

Descriptive words in Paresi-Haliti and in other Arawak languages

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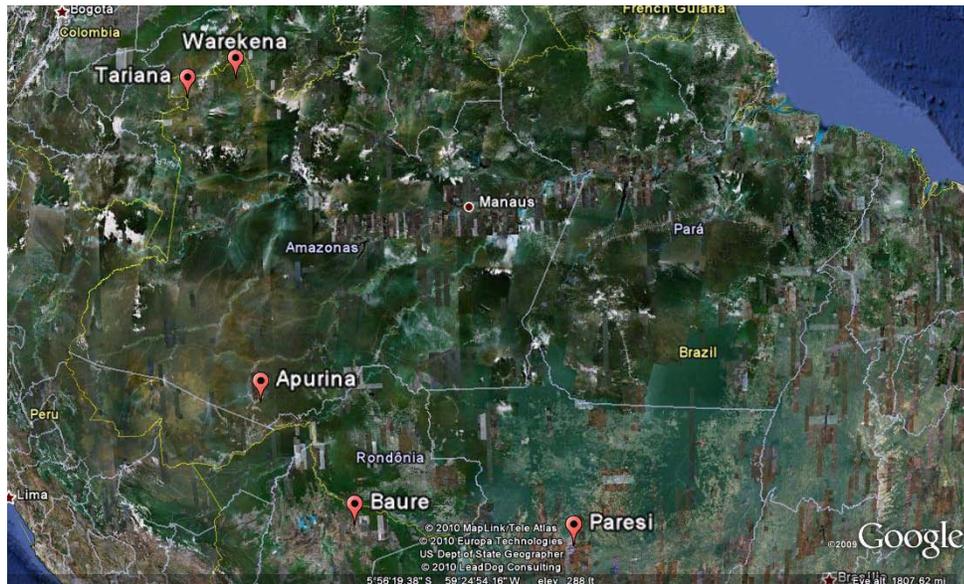
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1. Introduction

Paresi, a southern Arawak language, is spoken by approximately 2000 people distributed in several villages in Tangará da Serra, state of Mato Grosso, in Brazil. The Paresi data presented come from my own research in the field in 2007, 2008 and 2009¹. There has not been extensive material published on Paresi before, except for some SIL publications by Rowan (1969, 1978) and a thesis by Silva (2009). Paresi is a polysynthetic, head-marking language with no grammatical case marking.

The goal of this paper is to contribute to a better understanding of Paresi, an almost undescribed language, and to take a step toward a more thorough comparative understanding of the Arawak languages. This work has the potential to yield insights into the stability of word classes over time. This paper is organized in the following sections. Section 2 presents some theoretical background about adjectives across languages relevant to the present discussion. Section 3 presents the main word classes in Paresi: nouns and verbs. In section 4, the properties of descriptive words in Paresi will be compared, and provide an explanation of why most descriptive words are semantically, syntactically and morphologically in the verb category, and only a few of them are adjectives. Finally, section 5 will present how descriptive words are categorized in other four Arawak languages: Apurinã, Baure, Tariana, and Warekena (see map 1 on page 2).

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Map 1: Location of the Arawak languages presented in this paper

2. Cross-linguistic regularities of adjectives

Typologically, it is difficult to define the class of adjectives because in some languages there are no clear-cut distinctions between descriptive words and the classes of nouns and verbs. Dixon (1982) claimed that adjectives are not a universal word class and that descriptive words may be either nouns or verbs. Dixon's generalizations were that semantic types such as size, dimension, value, and color are likely to belong to the adjective class, however small it is (Dixon, 1982: 46). Furthermore, the human propensity type (such as happy, kind) is more likely to be associated with nouns, and the physical property type (such as hard, soft) is likely to be associated with verbs.

Later, Dixon (2006) argued that all languages have a formally defined adjective class. He said that in some languages "adjectives have similar grammatical properties to nouns, in some to verbs, in some to both nouns and verbs, and in some to neither" (2006: 1). According to him, there are two criteria which can distinguish word classes: similarity of syntactic function and similarity of meaning. For example, a noun functions as head of a noun phrase, while a verb functions as head of a predicate. Furthermore, nouns are semantically associated with concrete references, while verbs include reference to actions.

