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J.S. Robles and A. Weatherall: How Emotions Are Made in Talk [Book review]

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SUMMARY

Many scholars interested in emotions are familiar with Feldman Barrett's (2017) book "How Emotions Are Made," which is a psychologist and neuroscientist's explanation of how emotions are made in the interaction of the brain with the body and culture. The title of the present book suggests that it complements accounts of what happens in the brain through explaining "How Emotions Are Made in Talk".

The first chapter in "How Emotions Are Made in Talk" is a short preface by Anssi Peräkylä, who has edited a well-known volume on the language of emotions, "Emotion in Interaction", together with Marja-Leena Sorjonen (2012). The title of his preface, "Emotion as an emergent theme in conversation analysis" robustly locates the current volume in the field of conversation analysis. Peräkylä points out that there are both similarities and differences between the two volumes in that they cover partly the same topics. He concludes by stating that conversation analysis now begins to be in a place where it can "answer some questions regarding psychology in social interaction that Goffman posed many years ago" (p. xvi).

The editors of "How Emotions Are Made in Talk", Ann Weatherall and Jessica S. Robles, also refer to Peräkylä and Sorjonen's "Emotion in Interaction" in their introduction that is titled "How emotions are made to do things". They suggest that their volume not only sheds further light on emotions in interaction but also "present[s] a new generation of conversation analytic studies at the cutting edge of scholarship" (p. 2). They then proceed to precisely explaining, "How emotions are made to do things". Starting from "Terminology and emotions research", they tour previous research into emotions and interaction, including seminal work by Goffman, consider "Methodological issues", discuss the problematics of naming emotions, note that emotion displays are often nonverbal, and give an example of a conversation where emotion occurs. They thus go a long way into preparing for the studies presented in the book, whose contents they then briefly summarize.

The studies in the volume are divided into three groups; they come under the headings "The social moral ordering of emotions", "Emotions as temporally unfolding", and "Displays of emotion". The data for "The social and moral ordering of emotions" comes from sports settings, a telephone call between a father and mother who disagree about the father's responsibilities, and calls to a telephone helpline. "Emotions as temporally unfolding" in their turn unfold in troubles talk, complaining and children's reciprocal laughter. Lastly, the "Displays of emotion" occur in various contexts: a "call between two sisters, a child protection helpline, a doctor-patient palliative care interaction[,] an emotion-focused therapy session" (p. 189), parent-child interaction, "language therapy sessions for people with post-stroke aphasia" (p. 233), and contexts where people express pain.

The very first study is written by Edward Reynolds, whose topic is "Emotional intensity as a resource for moral assessments: The action of 'incitement' in sports settings". He first analyses interactions in a gym, illustrating transcripts with photos and timelines of utterances. Then he moves on to analyze some interaction in basketball, including photos and a pitch contour image of a player's utterance "Watch mine watch mine deep deep deep" (p. 41). He concludes his analysis section by returning to the gym; looking at a situation where Chris fails in a task, she has set for herself. Again, the analysis contains

photos, a timeline “for failure” (p. 44) and a pitch trace image. In the discussion, Reynolds summarizes his research as showing how “participants enact a public form of arousal as a resource for regulating the sports conduct of others” (p. 46). He claims that when someone incites another person to do well in sports, it as if becomes a moral obligation for the latter person to succeed.

The second research chapter also concerns moral obligations. It is called “Affect in interaction: Working out expectancies and responsibility in a phone call” and written by Bryanna Hebenstreit and Alan Zemel. They analyse a telephone call between “Mom” and “Dad” where the two discuss Dad’s failure to pick up his children as expected by Mom. In this conversation, Mom blames Dad for the failure, but Dad refuses to accept the blame. While Mom is of the opinion that Dad should have known what to do, Dad counters by suggesting that she should have explicitly informed him of what he was supposed to do. Hebenstreit and Zemel have titled the turns in the conversation as follows: “Marking the breach”, “Exposing the breach”, “Escalation”, and “De-escalation”. They suggest that they have been able to describe a situation where genuine apologies were expected but not offered.

