Parts of Speech as Radical Constructions in Amis

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Abstract

The category “Adjectives”, with the intermediate status between the Noun-Verb continuum, has for decades become the core of theoretical debates. One mainstream claim is the lack of universal ‘adjective’ category. Croft, on the other hand, maintains an alternative view: noun, verb, and adjective are not categories found in particular languages; they are language universals (Croft 2001: 63). The proposal might be a theoretical shock for Austronesian grammarians, since claims such as “the lack of adjective category” and “putative adjectives are subsumed under the verb category” have been attested repeatedly in most reference grammar in Austronesian family. The approach to identifying the absence of adjectives, and further categorizing putative adjectives into verbs or nouns, has been criticized as “lumping”, which involves methodological opportunism in ignoring small part-of-speech classes (Croft 2001: 65-75).

This study, thus, is a humble attempt to re-investigate the Amis parts of speech within Croft’s Radical Construction Framework. We take advantage of the framework to illustrate in semantic maps the language particulars of Amis parts of speech. Accordingly we conclude that Amis lexical roots are not precategorial; they are, if not syntactically, at least morphologically subcategorized. Another intriguing finding with theoretical implication is that, we seem to observe some empirical evidence to partially counter the Radical Construction Framework during application of the framework itself. We demonstrate how the structural coding for Amis modification constructions challenges the theory’s own hypotheses and poses threat to the framework. As a consequence, we render support to the ‘lumping’ approach by taking typological considerations, and by providing diachronic interpretations from the synchronic Amis data.

1. Introduction

Proposal A: There is no universal ‘adjective’ category

- Putative adjectives are ‘chameleons’ in some languages they form an open class, in some other languages a closed one, in still other languages they are conflated with ‘nouns’ or ‘verbs’.
- The notion of prototype theory and markedness theory is applied: a)
prototypically, adjectives refer to “Properties” and serve the “Modification” function; b) the presence of adjectives can be assured by observing the typologically unmarked structure for the corresponding prototype.

- Parts of speech in Formosan languages under this proposal (Ross 2003; Yeh 2003; Wu 2004; Kuo 2008):
  i) No adjective category
  ii) Putative adjectives are subsumed under the verb class

Proposal B: There is a universal ‘adjective’ category
- Dixon (1977): ‘some languages have no adjective class at all’;
  Dixon and Aikhenvald (2004): every language ‘has an adjective class’
- Croft (1991): adjectives are less prominent as a prototype than nouns and verbs;
  Croft (2001): noun, verb, and adjective are typological prototypes
- The approach based on Proposal A is, according to Croft, a ‘lumping’ method for “involving methodological opportunism in ignoring small parts-of-speech classes” (p.65-75).

The purpose of this study:
To re-investigate the Amis parts of speech within Croft’s (2001) Radical Construction Framework.

2. The Framework

With regards to parts of speech:
✓ The traditional view:
(1) (Croft 2001: 63)
a. Noun, verb, and adjective are universal (cross-linguistic) categories found in particular languages
b. But noun, verb, and adjective are not language universals □ that is, not all languages possess the parts of speech noun, verb or adjective.

✓ Radical Construction Framework:
(2) (Croft 2001: 63)
a. Noun, verb, and adjective are not categories of particular languages
b. But noun, verb, and adjective are language universals □ that is, there are typological prototypes which should be called noun, verb, and adjective

- These prototypes can be described from an integration of semantics (i.e. ontological classes) and syntax/pragmatics (i.e. syntactic function/propositional
Typological prototypes noun, verb, and adjectives (Croft 2001: 89)
- **noun** = Reference to an Object
- **adjective** = Modification by a Property
- **verb** = Predication of an Action

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<th>Relationality</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Actions</td>
<td>relational</td>
<td>process</td>
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Table 2. Overtly marked structural coding constructions for parts of speech (Croft 2001: 88)

- **Reference**
  - **Objects**: UNMARKED NOUNS
  - **Properties**: deadjectival nouns
  - **Actions**: action nominals, complements, infinitives, gerunds

