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The Polysemy of Body Part Terms in Hausa within the Frame of Image Schemas

Abstract

Body part-terms have been identified as a productive source of figurative lexical meanings as well as grammatical meanings (Heine, et al. 1991). The paper adopts descriptive lexical semantics as a model of approach. This paves the way to examine the relationships that exist between different interpretations of words. Virtually, every language exhibits rich set of semantic extensions of body part-terms, highlighting the importance of the human body for lexical and grammatical structure (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Most meaning extensions of body part-terms can be shown to have a clear motivation through either metaphor or metonymy, as has been argued in many studies before (Allan, 1995). The paper provides a rich inventory of body part-terms in Hausa and interprets the variety of their meanings in terms of conceptualization patterns.

Keywords: body part, compositional polysemy, semantic extension, metonymy, Hausa

1. Introduction

The body part terminology has attracted the attention of researchers from different domains as it has an enormous potentiality for semantic extensions into other semantic domains and functions as a source for the development of other grammatical forms. Body part terms in Hausa are no exceptions, because they offer a good, varied and rich laboratory for the study of polysemy and conceptualization (Bilkova, 2000).

In Hausa, the general term for ‘body’ is *jiki* which refers to the physical body. Following Oladipo (1992: 15) it is “a collective term for all the material components of a person”. Gbadegesin (2003: 175) defines body as “the physico-material part of the human being”. As such, it includes both external parts (*goshi* ‘forehead’, *kai* ‘head’, *ido* ‘eye’ etc.) and internal components (*zuciya* ‘heart’, *ciki* ‘stomach’, *rai* ‘soul’ etc.).

In this paper, the focus will be on one body part *kai* ‘head’ with its sub-parts i.e. *ido* ‘eye’, *kunne* ‘ear’, *hanci* ‘nose’, *baki* ‘mouth’, *fuska* ‘face’, and *goshi* ‘forehead’. This body part and its sub-parts, apart from being very common, show a great variety of meanings.

In Hausa, similarly to other languages, terms for physical body and its parts are often used to talk about other things than body. The explanation usually advocated for this is an intuitive interpretation of the surrounding world through bodily experience (Lakoff, Johnson 1980) . With this argumentation, a number of words for body parts are used with metaphorical meanings in which the target domain differs from its source (body) domain. The question is to which extent the polysemy of body part terms is determined by the factors common to many different languages and whether the metaphorical use of body part names is motivated by similar ways of conceptualization.

2. The concept of polysemy

A polysemy is a word or phrase with multiple, related meanings. Polysemy can be understood as a variation in the construal of a word on different occasions of use (Croft & Cruise 2004:109). Polysemy can also be seen as the phenomenon when a single word has two or more meanings, no matter how meaning is defined in a given approach (Petho 1999:1). This is a pivotal concept within social sciences, such as media studies and linguistics, because applying pre-existing words to new situations is a natural process of language change.

Filmore & Atkins (2000) stipulate three elements in their attempt to describe polysemy: the various senses of polysemous

words have a common origin, the links between these senses form a network and understanding of how the 'inner' one contributes to understanding of the 'outer' one.

3. Theoretical framework of the study

Before establishing the analysis of *kai* 'head' and its sub-parts, it is important to introduce the theoretical framework employed for the analysis. This frame is what Ibarretxe (1999) has called compositional polysemy. The basic idea of compositional polysemy is that different semantic extensions of a lexical item are obtained through the interaction of the semantic content of both the lexical item itself and its different co-occurring elements. The weight of the semantics of these elements in the creation of polysemy is not always the same; it varies according to the degree of semantic influence of these elements in the overall meaning.

In compositional polysemy which forms a theoretical background for cognitive analysis, a word is understood as if all its multiple meanings were systematically related. With this attitude, one of the most important objectives is to show that the multiple semantic extensions of a lexical item are related not in an arbitrary but in a systematic and natural way by means of several cognitive mechanisms such as image schemas, metaphor and metonymy. Numerous studies within this framework have shown that this is a strong hypothesis (Behrens 1999; Lakoff 1987).

