

akup

ARBEITEN DES KÖLNER UNIVERSALIEN - PROJEKTS

Nr. 27

Hansjakob Seiler

TWO SYSTEMS OF CAHUILLA KINSHIP EXPRESSIONS:
LABELING AND DESCRIPTIVE.

Januar 1977

[To appear in the
Festschrift for Madison S. Beeler]

The language of the Cahuillas shows two systems of expressions referring to kinship, which could be termed, respectively, as labeling-relational and as descriptive-establishing. No comparable systematic duplicity has been reported for any other Southern California Uto-Aztecan language, at least to the knowledge of this author. He would be grateful for reactions and informations pointing to the existence of similar situations in related or unrelated languages of the area or of more distant regions.

In order to explain the workings of the two systems I must briefly outline the frame of reference which is presented both in a more comprehensive and in a more detailed fashion in Chapter 1 of the Semantics of my Cahuilla Grammar (Seiler in press: p. 253 ff.).

*

*

*

While I do not think of semantics and syntax as of two distinct compartments, I do consider them as two different perspectives of looking at the facts of language which are one and the same. For the semantics I use a notation with (atomic) predicates and arguments. In order to distinguish them from morphological and syntactic entities the semantic ones will be marked here by capital letters.

By SEMANTIC PREDICATES (abbreviated as SEM PREDs) I mean those abstract entities which entail one, two, or more places to be filled by ARGUMENTS. By the latter term (abbreviated as ARGs) I mean those abstract semantic entities which may fill the places opened by PREDs without themselves opening any places to be filled. Note that PRED in the semantic sense need not be coterminous with a predicate in the syntactic sense. The latter is typically represented by a verb, while semantically a PRED can be seen in such a noun as the English father, viz. as FATHER (x, y).

In formal logic we know the possibility of transforming PREDs into ARGs which, in turn, may be used to fill places of PREDs on a higher level. The operator achieving such transformations is the λ -operator:

(1) $\lambda(x)(Px)$.¹

In the reality of natural languages an element comparable in function to the λ -operator is not often found. But the Cahuilla - and, in general, the Uto-Aztecan - absolutive suffix functions in a way that comes strikingly close to the λ -operator.

A major problem which arises when correlating the abstract analog of predicate calculus with semantic structures of natural language should at least be briefly mentioned. If there are more than one ARG to one PRED, one will have to justify their distinction. Given a logical structure such as "HIT (x, y)", it is customary to call x the first argument (ARG₁), and y the second argument (ARG₂). But on what grounds do we decide that x, and not y, is the first argument? On the theoretical side the distinction between first and second argument seems to be largely intuitive. At the end of this paper I shall point out some empirical facts which might help to solve the problem, at least within the restricted domain which is under consideration here.

For the purpose of explicating Cahuilla kinship terms I need one more class of abstract semantic entities, which is that of LOGICAL PREDICATES (abbreviated LOG PREDs), to be distinguished from the SEM PREDs. Any expression may appear as an ARG of a LOG PRED. The LOG PRED I shall have to deal with here is given the name of APPLIES. It asserts that an ARG₁ "applies" to an ARG₂, one of its possible senses being that a name "applies" to an object. In languages like English APPLIES usually surfaces as the copula is, e.g. this is a basket, which I should represent as

(2) APPLIES (this, basket).

Expression (2) asserts that ARG₂ (basket) applies to ARG₁ (this).

Note that for the logician and even for the "linguist and natural logician" a noun like the English basket represents a one-place predicate of the form BASKET (x): "x is a basket". Under such a view "x is a basket" is a one-place

predicate just like "x is sleeping": SLEEP (x).

