

SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING EMPHASIS

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Emphasis may be regarded as a general semantic category. It is not separable from language and has no referential meaning in and of itself but is used in interpersonal communication to signal the importance of a given element of language. Emphasis introduced to any interpersonal communication event results in general from the need of intensification or contrasting. The need of intensification produces a kind of emphasis that may roughly be labelled as 'emotional'. The need of contrasting provides for a kind labelled 'logical'. Both kinds contribute substantially to the process of communication.

It is more than likely that all natural languages possess means of expressing emphasis, hence one may speak here of a universal of language. Yet, acceptance of this tentative assumption raises the problem of realization of this phenomenon in natural languages. At this point one may be glad to remember that problems which are not systematically describable and are in need of scientific analysis call for restraint in formulating hypotheses pertinent to them. Emphasis is one of those problems.

It is likely that no two languages possess identical means of expressing emphasis or, in other words, no two identical sets of realizations of emphasis in different languages can be had.

The considerations of the present paper bear on how certain realizations of emotional emphasis are formed in the process of communication, with particular attention to two structurally different languages, English and Polish, treated comparatively. An analysis of the logical emphasis is beyond the scope of this work since even a brief survey of the problem would amount to a separate paper.

The physiological side of emotion has long been the object of research concerning the area where psychology and linguistics overlap. The work is directed toward the solving of such problems, for example, as whether the state of mind produces psychological changes, or otherwise. How do various

emotional states influence our bodily movements? Is it possible to give a precise definition of the beginning and end of an emotional state? and others. However, literature on the subject reveals disregard, or at best pays little attention to the environmental, that is the cultural side of the matter.

The anthropologist is wary of those who speak of an „instinctive” gesture on the part of a human being (...) He cannot safely rely upon his own culturally subjective understandings (*It is not infrequently observable that some do* — B. L.) of emotional expression in his relations with persons of another tribe. The advisability and the value of a correct reading of any cultural symbolism whatsoever has alerted him to the possibility of culturally arbitrary, quasi-linguistic (that is, non-instinctual but learned and purely agreed upon) meanings in the behaviour he observes (Labarre 1947: 49)

The anthropologist is, then, aware of the subjectivism of our understanding. Does that hold true for the physiologist? Is crying and laughing exactly the same everywhere? How wide is the range of different emotional and gestural expressions.

Even in the same culture crying may function as a carrier of different meanings, e.g. tears in the eyes of a little boy and an adult male. When it comes to different cultures the disparity may be striking.

It is quite possible, however, that a smile or a laugh may have a different meaning for groups other than our own. Lafcadio Hearn has remarked that the Japanese smile is not necessarily a spontaneous expression of amusement, but a law of etiquette, elaborated and cultivated from early times. It is a silent language, often seemingly inexplicable to Europeans, and it may arouse violent anger in them as a consequence. The Japanese child is taught to smile as a social duty, just as he is taught to bow or prostrate himself; he must always show an appearance of happiness to avoid inflicting his sorrow upon his friends. The story is told of a woman servant who smilingly asked her mistress if she might go to her husband's funeral. Later she returned with his ashes in a vase and said, actually laughing, "Here is my husband". Her white mistress regarded her as a cynical creature; Hearn suggests that this may have been pure heroism (Hearn 1894:3).

So much for the culture factor in the study of emotional behaviour. Cultural basis of emotions and gestures is a promising field of interest for anthropologists, physiologists and linguists.

Emotional emphasis may be applied to any stratum or system of interpersonal communication, for instance, language, vocal modifiers, kinesics. In language it has two modes of expression: speech and script. Emphasis attained by means of syntax is a part of the other kind, logical emphasis, and for that reason it is not discussed here.

Vocal modifiers embrace all the vocal phenomena which accompany language. They include what is labelled as suprasegmentals, sound-attributes or prosodies, and a number of other vocal phenomena (Robins 1964:159).

In connected speech any of these sound-attributes: stress, pitch, length, intonation, or combination of those may be used for signalling the importance or prominence of a particular speech event or events. In the majority of the languages of Europe stress and intonation remain in close connection. An increase of stress produces changes in the intonation contour. It is frequently accompanied by an increase of the length. In tone languages however, the above does not necessarily hold true. A change of the tone in these languages produces an entirely different semantic element, that is, the tones used are lexically distinctive. One should bear in mind the difference between the tone which is the pitch of a syllable and the intonation which refers to pitch sequences and is more of a tune of full utterances, that is, sentences or parts of sentences. Thus in non-tonemic languages the tunes are semantically relevant, and so is the case, according to Robins (1964:114), with tone languages. English stressed syllables compared with Polish ones bear more importance in terms of forming an intonation contour. This is a feature of stress languages. As Gimson puts it, "(...) the syllables uttered with the greatest stress constitute for the speaker, hubs with which unstressed syllables will be associated to form rhythmic groups" (Gimson 1962:237). In comparison with Polish, which has a fixed word stress pattern and much more freedom in regard to word order, English makes a very extensive use of intonation tunes (Jassem 1952). Closing the matter of sound-attributes, here is what Gimson writes.

