



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI  
“L’ORIENTALE”  
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI E RICERCHE SU AFRICA E PAESI ARABI  
*Centro di Studi Magrebini*

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VIII Afro-Asiatic Congress

edited by  
Sergio Baldi

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# Idealized Cognitive Models and Hausa Experiential Constructions Preferred Strategies and Pragmatical Devices

Gian Claudio BATIC

The aim of this paper is to give a representation of congruent and imaginative strategies productive in the linguistic encoding of basic-level experiences in Hausa (Afro-asiatic, West Chadic, A).

We will argue that Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs) (Lakoff 1987), that is to say conventionalized points of view underlying the everyday usage of the language, need to be considered as *orientative sources* in order to express the experience.

## 1. Basic-level Experiences

We take into account the following set of basic-level experiences.

<u>Domain</u>	<u>Experiences</u>
Emotions	Anger, Fear, Happiness, Worry, Shame, Disappointment, Sadness, Hate, Pity, Jealousy, Love
Cognition	Knowing, Understanding, Remembering, Forgetting, Surprise
Conception	Believing/Trusting, Thinking, Assuming, Doubting
Volition	Wanting, Needing, Envyng
Perception	Seeing, Hearing, Smelling
Physical	Pain, Cold, Sweating, Hunger, Sickness, Pregnancy

The experiences enlisted above have been the source events in previous studies on experiential encoding (Reh 1998, Becher 2003, Batic 2009).

## 2. Hausa ICMs

ICMs are mental models that represent coherent conceptions of the world. They can be seen as subjective definitions made possible by a set of background assumptions (Lakoff 1987:70).

Consider the following *coffeehouse conversation* in which the speakers focus on the definition of a hurricane:

SANDY: Nobody can say just exactly what a hurricane is – that is, in totally precise terms. There’s an abstract pattern that many storms share, and it’s for that reason we call those storms hurricanes. But it’s not possible to make a sharp distinction between hurricanes and non-hurricanes. [...] In your imagination, you can even extend the concept of “hurricane” to include a microscopic storm on the surface of a neutron star.

PAT: [...] Often the decision about what family some species belongs to comes down to an abstract pattern shared at some level. Even the concept of “male” and “female” turn out to be surprisingly abstract and elusive. When you base your system of classification on very abstract patterns, I suppose that a broad variety of phenomena can fall into “the same class”, even if in many superficial ways the class members are utterly unlike one another (Hofstadter 1985:498-99).

It is impossible to employ an idealized model to describe precisely what an experience is. Events like happiness or anger fall beyond the control of categories such as ‘true’ or ‘false’, and so do ICMs. What makes ICMs acceptable and, in a way, shared, is a series of cognitive instruments: generalization, prototypical and stereotypical selection, synecdoche, etc.

From a pragmatic point of view, ICMs given by speakers in form of extensive definitions play an important role in our understanding of non-congruent experiential encoding.

See the following examples of ICMs:

1 SWEATING

gùmī anà yînsà lōkàcinsà kō ìdan kāyan aikì màì wàhalà kō ìdan ðākìnkà bà tǎgà

*you sweat when your work is hard or when there is no window in your room*

2 HATE

nā kī jinin mùtūmin dà bā yà kǎrātū kō kuma bā yà sôn nēman kuđī, sànnan bā yà girmàma mutànē

*I dislike people who are not able to read and people who don't to make some money, and also those who don't respect other people*

## 3 HATE

bā nà sôn wanda bā yà zuwà makařantā shī nē sai ka jē makařantā zā  
kà san yandà dà kā yi řubùtū kà san yandà zā kà yi kàřātū; ìdan bā kà  
jē makařantā bà zā kà san wandà, sànnan bâ ka dà wani sīřī

*I don't like who don't go to school, that's it. Since, if you go to school  
you'll learn how to write and read; if you don't go to school you'll  
never learn that, then you can't have the confidence*

Both (2) and (3) focus on education as a discriminating principle. The prototypical “good person” goes to school. An exemplification of this ICM can be found in the scheme above:

- 4
- a. illiterate people are unsuitable
  - b. lazy people are unsuitable
  - c. disrespectful people are unsuitable
  - d. people to be liked go to school, know how make some money, and behave properly

ICMs can be very informative. So, for examples, (5) vehicles also a conception of ‘friendship’, summarized in (6).

