

## **Book Review**

**Matthew, T. Prior (2016). Emotion and Discourse in L2 Narrative**

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In his latest monograph titled *Emotion and Discourse in L2 Narrative Research*, Matthew T., Prior (2016) displays his seven-year-long qualitative inquiry of L2 immigrants from Southeast Asia. Entertaining the idea that the ubiquity of emotions can be understood as a social construct, Prior launches his emotionality investigation into seven participants' L2 autobiographical research across time and space. Throughout the book, he illuminates the interplay between emotion and autobiographical representation of experience. Exploring a wider range of gendered experiences, the book makes an exceptional contribution to the field by offering fuller insights for management, formation and reception of emotionality in talk.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the background in its exploration of the representation and management of emotionality. It begins with brief review on emotional research and extends to its methodology which covers the autobiographical materials, analysis of the interview and biographies of seven focal participants.

Chapter 2 starts off the 'doing' and 'reading' nature of emotionality. Then it moves on to the discursive constructionist (DC) framework that is employed to delve into emotionality. Before its accounts, special emphasis is placed on key discursive approaches such as discursive psychology and conversation analysis. A form of constructionist inquiry, as their shared feature, catalyses the generation of discursive constructionist approach. In the following section, Prior describes the advantages and contributions that DC brings to the understandings of emotionality-focused research.

Chapter 3 first relates conventional features of autobiographical tellings, examining how these conventions assist researchers in understanding speakers' emotional and communicative landscape. The story preface is later identified as a

device to investigate how tellers launch tellings in the interview context. A discreet inspection reveals that tellers are far from simply recalling their stories.

Chapter 4 and 5 narrate the interviewers' contribution to constructing and supporting emotionality in tellings. Chapter 4 elaborates how the interviewees' storytelling can be conceived as the result of the bounded question sequences from interviewers. Perhaps most strikingly, interviewer question sequences are highly coordinated activities which involve the elements producing anticipated data. Followed by Chapter 5, it attends to the role of interviewer question sequences. Prior deems the interview as a normative practice that permits the interviewers to organize the interview itinerary and direct to the research purposes. By looking at feeling questions and emotion-implicative questions, Prior examines how these question sequences can be utilised to solicit interviewees' emotional matters.

In Chapter 6, the focus is shifted to the analysis of emotionality and its management. The author introduces the concept of emotion (re)formulation to scrutinize the intersection between L2 narrative interview and psychotherapeutic interaction. Prior's analysis suggests that both taking up and resisting one another's reformulation is reflexive of both interviewers and interviewees. The interlocutors need adapt their talk in the pursuit of an affiliative and stance-sharing response from each other.

Chapter 7 and 8 explores negative emotionality and its management throughout the interview. In Chapter 7, Prior respectively presents the way the interviewees and interviewers attend to their own emotionality as well as the emotionality of each other. It also deals with another two aspects of emotional interaction which encompass emotional contagion and emotional danger. Chapter 8 begins by addressing the phenomenon of interviewees' resistance to positive emotionality. A clear illustration of this phenomenon is produced through the analysis of interview prompts. Meanwhile, Prior provides some explanations for the production of negativity rooted in autobiographical interview research.

Chapter 9 reflects on the findings of previous chapters and points out major contributions to research. It concludes by discussing the future directions for L2 autobiographical interview research.

All in all, this book is a riveting read for both students and researchers. In a number of ways, Prior advances the readers' understanding of the discursive constructionist approach and emotionality. Of particular significance, Prior's study serves as an authoritative guide to tackling the relationship between emotion and narrative. While several scholars have started to explore the crucial role of emotion in narrative research (Gilbert, 2001; Peräkylä and Sorjonen, 2012), no studies have treated it to the comparable depth as Prior who goes so far as to discuss the delicate topics, such as refugees, gender and sexuality. A further contribution of the study is that Prior brings his reflexivity to the fore and his critical perspective sheds a powerful light on the interactional role of the interviewer, which is often neglected or rarely gains respect in narrative research.

Nevertheless, no book can stand without criticism. One limitation concerns its loose organization in the DC framework section. It is better to provide a direct-view style of addressing DC approach first and then other relevant issues. Another limitation lies in the fact that narrative, emotion and identity are interconnected, but Prior fails to foreground the existence of how participants' emotionality functions as the reification of their identity and how their emotion trajectories pave the way for their identity construction.

In spite of the shortcomings, the scholarly merits of this book are profoundly outstanding. Overall, the book aptly achieves its goal of understanding the representation and organization of seven immigrants' emotionality through the *emic* perspective. With its adequate longitudinal scope and meticulous scrutiny of critical topics, this book will undoubtedly deepen and enrich the readers' understanding of L2 immigrants' life experiences and emotional management in and through their tellings.

### References

Gilbert, K.R. (2001). *The Emotion Nature of Qualitative Research*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Peräkylä, A. & Sorjonen, M. (2012). *Emotion in Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.