

Gradability and intensification of the language quantity (on the materials of English, Russian and Japanese)

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Abstract. The languages under consideration possess numerous lexical as well as grammatical groups of quantity representation. English, Russian and Japanese are exuberant in pure quantification markers and markers of gradability which do not have pure quantitative meaning, but correlate with it. Gradability is connected with norm aberration, marking a ‘more than the norm’ or ‘less than the norm’ situation. Intensification is not only norm deflection, but also a kind of evaluation. The role of context is by all means of paramount importance when defining positive or negative types of evaluation.

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Introduction

All operations with numbers are characterized by single-valuedness. Therefore, they are not always applicable to everyday life with its ambiguity, emotion and sensual expression. We are interested in another type of quantity – the language quantity.

Describing people’s feelings, language quantity is completely different from the quantity of mathematics. Man measures not only what surrounds him, but what happens inside him as well. Emotions make people constantly resort to exaggeration and understatement, compare different things in terms of saturation and deviations from the standard. This emotional energy can not exist in science. This, of course, does not mean that there is no precise mathematical quantity in language. In contrast, singularity and numerality are integral parts of the definite quantity macrofield. However, language quantification is not confined to definite quantity.

The aim of this article is to explore the main peculiarities of “emotional” and “non-emotional” language quantity via the phenomena of *gradability* and *intensification*. Language possesses pure *quantitative meanings* and *gradable meanings*. Quantitative meanings refer to countable objects and are expressed by numerals and their derivatives, lacking emotion; gradable meanings refer to uncountable phenomena, indicating man’s emotional world. Gradation and quantitative marking are respectively the first and ultimate phases of the quantification process [1].

Main part

Elements of gradability emerge in conscience when comparing two or more objects with one of them being a standard. So, in the sentences

Engl. “Mike can really handle the car”. **Jap.** Kanojo wa atama ga ii desu “She is smart”, we imply that “Mike can handle the car better than many others” and “comparing with others she is smart”. The operations of comparison and gradation end up with the overall quantitative evaluation, i.e. gradation is transformed into quantity.

Grammatical *gradability* is realized in the following ways:

1) in aspect forms: **Engl.** Please, *wait!* – I *have been waiting* for you; **Rus.** *idti – priiti* (to walk – to have come), *naiti – nakhodit’* (to have found – to find); **Jap.** *benkyoosuru* “to study” - *benkyooshite iru* “to be studying”);

2) degrees of comparison of adjectives: **Engl.** analytically: *the most difficult, a busiest man, a kindest woman*; synthetically: *happier, cleverer*; suppletively: *better – worse*; **Rus.** analytically: *samiy krasiviy* “the most gorgeous”; synthetically: *bogache* “richer”, *vidneishiy* “a most outstanding”, *bogateishiy* “a richest”, *umneishiy* “a smartest”. In Japanese grammatical degrees of comparison do not exist.

3) affixation: **Engl.** *republish, restore, reddish, wordage*; **Rus.** *belovaty* “whitish”, *nosasty* “nosy”, *nozhishcha* “a big foot”, *domik* “a small house”; **Jap.** *kirogakatta* “yellowish”, *saikyooku* “reteach”, *saikoo* “maximum”, *tottemo* “very-very”.

Pure quantification is expressed primarily in the category of number, although in the Russian language it may be realized syntactically: *v sem’ chasov* (at seven o’clock) – *chasov v sem’* (approximately at seven o’clock).

Gradable semantics has its lexical representation of certain points or periods on the time axis and in space **Engl.** *long ago, early, midnight, fortnight, vacation, nearby, to the left, tomorrow*; **Rus.** *davno* “long time ago”, *rano* “early”, *pozдно*

“late”, *zeema* “winter time”, *notch* “night time”, *otpusk* “vacation”, *blizko* “close”, *nalevo* “to the left”; **Jap.** *mukashimukashi* “long time ago”, *osoku* “late”, *yoru* “night time”, *yasumi* “vacation”, *chikaku* “close”, *migi ni* “on the right”, *haru* “spring time”. Pure quantification semantics is represented by cardinal numerals as well as pronouns and words of indefinite quantity: **Engl.** *many, little, few, a few, a bit, some*; **Rus.** *mnogo* “much, many”, *mahlo* “little”, *nemnogo* “a little”, *neskolko* “several”, *skolko-nibud* “some”; **Jap.** *takusan* “much”, *daibu* “a significant amount”, *sukoshi* “little”, *choppiri* “very little”, *suu* “several” [2].

