Ravenous wolves and cuddly bears: predators in everyday language

Silvia Dingwall

Englisches Seminar, Universität Zürich, Plattenstrasse 47, CH-8032 Zürich, Switzerland
dingwall@es.unizh.ch

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to show how a study of language patterns may benefit research on people's attitudes to predators and their acceptance of change. Frequently used expressions in several European languages containing the words for wolf, lynx and bear are analysed. Of these three animals the wolf is the one associated with the most numerous, complex and negative range of expressions, whereas the lynx is hardly present in these languages and the bear is portrayed in a less negative way. This fits in with the findings from research on acceptance of these animals reported in other papers in this volume. A different linguistic approach is used to analyse a recent discussion about the wolf in the Swiss parliament where again it is evident that the lynx meets with better acceptance than the wolf. Finally, suggestions are made for using such linguistic analyses to feed into attitude research and public information campaigns to promote the acceptance of these animals.

Keywords: wolf, lynx, bear, idioms, corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, Switzerland

1 Introduction

In this paper I sketch out two ways in which linguistics may be useful for those researching attitudes to predators. In the first part I analyse expressions associated with the wolf, bear and lynx in English, making some comparisons with other European languages. This analysis takes its data from both traditional dictionaries and modern language corpora and aims to identify linguistic clues about the possible attitudes speakers of a particular language might have to these animals. At the same time fixed expressions also provide a linguistic resource for people to draw from in order to put linguistic flesh on the bones of their arguments. This is the focus of the second part of the paper where, in the tradition of critical discourse analysis, the actual discourse used in an official political discussion is briefly analysed. My aim is to show what form such analyses can take and the kinds of findings they could produce. Given the limited scope of this project, it has not been possible to carry out a very thorough linguistic study and the results are necessarily speculative. I hope that the conclusions will nevertheless help to broaden the perspective of research on the acceptance of predators.
2  Languages shape and are shaped through use

The languages we learn as children serve not just as tools for communication but also, in some sense, as theories of experience or maps of how the speakers of those languages view the world. The concepts explicitly expressed as words, i.e. lexicalised, in a language are like points on the map where “biology, culture and the cognitive need for informativeness meet” (VARELA et al. 1991: 177). Thus some languages, such as that of the Kalam in New Guinea, have no single word with a meaning similar to that of the English word animal, but rather several words classifying the animal world into categories like “flying animals, birds and bats” or “frogs, small marsupials and rodents” (FOLEY 1997: 117). Presumably the Kalam traditionally had little need to discuss the concept of “animal” as such, i.e. they experienced no cognitive need to convey information about “animal”, and if the need did arise for them to refer to it frequently, their language would be sufficiently flexible to create an appropriate term. Findings like these prompted some linguists early last century to claim that we are mental prisoners of the language we speak and that language determines thought. This has come to be known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, named after two American linguists, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, who were particularly associated with it. While few would make such a strong claim today, most would accept that the language we speak does encapsulate a “theory of experience” and, as such, influence how we perceive the world and, presumably, our attitudes to things in that world. Moreover, it affects the ease with which we perform various mental tasks such as remembering things or distinguishing concepts. This does not mean that a language shapes and is shaped by only one “theory of experience” since it may well be compatible with diverse “theories” reflecting the needs and experiences of different groups of speakers.

If we accept that languages are not neutral but have some influence on how we view the world, then it follows that children learning a particular language will, in the process of acquiring it, be introduced to and socialized in a particular worldview and ways of looking at their environment. Their attitudes to, say, certain animals will be shaped by the expressions associated with those animals in the language itself and in the stories, nursery rhymes, songs and games taught to them, and the films they see, as well as through any direct experiences they may have with the animals (see also EGGER on the role of mythology, this volume). One way of exploring a language’s “view” of an animal, and thus of how the attitudes towards the animal are embedded with varying degrees of explicitness in the language, is by looking at the fixed expressions in which its name occurs. I have made a preliminary attempt at doing this for English, in particular for British English, the language I know best, with some references to other European languages as well.

3  Defining derivations, fixed expressions and collocations

Derivations are words obtained from other more basic words by the addition of an ending (or a beginning) that can change the meaning of other words in a similar way, e.g. wolfish is derived from wolf by adding –ish (compare reddish). Conversions are derivations which have the same form as the original word but belong to a different grammatical category, e.g. to wolf (“to eat a large amount quickly”) is a verb derived from the noun wolf. Fixed expressions are groups of two or more words that tend to be relatively “frozen” in structure and in how they can be changed (see ROOS, 1989 for a more extended discussion). Idioms are a special type of fixed expression whose meaning is more than the sum of its parts. They behave grammatically like single words and usually have separate entries in a lexical dic-
tionary. For instance, the idiom *to cry wolf* ("to ask for help when you do not need it") does not retain this meaning if cry is changed to *shout* even though “cry” (in this sense) and “shout” are nearly synonymous. Collocations are words, or collocates, that tend to go together, but which are not as rigid as fixed expressions, although this is clearly a matter of degree. *Hungry* and *wolf* are collocates, but so are *ravenous* and *wolf* and we can talk about *a very hungry or a ravenous wolf* with little change in meaning. The linguist *Firth* (1957) said: “You shall know a word by the company it keeps”, so the next section explores what company the *wolf*, *lynx* and *bear* keep linguistically, with the main focus on the *wolf*.

