Emotions *do* enter grammar because grammar is meaningful

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Abstract. In this discussion note on the focus paper by Martina Wiltschko, entitled 'Emotions do not enter grammar because they are constructed (by grammar)', six theses are selected for discussion. I agree in general terms with Wiltschko's claims that emotions are constructed, that emotion words are folk-psychological, and that there are no dedicated grammatical categories for expressing emotions. However, I find Wiltschko's core claims that emotions do not enter grammar, because they are constructed by grammar and because they are constructed by the same cognitive architecture that generates complex linguistic expressions, to be overstated and problematic. After discussing Wiltschko's understanding of the basic notions of grammar, meaning, and emotion, I argue that: (i) emotions do enter grammar, albeit in less fixed, secondary, and more flexible ways; (ii) grammar plays an efficient *constructional* role in emotional meaning-making, through dynamic sets of form-meaning pairings; and (iii) emotions enter grammar and grammar *perspectivally* constructs emotions, through cognitive abilities such as construal, (inter)subjectification, and figurativity.

Keywords: emotion, cognition, culture, grammar, emotional meaning, conceptualization, construal, embodiment, situatedness, figurativity

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, Martina Wiltschko has developed a new formal and typological approach to the universal structure of grammatical categories, especially clause structure, and to the grammar of language interaction. By integrating both propositional and interactional aspects of language under a unified grammatical structure, she reinforces generative notions of Universal Grammar (Wiltschko 2014, 2021). As a natural development of her broad and promising linguistic research, and in line with the growing interdisciplinary interest in emotion within the huma-

nities and cognitive science, known as the 'affective revolution' (Davidson et al. 2003), the 'affective turn' (Dukes et al. 2021), or the 'emotional turn' (Damasio 1994), in her 2024 focus paper 'Emotions do not enter grammar because they are constructed (by grammar)' Wiltschko addresses the question of whether and how the human capacity to experience emotions, what she proposes to call *emotionality*, can be integrated into her formally and typologically grounded theory.

By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue among the language sciences, the affective sciences, and the cognitive sciences, and by seeking intersections between different theoretical models of language, namely generative linguistics and cognitive linguistics, Wiltschko advances an ambitious and challenging proposal, as a focus paper should, on the relation between language and emotion. In this discussion note, I discuss the following theses from Wiltschko's (2024) focus paper, developed from a not entirely explicit generative perspective:

(1) Emotions are constructed.
(2) Emotion words are not universal but folk-psychological.
(3) There are no grammatical categories dedicated to the expression of emotions, i.e. the expression of emotions makes use of already existing linguistic means.
(4) Emotions do not enter grammar(s).
(5) Emotions do not enter grammar because they are constructed by grammar.
(6) Emotions do not enter grammar because they are constructed by the same cognitive architecture that generates complex linguistic expressions.

While I agree in general terms with the first three theses – though they deserve some critical qualification, as I will show in Section 2 – the last three, which constitute the core of Wiltschko's proposal, are more problematic and, in my view, less acceptable, perhaps even untenable. I will argue against them in Section 4, after discussing Wiltschko's understanding of the basic notions of grammar, meaning, and emotion – concepts that are essential for any study of the relation between language and emotions – in Section 3.

2. Points of agreement, with some critical remarks

2.1. Emotions are constructed

There are two opposing views on the nature of emotions in the psychological, linguistic, and philosophical literature on affectivity and emotions. The first is the older and more popular *Basic Emotion Theory* (BET), with roots in classical philosophy, modern development in the works of Darwin and James, and more recently, of psychologists such as Ekman (1972, 1992, 1994). The second is the more recent *Theory of Constructed Emotion* (TCE), primarily associated with the work of Barrett and colleagues (Barrett 2017a, 2017b). Basic Emotion Theory claims that there is a small set of *basic* emotions (e.g., anger, fear, shame, happiness, sadness, etc.), although there is no consensus on the exact list. These are discrete, natural kinds shaped by biological evolution and therefore primitive, innate, and universal. By contrast, the Theory of Constructed Emotion emphasizes the constructed nature of emotions, viewed as built from a complex and dynamic set of components and co-constructed through language and culture. Accordingly, psychologists supporting the constructionist view on emotions do not treat them as fixed entities but as inherently situational, individual, and culturally dependent (Mesquita 2022;

Barrett & Lida 2024; Dukes & Sander 2024; Barrett et al. 2025; Hoemann et al. 2025). This controversy in the affective sciences mirrors the debate in linguistics between those who defend innate linguistic universals, i.e., the hypothesis of an innate Universal Grammar (generative linguistics, e.g., Chomsky 2000), and those who stress cognitive grounding and diversity in language (i.e., cognitive and functional linguistics, e.g., Evans & Levinson 2009; Dąbrowska 2015).

