

## INHERENT SUPERCHARGING AS A TYPE OF VALUE-LOADING

This paper is an attempt to determine why two syntactically different statements, one with an explicit value-loaded qualifier (*She has good taste*) and the other without such a qualifier (*She has taste*), imply the same positive evaluation. We will try to show the presence of such evaluation on the example of some nouns, such as *luck, taste, judgement, class* and *style*.

The process behind one kind of such value-loading is named *supercharging*. Supercharging is a specially adopted term denoting the process, which lies behind the "enriching of the semantic content" of a lexical item. The value-loading in supercharging can be described as the addition of a semantic feature "positive value" to the normal semantic content of a lexical item in the clause or the phrase.

Supercharging can be *inherent* or *accidental*, depending on whether the added semantic feature has become a permanent part of an extension of the item or is only temporary. *Inherent supercharging* is normally reflected in derivatives and/or specially mentioned in dictionary entries of the specific lexical item, often marked *esp., spec.* or *absol.* *Accidental supercharging* doesn't normally leave such traces (Fahraus, 1980/).

Many other linguists such as A.Bain, D.Bolinger, G.Stern, J.Firth have paid special attention to the problem of value-loading and discussed this phenomenon in their works. The previous research proved to be very useful for the present analysis.

It's of special interest to point out the possibility of assessing a lexical item along certain antonymous scales. Firth's well-known statement "one of the meanings of *night* is its collocability with "*dark*" implies that among the inherent features of *night*, one contains the information that *night* can be assessed along a scale "*light/dark*" and is obligatorily placed at the "*dark*" end of the scale. A *night* can be dry or wet but it is never inherently one or the other. This can be shown by means of a minus sign (for the negative end of the scale): "*-lightness*". In the same way plus sign indicates that the position at

the positive end of an antonymous scale is an inherent property of a lexical item, e.g. "+size" for *giant* /Firth, 1951/. This can be applied to the items that will be discussed later in order to prove that the position at the positive end of the scale of value implies positive evaluation.

In *qualitative* supercharging the added feature always denotes one end of an antonymous scale of "quality" (e.g. "*strong*", "*difficult*"), or pure evaluation ("*good*", "*bad*"). In *quantitative* supercharging the added feature denotes "quantity" and is expressed by a quantifier.

The feature added in supercharging, whether qualitative or quantitative, entails the addition of an evaluative feature. Normally gradable adjectives for nouns and manner adverbs for verbs, which have a characterizing, i.e. evaluative function, are called qualifiers. Quality denotes a more "accidental" aspect of a person (or a thing) and can be used for characterizing, since it contains an adjectival semantic feature. Qualifiers denote positions in antonymous scales and as a consequence they are of an evaluative character.

According to Bolinger, antonyms form adjectival pairs. Antonyms expressing physical measurement - the so-called antonyms "par excellence", such as *big/small*, *tall/short*, *high/low*, *strong/weak*, *great/little*, even when they modify abstract entities.

Cruse makes an important statement about the type of relation between antonyms: "Although antonymy is frequently spoken of as a relation between words, strictly speaking, it is a relation between senses". So the scale of "value" has *good/bad* at its ends. So the scale *good/bad* also denotes the relation between the adverbs *well/badly*, focusing on their sense instead of their form /Cruse, 1986/.

The items studied are often modified by antonymous adjectives, such as *good*, *bad*, *excellent*, *high*, *low*, which are definitely placed in the one or the other end of scale of "value". As a consequence such items contain a semantic feature "assessable as to value". If a lexical item which has no inherent value feature takes a value-loaded qualifier, it is still inherently neutral as to position in the scale of "value", and the position is indicated by the qualifier: *to have good/bad taste in music*. However when without any qualifier, a basically neutral item nevertheless implies a position in that scale. The fact that *to have taste in music* implies "to have good taste in music", is an obvious example of inherent supercharging.