In the case of adjectives, Dixon proposed four basic semantic types, which include dimension ('big', 'small', 'tall', etc), age ('new', 'young', 'old', etc), value ('good', 'bad', 'lovely', etc), and color ('black', 'white', 'red', etc). Haspelmath (2001) showed Tamil to be a language which coincides with Dixon's proposal. Tamil has a small class of adjectives corresponding to these four basic concepts, while other concepts classified as adjectives in English are expressed by verbs or by nouns.

According to the typology of predicate adjectival constructions presented by Wetzer (1992), there are three types of languages: languages with a distinct open

adjective class, languages with a small closed class of adjectives, and languages with no distinct class of adjectives. Wetzer (1992) discussed some potential complications to Dixon's generalizations. For example, he said that the association of human propensity type with nouns is less straightforward than Dixon proposed. Some languages can distinguish within the human propensity type between more and less stable characteristics. In these languages, less stable human characteristics (such as angry, happy, and afraid) are encoded in the verb class, while more stable characteristics (such as stupid, blind, and proud) are encoded as nouns.

Another important contribution of Wetzer's to the discussion of adjectives is his classification of "nouny" and "verby" adjectival terms. He proposed this dichotomy instead of the tripartite distinction between adjectives, (adjectival) nouns, and (adjectival) verbs. "Nouny" adjectivals are noun-like adjectives and adjectival nouns, while "verby" adjectivals are verb-like adjectives and adjectival verbs.

In addition, he proposed some criteria for "nouniness" and "verbiness" in predicate constructions (the use of copula and the zero-marking criterion). Therefore, in languages in which nominal and verbal predicates are distinct, the use of copula in nominal and adjective predicates characterizes the nouniness of adjectivals. On the other hand, person marking in verbal and adjective predicate characterizes the verbiness of adjectivals.

Croft (2000) argued that nouns, verbs, and adjectives are not categories of particular languages, but rather prototypical categories realized differently from language to language. He noted that these categories are universal in the sense that they correspond to distinct markedness patterns. Croft defines prototypical word classes based on the structural coding criteria of typological markedness, as shown in table 1:

Table 1: The conceptual space for the parts of speech (Croft, 2000: 89)

	REFERENCE	MODIFICATION	PREDICATION
Objects	unmarked nouns	genitive, adjectivalisations, PPs on nouns	predicate nominals, copulas
Properties	deadjectival nouns	unmarked adjectives	predicate adjectives
Actions	action nominals, complements, etc	participles, relative clauses	unmarked verbs

Adjectives are presented as a class that is prototypically a modifier and refers to a property, and will be unmarked in this function. Croft also presents a behavioral criterion stating that marked members should not have more inflectional possibilities than unmarked members. Thus, predicate adjectives as marked members of the adjective class should have the same and not more inflectional possibilities than unmarked members, which are adjectives in modification function.

Bhat (1994) proposes some parameters similar to those put forth by Croft to distinguish between adjectives and nouns, and adjectives and verbs. He says that adjectives as an independent class are modifiers of nouns in a NP (Noun Phrase), and they do not present agreement marking with nouns. Thus, in English, the adjectives are a category a part because they are dependent on the noun, shown by the unmarked

distribution (*black cats*, **blacks cats*). In the case of languages such as Portuguese where the adjective agrees with the noun (*gat-a-s pret-a-s* / cat-FEM-PL black-FEM-PL ‘black cats’), the adjectives are more like nouns (Chagas, 2007).

Bhat (1994) also says that in languages where verbs and adjectives are in different categories, adjectives are unmarked, and verbs have some kind of derivational affixes when in adnominal position (modification function). For instance, the Portuguese verb *trabalhar* needs the derivational suffix *-dor* to be used in adnominal position as in *mulher trabalha-dor-a* / woman work-NMZR-FEM ‘woman who works hard’.

According to Aikhenvald (1999), all Arawak languages have nouns and verbs, and most of them have also the adjective class. Adjectives can share properties with verbs, being classified as a subclass of verbs in Guajiro and Apurinã. In other languages such as Tariana, adjectives can share properties with nouns and stative verbs, and they also have features of their own.

In this paper, I argue that most of the descriptive words in Paresi form a subclass of verbs.

