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Unpacking the New

Critical Perspectives
on Cultural Syncretization
in Africa and Beyond

edited by

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and Ulf Vierke

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Conceptual Blending in Language, Cognition, and Culture.

Towards a Methodology for the Linguistic Study of Syncretic Concepts

Hans-Jörg Schmid, Dymitr Ibriszimow, Karina Kopatsch and Peter Gottschligg

1. Introduction: Blended Concepts in a Post-Colonial African Context

Many post-colonial nations in Africa are marked by a highly complex linguistic situation, with a variety of Standard English co-existing as a lingua franca of (secondary and) tertiary education, or even as an official language, alongside a number of native African languages. Among the educated urban population in countries like Nigeria or Kenya there is a high proportion of multilingual speakers who are fluent in English and one or more indigenous languages. Switching to and fro between languages as they move through their daily lives, these speakers have to juggle ideas and concepts from totally different historical and cultural contexts. For example, as will be shown with data compiled in Northern Nigeria, the English word *cap* does not seem to be associated with the same concept as the Hausa word *hula* in the minds of bilingual speakers, although the two words are given as referential equivalents in bilingual dictionaries (e.g. Abraham 1962, Bargery 1993, Newman and Newman 1977). What our findings indicate is that in Nigerian English the word *cap* seems to evoke some sort of conceptual blend between the concept associated with the native English word *cap* ('baseball cap') and the concept associated with Hausa *hula* ('sown ornamental cap worn by men').

The minds of African multilingual speakers thus seem to provide a fertile ground for the emergence of culturally *blended concepts*.

The subjects of this paper, however, are not only blended concepts with inputs from different sources, but what we call *syncretic concepts*. These are defined as the results of conceptual blending¹ in a linguistic and cultural contact situation whose cognitive structures are different from the two (or more) input concepts to such an extent that they can be seen as emergent, qualitatively new concepts in their own right, emancipated from their sources.

2. Method

In this study we focus on blended and syncretic concepts in the variety of English spoken by educated native speakers of Hausa in Northern Nigeria, sometimes referred to as *Hausa English* (Bamgbose 1997). These are compared with corresponding Hausa concepts, on the one hand, and American English concepts, on the other. The rationale behind this twofold comparison is that as an English-as-a-Second-Language variety, Nigerian English is subject to competing influences from native varieties of English and the local Hausa culture.² Since we are also interested in the potential influence of modernization and globalization on blended concepts, it is the American variety of English, the major representative and source of 'Global English', that was chosen as a reference point,

¹ Readers familiar with the cognitive-linguistic theory of "conceptual blending" (for a recent account see Fauconnier & Turner 2002) will realize that the basic setup of blended concepts is vaguely inspired by the latter approach. However, as blending theory deals with the online construction of meaning, while our concern is the nature of more or less fully entrenched concepts, not constructed on the fly but stored in long-term memory, the similarity remains somewhat superficial. On the other hand, what blending theory may be well able to handle are the early stages, when L2 speakers of English become familiar with a new English form and concept from Western culture, both of them blended with the speakers' own cultural backgrounds.

² We are of course aware of the fact that the notion of 'Hausa culture' is a hopeless idealization. We use the term as a shorthand reference to the culture that was elicited in our tests, i.e. the knowledge to a large extent shared by the Hausa-speaking informants.

rather than British English, the historical mother variety of Nigerian English.

We will report on findings from research carried out in Maiduguri/Borno State, Nigeria and St. Barbara/California, USA. 45 Hausa-speaking students from the University of Maiduguri and 47 students at the University of California at St. Barbara participated. The same Nigerian informants were presented with Hausa words and English words at independent sessions separated by several days. Since some of them did not turn up for the English session or felt unable to respond to certain English words, there are only 39 responses to the English stimuli.

The method applied was the so-called "attribute-listing task" used by the psychologist Eleanor Rosch in the 1970s to investigate the conceptual structures of cognitive categories (cf. Rosch 1975, Rosch and Mervis 1975). In this test, informants are confronted with everyday words like *camel*, *cap* or *bicycle* and asked to list attributes that are shared by all the entities which can be referred to by the words. Typical answers for the stimulus *bicycle*, for example, include attributes like 'has pedals', 'has two wheels', 'is used as a vehicle' and so on. In the analysis of the lists provided by the individual subjects, attributes are cumulated and ranked according to the number of informants who wrote them down. Attributes named by a large proportion of informants like 'has pedals' are considered to be more important aspects of the conceptual structure of a word than idiosyncratic ones (like 'my uncle has one' for *bicycle*), and are taken to be significant for the formation of a 'prototype' of the corresponding cognitive category.³

As will be shown, the conceptual structures of individual blended concepts are subject to a large number of factors, including the language of the words encoding them, the nature of the entities they represent, the culture in which they are embedded, and the concep-

³ For a summary of the so-called 'prototype theory' of categorization and its methodology see Ungerer and Schmid (2006: Chs. 1 and 2).

tual domain to which they belong. The fact that blended concepts are determined by a complex network of interrelated parameters raises a number of serious methodological issues that will be discussed in this paper:

- Is it possible to distinguish 'real' syncretic concepts, i.e. emergent and new ones, from less spectacular cultural adaptations and contextualizations?
- Is it possible to determine the specific source of syncretization for individual concepts?
- Where are the methodological limits of the study of syncretic concepts?

Our aim is thus twofold: we want to show that there are degrees of conceptual 'blendedness' and we want to reflect on the potential and limitations of methods of investigating conceptual blending and syncretic concepts. Before we tackle these more theoretical issues, we will look into a selection of our findings from the attribute-listing tasks.

3. An Illustrative Selection of the Findings: *airplane*, *wheelchair* and *cap*

In this section we will discuss a number of salient aspects of the attribute-lists collected for three concepts lexicalized as E. *airplane*/H. *jirgin sama*, E. *wheelchair*/H. *keken guragu* and E. *cap*/H. *hula*. These case studies will help to illustrate the range of factors influencing the degrees of conceptually blended concepts to be found in Nigerian English. The lists providing the attributes named by the three groups of informants and the number of informants who named them are attached in the appendix to this paper.⁴

⁴ For the readers' convenience, the majority of whom is probably not conversant with Hausa, the Hausa attributes are presented only in an English translation in this paper. It should be kept in mind that the English translations are quite imperfect in mirroring the concepts behind the Hausa attributes.

