

LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC CONCEPTUALIZATION OF BEAUTY AND UGLINESS IN ENGLISH & NAFARA LANGUAGES

Sita TUO
Université Péléforo Gon Coulibaly
Enseignante-Chercheure
Département d'Anglais

Abstract

This analysis is based on two different languages, two different cultures, and two different communities. In the era of globalization, communication is destined to become increasingly cross-cultural because it involves interactants of different languages, different cultures, and different conceptualizations. Beauty is linked to the identification of aesthetic. It (beauty) encompasses two other close opposite variants known as beautiful and ugly. Then, the lexical and semantic appreciation of these terms differ from a speech community to another. An individual may appreciate something as beautiful or ugly according to his own point of view. The judgement of the beauty and ugliness is bound to the context for English and Nafara people. Beautiful is associated with good, and ugliness is led to wrong and bad things for many communities. But, Nafara and English have the same view point about beautiness and ugliness. Something may be considered as ugly or beautiful through the eyes of people. Thus, English and Nafara people take into account moral virtue, heart disposition in a way that they beautified ugliness and uglified beautiness.

Keywords: aesthetic, beautified ugliness, moral virtue, semantics, uglified beautiness.

Conceptualisation lexicale et sémantique de la beauté et de la laideur en Anglais et Nafara Résumé

Cette analyse est basée sur deux langues différentes, deux cultures différentes et deux communautés différentes. À l'ère de la mondialisation, la communication se veut de plus en plus interculturelle parce qu'elle implique des intervenants de différentes langues, de différentes cultures et de différentes conceptualisations. La beauté est le terme qui désigne l'esthétique. Elle (beauté) englobe deux autres variantes proches opposées qui sont 'belle et laide'. Ensuite, le lexique et l'appréciation sémantique de ces termes diffère d'une communauté à l'autre. Un individu peut apprécier une chose d'aussi belle ou laide selon son propre point de vue. Le jugement de la beauté et de la laideur est lié au contexte pour les Anglais et les Nafara. Le beau est associé au bien, et la laideur est liée au mal et aux mauvaises choses pour de nombreuses communautés. Mais, les Nafara et les Anglais ont le même point de vue sur la question de la beauté et de la laideur. Une chose est considérée comme laide ou belle selon l'appréciation personnelle de chaque individu. Par contre, les Anglais et les Nafara tiennent compte de la vertu morale, de la disposition du cœur dans leur conceptualisation de la beauté et la laideur. C'est sur cette base qu'ils embellissent la laideur et enlaidissent la beauté.

Mots-clés : esthétique, beauté enlaidie, laideur embellie, sémantique, vertu morale.

Conceptualización léxica y semántica de la belleza y la fealdad en Inglés y Nafara

Resumen

Este análisis se basa en dos idiomas, dos culturas y dos comunidades todos diferentes. En la era de la globalización, la comunicación pretende ser cada vez más intercultural porque implica a participantes de diferentes idiomas, culturas y conceptualizaciones. La belleza es el término que designa la estética. Ella (belleza) abarca otras dos variantes cercanas opuestas que son 'hermoso y feo'. Entonces, el léxico y la apreciación semántica de estos términos difieren de una comunidad a otra. Un individuo puede apreciar una cosa bella o fea según su propio punto de vista. El juicio de la belleza y de la fealdad se vincula con el contexto para los ingleses y los nafara. El bello está asociado con el bien, y la fealdad

está relacionada con el mal y las cosas malas para muchas comunidades. Pero, los nafara y los ingleses tienen el mismo punto de vista sobre la cuestión de la belleza y la fealdad. Una cosa se considera fea o hermosa según la apreciación personal de cada individuo. Por el contrario, los ingleses y los nafara tienen en cuenta la virtud moral, de la disposición del corazón en su conceptualización de la belleza y la fealdad. Es sobre esta base que embellecen la fealdad y enlazan la belleza.

Palabras clave: estética, belleza afeada, fealdad embellecida, semántica, virtud moral

Introduction

Lexical and semantic conceptualization of beauty and ugliness matter's among Nafara and English people is at stake in this research paper. Beauty and ugliness are two close notions appreciated the same way in Nafara and English communities. First of all, beauty is connected to high standard appreciation. It led to shape, good, color, or form that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight and it is assimilated to goodness. It was in this view that Plato has defined the beauty as the splendid coronation of what is known as true. Secondly, ugliness or awfulness, or dreadfulness, or horridness, or terribleness is defined as a quality of an extreme unpleasant thing. The adjective "ugly" is associated with the term 'bad' and 'bad' is known as something of poor quality or a low standard. In few words, ugliness is the flawed beauty because it fails to conform to the high standard of appreciation. It is for that reason people do not appreciate it. The subjectivity can be seen through the judgement and appreciation someone may have about something or a person. All human beings do not have the same appreciation about the same thing. Exceptionally, English and Nafara have the same point of view about the concepts of beauty and ugliness.

