

## Adjectival modification in Kipsigis

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**1. Overview:** Adjectives in Kipsigis (Nilotic, Kenya) can never modify the noun directly; they can modify a noun only in the presence of the marker *ne* (1), which is the same marker that introduces relative clauses (2), or in the presence of one of the language's three demonstrative suffixes (3). When the demonstrative suffix is present, the relativizer is ungrammatical (3).

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| <p>(1) ngóoktá *(nè) tâuy<br/>         dog RELblack<br/>         'a/the black dog'</p> | <p>(2) ngóoktá *(nè) á-chám-é<br/>         dog REL 1SG-like-IMP<br/>         'the dog that I like'</p> | <p>(3) ngôog-ì/-áan/-ín *(nè) tâuy<br/>         dog-prox/med/dist REL black<br/>         'this/that black dog'</p> |
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There are two possible explanations for the inability of Kipsigis adjectives to directly modify nouns. First, the language could lack the syntactic category 'adjective'; e.g. Kim (2002) argues that 'adjectives' in Korean are verbs, and they modify nouns only as predicates inside relative clauses. Second, in light of Cinque's (2010) classification of adjectives into direct modification adjectives (generated in the specifier of dedicated functional projections), and indirect modification ones (predicates of reduced relative clauses), we could say that Kipsigis has adjectives, but lacks the direct modification type. Baker (2003a,b) has analyzed Slave, a language without attributive adjectives, in this way. In this talk, I argue in favor of the second approach, and I suggest an analysis along the lines of Kayne (1994). **2. Kipsigis has adjectives:** Kipsigis adjectives constitute a syntactic category distinct from verbs and nouns. Firstly, while most verbs in the language are monosyllabic, the majority of adjectives are disyllabic. Secondly, nouns can be derived from adjectives with the suffix *-in*, which is never used to form deverbal nouns. Thirdly, while verbs do not inflect for number in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (4), adjectives do (5). Moreover, adjectives form their plural with the suffix *-een*, which is unique to their class, and is distinct from the plural suffixes used with nouns.

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| <p>(4) Chám-è<br/>         love.3SG-IMP</p>                | <p>Kíbêet/làagôok<br/>         Kibeet(name).NOM/children.NOM</p> | <p>Chéebêet.<br/>         Cheebeet(name).OBL</p> |
| <p>'Kibeet loves Cheebeet/The children love Cheebeet.'</p> |  |  |

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| <p>(5) a. ngèchèréet nè píriir<br/>         chair REL red<br/>         'a/the red chair'</p> | <p>b. ngèchèróok chè píriir-èen<br/>         chairs REL.PL red-PL<br/>         '(the) red chairs'</p> |
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Fourthly, only adjectives can be modified by *kot* 'very'. This restriction is syntactic, and not semantic, since the word *misiing* has the same meaning, but can modify either adjectives or verbs:

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| <p>(6) a. chèeptá nè kárâarán kót/misiing.<br/>         girl REL beautiful very/very<br/>         'a/the very beautiful girl'</p> | <p>b. Rôobàn-ì misíing/*kót.<br/>         rain.3SG-IMP a lot/very<br/>         'It rains a lot.'</p> |
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Finally, adjectives, unlike verbs, inflect for Case. Kipsigis has a marked nominative Case system: nouns are marked tonally with nominative Case in subject position, and are left unmarked in all other cases. The tonal rules of Case assignment are different for nouns and adjectives. Adjectives (but not nouns), in addition to distinguishing between a nominative and an oblique form, have a third Case form when they are in predicative position. The following examples illustrate the Case distinctions for nouns and adjectives (note that the relativizer inflects for Case too).

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| <p>(7) a. kì-á-kéer<br/>         PAST-1SG-see</p> | <p>ngèchèréet<br/>         chair.OBL</p> | <p>nè píriir<br/>         rel.OBLred.OBL</p> |
| <p>'I saw a red chair.'</p>                       |  |  |
| <p>b. kì-ì-bút</p>                                | <p>ngèchèréet</p>                        | <p>né píriir</p>                             |

PAST-CLASS2-fall.3SG      chair.NOM      rel.NOM      red.NOM  
 ‘A/the red chair fell.’

c. **Pírîir**      ngèchèrèt.  
 red.PRED      chair.NOM  
 ‘The chair is red.’

