# Emotions and abstract attributes of the person in Dalabon

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## 1   Intro

Personal intro.

I'm interested in linguistic descriptions of internal or "private" states, psychic states, and **invisible aspects of the person** in general. These include cognitive states, emotional states, sensations…

Today I'll question the etymology of a Dalabon noun which refers to an abstract aspect of the person, *koh-no*, "gaze", "sight", "look", better transalated by the French "regard". In the first part of the talk, I'll discuss the meaning of *koh-no* in synchrony, and then its etymology. *Koh-no* means "gaze", "regard", but etymologically it refers to a part of the side of the face. In the second part, I will question what triggered this semantic shift – what contexts, what linguistic factors. I will suggest a scenario, involving cultural scripts related to shame, where it seems reasonable to imagine how a lexeme meaning "side of the face" could have gained the sense "gaze", "regard". I'll be interested to know if you find this scenario convincing, and/or what further evidence could bring stornger support.

## 2   Descriptions of emotions in Dalabon

### 2.1   Dalabon

Gunwinyguan non-Pama-Nyungan

Dalabon has the particularity of being highly polysynthetic, like BGW, and entirely agglutinative (even more than BGW). Dalabon is like a lego game. This is important, because speakers exploit this compositionality: they are very prone to form new compounds via analogy, and to reanalyse the components of compounds, and this seems to be an important source of semantic shift.

(1MT)  *Bala-h-yaworno-ni-nj*        *bala-h-karra-dorrung-rokrok-ni-nj.*
        3pl-R-little.one-sit/be-PI    3pl-R-all-body-appearance-sit-PI

        When they were little, they all looked similar.

### 2.2   Emotions and abstract attributes of the person in Dalabon

How about linguistic descriptions of internal states? The most common way to describe internal states in Dalabon is by means of predicates. Like in many other Dalabon languages (see Turpin (2002), Gaby (2008)), a large number of these predicates are compounds, where one of the component is a body part, either a visible body-part or an internal organ:

(MT2)  *Barra-h-du-rru-ninj*      *mak*    *barra-lng-marnu-**kangu-yerrk-m-inj**.*
        3du-R-growl-RR-PI         NEG      3du-SEQ-BEN-belly-release-VBLZR-PP

        They kept arguing, they wouldn't **forgive** each others.

There are also a large number of predicates where the first component is not a body-part, but an abstract attribute of the person.

(MT3)         *Nga-h-**men-bon-inj**     kardu    ka-h-don-iyan    muna-no,*
                         1sg-R-ideas-go-PI maybe   3sg-R-die-FUT night-FILL

                        *kardu    ka-h-don-iyan    dohkardu       derrh-no.*
                        maybe   3sg-R-die-FUT or.maybe    tomorrow

                        I **had dreadful thoughts**, that he would die, that he might die overnight or maybe tomorrow.

And *men-no* can be a noun:
*men-no* [mɛnːɔ] "consciousness", "one's judgements"
(Ponsonnet 2009)

(MT4)         *Ngale            kardu    ka-h-dja-duway-ngan-kih,*
                        INTERJ  maybe   3sg-R-just-duway-1sg.POSS-proper

                        *nga-h-marnu-yolh-yerrk-mu          ka-h-yin **men-no**.*
                        1sg>3-R-BEN-feelings-release-VBLZR 3sg-R-say:PR    ideas-3sg.POSS

                        Well, after all, he's my own husband, I'll forgive him, she thinks for herself.

The Dalabon *-no* is pervasive in Dalabon and has a number of different functions. I can answer questions about it after the talk. In this case, *-no* is the 3sg possessive suffix, and it is obligatory on these nouns because they belong to the morphosyntactic nominal subclass of attributes of the person. I can also answer questions about nominal subclasses after the tall (Ponsonnet in prep.).

Likewise, there is also
*yolh-no* [yɔlʔnɔ] "feelings", "enthusiasm"
(Ponsonnet 2010)

And koh-no, which I am going to focus on today:
*koh-no* [gɔʔnɔ] "gaze"; "sight", "look", "regard"

There are a couple more, but not very many – a total of 6 maybe. I am interested to find out how, in a language that describes emotions using mainly predication, these nouns came to lexicalise an abstract aspect of the person.

