Emotion predicate constructions in Tu'un Javi (Ixpantepec Nieves Mixtec)

Emotion constitutes a major component of human behavior. According to Lyons (1977), affective meaning is one of the key features of 'linguistic meaning' and has long been an important topic of research in linguistics (see, Besnier 1990) and anthropology (see, Lutz & White 1986). Understanding cross-linguistic/cross-cultural differences in the linguistic encoding of emotions can lead to insights into how those emotions are conceptualized in various speech communities. This paper examines the structure of emotion predicates as they participate in affective constructions in Tu'un Javi (Ixpantepec Nieves Mixtec) [ISO 639-3: mks], spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico.

One of the most salient features of emotion predicates in Tu'un Javi is its distinctive use of body part terms (BPTs) as part of the affective construction. BPTs have wide and varied uses, through Mixtec and Mesoamerican languages more generally, including in the marking of argument structure and spatial relations (e.g., 'adpositional functions'). Due to the flexible word order of the language, the status of the BPT phrase is often ambiguous in terms of its argument assignment within the 'valency type' (Talmy 2007) of the emotion predicate. Example (1a) below shows an example of a typical affective construction:

(1) a. *Ku=jiì* *ini=ìn*
COP=BE.happy insides=1SG
'I'm happy.' (Elicited)

The BPT *ini* 'insides' may be ambiguous interpreted as the subject, indicating an 'experiencer-as-subject' valency type or it may be interpreted as an oblique argument, indicating that the stimulus is impersonal and the oblique locates the experience within the experiencer, using an adpositional construction—a difference unaddressed in Talmy's original affect predicate valency typology. The findings of this paper arrive at recruitment of the impersonal expression construction, also found in the expression of weather verbs, suggesting a conceptualization of emotion as stimulated beyond one's control, inducing an internalized state within the experiencer. This paper takes a Construction grammar theoretic approach to the grammatical description of emotion-based expression.

References

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