4 Predators in everyday language

4.1 Expressions associated with the *wolf*

As the papers by *Egger* and *Keller* (this volume) show, the wolf has played a prominent role in European mythology and culture. Wolves feature in many children’s stories and folklore (e.g. in La Fontaine or the Grimm brothers) where they usually represent danger and brutality as in the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*, although in some stories they also come across as stupid (e.g. La Fontaine’s *Le Loup, La Mère et L'Enfant*). There are, however, a few stories, such as that of the legendary founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus (see Abb. 1 in *Keller*, this volume), in which children are actually reared by wolves (as was Mogli in Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Book*). It is not surprising then that the multifaceted *wolf* has left its imprint on European languages (and psyche according to *Egger*, this volume). Here I make a preliminary attempt to identify some of these linguistic “wolf tracks”.

In Table 1, expressions associated with *wolf* in modern, everyday British English are listed, glossed1, and classified according to the main characteristic of the animal to which the expression seems to be referring. As an indication of the “salience” of the expression, i.e. of the extent to which the expression is known and used, the frequency (number of occurrences per million words) with which the expression occurred in the British National Corpus of spoken and written English (a collection of 100 million words from various texts) is given. *Collins Cobuild Wordbanks* on line (56 million words) was also consulted. The expressions are listed in order of frequency with the expression found most often in the corpus at the top of the table. This does not, of course, tell us much about how the word is understood by the speakers or writers who use it. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the features of, say, an animal, evoked by a particular expression will be associated in speakers’ minds with that animal if the expression is frequently used.

The *wolf* expressions in British English that occurred most frequently had to do with sexual desire (*wolfish, wolf-whistle*), whereas the next most frequent expression evokes the idea of solitariness (*lone wolf*). Certain idioms (in particular, *A wolf in sheep’s clothing, To keep the wolf from the door, Cry wolf*) and the collocation *big, bad wolf*, which probably originated in stories where the animal symbolises danger, are also quite common. So too are the derivation *to wolf* and the collocations *hungry or ravenous wolf*, which convey the image of a perpetually hungry animal. Less frequent seem to be expressions that focus on the wolf’s social nature, although *wolf pack* and *pack of wolves* are clearly collocations in English. *Murderous wolf* does not appear to be a collocation in English according to my dictionary and corpora searches.

---

1 Most of the definitions are taken from The Cambridge International Dictionary of English, which is based on the Cambridge Language Survey corpus of written and spoken English containing over 100 million words.
Table 1. Expressions associated with wolf in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Feature of animal involved</th>
<th>Frequency (per million words)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wolf-whistle (fixed expression)</td>
<td>“a whistle directed at someone found sexually attractive”</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfish (derivation)</td>
<td>“to be sexually interested”</td>
<td>Hunger, Sex</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lone wolf (fixed expression)</td>
<td>“someone who likes being on their own”</td>
<td>Solitariness</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wolf in sheep's clothing (idiom)</td>
<td>“someone who hides the fact that they are evil behind a pleasant and friendly appearance”</td>
<td>Evil nature, Deceitfulness</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To keep the wolf from the door (idiom)</td>
<td>“to have just enough to eat and live”</td>
<td>Murderer of the weak, Hunger</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To wolf (down) (conversion)</td>
<td>“to eat a large amount quickly”</td>
<td>Uncontrollable hunger</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry wolf (idiom)</td>
<td>“to call for help when you do not need it”</td>
<td>Danger</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big, bad wolf (collocation)</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
<td>Evil nature</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungry wolf (collocation)</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
<td>Hunger</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf pack (collocation)</td>
<td>“group of wolves that lives and hunts together”</td>
<td>Social animal</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravenous wolf (collocation)</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
<td>Hunger</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Murderous wolf)</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
<td>Murderer</td>
<td>No occurrence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How does the treatment of the wolf in English compare with that in other languages? What I outline here is based on dictionary searches and discussions with native speakers. A detailed analysis of corpora in different languages would be needed to assess the salience of the various expressions I discuss below.

