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The cross-cultural equivalence of the American emotion concept SURPRISE and the German ÜBERRASCHUNG: corpora data

Tekstynais paremtas amerikietiškos ir vokiškos sąvokos SURPRISE
ir ÜBERRASCHUNG tarpkultūrinio ekvivalentiškumo tyrimas

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Abstract

The article tests a corpus-based methodology that identifies the particularities of cross-cultural equivalence of the emotion concepts (ECs) representing the emotion of surprise in American and German cultures – SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG. The developed methodology involves three procedures, which make it possible to compare the conceptual structures of these ECs by the following indicators: (1) relevance of conceptual metaphors (dominant conceptual connections), (2) relevance of emotional conceptual proximates (dominant meanings), and (3) valence and arousal. By means of qualitative and quantitative analysis of the study samples, the article identifies similar and different characteristics of the metaphorical conceptualisation of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG, and reveals the originality of the emotion of surprise against the background of other basic emotions. The coincidence of the dominant conceptual relations of these ECs shows the similarity of their conceptual structures. Based on the identification of the most relevant emotional conceptual proximates of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG, a similarity 77.5% was established, i.e. these ECs demonstrate a high level of equivalence. In addition, the study of these proximates reveals that the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG are characterised by certain neutrality based on the balance of positive and negative semantics. The verification of the results of the first two procedures of the study by comparing the conceptual structures of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG by the indicators of valence and arousal of their emotional conceptual proximates confirms the conclusions about a rather high level of equivalence of the compared ECs, since the average value of the mentioned indicators is almost the same. The ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG display the abovementioned characteristics, but the emotion itself is positive and intensive.

KEYWORDS: surprise, emotion concept, conceptual metaphor, translation, corpus linguistics.

Introduction

Modern constructivist theories suggest that language and sensory perception play a crucial role not only in how people categorise emotions, but also in how they experience them. In this way, abstract concepts are formed that are used to interpret bodily perceptions associated with specific emotions (Giraud et al., 2023). This means that ECs are complex phenomena that are represented on two levels – conceptual (cognitive) and linguistic. Due to their fuzzy nature, ECs are influenced by culture (Wilson & Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2019, p. 92). Therefore, researchers studying the human emotional world emphasise that ECs belong to cultural concepts (Goddard, 2018; Mizin & Letiucha, 2019; Mizin & Ovsienko, 2020; Panasenko et al., 2023; Russell, 1991).

The identification of the cultural specificity of ECs is based on the widespread belief that emotions acquire socio- and ethno-cultural semantic shades in the process of social interaction of individuals, which affect their expression and perception by speakers of different languages and cultures (Mizin & Slavova, 2024; Ogarkova, 2013; Soriano, 2015). This opinion is consistent with the findings of psychologists that the perception and expression of emotions – even universal (basic) ones – is somewhat different for representatives of different linguistic societies (Doyle et al., 2021). This also applies to surprise, which is the focus of this paper. Despite the fact that this emotion is one of the basic emotions (see, e.g., Ekman, 1992; Plutchik, 1997), it can show certain specifics in different cultures.

Despite the importance of surprise for the human emotional world, this emotion is not as popular among cognitive linguists as, for example, fear, anger or joy, so it has been the subject of rather few studies (Celle & Lansari, 2014; Kövecses, 2015; Kövecses et al., 2019; Marmolejo-Ramos et al., 2017; Mazurkiewicz-Sokołowska, 2022). At the same time, in the field of cognitive linguistics, linguistic expression of ECs as cultural concepts is studied mainly through the analysis of their metaphorical conceptualisation, which is based on embodiment as the “bodily basis” (Kövecses, 2020), or by means of the natural semantic metalanguage methodology (Wierzbicka, 1999). However, today’s globalisation processes, which intensify language contacts and, in turn, promote the removal of cultural barriers, largely orient studies devoted to the investigation of ECs toward the search for cross-cultural equivalents. As a result, a methodological synthesis takes place between cognitive linguistics, translation studies, and intercultural communication (Dewaele, 2022; Mizin & Slavova, 2024; Soriano & Ogarkova, 2025). This tendency is driven by the fact that intercultural communication can be successful only if an adequate cross-cultural transfer of ECs is achieved; otherwise, members of the target culture will gain a distorted understanding of the emotional world of the source culture representatives.

The above-mentioned considerations determine the relevance of the present study, which is devoted to establishing the cross-cultural equivalence between the American emotional concept SURPRISE and the German ÜBERRASCHUNG. In addition, it is important to note that identifying cross-cultural equivalence directly correlates with both the theory and practice of translation. This aspect determines the practical importance of this study for professional translators, as the findings may contribute to the accurate rendering of the lexemes *surprise* and *Überraschung* in English–German translations.

