

EVALUATIVE CATEGORIZATION

It is generally thought nowadays that we use the same principles of natural categorization in language as when we categorize world. This categorization is based upon certain points of reference called prototypes, which help to identify categories and their members. One can agree that there exist prototypes in our mind for apples, birds, tables, chairs and other things. But are there any prototypes for bad people, nice birds, interesting books, good cars or comfortable chairs? And if the answer is positive, are these categories and their prototypes of the same nature as just birds, books or chairs? Very likely it greatly depends upon the person's preferences, and these preferences come to the fore when we use language in communication. So it gives reason to think of two types of categorization we deal with – that in the system of language and that in speech. If the first one - systemic - reflects our knowledge of the world as it is encoded in linguistic meanings, the second - functional - involves scaling and evaluation we need for forming judgments and utterances while processing information in speech. It is here when the evaluative categorization comes into action, and the categories we form in speech and their possible prototypes certainly differ from those we form in our mind with the help of words as linguistic units and following the principles of natural categorization.

The evaluative categorization presents an idealized image of world as a result of interaction of two conceptual systems – one deriving from a physical world and the other – from a man's system of values. It builds on a system of categories based on scaling and evaluation. These categories are like specially organized mental spaces centered round some stereotypes and opinions (good – bad, low-high, close – distant, pleasant – unpleasant, comfortable – uncomfortable, etc.). The members of these categories do not need to be similar in their form, function, or meaning. What they do have in common is a certain type of opinion or reaction produced. The chief points of reference and gradation here are not regular prototypes and their characteristic features but different scales and standards and types of emotional reaction. Accordingly the boundaries of such-like categories are much more unlimited as compared with categories of natural objects.

Thus if natural categorization bases upon the physical or functional similarity of objects, the evaluative categorization builds on the effect these objects and their characteristics produce on man. The two types of categorization follow different principles and they define the choice of linguistic units in speech.

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