For us, expressions such as "x is a basket" are manifestations of the LOG PRED "APPLIES", which is a two-place predicate. It shows common features as well as marked differences in comparison with a two-place SEM PRED such as "BEAT", beat: Both are two-place. But in a SEM PRED like BEAT there are restrictions as to the insertable ARGs: Thus ARG₁ is normally [+animate] . On the other hand, LOG PREDs do not show any restrictions as to the properties of insertable ARGs. For any conceivable ARG it may be asserted that it APPLIES to something. Basically, LOG PREDs correspond to metalinguistic operations.

A further pair of notions needed for our explication is that of relational vs. absolute expressions. Relational expressions I call those which, as SEM PREDs, take the right number and the appropriate kind of ARGs. English father is a relational noun; semantically underlying is FATHER (x, y), a two-place predicate, one place for the one who is a father, the other place for the one whose father he is. Since verbs always represent SEM PREDs we may say that verbs are always relational.

Expressions not requiring ARGs I call absolute for this very reason. Absolute expressions are insertable into places belonging to either SEM PREDs or LOG PREDs.

The terms of "relational" and PRED as well as the terms of "absolute" and ARG are equal in their extension, but not in their intension. ARG implies the existence of a PRED, while "absolute" does not imply this.

There are two cardinal functions which any speaker of a language must be able to perform: predicating and naming. The predicating function leads to the formation of propositions, the PRED being the nucleus of a proposition. The naming function provides terms serving as ARGs belonging to PREDs in a proposition.

In the abstract model hinted at in (1) it is possible to name by predicating; i.e. on the basis of PRED I can form an ARG. In natural languages this amounts to saying that I can create a name for something (an object of nature

or thought) by using a proposition and saying something about the object. This technique of naming by describing (predicating) I shall call "descriptive". Descriptive terms show two properties:

1. They are analysable into constituent elements so as to recognize the connection between the term and the proposition.

2. They are distinguishable from the proposition:

- a. by a special formal element - in logic the λ -operator, in Cahuilla the absolute suffix.
- b. by a narrowing or specialization in the meaning.

A term which is not descriptive, i.e. which is not connected with a proposition, I shall call "label", "labeling": It does not say anything about the object but is assigned to it just as a label is attached to a thing (see Seiler 1975).

* * *

Cahuilla kin relationships can be stated in two ways, one by labeling-relational, the other by descriptive-absolute expressions:

- (3) nési 'She (is) her niece
($P_2 = \emptyset$, $P_1 = \emptyset$)-STEM² (sister's daughter)'

The kin relationship is represented here as inherent, as taken for granted. Neither of the ARGs nor the PRED -nési 'sister's daughter' is being topicalized. The expression is relational, and it is a label.

When the Cahuilla wants to present this relation not as given beforehand, but as to be established, he phrases it as

- (4) pe-y-nési-k(at) 'She who is related to her,
O- P_2 -STEM-SUFF.³ [who is] the niece'.

DIR.+ABS.

her-she-niece-related-to ... who-is

One of the ARGs, 'she', is being topicalized, and it is represented by a subject prefix $P_2 = -y-$. The

other ARG, 'her', is systematically associated with the PRED 'niece', and it is represented by the object prefix 3rd sing. pe- 'her'. -k(at) is a relativizing complex nominal suffix indicating oriented relationship and containing the absolutive -t which transforms the PRED into an ARG.

Absolute expressions indicating oriented relationship I shall henceforth call "establishing". Several questions arise: why should there be special expressions for establishing or describing the kind of kin relationship? And what are the deeper connections that would justify what at first sight seems to be a strange way of putting things?

There are certain grammatical and certain socio-cultural reasons for preferring either an establishing expression as in (4), or a relational one as in (3).

To mention one socio-cultural reason first: the establishing expression is used when a relative, say, the 'maternal aunt', is no longer living. She can then no longer be referred to by the relational expression, which is the direct way of referring to kinship. Instead, an indirect way is chosen which consists in showing how the deceased person, which is the topic, was related to the living one. An embedding semantic structure is used whereby the establishing assumes a direction. An expression such as (4) is used, then, to refer to the 'maternal aunt' and not to the 'niece'. What happens in such socio-cultural contexts and with these establishing expressions is that reference to one of two reciprocal or semi-reciprocal kin terms ('aunt-niece') is made by using the other. Therefore, the relational expression that corresponds to (4), from the point of view of language use, is not (3), but

(5) h́enes 'She (is) her maternal aunt'.