In her focus article, Wiltschko (2024) rightly rejects the theory of basic emotions, reinforcing two well-known and unquestionable language-based arguments against Basic Emotion Theory (BET): the cross-linguistic diversity of so-called basic emotions, and the crucial role that language plays in our experience and understanding of emotions (p. 7). Somewhat surprisingly, however, she not only firmly rejects BET but also explicitly subscribes to a constructionist perspective on emotions – an alignment that seems somewhat at odds with her fundamentally generative orientation, which is more congenial to the assumption of innate emotions, as in BET. Nonetheless, Wiltschko's (2024) endorsement of the principle of constructed emotions – and especially of what she calls "a novel language-based argument for the theory of constructed emotions" introduced in her focus paper (p. 7) – is articulated in a fundamentally generative manner. She does not explore how emotions are constructed lexically ("[my argument] goes beyond words denoting emotion concepts", p. 7) – which would inevitably require a contextualist analysis of emotional meaning-making. Rather, Wiltschko turns to grammar (specifically syntax, her "central component") to identify a highly general and abstract principle, presented in a quasi-mathematical format (see Figures 4–6, pp. 38–41): namely, grammar's property of *hierarchical compositionality* (Section 5 of the focus paper). This is, for her, the "universal cognitive architecture" responsible both for the construction of sentences and for the construction of emotions, the property that "generates hierarchical complexity in language [and emotions]" (p. 37). I will discuss this central thesis in greater detail in Section 4.

Wiltschko's response to the essential question she formulates, i.e., "emotions are constructed, but how?" (p. 34), thus focuses on formalist and generativist processes of compositionality, recursion, and hierarchy. Yet, emotions are not constructed in a static, internal, or top-down manner. Rather, they emerge dynamically, adaptively, and in constant grounding within the contexts in which we experience/use them. Emotional experience and meaning are achieved through continuous engagement with the physical, social, cultural, and linguistic environment. It is therefore not sufficient to say that emotions are constructed; one must show *how* they are dynamically constructed in each particular context (or set of contexts) and how they are inherently situated and variable (see Soares da Silva 2025).

2.2. Emotion words are folk-psychological

Referring to Wierzbicka (1999), Wiltschko (2024) notes that "emotion words available in the languages of the world merely correspond to the folk-psychological conceptions of individual emotions and consequently there are significant cross-linguistic differences" (p. 45). She further argues that "any approach that seeks to identify universal physiological, psychological, and cognitive correlates of a particular emotion as named by a word is bound to fail" (ibid.). Indeed, emotion words have no universal definitions, and emotion categories do not correspond to invariant experiences. The experience of any given emotion is situated in its context and therefore varies both across and within individuals.

Two remarks are in order regarding Wiltschko's thesis. First, the culturally shaped 'folk psychology' of emotions (see D'Andrade's 1987 seminal study) or *cultural models of emotions* is not confined to emotion words, but cuts across all linguistic expressions of emotion: phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and discursive (see Foolen 2012, 2016; Majid 2012; Soriano 2022 for overviews). Indeed, all emotional constructions in language convey emotional meaning, and emotional meaning is embedded in all our experiences. Second, the cultural variability of emotions arises not only cross-linguistically, between (highly) divergent, genetically unrelated languages and historically and geographically distant cultures, as is more commonly studied (e.g., Matsumoto et al. 2010 and Ogarkova & Soriano 2014 on anger), in which differences in conceptualization and emotional expression are easier to detect. Rather, cultural variability also becomes manifest *intra*-linguistically, between varieties of the same language (see Soares da Silva 2020, 2021, 2022 on anger and pride in European vs. Brazilian Portuguese).

