

South African Journal of African Languages

ISSN: 0257-2117 (Print) 2305-1159 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjal20

Properties of the adjective category in Runyambo

Lea Mpobela & Amani Lusekelo

To cite this article: Lea Mpobela & Amani Lusekelo (2020) Properties of the adjective category in Runyambo, South African Journal of African Languages, 40:1, 120-129, DOI: 10.1080/02572117.2019.1672335

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2019.1672335

Published online: 12 Dec 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 44

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjal20

South African Journal of African Languages 2020, 40(1): 120–129

Copyright © NISC (Pty) Ltd

South African Journal of African Languages
ISSN 0257-2117 EISSN 2305-1159
https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2019.1672335

Properties of the adjective category in Runyambo

Lea Mpobela*[1] and Amani Lusekelo[2]

[1]*Department of Languages and Linguistics, Saint Augustine University of Tanzania, Tanzania*
[2]*Department of Languages and Literature, Dar es Salaam University College of Education, Tanzania*
**Corresponding author, email: rafikilea@yahoo.co.uk*

The identification of adjectives in many languages seems to be a point of concern to many linguists. It has been established by some scholars that adjectives form a closed word category in many languages of the world, while in others they are said to form an open word category. The aim of this article is to determine the nature of adjectives in Runyambo, using the prototype theory. Any item deviating from the prototypical features of a category tends to be morphologically or syntactically marked. The items discussed in this article therefore range from core adjectives to adjectives derived from other word categories. Runyambo falls in a group of languages with a closed class of adjectives forming only 13 items. Among these 13 items, there are only six core adjectives, two adjectives derived from nouns, two from verbs and three flexible adjectives.

Introduction

Adjectives are traditionally defined as a class of words that designate property concepts and that are used to modify nouns as attributes in the noun phrase (Givón, 1984). According to Baker (2003), adjectives are distinguished from verbs by not licensing a specifier, and from nouns by not having a referential index. Despite being clearly defined by different scholars, the issue of universality of adjectives has been a point of dissention among scholars. While some claim that adjectives form a universal word category (Baker, 2003; Dixon, 2004; Wasike, 2018), others claim their absence in some languages (Rijkhoff, 2000; Courtz, 2008; Meira and Gildea, 2009). In some languages property concepts are said to be presented mainly through other word categories including nouns (Heny, 1972; Hyman, 2003), verbs (Helmbrecht, 2004; Rugemalira, 2008; Dorvlo, 2009), adverbs (Meira and Gildea, 2009), or by nouns and verbs. For instance, Rugemalira (2008) claims that most property concepts in almost all the languages he discussed are represented by nouns and verbs. He gives an example of *komeye* 'be hard' in Hangaza, a Bantu language spoken in the north-western part of Tanzania. All the above claims make the discussion about adjectives controversial and raise two questions about adjectives in Runyambo: how are the property concepts represented in this language, and does the language have an independent category of adjectives?

The characterisation and identification of adjectives in Bantu languages seem to be challenging tasks. It has been established by some scholars (Hyman, 2003; Rugemalira, 2008; Segerer, 2008; De Schryver, 2010) that Bantu languages possess a closed class of adjectives which in some languages can be replaced by nouns or verbs without affecting the meaning of the information being communicated. In such languages, property concepts (semantic adjectives) are represented by items from other word categories. In a language like IsiZulu, only three adjectives are identified by De Schryver (2010). The presence of few adjectives has been reported to be the case in many Bantu languages, including Runyambo.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to identify adjectives in Runyambo, a Bantu language (E21) spoken in the north-western part of Tanzania. Runyambo possesses a closed number of adjectives which constitutes only 13 lexical items. Among these 13 items, there are only six core adjectives, two adjectives derived from nouns, two from verbs and three flexible adjectives. The article starts with a discussion of adjectives in different languages of the world, followed by a discussion of adjectives in Runyambo. The next section presents the general features of adjectives, while the last section presents a conclusion.

Delineation of adjectives

The identification of adjectives in many languages of the world has not been challenge-free. Some scholars claim the absence of adjectives in some languages, while their presence is reported in other languages. Baker (2003) believes that however closed the adjective class may be, it exists in all languages of the world. Baker gives the three features which distinguish adjectives from nouns and verbs in all languages as stated below:

i) Adjectives can be direct attributive modifiers of nouns, but nouns and verbs cannot be as in 'a rich man' versus '*a wealth man' and '*a shine coin'
ii) Adjectives can be the complements of degree heads like so, as, too, and how in English, but neither nominal nor verbal projections can be.
iii) Adjectives can be resultative secondary predicates, unlike nouns and verbs as in 'They beat the metal flat' versus '*they beat the metal a sword'.

In his discussion about character substance (NP) like 'fresh milk', Bloomfield (1933: 202) defines an adjective as

> …the attribute in a construction. In English it is a word class definable precisely by its functions in a phrase. It is a qualitative character of specimen of a species of objects.

Bloomfield further divides adjectives into limiting (determiners and numeratives) and descriptive adjectives, where in a construction with both, the limiting will appear before the descriptive adjectives as in 'this fresh milk'.

In relation to the number of adjectives in African languages, Creissels (2000) asserts that adjectives are generally rare in African languages, particularly in the Niger-Congo phylum where many languages only have a very small number of underived/genuine adjectives. To complement this argument, Rugemalira (2008) suggests that the Bantu adjective category can be dispensed with because in many Bantu languages there are only a handful of words that can be identified as underived adjectives, and that these may disappear without having any serious consequences for the grammars of these languages. In his study on Logba, Dorvlo (2009) argues that in some languages the non-derived adjectives are few in number. In those languages the words which express adjectival (property) concepts are either derived words or belong to a different word category. He argues that many adjectival concepts are expressed by means of verbs. Akrofi-Ansah (2013) presents only thirteen adjectives in Leteh, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana (see Table 1).

