

Patient demotion constructions in Hausa

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According to Parsons (1960, 1962, 1971/72; also see Newman 1973), Hausa has seven main derivational transitive and intransitive verb classes, which he refers to as "grades", that stand in a hierarchical organization. Indeed, in the system, grades 1, 2, and 3 are basic in the sense that each can contain verbs that do not appear in the other two, although many verbs can appear in two or all three basic grades. Verbs in the other grades (grades 4-7) are all derivable (theoretically at least) from verbs already present in at least one of three basic grades. In addition, transitive grades also signal whether their verb is followed by a noun DO, a pronoun DO, or no DO at all (such as when it is omitted, focus-fronted, relativized, or questioned). This communication deals with three of the four patient demotion processes defined in Janic, Stroński, and Tavakoli (2023). First, there are indications showing that P-demotion with an oblique argument can happen inside the same grade (*juuy-à teebùr* 'turn-gr1 table' / *juuy-à dà teebùr* 'turn-gr1 table away') or through an apparent grade change (*sày-i teebùr* 'buy-gr2 table' / *say-ar dà teebùr* 'sell-gr5 table'). Both cases use the preposition *dà* 'with, and' and are generally associated with an "action away" meaning. Secondly, Hausa also contrasts transitive grade 2 verbs with intransitive grade 3 verbs where the direct object is missing (*Muusaa yaa tsòoràc-i zaakii* 'Musa 3MS.PERF fear-gr2 lion' / *Muusaa yaa tsòorat-à* 'Musa 3MS.PERF afraid-gr3 [of something]'). These (grade-based) derivational alternations can probably be assimilated to P-demotion constructions with a suppressed argument. Finally, many transitive verbs can appear without their direct object but also without changing their grade (*Bintà taa àif-i diyaa biyu* 'Binta 3FS.PERF give.birth-gr2 two children' / *Bintà taa àif-aa* 'Binta 3FS.PERF give.birth-gr2'). These alternations can probably be assimilated to P-demotion constructions with an omitted argument. The communication will explore the semantic and pragmatic implications of the three P-demotion processes. Hausa apparently does not have the typical, mono-word, direct object incorporation.

References

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