The editor Ann Weatherall herself has written the third chapter in the book, “Displaying emotional control by how crying and talking are managed”. She is interested in situations where someone is “flooding out”: in Goffman’s work, “[f]looding out referred to a moment where an emotional outburst immobilised an individual, even if momentarily, from interpersonal engagement” (p. 78). She analyses what the callers and call-takers do in such situations, giving examples of the following options: “Resuming talk after crying interrupts it”, “Crying speaker resumes talk after a call-taker takes a turn”, “Talk after crying in a transition relevant space”, and “Resuming talk after crying when no-one is speaking”. “Transition relevant” here means a space where “speaker transition can occur” (p. 89). Weatherall shows that even if the callers cannot help crying, they are able to resume talk and focus on the matter at hand. The call-takers in her data may seem somewhat “cold” but this is because their primary task is “not to provide emotional and practical support ... but rather to transfer or refer the caller to the services that do provide that help directly” (pp. 94-95).

The second section of the volume that focuses on “Emotions as temporally unfolding” begins with a chapter written by Jessica S. Robles, Stephen M. DiDomenico and Joshua Raclaw. They write about “Using objects and technologies in the immediate environment as resources for managing displays in troubles talk”. They analyze situations where “laptops and smartphones ... become consequential to the display of affect and affiliation in the context of troubles talk” (p. 107). They are interested both in situations where the listeners affiliate with troubles talk and in situations where they do not provide as much affiliation as expected. They point out that the laptops and smartphones can be used to regulate the conversation because they as if provide a legitimate reason to focus on something else than the troubles talk or even to change the topic of conversation. This applies to both the troubles tellers and the persons who listen to them. To the troubles tellers, the laptop may provide a kind of shield behind which they can hide. Robles, DiDomenico and Raclaw’s chapter is illustrated by screenshots of the situations which they analyze. For example, in figure 2 we can see a young woman duck her head behind the laptop and pull her hair back (pp. 113-114).

In the next chapter, we move from troubles telling to complaining. Johanna Ruusuvoori, Birte Asmuss, Pentti Henttonen and Niklas Ravaja analyze “complaining about third parties in the institutional situation of performance appraisal reviews” (p. 129). Their contribution is titled “Shared affective stance displays as preliminary to complaining”. The performance appraisal reviews under scrutiny have taken place in Finland and Denmark. The authors provide us with examples both of cases where the managers and employees reach a shared affective stance, which makes it easier for the employees to complain about a third person, and with examples where the managers do not explicitly share the employees’ stance. They suggest that the former kind of situations make the managers and employees more democratic than the latter and foster good communication. When the managers share the employees’ affective stance, they simultaneously validate it. This chapter is illustrated by drawings; for example, in figure 4, a “manager smiles minimally” (p. 153).

The third chapter about unfolding emotions takes us to the kindergarten. Emilia Strid and Asta Cekaite

tell us about “Embodiment in reciprocal laughter: Sharing laughter, gaze, and embodied stance in children’s peer group”. Their chapter is richly illustrated by drawings depicting the children and their teachers in three different situations. In the first situation, a “multiparty laughing bout” (p. 167) emerges after a teacher says something that the children think is funny. In the second situation, the teacher tells about the reception class that the children will go to before they start in the real school, and one girl comments, which results in laughter between herself and another girl. In the third situation, a teacher and three children sit at the lunch table when the children start laughing. The laughter continues although the teacher reprimands the children. Strid and Cekaite conclude that “[l]aughter [is] not only a vocal phenomenon but an embodied action” (p. 183), and it is action that the children do together.

As stated above, the last four chapters of the book are grouped under the rubric “Displays of emotion”. The first of them, “Responding emphatically from shifting epistemic terrains” by Joseph Ford and Alexa Hepburn begins by discussing how conversation analysts have understood and studied empathy. Ford and Hepburn choose to define empathy as a “display of understanding that is done semantically rather than through prosody” (p. 190). The emphasis is on the word understanding – the person who shows empathy does not feel the same emotion as the recipient of empathy. An example is a situation where a call-taker in a helpline responds to a caller by saying, “You sound as though you’re very upset about it” (p. 195). Ford and Hepburn are interested in empathy in different environments and illustrate with various examples. Their aim is to see what the different settings have in common and where they differ. For instance, a doctor talking with a patient with terminal cancer will respond differently to the patient than a therapist who wants their patient to talk soothingly to her inner child.

