Comparative analysis of modern greek and Bulgarians surprise expressing idioms from A cognitive perspective

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Настоящата статия обсъжда концептуализацията на изненадата като една от шестте първични емоции, идентифицирани от Екман, Фрисен и Елсуърт (1982: 45) в съвременната гръцка и българска фразеология. Целта на тази статия е да изучи концептуализацията на изненадата, както е илюстрирано чрез идиоматични изрази (пълен фраза / идиом). Чрез сравнение първо се откриват подобни и различни метафорични идиоми за концептуализиране на изненадата. Представяме семантичното моделиране на идиомите и това моделиране от своя страна разкрива как гръцкият и българският народ говори и структурира абстрактните концептуални области (Gibbs & Wilson, 2002: 527).

Ключови думи: φρασεολογική μονάδα, συναίσθημα, έκπληξη, концептуална метафора, съвременен гръцки, български

The present paper discusses the conceptualization of surprise as one of the six primary emotions identified by Ekman, Friesen & Ellsworth (1982: 45) in Modern Greek and Bulgarian phraseology. The purpose of this paper is to study the conceptualization of surprise as illustrated through idiomatic expressions (full phraseme/idiom). By means of comparison, similar and different metaphoric idioms for conceptualizing surprise are first detected. We present the semantic patterning of the idioms and this patterning, in turn, reveals how Greek and Bulgarian people talk about and structure the abstract conceptual domains (Gibbs & Wilson, 2002: 527).

Keywords: φρασεολογική μονάδα, συναίσθημα, έκπληξη, conceptual metaphor, Modern Greek, Bulgarian

1. Introduction

The study of human emotions is undoubtedly a meeting point for a plethora of sciences and theoretical approaches, which investigates different aspects of emotion. A cognitive perspective can lead to significant results in the study of the linguistic expression of emotions (Kövesces 1986; 2000; Lakoff 1987; 1993; Wierzbicka 1999; Dobrovolskij & Piirainen 2005 etc.). The present paper attempts an analysis of idiomatic expressions in Bulgarian and Greek that depict the emotion of surprise. The

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classification of the phraseological material will be based on conceptual metaphor. The declaration of *surprise* is evaluated as neutral, is expressed as pure emotion and is connected to "basic dysfunctions of the subject and lack of awareness" due to an unexpected or surprising event ($\epsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\lambda\eta$ $\epsilon\lambda\alpha\tauo\varsigma$, $\epsilon\gamma\delta\pi$ yma u dyma, I turned into a pillar of salt) (Baletópoylos & Mótsioy 2017: 262).

2. Emotion of Surprise

Surprise is caused by a sudden, unexpected exposure to something (event situation), often leading to a feeling of astonishment, wonder or amazement. The emotion of surprise is defined by an unexpected event that, despite any effort for control over occurrences, is presented without warning to disrupt, interrupt or confine what is happening.

According to the most popular theories that offer definitions of human emotional experience, there are four to eight basic emotions. In the case of surprise, views differ. V. Apresjan includes surprise in her list of six main emotions, along with rage, fear, disgust, sadness and joy (Apresjan 2011a: 20). Paul Ekman (1992a: 170), confirms the idea of the existence of basic emotions and proposes a list of six main emotions. His list includes joy, sadness, fear, anger, disgust and surprise. However, most scholars question whether surprise should be classified as a distinct and discrete emotion, thus causing a debate on whether it should appertain to the main emotions group. This claim has been supported by Ortony & Turner (1990: 317) who underline the neutral nature of surprise and the positive or negative nature it acquires when combined with other emotions. It can be accompanied by a sense of joy, fear, stress or admiration (Ortony et al 1988: 127-174, Baletópoylos & Mótsioy 2014: 155).

3. Source of Data

For the purposes of this study, a corpus including semantic phraseological units that express surprise has been created. The group of pragmatic phraseologisms is excluded from this collection¹. We examine phraseological units in which surprise is perceived as a reaction to something unexpected, sudden and unforeseeable. The phraseological units that are examined in the Bulgarian language are drawn from the Phraseological Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language ($\Phi P E E$) and the New

¹ For further analysis on pragmatic phraseologisms, see Μότσιου, 2012.