In so far as a listener interprets correctly those parts of an utterance upon which the speaker wishes to concentrate attention, or is aware of the speaker's attitude to him, or makes judgements upon the personality of the speaker, the pattern of intonation used may be said to constitute a linguistic system which has a communicative function within a particular community. There seems no doubt that intonation in its accentual function and that non-accentual function concerned with the distinction of sentence types, does constitute a linguistic reality of this kind. Since, however, we sometimes misinterpret the emotional attitude as conveyed by intonation, it may be said that non-accentual patterns of this kind are less perfectly systematized, or that such linguistic systems are more numerous and applicable to smaller communities (regional or social) than phonological systems, so that a faulty judgement of emotional attitudes conveyed by intonation cues may derive from an interpretation of these cues in terms of our own, different, intonation usage in showing such attitudes (cf. the interpretative adjustments needed on the phonological level between speakers of two different types of English (Gimson 1962:243-4).

The other vocal phenomena embraced by vocal modifiers include various kinds of noises and qualities of sound which may be grouped under the term 'vocal qualifiers'. These include what is commonly known as voice quality or the tone of voice. Voice quality consists of a large number of elements "which are at present not fully understood as regards their articulatory basis" writes Pittenger (1957:43). Any process of spoken communication is characterized by the following vocal qualifiers:

1. Force of articulation
2. Pitch range
3. The duration of junctures within the intonation tune
4. Certain additional work of the laryngeal apparatus
5. Word tempo
6. Sentence tempo

Realization of all these elements largely depends on factors which are outside the strata of communication, as for example, the dimensions of the place where the communication event occurs, the acoustics of the place, the distance between the speaker and the hearer, manners and habits of the two, and the social conditions. For the sake of systematic presentation the vocal qualifiers are discussed here as events composed of juxtaposed pairs corresponding to a single auditory impression. The terminology used in this connection is that of Robert E. Pittenger and Henry Lee Smith, Jr. (1957:75). Descriptions given below pertain to changes that may occur in any of the two ways presented. There is no correlation between the pairs and the size of a speech event with which they occur. However, certain combinations of vocal qualifiers and segments of speech are more frequent than others. The following does not pretend to be a complete list of vocal qualifiers but is only an attempt in formulating some basic statements as regards the phenomena.

1. Force of articulation

- a. Increasing loudness
- b. Increasing softness

This qualifier may extend over any size of speech event, from a syllable to more than a sentence. Increasing loudness may indicate the state of alarm or panic, etc. on the part of the speaker. It is usually accompanied by a change in pitch. Increasing loudness may also be due to external factors, such as the size of the room, high level of noise, and others. Increasing softness signals dissatisfaction or disappointment. Polish and a number of other, mostly Slavic, languages have well developed systems of diminutive forms and augmentative forms. In contexts calling for some expression of emotion these devices, known as hypocoristic forms, are often made use of. English is rather poor, as it were, when it comes to diminutives and augmentatives. This deficiency is made up for by the rich inventory of intonation contours. Increasing softness may occur in Polish contexts of tenderness, friendliness, as for example, when addressing our loved ones. The combination of diminutive forms of the word plus softness produces a double-strong effect of emotion in communication, e.g.

ZOFIA, Zosia, Zosiunia, Zosieńka, Zosiunieczka, et al.

TOMASZ, Tomek, Tomeczek, Tomciunio, Tomciusieczek...

JERZY, Jurek, Jureczek, Jurunio, Jerzyk...

PIES, piesek, pieseczek, piesiatko, psiunia, psinka...

A good illustration of how Polish evokes emotional atmosphere by means of diminutives is Julian Tuwim's poem "Epistoła sentymentalna" quoted by Halina Kurkowska and Stanisław Skorupka (1959:49)

Przypomniał mi się twój pokoik
Tak dawno, dawno nie widziany:
Pianinko, sofka, etażerka
I obrazeczków pełne ściany

Śliczne kwiateczki, poduszeczki
Książeczek (zwykle nie rozcięte)
I hustereczka, firaneczki,
Dalekie wszystko, drogie, święte...

