity when this is not fully achieved by the noun, here the adjective functions both as a nominal head and also as a property concept.

As a matter of fact, there are some adjectives that are habitually used as nouns in both Chichewa and Chiyao. The examples in (19) and (20) show adjectives that are rarely used with their nouns because the nouns are assumed to be understood. In these examples, the understood noun is a class 2 noun for (19) (for example, anthu [people]) and a class 1 noun for (20) (for example, munthu [a person]).

19. Wo-phunzira   amapeza   ntchito za-bwino.
    Poss-learn   they.habitual.find   job   Poss-good
    'The learned always find good jobs.'

20. Anamenyedwa   ndi-wa-misala
    he.past.beat.passive   by-Poss-madness
    'He was beaten by a mad person.'

The use of attributive adjectives in argument positions without the noun should also be understood within the context in which adjectives and nouns share certain characteristics. It is a well known fact that both adjectives and nouns have descriptive properties (Ferris 1993) and may both be considered as property concepts. As a matter of fact, nouns identify their referents by means of their descriptive content. It is also for this reason that adjectives may be derived from nouns. For English, this might explain such phrases as "school regulations" in which a noun is used attributively as a property concept.

Another function which is evident in the data and similar to the one identified by Thompson is where the adjective is used predicatively to instantiate a property explicitly assigned to the noun or noun phrase already identified by the subject but which does not take part in identifying that subject. These adjectives are usually preceded by a copula which helps to mark the relationship between the adjective and the noun or

noun phrase it modifies. It should also be noted that it is very common for speakers to omit the copula in rapid speech. This is the case with the second and third adjectives in the Chiyao example in (22) below.

Although no frequencies were computed for the occurrence of adjectives in this discourse role, this role appears to be the natural role because of the preponderance of adjectives in this discourse function. This in part explains why Meiklejohn (1909) argues that every adjective is either an explicit or an implicit predicate. Explicit predicate adjectives occur in predicate positions while implicit predicate adjectives occur attributively. Thus, the attributive position is in some sense a disguised form of the predicative adjective. In either position the adjectives share the referential locus of the head noun to which they are related. The following (21 and 22) are examples of the predicative adjective with the copula.

21. **(students talking about political leaders)**

Ee,	ifeyo	a UDF	sitikumufuna		chifukwa		ndi-wa-kuba,
Yes	we	of UDF	not.we.to.he.want		because		be-Poss-steal
atule		pansi,	alowepo	ena.			
he.drop		down	they.enter.there	others			

'We of the UDF do not want him because he is a thief; he should resign and let others run the party.'

22. **(a politician talking about members of the opposition at a presidential function)**

Pana	*wandu*	*wane*	*wa-kulepela*		*kupikana. Nambo*	*kupikana*
there.be	people	some	Poss-to.fail		to.hear but	to.hear

kwa-kusausya	*ngumanyilila.*	*Nibwana*		*chonde*	*ajimanjaji,*
Poss-be.difficult	I.know	So.sir		please	these.ones

wa-kupupuluma,	*wa-kulikuya*	*lisimba*		*kwalyatilile.*	
Poss-be.haste	Pr-to.it.follow	lion		to.it.run away.where	

'Sir, some people have problems understanding. I know that understanding is difficult. These people sir, are too much in a hurry, they are the kind of people who would be foolish to follow a lion into the forest.'

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Apart from the predicative adjective which appears with a copula, Thompson also identifies adjectives which are attributes to predicate nominal head nouns which are relatively non-new information bearing. Examples of this kind of function were also found in the data for this paper (examples 23 - 25). This type of function is not significantly different from the predicative function in (21 - 23) because the adjectives in both positions share the referential locus of the head noun which is marked on the adjective by the agreement marker. The agreement prefix, as discussed above, is a pronominal representative and anaphorically linked to the noun already identified in the discourse. A predicate nominal head noun is basically redundant and therefore sometimes omitted in discourse. Thompson's distinction between predicative adjectives (with a copula) and attributive predicative adjectives (with non-new-information bearing nominals) is quite plausible in languages that do not mark the nominal on the adjective but quite difficult to sustain in languages that mark the nominal on the adjective. It should also be noted that the copula in clauses where the noun is included precedes the noun. In the Chiyao example in (25), the nominal relative clause is the nominal head for the adjectives and is non-new information bearing too.

23. **(talking about their colleagues from the Northern Region)**

Anthu	a-kumpoto		akapita		kumidzi	kwawo	amakanena		kuti
people	Poss-at.north		they.cond.go		to.villages	to.their	they.habit.say		that

iwowo		ndi-anthu		wo-phunzira		kuposa		enafe.
they-.they		be.people		Poss-learn		to.exceed		some.us

'When people form the North go to their home villages, they tell other people that they are more educated than some of us.'