Theoretical Background

Researchers have found that surprise does not share all the characteristics of basic emotions (Fontaine et al., 2013; Kövecses, 2015; Marmolejo-Ramos et al., 2017; Niepel et al., 1994). On the one hand, the experience of this emotion is accompanied by physiological changes, specific behavioural patterns (including a particular facial expression) and subjective experience. In this case, surprise interrupts other existing processes, directs attention to the stimulus that causes it, and thus enables the body to react adaptively to sudden changes in the environment (Niepel et al., 1994). On the other hand, despite the fact that the conceptual structure of most basic emotions contains an element of control, since a person tries to control their socially prohibited reactions and actions, surprise is not characterised by a “tendency to act” (Fontaine et al., 2013). This is because, in the case of surprise, the scenario simply stops at producing certain reactions as a result of a cause-and-effect process. If there is no action characteristic of it, then there is no need to control it, which explains the absence of the control element in the structure of surprise. Whereas the conceptual structures of basic emotions (e.g., joy, anger, fear) include control and action: *cause* (of emotion) → *causes* → *emotion* + *effect of emotion* → *control* → *action* (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987),

surprise has a “truncated” structure: *cause* (of surprise) → *causes* → *surprise* + *effects of surprise* (Kövecses, 2015). This particular feature of the conceptual structure of surprise correlates with the specificity of the semantic organisation of EC SURPRISE, since, unlike other ECs representing basic emotions, only two conceptual metaphors (CMs) are relevant for it – (1) SURPRISING SOMEONE IS UNEXPECTEDLY IMPACTING SOMEONE and (2) SURPRISING (SOMEONE) IS AN UNEXPECTED SEIZURE/ATTACK (Kövecses, 2015).

The specificity of the EC SURPRISE, compared with other basic ECs, is largely shaped by its cultural particularities. This, in turn, motivates the study of this concept on the basis of new scientific procedures, especially those based on interdisciplinary grounds. The idea of revealing hidden culturally marked meanings of ECs, in particular the EC SURPRISE, by means of analysing the conceptual metaphor, should be highlighted as quite promising here (Kövecses, 2015). If initially the identification of CMs in order to reveal the semantic organisation of a particular EC was based mainly on the analysis of lexicographic sources, nowadays the involvement of a wide range of empirical material provided by language corpora can make such studies more objective (Kapranov, 2024; Mizin & Slavova, 2023).

It should be noted that the use of corpus-based tools in cross-cultural studies devoted to establishing the equivalence of ECs allows comparing the content of the latter by various indicators, including valence. In this regard, it should be noted that the valence of surprise may show some cultural variability, as it is located midway between joy and sadness on the vertical scale, which emphasises its neutral status (Marmolejo-Ramos et al., 2017). This means that surprise is situationally balanced between positive and negative, i.e. in a particular culture it can be more positive or negative. Considering that valence is closely related to such an important indicator of emotions as arousal, the latter can also demonstrate cultural specificity.

In view of this, the purpose of the proposed article is to establish the cross-cultural equivalence of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG by comparing the conceptual structures of the latter on the basis of (1) their dominant conceptual relations (relevant CMs), (2) dominant semantics (relevant emotional conceptual proximates (ECPs)), and (3) indicators of the value and arousal of these ECPs. The implementation of this threefold objective is based on a corpus-based methodology, which involves a comparative qualitative and quantitative analysis of samples formed on the basis of data from the English (American variant) and German corpora – The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache (DWDS). On the basis of such a comprehensive approach, it is possible to achieve more objective characteristics of the equivalence of the compared ECs, which will contribute to reinforcing and/or refining the results of previous studies in the fields of cognitive linguistics and intercultural communication. Moreover, it may assist practical translation work, since the applied methodology relies not on lexicographic sources but on corpus data.

Methods and Language Corpora

Methodologically important for the proposed study are the notions of (1) “conceptual metaphor” and (2) “emotional conceptual proximates”:

- 1 According to one of the basic postulates of cognitive linguistics, language can reflect the conceptual (cognitive) system of a person in a certain way. At the same time, conceptual metaphors play an important role as “windows to the mind” (Handl & Schmid, 2011). The methodological basis for this postulate is the assumption that language learning allows us to see the hidden mechanisms of human thinking; therefore, by opening these “windows”, it is possible to trace the possible influence of the structure of language and its use on how the human brain works (Pederson, 2007).
- 2 By the term “emotional conceptual proximates” we mean those ECs that have the closest connections (associations) with the studied ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG. This idea is based on the assumption that each EC, as a dynamic mental construct, is a “cocktail” of various semantic meanings. These meanings indicate the connections of EC with other cultural concepts – emotional, moral and ethical, socio-cultural and ethno-cultural. As a rule, each EC is dominated by emotional semantic meanings, which, in turn, are represented by those ECs that are closely correlated with it. Therefore, it is possible to establish the closest ECPs to it in the conceptual structure of the EC (Mizin & Slavova, 2023, p. 4). The hierarchy of the most relevant ECPs in the semantic structure of ECs can (1) provide a clear picture of their content and (2) identify rather imperceptible similarities and differences in their content when determining cross-cultural equivalence.

