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## THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN THE RECOGNITION AND CATEGORISATION OF EMOTIONAL STATES. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “ME” AND EMOTION IN A CULTURAL CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This article concerns the analysis of the importance of language in the self-determination of one's emotional states and his/her determination of the same in another person. In the first part of the article, the author presents difficulties related to the categorisation of emotions resulting from the use of different languages. The author goes on to prove that a broadly defined culture is of key significance for understanding emotions, with language being an indispensable dimension for naming certain emotional states. Due to the fact that emotions are specifically linked to the “subjective self”, fundamental role should be attributed to the kind of formed mental structure that defines the character of this “subjective self”. Collective and individualistic cultures are examples of a different formation of the structure of the “self”. They determine the ways of experiencing emotions and the types of dominant emotional states. As the basic system of social communication, language allows these states to be given meaning, and thus explains the difference in their experiences and guides the way they are categorised.

**Keywords:** language, culture, emotion, self

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is to substantiate the thesis that the basis for the possibility of recognizing emotions in oneself and others is a formed mental structure in which language plays a special role as a basic tool for coding and decoding (naming) meanings. As such a tool, language also determines the possibility of experiencing certain emotional states in a given way. Language is not an emotion, but it is essential for emotions. Only the naming of an experienced state, in and of itself, gives the individual a sense of

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wholeness and comprehensibility of what is within himself or herself and in the world. This has already been pointed out by Schachter who created a two-factor theory of emotion (Schachter & Singer, 1962).

It should be explained that the author treats emotion in a holistic way, as a whole composed of four components: neurophysiological, expressive-social, experiential (feeling state) and motivational. When analysing the importance of language and culture, two of them play a special role: the experiential and expressive component. The activation of these components of emotion, by virtue of the principle of mutual arousal, leads to the activation of the others (Izard, 1977).

An emotion, as a complex set of changes (including physical and mental changes), which is a form of response to a situation or event (or generally a trigger) to which an individual assigns a certain meaning and significance, is something real and has an ontological status. At the same time, it is a certain cognitive construct, which is significantly influenced by broadly understood culture and individual experiences. The possibility for pointing at emotions as being something real is attested to by the evolutionary continuity and similarity of emotional expressions in animals and humans, as has already been demonstrated by Darwin. There is also ample evidence to suggest that the perception of certain fundamental emotions is something universal, independent of culture or nation. The recognition of emotions is a pre-linguistic ability, and words are simply a means of communicating an already formed perception. This is referred to in the so-called universality hypothesis. Certain common ways of perceiving emotions, independent of culture, are the result of similar relational patterns. Each emotion is characterised by a specific type of relational meaning, defined as a basic relational theme. For fear, for example, the main relational theme is facing a precarious existential threat, for shame – to fall below the personal ideal. The basic relational theme is in a way the result of the co-occurrence of the person–environment relationship, personal significance and appraisal processes (Lazarus, 1991, p. 147).

However, the evolutionary continuity does not explain the reality of human emotional life. Animals cannot use vocalisation regardless of emotional and behavioural situations. Appraisal (e.g., anxiety), understanding (e.g., the concept of danger) and behaviour are closely linked in animals (they form a unity). Concept–emotion–behaviour create a synthetic form of cognition and action (Perlovsky, 2009, p. 519). Meanwhile, humans are beings that create meaning, assign importance, but also discover them. As a result, in human beings the reality created by emotions is, in a way, anchored in the structures of meaning. Therefore, understanding human emotions requires a reference to the type of human nature. This type of nature is not only about the intrinsic qualities of being a person, but also about fulfilling these qualities only by interacting with others. As a result, this interaction with others contributes to the development of certain mental structures in the creation of which language plays a particular function.