I krzeselczko i stoliczek
Mały stoliczek z szufladeczką
Gdzie stos olbrzymi moich listów
Pod różowitką spał wstążeczka.

The poem is usually recited in soft, low voice. The effect obtained is the feeling of sentimentality or longing for things and images from the past. A very curious effect is obtained if the same poem is recited in loud, robust voice which utters the diminutive forms of the poem with somewhat stronger than usual stress; it is either comic or ironic.

Generally speaking, in the word of emotion feeling dominates over meaning, and for that reason it is rather difficult if at all possible to establish in precise terms the semantic value of such a word. Informal speech makes great use of the haziness of emotive phrases, which usually consist of plain or neutral, as it were, words burdened with an appropriate emotional load when need be. Vocal qualifiers and kinetics are of primary importance in this regard.

2. Pitch range

- a. Raised pitch
- b. Lowered pitch

Pitch range belongs with the features of our uniqueness or individuality. If we want to communicate alarm, anger, or combinations of those plus a number of other states we tend to depart from our regular pitch upward. The same occurs when grown up people try to communicate with babies or little children; they make an attempt to inform the noisy beings about the affection felt for them. Raised pitch together with increased loudness is very typical of contexts of extreme excitement. Certain way of expressing negation or disagreement in Polish is characterized by an unusual raising of the initial pitch, particularly when the speaker insists on having upper hand in an argument and, therefore, uses the emphatic contour of the 4 2 1 # type¹.

Nigdy! Kłamiesz!

4 2 1 # 4 2 1 #

The lowering of pitch occurs in combination with other vocal qualifiers, as for example, the word or sentence tempo. Emphatic forms which convey the listener's unwillingness to believe the news include the lowering of pitch. The difference between Polish and English is almost nil here.

3. The duration of junctures within the intonation tune

- a. Spread register
- b. Squeezed register

When the usual amount of time between the pitch phonemes of an utterance is extended the result is the spreading of register. Most often spread register appears in combination with other vocal qualifiers. A typical situation in which spread register is used occurs when the direct communication between the speaker and the listener is hampered by the distance between them. Also, according to common manifestations, spread register is used when the listener is not visible to the speaker. Increasing loudness is added in such instances

John — ny, are you home yet? (Pittenger 1957: 73)

Ba — a — siu, jesteś tu?

Spread register plus increasing loudness occur in both languages in very much the same way.

If the time-unit between the pitch phonemes of an utterance is reduced the effect obtained is the squeezing of register, which reveals itself in the monotony of what is being said. A doctor's nurse at the end of her working hours may be heard saying her "Next please" in a voice signalling weariness. The intonation contour applied most frequently in such situations is that of a series of the same pitch. Squeezed register is also used with the vocative forms, the intonation contour being much the same as in the case of spread register. It may be accompanied by rasping of the voice, as for example, during taking a roll in the military service.

4. Certain additional work of the laryngeal apparatus

- a. Rasp
- b. Openness

According to Pittenger and Smith, these have to do physiologically with the amount of muscular tension under which the laryngeal apparatus is held. "Under tension the strained or rasping quality is heard. With open-

¹ The scale of pitch phonemes according to G. L. Trager, H. L. Smith, Jr. 1951. *An Outline of English Structure. SIL Occasional Papers* 3. Norman, Okla. Repr. Washington, American Council of Learned Societies, 1963.

ness a sort of hollow or booming acoustic impression is added to the communication. This open quality is associated with the "tone of voice of clergymen, politicians, and undertakers. Most Americans get the impression that there is a lack of sincerity connected with its use. From mother to child, openness is used to signal security, but reminds the child of his dependent state" (Pittenger 1957: 73). Rasp often accompanies increasing loudness (fear, anger). Rasp plus squeezed register produce the effect of lack of interest or weariness.

5. Word tempo

- a. Drawl
- b. Clipping

Reducing the speed of articulating the syllables we obtain the effect known as *drawl*. Drawl may change the meaning of an utterance from positive to negative, as in "Sure, you've been there" where "sure" is drawled. The resultant meaning is equal to something like "I don't believe that you have been there". Polish "No jasne, byleś tam" with "jasne" and "byleś" drawled also connotes disbelief. On the whole, drawl used for the effect of contradicting the statement, is probably less frequently applied to Polish phrases than to the English ones. The function of contradicting in Polish is often carried out by intonation contours of mockery, irony, etc.