The study samples, both automatic and manual, were formed on the basis of data from the COCA and DWDS corpora. In our opinion, these corpora fully meet the criteria required to achieve the goal of the proposed study. First, we are talking about the function of automatically generating a list of occurrent forms of the query word in terms of frequency, a large corpus (the larger the corpus, the more objective its data), the proportionality of the time period for creating comparable corpora and the limitation of the corpus material to one language variant, which is important due to the presence of a number of variants in English and German. In view of this, in COCA and DWDS, firstly, by entering a query word, one may get lists of occurrent forms arranged by frequency (the “Collocates” function in COCA and the “Wortprofil 2024” function in DWDS). It is the frequency indicator that allows us to determine the relevance of both the studied ECs in the compared cultures and the ECPs that represent these ECs. Secondly, COCA has an impressive size of 1 billion words.

This means that the word frequency processed by the “Collocates” function is quite objective. The “Wortprofil 2024” includes an even larger amount of material – 6 billion words, based on 12 corpora, e.g., Die Welt (1999-2023), Die ZEIT (1946-2023), Wikipedia (2023), etc. These corpora largely encompass 8 genres (e.g., popular magazines, newspapers, Wikipedia) with texts balanced in COCA. This discrepancy in the amount of material processed by “Collocates” and “Wortprofil 2024” is not essential for the proposed study, as it does not affect the determination of the relevance of the former and latter in American and German cultures using the frequency of the lemmas that objectify the compared ECs and their ECPs. In addition, the authors of the study to some extent levelled the frequency of collocations presented in the study samples (**Table 2**), presenting them in terms of per 1 million words (pmw). Thirdly, “Collocates” and “Wortprofil 2024” process a significant part of contemporary texts, which is important in establishing relevant associations (conceptual connections) between the representatives of American and German cultures. Fourth, both English and German have regional variants. There are significant differences between some of these variants (cf., e.g., Austrian and Swiss variants of German). Therefore, when studying English and German in comparison, one should follow a certain correspondence – choose one of the options. This correspondence exists between COCA and DWDS, as the former represents the American version of English and the latter the basic (literary) version of German.

In view of the aforesaid, the methodology of the proposed study is based on the following procedures:

- 1 Establishing, on the basis of the most frequent collocates objectifying the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG, the most relevant for the latter CMs (**Table 1**). This makes it possible to identify the dominant conceptual connections of the compared ECs.
- 2 Comparison of the conceptual structures of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG by identifying their most relevant ECPs (**Table 2**). The latter are established on the basis of the frequency of the occurrent forms of their names in the COCA and DWDS corpora. This way, the dominant meanings of these ECs are determined.
- 3 Verification of the results of the first two research procedures by comparing the conceptual structures of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG on the basis of two characteristics of their ECPs – valence and arousal (**Table 3**).

Results and Discussion

The research samples, the quantitative analysis of which is presented in **Table 1**, were formed manually exclusively by means of autosemantic lemmas (collocates and co-occurrences), since only notional words can objectify source domains in the structure of the conceptual metaphor. The basis for the selection of these lemmas were automatically generated lists of occurrent forms of the query words *surprise* and *Überraschung* based on the highest frequency (the “Collocates” function in COCA and the “Wortprofil 2024” function in DWDS):

- 1 In COCA, the most frequent noun (+noun), adjective (+adj), verb (+verb) and adverbial (+adv) collocates of the query word *surprise* are presented in four columns with a total of $n = 311$.
- 2 DWDS does not have such a clear division of collocates by parts of speech as COCA. Here, in 13 columns, the most frequent occurrent forms (collocates and co-occurrences) of the query word *Überraschung* are grouped according to their grammatical relations, e.g.: *Subjekt* [subject], *Akkusativ-/Dativobjekt* [accusative/dative object], *Genitivattribut* [genitive attribute], *Adjektivattribut* [adjective attribute], *Präpositionalgruppe*

[prepositional phrase]. At the same time, some grammatical relations are represented by only one (e.g., *hat vergl. wortgruppe* [has a comparative phrase]) or two (e.g., *ist in vergl. Wortgruppe* [is in a comparative phrase]) occurants. The total number of query word occurants for *Überraschung* is $n = 825$.