2.3. No dedicated linguistic means for expressing emotions

Wiltschko (2024) claims that "there are no means that are dedicated to expressing emotions only" (p. 2) and, more specifically, that "there are no grammatical categories dedicated to the expression of emotions" (Section 3.2). While acknowledging that it is empirically impossible to prove the non-existence of a language category, Wiltschko supports her claim with evidence from the typological literature, the standard inventories of grammatical categories (including the Leipzig glossing rules), and a discussion of a set of "apparent counterexamples": miratives, exclamatives, optatives, desideratives, frustratives, constructions expressing fear, evaluative morphology (especially diminutives and augmentatives), commiseratives, and interjections. Within the scope of this discussion note, there is no space to comment in detail on Wiltschko's treatment of these "apparent counterexamples". In broad terms, I agree with her thesis of there being "no dedicated means", as well as with the idea that the expression of emotions "exploits existing means" (p. 13). However, I strongly disagree with the implications or corollaries Wiltschko draws from this thesis, as I will show in Section 4.

It is indeed unlikely that there are grammatical categories *primarily and exclusively* dedicated to expressing emotions, the same way as specific and clearly meaningful categories, such as number, tense, or aspect. Among the reasons for this absence – a relevant issue that cannot be developed here – are the context-dependent, often communicatively non-essential, and systematically variable nature of emotions, as well as the fact that emotions in language are often *shown* rather than *said* (following Wittgenstein 1963, emotions are not hidden mental objects or physical sensations but are instead defined by their public expressions and social contexts, understood through language games within a particular form of life). Still, this absence does not prevent languages from constructing and expressing our full range of emotional experiences in highly efficient and intelligible ways through all available linguistic means, including diverse and specific ones, which may be more or less grammaticalized. In other words, we can express individual and collective emotional experiences effectively through lexical, grammatical, and discursive resources, without the need for grammatical categories existing solely for that purpose. A crucial factor in this process is the *meaningfulness of grammar*, which inherently involves a potential for affectivity and emotionality.

3. (Re)defining grammar, meaning, and emotions

Before engaging with the most critical points of Wiltschko's (2024) proposal, it is necessary to clarify the notions of *grammar*, *(emotional) meaning*, and *emotion* – all essential for understanding both her theses and the relation between language and emotion. In the interdisciplinary context of affective sciences and linguistics, Wiltschko appropriately devotes Section 2 of her focus paper to defining emotions, language, and the relation between the two. However, somewhat surprisingly, she does not clarify what she understands by grammar or linguistic meaning.

Indeed, Wiltschko does not present an explicit definition of grammar, nor does she specify what dimensions of language she considers grammatical. From her (implicit) generativist stance, her identification of "apparent counterexamples" to her principle of "no grammatical categories dedicated to the expression of emotions" and her reliance on hierarchical compositionality as the underlying mechanism for "the construction of complex linguistic expressions" (p. 3), we can infer that she confines grammar to syntax. She assumes the formalist principle of *full compositionality*, treating classes of words and morphemes, what she calls "grammatical categories" (p. 14), as "the fundamental building blocks of grammar" (ibid.). These are to be understood as discrete units that can be stacked in various arrangements to form complex expressions, which are fully determined by their constituent units and the ways they combine (i.e., "the interpretation of a complex expression depends on its constituent parts and the way they are combined, where grammar is responsible for this combinatorial aspect", p. 13; "What is at the root of infinity in language is *compositionality* and *recursion*", p. 36).

Thus, Wiltschko assumes the main features of mainstream generative linguistics: the centrality of syntax and its computational nature, formalism, modularity – along with the relative neglect of semantics – and the separation between grammar (rules and regularities, i.e., the 'core') and the lexicon (idiosyncratic, idiomatic, i.e., the 'periphery'– "words are always language-specific and do not straightforwardly reflect universal aspects of human cognition and/or emotions", p. 8). In this view, grammar appears as a sterile formal system, a computational device operating over contentless symbols, through which "compositionality, recursion, and hierarchy" are taken as the fundamental properties of both *linguisticality* and *emotionality* (p. 36; "If indeed Grammar is the property of our linguisticality that is responsible for hierarchical composition, then we might reasonably propose that this architecture is also utilized for our emotionality", p. 35). On this basis, Wiltschko defends the claim that emotions do not enter grammar.

