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*About the reviewer*

Jyh Wee Sew, who specializes in Malay pedagogy and coached Process Drama at the STC Mother Tongue camp, has been the Staff Welfare Chair, and Cockpit Coordinator of STC since 2003. His recent communal activities include the adopting of a senior citizen housing block in Telok Blangah (Singapore) and group visits with Malay, Indian, and Chinese children to the Moral Welfare Home in Telok Blangah. In 2004 he published *Dari Kertas ke Skrin* [From Paper to Screen] (on learning and teaching Malay in multimedia) as well as two book reviews.



Jean Harkins and Anna Wierzbicka (eds), *Emotions in Crosslinguistic Perspective*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001. vi + 421 pages. ISBN 3-11-017064-7

Reviewed by Valerij Dem'jankov (Moscow State University)

The book under review deals with “the ways that people talk about what they are feeling, and with the words that they use in whatever language they speak” (p. 4). This approach, elsewhere called “linguistic psychology”,<sup>1</sup> is analogous to “linguistic philosophy”, which studies philosophically relevant concepts employed in ordinary language. The authors' working hypothesis is that “a careful examination of linguistic data can provide clues to what people mean when they use such words or expressions” (p. 5), showing that “it is possible to identify what elements of meaning are specific to the language under examination, and what elements are shared with similar words and expressions from other languages” (p. 7). Since the first part of this program is not always realisable, because of the utter subjectivity of speaking about one's inner world, the main result belongs to the second part of the program.

The papers of this book belong to two groups. The first consists of papers written by linguists describing a language other than their mother tongue: Robert D. Bugenhagen (“Emotions and the nature of persons in Mbula”), Nick

J. Enfield (“Linguistic evidence for a Lao perspective on facial expression of emotion”), Cliff Goddard (“*Hati*: A key word in the Malay vocabulary of emotion”), Jean Harkins (“Talking about anger in Central Australia”), and Paweł Kornacki (“Concepts of anger in Chinese”). Every now and then these authors find out that “they feel like us” or “they feel something quite different from what we feel in the same circumstances”. The writers in this group look, first of all, for *universal regularities* and *similarities* to English or to other ‘universal’ languages.

The second group contains papers written by native speakers of the described languages: Mengistu Amberber (“Testing emotional universals in Amharic”), Uwe Durst (“Why Germans don’t feel ‘anger’”), Rie Hasada (“Meanings of Japanese sound-symbolic emotion words”), Irina B. Levontina and Anna A. Zalizniak (“Human emotions viewed through the Russian language”), Anna Wierzbicka (“A culturally salient Polish emotion: *Przykro* (pron. *pshickro*)”), and Zhengdao Ye (“An inquiry into ‘sadness’ in Chinese”). These authors deal with the difficulties arising from rendering one’s feelings into a foreign language (this task seems only at first sight similar to looking for an appropriate term in one’s own language) and stress idiosyncratic uses of emotion words in their mother tongues. Dramatising this diversity of “emotional worlds” is very typical of the second group.

Both approaches have certain limitations. The first approach is not always ideal because nuances of foreign language use may pass unnoticed, unless they are relevant to the “outside” observers. Referring to the researchers relying on English as the *lingua franca* of anthropological research, Zhengdao Ye, the author of the last paper in this book, writes: “They forget that the high wall of the well is built up by the bricks of Anglo values and judgments” (p. 360).

On the other hand, the second approach has its own drawbacks. For instance, demonstrating “the trap involved in the attempt to reach for human universals on the basis of one’s native language alone” (p. 337), Anna Wierzbicka makes the following critical remark: “scholars [...] end up doing precisely what they wished to avoid, that is, ‘deifying’ some words from their own native language and reifying culture-specific concepts which are encapsulated in them. Thus, unwittingly, they illustrate once again how powerful the grip of our native language on our thinking habits can be” (p. 338). I must say this remark is almost invariably true of the papers belonging to the second group. I wholly agree with Zhengdao Ye that “researchers may not be aware that their own language, along with its built-in culture and concepts, constitutes a well, and that the deeper the well, the more limited their view of the world will be” (p. 359).

I think both approaches are well balanced by the cooperation of native speakers of different languages.

