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Book review: Alba-Juez, L., & Haugh, M. (Eds.). (2026). *The sociopragmatics of emotions.* Cambridge University Press

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Quite undeniably, emotion permeates every facet of human activity. Not only does it impact personal experience of reality, but it also serves as a pillar of our social and relational selves. It is precisely this omnipresence that has garnered significant attention across a diverse array of disciplines, from psychology (e.g., Niedenthal & Ric, 2017; Scherer, 2000) and sociology (e.g., Gordon, 2017; Turner & Stets, 2005) to anthropology (e.g., Beatty, 2019; Lindholm, 2005) and neuroscience (e.g., Adolphs & Anderson, 2018; Lane & Nadel, 1999). Historically, these fields have sought to map the cognitive, affective and cultural terrains of human feeling and have explored how internal states manifest in external social behaviours.

Within the realm of linguistics, and more specifically across the disciplines of pragmatics and discourse analysis, the study of emotion has evolved from treating affect as a mere marginal variable (e.g., Brown & Gilman, 1989; Spencer-Oatey, 1996) to recognising it as an intrinsic, structuring and filtering component of communication (e.g., Alba-Juez, 2021; de Saussure & Wharton, 2020; Wharton et al., 2021; Wharton & Strey, 2019). Rather than being viewed as a disruptive, irrational byproduct, emotion is now increasingly analysed as a systematic, interactional phenomenon. It is within this burgeoning paradigm that *The sociopragmatics of emotion*, edited by Laura Alba-Juez and Michael Haugh, makes a most illuminating contribution.

By bridging the gap between linguistic structures and social interaction, this edited collection champions a multidimensional and multidisciplinary framework that explores how emotions are dynamic, context-dependent resources vital to human alignment. The volume is organised in three parts addressing three domains tightly connected with emotion: evaluation, social relationships and morality. They comprise a total of ten chapters. Additionally, it features an introductory chapter and an epilogue.

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The first part addresses emotion and evaluation. Its first chapter is "Invoked emotions in times of Coronavirus. A sociopragmatic analysis of the narratives of healthcare workers and victims of Covid-19 in Spain during lockdown", by Laura Alba-Juez. It investigates the discursive construction of emotion within personal narratives recounted by Spanish healthcare personnel and Covid-19 victims during the initial peak of the pandemic (March–June 2020). Relying on Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), the analysis transcends isolated individual sentences to offer a holistic sociopragmatic view. It examines how sociocultural expectations, multimodal semiotics and the inherently fluid nature of human affect intersect with evaluation, relationships and morality. A primary finding demonstrates that *invoked*—i.e., implicitly triggered—emotion occurs with significantly higher frequency than *inscribed*—i.e., explicitly stated—emotion. This prompts the author to suggest a new taxonomy of invoked emotional mechanisms.

The second chapter is titled "The use of humour as an affiliative strategy in times of Covid" and is coauthored by Carmen Maíz-Arévalo and Francisco Yus. Their study shifts the lens to internet-mediated communication, as it looks into how meme-based humour served as a vital psychological mechanism for Spanish citizens coping the emotional strain of the 2020 lockdown. Based on a corpus of 250 memes collected during the 99-day state of alarm, the authors assess the primary humorous dimensions deployed, their discursive realisations and the pragmatic motivations behind them. Their findings reveal a clear predominance of affiliative humour over more maladaptive types, such as aggressive or self-deprecating forms. This preference underscores a collective sociopragmatic drive to bolster ingroup solidarity, foster empathy and trigger positive digital emotion contagion amid pervasive societal anxiety.

Authored by Carmen Sancho Guinda, the last chapter in this part is "Promoemotion in action. Sci-Tech marketing in university innovation portfolios". It explores the institutional and commercial application of affect by analysing the online dissemination portfolios of Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM). More specifically, the chapter scrutinises *technology disclosures*, a contemporary hybrid genre designed to promote scientific innovations to broader market audiences. Drawing upon Systemic Functional Linguistics, Critical Discourse and Genre Analysis, and Multimodal Semiotics, the study details three core empathy-raising strategies: involvement, amusement and metadiscursive guidance. By examining 134 technical solutions, the author illustrates how digital affordances have allowed traditionally neutral, empirical technical writing to colonise emotional territory, thereby leveraging affect to construct institutional ethos and build trust with prospective investors.

