Adjectives and Relatives

Adjectives (Iziphawuli)

There are 18 adjectives in Xhosa:

1. nye  one  8. hle  beautiful  15. ncinci/ncinane  small/young
2. bini  two  9. tsha  new  16. ngaphi?  how many?
3. thatu  three  10. dala  old  17. nye  another/other
4. ne  four  11. de  tall/long/high  18. ni  kind
5. hlanu  five  12. futshane  short
6. thandathu  six  13. khulu  big/large
7. bi  ugly  14. ninzi  many/much

To begin with, consider the difference between an attributive adjective concord (AAC) and a predicative adjective concord (PAC):

**Attributive adjective concord:** Ndnamehlo amahle  
*I have eyes that are beautiful*

**Predicative adjective concord:** Amehlo am mahle  
*My eyes are beautiful*

As you can see above, the AAC has the initial vowel, while the PAC does not. Now let’s go into more depth. When a sentence uses the terms “is/are” (and not “that”) it is **predicative**. When it uses “that” it is **attributive**.

Note: Remember this when dealing with relatives, which will be explained further on

**Attributive adjective concords**

Nanku umntu omtsha  
*Here is a person who is young*

Nditya isonka esidala  
*I am eating bread that is old*

To form the AAC, all you have to do is a simple formula:

\[
\text{noun} + \text{full noun prefix} = \text{attributive adjective concord}
\]

For example, take the following nouns:

**Izinto**  
\[a + izi = ezi\]  
Izinto ezininzi  
*Many things*

**Ilfu**  
\[a + ili = eli\]  
Ilfu elikhulu  
*A big cloud*

**Class 9 & 10**

The n of classes 9 and 10 causes some sound changes:

- N becomes an m before b and f:  
  \[n+f = mf; \quad n+b = mb\]

- N eliminates h from th and kh:  
  \[n+th = nt; \quad n+kh = nk\]

- N changes hl to tl:  
  \[n+hl = ntl\]
**Predicative adjective concords**

Iinyawo zam zinkulu  
*My feet are big*

Umntwana mhle  
*The child is pretty*

To form the PAC, all you have to do is drop the initial vowel of the AAC.

Some examples to show how this works:

The **attributive adjective concord** for isikolo is **esi**. The **predicative adjective concord** is just **si**, as you drop the initial vowel (**e**).

**Class 9** is different. Instead of dropping the initial vowel, the noun prefix **in**- is used as the concord.

** Relatives (Izibaluli)**

The other descriptive stems are called **relative stems**. Relative stems include descriptive words like colours, numbers from seven upwards and many more.

**Attributive relative concords**

Nanzi iintombi **ezintle**  
*Here are girls that are pretty*

Unomhlobo okrwada  
*You have a child who is rude*

**Strong noun classes**

a + full noun prefix = attributive relative concord

**Izinja**  
*a + izi = ezi*  
*Izinha ezimnyama  Black dogs*

**Abantu**  
*a + aba = aba*  
*Abantu abakrelekrele  Clever people*

**Weak noun classes**

a + positive subject concord = attributive relative concord

**Inja**  
*a + i = e*  
*Inja enmyama  A black dog*

**Amahashe**  
*a + a = a*  
*Amahashe amnandi  Nice horses*

**Predicative relative concords**

IsiXhosa **silula**  
*Xhosa is easy*

Umntu **udlakadlaka**  
*The person is untidy*

To form the predicative relative concord, all you have to do is use the **positive subject concord**.