In the Introduction Anna Wierzbicka and Jean Harkins show how a universal semantic metalanguage must look like in order to cope with both types of description, “to produce more accurate descriptions of the meanings of emotion words and, more generally, ways of speaking about emotions in different languages” (p. 1). They stress the role of language as central “to the study of emotions, particularly when examining instances where the cultural life of one group seems to focus attention on emotional states for which other groups don’t even have names” (ibid.).

The only passage of the Introduction that is not quite clear to me is Wierzbicka and Harkins’ claim that “whatever the conditions that produce an emotion like anger, whether or not it is visibly expressed, and whatever physiological responses accompany it, it is only through language (if at all) that we can know that what is experienced *is* anger: that is, if the experiencer says so, or says other things by which we know that the person feels anger” (pp. 2–3). I think naming emotions is in this respect not different from naming other types of human activity, both verbal and non-verbal. For instance, observing anybody’s movement we know that one is running, crawling or simply walking only because somebody tells us that or because we ourselves name it running, walking, etc., relying on our language knowledge.

For the metalanguage of emotion words, the Introduction reminds us, it is important to have in mind that some emotional concepts are simple (non-decomposable) and universal, and other concepts are complex, i.e., explainable in terms of the simple concepts (pp. 8–9). The linguists’ problem consists in the proper choice of these universal simple concepts and in assigning a proper status to emotion words. The technical language of modern psychologists, as well as English or any other natural language, may be misleading in describing people’s subjective experience (pp. 10–11). As a better approximation, the *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (NSM) devised by Wierzbicka is used by the authors of this book. Zhengdao Ye rightly points out three main advantages of the NSM in the study of emotions: “Firstly, it makes possible the explanation of meanings from an insider’s perspective. Secondly, the exact differences and connections between concepts, within a culture and across cultures, can be clearly identified. [...] Thirdly, it allows for definitions to be translated into different languages while retaining neutrality” (p. 397). I think the NSM has all these necessary properties, but other systems based on the same principles are not excluded. Wierzbicka and Harkins’ distinction of three basic modes of

describing one's feeling (p. 14) — telling (1) that one “feels good or bad” (e.g., “I feel wonderful”), (2) that one feels like a person feels in a certain situation and then identifies, in one way or another, that prototypical situation (e.g., “I feel lost/abandoned/like a motherless child”), and (3) what seems to be happening inside one's body (e.g., “My heart is breaking/heavy”) — is, however an extremely useful application of the NSM framework to the cross-linguistic study of emotions.

Mengistu Amberber gives a semantic description of Amharic emotion predicates postulating a distinct innate and universal cognitive domain specialised in the emotions (p. 35). The experiencer argument of certain emotion predicates in Amharic behaves morphologically but not syntactically as if it was the object of the clause rather than the subject (p. 64).

Robert D. Bugenhagen specifies the meanings of several emotion expressions in the Mbula language (Papua New Guinea) involving body part images. These expressions bring to mind the English *butterflies in the stomach* and *broken heart*. Unlike English, Mbula has relatively few lexical items encoding exclusively emotional or physical experiences on their own. For instance, there are no specialised words for ‘anger’, ‘love’, ‘joy’, or ‘disappointment’: “in order to talk about these notions, they *must* use body image expressions which *localise* the experience. There is no other option in their language” (p. 75). The English glosses of the body part terms most frequently used in this language are: ‘eye’, ‘inside(s), feelings’, ‘liver’, ‘genitals, being’, ‘skin’, ‘stomach’; less common are: ‘mouth’, ‘ear’, ‘throat’, and ‘lips’. In sentences depicting emotions, the experiencer is encoded as the ostensible genitive of the body part noun, and the experiential stimulus as the object of the oblique preposition *pa*. The body part name is syntactically incorporated with the verb into a kind of complex predicate. It appears that the Mbula lexicon is “much more precise in delineating negative emotions than positive ones” (p. 95), attributed both to oneself and to others. Thus, it is relatively rare for people to announce that they are happy. The hypothetical reason is that “[s]aying that you are happy makes you more likely to be a target of other people's jealousy. It is somewhat more common for people to attribute happiness to others” (p. 95). It is still unclear to me why speaking of one's own happiness is nevertheless so common in Western cultures, where the concept of jealousy also exists. Probably, such (seeming or real) statements are inevitable when the mother tongue is in the focus of investigation.

