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DANCING CHEEK TO CHEEK WITH CHEEK: THE HISTORICAL MEANDERINGS AND PHRASEOLOGICAL PRODUCTIVITY OF THE WORD

Introductory Word

In the sections that follow we shall be concerned with analyzing the semantic evolution of the noun *cheek* in the history of English. The semantics of the lexical item under scrutiny will be examined with reference to its two aspects, that is (1) the semantic potential of the analysed lexical unit in its primary, etymological sense (sense **A**) and its secondary senses (senses **B** > **E**), (2) as well as the secondary senses emerging from various phraseological units which echo the nominal sense **B** (henceforth **B**-related senses). The analysis proposed here continues the area of research initiated in Więclawska (2009a, 2009b), Więclawska 2010, Kleparski and Więclawska (2010) and Więclawska (2011), the target of which are semantic changes and phraseological productivity of lexical items variously related to the conceptual macrocategory **BODY PARTS**. The methodological apparatus employed here is the one that follows the theoretical frames developed by, among others, Kleparski (1996, 1997, 2002), Kieltyka (2008, 2010) that may be referred to as representing much cognitivistic spirit of semantic analysis.

Semantic Evolution and Phraseology of *cheek*

According to the etymological sources that have been consulted¹ the Mod.E.² *cheek* goes back to the Proto-Germanic **keukōn*- and – to be more precise – to

¹ The etymological dictionaries consulted include *DWO*, *EDoME*, *OSEDM*, the *OED*, *ODEE* and *WH*.

² The following abbreviations are employed throughout the work: E.Mod.E. - Early Modern English, I.E. - Indo-European, Mid.E. - Middle English, Mid.L.G. - Middle Low German, Mod.D. - Modern Dutch, Mod.E - Modern English, O.E. - Old English, O.Fris. - Old Frisian, L.G. - Low German, W.G. - West German.

the W.G. forms **kâkâ*, **kâkôn* and **keukôn*.³ The O.E. descendants of these prehistoric Germanic forms that are provided in the lexicographic sources are *cēce*, *cēace* and *cēoce*.⁴ The chronologically latest O.E. form *cēoce* is related to the O.Fris. *ziāke*, which points to its derivative links with the Proto Germanic form **keukôn*-. In turn, the other two O.E. variants *cēce* and *cēace* may be assumed to be linked with one of the Mid.E. forms, that is *cheke* in that they are said to correspond to the Mid.L.G. *kāke*⁵ to which also the Mid.E. *cheke* is apparently related. The etymological sources give other alternative Mid.E. forms, such as *choke* and *chook* which are apparently related to the O.E. *ceoke* that is listed in some sources as potentially erroneous variant of the O.E. form *cēoce*. The only contemporary form given as etymological cognate of Mod.E. *cheek* is the Mod.D. *kaak*.⁶

The diachronically primary sense of *cheek*, that is the sense A ‘the jaws in animals’ is evidenced for the first time in the history of English in the O.E. period, as testified by the following *OED* quotations (a 825 *Cecan heara zeteþ.* > c 1386 *And hadde no wepen but an asses cheek.*). Clearly, the sense may be said to be grounded in the conceptual macrocategory **BODY PARTS**, and one may postulate that its cognitive account involves the entrenchment links to **DOMAIN OF BEING [...]**, **DOMAIN OF RELATIVE POSITION [...]** and **DOMAIN OF SHAPE [...]**, within the attributive paths of which the conceptual values (ANIMAL), (LATERAL) and (ELLIPSIS) are highlighted respectively.

The historical dictionaries show that there are four, distinct secondary senses of the noun *cheek*, that is:

- sense B ‘the lateral side of the face below the eye in men and animals’,
- sense C ‘an object resembling cheek in shape and/or relative position’,
- sense D ‘the unit of visual perception applied to environmental categories’,
- sense E ‘the buttocks’.

