THE EXPRESSION OF THE CONCEPTS OF PROPERTY IN YANOMAMA OF THE BRAZILAN AMAZON

The Yanomami languages have been analyzed as languages without adjectives (Migliazza, 1965; Ramirez, 1996; Lizot, 1994). In these languages the class of adjectival types and the class of verbal types are supposedly morphosyntactically neutralized. The distinction between those two classes is therefore purely based on semantics. Those analyses tacitly assume that the lack of morphological markedness of a word when functioning as modifier of a noun is the main criterion to identify an adjective in the languages (Dixon, 1982 y Beck, 2002).

I intend to demonstrate that, although Yanomama spoken in Papiu, in the Brazilian Amazon, marks morphologically the words that express CONCEPTS OF PROPERTY (CPs) (Dixon, 1982) when they are functioning as modifiers of a noun, the language nevertheless has adjectives in the sense that it has a major open class of words that express the semantic types CPs and that can be morphosyntactically distinguished from any other major class of the language. This word class is the only one that can be derived with the suffix *–rima* and then modify a noun. Other verbs cannot take that suffix and can modify a noun only as the head of a relative clause. The case of Yanomama confirms that the modifying function is indeed a key-function to study the expression of the CPs in a language but it also indicates that the lack of morphological markedness in the modifying function as the only criterion to indentify an adjective is a too simplifier position. The modifying function (besides the predication) is the main function frequently related to the adjectives. The existence of a specialized morpheme for the modifying function that can be taken only by the words that express the CPS is a strong piece of evidence to support the claim of the existence of an adjectival class in Yanomama.

Some data

The words that express almost all semantic types CPs in Yanomama indeed share some features with the class of verbs. In predication, for instance, both verbs (2) and words that express the CPs (1) can take the inflections of tense and aspect in their non-marked version:

(1) Krepuna a-kohipë-rayo-ma.
Krepuna NCL-*be strong*-PERF-PAS
Krepuna got strong.

(2) Xama a-toku-rayo-ma
tapir NCL-*run away*-PERF-PAS
The tapir run away.

On the other hand, nouns cannot directly take the tense-aspectual morphology and need a copula that hosts those morphemes or have to be previously derived with one of the several verbalizer suffixes of the language (3) to then be able to receive those morphemes:

(3) Ipa uhuru a-horema-**pë**-rayo-ma.
POS1S *child* NCL-*worm*-**VERBLZ** –PERF-PAS
My child got "wormed" (was attacked by worms).

The words that codify the CPs can be distinguished from the other verbs in the context of the modifying function of the head of a noun phrase. Both verbs and words that express CPs could function as modifiers. The clause of both kinds of word could take the nominalizer enclitics *=nii*, *=pii*, *=wei* or *=re* and then be a relative clause of the head of a noun phrase, i.e., be the modifying clause of a noun:

Words that express CPs:

(4) [Ipa *wao* kiki-wakë-o-nii] CR kiki-ixi-rayo-ma.
POS1S *cloth* NCL:*cloth-be red*-INCOMPL-RELTZ NCL:*cloth -burn*-PERF-PAS
My shorts that was red was burned.

Eventive verbs:

(5) [mihi *xote* wa-he-tiyë-re] he-taa-mu-totihi-mahi
DEM:*that basket* 2S-NCL:*basket-weave*-RELTZ NCL:*basket-look*-REFLEX-*beautiful-very*
The basket you are weaving looks like (very) beautiful.

Positional verbs:

(6) [kihi wãro a-ka-upra-re] ha ãri =paxio
DEM:*that man* NCL-FOC-*stand*-RELTZ *my father* NCL:*old parents* =EVID
That man that is standing is my father.

Nevertheless, only the words that codify CPS could also be derived with the suffix *–rima* and then act as the modifying of the head of a noun phrase without being the head of a relative clause:

(7) Ipa wao wakë-rima kiki-ixi-rayo-ma.
POS1S *cloth be red*- NOMLZ NCL:*clothes-burn*-PERF-PAS
My red shorts burned.

Neither positional verbs nor eventive verbs could be derived with the suffix *-rima*. Actually, there is no other word class in the language that can take this suffix, only the words that express CPs. There is no exceptions:

(8) *kihi warõ upra-rima ha ãri =paxio
DEM:*that man stand*-NOMLZ *my father* NCL:*old parents* =EVID
That standing man is my father.

Abbreviations

2S	*second person*	PAS	*past*
NCL	*nominal classifier*	PERF	*perfective*
FOC	*focalizer*	POS1S	*first person possessive*
INCOMPL	*incompletive*	VERBLZ	*verbalizer*
NMLZ	*nominalizer*		

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