

Perception Metaphor Workshop

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Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

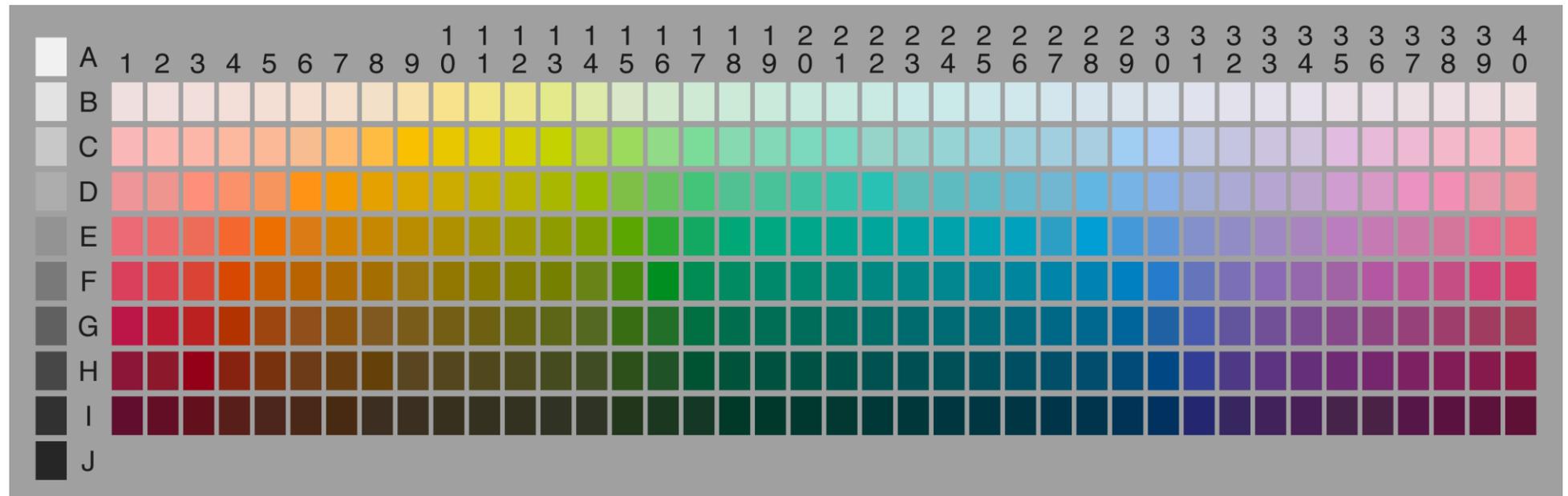
APPROACHING PERCEPTUAL
ADJECTIVES: THE CASE OF ‘HEAVY’

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Perceptual lexicon

- Language and Cognition:
 - How people conceptualize senses
- Extralinguistic stimuli

*red, blue,
green...*



Berlin & Kay 1969;
Kay&Maffi 2005; Kay et al. 2009...

Perceptual lexicon

□ Language and Cognition:

How people conceptualize senses

→ Extralinguistic stimuli:

Sweet, salt, bitter, sour...



Senft et al. 2007;
Majid & Burenhult 2014

Perceptual lexicon

□ Linguistic behavior:

Distribution (Moscow Semantic School tradition)

Color terms:

blue sky, blue dress, blue light, blue mood...

Language of taste:

sweet tea, sweet pepper, sweet voice, sweet face...

Typology of perceptual adjectives

- Direct meanings: usually describe objects from the point of view of one or another sense
 - ▣ Vision (‘blue’ , ‘round’)
 - ▣ Auditory (‘loud’ , ‘quiet’)
 - ▣ Touch (‘soft’ , ‘smooth’)
 - ▣ Olfaction (‘stinking’ , ‘fragrant’)
 - ▣ Taste (‘sweet’ , ‘bitter’)

Typology of perceptual adjectives

- Regular polysemy:
changing of the perceptual channel

haptic → auditory:

soft chair vs. *soft voice* (ENG)
tverdy kamen' vs. *tverdy golos* (RUS: 'hard stone'
vs. 'hard voice')
main dure vs. *son dur* (FR: 'hard hand' vs. 'hard
sound')

Typology of perceptual adjectives

- Regular polysemy:
changing of the perceptual channel

haptic -> visual:

sharp spear vs. *sharp nose* (ENG)

oštar nož vs. *oštar lakat* (SRB: ‘sharp knife’ vs.
‘sharp elbow’)

tupaya igla vs. *tupoi podborodok* (RUS: ‘blunt
needle’ vs. ‘square chin’)

Typology of perceptual adjectives

□ Regular polysemy:

changing of the perceptual channel

gustatory → olfactory:

sweet tea vs. *sweet smell* (ENG)

sladak sok vs. *sladak miris* (SRB: ‘sweet juice’ vs. ‘sweet smell’)

kislaya yagoda vs. *kisly zapakh* (RUS: ‘sour berry’ vs. ‘sour smell’)



The case of 'heavy'

Language sample

- English, French, Spanish
- Russian, Serbian
- Japanese
- Chinese
- Besleney Kabardian (Circassian, North-West Caucasian)
- Russian Sign Language

Perceptual

- Initially haptic
- Channel swapping:
 - => Visual (*heavy bag* -> *heavy clouds*)
 - => Auditory (*heavy bag* -> *heavy sound*)

Perceptual?