An interaction between a lexeme denoting body part and co-occurring elements leads to the emergence of numerous senses that are different from the notion of body. Semantic extensions of body part terms in Hausa and the postulated mechanisms responsible for their development are presented below.

The method chosen for this research was multi-dimensional. Thus, participant observation, arm chair technique were employed and also literature materials were investigated for collecting the data. Every piece of data was evaluated and assessed from the native speaker's perspective. Hausa dictionaries were also used to confirm words attributed to standard Hausa and those seen as dialectal, borrowed, innovated or created.

4. Data presentation and analysis

Looking at the semantic content of the words that accompany the body part-term lexemes, I now proceed to analysing and discussing the polysemous nature of some Hausa body part-terms. In carrying out the analysis and discussion, I pay attention to the body-part lexemes and the co-occurring elements in the sentences that will help in construing their meanings.

4.1. *Kai* ‘head’

Kai ‘head’ is the upper part of the body in humans, joined to the trunk by the neck, containing brain, eye, ear, nose, mouth etc. The basic reference of the notion ‘head’ is body part, but frequently head expressions are used to refer to the presumed content of the head, that is the brain, the mind, human ratio, intelligence. This is because the mind, rationality, and intelligence has been presumed to be located in the head (Niemeier, 2000). Therefore, location is common motivation for the use of the word head in the metonymic expressions denoting rational thoughts, as it is manifested in the expressions given below:

- 1 a. *Ya d'auke min kai*
‘He makes me silly shy’ (lit. ‘He tied my head’)
- b. *Ya yi batan kai*
‘He lost direction’ (lit. ‘He lost head’)
- c. *Yana da duhum kai*
‘He is not very intelligent’ (lit. ‘He has dark head’)
- d. *Ya yi d'anyen kai*
‘He acts senselessly’ (lit. ‘He did unripe head’)

All these expressions refer to general human gift of reasoning or its absence. However, they are differently related to what Dirven

(2002) calls ‘metonymic chain’ which goes from head *via* brain, *via* grey cells, *via* thinking or thought processes, *via* mind, *via* thought to intelligence. In Hausa, we find plenty of expressions involving *kai* that are similar to (1a), where one is confused on an issue that he was unable to solve. The appeals in (b) & (c) work in the same direction as they view the subjects of the expressions as having lost sense of reasoning and understanding. Example (d) is referring to someone who acts without reasoning. *Kai* ‘head’ is not the direct equivalent of the above listed notions, but the context in which this word is used, clarifies the meaning of the whole phrase.

The word *kai* functions in another semantic area referring to the notion of ‘self’. Through the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy, its meaning has extended to ‘person’, e.g.:

- 2 a. *Aikin ya sha kaina*
‘It was too much for me’ (lit. ‘The work drank my head’)
- b. *Yana son kansa*
‘He is selfish’ (lit. ‘He loves his head’)
- c. *Ya ba da kai*
‘He has surrendered’ (lit. ‘He gave out head’)
- d. *Sun hada kai*
‘They conspired’ (lit. ‘They joined head’)
- e. *Yana cin gashin kai*
‘He is his own master’ (lit. ‘He is eating roasting of head’)
- f. *Ya yi girman kai*
‘He is full of conceit’ (lit. ‘He did big head’)
- g. *Ya kwantar da kai*
‘He complied with’ (lit. ‘He laid down head’)

- h. *Ya shawo kansa*
 ‘He prevails over him’ (lit. ‘He drank his head’)

The meaning ‘self’ is grounded in the conceptual experience that head represents ‘individual thought, selfishness’. In Hausa, reflexives are regularly formed with the noun *kai* and possessive pronouns, i.e. *kaina* ‘myself’ (not *my head).

