The Concept of FEAR in the Bible:
Two conceptual studies from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective

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Abstract

It is told that there are 366 instances of different forms of "do not be afraid" in the Bible, one for every day of the year including leap years. It sounds like a nice thought; however, proving it would probably require a lot of time. Nevertheless, fear is a recurring topic in the Bible and can be interpreted in many different ways. The Bible is with no doubt a huge source of knowledge for Christians in the world. One might think that proper translations from the original languages, Hebrew, some Aramaic and Greek, are in order for every Christian to understand its content without any confusion.

The question for this essay is therefore whether the 21st century Catholic conceptualisation of FEAR is different from the 21st century Protestant one; furthermore, if the 17th century conceptualisation is different in comparison with the one of the 21st century.

The results were analysed using two statistical models in R: Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Logistic Regression. They showed that the conceptualisations of FEAR in two contemporary translations of the Bible, i.e. Catholic Public Domain Version (CPDV) and the English Standard Version (ESV), are widely different, while the conceptualisations of FEAR in two Protestant translations with almost 400 years’ difference in age, i.e. King James’ Version (KJV) and ESV, are practically the same.
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1. Introduction

There are two questions for this study. The first question is whether the conceptualisation of fear in a Catholic contemporary translation of the Bible is different from the conceptualisation of FEAR in a Protestant contemporary translation. The second question is whether the conceptualisation of FEAR has changed in Protestant translations of the Bible during these last 400 years.

The main reason for doing this study is the fact that the Bible is one of the most, if not the most, fundamental source of knowledge in Christianity. Countless people have seen this book as law, and even died over it. For this, one might think that a properly translated Bible would be in order for every Christian to understand and make his or her own interpretation of its content.

This has been made possible with the method of corpus-based Cognitive Linguistics. YouVersion’s Bible database (see References) has been a primary source in order to find examples including the lemmas fear and/or afraid. Definitions of fear have had an essential part in this study in order to interpret the lemma(s) fear and/or afraid. For example, terror and reverence do not necessarily have the same meaning, but are in some cases still conceptualised as FEAR.

2. Background

The term Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1987) refers to the branch of linguistics that interprets language in terms of the concepts. Cognitive linguists claim that knowledge of language originates from the use and not from the rules of language. Furthermore, cognitive linguists deny that the mind has any unit for language-acquisition that is unique and independent. This branch is relatively modern and emerged in the 1970s as dissatisfaction developed with the dominant formal approaches to language. It is closely related to other cognitive sciences, for example cognitive psychology.

The Cognitive Linguistics branch does not constitute a single researched theory, as other linguistics branches do, and is therefore best described as a ‘movement’ or an ‘enterprise’ (Evans et al. 2007).

When examining emotions in terms of the concepts, as this research attempts to do with FEAR, it is usually done by focusing on the way these emotions are expressed in and through language (Kővecses 1990).
Furthermore, Wierzbicka (1972) questioned the mere possibility to define emotions such as fear, joy, sorrow, admiration etc. in a purely semantic way, without including feelings. It is challenging, and perhaps not even possible to define FEAR as something felt in exactly the same way by everybody.

3. Method

3.1. Material and procedure

The material used in this study consists of Bible verses gathered from YouVersion’s Bible database, where it is possible to filter the search depending on what version of the Bible one wants to inquire into. From there, all the Bible verses containing the lemmas mentioned in the introduction were selected from the three versions of the Bible. The three different versions of the Bible that were looked at were as follows: firstly, King James’ Version (KJV) published in 1611; secondly, the English Standard Version (ESV) published in 2001; thirdly and finally, the Catholic Public Domain Version (CPDV) published in 2009.

Furthermore, all the Bible verses that contain the lemmas fear and/or afraid from the three versions were added, 25 verses at a time, into a text file in the text editor TextWrangler. This was done in order to remove all the formatting that automatically follows when something is copied from the Internet. Afterwards, chunks of about 30 examples were added in Microsoft Word documents, where the advanced search function was used to highlight the lemma(s) in red and adjust the tabs. This was firstly done to make Verse, Bible and Example fall in the same line and so, make everything more clear; and secondly to ease the work in the final step of the data gathering process, i.e. add all of the data in a Microsoft Excel document.

