

Linguoculturological reasons for the different levels of somatization of sadness in languages of the world

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Considering their important role in human life the study of emotions is of great interest for linguistic science. This article is dedicated to the analysis of the phenomenon of somatization of sadness and the explanation of differences in the levels of such somatization as reflected in language.

The analysis of literature has shown that expression of sadness with the help of somatic expressions is particularly prevalent in African, South-East Asian and Australian languages. Organs that are most often associated with emotions are the heart, liver and stomach and interoception plays a great role in creating an association between an organ and an emotion. With its help a person becomes aware of the physical changes taking place inside their body, which can be caused in particular by emotions. It was established that certain associations between organs and emotions come to exist due to "somatic bridges" while others form because of "semantic shift". It was found that the frequency of the use of somatic expressions that express emotions was reduced in English during the industrialization and that similar changes are taking place today in Chinese.

In order to explain the differences in the level of somatization it is useful to turn to the triadic structure of concepts, in accordance to which the concept "sadness" has an experiential side (an interoceptive characterization of the emotion), a notional side (a definition, verbal representation etc.) and an evaluative side. It is hypothesized that an important role of somatic expression in the expression of sadness points to the importance of the experiential side while the use of abstract words is indicative of the notional side being important. The fact that the experiential side of a concept is considered to predate the notional side explains the direction of the diachronic change from stronger somatization of emotions towards their expression with the help of more abstract notions.

Keywords: expression of emotions, expression of sadness, concept, interoception, somatic expressions, psi-collocations.

Interdisciplinarity is one of the defining characteristics of science in the XXI century. Integration of knowledge accumulated in such disciplines as linguistics, psychology, culturology, anthropology etc. allows us to examine the human life in its entirety. In accordance with the principle of anthropocentrism linguistic research in particular focuses on the person rather than on language seen as an abstract entity separated from the speaker. Emotions are among the most important manifestations of one's private life, and sadness is considered a basic emotion that has significant impact on the person's behavior and thought process. Therefore, studying the differences between the ways that different language-communities conceptualize sadness becomes a task important for the field of linguoculturology. The level of somatization is a metric by which the expressions of the concept of sadness in different languages differ significantly.

That is why the goal of this paper is to analyze the verbal expression of sadness in different languages from the point of view of its somatization. It is important not only to identify the languages and language families in which the phenomenon of emotion somatization is prevalent but also to analyze the results and explain them with the help of modern understanding of concepts and the way that

they are formed. In order to achieve this goal an analysis of information pertaining to a number of languages, that belong to different language families and are spoken in various parts of the world, was conducted. Lexical, grammatical and phraseological data have proven to be instrumental in understanding the phenomenon of somatization of emotions.

The way that emotions are reflected in language was studied by a number of renowned linguists. First of all, Anna Wierzbicka, a Polish-Australian researcher, should be mentioned. Much of her work is centered around finding differences in how speakers of different languages understand and perceive everyday emotions. J. Lakoff is the leading researcher in the field of emotional metaphors and metonymies. The issue of connection between the body and emotions in Chinese language and culture is studied by P. Zhao and colleagues. The phenomenon of "psi-collocations" in South-East Asia was described by L. Matisoff. The expression of emotions in African languages is the subject of work by L. McPherson, K. Prokhorov, V. Dzokoto, S. Okazaki and others. M. Ponsonnet is the leading researcher in the field of emotions in Australian languages.

Sadness can be described as a psychological pain accompanied by loneliness, distress, depression, anxiety, grief and anguish. It is associated with specific behaviors, expressions, physiological changes and

cognitive processes. Sadness is believed to have an adaptive function as it allows people to cope with loss. At the same time excessive sadness can be detrimental to one's mental health [1, p. 199]. From the point of view of linguoculturology it is sadness as a concept that is important. A concept is different from a notion since it includes not only the characteristics that have to do with description and classification but also the sensory-volitional and experiential-phenomenological characteristics. While a notion can only be understood a concept can be experienced [8, p. 48].

According to O. Selivanova, "a concept is an informational structure of consciousness, a mixed-substrate specially organized unit of memory, which contains the totality of knowledge regarding the object of cognition, verbal and nonverbal, accumulated through the interplay of the five mental functions of consciousness and the unconscious" [16, p. 256]. The concept of sadness belongs to the category of kaleidoscopic concepts, which represent the sum of scenarios and frames connected to a certain emotion. In other words, it includes the associations that people have with sadness as well as the knowledge about how this emotion is to be felt and expressed as it unfolds in time [12, p.88].