This difference between inherently value-loaded items and items

inherently neutral as to value, is noted by Cruse, who describes it as follows: "All judgements and comparisons of "inherently bad" items seem to be made on a scale which extends from "neutral" to "bad". Examples for comparison:

- (1) *John had a **bad** accident.*
- (2) *The exam results were **bad**.*

In sentence (2), *bad* must be understood to be operating on the *good-bad* scale, and indicates that the results were "bad rather than good". *Bad* in sentence (1), on the other hand, doesn't indicate that the accident was "bad rather than good", but that it was worse than the average for accidents; *bad* here refers to the neutral-bad scale" /Cruse, 1986/.

Almost any lexical item can be given a value load and thus be used for evaluation; it depends on the speaker's background or intentions. In such a case we can talk about an emotive value load of an item. "On the whole *liberal* is a good word in Great Britain, but it's a bad word in South Africa" (an example from F.Palmer) /Palmer, 1979/.

Some lexical items always carry a value load, even in their basic sense, such as *courage, love, brilliant, clever*, which have a positive value load. On the other hand *coward, hate, stupid, ugly* can be placed in the negative part of the scale of "value".

In "Degree Words" /1973/ Bolinger claims that not only adjectives but also some nouns and verbs are gradable, because they contain an intensifying feature, which is factored out by the how question. (Such how questions are e.g.: *He failed so! — How **badly** did he fail?*) He notes that there are nouns that may be either *degree* or *nondegree* (e.g. *quantity, knowledge, smell*).

One property of a degree noun is, according to Bolinger, that the inherent gradable feature can itself intensify the noun if explicitly expressed in a modifier. So while a bad mistake is intensifying — we do not normally contrast bad mistakes with good ones. A *bad smell* is distinguishing: bad smells are different from good smells. This is true in spite of the fact that *smell* is a degree word when combined with an intensifier: *What a **smell!*** This is another case of supercharging.

In Bolinger's analysis a typical degree word takes both grammaticized (e.g. *such, exclamatory what, quite, very, rather*) and ungrammaticized (e.g. *great, bad, frightful, utter*) intensifiers. Any device that scales a quality, up or down, is an intensifier.

Later Bolinger singles out "other potential degree words" such as

*quantity*: "Such a quantity refers to a large amount, a large quantity is distinguished from a small one" /Bolinger, 1973/.

The possession of such gradable features allows intensification of the item. According to this we can consider that this intensifying feature is present in the items studied. Later we will prove that this feature tends to be mostly positive.

According to the points stated above in supercharging a value-loaded semantic feature seems to be added to the content of an item otherwise neutral as to value. In the case of the inherent supercharging the added feature becomes a permanent feature of an extension of the item. It has been found in *luck, taste, judgement, style, class*, etc. Examples were taken from the contemporary fiction, both American and British. The methods applied in our study are the so-called dictionary definition method and the method of contextual analysis. The terms used in the investigation have been borrowed from the works of the above-mentioned authors.

This was the general information our investigation is going to be based on. Each lexical item in question will be discussed from the point of the problems discussed.

Our analysis of the lexical item "luck" has shown that *luck* belongs to the same semantic field as *fate* and *destiny*, which denote a force or power, which controls or directs our lives. But *luck* is different from these, because it can be said to 'pick' events, which are to happen to us, but in a completely random way; there is no regularity or predetermination where *luck* is involved.

*Luck* can be 'active' usually as the subject of the clause. In the following sentences with *as luck had it* the evaluation implied by the context varies from "good" to "not bad" and "bad", and is really not deducible, i.e. it is neutral as to "good" or "bad", in:

*As luck had it, he hadn't gone 20 feet in the street before Pat appeared.*  
(good)

*Luke, on the other hand, flew to Bangkok, and as luck had it he flew under Jerry's name.* (not bad)

*I missed the train home and I couldn't get any kind of a yoke to give me a lift, as luck would have it, there was a mass meeting that same day.* (bad)

In the phrase, *a matter of luck*, *luck* normally has the sense of "power picking events randomly", and no evaluation of the outcome

is implied by *luck* itself. Yet the current situation is usually good, when we *push* or *press our luck*:

*I won't press my luck. I'll disengage if I see it's near breaking point.*

Unqualified *luck* may be interpreted as either "random power" or "result". In both cases it is neutral as to value:

(1) *The details would depend on quick wits and luck.*

(2) *An actor must believe that he is, whatever his luck, a great actor.*

In sentence (2) *whatever* has value implication, but *luck* itself is neutral as to value. Sometimes, however, unqualified *luck* "result" seems itself to carry a positive value load; here this positive value is reflected in the context, in *perfect marriage*:

*It was one of those rare operations where luck, timing and preparation came together in a perfect marriage.*

The phrase *to wish smb. (good) luck* may take both qualified and unqualified *luck*. But the wish itself is uttered: *Good luck!* It's obvious that when unqualified after wish the value feature is implicit (inherent), while in the second case it is always explicit. If bad luck is desired it must be explicitly stated, as in: *Other students had received letters wishing them bad luck.*

In exclamatory expressions with *what* the focus is on either the explicit (for qualified *luck*) or implicit (for unqualified *luck*) value load:

*But what evil luck she had driven him abroad.*

*What luck I didn't stay for lunch and the champagne.*

It's obvious that there is a difference as to value load between certain uses of the lexical item *luck*. Both the basic sense "random power" and the sense "result" are cases of neutral *luck*. *Luck* is always smth unplanned, unpredictable, and contrasted with good planning, hard work and conscious effort. But with the "result sense" there is an extension, which has an inherent value load, since it's found only when *luck* doesn't have any qualifiers with their more or less strong implications of value. This value load is always positive. Here *luck* can be said to be supercharged with the added semantic feature "positive value".

The phrase *by luck* probably contains positive *luck*. The fact that there is another expression denoting "randomness" without evaluative implications, *by chance*, may be regarded as circumstantial evidence. *By good luck* is found in the material but there's no instance of *by bad luck*.

In the constructions of possession both qualified and unqualified *luck* are found. With lexical items denoting "cause someone to have" both qualified and unqualified *luck* are found:

*He must have brought me luck.*

*It's surely blood money and will bring bad luck on us.*

As it is evident unqualified *luck* refers to "good luck" after *bring*, *cause*, etc. Both qualified and unqualified *luck* are common after possessive *have*. Unqualified *luck* always carries a positive value load. *Luck* may be said to denote an "inalienable" property of human being. The fact that the possession of it can be negated, despite its inalienability, is proof that unqualified *luck* must refer to smth else than its basic sense, after possessive *have* and related verbs, such as *lose*. When unqualified *luck* "result" as usual carries a positive value load:

*It's not often I have the luck to be entertaining two such charming ladies.*

Sometimes *luck* seems actively to take sides, to be with or against us:

*Luck was with him.*

*When I reached it, I thought for a moment that my luck had deserted me.*

*With luck* expresses more of a hope and wish than a real fact.

Although most instances of qualified *luck* "result" in the above-mentioned examples have been modified by *good* or *bad* there are many others found in fiction: *luck* can be *mixed*, *hard*, *rotten*, *lousy*, *ill*, etc., or *wonderful*, *amazing*. It may be not surprising that the negative qualifiers are more varied than the positive ones, since unqualified *luck* is very often employed when the writer wants to express positive evaluation. Positive *luck* can take quantifiers without losing any of its evaluative implications:

*It was too early to find a restaurant... and he seemed to have little luck in discovering a bar.*

Some support for the suggestion that there is a special point in the semantic content of *luck*, which carries an inherent positive value load, is found in the derivatives *lucky* and *luckless* (*having good luck* and *lacking good luck* respectively).

*Taste* is one of our bodily senses. So the core of the lexical item *taste* naturally contains the features "perception", "ability", and "signal";

in the basic sense of *taste* the feature "gustatory" is added, to distinguish it from other bodily senses.

There is no basic difference in semantic content between *taste* "signal" as a noun and as a verb, except the consequences of the grammatical features of the noun and the verb, respectively. *Taste* clearly refers to gustatory qualities:

*His dinner tasted flat.*

The fact that "gustatory" is normally evident also in the figurative use of *taste* "signal" can be viewed from the following:

*Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.*

*Taste* "signal" can be modified by adjectives denoting a gustatory quality (*brackish, bitter, sweet, sour, etc.*) or its source (of garlic, blood) and also by purely evaluative qualifiers such as *good, bad, etc.* This shows that *taste* "signal" has the feature "assessable as to value", and the evaluation is expressed by qualifiers or inferred from the context.