- **Modification**
  - **Objects**: genitive, adjectivalizations, PPs on nouns
  - **Properties**: UNMARKED ADJECTIVES
  - **Actions**: participles, relative clauses

- **Predication**
  - **Objects**: predicate nominals, copulas
  - **Properties**: predicate adjectives, copulas
  - **Actions**: UNMARKED VERBS

- **Typological markedness applies to a) structural coding and b) behavioral potential** and results in two implication universals:
  a. the ‘structural coding criterion’ specifies that the marked member is encoded by at least as many morphemes as the unmarked member.
  b. the ‘behavioral potential criterion’ specifies that the unmarked member displays at least as wide a range of grammatical behavior as the marked member.

- **The Conceptual Space Approach**:
  (4) **Structural Coding Map Hypothesis**: Constructions encoding a function should code that function in at least as many morphemes in typologically marked points in conceptual space as in typologically unmarked points in conceptual space.
  (5) **Behavioral Potential Map Hypothesis**: Constructions expressing the behavioral potential of a category should be found in at least the typologically unmarked points in conceptual space.

(Demonstration: English and Lango: see appendix A.)
3. The Structural Coding of Amis Parts of Speech Constructions

Amis is a Formosan language with the largest population. It has five dialects: Sakizaya, Northern, Tavalong-Vataan, Central, Southern. This study investigates the Central dialect. The data are collected from Changkuang Community at Changpin, Taitung County.

- **Reference function:**
  The structural coding for the reference function in Amis is always the *u* marker plus the root form, regardless of the semantic class.
(6) object reference$^1$: (bare root + $u$ marker$^2$

a. Ø-fangcal $k$-$u$-ra $wawa/singsi/wacu$
   AF-good NOM-CN-that child/teacher/dog
   'That child/teacher/dog is good.'

b. pa-fli kaku ci panay-an $t$-$u$ $paysu/siri/tayal$
   CAU-give 1SG.NOM NCM.SG PN-OBL OBL-CN money/goat/work
   'I gave Panay money/a goat/a job.'

(7) property reference: (bare root + $u$ marker)

a. hakuwa $k$-$u$ takaraw ni kulas (dimension)
   how-many NOM-CN tall NCM.SG.GEN PN
   'how tall is Kulas?'
   (Lit. How many is the tallness of Kulas?)

b. hakuw=tu $k$-$u$ katelang nuna luma' nira (age)
   how-many=ASP NOM-CN old that.GEN house 3SG.GEN
   'how old has his house become?'

c. hakuwa $k$-$u$ fangcal nura faki (value)
   how-many NOM-CN good that.GEN uncle
   'How good/kind is that uncle.'

d. hakuwa $k$-$u$ kahngang nu pising aku (color)
   how-many NOM-CN red GEN face 1SG.GEN
   'How red is my face?'

e. hakuwa $k$-$u$ fa'edet nuna nanum (physical property)
   how-many NOM-CN hot that.GEN water
   'How hot is that water?'

e. hakuwa $k$-$u$ keter nu mama isu (human propensity)
   how-many NOM-CN angry GEN father 1SG.GEN
   'How angry is your father?'

f. hakuwa $k$-$u$ usui nura tamina (speed)
   how-many NOM-CN slow that.GEN boat
   'How slow is that boat?'

(8) action reference$^3$: (bare root + $u$ marker)

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1 The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: 1/2/3SG: first/second/third person singular; AF: actor focus; ASP: Aspect marker; CN: common-noun marker; FAC: Factual mood marker; GEN: genitive case; IMP: Imperative marker; InA: Instrumental Applicative; IRR: Irrealis; LNK: linker; NCM: Non-common noun marker; NOM: nominative case; OBL: oblique case; PF: patient focus; PN: proper name/place name; Prep: preposition.

