The purpose of the studies in this book is to demonstrate how the tools of linguistic analysis can be applied to produce accurate descriptions of the meanings of emotion terms. Each of the studies in this book demonstrated a good depth of knowledge of the languages studied. The articles in the volume include:

1. Introduction (Anna Wierzbicka and Jean Harkins)
2. Testing emotional universals in Amharic (Mengustu Amberber)
3. Emotions and the nature of persons in Mbula (Robert Bugenhagen)
4. Why Germans don’t feel “anger” (Uwe Durst)
5. Linguistic evidence for a Lao perspective on facial expression of emotion (N. J. Enfield)
6. *Hati*: A key word in the Malay vocabulary of emotion (Cliff Goddard)
7. Talking about anger in Central Australia (Jean Harkins)
8. Meanings of Japanese sound-symbolic emotion words (Rie Hasada)
9. Concepts of anger in Chinese (Pawel Kornacki)
10. Human emotions viewed through the Russian Language (Irina B. Levontina and Anna A. Zalizniak)
12. An inquiry into “sadness” in Chinese (Zhengdao Ye)

The studies support several claims of the Natural Semantic Meta-language (NSM) theory. Lexicalized emotion concepts are not universal. The rigorous analytical and descriptive approach of NSM can illuminate the similarities and subtle differences between concepts in different languages. This capability is of great interest to translators since they struggle with expressing the meanings of words from one language into another language often keenly aware of the inadequacy of any single lexical item they might choose as a translation equivalent. NSM semantic descriptions in two languages can identify components that need to be added to an “equivalent” term in a translation, be that as a modifying phrase or as a full proposition.

Robert Bugenhagen’s article examines body part expressions of emotions in Mbula, an Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea. Mbula conceptualizations of emotions include a physical component which can be very specific as to the part of the body that is involved,
including the eye, insides, liver/chest, genitals, skin, stomach, and less commonly, the ear, mouth, throat, and lips. Most emotion expressions involve body part images; primary lexical items referring to emotions are few in number. He maintains the focus of a cognitive approach to meaning, i.e., how the Mbula community conceptualizes emotions, while leaving open the question of a biological basis of emotions. (NSM theory acknowledges the biological component of emotions; this may eventually lead to recognizing biological limitations to the cultural relativity of the perceptions of emotions.)

In general, negative emotions in Mbula are more precise and therefore greater in number than are positive emotions. Bugenhagen suggests some cultural dynamics that might be reflected by that pattern of vocabulary.

Uwe Durst studies German expressions related to “anger”. He depends heavily on formal linguistic contrasts to distinguish the meanings of similar expressions.

N. J. Enfield discusses Lao expressions that describe facial expressions, and then maps the kinds of emotional and cognitive states and actions people attribute to those expressions. His study concludes that facial expressions are both culture specific and in many cases broad in their scope of the inner states or activities reflected by them. He discusses the issue of the biological basis of emotions, which he does not deny. His emphasis, however, is that linguistic expressions in natural human languages express cultural-specific conceptualizations of emotions. Facial expressions are interpreted within the lexical categories of the language, thus even the universal features of emotions and facial behavior are not necessarily exhibited by the vocabulary of a given language.

Enfield’s article is distinctive in this collection of articles in that he focuses on facial expressions of emotions. Facial expressions of emotions is a topic, however, which is important in the theory of emotion concepts.

Cliff Goddard presents a study of the Malay term *hati* ‘liver’. He covers the term’s range of usage and collocation possibilities; a semantic explication of *hati*, and explications of idioms involving the term.

Goddard also discusses the form of NSM explications. He notes that “feeling towards” is not a universally possible syntactic pattern; he uses “think about,” but “about” in this sense is not a semantic primitive. Goddard’s explications express prototype situations in a simple and easy to understand manner.

The co-editor of the volume, Jean Harkins, points out that analyzing meanings of concepts necessarily requires attention to cultural contexts and variations within a speech community. On the other hand, a culture-independent semantic description that enables comparative semantics to be done, minimizing ethnocentric perspectives, and addresses intercultural dynamics is necessary to address questions of universality in human concepts of human experience. She discusses anger-like words in the Australian language Arrernte, giving consideration of the impact of the cultural perspective on the process and conclusions of analysis. Her analysis boldly tests the
universality of the semantic primitives and formalism of NSM descriptions by using explications of Arrernte terms written by Arrerente speakers in their own language.

Irina Levontina and Anna Zalizniak discuss Russian emotions radost’ ‘joy’, udovol’stvie ‘pleasure’, toska ‘yearning’. They identify the basic parameter of “elevated, sublime” versus “earthy, corporeal” that characterizes several domains.