Increasing the speed of articulating the syllables we obtain the effect known as *clipping*. As Pittenger and Smith put it, "Clipping is the exact opposite of drawl, in that the syllable is checked or squeezed into a far shorter time interval. Quite frequently so called interjections such as 'Well', 'Yep', and 'Nope' are heard with this vocal qualifier, usually signalling, 'It's my turn to talk now'. 'No' or 'Nope' so interjected will often be found not to have the meaning of negation: in 'No, you are exactly right', basic agreement with the previous speaker is being signalled along with the strong opinion that the previous speaker has not gone anywhere near far enough". (Pittenger 1957: 73).

English	Well	Yep	Nope
Polish	No'	Ta'	Nie' or e'

6. Sentence tempo

- a. Increased tempo
- b. Decreased tempo

This is perhaps the most common way of expressing emphasis with a vocal qualifier. Increased tempo is produced by squeezing more words or phrases into a time-stretch. Decreased tempo corresponds to a smaller quantity of

words or phrases within the same time-stretch. Increased or decreased tempos appear often in combination with increasing or decreasing loudness. In excitement we tend to increase the tempo of speech. However, a radio reporter broadcasting a sports event, will use the increased tempo not only because of excitement but also economy. Decreased tempo is used whenever we want the listener to grasp the meaning of our words more fully. There is an interesting difference between English and Polish here. For scolding her child a Polish mother will use increasing tempo along with increasing loudness. She may also repeat the phrase at least twice in quick succession. An English-speaking mother tends to use decreased tempo plus increasing loudness.

The repetition so characteristic of emphatic Polish is best observed in the case of yes-no answers. It is not unusual to hear a Pole answer with 'tak tak tak (tak)' for emphatic 'yes', or 'nie nie nie (nie)' for emphatic 'no'. The number of repetitions hardly ever exceeds four and, of course, the more repetitions the faster the tempo. This device applies to short phrases as well as to full sentences. Repetition is not foreign to English, yet it is seldom made use of.

English: Quiet

Polish: Cicho cicho cicho

English: Put it down

Polish: Połóż to, połóż to, połóż to

Let us conclude the part on vocal qualifiers with the observations of Pittenger and Smith.

Normally in communication these elements are interspersed as useful and needed. Most of the time, when they are successfully integrated by the speaker into the utterance, the listener will be unaware of the 'tone of voice'. When they are used in unusual contexts or in differing amounts than 'normal', the listener becomes aware of something, although without this frame of reference he may be unable to locate the source of his impression. Many psychiatrists and other skilled in communication have learned to value the information received from these kinds of phenomena and trust its validity, even though they consider the source to be experience, or intuition, or a third ear. (Pittenger 1957:74)

The importance of considering nonspeech sounds as fully internal elements of the phonetic system of language was stressed by Kenneth L. Pike (1943 : 32 - 41). Although it has been a long time since the idea was introduced by this prominent scholar, it is still extremely hard, if at all possible, to obtain any serious discussion of these matters in Polish. Linguistic literature passes over it in silence.

The nonspeech sounds, also termed as vocal differentiators, form a system that contributes substantially to the full range of communication elements. However, the 'meaning' of each of them largely depends on the cul-

ture, that is, vocal differentiators constitute an inherent part of the culture. In the culture of the Western world crying is associated with either physical or mental suffering. Adult males restraint themselves from it except for those social situations which customarily allow them to show their emotions in such an emphatic manner. As far as laughing is concerned, another vocal differentiator, it will suffice to refer the reader to the quotation from Weston Labarre on p. 74 of this paper. According to Pittenger and Smith (1957 : 74) "...men in Persia are allowed to weep all their lives".

Vocal differentiators include also breaking:

There is a rigid and intermittent tension and relaxation of the vocal cords so that the voice is broken, resulting in a sort of tremulousness, with interruption of the tone. The nervous giggle is a frequently occurring example of breaking, but the use of breaking accompanied by overloudness, openness, and overslow tempo in the style of orators and preachers to signal deep emotional involvement is perhaps its most characteristic occurrence. The quavering voice of great emotion frequently precedes tears, anger, or excitement. It signals uncertain control in this context. (Pittenger 1957:74).

Vocal differentiators may also include such phenomena, as for example, nasalization, labialization, glottalization, retroflexion, and others.