From this entry, we realized that the expressions for *kai* ‘head’ conceptualize the notion of rational thought through making reference to the head’s presumed content, that is the brain, the mind and the human intelligence. The examples refer to the general human gift of reasoning, but motivation for the use of the term *kai* for many different meanings is common idea that the brain is located in the head. It finds the ground for further extensions that reasoning is one of the brain’s functions and also a balanced mind is required as a condition for reasoning.

4.2 *Baki* ‘mouth’

Baki ‘mouth’ is the opening through which an animal or human takes in food. Mouth is cross-linguistically associated with language (Radden 2001). Also in Hausa, the meaning ‘mouth’ is extended to ‘speech’ and different ‘speech acts’. This could be seen in the examples below:

- 3 a. *Ya iya bakinsa*
 ‘He is reserved’ (lit. ‘He guards his mouth’)
- b. *Shi dan baka ne*
 ‘He is talkative’ (lit. ‘He is son of mouth’)
- c. *Ya bata bakinsa*
 ‘He talks nonsense’ (lit. ‘He spoiled his mouth’)

- d. *Ya saki baki*
‘He speaks too much’ (lit. ‘He released mouth’)
- e. *Yana da nauyin baki*
‘He is an introvert’ (lit. ‘He has heavy mouth’)
- f. *Ya yi zakin baki*
‘He presented a convincing speech’
(lit. ‘He did sweet mouth’)

Here, more than one conceptual shift is considered to account for the meanings derived from ‘mouth’. The examples signify individual speech character i.e. being ‘introvert’ in (3), ‘reserved’ in (3a) or ‘talkative’ in (3b). What they have in common is conceptualization of the idea of speaking through INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. The relationship between speech in general and the speech act in particular is captured by the MEANS FOR ACTION metonymy (Radden & Kövecses, 1999: 37) or INSTRUMENT FOR EFFECT which is chained as *baki* ‘mouth’ → *magana* ‘speech’ → *yanayin magana* ‘nature of speech’. In Hausa, this cognitive mechanism is responsible for secondary target of various speech acts, such as gossip, exaggeration, fear, etc.

Many examples are to show that *baki* ‘mouth’ is extended to the lexical concept ‘speech’ through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. This metonymy has a strong experiential motivation, but it does not cover all aspects of the subsequent semantic shift. Because speech is the means to accomplish a wide range of social activities, *baki* is used in expressions that locate the ‘speech act’ in social environment. It motivates various senses such as ‘appeasing’ in (4b), ‘arbitrating’ in (4d), ‘pleasing’ in (4g) etc., as follows:

- 4 a. *Ya nemi baki*
‘He tried to pick a quarrel’ (lit. ‘He searched for
mouth’)

- b. *An ba shi baki*
‘He was appeased’ (lit. ‘He was given mouth’)
- c. *Ya tsoma baki*
‘He gets involved’ (lit. ‘He plunged in mouth’)
- d. *Ya sa baki*
‘He arbitrated’ (lit. ‘He put mouth’)
- e. *Ya yi min ciwon baki*
‘He grumbled to me’ (lit. ‘He did to me itching
mouth’)
- f. *Na ari bakinsa*
‘I spoke on his behalf’ (lit. ‘I borrowed his mouth’)
- g. *Na ba shi baki*
‘I pleased him’ (lit. ‘I gave him mouth’)
- h. *Sun sayi baki*
‘They gave a present to the
bride to win her speech’ (lit. ‘They bought mouth’)
- i. *Ya yi mata d’aurin baki*
‘He prevented her to notify’ (lit. ‘He did to her tying of
mouth’)
- j. *Ya yi baki biyu*
‘He is inconsistent in speech’ (lit. ‘He did two mouths’)
- k. *Ya yi subul da baka*
‘He had a slip of tongue’ (lit. ‘He did slip with mouth’)

The examples in (5a-c) clearly show that the body part *baki* ‘mouth’ can be used in an expression to indicate absence of speech.

INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy has its negative application in this case:

- 5 a. *Ya kame bakinsa*
‘He kept silent’ (lit. ‘He cached his mouth’)
- b. *Baki alaikum ya fita*
‘He walked out silently’ (lit. ‘Mouth to you he left’)
- c. *Ya ja bakinsa*
‘He kept mute’ (lit. ‘He pulled his mouth’)

The body part term *baki* ‘mouth’ with some qualitative expressions functions not only as the means to conceptualize the speech, but also to depict the effect of being emotionally aroused. This can be self-stimulation as in (6a) or inspiring someone else as in (6b) and (6d):

- 6 a. *Yana da dadin baki*
‘He is given to flattering’ (lit. ‘He has sweet mouth’)
- b. *Ya yi masa dadin baki*
‘He placates him’ (lit. ‘He did to him sweet mouth’)
- c. *Ya yi mugun baki*
‘He used smutty language’ (lit. ‘He did bad mouth’)
- d. *Ya yi masa romon baka*
‘He is pacified’ (lit. ‘He did to him soup of mouth’)
- e. *Jan baki ne da shi*
‘He is used to ridiculing’ (lit. ‘He is used to pulling mouth’)

The presented examples indicate that *baki* ‘mouth’ represents the notion for speech in Hausa. The basic mechanism responsible for this semantic shift is INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. However, *baki* ‘mouth’ is involved in conceptualization of social relations. Therefore, the speech organ *baki* ‘mouth’ stands for the act of conniving between two individuals:

7. *Sun hada baki*

‘They connived’

(lit. ‘They joined mouth’)

4.3 *Ido* ‘eye’

Ido ‘eye’ is an organ of sight which is responsible for converting light into impulses that are transmitted to the brain for interpretation. An eye is an opening for information to reach into the heart. Raw information received has to be processed by the heart before it can turn into knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, eyes are windows into the mind and can be a source of polysemy when used in various expressions.

In Hausa body part term ‘eye(s)’ is associated with ‘vision’ through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. This mechanism is responsible for different notions (goals) and their further derivations. The eye stands metonymically for knowing and understanding, like in the examples (8 a-f) below.

8 a. *Ya yi ido*

‘He became acquainted’

(lit. ‘He did eye’)

b. *Ya yi ido rufe*

‘He did it without hesitation’

(lit. ‘He did eyes closed’)

c. *Ya ba ni ladan ganin ido*

‘He gave me a token share’

(lit. ‘He gave me share of
seeing eyes’)

- d. *An yi masa wankin ido*
‘He was tricked’ (lit. ‘They washed his eyes’)
- e. *Mun zuba masa ido*
‘We look earnestly at him’ (lit. ‘We pour him eyes’)
- f. *Ya sa masa ido*
‘He let him do it’ (lit. ‘He puts him eyes’)

In the above examples, *ido* ‘eye’ stands metonymically for vision and vision being the most consistent human gift of perception is further metaphorically mapped onto understanding. The visual perception may be also mapped onto ‘attention’, e.g.:

- 9 a. *Ya yi don ganin ido*
‘He did it for the attention of others’
(lit. ‘He did for the sake of seeing eyes’)
- b. *Yana daukar ido*
‘It’s throwing a dazzling reflection’
(lit. ‘He is taking eyes’)

In (10a-c) the body part *ido* ‘eye’ is associated with vision and is further metonymically replaced by noticing something under the attention and scrutiny of an individual or public:

- 10 a. *A kan idona ya zo*
‘He came in my presence’ (lit. ‘It is on my eyes he came’)
- b. *Ya zama mai ido da kwalli*
‘He became a tycoon’
(lit. ‘He becomes an owner of eyes with antimony’)
- c. *Ya yi ta ruwan ido*
‘He persistently is unable to choose’

(lit. ‘He tirelessly did water of eyes’)