The second part of the volume turns to emotion and social relations. Its first chapter is contributed by Carolina Figueras Bates: "Doing emotions and displaying empathy. The construction of online peer support". It offers a comparative analysis of how emotions are enacted and empathy is structurally displayed within two distinct internet-mediated mental health support forums: one about borderline personality disorder (BPD) and another about eating disorders (ED). Focusing specifically on peer-to-peer interactions concerning

these disorders, the analysis tracks the grammatical and pragmatic deployment of the perceptual verb *to feel*. It uncovers two contrasting discursively constructed selves: within the ED forum, somatic and bodily sensations frequently supersede abstract emotional labels; in contrast, in the BPD forum, distinct emotional boundaries are prioritised in order to stabilise a fluid sense of self. Crucially, both groups embed these tailored feeling states within highly person-centred, empathic displays.

Coauthored by Yongping Ran and Linlin Fan, "Understanding affective aspects of Chinese relational practices. From the perspectives of 'heart' and 'face'" is the second chapter. Acknowledging that the intersection of affect and relational frameworks remains under-theorised within non-Western contexts, this chapter seeks to bridge the gap via a sociopragmatic study of Chinese medical interactions. Hence, the authors examine how doctors balance interpersonal relationships while executing the delicate, potentially tense act of urging patients to settle outstanding fees. The study introduces the conceptual framework of *heart* (*qíng*) to complement traditional, orthodox notions of *face* (*liǎn* and *miànzi*). *Qíng* is defined as an interactional commitment to interlocutors' emotional well-being, realised through *human touch* (*rénqíngwèi*) and *emotional warmth* (*wēnqíng*). The authors identify six distinct interactional strategies—such as evoking past favours or directly disclaiming threat to the heart—to safely manage these sensitive transactions.

Tatiana Larina authors the next chapter in this part: "Emotive politeness and communicative styles. Leave-taking in British and Russian interpersonal interaction". She conducts a cross-cultural, comparative investigation of formulas, communicative styles and polite practices enacted during leave-taking in British English and Russian contexts. Adopting a methodology that blends sociopragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics and classic politeness theory, the author analyses data gathered from discourse completion tests and naturalistic observations, while advancing her established paradigm of *emotive politeness*, which she defines as the deliberate interactional orientation towards interlocutors' feelings and emotive facework. She finds that British communicative styles demonstrate a substantially higher reliance on explicit emotive politeness than their Russian counterparts, which lends support to the premise that politeness is fundamentally a culture-specific, psychologically variable phenomenon.

The last chapter is "Laughter and embarrassment in a complicated task". Here, Shelby R. Miller, Hilal Ergül and Salvatore Attardo investigate the real-time occurrence of embarrassment and its behavioural correlates during natural, dyadic task-completion exercises—specifically, the collaborative assembly of a complex puzzle. Framing embarrassment as an emotional reaction to a perceived social or moral infraction, they locate face management and stance alignment within a multimodal paradigm. Their empirical data shows that laughter and genuine smiling frequently co-occur with felt embarrassment. This direct correlation challenges earlier assertions that embarrassment yields only artificial smiles or that laughter is solely an index of humour. The authors

outline a sociopragmatic typology consisting of *self*, *vicarious* and *joint* embarrassment, identify *self-absolution* as an interactive strategy for conversational repair and offer exploratory thoughts on the role of individual personality types.

The third part of the volume is dedicated to emotion and morality. Isolda E. Carranza authors its first chapter: "The institutional relevance of emotions. Moral-nexus effects in the courtroom". Drawing on ethnographic data and audio-visual recordings of criminal trials, Carranza explores how institutional actors—specifically prosecutors—discursively construct and evaluate the emotions of non-institutional participants, such as witnesses and defendants. Concentrating on prosecutors' cross-examinations and closing arguments, she demonstrates that metapragmatic commentary regarding an individual's display—or noticeable absence—of grief and love serves a dual purpose: it judges the *appropriateness* of the emotion while verifying its *authenticity* for unaddressed but listening trial audiences—such as judges or juries. Ultimately, this evaluation influences the perceived credibility of the speaker. The chapter introduces the concept of the *moral nexus*, which alludes to a powerful rhetorical alignment of information, affect and culturally available moral scripts enabling institutional figures to project a unified epistemic-affective-moral stance.