There are lexical units which denote both gradable and pure quantitative meanings. The following examples may be pointed out:

derivatives of cardinal numerals: **Engl.** *twice, double, triple, triangular, thirty-percent*; **Rus.** *troynoy* “triple”, *treugolny* “triangular”, *tryokhprocentny* “of three percent”; **Jap.** *futae no* “double”, *sambai no* “multiplied by three”, *sankakukei* “triangle”, *sandanrompoo* “trinary”;

counting and measurement names: **Engl.** *minute, hour, time, money, sum, distance, hardly, too, very, till, unless, yet, already*; **Rus.** *chas* “hour”, *ves* “weight”, *rastoyanie* “distance”, *vremya* “time”, *den’gi* “money”, *soumma* “sum”, *yedva* “hardly”, *eshchy* “more”, *ochen* “very”, *pokah* “yet”, *slishkom* “too”, *uzhe* “already”; **Jap.** *jikan* “hour, time”, *omosa* “weight”, *kyori* “distance”, *sookei* “sum”, *sokudo* “speed”, *mada* “yet”, *totemo* “very”, *amari* “too”, *moo* “already”;

words with gradable quantitative components: **Engl.** *gigantic, hulk, skyscraper, pinnacle, zenith, dwarf, dandiprat, hole, precipice, abyss*; **Rus.** *vysoky* “tall, high”, *velican* “giant”, *neboscryob* “skyscraper”, *liliput* “midget”, *karlik* “dwarf”, *yama* “hole”; **Jap.** *issunbooshi* “Tom Thumb”, *shoojin* “lilliputian”, *waijin* “midget”, *oobito* “jumbo”, *jaianto* “giant”, *bakudai na* “overwhelming”, *matenro* “skyscraper”, *choojoo* “zenith”, *musuu* “abyss” [2].

Some idioms and free word combinations possess gradable and quantitative meanings as well.

The examples of idioms are exuberant in all languages considered: **Engl.** *not to see somebody for ages, a while ago, high and mighties, like herrings in a barrel, bushel of salt, to feel empty, face to face, never say never, to come up big, to kill two birds with one stone*; **Rus.** *vyshshaya mera* “death penalty”, *litsom k litsu* “tet-a-tet”, *ne segodnya-zavtra* “any day now”, *odin za vsekh* “one for all”, *poud soli s’est* “to eat a bushel of salt”, *semerno odnogo ne zhdoot* “many must not wait for one”, *na vsyu Ivanovskuyu* “to cry as loud as possible”, *odin v pole ne voin* “one man no man”; **Jap.** *banzai* “hurrah (lit. ten thousand years)”,

bannin wa hitori no tame ni, hitori wa bannin no tame ni “one for all and all for one”, *ashita no hyaku yori kyoo no gojuu* “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”, *hajime areba owari ari* “well begun is half done”, *ichika bachika* “hit or miss”, *sushizume no* “like herrings in a barrel”, *juu nin too iro* “different strokes for different folks”, *senri no michi mo ippo kara* “even a thousand ri (length measure) way begins with a single step”.

