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Body parts as source concepts

Body part terms have been the focus of linguistic studies since long. Nowadays, due to the rapid development of cognitive linguistics in general and cognitive semantics in particular within the last few decades they are being looked at in a different way. Thus, in recent studies on grammaticalization they are regarded as source concepts for the expression of grammatical functions. In this connection some very important questions have been discussed in some way or other in the relevant literature [1].

In the present paper we will mainly focus on some cognitive peculiarities of body part terms in Kabardian (one of the autochthonous West Caucasian languages spoken in Kabardino-Balkaria, Russia) as source concepts from two angles: (1) body-part terms and naive anatomy and (2) body part terms as locatives and partitives.

The choice of the material has been determined by a very important reason. And that reason is that «source concepts tend to be derived from domains of cognition that are basic to human experience» [2, c. 119]. In this respect we consider body part terms the most favourable ground to demonstrate phylogenetic aspects cognition.

Kabardian initially gives names to several body parts (reasons for this may be various, most important being, probably, the functional aspect), such as body, head, nose, neck, tail, back, heart, etc. Each of the units extend metaphorically from the corresponding prototype (or from their basic domain), acquiring, consequently, different meanings.

When the necessity to name other parts of bodies (functionally less important, maybe) presented itself the language having intricately combined the above terms gave names to them. Thus, hand fingers and foot fingers in Kabardian are literally *handnose* and *footnose*, i. e. «hand + nose»; «foot + nose»; lips are literally conceptualized as *mouthnose*, i. e. «mouth + nose». Wrist and ankle are correspondingly understood as *armneck* «arm + neck» and *legneck* «leg+neck». It is clearly seen from the examples that the second component of every compound word is a metaphorically applied member. The

number of examples can be enlarged. Thus, jaw in Kabardian from the view point of the naive anatomy is referred as a *mouthbodynose* «mouth+body+nose». Back of the hand is similarly understood as the *handback* whereas the opposite part, which is in English normally referred to as a «palm» in Kabardian is conceptualized as *handheart*. The correlating parts of the leg are correspondingly termed as *foothead* and *footheart* (cf: sole of the foot). Besides, shoulders and buttocks can also have their metaphorical *heads*. Heart as a material organ can have its *head*, its *neck*, and even its *ears*.

From the second viewpoint, i. e. concerning the use of the body part terms as partitives (outside the human body), the activity of the somatic lexicon in Kabardian is really astounding. There is hardly a fragment in a Kabardians» «micro- and macroworld» that is not metaphorically (sometimes-metonymically) termed by one the units within the list mentioned.

Thus, conceptually, in Kabardian the sky may have its *heart* and its *sides*; clouds may have their *noses* (darkness, for example, is believed by the Kabardians to be the result of merging of *cloudnoses*); rivers are believed to have their *heads*, *lips* and *tails*; mountains have *foots* and *heads* (similar to English), *cheeks* and *sides*, *backs* and *footnoses*, *jaws* and *chins*. Even settlements have their *backs*, and *fronts*, their *necks* and *tails*.

Kabardian, to identify parts of specific locations widely uses the terms in their metaphorical meanings. Hence, we have *villageneck* (the place where the first houses in a settlement were initially built), its opposite being conceptualized as a *villagetail*. We also have in Kabardian a *villageback*. The opposite part is named by the combination of the two body part terms, viz. *heart+nose*. So, this particular part of a settlement (village in our case) is literally termed as *heartnose*. According to the informants» opinion, this is the part of a village that faces the road.

Here, we would like to point out that in contradistinction to many languages of the world in Kabardian the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic models of conceptualization are intricately interwoven. On the one hand, villages are conceptualized as having their front and back (this is purely anthropomorphic model). On the other hand, villages are viewed as having their neck and tail (zoomorphic model). In this respect we fully agree with the idea that zoomorphic model occurs when the relation between a spatial concept and the location of a given body part cannot be accounted for in terms of the human body [3].

The above listed terms can also be extended to parts of things, being used as partitives in this case. Practically all artefacts, big or small, have their metaphorical *heads* and *buttocks*, *tails* and *noses*, *backs* and *sides*.

Furtherly, the Kabardian body-part terms demonstrate striking activity within the framework of the very productive metaphorical cognitive model «SPACE → TIME». Hence, a year may have its beginning and its end which are correspondingly viewed in Kabardian as its *head* and *tail*. Months, likewise, have their *noses* and *tails*, i. e. used metaphorically the words mean the beginning and end of a particular month. Thus, metaphorical extensions underlying phases of the kind *the nose of March was awful but its tail should be fine* are perceived as normal from the point of view of the Kabardian conceptual scheming. To be more exact, the example needs special attention. Thus, nose and tail primarily naming one the most cognitively salient parts of body extend from their prototype and «start» their metaphorical life as partitives (*riverhead* and *rivertail*) and landmarks (*villagenose* and *villagetail*). In accordance with the «SPACE → TIME» pattern of cognitive transfer they serve as a concept source for quite a different target domain, i. e. TIME. Paradoxically, being applied as metaphorical terms in the example *the nose of March was awful but its tail should be fine* both of them should be understood metonymically. So, the phrase may be interpreted in two ways: either from the point of view of the weather, it being fine at the beginning of the month and bad at its end or from the viewpoint of pleasant/unpleasant events which took place at the corresponding periods of time. As we understand, this is a sample phrase to illustrate, how complex the process of cognition is and what resources are recruited by the languages of the world to code the process as such.

To conclude we share some linguists' ideas that «most studies have focused on English or European languages resulting in a biased view of the area of inquiry. Expansion of the inventory of languages under investigation would enrich our understanding of the domain» [4].

References

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