## 5 ANGER

kàmař yànzū inà cikin dàmuwā sabòdà inà dà àbòkīnā kullum munà  
tāre àmma yāu sāmī kudī yà gujè minī sai yànzū nā gan shī bâ shī dà  
kudī

*now for example I'm worried because I've a friend, we are always to-  
gether but today he got some money and ran away from me; right now  
I've seen him, but he doesn't have the money any longer!*

- 6
- a. friendship is being together
  - b. friends share their own wealth
  - c. when a friend behaves greedily, then the friendship is compromised

Since ICMs do not need to be true or false, but simply to work on an abstract level, there is no conflict between two different models referring to the same event.

Consider for example these SICKNESS ICMs:

## 7 SICKNESS

rashīn lāfiyā shī nē mùtūm yā tāshī bā yā jīn kārī à cikinsà bā yā sôn  
wani àbù wandà zài mōtsà jīkinsà bā yā jīn dādīn bākinsà

*sickness is this: a man raising up who doesn't feel any strenght, who doesn't want anything forcing his body to move; a man who doesn't feel any sweetness in his mouth*

8 SICKNESS

rashìn lāfīyà shī nè mùtùm bā yà gānè kōwānēnè

*sickness is this, when a man doesn't understand anything*

What is possible to infer is a distinction between a physical model, where sickness is seen and defined on the basis of its capacity to affect one's physical conditions (7), and another model, characterized by the weakening of the cognitive sphere (8).

### 3. Preferred Strategies

The strategies employed in the linguistic encoding of basic-level experiences are summarized in table 1.

congruent	label	LB
	label periphrastic	LP
EXPERIENCE	metaphor	MR
	metaphor from	MR<MY
	metonymy	
	metonymy	MY
	anthropomorphization	AN
	image-scheme	IS
	symbol	SY
	body part	BP
	body part oriented	BPO
	imaginative	

tab. 1 (based on Batic 2009)

It would not be surprising to state that only a few among the strategies are commonly used by speakers to describe a basic feeling or a simple cognitive operation. In fact, from a pragmatic point of view, it should be pointed out that some strategies, even when referred to such basic events, are highly dependent on the speaker as a person reacting with a certain degree of creativity and individuality.

This could be seen as the first reason why some strategies/renderings are less frequent than others. The second reason is not speaker-oriented, being justified by the nature of the model we chose to categorize the basic experiences, and can be drawn up in the following way: the sub-domains we designated fit the analysis well only if we bound them in a conceptual box (the main domain), but if we try to draw a strict cor-

respondence between the event (e.g. HATE) and the action carried out by the speaker, we'll notice an asymmetrical biuniform correspondence. HATE, of course, exists in one person's mind and the speaker has the choice between, e.g., Ha. **ki** 'hate/refuse' and **kiyayyà** 'mutual hating'. Nevertheless, even if we registered the event of UNIVOCAL HATING and that of MUTUAL HATING without any cognitive/experiential distinction, they appear to be as two distinct sub-events of HATE since they refer to two different modalities of hating. The classification of these sub-events (conceivable as *surface* representations, with no reference to chomskyan theory) under the heading of HATE (*deep* representation) follows an ideal scheme which does not take into account completely the several shades that constitute the human experience.

Considering these aspects (the individual selection and the recognition of a specific sub-event by the speaker/experiencer), how can we talk of preferred strategies? And: do preferred strategies exist?

These two questions must satisfy one premise satisfied. Such a premise breaks down into three points: (a) pre-eminence of speaker's point of view; (b) existence of standard experiential concepts; and (c) pragmatical nature of the experiential renderings. In other words, preferred strategies are not abstract solutions independent from the speakers/experiencers who are called to elaborate them. On the contrary they are the reflex of conventionalized usage in everyday linguistic exchange.

Mother-tongue speakers do not have any problem in identifying and encoding properly the basic-level experience they are asked for: if the question asked by the researcher is clear, so is the informant's answer. A strategy which is commonly displayed by informants is that of referring to a simple event with a low degree of elaboration (e.g. mutual feeling is more elaborated than univocal one, violent anger is more complex than being simply angry etc.). This strategy mirrors specific renderings. Sometimes two or more renderings coexist with no pragmatical distinctions: for example, label and imaginative constructions are both valid strategies to vehicle basic happiness. That is to say that two different strategies are associated to the same kind of happiness, thought as prototypical. Nevertheless it would be noticed that the speakers trend is giving the congruent solution first, where possible, then, the metaphorical/imaginative one. This can be proved only by working with a certain number of informants. Even if this check does not have any statistical value it is still useful for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Generally the first renderings given by speakers fit well with the idea of preferred strategy. When the informant starts to ask questions in order to define, limit or spell out an event, then it is leaving the background of basic experience to accost some of its particular realizations (sub-experiences).