Note that some of these senses may be qualified as metaphorical extensions of the historically primary sense of *cheek* (see senses C and D), while others – by virtue of the standards assumed for the purpose of the analysis – as cases of either narrowing (sense B) or cases of widening (sense E). *Figure 1* drawn below illustrates the derivational links of the historical secondary senses of *cheek*.

³ As testified by the *OED*, *DWO* and *OEE*.

⁴ Note that some dictionaries use different diacritics for the form, i.e. *c – ċ* as in *ċēoce* (the data found in *WH* and *OEE*).

⁵ Note that the Mid.L.G. form *kāke* is registered as L.G. form by *EDoME* which additionally provides the alternative L.G. form *kēke*.

⁶ This assumption was testified by, among others, *ODWH*, *OEE*, *CEDEL*, *OSDM* and *EDoME*.

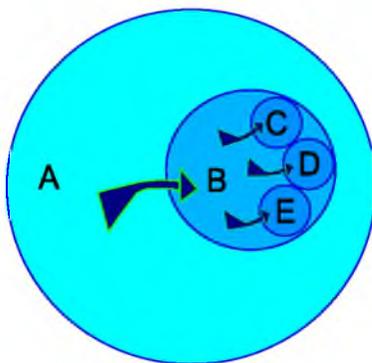


Figure 1. The links in the semantics of cheek.

The chronologically first developed **A**-related sense of *cheek*, that is sense **B** defined in the *OED* as ‘the lateral side of the face below the eye in men and animals’ is first documented in the mid-10th century Anglo-Saxon contexts (a 950 *Gif hwa ðec slaes in suidra ceica ðin.* > 1831 *The Cheeks* form the lateral walls of the mouth. Externally they have no precise limits. > current in present-day English).⁷ Note that the sense is clearly linked to the same conceptual macrocategory as the source sense, that is **BODY PARTS**, the change representing the instance of *intracategorical shifts*. Also, one has grounds to claim that this sense alteration represents the case of meaning narrowing.

The sense construal discussed here is explicable through reference to the same set of **CDs**, the change lying in addition of the attributive element (**HUMAN BEING**) to the attributive path of **DOMAIN OF BEING [...]**, while other elements of the cognitive structure earlier distinguished for sense **A** remain unchanged.

In turn, the two historical Mid.E. sense shifts, that is the rise of sense **C** ‘something resembling a cheek in relative position and appearance’, and sense **D** ‘unit of visual perception applied to environmental categories’ may be justifiably viewed as a cases of metaphorical extensions, whereby the attributive potential of **DOMAIN OF RELATIVE POSITION [(LATERAL)]** and **DOMAIN OF SHAPE [(ELLIPSIS)]** are transferred on the plane of entities linked to the conceptual categories **APPLIANCES/TOOL COMPONENTS** and **ELEMENTS OF LANDSCAPE** respectively. To complement the cognitive account of the construal of the novel senses one may postulate the backgrounding of the elements (**HUMAN BEING**) ^ (**ANIMAL**) in the attributive path of **DOMAIN OF BEING [...]** and substituting them with the values (**INANIMATE OBJECT**) for sense **C** and (**NATURAL ENTITY**) for sense **D**.

⁷ The following contemporary lexicographic sources document the discussed sense: *MED*, *DSUE* and *RHHDAS*.

The latest nominal sense that may be discerned in the history of *cheek* represents the case of intracategorical sense shift leading to the development of sense E ‘the buttocks’. On the grounds of the cognitive apparatus adopted here one is justified in postulating the entrenchment link to the conceptual macrocategory **BODY PARTS**, and the sense may be viewed as being built upon the sense **B**, as illustrated in *Figure 7*, the sense shift resulting from the backgrounding of the value (ANIMAL) in the conceptual matrix of the attributive elements highlighted in the construal of the sense **B** ‘the lateral side of the face below the eye in men and animals’.