By contrast, as extensively demonstrated by Cognitive Grammar (e.g., Langacker 2008) and Construction Grammar (e.g., Goldberg 1995; Croft 2001; Diessel 2019), grammar is symbolic and meaningful in nature. It is a system of conceptual structuring and symbolization that involves general cognitive abilities (e.g., perception, memory, categorization), encyclopedic knowledge of the world, and imaginative abilities. It consists of a vast and structured inventory of conventional *constructions* (i.e., pairings of form and meaning shared by a linguistic community) which vary in symbolic complexity and schematicity. Three fundamental consequences follow from this. First, the meaningfulness of grammar, in the sense that grammatical constructions carry semantic information on top of the semantic information contained in the words forming them. Second, the grammar-lexicon (or syntax-lexicon) continuum, meaning that instead of positing two clearly distinct levels of lexicon and syntax, constructions form a continuum, from the morpheme, through the word, collocation, phrase, to the sentence, and beyond; similarly, a con-

tinuum without a clear boundary exists on this view between semantics and pragmatics. Finally, the principle of only partial compositionality, in the sense that while the semantics of parts contributes to the meaning of the whole, this contribution is not viewed as determining it in full.

In line with her grammar vs. lexicon dichotomy, Wiltschko posits a qualitative distinction between lexical meaning, which she takes to "denote concepts", and grammatical meaning, which, though it "may be grounded in certain (typically abstract) conceptual meanings (like time, location, number, and questionhood), typically does not display the same range of meaning that lexical categories within the same conceptual space do", understanding that "the meaning of grammatical categories is often characterized through contrastive oppositions" (p. 15). Yet, although grammatical meaning is indeed generally more abstract than lexical meaning, both share the same dynamically conceptual and interactional nature. That is, grammatical meaning also resides in processes of *conceptualization*. Crucially, this constitutes a dynamic process grounded in social interaction, negotiated by interlocutors when exchanging turns in conversation or producing any utterance.

Wiltschko (2014) further claims (citing Frege) that "emotive meaning is fundamentally different from representational meaning" (p. 13), the latter being identified with truth-conditional meaning, while expressive language follows a different logic from representational language. Beyond the problems with the *objectivist* conception of representational, truth-conditional meaning (viewed as transcendent, independent of cognition or social interaction), Wiltschko identifies *emotive* meaning with Frege's "emotive *Färbung* ('coloring')", i.e., the affective connotational meaning of linguistic expressions not primarily intended to denote emotions. This is consistent with her thesis of there being "no dedicated linguistic means", and therefore, speakers rely on the affective use of existing grammatical and lexical resources to express emotional content. Yet, Wiltschko does not recognize that *emotive* meaning can correspond not only to the non-denotational, non-referential, or connotational meaning of linguistic expressions but also to their denotational or referential meaning. Although these are two different modes of constructing and expressing emotions (one more inferential and *communicative*, the other more descriptive and *conceptual*, but both meaningful), both connotation and denotation are productive loci of emotion in language, both in the lexicon and in grammar – although with some preferential tendencies (e.g., connotation as psychologically more effective, Besnier 1990, denotation as more directly lexicalized).

An even more relevant aspect of emotional meaning, largely absent from Wiltschko's (2024) focus paper, despite her endorsement of a constructionist view of emotions, concerns the *inherent dynamicity and situatedness* of emotional meaning (and of meaning in general). What are also absent are the dimensions, and particularly the linguistic features, that capture the experience of emotion as a process of situated emotional meaning-making. Supporting the theory of constructed emotions, Wiltschko (2024) rightly observes that the key question for emotion research "does not concern the inventory of emotions but rather the ingredients involved in their construction and how they relate to each other, i.e., the architecture of emotionality" (p. 7). Drawing on Barrett (2017b), she refers to ingredients such as physiological changes, arousal, appraisal, conceptualization, and language (see Figure 2, p. 7), to which she adds grammar's property of hierarchical compositionality as the novel contribution of her focus article. Yet, she does not analyze how these processes of emotional meaning and experience interact in particu-

lar situations, nor how they are constructed through a broad and diverse range of linguistic features, or how they vary across situations, individuals, and cultures (see Hoemann et al. 2025; Soares da Silva 2025).

