

INTENSIONAL-EXTENSIONAL LANGUAGE AS A MEASURE OF SEMANTIC ORIENTATION

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Does a liberal preacher use fewer dogmatic and more qualified language forms in his preaching than a fundamentalist does? Or, to put it in semantic terminology, does a liberal preacher use fewer intensional and more extensional terms in his preaching than a fundamentalist does?

One might think that the liberal claim to tolerance and scientific orientation would come through to people in extensional language and that intensional statements would be reduced to a minimum. The opposite, of course, might be expected of a fundamentalist who often is portrayed as rigid, intolerant, and dogmatic both in attitude and word.

One study cannot settle the above questions but it may serve to launch analytical efforts and provide a pilot study for future reference.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to discover whether or not the general semantics theory of intensionality-extensionality applies in the expected way to two speakers who differ significantly in theological beliefs, education, scholarship and other ways, but whose speeches fall into similar categories. This analysis makes no attempt to study the theory that intensionality and extensionality are indexes of mental health. Neither does it seek to determine whether or not they are factors affecting the mental health of listeners. Vocal, rhetorical, and various non-verbal factors, while undoubtedly important, are not treated in this study.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPEAKERS STUDIED

The two speakers under consideration are Harry Emerson Fosdick, former pastor of the Riverside Church of New York City and for many years a leading voice for the liberal wing of American Christianity, and Oral Roberts, contemporary fundamentalist mass evangelist and "faith healer" whose preaching is heard currently by thousands of people in tent and auditorium meetings, on radio and television.

Although the common bond that qualifies these men for consideration is the preaching task, their theological and personality differences should contribute to our understanding of their usage of the various intensional-extensional types of language structures.

Educational differences

Fosdick attended the public schools of Buffalo, New York. He studied Greek and Latin under his father in high school. He graduated from Colgate University in 1900 where his dominant activity was public speaking. He won numerous prizes in oratorical contests and was named to membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He studied at Colgate Divinity School for one year and then transferred to Union Theological Seminary

in New York from which school he received the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1904. He completed his formal education in 1908 when Columbia University conferred upon him the Master of Arts degree in sociology and economics.

Oral Roberts went through the public schools of Ada, Oklahoma. Later he entered Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Oklahoma. He enrolled as a sophomore at Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma, in September, 1946, and continued there until June, 1947, completing fourteen semester hours with "above average grades."¹ No theological training was discovered.

Teaching differences

While busy with their preaching ministries both men did some teaching. Fosdick was an instructor at Union Theological Seminary in New York from 1908 to 1915 and then professor of practical theology from 1915-1945 in the same institution. He delivered scholarly lectures at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Stanford, Vanderbilt, and other universities.

Roberts taught in the religious education department of the Southwestern Bible College, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, during the school term of 1946-1947.

Literary differences

Both men have been prolific writers. Fosdick authored a number of scholarly as well as popular magazine articles. Several volumes of his lectures and nine volumes of his sermons have been published. He has written a number of highly regarded books on various subjects.² His autobiography was published in 1956.³ Most critics agree that his literary production was on a consistently high level.

Oral Roberts writes mainly to a popular audience on religious themes. He edits *Abundant Life*,⁴ a monthly magazine dedicated to articles concerning his evangelistic and faith healing meetings and associated themes. He has published several books of sermons, a biography of some of his friends, an autobiography,⁵ and various tracts and pamphlets. He has written no scholarly works.

1. Statement by M. H. Ziegler, Registrar, Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma, personal correspondence, May 31, 1958.
2. For example *Christianity and Progress* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922); *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924); *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938); *On Being a Real Person* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943); *The Man from Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949); and others.
3. *The Living of These Days* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956).
4. Published in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
5. *Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1952).

Leadership differences

Fosdick appealed mainly to a middle-to-high class of audience. They were intellectual, liberal, and economically superior on the whole. And while he was never officially designated as such, nevertheless, he was generally considered as a leader of the liberal wing of American Christianity throughout the days of the fundamentalist-liberal controversy and until his retirement in 1945.

Roberts appeals mainly to a lower-to-middle class audience as to its intellectual and socio-economic levels, although he has some following among the more affluent group. His ministry is carried on predominantly among those interested in faith healing and emotion-packed evangelism. He is not considered a leader of the fundamentalist, conservative, or evangelical wing of American Christianity despite his widely attended meetings and vast radio and television audiences, nevertheless, his theological conservatism is well known.