The *OED* contexts illustrate the presence of the sense since the end of the 16th century (a 1600 Spied both his great *cheekes* full of small blisters. > 1959 A car .. is already a girl. .. The tail-lights are cloacal the rear is split like the *cheeks* of a drum-majorette.). It may be added that the use of *cheek* in the sense **D** is chiefly documented in dictionaries of slang use (see, for example, *MED*).

The tabled data show that the phraseological productivity of *cheek* is relatively insignificant when compared to those of other **HEAD**-related lexical items. As illustrated in *Figure 2*, all idiomatic senses are qualified as **B**-related phraseological formations in that they may be proved to be conceptually based on the cognitive frame of the sense **B**, by contextually extending the relevant conceptual values highlighted for the sense **B** onto the relevant categories belonging conceptually to the target categories **MORALS**, **ATTITUDES**, and **SPATIAL RELATIONS**, which might be accounted for in terms of the associative processes conditioned by the symbolic capacity of *cheek*.

To start with, *cheek* that forms the constitutive element of such phraseological units as *CHEEK by jowl* and *CHEEK by CHEEK*, is employed in the sense ‘to be close to something’ which may justifiably be assumed to fit in the frames of the conceptual category **SPATIAL RELATIONS**.⁹ Note that the *jow* ⇔ *cheek* interchangeability may have resulted by virtue of the extralinguistic structural contiguity of the two body parts, which – as will unfold in what follows – is a common pattern in the formation of the **HEAD**-related phraseological units. Here, it might be postulated that the conceptualisation of the sense through the *cheek*-based phraseological formation rests upon the metaphorical image created by the physical act where touching somebody’s cheek stands for close proximity of people or things not usually found together, and thus is associated with the closest intimacy.

Significantly, the **B**-related sense in question shows itself as the historically oldest one among the senses encoded by the phraseological formations, which is evidenced by rich *OED* material that covers the time-span of six centuries starting from 14th century (c 1330 *Vmwhile CHEKE bi CHEKE*. > 1861 *Destitution ... must be content often .. to jog CHEEK by jowl with crime*.). Note that the onset of the 20th century witnessed the coinage of another phraseological formation, that is *CHEEK to CHEEK* which currently is most commonly used in dancing

⁹ Examples taken from *MED*, *ODoEP*, *ODoCIE*, *TEM*, *PSaPP* and *DSUE*.

context, as testified by the following 20th century quotations given in the *OED* (1922 They danced *CHEEK to CHEEK* with the boys. > 1968 It's the way she behaves .. flirting – trying to shock, really – *CHEEK to CHEEK* dancing and all that. > current in present-day English).

The crosslinguistic query shows that this English idiomatic expression has mirror-like equivalents in various languages, and these clearly fit in the category of equivalence referred to as the category of lexico-syntactic symmetry complemented by HEAD equivalence of semantically parallel phraseological units. The following idiomatic expressions form a set: Mod.E. *CHEEK to CHEEK*, French *danser JOUE* ('cheek') *contre JOUE* ('cheek'), Italian *ballare GUANCIA* ('cheek') *a GUANCIA* ('cheek') and German *tanzen WANGE* ('cheek') *an WANGE* ('cheek').¹⁰

The mid 19th century **B**-related sense 'to be humble' which is conveyed by the phraseological formation *to turn the (other) CHEEK* enriches the body of idiomatic expressions the semantics of which is related to the conceptual category **ATTITUDES**. One has grounds to conjecture that the conceptual foundation of the sense may be hidden behind the biblical symbolism of the contextual use of *face* employed in sense **B** referring to the part of both human and animal face which is transferred onto the structurally contiguous *cheek*. Here, the physical act of slapping one's cheek is understood as answering an affront or attack with meekness and humility (see *PE*).

