Property words in Oceanic languages

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Background

- Part of broader study on Oceanic word classes
- Oceanic property words: variation (Ross 1998) vs. coherence (Stassen 1997)
- Attributive/modifying vs. predicative function
- Balanced sample of 35 Oceanic languages (Bakker 2010)

Aims

- Diversity in Oceanic property word classes
  - Modification and predication

- Compare Oceanic languages with WALS data
  - WALS landmark of MPI-EVA
  - Generalizations about **predicative** 'adjectives' and other features:

    - Wetzer 1996 / Stassen 1997:
      Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ Tense
      Verbal adjectival predication ↔ No tense
    - Dixon 2004:
      Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ Dependent marking
      Verbal adjectival predication ↔ Head/zero marking

Diversity in Oceanic property words (Ross 1998)

- Function and morphological behavior
  - Modification
    - verbal (person/number indexing, TAM)
    - nominal (possessive indexing)
    - adjectival (unmarked)
  - Predication
    - verbal (person/number indexing, TAM)
    - non-verbal (either possessive indexing or unmarked)

- Often: two or more formally distinct classes of property words

Some examples (i)

- Loniu (Admiralty Islands; Hamel 1994: 112, 113, 181, 212)
  - Modification: some adjectival (unmarked), some nominal (poss.)

    niw   ɔkɛt
    coconut   black
    'black (ripe) coconut'

    pʷahacʼan   laʔɛlɛwɛ-n
    road   long-**3SG.POSS**
    'long road'

  - Predication: non-verbal (unmarked)

    maʔa-m   piʔɛn   cf.   *iy*   *ilɔs*
    skin-2SG.POSS white   3SG   **3SG**.fell
    'Your skin is white.'   'He fell.'

Some examples (ii)

- Tawala (Western Oceanic, Papuan Tip; Ezard 1997: 56, 28)
  - Modification: nominal (poss.)

    *bulumakau banei-**hi***
    cows   big-**3PL.POSS**
    'big cows'

  - Predication: non-verbal (poss.) or verbal (subclass)

    *A dewa dewadewa-**na** / **i**-dewadewa*
    his custom good-**3SG.POSS**   **3SG.SBJ**-good
    'His custom is good.'

Some examples (iii)

- Kokota (Western Oceanic, Meso-Melanesian; Palmer 2009: 94, 98)
  - Modification: mostly adjectival (unmarked), but a subclass nominal (poss.)

    kaike namhari dou
    one   fish   big
    'a big fish'

    *kaike zora lehe=**mu***
    one   pig   dead=**2SG.POSS**
    'a dead pig'

  - Predication: mostly verbal, but three items ('wild', 'tame', 'old') non-predicative

    *namhari   ine   **n-e***   *dou*
    fish   this   **REAL-3SG**   big
    'This fish is big.'

Some examples (iv)

- Engdewu (Temotu, Reefs Santa Cruz; Vaa 2013: 133, 273)

  - Modification: verbal

    trak   ***ka̤***   ***u****-tapwa̤*
    truck   REL   PFV.N3AUG.S/A-small
    'a small truck'

  - Predication: verbal

    mvatüti   ***tu****-kotei-ṳ̈*
    tomorrow   IPFV.N3AUG.S/A-good-1MIN.S/A
    'Tomorrow I will be fine.'

Coherence in Oceanic adjectival predication (Stassen 1997: 4279f; Wetzer 1996: 276)

- "With only marginal exceptions, Austronesian [incl. Oceanic] languages can be shown to have verby encoding for predicative adjectives."

- "The almost uniform verby nature of adjectival predicate encoding in Austronesian languages is matched by the non-tensed character of their verbal systems."

- Universally:
  - Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ tensed
  - Verbal adjectival predication ↔ non-tensed
  Due to time-stability (Givón 2001)

