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## ***BOOK REVIEWS***

### **REVIEW OF GEOFF THOMPSON AND LAURA ALBA-JUEZ (EDS.) 2014. *EVALUATION IN CONTEXT* (PRAGMATICS & BEYOND NEW SERIES, VOLUME 242), Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 418 pp.**

Geoff Thompson and Laura Alba-Juez have put together an excellent volume in the study of evaluation in context, presenting some of the most recent developments in the field. As the authors state in the preface of the volume, the book is intended as a sequel to the seminal work in research on evaluative language, Susan Hunston's and Geoff Thompson's volume "Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse" that laid the foundations of the field when it was published in 2000. Almost 15 years later, Thompson and Alba-Juez aim to take the field further by providing readers with a collection of papers by renowned academics that aim to provide new and fresh perspectives on research at the interface of text, context, and discourse. As such the book not only appeals to scholars and students of pragmatics and text analysis, but also bridges research on evaluative language informed by both multimodal approaches and a variety of perspectives on linguistic theories such as politeness, semantics, as well as functionalism. Intentionally or not, the book mainly encompasses research from scholars with a background in Spanish academia, yet from a closer perspective this is plausible, as much of the volume is based on research conducted within the framework of the *FunDETT Functions of language: Evaluation in Different Text Types* project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation with Laura Alba-Juez as the principal investigator.

Contributions within the volume are organized around three overarching themes or sections that include 1. a broad overview by the two editors that addresses "the many faces and phases of evaluation", 2. *Theoretical considerations and approaches to evaluation*, as well as 3. *Evaluation in different contexts*. While the introduction contextualizes the field and highlights the innovations and paradigmatic changes the field witnessed since the publication of Hunston's and Thompson's seminal volume "Evaluation in text",

the second part points towards recent theoretical developments in the field with the help of a number of articles that provide a helpful overview on the current state of research on evaluative language. I would highly recommend contributions by Thompson (chapter 3) and Macken-Horarik and Isaac that problematize a number of theoretical and methodological questions that relate to research on evaluative language based on appraisal theory, applying this model of functional linguistics to the study of text (chapter 3). Most notable is a phenomenon Thompson labels as the “Russian doll syndrome” (p. 59) that occurs in instances when an evaluative expression is recursively related to other categories. This, as well as the other examples provided by the author will surely be beneficial to those conducting research in the field, making analyses based on the appraisal model more conclusive, methodologically sound, and reproducible. Macken-Horarik and Isaac (chapter 4) equally found their research on the appraisal model, convincingly addressing a number of challenges that come along the analysis of text. This incorporates questions on how to account for implicit evaluation and, more importantly, the oftentimes complex relationship between text and (cultural) context within the framework of their approach. In the following chapter (5), Alba-Juez and Attardo base their analysis on spoken data rather than focusing on narrative texts. In their research the authors examine two groups of L1-speakers of English and Spanish to determine whether or not (verbal) irony is fundamentally related to the contrast between negative and positive evaluation. In sum, the authors state that it is in fact related, yet they also carve out to establish shared feelings of likeness simply to amuse the receiver. Moving on to chapter 9, Estebas-Vilaplana focuses her attention on spoken interaction in English and Spanish, precisely on the effect of pitch-range variability. She concludes that English speakers identify utterances produced with a high pitch as neutral and rather positive, whereas low pitch utterances are seen as impolite. In contrast to that, high pitch utterances are perceived as overstressed and intrusive by Spanish speakers while low pitch utterances are regarded as polite. In the third part of the volume, authors present largely empirical work and as such provide readers helpful insights and ideas for own research projects while at the same time allowing to reflect on methodological problems that may surface in empirical work. Most notable are chapters 12, 15, and 16. Chapter 12 by Degaetano-Ortlieb and Teich presents corpus-based research on expressions of epistemic and attitudinal stance in academic texts, in this instance scientific research papers from a number of different fields. They suggest that in each scientific field types of evaluative meaning differ with regard to frequency. Chapter 15 by Breeze on the other hand puts research on evaluative language within a more explicit context, highlighting the ways religious groups in the United Kingdom are represented and evaluated via textual and visual resources. The corpus-driven approach that draws from excerpts from the British media reveals a disconnection between largely neutral tones in articles, but an (overwhelmingly) evaluative one with regard to both images and headlines. Chapter 16 is also based on media discourse and highlights different patterns of evaluative language used in the newspapers ‘Times’ and ‘The economist’, assessing that aspects of evaluation can be studied by carefully identifying recurring lexical and grammatical patterns, being based on the notion of ‘local grammar’ put forward by Hunston and Sinclair (2000).

In sum, the book presents readers an insight into the study of evaluative language also for those with little knowledge of the field so far. For students and scholars alike, all chapters present original, interesting and inspiring research that may help to better understand the core issues of the field. In that respect, Thompson and Alba-Juez have compiled a well-written reference work for everyone interested in the study of evaluative language. It is furthermore novel, as it moves on from a strictly textual level towards multimodal research and the study of interactional data in general. However, despite the richness of the data presented in the volume and occasional references with regard to cultural contexts, the volume would benefit from a thorough discussion on the relationship between the study of text, (critical) discourse analysis, and even sociolinguistics. After all we may argue that language is socially constructed.

**Sebastian Muth**