A LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SYMPATHY, COMPASSION, EMPATHY AND PITY IN ENGLISH AND MOROCCAN ARABIC

Khalid Elasri

Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco

ABSTRACT

This corpus-based study attempts to investigate the conceptualization of sympathy, empathy, compassion and pity in English and Moroccan Arabic. Using examples from the British National Corpus (BNC), I compared these English concepts to their equivalents in Moroccan Arabic. The Semantic Analysis of these concepts in both varieties is carried out through the natural semantic metalanguage. This metalanguage is based on empirically established semantic primes such as feel, want, say, think, know, good, bad, that is shared by all human languages (Wierzbicka, 1999; Goddard, 2010). The use of such universal semantic concepts can make it possible to identify the precise semantic and conceptual differences between English and Moroccan Arabic words. Results of the contrastive analysis reveal that there are significant differences in the conceptualization of sympathy-related concepts in English and Moroccan Arabic. These differences are associated with the prevalence of different models of social interaction in Anglo and Moroccan cultures, as well as different cultural attitudes towards emotional expression. More specifically, the differences between English concepts and their Moroccan Arabic equivalents are mainly related to the degree of familiarity between the experiencer and the target person and the complexity and expression of the feelings. Thus, this corpus-based study can contribute to the description and analysis of linguistic and cultural variation in the conceptualization of emotions towards others plights in two varieties that belong to different cultural dimensions.

KEYWORDS: *Culture, Concepts, Emotions, Semantic Analysis*