In modern linguistics a dyadic and a triadic structure of a concept are distinguished. The dyadic structure consists of a nucleus and periphery. The nucleus is normally the key lexeme which denotes the concept. The lexemes that are part of the nucleus are characterized by high frequency of use, semantic generality and stylistic neutrality. For example, the English word "sadness" can be used in a variety of styles and contexts which means that it probably is the nucleus of the concept "sadness". In contrast, a word like "woe" is stylistically marked and the word "heartbreak" is mostly used in the context of romantic love. Thus, these words are likely closer to the periphery of the concept.

The triadic structure of a concept includes an experiential, a notional and an evaluative side. The experiential side consists of visual, audial, tactile, olfactory and gustatory characteristics of objects, phenomena and events which are reflected in memory. They are the relevant features on a practical level. The notional side includes verbal representation, denomination, description, characteristic structure and definition as well as comparative characterization within the conceptual range. Finally, the evaluative side reflects the importance of a concept for both the individual and the whole language community. It is important to note that the experiential side is associated with a mode of reality perception that historically predates the notional mode. It is the experiential image that constitutes the nucleus of a concept. Guided by the needs of rational thinking it goes through a number of transformations on its way to the highest level of abstractness [17, p. 89]. In other words, first people pay attention to the physical changes that accompany sadness and only after that they name

this emotion, define its characteristics and separate it from other emotions.

It is well known that concepts can be represented by a variety of verbal means such as lexemes, collocations, phrases, structural and positive sentence schemas, which carry typical propositions etc. [12, p. 244]. The concept of sadness can be expressed not only through abstract emotion words but also through somatic sensation expressions and somatic metaphors. These are body-part phrases referring to both literal and imaginary processes taking place inside, or with the body. A. Ogarkova has identified the possibility to express emotions with the help of somatic expressions in dozens of diverse and unconnected languages. The English examples include "his hair stood on his head", "his heart sank" etc. It was hypothesized that the possibility to express emotion not only through abstract words but also through metaphoric body-part expressions is a universal trait in all languages [11, p. 51–52]. Z. Kovecses points out that the bodily basis of emotion is the only ontological content of an emotional concept, the majority of which is comprised of figurative construal. The researcher believes that prototypical emotion concepts, such as sadness, are more embodied than other abstract concepts and thus somewhat different from them [7, p. 44–45].

This notwithstanding, languages differ in respect to their degree of reliance on somatic expressions for the expression of sadness (or the somatization of sadness). This is most clearly illustrated by the existence of languages in which there are no specific lexemes that denote sadness and any expression of this emotion happens with the help of somatic expressions. The examples of such languages can be found in Africa. L. McPherson and K. Prokhorov have studied the expression of emotions in languages of the Dogon family, which are spoken in the east central region of Mopti in Mali (Ben-Tey, Jamsay, Nanga, Yanda-Dom, Najamba-Kindige, Tommo-So, Yorno-So, Sangha-So, Togo-Kan, Mombo and Ampari). In these languages emotions and character traits are expressed through a combination of the word "liver" with a certain adjective or verb. Only in one of the languages studied, in Tomo-So, exists a lexeme that denotes sadness. However even this lexeme is mostly still used in combination with the word "liver". So instead of the phrase "I am sad" a speaker of Tomo-So will say "My liver is sad".

The majority of expressions of sadness in particular in these languages are formed by combining the word "liver" with a verb and not an adjective. The phrase "liver cry" means "to be dissatisfied, unhappy" in Jamsay, Nanga and Togo-Kan. In Tomo-So the phrase "liver is ruined" indicates being devastated. The combination of the word "liver" and the word "be sliced" means a sudden intense feeling of disappointment in Togo-Kan and Jamsay. In Nanga the same feeling is conveyed through the combination of the noun "liver" and the verb "to break off". The sudden nature of disappointment is reflected in the choice of verbs since both "be sliced" and "break off" are verbs that denote a quick action. Expressions with the component "liver" are also used to express emotions

caused by bad memories. They are included in imperative sentences to ask the interlocutor not to remind the speaker about an unpleasant event in the past. To achieve this aim the verb “take up” is used in Nanga and Togo-Kan resulting in the formation of the phrase roughly equal to “Do not take up my liver”. In Tomo-So and Jamsay “liver” turns into “liver wound” and the verb “bump” is used in combination with it. Thus, we get the expression “Don’t bump my liver wound”.