Next, Hansun Zhang Waring’s chapter takes us back to children’s world. It is about “Socializing the emotions of joy and surprise in parent-child interaction”. The data for the study comes from a “large corpus of 148 hours of 35 video-recorded mealtime interaction [sic] between a three-year-old child Zoe ... and her parents” (p. 216), of whom Zhang Waring is the Mom. The chapter is illustrated by screenshots from the videos where Dad and Zoe enact joy and surprise individually and together. Zhang Waring underlines that Dad tailors her enactments of joy and surprise to Zoe who in her turn does not reciprocate in exactly the same manner but is creative in her own behavior. Zhang Waring also has another point of emphasis: She says that there is plenty of research on the socialization of negative emotions. However, we should shift the focus to positive emotions and really look at what people, especially children, are doing, rather than estimating what they are thinking.

The book then moves from laughter to crying, in Sara Merlino’s chapter “Haptics and emotions in speech and language therapy sessions for people with post-stroke aphasia”. The title is slightly misleading in that the chapter focuses on a single patient, a “71-year old man diagnosed with aphasia that resulted from a stroke in his left temporal lobe” (p. 238). Merlino analyzes his meetings with two speech and language therapists. The gist of the matter is that the patient has a tendency to burst into crying and needs to be soothed. The therapists tend to touch his hand or hands to calm him down. On one occasion, the patient seeks for consolation by touching the therapist’s hands. The chapter includes many drawings showing the patient and therapist together or the patient alone.

Lastly, in the volume, Amanda McArthur reports on “Affect and accountability: Pain displays as a resource for action”. Her chapter contains a lengthy introduction to the ontology of pain. The point is that while pain is not necessarily considered an emotion, it seems to overlap with emotion: there is medical evidence that pain and emotion occur simultaneously in the brain, and “[p]henomenologists and historians of pain have also long argued that the physical sensation of pain cannot be separated from our emotional reaction to it” (p. 266). McArthur focuses on pain displays such as “arghhh*hhh” and “ow” or wincing that patients produce when visiting the doctor. She suggests that there is something performative in them. On the one hand, people think it is all right to display pain because it is something a person cannot control; but, on the other hand, the patients tend to display pain at very suitable junctions, suggesting an element of control.

There is also some extra material in the book. The author bios can be found between the table of contents and the preface. A transcription glossary and a four-page index appear as appendices after

the last chapter.

EVALUATION

Since this volume seems to be designed as a sequel to Peräkylä and Sorjonen's volume *Emotion in interaction* (2012), the question arises how well this is accomplished. I do not dare say anything definitive, but offer some comments. Firstly, it is clear that Peräkylä and Sorjonen's (2012) book has a special status within emotion research. In the Helsinki University library, for example, it is available as a course book. The same does not yet apply to *How Emotions Are Made in Talk*, which is available in e-form, but time will tell.

In his book note on *Emotion in Interaction*, Hoey (2013: 596) states the following: "The volume would be a key reference for students and professionals interested in interactional approaches to language use, sociality, and psychology." This can be compared with what it says on the back cover of *How Emotions Are Made in Talk*: "This volume should be of interest to interactional scholars and researchers interested in social approaches to emotion, and addresses a range of scholarship across the disciplines of sociology, communication, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology."

If we consider the topics covered by the two books, Peräkylä's preface is right: they overlap to a notable extent. Both books consider adult-child interaction, complaints and complaining, laughter, crying, surprise and empathy. Moreover, both volumes include drawings, photos/screenshots and pitch tracks. Indeed, both books even include a section on transcription conventions and an index.