3.1 *Airplane*

Table 1 in the appendix gives the findings for the Hausa lexeme *jirgin sama* and the Nigerian English and American English lexeme *airplane*. As the table shows, there is a large number of attributes that are named by the informants of all three groups, among them 'fly/flying', 'engine', 'passengers' and others. Perhaps the most striking feature of the Hausa list is that no equivalent to the English attribute 'pilot' is given. On the other hand, the attribute 'sky', which seems to be motivated by the literal meaning of the Hausa lexeme (*jirgin sama* 'sky vehicle') and is named by 40% of the Hausa informants in response to the Hausa word, is not included in the reactions to the English lexeme *airplane* (from the same informants!).

By and large, the Nigerian English concept seems to be closely related to the American English concept, but information about the usual procedure on board is missing ('bad food', 'movie' etc., and also 'stewardess', 'flight attendant').

3.2 *Wheelchair*

The results for *wheelchair* (see Appendix, Table 2) pattern in an altogether different way. The attributes given by the informants indicate that the Nigerian English concept is more similar to the Hausa one than to the American English one. What the attribute lists seem to reflect is the noticeable difference between the objects in Nigerian and Western culture: while in the West, wheelchairs have engines or rings attached to the wheels that allow riders to move forward, Nigerian wheelchairs are equipped with a chain and pedal-like handles which riders use for self-propelled motion.

In contrast to *airplane*, we also notice an influence of the Hausa word *keken guragu* (literally 'bicycle for cripples') in the attributes given for the English word *wheelchair*. For the attributes given in response to the Nigerian English lexeme include literal translations of the Hausa lexeme.

3.3 *Cap*

The attributes for Nigerian English *cap* (see Appendix, Table 3) again reveal indisputable similarities with the Hausa concept. Coinciding attributes include 'round(ed)', 'hand made', 'worn by men', 'sown', 'made of wool/cotton'. What is not included in the Nigerian English list but plays an important role in the responses for Hausa *hula* is the ornamental function. This is an attribute related to the everyday interaction with the referents, reflecting attitudinal and emotional associations with them. It is a significant finding also for other words like *shoe* or *window* that these interactional and attitudinal attributes are not named by the same informants in response to the English word, but only given in response to the Hausa word.

Comparing the list of attributes given by the American informants with the one produced by the Nigerians in response to the English stimulus, we see that the American English concept is markedly different from the Nigerian English concept. What the Americans seem to have in mind is undoubtedly the picture of a baseball cap, while the Nigerian English speakers visualize the local *hula*-type of headgear. In contrast to *wheelchair*, there is no noticeable impact of the Hausa form on the Nigerian English concept.

Taken together these selected findings give a glimpse of the multifaceted and multivariate situation with regard to the nature of blended concepts. In order to interpret the whole set of findings it is essential to develop a theory of blended concepts and a set of parameters that allow us to determine the degree of blending involved in individual concepts. The starting point in this endeavour is an extended version of Ogden and Richard's (1923) well-known semiotic triangle serving as an idealized version of 'pure concepts'.

4. Theoretical Aspects: Blended Concepts

4.1 Pure concepts

Extending the semiotic triangle introduced by Ogden and Richards (1923), we assume that concepts must be considered on the four dimensions represented in Figure 1:

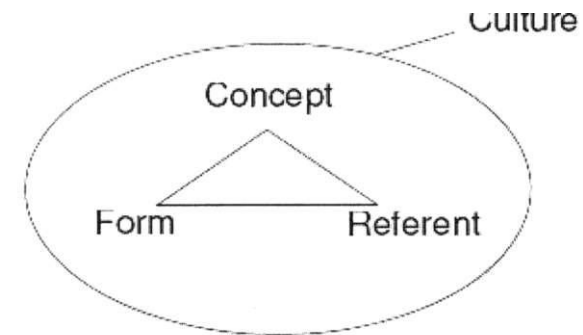


Figure 1:

Representation of „pure concept“(adapted from Ogden and Richards 1923)

The *concept*, in a narrow sense, in people's minds creates an association between a linguistic *form* and an extra-linguistic *referent* or set of referents in the world. In Ogden and Richard's terms, the *word* "symbolizes" the *thought* which "refers to" the thing. Though there is a line at the bottom of the triangle it should be clear that there is no direct link from form to referent, but only an association mediated by the concept. In addition to the components of the original semiotic triangle Figure 1 represents the idea that concepts are inevitably embedded in cultures. In order to distinguish concepts from words, on the one hand, which are traditionally marked by italics, and referents, on the other hand, we will mark them by small capitals. Thus the word *cap* encodes the concept CAP which stands for real caps in the extra-linguistic world.

The defining characteristic of *pure concepts* is that all three components of the triangle - form, concept and referent - 'belong' to one

language and one culture, in the sense that they are historically and psychologically rooted and entrenched in them. It must be emphasized, however, that the notion of *pure concept* is an idealized theoretical construct, potential manifestations of which will always be open to historical, linguistic, psychological, ethnological and anthropological controversy. The main function of the notion of pure concept is to serve as a backdrop for the following explanation of the basic setup of blended concepts.

4.2 Blended concepts: The basic setup

Risking a smack of triviality, one can say that blended concepts are the results of the mixture of two pure concepts from two cultures, typically in one of these cultures. This basic setup is represented in Figure 2.