Like English, other European languages tend to associate the wolf with hunger and fear. Thus French, German and Swedish have expressions suggesting hunger:

- French: _Une faim de loup_² (wolf’s hunger)
- German: _Einen Wolfshunger haben_ (to be very hungry) _Ein hungriger Wolf_ (a hungry wolf)
- Swedish: _Hungrig som en varg_ (hungry as a wolf)

² AMAR and LATTANZIO (2001) suggest that _de loup_ may serve as an intensifier in French, so that _une faim de loup_ means “very very hungry” and _un froid de loup_ “very very cold”. Varg (wolf) may have a similar function in Swedish in expressions like: _vargakallt_ (extremely cold), _vargavinter_ (extremely cold winter), _bitvarg_ (nasty person), _snålvar_ (stingy person), _slivarg_ (hard worker), and _smutsvar_ (dirty dog).
And other expressions suggesting evil, danger or even the devil:

- **French**
  
  - *l’homme est un loup pour l’homme* (man is a wolf for man, i.e. merciless), *prendre le loup par les oreilles* – compare the English “take the bull by the horns”), *enfermer le loup dans la bergerie* (to shut up the wolf in the sheep-fold), *se jeter dans la gueule du loup* (to rush into the lion’s mouth), *quand on parle du loup on en voit la queue* (when one speaks of the wolf one sees the tail, i.e. speak of the devil), or the children’s game *Jouer au loup. Jeune loup* is used to describe an overly ambitious person who may hurt people.

- **German**
  
  - *Wolf im Schafpelz* (wolf in sheep’s clothing)
  - *Unter die Wölfe geraten* (fall among thieves)

- **Swedish**
  
  - *vargtimmen* (the hour of the wolf – the hour before dawn when people often die)

In French there is also an expression associating the wolf with near darkness, but this time with twilight: *entre chien et loup* (i.e. so dark you cannot distinguish a dog from a wolf) and another with silence: *marcher à pas de loup* (to tread stealthily). Some languages seem to connect wolves with cold temperatures, perhaps because wolves are more likely to move closer to human settlements when winters are hard and food is scarce (cf. Swedish: *vargavin- ter* “bitterly cold winter” and French *un froid de loup* “very very cold”). Unlike English, none of these languages seem to have fixed expressions or derivations connecting the wolf with sexual desire, except in an extended sense of hunger (although in French *avoir vu le loup* used to refer to a girl who was no longer a virgin).

Clearly, then, European languages are full of references to real or imagined wolf characteristics, and so too are children’s games (e.g. *What’s the time, Mr Wolf?* or *Schäflein, Schäflein, komm nach Hause*) and stories. I’d like to focus on two seemingly contradictory features that contribute to the complexity of the wolf as a symbol, namely, that it can be, as CALUORI and HUNZIKER (this volume) say, either a “socially conformist member of a pack” or “a self-reliant and independent animal”. German and Swedish both have expressions that pick up on the first characteristic:

- **German**: *Mit den Wölfen heulen*, Swedish: *tjuta med vargarna* (run/howl with the pack, i.e. do what the others do).

While similar expressions can be found in some English and French dictionaries (*run with the wolves, hurler avec les loups*), they do not appear to be very salient in modern usage. The second wolf characteristic, that of the solitary animal, seems, on the other hand, to be more salient in English (*lone wolf*) and probably also in French and Swedish than it is in

---

3 Presumably the term Wolf or *Fleischwolf*, meaning a “mincer” or “grinder” and occurring in the expression *jemanden durch den Wolf drehen* (to put someone through the mill) also has a connection with the animal. So too may *Staubwolf* and *Wolfen*, which refer to “a cleaning machine” and a “cleaning process” in the textile industry, and *Reisswolf* (shredder) but I will not pursue these.

4 In Swedish, “the wolf has, since time immemorial, stood for fear and death, and the etymology of the term varg itself links it to death, outbreaks and taboos.” (Christina Ljungberg, personal communication)

5 As in: *C’est un vrai loup, il ne voit personne* (That’s really a wolf, he doesn’t see anybody). There is also an indirect association in *un loup de mer* (a fish, but also an unsocial person), and *un vieux loup de mer* (an old sea dog).

6 For instance, in the expression: *varg i veum* (a wolf in a holy place) meaning an outlaw, someone who has committed sacrilege. Today it could be used to refer to a politician who has misbehaved (Christina Ljungberg, pers. communication).
German, which has no such fixed expression. Of course, it is possible to talk about *ein einsamer Wolf* (“a lonely wolf”) in German, and Herman Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* certainly evokes this wolf image. But perhaps German speakers tend to think more often of wolves in packs than do speakers of British English\(^7\), Swedish and French.