It is important to note that not all occurrent forms of the query words *surprise* and *Überraschung* objectify the source domains of the CMs of the ECs SURPRISE or ÜBERRASCHUNG. In addition, many of the occurrences in *Wortprofil 2024* are repetitive (e.g., the same verb can be presented in different grammatical positions). Therefore, the results of the occurrences analysis presented in **Table 1** were based on much smaller samples – *surprise* $n = 117$, *Überraschung* $n = 138$. These samples were formed by means of contextual analysis of lemmas presented in the lists of occurrent forms of the query words *surprise* and *Überraschung*, since for each lemma both “Collocates” and “Wortprofil 2024” have a function to automatically create concordances in which this lemma is a keyword.

It was the context that made it possible to determine whether a particular lemma could objectify one or another source domain of the CMs of the ECs SURPRISE or ÜBERRASCHUNG. Methodologically important for comparative analysis is the requirement of proportionality of the parameters (units, structures) being compared, so in our study we do not study conceptual metaphors specific to the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG, but those considered relevant for other ECs that represent basic emotions, in particular FEAR, ANGER, SADNESS, HAPPINESS, and LOVE (Stanič, 2023, pp. 27–29; cf. Kövecses, 2020, p. 43): 1) EMOTION IS A SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER (BODY); 2) EMOTION IS A CONTAINER/BOUNDED SPACE; 3) EMOTION IS AN OPPONENT; 4) EMOTION IS AN ILLNESS; 5) EMOTION IS AN AUTONOMOUS FORCE; 6) EMOTION IS AN OBJECT; 7) EMOTION IS A GOAL. These CMs can clearly demonstrate the conceptual links (associations) that are relevant for the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG.

Table 1 Relevance of the CMs of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG (the most frequent occurants).
Source: Own processing

	Conceptual metaphor	SURPRISE	ÜBERRASCHUNG
		$n = 117$	$n = 138$
1	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a substance in a container (body)	7	4
1.1	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a fluid (in the body)	0	0
1.2	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a substance (in the body)	7	4
2	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a container/bounded space	12	1
3	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is an opponent	6	13
4	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is an illness	4	0
5	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is an autonomous force	57	66
5.1	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is an undefined force	13	9
5.2	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a natural force	26	21
5.3	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is cold	0	1
5.4	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is heat/fire	2	0
5.5	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a living thing (person/plant)	16	33
5.6	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a wild (captured) animal	0	2
6	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is an object	31	52
6.1	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a physical object	29	35
6.2	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is food	1	12
6.3	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a burden/an obstacle	1	5
7	SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG is a goal	0	2

The analysis of the data (**Table 1**) is fully consistent with the above opinion that surprise differs from other basic emotions due to its “truncated” conceptual structure (absence of control and action elements). This can explain the fact that among the seven CMs that are considered to be dominant for the ECs FEAR, ANGER, SADNESS, HAPPINESS, and LOVE, only two are of the highest importance for the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG – SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS AN AUTONOMOUS FORCE and SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS AN OBJECT. Instead, CM SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS A GOAL, which is based on a “controlled” action, is irrelevant for both ECs under comparison. The same irrelevance can be traced to the CMs SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS A SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER (BODY) and SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS AN ILLNESS.

However, it should be noted that in American culture there are few cases of conceptualising surprise as source domain AN ILLNESS, e.g.:

Ex 1 *There was always a feeling of relief in these dreams, of delirious surprise.* (COCA)

It is noteworthy that, in contrast to other basic emotions, surprise is not associated in American culture with liquid, cold, and animals (source domains A FLUID, COLD, A WILD (CAPTURED) ANIMAL), and in German culture – with liquid and heat/fire (source domains A FLUID, HEAT/FIRE). There are also cases when in one culture the associative connection of surprise with some source domains is weak, while in the other it is quite strong. American culture, for example, is more likely to associate this emotion with source domain A CONTAINER/BOUNDED SPACE, e.g.:

Ex 2 *My heart thudded in surprise.* (COCA)

Ex 3 *Aaron shrieked in pained surprise.* (COCA)

In German culture, however, surprise is much more often conceptualised as source domain FOOD, e.g.:

Ex 4 *Gastronomen und Vereine bieten an ihren Ständen kulinarische Überraschungen* [Caterers and associations offer culinary surprises at their stands]. (DWDS)

In addition, this emotion has different connotations for Germans, and it can even be served, e.g.:

Ex 5 *Und zum Parteitag servierte Scholz noch eine weitere Überraschung* [And Scholz served up one more surprise at the party conference]. (DWDS)

Ex 6 *Bei einem Dinner im Münchener Hotel "Mandarin Oriental" war dieses Paar die süßeste Überraschung* [This couple was the sweetest surprise at a dinner at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Munich]. (DWDS)