## 3   *Koh-no* "gaze", "sight", "look", "regard"

We will first take a look at the data available in synchrony. Then I will question etymology, clues being provided by cognates in neighbouring languages.

### 3.1  Synchrony

### 3.1.1  Speakers definitions of *koh-no*

Speakers do not make extensive spontaneous use of *koh-no* as a noun, but they do acknowledge it and define it when prompted (in contrast with other recurring morphemes, which get rejected). Speakers gave consistent definitions of *koh-no*.

Some speakers' do indicate that *koh-no* means "eyes". Yet, *koh-no* was never assined a location on body drawings during pointing tasks (although I sometimes asked). The two most fluent speakers spontaneously gave definitions emphasizing the function sense.

(MT5)  *[Koh-no],*  *mumu-no-yih*  *kanh*  *ka-h-kurnh-na-n.*
                    eyes-3sg.POSS-INST   DEM    3sg>1-R-place-see-PR

       *Koh-no,* she looks around with her eyes.

(LB6)  *Koh-dorrungh*  *min*   *wan*   *dei*   *luk.*
       KOH- COM        mean   when   they   see/look

       *Koh-dorrungh* means when they see.

However, KOH is more commonly used in compounds. As mentioned before, Dalabon speakers display a striking tendency to reanalyse the components of their lexicalised compounds. As a result, it makes sense to look at compounds to see how *koh-no* may have been reinterpreted, and whether it match speakers utterances/metalinguistic comments on *koh-no*.

### 3.1.2  KOH compounds

Your handout presents a full list of the KOH compounds that have been documented so far, with examples. Many of these compounds denote perception events, others cognitive events, others emotional events. I won't have the time to go through them all, but I'll give a couple of examples of each.

Perception
***koh-yi-kurnh-nan***, v.t.
KOH-?INST?-country-see
PERCEPTION
[DD] Look around for something, scan for something.

(DD7)  *Bala-h-kalngH-m-inj*   *bad-dulum-no*   *bula-h-**koh-yi-kurnh-nan-inj**.*
       3pl-R-climb-VBLZR-PP    stone-hill-FILL   3pl>3-R-KOH-?INST?-country-see-PP

       They climbed up the hill and **looked down [at the country around]**.

Here KOH could be interpreted as "eyes".

***koh-dabka***, v.t.
KOH-block
PERCEPTION
Prevent someone from seeing something by standing as a material obstacle blocking sight.

(MT8)  *Dja-h-wayh-mu,*                *nga-h-bim-n-iyan delebidjin,*
       2sg-R-?move.out?-VBLZR:PR       1sg>3-R-picture-PR-FUT

       *ka-h-**koh-dab-ka**.*              *Nukah, dja-h-durduh-mu.*
       2sg>1sg-R-KOH-block-CSTVZR:PR   DEM    2sg-R-move-VBLZR:PR

       Move out, I'm watching television, you're standing in front f it **preventing me from seeing**. There, you move!

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Here the interpretation as "eyes" is less straight forward, because "cover eyes" would mean something else.

Emotion
***koh-wurrhmu***, v.i.
KOH-surprised
PERCEPTION/EMOTION
Be surprised by something one sees.

(MT9) *Da-h-na-n*          *kardu*    *keninjh*   *kardu ka-h-rurduk-mu,*
       2sg>3-R-see-PR      maybe   whatsit           maybe   3sg-R-?move?-VBLZR:PR

       *kardu marlaworr-no kardu*           *keninjh, kardu*    *yarraman.*
       maybe leaves-FILLmaybe        whatsit        maybe   horse

       *Dja-h-**koh-wurrh-ka-rru-n,** kanh.*
       2sg-R-KOH-fright-CSTVZR-RR-Pr DEM

       You see something moving, maybe what, leaves or maybe whatever, a horse. You **frighten yourself** from the sight of it.

Cognition
***koh-dih***, adj.
KOH-PRIV
COGNITION
Uninformed about a given matter, entirely ignorant about it.
Said of young uninitiated men who haven't seen ceremonies yet.

(JW10)           *Ngey,*    *nga-h-**koh-dih-ninj**, kardu wurdurd-kun*

1sg      1sg-R-KOH-PRIV-PI maybe children-GEN

*bula-h-marnu-yenjdju-nginj*      *ngey*    *nunh*    *nga-h-warhwan-inj.*
3pl>3-R-BEN-talk-PI          1sg    DEM    1sg>3-R-ignore-PI

I didn't know, I had no idea, the kids told me, I **didn't know** about it.[1]

Here it could hardly be "eyes", it has to be "sight". And indeed, this matches speakers' metalinguistic comments when questioned on *koh-no*.