Whether a language seems to “encourage” its speakers to see a wolf more as a social or as a solitary animal could influence how they react to the wolf re-immigrating into their country. If the appearance of a single animal makes you think of a whole pack running over the landscape, you might well be reluctant to welcome it. In the Swiss context, it would be worth exploring what linguistic “tracks” the wolf makes in the different Swiss languages and drawing on the results of this analysis in deciding on the questions to ask in a survey (see the conclusions in section 6 for further discussion of this point). Might German speakers, for example, be more likely to see the wolf as a threat than French speakers?

In none of the languages looked at do the expressions connected with the wolf focus on positive characteristics although these are apparent in ancient mythology (see EGGER, this volume). Has, for instance, the image of the wolf as a potential nurturer of lost children (Romulus and Remus) disappeared completely from European culture? Taking a look at changes in languages and folk-tales historically might help to find out whether this has happened and if so why (see also KELLER’S historical discussion of predators in operas, this volume). Looking to the future, if re-immigrating wolves are to gain acceptance, re-circulating such stories and inventing new ones could help.

### 4.2 Expressions associated with the bear and the lynx

According to WILD-ECK and ZIMMERMANN (this volume) “public acceptance of the lynx is much higher than it is of bears and wolves”. HUNZIKER *et al.* and STECK and TESTER (this volume) also note that the lynx is generally well accepted in the wild. What characteristics of the animal do European languages focus on? My data (limited to four languages) suggests very few, the most common being its association with good eyesight. In English we can talk about someone being *lynx-eyed*, and the French say *avoir des yeux de lynx* (to have the eyes of a lynx – be able to see through a brick wall). In *Attention, un oeil de lynx nos surveille* (Watch out, someone’s watching us – Big Brother’s watching us) there is also a connection with seeing. Related expressions in German are: *Luchsaugen* (lynx eyes) and *aufpassen wie ein Luchs* (to watch like a lynx – English has an equivalent expression with *hawk*). The origins of this rather positive image probably lie in legend. German has one negative derivation: *abluchsen* (to get something from someone that they may not want to give), but this seems to be an exception. The fact that the lynx is less burdened with negative fixed expressions, etc. than the wolf is probably due to its behaviour affecting humans less directly. For example, it does not move around in large packs or howl loudly at night. As a result the lynx does not act as such a powerful symbol as the wolf, and its re-introduction is less likely to provoke such emotional reactions as the wolf’s re-immigration.

How do things stand with the bear? Bears in German, French and English are traditionally thought of as grumpy, unhelpful animals, but without the aura of evil or danger that surrounds the wolf. Thus we find: *bearish, gruff as a bear, cross as a bear with a sore head* in English, *bärbeissig* (surly) and *jemandem einen Bärendienst erwiesen* (do someone a bad turn) in German and to call someone *un ours* in French means to say they are unsociable

---

\(^7\) Canadians living closer to wolves may see this differently!
(see also c’est un ours mal léché – he is an ill-licked cub, i.e. badly brought up). In German bears are also associated with strength (stark wie ein Bär – strong as a bear (in English the animal is an ox), bärenstark – bear-strong, Bärenkraft – bear-strength, Bärennatur – bear nature, i.e. to have a strong constitution), good appetites (Bärenhunger) and sound sleep (schlafen wie ein Bär – sleep like a bear [like a baby]). The way bears move on their hind legs is suggested by the expression bärenhaft in German, which may be similar to calling a person an old bear in some situations in English. How the expression Jemanden einen Bären aufbinden (to play a joke on someone) fits in the picture is not so clear.

Of course, in English in particular, the image of the rough and tough bear has been modified over the past century by teddy-bear stories (Pooh the Bear, Paddington Bear, etc.). In these the bear appears as a lovable, huggable, rather clumsy, slow and sleepy animal. It is unthinkable that wolves could undergo such a transformation, but bears, who can move upright on their hind legs and who have seemingly less threatening facial features, have probably long been viewed somewhat anthropomorphically in the west. Thus we find in English that cuddly and bear frequently collocate and a bear hug, which used to mean a very tight and potentially dangerous hug now means something more affectionate. If bears do move back into Switzerland in the near future as BREITENMOSER and BREITENMOSER-WÜRSTEN (this volume) predict, then a public information campaign will have to convey to people that bears, however cute their image, can, in fact, be more dangerous for humans than wolves (BREITENMOSER-WÜRSTEN et al., this volume). The picture of the bear that emerges from this brief linguistic analysis is far less complex than that of the wolf, and it may well be that the bear, when it does move back into Switzerland, will polarise opinion more than the lynx but considerably less than the wolf has done8.

5 An example of official political discourse about the wolf – a brief analysis

On December 13, 2001 a motion to remove the wolf’s protected status in Switzerland was debated in the Council of States, one of the two parliamentary chambers of the Swiss federal government. It was passed with 18 votes in favour and 9 against. The transcription of the debate is available on the Internet (www.parlament.ch). This can be analysed along the lines of critical discourse analysis as described in MCKENNA (2000) by giving a linguistic description of the choice of words, grammar and rhetorical devices used, and then interpreting them from a macrosociological perspective. This involves analysing more linguistic features than are normally included in a contents analysis (see KACZENSKY et al. this volume).