Unlike Americans, Germans are more likely to associate surprise with source domain an opponent, e.g.:

Ex 7 *Sonst können böse Überraschungen drohen* [Otherwise there is the threat of unpleasant surprises]. (DWDS)

Ex 8 *Die Gegner befürchten unliebsame Überraschungen* [Opponents fear unpleasant surprises]. (DWDS)

Against the background of such obvious differences in the conceptualisation of surprise in American and German cultures, there is also a number of similarities. This applies, for example, to the fact that the most relevant associations in both cultures are those of surprise with a certain (autonomous) force, the source of which can be a living being (source domains A FORCE, a LIVING THING), and with physical objects (source domain A PHYSICAL OBJECT):

1 A FORCE, e.g.:

Ex 9 *A few students gasped in surprise.* (COCA)

Ex 10 *Überraschung rief die Entlassung von Nordirland-Minister Julian Smith hervor* [The dismissal of Northern Ireland Minister Julian Smith came as a surprise]. (DWDS)

2 A LIVING THING, e.g.:

Ex 11 *Surprise widened Mrs. Richie's eyes.* (COCA)

Ex 12 *Dann kommt plötzlich die Überraschung* [Then suddenly comes the surprise]. (DWDS)

The association of surprise with a flowering plant is specific to Germans, e.g.:

Ex 13 *Mir scheint, da blühen (blühen = lit. to bloom) uns langfristig noch einige Überraschungen* [It seems to me that we are in for some surprises in the long term]. (DWDS)

3 A PHYSICAL OBJECT, e.g.:

Ex 14 *Tootsie Roll Pop of a literary confection – hard-boiled candy enrobing a chewy surprise at its core.* (COCA)

Ex 15 *Im verstopften Ofenschacht versteckte sich eine goldige Überraschung* [A golden surprise was hidden in the blocked oven shaft]. (DWDS)

It is quite common for Americans to associate surprise with a certain instrument, e.g.:

Ex 16 *He totally caught these guys by surprise.* (COCA)

Ex 17 *They reacted with mild surprise.* (COCA)

The relevance for the CM of cultures under comparison SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT may be partly due to the fact that names of ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG convey the semantics of a gift, e.g.:

Ex 18 *Die erste Überraschung und damit ein schönes Geschenk zum Schulanfang kommt vom Offenbacher Figurentheater* [The first surprise and therefore a lovely gift for the start of school comes from the Offenbach puppet theatre]. (DWDS)

This emotion can be hidden as a gift, e.g.:

Ex 19 *Die Türchen dieses Adventskalenders sind immer da, doch an einem Tag im Dezember verbergen sie eine Überraschung zum Advent* [The doors of this Advent calendar are always there, but on one day in December they hide a surprise for Advent]. (DWDS)

Ex 20 *I nodded and tried to mask my surprise.* (COCA)

The idea of the secrecy of surprise is also conceptualised as source domain A LIVING THING (PERSON/PLANT), e.g.:

Ex 21 *I kicked at the hanging coats to make sure no other surprises lurked in the closet corners.* (COCA)

It is noteworthy that the results of our analysis are somewhat inconsistent with the conclusion of Kövecses (2015) that surprise, unlike other basic emotions, cannot be metaphorically interpreted as a substance inside a container, since, in his opinion, one can be full of joy but not surprise. Kövecses emphasises that someone can be full of surprises, but this only points to a specific person who is often the source of such surprises, not the emotion itself, as in the case of joy. The material of the samples of the proposed study contradicts

this conclusion to some extent, since not only a person can be a container of surprise, but also inanimate (concrete/abstract) objects, e.g.:

Ex 22 *Life is full of terrible surprises and miserable fates.* (COCA)

Ex 23 *Zuvor allerdings beschert uns der amerikanische Vorwahlkampf eine Wundertüte voller Überraschungen...* [Before that, however, the American pre-election campaign has brought us a surprise bag full of surprises...]. (DWDS)

By examining the data in **Table 1**, we cannot state unequivocally whether there are differences in the expression of the valence between ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG. At first glance, there is no significant difference here. To some extent, this can be explained by the fact that negative source domains AN OPPONENT, AN ILLNESS, and A BURDEN/AN OBSTACLE are either not represented in the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG conceptual structure at all, or are irrelevant. Among the dominant CMs, there are also none that are conceptualised by purely positive source domains. Obviously, because of this, there is a certain balance of positive and negative meanings in the conceptual structure of the compared ECs, which causes a certain neutrality of both ECs, e.g.:

Ex 24 *That tells me a mega nasty surprise is coming in a few months.* (COCA)