De Schryver (2010) finds a similar trend in isiZulu where there are only 17 adjectives including *-nye* 'other', *-khulu* 'big' and *-bili* 'two'. However, such adjective stems take noun class prefixes. They change as they modify nouns in different classes. For example,

(1) *omunye* class 1
ezinye class 7
ababili class 2
ezimbili class 7

Being nominal, adjectives in Basaá are classified into three classes depending on how they behave in a syntactic construction. Hyman, Jenks and Makasso (2013) claim that adjectives in Basaá function as heads of noun phrases – a function that is expected to be performed by nouns. The first group of adjectives (examples 2a, 2b and 2c) includes those which only occur in the construction where a nominal adjective (NA) is connected to a noun (N) by the connective 'of' (NA-of-N) as in:

(2a) *ɓalám ɓá dínuní*
ɓa-lám ɓá dí-nuní
cl.2 beautiful of birds
'beautiful birds'

Table 1: Adjectives in Leteh

Dimension	Colour	Age	Value
atimi short'	*ofufuru* 'white'	*ohue* 'new'	*ɔkpamkpa* 'bad'
ɔtɔntɔ 'tall'	*obibi* 'black'	*ɔdedɛ* 'old'	*okosɛ* 'good'
akitibi 'small'	*ɔhɛ* 'red'		*efɛ* 'true'
ɔkpɔmkpɔ 'big'			*enufu* 'false'

(2b) *minlaŋgá mí dínuní*
min-laŋgá mí dí-nuní
cl.4 black of birds
'black birds'

(2c) *hipeda hí hínuní*
hi-peda hí hí-nuní
cl.19 small of bird
'small bird'

This group of adjectives is said to have an inherent gender, controlling the noun class on the connective, and is referred to by Hyman et al. (2013) as a nominal adjective (NA). The same is argued by Hyman (2003) as he classifies adjectives as adjectival nouns. As seen in the examples above, the connective 'of' must agree with an adjective in noun class and number and the noun in the NA-of-N construction. This group is said to have more terms than others.

The second group of adjectives in Basaá are true adjectives. This is a group of adjectives that modify nouns. They follow and agree with the nouns they modify. This group comprises only seven members, namely *-kéŋí* 'big', *-tídgí* 'small', *-púbí* 'pure', *-híndí* 'black', *-súní* 'cold', *-léégá* 'warm' and *-yomí* 'live'. The syntax of adjectives in this group is similar to the syntax of adjectives in many other Bantu languages, including Runyambo, in agreeing in number and class with nouns.

The third group of adjectives in Basaá includes *n-lám* 'beautiful' and *m-ɓɛ́* 'ugly' and is said to be the smallest. The items in this group can occur either in the first group construction or the second group.

Concluding about the above three groups, Hyman et al. (2013) suggest that all the adjectives in Basaá are categorically nouns, enabling them to head a noun phrase. This claim leads to the conclusion that property concepts in Basaá cannot form an independent category of adjectives.

In contradistinction to the above, Mpofu (2009) analyses 90 adjectives in Shona. He argues that Shona has eight semantic types of adjectives including dimension, physical property, colour, age, value, human propensity, cardinal numbers and quantification. A similar amount of adjectives and their classifications are found in Shinyiha (Goodness, 2014). Both Mpofu and Goodness examine core and derived adjectives. To them, adjectives form an independent word category in Shona and Shinyiha. This is supported by Creissels (2014) who differentiates between the new and traditional adjectives in Setswana. He argues that the new adjectives act as relatives in some way.

Haspelmath (2012) argues that adjectives in German have a characteristic pattern of inflection that makes them different from nouns, and this morphological pattern could be used to define the class as in *roter/rote/rotes* 'red (masculine/feminine/neuter)'. Courtz (2008), on the other hand, differentiates between adjectival nouns and adjectives in Carib, a member of the Cariban language family spoken in the coastal region of northern South America, in villages on the rivers and creeks in Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. A small group of nouns are referred to as adjectival nouns as they are used to designate quality. Courtz (2008: 60–61) gives four arguments that made him identify such terms as nouns rather than adjectives:

i) They don't distinguish adverbial forms and adnominal

forms, but the stem may be used adnominally without any adnominalising suffix;
ii) Instead of the adjective pluraliser *-ine*, they combine with a plural suffix *-non*, which varies with *-konin* noun stems ending in *-n*, and *-konis* the most common noun pluraliser;
iii) Without any change of form, they may precede the postposition *me*; and
iv) They show possessive forms in some instances.

It is claimed by Meira and Gildea (2009) that in Cariban languages property concepts belong to adverbs or nouns. For example, in Akawaio the property concept *juwaŋ* 'hunger' is a noun, while the colour term *aimu'ne* 'white' is an adverb. However, Courtz (2008) identifies an independent class of adjectives in the Carib language and defines an adjective as a word category that designates a quality, i.e. an adjective qualifies an entity. He groups Carib adjectives into two forms: an adverbial form and an adnominal form, which actually supports the arguments by Meira and Gildea (2009) above.

Menon (2012) asserts that in Dravidian languages including Malayalam, adjectives are not found in the lexicon nor are they created in syntax. Menon (ibid.) claims that adjectival-like constructions can be syntactically created for the purpose of attributive modification and predication. He presents two classes of roots in Malayalam that look adjectival, in that they participate in positions in which English would have an adjective as follows:

Class 1 (*-a* ending relativised roots) like *valiya* 'big', *ceriya* 'small', *puthiya* 'new', *nalla* 'good', *pacca* 'green', *velutta* 'white', *maŋŋa* 'yellow', *pazhaya* 'old'
Class 2 *(-am* ending nominalised roots) *santosham* 'happiness', *sankatam* 'sadness', *prayasam* 'difficulty', *pokkam* 'tallness', *bedham* 'better', *madhuram* 'sweetness'

From the above examples, it is clear that the adjectives in Malayalam are presented as either relative clauses or nouns.