24. **(in the same conversation as in [23] above)**

Achewa	kumeneko		kuRumphi		ndi	kuKaronga		ali
the.chewa	there.	in	at.Rumphi		and	at.Karonga		they.be

m'maesiteti,	ndimatenanti		wo-tsalira,		wo-saphunzira,	wo-bwerera
in.estates	be.tenants		Poss-remain.benef.	Poss-not.learn		Poss-go.back

m'mbuyo;	*amangoona*		*ngati*	*kuti*		*tonsefe*	*kuno*	*tiri*	*choncho*
in.back	they.habit.just.see		like	that		we.all.us	here	we.are	like.that

'The Chewa in Rumphi and Karonga are mostly backward, illiterate tenants working on estates. They think that all of us are like that.'

25.   (a local chief thanking the head of state during a political function)

Ligongo yimtesile	*apapayi*	*yakusalala,*	*soni*	*yakunong'a,*
because that.you.done	here.here.this	Poss.beauty	also	Poss.tasty

soni yakunonyelesya.
also Poss.pleasing.very

'The things that you have done here are very beautiful and pleasing.'

A third predicative function that Thompson identifies is where the attributive adjective functions predicatively because its predicate nominal head is relatively empty. This function, again, is not significantly different from the case reviewed above - where the nominal head is non-new information bearing. In both cases, the information load of the nominal head is less than ideal. The example in (26) shows this function in Chichewa. The nominal substitute, "ujeni" is a term people use when trying to remember the name of something. The speaker here fails to re-identify the name of the story writer and instead uses an empty nominal substitute. Although no examples of this use were found in the Chiyao data, it is not difficult to imagine situations in which it would be used.

26.   (talking about a story in a newspaper)

Nkhani	ija	analemba	ujeni	wo-bowa	uja;	akuti
story	that	he.past.write	(so-and-so)	Poss-boring	that	he-say

chiyani?	Ine	sindinayionetsetse.
what?	I	not.I.past.it.see.much

'The story that so and so wrote; that boring [writer]; what does he say? I didn't pay much attention.'

New participants in discourse

The second major function that Thompson discusses is where the attributive adjective introduces a new participant into the discourse. In this function the adjective bears the burden of the information load because the referent being modified is empty. There were two examples of this function in the Chiyao data (examples 27 and 28). In example (27) both the noun and the adjective are introduced into the discourse for the first time. The adjective, however, is more important in distinguishing this 'road' (*msewu*) from other roads in the area. The adjective has, therefore, more descriptive content than the noun. Later in the same speech, another road is introduced by another adjective (example 28).

27. **(talking about transport problems in the area)**

Awu	*nsewu*	*awuwu*		*wa-Malombe,*	*kwana*		*wandu*
it-this	road	it-this-this		Poss-Malombe	to.there.be		people

alimile		*sona*		*akulepela*		*kutyoka*	*najo*	*kuti*
they.grow		tobacco		they.fail		to.leave	it.that	that

ayiche	*najo*	*akuno.*
they.come	it.that	here

'Tobacco farmers from the Malombe area are failing to transport their tobacco because of the poor road condition.'

28. **(talking about the accusations the opposition is making)**

Wandu	*wane*	*kuliwata*	*kwene*	*pasanja*		*nikwima*	*njo!*
people	other	to.step.on	really	on.platform		and.stand	upright

nikuwechetaga		*kuti*	*m'nolite*		*msewu*	*we-ukucheukuche.*
and.to.speak		that	you.seen		road	Poss-dug.up.dug.up

Ana	*wele*	*msewuwu*		*alinganyisye*		*wani?*
but	that	road.this		they.made		who

'It's unbelievable that some people stand on a platform and question the potholes on the road. Who constructed this road?'

Conclusion

This paper has shown that adjectives in Chichewa and Chiyao form their own class, distinct from nouns and verbs although they may share one or two features with these two universal categories. Unlike nouns, adjectives on their own cannot be grouped into classes the same way nouns are because their classifiers are donated to their morphology by the nouns that they modify. Adjectives, therefore, depend on nouns for their class identification and consequently can belong to different classes depending on which noun they are associated with. The paper has also shown that adjectives in Chichewa and Chiyao, just like those in English and Mandarin, function both predicatively to attribute a property to nouns and also to introduce new referents into the discourse. This paper has also uncovered another function where the adjective functions in argument position, especially in the subject position without a preceding noun. The need to appeal to pragmatic considerations for distinguishing between derivative adjective and possessive forms has also been attested in this paper.

Notes

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1. For a discussion on the status of the object marker in Bantu see Bresnan and Mchombo (1987).

2. For the rest of the paper, examples in Chiyao will be given in italics while those in Chichewa will be in the normal type print used for the rest of the paper.

3. Degree modifiers, like other modifiers in Chichewa and Chiyao, occur postpositionally.

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