After inserting the data in Excel, the Excel Document was supplied with a column with the name of the verse, another column with the particular Bible version, a third column showing from which testament the verse is from, a fourth with the content of the verse and a fifth with the lemma used in the verse. The data was then manually looked through to find all the CPDV and ESV verses that were different in translation and afterwards copied and pasted into another sheet. In this state, the sheet was supplied with a column with the name of the verse, another column with the CPDV example, a third column with the ESV example, a third with the Translation
Option, TransOpt i.e. Catholic or Protestant, a fourth with the testament, a fifth with the lexeme and finally a sixth with the lemma. The rest of the coding scheme looks as follows: ‘Axiology’, ‘Definition’, ‘Replacement’, ‘Word class’, ‘Main verb’, ‘Polarity’, ‘Cause’, ‘AgentSingPl’ i.e. Agent Singular or Plural, ‘Agent’, ‘ExperiencerSingPl’ i.e. Experiencer Singular or Plural, ‘Metonymy’, ‘KövescesMetaphor’ and ‘SirvydeMetaphor’. These will be further described in the next section.

After coding this, the focus was moved to the second stage of the coding, i.e. doing practically the same thing for KJV and ESV. All the KJV and ESV verses that are different in translation were added into a new sheet. Only here, the TransOpt column was renamed Period and the CPDV column was renamed KJV. Otherwise the coding scheme in the 17th versus 21st Centuries sheet looked the same as in the Catholic versus Protestant sheet.

3.2. Problem areas

These following paragraphs will focus on what was time consuming or difficult during the procedure of gathering data.

The main issue was that gathering data took an extensive amount of time, partly because most of it had to be done manually. The YouVersion Bible website only displays 25 verses per page, and it was not possible to adjust the amount shown per page. This required a great deal of copying and pasting, especially since there were three Bible versions to go through twice each, once for fear and once for afraid, and further delayed the process.

Moreover, when trying to add the data in Microsoft Word the software crashed several times. The conclusion from the consequences of doing so resulted in adding chunks of about 30 verses into Word, opening a new document for every chunk, and finally adding each chunk in the Excel document. In the end there were almost 2000 verses copied into the first Excel sheet.

It also took an extensive amount of energy to search through these 2000 verses to find the ones that were different in translation, copying them and pasting them, one at a time, into another Excel sheet. Furthermore, going back to the YouVersion Bible website and find the verse without the lemma fear or afraid, copying it into TextWrangler and finally copying it into the empty verse column also took a great deal of time and energy. The most frustrating part was when the verse not supposed to contain the lemma fear or afraid, did, and still had not been included in the initial
collection of Bible verses. Therefore, all the effort in copying the examples with *fear* or *afraid* was for nothing. This concludes that there are some problems with the YouVersion Bible website, and maybe it would have been useful to use another website.

At the end of the data gathering, there turned out to be only 167 verses different in translation considering the Catholic versus Protestant Bibles, and only 145 verses different in translation considering 17th versus 21st Centuries Bibles, which meant that I could only code 312 verses for this study.

4. Analysis

4.1. Catholic versus Protestant

4.1.01. Operationalizing the coding scheme

After inserting the verses in Excel it was time to organise a coding schema for the analysis. The point with it was to help answering the essay questions; however, in the beginning I was not quite sure what the questions were. After a couple of advisory meetings with my supervisor, it was concluded that noting what definition *fear* or *afraid* had was essential and crucial for the questions to be answered. With that, the inspiration started flowing and eventually, a complete coding scheme was created.

Some of the categories were included not necessarily to answer my question, but simply to clear things up and encourage deeper analysis of the Bible verses. These categories include for example Replacement, Main verb and two Metaphor columns.