Uses of *taste* where "perception" is a prominent feature are found in many different contexts. Studying the wide range of *taste* "perception" (verb as well as noun) we see that "gustatory" is a prominent feature of *taste* in some instances, whereas it has disappeared in others:

*You will find that avocado is unlike any other fruit you have ever tasted.*

*Miss Upton and Miss Packard had many tastes in common.*

In *taste* "perception" there is, however, a transition from a gustatory to a non-gustatory sense. During the transition the inherent quality feature changes, from "gustatory" to "any quality (including gustatory)" to "aesthetic quality". The weakening feature "gustatory" is evident as one goes from *have a taste of* to *have a taste for*, where it has totally faded away. It can be demonstrated by:

*a season to taste in comparison with to my taste  
have a taste for retsina have a taste for melancholy  
have a taste for rear beef have a taste for music*

So it's useful to give two different definitions of *taste* in this use:

*Taste* (1) - individual preference: liking, relish, fondness, inclination (a *taste* for music)

*Taste* (2) - preference or liking in food or drink (a *taste* for rear beef)

The dictionary definitions seem to describe 2 very different lexical items, but the similarities are greater than the differences. Later on we will treat them as *taste* (1) and *taste* (2).

What is preferred, what someone puts a high value on and consequently chooses, is what he *has taste for*. This evaluation is made along the scale "good/bad", where "individual norm" is an important semantic feature (of *taste* (1)), as is seen in sayings such as *tastes differ*, and *there is no accounting for tastes*. The individuality of the evaluation is underlined by the frequent use of personal pronouns with *taste* (1): *my/ his/ their taste for music*.

*Taste* (1) contains the feature "assessable as to value" but the norm for this evaluation is set up to someone other than the individual whose taste is being discussed:

*My taste is bad because I like Scott and Stevenson; the taste of those who like E.R.Burroughs is worse.*

In *taste* (1) the norm on which the evaluation is based is an individual one, in *taste* (2) it is the generally accepted, authoritative norm.

Purely individualizing modifiers, such as *personal, individual, public*, etc. indicate *taste* (1), even though *taste* is uncountable. *Literary, artistic, musical taste* denote the ability to make value judgements and choices based on aesthetic criteria according to the general norm.

The qualifiers of *taste* "ability" are all strongly evaluative, either denoting distinguishing characteristics, such as *exquisite, faultless, appalling, questionable*, or degrees in the scale of "value", such as *good, bad; excellent, perfect, poor*.

A positive value load is unquestionably present in the reference of *taste* (2) in for example: *She has taste in music*. A change of context doesn't change the message. Instances which clearly exhibit this positive value-loading of unqualified *taste* "ability", "evaluation" are the following: after possessive *have* and *with*, and after *of*:

*Have dignity and taste;*

*Woman with taste and money;*

*The apartment of a rich woman of taste.*

When negated, or in other contexts denoting "lack of", unqualified *taste* "ability" still implies "good taste":

*It was the room of a woman without taste or moderation.*

The difference in semantic content between positive *taste* and other senses of the lexical item *taste* is reflected in derivatives: *tasty, tasteful, tasteless*. The last two are derived from positively value-loaded *taste*



denoting "characterized by good taste" and "characterized by the lack of good taste" respectively. *Tasty* denotes "having a pleasant flavour"; it is found both as an adjective and as a noun denoting "something good to eat; goody". *Tasteless* is related to the negation "have no taste". Both *tasty* and *tasteless* can be used in the figurative sense, *tasteless*: "dull, insipid, uninteresting"; *tasty*: strikingly attractive or interesting", as in *the tale comes to a flat and tasteless end* and *details make tasty reading*

In its most basic sense, *taste* "perception" denotes an inalienable property of all human beings. To say that someone has or has not taste is thus literally a kind of truism or denial of an undeniable fact, which would have no informative value unless there was something else added to the semantic content of the item. The additional message can be described as a semantic feature denoting a positive value "good".

