

Introduction to emotions in language

Diana Santos

ILOS

d.s.m.santos@ilos.uio.no

June 2015, day 1



Emotions in language

- Aristotle: *Rhetorics is the capacity to arouse emotions in your audience.*
- Language is a window into the mind.
- Blaise Pascal: *Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*
- *The mistake of Descartes*: feeling and reasoning are not physically separate in the brain

Overview of this course

- Rationale: to learn/teach more on the import of emotions in language
- To give an overview of many different schools and initiatives, as well as of the who's who we know of
- To clearly express our own opinions and let others criticize them
- To help the students substantiate their own opinions and feelings on the subject
- To provide a forum for discussing the field
- To provide some tools to explore it further

The definition problem

Hardly ever the most interesting issue, but something one has to tackle. We assume everyone here knows well enough what an emotion is, although if pressed everyone may come up with different word formulations, in different languages...

- In this course, any definition of emotion is good (but we will cite a few, nevertheless)
- More than that, we are interested in the language consequences of emotions, not in emotions proper (whatever these may be)
- We believe that language has a central role in our cognition, though, so naming and reasoning about emotions is what makes an emotion an emotion
- We are quite aware of different emotions in different languages and cultures, and this is one of the reasons why emotions in language are so fascinating

The definition problem

Although we are giving the course in English, we will present names and definitions in other languages as well, precisely to show that the way English cuts its language pie is... English-specific.

What

Emotions Sentiments Feelings Opinions
Affective language Subjectivity in language Private states Expressive language

Applications

Opinion mining Subjectivity analysis
sentiment analysis online
anthropology social media monitoring
and analysis appraisal extraction affective
computing reputation analysis

◀ ◻ ▶ ◀ ◻ ▶ ◀ ≡ ▶ ◀ ≡ ▶ ≡ ◻ ◻ ◻

No theory of emotion disagrees on

- emotions have intensity
- there are individual differences in emotion
- expression vs. description are different things
- to talk/describe emotions is a cognitive ability (mediated by language)

◀ ◻ ▶ ◀ ◻ ▶ ◀ ≡ ▶ ◀ ≡ ▶ ≡ ◻ ◻ ◻

Starting from the beginning

(From *The Science of Emotion* by Randolph Cornelius, 1996)

Four schools in psychology that study emotions:

- Darwinian
- Jamesian
- cognitive
- social constructivist

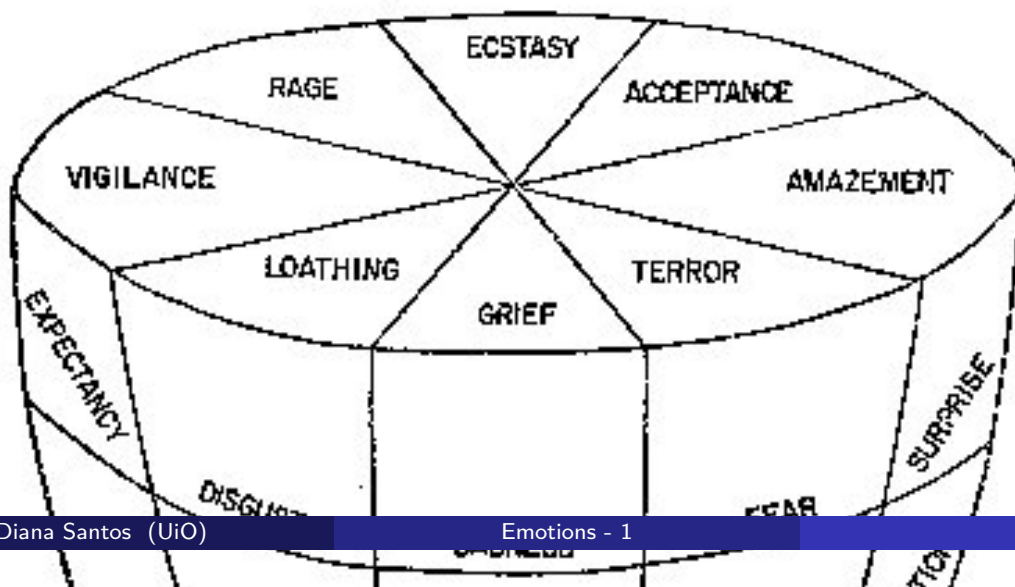
They study and look at different issues, but one can learn from all, and they are all “alive”.

The Darwinian perspective

Main interest: study the emotions as part of the evolutionary paradigm: how they helped in natural selection, what is shared with animals.