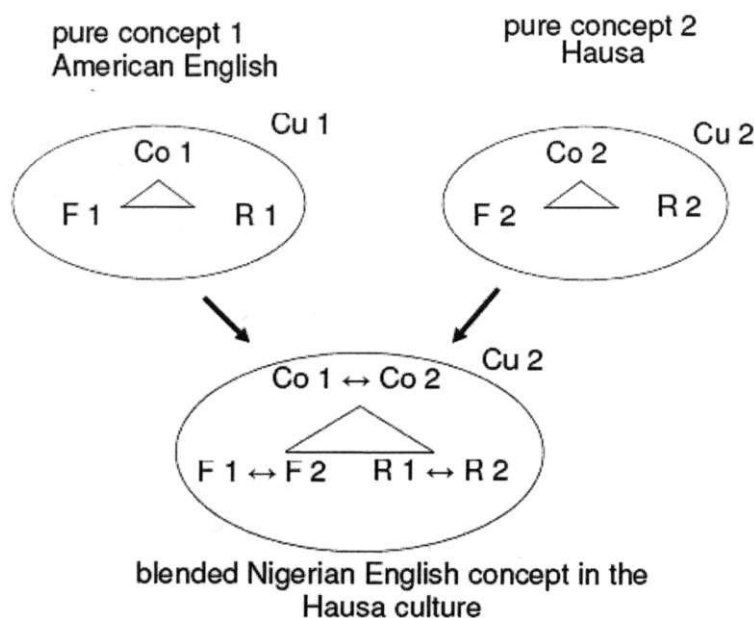


Figure 2: Basic setup of blended concepts (Co = concept, F = form, R = referent, Cu = culture; \leftrightarrow = variable degree of influence)

The double-pointed arrows in the blended concept indicate that the three components of the concept can be influenced to different degrees by each of the two pure concepts. Applied to the present data this means that Nigerian English concepts can be like American English concepts, on the one hand, like Hausa concepts, on the other hand, but they can also incorporate input from either of these sources to a greater or lesser degree. The internal complexity of blended concepts is further compounded by the fact that the three components of the blended concepts do not have to be related to the same source. For example, the Nigerian English word *wheelchair* takes its form from English. As we have seen, however, the concept associated with the word by Nigerian speakers is more similar to the corresponding Hausa concept KEKEN GURAGU, and the typical Nigerian referent is also distinctly different from the typical Western specimen of a wheelchair. These considerations show that there is an enormous range of variants of blended concepts depending on which aspects of the concepts are affected by blending and on the sources of the input into the components of the blended concept. As already hinted at, there are a large number of potential factors determining the particular composition of a blended concept. In the next section we will isolate the most important factors in order to create an analytical tool for the study of blended concepts.

5. Parameters Determining the Degree of Conceptual Blending

The parameters determining the degree of conceptual blending will be presented in three groups each of which relates to one component of the semiotic triangle: referent-related parameters, concept-related parameters and form-related parameters.

5.1 Referent-related parameters

- a) Degree of difference between the classes of referents in Hausa and Western culture

This parameter captures the similarity of the typical referents of a word in the Hausa culture as compared to Western/American referents. For example, while American baseball caps are considerably different from Nigerian referents of Hausa *hula*, there is no noticeable difference for the referents of the word *airplane* in the two cultures.

- b) Degree of appropriation of referents in Hausa culture

This parameter applies especially to items introduced into Nigeria from the West. The question is to what extent the referents have become part of everyday Hausa culture. What is the frequency and intensity of people's interaction with the referents? Airplanes, for example, exhibit a low degree of appropriation by Nigerians because only a small minority of them has the opportunity to fly. This of course explains the rather detached view of airplanes from the outside reflected in the attributes lists collected from the Nigerian informants. Cars and busses, on the other hand, have become an integral part of Hausa culture since many people use them and interact with them in a variety of ways (e.g. as drivers, passengers, mechanics, dealers, owners, pedestrians etc.).

- c) Degree of cultural adaptation of referents to Hausa culture

This parameter tends to correlate with the previous one, because adaptation tends to be the result of intense appropriation: Nigerian trucks are more adapted to the Nigerian context than Nigerian airplanes. As a result, it would be difficult to tell apart a Nigerian jet from an American one, but easy to recognize a Nigerian truck. The degree of adaptation is also related to parameter a), because objects that have been highly adapted to Hausa culture are more different

from corresponding American objects than objects taken without any cultural adaptation.

5.2 Concept-related parameters

While the set of parameters explained in the previous section concern the appearance and characteristics of things, the ones to be discussed now are located in people's minds.

- d) For Nigerian English: Degree of conceptual adaptation of English concepts to corresponding Hausa concepts, as compared to concepts in American English

This parameter is the conceptual counterpart of parameter c). It captures the degree of *contextualization*, *Africanization* (cf. Wolf 2003) or *nativization* (Bamgbose 1997: 11) of concepts encoded by English words to the local culture. As has been shown, the Nigerian English concept WHEELCHAIR, for example, is more similar to the corresponding Hausa concept than to the American English one. The English concept thus seems to be adapted to the local culture.

- e) For Nigerian English: Degree of conceptual emancipation of Nigerian English concepts from American English concepts

This parameter captures the extent to which a concept in Nigerian English differs from the concept in American English encoded by the same word. Although there is often a correlation to parameter d) - concepts highly adapted to Hausa culture tend to be more emancipated from English culture - the two cannot be subsumed on one dimension, because it is possible for Nigerian English concepts to be both emancipated from American English and not adapted to Hausa culture. Blended concepts of this type are particularly good candidates for the status of syncretic concepts, because they are qualitatively different from their conceptual and cultural input. The concept WINDOW emerges as an example of this type from our study; the conceptualization of the English word by our Nigerian informants differs significantly from both their conceptualization of the corre-

sponding Hausa concept TAGA and that of the American English informants.

- f) For Hausa: Degree of conceptual adaptation of Hausa concepts to English concepts

This is the counterpart to parameter e) from the Hausa perspective. The question is whether a particular Hausa concept has undergone a conceptual adaptation to an English concept. Processes of this type may be the result of a cultural *alienation* caused by the English language and the Western culture and world-view transported by it all over the globe. This is a particularly intriguing question in view of the heated debate on how the presence and use of English affects post-colonial societies; strong catchwords in this controversy are *linguistic imperialism*, *linguistic genocide*, English as a *killer language* (see Mühlhäusler 1996, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Unfortunately it is impossible to focus on this issue here because of a methodological problem: there is no external reference-system for Hausa comparable to American English as a 'global' reference-system to which Nigerian English can be related. Hausa speakers entirely unaffected by English, which would be candidates for supplying such a reference-system, can only be found in remote rural areas, where attribute-listing tasks cannot be applied due to the illiteracy of most informants.