As far as free word combinations with gradable quantitative meaning are concerned, we may refer to **Engl.** *a lawn before the house, whole valuable, ten yards, in three days, the whole team, significant difference*; **Rus.** *sadovy uchastok* “a garden lawn”, *rostom pod potolok* “height of the ceiling”, *cherez paru mesyatshev* “in a couple of months”, *dostatochno interesny* “interesting enough”, *tselaya kvartira* “whole apartment”, *polny poryadok* “perfect order”; **Jap.** *atoato* “distant future”, *manpuku* “complete welfare”, *zensekai* “whole world”, *juubun ni kantan* “fairly simple”, *kujoo – 9 jo* “measure of length”, *einen* “long years”, as well as combinations, denoting measure, quantity of time, points and periods of the time axis: **Engl.** *once, one day trip, to be an hour off from, in the last century, during whole life, the following day, whale of a shot, abyss of ignorance, a lion’s share of time*; **Rus.** *den poutee* “one day of the trip”, *v pozaproshtlom veke* “in the century before the last”, *cherez dva goda* “in two years”, *vsyu zhizn’* “whole life”, *v sleduyushchem kvartale* “in the next quarter”, *gory vremeni* “heaps of time”, *miriadi zvyozd* “myriads of stars”; **Jap.** *ichido* “once”, *motomoto* “from the very beginning”, *ichinichijuu* “whole day”, *kyoonen* “last year”, *ni jikan ato* “in two hours”, *hoshi no musu* “myriads of stars”, *kaminari no hakushu* “thunder of applause”, *jikan no yamayama* “heaps of time”, *dan’u* “hail of bullets”, *yama hodo no kane* “piles of money”.

As N.D. Arutyunova once said, people generally observe and denote all that deviates from the norm, or attracts attention on a neutral background. Man does not search norms and standards, he rather looks for diversity. Gradable symptoms such as large/small, high/low, long/short are aberrations that have to be observed. The class of norm aberration exponents in the modern language is formed and replenished by the words with initially qualitative semantics, which are transformed into quantitative [3]. Such qualitative-quantitative transformations are connected with the phenomenon of *intensification*. Intensity as a category expresses objective quantitative determination of a trait, object, process, etc. In this case, the reference point is the ordinary norm, which predetermines the other two indicators – more than the norm and less than the norm. If we compare gradability and intensification,

we should note that the first deals with quantitative differences between the traits, phenomena or objects (referents) and their quantitative non-standard characteristics while the latter (intensification) is even more striking example of emotional expression of the standard deviations.

The notion of intensification has been the object of linguistic research and interest. The works on intensification share the same point – that the phenomenon is an evaluative category. Quantification of the meaning distinguishes it from simple evaluation. Similar to evaluation, quantitative semantics can either be general or specific. Thus, the example of general evaluation in English may be the word *very* while in Russian and Japanese *ochen* and *totemo* correspondingly [4]. This word is neutral and purely quantitative. Close to it are the words **Engl.** amazingly, astonishingly, enormously, terribly, desperately; **Rus.** *uzhasno* “terribly”, *strashno* “dreadfully”, *porazitelno* “astonishingly”; **Jap.** *fushigi na hodo* “amazingly”, *odorokuhodo*, *bikkurisuruhodo* “strikingly”, *hijoo ni* “dreadfully”, *hisshi ni natte* “desperately”, however they denote more specific emotional evaluations [5]. Both intensification and evaluation are subjective and therefore the category of truth is inapplicable to them. Considering the connection between evaluation and intensification, E.M. Wolf notes that in some cases, the first brings to life the latter, e.g. What terrible weather! (evaluation) – What a terrible misfortune! (intensification) [6].

Intensifiers in natural languages can be expressed grammatically and lexically. Among the grammatical means of expressing intensification are affixation, reduplication and compounding. Affixation is the most productive synthetic means of intensification in all three languages under consideration.

In Russian there are prefixes-intensifiers and suffixes-intensifiers. The prefixes-intensifiers are the following: *pere-* (*pereest* “to overeat”, *pererabotat* “to overwork”), *pre-* (*prebolshoy* “very big”, *preotlichny* “excellent”, *premudry* “very wise”), *sverkh-* (*sverkhpribyl* “excess profit”, *sverkhprovodimost* “superconductivity”), *arkhi-* (*arkhiiepiscop* “archbishop”, *arkhislozhny* “very difficult”), *guiper-* (*guiperaktivny* “hyperactive”, *guipertenzia* “hypertension”), *nedo-* (*nedozrely* “immature”, *nedorazvity* “undeveloped”), *anti-* (*antinauchny* “anti-scientific”, *antipravitelstvenny* “anti-government”), etc. The suffixes-intensifiers are as follows: *-at* (*nosaty* “big-nosed”, *puzaty* “big-bellied”) *-ishch* (*chudovishche* “monster”, *domishche* “a very big house”, *chelovechishche* “a very big man”), *-ik* (*kotik* “a small cat”, *domik* “a small house”), *-ek* (*chelovechek* “a tiny man”, *pirozhocek*

“a tiny piece of cake”), etc. These intensifiers appear by different semantic means on the bases of qualitative adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs.