Language is a fundamental ability of every person. People as such acquire concepts (ideas) through cognitive processes and language. The emotional centres in the cerebral cortex (see e.g., the analyses: Damasio, 2011; LeDoux, 2000) are closely linked to the centres of the limbic system, hence there is a kind of simultaneity of their influence on cognitive systems and language. As emphasised by Perlovsky (2009, p. 520), the emotionality of language is expressed in its sounds, which linguists refer to as a melody of speech or prosody (accent, vowel length, intonation). Everyday speech is usually

only slightly emotional, unless the individual deliberately induces an affective state. However, an appropriate level of emotionality is crucial for cognitive development. If language was not saturated with emotionality at all there would be no possibility of either motivational involvement in conversation or the development of language patterns (models). Simple cognitive processes, such as registering objects, can be developed independently of language. However, higher cognitive structures are developed on its basis, and this requires an emotional connection between cognitive and linguistic patterns. It is important to clearly stress here the important links between neural mechanisms, language and emotions, as well as the evolution of culture that shapes these links and gives them their special character (as cited in Perlovsky, 2009).

As early as in the 1930s, Benjamin Whorf and Edward Sapir argued that the language spoken by people affects their way of thinking. Although this was not a completely new approach – it was previously pointed out by philosophers such as Nietzsche – after it was criticised in the 1960s, particularly under the influence of Chomsky's analyses, recently there has been a return to this idea. Neuroscience research has contributed to this, among other things (as cited in Perlovsky, 2009).

Emphasising the importance of language is referred to in psychology as the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis – LRH. Research on the meaning of language has been more frequent in the field of colour perception and naming. Although many earlier data indicated a lack of relevance of language in this regard, the latest data seem to suggest its very important role. As it turns out, the words people use to identify colours affect the ability to separate different colour categories. For example, one of many studies (as cited in Lindquist, Barrett, Bliss-Moreau, & Russell, 2006, p. 126) revealed differences in how speakers of different languages categorize specific instances of colour. The study was conducted among English speakers (11 basic colour terms), Russian speakers (12 basic colour terms) and Setswan speakers (five basic colour terms). The study revealed differences in colour categorisation (e.g., classification to the blue–green region), in the creation of a different number of colour groups and in the number of tiles placed in each colour group. Moreover, when the subjects were trained in colour differentiation and colour terms, these skills also led to a better discrimination of their wavelengths. The same seems to apply to emotions.

The study described above justifies the claim that the perception of both the emotions in the subject and those experienced by others depend on the concept of emotions shaped by language, culture and individual experience. Separate cultural contexts, caused by (among other factors) different language, cultural knowledge and activities in different contexts, have a different impact on the perception of emotions. The categories of emotions themselves are therefore fluid.

Barrett, Lindquist, and Gendron (2007) put forward the hypothesis that the context for the perception of emotions is precisely language. Language allows for the categorisation of emotions and gives an opportunity to infer them, if they can be clearly named. There is a similarity between language and assessing the emotions of another person excluded from the context in which that emotion is manifested. Words identifying emotions (related to the conceptual content) and currently available reduce the uncertainty that occurs in the recipient when registering most of the natural behaviour of others (here: facial expressions) and narrow their meaning, thus enabling quick and easy perception of emotions. Words have a great influence on the ability to categorise events or objects, facilitating their perception and thus allowing for better orientation in social reality.

The relationship between words and emotions is very complicated, however, neuroscience research provides some evidence of this relationship. The inferior frontal gyrus, extending from the Broca's area through the triangular and orbital parts, is part of a separate nervous system on the inferior frontal convexity. This part is responsible for the perception of emotions. Inferior frontal gyrus is considered to be the basis for cognitive processes and language, as well as the centre for the retrieval of conceptual knowledge. The very act of naming emotions inferred from the faces of others increases neuronal activity in the right inferior frontal gyrus and contributes to the reduction (lowering) of the activity of amygdala. The reduction of this activity can be treated as a reflection of the reduction of the ambiguity of the incoming information about the registered face.