5.3 Form-related parameters

- g) Effects of forms on concepts

This parameter captures what is traditionally known as linguistic *interference*. The concept WHEELCHAIR provides an interesting example: as already discussed, the Nigerian informants named attributes like 'handicap bicycle', 'bicycle' and 'has a chain', which are hardly comprehensible from a Western perspective. The most likely source of these attributes lies in the Hausa word for wheelchairs, *keken guragu* and 'bicycle for cripples/handicapped people'.

The attributes given by the informants for English *wheelchair* indicate that the form of the Hausa word leaves its mark on the corresponding concept in Nigerian English.

- h) Origin of the form: English or Hausa?

All Nigerian English words investigated are originally English. Words borrowed from Hausa such as *tuwo* ('staple food'), *gari* ('fried cassava flour') or *gyara* ('makeweight' given by seller', cf. Wolf and Igboanusi 2003: 74ff.) were not taken into consideration, because they have no American English equivalents. Many Hausa words, especially in domains dominated by modernization such as vehicles or computing, are loanwords from English (e.g. Hausa *jif* 'jeep' and *tasi* 'taxi').

- i) Existence of a form in English and Hausa

Not all of the Nigerian English words investigated have equivalents in Hausa. For example, there is no need for Hausa words corresponding to English *cheese* or *pizza*, for the simple reason that the referents can hardly be found in Nigeria and consequently speakers have little opportunity to refer to them.

Having established parameters that can guide the assessment of individual concepts, we will now present some further case studies demonstrating the highly complex interplay between the parameters and then move on to the methodological issues mentioned above.

6. Case Studies

The following seven case studies of Nigerian English words are arranged in three groups according to parameter (a), 'difference of referents', and analyzed according to the concept-related and form-related parameters listed in 4.2 and 4.3. First two examples will be presented where Nigerian and Western referents are more or less identical, then three cases with similar referents and then two words with distinctly dissimilar referents. Throughout the focus lies on the

conceptual structure of the concepts, since they were the target of the attribute-listing experiments described above.

6.1 Same referents

6.1.1 *Camel*

Referent-related parameters: We assume that camels are perceived, at least by the general public, as being more or less identical in their outer appearance in Nigeria and the USA.

Concept-related parameters: The assessment of the concept-related parameters is based on the findings from the attribute-listing experiments presented in Table 4 in the appendix. The attribute-lists from the three groups of informants yield a closer similarity between Nigerian English and Hausa than between the former and American English. The American informants are preoccupied with stereotypical knowledge about camels such as 'humps', 'desert' and 'spits', some of which are also given by some of the Nigerian informants. The lists for Nigerian English and Hausa, on the other hand, include important shared attributes with similar scores: 'tall', 'long neck', 'long legs', 'carries goods' and 'meat'. These attributes reflect a richer cognitive model of camels derived from a more intense interaction with these animals.

The findings for the concept CAMEL thus suggest that we are dealing with a case of contextualization here. An English word for referents of local origin and relevance has been conceptually adapted to the local context and shows clear signs of similarity with the concept underlying the referentially equivalent Hausa word *raƙumi*.

6.1.2 *Airplane*

Referent-related parameters: Airplanes are of Western origin and, as already mentioned above, especially long-distance jets exhibit a low degree of appropriation and adaptation. There is no perceivable difference to Western referents.

Concept-related parameters: As already explained in Section 2.1, the Nigerian English concept AIRPLANE shares attributes with both

Hausa and American English (cf. Table 1 in the appendix): 'flying', 'transport', 'passengers' and others are obvious examples. What distinguishes the Nigerian English concept from the American one is that the American informants display more inside knowledge about the props and events during the flight. They clearly activate some sort of plane-flying script including aspects like 'stewardess', 'flight attendants', 'movies', 'bad food' and 'peanuts'. Not surprisingly, the Nigerian informants, on the other hand, take an outside view and focus on the parts of airplanes ('engine', 'tyres', 'wings' and 'propeller') in response to both the English and the Hausa stimulus. The attribute 'pilot' is given for the English stimulus, but not for the Hausa word.

Form-related parameters: Interestingly, an effect of the literal meaning of the Hausa word *jirgin sama* ('sky vehicle') is only noticeable in the Hausa list ('travels in the sky'), but not in the Nigerian English one. Thus there is no indication of linguistic interference of the Hausa form on the Nigerian English concept. On the other hand, the list for the Nigerian English stimulus includes references to 'air'. The first element of the compound, *air*, seems to be responsible for this.

The evidence suggests that the concept AIRPLANE has mustered more resistance against adaptation to the local culture than the concept CAMEL. This is probably due to the low degree of appropriation, which is reflected in the removed view of planes emerging from the attribute lists. An effect of the linguistic form is only noticeable in the attribute 'air' given for the Nigerian English word. The fact that there is no interference from Hausa is particularly noteworthy, as such interference has been found for the concept WHEELCHAIR to be discussed below (see 5.3.2).

6.2. Similar referents: banana, shoe, window

6.2.1 *Banana*

Referent-related parameters: Although they are a natural product, bananas come along in different colours and sizes and with different tastes in Nigeria and the USA. The referents are thus similar, but less identical than e.g. camels or airplanes.

Concept-related parameters: Viewed in their entirety, the three lists in Table 5 in the appendix are surprisingly dissimilar. As before, there are of course attributes included in all three lists, but there is little convergence with regard to their frequency scores. The Nigerian English list shows clear signs of cultural adaptation in several attributes referring to the growing of bananas: 'leaves', 'roots', 'tree', 'plant' and 'stem'. The same attributes can be found in the Hausa list, but except for 'tree', they are absent from the American one. This does not mean, however, that the Nigerian English concept is identical to the Hausa one, because the attitudinal attributes 'delicacy/desired' and 'pleasant/nice' given for the Hausa concept AYABA are missing in the Nigerian English list.

What these findings indicate is that the Nigerian English concept banana seems to be sufficiently different from the American English concept to be regarded as highly adapted and thus emancipated. All the aspects related to banana plants (rather than the fruits themselves) only play a role for the Nigerian informants, but not for the American ones. The fact that the attitudinal attributes given for the Hausa concept are missing is open to several interpretations: it could be a sign of an ongoing, uncompleted adaptation process or of the emergence of a syncretic concept, blending conceptual material from the two sources in a qualitatively new way.

