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MAGDALENA KRZYŻANOWSKA, Universität Hamburg

Dissertation Abstract

Epistemic Modality in Amharic

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Dissertation Abstracts

MAGDALENA KRZYŻANOWSKA, *Epistemic Modality in Amharic*, PhD Dissertation in Linguistics, Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures at the Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, defended on 6 October 2020.

This thesis is devoted to a description and analysis of the category of epistemic modality in contemporary Amharic. It is based on a corpus of written and spoken texts that come from both printed and electronic media, which have been interpreted and analysed with the help of Amharic-speaking informants. The dissertation consists of an introduction and six chapters, followed by a conclusion and a lexicon of Amharic modal epistemic expressions provided with English and Polish translations.

The semantic category of epistemic modality falls precisely in the realm of non-knowledge, which spreads between propositional knowledge, at one extreme, and ignorance, at the other. Thus, epistemic modality is understood as the speaker's assessment of her/his non-knowledge in respect to the proposition. As there is a lack of standardized terminology for discussing modal epistemic expression, in this work the following terms are used: epistemificator (modal epistemic expression), epistemizer (the sender of an epistemically modalized sentence), epistemized (the epistemically modalized sentence), epistemized head (the head verb of the epistemized) and epistemificator head (the head verb of the epistemificator).

The thesis examines a wide range of Amharic epistemificators (70-odd), which have been classified into grammatical, lexical, copular (an intermediate category), and parenthetical, according to their degree of grammaticalization/lexicalization. Epistemificators are considered as units of language in the sense proposed by Bogusławski:[1] each such unit should bear a distinct meaning and occupy a place in the system of the language. This approach results, for example, in analysing all modal epistemic verbs together with the arguments that they take. The research procedures that have been applied for the semantic investigation are tests of falsification/verification and substitution, the concept of epistemic dimensions and their values, and the method of analysing sentences in terms of thematic-rhematic structure.

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[1] See e.g. A. Bogusławski, 'O zasadach rejestracji jednostek języka' ('On principles of registering units of language'), *Poradnik Językowy* ('The linguistic guide'), 8 (1976), 356–364.

The main tools with which the epistemic expressions are studied are eight dimensions, five semantic, and three formal. The list of dimensions is as follows: (1) explicit vs implicit epistemizer; (2) manner of integration of epistemized and epistemificator into the sentence; (3) concrete vs abstract epistemificators; (4) personal vs non-personal epistemificators; (5) degree of epistemic strength; (6) source of epistemic assessment; (7) axiological judgement; (8) time orientation. In addition to the dimensional analysis, for selected epistemificators (both grammatical and lexical) prose semantic sketches are provided, which hopefully may be useful in the future for a more comprehensive semantic description. Subsequently, three types of complement clauses are examined in greater detail, with an attempt to shed light on their comparative semantics. These are *ǝndä-*, 'that', *bǝyye*, 'I saying', and nominalized clauses. The final chapter discusses the interaction between epistemic modality and two other categories, namely time and negation. In dealing with the category of time it is noted that any utterance containing an epistemic modal expression involves two points in time: the moment of the sender's epistemic assessment and the location in time of the state of affairs. The moment of epistemic assessment is typically 'here and now'. Within any modal epistemic sentence there are basically two possible loci for indicating the location in time of the state of affairs: the epistemized head and the epistemificator head. In view of that epistemificators are grouped into various types and further examined. In the section on negation, it is pointed out that in an epistemic sentence there are in principle two things that might be negated: the epistemificator head and the epistemized head. Thus different patterns of behaviour of epistemificators in regard to negation are distinguished and discussed.

HEWAN SEMON MARYE, *The Rhetorics and Polemics of Humor in Addis Abäba, 2005–2019*, PhD Dissertation in Ethiopian Studies, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Hamburg, defended on 5 July 2021.

This dissertation primarily introduced the Amharic word *čäwata* as the equivalent for the English word humour, implementing the word to describe the phenomenon of joke telling and humorous conversation. Addis Abäba is the focus of this study as it is the political, economic, and cultural centre of the country during the period investigated.

Chapter 1 discusses *čäwata* in Ethiopian historiography and reveals how humour plays a part in Ethiopian oral culture, a part that has not been previously seriously collected and studied. Chapter 2, 3, and 4 discuss humour in three venues in Addis Abäba: parliament, theatre, and public spaces (namely the minibuses, and public demonstrations). In each chapter, a particular case study is