As to chronology, the discussed sense was first registered mid 19th century, as evidenced by the following *OED* quotations (1850 Wisdom has taught us to be calm and meek, To take one blow, and *turn the other CHEEK*. > 1969 Nye [Bevan] was never one *to turn the (other) CHEEK*, and I have no doubt there were conflicts of personality and frustrated ambition behind his resignation.). The lexicographic works that have been consulted point to the common use of the phraseological unit in the present-day English (see, for example, *EAI*).¹¹

The discussed idiom with its counterparts in the languages used for comparison clearly fit in the crosslinguistic category of the lexico-syntactic symmetry complemented by HEAD equivalence of semantically parallel phraseological units. Here, compare such phraseological formations as Mod.E. *to turn the (other) CHEEK*, French *tendre l'autre JOUE* ('cheek'), Italian *porgere l'altra GUANCIA* ('cheek') and German *die andere WANGE* ('cheek') *hinhalten*.¹²

¹⁰ Examples taken from *DMFA*, *CRUD*, *DFIIF*, *DI*, *LCGE*, *GE*, *LGFDFF*, *GFIIF*, *DIID*, *GWE* and *LEW*.

¹¹ Also, the illustrative material was taken from *PE*, *EAI*, *PI*, *MED* and *TEM*.

¹² Examples taken from *CRUD*, *DII*, *LCGE*, *DIID*, *DFEAC*, *DFDPEAc*, *GFIIF*, *DMd-PEeL* and *GE*. Note that the lexicographic sources, that is *GE*, *CRUD* evidence the lexical variants of the above quoted phraseological formations, here considered as onomasiologically viewed synonyms, these are French *presenter l'autre JOUE* ('cheek'), German *die andere WANGE* ('cheek') *darbleiben*.

The lexical data available allows us to postulate the Mod.E. rise of a relation between the semantics of the phraseological unit *to have the CHEEK to do something* and the cognitive matrix of attributive values specifiable for the target conceptual category **MORALS**.¹³ The sense conveyed by the idiomatic expression is ‘to be bold’ and we are certainly dealing here with an interesting case both in crosslinguistic and diachronic perspective. The sense that emerges from the phraseological formation analysed may rest on the transfer of the symbolic load of the lexical item *face* employed in its secondary sense **B** ‘the lateral side of the face below the eye in men and animals’ onto the structurally contiguous *cheek* (*cheek* ⇔ *face*). One might postulate that the conceptualisation path involved here is conditioned by contextual association of honour and dignity that *face* ⇔ *cheek* symbolically stand with broadly understood effrontery. Alternatively, one may conjecture that the rise of the figurative sense may have been triggered by the working of the attributive value (FRONT) foregrounded in the cognitive matrix of the nominal source sense **B** referring to part of face of either men or animals. This – applied to human behaviour – may translate as lack of effrontery and decorum or direct, blunt, unceremonious and hence rude behaviour. The lexicographic works inform us that the discussed phraseological formation came into widespread use in the 19th century, as evidenced by the following *OED* quotations (1852 On account of his *having so much CHEEK*. > 1885 It *shows a considerable amount of CHEEK* to bring forward this matter.), and it is widely recorded in the present-day dictionaries.¹⁴

The crosslinguistic query provides us with cases of semantically corresponding phraseological formations in other languages that serve to convey the sense ‘to be bold’. By and large, these may be said to fit in the crosslinguistic category of lexico-syntactic symmetry complemented by HEAD=(*cheek*) ^ (*forehead*) disparity. A case in point is the Mod.E. idiomatic expression *to have the CHEEK to do something* and the German phraseological unit *die STIRN* (‘forehead’) *haben etwas zu tun*.¹⁵

¹³ The lexicographic sources list other phraseological units used in the discussed sense, that is *to give the CHEEK*, *to have more CHEEK than a white man*, *to have more CHEEK than Jessie [an elephant at Sydney Zoo]*, *What a CHEEK!* (examples taken from *TEM*, *DoEWiC* and *DSUE*).

¹⁴ The example was taken from *DSUE*, *DoEWiC* and *TEM*.

