

ABSTRACT

This study addressed the question of how to account for lexical categorization in Kikamba. It focused on Kikamba taxonomic conceptual categories of kinship and natural entities. These conceptual categories and the corresponding lexical categories were analyzed using the Prototype theory developed by Rosch in the 1970's. The research focused on the role played by the prototype category in establishing the meaning of lexical items. In addition, it sought to establish whether the meaning of a lexical form is based on a single concept formation or whether it involves multiple concept formation, which entails a cognition process. The study investigated especially at how Kikamba categorizes its lexical items in the conceptual fields of kinship and natural entities. The investigation revealed that:

- The Kamba people's environment influences the way in which the language categorizes its kinship concepts and natural entities.
- The Kamba culture plays a role in the categorization of the Kikamba lexical items in the domains of kinship and natural entities.
- In the categorization of the kinship and natural categories in Kikamba, overt categories, covert categories and lexical gaps exist. More specifically, the data on lexical categorization in kinship and natural entities in Kikamba was analyzed using Rosch's Prototype theory. Through the analysis, it was established that:

- The meaning of a lexical form involves a cognition process in which various concepts are formed for a particular lexical form with one particular concept, the prototypical concept, being reflected in the meaning of the lexical form.
- The categorization of lexical items in Kikamba involves fuzzy boundaries, family resemblance, and central and peripheral category members.
- The various categories are related to one another on the vertical dimension through the semantic relationship of inclusion and on the horizontal dimension through the semantic relationship of contrast. (cf. Rosch 1978:27-48)

Generally, the research has demonstrated that the prototype category plays a pivotal role in establishing the meaning of a lexical form. In defining a particular lexical form, the mind forms various concepts in relation to the particular lexical form, with the prototypical category being used in giving the dictionary meaning of the particular lexical form. (cf. Rosch and Lloyd 1978:76)

The research report is presented in four chapters. Chapter one provides general background information that forms the basis of the research. It also discusses the theoretical framework within which the data was analyzed, and reviews the relevant literature on this area of study. Chapter two deals with lexical categorization on the kinship lexical field in Kikamba, and employs the prototype theory in the analysis of the Kikamba kinship lexical categories. In chapter three, the lexical field of natural entities in Kikamba is investigated and analyzed using the prototype theory. The final chapter, chapter four, gives a summary of the research findings discussed in chapters two and three. This chapter also indicates the extent to which the research findings answer the various research questions stipulated in chapter one.