## 2. LANGUAGE AS A BASIS FOR CATEGORISING EMOTIONS

Languages differ in the number of terms used to describe emotions. Wallace and Carson, for example, indicate that the English language contains more than 2,000 words to describe emotions, although people use no more than a tenth of them. In Dutch, Hoekstra discovered 1,501 such terms. Boucher points to 750 names of emotions in Chinese from Taiwan and 230 in Malaysian. Lutz discovered 58 words that are used to describe the temporary inner states by the inhabitants of the Ifalik island (Pacific Atoll, Micronesia). An extremely low number of terms is used by people from the Chewong tribe (population of 300) who live in Malaysia – they only use seven terms to describe emotions (as cited in Russell, 1991, p. 428).

Levy, who studied the Tahitians and Newars from Nepal, has found that different communities have different cognitive models of emotion. There can be an excessive or deficient awareness of emotions. In Tahiti, for example, anger (*riri*) is an overdeveloped structure compared to other languages – it has 46 separate terms, while in English there are only a few (such as *rage*, *fury*, *irritation*, *annoyance*). On the other hand, the awareness of the emotion of sadness (*pe'ape'a*) in the Tahitian people is reduced – there is actually no concept of sadness; there is only a generic term that can be translated as a feeling of illness, worry or tiredness. This is not unique to Tahiti. Among the inhabitants of the Ifalik Atoll (often referred to as a peaceful community), the word *song* differs from other types of anger and the way that anger towards other societies is understood. The word *song* is not used to describe feelings about unpleasant or frustrating events; it is used to describe reactions to morally reprehensible actions. It is a pro-social term, which identifies activities that may disrupt the moral order or violate social values. However, Lutz (1998) adds that the word *song* also indicates a state in which a person cries, sulks, or does harm to himself, including an act of suicide. It can therefore encompass both anger and sadness.

When referring to the Ifalik culture, one can also stress the differences in the meaning of the term *fago* (as cited in Harré, 1998, p. 48; Lutz, 1998). People living in the Ifalik often use the word *fago*, which includes a class of judgments that take account of relations with someone else. They have a *fago* towards someone who is ill, towards someone who leaves their home, towards someone who dies or is dead, towards someone who is polite, kind (goodnatured) and socially competent. In English, the meaning of this emotion can include such states as compassion, love and sadness. In general, *fago* seems to express an opinion that someone deserves something. For example, the

sick person deserves our attention and sympathy, the dead person deserves our attention and grief over the passing of life, someone socially valued deserves our attention and recognition. Furthermore, *fago* also expresses an opinion that someone potentially lacks something, for example, a sick person lacks care, a person dies in the feeling that nobody will miss him or her, a socially competent person may be undervalued. *Fago* is neither a regret nor a sadness about something, rather it reflects the need for or rejection of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The dimension of sadness that Lutz (1998) talks about is a kind of consequence of an assessment of the anticipation that someone lacks care or recognition or mourning for him/her.

In many languages, there are different “shades”, nuances that in one word combine several emotional states, such as anger and sadness, shame and embarrassment (Japanese, Tahitian, Ifalik community, Indonesian, Newars from Nepal). The Javanese language uses a single term, *isin*, which encompasses shame, guilt, shyness and embarrassment; Pintupi (a group of Australian Aborigines) use a single term, *kunta*, which contains shame, embarrassment, shyness and respect. Examples are many. Not to mention the fact that in some languages it is difficult even to unequivocally point out to comparable terms – some languages may lack a concept of emotion as such altogether (data as cited in Russell, 1991, pp. 429–430).