3. Paresi word classes

There are two major word classes which can be defined in Paresi. The two classes, nouns and verbs, can be defined according to syntactic, semantic and morphological factors. In this subsection, nouns and verbs will be defined by contrasting them.

Cross-linguistically, prototypical members of the noun class are word forms that, morphologically, may have affixes indicating number, case, possession, person and number, and definiteness. In Paresi, nouns have affixes indicating number and possession. The suffix *-nae* denoting plurality on nouns is represented in example (1), and the possessor prefix *no-* ‘1s’ and the possessed suffix *-ni* ‘1s’ are represented in example (2):

- (1) *atyatseta-tyo n-awenakali-ye-re-nae atyo no-hinaehare-nae*²
 then- FOC 1s-village-POSSESSED-NMLZ-PL FOC 1s-relative-PL
 ‘Then all the people in the village are my relatives’ (E. GK. 120609)³
- (2) *no-tamitse-ni kakoa Ø-tekoa-ha Ø-nea*
 1s-niece-POSSESSED POSP 3-run away-PL 3s-say
 ‘They run away with my niece, he said’ (T. JT. 080208)

² The abbreviations used in this paper are: FOC-Focus; PL-Plural; POSP-Postposition; POSSESSED-Possessed; INTENS-Intensifier; IFV-Imperfective; FUT-Future; CAUS-Causative; ATTR-Attributive; NMLZ-Nominalizer; PASS-Passive; PROG-Progressive; M-Masculine; ANT-Anterior; AFF-Affect; CLF-Classifier; UNPOSS-Unpossessed; TH-Thematic Suffix; IRREL-Irrealis; PART-Particle; REG-Regressive; TRAN-Transitivizer; SUBORD-Subordinator; ART- Article; NONACC-Nonaccusative; REL-Relativizer; ADJ-Adjectivizer; PFTV- Perfective; F.O-Feminine Object.

³The source of the example can be observed from the codes: T: indicates the examples come from texts; E: indicates they come from elicitation; the letters refer to the speaker’s names; and the numbers indicate the date when the data were collected (mm/dd/yy).

The prefixes used for possessors on nouns cannot be a parameter to identify nouns because they are the same prefixes indicating person/number of subject on verbs, as seen in (3). The only difference between the set of pronominal markers on verbs and on nouns is for the 3 person singular, which in verbs is unmarked, but in nouns can be marked by *e-/i-*. See Table 2 with the pronominal markers. Only the possessed suffixes are unique to nouns. These suffixes can be used as nominalizers when attached to verb roots.

- (3) Awitsa ite **no-**zani no-waya
 today FUT 1s-go 1s-see
 ‘Today I will go to see it’ (T. J.A. 071508)

Table 2: pronominal markers

	Singular	Plural
1	no-, na-,n-	wi-, wa-, w-
2	hi-, ha-, h-	xi-, za-
3	Ø (e-/i- nouns only)	ø...-ha (pl)

Furthermore, syntactically, noun roots in Paresi can function as the heads of NPs, they can occur as argument of verbs as shown in examples (1-2), and they can also be combined with demonstrative markers. In a predicate construction, nouns are intransitive predicates:

- (4) natyo Zomozokae
 1s Zomozokae
 ‘I am Zomozokae’ (T. J. 072708)

According to Haspelmath (2001), cross-linguistically prototypical members of the verb class are roots that have affixes or clitics indicating tense, aspect, mood, polarity, valence-changing operations, and the person/number of subject and object(s). In Paresi, verb roots can be transitive or intransitive. Syntactically, verbs are head of predicates (without additional coding). Some examples of verbs in Paresi are given in examples (5) and (6).

- (5) na-**tona** kahare (intransitive verb)
 1s-walk INTENS
 ‘I walked a lot’ (E. GK. 121808)
- (6) Ø-**moko**-tya-h-ita-ha natyo (transitive verb)
 3-hit-TH-PL-PROG-PL 1s
 ‘They are hitting me’ (E. LK. 070108)

There are some valence-changing operations that occur with verbs, such as the passive construction, formed by the suffix *-ka*, and the causative constructions formed by the morpheme *-ki*, as shown in (7) and (8) respectively.