Expression (5) presents the relationship AUNT as inherent, and it is a label. Expression (4) is descriptive, the technique consisting in not mentioning AUNT directly and in starting instead from the reciprocal term NIECE and in explicating how she is related to the deceased person⁴.

The systematic connection between relational and establishing kin expressions parallels the connection of reciprocity between such kinship notions as 'father's father - son's son', 'uncle - nephew'. And this parallelism may very well explain a striking fact concerning the morphemic and phonemic make-up of a great number, or even the majority, of kin terms in Cahuilla - and perhaps also in other Uto-Aztecan languages:⁵ The two reciprocal terms are similar in shape, except that the term referring to the descending generation is longer by a consonant, or a vowel, or a consonant plus vowel.

- (6) (i) né-qex 'my grandfather's sister'
(ii) ne-qéxe 'any (a woman's) brother's grandchild'
- (7) (i) né-kum 'my father's older brother'
(ii) ne-kúmu 'my (a man's) younger brother's child'
- (8) (i) né-nes 'my mother's older sister'
(ii) ne-nési 'my (a woman's) younger sister's child'
- (9) (i) né-su? 'my mother's mother'
(ii) ne-súla 'my (a woman's) daughter's child'
- (10) (i) né-qa? 'my father's father'
(ii) ne-qála 'my (a man's) son's child'
- (11) (i) né-k^Wa 'my mother's father'
(ii) ne-k^Wála 'my (a man's) daughter's child'.

It may very well be that these "increments" in the descending terms were, in an older stage of the language, true suffixes, perhaps diminutives, while synchronically no traces of a morphemic status can be detected. In such an older stage, then, these kin terms were analysable and thus, perhaps, descriptive. Nowadays, however, they are completely labels. On the other hand the establishing kin expressions studied here are typically descriptive.

We note that the forms of both types of kinship expressions, the relational and absolute-establishing, show two co-occurring personal prefixes; the former has two subject prefixes, P_2 and P_1 , the latter an object prefix plus a subject prefix P_1 . The personal prefixes are variable

as to three persons and two numbers. We further note that, except for the socio-cultural restrictions mentioned earlier, most relational kin expressions have a corresponding absolute one. Taking all these facts into account, it is not surprising to find an impressively high number of kin expressions in Cahuilla. To give an idea, we counted all the possibilities of expressions occurring for 'maternal aunt' and 'niece (sister's daughter)' which were elicited from and rechecked with several informants. Forty-eight forms were found for the aunt and just as many for the niece. I do not have, for every kin relation expressed in the language, the exact number of occurring forms. According to a rough estimate the number of kin expressions may reach almost a thousand.

Theoretically, it could, of course, be still higher. However, there are important constraints imposed mainly by the semantic structure of the category 'person'. The constraints operate on the relative markedness of the persons of ARG₁ and ARG₂ as compared with each other. Thus, in a relation which shows the structure

(12) I NIECE SHE " 'I am her niece'

the person of ARG₁ is 1st and is therefore marked vis-à-vis the person of ARG₂, which is 3rd and is unmarked as compared to the 1st.

An absolute constraint is effective when the person of ARG₁ is a 1st (sing. or plur.). Then the establishing expression has to be chosen, and the relational is excluded. Thus we get

(13) (i) ne-y-nési-k 'She who is related to me, the
niece', i.e. 'my (deceased) aunt'

and not

(ii) *hen-nési 'I am her niece'.