The universalist idea presented by Chomsky (1970) is doubted by many scholars who argue against the universality of adjectives. Beck (2000), among others, argues that adjectives are not found in all languages, and even in languages where they are found they differ tremendously in terms of their numbers. Haspelmath (2012) argues that in contrast to nouns and verbs, adjectives are sometimes like function words in that they form a rather small, closed class. He claims that many languages appear to lack adjectives entirely, expressing all property concepts by words that look like verbs or nouns. He gives examples from Korean where property concepts inflect for tense and mood and they require a relative marker just like verbs as presented below:

(3a) *sani nophessta*
san-i noph-ess-ta
hill- NOM high-past-DEC
'The hill was high'
(3b) *nophun san*
noph-un san
high-relative hill
'a high hill'

In support of this argument, Givón (1984) argues that adjectives are somewhat between permanent time-stable properties (nouns) and less time-stable, changing and temporary properties (verbs). Adjectives in Sakha are classified under the nominal paradigm (Vinokurova, 2005). In Mohawk, putative adjectives take some agreement prefixes and others take tense/aspect suffixes as uncontroversial intransitive verbs (Baker, 2003). The situation in Mohawk seems to present what Van Lier and Rijkhoff (2013) call flexible word categories. They present a flexible class of modifiers in Krongo and non-verbs in Turkish which seem to fulfil the functions of a number of word categories. The examples in Krongo are given below:

(4a) *güzelim*
güzel-im
beauty-1.POSS
'my beauty' (noun)
(4b) *güzel bir kopek*
beauty ART dog
'a beautiful dog' (adjective)

According to Hengeveld (2013), flexible parts of speech systems display classes of lexemes that can be used in more than one function without requiring lexical or syntactic derivation. He defined verb as a head of a predicate phrase and manner adverb as a modifier of a verb, while noun is defined as a referential phrase and adjective as a modifier of a noun.

Segerer (2008) discusses adjectives in seventy-two languages, some of which lack an adjective class. All these languages vary in the number and types of adjectives that they possess. Meira and Gildea (2009) argue that adjectives and adverbs form one class of adverbs, while Hengeveld (2007) claims that in Garo the adjectival concepts are presented through bound morphemes attached to the verbs.

In order to come up with a clearer discussion of adjectives in Runyambo, we employ the prototype theory which states that 'a prototype is a typical case of a category, and other elements are assimilated to the category on the basis of their perceived resemblance to the prototype' (Langacker, 1987: 371). The theory posits that there are degrees of membership based on degrees of similarity. The prototype theory allows for more or fewer prototype members. One of the principles of prototype theory is to achieve maximum differentiation with the prototypical instance of a category being that which distinguishes it most clearly from all other categories. Taylor (1995) argues that membership in a prototype category is a matter of gradience, which is referred to as a fuzzy feature. There is no clear-cut distinction between prototype and non-prototype, but only a range from 0 to 1. On the other hand, Croft (1991) asserts that prototypicality correlates with two kinds of markedness pattern across languages, including structural markedness, in that items deviating from the semantic prototype tend to occur with additional morphemes. This article considers structural markedness, among other issues.

An inventory of adjectives in Runyambo

This part presents a detailed analysis of adjectives in Runyambo. A total of 13 adjectives are discussed. Among these adjectives only six are underived, while two are derived from verbs, two from nouns and three are flexible. These will be divided into three subgroups depending on their prototypicality.

Adjective	Gloss
to	'young'
ce	'small/thin/few/some/little'
bi	'bad/ugly/evil/dirty/contaminated'
hângo	'big/wide/fat'
inji	'many'
sya	'new'
bisi	'raw/wet/uncooked'
gufu	'short'
kuru	'old'
runji	'good/beautiful/handsome/generous'
reingwa	'tall/long'
heihi	'near'
hare	'far'

Core adjectives

Runyambo has only six lexical items that are purely adjectival. We argue that these lexical items are adjectives due to their morphological, syntactic and semantic behaviour. However, the same lexical items can be nominalised, as will be discussed. Such lexical items are presented below:

Adjective	gloss
to	'young'
ce	'small/thin/few/little/some'
bi	'bad/evil/ugly/dirty/contaminated'
hângo	'big/wide/fat'
inji	'many'
sya	'new'

The above data were extracted from both written sources and the field. The structural and behavioural characteristics of these adjectives are presented below.

The morphology of core adjectives

The prototype adjectives in Runyambo, just like in other Bantu languages, agree with the nouns they modify. An adjectival root (RT) is a bound morpheme of which the structure is completed by a noun class prefix (NCP). Runyambo divides its nouns into 18 classes. This brings about an agreement pattern between a noun and an adjective. The morphological structure of the adjective therefore, is NCP+RT as in the examples below:

(5a) *Omukazi muto*
o-mu-kazi *mu-to*
AUG-cl.1-woman cl.1-young
'a young woman'

(5b) *Entaama nto*
e-n-taama *n-to*
AUG-cl.9-sheep cl.9-young
'a young sheep'

(5c) *Ecaana cito*
e-ci-ana *ci-to*
AUG-cl.7-child cl.7-young
'a fat young child'

As seen in the above examples, the adjective *-to* 'young' agrees with the nouns it modifies by means of an agreement morpheme (AM). This morphological behaviour is not inherent to prototype adjectives only but to all adjectives in Runyambo. The noun class and adjectival concords in Runyambo are presented in Table 2.

