

ASPECTS OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE: INTENSITY IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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Contrastive studies seeking to describe the similarities and the differences Between English and Polish have been focusing on the fundamentals, that is on the sound and the grammatical systems of standard educated, possibly "objective" forms of the two languages. This is a natural course of action, or to use another phrase, a logical avenue of attack, since any contrasting of two languages in less significant aspects when the fundamentals have not been sufficiently dealt with might be understood as a 'soft snap' for anyone working on such a project, or as an illustration of illogic in handling linguistic material. The contrastive studies expected to give an insight of the interference phenomena which stem from structural differences between two languages, and it is these phenomena that constitute *the* major problem in the process of learning and/or teaching. The Center for Applied Linguistics maintains that "a careful contrastive analysis of the two languages offers an excellent basis for the preparation of instructional materials, the planning of courses, and the development of actual classroom techniques" (Ferguson 1965 : V).

I would like to re-phrase this quotation by introducing a minimal lexical change: "complete" instead of "careful", though the original word can be understood in the same way, I believe. Complete contrastive analyses should cover all components of the communication process, the fundamental and the marginal ones, and the more so since the notions of fundamentality and marginality are highly relative. They depend on the order of priorities set up by the analyst: as a phonetician he may give a more extensive treatment to phonetics and phonology; as a student of syntax — to syntactic structures. If he happens to be primarily interested in semiology or semiotics, then his order of priorities may still be different from the other two.

The present paper undertakes to discuss several linguistic elements used in English and in Polish to convey intensity which is one of the aspects of emotive language. The discussion is given a semiotic framework, which means it is solely concerned with problems sometimes seen as marginal by those concerned with grammar only.

It is almost a commonplace to observe that impersonal, neutral or, as it were, "objective" language is rarely used in interpersonal communication. A substantial part of this communication is charged with emotions, which may roughly be classified into positive and negative ones. Extensive treatment of emotional processes and of classification of emotions can be consulted in Reykowski (1968) and in Obuchowski (1970).

Man is able to respond emotionally to language. The response comes as a result of the communication process which includes elements accepted in a given language as carriers of emotions, e.g. words and phrases such as *Liar! Kłamca! I love you. Kocham się. Traitor! Zdrajca! I hate you. Nienawidzę cię. I think he is a moron. Uważam, że z niego baran.* Expressions of this kind arouse both the speaker and the hearer. Reykowski maintains, however, that it is a simplified presentation of the matter, because people normally react to a number of elements or components of a situation and not to a single feature of it only (Reykowski 1968 : 170).

It seems that a lexicon analysed impersonally or objectively reveals scarcity of words always carrying a high emotive load. This is explained by the fact that emotions are the most subjective reactions man can experience and emotive meaning ascribed to standard lexical items varies from person to person.

"Zdolność słów do przekazywania emocji zależy od tego, jakie człowiek miał z nimi doświadczenia. (...) Tak np. słowo „komunista” u jednych wzbudza emocje wzniosłe, podczas gdy u innych budzi nienawiść, poczucie zagrożenia. Tak samo różnie odbierane będą słowa „milicja”, „wojna”, „krew”, „pogarda”, „kłamstwo”, „brutalny”, i inne. Różnice będą zależały od środowiska, w którym się człowiek wychował, od zasad, które przyswoił, od doświadczeń, które przeżył. Systemy wychowawcze nastawione są na to, by pewnym słowom nadać określony emocjonalny sens. (...) Również usiłowania propagandy zmierzają do tego, by pewnym słowom nadać określony odcień emocjonalny" (Reykowski 1968 : 170 - 71).

From the foregoing one may conclude that an attempt at a systematic analysis of emotive language in objective terms would be a futile effort, but the conclusion would only be partially true. Emotive language is analysable and can be described systematically. The fact remains, however, that it is a neglected area of language study, although it is not totally absent from interdisciplinary research (Sebeok et al. 1964).

This neglect leads to a particular situation in the applied linguistics area: students are usually exposed to non-emotive foreign language structures only, and if there is any attempt on the part of the instructor to provide some information on the emotive structures, this information is usually superficial and highly impressionistic. Of course it results from the lack of appropriate materials presenting the problem on the language teacher's level. Another reason is that very frequently language instructors

are not native speakers themselves, which in case of emotive communication teaching is a deficiency. It does not necessarily mean that a native speaker could theorize better on the subject but at least he may provide genuine emotive patterns to his class, while a non-native can hardly ever do it spontaneously.