The metonymic extension of *ido* ‘eye’ is visible where the activity of seeing is mapped onto expecting, as observed in (11a and 11 b) below:

- 11 a. *Ya zura masa ido*
‘He gave up’ (lit. ‘He puts eyes on him’)
- b. *Ya yi zuru da ido*
‘He looked intently [at him]’ (lit. ‘He gazed with eyes’)

This is another group that constitutes those examples in which the lexeme *ido* ‘eye’ stands for warning (in 12 a-b) and fearing (in 12 c):

- 12 a. *Ya yi jan ido*
‘He prevented others/strives hard’
(lit. ‘He did red eyes’)
- b. *Ya zare masa ido*
‘He warned him/frighten’
(lit. ‘He stared at him with his eyes’)
- c. *Ya cika min ido*
‘I feared him’ (lit. ‘He filled my eyes’)

In a group of examples *ido* ‘eye’ expresses the notion for ‘self’. The mechanism responsible for this shift is PART FOR WHOLE metonymy. Therefore, the perceptual organ eye stands for the person possessing the organ. The idea is exemplified in (13a-d):

- 13 a. *Ya hana ido barci*
‘He had a sleepless night/He worked hard’
(lit. ‘He prevented eyes to sleep’)

- b. *Mun haɗu ido da ido*
‘We met in person’ (lit. ‘We met eye to eye’)
- c. *Ido na ganin ido*
‘Publicly, in the sight of people’
(lit. ‘Eyes seeing eyes’)
- d. *Idonsa ya raina fata*
‘He feels sorry’ (lit. ‘His eyes look down at skin’)

4.4 *Kunne* ‘ear’

Human being gathers information about the external world through the functioning of this sense organ which is one of the five perceptual senses. In Hausa, the meaning of phraseological expressions involving the word *kunne* refer to ‘listening’ or ‘hearing’, as in the following examples:

- 14 a. *Ban aron kunnuwanka*
‘Let me report to you/listen to me’
(lit. ‘Borrow me your ears’)
- b. *Kunnensa ya yi laushi*
‘He capitulated’ (lit. ‘His ear did soft’)
- c. *Ya kasa kunne*
‘He pays attention’ (lit. ‘He spread ears’)
- d. *Ya ja masa kunne*
‘He cautioned him’ (lit. ‘He pulled his ears’)
- e. *Ya yi mata romon kunne*
‘He played deceit on her’
(lit. ‘He did her soup of ears’)
- f. *Kunnenka nawa*
‘I have a story to tell’ (lit. ‘How many ears do you have’)

Regarding the pattern of conceptualization, ear is mapped onto ‘hearing’ through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. In some phrases, ear stands for the concept of ‘attention’ as in (14c) which is more specific than hearing since it involves deliberate action on the part of the perceiver. This point to a metonymically-structured polysemy is founded in the semantic shift from the concrete domain of the body to the more abstract realm of the intellect. Another metaphorical association points at ears as a receptacle for knowledge that enables expressing the concept of ‘hearing’ from the speaker’s perspective. The examples (14d-14f) are to demonstrate it, see also (Pawlak 2005).

4.5 *Fuska* ‘face’

Fuska ‘face’ is that part of the head from the forehead to the chin. The figurative extensions of the senses of face in Hausa reflects the metonymic and/or metaphoric understanding of the face as “highlight of appearance and look, indicator of emotion and character, focus of interaction and relationship and locus of dignity and prestige as indicated by the expression: *labarin zuciya a tambayi fuska*, ‘face depicts what is in the mind’. Yu (2001) believes that the face is the most distinctive part, on the interactive side, the front of a person, which displays emotion, suggests character and conveys intention.