Phraseological Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language (Нов Фразеологичен речник на български език). The sources of phraseological units in Greek come from two dictionaries of the Modern Greek language (Λεξικό της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής (ΛΚΝΕ) by the Triantaphyllidis Foundation and Λεξικό της Νέας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας, by Babiniotis), as well as from some specialized dictionaries and collections (Vlachopoulos 2007, Natsoulis 1989). A part of the material pertaining to idiomatic expressions of the Modern Greek language has also been selected from web sources.

4. Aim of the Study

The present study is part of a wider research on the conceptualization of surprise, comparing idiomatic expressions that depict the emotion in Greek and Bulgarian. The study focuses on:

- a) Ananalysis of idiomatic expressions that denote the feeling of surprise and comprise the relevant semantic field.
- b) Agrouping of metaphors that constitute the semantic background of phraseologisms.
- c) Revealing the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural similarities and differences that will occur between the two languages that are being examined.

5. Research Methodology

Cognitive instruments are used for the investigation of the semantic field of surprise, with conceptual metaphors being the main medium for accessing and understanding emotions in this procedure (Tsapakídoy 2015: 37). Various parameters have been pinpointed regarding emotion description (intensity, positive or negative evaluation and others), some of which will be taken into consideration for further analysis of the material.

When it comes to surprise, Z. Kövecses mentions only three conceptual metaphors relating to the specific emotion. These are PHYSICAL FORCE, BURST CONTAINER and NATURAL FORCE (Esenova 2011: 32). We will try to describe surprise juxtapositionally, comparing idiomatic expressions depicting the emotion of surprise in Greek and Bulgarian. Subcategories are formed within the three wider

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categories, based on the metaphorical models that are integrated in the inner form of each unit (Baletópoylos & Mótsioy 2017: 262)².

6. Analysis

(A) SURPRISE IS A BURST CONTAINER

According to Z. Kövecses (1998: 133), this pattern is the main and most common mapping for emotions. He claims that the specific metaphor (the body as a container) does not fully specify the character of surprise, but rather it determines a very important aspect, i.e. that the surprised person loses control of themselves (Kövecses 2000: 33). However, according to what Z. Kövecses mentions and based on the data of the present research, the metaphor of the CONTAINER proved not to be as common with the emotion of surprise, since it is represented by much fewer expressions than anticipated.

More specifically, no expression to answer to this pattern was detected, neither in Greek nor in Bulgarian, contrary to English, where a number of examples are mentioned (*I just came apart at the seams*).

(B) SURPRISE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE

This category includes expressions that describe the attack on main human functions (physical – mental). Surprise is presented either as a type of object that attacks the person in a way, or as an external force that causes a reaction. Inaction, loss of motion control of the body and lack of perceptual ability are among these reactions.

SURPRISE IS A BLOW FROM A MOVING OBJECT

² For further analysis of this term, see Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen ("Figurative language: cross-cultural and cross – linguistic perspectives"), 2005 and Dimitrij Dobrovol'Skij ("The notion of "inner form" and idiom semantics"). Etudes et travauxd'Eur'ORBEM, 2016, Proverbes et stéréotypes: forme, formes et contextes, 1 (1), pp.21-35. <u>http://eurorbem.parissorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/etudes_travaux_1_2016-proverbes_et_ste_re_otypes_.pdf</u>.

An unexpected event can be presented as an object that suddenly and forcefully falls on a person that is not able to react.

