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Surprise in Storytelling[1]

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Introduction

There is much debate about whether surprise is an emotion or not. For many psychologists (among whom Ekman, 2004), surprise is one of the six primary emotions. In Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988 : 32), however, it is argued that surprise is a cognitive state rather than an emotion because it does not necessarily involve a valenced reaction : "People can be surprised while being affectively neutral about the surprise-inducing situation". On this view, people who feel surprised at an unexpected event while remaining emotionally indifferent are not experiencing an emotion. My aim in this paper is not to take sides in this debate which may be more relevant to psychologists than to linguists. From a linguistic and pragmatic point of view however, there is no reason why surprise should be limited to a strictly emotional spontaneous reaction. What speakers express verbally is far from giving us direct access to their inner states and actual emotions. As shown by Caffi and Janney (1994 : 328-329), emotive communication is cognitively-mediated and embedded in social relations : "it is related to self-presentation, and it is inherently strategic, persuasive, interactional, and other-directed by its very nature". From a linguistic perspective, the focus is thus more on the way emotions are displayed and talked about than on assessing a speaker's emotional inner state.

Surprise displays appear to enter patterns which can be uncovered through an annotation scheme. Evidence suggests that surprise is related to interest, not to indifference. Emotive verbal displays of surprise will be argued to be part and parcel of a cognitive process by which new information is integrated, before being shared. However, displaying surprise, especially in storytelling, follows strict social rules. Whether participants share common expectations or not, whether they are willing to affiliate with each other or not are crucial issues for the unfolding conversation and for subsequent emotions. How the cognitive and social dimensions interact is a complex question that will be addressed in this paper.

1. Corpus data

The corpus data used for the present study are drawn from the radio programme *This American Life* and from film scripts. We looked for programmes and films where surprise episodes and surprise-related emotions are frequent, and selected two radio talks about coincidence stories and scary stories - the audio recording and the script of which are available. We obtained permission to use and annotate them for research purposes. As for films, we selected several surprise-inducing contemporary films whose subtitles are freely available on the website OpenSubtitles.

We then set out to annotate this corpus for surprise, more specifically for the discursive patterns where surprise is conveyed, as illustrated in Figure 1. The software programme chosen is Glozz[2], a programme that allows the manual annotation of both units and relations between units, which makes it possible to reveal the network of surprise-related verbal reactions. The present study is based on the manual annotation of 345 surprise utterances in 193 surprise sequences.

[1] This study is part of the Emphiline project, ANR-11-EMCO-0005. Special thanks are due to Hakima Benali, engineer, for what she made possible. The author would also like to thank the reviewers for their comments on a previous version of this paper.

[2] Glozz is an annotation platform developed by Antoine Widlöcher and Yann Mathet. It was initially designed for the ANR funded Annodis project. http ://www.glozz.org/, consulted 20 June 2017.

2. Definition of surprise reactions and surprise sequences

In our film sub-corpus, surprise arises in dialogue. Typically, surprise is occasioned by a discourse event that can be found in the preceding context. Predictably, the source of surprise appears before the reaction of surprise. However, the source of surprise cannot be equated with a mere stimulus. Nor can the verbal response be compared to a physiological startle. In psychological organismic approaches, emotion displays are regarded as "visceral" spontaneous reactions akin to physiological responses to a stimulus (Hochschild, 1979 : 551). In dialogue, what is surprising to a speaker may not be surprising to another because speakers do not necessarily have the same expectations. Surprise involves a judgment rather than a visceral response, more specifically a noncanonicity judgment, to use a term originally coined by Fillmore and defined as follows by Michaelis :

> A noncanonical situation is one whose absence a speaker would have predicted, based on a prior assumption or set of assumptions, e.g., a stereotype, a set of behavioral norms, or a model of the physical world. (Michaelis, 2001 : 1039)

The experience of surprise may vary from one individual to another, depending on past personal experience and on the social standards shared within a community. In addition, there is no one-to-one relation between the experience of surprise and the expression of surprise, which makes the analysis of surprise reactions particularly challenging for a linguist. It is perfectly possible for a speaker to express surprise without experiencing it, or vice versa to experience surprise without expressing it. Expressing surprise may be socially expected and even necessary under certain circumstances. Conversely, expressing surprise may be a source of anger if speakers have different assumptions about the world and conflicting behavioral norms.

2.1. Expression vs. description of surprise

2.1.1. A formal distinction

According to a long-standing tradition in philosophy of language and pragmatics, expression is distinguished from assertion. Among illocutionary speech acts, Searle (1969) makes a distinction between assertive speech acts, which aim to describe a state of affairs and may be judged true or false, and expressive speech acts, which represent psychological states. This distinction is commonly exploited in the study of emotions. Interjections are deemed to be devoted to the expression of emotions (*oh*, *hooray, wow*). By contrast, emotion adjectives "describe the emotion they signify" in Kövecses's terms (2000 : 2–3). Kövecses further argues that *I love you* may be used both to describe and express love. In the case of surprise, it will be argued that adjectives primarily **describe** surprise, while exclamations, interjections and other non-sentential elements **express** surprise. This distinction is supported by formal arguments. Rett and Murray (2013 : 455) put forward four distinguishing features of the expression of surprise. Consider the following utterance, borrowed from Rett and Murray :

(1) (Wow,) John arrived on time! (Rett and Murray, 2013 : 455)

Firstly, the expression of surprise is "undeniable in discourse". As pointed out by Rett and Murray, *No, you are not surprised* is not a possible reply. Only the content can be denied by the interlocutor (*No, John didn't arrive on time*).