This article demonstrates different patterns of polysemy of the words and their meaning according to folk aesthetics and cultural semantics of Nafara and English languages. The meanings of the terms are represented using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) related to Nafara and English cultural themes. The use of fixed expressions in Nafara and English people discourse shows the subjective judgement of aesthetic qualities of the beauty shared by the both different languages. What is qualified as beauty? What do we considered as ugly or awful? Do Nafara and English people conceptualize and consider the "beauty and ugliness" the same way? The purpose of the present work is to investigate the use of lexical and semantic conceptualization of beauty and ugliness in English and Nafara people's interactions. The first section deals with the methodological framework. It highlights the data

collecting methods. Then, the second section will show the results of the findings. And finally, the last part is about the analysis of the results.

1. Methodological framework

Beforehand, interactions have shifted my attention through the use of words related to appreciation. Regard to this, I have mentioned that some expressions show the beauty, the goodness, the awfulness, the ugliness, or something of poor quality or a low standard. This paper demonstrates different patterns of polysemy of the words and their meaning according to the framework of folk aesthetics and cultural semantics in the both languages. The meanings of the words are used in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) because it governs universal syntax. The analysis demonstrates cultural significance of aesthetic value in English and in Nafara with their intrinsic link with ethics, morality, virtue, and spirituality.

In addition, the data collection of this work is twofold. First of all, I have investigated the area of Napié, located in the north of Côte d'Ivoire where Nafara language is spoken. The corpus has been collected during an interview held two years ago. I have interviewed twenty-five (25) men and twenty women in the month of august 2021. Today, gender matter is still developing and I have collected data from women as well as men. The objective when selecting men and women has been to test the influence of the appreciation of the two different groups. Do they appreciate beauty and ugliness the same way? Or the appreciation of beauty and ugliness depends on gender. The interview was about the conception and consideration of beauty and ugliness by Nafara people. In regard to the objective, this analysis will be done in the trend of pragmatics according to Anna Wierzbicka's orientation of the semantics of human interactions. She has studied language as a tool of human interaction. Wierzbicka (2003, p.1) "*investigates various kinds of meanings which can be conveyed in language meanings which involve the interaction between the speaker and the hearer*". This work is inscribed in this specific orientation because it lies down the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM).

Secondly, the research work "On the connection between beauty and morality in the Old English corpus" ran by Minaya (2019) has really back up English consideration and conception of beauty. The research work by Minaya (2019) deals with the relation between beauty and its connection with cognitive considerations in Anglo-Saxon England. The better understanding of the concept of beauty in the English language today is gained on the initial point of view developed into the corpus of old English. This fact allows me to consider the

English language as a specific form of appreciation, creative, and learning which can be compared to Nafara language. In this regard the usage of methods of conceptual analysis in description is considered the most preferable.

2. Lexical and semantic conceptualization of beautiful and ugly

The judgement that somebody or something is good- or bad-looking expresses a kind of controversy on aesthetic matter which is beautiful or ugly. Beauty and ugliness are pointed in a situation of disagreement and do have qualities that make them aesthetic. This idea is adopted by Suojanen (2016, p. 2) as follows:

People have different opinions and judgements about what is beautiful or ugly. Nevertheless, it has been argued that aesthetic perception, or experience, is objective in the sense that aesthetic qualities belong to natural phenomena, human persons, and artworks. According to that argument, non-aesthetic and aesthetic qualities exist in an object, and they can be experienced.

For Suojanen, “non-aesthetic and aesthetic qualities exist in an object” means that each object has beautiful and ugly features at the same time. If the two characteristics belong to an object, beautiness in that context may be considered as a word that encompasses beautiful and ugly features. Beauty refers to the concept of “appearance”, “good”, “evil”, “health”, “nature”, and “art”. What do I mean when speaking about beauty?

