

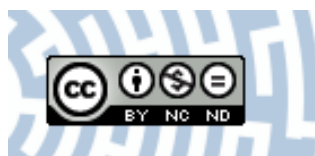


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Expressives and Axiological Models: Some Remarks on Motivation in Linguistics

Motivation constitutes one of the differences between logical as opposed to expressive signs (cf. Guiraud, 1974). Accordingly, expressive signs are considered to be motivated, while logical signs are regarded as arbitrary. The question for a linguist is where he should put linguistic signs. For a long time we were taught, in the spirit of de Saussure, that by and large linguistic signs were conventional, therefore arbitrary (cf. eg. Lyons, 1968). The only linguistic phenomena that were granted a certain degree of motivation were onomatopoeia and expressives (cf. Grabias, 1981).¹ However, recently G. Lakoff (esp. in Lakoff 1980 and 1987, but cf. also Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff and Kövecses, 1987) has shown that in fact a much wider range of linguistic phenomena can be analysed in terms of motivation. In particular, idiomatic expressions in English are motivated by the way we, as human beings, construe our everyday experiences in terms of conventional images. As Lakoff (1980) shows, the meaning of an idiom is not arbitrary, but depends on a) the image conventionally associated with the idiom, b) the world knowledge that goes with the image, and c) the interpretation of the image and world knowledge via conventional metaphor. Lakoff convincingly argues that some such steps must be involved in any adequate account of the meaning of idioms like *keep someone at arm's length* and *spill the beans*. Also, a wide range of vocabulary dealing with emotions can be shown to be based on, or stem from, the way we, again as certain psychophysiological beings, experience our emotions. That is to say, if we were different and experienced our emotions differently, that part of our vocabulary would be different (cf. Lakoff and Kövecses, 1987; their analysis is reproduced in Lakoff, 1987). Finally, Prof. Krzeszowski in his recent paper (1989) argues that the axiological load of a large number of expressions is motivated

¹ In the literature on word-formation the motivation is equated with derivation. Accordingly, a word is said to be motivated if it is morphologically derived from another word, eg. the diminutive *domek* „little house” is motivated by the basic form *dom* „house” (cf. Grzegorzczkova and Puzynina, 1979). Following Grabias (1981) we shall refer to this kind of motivation as formal motivation. We shall try to show that at least some morphological markers of expressivity are themselves motivated by much more general, language-independent cognitive models. The discovery of these underlying models help to „make sense” of the huge bulk of linguistic data which, not being predictable, would have to be taken as completely arbitrary. In his discussion of the Japanese classifier *hon*, G. Lakoff (1987:107) notes: „the traditional generative view that everything must be either predictable or arbitrary is inadequate here. There is a third choice: motivation”.

evaluation of somebody's manners expressed by *cham* „cad” considerably exceeds that of *prostack* „simpleton”.

1.2. While Grabias' analysis of morphological exponents of expressivity is impressive and on the whole convincing, it is difficult to agree that all of the expressive derivatives he regards as motivated formally are indeed so, and only so, motivated. In particular, his solutions fails to account for the remarkable correspondences between meliorativity and diminutivity on the one hand, and pejorativity and augmentativity on the other. According to Grabias' calculations, out of 72 meliorative suffixes, 29 suffixes function also as markers of diminutivity, while out of 62 pejorative suffixes, 9 are also augmentatives (cf. Grabias, 1981:75).³ What is striking is the total lack of pejorative diminutives and meliorative augmentatives. I want to suggest that these findings are not contingent and that there is a cognitive connection between the size and the evaluation indicated by the morphological derivations involving these two parameters. The relevant correspondences can thus be seen as grammatical reflexes of two axiological models: SMALL IS GOOD and BIG IS BAD. Given the models, the data make perfect sense and follow naturally as consequences of the underlying models.

Two sorts of counterexamples immediately come to mind:

- a) lexical items encoding both size and evaluation but relating them in the way that reverses the relations set up by the models we have proposed, eg. *pomniejsi pisarze* „minor writers” (=writers who are not very good) versus *wielcy pisarze* „great writers” (= good or very good writers);
- b) pejorative uses of otherwise meliorative diminutives, eg. *profesorek* „little professor”.