When the coding of all the verses was complete, the data was reorganised and spelling mistakes were corrected. This was easily accomplished through a command in the statistical software R where an overview of the loaded data could be accessed to check the features of each column. By doing this, it was easy to see what could be adjusted, how many of each feature there were and if it was possible to push some of the features together.

Below is presented a deeper description of the coding scheme, including short descriptions of most of the features and why they were considered important for the analysis and the results.
4.1.02. TransOpt

This variable, abbreviation of Translation Option, stated in which Bible translation the lemma occurs. This was the crucial variable for this state of the study and consists of two features: ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’.

4.1.03. Testament

This column was used to keep track of the verses and which testament they originate from. It was kept to test if the conceptualisation of FEAR would be different depending on testament. The two options were carried out as ‘OT’ and ‘NT’, Old Testament and New Testament.

4.1.04. Lexeme

In a few cases, fear or afraid were not the only words occurring in the verses. Instead, a few verses contained fearful and even more uncommonly, fearfully. That is why there is one column with Lexeme and one with Lemma.

4.1.05. Lemma

The Lemma option consists of the two words that were keywords in the initial search, namely fear and afraid.

4.1.06. Axiology

This category is very subjective and was interpreted with the help of imagination. It consisted of the features ‘Positive’, written as ‘pos’; ‘Neutral’, written as ‘neut’; and ‘Negative’, written as ‘neg’. Axiology was interpreted in what kind of ring the context of the verse had to it and sometimes needed a larger context for it to be analysed in a proper way.

4.1.07. Definition

This column was one of the most essential features in this study. This is also subjective and interpreted with imagination as well as with help from the Replacement category (see 4.1.08). Its aim was to set some sort of perspective on the verses. It consisted of the following eight features:

(1)

a. And he took Peter, and James, and John with him. And he began to be afraid and wearied. (Anxiety)

b. And astonishment took hold of everyone, and they were magnifying God. And they were filled with fear, saying: “For we have seen miracles today.” (Awe)

c. Accomplish my precepts, and observe my judgments, and complete them, so that you may be able to live in the land without any fear, (Danger)

d. And so, when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty stadia, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near to the boat, and they were afraid. (Dread)

e. Yet truly, each and every one of you should love his wife as himself. And a wife should fear her husband. (Respect)

f. Observe my Sabbaths, and be fearful toward my Sanctuary. I am the Lord. (Reverence)

g. Because of this, you are surrounded by traps, and unexpected fears will disturb you. (Terror)

h. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. (Threat)

4.1.08. Replacement

The Replacement column was basically there to show what the missing lexeme was replaced with in the verses without fear or afraid. However, it proved to be out of importance for the study in particular, with 64 replacements and 35 of these only occurring once. It did clarify the data and was not time consuming to note.

4.1.09. Word class

The Word class category was used to state what word class the lexeme had. It consisted of the features ‘Noun’, ‘Verb’, ‘Adjective’ and, extremely rarely, ‘Adverb’. It was kept in case the noun fear would collide with the verb fear. An example of each feature is presented below.
(2)

a. And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. (Noun)
b. You shall not fear them, for the Lord your God is in your midst: a great and terrible God. (Verb)
c. Then, while they were talking about these things, Jesus stood in their midst, And he said to them: "Peace be with you. It is I. Do not be afraid." (Adjective)
d. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. (Adverb)

In the few verses with a passive or neutral voice I chose to keep the lexemes as verbs, basically for consistency.

4.1.10. Main verb

This category was, like Replacement, out of importance considering the study per se, but cleared things up and encouraged deeper analysis into each of the verses. It stated the main verb of the FEAR clause.

4.1.11. Polarity

The Polarity column was used to state whether there was fear involved or not. The cases where fear was present, the feature noted was ‘pos’ and in the verses where fear was absent, ‘neg’ was noted.

