

ACCIDENTAL SUPERCHARGING AS A TYPE OF VALUE-LOADING

This article describes a particular type of supercharging, i.e. enriching of the semantic content, which is called accidental supercharging or syntactic value-loading (see Bostanjyan, 2002:46). In accidental supercharging the added semantic feature doesn't become a permanent part of an extension of the item. On the contrary, in case of the inherent supercharging it is temporary. To illustrate the phenomenon of accidental supercharging certain semantic constructions were studied.

The results of the investigation establish that apart from the more apparent ways of expressing value judgements, such as the use of the inherently value-loaded items or emotive value-loading (as well as the use of phonological components in speech) there also exist combinations of syntactic and semantic factors that have evaluative effects.

Syntactic properties of supercharging are that no qualifiers (or, in relevant cases, quantifiers) are used, and the affected items occur in syntactic frames and, in combination with certain semantic properties of items and relations, constitute what look like truisms or, when negated, denials of undeniable facts. Such semantic properties are e.g. relations of 'possession' or 'requirement', 'inalienability' or 'inner possession'.

In the case of accidental supercharging value-loading is characterized by the addition of a positive value to the normal semantic content of a noun in the syntactic structure.

As the truistic use of items denoting inalienable properties is made meaningful by an added value load, which is always positive, an investigation of phrases such as *man/woman/person etc. + of ('having')* + *unqualified N* ought to show the same tendency to value-load certain nouns. The supercharged senses of the nouns are only temporary and the supercharging is thus accidental.

In the present discussion, *man* in *man of + unqualified N* stands

for the most general items denoting human beings, such as *woman*, *person*, *individual* etc. and their plurals. Only the cases where *of* denotes possession in the relationship (e.g. *man of intellectual interests* = 'man who has intellectual interests') are of interest for the present study. They can be divided into four subgroups according to the reference of the noun:

- a. outer appearance, physical properties,
- b. inner qualities, i.e. psychological properties,
- c. worldly possessions,
- d. social properties, such as status and reputation.

a. Instances of reference to outer appearance, behaviour can be illustrated by the following sentences:

Charles Mantle, the New York Yankee's *man of muscle*...

He was a shortish *man of slight built*.

For *man of his mass* he was curiously short.

The magician is a *man of looks*, and knows women.

There are only two cases of unqualified N among these sentences, *man of muscle* and *man of looks*.

To have muscles is an inalienable property of all men. So is *to have looks*, i.e. the way one looks, one's appearance; very often *looks* refer to 'face'. Both are thus truisms. *Muscle* is basically neutral as to value, but the item is assessable along the antonymous scales such as 'strong'/'weak' and 'lots of'/'little'. A *man of muscle* has strong, well-developed muscles. Consequently *muscle* has a positive value load when unqualified in the frame *man of + unqualified N*.

Looks as it refers to 'face' or appearance, is basically neutral as to value:

What was there left of his good *looks*?

But in the literal truism *a man of looks*, *looks* although unqualified refers to 'good looks'. When dictionaries illustrate the definition 'personal appearance' with: She is beginning to lose her *looks*, as 'her beauty', it doesn't really illustrate the sense 'personal appearance' but a special use of it, where it exhibits a positive value load: to lose what every human being has is a denial of undeniable fact, a kind related to truisms in its superficial meaninglessness.

b. Inalienable properties of all human beings, i.e. such properties

which are inborn and not acquired during life are denoted by the basic sense of *sense, vision, taste, intellect, character, heart, mind*.

Basically *sense* denotes a 'faculty of perceiving' which for a bodily sense concerns sensual signals, but which can also refer to any kind of mental apprehension performed by the mind. It is neutral as to value, in e.g. *sense of smell* and *his bad sense of timing*. In *a man of sense* a positively value-loaded extension of *sense* is used which is also found in e.g. *see sense, make sense, talk sense*. Since all men have some kind of sense, the use in *a man of sense* is truistic and *sense* acquires its meaningfulness from the value implications.

Vision basically denotes a bodily sense, our facility of seeing and has an extension 'faculty of understanding'. *A man of vision* has good ability to look ahead.

Intellect our power of reason, is a property of all human beings. It is basically neutral as to value, and *a man of intellect* is a truism, which gets its meaningfulness from an added value feature 'good' or the like.

Character basically denotes 'quality', which is essential to an object, place, time etc. or to a person. In the phrase *a man of character*, there are implications of e.g. 'strong'. The quality feature 'strong' entails a positive value load in character in this phrase.

Man of mind is probably rare. Yet, the uncountable, unqualified basically neutral as to value items for mental properties are positively value-loaded in truisms:

But these are the days of advance, the works of the *man of mind*.

Intelligence is also an inalienable human property. It can be qualified along antonymous scales such as 'high'/'low', 'quick'/'slow':

This assumes high *intelligence* in the prisoner.

In case of possessive *with + intelligence* (unqualified) it always has a positive value load. The statement is superficially a truism. Such is the case also in the phrase *man of intelligence*.