<u>Bulg.</u>

като ударен/цапнат (плеснат) с мокър парцал, [kato udaren/tsapnat (plesnat) s mokar partsal] lit. '*like having been hit with a wet rag*' for a strong surprise caused by something very unpleasant

<u>Gr.</u>

Mov έρχεται καταπέλτης – *νταμπλάς/κατακούτελα* – *κεραμίδα*, [mu erxete katapeltis dablas/katakutela – keramida] lit. '*I get a blow right on my forehead*', I get a blow on my head for a particularly strong surprise

μου 'ρχεται ο ουρανός σφοντύλι, [mu erxete o uranos sfondili] lit. 'the sky hits me like a flywheel' I am shocked by a sudden blow or I am very tired because of some unexpected and unpleasant event

We could possibly come to the conclusion that "SURPISE AS AN EMOTIONAL EFFECT IS THE RESULT OF PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH AN OBJECT".

SURPRISE IS A FALL (FROM A GREAT HEIGHT)

A contradiction between existing knowledge and preliminary expectations of a situation is formed in this category. This divergence between expectations and reality can be expressed as a fall from a great height.

Bulg.

naдам от небето, naдам от Mapc, [padam ot nebeto, padam ot Mars] lit. 'I fall from the sky, I fall from Mars' I am very surprised by the discrepancy between my expectations about something and what is happening

<u>Gr.</u>

Πέφτω από τα σύννεφα, [pefto apo ta sinefa] lit. 'I fall from the clouds', I am unpleasantly surprised by the inconsistency between my expectations and what is happening

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SURPRISE IS AN IMPACT POWER WHOSE RESULT IS LOSS OF MENTAL CONTROL

The units listed on the table below describe situations in which the person's reaction when experiencing surprise is to lose their ability to think.

<u>Bulg.</u>

губя си акъла – ума, [gubiya si akala – uma] lit. *'I lose my mind*' I am astounded, amazed, confused *не вярвам на очите си, на ушите си,* [ne vyarvam na ochite si, na ushite si]

<u>Gr.</u>

τα 'χάνω, [ta xano] lit. '*I lose it*', I lose my mind, in complete confusion δεν πιστεύω στα μάτια μου – στα αυτιά μου, [den pistevo sta matxia mu – sta aftxia mu] lit. '*I can't believe my eyes – my ears* 'I am deeply shocked and confused

SURPRISE IS AN IMPACT POWER THAT RESULTS IN LOSS OF THE ABILITY TO SPEAK

The person is the first to signal surprise, since the emotion is interrelated with distinct facial expressions. The most original symptom of surprise is loss of the ability to speak.

Bulg.

гълтам си граматиката, [galtam si gramatikata] lit. 'I swallow up my grammar', I cannot speak, I'm too upset

загубих говор и картина,[zagubih govor i kartina] I lose my ability to speak and perceive, I am completely amazed

<u>Gr.</u>

*Μ*ένω άφωνος – άλαλος – άναυδος [meno afonos – alalos – anavdos] lit. '*I am* speechless, *I am left with no voice*'

SURPRISE IS AN IMPACT POWER THAT RESULTS IN LOSS OF MOUTH AND EYE MOVEMENT CONTROL

In this category, we will focus on expressions that describe the loss of control in facial movement.

<u>Bulg.</u>

опулвам очи, ококорвам очи, облещвам очи, [opulvam ochi, okokorvam ochi, obleshtvam ochi] I am amazed, I open my eyes widely with surprise оставам с отворена уста, [ostavam s otvorena usta] lit. 'I remain with my mouth open'

<u>Gr.</u>

γουρλώνω τα μάτια (από κατάπληξη),[gurlono ta matxia (apo katapliksi)] lit. '*I goggle* my eyes with surprise'

μένω με το στόμα ανοιχτό, [meno me to stoma anixto] lit. 'I remain with my mouth open'

(C) SURPRISE IS A NATURAL FORCE

The idea and the image of a natural force (such as thunder, storm) seems to be present in the way we perceive many emotions. Z. Kövecses (2000: 37) stresses that the emotion acquires the form of a natural phenomenon. Natural forces (lightning, thunder) are considered extremely powerful since they have a great impact on humans.

SURPRISE IS A BLOW BY A NATURAL PHENOMENON

Bulg.

