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KEYNOTE LECTURE

The Statistical Interface of Grammar and Semantics in the Domain of Emotions

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The semantic description of emotion terms presents a special challenge since emotions are subjective, not directly observable, and do not lend themselves to prototype analysis. Psychological experiments on the mutual similarity of emotions and the labelling of facial expressions suggest a circumplex set of relationships defined by valency (negative vs. positive) and intensity of emotions. But two questions arise: 1) How do we distinguish among apparent synonyms, such as *joy*, *delight*, *happiness*, *bliss*? and 2) How do we distinguish between emotions with similar valency and intensity, such as *anger* and *fear* (both negative and intense)? The distribution of grammatical categories offers a supplementary perspective on this (and potentially any other) semantic field. The relative frequencies of grammatical case in the SYN2015 and SYN2020 corpora of Czech for 65 relevant high-frequency nouns reveal a strikingly different view of the landscape of emotion. In this view emotion terms are placed according to their affinity to or repulsion from the cases, which serve as proxies for abstract metaphorical roles, such as Nominative agents, Genitive contents, and Locative locations. This statistical approach separates synonyms, shows how dissimilar emotions may behave similarly, and furthermore serves to pinpoint strategic items for further collocational analysis. We will also address some big-picture issues, such as the semantic contribution of grammar and the chimera of emotions expressed by chatbots.