If the ARG₁ is 2nd person, and the ARG₂ a third, then either type of expression may occur, though there is a distinct preference for the establishing. Thus, while we find both

- (14) (i) ʔe-y-nési-k 'She who is related to thee,
the niece',
and
(ii) ʔet-nési 'Thou art her niece' (with $P_2 =$
ʔet and $P_1 =$ zero),

there is a preference for (i) over (ii).

For the establishing expression, on the other hand, there are no absolute restrictions. The relational is preferred as over the establishing when the person of ARG_2 is marked as compared with the person of ARG_1 . Thus, when ARG_1 is a 3rd, and ARG_2 is either 1st or 2nd, we get more often and more readily a relational expression than an establishing one:

- (15) (i) ne-nési 'She is my niece'
(ii) pe-n-nési-k 'I who am related to her, the
niece' i.e. 'I as her aunt'
[this was qualified as "strange"
by one informant]
- (16) (i) ʔe-nési 'She is thy niece'
(ii) ʔe-y-nési-k 'Thou who art related to her, the
niece' [this was suggested to
and accepted by the informant].

According to the same principle, we find preference for the relational expression when the person of ARG_1 is 2nd and the person of ARG_2 is 1st:

- (17) (i) ʔeme-ne-nési-m 'You are my nieces'
 P_2-P_1 -STEM-plur. [which was the form first given]
(ii) ʔeme-n-nési-k 'I who am related to you, the
 $O-P_2$ -STEM-SUFF. nieces' [which was said to
be also possible].

The preferences and restrictions may be summarized in the following chart, the asterisk indicating exclusive occurrence of one expression type:

(18)

TYPES OF EXPRESSION	PERSONS OF ARGUMENTS	
	ARG ₁	ARG ₂
ESTABLISHING	*1	
	2	3
RELATIONAL	3	
	2	1

From these regularities and preferential criteria for the distinction between first and second argument in Cahuilla kinship expressions, one might say that the first argument is the one, which, if identified with the speaker, makes it impossible to present a kin relationship as inherent, as given; and which ipso facto necessitates the choice of an establishment expression. This much could be said in response to the question raised earlier in this paper. In addition, our distributional analysis might be of use for reconstructing some aspects of the socio-cultural situation conditioning the use of descriptive-establishing kin terms: They were in order when the participants of the speech act (above all the speaker, but also the addressee) traced their relationships to a deceased person.

It is very likely that the descriptive-establishing technique for forming kin expressions was originally used in other well circumscribed social situations. Outside the domain of kinship, descriptive-establishing formations of an exactly parallel morphological make-up occur in such situations where ownership of an implement of the material culture is being established.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 On this complex of problems see van den Boom (1975:66 f.); in order to accomodate cyclicity he proposes to represent the variable as a sentence variable.
- 2 P_2 and P_1 symbolize two different series of personal prefixes, occurring in that order before predicative nouns; in this particular example both P_2 and P_1 are in the 3rd person and as such represented by zero.
- 3 O stands for object prefix, DIR. for directional, and ABS. for absolutive suffix.
- 4 In her book on the Chemehuevis, Carobeth Laird (Laird 1976:69 ff.) describes in detail the customs for not mentioning kin terms of deceased relatives. She also adds "that in making clear his (dead man-parent's or woman-parent's) hereditary right to a song a person may properly trace his ancestry and in so doing mention dead ancestors, but I do not know precisely how this would be done" (p.69).
- 5 The fact is pointed out for Kawaiisu, a "Shoshonean" language of California, by Greenberg (1966:79).

REFERENCES

- van den Boom, Holger. 1975. Zum Verhältnis von Logik
und Grammatik am Beispiel des neuinterpretierten
 λ -operators. In: Seiler, H. (ed.) 1975. 58-92.
- Greenberg, Joseph H. 1966. Language Universals. The Hague:
Mouton.
- Laird, Carobeth. 1976. The Chemehuevis. Banning:Malki
Museum Press.
- Seiler, Hansjakob (ed.). 1975. Linguistic Workshop III.
Structura 9. München:Fink.
- Seiler, Hansjakob. 1975. Die Prinzipien der deskriptiven
und der etikettierenden Benennung. in: Seiler,
H. (ed.) 1975. 2-58.
- Seiler, Hansjakob. In press. Cahuilla Grammar. Banning:
Malki Museum Press.

