Pluractionality in Hausa
Pluractionality in Hausa

PROEFSCHRIFT

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Acknowledgements

I consider myself generally very lucky. The fact that I ended up doing my PhD in Leiden is just another confirmation of that. Being a PhD student at LUCL means, among other things, having the luxury of being surrounded by excellent linguists who are nice people at the same time. If, in addition, you become part of a research project that is both very interesting and has members who are a pleasure to spend time with – work- or otherwise – what else can you wish for? Thus, the first thank you goes to my supervisor Jenny Doetjes for creating the Degree project and accepting Camelia Constantinescu and me as her PhD students. A lot of things have happened as a consequence of that, not just the eventual emergence of this dissertation.

The topic of my dissertation turned out to be only partly related to gradability but that didn’t make my involvement in the project any less fun. Working with Jenny and Camelia was always very enjoyable and it led, among other things, to discoveries like ‘a Czech can be a brain twin of a Romanian’. Whether reading a paper together, preparing a joint talk or organizing a workshop, it always seemed easy to work as a team.

From the beginning, it was also very clear how lucky I was to have Jenny as my supervisor. In every stage of the process I got all the advice, support and freedom that I needed. Things couldn’t have been smoother for me in this respect. In the final stages of my writing, my promotor Johan Rooryck was an immense help. Without Johan’s critical reading, this dissertation would have been much less readable. Thank you, Jenny and Johan! In addition, I would like to thank Willem Adelaar for reading part of an earlier version of the manuscript and giving me invaluable comments and suggestions.¹

It goes without saying that many other people had an influence on me and my linguistic thinking and thus directly or indirectly contributed to the shape this dissertation has taken. Making the partly arbitrary decision of putting the beginning point of my interest in linguistics in my university years in Prague, I would like to thank two of my Prague teachers specifically: Jarmila Paneová and Oldřich Uličný. Jarmila Paneová inspired some of the first passionate linguistic discussions I engaged in – with Jakub Dotlačil, until late at night in our student dorm in Prague. Oldřich Uličný deserves credit for informing me (and Jakub, again) about the possibility of studying general linguistics in Norway and thus effectively sending me on a path that eventually took me to Leiden. Thank you both so much!

Moving to Tromsø changed my life. I learned a lot in the two years I spent there. I would like to thank my Tromsø teachers for that, especially Gillian Ramchand, Peter Svenonius, Øystein Nilsen and Tarald Taraldsen.

¹ My thanks go also to Malami Buba for checking the tones and vowel length in my Hausa examples and Stanly Oomen and Jenny Doetjes for providing the Dutch translation of the summary.
After coming to the Netherlands, the number of people who had an impact on me as a linguist suddenly became too large for me to even try to come up with a reasonably complete list. It is a great thing about the Netherlands that the individual institutes are not very far from each other and thus it is not a problem to attend linguistic events at other institutes than one’s own and meet linguists from other Dutch universities as well as from abroad. I’m giving up on mentioning concrete names now for the fear that I forget someone. However, apart from all LUCL members, who created such a friendly and stimulating environment, I would like to thank especially the Utrecht linguists, since the Leiden – Utrecht connection was an especially important one to me.

For the development of the ideas put forward in this thesis, certain events and people outside the Netherlands were also important. First, I would like to mention the Nominal and Verbal Plurality workshops that took place in Paris in the years 2007-2009. I would like to thank the organizers (Patricia Cabredo Hofherr and Brenda Laca), as well as the speakers and the audience. Many of the talks presented there contributed substantially to my understanding of plur(action)ality. Second, I would like to thank Katharina Hartmann for inviting me to give a talk at ZAS in June 2009. It not only helped me formulate some of the ideas presented in this dissertation but it was also nice to get in touch with other formal linguists working on Chadic languages (apart from Katharina Hartmann and Malte Zimmerman also Andreas Haida and Mira Grubic), and to work with their informant (who later turned out to be a great companion in Nigeria).

A big portion of the time and energy devoted to this dissertation went into collecting the data. When I started my PhD, I knew nothing about Hausa. It was thus a long journey to the stage when I thought I’d finally understood what is going on with Hausa pluractionals and there were many people involved in the process. I would like to thank them here.

Within LUCL, my thanks go to Maarten Kossman who first introduced me to Hausa in his Hausa structure course and provided me with study material and Stanly Oomen who did his best to make my Hausa tolerable (unfortunately largely unsuccessfully) by texting me in the language and providing me with Hausa books and links to various Hausa websites. I would also like to thank all LUCL members who helped me find native speakers of Hausa in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe.

Outside LUCL, there are many people to thank for helping me in Hausa-related matters: those who helped me understand the Hausa grammar, learn aspects of the Hausa culture, find native speakers and those who shared their judgments on pluractional verbs with me. Everyone’s help is truly appreciated.

