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Alexander Cobbinah (São Paulo)

The culture and language of emotion in Casamance

The talk will address issues surrounding the expression of emotions in Bainouk Gubëeher, a small language of the Atlantic branch of Niger Congo spoken in rural Casamance. The language allows the expression of a varied set of positive and negative emotions using lexical root, body metaphors and to some extent colour terms, all of which is fairly typical for West African languages.

An intriguing question that has emerged from a decade of linguistic field research and lived experience with the community is whether the semantic extensions of some of these items as well as the obvious scarcity of expressions denoting individual emotions can be tied to cultural facts in the area of social and political relations and ideologies. The societies in Lower Casamance are predominantly non-hierarchical, with very flat power structures and collective mechanisms of decision making. Personal ambition, attempts to enforce social distinctions through ostentatious behaviour as well as the unwillingness to support the collective are considered as antisocial and usually sanctioned. In this context, the focus on socially relevant behaviour rather than on individual emotional states observed in the language – and others spoken in the surrounding area – is hypothesized to be correlated to the anti-individual ideologies prevalent in the social sphere.

Alexander Cobbinah is currently Professor for African Linguistics at the University of São Paulo, whose department of linguistics he joined in 2018. He studied Linguistics and African Studies in Köln and obtained his PhD degree at SOAS London in Field Linguistics in 2013. He has researched in Senegal and Cape Verde as a member of various language documentation projects and published about noun class systems, multilingualism, language description, and questions surrounding ethnic and linguistic identities.

Institutskolloquium Sommersemester 2021 (Leitung: Nico Nassenstein)

Wann? Dienstag, 27. April 2021, 18:00–19:15 Uhr

Wo? Konferenzschaltung via Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4362747051?pwd=ZW85YmFKUjQ1aHZFeFIWVjF0bVdnZz09>

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de