Reviewing the state of the art on the nature of emotions, Wiltschko (2024) concludes: "What is shared among all definitions is the assumption that emotions are *reactions* to a trigger (which may be an event, an object or individual, a thought, or another emotion) and that it involves *several ingredients*" (p. 4). She observes that the presence of a trigger distinguishes *emotion* from *mood*, and notes further: "there is no consensus on the ingredients that are involved […] as to what counts as an emotion nor regarding the architecture of the system that generates emotions" (ibid.). She calls *emotionality* the capacity that allows humans to experience emotions, in analogy with Haspelmath's (2019) *linguisticality*, and regards both as species-specific capacities invariant across the human population (p. 4). While she acknowledges that "emotions involve a cognitive component" (p. 4), simply because they "have content and this content is cognized relative to the experiencer's goals or desires" (ibid.), and endorses Cochrane's (2019: 10) definition of emotions as "valent representations [i.e., mental representations in a positive/negative manner] of situated concerns" (p. 5), Wiltschko does not fully integrate either emotion or language with cognition. Instead, she continues to separate them by positing a universal, innate, non-language-specific *cognitive architecture*, identified as a *hierarchical organization* (or *hierarchical processing*), as the shared basis of both linguisticality and emotionality, and as a fundamental property of human cognition.

The problem is that this general cognitive capacity – considered the central and innate property of human cognition, language, and emotion, and theoretically offering "a new way to think about language and cognition, one where the seemingly unsurmountable differences between generative and cognitive linguistics dissolve" (p. 49) – is highly abstract and disembodied. It fails to show how cognition is inherently affective (Colombetti 2014); how emotions are inherently reason-laden (Damasio 1994); how the experience of emotion is a situated process of meaning-making (Hoemann et al. 2025); how cognition is embodied and enactive (and also embedded and extended, see Gallagher 2017); how language is embedded in cognition and social interaction; and lastly, how cognition, emotion, and language are intersubjective and situated in all our contexts (physical, social, cultural, historical).

4. Discussion of Wiltschko's main thesis

The title of the focus paper synthesizes Wiltschko's (2024) main thesis: *emotions do not enter grammar because they are constructed (by grammar).* Specifically, Wiltschko's core claim is that: (i) no grammatical category exists that is dedicated to emotions, even though "emotions can be expressed across all levels of language" (p. 44); and (ii) this absence is not accidental but stems from a principle: emotions are not "primitives that could be directly linked to grammatical categories" (p. 1). Rather, emotions are constructed through the same cognitive architecture that generates complex linguistic expressions. This claim is captured in Wiltschko's layered and contentful 'emotional spine hypothesis', a specification of the 'universal spine hypothesis' (proposed in Wiltschko 2014), which consists of the layers 'Classifying', 'Point-of-view', 'Anchoring', and 'Linking', and on the basis of which the syntactic (or grammatical) structure of a language is said to be built.

I have already discussed the epistemological foundations of Wiltschko's (2024) thesis, namely her conception of grammar and linguistic meaning, including emotional meaning (and ultimately of her ideas on cognition, emotion, and language), as well as some limitations of her constructionist perspective on emotions and language. I now turn to highlight the problems with Wiltschko's thesis and argue that emotions do in fact enter grammar pervasively – even in the restricted sense of syntax, morphology, and phonology. Regretfully, the limits of this discussion note do not allow for a detailed treatment of the so-called 'spinal functions' in Wiltschko's 'emotional spine hypothesis' (Section 5.4) or her 'extended universal spine hypothesis' (which adds to the 'propositional spine' an 'interactional spine', Wiltschko 2014, 2021), which is to "lend content to the hierarchical organization" of sentences and emotions and "restrict the kinds of" grammatical and emotional categories (p. 39). I nevertheless acknowledge that some of these 'spinal functions', such as point-of-view, anchoring, and ground-self/other (see Table 2, p. 44), are indeed decisive for emotional meaning-making, even if I disagree with the way in which they are understood and operationalized.