In English the following prefixes-intensifiers and suffixes-intensifiers are distinguished: *over-* (overreact, overestimate, overtime), *hyper-* (hyperalert, hypercharge), *super-* (supersonic, superabundance, supercountry), *ultra-* (ultra-modern, ultra-short, ultramarine), *under-* (underdo, underload, undernourishment), *-ish* (reddish, tallish), *-less* (pointless, stainless, aimless), *-est* (cleverest, hottest, largest), etc. As for Japanese, its prefixes-intensifiers and suffixes-intensifiers are: *-ma* (*massaki* “very first”, *masshiro* “very white”, *mabbadaka* “completely naked”), *-sai* (*sai* “the most favorable”, *saiaku* “the worst”), *-gachi* (*byookigachi* “often ill”), *-chō* (*choodendō* “superconductivity”, *choojin* “superman”, *chookokka* “superpower”), *-kyoku* (*kyokuchi* “the highest degree”, *kyokushoo* “infinitely small”, *kyokuchootanpa* “ultrashort waves”), *-mu* (*muboo* “foolishly, headlong”, *muchi* “ignorance”, *mugon* “silence”), *-nai* (*keiken no nai* “unexperienced”, *seigen no nai* “unlimited”, *mondai ja nai* “no problem”), *-sugiru* (*tabesuguru* “to overeat”).

Reduplication is also a quite productive means of intensification. The examples of reduplication in Russian are: *malenky-premalenky* “tiny”, *bolshoy-prebolshoy* “very big”, *bely-bely* “very white”, *polnim-polno* “a lot”, etc. In English this phenomenon is presented in the following examples: *hush-hush*, *go-go*, *buddy-buddy*, *harum-scarum*, *helter-skelter*, etc [7]. Reduplication is especially productive in Japanese: *mukashimukashi* “a long time ago”, *zenzen* “not at all”, *dandan* “gradually”, *takusan-takusan* “a lot”, *chookochooko* “without a rest, like a squirrel in a wheel”, *kogoshii* “divine”, *chinchikurin* “a shorty”, etc.

The examples of intensifying compound words in Russian are: *mnoostradalny* “suffering”, *nizkooplachvaemy* “underpaid”, *polnovlastny* “sovereign”, *bolshegolovy* “loggerhead”, *sememilny* “seven-mile” etc. In English the intensifying compound words are: *quick-witted*, *top-secret*, *world-famous*, *big cheese*, *worn-out* etc. In Japanese they are: *daisuki* “to love very much”, *daikirai* “to hate”, *wakariyasui* “easy-to-understand”, *wakarinikui* “hard-to-understand”, *jinkookajoo* “overpopulation”, *chikarazuyoi* “powerful”, *mushiatsui* “stuffy”, etc.

Some parts of speech, particularly adjectives, adverbs and nouns refer to lexical means of intensification. Thus, in Russian the adjectives-intensifiers are: *nesmyvaemy* (*pozor*) “indelible (disgrace)”, *neistoschimoe* (*bogatstvo*) “inexhaustible (wealth)”, *neskonchaemy* (*potok*) “endless stream”, *neispravimy* (*lgun*) “incorrigible (liar)”, *negasimaya*

(*lubov*) “unquenchable love” etc. In English they are: *endless* (attempts), *inveterate* (smoker), *inexhaustible* (supply), *irresistible* (charm), *incomparable* (bore), *utter* (absurdity) etc. In Japanese they are: *nuguu koto no dekinai haji* “indelible (disgrace)”, *sokonuke no baka* “impassable (fool)”, *naminaminaranu kokoro tsugai* “endless attention”, *mugen no chie* “inexhaustible wisdom”, *taihen na itami* “infernal pain”, *kyodai kibo* “monstrous proportions”, *satsujinteki na atsusa* “dead heat”, *makka na uso* “pure lie”, etc [8].