6.2.2 *Shoe*

Referent-related parameters: Like bananas, shoes are essentially similar but not identical in the two cultures.

Concept-related parameters: Attributes shared by the Nigerian English and the American English concept are 'foot wear' and 'protect feet' (see Table 6). Apart from these two attributes, there is little overlap between the two English lists. The Nigerian English list shares with the Hausa list the attributes referring to 'legs' or 'feet' respectively, to the materials 'leather, skin, hide' and 'rubber' and to 'protection'. It is worth mentioning that the Nigerian English list does not contain references to 'thorn' as potential dangers for the feet; the ornamental function of shoes is also not given by the Nigerian informants in response to the English stimulus.

As was the case for BANANA, there is considerable evidence for an adaptation and contextualization of the English concept SHOE. And again, the Nigerian English concept lacks attributes given for the Hausa word *takalmi*, which are so to speak 'closer' to people's everyday lives and experiences, namely the reference to 'ornaments' and to 'thorns'. The Nigerian English attribute list seems to reflect an emotionally more detached view of the same referents than the Hausa list.

6.2.3 *Window*

Referent-related parameters: At least as far as their perceptual properties are concerned, Nigerian windows differ considerably from typical windows in the West in that they tend to be covered.

Concept-related parameters: The perceptual difference is clearly reflected in the attribute lists in Table 7. While American informants focus on attributes related to light and brightness ('light', 'clear', 'see through/look out', '(good) view', 'sunshine'), Nigerian informants stress the ventilation function of windows both in the Nigerian English and the Hausa lists, but also mention the fact that windows tend to be covered. Interestingly, the attribute 'brightening room / brightness' is named only for the Hausa word *taga*. Other associations unique to the Hausa responses are 'lock', 'nail(s)' and 'key'. These are again reflections of the interaction with local specimens of the category which do not seem to be triggered by the English word.

6.3 Dissimilar referents: cap and wheelchair

6.3.1 Cap

Referent-related parameters: The objects referred to by the word *cap* in Nigerian English and American English differ markedly. In the Nigerian context, a cap is a colourful round ornamental item of headgear, usually hand-sown or woven and worn exclusively by men. For Americans, the typical cap is of course a baseball cap.

Concept-related parameters: Looking at Table 3, there can be no doubt that the Nigerian informants call up the image of a Nigerian type of cap when they respond to the attribute listing task, no matter whether the stimulus is English *cap* or Hausa *hula*. This shows in the attributes 'round', 'hand made', 'worn (mostly) by men', 'sown', 'made of wool/cotton' and '(many) colours'. However, as before, the adaptation of the English concept to the local culture seems to stop when it comes to attitudinal and interactional attributes: there are no correspondences of the Hausa attributes 'ornamental', 'thread', 'yard' and 'woven'. The attributes given by the American informants, on the other hand, do not only make it clear that they have baseball caps in mind, but they also reflect the polysemy of the lexeme *cap* in attributes like 'bottle', 'lid' and 'closes something'.

6.3.2 Wheelchair

Referent-related parameters: Unlike Western wheelchairs, Nigerian ones typically feature handles that allow the people using them to propel themselves forward by means of a chain transmission, if they are capable of doing that. In the West, wheelchairs are pushed by other people or propelled by electric motors.

Concept-related parameters: The strong association between wheelchairs and handicapped, physically disabled or 'crippled' persons emerges from all three attribute lists in Table 2. An essential part-whole attribute included in all three lists is the reference to 'wheels', but the answers with regard to the number of wheels vary from two to four. What is of particular interest here are attributes

which seem to be influenced by the linguistic forms of the compounds *wheelchair* and *keken guragu* (lit. 'bicycle for cripples'). On the one hand, it is remarkable that the attribute 'chair' occurs only in the Nigerian English list, but not in the Hausa one. On the other hand, the Nigerians also refer to wheelchairs as resembling bicycles. While this could of course simply be due to the perceptual and functional similarity between Nigerian wheelchairs and bicycles, it is striking that the Nigerian English list includes verbatim translations of the Hausa word as 'handicap bicycle' or 'bicycle for crippled'. The combination of these two findings calls for an explanation in terms of linguistic interference: it seems that both the English form *chair* in *wheelchair* and the Hausa form *keke* ('bicycle') in *keken guragu* leave their marks on the conceptualizations emerging from the attributes given in response to the Nigerian English word. This is in contrast to the concept AIRPLANE where we found no traces of linguistic interference of the Hausa word on the English concept.

7. Discussion

Taken together, even the small number of cases yields some interesting results, but gives also an insight into the complexity of the investigation of culturally blended concepts. The following tendencies can be observed.

The conceptual setup in Nigerian English of the two concepts with more or less identical referents, CAMEL and AIRPLANE, seems to be related to the cultural relevance of the referents in Hausa culture. Being of greater relevance to the local culture, camels are conceptualized very much alike in Hausa and Nigerian English but clearly differently from the latter two in American English. Due to the lack of appropriation, the Nigerian English conceptualization of airplanes sides more with the American view than with the local Hausa one. The origin of the referents, African for camels and Western for airplanes, seems to play a role here as well.

A finding common to the three concepts with more or less similar referents, BANANA, SHOE and WINDOW, is that there is a marked degree of conceptual adaptation to the African cultural context. Clearly the words *banana*, *shoe* and *window* do not 'mean' the same to Nigerian and American speakers of English, even though they apparently speak the same language. However, it is not the case that Nigerian speakers simply transfer their Hausa concept to Nigerian English. Important attitudinal associations as well as attributes extracted from everyday interaction with the objects do not emerge in the Nigerian English list, although they are given for the corresponding Hausa terms. The Nigerian English concepts seem to be emotionally more detached and less 'rich' than the Hausa concepts. This may be a reflection of the status of English: for all the speakers who acted as informants, it is a language acquired by institutional education rather than inside the family and a language whose use is reserved for occasions on the formal end of the scale. The question whether the detachment is a reflection of the fact that English has remained a foreign language representing a foreign culture must remain open.

