



Lidil

Revue de linguistique et de didactique des langues

60 | 2019

Langues des signes et genres discursifs

Agnès Celle and Laure Lansari (eds), *Expressing and Describing Surprise*

Amsterdam / Philadelphia, John Benjamin Publishing Company, 2015,
246 p.

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lidil/6726>

DOI: 10.4000/lidil.6726

ISSN: 1960-6052

Publisher

UGA Éditions/Université Grenoble Alpes

Printed version

ISBN: 978-2-37747-164-5

ISSN: 1146-6480

Electronic reference

Samia Ounoughi, "Agnès Celle and Laure Lansari (eds), *Expressing and Describing Surprise*", *Lidil* [Online], 60 | 2019, Online since 01 November 2019, connection on 01 March 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lidil/6726> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/lidil.6726>

This text was automatically generated on March 1, 2024.

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- 1 This volume gathers a collection of 10 articles the aim of which is to analyse surprise and to single out the ways in which this specific primary emotion is connected with both human cognition and linguistics. The authors' individual and common projects add to existing research on emotions by exploring surprise not only from a psychological or semantic standpoint, which they nonetheless take into account, but through cognition and linguistics. The broadness of the corpora involved is to be noted as authors wanted to avoid an English language centered approach, sometimes resorting to NSM Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Goddard) and also using corpora of various languages like Malay (Goddard), Italian (Ascone), French (Tutin) or Cheyenne (Celle et al.). These articles also complement one another by tackling written and oral corpora in diverse fields of knowledge and culture, like scientific language (Tutin), situations of daily life (Peterson) and even casual exchanges on social media (Ascone).
- 2 Since the definition of surprise as an emotion can be questioned, the authors also put their exploration methods to the test, as well as the feasibility of their process, to reach reliable conclusions (Krawczac & Glynn). GRID, for instance, is a research paradigm based on a questionnaire that Soriano et al. applied to cross disciplines and give a picture of surprise as felt and expressed by natives of various languages and cultures. Beyond cultures and languages, surprise is also investigated in the field of scientific writing where subjectivity is the least expected and yet exists. Based on a corpus of

hundreds of articles in human sciences, Agnès Tutin shows how, in such a specific domain, surprise shifts from an affect to “a state of consciousness”.

- 3 The way in which these contributions also tackle the analysis of surprise at various phases of speech construction also adds to the depth of comprehension of surprise through linguistics that this rich volume brings about. While semantic explorations involving the meaning of surprise-related words in oral or written corpora, starting with the dictionary, others seek to highlight the connections on a syntactic level involving both context and situation (Celle et al.; Clavel). Indeed, the seminal aspect of interaction in emotions is approached through the questioning and exploration of the concept of mirativity (the markers pointing to the newness of information in the recipient’s response), which is used by most authors (Krawczak & Glynn; Peterson; Celle et al.). Questions such as the degree of congruity or incongruity between the emotion and its shape in discourse are explored (Krawczak & Glynn). Authors also take research a step further by challenging commonly accepted ideas such as surprise necessarily stemming from a response to a stimulus, demonstrating that the recipient’s own profile and experience also here act a major part (Celle et al.).
- 4 In every respect, this collection of articles reminds us of the width and depth of such a basic reaction as surprise. The variety of methods and language supports also inform what linguistics and cognition can do to enhance research thanks to a natural insight into many other disciplines. This, of course cannot go without a degree of complexity as the multiplicity of parameters inherent to a human and humane understanding cannot be ignored. And yet, the reading of this volume invites the reader into a fabulous universe, a trip worth taking.

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