The second chapter is contributed by Wei-Lin Melody and Michael Haugh: "Displaying embarrassment as social action in business interactions". It views the display of embarrassment as a highly calculated interactional tool that is used by speakers to orient towards social norms and signal discomfort regarding potential normative violations. Relying on spoken corporate interactions between insurance agents and clients conducted in Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese Hokkien, the authors look past the psychological state of embarrassment to examine its interactive life-cycle. They track contextual factors triggering these displays, how they are structurally manifested and, crucially, how clients respond. The study emphasises that the broader relational and moral consequences of embarrassment can only be decoded by looking at these sequential, collaborative co-participant responses.

The last chapter is "'I'm so angry!' Anger and taking offence in calls to an insurance company", by Carmen Santamaría-García. It examines the linguistic escalation of anger and the pragmatic process of taking offence through a qualitative analysis of two customer service phone calls recorded at a Spanish insurance helpline. From a sociopragmatic framework, the chapter explores how negative emotional states map directly onto moral frameworks within institutional interaction. The author isolates two primary discursive activities inherent to taking offence: *registering* the offence, which is typically achieved through the explicit verbalisation of negative affect, and *sanctioning* the offence, which appeals directly to an underlying violated moral order. The study successfully demonstrates how these dual actions link emotion and morality to negotiate social rights and expectations in real time.

The book is closed by an epilogue authored by Miriam A. Locher and titled "Revisiting the sociopragmatics of emotion". This is a reflective bookend that synthesises the volume's collective empirical contributions against the theoretical triad proposed by the editors: evaluation, relationships and morality. Additionally, it contextualises the diverse case studies within a broader methodological discussion and advocates for balanced, mixed-method approaches capable of capturing both *showing* (implicit, multimodal or invoked) and *telling* (explicit, lexical or inscribed) emotional cues. Finally, this epilogue concludes with a forward-looking agenda and notes that, while this collection significantly advances the field, ample scope remains for scholars to further untangle and refine these core sociopragmatic concepts.

The sociopragmatics of emotion arrives at a critical historic and academic juncture, which makes it an exceptionally timely contribution to the fields of pragmatics and discourse analysis. In an era marked by profound global crises and rapid technological shifts, the traditional view of emotion as a static, internal psychological state is no longer sufficient. This volume directly challenges it by positioning emotion as a dynamic and interactive phenomenon that is fundamentally immanent to how human beings evaluate the world, manage relationships and abide by distinct moral orders.

The timeliness of this collection is most vividly illustrated through its engagement with the global Covid-19 pandemic, a recent international crisis that greatly affected everyday life in many respects. For example, Alba-Juez's chapter examines the raw, real-time narratives of Spanish healthcare workers and victims during the peak of the 2020 lockdown. By analysing how these individuals relied on implicitly invoked emotional mechanisms to process trauma, her work captures the immediate social reality of crisis communication. Similarly, Carmen Maíz-Arévalo and Francisco Yus investigate the proliferation of internet memes during the same period and provide immediate evidence of how society actively deployed affiliative humour as a vital psychological coping strategy and group-rapport device to combat collective anxiety and fear.

The volume also proves to be an immensely enriching work because it broadens the empirical and theoretical scope of emotion analysis. Rather than relying on a singular school of thought, the contributing authors base their works on multidimensional frameworks blending cross-cultural pragmatics, multimodal semiotics and ethnographic observation. This eclectic approach allows the book to uncover subtle interpersonal dynamics that standard textual analyses frequently overlook. For instance, Ran and Fan's chapter complement Western-centric politeness frameworks by introducing Chinese concepts. In turn, Miller, Ergül and Attardo challenge long-held linguistic assumptions regarding conversational markers. Lastly, Carranza's ethnographic study of criminal trials offers an illuminating look at how emotion is weaponised within institutional discourse.