2 In the literature, $u$ is viewed as the (common) “noun marker”. It is part of the nominal case marking system which includes the ‘case proper’ (e.g. $k$-$t$-$n$- ‘NOM/OBL/GEN), the noun marker $u$, and possibly the deitic morphemes (e.g. $n$-$i$-$s$- ‘here/there’) (cf. Liu 1999; Wu 2006). Here, $u$ is viewed as a marking device though it is embedded in case marking. This is for the consistency of our analysis. Later, we will show that $u$ is necessary for the object predication construction; it will thus be odd to disregard the $u$ marker in the reference construction and count the $u$ marker only in the predicative construction.

3 Not all action references in Amis are encoded by the pattern as in (8). For example, $mi$-$nanum$ ‘drink’ is manifested as $pi$-$nanum$ when it serves as the reference. This kind of derivation is one of the deverbalization processes in Amis (Wu 2006: 70). Radical Construction Framework examines the “typologically prototypes” as well as the marked constructions. The focus is thus on the root form of the three semantic classes, and the possible operations (i.e. marked structural coding) required for nonprototypical syntactic functions. Along this line, our discussion centers on root-level operations only. Stem-level and word-level operations will not be discussed in order to avoid confusion.
(Wu 2006: 68; gloss mine)

a. na'on-en k-u rakat
   mind-UV NOM-CN walk
   'Good-bye.' (Lit. Mind your walk!) (Imperative, UV)

b. Ø-tata'ak k-u palu aku
   AF-big NOM-CN beat 1SGGEN
   'I was beaten severely.' (Lit. My beating is big)

**Predication function:**

For predication, the object semantic class differs from the property/action semantic classes in structural coding:

(9) object predicate: (bare root + u marker)

a. u singsi Ø-ci sawmah
   CN teacher AF-NOM-NCM.SG PN
   'Sawmah is a teacher.'

b. u sasti' ku sa-pi-palu ni mayaw ci dongi-an
   CN stick NOM InA-PI-beat NCM.SG,GEN PN NCM.SG PN-OBL
   'The stick is what Mayaw beat Dongi with.'

(10) property predicate: ((voice/focus) affixation4)

a. zero affixation:
   Ø-takaraw/Ø-kereteng/Ø-fangcal kaku
   AF-tall/AF-heavy/AF-good 1SG.NOM
   'I am tall/heavy/good.'

b. ma- affixation:
   ma-su'su'/ma-laluk/ma-keter Ø-ci lising
   AF-fat/AF-diligent/AF-angry NOM-NCM.SG PN
   'Lising is fat/diligent/angry.'

(11) action predicate5: ( (voice/focus) affixation)

a. <um> affixation:
   r<um>akat/r<um>adiw kaku i lalan

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4 Property predicates, or state predicates in Wu (2006), possess two structural coding patterns: zero and ma- affixation. Wu (2006: 162) argues that “the distinction between the two types of state predicates seems to be the distinction between individual-level predicates and stage-level predicates; the former usually depict inherent properties, whereas the latter usually depicts the episodic properties.

5 In the literature, four types of affixation of Amis predicates have been discussed: a) Ø; b) <um>; c) mi-; (d) ma- (Liu 2003; Wu 2006; Tsukida 2008, among others). While action predicates are found to possess all four types of affixation, in this study we neglect the zero type for a significant reason. The “zero” action predicates (i.e. Ø-A verbs in Tsukida (2008)), upon close scrutiny, are actually composed of the root plus specific prefixes. For example:

i) Ø-A verbs in Amis (adapted from Tsukida (2008: 281); gloss mine)
   Ø-padingwa (pa-dingwa) ‘make a telephone call’ (cf. dingwa ‘telephone’); Ø-tayni (ta-ini) ‘come’ (cf. ini ‘here’); Ø-talalutuk (tala-lutuk) ‘go to mountain’ (cf. lutuk ‘mountain’)

In note 2 we explain that “root-level operations” are the target of this study. However, not all root-level operations should be incorporated into the analysis. For example, we identify the significance of mi-affixation, for the predicate mi-palu ‘hit’ and the reference palu ‘hit’ are exactly the same in terms of semantics. However, the predicate tala-lutuk ‘go to mountain’ and the reference lutuk ‘mountain’ are involved with certain level of “semantic shift”. This kind of derivation should thus be disregarded.
walk<AF>/sing<AF>  1SG.NOM  Prep  road
'I am walking/singing on the road.'

b.  *mi*- affixation:

mi-palu/mi-nengneng  cingra  tura  wawa
AF-beat/AF-see  3SG.NOM  that.OBL  child
'He is beating/He sees the child.'

c.  *ma*- affixation:

ma-tayal  ku  faki  aku  i  uma'
AF-work  NOM  uncle  1SG. GEN  PreP  field
'My uncle works in the field.'

