

EMOTION IN DISCOURSE

J. Lachlan Mackenzie and Laura Alba-Juez, eds.
Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2019

BRIAN MOTT

Universidad de Barcelona
mott@ub.edu

125

The book here reviewed includes contributions to a research project (EMO-FUNDETT Excellence Project) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO), together with some invited additions from the “International Conference on Language and Emotion”, held at UNED in Madrid in November 2016. The publication fits admirably into Benjamins’ *Pragmatics and Beyond New Series*.

In their introduction (which is, in fact, Chapter 1, “Emotion processes in discourse”), the authors provide a complete survey of earlier studies of emotion in discourse, which has long been neglected, present their own functional, discursive approach to the topic, and summarize the content of the four sections into which the book is divided.

They begin by establishing that emotive functions are not merely conveyed through intonation and the lexicon, but in fact permeate the whole of grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics). We are introduced to the term ‘affect’ (i.e. the emotion associated with an idea) (3), and also the phrase ‘emotional turn’ (i.e. the recent trend of focussing on emotion in language) (4). The authors point out that one of the main research questions motivating their new work is the demarcation of the difference between the emotive function of language and the evaluative function (8), a challenging undertaking due to a lack of consensus among scholars on the use of terms such as ‘appraisal’, ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’ (14-15).

Section I contains chapters 2–6. They deal with the interlacing of emotion with linguistic structures and language in interaction. Section II contains chapters 7–9, which offer examples of emotion in real, everyday situations. Section III contains chapters 10–12. These discuss the interaction of emotional intelligence and pragmatic competence. Section IV contains chapters 13 and 14, which look at the effect of emotion in different discourse types (journalism and scientific writing).

Chapter 2, “The multifunctionality of swear/taboo words in television series” by Monika Bednarek, draws on transcriptions of dialogues from 66 contemporary US TV series recorded in the *Sydney Corpus of Television Dialogue*. The semantics and pragmatics of swear words and classification into types receives full coverage, but it is perhaps going too far to say that “their use is often not ‘gratuitous’” (49), particularly in view of Wharton’s (2016) contention that expressives contribute nothing to the truth conditions of an utterance and any meaning that they might have is independent of context. Very often, repeated expletives fulfil a merely rhythmic function in the basically trochaic pattern of English (*ábsofúckinglútely*—the phonology of expletive insertion is explained in Hammond [1999: 161–167]), but there is little reference to rhythm in this article.

126

Chapter 3, “The syntax of an emotional expletive in English” by J. Lachlan Mackenzie, concentrates on the syntactic distribution of *fuck* and its inflected and derivative forms, which are “in themselves meaningless but ‘fill out’ the clause with an expression of emotion” (55). Numerous compounds are quoted (*fuckbag, fuckfest, eyefuck*), along with many blends (*fuckaholic, fuck-a-rama < panorama*), which reveal the productivity and versatility of the root. The actual positions occupied by *fucking* in the utterance, though subject to constraints, are very varied. As in Chapter 2, the metrical foot could have been invoked here: apart from Hammond (1999), McCarthy (1982), who is also cited by the author on another count (72n5), supports a phonological analysis, as does Smith (2020), who leaves no doubt as to the far-reaching role of the trochee in shaping nearly all the Germanic languages. The trochaic template can account for examples like “Get your-fucking-self out of here” (75), which Mackenzie marks as questionable, and obviates the need for numerous grammar-based rules.

Chapter 4, “Interjections and emotions: The case of *gosh*” by Angela Downing and Elena Martínez Caro, shows, with ample textual evidence, that *gosh* (< *God*), bleached of its original religious significance, functions as a pragmatic marker in present-day English. Far from being old-fashioned, *gosh* is still widely used, especially by women (89).

In Chapter 5, “Expressing emotions without emotional lexis”, Ruth Breeze and Manuel Casado-Velarde, in defiance of a universal conceptualization of emotion in language, support the idea that culture filters embodied experience. Good coverage

of the similarities and differences between English and Spanish metaphors is provided, though more could have been said about why there should be such differences as are mentioned. Occasionally the translations are slightly awkward (for example, pronominal *quemárase la sangre a alguien* cannot be even literally rendered as transitive “to set fire to someone’s blood” [126]).

Chapter 6, by Ad Foolen, investigates “The value of left and right”, i.e. the emotive value of these words and their equivalents in different languages. The article is particularly interesting for its recognition of the fact that the left-right spatial dimension appears to have some special status among image-schemata (145) and that so many cultures are right-biased in their evaluations of this polarization of concepts.

Section II starts with Chapter 7, “A cognitive pragmatics of the phatic Internet” by Francisco Yus, who, while endorsing the obvious conclusion that internet messages play a role in social bonding, also sets out to prove via the application of Relevance Theory that there is propositional content in this form of communication. Moreover, phatic communication itself is not just speaker-centred, but may produce phatic effects in the hearer if s/he infers phatic emotions beyond the sender’s intention (171). The study provides a plethora of terminology related to the different types of posts people send and lists no fewer than 16 cases or scenarios.