Uwe Durst notes that the English *anger/angry* covers a wider range of use than the German *Zorn/Wut/Ärger*. The German counterparts have “a meaning which is somewhat different from each of the English words, and there is no

evidence for the ‘basicness’ of one of these words” (p. 118). Therefore, to put this observation into Wierzbicka’s framework, “anger” does not belong to the universal semantic metalanguage. Explaining the discrepancies in the behavior of the three German equivalents Durst supposes that the arousal of *Wut* and *Zorn* is out of the experiencer’s control. This is the alleged explanation for the fact that the negative imperative of *sich ärgern* sounds much more natural than the corresponding forms of *eine Wut/einen Zorn haben* or *wütend/zornig sein*.<sup>2</sup> I would only like to note that *Ärger* in the phrase *Ärger haben* means in German ‘hardship’ and not ‘anger’.

N.J. Enfield stresses the “folk” analysis of face expressions as “fundamental to a well-informed comparative science of emotion and nonverbal communication” (p. 149). Thus, in Lao there are no exact equivalents to the English *sad*, *angry*, *disgusted*, *happy*, *surprised*, and *afraid*, and most of these terms are rendered by expressions mentioning the heart. Commenting on this and other observations, the author writes: “So, even if we accept that the Lao and English categories are indeed ‘emotions,’ they are not *the same* emotions” (p. 155). Besides, “While English has a range of simple words for facial expressions, Lao notably has few” (ibid.). Most of them are denominations of facial expressions, which are periphrastic expressions, such as “rotten face” (i.e., ‘anti-smile’), “smelly face” (i.e., ‘disgust face’), “ready-to-cry face”, and “clenched mouth”. Unlike English, where there are many expressions describing the face movements as a whole (such as *frown* or *grimace*), “the Lao equivalents explicitly refer to relevant *parts* of the face, such as the eyebrows or the lips” (p. 162); therefore, emotions are referred to by means of expressions involving mostly features or components of the face. But if this is really so, I do not think Lao differs drastically from Western languages in this respect.

Cliff Goddard demonstrates that the Malay *hati* (literally: ‘liver’), a word having high frequency in the discourse about human interaction (e.g., *susah hati* ‘troubled, worried’, *hati keras* ‘determined’), may be glossed as “the sensitive part of a person”. This lexeme is a “versatile resource for describing subtle nuances of feeling” (p. 191).

Jean Harkins stresses the fact that “if we are making serious attempts to describe emotions in terms of a language-independent and culture-neutral metalanguage, [...] we need to consider that this is a culturally situated activity” (p. 197).

Rie Hasada addresses a practical problem, explicating in terms of NSM the meaning of seven most commonly used semantically interrelated “psychomimetic” Japanese words, “so that learners can actually use them correctly” (p. 218).

Paweł Kornacki proposes NSM explications for several anger words in Chinese: *nu*, *sheng/qi*, *naohuo*, *fen*, and *taoyan*. The first two “are focused more on the explicit appraisal of the relevant situations — in somewhat ‘moral’ terms, as far as *nu* is concerned (“this is bad”), or as a personal rejection in *sheng/qi* (“I don’t want this”) — and the frustrations of personal aims, although certainly possible as triggers of these emotions, are presented from a somewhat different angle. It is ‘things’ that happen, and it is their ‘badness’, or our ‘diswant’ of them, which cause these feelings; and what matters here is reactions rather than intentions” (p. 284).