However, as we have already seen, adjectives cannot directly modify a noun. Moreover, there are no adjectives in the language that cannot appear in

predicative position (such as *former* or *alleged* in English). We can, thus, conclude that Kipsigis only has Cinque’s (2010) indirect modification adjectives. It is worth pointing out, though, that, while Kipsigis adjectives exhibit many properties of indirect modification adjectives discussed by Cinque (2010) (e.g. multiple adjectives are not subject to ordering restrictions), they also differ from them in some respects. Firstly, indirect modification adjectives are predicted to only have an intersective reading, since they are predicates in relative clauses. A non-intersective reading for the adjective, however, is possible in (8).

(8) Lábátîindét      nè      kárâarán      Kîbêet.  
 runner      REL      beautiful      Kibet.NOM

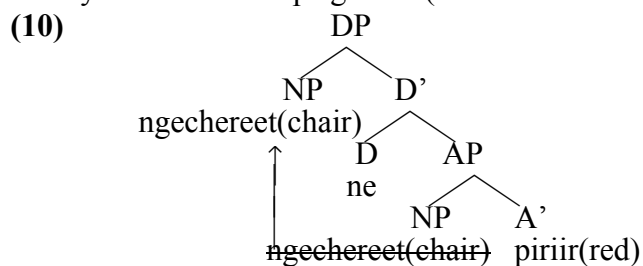
‘Kibeet is a good runner (= runs well)/Kibeet is a runner, who is good-looking.’

Secondly, in a sentence like (9), the stage-level interpretation typically available to post-nominal (reduced relative clause) adjectives in English is not available in Kipsigis.

(9) Á-chám-é      sùméek-âap      Mary nè      kôo-èen  
 1SG-like-IMP      hair(PL)-POSS Mary REL      long-PL

‘I like Mary’s long hair/#I like Mary’s hair long.’

Thirdly, the existence of a different Case form for adjectives when they modify a noun vs. when they are clausal predicates (7) raises some questions about whether they are predicates inside relative clauses. **3. Analysis:** Following Kayne’s (1994) insight that adjectives are reduced relative clauses that are the complement of D, I argue that DPs with adjectival modification in Kipsigis have the structure in (10). An AP with the adjective as the predicate and the noun as its subject, is the complement of D; the noun then moves to SpecDP. The relativizer *ne* is in complementary distribution with the demonstrative suffixes in the language (3), and it agrees with the head noun in Case and number (examples 5 and 7). I take these facts, in conjunction with the fact that the complementizer of sentential complementation in Kipsigis is never *ne*, to suggest that the demonstratives and the relativizer are both instances of D in the language. Following Ouhalla’s (2004) claim that some languages have DP, and not CP, relative clauses, I argue that there is no CP layer inside the Kipsigis DP (at least not in the case of adjectival modification).



The small AP structure, as opposed to a PredP/TP/CP, might also explain the fact that adjectives in Kipsigis agree with the noun they modify in Case, instead of appearing in predicative Case form. If predicative Case is assigned in the context of PredP or TP, then we would not expect it to be assigned in (10). However, the adjective

still has a Case feature to check; the closest Case-marked element in (10) is D, which will have nominative or oblique Case depending on the syntactic environment of the whole DP. **4. Conclusion:** Kipsigis adjectives form a distinct syntactic category, yet they are unable to directly modify nouns, because the language only has indirect modification adjectives, which always appear as predicates-complements of D. Baker (2003b) tentatively suggests that adjectives can directly modify a noun only if they have phi-features, and he argues that the absence of phi-features in Japanese and Slave adjectives is the reason why these languages lack direct modification

adjectives. However, this explanation does not apply to the Kipsigis data, which can therefore shed light on the important question of why some languages do not have direct modification adjectives.