Emotions enter grammar (or more specifically, syntax, morphology, and phonology) and grammar enters emotions through a variety of means and forms. These are all *meaningful* and *inside* grammar, contrary to Wiltschko's (2024) claim that "the expression of emotions either appears to lie outside of grammar or else is parasitic on the grammar dedicated to the representation of thought" (p. 13). These grammatical means and forms remain layered and flexible, even if they are not usually exclusive or primary but rather *secondary*. I'm thus in agreement with Foolen's (2025) counterargument to Wiltschko (2024) that "both emotions and grammar do enter each other's domain, although in a secondary way" (2025: 63). Crucially, grammar does not require emotion-labeled categories to be intrinsically and efficiently affective, just as emotions do not require dedicated grammatical categories to be expressible through grammar. In fact, grammar is not a neutral skeleton, but it constantly encodes perspective, evaluation, and speaker stance, and is therefore inherently affective. This also means that emotion doesn't need a labeled 'emotion' category to be communicated through grammatical means.

The fact that the grammatical construction of emotions relies on already existing linguistic means does not exclude emotions from grammar. Rather, it integrates them into grammatical constructions through fundamentally linguistic processes that make language cognitively and communicatively economical and efficient. Some of the latter are polysemy (via cognitive mechanisms, such as metaphor and metonymy), prototype-based categorization (Geeraerts 1997), subjectification and intersubjectification (e.g. Langacker 2006; Traugott 2010), grammaticalization, and constructionalization.

One eloquent example is the grammatical category of the diminutive (and other evaluative morphological categories such as the augmentative and the pejorative) in some Romance languages (e.g., Portuguese, Spanish, Italian), as well as many others (Jurafsky 1996), but absent in languages like English or French. While Wiltschko (p. 26) rightly notes that the diminutive is an emotional grammatical category only "in a secondary fashion", since its basic meaning is referential 'smallness' (or, as Jurafsky 1996 proposes on the basis of more than 60 languages, the primitive meaning of 'child'), this does not prevent the Portuguese diminutive from being extraordinarily rich, diverse, and efficient in emotional expression. Arguably the Romance language that most extensively employs diminutive suffixes, Portuguese uses the diminutive for a wide range of affective meanings, from affection and appreciation (tenderness, love, intimacy, senso-

ry pleasure, sympathy/empathy, delicacy, euphemism) to disaffection and depreciation (contempt, hatred, irrelevance, insignificance, belittlement, antipathy, harshness, insult, dysphemism), all through processes of metaphorical and metonymic semantic change, accompanied by subjectification and intersubjectification (see Soares da Silva 2006, in press).

To summarize very briefly: emotions enter grammar not from outside grammar but from within, if we understand grammar as grounded in conceptualization and social interaction, and therefore as inherently meaningful and affective. Two of the cognitive processes by which emotions thus enter grammar correspond to what Langacker (2008) call *conceptual archetypes* (also called *image schemas*) and *construal.* They both refer to the situated way in which a speaker conceptualizes an experience or an event and represents that conceptualization in language. For this reason, conceptualization and expression of emotions, although distinct processes, are considered here in their naturally intrinsic relationship and, specifically, from the perspective of how the linguistic expression of emotions reveals cognitive processes of emotional meaning-making. Importantly, we assume the hypothesis that cognition is intrinsically affective (e.g., Damasio 1994; Colombetti 2014), leaving no room for the traditional dichotomy between cognition and emotion, nor for the dichotomy between the conceptualization of emotions and their expression.

Emotional experiences may be treated as conceptual archetypes (i.e., "experientially grounded concepts so frequent and fundamental in our everyday life", Langacker 2008: 33) that provide the semantic *prototypes* for all grammatical categories (nouns, verbs, clause structure, etc.), thereby furnishing the cognitive foundation for linking grammatical constructs with semantic particularities. Conceptual archetypes for emotional experiences include *forces* (i.e., we conceptualize emotions through their effects, construing them metaphorically as forces that affect us and metonymically through their results on our body and behavior, Kövecses 2000); *force-dynamic* (Talmy 2000) causal events; and the semantic roles of their participants as Stimulus/Causer/Affector, Experiencer/Causee/Affectee, as well as the resulting 'state' and subsequent 'response'. The grammatical encoding of the emotional causal event includes the Experiencer-Stimulus stative-causative pattern, allowing variation between Stimulus-as-subject (e.g., *That frightens me*) and Experiencer-as-subject (e.g., *I fear that*) (Talmy 2000: 98). In addition, in languages such as Mandarin Chinese, the Affector-Affectee eventive-causative pattern (in line with the canonical Agent-Patient interaction) allows for a third possibility of grammatical subject orientation, i.e., Affector-as-subject (see Liu 2022).