## 3.2  Etymology

Where does this abstract attribute of the person comes from?
Several of Dalabon's immediate neighbours have a similar morphemes:
In BGW (Garde (2010) and pers. com.)[2]
In Rembarrnga (Saulwick 2003)[3]
In Ngalakan (Merlan and Baker 1996 (1983))[4]
In Warray (Harvey n.d.)

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[1] It is interesting to note that we have a very clear example of "sight to knowledge extension". This is not unique to Dalabon, as we also find *goyi* in NGKL [goyi], and *–yih* [yiʔ] is the ergative/instrumental suffix), as well as Warray *gok* [gok] "don't know" (<mark>xxxxx</mark> ask Mark). This is an example of semantic shift from sight to knowledge – a type of shift that Evans and Wilkins Nicholas Evans and David Wilkins, 'In the Mind's Ear: The Semantic Extensions of Perception Verbs in Australian Languages', *Language,* 76/3 (2000), 546-92.p. 562 " 'See' only rarely extends into the cognitive domain (usually via 'recognizing visually', thence sometimes to 'know', (esp. by sight)') and more commonly denotes interpersonal emotion and communication such as 'meet with', 'look upon with desire', 'choose' and so on." Of course, this example does not invalidate their claim. However, this example is worth noting, because the notion of knowledge lexicalised by KOH "gaze" compounds is an important one (see Rembarrnga *Banga-guwah-rdabgara.* "I close their eyes", With an anthropological note: "We say this when they're ready to grab young men ready to be initiated." This is the bridging context explaning the two senses attested for *koh-dabka* in Dalabon. It would be interesting to know if new initiands were taken to the ground with a blindfold. This brindging context explains the compounds *koh-ngarrkmu* "get jealous over wrongdoing in ceremony". So indeed, we are dealing with social knowledge here, i.e. secret knowledge displayed in rituals. this example is worth noting, because the notion of knowledge lexicalised by KOH "gaze" compounds is an important one[1]. As you may find if you have the time to take a closer look at you hand-out, KOH compounds lexicalize a number of senses having to do with rituals and the knowledge displaid in ritual. As demonstrated by Keen Ian Keen, *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion* (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1994)., this is a socially crucial aspect of knowledge. This is an interesting topic, but one for another paper, and I will not be able to deal with it now.

[2] *kohbanj* [goʔbaɲ] n. (*na-* masc., *ngal-* fem.) "old person"
*kokbabi* [gokbabi] n. "person or animal which stares hard at OBJ or watches continuously"

[3] *guwah* [guwaʔ] inc. n. "eyes"
Vowel split with a glide in the middle is a pervasive sound change in Rembarrnga Mark Harvey, 'An Initial Reconstruction of Proto-Gunwinyguan Phonology', in Nicholas Evans (ed.), *The Non-Pama-Nyungan Languages of Northern Australia: Comparative Studies of the Continent's Most Linguistically Complex Region* (552; Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, 2004)..
*guwah-yiwarnh* [guwaʔyiwaɲʔ] vt. "look at something"
*guwah-bœtti* [guwaʔbəd:i] vi. "be busy looking at something"
And in an example:
*Banga-guwah-rdabgara.* "I close their eyes"
With an anthropological note: "We say this when they're ready to grab young men ready to be initiated."

[4] *goberh-* [gobeɹʔ] v. "to look back"
*goyi* [goyi] adj. "to be knowledgeable, expert, know"
*-yih* [yiʔ] "ergative, instrumental with all NP types." (like in Dalabon)

<u>In Jawoyn</u> (Merlan and Jacq 2005)
I haven't found comparable compounds in Jawoyn, but there is the noun
*kok* [gok] n. "side of face"
(also in Warray,
Lenition from [k] to [ʔ] morpheme finally is unsurprising lenition and is found in other
Gunwinyguan cognate sets.[1](eg. from (Harvey 2004))
In addition, the presence of the velar in BGW *kokbabi* "persons who stares at OBJ" leaves little
doubt that Jawoyn *kok* "side of face" and Dalabon *koh-no* are cognates.

