

## Hyponymy, metonymy, and more: On spatial terms in West African English-lexifier pidgins

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Trends in the field of semantic typology (Levinson et al., 2003; Moore et al., 2015) over the last twenty years have provided creolists new ways to study spatial, perceptual, and emotional terms in pidgin and Creole languages (Essegbey, 2005; Corum, 2015; Ponsonnet, 2020) and their substrate and adstrate sources (Ameka & Essegbey, 2006; Ponsonnet, 2022). Drawing on typological insights and areal findings from those studies that identified specific body part terms in descriptions of spatial relations and expressions of emotions, this presentation discusses the importance of hyponymy, metonymy, and other conceptual phenomena in the selection of spatial terms and descriptions of spatial relations in Nigerian Pidgin, its West African pidgin and Creole kin, and relevant substrate and adstrate languages.

Hyponymy refers to a specific, subordinate sense of a word in relation to its general, superordinate term, as in “*dog* and *animal* and between *daffodil* and *flower*” (Cruse, 2006, pp. 80-81). With respect to words that express spatial relations, *inside* is subordinate to *in*, since *inside* provides more specific information than *in*. In addition to a geometric, or topological, relationship, pragmatic factors are involved in the choice of hyponyms as spatial terms. Levinson et al. (2003) state, “the use of the superordinate [spatial word] implicates that the speaker is not in a position to use the more informative expression (else he or she would be in breach of Grice’s second maxim of Quantity...)” (p. 489); yet, in Nigerian Pidgin, there is a tendency to use subordinate spatial terms over superordinate spatial terms—we discuss why.

Faraclas (1996) refers to hyponymic spatial terms in Nigerian Pidgin as “modifier nouns” or “denominalized prepositions” (p. 243), and he explains that they commonly occur in preposition + associative/possessive constructions. Mann (1993) also mentions a nominal source for terms like *ontop* and *insai* that follow the optional locative relator *for*, as in, *Mai bag dé (fo) insai(d) ka* ‘My bag is in the car’ (p. 62). We examine uses of “modifier nouns” in West African English-lexifier pidgins and their substrate and adstrate languages to stress the importance of hyponymy in tracing the selection of spatial terms in those contact languages.

Nominal sources of spatial terms that convey topological notions like CONTAINMENT and SUPPORT in Nigerian Pidgin can also be explained in terms of metonymic motivation. Cruse (2006) distinguishes a metonymic, i.e., inferential, use of an expression from a literal meaning: “metonymy involves a relation of association” (p. 108). Metonymic reasoning allows speakers to link a concrete object with an abstract spatial or directional relationship; Faraclas explains, “In order to further specify a spatial or directional relationship, the locational object may include an associative/possessive construction in which the modifier noun is a locational noun such as *onda* ‘under’ or a body part such as *bak* ‘back’.... Locational nouns often form compounds with such words as *ples* ‘place’ or *sayd* ‘side’” (1996, p. 149). In fact, the *sayd* construction is common in the specification of topological spatial relations in Nigerian Pidgin. It is used to indicate proximate relationships: *A de farmsâyd*, ‘I am near the farm’; interior locations: *A de (fôr) insâyd haws*, ‘I am in the house’; exterior locations: *A de (fôr) awtsâyd haws*, ‘I am outside the house’; posterior locations: *A de (fôr) baksâyd haws*, ‘I am behind the house’; and superior contact locations: *A de (fôr) opsâyd haws*, ‘I am above/on top of the house’ (Faraclas, 1996, pp. 152-155). Nigerian Pidgin speakers can also combine locational nouns *down*, ‘down, under,’ and *onda*, ‘below, under,’ with *sayd* to refer to inferior contact locations. The *sayd* construction is also found in complex compound forms, for example, *A de (fôr) môto-pak-sayd haws*, ‘I am near the terminal’ (Faraclas, 1996, p. 247).

In discussing the expression of spatial relations in Nigerian Pidgin, I hope to show that the presence of words and structures that creolists have traced back to one substrate language are traceable to other languages as well, and, moreover, such words and structures can also be traced to the influence of embodied universal tendencies, like hyponymy and metonymy.

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