- "Tensedness":
  - Grammatical (obligatory) category
  - Morphologically bound to main verb
  - Minimally past/non-past distinction
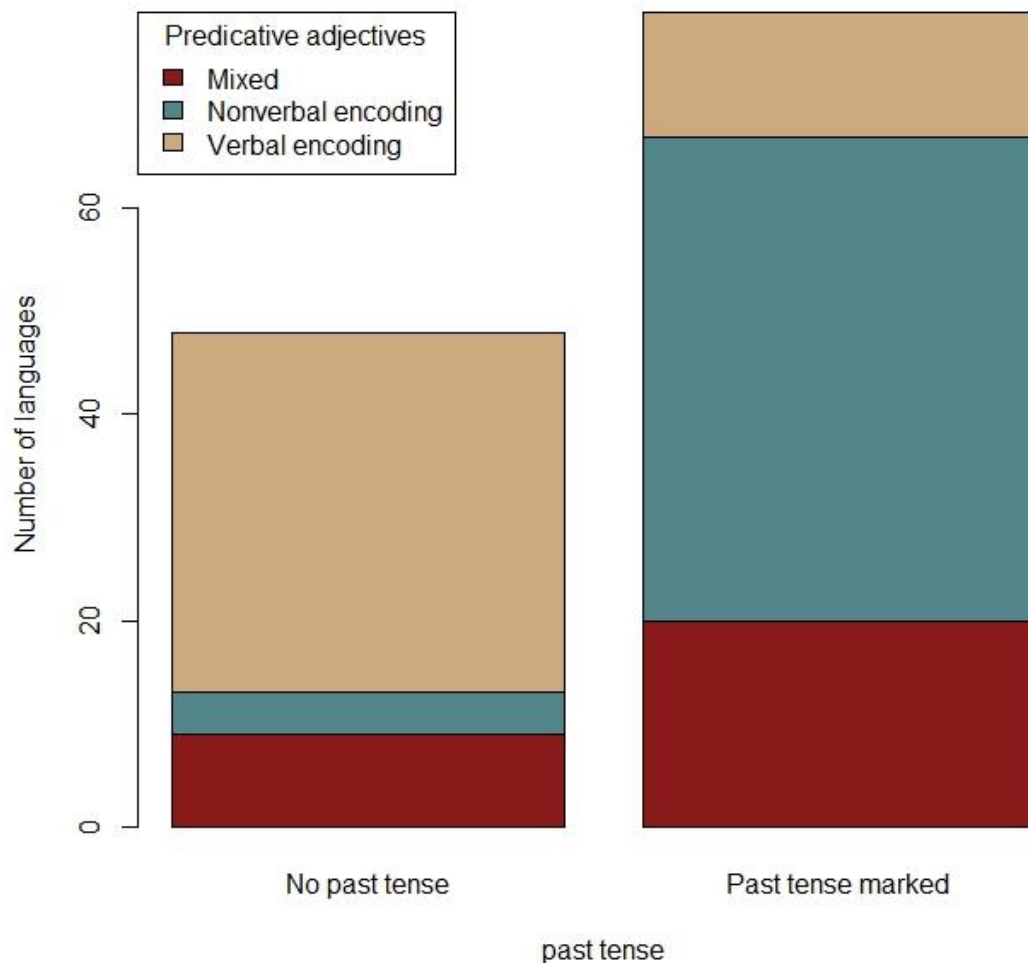
W/S's generalization: WALS data

Stassen 2013 (predicative adjectives) X Dahl & Velupillai 2013 (past tense)

Predicative Adjectives	PAST TENSE	
	NO	**YES**
Mixed	9	20
Non-verbal encoding	**4**	**47**
Verbal encoding	**35**	**12**

- Mixed=
    - the same lexical item can "switch" between verbal and nonverbal encoding (*fluid*)
    - the set of property words is split into a subset with verbal encoding and a subset with nonverbal encoding (*split*)
    - → Both occur in Oceanic languages