Construal, or "our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways" (Langacker 2008: 43), is crucial to understanding how emotions enter grammar and how grammar constructs emotional meaning. It constitutes a fundamental component of any linguistic meaning ("a meaning consists of both conceptual content and a particular way of construing that content", Langacker, ibid.), and is the "essential import" of grammatical meaning (Langacker 2008: 4). An emotional experience can be conceptually represented as a 'thing', a 'process', or a (non-processual) 'relation' by virtue of its grammatical construal as noun, verb, or adjective/adverb, respectively (Langacker 2008: 9–10). Some languages, such as English or Dutch, favor nouns and adjectives for the representation of emotion, thus profiling the Experiencer and encoding emotions as individual inner states. By contrast, other languages, such as Russian or Chinese, preferentially construe emotions as verbs, profiling procedural and interpersonal relationships and encoding emotions as processes. According to Semin et al. (2002), individualistic cultu-

res are more likely to use nouns/adjectives because they foreground the individual, whereas collectivistic cultures would favor verbs in order to profile emotions as interpersonal phenomena. Grammatical construal also allows Experiencer-subject and Affector-subject constructions to convey differing degrees of control/responsibility over the emotion. Other dimensions of grammatical construal that are relevant to emotional meaning-making include distance (proximal vs. distal), boundedness (ongoing vs. finite), reality status (real vs. hypothetical), speaker agency (subject vs. object), and emotion location (self vs. other) (see Hoemann et al. 2025).

Other cognitive processes that inscribe emotional experience into grammar include figurativity, especially conceptual metaphor and metonymy (see Niemeier 2022 for an overview, and Kövecses 2000), as well as diachronic processes of semantic change and consequent polysemy, typically driven by metaphor and metonymy, which often also underlie other processes such as subjectification and intersubjectification (Soares da Silva, in press). The emotional diminutive and augmentative are excellent examples, as discussed earlier in this section for Portuguese. It could be argued that the entire range of emotions expressed by diminutive and augmentative forms in Portuguese is merely external to grammar. However, the crucial point is that the cognitive and linguistic processes that enable the expression of these emotions through diminutive and augmentative suffixes are inevitably inscribed in the grammar itself. Additional diachronic processes of grammaticalization and constructionalization may begin with a lexical form with a concrete meaning and culminate in an emotional grammatical unit or a fixed emotional grammatical pattern or construction. Other examples – in addition to diminutive and augmentative suffixes originating from the grammaticalization of the notions of small and large size of objects, and in some languages from the grammaticalization of the full lexical forms 'child' or 'son' (diminutive) and 'mother' (augmentative) (see Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson 2022) – include the conceptualization of emotional causality through prepositional phrases, as in the English constructions [Verb + *with/in/for/out of* + emotion], e.g., *jump for joy, out of love* (Radden 1998), the English construction *feeling down*, and the Portuguese construction *partir o coração* 'break one's heart' (emotional pain). Further examples include many interjections and other expressive forms, emotive markers such as Spanish *¡anda!* (imperative of *andar* 'to walk') and Portuguese *olha!* (imperative of *olhar* 'to look'), the *What's X doing Y?* construction encoding irritation and surprise (Goldberg 1995), Quechua evidentials expressing emotional states, and many other cases of grammaticalization and constructionalization of expressions of motion, space/location, temperature, and bodily sensations that have developed emotive meanings.