In Dalabon we find *koh-kiyarrk-no* ([gok:iyarkno], or [gok:iyɛrkno][2]), a rare but well identified
noun meaning "teeth", or "jaw" for some speakers.

In Ngalakan, we find *giyarrk* [giyark] "tooth".

Hence we have the following picture:
Jawoyn:              [gok]    "side of face"
Dalabon              [goʔkyiark] "teeth" or "jaw"
Ngalakan             [giyark]          "tooth".

With this configuration, we may conclude on reasonably safe grounds that the etymon of
Jawoyn *kok*, Dalabon *koh-no* etc. formerly denoted a body part on the side of the face, maybe
the jaw.

Now, how do we get from the sense "side of the face" to the sense "gaze", "sight", "look",
"regard"? It is not a predictable semantic extension. What triggers this abstraction, and what is
it based on? I argue that the study of Dalabon emotion vocabulary can shed light on this
question.


## 4   *Koh-no* and shame

Interestingly, *koh-yermu*, KOH + "shame", has a twin compound, *medmo-yermu* where *medmo-no* means "side of the face" synchronically. The study of these two compounds suggests a
plausible bridging context for the lexicalisation of the sense "gaze", "regard" of *koh-no*.

### 4.1   *Koh-yermu*, *koh-yedjmu*, "ashamed with respect to sight"

Let's get back to *koh-yermu* and *koh-yedjmun*, two KOH compounds associated with shame.
Gathering good data on emotions is difficult; gathering data on shame is the most difficult task
of all. As a result, I do not have very good data on *koh-yermu* and *koh-yedjmu*, and their exact
senses are not entirely clear. But I do have enough to carry out my demonstration.

*Yermu* means "be ashamed", "be embarrassed", "shy off". The verb can be used to describe a
child shying away from an adult.

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[1] Tree snake: Dal: *karnpowq*, BGW *karnpowk*, Warray *karnpuk*.
White corrella: D, Ja, Warray: *ngalelek*; BGW: *ngaleleq*)
[2] Note that in Dalabon there is no audible difference between glottal stop + other stop clusters on the one hand, and
long stops on the other hand, so that *koh-kyerrk-no* and *kok-kyerrk-no* share the same phonetic realisation.

(MT11)  *Dja-h-marnu-**yer-mu***
        3sg>2sg-R-BEN-ashamed-VBLZR:PR

        *mak*     *dja-w-iyan*         *kanh*    *wurdurd-wurd.*
        NEG     3sg>2sg-follow-FUT    DEM    child-DIM

        You make him **feel shy**, he won't come near you.

While this emotion is often examplified by children's behaviour, *yermu* means "being scared of others" more generally. This emotion exerts a constant pressure upon adults in daily life. It is well known that shame and embarrassment operate as strong social regulators among Aboriginal groups of Northern Australia (see Myers (1986), Harkins (1990)).

*Koh-yermu* was sometimes used as equivalent to *yermu*, but based on the available examples, it seems that it specifies a context where one is "ashamed of being exposed to the sight of a large number of people".

(MT**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**)*Ka-h-bobo-n*     *kahnun*   *ka-ye-balarnh-bobo-n*     *ka-h-malk-na-n*

        3sg-R-go:REDUP-PR      DEM    3sg-SUB-nearly-go:REDUP-PR  3sg>3-R-country-see-PR

        *ka-h-na-n*         *nunh bula-h-naHna-n*      *kinikun-be*
        3sg>3-R-see-PR    DEM 3pl>3-R-see:REDUP-PR  different-ABL

        *nunh ka-h-dja-**koh-yer-mu**.*
        DEM 3sg-R-just-KOH- ashamed-VBLZR:PR

        He's walking, when he's about to walk around, he looks around, and he sees that they're **looking at him** ?from all around?, **he koh-shames away then**.

Shame is connected to social appropriateness, and in this social context, appropriate relationships are defined largely by the rules of kinship. Some kin categories, like brothers and sisters for instance, are taboo to one another. *Yedjmun* means something like "get ticklish"[1], but also "feel embarrassed because of the proximity of a kin in a taboo relative".

(LB12)     *Ngah-**yedjmun***     *mak*    *nga-marnu-bo-niyan*    *redj-no-kah.*
           1sg?>3?-embarrassed:PR NEG    1sg>3-BEN-go-FUT    side-3sg.POSS-LOC

           I'm **embarrassed in his presence because he is in a taboo category**, I won't go near him.