NATURE OF THE SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Definition of intension-extension

The notion of intension-extension, as Murray and others have pointed out, was borrowed by Korzybski from the area of logic.⁶ Writers in that field use it to refer to the difference between qualities and objects. Mill, for example, used the terms "connotative" and "non-connotative" to express the concepts of intension and extension respectively.⁷ Korzybski suggested that extensional orientation had to do with following an evaluative process of facts or objects first, and words or labels afterward.⁸ This orientation, according to Korzybski, reveals itself in the language structure men use. He related intensionality to the traditionally Aristotelian orientation and extensionality to the newer non-Aristotelian, or general semantic orientation.⁹ By this he appears to mean that a definition by intension is given in terms of Aristotelian "properties," which leave out many characteristics of the object defined. A definition by extension, on the other hand, includes not only the naming of an object, but also the exhibiting of a class of individuals each distinctly enumerated.¹⁰

Procedure and criteria

Ten sermons from each preacher were selected at random from their published books of sermons. Their authenticity was deemed satis-

6. Elwood Murray, Raymond H. Barnard, and J. V. Garland, *Integrative Speech* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1953), p. 198.
7. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic* (London: Longmans, Greene and Company, 1889), p. 19.
8. Alfred Korzybski, "Outline of General Semantics," *General Semantics Papers From the First American Congress for General Semantics*. Collected and arranged by Hansell Baugh (New York: Arrow Editions, 1938), p. 1.
9. Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity* (third edition; Lakeville, Connecticut: The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1948), p. xxx.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. xxx-xxxi.

factory in light of the procedures used by the two men prior to publishing them. Fosdick wrote his out word for word before delivery, re-checked them and saw them printed as they were without re-editing by the publishers.¹¹ Roberts preached his extemporaneously, but had them recorded on tape, typed and published as they were preached.¹²

A set of criteria was then drawn up from the written works in the field of general semantics.¹³ These were listed under the headings of intensional, qualified intensional, and extensional types respectively.

The intensional criteria consisted of the following types with their appropriate symbols:

- I-1 "*Allness*" terms such as all, every, entire, whole, none, etc.
- I-2 *Superlative terms* such as best, worst, most, least, only, matchless, etc.
- I-3 *Two-valued, either-or* terms such as "Either you are my friend or my enemy," etc.¹⁴
- I-4 "*Is*" of *identification statements* such as "Joe is a fool," etc.
- I-5 "*Is*" of *predication terms* such as "Roses are beautiful," etc.

The qualified intensional criteria consisted of the above mentioned criteria, but, with the letter "q" added. Thus I-1q refers to a qualified "allness" term; I-2q refers to a qualified superlative statement and so on throughout the various intensional categories.

The extensional criteria consisted of the following types with their appropriate symbols:

- E-1 *Comparative terms* such as higher, lower, more, less, etc.
- E-2 *Quantifying terms*, or precise numerical designations such as 60, sixty, second, etc.
- E-3 *Conditional terms* such as if, but, except, perhaps, unless, etc.
- E-4 *Consciousness of projection terms* such as seems, appears, in my opinion, etc.

11. Eugene Exman, "Fosdick as Author," *Christian Century* LXXV (May 21, 1958), p. 618.
12. Oral Roberts, *The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons*, Revised edition. (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1951), Title page; *Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1955), Title page.
13. For example, see Wendell Johnson, *People In Quandaries* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), p. 503; and Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity, op. cit.*, pp. xxv ff., and others.
14. This category was in the original design but finally dropped. Clear-cut cases of either-or statements were obvious but relatively few. When this type of dichotomy moved beyond the specific either-or terminology, however, it became less identifiable to the point of unreliability and was therefore discontinued.

E-5 *Pseudo-quantifying terms* or terms loosely indicative of amount, size, etc., such as many, much, few, lots, etc.¹⁵

The sermons were then analyzed in light of these criteria; the frequency of occurrence of the various types of terms was tabulated and treated statistically using the chi square formula.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to discover the intensional-extensional word usage of two speakers whose theological orientation, education, scholarship, and other personal factors differed significantly. Analysis of their sermons revealed the following results:

1. In a general count, Fosdick used more unqualified intensional types relative to the total words in his sermons than Roberts did. The difference was significant ($P < .01$).

2. A breakdown of the general count into its individual categories, however, shows some variation in usage. Thus Fosdick (see Table I) used significantly more "allnesses" (I-1), and superlatives (I-2), but Roberts used significantly more "is" of identification terms (I-4). Both preachers tended to predicate values (I-5) in about the same amount.

3. "Allnesses" (I-1), and superlatives (I-2) were the heaviest factors in Fosdick's greater use of intensional language. His high frequency of usage of these types of terms over-balanced his other differences with Roberts.

