○ **K. MULLAN, *EXPRESSING OPINIONS
IN FRENCH AND AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH
DISCOURSE: A SEMANTIC AND
INTERACTIONAL ANALYSIS***

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Review by **Erin Moore** School of Languages and Linguistics, University of Melbourne

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This book provides a thorough and informative investigation which valuably contributes to the study of discourse markers, discourse analysis, interactional research and cross-cultural communication. The study explores the link between identity, talk-in-interaction and expressing opinion through a comprehensive comparison of how French and Australian English speakers express opinion, specifically examining the strategies employed when speakers use *I think*, *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*.

Mullan's work begins with discussion of the conceptual frameworks and methodologies employed in the study (Chapters 1 and 2). The treatment of the four expressions is then twofold. Firstly, there is theoretical discussion of the Australian expression *I think* and the French expressions *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve* in terms of the interactional style of Australian English and French (Chapter 3) and the existing literature for each expression (Chapter 4 for *I think*; Chapter 5 for the French expressions). Secondly, the analysis of the interactional use of each of the expressions is presented (Chapter 4 and 6-8). The findings are summarised in the final chapter.

Mullan's engaging introduction provides a solid foundation for the study, which investigates how the core meaning of the four expressions and their interactional uses differ. Interactional use is characterised in terms of three primary functional categories: organisational, semantic and pragmatic. While there is overlap between the primary functions, the author summarises the trends for the expressions as organisational for *I think* and *je crois*, semantic (expressing speaker opinion) for *je trouve* and equally organisational and semantic for *je pense* (the only pragmatic function described was one instance of face saving by *I think*). The book also argues that all four expressions are grammaticising into discourse markers but at different rates, with *I think* having progressed furthest, and the French expressions at different stages of development.

The second chapter describes the methodological framework within which the research was conducted. Mullan supports her use of a range of different methodologies with reference to the multidisciplinary nature of discourse analysis. Thus she uses the sequential-interactional

framework of Interactional Sociolinguistics along with a number of Conversation Analysis principles deemed most appropriate and concepts such as establishing the core meaning of each expression, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, semantic primes and cultural scripts. The data collection process and transcription conventions are detailed, as is the appropriateness of intonation units as the chief means of analysis. The data consisted of conversations between pairs of speakers (native speakers with either native or non-native speakers) in English or French, with the researcher present.

The third chapter describes the French and Australian English interactional styles and the relative importance of expressing opinion. The author reviews the literature on discourse markers and the role of the four expressions as discourse markers in interaction, looking at what has been said previously regarding their definitions, characteristics, functions, discourse marker meaning and grammaticisation. Mullan proposes that all discourse markers have meaning and offers core meanings for the expressions and describes their varying degrees of grammaticisation.

Chapter 4 presents the study of *I think* in Australian English interactions. It provides a review of previous studies of this epistemic expression from different theoretical perspectives. Definitions of *organizational*, *semantic* and *pragmatic* roles are provided as well as discussion about the expression of opinion and doubt. Similarly, Chapter 5 presents a literature review of the previous studies of the three French expressions and explores the semantic differences between them. There is an extensive discussion of the semantics of each of the three phrases which is vital for understanding the complexity and nuances involved.

The primary purpose of Chapters 4 and 6-8 is to present an analysis of the four expressions which divides the instances of each expression in the data by intonation unit (IU) position and function (as well as looking at the distribution of instances with respect to speakers and turns). The results indicate that *je pense* has less of a discourse marker role than *I think*. *Je crois* most frequently acts as a discourse marker and semantically it expresses speaker belief and doubt, while *je trouve* most frequently marks speaker opinion.

The importance of expressing opinion in French interaction is highlighted and the core meanings of *je pense* (expressing viewpoints based on facts, known or inferred events); *je crois* (expressing speaker *belief* that something is true rather than a proposition based on evidence); and *je trouve* (expressing opinion discovered through personal experience) are proposed. Also of note is the proposal that *je pense* has grammaticised to a lesser extent than *I think*, while *je crois* has grammaticised to a greater extent than *je pense* but not to the same degree as *I think* and *je trouve* is the least grammaticised of the four expressions.

The book's final chapter consists of a summary and comparison of the analyses of the four expressions as well as suggestions for future research concerning cultural scripts, different approaches that might be taken and the impact of the findings on pedagogy. The author notes

that *I think* and *je crois* are the most similar of the four expressions, being more organizational and hence having been grammaticised to a greater extent. The summary provides a detailed review of the book leaving the reader with a thorough understanding of the findings of the study.

In general, Mullan presents sound arguments for the methodological approach taken, although there are a few minor shortcomings that even the author acknowledges. For example, despite the multifunctional nature of discourse markers generally (e.g. Brinton, 1996; Fischer, 2006), and of these expressions specifically (as Mullan repeatedly reminds the reader) the approach relies on assigning only one functional role to each instantiation of an expression. The reliance on discrete categorisation is defended by virtue of the ensuing opportunity to analyse and describe the data in terms of percentages which represent entire categories (i.e. the percentages for various divisions of the data always add to one hundred). This makes for a clear analysis which the reader can follow easily, but the end does not necessarily justify the means.

The implementation of the methodology is generally unproblematic, however the definition of what constitutes a separate IU is not entirely convincing. For Mullan, a separate IU includes not only the expression occurring alone in an IU (Chafe, 1993; Kärkkäinen, 1982) but also truncated turns where there is other material in the IU. This may be merely a terminological issue (i.e. they should be called something other than 'IU separate') but it could also be seen as a flaw in the analysis as the effect of other content in the IU may have an effect on the results (e.g. certain functions may only be performed by the expression when there is no other material in its IU). In extracts with multiple examples it can be difficult to follow which example is being discussed. This is exacerbated by the multiple functions discussed for examples and the labelling of IU-separate examples which contain other material and so appear IU-initial. However, this is a minor flaw in an otherwise informative analysis.

Distinguishing functions by IU position proves to be an effective means of distinguishing between the uses of these expressions, but a breakdown of the numbers with respect to turn position might prove equally interesting. Presenting the data from the alternative perspective (i.e. for each function, how do the expressions pattern in terms of turn/IU position?) might also offer insight because there is overlap in the functions performed in each IU position. However, the limited scope of any study may require the exclusion of these other possible analyses.

In providing in-depth discussion of the intricacies of the French phrases, Mullan introduces a number of key concepts (e.g. evidentiality, subjectivity). Discussion of the concept of evidentiality as it relates to these expressions (particularly *je trouve*) is quite theoretical and could be considered an unnecessary digression, but it assists the reader in reaching the conclusions drawn about the semantic difference between the French expressions prior to their analysis. The resultant chapter is much more explorative and theoretical than the

preceding *I think* chapter but primes the reader for the individual French expression chapters to follow.

The consistent organisation of the analysis chapters acquaints the reader with the structure and recurrent concepts, making it easier to compare across markers and to begin to see the larger picture in this comparison. However, there is no reference to the study's place in the field of discourse marker research.

In conclusion, Mullan's work provides a detailed account of the place of *I think* in Australian English interaction and *je pense, je crois* and *je trouve* in French interaction. The book provides a sound model for analysing discourse markers and similar expressions. Those interested in discourse markers, discourse analysis, and interactional analysis will find the approach thorough and effective. The cross-cultural comparison offers new insights for research in these fields and likewise new ideas for examining differences across and within languages and cultures. Mullan's work is a well-conceived, well-implemented and well-presented study which emphasises the interactional significance of these expressions.

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