It is becoming increasingly clear how important semantic background is for inferring emotions, even from facial expressions. At this point, it is worth mentioning the research on semantic dementia, which confirms that conceptual knowledge of emotions seems essential for the perception of emotions (Lindquist, Gendron, Barrett, & Dickerson, 2014). In general, the results of the research indicate that emotions are experienced and perceived in the medial and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex and anterior and mesial temporal lobe. In case of damage to the above mentioned brain structures, patients cannot infer the category of emotions that a given facial expression belongs to (the research concerned the ability of naming such emotions as anger, aversion, sadness, anxiety, and happiness). Previous studies by Lindquist et al. (2014) have indicated that a temporary deterioration in access to and use of emotional knowledge by healthy people results in a decrease in the ability to categorise emotions. It should be clarified that the research was experimental. The subjects were put in a state of the so-called semantic satiation (e.g., repeating the name of a given emotion 30 times weakens the ability to later read and name the emotion expressed in the photograph) or into the state of the so-called verbal over shadowing, consisting in repeating the name of an emotion other than the one expressed on the face. Therefore, inferring facial expressions and categorising given names of emotions requires the use of language, which seems to be something very fundamental. People with a damaged anterior temporal lobe cannot perceive anger, sadness and other emotions in other people’s faces as separate emotions, although they are able to recognise affective valence, i.e. whether these emotions are positive or negative.

The above examples prove the difficulty of direct translation of the names (terms) of emotional states. Language is a result of a mentality, way of thinking, evaluation and many other conditions. However, it is not only the language that is important, but also the principles for its use. These principles include, among other factors, the standards in which emotions are expressed and properly felt. We recognise which words relate to emotions only as a result of the role they play in a given culture (see analyses: Harré, 1998). The above also applies to the accuracy of recognising emotions experienced by others.

The dialect theory of emotional communication indicates that lower accuracy in inferring the expression of emotions of so-called external groups results from their lesser similarity to a given cultural group in terms of style of expression (however, there is no significant research on vocal expression). The authors of dialect theory propose that the language of emotions be treated as universal. Different cultures, however, may express themselves in different dialects, which, in turn, make the recognition of emotions less accurate when one considers cultural differences or barriers. Even minor linguistic differences can lead to some confusion. Cultural differences in the expression of emotions are like dialects of more universal grammar of emotions (Elfenbein, Beaupre, Lévesque, & Hess, 2007).

For example, Lindquist et al. (2014) compared the perception of emotions that have linguistic equivalents by participants from the US and the Himba ethnic group (who have relatively little contact with people outside of their immediate communities and live in the Keunene region of Northwestern Namibia). The experiment consisted in the ability to recognize emotions shown in photographs. One group was provided with a set of emotion words and participants were asked to indicate which emotions fit the facial portrayals, while the other group was asked to recognise the emotions based on facial expressions and sort them freely. The results showed that there were some differences between the studied groups – the US participants categorised the supposed emotions rather aptly (both the groups of people who had been emotion words and those that were not), while people from the Himba group sorted the names of emotions and labeled face piles slightly differently. This study confirms, albeit not entirely, that both the cultural dimension and the universality of emotions are significant.

Research studies on the expression of 11 emotions conducted by Laukka, Neiberg, and Elfenbein (2014) in five English-speaking national groups (i.e. residents of the USA, Australia, India, Kenya, and Singapore) prove that there are differences in the ease and precision of recognising the expression of emotions – members of a given community differed from each other, despite their linguistic similarity. This also confirms the relevance of the dialect theory.

However, the difficulty of direct translation of meaning (semantics) and label for a given emotion does not mean that people from different socio-cultural circles do not experience the same types of emotions. Insightful analyses by Wierzbicka (1999a), carried out on the basis of linguistic and ethnographic research, indicate, among other things, that all languages include the word *feeling*, in all languages some feelings are treated as *good* and some as *bad*, all languages contain emotional exclamations and emotional terms, in all languages feelings can be described as bodily images (depictions), and all languages include substitute (alternative) grammatical constructions allowing for the description of feelings based on recognition (Wierzbicka, 1999a, p. 36). According to Wierzbicka, patterns of emotions and the ways of their interpretation are the result of culturally conditioned emotional scripts (see analyses in Jasielska, 2013, p. 116 et seq.). The literature presents analyses of the significance of language in the creation and expression of emotional states (see e.g., Gawda, 2007; Jęczeń, 2008), the significance of cognitive processes (e.g., Maruszewski & Ścigała, 1998), as well as proposals for solving difficulties in translating the names of emotional states (see e.g., Rowiński, 2008; Wierzbicka, 1999b) and for organising approaches to the analysis of the role of language (e.g., Jasielska, 2013).