Analysis of the sermons in light of their use of qualified intensional terms provided the following results:

1. In a general count Fosdick used more qualified intensional statements relative to total words used than Roberts did.

2. Comparison of the men as to qualified against not-qualified intensional terms by individual categories revealed similar results (see Table II).

According to this breakdown Fosdick exceeded Roberts in every category except qualified superlatives (I-2q) in which no significant difference was noted.

Analysis of the sermons relative to their use of extensional terms revealed the following information:

15. Pseudo-quantifying terms, while seemingly located about mid-way between the extremes of "allness" and precise quantifying statements, were nevertheless treated as extensional factors because they did modify the "allness" tendency.

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF FOSDICK AND ROBERTS AS TO FREQUENCY
OF USAGE OF UNQUALIFIED INTENSIONAL TERMS AGAINST
TOTAL WORDS USED

| CRITERION | TOTAL NUMBER OF TERMS INVOLVED | | | | X ² | IN FAVOR OF |
|-----------|--------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|----------------|-------------------|
| | FOSDICK 32,279 words | | ROBERTS 40,159 words | | | |
| | Expected | Actual | Expected | Actual | | |
| I-1 | 496 | 548 | 611 | 555 | 11.89** | Roberts |
| I-2 | 134 | 196 | 166 | 104 | 52.62** | Roberts |
| I-4 | 393 | 354 | 488 | 527 | 6.93* | Fosdick |
| I-5 | 304 | 292 | 378 | 390 | .85 | |

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$

df - 1

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF QUALIFIED AGAINST
NOT QUALIFIED INTENSIONAL TERMS

| CRITERIA | FOSDICK | | ROBERTS | | X ² | IN FAVOR OF |
|----------|------------|--------|------------|--------|----------------|-------------------|
| | Expected** | Actual | Expected** | Actual | | |
| I-1 Q*** | 118 | 162 | 102 | 58 | 42.31* | Fosdick |
| I-1 N | 592 | 548 | 511 | 555 | | |
| I-2 Q | 59 | 60 | 30 | 29 | N.S. | N.S. |
| I-2 N | 197 | 196 | 103 | 104 | | |
| I-4 Q | 70 | 99 | 90 | 61 | 25.92* | Fosdick |
| I-4 N | 383 | 354 | 498 | 527 | | |
| I-5 Q | 71 | 90 | 84 | 65 | 11.84* | Fosdick |
| I-5 N | 311 | 292 | 371 | 390 | | |

df - 1

* $p < .001$

** Expected figures rounded to nearest whole number.

*** Q = Qualified, N = Not qualified.

1. In a general count Fosdick used significantly more extensional types relative to total words used than Roberts did ($p < .001$).

2. Breaking this general tabulation down into the specific criteria (see Table III) reveals that Fosdick also exceeded Roberts in each separate category.

3. Conditional language (E-3) contributed most heavily to the total extensional count of both men. At the same time they differed most in their use of comparative terms (E-1), and agreed most in their use of quantifying symbols (E-2).

4. While the men differed significantly in their usage of extensional language, in a general way they tended to load their sermons quantitatively with the same kinds of terms. Thus, both used conditional terms (E-3) frequently, but consciousness of projection terms (E-4) infrequently. The remaining categories showed similar loading.

TABLE III
COMPARISON OF FOSDICK AND ROBERTS AS TO FREQUENCY
OF USAGE OF EXTENSIONAL TERMS AGAINST
TOTAL WORDS USED

| CRITERION | TOTAL NUMBER OF TERMS INVOLVED | | | | X ² | IN FAVOR OF |
|-----------|--------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|----------------|-------------------|
| | FOSDICK 32,279 words | | ROBERTS 40,159 words | | | |
| | Expected | Actual | Expected | Actual | | |
| E-1 | 285 | 381 | 354 | 258 | 59.21** | Fosdick |
| E-2 | 383 | 433 | 490 | 450 | 7.25* | Fosdick |
| E-3 | 492 | 564 | 611 | 539 | 19.60** | Fosdick |
| E-4 | 31 | 53 | 39 | 17 | 27.53** | Fosdick |
| E-5 | 182 | 236 | 226 | 172 | 29.30** | Fosdick |

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

df - 1

CONCLUSIONS

In light of the above study certain conclusions appear to be valid.

In the first place the analysis indicates that high verbal extensionality is not necessarily accompanied by low verbal intensionality or *vice versa*.