Salvatore Attardo’s contribution, “Humor and mirth: Emotions, embodied cognition, and sustained humor” (Chapter 8), upholds the philosophy ‘When you’re smiling, the whole world smiles with you’. Sustained humour may be extended over several conversational exchanges, rather like, it occurs to me, Beatrice and Benedick’s witty repartee in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The dichotomy marked-unmarked as applied to humour versus serious communication (191) seems a debatable, if not unnecessary, compartmentalization, but the author undertakes a thorough examination of the interaction of these two components of expression.

Nina-Maria Fronhofer rounds off this second section with her contribution “*My anger was justified surely?*” (Chapter 9), a study that examines the scalar concept of un-/certainty in the context referred to in the title, and finds that German narratives use twice as many ANGER lexemes as their British English counterparts (225). The results are exhaustively discussed and modestly presented as tentative.

Section III opens with a contribution by Laura Alba-Juez and Juan-Carlos Pérez-González, “Emotion and language ‘at work’” (Chapter 10), the expression *at work* being a pun on the meanings ‘in action’ and ‘at the workplace’. The terms ‘emotional intelligence’ and ‘pragmalinguistic competence’ are clearly explained (251-254), and there is reference to theories of (Im)politeness (256-257) before the authors expound their research methodology. A welcome inclusion among the rich bibliography is Daniel Goleman’s *Emotional Intelligence* (274).

Chapter 11, “The effects of linguistic proficiency, Trait Emotional Intelligence and in-group advantage on emotion recognition by British and American English L1 users” by Dewaele, Lorette and Petrides, discusses individual differences in emotion recognition ability, and comments that “[u]nsurprisingly, some people are better at recognizing emotions than others” (280), but “[i]ndividuals draw on different resources and combine different strategies in order to identify emotions” (294).

Chapter 12, by Miguel-Ángel Benítez-Castro and Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio, is a reappraisal of Martin and White’s AFFECT taxonomy (2005), concluding that ATTITUDE, which only applies to generalized contexts, needs replacing with a newly refined, “more psychologically inspired” (305) AFFECT category, subsuming EMOTION and OPINION, in order to capture more temporary, event-dependent instances (304). Convincing arguments for this are provided but, as the authors admit (327), arranging emotion into goal-seeking, goal-achievement and goal-relation types may still require some reconsideration. With regard to their attempt to weigh up the different import of *happy*, *glad*, *pleased* and *satisfied* (308), it should be remembered that there is a gap between language and cognition: different words and metaphors for the same emotion (e.g. *angry*, *boiling*) are conceptual resources with different discursive uses and deployment (Edwards 1999: 280). Do the verbs *affirm*, *declare*, *assert* and *aver* necessarily refer to different acts? (Cummins 2019: 204).

128

Section IV begins with Isabel Alonso Belmonte’s study of “Victims, heroes and villains in newsbites” (Chapter 13), an analysis of 139 newsbites from *El País*, concerning the Spanish eviction crisis. The main thrust of the paper is its allusion to the increasing subjectivity in journalistic practice, in particular in Spanish (and Italian) newspapers, as opposed to British ones, and how journalists cleverly elicit an emotional response from their readers.

The last contribution, “Promoemotional science?” by Carmen Sancho Guinda (Chapter 14), comments on the recent use of graphics in scientific papers. Despite its entertainment value, it is a serious, detailed account, outlining how the inclusion of graphics in science is part and parcel of the popularization of the area (361), which has been “evolving towards informality in the last half century” (362). “Scholars have stepped out of their ‘ivory towers’” (363), but pictures have a stronger emotional impact than words and may blur meaning (367). On the positive side, the author allows that “GAs [the graphical abstract genre] have been a step forward in the direction of science democratization” (379).

All the papers in this volume have been carefully researched and amply supported with extensive bibliographical references, and their quality is exactly what we would expect from a selection made by McKenzie and Alba-Juez, whose excellent editing appears to have left only two slips in the whole book: *reminder* = *remainder* (43, end of first paragraph); *to which extend* = *to what extent* (221n5). There is no doubt in my mind that this volume is an extremely valuable addition to its field.

Works Cited

- CUMMINS, Chris. 2019. *Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P.
- EDWARDS, Derek. 1999. "Emotion Discourse." *Culture & Psychology* 5 (3): 271-291.
- HAMMOND, Michael. 1999. *The Phonology of English: A Prosodic Optimality-Theoretic Approach*. Oxford and New York: Oxford U.P.
- MARTIN, James R. and Peter R.R. WHITE. 2005. *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCARTHY, John J. 1982. "Prosodic Structure and Expletive Infixation." *Language* 58 (3): 574-590.
- SMITH, Laura Catharine. 2020. "The Role of Foot Structure in Germanic." In Putnam, Michael T. and B. Richard Page (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Germanic Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.: 49-72.
- WHARTON, Tim. 2016. "That Bloody So-and-So Has Retired: Expressives Revisited." *Lingua* 175-176: 20-35.