

The conceptualisation of BOREDOM in English, French and Russian: a quantitative corpus-driven study.

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Although boredom is commonplace and has been extensively studied in social psychology, no linguistic research so far has discussed the emotion in a cross-cultural context. This study seeks to establish the conceptual structuring associated with this emotion in British English, American English, French and Russian. Applying the Behavioral Profile Approach (Geeraerts *et al.*, 1994, Gries, 2003, Divjak & Gries, 2006), the study examines patterns of usage of 'boredom' terms to reveal cultural similarities and differences. Specifically, the research investigates the hypothesis that these languages structure the emotion concept differently and, by extension, it can be inferred that the experience of boredom also differs. Recent findings suggest that this divergence does exist in Anglo-Saxon, Western and Russian societies and that it is historically and socially motivated (Tochilnikova, 2021).

The concept is operationalized through the lexical categories of 'boredom', 'skuka' and 'ennui' respectively and their verbal and/or adjectival profilings: *bored*, *boring* and *dull* in British and American English, the adjective *skuchnyi* 'boring' and neuter predicate *skuchno* 'bored' in Russian, *s'ennuyer* 'be bored' and *ennuyeux* 'boring' in French. This operationalization is based on the principle of cultural keywords (Wierzbicka, 1997) and the relative frequency of occurrence (Glynn, 2014, Krawczak, 2014). In total, 1429 random occurrences were retrieved from stylistically homogenous corpora of online diaries (Speelman & Glynn, 2005/2012, Yang *et al.*, 2019) and annotated by two annotators. Establishing the behavioral profile of the usage of each lexeme involves the manual annotation of its contextualized occurrences for formal and semantic characteristics such as causes, responses, stimuli and intensity of boredom. These factors are directly informed by the results of psychological studies of boredom (Raffaelli *et al.*, 2018) as well as the results of lexical studies of the conceptualisation of emotions (Kövecses, 1990, Wierzbicka, 1992).

The obtained dataset is then submitted to multiple correspondence analysis. At this stage, the goal of the study is to identify any form-functional associations in the four socio-cultural contexts. Exploratory results show that with respect to conceptual-lexical structure, regardless of the language, the usage of the adjectives designating 'boredom' is associated with monotonous activities and content, which suggest a simple, common or "everyday" type of boredom experienced when an individual is already engaged in an activity (long lectures, work, subjectively uninteresting tasks). Additionally, the nouns (boredom, skuka, ennui) are associated with more abstract causes such as low-challenging environment and unknown cause implying the experience of a complex existential boredom. While in all three languages boredom arises due to similar causes, it is expected that cross-cultural differences will be observed with regard to the behavior in reaction to boredom stimuli: the other-directed French and English will seek distraction (often entertainment) in response to a mundane environment in contrast to inner-directed Russians expressing discontent and looking for change.

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