It is interesting to observe that almost always the richest and most productive domains are those which present clearly identifiable solutions. For example, in EMOTION, a part from two or three events, the choice of a preferred (if not exclusive) strategy is pretty unequivocal. Not the same with UNDERSTANDING for which Hausa displays different verbs (*fâhimtâ*, *gânè*, *ji*, etc.), each of them covering one aspect of the experience (understand a speech, a language, understand exactly what has been said etc.). Empirically, speaker's behaviour when facing such event is less predictable than that of a physical or emotional domain, since understanding is highly context-dependent and its realizations can not easily be led back to a preferred, all covering/inclusive strategy.

The following table presents the preferred strategies given by regular and occasional informants. The aim of this synthetic representation is that of focusing on what we could call 'strategical trends' in the expression of our 33 basic-level events.

		EXR	PHM
EMO	anger	<b>L</b> LB - LB/C LP	<b>L</b> LB LP
	fear	<b>L</b> LB - LB/C LP	<b>L</b> LB
	happiness	<b>BP[MR SY] - L</b> LP BP[MR MY]/C BP[MR MY]/P IM	<b>BP[MR]</b> L BP[MR]
	sadness	<b>BP[MR SY]</b> BP[MR]/C BP[MR SY] BP[MR SY]/C BPo[MR]	<b>BP[MR]</b> BP[MR] AN  BP[MR]
	worry	<b>L</b> LB BP[MR] AN	<b>L</b> LB
	shame	<b>L</b> LB LP BP[MR]	<b>L</b> LB LP



	disappointment	<b>BP[MR]</b> LB - LB/N LP BP[MR] BPo[MR]	<b>L</b> LB - LB/N BP[MR] BP[MR]/P
	hate	<b>MY</b> LB LP MY - MY/N BP[MY]  AN	
	pity	<b>L</b> LP	
	jealousy	<b>L</b> LB	
	love	<b>MY</b> LB MY	

COG	knowing	<b>L</b> LB - LB/C LP MR	<b>L</b> LB
	understanding	<b>L - MY</b> LB LP MY	
	remembering	<b>L</b> LB BP[IS]	<b>MY</b> MY
	forgetting	<b>L</b> LB LP	
	surprise	<b>L</b> LB	<b>L</b> LB LP

CON	trusting	<b>L</b> LB LP BP[MR] MR  LB MY	
	thinking	<b>L</b> LB LP MR<MY MY MR	
	assuming	<b>MY</b> LB MY	
	doubting	<b>L</b> LB - LB/C LP MY/P	

VOL	wanting	L/MY LB	
	needing	L LB	
	envying	L LB LP BP[MR SY]/P	

PER	seeing	L LB	
	hearing	L LB	
	smelling	L LB LP	

PHY	pain	L - MY LP MY - MY/P MR BP[AN MY]	
	cold	L LB  MR LP	
	heat	L LB	
	sweating	L LP MY/P	
	hunger	L LB LP MY MR  LB	
	sickness	L LB - LB/N LP BP[IS]	L LP/N
	pregnan.	BP[MY] BP[MY] - BP[MY]/C BP[MR] MR MY/C MR<MY	BP[MY] BP[MY]/P

Preferred strategies in linguistic encodings mirror prototypical conceptions of the experience. The border between a prototypical and an individual-oriented idea is given by the pragmatic dimension, which is made up by two elements: performance and context. ICMs offer the prototypical context for which specific interpretative keys work.

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**RÉSUMÉ**

L'article analyse certains aspects du codage linguistique des expériences primaires dans la langue haoussa (phylum afro-asiatique, tchadique ouest A). Les domaines suivants sont pris en considération: émotionnel, cognitif, conceptuel, volitif, perceptif, physique. Les stratégies adoptées dans le codage sont fonctionnelles au domaine expérientiel considéré. Les locuteurs emploient des stratégies préférentielles qui reflètent la dimension prototypique de l'expérience. La limite entre la conception prototypique et celle individuelle et créative est donnée par la dimension pragmatique. L'idée de Model Cognitif Idéal développée par Lakoff est conçue ici comme définition d'orientation qui permet l'affirmation de tendances stratégiques spécifiques.