Adverb-intensifiers are also productive in these languages: **Engl.** *devilishly attractive*, *awfully hungry*, *unbearably stuffy*, *strikingly gorgeous* etc.; **Rus.** *chertovsky* (*privlekatelen*) “devilishly (attractive)”, *zversky* (*goloden*) “brutally (hungry)”, *uzhasno* (*interesny*) “terribly (interesting)”, *nevinosimo* (*zharko*) “unbearably (hot)”, *bezgranichno* (*bogat*) “infinitely (rich)”, etc.; **Jap.** *baka ni un ga ii* “damn (lucky)”, *kogoshiku utsukushii* “divinely (beautiful)”, *atsukute yarikirenai* “unbearably (hot)”, *wata no yoo ni tsukareru* “brutally (tired)”, *odorokuhodo tonchi no yoi hito* “amazingly (resourceful man)”, etc [9].

The examples of nouns-intensifiers are: **Engl.** *slews of work*, *in the thick of events*, *pyramid of facts*, *load of cobblers*, *world of disappointment*, etc.; **Rus.** *koroleva krasoty* “beauty Queen”, *uma palata* “Chamber of mind”, *geniy iz geniev* “the genius of geniuses”, *reki krovi* “rivers of blood”, *fontan emotsy* “the fountain of emotions”, etc.; **Jap.** *kuroyama no hito* “crowds”, *bi no jo oo* “beauty Queen”, *hi no umi* “sea of fire”, *shitsumon no musuu* “millions of questions”, *bansha* “a thousand thanks”, *yorozuya* “fountain of wisdom”, *chishiki* “store of knowledge”, etc [10].

However, being secondary (apart from the gradable meaning), they cannot form new meanings. As it is seen from the above-mentioned examples, adjectives-, adverbs- and nouns-intensifiers express either a very negative attitude to the subject (–), or, on the contrary, an extremely positive one (+). But any intensifier cannot be only positive or only negative. For example, the meaning of the Russian phrase *bozhestvenno nekrasiva* “divinely ugly” is rather positive than negative. In this case the ugliness is more attractive than beauty. The Russian scholar A. Vertinsky proves it: “When stupidity is divine, mind is nothing” [11].

Lexical intensification is evident in different parts of speech: verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc. In this case the quantitative characteristics of an object or action are traced: they increase from a “less than normal” indicator to a “more than normal” one. For example, it is evident in the following adjectives: **Engl.** *reddish – red – bright red*; **Rus.** *krasnovaty*

“reddish” – *krasny* “red” – *yarko-krasny* “bright red”; **Jap.** *akagatta* “reddish” – *akai* “red” – *senkoo* “bright red”. Or in the verbs: **Engl.** *to stay – to creep – to stroll (to waddle) – to go – to hasten – to run – to rush*; **Rus.** *stoyat* “to stay” – *polzti* “to creep” – *brezti* “to stroll” – *idti* “to go” – *toropitsya* “to hasten” – *bezhat* “to run” – *mchatsya* “to rush”; **Jap.** *tatsu, totte iru* “to stay” – *noronorosusumu* “to creep” – *sorosoroaruku* “to stroll” – *iku* “to go” – *isogu* “to hasten” – *hashiru* “to run” – *shissoosuru* “to rush”. And in the number of nouns: **Engl.** *calm – breeze – wind – gale – hurricane (tornado)*; **Rus.** *shtil* “calm” – *veterok* “breeze” – *veter* “wind” – *shkval* “gale” – *uragan* “hurricane”; **Jap.** “calm” – *bifuu* “breeze” – *kaze* “wind” – *shippuu* “gale” – *taifuu* “typhoon” [12].

Conclusion

Gradable-quantitative meanings and intensifiers in all three languages are quite diverse and represented grammatically and lexically. However, there are certain differences. For example, grammatical structure of Japanese differs from Russian and English: it provides no grammatical forms for expressing degrees of comparison in adjectives and no grammatical number. The most productive means of gradable-quantitative and intensifying vocabulary in Japanese are reduplication and affixation, whereas in Russian and English reduplication is not so productive. In English, compounding is the most productive means of intensifier formation. In terms of lexical means all languages compared are rich in free combinations and phraseology.

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