

## **A rare type of parts of speech system: constructing meaning through nouns, verbs and adverbs in Ye'kwana**

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In Ye'kwana (Cariban, Venezuela), there are three distinct main classes of words: in their basic form, members of the noun class are used as referents, members of the verb class as eventive predicates and members of the adverb class as modifiers of predicates (e.g. *The mailman drives fast* or *I painted the house black*) but not of referents (e.g. *\*fast mailman*, *\*black house*).

The syntactic distribution of each of these categories does not overlap (no category fuzziness) but productive derivational morphology allows the expression of the verbal and adverbial meanings in reference function – through nominalization – and of verbal and nominal meanings in verbal modifier function – through adverbialization.

Even though three distinct word classes can successfully be identified, there is no dedicated class for modification of a referent. Unlike the widely attested cases of adjective-noun or adjective-verb class syncretism, most concepts commonly associated with an adjective class belong in Ye'kwana to the class which is used for predicate modification. Thus, in order to function as referent modifiers members of this class require derivational morphology – the adverbial nominalizer *-ato*.

After characterizing the morphosyntax and functions of the adjective-adverb class, I show evidence suggesting this odd third part of speech was innovated due to constructional constraints on the form necessary in attributive function and secondary predication.