Irina B. Levontina and Anna A. Zalizniak show that the key to understanding emotion manifestations of Russians is the concept of *duša*, only approximately corresponding to the English ‘soul’. The Russian “soul” is a counterpart of the Mbula “liver” and of the English “heart”. Following the long tradition of Russian philology, the authors distinguish between two kinds of concepts: those belonging to the “elevated” sphere of the world and those belonging to the “terrestrial” sphere. Thus, *radost* ‘joy’ belongs to the first kind, and *udovol’sstvie* ‘pleasure’, in their opinion, “being axiologically neutral or even positive, in the Russian linguistic picture of the world shows a clear tendency to slide into the sphere of negative assessment” (p. 295). The same distinction, allegedly alien to the Western system of emotion words, is postulated for *ščast’e* ‘happiness’ vs. *naslaždenie* ‘enjoyment’. Further, the Russian *toska* is said to belong to the set of the “untranslatable emotion words”. I would like to note that there are quite a few English equivalents many of which render some sort of *toska*: *anger*, *boredom*, *craving*, *heart-sinking*, *sorrow*, *wearies*, *yearn*, *yearning*; as well as some loan-words such as *Angst*, *depression*, *ennui*, *melancholy*; and stylistic variants such as *dump*, *black dog*, *nostalgia*. Some other emotion words lacking close English equivalents denote what Russians feel toward each other and what Russians tend to feel when they part from their beloved. To the former class belong situations like ‘I (don’t) want to see you’, ‘I want to talk to you’ and ‘I feel the same thing you feel’. My impression is that the authors ascribe idiosyncrasy to those Russian terms for which we find too many equivalents in West-European languages. But couldn’t one consider the Russian *toska* (and other idiosyncratic emotion words) as a term for a certain universal cover-concept for which English equivalents give but a partial, or “context-dependent” realisation (analogously to grouping phonetic variants of phonemes in phonology)?

Wierzbicka in her paper indicates that the Polish *przykro* focuses “on painful effects of a perceived lack of expected interpersonal ‘good feelings’, points

to the same cultural values and expectations and provides additional evidence for their reality” (p. 356).

Zhengdao Ye investigates the Chinese words corresponding to English *sadness*. These words belong to the class of “monosyllabic” (or rather, taking into consideration the structure of the Chinese word, I would prefer the term “monomorphemic”, or basic) linguistic units, representing emotions “basic” to Chinese, but not necessarily universally basic. Thus, unlike English *sadness*, Chinese *bei* “is more tragic and fatalistic, involving a momentary transference”; *ai*, “though involving ‘loss’, is ethical in nature, arousing altruistic compassion and sympathy”, etc. (p. 390). The general conclusion is that what is basic is not the emotion terms but “the cognitive element found in emotions that is fundamental to the universality of emotion. The configuration of these elements is shaped by culture. They are artefacts of the Chinese culture, shaped by uniquely Chinese experiences and views of life and the universe” (p. 391).

On the whole, I think the book is a great success. It is valuable both for psychologists and for linguists. Its methodological insights and linguistic materials give a good overview both of the national emotional landscapes and of universal human emotionality in general.

## Notes

1. Dem’jankov et al. (2004) define linguistic psychology as the discipline studying the ways psychological concepts are talked about in the languages of the world.
2. Unfortunately, the reviewer did not have access to Weigand (1998), where the semantics, pragmatics and syntax of these German emotion words are treated in the framework of contrastive lexical semantics.

## References

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Susanne Beckmann, *Die Grammatik der Metapher. Eine gebrauchstheoretische Untersuchung des metaphorischen Sprechens*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001, ix + 241 pages. ISBN 3-484-30438-3

**Reviewed by Cristina Marras (Tel Aviv University)**

Susanne Beckmann's study deals with one of the fundamental figures of speech — metaphor. In the *mare magnum* of contemporary studies of this trope, Beckmann's book proposes a description and an interesting discussion of the formation of metaphors and their understanding. Her main contention is that metaphorical speech is the result of an interaction between creative processes and rules, an interplay between linguistic and communicative models.

*Die Grammatik der Metapher* is divided into eight chapters with an appendix containing a *corpus* of occurrences of the metaphor *Datenautobahn* (Information-Highway) drawn from magazines and newspaper.

In the first three chapters, Beckmann's main purpose is to demonstrate how a metaphor evolves through different steps, from an original creative occurrence, through various forms of *habitualisierung*, up to full-fledged conventionalization. Her concept of *Grammatik* is based on the philosophical use of this terms by Wittgenstein. Yet, while focusing, accordingly, on rules, conventions and their violations, she discusses the character of metaphorical