### 3. EXAMPLES OF INTERPRETATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND EMOTION

Nowadays, the role of the semantic layer in information processing is increasingly stressed. It is not enough for the information alone to be provided by an event, but it is important to draw conclusions about it from our knowledge of the world. The role of language is particularly important in creating meaning and interpretation of information, but the relationship between language and emotion is very complex – it can be described as mutual determinism. For example, according to Shanahan (2008), understanding the importance of language requires a departure from treating it solely as a cognitive structure responsible for providing meaning.

Recognition of the contextual and semiotic dimension of language leads to emphasizing the role that emotions play in the communication process. The treatment of language as a basis for giving meaning requires that thinking is considered to be an intersubjective phenomenon. Intersubjectivity can only be understood by reference to the emotional dimension of thinking. Therefore, emotion is always critical in the creation of meaning. Shanahan (2008) points out explicitly that emotion is a kind of assessment of the stimulus by the organism in order to choose the right type of behaviour as a form of response. Emotion is a kind of language amplifier that changes the meaning of an object or situation.

It seems that this interpretation can be accepted, although there are also many criticisms in this regard. Salvatore and Venuleo (2008) had already pointed out some weaknesses in such an interpretation. Firstly, the subject does not come into contact with a single, separate object. The subject does not so much meet the object, but rather is immersed in the dense network of potential relationships created by the surrounding reality. This means that the registration of an object requires a kind of exclusion and separation from the whole context experienced by the subject. Two people involved in the same field of experience but having different positions, will be able to create different objects. Secondly, it follows from the above that the perception of a stimulus is achieved through meaning (it does not happen before the meaning has been assigned); the mediation of meaning is intrinsically linked to the selection and evaluation of the pattern of relationships to which we refer. Finally, the creation of meaning is embodied in social activity and shaped and directed in accordance with the requirements of the regulation of such social activity. In other words, it is the result of specific positioning. From this perspective, creating meaning is always a social and discursive process.

According to Harré (1991, pp. 142–143), when interacting with others, it is important for the subject to take different positions within the socio-cultural context. For Harré, emotion is the exploration of some kind of social action. Emotions do not exist as isolated from this arrangement. There are only different ways of emotional acting and feeling, through which one's judgment, attitude, opinion is revealed in their own, physical way. For example, anger is a noun, but this noun does not describe a person or what they have, but refers to his or her condition. This doing can take the form of physical sensation, of which only a socially developed person is aware. For example, being angry is considering anger in a given situation as an expression of a moral position. Shame and embarrassment are a matter of culture and language – shame is the result of a serious breach of the social contract (breach of convention and moral guilt); embarrassment is a delicate breach of convention (custom, agreement).

However, the creation of meaning is not just a product of positioning; rather, it is the way in which such positioning attempts to reproduce itself in the dialectic space of social exchange. The creation of a sign is not a simple text-creating operation, but an act of speech; the act of communication is an integral part thereof and is carried out by a given system of activities. Therefore, it is not possible to look at language without taking into account its perlocutionary value, connotational function, which lead to a certain action, affect the listener, the expectations and experience of a given reaction, etc. We use language in order to have a relationship with others and to act through that relationship in some way. Thus, language is an argumentative and rhetorical activity aimed at strengthening someone's vision of the world (as cited in Salvatore & Venuleo, 2008).