This allows for the possibility that a man having avowedly more liberal orientation and superior personal accomplishments like those reported may use more intensional language than one whose orientation is more conservative and whose personal accomplishments may be less. These factors do not protect one from an excessive use of over-generalizations and superlatives.

Again, the use of intensional language was less consistent on the part of both men than their use of extensional. This might suggest that less certainty of evaluation should be attached to certain types of intensional language than to others and to extensional types where consistency was high. Thus, while the men differed significantly in their use of "allnesses" (I-1), superlatives (I-2) and the various extensional types, they tended to predicate values (I-5) in about the same amount. From this we might conclude that "is" of predication (I-5) and, to a lesser degree, "is" of identification (I-4) are more characteristic of normative human language, while "allnesses" (I-1) and superlatives (I-2) are more characteristic of extremes of human verbalism.

The results of the intensional language analysis suggest that a man may use certain of these types excessively and other types moderately or normally.

Then, Fosdick's habit of qualifying his intensional statements more often than Roberts did might indicate that frequent use of "allnesses" (I-1) tends to produce a caution which leads a speaker to offset this extremity by qualification.

Finally, the results of the study indicated that a man of liberal orientation may use more extensional terminology than one whose personal orientation is more conservative. This phase of the study also correlated favorably with Fosdick's more frequent use of qualified intensional language. At the same time it tended to dramatize the contradictory nature of his more frequent use of intensional language.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Caution should be exercised in making broad generalizations from this analysis. The limited number of speakers studied would tend to limit the conclusions accordingly. As a result of this and other factors brought to light by the investigation, certain areas of further research appeared.

For example, more extensive investigation of this kind is needed to determine more precisely the relationship between intensionality and extensionality. This approach would seek to discover how often high verbal extensionality is accompanied by high intensionality or *vice versa*, or whether a converse relationship can be expected.

Such a study could provide new and broader information if it were performed on the speeches of varying kinds of professional men. A comparison of scientists with preachers, or actors with college professors, or politicians with philosophers, for example, could provide information that would help test the validity of the criteria as well as provide clues to the verbal habits of various groups.

Similar approaches analyzing different kinds of literature, such as radio and TV commercials, scientific reports, novels, presidential speeches, textbook material, personal correspondence, might reveal human tendencies as controlled by communication needs and purposes.

A second avenue of research suggested by this study has to do with further refinement of the present criteria and continued search for

further types. Investigation into the possibility of other types of "allness" terminology than those used in the present analysis would be helpful. Thus, we should ask how much "allness" is represented in negative terms, past tenses, and imperative language.

This aspect of research leads us to suggest further investigation into the nature and definition of two-valued and other forms of dichotomous language with their "allness" implications. This criterion appears to be a vital intensional factor but until it is more carefully and precisely defined its usefulness in analysis will remain limited.

Furthermore, continued investigation concerning the intensional character of the "is" of predication is needed. The present study indicated that while Fosdick and Roberts differed significantly in their use of the other criteria, both tended to predicate values in about the same amount. Such results may indicate that "is" of predication is a decidedly normal, if not healthy, verbal pattern. If this is true, the conclusion would tend to agree with the findings of Busemann¹⁶ and Boder.¹⁷ Busemann, in 1925, presented evidence indicating that the relative frequency of verbs and adjectives in children was closely related to what he termed emotional stability. Thus, he found that a relative increase in the number of verbs was accompanied by an increase in emotional instability as rated by the children's teachers. An increase in the adjectives was noted in those rated more stable.

Boder adopted Busemann's method with some slight changes and used it to analyze the words of certain American writers representing the fields of drama, law, fiction, and science. His results revealed that the number of adjectives per hundred verbs was least in drama, slightly more in legal material, significantly greater in fiction, and highest in scientific writing. Such findings as these indicate the need for further experimentation with the "is" of predication and other uses of the adjective.

Finally, a search for a set of criteria which can measure the relationship between abstract and concrete terminology as indicators of intensionality-extensionality is needed. An equally effective set of criteria is needed to measure the relationship of vocal and bodily factors to intensional-extensional language.

Communication is a complex form of human activity. Perhaps one of the most significant contributions to a clearer understanding and more effective use of it has come in recent times from the general semanticists. Because of this the need for testing their hypotheses by careful analysis is paramount. It is hoped that these findings will open up a greater area of such investigation.

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16. A. Busemann, *Die Sprache der Jugend als Ausdruck der Entwicklungs-rhythmie* (Jena: Fischer, 1925).
17. D. P. Boder, "The Adjective-Verb Quotient; A Contribution to the Psychology of Language," *The Psychological Record*, III (1940), pp. 310-343.