The macrosociological background to the wolf controversy in Switzerland is described in other papers in this volume (in particular in WALLNER und HUNZIKER). Suffice it to say here that some solitary wolves are known to have re-immigrated into parts of the Swiss Alps during the past decade. They have been the subject of much public discussion and research (see the relevant papers in this volume and the dossier of newspaper articles available from www.nzz.ch/dossiers/dossiers2000/wildtiere). This natural re-appearance of the wolf followed the artificial re-introduction of the lynx, which has also been the subject of intense

---

8 ZIMMERMANN et al. (this volume) report that people in Norway, where both the wolf and bear are to be found, had more polarised views about the wolf than they did about the bear.
controversy in Switzerland. A thorough critical discourse analysis of the December 13 debate would therefore involve referring to previous government debates on the wolf and lynx as well as to public discussions of the topic. Here I will briefly describe some of the results of an initial textual analysis of the debate itself, bearing in mind that this in no way tells the “whole story.”

Maissen, a member of parliament from the Grisons and the proposer of the motion, states in the opening of the debate, that one of his concerns is to put a stop to the extensive public discussion (and public funding) of the wolf, so that it does not become a permanent issue (nicht zum Dauerthema wird). Other themes that came up were:

- The wolf is a murderous predator (ein mordlustiges Raubtier), addicted to hunting (Jagdtrieb), while the lynx only kills to satisfy its hunger.
- The wolf is a social animal (Rudeltier – pack), unlike the lynx (Reviertier – territorial animal).
- Distinctions were made between protected (geschütztes) vs. huntable (jagdbares) vs. useful or domestic (Nutztier) animals.
- Questions were raised about what constitutes a species-appropriate lifestyle (artgerechter Lebensstil).
- There was evident tension felt between those from rural mountainous areas and those from cities (der Wolf auf dem Uetliberg – the wolf on a well-known hill near the city of Zurich)

This is not a complete list of the issues that were raised during this lively debate, but they serve to illustrate the analytical approach taken and to tie in with concerns mentioned in other papers in this volume. I comment on each issue briefly below. Besides studying the transcription text on paper and searching for particular expressions, themes, grammatical forms, etc., a concordance software programme (Monoconc for Apple computers) was also used to identify the contexts of particular words and expressions like natürlich.

5.1 The wolf: a cruel murderer?

Some of the language used to describe the wolf as a hunting animal in this debate could have come out of a horror story. Thus we find that not only is the wolf described as a murderous animal (a collocation that does not appear in the British National Corpus), which the lynx is not, but also as addicted to hunting and intoxicated by blood:

Der Luchs jagt seine Beute nur zum Überleben, um den Hunger zu stillen, während der Wolf in einen eigentlichen Blutrausch verfällt und wahllos Muttertiere und kleine Schafe reiss. (The lynx just hunts its prey to survive and satisfy its hunger, whereas the wolf is intoxicated by blood and indiscriminately kills (tears) mother animals and little sheep).

The wolf is not only contrasted with the lynx, but also with its victims, described by the speaker cited above as mother animals and little sheep, rather than sheep in general. Notice too how the word reissen is invariably used to refer to how the wolf kills rather than the more neutral words jagen (hunt) or töten (kill). It seems to be a technical word in hunting and biology for large animals killing their prey, but with which animals can it collocate? It does not co-occur with lynx in the debate, but it does in one case with a bösen Hund (wicked
For. Snow Landsc. Res. 76, 1/2 (2001)

Saying *Der Wolf reisst* may give the impression that how the wolf kills is more brutal and indiscriminate and somehow less “natural” than how the lynx kills. Graphic descriptions are given of what sheep can look like after wolves have attacked them. While information about the wolf is presented as factual in the present tense (The wolf is ...), the language used is not that of a scientific debate. No references are given, for example, the active rather than the passive tends to be used, thus contributing to the dramatic tone, and some of the words have clearly been chosen for their emotional impact (e.g. *Muttertiere und kleine Schafe*).

5.2 The wolf: a social animal?

In the first part of the debate, the wolf is often referred to in the plural (*Wölfe*), which reinforces the idea of many wolves descending on Switzerland (see the discussion in 4.2). The singular is used when its behaviour is described. The wolf is again contrasted with the lynx (and eagle). The latter are said, as territorial animals (*Revier*tiere), to regulate their populations themselves, whereas the wolf is an animal that lives in packs (*Rudeltier*). And what will happen when packs of wolves arrive in Switzerland?:

*Nun müssen wir uns vorstellen, was passiert, wenn dann die Ausbreitungsphase kommt, wenn dann Rudel von Wölfen da sind.* (Now we must imagine, what will happen when the expansion phase (of the wolf population) comes, and packs of wolves are here.).

