

- 1) Lexical Categories in Endenese
- 2) Descriptive Linguistics and Syntax
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Lexical Categories in Endenese

Endenese is a little known language of eastern Indonesia spoken by 87,000 on the island of Flores. It is classified as a Bima-Sumba language after Esser (1938) within the Central Malayo-Polynesian subgroup (Blust 1993). Endenese is an extremely isolating language and contains almost no morphology. Because of this, the distinction between lexical categories can be quite opaque, especially between noun and verb. This fluidity is demonstrated with *senda*, which is glossed as ‘weave’ in (1) as a verb and as ‘cloth’ in (2) as a noun.

1. Ki kai *senda* ngere na mesa, wengi rua rhawo na ngarha medo.
 if 3SG weave like this always day two sarong this can finish
 ‘If she always weaves like this, in two days the sarong can be finished.’
2. Ngga'e ghi pete *senda* dhato.
 self 3SG.POSS dye cloth alone
 ‘She dyed the cloth material by herself.’

As shown in (1) and (2), a large class of Endenese words does not demonstrate a clear-cut morphological or phonological distinction between nouns and verbs. Further, there are many roots that lack any of these types of distinctions, some of which are demonstrated in (3) - (5).

Nouns	Verbs
3. weti ‘areca nut’	weti ‘to chew areca nut’
4. gera ‘anger’	gera ‘to get angry’
5. seru ‘voice’	seru ‘to talk’

Languages that commonly employ these *multifunctional* words like Endenese are often termed zero conversion languages as the conversion from noun to verb (or vice versa) is not formally marked (cf. Evans and Osada 2005). Such languages are attested in other Austronesian languages such as Tongan (Broschart 1997) and even in other Bima-Sumba languages, such as Keo (Baird 2002) and Kambera (Klamer 1998).

Even though a large distribution of words is *multifunctional*, there exist others that must be marked with the nominalizer *orha*. These cannot occur as a noun in the base form, but must be marked. This is shown in (6) and (7).

Base Verbs	Nominalizations	
6. ka ‘to eat’	orha ka ‘food’	*ka
7. rheda ‘to place high’	orha rheda ‘a high place’	*rheda

To address these issues, this paper develops multiple tests for determining membership in Endenese lexical categories based on a distributional analysis of semantic and syntactic prototypes, as discussed in Payne (1997). In turn, this describes the manner in which Endenese distinguishes what Croft (2000) calls primitive notions of reference, event, and modifier, which relate to noun, verb, and adjective respectively.

References

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