Secondly, it is "unembeddable under negation and other sentential operators". *John didn't arrive on time!* cannot express that the speaker is not surprised that John arrived on time; *Mary said John arrived on time!* can only express the speaker's surprise that Mary said John arrived on time, not the subject's surprise that John was on time.

Thirdly, the expression of surprise is always speaker-oriented – it has an exclamation intonation and not a question intonation. Fourthly, it is subject to the recency restriction.

The first criterion, i.e. the deniability test, allows Rett (2011 : 437) to highlight an important difference between assertion and expression of surprise, namely that it is possible to confirm or deny an assertion, whereas the expression of surprise is not debatable :

(2) A : I am surprised that I won the contest.
B : Yes, you seem shocked.
(3) A : Wow, I won the contest.
B : # Yes, you seem shocked (Rett 2011 : 437).

Rett (2011 : 436-437) further argues that "while the speaker's surprise in (2) can be agreed with, a sign that it was part of the assertion, the speaker's expression of unfulfilled expectation in (3) cannot". This analysis is very close to Potts's claim that "a sincere utterance of *damn* cannot be challenged or turn out to be false" (Potts, 2005 : 157). Interestingly, formal approaches, like organismic approaches in psychology, take the expression of surprise to be an uncontrolled outburst of emotion. This distinction proves valuable in that it rightly sets apart surprise lexemes from exclamatives, interrogatives and interjections.

However, the binary distinction between description and assertion is difficult to maintain beyond the frame of a root sentence. For instance, the expression of surprise in reported speech does not fully meet the last two criteria proposed by Rett and Murray :

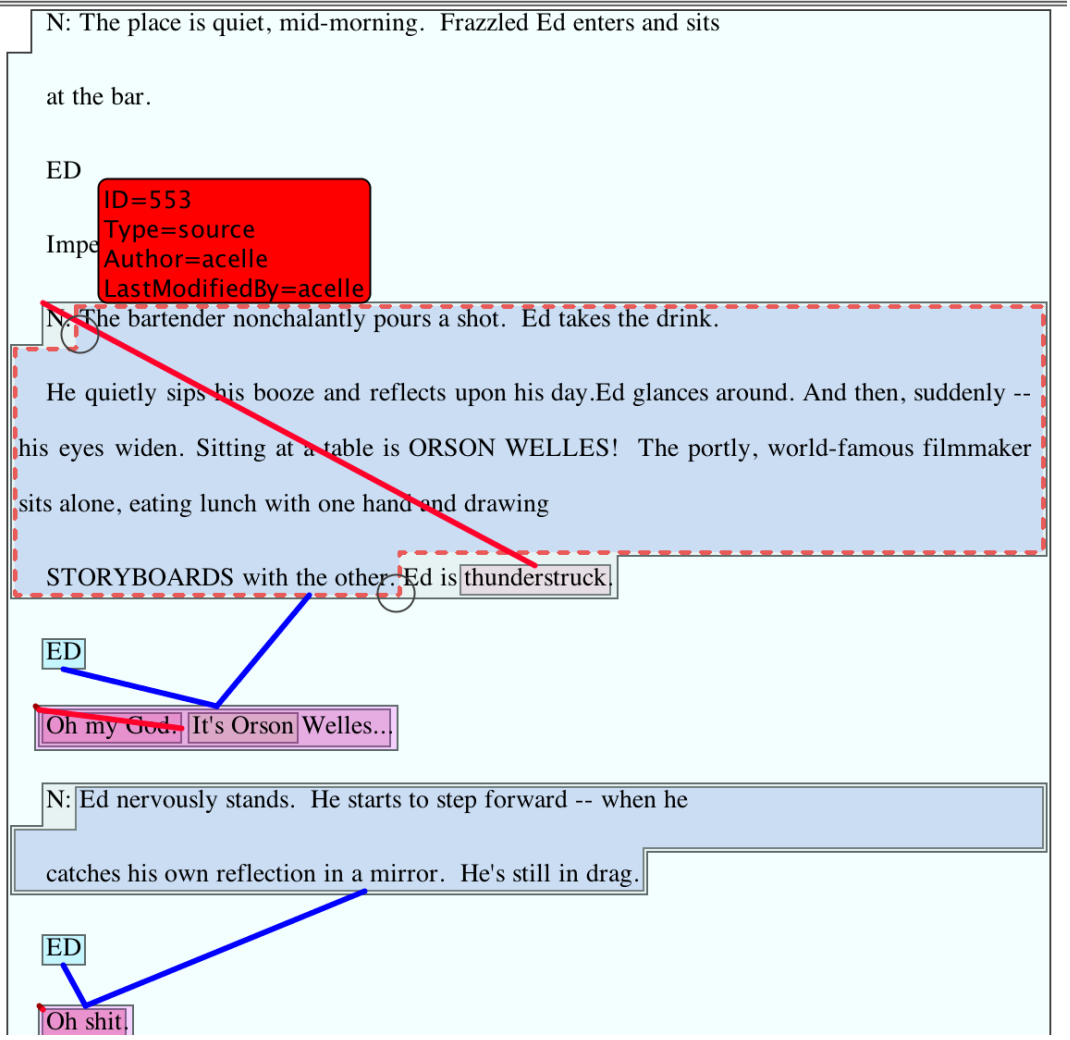
(4) So I asked her to just send me a picture of something. And it was really funny. She ended up sending me this picture of her as little kid as a joke. And I was like, **oh, yeah, that's kind of funny**. **It's not what I was expecting, but that's funny**.
(5) And I thought **oh, that's weird**.

As in a root exclamation, the embedded clause conflates the expression of surprise through an interjection (*oh*)[3] and the assertion of p (*that's kind of funny, that's weird*). And yet, being reported, the expression of surprise is indexed to a past situation even if it retains the intonation of an exclamation. In storytelling, the expression of surprise is not subject to the recency restriction, the situation referred to being a past one. This blurs the lines between expression and description.