Clearly the speakers in the debate were very much aware of the wolf as a social animal.

5.3 Classifying the animal kingdom: protected, huntable and useful animals

Underlying the debate about whether the wolf should have protected status is an implicit classification of the animal kingdom into those animals worthy of protection (*schützenswert*) and those not. If the wolf were no longer treated as a legally protected animal in Switzerland, then it could be hunted like deer and chamois. One factor influencing people’s acceptance of the wolf seems to hinge on the notion of *Nutztiere*, which can be translated as both useful animal and domestic animal. The sheep a wolf kills are classified by one speaker as *Nutztiere*, whereas the mice a cat might kill are not:

*Nun, Katzen hält man natürlich, um die Mäuse zu dezimieren, das ist erwünscht. Aber Schafe sind im Gegensatz zu Mäusen keine Plage.* (Now cats are kept naturally to decimate mice, which is desired. But sheep are, unlike mice, not a nuisance).

Identifying such implicit folk classifications of the animal kingdom (and of the natural world) would help in elucidating how people view the concept of wilderness which HUNZIKER refers to in the foreword to this volume and which LJUNGBERG (2001: 183) sees as “a category closely linked with the development of human culture”.

5.4 Living naturally in the wild

In the quotation given in 5.3, the word natürlich occurs. It is used (twice, but in the first case it means “of course”) in:

Zudem fehlt natürlich beim Wolf der natürliche Feind. (In addition the natural enemy of the wolf is naturally missing).

This word is tricky as even experts disagree about what is natural, especially in the context of an animal’s behaviour or way of life:

*Es ist in unseren Verhältnissen nicht möglich, dass sich der Wolf natürlich verhält. Er kann sich nicht seiner Art entsprechend verhalten, weil das Umfeld nicht mehr artgerecht ist. … In Italien z. B. und in anderen Ländern ist die Höhenlage hingegen anders.* (It is not possible under conditions prevailing here for the wolf to behave naturally. It cannot behave in a way appropriate for its species because the surroundings are no longer suitable for the species. … In Italy, for example, and in other countries, the situation at high altitudes is different).

The conditions prevailing in Switzerland are seen to have changed historically (nicht mehr artgerecht implies conditions were once suitable for wolves) and to differ from those in other Alpine countries (die Höhenlage ist anders). Again this information is presented as fact, but not all would agree with these conclusions (see, e.g., Eidg. Forschungsanstalt WSL 2001: 21).

5.5 Tensions between city and mountainous regions

Two quotations from the debate serve to illustrate the underlying tension between urban and rural areas also mentioned in some of the other papers in this volume:

Wollen wir in den Gebirgstälern ein Alpenreservat erhalten, wo die Tiere geschützt und die Menschen vertrieben werden? Auch diese Frage wird man irgendwann stellen müssen. Aber das ist nicht die Zukunft der Bergler, … (Do we want to have an Alpine reservation in the mountain valleys where animals are protected and humans expelled? This question will also sometime have to be asked. But this is not the future for the “mountain man”).

*Es geht nicht um den Wolf auf dem Üetliberg oder im Bremgarten Wald. Es geht nur um den Wolf in Gebirgstälern, in welchen faule Leute hocken, Arbeiter-Bauern, die ihre Tiere nicht hüten wollen. Also haben diese Leute für den Wolf gefälligst ihre jahrhundertealte Art der Bewirtschaftung aufzugeben.* (It doesn’t have to do with a wolf on the Uetliberg (a well-known hill outside Zurich) or in the Bremgarten forest (a large wood near Bern). It only has to do with the wolf in mountain valleys, in which lazy people sit, worker-farmers, who do not want to guard their animals. So these people have to kindly give up for the wolf their century-old way of farming.)

The initial rhetorical question in the first quotation is a well-known rhetorical device. Note too the way “protected animal” is set against the expulsion of humans as if protecting ani-

---

9 Other words, such as nachhaltig (sustainable) and artgerecht (appropriate for the species), also have meanings that are difficult to pin down.