Adjectival roots in Runyambo have the other morphological feature of changing into nouns and verbs freely. The attachment of the augment and the noun class prefix changes adjectives into nouns. These morphological features are complemented by the syntactic features unique to adjectives which are discussed in the next subsection. The augment in Runyambo differentiates between nouns and adjectives. Nouns have an augment, while the adjectives have only the noun class prefix. This is a very important feature that differentiates between nominal modifiers and nouns. In Runyambo, the adjectival roots are bound morphemes just like

Table 2: Noun class system and adjectival concords in Runyambo

NC	AUG	NCP	Stem	AM	Example	Gloss
1	o-	-mu-	-ntu	mu-	*omuntu muto*	young person
2	a-	-ba-	-ntu	ba-	*abantu bace*	a few people
3	o-	-mu-	-péera	gu-	*omupeera guto*	young guava tree
4	e-	-mi-	-péera	mi-	*emipeera mito*	young guava trees
5	e-	i-/-ri	-iso	ri-	*eriiso rice*	a small eye
6	a-	-ma-	-iso	ga-	*ameiso gace*	small eyes
7	e-	-ci-	-ríibwa	ci-	*eciriibwa cihango*	a big cassava
8	e-	-bi-	-ríibwa	bi-	*ebiriibwa bihango*	big cassavas
9	e-	-(n)-	-te	N-	*ente nce*	a small cow
10	e-	-(n)-	-te	zi-	*ente zice*	few cows
11	o-	-ru-	-hu	ru-	*oruhu ruhango*	a big skin
12	a-	-ka-	-âna	ka-	*akaana kato*	a small young child
13	o-	-bu-/tu	-âna	bu-/tu	*obwaana buto*	small young children
15	o-	-ku-	-ju	ku-	*okúju kuhango*	a big kneel
15a	o-	-ku-	-jenda	ku-	*okujenda kubi*	a bad walk
16	a-	-ha-	-ntu	ha-	*ahantu habi*	a bad place
18	o-	-mu-	-nju	ha-	*omunju habi*	in the bad house

nominal roots and they all receive AUG and NCP to become nouns. Most of these nouns are inherently found in noun class 14 by the augment *o-* and the noun class prefix *-bu-*.

Adjective	gloss	noun	gloss
to	young	*obuto*	youngness
ce	small/thin/few	*obuce*	thinness
bi	bad	*obubi*	badness
hango	big/wide	*obuhango*	bigness
sya	new	*obusya*	newness

The abovementioned five core adjectives can become nouns in noun class 14. These adjectives can also be nominalised and used as nouns when the referents are definite. This means when a selection among many people is made and a small one is taken, *omuce* can be used to refer to such a person. In this case the output will be a noun as in the examples below.

(6a) *Omuto nakweta*
o-mu-to ni-a-ku-eta
AUG-cl.1-young Prs-SM-INF-call
'The young one is calling you.'

(6b) *Omuce akajeenda ohamujera*
o-mu-ce a-ka-jeenda
AUG-cl.1-small SM-Pst-go
'The thin one went to the well.'

(6c) *Ababi bakamuroga*
a-ba-bi ba-ka-mu-roga
AUG-cl.2-bad SM-Pst-OM-bewitch
'The bad ones bewitched him/her'

The noun phrase is always headed by a noun, hence the words *omuto, omuce and ababi* are nouns rather than adjectives. Rugemalira (2005) presents class 14 abstract nouns derived from adjectives but he does not present the noun forms in other noun classes as we do in this article. Runyambo adjectives have a very productive nominalising morphology in which a single adjective can be nominalised into many noun classes.

Adjectives in Runyambo therefore behave like nouns as they can be attached to different noun class prefixes, the behaviour possessed by nouns. They are easily nominalised and they take the same agreement affixes as the nouns they modify (see Table 2). Their behaviour makes the adjective category more similar to nouns than verbs and adverbs. Nouns can easily share the syntactic position of an adjective when they function as nominal modifiers as in (7).

Also, adjectives are changed into nouns when they are used as relative clauses in different constructions. In this case, both the noun and the nominalised adjective are used. This morphological behaviour is presented in the examples below:

(7a) *Omwaana omuto narira*
o-mu-ana *o-mu-to* *ni-a-rira*
AUG-cl.1-child AUG-cl.1-small Prs-SM-cry
'The child who is young is crying.'

(7b) *Omuti oguce gugwiire*
o-mu-ti *o-gu-ce* *gu-gw-ire*
AUG-cl.3-tree AUG-cl.3-small SM-fall-PERF
'The tree which is small fell.'

The foregoing discussion reveals the fact that morphologically adjectives can behave like nouns as nouns can behave like adjectives when they are used to modify nouns as in examples in (7). As also suggested by Kahigi (2008), the distinction between nouns and adjectives is problematic in Bantu. However, the only morphological difference is that adjectives do not take an augment, while nouns do. Also the noun class prefix is not inherent to adjectives, hence a single adjective can take an NCP from any noun it modifies. That is, an adjective inherits the NCP of a noun it modifies. Despite the morphological similarities between adjectives and nouns, they still form two distinct word categories.

Adjectives in Runyambo can also be changed into verbs by suffixing the verbalising morpheme *-ha* to the adjectival root. However, only four roots among the six core adjectives possess this ability. This morphological feature is inherent to adjectives as it cannot be possessed by nouns. Nouns in Runyambo cannot be verbalised by attaching *-ha*, instead they receive the suffix *-haara*.

Generally, adjectives are differentiated from prototype nouns because such nouns cannot be verbalised. Thus, only property concept nouns can be verbalised. The two adjectives *-sya* and *-inji* behave differently. However, their existence can be traced in other Bantu languages including Kiswahili, a situation that makes them prototype Bantu words. Their behaviour in the examples below reflects the reality that originally *-inji* is a quantifier and *-sya* was originally a verb in Proto-Bantu **-pi* 'burn', which in Runyambo is used for both 'burn' and 'new'. Such differences make them less prototypical than the four adjectives shown below.