As for immediate contexts, they do allow for a distinction to be made between expression and description. Interjections, disfluencies, silence, laughter may all express surprise, though none of these unequivocally expresses surprise. These expressions of surprise typically appear in dialogue.

Conversely, descriptive surprise lexemes are not represented in our dialogical corpus except in stage directions. In view of the large amount of surprise-related information that appears in stage directions, i.e. movement, facial expressions, and mention of other affects associated with surprise, we decided to include stage directions in our annotation scheme.

[3] Whether interjections such as *oh* or *my God* really express surprise will be addressed in section 3.1.



33% of the stage directions contain the source of surprise. This is illustrated in the following figure where two stage directions (marked in blue) are followed by exclamations (marked in pink)[4].

This is in accordance with our initial hypothesis that the description and the expression of surprise should be kept separate. Surprise lexemes are not found in spontaneous expressions of surprise, at least not in immediate contexts.

2.1.2 Distribution of utterance types

The distribution of utterance types expressing surprise varies significantly depending on the sub-corpus considered and on whether surprise is conveyed in an immediate or reported context. In the sub-corpus of film scripts, which we have annotated for the expression of surprise in dialogue, it appears that surprise is expressed in interrogatives (53%), exclamations (35%) and declaratives (12 %).

(6) ED
Why were you buying a coffin?
BELA
Because I'm planning on dying soon.
ED (*concerned*)

[4] Descriptive lexemes always appear in stage directions and not in dialogue. However, stage directions may also include expressive discourse chunks. For example, in the stage direction part in Figure 1, *Sitting at a table is ORSON WELLES!* is a reported thought having Ed as a source, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer. The surprise that is then verbally expressed in dialogue (*Oh my God! It's Orson Welles!*) is announced in the stage direction in the form of an expressive thought representation.

Really?

In the same sub-corpus, reported surprise is systematically conveyed in declarative utterances which describe surprise in assertions with either surprise lexemes or physical characteristics. Strikingly, such utterances are only found in stage directions :

(7)

Bela is wowed	Ed is dazed	He is stunned
Bela is puzzled	He is flabbergasted	Ed's eyes pop

Importantly, this descriptive lexicon is not represented at all in dialogue, where surprise is only expressed in exclamations and questions. However, the function of these utterances is not confined to expressing surprise. These utterance types are also prone to expressing other emotions that may be found associated with surprise, for example anger. In the case of anger, questions may contain evaluative adjectives (*mad, crazy, insane*) :

(8) REVEREND LEMON
This is our choir director. He's gonna play the young hero.
ED
(furious)
Are you INSANE? I'm the director! I make the casting decisions around here!

The exclamation of anger-related surprise may also take on the form of an insult :

(9) ED
I'm sorry! What did you want me to say?
DOLORES
I wanted you to say, "No! I wrote the part for my girlfriend Dolores."
ED
But there's plenty of other parts.
DOLORES
Like what?!
ED
(*nervous*)
The secretary. Or the file clerk.
Dolores is stunned.
DOLORES
YOU ASSHOLE!
She hurls a pot at Ed. WHACK! It slams him in the head.

The distribution is different in the other sub-corpus annotated for this study, i.e. in storytelling found in conversation. In the radio talks of *This American Life*, participants are invited to tell a story. Dialogue between a participant and a journalist thus incorporates a narrative structure. Although the two radio talks annotated for this study are taken from exactly the same radio programme, *This American Life*, the quantitative distribution of surprise-related utterance types is different in each radio talk. The emotional nature of the story appears to play an important role both from a narrative point of view and from an interactional point of view. Although a larger-scale study would be necessary to substantiate this claim on a firm quantitative basis, our results clearly indicate at this stage that in the case of coincidence stories (henceforth TAL 1 sub-corpus), surprise is displayed at two levels :
- at the interactional level between the journalist and the teller, in which case surprise is mostly conveyed by interrogatives :

(10) Sarah Koenig
Oh. What did you call them?
Hannah Jacoby
Poopatroopers.
Sarah Koenig
Really?
I didn't quite believe Hannah about this, but she looked it up. It's true, Poopatroopers.

(11) Blake Oliver
So I asked her to just send me a picture of something. And it was really funny. She ended up sending me this picture of her as little kid as a joke. And I was like, oh, yeah, that's kind of funny. It's not what I was expecting, but that's funny. And then I glanced back at the picture, and I saw my grandma walking through behind her.
Sarah Koenig
What?
Blake Oliver
Yeah. How crazy is that, right?
Sarah Koenig
Very crazy. The picture was taken about 18 years ago.

- at the narrative level where the teller mimics her past reaction of surprise, using interjections as re-enactment items. Interestingly, the lexicon used in reported speech in oral storytelling contains surprise lexemes as well as evaluative adjectives in declarative utterances, contrary to what can be observed in dialogue :

(11) Blake Oliver
So I asked her to just send me a picture of something. And it was really funny. She ended up sending me this picture of her as little kid as a joke. And I was like, **oh, yeah, that's kind of funny. It's not what I was expecting, but that's funny.** And then I glanced back at the picture, and I saw my grandma walking through behind her.

Clearly, reported surprise is not conveyed in the same way as in immediate contexts, where descriptive surprise lexemes are not represented.

Unlike coincidence stories, scary stories do not generally arouse a surprised response from the journalist at the interactional level. If they do, these responses are expressed by exclamatives and interjections but not by interrogatives questioning the truth of the proposition :

(12) **Michelle**
So my husband and I go. And of course, we have to wait time in the emergency room. And then we get in. And then, when we're inside, then someone comes and tells me that I live in Putnam County, and I'm in a hospital in Westchester, and that they can't give me the shots.
Alex Blumberg
Oh my God.

