That did it! 'apt-get install vim' and ':syntax on' solved the problem.
Thanks, Mike.

Michael Wallace wrote:
>>   Does anyone know if it is possible to use syntax highlighting
>> while editing IDL files using Vi (or Vim). If so, how does one go
>> about doing it?
>
>
> Yes, using vim. There may be basic highlighting in vi, but vim is
> really what you want. To turn on syntax highlighting, you only need to
> do ':syntax on' (without quotes) from within vim and it should
> automagically recognize the file type and highlight appropriately. If
> that doesn't work, try ':cal SetSyn("idlang")' (without quotes) instead.
> If that fails too, then you probably don't have the IDL syntax file
> installed on your system. On my systems, the IDL syntax file is
> /usr/share/vim/vim??/syntax/idlang.vim where ?? is the version number of
> vim. If you can't locate the file, just upgrade vim. Not only will you
> have a better vim, but I know that it comes with the IDL syntax file
> already in place.
>
> HTH,
>
> Mike W
>