*Koh-yedjmun* was sometimes used as an equivalent of *yedjmun*, in the sense examplified by (33). Some examples indicate that like *koh-yermu*, *koh-yedjmu* has to do with seeing and being seen.

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[1] Or possibly "get tickled". The sense of this predicate is to be clarified, and so is its grammatical status. Morphologically it looks like an adjective *yedj* followed by an inchoative verbalizer *-mun*, but I could never obtain confirmation or specification with respect to *yedj*.

(MT**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**)    *Laik    mak    bulu    ka-n-iyan    o    mak ngorr*
      *ka-n-iyan*
                          like    NEG    3pl    3sg>3-see-FUT or    NEG 12pl        3sg>1-see-FUT

                          *ngorr    ka-h-marnu-medmo-yer-mu*
                          12pl    3sg>1-R-BEN-temple-ashamed-VBLZR:PR

                          *o  ngorr ka-h-marnu-**koh-yedjmun**.*
                          or 12pl 3sg-R-BEN-KOH-embarrased:PR

                          He won't look at them, or he won't look at us, he's "temple"-ashamed, or he's **embarrassed ?by the sight of us?.**

At this point, I do not have enough contextualised examples to safely assess the exact sense of *koh-yermu* and *koh-yedjmun*.[1] But in anycase, what is relevant here is that the speaker compared *koh-yedjmun* "KOH" + "embarrassed" with *medmo-yermu* "MEDMO" + "ashamed", where *medmo-no* actually means, synchronically, "bones of the temple", "back of the side of the face" – which takes us back to the etymology of *koh-no*, "side of the face", possibly "jaw". The study of the emotional compounds including MEDMO indicates a plausible scenario as to how *koh-no* came to acquire its abstract sense "gaze", "regard".

## 4.2  *Medmo-yermu* "ashamed with respect to sight"

### 4.2.1  *Medmo-yermu*

The narrow denotation of *medmo-no*, the bone that we have near the temple, probably corresponds to its etymology, since *mo-no* means "bone". The broader denotation of *medmo-no* is the back of the side of the face, from the said bone down to the back of the jaw. Note that used in isolation, *medmo-no* does not denote the cheek.

As mentioned above, *medmo-yermu* also means "be ashamed", and again the examples suggest that the emotion at stake has to do with sight. Compare the following examples:

20110613_003_LB [ContEl]
(LB13)    *Nga-h-medmo-yer-mu,*            *bulu-medmo-nahna-n.*
          1sg-R-temple-ashamed-VBLZR:PR    3pl>1:APPR-temple-see:REDUP-PR

          I'm ashamed, I fear that they might see me and make me feel ashamed.

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[1] The speaker's definitions may as well be reconstructions based on her analysis of the compound as "gaze" + "ashamed" and "gaze" + "embarrassed". This reconstruction may indeed have become a full sense of the word, or not.

(MT14) *Nunh*   *wurdurd*         *mak*
DEM      child            NEG

*dja-marnu-yenjdju-ngiyan*       *delebon-walung*       *dja-h-marnu-yer-mu*
3sg>2sg-BEN-talk-FUT            telephone-ABL      3sg>2sg-R-BEN-ashamed-VBLZR:PR

MP        *Kardu*   *ka-h-marnu-medmo-yer-mu?*
maybe 3sg>1-R-BEN-temple-ashamed-VBLZR:PR

MT        *Mhmh oni   munu kanh ka-h-dja-yer-mu.*        *Ka-h-dalu-yer-mu.*
NEG      only  only   DEM 3sg-R-just- ashamed-VBLZR:PR      3sg-R-mouth-ashamed-VBLZR:PR

        MT     This child won't speak to you over the phone, you make her feel shy.
        MP     Can we say she is "temple-shy" of me?
        MT     Mhmh, only just, she is shy. She is mouth-shy.

## 4.2.2   Shame scenarios and scripts connecting gaze and side of the face

The connection between *medmo-no*, "side of the face" the emotion of shame becomes clear when we consider descriptions of the a posture with universal connotations:

(MT15)        *Dja-h-medmo-dab-ka-rru-ninj.*
2sg-R-temple-block-CSTVZR-RR-PI



You were covering the side of your face.