The face being one of the external parts that is the most suggestive or expressive of one’s inner world, is the locus where one’s feelings can be all “written”. For instance we smile when happy and cry when sad. The reactions to emotion and feelings all are shown on our faces. Examples are as follows:

- 15 a. *Ya saki fuska*
‘He looks pleasant’ (lit. ‘He let face released’)
- b. *Ya yi shimfidar fuska*
‘He welcomed people’ (lit. ‘He did spread face’)
- c. *Ya ga fuska*

- ‘He has seen the chances’ (lit. ‘He saw face’)
- d. *Ya hadē fuska*
‘He looks scowling’ (lit. ‘He joined face’)
- e. *Ya d’aure fuska*
‘He has an angry look’ (lit. ‘He tied face’)
- f. *Ya yi fuska biyu*
‘He commits hypocrisy’ (lit. ‘He did two faces’)

In the studies of metaphors (Lakoff, Johnson 1999), ‘face’ is seen as a container which contains the facial expression. On our experienced basis, *fuska* stands for the person to indicate human nature, character, and emotional state. Therefore, the conceptual schema in which the body part ‘face’ functions, is PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy and this is clearly manifested in (16) below:

16. *Ya ci min fuska*
‘He humiliated me’ (lit. ‘He ate my face’)

4.6 *Hanci* ‘nose’

Nose is seen as that part of the face that sticks out above the mouth, used for breathing and smelling things. It represents the perceptual organ of smelling. The location and shape of the nose rather than its function determine the use of the word *hanci* in figurative expressions, as in the following examples:

- 17 a. *Yana hura hanci*
‘He is so snobbish’ (lit. ‘He is blowing nose’)
- b. *Yana daga hanci*
‘He is putting on airs (egotism)’ (lit. ‘He raises nose’)

- c. *An turmuza hancinsa*
‘He was let down’ (lit. ‘His nose was stuck’)
- d. *Ya shigar min hanci*
‘He disturbs me’ (lit. ‘He entered my nose’)
- e. *Ya ci hanci*
‘He collects bribe’ (lit. ‘He ate nose’)

However, in expressions nose has predominantly negative connotation, probably because of the bad smells or the association with snoring and the excretion of mucus. The perceptual domain motivates the ACTION FOR EVALUATION metonymy which directs attention to the negative meanings.

4.7 *Goshi* ‘forehead’

Forehead *goshi* is that part of the face above the eye brows and below the hair. The front position it occupies on the face signifies the meaning of the expressions. The phrases in which *goshi* is used have positive evaluation, as in the following examples:

- 18 a. *Amarya tana da goshi*
‘The bride is a bringer of good luck’
(lit. ‘The bride has forehead’)
- b. *Komai ya zo gaban goshi*
‘Everything has come to its eve’
(lit. ‘Everything has reached forehead’)
- c. *Dan gaban goshi ne shi*
‘He is the most loved one’
(lit. ‘He is the son of forehead’)
- d. *Goshin magariba ya zo*
‘He came just prior to sunset prayer’
(lit. ‘At the forehead of sunset prayer he came’)

The body part term *goshi* ‘forehead’ is extended to mean ‘front’ or ‘before’ (as in 18d) with reference to space and time. Metaphoric extensions further apply the PART FOR ORIENTATION metonymy which also covers a good evaluation.

5. Conclusion

The paper addresses the more general question of polysemy and highlights that it includes a system of rules (of mostly metonymic and metaphoric motivation) that are applied in everyday use of language as part of an active interpretative process.

In terms of image schemas, the body part *kai* ‘head’ and its sub-parts which function in numerous expressions represent the following kinds of metonymies:

PART FOR WHOLE (*kai* ‘head’, *fuska* ‘face’)

INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION (*baki* ‘mouth’, *ido* ‘eye’,
kunne ‘ear’)

ACTION FOR EVALUATION (*hanci* ‘nose’)

PART FOR ORIENTATION (*goshi* ‘forehead’).

Particular meanings are differentiated in perceptual domain. Most of the figurative uses of the body part terms examined play an important role and help in conceptualizing different aspects of feelings or social interaction.

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