While both Nigerian caps and wheelchairs are markedly different from American caps and wheelchairs, the underlying Nigerian English concepts do not yield similar patterns on the conceptual level. CAP behaves in a way comparable to SHOE or WINDOW, showing distinct evidence of cultural adaptation with missing attitudinal and interactional attributes. The concept WHEELCHAIR, on the other hand, seems to be a true blend of the two cultures, which is influenced by the linguistic form of the words in English and Hausa. The Nigerian attribute list for *wheelchair* reveals both associations with chairs, which are not triggered by the Hausa word, and with bicycles, which are not activated in the minds of American speakers. That Nigerian English WHEELCHAIR shows signs of linguistic interference, while the other compound AIRPLANE does not, may be due to the lower degree of appropriation of airplanes.

None of the Hausa concepts shows signs of an influence from the Nigerian English concepts. Even for AIRPLANE, a technological item associated with modernization and globalization and thus a particularly good candidate for phenomena of this type, an alienating effect of English could not be discerned.

8. Conclusion

The investigation of blended concepts has proved to be a methodological challenge. Three crucial sources of the complexity of the problem can be extracted from this discussion: first, the variable degrees of influence from the two cultures and languages (more or less Hausa influence vs. more or less English influence); second, the lacking correlation between referent-related and concept-related parameters; and third, the unpredictable influence of linguistic forms on concepts, which seems to be subject to referent-related parameters.

With these issues in mind, we can return to the methodological questions raised at the outset of this paper:

- a) Is it possible to distinguish 'real', i.e. new and original, syncretic concepts from less spectacular cultural adaptations and contextualizations? We believe that this question must be answered in the negative. While we have found evidence for concepts whose structures display distinct signs of conceptual blending with an input from two cultures, it seems impossible to decide whether something new has emerged. Inevitably there are traces of the input of the source concepts and cultures. What seems to be the case, on the other hand, is that the input does merge in a qualitatively new way in the blended concepts, and it is in this sense that one might say that syncretic concepts have been found after all. The best candidates are the concepts with a distinct mixture of conceptual components from the two sources, which tends to be caused by an extra-linguistic difference between the referents. As far as the possible influence of globalization is concerned, our

findings suggest the conclusion that the degree of adaptation of global concepts depends on the degree of appropriation in the local culture. For example, the increasingly global food concept pizza, which we have also investigated but not discussed in details here, does not seem to be entrenched in the minds of Nigerian speakers: only very few informants are able to provide attributes, and those who are stick to very general properties like 'round', 'flat' or 'food'.

- b) Is it possible to determine the specific source of blending for individual concepts? Again we are rather sceptical and believe that the evidence is limited. While it is tempting to assume cultural causes for conceptual effects, the link is apparently not that straightforward. As we have seen, purely linguistic factors like the interference of lexical forms are at work as well. Unless there is fairly clear evidence in the attributes given by the informants - as was the case for wheelchair - it is difficult to distinguish between conceptual blending triggered by linguistic interference and conceptual blending caused by cultural adaptation.
- c) Where are the methodological limits of the study of syncretic concepts? As we have seen, the complexity of the task at hand arises from the interplay between linguistic forms, extra-linguistic referents, mental concepts and tacit cultural knowledge. As linguists, we have more or less sufficient information on linguistic forms and their history. By means of attribute-listing tasks, we have tried to collect intersubjectively valid information about concepts. For information about material culture we must rely on our own unsystematic observations, information given by members of the culture and on results of anthropological investigations. The latter, however, tend to be influenced by the perception and linguistic proficiency of the field worker, and we have seen how much the Nigerian English concepts of everyday items can differ from the corresponding Western ones. The material col-

lected on the conceptualizations of everyday goods may thus in fact be helpful for anthropological research.

What we hold to be crucial from a methodological point of view is that blended concepts can only be investigated with a comparative approach. It is not reasonable to speculate on the blended or syncretic nature of a concept unless one is able to collect systematic and reliable information on the potential linguistic, conceptual and cultural input systems. Blended concepts should never be blended concepts as such, but must inevitably be blended concepts in relation to input systems. In fact, other approaches to the study of syncretism, e.g. in the fields of art, religion or material culture, must be put under the same constraint. It would be rather naïve to assume that the situation is less complex here, because researchers in these areas do not have to bother with linguistic forms and concepts. After all, knowledge about culture is inevitably conceptual knowledge. In addition, the methods in these academic fields largely rely on the use of language as a medium of communication and we have seen that even for the most basic and common everyday words a correspondence between Nigerian English concepts and American English or Global English concepts can by no means be taken for granted. We hope, therefore, that the material we have collected on the conceptualizations of everyday goods may in fact be helpful for anthropological, ethnological and sociological investigations as well.

Finally, we want to emphasize that it seems impossible to give well-founded judgments on individual blended concepts. The degree of blending discernible in one concept will always have to be determined in comparison with other blended concepts with linguistic, conceptual or cultural similarities.

Table 2: Attribute lists for Hausa *keken guragu* and Nigerian and American English *wheelchair*

Hausa <i>n</i> = 45			Nigerian English <i>n</i> = 39			American English <i>n</i> = 47		
<i>keken guragu</i>	freq.	weight	<i>wheelchair</i>	freq.	weight	<i>wheelchair</i>	freq.	weight
vehicle for a cripple(s)	26	0,58	tyres/rollers/wheels (two/three/four)	33	0,84	wheels	35	0,74
tyres / two tyres	19	0,42	chair (type of ~)	16	0,39	handicapped	18	0,38
chain	14	0,31	used by /disabled handi-capped/ crippled people	16	0,39	chair	15	0,32
(type of) vehicle / riding	13	0,29	seat (one ~)	10	0,24	physically disabled person	13	0,28
(has) three tyres / wheels	13	0,29	handle(s)	6	0,15	injury/injured	10	0,21
seat / saddle	12	0,27	handicap bicycle/ rider/bicycle for crippled/ resembles bicycle	5	0,12	old/elderly people	9	0,19
pushing / is being pushed (is used for) transport (of cripples)	10	0,22	made of steel/iron/metal mostly used in hospital	5	0,12	hospital	8	0,17
driving/driven per/by hand	9	0,20	/hospital utensil	4	0,10	electr(on)ic	8	0,17
metal	7	0,16				sick/ill	7	0,15
brakes / hand brakes	6	0,13				metal	7	0,15
sitting / place to sit / sth. to sit	6	0,13				seat	7	0,15
pedal / hand pedal / pedal for driving	5	0,11				ramps	6	0,13
						cripple(d)	6	0,13
						transportation	6	0,13
						push	6	0,13