In order to answer (a), let us recall that, as explicitly stated in Quinn and Holland's definition of a cultural model, the existence of one model does not exclude other, alternative models referring to the same aspect of the world. Thus the model SMALL IS GOOD does not preclude the alternative model SMALL IS BAD, and, consequently, the model BIG IS BAD does not preclude the model BIG IS GOOD. Rather, what we are confronted with in such cases is the problem of determining the experiential grounding (cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) of the two competing models and their respective domains or scopes of application (cf. Bierwiaczonek, in preparation). Without going very deep into the question of experiential sources of the two contradictory evaluations of size, let me suggest that the model SMALL IS GOOD derives from the experience of play with little toys, little animals and little children, which are safe and easy to play with and fondle: the child plays with or manipulates its SMALL objects and this makes it feel GOOD. Thus the basic experiential domain of the model lies in the close physical interaction between the active child and its more or less submissive object. Incidentally, the same kind of considerations may be necessary in order to account for the frequent identity of diminutive and hypocoristic functions within one suffix, eg. in Polish diminutives of the second degree: *-eczko*, *-ulko*, *-ulka*, etc. (cf. Grabias, 1981:65).

The model BIG IS GOOD seems to stem from the child's experience of parents as protective authority: the BIG ones are GOOD because they feed you, cuddle you, shelter you, help you, defend you and teach you; they are to be looked up to as models and ideals.

³ Grabias' count ignores a large group of 21 pejorative-augmentatives out of 34 invarient pejoratives as well as some other groups relevant to our discussion; cf. his Table of suffixes pp. 71-74.

Thus the domain of this model is determined by the asymmetrical relation between the child and the parent (ie. the provider, the teacher, the ideal) in which it is the BIG one who is more active and, as a result of his physical as well as mental superiority, somewhat remote. Accordingly, the infelicity of combinations like *wielki tatusiek* „great daddy” is brought about not only by the implied incompatible sizes of the referent (which may refer to its different aspects, cf. *maty wielki człowiek* „little great man”), but also from the implied incompatible distances: remoteness implied by *wielki* and closeness implied by the diminutive *tatusiek*.

It follows from our analysis that the two negative models BIG IS BAD and SMALL IS BAD, respectively, are derived from the positive ones discussed above. This result supports Krzeszowski's contention that BAD, grounded in the experience of lack, is always defined relative to GOOD (cf. Krzeszowski, 1989:32). At the same time, his findings concerning the GOOD-BAD asymmetry provide independent justification for the proposal put forward here.

The potential evaluative re-ranking illustrated in (b) is one of the consequences of the double conceptions of size discussed above. If the professor is regarded as an object of affection and the resultant close emotional and/or bodily interaction, rather than an admired professional and human ideal, than his smallness is OK and the diminutive will be taken as a hypocoristic, in accordance with the model SMALL IS GOOD.

If, however, we shift the domain, the model changes. In the domain of remote authoritative relationships SMALL IS BAD, hence the diminutive sounds disparaging or even offensive. The same kind of change is at work when we use *tatunio* „daddy” referring to our drunk parent reeling from one side of the sidewalk to the other: the diminutive ideal is a BAD ideal.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that our interpretation of augmentative expressives in terms of the axiological model BIG IS BAD runs against certain claims of Wierzbicka's account of expressively marked nomina personae she advanced in her *Dociekania semantyczne* (1969:47ff). It is interesting, however, that in her view what the nouns like *grubas* „fatty”, *chudzielec* „scrag”, *milczek* „taciturn person”, *beksa* „sniveller”, *śpioch* „sleepyhead”, *żartok* „glutton”, etc. have in common is, in her terms, the model frame I SUPPOSE TOO MUCH, which of course is another way of wording the excess modal discussed above. Wierzbicka comments: „Excess (...) becomes in a natural way the source of the negative emotion: anger, impatience, contempt” (p.48). We cannot be agree; let us observe, however, that the Polish morphology provides a much more straightforward instantiation of the excess model through one of the senses of the prefix *prze-*. All the following predicates: *przedobrzyć* „overdo”, *przegrzać* „overheat”, *przereklamować* „overadvertise”, *przeciążony* „overloaded”, *przemęczony* „tired out”, *przepracowany* „overworked”, etc. imply going beyond a certain acceptable standard or norm, which in turn leads to unwelcome, negatively evaluated consequences. Again, these negative implications of all the above predicates follow naturally if we assume that the prefix *prze-* instantiates the axiological excess model, which, let us repeat, should be regarded as a language independent cognitive schema, which, beside its linguistic manifestations, is reflected in physiology (eg. too high temperature, too much vitamins, too much stress may all be bad as they upset the organism's homeostatic balance), economy (eg. inflation – too much money) or art (eg. too much complicated chords may destroy the beauty of a

musical composition, too many details on one side of a still-life may upset its symmetry, etc.).