The researchers explain the utilization of the word “liver” in the expression of emotions using the fact that feelings are often accompanied by physical sensations in the chest area. Therefore, it is not surprising that people may form associations between strong emotions and organs situated in the upper abdomen. For example, in English there is an expression “my heart sank”. However, since most people do not actually feel their livers, the choice of this particular organ remains in need of an explanation. McPherson and Prokhorov believe that due to its significant size and central location the liver attracts attention during the butchering of livestock. In addition, when butchering the liver, heart and lungs are removed together, which leads people to believe that they all form a single complex organ [10].

The expression of emotion in African languages was also studied by V. Dzokoto and S. Okazaki, who worked in Ghana in Western Africa. Specifically, they looked into Fante (an Akan language from the Kwa group) and Dagbani (a Mole-Dagbani language from the Gur group). Fante speakers were able to name just 16 words that denote emotions in their language. Among them 12 included a name of a body part (5 terms referred to the eye, 3 to the self or skin and 1 each to the face, ear, chest and stomach). The emotion of happiness in this language can only be expressed by saying one is “not happy” (*ma’ani nka*). At the same time the word happiness (*anika*) itself consists of the components “eye” and “agree/reach”. In Dagbani only 9 words that denote emotions were found and 5 of them included the component “heart”. Sadness is described by the word *suhisajingu* (lit. destruction of the heart). Whilst the connection between emotions and the heart has been described above, the connection between emotions and the eyes remains in need of an explanation. V. Dzokoto and S. Okazaki believe that the forming of such connection in some language communities is due to the peculiarities of their natural environment. Dagbani tribes live inland, in the northern, drier parts of Ghana whereas Fantes reside in coastal Ghana where the vegetation includes rain forest, coastal shrub and grassland. So, the vegetation that surrounds them is more heterogeneous and contains more visual information. This might result in a heightened role of visual cognition and eyes in the consciousness of Fantes [4].

African languages are far from being the only languages that tend to express emotions by mentioning the body. P. Zhao and colleagues have

compared emotional expressions in English and Chinese. The latter has numerous words and idiomatic phrases that denote emotions and mention visceral organs including the heart, lungs, liver, spleen, kidneys, gallbladder and intestines. The expressions that refer to sadness mention the liver (e.g. *zhai xin qu gan*; lit. the heart and liver are torn off from their body; extremely sad), intestines (e.g. *xin sui chang duan*; lit. the heart is broken and intestine is crackled; heartbroken), lungs (e.g. *ce fei gan*; lit. feeling pitiful to the deep sense of the lung and the liver; feeling anguish), spleen (e.g. *tong ru xin pi*; lit. feeling sharp pain in the heart and the spleen; heart breaking). In addition, the Chinese word *xin* (heart) can be used to express almost any emotion. [16, p. 318]. Despite the fact that in English there also exists a number of expressions with the component “heart” that denote emotions, the majority of the Chinese expressions that include the word *xin* are still translated with the help of nuanced and abstract mental words such as “discouraged”, “distressed”, “grieving” etc. [16, p. 322].

In general, in English the level of somatization is significantly lower than in Chinese. In emotional expressions the kidneys, liver and gallbladder are almost never mentioned. The only exceptions are words that are rarely used today such as “lily-livered” and “yellow bellied” and word of Greek origin, such as “melancholy”, in case of which the direct connection to the body has been lost [18, p. 319].

P. Zhao and colleagues believe that one of the functions of the brain is the categorization of an endless flow of information with the help of discrete and abstract terms. This endless flow exists due to interoception, a process that ensures that the nervous system receives, interprets and integrates signals received from the body. Interoceptive signals, such as muscle tension, temperature and blood pressure, are constantly transmitted to the brain but they are imprecise. These are the emotional concepts that help make sense of all this information. Language enables us to group similar feelings together which reduces the uncertainty when interpreting them. The researchers have hypothesized that some cultures pay more attention to the bodily changes while others emphasize the abstract cognitive aspects of emotions. For example, in the Chinese culture the somatic sensations that accompany emotions are very important and fewer abstract words are used, and vice versa among the speakers of English the use of abstract nuanced terms is considered crucial while the bodily changes are often ignored [18, p. 321].

Generally South-East Asian languages tend to utilize “psi-collocations”. In European languages most emotional expressions do not include a morpheme that would specify the locus of the emotion. Adjectives and verbs that are used to describe emotional phenomena do not have to be used with a certain word that would indicate that it is the emotional sphere that they are connected to. In other words, though it is possible to speak of a class of words that are used to describe emotions, this class is covert. A word can not be determined to belong to this class on the basis of having a certain external trait. On the other hand, in South-East

Asian languages words that have to do with emotions form an overt class. Emotional concepts in such languages are mostly expressed with the help of multimorphemic set expressions (psi-collocations). The noun in such an expression (psi-noun) points to its connection to the emotional sphere. The verb or the adjective (psi-mate) that accompanies the noun expresses the particular emotions itself.

