

Methodological Shortcuts in Existing Assessments of Emotional Expressions

1. Restriction to Facial Expression

Analysis of emotions often limited to the analysis of facial expressions (FACS)

There are, however, additional expressive channels of emotions:

- Gesture
- Body movement
- Gaze behavior
- Touch
- Behavior in space
- Intonation
- Verbal utterances

(Collier, 1985)

2. Equifinality of an Expression

Same expression sign (ES) can be assigned to different emotions, e.g., smiling:



Affection



Dominance



Being deeply moved

→ A sign could attribute a similar meaning to each of the different syndromes

3. Equifinality of an Emotion

Same emotion can be expressed by different expressions.



Anger



Contempt



→ Different syndromes of expressions could express different facets of an emotion family

4. Sufficiency of Expression

How many expression signs does a person have to express before they can be classified to an (emotional) meaning?



Prototypical



"Only" a pout

Different criteria, e.g., for shame in different expression manuals:

- SEECs of Geppert (1997): 2 out of 6 signs
- Alessandri et al. (1993): 3 out of 7 signs

Shortcuts

1. Only limited empirical research validating the assignment of expressions to emotions
2. Most current theories of emotion reduce expressions to an index (readout) of an emotional state. Both the action readiness and the appeal function are neglected.

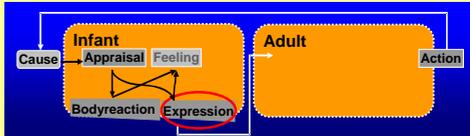
Conclusions

1. Verbal labels of emotions are culture-specific, whereas the nonverbal code of expressions is used in all cultures.
2. Expressions are a (also deliberately usable) means of influencing others and oneself

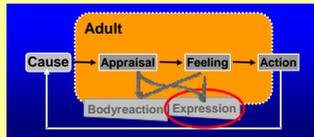
Emotional Expression as a Means of Communication and Self-Regulation

Double Function of Expression:

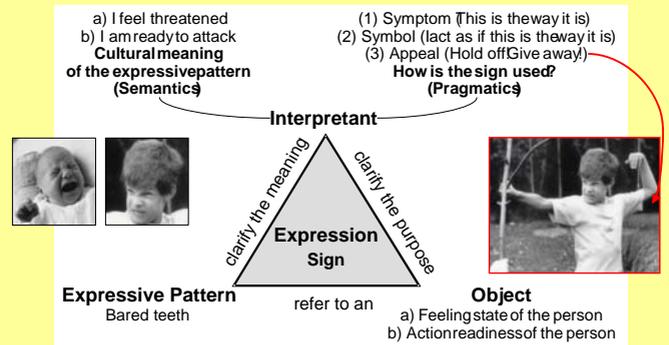
1. Interpersonal Regulation of Actions: Appealing to Others via Expression



2. Self-Regulation of Actions: Appealing to Oneself via Internal Sensations of Expression



Expressions as Signs Referring to Emotions as Motive-Relevant Relational Processes:



A Lexicon of Expression Signs

Meanings of an Expression Sign (ES)

Expression sign	Description	Symptom Function		Appeal Function
		Feeling state/ Appraisal	Action readiness	
	Smile	I feel something good now.	I want to continue the current (inter) action. I want to join you.	Let's play together. Let's be friends.
	Wide open eyes with immobile eyebrows	What I perceive is threatening, but I can't do anything about it.	I want to know more about this, but I can't do anything now.	Don't hurt me. I submit. Help me out of danger (directed toward trusted person)
	Nose wrinkling	Something is unpleasant to me.	I want to expel something unpleasant. I want to rid myself of this.	Spare me that (unpleasant something).
	gaze focusing (with/without open mouth)	What I can perceive right now is new or unexpected.	I want to know more about this.	Give me more information.

Guidelines:

1. ES has a relational meaning
 1. Appraisal of the situation
 2. Action readiness toward the cause
 3. Appeal to other/self
 2. ES has first-person present tense orientation
 3. Polysemy and context specificity are possible
- (Wierzbicka, 1995, 1999)

Expression sign	Description	Symptom Function		Appeal Function
		Feeling state/ Appraisal	Action readiness	
	Sticking out one's tongue at someone	You force me to do something that I think I have to do, but I want to decide to do it by myself.	Although I give in, I can't resign to you.	I want you to know that I do not resign to you.
	Kneeling to somebody	I think something very good about you, I could never think the same about	Because of this, I accept your will without limitation.	I want you to know that I accept your will.

Procedure for Compiling the Lexicon

Material

1. Videoclips of spontaneous expression signs (ES) in a naturalistic situation
2. Posted ES within an imagined context

Procedure

1. Compiling a set of ES and gathering a sample of participants
 2. Participants judge ES (open- or forced-choice format)
 3. Extracting a distribution of assigned meanings
- (see, also, Berlin Dictionary of Everyday Gestures; Posner et al., 2001)

Questions

- "If you look at this expression, ..."
1. in which context could the ES occur? (context)
 2. How might the person appraise the situation? (appraisal)
 3. Which action could be triggered? (action readiness)
 4. Is the interaction partner going to act in a particular way? (appeal)
 5. Could the ES have a significant instrumental function?
 6. Would you assign the ES to a particular emotion?

Outlook

Lexicon of Expression Signs (ES) as an Internationally Compiled and Usable Video Database

Possible features of such a database:

- Meaning of single ES (distribution in different samples)
- Compiling and data sorting of subsets of ES, e.g., emotion, culture, channel of expression
- Access to the database via Internet (coding and retrieval)
- Stepwise supplementation of ES and other data structuring procedures

Possible Research Issues

1. Analysis of meaning(s) of ES: Which expression signs have which meaning (appraisal, action readiness, and/or appeal)?
2. Analysis of combinations of ES: Are there syntactic rules for combining ES?
3. Use as training manual (adaptable to different sets of ES)
4. Analysis of similarities and differences across age groups, subcultures, and cultures
5. Analysis of the encoding and decoding competence of selected samples
6. ...