Modern work: Ekman and Izard.

facial expressions for happiness, surprise, sadness, fear, disgust and anger are correctly identified by people from vastly different cultures



The Darwinian perspective: problems

Universals of facial expressions imply universals of emotions?

Primary emotions serve the adaptive interests of the organism. What about the social meaning?

Expression or context of the expression?

Unexpectedly (?), spontaneous emotion is much harder to detect than posed emotion...

The Jamesian perspective

- it is the bodily changes that induce the emotion, not the other way around.
(bodily changes= visceral change, or expressive behaviour. A set of “nervous anticipations”...)

Take away the bodily symptoms from a frightened individual; let his pulse beat calmly, his look be firm... ; and what remains of his fear? (Lange, 1885)

- Tenet: There are distinct patterns of physiological responses for at least some emotions...
- James Laird, the facial feedback hypothesis (“awareness of one’s facial expressions is the emotion”)

The cognitive perspective

- The primacy of appraisal by Magda Arnold.

a person's emotional response to an event depends on how he or she appraises the event

(measuring skin conductance while viewing a highly disturbing film)

- the cognitive-motivational-relational theory of Lazarus, suggesting a molecular level (specific judgements) and a molar level (combination)

Important: must objects be cognized before they can be evaluated?

Automatic/unconscious process, or more? Liking vs. guilt.

The cognitive perspective

Other theories

- emotions deal with arousal and perception of arousal, brought about by interruption (Mandler)

the function of emotions is to call attention to events in our environment that have possible adaptive significance for us

- Emotions are central to the organization of cognitive processing (like an operating system) (Oatley & Johnson-Laird)

emotions come at the junctures of our plans, when our plans have been interrupted or fulfilled.

emphasize the impact of emotion on beliefs:

- Beliefs are regarded as one of the major determinants of emotion (appraisal theory)
- But the other way around: Emotions are among the determinants of an individual's beliefs (see Spinoza "emotions are states that make the mind inclined to think one thing rather than another")
 - emotions provide information and guide attention
 - emotions lead to new beliefs
 - (some) sentiments (warm affection, despondency, and antipathy) structure our relationships with other people, in distributed cognition (social relations)
 - Interesting: Adult attachment interview questionnaire correlates with kinds of literary response (Oatley, 2000, pag 103)

The social constructivist perspective (or cultural perspective)

Emotions are products of culture.

*They can be fully understood only on a social level of analysis.
(Averill, 1980)*

emotions are characterized by attitudes such as beliefs, judgements and desires, the contents of which are not natural, but are determined by the systems of cultural belief, value and moral value of particular communities (Armon-Jones, 1986)

Example: if a person does not appraise a situation as one involving a unjustified transgression against him or herself, he or she will not enact the transitory social role that is anger.

The social constructivist perspective

Objects of fear can be culturally determined

fear of people with AIDS, of urban spaces, of pesticides, of contraceptives

And the social function of fear is “instrumental in sustaining social va-

members of a society are encouraged to be afraid of departing from what is expected of them and what is tolerated.

This brings us to the cross-cultural studies of emotions...

Cross-cultural studies of emotions

Language matters. The language of emotion is a vital part of the experience of emotion

emotional experience requires a language of emotion (Lewis & Saarni, 1958)

But

emotion talk does not exist in isolation from other domains of knowledge (Heelas)

Amae is an emotion that is central to Japanese family and social life in that it provides the bond that holds the various personal and social relationships that a person may have together.

Those who are close to each other (...) do not need words to express their feelings. (Doi, 1973)

Fago is the most used word in the cluster of “connection and loss”, meaning

one's relationship with a more unfortunate other (Lutz, 1986)

How many emotions? The same emotions?

there are an indefinite number of emotions: societies can shape, mold, or construct as many different emotions as are functional with the social system. (Averill)

doubt whether anyone would fall in love if they had not heard of it (Averill and Nunley)

Emotionology: the evolution of anger in American society

the conventions and standards by which Americans evaluated anger, and the standards they developed to reflect and encourage these standards (Stearns and Stearns, 1986)

Four schools, but:

The key to reconcile these apparently irreconcilable perspectives [...] resides in the question of how one defines emotion or, more precisely, at what level of organization one places emotion. [...] different levels of organization.

just like eating

what aspects of emotion one chooses to emphasize.

And this is very much the case of the group of students here.