Table 1: Attribute lists for Hausa *jirgin sama* and Nigerian and American English *airplane*

Hausa <i>n</i> = 45			Nigerian English <i>n</i> = 39			American English <i>n</i> = 47		
<i>jirgin sama</i>	freq.	weight	<i>airplane</i>	freq.	weight	<i>airplane</i>	freq.	weight
transport (commercial) / used for transport	19	0,42	engine	16	0,37	wing/wings	35	0,74
(travels) in the (open) sky	18	0,40	flying	15	0,35	pilot/pilots	28	0,60
carrying people / passenger / travellers	15	0,33	pilot	12	0,28	fly/flying	23	0,49
engine	12	0,27	transport(ation) (means of ~)	11	0,26	passengers	17	0,36
flying (off)	12	0,27	has (small) tyres/wheels	9	0,21	(jet) engine/engines	16	0,34
has tyres	12	0,27	(two) wings	8	0,19	stewardess	14	0,30
(carrying / travelling with) goods	11	0,24	carries many people / passengers / goods	7	0,16	travel/travelling	10	0,21
has (long) wings	11	0,24	moves/lies in air	7	0,16	fuel/jet fuel	10	0,21
vehicle	10	0,22	vehicle	7	0,16	seats	9	0,19
propeller	7	0,16	airport	6	0,14	sky	8	0,17
runs very fast /travelling fast	5	0,11	propeller	6	0,14	airport/airports	8	0,17
passengers' seats / seats	5	0,11	passengers (conveyance of ~)	5	0,12	transport(ation)	8	0,17
			seats	5	0,12	fast	7	0,15
						movie/movies	6	0,13
						flight attendants	6	0,13
						first class (vs. coach)	6	0,13
						crash	6	0,13
						cockpit	6	0,13
						luggage	6	0,13
						bad food	5	0,11
						peanuts	5	0,11
						air	5	0,11
						wheels	5	0,11
						windows	5	0,11

Table 4: Attribute lists for Hausa *raƙumi* and Nigerian and American English *camel*

Hausa <i>n</i> = 45			Nigerian English <i>n</i> = 39			American English <i>n</i> = 47		
<i>raƙumi</i>	freq.	weight	<i>camel</i>	freq.	weight	<i>camel</i>	freq.	weight
animal	31	0,69	animal	32	0,82	hump(s)	40	0,85
(used for) carrying loads								
(for payment)	23	0,51	legs (four), long	22	0,56	desert	36	0,77
tall	23	0,51	(used in)desert	20	0,51	spit	24	0,51
has long neck	18	0,40	tall	17	0,44	animal	16	0,34
			transport(er/ation) (means					
(used for) transport	15	0,33	of ~)	14	0,36	water (storage)	15	0,32
vehicle / riding	12	0,27	long neck	13	0,33	means of transportation	14	0,30
to wander/travel in Sahara								
/in desert environment	8	0,18	carry loads/goods	7	0,18	4 legs	11	0,23
has long legs	8	0,18	hunchback	7	0,18	Egypt(ian)	10	0,21
hump / hump on the back	8	0,18	vehicle	6	0,15	brown	10	0,21
desert / living in the desert	7	0,16	eyes	5	0,13	cigarettes (ad)	9	0,19
(four / two) legs	7	0,16	carry people	4	0,10	Arabian	9	0,19
short tail / small tail / tail	6	0,13	meat	4	0,10	no need for water	7	0,15
meat	6	0,13	travelling	4	0,10	(accustomed to) heat/hot	7	0,15
(is used to) travel	6	0,13				sand	7	0,15
lead-rope of camel	5	0,11				(Middle) East	7	0,15
eats thorn / thorn	5	0,11				tall	7	0,15
big, huge	5	0,11				travel(ing)	6	0,13
						(big) hooves	6	0,13
						ride	6	0,13
						fur/furry	6	0,13
						slow	5	0,11
						yellow	5	0,11

Table 3: Attribute lists for Hausa *hula* and Nigerian and American English *cap*

Hausa <i>n</i> = 42			Nigerian English <i>n</i> = 39			American English <i>n</i> = 47		
<i>hula</i>	freq.	weight	<i>cap</i>	freq.	weight	<i>cap</i>	freq.	weight
head-cover / is put on								
the head	29	0,69	(used on) head	15	0,38	baseball	45	0,68
(only) men (use it) /								
male	22	0,52	round(ed)	9	0,23	hat	37	0,56
ornamental / put on for								
ornamentation	16	0,38	(many) colours	8	0,21	head	20	0,30
to sow / sowing / sown								
(by hand)	14	0,33	hand made	7	0,18	bottle	12	0,18
(there is) thread in it	11	0,26	cover	7	0,18	protects from sun	11	0,17
type of cap	11	0,26	worn (mostly) by men	6	0,15	covers (hair)	11	0,17
clothes	10	0,24	medium size	6	0,15	wear	9	0,14
weaving / woven	6	0,14	soft/hard	5	0,13	lid	9	0,14
sth. to wear	6	0,14	sown	5	0,13	(cap) gun	9	0,14
yard of textile material	6	0,14	cloth	4	0,10	sports	9	0,14
(different) colour(s)	5	0,12	made of wool/cotton	4	0,10	brim	9	0,14
(part of) garment	4	0,10				team	7	0,11
cap (syn. of <i>hula</i>)	4	0,10				button on top	9	0,14
						hair	7	0,11
						bill	7	0,11
						boys/guys	8	0,12
						logo	5	0,08
						sun(shine)	4	0,06
						screw on	6	0,09
						closes something/closing		
						device	7	0,11