In Thai the psi-noun is the word *caj* (heart/breath), in Jingpho it is *myit* (heart/mind). Mikir and Lepcha also utilize words that mean “heart”. In Lushai both “liver” and “heart” are used. In Burmese the words “heart”, “liver” and “stomach” can play the role of a psi-mate [9, p. 3-4]. There is detailed information on how emotions are expressed in White Hmong, a language that is used mostly in China. The word *siab* (liver) is the psi-noun in Hmong. For example, the phrase *qab siab* (lit. sweet liver) means “happy, at ease” and vice versa the phrase *tsis qab siab* (lit. non-sweet liver) means “unhappy, ill at ease”. The same feeling can be expressed using the phrases *raug siab* (lit. hit the mark liver) and *xu siab* (lit. miss the mark liver). *Siab khis* (lit. liver break a piece off) means “to feel frustrated, saddened” and *chob siab* (lit. pierce liver) means “offended, grieved”. Sometimes psi-collocations may seem excessive. For instance, the phrase *kho siab* (lit. lonely liver) just means “lonely”. Despite this, in Hmong it is important for the locus of an emotions to be indicated. So, even though some expressions with the word *siab* can be translated to English with the help of the expressions with the word “heart”, *siab* plays a far more important role in Hmong than “heart” does in English [6, p. 170–174].

Information from the Australian languages, in which the use of names of body parts to express emotions is very prevalent, is crucial for understanding the phenomenon of somatization of emotions. Having studied dozens of the continent’s languages, M. Ponsonnet proposed a mechanism according to which the associations between emotions and certain visceral organs may form. In her opinion, a “somatic bridge” (a connection underpinned by human physiology) can exist between an organ and an emotion. For example, the fact that our heart beats faster when we are afraid is the somatic bridge that connects fear and the heart [14, p.31]. Somatic bridges play an important role in the emergence of associations between emotions and the stomach, heart and throat. In Australian languages the stomach is the body part that is used most often in the context of expressing emotions. 275 expressions that include the component “stomach” were found in 26 languages used all over Australia. In particular, these expressions are used to denote general negative emotions (such as sadness) and empathetic emotions (such as sympathy and grief). For instance, in Pitjantjatjara the expression *tjuni tjulyypila(pa)* (lit. stomach upset, sad) means “feeling terrible, sad, depressed”. In Wirangu

the phrase *dyarda wadyarn* (lit. stomach cry) means “sad, dejected”. In Warlpiri the expression *miyalu-jarrimi* (lit. belly + INCHOACTIVE) has the meaning “worry, feel sorry for” [14, p. 34].

In addition to the organs connected to emotions with the help of semantic bridges, M. Ponsonnet also postulates the existence of organs which become connected to emotions due to “semantic shift”. This is a situation that happens when a word that denotes a certain body part, that is already associated with emotions, starts to denote a different body part. For instance, in some Australian languages the word “stomach” started also meaning “liver”, which resulted in associations forming between emotions, which were connected to the stomach, and the liver. Thus, the liver also became associated with general unpleasant and empathetic emotions [14, p. 34].

In addition to the difference between various languages at their current stage of development, the difference in the level of use of somatic expressions that refer to emotions can also be seen when comparing various stages of development of one language. For example, a more significant separation of emotions and the body in English happened during the Victorian period. Before that happiness, anger and sadness were considered to be connected to physiological processes. During the Victorian era, which was marked by industrialization, people came to see their body as simply a machine governed by the brain. Because of such attitudes towards the body the importance of the somatic aspect of emotions diminished. Expressions connecting the body and emotions, which had been used literally, started being used metaphorically. Emotions began being perceived as coming from the spirit and not the body [15, p. 66–67]. Zhao and colleagues ascertain that in China certain changes in the way people express their emotions are happening right now. Young people and those living in cities use more psychological terms to convey their emotions (depression, social phobia, PTSD etc.) whereas older people and those residing in rural areas continue to prefer the embodied view of emotions [18, p. 319].

