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**CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS, EXPERIENTIAL REMEMBERING,**  
**SEMANTICS, AND CULTURAL ELABORATION.**

***Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada mashhur olim Wierzbickaning xotira konsepsiyasini ingliz va o'zbek tillarida qiyoslab xotira va xotirlash so'zlarining semantik va konseptual tahlili haqida fikr yuritiladi. Shu bilan birga ingliz tilidagi xotira so'ziga oid terminlarning bayoniga munosabatlar bildiriladi.*

***Annotation.** This article discusses the concept of the famous scientist Wierzbicka's memory compared to the English and Uzbek languages and commemorate the memory is carried out on the semantic and conceptual analysis of the words. At the same time, it is made a response for the English word description of the terms of the relationship of memory.*

***Аннотация.** Эта статья обсуждает концепцию известного ученого памяти Вежбицкой по сравнению с английскими и узбекском языках и ознаменованть память осуществляется на семантическом и концептуального анализа слова. В то же время, описание памяти английское слово из точки зрения ответ.*

***Kalit so'zlar.** bolalik xotiralar, kontseptual va tarixiy semantik tahlil, rekonstruktiv eslab qolish, faylasuflar va psixologlar, inson hayotining modeli, tajribaga asoslanmagan va tarixiy.*

***Key words.** memories of childhood, semantic analysis, reconstructive remembering, philosophers and psychologists, model of human life, conceptually and historically.*

***Ключевые слова.** воспоминания о детстве, семантический анализ, реконструктивной беспамятства, философы и психологи, модель человеческой жизни, концептуально и исторически.*

I turn now to Wierzbicka's proposed explications of some relevant English terms. To students of memory inexperienced in semantic analysis, these should be highly productive new ways of getting at both familiar and unfamiliar phenomena. Given my wishful synthetic urge to integrate cognitive and cross-linguistic semantics with other sciences of memory, a number of general issues arise about the NSM's set of universal conceptual primes, including the key mental predicates and time concepts which lie at the heart of the semantic field we're interested in here: we need to know more, for example, about what the proposed explications imply about speakers' actual knowledge of the meanings of their terms, and about the relation between these explications and any possible causal accounts of how thoughts and communicative utterances are produced. These issues, however, arise for any attempt to capture common sense or folk understandings of thinking,

knowing, and so on, across all traditions of ethno psychology: and for present purposes I won't address them directly in this context, operating for now on Wierzbicka's cautious but optimistic suggestion that NSM 'scripts written in lexical universals . . . may not only be useful theoretical constructs but also have genuine psychological reality'.

Wierzbicka uses the English phrase *memories of childhood* to show how the concept of (countable) 'memories' implicates a particular 'model of human life' (this volume):

*Someone's memories (of childhood, etc.)*

- a. everyone knows:
- b. a person lives for some time
- c. during this time many things happen to this person
- d. after these things have happened,  
this person can think about these things

like this:

"I know what these things were like because they happened to me"

- e. a long time after these things have happened  
this person can think about them in the same way  
if this person wants to think about them in this way
- f. other people can't think about these things in the same way

Such memories, then, are of something that "happened to me". The concept of a (countable) memory is thus aligned in some respects with what Wierzbicka calls the 'experiential' use of the word *remember*. In the case of *remember*, her useful distinction between 'experiential' and 'factual' uses is also explicitly defended by the majority of philosophers and psychologists: I can factually remember many things (including things that happened to me, as well as many other things) which I cannot experientially remember. Wierzbicka makes the extremely interesting claim that the word *memory* cannot be used in the 'factual' sense, which if true is something that some philosophers and psychologists have missed. She argues that 'one can say: "I remember my PIN number", but not "I have a memory of my PIN number"'. One ordinary grammatical marker of factual remembering, the use of a "that" complement as in "I remember that my parents went to college in Omaha" is at best non-standard with the word *memory* in its countable experiential sense. I have found two instances of this non-standard use in recent academic work, but it's telling that both are in philosophical works in which the experiential/ factual distinction is precisely at issue, and Wierzbicka may well be right that in ordinary English usage it's illegitimate to refer to "my memory that the cake at the party was chocolate" (Senor 2005, Section 3) or "my memory that my parents went to college in Omaha" [1;171–188]. Here no doubt the established corpus analytic methods of cognitive semanticists can help. But Wierzbicka's proposed asymmetry between *memory* and *remembering* – that *remembering* has both experiential and factual uses, whereas *memory* has only experiential uses – seems right, and might

be better supported if her explication of memory was tightened a little, as I now suggest.