At the narrative level, surprise is mainly conveyed by descriptive declarative utterances in scary stories :

(13) One morning, I heard footsteps in the room over my head. I hurried up the stairs. **To my surprise, the room was empty**.

Lexical information about bodily movement may also describe fear :

(14) One night I woke up and saw, sitting on the foot of my bed, a man and a woman. The woman was young, dark and slight and wore a large picture hat. **I was paralyzed and could not move**.

The distribution of utterance types expressing surprise and fear in the sub-corpora can be summarized as follows :

Expression of surprise in the dialogical film sub-corpus

Utterance types	Interrogatives	Exclamations	Declaratives
Dialogue	53%	35%	12%
Stage directions	0%	0%	100%

Expression of surprise in storytelling in the radio sub-corpus (TAL1)

Utterance types	Interrogatives	Exclamations	Declaratives
Interactional level	63%	21%	16%
Narrative level (Reported speech)	16%	10%	74%

Expression of surprise and fear in storytelling in the radio sub-corpus (TAL2)

Utterance types	Interrogatives	Exclamations	Declaratives
Interactional level	0%	100%	0%
Narrative level (no instance of reported speech)	12%	4%	84%

Predictably, declaratives include descriptive forms (such as adjectives and surprise lexemes), whereas interrogatives and exclamatives express surprise without such lexemes. Reported speech in oral storytelling, however, is a mixed case, for it conflates expressive interjections and declarative utterances with surprise lexemes. Being both expressive and descriptive in nature, reported speech in oral storytelling is a challenge to the formal expression-description distinction.

2.2. Integration of unexpected information

From a psychological perspective, it has been argued that surprise is the briefest emotion, should surprise qualify as an emotion. In other words, surprise lacks a content of its own, as well as an opposite emotion. Linguistically, however, I argue that surprise involves a noncanonicity judgement that can take various forms in complex sequences. The expression of surprise is not encoded by a specific grammatical marker. As pointed out by DeLancey (1997 : 48), mirativity "exists only as a covert category" in English, intonation being its most tangible mark : "The mirative intonation contour is an exaggerated version of the declarative intonation, with the tonic rise considerably higher" (2001 : 377).

Displaying surprise amounts to responding to a situation that violates one's expectations. This may be achieved in two ways : either by expressing disbelief, especially in the case of a discourse event, or by attempting to make sense of a new situation. This integration of new information activates a cognitive process by which the speaker registers some discrepancy. S/he then explicitly draws the hearer's attention to it. Although this verbal response may serve different pragmatic purposes, the outcome is always some change in the speaker's assumptions, possibly in the relationship between speaker and hearer or even in the course of

subsequent actions. Depending on the nature of unexpected information, two cases may be distinguished :
a) If some unexpected event is evidence that is directly perceived by speaker and hearer, its very existence will not be challenged. The question is rather how to integrate new information and how to act in view of unexpected information. The expression of surprise then takes the form of either an imperative or an exclamation - marked in bold below- while the decision-making resulting from the cognitive integration of novelty may be expressed by various means - imperatives, questions which are underlined in the following examples :

(15) *Now entering the ring, in the gold trunks, 350 bone-crunching pounds of pure strength, the "Swedish Angel"... Tor Johnson!!! The crowd goes apeshit. The stands are going to collapse from the SHOUTING. Ed's eyes are the size of saucers.*
ED
My God, look at that guy. He's a mountain!
The bell RINGS. Tor quickly grabs his OPPONENT, a man in a blue mask, and throws him at the ground. Then Tor jumps onto his stomach, easily picks him up, and heaves him at the ropes. People CHEER. Ed is flabbergasted.
ED
I've never seen anything like him!
BUNNY
And once I'm a woman, Jean-Claude and I are getting married --
ED *(eyes glued to the ring)*
Ssh! **He's so big! He's a monster!** Can you imagine what that guy would be like in a movie?

Annotation reveals that it is only in such cases that the source of surprise is not preposed. Indeed, the expression of surprise includes the source of surprise. The presence of deictic items (such as *this*, *that*, *there*) is indicative that the source of surprise is situation-bound. New information is made available to the recipient who is invited to integrate it visually. This information is immediately processed and allows the speaker to make new plans for his next film, i.e. hiring the wrestler as an actor (*Can you imagine*...). Similarly, the expression of surprise is followed by a statement of purpose in response to an unexpected situation in the following example :

(16) *Bela rolls up his pants and wades out, into the water. He screams.*
BELA
Goddamn, it's cold!
ED
Once you're in it, it warms up.
BELA
Fuck you! You come out here.
(beat)
Hey, toss me that J.D.
A crew member throws Bela a bottle of Jack Daniels.

Even if surprise is expressed in a spontaneous reaction, it is integral to a decision-making process. Firstly, the situation is assessed as bad and potentially harmful for the speaker. Secondly, in order to cope with a situation perceived as contrary to his personal well-being, the speaker focuses on how to overcome the feeling of cold. The water being unexpectedly cold, the decision to get hold of a bottle of whiskey is supposed to help the speaker overcome the cold. The expression of surprise, albeit spontaneous, may well serve a survival-related goal. In retrospect, it may be viewed as the first step of a pragmatic relation. By making

surprise public and shared, the speaker's spontaneous response to the situation prepares the ground for his request.

b) The second type of new information that may appear is discursive. It is by far the most frequent case in dialogue, at least in our data. In that case, the source of surprise is systematically preposed. Two types of response are possible. Either the speaker challenges the veracity of new information and expresses disbelief :

(17)

Really? You got to be joking. Are you serious?	No kidding. That's incredible. Oh God, I can't believe I'm doing this?