To complete the picture, we may note that balance may also be upset through insufficiency, producing another axiological model, which may be called the insufficiency model: TOO LITTLE/FEW OF X IS BAD. Again the model has many grammatical reflexes but since we are dealing with morphology, let us mention only one clear case of its instantiation: the prefix *niedo-*. The prefix *niedo-* evokes the insufficiency schema by implicating that the amount of the activity (referred to in the predicate) necessary for its completion has not been carried out. As the result, the amount of the activity is constructed as TOO LITTLE and the predicates like *niedorobiony* „not-made-hard-enough”, *niedospany* „not-slept-long-enough”, *niedopieszczony* „not-caressed-long/hard-enough”, etc. all express negative evaluation.

1.3. From what we have said so far it should be clear why we find it difficult to accept Grabias' account of the three sources of emotivity of lexical items we presented in the beginning of our considerations. First of all let us note that one of the consequences of the cognitive approach to semantics is the obliteration of the traditional distinction between the semantic and pragmatic components of meaning and the corresponding dichotomy of denotation and connotation (cf. Krzeszowski, 1986, 1989). Instead, the meaning of predicates is defined in terms of IDEALIZED COGNITIVE MODELS (ie. ICM-s in the sense of Lakoff, 1987), which specify, among other things, their prototypical properties, members and applications. Moreover, the predicates are viewed as operating in a certain culture which determines all kinds of conventions, expectations, scripts and values the speakers involved in any single verbal exchange consciously or, more often, unconsciously presuppose and draw upon. This means that a prototypical liar is a person who, among other things, says something „with intent to deceive” (cf. Coleman and Kay, 1981). This intent to deceive is in turn, in our culture, deeply connected with harmfulness (cf. Sweetser, 1987). It is thus impossible in our culture to refer to the concept of lying without at the same time evoking the axiological model DECEIVING /hence also LYING/ IS BAD. The expressive or, rather, axiological value of the predicate *liar* (ie. Grabias' *ktamca*) depends therefore on the extent to which the people involved in the discourse share the axiological model of deceiving. Thus, contrary to Grabias' claim that *ktamca* serves to influence the emotions of the hearer by the speaker, it is quite conceivable that the speaker is much more radical and emotional in his condemnation of the liar than the hearer, for whom the lie may not be such a big deal (ie. the model, perhaps due to different cultural background, has lower intensity). In the same way we can account for the evaluative and emotive properties of the predicate *chudzielec*. Ignoring the exact expressive impact of the suffix *-elec*, it is clear that the evaluation entailed by the insufficiency model the predicate evokes will again involve all the participants in the exchange (cf. Bierwiazzonek, in preparation, for details). This of course means that another traditional distinction, namely the distinction between expressive and impressive functions of language, must be abandoned: both expressiveness and impressiveness are functions of the use of predicates involving axiological (and perhaps also affective) models. The rest belongs to the psychology of intentions.

Finally, let us observe that the causes of emotions cannot lie in the referents of the nominative signs Grabias discusses but, rather, in the way they are construed. It is process

of construal that determines the way various parts of reality are categorized and evaluated. To give only a handful of most common and trivial examples, the predicates *convert* and *apostate*, *aide* and *lackey*, *man of vision* and *visionary* (taken from Bolinger, 1967:261) may all have the same referents who do, or have done the same things, but differ in other important respects. Of course we can suggest, as many have done, that some of them are marked „derogatory” and others „appreciative” but I find this solution unilluminating. Instead, we can look a little deeper and see the conceptual meaning of predicates as „a psychological object or process” (cf. Coleman and Kay, 1981) called a prototype, which is furthermore related to the whole network of cognitive and evaluative processes we, as human beings immersed in a certain physical and cultural reality, are incessantly engaged in. This is to say, we can look for the principled cognitive motivations of the semantic structure of language. I believe that the theory of cognitive linguistics as it has been recently developed by Lakoff, Langacker, Krzeszowski and others, makes this venture possible. Above I have tentatively indicated ways of capturing certain morphological data of Polish in terms of cultural models that motivate them. In the work that is now in preparation I hope to show that the framework of cognitive linguistics can be successfully used in an analysis of a much wider range of axiological problems of language.

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