W/S's generalization: WALS data PAST

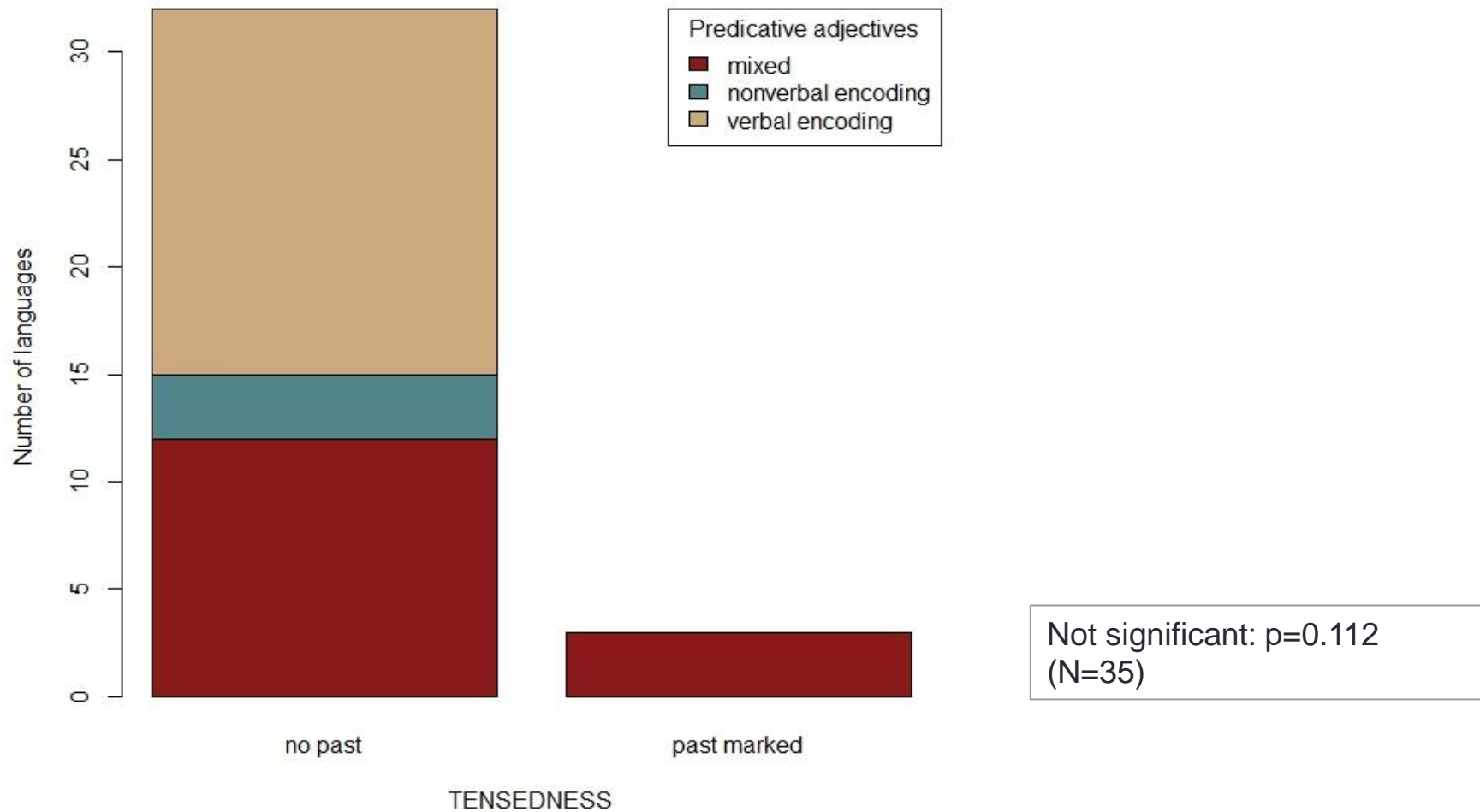**Relationship between predicative adjectives and past tense**

Significant correlation:
p=6.508e-11
(N=127)

W/S's generalization: Oceanic data

Predicative Adjectives	PAST TENSE	
	NO	YES
Mixed	12	3
Non-verbal encoding	**3**	0
Verbal encoding	**17**	0

W/S's generalization: Oceanic data

Relationship between predicative adjectives and 'tensedness'

Not significant: p=0.112 (N=35)

Oceanic counterexamples (i)

- Non-tensed & non-verbal adjectival prediction (N=3):

  - Hote (Western, North New Guinea; Muzzey 1979: 29, 62)

ho-yuv	*la*	*mavi*
2SG.ACT-blow	his.stomach	happy
'You blew/are blowing.'	'He is happy.'	

- Strictly: mixed languages (43%!) provide no evidence pro/con, but many non-tensed ones have a sub-class/type of non-verbal adjectival predicates:

  - e.g. Mato (Western, North New Guinea; Stober 2013: 49, 50)

long-a	*ø-sabuxa*	*haidanga=di*	*gamata-**ding***
area-SPEC	**3SG.S**-red	flower=PL	green-**3PL.POSS**
'The area becomes red.'		'The flowers are green.'	