Heart basically denotes a concrete object. In an abstract extension it has come to refer to the 'center of emotions', and as such has no value implications. In truistic use, i.e. in *man of + N*, in other contexts of 'possession', after e.g. possessive *have, with* and in denials of

undeniable facts, unqualified, abstract *heart* normally refers to a 'kind' heart, i.e. it contains a value-loaded feature:

He was a companionable if misunderstood man; *a man of heart*; even a good man.

Have a heart! is paraphrased 'show sympathy, understanding' and thus has an inherent positive evaluative feature, and *heartless*, 'unkind, without pity', is derived from this, the positively supercharged sense of *heart*.

Of the items of the group *b* there remain some, which denote properties which are not inherent (positive evaluative feature) in all human beings, but which nevertheless are so closely related to human life as to be virtually 'inalienable' ones. Such items are e.g. *breeding, learning, knowledge, experience*.

Breeding which basically means the 'giving birth to young' has been extended to the training of the young, their upbringing and education. We are all brought up in some way or other. So *breeding* is regarded as an inalienable part of our existence. It is basically neutral as to value (*a man of good breeding*). When unqualified in the phrase *man of + N* it has the positive value implications of 'high', 'good':

A man of sense and breeding loves a woman we dislike.

Both *learning, knowledge* and *experience* are acquired during our lives, and are thus considered to be inalienable ones. In the phrase *man of + N*, unqualified *learning* refers to 'a great amount of learning or deep learning'. *A man of knowledge* knows a lot and *a man of experience* has experienced a lot. Their position is in the positive part of the scale.

c. Group *c* embraces nouns, which denote worldly possessions (*man of wealth, man of means, man of property*).

Wealth is an adjectival noun with the inherent feature 'great quantity', but both *means* and *property* are basically neutral as to value. *Means* basically denotes 'method, process by which a result may be obtained'. In *a man of your means* or *have private means* the amount of money is not necessarily large, whereas in *man of means* it refers to wealth.

A man of property is a 'wealthy man'. *Property* basically denotes only 'possessions, things owned':

He has a small *property* in Kent.

A *man of property* has a great deal of property. The great quantity has become a feature of the lexical item.

d. Group *d* consists of nouns, which denote social properties such as rank or reputation. Both *standing* and *position* denote inalienable properties of all members of society, and to use them unqualified in the phrase *man of + N* makes it a truism, made meaningful by the added implications of a fixed position in the positive part of the scale 'high'/'low'.

So it is obvious that the phrase *man of + unqualified N* becomes a kind of truism when the noun denotes inherent or inalienable properties of human beings and is neutral as to quality or value in its basic sense. The truism is saved by the addition of a semantic feature, entailing a fixed position in the positive end of antonymous scales, to the noun in this truism.

When the noun is modified or when it already contains a gradable feature in its basic sense, nothing is added to it. In such a case the expression doesn't constitute a truism.

In the terms of the present study, nouns denoting inherent or inalienable properties of human beings and basically having no evaluative semantic features are supercharged as to quality, quantity or value in the phrase *man of + unqualified N*. Their value load is positive.

The study of another construction *the unqualified (unquantified) N + to + Inf* is also of great importance. In this frame there is a difference as regards supercharging between occurrences after possessive *have* or other contexts denoting possession, and those after *be*:

(after *have*) He has not *the courage to do it*.

Did the movie producer *have the courage to be bluffed*? Did he *have the willingness to suffer* financially?

I *have the brains to become* a producer but I don't *have the money*.

(after *be*) But now was not *the time to worry* about such things. She must have thought that *was the way to get you interested* in her.

After *have* only quantitative supercharging of the noun is found. In this relation of requirement between noun and infinitive, the noun is an obligatory factor for the realization of action by the infinitive. The unqualified noun (abstract plural count or mass) has a fixed position in the dimension of quantity. The feature added to the normal semantic content of the item is not expressed by a gradable adjective, as in the case of the construction *man of + unqualified N*, but by the absolute quantifying adjective *sufficient*. The position is at the positive end of the scale '*sufficient/insufficient*'.

After *be* a nonadjectival noun denotes an obligatory requirement of any action. It is supercharged by a qualitative/evaluative feature expressed by an absolute adjective *right* or the superlative of the purely evaluative *good, best*. The function of *be* is characterizing here, and not identifying. As normal in supercharging, the item's position in a qualitative scale is in the positive part. The supercharged senses of the nouns are only temporary and the supercharging is thus accidental.

Summarizing the above-mentioned facts we can clearly state that the constructions discussed although not truistic, are in a certain way marked by redundancy. Positive evaluation is added to the nouns, which are inherently value-loaded as a consequence of a quality feature. This feature is only temporary and normally leaves no traces in other uses of the item.

Thus, accidental supercharging is characterized by three features common to all the constructions that were discussed:

- a. the resulting expressions look like truisms or denials of undeniable facts, or in other respects, redundant statements;
- b. the added feature is temporary;
- c. the added feature is positive.

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