4.1.12. Cause

The Cause column indicated what element caused the fear in the verse. Deeper context was in most cases needed and it was a tough question to answer. In the end it had the following ten features: ‘Danger’, ‘Death’, ‘Destruction’, ‘Greatness’, ‘Inferiority’, ‘Judgment’, ‘Punishment’, ‘Respect’, ‘Threat’ and ‘Vision’. ‘Greatness’ was often used in a positive sense, for example when the definition of the word was ‘Awe’ or ‘Reverence’.
4.1.13. AgentSingPl

This column was added as there were too many specifications in the Agent category. It simply showed whether the agent was singular or plural. The features here were ‘Sing’ and ‘Pl’.

4.1.14. Agent

Agent stated who or what was behind the fear in the verse. At first, the specific agent behind the fear was noted, but as the amount of these grew they were eventually narrowed down to the following seven features: ‘BiblicalBaddie’, ‘BiblicalGoodie’, ‘God’, ‘Human’, ‘King’, ‘People’ and ‘Thing’. ‘BiblicalBaddie’ included Pharaohs and people doing awful things to people that had done nothing wrong, whilst ‘BiblicalGoodie’ included prophets, including Jesus, and people from the Bible considered pious, for example Joseph. ‘Human’ included specified people as well as unspecified people. ‘People’ stated nations and tribes such as Egypt and Judeans. One example of each feature is presented below.

(3)

a. And when it had become light on the next day, Pashhur led Jeremiah from the stocks. And Jeremiah said to him: “The Lord has not called your name: ‘Pashhur,’ but instead: ‘Fear all around.’” (BiblicalBaddie)

b. Then, while they were talking about these things, Jesus stood in their midst, And he said to them: “Peace be with you. It is I. Do not be afraid.” (BiblicalGoodie)

c. I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent. (God)

d. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and meek, but also to the unruly. (Human)

e. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. (King)

f. because I stood in great fear of the multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and did not go out of doors— (People)

g. then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die. (Thing)
4.1.15. ExperiencerSingPl

This category specified, like AgentSingPl, whether the experiencer was singular or plural. This was done simply to narrow down the specifications in the Experiencer category. The features were ‘Sing’ and ‘Pl’.

4.1.16. Experiencer

The Experiencer column stated who or what experienced the fear. At first, the specific person or thing was noted; however, as these grew in number they were eventually narrowed down to these following seven features: ‘BiblicalBaddie’, ‘BiblicalGoodie’, ‘Human’, ‘King’, ‘People’, ‘Place’ and ‘Thing’. One example of each feature will be presented below.

(4)

a. And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him. (BiblicalBaddie)
b. My spirit was terrified. I, Daniel, was fearful at these things, and the visions of my head disturbed me. (BiblicalGoodie)
c. And so, when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty stadia, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near to the boat, and they were afraid. (Human)
d. King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest I be handed over to them and they deal cruelly with me." (King)
e. And they will be afraid and confounded over Ethiopia, their hope, and Egypt, their glory. (People)
f. Wail, O gate; cry out, O city; melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you! For smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks. (Place)
g. a lion, the strongest of beasts, who fears nothing that he meets, (Thing)

4.1.17. Metonymy

This column was inserted to keep track of metonymies in the verses. The most common one was ‘tremble’ and occurred in five of the verses.
Another was ‘struck’ with three verses. The third one was ‘melt’ with two verses.

4.1.18. KövecsesMetaphor

KövecsesMetaphor was inspired by the different metaphors in Emotion Concepts (Kövecses 1990) and stated them. These were just interesting to look at; however, there were too few of them and could not be used in the results of the analysis.

4.1.19. SirvydeMetaphor

The last column was created in inspiration by the article Facing Fear: A Corpus-based Approach to Fear Metaphors in English and Lithuanian (Sirvyde 2006). It stated the different types of metaphors in the article. They were in some ways similar to Kövecses’ metaphors but did have some differences passim which was interesting.

4.2. 17th versus 21st Centuries

4.2.01. Operationalizing the coding scheme

Due to the fact that the questions were similar it was decided that the original coding scheme for the Catholic versus Protestant part of the essay was to be the coding scheme for this part as well. Only, the TransOpt column in Catholic versus Protestant was renamed Period to keep them apart and not get confused.