10 LJUNGBERG (2001) discusses various notions of “nature”, and questions the traditional boundaries between nature and culture.
mals necessarily implied driving away humans. In the second quotation, the speaker is mimicking (ironically), without clearly saying so, how he believes non-rural Swiss think about those living and working in Swiss mountain valleys. The choice of words is also revealing and poses some translation problems, e.g.: in the first quotation *Reservat* was used and not *Schutzgebiet* which can be translated as either “reservation”, when humans are involved, or “reserve” if the focus is on animals. *Bergler* refers to someone who lives in the mountains, but has folkloristic and other connotations, which cannot be conveyed by this paraphrase. *Hüten*, in the second quotation, can mean either “guard” and “tend” or “look after”, so the impression is given that city people think that mountain farmers do not look after their animals properly. This is not stated explicitly, but the implication is that this is one of the stupid things city people say. This tension between city and rural (or in this case, mountain valley) dwellers becomes more apparent in the context of the full statements made by the two speakers, who each make a point of making clear their personal connections with rural regions.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

In the first part of the paper, I showed how the expressions associated with the wolf, lynx and bear in different languages focus on different real or imagined characteristics of these animals. It is argued that these implicit characteristics, along with other cultural phenomena, such as folk-tales and children’s stories, may well influence how speakers of these languages view the animals, so that fixed language expressions and collocations can be seen as initial rough indicators of potential attitudes to predators. For example, the wide range of expressions associated with the wolf in the four languages analysed indicates that it has a rich cultural history, so that attitudes towards the wolf among speakers of these languages are likely to be more extreme and complex than those towards less culturally laden animals.

In section 5 I outlined a critical discourse approach to analysing a recent political debate about the wolf, identifying some themes that link to those discussed in other articles in this volume. The outcome of the debate, with the majority voting in favour of removing the wolf’s protected status in Switzerland, was undoubtedly influenced not only by the facts presented, but also by the choice of words, grammar and rhetorical devices used in the arguments. Thus the negative image of the wolf, already present in the popular imagination as shown in section 4, was drawn on to portray the wolf as a bloodthirsty, murderous and brutal beast.

6.1 Implications for research on attitudes and acceptance

In researching attitudes to predators in a particular region, it could be worthwhile finding out, e.g. by consulting linguists, about any relevant fixed expressions in the local dialects (as well as about wolves in local children’s games, stories, folk-tales, etc.). The frequency and complexity of these would provide some indication of how much cultural baggage the animal in question carries with it in that region. Textual searches and analyses of local newspapers could also be easily and cheaply performed using concordance software, given that many newspapers are now accessible on the Internet. Factors like whether a language “views” the wolf as a solitary or a social animal could also be investigated and the results
compared with survey findings. It is possible that part of the opposition to the reappearance of the wolf in Switzerland may be to do with an implicit fear (reinforced by expressions in at least some of the Swiss languages) that packs of wolves will descend on the country, but this fear may not be equally present in the different language regions of Switzerland.

Debates about the re-immigration should also be submitted to linguistic analysis to discover implicit folk classifications of animals and other natural phenomena. A critical discourse analysis of how terms such as natural, nature, sustainable, artgerecht, etc. are used might also reveal subtle changes in the way people view “wilderness” and its (potential) predator inhabitants.

6.2 Recommendations for information campaigns to promote predator acceptance

Any information campaign to promote predator acceptance should make careful use of words. For this, information about which words and expressions are culturally laden would be valuable. Further, old stories or stories from other cultures (such as some of the North American Indian wolf stories) about predators that portray them in a positive light, or at least not purely negatively, could be fed into popular culture (children’s stories, songs, etc. – see also the paper on INFOX, in this volume, and the material on predators for school-children in Eidg. Forschungsanstalt WSL, 2001). It is not enough merely to provide factual information. Critical discourse analyses of debates about predators should be conducted to identify successful linguistic and rhetorical strategies for presenting arguments. Above all, it should not be forgotten that facts do not speak for themselves – we have to make them speak, and for this we need language.

7 Summary

This paper has tried to show how linguistic analyses may be useful for research on predator acceptance. I argue that the languages we speak, together with the myths, stories, etc. we have grown up with, will influence how we view the world, although probably not as much as direct experience. Analysing the attitudes towards, say, an animal implicit in a language may help us understand and predict how speakers of the language view the animal. To this end, frequently used expressions in English, French, German and Swedish containing the words for wolf, lynx and bear were analysed using information from dictionaries and language corpora and consulting native speakers. Expressions associated with the wolf were found to be the most numerous, complex and negative, whereas only a few seem to refer to the lynx. One factor that may influence acceptance of the wolf is that languages seem to differ in the extent to which they predispose their speakers to view the wolf as a social or a solitary animal. The traditional image of the bear as a strong, bad-tempered animal is still evident in some expressions, but this has been modified over the decades by the cuddly teddy-bear figures popular in children’s books. Thus some image polishing is required for the wolf to gain acceptance, whereas the reverse may be true for the bear, which is potentially more dangerous for humans.
To illustrate another linguistic approach, a recent debate in the Swiss parliament on the protected status of the wolf was analysed using a critical discourse approach. I focused on five issues, exemplifying them with quotations from the debate and commenting on some of the linguistic “highlights” in each. Thus the wolf was consistently portrayed through choice and juxtaposition of words in a much more negative light than the lynx. Frequent use of the plural to refer to wolves and the expression *Rudeltier* (again in contrast with the territorial lynx) may have given the impression that groups of wolves were waiting to enter Switzerland. Implicit classifications of animals as worthy or not of protection, etc. were also apparent in the debate, as was the idea that certain types of animal behaviour and habitats are more “natural” than others. Finally, some rhetorical strategies used in the debate to refer to tensions between city and mountain-valley dwellers were identified.