Insofar as the learners are expected to acquire only a limited command of a foreign language (passive skills of reading and translating which are indispensable for research purposes) there is no need to present to them a systematic description of emotive forms in that language: they would hardly ever have an opportunity to use this knowledge. On the other hand, the situation is different when the learners are trained to acquire a command approximating that of a native speaker. All Polish students taking courses at our Institutes of English Philology or Departments of English at several Polish universities may serve as a good example. They study English for five consecutive years to receive Master of Arts degrees either in English literature or in English language. They all should have one thing in common: knowledge of all aspects of the English language.

Since the courses offered at our university departments of English are similar throughout Poland one may afford generalizations based on observations from one school only.

Working as an instructor of English at the University of Warsaw I noticed that the students lack formal training in emotive forms of English. This shortcoming of the curriculum has some serious implications of psychological and linguistic nature. In terms of linguistic implications the shortcoming accounts for the existence of a barrier or a *communication ceiling*, to coin a phrase. Analysing the English of our fourth and fifth years' students the most advanced ones, that is, one can see they have no problems with grammar and are familiar with standard, educated and even sophisticated vocabulary. Yet their English from other registers is rather limited in scope, including colloquialisms and slang, which are thoroughly neglected in the English departments all over the country. It is clear that the moment they venture into the area of emotive language they are bound to stumble over it (we must exclude here those students who had spent a number of years in some English-speaking countries). This stumbling occurs both in writing and in speech. As to speech, one can predict that it is the interference of emotive Polish which is at work here; in writing the students' performance may be poor because they are hardly ever requested to exercise in a systematic way a variety of English emotive expressions. Since emotive English is presented to Polish students piecemeal and haphazardly it is no wonder they fail at it and therefore it seems that a contrastive differential study of emotive Polish and emotive English could be of use here.

The present paper was prompted by the need for starting the work on such a contrastive study. The community of linguists may be genuinely busy subordinating languages to current linguistic theories and for this reason they tend to by-pass less essential problems in applied linguistics. It is a considered opinion of the author of this paper that it would be a waste of precious time to wait with the discussion of the problems of emotive language until the fundamentals of Polish and English are given exhaustive comparative treatment in a publication. The work on these allegedly minor aspects of the communication process should get off the ground now so that the necessary research can be conducted in all areas simultaneously, if the future series on Polish and English structures are to be really and truly complete.

The problem specifically dealt with in this work is intensity as an aspect of emotive language. It must be stated at the outset that space restrictions limit the range of the presentation and the minuteness of detail.

Feelings seem to belong with features of personality but their linguistic reflection may be discussed in a formal framework. For that purpose we should start with introducing the notion of intensity. In everyday speech we are "deeply shaken" or "deeply moved". Such phrases signal the existence of some depth dimension. In our considerations we are not interested in the depth dimension because it is an extra-linguistic element. Admittedly the outward or surface manifestations of feelings or emotions are dependent on this extra-linguistic element but at the same time they can oscillate only within the limits accepted by a given culture; consequently, by a given language. Psychology offers a definition of intensity: "Intensity is the distance from the feeling threshold", that is from the personal state at which feeling is just manifested (or ceases to be manifested) as feeling (Stern 1938: 34). Exact determinations of emotional intensity in terms of personal depth of feelings are hardly feasible. Only physiological phenomena accompanying emotional states e.g. skin temperature, changes in heartbeat, can be determined instrumentally but again it is no task for a linguist. The linguist is interested in the surface manifestations of emotions and he can only deal with relative degrees of intensity. When the object of study is a contrastive analysis of two languages it becomes necessary to find out how both these languages indicate these relative degrees of emotional intensity. It was Bloomfield who made the following observation:

Our language will use a phrase where other uses a single word and still another a bound form. (...) As to denotation, whatever can be said in one language can doubtless be said in any other: the difference will concern only the structure of the forms, and their connotation. What one language expresses by

a single morpheme will in another language require perhaps a long phrase; what one language says in a word may appear in another language as a phrase or as an affix (Bloomfield 1933: 277).

Learning a second language we are at times surprised to see that the simple names for synonymous simple expressions in the two languages do not stand in the one-to-one relation; in order to obtain a strictly synonymous expression we must resort to a paraphrase or a syntactical word complex: Polish 'dłoń' and English 'palm of the hand'. Designations of colours are frequently given as illustrations of the above statement, e.g.

pink	jasnoróżowy
aquamarine	koloru wody morskiej
ox blood	koloru ciemnej krwi

The simple expressions may also stand for a conceptual synthesis. Such conceptual syntheses may be unlimited in number, yet in practice they always are. What these conceptual syntheses are depends with different speech communities on external and internal circumstances, such as the stage of technological advancement, development of interests, common experiences, spiritual life, etc. Such conditions are reflected in linguistic designations: complicated concepts with high frequency take on a simple form, while complicated concepts of low frequency often retain their complex linguistic form. This conceptual synthesizing can be described in other linguistic terms, suggested by Jakobson (1959: 233), as *interlingual translation* or rewording, which is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. Slang usually abounds in intralingual translations and so does emotive talk.