- (7) oka atyaotseta=ene atyo Katxiniti-hare **ka**-kolatya-**ka** hoka meho
 PART PART=ANT FOC Kaxiniti-M ATTR-take-PASS PART exterminate

‘Then, the Kaxiniti were taken from there and exterminated’ (T. JT. 063009)

- (8) ha-ya-**ki**-tsa natyo kawalo
 2s-buy-CAUS-TH 1s horse
 ‘You made me buy a horse’ (E. GK. 110209)

In addition, verbs can only modify nouns by nominalization with the nominalizer *-tere* or *-re* in a relative clause:

- (9) no-kaoki-heta zoima [Justino Ø-**moko-hene-re**] Cl_{rel}
 1s-arrive-REG child Justino 3s-hit-IFV-NMLZ
 ‘I met the child who Justino hit’ (E. GK. 021109)

4. Paresi adjectives and descriptive verbs

4.1. Paresi adjectives

Underived adjectives form a very small closed class, with only 4 words which can be considered true adjective. In addition, there are another 5 adjectives which I call historically derived adjectives because the nominalizers *-re* and *-ne* are lexicalized with these words.⁴ These are shown together in Table 3. Interestingly, only three of the four semantic groups given by Dixon (1986) are represented, because colors are not treated as adjectives in Paresi. Descriptive words referring to human propensities are in the noun class.

- (10) hati **kalore** tyoma-ha
 house big make-PL
 ‘They made a big house’ (E. GZ. 101109)

Table 3: The semantic types of basic underived adjectives

Property	Quantity	Adjective	Gloss
DIMENSION		kalore	‘big’
		kalomena	‘thick’
		kidyane	small
		wahere	long
AGE		waitare	‘new (for things)’
VALUE		waiye	‘good’
PHYSICAL PROPERTIES		tihē	‘bitter’
		katyala	‘sour’
		timena	‘heavy’

⁴ One example is the adjective *kidyane* ‘small’, in which the *-ne* is no more a productive suffix.

4.1.1. Noun modification⁵

Adjectives juxtaposed with a noun are interpreted as modifying the noun as seen in (11); while two juxtaposed underived nouns are interpreted as possessive constructions as seen in (12). There are adjectives such as *kalore* which can function as modifier in a NP.

- (11) *hati kalore* (or *kalore hati*)
house big
'big house' (E. GZ. 101109)
- (12) *baba matsene*
father field
'My father's field' (E. J. 121506)

However, as Hansen (2007) has noted, this characteristic is not sufficient to define adjectives, because some nouns can also modify other nouns in some languages. This is the case in Paresi, where derived nouns can modify other nouns.

4.1.2. Adjectives compared to nouns

Adjectives cannot take the plural marker or the possessor and possessed markers like nouns unless they are nominalized by the *-re*, *-ne* or *-ze* markers.⁶

- (13) *kaxali timene-re-nae ezoa*
box heavy-NMLZ-PL fall
'The boxes fell down' (E. GZ. 101109)

However, like nouns, they can appear as the head of a NP as in (10).

- (14) *kalore tyoma-ha*
big make-PL
'They made a big thing' (E. GZ. 101109)

When adjectives are functioning as predicates, they form intransitive predicates, as can both verbs and nouns. They take also TAM (Tense, Aspect and Mood) suffixes as do verbs, but they do not undergo valence changing operations such as causativization.

- (15) *hi-kidyane ene*
2s-small ANT
'You were small' (E. GZ. 101109)

⁵ Another characteristic considered as unique to adjectives is the ability to occur in comparison constructions, but this parameter is not cited here because more research needs to be done on this aspect.

⁶ The suffix *-re* occurs after the vowel *a* and the suffix *-ne* occurs after *e*, and *-ze* is usually used in roots which end with *re* or *ne*, but its distribution is not precisely known so far.

Paresi has classifiers referring to forms, such as small (*tse*), and long and thin (*hi*). Some classificatory nouns can be attached to adjectives. For instance, *waiye* ‘good’ can be used with the classifier *dya* ‘CLF.round’ to form *waiye-dya* ‘round thing’.

4.2. Paresi descriptive verbs

Some descriptive words in Paresi do not belong to the adjective class, but rather they form a distinct subclass of verb. The majority of the descriptive words occur only as predicates. Because they do not function as modifiers in underived form, they are unlike core adjectives, and they are classified as descriptive verbs.