Or the speaker tries to make sense of new information by attempting to understand its cause. This is mostly achieved in *wh*-questions, or questions introduced by antinomial *and* which conveys incongruity :

(18)

Hey Bela, **how** do you do that ? **How'd** you know? **Why** do you ask?	Jesus Christ! **And** you never told me? Ugh! **How** can you act so casual, when you're dressed like that?!

2.3. Cataphora in immediate contexts

Corpus data show that in 9% of cases, surprise is conveyed in complex sequences where participants are not on a par as regards the status of new information. To some extent, the recipient's surprise may be deliberately anticipated and sought by the speaker who is the only one to hold some information, the disclosing of which is in his / her firm control. Surprise can be detected through cataphoric elements which announce it in dialogue. Cataphora typically points forward to some fact whose verbal disclosing is consciously delayed :

(19) ED
Sweetie, you won't believe it! I've got the most incredible news!
DOLORES
(*excited*)
You got the job?!!
ED
Huh?!
(*confused*)
Oh, uh, no, I didn't get the job. But something <u>better</u> happened!
DOLORES
Better than not getting a job?
ED
Yeah! I met a movie star! Somebody really big!
DOLORES
Who? Robert Taylor?!
ED
(*annoyed*)
No! A horror movie star!
DOLORES
Boris Karloff!?
ED

Close! The other one!
DOLORES
You met Basil Rathbone!
ED
Oh, the hell with you. I met BELA LUGOSI!
DOLORES
I thought he was dead.
Ed's eyes pop.
ED
No! He's very alive. Well... sort of. He's old, and frail -- but he's still Bela Lugosi! And he's really nice.
DOLORES
Boy, I can't even remember the last time he was in a picture.

Faced with Ed's partial disclosure of supposedly surprising information, Dolores attempts to guess what occurred. She draws upon her own knowledge of Ed to infer what might run counter to his expectations. The reply made by Ed reveals a discrepancy between each one's expectations, both epistemically and morally. What is important to Ed appears completely pointless to Dolores.

A corpus of actual dialogue shows that surprise cannot be restricted to a response to a stimulus. An announcement may be carefully planned in order to reveal a piece of information, which may have far-reaching consequences on the speaker-hearer relationship. Since speaker and recipient do not share the same knowledge, they are not on an equal footing, and the recipient can only hazard a guess at what happened. But a wrong guess may reveal different moral standards and therefore occasion unforeseen emotions on the part of the instigator as specified in the stage directions (*confused, annoyed*). The surprise-inducing strategy here fails to arouse interest and admiration.

But cataphora may also point forward to some fact that the speaker fails to verbalise. By creating both an emotional tension and an expectation, cataphoric devices lead the recipient to guess a true fact that the speaker is reluctant to explicitly state. Cataphora postpones a confession and forces the recipient to deduce a true fact from visual evidence :

(20) ED
I've got a little surprise for you...
(he smiles nervously)
I finished my script.
Ed anxiously pulls out a pile of pages. Dolores looks in awe at the cover : ""GLEN OR GLENDA" By Edward D. Wood, Jr""
DOLORES
Ed, I'm so proud! I'll read it as soon as I get home.
ED
(apprehensive)
Well, I'd really like to know what you think. Why don't you go in the bedroom and take a look at it? I'll wait...
There's an uneasy moment between them. She senses something funny. Dolores takes the script and goes into the bedroom. The door closes. Ed starts pacing...
INT. BEDROOM - LATER
Dolores reads the script. She finishes the last page, then looks up. She is very shaken.
Dolores stands. She grabs the door and opens it.
THROUGH THE DOORWAY
Ed stands somberly in drag. He's in a pantsuit, heels, and pink angora sweater.
Dolores is totally rattled. She struggles for a response.
DOLORES

So that's where my sweater's been.
Ed silently nods.
DOLORES
How long have you been doing this?
ED
Since I was a kid. My mom wanted a girl, so she used to dress me in girlie clothing. It just kinda became a habit.
DOLORES
Jesus Christ! And you never told me?
ED
This is my way of telling you --
DOLORES
(furious)
What, by putting it in a fuckin' script, for everyone to see?! What kind of sick mind would operate like that?

At first sight, the metonymic use of *surprise* may be taken to point forward to the statement *I finished my script*. It soon becomes clear, however, that the source of surprise is not that fact, but the content of the script. The surprising fact that is announced, i.e., Ed being a transvestite, appears in the script he has written and is revealed by his outfit. But it is not explicitly verbalized in conversation.

Surprise is thus pragmatically exploited and staged by the use of cataphoric devices in a conversation monitored by the speaker. Rather than a naturally-occurring emotion, surprise is, as it were, inflicted on a recipient according to a timing carefully worked out by the speaker. The surprise sequence therefore spans over a long stretch of interaction delineated by cataphora at one end and the recipient's full realization at the other. Within these boundaries, we find multiple expressions of surprise[5] that manifest the recipient's ability to quickly react and adapt to an unexpected new situation. Surprise undoubtedly shapes a new interpersonal relationship.

3. Surprise in storytelling

3.1. Coincidence stories : a narrative pattern

In storytelling, the narrative potential of surprise is exploited, which is in line with the radio programme's catchphrase : "No coincidence, no stories". Radio talks are a case in point. They tell stories which are framed at two levels. Firstly they are introduced by a preface where a journalist tells the audience what the programme is about. The audience is thus informed that the stories they are about to hear are surprise-related, a coincidence being likely to induce surprise :

(21) Sarah Koenig
Before we go any further, from WBEZ Chicago, it's This American Life, distributed by Public Radio International. I'm Sarah Koenig sitting in for Ira Glass. **And you're about to hear this story the same way I did-- blind. All I know is that it's going to have a coincidence in it**.

