

The Meaning of Emotion Terms in Mongolian and English cultures

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Хураангуй: Энэхүү өгүүлэл нь монгол, англи соёлд хэрэглэж буй сэтгэл хөдлөлийн нэр томьёог утга зүйн талаас харьцуулан судалж, нийтлэг болон онцлог талыг тодруулахыг зорилоо. Судлаач Айзард, Бюехлер нарын боловсруулсан сэтгэл хөдлөлийн 10 нэр томьёо, Баянцагааны орчуулсан *Бодь мөрийн зэрэг* зохиолд тодорхойлсон монгол нэр томьёог судалгааны хэрэглэгдэхүүн болгон ашигласан болно. Соёл хоорондын утга судлалын судалгааны аргыг ашиглан харьцуулалт хийж, ойлгоход бэрхшээлтэй үгсийн утгын дэлгэрэнгүй тайлбарыг өгөв. Сэтгэл хөдлөлийн нэр томьёог соёл-хоорондын утга судлалын үүднээс задлан шинжлэхдээ хэл, соёлын онцлог, шинжлэх ухаанд хэрэглэгдэж буй байдал, хүний талаарх түгээмэл ойлголт зэргийг харгалзан үзэж, утгын тайлбар өгөх шаардлагатай болохыг судалгааны үр дүн харуулав. Харьцуулсан судалгаанаас харахад монгол хэлэнд хэрэглэгдэж буй сэтгэл хөдлөлийн нэр томьёо нь өдөр тутамд ашиглаж буй түгээмэл үг хэллэгээс утга, үүрэг, хэрэглээгээрээ өө байсан. Цаашид монгол соёлд хэрэглэж буй сэтгэл хөдлөлийн нэр томьёог монгол хэлний өвөрмөц онцлог, түүхэн

хөгжил, үг зүйн тогтолцоо, ардын уламжлалыг үндэслэн, нийгэм хэл шинжлэлийн үүднээс нарийвчлан судлах шаардлагатай хэмээн үзэж байна.

Түлхүүр үг: Сэтгэл хөдлөл, соёл хоорондын утга судлал, үг зүйн тогтолцоо

Introduction

Our personal experiences provide us with a frame of reference for dealing with other cultures. Before I can truly understand other culture, I must first look objectively at my own culture, focusing on Mongolian people's emotions and how they are expressed by means of Mongolian words.

Wierzbicka (1986) suggested the interesting and provocative ideas to identify a set of fundamental human emotions. According to Izard and Buechler (1980: 168), a set of fundamental human emotions: (1) interest, (2) joy, (3) surprise, (4) sadness, (5) anger, (6) disgust, (7) contempt, (8) fear, (9) shame/shyness, and (10) guilt has already been identified. Having chosen five of them, I have tried to give a brief introduction on the different system of emotion terms in Mongolian and English languages.

It is natural to become so identified with our own culture system that it is not easy to separate our personal point of view from what actually exists; it is difficult to be objective. Western people, of course, do not have strong feelings about Mongolian people and how they should emotionally behave. When we encounter people that are different from our own, especially people from other cultures, we usually react by thinking that they are strange. We are even apt to be suspicious, if not fearful, of them. In actuality, we do not understand why they act, look, speak, behave, and dress differently from us. It is human nature to reject and to label as “bad” or “crazy” that appears different to us.

It is much easier to evaluate other cultures than our own; they stand out because of their differences. It is much more difficult to study our own culture which we take for granted. Therefore, my purpose in this paper is to present the explanatory value of speaking terms of emotion examining a number of emotion terms to clarify the sources of confusion and to reveal the real differences between Mongolian and English languages.

Literature review

It is believed that emotion terms available in a given lexicon provide an important clue to the speakers' culture. English terms of emotion constitute a folk taxonomy, not an

objective, culture-free analytical framework, so obviously we cannot assume that English words such as *disgust*, *fear*, or *shame* are clues to universal human concepts or basic psychological realities (Anna Wierzbicka 1992: 119).

Catherine Lutz (1990: 38) has exposed that American psychology has taken English emotion words such as ‘*fear*’, ‘*love*’ and ‘*disgust*’, has reified what are essentially American ethno-psychological concepts, and has accepted them, often unquestioned, as the conceptual apparatus of scientific inquiry. Given the limited cultural base, it would be surprising if the emotions, exactly as distinguished, conceptualized, and experienced in American society, emerge as universals. Exactly this has been assumed, however, and then ‘proven’ by Western researchers (Ekman & Friesen, 1980).