The explications of *remember* in its experiential use and of (countable) *memories*, as Wierzbicka will be aware, are in certain respects related in both aim and substance to the conceptual analysis of these terms developed in 20th -century analytic philosophy. In the influential analysis offered by C.B. Martin and Max Deutscher (1966), and in its subsequent elaboration and critical development, especially in Deutscher's own intriguing return to the argument in 'Remembering "Remembering"', we can find one element which is absent in Wierzbicka's explication of the English 'folk model' of *memories*, which is arguably thus too weak in one key respect. Martin and Deutscher's analysis incorporated a stronger causal criterion which, in their view, is built in to the ordinary model. The problem in Wierzbicka's explication arises between steps d) and e). Clause d) rightly requires that a person's ability to think about things which have happened to her is due to them having happened to her: I can think about being stung by a bee in the garden, and I know what these things were like, because I was stung by a bee in the garden. So far so good: but clause e), which notes that on subsequent occasions I can still think about those things, does not require that this subsequent ability is itself due in the right way to the original experiences. But consider the possibility that the bee sting which I could once think about may later be forgotten completely. Nevertheless I may later be told convincingly by authoritative informants – my parents, for example – that at a certain age I was stung by a bee, so that now again I can think about being stung by a bee. But this ability in the present is due now not to the original experience, or not in the right way, but instead to a more indirect or deviant causal chain. And in ordinary usage, we would accept that in this case I can now think about what happened, and even that I know that I was stung by a bee: but not, I suggest following Martin and Deutscher, that I still have a *memory* of being stung by a bee. In some contexts like this it's fine to say that I (factually) remember that I was stung, but not that I (experientially) remember being stung.

Martin and Deutscher dealt with this by requiring, at a first pass, that the experience must have been 'operative in producing a state or successive states [which are] finally operative' in producing or grounding the present memory and the present ability to remember. The spirit of this proposal is met successfully, in fact, in Wierzbicka's explications of the experiential use of *remember*, where the causal link between original experience and present thinking is present (in clauses b) and c) of the explication, for example, of *I remember that feeling*): something like it needs to be introduced into clause e) of the explication of *Someone's memories (of childhood)* too.

Martin and Deutscher went on to argue that this causal criterion, embedded in ordinary English usage, itself implies and can be analyzed in terms of 'the idea of a memory trace', which they claimed is 'an indispensable part of our idea of memory' [2; 161]. The idea was of course not that, to have a memory or to

think about memory, I must have any knowledge at all of neurophysiological theory, but only that I am committed to the existence of some causally connected set of states which underlies my ongoing ability to think about what happened to me before. This claim, which met and continues to meet with enormous resistance from other philosophers, is relevant in our present context because it seems to support Wierzbicka's fascinating suggestions about the culturally-specific assumptions built in to the English folk model of "memories", as well as her concerns about the linguocentric universalizing and overgeneralizing of such assumptions. However I want to respond to Wierzbicka on this point by suggesting that her explications are in certain different respects too strong, in going beyond the basic semantics of the English terms by building in too much idiosyncratic metaphysical baggage.

The modern English folk model, Wierzbicka suggests, includes four strong and tightly connected implications which are not present in the related semantic fields in other languages, and which should thus not be unproblematically assumed within theoretical and scientific treatments of memory and remembering. Firstly, in English phrases like *memories of childhood* there's an implication of internal storage which is absent in, for example, Polish and French (this volume). Secondly, and as a consequence, in English memories are taken to be static, fixed items and 'accumulated knowledge' to be extracted rather than dynamic, living experiences; and the modern English word *remember* has lost an 'older, process meaning' which implied a dynamic activity. Thirdly, and as a consequence, this semantic field in English incorporates assumptions about 'a certain control over one's knowledge of the past, as one has experienced it', with key English words implying 'a degree of control and initiative', thus driving a focus on voluntary memory and the unfortunate 'tendency to view human "memory" instrumentally'. Finally, there's a strong assumption of 'privileged access' built in to some of the English key words which is absent in most other languages: I have a special 'private ownership' of the memories I keep in my head, 'like mental possessions (often, "treasures")'.