Ex 25 *I hope you're ready with your checkbooks because we have a delightful surprise for you, our loyal clients.* (COCA)

Ex 26 *Der bösen Überraschung folgt die gute* [The bad surprise is followed by a good one]. (DWDS)

Ex 27 *Das ist eine gute Nachricht, eine schöne Überraschung* [This is good news, a nice surprise]. (DWDS)

The differences in the expression of arousal between the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG, based on the data in **Table 1**, unfortunately, do not allow us to draw any objective conclusions, since all source domains presented in this table can equally conceptualise both intensive and non-intensive meanings of the mentioned ECs. The arousal of surprise itself often depends on the situation that activates this emotion. At the level of language, such situations are reflected in the contexts in which names of ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG are used, e.g.:

Ex 28 *He stiffened in surprise but put an arm around her.* (COCA)

Ex 29 *I could feel the mingled outrage and surprise of the people around us.* (COCA)

Ex 30 *Auf dem Revier erlebt Duschnitz eine gewaltige Überraschung* [Duschnitz experiences a huge surprise on the hunting ground]. (DWDS)

Ex 31 *Beide haben vor allem in Europa für eine Mischung aus ungläubiger Überraschung und Bestürzung gesorgt* [Both have caused a mixture of incredulous surprise and dismay, especially in Europe]. (DWDS)

Considering that the analysis of the metaphorical representation of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG does not provide a full picture of their expression of valence and arousal neither in general nor in the comparison of these ECs with each other, it is necessary to compare the conceptual structures of the latter by identifying their most relevant ECPs (**Table 2**). This comparison is based on the frequency of the occurrent forms of their names in the COCA and DWDS corpora. For this purpose, a sample of 20 lemmas was formed for each of these ECs, but only those denoting emotions. In our opinion, samples of 20 lemmas each are quite sufficient to get a fairly complete picture of the semantic organisation of the studied ECPs. In addition, the lists in “Wortprofil 2024” are limited to 100 collocates and co-occurrences of query words, so it is somewhat problematic to select more than 20 nominal lemmas denoting emotions from these lists.

Table 2 The most relevant ECPs of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG. Source: Own processing.

N	SURPRISE		ÜBERRASCHUNG	
	ECPs	F./pmw	ECPs	F./pmw
1	shock	0.19	enttäuschung 'disappointment'	0.16
2	delight	0.14	freude 'joy'	0.11
3	disappointment	0.07	empörung 'indignation'	0.04
4	joy	0.07	entsetzen 'horror'	0.04
5	confusion	0.04	ärger 'anger'	0.03
6	excitement	0.04	irritation 'irritation'	0.03
7	dismay	0.03	schock 'shock'	0.02
8	disgust	0.03	bestürzung 'consternation'	0.02
9	suspense	0.02	verwunderung 'astonishment'	0.02
10	awe	0.02	verärgerung 'annoyance'	0.02
11	consternation	0.02	verwirrung 'confusion'	0.02
12	disbelief	0.02	bedauern 'regret'	0.01
13	jolt	0.02	spannung 'excitement'	0.01
14	chagrin	0.02	erleichterung 'relief'	0.01
15	amusement	0.01	begeisterung 'enthusiasm'	0.01
16	indignation	0.01	staunen 'amazement'	0.007
17	annoyance	0.01	besorgnis 'worry'	0.007
18	astonishment	0.01	ablehnung 'disapproval'	0.007
19	amazement	0.009	genugtuung 'satisfaction'	0.007
20	fright	0.009	überraschung 'surprise'	0.006

The analysis of the samples (Table 2) reveals that 31 ECPs representing the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG show full or partial equivalence, i.e., the similarity of semantic structures of these ECs is 77.5%. This demonstrates a high level of their equivalence. It is noteworthy that the first two positions in both samples are occupied by lemmas with much higher frequency than the frequency of other lemmas: *shock* and *delight* for SURPRISE and *Enttäuschung* and *Freude* for ÜBERRASCHUNG. It should also be taken into account that shock can be a positive emotion for Americans, but for Germans it is only a negative one (Fronhofer, 2019, p. 173); therefore, we can expect American surprise to be more positive. In general, a comparison of the latter ECPs shows that in American culture, associations of surprise with disgust are more relevant, while in German culture, they are more relevant to anger.

Since our conclusions about the particularities of the expression of valence and arousal of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG require verification on the basis of more objective data, further we compare the conceptual structures of these ECs by determining the valence and arousal indicators of their ECPs (Table 3). The involvement of these characteristics is explained by their importance in revealing the nature of emotions (Russell, 2003). Valence describes the degree to which a stimulus causes a positive or a negative emotion (which ranges from *pleasant* to *unpleasant*); arousal refers the intensity or level of energy inverted in the emotion (which ranges from *calm* to *excited*) (Citron et al., 2014). It should be noted that the term *intensity* as used here is actually synonymous with *arousal* (cf. also, e.g., Citron et al., 2014), since the distinction between the notions of “arousal” and “intensity” is not essential for achieving the goal of the proposed study.