(22) At the risk of being corny, I'm going to say it. Today's show-- no coincidence, no story. While the big man's away-- Ira's on vacation-- we're going to sneak these coincidence stories onto the air. **All the stories you'll hear today, they are verified true stories that my**

[5] We agree with Ekman (1992 : 186) that surprise is a brief emotion. Surprise sequences, however, may be long. This does not mean that surprise is a long-lasting emotion in such sequences, but rather that these sequences contain "repeated but discrete emotion episodes".

colleagues hid from me until the actual interviews so it wouldn't spoil the surprise, which is why there is so much unprofessional giggling this hour.

At the interactional level, the teller also sets a frame around the story :

(23) It happened when I was in college.
(24) So here's my story.

Given the first preface introduced by the journalist, the kind of emotional response that is sought by the teller can be anticipated by the recipients, i.e. the audience, which casts doubt on the supposed spontaneity of their emotional reaction.

Predictably, surprise displays appear at both levels, that is, in the journalist's responses to a story – in which case the journalist is the recipient - and in the story reported by a teller – in which case some participant in a past situation was the recipient. In order to ascertain whether these surprise displays are similar or not, we extracted the two sub-categories and compared them.

To a certain extent, the two sub-categories appear not to have the same characteristics[6]. As stories are being told, they are punctuated by surprise interjections from the journalist such as *Oh my God!*. By contrast, surprise experienced by some participant in a past situation, possibly the teller herself, is described by surprise lexemes and metaphors :

(25) I was speechless for the first time ever.
(26) Our hearts just sort of dropped.
(27) I'm confused all of a sudden.

In order to determine the function of surprise in storytelling, it is worth examining what comes on completion of a story. Interestingly, while recipients respond with interjections throughout a story, a shift can be observed in the final part of a story, once the surprising event has been disclosed. At that stage, we find epistemic and evaluative markers which aim to reconsider the unlikelihood of a surprising event :

(28) Blake Oliver
Like, what are the chances to think that not only did I meet Cami, but she sends me this picture of her in the background, of my grandma?
Sarah Koenig
I don't know what the chances are. Minuscule !
Blake Oliver
It's **insane**. **Right**?
Sarah Koenig
Yes.
Blake Oliver
It's **crazy**.

The experience of surprise is shared as the journalist-recipient confirms the discrepancy between the unlikelihood of an event and what actually happened. This reflexive epistemic assessment has a social function. There is always a moral to a story and the teller makes sure that the recipient shares her moral standards[7].

[6] The similarities between the two sub-categories in terms of expressivity will be addressed in section 3.2.

[7] The adjective *insane* in this reflexive assessment of the surprising character of a story serves an affiliative function, which is made possible by the interrogative context, as noted by an anonymous referee. Using *right* in an interrogative utterance that follows an assertive statement, the speaker makes sure that the recipient confirms his appraisal. Likewise in (29), *how crazy is that?* is formally an interrogative utterance characterized by subject-

The semantic field of insanity is represented by lexemes such as *insane, crazy, mad* :

(29) How crazy is that? Yeah.

These adjectives are used both as evaluative and as emotive adjectives. On the one hand, they provide a noncanonicity judgement about the coincidence story; on the other, they are intended to provoke an emotive reaction from the recipient who is being asked to confirm the speaker's appraisal of the situation. Indeed, these adjectives signal that the teller seeks the recipient's affiliation, which will validate her own moral standards.

Alternatively, the recipient's affiliation can be marked by other surprise lexemes, such as *shocked* :

(30) I'm shocked by this story.

As shown by Couper-Kuhlen (2012), interjections may express affiliation, but it very much depends on where they appear in a narrative. As a story is being told, interjections suffice to mark affiliation. Interjections such as *Oh my God!* express the recipient's surprise and affiliation, provided they are repeated throughout the story. Once a story has been told, however, an interjection would not be enough to convey the recipient's affiliation. Descriptive lexical elements are put into service at that stage for the recipient to display a heightened emotive involvement.

3.2. Expressivity vs. expression

One of the most unexpected findings of this study is that embedded surprise displays in a narrative are similar to surprise displays in an immediate context in terms of expressivity. In reported direct speech chunks, interjections are as frequent as in immediate contexts. This raises a theoretical problem. In storytelling, surprise displays look like mixed forms. On the one hand, they are instances of direct speech if we rely on criteria used in written discourse. They may have an exclamation intonation and as such be deemed speaker-oriented. On the other hand, they do not fulfill two of the criteria put forward by Rett to define the expression of surprise :

(31) And he's like, **oh, well, I'm Chris. I'm your father. I met you 10 years ago**. And I was like **oh, holy [BLEEP].**
(32) We were walking along, and some people passed in front of us. And my mom said, **oh my God, Raoul?** And then she turned to me and said, **that's your father. That's your dad**. And it was.

In (31), the speaker reproduces her past experience of surprise occasioned by her coincidental encounter with her father. In the second example, the experiencer is the mother and her surprise is mimicked by her daughter, i.e. the speaker.

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auxiliary inversion. And yet, it is not an informative question about some undetermined degree of craziness, but an exclamation about the high degree of craziness associated with the story being told that the recipient is invited to confirm. Note that the same adjective serves a completely different function in an immediate context where surprise is experienced only by the speaker, as in (8). In a spontaneous reaction to a situation considered deviant by the speaker as opposed to the addressee, a question about the addressee's supposed insanity is tantamount to an insulting way of expressing disbelief. This difference in the pragmatic use of the same lexeme suggests that an annotation scheme cannot rely solely on the lexicon and should include utterance types at the pragmatic level as well as semantic relations establishing who experiences emotion and who does not. Where such adjectives are used in a surprise sequence is also a relevant parameter.