Adjective	gloss	verb	gloss
-to	young	*tooha*	become young
-ce	small/thin	*ceeha*	become small/thin
-bi	bad/ugly	*biiha*	become bad/ugly
-hango	big/wide	*hanguha*	become fat/big
-inji	many	–	
-sya	new	–	

These examples reveal the fact that Runyambo has only four inherent prototype adjectives. In Runyambo it is possible for adjectives to become verbs, but very rare for verbs to become adjectives. Only two adjectives from verbs will be presented in the next subtype of adjectives.

Syntactic features

In their original form, the core adjectives in Runyambo occur attributively following the nouns they modify. This position cannot be occupied by a noun unless it functions as a relative clause. Even when a noun is used, only nouns representing property concepts or derived from adjectives are allowed. For example,

(8a) *Omwaana muto* 'a young child'
omwaana omuto 'a child who is young'

(8b) *Omukazi muce* 'a thin woman'
omukazi omuce 'a woman who is thin'

(8c) *eka mbi* 'a bad family'
eka embi 'a family which is bad'

From these examples, it is evident that Runyambo possesses a closed class of adjectives which behave

differently from nouns and verbs. However few they are, they are still important and worthy to be recognised and differentiated from the other word categories, including nouns and verbs.

The nominalised adjectives can function as subjects of the sentence – an inherent feature of nouns in Runyambo. However, they differ from core nouns as they cannot be modified by other adjectives. They semantically carry two notions of a noun and adjective at the same time. Compare the following examples:

(9a) *omuce neiza* **omuce muruunji neiza*
(9b) *enuunji nerya* **enuunji nto nerya*
(9c) *oguruunji bagutemire* **oguruunji gureigwa bagutemire*

The fact that they can be subjects of a sentence in (9a), (9b) and (9c) proves their being nouns. However, the adjectives cannot syntactically function as subjects. This feature differentiates adjectives from nouns in Runyambo. The following constructions in Runyambo are therefore impossible:

(10a) **muce neiza*
(10b) **nuunji nerya*
(10c) **guruunji bagutemire*

The examples in (10) differentiate adjectives from nouns. Nouns cannot be regarded as nouns unless they carry an augment, hence **mukazi* and **muti* in the constructions **mukazi neiza*, **muti bagutemire* are not nouns. The nouns are *omukazi* 'a woman' and *omuti* 'a tree'.

The other syntactic function of adjectives is subject complement. The adjectives in Runyambo follow the copular verb *ni* 'is' or *ti* 'is not'. They occur as predicates in a sentence.

(11a) *Omuseiza **ni** muto* 'the man is young'
(11b) *Entebe **ti** mpango* 'the chair is not big'
(11c) *Omunyembe **ni** guce* 'a mango tree is small'
(11d) *Ahanzu **ti** habi* 'at the house is not bad (the area)'

Generally, Runyambo adjectives possess some unique syntactic features which are inherent to them. Thus, despite being the smallest word category, they must be appreciated as an independent word category worthy to be presented as such in Runyambo linguistics.

The semantics of Runyambo core adjectives

Adjectives are words that designate property. They are used to modify nouns. All adjectives in Runyambo function as semantic modifiers of nouns. We thus agree with Baker (2003), who argues that the ability to modify nouns is the defining or at least the characteristic, prototypical property of adjectives. They are used to characterise a noun which they modify. Haspelmath (2012) also suggests that the category adjective be established based on the meaning of roots. Runyambo makes use of only six core adjectives some of which designate more than one meaning.

-to 'young'
-ce 'small/thin/few/little'
-bi 'bad/ugly'
-hango 'big/wide/fat'
-inji 'many'
-sya 'new'

A few existing core adjectives in Runyambo fit in only five of the thirteen semantic types of adjectives identified by Dixon (2004). However, some of them fit into more than one type as will be shown. The other semantic types are presented by verbs and nouns representing property concepts, namely:

Dimension: *-hango* 'big/fat/wide', *-reingwa* 'tall', *-ce* 'small/thin', *-gufu* 'short'
Age: *-sya* 'new', *-to* 'young', *-kuru* 'old'
Value: *-ruunji* 'good', *-bi* 'bad/ugly/evil'
Quantification: *-inji* 'many', *-ce* 'few', *-onka* 'only'
Position: *eihi* 'near', *hare* 'far'

In Runyambo, a differentiation in dimension can be made between big and small, and tall and short. The terms *-hango* and *-ce* carry more than one meaning each. In Runyambo the terms 'fat', 'wide', 'big' are stated by one term. What differentiates them are the nouns they modify. All things that can be measured in terms of the space they occupy use the term *-hango* if they occupy a big space. The evidence is given below:

(13a) *enyanja mpango*
e-n-yanja n-hango
AUG-cl.9-water body cl.9-big
'a big water body'
(13b) *omuntu muhango*
o-mu-ntu mu-hango
AUG-cl.1-root cl.1-big
'a fat person'

The adjective *-ce* on the other hand falls into two semantic types of dimension and quantification. In dimension, *-ce* means small or thin, while in quantification it means few, some or little. Therefore in quantification *-inji* 'many' is differentiated from *-ce* 'few'. Value differentiates between *-bi* 'bad/evil/ugly/dirty/contaminated' and *-ruunji* 'good/beautiful/handsome', which will be discussed later in derived adjectives.

Runyambo adjectives can also be grouped into quantifiers and qualifiers. Some adjectives are used to show the quantity of the entities in the noun they modify. Such adjectives include *-ce* and *-inji.* Other adjectives are used to qualify the nouns they modify by showing the quality. Such adjectives include *-kuru, -to, -sya, -hango* and *-ce*. Thus, the adjective *-ce* falls into both qualifiers and quantifiers as it presents a range of meanings.