4.2.02. Period

This indicated which century the translation including fear or afraid was from. It was crucial in order to investigate whether the conceptualisation of FEAR had changed during the 400 years that were in between. The features used in Period were ‘KJV’, meaning 17th century as it was published in 1611; and ‘ESV’, meaning 21st century as it was published in 2001.
5. Results

The results were obtained using two statistical techniques in R. The first, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), was used for discovering any patterns of correlations between the different factors of the verses. The second one, Logistic Regression, showed the predictability of the results and stated its accuracy.

The following sections present the results considered most important for this study, which implicate one MCA plot and four models of Logistic Regression, two for each part of the study. An enlarged copy of the plot is available in the appendix section.

5.1. Catholic versus Protestant

5.1.01. Multiple Correspondence Analysis


As can be seen below, BiblicalBaddie and Danger are clearly connected; as are Anxiety and Human. God and BiblicalGoodie are connected to Reverence, but also to Awe and Terror. Moreover, Protestant seems to be more closely connected to Dread, Reverence and Terror, while Catholic definitions are more related to Respect, Awe, Threat and Anxiety. The Protestant Bible seems to have People as agents and the agents of the Catholic Bible appear to be slightly more connected to King and BiblicalBaddie.
The fact that Reverence is closely connected to God and BiblicalGoodie is not much of a surprise. In the cases where God is the agent, the experiencer either fears some kind of punishment, or perceives some kind of greatness done by God and so, venerates God.

Moreover, BiblicalBaddie and Danger, as well ad BiblicalBaddie and Threat, are connected mainly because BiblicalBaddie causes danger or threat and so, makes the Experiencer experience the fear.

One might assume that Awe and Reverence are close in meaning; however, Catholic and Protestant Bibles do not use them in the same manner. As can be seen in the plot, Awe is clearly more connected to Catholic than it is to Protestant. Reverence, however, is closer to Protestant but almost as close to Catholic. In conclusion, it can clearly be seen that the two translations use different definitions of fear.
5.1.02. Logistic Regression

The next model compares the two Bible versions Catholic and Protestant and predict the outcome of the study. Below is a Generalised Linear Model, GLM, with TransOpt and its features ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ as a response variable to the features in the left column. These are used to predict the probability of each word’s property in relation to them.

The asterisks to the right show the statistical significance of a particular result, with the number next to it indicating a percentage of the probability of achieving the same result if repeated. The more asterisks the closer to zero the percentage value is. This increases the significance.

Table 1. Catholic versus Protestant
Call:
glm(formula = TransOpt ~ Testament + Definition, family = "binomial",
data = dataframe)

Coefficients:

|                      | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|----------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)          | -1.38450 | 0.51128    | -2.708  | 0.00677  **|
| TestamentOT          | 1.00837  | 0.44036    | 2.290   | 0.02203  * |
| DefinitionAwe        | -0.07524 | 0.61976    | -0.121  | 0.90337  |
| DefinitionDanger     | -1.70331 | 1.11994    | -1.521  | 0.12828  |
| DefinitionDread      | 1.34458  | 0.51572    | 2.607   | 0.00913  **|
| DefinitionRespect    | -0.20467 | 0.78126    | -0.262  | 0.79334  |
| DefinitionReverence  | 0.64869  | 0.59961    | 1.082   | 0.27931  |
| DefinitionTerror     | 0.88529  | 0.50779    | 1.743   | 0.08126  .|
| DefinitionThreat     | -1.62463 | 1.12136    | -1.449  | 0.14739  |

Signif. codes: 0 ‘***’ 0.001 ‘**’ 0.01 ‘*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1

(Dispersion parameter for binomial family taken to be 1)

Null deviance: 229.78 on 166 degrees of freedom
Residual deviance: 200.87 on 158 degrees of freedom
AIC: 218.87

Number of Fisher Scoring iterations: 4

Catholic: 92
Protestant: 75
R2: 0.197
C: 0.718

As can be seen above, three features are significant in this Logistic Regression model. Negative numbers predict use in the Catholic version of the Bible and positive numbers predict use in the Protestant Bible. Seeing as the features significant in this model are marked with positive Estimate
numbers, it is concluded that this model predicts use only in the Protestant Bible, i.e. ESV.