2.1. Concept of Beauty from Old English to Contemporary English

Old English (OE) language had words which are diachronically linked to the concept of beauty. In this sense, the work by Ramey (2017, p. 478) gives a list of these words which show that early Old English was deeply interested in the concept of beautiness. This perception is transcribed through the writing form and the meaning of words that show the diachronic relationship with contemporary words. So, the presence of the diversified lexemes from Old English to contemporary English testifies that antiquity relationship. For Ramey (2017, p. 478) the word ‘wroetlic’ is a lexeme which describes beauty. Other lexemes such as ‘wlitig’, ‘fœger’, ‘fœgre’ and ‘fœgerum do. Adjectives ‘fœger’ and ‘wlitig’ mean beautiful. Beautiful points to qualities of bright and pleasing appearance. Secondly, the adjective ‘fœger’ is connected to luminous images in visually marked aesthetic experience. In this regard, Franzen (2012: 1) added that “things declared to be beautiful in OE sources are often assessed spiritually rather than visually or in terms of another sense”. The concept of beauty includes various descriptive lexical units, which have negative and positive emotional

coloring Beautiful is associated with the beauty, light, freshness, nice, wonderful, pretty, pleasure, awe, and purity. And ugly which is the world of darkness, ugliness, artificiality, limit, cruelty, horrible, and evil. Consequently, cognitive linguistics field through the work of Keltner and Haidt (2003, pp. 304-305) have identified seven features in the experience of awe, which they divide into two groups: central and peripheral features. For Keltner and Haidt (2003), peripheral or “flavoring” features are optional characteristics of elements of the aesthetic object that modify or modulate the aesthetic experience and “[give] rise to the variety and diversity of awe experiences,” namely: threat, beauty, ability, virtue and supernatural causality.

For Tim Lomas 2022, p.10), aesthetic has four main themes. There are stimuli, qualities, modes, and dynamics. The visual perception, sound, taste, smell, touch belong to stimuli. As far as qualities are concerned, we do have harmony, naturalness, simplicity, prettiness and shock. The third theme, dynamics encompasses appreciation, understanding, and creation. The last word deals with modalities, movements, and techniques according to Minaya (2019). Finally, Suojanen (2016) opined that unity, coherence, intensity, and completeness can be considered in this topic:

Aesthetic features are the qualities aesthetic experience has. In brief, according to them, the intensity, unity, and completeness of artworks cause the aesthetic experiences of symmetry, unity, and completeness in different persons. Because intensity, unity, and completeness are objective qualities of artworks, one’s perception is about the aesthetic qualities of artworks. However, whether these things can be considered beautiful or ugly on the grounds of unity, completeness, coherence or intensity of experience is a problem. Intensity, unity, coherence, and completeness are non-aesthetic qualities that differ from aesthetic ones. Suojanen (2016, p.3)

2.2- Lexical terms of beauty in Nafara

In conversational situation, there are set expressions such as idioms in Nafara language related to ‘beauty and ugliness’. These words are really distinct from one another, and can be encountered in a real situation of communication. The word “beauty” encompasses the notions of “beautiful” on the one hand, and “ugly” on the other hand. Hence, we have “Càw” “beau or good, “nàjèri” “ beauty, “ceri nàjère” is related to physical beauty, prettiness, and physical appearance. The expression “ca càw” refers to a beautiful woman, “nà càw” a handsome man and “pii càw” is a beautiful child. “Bi u ñuè” is the expression which shows the process of making someone beautiful.

However, other expressions are used for ugly like “bi Pe ʔe” which means to be wicked, to be unkind. Secondly, the fixed expression “bi Pe ʔe” in Nafara also refers to adjectives “bad and wrong”. Thus, “nàpeʔew” is a wicked person, an unkind person. “nàpeʔem” identified the wickedness, badness, unkindness. Whereas, “sipeʔew” is only used to designate a witch, an enemy, a sorcerer. This word is also a name given to a mask to show its wickedness and “sipeʔem” is wickedness, and the witchcraft.

On the contrary, “ʃù Càw “ is a good person, “fani Càw” a good wrapper, “ʃù teleo” makes a clear cut difference saying that person is a true good person. In the same viewpoint, “fani teleo “ is used to identify the good quality of a wrapper, because the adjective “teleo” means good. As far as things are concerned, there are two main expressions “ya canga” for a good thing and “ ya pehe” for a bad thing. Nouns, adjectives and set expressions exist and they are used to express the point of view of the speaker. But, the terms beautiful and ugly are interchangeable according to context-dependent variables in Nafara community.