Derived adjectives

Adjectives derived from nouns

In Runyambo, adjectives look similar to nouns in that they agree in noun class with the nouns they modify. Also just like nouns, adjectives are made up of bound roots which cannot stand alone as a word. The adjectives in this group are argued to be derived from nouns due to their morphological behaviour which is similar to that of other nouns that are not changed into adjectives.

The suffix *-haara* is attached to adjectives in this group to make them verbs. The same affix is attached to other nouns

to form verbs as well. This is also supported by Rugemalira (2005) as he argues for the presence of verbal derivatives from nouns, including the nouns *obugufu* and *obubisi*. However, only two adjectives of this sort exist, as shown below:

obugufu	'shortness'	-gufu	'short'
		gufahaara	'be short'
obubisi	'rawness'	-bisi	'raw/wet'
		bisahaara	'be raw'
obunaku	'poverty'	*-nakuhaara*	'be poor'
obujune	'sorrow/sadness'	*-junahaara*	'be sad'
oburenga	'dull'	*-rengahaara*	'be dull'
obunafu	'laziness'	*-nafahaara*	'be lazy'

The above examples reveal the fact that the adjectives *-gufu* and *-bisi* are derived from nouns. The evidence of their being derived from nouns is presented by the morphological behaviour of the nouns. It is evident that nouns in Runyambo are changed into verbs by attaching the suffix *-haara*. Just like the core adjectives, this group of adjectives agrees in NCP with the nouns they modify. *-bisi* is selective on the nouns it modifies; it cannot modify nouns in class 1/2. *-gufu* can be used to designate duration or distance in Runyambo as in:

(14a) *Oruguudo rugufu*
o-ru-guudo ru-gufu
AUG-cl.11-road cl.11 short
'A short road'

(14b) *Amaciro gagufu*
a-ma-ciro ga-gufu
AUG-cl.6-season cl.6-short
'A short season'

-bisi on the other hand is used to mean unripe, as opposed to *-hiire* (verb) 'ripe' in fruit, while it is used to mean 'uncooked' or 'not properly cooked' in food, as in *ebitoce bibisi* 'uncooked food'. The same can be used for wounds when the wound is new, or not healed; one will use *-bisi*. *-bisi* is also used to designate wet in Runyambo. It is used as a synonym of the verb *robha* 'be wet'.

Adjectives derived from verbs

The findings show that some adjectives are derived from verbs. Good examples of such adjectives are *-kuru* 'old' which is derived from the verb root *-kur-* 'grow' and *-runji* 'good' from the verb root *-rung-* 'season/spice'. To show the evidence that they are derived from verbs, a list of other property concept verbs changed to nouns is given. This is to reflect how verbs change into nouns and adjectives as in the examples below:

Root	Verb	Adjective/Noun
-kur-	*-kura* 'grow'	*-kuru* 'old'
-rung-	*-runga* 'spice'	*-runji* 'good'
-tung-	*-tunga* 'become rich'	*-tunji* 'richness'
-nur-	*-nura* 'be delicious'	*-nuzi* 'deliciousness'

The adjectives *-kuru* and *-runji* are derived from the bound roots which, as seen earlier, are originally verbs. The evidence that these adjectives derive from verbs is also reflected in other Bantu languages as suggested by Hyman (2003) that synchronic alternations are found in languages which use the /ụ/ and /ị/ suffix to derive adjectives or nouns from verbs.

Just like other adjectives in Runyambo, *-kuru* and *-runji* agree with the nouns they modify. When used with the noun, *-tunji* functions as an adjectival clause in a noun phrase as in *omuntu omutunji* 'a rich person', as opposed to **omuntu mutunji*, which is not a possible construction in Runyambo. If one wants to say 'a rich person', *omutunji* will be used. This is, however, different from the word *-nuzi* 'sweetness' in which a verb is used to designate property in this word. For example, the delicious food will be termed *'ebitoce binuzire'* in Runyambo.

Flexible adjectives

Adjectives modifying locative nouns in Runyambo can function as adverbs and adjectives. This means when attached to locative prefixes the same adjectives can function as place adverbs. Such adjectives include *heihi* 'near' and *hare* 'far'. When these are used with nouns that they modify, they become adjectives, as in the examples below:

(15a) *Enkoko ekanaga* (*ahantu*) ***hare***
e-n-koko e-ka-naga (*a-ha-ntu*) *ha-re*
AUG-cl.9-hen SM-Pst-lay eggs (AUG-cl.16-being) cl.16-far
'A hen laid eggs at a far place.'

(15b) *Embeba bakazinaga* (*ahantu*) ***heihi***
e-n-beba ba-ka-zi-naga (*a-ha-ntu*) *he-ihi*
AUG-cl.10-rat SM-Pst-OM-throw (AUG-cl.16-being) cl.16-near
'They threw the rats to a near place.'

These examples reveal the fact that prototypicality is a matter of gradience. The lexical items range from prototype adjectives to derived and flexible adjectives that fall between adverbial and property concepts in Runyambo to items which are not adjectives at all.

For example, the adjective *-reingwa* 'tall' is derived from the root *'-rei'* whose nominal and adjectival root is *-reingwa*. The same root is found in the class 3 noun *omureiba* 'long straight tree' and a verb *reiha* 'become tall'. The forms of *rei-* reveal the fact that *rei-* possesses a trilateral category membership. Thus, it is nominal, verbal and adjectival. This root, however, is different from the other adjectives, including *-kuru* and *-rungi* which seem to be derived from verbs.

General features of property concepts in Runyambo

Gradability

Many word classes – including nouns, verbs and adjectives – can be graded. However, only adjectives that denote a property can be graded or compared. Hence only gradable adjectives can be compared and intensified. Runyambo uses three strategies to express gradability. Adjectives in Runyambo can be intensified through the use of the adverbs *muno* 'very' and *munonga* 'very much', vowel lengthening and intonation, change of the root, clitic *-mu* and reduplication. The property concepts in Runyambo can also be compared through the use of comparatives *saaga/ cira*, 'surpass' and superlative *sagurirana* 'surpass all'.