Thus, considering universal human concepts of emotions, scientific expressions and culture-specific aspects of emotions, the emotion terms in English are in question. For example, Anna Wierzbicka (1992: 120) has suggested:

- (1) The universal human emotions must be identified in terms of a language-independent semantic metalanguage, not in terms of English folk words for emotions or in terms of English scientific expressions such as “a loss of situational self-esteem” for shame-like emotions.
- (2) Lexical discriminations in the area of emotions as in other semantic fields provide important clues to the speakers’ conceptualizations.

From a Mongolian point of view, Mongolian terms of emotion are words that are derived from and related to the ways of Mongolian traditional nomadic civilization, religion, and customs, and also, they are closely related to the established etiquette of morality that Mongolian people firmly adhered for many decades (Bayantsagaan, 1990). For example, Bogd Zonhova, a Living Buddha (624-544), in his book “*Bodi muryn zereg*” described 10 kinds of wisdom of a teacher. His doctrines could show us a clear meaning of the word ‘*bayasahui*’ that can be translated as ‘*joy*’, ‘*happiness*’, ‘*pleasure*’, and ‘*delight*’ in English.

- (1) *X (teacher) is bayasahui.*
 - when he is able to correct his mistakes.
 - when he can restrain himself from ‘laziness’.
- X is happy.*
 - when he likes whatever he does intentionally.
 - when he has a special power of speech.
- X has a great pleasure.*
 - when someone helps him.
 - when he is generous to people.

To see the emotion terms in both languages, they have the same morphological system. On the other hand, the words form using the different inflectional and derivational suffixes, for instance, *joy* (noun), *joyful* (adjective) in English, and similarly, in Mongolian language, *ichguur* (noun), *ichguurtei* (adjective), and *ichih* (verb).

(2) *ichguurtei* – *shamed*

In Mongolian culture, it is said that it is very shamed on people when they lose their honor.

(3) *ichih* – *to be shy*

Mongolian people are “*shy*”. Mongolian culture discourages people from saying openly what they think in their mind and what they do not want (Namjil, 1999) whereas Western culture encourages them to do so. Otherwise, Mongolian culture generally requires people be governed by the norms of modesty when characterizing their performance.

From the above examples, it is difficult to judge who is right and who is wrong. My view is that both encouragement and discouragement are right in what they are trying to say, but that they both fail to say it clearly and unambiguously. Both cultures use the same word ‘*shyness*’ but it is defined differently in them. In fact, it means something different.

Discussion

In applying the cross-cultural semantic theories, the cross-cultural comparison of emotions has been done. As stated in Anna Wierzbicka (1991), the researchers in cross-cultural pragmatics try to explain the differences in the ways of speaking in terms of emotions such as ‘*joy*’, ‘*sadness*’, ‘*disgust*’ and ‘*shame/shyness*’ etc. without explaining what they mean by these terms, and using them as if they were self-explanatory. But if one compares the ways in which different writers use these terms, it becomes obvious that they don’t mean the same things for everyone.

The terms cannot be comprehensible to people from different cultural backgrounds. In fact, the intended meanings are often not only different but mutually incompatible. As a result, the same ways of speaking are described by some authors as ‘*shame*’ and by others as ‘*shyness*’. They lead to confusion. For example, in the literature on Mongolian culture and society, Mongolian ways of speaking are often described as “*shame*” and are contrasted with the English ways of speaking, which are supposed to be more “*shy*”.

Explications of emotion term “*Disgust*”

To account for both the similarities and the differences in the use of the terms under discussion in both cultures, the following rough explications can be proposed (Anna Wierzbicka, 1992:127). For some terms, it seems possible to me to explain what the relevant feeling is in English although they do not have the same concepts.

Jigsjil, zevuuzel – disgust (Tsevel, 1968),
disgust

X thinks something like this:

I now know: this person did something bad. People shouldn't do things like this.
When one thinks about it, one can't feel something bad. Because it will make X
feel bad.

X feels like someone who thinks something like this:

I have something bad in my mouth. I don't want this.

Distaste

X thinks something like this:

Y did something bad.

When I think about it, I feel something bad. Because of this, X feels
something bad.

X feels like someone who thinks something like this:

I now had something bad in my mouth.

Revulsion

X thinks something like this:

Y is in this place.

A part of my body could be in same place.