(16) no-nidy **heta**
 1s-be.thin REG
 ‘I will be thin’ (E. GZ. 101109)

(17) txinitse **kiya** (or txinitse **kiyere**)
 jaguar-CLF.small be.black
 ‘The cat is black’ (E. GZ. 101109)

In order to modify a noun, descriptive verb roots take the nominalizers: *-re*, *-ne* or *-ze* (see Table 4) as shown in (18).

(18) no-tyo-heta (txini-tse) **no-kiye-re** kakoa
 1s-come-REG jaguar-CLF.small 1s-be.black-NMLZ POSP
 ‘I came with my black cat’ (E. GK. 122408)

Table 4 presents examples of nouns derived from descriptive verbs. The derivational process requires the suffixes *-re* or *-ne*, and is necessary for descriptive verbs to be used as modifiers of nouns.

Table 4: Deriving nouns from descriptive verbs

Property	Noun	Gloss
DIMENSION	nidya-re	‘thin one’
AGE	ohiye-ne	‘old one’
COLOR	kiya-re> kiyere	‘black one’

4.2.1. Properties of descriptive verbs compared to other verbs

Morphologically, descriptive verbs in predicate constructions take tense/aspect markers, as seen in (16).

However, descriptive verbs are considered a subclass of verbs because they have their own properties that distinguish them from other verbs. For instance, descriptive verbs, like adjectives, cannot take the causative suffix *-ki* to form causative constructions. Descriptive verbs can only appear in periphrastic causative constructions with the verb *moka* ‘put’, as in (19).

(19) na-kaidya-ti no-koloti **moka**

1s-food-UNPOSS 1s-be.fat put
 ‘The food made me fat’ (E. GZ. 101109)

(20) *na-kaidya-ti no-koloti-ni-ki-tsa
 1s-food-UNPOSS 1s-be.fat-POSSED-CAUS-TH
 ‘The food made me fat’ (E. GZ. 101109)

(21) *limão e-katyala-ni-ki-tsa no-nakaidi
 lemon TRAN-sour-POSS-CAUS-TH 1s-food
 ‘The lemon made my food sour’ (E. GZ. 101109)

In addition, verbs can only modify nouns by nominalization with the suffixes *-tere* or *-re* in a relative clause, while the descriptive verbs can modify nouns by taking the nominalizers *-re* and *-ne*.

Table 7: Summary of the properties of adjectives compared to nouns and verbs

		Verbs	Adjectives	Descriptive verbs	Nouns
1.	number marking	no	no	no	yes
2.	person marking	yes	yes	yes	yes
3.	head of NP	no	yes	no	yes
4.	copula complement	no	no	no	no
5.	modifier within an NP	yes: with <i>-tere</i> or <i>henere</i>	yes	yes: with <i>-re</i> or <i>-ne</i>	no

According to the structural coding criterion defined by Croft (2000), as discussed above, adjectives are words that prototypically function as modifiers, and will be unmarked as such. We have seen that most descriptive words in Paresi cannot act as modifiers without an additional morphological marker. Therefore, we analyzed some descriptive words (except the nine underived adjectives) as a subclass of verbs because they occur unmarked only as predicates.

5. Descriptive words in other Arawak languages

Dixon (2006) observes that adjective classes that are more verb-like tend to be found in head-marking languages, which is consistent with the case of Paresi and with other Arawak languages. The head-marking feature is inherited from Proto-Arawak, and Aikhenvald (2006) stated that the majority of Arawak languages have verb-like adjectives. So, the adjective’s function as an intransitive predicate can be explained as an inherited property.

This section presents some preliminary historical-comparative work to address whether the adjective patterns are really more like verbs (“verby”) than like nouns (“nouny”) in some of the Arawak languages. This comparison is a first step toward evaluating the relative stability of the characteristics that define a word class like adjectives in a family over time. The work is based on a sample of five languages from

[five?] different branches of the Arawak family: Paresi, Baure (Southern Arawak), Apurinã (Arawak meridional-Purus), Warekena, and Tariana (Northern Arawak). The sample has few languages because in-depth descriptions are rare, but are essential for a clear definition of word classes within a given language.

