

Emerging Emotions: When Affect is a Stance

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ABSTRACT

In this talk I propose that the expression of emotion, as it emerges in conversational interaction, is negotiated between co-participants and realized collaboratively as an affective stance. The analysis follows the trajectory of affective display as it unfolds in naturally occurring interactions (drawn from conversations among intimates in the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English). Participants deploy stances to calibrate their alignment with each other in both affective and epistemic terms. Interestingly, epistemic stance turns out to be an important trigger for affective stance, as participants evaluate one another's cognitive competence and access to knowledge and information, with consequences for emotion. The collaborative construction of links between knowledge and affect can be understood as introducing a socioaffective dimension into the dialogic practice of distributed cognition.

Drawing on the stance triangle model (Du Bois, 2007), the talk explores how participants' explicit stance utterances interact with implicit subjective positioning as established through prior stances, yielding a situated interpretation of intersubjective relations between participants. Crucially, the speakers' shared orientation to a common stance object scaffolds intersubjective engagement, independent of whether the specific affective evaluations converge or diverge. The triplex stance act—simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects, and aligning between subjects—turns out to closely model the emergence of affect across turns and intersubjectivity between speakers.