The expression of surprise in direct reported speech violates the recency restriction. In addition, the expression of surprise need not be speaker-oriented, as illustrated in the second example. The question mark following the interjection "Oh my God, Raoul?" indicates that the expression of surprise is addressee-oriented. As for (31), it is not quite clear who is addressed by the interjection *oh, holy!* It may be self-addressed, but it may also address either the father in the past situation. It may even not have been originally pronounced and simply function as a surprise token enacting surprise in dialogue.

Formal treatments of surprise inspired by the speech act theory tend to equate the expression of surprise with the experience of surprise and fail to account for the expression of surprise in non root contexts. The expression of surprise in reported speech reveals that expressivity may not coincide with the speaker's experience of surprise at the time of utterance. It is no coincidence that emotion-laden reported speech is often introduced by *like* as in (31). *Like* is primarily a preposition that marks comparison and similarity. In spontaneous spoken English, it is frequently used as a marker of approximation. In (31), *like* introduces a stretch of direct speech (*oh, well, I'm Chris. I'm your father. I met you 10 years ago*) and then an emotion (*oh, holy*…) which may not correspond to a stretch of direct speech actually uttered in the past situation. No content is associated to this interjection which is only indicative of the speaker's emotional state. Rather than a true quotative committing the speaker to a reported speech act, *like* is an enactment[8] marker (see Fox and Robles, 2010) that puts the speaker's emotional state to centre stage for the sake of expressivity in dialogue. At the same time, the interjection – or the stretch of direct speech or thought – introduced by *like* is a highly conventionalized one, as pointed out by Ferrara and Bell :

> The prototypical case of "be + like" is a theatrical, highly conventionalized utterance which makes the inner state transparent to the audience. (K. Ferrara and B. Bell, quoted by Fox and Robles, 2010 : 717)

The purpose of this conventionalized construction is to focus on a highly incongruous situation.

The most salient characteristic of expressive reported speech chunks is the use of interjections. Interjections may be used as surprise tokens because, as Goddard (2013 : 3) points out, "interjections show rather than say". They do not describe emotions. However, it is important to stress again that interjections are not a universal natural response to a stimulus.

Even in an immediate context, "primary interjections cannot simply be natural responses of the human animal, because the same noises are not found in every language". Goddard (2013 : 3) Goddard has shown that *wow, gee, yikes, boy,* which are all surprise-related in English, are not used randomly[9]. In other words, interjections may function as surprise tokens and contribute to enacting surprise. Tellers may model a reaction of surprise in a conscious and deliberate manner in order to share their experience. In turn, recipients deliver a surprised receipt that encourages tellers to proceed with their storytelling.

Interjections may be used as ready-made surprise tokens. But they are not uncontrolled visceral responses. It has been claimed by Goffman (1978) that "response cries" are socially organized, even if they "externalize a presumed inward state". Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2006) go further in an attempt to "detach the psychology of surprise from its social expression". They contend that the expression of surprise is in fact an interactionally achieved

[8] See also Legallois et François (2012) who define quotative *like* as a mimetic expressive.

[9] According to Goddard (2013), *wow* is compatible with a context that is positively evaluated, *gee* indicates that the speaker is both taken aback and interested, *gosh* marks momentary bewilderment, and *yikes* indicates a bad feeling in response to an unexpected event evaluated negatively.

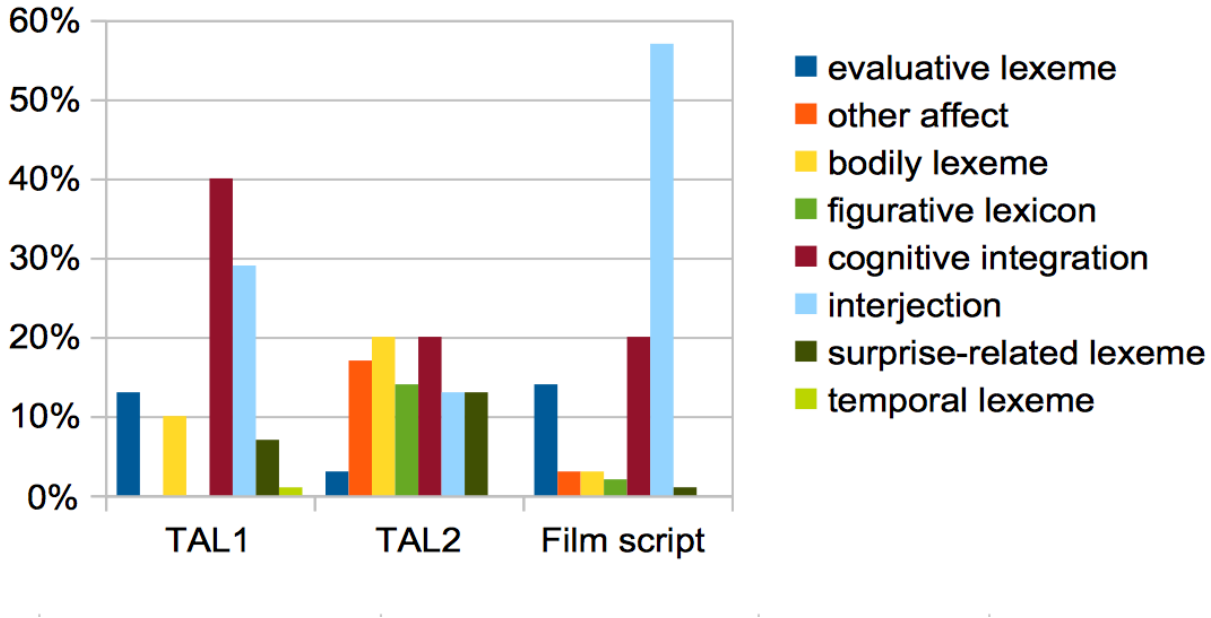
performance. This social dimension is doubtless present in storytelling. As shown by Wilkinson and Kitzinger, surprise performances often take the form of a display of ritualized disbelief.