As can be seen in the two last lines of the model, the $R^2$ score is 0.197, which is just below the $R^2$ score limit of 0.2 to be an extrapolative model for the study. The C score is 0.718, which also is below the C score limit of 0.8 to be a predictive model for the study. This, however, has no relevance for this particular study but should be displayed nonetheless.

5.2. 17th versus 21st Centuries

5.2.01. Multiple Correspondence Analysis

When doing MCAs on this topic it turned out being of no importance and very difficult. The main reason for this is data sparseness and the fact that it would be unwise to remove the verses with the fewest features. That is why there is no MCA plot on this part of the study.

5.2.02. Logistic Regression

Table 2. 17th versus 21st Centuries

Call:
  glm(formula = Period ~ Testament + Definition + Experiencer,
      family = "binomial", data = dataframe)

Coefficients:
                   Estimate  Std. Error z value Pr(>|z|)
(Intercept)     17.5577     2749.6617   0.006    0.9949
TestamentOT    -0.3259    0.7001 -0.465    0.6416
DefinitionAwe   2.2176     1.2029  1.843    0.0653 .
DefinitionDread  0.7299     0.6689  1.091    0.2751
DefinitionRespect 1.0990    1.3896  0.839    0.4013
DefinitionReverence 17.4623   1758.1270  0.010    0.9921
DefinitionTerror  1.4955     0.6916  2.162    0.0306 *
DefinitionThreat 17.1936    2792.3601  0.006    0.9951
ExperiencerBiblicalGoodie -16.7196   2749.6617 -0.006    0.9991
ExperiencerHuman  -17.3142   2749.6617 -0.006    0.9950
ExperiencerKing   -16.6864   2749.6617 -0.006    0.9952
ExperiencerPeople  -17.3729   2749.6617 -0.006    0.9950
ExperiencerPlace -16.7234   2749.6618 -0.006    0.9991
ExperiencerThing   -0.2271   3317.6313  0.000    0.9999
---
Signif. codes:  0 ‘***’ 0.001 ‘**’ 0.01 ‘*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1

(Dispersion parameter for binomial family taken to be 1)

Null deviance: 147.85  on 144  degrees of freedom
Residual deviance: 133.29  on 131  degrees of freedom
Comparing the 17th century conceptualisation of FEAR with the one of the 21st century, it is slowly revealed that FEAR in Protestantism has not changed during these last 400 years. Two of the features in the Logistic Regression are to some extent significant, namely the definition of Awe and the definition of Terror. Both of these features predict use in KJV, i.e. the Bible version published in the 17th century. This is indicated with the positive numbers below Estimate. Negative numbers predict use in ESV whilst positive numbers predict use in KJV.

When looking at the features less significant, or not significant at all, it can be seen that none of the Definition features predict use in ESV. This shows that the definitions shown in this study is only used in the 21st century Bible, ESV, and not in KJV. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the word fear, as we know it today, has narrowed in meaning and only represents a small part of the concept of FEAR. The rest of the concept has been replaced with other, perhaps new, definitions and so, is described in different manners than it was 400 years ago. Terror and Awe would in most cases be considered two different emotions. Even so, they would, in the 17th century at least, be considered the very same emotion. This is clear from the use of the word fear in the KJV.

In this model the R2 score is 0.149 and the C score is 0.69. This means that this model is not predictive of the overall outcome.

6. Discussion

6.1. Catholic versus Protestant

Considering the fact that the Bible should be amongst some of the most carefully translated works in history it is worrying that there is such difference between the two translations, even though they both were published in the 21st century; even within the same decade. The C score of 0.718 is statistically normal but disturbingly high. The higher the C score is, the more predictive the model is. This model should not be as predictive
as it is; in other words, these translations of the Bible are poorly translated. The conceptualisation of FEAR should be the same in the two versions. Catholics and Protestants should have the same qualifications to read the Bible and understand its full content.