Intensification

As stated earlier, adjectives in Runyambo can be intensified by a degree word *muno* 'very/much' and *munonga* 'very much'.

(16a) *omukazi muhângo muno*
o-mu-kazi *mu-hângo* *muno*
AUG- cl.1-woman cl.1-fat very
'a very fat woman'
(16b) *ente nce munonga*
e-n-te *n-ce* *munonga*
AUG-cl.9-cow cl.9-small very much
'an extremely small cow'

From the above examples, it is revealed that *muno* and *munonga* do not agree with the noun or the verbs they intensify. Also, some Runyambo core and derived adjectives can be intensified by vowel lengthening and intonation. Thus the prolonged vowels are also high toned as in the examples below:

(17a) *abaisici* ***barunji*** 'beautiful girls'
abaisici ***barúúúúnji*** 'extremely beautiful girls'
(17b) *omwâna* ***muhângo*** 'a fat child'
omwâna ***muháááángo*** 'an extremely fat child'

The adjective *-ce* 'small' (or *-ke* as some speakers pronounce it), however, is intensified differently by changing the root into *-nti* and vowel lengthening is done on the noun class agreement morpheme attached to the root. For example:

(18a) *Akaana* ***kace*** 'a small (good) child'
Akaana ***káááánti*** 'an extremely small child'
(18b) *Omujera* ***guce*** 'a small well'
Omujera ***gúúúúnti*** 'an extremely small well'

Reduplication can also be used in some Runyambo adjectives to show the intensity of the quality possessed by a noun. In this case, it is when the quality is not extreme. In monosyllabic adjectives, the root and the noun class agreement prefix are reduplicated, as in the example of *-ce* in (19a), while in property concepts with more than one syllable only the root is reduplicated, as in the example of *-bisi* in (19b):

(19a) *omwisici* ***muce*** 'a small girl'
omwisici ***muce muce*** 'a relatively thin girl'
akaana ***kacekace*** 'a relatively small fine child'
(19b) *ebitoce bi****bisi*** 'uncooked food'
*ebitoce bi****bisibisi*** 'relatively uncooked plantain'
*omwongo gu****bisibisi*** 'a relatively uncooked pumpkin'

Different from reduplication, the native speakers of Runyambo use the clitic *-mu* 'somehow' which is attached to the adjective as exemplified below:

(20a) *Nyangoma ni muhângo****mu*** 'Nyangoma is somehow fat'
(20b) *Muka wenene ni murunji****mu*** 'His wife is somehow beautiful'

The foregoing discussion presents an interesting fact that in Runyambo a single quality can be intensified differently to give different qualities.

Comparability
Adjectives in Runyambo can be compared. In Runyambo, this comparison is done by the verb *saaga/cira* 'surpass' and *sagurirana* 'be beyond normal'. *Saaga/cira* is used to compare two things, while *sagurirana* states how something/one possesses a trait exceedingly, hence only one thing is involved. For example,

(21a) *Nyamwiza ni murunji kusaaga Nyamicu*
Nyamwiza *ni* *mu-runji* *ku-saaga* *Nyamicu*
Nyamwiza be cl.1-beautiful INF-surpass Nyamicu
'Nyamwiza is more beautiful than Nyamicu'
(21b) *Nyanjura ni murunji kusagurirana*
Nyanjura *ni mu-runji* *ku-saagurirana*
Nyanjura be cl.1-beautiful INF-be beyond normal
'Nyanjura is exceedingly beautiful'

Core and derived adjectives do not need adverbs when compared. The comparative marker *saaga/cira* is made infinitive when comparing adjectives and other property concepts. Therefore, however few they are, Runyambo possesses an independent category of adjectives.

Co-occurrence of adjectives
In Runyambo, adjectives can co-occur. A noun can have up to four qualities. The co-occurrence of adjectives is not restricted to certain positions. They can occur freely without any obligations as to which should come before which, as in the examples below:

(22a) *Omwâna muce murunji mugufu narira*
o-mu-ana *mu-ce* *mu-runji* *mu-gufu* *ni-a-rira*
AUG-cl.1-child cl.1-small cl.1-good cl.1-short FOC-SM-cry
'A thin beautiful short child is crying'
Or
Omwâna murunji mugufu muce narira
(22b) *Ente nto nunji mpângo ekafa*
e-n-te *n-to* *n-runji* *n-hângo* *e-ka-fa*
AUG-cl.9-cow cl.9-young cl.9 good cl.9 big SM-Pst-die
'A good fat young cow died'

Conclusion

Adjectives in Runyambo form a closed class of only 13 members with only six core adjectives. Most of the property concepts in Runyambo are presented through lexical items from other word categories including nouns and verbs. There also exists a weak boundary between nouns and adjectives in Runyambo, a situation that makes adjectives similar to nouns and they can freely change into nouns.

Syntactically, all adjectives can appear in attributive and predicative positions. In attributive position, adjectives occur after the nouns they modify, while in predicative position, they occur as subject complements following the copular verb *ni* 'is'. This feature is inherent to prototype adjectives and nouns in Runyambo.

Generally, Runyambo adjectives can be differentiated from other word categories through the following features:

i) Adjectives in Runyambo function as direct modifiers of nouns. When they modify nouns, they need not appear

as relative clauses as property concept words from other word categories.

ii) Adjectives in Runyambo do not carry augments and they agree in noun class with the noun they modify.

iii) Runyambo adjectives appear with a copular *ni* when they appear in a predicative position. This differentiates them from verbs not nouns.

iv) Adjectives in Runyambo cannot function as subjects, hence they cannot appear without the nouns they modify in a noun phrase.