The verb *judge*, "estimate", "consider", denotes an activity or process. So the core of *judgement* reflects this in the feature "process of evaluation" or the like:

*I put that to you for judgement.*

*Judging* can be described as a process of choosing certain facts and assessing their position in antonymous scales such as "good"/"bad", "right"/"wrong" and sometimes also making a decision based on that assessment. Evaluation is a prominent feature in all uses of *judgement*, since assessment along an antonymous scale always entails an assessment as to value:

*Society's standard of moral judgement is that of a reasonable man.*

*Judgement* is very often found in religious or judiciary contexts. In court, judges *sit in judgement*, i.e. consider evidence and try to evaluate it, according to the law.

The qualifier *critical* strengthens the reading "process of evaluation": "*No research at all,*" *had been Miss Lydgate's verdict,*" *and no effort at critical judgement*".

That the evaluation in *judging* is based on individual norm of values is often apparent from the use of possessive pronouns. *In my judgement* is similar in meaning to *in my opinion*, and *judgement* refers to the result of the evaluation, leading to the opinion which is being formed. *Judgement* "result" contains the feature "assessable as to value": *whose judgements are known to be good.*

From the basic sense of *judgement* there is an extension from the process or result of evaluation to the ability to form an opinion

concerning which value to assign to certain facts. This ability is an inherent faculty of human beings:

*We have been letting technology run us as if we had no judgement of our own.*

*Judgement* "ability" is assessable as to quality, and thus also value along the dimension "good"/"bad". *Sound* and *poor* are the most common qualifiers besides *good* and *bad*.

The fact that unqualified *judgement* sometimes carries a positive value load is recognized by dictionaries, they define it as "good sense, ability to judge", as in *a man of judgement* or *display judgement*.

*Judgement*, which is basically neutral as to value having only the inherent feature "assessable as to value", carries positive value load in certain syntactic frames, especially *have+unqualified judgement*, *be a (person) of+unqualified judgement* and *to do smth. with+unqualified judgement*.

We all have an inherent ability to judge and evaluate. To say that someone has judgement would thus be meaningless, a truism, unless something was added to such a statement. The same logic applies to the statement *he has no judgement*, which would be a denial of an undeniable fact if taken literally. Instead in such statements unqualified *judgement* has a positive value load, which is implicit in the semantic content of the lexical item.

The basic sense of *style* can be labelled as "way of doing or being". But there is normally an implication of something characteristic or distinctive in *style*, which is better shown by the lexical item *manner*. *Style* is found in the context of many activities; the range of *style* comprises all kinds of artistic activity. It has the same basic sense "manner" in all the artistic fields, such as music, writing, architecture, painting, stagecraft, which all have typical form and express something:

*He has more chance to us over to his rather exaggerated style of acting.*

*The principle defect of this book is that it is written in a style which will convey the reader little or nothing.*

Some kind of *style* is always a property of our appearance and behavior, from the way we look, dress or act in various situations, also the way of living and being. In some sense *style* comes close to that of *fashion* used about clothes, behavior, thought, custom, etc.

No evaluative feature is inherent in *style*, only the general one "assessable as to value". Modifiers carry the value load, from those

with a very light value load, such as *vivid, bleak*, to almost purely evaluative ones, such as *grand, superb, fine*. Qualifiers from the negative end of the scale of value are more seldom found, e.g. *coarse, bad, humble*.

The fact that there exist qualifiers from both ends of antonymous scales must be considered as proof that *style* basically contains no evaluative feature which denotes a position in the scale of value. Still, there are cases of *style* which imply a value judgement without a qualifier and without any explicit contextual means. It is found in the whole range, from literature to sports and dress.

*Style* is found after possessive *have* and *with*. The next example shows that what is stated and denied, is the possession of good *style*:

*The play had style, moved at a quick pace and everyone did well.*

Thus the evaluation is implicit in *style*, which can be said to have an inherent feature "positive value" in this use, which is present in *do smth in style*. In any case unqualified *style* has an inherent positive value load and it is thus supercharged. The difference in value load between the basic sense, neutral as to value is reflected in derivatives: *stylist* (derived from neutral *style*), *stylish* (derived from positive *style*), *styleless* (having no good style).