Dixon's generalization: WALS data

Dixon (2004: 33):
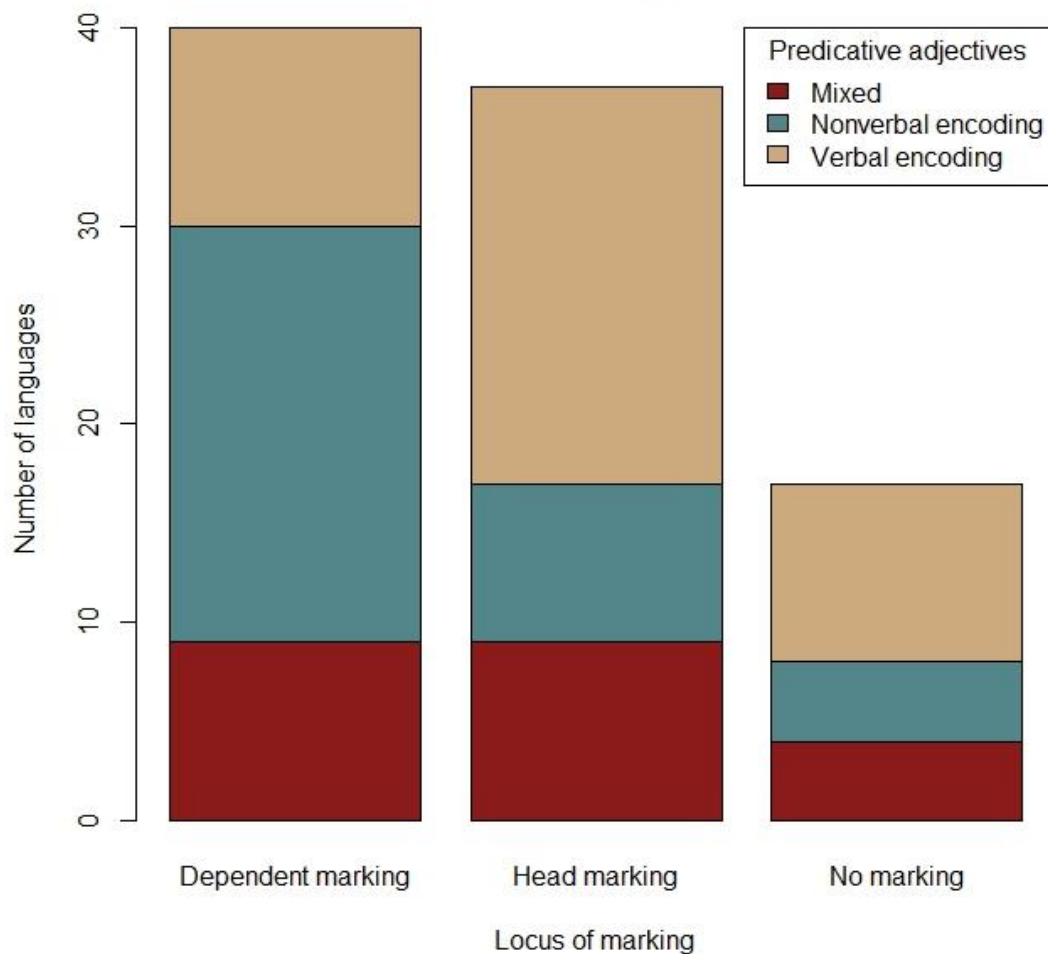 Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ Dependent marking
  Verbal adjectival predication ↔ Head/zero marking

Stassen 2013 (predicative adjectives) X Nichols & Bickel 2013 (locus of marking)
(N.B. = marking of nominal P, with priority for overt marking)

Pred.Adjectives	Dep. marking	Head marking	No marking
Mixed	9	9	4
Non-verbal encoding	**21**	**8**	**4**
Verbal encoding	**10**	**20**	**9**