Interestingly, while the newer book begins with a preface by Peräkylä, the older book ends in an epilogue by him. In my opinion, the said epilogue would also serve well as an introduction to the newer book. In it, Peräkylä (2012) considers the theoretical side of all the practical studies included in *Emotion in Interaction*. He talks, for example, about the importance of shared emotions. He talks about the centrality of emotional expression, not only because it shows what a person is feeling but also because it serves social interaction. Moreover, he talks of emotion as realized in action tendencies. He claims that action and emotion are "inherently intertwined" (p. 281). He also considers socialization and emotion contagion. He says that the contributions to the older volume "illustrate practices of emotion work" (p. 285) and goes on to add: "they illustrate that feeling rules of society do not influence individuals directly but rather in and through the interactional practices through which the emotional displays are shaped moment by moment" (p. 286). All these theoretical considerations apply very well to the newer volume as well.

To consider Robles and Weatherall's statement that their book "present[s] a new generation of conversation analytic studies at the cutting edge of scholarship" (p. 2), we can compare the lists of authors of the two books. There is a little overlap: both books feature work by Asta Cekaite, Johanna Ruusuvuori, and Alexa Hepburn. However, most of the authors have indeed changed.

While it is good to be aware that Robles and Weatherall seem to consider Peräkylä and Sorjonen's (2012) book as a pioneering ideal, it is important to point out that their book also relates to other books and has merits of its own. I would like to mention here a book that I have reviewed earlier for *Linguist List*, *Emotion in Multilingual Interaction*, edited by Prior and Kasper (2016; Tissari 2017). It discussed very similar issues, but from a slightly different point of view, as it was focusing on situations where people spoke a second or foreign language. Prior and Kasper's (2016) book in fact even shares one author, Asta Cekaite, with the volume under review.

To return briefly to the comparison between *Emotion in Interaction* (Peräkylä & Sorjonen 2012) and *How Emotions Are Made in Talk*, the latter does not have a theoretical section at the end, but it has a rather lengthy theoretical section in the introduction. In addition, the division of the book into three different sections reflects deep theoretical thinking. Emotions are displayed, they unfold temporally, and there is a "social moral ordering" to them. All this of course is related to the conceptualization of emotions expressed in Peräkylä and Sorjonen's title *Emotion in Interaction*: it is interaction all the way

through.

Of the new things that Weatherall and Robles's book brings to the table, I personally appreciated the chapter on pain displays by McArthur. She was able to explain very well why some people do not consider pain an emotion and why others do. She also provided an interesting account of what happens at doctor's appointments when people display pain. I bought her idea that such displays of pain are in fact relatively controlled displays of pain rather than something the patients cannot help doing.

Since I am not a practicing conversation analyst myself, it was sometimes challenging to keep track of all that was occurring in the conversations that were analyzed. This applied, for example, to Robles, DiDomenico and Raclaw's chapter on objects and technologies as resources for managing affect displays. Above all, it probably indicates that their data was very rich. I in fact enjoyed the richness of data that was provided in not only transcripts but also pictures and photos/screenshots in many of the articles, including theirs.

If I may, I will conclude by picking out my favorite chapters from the volume. That they are my favorites does not say anything about the rest of the book; this choice is subjective. I admired the detail in which Hebenstreit and Zemel analyzed Mom and Dad's conversation in their chapter on how Mom and Dad dealt with Mom's disappointment in Dad's behavior. Similarly, when I read Merlino's chapter on the speech and language therapy given to a patient with post-stroke aphasia, it was almost as if I had been there. It was all so clearly explained and beautifully illustrated with drawings. Finally yet importantly, the articles on children's expression of emotion were not only endearing, but also the transcripts and images worked very well hand in hand. I am now referring to Strid and Cekaite's chapter on "Embodiment in reciprocal laughter" and Zhang Waring's chapter on "Socializing the emotions of joy and surprise in parent-child interaction". I agree with Zhang Waring that we need more research into how children are socialized into displaying positive emotions.

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ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr. Heli Tissari has specialized in words and metaphors for emotions in the English language and their histories since around 1450. At the time of writing this review, she was working as a substitute lecturer

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