дойде ми като гръм от ясно небе, [doyde mi kato gram ot yasno nebe] for something that happens suddenly, out of the blue and provokes confusion

<u>Gr.</u>

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 $\Sigma \alpha v \kappa \epsilon \rho \alpha v \delta \varsigma \epsilon v \alpha i \theta \rho i \alpha$, [san keravnos en e θ ria] lit. '*like thunder in a clear sky*', for unexpected, sudden news that cause confusion and is usually associated with unfavorable developments

SURPRISE IS THE INABILITY TO REACT (DUE TO A SUDDEN COLLISION WITH A NATURAL FORCE)

<u>Bulg.</u>

оставам като треснат/като гръмнат, [ostavam kato tresnat/kato gramnat] lit. '*I* am thunderstruck' I am unable to move and react като ударен от гръм, [kato udaren ot gram]

<u>Gr.</u>

*Μ*ένω κεραυνοβολημένος/εμβρόντητος, [meno keravnovolimenos/emvronditos] lit. '*I* am thunderstruck' numb by an unpleasant surprise

Μένω στήλη άλατος/κολώνα/παγωτό/κάγκελο/άγαλμα [meno stili alatos/kolona/pagoto/kagelo/agalma] (jarg.), lit. '*I become a pillar of salt/column/ice cream/railing/statue*'

Z. Kövecses (2000: 33) specifically mentions that surprise is not a socially complicated phenomenon and therefore is a less understandable concept compared to other emotions. A main characteristic of the linguistic expression of surprise is its ability to show escalation with different levels of intensity (Thwmadákh & Márkoy 2014: 544) ($\gamma ov \rho \lambda \acute{o} v \sigma \tau \mu \acute{a} \tau i \alpha - low \, level \, of \, intensity, \mu \acute{e} v \omega \epsilon \mu \beta \rho \acute{o} \tau \eta \tau o \varsigma - high \, level \, of \, intensity$). Surprise can show fluctuation in levels of intensity when it is caused by stimuli that both *surprise* the subject, and *immobilize* it at the same time. More specifically, gradations concerning the *unexpected* and the *loss of control* are noted in the above categories. When the feeling of surprise is not evaluated as neutral, it can later be deemed as positive or negative and cause a sense of fear or embarrassment, joy or awe. F. Valetopoulos & E. Motsiou (2017: 268), observed that in Greek and Russian, surprise is mainly connected to a negative or neutral experience rather than a positive one (*zълmam cu граматикаma* - fromshame, fromfear, fromblushing). In that case, the description of surprise is unclear and vague, thus creating "grey areas" between two different emotions (Baletópoylos & Mótsioy 2017: 264).

7. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the data presented in this paper, based on the same criteria for both languages, describes *surprise* as a neutral momentary emotional experience – a reaction to something unexpected, sudden and unpredictable – that has an impact on a person. The role of surprise is directly connected to the process of perception, as well as with the motion control of the body. In conclusion:

- 1. In both languages the idiomatic expressions that depict surprise focus on: *the unexpected event and the attack on basic human functions*.
- 2. Based on the gathered material, the evaluation of the experience of surprise is considered prominently neutral in both languages.
- 3. A part of the semantic phraseological units depicts surprise as a brief emotion which transforms into a negative one (usually fear or shame). The units compiling this "grey area" are equally found in both the Greek and the Bulgarian language.
- 4. The number of units describing situations of "positive surprise" is much smaller.

The conclusion arising from the analysis of the materialis that there are plenty of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic similarities, both in Greek and in Bulgarian. However, it should be noted that surprise is one of the emotions that have been less studied in comparison to the rest. The category of "human dysfunction" (reduced reaction) due to an unexpected event plays a prominent role in the expression of surprise (Baletópoylos & Mótsioy 2017: 262). Therefore, in order to get more accurate results, an in-depth analysis of the units into subcategories is required. This study comes to the conclusion that loss of control is the most fundamental characteristic of surprise (L' Hôte,Celle, Jugnet, & Lansari 2017: 235).

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