My most important guide into all matters Hausa was undoubtedly Malami Buba. He came as a guest lecturer to Leiden in June 2007 and managed to teach me some Hausa despite the fact that I was often falling asleep right in front of his eyes in my after-lunch dip. Malami wasn’t only my Hausa teacher, however. He also provided me with the first set of pluractional data and his comments helped me greatly to get a feel for the data. In
August and September 2009 he also took care of me during my field-trip to Sokoto, Nigeria. His ‘all-in-one’ package deal including accommodation, food, transportation and arranging sessions with informants, among other things, made everything much easier for me. He was also my guide into the Hausa culture and made it possible for me to have a fuller contact with the locals. My thanks also go to Malami’s wife Norma, his Sokoto-based family and friends, who welcomed me warmly in their homes.

In Sokoto, there was one more person who contributed greatly to my enjoyment of my stay there: Mu’awiya Jibir, a.k.a. MJ. Having met a few months earlier in Berlin, it was a pleasure to meet again. Without all the thick sweaters this time (June 2009 was quite cold in Berlin), Mu’awiya took me around, introduced me to his friends and made sure I saw what there was to see and ate what I didn’t get a chance to eat elsewhere, despite the fact that he himself, like everyone else, was fasting. I miss you, Mu’awiya!

Clearly, this dissertation could not have been written without me having access to the relevant data, that is, without the help of my informants. Apart from the native speakers of Hausa that I interviewed in Sokoto, I would like to thank those that I met and had a chance to talk to all around Europe. Whether based in Nigeria, the Netherlands, Great Britain, the Czech republic or Germany, all the Hausa speakers I had a chance to work with were very friendly, helpful and willing to consider all the strange scenarios I asked them to imagine, even though it was often hard for them to conceal their amusement at the kinds of things some linguists want to know. My thanks go naturally also to all those people who helped me find native speakers of Hausa in Europe, which was an unexpectedly difficult job. Thank you all!

One of the most important things that I have gained by becoming a PhD student in Leiden is all the amazing people I met during those years as a consequence of that. Some of the people have already been mentioned above. It was especially my Leiden friends who made my stay in Leiden so much fun. Camelia Constantinescu, Mélanie Jouitteau, Juliette Huber, Stanly Oomen, Rebecca Voll and Allison Kirk (in the order they appeared in my life) represent the ‘core’ of my Leiden family. The family started out as a triangle, with Camelia and Mélanie being its Romance angles, and even though Mélanie, unfortunately for us, left after the first year, it was gradually getting bigger. Rebecca deserves most credit for that as she not only made Josh Wilbur come to Leiden but the two of them even made a new member from scratch. Mélanie, on the other hand, probably deserves most credit for creating links leading outside the Netherlands. It is through her that I met people like Anamaria Fălăuş and Milan Rezac, which is something I’m very thankful to her for – apart from her letting me meet herself, naturally! Back in Leiden, there were others: Sandra Barasa, joining us on special occasions, Jessie Nixon, who moved to Leiden at a later point, and other colleagues-friends. Whether it was painting Camelia’s apartment, canoeing in Czechia, getting lost in the dunes of Texel, playing ‘extreme’ croquet or just having dinners together, all these occasions contributed greatly to making the Leiden years unforgettable for me. Thank you all! I would also like to thank the few non-linguists that I met while I was in Leiden
– on trains, at Turkish dinners, at yoga... You’re not likely to read these lines but in case you do, I hope you know I’m talking about you!

Camelia has been mentioned several times already but I would like to do it one more time. One of the lucky consequences of my coming to Leiden is that I met a friend of a kind that one can probably find only once in a lifetime. Thank you for coming into my life and everything that has followed from that!

Apart from the ‘new’ people in my life, I would like to thank all my old friends who stayed in touch with me throughout my Leiden years. I might not have been able to see especially my Czech friends as often as I would have wanted to but the mere fact that they were (and are) still there made a huge difference to me.

Naturally, I wouldn’t be writing these lines without my parents being there in the first place. I would like to thank them for so much more than just creating me, though. I have always had their love and full support in everything I did. I wish my father could see that even though I never changed my mind and started studying something more useful (like law or economics), I’m doing fine. My mother has never worried about that and now she’s probably even stopped worrying about where my crazy journey across the planet will take me next. Thank you both for the freedom you always gave me and the confidence you’ve always had in me! I would also like to thank my sisters and the rest of my family! One of the best things about having a family is that even though no one might really know what exactly it is that you do for a living, they love you anyway.

Finally, I would like to thank Shoshi, for storming into my life and turning it upside down. I’m so glad Bubák threw you my way!
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Quileute  
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Tangalle  
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Creoles and Pidgins  
Mixe-Zoque, Mixe-Zoque
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