In der Reihe akup erscheinen die Arbeiten des Kölner Universalienprojekts (DFG-Projekt, Leitung Prof. Dr. Hansjakob Seiler). Die Nummern 1 - 15 sind erschienen als Linguistic Workshop I - III (LW I, LW II, LW III), München: Fink 1973-75.

1. Seiler, H. 1973, "Das Universalienkonzept", LW I, 6-19
2. Lehmann, C. 1973, "Wortstellung in Fragesätzen", LW I, 20-53
3. Ibañez, R. 1973, "Programmatische Skizze: Intonation und Frage", LW I, 54-61
4. Brettschneider, G. 1973, "'Sexus' im Baskischen: Die sprachliche Umsetzung einer kognitiven Kategorie", LW I, 62-72
5. Stephany, U. 1973, "Zur Rolle der Wiederholung in der sprachlichen Kommunikation zwischen Kind und Erwachsenen", LW I, 73-98
6. Seiler, H. 1974, "The Principle of Concomitance: Instrumental, Comitative and Collective (With special reference to German)", LW II, 2-55
7. Seiler, H. 1974, "The Principle of Concomitance in Uto-Aztecan", LW II, 56-68
8. Lehmann, C. 1974, "Prinzipien für 'Universal 14'", LW II, 69-97
9. Lehmann, C. 1974, "Isomorphismus im sprachlichen Zeichen", LW II, 98-123
10. Seiler, H. 1975, "Die Prinzipien der deskriptiven und der etikettierenden Benennung", LW III, 2-57
11. Boom, H. van den 1975, "Zum Verhältnis von Logik und Grammatik am Beispiel des neuinterpretierten λ -Operators", LW III, 58-92
12. Untermann, J. 1975, "Etymologie und Wortgeschichte", LW III, 93-116
13. Lehmann, C. 1975, "Strategien für Relativsätze", LW III, 117-156
14. Ultan, R. 1975, "Infixes and their origins" LW III, 157-205

15. Stephany, U. 1975, "Linguistic and extralinguistic factors in the interpretation of children's early utterances", LW III, 206-233
16. Ultan, R. 1975, "Descriptivity grading of Finnish body-part terms"
17. Lehmann, C. 1975, "Determinations, Bezugsnomen und Pronomen im Relativsatz"
18. Seiler, H. 1975, "Language Universals and Interlinguistic Variation"
19. Hohenstein, E. 1975, "Semiotische Philosophie?"
20. Seiler, H. 1976, "Introductory Notes to a Grammar of Cahuilla" (To appear in Linguistic Studies offered to Joseph Greenberg on the occasion of his 60th birthday)
21. Ultan, R. 1976, "Descriptivity in the Domain of Body-Part Terms"
22. Boom, H. van den 1976, "Bedeutungsexplikation und materiale Implikation"
23. Seiler, H. 1976, "Determinations: A Universal Dimension for Inter-Language Comparison (Preliminary Version)"
24. Moshinsky, J. 1976, "Measuring Nominal Descriptivity"
25. Moshinsky, J. und Seiler, H. 1976, "Materials for the DFG International Research Conference on Language Universals" (erscheint voraussichtlich Januar 1977)
26. Walter, H. 1976, "Das Problem der Deskriptivität am Beispiel deutscher Verbalderivation"
27. Seiler, H. 1977, "Two Systems of Cahuilla Kinship Expressions: Labeling and Descriptive" (To appear in the Festschrift for Madison S. Beeber)

Herausgeber: Prof. Dr. Hansjakob Seiler

Adresse : Universalienprojekt
Institut für Sprachwissenschaft
Universität
D - 5000 Köln 41