3. Uglified beauty and beautified ugliness

The very wide range of the meaningful lexical words in English and in Nafara shows the difference between two words. Beauty and ugliness are not objective properties of a thing itself. But, beautiness and ugliness represent two opposite way of appreciating something or someone. When I claim that someone or an object is beautiful for instance, I am really claiming something about that person or that object that is beautiful. Hence, judgments and appreciations are subjective. The speaker or appreciator formulates a feeling of pleasure or displeasure making something or someone beautiful or ugly. These terms are totally opposed. Therefore, judgments and appreciations ascribe assent to everyone. Whoever declares something to be beautiful wishes that everyone similarly approves it as being beautiful.

In this regard, the inner context is opposed to the outer context. So, I can assume that through the prism of the concept of “beauty”, expresses not only the attitude to the entire “beauty or ugliness”, but mostly the inner world is reflected.

3.1. Uglified Beauty

As I have noticed in English and in Nafara, each language has its own assessment values. Adorno quoted by Gladkova and Romero-Trillo (2021) point out aesthetic concepts like beautiful and ugly ‘are dynamic concepts and can easily exchange their aesthetic value. I have mentioned that beautiful and ugly while ascribing a positive or a negative aesthetic

value, have or acquire a positive or a negative connotation. The matter of aesthetic value is developed by Ernesto (2023) in three different kind of judgement. The A- value, Q- value, and N- value as in the following statement:

There also exist not one, but several kinds of value, according to what their object is and the entities they pertain to. Three of these kinds of value will be relevant here. The first kind is affective value or A-Value, which is ascribed to entities that cause pleasure or suffering, that feel good or bad; aesthetic appreciation is a stereotypical case of A-Value. The second kind is quality value or Q-Value, which is ascribed to entities relative to others of their same class, according to how good or bad they are at being what they are. And the third kind is normative value or N-Value, which has to do with conformity to social norms and conventions; it applies stereotypically in the moral domain, but also in others like manners and politeness. Ernesto (2023, p.5)

Ernesto Wong García identified four values. They are considered the best for speakers from the same speech community. A woman may be said beautiful. Unfortunately, the good-looking of that woman may be hidden by her bad actions, bad behavior in Nafara community. As the ugliness is associated with 'bad', and the word 'bad' is known as something of poor quality or a low standards thing or object, the good-looking woman fails to conform to standards of moral virtue or acceptable merit. Therefore, beauty is below standard and expectations as of ethics or decency. Some specific terms such as “nàpe?ew” a wicked person, unkind person, or “nàpe?em” wickedness, badness, unkindness or “sipe?ew” witch, enemy, sorcerer (it is also a name given to a mask to show its wickedness) and “sipe?em” the wickedness, the witchcraft will be the possible words to identify that woman. In Nafara these terms are used to demonstrate the ugliness of a woman. She may be a good-looking woman, but, if she shows negative qualities, she will be seen as an ugly woman. The appreciation of ugliness as beautiness, then, beauty as ugliness is not only specific to English and Nafara people, but also referred to in the bible. Christianity has its own perception of that judgment.

Through the book of Proverbs chapter 31 verse 30-31 says that “*Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates*”. Thus, the first book of Samuel continues in this trend. 1 Samuel chapter 16 verse 7 says ‘But the LORD said to Samuel’, “*Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” This biblical point of view sheds light on what Nafara and English people called outer beauty. It is about a good-looking person “appearance or physical stature” known as values. They may disqualify someone if they (values) are not in accordance

with inner expectations values. The beautiness may be uglified by bad, and low standard actions. In that context, the beauty has failed and the ugly has took control over beauty.

3.2 – Beautified ugliness

The “beautified ugliness” consists in endowing an ugly person or thing with beautiful features, in order people appreciate her/him/ it. As the results of findings show Nafara and English people attribute beautiful features to someone or something without mentioning his or its physical appearance. The physical appearance is less considered. It is also called the outer, outward, or the outside beauty. Whereas, the inner beautiness is also called inside or hidden beauty. The latter mentioned takes into account value and moral virtue features which are very cherished by English and Nafara people. The same point of view is shared by Minaya (2019) who analyzes this aspect of the concept as follows:

... to analyse the OE adjective *fæger* ‘beautiful’ in order to uncover aesthetic assumptions in Anglo-Saxon England and to gain a better understanding of the recurrent connection between what has been traditionally called “inner” and “outer” beauty. In other words, I will explain the link between sensory aesthetic experience, morality, spirituality and divinity. To do so, I will combine methods from corpus and cognitive linguistics and traditional literary analysis of the texts in the concordance. Each of these methods is equally important and provide complementary data that helps understand Old English beauty from different perspectives. Minaya (2019 p. 206)