Note that it is not the *medmo-no* that is hidden on the picture – in fact, the speaker specified that my *medmo* was visible. The *medmo* is rather where the hand is located. Hence the compound is already somewhat lexicalised to refer to this typical posture. On the other hand, *medmo-dabkarrun* does not lexicalise a specifically emotional sense: the speaker's responses in this session showed that this posture can be interpreted with reference to shame or to other situations.

Nevertheless, the posture encapsulates an association between shame, gaze and the side of the face. This association is exploited in further MEDMO compounds probably produced by analogy, where the reference to shame scenarios is lexicalised. In (34) we found *medmo-nan* "side.of.face" + "see" "make someone feel ashamed by looking at them"; here we have *medmo-dabka* "side.of.face" + "cover", "protect someone from shame by preventing other people to see her.

(LB16)        *Kardu*   *dja-h-worhdi,*         *darnki-duninj*       *redj-no-kah,*
maybe   2sg-R-stand:PR    close-INTSFR         side-3sg.POSS-LOC

*mak bulu*      *ka-n-iyan,*           *kahke*  *buka-h-redj-dab-ka,*
NEG 3pl     3sg>3-see-FUT      nothing 3sg>3sg.h-R-side-cover/close-CSTVR:PR

*buka-h-medmo-dab-ka.*
3sg>3sg.h-R-temple-cover/close-CSTVR:PR

You might stand really close, by her side, so that she won't see them, you hide her by standing by her side.

The speaker set (37) in a context where people watch each others from a distance. It is easy to imagine that in the context of pre-colonial open camps, one was constantly exposed to sight. In emotionally difficult times, hidding behind a close relative would have been one of the safest options.

### 4.2.3 Bridging contexts and constructions

We have a small series of compounds which include MEDMO and relate to shame:

**medmo-dabkarrun**
side.of.face+cover
hide one's temple as one does when trying to escape other people's look ("le regard des autres" in French)

**medmo-dabka**
side.of.face+block
protect someone from shame by hiding her

**medmo-nan**
side.of.face+see
make someone feel ashamed by looking at her

**medmo-yermu**
side.of.face+shame
be ashamed with respect to sight

Two of these compounds have KOH parallels:

**medmo-yermu**
side.of.face+shame
be ashamed with respect to sight
**koh-yermu**
regard (formerly side of face)+shame
be ashamed ?with respect to sight?

**medmo-dabka**
side.of.face+block
protect someone from being seen and feeling ashamed
**koh-dabka**
regard (formerly side of face)+block
prevent someone from seeing by means of physical interference

The second parallel, with dabka, MEDMO/KOH + "cover"/"block", becomes particularly suggestive if we take a look at the possible constructions and senses in which the verb *dabka* occurs.

*Dabka*, a transitive verb, modulates several senses based on the specific nature of the arguments. The ordering is arbitrary here, and we need not be concerned with the first two sense.

## 1. **shut down**
1st argument is an animate agent, usually intelligent.
2nd argument is a system.
We are not concerned with this one.

(MK17)        *Da-h-dab-ka!*
              2sg>3-R-block-CSTVR:PR

              Switch if off! [the recorder when interrupted by a visit]

## 2. **shut, lock**
1st argument is an animate agent, usually intelligent.
2nd argument is an entity defining a space.
We are not concerned with this one.

(DD18)        *Da-h-dun-dab-ka !*
              2sg>3-R-hole-block-CSTVR:PR

              Shut the door! (Litt: Shut the room!)

## 3. **block**
1st argument is a material entity (often liquid).
2nd argument is a path – a river, a road.

(MT19)  *Ka-h-dja-yaka*          *nunh*    *wah-boyenjboyenj*     *ka-h-bo-n*      *balkkah,*
        3sg-R-just-rain:PR       DEM       water-big:REDUP   3sg-R-go-PR      floodwaters

        *kah-djorlhdabka  rud-no*            *nunh*    *ka-h-dabka.*
        3sg>3-R-?alter?:PR          road-FILL          DEM      3sg>3-R-block-CSTVR:PR

        When it rains, huge amounts of floodwaters flows, it alters the road, it cuts it off.

## 4. **cover – often protect**
1st argument is an animate agent, usually intelligent.
2nd argument is any entity that is not a path and does not define a space.