The final category to be mentioned here is that of vocal identifiers. At present it is recognized as a one-member category, which always appears in combination with vocal qualifiers. This is the glottal stop whose presence or absence identifies negation or affirmation of the utterance, respectively. "In the utterance 'uh-huh' or 'ah-hah' meaning affirmation, *yes*, there is a smooth transition between the syllables, whereas in 'uh-uh' or 'ah-ah' meaning *no*, there is a glottal closure. No significant difference in meaning is noted whether these vocalizations are uttered with the lips and full nasalization (a vocal differentiator), or with partial nasalization with the lips apart, or with the lips apart and no accompanying nasalization (...). In the flow of other utterances the interruption of a word by a glottal stop and pause is frequently a signal that all or part of the utterance is negated or changed by a suddenly perceived contrasting thought". (Pittenger 1947 : 74).

Polish reveals the lack of negative vocal identifier of this particular construction. In place of it Poles tend to use a prolonged disyllabic utterance *terminated* by a glottal stop: uh... or ah... For emphatic negation this may be repeated, according to the same pattern that was discussed earlier.

One of the most difficult features of the utterance to be described precisely is voice quality. It embraces a number of components to which adequate scientific analysis is wanting. Commonly it is known as the "tone of his voice" or the "quality of her speech", as for example, hostile, amicable, excited, etc. Voice quality may be applied to any size of speech event. According to Robins

(1964 : 114), *The deliberate use of a pitch range wider than one's usual one, or higher or lower than that normally used, correlates in various speech communities with various situations and intensions on the speaker's part (excitement, mockery, wheedling, and so on) and is understood in these lights by others of the same community.* (italics mine — B. L.) All the remaining features of voice quality are idiosyncratic hence it is possible to recognize or distinguish the voice of an individual regardless of direct eye-contact.

Final system of communication which is acquired through non-systematic, informal learning is kinesics, or gestures and motions. These, again, are different in different cultures and may be very effective in communicating. In the language of gestures world over particular areas of body are put to use: face, arms, legs. An extremely interesting study is the already cited work by Weston Labarre (1947 : 64).

Compared with Polish the English system of kinesics seems to be less developed. As Labarre puts it, "...Americans are characteristically illiterate in the area of gesture language. The kinaesthetic 'business' of even accomplished and imaginative stage actors like Sir Laurence Olivier and Ethel Barrymore is limited by the rudimentary comprehension of their audiences. Americans watch enthusiastically the muscular skills of an athlete in doing something, but they display a proud muckerism toward the dance as an art form which attempts to mean something". (Labarre 1947 : 64).

It seems that Poles have developed a fairly rich lexicon of gestures, though certainly not so rich as that of the peoples of the Mediterranean origin. To give just a few examples: Emphatic yes — a series of quick nods combined with some form of contraction of the face muscles of the cheeks and mouth; emphatic no — a series of rapid turns of the head from left to right or vice versa; when giving an answer of the kind: "I have no faintest idea", a Pole may raise his shoulders a little for an instant while simultaneously raising his eyebrows; when index finger and thumb are folded as if holding an imaginary key put against either left or right temple and twisted one way or the other, the meaning is "this/he/she/it is crazy". It is interesting to note that the *mano cornuta*, the thumbed nose, in many countries considered an obscenity, is a mild sign of scorn in Polish.

In the final paragraph of Labarre's work we read.

(...) A study of conventional gesture languages... a study of the body language of constitutional types (the uncorticated, spinal-reflex spontaneity and *legato* feline quality of the musclebound athletosome, his body knit into rubbery bouncing tonuses even in repose; the collapsed colloid quality of the epicurean viscerotonic whose tensest tonus is at best no more than that of the chorion holding the yolk advantageously in the albumen of an egg, or the muscle habituated into a tendon supporting a fitch of bacon... — all might offer us now insights into psychology, psychiatry, ethnology, and linguistics alike. (Labarre 1947:67 - 8).

The above presentation is by no means a complete inventory of the phenomena. The framework of the paper was to include only the major items investigated and described by others. In a way it is a proposal for discussion or possibly the beginning of some more involved study of the emotive, emphatic elements in communication process.

The comparison between Polish and English indicates that the differences are not striking, yet worthwhile elaborating, so that they might be used by those working in applied linguistics, particularly on language manuals for Polish students of English. The information on other systems of communication besides language proper are next to nil in most of these manuals currently in use. This situation may have its origin in the assumption that the phenomena are not describable and can only be learned through direct contact with the native speakers. Without undermining the validity of this assumption one may say that these phenomena do lend themselves to description, though not easily. The present paper has been an attempt in this direction.

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