Table 6: Attribute lists for Hausa *takalmi* and Nigerian and American English *shoes*

Hausa	n = 42	Nigerian English	n = 38	American English	n = 47			
<i>takalmi</i>	freq.	weight	freq.	weight	freq.	weight		
(made of) skin / leather shoe	27	0,64	(made of) leather / hide / skin	23	060	(wear on) feet	38	0,58
(made of) rubber / rubber shoes	22	0,52	feet/ foot wear / used on feet	18	0,47	(with/without) socks	22	0,34
legs / is worn on the leg	19	0,45	cover(ed) shoes/top	13	0,34	boots	22	0,34
protection (against thorn, heat, sun or stumbling)	18	0,43	rubber protect feet (from injury) / protection	13	0,34	protection (protect feet)	20	0,31
ornament	14	0,33		9	0,24	running	20	0,31
putting on / is put on	10	0,24	foot cover	6	0,16	sandals	19	0,29
heel	6	0,14	pair	6	0,16	laces	18	0,28
rope	5	0,12	part of dress(ing) / dress size(s) (different ~)/big and small	6	0,16	(high) heels	17	0,26
clothes	5	0,12		6	0,16	comfort(able)	14	0,22
walking	4	0,10	colour(s) (different ~)	5	0,13	sneakers	12	0,18
			slippers	5	0,13	walk	11	0,17
			female	4	0,11	flip-flops	10	0,15
			male	4	0,11	tennis	10	0,15
			sandals	4	0,11	leather	9	0,14
						sole	8	0,12
						colour(ed)	8	0,12
						brands	7	0,11

Table 5: Attribute lists for Hausa *ayaba* and Nigerian and American English *banana*

Hausa	n = 42	Nigerian English	n = 39	American English	n = 47			
<i>ayaba</i>	freq.	weight	freq.	weight	freq.	weight		
food / food stuff / eating / is eaten	28	0,67	fruit	20	0,54	yellow	55	0,85
(is) sweet / sweet stuff	17	0,40	sweet	14	0,38	fruit	35	0,54
delicacy / desired	12	0,29	edible (when ripe)	13	0,35	(waxy) peel/peelable	31	0,48
shell, bark	11	0,26	leaves	13	0,35	long	24	0,37
garden	10	0,24	roots	10	0,27	monkey	23	0,35
leaf / has leaves	9	0,21	tree (derived from ~)	8	0,22	tree	15	0,23
garden stuff / garden						curved/crescent		
fruit	8	0,19	plant	7	0,19	shaped/irregular shape	15	0,23
fruits / tree fruits / fruit	6	0,14	soft	7	0,19	sweet	13	0,20
soft	6	0,14	food	6	0,16	slip/slippery	12	0,18
planting / (is) planted	6	0,14	green/yellow	6	0,16	healthy/good for you	12	0,18
(obtained from) a tree	6	0,14	peeled/cover that has to be removed	6	0,16	green (when not ripe)	10	0,15
pleasant, nice	6	0,14	flowers (before producing plant)	5	0,14	tropical	10	0,15
green / green back (bark)	6	0,14	carved /curved shape/semicircle	4	0,11	cereal	9	0,14
white inside / white / inside (white)	5	0,12	stem	4	0,11	mushy	9	0,14
peeling / is peeled before eating	4	0,10	vitamins	4	0,11	potassium	8	0,12
root / has roots	4	0,10				soft	7	0,11
						tasty/delicious/yummy	7	0,11
						Chiquita	7	0,11

Hausa	n = 42	Nigerian English	n = 39	American English	n = 47			
<i>taga</i>	freq.	weight	freq.	weight	freq.	weight		
(place for) air	19	0,45	air going in and out,	28	0,70	glass	50	0,77
(entrance)	13	0,31	ventilation	9	0,23	open	26	0,40
wood			part of building					
room / inside/part	11	0,26	(part of) room	9	0,23	light	23	0,35
of the room	10	0,24	glass	8	0,20	panes	22	0,34
glass								
house / inside the	9	0,21	wood	8	0,20	outside	17	0,26
house								
brightening room /	9	0,21	cover(ed)/not open	7	0,18	clear	15	0,23
brightness			opening (not very wide/to the					
iron	8	0,19	outside) (~ in building/room)	7	0,18	sight/see-through/look out	15	0,23
lock (inner)	8	0,19	metal/iron	5	0,13	view(s) (good ~)	16	0,25
nail(s)	7	0,17	part of house	4	0,10	house	13	0,20
building / part of								
the building	6	0,14	square (opening)/rectangle	4	0,10	close(d)	13	0,20
curtain	6	0,14				sun(shine)/sunny	11	0,17
sth. to close /								
closed with the								
window cover / to								
close	5	0,12				curtains	9	0,14
to open	5	0,12				(necessary in) building	9	0,14
key	5	0,12				car(s)	8	0,12
						square/rectangular	7	0,11
						clean	8	0,12
						breaking/breakable	7	0,11

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Creolization and Simplification: A Linguistic Perspective

Jonathan Owens

Concepts

In an enterprise so large and diverse as the SFB-FK 560 in terms of the themes it treats and the disciplines which treat them, it is useful at times to step back and compare important concepts from the different projects. In doing so one will confirm, or perhaps discover, that different projects are doing the same thing, as it were, but that the similarities have been masked because of the different terminologies used. Equally, it may emerge that ostensibly similar concepts mask what in fact are fundamental differences, which reflect further differences in the underlying reality the research is dealing with.

In this brief chapter I concentrate on the second aspect of the problem: highlighting the notion of simplification in contemporary research on creolization. Creolization is most developed as a branch of linguistic research, though it has been invoked in a cultural sense as well (Hannerz 1987), and the term has been adduced in research in our B domain on syncretization, which has been the main focus of the colloquium on which the proceedings are based. In this chapter I summarize the main points of the current debate, and in the concluding section generalize to a comparison between simplification and creolization on the one hand, and the notion of syncretization on the other.

1. Simplification in Creolization

Creoles are a class of languages which for many years were ignored by linguistics but became very popular from around 1970, and have since become established as a niche domain within linguistics. Their enduring interest resides in the fact that in many cases they are