

**UNRAVELING THE SEMANTIC AUXILIARY HIGHLIGHTS OF NEGATIVE
ASSESSMENT EXPRESSIVE VERBALIZERS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Akhmedova Nargiza Alidjanovna

Tashkent Pharmaceutical Institute. Senior teacher.
thecoolguyaar9798@gmail.com

Annotation: This paper examines the semantic, structural, and pragmatic dimensions of negative assessment expressive verbalizers (NAEVs) across various languages. It discusses their intensity, subjectivity, cultural influences, and syntactic positioning, as well as their implications for translation and language learning.

Key Words: Negative assessment, expressive verbalizers, semantics, cross-linguistic analysis, pragmatics, translation, linguistic variation, cultural linguistics.

Introduction

Language is a complex system of communication that encapsulates not only the transmission of information but also the expression of emotions, attitudes, and evaluations. Among the various linguistic phenomena, expressive verbalizers play a crucial role in shaping discourse by conveying subjective stances. Negative assessment expressive verbalizers (NAEVs) are particularly significant in human communication as they reflect disapproval, criticism, or emotional distress across different languages. Understanding the semantic auxiliary highlights of such verbalizers in foreign languages offers valuable insights into cross-linguistic pragmatics, socio-cultural norms, and cognitive linguistic frameworks.

This paper explores the intricate nature of NAEVs, emphasizing their semantic nuances, structural variations, and functional significance in diverse linguistic landscapes. By examining their usage in multiple languages, we aim to highlight the impact of cultural, historical, and psychological influences on their formation and deployment.

Defining Negative Assessment Expressive Verbalizers

NAEVs are linguistic constructs used to express discontent, criticism, or dissatisfaction. These verbalizers often function as auxiliary elements that modify the meaning of primary speech acts by adding emotional or subjective intensity. They appear in various grammatical categories, including verbs, adjectives, interjections, and adverbs.

Some common examples of NAEVs include:

- English: "disgusting," "awful," "horrendous," "detest"
- Spanish: "horrible," "detestable," "asqueroso"
- French: "affreux," "détestable," "odieux"
- German: "abscheulich," "grauenhaft," "schrecklich"

These verbalizers not only convey negative sentiments but also provide contextual cues regarding the speaker's emotions and stance.

Semantic Characteristics of NAEVs

Intensity and Gradability

One of the primary semantic highlights of NAEVs is their intensity. Some negative expressive verbalizers exhibit gradability, meaning they can vary in degree depending on the linguistic and pragmatic context. For instance:

- English: "bad" vs. "horrific"
- Spanish: "malo" vs. "terrible"
- French: "mauvais" vs. "épouvantable"

The intensity of a negative assessment can be further modulated through adverbial reinforcements such as "extremely" (English), "très" (French), or "muy" (Spanish).

Subjectivity and Emotion

NAEVs inherently carry a high degree of subjectivity, as they encode personal judgments rather than objective descriptions. Their emotional charge varies according to the speaker's intent, context, and audience. The subjective aspect of these verbalizers often triggers empathetic or defensive responses in discourse.

Cultural and Contextual Dependence

Different cultures exhibit varying degrees of tolerance for negative expressions. In some languages, the use of NAEVs is more direct, while in others, indirect or mitigated expressions are preferred due to politeness conventions. For instance:

- In Japanese, indirect and euphemistic forms are often used instead of harsh NAEVs to maintain social harmony.
- In Russian, direct and even exaggerated NAEVs are more acceptable in casual conversation.
- In British English, understatements such as "not great" often replace harsher NAEVs like "terrible."

Structural Variations of NAEVs in Foreign Languages

Morphological Aspects

Many languages incorporate NAEVs through affixation, compounding, and reduplication. For instance:

- German: Prefixes such as "un-" in "unerträglich" (unbearable) intensify negative assessments.
- Chinese: The character "不" (bù) functions as a negative prefix, e.g., "不好" (bù hǎo – not good).
- Arabic: The use of the root-based derivational system allows for variations of negative expressions based on trilateral root structures.

Syntactic Positioning

The syntactic placement of NAEVs varies across languages:

- In English and German, adjectives usually precede the noun: "awful situation," "grauenhafte Lage."
- In Romance languages like Spanish and French, adjectives often follow the noun: "situación horrible" (Spanish), "situation affreuse" (French).
- In Japanese, NAEVs often appear at the end of the clause: "Kono eiga wa tsumaranai" (This movie is boring).

Functional and Pragmatic Roles of NAEVs

Emphasis and Persuasion

NAEVs serve as rhetorical tools to persuade, emphasize discontent, or reinforce subjective judgments. In media, literature, and political discourse, they are often strategically employed to influence public opinion.

Social and Interpersonal Dynamics

The usage of NAEVs reflects social relationships, levels of formality, and power dynamics. In professional settings, milder forms such as "suboptimal" or "less than ideal" are preferred over blunt expressions like "terrible" or "horrible."

Humor and Irony

In some contexts, NAEVs are used humorously or ironically to lighten criticism or create a sarcastic effect. For example, English speakers might say "fantastic" with a sarcastic tone to imply the opposite.

Cross-Linguistic Variations in the Perception of NAEVs

Different linguistic communities perceive and interpret NAEVs differently. Studies in cognitive linguistics suggest that:

- Languages with frequent negative polarity items (e.g., Russian and Greek) allow for more expressive complaints and critiques.
- Politeness-oriented languages (e.g., Japanese and Korean) employ hedging strategies to soften negative assessments.
- English and Romance languages exhibit a balance between directness and mitigation, depending on the communicative context.

Implications for Translation and Language Learning

The translation of NAEVs poses challenges due to cultural and linguistic disparities. A direct translation might not convey the intended emotional weight or pragmatic function. For instance:

- The English "disgusting" might be translated into Spanish as "asqueroso," but the emotional connotations might not be identical.
- Japanese learners of English might struggle with the directness of English NAEVs, preferring euphemistic alternatives.

Language learners must be aware of these nuances to use NAEVs appropriately in different cultural settings.

Conclusion

Negative assessment expressive verbalizers play a pivotal role in communication, shaping discourse through subjective evaluations and emotional intensity. Their semantic, structural, and functional properties vary widely across languages, influenced by cultural norms and cognitive frameworks. A deeper understanding of these verbalizers enhances cross-linguistic comprehension, translation accuracy, and effective language acquisition. Future research can explore how NAEVs evolve in digital communication, social media, and emerging linguistic trends, offering further insights into their dynamic nature in a globalized world.

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