Dixon's generalization: WALS data

Relationship between predicative adjectives and locus of marking
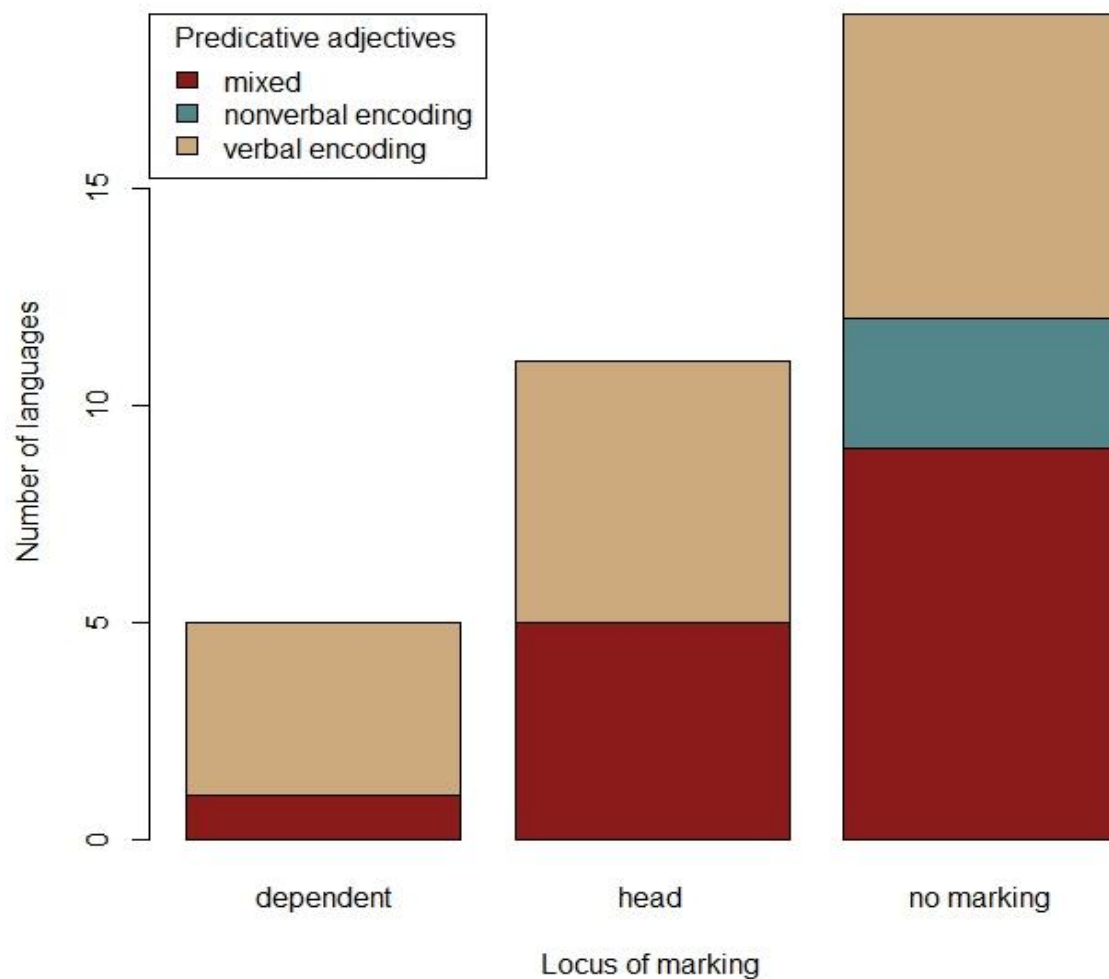
Significant correlation:
p=0.004
(N=94)

Dixon's generalization: Oceanic data

Pred.adjectives	Dep. marking	Head marking	No marking
Mixed	1	5	9
Non-verbal encoding	**0**	0	**3**
Verbal encoding	**4**	**6**	**7**

Dixon's generalization: Oceanic data

Relationship between predicative adjectives and locus of marking

Not significant: p=0.299 (N=35)

Oceanic counterexamples (ii)

- Zero marking & non-verbal adjectival predication:
  - Hote again (Muzzey 1979: 35, 62)

ega	*yanaŋ*	*waba*		*la*	*mavi*
3PL.carry	my	cargo		his.stomach	happy
They carry my cargo.'				'He is happy.'	

- Dependent marking & verbal adjectival predication:
  - North-East Ambae (Central-Eastern, Remote; Hyslop 2001: 123, 57)

Re	*maresu*	*ra=mo*	*hua*	**na**	*mwerabuto*	*nhihie*
PL	child	3NSG=REAL	find	**ACC**	devil	that
'The children found the devil.'						

Netu-re		**ra=u**	*biti*
child-3SNG.POSS		**3NSG=TEL**	small
'Their children are small.'			

Concluding remarks (i)

- Oceanic property words show a range of formal variation, both in modifying and in predicative function

- Oceanic shows no direct reflection of the world-wide correlation between tensedness and adjectival predication
  - Grammatical (non/past) tense is rare
  - Various non-tensed languages have non-verbal adjectival predication or mixed strategies/classes
  - Yet absence of tense 'allows' property words to behave verbally
    - In some cases the same holds for even more time-stable object words ('nouns')

Concluding remarks (ii)

- Oceanic shows no direct reflection of the world-wide correlation between adjectival predication and locus of marking
  - Some languages with zero marking have non-verbal adjectival predication
  - Most languages with dependent marking have verbal adjectival predication

- Overall (in WALS and Oceanic) Wetzer/Stassen's generalization receives more support than Dixon's
  - What's the functional motivation behind the latter?

References

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