

Introduction

From Logos to Dialogue

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Emotion in Language: Theory - research - application

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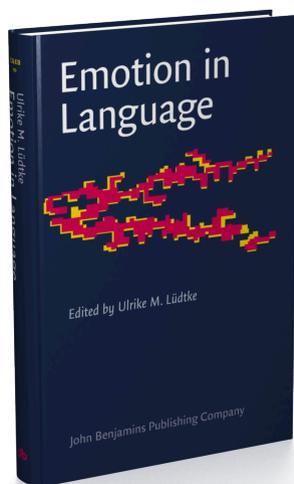
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Introduction

From logos to dialogue

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This book is inspired by many years of pedagogic and therapeutic work with children and adults in preschool, school and clinical settings. The miracle of language development and the joy of expressive language on the one hand and the vulnerability of language and the sorrow and grief caused by its distortion or even loss on the other opened my eyes to the inseparability of emotion and language. Even though I had just been part of the editing team for *Moving Ourselves, Moving Others: Motion and Emotion in Intersubjectivity, Consciousness and Language* (2012), I felt there was a strong need for an interdisciplinary volume focusing exclusively on the enormous importance of emotion in language. Even though the so-called “emotional turn” was sparking more and more interest among linguists in the role of feelings and affect, the only linguistic anthology available on this subject was the by now classic compilation by Niemeier and Dirven (1997) *The Language of Emotions*. As research approaches have become more and more interdisciplinary since then, I invited contributions both from well-known pioneers on this topic and also from young scientists in a broad range of disciplines. Their positive response led to a total of 21 papers, which have been grouped into three parts according to whether their scientific emphasis was on: I Theory, II Research, or III Application.

Part I *Theory* consists mainly of time-spanning, integrative survey papers on the relation between emotion and language from the perspectives of developmental psychology and neuropsychology (Trevarthen; Nadel and Han; McGilchrist); neuroscience (Panksepp); philosophy and phenomenology (von Bonsdorff; Stuart and Thibault); cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics (Schwarz-Friesel; Klann-Delius; Lacheret); and language teaching (Buccino and Mezzadri).

In Part II *Research*, the results of recent empirical linguistic studies are discussed (Lüdtkke and Polzin) especially through analyses of the emotional properties of the language of adults and children (Foolen; Glaznieks), of Holocaust victims (Busch; Schwarz-Friesel) and of Internet users (Ortner; Marx).

In Part III *Application*, different clinical studies highlight various important areas of emotion in language pathology across different ages related to e.g. stroke (Polse, Lai and Reilly), lesions (Hielscher-Fastabend), borderline personality disorder (Gratier, Dominguez, Devouche and Apter) and autism (Levy and Kauschke).

The polyphonic rise of emotivity: Reinstalling the “other” side

Beyond this divide there have been manifold linguistic niches in the past where the scientific focus was on the “other,” emotive side of language, starting from antique rhetoric over poetics, stylistics and psychology of expression to psychoanalytic as well as early post-structuralist and post-cognitivist linguistics and sociolinguistics. Phenomena of interest were here not the logical generation of any kind of artificial or artificially perceived language but its emotionally permeated natural counterparts: the figurative language of children, the playful affectionate language of lovers, the provoking language of youth, the broken language of immigrants, the shattered language of people with psychic disorders, the artful language of poetry, the affect-laden metaphorical language of dreams or the magical language used in rituals. What all approaches seemed to have in common has been their revival of a more polyphonus conceptualization of language. Therefore many linguistic correlates confined to the realm of logic have been completed by their lost halves: Linguistic homogeneity was supplemented by heterogeneity, acceptance of linguistic norms by openness to transgression, destruction by reconstruction on all linguistic levels, linguistic linearity by spatialization, arbitrariness by motivatedness, the ‘transcendental signified’ by the ‘free play’ of signifiers (Derrida 1967), the transcendental ego of the ‘Cartesian subject’ by the ‘subject in process’ (Kristeva 1998) and intersubjectivity, the power, importance and identity of the author by his death and, in sum: monologue by dialogue (Bakhtin 1981). Alongside that, the relation between language and “reality” as well as the relation between language and society was reframed: No longer could language be a true, direct, objective, valid and verifiable representation of reality, but it could instead express a subjective or even intersubjective dialogical perception of correlational “truth.” And instead of having a stabilizing social function through the control and suppression of affect drives and the marginalization of idiosyncratic expressions, language was conceptualized as having challenging rebellious and subversive social functions too, allowing the inscription of affect traces into surface structures and bringing censored bricolage from the periphery to the center of the logosphere. Thus, the co-existence or even complementarity of the two sides of language was on its way.

The emotional turn: Conceptualizing the wholeness of language

In this context, the emergence of the emotional turn in linguistics was inevitable although it is still “under construction.” For finally conceptualizing the wholeness of language, or at least a syncretism of individual rational logos and intersubjective emotional dialogue, several interconnected paradigm shifts are needed:

- from *anthropocentrism*, where language capacity raises man governed by reasoning over animal driven by instincts, to *biocentrism*, where language is a property of all beings and has instinctual affects in common, even in humans;

- from *mentalism*, where language is a mirror of mind and the language system (*langue*) is purely mental, to *materialism*, where language is instead a mirror of the material context, which therefore becomes intralinguistic, reflecting in particular the socioeconomic, cultural, social, emotional and gender-specific conditions;
- from *positivism*, where epistemologically language is a pure instrument of perception and able to describe reality truly, to *constructivism*, where “reality” changes depending on perception and therefore language always becomes (inter)subjective;
- from *realism*, where linguistic markers are substantial entities, to *relationalism*, where they are relationally constructed;
- from *individuocentrism*, where language is an individual phenomenon and its most important prerequisites are intraindividual like the language system, to *intersubjectivity*, where language is per se intersubjective and therefore the socio-emotional context and the impact of *parole* on *langue* are important;
- from *logocentrism*, where only verbal language with its highly elaborated code of arbitrary symbols is taken into account, to *semiotics*, where multi-modal non-verbal sign systems with their high amount of emotionally motivated and marked icons and indexes play important roles as well;
- from *cognitivism*, where language processing on all linguistic levels is purely cognitive, to *psychoneurobiology*, where the impact of emotions is not only recognized but even highlighted as generating relevant cortical growth and differentiation.

I am firmly convinced that all the papers presented here, each with its own particular focus, provide strong support for this paradigmatic trajectory from *logos* to *dialogue*.

As I at last write these first words of the present volume, my gratitude goes to the authors for their deep, innovative and inspiring contributions. Additionally, I would like to thank the anonymous colleagues who were willing to act as reviewers for the different papers. Special thanks go to Ralph Ellis, co-editor of the Consciousness & Emotion Book Series in which this volume is being published. Thanks are also due to Els van Dongen and Esther Roth, Acquisition Editors, and Susan Hendriks, Desk Editor at John Benjamins, who guided me through feelings of curiosity, impatience, exhaustion, excitement and gratefulness. Finally, I thank my students Marie Bansner and Julia Wendel, who took care of accurate formatting and file saving and helped with author correspondence.

Last but not least, I hope that the overall result will contribute to consolidating the recognition and acknowledgement of emotion in language theory and to inspiring further research into emotion for the benefit of all children and clients in the various areas of applied linguistics. Therefore, my deep gratitude goes to Bodo Frank and Colwyn Trevarthen, who do not only emphasize this, but give overall meaning to the whole volume with their compassionate epilogue.

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