Valence and arousal indicators of ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG are established on the basis of the data presented in Bradley and Lang (1999). It should be stressed that according to the conception of the study, ECs and ECPs that represent them are cultural concepts. This means that in the process of cross-cultural study of these concepts, it should be taken into consideration that their names may not have complete equivalents in the target languages. This fact may affect the results of our research to some extent, since due to the lack of a list of German words with their valence and arousal, processed by the ANEW method, **Table 3** presents the data of the English equivalents of these words. At the same time, the authors realise that the data in these tables may be somewhat inaccurate. However, for the purposes of this study, such inaccuracy is considered irrelevant.

Table 3 Mean value of indicators of valence (V.) and arousal (A.) of the most relevant ECPs of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG. Source: Own processing.

N	SURPRISE			ÜBERRASCHUNG		
	ECPs	V.	A.	ECPs	V.	A.
1	shock	3.12	7.02	enttäuschung	2.39	4.92
2	delight	8.26	5.44	freude	8.62	6.73
3	disappointment	2.39	4.92	empörung	3.52	6.83
4	joy	8.62	6.73	entsetzen	2.76	7.21
5	confusion	3.27	5.55	ärger	2.34	7.63
6	excitement	7.50	7.67	irritation	3.11	5.76
7	dismay	1.57	4.18	schock	3.12	7.02
8	disgust	2.45	5.42	bestürzung	1.57	4.18
9	suspense	2.76	6.96	verwunderung	7.74	6.11
10	awe	6.35	6.05	verärgerung	2.74	6.49
11	consternation	1.57	4.18	verwirrung	3.27	5.55
12	disbelief	3.27	5.55	bedauern	2.25	5.74
13	jolt	3.12	7.02	spannung	3.56	6.53
14	chagrin	2.79	5.64	erleichterung	7.07	3.93
15	amusement	8.26	5.44	begeisterung	7.98	7.38
16	indignation	3.52	6.83	staunen	6.56	6.58
17	annoyance	2.74	6.49	besorgnis	2.76	6.96
18	astonishment	6.56	6.58	ablehnung	2.79	5.64
19	amazement	7.74	6.11	genugtuung	7.94	4.94
20	fright	2.76	6.96	überraschung	7.47	7.47
\bar{x}		4.49	6.04		4.48	6.18

Based on the 10-point scale used to measure the valence and arousal of the ECPs, the “average” indicator 5 shows a certain “neutrality” of the emotion represented by the corresponding ECP in relation to these two characteristics. Therefore, indicators below 5 show a negative valence and low arousal of emotions (increasing negativity and decreasing arousal from 5 to 0), and indicators above 5 indicate a positive valence and high arousal (increasing positivity and arousal from 5 to 10). In view of this, the average value of the valence and arousal indicators of the ECPs of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG (**Table 3**) quite clearly confirms the

above conclusions about the neutrality of surprise in both American and German cultures, as there is only a minor deviation towards the negative (cf. a somewhat different result in Fronhofer, 2019, p. 173). However, it should be emphasised here that this is not about the neutrality (slight negativity) of the emotion itself, as it is positive ($V. = 7.47$, $A. = 7.47$), but about the corresponding ECs as cultural phenomena. It is noteworthy that the average value of the valence indicators is virtually the same in the ECs under comparison, while the arousal of surprise is slightly higher in the Germans. In general, the average value of the arousal indicators of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG shows that surprise for both Americans and Germans is quite intense, although its arousal is much lower than, for example, in the ECs FEAR, ANGER, HAPPINESS or LOVE.

Conclusion

The corpus-based research methodology was tested by identifying the features of cross-cultural equivalence of the American ECs SURPRISE and the German ÜBERRASCHUNG. This methodology is based on three procedures, by which the conceptual structures of these ECs are compared according to (1) the relevance of CMs (dominant conceptual relations), (2) the relevance of ECPs (dominant meanings), and (3) the indicators of valence and arousal.