From the perspective of physiological indicators and body language, emotions are expressed as something that exists objectively. However, by registering these indications, the observer assigns a certain meaning to them and tries to infer what they demonstrate – in this case, we are dealing with the inclusion of the subjective perspective of a given observer – the emotion starts to occur, but in an ontologically subjective way (it depends on the perceiver). According to the philosopher John Searle (as cited in Barrett, 2012, p. 417), people create ontologically subjective entities as part of social reality by imposing on objects (and people) functions that are not based solely on the nature of the physical properties of these objects. According to Searle, object X matters as having a certain status Y in a particular context C. This status allows for the indication of a specific function (or functions) of X, which does not result from its physical structure. For example, if a plant is seen as a flower or weed, this perception creates a meaning about the value of the plant – the flower triggers a readiness to admire, whereas the weed triggers readiness to reject. Then a flower or weed determines the possibility of communication between people, defines a form of some social influence on the other person. However, there must be a kind of consensus in people's minds about this flower or weed – that one is something positive and the other negative. It can be said that ontologically subjective categories depend on collective intentionality regarding the way they exist. In a way mediated by meaning, physical properties acquire the ability to perform certain functions that are not directly related to the very nature of these objects. People create ontologically subjective categories that fulfil certain functions, which help to create the social life. The same applies to emotions. The inflow of impressions from the world (e.g., light, sound) combined with impressions from one's own body creates an experience of emotion or perception of emotion when it is given meaning – when a form of categorisation occurs. By categorising impressions, they acquire functions that do not arise spontaneously from these impressions, but from the addition of information from previous experiences. Needless to say, this is a very fast and immediate process.

#### **4. CULTURE AS A FACTOR CREATING A TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “SELF” AND EMOTIONS**

These briefly signalled analyses inevitably lead to the need to consider the social context as important for understanding the relationship between the language used and emotions. However, the very specificity or nature of emotions must also be taken into account. Nowadays, the fact that emotions are closely linked to the subjective “self” is rarely questioned. It can be said, referring to some authors (e.g., Lambie &

Marcel, 2002), that there is a close relationship between the “self” and emotion and that this relationship can be perceived as bidirectional. An emotion affects the “self”, and the “self” is capable of confirming, strengthening or changing emotions. Emotion always entangles the “self” and leads to its particular perception and organisation of the “self” in a form that allows it to respond in a specific situation.

As pointed out by Greenberg (as cited in Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 254), emotions are the basis for the construction of the *self* and the key determinant of the organisation of the “self”. In the context of Hermans’ dialogical theory of the “self”, emotions are treated as a temporary position that the “self” takes in relation to various forms of reality. However, emotions themselves can also become a way of assuming a position (e.g., I place myself as someone happy). It should also be emphasised that the way emotions are experienced is influenced not only by the previous history of placing oneself in different positions of the “self” but also by the context in which the individual participates – a context that is mainly interpersonal. Emotions are not only a part of the “self–other” relationship, but also a part of the history of the “self–me” relationship and previous contexts. Because of this very close relationship between emotion and the “self”, the style (character) of the mentality will be shaped by existing in a given culture. Language as a mental structure is particularly important in culture, as has already been substantiated above. For example, the longitudinal studies carried out by Nafstadt et al. (as cited in Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 293) indicate huge changes in the number of terms used in connection with neoliberal ideology and consumerism. Between 1984 and 2006, the number of articles in the press containing the words *buy*, *purchase* and *sell* increased by 63%. The use of the word *customer* has increased by 46%, the word *consumer* by 45%, *pressure to buy* by 36% and the word *greedy* by 86%. There was also a 44% increase in the use of the words *I*, *me*. On the other hand, the use of words such as *solidarity* (60%), *belonging* (68%), *social welfare* (60%), *sharing*, *community*, *common* (30%) has decreased. The use of the word *gratitude* has decreased by 27%. An interesting change has been observed in the frequency of the use of the words *give* (down 23%) and *receive*, *take* (down 47%). Finally, the use of the word *restraint* has reduced by 60% and *modesty* fell by 66%. However, the use of the word *want more* as something somewhat opposed to *satisfied*, *grateful* has increased enormously – by as much as 187%. The above proves the fundamental importance of mental changes resulting from cultural changes and its impact on the use of terms that, as it were, adequately reflect the emotions experienced in such cultural contexts. Culture not only imposes ways of expressing the emotions we experience, but at the same time indicates in which relationships and how we should experience them. For example, Averill emphasises the importance of the so-called emotional position, which can be analysed in terms of privileges (e.g., a person in love can engage in sexual behaviour with another person), limitations (e.g., lovers are to be honest with one another and discreet), responsibilities (what people should feel or do, e.g., in a state of mourning they should take certain related actions), initial requirements (e.g., most social positions can be held by people of appropriate age, gender, and social status; as cited in Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, pp. 56–57).