- Modification function:

For modification, the object semantic class differs from the property/action semantic classes:

In Amis, an object modifier may have two structural coding patterns:

a.  postnominal genitive case;

b.  prenominal linker

(12) postnominal object modifier: genitive n- + u marker

a.  fafuy  n-u  lutuk
    pig  GEN-CN  mountain
    'mountain pig.'

b.  suta'  n-u  kiwkay
    land  GEN-CN  church
    'the land of church.'

c.  singsi  n-u  amis  (Wu 2006: 94; gloss mine)
    teacher GEN-CN  Amis
    'Amis teacher. (the teacher is not necessarily Amis)''

(13) prenominal object modifier: linker a

a.  fadisu'su'  a  epah
    grape  LNK  wine
    'grape wine'

b.  kilang  a  kayakay
    wood  LNK  bridge
    'wood bridge.'

c.  amis  a  singsi  (Wu 2006: 94)
    Amis  LNK  teacher
    'Amis teacher (the teacher is Amis)'

(14) property modifier: (affixation + -ay marker + a linker)

a.  Ø-takaraw-ay  a  tamdaw  (dimension)
    AF-tall-AY  LNK  person
    '(a) tall person'

b.  Ø-katelang-ay  a  luma'  (age)
    AF-old-AY  LNK  house
    '(an) old house'

c.  Ø-fangcal-ay  a  faki  (value)
    AF-good-AY  LNK  uncle
‘(a) good uncle’
d. Ø-kahngang-ay a pising  (color)
   AF-red-AY LNK red
   ‘(a) red face’
e. Ø-fa’edet-ay a nanum  (physical property)
   AF-hot-AY LNK water
   ‘hot water’
e. ma-keter-ay a wawa  (human propensity)
   AF-angry-AY LNK child
   ‘(an) angry child’
f. ma-usui-ay a tamina  (speed)
   AF-slow-AY LNK boat
   ‘(a) slow boat’

(15) action modifier: (affixation + -ay marker + a linker)

a. r<um>adiw-ay a tamdaw
   sing<AF>-AY LNK person
   ‘(a) boy who sings/is singing’
b. mi-palu-ay tu wawa a singsi
   AF-beat-AY OBL child LNK teacher
   ‘(the) teacher who beats/is beating the child’
c. ma-tayal-ay a fahinayan
   AF-work-AY LNK man
   ‘(a) man who works/is working’

Fig 5. The semantic map of the structural coding of Amis parts of speech constructions

Observation: The Structural Coding Hypothesis is violated particularly in Amis modification constructions.
4. The Behavioral Potential of Amis Parts of Speech Constructions

- No behavioral potential for Amis object reference prototype.
- The Tense, Aspect, and Modality (TAM) in Amis predication:

Table 3. TAM inflections for Amis predicates

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<td>Core properties (i.e. Ø type)</td>
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<td>“less-core” properties</td>
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<td>(ma-type; valency=1) e.g. <em>ma-su’su</em> ‘fat’</td>
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<td>nonprototypical properties</td>
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<td>(ma-type; valency ≥ 1) e.g. <em>ma-keter</em> ‘angry/scold’</td>
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<td>Actions</td>
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<td>I: ka- (Imperative mood)</td>
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<td>II: -ay (Factual mood)</td>
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<td>III: Ca reduplication (Irrealis mood)</td>
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<td>IV: Habitual kara- construction:</td>
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(16) Imperative mood in Amis:
   a. ka-harakat!
      IMP-fast
      ‘Hurry!’
   b. ka-su’su’=tu
      IMP-fat=ASP
      ‘(It’s about time that you) get fat!’
   c. ka-fana’
      IMP-know
      ‘(You should) know/learn!’
   d. ka-tayal
      IMP-work
      ‘(Go to) work!’

