Notions of SELF in Hausa

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Abstract

The paper deals with the special ways of expressing the notion of the SELF in Hausa that function as linguistic patterns of person. The language data demonstrates how personal identity is constructed as an idea and what consciousness this idea is founded on. Lexical, morphological and syntactic data, as its structural representation, refer to self-identity, self-perception, and self-categorization. Special attention is placed on body part terms that are widely attested in Hausa in the function of lexical exponents for person. The concept of person is analyzed on the basis of some basic equivalents for the SELF (*kai, jiki, rai, hankali*) which determine the understanding of the concept in some particular contexts. As a result, the discourse properties of certain systemic devices allow for indicating some cultural implications of their content.

Introduction

The notion of the SELF has its roots in one's identity. As a form of self-knowledge, it is what one knows about oneself, and is referred to in the first person. The notion, however, has a broader meaning. It is in fact a relational concept, the idea of which includes some 'external' factors, such as views on the surrounding world and references to the views and perceptions of others.

There are different attitudes towards studying 'selfhood'; the concept is important within various philosophic debates (see Perry 1990, Perry 1998), but it is also present in other works dealing with the nature of self-consciousness, the nature of bodily awareness (Bermudez et al. 1998) or human emotions (Athanasiadou, Tabakowska 1998). In linguistic analyses, the main question pertains to how the notion is conceptualized within language and to what extent the human body is a structural template for describing the concept. Linguistic representation of the notion of the SELF includes lexical terms, but also direct statements concerning self-perception and some metaphoric patterns of modelling a person. An analysis of linguistic devices allows for the formulation of statements on the notion itself and on whether there are some culturally oriented features in its understanding.

The Hausa language provides a variety of forms for studying the structural representation of the notion of the SELF. As in many other languages, body

part terms and other lexical, grammatical and figurative expressions are used to express the meaning. However, systemic devices are not the only sources of conceptualization of the notion. Linguistic communication, which takes place under specific conditions and includes speaker-hearer interaction (Heine 1997: 15), also has an effect on how self-consciousness and self-perception is manifested. This paper aims to demonstrate that discourse features may influence the way the conceptualization patterns of the SELF function.

The methodological background for the present analysis is based on the contextual meanings of lexical items with special focus on new meanings developed through semantic derivation. The analysis has been conducted with the assumption that what is expressed in language has its cultural dimension. The interpretation of data refers specifically to the theory (concept) of 'language view (picture) of the world'/'*Sprachliches Weltbild*' (Underhill 2011, Bartmiński 2006) that explores the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualization.

The sources for linguistic studies were found in literary texts based on oral tradition (mainly *Magana Jari Ce* by Abubakar Imam) as well as in newly created texts distributed over the internet that represent modern communication in Hausa.

Lexical Equivalents for 'Person', 'Individual', 'Human Being'

The lexical representation of 'person' is primarily attributed to the word *mutum (mùtûm)*[1]/*mutumin (mùtumìn)* in its genitive form, which is homogenous with the equivalent for 'man', 'male'. When we speak about a person in Hausa we must define more precisely whether we mean 'man' or 'woman' (*màcè* in the latter case). The derivational feminine form of *mutum—mutuniya (mùtūnìyā)* also exists. Both these forms may be used in some nominal compounds. Therefore:

(1)   *mutumin kirki* 'good fellow'; *mutumin banza* 'good-for-nothing fellow'

(2)   *mutuniyar kirki* 'decent sort of woman or girl'; *mutuniyar banza* 'useless girl or woman'

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1   The marking of tone and vowel length is provided only for lexical items presented as terms. Therefore, ` stands for a low tone, ˆ for a rising tone (a high tone remains unmarked), whereas a dash ˉ is to indicate a long vowel. In contextual use, the words remain unmarked which is a standard Hausa orthographic rule.