With regard to the different ways in which emotions are categorised in different cultures, it can be said that the ways of reacting, which have been mentioned earlier, often lead to the need to take into account the different ways in which the sense of “self” is formed. In the

Ifalik culture, there is no distinction between “self” and others. The connection with the feelings and thoughts of others is natural in that culture, and therefore its representatives use the word *we* rather than *self*, for example, instead of saying *I would like to do something with you* they prefer to say *we should do it together*. This is not unique to this culture.

The link between “self” and emotions is visible when considering collectivist and individualist cultures. Within collectivist cultures, for example, the “self” in Confucianism is somewhat suppressed, as the ultimate goal is to realise oneself through self-education towards harmonious relationships. In African cultures, the “self” includes ancestors; it includes both humans (e.g., grandparents) and the non-human world, both of which are treated as being part of the community.

In individualistic cultures, youth is a period when a person must strive to achieve an identity that enables him or her to function independently in different social groups, outside his or her own family (failure triggers an identity crisis); in collectivist cultures, the growth in adolescence is about strengthening dependency needs in hierarchically ordered family relations, and the ideal is to be like others, and not to be different. The first words of young Chinese children are ones that relate to other people; in the United States, on the other hand, children begin with learning words about objects. In their drawings, children from Cameroon portray themselves as being alone. And when they draw pictures of their families, they portray themselves as smaller than children from Germany do when they draw same kinds of pictures. In Japan, feeling good is more related to interpersonal situations (such as a feeling of friendship), while in the U.S., feeling good is more often associated with interpersonal distance – such as feelings of superiority or pride. In the United Kingdom, happiness is positively linked to a sense of independence, while in Greece such a link is considered to be negative. Mao states that the word *individualism* is often translated in China as *gèrén zhǔyì*, with negative rather than positive connotations, such as “self-centered” or “selfish” (2003, data as cited in de Mooij, 2014, p. 206). In the European languages, we have a reflection of a mentality that emphasises its own distinctiveness from others. As a result, the European is more focused on the states he or she is experiencing and on safeguarding his or her own subjectivity – integrity.

The division into collectivist and individualist cultures outlined above explains the disparity in the development of different forms of the “self” – the “interdependent self” or “independent self” respectively. Many analyses show (as cited in Adams, 2012, p. 184) that people with an autonomous construction of “self” tend to focus on the characteristics of people and objects as basic units of reality. It also leads to treating oneself and others as a whole abstracted from the context. Therefore, there is a dominant tendency among such people to describe oneself in terms of properties and disposition, as well as promotion-focusing through strengthening oneself and emphasizing one’s uniqueness. Individual choices and preferences and a kind of tendency to cultivate self-esteem, often through attributive distortions in favour of oneself, are of crucial importance.

All this is also reflected in emotional life. The formed “independent self” leads to the domination of experiencing and expressing oneself by emphasizing the possession of positive qualities and being separate. For example, research by Kitayama, Markus, and Kurokawa (2010) shows the relationship between the “independent self” and emphasizing the personal meaning of emotional experience (more than normative or consensual) and the positive evaluation of self-awareness emotions (i.e., pride) that signal personal fulfilment.