Expressivity may be viewed as part of a social setting where storytelling is designed to induce surprise. Expressive tokens are conventionalized items that do not necessarily reflect the speaker's actual inner state.

3.4. Surprise vs. fear

Scary stories were expected to be similar to coincidence stories with respect to journalist-teller interaction. And yet, we found fewer surprise reactions in scary stories and surprise displays were not as expressive. Additionally, lexemes related to physical reactions and bodily movement (*hurried up, big and startled eyes, paralysed, not move, no one spoke, screaming, running, her expression changed, pained…*) as well as other affects (*distraught, scared, scariest, crying, angry*…) were found to be more frequent in scary stories. The distribution of the lexicon between the 3 sub-corpora is represented in the following charts :

	TAL1	TAL2	Film script
evaluative lexeme	13%	3%	14%
other affect	0%	17%	3%
bodily lexeme	10%	20%	3%
figurative lexicon	0%	14%	2%
cognitive integration	40%	20%	20%
interjection	29%	13%	57%
surprise-related lexeme	7%	13%	1%
temporal lexeme	1%	0%	0%



Distribution of the lexicon in the subcorpora

The reason for this difference may lie in the fact that the source of fear turns out to be rationally explainable, and therefore emotionally disappointing. For example, a supposedly true ghost story turns out to be a case of carbon monoxide poisoning :

> (33) **What's amazing about this story is what a completely traditional ghost story it is**. I feel like everything that happens to them, I've heard in some ghost story at some point or another. And then **it turns out to be carbon monoxide poisoning**. And I have got to say, **I can't tell if I feel sort of relieved that there's a totally rational explanation or kind of disappointed**.

Or a scary situation turns out to be a joke made by the teller's father :

> (34) It was completely black. I remember whispering, "Hello? Is there anybody home?" And all of a sudden, in the stairwell, the shape of a man and what I saw later was a baseball bat-- but could have been anything to me at the time-- reared up out of the dark stairwell. **And that's**

when I knew I was dead, murdered, mutilated, something horrible. And I dropped to the ground-- apparently without even a yelp of protest, pretty much just a whimper-- into fetal position. I heard laughing. And the light turned on.
It was my dad. This was his idea of a joke. And then later he claimed that it was a character-building test, and that now I knew myself better. I knew that I needed to be prepared for being mugged or attacked in the dark because I didn't even try to defend myself. **But that moment when my dad reared up on the stairs-- and it could have been just about anybody-- was one of the scariest moments of my life.**

In both examples, fear results from an error of judgment[10]. The physical and psychological dimension of fear is described in the latter example, where the physical manifestations of fear are triggered by the teller's mental state. When the teller's anticipation proves wrong, surprise puts an end to the sense of fear and causes a collision of disappointment and relief, both on the teller's part and on the recipient's part, because the recipient's narrative expectations may not be completely fulfilled. Scary stories are expressive when what is reported runs counter to accepted standards. This is illustrated in the following example :

(35) So my husband and I go. And of course, we have to wait time in the emergency room. And then we get in. And then, when we're inside, then someone comes and tells me that I live in Putnam County, and I'm in a hospital in Westchester, and that they can't give me the shots.
Alex Blumberg
Oh my God.

Here, the recipient's expressive reaction is caused by the unexpected failure of the US health care system to properly handle an emergency case after an attack by a rabies-infected raccoon, as explained in the following comment :

(36) Alex Blumberg
You survived the attack by the raccoon. You survived hitting it over the head with a tire iron 50 times. And then the thing that finally brought you to your knees was the US health care system.

An error of judgment may induce relief or disappointment on the teller's part, but it is not enough for the recipient to express surprise. A reaction of affiliation is only expressed if the recipient's expectations are violated.

Surprise appears to be a resource for interaction. An event that violates expectations is worth telling because it invites co-participants to test and revise prior assumptions and to socially affiliate with each other.

Conclusion

We hope to have shown that surprise sequences can be defined as discursive scenarios. In addition, the expression of surprise in storytelling presents a strong challenge to the expression-expressivity equivalence. Far from being insincere speech acts, surprise displays in storytelling mimic emotional reactions of surprise. Surprise is displayed according to social norms, independently of the individual's actual emotional state. Even if surprise may correspond to a personal subjective experience, the way it is displayed and reported in interaction obeys social rules. These findings are in line with both Plantin's claim that emotion in general is linguistically meaningful and with Wilkinson and Kitzinger's (2006)

[10] Fear is not assumed to always result from an error of judgment. However, in storytelling, it is noteworthy that reported stories imply a discrepancy between the teller's fear-inducing wrong anticipation and reality. This ensures the story's tellability.

theory that surprise in particular is socially meaningful. Rather than the expression of an emotional experience, surprise displays are indeed a social performance. Surprise may be considered to be a resource for interaction because it violates the participants' epistemic expectations and challenges their moral standards. The integration of unexpected new information relies on the recipients' ability to make a cognitive update and requires that they respond and adapt according to social standards, whatever their actual emotional state.

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