When contrasting two languages we sometimes notice that similar conceptual combinations are designated by simple expressions in both languages but we could not treat them as synonyms because of only partial overlapping of their meanings. What is more, even if we deal with logical identity of expressions in different languages we should not forget about their emotive loads which may differ between themselves.

Historical development of the English lexicon was so vigorous that indeed not many languages can claim such an abundance of approximate synonyms. Naturally, this becomes a major obstacle in learning for foreign students of English. To acquire a command of English close to that of the native speakers foreign students must continually build up the stock of synonyms being aware of their shades of meaning. Authors of books on the making of English point out that, as a general rule, when there are two words or phrases expressing approximately the same notion, one of them being of Germanic and the other of French or Latin

etymology, the native word is one that has the fuller emphasis, and the greater richness of suggestion in emotive language. Many of the French words and nearly all the words taken over before 1350 and quite a number of subsequent borrowings and importations, have become part and parcel of the English language, so that they appear to everybody just as English as the pre-1066 stock of native words, yet there are numerous words that have never become so popular. There are as many gradations between words of everyday use and such as are not at all understood by the common people, and to the latter class may sometimes belong words which literary people would think familiar to everybody (Jespersen 1905).

Polish students of English share the same difficulties in mastering the language and they also share them with other foreign learners of English. One of these difficulties is their inability to "feel" the shades of meanings of multiple English synonyms. As to the emotive utterances this inability is particularly conspicuous. It is understood, however, that this could be helped by a systematic presentation of means used in Polish and in English for conveyance of emphasis or intensity, or rather of emotive attitudes. The following is only a tentative suggestion of items to be discussed at length elsewhere (the present author's forthcoming Ph. D. dissertation).

- 1) Any vowel or consonant can be lengthened or intensified (in certain distributions, naturally) in Polish and English. In writing it is represented by italicizing, spacing repetition of a letter.

Joohn! Baardzo ładny!
 Barrrdzo ładny!

- 2) A phrase or a sentence is intensified:

"You must be out of our mind", yelled Tom.
 — Chyba do reszty oszalałeś — wrzasnął ojciec.

- 3) Stressing the main verb the speaker wants to focus on the meaning of the verb, he wants to juxtapose it with some other verb:

As they entered the lobby of the Times Square Palace Hotel, Joe said, "See, man, this is where I *live*".

I don't think you *can* shoot him.

Bić to go chyba nie będziesz, co? — zapytał chudy.

- 4) Intensive negation

I did not see this fellow / I didn't see this fellow

Polish resorts here to reduplication. See Lewandowski (1970 : 73 - 83).

Nie, nie, nie widziałem go / Nie widziałem go.

Both the auxiliary verb and the negative particle may come under stress in English:

"You *won't* mind going to the post office by yourself, will you?"
 Polish may have here elements of lexical intensification.

- 5) Positive intensity (Intensive auxiliary in English)

Lexical intensity in Polish

You *are* clever! Rzeczywiście jesteś sprytny!
 She *is* nice, isn't she? Miła z niej (dziewczyna).

or by a change in the position of adverbial modifiers such as *really*, *never*, *ever* (British and American English differ in this respect).

"I don't think I ever had seen a bigger cake."

Chyba nigdy nie widziałem takiego dużego tortu!

The paper should include also a discussion of syntactical and lexical intensifiers as well as those of paralinguistic kind but it would enlarge the body of the work to such an extent that instead of being only a signal of the research in progress it would become a full monograph. There is, however, one more issue: general national characteristics or national spirit in the language. On the basis of my study, which goes far beyond what has been presented here, I am inclined to say that there is a striking lack of intensity in the English lexical items pertaining to emotions, and this observation has already been made by others. The emotional behaviour of the average Englishman is reflected in lack of high intensity, in his speech habits in general, and it was the Englishmen who have set the standard for the English-speaking peoples. Fowler speaks of "a stubborn national dislike of putting things too strongly", "the intemperate orgy of moderation," "the use of understatement not to deceive, but to enhance the impression on the hearer (Fowler 1972 : 383, 550, 610).

It is a well known fact that a tendency to avoid the expression of intense feelings goes hand in hand with the absence of emphatic gestures in the behaviour of the British and also with less dynamic speech habits than those of the Poles. Naturally the English cannot be expected to live without linguistic devices for expressing strong feelings since every human being is overcome by them from time to time. But these devices have not yet been researched fully.

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