Such linguistic analyses could, I maintain, be useful in researching attitudes to predators and in preparing public information campaigns to promote acceptance of these animals.

Zusammenfassung

*Hungrige Wölfe und kuschelige Bären: Raubtiere in der Alltagssprache*


Als Beispiel einer anderen linguistischen Methode (critical discourse analysis) wurde eine Debatte über den Schutz des Wolfes analysiert, welche vor kurzem im schweizerischen Parlament stattgefunden hat. Dabei wurden fünf Themen identifiziert und mit linguistisch kommentierten Zitaten aus der Debatte erläutert. In der Debatte wurde der Wolf durch den gewählten Wortschatz und durch gewisse Satzkombinationen konsequent als viel böser als der Luchs dargestellt. Es war viel die Rede von Wölfen (Mehrzahl) und vom Wolf als Rudeltier (wieder als Kontrast zum Luchs, einem Reviertier), was tendenziell den Eindruck
erweckte, dass viele Wölfe nur darauf warten, die Schweiz zuüberfallen. Ersichtlich war in
dieser Debatte auch eine implizite Klassifikation der Tiere u.a. als mehr oder weniger
schützenswert. Ebenso war die Idee vorhanden, dass gewisse Lebensräume und Arten von
Tierverhalten «natürlicher» sind als andere. Zum Schluss wurden einige rhetorische Stra-
tegien analysiert, mit welchen Spannungen zwischen Menschen, die in Städten wohnen und
solchen, die in Berggebieten leben akzentuiert wurden.

Die vorliegende Arbeit zeigt, dass linguistische Analysen eine nützliche Rolle in der
Raubtierakzeptanzforschung und bei Informationskampagnen zur Förderung der Akzep-
tanz spielen können.

Acknowledgements
I am very grateful to Ruth Landolt for encouraging me to write this paper, and to Eva Dingwall,
Monique Dousse, Michèle Kaen nel Dobbertin, Christina Ljungberg, Heather Murray, Valérie
Nizon and Samuel Stucki for their help with language expressions and/or feedback on my initial
draft.

8 Literatur

<http://www.chilton.com/paq/archive/PAQ-00-340.html> Coproduction du CNDP, (Centre
National de Documentation Pédagogique).

British National Corpus of spoken and written English. [Published online, Nov. 2, 2001]. Available
from Internet <http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc>.

Collins Cobuild Corpus Concordance Sampler. [Published online, Oct. 2000]. Available from
Internet <http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk>.

werkstatt zur Wiedereinwanderung von Bär, Luchs und Wolf. Birmensdorf, Eidg. Forschungs-
anstalt WSL. 138 S.

Philological Society). 1–32.


169–186.

MCKENNA, B., 2000: Critical Discourse Method of Field: Tracking the ideological shift in


experience. Cambridge, MA, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
In fact, the Bible clearly says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is God. Bear with me and ample proof from his own lips will show how unashamedly he uses Christ Jesus’ Name as a springboard to advance the doctrines of devils and to bid false teachers God speed. In the next few paragraphs we shall be looking at some of the traits of a false teacher and prove beyond any shadow of doubt that Trevor Hudson does not preach the unadulterated Gospel of God but another gospel, and indeed the doctrines of devils. Hares, Siberian tigers, black bears, wolves, and lynxes are just a few examples of the that live in the forests. Unfortunately, deforestation from logging companies and hunting is threatening River and Wetlands. There are, however, some and important animals that live in this area. The polar bear, reindeer, and musk ox live in the tundra and need this habitat for their. Global warming is destroying this habitat and the survival of these animals. Other predators that wolves avoid conflict with include cats like mountain lions, bears, particularly grizzlies: (https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2625442/dramatic-moment-600lb-grizzly-bear-takes-on-pack-of-wolves-over-a-deer-carcass-is-captured-by-british-tourist-in-the-rocky-mountains/). However, it’s not just bears that wolves have to worry about. There are also tigers: (Photo from John Irvine’s fantastic sequence here: Tiger vs Wolf. These aren’t exactly predators, as they aren’t going looking for wolves to kill and eat, but they will certainly take down wolves that encroach on their rights. Wolves are apex predators. They don’t have another animal that kills them to eat them.