In the case of the “interdependent self”, the psychological reality is different. The “interdependent self” is a kind of integration into context and community. People emphasise that they do not exist in isolation, but rather that their actions reflect the importance of others in the community (the actions of some have consequences for others). The predominant experience here is that of experiencing oneself as someone in close relationships with others. The importance of given events, situations, objects, etc. is a result of taking into account the relations between objects, events and situations, which leads to a stronger sensitivity to discovering the properties of a given situation and not to focusing on one’s own characteristics or dispositions. Therefore, taking into account the context promotes dialectical reasoning styles and tolerance of logical contradictions. Moreover, the general attitude in the case of the “interdependent self” contributes to the focus on preventing something by meeting commitments or standards and thus leading to the discovery of domains of life that will need to be improved.

Such a construction is also connected with paying less attention to the expression of personal qualities, and more to the process of accommodation and adaptation to the environment itself. Therefore, it will be important to possess information that indicate one’s own shortcomings or failures in meeting obligations and standards. This motivation to prevent defects (more than to promote self-empowerment) is particularly evident in the tendency to make an increased effort to carry out tasks after tasks after failure (more so than after success).

The “interdependent self” is associated with tendencies to experience and express emotions, which emphasise adaptation to the interpersonal context. For example, the studies by Mesquita (2001), Oishi, Diener, Scollon, and Biswas-Diener (2004) indicate the relationship between the “interdependent self” and the predominance of emphasis on the external, “objective” or consensual meaning of emotional experience. Moreover, feelings that signal one’s own forms of imperfection are evaluated more positively. Self-awareness emotions, such as guilt, triggered by violations of social norms or failure to meet social obligations, are valued higher in collectivist societies than in individualistic ones (see Eid & Diener, 2001). Intercultural differences seem to be less important in terms of other emotions that arise from external interactions (e.g., anger, sadness).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion: on the one hand, the obvious foundations of the construction of human nature (biological background, somatic properties, personality structure) are crucial for understanding emotions, however, the cultural context and linguistic system is a special form of superstructure. In this case, the importance of the cultural context should be reduced to the dimension of the created cognitive-social-experiential structure that allows for the development of a given style of perception of reality and oneself. Emotions are closely linked to the “subjective self”, but the way they are experienced depends fundamentally on the system of developed meanings in which language plays a fundamental, crucial role. In other words, the developing mentality of a given type and the ability to categorise emotions in a given style, through the use of a given language, makes it possible to infer the meanings attributed to the emotional states experienced.

One final reflection. The role of language in strengthening emotional states alone cannot be overlooked. The relation between one’s inner construction and the outwardness of

the type of expression reinforces the experienced emotional states. Speech, as an external form of communication through language, reinforces the emotional states experienced. Some languages are more expressive, some are less. For example, studies and research by Gutfreund (1990) on bilingual people (English–Spanish) indicate that, regardless of whether the first language was English or Spanish, the subjects manifested their emotions more intensely when using Spanish during the interview.

The human voice is an important source of emotional information through measures such as acoustic tone patterns, intensity, voice quality and duration. In the 18th century, the Russian writer Mikhail Lomonosov observed that the front vowels (like *i*) are preferred when tender words are pronounced and the back vowels (like *o*) when describing matters that trigger fear or sadness. The experiments carried out by Rummer, Schweppe, Schlegelmilch, and Grice (2014) aimed to show the relationship between spoken vowels and emotional states. Subjects in a positive mood produced more words containing *i*, a vowel involving the same facial muscles that is used in smiling, i.e. the zygomaticus major muscle. Subjects in a negative mood, on the other hand, produced more words containing *o*, a vowel involving the orbicularis oris muscle. The above would suggest that the relationship between vowels and mood is related to, or modified, by orofacial muscle activity. The cartoons also seemed to be rated as funnier by subjects articulating the *i* vowel. All of this is to some extent in line with Darwin's earlier hypothesis of facial feedback and with research carried out by Zajonc, Murphy, and Inglehart (1989), who experimented with German speakers (the participants were asked to read stories that contained higher or lower frequency of the vowel *ue* – u-umlaut).

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