Finally, emotional experiences are encoded through a range of grammatical means and constructions in: (i) phonetics and phonology (e.g., sound-symbolism and prosody); (ii) written symbols (e.g., emoticons, abbreviations, capitalization, punctuation); (iii) morphology (e.g., diminutives, augmentatives, pejoratives, amelioratives, honorific suffixation, reduplication, compounding, word-formation blending, pronouns, see Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson 2022 for an overview); and (iv) syntax, as in experiencer constructions (which convey construal alternatives regarding whether the emotion is controllable, (un)wanted, externally caused or self-generated), the ethical dative, syntactic reduplication, certainty (conviction/confidence) and intensity (emotional strength) constructions, mitigation/reinforcement constructions, adjective-noun (vs. noun-adjective) order in languages like Portuguese, impersonal constructions and agentless passives (which convey depersonalization and affective distance, Besnier 1990). The latter also include "apparent counterexamples" in syntax discussed by Wiltschko (i.e., miratives,

exclamatives, optatives, desideratives, frustratives, *fear* constructions, commiseratives, and interjections), among many others. Some of these constructions are primarily emotive, others secondarily so. Some are direct, others indirect means of expression; some express emotions denotationally, others connotationally, but all of them are efficient grammatical means for constructing and encoding emotional experiences. In several of these grammatical constructions, the emotional meaning, though inferred rather than lexically specified, resides not in individual words but in the construction itself, such as the *What's X doing Y?* construction encoding irritation. Naturally, languages may differ in the quality, quantity, and diversity of their grammaticalized affective and emotive devices.

It may be argued that the use of all these grammatical means of expressing emotions is not primary but fundamentally secondary. More importantly – and this is likely Martina Wiltschko's position – these grammatical means are used primarily or essentially to "express thoughts or propositions". This, however, constitutes the central weakness of Wiltschko's argument. As I have already argued in the previous section, based on the epistemological stance and the empirical evidence from Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Science, there is no solid foundation for defending the hypothesis of the primacy or essentiality of "cognitive" (i.e., non-affective, non-emotional) meaning, nor for sustaining the assumption of a strict separation between thought and emotion, or between cognition and emotion. More specifically, what all these grammatical means in fact demonstrate – and I wish to emphasize here the exemplary status of diminutive and augmentative suffixes in Portuguese and other languages – is that the so-called "cognitive" or thought-expressing meaning claimed as the real or core meaning of these constructions can be overridden, or at least expanded, by emotional meanings. It is precisely these emotional meanings that render such constructions more efficient, more meaningful, and even more grammaticalized.

5. Conclusion

I agree with Wiltschko's (2024) claims that emotions are constructed, that emotion words are not universal but folk-psychological, and that there are no dedicated grammatical categories for expressing emotions in the way there are for number, case, or tense – although, as we have seen in Sections 2 and 3, some of the arguments she puts forward in support of these claims are open to criticism. However, Wiltschko's core claim that "emotions do not enter grammar", "(because) emotions are constructed by grammar" and "(because) emotions are constructed by the same cognitive architecture that generates complex linguistic expressions", is overstated, inadequate, and ultimately untenable.

Her main claim and two sub-claims can be countered and reformulated as follows. First, emotions do enter grammar, albeit in less fixed, less obligatory, less direct, secondary, inferred, more diverse, and more flexible ways than canonical grammatical categories such as number, tense, or aspect. Second, grammar plays a crucial and efficient *constructional* role in the experience of emotion and in emotional meaning-making, through complex and dynamic sets of *constructions* (i.e., pairings of form and meaning), whether syntactic, morphological, or phonological. Third, emotions enter grammar, and grammar *perspectivally* constructs emotions, through cognitive abilities (apart from the conceptual archetypes that provide content) that constitute grammatical meaning itself – and linguistic meaning more generally – such as construal, prototype-based categorization, polysemy, and other cognitive processes (which may be taken as

facets of construal), including attention, perspectivization, subjectification, intersubjectification, and figurativity. These cognitive abilities are not exclusive to language, but neither are they separable from language (as Wiltschko's notion of a 'cognitive architecture' seems to suggest). Instead, they are fully integrated into and efficiently adapted by language. They ground grammar in the dynamic, embodied (broadly experiential) and potentially value-laden processes of conceptualization. This is to be understood not only in terms of the *object* of conceptualization but, above all, in terms of the *subject*'s (indeed, the interlocutors') perspective – and of social interaction. They are what confer upon grammar its meaningfulness and, inevitably, its affective and emotional dimension as an essential aspect of human experience and linguistic meaning.

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