Another strength is the comprehensive coverage of interaction in face-to-face settings and technology-mediated or digital environments. Addressing emotion in synchronous, physically co-present communication allows researchers to understand the complex, real-time negotiation of social norms, rights and cultural identities. As seen in Chang

and Haugh's analysis of spoken business interactions, tracking the sequential lifecycle of embarrassment displays reveals exactly how corporate actors signal discomfort with potential normative violations to alter the trajectory of a transaction. In turn, Larina's comparative study of British and Russian leave-taking illustrates how face-to-face interactional routines are deeply shaped by culture-specific levels of emotive politeness. Furthermore, Santamaría-García's study of helpline telephone calls demonstrates how the verbal registration of anger allows institutional customers to sanction perceived injustices and actively appeal to a shared moral order.

In the digital sphere, looking at emotion is crucial to unravelling how modern communities construct identity, display empathy and commercialise content. Indeed, digital texts rely heavily on unique linguistic markers to anchor the self. This is what Figueras Bates manifests regarding the usage of the verb *to feel* by marginalised individuals in the two online mental health forums: it enables the discursive stabilisation of an unstable sense of self and the construction of highly person-centred, empathic peer-support networks. Conversely, in commercial digital spaces, Sancho Guinda shows how academic institutions actively take advantage of digital affordances to colonise an emotional territory and transform a traditionally dry, empirical type of portfolio into a persuasive tool designed to build trust with investors.

While the collection stands as an insightful and comprehensive volume, a critical evaluation reveals a couple of notable omissions and methodological areas that warrant further development. These limitations primarily concern the lack of integration with modern corpus linguistics tools (Baker, 2006; Cantos Gómez, 2013; Silverman et al., 2021) and a relatively restricted focus on the cognitive dimensions of affective communication (Padilla Cruz, in press). More specifically, the analyses reported on in this collection do not take advantage of computational software facilitating lexicometric analysis, sentiment analysis and topic modelling, and fail to address the cognitive impact and psychological processing of emotion-conveying elements.

Certainly, the studies provide deep, qualitative and interpretive micro-analyses of specific interactive moments, such as Santamaría-García's reading of two insurance helpline calls or Figueras Bates's examination of *to feel*. However, they rarely scale these insights using computational methods. For example, incorporating lexicometric tracking would have allowed Alba-Juez to statistically validate her newly proposed taxonomy of invoked emotional mechanisms across a much larger corpus of crisis narratives. In the case of Maíz-Arévalo and Yus's corpus, utilising automated sentiment analysis and structural topic modelling would have illuminated broader, macro-level emotional trajectories and thematic shifts across Spanish digital spaces. By relying almost exclusively on manual, qualitative framework applications, the volume misses the opportunity to demonstrate how sociopragmatic theory can be paired with big data and computational humanities.

On the other hand, the volume intentionally anchors itself within a sociopragmatic framework and focuses on the interactional, normative and social dimensions of language use. However, by strictly prioritising how emotions are displayed, negotiated and responded

to externally, their actual cognitive reception and psychological internalisation remain under-theorised. In Sancho Guinda's analysis of promoemotion within university sci-tech portfolios, the text details the empathy-raising strategies used to build institutional ethos and trust. Yet, without experimental or cognitive data, such as eye-tracking or reader-response metrics, the actual cognitive impact of these hybrid texts on prospective investors remains speculative. Similarly, while Chang and Haugh look at how co-participants sequentially respond to displays of embarrassment, their contribution broadly bypasses the psycholinguistic mechanisms driving emotional processing. Bridging the gap between the social performance of emotion and its cognitive reception would have made this already enriching volume an even more powerful, multi-disciplinary tool.

Ultimately, these methodological omissions do not diminish the value of the volume; rather, they illuminate exciting new pathways for future (socio)pragmatic research. *The sociopragmatics of emotion* stands as an indispensable collection that successfully reframes our understanding of emotion as a driving force behind all human sociality. By masterfully balancing rich qualitative insights with cross-cultural breadth, Laura Alba-Juez and Michael Haugh have compiled a work that is as intellectually stimulating as it is practically relevant. It is a highly recommended, essential read for scholars and students alike. Moreover, it is a definitive volume that will undoubtedly shape the trajectory of pragmatics and discourse analysis as regards the study of emotion and its communication for years to come.

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