The languages having the adjective class coincide with Dixon’s generalizations concerning the core semantic types associated with the adjective class. In Tariana and Baure adjectives are distributed not only across the four core semantic types: dimension, age, value, and color, but also across physical properties. In Table 8, the adjectives in “nouny” adjectival languages (Tariana and Baure) are shown.

Table 8: Adjectives in Baure and Tariana

Property	Gloss	Baure	Tariana
DIMENSION	‘big’	tʃo-	hanuite
	‘thick, large’		maleda
	‘small’	ti-	tsũite
	‘thin’		medewite
	short	mohi-	maduite
AGE	‘old’	tʃino-	upite
	‘new’	koto-	walite (‘new/young’)
VALUE	‘bad’	har-	ma:tʃite
	‘proper, good’	heno-	matʃi:te
COLOUR	‘red’	moserokon	irite
	‘black’	hamokon	kadite
	‘white’	kotipokon	harite
	‘green’	kotiskon	hiporite
	‘yellow’	yaskon	ewite
PHYSICAL PROPERTIES	‘bitter’	bihkon	hipisi-peri
	‘sweet’	etovikon	pumeni-peri
	‘sour’	tʃapso(so)kon	kama:-peri
	‘heavy’	kohinikon	hamia-peri

Interestingly, the concepts relating to human propensity are encoded as verbs in Paresi, Tariana and Baure.

In addition to the semantic characteristics, we have investigated the grammatical properties of attributive and predicative adjectivals (descriptive words) in each language compared to nouns and verbs. In conclusion, we compare these properties in order to analyze which properties in general characterize adjectivals as “nouny” or “verby” across these Arawak languages.

5.1 Characteristics of the Baure adjective class

In Baure (Southern Arawak language), according to Danielsen (2007), adjectives are mainly nominal with respect to their form and morphological behavior, but they can also be used in predicate bases. There are three classes of adjectives: the closed class (with bound roots, including dimension and age adjectives), the semi-open class (with adjectives used in the underived forms), and the open class (with derived adjective forms).

Adjectives with classifiers in Baure can function as modifiers in a NP, as shown in (22):

- (22) to hikotʃ tʃo-pe
 ART knife big-CLF.cutlery
 ‘the big knife’

However, nouns can also be used to modify a noun; thus this characteristic is not unique to adjectives. Adjectives in the semi-open class are generally used in predicates as in (23):

- (23) monik to pi=tʃahahi
 pretty ART 2s=hair
 ‘Your hair is pretty’

Modification within a NP is not very common in Baure, and in general, adjectives follow the head (Danielsen (2007).

By comparing some morphological and syntactic properties of adjectives to nouns and verbs in Table 9, we can conclude that Baure adjectives are relatively noun-like, as Danielsen (2007) observes. The properties in (1) and (2) are morphological properties shared by nouns and adjectives. There are also syntactic properties shared by nouns and adjectives (3-5).

Table 9: Properties of Baure adjectives compared to nouns and verbs

		Verbs	Adjectives	Nouns
1.	number marking	no	yes	yes
2.	person marking:	yes	yes	yes
3.	head of NP	no	yes	yes
4.	copula complement	no	yes	yes
5.	modifier within an NP	no	yes	yes

5.2 Characteristics of the Tariana adjective class

Adjectives in Tariana can be underived or derived. The underived adjectives form a closed class of twenty-nine items. Adjectives, but not nouns,⁷ can function as

⁷ There is an exception with nouns that have a generic reference, as in *taria nawiki* ‘Tariana people’. Furthermore, it is possible for noun to modify another noun in Tariana, but certain additional processes apply.

modifiers in a NP as in (24), and they can precede or follow the head depending on the noun head:

- (24) inaru **ma:tʃite**
 woman bad
 ‘bad woman’

In Tariana, adjectives share properties with nouns and stative verbs, and Aikhenvald (2006) has hypothesized that the noun-like properties could be a consequence of language contact with Tucanoan languages. Table 10 shows that there are more noun properties shared with adjectives than verb properties.