*To have no style* is a denial of an undeniable fact unless *style* refers to "good style".

The core of *class* is "group" or "set". The range embraces both animate and inanimate entities. Division based on similarity is probably part of the core. This basic sense of *class*, is the basis of its use as a verb, *to class*. *Class* is widely used in the field of education and teaching. Human society has long been divided into classes. There is no evaluation indicated by e.g. the class names *working class, educated class, governing class*, but we know that these phrases very often have an emotive value load. So despite the grading in the system, *upper-class, middle-class, lower-class* may have only a characterizing function and it is not necessarily evaluative.

The positive-end items of the evaluative scale, such as *first* or *A*, often imply "good" or even "best": *first-class hotel* (very good, excellent). Still when characterizing, only *first-class* has positive implication. *Second-class* and *third-class* have negative ones.

Other common qualifiers of *class* are from antonymous scales, such as *high/low, top/bottom, good/bad*, but negative-end items are not common.

Lexical item *class* itself has no inherent evaluative feature. Still when used attributively and predicatively, *class* carries positive value load: *He's a class tennisplayer*. An activity can be performed *with class*. *To have no class* looks like a denial of undeniable fact. It is meaningful only when class is supercharged.

*Classy, classiness, classless* and *classy* are interesting derivatives of *class*.

*Classy* is derived from a supercharged *class*, denoting "upper-class, superior". *Classiness* has the same implication. The other two derivatives are derived from the neutral *class*, denoting "certain social or economic class" or "traditional, well-known" respectively.

*To have class* may have later appeared in analogy with *to have taste, to have judgement*, which are truisms and are made meaningful by addition of a value load.

The aim of the study was to examine some lexical items where the semantic content of a word seems to become enriched with an evaluative feature when unqualified. Having observed each item separately, we have arrived at some generalization.

Basically the items studied are neutral as to value, and can be evaluated along the whole dimension of "value" which is done by value-loaded modifiers, i.e. qualifiers. Only when unqualified in the construction of possession they carry more or less strong evaluation. Syntactic properties of supercharging are the following:

- No qualifiers or quantifiers are present;
- The items occur in certain frames which in combination with certain semantic properties of items, make truisms;
- When negated, these combinations make denials of undeniable facts.

The value-loading in supercharging can be described as the addition of the semantic feature "positive value" to the normal semantic content of a lexical item. Supercharging as to quality/value affects inherently not value-loaded items. Inherent supercharging has been established for items denoting inalienable properties, most often of human beings, such as *luck taste, judgement, style* and *class*, in the frames of possession with unqualified nouns. This combination creates what looks like a truism or, when negated, a denial of an undeniable fact. In inherent supercharging the added value feature is a permanent part of an extension of the item. The difference between the item's supercharged sense and the value-neutral one is often reflected in derivatives.

One can't deny that all the characteristics described equally refer to all the inherently supercharged nouns in question. It could be more convenient to have only one possible interpretation of an item normally neutral as to value, when it is given a value load by semantic or syntactic means. That this interpretation in the majority of cases tends to be positively evaluative is probably the result of something deeply rooted in the human psyche.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bain A.I. English Composition and Rhetoric. L., 1967.
2. Bolinger D. Degree Words. Mouton, 1971.
3. Cruse D.A. Lexical Semantics. Cambridge, 1986.
4. Fahraus A. Syntactic-semantic Value-loading in English. Copenhagen, 1980.
5. Firth J. General Linguistics and Descriptive Grammar. Oxford, 1951.
6. Palmer F.R. Semantics. M., 1979.
7. Stern G. Meaning and Change of Meaning. Gotteburg, 1932.
8. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. ed. by A.S.Hornby, L., 1978.

### FICTION

1. Caldwell T. The Final Hour. Greenwich, 1972.
2. Carre J. The Honourable Schoolboy. N.Y., 1980.
3. Christy A. Curtain. N.Y., 1976.
4. Mansfield K. Collected Stories. L., 1959.