

Moving language:
Conceptualization of (e)motion in
English and Spanish

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How much do languages differ?

- Fundamental question, of vital importance for understanding what language is.
- Vital for purely practical matters like human or automatic machine translation, **BUT**:
 - Translation Theory starts from the assumption of imperfect translatability
 - Automatic translation assumes “Noisy-channel Model”—ie. Spanish is just English + Noise and vice-versa!

Spicy Falam Sampler

- A language of Burma, from the Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto-Burman languages
- No relationship with European languages until recent conversion by the Baptists
- Wide range of expression patterns for words and phrases describing emotion:

(Mostly) Familiar Patterns

- *Ti'51* 'fear.v, be afraid'
- *du'51* 'like'
- *nuam24* 'be fun'
- *vui24* 'make regret'
- *Thi' 51* 'scare'
- *-du'1* 'like/want/DESIDERATIVE' (*kahni'5du'1* 'I want to sneeze')
- *-ngam51* 'dare/AUSATIVE'

Very Unfamiliar

- Psycho-collocations (Matisoff 1986, VanBik 1998, Goddard 2001):
 - *-lu:ng5 ('a)'o:j51* ‘be excited, happy’, lit. ‘X’s heart rejoices’
 - *-thin5 ('a)he:ng51* ‘be angry’, lit. ‘liver is angry’
 - *(-thin5) 'apha:ng5* ‘be worried’, lit. ‘liver is worried’
 - *-ning5 ('a)zak5* ‘be ashamed’, lit. ‘shame is shamed’?

How to judge such data?

- Languages differ semantically
 - Sapir/Whorf: language-based world-views
 - Clearly true, at least in some limited sense
- Intertranslatability seems to indicate some form of similarity
 - Leonard Talmy: lexicalization patterns
 - Anna Wierzbicka: natural semantic metalanguage

Wierzbickan Approach

- All meanings are expressible as explanations composed of common, simple, universal words:
- A fragment of En. “anger” (Wierzbicka 1999):
 - (a) this person did something bad
 - (b) I don’t want this person to do this
 - (c) I want to do something to this person because of this
- Clearly it is useful to think of meanings as composed, in particular describing emotions in terms of what they are a response to...

Wierzbickian Problems

- Syntactic composition of words is poorly described
 - each phrasal template is given its own independent full-text definition
 - Thus “feel angry” is given a complete separate definition from “be angry”, despite similarity of relation to “feel sad” vs. “be sad”
- Plenty of evidence that the universals are neither complete nor universal!

Talmian Cognitivist Approach

- Studies semantic differences in lexicalization across languages
- Assumes schemata with different parametric diatheses:
 - Causative vs. inchoative vs. stative
 - *teach vs. learn vs. know*
 - Multiplex vs. duplex vs. uniplex
 - *among vs. between vs. near*

Conceptualization patterns

- *Entró en la biblioteca como de costumbre.*
- *She went into the library as usual.*

- *Soy cosmopolita, pero me sorprendo como los de pueblo.*
- *I may be cosmopolitan, but I'm as surprised as a country bumpkin.*

Conceptualization differences

- *Entró en*: Punctual state-change, path-in-verb.
- *went into*: Event with culmination (Achievement), path-in-satellite
- *me sorprendo*: State-change
- *surprised*: State (albeit temporary)

Lexical vs. Morphemic

- Difference is not in roots, since English has many basic causative emotional predicates:
 - *to anger, to interest, to bore, to please, ...*
- Almost all causative emotional predicates are less common than their stativized counterparts:
 - Anger.v [514] vs. angry [4286]
 - Interest.v [667] vs. interested [8509]
 - Bore.v [378] vs. bored [1192]
 - Please.v [2712] vs. pleased [3920]
 - Annoy.v [1004] vs. annoyed [324]

...But compare Spanish!

