



2018

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Recommended Citation

Gao, Fang (2018) "Book Review: Matthew T. Prior (2016). Emotion and Discourse in L2 Narrative Research. UK: Multilingual Matters. 280 pp. ISBN: 978-1783094424," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 3. DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1172

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaeea/vol13/iss1/3>



Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement

Vol. 13 Iss. 1 (2018)

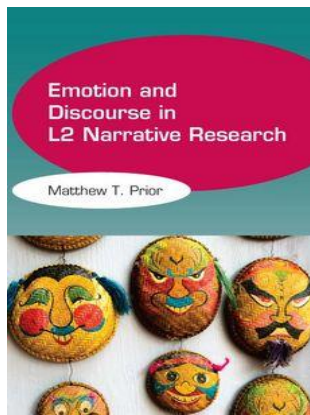
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Book Review: Matthew T. Prior (2016). *Emotion and Discourse in L2 Narrative Research*. UK: Multilingual Matters. 280 pp. ISBN: 978-1783094424

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Are you the stoic scholar who always strives for an objective interviewer stance to avoid addressing the role of emotionality in your research? I assume that most of us would respond that we are fully aware of and recognize the presence of emotion in our research activities. The more challenging work is how to operationalize and manage emotionality as well as address such a topic to better gain unmediated access to our participants' authentic voices and affective worlds. It is in these interstices that Matthew Prior places *Emotion and Discourse in L2 Narrative Research*, a book about how emotionality is a critical analytical lens of qualitative autobiographical interviews that is constructed and performed through dialogic interaction between researchers and participants.

Adopting a critical-oriented discursive construction, and informed largely by the findings of conversation analysis and discursive psychology, Prior conducted this longitudinal study and autobiographical research via interviews with seven principal participants. All are refugees from Southeast Asia (Khmer, Vietnamese, and Filipino) with immigrant experiences. The book's topics include the challenges of acculturation, linguistic discrimination, sociopolitical barriers to participation and belonging, and various other identity and psychological struggles. The book shed light on the often-neglected role of emotionality management in autobiographical research, in particular participants' socio-affective expressions that are always hidden in the fragmented pieces of qualitative autobiographical interviews.

Chapter 1 provides a brief history on emotion, during which Prior illustrates that while emotion can be judged as an anathema to academic production, emotion in fact plays an integral role in the lives and practices of L2 users. Prior examines how emotion serves as the communicative force that binds participants' narratives. He argues for the treatment of emotion as a distinct topic of scholarly inquiry in its own right rather than a tangential component of human language, life, and experience, or a researcher's post-hoc observation. In this chapter, Prior also briefly presents the seven focal participants' experiences and how they have navigated their stigmatized identities. Prior stresses the urgent need for more rigorous and scholarly



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Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement, Vol. 13, Iss. 1. (2018) ISSN: 2153-8999

reconsideration of reflexivity as a research practice and considers how researcher positionality influences the entire research process.

Chapter 2 is the most jargon-infused chapter of the book. Prior examines the primary theoretical framework of the study—a discursive constructionist approach (DC)—and demonstrates how an analytically-grounded and reflexive analysis of emotionality can be actively managed, examined, and analyzed in L2 autobiographical interview research. He also integrates the tools and findings of conversational analysis (CA), discursive psychology (DP), ethnomethodology, membership categorization analysis (MCA), sociology, and anthropology to complement his in-depth analysis of the emotions in participants' narrative repertoires and how they collectively offer a means to process the accounts and concepts generated by the participants.

Chapter 3 examines the participants' contributions by illustrating the key conventions and constraints of a speaker's telling and storied material. It focuses on how interviewees contextualize their stories, articulate emotional pronouncements, and avoid dialogue altogether. Prior insists that the interviewer-interviewee relationship is co-constructed, which determines its overall tellability, stance, and subject-object memory. Interviewees' references to negative emotions, trauma, stress, discrimination, and dilemmas were tied to gender, class, and social belonging. These assertions vividly demonstrate that social economic struggles are always accompanied by psychological struggles and emotionality, the latter of which operates as a fundamental device that permeates interview talk and interaction.