I share and applaud Wierzbicka's uneasiness about these implications or assumptions. But I think her diagnosis of their source and history needs some amendment, and I don't think she is right to identify them so closely with and in the models available either in the contemporary cognitive sciences, or in modern English usage. I have already said enough about the current psychology of memory. There certainly have been theories of memory which embody, in different ways, these four assumptions.

Such archival or local models in which memories are thought of as independent items each kept in a distinct place, to be pulled out of cold storage only by some executive or controller, do indeed now seem to project onto the mind the quite different properties of digital computers; and as has often been pointed out, such models thus neglect or deny some of the most crucial dynamics of human remembering, such as its creative tendencies to blend, associate, and generalize, its

deep context-sensitivity, and its intrinsic and open-ended activity. So those research programs which do argue for, embody, or impose these assumptions have naturally been subject to sharp criticism. But, to reiterate, dominant views across the disciplines now specifically reject exactly the idea of static items being held fixed in an internal storehouse which is under the control of an active subject who has special private access to them. While it's misleading to remain at the level of broad metaphors in characterizing the wide range of alternative views available in philosophy, cognitive and developmental psychology, and computational neuropsychology, it's safe to say that constructive, dynamic, or reconstructive remembering is instead at the heart of many of them. Secondly, Wierzbicka's intriguing narrative about the roots of the specific historical and cultural contingency of these four assumptions needs to be amended and weakened in at least two ways. I agree that the real grip which these assumptions have indeed had at some periods and in some contexts has been connected in complex ways to the broader historical and cultural shifts which we can label as the rise of possessive individualism or the invention of autonomy [3;1–11]; and my own grand narrative of the decline of dynamics in the history of theories of memory also locates key developments in specifically English Enlightenment ideals about morality and control of the personal past. But Wierzbicka sees these 'storage-and-control' assumptions about remembering as essentially and uniquely or primarily modern – the legacy, perhaps, of new dualisms of body and intellect, reason and emotion which took hold of the English language at some point in the early modern period [4;44–47] – whereas in my narrative they are historically more diffuse and culturally more contingent. I also argue that the rise of these fundamentally moral assumptions about memory was independent, both conceptually and historically, of the kind of mechanistic approach with which Wierzbicka associates them. The local urge to think and talk of memories as independent manageable items separately stored in cells or on coils or etched on wax tablets of the mind is an ancient one, has recurred in various forms across the entire history of Western ideas about and practices of memory, and has never been restricted to the Anglophone world. Even in the history of modern institutionalized psychology, the different phases in which these assumptions have held more sway – such as in Ebbinghaus's work in the late 19th century, and in classical Artificial Intelligence in the 1960s and 1970s – each have quite different sociocultural contexts and different critics and competitors.

Thirdly, and closest to the heart of Wierzbicka's case, I am suspicious of the idea that these four assumptions about storage and control are built in to the English terms as strongly or as essentially as she suggests, or that there is such a clear and specific 'model of human life' implicit in English phrases about memory and remembering. I'm not at all denying either those concepts can be culture-specific, or that such concepts can influence thinking in ways which are not obvious to speakers. My argument is about the particular nature of these English terms and the extent and nature of metaphysical baggage which they carry. I

suggest that in this context we should distinguish a more basic semantics (and psychology) from a range of possible cultural elaborations. My case is exactly parallel to an argument against Whorf's view of 'Hopi time' made by Cliff Goddard.