- sorprende [4.6M] vs. sorprendido [2.8M]
 - NB: Surprise.v [1172] vs. surprised [4711]
- Enfada- [1.1M] vs. enfadado [.7M]
- Aburri- [3.5M] vs. aburrido [3.64M]
- Gusta [70M] vs. gustado [7M]
- Enoja- [1.8M] vs. enojado [1.7M]

Spanish vs. English

- Spanish has reflexive construction, often used for inchoative state-change
- Part of a broader pattern: Spanish prefers state-change conceptualization at the lexical level in both motion and emotion
- English prefers stative conceptualization of emotions at the lexical level
- English has a pattern in which a durative motion event is combined with locative relation substages: “Climbed into his own room.”

Inadequacy of Talmian representation

- Words are seen as bundles of independent semantic features
- There is no abstract bundling of features
- Leaves us with no-where to describe the co-occurrence of features except at the lexical level
- But bundlings of features are shared across lexical items!

Frames to the Rescue!

- We call bundlings of scene elements, together with their partially specified constraints and relations, **FRAMES**.
- The pieces of the scene are **FRAME ELEMENTS**.
- Paired with a **CONSTRUCTION-GRAMMAR** theory that hypothesizes that all levels of grammar—subwords, words, phrases, utterances—have meanings which can be described by frames.

Frame example: Motion

- A **Theme** begins at a **Source**, travels along or past a **Path**, and ends up at a **Goal**. The **Direction**, **Area**, **Distance**, and **Speed** of the **Theme** may also be specified.
- Evoked by words (Lexical Units) such as English *go.v*, Spanish *ir.v*, Japanese *iku.v*, etc.
- Has Subframes: Departing, Traversing, Arriving
- Inherited by: Self_motion, Motion_directional

Further Frame Relations

- Frames and Frame Elements are related to each other systematically and formally.
- “Using” relation declares that one Frame presupposes another, which is bound, as a whole, to a Frame Element
- Motion uses Locative_relation for each of the Source, Path, and Goal elements.

Frame Semantics vs. NSM

- Textual composition of primitives is replaced by frame/frame element relations:
 - “This person does something bad”
 - “I feel something bad because of this”
 - = Anger frame in “Using” relationship with frame representing “this”, the Misdeed frame
 - Misdeed is bound to Stimulus FE inherited from a general Emotion frame

Normal Relational Structure

- Across the frame hierarchy, it occurs over and over that a frame **inherits** (is a subtype of) a more abstract frame and is a **point-of-view** of a rich scene with several conceptualizations.
- *buy.v* and *sell.v* belong to Buying and Selling frames which are perspectives on the part of a commercial transaction focused on the Goods.
- Buying inherits from Getting
- Selling inherits from Giving

Frame Semantics vs. Talmian Features

- Repeated inheritance of high-level structuring frames like Event, Transitive_action, Intentional_act, Trajector_landmark_relation explains why certain Talmian features are broadly useful.

Falam explicable with Frames

- Stative verbs/adjectives with the Experiencer as subject:
 - *Ti'51* 'fear, be afraid'
 - *du'51* 'like'
- Stative verbs/adjectives with the Stimulus as subject:
 - *nuam24* 'be fun'

Familiar Patterns

- Verbs with an Agent, Cause, or Stimulus subject and Experiencer object:
 - *vui24* ‘make regret’
- Some of these verbs are causatives with discernable (though not productive) connections to statives
 - *Thi’ 51* ‘scare’ (cf. *Ti’51* ‘be scared’)

Unfamiliar Patterns

- Raising-type modal verbs/affixes, which require a main verb whose subject is co-construed as Experiencer:
 - *-du'1* 'like'
 - *-ngam51* 'dare'
- Nouns with deprofiled Experiencer:
 - *mang5bang1za:1* 'a surprise, a shock'
 - *mang5bang1za:1 a'um24* 'that's a surprise'

Is it more than just language?

- Lexical and constructional differences give rise to language-specific semantics.
- Do speakers of different languages think differently?
 - Dan Slobin: thinking for speaking
- There are some differences in non-linguistic tasks attributable to linguistic differences
 - Gentner, Imai, & Boroditsky 2002: different metaphors for duration change time-estimation error patterns

Process Frame

- The Finish subframe follows the Ongoing event.
- This frame is inherited by the Public_lecture frame.
- Therefore, this lecture has an end.
- As is usual, the Lecture ends with:
 - THANKS TO ALL OF YOU FOR LISTENING!