(17) Factual mood in Amis:
   a. Ø-harakat-ay kuni tamina
      AF-fast-FAC this.NOM boat
      ‘This boat is fast for real.’
   b. ma-su’su’-ay ku mama aku
      AF-fat-FAC NOM father 1SG.GEN
      ‘My father is really fat.’
   c. ma-fana’-ay kaku a r<um>adiw
      AF-know-FAC 1SG.NOM LNK sing<AF>
      ‘I really can sing/know how to sing.’
   d. ma-tayal-ay kaku i umah
      AF-work-FAC 1SG.NOM Prep farm
      ‘I really work in the farm.’

(18) Irrealis mood in Amis: (Ca reduplication)
   a. *ha-harakat kuni tamina
b. ma-ma-su’su’  kaku
   IRR-AF-fat    1SG.NOM
   ‘I am/was about to get fat.’

c. ma-ma-fana’  kaku    a    r<um>adiw
   IRR-AF-know  1SG.NOM   LNK    sing<AF>
   ‘I am/was about to know how to sing.’

d. ma-ma-tayal  kaku  i  umah
   IRR-AF-work  1SG.NOM    Prep    farm
   ‘I am/was about to work in the farm.’

(19) Habitual construction in Amis
a. *kara-harakat
b. *kara-su’su’
c. ?kara-fana’/ kara-keter
   KARA-angry/scold
   ‘scold very often; get angry very often’
d. kara-tayal  / kara-futi’
   KARA-work / KARA-sleep
   ‘work very often/ sleep very often’

• Degree inflections for Amis properties:
Kuo (2008) identified four types of comparative constructions in Amis. Among them,
two types possess an explicit degree morpheme, and thus may be employed for the
examination of behavior potential:

a. -ki- comparatives: the -ki- affix is incorporated with the property (of comparison),
indicating an ‘exceed’ sense. The comparative interpretation is manifested by
means of (semantic) transitive event. That is, A is taller than B, in -ki- comparatives,
should be literally interpreted as ‘A exceeds B with respect to the tallness property.’

(20) The distribution of -ki- comparative morpheme
a. property predicates
   mi-ki-takaraw  kaku  tura    tamdaw
   AF-exceed-tall  1SG.NOM   that.OBL   person
   ‘I am taller than that person.’

b. property modifiers
   ma-ula h cingra  tu  mi-ki-takaraw-ay
   AF-like  3SG.NOM   OBL  AF-exceed-tall-AY
   tura  tamdaw   a  fafahiyan
   that.OBL  person   LNK    man
   ‘He likes the man (who is) taller than that person.’

b) ikaka comparatives: ikaka is a grammaticalized comparative morpheme indicating
‘more’; it serves as the predicate of the construction (Kuo 2008: 60–64). The
property (of comparison) in this construction, particularly, has to occur in root form.
Therefore, A is taller than B, in ikaka comparatives, should be literally interpreted
as ‘A’s tallness comparing to B’s tallness is more.’

(21) The distribution of *ikaka* comparatives
a. property references

Ø-ikaka ku takaraw aku tura tamdaw
AF-more NOM tall 1SG GEN that.OBL person
‘I am taller than that person.’

![Semantic map of Amis parts of speech constructions](image)

Fig 6. The semantic map of the behavioral potential of Amis parts of speech constructions

Observation:
- The distribution of TAM inflections conforms to the Behavioral Potential Map
- The distribution of comparative constructions, however, violates the hypothesis

*Accounting for the inconsistency:*
Amis conforms to the hypotheses (4) and (5) for object reference and action predication, but not for property modification:
- These hypotheses are in the right track, *except for suffering from the idea ‘adjective as a prototype (i.e. language universal)’.*
- Our investigation in Amis parts of speech constructions renders support to a ‘lumping’ perspective of parts of speech:
  a) adjectives might not be an independent category
  b) the property modifiers may possess structural markedness