Return first to clause e) of Wierzbicka's explication of the phrase *memories of childhood*:

- e. a long time after these things have happened  
this person can think about them in the same way  
if this person wants to think about them in this way

Wierzbicka makes this clause carry the weight of the assumptions about internal storage and about control and 'voluntary memory' which she imputes to 'the English folk model': 'the English phrase implies that the memories in question "are there", as it were stored in a person's head'. The fact that such a phrase cannot be rendered precisely in Polish, for example, suggests to her that for Polish speakers and thinkers there is no such implication that images or experiences are 'retrieved from some mental archive where they have been stored': instead, relevant Polish phrase simply that they 'are as it were brought back from the past (by thinking)'. As philosophers might say, Polish speakers are thus to be understood as direct realists, assuming that we are in direct contact with the past in remembering, as the things brought to light 'in thinking about one's past life' are 'not "memories" (stored in the mind) but as it were past events themselves'; whereas English speakers are indirect realists, doomed to make contact with the past only through a mediating realm or veil of representations and traces.

But English phrases like this do not carry this degree of metaphysical weight. Rather, in both languages there are certain ways for capturing the point that I can think about many things that happened before even though I am not now currently thinking about them. My (countable) memories are just whatever I can thus remember, in what in more technical language we could call a dispositional sense of *remember*, as opposed to its occurrent sense: my (countable) memories are what I can remember, not what I am remembering. Of course there's much more to say about this barer dispositional use of memories, and cross-linguistic analysis will of course be fascinating on this point: I hope here merely to have shown that phrases like *memories of childhood* do not carry such a strong implication of some distinct archival form of inner storage. While I'm not qualified to comment for sure, Wierzbicka's discussion of some Polish words related to "memory" does not seem to rule out the idea that this barer dispositional use is present in Polish too, to mark the difference between what I'm (occurrently) remembering now and what I can remember.

I'm not sure whether the conclusion to draw from this discussion is that the relevant clause of Wierzbicka's explication should be altered, or merely that we should reject the strong lessons she draws from it. She herself is aware of the danger of building too much in to this clause: in the original version of her paper, as presented at the Work-shop on the Semantics of Memory in November 2003,

there were two slightly different clauses in place of the version of clause (e) quoted above from the final paper:

- e. a long time after these things happened  
this person can think about some of these things in the same way
- f. if this person wants to think about some of these things in this way  
this person can always think about them in this way

As well as usefully simplifying and condensing these two clauses in the final version, Wierzbicka has rightly if slightly weakened the extra metaphysical implication of storage and control by dropping the word ‘always’ from the replacement clause. This is probably enough, so that our disagreement about the implications of the English model would have to be resolved by other means.

The second respect in which I don’t see that an English folk model intrinsically incorporates such strong metaphysical assumptions is in relation to privacy and privileged access. The explication of *memories of childhood* includes reference to what has happened uniquely to me, which as Wierzbicka rightly says marks the point that what happened to me ‘is both the source and the content’ of my relevant memories; and it includes the clause (f). Other people can’t think about these things in the same way’, which rightly marks the requirement for experiential memory that I have a unique point of view or perspective on what I remember when I remember it. Perhaps I’m not clear on what Wierzbicka means by phrases like ‘private ownership’ and ‘privileged access’: perhaps these notions are only intended to mark this relatively innocent notion of subjective point of view in personal memory, which is after all pretty much definitional of or essential to this kind of experiential memory, according both to Wierzbicka and to psychologists like Tulving. This interpretation seems strengthened when we find that the explication of relevant Polish terms includes the same clauses. What then is the stronger sense of privileged access and metaphysical privacy which Wierzbicka nonetheless thinks is unique to modern English? If the basic semantics of words like memories doesn’t show it up, how can we identify its presence and effects?

The distinction I’ve suggested in this context between basic semantics and cultural elaboration, in relation to thinking about what happened before, isn’t hard and fast: what will count as elaboration will depend largely on the grain of one’s interests, and on the kind of evidence being adduced. But just because there’s a spectrum, rather than a sharp distinction, between what’s basic and what’s not in this realm, we can expect a more-or-less metaphysically neutral set of ordinary assumptions about activities relating to the past to be apparent in at least most languages even if the relevant words are not themselves primitive. In Nick Evans’s presentation (this volume, conclusion), indeed, Dalabon is precisely one such language: ‘a language that offers a number of distinct ways of talking about remembering – and which appears to conceptualize the dimensions of memory in a

way that is reassuringly familiar and non-exotic to English speakers – but without having any lexicalized verb for “remember”.

### **Used Literature**

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