One of the reasons for this result might be the fact that there is still some sort of hierarchy left in the Catholic Church, at least one more definite than the hierarchy in the Protestant Church. Even though the Catholic Church did give up on the Vulgate being completely in Latin and only the savants being educated to read and understand the Bible, perhaps there is some kind of protest here. Every person nowadays can get hold of a Bible and interpret its content in their own way; this is maybe, for some, a problem. The fact is in fact, that only priests are allowed to preach the Word of God in the Catholic Church, and priests are on a holy mission from God. They may, in a way, be considered closer to God than average people. Therefore, should only priests be privileged to fully understand the content of the Bible?

Another reason for the result being as it is, can be the cultural difference between Catholics and Protestants. Today, there are about 100 female priests in the Catholic Church, but it is still in some circuits frowned upon by the Vatican (Levitt 2012). There is hierarchy not only in the church, but also in the families. Ephesians 5:33 say in CPDV: “Yet truly, each and every one of you should love his wife as himself. And a wife should fear her husband.” In ESV, the meaning is different: “However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” The meaning of the word has changed completely.

6.2. 17th versus 21st Centuries

The conceptualisation of FEAR between the 17th and 21st centuries seems to not have changed at all. But it does seem as if FEAR has grown less polysemous, i.e. lost meanings, during these four centuries. The Hebrew word for fear has many different forms, although they will not be presented here with the risk of being completely inaccurate. The fact remains: FEAR has had many meanings but is not interpreted in the same way today as it may have been 400 years ago. Terror and awe may have been similar in meaning but the semantic change has made the meaning radically different from the original meaning.

In the end, the two emotions, if felt, are alike. If each of the two emotions would be described with an interjection, the interjection describing Terror would be somewhat close to “Aaah!” and the one
describing Awe would be “Wow!” Perhaps this, the personal experience when exposed to the emotion, is the only difference in meaning that can be found. After all, people of the 17th century are as much people as people of the 21st century. Only, today we are allowed to feel precisely whatever we want, at least more openly than what was expressed four centuries ago. That is peradventure why there are 115 different instances of fear or afraid in KJV and only 30 in the ESV; in ESV new definitions of fear have been used.

7. Summary

The aim of this study was to state whether the conceptualisation of FEAR is different considering two branches of the same religion; and also, two centuries in the same branch. This was accomplished by comparing two contemporary Bible versions from two big branches of Christianity, and two protestant Bible versions from two different centuries.

The results were analysed with the help of the statistical software R. It showed that the conceptualisation of FEAR in the Catholic version of the Bible is very much different from the conceptualisation of FEAR in the Protestant version of the Bible. These versions are both more or less contemporary and were both published in the 21st century. Still, the conceptualisation is distinctly different between the versions, and it should not be so. If the versions would be properly translated, there would not be such a difference between the translations.

The reason for this result might be the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, and the less hierarchical structure of the Protestant Church. There is a culture difference, one stating that women are of lower standard than men. It is the woman that should ‘fear’ her husband, and not the other way around (Ephesians 5:33, CPDV). In the same verse, the ESV simply states that the wife should ‘respect’ her husband, and that has, in my opinion, a completely different ring to it.

The results for the second part of the study showed that the conceptualisation of FEAR has practically been the same since 1611 and the King James’ Version being published. Two definitions were significant in this part of the study: Awe and Terror. Both of these definitions predicted use in KJV. This probably just means that FEAR as a concept has different meanings; in other words, stayed polysemous. The only difference is that ESV has chosen to use other definitions of fear, such as awe, respect, anxiety and terror. The vocabulary has increased, so to speak.
Fear was polysemous even in the 17th century, and still is. However, other words are today used to make the context and content easier to understand. A person born in the 20th century would not necessarily know that fear not only means ‘fear’, but also ‘respect’ and ‘reverence’. The meaning of fear has become broader. It has become more important to state what kind of fear there is in the context; a fear that makes one want to run away screaming, or a fear that makes one want to stay and witness.
References