Table 10: Properties of Tariana adjectives compared with nouns and verbs

		Verb	Adjective	Noun
1.	number marking	no	yes	yes
2.	person marking	yes	no	no
3.	head of NP	no	yes	yes
4.	copula complement	no	yes	yes
5.	modifier in NP	no	yes	no

5.3 Warekena

According to Aikhenvald (1998), there are no underived adjectives in Warekena, but only derived adjectives. These are derived from stative verbs by the morphemes *-li*, *-ni* or *-mi*, as shown in (25), in which the adjectives *futʃi-li* ‘big-ADJ’ and *niwe-li* are modifying the noun *atapi* ‘tree’. Nouns are rarely used as modifiers in Warekena.

- (25) ʃa-wa nupa-hã-li atapi futʃi-li **futʃi-li** niwe-li a:tapi
 go-NONACC come-PAUS-REL tree big-ADJ big-ADJ tall-ADJ tree
 ‘He went, having arrived at a big tree, a big and lofty tree.’

This adjective-like class in Warekena can be considered as a subclass of verbs. However, more data is needed. Warekena derived adjectives may be considered “nouny” based on the properties shared with nouns (1, 3 and 4) as seen in Table 11. However, there is also at least one property shared with verbs. Considering the criteria applied by Wetzer, adjectives in Warekena are “verby” because there is person marking on verbs. However, it is not clear if adjectives can or cannot occur as copular complements, and more data are needed to confirm this argument.

Table 11: Properties of Warekena adjectives compared with nouns and verbs

		Verb	Adjective	Noun
1.	number marking	no	no	yes
2.	person marking	yes	yes	no
3.	head of NP	no	yes	yes
4.	modifier in NP	no	yes	yes

5.4 Apurinã

In Apurinã, a south-western Arawak language, there is no adjective class, and the functions normally associated with adjectives in other languages are accomplished in Apurinã either by classificatory nouns or by descriptive verbs. (Facundes, 2000; Chagas, 2007). In Apurinã, descriptive words neither appear as modifiers of a NP nor in an adverbial function. According to Facundes (2000), there are relative clauses with a descriptive predicator as in the example (24), in which the descriptive verb appears modifying the subject of the matrix clause in a relative clause:

- (26) suto **here-ro** apo-pe
 woman be.pretty-3F.O arrive-PFTV
 ‘The woman who’s pretty has arrived.’

The properties that characterize descriptive verbs as a subclass of verbs are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Properties of descriptive verbs compared with nouns and verbs

		Verbs	Descriptive verbs	Nouns
1.	number marking	no	no	yes
2.	object pronoun coreference marking	yes	yes: some	no
3.	head of NP	no	no	yes
4.	modifier within an NP	no	no	no

6. Conclusions

I have shown that Paresi has an adjective class, and also a distinct (sub)class of descriptive verbs. As the Paresi case illustrates, the differences among word classes may be quite subtle, and more investigation of this aspect in Paresi texts is needed.

A comparison across some of the Arawak languages suggests that there is considerable diversity among adjective classes within the family. On the one hand, we have Paresi, Warekena, and Apurinã, which are “verby” adjectival languages, and on the other hand we have Baure, Tariana, which are “nouny” adjectival languages. Baure and Tariana are languages that have a closed small adjective class, while in Warekena there are no underived adjectives, and in Paresi there are only a few of them. In the majority of these Arawak languages, the human propensity type is in the verb class as stative verbs.

Considering the criteria for nouniness or verbiness in attributive and predicate construction, the comparison of Arawak languages presented showed that the following properties characterize adjectivals as “nouny”: being the head of a NP, being a modifier in a NP, the absence of person marking, and the use of adjectivals as copula complement in predicates. On the other hand, the use of person marking and the absence of number marking on adjectivals characterize them as “verby”.

Interestingly, if we consider only the criteria presented by Wezter (1992) for predicate constructions, we could reach the same conclusion that Tariana and Baure are

“nouny” and Paresi, Warekena and Apurinã are “verby” adjectival languages. More work needs to be done with other Arawak languages, such as Palikur and Guajiro, which are claimed to have “verby” adjectivals with no distinct adjective class (Aikhenvald, 2006). Both Tariana and Bauré probably have “nouny” adjectivals (in the Tariana case, according to Aikhenvald due to contact with other languages), and it would be important to know whether there are other languages in the family that present the same pattern. We can conclude that the noun-like vs. verb-like adjective identity does not appear to be very stable in the Arawak case.

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