The matter of moral virtue and value such as “morality, spirituality and divinity” are inner features of beautiness. Minaya (2019, p. 206) refers to them when explaining the recurrent connection between ‘inner’ and ‘outside’ beauty. He has also used “cognitive linguistics and traditional literary analysis of the texts” in Old English (OE) to clarify that explanation. Thus, the beautiness of a woman is seen through her good qualities, kindness, and the hidden person of heart, moral virtue, divinity, and spirituality which do not belong to physical appearance. They are outer qualities. Then, these hidden qualities are more considered than the good-looking or physical appearance. Therefore, the outer, outside, physical appearance is the underground beauty, whereas, inner beauty is put forward.

In this context, an ugly woman for example may be qualified as a beautiful one. So, they use a specific term “*ceri nàjèrè*” physical beauty, outside beauty, or physical appearance which is different from the term “*nàjèrè*” beauty. Thus, Nafara people as well as old English refer to different lexical items endowed with semantic conceptualization to make the difference between physical appearance and beautiness. The same idea is developed in the bible through the book of 1Peter chapter 3 verse 3 - 4: *“Do not let your adornment be merely outward—*

arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God". Biblical verses favor the hidden beauty as Nafara and old English people do. The inner beauty is qualified as the incorruptible and a very precious beautiness. It takes into account some qualities inherent to the person himself, and they cannot be seen but are remarked through the behavior of a person, moral virtue, and a material quality of a thing. The same idea of beauty is strengthened in the book of 1 Timothy chapter 2 verse 9 -10: *"in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works"*. I can assert without doubting that biblical texts are in favor of inside beauty. Fixed expressions such as "good works", "spirituality", "the hidden person of the woman's heart", "and professing godliness" are used for outer beautiness in bible and these expressions are considered alike in English and Nafara. Finally, Minaya (2019) concludes:

In most instances, male beauty is connected with a strong and visually abundant perception. The qualities of being OE *strang* 'strong', OE *lang* 'tall', OE *geong* 'young', and OE *brād* 'broad-shouldered, strong' are central to the perception of men (OE *wer*, *mann*, *cniht*). While this is a clearly visual judgment, it also has a cognitive component that links the inner and the outer. Beauty was often evaluated in terms of reproductive ability, and for a man to be strong, tall, and young implied being healthy and hence (at least in Anglo-Saxon thought) able to reproduce. Women, on the other hand, were evaluated in terms of being OE *eadmod* 'modest', OE *clæn* 'clean (in the moral sense)', OE *wynsum* 'pleasant', OE *geong* 'young' or beautiful in their shape (OE *hīw*). The emphasis on the reproductive could also be identified; it is clear that female beauty is more connected with moral considerations. The notions of purity and modesty were fundamental to the perception of female beauty as represented in the corpus. Minaya (2019 p. 212).

In a nutshell, the beautified ugliness can be perceived through the lexical and semantic examples of that work. They may highlight people on the fact that some communities have favored inner, inside, hidden beautiness. In old English for instance, 'female beauty is more connected with moral considerations'. So, high standard qualities and moral virtue or excellence and admirableness of beauty are noticed in an area where nothing could appear physically. On the contrary, 'beautiful in their shape' which is the outer, outside, and outward beauty is disappreciated when that person does not fulfill the requirements referred to above about the concept of beautiness. Those requirements of beauty are in accordance with the viewpoint of English and Nafara.

Conclusion

The importance of appreciation in humans' life has been discussed in this work. So, it can be assumed that the variety of lexical and semantic units are combined with the concept of "beauty" has become one of the central concepts. The linguistic expressions in the two languages have shown in a long scale the concept of "beauty". Beauty should be understood in term of two variants "beautiful and ugly". Such consideration of the concept of Beauty takes into account various combinations with the notions of variables or qualities such as good behavior, hard-working person, kindness, and the welcoming woman, the hidden person of the woman's heart, virtue, and moral considerations for Nafara community. The features of the concept of "beauty" in English, in Nafara, and even the biblical scriptures come to the compliance with a certain ideal appreciation of "beauty". It is in this regard that it is possible to recognize moral deficiencies in people behavior in relation to the positive aesthetic and ugly appearance in relation to the negative aesthetic.

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