□ More complex interaction:

Strongly associated with two situation types

Situation 1: moving

a person displaces an object (with difficulty)

Because of the weight of an object

Because of friction



*heavy
backpack*

*'heavy'
pedals*



Situation 2: weighing

- a person estimates the weight of an object



‘How much do you weigh?’

Typological perspective

□ Usually one dominant adjective

type 1 (English, French, Russian...)

Moving 1.1 - dominant adjective

Moving 1.2 - adjective from a different semantic domain

Weighing 2 - verbal construction or peripheral adjective

Typological perspective

type 1: examples

EN

Moving 1.1 *He swung his **heavy** pack up*

Moving 1.2 *Nobody likes **stiff drawers** or tacky plastic runners.*

Weighing 2 *How much do you **weigh**?*

Typological perspective

type 1: examples

RUS

Moving 1.1 *On vseгда nosil tyazhelye sumki*

'He used to have heavy bags on him'

Moving 1.2 *Sleva stoyal komod s tugimi yaschikami*

'There was a bureau with stiff drawers on the left'

Weighing 2 *On derzhal v ruke uvesisty bulyzhnik*

'He was holding a weighty stone in his arm'

Typological perspective

type 2 (Japanese, Russian Sign Language...)

Moving 1.1 - dominant adjective

Moving 1.2 - dominant adjective

Weighing 2 - verbal construction or peripheral adjective

Typological perspective

type 2: examples

JAP

Moving 1.1 *Omoi baggu*

‘a heavy bag’

Moving 1.2 *Sakamichi de jitensha no pedaru ga omoi*

‘When riding uphill, the pedals are heavy’

Typological perspective

type 2: examples

RSL

Moving 1.1 'heavy handbag' &

Moving 1.2 'stiff drawers'



Typological perspective

type 3 (Chinese, Serbian (at least, diachronically))

Moving 1.1 - dominant adjective

Moving 1.2 - adjective from a different semantic domain

Weighing 2 - dominant adjective

Typological perspective

type 3: examples

SRB

Moving 1.1 *Pet i po kilograma je teška torba pervaka*

‘The first-grader’ s heavy bag weighs 5.5 kg’

Weighing 2 *Koliko si težak?*

‘How much do you weigh?’

Typological perspective

type 3: examples

CHI

Moving 1.1

Zhòng bāo ‘heavy bag’

Weighing 2

Nǐ yǒu duō zhòng?

‘How much do you weigh?’

(lit. “How heavy are you?”)

Metaphorical extensions

type 1 or type 2 \Rightarrow only negative connotations

Moving 1.1

Moving 1.2

Weighing 2

Moving 1.1

Moving 1.2

Weighing 2

Metaphorical extensions

type 1 / 2: example

RUS: *tyazhely*

tyazhelyj film ‘heavy movie’

tyazhely character ‘heavy temper’

tyazhely razgovor ‘heavy talk’

tyazhelyaya zhizn’ ‘heavy life’

Metaphorical extensions

type 3 => possibility of positive connotations

Moving 1.1

Moving 1.2

Weighing 2

Metaphorical extensions

type 3: example

CHI *Tā bǎ zhè tiáo tiělù kàn de hěn zhòng hěn zhòng, jīhū jiāng tā zuò wéi zìjǐ shēngmìng de quánbù.*

‘He considers this railway very, very **important** (lit. ‘heavy’), almost considers it to be his life’

Gōngzuò yào fēn qīng zhòng huǎnjí, bù néng yī bǎ zhuā.

‘You should make difference between unimportant and **important**, unurgent and urgent work, shouldn’t grasp everything at one time ’

Intensifiers

type 1 or type 2 => negative or neutral connotations

FR *lourdes dettes* ('heavy debts')

RUS *tyazheloe zabolevanie* ('serious disease')

ENG *heavy taxes*

heavy rain

Intensifiers

type 3 => neutral or positive connotations

CHI	<i>zhòng</i> kǒuyīn	‘strong accent’
	ēnqíng hěn <i>zhòng</i>	‘kindness is very big’
	<i>zhòng</i> wù	‘heavy fog’
SRB	<i>teške</i> pare	‘much money’
CHI	<i>zhòng</i> jià	‘great price’

Conclusion

- Perceptual adjectives express a more complicated idea than just a translation of an information from a perceptual channel
- Strongly associated with several situation types
- Typologically, different linguistic means can be used for different types of situations.
- Different types of situations give rise to different metaphoric meanings
- Consequently, metaphorical extensions can serve as a key to reveal this complexity

□ Thank you for your attention!



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