(MK20)  *Bala-h-kod-marnbu-n*      *bala-h-dab-ka-ng*       *kanh kirdikird.*
        3pl-R-paper-make-PR        3pl-R-block-CSTVR-PP          DEM woman

        They make a sheet of paperbark and covered the woman with it.

(MT21)  *Djorrkkon*        *kanh*    *bale-dabka-rru-n.*
        pubic.cover        DEM      3pl:SUB-block-CSTVR-RR-PR

        They cover themselves with a *djorrkkon*, a pubic cover.

Compounds with a structure "side of face" + *dabka*, whatever *medmo-dabka* or possibly, formerly, *koh/k-dabka,* fit very well into frame 4: "cover (one's own) side of face".

11

(MT22)  *Dja-h-wayh-mu,*                     *nga-h-bim-n-iyan delebidjin,*
        2sg-R-?move.out?-VBLZR:PR            1sg>3-R-picture-PR-FUT

        *ka-h-**koh-dab-ka**.*                      *Nukah, dja-h-durduh-mu.*
        2sg>1sg-R-KOH-block-CSTVR:PR         DEM   2sg-R-move-VBLZR:PR

        Move out, I'm watching television, you're standing in front f it **preventing me from seeing**. There, you move!

In the literal sense, *medmo-dabka* inherits a "literal" sense from *medmo-dabkarrun*, where it must be interpreted under construction 4.

But in its behavioural/emotional sense, "protect other before from the shame induced by other people's sight", we can see how speakers would be willing to reanalyse the compound as they do, and how this would fit quite naturally into frame 3 above. The "gaze" is easily construed as a metaphorical path metaphorically, and whatever blocks it is the subject argument, the obstruing entity. As a result, the "side of face" term can be realanised as "gaze".

Hence we have:
- A series of compounds caracterised formally by MEDMO, but semantically associated with the notion of "sight", "gaze": *medmo-yermu* is an hyponym of *yermu* meaning "*yermu* with respect to sight".

- For *medmo-dabka*, a practical bridging context, a scenario – the one presented in (37), where the action of *medmo-yermu* "protecting one from sight" coincides with the action of "preventing one from seeing" (the sense of *koh-dabka*).

(LB23)          *Kardu   dja-h-worhdi,*              *darnki-duninj*           *redj-no-kah,*
                maybe   2sg-R-stand:PR              close-INTSFR             side-3sg.POSS-LOC

                *mak bulu        ka-n-iyan,*                 *kahke   buka-h-redj-dab-ka,*
                NEG 3pl          3sg>3-see-FUT               nothing 3sg>3sg.h-R-side-cover/close-CSTVR:PR

                *buka-h-medmo-dab-ka.*
                3sg>3sg.h-R-temple-cover/close-CSTVR:PR

                You might stand really close, by her side, so that she won't see them, you hide her by standing by her side.

- A linguistic context were the standard rules of the language open up two different interpretations, via two different frames of the predicate *dabka*, facilitating the shift from the sense "protect one from shame" to the sense "prevent from seeing".

Do you find it convincing? What sort of evidence, of data, would make it more convincing?

## 5   Conclusions:

In Dalabon, there is a noun which refers to sight, *regard*, as an abstract attribute of the person. The etymon of this word would have denoted a part of the side of the face.

The semantic shift from "side of the face" to *regard* is not predictable. But it can be explained if we take a look at a couple of Dalabon lexemes which involve the synchronic term for "side of

the face", namely *medmo-no*. These compounds relate to scenarios associated to shame, a very prominent emotion in the Dalabon social context.

- ☐ Factors facilitating the lexicalisation of an "abstract attribute of the person denotation":
  - ◻ Shame scripts where gaze is associated with the side of the face (cultural and universal).
  - ◻ Cultural importance of shame.
  - ◻ Speakers are inclined to form compounds by analogy.
  - ◻ Speakers are inclined to reanalyse the components of their compound lexemes.
  - ◻ Existing lexical polysemies opening up several interpretations for a compound (*dabka* constructions).
  - ◻ Speakers are open to metaphorical representation of "gaze" as a path.

The lexicalisation of this abstract aspect of the person is rooted in the necessity to describe emotionally loaded relationships between people, *le regard* being one of the most important mediation between people, and a central component of shame scenarios (in French, the expression "le regard des autres", "other people's look", immediately brings about connotations of shame and embarrasment).

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