This article has a different character from the others in the volume. The authors discuss the positive emotions informally, i.e., radost’ ‘joy’ and udovol’stvie ‘pleasure’, but no formal semantic explication is offered.

Anna Wierzbicka analyzes the Polish concept of przykro and compares it to similar concepts in English, offended, hurt, sorry, feel bad. She points out the ways these terms contrast in conceptual structure.

Zhengdao Ye describes and contrasts three Chinese terms, bei, ai, and chou. These terms are classified as representing sad-like emotions, but their meanings only overlap in meaning with similar English concepts, sad, worry, grieve, mourn, melancholy, and anxiety.

Translatability of concepts is an important axiom upon which linguists base comparative semantic studies and psychologists base hypotheses of universal elements of human cognition. Several of the authors hedge about or deny the translatability of certain terms into other languages. Wierzbicka and Harkins in their introduction refer to the “never perfect intertranslatability” of some emotion terms (p. 21). These statements are clearly intended to point out that lexical items in one language are sometimes unique, lacking a single lexical equivalent in another language. This fact should not deny the underlying principle of translatability. It rather clouds the issue somewhat by bringing assumptions about translation theory into the discussion. Translation is not limited to word-for-word equivalents as is required by the literalist approach to translation. A word in one language may be translated by a modified phrase in another language, for example, as promoted by meaning-based approaches to translation. The importance of this for semantic theory is that NSM theory claims that there is a set of universal, primitive concepts that can be expressed in any language. These concepts, the theory claims, being expressed in any language, can be used to formally define any concept in any language. Zhengdao Ye rightly observes this idea stating that framing definitions in the NSM framework “allows definitions to be translated into different languages while retaining neutrality” (p. 397). Whether or not such a definition would pass as a translation of a given word, or whether a more complex but more perspicuous expression would be necessary, is a question for translation theorists. In denying the translatability of Russian terms nadryv, obidno, and sovestno (p. 302), Levontina and Zalizniak are claiming that they are uniquely Russian concepts, the reader should not conclude that they are saying that their meanings cannot be rigorously defined in the words of another language.

In practice, NSM theory requires that emotion concepts be defined in terms of prototypical scenarios. Primitive, universal concepts like “think,” “feel,” “good,” “bad,” “want,” “happen,” and “do” are combined with cultural-specific prototypical scenarios to explicate emotion concepts. Commonly the scenario is presented followed by the inherent meaning of the lexeme, which is stated as, for example, “someone feels something like those people do.” This approach
must be careful to distinguish between the prototypical components of the scenario and the necessary components of the concept being explicated. For example, in the Mbula expression *ni-ise* the meaning is the good feeling like (prototypically) people get when (1) something good happened to them, (2) it did not happen to other people, (3) they think their experience is unique among people, (4) they do something overtly, (5) resulting in public awareness of how those people are feeling. From Bugenhagen’s discussion of the term a person who is *ni-ise* “feels ‘special’ and others can see it from the way the person behaves.” (p. 101) These are necessary conditions for *ni-ise* to be used, therefore all of these components need to be indicated as necessary components in the explication of the term, distinct from the prototypical scenario part of the explication. Is *ni-ise* a complex, psycho-physical-social event that requires someone else to perceive it through the experiencer’s overt physical manifestations, or is it only an internal psycho-physical event that is only prototypically overtly expressed and perceived by someone else?

In the author’s opinion NSM scholars must continue to refine semantic explications at this point. Goddard (1990:270) explains why the prototype scenario is necessary in a definition. For the Yankunytjatjara term *mukuringanyi* (sense two),

> We have no way of knowing whether a specified X, who is, let’s say, “filled with fondness for” Y actually thinks the precise thought “Y is good”; or actually becomes aware that she wants to be with Y, etc.

Goddard’s definition claims that the experience is like what X would experience if she were thinking these thoughts about Y. The prototype scenario part of an explication should be restricted to this type of unverifiable component, or observable features that are prototypical, but not necessary in a situation to felicitously use the term to refer to that situation.

Wierzbicka (1999:12–16) explains basic modes people use to describe feelings. One is to use primitive concepts like “I feel good,” “I am thinking about what happened.” Another is to use a comparison, e.g., “I feel like an abandoned child.” Both of these modes of description can be expressed in a language-independent meta-language and therefore understood by a speaker of any language. An outsider, however, cannot directly associate a feeling with a scenario that a person in another culture experiences, since the same scenario may arouse different emotions in different cultures. An explication of an emotion must include more than a description of the typical cultural cause or expression of it. It must also include the invariant components described by primitives apart from the prototypical scenario.

**References**