Generally, this article shows that there are items in this language which deserve to be categorised as adjectives even if they form a very small group. Linguists working on Runyambo would not do justice to the grammar of Runyambo if they lumped them together with nouns.

Abbreviations used

AM	Agreement morpheme
ART	Article
AUG	Augment
Cl	class
DEC	declarative
FOC	Focus
INF	infinitive
N	Noun
NA	Nominal adjective
NC	Noun class
NCP	Noun class prefix
NP	Noun phrase
NOM	Nominative
OM	Object marker
PERF	perfective
POSS	Possessive
Prs	Present
Pst	Past
RT	Root
SM	Subject marker

ORCID

Amani Lusekelo https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1398-9367

References

Akrofi-Ansah M. 2013. Expressing property concepts in Leteh (Larteh). *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 2(2): 23–40. https://doi.org/10.4314/gjl.v2i2.2

Baker M. 2003. *Lexical categories: Verbs, nouns, and adjectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615047

Beck D. 2000. Typological variation of the adjectival class: Markedness and iconicity at the semantics - syntax interface. In: Wanner L (ed.), *Advances in Meaning-Text Theory*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. pp. 1–30.

Bloomfield L. 1933. *Language*. New York: H. Holt and Company.

Chomsky N. 1970. Remarks on nominalization. In: Roderick JA, Peter SR (eds), *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*. Waltham: Blasdell. pp. 184–221.

Courtz H. 2008. *A Carib grammar and dictionary*. Toronto: Magoria Books.

Creissels D. 2000. Typology. In: Heine B, Nurse D (eds), *African languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 231–258.

Creissels D. 2014. The new adjectives of Tswana. In: Raffaele S, Francesca M (eds), *Word class: Nature, typology, and representations*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp. 75–94.

Croft W. 1991. *Syntactic categories and grammatical relations. The cognitive organization of information*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

De Schryver GM. 2010. Revolutionizing Bantu lexicography: A Zulu case study. *Lexikos* 20: 161–201. https://doi.org/10.4314/lex.v20i1.62689

Dixon RMW. 2004. Adjective classes in typological perspective. In: Dixon RMW, Aikhenvald AY (eds), *Adjective classes: A cross linguistic typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 1–45.

Dorvlo K. 2009. Does Logba have an adjective class? In: Matondo M, Mc Laughlin F, Potsdam E (eds), *Selected Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*. Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. pp. 95–105.

Givón T. 1984. *Syntax. A functional-typological introduction*. Volume I. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/z.17

Goodness D. 2014. The *Shinyiha* adjective as a distinct lexical category. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam.

Haspelmath M. 2012. How to compare major word classes across the world's languages. *CLA Working Papers in Linguistics, Theories of Everything* 17(16): 109–130.

Helmbrecht J. 2004. Are there adjectives in Hocank (Winnebago)? *Arbeitspapiere des Seminars für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Erfurt (ASSidUE)* 14: 1–24.

Hengeveld K. 2007. Parts of speech systems and morphological types. *ACLC working papers* 2(1): 31–48.

Hengeveld K. 2013. Parts of speech systems as a basic typological determinant. In: Rijkhoff J, Eva VL (eds), *Flexible word classes: Typological studies of underspecified parts of speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 31–55. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199668441.003.0002

Heny F. 1972. Bantu lexical classes and semantic universals. *Studies in African Linguistics* 3(2): 201–258.

Hyman LM. 2003. Basaá (A43). In: Nurse D, Philippson G (eds), *The Bantu languages.* London: Routledge. pp. 257–282.

Hyman LM, Jenks P, Makasso EM. 2013. Adjectives as nominal heads in Basaá. In: Orie OO, Sanders KW (eds), *Selected Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Conference on African Linguistics*. Somerville: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. pp. 151–162.

Kahigi K. 2008. Derivation in Sisumbwa. *Occasional Papers in Linguistics Series* 3: 53–81. LOT Publications.

Langacker RW. 1987. *Foundations of cognitive grammar. Vol. 1: Theoretical prerequisites.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Meira S, Gildea S. 2009. Property concepts in the Cariban family: Adjectives, adverbs and/or nouns? In: Wetzels WL (ed.), *The linguistics of endangered languages -- Contributions to morphology and morphosyntax*. Utrecht: LOT Occasional Series. pp. 95–133.

Menon M. 2012. The apparent lack of adjectival category in Malayalam and other related languages. *The Proceedings of GLOW in Asia IX.* pp. 157–171.

Mpofu N. 2009. The Shona adjective as a prototypical category. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oslo.

Rijkhoff J. 2000. When can a language have adjectives? An implicational universal. In: Vogel PM, Comrie B (eds), *Empirical approaches to language typology 23.* New York: Mouton de Gruyter. pp. 217–258. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110806120.217

Rugemalira JM. 2005. *A grammar of Runyambo.* LOT Publications Grammar Series 1. Dar es Salaam: LOT Project, University of Dar es Salaam.

Rugemalira J. 2008. Adjectives in Bantu. *Occasional Papers in Linguistics* 3: 23–33. LOT Project, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam.

Segerer G. 2008. Closed adjective classes and primary adjectives in African languages. Working Paper. Archive ouverte en Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société. https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00255943

Taylor JR. 1995. *Linguistic categorization: Prototypes in linguistic theory*. (2nd edn). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Van Lier E, Rijkhoff J. 2013. Flexible word classes in linguistic typology and grammatical theory. In: Rijkhoff J, Eva VL (eds), *Flexible word classes: Typological studies of underspecified parts of speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199668441.003.0001

Vinokurova N. 2005. Lexical categories and argument structure: A study with reference to Sakha. Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University.

Wasike A. 2018. Adjectives in Lubukusu. In: Kandybowicz J, Major HT, Duncan PT (eds), *African linguistics on the prairie: Selected papers from the 45th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*. Berlin: Language Science Press. pp. 325–339.