Plutchik

Listening to Plutchik, *The emotions*, a Darwinian

- What is a theory of emotion? integrator, predictor, stimulator, incorporator
- does not distinguish humans from animals
- postulates of his theory
 - there are primary emotions: a small number; and mixtures; can have varying degrees of intensity
 - primary emotions differ from each other in both physiology and behaviour
 - primary emotions exist in pairs of polar opposites

Criteria for primary emotions:

- ① have relevance for basic biological adaptive processes
- ② be found in some form at all evolutionary levels
- ③ not depend on particular neural structures or body parts
- ④ not depend on introspection
- ⑤ primarily defined in terms of behavioural data

Plutchik 3

Scott (1958) lists kinds of (animal) adaptive behaviour:

Ingestive, shelter-seeking, agonistic (fighting or protective), care-giving, care-soliciting, allelomimetic (do the same thing with some degree of mutual stimulation), investigative.

Plutchik chooses some and adds “contact behavior or orientation” (surprise):

incorporation, rejection, destruction, protection, reproduction, deprivation, orientation, exploration.

Different types of emotions

- Expressive emotions have a physiological fingerprint, are bumpy, while others are long-term.
- Mixed emotions

awe = dread + veneration (Greenacre (1956))

surprise: can be good (as opposed to boredom) or bad (fright)

Emotions involved in play... another important area. (roles, acting, learning, “grow up”)

Plutchik 5: the dimensionality of emotions (p. 148)

TABLE 6

Rank-order intercorrelations for five scales of the semantic differential. N = 19

	Pleasure- Pain	Excited- Depressed	Active- Passive	Excitable- Calm
Good-Bad	+0.91	+0.28	+0.11	-0.22
Pleasure-Pain		+0.39	+0.30	-0.21
Excited-Depressed			+0.89	+0.75
Active-Passive				+0.68

Plutchik 6: relationship with the body

- The more physiological the emotion, the more there are commonly used body descriptions: *cold feet, cold sweat, trembling...*
- Emotional expression in Chinese literature: mostly the same as English, but
 - they stretched out their tongues
 - he clapped his hands(surprise and disappointment)

Plutchik: Some comments on Good and bad

- (Most) emotions presuppose evaluation, “an intuitive appraisal of a stimulus as good (beneficial) or bad (harmful)”, Plutchik (p. 61) on Magda Arnold.
- Long-lasting emotions... are called personality traits.
- According to Plutchik, persisting situations which produce mixed emotions produce personality traits (“proud, aggressive, submissive, and optimistic people”).

(Diana) Sins are prohibited feelings. Not actions (this is the legal domain.)

a patterned bodily reaction of either destruction, incorporation, rejection, protection, reproduction, deprivation, orientation, or exploration, or some combination of these, which is brought about by a stimulus.

- the stimulus does not need to be external, which leads us to... the nature of happiness.
- one can react emotionally to one's own emotions, esp. reacting to guilt.

Wierzbicka: linguistic and cultural

Against the primacy of *emotion*

even languages culturally (as well as genetically) closely related to English provide evidence of different ways of conceptualizing and categorizing human experience.

(...) the concept of feeling is universal and can be safely used in the investigation of human experience and human nature (...), the concept of "emotion" is culture-bound and cannot be similarly relied on.

There is no reason why we should have to make such choices, linking "emotion" either with bodily processes, or with feelings, or with thoughts, or with culture. (...) All these things can be and need to be studied...

See Wierzbicka, p. 24-45.

The importance of culture...

In answer to the question “In which language does the phrase I love you feel stronger?”, Rie, a native speaker of Japanese with English as a second language (L2), points out that the Japanese avoid expressing their emotion overtly: “... silence is beautiful in Japanese society. We try to read an atmosphere” (Dewaele 2008)

My own experience: *amuado, fazer caixinha*: feelings/expression of feelings you should grow up from. Examples and impression from Norway.

What does man teach foreigners in Norway?

Nordmenn liker ikke konflikter.

Greit nok. Ikke vi, heller!

Derfor skal man ikke spørre “hvorfor”.



Relation with language

In any case, this course is focused on the relation with language, and all the students here are interested in language in some way.

- Language is the categorization machine: how do we categorize emotions?
- Language allows the difference between **expressing** and **describing** real or fake emotions, and emotions of others.
- Different languages = different emotions?
- Language functions: arousal of emotions, sharing of emotions, negotiation of emotions. Through language you can infuriate, and soothe, augment or diminish feelings of the others
- Language does not occur in a vacuum, which means that gestures, facial expressions, intonation, volume, overt (physical) display of emotions, etc. do interact with language (words and syntax). Emoticons are a proof of para-language means.
- Teaching of emotions and emotional behaviour is done through language (both as in mother-child interaction and in literature)