The phenomenon of somatization of emotions, which is reflected in language, can also be shown using psychological methods. V. Dzokoto, who authored the research of Fante and Dagbani languages cited above, asked a group of Ghanaians and a group of Americans to fill out a number of questionnaires. Two of them pertained to the perceived understanding and comprehension of signals from one’s body. They included questions like “Do you notice distinct body reactions when you are fatigued?” The third questionnaire had to do with the perceived awareness of one’s emotions. It included, for instance, the question “Do you pay much attention to your feelings?” In comparison with the American subjects the Ghanaian participants reported higher levels of interoceptive awareness and lower levels of emotional awareness [3, p. 670–671]. Such results are unsurprising considering a big number of somatic expressions used to express emotions in languages spoken in Ghana.

In clinical psychology the term “somatization” refers to a situation when a person expresses a personal or social grievance by complaining of a somatic problem. S. Farooq and colleagues have compared the levels of somatization among British people of Asian descent and indigenous British people. People of Asian descent have demonstrated a higher number of somatic symptoms, which point to a tendency to analyze and experience emotions in somatic terms [5].

The research conducted allows us to reach the following conclusions. Sadness is a kaleidoscopic concept that includes a significant number of various parts such as the antecedents and the consequences of the emotion, its subjective experience and socially acceptable expression.

Turning to the triadic structure of the concept, which includes the experiential, the notional and the evaluative sides, it is possible to reach the conclusion that the speakers of different languages emphasize different sides of the concept “sadness”. When dealing with emotions the experiential side should be considered to include not only visual, audial, olfactory, tactile and gustatory but also interoceptive characteristics. It is due to interoception that a person pays attention to the changes in heartbeat, breathing and other physiological functions that accompany emotions. Interoception is the reason associations form between emotions and visceral organs. It can also be the reason for the use of a great number of somatic

metaphors and metonymies as well as psi-collocations. Sometimes an association may come to exist between emotions and an organ we do not normally feel (e.g. liver). There are several possible reasons for this phenomenon. A certain unfamiliarity with physiology may play its part leading people to ascribe more functions to organs that are bigger in size. It is also possible for a semantic shift to have happened resulting in a word, that was once used to denote one organ, now denoting a different one.

An exceptionally strong association between sadness and visceral organs can be seen in the African, Australian and South-East Asian languages. This points to the importance of the experiential side in the conceptualization of sadness in these languages. In English and other European languages sadness is perceived as an abstract phenomenon, which is evidenced by it being represented by an abstract noun that is unconnected to any body parts. In order to identify their emotions, English speaking people rely on the knowledge about the scenarios that cause sadness rather than on the sensations that accompany it. Thus, the notional side of the concept “sadness” is of greater importance to them. At the same time the changes that happened in the English speaking world in the XIX century and the tendencies that can be observed in modern China show that a language can “reorient” itself to pay more attention to the notional side of emotional concepts. This fact is consistent with the idea that the experiential side of a concept predates its notional side on the path to greater cognitive abstraction.

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Лінгвокультурологічні причини різного рівня соматизації почуття суму в мовах світу

Зважаючи на їхню важливу роль у житті людини, вивчення емоцій становить значний інтерес для лінгвістичної науки. Статтю присвячено аналізу явища соматизації почуття суму у мовах світу та пояснення мовних розбіжностей у рівні такої соматизації.

Аналіз літератури показав, що вираження емоцій за допомогою соматичних виразів є зокрема притаманним для мов Африки, Південно-східної Азії та Австралії. Органами, які найчастіше пов'язуються з емоціями, є серце, печінка та живіт, а велику роль в становленні асоціативних відносин між органом та емоцією грає інтроцепція. За її допомогою людина фіксує фізичні зміни всередині свого тіла, які можуть бути викликані, зокрема, емоціями. Було встановлено, що деякі асоціації між органами та емоціями виникають завдяки «соматичним мостам», у той час як інші починають існувати через «семантичне переміщення». Було виявлено, що частота використання соматичних виразів на позначення емоцій англійською зменшилася в період індустріалізації та що схожі зміни мають місце сьогодні в китайській мові.

Для пояснень розбіжностей у рівні соматизації корисною є триадна структура концепту, згідно з якою концепт «сум» має образну (інтроцептивну характеристику почуття) понятійну (дефініцію, мовну фіксацію) та ціннісну сторони. Припускається, що важлива роль соматичних виразів при позначенні емоції суму вказує на важливість образної сторони цього концепту, а використання абстрактних слів свідчить про значущість його понятійної сторони. Те, що, як вважається, образна сторона концепту передусім понятійній, пояснює напрямок діхронічного руху мов від більшої соматизації емоцій до більшого їх вираження за допомогою абстрактних понять.

Ключові слова: мовне вираження емоцій, вираження емоції суму, концепт, інтроцепція, соматичні вирази, психовирази.
