Semantic-Pragmatic Evolution of Negative Emotive Words: A Corpus-Based Analysis

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This presentation delves into the semantic-pragmatic features and evolution of Negative Emotive Words (Szabó et al. 2023), particularly focusing on the Hungarian word *durva (lit. 'harsh')* within the domain of automotive texts. Using a manually created corpus derived from the *Autó-Motor* (car-motorcycle) journal (January 1950 to December 2020), available on the Arcanum Digitheca platform, the study offers insights into the dynamic linguistic shifts of NEWs over time.

Negative Emotive Words (NEWs), as defined by Szabó and Bibok (2019), inherently possess negative semantic content, which can diminish or transform based on usage context. For instance, words like *terribly* or *terrific* in English often transcend their negative connotations to express intensification or even positive evaluation. Similarly, in other languages, such as Hungarian and Japanese, NEWs display a range of functions from intensifying quality to expressing surprise or a positive emotion.

The corpus for this analysis was meticulously compiled, featuring 893 instances of *durva*, from which 892 were annotated after excluding one ambiguous example. The annotation process was guided by prior research (Szabó and Otani 2023; Szabó and Bibok 2023) and aimed to explore the variety of semantic-pragmatic functions of *durva*. This involved analyzing not only the direct sentiment of NEWs but also the sentiment of their contextual sentiment features.

During the manual annotation phase, each instance was categorized into distinct semantic-pragmatic groups. This meticulous classification enabled a thorough investigation into the frequency distribution of these categories across various decades.

The diachronic study revealed substantial variations in the semantic-pragmatic attributes of NEWs across different periods. A noteworthy trend was identified where specific categories increasingly overshadowed others in frequency. This shift accentuates the evolving dynamics of NEWs in the realm of automotive texts. While the analysis indicated a broadening in their application, a consistent change in collocational sentiment features over the decades was not evident. However, a significant transformation was observed in the contextual sentiment features of *durva*. Initially confined to negative contexts, from the 1980s onwards, its usage expanded to encompass neutral and positive connotations, representing a marked departure from its traditionally negative connotations.

In summary, this study illuminates the evolving semantic-pragmatic dimensions of NEWs within language, showcasing the dynamic progression of their functional roles across different periods. Significantly, this research accentuates the critical role of longitudinal sentiment analysis in comprehensively grasping these developments. Additionally, it underscores the necessity for a judicious selection of sentiment analysis methodologies in such studies. This is particularly evident

from our findings, where different analytical strategies (contextual and collocational sentiment analysis methods) yielded distinct outcomes.

References

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