

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275002910>

# Mullan Kerry, Expressing Opinions in French and Australian English Discourse: A semantic and interactional analysis. (Pragmatics & Bey....

Article in *Journal of French Language Studies* · November 2013

DOI: 10.1017/S0959269513000288

CITATIONS

0

READS

56

1 author:



Joshua Nash

University of New England (Australia)

66 PUBLICATIONS 128 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Norfolk Island placename research [View project](#)



Vrindavan and Indian environmentalism [View project](#)

# Journal of French Language Studies

<http://journals.cambridge.org/JFL>

Additional services for *Journal of French Language Studies*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

**Mullan Kerry, *Expressing Opinions in French and Australian English Discourse: A semantic and interactional analysis.* (Pragmatics & Beyond New Series, 200.) Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010, xvii + 282 pp., 978 90 272 5604 1.**

Joshua Nash

Journal of French Language Studies / Volume 23 / Issue 03 / November 2013, pp 459 - 461  
DOI: 10.1017/S0959269513000288, Published online: 01 October 2013

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0959269513000288](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0959269513000288)

## How to cite this article:

Joshua Nash (2013). Journal of French Language Studies, 23, pp 459-461  
doi:10.1017/S0959269513000288

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

se connaissaient et ont pu ainsi s'influencer dans l'écriture du *Roman de la Poire* et du *Roman de la Rose*.

S. Schmid réunit deux champs de recherche chers à J. Wüest, à savoir l'acquisition d'une langue seconde et la structure sonore du langage. À travers une étude empirique sur le discours de 10 apprenants de français L2 d'un lycée zurichois, Schmid montre qu'il existe une interférence du système phonétique du suisse allemand.

P. Wunderli se penche sur certaines particularités linguistiques des manuscrits du Nouveau Testament de Lyon. Ces derniers sont loin d'être homogènes. Son analyse souligne qu'ils auraient une origine en partie italienne, justifiée par la nature du texte et la traduction latine de l'unité de base. Une nette prépondérance des phénomènes morphologiques et morphosyntaxiques typiques du Languedoc est néanmoins ressentie.

Sans remettre en cause le statut du domaine franco-provençal, F. Zufferey clôt le volume en s'interrogeant sur les particules affirmatives et la partition du domaine gallo-roman. Son analyse confirme le rattachement du franco-provençal au domaine d'oc. L'auteur insiste toutefois sur l'importance de la participation du franco-provençal aux évolutions phonétiques qui ont façonné la langue d'oïl.

Au travers des différentes contributions, le lecteur de ce recueil découvrira non seulement l'héritage laissé par J. Wüest, mais également la vitalité de la discipline aujourd'hui. Les articles sont d'une haute qualité d'innovation et d'érudition. Accompagné de nombreux messages directement adressés à J. Wüest et commémorant la vie et le travail de ce chercheur remarquable, le volume s'adresse plutôt aux spécialistes de la discipline, qui pourront apprécier pleinement les différentes contributions. La rigueur de la rédaction et la richesse des domaines explorés font de l'ensemble un précieux ouvrage de référence.

Isabelle Lemée  
Department of Languages  
Lakehead University  
955 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, ON  
P7B 5E1, Canada  
ilemee@lakeheadu.ca

Mullan, Kerry, *Expressing Opinions in French and Australian English Discourse: A semantic and interactional analysis*. (Pragmatics & Beyond New Series, 200.) Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010, xvii + 282 pp., 978 90 272 5604 1.  
doi:10.1017/S0959269513000288

This volume combines pragmatic and cross-cultural communication analyses by comparing ways native French and Australian English (AE) speakers express their opinions through the use of several specific discourse markers. The author uses the intonation unit and its functional position within discourse as the study's unit of analysis. Mullan claims that, rather than a high degree of syntactic precision (not necessary to her study), it is the intonation unit which allows for more effective pragmatic observational power. She focuses on *I think* in AE and the corresponding French expressions *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*. A clear and synthesized methodology incorporating Schiffrin's integrational sociolinguistics, Schegloff and Sachs' conversation analysis, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness and Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic

Metalanguage (NSM) provides the analytical tools Mullan employs to analyse her data.

The data collection techniques and procedures given in Chapter 2 are sound and are an effective segue into the analysis of French and AE interactional styles in Chapter 3. Sapir and Whorf's extreme approach to linguistic relativity and ways of speaking is contrasted with Wierzbicka's view that languages differ significantly but nonetheless share a core of linguistic universals. The difference between both approaches is illustrated through the juxtaposition of authentic French and AE data, on the one hand, and previously formulated NSM cultural scripts (definitions using lexical universals), on the other. What is not clear in Mullan's treatment of her data (presented in subsequent chapters) and its relation to NSM scripts and the dictionary definitions for the words and meanings under analysis is how the data could be used to falsify some of the presented NSM scripts and dictionary definitions. (This issue relates to more general concerns I have about the effectiveness and applicability of NSM as an empirical tool and not necessarily to Mullan's employment of NSM.) In this chapter, Mullan does not critically appraise the pros and cons of NSM as a theory-cum-philosophy, a consideration I believe is overdue for those working with NSM as their principal framework. However, the empirical rigour with which Mullan presents tabulated data and sections of discourse data is notable; this makes up for any shortcomings arising from employing what I believe NSM is: an unfalsifiable theory and philosophical approach to describing language rather than an empirical tool for analysis.

The analysis in Chapters 4 to 8 presents empirical evidence of Mullan's main claim: expressing and reiterating an opinion using the AE and French equivalents of *I think* is more highly valued among French speakers. The semantics of doubt and the pragmatics of saving face are compared cross-culturally. The greater degree of standoffishness of Australians in comparison to French speakers in the discourse situation using the syntactic and pragmatic implications of AE *I think* and French *je pense, je crois* and *je trouve* is the main empirical focus in the analysis. AE speakers are more likely to make less opinion-loaded statements than French speakers. In NSM speech, 'it is good to say things like this to other people' (French); 'it is not always good to say things like this to other people' (English). The NSM cultural scripts and the analysis of authentic discourse throughout the volume suggest AE speakers are more likely to remain non-committal and less opinionated to maintain social harmony than their French counterparts. Mullan lists the tendency of Australians to turn conflict into a joke as different from the French and European position of being comfortable with differing views. The author also claims French modes of interaction are more inclined toward intellectual and even conflict-driven discussions.

Apart from some stylistic weaknesses (e.g. the repetitive nature of much of the writing, especially in chapter summaries), Mullan's volume is a fair contribution to discourse analysis, analyses of language and interaction, NSM theory, and indirectly the teaching of English and French as a foreign language. The differences between AE and French discourse styles have important implications for understanding not only how speakers of French and Australian English(es) engage in linguistic and social interaction, but more broadly how French and other European language speakers may interact with each other in Australia and (possibly) the rest of the English-speaking world. I would have liked more emphasis on the author's claim that expression of opinions in French is more intellectually directed and driven than in AE. In view of the book's obvious empirical strength, I believe highlighting this point would have allowed the author to

*Book Reviews*

underscore even more clearly the importance of her study for a better understanding of the pragmatics of language in interaction and cross-cultural communication in general. However, this is a minor criticism, one which I do not think should overshadow the contribution Mullan's book makes to pragmatics and beyond and to the 'Pragmatics & Beyond New Series'.

Joshua Nash  
*Discipline of Linguistics*  
*University of Adelaide*  
SA 5005  
Australia  
[joshua.nash@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:joshua.nash@adelaide.edu.au)