

Appropriateness in discourse: The adjectives *surprised* and *surprising* in monologue and dialogue

Ilka Mindt

University of Würzburg, English Linguistics, Neuphilologisches Institut, Universität Würzburg,
Am Hubland, D-97074 Würzburg, Germany

Received 22 March 2007; received in revised form 14 February 2008; accepted 22 April 2008

Abstract

This paper addresses the notion of appropriateness in discourse. Its aim is two-fold: first, to apply the theoretical concept of appropriateness to data taken from the British National Corpus and second, to discuss the connection between discourse types (monologue vs. dialogue) and the evaluation of appropriateness.

The quantitative distribution of *surprised* + *that*-clause and *surprising* + *that*-clause in discourse reveals clear preferences in usage: whereas *surprised* + *that*-clause is found more frequently in dialogical contexts, *surprising* + *that*-clause typically occurs in discourse settings close to monologues. A qualitative analysis in terms of speech act theory demonstrates that the locutionary acts of both realizations are essentially the same but the illocutionary acts are different: whereas *surprised* + *that*-clause expresses an emotion, *surprising* + *that*-clause conveys a judgement.

© 2008 Published by Elsevier B.V.

Keywords: Appropriateness; Monologue; Dialogue; Frequency; Speech acts; Extraposition

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the concept of appropriateness as outlined by Fetzer (2004), which will be applied to different types of discourse. The focus will be on two adjectives followed by a *that*-clause as shown in (1) and (2).

- (1) *I'm surprised that* you have never remarried. (H97 3497)¹
- (2) *It is surprising that* markets did not react sooner to this. (ABJ 3486)

E-mail address: mindt@uni-wuerzburg.de.

¹ The information given in brackets after each example refers to the categories and the S-units as found in the BNC World edition.

The two adjectives *surprised* and *surprising* convey the same semantic meaning in that both express a degree of unexpectedness. Although the adjectives are quasi-synonymous, they occur in different linguistic contexts and have distinct co-occurrence patterns. The aim of this paper is to investigate how *surprised* + *that*-clause and *surprising* + *that*-clause are distributed among two types of discourse and how this relates to the evaluation of appropriateness.

In section 2 the notion of appropriateness will be introduced together with the corpus used for this study. Three aspects are important for the evaluation of appropriateness. They are considered in the subsequent sections: the linguistic realization, the linguistic context in terms of two discourse types, and the communicative action. The evaluation of appropriateness depends on these three aspects and will be carried out in section 6.

2. Introducing appropriateness

Appropriateness as introduced by Fetzer (2004) is a pragmatic concept. In terms of its use, it is either a “common-sense notion” or a “theoretical construct” (2004:89). The pragmatic concept of appropriateness is “anchored to speaker, hearer, communicative intention, communicative act, linguistic representation and context.” (2004:20). Appropriateness as a common-sense notion “refers to the product of a process of evaluation based on the nature of the connectedness between coparticipants, communicative actions and their linguistic realizations in linguistic and sociocultural contexts” (2004:89). As a theoretical construct, appropriateness is “a relational concept” (2004:89) which depends not only on speakers and hearers, on communicative actions and on communicative genres, but also on the “norms and strategies of a speech community.” (2004:89).

The appropriateness of an utterance can be evaluated “with regard to the nature of the connectedness between a communicative action, its linguistic realization and its embeddedness in linguistic and social contexts.” (2004:19–20). Three important aspects have to be considered in order to evaluate appropriateness:

- a. the linguistic realization,
- b. the linguistic and social context, and
- c. the communicative action.

Each of these three aspects will be dealt with in turn, starting with the linguistic realization in section 3, the linguistic and social context in 4, and lastly the communicative action in section 5.

This paper applies the theoretical construct of appropriateness to discourse and thereby demonstrates its value as a pragmatic concept by making use of examples taken from the British National Corpus (BNC). The BNC comprises 100 million words and consists of written and spoken British English from the later part of the 20th century. It covers many different styles and varieties of texts, such as scientific or imaginative ones. The BNC is a finite and balanced corpus which has been designed to be representative of the English language.

The appropriateness of an utterance is distinguished from its grammaticality, well-formedness, and acceptability (for more details see Fetzer, 2004). Grammaticality relates to sentences “produced in accordance with the rules of a grammar” (Fetzer, 2004:13), well-formedness “is anchored to the domain of linguistic form and to the domain of comprehensibility” (2004:15), and acceptability is an “empirical construct” (2004:19) that “is evaluated with regard to the nature of the connectedness between linguistic form, sequential position and social context” (2004:20). The problem of grammaticality and acceptability has

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/933897>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/933897>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)