¹⁵ Examples taken from *LCGE*, *GE* and *GEW*. Note some lexicographic sources give the lexically alternative version of the idiomatic expression used in the sense ‘to be bold’, i.e. *die STIRN* (‘forehead’) *besitzen etwas zu tun* lit. ‘to possess the forehead to do something’. These – in line with the assumption made in the introductory section – from the onomasiological perspective are considered as lexically synonymous.

Conclusions

The data collected allow us to determine a relatively limited number of senses, both as regards the historical senses of *cheek* (senses **A** > **E**, as illustrated in *Figure 7*), and the senses encoded by the historical *cheek*-based phraseological formations (**B**-related senses, itemised in *Figure 8*). Such relatively insignificant productivity – on our interpretation – might follow as corollary of low structural salience of the body part denoted by the term that somehow translates into its insignificant symbolic potential. This – in turn – might rest on the absence of the involvement of **DOMAIN OF FUNCTION** [...] in the construal of all the consecutive nominal senses of *cheek* which – judging by the example of the previously analysed *eye* – will prove to be the cognitive category with the attributive values of the highest figurative potential (see, for example, the following senses of *eye*: sense **A** ‘the organ of sight in men and animals’, sense **C** ‘ocular knowledge’, sense **F** ‘an object resembling eye in shape and/or relative position and/or function’).

As for the nominal senses that developed during the course of history of English, these may justifiably be conjectured to have been based on sense **B** ‘the lateral side of the face below the eye in men and animals’, both because of the evidential chronology and the existence of a number of contact points common between both sense-threads. Note that all secondary senses **C**, **D** and **E** are construed on the conceptual foundation of sense **B** in that the attributive matrix of the attributive values located within **DOMAIN OF RELATIVE POSITION** [...] and **DOMAIN OF SHAPE** [...] highlighted for the sense **B** remains active for all three of them.

Similarly, in determining the possible source sense for the semantics of the *cheek*-based phraseological formations the criteria of chronology and the metaphorical transference of conceptual attributive blend of the source sense were taken into consideration. For example, the sense ‘to be humble’ of the expression *to turn the (other) CHEEK* may be assumed to build upon the semantic purport of sense **B** ‘the lateral side of the face below the eye in men and animals’ in that it refers to the contextually operative attributive value (HUMAN BEING) specifiable within the attributive path of **DOMAIN OF BEING** [...].

Note that the *cheek*-related data seem to provide evidence for the tendency which amounts to saying that there obtains some semantically qualitative overlap among the various **HEAD**-related phraseological formations. Compare, for example, *eye*- and *cheek*-based phraseological formations that express parallel sense ‘near’, that is the pair *CHEEK by CHEEK* and *before one’s EYES*.

As to the types of semantic alterations observed in the diachrony of *cheek* one may conclude that the category of metaphor seems to be at work twice in generating its secondary nominal senses (i.e. sense **C** and sense **D**). The cases of sense narrowing (sense **B**) and widening (sense **E**) were determined on the grounds of the scope of attributive values either increasing or diminishing respectively. Also, *the law of abstraction* formulated long ago by Bréal (1897) is clearly at work in that the majority of senses emerging from the *cheek*-based phraseological formations seem to be accountable through reference to its principles (see *Figure 8*).

Crosslinguistically, the *cheek*-based phraseological data seem to confirm the panchronic character of certain conceptualisation paths, in that certain phraseological formations fit in one of the categories of crosslinguistic equivalence that have been distinguished. Here, two cases of mirror-like equivalence were identified, that is both the Mod.E. idiomatic expression *to turn the (other) CHEEK*, and its Romance and German equivalents fall in the category of the lexico-syntactic symmetry complemented by HEAD equivalence of semantically parallel phraseological units. Also, the Mod.E. embodiments of the sense-thread ‘to be bold’, namely *to have the CHEEK to do something* along with its German *forehead*-based counterpart clearly fit in the category of lexico-syntactic symmetry complemented by HEAD disparity of semantically parallel phraseological units.

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