5. In Defense of the “Lumping” Approach

*From a typological perspective:*
The Parts of Speech system and its typological implications:
- head-marking or dependent marking (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2004: 33)
- word order (Hengeveld et al. 2004)
- dependent clauses (Van Lier 2006).
- syntactic pattern of comparatives (Kuo 2008)

• From a historical perspective:
The lumping approach identifies different stage of "category formation" in the development of the Austronesian family (cf. Starosta, Pawley & Reid (1982) (henceforth SPR), Himmelmann (1991) and Kaufman (2009), among others):

Different stages of parts-of-speech formation:

1 category (noun)  
(e.g. Proto-Austronesian)  

2 categories (noun and verb)  
(e.g. Tagalog; Formosan)  

3 categories (noun, verb, 'adjective')

"a strongly noun-oriented language, with a high percentage of nominalization strategies"  
(SPR p. 149)

"the cues for the nominal organization of the syntax were lost by natural erosion and that this naturally led to the re-emergence of a true category as canonical event denoting predicates"  
(Kaufman 2009)

A true adjective category might emerge out of verbs when the structural coding of property modifiers, with development, become unmarked as compared to action modifiers.

6. Conclusion
✓ On Radical Construction Framework:

Merits:

a) It separates language-particulars from language-universals with the conceptual space analysis;
b) It distinguishes structural coding criterion and behavioral potential criterion and proposes implicational universals respectively, based on typological markedness.

Limitation: Inconsistency arises from treating adjectives as prototypical as nouns and verbs.

✓ On The ‘Lumping’ Approach, which maintains the markedness of adjectives (sometimes even verbs, as argued in PAN):

a) It helps establish significant typological correlations
b) It reflects the fact about parts of speech across languages and across time.
References


English:

Figure A. Semantic map of English parts of speech constructions (Croft 2001: 99)
-NR: Overt Nominalization (e.g. (1a-b)); genitive 's or Prepositions (e.g. (2a-b)); complementizer that and –ing (e.g. (3)-(4)); WH-Rel: Relative Pronoun (e.g. (5)); Copula be (e.g. (6))

(1) a. goodness, happiness  
   b. destruction, production
(2) a. Bill’s book  
   b. the book on the dresser
(3) a. She realized that he was not going to leave her.  
   b. the man that left the party early
(4) a. Running is bad for your knees.  
   b. the woman running down the road
(5) the tree which fell on my house
(6) a. That is a cypress.  
   b. That cypress is big!
On Behavioral Potential:
“The behavioral potential constructions in English are restricted to the relevant prototype regions in conceptual space, which conforms to the Behavioral Potential Map Hypothesis. Further, the differences in the formal expression of degree in English allows us to identify more and less prototypical property words as adjectives. The degree of prototypicality conforms with Dixon’s (1977) generalizations: the most prototypical adjectives are the English property words with morphological or suppletive degree forms that include the concepts of value (good/better/best, bad/worse/worst), age (older/oldest, younger/youngest, riper/ripest), and dimension (taller/tallest, wider/widest).” (Croft 2001: 99)

Lango:

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<td>Peripheral properties</td>
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I: distinct singular/plural stems
II: nonhabitual copula
III: subject agreement
IV: attributive particle \((\checkmark) = \text{attributive particle + relative pronoun preferred}\)
V: habitual tone in nongerund habitual forms
VI: inflections for nonhabitual forms
VII: possess distinct infinitive and subjunctive forms

Distribution of Lango property and action words (Croft 2001: 100)

Figure B. Distribution of Lango predication/modification constructions (Croft 2001: 101)
“The overt structural coding constructions include the nonprototypical regions of the conceptual space, in conformity to the Structural Coding Map Hypothesis...The behavioral potential constructions in Lango include the prototypical regions of the conceptual space. The employment of distinct Singular and Plural stems is also found in the nonprototypical region of core property predication, and the employment of subject agreement is also found in the nonprototypical region of property predication. These facts are still in conformity to the Behavioral Potential Map Hypothesis.”
(Croft 2001: 100-101)