If this happened, I would feel something bad.

When I think about it, I can't feel something bad.

Because of this, X feels something bad

(of the kind of people feel when they think something like this)

A few explanations are shown in order:

First, the phrase “I know now” is meant to indicate the perception: one feels *disgust* or *distaste*, when one first realizes (sees, hears, etc) that someone did something “bad”, not later.

Second, the references to the mouth in the explication of *disgust* and *distaste* are supported by facial expressions characteristic of these emotions (although disgust appears to be also associated with a wrinkled nose; (Ekman and Friesen, 1974).

Third, *distaste* is, intuitively speaking, a milder emotion than disgust. By difference in tense in the components ‘I have something bad in my mouth’ (*disgust*) and ‘I now had something in my mouth’ (*distaste*), and also by the absence of a volitive component ‘I don't want this’ in *distaste* and its presence in *disgust* (the *disgusted* person rejects, so to speak, an unacceptable current experience, but *distaste* is more like a kind of unpleasant after-taste).

Fourth, *disgust* implies that something is objectively bad and that other people would feel something unpleasant ('when one thinks about it, one can't feel something bad'); by contrast, *distaste* seems to be more subjective ('when I think about it, I feel something bad').

Fifth, *revulsion* is represented as referring to undesirable objects (or creatures). This may seem too restrictive, as it can also refer to human behavior and to abstract entities.

Sixth, the phrasing 'one/I can't feel something bad' in the explications of *disgust* and *revulsion* is an attempt to reflect the instinctive character of the negative reactions in question.

To conclude this part, all points mentioned here require further investigations and the explications sketched should be regarded as no more than first approximations. I agree with what Anna Wierzbicka stressed that the exact boundaries drawn between the related feelings of disgust, distaste and hate are language-specific. For example, Mongolian has several words that can be used as translation equivalents of the words in question: *zevuuzel* and *egduuzel* (dislike), *durguizel* (distaste), *jigshil* (disgust), and *horson jigshih* (revulsion).

Conclusion

To conclude from my reading of the very few literatures in this topic, I doubt whether the emotions can so neatly be identified by means of English words. Otherwise, when we talk about the meaning of emotion terms or words in different cultures, first of all, we must do semantic analysis collecting the lexical data to find out whether there is a direct connection between the emotion aspects such as universal human concepts, culture-specific aspects and scientific expressions to identify exact meanings of the terms. Therefore, collaboration of psychology, anthropology and linguistics is extremely important to do this task.

The main difference between Mongolian and English languages in this area under discussion can be represented in terms of certain specifiable features, for instance, Mongolian emotion words, of course, are not all the same as the simple words that we use every day, but as mentioned above, it is important to study them on the basis of special distinctions of Mongolian language, Mongolian folk traditions, historical development of Mongolian language, Mongolian morphological system and sociolinguistics.

Different systems of emotion terms reflect different ways of conceptualizing emotions, and conversely, any cross-cultural similarities in the conceptualization of emotions will be reflected in the ways of different societies converge in the labelling of emotions. But the extent of similarities and differences in the labelling and conceptualization of emotions cannot be assessed without rigorous semantic analysis, and without a language-independent semantic meta-language.

Монгол, англи соёл дахь сэтгэл хөдлөлийн нэр томъёоны утга

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Abstract:

The paper deals with the explanatory value of speaking terms of emotion English and Mongolian cultures. While examining a number of emotion terms, the sources of confusion have been clarified and the real differences between English and Mongolian languages have been revealed. In applying the cross-cultural semantic theories, the cross-cultural comparison of emotions has been done. English terms of emotion constitute a folk taxonomy, not an objective, culture-free analytical framework while Mongolian terms of emotion are words that are derived from and related to the ways of Mongolian traditional nomadic civilization, religion, and customs. The main difference between Mongolian and English languages can be represented in terms of certain specifiable features, for instance, Mongolian emotion words, of course, are not all the same as the simple words that we use every day, but as mentioned above, it is important to study them on the basis of special distinctions of Mongolian language, Mongolian folk traditions, historical development of Mongolian language, Mongolian morphological system and sociolinguistics. In conclusion, different systems of emotion terms reflect different ways of conceptualizing emotions, and conversely, any cross-cultural similarities in the conceptualization of emotions will be reflected in the ways of different societies converge in the labelling of emotions.

Key words: emotion terms, cross-cultural semantic analysis, cultural meaning

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