

Folk psychologies and social cognition

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“In short, it is pernicious to use one language’s dictionary as the source of psychological constructs.”

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STAGE ONE: FIRST USES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WORDS

- I don't **mind**.
- I **like** you.
- I **feel bad**.
- I **forgot** to do it.
- I lost my **sense of smell**.
- I wasn't **expecting** this.
- I did it against my **will**.
- Why are you **angry**?
- What do you **mean**?
- Don't you **remember**?
- **Think** about it.
- You're **stupid**.
- You don't **understand**.
- You don't **love** me.
- **Look!**
- He did it **on purpose**.
- She's **considering** it.
- They **agree** on that.
- They are one **mind**.
- Her **soul** is pure.
- He **suspects** it will rain.
- Her **memory** is fading.

1. Diversity
2. Normativity
3. Polysemy
4. Indeterminacy
5. Context dependence

English vs. Chewong

- Size of psychological vocabulary: thousands vs. a few handfuls
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English vs. Chewong

- ❑ Size of psychological vocabulary: thousands vs. a few handfuls
- ❑ Frequency of use: high vs. low
- ❑ Qualitative differences:
 - No synonyms or near-synonyms for “think” or “feel”.
 - Some varieties of thinking and feeling are lexicalised, but attributed to the liver:

“My liver did not remember” (\approx “I did not remember”)

“My liver is good” (“I’m feeling fine”).

“My liver is small” (“I’m ashamed”). (Howell 1984)

- There are hosts of things that everybody is **supposed** to know.
- In some situations, people are **supposed/entitled** to be sad, angry, nervous, ashamed, outraged, ...
- **Taboos** about mental-state talk.

□ **Believe:**

- “I believe you”
- “I believe in you”
- “He believes in ghosts”
- “She believes in communism”
- ...

□ **Know:**

- “She knows what she’s doing”
- “I know her”
- “I know her BMI”
- “Mother knows best”
- ...

□ **Pain:** Borg et al. (2019), Liu (2021)

□ ...

- Chewong: “My liver is small.”

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- Barney: “My phone thinks it’s in Norway.”

- Chewong: “My liver is small.”
- Barney: “My phone thinks it’s in Norway.”
- Betty: “The cat thinks it’s feeding time.”

Sources:

- Polysemy and ambiguity
- Indeterminacy
- General flexibility
- ...

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**That's five good reasons
to avoid folk-psychological terms in academia**

STAGE 2: GENERIC STATEMENTS ABOUT MENTAL STATES

- “Seeing is believing”
- “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”
- ...

STAGE 3: FOLK PSYCHOLOGY ENTERS ACADEMIA

Part 1: philosophers begin to debate “thoughts”, “pains”, “minds”, ...

- In their local vernaculars: Greek for Greek philosophers, Chinese for Chinese philosophers.
- Thus academic psychology sprang from folk psychology
and the umbilical cord was never cut

- **Emotions:** Fiske (2020)

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- **Intentions**

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□ Emotions: Fiske (2020)

□ Intentions

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I intend to ...	≈	ik ben van <u>plan</u> om ...
with the intention of ...	≈	met de <u>bedoeling</u> om ...
I'm doing this intentionally	≈	ik doe dit met <u>opzet</u>

□ Meaning

“Not only do words and sentences mean things; speakers mean things by their words. We use the word “means” in both ways. [...] Grice proposes that sentence meaning derives from speaker meaning. It is because people mean things by their words that those words come to mean what they do.” (McGinn 2015)

STAGE 3: FOLK PSYCHOLOGY ENTERS ACADEMIA

Part 2: Philosophers start to debate “attitude reports” like “Ralph believes that Ortcutt is a spy.”

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[...] folk psychology has been construed as the prediction and explanation of behavior in terms of mental-state concepts, such as belief, desire, and intention—a **capacity** also referred to as *mindreading* or *theory of mind*. (Westra 2021)