- 1 The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the samples revealed both similarities and differences in the metaphorical conceptualisation of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG. The coincidence of the dominant conceptual relations of these ECs showed the similarity of their conceptual structures; in particular, both ECs are dominated by associations related to the conceptualisation of surprise as the source domains AUTONOMOUS FORCE and AN OBJECT, and they almost do not contain CMs SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS A GOAL, SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS A SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER (BODY), and SURPRISE & ÜBERRASCHUNG IS AN ILLNESS. Against this background, the cross-cultural contrasts of SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG are clearly visible: surprise is not associated with liquid, cold and animals in American culture (source domains A FLUID, COLD, A WILD (CAPTURED) ANIMAL), and in German culture, it is not associated with liquid and heat/fire (source domains A FLUID, HEAT/FIRE). At the same time, in one culture, the association of surprise with some source domains is weak, while in the other it is quite significant. Therefore, although SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG can be defined as equivalent ECs, their equivalence is incomplete.
- 2 The level of equivalence of ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG has been clarified by comparing the conceptual structures of the latter by identifying their most relevant ECPs. This approach made it possible to establish that the similarity of the semantic structures of these ECs is 77.5%, i.e., they demonstrate a high level of equivalence. The corpus data clearly demonstrated that in American culture, associations of surprise with disgust are more relevant, and in German culture, they are more relevant to anger. At the same time, surprise evokes primarily negative emotions – namely, shock among Americans and disappointment among Germans. Since this negativity is neutralised by the positivity of admiration in the former and joy in the latter, it can be assumed that there is a balance of positive and negative meanings in the conceptual structures of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG.
- 3 By verifying the results of the first two procedures of the study on the basis of comparing the conceptual structures of ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG according to the indicator of valence and arousal of their ECPs, the conclusions about a rather high level of equivalence of the compared ECs are confirmed, since the average value of the mentioned indicators is almost the same. In both American and German cultures, the ECs under study are basically neutral (a slight deviation towards the negative), and have a relatively high arousal indicator (it is slightly higher in Germans), though the emotion itself is positive and intensive.
- 4 The basis for determining the equivalence of the ECs SURPRISE and ÜBERRASCHUNG lies in corpus data, which ensures that the findings of the study are reasonably valid both for cross-cultural research and for translation practice. So, in English–German and German–English translation of the lexemes *surprise* and *Überraschung*, translators should consider that, for American speakers, the concept of surprise is more strongly associated with disgust, whereas for German speakers, it is predominantly linked with anger. Moreover, in American culture, there are instances in which surprise is conceptualised as an illness, whereas in German culture, this emotion is much more frequently conceptualised as food or a flowering plant. The study also reveals a somewhat greater positivity of American surprise, which is relat-

ed to the fact that shock, closely associated with it, can be experienced as a positive emotion by Americans, whereas for Germans it is exclusively negative. In view of this, the lexeme *surprise* should not be unconditionally translated as *Überraschung*, as it may be rendered in German by alternative expressions conveying more positive emotions, and conversely.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Santrauka

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Tekstynais paremtas amerikietiškos ir vokiškos sąvokos SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG tarpkultūrinio ekvivalentiškumo tyrimas

Straipsnyje išmėginta tekstynu pagrįsta metodika, leidusi nustatyti nustebimo jausmą reiškiančių emocijų sąvokų SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG tarpkultūrinio ekvivalentiškumo ypatumus amerikiečių ir vokiečių kultūrose. Sukurtą metodiką sudaro trys procedūros, kurios leidžia palyginti jų konceptualias struktūras pagal šiuos rodiklius: (1) konceptualių metaforų (dominuojančių konceptualių ryšių) svarbą, (2) emocinių konceptualių dominuojančių reikšmių svarbą ir (3) vertinamumo ir intensyvumo rodiklius. Pasitelkus kokybinę ir kiekybinę tiriamų pavyzdžių analizę, straipsnyje nustatomi panašūs ir skirtingi sąvokų SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG metaforinio konceptualizavimo bruožai, atskleidžiamas nustebimo jausmo autentiškumas kitų pagrindinių emocijų kontekste. Šių sąvokų dominuojančių konceptualių ryšių sutapimas rodo jų konceptualių struktūrų panašumą. Remiantis reikšmingiausių sąvokų SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG emocinių konceptualių proksimatų nustatymu, išaiškinta, kad jų panašumas sudaro 77,5 %, t. y. šios sąvokos rodo gana aukštą ekvivalentiškumo lygį. Be to, šių proksimatų tyrimas parodė, kad SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG pasižymi tam tikru neutralumu, pagrįstu teigiamos ir neigiamos semantikos pusiausvyra. Pirmųjų dviejų tyrimo procedūrų rezultatų patikrinimas, lyginant SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG konceptualias struktūras pagal jų emocinių konceptualių proksimatų vertinamumo ir intensyvumo rodiklius, patvirtino išvadas apie gana aukštą gretinamų sąvokų atitiktį, nes minėtų rodiklių vidurkiai beveik sutampa. Emocijų sąvokos SURPRISE ir ÜBERRASCHUNG pasižymi minėtomis savybėmis, tačiau pats jausmas yra teigiamas ir intensyvus.

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