Chapters 4 and 5 should be read together, as Prior turns to the interviewer's construction of emotionality in autobiographical narrative. Chapter 4 focuses on the solicitation and elicitation of the interviewee's authentic response, the question sequence of qualitative research interviews (not yet systematically analyzed by the previous studies), and the four-turn questioning structure (i.e. question-pause-question-answer) used for the interviewer's reformulation of the previous utterances. This structure is used to display the researcher's empathy and affiliation as well as request more explicit storytelling from the interviewee. In Chapter 5, Prior investigates the two types of question formulations used to solicit and elicit participants' emotional responses: feeling questions that request interviewee's feeling and emotional states (e.g., "How do you feel about...?") and emotion-implicative questions, a more subtle evocation of the participants' particular affective stance ("Was it difficult for you...?"). Using these direct and indirect emotion-indexing terms and inferences, interviewees are oriented towards the interview talk. In other words, both researcher and research participants collaboratively shape the interactional trajectory of the research.

Chapter 6 discusses how qualitative interviewing is similar to psychotherapy in its introspective and retrospective accounts, its use of question and answer sequences, and its solicitation and ratification of interviewees' thoughts and feelings to further the ongoing interaction (p. 134). Participants, via their articulation of emotional and traumatic memories into a narrative account, can facilitate personal change and healing in a natural way. Such a process is therapeutic and allows the interviewees to consciously process such affect-laden emotions.

Chapter 7 is a stand-alone excerpt that investigates the often-neglected point of how researchers' should learn and be prepared to manage their own emotionality and distress. Throughout the affect-laden interview, researchers are entirely immersed in the anger, violence, struggle, and injustice referenced by their participants. Accordingly, interviews and emotions should always be approached interactionally. Interviewees often expect an affiliative, empathetic, or stance-endorsing response from the interviewer, which makes the interview even more emotionally draining. In addition to the emotional labor of the interview, the research activities of

repeatedly listening to, transcribing, and analyzing the recorded data further expose researchers to personal distress and even emotional danger (p.174). Such “emotional contagion,” as Prior calls it, needs to be fully considered before conducting the research. He further advocates that during the IRB application and investigation, committees should incorporate researchers’ own self-care as part of the ethical considerations.

Prior investigates the interviewee’s active resistance to talking about positive emotions and experiences in Chapter 8. Taking into account that most autobiographical interview research focuses on groups and individuals perceived as marginalized, such a finding seems unsurprising. However, after a deeper analysis of his participants’ accounts, Prior finds that they viewed most of their positive experiences such as joy as mere coping mechanisms, and believed their negative experiences were authentic (p. 185). Moreover, traumatic experiences tend to engender more emotional thoughts and emotional involvement between the participant and researcher.

In the final chapter, Prior summarizes the implications and essence of the dynamic interface between emotionality and autobiographical interview research. The analysis and accounts of immigrants and transcultural men from Prior’s study demonstrate that these participants are not simply reporting their life experiences and events. They are also generating and managing the emotionality of their personal histories for the researcher. To purely make a record and produce thematic summaries of what is explicitly visible and heard from the participants is far from enough. These dialogues only hint to the subtext of the larger personality core within the interview subject. Just as the iceberg metaphor suggests, it is the hidden subtext that lies beneath the iceberg that really matters. Therefore, qualitative researchers need to constantly and rigorously inspect and reflect on their own research practices to dig deeper into the essence.

Prior’s book creates an emotional space of contemporary narrative and ethnographic research. He explores the links between emotion and the autobiographical representations of experience. However, a pure focus on emotions is not Prior’s argument in this book. Instead, he insists on the need to recognize and incorporate the emotional nature of qualitative research just as we do any other human social concerns or activities. As the book emphasizes, the emotionality of social actions offers a theoretical and analytical lens through which to examine human experience and its emergent discursive representation (p. 197). Qualitative researchers should confidently reclaim the “emotionalist” label by attending to their speakers’ effective work while maintaining reflexivity and analytical rigor (p. 215).

Prior’s book is a must-read treasure that will appeal to qualitative scholars and graduate students who employ interview methodology in their studies. This book will help them pay closer attention to how emotionality can be co-constructed between participants and researchers throughout narrative autobiographical interviews. Though the *Emotion and Discourse in L2 Narrative Research* title seems to signal an audience of L2 scholars, Prior’s theoretical framework, discourse analysis, identity construction, reflexivity, and autobiographical interview techniques make this book insightful reading for a wider audience of scholars in all narrative inquiry fields and disciplines.

Funding

The research was funded by Shenyang Pharmaceutical University (Project No. ZQN2015035, ZQN2015010) & LiaoNing Provincial Education Bureau (Project No. W2015367)

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Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement

Vol.13 Iss.1 (2018)

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